

The Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike.

I am indebted to His Honor, Judge Charles I. Landis, for a knowledge of the pamphlet which I propose to read to the Society to-day, and to the courtesy of Mr. John S. Witmer, the present owner, for permission to read and reprint it. While not of great historical importance, it is, nevertheless, interesting, for various reasons. First, because it was written 108 years ago by a man who at that time and for more than a quarter of a century before was one of the best-known citizens of this city; because of its bearing on the building of the best-known road in our county and State at that period,* because it introduces a number of other well-known historical characters; because, if we accept its statements, it shows that the good men and true of that early day were sometimes capable of a little sharp practice when the occasion offered; because it was once the property of our most noted member of the Bar at that period, Judge Jasper Yeates, whose well-known signature is written on the title page, and, lastly, because it is probably unique, the only copy that is in existence to-day. Its ownership since it saw the light is easily traced. First came Judge Yeates. How it passed from his possession into that of David Witmer, one of the parties with whom it concerns itself, I am unable to say, but, laid away and carefully preserved, for it has to-day all the freshness of

* In 1807, Albert Gallatin, then Secretary of the Treasury, in a report made to the Senate of the United States, said: "The Lancaster road, the first extensive turnpike that was completed in the United States, is the first link of the great western communication from Philadelphia."

ink and paper it can have had when it came from the press, it now turns up in the ownership of a great-grandson of David Witmer, towards whom its shafts are in part directed.

The Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike Company was chartered by the General Assembly of the State on April 9, 1792. The act of incorporation is called "An Act to enable the Governor of this Commonwealth to incorporate a company for making an artificial road from the city of Philadelphia to the Borough of Lancaster." The very title does away with the general illusion that this turnpike was a State road, built by the State and owned by the same. The act of incorporation consists of a preamble and twenty-two sections, the whole being a document of more than six thousand words. I shall not inflict on this Society even so much as an abstract of this formidable legislative document, but I will refer to some things concerning it not generally known, and which are also interesting in themselves.

The preamble recites that as great quantities of country products and foreign merchandise are daily transported between Philadelphia and the western counties of the State, roads are required over which wagons can travel without cutting into the soil, but which can be built only at great expense, but believing private enterprise is ready to undertake the task, the Legislature lends its encouragement.

The first section, therefore, appoints Elliston Perot, Henry Drinker, junior, Owen Jones, junior, Israel Whelen and Cadwallader Evans, of the city (of Philadelphia), Gentlemen, and Edward Hand, John Hubleby, Paul Zantzinger, Matthias Slough and Abraham Witmer, of the county of Lancaster, Gentlemen, Commissioners to procure the proper books and receive the names of such

persons who desire to subscribe for stock and enter the same in the books. The shares were to be \$300 each. Stock books were to be opened in Philadelphia and Lancaster. Publication of the same was to be made in three Philadelphia papers, one of them in the German language, and in the paper printed in Lancaster, the *Neue Unpartheyische Lancaster Zeitung und Anzeigs-Nachrichten*. Six hundred shares were to be allotted to Philadelphia and four hundred to Lancaster, or a total capitalization of \$300,000. After ——— shares were subscribed for the Governor was authorized to issue letters patent creating the subscribers into a corporate body by the name of "The President, Managers and Company of the Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike Road." Authority was also given to increase the capital stock, if found necessary. As the road proved to be a more costly affair than it was thought it would be, new stock was subsequently issued. How much, or how often, I do not know, but a final issue of 100 shares was made on February 5, 1796.

The seven named commissioners were authorized and directed to give notice in four papers when the stockholders should meet and organize the company by electing a President, twelve Managers, a Treasurer, and such officers as might be necessary. Each share of stock was to have one vote, but no man more than ten votes, no matter how much stock he had. The second Monday of each year was to be annual election time. A seal and certificates of stock were to be provided. The certificates were, of course, transferable. The officers were to meet at stated periods for the transaction of business, and accurate minutes were to be kept.

The rights and privileges of the Company were of the most liberal

kind. It could exercise the right of eminent domain. The officers and those in their employ were authorized to enter into and upon all lands, tenements and enclosures through and over which the road might pass, to examine the ground and the stone-quarries and beds of gravel and other material necessary to build the road, and to survey and fix any route which in their judgment combined the most desirable qualities, "from the west side of the Schuylkill river, opposite to the city of Philadelphia, so as to pass near to or over the bridge on Brandywine Creek, near Downingtown, and from thence to Witmer's Bridge on Conestoga Creek, and from thence to the east end of King Street, where the buildings cease in the Borough of Lancaster."

Permission was also given the Company, including the managers, workmen, engineers and laborers, to enter upon and into the adjoining lands, first giving notice to the owners of their intention, but being held responsible for any damage they might do, and for taking away such building material as they might need.

They had authority to build bridges over the Schuylkill, Conestoga and other water courses, wherever it was necessary. They were to lay out a road fifty feet wide, "twenty-one feet of which in breadth should be bedded with wood, stone, gravel, or any other hard substance, well compacted," arched in the middle and sloping to the sides at an angle of not more than four degrees, and forever keep the same in good repair.

After ten miles of the road were finished westward from Philadelphia, they were authorized to erect gates and collect toll, and so with each succeeding ten miles. The rate of tolls was fixed by the charter. They put the rate at less for wide-wheeled wagons than for

narrow-wheeled ones, from December until May, showing those early legislators knew something about road-building. The Legislature passed a road law favoring wide tires at its last session. They also limited the freight that might be carried on one wagon during the spring season to seven tons, but allowed eight tons the rest of the year. Not more than eight horses could be attached to any one wagon, and only six if the tread of the tires was not more than nine inches.

The road was to be kept in good order, under severe penalties. A rigid system of keeping the accounts of the road was also prescribed, and these had to be annually submitted to the stockholders at their general meeting. If it was found that the original amount of stock authorized would not suffice to build the road, the Managers were authorized to increase the number of shares to an extent deemed sufficient to complete the road. This was evidently done twice or oftener. The original amount of stock sold was only \$300,000; on February 10, 1796, 100 additional shares were put on the market; but these two amounts realized only \$330,000, and, as the total cost was \$465,000, there are still 450 shares, or \$135,000 to be accounted for.

