

SKETCH OF JOSEPH SIMON.

About the year 1742 several Hebrew families settled in Lancaster town and engaged in shop-keeping, in which calling they prospered. I will refer to one of them, who became one of the wealthiest and most prominent Indian traders within the Province of Pennsylvania, and the ancestors of several distinguished Hebrew families in Philadelphia and elsewhere. I refer to Joseph Simon.

Sampson Meyer emigrated to America about the year 1730, bringing with his family his niece, Rose Bunn, then nine years of age, who married Joseph Simon about the time he settled in Lancaster. The house and lot he purchased soon after he located here was situated on the north side of West King street, adjoining the property of Simon and Anthony Snyder, a short distance east of the old "Plough" Tavern. In addition to conducting a general store, Mr. Simon engaged in the Indian trade, then a very lucrative business. Many of the most successful Indian traders resided in Donegal township, and Mr. Simon very soon formed close business relations with Colonel Alexander Lowrey, which continued for more than forty years. Many of these early traders suffered great losses from Indian depredations, and, to meet their obligations to Philadelphia merchants, were compelled to borrow money and mortgage their farms. Mr. Simon advanced money frequently to these unfortunate traders, and as early as 1750 he purchased some of their farms in Donegal, but soon sold them again.

About the year 1750, the traders

gradually extended their operations from the forks of the Allegheny to the Lakes on the north, the Mississippi on the west and to the headwaters of the Cumberland and Tennessee on the south.

In June, 1755, when General Braddock arrived at Big Crossing, fifteen miles above Little Meadows, with his army, then on its way to capture Fort Duquesne, he met Mr. Simon's pack train in charge of Daniel East, who was the first person to bring news to Carlisle of the progress and position of the army.

For their own safety, the Indian traders joined their pack trains and moved in a body, and it required great skill and generalship to bring their skins and peltries over the mountains to the east without meeting hostile Indians, in the interest of the French. They were not always successful. In January, 1750, a number of traders were captured at Salt Licks, near the Kentucky River, and their goods confiscated and their owners taken to Detroit and sold to the French officers. Some were taken prisoners and sent to France.

In 1754, when Colonel Washington was marching with his little army to the Ohio, a number of French and Indians advanced to check him. When the latter arrived at Gists, they attacked Lazarus, James and Alexander Lowrey's traders, who were then on their way east. The traders made a gallant fight, but were finally defeated, their goods taken, some killed and others wounded.

In 1754, Mr. Simon purchased the store and lot on the southeast corner of Penn Square, being the same property which Watt & Shand lately purchased and built upon. For many years Mr. Simon and his son-in-law, Levy Andrew Levy, conducted a store there. Afterwards Simon and Levy Philips, another of his sons-in-law,

carried on business there, and on January 14, 1784, Mr. Simon and Solomon Etting, a son-in-law, entered into partnership for three years, and, in 1813, Levy Philips, for six thousand, five hundred dollars, sold to Benjamin Ober and Peter Kline, who kept a dry goods store.

On May 1st, 1762, Mr. Simon purchased from James Hamilton a three-story brick dwelling and store on the southwest corner of Penn Square, next to the Morning News building, and in 1763 Mr. Simon purchased the three-story brick house adjoining his other house, now occupied by the Conestoga Bank. In connection with his sons-in-law, Philips and Gratz, he carried on a general store until his death. In 1814, Mr. Philips sold the property to the late William Jenkins, Esq. Mr. Simon, prior to 1763, rapidly accumulated many thousand acres of land throughout the Province of Pennsylvania.

In the summer of 1763, the traders, to the number of twenty-three, went as far west as the Mississippi. This was at the time Pontiac was inciting the Northern and Western Indians to attack the border settlers and the English traders from Pennsylvania. Colonel Alexander Lowrey had command of the "pack train," when he arrived at the place where Washington now is, in Southwestern Pennsylvania. He discovered that Pontiac was besieging Fort Pitt, and he marched rapidly and avoided the Indians, and encamped at a spring about four miles east of Fort Bedford. This was about November 30, 1763. When thus encamped, Indians of the Huron, Shawanese and Delaware Tribes attacked the traders, and killed several employes and destroyed and stole goods to the value of eighty-two thousand pounds, New York currency. Although pursued by the Indians to the shore of the Susquehanna, Colonel

Lowrey escaped. Many of these traders lost their all, and some were thrown into jail for debt. They petitioned Sir William Johnson, the Indian agent for the Crown of England, for redress.

And about November 1st, 1768, a congress of Indians was called to meet at "Fort Stanwix," now Rome, in the State of New York. Among other subjects brought before them was one to remunerate these traders. Delegates from several colonies and provinces were there; also, William Trent, one of the twenty-three traders who resided in Lancaster for a few years, who was appointed attorney-in-fact to represent their claims. About November 8th, the Indian chiefs executed a deed to William Trent for a tract of land which embraced more than half of the present State of West Virginia.

Mr. Simon was one of the heaviest losers. It may be of some interest to know the names of these traders. They were: Robert Callender, David Franks, Joseph Simon, William Trent, Levy Andrew Levy, Philip Boyle, John Baynton, George Morgan, Joseph Spear, Thomas Smallman, Samuel Wharton, John Welsh, Edward Moran, Evan Shelby, Samuel Postlethwait, John Gibson, Richard Winston, Dennis Croghan, William Thompson, Abraham Mitchell, James Dundass, Thomas Dundass, John Ormsley and Alexander Lowrey. They organized a company to settle the land called The "Indiana Company." Trent and Morgan were sent to England to procure a confirmation of the Indian deed from the Crown. This was about the year 1774, but on account of the trouble with the colonies nothing was accomplished. Under a patent by Queen Elizabeth to Sir Walter Raleigh in 1602, Virginia claimed all the land from the Atlantic to India on the West. Under this visionary claim Virginia refused to acknowledge the right of the Indiana

Company to their grant, and drove off their settlers.

Mr. Simon went to Williamsburg, Virginia, and employed counsel to procure favorable action from the House of Burgesses on the land grant. Mr. Simon's mission was a failure, although the House of Burgesses agreed to give the Indiana Company a large tract of land in the northwest territory, if the company would relinquish all claims to their grant in Virginia. Unfortunately for them, they refused to yield up their claim, and lost all. Up to the time of Mr. Simon's death he cherished the hope that his heirs would be able to recover his interest in the land grant. After the treaty between England and France in 1764, the former sent Colonel Wilkins, who commanded the Loyal Irish Legion, to America to take possession of the Illinois country, and he marched from Philadelphia, and passed through Lancaster about the year 1767. Joseph Simon and a number of other Indian traders marched in the wake of the British soldiers with immense stores of merchandise and established stores and trading posts at Kaskaskia, Fort Chartres, and Fort Edward, in Illinois. They sold all kinds of agricultural implements, and you could purchase at the company stores the finest broadcloth, hardware and all articles necessary to equip the settlers in housekeeping. Flat boats were sent to New Orleans with stores, and a flourishing trade was carried on with the French and Indians. I must not forget to mention that in addition to the tea sold large quantities of brandy were sold to the officers for use in hospitals, to kill malaria fevers, which were prevalent. Dr. John Connolly, the Tory, who was born in Manor township, went as surgeon to Colonel Wilkins' command. After marrying and going to housekeeping, he thought he could make a fortune in the Indian trade. He

purchased flat boats and several thousand pounds worth of goods from the company store. His venture was a disastrous failure, and he fled to Pennsylvania, and became a pet and adherent of Lord Dunmore, Governor of Virginia, who was also a Tory. In the month of July, 1773, Mr. Simon and twenty-two other Indian traders obtained a deed from the Illinois Indians for a tract of land which covered more than half of the present State of Illinois. During the early part of the Revolutionary War Colonel Roger Clark was sent out to the Illinois country at the head of several hundred militia by Virginia to capture the forts then held by the British. He succeeded and in consequence Virginia claimed to own all of the northwest territory. Virginia refused to ratify the claim of these Indian traders, and again baffled them. These traders were great land grabbers, but they did not excel our own Washington in that respect. Virginia never contested the right of Washington to hold all the land he could grab, and, although he had many suits in the courts about his lands and tenants, the courts sustained him.

In some of the European countries the Jew was not permitted to own real estate, but when he came to Pennsylvania there were no restrictions of this kind. The following are the names of some of the Hebrews who were named in this last Indian grant. They are names well known in Lancaster and Philadelphia, to wit: Joseph Simon, Levy Andrew Levy, Moses Franks, Jacob Franks, David Franks, Barnard Gratz, Michael Gratz, Moses Franks, Jr. Michael Gratz and Moses Franks were the commissaries who supplied Colonel Wilkins' army with live cattle. Mr. Simon owned many thousand acres of land in different parts of Pennsylvania. During the Revolutionary War he furnished powder,

shot, and guns for the use of the militia. Several of his descendants graduated at the military school at West Point. Mr. Simon was held in high esteem by his fellow traders and merchants. Several years before his death it was suggested that he and Colonel Alexander Lowrey, who had been connected with him in the Indian trade for forty years, ought to make a formal settlement of their partnership affairs to prevent any litigation among their heirs. Accordingly, arbitrators were mutually agreed upon, one of whom was the late Adam Reigart, Esq., who, in giving an account of the affair, stated that it was the most unique one he ever witnessed; no books or papers were presented for their inspection. When called upon, Mr. Simon reminded Colonel Lowrey that he paid the latter a certain sum of money at a certain spring in the far West, which was duly acknowledged; and Colonel Lowrey reminded Mr. Simon that he paid him a certain sum of money when they were seated on a log in the Indian country, which was not disputed. And thus these old Indian traders referred to transactions which covered a period of forty years without a jar or dispute. Mr. Simon was always a welcome visitor to the homes of his neighbors, in Lancaster, and in his old days spent much of his time chatting with friends. He would walk into their houses unannounced and was always welcome.

In 1747 Joseph Simon and other Hebrews purchased half an acre of land in Manheim township, adjoining the northwest boundary of Lancaster borough, from Thomas Cookson, the County Register, for a burial ground. Among those who are buried there, of which there is a record, are the following:

Joseph Solomon, died February 9, 1779, aged sixty-nine years.

Mrs. Rose Simon, wife of Joseph

Simon, died May 3, 1790, aged sixty-nine years.

Rachel Etting, wife of Solomon Etting, died January 14, 1790.

Joseph Simon, died January 24, 1804, aged ninety-two years.

Mr. Simon had the following named children:

I. Leah, who married Levi Philips, who moved from Lancaster to Philadelphia, where he carried on a mercantile business.

II. Miriam, married Simon Gratz, who moved to Philadelphia. This family became Gentiles.

III. Belah, married Solomon Cohen. They moved to Philadelphia. Some of their descendants now reside in Baltimore.

IV. Shinah, married M. Scuyler.

V. Susanna, married Levy Andrew Levy.

VI. Rachel, married Solomon Etting. They moved to Philadelphia and became Gentiles.

VII. Hester.

VIII. Moses.

VIII. Myer.

The sons were weak minded.

Many of Mr. Simon's descendants entered the legal profession and became distinguished lawyers.

There is a pamphlet in Yeates Library, called "Plain Facts," which gives a full history of the Indiana Company.

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