

The American War of Independence

Anselma Mill's Connection 02/27/26

Did The Lightfoot Brothers Support the Revolution?

From April 19, 1775, to September 3, 1783, Anselma was the Lightfoot Mill operated by William Lightfoot. William's older brother Thomas operated a sawmill on the other side of Conestoga Pike.

William and Thomas belonged to the Society of Friends, also known as Quakers. Thomas was married to Susanna Hudson Hatton a Quaker minister.

Major General John Sullivan of the continental army sent a letter to Congress asserting strongly that if what he suspected to be true, Quakers were "the most dangerous enemies America knows" His assertions were based on the faked Spankton Papers that stated that some Quakers were feeding military intelligence to the British. It is known that Joseph Galloway had about 60 Loyalists, most of whom were Quakers, informing him of the local details; where one might ford a creek, where buildings were located (taverns, mills, churches, etc).

A Copy of the Clinton Spy Map that was most likely carried by General William Howe of the British Army after the Battle of the Brandywine and later in the Spring of 1778, may have been exchanged with other papers from Howe to General Henry Clinton when Clinton took command of British forces at Philadelphia. The Lightfoot Mill is located on this map and was somehow spared during the Revolution. *(A Copy of the map may be viewed in the Anselma Post Office)*

Quakers were a pacifist religious group; they were known for their strong nonviolence belief and refused to take up arms in the war against Britain. The Continental Congress viewed the Quakers' refusal to fight as a potential threat to the war effort. In response, to the Sullivan letter, Congress ordered Pennsylvania and Delaware to apprehend and exile 20 men, 17 of whom were Quakers, to Winchester Virginia, where they were held for over seven months. Thomas lobbied for the release of the "Prisoners of Congress". Thomas attained a charge of high treason for this, but he was never convicted of any crime. Quaker families were often divided. Some maintained pacifism and some decided to join the fight. Thomas was a devout Quaker and did not take part in the revolution in any way.

Continental Army officers quartered themselves in the home of Thomas, while he and his family were relegated to live in just one room, the officers lived in the remaining portion of his house. Dead soldiers were buried on the land next

to Thomas's in deference to his being a Quaker leader. (*Reflections of Ann Head Warder*).

During the Revolutionary War there may have been cases where there were brothers against brothers, sons against fathers.

The "Act to Regulate the Militia of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania" passed 17 March 1777 required all able-bodied men ages 18 to 53 to serve tours of two months, established strict draft conditions, and levied heavy fines and penalties against those unwilling to participate. These fines were mainly used to pay someone to serve in your place. This would have given William the opportunity to pay for a substitute if he were a conscientious objector.

William was selected to serve in the Militia, 1st Class of Capt. George Irish's [Eirig] Company from Pikeland. Eighth Company, Second Battalion of the Chester County militia commanded by Colonel Thomas Bull for the year 1780. William paid the fine in 1782. Thomas was 54 years old and not required to serve.

(Fine book of Chester Co. pg.111 & 2.16.0)

			Inactive Duty Militia
Lightfoot, William		Rank	Pvt.
Lieutenancy	Chester	County. Battalion	2nd
Company	Capt. Ireby	Class	
Remarks:	Fines of 1782		
Authority:	Unit Muster Roll for the period Fine Book of Chester Co., p. 111		
[Certified	Dated	Muster Fines & 2.16.0	
"Military Accounts: Militia," <u>Records of the Comptroller General</u> , at D. P. R.			
THE BASIC RECORD DOES NOT PROVE ACTIVE DUTY.			

MA-8-10M

Did The Lightfoot Mill Supply Flour for Washington at Valley Forge?

George Washington issued a proclamation on 20 December 1777 that read as follows:

“By virtue of the power and direction to me especially given, I hereby enjoin and require all persons residing within Seventy miles of my Head Quarters to thresh one half of their grain by the first day of February and the other half by the first day of March next ensuing, on pain in case of failure of having All that shall remain in Sheaves, after the periods abovementioned, seized by the Commissaries & Quarter Masters of the Army and paid for as Straw. Given under my Hand at Head Quarters near the Valley forge in [] County, this 20th day of Decemb. Anno Dom. 1777. Go: Washington”

There was never a proclamation specifically pertaining to gristmills, but Washington often relied on local millers to grind grain for his troops, sometimes even negotiating with them to secure supplies. William most likely could have ground the wheat into flour for the men at Valley Forge.

Zachariah Rice, George Washington and Reese Sheneman

Zachariah Rice was the maternal grandfather of Rees Sheneman, owner of the mill from 1820 to 1851. Zachariah was an Engineer, Carpenter and Millwright under the command of General George Washington. He helped build the Yellow Springs hospital near his home in Chester County, which would soon be used as a field hospital for the casualties of the war. His wife, Abigail, became a recurrent visitor to the hospital, spending much of her time ministering to sick and wounded soldiers. As a result of her devotion to help the suffering, she contracted typhus, which would later cause her untimely death.

On September 11, 1777, Washington encountered general William Howe’s army at the battle of the Brandywine. As the battle ensued and the casualties mounted, Washington soon realized that he was hopelessly outnumbered and poorly supplied to resume the fight. He wisely decided to withdraw, saving his men to “fight another day”. Family lore indicates that during his retreat, Washington and his staff officers stopped at the Rice farm in West Vincent Township and asked Abigail if they could have some water. She sent one of her daughters to retrieve a pail of water from the well, to which she added some sugar, spices, and rum, making a drink that was properly known as “flip”. Abigail handed the drink to him and said, “Here, my Lord”. Washington quickly replied, “We have no titles here, we are all brothers.” As General Washington drank his beverage Abigail’s five-year-old daughter, Susannah, approached him. Washington smiled and picked her up, sat her on his knee while he finished his drink.

For Abigail's contribution to the war, the Daughters of the American Revolution placed a plaque in her honor on the Rice home in Chester County.

Anna Maria, the daughter of Abigail and Zacharia Rice, will marry Benjamin Sheneman. Rees Sheneman, the son of Anna Maria and Benjamin will purchase the mill in 1820.

Compilation by:

Morris Farnum

Volunteer at The Mill at Anselma