

Lazarus Stewart

Few events in the colonial history of Lancaster county have attracted more attention, or were more discussed at the time and since, than the raid of the notorious "Paxton Boys" on the remnant of Conestoga Indians who lived at Indiantown, and later their second raid on the few who had escaped the first massacre and been removed to the work-house in Lancaster, where all men, women and children, were indiscriminately slain.

This notorious event created a fierce discussion in the Province, and newspaper articles and a number of pamphlets were published on both sides of the question.

The Quaker element and the people at large very generally condemned the outrage, for such it was, but the "Paxton Boys" were not without their defenders, and these in turn strongly urged the actual necessity of the raid, as these Indians, it was alleged, had committed innumerable thefts in the surrounding country without having been chastised, and against which there was no adequate legal remedy.

Lazarus Stewart was an acknowledged ringleader among the raiders, and his arrest was demanded and made. It was then that he issued the statement and declaration which follow, and which have remained unknown until recently, when they were discovered in one of the offices of the county Court House.

Who Lazarus Stewart Was.

Lazarus Stewart was the son of Lazarus Stewart, an emigrant from

the north of Ireland, who settled on the Swatara Creek, Lancaster County, in 1729, on a tract of land of three hundred acres, granted to him by the Proprietaries on the 6th of March, 1739. He died in 1744. Lazarus Stewart, Jr., was born in Hanover township, May 16, 1733, and in 1751 married Martha Espy, of the same township. Captain Stewart was well educated and a yeoman. Colonel Elder, in a letter to Governor Penn, in speaking of his characteristics as a worthy man, represented him as "humane, liberal and religious." He was also a man of influence and standing in the community where he lived. In his military career he was brave and courageous. He was in the Provincial army, serving under General Braddock at the time of his defeat. In 1755 he raised a company for the defense of the frontier counties, under the command of the fighting Presbyterian parson, Col. John Elder. Many murders had been committed in Paxton and Hanover townships by the treacherous Indians, to which Captain Stewart alludes in his declaration. Colonel Elder did not approve of the means taken for protection in killing the Indians at Lancaster. He reminded his soldiers that the guilty and innocent could not be distinguished. In reading the journal of that celebrated Presbyterian divine and noted missionary, David Brainerd, who made his first journey among the Indians in May, 1745, you cannot fail to be impressed with the degraded and savage nature of these men of the forest. The request of Captain Stewart that he and his soldiers might have the privilege of a just and impartial trial in Lancaster was made to Governor Penn by Edward Shippen, and the delegates,

Matthew Smith and James Gibson, and the Governor and Assembly did not agree and the request was ignored. The prominent part Lazarus Stewart had taken in the killing of the perfidious Indians at Lancaster and Conestoga in 1763 made him conspicuous and disliked by many in eastern Pennsylvania.

He later moved with his family to Wyoming, where he took sides with the Connecticut settlers and fell at the head of his troops in that terrible massacre, July 3, 1778. It has been said Captain Stewart was one of the bravest of heroes of "seventy-six," although impetuous and rash at times.

Before leaving Hanover township, Captain Stewart built a block house a few rods from the bank of the Susquehanna river, in 1771, in Hanover township. It was built of logs, and contained four rooms on the first floor, and ample space in the floor above for the convenience of defenders. It afforded a safe retreat for families in time of danger. A number of families were gathered there for protection on the 3d and 4th of July, 1778. A band of Indians made an attack upon it in June, 1781. The house was defended with great spirit, the women taking an active part in the defense.¹

Lazarus Stewart's Declaration.

