

THE RED ROSE QUESTION.

One hundred and thirty years ago, Henry William Stiegel gave a piece of ground to a Lutheran congregation in the then hamlet of Manheim, in this county, for the sum of five shillings, to make the deed of gift lawful, and the further honorarium of one red rose to be ever after annually paid. When the Council of Zion Lutheran Church some twelve years ago resolved to revive the ancient custom of rose payments, which for more than a century and a quarter had fallen into disuse, the event received wide notice and well-deserved credit, and praise was awarded to the man whose large-hearted liberality had instituted in this fair county a practice so beautiful, so praiseworthy and so poetical.

For twelve successive years this revived payment has been made, with ever-increasing interest and enthusiasm. Men of high intelligence and culture have on the appointed day delivered eloquent orations on the man who made the custom possible and bestowed praise without stint upon him whose poetic temperament conceived so simple, yet so rich and beautiful an honorarium in exchange for his most generous gift. To him these eloquent men awarded the credit of conceiving this beautiful "romance of Christian philanthropy." And so the case has stood until this very hour. It is true that a custom somewhat similar was known to our provincial history. Even before Stiegel's time men and women in Penn's province had been doing charitable things along this line. Old deeds made more than one hundred and fifty years ago reveal numerous cases where men gave away tracts of

land for the rental of "one peppercorn annually if the same be lawfully demanded," and, again, for the "rent of one grain of good merchantable winter wheat yearly forever, if the same shall be lawfully demanded." The lawyers tell me that similar conditions are referred to in the Commentaries of Blackstone, so the practice of giving lands of great value to friends for a trifling consideration, antedates Stiegel's gift by many years—how many it would be interesting to know, and the investigation is worth making.

Not long ago a newspaper correspondent came to the front with the announcement that Henry William Stiegel was not, as had generally been supposed, the person who first employed the red rose device as a payment for a fictitious debt. The correspondent alluded to, in proof of his contention, gave the substance of a clause which was found in a number of individual deeds which were made prior to 1750, or nearly half a century before Stiegel's, to Zion Church, by the distinguished Casper Wistar, of Philadelphia, who came to America in 1717, and established what is believed to have been the earliest glass factory in the colonies, near Salem, New Jersey. That person owned lands in what is now Berks county, which he sold to various purchasers. In making his deeds, in addition to the stipulated amounts of purchase money, he also exacted the payment of a red rose. One purpose of this correspondent was to show that not only was Stiegel not the originator of the red rose custom, but also that he was merely a latter-day copyist, who has been receiving credit for what is not only a charming bit of sentiment, but which is at the same time unique in its conception.

This accusation is unjust. There is no evidence to show that Stiegel at any time claimed originality for the red rose idea or took special praise or

honor to himself for incorporating the payment of it in his gift-deed to the church. On the other hand, we think he is entitled to all the credit which so generous a donation, voluntarily made, without other consideration than the sum of sixty-six cents to make the deed conform with the existing law's demands. If I remember aright, the evidence adduced in the Wistar deeds, the payment of the red rose was in addition to the payment of a considerable sum of money, which no doubt represented the actual value of the land. There was no poetic sentiment in that so far as we can discern at this distant day. Why the red rose was called into the transaction the correspondent did not tell us, doubtless because he did not know.

This brings me to the purpose of this communication, which is to show that Casper Wistar was no more entitled to the credit of originating the beautiful red-rose idea than Henry William Stiegel, and that one more celebrated than either of them had employed this beautiful symbol in business transactions before either of the historical personages we have referred to was born.

A parchment deed, one of the old-fashioned kind, such as our fathers used to pass to each other when they sold real estate, lately came into my hands. It was given by Martin Bowman and Elizabeth, his wife, to one, Abraham Miller, to cover a sale of the one-half of thirty-five acres of land, the land being part of a five-thousand-acre tract, which had been conveyed in 1742 to one, William Allen, by the proprietaries "under and subject to the Yearly rent of one Red Rose to the Proprietaries of the said province, their heirs and successors forever, if demanded." It is further said the above-mentioned five thousand acres are part of the fifty thousand acres which William Penn in 1682 conveyed in fee

simple to Sir John Fagg. The deed, in addition, mentions two further sales of the land by still other deeds, the last by Jacob Miller, and in the latest one, dated 1770, the sale is made "subject to the Yearly Interest thereon," which was, of course, the one red rose exacted when the five thousand acres were sold away from the original Fagg's Manor tract.

It seems to me that we have here a clue which throws some light on this red rose business. It seems to have been in use in Penn's time. He brought it with him from England or Ireland. Where did it originate? Was it a customary thing when one wished to make a gift of real estate to another in fee simple to attach this limited fee, to legalize the transaction? It is not improbable that the idea may have had its origin far back in the annals of Great Britain. We know the Lancaster Plantagenets adopted a red rose as their symbol and the York branch a white one. If access could be had to old English deeds of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it is possible the red rose would be found even at that remote period playing the same part which we have seen it did in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Here is an extract from the Bowman deed, referring back to the original Penn deed:

THIS INDENTURE, Made The Sixteenth Day of July, In the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and sixty Four Between Martin Bowman and Elizabeth his wife of the Township of Lebanon in the County of Lancaster and Province of Pennsylvania, of the one part and Abraham Miller of Lebanon Township county and province aforesaid of the other part—Whereas William Penn formerly of London and then of Dublin, Esquire, did by Deeds of Lease and Release Bearing date Respectively the Second

and Third Days of April In the Year of Our Lord 1742 (Reciting as Therein Recited and for The Consideration Therein Mentioned Grant Bargain Sell and Convey Unto William Allen in fee the full and Just proportion and Quantity of Five Thousand acres of Land to be admeasured and Computed according to The Stature of The Thirty Third of King Edward The first) Situate Laying and Being Within The province of Pennsylvania Under and subject to the Yearly Rent of one Red Rose to the Proprietaries of The Said province Their heirs and Successors for Ever if Demanded Which said Five Thousand acres is part of The Fifty Thousand acres of land Which William Penn Esquire late Proprietor and Governor of The Said Province did by Deeds of Lease and Release dated Respectively The Fourth and fifth Days of September 1682 Bargain Sell and Convey in Fee Simple Unto Sir John Fogg (Fagg) and his Heirs in Trust as to one Moiety Thereof to and for the Use of William Penn Esquire, Father of the said first named William Penn and his Heirs for Ever AND WHICH Five Thousand Acres Were also by Deeds of Lease and Release Dated Respectively The Twenty Fourth and Twenty Fifth Days of September 1731 From John Thomas and Richard Penn Esquires then proprietaries of The Said Province, &c.

The deed then proceeds to define the amount of land sold and the price paid for the same, with all the rights and appurtenances thereto belonging, "The Lotts and Libérty Land apurtenances Thereto Excepted and Reserved."

Still later, in 1770, the other half of the 35 acres conveyed in the first deed was also sold to Martin Bowman for the sum of £18. This second deed or conveyance, after reciting all the conditions in the usual way, closes by saying "Under and Subject to the Yearly Quitrent thereon that is the red rose."

Author: Diffenderffer, Frank Ried, 1833-1921.

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