

**MICHAEL HILLEGAS
AND HIS
DESCENDANTS**

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Michael Hillegas and his descendants by Emma St. Clair Nichols Whitney

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EMMA ST. CLAIR NICHOLS WHITNEY

**MICHAEL HILLEGAS
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MICHAEL HILLEGAS

AND

HIS DESCENDANTS.

BY HIS GREAT-GRANDDAUGHTER,

EMMA ST. CLAIR WHITNEY.

*"Those who do not treasure up the memory of their
ancestors, do not deserve to be remembered by posterity."*

EDMUND BURKE.

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POTTSVILLE:

1891.

PREFACE.

IN her early childhood, the compiler of this volume was taught to revere the character of her ancestor, the subject of the following memoir. She has continued to feel a lively interest in everything touching his private and public life; and she cherishes what she deems to be a just pride of descent from one so worthy and honorable. Impressed with a feeling that a short sketch of his life and services would be acceptable to his descendants, and useful to such of them as are interested in American history, she has, for several years, given time and care to the collection of facts and records relating to his personal history, and his connection with public affairs, during the War of the Revolution. The labor incident to her task, in the way of necessary correspondence and the tedious examination of books and records, the collation of facts and dates, and preparation for the press, has been greater than one not familiar with such an undertaking, would suppose could be required; but it has been a labor of love, and has been willingly bestowed. Her reward will be full, if her relatives will but share with her the pleasure and profit of the study; and it is hoped that the facts and materials here collected and classified, will be found serviceable to some later writer, who will use them in the production of a work that will do ample justice to the memory of the

distinguished patriot, whose name gives title to the present volume.

To the memoir is added a genealogy, in which is set out as full a line of his descendants as could be obtained; and it is presented with a wish that it will be interesting and satisfactory. It certainly will convey to some of the family information not before possessed by them, and they will learn of their relationship with persons of whom they have not before heard: while some will here discover a consanguinity between themselves and others, whom they have known only as friends.

It gives the writer pleasure to acknowledge the courtesy and assistance of Mr. John W. Jordan, personally and as an officer of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; of Mr. Frederick D. Stone, Librarian of that Society; and of Dr. William H. Eagle, State Librarian. These gentlemen have responded cheerfully to every call that has been made upon their time and attention; and they have liberally placed at her disposal the data obtained by them in the course of their investigations into the history and character of Mr. Hillegas and his associates.

EMMA ST. CLAIR WHITNEY.

POTTSVILLE, PA., 1 *January*, 1891.

MICHAEL HILLEGAS.

1729—1804.

MEMOIR OF MICHAEL HILLEGAS.

MICHAEL HILLEGAS was born in Philadelphia, on the 22d day of April, 1729, O. S. He was the son of Michael and Margaret Hillegas, who were natives of Germany. The date of their immigration is not ascertainable. The earlier records of arrivals at Philadelphia are unsatisfactory. Among them is that of John Frederick Hillegas, in 1727, from the Palatinate upon the Rhine. If he was of this family, the relationship has not been traced; and, although the name of Hillegas is quite common in parts of Pennsylvania, it cannot be asserted that any descendant of this pair now bears it. The father was naturalized at the April Term, 1749, of the Supreme Court, in Philadelphia. He "took the Sacrament," 26 March, 1749, an Act of Parliament requiring as a prerequisite to naturalization, that the applicant, within three months prior thereto, should have taken the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in some Protestant or Reformed congregation.* Their remains repose side by side in Christ Church Burial Ground, at Fifth and Arch Streets,

*Penna. Archives, 2d Series, II., 377.

Philadelphia. Their grave-stones bear the following inscriptions :

In memory of
MICHAEL HILLEGAS,
who departed this life
Oct. 30th, 1749,
aged 53 yrs.

In memory of
MARGARET HILLEGAS,
relict of
Michael Hillegas,
who departed this life
July 21st, 1770,
Aged 65 yrs.

Of the early life of the subject of this memoir, little is now known. The style and penmanship of his letters and other writings, public and private, show that he was well and carefully educated, and that his business training was accurate and thorough. This, with the grandeur of his integrity, and his patriotic devotion during the long years of the Revolution, fitted him for the discharge of the duties of the public offices that he honored, and the trusts that he executed with faithfulness and zeal.

He was a merchant* and sugar refiner, and was

*In 1762, he was a member of the firm of Winey & Hillegas, as appears by the following certificate in his hand-writing :
" These are to Certify That Tho' & Dav^d Potts did pay us in the year 1762, Twenty-three pounds for Powder delivered at twice, to Wm. Palmer which we were then Inform'd was to be used in the Clearing the falls of Schuylkill. Dated Philad^a, May 11th, 1768.

" WINEY & HILLEGAS.

" £23,0,0."

interested in the manufacture of iron. Success in business gave him an ample fortune, a considerable part of which he contributed, by gift and loan, to the support of the army, during the struggle for independence.

He was one of the commissioners appointed to locate and erect Fort Mifflin.

He was a member of the Provincial Assembly of Pennsylvania, being one of the representatives from Philadelphia (one of the three original counties), from 1765 to 1775 inclusive.*

During all this time he was a member of the committee "to audit and settle the Accounts of the General Loan-Office and other public Accounts."

His taste for literature and practical science led him to association with the men of Philadelphia who gave that character and dignity to the pursuit of knowledge and intellectual culture for which, in those early days, the city was distinguished; and, on the 8th of April, 1768, he was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society. The following letter, written to him, is found in Sparks's *Letters of Franklin*, page 329:

LONDON, *17 March, 1770.*

DEAR SIR: I received your favor of November 25th, and have made inquiries, as you desired, concerning the copper covering of houses. It has

*Penna. Archives, 2d Series, IX., 727.