Declaration—Let all hear! Were the counties of Lancaster, York, Cumberland, Berks and Northampton protected by the Government? Did not John Harris, of Paxton, ask advice of Col. Croghan, and did not the colonel advise him to raise a company of scouts, and was this not confirmed by Benjamin Franklin? And yet when Harris asked the Assembly

¹Frontier Forts, Vol. 1, page 450

to pay the scouting party, he was told "that he might pay them himself." Did not the counties of Lancaster, York, Cumberland, Berks and Northampton, the frontier settlements, keep up rangers to watch the motions of the Indians, and when a murder is committed by an Indian a runner with the intelligence was sent to each scouting party, that the murderer might be punished? Did we not have the summer's heat and the winter's cold, and the savage tomahawk, while the inhabitants of Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Bucks and Chester "ate, drank and made merry." If a white man kill an Indian, it is murder far exceeding any crime upon record. He must not be tried in the county where he lives, or where the offense was committed, but in Philadelphia, that he may be tried, convicted, sentenced and hung without delay. If an Indian kill a white man, it was the act of an ignorant heathen, perhaps in liquor. Alas, poor innocent, he is sent to the friendly Indians, that he may be made a Christian. Is it not a notorious fact that an Indian who treacherously murdered a family in Northampton County was given up to the magistrates that he might have a regular trial, and was not this Indian conveyed into Bucks County, and is he not provided with every necessary and kept secured from punishment by Israel Pember-ton? Have we not repeatedly represented that Conestogue was a harbor for provoking savages, and that we were at a loss to tell friend or foe, and all we asked was the removal of the Christian Indian? Was not this promised by Governor Penn, yet delayed? Have we forgotten Renatus, that Christian Indian? A murder of more than savage barbarity was com-

mitted on the Susquehanna. The murderer was traced by the scouts to Conestoga. He was demanded, but the Indians assumed a warlike attitude, tomahawks were raised and the firearms glistened in the sun. Shots were fired upon the scouts, who went back for additional force. They returned and you know the event—Conestogue was reduced to ashes. But the murderer escaped. The friendly and unfriendly were placed in the work house at Lancaster. What could secure them from the vengeance of an exasperated people? The doors were forced and the hapless Indians perished. Were we tamely to look on and see our brethren murdered and see our fairest prospects blasted, while the inhabitants of Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Bucks and Chester slept and reaped their grain in safety?

“These hands never shed human blood.” Why am I singled out as an object of persecution? Why are the bloodhounds let loose upon me? Let him who wished to take my life—let him come and take it. I shall not fly. All I ask is that the men accused of murder be tried in Lancaster County. All I ask is a trial in my own county. If these requests are refused, then not a hair of those men’s heads shall be molested. Whilst I have life you shall not either have me or them on any other terms. It is true, I submitted to the Sheriff of York County, but you know too well that I was to be conveyed to Philadelphia like a wild felon, manacled, to die a felon’s death. I would have scorned to fly from York. I could not bear that my name should be marked by ignominy. What I have done was done for the security of hundreds of settlers on the frontiers. The blood of

a thousand of my fellow-creatures called for vengeance. I shed no Indian's blood. As a ranger, I sought the post of danger, and now you ask my life. Let me be tried where prejudice has not prejudged my case. Let my brave rangers, who have stemmed the blast nobly, and never flinched, let them have an equitable trial; they were my friends in the hour of danger. To desert them now were cowardice. What remains is to leave our cause with our God and our guns.

LAZARUS STEWART.

Warrants for Arrest of Stewart.

There recently came to light in the Court House an old deposition, which told of the conveyance of Lazarus Stewart to the Reading jail. Following is a verbatim copy of the old document:

Lancaster County ss.

Before me the Subscriber one of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace for said County Came Adam Sholly of Lancaster County Joyner, and made Oath upon the holy Evangelists of Almighty God—that on the 15th day of Septr last past this deponant was ordered by John Philip de Haas Esqr to assist in conveying a certain Lazarus Stuart to Reading Gaol, which orders this deponant was afraid to obey—that on the 16th day of October last this deponant with several other of the inhabitants of Lebanon Town were arrested by the Sheriff of Lancaster County for not assisting in Conveying the said Lazerus to the Gaol aforesaid. And this deponant further saith, that on the 17th October last

²From Historical Collections of Pennsylvania by Sherman Day, page 280.

