

Lancaster County Historical Society  
Oral History Project

Interviewee: Dorothea [Fortier]

Interviewer:

Date Recorded:

Transcriber: Kaitlyn Cody

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Interviewer: Our narrator is Dorothea [Fortier].

On our first operation remember tape, we interviewed Mrs. Edna Wagner who recalled at how she as a young girl was among the thousands of Lancastrians who saw the Liberty Bell when it made a first stop here in Lancaster on it's historic to the Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco in 1915. Her story was researched and reported for the Lancaster New Era by Mr. Ed [Clamaska] who wrote about another special little girl, the Goddess of Liberty who was among the crowds that day. From the description in the article, you Mrs. [Fortier] recognized yourself as that little girl. Is that the way it happened?

Dorothea: Yes, that's the way it happened and I was chosen because my mother was president of the newly organized Parent/Teachers Association and this gesture was to honor her. A telegram from Gap and a then a phone call from Bird - N - Hand announced the imminent arrival of the bell in Lancaster. The Trinity Church bell started tolling and other bells across the city followed suit. The train of coaches with the Liberty Bell came to a stop at Plum Street. That is where Mayor Trout and his committee, Mrs. Albert M. Herr, Mrs. D.R. Stockton and I got aboard. After a five minute halt, the train moved very slowly, so that the thousands and thousands of people could get a good view as it passed through Lancaster. I was seated beneath the bell on a cushion. I was dressed in the red, white, and blue vestments of the Goddess of Liberty and held a large arm full of white roses. There were many bouquets, wreaths, and tributes from various organizations, the D.A.R. and the Parent/Teachers Association among them, these were all surrounding the bell.

As the train came to a halt at Prince and Walnut Streets I rose to my feet, hit my head on the clapper, then paused to kiss the bell before going to the rail and waving to the people. Then the mayor presented the Lancaster Pennant to the Liberty Bell Committee and made a short speech explaining the various emblems on the flag. At Harrisburg Avenue, the train stopped again for a longer period and many children were lifted aboard from the crowd to touch the historic relic. Much blowing of auto horns and shouting by the throng sent the Liberty Bell Special on its way. The Lancaster group got off the train at Dillerville, I think. I am more impressed by this singular honor now than I was when I was eleven years old.

Interviewer: Eleven, I was going to ask you how old you were. You have some interesting memorabilia with you, would you like to describe that?

Dorothea: Well, I have two articles here that are yellowed with age. The first one was announcing the fact that I was chosen to be the Goddess of Liberty and I have already told you

why I was chosen. Then the other article relates the passing of the Liberty Bell through Lancaster on July 4, 1915 and it's told in quite flowery language because I really have to laugh when I look at this and see that they said, "when sweet little Dorothea kissed the bell the crowd went wild". Now isn't that journalism at it's very best shall we say. And then Darmstetters took pictures of me onboard the flat car of the bell and um made postcards of them and I still have them too which are, have also yellowed with age.

Interviewer: You have a crown on your head in that picture.

Dorothea: Yes, a listing crown and, uh, I wanted to say that that was the last time the Liberty Bell left Philadelphia and, but in 1917 it was used in a Philadelphia Street Parade for the first Liberty Lone Day Celebration.

Interviewer: Would you like to give us your full name too, including your maiden name?

Dorothea: Dorothea Barnard Fortier.

Interviewer: Thank you very much

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