

A THOMAS BARTON LETTER.

“For ask now of the days that are past.”—Deuteronomy 4:22.

The original letter of Rev. Thomas Barton to Rev. Richard Peters, D.D., which is herewith shown, was a purchase of the President, Mr. Geo. Steinman. In Volume 9, No. 9, Lancaster County Historical Publications, I gave a biographical sketch of Mr. Barton, and, at the request of Mr. Steinman, add the following as a supplement, and also a sketch of Mr. Peters and Mr. Alricks, in whose interest the letter is written. As stated in the previous article, he was a loyalist at the time of the Revolution, and the following extracts will show how many annoyances and trials he endured for his loyalty to the Church and State of his mother country. In Christopher Marshall's diary—so full of the history of our city during the war—I find, on May 22, 1778, he states: “In the evening had some conversation with several of our Assembly, respecting petitions being sent to them to take the Abjuration out of the ‘Test of Allegiance and Fidelity.’ One of them was from the Moravian (minister), one from Thos. Barton, minister of the Church of England in this borough, both of which were rejected.” And again on June 2, 1778: “Was informed that Parson Barton had petitioned Council for leave to sell his estate and leave the State, agreeably to the Act in that case made and provided, which he presumed would be granted.” And on May 4, 1778, the

diary again states: "A day or two past Thomas Barton, missionary, petitioned Council for leave to sell his estate and remove out of this State, which was granted under the limitations contained in the said Act;" and further, October 3, 1778: "This morning, I presume, Parson Barton moved off the last of his effects, in two covered wagons."

Record book S, Recorder's office, Lancaster, Pa., pages 724 and 727, gives the deed of Thomas and Sarah Barton

"To Paul Zantzinger, executed August 26, 1778.

"The said Thomas Barton choosing to sell his estate, real, retire out of the State, both in pursuance of an Act of General Assembly of the State of Pennsylvania, entitled an Act for the further security of the Government,' obtained permission from the Supreme Council of the said State, given by order of the Council, under the hand of the Honorable George Bryan, Vice President, and the great Seal of the State, at Lancaster, on the 30th day of May, 1778, to sell, convey and confirm, at any time within ninety days after the date thereof, of his estate, real, to any person or persons, their heirs and assigns forever."

The following is a copy of the letter of Rev. Barton to Rev. Richard Peters:

"Revd. dear Sir:

"I have the misfortune to acquaint you that we are all Confusion. Within 12 miles of my House, two Families, consisting of 11 Persons, were murder'd and taken—and in the Counties of Lancaster and Cumberland the People are daily alarm'd with fresh

Ravages and Murders. The poor Inhabitants are flying in numbers into the interior Parts. I prevailed yesterday upon the Inhabitants of Canawago and Bermudian to assemble themselves together, and, forming themselves into Companies, to guard the Frontiers of this County till we see what will be done by the Troops, who are going upon the Western Expedition, and I hope by this means we shall be able to keep these settlements from breaking up. Mr. Alricks tells me that he is determined (provided he can obtain the Governor's permission) to go out to the Ohio a volunteer in Defence of his King and Country. As he is certainly a Man of Resolution and valour; a man who can undergo Hardships and Fatigues; and, moreover, a man who has an Interest with, and an Influence upon the Country People, and is as likely to raise a number of them as any man I know, I think he stands well entitled to a Commission, and as I make no doubt but his Honour, the Governor, will have these Qualifications in view in the Disposition of the Commissions now to be given out, I hope this Gentleman will not be forgot. I well know that the least Representation from you in his Favor will do the Business for him; and he and his Friends will ever gratefully acknowledge your Friendship upon this occasion.

"I am, Worthy Sir

"Your faithful and affectionate
Friend and Servant,

"THO' BARTON.

"Huntington, April 11, 1758,

"directed,

"Rev. Mr. Peters."

Conewago and Huntington were townships in York county and Bermudian a hamlet in Latimer township,

also in York county, at the date of Mr. Barton's letter, but are now part of Adams county, which was taken from York, January 22, 1800.

Rev. Richards Peters, D.D.

Richard Peters was born in Liverpool, England, in 1704 and died in Philadelphia, July 10, 1776. His father was Richard Peters, a Town Clerk of his native town. Richard Peters was educated at Westminster School and at Oxford and Leyden. After the study of law for several years, it is said, his "honesty and candor" made the practice of law distasteful to him, and he decided to assume the gown of a clergyman. He had been unfortunate in his first marriage, at the early age of fourteen, which induced him to seek a home in the colonies, coming to Pennsylvania in the year 1735. He was assistant rector at Christ Church for a short time, and resigned in 1737. The Governor appointed him Provincial Secretary and Clerk of Council, June 6, 1747, and member of the Provincial Council May 19, 1748, and held the office until his death.

September 21, 1753, the Governor, desiring the following men to transact the business with the chiefs relative to Indian affairs, the following commission was executed and delivered to them:

"George the Second, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith and so forth,

"To our trusty and well beloved Richard Peters, Isaac Norris and Benjamin Franklin, Esquires, Greeting, etc."