I am indebted to the courtesy of J. Watson Ellmaker for permission to print part of a letter written to his grandfather at the time subscriptions to this turnpike were taken. It not only shows with what avidity the 400 shares at first allotted to Lancaster county were subscribed for by our people, but it also shows what considerable sums of money were available among our citizens for public enterprises at that early day. Here is the portion of the letter bearing on the turnpike:

"Near Lancaster, 5th June, 1792.

"Respected Friend.

* * * * I never seen men so wet with sweat in an harvest field, as some were in the crowd to-day to subscribe to the Turnpike Road,—most of them did not think that the work of it—for many did not get in for a share which warmed their minds as well as their bodies—the Subscriptions closed with 400 shares to-day about 11 o'clock.

"Am with respect thy fd.,

"WILL. WEBB.*

"Nl. ELLMAKER,

"Near New Holland."

Half-yearly dividends were also to be declared to the stockholders, if fairly earned, after all the current expenses had been paid. Every third year, from the date of incorporation until two years after the road was completed, the Managers were required to place an abstract of their accounts before the General Assembly including all the most minute details. It seems the rights of stockholders were far more carefully guarded in those days than now, when there appears to be no corporate liability worth speaking of.

If, at the end of two years after the completion of the road, the tolls prescribed did not yield a net revenue sufficient to declare a six per cent.

* William Webb was a prominent member of the Quaker colony of Lancaster city. His grandfather, James Webb, was a member of the Provincial Legislature for twenty-two years, between 1747 and 1777. He was also one of the County Committee of Correspondence in 1774. He was the owner of the land on which Knapp's Villa stands. Either he or his son, James Webb, Jr., built the house. William Webb's father was James Webb, Jr., who was Sheriff of the county in 1767, 1768 and 1769. William was a member of the Legislature in 1790, 1805 and 1806. He was a Director of the Poor in 1799, the year in which the Poorhouse farm was bought. This family of Webbs must not be confounded with that of another James Webb, a mason by trade, and a Tory in politics, who lived in Lancaster at the same time with the above.

dividend on the cost of the road, the Managers were authorized to increase the rate of tolls sufficiently to produce that result. If tolls to the extent of more than fifteen per cent. on the investment should be realized, then the tolls were to be reduced until no more than fifteen per cent. was obtained.

Hand-boards were required to be put up at all points where the turnpike intersected cross roads, telling the names and distances of the places to which such roads led. Milestones were required to be placed on the side of the road, beginning at the distance of one mile west of the Schuylkill, and extending thence to the borough of Lancaster, on which the distance each stone was from the west bounds of Philadelphia, and handboards telling the distances to the nearest gates and turnpikes. All wagons and drivers of vehicles of all kinds were required to turn to the right-hand side of the road, under a fine of two dollars for every violation of the rule.

The last section of the charter enacts that if the company does not begin the work within a period of two years after the passage of the act, or not complete the road within seven years, the Commonwealth may rescind the franchises.

The Philadelphia and Lancaster turnpike to-day exists only in name. The roadbed, it is true, still remains, but the legal road and name have disappeared. For many years it was a profitable investment to those who put money into it. Sixty-one taverns to sixty-two miles of road gives some idea of the travel that once passed over it. Across the roadbed once went thousands of great Conestoga teams and wagons, carrying all manner of merchandise to the western part of the State, and bringing back flour on the return trip.

But the turnpike was unable to com-

pete with the iron road and the iron horse. When the latter came to the front the former went to the rear. It became unprofitable and the tolls hardly sufficed to keep it in repair. An Act of the Legislature authorized the stockholders to sell it. In 1873 the western end, from below Kinzer to the city line, about fifteen miles, was sold for \$10,000. The men who bought it changed the name to that of the Lancaster and Williamstown turnpike. It is a profitable road to-day.

In 1879 the Eastern, from Paoli or thereabouts, was sold to A. J. Cassatt and others. It is a turnpike still and enters Philadelphia at Lancaster avenue. Other sections became so badly dilapidated that they were abandoned by the owners, taken up by Chester county and made free. In 1899 another sale was made. This time the section sold was that between Coatesville and Exton, twelve miles, for \$12,000. to A. M. Taylor and others, of New York, who were working in accord with the West Chester and Philadelphia Traction Company. Not being able to complete their arrangements, however, the section was also taken over by Chester county and made a free highway.

With the relation of a curious incident that occurred during the early surveys for the road, I will have done with my remarks concerning it. A surveying party was sent out from Philadelphia to work in the neighborhood of Paoli. A week passed and nothing was heard from it. After waiting ten days a rescuing party was sent after the lost surveyors. They were found in good condition and hard at work. All this 100 years ago and within twenty miles of Philadelphia!

The occasion that called out the pamphlet of Colonel Slough, which I will presently read, was an act of injustice which he believed had been

done him, as well as discourteous treatment received by him from some or all of the other members of the committee on construction, or managers, who beside himself were Edward Hand, Andrew Graff, Abraham Witmer, David Witmer. It appears the road was laid out into five parts, or sections, and one of these sections allotted to each manager, who was to superintend the construction. To Colonel Slough was allotted the superintendency of the western end of the turnpike.

Much of the work at the eastern end appears to have been done at the time, but on the Fourth and Fifth sections there was still some to do. A meeting was called by the Managers, at Downingtown, to receive bids for the unfinished work, in October, 1793. Sealed proposals were invited. Slough, it appears, went to the meeting, carrying with him a bid from one, Michael Fouts, of Strasburg, for making the road through "Hand's Pass."* He was given to understand that nothing would be done until the following day and that there was plenty of time for handing in the bid, or for changing it meanwhile. But it appears that contractors were contractors even in those earlier and better days of the Republic, and that while Slough was taking his time for submitting the bid, the other four Superintendents actually gave the contract to David Witmer, one of their number.

