

TERRITORIAL RAIDS ON LANCASTER COUNTY.

The fair domain of Lancaster county, with her nearly one thousand square miles of territorial area, with her thousands of water-courses to make green her fertile meadows, with her many elevated ridges and the magnificent valleys that lie between, with her hundred thriving towns and villages that nestle all over her fair surface—these and many other things, her fruitful acres and her riches in horses and cattle and almost every other conceivable form of wealth which are the pride of her people and the boast of the Commonwealth, have for well-nigh one hundred years been the envy of landowners and speculators. These have time and again sought to curtail her fair dimensions, to steal away her fairest townships, guided by self-interest and oblivious to local pride and patriotism. All these attempts during the past ninety-four years, since Lebanon was erected into a county in 1813, have failed, and for nearly a century our grand old county, the richest agricultural county in all the Union during the past three decades, has been allowed to retain her boundaries, a fact for rejoicing and grateful remembrance.

After the separation of Lancaster county from Chester county, its size was reduced to its present limits by the forming of York, Cumberland, Berks, Northumberland, Dauphin and Lebanon counties, and then began the efforts to make Lancaster county

smaller by forming other counties out of the territory that was left.

Finley County.

The first attempt of this kind of which there is a written record was made early in the nineteenth century. I say written record because no evidence has been found to show that the petition was ever presented to the Legislature. Only the written copy remains, and to this there is no date attached, which leaves us in the dark as to the exact period when this, the earliest raid on the territorial area of our county from within, was made. The paper and the handwriting indicate that the instrument of writing was drawn up in or about the year 1800, or a little later. There is no doubt that the grievances complained of in the petition were in a large measure real. Caernarvon, Colerain and Earl townships were from fifteen to twenty-seven miles from the county seat. The way was long, the roads at certain seasons almost impassable, and to reach Lancaster was a long and dreary journey, especially in inclement weather. We can hardly blame them for wishing a nearer town in which to transact their legal and other affairs. But here is the document. It speaks for itself:

“To the honorable, the Representatives of the Freemen of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in General Assembly met:

“Divers Freeholders and Inhabitants of the Townships of Earle, Caernarvon, Salisbury, Leacock, Sadsbury, Strasburg, and Colerain in the County of Lancaster, of West Fallowfield, East Fallowfield, Sadsbury, West Caln, Brandiwine, West Nantmill, and Honey-Brook, in the County of Chester; and Caernarvon in the County of Berks, beg leave to represent, that re-

lying on the known Wisdom, and Justice of your honorable House, they are Emboldened by the favorable Ear you have lately in many Instances given to divers of the Liege Subjects of this Commonwealth, who have petitioned for the Division of certain Counties within the same, State that they labour under many Inconveniences in attending on the Seats of Justice in the Several Counties, to which they respectively belong.

"In the first place Some of us are Distant Twenty seven Miles from them.

"2ndly. The great number of Suits in the Counties of Lancaster, Chester, and Berks prevent us from obtaining a Speedy trial by Jury, by which we are driven to great Expense, and have a respectable authority in Saying, a Delay of Justice is a Denial of Justice. By being an unreasonable length of time from our Homes, our Families suffer manifest Inconvenience and real injury.

"3rdly. Few who live at a great Distance from the Seat of Justice are Summoned by the Sheriff on common Juries, by which we may materially suffer, as in Trials an acquaintance with the parties and witnesses might furnish them with a better Opportunity of Deciding on the Question before them.

"4thly. In Elections those who live on the Skirts of large Counties have but a dull chance of obtaining even one member at the Board of Commissioners, or of that Important Officer the Sheriff, whose power in the returning of Juries to decide on our Fame, our Fortunes, and our lives is Immense.

"5thly. By circumscribing the Limits of Extensive Counties, and the throwing out the Excess in each by forming new Counties adjoining, Justice is then

brought to the Doors of the people. Criminals are often suffered to Escape unpunished where the prosecutor and the Witnesses are obliged to attend on Courts of Justice, situated at a great Distance from their respective Habitations.

"6thly. In Erecting new Counties you give Encouragement to Public Schools, by which Means you lend your Aid, to the Enlightening the Minds of your Constituents and of facilitating the Means of Education to the rising Generation.

"7thly and lastly. If a large Majority of any District of County within your Representation who are conveniently situated for a County and have within the same, Men of Honesty and Talents, Competent to the Execution of the Official Trusts therein, and are willing to defray the Expense of the Public Buildings for the Accommodation and the Annual Expenditures arising from the Administration of the Laws within such Limits, petition for the same, beg leave with due Deference and Respect to your better Sense and Judgment, to state, that no person out of Doors can say Nay, except the present Sheriff, Clerks, of Courts, and a few Justices of the peace, whose Limits, and of Course, whose fees may be a little Curtailed thereby.

