

ANNUAL ADDRESS

BY THE

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PREACHERS, PEDAGOGUES AND POETS OF BUFFALO IN 1825.

DELIVERED AT ST. JAMES HALL, BY APPOINTMENT OF THE BUFFALO HISTORICAL SOCIETY, ON THE OCCASION OF THE FOURTH "OLD FOLKS' FESTIVAL," JANUARY 24, 1867.

FELLOW CITIZENS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

In their selection of the speaker to-night, the Buffalo Historical Society have had in view the Annual Festival of the Old Residents of this city, and do not expect from me any learned or elaborate historical discussion. Having been a collector of antiquities long before the Society I represent for this time was originated, I have not been so much a contributor to their collections, as a rival, in a humble way, for old books and other monuments of the past. But they have this advantage, that Historical Societies are corporations living on through the centuries, and gradually absorbing all private collections as their owners pass off the stage. For my own, I desire no other or better eventual destination. I am laboring for them, if not with them, in gathering materials which are to be consigned to their archives. "Art is long, life is short," is an adage of the Latins (*Ars longa, Vita brevis*), beautifully rendered by one of our poets:

"Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though strong and brave,
Still like muffled drums are beating
Funeral marches to the grave."

The Historical Society of this city is the natural depository of the relics of the past; and it is to be hoped that our citizens will remember this in their testamentary dispositions, if not before.

From any formal or lengthy discussion of historical topics, I am excused, not only by the occasion, but by the exhaustive labors of my predecessors. Who would care to enter upon the early exploration of the region about Lake Erie by the Jesuits and their associates who traversed the wilderness, while the first settlements in New England were yet in their infancy, after the able dissertation of O. H. Marshall? Who would venture upon the early history of Western New York after the elaborate history in which William Ketchum has made us familiar with its Indian tribes, treaties and councils? Of the war of 1812 and the destruction of Buffalo, what remains to be said? The burnings and murders of that time, the flight of the population, the barbarities of the British and their savage allies are as familiar as household words.

And what more can be said as to that vexed question, why Buffalo was called "Buffalo;" whether the great bison of the West, extending his visits to this locality, gave us the name, or the multitude of bass-wood trees found here described in the Indian tongue by a word resembling our cognomen, came to designate the Place of Bass-wood? If Buffalo means soft timber, we have enough of that yet to fully justify its appropriateness. If it means the hard-headed representative of the western prairies, who monopolizes the best pastures and takes possession of every oasis in the great North American Desert, we have his likeness still, and may congratulate ourselves that in either case the name of the Queen City of the Lakes is sufficiently significant of portions of its population.

Besides, the very able and flattering reminiscences of many of our old citizens which have appeared in the papers of the Buffalo Historical Society, would prevent my attempting the formal biography of any one departed magnate, were it not forbidden

by the character of the occasion which calls us together, and the general and reasonable expectation of free sketches of the past, in which may be mingled the grave and the gay, as rather suitable for this Annual Old Settlers' Festival, already assuming the importance of a permanent institution.

I shall go back to the period of my first knowledge of Buffalo, and mainly confine your attention to the year 1825, memorable for the completion of the great Erie Canal, the visit of La Fayette, the dedication of "Ararat" by Mordecai Manuel Noah, and the execution of the three Thayers for the murder of John Love.

Perhaps the completion of the Erie Canal may be considered the great event of the first half of the nineteenth century. It is now almost forgotten that this magnificent undertaking was bitterly opposed by a large party usually dominant in the State; that the city of New York, which it has made the centre of the trade of the New World, was, with a characteristic stupidity, generally hostile to "Clinton's big ditch," as its citizens facetiously termed it; and that nothing but the genius and energy of the great statesman who projected it, and the completion and use of the long level west of Utica, when unbelievers who maintained that it would never hold water, were made to see boats afloat, could ever have secured the completion of the greatest work of the age.

The reception of General La Fayette was a great event for Buffalo. The old veteran stood upon a platform in front of the Eagle Tavern,* and the crowds assembled from the surrounding country passed him in single file, each person taking him by the hand. The largest battle of the Revolution in which he was engaged, could not have resulted in greater fatigue to the old hero than the hand-shaking of that day.

I saw the foundation of "Ararat" laid, not on Grand Island,

* Situated on Van Staphorst avenue (Main street), west side, just south of Cazenovia avenue (Court street.) The "eagle" which held its place for so many years over the door of this celebrated inn, and gave it its name now spreads its wings over the United States department in the library of the Society.—E.D.

but in St. Paul's church, with a strange mixture of Hebrew and Christian rites, a curious commingling of Jew and Gentile. There was Major Noah, with his Hebrew chorister and ritual, dedicating Grand Island as a City of Refuge for the scattered people who rejected Christ; and by his side an Episcopal rector in full canonicals, uttering a Christian benediction. Ararat came to nothing, and the only memorial of this City of Refuge which remains is the corner-stone, all there ever was of it, which, owing to the efforts of the Hon. Lewis F. Allen, has been deposited in the rooms of the Historical Society of Buffalo.

Still giving our attention to this memorable year, we have to note the leading men of that time resident in Buffalo:—our orators, statesmen and poets; our clergymen, schoolmasters, doctors and lawyers; our beaux, bon-vivants and wits. Perhaps it will be said: "This is rather a grandiloquent catalogue for a western village in 1825." But is not every village a world in miniature, and especially such a precocious town as Buffalo; always anticipating its coming greatness; always blowing its horn in the face of mankind; always counting, Chicago fashion, three or four for every two of its population!

Buffalo, in 1825, published to the world in general, and particularly and pugnaciously thrust into the face of Black Rock, with whom we waged a deadly war, a census of two thousand four hundred souls. Possibly there may have been a population approximating to two thousand; but the most ambitious, restless, pugnacious, egotistic people in the State of New York; and withal, abounding in men of great enterprise and ability. Surely among such a population, our catalogue need not be considered a joke, or even an exaggeration, seeing that in little more than fifty years, a noble city of more than one hundred thousand inhabitants, of which these men were the fathers and founders, bears witness that there were "giants" here in those days,—men of renown, who have left their mark for all time on the shores of Lake Erie.

But it may be anxiously inquired, how can you bring your numerous classes within the compass of an Address which ought not to exceed thirty or forty minutes? I reply, that as one of the standing orators for the Old Folks' Festival, I wish to lay out work for several years for myself and associates, and this Address is but an exordium. I do not intend to imitate the example of that long-winded Scotch Presbyterian, who, being called on to preach before the Vermont Legislature, stated, after an introduction which occupied an hour, that he should consider the remainder of his subject under nineteen particulars; upon which intimation his appalled audience rose and left him to discourse to vacant seats. I engage to touch lightly upon a few points, reserving the nineteen particulars for future anniversaries and other orators, who cannot fail to be grateful for the large and exhaustless field I have opened up before them.

It will not be deemed inappropriate to commence with our pedagogues. The "schoolmaster was abroad" in Buffalo, in 1825; and in the school work of that year, I may say with Æneas, "*Magna pars fui.*" The two teachers best known to myself were Millard Fillmore and John C. Lord. Mr. Fillmore's work in this interesting field had ceased before mine began; but knowing many of his pupils, and being *particularly interested* in one of them, I consider myself at liberty to refer to his labors as a teacher of the young idea.

Mr. Fillmore was engaged in this vocation at the Cold Spring, near Buffalo,* and also in the village proper, in the old Mullett house, then standing near the corner of Main and Genesee streets. He "boarded round," at least a part of the time, and was "well thought of." Indeed, he was considered so "likely a young man" among the old folks, that it was suggested by some that he would yet come to be a Justice of the Peace, while others did not think the Assembly Chamber of Albany beyond the reach of his endeavors.

* Two miles north of the village center.

I cannot of my knowledge speak of his success, in general, as a teacher; but having had one of his pupils, a daughter of the late Dr. Ebenezer Johnson, afterwards under my care, under a special covenant to honor and obey, I have been led to believe that Mr. Fillmore's discipline was not what it should have been. Yet this same village schoolmaster succeeded in after life in the government of a great nation, which esteemed him a sagacious President and successful Chief Magistrate, of whom it can only be said that he is not the first of the notable rulers of men who was yet unable to govern a woman. One proof I can produce of the intellectual progress of his pupils, in the poetic effusion of one of his scholars, which, if unequal to Gray's *Elegy*, is sufficiently striking and unique to deserve a record in the Historical Society of Buffalo. This poem details the fate of a young man, suddenly cut off in the prime of life:—probably one of the boys who enjoyed the instruction of our distinguished townsman.

This brilliant effusion is "owned to" by one of Mr. Fillmore's pupils, and presented to the singing meeting in the New England Kitchen,* where it has been read with great approbation. Here it is:

LINES ON THE DREADFUL DEATH OF CALIB DULITTLE, WHO RECENTLY
CAME TO THIS SETTLEMENT FROM VERMONT.

One Calib Dulittle was his name,
Who lately to this village came,
Residing ni his brother Jeemes,
Last Friday noon went out, it seems,

To cut sum timber for a sled.
The sno being deep, he had to wade
Full 40 rod to a ash tree,
The top being dry, as you may see.

* A distinguishing feature of the Old Settlers' Festival, presided over and conducted by Mrs. Dr. Lord.

Our Calib swung his ax on hi,
And thro the air he let it fly;
His work he thot was nearly done,
For it was now ni sit of sun.

The tree was holler at the coar,
And when it come a tumblin ore
It hit poor Cale upon the hed,
And he was tookin up for ded.

REMARKABLE was soon distrest
While THANKFUL, she wept in his brest,
No tongue can tell how MERCY felt
While on his shockin deth she dwelt.

Oh, cruel fate, thou wast unkind
To take our Cale and leave us hind,
For Calib was our rite han man,
And worker of our good farm land.

And when that tre it killed him ded,
It nocked our prospiks in the hed,
And laid him in the churchyard bed,
While on his body worms is fed.

Now, skollars, all a warnin take,
How Calib Dulittle met his fate,
And when you have a sled to make,
Don't let a tre fall on your pate.

Of the merits of John C. Lord, as schoolmaster, and of his select school, which was located in one of the Old Court House rooms, in the winter of 1825-'26, I am too modest to speak. We had a liberal range of study from Webster's Spelling Book up to the French and Roman classics; but as several of our professional and literary notables, such as Dr. White and O. H. Marshall, Esq., were among the pupils, it may yet be hoped that "Papers" on this interesting topic may be read before the Historical Society.

I shall only refer to an extract from a New Year's Poem, published on the first of January, 1826, in the Buffalo *Journal*,

of which David M. Day was the publisher, which poetic effusion, of my positive knowledge, came out of that schoolroom; and I shall quote only what relates to the affairs of 1825 and its remarkable events.

* * * * *

VII.

Let despots mock the joy with which we met
 Upon our shores our fathers' friend and son,
 And greeted him—the gallant La Fayette.
 Dare they insult the flag that bore him home?
 No! Europe never will again forget
 The due respect and proper courtesies
 Columbia's Banner claims upon the sea.

VIII.

My Muse wants breathing, she is too sublime
 For modern ears; 't were well to take good care
 Lest criticks ridicule her lofty rhyme—
 Which would indeed be a most sad affair.
 We'll lower our strain then, and devote a line
 To home concerns. 'T is said that Buffalo
 Is soon to be a city, and I know—

IX.

No reason why she should not. The foundation
 Of Ararat we lately helped to fix
 And have had other public celebrations
 (According to my note-book sixty-six,)
 And have a right to make our calculations
 On future greatness. There is something pretty
 And quite harmonious in the name of "city."

X.

The year hath been to us a Jubilee,
 A year of great rejoicing; we have seen
 Lake Erie's waters moving to the sea
 On their own element. The bark I deem
 Which bore our gift, more famous yet shall be,
 Than that proud ship in which to ancient Greece
 The intrepid Jason bore the Golden Fleece.

XI.

Yet boast we not of mighty labors done
 In our own strength or wisdom; we would bless
 His sacred name in morning orison,
 Who stamped his footstep on the wilderness;
 And towns and cities rose,—the busy hum
 Of congregated man, where erst HE viewed
 One dark and boundless solitude.

XII.

And the white sail now glistens on the Lake,
 Where late the Indian in his bark canoe,
 Bursting from some low marsh or tangled brake,
 Shot forth upon the waters joyously,
 Perchance his annual hunting tour to make,
 Where since the cultivated field, I ween,
 That savage mariner himself hath seen.

