THE TWENTY-SECOND ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION HELD AT LANCASTER,
OCTOBER 23 AND 24, 1953

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THE twenty-second annual convention of the Pennsylvania Historical Association was certainly one of the most successful gatherings in its history. The hospitality of the host institution, Franklin and Marshall College, was most gracious; the sleeping and eating accommodations were most acceptable; and the convention program was most stimulating. Among the eighty historians who were present, the consensus was that a better convention could not have been contemplated.

The convention opened with a luncheon meeting on Friday at which President Theodore A. Distler of Franklin and Marshall welcomed the assembled guests and described in brief and witty fashion the attempts of Franklin and Marshall College (which this year is celebrating the centennial of the united college) to provide a sound liberal education for its students. Mr. Samuel C. Slaymaker, President of the Buchanan Foundation, then briefly related the history of Wheatland, President Buchanan’s Lancaster home, and discussed the attempts of the Foundation to establish it as a national shrine. Following Mr. Slaymaker, Mr. George L. Heiges, President of the Lancaster County Historical Society, paid tribute to the 67 years of the Society’s existence and told of the many ways the Society has helped Lancaster County “remember” her rich historical heritage. In a final short luncheon speech, Dr. J. William Frey of the Franklin & Marshall Pennsylvania Dutch Folklore Center, spoke of the importance of folklore to history and described the work of the Center in acquiring and disseminating more knowledge of Pennsylvania folklore.

With this auspicious beginning, the convention proceeded to the Friday afternoon general session at which two papers were
read. Dr. Edwin B. Bronner of Temple University delivered the first, entitled "The Failure of the Holy Experiment." In his paper, Dr. Bronner analyzed Penn's difficulty with his colonists from 1684 to 1699 and concluded that, although the founding of Pennsylvania and its subsequent growth represented an unqualified political success, as an "Holy Experiment" it was a dismal failure. Dr. Bronner expressed the belief that this failure might not have been so complete had Penn been able to spend more time in the colony. The second paper, "Industry Comes to the Frontier," was given by Dr. Carlton O. Wittlinger of Messiah College. Dr. Wittlinger carefully traced the development of industry on the frontier, and in Lancaster County in particular, from 1710 to 1840. While dealing with such activities as distilling, grain and lumber milling leather-making, and textile and charcoal iron manufacturing, his paper underscored the fact that most industry during this period was based largely on agriculture, agriculture itself being the major industry.

The remainder of the afternoon was spent at the home of James Buchanan, Pennsylvania's only president and the nation's only bachelor president. Wheatland is but a few minutes ride from the Franklin and Marshall campus and is a delightful early 19th century structure packed with the original furniture and equipment of the Buchanan era. The members of the Association were most graciously received and conducted through the premises by the Junior League ladies of Lancaster. Before leaving, tea was served to those attending by the ladies of the Lancaster County Historical Society.

More than one hundred persons who attended the annual banquet on Friday evening were entranced by the magnificent address of Dr. Philip S. Klein on "James Buchanan and Ann Coleman." Dr. Klein's paper was actually the biography of an ill-fated love affair, and it sought to sweep away the myths and unfounded rumors surrounding Ann Coleman's premature death. The affair was beautifully pieced together in the light of new evidence with emphasis on the personalities involved illuminatingly portrayed against the backdrop of Lancaster society in 1819. Dr. Klein expressed the belief the key to Ann's death lay in the peculiar mixture of Buchanan's pride, father Coleman's fortune, and Ann's extreme jealousy and despondency. The speaker
then conjectured why it was Buchanan never married. The Coleman affair, he concluded, was only one factor among many. Nonetheless, Dr. Klein went on to say that the Coleman episode was extremely significant because it clearly illustrated even at that early date the basic strengths and weaknesses of Buchanan's character—strengths and weaknesses which became glaringly apparent during the Secession Crisis of 1860-61.

At the business meeting held on Saturday morning the following action was taken: Dr. R. W. Cordier was elected Vice-President to serve from 1953 to 1956; Drs. R. J. Ferguson, J. Orin Oliphant, W. J. Bell, and Philip S. Klein were elected to Council to serve from 1953 to 1956; Dr. Robert K. Murray was elected Secretary to fill the unexpired term of Dr. Philip S. Klein to 1954; the Treasurer reported on the financial condition of the Association and the Secretary reported on the membership which this past year has reached 1,000; Dr. Rosenberger of the Special Publications Committee reported that the committee hopes to have in print by next fall the three pamphlets agreed upon last year; Dr. Bining on the iron and steel industry, Dr. Miller on the petroleum industry, and Dr. Billinger on the coal industry; Dr. Wallace reported for the magazine stating that it was the continued desire of the editorial staff to satisfy the interests of the high schools, the profession, and the general public; the meeting then approved the Wheatland resolution for a commemorative postage stamp in recognition of this shrine; an amendment to the Constitution which appeared in the July issue of Pennsylvania History was also approved; Dr. Oliphant reported resolutions of thanks to our various hosts, to the program and local arrangement committees and to the Lancaster press for its coverage of the convention; a resolution was also passed congratulating Franklin and Marshall College upon the centennial of the united college; finally, it was agreed to accept the invitation of the Indiana State Teachers College, Indiana, Pennsylvania, to act as host to the Association at its meeting in 1954. The date of this meeting was set for October 22 and 23.