"Under these Considerations and the General principles of Justice and sound policy, which are familiar to your honorable Body, and which have been better and more clearly stated in similar Petitions, we request that you will give us leave to bring in a Bill declaring that the District of County contained within the following Limits, Viz.:

"Beginning on the Main branch of French Creek, where the Chester County line crosses said Creek, thence through a part of Berks County, to

Muddy Creek, about one Mile above the Mouth of said Creek; thence in a Direction to strike Octorara Creek, where the Maryland line Intersects it, and as far on said Direction as will answer to run a line to the South East corner of East Fallowfield Township, parallel to the line from French Creek to Muddy Creek; thence to the said South East corner of said Township, thence to the North East corner of said Township, thence to the Thirty-eight Mile stone on the Lancaster Road, and thence to the place of beginning, be formed into a County by the Name of Finley County, with all the rights, liberties, and Immunities, granted to the other Counties within this Commonwealth, and we are in Duty bound, &c., &c.

“DAVID WHITEHILL,
WILLIAM BOYD,
“JOSHUA HAINES.”

Who were David Whitehill, William Boyd and Joshua Haines? The following biographical sketches attempt to throw some light on the subject:

DAVID WHITEHILL.

David Whitehill was the son of Hon. John Whitehill and Rachel (Creswell) Whitehill, of Salisbury township, Lancaster county. He was born May 24, 1743, and married Rachel Clemson in 1770. He resided in the old home of the Whitehills, in Salisbury township. He served as Captain in Colonel John Boyd's Regiment in the Revolutionary War. He removed to Cumberland county, three miles north of Carlisle, where he resided at the time of his death.

JOSHUA HAINES.

Jacob Haines, of East Nottingham township, Chester county, purchased a large tract of land from Richard Evan-son in 1734. Joshua, his son, lived in Salisbury township, Lancaster county,

and died in 1794, leaving his son, "Isaac, his plantation, where he now lives," and also a son, Joshua, and, I presume, the man who signed the petition.

WILLIAM BOYD.

The following may be found in the Recorder's office, Lancaster, Pa.: "Commission of William Boyd.—To be a Justice of the Peace. Given by Thomas McKean, Governor of Pennsylvania—Townships of Salisbury and Sadsbury. Given, 11th of May, 1802." It has been proven the signature upon the petition to form a new county is that of 'Squire William Boyd, who belonged to a family of prominence in Salisbury township, and identified with the early history of Pequea Presbyterian Church.

Penn County.

The next attempt to carve up Lancaster county was made in December, 1819. James Colwell, of Lancaster county, and James Keller, of Chester county, introduced petitions in the House of Representatives, praying for the erection of a new county, to be taken from Lancaster and Chester counties, to be called Penn county.

Two years later, in 1820, John Lightner, of Lancaster county, introduced petitions in the House of Representatives praying for the erection of a new county to be taken from Lancaster, Chester and Berks, to be called Conestoga county. The principal reason for the forming of the new counties was that they were too far from the seat of justice, and criminals were often allowed to go free rather than undertake the journey.

Mr. Samuel McKean presented remonstrances from the inhabitants of Honeybrook and West Caln twnships, of Chester county, and David Morrison presented remonstrances from the

people of Drumore, Lancaster county, asking (should the county be formed) they be allowed to remain in these old counties.

Conewago County.

In 1824, '25 and '26 an effort was made to form a new county, to be called Conewago, out of portions of Lancaster, Dauphin and Lebanon. Of this proposed county an excellent map is still in existence and is herewith exhibited. The county was to consist of six townships, of which three were to be taken from Lancaster county, namely, Mount Joy, Donegal and Rapho; two from Dauphin, Derry and Londonderry, and one from Lebanon, also called Londonderry. These would have made a compact county, nearly circular in shape, with the Susquehanna and Swatara rivers on the southern and western boundaries and the Big Chickies on the east, and extending northward as far as Mount Hope. The number of inhabitants in the six townships was estimated at 15,633, and the taxables at 3,246. Of the former 10,582, or nearly 68 per cent., were to be taken from Lancaster county, 22 per cent. from Dauphin, and about 10 per cent. from Lebanon. It would have included the borough of Marietta, the towns of Bainbridge, Maytown, Mount Joy, Campbellstown, Springville, Richland and Elizabethtown; the latter was to be the county seat.