the said John Philip told this deponant, and a certain Henry Johnson that he would help them that they need not go to Lancaster with the Sheriff, and likewise clear them in Court. But this deponant and the said Henry Johnson must say—that the inhabitants of Lebanon Town had threatened them and said that if this deponant would help to Carry away the said Lazerus that then they would so Beat him that one might Sweep his Bones together in the Street with a Broom—upon which the deponant said he Could say no such a thing, for he was not afraid of the Towns People, but of the Hanover Men, Whereupon the said John Philip Replied you need not denie, for it is Sworn already upon Philip Gloninger, Nicholas Ensminger, Christin Mies & Eml. Bartling—and it is one of them who told you not to assist—and if you give Evidence against one of them you need not go to Lancaster with the Sheriff Now, And when the Sheriff is going off with the other Prisoners, you must pretend to Hunt a Horse, and I will tell the Sheriff that you shall follow him, and when he is out of Town I will take Bail for your appearance at the Court. And further this deponant saith not.

(Signed in German)

ADAM SHOLLY.

Sworn before me the 25 day of October, 1770.

Emanuel Carpenter.

Another Warrant for Stewart.

Before me the Subscriber one of his Majesty's Trustees of the peace for said County Came Henry Johnson said County Joyner and made oath upon the Holy Evangelist of Almighty God that on the 15th day of Sent last

past this deponent was ordered by John Philip De Haas Esq to assist in Conveying a certain Lazerus Sttuart to Reading Goal which orders this deponent was afraid to obey that on the 16th day of Oct. last this deponant with several other of the Inhabitants of Lebanon Town were arrested by the Sheriff of Lancaster Co. for not assisting in Conveying the said Lazerus to Goal aforesaid, and this deponent further saith that as soon as he was in the Custody of the said Sheriff the said John Philip called him aside saying you had no need to go out of the Sheriff's way nothing shall be done to you, if you will only tell who you was afraid of, that you did not lay hands upon the said Lazerus. Whereupon this deponant answered he was afraid of Hanover People, and this Deponent further saith that next morning he and Adam Sholly was called by the said John Philip to his house and he said John Philip asked this Deponent now tell me of whom was you afraid that you did not assist, for you seemed willing and Ready to go upon which this deponent Replied that Sholly had said perhaps the Hanover men would come and Beat them half dead. Whereupon the said John Philip asked who had told him. Upon which said Sholly answered that several Persons had told him to take Care what he was doing for if the Irish men should happen to Come he would find something upon which the said John Philip said this will help you nothing—oh this will not clear you—you are as Bad off as any of the Rest—and this deponent further saith that in the afternoon of the same day the said John Philip said to him, now tell me which of the towns People told you not to assist—and which of them said

that they would Beat you that it would be necessary to sweep your Bones together in the street with a Broom if you would lay hands upon the said Lazerus in assisting the Constable. Whereupon this deponent made answer that he had heard nothing of this kind from the Towns People. Upon which the said John Philip said to the deponent. You need not denie, for it is sworn already that it was Philip Gloninger, Christian Nies, Nicholas Ensminger and Emanuel Bartling you was afraid of and that it was them that had Threadant this deponent.

Were sworn before me the 25 day of October 1770. Signed

HENRY JOHNSON.

Emanuel Carpenter

Recorded 3 March 1772.

Book O, page 556.

Author: Clark, Martha Bladen.

Title: Lazarus Stewart / by Miss Martha B. Clark.

Primary Material: Book

Subject(s): Stewart, Lazarus, ca. 1734-1778.
Paxton Boys.
Lancaster County (Pa.)--History--17th century.
Pennsylvania--Politics and government--To 1775.

Publisher: Lancaster, Pa. : Lancaster County Historical Society, 1910

Description: 301-309 p. ; 23 cm.

Series: Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society ; v. 14,
no. 10

Call Number: 974.9 L245 v.14

Location: LCHSJL -- Journal Article (reading room)

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