

ANN GALBRAITH

In the Colonial days of America it was customary to refer to women only in their relation to the men of the family, be it as mother, wife, sister or daughter of a well-known man. However, one can find accounts of a few women of exceptional character and activity, whose exploits were set down in the annals of their time. Among the famous women of Lancaster County one notes the name of Ann Scott Galbraith, wife of Andrew Galbraith. She was the first woman political worker in the history of Lancaster County. In the year 1731 she actually made possible the election of her husband, Andrew Galbraith, as a member of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania.

The Galbraith family was an ancient and honorable one, rooted in the famous Lenox clan of Scotland, and James and John Galbraith, like many of the other early settlers in Donegal township in the province of Pennsylvania, came from sturdy Scotch Irish stock.

After James I attempted to plant a Protestant people in the County of Ulster in northern Ireland, thousands of Scotch Presbyterians left Scotland and settled in Ulster, Ireland. In time, however, the British crown imposed such heavy taxes on these Scotch Irish citizens that their lands were lost, and this group of people who had been very prosperous in their time were on the verge of ruin. Then too, the Established Church of England had been set up as the state church, and these Scotch Presbyterians would not give up their religious liberty. At this point in history, William Penn, the English Quaker, was offering a refuge in his new settlement in America — (Pennsylvania,) to oppressed people.

Taking William Penn at his word, these Scotch Irish sailed over to Pennsylvania's shores by the boat load. They formed a large segment of

the original settlers of the province. After landing at Philadelphia or New Castle, they did not even stop to take out land warrants, but pushed on to what was then really the wilderness of the frontiers. Many settled on the higher rolling lands called "barrens" which the Indians, by their annual fires, had destroyed despoiling most of the timber.

The Scotch Irish were a sturdy, resolute race, and from the very beginning of their settlements they mingled in the political field so industriously cultivated by the Quakers. The Quaker element aimed to and had controlled the legislative branch of Penn's provincial government from its earliest days. Wherever the Scotch Irish settled they established a church and a school. After this settlement was growing and developing noticeably, they went on methodically for perhaps ten miles, and thus were established many small settlements and villages in remote areas of Pennsylvania.

The Scotch Irish obtained a foothold in the General Assembly in 1731, by the election of Andrew Galbraith, the son of John Galbraith, a pioneer settler. Andrew had formerly held office as Justice of the Court of Common Pleas and as such presided with the president judge, John Wright, a Quaker, and Thomas Edwards, a Welsh settler, over the court held in Lancaster at Postlewaite's Tavern, in 1730, says Samuel Evans in a paper in Volume IV of the Lancaster Historical Society's Journal. From the time Andrew Galbraith was elected to the General Assembly, the Presbyterian Scotch Irish slowly acquired strength until they became a great power in that body. "The presumption is," to quote from Ellis and Evans History of Lancaster County, "that the apparent differences between these Scotch Irish settlers and the Quakers led to irreconcilable conflicts, but such is not the fact. The war then pending in Europe between the subjects of the Protestant and Roman Catholic princes united all the Scotch Irish Protestants on the side of the Penns. These settlers became the bulwark which effectually resisted the encroachments of the Catholics from Maryland on the south and drove the Indians farther west. They thus compelled them by the pressure of the tide of settlements to sell the lands they claimed to the Penns. Upon these lands, Penn's agents later invariably found many Scotch Irish people had settled; not to be uprooted from their established homes and lands. Thus, being subjects of Great Britain before they came to America, they were not required to take the oath of allegiance to the crown or to the Proprietors of Pennsylvania, the Penns. They were loud in their condemnation of the wrongs they and their ancestors had suffered in Great Britain and were constantly moulding a public sentiment hostile to the British Crown and the oppressive laws and taxes of the English Parliament.

The Galbraiths were among the earliest settlers and their sons, John, James Jr., and Andrew, settled on lands adjacent to the Big Spring which they called Donegal. Andrew was one of the founders of the old Donegal Presbyterian Church and built his home next to the meeting house in 1718. He was the first coroner in the county and was a member of the first jury drawn in Lancaster County. Being a prominent member of the church and one of its ruling elders, as well as belonging to a pioneer family in the region, he became an influential citizen.

In 1732 he and his neighbor and fellow-Presbyterian, George Stewart, were candidates for the General Assembly. At that time none but freeholders were allowed to vote and there was but one polling place in the county—at the county seat in the town of Lancaster where all had to go to vote. This was one of the most animated and extraordinary political campaigns that had ever taken place in the province. Mr. Galbraith took no part himself in the political canvass. His wife, Ann, put it all through. On her favorite mare, Nelly, Ann Galbraith rode through the forest paths to every place that she could reach where there were Scotch Irish settlers. She persuaded these men freeholders to join her in a cavalcade to Lancaster on election day. At the Court House in Lancaster she appeared, leading this large procession of mounted men. She dismounted and addressed the group of voters there assembled. Then she rode all around the Court House, talking with such eloquence and charming appeal to the crowd, that her husband's election was achieved in triumph. Andrew Galbraith, thus elected to the General Assembly, served from 1732 to 1738 and seemed to have no opposition after this first election.

In a biographical note of Madame Patterson - Bonaparte, in Lippincott's Magazine, Sept. 1877, we read:

"Miss Patterson of Baltimore, who married Napoleon's brother Jerome, came of the sturdy Scotch Irish race that peopled Pennsylvania's prosperous valleys. Her grandmother, Ann Galbraith, was a woman of remarkable force of character. During the Revolutionary years she took a prominent part in aiding the Colonial cause."

Naturally, these Scotch Irish who had suffered in Ireland from British tyranny and unjust taxes were easily influenced to rebel against the Crown and become active fighters in the Revolution. At a service in Donegal Church, the members of the congregation formed a ring around the Witness Tree, a large oak, which is still standing there, and, with the pastor in the middle, vowed their allegiance to the cause of American Independence.

Among General Washington's officers were several nephews of Andrew and Ann Galbraith.