

Colonial *and* Revolutionary Families *of* Pennsylvania

Genealogical and Personal Memoirs

EDITOR

JOHN W. JORDAN, LL.D.

Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Ex-General Registrar of Sons of the Revolution
and Registrar of Pennsylvania Society



VOLUME I



NEW YORK

CHICAGO

THE LEWIS PUBLISHING COMPANY

1911

William Crispin appears to have been born about 1610, though the place and exact date of his birth are uncertain. The first mention of the name found in published public documents is in the "Calendar of State Papers," Domestic Series; on March 3, 1634-5, the officers of customs at Kingston-upon-Hull advised the governor and others of the Company of Merchant Adventurers that the "Adventures," William Crispin, master, was lading in their port with woolen cloths for Amsterdam, contrary to the late proclamation, but these documents throw no light on any further happenings in the matter.

(The "Calendar" has an abstract of a letter, dated Holborn, September 2, 1635, from John Crispin to Secretary Edward Nicholas, in which he expresses hope that Nicholas's

respects toward the late affair concerning Kingston-upon-Hull will not be forgotten, and says that because of hurting his mare, and for various causes, he could not prosecute the delinquents, and entreats Nicholas to be his mediator; but there is nothing to show whether or not this letter has any connection with the advice of the customs officers of March 3, as the name Crispin and place Kingston-upon-Hull may be only a coincidence.)

For fourteen years after this the name does not occur in the "Calendar," and then there is a warrant from Colonels Deane and Blake to the Navy Commissioners, dated April 3, 1649, for William Crispin, late purser on the "Recovery," to be entered on the "Truelove." On August 6, 1650, the Admiralty Commissioners wrote to Colonel Deane that six new frigates were to be supplied with officers, and sent the petition and certificates of William Crispin for a purser's place in one of them; they instructed Deane, that if he found the papers correct, to return Crispin as fit to be employed, but to remember that they thought Thomas Phillips should be purser of the first of the frigates. (It is not entirely certain that this William Crispin, the purser, was the same as the captain of the "Adventure;" having already been master of a merchant-ship, he should have been able to obtain a higher office in the navy, especially if there is any truth in the story that he had been in the army. But his circumstances at the time, of which we are ignorant, might have induced him to accept the post of purser).

In 1652 William Crispin commanded the "Hope" in the service of the Commonwealth. At that time there were very few regular naval officers or regular naval vessels; when occasion arose to form a naval force, merchant-ships were impressed and equipped as men-of-war; army officers were generally assigned to them as admirals, captains and lieutenants in command of the soldiers who fought the ships, the navigation and command of the crew being in command of the master. On the other hand, it sometimes happened that, as many of these merchant-ships were already well armed and had a master and crew capable of fighting as well as handling the ship, the master was made captain, retaining full command of both fighting and navigation. William Crispin's captaincy was one of this latter kind. The "Calendar" has one letter written by William Crispin while in command of the "Hope" to J. Turner, November 19, 1652, saying that he mustered Captain Lawson's men on the "Fairfax," and found more landsmen and boys than upon any of the state's ships for the last ten years; that he discharged eighteen and signed their tickets, and sent down one hundred and eighty men to the "Fairfax" in the "Hope," but when they arrived and saw the landsmen, one hundred would not go, but went to other ships. This letter shows that Crispin and the other naval officers were preparing for the more important events of the following year; it also implies that Crispin had been in the service of the state for at least ten years before this date.

In May, 1653, an expedition was sent against the Dutch, under Col. Richard Deane and Col. George Monk, generals and admirals of the Parliament. The fleet in this expedition consisted of three squadrons, the first, or squadron of the red flag, contained thirty-eight ships, under the direct command of Deane and Monk; the second, or white, thirty-three ships, under Vice-Adm. William Penn; and the third, or blue squadron, thirty-four ships, under Rear-Adm. John Lawson. Capt. Crispin commanded the "Assistance," frigate, one hundred and eighty men and forty guns, in Penn's squadron. This fleet on the 2d and 3d of June, 1653, took or destroyed between twenty and thirty Dutch ships-of-war, took thirteen hundred and fifty prisoners, and pursued the Dutch to their own harbors.

After this engagement the "Assistance" spent the remainder of the year cruising, conveying merchantmen, and preying on the Dutch commerce, as evidenced by the following abstracts of letters in the *Calendar*:

"Aug. 9th, 1653, William Crispin 'Assistance' betwixt the shore and the 'Whittaker' to the Navy Commissioners. Being ordered by the General to bring his ship to Deptford for repairs, he asks orders for masts and other stores.

