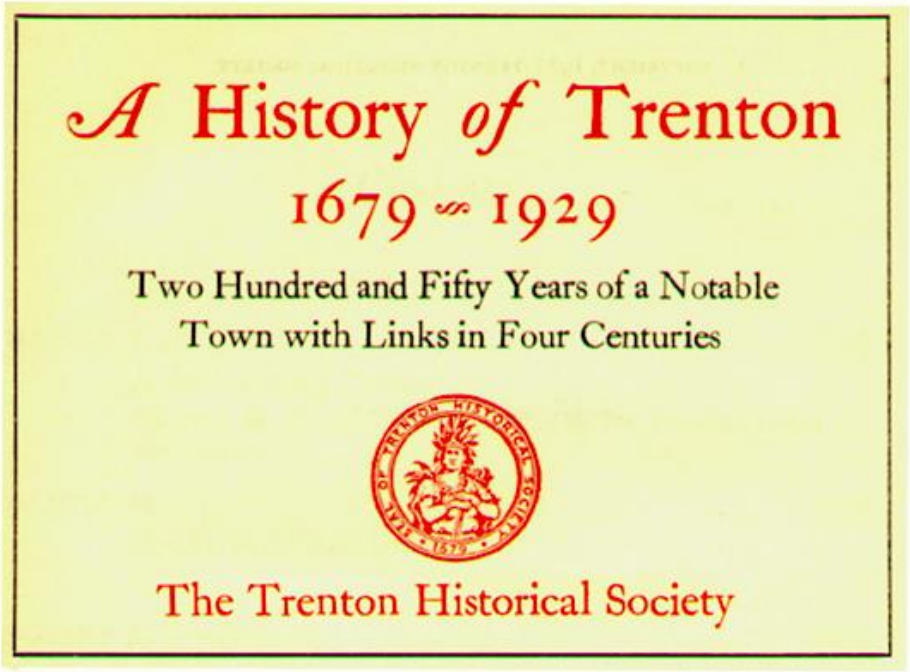

CHAPTER IV

Some Notable Events of Post-Revolutionary Times

BY MARY J. MESSLER

I. Proposal to Make Trenton the Federal Capital

AFTER a few years of comparative quiet, following the the Battles of Trenton in 1776 and 1777, Trenton again came into prominence in 1783, due to the controversy over the location of the federal capital. The part that Trenton played in that controversy has been carefully studied and presented by Dr. Hall in his *History of the Presbyterian Church in Trenton* and by Dr. Godfrey in his history of the Mechanics Bank, and forms a most interesting episode in the history of the city. [1]

[1] The writer is indebted to Dr. Godfrey's account for several citations from the *Papers of the Continental Congress*. The other quotations used throughout the chapter have been made directly from the sources quoted.

THE PERIPATETIC CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

During the Revolution, the Continental Congress had met in various places, depending upon the fortunes of the war and the wishes of its members. In June 1783, when the Congress was sitting at Philadelphia, a number of the non-commissioned officers and soldiers of the Pennsylvania

Line, exasperated by the delays in settling their claims, set out for Philadelphia to lay the matter before the authorities and demand a redress of their grievances and a settlement of their accounts. The State of Pennsylvania took no action in calling out the militia, and on the twenty-first of June a party of about thirty armed men marched to the State House where the Executive Council was in session. A message was sent in to that body that if the demands of the mutineers were denied, they would let the soldiers in upon the Council. The members of the Council rejected the terms proposed, but a special meeting of Congress was immediately called to determine upon a course of action. It was late in the day before a quorum could be obtained, and by that time the mutineers numbered some three hundred men. The members of Congress were panic-stricken, and immediately adopted a resolution declaring that they had been grossly insulted and authorizing President Elias Boudinot "to summon the members of Congress to meet on Thursday next at Trenton or Princeton in New Jersey in order that further and more effectual measures may be taken for suppressing the present revolt and maintaining the dignity and authority of the United States."[2]

[2] *New Jersey Gazette*, July 9, 1783.

No sooner had Vice-President John Cox [3] of the New Jersey State Council received President Boudinot's letter of the twenty-third, informing him of this decision of Congress, than he "summoned a meeting of the inhabitants of Trenton and the vicinity; who being justly alarmed at the daring insult offered to the Supreme Government of the American Union, and being desirous of testifying their zeal in support of the dignity and privileges of Congress," immediately passed the following resolutions: [4]

At a meeting of the inhabitants of Trenton, and vicinity, at the French Arms [5] on Tuesday the 24th June, 1783.

Having been informed, from undoubted authority, that a most gross and daring insult has been offered to Congress, the Supreme Government of the American Union, by a number of lawless people in arms, assembled at the State-House in Philadelphia on Saturday last:

Resolved unanimously, That we think it our immediate duty to express our resentment and indignation at so flagitous a proceeding.

Resolved unanimously, That we look upon tyranny and anarchy with equal abhorrence; and as we have, at the risque of everything, opposed the former, we are determined, at the same risque, not to be wanting in our efforts to suppress the latter, on whatever occasion or under whatever form it may present itself.

Resolved unanimously, That we consider the support of civil government and the majesty of the laws as one of the first of social duties, and riotous citizens who disturb the publick order and violate the dignity of the Union as the worst of enemies.

Resolved unanimously, That we feel the utmost cheerfulness in pledging our lives and fortunes to the government under which we live, in whatever way our services may be required, whether in resisting foreign invasion or quelling intestine tumults.

Resolved unanimously, That we would deem ourselves highly honored by the presence of Congress, and by an opportunity of testifying our zeal in support of their dignity and privileges, should they in their wisdom, think proper to adjourn to, or fix their residence in this State.

Signed by order and in behalf of the inhabitants,

JOHN COX

DAVID BREARLEY

PHILEMON DICKINSON

SAML TUCKER

WM. C. HOUSTON

SAM. W. STOCKTON

Committee.

3 John Cox was Lieutenant Colonel, Philadelphia Associators, and took part in the expedition which resulted in the Battle of Trenton. General Stryker, in his account of Washington's reception in 1789, thus describes the event: "Colonel Cadwalader immediately sent out scouts and adopted such a course as the information gained might warrant. Adjutant General Joseph Reed with Lieutenant Colonel John Cox and Major Joseph Cowperthwaite went towards Bordentown in search of the Hessian pickets, but of course found their post deserted."

In 1781-82 Cox was a member of the Legislative Council. He was also a prominent churchman and a member of the vestry of St. Michael's Church 1785-90. Before the Revolution, John Cox was a merchant in Philadelphia, but he removed to Trenton to improve the condition of his health. In 1790 he returned to Philadelphia and died there April 28, 1793. He was a man of highest character and abilities and his home at "Bloomsbury" was the scene of numerous social functions. His wife and two of his daughters participated in the reception to Washington in 1789. See Schuyler, *History of St. Michael's Church*, p. 91.

4 New Jersey Gazette, July 16, 1783.

5 This famous tavern stood on the southwest corner of King (now Warren) and Second (now State) Streets. From April 1, 1780, to February, 1781, it was called the Thirteen Stars, but when John Cape became proprietor in 1781 he changed the name to the French Arms, which name was retained until January 4, 1785, when the tavern was leased to Francis Witt. He had been the proprietor of a tavern on North King Street, called the Blazing .Star, and merely transferred the sign to his new establishment. The name was again changed, this time to the City Tavern, in April 1789, when Henry Drake became its proprietor.

These resolutions, together with the report of a subcommittee, composed of Moore Furman, Stacy Potts, and Benjamin Smith, which stated that "sixty Persons, or upwards can be accommodated here," 6 were forwarded to President Boudinot the following day by the chairman of the meeting. As they did not reach him until after his decision had been made to withdraw Congress secretly from Philadelphia to Princeton late on the twenty-fourth of June, 1783, nothing further was done in regard to them until Congress reconvened in Princeton on the first of July. The following day, when the resolutions were laid before Congress, it was unanimously: 7

Resolved, That the President inform Mr. Cox, that Congress entertain just sentiments of the respectful manner in which the inhabitants of Trenton and its vicinity express themselves in their resolve of the 24th of June last, with regard to Congress.

