

FULTON HALL AND ITS GRAVEN IMAGE.

The erection of "Fulton Hall," in 1852, on the site of the old Lancaster County Prison, was one of the many constructive developments in Lancaster, Pa., which were a part of the larger prosperity throughout the United States at the period following the discovery of gold in California.

Fulton Hall may be regarded as an integral part of the group of municipal and semi-public structures built at that time, including our present Court House, the Prison at the east end of the city, the three extensive Conestoga Cotton Mills, Franklin and Marshall College, Oddfellows' Hall and three of the larger churches. At this period, too, it is said that over a thousand residences were erected.

Dame Tradition contributes the following, which gives a hint of those prosperous days:

The late Frederick Quade, one night on his doorstep, told the writer that he had lived in New York City early in 1852, within a house or two of Horace Greeley, who had persistently advised him (as he advised all other young men) to "Go West." So he, Quade, decided to follow the suggestion, if he went no further than Pittsburgh. Boarding a train, he found himself with a party of genial men from Lancaster, Pa., who were leaving Gotham, after evidently combining pleasure with business relative to the development of their home town, and who strongly advised him if he wanted to reach the booming city of the West, he should stop off at Lancaster, Pa. So persistent were these merry gentlemen that Quade stopped off, and stayed the night at "The Leopard" at the expense of John F. Schroeder. Quade the next morning found he was indeed in a city where extensive building operations were in progress, notably those mentioned above, and he procured work in connection with the Fulton Hall project.

The old Lancaster County jail, at King and Prince Sts., is associated in most minds as the scene of the massacre of the Conestoga Indians in 1763, as it was within its grim walls that the bloody act was perpetrated, about ninety years before it was abandoned, to make place for Fulton Hall. The deplorable occurrence of the massacre has been admirably chronicled in a recent paper by Miss Lottie M. Bausman.

The site of the old jail, as recorded in the deed to the projector of Fulton Hall, was "composed" in part "of a lot of ground, which Andrew Hamilton, and Anna Hamilton, his wife, by deed of the 16th day of May, 1730 A.D., recorded in the office for the recording of deeds in and for the county of Philadelphia, did grant and convey with two other lots, unto Caleb Pearse, John Wright, Thomas Edwards, and James Mitchell, in trust, for the use of the County of Lancaster, to erect, or cause to be erected thereon, a prison to

accommodate the public service of said county." The balance of the lot was deeded to the county by Mary Brown in June, 1829.

That it was proposed, at least three years before the erection of Fulton Hall, to abandon the old jail, is indicated by Ellis & Evans, in their history of Lancaster County, where they state that plans for the new prison in the east end of Lancaster, by John Haviland, were approved and adopted by the County Commissioners on January 30, 1849.

To provide legality for the sale of the old prison property, we find an interesting, and evidently special, "Act of Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania" entitled "An Act relative to the Lancaster County Prison" approved on the 19th day of February, 1850, in which it is enacted "that the Commissioners of Lancaster County are hereby authorized, as soon as the removal of the prisoners from the present jail to the Lancaster County prison, to sell at public sale the present prison property."

We find further on record that, in pursuance of the above authority, the Lancaster County Commissioners, on the 5th day of April, 1852, at the public house of Lewis Sprecher "did sell same to Peter G. Eberman and Christopher Hager for the sum of Eight Thousand Four Hundred Dollars (\$8,400.00)" for which a deed was executed April 12th, 1852, recorded April 19th, 1852, Book X, Vol. 7, p. 549, to which we refer for further details.

About a week after the above sale, Christopher Hager bought from Peter Eberman and wife their half interest in the above property for Four Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$4,500.00), and thus he became sole owner. The property transferred is described as bounded on the three sides by King, Water and Prince Sts., with a frontage, on the latter, of 154 feet, the northern 52 feet of which was afterwards used for the Fulton Hall project, running back 148 feet to Water Street.

Ellis & Evans record that the prisoners first occupied the new prison at east end of city on September 12, 1851. On May 4, 1852, Christopher Hager took out a permit for the erection of Fulton Hall, which happened to be the same day on which the Commissioners of Lancaster County secured a permit for the building of our present court house. On the same day, May 4, 1852, workmen began tearing down the old prison, as noted in the public press at that time.