"Sep. 2, 1653, Captain William Crispin, 'Assistance,' Hole Haven to Admiralty Commissioners. Has received the remainder of his victuals and stores, and will sail to-night for the Downs; the 'Sapphire' and 'Hector' sail to-morrow.

"Oct. 5, 1653, Capt. William Crispin, 'Assistance,' off Plymouth, to Admiralty Commissioners. Sailed from Isle of Wight with the 'Hector,' 'Nightingale' and sixty-five merchant vessels, and meeting the 'Pearl,' sent her with orders to Captain Sparling (of the "President") and the captain of the 'Hopewell,' pink, to join him, but they declined, being bound for Guernsey and Jersey with some money, then to carry defective guns to Portsmouth or the Thames, and then for St. Malo. Parted with the fleet off Ushant, and took a ship of Middleburg, with hoops from Newhaven bound to Nantes, and the 'Nightingale' took her consort; a pink belonging to Delft has come in with the prizes and to get a supply of men and provisions, when he will put to sea again.

"Oct. 12, 1653, Captain John Humphrey, 'Nightingale,' to Admiralty Commissioners. Has been cruising at sea with Captain Crispin of the 'Assistance.' Took a prize from Rotterdam, and had a dispute with some men-of-war from Brest for two hours, but as there were fourteen or fifteen of them, sailed towards Falmouth for assistance; intends to follow them, and then go for Ireland.

"Oct. 22, 1653, Captain William Crispin, 'Assistance,' Falmouth, to Robert Blackborne. Victualled and tallowed his ships for five months, and has been plying eastward by order of the Generals. Put into Falmouth and received some more men; hearing there are some Dutch men-of-war about the Land's End, intends plying that way. Of the forty men pressed by Capt. Mills, all but four are landmen, and taken from their callings in the field, to the prejudice of the country. He suffers the seamen to be cleared on feeing the constables. Has sent Captains Humphreys and Sparling their instructions for sailing to Ireland."

The next year Oliver Cromwell, who was then Protector, decided to send an expedition against the Spanish possessions in the West Indies, which was dispatched secretly because England was at peace with Spain. A fleet of thirty-eight ships was sent out under Admiral Penn, with Gen. Venables in command of the soldiers. The fleet was divided into three squadrons, one directly under Penn, one under Vice-Admiral Goodson, and one under Rear-Admiral Dakins. Capt. William Crispin commanded the "Laurel," one hundred and sixty seamen, thirty soldiers and forty guns, which belonged to Penn's squadron. On Wednesday, December 20, 1654, fifteen ships, some from each squadron, under Rear-Adm. Dakins, sailed from Spithead. The "Laurel" probably was one of these, for the "Calendar" has a letter from Capt. Crispin, dated on the "Laurel," off the Lizard, December 26, 1654, to the Admiralty Commissioners, saying that he was ordered by Rear-Adm. Dakins to lie out, so as to speak with any ship homeward bound, and informing them that the major-general and all the remainder on board the squadron were well and only wanted the "Indian" which was not yet joined. The remainder of the fleet sailed on the 26th. The expedition arrived in sight of Barbadoes, January 29, 1654-5, and having put in there, made their plans and preparations; the leaders decided to first attack Hispaniola, and the fleet sailed from Barbadoes, March 31, 1655; they sighted the port of St. Domingo, April 13, and landed the soldiers the same day. Capt. Crispin sailed along the shore to make observations. The journal of the expedition, April 24, says, "Letters at eleven o'clock at night, came from General Venables and the rear-admiral (on shore, the latter in command of a party of sailors on land service). The general intimated that the army was just on the point to march, and that they intended that evening, or next morning betimes, to be at the landing place discovered by Captain Crispin, to the north-

