

The Infant School Society of Lancaster

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

IN September, 1831, the Infant School Society of Lancaster was organized; and a room for the sessions of the school was secured in the Lancaster County Academy building,¹ which stood on the east side of North Lime street, near Orange. In this room, on the ninth of January, 1832, a model school was opened, with 44 scholars.² The number was soon increased to 120.

This school became so successful and prosperous that the board of managers determined to open a second one, to which children would be admitted at reduced prices or according to the ability of parents to pay. The prompt and generous offer by the trustees of Franklin college of a large room in its building,³ which stood on the west side of North Queen street, in the fifth block, enabled the managers in a short time to complete the necessary arrangements for the new enterprise.⁴ On the first of May, 1832, this

¹ The Lancaster County academy was erected in 1827, on a lot of ground which measured 68 feet on Orange street and 245 on Lime street. On May 15th, 1839, by an act of the Legislature, the building and grounds were conveyed to the trustees of Franklin college. The latter institution occupied the building until it was sold at public auction, in December, 1855. Now divided into four dwellings, the old house is still standing at 109-115 North Lime street.

² The Lancaster Journal, of Friday, February 10th, 1832, contained the following announcement:

"The public is respectfully informed that on Wednesday morning, the 15th instant, at 10 o'clock, and every alternate Wednesday afterwards, the infant School will be open to visitors.

"By order of the Board,

"E. J. Reigart, Secretary,"

³ The venerable building in which the second school of the Society was opened in May, 1832, is still standing in the fifth block of North Queen street, on the west side. It was known originally as "The Store House," and was built by the State of Pennsylvania at an early period of the Revolutionary War, for the housing of military supplies. February 27th, 1788, an act was passed by the Legislature of Pennsylvania "vesting the public store house and two lots of ground in the borough of Lancaster, to the trustees of Franklin college, for the use of the said institution." The college occupied the building for nearly fifty years. September 17th, 1840, it was sold to John S. Gable. Subsequently, it was converted into six dwelling houses (438-48 North Queen street). The old building is thus used at the present time.

⁴ The Lancaster Journal, of Friday, April 20th, 1832, contained the following notice:

"Infant School No. 2, will be opened in the south room of Franklin college on Tuesday, May 1st. One or more of the managers will attend every Monday morning for the purpose of receiving scholars."

second school was opened, and was soon in successful operation, with nearly 100 children in attendance.⁵

In the Lancaster Journal of Friday, October 5th, 1832, appeared a report of the Society, as follows:

"The managers of the Infant School Society of Lancaster feel it a duty incumbent on them, on the anniversary of their first meeting, to present to the Society and Christian public a condensed statement of the proceedings of the past year; and in view of which, they would raise their hands in gratitude to God that He has so abundantly crowned their efforts with success.

"The board has felt that a weight of responsibility rested upon them in the commencement of this system of education; their experience, and the enterprise being new, gave rise to many difficulties to encounter, which, at first sight, appeared discouraging; many of these difficulties, and the prejudices consequent upon the origin of such institutions, have, happily, been overcome, and we may truly exclaim, not by our 'might' nor by our 'power' has this been accomplished, but by the 'might' and 'power' of Him who alone can reach the hearts of the children of men!

"It is unnecessary to advert to the utility and advantages arising from this method of communicating instruction to the infant mind, as it is fast gaining ground in the estimation of an enlightened people; and information is only wanted to change its violent opposers to those of its firm supporters. Many instances have occurred in which the most confirmed prejudices have been removed by only one visit to the institution—an institution which disclaims all feelings of sectarianism. How delightful thus to witness Christians of all denominations forgetting the little distinctions that divide them, and uniting in the simple yet efficient plan of conveying knowledge to the youthful understanding; we have, indeed, encouragement to animate our perseverance, and would appeal, with confidence, to a generous community to uphold us in our laudable endeavors. The Society only awaits the encouragement of its fellow citizens, by contributions or subscriptions, to enable it to establish more schools on the plan of the latter,—as one for white and one for colored children are very much needed in the southern district of the city. We sincerely believe that, if

⁵ The Lancaster Journal, of Friday, June 15th, 1832, contained the following:

"During the summer months the hours of tuition in the Infant Schools will be from 8 to 11 A. M. and from 2 to 4 P. M. Visitors will be admitted at school No. 1, in Orange street, on the first Wednesday, and at school No. 2, in North Queen street, on the third Wednesday in every month, from 9 to 11 in the forenoon, making the visiting days in each school once a month. Strangers desirous of seeing the school will be admitted at any time upon application to one of the managers."

carried into effect, through the blessing of God, this may remove the youthful vagrants that now throng our streets, from under the native influence of depraved example to the healthful influence of instructions fraught upon the principles of morality, religion and virtue."

In the Lancaster Journal appeared the first annual report of Henrietta Reigart, treasurer of the Society. The statement is as follows:

DR.

