

## INTRODUCTION

### The Unpublished Susquehanna Company Papers: Lost and Found ... and Lost Again

Many folks like to know who their ancestors were and what they did, but when those ancestors disappear from written records, researchers often hit a brick wall. For Connecticut ancestors in particular the brick wall may be taken down by using the Susquehanna Company Account Books. Connecticut land speculators formed and operated this company between 1753 and 1800. The Company sold shares, later called deeds, to land in northeast Pennsylvania which they had bought from the Indians without approval from the Pennsylvania Proprietaries or the Pennsylvania Land Office. A series of Account Books contains a record of all deeds from original purchasers, called proprietors, through settlers and claimants.

My unpublished manuscript titled The Unpublished Susquehanna Company Papers: Lost and Found ... and Lost Again will give in more detail the background for my three books on the Susquehanna Company and should be a lesson in how NOT to handle significant historical records.

*This is the version  
to use for MSS.*

The Unpublished Susquehanna Company Papers

Lost and Found ... and Lost Again

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The nine volumes of unpublished Account Books of the eighteenth century Susquehanna Land Company constitute a relatively untouched and unknown body of historic records. They document the primary economic activities of the Company by recording all of its business transactions and, together with one volume of Company minutes, form the major body of Company records.<sup>1</sup> The Minute Book, reproduced at various times, has served as the basis for study of the Company. The Account Books, however, were stored for safe-keeping after the Company ceased to exist and since then have been involved in a series of events not unlike a game of lost and found.

The publication of The Susquehanna Company Papers between 1932 and 1971 was designed to eliminate the archival problem of scattered and misplaced documents by making all records relating to the Company and its role in westward expansion available to researchers.<sup>2</sup> Thousands of relevant documents from leading repositories, archives, and local historical societies alike, were examined. Photostats of these were assembled, transcribed, and edited by Julian P. Boyd and Robert J. Taylor.<sup>3</sup> Except for a chart of the townships granted,<sup>4</sup> however, the nine volumes of Account Books were not included for publication in the printed series.

This unfortunate decision to omit the Account Books overlooked the historical importance of the individual in the Susquehanna Company and reflected the state and national orientation of The Susquehanna Company Papers. By excluding a large body of documents from the attempt at a "definitive edition,"<sup>5</sup> the editors propagated a common attitude that what was not included in the printed multi-volume collected papers was of little value. The location of the original Account Books was not reported to either the National Union Catalogue of Manuscript Collections or the National Historical



Publication Commission's A Guide to Archives and Manuscripts.<sup>6</sup> Neither were the photostats of the original Account Books cited in Historical Manuscript Depositories in Pennsylvania.<sup>7</sup> The only specific reference to the location of the Account Books in the published Susquehanna Company Papers is in a footnote on page 566 of volume 10. The ensuing discussion will attempt to rectify the neglect of the Account Books by describing the contents, fate, and present status of these important nine volumes of historical records.

# I

The Susquehanna Company formed, in 1753, for the purpose of settling land in northeastern Pennsylvania under Connecticut title, applied the term deed to all of the land transactions which occurred under its auspices. The first deeds were actually shares sold to subscribers. A share represented an equitable interest in all of the land held by the Company. It was not a deed to a specific amount of land in a specific location. There was no limit to the number of shares a person might buy, and a share might be split between two or more persons. The Clerk of the Company recorded the subscriber's name, number of shares purchased, and the amount paid, in the Minute Book of the Company along with the minutes.<sup>8</sup> This practice lasted from 1753 to 1769. In 1769, when the Company initiated actual settlement in Pennsylvania, the Clerk began to record the sale of shares and the transfer of shares from one subscriber to another in Account Books as opposed to the Minute Book. The Account Books continued to document the name and activity of every Company subscriber, for under the rules and regulations of the Company no subscriber was eligible to settle unless the Company had a record of his ownership of a share, either by purchase or by conveyance.<sup>9</sup>

When a subscriber actually settled in Pennsylvania, his share was



translated into lots within a township. At first the townships were divided among forty or fifty willing settlers.<sup>10</sup> So slow was settlement, however, that beginning in 1772, each township was surveyed upon the application of a small group of subscribers acting in the capacity of proprietors. They guaranteed to settle a total of twenty subscribers or more within a two, later three, year period.<sup>11</sup> Lots within townships were drawn at random, based on the number of shares a settler controlled, and recorded in town books, or in the Westmoreland Records, which were the records kept by the Susquehanna settlers in Pennsylvania in contrast to the Account Books which were kept by Susquehanna Company proprietors in Connecticut.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the early Minute and Account Books document the name of every individual having an interest in the Company. They do not, however, include settlement data. To tell if a subscriber actually settled land in Pennsylvania prior to 1782, the deeds in the Account Books must be used in conjunction with deeds to specific lots recorded in the town books or in the Westmoreland Records. None of this information appears in local Pennsylvania records, as the Susquehanna settlers operated outside of Pennsylvania law. If the settler's land later qualified under Connecticut claims, his name ~~an~~ may appear in Pennsylvania State Land Office or county deed records, but specifics of settlement are not fully interpretable without referring to the Account Books.<sup>13</sup>

After 1782, the management and policies of the Susquehanna Company changed considerably and so did the concept of a deed. Henceforth, the shares offered by the Company represented a right in a specific tract or lot which had been sold for a specific amount of money, or granted as a means to induce settlement. This change developed as a reaction to the Trenton Decree of 1782, itself the result of a federal court trial over land jurisdiction



arising from the activities of the Susquehanna Company. In effect it nullified all Connecticut jurisdiction in Pennsylvania, thereby declaring all deeds under which the Susquehanna subscribers had settled, illegal.<sup>14</sup> A moderate faction of the Susquehanna Company, honoring that decision, ceased to record deeds to specific lots and retired the Westmoreland Records.<sup>15</sup> A more radical faction of the Company continued to sell shares and grant townships. They rallied behind the Company's arch supporter, John Franklin. His tactics as leader of the radical faction was directed toward the settlement of all land which the Company claimed. He hoped to settle the Wyoming Valley with so many Susquehanna settlers that Pennsylvania would be forced to recognize Company land titles despite the Trenton Decree.<sup>16</sup>

Franklin began by granting Company-authorized half-shares to men who would move to Susquehanna Company lands and assist in the resistance to Pennsylvania law.<sup>17</sup> By settling for three years, each half-share holder could become the proprietor of a half share in the Company. The half-share men usually located outside of recognized townships on tracts called pitches. Franklin recorded their deeds, among other deeds, in a separate Account Book which he and his son, Billa Franklin, kept from 1786 to 1795. It forms Liber I of the nine volumes of Account Books.