ward of the Fort Jeronimo, in a little sandy bay." Some days of fighting resulted in failure, and it was then determined to try Jamaica. The fleet sailed for that island Friday, May 4, 1655, and on the 10th anchored in Jamaica harbor, except Capt. Crispin's ship, the "Laurel," which again cruised about outside. The same day the attack was made; the Spaniards made little opposition, and on the 17th formally surrendered. (The account of Captain Crispin by his great-grandson, already mentioned, gives a story of this engagement which appears to be entirely without foundation. It is to the effect that, the fleet having arrived before St. Jago, the then capital of Jamaica, William Crispin fired the first and third shots, the latter striking the flag-staff and felling it, whereupon the Spaniards surrendered; and that on the return of the expedition to England, its commander, Adm. Penn, was granted an addition of three balls to his coat-of-arms, in recognition of the three shots). A few days later it was decided that, on account of scarcity of provisions, part of the fleet should return to England, three ships go to New England to procure supplies, and fifteen stay at Jamaica. On Monday, June 25, the ships selected to go home set sail, Penn's being one of them. Penn went with her, leaving Vice-Admiral Goodson in command at Jamaica. The "Laurel" was one of those that remained, and, although Crispin and some of the other captains expressed a desire to leave, Crispin appears to have stayed with his ship.

It has been stated that the rear-admiral then acted in Goodman's place as vice-admiral, and that Capt. Crispin became acting rear-admiral. The journal of the expedition (as quoted by Granville Penn in his "Memoirs of Admiral Penn"), at this point, says, "Some of the captains expressed their desire to go home, notwithstanding their vessels remained, viz : rear admiral Captain Crispin (of the *Laurel*), C. Newberry and C. Story."

Capt. William Crispin, Richard Wadeson, and Thomas Broughton, who were appointed to take charge of supplying the English forces in the island, were called by the home authorities the "Commissioners for supplying Jamaica." Crispin returned to England early in the spring, for the *Calendar* has a letter dated London, April 24, 1656, from him to Col. John Clerke and Mr. Hopkins, about some Jamaica hides to be disposed of for the use of Gen. (Admiral) Penn.

Penn and that part of the fleet that returned had arrived at Spithead, August 31, 1655, and soon afterwards he and Venables were committed to the Tower, the reason given being that they had disobeyed orders by returning, but in reality because Cromwell knew that they favored the Prince of Wales. Penn was soon released but was dismissed from the service of the Protector, and retired to his Irish estates. (In the autumn of 1657 he was living on his estate of Macromp in county Cork; this was the confiscated estate of Lord Muskerry; after the Restoration it was restored to the latter (then Earl of Clancarty), and, in compensation, Penn was given the estate of Shannagarry, in the same county). About this time many of the principal men in the navy and their adherents found much cause for dissatisfaction in Cromwell's conduct, especially in the ascendancy of the army over the navy which he fostered. For a number of years they had borne the brunt of foreign wars and successfully carried out expeditions of conquest; in return for which, instead of being given higher commands or other suitable rewards, they were dismissed from the service or required to serve under Cromwell's land officers, whom he made admirals and generals-at-sea over the heads of tried and experienced naval officers. During the internal troubles most of the leading naval

officers had had little to do with party strife at home, being at sea engaged in fighting the common enemies of the whole English nation, consequently they had not much sympathy with Cromwell and his party; some of them, indeed, were royalists by birth and education, and had been in the navy before the struggle between King and Parliament began. Penn was one of these, and, as we have seen, he had been dismissed by the Protector. Crispin was retained longer; but when the naval party began to plan opposition to the Protector's government and adherence to the King, he was among the leaders of the movement. Granville Penn in his "Memoirs of Admiral Penn" has shown that the naval party laid the foundation for the Restoration, which was afterwards accomplished by Gen. Monk. This naval party had been gradually forming for some time, and circumstances contributed to increase its following. Hume in his "History of England" says that many of the inferiors, as well as the leaders of the West Indies expedition, were inclined to the King; and that, when Spain declared war against England on account of the violence of treaty by the sending out of this same expedition, several sea officers, entertaining scruples against this war, threw up their commissions. Crispin was undoubtedly one of the latter; and they, with the officers dismissed by Cromwell and their friends still in the service, formed the nucleus of the naval party which took part in the succeeding events.

In 1656 the fifth-monarchy men began to hold secret meetings and prepare for an outbreak; at the end of the year the naval party and some of the royalists hearing of it, attempted to turn it to their own account, and in the beginning of the next year (March, 1657) had come to terms with them and were preparing for a rising against Cromwell. Sec. Thurloe made a report of the discovery and frustration of this scheme, which is published in his collection of State Papers (vol. vi., pp. 184-186). (In the index to this volume Crispin is described as a fifth-monarchy man, but as Granville Penn points out, the report to which the index refers shows him to have been one of those Thurloe calls "behind the curtain"). After describing the actions of the fifth-monarchy men, Thurloe's report says:

"Things being thus settled among the men of these principles, those, who were all this while behind the curtain, and thought themselves as well of their own judgment as some of others, began to thinke, that these men might be made good use of; and in order thereto, the first step must be to reconcile the fifth monarchy and the common wealth partye. And to this end a meeting was betweene them, which they agreed should consist of twelve. The persons who met, wer vice-ad. Lawson, col. Okey, capt. Lyons, capt. Crispin, capt. Dekins, one Portman, Venner, mr. Squib, and some others. Four of these were officers at sea, and three deserted the fleet, when it went upon the coast of Spayne."