The architect for Fulton Hall was Samuel Sloane, and the style of the building was of such a character that to this day it is regarded as being fairly good style, having elements of the Italian treatment.

The building was admirably constructed by John Sener (1798-1864), brother of Gottlieb Sener, both of a distinguished local family of their craft as builders, who also built the Masonic Hall, Trinity Lutheran Church and many other of our prominent buildings. Some of the plans and specifications for Fulton Hall are still in the hands of the descendants of John Sener.

The cost of this extensive building was only about \$15,000 and of the ground \$3,300, which figures are interesting, when compared with values of to-day. When Christopher Hager sold his interest, as noted later, to the Fulton Hall Association, his estimated cost of the property, including furnishings, etc., was listed at \$21,324.08. At the foot of the memorandum containing the above figures, we find the following, which indicates the personal atten-

tion and close interest he had given to the erection of the Hall. He wrote:

"Now, when I estimate my expenses, for frequent visits to Philadelphia, and my personal attention, to construction, and of many other minor expenses, of which I have made no account, I think I can frankly say the cost of the hall is fully \$22,000.00."

In Ellis and Evans' History of Lancaster County is the statement that part of the old jail building was included in Fulton Hall, and, judging from the present appearance of the lower portion of the Water Street wall of the opera house, it would seem that the materials of the old jail had been used to construct that wall, at least.

The first intimation in the public press which we have of the purpose for which the old jail property had been purchased appeared in the Lancaster *Examiner and Herald* of May 5, 1852 (about a month after the purchase), which states:

"Fulton Hall."

"The new opera house to be erected on the old jail property by Christopher Hager, Esq., is to be called Fulton Hall, in honor of Robert Fulton, the discoverer of the power of steam" (as applied to navigation), "a native of Lancaster County. The proprietor has evinced a laudable pride in the commemoration of one whom Lancaster County may feel pride in claiming as one of her most distinguished sons. The hall is to be 53 feet in frontage on Prince Street, 148 feet in depth, and three stories high. The first floor room is intended for political meetings, county conventions, etc. The second is to be fitted up more elaborately, and to be used for lectures and entertainments of a social nature. The third is to be occupied by societies. We have heard that the Red Man are considering occupying rooms here. The workmen began tearing down yesterday, and by the 10th of September we are informed we may have the pleasure of hearing Jenny Lind in Fulton Hall."

The work of building Fulton Hall must have proceeded very rapidly, for on August 4th (only three months later) the following appeared in the same paper:

"The Odd Fellows of the city intend getting up a grand ball on the evening of the dedication of their hall on the 2d of September. The ball will be held in Mr. Hager's new city hall, providing their building be not finished in time."

And the following appeared September 1, 1852:

"Dedication of Odd Fellows' Hall in This City Tomorrow," and further stated that the levee and meeting will be held in the new city hall on Prince Street, indicating that Odd Fellows' Hall had not been completed.

The *Examiner and Herald* on October 20, 1852, devoted three columns to the opening of Fulton Hall from which we quote the following:

"Opening of City Hall."

"The Principal Address Being Made by Judge Hayes."

"Fulton Hall was formally opened to the public on the evening of October 14, 1852. Fifteen hundred tickets were gratuitously distributed by the proprietor."

The hall was described as "admirably furnished and in all respects of comfort and beauty one of the best rooms of its kind in the state. A great desideratum has been supplied through the enterprise of a public-spirited gentleman, who we hope may reap plentifully from the investment."

"The Philharmonic Society and the Lancaster Band supplied the music."

Judge Hayes in his remarks referred to the fact that a few years prior there was a disposition to infuse new life into our city, and that in 1847, the Conestoga Cotton Mill having been erected, began operations; the new county prison at a cost of \$111,000 had been completed; three large churches had been built, and two cotton factories had been added to No. 1. He stated that a thousand dwellings had been erected, and 5,000 inhabitants added to our population. Judge Hayes continued by saying that, "from the then present condition of Lancaster, it was evident that a great desideratum for our city was a town hall for concerts and other musical entertainments, lectures and various other assemblies."

In voicing the principles which recognized the need of recreation by the people of our city, which was satisfied by the erection of Fulton Hall, the judge stated:

"The desire for recreation follows long continued effort, as naturally as night follows day. The municipal corporations in Europe understand this principle, and provide entertainment in varied detail."

