

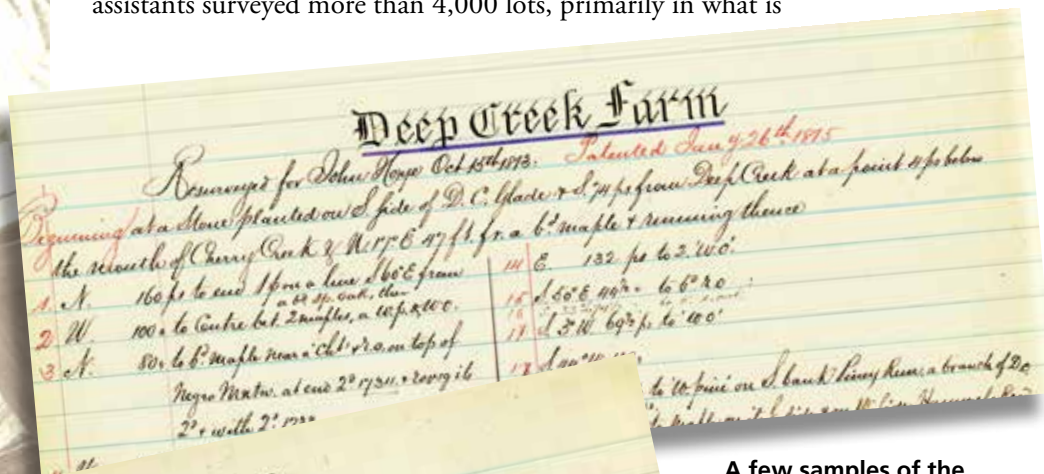
Military Lots Awarded For Revolutionary War Service

Written by: **Dan Whetzel**

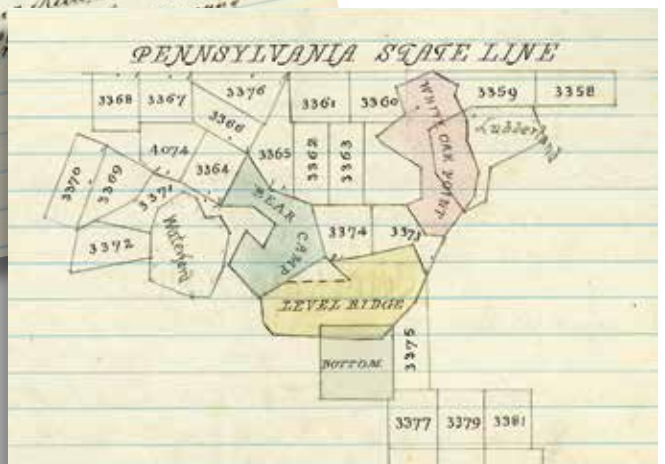
Some Garrett County property owners may be surprised to learn they have connections with patriots who fought in the War of Independence (1775-1783). The link between the early American time period and the contemporary one is based on military service during the Revolutionary War and the Maryland General Assembly's decision to award patriots with real estate located in the western region of the state. Following the legislature's decision to award land, much of present day Garrett County became available to officers, soldiers, and recruiters who actively participated in the war.

The Revolutionary War challenged the colonial legislatures to fill their new army with recruits. As an incentive for enlistment, the Maryland General Assembly enacted legislation in 1777 that provided for a bounty of 50 acres of land for every soldier who faithfully served three years in the American Army. Military recruiters were similarly rewarded with 20 acres when they reached a minimum of 20 enlistees. Early legislation did not include provisions for officers.

The General Assembly remained faithful to its word and authorized Colonel Francis Deakins to survey vacant land west of Fort Cumberland, a compound originally built at the confluence of Will's Creek and the Potomac River for use in the French and Indian War (1755-1763). Colonel Deakins and his 10 assistants surveyed more than 4,000 lots, primarily in what is



A few samples of the handwritten pages of Military lots.



today Garrett County. He found the western lands to be sparsely populated with the exception of a settlement in the area of present day Oakland.

Colonel Deakins concluded that 323 families had already settled on some of the plots. Notations were made of those properties and the inhabitants were later given preference to purchase the lands by making payments over a three year time period.

According to reports, 2,475 soldiers were eligible for the program. Following the inclusion of officers in 1788, the number of eligible service veterans entitled to land increased. Officers were provided with the opportunity to own four contiguous lots, thereby finalizing the promises to veterans made by the General Assembly. In 1788, a three member commission appointed by the governor of Maryland began managing the program, fixing the value of properties, and settling disputes that arose in the process.

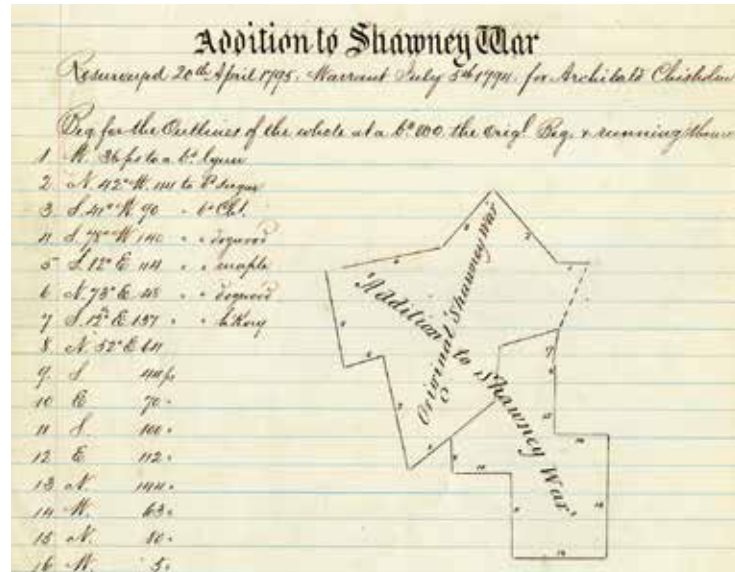
Records show that of the more than 4,000 lots surveyed, only 2,575 were actually assigned. A list of soldiers, officers, and settlers who were assigned land in Garrett County is provided by the Western Maryland Historical Library at www.whilbr.org/garrettlots.

A second interesting resource is available at the Garrett County Historical Society Museum, located at 107 South Second Street in Oakland, Maryland. A ledger book titled No. 1 W.C.P_. Lot Book, provides a handwritten list of lots surveyed by Mr. Deakins in 1787 and subsequent surveys through the 1870s. William C. Pennington, the original owner, recorded colorful and descriptive names assigned by property owners that make for interesting reading. Peace and Plenty (Deer Park), Anything, Sweet Hill, Troublesome, Come by Chance, Bucks and Bones, Both



Ends of the Bush, Ashby's Discovery, Shades of Death, and Cornucopia (Granstville) are a few of the many properties identified. The Pennington ledger was presented as a gift to the Garrett County Historical Society from the estate of the late Reverend John Grant, preeminent historian.

The General Assembly's incentive plan not only helped to meet the immediate needs of the colonial army but also influenced settlement of Western Maryland. Over time the lots were sold and consolidated as development of the county accelerated in the nineteenth century. Residents who research their deeds may find colorful names and know they are connected to Revolutionary War patriots who succeeded in winning an uphill fight against the British.



This story was suggested by Troy Gnegy of Garrett County and is presented in his honor.

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