

A RECORD
OF THE
DESCENDANTS
OF
JOHN ALEXANDER,
OF LANARKSHIRE, SCOTLAND,
AND HIS WIFE,
MARGARET GLASSON,
WHO EMIGRATED FROM COUNTY ARMAGH, IRELAND,
TO
CHESTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA,
A. D. 1736.

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THE ALEXANDERS OF MUNSTER AND MECKLENBURG.—
In the year 1714 James Stephenson, gent., of Bucks Co., Pa., appointed John McKnitt of Back Creek, Cecil Co., Md., his attorney to sell a tract of land in the N. E. corner of Cecil Co., called “New Munster.” This tract of 8000 acres commenced where the Sure Creek enters the Big Elk, and with a breadth of two miles ran North six miles up the Elk river until it entered some distance within the present Pennsylvania line, in Chester county.

Edward Odine had first patented these lands from King Charles and Odine sold them to David Taos; D. Taos willed them to his son John, and he, having run into debt to Robert Roberts, the colonial Legislature granted 4500 acres to Roberts to satisfy his claim against Taos, who had absconded.

Finally Roberts in 1714, sold these 4500 acres to Stephenson, and he in the same year, through John McKnitt sold about 2000 acres to a company consisting of James Alexander, farmer; Arthur Alexander, farmer; David and James Alexander, weavers; Joseph Alexander, tanner, and his son James; Elias and Arthur Alexander and William Wallace. The reason assigned by Ste-

phenson for selling to these persons was that they had already settled and improved thereon.* Their settlement must therefore have been sometime prior to 1714. Four years after the purchase Stephenson gave them individually deeds, to each one for that part on which he had settled and improved. These lands lay on the East side of the Elk and between that river and Christiana Creek and were close to the borders of Pennsylvania and Delaware. The relative positions of their settlements were these: James the farmer was located south toward the Elk; Arthur was east of James toward the Christiana; David was north of both James and Arthur; James, the weaver, and his son Moses were north of David; Elias east of James and Moses. Near these John Alexander bought land in 1718. Afterwards others of the same name came and settled along the borders of Pennsylvania and Maryland, from Munster to Nottingham.

Also Samuel Alexander, with his sons Andrew and Francis, bought lands in 1723 in the southern part of Cecil county, called "Sligo" and "Alexandria" tracts. In the same year Samuel and others bought a lot of land for a Presbyterian church in Bohemia, in the same county. In the same year Robert Alexander, from the city of Glasgow, Scotland, then a merchant of Annapolis, had lands in the same part of Cecil county, which in 1737 he left to his cousin, William Alexander, of "North Britain," (Scotland.) This William became a large land-holder in the vicinity of Elkton, Md. In 1741 he and Araminta his wife deeded a lot in Elkton for the erection of the first Presbyterian Church in that town. His lands descended to a second Robert, who

* The information here given is collected from the Records of Cecil Co., Md.; Foote's Sketches of N. C.; Wheeler's History of N. C. &c.

went off to England at the Revolutionary war and never returned. His lands were confiscated, but after the war one-third of them, together with one-half of his negroes, were restored to his wife Isabella, and to his six children, William, Lawson, Araminta, Henry, Andrew, and Robert. Of these, William settled on the lands near Elkton, and lived in considerable style, while the rest of the family seem to have remained in Baltimore. The son of this William, whose name also was Robert, succeeded his father on the homestead, but finally sold it and became a hardware merchant in New York city, where he now lives.

Nearly all these Alexanders of Cecil county seem to have been related, and came either direct from Ireland and Scotland, or else from the older colony in Somerset county, Md.

Of the original Alexanders of the New Munster purchase, David sold to John Alexander of Chester county, Pa. David himself removed to Chester county and died there; after which his widow married a Mr. Dobins, and removed with her husband to the Cape Fear river, N. C., where her daughter Anne Alexander married Gilbert Clark, the first Elder of the first Presbyterian church which was gathered in that region under the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Campbell in 1765. Several other Alexander families removed from Chester county to North Carolina with Dobins and his wife, and settled in Mecklenburg county. This was in 1749.

