

volumes, from which the children each Sabbath are furnished with a book. The school now numbers 216 scholars and 28 teachers; and from the efficiency of and the great interest manifested by the teachers, it is to be presumed that the number of scholars and the prosperity of the school will not deteriorate but rather advance. Since the new arrangement, there have been from Sabbath to Sabbath accessions to the school, — not one Sabbath having passed without admissions.”

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## TOWN MEETINGS TO CONSIDER REMOVAL OF STATE CAPITAL TO LANCASTER

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

ON Wednesday, January 24th, 1796, the citizens of Lancaster assembled in a town meeting to take into consideration the advantages and disadvantages that might result to our borough and county by the removal of the State government to this place. It was the unanimous judgment that such a removal would be of great benefit. A committee, of which the burgesses and commissioners were members, was appointed to draft a letter of instruction, expressing the sense of the meeting to the representatives from this county.

The Lancaster Journal of Friday, January 29th, 1796, contained a copy of the letter, which was as follows:

“To the Representatives of the County of Lancaster, in the Senate and House of Representatives of Pennsylvania.

“Gentlemen:

“Having understood that [the members of] the Legislature of this Commonwealth are now earnestly engaged in the consideration of the expediency of changing their future residence from the city of Philadelphia to some fit place in the interior country, the inhabitants of this borough, — from a reasonable consciousness that this place may be fixed upon for their future residence, from the many superior accommodations and conveniences it affords, — have this day assembled, in a large and respectable town meeting convened for the purpose, to take into consideration that highly probable event. And, in order to express their unanimous and unequivocal sentiments upon the subject, have appointed us as a committee to inform you of the result.

“We, therefore, in the discharge of that trust, take the liberty to solicit your unremitting exertions to accomplish this desirable measure; and on the part of the inhabitants, as far as we have authority, we assure you that no

pains will be spared, or exertions wanting, to provide for the accomodation of the Legislature and its attendant offices in the best possible manner; and that, from the zeal evinced on the occasion, there is the best reason to expect that the Legislature will not suffer from the removal in any point of convenience or real advantage. We, therefore, empower you to make such offers.

"We also assure you that immediate exertions will be used to regulate the police of this place, as far as the interests and happiness of society will admit, and which shall not be inconsistent with the essential liberty of the people.

"For the further and better communication of knowledge and useful literature, a spirited subscription has been opened, and is fast filling, for the establishment of a public library. This may also be attended with partial advantages to the members who may compose our future Legislatures.

"Annexed to this letter, you will find a statement of the immediate accomodations which may be procured.<sup>1</sup>

"Confiding, therefore, gentlemen, in your zeal and abilities, and nothing doubting your exertions for the interests of your county, we leave the rest to you. We are satisfied that no county, if its wealth and flourishing situation are to be taken into view, can vie with the county of Lancaster."

It was not, however, until three years later that the seat of government was removed to Lancaster borough.

The Philadelphia Gazette and General Daily Advertiser of Thursday, May 23rd, 1799, announced that "arrangements are making in Lancaster for the accomodation of the State Legislature. The public offices are removing thither from this city." A little more than two weeks later, the Lancaster Journal of Saturday, June 8th, contained this brief announcement:

"The different public offices of this State are now open in Lancaster."

The officers of the State government were not long in Lancaster before efforts were made in the Legislature to remove that body elsewhere.

The Intelligencer and Weekly Advertiser of Wednesday, February 24th, 1802, contained the following:

"Yesterday, the motion relative to fixing the permanent seat of government for the Commonwealth was taken up in the Senate. The vote was first taken on Columbia, for which there appeared eleven; next, on Philadelphia, when nine rose; then on Lancaster, which also had nine; and lastly on Harrisburg, for which there were fourteen."

A little more than a week later, the subject was again brought up in the Legislature. Our neighboring town of Harrisburg was

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<sup>1</sup> It is to be regretted that this statement was not published in The Lancaster Journal of Friday, January 29th, 1796.

making a strong bid to have the seat of government located within its borders.

The *Intelligencer and Weekly Advertiser* of Wednesday, March 10th, 1802, contained the following:

"On Friday last [March 5th], the Senate took up the bill for fixing the permanent seat of government of this Commonwealth at Harrisburg. Two several motions were made to strike out Harrisburg. The first was for the purpose of inserting Lancaster, in lieu thereof; which was negatived, thirteen to twelve. Columbia was then proposed, and met the same fate. The question was then taken on the first section of the bill, as it had been reported, and negatived, thirteen to twelve; so the bill was lost, and the government remains at Lancaster."

Four years later, the subject was again introduced in the Legislature.

The *Intelligencer and Weekly Advertiser* of Tuesday, February 4th, 1806, contained the following:

"The bill for fixing the seat of government permanently, was lost in the House of Representatives on Tuesday last; it, therefore, remains in Lancaster for another year."

Three and a half years later, some of the more far-seeing citizens of Lancaster realized that unless better accommodations were provided for the officers of the State government, the capital would be removed.

The *Intelligencer and Weekly Advertiser* of Tuesday, October 3rd, 1809, contained the following:

"The citizens of this borough, who wish the seat of government to remain in Lancaster, are invited to meet at the court house this afternoon, precisely at four o'clock, to consider and adopt the best plan of altering that building for the better accommodation of the Legislature."

What action was taken at the town meeting, if it was held, and who were in attendance, are not known, as subsequent issues of local papers do not refer to it. We do know that on Friday, January 26th, 1810, the bill for the removal of the seat of government to Harrisburg passed the Senate by a large majority.<sup>2</sup>

The *Intelligencer and Weekly Advertiser* of Saturday, February 17th, 1810, stated:

"The bill, fixing the seat of government of Pennsylvania at Harrisburg, has passed both houses of the General Assembly. It appropriates \$30,000 for

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<sup>2</sup> The *Intelligencer and Weekly Advertiser*, Saturday, January 27th, 1810.

the public buildings; and directs the removal of the public records in October, 1812."

The Lancaster Journal of Saturday, February 15th, 1812, contained the following:

"The bill for the removal of the seat of government to Harrisburg, has received the sanction of the governor and become a law. The public offices are to be removed within the month of April next, under the superintendence of the principals of each department. The papers, records, documents, books, furniture, etc., of the Legislature are to be removed before the first of June, under the superintendence of the clerk of each house. All the furniture which the superintendents shall deem unfit to be removed, is to be sold, at public vendue. The monies in the treasury are to be deposited by the treasurer in the Philadelphia Branch Bank at Harrisburg, provided that the sum at any time so deposited shall not exceed \$25,000."

The Legislature met in Harrisburg, for the first time, on Tuesday, December 1st, 1812.<sup>3</sup>

In 1827, an attempt was made to remove the State capital from Harrisburg to some other city. Pursuant to a call by the mayor, citizens of Lancaster convened in town meeting at the court house on Wednesday evening, January 17th. Nathaniel Lightner, mayor, was appointed chairman, and Samuel Dale and Benjamin Champneys, secretaries.<sup>4</sup>

The meeting, as stated by General George B. Porter, was for the purpose of considering the adoption of such measures as might be calculated to induce a removal of the seat of government from Harrisburg to Lancaster. A committee, consisting of nine persons—Nathaniel Lightner, Adam Reigart, Hugh Maxwell, John R. Montgomery, John Mathiot, Thomas Jefferies, F. A. Muhlenberg, Robert Evans and Jacob Rathfon—was appointed to confer with the grand jury, the county commissioners, and the select and common councils of Lancaster, on the subject of inviting the Legislature to remove the seat of government from Harrisburg to Lancaster; and, on behalf of the citizens, to join in adopting such measures as might be deemed necessary and proper.

The meeting adjourned to meet on the following evening.

On Thursday evening, January 18th, 1827, Hugh Maxwell, on behalf of the committee appointed the preceding evening, reported as follows:

<sup>3</sup> Lancaster Journal, Friday, December 4th, 1812.

<sup>4</sup> Political Sentinel and Lancaster Literary Gazette, Monday, January 22nd, 1827.

"The grand jury has recommended the immediate appropriation of twenty thousand dollars out of the funds of the county, and more will be given if necessary; and the select and common councils unanimously agreed to appropriate ten thousand dollars, and to furnish offices free of expense for five years; and your committee, after making every inquiry which the short time allowed it would permit, has come to the conclusion that a sufficient sum can be raised, without difficulty, for purchasing a convenient and eligible site for the accommodation of the Legislature, should choice be made of the city of Lancaster for the permanent seat of the government of the Commonwealth.

