

Brigadier General Jeremiah Mosher — A Hero of The Revolution

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

IN Vol. XXXIV, No. 7, pages 145-167, of the Proceedings of The Lancaster County Historical Society, is an article entitled, "Revolutionary Soldiers and Patriots of Lancaster County," in which appear the obituaries of 86 soldiers of the Revolutionary War. Since that article was written, my attention has been called to a copy of the Lancaster Journal of Friday, March 12th, 1830, in which appeared the following obituary of a distinguished officer:

"Died, on Monday morning last [March 8th], in the 77th year of his age, Brigadier General Jeremiah Mosher,¹ one of the few remaining veterans of the Revolution. He served under Arnold in the attempt to storm Quebec, when, as one of the forlorn hope, he penetrated the works in what was called the lower town, with seven companions, who were all killed or severely wounded. Sergeant Mosher was among the latter, and remained a prisoner until exchanged, when he joined his regiment and served during the remainder of the war and then retired, covered with honorable wounds. His remains were yesterday [March 11th] attended to the grave by an immense concourse of citizens, and were interred with the highest military honors."

A committee, consisting of John Longenecker, William Downey and Philip Wager Reigart, from the City Battalion of Volunteers, sent a letter of condolence to Mrs. Susan Mosher, widow of the late General Mosher, which was as follows:

"Mrs. Susan Mosher,
"Lancaster, Pa.

"Honored Madam:

"In expressing our sorrow for the visitation of Providence, which has bereaved your family of an affectionate husband and father, permit us to offer our condolence upon an event which has,

¹ Mr. Mosher was Brigadier General of the First Brigade, Fourth Division of the Pennsylvania Militia, according to an announcement in the Lancaster Journal of Friday, April 9th, 1830, in which John Getz offered himself as a candidate to succeed the late Mr. Mosher. It is not certain in what capacity he served in the army during the struggle for Independence. We do know, however, that his name does not appear in a compendious work entitled: "Historical Register of the Officers of the Continental Army During the War of the Revolution, April, 1775, to December, 1783," compiled by F. B. Heitman and published in 1893 in Washington, D. C.

at the same time, withdrawn from us one of the last of those veterans of the Revolution who stood in the front rank of the earliest and bravest defenders of his country, and after the achievement of our national independence was ever ready, when danger threatened, to obey her call. It was in that first great struggle that he acquired the honor and fame, hand in hand with a band of patriots, which never die. It was in his after conduct, in times of peace and in the bosom of his family, that the virtues of the private citizen shed a lustre on the character of a soldier.

“Be assured, Madam, that the memory of the companion of your bosom, our lamented General, who fought under Montgomery at Quebec, and served with distinguished honor under Washington and our own venerated Hand, and bore with him to the grave those honorable scars received on the battle ground, defending our rights and liberties, will ever be cherished by his fellow-soldiers.

“As our commander, he was respected for the services he had rendered to his country, and beloved for his urbanity and uniform kindness; and though the advance of age gradually reduced the vigor of his frame and dimmed the lustre of his eye, his friendship retained its brightness, and his heart its sensibility to the last. In his loss we suffer with you; we condole with you in your sorrows.

“Accept, venerated relict of our departed General, this expression of our grief, and believe us, on the part of those whom we represent and for ourselves, your sincere friends,

“John Longenecker,
“William Downey,
“Philip Wager Reigart.”

Under date of March 15th, 1830, Mrs. Mosher sent the following reply to the committee:

“Gentlemen:

“Nothing earthly could have been more consoling to the afflicted feelings of myself and my family than your letter of condolence upon the death of my lamented husband. Next to his attachment for his country, was his regard for the brave, the virtuous, the good. And now to see the prospect of those whom he loved, following his memory in affectionate remembrance beyond the grave, spoke, let me assure you, in terms of no ordinary comfort to the widowed heart of her whom he has left behind. It was more than respectful, it was filial; and it has left an impress on my feelings that time can never erase.

“For his services to his country, to which you have been pleased to allude, he ever found ample reward in his own feelings, and the approval of those upon whose opinions the patriot and the soldier love to repose. And, let me assure you, that from no source

did he receive more satisfaction than from the many marks of kind approbation and confidence so often extended to him by you and those whom you represent.