David Alexander's son Aaron removed from the Munster settlement and settled in Sherman's Valley, Pa., in 1748.

From 1740 to 1760 many Alexander families left Maryland, some for Chester, Lancaster, and Cumberland counties, Pa., and others for Mecklenburg county,

N. C. Thirty of these families went to North Carolina and Virginia at the same time, some of them settling about the city of Alexandria, which had been named after the descendants of a John Alexander who owned lands there and died in 1677.

Among those who went to North Carolina were several who greatly distinguished themselves by their public spirit and devoted patriotism during the Revolution. Two of these were sons of James Alexander of New Munster, Cecil county, Md. This James was probably the son of Joseph, who has already been named among the first purchasers of the Munster lands in 1714.

James acquired considerable land both in Maryland and in North Carolina. As a ruling elder his name appears first on the minutes of the New Castle Presbytery in 1725, and frequently afterwards in those of the Synod of Philadelphia. The name of his first wife was Margaret, probably Margaret McKnitt, the sister of John McKnitt, already mentioned as Stephenson's attorney; for John McKnitt, in his will dated 1733, appointed James Alexander, his "brother-in-law," his executor; and James Alexander called a son, who was born that same year, John McKnitt Alexander. By this his first wife he had issue as follows: Theophilus, Edith, Keziah, Hezekiah, Ezekiel, Jemima, Amos, John McKnitt, and Margaret. By Abigail, his second wife, he had, Elizabeth, Abigail, Margaret, Josiah, and Ezekiel. The first set of children were born between 1716 and 1736, and the second set, between 1746 and 1754.

Of these Hezekiah, John McKnitt, and Jemima, who had married Thomas Sharpe, removed from Maryland to Mecklenburg county, N. C., about the year 1754.

From this date until the Revolution other families from Maryland and Pennsylvania, and some direct from the Old Country, and by way of the Cape Fear river, settled in Mecklenburg county, N. C., in such numbers that the Alexanders were the most numerous people of one name in that county, and they, with the Harrises, formed one-third of the population. They were among the earliest founders, members, and elders of the "seven Presbyterian churches of Mecklenburg."

In the year 1755 the Rev. Mr. McAden went from the New Castle Presbytery on a missionary tour through that part of North Carolina. We find in his journal that he preached at that time in the houses of William and James Alexander on Sugar Creek, and in that of Justice Alexander on Rocky River, N. C. From these dates and facts it appears that families of this name began to settle there about 1746, that they arrived slowly until 1750, and then began to arrive in greater numbers. To what extent they participated in church affairs appears from the fact that in 1793 Hezekiah, William, Thomas, Elijah, Isaac, and Thomas Alexander were all elders in the Sugar Creek church, and John McKnitt Alexander and Ezekiel Alexander were elders in Hopewell church.

Nor was their participation in civil affairs less honorable to themselves and useful to their country, in the time of her greatest need. On the 20th of May, 1775, more than thirteen months before independence was declared by the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, a convention of North Carolina patriots, who were assembled in Charlotte, the county seat of Mecklenburg county, framed, adopted, and published the famous MECKLENBURG DECLARATION, containing the substance of all that is in the similar document adopted by Congress the next year.

Though this declaration was pronounced spurious by Thomas Jefferson, it was considered genuine by John Adams, and is sustained by such a weight of evidence as to show that the HIGHEST HONOR is due to those brave and patriotic men of Mecklenburg who dared at such a time to *lead* in framing, adopting, and publicly proclaiming such an instrument, and in pledging to its support their "lives, fortunes, and most sacred honor."

The year before the Convention met, the first Provincial Congress met at New Berne, N. C., and appointed committees on Public Safety, Bills of Rights, State Constitution, and Military Offices. Among the members of these committees were Hezekiah, George H., and Adam Alexander. This Congress authorized the calling of a convention of delegates elected from the several military districts. Colonel T. Polk, a grand-uncle of President James K. Polk, was a prime mover in the whole business of calling the convention.

