

Public Dinner Tendered to George Bryan Porter, Governor of Michigan, by Citizens of Lancaster

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

GEORGE BRYAN PORTER was born in Norristown, Pa., February 9th, 1791; and died in Detroit, Mich., July 6th, 1834.

He was a son of General Andrew Porter, an officer in the Revolutionary War. David Rittenhouse Porter, governor of Pennsylvania from January 15th, 1839, to January 21st, 1845, was a brother.

George B. Porter was a graduate of the Law School at Litchfield, Conn., and with James Buchanan and Judge Molton C. Rogers, became eminent as a member of the Lancaster bar, to which he was admitted in 1813. In April, 1818, he was appointed prothonotary of Lancaster county, succeeding John Passmore. He was a leading Democratic politician, and was urged by the convention of his party in Lancaster county as a candidate for governor of Pennsylvania. In 1824, he was appointed adjutant-general of the State. Being an eloquent speaker, he was chosen to make the address at the reception to General Lafayette when he visited Lancaster in 1825. He was appointed as the attorney to defend Walter Franklin when impeached before the Senate of Pennsylvania; and in 1827, he was elected a member of the Pennsylvania Legislature.¹ In 1831 he was appointed by President Andrew Jackson governor of the territory of Michigan, the duties of which position he discharged until his death.²

When the news of Mr. Porter's appointment as governor of Michigan territory was received in Lancaster, a number of his personal and political friends, desirous of expressing their kindly feelings for him and their appreciation of the honor conferred upon him, resolved upon tendering to him a public dinner. The invitation was extended by a committee, through the following letter:

"Lancaster, Pa.,
"August 27th, 1831.

"Dear Sir:

"Your friends and fellow-citizens of the city and county of Lancaster, receive, with mingled emotions of pride and sorrow, the news of your appointment to the office of Governor of Michigan. Your elevation to this distinguished trust is the spontaneous act of the President, Andrew Jackson. The honor must be very dear to you. To your friends, it is peculiarly gratifying. By the true friends of General Jackson in Pennsylvania it is hailed as a matter

¹ Harris's Biographical History of Lancaster county, p. 448.

² Lancaster Journal, Friday, August 19th, 1831.

of triumph. Your worth and public services in the contest for Jackson, and for the purity of the administration of our government, gave you claims to this exalted office. We who have known you longest and known you best, have the proud and pleasing assurance that your virtues and talents eminently qualify you for the honest and honorable discharge of its duties. But honored as we are by your appointment we cannot but deeply feel your separation from us. We regard your sudden departure for the scene of your future usefulness as a public and private loss to our county. Your public spirit and your unremitted labors in advancing the agriculture, wealth and comfort of the 'garden' of our country, are known to us all, and will be long remembered by the citizens of Lancaster.

"Your constant devotion to the prosperity and happiness of our city makes your departure the loss of every family in it. But in our social circles, in the joys and endearments of life, we shall most feel and most mourn the absence of yourself and your family. On behalf of many of our fellow-citizens we ask you to partake with us of a dinner to be given at Parker's hotel on Tuesday next.

"With sentiments of the warmest regard for yourself and your family, we are sincerely your friends,

"Adam Reigart, Dr. N. W. Sample, Jno. Lightner, Fred'k. Haines, Samuel Boyd, Joel Lightner, Francis Boggs, William Jenkins, G. L. Mayer, Jno. Mathiot, Wm. Norris, Henry Keffer and J. R. Montgomery."

Mr. Porter replied as follows:

"Lancaster, Pa.,
"August 27th, 1831.

"Gentlemen:

"Your kind favor of this date has been received, asking, on behalf of many of my fellow-citizens, that I would partake with you of a dinner, to be given at Parker's hotel, on Tuesday next; accompanied with an expression of your sentiments towards myself and family which does me great honor, and calls forth the liveliest feeling of gratitude. To know that I have merited your good opinion is not only a pleasing reflection but is an ample recompense for all the toils and labors of the busy life which I have spent among you. Nay, painful as the separation from you will be, this distinguished mark of your confidence will afford consolation. Surrounded, as I soon shall be, with all the difficulties of the important office which has (so unexpectedly to me) been conferred, I cannot but call to my aid every faculty of the mind, and use the most strenuous exertions and untiring diligence, to merit the approbation of the people, when you '*who have known me longest and known me best,*' have so kindly vouched for me '*vir-*

tues and talents which eminently qualify me for the honest and honorable discharge of its duties.' That I may never forfeit this valuable *pledge*, shall be the constant endeavor of my future life.

"For the notice, too, which you are pleased to take of my public services rendered in the contest for principle which resulted in the election of our illustrious President, I can only return to you my thanks. It does not become *me* to speak of what little I have done in aiding *you* in that great struggle.

"In determining the question, whether I should accept the appointment of Governor of Michigan, tendered to me by 'our cherished President,' great difficulties presented themselves to my mind. It caused the most serious consideration. To remove from this '*Garden of America*,' to separate from the many warm personal friends, in whose society so large a portion of my life has been most agreeably spent, and to part with our family and numerous relatives, both near and dear to us, are sufficient to call forth the most poignant sorrow and regret. On the other hand, considerations, which in my mind had great weight and which are known to several of you, induced me to make the determination which will cause me to commence a new life among strangers. The duties of the office seem to demand my immediate attention, and will require me to repair forthwith to Detroit. I must, necessarily, take a few days to arrange my business, and as I cannot possibly get away from Lancaster before Wednesday next, I shall cheerfully accept your invitation to dinner on Tuesday.

