

THE CONNECTION WITH LANCASTER OF A SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

By C. H. MARTIN

RECENTLY the writer purchased a copy of a book entitled, "Biographical Sketches of the Signers of the Declaration of American Independence," by B. J. Lossing (1848). In glancing through this volume I found that one of the Pennsylvania signers, James Smith, had read law in Lancaster and was here admitted to the bar. This encouraged a search for information concerning Mr. Smith's connection with Lancaster, and I take pleasure in presenting this brief paper to our Lancaster County Historical Society on this subject, showing that not only the Hon. George Ross, Lancaster's well-known signer, but also that the Hon. James Smith, signer from our neighboring city of York, lived for a number of years in Lancaster.

James Smith was a son of John Smith who was born in Ireland, where he was a respectable and enterprising farmer. Having a large family and believing that he could provide better for them in the new world, he determined to come to America. The fact that some of his brothers and uncles had already emigrated to Pennsylvania, some coming with Penn, induced Mr. Smith to settle in this Province. Some of his relatives settled in Chester county and became Friends.

When John Smith brought his family to America, three sons,—George, James (the subject of this sketch), Arthur, and several daughters of whom little is now known,—were with him. He came to Lancaster county and settled west of the Susquehanna in that part of Lancaster county included in York county when erected as a county in 1749. Here he continued to reside until about 1761, when he died at an advanced age.

George Smith, the oldest son, studied law in Lancaster, with Thomas Cookson, Esq., and was admitted to the Lancaster bar in 1743. (His name appears in the list of members of the Lancaster bar, with year of admission, as found under the subject of "Bench and Bar," in Ellis and Evans' History of Lancaster County, Page

245). He continued to reside in Lancaster until his untimely death by drowning in the Susquehanna while bathing, near the present site of Columbia, when seized with cramp, before assistance could reach him.

James Smith was about ten years of age when he came to Pennsylvania with his parents. When his brother George entered upon the practice of his profession, James came to Lancaster from the homestead and began the study of law under his brother's tutelage, completing it at the age of twenty-one, shortly before his brother's death. The list of "Bench and Bar," referred to above, shows that James was admitted to the Lancaster bar in 1752. Soon after his admission he removed to the section of country where Shippensburg now stands, accompanied by his earlier and later life friend, George Ross, where he engaged in surveying for lack of business in his profession. A few years later, he made his permanent home in York. Here he served in the following useful capacities in connection with the practice of his profession, there being only one other lawyer, Thomas Hartley, in York these years:

In 1774 he was chosen a deputy from the county of York to attend a provincial meeting in Philadelphia, which meeting began June 15th.

In 1775 he was elected a member for York county of the provincial convention for Pennsylvania.

In 1776 he was deputized by the committee of York county to join a provincial conference of committees of the Province of Pennsylvania.

In the same year 1776, he was elected a delegate from Pennsylvania to serve in the Continental Congress, at which time he signed the Declaration of Independence. He continued a member of this Congress in 1777-78. When the Congress sat at York, the Board of War used his law office.

In October, 1780, he was elected a member of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania.

He died July 11th, 1806, at an advanced age, having been born about 1719 as near as can now be determined, there being no known record of the exact date of his birth, but he was about ten years of age in 1729 when coming to America with his parents.

The fact that he read law in Lancaster, and was admitted to the bar here, and that he here began to practice his profession, be-

fore removing to the site of Shippensburg and later permanently to the young town of York, certainly entitle the recording in the Proceedings of our Society the information herein contained; and should give to this community the honor of claiming another signer of that immortal document, at least to the extent cited in connection with Mr. Smith's life in Lancaster.

FLAG PRESENTED TO LANCASTER FENCIBLES IN 1841

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

In Vol. XXXV, pp. 73-89, of the Proceedings of The Lancaster County Historical Society is an article entitled, "Flag Presented to Lancaster Fencibles in 1842." Since that article was published I have discovered in a local newspaper that another flag handsomely decorated by a local artist was presented to the Lancaster Fencibles in the fall of 1841, nine months before the beautiful standard—a gift of the citizens of Baltimore, Md.,—was presented to this local military company.

The Lancaster Intelligencer and Journal of Tuesday, October 5th, 1841, contained an announcement that a beautiful flag, painted by Mr. J. H. Brown,¹ was presented on the preceding day by the ladies of Lancaster to the Lancaster Fencibles. The interesting ceremony took place at the door of the residence of Mrs. Brown, presumably the mother of the artist, who lived on East King street. There was a large assemblage of people present on this occasion and the ceremonies were very interesting. George M. Kline² at that time a law student addressed the company on the part of the ladies as follows:

"Lancaster Fencibles:

"The ladies of your city this day present you these colors, and it is a gratification to me that I am able, in their name, to express the feelings of pleasure this interesting occasion calls forth. It is with pride they have witnessed the spirit that induced, and the patriotism that prompted you in the formation of this company; and while they regard you now, in the calm of

¹James H. Bryson's directory of Lancaster city published in 1843, lists "Henry J. Brown, artist, south-west corner East King [street] and Centre square." This is undoubtedly the artist who decorated the flag, but unfortunately the directory lists him as "Henry J." while the newspaper account refers to him as "J. H." The directory erred in stating that he lived on the south-west corner of East King and Centre [Penn.] square because there is no south-west corner of East King street and Penn square.

²George M. Kline was admitted to the Lancaster bar in 1842. See Mombert's "Authentic History of Lancaster county," published in 1869, p. 432.