

[Lancaster New Era, 9 April 1984, page 8]

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8/9/84 Buchanan, James

Buchanan Defended at Annual Tomb Rites

President James Buchanan, regularly criticized as one of the nation's poorest presidents, was defended Sunday at the annual wreath-laying ceremony at his hilltop tomb in Woodward Hill Cemetery.

John W.W. Loose, president of the Lancaster County Historical Society, said Buchanan was probably "the best prepared and best educated man for the presidency that this country has ever seen."

"No president has ever shown a greater devotion to ruling by the law, no matter the consequences," Loose said.

About 150 people attended the ceremony. The observance commemorated Buchanan's 193rd birthday (his actual birth date is April 23, 1791).

Buchanan, the nation's 15th president, lived most of his life in Lancaster and became the only president from Pennsylvania. He annually is remembered with speeches, a 21-gun salute and a wreath-laying.

Loose refuted the assessments from historians that Buchanan, who served from 1857 to 1861, was among the poorest presidents.

He said that historians with a "liberal bias" and a modern perspective fail to see Buchanan's virtue was a strict interpretation of the U.S. Constitution.

He refused to compromise his principles, even if that could have made him "the darling of the South ... or hero of the North," the crowd was told.

"He took a middle path, followed the Constitution and ended up at the bottom of the list," said Loose.

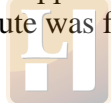
"There will come a day ... when the nation accords him the honor so rightfully his."

Sunday's gathering also heard Mayor Arthur E. Morris praise Buchanan as "highly intelligent and aristocratic" and belonging in the company of famous native sons like George Ross, Edward Hand, Robert Fulton and Thaddeus Stevens.

Retired Lt. Gen. Daniel B. Strickler, the program's emcee, was presented with a \$5 bank note from 1859 bearing a portrait of Buchanan from Derek Lineberry, an eighth-generation descendant of Buchanan.

The wreath laying was performed by Jean Weglarz, president of the Pilot Club, Rachel Eavenson, daughter of Harry Eavenson of 649 S. West End Ave., and Ryan Rasmussen, son of Theodore Rasmussen, 1182 Maple Ave., both students of James Buchanan Elementary School; and Col. Gene B. Reniker, commander of Fort Indiantown Gap.

Posting of the colors was by Koppenhaver's Company of the Hanover Township Rifle Battalion, and the 21-gun salute was fired by the Lancaster Fencibles.



The First U.S. Army Band, Fort George C. Meade, provided the music, and Lancaster Boy Scout Troop 268 led the Pledge of Allegiance.

[photo caption]

John W. W. Loose speaks at Buchanan ceremonies Sunday.

