

The Public Career of John Wright, Esq.

John Wright, Esq., of Columbia, on the Susquehanna, was the acknowledged and unquestioned "father" of Lancaster county, Pennsylvania. By unanimous consensus of authoritative opinion, and by common consent, this name and title belong to him and his memory. Pre-eminent above all his contemporaries of the territory which is now Lancaster county, he stands as the chief spirit and genius in our county's creation, and as the principal directing mind and shaping hand of its early years.

The public career of John Wright began in 1718 as Justice of the Peace for Chester county (3 C., p. 50). At this time he lived in Chester, but in September, 1726, with Blunston, Scarlett, Devel, Reilly and negro and Indian servants, he moved to Conestoga (Pamphlet 2, Col. Dames, 1906). Of John Wright's career in Chester little is known. He was a Justice in Lancaster until 1741.

1. Wright's Career as President Judge of Our Courts.

Our Court began Tuesday instead of Monday in each week, so that the litigants should not need to travel on Sunday. Our first Court was in August, 1729, and Wright presided over it and also presided regularly until 1741, except at the Court of September, 1730, he does not appear, nor in that of August, 1730. As a Judge, Wright seemed rather severe. In several prosecutions he sentenced the defendants to servitude and to being

whipped. The dockets contain certain specimens of Wright's handwriting. In the case of Lewis vs. Jervis, May term, 1733, there is some of his penmanship. There seems to be only one appeal to the Supreme Court in the cases tried by him, that of No. 54, November term, 1736.

2. President of the Private Sessions or Courts of Appointments.

In a docket about seven by twelve inches, ending in March, 1741, called the docket of the private sessions of Court for appointing officers, Wright is mentioned as President. These officers were Constables, Overseers of the Poor and of the Highways. The docket extends from 1731 to 1741. The principal men of the early county can be ascertained in these appointees.

3. Wright as President of the Criminal Courts.

There is not much to say concerning Wright's connection with the Criminal Courts. One of the first acts of the Court was to confirm the boundaries of the seventeen townships into which our county was divided by the Courts and the appointment of constables and other officers for them. Wright tried several interesting criminal cases; the principal one was the case against Cannady for larceny. The sentence was that the defendant pay fourteen pounds, seven shillings, costs, two pounds, eighteen shillings, to the prosecutor for expenses, fourteen pounds, the value of the goods stolen, and be publicly whipped with twenty-one lashes. After Cannady was imprisoned and whipped, he petitioned to be released, and he was released on the condition that he be sold by the Sheriff to the highest bidder for not over six years.

Wright also sentenced Robert Teas for counterfeiting, as follows: To be set in the pillory and both ears cut off, whipped on his bare back thirty-one lashes, one hundred pounds fine, pay all parties who lost money by his counterfeit twice the value, and all costs.

Another case he had was one against James Rogers for stealing a grubbing hoe, silk hood and a yard of linen. The sentence was twenty-one shillings fine and twenty-one lashes on his back. Many others were whipped, and among them a woman by the name of Sarah Taylor, for larceny. But the most interesting case was in the August term, 1736, when Dr. Smith was found guilty of being a quack and impostor. He was sentenced to ten lashes well laid on in Lancaster, and to be handed from one constable to another until he reached the Maryland line, whipped in each township and then to be thrown across the line into Maryland. He also had another case against Philip Crever for joining with 300 other rioters and making a war against the country. This was an outgrowth of the Cresap border struggle. At the May sessions, 1741, he took his leave in a very noble speech.

4. Wright's Career in the Assembly.

John Wright first appeared in a legislative capacity in 1718 as a member of the Assembly of Chester county, which at that time included Lancaster county (2 V., p. 245). He showed himself a strong Quaker, and refused to take any qualification except a particular Quaker oath (2 V., p. 246). This affirmation was one without invoking the presence of God.

Wright was early a member of committee in the assembly (do., p. 247). He seems to have been recognized as

a business man and financier, and he was on committees to examine public accounts, including those on tariff and tonnage duties, accounts of the Provincial Treasurers, etc., (do., p. 251). He was put on a committee to help decide the meaning of William Penn's will (do., p. 261). About this time he took a prominent place in the Assembly formerly held by David Lloyd, as Lloyd was now Chief Justice, that is, in 1718.

In the fall of 1719 there was a political revolution in Pennsylvania. Quaker power received a hard blow, and John Wright was defeated (do., p. 264). He was not again a member of the Assembly until 1725 (do., p. 457).

His first activity when he again appeared in the Assembly was on a committee to meet the Land Commissioners of Pennsylvania and try to mollify Indian complaints, particularly that their fisheries were being destroyed (do., p. 458). Later that fall his legal abilities seem to have been recognized, for he was put on a committee to revise the laws and compile them into one body (do., p. 461). He was one of our first known "Digesters" of the laws of Pennsylvania.

About the end of 1725, John Wright was appointed with others on a committee to remonstrate against the proprietors (that is, William Penn's family) for interfering with Pennsylvania Government beyond their authority (do., p. 463). He was very strongly a friend of the public against the proprietary government. His address to the proprietors is bold and fearless (do., p. 483). It is spread at large in the Votes of the Assembly. Wright appeared constantly in the grind of committee work. He originated legislation to encourage trade throughout the province, especially the dis-

tilling of spirits from molasses and fruit (do., p. 466). He was very much concerned about Lancaster county, especially in giving them the right to make liquors out of their fruit and grain and not be compelled to carry it to Philadelphia.