That Congress highly applaud the proper resentment the citizens of Trenton and its vicinity have discovered against disturbers of the public peace and violators of the dignity of the Union.

6 *Papers, Continental Congress*, Vol. XLVI, .p. 87.

7 *Journals of Congress*, July 2, 1783.

The above resolutions, together with a personal letter from President Boudinot, were forwarded to John Cox, July 3, 1783. Congress also sent a resolution to His Excellency William Livingston, governor of New Jersey, expressing its "high sense of the spirit and attachment of the citizens of New Jersey to the federal union," but informing his excellency "that events have rendered the call of the citizens into service unnecessary."[8]

8 *New Jersey Gazette*, July 16, 1783.

In the meantime, in view of the resolutions of Congress passed June 4, 1783, officially informing the executives of the several States of its intention to consider propositions for selecting a "permanent residence" for Congress on the first Monday of the following October, the Legislature of New Jersey, on June 19, 1783, agreed to offer to the United States jurisdiction over any district within the State to the extent of twenty miles square, and to grant £30,000 in specie for the purchase of lands and the erection of buildings. The resolutions also invited the inhabitants of New Jersey desiring the national capital in their particular locality to transmit their proposals to their representatives in Congress before the time limited for consideration. The inhabitants of Lamberton [9] in Nottingham township, south of the Assunpink Creek, were among those who presented to Congress the advantages of their specific locality. [10]

9 During the period of which we are writing, the district which we now call Trenton consisted of the city of Trenton north of the Assunpink Creek and the districts known as Lamberton, Mill Hill and Bloomsbury, south of the creek. Lamberton was named for Thomas Lambert who settled there about 1679. It was annexed to Trenton in 1856. The locality immediately adjoining the Assunpink on the south was in early times called Kingsbury, and afterwards Kensington Hill, but when it came to be a considerable manufacturing place the name was changed to Mill Hill. In 1840, Mill Hill was incorporated with Bloomsbury, which had been established by Alexander Chambers as a port for ships, to form the Borough of South Trenton. This borough was annexed to Trenton in 1851.

10 *Papers, Continental Congress*, Vol. XLVI, pp. 35, 39, 43, 49.

On October 6, 1783, when Congress took up the question "in which State buildings shall be provided and erected for the residence of Congress; beginning with New Hampshire and proceeding in the order in which they stand," each State was successively negatived. On the following morning, a motion was made by Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, "that buildings for the use of Congress be erected on the banks of the Delaware near Trenton, or of the Patowmack, near Georgetown, provided a suitable district can be procured on one of the rivers as aforesaid, for a federal town." Amendments left only the names of the rivers and it was finally resolved that the site should be "near the falls," that is, near Trenton on the Jersey side, or in Pennsylvania on

the opposite side. Congress further resolved "that a committee of five be appointed to repair to the falls of the Delaware, to view the situation of the country in its neighborhood and report a proper district for carrying into effect the preceding resolution."

A QUARREL BETWEEN THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH

The question now resolved itself into a quarrel between the North and the South. New England favored Trenton, whereas the Southern States felt that in the selection of any site north of Mason and Dixon's line their claims for recognition were being slighted, and their interests sacrificed to New England's commercialism. Accordingly, on October 8, 1783, the Southern members supported a motion to reconsider the proceedings of the previous day "in order to fix on some other place that shall be more central, more favourable to the union, and shall approach nearer to that justice which is due the Southern States." [11]

11 *Journals of Congress*, October 6, 7, 8, 1783.

This motion failed, as did other amendments, and the selection of Trenton or its immediate vicinity appeared to be an accomplished fact. On the thirteenth of October, 1783, Madison wrote to Randolph: "Trenton was next proposed, on which question the votes were divided by the river Delaware . . . . The vicinity of the falls is to become the future seat of the Federal Government, unless a conversion of some of the Eastern States can be effected." [12]

12 *Madison Papers*, Vol. 1, p. 576.

The continued opposition of an influential minority led, however, to a compromise, proposed by Elbridge Gerry, and adopted by Congress October 21, 1783, that Congress should have two residences to be occupied alternately, the one to be on the Delaware, as already determined, and the other on the Potomac, at or near Georgetown. A further resolution, which was also adopted, provided "that until the buildings to be erected on the banks of the Delaware and Patowmack shall be prepared for the reception of Congress, their residence shall be alternately at equal periods of not more than one year, and not less than six months in Trenton and Annapolis." [13] This Act was the occasion of a humorous publication by Francis Hopkinson, of Bordentown, entitled "Intelligence Extraordinary," in which he described the new mechanism of government as a "miraculous pendulum" vibrating "between Annapolis on the Chesapeak and Trenton on the Delaware, a range of about 180 miles." [14]

13 *Journals of Congress*, October 21, 1783.

14 Hopkinson's *Works*, Vol. I, p. 178.

During the course of these discussions the citizens of Trenton were active in their support of Trenton as the site of the federal city. Upon learning that the members of the Continental Congress were considering leaving Princeton because of the poor accommodations afforded, a town meeting was held at the French Arms to "formulate attractive conveniences" to induce the members of Congress to adjourn to Trenton. Rooms and board were offered to the members of Congress by many of Trenton's most influential citizens, and "Good Hay in any quantity" was promised. [15] In spite of these inducements, Congress adjourned from Princeton, November 4,

1783, to meet at Annapolis on the twenty-sixth of the same month. At Annapolis the question of the federal capital was again reopened, but no definite action was taken.

15 *Papers, Continental Congress*, No. 78, Vol. XXII, pp. 283-6.

Further evidence of Trenton's interest in the location of the capital was shown by the will of Dr. David Cowell, "a physician of respect, and extensive practice," who died December 18, 1783. He bequeathed "one hundred pounds to the United States of America, to be thrown into the fund for erecting public buildings at Lamberton," which the *New Jersey Gazette* of December 23, 1783, states "is the first legacy we recollect to have been given to the United States and is respectable for a person of middle fortune."

On the third of June, 1784, Congress adjourned from Annapolis to meet at Trenton on the thirtieth of October following. One can imagine the joy with which the citizens of Trenton greeted the news of this honor which they had twice sought without success the preceding year.

The New Jersey Legislature, then meeting at New Brunswick, on August 25, 1784, passed a resolution empowering James Ewing, Moore Furman and Conrad Kotts, as commissioners, to procure a "Dwelling House" for the President, "and also a House for Congress to sit in for the dispatch of public Business."[16]

16 *Votes of General Assembly of New Jersey*, 1781-84.

Accordingly, on the twenty-second of September, 1784, the commissioners leased the frame homestead of Stacy Potts on King Street, later known as the City Hotel, and now the site of the Rectory of Saint Mary's Cathedral, for the official residence of the president of Congress. The house was occupied by Colonel Richard Henry Lee from November 30, 1784, until his departure for New York on January 5, 1785. Before his election as president, Colonel Lee occupied a room in the house of Micajah How on the east side of King Street below St. Michael's Church.[17]

17 Ballagh, *Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, Vol. II, pp. 296, 321.

The French Arms tavern, on the southwest corner of King and Second Streets, then kept by Jacob G. Bergen, and the largest building in the city at that time, had already been leased by the commissioners for the use of Congress while in Trenton, and in October 1784 extensive preparations were begun to furnish the Long Room of the tavern suitably for the use of its members. The walls were repapered, the floors recarpeted and a platform erected in the center of the south side of the room between the two fireplaces. Thirteen new tables covered with green cloth and forty-eight new windsor chairs were also provided.[18]

18 Godfrey, *The Mechanics Bank*, pp. 25-6.

FRENCH ARMS TAVERN

The Continental Congress assembled in Trenton on Monday, November 1, 1784, with but seven members present. In the absence of a quorum, it was unable to proceed with business until the thirtieth of the month, when "a quorum of the States being represented, they proceeded to the choice of a President, when the Hon. Richard Henry Lee, Esquire of Virginia, was elected. This is the gentleman who is said to have originally made the motion in Congress for declaring the States of America independent, in the year 1776." On December 3, the Hon. Peter Van Berckel, Minister Plenipotentiary from the Netherlands, arrived in Trenton to confer with the officials of the Continental Congress. He probably returned to his legation in Philadelphia the following day. [19]

19 *New Jersey Gazette*, December 6, 1784.

TRENTON FAVORED

The question of the location of the federal capital was among the first business taken up by the Congress. On December 10 South Carolina moved for adjournment, and every effort was made to have the alternate sessions at Trenton and Annapolis repealed. Due to the opposition of the Northern members, these measures failed and on the twentieth of December it was resolved to take measures for procuring "suitable buildings" for national purposes, and a sum, not exceeding $100,000, was appropriated for that object. On the twenty-third of December, an ordinance was introduced providing for the appointment of three commissioners, "with full powers to lay out a district of not less than two nor exceeding three miles square on the banks of either side of the Delaware, not lower than Lamberton nor more than six miles above it, for a Federal town." Unsuccessful efforts were made to substitute Georgetown for Lamberton, but in spite of the continued opposition of the South the ordinance was finally adopted that the commissioners should "without delay" have the federal city laid out in some district "not more than eight miles above or below the lower falls of the Delaware," and "enter into contracts for erecting and completing in an elegant manner, a federal house for the accommodation of Congress," and houses for the President of Congress and principal officers of the government, with a "due regard" to the "accommodation of the states with lots for houses for the use of their Delegates respectively; that on the 24th of December instant Congress stand adjourned to meet at the city of New York on the 11th day of January following," and to continue to meet there until the buildings were ready for their reception. The immediate expenditures of the commissioners were not to exceed $ 100,000.

Congress adjourned on the day following this decision, after acknowledging the attentions of the Legislature of New Jersey "in providing accommodations for their reception," and "the exertions of the inhabitants in accomplishing the intentions of their Legislature." [20]

20 *Journals of Congress*, December 23, 24, 1784.

The next step toward making Trenton the federal capital was taken on February 8, 1785, with the election of the three commissioners provided for in the ordinance of December 23, 1784. The commissioners chosen by Congress were Philip Schuyler of New York, Philemon Dickinson, of the "Hermitage," Trenton, and Robert Morris, the "patriot financier" of the Revolution. When General Schuyler declined to serve, John Brown of Providence, R.I., was elected in his place. On May 19 he too declined the office.

The landholders of Trenton were fully aware of the material advantages which would accrue from the location of the federal capital near their city and the *New Jersey Gazettes* of the period contain a number of advertisements offering valuable land situated near Trenton or Lamberton "where it is expected the Federal town will be built." The following passage from a letter written by Moore Furman, a prominent citizen of Trenton, and the first mayor of the city in 1792, also expresses the general sentiment of the times: [21]

I have lately bartered some land in the country for a piece here; the spot the Federal Town is to stand on, and if you have an inclination to make sure of some near me believe me it may now be had reasonable . . . . Should it ever happen that Congress fix here it will be very valuable indeed.

21 *Letters of Moore Furman*, p. 77.

Soon after the appointment of the commissioners the personal influence of General Washington was brought to bear on the members of Congress to crush the Trenton capital plan. On February 8, 1785, he wrote from Mount Vernon to Richard Henry Lee, president of Congress: [22]

By the time your Federal buildings on the banks of the Delaware, along the point of a triangle, are fit for the reception of Congress, it will be found that they are very improperly placed for the seat of the empire, and will have to undergo a second erection in a more convenient one.

22 Sparks, *Writings of Washington*, Vol. IX, pp. 95-6.

On the fifth of April, 1785, the first appropriation to the commissioners was called for by the Committee of Supplies – "Federal buildings, $30,000." William Grayson, of Virginia, moved its refusal, but he was overruled. On motion of Charles Pinckney, of South Carolina, that vote was reconsidered and the report recommitted. Nothing further was done until the twenty-second of September, when the appropriation of $30,000 coming before the House, Elbridge Gerry, of Massachusetts, moved to make it the whole sum of $100,000. As none of the States except Massachusetts and New Jersey voted for it, the item, upon motion of Samuel Hardy of Virginia, was entirely stricken out of the bill. [23] This was a virtual repeal of the ordinance and the death blow to Trenton's hopes of becoming the capital of the United States.

23 *Journals of Congress*, September 22, 1785.

The project was not yet abandoned, however, for in 1787 the convention of New Jersey which met to ratify the Constitution of the United States passed a resolution suggesting to the New Jersey Legislature that in view of the provision in the new Constitution implying that the seat of government should be placed in a district not exceeding ten miles square, they "should offer a Cession to Congress of a district, not exceeding ten Miles Square, for the Seat of the Government of the United States, over which they may exercise exclusive Legislation." [24] This the Legislature did by a bill passed September 9, 1788, offering the requisite territory.

24 *Minutes of the Convention of State of New Jersey*, December 20, 1787.

A further attempt to make Trenton the federal capital was made by Mr. Boudinot in the House of Representatives, September 7, 1789, when he proposed "the banks of either side of the river

Delaware, not more than eight miles above or below the lower falls." His motion failed by a vote of four to forty-six.[25]

[25] *Annals of Congress*, September 7, 1789.

QUESTION FINALLY SETTLED BY COMPROMISE

The question of the location of the capital was finally settled by a compromise between the North and the South. As the northern States were anxious for the assumption of State debts by the general government, and the southern States were opposed to the measure, an agreement was reached whereby the South agreed to vote for the assumption of the debts provided the North voted for the location of the capital on the Potomac. This scheme is said to have originated with Robert Morris and Alexander Hamilton and to have been consummated at the dinner-table of Thomas Jefferson, then Secretary of State. Thanks to this scheme, in July 1790 it was determined to have the seat of government on the Potomac, and in 1791 Washington selected the spot which now bears his name. According to the terms of this Act, Congress remained in Philadelphia until December 1800.

The final attempt to have Trenton made the seat of the national government was undertaken December 2, 1801, when the Legislature of New Jersey unanimously resolved

That the members representing the State, in the Congress of the United States, be and they are hereby requested, if Congress should resolve to move, for the purpose of better accommodation from the city of Washington, to use their best efforts to procure their removal to the city of Trenton, and they are hereby authorized to proffer, in the name of this State, the State House and other public buildings belonging to the State for the use of Congress and their officers, for any length of time that the Congress shall wish to occupy them and that his excellency the governor, be requested to transmit a copy of this resolution to the members of Congress from this State, to be used by them as occasion may offer.[26]

[26] *Journal of Proceedings of Legislative Council of New Jersey*, December 2, 1801.

II. Ratification of the Constitution by the State o f New Jersey

IN SEPTEMBER 1787, the constitutional convention completed its work on the Constitution of the United States and the document was submitted to the several States for ratification. On the first of November, the Legislature of New Jersey authorized a convention of the people of New Jersey to accept the new organic law of the nation. In pursuance of this resolution, on the eleventh day of December, 1787, thirty-nine delegates, three chosen from each County in the State, assembled at the Blazing Star, formerly the French Arms, tavern in Trenton, for the purpose of ratifying the Constitution. The sessions of the convention were public and each was opened with prayer by the Rev. James Armstrong, pastor of the Presbyterian Church.

Meeting at ten o'clock and again at three, the delegates discussed the Constitution, section by section, for six days. After a fourth reading of the famous document, the work was considered

complete and on Tuesday, December 19, 1787, the convention "unanimously for and on behalf of the people of the said State of New Jersey" agreed "to ratify, and confirm the same, and every Part thereof." The following day, duplicate parchment copies of the Constitution, together with the Form of the Ratification, "one for the Congress of the United States and the other to be deposited among the Archives of the State," were signed by the delegates. After the signature of the president, John Stevens, each of the thirteen County delegations signed in the order of the age of the Counties, from Bergen the oldest, to Sussex the youngest. At one o'clock the same afternoon, the members of the convention went in procession to the Court House where "in the Hearing of the People," the secretary, Samuel Witham Stockton, read the ratification of the new Constitution by the Convention of New Jersey.[27] The reading was received with applause by the large multitude which had gathered to witness the proceedings and thirteen rounds, together with one more for the State of Delaware and another for Pennsylvania, were fired by the militia who were present. New Jersey was the third State to ratify the Constitution, being preceded by Delaware on the seventh, and Pennsylvania on the twelfth of December. At the conclusion of the ceremonies at the Court House, the delegates returned in the same procession to the tavern in order "to complete the great and important business of their appointment." The following morning, the convention was dissolved, after which the delegates with the principal inhabitants of Trenton and its neighborhood dined at Mr. Vandegrift's tavern, "in which company the most perfect harmony presided."[28]

27 *Minutes of the Convention of State of New Jersey*, December 18, 1787.