“Accept, gentlemen, for yourselves and your fellow-soldiers, the warmest wishes of the soldier’s widow, and her most fervent prayers for your prosperity in civil, and your success and glory in military life.

“Susan Mosher.”²

The Lancaster Journal of Friday, March 26th, 1830, contained an obituary of General Mosher, copied from the Baltimore Gazette of Saturday, March 20th. It is as follows:

“Died, on the 8th instant, in the city of Lancaster, Pa., in the 77th year of his age, Mr. Jeremiah Mosher, a general of the militia of that State. He was a native of the town of Roxbury, adjacent to the city of Boston. In the year 1774 he enrolled his name in a company of minute men, in compliance with a recommendation of the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, in anticipation of approaching hostilities. On the memorable morning of the 18th of April, 1775, he was aroused from his bed by Lieut. Foster, of that corps, and informed that a detachment of the British troops was on the march to destroy the military stores deposited at Concord, and he was directed to collect as many of the company as possible to repair to the usual place of parade. The writer of this article well recollects having seen his aged father assisting to equip his son with his musket and accoutrements and despatching him in all haste with the paternal and patriotic injunction to do his duty. It will be seen that he never forgot or disregarded the salutary admonition. The company marched and arrived in time to take a part in the engagement. Mr. Mosher returned, for that time, uninjured.

“The war having now commenced, he entered the army in a regiment commanded by William Heath. In the early part of the summer, he, with others, having knowledge of the islands in the bay, was engaged in driving off parties of the British who were attempting to carry away cattle, forage, etc. Early in the month of September, an expedition was determined on by General Washington to reinforce General Montgomery, who was then advancing into Canada by the way of Lake Champlain. A detachment was ordered and marched from Cambridge, under the command of Col. Benedict Arnold. It was directed to proceed through the Province of Maine to the Kenebec river, and to ascend it in boats, as far as practicable, then to penetrate through the wilderness to the river Chaudierre, in the Province of Canada, and thence to the

² Lancaster Journal, Friday, March 19th, 1830.

city of Quebec. The first division, under the immediate direction of Col. Arnold, accomplished the object, after encountering almost incredible privations and hardships. On the 9th of November, the division reached Point Levi, opposite to Quebec, and soon after crossed the river and joined General Montgomery. After various ineffectual plans to besiege the city at that inclement season of the year, it was determined to attempt to carry it by storm. On the night of the 31st of December, the army advanced in several columns. The one under the command of Col. Arnold was preceded by thirty volunteers, of which number Mr. Mosher was one. In attempting to remove some obstructions which impeded their advance, he received a severe and dangerous wound, and was removed to the general hospital, where, for a considerable time, his life was despaired of. In the spring of 1776, the British received reinforcements, and the American army was obliged to retreat. Mr. Mosher was still so ill as to make it impossible to remove him. He was left in the care of a Canadian family, of whose attention and kindness he ever entertained a fond recollection. It was late in the fall of that year before he was able to return home to his friends, who had supposed him dead.

“In May, 1777, having recovered his health, he again entered the army in a new regiment, commanded by Col. Henry Jackson, of Boston, and was engaged in disciplining the recruits. In September, the regiment marched from Boston and joined the army at White Marsh, near Philadelphia. When the army went into winter quarters, Jackson’s regiment, composed almost entirely of young men from the eastern part of New England, where small pox had seldom prevailed, was ordered to Lancaster to be innoculated. Early in the spring of 1778, it again joined the army, at Valley Forge, and was subsequently posted near the Gulf Mills, an advanced post.

“Soon after, Mr. Mosher was ordered to advance by night, with a small detachment, as near to the enemy’s advanced posts as possible, to gain information of their positions; and, if practicable, take a few prisoners, from whom information might possibly be obtained. In pursuance of his orders, he proceeded, with a small party, to within four miles of the city [Philadelphia] and fell in with a strong detachment of German troops, who were foraging. An engagement commenced in the night, and again Mr. Mosher was severely wounded. He would have been made a prisoner had it not been for the attachment of some of his men, who carried him several miles upon their shoulders to a farm house, where a conveyance was procured and he was brought into camp. As soon as the ball was extracted and he could be removed with safety, he was conveyed to Lancaster where he could be better

attended than in camp. He was long confined and greatly reduced in health.