He said that "For want of earlier accommodations such as Fulton Hall, the opportunity was lost for hearing in Lancaster the 'Nightingale of the North,' Jenny Lind. But now being equipped, we will soon have the pleasure of hearing the matchless violin of Ole Bull."

A news item appeared October 27, 1852, stating that "Ole Bull gave concerts in Fulton Hall on Thursday and Saturday of previous week, and a Philharmonic Concert was given Friday evening." The latter society gave concerts from time to time. That numerous entertainments, especially of a musical character, were given during the winter of 1852 is probable.

That lighter entertainments were included in the program we see from the note that the Philadelphia Glee Club gave a series of entertainments, and that Virginia Fuleroid, unrivalled Danseuse, accompanied the troupe.

Also, the following announcement:

EXTRAORDINARY ENTERTAINMENT

Kendall & Dixon's Ethiopian Minstrels

This renowned band of entertainers, the first in the United States, will appear October 15th in one of their inimitable entertainments.

To show the many uses to which Fulton Hall was put in the early days we cite the following:

In a Lancaster paper of November 17, 1852, appeared the line "The Presbyterian Congregation Worships in Fulton Hall," doubtless when the church was being rebuilt.

And again in the *Inland Daily* of May 30, 1853, the following:

"The Formal opening of Franklin and Marshall College will take place on June 7, 1853, at Fulton Hall, when addresses will be delivered by Judge

Hayes, Dr. Nevin and Bishop Potter. All of the officials of the city to be present."

We also note—"The June term (1853) of the Court of Common Pleas convened in Fulton Hall." This was doubtless during the erection of the present court-house.

According to the newspapers, in March, 1854, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was produced, which calls to our attention the fact that this dramatic anti-slavery production appeared on the stage in Lancaster seven years prior to the outbreak of the Civil War.

In the same year appeared Charles Shoppelrie from Paris, said to be the rival of Ole Bull, and Miss Lucy Stone of Massachusetts delivered two lectures in Fulton Hall, on the subject "Woman's Rights." The year following, Gottschalk, the American pianist, appeared and Madam Parodi gave her grand concert. Ole Bull gave a return concert in February, 1856. The same month we find the following in the *Inland Daily*:

"Horace Greeley, the old white hat philosopher, will deliver his lecture, 'Impressions of Europe,' in Fulton Hall." This reference to Greeley puts him in Lancaster very much earlier than is noted on the tablet at Hotel Brunswick.

In March, 1856, John B. Gough delivered his lecture on temperance in Fulton Hall, and the appetites of his hearers were so whetted that he repeated it the following month, and again the following May.

Tradition tells us that Adelina Patti sang at Fulton Hall at an early period of her career, for it was as a prodigy that she appeared.

Fulton Hall was naturally used for all sorts of entertainments, including church fairs, balls, exhibitions, teachers' institutes, graduation exercises of Franklin and Marshall College, also the High School Commencement exercises, and for many occasions of political interest.

A long line of distinguished actors, orators, and musicians appeared. These included the Davenport family, who, in a series of Shakespearian Plays, opened the Opera House when it came under the management of Mr. B. Yecker. Here, too, the inimitable Joe Jefferson, Booth, Barrett, and other distinguished actors, appeared,—in later years Madam Modjeska, the celebrated Polish actress.

It was at the Fulton Opera House that, within the past few years, Woodrow Wilson, now President of the United States, received the degree of Doctor of Laws from Franklin and Marshall College.

We hesitate to mention that it was there also that Count von Bernstorff, Ambassador from Germany to the United States, was similarly honored, of course before the disclosure of his nefarious conduct.

The writer remembers having been shown a manuscript book by Mr. B. Yecker containing the engagements of Fulton Hall, covering a long period of years, but unfortunately, this book seems to have been lost, and we regret exceedingly not having it at our disposal in connection with this paper, as it would have revealed many important and interesting occasions.

Our local historian, F. R. Diffenderffer, in his interesting and instructive paper, "Early Lancaster Playbills and Playhouses," recorded that "Mechanics Hall or Mechanics Institute on the first square of South Queen Street was fitted up as a theatre and held its place until the site of the old jail on North

Prince Street was converted into Fulton Opera House, where dramatic entertainments and indeed everything in the way of important public entertainments have mostly been held ever since."

