

Tribute to Old Lancaster

Old Lancaster! This is my theme;
Call it a vision or a dream;
An old familiar name most dear;
And one that we should e'er revere.
A name we mention with delight;
Given by good old Quaker Wright,
Who lived beloved, who died at last,
Without a cloud to dim his past.

Old Lancaster! Prim and sedate;
The glory of the Keystone State;
For you we toil with earnest zeal,
Some hidden treasures to reveal.
We search the records of the past,
For some old souvenir that was cast,
Maybe, in some forgotten nook,
Where one would seldom think to look.

Old Lancaster! Is it too late
In this year, nineteen hundred eight,
To say a word, to write a line,
Of that early, afar-off time?
Is it too late to resurrect,
And in these cases here collect,
The thing that will perpetuate
Our good old city, county, State?

Old Lancaster! We want to know
More of this town of long ago;
Of "Who was Who;" some one to name
All the great women known to fame.
All the great mother-pioneers—
Who, 'way back in the early years—
In times of peace, in times of war,
Much of life's heavy burden bore.

Old Lancaster! Proud inland shire,
The home-town of a great empire;
Whose smiling acres in their pride
Are to be seen on every side;
'Twas here the homeless found redress,
In a wild, unknown wilderness;
Free from the Old World's bigotry,
Free to enjoy their liberty.

Old Lancaster! Could you find speech,
To tell of all within your reach;

What a story might yet be told,
Of those historic days of old;
Of Washington and Lafayette—
Of others we can ne'er forget—
Who started forth at Freedom's call,
To act their part, to stand or fall.

Old Lancaster! Your magic hand
Once swayed a patriotic band
Of toilers who, from o'er the sea,
Came to this town of Liberty.
Here, on this favored spot of earth,
We claim that Freedom had its birth,
Long years before the "State-House"
bell
Pealed forth its ringing, warning knell.

Old home-like town! This tribute we
Unselfishly extend to thee!
A tribute which will e'er remain
An honor to your own fair name.
And now, as we this homage pay,
We shall have something more to say,
Of days when you your valor won,
In other years now past and gone.

Old Lancaster! It still would seem,
We have your Duke, Prince, King and
Queen;
Memorial to England's Crown,
When first you came to this old town.
Lone sentinels, they point the way,
Lest some strange stroller go astray.
Familiar names! how oft they bring
Thoughts of old Brittannia's King.

They'd been with you for many years,
Sharing alike your hopes and fears;
But when the "Declaration" came
They changed in thought, if not in
name.
So let these sentinels endure,
As bright, as cherished, and as pure,
As when first they were handed down
To mark the streets of this old town.

Old Lancaster! Ah, happy thought!
To think what changes time hath
wrought!
In planting 'round "The Hick'ry Tree"
A small, belated colony.
Yes; some will smile, and others frown;
But this is still the same old town;
A change or so made here or there,
Extending out from Centre Square.

Old Lancaster! Mark how you grew
From what was Old to what is New;
Your habits, customs—they have gone—
And yet the sun has ever shown
As brightly as in days of yore;
But what is better still, and more—
Plenty has come; few to complain,
For want of sunshine or of rain.

Old Lancaster! Our heartstrings cling
To songs our mothers used to sing;
Those old-time hymns of childish glee,
When rocked to sleep upon her knee.
Yes; still they come and still they go
Like dewdrops falling here below;
Sweet music as we all grow old;
Still sweeter as the heart grows cold.

Old Lancaster! we sound your praise,
For length of years, for peaceful days—
For home and friends and fireside—
For Easter-Day and Christmas-tide.
For all the many goodly things
Which honest labor always brings.
We love your Anglo-Saxon name—
With it the dawn of Freedom came.

Old Lancaster! Of bygone days,
With your slow-going, easy ways!
Let us draw from history's page
The name of poet, artist, sage.
For we can ne'er forget the men
Who followed Quaker William Penn,
To found this town and here retain
Their honored names without a stain.

Old Lancaster! None can recall
Your early settlers, great or small;
Your first Court House; your men of
state,
Who therein used to congregate,
To fight the battles of the day,
Dressing in garment bright and gay;
Who lingered 'round the "Grape" hotel,
Their many wondrous tales to tell.

Old Lancaster! Your sacred bells!
How each old tune within me dwells!
The same as in those early times
When first we heard Trinity's chimes.
The bells! The bells! Oh, let them ring;
For sweet reminders they oft bring
Of some beloved parson, divine,
Whom once we knew in olden time.

Yes, yes, old town, your bells have won
A place for you in Christendom;
In human hearts they've touched a
chord,
With inspiration from the Lord;
As down throughout the century
They've proved to man a legacy,
So let the bells with merry cheer
Ring out glad tidings year by year.

Old Lancaster! We love to roam
Around about the new "Long Home;"
To think, 'twas woman's sacrifice
That made this place a Paradise.
To found a "Home"—to aid the poor—
Out of decedent's ample store—
Is but to leave a name behind—
One to be cherished by mankind.

Old Lancaster! Happily rest.
The givers of a small bequest—
A little something that will tend
To aid and serve an aged friend.
Such cheerful deeds of kindness,
In aid of those now in distress,
Will live beloved, will e'er remain,
Bright jewel to a worthy name.

