

# Sutcliff's Visit to Lancaster in 1805.

The following extract was copied for the Lancaster County Historical Society by Mr. Samuel H. Ranck, of the Enoch Pratt Library, Baltimore, from a book printed in York (England). in 1815.†

The author, Robert Sutcliff, was the second son of a Dr. Abraham Sutcliff, who practiced medicine at Sheffield, England, until his death, about the year 1800. Robert was born at Sheffield, and was educated in the religious Society of Friends. He became a merchant and had many American connections, on account of which he made two voyages to America. The second voyage, and the travels connected with it, are the subjects of his book.

Sutcliff had no idea of publishing his notes of travel, which he put on paper from time to time, during his travels, but he was persuaded to permit their publication by the unknown writer of the preface to his book. He returned to England in 1806, where he remained until June, 1811, when he removed to America, with his wife and daughters. They landed in New York, and from thence moved to Philadelphia, where he died on the 11th of November of the same year, from the results of a cold which he contracted while assisting at a fire.

The places visited by Sutcliff were in the States of New York, New Jer-

† Travels in some parts of North America, in the years 1804, 1805 and 1806. 2nd edition, improved. York (Eng.), 1815. Printed for W. Alexander, and sold by him. By Robert Sutcliff. 312 pages. 12mo. Illustrated.

sey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, as far South as Richmond. Baltimore, Philadelphia and some other places he visited a number of times. His journey, when he visited Lancaster was from Washington, D. C., to Frederick, Md., York, Pa., to Columbia, to Lancaster, to Merion, Radnor and other places.

F. R. D.

“August 24th, 1805.

“This morning I passed through York-Town. At the Assizes or Session, which were held at that time, a boy of about fifteen years of age was convicted of the wilful and deliberate murder of his play-fellow, a little boy two or three years younger than himself. The reason he assigned for this cruel act was, that his companion had won a few pence from him at some game of chance. A lawyer who had attended the trial, was in the stage, and said that the culprit appeared unconcerned as to the issue; and, when convicted, showed no emotion; but, with a great deal of indifference, requested that his acquaintances would attend at his execution; which they did.

“At noon we came to the Susquehanna, on the opposite shore to Columbia, where we dined. This is one of the most beautiful and romantic parts of America. The river is here nearly one mile broad, with a number of beautiful little islands spread over it. What added greatly to the beauty of the scene were the high rocks which rise from the margin of the river, and near which were seen many eagles and fish-hawks soaring in the air; the latter frequently darting into the water, where they make a prey of the fish. In rising again, it frequently happens that the eagles pursue the hawks, and compel them to let go their prize; and, such is the swiftness

of the eagle, that he will often dart down and seize the fish before it reaches the water.

"In the shallow parts of the river many beautiful white herons are seen, stalking along in search of food, making a beautiful variety in the prospect.

"I saw a number of large, flat-bottomed boats in this river, some of which had come upwards of 300 miles, and could carry 1,000 bushels of wheat. The largest of them are more than 70 feet in length, but calculated for one voyage only, and for floating down the rivers with the stream, over shallows and falls; for when they arrive at the place of their destination they are taken in pieces, and the timber is used for other purposes. Exclusive of these boats, which are called arks, and have frequently a kind of cottage upon them, in which several persons are accommodated during the voyage, there are also many large floats of timber, which are so fixed together that they appear like one large compact body; and on them a small dwelling house is built, for the accommodation of a family. These floats sometimes contain several thousand feet of timber, which are conveyed in this way several hundred miles, at a very trifling expense. After crossing this beautiful river in the ferry-boat, we came to Columbia, a small, newly-built city, rising fast into importance. Here we again entered into the stage, and, passing through a fine, well-cultivated country, on a good turnpike-road, we came to Lancaster; which is considered the best inland town in North America, and is about twelve miles distant from Columbia.

"25th. This was the first day of the week; and, there being no meeting of Friends in Lancaster, I was induced to inquire if no Friend resided there, and was informed of a person, resident in

the town, who was a member of our Society. I called upon him, and was kindly entertained by him the whole of the afternoon. After a little conversation with him, I found that he was father to one of my customers in America. I have often thought it a great privilege in our Society that such an interchange of hospitality and freedom prevails among us. It has a great tendency to smooth the path of life, especially to strangers in a strange land. In the course of conversation in this family, I found that Major Andre and Colonel Despard had both taken up their lodgings with them, when prisoners on parole to the Americans. They spoke very respectfully of Major Andre, who had so conducted himself as to gain much upon the affections of the whole family. Some of his drawings and letters were shown to me, which they preserved with great care.\*

"26th. The short time I remained in Lancaster, I found that considerable business was done in the manufactory of locks, and latches, and rifle guns, all of which are esteemed to be superior to those imported from England. This day I came to Philadelphia, and had the company of Judge Yates the whole of the way. In the evening, I attended the burial of a young man, whom I had left but a few days before in good health."