January 21, 1726, we find Wright on the committee to revise the money laws of the province, especially the emission of paper money (do., p. 470). Wright was familiar with the panic of 1722, resulting from lack of paper money, and he was very strongly in favor of paper currency. England was opposed to it. Wright brought in a strong bill, strengthening the currency (do., p. 471). He was also made one of the signers of the new currency, the same as bank presidents now sign new bank notes (do., p. 474); and he also renewed the fight for the distilling of liquors. March 3 we find him advocating the passage of the first pure food law of Pennsylvania (do., p. 476).

A serious breach was now daily widening between the Governor and the proprietary family, because of the Governor's great love for the common people of Pennsylvania and the Assembly. On March 4 the Governor sent a message to the Assembly, telling them of the secret instructions sent him by Mrs. Penn, pronouncing them illegal, and revealing to the Assembly that James Logan had inspired the sending of the same. Logan denied this the same day. May 31 the Governor sent another message to the House and laid before them four letters showing that influences in England were threatening him with dismissal because he stood by the Assembly. June 1 the House took all these matters into consideration and appointed John Wright, Rawle and Biles a committee to draw

up an answer to the Governor's message (2 V., p. 482). The next day the committee reported that they had made progress, but could not finish until they had the address of the proprietary's family before them. Securing this aid, they proceeded in their work and laid their answer to the messages before the House on June 3.

This answer to the messages recounts the blessings of paper currency, and assures the Governor that in an address to the proprietary family, the preceding December, they have set forth the great good he has done to the province; and how he restored the people called Quakers to a participation in the Government from which they were deprived, in that he had a law passed for them relieving them of taking an oath, the necessity of taking which theretofore had kept them out of taking part in government.

On August 24, 1726, John Wright was again appointed and commissioned a Justice of the Peace for Chester county (3 C., p. 256). Wherever may have been his home before this time, the strong evidence is that now he is living about Conestogoe, that is, in the neighborhood of Columbia. One thing that seems to point to that fact is that in September, 1727, he writes a letter to James Logan giving an account of the killing of Thomas Wright by the Indians at Snaketown, about forty miles above Conestogoe (3 C., p. 285).

On the first of October, 1726, Wright was again elected a member of the House of Representatives for Chester county, and took his seat October 14 of that year (3 V., p. 3). David Lloyd was again elected Speaker, holding thus the Speakership two successive years, which he had not done

since 1709, though he did secure an occasional Speakership in the meantime. Quaker strength was gaining ground. In their fights they invariably looked to him to lead them.

On the 22d of November he was appointed on a committee with ex-Gov. Keith and others to draw up an answer to the Governor's address (3 V., p. 6). The main subject under consideration was the issuing of more paper money, which England opposed, but which proved a great blessing to the province. This answer also treated upon the encouragement of iron, hemp and silk productions in an intelligent manner (3 V., p. 37).

Wright next appears on a committee whose finding and report led to a decision of a constitutional law point which has been a landmark in Supreme Court jurisdiction ever since. November 23, Lawrence Lawrence filed a petition stating that he was in the Philadelphia jail by a writ issued from the Supreme Court of the province against him for 20,000 pounds, at the suit of John Moore, collector for the King, and set forth that the Supreme Court does not have power to issue original process, but can take cognizance of suits by way of appeal only.

The next day the House went into committee of the whole and placed John Wright in the chair. The committee sat and debated this matter November 25th, December 8th, morning and afternoon, and December 9th, and then came to the resolve, among others, "That no original process may be issued out of the Supreme Court in civil causes" (3 V., p. 8). But the further reaching result was that a committee was at once appointed to draft a bill for the establishment of Courts and their jurisdictions.

This decision was a great turning-

point in the powers of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. It has never since had original civil jurisdiction in ordinary law matters. The Court did not rightly have original jurisdiction in 1727, but they assumed it, an act which caused great fear among the people of Pennsylvania.

John Wright was appointed by the Assembly, April 1st, an additional member on the committee "to draw up a bill for establishing Courts of Judicature in this province" (3 V., p. 15). The result was an excellent law establishing the Courts of the province, containing sixteen sections, clearly defining jurisdictions and setting up proper safeguards against tyrannical use of judicial power, August 27, 1727 (4 St. L., p. 84). This shows that he was considered a power in the judiciary matters of the early Government; but he was also an authority upon other important affairs of the province.

April 28, 1727, John Wright was appointed, with Sir William Keith (late Governor of the province, but now a member of the Assembly), on a committee to "bring in a bill to lay a new excise agreeably to the several resolutions of this body" (3 V., p. 17.) This appointment again shows Wright to be a man conversant in the provincial finances and the sources from which the revenues could best be drawn. May 1, he is again appointed on a committee to inform the Governor that the Assembly has reconvened after its adjournment (3 V., p. 25). On May 5 he is appointed on a committee to take the law for the encouragement of hemp raising to the Governor to get his signature. This law placed a bounty on good hemp, and was of great value to this region which is now Lancaster county. Wright had much to do with its passage (3 V., p. 27).

