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# BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY

OF

## LANCASTER COUNTY:

BEING A HISTORY OF

EARLY SETTLERS AND EMINENT MEN  
OF THE COUNTY;

AS ALSO MUCH OTHER

UNPUBLISHED HISTORICAL INFORMATION, CHIEFLY  
OF A LOCAL CHARACTER.

BY

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\*LOWERY, COL. ALEXANDER, was born in the north of Ireland, in December, 1723, and came to America with his father, Lazarus Lowery, in 1729, who settled in Donegal township, Lancaster county, and was licensed by the Court in 1730 to sell liquor by the small; and by the Governor; as an Indian trader, which latter occupation he pursued for a number of years thereafter. His sons, John and Daniel Lowery, were also Indian traders. Having made frequent trips to the far west to trade with the Indians, Alexander probably accompanied them. He became a great favorite with the Indians, and exercised an influence over them which he retained during his life.

About the year 1748 he formed a partnership with Joseph Simons, of Lancaster, in the fur trading business, which lasted forty years. The fur traders usually made annual trips to the Allegheny and Mississippi rivers, in convoys, for their mutual protection. The Indians knew about the time they were expected, and brought their peltries from their hunting grounds farther West, to certain points, where they exchanged them for blankets, &c. Col. Lowery was a powerful man, and capable of enduring any amount of fatigue. He was considered one of the fleetest "Indian runners," and was frequently selected by the Government to collect the chiefs of the various Indian tribes at Detroit and other places, to make treaties. The only subsistence he was able to obtain for weeks at a time, was that procured by his trusty rifle. He was taken with inflammatory rheumatism while amongst the Indians along the banks of the Allegheny river, and was carried to a log cabin, situate in a lonely dell, where he was nursed by an aged squaw for several days, when an Indian doctor came along and carried him to the river, where a hole was made in the ice—for it was mid-winter—and ducked him in the river. The shock was so great to his system, that he was cured instantly, and never afterwards had a return of it. Col. Lowery accumulated money rapidly, and about the year 1755 commenced purchas-

\*Contributed by Samuel Evans, esq., Columbia.

ing large tracts of land. In 1757 he purchased of Joseph Pugh, sheriff, four hundred acres, sold as the property of his father, Lazarus Lowery, (deceased). In this purchase was included the farm lately sold by James B. Clark to Cameron, upon which the Lowerys resided from 1740 to 1758 or '59. In 1759 he purchased of sheriff Smith, four hundred acres, sold as the property of Daniel Lowery, his brother. (Duffy's park farm is a part of this place.) He removed to it in 1760, and lived in a log house—which stood in the meadow south of the barn—a few years. About the year 1762 he commenced to build the present stone mansion. His partner, Joseph Simons, brought carpenters from Lancaster and conducted its erection. Col. Lowery went amongst the Indians, and did not return until the building was completed. In 1763, at the time of the massacre at Bloody Run, Col. Lowery was sent back to Fort Rays, (Bedford,) in the evening, to get something left there by the traders. In the night the Indians murdered many of the traders and their men, (amongst whom was Daniel Lowery, his brother,) and destroyed an immense amount of goods. When he returned, about daylight, he discovered the terrible havoc made by the Indians, who attempted to capture him. He ran for the timber and was hunted for several days amongst the mountains; they finally discovered him when near the river, on the York county side of where Vinegar's Ferry now is, and made chase. He swam the river and made good his escape. This was the only instance in which he was molested by the Indians. He often remarked, that they were so frenzied that they knew not friend from foe.

