

WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON IN LANCASTER: OBSERVANCE OF HIS DEATH

By William Frederic Worner

The county and city of Lancaster, Pa., were honored by a visit from General William Henry Harrison, the hero of Tippecanoe, on Friday, October 7, 1836. He was a candidate, for the first time for the Presidency of the United States, having been nominated by the Whig conventions in Indiana, Ohio and Maryland, and by the Anti-Masonic convention at Harrisburg, Pa. In less than one month after he visited Lancaster, he was defeated at the polls by Martin Van Buren, who was elected President of the United States. General Harrison's visit to Lancaster is worthy of note, since the town was at that time a veritable hot bed of the Anti-Masonic party.

The committee appointed for the reception of General Harrison consisted of Emanuel C. Reigart, Col. George Mayer, Hugh Mehaffy, Major David Miller, John Ehler and George Ford. They proceeded to the borough of Mount Joy where they received their illustrious charge from the hands of the Harrisburg delegation.

The Examiner and Herald for Thursday, October 13, 1836, a weekly newspaper published in the interest of the Anti-Masonic party, contained the following in reference to the visit:

"A cavalcade of citizens and farmers met the train of carriages four miles from Lancaster. The General and two of the committee, Emanuel C. Reigart and Col. George Mayer, rode in front in a splendid black coach, drawn by four fine horses of the same color. Half a dozen vehicles and some horsemen brought up the rear. When the General's carriage drove up to the stand where the city cavalcade was awaiting him, the large porch of the tavern was crowded with farmers. From the whole assemblage he received a respectful salute, and alighting from the carriage gave to all an opportunity of greeting with a cordial welcome their distinguished visitor."

Der Volksfreund und Lancaster Beobachter, a German newspaper published in Lancaster, under date of Tuesday, October 11, 1836, states that the General's coach was drawn by "four beautiful brown horses." I have not been able to learn at which tavern on the Harrisburg turnpike the reception took place. It may have been on the porch of the old Black Horse hotel, though I have no grounds for hazarding this guess other than that the Black Horse hotel is nearly four miles from the heart of Lancaster City.

The Examiner and Herald further states:

"A mile nearer the city [Lancaster], he was again compelled to halt in courtesy to and to return the salutations of another assemblage of 'sovereigns'. From thence the procession proceeded without further interruption to the city, on nearing which the cavalcade opened and, passing the carriages on either side, preceded the General and his suite to his lodgings at the White Swan [hotel], where the veteran alighted amid an immense crowd, greeted by three loud and hearty cheers for the 'Hero of Tippecanoe'."

Der Volksfreund und Lancaster Beobachter says that "he was escorted to the city of Lancaster by several hundred citizens on horseback and in carriages, where the cavalcade arrived at about half past four in the afternoon. The General was escorted to the tavern of Mrs. [Rosina] Hubley, surrounded by a large concourse of citizens, all of whom were eager to get a look at the old hero and patriot, and, if possible, to greet him with a hearty shake of the hand."

The White Swan tavern stood on the corner of Penn square and South Queen street, on the present site of the annex to Watt & Shand's department

store and the People's Shoe and Hat-Cleaning Parlor. For more than a century it was one of Lancaster's leading hotels. It will be recalled that it was in this old hostelry that George Washington and John Adams, when Presidents of the United States, were entertained when they visited Lancaster Borough. Here, too, Jerome Bonaparte stopped when he passed through the borough on his way to Baltimore. It was eminently fitting, therefore, that this tavern should have been selected by the committee appointed for the reception of General Harrison, as the place in which to entertain the Hero of Tippecanoe during his sojourn in Lancaster City.

Here, at the very portals of this ancient hostelry, the distinguished guest was briefly addressed by James Porter, Esq. He was, however, prevented from making a suitable reply, owing to the press and confusion of the crowd. Rarely, in his whole life, was the General more disposed or more anxious to speak, yet it was impossible for him to do so owing to the turbulent spirit of the gathering that was assembled before the White Swan hotel.