"Your committee in presenting this report, though in strictness it may not be considered as comprising any part of its duty, cannot neglect pointing out some of the advantages which our city possesses over all other locations for the permanent seat of the government of the Commonwealth.

"Situated in the center of a beautiful valley celebrated for the purity of its waters, salubrity of atmosphere and richness of soil, abounding in all the necessaries and many of the luxuries of life, with a dense, active, industrious and healthy population, the city of Lancaster cannot be overlooked by a discerning Legislature, should a removal of the seat of government be determined on. And, in addition to these, your committee begs leave to remark that the position which our city holds in a political point of view is peculiarly favorable.

"In consequence of the difficulty, delays, and danger of crossing the Susquehanna river during the fall, winter and spring at Havre de Grace, occasioned by the floating ice and prevalence of high winds, it has been determined by the general government to find a safer and more expeditious route for the conveyance of the mails between the cities of Washington and Philadelphia. For this purpose, Gen. Bernard, of the engineer corps, has been employed in making surveys to fix the nearest and most practical route, making the city of Baltimore a point.

"It is believed the route which must be adopted will be either by Port Deposit or Conowingo bridge; should the latter be preferred, the daily mail from the city of Washington would pass within twenty-seven miles of the city of Lancaster, from which a connecting line would, of course, be established. The advantages that the general and State governments would mutually derive from a daily communication with each other, would be found so important that no time should be lost in effecting it. Therefore, among the advantages which the State government would derive from making the city of Lancaster its permanent seat, would be a daily communication with the general government at Washington; and also with the cities of Philadelphia and Baltimore, from which we are about equally distant."

The committee, in concluding its report, suggester that James Humes, John Reynolds, Samuel Dale, Jasper Slaymaker, Benjamin Champneys, Hugh Maxwell and John R. Montgomery, be a committee, in conjunction with Samuel Morrison and John Forry, appointed by the grand jury, to proceed to Harrisburg and present

to his excellency the governor, and the honorable the speakers of both branches of the Legislature, the proceedings of the councils of the city of Lancaster, of the grand jury of the county, of the commissioners, and of the citizens assembled in town meeting, cordially inviting those bodies to make choice of the city of Lancaster as the permanent seat of government of the Commonwealth; and pledging the people of the city and county of Lancaster to make every preparation for their reception and accommodation, on a site worthy of the government of a free people.

The Political Sentinel and Lancaster Literary Gazette of Monday, January 22nd, 1827, five days after the above action, stated, in an editorial:

"The councils of Philadelphia have tendered the Hall of Independence and other necessary buildings, for the accommodation of the Legislature. These proceedings were sent to Harrisburg, referred to a committee of the House of Representatives, and a report favorable to the *removal to that city*, made by Mr. Lawson, before our proposals reached the seat of government; although we had an advantage of *sixty miles* distance! Delays sometimes are dangerous, but we sincerely hope that this *criminal tardiness* in our city authorities will not prevent the real and genuine sentiments of our citizens from having their due weight with the members.<sup>5</sup> The city and county, it will be perceived, have appropriated \$30,000 for the erection of buildings; and, since our last, we are strengthened in the belief that \$60,000 more can be raised by subscription.

"But we should have preferred seeing the meeting come out at once and offer to erect buildings as elegant and commodious as those at Harrisburg. The city and county are surely able and willing to do it."

Eight years later, another attempt was made to remove the capital of Pennsylvania. A meeting of citizens of Lancaster was held in the court house on Monday evening, February 2nd, 1835. John Mathiot, mayor of the city, was appointed chairman, and Henry Carpenter and George L. Mayer, secretaries.<sup>6</sup> The object of the meeting having been explained by Mayor Mathiot, a committee, consisting of Christopher Hager, Jacob Rathfon, George

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<sup>5</sup> The attempt in 1827 to remove the capital of the State from Harrisburg could not have been made earlier than January 1st of that year; therefore, at this distant date, it is quite difficult to understand why the Political Sentinel and Lancaster Literary Gazette of January 22nd could possibly accuse the Lancaster authorities of "criminal tardiness," when they had already taken favorable action on a matter important enough to demand the most thoughtful consideration.

