

A VISIT TO HISTORICAL SCENES*

(Describing a visit to Lancaster, Pa., in July, 1926)

By HARRY PRINGLE FORD

It was a rare privilege recently to visit the attractive city of Lancaster, Pa., sixty-eight miles west of Philadelphia, with its wealth of historical associations and its many evidences of enterprise and prosperity.

The town, which had its beginnings about 1718, early caught the spirit of liberty, and its people were among the most active contributors, both in men and material, to the success of the Revolutionary war. The recent "Pageant of Liberty,"—a festival to Almighty God in commemoration of past glories, in gratitude for present prosperity, and in hope of future weal, given in connection with the Fourth of July celebration, and continuing it for several nights,—was on a scale that would have reflected credit on any community of our land; and the imposing street parade on the morning of July 5th, clearly indicated that the present generation is not unmindful of the heroic days of old nor forgetful of the important part that Lancaster had in connection with them. The abundant display in the store windows of dresses worn, and of furniture and material used in "the days that tried men's souls," was a most interesting and educational one.

Early on the morning of July 5th, 1926, a town crier, dressed in the quaint garb of the colonial period, was heard ringing his bell and crying out the hour and the state of the weather. Soon the streets were filled with a joyous throng: with a group of Indians here, and a company of colonial troops there, to add realism to the animated scene. The parade itself, which came along later, in spite of the rain, was a most colorful one, with its floats, Indians, continental troops, school children, firemen, Conestoga wagons, Daughters of the Revolution, and pathetic remnants of soldiers of former wars. Nearly all the banners and devices bore legends setting forth dependence upon God and devotion to country. No one could doubt that this is a Christian nation if the matter were to be determined by viewing a Lancaster street parade. Other cities of our land might get a much-needed lesson from this God-fearing, patriotic town.

In September, 1777, the famous old court house that once stood in the public square was the meeting place of Congress, when that body fled from Philadelphia on the approach of Howe's army. Many other places of interest are pointed out,—especially the sites of old inns, at which stopped many of our most distinguished men. Major Andre was a prisoner here for a time.

"Wheatland," once the home of President James Buchanan, is one of the most attractive places in the town. Its present owner, George B. Willson, Esq., is in full sympathy with the wonderful charm of the place and its historical associations. He has generously sought to retain everything much as it was in the days of Pennsylvania's foremost citizen, and his charming niece, Miss Harriet Lane. Mr. Buchanan became a member of the First Presbyterian church of Lancaster, during the pastorate of Rev. Walter Powell.

Another beautiful semi-country residence, "Abbeville," was once the home of Langdon Cheves, the distinguished South Carolinian, an intimate friend of Clay and Calhoun. In 1814, he was Speaker of Congress, and the same year declined the Secretaryship of the Treasury, under Madison. He was prominent as a lawyer, banker and statesman. Later in life, he removed to Lancaster where he became an elder in the First Presbyterian church. His old home, now owned by Mr. John W. Appel, is very attractive in its park-like setting.

The First Presbyterian church is among the finest in the city. Dr. Walter W. Edge is the successful pastor. In June, 1926, a fire seriously damaged the interior front of the building. Repairs will not be completed before late in the year. It is a matter of rejoicing that the steeple, which shares with that of the Trinity Lutheran church the distinction of being one of unusual symmetry and beauty, was not injured. Across the street is the St. James's Episcopal church, with its charming interior. In its interesting and admirably kept graveyard lies the body of pretty Ann Coleman, the only sweetheart of James Buchanan, who died December 9th, 1819, in her twenty-fourth year. He lived forty-nine years longer to treasure her memory and to dream dreams of the longed-for "might have been."

There are many places of interest near the city. At Churchtown is an abandoned Presbyterian church and a famous old academy, the latter now used as a public school house. Here also is "Windsor Forges," the once beautiful and hospitable home of the late Miss Blanche Nevin, widely known as an authoress, artist and sculptress. The Bangor Episcopal church here is the burial place of several one-time famous forge masters. The present building is erected from the stones of an earlier house of worship that stood on the site, and on many of these stones are carved the initials and names of former members.

Lancaster county is grandly beautiful. The farms betray the highest cultivation and the fields are filled with crops of corn, wheat and tobacco, with meadow lands in which graze herds of the finest cattle. Every barn is built with expectations of bountiful harvests. The rose-bowered porches of many homes were a joy to be held in everlasting remembrance; while the glimpses from the roadside of distant vistas could not be surpassed in beauty. A visiting Californian, who passed over the road a week before the writer, declared that he has seen nothing in his own State, or elsewhere, more beautiful.

A ride over the Welsh mountains, with no haunting fears of Abe Buzzard to mar the pleasure, brought us to Honey Brook, the boyhood home of Dr. William P. White. Here we found Rev. H. H. Kurtz, pastor of the Forks of Brandywine church, with his fine troops of Boy and Girl Scouts, conducting a booth for the sale of ice-cream, and having on exhibition a most interesting collection of relics and curios, the object being to secure funds for the work in which they are interested.

St. John's Episcopal church, founded in 1729, is at Compassville. Rev. Edward Y. Buchanan, brother of President Buchanan, was a one-time rector.

His wife was a sister of the famous song writer, Stephen A. Foster; and a daughter was the wife of President A. J. Cassatt, of the Pennsylvania railroad. Peter Bezallon, the famous French and Indian trader, is buried in the interesting old graveyard, the ancient walls of which are in need of attention.

Not far distant, is the old Pequea Presbyterian church, organized by Adam Boyd, in 1724, over which Dr. Robert Smith was installed pastor, March 25th, 1751. Dr. Smith established an important theological seminary here. James Waddell, the eloquent blind preacher, was a teacher; and William Wirt, attorney general of the United States under the administrations of Monroe and J. Q. Adams, was a student. Dr. Smith was moderator of the General Assembly in 1790; his son, John Blair Smith, in 1798; and another son, Samuel Stanhope Smith, in 1799. This was a remarkable record and the only instance of the kind in the history of the Presbyterian Church. Under a giant oak tree, still standing in the well-kept graveyard, Adam Boyd preached the first sermon in the summer of 1724, and here he lies buried. A little later, the first log church was erected near-by. The old walnut tree still stands under which George Whitefield preached.

The quaint old Leacock Presbyterian church, still standing, surrounded by peaceful graves, has left a pleasant memory.

At Lititz, the Moravian church, Brotherhood house, school and graveyard, are of appealing interest. The church has an unusually chaste and attractive interior; the Brotherhood house sheltered a large number of sick and wounded soldiers during the Revolutionary War; the school, "Linden Hall," is one of the oldest girls' educational institutions in the country, and the graveyard is unique in that all the tombstones are numbered (for ready reference in the records) and each stone lies flat on the middle of the grave. The graves of men are in one section; of women, in another; of girls, in a third, and of boys in a fourth. The grave of John Augustus Sutter, a governor of the northern district of California under the Mexicans, and on whose estate gold was discovered in 1848, is here.

At Ephrata was the famous "Order of the Solitary," a semi-monastic community of Seventh-Day Dunkards. Both men and women were members, and wore dresses somewhat similar to the Capuchins or White Friars. All are now gone, although the community at one time numbered 300 members. Only the "Sisters' House" and the vanishing traditions of the past, remain. In the cloisters many soldiers of the Revolution were nursed. Those who died are buried under a handsome monument on the nearby Zion's Hill. In a quaint little graveyard, a place for the imagination to have the fullest freedom, many members of the Order repose, among them Johann Conrad Beissel, Father Friedsam Gottrecht, founder and *vorsteher* of the Ephrata institution, and his successor, John Peter Miller, Brother and Prior Jaebez (Agrippa). In a stone-marked grave, "Sister Petronella" has been dreaming away the years for nearly two centuries; and all that is mortal of "Brother Philemon" sleeps nearby.

**Reprinted from The Presbyterian, of July 29th, 1926.*