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Major General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney

John Trumbull (O.M.)

HISTORY NOTES

VICOMTE DE NOAILLES

(Digested from Chapter 7 in Robert D. Arbuckle's *Pennsylvania Speculator and Patriot, The Entrepreneurial John Nicholson* [1757-1800), Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975, p. 93-113.)

As the French Revolution progressed, many French refugees came to America, bringing with them a wide range of political thinking. The Reign of Terror sent French nobility to our shores, including the central character in this short note - Marechal de Camp Louis-Marie, Vicomte de Noailles, an Original Member of the French Society and a promoter of the Asylum company in Northern Pennsylvania for French Revolution refugees.

Vicomte de Noailles, had served in the American Revolution in Rochambeau's Army. Quoting from Arbuckle (op. cit. p. 94):

" When the French moved out of Newport, Rhode Island, to join Washington on the Hudson, Noailles marched on foot all the way in order to set an example of endurance for his men. After the Revolution he returned to France and, as a member of the National Constituent Assembly, on 4 August 1789 proposed the acts which abolished feudalism in France. Later the revolutionary government condemned him to death, so he fled to England in 1792 and made his way to Philadelphia in 1793. He had been the dancing partner of Marie Antoinette at various balls and was worried about her safety. The *General Advertiser*, in announcing his arrival, said that he came with 1,500,000 livres! Nicholson probably took note of this. In July 1794 Noailles's wife and her mother and grandmother were guillotined. During his stay in Philadelphia, he resided at the home of William Bingham, "

Noailles evidently desired to establish a haven in Pennsylvania for exiled French nobility. To this end, he worked with Robert Morris, an Honorary Member of the Pennsylvania Society, and with John Nicholson, a land speculator. Both men owned vast acreage. Joining this group was another French exile, Antoine Omer Talon.

Both Noailles and Talon wished to buy land for a French refugee colony, and finally chose 200,000 acres owned by Nicholson and Morris on the Susquehanna River, twelve miles downstream from the present town of Towanda in Bradford County. (Towanda is on Route 220, about 20 miles south of the New York border.)

Thus began the romantic dream of a Royalist haven. Some made it; Marie Antoinette, a publicized but improbable refugee, did not. There were 40 there when Talleyrand visited in 1794. This was the occasion for his comment (Arbuckle, op. cit. p. 98), "it was a mistake for American speculators to rely on French emigres to buy and settle their lands because all Frenchmen long to return home and would, if and when a general amnesty were granted."

The colony was short lived. By 1799 some had gone back to France and in 1802 Napoleon declared a general amnesty. Also land title disputes had arisen.

What happened to Noailles? Arbuckle states he did not return to France but accepted a commission in the French Army under Rochambeau in the Santo Domingo theater. He died in Havana of wounds received in a battle with the British.

Noailles's memory is alive in the French Cincinnati by a collateral descendant, Duc de Mouchy. His memory is also alive at Asylum, where his name is on the State Historical Marker.

Clifford Lewis 3rd

History Editor

WASHINGTON'S MEETING IN CHESTER WITH TRIENNIAL DELEGATES

It is a matter of record that George Washington had decided by October 21, 1786, to resign as President General of the Society of the Cincinnati (see Minor Myers, Jr., *Liberty Without Anarchy*, p. 92). It is also a matter of record, and most fortunate for the Society, that Washington was persuaded to change his mind. It is quite possible that a quiet meeting on May 13, 1787, in Chester, Pennsylvania, fourteen miles southwest of Philadelphia, on Washington's journey from Mt. Vernon to Philadelphia, was an important factor in changing his mind. Here is the entry in Washington's diary:

"Sunday, May 13, 1787 - about 8 o'clock Mr. Corbin and myself set out, and dined at Chester (Mrs. Withys) where I was met by Generals Mifflin (now Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly) Knox and Varnum; the Colonels Humphreys and Minges; and Majors Jackson and Nicholas, with whom (after dinner) I proceeded to Philada."

