

# Abraham Witmer's Bridge

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At the period immediately succeeding the Revolutionary War, there was no bridge along the King's Highway over the Conestoga River. There was, however, a public fording. A fording still exists, though now partly covered over by the tracks of the Lancaster and Eastern Street Railway Company. The earliest move to secure a bridge at this point proved ineffective, as appears by the following minutes of the County Commissioners:

"1753—August 9.—The Commissioners and Assessors met according to adjournment and settled the accounts of the county with Peter Worrall, Treasurer, before the Justice and Grand Jury as in Page 108, and at the same time agreed to build two stone bridges, one across the tail race of William Douglass' mill, in Caernarvon township, on the Provincial Road leading to Windsor Furnace, and the other over Conestoga Creek, on the Provincial Road leading from Lancaster to the city of Philadelphia. Then they adjourned until to morrow.

"August 10.—The Commissioners and Assessors met according to adjournment and allowed orders from No. 1 to No. 10, page 110. Then they went to Conestoga Creek to view same in order to make a plan of a bridge necessary to be built according to yesterday's minute."

"1754—February 6.—The Commissioners and Assessors met according to adjournment, and having had under their consideration that the building of a stone bridge over Conestoga Creek, according to their minutes of

the ninth of August, last, page 109, will be a great burden on this county, the expense whereof will, by estimation, amount to near two thousand pounds, therefore, they prepared a petition with a plan thereof annexed, praying the assistance of the General Assembly of this Province to contribute towards the undertaking, which petition was this day signed by the Justices, Grand Jury, Commissioners and Assessors.

“February 7.—The Commissioners and Assessors met according to adjournment and appointed Isaac Sanders, one of the Commissioners, to attend the General Assembly of this Province with petition mentioned in yesterday’s minutes, to obtain their assistance in the premises.” The General Assembly evidently refused the petition, and no further action was taken by the county authorities as such.

A little later, an attempt appears to have been made to accomplish the object by means of a lottery; but this effort must also have proved futile. The following is a copy of a ticket issued:

“Conestoga Bridge Lottery.

“1761.

Numb. 5061.

“This ticket entitles the bearer to such/prize as may be drawn against its/number, if demanded within six months/after the drawing is finished; subject to such/deduction as is mentioned in the scheme.

“JOSEPH SIMON.”

On November 4, 1786, petitions were presented to the General Assembly from “a number of the inhabitants of the borough of Lancaster, and others residing on the east side of that part of the said Conestogoe Creek, where the great road leading from the bor-

rough to the city of Philadelphia crosses the same," praying that a law, entitled "An Act establishing a ferry and building a bridge across Conestogoe Creek, in the county of Lancaster" might be passed. Abraham Witmer at that time must have resided on the east side of the Conestogoe. As shown by the records, he owned considerable land on that side of the river, and his deed shows that he only acquired the tavern property on the west side on September 23, 1789. It is said, in Evans' and Ellis' History of Lancaster County, that he first purchased the land on which the tavern was built and afterwards, in 1789, acquired an adjoining tract. But this statement is incorrect. The conveyance of 1789 includes in its description the tavern plot, and after his death his executor sold the whole of this land, the tavern with four acres and one hundred perches, to Samuel Diller, and the balance of fourteen acres, more or less, to John Schwartz. An old draft in the possession of Israel Carpenter, showing the courses and distances of the tavern property, conclusively proves this claim. The petition to the Assembly was read and ordered to lie on the table, and on November 7, it was read a second time, and referred to Mr. Hubley, Mr. Lowry and Mr. Findley, to report a bill, if they deemed it necessary. On November 15, the committee reported a bill, which was duly read. At the same time, petitions remonstrating against the proposed act were filed. On December 15 the bill was read a second time, and a remonstrance of 740 inhabitants of the county was presented against it. No further action seems to have been taken by the Assembly at this session.

