

JAMES AND JOHN ELDER

July 22, 1921

John Elder, b. January 26, 1706, in the city of Edinburgh, Scotland; d. July 17, 1792, in Paxtang Township, Dauphin County, Pa. He received a classical education, and graduated from the University at Edinburgh. He subsequently studied divinity, and, in 1732, was licensed to preach the gospel. Four or five years later, the son followed the footsteps of his parents and friends, and came to America. Coming as a regularly licensed minister, he was received by New Castle Presbytery, having brought credentials to that body, afterward to Donegal Presbyterian church on the 5th of October, 1737. Paxtang Congregation having separated from that of Derry in 1735, and Rev. Mr. Bertram adhering to the latter, left that of Paxtang vacant, and they were unanimous in giving Rev. John Elder a call. This he accepted on the 12th of April 1738 and on the 22d of November following, he was ordained and installed the Rev. Samuel Black presiding. The early years of Mr. Elder's ministry were not those of ease; for in the second year the Whitefield excitement took a wide spread over the Presbyterian Church. He preached against this religious furore, or the "great revival", as it was termed, and for this he was accused to the Presbytery of propagating "false doctrine." That body cleared him, however, in December 1740; "but a separation was made," says Webster, "and the conjunct Presbyters answered the supplications sent to them the next summer, by sending Campbell and Rowland to those who forsook him. He signed the protest. His support being reduced, he took charge of the "Old Side" portion of the Derry Congregation."

Following closely upon these ecclesiastical troubles came the French and Indian war. Associations were formed throughout the Province of Pennsylvania for the defense of the frontiers, and the congregations of Mr. Elder were prompt to embody themselves. Their minister became their leader – their captain – and they were trained as scouts. He superintended the discipline of his men, and his mounted rangers became widely known as the Paxtang Boys." During two summers, at least, every man who attended Paxtang church carried his rifle with him, and their minister took his. Subsequently, he was advanced to the dignity of Colonel to the Provincial authorities, the date of his commission being July 11, 1763. He had command of the block-houses and stockades from Eastern to the Susquehanna. The Governor, in tendering this appointment, expressly stated that nothing more would be expected of him than the general oversight. "His justification", says Webster, "Lies in the crisis of affairs.....Bay at York, Steel at Conococheaque, and Griffith at New Castle, with Burton and Thompson, the church missionaries, at Carlisle, headed companies, and were actively engaged." During the latter part of the summer of 1763, many murders were committed in Paxtang, culminating the destruction of the Indians on Conestoga Manor and at Lancaster. Although the men composing the company of Paxtang, men who exterminated the murderous savages referred to belonged to his obedient and faithful rangers, it has never been proved that the Rev. Elder has previous knowledge of the plot formed, although the Quaker pamphleteers of the day charged him with aiding and abetting the destruction of the Indians. When the deed was done, and the Quaker authorities were determined to proceed to extreme lengths with the participants, and denounced the frontiersmen with "riotous and murderous Irish Presbyterians," he took sides with the border inhabitants, and sought to condone the deed. His letters published in connection with the history of that transaction prove him to have been a man judicious, firm and decided. During

the controversy which ensued, he was the author of one of the pamphlets: "Letter from a Gentleman in one of the Back Counties to a Friend in Philadelphia." He was relieved from his command by the

(James & John Elder, 2 of 5)

Governor of the Province, who directed that Major Asher Clayton take charge of the military establishment.

