

By William Frederic Worner.

Mr. Herbert W. Hartman, president of Follmer, Clogg & Company, manufacturers of fine umbrellas, has presented to the Lancaster County Historical Society an old newspaper, published in New London, Conn., on Friday, April 10th, 1778. It contains an interesting account of a court martial held in Lancaster borough during the Revolutionary war, at which time two spies were tried, found guilty and executed. From local sources, it is discovered that this trial took place before the middle of March, and yet an account of it did not appear in the Connecticut paper until nearly one month later. This is an admirable illustration or how slowly news was transmitted one hundred and fifty years ago. How great a change has taken place! On New Year's Day, 1927, some of us listened to a human voice giving a detailed account of every play made in a great foot-ball game in California, immediately after each play; and the shouting of the spectators could be distinctly heard across nearly three thousand miles of space. Another interesting thing was that while people on the Atlantic coast were, during the latter part of the game, listening in the darkness of the night to its progress, the sun was still shining brightly over the orange groves of California.

It is also an interesting fact that while the death of Henry Mansin (or Marson) who claimed to be a British officer, has left no memory even in Lancaster, where all of its tragic details took place, yet the execution of Major Andre, another spy and also a British officer, is world-known. It is also a singular coincidence that Andre had his residence in Lancaster for a time.

The account of the court martial and execution appeared in the Connecticut paper as follows:

"In pursuance of orders from his excellency, the Commander-in-chief, a general court-martial was held at Lancaster, in Pennsylvania, when Henry Mansin (who confessed himself an officer in the British army) and Wendal Myer, an inhabitant of the county, were brought before the court and charged with being spies, carrying on a traitorous correspondence, and supplying the enemy with horses, &c. The court, after a fair and candid trial, which lasted four days, and every opportunity given them to make their defence, found them guilty, and unanimously sentenced them to suffer death; in consequence of which, they were on Monday last executed near Lancaster, amidst a very numerous crowd of spectators. The unhappy wretches, before their execution acknowledged the justice of their sentence, and died fully convinced of the heinousness of their offence. They have discovered several persons who aided and assisted them, but who, unfortunately, made their escape upon the capture of these culprits. However, it is hoped that justice will overtake them, and inflict the punishment due to such paracides."

In Christopher Marshall's diary, under date of Friday, March 13th, 1778, appears the following in relation to this tragic event:

"Yesterday a Court Martial was held here, where four persons, for being concerned in purchasing and stealing horses for the enemy, were tried; one of them acquitted, one to be imprisoned during the war, two to be hanged on the sixteenth instant (this as I am informed)."

Three days later Marshall entered in his diary:

"March 16th. This day, about one, the two persons condemned at Court Martial last week, were executed, agreeably to their sentence."

Under date of Wednesday, March 18th, Marshall made the following entry in his diary:

"It's said that Henry Marson and Wendal Myer, the two men executed here this week, confessed at the gallows that they were guilty of stealing and procuring horses for Howe's army."