On September 14, 1787, a like petition was read, presenting the same

bill, with the insertion of a clause for leaving an open space where travelers might ford the creek; and on September 16 and 20 it was considered and debated, and on September 21, it was read the second time, was debated by paragraphs, and ordered to be engrossed for the purpose of being enacted into a law. On September 22, 1787, it was finally passed.

The act recited that, "Whereas, it hath been represented to this House by the petitions of a considerable number of the inhabitants of the county of Lancaster, that the erecting of a good and substantial bridge across the Conestogoe Creek, on the great road leading from the city of Philadelphia to the borough of Lancaster, in the county of Lancaster, would greatly benefit the trade and general interest of the community, which at present are considerably impeded by the frequent rise of the waters of said creek and the badness of the landing places on each side, and, whereas, Abraham Witmer, in order to effect an uninterrupted communication between the city of Philadelphia and the Western counties of this State, and at the same time to obtain some advantages to himself and family, is desirous of erecting a bridge as aforesaid across the said creek at his proper cost and expense, and, therefore, hath prayed the General Assembly to vest the said bridge when built in him, his heirs and assigns forever with liberty to demand and receive such toll or fees from travelers as hereinafter mentioned and expressed, the said Abraham Witmer engaging for himself, his heirs and assigns, that, if, at any future day, the Legislature shall think proper to make the same a free bridge, he or they shall surrender and give up their right to receive toll for the said bridge upon reasonable compensation for his

trouble and expense, to be estimated by indifferent persons chosen equally by the parties as hereinafter is expressed and declared. And, whereas, the plan proposed by the said Abraham Witmer for erecting a toll bridge over Conestogoe Creek appears to this House to be beneficial to the public. Therefore, be it enacted, etc.

Section 1. provided that the property of the bridge, when built, should be in Abraham Witmer, his heirs and assigns, forever, and that they might demand and receive toll from travelers and others, according to the following rates:

For every coach, landau, chariot, phaeton, wagon or other four-wheeled carriage, the sum of 1 shilling and 6 pence.

For every chaise, riding chair, cart or other two-wheeled carriage, the sum of 9 pence.

For every sled the sum of 1 shilling.

For every single horse and rider, the sum of 4 pence.

For every foot passenger the sum of 2 pence.

For every head of horned cattle, sheep or swine the sum of 1 pence.

Section 2 authorized Abraham Witmer, his heirs and assigns, to erect and build, maintain and support, a good and substantial bridge over and across the said creek at the place aforesaid, "Provided nevertheless that a passenger on said road of twenty feet wide in a direct and straight line on the north side and at both ends, was left free, open and clear of every incumbrance."

Section 3 declared that, if Abraham Witmer and his heirs should exact or demand greater or other rates than prescribed by the Act, or should neglect to keep the bridge in good repair, they should, for every offense, forfeit £10, one-half of which should go to

the poor of the townships of Lancaster and Lampeter in equal portions, and the other half to the party complaining, to be recovered before any Justice of the Peace of the county. An appeal was allowed within five days to the next Court of Quarter Sessions.

Section 4 allowed all poor persons, who were exempt from county rates and levies, to pass and repass the bridge toll free.

And section 5 provided that, whenever the Legislature should deem it expedient to make the bridge free, it should appoint three Commissioners, and Abraham Witmer, his heirs and assigns, should also appoint three, who, or any four, should ascertain the compensation Abraham Witmer should receive for his trouble and expense, and the same should be paid to him out of the treasury of the Commonwealth.