Wheeler's History of North Carolina gives the following list of the officers and members of that celebrated Convention, who were also signers of the Declaration of Independence, viz:

Abraham Alexander, President; John McKnitt Alexander, Secretary; Dr. Ephraim Brevard, Chairman on the Committee of the Declaration; Hezekiah J. Balch, John Phifer, James Harris, William Kennon, John Ford, Richard Barry, Henry Downe, Ezra Alexander, William Graham, John Queary, Hezekiah Alexander, Charles Alexander, Adam Alexander, Zaccheus Wilson, Waightstill Avery, Benjamin Patton, Matthew McClure, Neill Morrison, Robert Irwin, John Flanigan, David Russ, John Davidson, Robert Harrison, and Thomas Polk.

John McKnitt Alexander, the Secretary, and Heze-

kiah, one of the signers, were sons of James Alexander of Munster, Cecil county, Md., who died there in 1779, and his will is recorded in the office of Wills, in Elkton, Md. The names mentioned in this will are those of his second wife, Abigail, and of the following children, then living, viz: Hezekiah, Amos, John McKnitt, Josiah, Ezekiel, Jemima, Elizabeth, Abigail, and Margaret.

These names correspond exactly with those given on a preceding page, and which were sent from North Carolina by Gen. S. B. Alexander, a great grandson of John McKnitt Alexander. The General also gives the following descendants of James, through his son, John McKnitt:

John McKnitt Alexander married Jean Bane, who came from Pennsylvania. Their children were William Bane, Joseph McKnitt, and five daughters.

Joseph McKnitt Alexander married Dovey Winslow, and had one child, named Moses Winslow. Moses Winslow Alexander married Violet Graham, and had eleven children. The eleventh is General S. B. Alexander, now living near Charlotte, Mecklenburg county, N. C., who distinguished himself in the civil war by his bravery, and rose from the position of a private soldier to the rank of General.

We have seen that John McKnitt Alexander went from Maryland to North Carolina about 1754, when twenty-one years of age. From being a tailor by trade he became a surveyor, a wealthy landholder, a prominent and influential citizen, a leading patriot, and an active member of the Church courts. For twenty-five years he very constantly attended the Synod of the Carolinas, and was its treasurer for many years. Besides being Secretary of the Convention, and a signer of the

Declaration of 1775, he took an active part in the Revolutionary struggle.

When Lord Cornwallis entered Charlotte in 1780 with the British army, Duncan Ochletree, a wealthy citizen, who till this time had acted with the patriots, turned tory to save his property. In the service of Lord Cornwallis he first made some fruitless attempts to bribe the leaders of his former friends, and then harrassed them by foraging from their properties to supply the British troops. "Cato," said John McKnitt Alexander to his faithful slave and foreman, "the moment you see the red-coats enter our lane, run and apply the torch to the stacks and barn. Ochletree shall not get a bundle of straw from our plantation." The occasion soon occurred. The order was executed by Cato, and the British completed the work of destruction by burning the house also. But the safety of Ochletree was of short duration. The defeat of Ferguson at Kings Mountain compelled Cornwallis to withdraw after holding Charlotte only two weeks. Ochletree, foreseeing what would happen, was sorely distressed with new fears and dangers. How should he now save himself and his property from the injured and exasperated Whigs?

Mounting his horse at dark, he rode to the house of his old friend, John McKnitt Alexander, nine miles in the country. Mr. Alexander and his son were absent two miles off, in the camp of Major Sharpe. His wife refused either to admit Ochletree, or to inform him where her husband was. He begged and protested that his intentions were patriotic, at the same time handing his sword in at the window as a pledge. Finally a little daughter Peggy, thirteen years of age, with her faithful maid, Venus, was despatched to the camp to summon

her father. When he arrived at the house, Ochletree told him that the British would evacuate Charlotte that night; that he threw himself for protection of life and property upon the generosity of Mr. Alexander, and asked advice and assistance in his critical dilemma.

The reply was such as might have been expected. "Ochletree, if I had met you anywhere else I would have killed you. In these circumstances, so far as I am concerned, you are safe; but neither your life nor your property is safe in Mecklenburg. The Whigs will take both. I advise you to reach the Yadkin before daylight." Ochletree was seen no more in Charlotte.

Though now beyond the age of military service, John McKnitt Alexander accompanied General Greene in his expedition into South Carolina and in his masterly retreat before Cornwallis. By his intimate knowledge of the topography and of the people of the country, he afforded valuable counsel and assistance to that officer.

He died July 10, 1817, aged 84, and was buried in Hopewell church graveyard, where also are buried his wife, Jean Bane, and his brother Hezekiah, "the clear-headed magistrate."

Dr. Joseph McKnitt, the son of John McKnitt Alexander, graduated honorably at Princeton, studied and practiced medicine, and distinguished himself for talent and public spirit. He inherited and occupied "Alexandria," the honored homestead of his father, where he died, in 1841, aged sixty-seven.

In 1830 he vindicated the claims of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, by taking the depositions of living witnesses, and by collecting a large amount and variety of documentary evidence. These have been made matters of public record at Raleigh, N. C., and a copy is in the Congressional Library in Washington

City. Preparations are being now made to celebrate the centennial of the Declaration on the 20 of May in this year, 1875.

Two brothers of John McKnitt Alexander, who remained in Cecil county, Md., became leading elders in the Rock Presbyterian church. These were Theophilus and Amos. Theophilus died before his father James, in 1768.

His son, Joseph Alexander, D.D., was a man of fine talents and scholarship. He married a daughter of President Davies of Princeton College, N. J., and exercised his ministry in North and South Carolina.

Amos married Sarah Sharpe of Cecil county, Md., and had eleven children:

1. Rachel—*died*.
2. Priscilla married Mr. Longwell, and moved to Penns Valley, Pa.
3. Jemima married Alexander Read, and her daughter married Governor Bigler of Pennsylvania.
4. Ruth married Joseph Wallace of Baltimore, Md.
5. Mary married John Evans, grandfather of Alexander Evans, Esq., of Elkton.
6. Dorcas married Henry McCoy of Philadelphia.
7. Amos.
8. Sarah married Robert Hodgson, father of James Hodgson of Chester county, Pa.
9. Mark married Elizabeth Gilpin of Cecil, Md., 1798.
10. Margaret married her cousin, James Alexander, who moved to Kishacoquillas Valley, Pa., where he died and left lands there, in North Carolina, and on the Susquehanna, to his sons, John, James, and Jonathan.
11. James married Mary Clendenin of Harford county, Md.; lived some time at New London, Chester county,

Pa., removed in 1832 to Piqua, Ohio, where he died in 1862, aged ninety years. His children were Amos, Adam C., Alexander W., James, David, and William Henry Alexander.

Adam C. Alexander married Susan Ives of New London, Pa. Their children: James B., Mary Ellen, Elizabeth C., John E., Adam C., Alexander W., and Susan E. 1875—Residence, New London, Chester county, Pa.

Amos Alexander, son of Amos, married Amanda Duffield, daughter of George Duffield of Chester county, Pa., father of the Rev. George Duffield, once pastor at Carlisle. His children were James, Charles, Amos, George, Henry, and Amanda.

Robert Hodgson, who married Sarah, daughter of Amos Alexander, had children:

Mark married Sophia Duffield, sister of Amanda.

Elizabeth married Joseph Strawbridge of Chester county.

James married Elizabeth, daughter of Rev. George Gillespie, one of the early ministers of the Presbyterian Church.

Robert married Matilda Brown of Philadelphia.

Harrison—*died.*

Sarah married Robert W. Brown of Honeywood, Chester county, Pa.

Alexander married Nancy Irvin of Chester county.