August 17, 1727, Wright was a member of a committee to carry to the Governor and urge his approval of two important measures which the houses had just passed, viz.: The bill for establishing the Courts of judicature, and "A Supplementary Act to the Act of Ascertaining the Number of the Members of Assembly and to Regulate Elections" (3 V., p. 32). The first act overthrew the established mode of erecting Courts, set up by Governor Evans about twenty years earlier, viz.: creating them by ordinance of council without the aid of Assembly. It also provided fixed terms, instead of the irregular terms set by the Governors heretofore, as business made them necessary; it fixed jurisdictions original and appellate and prescribed the form of oaths, including the attorney's oath, in almost the exact form in which it is taken and administered to-day (4 St. L., p. 84.) The second act fixed the number of inspectors to hold elections, providing the manner of holding elections, providing an oath for them to take which was not required before, providing the manner of holding elections, fixing the qualifications of electors and was remedial generally (do., p. 87.) These acts were both fundamental in character, and first put into form and substance much of what now exists.

The next day Wright, together with Langhorne and Kirkbride, also on the committee appointed "to revise the laws since 1719, reported that they had gone through the same and delivered in at the table the list thereof" (3 V., p. 32).

The Governor finds several objections to the Court of Judicature bill; and finally, August 25th, it is decided by the Assembly that Wright and Kirkbride shall be a committee to

meet two members of the Council in conference upon the same (3 V., p. 34). The next day he is on a committee with William Monington to hold a conference with two members of Council upon the bill for "Taking Land in Execution." This latter was another great step in the substantive law, because it provided for the completion of making title by a succeeding Sheriff, when the one who held the sale went out of office or died before the deed was made, the want of which had created trouble in titles theretofore (3 V., p. 34).

In the fall of 1727 John Wright was defeated, as were all the other Chester county Assemblymen, except David Lloyd and two others.

About this time John Wright joined with Barber and Blunston and settled on large tracts of land near the Chickies hills on the Susquehanna. Blunston took the point farthest up the river, Wright 250 acres below, on which the Wrights lived in 1844, the tract being marked by two large walnut trees (Rupp, p. 188). On the Susquehanna he found himself steadily employed in keeping down Indian quarrels and securing treaties to be held at that point by the Government (Rupp, p. 198). The American Weekly Mercury of May 30, 1728, gives an account of one of these treaties, which seems to have been quite elaborate, 250 men on horseback having attended (3 C. R., p. 302).

In the latter part of the year 1728 John Wright was undoubtedly the leader in the circulation and success of another petition. Rupp says: "The inhabitants of the upper parts of Chester county, as early as 1728, to avoid inconveniences arising daily from the want of "justice at every man's door," proceeded to petition the proper authorities to erect and establish a new county" (3 C. R., p. 302).

During the winter the petition to erect Lancaster county was circulated, and by some proper method it reached the Council February 6, 1729; and I have no doubt that John Wright attended to all the executive work connected with the establishment of the new county up to this point (3 C. R., p. 343). The original petition was lost for some time, but a copy of it has lately been found among the archives at Harrisburg. It has been engrossed by the writer, and together with the names of the signers hangs in the Commissioners' office in the Court House.

The last reference to the "originals," which seems to refer to this petition, and also the survey and warrant, is May 2, 1729 (3 V., p. 83) where Gov. Gordon, in a message to the Assembly, asks him to return it to him. I purpose, upon the next opportunity, asking some spiritualistic medium to call up Governor Gordon and inquire of him what he did with that petition, 177 years ago.

Another consideration may have moved Wright to be active in the formation of the new county—it would give him a political berth of a very certain character—much to be preferred to the precarious office-holding he was about that time experiencing. This it most certainly did give him.

February 20, 1729, the Governor appointed John Wright one of the commissioners to survey and fix the boundary line to separate what is now Lancaster county from Chester county (3 C. R., p. 358). March 28th of that year the Assembly ordered "that the clerk make out a copy of the petition exhibited to this house against erecting the upper parts of Chester county into a new county, and deliver the same to John Wright" (3 V., p. 77). It should be noted here that two peti-

tions were presented against the forming of a new county on the ground that the section was too poor to support separate county governments (3 V., p. 78). The sending of these petitions against the county, or at least one of them, to Wright, leads me to say that by this one can imagine what work to overcome opposition, etc., he did. May 2 he signed the survey and return of warrant to lay out the new county (3 C. R., p. 356); and May 8 he was appointed one of the first board of justices of the peace for the county (3 C. R., p. 358). October 1, 1729, the people of the new county elected him again a member of the Assembly, there being three other members (3 V., p. 95).

January 13, 1730, Wright was again on a committee to draw up an answer to the Governor's speech on paper money. The Governor, out of regard for England, began to fear to pass laws for paper money, but Wright and the Assembly very strongly urged it (3 V., pp. 97-98).

We next find Wright framing a law to enact an excise bill to raise revenue, providing a duty on rum, brandy and other spirits, and making both wholesalers and retailers pay certain tariffs. This is one of the first tariff laws of the country. This act laid duties on imported articles.

January 27th John Wright was appointed on a committee with Chapman, Goodson and Cowpland to take the bill to naturalize the Germans, and to enable them to hold land, to the Governor for approval. This act immediately affected the hundreds of Mennonites living throughout Wright's neighborhood (3 V., p. 102).

The next important act which was initiated by John Wright was an act to prevent private individuals from buying land from the Indians (3 V., p. 102).

John Wright is next engaged in an important step for Lancaster county. February 11th he presents to the House a bill for lending the sum of 300 pounds in bills of credit to Lancaster county, for erecting a prison and court house in the county of Lancaster, the title of which he read in his place and afterwards brought down to the table, where it was ordered to be read for the first time. (3 V., p. 114). The next day he was appointed on a committee to take the bill to prevent clandestine marriages to the Governor for approval (2 V., p. 115). And on the same day he is appointed one of the four Commissioners to buy and take the title to the land on which to build the court house and prison in Lancaster, the commissioners, of course, holding the title in trust for the county (1 Pa. Arch., p. 252). August 5th the treasurer of the province pays into his hands the 300 pounds lent to the county of Lancaster to build the last-named buildings (3 V., p. 118).

October 1, 1730, Wright was again elected to the Assembly to represent Lancaster county (3 V., p. 124).

On the 6th of January, 1731, Wright was appointed chairman of the committee to draw an answer to the Governor's speech (3 V., p. 129). In this address he felicitates the harmony that pervades all classes, and laments the late divisions and groundless dissensions; he acknowledges the blessings of annual election of Assemblymen; he notices the great increase in population; he suggests that the evils growing out of the brewing of bad beer be corrected, and agrees with the Governor that we should raise more products for export to Great Britain (3 V., p. 130).

On the 13th of January, 1731, John Wright was appointed on a commit-

tee of the first importance, viz: 'To draw a bill to re-emit paper currency (3 V., p. 134). His committee reported the bill on January 16, 1731 (3 V., p. 135), when it was read for the first time. January 21st it was read the second time and debated (3 V., p. 138). January 27th it was read the third time and passed the House (3 V., p. 147). The bill was sent to the Governor, and on February 3d he sent the House a long message on the same (3 V., p. 149), fearing that it would meet a sad fate in England. However, February 6th, he signed it and it became a law (3 St. L., p. 197).

In the middle of January, 1731, he was chairman of the committee to consider the rights of the Courts and the commissioners on the subject of erecting new bridges (3 V., p. 135).

On the 30th of January, the same year, he was on a committee to draw the law on the subject of insolvent debtors. This was legislation of a very fundamental character. The subject of how to treat the insolvent debtors has perplexed Governments from the beginning (3 V., p. 148).

He next is interested in drawing up a remonstrance against the Sugar Islands, known as the Southern Colonies of Great Britain, which were determined all they could to break up our sugar trade with Britain (3 C., p. 401).

On the 2d of October, 1732, Wright is again defeated for the Assembly by Andrew Galbraith (3 V., p. 183). Wright, however, contested this election. On the 16th of October he presented and urged his petition in the Assembly, setting forth that "Andrew Galbraith is returned a representative for the county of Lancaster, that several tickets wherein was inserted the name of this petitioner (Wright) were rejected because they contained the

names of three candidates only; whereas the inspectors allege they ought by law to have contained the names of four, which tickets so rejected had they been received would have given the majority of votes in favor of him, the said John Wright; and therefore complaining of the undueness of said election and return and requesting the same to be vacated and the petitioner admitted to his seat in the House."

In the House the petition was read the same day, and it was ordered that it be again read to-morrow morning at 10 o'clock at which time the petitioner hath leave to be heard by himself or counsel, if to him shall seem expedient, of which he shall have notice (3 V., p. 183).

October 17 the proceedings are set out as follows: "It being notified to the House that John Wright, Esq., was attending without in the lobby, on the subject of his petition according to leave of yesterday given him; he was admitted and being admonished by the Speaker that he was at liberty to offer what he had to say, first, the said John Wright and then the said Andrew Galbraith were fully heard at the bar of the House, and then the said John Wright was ordered to withdraw.

"The House took the allegation and proofs of either side under consideration, and after some debate the question was put that a ticket contained a less number of names than by law are directed to be returned of representatives for each county of the province be a good ticket. Resolved in the negative."

The question was then put that Andrew Galbraith is duly returned a member for the county of Lancaster. Resolved in the "Affirmative" (3 V., p. 183). Another point was that the

Sheriff returned the election to be held October 1, which was Sunday; he was sent for and ordered to amend the same to October 2 (3 V., p. 183).

Thus John Wright was voted out by the House by virtue of that ancient privilege of assemblies, preserved in our National and State Constitutions to-day, viz.: "That the House shall be the judge of the election and qualifications of its own members."

Rupp also gives an account of the heat in this contest between Wright and Galbraith (Rupp, p 264). He says: "In the history of this county the year 1732 is remarkable on account of a violent contest in which females played a manly part. Andrew Galbraith of Donegal and John Wright of Hempfield were both candidates for members of the Assembly; it was an exciting time produced by exciting causes. And Andrew Galbraith was pushed forward by his friends. Mrs. Galbraith mounted her favorite mare Nelly; a spur she fastened to her ankle, and away she went, her red cloak flying to the wind, to scour the country for Andrew. She did him good service; for Andrew Galbraith was elected and returned a member and took his seat."

The account of this election, as shown by the report of the Assembly upon it, shows that the method of using "short" tickets is at least 175 years old. It was held to be illegal, and caused Wright's defeat. This method is used to-day at primaries; that is, those interested in a certain slate of candidates have printed a ticket containing their names only, and use these instead of the ticket containing the whole list of nominees, from which the elector shall strike out those whom he does not wish to vote for. It is one of the methods of political engineering, and John Wright

seemed to be acquainted with it; and, indeed, may have invented it.

But fate was kinder to Wright than the electors were generous. In the spring of 1733 George Stuart, one of the four Assemblymen for Lancaster county, died, and the Assembly shortly afterwards ordered a writ of election to the Sheriff of Lancaster county to elect a member in his stead, and August 6, of the same year, John Wright was returned elected (3 V., p. 188) and took his seat the next day (3 V., p. 189).

