

Juvenile Society of Lancaster

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

IN the year 1812, or earlier, perhaps, an organization known as the "Juvenile Society of Lancaster," was formed in local circles.

Who organized the association or who constituted its membership is not now known. It was a cultural organization which existed only for a short time, but while it lasted it undoubtedly did much to advance the cause of learning in Lancaster.

The Lancaster Journal of Saturday, March 21st, 1812, contained the following:

"JUVENILE SOCIETY OF LANCASTER.

"As the design of this association is not generally known, and as the important benefits which the members are capable of deriving from it are not so well understood as they ought to be, it is proposed to make a public exhibition of their usual routine of exercises, the nature of their institution, to give a statement of their library, and to thank their friends for past favors, and modestly to state their claims for future patronage.

"At this entertainment all the members of the society will perform; generally speaking, the exercise will be as follows:

"First. A salutatory address by one of the members, prepared for the occasion.

"Second. The delivery of extracts from orations, speeches and poems, and the performing of scenes from some of Shakespeare's, Goldsmith's and Molier's plays.

"Third. A valedictory address, prepared for the occasion and delivered by one of the members.

"It is also contemplated to desire the favor of the 'Lancaster Military Band' to attend and perform a few pieces of instrumental music, in order to give variety and interest to the entertainment. Although the exercises are in a considerable state of forwardness, yet such is the nature of circumstances that the time and place of performance cannot now be named. Seasonable notice will, however, be given by means of bills. The young gentlemen will endeavor to fix on a convenient time for their performances—one, if possible, that shall not interfere with parties or balls."

It is to be regretted that the society advertised its entertainment by bills (not one of which, so far as known, has survived) instead of using local papers, so we have now no means of learning when or where the exercises took place, or the names of those who participated.

In the Lancaster Journal of Friday, May 1st, 1812, appeared a statement, addressed to James Buchanan, Jasper Yeates Smith, George R. Hopkins, John Reynolds, Dr. Samuel Humes, Jasper

Yarmaker, George Louis Mayer, Henry Shippen, John Graeff and Molton C. Rogers, in which the trustees of the society presented to "the friends of literature and science" a plan for perpetuating the library of the association. Appended to the statement was an address which was as follows:

"Gentlemen:

"The youth associated under the denomination of the 'Juvenile Society of Lancaster,' respectfully beg leave to solicit your attention to the above-named little institution, and particularly to the library connected with it. By the advice of a friend, in whom they have much confidence, and with his assistance, they have associated as aforesaid, for the purpose of improving themselves in the difficult but important art of elocution and its kindred branches of literary pursuit. This is the immediate and most operative motive for their association. But they are told, and I believe it to be true, that the establishing of an early *habit* of applying to books and literary associations for that amusement which it is a part of their nature to require, will have a governing and salutary influence over the whole of their future conduct. They are told in a book belonging to their library, that 'honorable age is not that which is measured by numbers of years; but wisdom is the grey hair unto man, and an unspotted life is old age.' Their faith in this declaration assures them, that this *habit*, when it once assumes the dominion which they would willingly permit it to have over them, will preserve to them the *innocence of youth*, while it hastens the *maturity of age*. For these purposes, and in this manner having formed their association, the necessity of a library immediately suggested itself to them. A library, therefore, they determined to have. In pursuance of this resolution, means were immediately projected for its attainment. They will only state generally, at this time, that their library is now very respectable as to its number of volumes, but more so, as to the character of the works which it contains.

"Permit the undersigned, therefore, in the name of and in pursuance of a *unanimous vote* of the society, to request you gentlemen, (with such others as you shall think proper to add to your number) to constitute yourselves a board of 'trustees,' and to take the library into your own hands, and manage its concerns as you shall think proper; taking care always to secure to the 'Juvenile Society' all the privileges that may be proper for them to enjoy, or that may be necessary for their improvement in any department of education. It is also their expectation, that you gentlemen, (*or such of you as shall accept this invitation*), will devise some means of augmenting it and making it a public library, and, therefore, a public blessing. Should you, or a majority of you gentlemen, comply with this request and signify that acceptance

to the Juvenile Society, the librarians and treasurers are instructed to make out a statement of their several trusts, and communicate it to you, whereby you may be enabled, by knowing its present condition, to judge what will be more proper to be done hereafter. The library is now kept at the society's room at Mr. Bacon's school. Should no other room be previously obtained by the trustees, it will be removed to a convenient room in the house occupied by Mr. Cochran as a land office, on April 1st, where Mr. Bacon will gratuitously accommodate it, till the trustees shall see cause to remove it.

