

Ann Tew Lost Ears Twice in Same Day in Lancaster County's Court

Ann Tew's reputation is much sunnier than in her shady days of 1766 when a Lancaster County Quarter Sessions Court ordered that her ears be cut off on the same day.

The Court called her a "son of bad fame," is sought by as a legal oddity, where in 1765 she was a counterpart of the "check raiser" from the records of the County. From the records one assumes she was sentenced to one ear in the pillory, that both her ears were cut off and she was whipped with 31 lashes and again in the afternoon of March 25, 1766.

Ann Tew of Lancaster County, Spinster, being a person of bad fame and wickedly intending the honest liege, Subjects of our said Lord the King, to cheat, deceive and defraud, the first day of January in the sixth Year of the Reign of Our Sovereign Lord George the third, King of Great Britain, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith at Lancaster County aforesaid and within the Jurisdiction of this Court with force and arms . . . a certain one shilling Bill of Credit of the Province of Pennsylvania falsly and fraudulently altered in its Denomination with design to increase the value thereof and purporting to be a ten shilling Bill of Credit of the said province unto a certain Wendal Gilbert . . . for a god, true and genuine ten-Shilling Bill of Credit of the said Province, falsly fraudulently and deceitfully did tender utter, pay away. She, the said Ann Tew, then and there well knowing the same one Shilling Bill of Credit to be so as aforesaid altered in its Denomination with design to increase the value of same contrary to the form of the act of General Assembly of the said province in such case made and provided and against the peace of our said Lord the King his Crown and Dignity . . .

A jury of 12 men found Ann guilty. These 12 men gave the decision leading to an apparent double sentence, two punishment periods in one day, separated by two hours at noon.

The True Bill Account

The True Bill of The King v Ann Tew in February Sessions, 1766, Lancaster County, reads:

"Judgment that Ann Tew stand in the Pillory on Tuesday the 25th day of March next, for the space of one hour, between the hours of nine and twelve of the clock in the forenoon of the same day; that she have both her ears cut off and nailed to the same pillory, and that she be whipped at the publick whipping post, with thirty one lashes; that she

pay a fine of one hundred pounds to his Honour the Governor; discharge the costs of prosecution and stand committed till this sentence be carried into execution."

The second true bill reads much the same.

"The prisoner being arraigned pleads non cul et de hoc Wc; Attorney P Dorn Rege Sili Similiur Wc;

"And now a jury being called came to wit Caleb Stewart, Alexander Scott, Christian Buch, Abraham Riblet Henry Mauier, Daniel Kamm, Peter Riblet, Joseph McQuinn, John Bower, George Fisher, Patrick Henry and Christian Kinter, who being duly empannelled, returned, elected, tryd, chosen, sworn. affirmed, upon

"Whereupon the Court their oath and affirmation, respectively, do say that Ann Tew is guilty of the misdeameanor whereof she stands indicted; adjudges that, on the 25th day of March next, she stand in the Pillory for the space of one hour, between the hours of two and four of the clock, in the afternoon of the said day; that she have both her ears cut off and nailed to the same pillory, and that she be whipped at the publick whipping post, with thirty one lashes; that she pay a fine of one hundred pounds, to his Honour the Governor, discharge the costs of prosecution and stand committed till this sentence be carried into execution"

There's a note in the envelope file of this strange, strange case, from a much more recent official of the Quarter Sessions Court.

"Ann Tew, 1760-1768 File
1st Charge
31 Lashes
Ears Cut Off
Altering Note
2nd — the same

Ann appears in the prison roster, also in the aging files, "A list of (Calendar of) Prisoners remain in Lancaster Gaol for their fines and fees, February 5th, 1766."

Benjamin Franklin's bill that Ann altered would seem strange today. Its dimensions are two and 13/16th inches by 3 1/2 inches. Ornate border designs were forerunners of today's intricate designs to prevent counterfeiting, and this aged note carries the warning "To Counterfeit is Death" On the reverse side is the endorsement of Wendal Gilbert, with a second signature "Wentel Gilbert" below

On the face of the bill, one reads "This bill shall pass current for ONE (and here Ann had altered the word to TEN) shilling within the province of Pennsylvania according to an act of the Assembly, made in the Fourth Year of the Reign of King George III."

In a letter-fold is the Court's

Most Unusual

Sentenced to have her ears cut off twice in the same day, Ann Tew 190 years ago provided one of the most unusual legal cases in Lancaster County.

Lawyers and students from all over the country today call on the office of the clerk of quarter sessions, Mrs. Violet Estleman, to again study and ponder over these unusual parchments

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Show Business - Early Start



One of the most youthful — but enthusiastic — exhibitors at the recent 4-H Baby Beef Roundup at Lancaster Stock Yards was Janet Frey of R1 Lancaster. Janet, who is ten years old, came out with a ribbon for her Whiteface, which explains that sincere smile. This is her first year showing baby beef. — (Lancaster Farming Photo).

True Bill, 13 inches by 8 1/2. The parchment has acquired the patina of age, but the firm script of the Judge is still very readable.

Wars have come and gone since Ann's case was filed and tied with red tape. Today court reporter's type and file hundreds of cases. Wigs are absent from the Bench. The Court has modernized, yet retained many of the symbols and procedures of the 1700s.

No wonder Ann's an interesting case.

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