In November, 1732, Wright took the first step which brought on Cresap's War, in issuing a warrant for the arrest of Daniel and William Lowe, who lived on the west bank of the Susquehanna, opposite Washington Borough (1 A., p. 349).

Wright was criticized for precipitating a war, but he justified it, viz: by taking affidavits at Hempfield, those of John Brubaker, Joshua Lowe, Francis Ward, Charles Jones, constable of Hempfield; Joshua Minshall and Tobias Hendricks (1 A., p. 355), all tending to show the bad character of the Lowes.

On October 30th Wright further justified his action in a letter to the Governor (1 A., p. 363). In this letter he says that when, in 1729, the county of Lancaster was formed, the southern boundary was to be the Octoraro creek and the province of Maryland; that the line was not run, but no authority was claimed by those few families settled north of (mouth of) the Octoraro by Maryland. He also says: "At that time there were no English inhabitants on the west side of the Susquehanna River in these parts and that only about two years before, Edward Parnell and others were settled at a place called Conojohel." The latter place is now Wash-

ington Borough. He then says about two years later Cresap and others of loose morals came and disturbed the Indians on the lands from which Parnell had been removed. He accuses them with taking the guns from the Indians and trying to influence them against the Government, and he says the place where the Lowes lived was twenty miles above the Maryland line. And he concludes by saying: "Therefore, we believed it our duty as conservators of the peace to use legal authority for the security of His Majesty's subjects, and curbing the insolence of lawless and unruly offenders, and accordingly issued a warrant to apprehend Daniel and Wm. Lowe—when they were brought before us they were used with all leniency the case would bear, and dismissed in the security of their own friends for thier future good behavior and appearance at our next Court of General Quarter Sessions," etc.

On the 12th of February, 1733, Gov. Gordon writes an answer to John Wright's letter respecting the trouble at Lowe's home (1 A., p. 386). In this letter the Governor says that Governor Ogle, of Maryland, makes serious charges against the constables who made the arrests, and that John Lowe, the father, particularly complains; and the Governor asks Wright to call the constables and examine them very minutely as to the treatment of the elder Lowe, when no warrant was issued against him.

In August, 1733, the Assembly commissioned Wright to go to the Governor and tell him that the Assembly considered his commission null and void (3 C. R., p. 509).

The Assembly based their objection to the Governor's commission on the ground that, Hannah Penn having died, the commission was void,

and that a new appointment must be made. The House refused to act, until the new election was held, and then the Governor secured a new appointment, sanctioned by the King (3 C. R., p. 525).

October 1, 1733, better political fortunes fell to Wright, and he was again elected a member of the Assembly, taking his seat October 14, 1733 (3 V., p. 195). And on the next day he was appointed on the usual committee to inform the Governor that the House had met December 1st; he was re-commissioned Justice of the Peace (3 C., p. 531). And December 19th he was a committee to carry the address of the House to the Governor (3 V., p. 198).

On the 29th of January, 1734, we find Wright again busied with the Cresap affairs, for on the 30th Samuel Blunston writes to Governor Penn that yesterday on information that Cresap and several hands were at John Hendrick's squaring logs to build a house and built a flat for the ferry, John Wright and Edward Smout, who were qualified for the occasion, went over accompanied by the Sheriff, Enerson, and four or five others, to proceed against them (1 A., p. 410) for forcible entry. Cresap, hearing of the intended expedition, did not appear, but eight others were arrested. Hearings were held on the spot by Wright and Smout, and they were committed to the Lancaster jail. Wright also on this expedition made out warrants for the arrest of Cresap and left with them a posse, while the first named or mentioned eight were taken to jail. The result was that a raid was made that night. Cresap and seven associates were found barricaded in a cabin, which was broken into. The result was that one of the posse was

shot in the leg and almost bled to death and the remainder were beaten with "hominy pestils," but not much hurt. Cresap escaped and went to Annapolis to report the matter to Governor Ogle of Maryland. The particular grievance here was that Cresap was building a house on John Hendrick's land; and this was the cause for the action of forcible entry (1 A., p. 412).

October 1, 1734, Wright was again elected to the Assembly (3 V., p. 219).

We find him again introducing an act to enable his German neighbors to hold land, that is, to naturalize them. The act was passed March 29, 1735 (do., p. 228).

The list naturalized were most largely from Philadelphia, but it contained a few from Bucks and Chester and from Lancaster county. John George Beard, John Casper Stover, Michael Weidler, Frederick Ebersheid, Peter Ensminger, Jacob Kershberger, Jacob Byerly, Jacob Leman and Michael Byerly, were of Lancaster county.

March 19, 1735, he was appointed on a committee to ascertain the balance due to Hannah Powell for drink and provisions furnished the men building the State House (3 V., p. 230).

September 15, 1735, we find John Wright again interested in matters connected with Cresap's war. On that day he made a deposition (1 A., p. 464) on his affirmation, "being one of the people called Quakers," saying that he owns a tract of land on the west side of the Susquehanna river, opposite to where he now lives, about seventy miles more northerly than Philadelphia, and he sowed a field with wheat, and he went with a suitable number of hands about the beginning of last July to reap the same; and that Thomas Cresap, with twenty per-

sons, men, women and lads, armed with guns, swords and pistols and blunderbusses and drum beating came toward said field, and this deponent demanding to know what he meant by appearing in so hostile a manner, Cresap answered that he was informed that several Pennsylvanians were come over, and he was come to fight them, and at the same time had a drawn sword in one hand and a cocked pistol in the other, both of which he presented to the deponent's breast, who as a justice commanded him and his company to keep the peace, which resolution had some weight, and his associates were unwilling to proceed to hostilities; and Cresap also had wagons to carry off this deponent's grain.