"27th. (of fifth month, 1806). This afternoon a friend presented me with an account of a most extraordinary persecution that was carried on in the year 1763 against the last remaining

\* The name of Mr. Sutcliff's entertainer was Mr. Caleb Cope, a plasterer by trade, and Burgess of the borough in 1774. He was a resident from about 1770 until about 1813, when he moved to Burlington, N. J. His residence was on North Lime street, the house, still standing, being owned and occupied by Miss Eliza Smith. F. R. D.

part of a particular tribe of Indians. This tribe, from their residing at Conestoga, were called Conestoga Indians. On the first arrival of the English in Pennsylvania, they sent messengers to welcome them, with presents of venison, corn and skins; and entered into a treaty of friendship with William Penn. This treaty has been since frequently confirmed, and had never been violated, either on the part of the Indians or the English, until the time that these cruel transactions took place. It has always been observed that Indians, settled in the neighbourhood of white people, continually diminish; and this tribe had dwindled away, till there remained in the village no more than seven men, five women and eight children. Of these, Shebeas, who was a very old man, had assisted at the treaty with William Penn, in the year 1701, had ever since continued a faithful friend of the English, and bore the character of an exceedingly good man, for, considering his extraction, he was naturally of a most kind and benevolent temper. This little remnant of Indians were in the constant practice of addressing every new Governor of the Province, and they accordingly presented an address to John Penn, a new Governor, on his arrival; assuring him of their fidelity, and praying for a continuance of that favour and protection they had hitherto experienced.

“This address was scarcely presented when the horrible catastrophe occurred, which I am about to relate. In the townships of Paxton and Donegal, in the county of Lancaster, a number of people, actuated by the wildest religious enthusiasm, in which they were encouraged by some furious zealots among their preachers, conceived the notion that they ought to extirpate the heathen from the earth, as Joshua did

some nations of old; that they themselves, as Saints, might possess the land. Fired with this dreadful kind of zeal, on the 11th of the 12th month, 1763, fifty-seven men, well mounted, and armed with firelocks, hatchets, and hangers, came down from the two before-mentioned townships, and surrounded the little Indian village at dawn of day, broke in upon the inhabitants all at once, and fired upon, stabbed, and hewed in pieces the poor, defenseless creatures who happened to be in their huts; among them the good old Shebeas was hewed in pieces in his bed. The daughter of the venerable Shebeas, who for several years past had devoted her time to waiting upon her beloved father, was also slain. After taking off the scalps of those that were thus murdered, and setting fire to the village, the murderers mounted their horses and rode away, disappointed in not having found all the Indians at home, fourteen out of the twenty being absent. It is not, perhaps, in the power of language to express the feelings of the remaining fourteen Indians, some of whom were little children, on their return to the village, when they beheld the mangled remains of their near and dear connections and saw their habitations a heap of smoking ruins.

“The magistrates of Lancaster, hearing of what had past, came over and took the survivors under their protection, doing all in their power to console them; and, taking them by the hand, led them to Lancaster, where, for their greater security, they lodged them in a strong stone building in the town, in which they were supposed to be in perfect safety. The Governor, John Penn, immediately issued a proclamation, enjoining all officers, both civil and military, to assist in bringing to justice the perpetrators of this horrid outrage.

“The remaining fourteen Indians continued in the house provided for them in Lancaster, in the centre of the city, unconscious of danger, till the 27th of the 12th month, being thirteen days from the time their village had been destroyed. On that day a company of men, fifty in number, well mounted and armed, rode hastily into Lancaster, made the best of their way to the house where the poor Indians were lodged; with violence broke the door; and, with fury in their countenances, rushed in upon these unarmed and defenceless creatures. The Indians, seeing no protection nigh, nor any possibility of escape, immediately divided into their little families, the affrighted children clinging to their distressed parents. In unutterable anguish they fell upon their knees, protesting their love to the English people, and that, in their whole lives, they had never done them any injury. While thus imploring mercy of these hard-hearted men, they were, without distinction, hewn down with hatchets, and, in a few moments, were all laid lifeless on the floor; a deplorable instance, amongst many others, of what a pitch of wickedness the mind of man may be brought to, when acting under wrong impressions of imagined religious zeal. This cruel massacre was completed in one of the largest inland towns in America, in the broad face of day, and in so public a manner that, after the commission of this atrocious murder, the miscreants all came out and stood at the door of the house, besmeared with blood, gave three loud huzzas, mounted their horses, and rode away. Notwithstanding this publicity, and a proclamation by John Penn, the Governor, offering a reward of £200 for the discovery of any of them, yet such was the dread in which they were held that none of them were brought to justice.”

[The above account of the brutal Indian massacre in this county and city, in 1763, while presenting no new facts, is, nevertheless, interesting. The writer, Mr. Sutcliff, has, however, been led into error by his informant, whoever he may have been, as to the cause of that tragedy. He ascribes it to religious enthusiasm and over-zealous bigotry, although, as he says, it is very true, the perpetrators were anxious to get the Indians out of the country. The fact is, these same Indians were accused, and with good reasons, too, of a long-continued series of thefts, of stock and other property, from the settlers at a distance from their village, and also of harboring Indians of other tribes who were engaged in the same line of business. Forbearance ceased to be a virtue, and the wiping out of the Conestogas followed. From no point of view can that horrible massacre be extenuated, but, at the same time, there was much provocation, and among the rough pioneers little else was to be looked for. Both sides have had their defenders, and many pamphlets were written concerning the event, reflecting the views of the writers and colored as their one-sided views dictated.

F. R. D.]



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