28 *New Jersey Journal and Political Intelligencer*, January 2, 1788.

III. Washington's Reception by the People of Trenton, 1789

ONE of the most pleasing celebrations ever held in Trenton was the reception to Washington in 1789, when he passed through the town en route to New York to be inaugurated the first President of the United States. This event received considerable notice in the press of the day, and has also been graphically and accurately presented by the late William S. Stryker in his monograph entitled *Washington's Reception by the People o f New Jersey in 1789*, which was published in 1882.

On the sixth day of April, 1789, Congress, then sitting in New York, declared General Washington to have been elected the first President of the United States. On the fourteenth of April, Mr. Charles Thompson presented to him at Mount Vernon the official notice of his election. Knowing well that the urgency of the public business required the immediate attendance of the President at the seat of government, Washington hastened his departure; and on the second day after receiving notice of his appointment, he took leave of Mount Vernon.

MANY DEMONSTRATIONS OF AFFECTION

Although Washington looked forward to a quiet journey from Mount Vernon to New York, he soon found that it was impossible to prevent the demonstrations of affection which the people of the towns along his route eagerly bestowed upon him. On the twentieth of April he reached

Philadelphia, where he was received with great enthusiasm. The following morning, the military paraded at ten o'clock to accompany Washington to Trenton, but "being obliged on account of the weather to proceed in his carriage, he declined the honor, for he could not, he said, think of riding under cover while his friends were exposed to the rain on horseback." [29]

[29] Griswold, *Republican Court*, p. 128.

It was about two o'clock . . . when the carriage arrived at the old stone ferry house at Colvin's Ferry, now Morrisville. Here Patrick Colvin, the owner of the ferry, took charge of the Presidential party and personally ferried them over the Delaware river . . . . A troop of horse, commanded by Captain Carle, and a company of infantry commanded by Captain Hanlon, compleatly equipped, and in full uniform with a large concourse of the gentlemen and inhabitants of the town and neighborhood, lined the Jersey bank of the Delaware, to hail the General's arrival. As soon as he set foot on shore, he was welcomed with three huzzas, which made the shores reecho the chearful sounds. After being saluted .by the horse and infantry, he was escorted to town, in the following order: A detachment of the horse. The Light Infantry. His Excellency, on horseback, attended by Charles Thomson, Esquire, and Colonel Humphreys. The troop of horse. The gentlemen of the town and neighborhood on horseback. [30]

[30] *Pennsylvania Packet*, May 1, 1789; Stryker, *Washington's Reception*, p. 4.

While the gentlemen of the town were meeting "their beloved General with peals of thunder" and honoring him "with all the pompous parade of war," it remained for the ladies of Trenton to meet "their defender with sentiment and touch the tender feelings of the Hero's heart." At the bridge over the Assunpink Creek, the most prominent matrons of the town had planned a testimonial "as new as it was pleasing," in memory of General Washington's heroic deeds at the Battles of Trenton in 1776 and 1777, and as an expression of their gratitude for the successful culmination of the Revolutionary struggle.

On the north side of the bridge an arch about twenty feet high was raised, supported on one side by seven and on the other by six pillars. The arch was nearly twenty feet wide and about twelve feet in length. Each of the thirteen pillars was entirely covered with masses of evergreens and wreaths of laurel, and the arches above were closely twined about with the same material, and festooned inside with long ropes of laurel and the flowers of early spring. On the south side of the archway, the side which first appeared to the presidential party, an inscription in large gilt letters on a blue ground was fastened, and beautifully ornamented with flowers:

THE DEFENDER OF THE MOTHERS WILL BE THE PROTECTOR OF THE DAUGHTERS.

Above this arch was a circlet of laurels and flowers, wreathing the dates of those two events just referred to:

December 26, 1776 - January 2, 1777 [31]

The summit of the dome displayed a large sun-flower, which, always pointing to the sun, was designed to express this sentiment, or motto, "To you alone," as emblematic of the affections and hopes of the People being directed to him in the united suffrage of the millions of America.[32]

[31] Stryker, *Washington's Reception*, p. 6.

[32] *Pennsylvania Packet*, May 1, 1789.

The framework of the arch had been erected the previous day by workmen in charge of Benjamin Yard, but it had been decorated by the ladies of Trenton with their own hands.

The weather had cleared during the day, and as Washington came to the high ground on Mill Hill[33] the sun lit up the beautiful arch through which he must pass. "But as he passed through the archway with uncovered head a still more lovely sight greeted him. On the one side of the arch he saw six little girls dressed in white, carrying baskets of flowers; on the other side, thirteen young ladies to represent the several States, who were dressed in similar style, and also had baskets filled with flowers." Behind them stood twenty-two of the most prominent matrons of the town.

[33] See note 9, above.

As Washington rode beneath the arch, the choir began to sing a beautiful ode, which had been written for the occasion by Major Richard Howell, afterwards governor of New Jersey. The song, which was rendered "with exquisite sweetness," was as follows:[34]

Welcome, mighty Chief ! once more

Welcome to this grateful shore!

Now no mercenary foe

Aims again the fatal blow-

Aims at thee the fatal blow.

Virgins fair, and Matrons grave,

Those thy conquering arms did save,

Build for thee triumphal bowers.

Strew, ye fair, his way with flowers-

Strew your Hero's way with flowers!

[34] Stryker, *Washington's Reception*, p. 7.

Extensive research on the part of Dr. C. E. Godfrey has established the fact that this sonata was sung to the tune of "See the Conquering Hero Comes" from Handel's "Judas Maccabaeus." [35] According to General Stryker, "The first four lines were sung by both matrons and young ladies, the young ladies sang the fifth line, the matrons the first part and the young ladies the last part of the sixth line, then both sang the two next lines, the matrons the ninth, the young ladies the tenth line."

35 *Trenton Sunday Advertiser*, December 29, 1912.

GENERAL WASHINGTON'S RECEPTION BY THE CITIZENS OF TRENTON

While the ode was being sung, General Washington bared his head and listened "with deepest emotion." In commenting upon this occasion, Irving, in his life of Washington, says:

We question whether any of these testimonials of a nation's gratitude affected Washington more sensibly than those he received at Trenton.

From information "obtained from one of the participants in this reception who was living in the year 1850, from one who died in 1864, and another in 1877, from others who remember to have seen it, and from tradition in the families of Trenton," General Stryker has been able to identify all of the ladies of Trenton and vicinity who took part in this reception.

The ladies who planned the celebration and who met Washington at the bridge were Mrs. Susannah Armstrong, wife of Rev. James F. Armstrong, Mrs. Mary Borden, Mrs. Susannah Calhoun, Mrs. Elizabeth Chambers, Mrs. Esther Cox, Mrs. Mary Dickinson, Mrs. Elizabeth Ewing, Mrs. Sarah Furman, Mrs. Susannah Gordon, Mrs. Mary Hanna, Mrs. Sarah How, Mrs. Keziah B. Howell, Mrs. Mary Hunt, Mrs. Esther Lowrey, Mrs. Sarah Milnor, Mrs. Ann Richmond, Mrs. Mary Smith, Mrs. Rachel Stevens, Mrs. Annis Stockton, Mrs. Catherine Stockton, Mrs. Jane Tate and Mrs. Grace Woodruff.