Peace, however, was restored, - not only in civil affairs, but in the church. The union of the synods brought the Rev. John Elder into the same Presbytery with Messrs. John Roan, Robert Smith, and George Duffield, they being at first in a minority, but rapidly settling the vacancies with New Side men. By the leave of synod, the Rev. Mr. Elder joined the Second Philadelphia Presbytery May 19, 1768, and on the formation of the General Assembly, became a member of Carlisle Presbytery. At the time the British army overran New Jersey, driving before them the fragments of our discouraged, naked, and half-starved troops, and without any previous arrangement, the Rev. Mr. Elder went on Sunday, as usual to Paxtang church. The hour arrived for church-service, when, instead of a sermon, he began a short and hasty prayer to the Throne of Grace; then called upon the patriotism of all effective men present, and exhorted them to aid in support of liberty's cause and the defense of the country. In less than thirty minutes, a company of volunteers was formed. Colonel Robert Elder, the parson's eldest son, was chosen captain. They marched next day, though in Winter. His son, John, at sixteen years, was among the first. His son, Joshua, sub-lieutenant of Lancaster County, could not quit the service he was employed in, but sent a substitute. Until his death, for a period of fifty-six years, he continued the faithful minister of the congregations over which he had been placed in the prime of his youthful vigor, passing the age not generally allotted to man - that of four-score and six years. His death was deeply lamented far and wide. Not one of all those who had welcomed him to his early field of labor survived him.

Charles Miner, the historian of Wyoming, gives this opinion of Rev. John Elder; "I am greatly struck with the evidences of learning, talent, and spirit displayed by him. He was, beyond doubt, the most extraordinary man of Eastern Pennsylvania. I hope someone may draw up a full memoir of his life, and a narrative, well digested, of his times....He was a very extraordinary man, of most extensive influences, full of activity and enterprise, learned, pious, and a ready writer. I take him to have been of the old Cameronian blood. Had his lot been cast in New England, he would have been a leader of the Puritans." He had, with one who well remembered the old minister, "a good and very handsome face. His features were regular - no one prominent - good complexion, with blue eyes.... He was apertly, long, straight man, over six feet in height, large frame and body, with heavy legs....He did not talk broad Scotch, but spoke much as we do now, yet grammatically." His remains quietly repose amid the scenes of his earthly labors, in the burying-ground of Old Paxtang church, by the side of those who loved and revered him. Over his dust a marble slab bears the inscription dictated by his friend and neighbor, William Maclay, first United States Senator from Pennsylvania.

The Rev. Mr. Elder was twice married; m, First, in1740, Mary Baker, b. 1715, in county Antrim, Ireland; d. June 12, 1749, in Paxtang; dau. Of Joshua Baker, of Lancaster, Pa. They had issue:

- I. Robert, b. Friday, June 11, 1742; m. Mary J. Thompson.
- II. Joshua, b. March 9, 1744-5; m. 1st, Mary McAllister; 2nd, Sarah McAllister.

(James & John Elder, 3 of 5)

- III. Eleanor, b. December 3, 1747; m. John Hays.
- IV. Grizel, b. May 2, 1749; d. September 18, 1769.

Mr. Elder m., secondly November 5, 1751, Mary Simpson, dau. of Thomas and Sarah Simpson, of Paxtang; b. 1732, in Paxtang; d. October 3, at 6 A.M. and had issue.

- V. Sarah, b. October 19, 1752; d. Feb 14, 1822; m. James Wallace.
- VI. Ann, b. Oct. 8, 1754; m. Andrew Stephen.
- VII. Mary, b. Jan. 12, 1760; m. James Wilson.
- VIII. John, b. Aug. 3, 1757; m. Elizabeth Awl.
- IX. James, b. May 21, 1762; d. Aug. 6, 1763.
- X. James, b. Friday June 15, 1764; m. Lucinda Wallace.
- XI. Thomas, b. Jan. 30, 1767; m. first, Catherine Cox; 2nd, Elizabeth Shippen Jones.
- XII. David, b. May 7, 1769; m. Jane Galbraith.
- XIII. Samuel, b. Feb. 27, 1772; m. Margaret Espy.
- XIV. Michael, b. Aug. 9, 1773; m. Nancy McKinney.
- XV. Rebecca, b. March 1, 1775; m. James Awl.

See pages 152, 153, 154 Egle's Pennsylvania Genealogies.

H.H. Shenk, Custodian of the Public Records.

