

The Federal Parade of 1788

[In 1868, Naphtali Phillips, of New York, then a man of ninety-five, wrote to his friend, Mr. James McAllister, Jr., of Philadelphia, describing the Federal Parade held in Philadelphia on July 4, 1788. When Phillips participated in the procession he was a boy of fifteen. The parade was held by the Federalists to celebrate the adoption of the national Constitution by a majority of the states and by Virginia. The original of the following letter is found among the manuscripts of The Library Company of Philadelphia. — EDITOR.]

New York, October 24th, 1868.

My dear friend McAllister:

... As ... respects the great federal procession in "1788," I have been anticipated by the *Sunday Dispatch*. I shall make a few particulars in addition thereto.

First, in an open carriage drawn by elegant horses, sat Chief Justice McKane [Thomas McKean] with other judges of the [Pennsylvania] Supreme Court, holding in his hand the new [United States] Constitution in a frame. This was received by the populace with great rejoicing. (I do not think I can give the procession in its particular order, but I give it to you as well as I recollect.) Then came farmers with large cattle and sheep on a platform drawn by horses, all handsomely decorated. The farmers were sowing grain as they walked along. Then came an handsome ship elegantly adorned with flags in all parts of it, manned by young midshipmen and drawn by horses, on wheels, and one of the crew throwing the lead as they passed along singing out in true sailors' voice "By the Deep Nine," "Quarter Less Seven," and so on.

Next, a printing press on a platform drawn by horses, composers setting types; and the press worked by journeymen distributing some printed matter as they went along.

Speaking of the press brings to my mind the words of "Junius," as follows: "Let it be impressed on your minds, let it be instilled to your children, that the liberty of the press is a great palladium of your civil and religious rights." I do not know that I have given you the exact words, but you have the substance.

Next came blacksmiths with their forge, with a large bellows keeping up a blast to keep alive the flame of liberty. Next came

shoemakers on a platform, men and boys soleing and heeltapping, others making wax ends. Then followed three fine-looking men dressed in black velvet, with large wigs on, densely powdered, representing the hairdressing society. Then the various trades followed with their appropriate insignia; young lads from different schools lead by their ministers and teachers, of which I was one of the boys.

The procession then proceeded from about Third Street near Spruce, northward towards Callowhill Street, then wheeled towards Bush Hill, where there was a number of long tables loaded with all kinds of provisions, with a separate table for the Jews, who could not partake of the meals from the other tables; but they had a full supply of soused [pickled] salmon, bread and crackers, almonds, raisins, etc. This table was under the charge of an old cobbler named Isaac Moses, well known in Philadelphia at that time. There was no spirituous liquor for the company. Having doon [done] full justice to the good things provided for, the procession then retrograded. It was the last I saw of them.

I reached home late in the afternoon, fatigued and hungry. My kind, good parents having provided a good meal for me, I retired to rest and knew nothing till I saw the sun shining in my room the next morning.

Some time after the procession, a large sign was exhibited at some public house representing the Federal Convention members, all being present as they sat with Gen'l Washington at their head as their president, and at the lower part of the sign were these words: "These thirty-seven great men together have agreed that better times shall soon succeed." So ends the procession.

When you see that *young* lady, Miss Ellet, make my best respects to her and invite her to accompany you to New York on your next trip, when I shall have the honor to solicit her hand at the opening of the next ball given in her honor, in dancing a minuet, as was the fashion in the olden times when we went to balls, when the city lamps were lit, and [we] were all snug at home before eleven. It was then customary to see your partner safe at home and to call next morning to inquire of her health after the fatigue of the preceeding evening. The lady was waiting for her partner, and after setting some time, if his company had been very agreeable, this led to an extensive acquaintance which sometimes ended in matrimonial co-partnership.

A few days ago I entered my ninety-sixth year. Ladies and

gentleman came to congratulate me on the occasion with a good sprinkling of children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, their ages ranging from seventy years to one week, with a fair prospect of an additional [one] in a short time.

I would have been very happy if you had been here to make one of the company, to hobnob with me in a glass of champagne or sherry. Sufficient for this letter, for I have many other matters interesting for the time when I shall again have the honor of addressing you. My best regards to your honored father, with kind remembrance to those who may inquire after me, and believe me, my dear friend, to be your sincere friend,

P. S. More anon.

NAPHTALI PHILLIPS

VICTORY IN MARYLAND

[After a generation of struggle for political equality in Maryland, the Jews were finally enfranchised in 1826. In the following letter to a Jewish friend, Solomon Etting of Baltimore, Benjamin Chew Howard described how the battle was won. Howard at that time was a member of the Maryland House of Delegates. In later years he served in Congress. The original of this letter is in the possession of The Library Company of Philadelphia. — EDITOR.]

Annapolis, Jan. 5th, 1826.

Dear Sir:

The Jew Bill passed the House this morning, having previously passed the Senate. The act of last session is therefore confirmed, and I give you my hearty congratulations thereon. [Delegate John S.] Tyson made a beautiful and able argument upon it. It was the best speech I ever heard him make.

I held myself ready to reply to any one who might take the field against him, but no one stepped forth in such a miserable cause. I thought it therefore unnecessary to come out. The stain upon the Constitution of Maryland is blotted out forever, for in the march of the human mind it is impossible to recede.

Accept my sincere congratulations and believe me,

Yours truly,

BENJ'N C. HOWARD