At May term, 1788, of the Court of Quarter Sessions, a petition to the following effect was presented to the Court (see Road Docket No. 7, 1788-1791, pp. 33-34): "On the petition of Abraham Witmer and others, inhabitants of the county of Lancaster, setting forth that the said Abraham Witmer, pursuant to an Act of Assembly of this State, is about to erect a bridge over the Conestoga Creek on the road leading from Lancaster to the city of Philadelphia, but upon inspection of the records of the State there does not appear any documents which ascertain the exact place where the said road crosses the said creek, by reason whereof great inconveniences have arose to ascertain the proper place where the said bridge is to be erected, so as to correspond with the road aforesaid, and praying the Court to appoint proper persons to view and lay out a road for the public

good, beginning at the center of the Court House in the Borough of Lancaster, and extend eastwardly along the accustomed road leading to Philadelphia across the said creek to such a convenient distance as may be necessary, so that the said Abraham Witmer may properly place the said bridge over the creek aforesaid, to answer the purposes in the aforesaid act mentioned. The Court appoints James Crawford, Abraham Buckwalter, Sr., George Graeff, Adam Weaver, John Brackbill and John Burkholder to view the said premises and that they, or any four of them, if they see cause, lay out the said road by courses and distances in a manner the most useful for the public in general and least injurious to private property and make report to the next Court." At August term, 1788, a return was made to this order as follows (see Road Docket No. 7, 1788-1791, pp. 51-52): "The persons appointed to view and lay out a road beginning at the center of the Court House, in the borough of Lancaster, and extending eastwardly along the accustomed road leading to Philadelphia across Conestoga Creek, having now made report in the words and figures following, viz.: 'To the Worshipful Justices of the General Court of Quarter Sessions of the Peace to be held at Lancaster for the county of Lancaster on the first Tuesday in August next, we, the subscribers appointed by your Worships to view and lay out the road within mentioned, have, pursuant to the within order, viewed the same, and do report that we see cause to lay out the same according to the courses and distances following; viz.: Beginning at the center of the Court House and extending along the middle of King street, in the borough of Lancaster N. 82 E. 120 perches in the center of

said street in Adamstown, thence extending along the middle of the old accustomed road leading to Philadelphia N. 80½ E. 168 perches, thence S. 87 E. 65 perches and South 77 E. 188 perches to a post in the middle of the road placed about three perches from a beech tree standing to the southward thereof, thence across Conestoga Creek S. 78 E. computed about 20 perches, thence N. 81 E. 12 perches to a post opposite Andrew Graeff's smith shop, thence N. 75 E. 149 perches to a post on the north side of a black oak standing in Martin Graeff's land at the distance of about 33 feet, which said road so viewed and laid out by us we return to be of public utility and least injurious to private property, and will enable Abraham Witmer to place the bridge over Conestoga Creek agreeable to the directions of the Act of Assembly for that purpose enacted. In witness whereof, we have hereunto set our hands this 17th day of June, Anno Domini, 1788. James Crawford, Abraham Buckwalter, George Graeff, Adam Weaver, John Brackbill, John Burkholder.'” The Court thereupon approved of and confirmed the said road, and it was ordered that the same should be forthwith opened, cut, cleared and bridged (if necessary), of the breadth as the Court should thereafter direct, according to the Act of Assembly of this State in such case made and provided. This order was directed “to the Supervisors of the roads and highways of the borough of Lancaster and township or townships through which the above described road runs.”

The bridge built by Abraham Witmer under the act of 1787 was not the present bridge. That one was evidently a wooden bridge, and, therefore, a much lighter structure. When it was erected, I cannot exactly say,

but in May, 1789, the road, leading from the King's Highway northward to what was known to us as Ranck's Mill, and before that as Andrew Graeff's Mill, was laid out, and it began as recited in the Court proceedings "two perches west of Whitmer's Bridge, nearly opposite the fourth pillar, on the west side of said bridge and on the west side of Conestoga Creek," etc. This and the former records referred to fix, therefore, the time of its construction as between June 17, 1788, and May, 1789.