The thirteen young ladies who represented the several States were Miss Eleanor Armstrong, Miss Elizabeth Borden, Miss Elizabeth Cadwalader, Miss Catherine Calhoun, Miss Esther Cox, Miss Mary Cox, Miss Mary Dickinson, Miss Maria Furman, Miss Mary C. Keen, Miss Mary Lowrey, Miss Maria Meredith, Miss Sarah Moore and Miss Margaret Tate.

The six little girls who strewed flowers in front of Washington as he passed under the arch were Sarah Airy, Jemina Broadhurst, Sarah Collins, Sarah How, Sarah B. Howell and Elizabeth Milnor.

WASHINGTON'S LETTER TO THE LADIES OF TRENTON

After the reception at the arch, General Washington proceeded up Queen Street, now Broad, to the City Tavern, formerly the French Arms, on the southwest corner of Second and King Streets, where he dined with the principal citizens of the town. During the afternoon, before he left for Princeton in the company of his friend, the Rev. James Armstrong, pastor of the Presbyterian Church, a copy of the song which had greeted him at the bridge was given to him, and that evening he handed to Mr. Armstrong the following letter: [36]

General Washington cannot leave this place without expressing his acknowledgments, to the Matrons and Young Ladies who received him in so novel and grateful a manner at the Triumphal Arch in Trenton, for the exquisite sensation .he experienced in that affecting moment. - The astonishing contrast between his former and actual situation at the same spot, the elegant taste with which it was adorned for the present occasion, and the innocent appearance of the white-robed choir who met him with the gratulatory song, have made such impressions on his remembrance as, he assures them, will never be effaced.

Trenton April 21st, 1789

36 Stryker, *Washington's Reception*, p. 19.

FACSIMILE OF WASHINGTON'S LETTER

This letter was read the following afternoon at a gathering of ladies at the home of Dr. Isaac Smith on King Street, and was later printed and a copy distributed to each lady who aided in the reception. The original note was preserved in the family of Dr. Smith, and later was presented to Chief Justice Ewing by Miss Lydia Imlay, an adopted daughter of Judge Smith. Judge Ewing placed the letter "in a handsome frame" and for many years it was "preserved by his family as a most gracious relic." In 1927, the letter was placed in the permanent custody of the Free Public Library by William E. and Caleb S. Green.

The arch was preserved on the premises of the Misses Barnes on King Street, near the Episcopal Church, until 1824, when it was placed in front of the State House to grace the reception to General Lafayette. A portion of it was again used on May 10, 1855, on Chancery Lane, upon the occasion of a firemen's parade given in honor of a visit of the Phoenix Hose Company, of Easton, Pa. Later it came into possession of Mrs. Armstrong and Dr. Francis Ewing. In 1876, it was exhibited at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, and later deposited in Independence Hall, where it remained until 1897, when it was returned to Trenton and placed in the Battle Monument. Recently it was transferred to the Old Barracks, where it now occupies a place of honor on the wall of the armor room. [37]

37 Podmore, "Washington Arch," *Trenton*, February 1928.

About a month after the reception to General Washington, on May 25, 1789, Mrs. Washington, with her grandchildren, Eleanor Custis and George Washington Custis, spent a night in Trenton, while en route to New York to join her husband. The following year, on September 1, 1790, Washington and his family stayed over night at the City Tavern, while travelling from New York to the southward. "Beside the President and Mrs. Washington, the travelling party comprised . . . the two grandchildren of Mrs. Washington, Major William Jackson, Thomas Nelson, two maids, four white and four black servants and sixteen horses."[38]

[38] Baker, *Itinerary of Washington*, Vol. 11, p. 194.

IV. Trenton Made the Capital of New Jersey, 1790

ALTHOUGH Trenton was unsuccessful in its attempts to become the federal capital of the United States, it was honored by being selected, in 1790, as the capital of the State of New Jersey. As early as September, 1776, Governor Livingston, in his message to the House, had recommended that the capital of the State of New Jersey be located "in some convenient and plentiful part of the State," but in spite of the suggestion no definite action was taken. During the Revolution, the Assembly and Council met at such places as convenience and safety required, occasionally visiting Perth Amboy, the old capital of East Jersey, and Burlington, the old capital of West Jersey. With the establishment of peace, interest in the subject was revived, due partly to the presence of Congress in Trenton and partly to the efforts of Trenton to become the seat of the federal government.

As in the case of the location of the federal capital, the North and the South were on opposite sides of the question. A conservative spirit desired the retention of both Burlington and Perth Amboy, while other members were equally active on behalf of Woodbury and New Brunswick. The convenience of Trenton's location on the route of the "flying machines," as the stage coaches which ran between New York and Philadelphia were modestly called, finally outweighed all other considerations, and on November 25, 1790, "An Act for fixing a permanent seat of government in this State" was enacted, providing:

That Trenton, in the county of Hunterdon, shall henceforth be considered as the seat of government; and that the first meeting of the Legislature, after the next, and every further annual election for the members thereof, shall be at Trenton, in the County of Hunterdon.[39]

[39] *Laws of the State of New Jersey*, November 25, 1790.

The following year, "An Act to provide suitable buildings for the accommodation of the Legislature and public offices of the State" was introduced and finally passed November 22, 1791, in spite of renewed efforts to have New Brunswick and Woodbury inserted in place of Trenton. In pursuance of the Act, Joseph Cooper, Thomas Lowery, James Ewing, Maskell Ewing, George Anderson, James Mott and Moore Furman were appointed commissioners with power to purchase or accept a suitable tract of land for the erection of buildings for the use of the State. The tract secured was located where the present Capitol building now stands and consisted of three and three-quarters acres, purchased from Joseph Britain, George Ely and Mrs. Mary

McCall at a cost of £250 5s. The erection of the State House was immediately begun and by 1794 the Legislature was able to hold its sessions there. The total cost of the building was £3,000, which was raised by State appropriation, by a subscription of £300 from the inhabitants of Trenton and by the sale of articles belonging to New Jersey.[40]

40 *True American*, June 25, 1897.

THE ORIGINAL STATE HOUSE

The original State House was a quaint-looking building, sixty by one hundred feet, with a bow at either end containing rooms for the Assembly and for the Council. It was rough-cast, of a bluish color, and had a cupola which, in 1806, was provided with a bell which was used for announcing the hour of meeting of both Houses and occasionally for giving an alarm of fire in the town.

By an Act of the Legislature, passed March 3, 1795, a building was erected for the quarters of the secretary of state and for the preservation of the public records. About this time, Second Street, now State Street, was extended westward a short distance and a gravel walk laid from Chambers corner, now State and Willow, to the Capitol building. In 1798, the lot was enclosed with a fence, and, in 1799, a brick pavement was laid around the building.

FIRST STATE HOUSE

At first, the use of the State House appears to have been permitted for other purposes than for the accommodation of the Legislature and State officials, but on November 3, 1803, it was resolved by the General Assembly "that a committee be appointed to inquire into the cause and conduct of a mob assembled in Trenton in the month of February last, and also by whose direction or approbation the State House was occupied as a ball room on the 4th of July." This inquiry led to the appointment of a custodian of the State House and also to the decision that the building was not "to be occupied for any other purpose than for the accommodation of the constituted authorities for which it was erected."[41]

41 *Votes and Proceedings of General Assembly of New Jersey*, November 3, 10, 1803.

Numerous repairs were made to the State House from time to time, and some attempt was made to beautify the grounds around the building. Several small office buildings were erected adjoining the main building, and in 1848 very extensive additions were made to it. At that time, the rough-casting was removed and a rotunda was added.

After the erection of the State House, it was thought desirable to have a permanent residence for the executive of the State, and consequently on the ninth of March, 1798, the Legislature passed an Act appointing James Mott and John Beatty commissioners to contract for and purchase a house and lot of land for the residence of the governor. A sum of $10,000 was appropriated for

this purpose and on March 12, 1798, the commissioners purchased a house and lot from Moore Furman, located on Second Street, a block or so east of the Capitol. A letter of Moore Furman's, dated April 4, 1798, shows that the house was occupied by the governor the following month: [42]

Trenton April 4th 1798.