"Sept. 4, 1832.	To cash received from benefactors and life mem- bers,	\$ 90.00
	Subscriptions and donations,	104.50
	Tuition received during the past year,	253.60%
	Fines from the managers,	10.00
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		\$458.10¾"

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"Sept. 4, 1832.	Cash paid for sundry orders to the teachers dur- ing the past year,	\$180.75
	Sundry orders for lumber, carpenters' work, fuel, etc.,	187.95¾
	Balance in hands of treasurer,	89.40
		<hr/>
		\$458.10¾"

The Lancaster Journal of Friday, August 17th, 1832, announced that "at early candle light," on Saturday, August 18th, the Rev. Mr. Carll, of Philadelphia, would deliver a lecture in Trinity Lutheran church, Lancaster, on the advantages to be derived from infant school instruction.

The Lancaster Examiner of Thursday, January 17th, 1833, contained an advertisement, a part of which is as follows:

"The managers of the Infant School of Lancaster, having had application made to them from several of the neighboring towns for infant school teachers, and believing that more schools would be established if teachers acquainted with the system could be more readily procured, give notice that persons who wish to qualify themselves for teachers, will be admitted gratuitously into the model school. Application is to be made to the managers."

Then follows an extract from a Philadelphia paper, pointing out the qualifications desirable in an infant school teacher.

In the Lancaster Journal of Friday, April 12th, 1833, appeared a lengthy communication, addressed to John Reynolds, editor. It dealt with the science of education, the writer stating that posterity would acknowledge its indebtedness to Pestalozzi for early movements in the revolution of learning. A portion of the article is as follows:

"The citizens of Lancaster have an opportunity of witnessing the very great benefits derivable from the operation of the 'Infant School System'; and if intelligent parents have not availed themselves of the opportunity thus afforded, it can only be accounted for by supposing them too indifferent, or too prepossessed, to take that care which none should hold themselves excused from exercising in behalf of beings in whose existence they have had an agency. It would scarcely be believed that an observing, unprejudiced person would spend a session in one of the institutions of this place without feeling gratified to see that while infants think they are playing they are acquiring useful knowledge."

Amos Gilbert, the author of this communication and a teacher of note, contributed extended articles on education to the four succeeding issues of this paper.

The Lancaster Journal of Friday, September 6th, 1833, contained the second annual report of the Infant School Society of Lancaster.⁶ It is as follows:

"The board of managers, in laying before the Society their second annual report, feel that they have much for which to be thankful to the great Giver of every good and perfect gift, in the many favors experienced by them during the past year; particularly in disposing the minds of our benefactors to assist us in our late difficulties, whereby we have been animated with fresh hope that He, whose cause, we trust, we are endeavoring to advance, and in whose hands are the hearts of all men, will continue to smile upon our feeble efforts, so that we may still find, when discouragements arise, those willing to aid us.

"From the report of the treasurer, it will appear that the funds raised by subscription during the past year have fallen short of the sum necessary to meet the current expenses. In order to increase our means, a sale of fancy articles was held,⁷ the net proceeds of which amounted to \$275.00; of this sum \$75.00 were sufficient to pay the debts then contracted, and the remaining \$200.00 were invested in stock at 6 per cent interest.

⁶ The Lancaster Journal, of Friday, September 20th, 1833, contained the following notice:

"The subscribers to the Infant School are requested to attend a meeting to be held at the model school room on Monday, September 22nd, at 4:30 P. M. Agreeably to the constitution, the report of the managers for the past year will then be read and managers chosen for the succeeding year."

⁷ The Lancaster Journal, of Friday, April 26th, 1833, contained the following:

"An exhibition and sale of useful and fancy articles will be held in the Infant School room at the academy on Wednesday, the first of May, to open at 10 o'clock in the morning and continue open until 10 o'clock in the evening. The proceeds of the sale are intended for the benefit of the Infant School Society of Lancaster. The patronage of their friends and the public is solicited. Admittance 12½ cents."

"In consequence of this state of its affairs, the managers have not thought it expedient to establish other schools during the past year, as they had anticipated; but the system, as it becomes better understood, is gradually gaining friends, and they feel a hope that, in the course of another year, circumstances will warrant their opening an additional school in a different section of the city; and as they are convinced that schools of this kind, under proper regulations, are a blessing to the community, they would earnestly call upon the Society to cooperate with the managers in endeavoring to increase their means so as to carry it into effect as soon as possible.

"The two schools now in operation are in a flourishing condition; the children show the greatest attachment to their instructors; and evince, in many instances, their desire to become acquainted with the things belonging to their eternal welfare; and the managers assure their friends that this is the great object of their endeavors.

"It is a rule of the school that a portion of the Holy Scriptures should be read and illustrated to them daily, and we hope that the seed thus sown in the hearts of these little ones, will, in many of them, spring up, flourish and bring forth fruits; and though in others it may appear to be choked for a time, yet they trust that it will be, like bread cast upon the waters, found after many days.

