

JOHN SCOTT AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The history of the public schools of the community surrounding Donegal is linked with the early history of Donegal itself. Especially is this true with regard to the townships of East Donegal and Conoy and the Borough of Marietta. Prior to the establishment of the public school system of Pennsylvania, the school masters of these localities came from Donegal. According to the most authentic information, the first school house in East Donegal township was built at Donegal Springs, a few years after the church was built. Colin McFarquhar, one of the early ministers of Donegal Church, taught a classical school, and, during his residence in Maytown, prepared a number of young men for college. The second oldest school house stood near the spring in Duffy's Park, about a mile outside of Marietta. This was as early as 1750, and an Irishman, named Murphy, taught here prior to the Revolution. Thomas Marshall Boggs, a Donegal pastor, taught a classical school in Marietta and Mount Joy. Joseph Jeffries, an Irishman, was one of the first teachers in the Borough of Marietta. He had previously taught at Donegal Church and at Breneman's, in Conoy.

The first school in Marietta, according to the best authority, was kept by a Mr. McCready on Walnut street. Afterward Mr. Jamison kept a school on Front street, but this became too

busy and noisy, especially in rafting seasons, and Mr. Jamison removed his school to a one-story frame house in an alley just in the rear of the Bowman residence.

When Messrs. Anderson and Cook laid out portions of their respective farms into town lots, called Waterford and New Haven, in what is now the borough of Marietta, the former devoted the triangle, now occupied by the Marietta High School, for a school house and play ground, and it was here that the "Bell School" house was built. This was distinguished from other schools of later date by being called the "Public School." It was of brick, a full story high and about forty feet square, surmounted by a belfry at the east end, in which was a small but remarkably clear and loud-toned bell, said to have been purchased from a Philadelphia steamboat, and, therefore, in the habit of sounding loud to overcome the noises of city wharves and streets. James Anderson, who was primarily responsible for the establishment of this school in having provided the land in laying out his town, was one of the early Donegal settlers.

In what is now Conoy township, the early schools were taught by Donegal masters; and, according to some authorities, the common school system was accepted before the township of Conoy was cut off from Donegal in 1842.

John Scott, the subject of this sketch, was born in Ireland on the first day of May, 1773, and died on the eighth day of October, 1842. He came to Donegal in the last years of the Eighteenth Century. Scott was a fence maker and plied his trade among the early settlers and farmers of this community. This is attested by the

large slab which marks his resting place in the Donegal Cemetery, immediately adjoining the church, for there appears thereon two posts, with a number of rails, the top ones of which are broken. The following story is told explanatory of this design:

A prominent member of the Donegal congregation was responsible for the design in that he prevailed upon John Scott's executor to procure it. When asked in later years the significance of the broken rails, he said it indicated that the bars had been broken and John Scott's soul let through. The same member of the congregation claimed to be the author of the following lines which appear on the slab:

"How loved, how valued once, avails
thee not,
To whom related or by whom begot,
A heap of dust alone remains of
thee,
'Tis all thou art and all the proud
shall be."

Scott was unmarried and lived in a small house in what is now the village of Maytown. He was frugal in his mode of living and evidently saved his earnings, for when he died in 1842, he left an estate valued at several thousand dollars.

His last will and testament reads as follows:

In the name of God; Amen. I, John Scott, of Donegal township, Lancaster county and State of Pennsylvania, calling to mind the mortality of my body and being of sound and perfect mind ordain this to be my last will and testament. And first, I recommend my soul unto God who gave it, my body to the dust in the hope of a glorious resurrection at the last day through the merits of my blessed Savior. And second, it is my will that my body be buried in decent manner and as respect what God has given

me in this life is ordained and bequeathed in the following manner—that all my just debts be paid and the remainder of my real and personal property be applied to the maintaining and support of my beloved, honored mother during her natural life, and at her decease, if anything remains, to be placed in the following manner—that two stones be placed on our graves not to exceed two hundred dollars and the remainder to be applied to the following use, to John McKee one hundred dollars, and to the education of poor children of all denominations to read the Bible, the best of all books, and it is my will that Peter Creabel and William Kearr be my executors of this my last will and testament, this third day of February, 1820.

Witness my hand and seal,

JOHN SCOTT.

N. B.—I do empower my executors to sell my real and personal property and apply the same to the use above mentioned by me.

JOHN SCOTT.

The spelling and construction of this will indicate that Scott was not a man of culture or education, and it is very doubtful, in my mind, whether his money was used for the purpose for which he intended it, for he evidently had in mind the religious rather than secular education of poor children.

A feature of this will, which may or may not be of particular significance, is the fact that Scott named as his executors William Kearr, a Scotch Irishman and Donegal pastor, and Peter Creabel, a Pennsylvania German.