The pamphlet does not assail the Chairman of the Board, General Hand, in direct terms, but if the statements made are true, and we have no evidence to show they are not, General Hand does not appear in an enviable

* "Hand's Pass" was a cut or pass on the line of the road, a few miles west of Coatesville. Why so named I do not know. There was a tavern with a ghostly reputation there, after the road was built.

light. For some reason it is evident that it was determined the bid Slough had should not be considered. It could not have been because it was thought the bid was his own, made in another man's name, or that he, being a Superintendent, could not be a bidder, because David Witmer, also a Manager, got the contract. There was bad blood between Slough and the Witmers. This is not only shown by the altercation between them at the meeting where the events related in the pamphlet occurred, but at other places in his little book he openly denounces the two brothers and accuses them of unfair dealings towards the stockholders.

Colonel Slough's Pamphlet.

J. Yeates.

**TO THE
STOCKHOLDERS
OF THE
PHILADELPHIA AND LANCASTER
TURNPIKE ROAD.**

Printed in the Year 1794.

When a man is appointed to attend to and transact the business of an individual, is a society or company of men, it becomes, in my idea of things, his duty to attend to it with the same diligence and œconomy as if it was his own; and, you having done me the honor, at the last election to appoint me one of your Managers of the Turnpike Road, I took upon me the trust reposed, and have given that attention to it, which the business, in my humble opinion, required: Having been absent at the time of election, and necessarily obliged to attend to some of my

own affairs, it put it out of my power to give that attention, which I thought it my duty to do, until the month of February last, when I went to Philadelphia, and attended a number of meetings of the Board of Managers, at their office, until the 12th day of March, on which day it was unanimously agreed, that the distance of the road should be laid off into five districts, and a Superintendant should be appointed for each, whose duty it should be to attend to the making the road, agreeably to written instructions, which were agreed on, made out, and handed to each of the Superintendants; and, however justifiable it was to appoint, to this duty, some of those who were at the same time your Managers, I had the honor of being appointed the Superintendant of the Fifth District. I left Philadelphia on the 15th day of March; arrived at home on the 16th; and commenced my operation on the 20th, with a few men; their number increasing daily, I carried on the work according to my best judgment and abilities; and, had I agreed to say YES, to every proposition which was made by some of my colleagues, as well in the attempt made by them to alter the tract of the road very materially, as some others, I should, I believe, have had the approbation of those gentlemen to this day.

But because I took upon me to judge for myself in the business, preferring a straight road for a crooked one, and having also regard to distance, which by the proposed alteration would have been considerably increased, those gentlemen have ever since, by every means in their power, endeavored to impede the business, and to do every act which they could devise to put a stop to it. The work, notwithstanding all those manœuvres and obstacles which were thrown in my way, went on very well, though very contrary to the

wishes of those gentlemen, until the malignant disorder, which raged in the city of Philadelphia, broke out, when a scarcity of money took place; the work, however, continued until the following notice was given in the Federal Gazette, calling a Meeting of the Managers of the Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike Road, on the 14th of October last, at the House of Hunt Downing, in Downing's Town. Agreeable to which, the members residing in and near this borough attended, that is to say, Edward Hand, Andrew Graff, and Abraham Witmer, Esquires, David Witmer, and myself; and were met by Richard Thomas, Esq., and Mr. Israel Whelen. At this meeting among other transactions, the following resolutions were entered into, and appears on the books of the company: "That Edward Hand, Andrew Graff, and Abraham Witmer, be a committee, vested with authority, to enter into contracts with individuals, for completing such parts of the Turnpike Road, in the Fourth and Fifth Districts, as are not yet done, and for the perfecting of which, contracts have not already been entered into by the respective Superintendants, or Committees heretofore appointed by the Board, or shall hereafter be entered into by the Superintendants, with the approbation of the before-mentioned committee, or a majority of them: It is also resolved, that the same committee have authority to contract for erecting the several Bridges, that may be necessary in the Districts aforesaid.

"Extracts from the Minutes.

"EDWARD HAND, Chairman."

In consequence of the foregoing resolutions, the following notice was given on the 17th of October:

"The subscribers give public notice, that they will collectively or individually receive proposals in writing (sealed up) until the first day of November

next, on which day the contracts will positively be closed, for quarrying, hauling and laying the stone, for a perch of road, by the same person; for quarrying and hauling the stone, for a perch of road, by the same person, for hauling and laying the stone, for a perch of road, by different persons; for perfecting the side, or summer roads and ditches, by the perch of road; for graveling the road from Witmer's Bridge to Lancaster, by the perch or rod, the gravel to be four inches thick on the surface, after the interstices between the loose stones are filled up. Also, for levelling, paving and graveling the whole of the road, through Hand's Pass, including the perfecting of the side or summer roads and ditches.

"N. B. It is supposed that a ditch on the upper or northern side only, will be necessary.

"Proposals will at the same time be received for reducing stone to gravel, from the size of a pullet's egg to that of a common pea, and covering a perch of road therewith, four inches thick: The quality of the stone intended to be reduced, to be mentioned in the proposals.

"The parties contracting, may be certain of receiving their money at the time stipulated.

"(Signed.)

"EDWARD HAND,
"ANDREW GRAFF,
"ABRAHAM WITMER,
"DAVID WITMER,
"MATTHIAS SLOUGH.

"Lancaster, Oct. 17, 1793."

At the meeting on the 14th of October, it was agreed that another meeting should be held at the same place, on the 11th of November following; but it being afterwards thought better, by Mr. Whelen, that the chance of having a fuller board, by putting the meeting off a week longer, which

would bring it to the 18th of the same month. Mr. Whelen wrote to General Hand, requesting the members in and near Lancaster would agree to have it on that day, which was agreed to, and Mr. Whelen was informed by the General, that it was agreed, by the members here, that it should be on the 18th; whereupon Mr. Whelen gave notice, in the Federal Gazette, accordingly; and, agreeable to that notice, I left Lancaster, at three o'clock in the afternoon of the 17th, and went as far as Captain M'Clelland's that evening, on my way to meet the Board of Managers, at the house of Hunt Downing, in Downing's Town, where I arrived at 12 o'clock on the 18th, I found General Hand, Andrew Graff, and Abraham Witmer, Esquires, Mr. David Witmer, and Mr. Israel Whelen; and about one o'clock Richard Thomas, Esq., also arrived. About one hour after my arrival, I was called up stairs, by General Hand, in order to give him some explanation of my accounts, which I had previously rendered to the Committee, at Lancaster; after having done this, as I thought, to the satisfaction of the General, I mentioned to him, that "I supposed there would be some further proposals offered, for making the road thro' Hand's Pass; and, that if it was the case, I had one in my pocket, which I should offer, and that I was at liberty to alter it as I pleased." To which the General answered, that "he did not doubt but it would be the case from the number of people that were collecting, and that as soon as he had finished the report he was then drawing up, we would adjourn down stairs, and would there receive any proposals which should be offered." (Here it may be necessary to mention, that when I found fault with the proceedings, on the 19th in the morning, which had taken place the day before, it was thrown out, before

a number of people, that I did not mention the whole truth, alluding to my being at liberty to alter the proposals, which I meant to offer for Hand's Pass; and I will only mention, that if an alteration had taken place, it must have operated in favor of the company.) Dinner, however, was ready before the General had finished his report, and he was called to it. After dinner he returned up stairs again, and finished his report, when he called all the members present up stairs, in order to receive it, which was accordingly done. The General being appointed Chairman, and Mr. Whelen Secretary; after going through the usual forms, and the necessary entries being made, it was thought best to adjourn down stairs, in order to receive any proposals which might be offered: A good deal of conversation past, and amongst the rest, some harsh words between David Witmer and myself, to whom I offered to take any bet he would mention, that not one hundred rod of his road was made according to his instructions; after which a calm took place, during which, a Mr. Humphreys, handed a paper to Mr. Graff, who handed it to General Hand, which, on being read, contained proposals for making the road through Hand's Pass, for the sum of two thousand seven hundred pounds: This proposition was read by every member present, and nothing was said respecting it. Some time after this, Colonel James Moore, of Chester County, and two other gentlemen arrived, who had given in their proposals for making the same road, on the first of November last, at Lancaster; but the business not being rightly understood by them, they were desired to attend, on the ground, on the 18th, where they should be met by the committee on that day, and that the business could afterwards be settled at Downing's

Town. These gentlemen waited the greatest part of the day on the ground, and not being met by any person or persons, with whom they could confer on the subject, they, in the evening came to Downing's Town, where Colonel Moore mentioned their having waited agreeable to appointment, but as no person met them they thought best to attend at Downing's Town: A good deal of conversation passed between Colonel Moore and the Managers on the subject; and other two gentlemen remained silent. Among other things Colonel Moore said, that "it was a difficult matter to ascertain what would be a reasonable price for making that part of the road, and he thought it would be best for the Managers to say what they would give?" This he was told would frustrate the object they had in view, which was to get it done on the cheapest terms, and that therefore he must mention the price he would make it for. To which he answered, that "it would require a little more time." General Hand replied, that "we were not in a hurry," and that "the man whose offer was lowest, and such as was thought reasonable, would certainly get the job." To this David Witmer added, that "the business would not be finished that evening, and that he had time to consider of it until the morning." The General then said, "certainly." All this made me very easy with respect to the proposal, which I had in my pocket, signed, and handed to me by Mr. Michael Fouts at Strasburgh. Supper came in, and before it was quite over, General Hand was called out by David Witmer; General Hand soon called out Mr. Whelen; Mr. Whelen returned and called out Mr. Thomas, both of whom soon returned into the room, and told Mr. Graff and Mr. Abraham Witmer that they were wanted out of doors;

they went out, and General Hand, Mr. Graff, Mr. A. Witmer, and Mr. D. Witmer went up stairs together; after sometime they returned, when, in a smiling manner, I told General Hand, that "there was a good many secrets going forward," he said "yes, and if you come out of doors I will tell you what they are." I went out with him, and there being a number of persons in the passage, we went into Mr. Downing's garden, when he told me that "David Witmer had got the Pass;" at which I expressed my astonishment, and asked him "if he did not recollect what I told him up stairs?" (alluding to the proposal which I told him I had in my pocket) to which he answered, "you are too late." I then asked the sum Witmer was to get, he told me "two thousand four hundred pounds."

I then again told General Hand, that "I thought it very wrong, and that the person, whose proposal I had in my pocket, offered to make it for four hundred dollars less." The General again told me "I was too late." I then mentioned the matter to Mr. Whelen, who told me "he had nothing to do with it." I then mentioned it to Mr. Graff, whose answer was, that "when they went up stairs together, the General mentioned, that 'David Witmer had offered to do the Pass, for a price for which he thought he ought to have it,' and asked Abraham Witmer, 'what do you say?' when Abraham said 'yes,' and I said so, too."

Thus was the business managed, without saying a word to Colonel Moore, who was waiting to give in his proposal, in the morning of the 19th, his partner in the business, having withdrawn to another house, in order to draw them up; after having appointed him to meet the Board on the 18th, for that purpose, and without my having the least intimation of what

was going forward (which as a Manager and Superintendant I was entitled to, or whence the use of my name to the advertisement) a species of treatment, which I could not silently submit to, and, therefore, as soon as the gentlemen arose from their beds, I handed Mr. Fouts's proposal to General Hand, which was handed to the other gentlemen, and nothing was said. Colonel Moore lodged in the house, and on his coming down stairs, in the morning, which was very early, I asked him "if he knew Hand's Pass was disposed of?" He said, "no, it is impossible!" I told him "it certainly was so, and that I had my information from General Hand;" "then I think myself very ill treated, as I expect the other two gentlemen (meaning his partners) here every moment, to present their proposals." Colonel Moore told the General what he had heard, and asked him "if it was so?" the General said "it was;" when Colonel Moore repeated, "that he thought himself ill treated." Soon after this the gentlemen concerned with Colonel Moore appeared, when they were told by Colonel Moore what was done, and they also thought themselves very ill treated. Colonel Moore then called the General out of the room, the General soon returned, and mentioned, that "the Colonel had offered to make the road through Hand's Pass, for two thousand two hundred pounds;" when David Witmer laughed aloud, and said, "well, if he offers it for something less, maybe I will let him have it." Colonel Moore looked at him with disdain, and said, "no, I will not take it from you," went to his horse, mounted him, and rode to the Turk's-Head, to attend the Court, of which he is one of the Judges, saying, "you will probably hear more from me on this subject."