Relative to the discourteous treatment of General Harrison in Lancaster, a word of explanation should be given. The Hero of Tippecanoe was prominent in a very exciting campaign. He was the candidate of the Anti-Masonic party, and partisan feeling ran high. Nearly all the data appearing in this monograph was taken from the Examiner and Herald and Der Volksfreund und Lancaster Beobachter, organs of the Anti-Masonic party. Both newspapers of the opposing party, the Lancaster Intelligencer and the Lancaster Journal, for October, 1836, are missing and no copies can be found. In quoting from the Anti-Masonic weeklies I am giving what was, undoubtedly, a partisan view of the whole affair. In order the better to understand the situation in Lancaster at that time one excerpt from a vitriolic account that appeared in the Examiner and Herald for Thursday, October 20, 1836, will suffice:

"We hope that our country friends will bear in mind the shameful and disgraceful manner in which General Harrison was treated by the Masonic mob during his recent visit to this city. Let them remember that their candidate for the Presidency, instead of being treated with the courtesy due to every stranger who visits us, was publicly scoffed at insulted and abused by the Masonic party. The very dogs that throng our streets are treated with more respect and allowed greater privileges than were extended to this war-worn veteran. Whenever he appeared in public, disgusting caricatures and lying banners met his eye; and when he attempted to walk our streets he was followed by a mob and his ears saluted with fiendish and savage yells."

It seems that a number of boys were hired by the opposing faction to heckle General Harrison whenever he attempted to speak. The Examiner and Herald, in commenting on the rude behavior of the crowd, further states:

"A soldier's honor is a sensitive plant and is keenly alive to the rude touch of calumny, whether it proceed immediately through the hands of a blackguard mob or immediately from those who were its instigators."

General Harrison stood for some minutes on the steps of the White Swan hotel to receive the congratulations of the crowd that surrounded him and pressed to the door. He then went into the hotel and partook of dinner, at which he spoke briefly but pertinently in reply to a complimentary toast.

In the evening he was entertained at the home of Emanuel C. Reigart, which at that time was located on the south side of West King street, where Herr & Zimmer, dealers in house furnishings, now have their store. It was in Mr. Reigart's home that General Harrison received his friends and such of the "citizens generally as could divest themselves of the trammels of, opposite party prejudices." Several Democrats were among the numerous visitors.

About ten o'clock on Saturday morning, October 8, 1836, General Harrison left Lancaster, accompanied by the committee, and was escorted, as on his arrival, by a cavalcade of citizens. He had accepted an invitation to stop

over a few hours in the borough of Columbia, on his way to York, Pa.

On reaching Locust Grove, he was greeted by three loud and hearty cheers from a large assemblage of patriots, citizens and farmers, who had come to welcome him to Columbia. Immediate after, a band struck up the spirit-stirring tune of "Hail Columbia." The Examiner and Herald says that "the effect was inconceivably fine. The gallant old soldier, who had just passed through the hammock of an enemy infinitely more savage, and possessing not a little of the generosity of the Indian, must have felt his wounded spirit lifted up, healed and re-invigorated, by the enthusiastic outpouring of the gratitude and joy of his fellow citizens."

The cavalcade, having received a considerable accession of carriages, proceeded on its way to Columbia. The streets of the borough were lined with interested spectators. The procession stopped before the door of the old Washington hotel, which at that time stood at the corner of Walnut and Front streets. On alighting from his coach, General Harrison received from Dr. Richard E. Cochran, on behalf of his fellow citizens, a warm and eloquent tender of the hospitalities of the borough.

The Examiner and Herald states:

"The reply of General Harrison was as beautiful as it was prompt. It confirmed all that we had previously learned of the happy facility and pertinacity with which this extraordinary man always expresses himself on the most sudden and unlooked-for occasions. The speech of the General was responded to by three cheers."

After partaking of dinner, the General crossed the bridge to Wrightsville. In the latter town he was met by the York committee and an immense crowd of people. On receiving the distinguished guest from the Lancaster and Columbia committees, Charles A. Barnitz, of York, delivered an address.

As already stated, at the opening of this paper, General Harrison was defeated and Martin Van Buren was successful at the ensuing election. This, however, did not prevent Harrison's admirers from making another attempt to place him in the highest position within the power of the people. At the Whig convention which met at Harrisburg, Pa. on December 4, 1839, he was nominated, a second time, for the Presidency of the United States, and was elected, after one of the most exciting and picturesque campaigns the people of the United States have ever seen. He was inaugurated March 4, 1841. Exactly one month later, on Sunday, April 4, 1841, at 12:30 A. M., he died in the White House at Washington, D. C.

