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110th Anniversary Marked At James Buchanan's Grave

By Mary Beth Wagner

Intelligencer Journal Staff

How would you commemorate the 110th anniversary of the death of the 15th President of the United States, James Buchanan?

The James Buchanan Foundation for the Preservation of Wheatland did it with a public promenade through Woodward Hill Cemetery, where Buchanan's grave can be found.

A small crowd gathered on Sunday afternoon for the promenade, led by John Francis Marion, prominent historian, author, and publisher from Philadelphia.

The promenade began at the entrance of the cemetery and then proceeded to Buchanan's grave.

Interesting Features

Before reaching Buchanan's grave, Marion made note of some interesting features of the cemetery, using research from his latest book, "Famous and Curious Cemeteries," in which Woodward Hill Cemetery is included.

And it's surprising how many tombstones look the same until someone outlines some of their specifics.

Many of the stones in the cemetery are very old and, due to the fact that the cemetery is dated to the 19th century, are characteristic of the styles of that era.

Marion pointed out many Victorian type stones where the decoration above them was an urn draped with cloth hewn out of the stone. Almost always, the urn is partially draped. However, Marion showed a variation of this type in the cemetery which was completely draped.

'Open-Book' Motif

According to Marion, the "cross and crown" was a popular motif during the 19th century. The "open-book" motif was also used often. Evidence of both of these

More 110th Page 2

15th U.S. President

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Continued From Page 1

themes can be found on stones in the cemetery, which Marion showed to the crowd.

Mario noted the high mortality rate of children in the 19th century. He pointed out some characteristic markings of children's tombs such as a lamb, seen at the cemetery, and a broken pillar, denoting "life cut short."



Many towering obelisks dot the cemetery grounds, some plain and some with incised decorations.

Before going to Buchanan's grave, Marion took the crowd to the grave of Edgar Fahs Smith, once provost of the University of Pennsylvania. Smith was important in Pennsylvania educational circles and, according to Marion, is still spoken of in Philadelphia today.

Famous Painter's Grave

The grave of Jacob Eichholtz, a famous painter, is also in the cemetery.

At Buchanan's grave, Marion gave a brief history of the original tombstone, which stood on the site until the 1960's when it was replaced by the stone here now.

The original stone was said to have been placed on an angle and to have had a lower base of American granite. Marion gave an estimated cost of the tombstone at \$2500.

Also, at this time, he pulled from his pocket a marble piece with an oak leaf pattern made for Buchanan's original stone, but probably not used for it.

The new stone is very simple and sits upright. Marion refers to the simplicity of it as "handsome."

After stopping at Buchanan's grave, Marion showed some "gothic-style" ironworks which he finds one of the most interesting things in the cemetery. It consists of a round iron fence marked off at the gate by two iron figurines. Marion has never seen anything like it in any other cemetery.

Slate stones and a box-tomb were also seen. The box-tombs, which were very likely to cave in, were replaced by more substantial tombstones in the 19th century.

The motto "asleep" was characteristic of tombstones during the 19th century as well as the homily, "entered into rest." Both of these sayings mark stones in the cemetery.

"Relic of" was also used during the 19th century and meant "widow of." A tombstone was referred to the promenade with this type of marking on it.

Community History

Marion feels a cemetery can give the "economic and social history of a community" and by walking through one, certain patterns can be seen, such as how names have changed and who the wealthy businessmen were in the community.

He also believes the prosperity of the middle class of the 19th century can be recognized in 19th century cemeteries such as Woodward Hill.

Marion sees Lancaster as a small community in comparison to New York or Philadelphia. But he notes the advantage of it as a place where small groups of people can get together to preserve their community cemeteries.

[Photo caption, left]

Members of the James Buchanan Foundation for the Preservation of Wheatland are served lunch by costumed Wheatland guides on the Wheatland lawn as part of the festivities commemorating the 110th anniversary of Buchanan's death.



[Photo caption, right]

John Francis Marion, in the center of the crowd, really knows his cemeteries as he stops to give the crowd some distinctive characteristics of the Woodward Hill Cemetery.

22 Lancaster Pa., New Era—Monday, April 21, 1975

[photo caption]

Col. Ervin V. Johnson, commander of the U.S. Army garrison at Indiantown Gap, yesterday placed a wreath on James Buchanan's grave in Woodward Hill Cemetery in honor of Buchanan's 184th birthday. Johnson is flanked by J. Fred Sener III, cemetery board representative, left, and Ronald D. Miller, pastor of Trinity Evangelical Congregational Church.

Cemeteries Mark Buchanan's Birth

15th President's Historic Star Rising, Junior Historians Head Says

By JACK BRUBAKER

New Era Staff Writer

While most Americans were reacting passively to the 200th anniversary of "the shot heard 'round the world" this weekend, Lancastrians gathered to celebrate actively the 184th anniversary of James Buchanan's birth.

Buffeted by strong breezes which whipped the flag above Buchanan's grave atop the rise in Woodward Hill Cemetery, a hardy group of local memorializers paid tribute to the nation's 15th President.

There were more participants than spectators at the Sunday afternoon service, although those who pulled up their collars and held down their hats to watch the annual proceedings numbered over 100.

Brave Chill

They braved the un-springlike weather to hear area musicians and dignitaries praise the birth of Lancaster's foremost resident.

Noting that Buchanan has not been given enough credit for his ability to mediate between North and South on the brink of civil strife, James Kinter III, main speaker of the day, said Buchanan's historic star is rising.

Briefly outlining Buchanan's multi-faceted political career, the Penn Manor senior and outgoing president of the Pennsylvania Federation of Junior Historians, said Buchanan's prime virtue was his ability to compromise.