By February, 1787, John Franklin secured control of the Susquehanna Company and transferred the entire operations from Connecticut to Pennsylvania. He undoubtedly moved the Minute Book and the three existing Account Books to Pennsylvania at the same time. It is this initial moving of the Susquehanna Company records which set the scene for later confusion as to their existence and location. No specific reference to it seems to be recorded, but the evidence for the move at this time is at least twofold: first, the last date for the recording of a deed in Connecticut was January



30, 1787, by Samuel Gray, the long-time clerk of the Company,<sup>18</sup> and, second, Franklin needed the records on Wilkes-Barre by March 6, 1787 when hearings on land claims began.<sup>19</sup> The hearings were intended to determine how much Company land was unoccupied and available for settlement.<sup>20</sup>

From this time, until the Company ceased to exist in 1803, Franklin continued to sell shares to individual subscribers, but he placed a major emphasis upon the granting of whole townships to proprietors who would function as mini-population companies and assist in the rapid settlement of the area. In essence these proprietors were speculators who hoped to realize a sizeable profit on the sale of land within their own townships. One group of proprietors even formed its own land company, procuring a number of townships in the Susquehanna purchase for its own benefit.<sup>21</sup> As before, new townships could be surveyed and lots drawn only upon the application of a settling group. However, the minimum number in a settling group was reduced and the acreage allowed per share was increased.<sup>22</sup> The Account Books record not only the shares granted to individual subscribers and the townships granted to proprietors, but also the proprietors' sale of lots within the townships, the lots drawn upon settling, and the sale of lots from one owner to another. These deeds, used in conjunction with Pennsylvania Land Office records,<sup>23</sup> provide the only way of tracing a settler's mobility and accurately dating his residency in Pennsylvania, if any. If a subscriber did not settle on his share, if a settler did not remain on his land after 1810,<sup>24</sup> or if a settler sold his lot to another settler at any time between 1783 and 1803, the Account Books are the only place where a record of his Pennsylvania activities can be found.

None of the deeds granted after January 30, 1787 were recorded in the regular Account Books until 1794 or later. In the latter part of 1789, John



Franklin shifted the base of the Company's operations from Wilkes-Barre to Athens, Pennsylvania.<sup>25</sup> He granted few new deeds until 1794, however, when his clerk, David Paine, began recording old and new deeds in the middle of the third volume of Account Books.<sup>26</sup> In the interval between 1787 and 1794 those deeds which were granted were recorded in Franklin's own Account Book, Liber I, or not at all.

Numerous land transactions occurred between 1795 and 1803, in Franklin's final efforts on behalf of the Susquehanna Company.<sup>27</sup> He opened a land office in Athens which encouraged speculator proprietors to an even greater extent. Franklin's land office functioned until the latter part of 1802. It closed when the decision was made to exclude, from the Pennsylvania Compromise Law of 1799, all of the townships granted after December, 1782, the date of the Trenton Decree.<sup>28</sup> Realizing he was out of business, Franklin set the Account Books aside with the Minute Book. Seldom were they to surface together and intact.

## II

By carefully piecing together scattered bibliographic comments, we can document six attempts to gather and make use of the Susquehanna Company records for legal and historical purposes since Franklin set them aside. Researchers should be aware that results of each of these attempts reprint or incorporate aspects of either the Minute Book or the Account Books, or both. In no way, however, should they be construed as satisfactory substitutes for using the original Account Books. The question of why the Account Books were not originally known, not fully appreciated when known, and still remain generally unknown and unappreciated, can be answered by studying each of these efforts.



The Susquehanna Company records were first sought as legal documents to be used to settle the conflicts over disputed land claims between Pennsylvania landholders and Connecticut settlers.<sup>29</sup> In 1801, the three Commissioners responsible for executing the Compromise Law of 1799 turned to the Susquehanna Company itself for assistance. They were seriously interested in accomplishing their task in a fair and equitable fashion.<sup>30</sup> With little knowledge of the nature or format of the Company's records, they asked to borrow all materials which would document the necessary proof of settlement prior to 1782 as required by the law. John Franklin placed at their disposal one volume which the Commissioners called a book of rules and regulations of the Susquehanna Company from 1754 to 1786. They described it as containing about 170 folio pages and they accepted it as authentic for they knew the volume had been submitted previously as evidence in a federal court test case dealing with land intrusion.<sup>31</sup> The Commissioners made a verbatim copy and prepared a full topical index before returning the volume within the week as they had agreed.

Based upon evidence in the verbatim copy, (presently available at the Pennsylvania State Archives,) the volume Franklin submitted, containing minutes of the meetings held in Connecticut through December, 1786 and records of the sale and conveyance of shares to 1769, was the original Susquehanna Company Minute Book. Apparently Franklin did not turn any of the Account Books over to the Commissioners. No comments concerning them appear among their reports. The Commissioners were satisfied with the Minute Book and the Westmoreland Records, which they had also borrowed. These two sets of records appeared to contain enough evidence to validate claims based upon deeds granted prior to 1782.<sup>32</sup>

When the work of the Commissioners was completed in 1808, they deposited



their books, records, and papers with the Secretary of the State Land Office, but their minutes in regard to this matter were not as precise as the rest of their reports.<sup>33</sup> As a result, we do not know whether the verbatim copy of the Minute Book actually reached the Land Office. We may surmise, however, that it did repose there, unused, until it was borrowed through legislative action a generation later.

