

Public Dinner Declined by James Buchanan

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

ON Monday evening, March 3rd, 1828, the Hon. James Buchanan, who represented this district in the Congress of the United States, arrived in Lancaster for a short stay.¹ A number of his friends met at Stehman's tavern on the day after his arrival, appointed a committee, and sent to him the following invitation:

"Lancaster, Pa.,
"March 4th, 1828.

"Sir:

"We have been appointed a committee on behalf of many of your constituents in the city of Lancaster, to present to you their invitation, and to express their hope that you will favor them with your company at a dinner intended to be given on Friday next, at Mr. Stehman's [tavern]. They anticipate with pleasure your presence on that occasion, intended as a public expression of their entire approbation of your conduct as their representative, and especially of your uniform and decided course in the cause of Gen. Andrew Jackson, the candidate of the people for the next presidency. In this hope let them not be disappointed; for if aught can add to the estimation in which they hold this distinguished individual, it is the circumstance, that his elevation to the chief magistracy of the Union is the earnest desire of the best and greatest men of the nation, and among them, of you, their long tried and faithful servant.

"With sentiments of the highest consideration and esteem, we are, sir, your friends and fellow-citizens,

"Nathaniel Lightner,
"John Reynolds,
"George Louis Mayer,
"John R. Montgomery,
"Henry Rogers,
"John Getz."

"To Hon. James Buchanan."

Mr. Buchanan sent the following reply:

"Lancaster, Pa.,
"March 4th, 1828.

"Gentlemen:

"I have this moment received your invitation, 'in behalf of many of my constituents in the city of Lancaster,' to attend a public dinner, to be given on Friday next, at Mr. Stehman's. I do not desire to conceal the sentiments of gratitude with which I received

¹ Lancaster Intelligencer, Tuesday, March 11th, 1828.

this invitation. I am truly sorry I cannot accept it with propriety. Professional and private business of an imperative character has compelled me, at this time, to visit Lancaster for a few days. I arrived here last night, and shall return to the performance of my public duties by the stage to-morrow, or, at furthest, on Friday. If I were to accept your invitation, my purpose would be defeated, and that, too, at a period of the session when we may daily expect the tariff to be taken up for consideration by the House of Representatives.

"I feel justly sensible of the great importance of that bill, in all its branches, to the people of the United States. I cannot forbear to notice one of its features, which, should it obtain the approbation of Congress, will be of incalculable advantage to the farmers of this Congressional district, as well as to those of all the grain growing states of the Union. If the importation of foreign spirits, and of the foreign material from which domestic spirits are distilled, shall be in any considerable degree prevented, as I have no doubt it will, by the imposition of protecting duties upon foreign spirits and molasses, the domestic demand for corn and rye will be immensely increased. This circumstance will tend greatly to encourage the agricultural interest, which, after all, is the primary interest of the country. I sincerely hope that the politics of the day may not be blended with the discussion of the tariff, as to endanger its passage. It never ought to, and I trust it never will, in any aspect which it may assume, become a party question.

"I cannot consent to indulge myself in a pleasure, however grateful it would be to my own feelings, which might, even by possibility, be purchased at the expense of a vote in any stage of the tariff bill.

"In regard to the presidential election, to which you have alluded, my sentiments have been too long and too well known to you, to require a repetition. They differ from those of a number of my most respectable constituents and personal friends; but whilst I cheerfully accord to them the privilege of every freeman—to think and to act upon this subject according to the dictates of his own conscience—I shall exercise the same right, and shall ever fearlessly maintain, upon all proper occasions, the honest preference which I feel in favor of the election of Andrew Jackson, who has been truly and emphatically styled 'The People's Candidate.'

"With sentiments of the highest respect, I remain your friend,
"James Buchanan."

"To Nathaniel Lightner, John Reynolds, George Musser, Geo. Louis Mayer, John R. Montgomery, Henry Rogers and John Getz, Esquires."