

# Early Local Historical Items.

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In the proceedings of the Lancaster County Historical Society for the month of October, 1907, and for the month of December, 1910, may be found lists of certain items of early Lancaster county history gleaned from the "American Weekly Mercury," the earliest newspaper of Pennsylvania, beginning 1719, and ending its career in 1746. These items of greater or lesser importance furnish a certain department of the historical facts of our county, in its earlier days, that have value worth preserving. This newspaper is very rare, and it is believed that our Society ought to have a record of its early facts.

The article of December, 1910, brings the "items" down to 1738, and we shall now proceed with a narration of the same down to the discontinuance of the paper.

It is evident that the Proprietors had great difficulty in collecting their quit rents. In the issue of the Mercury of June 28, 1739, there is one item stating that inhabitants for several years past have neglected to appear at the place fixed in their patents, or by an Act of Assembly, to pay their quit rents. The item continues and says that inasmuch as the proprietor is agreed to take paper money for all lands patented before 1732, that the people ought to appreciate it and pay more promptly. Notice is then given that Richard Peters, the secretary of the Proprietor, among other places,

would sit at Lancaster, in the county of Lancaster, from the 7th to the 17th of October, where all persons who are one or more years in arrears are required to pay their quit rents, and, in default, the receiver of quit rents orders a distress to be made immediately, in pursuance of law.

In the issue of October 4, 1739, the election figures of Pennsylvania are set forth. However, only those of Philadelphia county, Chester county and Bucks county are given, showing how large the vote was for the different candidates. In Lancaster county, only, the names of those elected are mentioned, but the vote is not given, which is very much to be regretted. From the item it appears that the Chester county vote was 866, the Philadelphia county vote 555, and Bucks county 382. These are the highest votes of the officer receiving the highest number at those elections.

In the issue of November 29, 1739, there is an interesting account of the tremendous crowds that Rev. George Whitfield is drawing in Philadelphia and through Chester county, etc. About this time he reached Lancaster county and preached at Pequea, in the Presbyterian Church, but the paper does not have an account of this.

In the issue of March 11, 1740, there is an account of Benjamin Sterrett, going home from a neighbor's house, found dead by a small creek. I mention this only to show that the Sterrett ancestry lived in the western part of Lancaster county, around Donegal, as we all know, and in other sections. Chief Justice Sterrett, of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, descended from them.

In the issue of April 7, 1740, there is a glowing account of the great joy

and the public demonstration, upon the declaration of war against Spain. The item sets forth that there was booming of guns and toasts were drunk to the royal family, etc., and a great love shown for England. While this is a narration of the doings in Philadelphia county, it is likely there was considerable excitement in Lancaster county also. It shows the great love that our county and the others had for Great Britain in those early days.

In the same issue, a notice is given to all who are willing to enlist in the important expedition on foot, for taking and plundering the most valuable ports of the Spanish West Indies that they may wait upon certain gentlemen in Philadelphia, and in Chester county and in Bucks county; and as to Lancaster county, directs that they report their names to Andrew Galbreth, Thomas Edwards and Thomas Smith, the late Sheriff, and \_\_\_\_\_ Cookman. We thus see that, as early as 1740, this county was active in a patriotic way. It is set forth that the gentlemen who were to receive the names of those willing to enlist are strictly prohibited from disclosing the name of any person who desires to have his name concealed. This notice appears in both English and German. I notice that in the Second Series of the Pennsylvania Archives, Volume 2, page 489, under the head of provincial officers and soldiers, we have for Lancaster county Captain Thomas Edwards, December 1, 1744; Lieut. Reese Morgan, December 1, 1744; "Earl Town, Lancaster county, Pennsylvania"—also Captain William Maxwell, Ensign James Wilkins, February 12, 1745-46 (raised in Rathmullen township, Lancaster county).

These were likely employed in King George's War. It appears that some Lancaster county soldiers deserted, as under the date of July 24 it is stated that Thomas Fitzpatrick and others deserted out of the service at Germantown, and are supposed to have gone to Lancaster county.

