

Lancaster's Contribution to Snow Hill in the Fire of 1834

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

In The Lancaster Union of December 9th, 1834, appeared a communication, under the date of November 25th, which is as follows:

"I have just emerged from a night of horrors. The center of the most valuable section of Snow Hill, Maryland, is in ashes. The village has no tavern, no public office; and of all the houses occupied yesterday by merchandize, all, save two, are now smouldering ruins. The public loss is nothing compared with that sustained by individuals. Some are left houseless and almost naked; some, whose circumstances were comfortable only yesterday, are now poor; older men's fortunes are greatly diminished; younger ones have lost the labor of their lives. It would require from \$100,000 to \$150,000 to repair the injuries of last night. Snow Hill is ruined."

The Lancaster Journal of Friday, December 5th, 1834, in referring to the conflagration, stated editorially:

"The calamity which has befallen this place calls loudly upon the sympathy and kind feelings of the citizens of Lancaster. This beautiful town, lately the seat of prosperity and happiness, is now a heap of blackened ruins. Before the calamity, which has rendered its inhabitants houseless, and many of them penniless, it was a place of considerable trade, owing to its situation upon the Pocomoke river, giving business and employment to about 1200 inhabitants. It is the capital of Worcester county, a port of entry, and contained a court house, academy, three houses of public worship and a bank.

"We are glad to perceive, by the annexed notice of the mayor, that the citizens of Lancaster, with their usual promptitude, are about to offer their aid to their suffering fellow citizens. We have been greatly favored. The dread element, by which so many thousands have suffered within a few years, in the United States, has scathed us but lightly. While we are grateful for this exemption, and for the abundance with which Providence had blessed us, let us not lose the opportunity of rendering efficient aid to our less fortunate brethren."

In pursuance of a call by John Mathiot, mayor, citizens of Lancaster assembled at the court house on Saturday evening, December 6th, at 7 o'clock for the purpose of taking into consider-

ation the unhappy situation of the suffering inhabitants of the Maryland town. John Mathiot was appointed chairman; and George Louis Mayer, secretary. Committees were appointed as follows to call on the citizens and solicit contributions:

North-east Ward.

Dr. George B. Kerfoot	Michael Metzger
John Wind	Samuel E. Gundacker

North-west Ward.

C. F. Hoffmeir	Jacob Frey
David Longenecker	George Ford, Jr.
Henry D. Carson	

South-east Ward.

Jacob Demuth	Jacob Gable
B. McGonigle	Dr. P. Bier

South-west Ward.

George Bryan	D. Lepkichler
C. Gillespie	Henry Carpenter

George Louis Mayer was appointed treasurer.

In July, 1834, a public meeting was held in Lancaster and contributions, amounting to \$155.37, were solicited for exiled Poles. The sum of \$105.51 was spent in assisting 29 Poles. In view of the fact that no applications for relief had been made for some time, and no probability of further calls being made, the committee appointed for that purpose was discharged and the remainder of the contribution, \$49.86, was appropriated for the use of the Snow Hill sufferers.

Lancaster, with its accustomed liberality, responded to the call of Mayor Mathiot. In a little more than two weeks, a goodly sum was realized and transmitted to the sufferers.

The Lancaster Union of Tuesday, December 23rd, 1834, contained a statement of monies collected, as follows:

"North-west ward, north side,.....	\$ 60.35
" " " , west "	39.00
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	99.35
North-east ward, east side,.....	90.50
" " " , north "	28.81
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	119.31
South-west ward, west side,.....	40.00
" " " , south "	18.75
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	56.75

South-east ward, east side,.....	51.75
“ “ “ , south “	5.96
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	59.71
Amount received from the Forrest Dramatic Society,	12.00
Balance of the Polish fund,	49.86
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	\$394.98”

The amount was transmitted by a check of Joseph Ogilby, Esq., on the Bank of Pennsylvania, to the chairman of the committee of distribution. Several weeks later, the treasurer received an acknowledgement, as follows:

“Snow Hill, Md.,
“January 14th, 1835.

“Dear Sir:

“In behalf of the committee and the afflicted inhabitants of this place, I beg leave to return our sincere thanks to the benevolent citizens of the city of Lancaster for the prompt, efficient and kind aid they have afforded an afflicted community. I humbly pray a similar calamity may never befall your generous city.

“Very respectfully,
“Your obedient servant,
“John S. Martin, Chairman,
“Committee of Distribution.

“To George Louis Mayer, Esq.”

In addition to the sum collected in the city, contributions were received from several towns in the county. The Lancaster Union of Tuesday, March 24th, 1835, contained the following:

“From Lititz, Lancaster county, Pa.....	\$23.44
“ Churchtown, Lancaster county, Pa.....	15.00
“ Marietta, Lancaster county, Pa.....	17.25
“ Strasburg, Lancaster county, Pa.....	25.25
“ Reamstown, Lancaster county, Pa.....	9.12½
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	\$90.06½”

Snow Hill claims the distinction of being the first place in which organized Presbyterianism had its beginnings in this country, under the leadership of Rev. Francis Makemie, who landed on our shores in 1683. The town is now one of the most attractive on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

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