Thus is this piece of road disposed of, to a person who is probably a fa-

vorite, at one hundred and fifty pounds more than Mr. Michael Fouts, of Strasburgh, offered to make it for, and for two hundred pounds more than what Colonel Moore offered to do it for. That all men are liable to err, I readily acknowledge; and, if I have erred, in any instance, from the novelty of the business, or from a desire to forward it, I have the consolation to say, that I can lay my hand on my heart, and declare, that I, in no instance, wantonly sported with one shilling of the Company's money. But, what good reason can be given, for sinking this sum of your money? I can think of none, except it is to indulge a certain anonymous writer, in the news-paper, some months since, who, after extolling the merit of Mr. David Witmer, in a most extraordinary manner, goes on to say, "That he thinks him justly entitled to a compliment of four or five hundred pounds, from the Company, for his extraordinary exertions." Of this piece, I believe, it will not be very difficult, to prove Mr. Witmer, himself, the author, and that he got the favor of a gentleman in the neighbourhood to form it for him. I wish not to rob Mr. Witmer of the least merit, and therefore, readily confess, that a great deal of work is done in the Fourth District, but that it is to be ascribed to the extraordinary exertions of the Superintendant, I deny; and had the writer above alluded to, told you what is evidently the case, and may be seen on taking a view of the country, and the fields through which the Fourth District extends; I have passed along it several times, and found, I think, but four or five small fields, which were ploughed the last season, and have grain sowed upon them. Hence it is a fact, which cannot be contradicted, that owing to the barrenness of this soil, and the inhabitants finding

that more money was to be made by working on the turnpike, they abandoned their fields, and the whole country adjoining to the road, bent their whole attention to it: In addition to this, it must be observed, that the necessary stones for making the road, lay either on the tract, or within a few rods of it, and that there was no necessity for quarrying of them, or for hauling them any considerable distance; all that was necessary, was, to send some hands to a small distance, with crow-bars and picks to raise the stones out of their beds, to have a few sledges to break some of them, and they were ready to put into the wagon or cart; whereas in the Fifth District, the whole of the stones are and must be taken out of the ground, at a very heavy expense; for which purpose there is also a considerable quantity of powder necessary; the quarries, in some instances, difficult to find, and those at a considerable distance from the tract.

From all which, it is reasonable to suppose, that a mile of road, in this District, must be attended with much heavier expense, than in that of the Fourth District. Mr. Witmer says, the whole of the road through his District, extending twelve miles, is completed. I say so too, excepting the most difficult parts of it, which he has taken care to leave to the last.

About one mile and a-half of the road, in the Fifth District is paved, stones sufficient are quarried to pave about four miles more, the timber, to the extent of seven miles is taken up by the roots, and there remains about three quarters of a mile, from which the timber has to be removed, in like manner, in the whole of the Fifth District. This is not the case with respect to the timber of the Fourth District, as I much question if one dozen trees or grubs are taken up by the roots in the

whole of it. The road in the Fifth District, to the extent above mentioned, is formed, and ready to receive the stones, except in a few instances, where some earth has to be removed.

For the carrying on and doing this work, I have drawn from the Treasury, the sum of six thousand two hundred and seventy-three pounds, or thereabout, and it will take about thirteen hundred pounds more, to discharge some arrearages, for quarrying and hauling stones, &c.

Mr. Witmer has drawn from the Treasury, the sum of at least, twenty-six thousand dollars (his arrearages I will not venture to guess at) for the work he has done; which work will in all probability require a number of men annually to clear it of the sprouts which will come forth from the stumps which remain in the ground. This I mention because they have already come through the pavement; and how will it be with the side or summer roads where the stumps are innumerable?

Here I would willingly rest this disagreeable business did not justice to my own character, who have a family to support, call upon me to say a few words to the Two Brothers and the Family Compact: You, gentlemen, have ever since my opposition to the alteration of the road, in the Fifth District, been extremely busy, in making enquiry to know the sums of money I have drawn from the Treasury; had you confined yourselves to that principle, which ought to be adhered to by every good man, and had you not prostituted truth at the shrine of your malice, I should have treated all you said with the contempt it deserved; you have not confined your malice to yourselves, in propogating your infernal stories, but sent forth your sons and your daughters, your man servants and your maid servants,

to calumniate and traduce my character abroad.

That your actions have been, and continue to be influenced by interested motives, will further appear from the following facts, to wit: That you, David, not long since, on your return from Downing's Town, charged one of your colleagues with having been, at least, three hundred pounds out of your way, in his opposition to the alteration of the tract in the Fifth District. From this charge it is but fair to infer, that I am chargeable with a like sum by you, or probably the loss may be greater, because it tends to frustrate your design in laying out a Town, for having the County of Lancaster divided, and the Seat of Justice fixed on the spot where you live, and to have one turnpike at your Brother's Bridge, and another at your own Town; that yourself and Brother Abraham have this dear alteration of the tract much at heart; that not content with sacrificing the sum already mentioned in the contract for Hand's Pass, will appear from David's application to the Board at Philadelphia, on the 14th or 15th instant, at which Brother Abraham was present: That your design is fraught with destruction, is as evident as the sun at noon day, or why propose to the Board of Managers, some of whom have probably never seen the tract, to deviate from it, after it has cost the Company more than one thousand pounds, it being already opened, and formed the distance of seven miles, the greatest part of which is as straight as it is possible to make it, as beautiful to the view as any part of the road between the City of Philadelphia and the Borough of Lancaster, the distance considerably shorter than that which you propose.—Forbid it justice, that you should ever be indulged in your interested and destructive scheme! And,

as to your complaint, David, to the Board, a few days since, at Philadelphia, respecting the arrearages due to you, I must beg leave to correct the expression, and say, they are not due to you, but to the people who worked under your direction, and I believe them to be considerable, as I am not ignorant of the manner in which the business is managed.