All original Susquehanna Company records, the Minute Book, the Account Books, and the Westmoreland Records remained in the control of a few Company partisans.<sup>34</sup> They hoped that the records would help provide Pennsylvania title for all land the Company had deeded after 1782 in defiance of the Trenton Decree. Such a law was implemented in 1807 and by 1811 the vast majority of conflicting land titles had been settled without referring to the Susquehanna Company records.<sup>35</sup> Thereafter, the Minute and Account Books were of historical value only.

The second serious attempt to locate and use the Susquehanna Company records was part of an effort to compile a local history based upon recorded fact. In retirement, Charles Miner gathered all that he could of the history of his native area, combining the techniques of oral history and documentary research. He published his results in 1845 in his one-volume History of Wyoming. Included is an annotated list of sources providing the first bibliography devoted to the Susquehanna Company.<sup>36</sup> From it we learn that Miner used the "ancient Susquehanna Company records" which he borrowed through the efforts of State Senator Luther Kidder and House Speaker Hendrick B. Wright, both of Luzerne county. Miner might have learned about the existence of these records from either C.L. Ward or Joseph Kingsberry, both of whom he cites in his bibliography. Ward had planned to publish a history of the same area,



collecting papers and copies of documents, before losing much of what he had written in a fire and prompting him to give Miner several valuable papers once owned by Franklin.<sup>37</sup> Kingsberry served as the last clerk of the Susquehanna Company. He furnished Miner with a journal of Franklin's. Both Ward and Kingsberry might have known about other records which Franklin had and informed Miner of the "ancient Susquehanna Company records."

On February 14, 1842, Hendrick B. Wright, a Wilkes-Barre lawyer with historical interests,<sup>38</sup> introduced a resolution in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives authorizing the transfer of the Susquehanna Company records from the Land Office in Harrisburg to the Recorder's Office in Luzerne County. The resolution specifically stated that the records were to remain in the Recorder's Office for the inspection of all persons, on the payment of the necessary fee, and were not to be removed unless they were requisitioned back to Harrisburg by either the Governor or the Secretary of the Land Office. The bill faced little opposition in the Legislature. Only its title was amended by the Senate before it was passed. The Governor signed it into law on April 1, 1842.<sup>39</sup>

Miner must have felt very fortunate in having such political cooperation from people interested in the completion of his book. Had it not been for their assistance, he could not have written, when referring to the minutes of the December 26/7, 1786 meeting of the Susquehanna Company, "Except for the copy before us, there is not, probably, another in existence."<sup>40</sup> It is this statement that identifies what Miner called the "ancient Susquehanna Company records" as the verbatim copy of the Minute Book prepared by the Compromise Law commissioners. We know now that his statement was not accurate, but at the time it was written, Miner obviously was not aware that the original Minute Book and the Account Books were extant.



Very little is known about what happened to the verbatim copy of the Minute Book when Miner finished with it. He either left it in the Recorder's Office in Wilkes-Barre, or he kept it among his own papers. In 1850, a few years after he completed his work, a local writer complained in the Wilkes-Barre Advocate that "the valuable records of the old Susquehanna Company," were "in the possession of one who claims no right to them."<sup>41</sup> This statement must refer to the verbatim copy of the Minute Book which Miner had ~~bor-~~ borrowed and not to the original Minute and Account Books. As indicated by Miner's statement concerning the minutes of the December 26/7, 1786 meeting, few people in 1845 knew about the original Susquehanna Company records.

Other researchers had to content themselves with using the Susquehanna Company minutes and related document<sup>5</sup> that were published in 1852 and 1853 in the Colonial Records and Pennsylvania Archives.<sup>42</sup> These came from material found mainly within the records of the Provincial Council and the Supreme Executive Council. They consisted of official correspondence concerning the Wyoming controversy and minutes of Company meetings which Pennsylvania authorities had apprehended. They did not include the December 26/7, 1786 minutes which were in the verbatim copy of the Minute Book. This can only mean that that copy was somewhere in Wilkes-Barre in the early 1850s.

Credit for the third attempt to locate and use the original Susquehanna Company records belongs to the Rev. David Craft. His detailed History of Bradford County (Philadelphia, 1878) includes a great deal of specific information based upon the Susquehanna Company Minute and Account Books. Unfortunately, due to the typical format of county histories and his lack of documentation, few readers may realize how extensively Craft relied upon these records.<sup>43</sup> He owed his knowledge of them to his associate founders



of the Bradford County Historical Society, C.L. Ward, mentioned earlier, and Edward O. Herrick.<sup>44</sup> Both of these men played significant roles in the preservation of the Susquehanna Company records.

In his retirement, Judge Edward O. Herrick amused himself by searching in the garret of old families in the neighborhood of Athens for papers and documents which might throw light on the early history of his native valley. On one such visit to Col. John Franklin's house in 1862, at the time owned by Zephon Flower Walker,<sup>45</sup> Herrick uncovered what he counted as "thirteen ms. volumes" of the Susquehanna Company records. According to Judge Herrick, one of the volumes contained the records of all the meetings of the "Connecticut Susquehanna Company" from the formation of the Company in 1753 to 1802, in the handwriting of the clerks Samuel Gray, Joel Barlow, and John Franklin; two other volumes contained copies of the charters of the New England colonists and the remainder were the deed books of the Company.<sup>46</sup> Although the first volume of deeds was missing and Herrick had been told it had perished in the Montrose Court House fire along with other Franklin papers,<sup>47</sup> these records were, indeed, the long forgotten original Susquehanna Company Minute and Account Books.