I dare not compare this poem with that inimitable effusion of Mr. Fillmore's pupil; and outside of their respective merits there are two reasons for my forbearance; one is, that my competitor is a lady; and the second is, that the aforesaid lady has it in her power greatly to annoy me if I should be so unfortunate as to awaken her indignation. Let her wear the laurel crown, so there be domestic tranquillity—peace at the hearth.

While on the subject of poetry, that remarkable ballad on the murder of John Love which appeared in the same year ought not to be omitted. It should be preserved, like a fly in amber, in the archives of the Buffalo Historical Society. Whether it was the production of any of the pupils who attended the schools before referred to I cannot say. It has been claimed by the town of Boston, but I think it belongs to Buffalo.

As the cities of Greece contended for the birthplace of Homer, so it may hereafter happen to Boston and Buffalo to contend for the honor of the nativity of the immortal poet who sang the dreadful fate of John Love and the crime of the three Thayers, who were executed in this city, June 17th, 1825. I have had surmises that one of my own pupils might possibly have

been the author of this lamentable ballad, but I will not press the claim, as my friend Fillmore may contend with justice that this mournful ditty was quite as likely to have issued from his school as mine. I read it as a reminiscence of the year 1825, and for the purpose of putting it upon record in the Historical Society.

THE LAMENTABLE BALLAD ON THE MURDER OF JOHN LOVE BY THE
THREE THAYERS.

In England some years ago
the sun was pleasant fair and gay
John Love on board of a ship he entered
and sald in to america.

Love was a man very perceiving
in making trades with all he see
he soon engaged to be a sailor
to sail up and down on Lake Eri.

he then went into the Southern countries,
to trade for furs and other skins
but the cruel French and saveg Indians
came very near of killing him.

But God did spare him a little longer
he got his loding and came down the lake
he went into the town of boston,
Where he made the grate mistake.

With Nelson Thayer he made his station
thru the summer for to stay
Nelson had two brothers Isaac and Israel
love lent them money for thare debts to pay

Love lent them quite a sum of money
he did befriend them every way
but the cruel cretres tha couldent be quiet
till they had taken his sweet life away

One day as tha were all three together
this dreadful murder tha did contrive
tha agreed to kill Love and keep it secret
and then to live and spend thare lives

On the fifteenth evening of last december
in eighteen hundred and twenty four
tha invited Love to go home with them
and they killed and murdered him on the floor

First Isaac with his gun he shot him
he left his gun and went away
Then nelson with his ax he chopt him
till he had no life that he could perceive

After tha had killed and most mortly brus'd him
tha draw'd him out whare tha killed thare hogs
tha then carried him of a pease from the house
and deposited him down by a log

The next day tha ware so very bold
tha had loves horses riding round
Some asked the reason of Loves being absent
tha said he had clerd and left the town

tha said he had forged in the town of Eri
the sheriff was in pursuit of him
He left the place and run awa
and left his debts to collect by them

tha went and forgd a power of turney
to collect loves notes when they ware due
tha tore and stormed to git thare pay
and sevrl nabors they did sue

After they had run to a high degree
in killing love and forgery
tha soon were taken and put in prison
whare tha remained for thare cruelty

Tha were bound in irons in the dark dungon
for to remain for a little time
tha ware all condemd by the grand jury
for this most foul and dreadful crime

Then the Judge pronounced thare dreadful sentence
with grate candidness to behold
you must be hanged untell your ded
and lord have mursey on your sols.

But enough has been said of the poets and poetry of Buffalo in 1825. I shall defer the pathetic narrative of the shipwreck of the canal boat *Medora* to a future occasion.

Passing from these light topics, will not the audience accept a graver theme, in brief sketches of the clergymen of Buffalo, in the year of our Lord 1825, of whom it may be truly said that they would lose nothing by comparison with their successors in 1867. The leading denominations were represented here in 1825, each by a single church. The first regularly settled clergyman was the Rev. Miles P. Squier, in the First Presbyterian Congregation. He was an educated man, not without good points, but with an overweening self appreciation, which, while it gave offence to some, was to the major part of his acquaintance a source of amusement. He could not have exhibited a greater dignity of deportment had he been Bishop of Rome or Czar of all the Russias, and resembled the man described by Coleridge who always took off his hat when he spoke of himself. He would have shaken hands with Andrew Jackson or George the Fourth, with the patronizing and condescending air of one conferring a great favor. In the latter years of his life he wrote a book on the "Origin of Evil," in which, I have no doubt, he imagined he had mastered this intricate subject, untied the Gordian knot in theology, and left nothing further to be said or desired on the topic. He was a worthy man and a sincere Christian, notwithstanding his eccentricities, and is remembered with affection by some of our old residents. The successor of Mr. Squier was the Rev. Gilbert Crawford. I became acquainted with him and attended his services in 1825. He was a Scotchman, and had had the advantage of the admirable training of the time-honored and witness-bearing church of his fathers. Though tenacious of the five points of Calvinism, and in the beginning of his ministry inclined to limit the entrance of the Way of Life to Presbyterians of the bluest cast, yet with time and experience he became tolerant and catholic in his judgments of those who "cast out devils" under other

symbols than the Assembly's Catechism. Mr. Crawford was one of the ablest preachers ever settled in Western New York. He was of a more ardent nature than is usual with his countrymen, and was at times a model of pulpit eloquence, moving all hearts with his vehement and passionate oratory.

Though Gilbert Crawford has long rested from his labors, yet his memory is green in the hearts of multitudes in Western New York who have been made the wiser and the better by his ministry.

With the Rev. Mr. Searle, Rector of St. Paul's, I next made acquaintance. He was the predecessor of the Rev. Dr. Shelton, who has been settled here for a longer period than any other clergyman, and who enjoys a large measure of the esteem and affection of our community, irrespective of denominational boundaries. Mr. Searle was a finished gentleman in manners, and was said to be of somewhat convivial tastes. He was highly and deservedly esteemed. My impression is that he was the highest kind of High Churchman, holding the Kingdom of Heaven to be a close corporation in the Episcopal Church, and looking upon those without her pale, as the "celestials" regard all people not inhabiting the "Flowery Kingdom," as outside barbarians.

Of Diocesan Bishops, we knew little in those primitive days. I do not remember to have seen Bishop Hobart, the Episcopal Bishop of New York, at this time. I well recollect, however, an introduction to Bishop Dubois, the Roman Catholic Prelate of this State in 1825. He was made known to me by Mr. Le Couteulx, an old and worthy citizen, whose memory should long since have been honored by a "Paper" read before our Historical Society. Bishop Dubois was the most polite of Frenchmen, and seemed amazed at his own hardihood in venturing so far beyond the pale of civilization; feeling, like the traveled Turk, that he had, in his visit to Buffalo, reached the "Wall of the World."

My recollection is that the only Roman Catholic priest here in 1825, was Father Pax, a German, who ministered in a very

humble edifice, then standing upon the present site of St. Louis' Cathedral. He was esteemed a worthy man, but a severe disciplinarian; for though his name was Peace, his practice was occasionally belligerent—the old gentleman freely applying his cane to the shoulders of refractory parishioners.

The Baptist Church of this city has never enjoyed the labors of a more eloquent divine than the Rev. Mr. Handy, who, in 1825, held forth the Word of Life in Buffalo. He labored as one standing by the grave's mouth, with his eye fixed upon the Heavenly City he was soon to enter.

How well I remember his youthful and intellectual countenance, upon which the shadows of death were falling, his earnest and eloquent appeals, his affectionate manner, his hectic cough, marking him for the grave, where he was early borne by a weeping community. Many were attracted to his ministry outside the Baptist communion, for while a sincere immersionist, he was a catholic Christian, who held the essential doctrines of the gospel far above all denominational shibboleths.

There remains but the Methodist Episcopal communion, which, if I mistake not, was served in 1825 by the Rev. Glezen Fillmore, an able and faithful minister of the New Testament, whose praise is in all the churches, and who yet survives,* the venerable and venerated relic of a past age.

In conclusion, let me say that the Historical Society of this city has the main design of preserving all records of the early history of Buffalo, and all the reminiscences of its pioneer population. They are fast passing away. Every year their numbers are diminishing, and we have evidence to-night that only a few venerable Fathers and Mothers survive of those who encountered the perils of the wilderness, and who suffered the loss of the fruits of their industry in the burning of Buffalo. They remind us by their presence of what they have done and suffered, in laying the foundation of this populous, wealthy and

* Rev. Mr. Fillmore died January 26th, 1875.

beautiful city. What amazing changes have these aged men and women seen, changes in a lifetime, which ordinarily require centuries in their accomplishment. What contrasts must be apparent to them, as they look back to the period when Buffalo was an insignificant hamlet, fringed with impervious forest on one hand, and the solitary waters of our great inland sea on the other; the mournful sighing of the winds in the tree tops, and the solemn singing of the stormy waves, deep calling unto deep, only broken by the whoops of the savages who came to gaze upon the white men who had invaded their solitudes. With what anxious foreboding did the young mother clasp her babe to her bosom, as the red warriors looked curiously into her cabin, knowing that neither age nor sex were spared by them when out upon the war path. Could that fair girl or her youthful husband, in their most vivid imaginings, have conceived it possible that they should live to see such a city as this, with a harbor whitened with the sails of many populous states, and a commerce more important than that of the entire sea-board, in the year 1800? Like a dream, when one awaketh, must these changes seem to the venerable survivors who saw Buffalo in the early years of the nineteenth century.

Separated from the East, the supplies of the early settlers were forwarded slowly by dangerous and uncertain routes. They were deprived of the ordinary appliances of civilization, dwelling apart from their brethren. They now hear the sounds of commerce on an artificial river connecting this city with the ocean and the world; and the solitudes, which once were broken only by the hoot of the owl, or the melancholy cry of the whip-poor-will, are now resonant with the rush of commerce and the shouts of the canal driver. They fled, more than half a century ago, from their burning habitations, pursued by a merciless foe; they saw the results of all their toil dissipated in a conflagration, from which it seemed that Buffalo could never recover; they have since seen her rise from her ashes like the fabled Phoenix, and on her banner the excellent motto of the Empire State, of

which she is the second city in commercial rank, "Excelsior."

Recovering from the momentary panic, the people of Buffalo, with the indomitable energy which was a marked characteristic of our pioneer population, returned, not to sit down among the ashes of their houses and their goods; but to rebuild and restore, to lay anew its foundations, to repeat the trials and self-denial of years, the fruits of which were destroyed in an hour, to commence their labors a second time in a solitude as profound as that which they invaded when they first entered their cabins on the shores of Erie.

Survivors of those who have borne the burthen and heat of the day, we welcome you to these festivities, commemorative of your trials and labors, and especially of your triumph. Behold the city which you and yours have built! Behold this audience, in which is represented so much intelligence, character and wealth, so much youth and beauty; which, but for you, could never have met to make this Hall vocal with their congratulations! The Historical Society of Buffalo welcome you, and promise, before this vast congregation, that your names and your deeds shall not perish from among men; that future generations shall know from their archives, the privations and sufferings of that enterprising band, who first camped under the "grand old trees" bordering the solitary waters, now ploughed by a thousand keels; who, under the arches of that primitive forest, or in their rude log cabins, offered prayer and praise to Him who had been a wall about them in all their perilous journey, and to whom they looked for protection from the dangers they must yet encounter.

We welcome the living. We honor the dead. We implore for these survivors the divine benediction and the good hope of another and a better life.

Over the dead of two wars, separated by more than half a century, some of you have been called to mourn; the associates of your youth, the friends who labored by your side, have for the most part passed into the unseen world, yet you have not

labored or suffered in vain. You behold the result of your toils to-day, and beyond this "there remaineth a rest for the people of God." Why should you count the sufferings of this time worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed?

Wayworn and aged friends,—may we not apply to you the pathetic words of a poet:

"My feet are worn and weary with the march,
On the rough road and up the steep hill-side;
Oh, City of our God, I fain would see
Thy pastures green, where peaceful waters glide.

My garments, travel-worn and stained with dust,
Oft rent by briars and thorns that crowd my way,
Would fain be made, O Lord, my righteousness,
Spotless and white in Heaven's unclouded ray.

Patience, poor soul, the Savior's feet were worn,
The Savior's heart and hands were weary, too;
His garments travel-stained, worn and old,
His vision blinded with a pitying dew.

Love thou the path of sorrow that He trod;
Toil on, and wait in patience for thy rest;
Oh, City of our Lord, we soon shall see
Thy glorious walls, home of the loved and blest."