"As they have been called upon during the year to mourn the death of one of their little school-mates, their minds have realized the uncertainty of life even to the young. Many very interesting anecdotes of the children could be related to prove how well they understand the lessons taught them, and the very pleasing manner in which they apply texts of Scripture to regulate their conduct in their intercourse with each other, but the fear of exciting feelings which we endeavor to banish from our schools, forbids it. We would, therefore, invite those interested to visit the schools and question the children upon any of the lessons taught them, and we think they would be surprised at the progress and attainments they have made in the various branches in which they have been instructed. In the female department of both schools great attention is paid to needle work, and several articles made by the children have been sold; while the boys have made some proficiency in arithmetic and in writing on slates. The managers have given public notice that any females desirous of qualifying themselves as a teacher, will receive gratuitous instruction in the model school. One young lady has availed herself of the offer.

"Since our last report, we have been called to the mournful duty of following to the grave one of our warmest friends, the late

Dr. Robert Moore.⁸ At the opening of our schools he proffered his services as physician of the board; and during the remainder of his exemplary life he was most active and useful in the cause. May we feel his sudden removal in the prime of life, and in the midst of his usefulness, as a solemn warning to us to be diligent and work while it is day!"

Appended to this report is the following second annual statement of the treasurer, Henrietta Reigart, from September 4th, 1832, to September 1st, 1833:

DR.

"Balance from 1832,	\$ 89.40
To cash from tuition model school,	301.89
" " " " second school,	81.31
" " " subscriptions and donations,	63.34
" " " managers fines,	6.18
" " " charity box,	2.25
" " " avails of a sale of useful and fancy articles,	70.00
" " " further sale,	4.92
" " " Juvenile Society,	5.00
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	\$624.29"

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"Paid for teachers salaries,	\$524.59
" " books, slates, sewing materials, etc.,	20.61
" " coal, sawing, splitting, etc.,	50.37½
" " cleaning rooms, making fires, etc.,	16.46
" " moving stoves, mending locks, etc.,	4.12½
" " incidental expenses,	7.84
Balance in hands of treasurer,29
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	\$624.29"

The Lancaster Journal of Friday, May 16th, 1834, contained the following notice:

"THE WANDERING PIPER.

"The undersigned directors of the Infant School Society of Lancaster, return their thanks, in behalf of said institution, to 'the Wandering Piper', for the receipt of thirteen dollars and seventy-three cents, presented by him for the benefit of the said Society.

"Ann E. Franklin,
"Ann C. Hall."

It is to be regretted that we do not have the name of this generous musician, and that the local papers from which this in-

⁸ Dr. Robert Moore died December 31st, 1832, in the 38th year of his age.

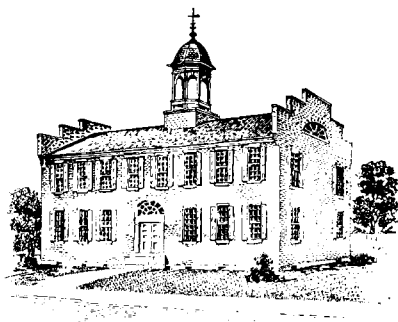
formation was obtained do not contain the names of the officers, managers, directors and teachers of the Infant School Society of Lancaster, together with those of the contributors, as this information would be of value and interest. Outside of Henrietta Reigart, Ann E. Franklin and Ann C. Hall, whose names appear in the papers quoted, we have no means of knowing who were active in the work of this benevolent institution.⁹ We do not know how long the organization continued to exist, as subsequent issues of our local papers do not contain any references to it, and all records of the schools seem to be hopelessly lost. We are sure, however, from the meagre information we have been able to give in this article, that a blessed work for the Master and humanity was carried forward. We are grateful to these noble, self-sacrificing people of our town who nearly a century ago so generously gave of themselves and their means to the uplift of little children. Will those who write of us a hundred years from now have similar stories to relate of our contributions to the betterment of humanity?

⁹ The name of Mrs. P. W. Reigart should be included in this list as it was appended to a notice which appeared in the Lancaster Journal of Friday, January 6th, 1832. It is as follows:

"Notice is hereby given that the first session of the first Infant School of this city will commence on Monday the 9th instant at 9 o'clock, A. M. Two of the managers will regularly attend every Monday morning for the admission of pupils. Children received from 2 to 8 years of age. No visitors will be admitted till the school has been in operation at least one month. Terms \$1.50 per quarter.

"By order of the board.

"Mrs. P. W. Reigart, Secretary."



THE LANCASTER COUNTY ACADEMY

The Infant School was opened in this building on January 9th, 1832

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 Frederic Worner.

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 Church schools--Pennsylvania--Lancaster--History.

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Institution E-mail Address