

The Influence of Lancaster County on the Pennsylvania Frontier.

Address by Hon. Frederick A. Godcharles.

After music Hon. Frederick A. Godcharles, Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, delivered an informal address on "The Influence of Lancaster County on the Pennsylvania Frontier." He spoke as follows:

With an Historical Society such as is yours, whose members so thoroughly understand the history and traditions of Provincial Pennsylvania, it is no small concern to one invited to address you upon such an occasion to select a subject which could in any degree either hold your attention or leave with you a single pleasant reflection.

Pennsylvanians have always been too modest to sing the praises of those who have made Pennsylvania great; the school children of to-day, as in the past, have never been properly thrilled with the deeds of patriotic daring on our own frontiers and bloody battlefields, but each in his turn has studied the deeds of the heroes of other states. Where is the school boy or girl who does not know something of Paul Revere's Ride, the Boston Tea Party, etc.? But how many know of the trials and tribulations of the sturdy Scotch-Irish and hardy German settlers on our own frontiers, of the hundreds of Indian incursions within the very limits of our busy towns and cities of to-day; of the various expeditions against the savages during and subsequent to the French and Indian War and of the battles fought on our very soil during each of the great wars in our country? I dare say that but a few are intimately acquainted with these heroes at home, but it is hoped that in the future more earnest effort may be made to bring this great Commonwealth before the country in the degree which the exploits and deeds of our people have long since merited.

In this spirit I have thought that you natives of old Lancaster county, with a full portion of this same modesty, may not be familiar with the influence exerted by many of your heroic early citizens on the frontiers of our Province; how these brave men and women pushed out from old Lancaster, following the great natural highways, crossing the mountains and again pushed into the western part of our state, in each movement ever leading the native settlers in their determined fight to permanently locate their families on the fertile and coveted soil of Penn's Woods.

As a native of Northumberland county, and a descendant of some of your own people, I am particularly pleased this evening to devote the few minutes allotted to me in relating a few of my impressions of the influence exerted by Lancaster countians on the Frontiers of Pennsylvania.

The first settlers in what is now Central Pennsylvania were those intrepid, hard characters known as the Indian traders. The most prominent of these were from Lancaster county. Jacques LeTort, first settled at Conoy, then in Donegal township, Lancaster county, and later moved up the Susquehanna to the confluence of the North and West branches, and opened a store on what has long been known as the Big Island, at Sunbury.

John Harris, a native of England, first selected Lancaster county as a home, then moved farther towards the center of the Province and became the

first white settler at Paxton. It was he who first introduced the plow on the Susquehanna in the territory which is now above Lancaster County. He was the father of Captain John Harris, founder of Harrisburg.

Other Lancaster County Indian Traders who pushed into the great wilderness and became factors in planting white settlements on the frontiers were the Galbraths, who went into the Cumberland Valley, George Gibson, who went to what is now Perry county, and John Wilkins, Henry Bealy, Col. James Hamilton, Lazarus Lowry and his four brave sons, John, James, Daniel and Alexander, all of whom pushed into the Allegheny and Ohio regions.

The early settlers who first learned the attractions of the Upper Susquehanna and Juniata Valleys were principally Scotch-Irish or English; later the German and Swiss moved into this territory. Of the earlier settlers the vast majority came from Lancaster county.

Not only did these sturdy settlers spread the influence of Lancaster county, but the wagons and pack horses used by them and on the frontiers were obtained there.

The Indians became a most serious menace after the defeat of Braddock, July 9, 1775, and the entire frontiers of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia were exposed to the ravages of the French and Indians.

Dreadful outrages and cruel murders became almost daily occurrences. The Indians destroyed the settlements of Great Cove, in Cumberland county, others on the Tulpehocken in Berks, others along Penn's Creek in what is now Snyder county, and many other places on both sides of the Susquehanna. In January, 1756, French and their Indian Allies, formed marauding parties which attacked English settlers on the Juniata, murdering and scalping those who did not flee.

These incursions caused forts to be built as protection to the settlers, and soon small stockades sprung up along the streams and traveled highways.

The Provincial authorities gathered the friendly Indians from the Susquehanna to Philadelphia, that they might not be mistaken for enemies. They did not remain there long, but headed by their great leaders, Sarroyady and Montour, at the risk of their lives, they hurried to visit the several tribes located along the Susquehanna and endeavored to persuade them to live at peace with the white settlers of Pennsylvania.

It was at this time that Lancaster County rendered the most efficient service to the frontier settlements. The people of this county joined with those of the frontier counties of Pennsylvania in expressing the highest indignation because the Provincial Assembly, with its Quaker personnel, refused to adopt war like measures to put a stop to these massacres. They held public meetings here in Lancaster and resolved to go to Philadelphia and compel the Provincial authorities to pass proper laws to defend the country. They sent dead bodies and some badly mangled victims to Philadelphia, where they hauled them through the streets in wagons bearing placards that they were victims of Quaker apathy.

