

HISTORY
OF THE
COUNTY OF LEBANON
IN THE
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA:
BIOGRAPHICAL AND GENEALOGICAL.

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REV. JOHN CONRAD BUCHER.

In the seventh generation of a family record which embraces nearly three hundred and fifty years is found the birth-date of John Conrad Bucher, June 10, 1730. He was the son of John Jacob Bucher, Landvogt of the District of Neukirch, in the Canton of Schaffhausen, Switzerland. Intending him for the ministry, his father afforded him the best educational advantages of his time and country. His album, still preserved, testifies to his connection with the celebrated institutions of learning at St. Gall, Basle, and Göttingen, and contains among its interesting and valuable contributions the autographs of Wagelin, Zollikoffer, John Laurence Mosheim, and others.

At the age of twenty-five years he came to America. It would be interesting to learn what circumstances led him to the Province of Pennsylvania. Having received a theological education, with the ministry in view as his life-work, it is a matter of plausible speculation that through the instrumentality of the Rev. Michael Schlatter, who had a short time previously visited Europe for the purpose of bringing out German Reformed pastors to minister to the spiritual wants of the large German population of the Province, Conrad Bucher was induced to leave the refinements of a home abounding in wealth and comforts and undergo the hardships necessarily attendant upon life in a new country, although there is no positive evidence that he had fully entered the ministry until many years later.

The French and Indian war commenced in 1754; beginning with Braddock's defeat, in 1755, the English arms met nothing but disaster. The county of Cumberland, which embraced all the country west of the Susquehanna, was especially exposed to Indian raids and incursions. In 1758, General Forbes, a Scotch veteran, was appointed commander-in-chief of the expedition for the reduction of the French Fort Du Quesne. The General Assembly of the Province resolved to place at his disposal two thousand seven hundred men. In order that German and Swiss settlers would more readily enter the service, Parliament, in 1756, passed an "act providing for the appointment of German, Swiss, and Dutch Protestants as officers." In this emergency Conrad Bucher entered the provincial service, commissioned as ensign, or second lieutenant, April 1, 1758, in the First Battalion, Pennsylvania Regiment.

The provincial army having achieved success in taking Fort Du Quesne and dispersing the French, established, manned, and equipped Fort Pitt, and returned to Carlisle. In this famous expedition Col. George Washington was in command of the Virginians, Col. Bouquet of the English, and John Armstrong, James Potter, Hugh Mercer, William Lyon, William Maclay, names famous subsequently in Revolutionary annals, held subordinate positions.

Conrad Bucher, continuing in service, was commissioned, April 19, 1760, first lieutenant (*Pennsylvania*

Archives, p. 603) and stationed at Fort Louthier, Carlisle, one of the line of forts erected for the protection of the frontier.

Lieut. Bucher participated in Bouquet's expedition, in 1763, for the relief of Fort Pitt, which had been assailed by the combined Indian nations in the war known as Pontiac's Conspiracy, and which was the next active field service of the provincial army. It was on this march westward that the famous battle of Bushy Run was fought, on the 5th and 6th of August, in which the Indians undertook to wipe out the little army as they had done with Braddock in 1755, but in which they, in turn, were so thoroughly demoralized and their prestige destroyed, through the superior tactics of Bouquet, that they retreated without making further demonstrations against the fort.

By commissions dated July 12, 1764, Lieut. Bucher was promoted to the adjutancy, and, July 31st, to a captaincy "in the Second Battalion of the Pennsylvania Regiment of foot," Asher Clayton, lieutenant-colonel commandant, and the Hon. John Penn, colonel. These four commissions on parchment, and in good preservation, are among the family records at Harrisburg.

Capt. Bucher's final service was in Bouquet's expedition against the Ohio Indians, who, forgetting their punishment at Bushy Run, had again become bold and incursive. This expedition, like the two former, concentrated forces at Carlisle, and commenced their march westward, over the route twice trodden, on the 9th of August, 1764. It is matter of history that Bouquet was eminently successful,—the Indians were brought to terms and sued for peace, and their captives, men, women, and children, delivered up. The army returned to Carlisle early in 1765, and the provincial troops were disbanded. Thus terminated the military career of John Conrad Bucher, having participated in three memorable campaigns which had a most important bearing in the early history of the State and nation.

While Bouquet's army halted at Fort Bedford, on the 8th of September, 1764, the officers of the Pennsylvania regiments formed an association under a written agreement "to apply to the Proprietaries for a tract of land sufficiently extensive to accommodate each one with a reasonable and commodious plantation, etc." In their formal application they represented that the land thus far purchased from the Indians did not afford any situation convenient for their purpose; they therefore prayed the Proprietaries to make a "new purchase, etc." In 1768 the Fifth Purchase, embracing the territory from the northeastern to the southwestern section of the Province not already purchased, was made, and in 1769 twenty-four thousand acres were granted them; of this amount, six hundred and sixteen acres in Buffalo Valley (Union County) and five hundred and seventy acres on Bald Eagle Creek (Centre County) were allotted to Capt. Bucher.