The chief mover in the enterprise was Jacob Gish, a member of the Legislature at that time, and a wealthy landowner, residing on Conoy creek, some distance below Elizabethtown. In all probability he was a real estate owner in Elizabethtown itself, and this new county project must have appealed to his interests in a very emphatic manner. At any rate, he was a zealous

advocate of the measure, although it does not appear to have developed much outside strength, the map filed in the Archives and the following facts from the House record being the only attesting memorial of this attempt to make Elizabethtown the Shiretown of a new county.

In the Senate journals of 1824-25-26-27, not a line is to be found in reference to the proposed new county, but on consulting the House journals for these years better fortune attended the research.

On the 22d of December, 1824, a bill creating a county out of parts of Lancaster, Dauphin and Lebanon was referred to a committee consisting of Messrs. John Chandler, Jr., of Chester; Charles Gleim, of Lebanon; Calvin Blythe, of Mifflin; Robert E. Hobart, of Montgomery; Joseph Rankin, of Indiana; William M. Meredith, of Philadelphia, and William Thompson, of Chester.

The next day, December 23, 1824, Mr. Chandler, "from the committee to whom was referred that item of unfinished business, reported a bill, No. 104, entitled, 'An act erecting parts of Lancaster, Dauphin and Lebanon into a separate county called Conewago.' "

On the 14th of January, 1825, Mr. Nathaniel Lightner, of Lancaster, presented a petition for a new county out of parts of Lancaster and Dauphin.

On the 5th of February, 1825, Mr. Gleim, of Lebanon, presented four petitions against the proposed new county out of Lancaster, Dauphin and Lebanon.

On the 23d of December, 1825, really the beginning of the next year's session, the new county project was referred to a committee consisting of Messrs. Henry Haines, of Lancaster; Jacob M. Wise, of Westmoreland; Christian Snyder, of Bedford; William

Beatty, of Allegheny, and Aaron Kerr, of Washington.

On the 24th of December, 1825, Mr. Haines presented six petitions, chiefly from Lancaster, in favor of the measure.

On the 3d of January, 1826, Mr. Haines presented a similar petition.

On the 7th of January, 1826, Mr. Haines reported the bill for the erection of the new county, and on the 7th of January, 17th of January, 27th of January, and the 8th of February, of the same year, presented a number of petitions in favor of the measure.

There is nothing more in reference to the matter, and this must have been the end of it.

Jacob Peelor, the maker of the map, was appointed a Justice of the Peace for Donegal township in 1818, and resided on the south side of Main street, in Elizabethtown. When the town was incorporated, in 1827, he was chosen Clerk of Council, and held the same office during the following year. In 1829 he was chosen Burgess. He was evidently an accomplished surveyor, draughtsman and civil engineer, as his map proves. I find that in April, 1854, Jacob Peelor moved to Lancaster, where he bought the store property of Benjamin Ober, on South Queen street, immediately below the new market house. No further trace of him has been found. No doubt Peelor was the owner of landed estate in Elizabethtown, and thereby became interested in the new county project.

Monroe County.

Strange to say, the erection of a new county out of the same townships shown on the map was again made six years later, in 1832. This time the name to be adopted was Monroe, instead of Conewago. This change in name was perhaps made in order to throw a cloud over the earlier effort.

The following proceedings of a meeting of the inhabitants, favorable to the erection of the county of Monroe, is good reading at this time. The Colonel Mathiot, to whom the letter is addressed, was a member of the Legislature from Westmoreland county, and in his day one of the enterprising citizens of Western Pennsylvania.

"Elizabethtown, February 13, 1832.

"To Jacob D. Mathiot, Esq.

"Dear Sir: At a large and respectable Meeting of the citizens residing within the bounds of the contemplated Monroe County, convened agreeable to previous notice at the house of J. Maglauchlin, in the borough of Elizabethtown, on Monday, the 13th instant; George Redsecker, Sen., was called to the chair; Samuel Shrode appointed Vice-President, and Adams Campbell and Andrew Wade, Esquires, Secretaries.