In the issue of September 18, 1740, we are given a view of how the people were divided on the question of King George's War. It will be remembered that John Wright, the presiding Justice of our Court, greatly opposed Governor Thomas, who was zealous in the war, and the result was that Wright was not reappointed to the Judgeship. The feeling against the war was strong throughout Lancaster county, but in many sections it was very rampant in favor of war. In the issue of the paper just stated it is set forth that, "during the later part of the last week," there was a personal review by the Governor of seven companies of troops raised, who were embarking for the West Indies, and that the troops were very cheerful and eager to go to the front, in order to preserve the honor and welfare of the British nation. It is set forth that these are the first drafts ever made in Pennsylvania. The article then says that it is no uncommon thing in these depraved times to see the Governors abide the reproaches and clamors of the representatives and to undergo pain and anxiety; but to see the Governor, contrary to his own interest, merely from the dictates of duty, loyalty and zeal for the safety and honor of our mother country, bravely encounter hardships, without any assistance from the Legislature, simply to fulfill the request of our Royal

Masters, reflects a resolution, a spirit unparalleled in the plantations. It seems that a considerable number of Lancaster county people, especially those bound to service, deserted their masters and joined the armies. Among others we find that a Daniel Hagen ran away from Andrew Caldwell, in Pequea, and others.

In the issue of October 2, 1740, election returns are again given, but the figures are given for Philadelphia county only. The exact vote seems to be 1,822.

In the issue of May 14, 1741, there is a long account of the great public rejoicing throughout Pennsylvania because of the taking and destroying of the forts and castles and the battery in the harbor of Carthagen, and attacking the Spanish admiral with his flag ship and sinking all the rest of the Spanish vessels. The article goes on to state that Pennsylvania contributed loyally to this victory, and there was a great demonstration about the State House. The Governor dined publicly with a large body of gentlemen. The evening was spent largely with rounds of cannon shot. Fifteen of the houses were illuminated. A great bonfire, which was concluded by a whole pipe of Spanish wine, ended the celebration. Lancaster troops were in the army that reduced the Spanish defenses.

In the issue of October 8, 1741, the election returns of Lancaster county are given, as are those of the rest of the counties, but no figures.

Nothing occurred until October 7, 1742, when election returns are again given.

In the issue of June 9, 1743, there is an account of a report that Indian outrages had been committed in Lan-

caster county; and also in Skohooniaty, or Jeniaty, but it was found that these things were false.

In the issue of April 26, 1744, there is a long account of the murder of John Armstrong, an Indian trader, in or near Lancaster, and two or three of his servants, by some of the Delaware Indians, and the reason for it as set forth, namely, that a Delaware Indian being indebted to Armstrong for some time, Armstrong seized a belt of wampum and a horse for pay—that a few days later this Indian and five others met Armstrong and his servants going from Philadelphia to Lancaster with a wagon load of goods, and demanded the horse back, saying that Armstrong was overpaid; that Armstrong refuses to do this, saying that he was not yet paid in full; that the Indians then turned aside to consult together, and agreed to murder Armstrong and his servants, so that the servants could not reveal the killing—that three of these Indians afterwards disavowed the agreement, but the others stuck to it, and rapidly followed Armstrong, and when they met him, the Indian who wanted the horse gave Armstrong a blow on the head with his tomahawk; that Armstrong struck back with his fist; that the two servants went to Armstrong's assistance; that one of the other Indians then presented his gun and shot one of them and immediately loaded his gun again and shot the other, and that by this time Armstrong was dead. The account goes on to state that they buried Armstrong, and the two men they threw into the creek or river, where the bodies were found afterward by inhabitants. The goods they conveyed three miles further and put them in a hole which they

dug in the ground. This account was given by the Indian who shot the man who was taken to the Lancaster jail. The account goes on to say that the king of the Delaware Indians promised to see that they were brought to punishment. There are several accounts of this killing in the Colonial records and other early historical books; but, as this goes into many particulars, that those accounts do not contain, I thought it well to give the substance of this newspaper report.

In the issue of June 21, 1744, an account is given of the Governor of Pennsylvania and the Commissioners from Maryland and Virginia setting out from Philadelphia together for Lancaster, to meet the chiefs of the Five Nations of Indians in the big Indian treaty about to be held in Lancaster to adjust differences that existed between some of the inhabitants of Virginia and a party of the Five Nation Indians, who had some difficulty about a year earlier; and also to strengthen the treaty of friendship between the Five Nations and the people of Pennsylvania. The account sets forth that several of the principal inhabitants of Pennsylvania went with the party from Philadelphia to Lancaster. The far-reaching effect and importance of this great Indian treaty, at which about 550 Indians were present, is recorded in all of the historical books, and I will spend no time upon it. The purposes of the treaty are set out in this newspaper report in a slightly different way from that stated in the historical books.

In the issue of November 15, 1744, it is stated that Mushmelon, the Indian who received the sentence of death on the 5th of November, for the

murder of Armstrong and his two men, was executed.

