

THE HISTORICAL CONNECTION OF THE SHIPPEN
FAMILY TO THE STATE.*

BY THOMAS WILLING BALCH.

We are met on this fine June day in this beautiful valley of the Cumberland, replete in precious memories, to dedicate a bronze tablet to the founding of this burg by Edward Shippen, known as "of Lancaster." That sobriquet derived from the place of his residence during the autumn of his life, was given to distinguish him from his many kindred, both here in America and in England, of the same name.

When I was asked to speak on this occasion of the services of the Shippens to the State and the Nation, I naturally delved into the Shippen manuscripts in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. And let me extend to each and every one of you a cordial invitation on behalf of the Historical Society to visit its hall, whenever you are in Philadelphia, and examine its splendid collections of rare books and precious manuscripts and objects relating to the history of Pennsylvania, such objects as the sword of Anthony Wayne and the sword of George Gordon Meade.

The name of Shippen is of historic significance in the annals of Pennsylvania and has been woven into the very marrow of her history. Dating back to the middle of the thirteenth century in Yorkshire where the Shippens were yeomen, in later times one of their number rose to be Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University, and another, William Shippen, became an important member of Parliament on the time of Sir Robert

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Walpole. The name was brought to this country by Edward the emigrant of that name who, after landing in Boston in 1668, finally settled, because he was a Quaker, in Philadelphia in the last decade of the seventeenth century. By his abilities and force of character, he rose here in Pennsylvania to a place of social importance and political power. In 1695 he was made Speaker of the Assembly, in 1699 Chief Justice of the Province, in 1701 by designation in the Charter that William Penn granted in that year, first Mayor of the newly chartered City of Philadelphia, and afterwards he was President of the Council and for a few months Acting-Governor of the Province. In 1699 he had the honor of being in the Shippen house near Dock Street for about three weeks the host of William Penn, who then went to live in Samuel Carpenter's slate-roof house on Second Street.

From that time on others of the Shippens helped to rule the Province of Pennsylvania for the Penns until the Declaration of Independence destroyed the old order of things and in its stead the United Thirteen Colonies joined the circle of the family of Nations. Then, two Shippens, the sons of him whom we honor today, were called upon to serve the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. One of them of the same name as the Chief Justice of the Province in 1699, was appointed by Governor Thomas McKean to fill a century later in 1799, the high office of Chief Justice of the Commonwealth. The younger of the two, Joseph Shippen, Colonel under and Secretary to the Province, served with General Forbes in the capture in 1758 of Fort Duquesne. And then under the Commonwealth, he was appointed Judge of Lancaster county in 1789.

Another member of the family to gain distinction, was Dr. William Shippen, the elder, a grandson of the emigrant. He was one of the first physicians to the Pennsylvania Hospital, a vice-president of the Amer-

ican Philosophical Society, and a founder of the Second Presbyterian church of which he was a member for about sixty years. The 20th of November, 1778, the Pennsylvania Assembly elected him to the Continental Congress, and re-elected him the 12th of November, 1779. In spite of his age, Dr. Shippen attended regularly to his work in the Congress in behalf of America. His son, Dr. William Shippen, the younger, a graduate of the College of New Jersey in 1754, studied medicine first with his father, then in London, and graduated in medicine at the University of Edinburgh in 1761. The 26th of November, 1762, he began the first course of lectures in anatomy delivered in America, in a room in the State House, now known in the country at large as Independence Hall, but which all good Philadelphians and Pennsylvanians still call the State House. In 1765, in connection with Dr. Morgan, he was a founder of the Medical School of the College of Philadelphia. In November, 1767, he was elected to the American Philosophical Society. He served America long and well in the Revolutionary War. The 15th of July, 1776, he was appointed "Chief Physician for the Flying Camp." In March, 1777, he laid before the Congress a plan for organizing a Hospital Department, and the 11th of April, 1777, he was unanimously elected Director General of all the Military Hospitals for the armies of the United States; in which position he worked until the 3rd of January, 1781. In 1787 he was one of the originators of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, and its President from 1805 until his death in 1808.