"After having examined the body of the 'Remonstrances' that have been presented to your honorable bodies, to influence your minds against the division, it was unanimously Resolved, That so much of the proceedings of this meeting be presented to each member of the House, so as to give an idea of our grievances embracing such facts that no advocate for the remonstrance can deny. A Committee of five being appointed, consisting of Messrs. Charles Ebbeke, Samuel Redsecker, Col. Abraham Greenawalt, Samuel Hoffer, Esquire, Dauphin, and Abraham Gish, of West Donegal, retired, and in a few minutes reported the following, by Mr. Ebbeke:

"'Mr. President: The Committee appointed to report to this Meeting, the items of grievances necessary to lay before the Legislature, have requested me, as their chairman, to report the following:

“First. Our claims for the division are the impossibility of having anything done in our Courts, in any reasonable time, owing to the press of business.

“Second. From all information received there is now on the Prothonotary's Docket, from 18,000 to 30,000 suits, which cannot be determined in thirty years, and hold Court without intermission.

“Third. There is at this time Courts of Quarter Sessions, District Court, Circuit Court, and Mayor's Court, some of which are almost constantly in session, notwithstanding suits are increasing instead of diminishing.

“Fourth. The Mayor's Court having been established for the city expressly, the expenses for the same are drawn from the county treasury, where the county receives no benefit, which is a grievance hard to be borne.

“Fifth. The population of Monroe county is between 12,000 and 14,000, a number of whom, particularly those that reside in the county of Lancaster have between twenty and thirty miles to the seat of justice, which makes it inconvenient and expensive.

“Sixth. Owing to the impossibility of determining suits, the witnesses expend their time and money in traveling to and from the Court, frequently a witness in the same suit), without a probability of it being determined, or expenses ever paid.

“Seventh. As a proposition has already been presented to the House of Representatives, offering to deposit \$10,000 in the Farmers' Bank, of Lancaster, in a certain period, for the purpose of erecting the Public Buildings, in the opinion of the Committee, will obviate all weight and remonstrances can have, deeming it almost

or altogether sufficient to erect said buildings.

“Resolved, That this Meeting humbly pray the House of Representatives to give our claims a serious investigation as a Constitutional right—not as a matter of courtesy.

“Resolved, That this Meeting recommend the Members of the House to James Mackay, Esq., for any information that they shall desire.

“GEORGE REDSECKER, SEN.,
“President;

“SAMUEL SHRODE,
“Vice-President.

“A. CAMPBELL, Secretary,

“A. WADE, Assistant Secretary.”

Later Attempts.

Other efforts to divide the county have been made at more recent dates. As late as 1852 the borough of Columbia started such a project on the York county side of the Susquehanna, and part of that county was to be included in the new county. Still later, in 1854, Ephrata tried her hand at the game of becoming a county seat, the late Martin Gross being the instigator, but this scheme also came to naught.

The most recent attempt to curtail the fair proportions of Lancaster county occurred in 1858, and, strange to say, very nearly along the lines where the earliest attempt, already related, was made. The scheme was again fathered by Lancaster county and Chester county men. Drumore, Fulton, Little Britain, Eden, Bart and Colerain townships, a no inconsiderable area of the county, were to be united with Oxford, West Fallowfield, Londonderry and the Nottingham townships of Chester county, to form a new county, to be called Octorara—the name was the best part of the scheme. The borough of Oxford, in Chester county, was to be the county

seat. The plan lacked the financial backing necessary to make it a success, and it consequently failed.

Let us turn back for a moment and briefly review how these several schemes, eight in number, would have affected this grand old county. She would have been shorn of the fairest portion of her domain. Caernarvon, Salisbury, Earl, Leacock, Sadsbury, Strasburg, Colerain, Drumore, Little Britain, Fulton, Bart, Eden, Mount Joy, Donegal and Rapho townships were to have been taken from her, to say nothing of those which were to be included in the other schemes that did not reach the Legislature at all. Taken together, they included at least one-third of the present area of the county. Whatever merit there may have been in the arguments put forth in the foregoing petitions—and it cannot be denied they had certain merits—these are no longer valid. Steam and trolley roads now traverse the county in all directions, and even the most remote citizen can now, or soon will be, able to reach the county seat in an hour or two with comfort. We can to-day congratulate ourselves upon the failure of all these schemes for our territorial dismemberment.

Author: Steinman, George.

Title: Territorial raids on Lancaster County / by George Steinman,
Esq.

Primary Material: Book

Subject(s): Lancaster County (Pa.)--Boundaries.
Lancaster County (Pa.)--Politics and government--1775-1865.

Publisher: Lancaster, Pa. : Lancaster County Historical Society,
1903/1904

Description: [97]-109 p. : ill. ; 23 cm.

Series: Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society ; v. 8,
no. 4

Call Number: 974.9 L245 v.8

Location: LCHSJL -- Journal Article (reading room)

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