

The Release of the Prisoners, 1 March, *Carlisle Gazette*, 5 March 1788

A narrative of facts, respecting the manner by which the prisoners were liberated from their confinement, in the gaol of Cumberland County, on Saturday the first of March instant.

It is presumed the public are already in full possession of the cause which gave rise to the following transactions, viz., the opposition made by some of the inhabitants of the borough of Carlisle to the rejoicing intended to be celebrated by the new Federalists, on the 26th and 27th of December last. It is already known that a number of depositions were taken in the office of John Agnew, Esquire with an intention to criminate the several persons who were active in opposing said rejoicing, on which depositions or other information laid before the honorable the supreme justices of the State of Pennsylvania, a warrant was issued charging the said opposers with divers unlawful acts, etc. and commanding the sheriff of this county to apprehend 20 persons therein named, and take them before some of the justices of the Supreme Court, or any of the justices of Cumberland County, to answer to the premises and be dealt with according to law. Some time after the sheriff received the warrant, and called upon the defendants, and informed them such warrant was in his hands; each person willingly agreed to appear at any time he might think proper before any magistrate of this county. He thought proper to appoint Monday the 25th of February last for them to appear before John Agnew, Esquire which they readily complied with. The warrant being read, which exhibited the charge of a riot against the defendants, who demanded that they should be confronted with the witnesses, and offered, if permitted, to produce sufficient evidence to exculpate themselves from the charge alleged against them, which was refused, as the magistrate was of opinion that it was not in his power to supersede a warrant issued by the supreme justices. In the interim a country magistrate [Samuel Irwin] arrived, who had been previously sent for by John Agnew, Esquire. After a short consultation, they came forth, and the country justice told the defendants that in his opinion the warrant admitted of a hearing, but added that he was determined not to act in the matter and advised the defendants to accept of a proposal made by Mr. Agnew, which was to remain in the custody of the sheriff unto the 25th of March next, at which time Mr. Agnew hoped to have instructions from the supreme justices. Seven of the defendants absolutely refused the proposal, unless they were assured of an investigation of the premises at the time mentioned, which was likewise refused. Bail was then demanded by the justice. The defendants answered they were conscious that they were guilty of no crime against the laws of their country; and as they were prosecuted to gratify party spite, they were determined not to enter bail on the occasion, but would otherwise willingly comply with the orders of his worship, upon which Mr. Agnew wrote and signed their commitment, and gave it to the sheriff, who conducted the prisoners to the county gaol. Immediately the country took the alarm on hearing that a number of persons was confined in prison for opposing a measure that was intended to give sanction to the proposed Federal Constitution. The people who composed the different companies of militia in this county thought proper to collect, and appointed to meet in Carlisle on Saturday last to inquire why those persons were confined, and at the same time determined to act agreeable to the opposition offered them by the rejoicing party. Accordingly about sunrise the bell began to ring, and the men under arms made their appearance from different quarters, who previously had appointed one person from each company to represent them in a

committee, for the purpose of consulting on such measures as might be most expedient on the occasion. Previous to their meeting, five persons with delegated power from the people of Dauphin County had met a number of new Federalists and had proposed terms of accommodation. In one hour the new Federalists promised to give them an answer, at which time they accordingly met, together with the committee appointed by the different companies, who immediately agreed on terms of accommodation, and mutually consented to transmit a petition to Council, signed by a number of respectable persons on both sides of the question. They then agreed that the sheriff would sign the following discharge:

Be it known that I Charles Leeper, Esquire, Sheriff of Cumberland County, do hereby discharge from their imprisonment in the jail of this county of Cumberland, the following persons, viz., James Wallace, William Petrikin, Thomas Dickson, Samuel Greer, Bartholomew White, Joseph Young, and Joseph Steel. Charles Leeper, Sheriff.

After the above agreement was ratified, the militia were marched under their respective officers from the public square to the jail, where the sheriff conducted the prisoners to the street. Having read the above discharge, they were restored to their former liberty with loud huzzas and a *feu-de-joie* from right to left of the companies, who then marched out of town in good order, without injuring any person or property, except two balls which was fired through a tavernkeeper's sign who is said to be a warm Federalist.

It is with pleasure we announce to the public that the militia who appeared on this occasion amounted to about 1,500 men who are generally men of property and good characters, who all evinced both by words and actions, that they intended to persevere in every measure that would oppose the establishment of the new Constitution at the risk of their lives and fortunes.

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