

# The Unveiling of the Tablet Commemorating the Joint Sesqui-Centennial of the Constitution of the United States and Franklin College

*By* DR. HORACE R. BARNES

The four days, October 14 to 17 inclusive, will go down in the history of Lancaster County as one of the outstanding periods in the long and noteworthy life of this historic county. During these beautiful October days there assembled on the campus of Franklin and Marshall College hundreds of alumni, guests, friends of the college, and distinguished delegates from colleges, universities and learned societies. These people had met to help celebrate the Sesqui-Centennial Anniversary of one of the oldest liberal arts colleges in the United States.

Other events which added to the significance of the great occasion included the annual meetings of the Pennsylvania Historical Association which were held on the College Campus October 15 and 16; the dedication of "Wheatland," former home of President James Buchanan, who was also the first president of the Board of Trustees of Franklin and Marshall College; and the unveiling of the tablet commemorating the joint sesqui-centennial of the Constitution of the United States and of Franklin College.

Each October for many years, the Lancaster County Historical Society has been marking some of the many points of real historical interest in this locality. Throughout various sections of Lancaster County, beautiful bronze tablets carry historical messages, and designate for succeeding generations places which should never be forgotten. In the fall of 1937 two such markers were erected. The one at New Holland, Pennsylvania, commemorates the life and work of the distinguished entomologist, Rev. Frederick Valentine Melsheimer, for a short time Professor of Languages in Franklin College.

and president of the college during its second year. The other tablet, which has been placed at the main entrance to Franklin and Marshall College and which is the subject of this paper, is a tribute to some of the outstanding characters in the development of the United States of America. The inscription on these tablets were written by Dr. Herbert H. Beck.

The exercises associated with this event were held under the most auspicious circumstances at 11:45 A. M., Saturday, October 16, 1937, on the campus of Franklin and Marshall College. The spacious main entrance to the beautiful Keiper Liberal Arts Building served as the platform. The many guests who were seated near the platform, or who stood close by, had no difficulty in hearing the addresses as amplifiers carried the messages to all nearby.

Dr. Herbert H. Beck, Professor of Chemistry at Franklin and Marshall College, and president of the Lancaster County Historical Society presided, and, in introducing Miss Louise Wallace who unveiled the tablet, remarked:

"The tablet about to be unveiled is placed here by the Lancaster County Historical Society with faith and loyal pride in the intimately related subjects of its inscription—The Constitution of the United States and Franklin and Marshall College. This inscription reads:

FRANKLIN COLLEGE

Founded in 1787

Which in 1853 Became

FRANKLIN AND MARSHALL

Had on its Original

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Thomas McKean

Benjamin Rush

Robert Morris

George Clymer

and as its Patron

Benjamin Franklin

Signers of the

Declaration of Independence

and the last three and

Thomas Mifflin who were members  
of the Constitutional Convention

Erected in celebration of the  
Joint Sesqui-Centennial of the  
Constitution of the United States  
and the College

by the

Lancaster County

Historical Society

1937

"It is fitting that the unveiling should be done by a direct descendant of that man whose name is closely coupled with the College and the Constitution—Benjamin Franklin. Louisa Johnston Castle, on the program for the unveiling act, could not be here today; but we are fortunate to have found another granddaughter in direct descent whose winsome personality brightens the memories of her illustrious ancestor. This is Louise Wallace, who will unveil the tablet."

Following the unveiling of the tablet, in introducing Mr. T. Roberts Appel, Dr. Beck stated:

"This tablet, which is the twenty-seventh placed in Lancaster County by the Historical Society, came here at the suggestion of C. H. Martin, a member of the Society's Marker Committee. We deplore the loss of another member of the committee, Rev. Martin W. Schweitzer, who passed away last week. Mr. T. Roberts Appel was appointed chairman of the General Committee in charge of this event. Acting for the Historical Society, Mr. Appel will present the tablet to the College."

