

MADAME FERREE

Another biography of an outstanding pioneer woman in the history of Lancaster County.

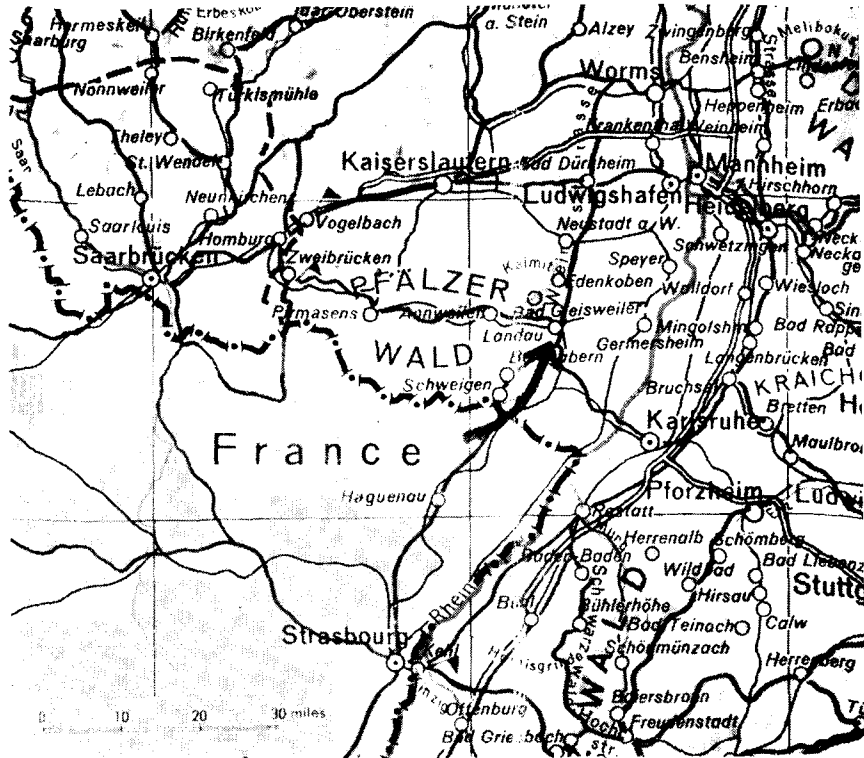
The story of Mary Warenbauer Ferree recounts the wanderings of a woman of spirit and perseverance. Pursuing her object in life to find a place of freedom and opportunity where her children could live in peace and religious liberty, she achieved her goal. A shining light among pioneer Colonial American Women, her life history fascinates one with its variety, adventures and accomplishments.

Before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, in a village in one of the upper provinces of France, lived a Huguenot silk weaver, named Daniel Fiere. He had married Marie Warenbauer and they had a son Daniel aged nine, a daughter Katharine aged six, and two, perhaps three younger children.

When Louis XIV of France revoked in 1685 the Edict, which had permitted the Protestants of France to freely exercise their religion, many of the Huguenots were obliged to flee for their very lives from their native country. The privileges of Protestants were openly violated, families disrupted and severities exercised which excited the horror and indignation of all the reformed States of Europe. Decrees were issued against emigrations and guards were placed on the coasts. Nevertheless vast numbers escaped and carried their arts and industries to other nations. When the troops entered their village, not far from the River Rhine, and commenced murdering the Protestants, pillaging their properties, the Fiere family simply had to take flight into Germany. On leaving France, they were accompanied by a youth named Isaac Lefevre, all of whose family being Protestants, had been put to death. He carried with him one heirloom, the family Bible, which was preserved by his descendants of Lancaster County to modern times.

This group of French Huguenots settled in Landau near the Rhine, where they resided for two years. Then they moved to a small adjacent village named Steinweiler. Here their son Philip Fiere was born in 1687. The father, Daniel Fiere, died that same year leaving his wife, Marie, and the six children, Daniel, Jr., Katharine, Mary, Jane, John and Philip. The

Map showing portion of France and Germany where the Huguenots lived and sought refuge.



oldest son Daniel was married here to Anna Maria Leininger and they all lived in Steinweiler until 1708. After her husband's death, Marie Fiere was known, according to an old French custom, by the name of Maria Warenbauer, which was her maiden name.