All things have their day of usefulness and new requirements render changes from time to time necessary. So it was with this bridge, which was soon found unfitted to the conditions which subsequently arose. To meet these changes the act of April 4, 1798, which supplemented the former act of 1787, was passed, and in it are to be found the reasons for a further proposed improvement. The act states that, "Whereas, by the act to which this is a supplement, Abraham Witmer, of the county of Lancaster, was authorized to erect, and in pursuance of that authority did erect, a bridge over the Conestogoe Creek on the great road leading from the City of Philadelphia to the borough of Lancaster, and the said Abraham Witmer has represented to the Legislature that the said bridge, having been built without a view to the making of the Philadelphia and Lancaster turnpike road, is not constructed of material sufficiently durable, nor calculated to sustain heavy burdens, which, since the completion of the said road, are daily passing over the same, and hath prayed the Legislature to pass a law to authorize him to erect a bridge over the said creek upon that permanent and extensive plan which the importance

of the situation requires." Section 1 of this act then authorized him to build and maintain a permanent bridge on any unoccupied part of the great road, immediately above and on the north side of "his present bridge," provided that he should, as soon as the new bridge was completed, remove the old bridge and leave a passage of twenty feet on said road on the south side of the new bridge and at both ends thereof for the use of all those who might think proper to pass and repass the creek without going over the bridge. By section 2, the rates of tolls and the penalties for taking greater toll were fixed the same as in the original act; and by Section 3, the Legislature might, when deemed expedient, make the bridge free by paying Abraham Witmer such sums of money as it should be ascertained he was entitled to for his right and title in the bridge. Under the latter act the present stone bridge was constructed. It was finished on Thursday, November 13, 1800. A notice published in the Lancaster Journal on Wednesday, November 12, 1800, reads:

### **Conestogoe Bridge.**

It is with great pleasure Abraham Witmer informs the public that his new bridge will be completed to-morrow, on which day, at one o'clock, the inscription stone will be fixed in the center of the north wall of said bridge. The friends of Abraham Witmer and all other citizens desirous to see the same are respectfully informed thereof.

The length of the bridge is 540 feet, and the width of the roadway is 19 feet in the clear. In the middle of it, on the north wall, is a tablet which contains the following:

Erected by  
Abraham Witmer  
M.D.C.C.XC.IX-M.D.C.C.C.  
A Law of an Enlightened  
Commonwealth  
Passed April 4, 1798,  
Thomas Mifflin, Governor,  
Sanctioned this Monument  
of the Public Spirit  
of an  
Individual.  
61 M. to P.

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On the south side of the bridge, carved in the stone abutment, is the following:

This Bridge  
Was Built by  
Abr. Witmer  
and  
His Wife  
in the Year  
1800.

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How much it cost to build, I cannot say with accuracy, as it was a private undertaking, and there are no records existing that I know of which contain that data. The subsequent proceedings concerning it, however, throw some light upon that subject, and I will briefly relate them.

The Act of April 2, 1811, P. L. 223, declared that, "Whereas, it appears that there is due to the Commonwealth from the estate of William Henry, deceased, formerly treasurer of Lancaster county, the sum of \$12,018.34, being part of the arrears of State tax due from the county of Lancaster; and whereas, it appears that the county of Lancaster has incurred some expense and inconvenience in furnishing the Legislature with a state house and other accommodations for a number of years past,

Therefore (section 1) be it enacted, etc., that, as soon as the Commissioners of the county of Lancaster shall have paid unto John Joseph Henry the sum of \$1,600, then the claim of the Commonwealth to the \$12,018.34 due from the estate of William Henry, deceased, shall be relinquished to the Commissioners of the county of Lancaster, for the purpose of purchasing and making free the bridge built by Abraham Witmer over the Conestoga Creek in said county." In the following year, namely, on March 27, 1812, an Act was passed, entitled "An Act to purchase and make free the bridge over the River Conestoga, built by Abraham Witmer, in the county of Lancaster." This Act recited that, "Whereas by the Act and its supplement, authorizing Abraham Witmer to erect and maintain a toll bridge across the Conestogoe River, the Legislature reserved to itself the purchase and redemption of said bridge; and, whereas, by an Act passed the second day of April, one thousand eight hundred and eleven, the sum of ten thousand four hundred and eighteen dollars and thirty-four cents, arrearage of State taxes, due from the county of Lancaster, was granted to the Commissioners thereof towards the purchase of said bridge;" therefore, by Section 1, James McFarland, of the county of Schuylkill, George Nace, of the county of York, and John Ritchey, of the county of Dauphin, were appointed Commissioners on the part of the Commonwealth, who in conjunction with such Commissioners, not being of Lancaster county, as should be named by Abraham Witmer, should proceed to estimate the sum or sums that the said Abraham Witmer, his heirs and assigns, were entitled to receive, according to the true intent and mean-

