

**EXTRACTS FROM CHIEF
JUSTICE WILLIAM
ALLEN'S LETTER BOOK**

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Extracts from Chief Justice William Allen's Letter Book by Lewis Burd Walker

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LEWIS BURD WALKER

**EXTRACTS FROM CHIEF
JUSTICE WILLIAM
ALLEN'S LETTER BOOK**

The Burd Papers.

Vol. I.

EXTRACTS

FROM

CHIEF JUSTICE WILLIAM ALLEN'S

LETTER BOOK.

SELECTED AND ARRANGED

BY

LEWIS BURD WALKER.

TOGETHER WITH AN APPENDIX

CONTAINING PAMPHLETS

IN

THE CONTROVERSY WITH

FRANKLIN.

1897.

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P R E F A C E.

Chief Justice William Allen was born August 5th, 1704. His mother, Mary, daughter of Thomas and Susanna Budd, was a sister of Rose Budd, whose daughter, Sarah Plumley, was married to Edward Shippen, of Lancaster. William Allen was married February 16, 1733—1734, to Margaret Hamilton, daughter of Andrew Hamilton, by whom he had four sons and two daughters, as follows:

John Allen, born about March, 1739; died February, 1778.

Andrew Allen, born June, 1740; died March 7, 1825.

James Allen, born about 1742; died September 19, 1778.

William Allen, born about 1751; died July 2, 1838.

Anne Allen, married May 31, 1766, to John Penn; died after August, 1813.

Margaret Allen, married August 19, 1771, to James de Lancey; died October 18, 1827.

In October, 1735, William Allen was chosen Mayor of Philadelphia, and on October 2, 1750, was appointed Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, which office he resigned in 1774, having received an annual salary of about £120, which he distributed in charity. It is to William Allen that the present location of the State House is due, as he purchased the ground with his own money, and held it until the province was able to reimburse him.

He was ever ready to assist men of talent who were struggling with adversity; and Benjamin West has expressed his lively sense of gratitude to William Allen in the strongest words, for the unexpected and unsolicited

advance of money, which enabled West to complete his course of study in Italy. He also aided Franklin very materially, as will be seen by the letter to David Barclay & Sons, dated November 5, 1753, and by the "Answer to Mr. Franklin's Remarks," (attributed to Rev. William Smith), as published in the Appendix; and it is a matter of great regret that gratitude for favors received did not prevent Franklin from abusing his benefactor.

Though William Allen was strongly opposed to the tyrannical course pursued by the British Government towards America, and even contributed "caannon shot" for the use of the Board of the Council of Safety; yet he was opposed to the Declaration of Independence, and therefore was considered a Tory.

He was a very extensive land-owner in Pennsylvania; and upon one tract a town was laid out, which commemorates its founder in its present name of Allentown. He died Sept., 6th, 1780; and his letter book passed into the hands of Edward Shippen, afterwards Chief Justice. After the death of Edward Shippen it was handed over to Edward Burd, and from him to his daughter, Miss Sarah Burd.

After Miss Burd's death the next owners, Misses Mary and Louisa Hubley gave it to their nephew, Dr. Lewis L. Walker, subsequent to whose decease it came into the hands of his nephew, the present editor. This Book, bound in leather, contains copies of 187 letters of William Allen, covering the period of 1753-1770; from 87 of which extracts or copies have been made, which are herein published. In the appendix will be found a reprint of three scarce pamphlets, which are explanatory of some of the letters. The original spelling of the letters has been retained.

EXTRACTS

FROM

WILLIAM ALLEN'S LETTERS.

July 31, 1753. To B. Hume, P. Valette and P. Furnal.
The Sugars were consigned to Messrs. John & Thomas Simpson, whose unhappy Fate, no doubt, you must have heard; The former having shot himself & the latter so shocked at his Uncle's untimely End, that he took to his Bed & died in a few days.

Oct. 21, 1753. To D. Barclay & Sons, London.

I note what you write about the Lottery Tickets. As I do not like the Scheme of the Lottery should be glad this came in time to contradict my former Directions. I intend the Money should be laid in the first Government Lottery upon the usual footing. But as there is so large a Deduction to be taken out of this, it will no doubt be unprofitable to the Adventurers. However if this shall come too late, I shall be contented with what you do. I request you would Order my Periwig Maker to make me three Bob Wigs of the same Colour with the last, and forward them to me by any Opportunity that offers.

Nov. 5, 1753. To Evan Patterson. Atty. London.

* * * What I have from time to time charged you as a Commission, is what every merchant in America charges for the Receipt & Remittance of Money or only for Remittance:—Two and a half (per cent) being generally added for the Receipt, & often Five which in the whole would make Ten, But as I often thought that unreasonable, I never charged more than five under which (upon Inquiry) you'll find no money ever remitted by Bill or otherwise from America. * * * I am willing to purchase their (the heirs of Bellair) interest in this Province which is One Hundred Acres of Liberty Land & Rights to 8000 acres of unlocated Land. I can with great truth inform you that their Rights are decaying in value every day, and are not worth now so much by forty per cent as they were twenty years ago: The Reason if attended to is very plain; Because other people have taken up their Land. And the proprietors have since that time sold some Millions of Acres, at the Rate of fifteen pounds ten shillings this money a hundred in Small Tracts, even from twenty five Acres or upwards, so that all the good Land within the tract purchased of the Indians is taken up. There is an Expectation that within a few years another purchase may be made of the Indians, in which the Rights to land may be laid out to some advantage; tho' they must be very remote and not within one hundred & fifty miles of this City. Yet if care is taken and by persons well acquainted in the Country, some good Lands may be got. But if the Heirs of the Family do not sell before that time, or get some very judicious person immediately after it to locate their Lands, which will I can assure you be a very difficult Task, their Rights will be of no value; they will be obliged to lay out their land in some part of the Country,

now in the possession of the French, for they have lately built Forts within the bounds of this province. Upon the whole I mean that if they keep their Lands another twenty years in their Hands, the whole 8000 Acres will not be worth Fifty Guineas. As I am well acquainted with the back parts of the Country by Information from some who have been upon the Spot, I am willing to give them £800 for their Interest, & will remit them the money for the same, as soon as I am informed the Heirs are willing to sign the Deeds. I am no way anxious about the purchase, being assured I shall make no great matter of advantage by it. However that matter may be, this Information I give may be of some use to them, which may be depended on that if they let matters continue upon the Foot they have done, their Interest will vanish, of which I desire you would be so good as to acquaint them & me of their Result.

I would have made them offers for their Lands in the Jerseys; But that Province is in so distracted a Condition, and so little Hopes of it being otherwise as long as the present Governor lives, that nobody will venture to lay down any Sum for purchases there. All Lands in the Jerseys belonging to Gentlemen in England, or this, or the Neighboring provinces are taken possession of by a set of Freebooters, whom you cannot dislodge; But upon any attempt to remove them by Law rise up in Bodies, and in a riotous manner break open prisons and rescue persons arrested.

I have nearly thirty thousand acres in that province, which is mostly occupied by these Villians.

Nov. 5, 1753. To Thomas Simpson in London.

I have received your melancholy Letters. And give me leave to say the shocking News of my good Old Friend