Feb. 26, 1760, Lieut. Bucher married Mary Magdalena, daughter of George Hoak, one of the earliest citizens of York, then in Penn's Manor of Springettsbury, and the purchaser of lot No. 107; the lady, born Feb. 2, 1742, survived her husband nearly forty years, and was buried at Alexandria, Huntingdon Co., Pa. Her maternal blood was Huguenot, of the family Lefevre. The issue of this marriage was three sons and five daughters, the latter of whom all died young; of the sons, John Jacob, of Dauphin, and John Conrad, of Huntingdon, became conspicuous men in their respective counties.

Of the exact time of Conrad Bucher's full ordination into the ministry of the German Reformed Church we have no record; his numerous manuscripts in German text, which have never been critically examined by competent hands, might elicit much of public as well as of private interest. It is, however, certain that he did not regularly enter into the service of the church until he had ceased to wear the livery of the king in 1765, although he may have occasionally officiated, as it was not uncommon in those perilous times that one man should represent the dual professions of priest and soldier.

From 1765 to 1768, during which time he maintained his residence at Carlisle, we learn from his memoranda that he ministered regularly to the congregations at Falling Spring, Hagerstown, Sharpsborough, Frederickstown, Middletown, Hummelstown, Quitapahilla, and Lebanon, as well as at Carlisle, and that he preached and catechised at other places.

In the year 1767 (*Pennsylvania Archives*, Second Series, vol. ii.), the "Rev. Conrad Bucher's" name is found in the list of ministers and magistrates to whom marriage licenses, then requisite under proprietary regulations, were issued by the Provincial Secretary.

Having accepted a call to the church in Lebanon in 1768, he removed thither in the spring of 1769. But his service was not confined to this church; his field of labor now included several of his old congregations and those at Maytown, Manheim, Rapho, etc. This circuit he seems to have traveled regularly, preaching often, unwearied in his work, filled with zeal, and devoted to his Master's cause.

Up to 1770 he had occasionally included the congregation at Reading in his visitations, and so pleased them as to elicit a call to become their pastor. But on account of ill health he forbore its consideration, and at last Cötus (the Synod) resolved that "the decision should be laid upon the conscience of the Rev. Mr. Bucher himself;" he declined this call "from love to his own congregations."

When the conflict for American independence arose it found Conrad Bucher on the side of liberty and his adopted land. He had, no doubt, many pleasant memories of grateful service to that government which had been instrumental in opening the way to a new life in this country; but he had also many

loved objects to cherish and protect, and a higher ambition to serve the liberties of a free people. He consequently joined his fellow-citizens in their formal oath of allegiance, taken at Lancaster, June 10, 1778. Although positive evidence of the fact is wanting, yet it is believed, as it is traditionary in the family, that he served as chaplain to a Pennsylvania regiment in the Revolutionary war.

As we approach the fiftieth year of Conrad Bucher's life, it is found that the activities of his earlier manhood have left fatal evidences of overwork or undue exposure, too continued strain of laborious effort for the good of others and too little consideration of self. Some form of heart-disease developed itself.

In the Cötal Minutes of April, 1779, mention is made incidentally of his "sickly condition," and following this he was compelled, on account of continued failing health, to relinquish his more distant congregations. To his last capable moment, however, he "waited on the Lord," and was assiduous in his pastoral duties.

On the 15th of August, 1780, he was invited to solemnize a marriage at Killinger's, on the Quitopahilla, near Millerstown (Annville). While there, amid the nuptial festivities, he was suddenly stricken down. In the graveyard of the ancient German Reformed Church at Lebanon, in whose pulpit he had ministered twelve years, reposes the dust of John Conrad Bucher, with four children, who died in infancy.

The Rev. Conrad Bucher was equally fluent in English, German, and French. His Bibles in the two foreign languages are still preserved, the German having his preaching texts all marked. Endowed with the genius of his Fatherland, he was also a fine musician and singer. His voice was of unusual power and compass, a bass that could fill the church. He was systematic in his general habits, and possessed a degree of skill with the pen that was evidenced in his excellent copying of music and keeping his books. He was unquestionably a man of great cultivation, industry, perseverance, and zeal in his Father's business. His name and services have been properly associated by Rev. Dr. Harbaugh with the honored "Fathers of the German Reformed Church in America," and though his life-work does not dazzle, it nevertheless endures, and he has his reward.