Later still, in 1861, when Abraham Lincoln called for volunteers to defend the national Capital and the national flag, the very first troops to arrive in Washington City, were the Pennsylvania companies from the Valley of the Schuylkill. Among them marched a

Shippen. And another Shippen served in the Union Navy during the Civil War.

Edward Shippen "of Lancaster" whom we especially commemorate today with the founding of your town, was born at Boston the 9th of July, 1703, and the next year was brought to Philadelphia by his father, Joseph Shippen, who in 1727 joined with Franklin and others in founding the Junto, "for mutual information and the promotion of the public good." It was the forerunner of our numerous learned societies and colleges. Edward Shippen "of Lancaster" was brought up in Philadelphia as a merchant by James Logan, an active and able representative of the Penns, with whom he was engaged in business as Logan and Shippen, and later with Thomas Lawrence as Shippen and Lawrence, in the fur trade.

Elected to the City Council of Philadelphia, he served the town in that capacity many years, and in 1744 he was chosen Mayor. A copy of his portrait hangs in the Mayor's room in the City Hall. He was also a Judge of the Philadelphia Common Pleas. In 1746 he was a founder of the College of New Jersey at Newark, now Princeton University, and for twenty years was one of its first trustees. He subscribed to the University of Pennsylvania. In 1752 he removed to Lancaster and was appointed Prothonotary and so continued until 1778. He acted as paymaster for large affairs for both the British and the Provincial forces under the command of Generals Forbes and Stanwix, and Colonel Bouquet; and received the thanks of General Stanwix for the able and efficient way he performed his duties. His letters show he was an accomplished French scholar, a rare thing in those times, as well as a reader of all sorts and kinds of scholarly books. His home circle was cheerful and happy, he had a host of friends and he was ever a true and loyal Pennsylvanian. He was elected the 8th of March,

1768, to the American Philosophical Society, and died the 25th of September, 1781, at Lancaster.

One of the most important of his services to the development of the Province, however, was his founding about 1733 of your burg. Located here at the foot of the North Mountains, it was an advanced post of the colony and of the English tongue in the struggle of our fathers with the sons of France for the possession of North America, and the upbuilding of a free nation, based upon the Common Law and the language of Shakespeare. And it was through your town that General Forbes and Colonel Bouquet, Colonel James Burd and Colonel Joseph Shippen marched with their troops on to the capture of the French stronghold on the other side of the mountains.

When the struggle between the colonies and the British Crown broke out into armed strife, he was too old to take an active part in the contest as he had done in the French and Indian War. But his ardent hopes for the success of the American cause are repeatedly set forth in his letters as well as an unbounded admiration for General Washington. In a letter written at Lancaster the 23rd June, 1775, to his younger son, the Secretary of the Province he says:

“I have received the favour of your letter of the 15th inst. and am very glad to hear that so experienced an American officer has accepted of the Honor conferred on him by the Worthy Continental Congress. I make no doubt but the valiant Col. Putnam will cheerfully give Coll. Washington the right hand. I pray God to grant them success against our Blood Thirsty Enemys.”

Again writing the 15th Feb. 1778, to a friend in Reading, he says:

“His Excellency, George Washington, Esquire, is not only the Admiration of the Thirteen United States; but the Idol of his Army—Vive le General.”

Thus we see the Shippens were closely linked historically with the development of Pennsylvania. From the shores of the Delaware, across the waters of the Susquehanna, and over the tops of the Alleghenies to the head waters of the Ohio, the Shippens helped to develop and upbuild the colony founded by William Penn. On this happy occasion, when this bronze tablet is dedicated by the State Historical Commission and The Colonial Dames of America in memory of the founding of Shippensburg by a member of that historic family, let us all as we firmly and loyally uphold the Federal Union, also renew our allegiance, fealty and homage to the State in the words of the old and time-honored formula—"God save the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania."