

MICHAEL WITMAN, LOYALIST

In Volume XII., No. 7, of our Society's proceedings appeared sketches of the Lancaster county Loyalists. Among them was Michael Witman, of Cocalico township. This man Witman was perhaps the wealthiest, if not the most prominent, of all those attainted of treason in this locality. The article alluded to gives in detail the list of his possessions, real and personal, seized by the Provincial Government, sold, and the proceeds turned over to the new State Government by the acting agent and received.

The records at Harrisburg, as well as the Colonial records, were carefully searched at the time, but nothing further than was stated in the above-named article was learned of this man Witman or his career. Since then several items concerning him have been brought to light through the researches of Mrs. Mary N. Robinson, and these are now printed to supplement that early account. An effort was made to learn something of his early life, but only a few facts were ascertained, which are now stated.

The name of Michael Witman does not appear in Volume XVII, second series, Pennsylvania Archives, as among the arrivals from Germany. But on September 29, 1733, the passengers that reached Philadelphia on the Pink Mary were qualified. Among them were Mathies (aged

fifty-six), Mara Catrana (thirty-eight), Johannes (fifteen), Elizabeth (three and three-fourths), Matthew (thirty-four), Margrett (thirty), Mathies (six), and Christopher Witman, aged eight. The group was no doubt composed of two related families.

The only one connected with this inquiry was Christopher, aged eight years, and it is more than likely he was the father of our friend Michael, the Tory. On February 18, 1765, Christopher Witman, of Manheim township, made and signed a will, which was proved September 12, 1770. In that will his wife, Barbara, is named, and the following sons and daughters: Adam, Christopher, John, Michael, Henry; Rosina, wife of Detrich Kremer; Madlena, wife of Ludwig Imler, and Regina, wife of William Kurtz. The witnesses to the will were George Strickler, Casper Shaffner, Jr., Elizabeth Shaffner. (See will of Christopher Witman, C. 1, 307.)

Next we have the following marriage, celebrated by Rev. John Waldschmidt: Michael Witman to Catharine, daughter of Engelbert Schneider, January 9, 1759. (Volume 6, Sixth series, Pennsylvania Archives, p. 261.)

Next we have a sale of ninety-five acres of land in Cocalico township by Michael Witman and his wife, Catharine, on April 28, 1770, to Samuel Bowman, for £373. Recorded August 6, 1785.

On the same day the same parties sold a lot of land in Cocalico township to Henry Mohler for £373. Recorded April 28, 1790.

The foregoing records relate all that has been discovered relating to Witman's career prior to the time when his tory proclivities brought

him into contact with the State of Pennsylvania in 1779, the story of which is told in the article already referred to. As is there stated, he was at that time possessed of 232 acres of good land and a desirable tavern stand in Cocalico township, and which was seized by order of the Provincial Council on September 4, 1779, for £25,000.

With the above transaction Witman's was a sealed book until several months ago, when Mrs. Robinson discovered the following very interesting document, detailing the action of the Supreme Executive Council of the State among the archives in the Court House, of which the following is a verbatim copy:

Pennsylvania SS (L. S.).

Book R., P. 527.

Jos. Reed.

The Supreme Executive Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. To all to whom these presents shall come. Greeting:

Whereas, Michael Witman late of the County of Lancaster Innholder hath been convicted and attainted of High Treason and is now confined in the gaol of the said County and hath Petitioned this Council praying us to "take his case and that of his unhappy family into our Compassionate consideration and to extend mercy and Pardon unto him." Wherefore Know Ye that we having duly considered his case have pardoned remitted and released and by these Presents for us and our successors do Pardon remit and release unto the said Michael Witman by whatsoever name or addition of names or place the said Michael Witman may be known or called or was lately known or called aīl and all manner of Treasons misprison of Treason malfesances crimes and offenses

whatsoever by himself or with any other Person or Persons against the said Commonwealth before the day of the date hereof at what time soever in what manner soever and wheresoever committed or perpetrated whereof the said Michael Witman is or hath been indicted accused arraigned impeached attainted convicted condemned or adjudged and all and singular the indictments condemnations attainders and executions so far only as the same relates to pains of death and corporal Punishments whatsoever upon or against the said Michael Witman for or concerning the Premises or any or either of them had done rendered or adjudged or hereafter to be had done rendered or adudged (saving expressly to the use of the State all fines and forfeiture adjudged or accruing to the State by virtue of the conviction or attainder as aforesaid of the said Michael Witman) also all and singular the outlawries by reason of the Premises or any or either of them proclaimed or hereafter to be proclaimed and all and all manner of suits complaints or impeachments censures and Process whatsoever which the said Commonwealth against him by reason of the Premises or of any or either of them should have had have or hereafter may in any wise have and the Suit of the Peace of the said Commonwealth which against the aforesaid Michael Witman pertains or may pertain by reason of the Premises or of any or either of them from peace to him thereupon given and grant not willing that the said Michael Witman by the Sheriffs Justices Bailiffs or other our ministers or successors for or by occasion of the Premises or of any or either of them be molested disturbed or in any thing aggrieved and willing that

these letters patent as to all and singular the Premises afore mentioned except as to the saving herein before excepted be and remain good form vallid and effectual in Law although the crimes and offenses aforesaid be not fully set forth and that this Pardon be in all Courts within this Commonwealth and elsewhere interpreted and adjudged in the most favorable sence for the more sure release pardon and exoneration of the said Michael Witman as to grant or declaration in that behalf obtained or to be obtained any defect or defects in these letters Patent contained or any Law act ordinance or provision proclamation or restriction or any other thing cause or matter whatsoever to the contrary hereof in any wise notwithstanding.

Given by order of the Council under the Hand of his Excellency Joseph Reed Esquire President and the Seal of the State at Philadelphia this Twenty-first day of January in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-nine.

Recorded the 22d day Decr. 1779

JOHN HUBLEY. R

Attest

T. MATLACK

Sec'y

It would seem from all the foregoing that after all of Witman's property that the State could lay its hands on had been taken from him and confiscated, he was subjected to the further punishment of imprisonment. Fortunately for him, the latter was not of long duration, and he became a free man again. He was only one of the hundreds of loyalists in the State, but perhaps he was more outspoken than most of them, and, besides, the owner of a considerable estate, both circumstances contributing

to make him conspicuous beyond most of his fellow traitors, and calling down upon him the newly-founded Commonwealth. Of his subsequent career, no record has so far been discovered.

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