After their discovery, the original Minute and Account Books took a circuitous route to their destination at the Connecticut Historical Society. Herrick, realizing that they were "too valuable to be permitted to remain in a private collection," where he thought the records "of no value except as a curiosity and are in danger of being scattered or destroyed," asked Walker for them.<sup>48</sup> Shortly after he obtained the manuscripts on March 6, 1862, Herrick was interviewed by D. Williams Patterson, an eminent genealogist. Patterson claimed to have "succeeded in persuading" Herrick to present the original records of the "Connecticut Susquehanna Company" to the Connec-



ticut Historical Society. On June 28, 1862 Patterson mailed "a portion" of them, by express from Waverly, New York, to Charles Hosmer, the librarian of the Society. The remaining volumes he took home with him to West Winsted, Connecticut.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, Herrick wrote to Hosmer informing him of the gift of "thirteen volumes" and commenting that he could think "of no place more appropriate for their preservation than the Historical Society chartered by the state which gave birth to the company, as well as to the men whose names are so oft repeated in its records."<sup>50</sup> Patterson, lamenting that he dare not examine them longer, mailed "the balance five volumes" to Hosmer July 7, 1862, saying he thought there were only ten volumes aside from the indexes.<sup>51</sup> The following year, at Herrick's instigation, Patterson forwarded the index which, apparently, he had retained.<sup>52</sup> The accession records of the Connecticut Historical Society show only that "Five Manuscript Volumes of Records, etc., regarding the Susquehanna Land Company" were added to their collection July 17, 1862.<sup>53</sup>

The discovery and transfer of the record books of the Susquehanna Company remained generally unknown, but at some time before their deaths in 1870, Herrick or Ward must have relayed this information to David Craft. It is likely that the records stimulated Craft's interest in preparing his Historical Discourse of the Wyalusing Presbyterian Church which he delivered to his congregation in 1869.<sup>54</sup> If it were not for this obscure publication, a forerunner of his History of Bradford County, we would not know with certainty that Craft had used the Minute and Account Books. Tucked away in a footnote on page 45 of his Wyalusing history, is Craft's comment that the Connecticut Historical Society held four volumes of records of the Susquehanna Company which he had used. Two of these contained copies of deeds, charters, lists of original proprietors, and the constitution of the Company. Another volume



contained the minutes of the Company's meetings, and a fourth volume was a record of deeds and surveys marked "Liber 4 [sic?] extending from 1784 to the close of the Company's existence."<sup>55</sup> One wonders what Craft's initial reaction was upon traveling from Athens, Pennsylvania to Hartford, Connecticut in 1868 or 1869, expecting to find the twelve or thirteen volumes he had been told about, and being able to locate only four? He did go on to comment in his footnote that several volumes of records and deeds were missing. It seems that no sooner had the records been uncovered and set aside in a place more appropriate for their safekeeping than they were unfortunately scattered and lost again.

Nearly twenty-five years later, in 1893, part of the records of the Susquehanna Company reappeared when they were printed in volume 18 of the second series of the Pennsylvania Archives, edited by William H. Egle. This constituted the fourth attempt to gather the records together since Franklin had set them aside. Totally devoted to the subject of "The Connecticut Settlement in the Wyoming Valley," pages 1-112 of the first section of volume 18 reprinted the verbatim copy of the Minute Book prepared in 1801 by the Committee Law commissioners. This was the same copy of the Minute Book which had been transferred to Wilkes-Barre in 1842. These minutes were augmented, from pages 112-123, with additional minutes found, before this time, only in the Account Books. No other information from the Account Books was printed.

Appropriations by the Legislature of 1885 provided for volume 18 as part of five new volumes to deal with the period before 1812.<sup>56</sup> Apparently the usual procedure was to select historically important material for each volume before funding was provided. The fact that volume 18 was designated, by 1885, for the topic, "Connecticut Settlement," seems to indicate that the



verbatim copy of the Minute Book was returned to Harrisburg prior to that time. A comment contributed by the Rev. David Craft in the History of Scranton may indicate that our thinking in this regard is not far from wrong. In 1877 he used, in the Land Office, all of the Compromise Commissioners' books records, and papers, but upon searching for them again after 1885 he discovered they were nowhere to be found.<sup>57</sup> Craft assumed they had been "stolen," but most likely they had been transferred to the State Librarian, W.H. Egle, who, as editor of the Pennsylvania Archives, selected material to be included. Reprints of several of the Compromise Commissioners' records appear in volume 18. If the verbatim copy of the Minute Book had been in the Land Office, it would have been included in the transfer of material. If it had remained in Wilkes-Barre, it might have been returned personally to W.H. Egle, for he was a frequent guest of the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society located in that city.

Exactly how and when the additional minutes from the Account Books were obtained was not documented and the location of the originals was not cited, but in 1893, the year that volume 18 appeared, the Connecticut Historical Society, for the first time, printed a partial list of its manuscript holdings.<sup>58</sup> It included an entry under Susquehanna Company which read as follows: Book of records of proprietors' meetings; names of shareholders; land records of; papers used in controversy concerning title to land of; letters concerning. It is impossible to tell how many volumes this entry refers to, but it does indicate some interest in making the records of the Susquehanna Company available.

The local historian, Oscar Jewel Harvey, conducted the fifth significant effort to use as many of the original Susquehanna Company records as



he could locate. His goal was a completely accurate and minutely detailed history of Wilkes-Barre, two volumes of which he published in 1909.<sup>59</sup> Having spent years locating and collecting original source material, he prepared a lengthy bibliography.<sup>60</sup> In it he remarks that "without doubt" none of the earlier historians of Wyoming (Chapman, Miner, Stone, Peck, or Pearce) had ever seen the full and complete records of the transactions of the Susquehanna Company, "inasmuch as when they wrote this material was not known to be inexistence; or, if known, was not accessible."<sup>61</sup>

Seemingly anxious to accept credit for being the first historian to base much of his research upon the original Susquehanna Company records, Harvey failed to include, in his bibliography, citations to his predecessors who had used the records. No mention of Craft, Walker, Herrick, or Egle appears in Harvey's bibliography and he gives no more than a cursory phrase to the Pennsylvania Archives. Although references to Craft and Egle do appear in his fine-print footnotes, his lack of comment in his bibliography is strange considering that Harvey knew both Craft and Egle through the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.

In any event, Harvey did know that the Susquehanna Company records had been found and were at the Connecticut Historical Society. In 1900 "the entire five lots of Wyoming matter" were offered to him to use "ad libitum."<sup>62</sup> What the phrase, "five lots" refers to we cannot be sure, but it is reminiscent of the fact that only five volumes of the records of the Susquehanna Company appear in the Accession Book of the Connecticut Historical Society. Using the records extensively in 1901 or 1902, Harvey extracted a large amount of material, giving him "some new paragraphs in early Wyoming history."<sup>63</sup>

Apparently Harvey also solved the problem of the missing volumes. He relates that Charles Hosmer, the librarian of the Connecticut Historical



Society, laid several volumes aside in his own curiosity shop and in the library, where they remained in "out-of-the-way-corners, littered over with newspapers, pamphlets, etc.," until they were finally collected by Dr. Charles Hoadley, the President, and "placed in the fire-proof vault of the Society."<sup>64</sup> We do not know exactly how many volumes Harvey did have access to, but we may presume, from the evidence, that they were all together as Herrick had given them to Patterson in 1862 and as we know Boyd found them in 1929.