Prior to October 8, 1855, Christopher Hager and wife by various deeds conveyed various undivided interests in the Fulton Hall property on North Prince Street to John F. Schroeder, Wm. B. Fordney, Nathaniel Ellmaker, Reah Frazer, Thomas E. Franklin, John F. Long, Christian Kieffer, John Black, Richard McGrann, Michael Barry, Henry Christ, Patrick Kelly, Michael Malone, David Longenecker, Patrick McEvoy and Jacob Bausman.

On October 8, 1855, same date, the above persons conveyed all their right, title, and interest in "The Fulton Hall Property" on Prince Street to the "Fulton Hall Association of the City of Lancaster" (reference Deed Book S, Vol. 8, Page 372).

The Fulton Hall Association was incorporated by special act of Pennsylvania Legislature May 7, 1856. (See page 622.) The members' names in charter are practically the same as the parties above mentioned.

A deed for adjoining lot in 1865 showed that Christopher Hager was still president of the association.

September 7, 1865, the stockholders authorized the sale of the property and the association sold same to Hilaire Zaepfel and Blasius Yecker.

Following the death of Blasius Yecker in 1904, the "Fulton Opera House Company" was organized and has been in operation to the present time, under the management by Charles Yecker, his son.

Many interesting records of this last period might be added, which the length of the paper does not permit.

A unique and interesting feature of Fulton Hall is THE WOODEN IMAGE OF ROBERT FULTON above its doorway.

Of the thousands of people who have entered or passed Fulton Hall, probably few were cognizant of the statue of the world-wide celebrity in the niche over the doorway. And, when we note that this image portrays Robert Fulton, a native of Lancaster County, we realize that many might have been interested in it.

Then, too, be it remembered, the image is unique in being Lancaster's only portrait statue in public view. The writer, after passing for years this graven image, became curious as to its origin. Inquiry was made of the late John F. Sener, whose father, John Sener, had built Fulton Hall, and probably placed the statue in its niche. He knew only that it was carved in cedar wood, of which figure-heads of ships are made, but referred to Frederick Quade, who had been employed upon the building when it was placed.

About that time came a letter from the venerable artist, both sculptor and painter, the late J. Augustus Beck of Harrisburg, but originally of Lancaster County, inquiring what had become of the statue of Fulton, which stood in a niche in the front of Fulton Hall, and he continued:

"I can tell you who carved that figure. It was a stone cutter from Philadelphia, named Hugh Cannon. I was in his studio where he carved both in wood and marble."

The files of the *Intelligencer* revealed, in issue of March 21, 1854, two years after the erection of Fulton Hall, that "A splendid statue of Robert

Fulton was on Thursday placed in its appropriate niche. It attracted much attention, and was carved by Mr. Cannon, of Philadelphia.

Mr. Beck wrote that, when he, Beck, was an apprentice in 1848 with the late Major Howell on East King Street (next Lane's Store), Hugh Cannon was working there, and at that time, Cannon had a high reputation in Philadelphia in his craft. Charles Howell had brought him to Lancaster about that date, probably in connection with some monumental work.

That this man Cannon had marked talent and considerable distinction as a sculptor, is evident from the fact that he is represented in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia by marble busts of Henry Clay, Nicholas Biddle, and of the sculptor himself. Mr. Beck also related that Cannon executed a marble bust of Frederick Groff, engineer, which was placed under a monumental canopy at Fairmount Water Works, Philadelphia.

The Hon. W. U. Hensel, at the time of the Lancaster Portrait Exhibition in 1912, took great interest in tracing an early portrait of Nicholas Biddle by Jacob Eicholtz, Lancaster's greatest portrait painter, and now we find another interesting association in the fact that Hugh Cannon, who carved our statue of Robert Fulton for Lancaster, also carved a marble portrait bust of the same distinguished Philadelphian, Nicholas Biddle.

Edward Biddle, Esq., art critic, recently wrote us that we are indeed right as to the bust of Nicholas Biddle having been carved by Hugh Cannon, and that he possesses a letter from Cannon to Nicholas Biddle, requesting him to inspect the finished work. He also wrote that Cannon was employed by Strotheus (the elder) of Philadelphia.

Mr. Beck wrote that Hugh Cannon had a brother who, when in the employ of Leonard and Bear of Lancaster, carved two unique gate posts, now at Woodward Hill Cemetery. They are of grey Picton Stone, and each is surmounted by a carved human head of solemn visage, probably representing Memory and Sorrow. These gate posts guard the entrance to the lot on which is the grave of the late Hon. W. U. Hensel.

Mr. Beck wrote that he visited Hugh Cannon in Philadelphia in 1851, at his studio, which was a carriage house where several wooden images were under way. He learned nothing of Cannon's nationality, but wrote that his visage was more Irish than Scotch, and did not learn whether he was born in America or not.

While our statue of Fulton by Cannon may not be a great work of art, yet it is far above others of the class to which it belongs, such as that of Washington in Independence Hall, Philadelphia, and one of same subject in our own Masonic Hall, Lancaster.

Our image of Fulton is an interesting and decorative work. There is good characterization and dignity. The pose is somewhat stiff, and the scroll in hand a conventional feature, but the artist's admirable use of a military cloak gives a richness to the composition which is artistic and effective.

There is a rugged treatment of the head and hair which is strong in effect and is very similar to that used by Howard Roberts in his statue of Fulton which stands under the rotunda of the Capitol at Washington, a companion piece to Miss Blanche Nevin's statue of General Muhlenburg.

It would be interesting to know which of the then existing portraits of

Fulton was the basis of Cannon's Fulton, for of course it was not done from life, as Fulton died in 1815. There is quite a marked similarity in the likeness as portrayed by Cannon in 1852, and Roberts about 1880, and both probably based their work on the celebrated bust by Jean Houdon (1741-1828), and the oil portrait by Benjamin West, president of the Royal Academy.

The Philadelphia sculptor Rush was a noted producer of wooden images while Fulton lived, but we know of none of this subject by him.

The statue is in remarkably good preservation, considering that it is of wood, and exposed to the weather since March, 1854.

As to the cost of this work of art, we find in a statement of value of Fulton Hall Property, made when same was transferred to the Fulton Hall Association, as follows: "Estimated cost of statue of Fulton, together with some rough casting on Water Street, etc., \$375," so that we may assume that the sculptor Cannon received between \$300 and \$375 for his production.

At the time of the recent Hudson-Fulton Celebration in New York, attention was called to the statue of Fulton on Lancaster Fulton Opera House facade.

It might be noted that the continued interest of J. Augustus Beck in our wooden image of Fulton was probably due in part to the fact that he, while a student of sculpture in Rome, about 1856, contemplated the execution of a marble statue of Fulton for Lancaster City.

Frederick Quade told the following anecdote about our statue of Fulton:

On the day that the crate containing the wooden image had arrived, and was standing on the sidewalk in front of the Hall entrance, Quade told Mr. Hager, the proprietor, that the workmen found it impossible to get along amicably with the foreman, as he was constantly getting into a high dudgeon, and asked what could be done about it. The reply came promptly that they might petrify the old man, and put him in the niche, and send the statue of Fulton back to Philadelphia.

Fortunately, the suggestion was not practicable, so the graven image of Robert Fulton was ensconced in its niche on the facade of Fulton Hall, to memorialize a world-wide celebrity, who was a native of Lancaster County.

As Fulton Hall, and as Fulton Opera House, our playhouse has for sixty-five years been the gathering place of the people of Lancaster for entertainment, instruction, social functions, celebrations, and for many other events, so that as originally projected, it has contributed greatly to the welfare and happiness of the people of Lancaster and its vicinity.

Author: Hager, Walter C.

Title: Fulton Hall and its grave image / by Walter C. Hager.

Primary Material: Book

Subject(s): Hager, Christopher.
Sloane, Samuel.
Sener, John.
Cannon, Hugh.
Fulton Hall (Lancaster, Pa.)
Fulton Opera House.
Municipal buildings--Pennsylvania--Lancaster County.

Publisher: Lancaster, Pa. : Lancaster County Historical Society, 1918

Description: 141-148 p. : ill. ; 23 cm.

Series: Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society ; v. 22,
no. 9

Call Number: 974.9 L245 v.22

Location: LCHSJL -- Journal Article (reading room)

=====

+++++

Institution Name
Institution Address
Institution Phone Number
Institution E-mail Address