Dear Sir,

. . . I have sold my house for $10,000 and conveyed it to our present Governour [Richard Howell] and to his successors forever . . . . I am moving in the Storm to a new house, a few doors to the westward of the house I sold, and . . . the Governour is fixing himself and family in the Government house.

[42] *Letters of Moore Furman*, pp. 108-9.

Most of the subsequent governors, however, appear to have preferred to live in their own homes and rent the house provided for them. Consequently, whenever the question of repairs to the house came before the Legislature, a commission was appointed to inquire into and report the propriety of selling the same. On November 12, 1801, a committee of both Houses of the Legislature reported:

That convinced of the propriety of having the governor as well as the heads of departments to reside at the seat of government, the convenience which will necessarily result to persons having business in chancery, the immediate access which the executive at all times have, and the frequent necessity of recurring to the public documents, are of such importance, and we trust so obvious, that the Legislature will at all times, hold out the inducement of a good and convenient house for the immediate accommodation of the governor .... For the above reasons it is the opinion of your committee it would be inexpedient to sell the same at present. [42a]

[42a] *Journal of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council of State of New Jersey*, November 12, 1801.

In spite of this and similar reports, other attempts were made to sell the house, and in 1824 commissioners were appointed to sell part of the government lot, commencing on the southwest corner and extending twenty feet to the east, the money received from the sale to be applied to the school fund.

On March 1, 1830, a resolution was adopted, that in case the governor saw fit to make the government house his residence, the treasurer should be authorized to put it in proper repair, and in February 1833 two commissioners were appointed to repair the dwelling-house, carriage-house, and fences, at a cost not exceeding $300.

The house was finally sold, in 1845, to John A. Weart, Joseph C. Potts and Dr. John McKelway for the sum of $10,000. About 1862, the house was considerably enlarged and reopened as the State Street House. In 1903, the house was thoroughly remodelled and refurnished throughout, and on January 1, 1904, it was reopened as the Hotel Sterling, which name it still bears. The part of the building that abuts State Street is the original governor's mansion, the governor's reception and sitting-room now serving as the hotel office.

V. Lafayette's Three Visits to Trenton

THE most distinguished visitor received by the Continental Congress while in session in Trenton in 1784 was General Lafayette, who on the sixth of December wrote to President Lee that he would wait upon Congress the Friday following, and in taking leave of that body would be "happy to receive what Commands they may please to lay upon one of their Most Affectionate and devoted servants." [43] On the ninth of December, the matter was referred to a congressional committee, consisting of Messrs. Jay, Williamson and Hardy, which immediately reported that "the merit and services of the Marquis renders it proper that such an opportunity of taking leave of Congress be afforded him." A special committee, consisting of one member from each State, was then appointed "to receive the Marquis and in the name of Congress to take leave of him," and also to prepare a letter commending him to the favor and patronage of his Most Christian Majesty, the King of France. [44]

43 *Papers, Continental Congress*, No. 19, Vol. II, p. 253.

44 *Journals of Congress*, December 9, 1784.

THE FIRST VISIT

On Friday afternoon, December 10, General Lafayette arrived in Trenton and on the following day, immediately after the close of the congressional session, was formally received by John Jay, chairman of the special committee, and his fellow-members, in the Long Room of the French Arms tavern. The resolution of the ninth of December assuring him "that Congress continued to entertain the same high sense of his abilities and zeal to promote the welfare of America, both here and in Europe, which they had frequently expressed and manifested on former occasions," and that they would not "cease to feel an interest in whatever may concern his honor and prosperity" was then communicated to him.

Lafayette then replied to Congress in the following terms: [45]

Sir:

While it pleases the United States in Congress so kindly to receive me, I want words to express the feelings of a heart which delights in their present situation and the bestowed marks of their esteem.

Since I joined the standard of liberty, to this wished for hour of my personal congratulations, I have seen such glorious deeds performed, and virtues displayed by the sons of America, that in the instant of my first concern for them, I had anticipated but a part of the love and regard which devote me to this rising empire.

During our revolution, sir, I obtained an unlimited indulgent confidence, which I am equally proud and happy to acknowledge; it dates with the time, when an unexperienced youth, I could only claim my respected friends paternal adoption. It has been most benevolently continued

throughout every circumstance of the cabinet and the field; and in personal friendships, I often found a support against public difficulties. While, on this solemn occasion I mention my obligations to Congress, the State, the people at large, permit me also to remember the dear military companions, to whose services their country is so much indebted.

Having felt both for the timely aid of my country and for the part she, with a beloved king, acted in the cause of mankind, I enjoy an alliance so well rivetted by mutual affection, by interest, and even local situation. Recollection insures it. Futurity does but enlarge the prospect; and the private intercourse will every day increase, which independent and advantageous trade cherishes, in proportion as it is well understood.

In unbounded wishes to America, sir, I am happy to observe the prevailing disposition of the people to strengthen the confederation, preserve public faith, regulate trade, and in a proper guard over continental magazines and frontier posts, in a general system of militia, in foreseeing attention to the navy, to insure every kind of safety. May this immense temple of freedom ever stand a lesson to oppressors, an example to the oppressed, a sanctuary for the rights of mankind! and may these happy United States attain that compleat splendor and prosperity which will illustrate the blessing of their government, and for ages to come rejoice the departed souls of its founders.

However unwilling to trespass on your time, I must yet present you with grateful thanks for the late favors of Congress, and never can they oblige me so much as when they put it in my power, in every part of the world, to the latest day of my life, to gratify the attachment which will ever rank me among the most zealous and respectful servants of the United States.

LAFAYETTE.

45 *ibid*., December 13, 1784.

At the conclusion of the formal ceremonies, President Lee handed to General Lafayette an autograph letter containing his personal congratulations and farewell, together with a sealed envelope, which he requested the Marquis to deliver personally to the Hon. Benjamin Franklin, Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States to France.[46] This packet also contained the congressional letter to the French King commending the Marquis to his royal favor in recognition of the invaluable services which he had rendered to this country during the Revolution.

46 *Papers, Continental Congress*, No. 16, p. 315.

On the same day that Lafayette was received by Congress, he was also received by the Legislature of New Jersey, then sitting in Trenton. An address was presented to him by order of the Council and House, expressing "fervent wishes" for his welfare and prosperity, and assuring him that "the citizens of New Jersey will ever retain an excellent sense of your disinterested friendship and important services." To which the Marquis replied that his heart felt "deeply interested in the warmest wishes for the particular welfare of the State of New Jersey," and that he wished to present them "with the most grateful acknowledgements and affectionate assurances" of his respect.[47] The following Monday morning, Lafayette left Trenton for

Elizabeth-town and New York, and on Thursday, December 15, he sailed on *La Nymphe* for France.

47 *New Jersey Gazette*, December 27, 1784.

LAFAYETTE RETURNS IN 1824

In 1824, Lafayette returned to the United States for his fourth and farewell visit. As soon as it was known that he would visit Trenton, preparations were begun for his reception. On August 17, 1824, the citizens of Trenton assembled at the City Tavern, formerly the French Arms, and passed resolutions providing ways and means for the entertainment of the General and his party, which comprised his son, George Washington Lafayette, and his secretary, Auguste Le Masseur. At this meeting, it was "Resolved, That Charles Ewing, Pearson Hunt and William Halstead, junior, esquires, be a committee of the citizens to cooperate with the committee appointed by the Corporation to make and carry into effect the arrangements required by this interesting occasion."

The committee of the Corporation, which had been appointed the previous day, consisted of Evan Evans, David Johnston and Charles Burroughs. 48 These two committees entered upon their work with great enthusiasm, so that by the time of Lafayette's arrival on the twenty-fifth of September everything was in readiness for his reception and the whole city in holiday attire. An account of the celebration in the *True American* for September 25, 1824, shows the excitement prevailing in the city: "In this city, ordinary business is suspended, the common affairs of life are forgotten, and one general feeling of enthusiasm prevails in favor of La Fayette . . . . We can say no more but run to mingle with the enraptured multitude."

48 *Trenton Federalist*, August 23, 1824.