The Susquehanna Company Papers represent the most recent effort to collect and use all Company records. Designed to be "an attempt to gather into a definitive edition the documents relating to the Susquehanna Company (1753-1803), to the migration from Connecticut to northeastern Pennsylvania which it sponsored, and to the resultant boundary dispute between Pennsylvania and Connecticut which had ramifications in many important fields during the whole of the last half century,"<sup>65</sup> it is by far the most complete of all the projects, but not definitive.

The impetus for such a large undertaking stemmed from the discovery, in New Milford, Pennsylvania, of a number of valuable manuscripts in a wagon-load of old waste paper during the "Conservation Days of the Great War."<sup>66</sup> Many were Col. John Franklin's writings, apparently in his own hand. Others were copies of state documents. They were given to Charles H. Ainey, a prominent lawyer in New Milford,<sup>67</sup> who gave the two large packages of manuscripts to the Susquehanna County Historical Society in 1919.<sup>68</sup>

The list of documents and manuscripts, 124 pieces of material relating to the Susquehanna Company dating from 1753 to 1828 aroused great interest when it was presented at the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies meeting in January, 1923.<sup>69</sup> Priding itself as the repository of local history



for the entire area, the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, under the directorship of Frances Dorrance, immediately requested permission to publish the manuscripts.<sup>70</sup> Permission granted, the Society recruited A.E. Martin, chairman of the Pennsylvania State College history department, to perform the necessary editing.<sup>71</sup> Greater awareness of the project by the Society members soon initiated the proposal to expand it by locating, photostating, editing, and publishing all source material relating to this fundamental epoch in their local history. Instead of the busy departmental chairman, A.E. Martin, they hired the recent graduate student, Julian Boyd.<sup>72</sup> He began this enormous task funded by a handsome gift of \$25,000 from Col. Dorrance Reynolds, donated as a memorial to his late father Sheldon Reynolds, past treasurer, secretary, and president of the Society.<sup>73</sup>

This attempt to prepare a source history of the Susquehanna Company and the western claim of Connecticut proved to be a difficult undertaking.<sup>74</sup> After identifying all of the available documents, those already owned by the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, those in private hands locally, and those in other historical societies, libraries, and private collections,<sup>75</sup> Boyd had them reproduced by a photostatic camera. He arranged these photostats in large, blue, ledger-style, loose-leaf binders in chronological order. Thereafter, he copied and edited from these loose-leaf binders so that his typescript copy corresponded directly to the photostat copy. In this way, the published volumes and their indexes correspond directly to the photostat volumes for researchers who might want to consult the facsimilies of the originals.<sup>76</sup>

In this fashion, Boyd duplicated all of the Susquehanna Company Minute and Account Books that were deposited in the Connecticut Historical Society.<sup>77</sup> He incorporated the minutes of all the meetings into the published Papers,



but he did not incorporate any of the deed information from the Account Books. Instead, Boyd placed the nine volumes of photostat Account Books in their own binders corresponding to the original books, but for some reason he grouped some together and changed all of the paging. Boyd also prepared typescript summaries of the deeds and indexed onto 3 x 5 cards every name which appeared in the Account Books (up to page 746 in his photostat binder of Liber E,F,G-H). By the time he had completed this procedure, there were three sets of the Minute and Account Books: the original, the photostat, and the full or summarized typescript version.

When it appeared that complete success in gathering and publishing all of these records was near at hand, the project fell victim to two separate catastrophes. An interruption in funding caused by the depression of 1932 brought the resignation of Julian Boyd.<sup>78</sup> He had completed three of the projected twelve volumes, and a fourth one was in press. When the fourth volume came off the press in 1932, 30 or 40 sets of the four volumes were distributed to libraries as part of the 75th anniversary celebration of the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.<sup>79</sup> The remaining stock was stored in the basement of the Society's building, along with the photostat copies of the deed books. It seems they were still there four years later, in 1936, when the Susquehanna River flooded. Water in the basement dissolved the glue of the tables on which the books were placed. The tables collapsed, submerging everything and virtually all of the printed books were destroyed.<sup>80</sup> Many of the photostat Account Books were saved, however, and later restored by three volunteers. They ironed the curling pages and replaced them in their blue, loose-leaf binders.<sup>81</sup>

A lone proof copy of a fifth volume of the project, already set in type, as well as the photostats, typescripts, notes and bibliography for the re-



maining seven volumes did survive the flood. Boyd took everything with him, expecting to work on the project as time allowed, but by 1946 it had become quite obvious to him that his editorship of The Papers of Thomas Jefferson precluded his completion of The Susquehanna Company Papers project. Therefore, he reluctantly returned the manuscript material in his possession to the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society. This time Col. Dorrance Reynolds, who had financed the project up to this point, stored the eighteen boxes in his own bank vault.<sup>82</sup> The sixth and last effort to gather together the records of the Susquehanna Company thus remained in storage until after Col. Reynold's death in 1959.

The project was revived after the executors of Col. Reynolds' estate delivered the typescripts, notes, and other materials for the unfinished volumes to the Society in 1961.<sup>83</sup> A Society newsletter in 1962, reporting the reacquisition of these documents and a brief history of the project, came to the attention of Victor Reynolds, director of Cornell University Press.<sup>84</sup> Mr. Reynolds proposed a renewal of the project under the guidance and assistance of Cornell Press. Arrangements were made to begin by reissuing volumes one through four of The Susquehanna Company Papers as a unit. They appeared in November, 1962.<sup>85</sup>

Completion of the project was delayed until the pressing problems of finances and editorship were solved. Applying for funds from the newly established National Historical Publications Commission in 1966, the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society received a grant to complete the project. After studying the proposal carefully, Dr. Robert J. Taylor agreed to undertake the editorship. Over the next four years he worked diligently to complete the remaining volumes. He returned to original sources to check the accuracy of the typescripts of photostats damaged in the flood and he searched



archives and collections not available earlier. He provided editorial annotation and made final decisions about the content of each of the remaining volumes. "By making Vols. 10 and 11 somewhat larger and by using some greater selectivity," the projected twelfth volume was eliminated in an effort to keep publication costs down.<sup>86</sup> Despite this saving, the successful completion of the project necessitated an allocation from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and special support from close friends.<sup>87</sup> Finally, in 1971, nearly forty years after the inception of the project, The Susquehanna Company Papers were completed with the publication of the eleventh volume.