Mr. Appel:

"Dr. Beck, president of the Lancaster County Historical Society; Dr. Benjamin Franklin Fackenthal, Jr., president of the Board of Trustees of Franklin and Marshall College, and its most illustrious benefactor; Dr. John A. Schaeffer, president of this College; Alumni and friends:

"The Lancaster County Historical Society, formed to investigate and perpetuate local history and tradition, has in time past marked with substantial tablets places of unusual historical interest and significance in the community. The peculiar and remarkable coincidence of the signing of the Constitution of the United States in the same year with the founding of Franklin College deserves a special commemoration on the part of this Society.

"The character and ability of the members of the Constitutional Assembly is most widely known by their leadership, scholarship, statesmanship, sound common sense, and foresight appearing in the Constitution of our Nation. And all of these qualities were likewise manifested in the character of those who became trustees of this institution.

"This wonderful birthday party, which the College is celebrating, to this time has been largely academic in character, and has drawn hither men and women from colleges and universities,—people of distinction in commerce, business and trade, and the illustrious story of this institution has been most eloquently venerated.

"The people of this nation are most appropriately paying deserved tribute to those farseeing statesmen who signed a constitution for a people in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity forever.

"Now the community of Lancaster joins in this joint academic and political birthday party.

"And this occasion, Dr. Fackenthal, is also somewhat of a birthday celebration to you personally. For while the founders laid the cornerstone of this institution in a reconstructed brew house you have provided the most fitting capstone to the whole structure in the erection of this beautiful library. The community therefore extends its felicitation and well wishes to you personally.

"Therefore, Dr. Fackenthal, the Lancaster County Historical Society, a unique institution bringing Town and Gown into intimate pleasant relationship, takes great pleasure in presenting to you and through you to the alumni, friends of the college, and students now here, and those yet unborn who will pass this way through countless future years, this tablet, in the confidence and hope that it will not only mark an historical coincidence, but that its message and significance may be an inspiration on the way of life to those who pass by; that it may inspire men of keen mind, sound morals, deep religious instincts, to assume the responsible tasks of leadership in a progressive civilization and in our national, social, commercial, and educational life. For without these characteristics civilization and this nation will perish.

Those who enter these portals  
Come with high hopes and ideals,  
Yet each and every are mortals,  
The truck and the garbage,  
The gold and the silver  
Of every long age  
The refinement of time will tell  
The past is past, not forgotten,  
Our roots are deep planted there,  
The present to all seem travail,  
But clear eyes, pure heart, sound faith,  
The eternal justice of law,  
The scholars bright lamp of wisdom—  
The future has promise for all."

Anyone familiar with the history of the State of Pennsylvania, or with Franklin and Marshall College knows of Dr. Benjamin Franklin Fackenthal, Jr., who has made so many notable and outstanding contributions to the history of this state; and who has been so very generous in his many princely gifts to Franklin and Marshall College. In presenting Dr. Fackenthal to the audience, Professor Beck paid gracious tribute to him in the words:

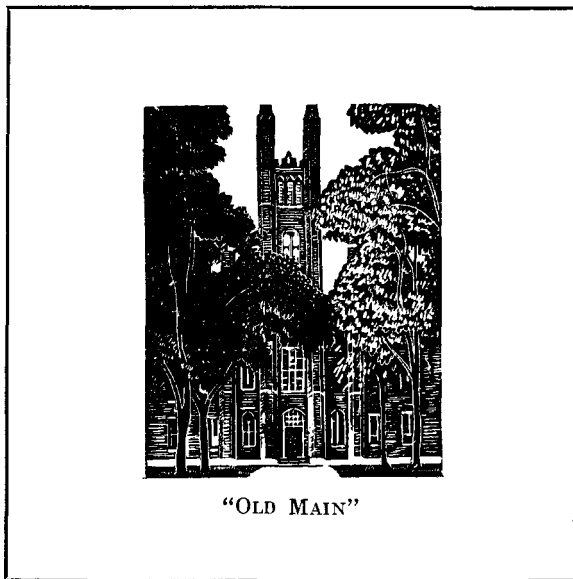
"How fitting it is that this historical tablet should be accepted by Benjamin Franklin Fackenthal, Jr. He, by happy presentiment, was named for the immortal patron of the college. He is the all-time greatest benefactor of the college. He is president of the Board of Trustees of the college; and as presi-

dent of the Bucks County Historical Society, he is generally recognized for his many valuable contributions to the historical records of his native state, Pennsylvania. Dr. Fackenthal will officially accept the tablet for the college."