Treaties were made with the Indians at Easton, but only to be broken.

War was inevitable, but the Quakers could not see it.

The demand for a fort at the confluence of the North and West Branches of the Susquehanna was made known at a very early date. The friendly In-

dians, under that great Shikellimy viceroy of the Six Nations, urged the Provincial authorities to build a fort there, granting them not only the ground but promising to assist in the actual building and to send every moral support in their power.

Moravian missionaries had established a mission there and provided a blacksmith who could repair guns for the Indians and do such work as would spare them from taking it to Tulpehocken.

After years of debate among the Quakers in authority, it was finally, in 1755, decided that a fort should be built at Shamokin, as the present site of Sunbury was then known. Of the twenty-five companies ordered to be raised, nine were placed under the command of Lt. Col. Conrad Weiser, eight under Major James Burd, called Augusta regiment, and sent to Upper Susquehanna, and eight under Col. John Armstrong along the west side of the Susquehanna.

Col. William Clapham, of Philadelphia, was directed to recruit a regiment for this purpose and build the fort according to plans prepared in London. The principal recruiting for this hazardous enterprise was done by Joseph Shippen, of Lancaster, who was commissioned a Captain. He was ably assisted by his distinguished father, Edward Shippen, and his brother-in-law, Major James Burd, who was placed next in command to Colonel Clapham. The story of the expedition, from the moment of signing up the first raw recruit, buying food, horses, canoes, etc., training the soldiers at Harris's Ferry, and building bateaux at Hunter's and Halifax, the treacherous march up the river, with the long halt at McKees, where it was necessary to build Fort Armstrong in the spring of 1756, to the landing at Shamokin, was the sad story of trial and privation, known so well to those hardy ancestors of ours in these early days. The actual work of building this fort fell to Lancaster countians and nearly every officer in the garrison came from this county, as did the larger portion of the command.

The correspondence carried on between Captain Joseph Shippen and his father, Edward Shippen, and brother, Chief Justice Edward Shippen, Jr., reveals not only the beautiful family life of the Shippens, but gives the most intimate account of the terrible ordeal through which those sturdy men suffered that the frontiers could be protected from French invasion and stealthy Indian incursions.

During the building of the fort, which required several years, there were many times when it was momentarily expected that the French and their Indian allies would swoop down upon and attack Fort Augusta. On many occasions it was necessary to despatch expeditions a long distance into the enemy's country, both as a matter of protecting the fort during its erection, and to ascertain the location of the towns of the enemy and their numerical strength. Each one of these expeditions was planned by a Lancaster countian and commanded by that intrepid warrior from your county, Captain John Hambright, than whom few ever gained a more respected reputation in our country. Later the command of this important fortification was entrusted to that capable officer, then Lieu. Col. James Burd. He was later succeeded by Capt. Joseph Shippen, and he by other Lancaster countians. In fact, the only prominent officer during this time, not from Lancaster county, was the unpop-

ular and incompetent commander, Col. Wm. Clapham, who was relieved of his commission by the Provincial Council, so it is a fact that the permanent settlement of what is now Central Pennsylvania was due to the bravery and sacrifice of the noble sons of Lancaster County.

Thus Lancaster County had furnished the majority of the troops and the ablest officers during the building of this most important of all the frontier fortifications.

Again, in August, 1763, volunteers from Lancaster County were sent to the West Branch Valley, as they were again years later, when they accompanied Col. Hartley and General John Sullivan in their expeditions against the Indians in Northern and Central Pennsylvania.

Among the large list of those from Lancaster county who went to the frontiers of our great state and there by their military service or permanent residence exerted a definite influence for the weal of their fellow men might be mentioned the following: Colonel Joseph Shippen and Major James Burd, brothers-in-law and most distinguished officers of the Augusta regiment, mention of whom has been previously made. General Edward Hand, who while not a success as an Indian fighter, rendered most distinguished services on the western frontier and later at Fort Augusta.

Captain John Hambright, who served at Fort Augusta from the first landing of troops until the garrison was ordered away by Provincial Council and the fort abandoned. Every expedition against the French and Indians which was sent from this advanced fortification during the years of its activity was led by this brave and capable officer. He remained in Northumberland county and became one of its most honored and valued citizens, holding many positions of honor and trust.

Captain John Boyd went into what is now Northumberland county and was one of the dashing and brave commanders who successfully fought the Indians until captured near Roystown. With a companion named Ross he was made to suffer extreme torture, and was an eye witness to the cruel burning of Ross and he awaited his turn at the stake, but was saved by an Indian squaw who claimed him as her son. He was taken to Canada, where he lived until released at the close of the war. He returned to Northumberland, where he became one of the most prominent citizens of the county, holding many positions of distinction and was a leading merchant and miller. The old Indian squaw visited him and he made two trips to Canada to visit among the Indians who had held him captive.