"This week marks the beginning of the country's Bicentennial celebration," he added, "and so it is difficult for us to turn our attention to the celebration of our 15th President's birthday."

He noted, however, that a parallel can be drawn between the battles of Lexington and Concord, which initiated the Revolution 200 years ago, and Buchanan's mediation which helped delay the start of the Civil War 114 years ago.



Under the cold, gray sky, the 324th U.S. Army Materiel Command Band from Maryland's Aberdeen Proving Ground played some brassy martial music to open the ceremonies.

Honor Guard

White-helmeted honor guard members of the Army garrison at Indiantown Gap Military Reservation marched to stand at attention at the gravesite while Mrs. Blanche Shepler sang "The Star Spangled Banner" on the cold hill.

Mount Eden Boy Scout Troop 89 led the assemblage in pledging allegiance to the wind-flapped flag, and Ronald D. Miller, pastor of Trinity Evangelical Congregational Church, presented the invocation for the ritual.

Fifth graders from James Buchanan Elementary School sang appropriate patriotic tunes, and Jane M. Abbott, president of the Lancaster Pilot Club, which maintains the gravesite, welcomed the audience.

Lays Wreath

Following Kinter's address and a rendition of "Stars and Stripes Forever," by the Army band, Col. Ervin V. Johnson, commander of the garrison at Indiantown Gap, made remarks preparatory to laying the wreath on Buchanan's stone.

A veteran of three wars and 11 battle campaigns, Johnson said he has accomplished many things during over 30 years' service in the military, but this was the first time he ever had represented the President of the United States at a commemorative event.

"Patriotism is alive in the United States and particularly here in Lancaster," said the soldier. "And not only is it alive but, as we can see in this weather, it is well."

Voice Cracks

As his voice cracked with "a sense of humility and a real sense of fierce pride," Johnson then noted, "This is one of the great moments of my life."

He tenderly laid the large wreath on the grave of the man born 16 years after the first confrontation of British and colonial soldiers in America.

An Army bugler blew "Taps" on the wind-swept hill as a fellow horn player echoed the plaintive tune in the valley below.

And there were tears in the eyes of veterans who heard the sound.

[handwritten above photo]
New Era April [25, 1977, page 4]
[photo caption]

[Note: some text was missing on the jpg. It was restored from newspapers.com,
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/562380156/?terms=%22Lancastrians%2Bpay%2Btribute%2Bto%2BJames%2BBuchanan%22>]

Lancastrians Pay Tribute to James Buchanan

Lancastrians commemorated the 186th anniversary of the birth of James Buchanan Sunday at the 15th President's grave in Woodward Hill cemetery.



Shown above is the crowd which gathered at the tomb and stood at attention as an [honor guard, garbed in uniforms of past and early conflicts, presented arms.]

Col. Ervin V. Johnson, commander of Fort Indiantown Gap, represented President Jimmy Carter at the ceremony and placed a wreath from the White House on the Buchanan grave. Col. Johnson also spoke briefly.

[Music for the program was furnished by] the First U. S. Army Band, Fort Meade, Md., and the James Buchanan Sixth Grade choral group. Barry Reynolds was soloist.

Also taking part in the program were Mrs. Earl F. Rebman, representing the Pilot Club; Lt. Col. Harold E. Nunemaker, [Fort Indiantown Gap chaplain.]

Lt. Gen. Daniel B. Strickler (retired) was master of ceremonies; Capt. Ron Waddell, commander of Hanover Twp. Rifle Battalion, presented a resume of President Buchanan.

Lancaster Mayor Richard M. Scott as[sisted at the wreath-laying ceremony.]

32—Intelligencer Journal, Lancaster, Pa., Friday, June 9, 1978

Philadelphia Author to Lead Tour of Woodward Hill

Philadelphia writer John Francis Marion, author of “Famous and Curious Cemeteries,” will help commemorate the 110th anniversary of the death of President James Buchanan on Sunday by leading a promenade through Woodward Hill, the site of Buchanan’s tomb.

The walk is open to the public free of charge. Marion will leave the main entrance of the cemetery on S. Queen St., at 2:30 p.m.

In his book, Marion listed some of the prominent people buried in Woodward Hill.

“When I did the book,” he said this week, “I covered about 75 cemeteries in depth and detail, and touched briefly on about 200 more.”

“The Lancaster cemetery,” he said, “was one of the 200. Actually I had never visited the cemetery until about a month ago when I went there to get ready for Sunday’s walk.”

He added that Woodward Hill’s inclusion in his book lists only a roster of the famous people buried there.

Marion said that these included, in addition to Buchanan, Edgar Fahs Smith, a former provost of the University of Pennsylvania; James Shulz, one-time governor of the commonwealth; Clement B. Grubb, the Revolutionary iron master; Gottlieb Henry Muhlenberg, pioneer botanist; and Jacob Eichholtz, the famed painter.

Commenting on the upcoming promenade, Marion said he would direct the group to the graves of the famous, but he would also point out and discuss gravestone, tombs, and monuments which are unique and reflective of periods during the walk.

Sunday’s cemetery stroll is part of the anniversary program which will also include a luncheon at Wheatland, the restored Buchanan mansion on the Marietta Pike, for members of the James Buchanan Foundation for the Preservation of Wheatland.



In addition to writing the cemetery book, Marion was honored for another book “Bicentennial City,” which outlined several walking tours and anecdotes on famed Philadelphians.

He is also the author of “Philadelphia Medica,” a history of the city as one of the world centers of medicine.

He says he is currently working on two new books — a history of historic Charleston, and a life of Rebecca Gratz, granddaughter of Joseph Simon, an early Lancaster trader. A Philadelphia society belle, she is believed to have been the model for one of the heroines of Sir Walter Scott’s “Ivanhoe.”

