

The Mother of Counties

Northumberland County was founded in 1772. It covered a vast area of Central Pennsylvania. So many counties and parts of counties, including what would become Clinton County, was once part of Northumberland County, thus it became known as “The Mother of Counties”.

On April 17, 1777, William Reed, who built Ford Reed in what would become Lock Haven, was brought before the County Committee of Safety. The entry is as follows:

“Whereas, a certain William Reed, of Bald Eagle Township, has been taken into custody and carried before this committee to answer for his conduct in refusing to associate and bear arms in behalf of the states; and being asked his reasons for so refusing, his answers were as follows: That he was once concerned in a riot in Ireland commonly known as: The Name of the Hearts of Steel Riot, and was taken prisoner, tried and acquitted upon taking an oath of Allegiance to the King and coming under solemn obligations never to lift arms against him for the future. After some research, it was found that William’s mother brought him to America when he was about 5 or 6 years old. He could hardly have been a threat to Great Britain at that age. So did he make up the story to avoid fighting in the Revolution? He therefore looked upon it as a breach of his oath to muster or bear arms in behalf of the states, as the arms of the state were now employed against the King to whom he had sworn allegiance.

“Being further asked if he had any objections to the cause the United States were now engaged in”, he said he had not any, and would be as forward and willing as any to engage in it could he

do it without breach of his oath. Being asked if he would take an oath of Allegiance to the United States, he said he would if it did not oblige him to take up arms, accordingly, the following oath was administered to him: "I do swear to be true to the United States of America and do denounce and disclaim all allegiance to the King of Great Britain; and I promise that I will not, either directly or indirectly, speak or act anything to prejudice the cause or safety of the states or lift up arms against them or be in any way assistant to their declared enemies in any case whatsoever."

William Read (Reed)

Source: The History of Centre and Clinton Counties by John Blair Linn 1883.

Contributed by Richard Winters.