He was also Secretary of the Land Office. In 1762 he was invited to be-

come rector of the united churches of Christ and St. Peter, in Philadelphia, and continued until his resignation, in September, 1775. He visited England in 1764 for his health.

In 1741 the churchmen of Philadelphia manifested some dissatisfaction to the alleged supremacy of the Bishop of London, saying, in the case of the Rev. Richard Peters, who was serving as the Secretary and agent of the proprietaries, that as the Bishop declined to license him for their church, after they had chosen him (alleging for his reason his living by his lay functions), they would not accept any person whom he might license, they saying his diocese did not extend to this province. Mr. Peters himself alleged that the right of presentation lay in the proprietaries and Governor. Bishop White speaks of Dr. Peters "with respect and affection," he having been one of the assistant ministers in the united churches during the latter years of Dr. Peters' rectorship. Bishop White says that he had adopted the fantastical notions of Jacob Boehman, the German cobbler, in regard to the "onward light" and kindred topics, and he was a public opponent of George Whitfield during the latter's evangelistic journey through the country. Richard Peters received the degree of D.D. from the University of Oxford in 1770. He was one of those, with Benjamin Franklin, who founded the public academy out of which grew the College of Philadelphia. He was one of the original Trustees and President of the Board in 1756-64; an incorporator of the Philadelphia Library, and an original manager of the Pennsylvania Hospital. The distinguished jurist, Richard Peters, of Pennsylvania, was a nephew of Dr. Richard Peters, the subject of this sketch.

In Pa. Archives, 1 Series, Vol. 3, page 80, a letter is published from Rev. Henry Muhlenberg, addressed to Rev. Richard Peters, reprimanding him for holding a public office when an ordained minister. I quote the following to show the high esteem he had for his character, as well as the appreciation of his varied talents:

“Reverend Sir: Having the Honour to be in Your Company, together with Mr. Acrelius, etc., on the Evening of October 31st, a. c., and hearing you argue about Substantial Points of real Religion, I perceived something (quoique Sans Comparison) that made me think like the passage from First Kings, chapter X, verse 7, ‘Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came and mine eyes had seen it; and, behold the half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.’”

This reproof recalls the story, no doubt familiar to you all, when the son of this Lutheran divine, John Peter Muhlenberg, and also a clergyman, forsook his calling. General Washington offered him a commission as Colonel of the Eighth Regiment, which he accepted. Ascending his pulpit for the last time, he preached upon the duties men owe their country, and said there was “a time for all things—a time to preach and a time to fight,” and later removed the clerical gown, which had concealed the military uniform during his discourse, and he stood before his congregation ready for battle.

Hermanus Alricks.

Hermanus Alricks, mentioned in Rev. Thomas Barton’s letter, was a

son of Wessels Alricks, born in Philadelphia about 1727, and descended from the family of that name prominent in the early history of the settlements on the Delaware. The first of the name mentioned was Jacob Alricks, who controlled the government of a Dutch colony as Director in 1656, coming to this country from Holland. His position was attended with many trials, and he died December 30, 1659. Peter Alricks served as Deputy Governor over the dominion of the Dutch colony from September 19, 1673, to November 10, 1674; also, as Justice, October 16, 1677; Bailiff, Assistant Commissaries and other offices of trust. Hermanus Alricks moved to Cumberland county just prior to the organization of the county, which was on January 27, 1750, and was appointed the first Justice, May 10, 1750, an office he held until his death. He was among the first members of the Provincial Assembly from the county, and was also Prothonotary, Clerk of Courts, Register and Recorder. He was certainly a man respected and honored by his constituents, and by the complimentary remarks of Mr. Barton a man of resolution and valor. He died in Carlisle on December 14, 1772. Col. Alexander Lowrey, of this county, married the widow of Hermanus Alricks, upon a second marriage, and is the ancestor of our distinguished historian of Lancaster county, Samuel Evans, of Columbia.

Author: Clark, Martha Bladen.

Title: A Thomas Barton letter / by Miss Martha B. Clark.

Primary Material: Book

Subject(s): Barton, Thomas, 1730-1780.
Peters, Richard, 1704-1776.
Alrick, Hermanus, 1726-1772.
Lancaster County (Pa.)--Biography.

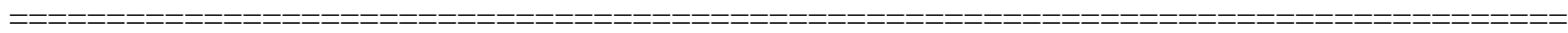
Publisher: Lancaster, Pa. : Lancaster County Historical Society,
1905/1906

Description: [162]-168 p. ; 23 cm.

Series: Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society ; v. 10,
no. 5

Call Number: 974.9 L245 v.10

Location: LCHSJL -- Journal Article (reading room)



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