In the issue of May 9, 1745, there is part of a speech made by the Governor to the Assembly, in which he refers to a letter he received from the Governor of Virginia, enclosing the answer of the Catawba Indians to a message he had sent them, pursuant to the Lancaster treaty.

The American Weekly Mercury, from which we have taken the above items, always took the proprietary or aristocratic side in politics. In 1728 Benjamin Franklin began the Pennsylvania Gazette, which generally took the popular side—the side of the Assembly, or lower House, while the Mercury took the side of the Council, the upper house.

We will now give some of the important local items from the Gazette:

The looseness of government and its inefficiency here on the Susquehanna, just about the time our county was organized, appears in an item of the Gazette of April 12, 1729, as follows:

“We hear there are associated together a company of Irish robbers, the chief of whom are said to be one Bennett, whom they call their captain, and one Lynch, whom they call their Lieutenant, with Dobbs, Wiggins and many others, who skulk about this and the neighboring provinces; their villainies being to steal the best horses and load them with the best goods, and carry them off before people’s faces, which they lately done in or about Conestoga. It seems their usual practise has been to steal horses from this province and the Jerseys, and carry them to sell in Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina. It is said they began to grow

more numerous and had a place of rendezvous where they met to consult how to perpetrate their rogueries and to entertain all like themselves."

The petition asking for the erection of this county filed in Council refers also to the lawless conditions here.

In the issue of January 13, 1730, there is a poem on the different rivers and creeks of Pennsylvania, in which the writer personifies each of the streams and makes them tell their story.

A part of our own river's story is as follows:

"Last Susquehanna, vexed to meet delay,  
O'er rugged rocks rolled rapid on  
his way,  
Foaming with haste his Ruler to obey,  
The Father of the floods began to  
speak."

\* \* \* \* \*

"And all attend the banks of Chesapeake," etc.

The poem has no merit, and I did not copy our Susquehanna's own story. Modern poets, however, should not overlook the fact that old Susquehanna has been praised in verse over 180 years, at least.

The character of the neighbors of our ancestors here in the Conestoga Valley, in early days, is shown in the following article of January 13, 1730, in the Gazette (and in January 14, 1729 (30) in the Mercury):

"A very large panther was killed near Conestoga. He had gotten among some swine in the night-time, and the owner, hearing their cries, went out with a couple of dogs, which drove the panther up into a great tree. Ignorant of what it was that went up the tree, he made a fire near it, and left two

women to watch while he went to fetch a neighbor that had a gun. They fired at him twice, and the second time broke both his forelegs; upon which, to their great surprise, he made a desperate leap and fell to the ground near the man, who could just get out of his way. The dogs immediately seized him, and with another shot in the head he was dispatched."

Also in the Mercury of January 27, this year, there is an article showing the ruggedness of womanhood in those days. It is as follows:

"At Conestoga, near the beginning of this month, a stout action was performed by Christopher Franciscus. He was gone to bed and soon after heard a great disturbance among his sheep, which made him suddenly rise and send out his dog, himself hastening after to his sheep pen, where a large wolf was alarmed and was leaping over the fence just as the careful husbandman got there. The wolf, being delayed by slipping one foot into a cranny of the fence, the man had time and resolution to take him a strong grasp by the neck with one hand and by a hind leg with the other and so pulled him down; and shifting his hand from the wolf's leg to his ear, and forcing his knee upon the struggling beast's body and there held him, without being bitten, though very hard to prevent, because the trusty dog, worrying at the wolf's hinder part, the more enraged him. Meanwhile the man had not neglected to call for help. He was heard by a daughter of his, who had the courage and faithfulness to bring a knife and relieve her father by letting out the entrails of the wolf." Surely there were Amazons in those early Conestoga days!

A picture of the dangers and hardships of our forefathers here at home is given in the following item, from the Gazette of May 11, 1731:

"We hear from the county of Lancaster that on the 10th of February, one Ed Tadlock was found dead in the woods near Swattarrie Creek, having been missing eleven days. He came from Kent county, and was seeking a place to settle himself and family; but, losing his way, it was thought that he perished in the cold. From Lancaster we also hear that on the 26th of February one James Hendricks, riding in the woods near Susquehanna with his two sons, in pursuit of game, as they passed a narrow path in the bushes, the father's gun, which would fire at half-cock and had no guard to the trigger, went off and shot his son James in the back. Three years ago this boy, in February, killed his cousin, who was hunting turkeys with him."

An article of May 6th discloses the dangers from fires in the woods, etc.:

"From Lancaster county, we hear that on the 18th, the woods being on fire, some people, fearing their fence would be burned, went out to prevent it, and a child following them, wandered among the woods, and being surrounded by fire, the flames seized its clothes and it was burned to death."

In the issue of February 8, 1732, there is an account of the dangers and horrors some of our Conestoga Palatines went through in reaching their new home. The article is as follows:

"There is a letter in town from some Palatines who embarked at Rotterdam in June last in a ship bound for this place, but instead arrived at

Martha's Vineyard, an island on the coast of New England—containing an account that the ship, being four and twenty weeks in her passage, their provisions fell short, and in the last eight weeks they had no bread; but a pint of grouts was all the allowance for five persons per day. They ate all the rats and mice they could catch, and the price of a rat was 18d. and of a mouse 6d. and water 6d. a quart. That seven persons died of hunger and thirst in one night; and of 150 passengers, which came on board at Rotterdam, over 100 were miserably starved to death. When at length it pleased God that a sloop should meet them and conducted the ship into Homes-Hole, a harbor of the above-named island. In the first three days after their arrival fifteen more died, who had been reduced so low by famine that it was impossible to recover them. They write further that they think if they had continued at sea three days longer, they should all have died, no one being able to hand another drop of water. But the good people of the island are very charitable to them and do everything in their power to refresh them; so that many who were famished and near death began to revive, but none are yet strong enough to travel."

What was done for their relief appears in an article in the same paper, dated February 22. It is as follows:

"Governor Gordon has been pleased to write a letter to the Governor of Boston, in behalf of the distressed Palatines on Martha's Vineyard as follows:

" 'Sir—On the application of several Germans and others from the Palatines, now inhabiting this province, I am to address you on behalf of their

unhappy countrymen, who, after a passage of twenty-four weeks from Rotterdam, are lately arrived at a port in your government, near R. I., as I suppose. The enclosed being an exact translation of a letter from them to a Dutch Minister here, sets forth fully their calamitous circumstances, and the horrid barbarity with which they have been treated by Lohb, the master of the vessel, who seems to have formed a design to destroy them, in order to possess himself of their effects, which are said to have been very considerable, when they embarked. A gentleman of your goodness and humanity cannot but be moved with pity, for the miserable condition of these poor wretches, and with a just indignation against the author of their misfortunes. And as it will be an act of great charity to relieve and protect the first, it will be no less a necessary act of justice to call the last to strict account. That if he cannot acquit himself of what is laid to his charge, he may reap the just reward of his oppression and cruelty.

“I am with much respect, sir, etc.

“ ‘Philadelphia Feb. 9, 1732.’ ”

And in the issue of May 18th we have a brief account of the slow progress of these suffering people on their toilsome journey from Boston to their final home with their brethren here in this land of Pequea and Conestoga.

It is as follows:

“Philadelphia, May 18—Saturday last arrived here 34 Dutch passengers, being those who came into Martha’s Vineyard half starved in December last. They have since been in Boston, where they say the people

took them into their houses and used them very kindly, so that many of them were at no charge, all the while they waited for passage; and, moreover, a collection was made among the inhabitants for their relief, by which £200 was gathered and given to them. The captain who brought them from Holland was prosecuted there on their account; but the accusations against him were not made good and he was acquitted and has since arrested those five who signed the letter for damages, and they are forced to remain behind to answer his action. 'Tis said the people who arrived here complain almost as much of being abused by those five, who were the chief persons among them, as they in their letter did of the captain."

It may be that some of our own ancestors were among that desolate body of men and women, fleeing to this land to escape persecution and poverty at home in Europe.

Another picture of the dreadful experiences which ignorant Palatines subjected themselves to in their tedious journey to our land is shown in an item of the same paper of October 19, 1732. It is as follows:

"Sunday last arrived here Captain Tymberton, in 17 weeks from Rotterdam, with 220 Palatines—44 died in the passage. About three weeks ago, the passengers dissatisfied with the length of the voyage, were so imprudent as to make a mutiny, and, being the stronger party, have ever since had the government of the vessel, giving orders from among themselves to the captain and sailors, who were threatened with death in case of disobedience. Thus, having sight of land, they carried the vessel twice

backwards and forwards between our capes and Virginia, looking for a place to go ashore, they knew not where. At length they compelled the sailors to cast the anchor near Cape May, and eight of them took the boat by force and went ashore; from whence they have been five days coming up by land to this place, where they found the ship arrived. Those concerned in taking the boat are committed to prison."

Those indeed were times that tried men's souls.

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