Even in their adopted home in the Palatinate, during the wars of those times, suffering and desolation was widespread. The Palatinate was ravaged, the whole country crushed with requisitions for the support of the marauding armies, and the land was laid waste. Under these conditions, the widow Fiere and her children heard the news of William Penn's province in America with hope and longing. Henry Baird in his "Huguenot Emigration to America" says: "There were no emigrants whom William Penn desired more ardently for his plantations on the Delaware and Susquehanna than the persecuted Huguenots. Many of them had heard of the advantages of Pennsylvania through the statements his agents circulated in all Europe." The chief agent on the continent was a Quaker friend of William Penn, Benjamin Furley. He was born in England but made his permanent home in Rotterdam, Holland. Through this source of information, no doubt, Marie Fiere and her brood came to the decision to emigrate to America.

The party consisted of Madame Fiere, her six children, three sons and three daughters, also the wife of Daniel, Jr. and their two sons Andrew and John. In addition there was Isaac Lefevre, the son-in-law who had come with the family from France and had married Katharine Fiere in

1703 and their little son Abraham. A passport was obtained for the Fieres and similarly Isaac Lefevre secured for himself, his wife and child a passport to emigrate "from the town of Steinweiler in the province Billigheim, via Holland and England to the island of Pennsylvania to reside there." The Court Clerk also stated as of March 10, 1708,

"They have behaved themselves piously and honestly; that it would have been highly gratifying to us to have them remain among us. They have paid for their permission to emigrate, and they are free from debts."

Daniel Fiere, Jr. also secured for himself and his little family, a certificate from the French Reformed Church which stated that: — "They have always made profession of the pure Reformed religion, frequented our sacred assemblies and partaken of the supper of the Lord with the other members of the faith. We commend them to the protection of God and the kindness of all our brethren. May 10, 1708."

There is no record about their sojourn in Holland on the way to England. But it is certain that Daniel Fiere and Isaac Lefevre with their families were in London during the summer of 1708, for in August, they, with a number of other persons obtained from the Queen, Letters of Denization for the British Colonies. They sailed with the Rev. Mr. Kocherthal, a Lutheran pastor, in charge of the party of 53 persons on the ship "Globe" in October 1708. They landed in New York on January 1, 1709. There was a Huguenot colony at Esopus, now Kingston, N. Y. and here they went after the long hard voyage. They were in destitute circumstances. There is on record a list of tools given to Isaac Lefevre so he could start work clearing the land. Esopus was only intended as a temporary location for they remained there just until 1712 at the latest and then proceeded south to Pennsylvania. At Esopus, Philip Lefevre, Isaac's son was born in 1710.

In the meantime the widow Marie Fiere and her four single children were in London in May 1709. On a "list of poor Germans come over from the Palatinate" they are listed in St. Katharine's, a precinct of London, on the River Thames. So, while the whole family left Steinweiler together in 1708 — there is no evidence that they all journeyed as far as London together. Marie evidently remained with her single children in Holland until 1709 and then crossed to England. It is likely they came to America on the ship Lyon with Gov. Hunter which landed in New York, June 14, 1710, but there remain no records to prove this.

Tradition says that Marie's son Philip worked for Abraham Dubois in Esopus, for a year, and if this be so, then Marie and her younger children were for a time located with the others at Esopus, before coming to Penn's province to take up land. Also by tradition Marie Fiere built her log house at a spring near the bridge crossing the Pequea Creek. Near this spot, the first white child of this region, Daniel Lefevre, son of Isaac and Katharine Lefevre was born in 1713.

During Marie Fiere's sojourn in London, one reads about her encounter with William Penn himself in an address delivered by R. Conyungham, Esq., on July 4, 1852 as follows:—"Marie Fiere the mother of Daniel, accompanied by her children and armed with a spirit of resolution,

superior to her sex, went to London. Thence she set out to the Kensington section where William Penn resided to be near Queen Anne of whom he was deservedly a favorite. When the widow was on the way with her family being conducted to find Penn's residence, Penn's carriage approached, and her conductor pointed him out. Being of a persevering disposition she called out to Penn in French. He immediately stopped his carriage and being well acquainted with the French language conversed with her. This was highly gratifying as she could neither speak nor understand English. Penn then learned the nature and object of her call and invited her into his carriage. As he was then on his way home, he listened attentively to what she had to say. He told her of his agents in the Province of Pennsylvania and promised to give her a recommendation treating her very kindly. She secured lodgings for her family in the vicinity. Penn introduced her to Queen Anne the next day. The Queen was delighted and "thus was afforded an opportunity to display the natural feelings of her heart." She arranged for Marie Fiere to go to America, with the privileges of British citizenship and ordered plans made for the transportation of the Fiere family on an English ship. They remained in London many months, waiting until a vessel was sailing for New York. Penn had lived in France, as a youth when he attended the College of Samur for two years. He knew many Huguenots intimately and he was most favorably inclined to them. So his interest in Marie Fiere and her family is quite understandable.