The completed project, however, did not include the nine volumes of Account Books. Apparently a printing, in either complete or summarized form, or their index as Boyd had nearly completed, was never intended.<sup>88</sup> The rationale for this decision has not survived in any records, and perhaps Boyd had planned on publishing the index in some form at some later date. Nevertheless, the omission of the Account Books from the published Susquehanna Company Papers emphasizes the fact that attitudes about what is valuable as primary source material do change.

Not only were the Account Books not published, but some of them had been misplaced or lost once again. The originals of Account Books E and H were missing from the Connecticut Historical Society and the photostats of Account Books D and I were missing from the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society. Theoretically, the researcher could still complete a study necessitating the use of the Account Books by using a combination of the original and photostat copies, if he could locate them.

Upon completing his work on The Susquehanna Company Papers in 1970, Taylor returned the photostats and other material in his possession to the



Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.<sup>89</sup> With a little more care than previously, apparently everything was stored on high ground before the flood waters of Hurricane Agnes in 1972 filled the basements of the Society's buildings. The photostats were placed in a musty second-floor museum store-room and typescripts and indexes were left in boxes in other second-floor rooms where they were simply stepped over or around. In essence, both the originals and copies were forgotten in favor of the published record. It seems that if a printed multi-volume collection of original documents is looked upon by the researcher as a way to circumvent making a trip to conduct research in the original records,<sup>90</sup> it is just as likely to be looked upon by the owner of the documents as a way to circumvent having the researcher page through the original records.

### III

As a result of this study, attention was drawn once again to the Account Books. The originals in the Connecticut Historical Society and the photostats in the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society should be in vaults and available to researchers. Individuals studying township development, mobility patterns, land speculation, or simply needing biographical or genealogical data pertaining to northeastern Pennsylvania should not avoid making a trip to consult the deed records. They contain a wealth of unexploited material. As a source for land titles in particular, they provide evidence which cannot be found in either county records or state land office records. For a complete analysis of any individual involved with the Susquehanna Company, they should definitely be consulted.

Based upon information currently available, the accompanying chart reconstructs the chronological order which the Minute and Account Books repre-



sent.

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Susquehanna Company Record Books

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Chronological Order	Liber Letter <sup>a</sup>	Auxiliary Number <sup>b</sup>	Description
1	unlettered	1	Articles of Agreement and Minutes of Meetings, pages 1-62, 1753-62 and a second series of two booklets, 1-58, 1762-73; 59-110, 1771-1802. Not strictly chronological; contains lists of subscribers.
2	?		The first volume of deeds, missing, described burned in Montrose Court House fire.
3	B	4	Deeds, 1773-1778, index.
4	G	10	Records of Conveyances, 1766-78; a thumbled ledger with pages missing.
5	C	5	Deeds, 1778-95, index.
6	D	6	Deeds, 1795-96, no index.
7	E	?	Deeds, 1795-98, original missing.
8	F	8	Deeds, 1795-98, no index.
9	A	11	Records of Conveyances, 1754-98.
10	H	3	Deeds kept by John and Billa Franklin, 1763-95.
	unlettered		Index, Grantor-Grantee, Avery through Young.

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<sup>a</sup> marked on front cover<sup>b</sup> circled number, date and inscriber unknown.

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Users should realize that the indexes must have been prepared at a date considerably later than the records themselves. For instance, Liber G, an index to the deed records 1766-1778, was probably prepared as the seventh book in the series, hence the letter G, and sometime after 1795 when Liber F was begun, but chronologically it belongs after the third volume. Again, the volume labeled Liber A, Records of Conveyances, 1754-98, could not possibly be the missing first volume to which Herrick refers,



and to which there is a reference in Liber C page 118, but rather was prepared as a final summation sometime after 1798. It is essentially an alphabetized ledger indicating original proprietor, number of shares, to whom and when conveyed, when recorded, taxes paid and township location. It is also important to note that the unmarked Grantor-Grantee index, Avery through Young, available in the original only, may refer to the lost first volume of deeds, since the information and page numbers do not fit any of the extant Account Books. By simply studying and comparing the existing records, a researcher might be able to reconstruct a large portion of the missing first volume, or at least determine to which volume the index belongs.

At the present time, the original Account Books, minus Libers E and H, can be used at the Connecticut Historical Society in Hartford, and in the photostat, minus Libers D and I, at the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society in Wilkes-Barre. In the interest of preserving the records within the missing original Libers E and H, the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg holds duplicates of the photostats of Boyd's Liber E,F,G-H. A copy of Boyd's typescript summary of the deeds up to page 746 of the photostat Liber E,F,G-H is also available in the State Archives. However, the index to the deeds, or the typescript summaries thereof, is still in Wilkes-Barre on 3 x 5 cards in a cardboard box.

In summary, despite repeated efforts to gather together the original records of the Susquehanna Company, none have succeeded in making available all of the pertinent documents. The scholarship exemplified in each attempt reflects the purpose of the project and the historical attitudes of the time represented. Currently, as we seek new ways in which to measure our past, even the most complete rendering of the original records to date seems to



have left important issues undeveloped. The exclusion of a significant body of documents misleads the researcher and points out the necessity of developing more appropriate ways of achieving accessibility.<sup>91</sup> The Account Books of the Susquehanna Company remain an untapped treasure.

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Notes

<sup>1</sup>Susquehanna Company Records, Minute and Account Books, 1753-1803, 10 vols., Connecticut Historical Society (CtHS).