ing of the Act of September 22, 1787, and its supplement of April 4, 1798, for the stone bridge across the Conestogoe River, built and owned by the said Witmer. Each Commissioner was to receive two dollars per day, which was to be paid out of the treasury of the county.

By section 2 it was stipulated that the Commissioners appointed on behalf of the Commonwealth, having been notified by the County Commissioners, and having fixed on a time and place of meeting, which should not be less than thirty days from and after their notification, the County Commissioners should forthwith give notice to Abraham Witmer, his heirs and assigns, of the time and place of meeting; and the Commissioners appointed by this Act, as well as the Commissioners appointed on behalf of Abraham Witmer, should, before they proceed to their duties, make oath or affirmation that they would, with impartiality and fidelity, perform the duties assigned to them and report the proceedings under their hands and seals to the Commissioners of Lancaster county as soon as they conveniently could.

By section 3, it was also stipulated that, if four or more of the Commissioners should not agree as to the sum which Abraham Witmer was entitled to receive, the county Commissioners should inform the Governor, who should thereupon appoint a suitable person, not being an inhabitant of Lancaster county, and that such person was constituted a commissioner, and the sum awarded by a majority should be paid to Witmer by the Commissioners of the county.

Under section 4, it was provided that, if Witmer, his heirs or assigns, should refuse or neglect to appoint Commissioners, or should neglect or

refuse to receive the compensation awarded, for the space of ten days after the time fixed for the meeting or from the tender made by the County Commissioners of such sum, he should be debarred from taking any toll from and persons or persons passing said bridge, and that, if he should take toll contrary to the meaning of the Act, he should pay a fine of two dollars for every offense.

Under section 5, if the sum awarded by the Commissioners exceeded \$10,418.34, then the County Commissioners, after paying the whole of the award, were authorized to erect a gate near or contiguous to the bridge and to receive tolls under the same regulations and restrictions as Abraham Witmer was authorized to do.

And by section 6, it became the duty of the County Commissioners to lay before the Court of Quarter Sessions an account annually of the expenses incurred in maintaining and supporting said bridge, as well as the amount of tolls received, and the balance was to be appropriated to the use of the county, and when it appeared to the Court that the sum over and above the \$10,418.34, had been reimbursed to the county, the Court, after due advertisement, was to declare the bridge to be free of toll.

Abraham Witmer having received notice from the County Commissioners to meet on June 25, 1812, at the house of Samuel Slaymaker, in the borough of Lancaster, named three Commissioners on his part. I have been unable to ascertain their names. But these Commissioners, together with the Commissioners appointed on the part of the State, met on the day appointed and having heard the parties they made an award that the sum of \$58,444.44 should be paid to Witmer. The County Commissioners

were dissatisfied with this result, and they thereupon gave the following public notice:

