

Fulton, Eleanore J. – WHEATLAND, Lancaster, Penna.  
Home of James Buchanan, Fifteenth  
President of the United States  
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“Great Men, in their moments of retirement, surround themselves with so many delightful objects, all bearing the peculiar impress of their genius and character, that they become, in a measure, the creators of a little world after their own image. What an enchanting place, then, Wheatland must be; and what classic fame must it not enjoy now and hereafter.” How true have been these words, written in 1849, both in actuality and in promise of fulfilment [sic].

James Buchanan, at the time of his purchase of Wheatland, in 1848, was the foremost citizen of the day. He had distinguished himself at the Lancaster Bar; he had served in the Legislature of Pennsylvania, and in the halls of Congress as Representative and Senator; he had been Minister to Russia under President Jackson; and was at this time Secretary of State in the Cabinet of President Polk. Scarcely had he become established in his new residence and prepared to enjoy its charm, when, in 1853, the same year in which he was elected President of the Board of Trustees of Franklin and Marshall College, he was appointed by President Pierce Minister to the Court of St. James. While in England, the degree of Doctor of Civil Law was conferred upon him by Oxford University, along with Alfred Tennyson the poet. From London his thoughts frequently turned to his lovely home in Lancaster County in his desire for its quietude, but no sooner had he returned when he was proffered [sic] the Democratic nomination for the Presidency.

Buchanan now was enjoying tremendous popularity. “He was wined, dined and feted as few Americans have ever been. His long public career, his recent diplomatic successes and popularity, and his peculiar availability at the moment made him the most outstanding Democrat of the country. He was the peer of his party. His nomination for the presidency was a natural sequence.” Wheatland became the Mecca for distinguished visitors from far and near. It became his campaign headquarters. “He did not tour the country, it came to him.”

Wheatland was a worthy home of a President. This beautiful mansion had always been the center of an intellectual aristocracy. It was built in 1828 on order of William Jenkins, Esq., a learned lawyer and bank president, and member of the well-known family of iron masters of “Windsor Forges” in Caernarvon. After occupying it about ten years, he transferred it to Thomas F. Potter, Esq., recently of Savannah, Georgia, who married his daughter, Martha. In 1845 it was purchased for a summer home by William Morris Meredith, Esq., a legal luminary of Philadelphia, who was, at one time and another, a United States District Attorney, a Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, and an Attorney General of Pennsylvania. Its transference from Meredith to Buchanan was conducted thru [sic] a correspondence notable for the gentility and courtesy of both parties.

Wheatland, named for the fields of golden wheat in which it was situated, was “modeled after a French plan of the latter part of the Eighteenth Century”, [sic] stately, comfortable and hospitable, reflecting to a marked degree the character of its owner, a gentleman of the “old school”. [sic] dignified, courtly and cordial. Surrounded by spacious grounds and grand old trees in which the birds gave daily concerts, it offered a peace and tranquility for which he yearned while laboring in the maelstrom of public affairs.

At Wheatland, as well as in London and Washington, Buchanan’s official hostess was his beautiful and accomplished niece, Miss Harriet Lane, who in this charming place in 1866, was married to Henry E. Johnston, a banker of Baltimore, the officiating clergyman being the Rev. Edward Y. Buchanan, brother of the then ex-president.

[No sources given for quotations]





Lancaster**History**<sup>3</sup>