Had you done justice to the cause, you are engaged in, a great deal of work would have been done this winter, had the proposals, which were handed in, on the first day of November last, been decided upon, agreeable to the notice given on the 17th of October, by persons who would not ask payment until it would have been convenient for the Company to pay them. The contracts for the several Bridges, ought, in a particular manner, to have been attended to, that those who took them might have prepared for the work during the winter; but, instead of this, you give it out, that there would certainly be an alteration in the road, in the Fifth District; that David would have the whole of the unfinished part to make; that I had nothing more to do with the making of it; that therefore there was no more work to be done in this District, and that if any one worked under my direction, he would certainly have no pay for it. I am a Stockholder in miniature, and having been honored with your confidence, in appointing me one of your Managers at the last election, I deem it my duty to lay before you these facts, to shew the treatment a worthy Citizen of Chester County received; the neglect shewn me, as one of your Managers, and one, who had a right to be consulted; that you may draw from them such conclusions as you may judge necessary and right, and such as may tend most to the interest of the Company.

MATTHIAS SLOUGH.

Lancaster, December 24, 1793.

Sketch of Col. Slough.

Col. Matthias Slough was for a period of half a century one of the most prominent citizens of Lancaster. Few men were better known than he, and he appears to have enjoyed the confidence of the community in an unusual degree, being in official life as often and perhaps as long as any of his local contemporaries. He was of German descent, having come to the borough of Lancaster with his father, Jacob Slough, in 1747. He was born in 1733 or 1734, but whether in Germany or America I have not been able to learn. He came here as a lad of 13 or 14 years of age. His father bought several lots in the southeast angle of Centre Square, in the year of his arrival from Henry Bostler, and built the well-remembered "Swan" tavern upon them, and opened the same for business about 1754. One authority, however, states that Bostler himself was licensed to sell liquor as early as 1741, but as he owned several other parcels of property in the borough, it is by no means certain that he kept a tavern on the site of the Swan. If he did sell liquor on that spot, it would seem that there must have been some kind of a tavern there before Jacob Slough built his. Perhaps the latter only enlarged the buildings on the premises when he bought them and better adapted them to the uses for which they were designed.

Young Slough became the landlord of this noted tavern certainly as early as 1761, and he retained the proprietorship almost continuously until 1806, when he removed from Lancaster. The first office of trust held by him was that of Assistant Burgess of the town in 1757, 1758-1760 and 1761. That he was an intelligent man and a patron of

education is demonstrated by the fact that he was one of the fifty-four charter members of the Lancaster Library Company, in 1759, which later became more widely known as the Julianna Library. He held the office of County Coroner from 1755 until 1768, being only 21 years old when he entered upon the duties of the office. Strange to say, he was also Treasurer of Lancaster county from 1763 to 1769, holding the offices of Coroner and County Treasurer at the same time.

It was while he held the former position that the famous raid of the "Paxton Boys" was made. In the well-known letter written by Edward Shippen, Esq., who was the County Prothonotary at that time, to Governor John Penn, dated December 27, 1763, he said: "Between two and three o'clock this afternoon upwards of a hundred armed men from the westward rode very fast into town, turned their horses into Mr. Slough's (an innkeeper's yard), and proceeded with the greatest precipitation to the work-house, where they stove open the door and killed all the Indians." The double duty of entertaining these murderous marauders at his hotel, unwillingly, no doubt, and afterwards, from his official position, of holding an inquest upon their bloody work, devolved upon him. I may here remark that I many times heard the story of that terrible deed related by one who, a lad of eleven years, ran to the work-house when on his way from school, and was an eye witness of what had been done.

Another dark episode in the early history of this community is also connected with the Swan Hotel. In its day it was noted for its good cheer, and many were the dances, dinners and routs held there. It was at one of these, held on May 12, 1789, than an unfortunate misunderstanding oc-

curred between Stephen Chambers, Esq., of the Lancaster Bar, and Dr. Jacob Reiger, which resulted in a duel, in which Captain Chambers was mortally wounded.

The Burgesses held their meetings at Slough's Tavern as early as June 23, 1761, and many times in later years, but they did not meet continuously in the same place.

Col. Slough was an early, if not a charter member, of the Union Fire Company, and at a meeting of the company, held on August 25, 1764, he "paid into the Treasurer's hand the sum of one pound, two shillings, which were collected by him; also five shillings, which was his fine for neglecting to summon the company to meet in June last, agreeable to the articles." The first of the quarterly banquets of the Union Company was held in 1791 at Slough's tavern.

He was the recipient of public honors at the hands of his fellow-citizens almost continuously from his first entrance into public office until he moved away. In 1773 he was first elected a member of the House of Representatives; he was re-elected in 1774, 1775, 1777, 1780, 1781, 1782 and 1783. This, be it remembered, was also one of the most trying periods in our history.

This brings us down to and into the period of the Revolutionary struggle. A man of Col. Slough's prominence and activities was certain to be found at the front when the outbreak came, and even during the preliminary period of preparation. Of course, Col. Slough was found training with all the other prominent men of the borough in the ranks of the friends of independence. In pursuance of a letter received at Lancaster from the Committee of Correspondence, at Philadelphia, a meeting of the citizens of this place was called on June 15, 1774, to

protest against the invasion of the rights of American citizens by the mother country, at which meeting Edward Shippen, Esq., George Ross, Esq., Jasper Yeates, Esq., Matthias Slough, Esq., James Webb, Esq., Mr. Ludwig Lauman, Mr. William Bausman and Mr. Charles Hall were appointed a committee to correspond with the general committee at Philadelphia, which was done on the evening of the same day.