“Whereas, in pursuance of the Act of Assembly for making free the bridge over Conestogoe, the property of Abraham Witmer, the referees appointed by the said Act have awarded the sum of \$58,444.44 to be paid to the said Abraham Witmer, and as the Commissioners have taken the advice of eminent counsel with respect to the conduct they ought to pursue and are desirous to lay the said opinion as well as all other matters relative to the premises before their constituents, the public are, therefore, respectfully requested by the undersigned Commissioners that they will at their respective township meetings on Friday, the 19th of March next, elect two citizens of their proper townships, to meet at the Court House in the borough of Lancaster on Monday, the 29th of March next, then and there to advise with and to recommend to and instruct said Commissioners what they ought to do and perform in the premises. February 27, 1813. Henry Shirk, John Bomberger.” The election took place at the time stated in this notice, and, delegates having been thus chosen, the County Commissioners, consisting of Messrs. Shirk, Bomberger and Christian Herr, Jr., on March 29, 1813, attended a meeting of these delegates of the county “relative to Abraham Witmer’s bridge.” The minutes of the Commissioners say that “the delegates resolved as follows, to wit: Resolved, That to draw monies from the treasury of said county for the payment of said bridge would be a deviation from the original law passed on that subject: Resolved, that the said Commissioners ought not to pay for the same unless compelled by due course of law;

“Resolved, That the proceedings be signed by the Chairman and Secretary and published in Dixon’s, Hamilton’s and Grimler’s papers.

“Attest, James Caldwell. J. Buchanan, Secretary.”

The resolutions being unfavorable to Abraham Witmer, the County Commissioners refused to draw an order for the award made by the joint Commission, and thereupon Witmer obtained a rule from the Supreme Court, to May term, 1813, to show cause why a mandamus should not issue, to compel them to make out an order on the treasurer in his favor. After a hearing duly had before that Court, the rule was discharged. Tilghman, C. J., delivering the opinion of the Court, said: “The Commissioners say they ought not to draw the order, because there is not money in the treasury sufficient to answer it. No doubt they speak the truth and it appears to be cause insurmountable against issuing the writ. Whether the Commissioners have done wrong in not taking measures to have the money placed in the treasury is not now the question. If they have, we have no right to punish them in this way. What would it signify to draw an order on an empty treasury? The treasurer would refuse payment, and there the matter would end. We know very well that no money can come into the Treasury but by a tax on the county; and that tax the Commissioners cannot lay without the co-operation of other persons, even supposing that the Act for the purchase of the bridge authorizes the laying of a tax for the purpose of paying Mr. Witmer. If Mr. Witmer’s object be attainable by way of mandamus the first step must be to order the proper persons to lay a tax; and it must be laid for the whole sum

at once, for the Act for the purchase of the bridge makes no provision for partial payments. There can be no apportionment of the toll; Witmer is entitled to take it all until he receives payment of the whole sum awarded. In short, the payment of so large a sum does not seem to have been an event contemplated by the Legislature; and whether this Court would think itself justified in compelling the county to raise it, without an Act of Assembly explicitly directing it, is a point on which I have not made up my mind. I recommend it to the serious consideration, however, of Mr. Witmer and his counsel before another application is made to this Court." See *Commonwealth ex rel. Witmer v. The Commissioners of Lancaster county*, 6 Binney, 5. The counsel of the county in this proceeding were Thomas Duncan, Moulton C. Rogers and William Jenkins, Esqs., and they received for their services the sum of \$1,500.

Abraham Witmer died on July 10, 1818, in the seventieth year of his age. It is said that he was buried in the graveyard of Mellinger's Mennonite Church, on the Philadelphia turnpike. There is, however, no mention of his burial there in the church records, and no stone marks his grave. His will was proven July 28, 1818, and letters testamentary on his estate were granted to his brother, David Witmer, his brother-in-law, Christian Herr, and John Neff, the other executors, having renounced. Negotiations were then again entered into with the county for the purchase of the bridge, but no final conclusion was arrived at until August 8, 1827, when David Witmer, as executor of Abraham Witmer, deceased, made a deed to Abraham Gibbon, Samuel Keller and Emanuel Reigart, Commissioners of Lancaster county, "for all that certain stone bridge erected across the River of

Conestoga, on the turnpike road leading from the city of Lancaster to the city of Philadelphia, situate, being and standing across the river aforesaid, in the townships of Lancaster and Lampeter, in Lancaster county, aforesaid, generally known and designated by the name of Witmer's Bridge." The consideration named in the deed is \$26,000. As this sum was deemed inadequate by the executor, the privilege was granted to him to collect, if he could, by private subscription, sufficient to over the alleged deficiency in the price. To accomplish that end, subscription papers were circulated over the county, reading as follows: "Whereas, a majority of the Commissioners of Lancaster county have entered into a contract with David Witmer, executor of Abraham Witmer, deceased, to purchase and make free of toll Witmer's Bridge, over the Conestoga River, in Lancaster county, but have not agreed to give the sum demanded by the said David Witmer for the same, but have stipulated that the said David Witmer may try to raise by subscription such further sum as may satisfy him for making the said bridge free of toll; and in order to accomplish so desirable an object, we, the subscribers, do hereby agree to pay to the said David Witmer the several sums subscribed by us, as soon as the bridge shall be declared free of toll, and no toll to be demanded from the subscribers until a failure of the contract." The amount collected in this way, as appears by the executor's account, was \$2,585.51. Some of the amounts subscribed were as low as fifty cents. Under the fifth and sixth sections of the Act of 1811, it was, as you will remember, stipulated that, if the sum awarded for the bridge exceeded \$10,418.34, the County Commissioners, after paying the whole

award, might erect a gate near the bridge and receive toll until the county was reimbursed; but, under the agreement of purchase, the bridge was made free, and from that time to this it has been a county bridge and presumably free from toll. Whether or not it is included in the mileage for which toll is paid along the turnpike, I cannot say; but it should not be, for the turnpike company does not own an inch of it, and never did.

Immediately after the completion of the bridge, the travel on the turnpike was very heavy, and continued to be so until about the time the railroad superseded it as a method of transportation. The tolls during this period frequently amounted to from twenty-five to thirty dollars a day. From July, 1818, up to the time of the sale by the executor, there was paid to him for toll \$22,060.98½. But, after the railroad was built, the traffic on the turnpike fell off, and the bridge receipts would have suffered in like measure. The proceedings which were taken to dispose of the various portions of the turnpike road, and how the turnpike was thereby finally placed under its present ownership, I propose to fully narrate at another meeting of the society.

Many distinguished men passed along the turnpike and over this bridge in early days. In June, 1800, President John Adams made a journey to Washington by way of Lancaster and Frederick, and in September, 1815, Joseph Bonaparte, ex-King of Spain, known then as the Count de Survilliers, passed through on his return from Washington to New York. Daniel Webster and his wife, in their carriage of bright yellow, with a wooden bucket underneath, and driven by their negro coachman, often came this way on their road to the capital, stopping frequently, over night, at

Gossler's Hotel, in Columbia. On one occasion, when the Chesapeake Bay and the lower river were impassable on account of the ice, a large number of Senators and Congressmen, including Rufus Choate, took this route.

I am afraid Abraham Witmer met the fate which falls to the lot of many public spirited citizens. When he died, his estate was heavily involved. The amount realized from the sale of his real and personal estate, as well as tolls, up to the year 1839, was \$103,493.97½, and all of it was expended in the payment of his debts. There was even then a balance of several thousand dollars unpaid. The heirs, as is usually the case when disappointed in their expectations, charged his brother, David, as his executor, with maladministration of the estate, and in 1830, they filed exceptions to one of the executor's accounts. These exceptions were referred to Nathaniel Lightner, George Musser and Israel Carpenter, as auditors, who reported that, outside of a small error of about \$69,76, the account was correct. The auditors charged for their services five dollars each. As a matter of fact, Abraham, when he died, owned his brother a large amount of money, for to August term, 1817, No. 152, he confessed a judgment in the latter's favor for \$10,000.

And here ends the story of Abraham Witmer's Bridge, so far as I have been able to ascertain it. This magnificent structure yet stands to attest the solidity and completeness with which the work was done. This bridge was one of the first of its kind in the State, and it excites admiration to this day. The man who conceived and completed it is, in my judgment, entitled to be gratefully remembered by our citizens and to have his name perpetuated in the records of this society.

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