As we have stated, Marie Fiere and her unmarried children arrived in New York in 1709, and joined the French colony in Esopus for some time before going to take up their residence in Pennsylvania.

There is considerable confusion about her name. It is agreed it was correctly, Mary Warenbauer Ferree. But in the records one finds Fierre, Fiere, Feree and Ferree and her maiden name as Weimar, Warenbier, Warenbur. Also Maria, Marie and Mary.

In the records at Harrisburg, it is stated that on September 12, 1712, Maria Warenbauer "at the instance of Martin Kendig had 2000 acres of land confirmed to her at Pequea." The minutes of the Land Commissioners of the Province of Penna. state:

"There was laid out to Martin Kendig besides the 2000 acres towards Susquehanna. The said Martin now appearing, desires the said land may be granted to Maria Warenbuer, widow who is to pay the consideration for it." All of these parties must have been present at Philadelphia before the Land Commissioners at this time, that is Martin Kendig, Mary Fiere, Daniel Fiere, her son and Isaac Lefevre, her son-in-law for the record continues,

"But upon further consideration of the matter between themselves, it was decided that the said land shall be confirmed to Daniel Fiere and Isaac Lefevre, and the money 140 lbs. at 7 per hundred acres by agreement, is now to be paid in one sum, tis agreed they shall pay only 10 pounds for interest, having been for some time due, that is 150 pounds for the whole." On September 10, 1712, a patent for the land was issued to Daniel Fiere and Isaac Lefevre. It ran east and west about 1 1/3 miles and

northwest by southwest about 3 miles. A receipt for the money was signed by James Logan. While Mary Fiere is credited with taking up this land as the original settler and it has been known ever since as the Mary Fiere tract, she, in fact, really never owned any land in Lancaster County. It is clear, however, that it was intended by the Penn commissioners for her, but with her consent was conveyed to her oldest son and son-in-law. On November 7, 1712, she paid one year's interest rent of the same as shown by the following receipt.

"Philadelphia 11,7,1712. Received of Maria Warenbuer, 20 shillings sterling for quit rent of 2000 acres of land, laid out to her in Strasburg, in this Province."

James Logan, Receiver

It also appears that all this was done under an agreement that Daniel Fiere and Isaac Lefevre should not retain the whole tract but should hold it, in behalf of their kindred and relations, who had advanced part of the purchase money. So later parts were given to various members of the family and one small tract was sold to John Fiere and one to Philip Fiere.

At last Marie Fiere had land and she built first some log cabins to serve temporarily as shelters. Here, surrounded on all sides by several clans of Indians, the family located in the gloomy silent shades of a virgin forest. By legend, her settlement prospered because she won the friendship of King Tanawa of the Pequaw Indians. The story goes that she met him the very day of her arrival at her lands, beside a spring. This spring is located near the site of the present Leacock Presbyterian Church. Her remarkable personality and charm won the Indian chief's regard and respect immediately. Previously these Indians had made treaties with Penn not to molest settlers in this region. The next year her son Philip built a house on the banks of the Pequea Creek on land added to the Ferree tract bought from Hans Graf. Philip had returned to Esopus and married Leah Dubois, bringing his bride to be near the family in Pennsylvania. Later her father came to settle nearby.

Marie Fiere, herself built a large house. Near this site was a small graveyard which she set aside for the use of her family as a burying ground and where she herself lies. It has been preserved by her descendants. The house she spent over a quarter of a century in acquiring was hers only briefly. She died in 1716 — aged 63 years. The house has completely disappeared, without a trace. But here she lived her last years at least secure. It was called Paradise, and here her family and descendants had a place free from persecution. It is even today a country side like a rural Paradise. Many descendants of the Huguenot settlers, the Ferres, the Lefevres and the Dubois families, have held high positions in our national life. We later citizens of Pennsylvania can do no less than pay tribute to the character and perseverance of this pioneer colonial woman, Madame Mary Warenbauer Ferree.

Lancaster, Pennsylvania

MARION WALLACE RENINGER