General Doughty had been selected by Governor Williamson to command the escort that met Lafayette at the State border and conducted him across the State. A medal, bearing on one side the likeness of Washington and on the other that of Lafayette, was issued by the State and worn by those who participated in the march.

On the twenty-fifth of September "the Committee of Arrangement from Trenton, with a corps of cavalry, met the General [at Princeton] to conduct him to Trenton. He was accompanied by the Governor and suite, and followed by a train of Citizens on horseback and in carriages. The General rode in an open Barouch, drawn by four white horses." The parade ground on the Brunswick Road was reached about two o'clock, and there the military of Hunterdon, Somerset, Burlington and Gloucester, consisting of about 2,000 men, were reviewed by the famous General. Immediately afterwards, a procession was formed in the following order - Cavalry, infantry, marshal, committee of the citizens, Governor Williamson and his suite, marshal, General Lafayette and his companions, officers of the Army and Navy, visitors of distinction, clergy, members of the bar, physicians, societies, citizens, marshal. The "arrival of the Procession at the head of Warren Street was announced by the firing of cannon and the ringing of bells. The bells continued to ring until the procession arrived at the State House."

At the head of Warren Street the procession passed under an elevated arch, “irradiated with stars and bearing the name of Lafayette stretched across the street. Its whole upper surface was mantled with verdure and beneath its curvature, the whole width of the intercolumniation was beautifully festooned with intertwisted wreaths of flowers and laurel. From its central summit, as also from the lateral arches on the right and left, sprang each a living cedar, their greenness studded over with flowers of various hues.”

The procession moved down Warren Street, passing under another decorated arch that stood near the corner of Warren and State Streets, to Bloomsbury Street (now South Warren), thence through Market Street to Greene Street (now Broad), up Greene Street to Perry Street, down Perry to Warren, down Warren to State, and up State to the State House. The streets were thronged with spectators from all parts of the adjacent country, and “there was one universal burst of feeling throughout the city.” A Philadelphia newspaper of the period notes that “such was the immense crowd that mail from Philadelphia had to pass around the city and enter the east street and the carrier had to lug the bag on his head and shoulders a distance of about 200 yards.”

THE WASHINGTON ARCH USED ONCE MORE

As Lafayette stepped from his barouche in front of the State House and advanced through an aisle formed by the military and the citizens, he was greeted by a sight of the Washington arch which had been erected at the gateway to the Capitol. At the arch, he was met by a group of twenty-four young women, representing the States of the Union, each bearing the name of the State she represented on a white belt which encircled her waist. As Lafayette advanced under the arch, thirteen members of the group, each representing one of the thirteen original Colonies, stepped forward and sang the following lines:

A welcome gallant chief

From Gaill’as sunny clime,

To glad our grateful hearts

Still spared by heaven and time,

Ten million voices raise

Their grateful notes today

Accept our feeble lays-

All we can pay.

The spirit of our sires

Still burns as free and bright

As burned its vestal fires

In the battle's stormy night,

It taught us to be free,

And ne'er will we forget

It bade us honor thee

Love La-Fayette.

Lafayette listened closely to the "dulcet notes of this interesting choir" and when the song was ended, replied: "Young ladies, I thank you very much." Later, upon being introduced to the young ladies of the choir, he remarked that he had never seen the States so handsomely represented.

The General was next escorted into the Assembly Room, which had been converted into a bower of beauty for the occasion. Here Lafayette was received by the mayor of Trenton, Robert McNeely, and Common Council, convened for the purpose of welcoming the distinguished visitor. The exercises were opened by an address of welcome by the mayor, expressing the joy it afforded the citizens of Trenton to receive Lafayette as their guest. The General returned a "feeling and appropriate answer," and after receiving a number of the citizens of the town, was conducted with great pomp to the Trenton House, on North Warren Street, where lodgings had been provided for him, and where a sumptuous banquet was served to a distinguished gathering of about one hundred guests.

In the evening, Lafayette attended a "handsome Entertainment ordered by the New Jersey Society of Cincinnati at the City Tavern." Most of the night was spent there in conversation with his brother officers of the Revolutionary Army. Trenton was all aglow and the arches were illuminated with lanterns.

The next morning being Sunday, General Lafayette attended service at the Presbyterian Church. Upon his entrance, the congregation rose in a body, and remained standing until he took his seat in the mayor's pew. At the close of the services, Lafayette was the guest of Mayor McNeely at his home on North Warren Street. In the afternoon, Lafayette rode to Bordentown, to visit Joseph Bonaparte, but returned to his apartments in the Trenton House the same evening. The following morning, under military escort and accompanied by the governor and a number of prominent citizens, he left Trenton for Philadelphia.[49]

[49] The full account of this celebration, from which the above quotations have been taken, may be found in the Trenton Federalist of September 27, 1824, and in the True American for October 2, 1824.

LAFAYETTE 'S THIRD VISIT TO TRENTON

The third and last visit of Lafayette to Trenton was on Saturday, July 16, 1825, when he breakfasted at the City Tavern, before proceeding to the home of Joseph Bonaparte at Bordentown, whence he went to Philadelphia. [50] It was at this time that he presented to Joseph Justice, of Trenton, the stamp which he had used to frank his correspondence during his visit to the United States in 1824, a privilege which had been granted him by special Act of Congress. Mr. Justice was then postmaster of Trenton, and editor of the *True American*, and had been a member of the reception committee at the time of Lafayette's visit of the previous year. [51]

[50] *Trenton Federalist*, July 18, 1825.

[51] Heston, *Jersey Waggon Jaunts*, Vol. II, p. 217. There is a facsimile of this stamp in the Trentoniana collection of the Free Public Library.

VI. Other Interesting Celebrations and Distinguished Visitors

THE citizens of Trenton were very active in the matter of celebrations in these early days and the newspapers of the period contain detailed descriptions of many of these festive occasions. On October 27, 1781, the capture of Cornwallis at Yorktown was celebrated by the inhabitants of Trenton "with every mark of joy and festivity." The day was ushered in with the beating of drums, and at eleven o'clock the governor, Council and Assembly attended a service at the Presbyterian Church conducted by the Rev. Elihu Spencer. In the evening the town was brilliantly illuminated.

The following year an event of state and national importance occurred at the French Arms tavern in celebration of the birth of a Dauphin and heir to the Crown of France. The birth was formally announced to Congress on May 2, 1782, and by Congress to the governors of the States. It was celebrated in Trenton May 24, 1782, when the "town artillery paraded at the market-place" and a dinner was attended by the officers of the State at the French Arms. The *New Jersey Gazette* for May 29, 1782, comments upon "the joy and satisfaction manifested on this occasion" and adds that "the liberal principles of the alliance, the generous aids offered to these States in consequence of it, and the great end it has been instrumental in securing, must ever interest us in the happiness of a nation whose character and conduct is the laudable reverse of that of our enemies." It was in connection with this celebration that the first American flag definitely known to have been hoisted in Trenton was unfurled to the breeze from the French Arms tavern.

A year later, on April 15, 1783, the citizens of Trenton held a gala celebration incident to the ratification of the "glorious peace" lately concluded with Great Britain at Versailles. About eleven o'clock in the morning, His Excellency Governor Livingston, the vice-president of the State, members of the Legislature, judges of the Supreme Court and other public officials, together "with a great number of the inhabitants of the town and vicinity," including the trustees, teachers and students of the Academy, met at the tavern of Rensselaer Williams on upper King Street, and from there went in procession to the Court House, where the governor's proclamation, declaring a cessation of hostilities in pursuance of the proclamation of Congress of

April 11 was read, after which thirteen cannon were fired, succeeded by the cheers of the people. At noon divine service was attended, the discourse being delivered by Dr. Elihu Spencer, pastor of the Presbyterian Church. At three o'clock entertainments were held in the French Arms, the Blazing Star [52] and Royal Oak taverns in King Street, where numerous toasts were drunk. At seven o'clock the houses of the town were illuminated, and the festivities of the day closed with a ball given in the French Arms.

[52] This tavern was located on North King Street and was kept by Francis Witt. When he leased the French Arms, on the southwest corner of King and Second Streets, in January 1785, he transferred the name Blazing,Star to that tavern. The former Blazing .Star tavern was later known as the Indian King.