Bernard Hubley, son of Lieut. Colonel Adam Hubley, went into Northumberland County as an officer of the German regiment, sent to protect the settlers from Indian incursions when that country was stripped of its able-bodied men then serving in the Continental army. He became a prominent citizen of his adopted county and began writing a history of the Revolution which was destined to be the best story of that great war, but he died before the publication of the third volume, and he had planned the work to be of eight such volumes. The first two volumes are very rare and highly prized by those fortunate to possess copies.

Colonel Matthew Smith, a hero of the French and Indian war, one of the Paxtang Boys, a distinguished officer of the Revolution, vice president of the

State, a prothonotary of Northumberland county and its leading citizen until the time of his death, July 22, 1794, was a native of Lancaster county and rushed into the terrified West Branch Valley at the time the British and Indians swooped down upon Fort Muncy and Fort Freeland and threatened to capture or invest Fort Augusta.

When he died the following obituary notice appeared in Kennedy's Gazette, July 30, 1794: "Died, the 22nd inst, about sunset, at Milton, Col. Mat. Smith, aged 54 years, being one of the first patriots for liberty; went to Canada in the year 1756, and suffered extremities. He was once Prothonotary of Northumberland county and was vice president of the State. Was interred 23rd inst., attended by a large number of his friends and acquaintances, together with the volunteer company of Light Infantry from Milton, conducted by Major Pratt and commanded by Capt. James Boyd, who after marching about six miles to Warrior Run burying ground and shedding a tear over the old patriots grave, deposited his remains with three well directed volleys and returned home in good order." Another account of this funeral says his body was carried in relays by the volunteer soldiers the entire distance of six miles.

Lieutenant Samuel J. Atlee and Casper Weitzel were two other prominent Lancastrians; the latter was the first resident practicing attorney; he was a member of the Provincial Convention and became a Major in the Revolution.

Captain Stephen Chambers, the first lawyer in Northumberland county, came from Lancaster county and returned there, where he was killed in a duel fought May, 1789, by Dr. Jacob Rieger. Captain Chambers was a brilliant soldier and served with the 12th Regiment of the Continental Line. He served in several sessions of the General Assembly.

Other soldiers from Lancaster were Col. Thomas Hartley, Col. Thos. Lloyd, Abraham Scott, Captain and hero of Germantown and Brandywine, member General Assembly; Col. Alexander Hunter, who commanded Fort Augusta longer than any other officer and through the trying period of the Revolution. Col. William Cooke, who so ably commanded the 12th Regiment, was a native of Lancaster County. He was a member of Provincial Convention and the Constitutional Convention; member General Assembly, Judge of the Courts and held other positions of honor and trust. His son, John, was also a distinguished officer of the Revolution.

Adjutant Jasper Ewing, who went into Northumberland County with General Hand, became a permanent resident, attorney and leading politician of the county. Major James Crawford was also a native of Lancaster, as were many other officers of the early days on the Frontiers.

Charles Smith, author of Smiths Laws, went to Sunbury from Lancaster and afterwards returned there. He was one of the eminent lawyers of his day, became a Judge, married a daughter of Jasper Yeates, and built the beautiful home known as "Hardwicke."

In fact, so many of the early citizens on the frontiers came from old Lancaster that we descendants feel we belong to this county, of which you and the entire Commonwealth are so proud.

At the conclusion of the literary program the society passed a unanimous rising vote of thanks to the musicians, the speakers and others who lent their aid in making the social a success; and also to the Iris Club for the free use of their building for the occasion.

The remainder of the evening was taken up by the luncheon and the social hour.

All of which is respectfully submitted:

CHAS. I. LANDIS,
J. L. SUMMY,
A. K. HOSTETTER,
L. B. HERR,
H. FRANK ESHLEMAN,
I. C. ARNOLD,
GEO. F. K. BRISMAN,
D. F. MAGEE,
MARTHA BLADEN CLARK,
MARY N. ROBINSON,
ADALINE B. SPINDLER,
D. B. LANDIS,
HARRY STEHMAN, JR.,

Executive Committee.

Author: Godcharles, Frederic Antes, 1872-

Title: The influence of Lancaster County on the Pennsylvania frontier / address by Hon. Frederick A. Godcharles.

Primary Material: Book

Subject(s): Frontier and pioneer life.
Land settlement.
Pennsylvania--History--Colonial period, ca. 1600-1775.

Publisher: Lancaster, Pa. : Lancaster County Historical Society, 1920

Description: 77-82 p. ; 23 cm.

Series: Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society ; v. 24,
no. 4

Call Number: 974.9 L245 v.24

Location: LCHSJL -- Journal Article (reading room)

+++++

Institution Name
Institution Address
Institution Phone Number
Institution E-mail Address