According to an affidavit of Sheriff Barber, of Lancaster county, in 1736, John Wright was likely present at his son's house, the same as several other justices of Lancaster county, on the notable Sunday, in the beginning of September of that year, when about 300 of the Maryland people, all armed in hostile manner, under command of several officers of the militia of Maryland, with "beat of drum and sound of trumpet," marched to the house of John Hendricks, when with the other justices of Lancaster county a small distance from Hendrick's house, Wright demanded of Edward Hall, who was commanding officer, the reason of the company's coming there in that hostile manner. Hall reported that thirteen companies were mustered, and they would not treat with the justices of Lancaster county (1 A., p. 489). The result was that large numbers of the inhabitants of Lancaster county flocked to the justices the following Tuesday, much terrified, and reported that armed men had broken into their homes.

October 1, 1737, Wright was again elected to the Assembly and at once became busy in committee work (3 V., p. 300).

On the 12th of August, 1738, Wright was on a committee to continue the issuing of paper money. He always did prominent work in that respect (3 V., p. 305).

In the fall of 1738 Wright was again elected to the Assembly (do., p. 319); and later the same year was appointed a Justice of the Peace (do., p. 313).

In January, 1739, we find him busily at work in a conference committee on the passage of the money bill (3 V., p. 330).

On January 30, 1739, Gov. Thomas sent down a message giving particular reasons why he could not pass the Assembly's paper money bill; but the Assembly overlooked the message and objected to the amendment proposed by the Governor, saying it would lessen the credit of paper money and injure commerce. The Governor took the view that our paper money was as bad as that of Boston, Maryland and Carolina, all of which had greatly depreciated. He said it will be injurious to the proprietors, if they must take it.

In this disagreement the House appointed a committee, of which John Wright was a member, to manage a conference with the Governor and council on the money bill, as above stated.

The matter hung in conference a long while until, May 9th, the different points were settled and a vote was taken on the point of requiring the proprietors to take out our paper money in payment of quit rents. John Wright voted that the proprietors be given a premium to satisfy them for taking this paper money in

payment. The Assembly stood two to one on this vote, Wright voting with the majority (3 V., p. 338). The whole Lancaster county delegation voted the same way. Paper money at this time seemed to be losing its favor, and Wright was appointed in May on a committee to draw a law to revive its quality (do., p. 341).

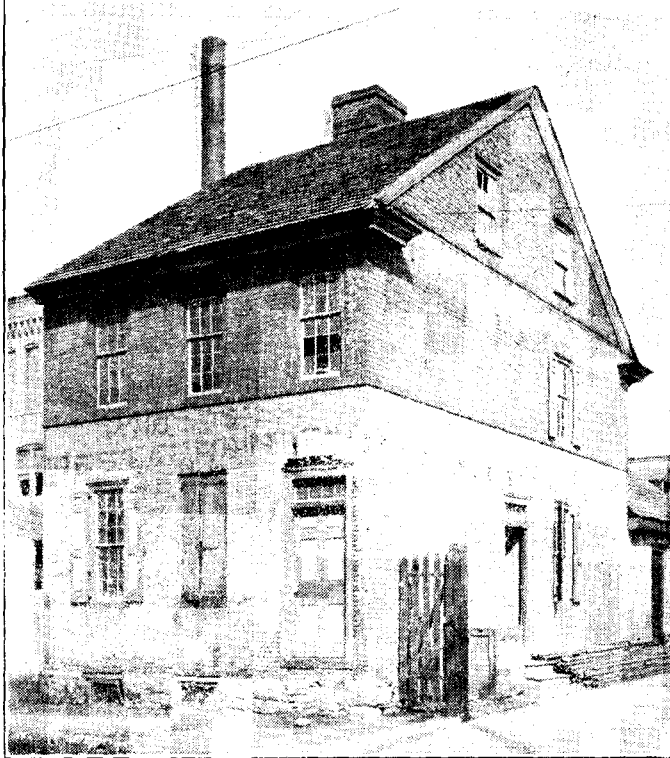
Troubles with Spain now began to arise, and the Governor began to demand supplies of war. Wright was appointed on a committee to draw a reply to the Governor. In it he points out that the Assembly will refuse any aid to war (do., p. 353).

January 2, 1740, Wright was again appointed on a committee to answer Gov. Thomas' war speech (3 V., p. 361). The committee consisted of Robert Jones, Israel Pemberton, Jos. Kirkbride, Joseph Harvey and John Wright. The committee worked on the answer January 3 and January 4, reported the same to the Assembly; and "after considerable debate and some amendment it was ordered engrossed."