In striking contrast to these festive occasions was the public commemoration of Washington's death which was observed by the town on the fourteenth of January, 1800, just one month after his death at Mount Vernon. In the morning, an oration was delivered by Samuel Stanhope Smith, President of the College of New Jersey, in St. Michael's Episcopal Church, of which the Rev. Henry Waddell was rector, and at half-past ten a procession was formed in Warren Street, opposite the church. As the bier, on which was deposited the General's hat, gloves and sword, was brought out of the church, preceded by the clergy and followed by the mayor and Common Council in deep black, it was received by the assembled troops with presented arms. Accompanied by the tolling of the bells, the procession moved off to the State House, where the ceremonies were performed. At a certain stanza in one of the elegiac songs, "eight beautiful girls, of about ten years of age, dressed in white robes and black sashes, with baskets on their arms filled with sprigs of cypress, rose from behind the speaker's seat" and strewed the cypress on the mock coffin. [53]

[53] Hall, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Trenton*, pp. 206-7.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS OF THE LATE EIGHTEENTH AND EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURIES

A number of distinguished visitors passed through Trenton during the early years of the nineteenth century and practically all of them, with the exception of Thomas Paine, were warmly received and entertained. The latter rode up to Trenton from Bordentown, February 28, 1803, to take the stage for New York. Refused a seat in the stage; he set out in his own chaise, but "a mob surrounded him with insulting music and he had difficulty in getting out of the town." The author of those ringing lines, "These are the times that try men's souls," showed neither fear nor anger, and "calmly observed that such conduct had no tendency to hurt his feelings or injure his fame, but rather gratified the one and contributed to the other."[54]

[54] *idem*., p. 210.

Early in November 1798 General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Ambassador to France, visited Trenton and was tendered a reception at the City Hotel, on north King Street, which was attended by the mayor, other city officers and heads of the government departments, and on January 18,

1806, a public dinner was given to Captain (afterward Commodore) Bainbridge, upon his return from Barbary. President Monroe, who was wounded in the Battle of Trenton, arrived in the city on Saturday, June 7, 1817, and the following morning attended service at the Presbyterian Church. On November 27, 1824, De Witt Clinton, governor-elect of the State of New York, who was in Trenton to demonstrate the practicability and utility of the proposed Morris Canal, was presented with an address by the vice-president of the Council, and later entertained at the City Tavern by a large number of the members of the New Jersey Legislature.

In 1799,[55] Trenton had the honor of becoming the seat of the federal government for a few weeks, while President Adams and his Cabinet were meeting in the city. Due to the prevalence of yellow fever in Philadelphia the public offices of the government were removed to this city on the twenty-sixth of August, and on the twenty-ninth, Benjamin Stoddert, Secretary of the Navy, wrote to President John Adams, who had already gone to Quincy, Mass., to escape the epidemic, that "the offices are now at this place and not badly accommodated" and urged the President to come to Trenton before the departure of the envoys to the French Republic.

[55] Accounts differ as to just when the public offices were removed to Trenton. Raum, in his *History of Trenton*, says that "in September 1793 the yellow fever made its appearance in Philadelphia and as a precautionary means to prevent the fever spreading among the inhabitants should it make its appearance here, the Common Council of the city appointed Messrs. Axford and Howell a committee to procure a house for travellers and for poor persons who might be taken ill of that malignant fever. The public offices of the United States government were removed here during the prevalence of the fever in 1793." The *History of Philadelphia*, by Scharf and Westcott, states that in 1797 "the office of Secretary of State was opened at Trenton, New Jersey, and the heads of the State and Post-Office departments went to the same town," while other histories refer to the removal of the offices to Trenton in 1798. As the yellow fever was prevalent in Philadelphia during all these years, it is probable that the offices were removed here upon several different occasions. From a study of the letters of President Adams, we conclude that he did not come to Trenton until 1799.

The President was most reluctant to come to Trenton, however, and replied to Stoddert that for him "to spend two or three months at Trenton with unknown accommodations cannot be very agreeable. Alone, and in private, I can put up with anything; but in my public station, you know I cannot."

In spite of Adams' reluctance, the members of his Cabinet, who were opposed to the French mission, continued to urge the desirability of his presence in Trenton, and on the second of September the President wrote to Stoddert that he would be at Trenton by the tenth or twelfth of October but that Mrs. Adams would not accompany him. Regarding accommodations he wrote:

I can and will put up, with my private secretary and two domestics only, at the first tavern or first private house I can find.

President Adams arrived in Trenton on the tenth of October, and the next day was greeted with fireworks. He found "the inhabitants of Trenton wrought up to a pitch of political enthusiasm that surprised him" in the expectation that Louis XVIII would soon be restored to the throne of France.

All of the Cabinet members were in Trenton, with the exception of the Attorney-General, who was in Virginia, and for six days, from October 10 to 15 inclusive, the President was employed

in conference with them, either at his own apartments in the Phoenix Hotel, which stood on Warren Street where West Hanover now joins Warren, or at their respective offices. An agreement on the French mission was finally reached and, on the fifth of November, the commissioners sailed for France. By the middle of November it was considered safe to return to Philadelphia and the offices were removed there.[56]

[56] *Works of John Adams*, Vol. IX, pp. 18, 19, 33, 252-3.

SOME CONTEMPORARY DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CITY

From the writings and journals of the travellers who passed through Trenton in these early days it is possible to get some idea of the appearance of the town. Trenton had been incorporated as a city in 1792 and, being on the stage route between New York and Philadelphia, had developed into quite a thriving place. The celebrated French naturalist, Francois Michaux, who passed through Trenton in 1802, says that "among the other small towns by the road side, Trenton seemed worthy of attention. Its situation upon the Delaware, the beautiful tract of country that surrounds it, must render it a most delightful place of abode." The beautiful surroundings of the town impressed more than one traveller, and James Flint, in his *Letters from America* in 1818, notes that "Trenton is beautifully situated at the head of the tide-water of the river Delaware. The orchards are luxuriant and the pasture grounds richer than any that I have hitherto seen in the country."

As most of these travellers spent only one night in Trenton, their comments are largely confined to the general appearance of the town and the condition of the taverns, which were "much dearer on this road than in Massachusetts and Connecticut."

An English tourist, Henry Wansey, writing in 1794, says of the town: "The houses join each other and form regular streets, very much like some of the small towns in Devonshire. The town has a very good market, which is well supplied with butcher's meat, fish and poultry. Many good shops are to be seen there, in general with seats on each side of the entrance, and a step or two up into each house." Isaac Weld, Jr., a native of Ireland, who passed through Trenton in July, 1796, writes that "the streets are commodious, and the houses neatly built."

The Duke de la Rochefoucauld, writing in 1797, says that the houses of the town were mostly wooden, those on the high street being best, "but very modest in appearance." He comments, however, upon the "number of handsome villas which greatly enrich the landscape" in the environs of the town.

In 1825 the Duke of Saxe-Weimar describes Trenton as a "very handsome place," with a "remarkable bridge crossing the Delaware." This bridge was begun in 1804 and on January 30, 1806, the completion of the span was celebrated with appropriate ceremonies. Gordon, in his *Gazetteer of New Jersey*, describes it as "a span of 1100 feet, having a double carriageway and footpaths resting on the chords of, and suspended from, a series of five arches, supported on stone piers. This structure has been much admired for its lightness, grace, and strength."

In 1834, according to Gordon's *Gazetteer*, Trenton proper contained:

425 dwellings, 13 taverns, about 30 stores, among which are 3 bookstores, and 3 silversmith shops; 3 printing offices . . . a public library . . . and a lyceum or literary association . . . . The Philadelphia steam-boats ply daily, and sometimes several times a day, one from Lamberton, and others from Bloomsbury; [57] and stages run 3 times a day by the rail-road to New York and Philadelphia.

[57] See note 9, above.

Gordon adds that "for some years past Trenton has not been in a very thriving state, but the late improvements have given new life to business and enterprise, and much prosperity is anticipated."