He was present at the meeting of the deputies chosen by the several counties of the State, at Philadelphia, held on July 15, 1775, as one of the eight representatives from Lancaster county. When the County Committee of Observation took an account of the amount of lead and powder available for the uses of the American forces, on May 4, 1775, he placed all his supply, four quarter casks of powder, at the rate of £15 per cwt., and 200 pounds of lead, at 45 pence per cwt., at the disposal of the committee. He was keeping a general store at that time, and this is the solitary fact I have found that fixes the time when he was a merchant, as well as an inn-keeper, although the fact itself is very well known.

During the course of the war large numbers of prisoners of war were sent to Lancaster for safe-keeping. Among the first to arrive were those taken at St. John's, Canada, by General Richard Montgomery. They arrived here on December 9th, 1775, and consisted of 9 officers and 242 privates, with 30 women and 30 children, all connected with the Seventh Royal Fusileers. For a time the officers were lodged at a tavern, and the soldiers in the local barracks. As no provision had been made for their support, Col. Slough proposed to the committee in charge to supply rations to these prisoners.

He was also present at the military

convention called in this city on July 4, 1776, when delegates representing the fifty-three battalions of the Associators of Pennsylvania met to "choose two Brigadier Generals to command the battalions and forces of Pennsylvania." He was at that time the Colonel of the Seventh Lancaster county battalion. (Daniel Roberdeau, having received 160 votes, was elected first Brigadier General, and James Ewing, receiving the next highest number of votes, 85, the second Brigadier General.)

Colonel Slough's battalion was the seventh of the thirteen raised in this county. It was ordered to Philadelphia in the summer of 1776, and from thence was sent to join the Flying Camp, in New Jersey, authorized by Congress. It was among the earliest to make its appearance in the camp, most, if not the entire battalion, being on the ground on July 8. An order of the Council of Safety was sent to him for £177.12.6 for arms purchased by him for the use of the battalion. His command took part in the desperate battle of Long Island, on the 27th of August following, and, after completing its term of service, returned to Lancaster in the fall, where it was subsequently engaged in guarding the prisoners of war confined at Lancaster and Lebanon.

On January 6, 1777, the Council of Safety again ordered Col. Slough's battalion to Philadelphia.

Although Colonel Slough's term of active service in the army in the field was not of great duration, his services were required in other and equally responsible stations.

On May 2, 1777, thirteen persons of prominence were appointed by the War Office to supply the patriot army with blankets, shoes and other clothing. Those for duty in Lancaster county were Bartram Galbraith, James Craw-

ford, Adam Ordt, Robert Thompson, Joshua Elder, Christopher Crawford, William Atlee, John Hubley, Alexander Lowry, Curtis Grubb, Philip Maisteller, Matthias Slough and Adam Reigart.

He was also one of a committee of twelve appointed to take charge and look after Dr. John Kearsly and one, I. Brooks, who had been arrested, charged with "being concerned in an endeavor to procure British troops to invade Pennsylvania and the other colonies in a Hostile manner, with other inimical correspondence and practices." From this place Dr. Kearsly was sent to York. Brooks remained in the jail here; no one was allowed to see him except in the presence of a member of the committee, which was composed of George Ross, Jasper Yeates, William Atlee, William Bausman, Christian Voght, Jacob Glatz, Abraham DeHuff, Andrew Graff, John Witmer, Jr., and Jacob King. In spite of this formidable committee and its precautions for his safety, Brooks escaped from the Lancaster Jail on October 4, 1777.

At the close of the Revolutionary War Col. Slough resumed the care of his private interests, from which his attention had been more or less drawn during those trying times. Just when he took up the business of store-keeper I have been unable to ascertain. As his name does not appear among the licensed innkeepers in 1780, the inference is that for a time he had given up that vocation. We, however, find him again in the tavern line in 1789.

He became a member of Lodge No. 43, F. and A. M., of Lancaster, September 29, 1794. The regular meetings of that lodge were held at the Swan Tavern from June, 1788, until June, 1792.. He was one of the five Superintendents employed in the construction of the Philadelphia and Lancaster turn-

pike, having charge of the fifth, the most westerly division, on which he began work on March 20, 1793.

He appears to have been largely interested in stage lines, especially after the completion of the Philadelphia and Lancaster turnpike. He, in conjunction with Messrs. Hunt and Downing, in 1796, managed a line of stages that ran from Lancaster to Philadelphia every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. At the same time he, in connection with William Geer, advertised that they had put a stage on the road from Lancaster to Shippensburg, passing through Middletown, Harrisburg and Carlisle. In January, 1797, the firm of Slough & Geer was dissolved, Slough retiring.

In 1797 I find he was exercising the office of deputy postmaster in the borough.

In 1780, Jasper Yeates, George Ross, Casper Shaffner and some other friends of higher education started an Academy in the borough. At an election, held on June 22, 1782, Colonel Slough, along with Dr. Muhlenberg, Hon. W. A. Atlee, John Hubley, William Henry and Jasper Yeates, was elected a curator of the Academy.

Colonel Slough was a man of considerable wealth, as estimated in those days. In addition to being the owner of the Swan tavern, he was the holder of much other real estate. His lands began near Witmer's bridge and extended along the Conestoga river, a considerable distance towards Graeff's Landing.

On February 26, 1799, he conveyed to Frederick Seeger, William Webb, George Musser, James Morrison, George Ihlig and Zachariah Moore, the County Directors of the Poor, the tract of land on the eastern edge of the city, containing 84 acres and 152 perches, now known as the Poor House Farm, for the sum of £3,129.7.16. Two years

later the old stone Poor House was erected on this land at a cost of £5,573.4.6¼. Slough's mill, spoken of in the early records, stood on the site of the old city water works.

