

Governor Clinton in Lancaster

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

DE WITT CLINTON, statesman, was born in Orange county, New York, March 2nd, 1769; and died in Albany, New York, on February 11th, 1828. He served his native state in several offices throughout his life, having been a member of the state legislature, United States senator, mayor of New York city and governor of the Empire State.

Mr. Clinton was in Lancaster on Tuesday, August 9th, 1825. Where he spent the night is not known. The Lancaster Journal of Friday, August 12th, 1825, contains the following:

“Governor Clinton was in this city on Tuesday night. He arrived very late in the evening, and set out early in the morning for Philadelphia. We regret that the citizens of this place had not an opportunity of testifying, in a public manner, the exalted opinion which they entertain of the merits and services of this distinguished individual, who may be justly styled the Father of Internal Improvement of this country.”

The Great Fire of 1825

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ON Wednesday, October 19th, 1825, the city of Lancaster was visited by the most destructive fire, that, so far as known, had ever occurred in the town. It was caused by some one carelessly throwing live coals on a heap of refuse matter. The fire spread instantly to an adjoining livery stable, owned by William C. Hull. The weather being very dry and a high wind prevailing, the flames ignited near-by buildings, and in a comparatively short period totally destroyed two large brick houses on West King street, a barn owned by Jacob Fry, Jr., Mr. Jacob Lindy's brick house, and a brick building next door occupied as a hatter's shop.

The Lancaster Journal of Friday, October 21st, 1825, states, “Fortunately the wind moderated soon after the commencement of the fire, or there is no calculating the extent of the damages that might have been sustained. The jail [located at Prince and West King streets] was in danger, the roof of Mr. Krug's bark house [site of the present Stevens House] was repeatedly on fire, and a number of houses at a considerable distance caught in the roof from the cinders lodging in the joints of the shingles. Great and praiseworthy exertions were made by the citizens to arrest the progress of the flames, but, unfortunately, the scarcity of water very much retarded their efforts. A number of gentlemen from

Marietta, Maytown, Columbia, and other parts of the county, [who were attending court] exerted themselves with a zeal which justly entitled them to the gratitude of the inhabitants of Lancaster."

The Lancaster Intelligencer of Tuesday, October 25th, 1825, in referring to the conflagration, called attention in its editorial column to the fact that in the future every precaution should be taken to guard against fires; and reminded its readers that "much harm may be avoided by having our chimneys swept in time." The editor desired to know what citizen could ever forgive himself, if through his negligence, or for the sake of saving the paltry sum of twenty cents (evidently the price charged at that time for sweeping a chimney), "he should be the cause of burning the property of his neighbor and turning his family out of doors."

At a meeting of the citizens of Lancaster held at the court house on Thursday, the day following the fire, for the purpose of taking into consideration the situation of the sufferers, Hon. Patton Ross, recorder of the city of Lancaster, was appointed chairman, and Emanuel C. Reigart, secretary.

A committee, consisting of Hon. James Buchanan, John Myer, George B. Porter, Jasper Slaymaker and Major John Getz, was appointed for the purpose of examining into the circumstances and losses sustained. Committees for making collections and receiving contributions for the use of the sufferers, were appointed as follows:

North-west Ward.

Jacob Snyder
J. F. Voight

Jonas Dorwart
George Matter, Esq.

North-east Ward.

Henry Keffer
William Norris

Thomas Wentz
John Carroll

South-west Ward.

G. H. Krug
H. Carpenter

William Russel
F. Hambright

South-east Ward.

Leonard Eicholtz
Robert Evans

Levi Rogers
S. D. Orrick

How much money was contributed and by whom given and collected, is not definitely known. Subsequent issues of the local papers do not contain any references to these matters. The Lancaster Journal of Friday, October 28th, 1825, however, states that a theatrical company then playing in the town gave a benefit performance on Monday evening, October 24th. The proceeds amounted to forty-two dollars and six cents. One half of this sum was received for the aid of the sufferers.

George H. Krug, Bernhard Haag, Alexander Miller and John Myer, through the medium of the Lancaster Journal, thanked "the citizens in general for their indefatigable exertions in protecting their property from destruction."

At a meeting of the citizens of Lancaster held in the court house on Tuesday, October 25th, 1825, Nathaniel Lightner, Esq., mayor of the city, was called to the chair. Christian Bachman was appointed secretary. The meeting was for the purpose of creating a better and more efficient organization of the firemen and citizens in the event of fire; and also to adopt measures to procure sufficient water. A committee, consisting of General George B. Porter, James Hopkins, Esq., James Buchanan, Esq., Samuel Dale, Esq., and Martin Shreiner, was appointed to determine what should be done.

An adjourned meeting was held in the court house on Saturday evening, October 29th, at which time the fire companies were requested to appoint from among their members a suitable person as director or captain; that the persons so appointed from each of the companies constitute the board of management; that they wear a badge or mark of distinction, by which they may be known to all; and that they have the sole right to fix the stations of the engines, to order the removal of buildings and other property, and to make such arrangements as they deem wise for successfully fighting fires. City councils were also urged to adopt "such measures as may be necessary to ascertain the practicability and probable expense of introducing the waters of the Conestoga into the city of Lancaster." It was not, however, until Washington's birthday, February 22nd, 1837, that water from the Conestoga flowed for the first time into the reservoir on East King street.

Collections in Aid of the Greeks

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In the Lancaster Journal of Friday, February 16th, 1827, appeared the following appeal:

"The undersigned, having been appointed by the Greek committee of Philadelphia as their agents in this neighborhood for raising a supply of food and raiment for the oppressed and famishing Greeks, earnestly solicit the aid of their fellow citizens of the county of Lancaster, in contributing to the alleviation of the distress and wretchedness of that gallant nation, suffering in addition to the misery of war with a most ferocious and sanguinary enemy, the horrors of a destitution of the necessaries of life; and moreover threatened, in the event of being subjugated, with ex-