Old Lancaster! Your churches, schools!
Wherein love reigns and virtue rules;
See how they've multiplled and grown
Since the first Christian seed was sown.
And as they stood in olden time
They stand to-day, a sacred shrine;
Emblems of what our lives should be
When full of love and charity.

Old Lancaster! We all delight
To honor you this New Year's night;
And, as we live in peace and health,
Should we not give then of our wealth?
Give freely to the aged—poor—
Who may come tapping at our door?
This is a duty we all owe,
To neighbor, friend, or maybe foe.

Old Lancaster! Traditions claim
That you are not to-day the same
Wigwam you were when, once anon,
You first met "Ground-Rent" Hamilton;
Who drew the town from Postlethwait
To "Hazel Swamp"—his own estate—
But be that as the records say,
To "Roaring Brook" you came to stay.

Old Lancaster! Turn back the dial.
And as we stroll a little while
Around the far-famed "Hick'ry Tree"
Together we, perchance, may see
The once-familiar "Gibson Inn,"
Where "Hick'ry Indians" got their gin;
Where trappers came from "Harris'
Ferry,"
To ply their trade, and then grow
merry.

Old Lancaster! Come, tell us how
The "Paxton Boys" got in a row?
Of how they entered the old jail?
(Ah, but oh! it's a grewsome tale.)
Of how they broke the door and lock,
And there scalped Indian "Billy Soc."
Now of that fatal, far-off time,
We close the scene; we draw the line.

Old Lancaster! Yes, pretty well
You've held this town within your
spell,
Since you helped drive King George's
band
Out of this town—out of this land.
'Twas after independence came
That patriots revered your name,
In all that tends to elevate,
Our good, old city, county, great.

Old Lancaster! Your old-time name
Among us here will e'er remain
As fresh and green, as firm and true,
As when it was first given you.
Other names are worth possessing,
Others still have proved a blessing;
But of the many, we prefer
The good old name of Lancaster.

Old Lancaster! Your name's been found
Among old treasures, here around;
On Indian deeds, dim from age—
It has been seen on ev'ry page.
We find it here, we find it there—
We find it almost ev'rywhere—
The brightest, fairest, dearest name
That ever brought a people fame.

Old Lancaster! City, county!
What a kind, heavenly bounty
Dame Nature has spread near and far,
All within reach of trolley car.

Rich in all blessings which should
make

A people proud, contented, great;
Not alone in temporal things,
But for what the near future brings.

Alas! And would some other name
To all of us be just the same?
Oh, bless you, No! for 'round it twines
Fond memories of other times—
When we together, girls and boys,
Would mingle in our childish joys,
Without the fear of Judge or Court
To break in on our youthful sport.

Old Lancaster! Need it be said,
We love the spot where rest the dead!
Where thousands lie who once were
here,
To gladden homes in every sphere.
We love "Old Woodward," where, below,
The Conestoga's waters flow,
As they go winding gently 'round!
Surely, this is hallowed ground!

Oh, famous, joyful, boyish stream!
To me such it will ever seem;
As 'neath its trees in other days
I strolled along in dubious ways.
I stood and watched the "Packet-boat,"
As it came speeding, all afloat,
To "Reigart's Landing"—Ah, but oh!
This was many years ago.

Old Lancaster! Your name alone
Has found a place in every home;
A name beloved in other climes—
The same as in my simple rhymes.
Yes; down the ages it will roll,
A sweet harbinger to the soul;
Telling of deeds that man has done,
Of battles lost, of victories won.

Old Lancaster! If you were here,
To speak, to whisper in our ear,
Some old-time song that once was sung
In early days when you were young—
A song, perchance, two centuries old—
As priceless as if carved in gold—
Ah! you are here, in name at least,
To join in this historic feast.

Old Lancaster! What would you be
Without a woman's charity?
The mothers who, in times of need,
Spread forth with tears the loving seed,

As they stepped from their lowly
sphere
Some poor, young soldier's heart to
cheer—
When boys in "blue" so quietly
Went forth to fight for liberty.

And now, old town, you've ever been
To us a royal diadem;
When Hope was sinking in dismay,
And gloom obscured each parting day—
When cannon's roared from shore to
shore—
And brought dismay to ev'ry door—
'Twas then the name of Lancaster
Shown brightly forth without a blur.

Old Lancaster! How thankful we,
That no widespread calamity
Has rent or torn this town in twain,
By fire, rain or hurricane.
Of course, you've had your ups and
downs,
The same as those of other towns;
But this one place—much favored spot!
How free from these has been your lot!

Financial troubles we have had,
But these were not one-half as bad
As holocaust and fiery blast
That other towns have overcast.
So let us, then, our voices raise,
In earnest words, Jehovah praise,
For all the things we now possess—
For peace and plenty, happiness.

Old Lancaster! Can you us tell
Where this or that man used to dwell,
Out of the turmoil, anger, strife,
Of this twent'eth century life?
And now, from past, eventful times,
Think, as you ponder o'er these rhymes,
Of what a glorious legacy
Was handed down for you and me.

Old inland town! Who can predict,
Or issue forth a new edict,
Of what in future may occur
To this old town of Lancaster?
But, whatever may be its fate,
It surely is not yet too late
To take a hand—to make a stir
For a new and better Lancaster.

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