<sup>2</sup>The Susquehanna Company Papers, Julian P. Boys, ed., I-IV (Wilkes-Barre, 1932) and (Ithaca, 1962); Robert J. Taylor, ed., V-XI (Ithaca, 1967-71). See Preface, I, i.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., I, v-vi.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., X, 566-77.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., I, i.

<sup>6</sup>Elizabeth Abbe, Librarian, CtHS, personal communication to author, March, 1981. Philip A. Hamer, ed., A Guide to Archives and Manuscripts (New Haven, 1961) does include a citation to photostats of 3,000 pieces of Susquehanna Company Records located at the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, but no further description, 559.

<sup>7</sup>Irwin Richman, Historical Manuscript Depositories in Pennsylvania (Harrisburg, 1965).

<sup>8</sup>See eg. Susq. Co. Records, Minute Book, July 18, 1753, CtHS; Susq. Co. Papers, I, 28-39.

<sup>9</sup>Susq. Co. Records, Minute Book, March 9, 1774, CtHS; Susq. Co. Papers, V, 325-9.

<sup>10</sup>Susq. Co. Records, Minute Book, Dec. 28, 1768, CtHS; Susq. Co. Papers, III, 43-4.

<sup>11</sup>Susq. Co. Records, Minute Book, Apr. 1, 1772; March 9, 1774, CtHS; Susq. Co. Papers, IV, 314-6, 325-9. For comprehensive discussions of shares see Thomas Cooper, "General Observations on the Connecticut Title," Ibid., XI, 352-4 and Ibid., X, 215, note 5.

<sup>12</sup>The Westmoreland Records, originally in 4 volumes, included the Town



Book of Wilkes-Barre and most that survives of the records of the other towns settled before 1774. The original records or hand copies, and typescripts with some pages missing, although reported missing in Susq. Co. Papers, XI, 247, note 4, are in the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society. A separate town book for Hanover is also in the WHGS.

<sup>13</sup>Connecticut Claimants, 3 vols., Division of Land Records, State Archives, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), Harrisburg.

<sup>14</sup>Susq. Co. Papers, VII, 247-9. The actual date of the Proclamation announcing the Decree was Jan. 6, 1783.

<sup>15</sup>Zebulon Butler retained them in his private possession and recorded an occasional deed after 1782.

<sup>16</sup>Susq. Co. Records, Minute Book, July 13, 1785, CtHS; Susq. Co. Papers, VIII, 247.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Susq. Co. Records, Account Book, Liber C, 108, CtHS; photo, 252, Wyoming Historical and Geological Society (WHGS).

<sup>19</sup>"Records of the Proceedings of the Court of Commissioners.....," John Franklin Papers, Manuscript Group 52, Division of Archives and Manuscripts, PHMC; Susq. Co. Papers, IX, 119-22.

<sup>20</sup>Susq. Co. Records, Minute Book, Dec. 26/7, 1786, CtHS; Susq. Co. Papers, VIII, 425-9.

<sup>21</sup>Articles of Agreement by William Wynkoop and Others, original draft, Tioga Point Museum, Athens, Pa.; Susq. Co. Papers, X, 212-3.

<sup>22</sup>Susq. Co. Records, Account Book, Liber C, Minutes, Feb. 18, 1795, 399-404; Susq. Co. Papers, X, 213-9.

<sup>23</sup>Connecticut Claimants, 3 vols.; Certified Townships of Luzerne County; Warrant, Survey, and Patent Books of county of residence; all located Division



of Land Records, PHMC.

<sup>24</sup>Many settlers chose to leave rather than repurchase their land from Pennsylvania land-holders or the state. This paper began as a study of such an individual. What appeared to be meager evidence from county records and The Susquehanna Company Papers changed to vast evidence when the Account Books were located and consulted.

<sup>25</sup>David Craft, History of Bradford County (Philadelphia, 1878), 275.

<sup>26</sup>Susq. Co. Records, Account Book, Liber C, 108, CtHS; photo, 252, WHGS.

<sup>27</sup>For interpretation of Franklin's efforts to form a new state see Julian P. Boyd, "Attempts to Form New States in New York and Pennsylvania," N.Y. State Historical Assoc., Quarterly Journal, XII (July, 1931), 257-70; James Brady, Wyoming: A Study of John Franklin and the Connecticut Settlement into Pennsylvania (Ph.D. Dissertation, Syracuse Univ.), 1973.

<sup>28</sup>Susq. Co. Papers, XI, 338-42.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., X, 468-74.

<sup>30</sup>Between 1799 and 1801 the appointed Commissioners could not solve procedural problems.

<sup>31</sup>Susq. Co. Papers, XI, 142; X, 278.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., XI, 114-26, 142-5, 246-9, 349-59.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., XI, 528-9.

<sup>34</sup>John Franklin retained the original Minute and Account Books. Jesse Fell, Connecticut settler and clerk to the Compromise Commissioners, was also clerk to the Luzerne County Commissioners. He retained control of the Westmoreland Records.

<sup>35</sup>Susq. Co. Papers, XI, 519-21; Luzerne Federalist, June 19, 1807; Certified Townships Luzerne County, Division of Land Records, PHMC.

<sup>36</sup>Charles Miner, History of Wyoming (Philadelphia, 1845), vii-viii.



<sup>37</sup>Circumstantial evidence points to a Dec, 27, 1831 fire originating in the Susquehanna Register office at the time Ward was editor and shortly after John Franklin died. Emily C. Blackman, History of Susquehanna County (Baltimore, 1970 reprint), 327-8, 541.

<sup>38</sup>Hendrick B. Wright, Historical Sketches of Plymouth (Philadelphia, 1873).

<sup>39</sup>Journal of the Fifty-Second House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg, 1842), I, 333-4, 664, 704, 812; Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg, 1842), I, 320, 612-3, 647.

<sup>40</sup>Miner, 404. Decisions at this meeting continued the Connecticut-Pennsylvania land controversy.

<sup>41</sup>Wilkes-Barre Advocate, Nov. 27, 1850; O.J. Harvey, A History of Wilkes-Barre (Wilkes-Barre, 1909), I, 27.