John Wright's convictions against war being so strong, the answer, no doubt, reflects his views and is partly his handiwork. It makes the following points (4 C., p. 366):

"The present situation of affairs in Europe, we acknowledge, give some reason to fear a rupture may ensuebut we hope the calamities attending a war may be avoided..... We acknowledge ourselves under many obligations to the Crown and present Government; and, therefore, from principle, gratitude and interest conceive ourselves bound on all occasions to demean ourselves as becomes loyal subjects, lovers of our religion and liberties. It is the regard we have for these that induces us to think in a manner not exactly

comfortable to the Governor in the matters recommended to us.....We, therefore, entreat his charity in our different sentiments, and his patience while we render an account wherein and why it is so. Our late proprietor.....agreed with the first purchasers for full liberty of conscienceand that clause he promised should never be changed.....this caused the first adventurers to come to this wilderness.....and most of them were of the people called Quakers, and principled against bearing arms in any cause whatsoever..... The others who have come may think it their duty to fight in defense of their country, their wives, their families and estates; such have an equal right to liberty of conscience..... But many are Quakers, and, though they do not condemn the use of arms in others, are principled against them themselves, and to make any law to compel them against their consciences to bear arms will not only violate a fundamental in our Constitution, and be a breach in our charter of privileges, but would be to commence persecutions against all that part of the inhabitants.....The majority are Quakers.....The Charter says because so near savages therefore full power is given to the proprietor to levy, muster and train all sorts of men to make war and pursue the enemies and robbers..... and by God's assistance to vanquish them, and to put them to death by the law of war, and this power is only restrained by the law of liberty of conscience.....the words are very extensive and hope suffice to all purposes the Governor can desire..... but all our aims will be ineffectualwe must depend upon our gracious Sovereign for protection, which he denies not even the meanest of



THE FORMER HOME OF JOHN WRIGHT, ESQ., IN CHESTER, PA.

his subjects; and having at the same time a due dependence on that Power which not only calms the raging waves of the sea, but sets limits beyond which they can not pass; and remembering the word of the sacred text that 'Except the Lord keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain.' "

The Governor made a second speech on the same subject, and John Wright was made a committee to answer this second demand. It contained the same Quaker principles as the first answer, only more definitely put (4 C., p. 371). The main points in the answer are, viz: The improbability of attack; the fate of those who would try, that is, they could never get back; the cost of forts, etc.; the difference between killing a soldier on the field and a robber, etc. January 19th he was a committee to deliver this address. On January 24 he was on a committee to answer the Governor's third address (3 V., p. 372), and this answer is also full of the Quaker philosophy (4 C., p. 387).

These events brought on Wright's complete disfavor with the Governor, and Governor Thomas had the first opportunity to make a telling blow against Wright when, in April, 1741, he dropped Wright from the list of Justices of the Peace and Judges for Lancaster county (4 C. R., p. 483). The Governor made the following excuse before Council for this action: "For some time past he considered it necessary to issue new commissions of the peace, for by the death of some and the misbehavior of others it is necessary to supply and rectify the magistracy of the province (4 C., p. 482)."

Wright knew that he was to be dismissed, and at the next term of Court, after charging the Grand Jury on

their duties, he discussed the question of power and abuse of power, and, as an aged man, gave the country good advice on the subject of war, and took leave of his office in a noble speech, concerning the duty of every servant of the people to the people. This was so highly thought of that it was ordered published, and may be found in printed papers (Rupp, p. 275). He concludes as follows: "And now, to conclude, I take my leave in the words of a Judge of Israel, 'Here I am, witness against me; whom have I defrauded; whom have I oppressed or of whose hands have I received any bribe, to blind my eyes therewith? And I will restore it.'

"May the Prince of Peace, who is King of Kings, protect the people of this province from domestic foes and foreign enemies, is my hearty desire; and so I bid you all farewell."

In June, 1741, Wright, as a member of the Assembly, was appointed on a committee to examine the complaint made by eighty-five citizens of Philadelphia, who petitioned the Assembly that the Assembly should make some kind of war defense and protect the commerce of this province. Something of the sense of dignity which Wright felt belonged to the Assembly is shown in the answer which he formulated, as follows:

"We are clearly of opinion that it is the undoubted right of every Freeman and Inhabitant of this province, on every proper occasion, to make application to the Assembly, provided it be done in a becoming and decent manner; and that such application ought to be encouraged and treated with the respect that is due to them.

"When we consider the purport of the present application, and observe the harmony and similitude of sentiments, which is apparent in this and some

former instances from divers of the same persons, with those which have been proposed to the consideration of the House from another quarter, it leaves us little room to doubt what are the motives which gives rise to it, or from whose countenance and encouragement, at least, it has been that some late attempts were made very much to the injury of the province.....

"We are, however, of opinion that that representation itself is extraordinary; that it insinuates facts which are in themselves untrue, and grossly reflect as well on the Assembly as divers of the inhabitants of the province; that it is a high insult and menace of the Assembly, a breach of their privileges, and has a tendency destructive of their freedom and constitution; and as such justly deserves their censure; and to be rejected; but it is nevertheless submitted to the judgment of the House" (3 V., p. 434).

October 1, 1741, Wright was again elected a member of the Assembly, but he attended very little, as he was becoming old and infirm (do., p. 448). He was made a member of the committee to prepare plans for a pest house for the sick, infected Germans, thickly arriving in Pennsylvania (do., p. 451).

In 1742 Wright is again interested in a law to naturalize more of our Germans (do., p. 498). He was also interested in improving the powers of the Orphans' Court.

As Wright was a member of the Assembly, though not a Judge of the Court henceforth, he had a fine opportunity to retaliate upon the Governor, and for a year or two he did it (3 V., p. 315).

In the fall of 1743 he was again elected to the Assembly, and later that year was made a trustee of the General Loan Office (do., p. 541).

