

# VISIT OF ZACHARY TAYLOR TO LANCASTER: OBSERVANCE OF HIS DEATH

By William Frederic Worner

Monday, March 5th, 1849, General Zachary Taylor was inaugurated President of the United States. Five months later, when "Old Rough and Ready," as he was affectionately called by his admirers, was making a grand tour of Pennsylvania and New York, the city and county of Lancaster, Pa., were honored by a visit from him. He left Washington, D. C., on Thursday, August 9th, 1849, and arrived in York, Pa., at one o'clock on the afternoon of the following day. He was met at the boundary line between Maryland and Pennsylvania by a delegation of twenty-five citizens of York, headed by Governor William F. Johnston of Pennsylvania.

After a banquet and a reception, which were held in the Washington House in York, the distinguished visitor, accompanied by Governor Johnston, was escorted by the York committee as far as Columbia, where he arrived late in the afternoon. At the eastern end of the bridge that spans the Susquehanna river from Columbia to Wrightsville, the President and his party were heartily received by a committee and citizens from the borough of Columbia and vicinity. The *Wahre Amerikaner*, a German newspaper published in Lancaster under date of August 15th, 1849, says: "The committee had several carriages in waiting at this place in which the guests took their seats. A parade was then formed and marched down Front street to Locust street, up Locust to Second street, and down Second to the residence of Peter Haldeman, Esq. At this place the crowd was given an opportunity of approaching nearer the distinguished visitors and of extending to them a hearty welcome. After this was over, the parade was resumed and moved down Second street to Walnut, and then down Walnut to the railroad."

Here the President was received by a committee from Lancaster which had journeyed to Columbia to receive him. It was composed of the following prominent citizens: Hon. Thaddeus Stevens, Capt. Joseph Reynolds, Alexander L. Hayes, Col. George W. Hamersly, James Buchanan, John C. Van Camp, William Gleim, Ellis Lewis, Emanuel C. Reigart, Dr. George B. Kerfoot, Reah Frazer, William Frick, Isaac E. Hiester, William Buckius, Hiram B. Swarr, Nathaniel Ellmaker, Col. David W. Patterson, Carpenter McCleary, William Mathiot, David Longenecker, Christopher Hager, John F. Long, George W. McElroy, Samuel Cormeny, Capt. Jacob Snyder, John Ehler, Gen. George Ford, A. Herr Smith, John Bear, Col. Edward C. Darlington, William Carpenter, Jacob Myers, Bonom Sampson, Thomas Baumgardner and Gilbert Hartley.

Shortly after seven o'clock, on the evening of August 10th, the President, accompanied by his son-in-law, Dr. Robert C. Wood, and Governor Johnston, arrived in Lancaster and was enthusiastically welcomed by a large concourse of citizens.

A cavalcade, under the direction of Gen. George Ford, chief marshal, met the President at the point where the railroad crosses the Harrisburg turnpike, near the northwestern boundary of Lancaster City. Here an immense crowd of people had gathered and anxiously awaited the arrival of the illustrious guest.

*Der Volksfreund* und *Lancaster Beobachter*, a German newspaper published in Lancaster under date of Tuesday, August 14th, 1849, states:

"On his arrival at this point the President was greeted by the assembled crowd of people with loud acclamations. The throng was so great and all were so eager to shake the hand of the man who had so gloriously defended the honor of his country and adorned it with such brilliant military feats, that it was difficult to take the President from the railroad coach through the crowd to the carriage intended for him."

After this had been accomplished and the procession properly formed by the chief marshal and his assistants, the President was escorted, amidst the loud acclamations of the people, to the quarters reserved for him in the old White Swan hotel in Penn square, which at that time was kept, I am inclined to think, by Henry Kendig. His arrival was announced by the firing of cannon and the ringing of bells, which continued until he reached his hotel. The procession was accompanied by a band of music. The national colors were displayed on the old court house, which stood in Penn square. This was the same building in which George Washington dined in 1791, when he, as President of the United States, honored the borough of Lancaster with his presence. Three hundred and thirty-six sperm candles were used to illuminate the court house in President Taylor's honor. (See Vol. 12, page 194, Proceedings of the Lancaster County Historical Society.)

The President and Governor Johnston, and others who accompanied them, were driven from the railroad to the White Swan hotel in carriages, while the citizens followed on foot. The Lancaster Intelligencer of August 14th, 1849, the President's political opponent, sarcastically remarked: "As the escorting cavalcade proceeded down North Queen street, we were struck with the silence and utter indifference displayed by the people - - - - What gave the city a most gloomy appearance more appropriate for a funeral cortege than the reception of a President, was the closing of the store windows."

Despite the "sour grape" attitude of the Intelligencer, we are glad to state that politics were forgotten for the time being. All parties united in the reception of the President, which was spirited and in good taste throughout. General Taylor came to Lancaster, after repeated and pressing invitations; and the welcome accorded him on this occasion was such as only the Chief Magistrate of the Nation should receive. The hearty manner in which he was entertained by the people of Lancaster city and county must have been gratifying in the highest degree, to him and his friends.

Upon reaching the White Swan hotel, the historic old hostelry in which George Washington and John Adams lodged when they visited Lancaster as Presidents of the United States, Thaddeus Stevens, chairman of the committee of arrangements, addressed the President as follows:

"Mr. President:—I am directed by the citizens of Lancaster to bid you welcome to their town and county. They were among your earliest, and have been your constant admirers; and they rejoice to have the opportunity to become personally acquainted with you.

"They have been attentive observers of your public career. As commander of our armies they have seen and appreciated your military skill,—your cool and daring courage. They have seen you, while deploring the existence of war, gathering its greenest laurels; and by your valor and humanity shedding upon our arms the brightest, the mildest, and the purest lustre that can shine through blood.

"Called to that station which is more honorable and more elevated than the throne of the proudest kings, they are glad to see you seeking by personal observation for facts which may guide your judgment and render your administration useful to your country. May you traverse every portion of Pennsylvania, learn its capabilities, see its prosperity and its sufferings. Observe how large a portion of its untold treasures are yet buried in the bosom of the earth, and ascertain what is necessary for their full and speedy development, in order that you may the better decide how far these great interests are worthy of the fostering care of government. Pennsylvania hopes that after full examination you will come to the conclusion that the labor of the people is entitled to the protection of the nation, that such protection is equally beneficial to agriculture, manufactures, commerce and the mechanic arts and sciences, bound together by one common band. In this hope I believe every Pennsylvanian agrees. I would not touch debatable ground,

as on this occasion all parties have magnanimously united, so that every good man may be able hereafter to enliven the evening of his days by recounting to his children's children, how he had seen, and perchance taken by the hand, the patriot hero, who had often exposed his life in his country's cause, and had always been successful.

"In the name, therefore, of our whole people, I bid you a hearty welcome."

To this address President Taylor, amidst great applause, replied as follows:

"Mr. Chairman:—The distinguished compliment paid me by the citizens of the town and county of Lancaster whom you represent, in welcoming me so cordially on my arrival here, and in tendering me their hospitality, has filled me with feelings of gratitude which I have not language to express. The warm, indeed I may say enthusiastic, character of my reception convinces me that the many kind invitations I have had to visit Lancaster came from the heart of your intelligent and patriotic citizens. I have come to Pennsylvania, with no political purposes in view, that I might witness in person her agricultural, manufacturing and mining operations, and I am gratified to know that thus far the people have welcomed me, without distinction of party, to this renowned commonwealth. I have come among you, too, in a plain and unostentatious manner, feeling that I would nevertheless receive kindness and hospitality wherever I visit or sojourn. In this spirit the people met at my first entrance into the state; and in this spirit they have escorted me from place to place.

"I am more than gratified, Sir, at your flattering notice of my military career in Mexico. It must be recollected, however, that our successes there are mainly due to the strong arms and bold hearts of freemen, regulars and volunteers, who participated with me in those hard-fought battles; and none, I am pleased to say, on either line of operations, were more conspicuous or more faithful to duty than the sons of Pennsylvania.

"In regard to the development and protection of the great industrial interests of Pennsylvania, her agriculture and manufactures, her iron and coal, no one takes a deeper interest in them than myself, or will more heartily co-operate with the national legislature in recommending or carrying out such measures as will facilitate the objects referred to.

"In conclusion, I thank you, and through you, the citizens of the city and county of Lancaster, for my warm reception on this occasion."

Shortly after he had withdrawn into the hotel he appeared at a window in the second story and spoke a few words to the vast throng gathered in front of the building. From this place Governor Johnston also briefly addressed the assembled thousands, but, unfortunately, his remarks were not preserved.

Der Volksfreund und Lancaster Beobachter further states:

"At half past eight o'clock the President sat down to a sumptuous supper with the reception committee, the mayor of the city, the presidents of both branches of city councils and a number of citizens. At about ten o'clock the President withdrew and retired to rest. The court house, on the tower of which the national flag waved, was illuminated during the evening in a brilliant manner."

The President rose at five o'clock on Saturday morning. Without having previously made his intention known, he visited the central market, where he had an opportunity of shaking hands with a number of his Lancaster friends and of seeing a market that is famed far and wide for the excellency and variety of its farm products. As soon as the distinguished visitor was recognized the throng of people about him became so great that he was obliged to beat a hasty retreat. Afterwards, accompanied by Governor Johnston and several citizens, he visited the cotton factory, of which Lancaster was justly proud, and expressed his great pleasure at what he saw there.

The ladies of Lancaster called upon him in large numbers and were most cordially received in the upper parlor of the White Swan hotel from eight until nine o'clock. In referring to this, Der Volksfreund und Lancaster Beobachter says that in order "to show him their respects some ladies presented the President with very beautiful garlands and bouquets of flowers, which he accepted with much pleasure." Later, such of the gentlemen as were able to force their way through the crowd paid their respects to the President in the parlors on the first floor of the ancient hostelry. He was, however, soon obliged to decline shaking hands, as the hearty grasp of the citizens of Lancaster would have squeezed his hand to a jelly. Afterwards the President took a seat before an open window in the upper story of the White Swan hotel where he could at least be seen by the vast crowd of people gathered in the street below.

At half past ten o'clock a procession was formed and marched to Penn square and halted before the door of the White Swan hotel. Concerning this part of the program Der Volksfreund und Lancaster Beobachter states:

"The President, accompanied by several members of the reception committee, stepped into the open carriage drawn by four horses standing in readiness for him, and the cavalcade moved in the following order: Chief marshal and his adjutants; Band; Second assistant marshal; Escort of mounted citizens; Third and fourth assistant marshals; President's carriage; Governor's carriage; Carriage containing members of the cabinet; Reception committee in carriages; Officers and soldiers of the American army in carriages; Mayor of the city and members of city councils; First assistant marshal and adjutants; High Sheriff of the county and his deputies; Judge and officers of the court; Mounted citizens; Assistant marshal; Citizens on foot; Conestoga wagons; Citizens in carriages. The procession marched through some of the main streets of the city, where the President was greeted with cheers and the waving of neckerchiefs by thousands of ladies who appeared at the windows. The procession then moved to the railroad crossing on the Harrisburg turnpike, where, at about twelve o'clock noon, the President stepped into the car of a railroad train intended especially for him."

Accompanied by Governor Johnston, he was consigned to the care of a committee from Harrisburg, which had come to Lancaster for the purpose of escorting the Chief Magistrate of the Union to the capital of Pennsylvania.

Before leaving Lancaster, the chairman of the Harrisburg committee introduced the "Old Hero" to a committee composed of Mount Joy's most prominent citizens. The latter had come to Lancaster by special train, in company with the Harrisburg committee, for the purpose of introducing the illustrious President to the patriotic population of Mount Joy as he passed through that village en-route to Harrisburg.

The Examiner and Herald for Wednesday, August 15th, 1849, states:

"Notwithstanding the shortness of notice, the concourse of people at Mount Joy was very great. When the train stopped at the depot, the crowd was so dense that it was with the greatest difficulty that the venerable chairman of the committee could conduct the distinguished guest to the rooms provided for his reception."

When the President entered the spacious parlors of the hotel he found them crowded with ladies. The greetings were warm and many. The President extended his hands to the ladies, and bowed down to kiss and bless the children. He clasped with fervor the hand of one aged father whose hair was silvered with the frosts of many winters and with full heart ejaculated: "You resemble an aged patriarch surrounded by his family." The Examiner and Herald records that the remark was a correct one and forcibly called to mind "the pertinence of other laconic expressions attributed to the war-worn veteran under widely different circumstances."

After partaking of refreshments, the distinguished visitors departed, leaving with all parties in Mount Joy "a most favorable impression and a

settled conviction that President Taylor and Governor Johnston were the very men to govern a powerful and glorious country."

President Taylor died at Washington, D. C., on Tuesday, July 9th, 1850, at ten thirty P. M. On Thursday evening, July 11th, in response to the call of Mayor Michael Carpenter, the citizens of Lancaster assembled in the court house to "manifest their high veneration for the memory of one who has occupied the highest office in the gift of the people."

The meeting was called to order by Oliver J. Dickey, Esq. The Rev. Dr. John C. Baker, pastor of Trinity Lutheran church, was chosen president; Rev. Bernard Keenan, rector of Saint Mary's Catholic church, Hon. Alexander L. Hayes, Dr. John L. Atlee and Thomas Henry Burrows, vice presidents; I. Newton Lightner, George W. Hamersly and William Mathiot, secretaries. A committee appointed to draft resolutions consisted of the following: David G. Eshleman, George M. Steinman, Joseph Ehrenfried, Thomas Emlen Franklin, Henry Stock, Lewis Hurford, George Sanderson, Hiram B. Swarr, Alexander H. Hood, John F. Heinitsh, James Whitehill, Godfried M. Zahm and Dr. John Miller.

The meeting was addressed in a most eloquent and impressive manner by Thomas Emlen Franklin and Hon. James Buchanan.

On Saturday, July 13th, 1850, the day of President Taylor's funeral the stores and places of business in Lancaster were closed at nine o'clock in the morning and remained closed for the rest of the day. The bells of the churches were tolled from twelve o'clock noon until two o'clock in the afternoon.

Saturday, July 27th, was the day set apart by the citizens of Lancaster to pay their last tribute of respect to the memory of the illustrious hero and statesman. The demonstration was not as large as had been anticipated, though considering the threatening state of the weather, it was a very creditable affair.

The procession was headed by chief marshal, Henry F. Benedict and his assistants, Daniel B. Vondersmith, John Hamilton, Jacob B. Amwake, George W. Hamersly and Charles M. Howell, all of whom were on horseback. Following these came Mayor Michael Carpenter and members of Select and Common Councils; judges of the court and members of the bar; school directors; members of the order of American Mechanics; Sons of Temperance; Brotherhood of the Union; Temple of Honor; Cadets of Temperance; Union Fire Company, and a number of citizens, accompanied by appropriate music. The procession started at nine o'clock in the morning. After marching through the several principal streets of the city, it proceeded to Trinity Lutheran church where an appropriate and highly eloquent eulogium on the life and character of Zachary Taylor was delivered by the Rev. Dr. Samuel Bowman, rector of Saint James's Protestant Episcopal church. During the delivery of the funeral oration the church was densely crowded and Dr. Bowman was listened to with profound attention. The address was published in full in the Examiner and Herald for Wednesday, July 31st, 1850.

During the time of the procession the stores and business places were closed, minute guns were fired and the bells of the churches tolled, giving the whole city a solemn appearance.

Thus were the last sad rites paid to the memory of one whom the whole nation mourned,—the record of whose deeds will grace the pages of impartial history as long as this great Republic endures.