Scott's mother had evidently died before him, for immediately upon his death there was an attempt on the part of the authorities to have his

estate escheated to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and this could only have been accomplished in view of the fact that he had no heirs or legal representatives to survive him. The proceedings to escheat the estate were resisted and Abram N. Cassel, who was one of the School Directors of Donegal township, interested Jacob Foreman, a member of the Assembly of Pennsylvania from Conoy township, and William Hiester, a member of the Senate, in the matter, with the result that on the fourth day of April, 1843, Hon. David R. Porter, then Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, approved a law, entitled: "An act to authorize the sale and conveyance of certain real estate, and for other purposes."

This Act of Assembly was one of those omnibus bills, which contain a number of subjects not related in any way to one another. For instance, the first section provided that "the trustees of the four United Congregations of Presbyterians or Reformed Churches in Lancaster county, be and they are, hereby authorized and empowered to sell certain real estate;" another section legalized a misnomer of the Trustees of Franklin College, in a certain conveyance of real estate; another section appointed certain commissioners to receive money, superseding certain others appointed in 1828; another section authorized the Trustees of Blockley Baptist Church, in the county of Philadelphia, to erect a new church building; and, finally, section 7, vested certain real estate in Nancy Call, in Westmoreland county, in the western part of the State. Section 3 of this Act of Assembly was as follows:

"That Peter Graybill, surviving executor of the last will and testament

of John Scott, late of Donegal township, Lancaster county, deceased, be and hereby is authorized to pay over to the treasurers of the townships of East Donegal and Conoy, in the said county, in proportion to the number of taxables in each, the proceeds of the estate of the said John Scott, which may remain after paying the debts of the said deceased, and the bequests mentioned in the said will, who shall, with the approbation of the Court of Common Pleas of the said county, invest the same in bonds secured by mortgage on real estate, within said county, in trust for the support of the schools of said townships, and shall apply the interest thereof from time to time, as the same may be received, as may be directed by the School Directors of said townships respectively."

The best historic authority, in writing of John Scott, says that upon his death he devised the bulk of his property to the schools of Donegal. While it is true that the balance of his estate was distributed among the school districts of what was then Donegal township, it was only done in accordance with the preceding section of the Act of the General Assembly of 1843, and not in accordance with his last will and testament.

The common school system of Pennsylvania was established by Act of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania, approved the first day of April, 1834, but the citizens of Donegal township refused to accept the law and declined to levy a tax to support the same. A. N. Cassel, William D. Slaymaker and others, who were friends of the common school law, were elected School Directors and used their best endeavors to acquaint the citizens of the community with the good features

of the system. They employed teachers and made themselves personally responsible for the teachers' salaries. This was not without its effect, for in the following year, we are told, the farmers of the district came to the support of the law and taxes were levied in accordance therewith.

Upon the erection of Conoy township in 1842, it was immediately decided to adopt the system, and a School Board, consisting of Frederick Hipple, Dr. Robert H. Jones, John Haldeman, Solomon Haldeman, John W. Hamilton and John Smith, Jr., was elected. This board held its first meeting April 4, 1842, whereupon the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

"That Conoy township does accept of the common school system, to commence on the first Monday of June next, and that the County Commissioners be requested to make the necessary arrangements to carry out said system according to the Act of Assembly."

On April 8, 1844, the Conoy Township School Board passed a resolution to build four new houses out of the fund "bequeathed by John Scott, of Donegal," one of said houses to be situated in Bainbridge, one at Stony Run, near Collins' Station, one at John Kob's on the Falmouth and Elizabeth-town turnpike, and one at Ebersole's. These houses were built by contract at prices from \$220 to \$265, and the houses at Kob's and Ebersole's are still used for school purposes, while the one at Falmouth was abandoned some years ago.

The amount received by Conoy township from the John Scott estate, in accordance with the Act of Assembly before referred to, was \$1,234.18, and a larger amount must have been received by East Donegal township.

This Act of Assembly shows that political log rolling was as common in 1843, if not more so, than it is to-day. The historian says that Mr. A. N. Cassel got Mr. Jacob Foreman, member of the Legislature from Conoy township, interested in the bill, as well as William Hiester, who was a member of the Senate. While Conoy township had been cut off from Donegal prior to this time, it is evident that Mr. Cassel had to agree that Conoy township should get a portion of the fund in return for Mr. Foreman's support of the measure, while Mr. Foreman evidently had to promise the members from Philadelphia county to vote for that section of the bill authorizing the erection of the Blockley Baptist Church; and William Hiester, a member of the Senate, must have insisted upon those portions of the bill relating to Franklin College and the election of certain commissioners.

It was as true in 1843 as it is to-day that the Legislative game is one of give and take and in order to accomplish a good end, such as that accomplished by Mr. Foreman and Mr. Hiester, it is often necessary to reciprocate by voting for other measures in which members from other sections are interested, even though they might not be quite so meritorious.

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