"In the latter part of 1779, he again joined the regiment, but the severe winter of 1779-80 so prostrated him that he was reluctantly compelled to retire from the army and take up his residence in Lancaster. He there married and continued to reside until his death, a period of fifty years. He there has filled several civil offices, has been a representative of the people in the Legislature of Pennsylvania, and has always been in office in the militia of the State,—the militia being his master passion. When young, he was daring to an extreme, and courted danger wherever it was to be met.

"The writer of this notice has personal knowledge of the estimation in which Mr. Mosher was held in Lancaster, and is enabled to say that in all his relations, public and private, his deportment was such as to command the high regard and esteem of the community in which he lived."

In Vol. 11, pp. 403-404 of the Proceedings of The Lancaster County Historical Society, is the following brief sketch of General Mosher, from the pen of the late Mrs. James D. Landis:

"By trade, Jeremiah Mosher was a blacksmith, and carried on an extensive business, doing most of the work for the stage lines running through Lancaster to Pittsburgh. It may seem somewhat strange to find him, after attaining high military honors, engaged in so humble a calling, yet there is in the possession of Mr. A. A. Hubley, [of East Orange, N. J.], a bill, dated 1792, rendered by Jeremiah Mosher to Joseph Hubley, for shoeing horses. The amount of the bill was 6£ 5s 3d.

"In 1812, he was coroner of Lancaster county; and in 1815-8, a member of the Legislature.³ He was a ruling elder in the First Presbyterian church, in 1821; and a past master of Masonic lodge No. 43 F. A. M.⁴

"Jeremiah Mosher lived on the south side of East King street, a few doors above Lime street. He died March 8th, 1830, and was buried in St. James's churchyard,⁵ with the honors of war. A horse, carrying his regimentals and inverted boots, was led in his funeral procession. By his will, he left his estate to his sons, Jeremiah⁶ and Joseph, and to his daughter, Isabella, who married Nathaniel Sample."

In the autumn of 1828, Mrs. Anne Royall, America's pioneer

³ In Harris's Biographical History of Lancaster County, page 402, it is stated that he was elected in 1815, and again in 1818.

⁴ In the History of Lodge No. 43, published in 1911, it is stated (page 278) that he served as Worshipful Master from December 27th, 1795, to June 24th, 1796; and from December 27th, 1809, to June 24th, 1811.

woman journalist, the most widely traveled woman of her day, was in Lancaster. She has furnished us with the following pen portrait of General Mosher, written two years before his death:

"I walked from Mrs. Dickson's to the library and found two very pleasant ladies there. After chatting and resting a few minutes, I happened to look across the street, and saw a tall, officer-like, elderly looking man; and though he was dressed in red flannel, it could not disguise his noble mien. He was a fine figure for his age, six feet, three inches, it is said, and as straight as an Indian. The ladies, seeing I admired him, said, 'That is General Mosher. He is a soldier of the Revolution; fought at the Battle of Bunker Hill; was born and reared in Boston, though long a resident of Pennsylvania.' I stepped over to speak to him, and found him quite a Chesterfield in his manners, and (stare not reader) a blacksmith! His face was one of the finest in nature, and he was as active as a boy.

"I saw him, shortly afterward, attending the election, elegantly dressed in uniform, adorned with splendid shoulder knots. He was the finest looking man on the ground."⁷

⁵ Unfortunately, we do not know the authority for the statement of Mrs. James D. Landis that General Mosher was buried in St. James's churchyard. We do know, however, that The Anti-Masonic Herald and Lancaster Weekly Courier of Friday, March 12th, 1830, contained an obituary of General Mosher which ended as follows:

"His remains were deposited in the Presbyterian burying ground yesterday afternoon with military respect."

⁶ Evidently Jeremiah Mosher, Jr., died shortly after his distinguished father. The Lancaster Journal of Friday, July 9th, 1830, contained the following:

"Died, in this city, on Sunday evening last [July 4th], Mr. Jeremiah Mosher, in the 50th year of his age."

⁷ "Old Lancaster: Tales and Traditions," pp. 172-3.

Lancaster's Contribution to Ireland in the Famine of 1847

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

EARLY in February, 1847, the "Hibernia" steamship brought news of the terrible ravages of famine in Ireland. The English newspapers received in America at this time, were full of heart-rending details of starvation and death.

The Lancaster Examiner and Herald of Wednesday, February 10th, 1847, in an editorial informing the public of the famine in Ireland, stated: