

GENERAL SAM HOUSTON IN LANCASTER

By William Frederic Worner

On Thursday, July 6, 1848, the city of Lancaster, Pa., was honored by a visit from General Sam Houston, the hero of San Jacinto, one of the founders and the first President of the infant Republic of Texas. He was accompanied by the Hon. David S. Kauffman, who formerly resided in Cumberland county, Pa. At the time of this visit, Mr. Kauffman was a Representative in the Congress of the United States from the Eastern District of Texas; while Sam Houston was serving in the United States Senate from the Lone Star State. General Houston and Mr. Kauffman were returning from a Democratic celebration in Carlisle, Pa., where they had addressed a large assemblage. The stop over afforded the citizens of Lancaster city and county an opportunity to meet these distinguished Democrats and extend to them a hearty welcome.

On Thursday evening, a great throng of people gathered in and about the old court house that stood in Penn square, to greet the visitors. In the assemblage was a delegation of more than one hundred persons from the borough of Columbia, accompanied by a brass band.

The Intelligencer and Journal for Tuesday, July 11, 1848, states:

"Since the good old Jackson era, no similar demonstration has been witnessed in this city. The court house was filled with a dense mass of people who greeted their distinguished visitors with round upon round of applause, that made the welkin ring."

The meeting was organized by the appointment of the following officers: President, Dr. Samuel Humes; vice presidents, Dr. George B. Kerfoot, John Barr, Isaac Holl, Edwin M. Hutter, Dr. John D. Miller, Peter Martin, M. D. Holbrook, Jacob F. Kautz, James Boon, Newton Lightner, Dr. F. A. Thomas and Jacob Winnower; secretaries, George F. Messer, George Eichelberger, Philip Gossler, J. B. Kauffman, Alexander Boggs and Charles M. Howell. Hon. Ellis Lewis was invited to a seat with the officers.

A committee, consisting of J. B. Amwake, Samuel E. Gundaker, J. Franklin Reigart, Jacob Weaver and Michael Bundel, was appointed to wait on General Houston and Mr. Kauffman, and invite them to address the meeting. The invitation was accepted; and the distinguished visitors, soon after appearing, were introduced by Colonel Reah Frazer.

General Houston's appearance on the platform was the signal for the most enthusiastic applause. "Although laboring under severe indisposition", the Intelligencer and Journal tell us, "his speech was one of commanding power and eloquence". He commenced by an appropriate and feeling tribute to gallant Pennsylvania. Long had he witnessed and admired the constancy and firmness of the old Keystone state in upholding the time-worn banner of Democracy.

He declared that he had beheld, with much pleasure, the industry, the prosperity and the unclouded comfort which were visible on every hand as he travelled through the Keystone State. In his inimitable manner, he "whispered" to the good people of Lancaster county that they were living on the very fat of the land. He did not desire this to be repeated, he said, as "it might savor of flattery".

He next gave a lively and humorous account of the rise and progress of Texas, and declared the constitution of the Lone Star State to be one of the most republican of all the states in the Union. He reviewed the then existing political parties of the United States. General Zachary Taylor had been recently selected as the presidential standard bearer of the Whig party. General Houston proved to be a gentleman "to the manner born". He stated that "he would be the last man on earth to tarnish any of the well-earned laurels of General Taylor as a military commander. Nobly has he won them and long may he wear them".

He then spoke, at some length, of the extraordinary conduct of Ex-President Martin Van Buren, and denounced him for lending himself to a Northern sectional organization. This portion of his speech was greeted with loud and long-continued applause.

General Houston's peroration was thrilling eloquent and beautiful. He then referred to the progress of the American Republic, and the effect of our example on other nations of the earth, over-toppling kingdoms and thrones, and erecting on their ruins fabrics consecrated to republican freedom and equality.

This is but an outline of General Houston's truly masterful address. It was interspersed with wit and anecdote, but time and space will not permit a reference even to a moiety of his happy hits. He sat down amidst tumultuous applause, leaving his audience enthusiastic and delighted.

General Houston was followed by his friend and colleague, the Hon. Mr. Kauffman. The American Press and Republican, a newspaper published in Lancaster under date of Saturday, July 8, 1848, states that "the remarks of Mr. Kauffman were not so well received as those of General Houston". The Lancastrian, another newspaper published in this city at that time, bearing date Wednesday, July 12, 1848, informs us that:

"The distinguished services of both these gentlemen are in the cause of Texan independence. Their high characters and their abilities as public speakers rendered their visit to Lancaster one of peculiar interest and pleasure to our citizens".

General Houston and Mr. Kauffman remained in Lancaster until the next day. The Lancastrian states that "they were called upon by a large number of our citizens, as well at the house of Colonel Frazer, whose guests they were, as at the hotel of Captain Shertz, where they spent an hour on Friday morning".

From this we infer that the distinguished visitors spent the night at the home of Colonel Frazer, who at that time lived on West King street, where R. C. Seldomridge now has his grocery store.

The hotel in which they "spent an hour on Friday morning" was, in all probability, the Jefferson House. It stood on the southeast corner of East King and Christian streets. In the early part of the last century it was known as "The Bull's Head" tavern. At the time of Sam Houston's visit to Lancaster it was kept by Christian Shertz. The hotel was torn down about 1850 and on its site the present Exchange Hotel was erected.

The distinguished party left for Washington, D. C., on Friday morning. During their stay in Lancaster they were visited by hundreds, and departed with the best wishes of our gallant Democracy to whom their visit was a treat long and gratefully to be remembered.