"Believing, gentlemen, that you will not think it any derogation from your characters as gentlemen or as men, to comply with this unanimous request of the youth of this society; and wishing you every honest pleasure and honorable profit that this world can afford, we are, gentlemen, your obedient humble servants."

The gentlemen to whom the communication was addressed accepted the trust confided to them, and proposed a plan for the establishment of a public library in Lancaster. They were led to hope that the old libraries (the Juliana and the Lancaster Library Company) which had heretofore been established in Lancaster, and which failed for want of careful management, would eventually be united to the library under contemplation. The trustees suggested calling it "The Lancaster Union Library." They proposed raising a fund for its increase by disposing of shares at twenty dollars each, to be paid in quarterly instalments of five dollars. The first payment was to be made at the time of subscribing. All donations which had hitherto been made to the Juvenile Society's library, were to be credited as part payment of shares, provided the donors became proprietors by subscribing for one or more shares of stock. A fundamental principle of the institution established at this time, required that books or apparatus belonging to the library could not be claimed by the librarian, or any other person, in payment of the expenses of the library.

In order to give the citizens of Lancaster an opportunity of exercising their liberality and showing their appreciation of this public-spirited effort, the following gentlemen were appointed a committee to obtain subscribers to "The Lancaster Union Library":

North-east Ward, George Louis Mayer, George B. Hopkins; North-west Ward, J. Reynolds, J. Slaymaker; South-east Ward, John Graeff, Henry Shippen; South-west Ward, Jasper Yeates Smith and Dr. Samuel Humes.

How much money was obtained by subscriptions is not now known. The library, however, seems to have been established, and served the people of this community for about six or seven years.

The references to the organization in the local papers are few, and little information concerning its activities can be obtained. The Lancaster Journal of Friday, February 3rd, 1815, contained an announcement that the trustees of the "Juvenile Library Society" were requested to meet at the house of Samuel Slaymaker on Friday, February 10th, on business relating to the society.

About four years later, the society discontinued its library. This was due to a lack of financial backing. Doubtless the people in the community did not respond to the calls for assistance or manifest that interest in the institution which it deserved. In the Lancaster Journal of Tuesday, October 5th, 1819, appeared an announcement in which "the members of the *late* Juvenile Society of Lancaster" were requested to meet on the evening of that day at seven o'clock in Mr. Schipper's school room, in Franklin College, which at that time was located in the fourth block of North Queen street, on the west side. Since the word "late" was used in the announcement, it is evident that the society's library was discontinued about this time or earlier.

The last reference to this worthy organization appeared in the Lancaster Journal of Friday, November 12th, 1819. The librarian, M. C. Clarkson, requested all persons having in their possession books belonging to the Juvenile Society of Lancaster to return them without delay.

Prevention of Horse-Racing and Gambling in 1812

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

LANCASTER borough was thrown into considerable excitement for a short time by a number of gamblers who had determined to run a horse-race on Tuesday, November 24th, 1812. As the advertisement of the race was not published in the newspapers but distributed by hand bills, it was not known to the magistrates until Saturday morning, November 21st. A notice was immediately issued to the citizens asking them to meet at five o'clock in the evening to consider the best means of enforcing the law against gambling and horse-racing.

At this meeting an attempt was made by those interested in the race to prevent an expression of public sentiment, but this was promptly defeated by the energetic and determined attitude of the better class of citizens. William Kirkpatrick was called to the chair, and John Hoff was appointed secretary. After the object of the meeting was stated by Messrs. Jenkins and Smith, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted: