

Snell-Zimmerman Land Patent 1734 and 1755

A little history-----

In 1710 there was a large influx of people coming to America from the Palatinate district in Germany. Due to wars (30 years' war and 100 years' war), famine and very cold weather that froze the crops---- times were not good. These people were called the Palatines and first they travel down rivers to Holland and took small boats to England where Queen Anne wanted to help them. She decided that her navy needed tar for the ships and they could get it from the trees in America so many ships-- overloaded with over 7000 people descended on New York harbor. Camps were set up along the Hudson River where they would get the tar from the trees, but this project did not last as the trees were the wrong kind to get tar from. The Palatines were left to fend for themselves. Some had heard of land available in Schoharie and a group traveled over the hills to Schoharie and settled there with the help of the friendly local Indians. They soon found out that they did not own the land and were told to leave or rent.

Jacob Zimmerman was one that left the area and moved north and settled St. Johnsville being the first settler there. In 1725, the town was established and it was called Zimmermans Mills. Jacob again wanted to own the land and a land grant with the Mohawk chieftains was written in 1733-34 for the land in the area and was given to a woman who was a friend to the Mohawk Indians. The English government would not accept the patent as written in Dutch and required it to be written again in English of which was done in 1755. This time Johan Jost Snell and Jacob Zimmerman jr. were the patentees. They paid 180 pounds to the English crown to have a legal document and this patent carries the seal of King George II. Both of these patents were signed by the Chieftains of the Mohawk tribe and their animal signs were written upside down noting that this land was given freely and the Mohawk Indians would never try to reclaim this tract of land.

The patent written in 1734 was that the Mohawk Indian chieftains gave the land grant as a gift to Anna Margarita Zimmerman as a friend to the Indians. It is interesting to note that this patent was written in Dutch (the common language of the area) as Albany was the county seat. The patent listed all the land along the north side of the Mohawk River from East Canada Creek going west and north to encompass 3600 acres-across from General Nicholas Herkimer's home. The Zimmerman sons soon settled on this land. When the English found out about this patent, they would not accept it as it was written in Dutch. By this time some of the Snell sons had also moved to the area. Jacob Zimmerman and John Jost Snell teamed up together and had the 1755 patent written in English (the same land grant as the 1734 patent) and all Indian chieftains of the Mohawk Tribe signed the document with their animal symbols of wolf, bear and turtle and you will note that the animal symbols are upside down. It is to say that the land was given as a gift and the Mohawk Indians will never ask for the land to be returned to them.

"At this time, it was required that anyone who wished a land grant first had to be licensed to purchase the land in the name of the British sovereign from the Indians owners. Once this had been done, he could then petition to purchase the land in his own name from the colonial government which petition if granted allowed him to buy the land from the Indians and have his purchase confirmed by a patent from the colony of New York. The complicated procedure had many steps and each step no doubt had its fees. It is natural that Jacob Zimmerman and John Jost Snell, faced the similar problem of acquiring the land they had settled in adjoining areas, combined to approach the colonial bureaucracy, in unity there is strength!"

(P74 The Eighteenth Century of the Zimmerman Family of the Mohawk Valley by David Kendall Martin)

The 1755 patent was recorded and a copy is in the Albany State Archives along with other documents for this land grant.

During the Revolutionary War, this document was hidden in a hollow log for safe keeping. After the war the document went west with the elder Snell family member. Story has it that the Zimmerman (Timmerman same name) and Snells made a pact that if some of the family would parish during the war the others would carry on the family name of Snell, Zimmerman Timmerman.

The patent became lost due to moving homesteading and was handed down to the younger generation throughout out the years. The Lawrence Zimmerman papers were held by the local families and it talked about the land grant but we did not know where it was. A descendant of Lawrence Timmerman, Mrs. W. T. Moffet of Rochester, Minnesota owned the 1734 patent, in 1930's it was found in Wisconsin hanging on a wall in a house there. Then it

got lost again. In the 1983 Orrin Snell living in Minnesota was called to his father home in Canada and was cleaning out the attic after his father death and found the 1755 patent. He contacted the reunion members and on his trip to the east he dropped the patent off at Edith and Ira Timmerman's home. It was in poor shape and the board of the reunion decided to send it to Cooperstown Historical Society to have it restored as best they could. It was kept at the Little Falls Historical Society Museum for many years as a loan to their museum and each year the S-Z-T Reunion would display the patent at the Snells Bush Church for the reunion and the members could see the patent. Recently the S-Z-T board decided to move the patent to the Dolgeville Museum as a loan for their museum. The patent needs to be displayed in the Town of Manheim as it is a part of Manheim. The board felt that the residents of Dolgeville and Manheim should be able visit the museum and view the patent. As a display in the museum the patent can bring local history to the community and visitors can learn and view history of the local area.