Joseph Elder, son of Robert m. Martha Jane Walker

Martha Elder, dau. Of Joseph and Martha Jane Walker Elder m. Robert Kerr—(See Kerr History for line of decent)

2. James Elder, son of Robert and Eleanor Elder b. 1712 in Scotland came to America prior to 1754 and settled near Dry Run, Cumberland, now Franklin Co., this was near the Marland line and on the extreme frontier. He was probably a resident for many years before he applied for a "warrant for survey" of land. His first warrant (No. 14) requests 150 acres of land adjoining Robert Elder, Josiah Anderson, and David Elder in Fannet twp. To pay 15 pounds 10 s per hundred acres. Issued by James Hamilton June 3rd, 1762 to John Luken Surveyor General. This was surveyed May 20th, 1766 and found contain 2123/4 acres, and was Patented to his son-in-law Robert Kerr. A "tract called "Ballymully" in Fanet twp. Franklin Co., adjoining David Elder, a black oak, widow Baker, a Mt. and Robert Elder's Improvement and Robert Anderson." This transfer is confirmed by Patent Book P. 8, Page 432.

James Elder and wife Elizabeth had transferred the "warrant" to Robert Kerr June 5th, 1785. Deed recorded in Book "I" page 212, Franklin Co. Pa. office of Recorder of Deeds. Description corresponds

with enclosed survey and deed included all buildings, stock, cows, horses, one half the sheep, crop in ground, grain in the house, and at James Elder's death the "negroe Petter", plantation "where we now

(James & John Elder, 4 of 5)

live." Consideration and subject to the purchase money and quit rent "do make good to the aforesaid Robert Kerr. His mark James (X) Elder mark

Witness, James Moore, Joseph Moore, Robert Armstrong.

WILL OF ROBERT KERR

Will No. 1492 dated Jan. 20th, 1817, Proven 20th Aug. 1817. Witness John Holliday and William Kerr. Exs. Sons Robert and William Kerr Recorded in Office of Register of Wills for Franklin Co., Pa.

In the name of God, Amen. I, Robert Kerr of Fannet Township, Franklin County and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, being sick and weak in body but of sound mind and memory, do make This my last will and Testament in manner and form following, viz: My Body I resign to the dust and my soul to God who gave it in full hope of Future happiness hereafter through a Crucified Redeemer. First my will is that my body shall be decently interred the funeral expenses to be paid out of my personal estate together with all my just debts.

Secondly my Will is that my real and personal estate be sold as soon by my executors after my decease as convenient for them, and I do empower my executors to sell and convey my real estate to the purchaser and my just debts to be paid out of my personal estate if sufficient. If not sufficient then out of my real estate and if the real estate cannot be sold immediately after my decease then in that case my executors will rent the same for the term of one year or until they can sell the same, and if my land is rented the profits arising from the same is to go to the support of my wife and fatherinlaw James Elder and such of my children as may be on the farm with their mother and that they may assist her on the same.

My will is that my wife Agnes is to have her choice of one horse creature, saddle and bridle, one bed and bedding, her wheel, and one of the chests, also one third of my real and personal estate of the sales after the debts is paid the residue being divided equally between my children Alexander, James Elder, William, Agnes, Robert, Elizabeth, Andrew, Thomas, Esther and Margaret except \$137 which is to cut out of my daughter Agnes share and to be divided equally among the rest of my children to them and their heirs forever. Item. My fatherinlaw James Elder to get a comfortable living during his life and a decent burying before the above division takes place. My will is that the share of the three youngest children be put to interest by my executors and the interest arising from this to be applied to schooling and cloathing the said children and lastly I do hereby constitute and appoint my two sons William and Robert and John Elder Senior executors of this my last will and testament. In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this twentieth day of January in the year 1817.

Signed and sealed in presence of us John Holliday, Wm. Kerr.

Roert Kerr (seal)

John Elder Sr. removed to Westmoreland Co., Pa.

Robert Kerr took oath as Ex. Aug. 1817

(James & John Elder, 5 of 5)

Wm. Kerr took oath as Ex. Feb. 16, 1818

Recorded in book C page 343 Chambersburg, Pa. Office of Register of Wills.

Robert Kerr's death occurred in 1817 and it was followed a year later by the death of James Elder. Eight years later Agnes Elder Kerr and some of her large family (See Kerr history) came to Ohio where she resided until time of her death.