On Monday morning, April 5, 1841, as soon as the sorrowful news of President Harrison's death was received in Lancaster, the bells of the churches were tolled. At eight o'clock, on the evening of the same day, in obedience to the call of John Mathiot, Mayor of Lancaster, the citizens met in the old court house (which stood in the center of Penn square) and adopted resolutions expressive of their united and sincere regret at the death of the President. The following were chosen officers of the meeting: President, John Mathiot, Esq.; vice presidents, Godfried M. Zahm, George H. Bomberger, Samuel Dale, Dr. George B. Kerfoot and Henry Keffer; secretaries, A. E. Roberts and William Shuler.

The committee appointed to report a preamble and resolutions, expressing the sense of the meeting, consisted of Emanuel C. Reigart, James Cameron, John W. Forney, Alexander H. Hood and Israel Carpenter. The committee appointed to carry out the resolution recommending that the day of President Harrison's funeral be properly observed in Lancaster, consisted of Henry Keffer, Peter McConomy, John F. Steinman, Dr. George B. Kerfoot and William B. Reed.

The meeting was eloquently addressed by John K. Findlay, Emanuel C. Reigart, James Buchanan (who was United States senator at the time) Nathaniel Ellmaker, James Cameron, George M. Steinman, Alexander H. Hood, John W. Forney (who was only twenty-four years of age, and who

subsequently became one of America's leading journalists and politicians) and George Ford, all of whom bore honorable testimony to the departed patriot and statesman. Their remarks were listened to with profound attention. James Buchanan, though belonging to the political party that opposed General Harrison, was unusually eloquent and impressive. He spoke not only as a statesman and patriot should speak on such an occasion, but as a true-hearted American, and he elicited general approbation in the course of his remarks.

On Wednesday, April 7, 1841, the day of General Harrison's funeral, the bells of the churches in Lancaster were muffled and tolled throughout the day; minute guns were fired at intervals, and from twelve o'clock, noon, the stores and taverns were closed and business generally suspended. The military companies and a large number of citizens, met and formed in funeral procession under the command of Major Frederick Hambright, and marched through the principal streets of the city. About six o'clock the crowd dispersed, nothing having occurred to mar the harmony of a day that was given up to mourning.

On Monday morning, April 12, 1841, in conformity with arrangements of the committee appointed for that purpose, the military companies and many of the citizens of Lancaster, formed in procession at the old court house at ten o'clock and proceeded to Trinity Lutheran church, where an eloquent funeral oration on the death of the late President of the United States, was delivered by the Rev. Dr. Samuel Bowman, rector of Saint James's Episcopal church. The opening prayer was made by the Rev. George F. Bahnson, of the Moravian church; the closing prayer by the Rev. Mr. Pool, of the Methodist Protestant church; and the benediction by the Rev. Dr. John C. Baker, pastor of Trinity Lutheran church.

Notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather, the church was crowded, and Dr. Bowman's discourse was listened to with closest attention. The Lancaster Intelligencer for Tuesday, April 13, 1841, states that "it was a production worthy of that gentleman's high character. During the delivery more than one eye was suffused with tears. It was beautifully appropriate and eloquent." It was printed in full in the Examiner and Herald of Wednesday, April 21, 1841.

The churches of the city and the Mechanics Institute were robed in mourning. As a testimony of respect, the officers of the city and county, and citizens generally, were requested to wear crape on the left arm for a period of thirty days.

It will be seen from the foregoing that at no place in the United States was the death of President Harrison more appropriately solemnized than in Lancaster—the town in which he had received such rude treatment less than five years before.

The body of President Harrison was interred for a short time in Washington, D. C., until the tomb at North Bend, Ohio, could be prepared for its reception. Concerning the pilgrimage of the corpse to its final resting place the Examiner and Herald for Wednesday, June 30, 1841, contained this paragraph:

"The remains of the 'Good President' were taken through Columbia, [Pa.] on Monday last on the way to North Bend. Several military companies were in attendance."