Dr. Fackenthal:

"Mr. Appel, President Beck and other members of the Lancaster County Historical Society, Ladies and Gentlemen:

"It is indeed a signal honor to accept this tablet on behalf of Franklin and Marshall College, which had its beginnings in 1787, the very year that representatives of the original thirteen states convened at Philadelphia to



formulate our Federal Constitution, which has remained unquestioned for one hundred fifty years.

"But the patriotic names inscribed on this tablet do not tell the whole story of the founders and patrons of this college.

"Three members of its first Board of Trustees, Thomas McKean; Thomas Mifflin, and Joseph Hiester became governors of this Commonwealth; William Bingham and Peter Muhlenberg became United States Senators, the same Peter Muhlenberg who while preaching at Woodstock in Virginia, at the outbreak of the Revolution, descended from his pulpit saying, "There is a time to preach and a time to fight, and now is the time to fight," and removing his gown disclosed his uniform, and asked for volunteers to follow him into the army. Later he rose to the rank of major general. Jasper Yeates was a dis-

tinguished jurist, and William Rawle a noted constitutional lawyer, appointed by President Washington to be United States district attorney. Equal honors must also be given to the four eminent ministers and the others, forty-five in all, who composed the first Board of Trustees, a galaxy of outstanding men, interested in the cause of education, which Dr. Nathan C. Schaeffer calls the "Common religion of all creeds." Did they have a vision of the results their pioneer work would accomplish, as evidenced by the greater Franklin and Marshall College of today?

"But the inception and inspiration for the founding belongs to that public-spirited and many-sided philosopher, the venerable Benjamin Franklin, then an aged man of eighty-one years, who was the largest subscriber, present in person at the laying of the corner stone of Franklin College, whose name will live through all the ages.

"We are equally fortunate in having associated with the name of Benjamin Franklin, that of John Marshall, Chief Justice of the United States, that great expounder of our Constitution. These names should be an inspiration to the students, alumni and friends of Franklin and Marshall College to carry on the work so well begun.

"On behalf of the college, I thank the Lancaster County Historical Society for this tablet, and for selecting the campus of this ancient institution of learning for its erection."

Following the address by Dr. Fackenthal, greetings were brought from a descendant of Benjamin Franklin. In introducing Dr. William Duane, Professor Beck stated that "an ill turn of Fate has necessitated a change at this part of the program. Mr. Franklin Bache, who was to have brought greetings from a descendant, lost his wife only two days ago. The youngest of a line of famous Lancaster physicians, Dr. John L. Atlee, III, helped me to get a pinch-hitter for Mr. Bache. Dr. William Duane, a classmate of Dr. Atlee, and a grandson in direct descent of Benjamin Franklin, will bring these greetings."

Dr. Duane, in his brief and kindly remarks mentioned the value of, and the need for, those sterling qualities which characterized his distinguished ancestor, Benjamin Franklin.

Subsequent to the unveiling of the tablet, Mr. Franklin Bache very kindly sent a copy of the remarks he had intended to make. It affords the writer of this article great pleasure to incorporate Mr. Bache's thoughts in this account:

"The year 1787, when this college was founded and when the Constitution of the United States was drafted and adopted by the Constitutional Convention, essentially divided the European settlement of what is now the United States into two periods, each of 150 years. And that from 1637 to 1787, dur-

ing which time the European population here increased from a few hundreds to three millions, the migration, in quality, had no parallel in human history.

“Those men and women who had the extraordinary courage to cut forever national and family ties and then to undertake a most perilous voyage, in tiny ships, in which the mortality from disease was appalling, and then to brave and conquer, with nothing but crude hand tools, a wilderness inhabited by a cruel and savage enemy, formed an unexampled instance of natural selection.

“And they were equally extraordinary examples of the survival of the fittest both in living through the voyage and in retaining life after they got here, in promptly building churches and schools in the face of poverty, hardships and danger, and in uniting in forms of self-government limited only by the fundamental control retained by the rulers of their native countries. And then in declaring their independence, winning it by war and finally in framing and uniting in a form of self-government under the wise provisions of which for 150 years they have prospered, became the greatest nation of the world and have provided freedom, opportunity and abundance to millions of later emigrants. Ambitious and misguided men have before now attempted by rousing race, sectional or class hatreds to break it down. They have failed and I have no fear of either Communism or Fascism as long as the blood of these forbears runs true.”

The last address on the program was delivered by Major Frank Melvin, who was introduced by Professor Beck as follows:

“We are honored to have as our speaker, Major Frank W. Melvin, president of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission. Immediately at the end of Major Melvin’s address the tablet will be removed from its temporary easel and placed on the northeast gate post at the college entrance. Major Melvin.”

[The story is somewhat incomplete without the address delivered by Major Melvin, but persistent efforts on the part of the Publication Committee failed to secure a copy of his excellent talk.]

Following Major Melvin’s inspiring address the tablet was placed on the northeast gate post of the main entrance to Franklin and Marshall College on College Avenue. It stands as a memorial to those far-seeing courageous patriots who did so much for our country and our college. It further exemplifies the fine spirit of cooperation which exists between “the Town and the Gown” in this historical community rich in educational institutions.

## PROGRAM

President HERBERT H. BECK, presiding

Unveiling of Tablet ..... LOUISE WALLACE

A grand-daughter in direct descent of Benjamin Franklin

Presentation for the

Lancaster County Historical Society ..... T. ROBERTS APPEL, ESQ.

Chairman of Committee

Official Acceptance of Tablet .....DR. B. F. FACKENTHAL, JR.

President of the Board of Trustees of Franklin and Marshall College

Greetings from a Descendant .....FRANKLIN BACHE

Great great grandson of Benjamin Franklin

Address .....MAJOR FRANK W. MELVIN

President of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission

COMMITTEE

T. ROBERTS APPEL, Chairman

C. H. Martin, Rev. Martin W. Schweitzer, Judge Wm. N. Appel, Dr. John L. Atlee, Charles G. Baker, Esq., Milton F. Baringer, Rev. John L. Barnhart, J. W. B. Bausman, Dr. Wm. S. Bertolet, Calvin A. Brown, Rev. Lee M. Erdman, B. F. Fackenthal, Jr., Fred. B. Gerner, Esq., Josiah W. Gitt, Wm. H. Hager, Samuel C. Hertzler, John M. Jamison, John R. Kauffman, Judge Wm. H. Keller, Paul Kieffer, Wm. H. Kretchman, S. Forry Laucks, L. A. Meyran, Henry A. Renninger, A. H. Rothermal, Esq., Wm. Shand, Wm. A. Schnader, Esq., Rev. Scott R. Wagner, Calvin N. Wenrich, S. R. Zimmerman, Esq., Henry H. Appel, Mr. Justice Owen J. Roberts, Frank H. Rudy, Linn L. Reist, Arthur P. Mylin, H. Frank Eshleman, Esq., Rev. Albert J. Reichert, John A. Schaeffer, H. M. J. Klein, Hon. J. Roland Kinzer, Mayor James H. Ross, Major General Edw. C. Shannon, Colonel James Hale Steinman, Herbert H. Beck, President.





*"True to the motto of her chosen seal—*

*Lux et Lex—*

*Lo, the old nation, day by day,*

*Passes, alas! away,*

*And the new nation needs*

*Men of high purpose and historic deeds  
For the stern conflict of the country's life,*

*Send forth a College, such as these!*

*Unto thy land give thou such legacies!*

*Equip thy youth with rugged virtues high  
Not with that apathy, the indifferent wear*

*Fatal to man and state,*

*But anchored resolute to do and dare,*

*Unpurchasable, of nerve and deed*

*Men simply great,*

*With deep conviction, who, at utmost need  
Would stand the champions of the State,*

*Such men the voice of History doth revere*

*O nurture them within this college here."*

—LLOYD MIFFLIN.