In 1770 he purchased of sheriff Stone, eight hundred acres, and the ground rents in Maytown, and a tannery adjoining, sold as the property of Jacob Downer. This land ran from Maytown to the river, and was afterwards sold to Alexander Boggs, Longenecker, and others. In 1774, when hostilities broke out with the mother country, Col. Lowery at once became very active on the side of the colonies. In July, 1774, he was placed on a committee of correspondence, to consult with other committees of conference in the province, who met in Philadelphia, July 15th, 1774. De-

ember 15th, 1774, he was appointed on a committee to watch the suspected persons, and prevent, if possible, the purchase and use of tea. Mrs. Lowery, being a member of the Church of England, sometimes induced the teamster's when they went to Philadelphia, to procure her some tea. When Col. Lowery discovered it, he invariably destroyed it. On another occasion, when he was from home, she procured a "Coat of Arms," and placed it upon his carriage; when he returned he destroyed it, and every other emblem of aristocracy. He was elected a member of Assembly in 1775, and served on many important committees. He was also elected colonel of the Lancaster county militia, 3d battalion; and in 1776 a member of the Assembly, and a member of the convention which framed the first Constitution of Pennsylvania. In 1777 he was appointed, with others, by the war office, to supply the army with blankets, the army being entirely destitute of clothing during the winter of that year. He commanded the Lancaster county militia at the battle of Brandywine. He was elected a member of Assembly in 1778-80, and a member of the Senate to fill an unexpired term of one who died. After the Revolutionary war, Col. Lowery retired to his farm at Marietta. August 29th, 1791, Gov. Thomas Mifflin commissioned him a justice of the peace for the townships of Donegal, Mount Joy and Rapho. Maytown being a lively place at that time, fights were a common occurrence. The parties often came to Col. Lowery to settle their disputes. His manner of dealing with them suited the times, and saved the county unnecessary expense. He usually placed the combatants upon the green sward in front of his house and made them fight it out, he standing by to see that there was fair play and no gouging. Sometimes he turned in and whipped both of the parties. This novel and summary way of dealing out justice, put a stop to the quarreling, and especially their complaints before Col. Lowery. Daniel Clark, the father of Myra Gaines, widow of the late General Gaines, was a wagon-boy of Col. Lowery's, and usually accompanied him on his western trips amongst the Indians. After attaining his majority, he went down the Mississippi river and settled at New Orleans. It is said,

when trading with the Indians, in the absence of weights, that Col. Lowery used his hand, which weighed two pounds, and his foot, which weighed four pounds.

About the close of the Revolutionary war James Cunningham, of Lancaster city, (who was lieutenant colonel in Col. Lowery's battalion, and served many years in the Legislature with him, and was a companion in his western trips,) died. An express was sent to Col. Lowery, notifying him of the sad event. He hastened to Lancaster, and arrived there just as the remains of his departed friend was about to be placed in the grave. The coffin was opened to permit the friend of his life to gaze once more upon his features. He advanced with tears in his eyes, and grasped the hand of the corpse, and exclaimed, "honest Jimmy Cunningham, that never told a lie, or did a dishonest or mean action, has gone to his fathers." It has been related by those who were at this funeral and witnessed this, that it was a most affecting scene, and drew tears from all present. Col. Lowery was a bluff man, with a commanding voice. He spoke as he thought. When in conversation with a friend, and about to enter the church at Donegal, of which he was a member, he walked in, continuing the conversation, and in the same tone of voice, which was unusually loud, until he had finished what he had to say. When Congress sat in York, Anderson's ferry, now Marietta, was the principal crossing along the river. Often boats were prevented from crossing by reason of the floating ice. Col. Lowery's house during these occasions was filled with officers and members of Congress, who were on their way to York. General Gates and lady, with some staff officers, were thus delayed and invited by Col. Lowery to his home. He placed them in the hall and proceeded to the kitchen, to enquire of Mrs. Lowery whether she could entertain them. She at once declared she could not think of it—when her husband told her to hush, that the party was at his heels and would hear her if she made much noise. Alex. Lowery was married in 1752, to Miss Mary Walters, by whom he had six living children. In 1772 he married Ann Alricks, widow of Hermanus Alricks, who was prothonotary, register,

recorder, clerk of the court, and justice of the peace for Cumberland county, and grandmother of Herman and Hamilton Alricks, esqs., of Harrisburg. When he married her, he had been a widower but six months, and she a widow but ten months. He promised to say nothing about the affair, but when they arrived in the vicinity of Maytown, several hundred persons turned out in all sorts of conveyances, and lined the public road for several miles to receive them, to the mortification of his bride. The colonel, being fond of a joke, evidently sent word in advance of his coming. She was a sister of Francis West, the grandfather of chief justice Gibson. Congress having made the continental money a legal tender, Col. Lowery sold the Clark farm to James Anderson, (who sold to Brice Clark,) and most of the Downer lands for that kind of money. When absent from home, James Polk, uncle of the late President Polk, a resident of Sherman's valley, Cumberland county, Pa., came and offered to pay a judgment note, held by Col. Lowery against him, in continental money. Mrs. Lowery, who was a spirited woman, refused to take the money, when Polk deliberately put his horse in the stable and declared his intention of staying until the colonel came home. He actually remained several days, and badgered and annoyed Mrs. Lowery so much, that she took the money, and bade him clear out and never show his face there again. Frances Evans was the only child by this marriage; she married Samuel Evans, a member of the Legislature from Chester county. John Evans, his ancestor, a native of Wales, landed in Philadelphia in 1690, with a family consisting of seven persons, viz: his father, mother, wife and daughter, brother and sister. In the spring of 1696 John Evans purchased a tract of land in the State of Delaware, called the "Welsh tract." In 1715 he purchased four hundred acres on the white clay creek, in Chester county, Pa., now owned by Esquire Niven. In 1718 John Evans, jr., married Reynold Howell, a native of Wales, who came to this country the same year. They left a family of six children, all of whom died young, except Evan, George and Peter. Evan was the father of Samuel Evans; Evan had three sons and three daughters. George served as a

sergeant in Bailey's regiment during the Revolutionary war, and was wounded at New York, by a bayonet which was thrust through his body; he lived many years thereafter. His daughter married Johnson, the Napoleon of the turf in this country. The first fee received by the late Judge Yeates, was from Col. Lowery. He had a wonderful memory, and was frequently called upon in different parts of the State to settle disputes about the title of lands. A few years before his death, he and Joseph Simons selected referees, one of whom was the late Adam Reigart, to settle the partnership affairs, which ran through more than forty years. Strange as it may appear, there was not a solitary record or scrap of paper to show the transactions between them, which must have amounted to many thousand pounds. Colonel Lowery would call Mr. Simons' attention to an amount of money paid him on a certain log, perhaps thirty or forty years before, when Simons would give his assent thereto, and in return remind Col. Lowery that he paid him a certain sum of money at a certain spring many years before, and thus these honest men recapitulated circumstances which covered forty years of time, without one word of dispute, and settled up their affairs. Mr. Reigart often remarked, that he never saw or heard of such a settlement.

Col. Lowery was married a third time to Sarah Cochrane, a widow, who lived near York Springs, in 1793. Samuel Eddie wrote the marriage contract. Col. L. had been on a visit to the Gibsons, in Sherman's valley. On his way home he stopped at York Springs; some of his friends, whom he met there, intimated to him that there was a spry widow, named Cochrane, at the springs, for whom he had better "set his cap." He hastened home and returned with his carriage, and at once proposed to the widow to marry; promptly she responded that she would. While crossing the mountain, on his way home, she manifested great fears lest the carriage would be overturned, and intimated that she would rather walk. The Colonel told Sammy, her son, who was driving, to stop and let his mammy out; he drove on and halted at the foot of the mountain, and remained there until his wife came up. She was a large woman, and suffered very much; she car-

ried her shoes in her hand; she never thereafter manifested her fears by expressing a desire to walk. It turned out that a trick had been played upon the old man, who was nearly seventy years of age. This Mrs. Cochrane was not the widow of that name who was first at the springs, but a very inferior woman. When he discovered the trick which had been played upon him, he built the house, (afterwards owned by Duffy), and placed her there, and never afterwards lived with her. Her sons, who were sporting men, robbed the old man of many hundred pounds, which they squandered at the races, &c. He died January 31st, 1805, leaving a large landed estate in different parts of the State. Col. Lowery was in the habit of saying that James Wilson, a member from Pennsylvania, of the convention which framed the Constitution, was the author of it. He knew the persons engaged in the murder of the Conestoga Indians, at Lancaster, and told his daughter, Mrs. Evans, that many of those engaged in it died a violent death.

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