By the end of August, 1744, he had failed very much in health and appeared very little in public station (3 V., p. 362). But he was again chosen to the Assembly in 1744 (4 V., p. 1). He had become the logical leader, or one of them, against Gov. Thomas' party, and sneered at the idea of the Governor calling the military tendency "the result of a fine public spirit." He declared that if Massachusetts wanted our assistance for an invasion of Canada she should make application for it, that we did not have at stake what Massachusetts had, and were not under obligations to help her.

In the fall of 1745 Wright was again elected to the Assembly (4 V., p. 21), and was chosen Speaker in place of Israel Pemberton, who refused to take the position. He was not able to attend the sessions on account of his age, and January, 1746, it was reported to the House that he desired to be relieved, or that the House proceed to business without him (do., p. 22). He appeared once or twice afterward, and on occasion urged a law to continue the excise and tariff of the province (do., p. 39).

In the fall of 1746 he was again elected to the Assembly (do., p. 48), but he did not appear until May, 1747, when he was appointed to draw up an address on Governor Thomas' proposed departure for England (do., p. 54). The animosity between him and the Governor seems to have subsided.

In the fall of 1747 he was again elected to the Assembly (do., p. 65), but he did not appear at the sessions because of old age until the 26th of August, 1748, when he moved that, as his age rendered him unable to attend the duties of trustee of the General Loan Office, he might be relieved (do., p. 82). He was relieved

shortly afterwards and the following January his son was appointed.

In the fall of 1748 he was again elected to the Assembly (do., p. 91), but did not appear at all. That ended his public career, and he died not long afterwards.

The other public acts of John Wright's life may be found in the books and at the pages indicated by the following citations, of which "C" means Colonial Records, "V" means Votes of Assembly, and "A" means Pennsylvania Archives, viz:

3 C., 50; do., 103; career as Judge of Courts, Docket 1729 to 1741; 2 V., 245; do., 246; 2 St. L., 212; 3 do., 58; 2 V., 246; 2 St. L., p. 213; Wright's property in land, Vol. 19, Second Series, Archives, 607; on committee to inspect public accounts, 2 V., 261; on committee to revise laws, do., 458; committee on address to proprietary, do., 463; views against proprietary encroachment, do., 483; the address in full, do.; on dams in the public waters, do., 464; to encourage distilling in Lancaster county, do. 466; signer of new issue of money, do., 474; on Brandywine land controversy, do., 482; on answer to the Governor's speech and the rights of Penn, do., 487; appointed Justice for Chester county, 3 C., 256; 3 V., 9; do., 12, 12 and 15; on the question of pork inspection, do.. 27; opinion on the cause of the reign of crime, do., 27; do., 27 and 30; on amendments to laws, do., 33; on security of property titles, do., 34; great political Judge, Harris, 608; on justice at every man's door, 3 C., 302; elected in 1729. 3 V., 95; given the volume of laws for Lancaster county, do., 96; secured 300 pounds for Lancaster county, do. 96; paid back in 1742, do., 439; duty on hemp, do., 98; amendment to same,

do., 97; the act, 4 St. L., 184; amendment to wine duty, do., 98; the laws passed, 4 St. L., 157; law to regulate peddlers, 3 V., 102; do., 108; patenting lands, Act of 1764, P. L., 914; 1897 P. L., 101; 1899 P. L., 229; on Fishbourne's embezzlement, 3 V., 121; do., 123; viewer of the Atkinson dam, do., 129; on re-emitting paper money, do., 134, 135, 138, 147, and 149; against graft, do. 135; against encroachment upon the judiciary, do., 140; on re-emitting paper money, do., 147; on insolvent debtors, do., 148 and 4 St. L., 211; on county tax, do., 148; against the Sugar Islands, 3 C., 401; provincial auditor, 3 V., 158; on land titles, do., 162; defeated for Assembly, do., 166; on opening lands across the Susquehanna, 1 A., 299; 3 C., 305; on arrest of Tradane, 1 A., 334; called a worthy good man, do. 339; loan office, 3 V., 177; Cresap arrests, 1 A., 349; do., 351, 353, 354 and 355; new tax bill, 3 V., 204; 4 St. L., 238; 1 A., 436; 3 V., 211; to provide for vacancy of commissioners, do., 227; on Ganawese murder, 1 A., 439; against Lord Baltimore, 3 V., 235; do., 236; defeated for Assembly, do., 246; trustee of loan office, do., 280; on Cresap war, 4 C., 360; do., 366 and 375 and 105; commissioned a justice, do. 152; Cresap war, 1 A., 555; 3 V., 301; do., 302; his integrity, do., 306; boundary dispute, do., 307; his power in Assembly waning; do., 318; loan office, do., 318; preserving paper money credit, do., 341 and 3 St. L., 322; 3 V., 362; 4 C., 371; on military matters, 3 V., 392; do., 393, 402, 407, 413 and 417; on privateers, do., 433 and 435; provincial auditor, do., 436; at odds with the Governor, 4 C., 549; 3 V., 380 and 503; again elected to Assembly, do., 497; on land titles of foreigners, do., 500 and 4 St. L., 391; 3 V., 515; do., 550 and 556; 4 C., 740; 4 V., 5; do., 6 to

11; Speaker, do., 21; sick, do., 22; do., 37, 38 and 40; opposed to war, do., 42; loyalty to the king, do., 43; against Canadian expeditions, do., 44; president of Council, do., 59; elected in 1747, do., 65; asked to be relieved. do., 65.

Author: Eshleman, Henry Frank, 1869-1953.

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