

II. RIVAL FERRIES OVER THE SUSQUEHANNA IN 1787— WRIGHT'S AND ANDERSON'S

By Geo. R. Prowell, Esq.

The recent construction of two large bridges across the Susquehanna at Harrisburg, and the plan proposed to have the river, between Columbia and Wrightsville, spanned by a large bridge with the accommodations sufficient for all kinds of traffic at the present time, has brought forth this story. It relates largely to the pioneer ferries of the Susquehanna, and the early modes of transportation across this stream, unfortunately too shallow for large steam boat navigation.

Much attention was paid in Colonial days in the towns of Lancaster and York, to the two ferries known as Wright's and Anderson's, located only three miles apart. It was nearly fifty years ago, that Gen. A. H. Glatz, of York, wrote an article, describing the importance of the Anderson's Ferry, which during the early period of the last century was owned by one of his ancestors, and known as the Glatz Ferry.

A copy of the Pennsylvania Chronicle and the York Weekly Advertiser, published December 19, 1787, two years before Washington was chosen President, gives an account of the controversy between the two ferries mentioned. This paper was recently presented to the York County Historical Society. The facts relating to this controversy are brought out in advertisements which appear in the columns of the paper mentioned, and succeeding issues of the same journal.

Only a few copies of the Pennsylvania Chronicle, the first weekly paper, published in York, are in existence. It continued to be published for three years, when the press and types were sold to a firm in Harrisburg, and a paper was started there called the Oracle of Dauphin. The next local paper published in York was the Pennsylvania Herald and the York General Advertiser, founded by John and Samuel Edie, in 1789, a short time before Washington's first inauguration. It was later called the York Recorder, and still later the York Republican, which was continued until 1890. Almost the entire files from 1789 down to 1890 are in the York County Historical Society. They contain real treasures of local history, and are frequently consulted by antiquarians.

A FERRY CONTROVERSY

The most interesting feature of the Chronicle on December 19, 1787, is the controversy between the owners of Wrights and Anderson's ferries. John Wright whose father was the first to open a ferry by permission of the province across the Susquehanna, between the present sites of Columbia and Wrightsville, had advertised in the previous issue of the paper that his ferry was the only good one for people to patronize. Long before the Revolution, William Anderson obtained a permit to open a ferry farther up the stream where Marietta now stands. The river is much narrower there than at the place where John Wright had his ferry.

Delegates who came to Continental Congress at York in 1778, during the Revolution, frequently crossed at the Anderson Ferry if they rode here from New York or the New England States, coming through Reading, Baron Steuben who came to York from Boston that year crossed at the Anderson Ferry. Most of the delegates who came here from Eastern Pennsylvania patronized Wright's Ferry. At this early date there was a lively spirit of opposition between the owners of the two ferries. In 1787 when this paper was printed, John Wright and his partner had reduced the cost of transportation over the river and advertised a cut-rate price. This helped to bring him trade. The travel through York on to the South and West at that early date was extensive, many four-horse wagons hauling goods to

the West passed through York and stopped for the night at one of the village inns.

In answer to the first advertisement of Wright's Ferry we find in the columns of the Chronicle the following:

Anderson's Ferry,
November 27, 1787.

TO THE PUBLIC

"The subscriber cannot think of passing over the illiberal and unjust publication of Messrs. John Wright and Joseph Jefferies, in the York Chronicle of the 21st instant, in which they say that he will deceive concerning his ferry at Anderson. I think that Mr. Wright knows nothing of a ferry, nor what constitutes it, and is in no wise calculated to be a ferryman; and that Mr. Jefferies is illiberal and unjust, must appear to the public, to be greater deceivers than they are apprized of, for reasons best known to myself, I will not animadvert on this subject; but the public may rely that I have a better and safer ferry than theirs, and travelers will find that they can go sooner, from Lancaster to York by crossing at this ferry, than at Wright's; and notwithstanding that they have laid wait on the roads, and have induced all that they could, that since occupying that noted ferry, formerly called Anderson, that I have put over the river Susquehanna, 10 wagons and persons to their one. I now say that my boats are new and good, and that they are equal if not superior to any on the river Susquehanna, and sufficient on both sides of the river. I expect the indulgence of the generous public, and remain their humble servant.

JACOB STRICKLER."

In response to the above the owners of Wright's Ferry in the columns of the same paper published an advertisement which appears on the same page with Jacob Strickler whose notice appeared in two succeeding issues of the Chronicle.

"Wright's Ferry,
December 8, 1787

TO OUR FRIENDS

As there have many ill-natured falsehoods appeared in an Advertisement of the 27th November last, signed Jacob Strickler, intending to injure the character of this ferry, and its keepers. The subscribers do not think it worth their while to enter into particulars respecting the author; but, beg leave to inform the public, that the Great Western Road through Lancaster and York, is much shorter and better this way, than any other and the passage of the river perfectly safe; they have a sufficient number of good boats, and make every exertion to forward travelers. They have lowered the price of the ferriage of a four-horse wagon to three shillings and nine pence, and that of a man and horse to six pence, and all other things in proportion. That they will strive to accommodate in the best manner in the tavern way any persons who please to favor them with their custom.

JOSEPH JEFFERIES,
JOHN WRIGHT."

P. S. I learned from reading several letters, written during the Revolution, that prominent soldiers and statesmen crossed at this ferry on their way to York in 1777-78. I intend to follow up this story with a brief account of the erection of four bridges across the Susquehanna under the Act of 1811, but do not seem to have time to write about them.

How valuable it is to have within our reach in our neighbor county a local newspaper beginning so far back as 1789 and extending down to 1890.

H. F. E.

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