It is very clear that Colonel Slough was among the foremost citizens of the place during the last quarter of the last century. We find him holding public office for a period of nearly fifty years. Indeed, few of our public men were so prominent in local affairs. There could hardly be a higher tribute to his character than that fact. In all my investigations I have found but a single aspersion on his reputation. It is to be found on page 254 of Christopher Marshall's "Remembrancer," under date of July 19-20, 1780. He has these paragraphs: "Visited by William Henry; (we) took a walk in the garden (and) stayed some time in conversation; (he) said that Slough had acted very imprudently, as he had heard; that he had caused the gold, before he paid it away, to be clipped very close, and thereby procured a large sum by this, his depreciation, very unjustly. I am told that this week and the last, two hundred horses have been sent from this place, that were purchased for the use of the French army by Matthias Slough."

While William Henry must be regarded as an unimpeachable witness in any case where he testifies from personal knowledge, it must be borne in mind he does not speak from positive personal acquaintance with the story he relates, but is careful to say "as he had heard." Under the circumstances we may pursue the modern plan of giving the accused the benefit of any doubts we may have. Certain it is, as I have abundantly demonstrated in the course of this biographical sketch, that during his long and busy public career, he was always found in the very best company. He seems to have

possessed the confidence of the provincial government as fully as he had that of his fellow-townsmen.

That his connection with these horse transactions for some reason became a matter of unpleasant gossip seems to be verified by the following certificate got up by Col. Slough, to be signed by citizens of the borough of Lancaster, and intended to accompany his vouchers for horses "bought by him for the French service," that is for the French officers in the war of the Revolution:

"To all whom it may concern:

"We, the subscribers, inhabitants of the Borough of Lancaster, in the State of Pennsylvania, do certify, that during the Period in which Matthias Slough, Esq., of this Borough, was engaged in the purchase of Horses for the Service of his most Christian Majesty, he, to the best of our observation, paid the most sedulous attention to the Discharge of the Trust reposed in him. That the Purchases made by him were conducted in our opinion, with the greatest economy & frugality of the money, the advanced Prices of all Cattle duly considered, which opinion we retained during his whole Transactions, and the general Sentiments of the Inhabitants to be the same. That he took considerable pains in finding out in the different Parts of the County, the best & fittest Creatures for the public service. & buying them from his constituents, & thus from his knowledge of Horses we have reason to believe he was adequate to the Trust. That the Horses sent off by him at different times to Hartford, were in good order in general when they left this Borough, and it is further well known to some of the subscribers, that he discouraged & prevented the Rise in the Price of Horses, by not purchasing from those who attempted buying them up through the County in

order to make a Profit to themselves.*

"20th September, 1780."

Several of his sons and daughters having moved to Harrisburg, one being the wife of Governor Simon Snyder, he removed to that place himself in 1806, where he remained until his death, on September 12, 1812, in his 79th year.

That he was enterprising, energetic and progressive is to be seen along the entire course of his career. Harris records in his Biographical History of the county that he "had sufficient taste in that early day to give his family a good education. His daughter, Fanny, was an accomplished pianist, and her sweet music often attracted crowds in the evenings to listen to the harmonious melody of her strains. One of her favorite pieces was "The Rose Tree in Full Bloom." In that day there were few pianos in Lancaster." That there were few pianos in Lancaster at that early day we can well believe. Most likely there were none; only spinets.

Colonel Slough was the father of a large family. He married Mary, the daughter of George Gibson, on April 23, 1757. This George Gibson was the son of Gibson who had the first public house in Lancaster, with the hickory tree before the door. I am indebted to Samuel Evans, Esq., for the following list of their issue:

- I. Jacob, born April 23, 1758; died May, 1758.
- II. George, born June 27, 1759; he was a physician, and died October 23, 1840, at Harrisburg.
- III. Matthew, born March 25, 1762.
- IV. Jacob, born December 15, 1764; was a captain, present at Gen. St. Clair's defeat; married Miss Polly Graeff, of Lancaster, on February 20, 1805; was for many years an innkeeper; died in 1839.

* From "Notes and Queries," Vol. 1, No. 1. Fourth Series, 1891.

- V. Elizabeth, born September 9, 1767.
- VI. Mary, born March 11, 1769; died October 8, 1823; married, first, Alexander Scott; second, Governor Simon Snyder, October 16, 1814. Her first husband, Scott, was born at Big Chickies; was a large landholder; removed to Lancaster city.
- VII. Matthias, born October 8, 1771; was a Lieutenant in the United States army; died September 3, 1797.
- VIII. Henry Gibson, born April 3, 1774; died, 1800.
- IX. Robert, born October 1, 1776.
- X. Elizabeth, born August 12, 1779; died March, 1855; was married in 1809 to Joseph Clendenin, a clerk in the Land Department at Harrisburg.
- XI. Frances, born October 8, 1781; died October 27, 1837; married James Peacock, of Harrisburg, September 25, 1813.

So far as I am aware, none of his immediate descendants at present reside in this locality.

Author: Diffenderffer, Frank Ried, 1833-1921.

Title: The Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike : and biographical sketch of Col. Matthias Slough / by F. R. Diffenderffer.

Primary Material: Book

Subject(s): Slough, Matthias, 1733-1812.
Toll roads--Pennsylvania.
Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike Road.

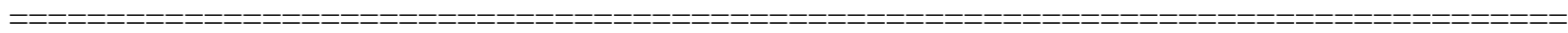
Publisher: Lancaster, Pa. : Lancaster County Historical Society,
1901-02

Description: [116]-149 p. ; 23 cm.

Series: Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society ; v. 6,
no. 8

Call Number: 974.9 L245 v.6

Location: LCHSJL -- Journal Article (reading room)



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