<sup>42</sup>In Colonial Records see Minutes of the Provincial Council, passim., IX, X; Minutes of the Supreme Executive Council, passim, XIII-XVI. In Pennsylvania Archives see 1st ser., III, IV, VI, IX-XI. Two researchers who relied upon these records were Horace Hollister, History of the Lackawanna Valley (N.Y., 1857), and Stewart Pearce, Annals of Luzerne County (Philadelphia, 1860).

<sup>43</sup>For copious notes Craft took from the Susquehanna Company Minute and Account Books see the Craft Collection, Tioga Point Museum, Athens, Pa.

<sup>44</sup>Craft, Bradford Co., 175. Bradford County Historical Society was founded in 1870.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 272.

<sup>46</sup>Edward O. Herrick, Jr., to Charles Hosmer, June 26, 1862, C+HS.

<sup>47</sup>Montrose, The Susquehanna Register, Nov. 24, 1842.



- <sup>48</sup>Herrick to Hosmer, June 26, 1862, Cths.
- <sup>49</sup>D. Williams Patterson to Charles Hosmer, July 7, 1862, Cths.
- <sup>50</sup>Herrick to Hosmer, June 26, 1862, Cths.
- <sup>51</sup>Patterson to Hosmer, July 7, 1862, Cths.
- <sup>52</sup>Louise Welles Murray, Old Tioga Point and Early Athens (Athens, 1908), 408, note 18.
- <sup>53</sup>Accession Book, Cths, 198.
- <sup>54</sup>Published 1870 by Craft.
- <sup>55</sup>Craft's description seems to fit the Minute Book and Account Books, Liber B and I, but the fourth volume is not identifiable.
- <sup>56</sup>Pennsylvania General Assembly, The Legislative Record (Harrisburg, 1885), I, 763, 802. Henry H. Eddy and Martha L. Simonetti, Guide to the Published Archives of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg, 1949), 70.
- <sup>57</sup>Craft, History of Scranton (Dayton, 1891), 63.
- <sup>58</sup>Connecticut Historical Society, Annual Report (Hartford, 1893), 28.
- <sup>59</sup>Oscar J. Harvey, A History of Wilkes-Barre (Wilkes-Barre, 1909), I, II; Oscar J. Harvey and Ernest J. Smith (Wilkes-Barre, 1927), III.
- <sup>60</sup>Harvey, I, 24-31.
- <sup>61</sup>Isaac A. Chapman, History of Wyoming (Pub. posthumously Wilkes-Barre, 1830); William L. Stone, The Poetry and History of Wyoming (Wilkes-Barre, 1840); George Peck, Wyoming (New York, 1858); Stewart Pearce, Annals of Luzerne County (Philadelphia, 1860); Harvey, I, 28. Harvey should have included Horace Hollister, History of the Lackawanna Valley (1st ed. New York, 1857).
- <sup>62</sup>Horace E. Hayden, "Reports," Proceedings, WHGS, VI, 1900, 16.
- <sup>63</sup>Ibid., VII, 1902, 13.
- <sup>64</sup>Harvey, I, 29.



<sup>65</sup>Susq. Co. Papers, I, i.

<sup>66</sup>Yearbook, Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies (PaFHS), 1922, 12.

<sup>67</sup>For many years these papers were owned by O.N. Worden. He willed them to his sister when he died in 1881; Ottwill I. Benson, great grand-nephew of Worden, telephone conversation, Feb. 10, 1982; Yearbook, PaFHS, 1920, 39.

<sup>68</sup>Yearbook, PaFHS, 1922, 12.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.; Proc., WHGS, XVIII (1922), xix; The PaFHS did not print the list. For a copy see The Montrose Independent, Dec. 13, 1928.

<sup>70</sup>Proc., WHGS, XVIII (1922), xix; Yearbook, PaFHS, 1923, 33. The manuscripts, called the Franklin Papers, were permanently loaned to the PHMC in 1952 in return for microfilming. For a microfilm copy see Susq. Co. Hist. Soc. and Pennsylvania State Archives MG 52.

<sup>71</sup>"President's Report for 1925," Proc., WHGS, XX (1929), xiv.

<sup>72</sup>"President's Report of 1928," Proc., WHGS, XXI (1930), xxii.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., vii-xix.

<sup>74</sup>Susq. Co. Papers, I, i.

<sup>75</sup>"President's Report for 1928," Proc., WHGS, XXI (1930), xxii

<sup>76</sup>Susq. Co. Papers, I, vi.

<sup>77</sup>Annual Report, CthS, 1929, 25.

<sup>78</sup>Julian Boyd became Director of the New York State Historical Association, 1932-4, and Librarian of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1935-40, "President's Report for 1932," Proc., WHGS, XXII (1938), xxxi.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., lxii.

<sup>81</sup>Ruth B. Schooley, ed., Newsletter, WHGS, June, 1962.



<sup>82</sup>Constance Reynolds Belin, Notes to a presentation of the history of the publication of The Susquehanna Company Papers, 1924-1962, found in Susquehanna Company Papers file folder, WHGS, 1981.

<sup>83</sup>Harry B. Schooley, Jr., Addendum to Application to the National Historical Publications Commission for a grant to complete the editing of The Susquehanna Company Papers, June 9, 1965.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., No relation to the Dorrance Reynolds family.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Robert J. Taylor to the author Nov. 4, 1981.

<sup>87</sup>Susq. Co. Papers, XI, 533-4; Minutes, Feb., 19, 1970, PHMC, RG 13, PHMC.

<sup>88</sup>Robert J. Taylor to the author Nov. 4, 1980.

<sup>89</sup>Robert J. Taylor to the author Dec. 14, 1980.

<sup>90</sup>Roland M. Baumann, "Dr. Shenk's Missing Series of the Published Pennsylvania Archives," Pa. Mag. Hist. Biog., CIII (Oct., 1979), 416.

<sup>91</sup>James Hutson, review of William B. Willcox, et al., eds., The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, Pa. Mag. Hist. Biog., CIII (Oct., 1979), 531; Larry R. Gerlach, review of Robert J. Taylor, ed., The Susquehanna Company Papers, X, 1971, Penna. Hist., XL (Kan., 1973), 105.