<sup>6</sup> The Lancaster Union, Tuesday, February 10th, 1835.

Musser, George Washington Barton, David Miller, Henry Keffer and George Bryan, presented the following preamble and resolutions, which were read and unanimously adopted:

"Whereas, a resolution has been adopted by the House of Representatives of this Commonwealth, regarding the removal of the Executive and Legislative branches of the government from the borough of Harrisburg; and

"Whereas, a committee has been appointed to receive proposals from any city, borough or town, signifying its willingness to erect suitable buildings for the accommodation of the government; and

"Whereas, the citizens of Lancaster are disposed to do all in their power to facilitate the removal of the seat of government, by preparing ample and sufficient buildings suited to the wants of the General Assembly and the several departments of this Commonwealth,—be it therefore

"Resolved, by the citizens of Lancaster, in general meeting assembled, that we take a lively interest in the resolution which the Legislature has adopted for the removal of the seat of government.

"Resolved, That it is the unanimous opinion of this meeting that the city of Lancaster is in every respect the most eligible situation which could be selected for the accommodation of the Legislature. We live in the center of a rich, agricultural country, well known throughout the union for the fertility of its soil. The Columbia railroad passes through the city, affording a ready intercourse with Philadelphia; and what is still more important, the air is pure and the people enjoy the consequent blessing of good health."

A committee was appointed to ascertain what amount could be raised by subscription from the citizens for the purpose of erecting such buildings as the wants of the government might require. It consisted of the following: North-east ward, George L. Mayer, William Frick, John Leonard, Jacob McCully; north-west ward, C. Hager, George Musser, Jacob Snyder, Christopher Brenner; south-east ward, Henry Pinkerton, Thomas Jefferies, Adam Metzger, J. R. Montgomery; south-west ward, George H. Krug, John Culbert, Charles Gillespie, John F. Steinman.

Another committee, consisting of Adam Reigart, John Bear and Godfried Zahm, was appointed to confer with the commissioners of this county for the purpose of ascertaining the sentiments of the people relative to the amount they would be willing to authorize the commissioners to subscribe for the purpose of erecting suitable buildings. The commissioners were also requested to call a meeting of the citizens of the county in the court house.

A meeting of citizens of Lancaster county was held in the court house on Monday, February 16th, 1835. Michael Musselman

was appointed president, Michael Seitz and James Porter, vice-presidents, and Abraham Eichler and Edward Purcell, secretaries.<sup>7</sup> Henry J. Long stated the object of the meeting. A committee, consisting of George Reed, John Lintner, Francis Kendig, Henry Livergood, Samuel Keller, Abraham Peters, Jacob B. Garber, Adam Keller, George Washington Barton and Christopher Hager, presented the following preamble and resolutions, which were unanimously adopted:

"Whereas, the Legislature of Pennsylvania has evinced a decided and earnest determination to alter the location of the seat of government; and

"Whereas, from a variety of causes, the city of Lancaster presents more advantages and is a more eligible site than any other that the State can afford, be it therefore

"Resolved, That the people of the county of Lancaster extend to the Legislature a warm and cordial welcome to make the city of Lancaster the seat of its contemplated removal.

"Resolved, That the Senate and House of Representatives be requested, respectfully, to appoint a committee to visit the city of Lancaster, to inspect personally the advantages which it presents, and to determine upon one from among the several sites upon which the capitol and other necessary offices may be erected."

The county commissioners were requested to subscribe fifty thousand dollars. It was also resolved that committees be appointed in every borough and township in the county to solicit subscriptions.

A committee, consisting of John Forry, George Washington Barton, George L. Mayer, John Mathiot, Henry Livergood, Francis Kendig, Sr., Jacob Kauffman, Abraham Peters and Dr. Samuel Humes, was appointed to present the proceedings of this meeting to the committee appointed by the Legislature, after it had received the action of the commissioners.

The Lancaster Union of Tuesday, February 24th, 1835, informed the public that a town meeting would be held in the court house on Monday, March 2nd, to which the boroughs and townships were invited to send representatives. What action was taken at the meeting, if one was held, is not known, as subsequent issues of the papers do not refer to it. We do know, however, that the capital remained at Harrisburg.

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<sup>7</sup> The Lancaster Union, Tuesday, February 17th, 1835.