Cromwell had dismissed Lawson in the summer of 1656, and the three who, Thurloe says, deserted the fleet, but had, in fact, thrown up their commissions, as mentioned above, were Lyons, Crispin and Dakins (the latter the rear-admiral in the West Indies expedition). Venner, who was the leader of the fifth-monarchy men, was a wine-cooper, and Thurloe calls him a person of very mean quality. The report continues:

"These twelve being met together, engaged solemnly to each other to secesy, and not to disclose to any creature, that there was any such meetinge save that a liberty was given to communicate all to m. g. Harrison and col. Rich, both of whom had bene sounded * * * One party was for actinge under a visible authority; and for that purpose propounded, that forty of the longe parliament should be convened in some fitting place, for they would not have all of them neither, under whom they would act."

This was probably the naval men and royalists, while what follows accords better with the fifth-monarchy ideas :

“The other were neither carefull for any authority to act under, nor that any way of government should be propounded beforehand; but were for action with such members as they could get, and wait for such issue as the providence of God should bring things to. Thus the difference stood betweene them, and many meetings there were upon it * * * These meetings continued thus, till it was resolved by his highnes (Cromwell) that a parliament should be called, and some of the chief of this meeting were apprehended and secured.”

The report does not name those taken, and we do not know whether Crispin was among them. Venner escaped, and he and his fifth-monarchy partisans resolved to take up arms at the first opportunity; but early in April several of their meeting places were broken up, their arms seized, and twenty of them captured. This conspiracy came to naught, but the naval party continued their secret activity in conjunction with the other royalists. If Crispin participated in any of the latter conspiracies, there is nothing at present known in evidence of it. After the last attempt he may have gone at once to Kinsale, in Ireland, where he is found soon after the Restoration. His former commander (and connection by marriage), Admiral Penn, was living at that time on his estates in county Cork, which were not far from Kinsale, and this probably drew Crispin to that place. (It has been stated that Cromwell gave Crispin a forfeited estate near the Shannon, not far from Limerick, but no evidence in support of the statement has been found after considerable search; there is no proof that Crispin was ever in that vicinity. His name may have been confused with that of Sir Nicholas Crispe, one of the London adventurers, who had an estate in the locality mentioned). In 1660, after the Restoration, Penn, who took an important part in the final acts of that event, was knighted and made Commissioner of the Admiralty and Governor of the town and fort of Kinsale. Crispin probably assisted Penn at this time, and no doubt came in for a share of the royal favor; he may have obtained a magistracy or judicial office of some kind in county Cork, as the Admiral's son afterwards wrote that Crispin was skilled in court-keeping. He lived in Kinsale about twenty years, but left very little of record there that has survived. The Council Book of the Corporation of Kinsale (from 1652 to 1800) mentions the reading at the meeting of July 18, 1662, a letter of protection from arrest granted to William Crispin by Thomas Amery, dated June 20, 1662. In the Marquis of Ormonde's papers (catalogued by the Historical Manuscripts Commission) is a letter from William Crispin dated at Kinsale, December 12, 1665, the last record of him here until his appointment to Pennsylvania. If he ever joined the Society of Friends he may have done so while at Kinsale, for the Friends were quite numerous in county Cork, and many of the Commonwealth soldiers there had adopted their tenets. It is supposed, however, that he was not a Friend.

In 1681 William Penn, son of the Admiral, having obtained the grant of Pennsylvania, proceeded to plant a colony there. He first sent his cousin, William Markham, as Deputy-Governor, to receive the government from the Duke of York's representatives at New York. In September he appointed three Commissioners for settling the colony, with authority to purchase land from the Indians, select the site for a city, etc. In his letter of instructions to them, dated September 3, 1681, he calls them “My Commissioners for the Settling of the present Collony this year transported into y^e said Province.”