"Permit me, in conclusion, to say that in removing to this pleasant, interesting and rapidly improving Territory, my attachment to the city and county of Lancaster will remain undiminished; that I shall ever be a *Pennsylvanian*, as we understand the term, in heart, and, I trust, in principle; and that it will, in my new situation, afford me pleasure at all times to reciprocate the warm hospitality, and return the kindness with which I have been treated since my first acquaintance with the citizens of the city and county of Lancaster. My fervent prayer will be for the prosperity and happiness of you all.

"Under feelings of sorrow and regret which I cannot describe, and recollections which can never be effaced from my memory, permit me to subscribe myself, with sentiments of unalterable regard, of respect and esteem,

"Your obliged and sincere friend,

"G. B. Porter."

"To Adam Reigart, Esq., and others."

On Tuesday, August 30th, 1831, a distinguished gathering sat down to a bountiful dinner at Parker's hotel. William Jenkins, Esq., was president, and Dr. Nathaniel W. Sample, vice-president.

After the cloth was removed, a number of toasts were drunk, one of which was as follows:

"General George B. Porter, our friend and fellow-citizen! For his merit—the only legitimate claim to office—he is placed by the President of the United States in the high and important station of Governor of Michigan. While we hail his appointment as an honor to Pennsylvania, we deeply feel his separation from us as a public and private loss to our city and county. May health and bliss be the lot of him and his family in their home of honor!"

This toast was greeted with nine cheers. After it was drunk, Mr. Porter returned his acknowledgments to the company for the honor done him. He recounted, in language warm from his heart, the various kindnesses he had received from citizens of the city and county of Lancaster during his residence for upwards of twenty years among them—kindnesses, he said, far in excess of any service he had rendered, and for which language was inadequate to express his appreciation. He concluded by proposing the following sentiment:

"The City and County of Lancaster, emphatically called the Garden of America! Her citizens enjoy an enviable reputation; with them, industry, perseverance and integrity receive their reward. It is but to know them to learn that their kindness and hospitality are unbounded."

A number of volunteers, expressive of the kindest feelings for, and highly complimentary to, the distinguished guest were then offered and drunk, after which the company separated.

The Lancaster Journal of Friday, September 2nd, 1831, contained the following:

"Governor Porter and family left this city yesterday for Michigan. He goes to Detroit by the way of Philadelphia and New York."

The Lancaster Journal of Friday, November 18th, 1831, contained the following:

"Gen. G. B. Porter, Governor of the Territory of Michigan, returned to this city with his family on Sunday evening last, from Detroit. On his arrival at Pittsburgh, on the 5th instant, a public dinner was tendered to him by a number of his friends, which, on account of his pressing engagements, he declined accepting."

Governor Porter arrived in Lancaster from Washington, D. C., on Wednesday, February 15th, 1832. His nomination as Governor of Michigan was confirmed by the Senate without opposition.³

The Lancaster Journal of Friday, April 13th, 1832, contained the following:

"Governor Porter was last week, when on his way to Michigan, taken very ill at Harrisburg. He is now, however, we are pleased

³ Lancaster Journal, Friday, February 17th, 1832.

to learn, somewhat better, but will not, we presume, be able to proceed on his journey for some weeks."

He recovered, and lived more than two years longer. The Union of Tuesday, July 22nd, 1834, contained the following obituary:

"Died, on the 6th of the present month, at Detroit, General George B. Porter, Governor of the Territory of Michigan. His disease, we have understood, was a virulent bilious fever, which terminated his existence in four days from the time he was attacked. In the prime of life, and in the vigor of manhood, and with the prospect of many years of prosperity and usefulness, he has been taken from a large and affectionate family, to whom he was devoted by the strongest ties which his warm and generous feelings invariably manifested. The deceased was an active and distinguished member of the bar of Lancaster county; and all who knew him, will recollect the zeal, fidelity and indefatigable exertions which he brought into requisition in the performance of his professional duties. In the various official stations with which he has been honored, he was distinguished by that determined spirit to perform his duties, for which he was always ready to sacrifice, in the accomplishment of his object, both his health and personal comfort. Every manifestation of respect and personal regard was exhibited at his funeral. All the civil, military and naval officers, with a large concourse of citizens, testified the high sense of the merits of the deceased, and their deep affliction at so sudden and unexpected a loss. Minute guns were fired, and the stores and shops closed during the time of his funeral.

"When the news reached Lancaster of the death of our late distinguished fellow-citizen, there appeared to be but one sentiment of deep and melancholy regret to pervade the whole community."

Countess La Rochefoucault in Lancaster

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

The Lancaster Journal of Friday, July 20th, 1832, contained the following interesting news item:

"We are requested to state that the Countess La Rochefoucault passed through this city on the 9th instant, on her way to visit the Rev. Mr. (formerly Prince) Gallitzen, in Cambria county. This lady is said to be well known in the District of Columbia as she distributes her great wealth for charitable purposes."