Highlighting this Cincinnati list by taking them in order of importance we have:

1. **Henry Knox**, "The father of the Cincinnati", close influential friend of Washington, and strong advocate of Washington continuing as President General. Quoting Myers (op. cit. p. 94) he "hoped to have a 'private conversation' with Washington to persuade him" to continue as President General. Knox also was Secretary for War.
2. **David Humphreys**, retired Lieutenant Colonel, former aide to Washington and delegate from Connecticut. He had written the "delegates would re-elect Washington, regardless of his wishes ." (Myers, op. cit. p. 97).
3. **Thomas Mifflin**, retired Brigadier General, Speaker of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, and five days later elected Vice President General of the Cincinnati.
4. **James M. Varnum**, retired Brigadier General, a veteran of Valley Forge, and delegate from Rhode Island.
5. **Francis Minges (Mentges)**, retired Lieutenant Colonel, a delegate from Pennsylvania.
6. **William Jackson**, retired Major, also a Pennsylvania delegate, and soon elected Secretary of the Constitutional Convention.
7. **Samuel Nicholas**, retired First Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, also a Pennsylvania delegate.

It was a small but imposing delegation. It could have been a courtesy call, some Cincinnati "waiting on" the President General, but the conversations in Chester might well have influenced Washington's decision to continue as President General. Again quoting Myers (op. cit. p. 97):

"Washington arrived in Philadelphia, Sunday May 13, but he took no part in Cincinnati meetings , save dining with the delegates on the evening of the fifteenth. What conversations transpired are unknown, but after some negotiations Knox prevailed. Washington would serve as President General again. Thus he was elected May 18th, as was Knox for another term as Secretary General."

This significant bit of Cincinnati history surfaced only because the Delaware County, Pennsylvania, Bar Association, based in Media, wished to re-enact on May 13 Washington's arrival in Chester en-route Philadelphia, as part of the Constitutional Bicentennial. Edward F. Muller, Jr., Esquire, a friend of the undersigned, told me he would have the honor of portraying Washington. I pointed out that Washington was then President General of the Cincinnati and our members should have a part. The Bar Committee agreed. Then, after one of them read the page from Washington's diary, I successfully sought a descendant of one of the seven Cincinnati present 200 years ago. Nicholas Spies, a descendant of Major Samuel Nicholas, and a member in that Right, came on from Pittsburgh to greet Washington again in Chester.



Chester, Pa., May 13, 1987, Major Samuel Nicholas (Nicholas Spies of the Pennsylvania Society) greets General Washington (Edward F. Muller, Esquire) exactly 200 years after Washington stopped in Chester en-route from Mt. Vernon to Philadelphia to the Cincinnati Triennial and the Constitutional Convention.

For the benefit of stamp collectors, a special Chester stamp cancellation was authorized for this occasion and the History Committee now have covers.

Clifford Lewis 3rd

History Editor

V 24, #1, Oct87, P 22

THE STATE SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI OF PENNSYLVANIA.

Our Ladies' Day Luncheon was held in late May at our Headquarters, the Hill- Physic-Keith House in Philadelphia. Although the weather precluded use of the magnificent Federal garden on this occasion, a good time was had by all.

The Pennsylvania Society plans to take its part in the Grand Federal Procession on Constitution Day, September 17th, in Philadelphia. This is the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Constitution, and the parade will be a reenactment of the largest parade in our history, held 200 years previously. It is hoped that the other Societies will see fit to participate, as the Society of the Cincinnati naturally took a major part in the original parade.

Philippus Miller, V Vice President

V 24, #1, Oct 87, P 28

EQUESTRIAN WASHINGTON STATUES: HOW MANY? (CONTINUED)

The May 1987 issue of *Cincinnati Fourteen* noted that three equestrian Washington statues were known and asked if there were more. A number of positive replies were received and the total is now ten. They are:

- 1 - West Point, noted by William Russell Raiford and Byron Edward Luckett, Jr.
 - 2 - Washington, D.C., noted by President General Reuben Grove Clark, Jr., John Dwight Kilbourne, Director of the Anderson House Museum and Library, and William M. Wood, our new Anderson House Manager.
 - 1 - Union Square, New York, N.Y., noted by Charles Gordon Heyd Evans.
 - 1 - Princeton, N.J., noted by Anthony Wayne Ridgway.
 - 1 - Paris, France, also noted by Anthony Wayne Ridgway.
 - 1 - Morristown, N.J., noted by this editor.
 - 3 - As noted previously in Philadelphia, Richmond, and Brooklyn.
- Are there still more?

Clifford Lewis, 3rd History Editor