At the general session on Saturday morning three papers were read. Dr. Nicholas B. Wainwright of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania spoke on “George Croghan and the Indian Uprising of 1747.” The paper clearly portrayed George Croghan not only
as one of Pennsylvania's leading Indian traders, but also as a clever Indian diplomatist and instigator of much Indian-French friction. Dr. Wainwright concluded that, although all the facts are not known, Croghan played no small role in the Indian uprising against the French in 1747. The second paper was delivered by Dr. John K. Mahon of the Historical Department of the U. S.
Army. In dealing with the subject, "Pennsylvania and the Beginning of the U. S. Army," Dr. Mahon ably presented the difficult problem of securing agreement among the states on the creation of a peacetime federal army and clearly proved Pennsylvania's interest in this matter. Dr. Mahon concluded that Pennsylvania was one of the most ardent supporters of a regular army and contributed the commanding officer as well as a majority of the men in the first peacetime force. Indeed, the speaker stated that over seventy percent of the first soldiers in the American Army of 1784 were Pennsylvanians. Mr. Thomas R. Adams, Curator of Rare Books, University of Pennsylvania, was the final speaker on the morning program. Speaking on the subject, "The Samuel J. Randall Papers," Mr. Adams related through what peculiar circumstances the University of Pennsylvania acquired this collection. He then urged Pennsylvania historians to avail themselves of these papers, since Randall was an outstanding Democratic leader in Pennsylvania during the post-Civil War period. The speaker suggested that among other things these papers could serve as the basis for an important biography, an aid to the study of the late 19th century Democratic party, and a guide in any analysis of party patronage during this period.

At the luncheon meeting on Saturday, Dr. Ernest P. Earnest, Chairman of the English Department, Temple University, delivered a most stimulating address on "Academic Procession: The American College, 1636-1953." In reality, Dr. Earnest's remarks represented conclusions contained in a book on this subject which is to be released this winter. His main thesis is that the history of the American college is a story of the conflict between tradition and the changing needs of an expanding dynamic society. In this framework, Dr. Earnest attacked the authoritarian, traditional, classical curriculum and its abysmal lack of application to the needs of a growing American society. He further charged that college faculties, not college presidents or administrators, usually formed the chief barrier to greater application and educational progress. Indeed, the speaker stated that, over the years, college presidents, laymen, and students were more responsible for educational progress than the professional educator. The former were moving forward, said the speaker, while the latter were holding back. While some might not agree with Dr. Earnest, all
would have to admit his views were both interesting and provocative.

The final general session on Saturday afternoon was opened by Mr. E. Gordon Alderfer of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences. Mr. Alderfer spoke on the theme, "Reflections of a County Historian," and described the problems confronting the local historian in reconstructing local history. He maintained the historian not only should impart to history the three standard dimensions of breadth, height, and depth, but also should employ yet a fourth dimension which he called intuition. The historian, he said, must be in tune with what he is attempting to describe or observe; he must somehow enter the stream of consciousness which places him more fully in the historical continuum. Following Mr. Alderfer was Mr. Dennis C. Kurjack of the Independence National Historical Park of Philadelphia, who gave a paper entitled, "The Evolution of a Shrine." In this paper, Mr. Kurjack showed how an old abandoned state house became the Independence Hall shrine of the present day. The speaker concluded by demonstrating how, over a period of 150 years, this hall became something more than just a building—it became the embodiment of the American independent spirit. The final speaker, Dr. Robert L. Bloom of Gettysburg College, spoke on the topic, "Edward A. Van Valkenburg and the Philadelphia North American." Edward Van Valkenburg was a crusading Philadelphia newspaper man during the Progressive era, managing the North American which was owned by Tom Wanamaker, son of the famous John Wanamaker. Dr. Bloom described Van Valkenburg's constant fight against the machine in Pennsylvania, and concluded that while Van Valkenburg was nominally a Republican he was actually an Independent. In 1912, he strongly supported Theodore Roosevelt and the Bull Moose ticket. By the time of Theodore Roosevelt's death, however, Van Valkenburg began to lose his crusading zeal and by 1924 was a conservative in the best tradition of the times. It was in that year that he resigned his post on the North American and died eight years later of heart disease.

The final event on the convention program was a tour of the North Museum and Planetarium which was recently built on the Franklin and Marshall campus. Mr. Howard Feather, Director
of Astronomy and Associate Curator of the Museum, concluded the tour with a Planetarium demonstration showing the stars as they appear at this time of the year over Lancaster. In addition, he gave the audience a spaceman's view of the earth 50,000 miles away. To those attending it was a most rewarding experience.

Thus ended the annual meeting of 1953. To this reporter the Planetarium show was a fitting conclusion to a wonderful historical convention. As one sat and contemplated the vast universe contained in the dome of the North Museum, one could not help feeling that here was history writ large in infinite proportions and yet in minute detail. Here was history not only in two, three, or four dimensions, but history in its ultimate and perfect nth dimension.