These Commissioners were William Crispin, John Bezar and Nathaniel Allen. The next month he gave them further instructions, and added another Commissioner, William Haigue. The commission to the four is dated October 25, 1681, and refers to instructions of October 14. This may have been the first commission issued, as no other is known to exist at the present day, nor have the instructions of October 14 been found. These Commissioners sailed for Pennsylvania soon afterwards, but not all in the same ship. There were three ships that sailed from England for Pennsylvania in the year 1681, the "John and Sarah," the "Bristol Factor," and the "Amity." Allen sailed in the "John and Sarah" the first that arrived in Pennsylvania, and Bezar probably in the same. Crispin went in one of them and the facts points to the "Amity," of London, Richard Dimond, master, as the one. The historians, Proud, Gordon and Clarkson, all say that the "Amity" was one of the three that sailed this year, that she was delayed by contrary winds and did not arrive until spring of the following year. Hazard says that the "Amity" was said to have been blown off the coast to the West Indies and did not arrive until spring, but remarks that we have proof that she did not sail until April of the next year; and later historians follow Hazard's statement. But we only have proof that she did sail from the Downs, April 23, 1682; none that she had not sailed before and returned without reaching Pennsylvania. By all accounts the ship Crispin sailed in was blown off after nearly reaching the capes of Delaware, and put into Barbadoes, and there we lose sight of her. The similarity of the accounts shows that Crispin's ship was the "Amity," and that the earlier historians were correct, as far as they went, while Hazard is mistaken in placing her first voyage in April, 1682, as she no doubt returned from Barbadoes to England, and made a new start in that month. William Crispin died in Barbadoes, when the ship put in there, and the news of his death was probably taken back to England by the "Amity," for Thomas Holme, Surveyor-General of Pennsylvania, who is said to have succeeded Crispin as Commissioner, came out in her next voyage. Crispin is also said to have been the first appointed Surveyor-General, but no proof of this has been found. Silas Crispin, son of William, came out with Holme. He had probably first sailed with his father and returned to England in the "Amity," as no doubt many of the other passengers did, to get another chance to reach Pennsylvania.

Penn also intended Captain Crispin to be Chief-Justice, as evidenced by the following extract from a letter to Markham:

"London, 18th 8th mo. 1681.

"Cosen Markham:

"* * * I have sent my Cosen, William Crispin, to be thy Assistant, as by Commission will appear. His Skill, Experience, Industry & Integrity are well known to me, & perticularly in court-keeping &c; so that it is my will & pleasure that he be as Chief Justice, to keep the Seal, the Courts & Sessions; & he shall be accountable to me for it. The proffits redounding are to his proper behoof. He will show thee my Instructions, which will guide you all in the business. The res is left to your discretion; that is, to thee, thy two Assistants & the Counsel * * *"

"Pray be very respectfull to my Cosen Crispin. He is a man my father had great confidence in and value for * * *"

"William Penn."

William Crispin was one of the "First Purchasers" of land in the Province; but his purchase of five thousand acres was never laid out to him. After his death this amount was confirmed to his children, in separate portions, by the Pro-

prietary's patents, in which it is stated to be of the latter's "free gift." William Penn granted five hundred acres to his son Ralph, one thousand acres to his daughter Rachel, and three thousand acres to his seven younger children, and his son Silas in 1692 obtained a patent for five hundred acres, stated to be in right of a purchase of five thousand acres (presumably his father's).

William Crispin's city lots are shown on Holme's "Portraiture," or plan of the city. They were: No. 43, on the south side of Vine street, running from Delaware Front to Second street; and No. 74, half on the southeast and half on the northeast corners of Eighth and High streets, each sixty-six feet on High and three hundred and six feet on Eighth street. These lots were never patented to him, but Silas Crispin obtained patents to some other city lots, presumably in place of these.

Capt. William Crispin married (first) about 1650, Anne, daughter of John Jasper, a merchant of Rotterdam, Holland, who was a sister of Margaret Jasper, wife of Adm. Sir William Penn, and mother of William Penn, Proprietary of Pennsylvania. Some authorities state that John Jasper was a native of Rotterdam, others that he was an Englishman by birth. Samuel Pepys, in his Diary, describes John Jasper's daughter, Lady Penn, as a "well-looking, fat, short old Dutchwoman," but her appearance might have been inherited from a Dutch mother, even though her father had been English. Howard M. Jenkins in "The Family of William Penn" (*Penna. Mag.*, vol. xx) remarks, "By one authority he is named a burgomaster, and the editor of Lord Braybrooke's edition of Pepys calls him Sir John." It has also been said that his name was Petre, translated Jasper in Dutch.