

Description of the events of Monday, May 7th from *A Full and Complete Account of the Late Awful Riots in Philadelphia. Philadelphia. Philadelphia: John B. Perry, 1844.*

THE unprecedented success of the newly organised party in the city of New York, who recently elected their candidate (Mr. Harper,) for Mayor, gave an impetus to the party in Philadelphia, who, some weeks since started a daily journal under the name of "The Native American," and have since been industriously placing before the public the political sentiments the advocate; and on the afternoon of Friday last (May 3d, 1844,) they called a meeting at the junction of Second and Master streets, Kensington. The meeting had organised, and one of the speakers was addressing the crowd, when, all at once, a rush from a concourse of Irish people, residing in that immediate vicinity, and who had surrounded the meeting, took place. The native Americans, so fiercely were they assailed by an overpowering force, were driven from the staging they had erected, and fled in all directions, pursued by the missiles and shouts of the Irish. This, of course, incensed men who had assembled peaceably to express their sentiments, as by the Constitution of the United States all citizens have an undeniable right. [3]

Another meeting was called by the Native Americans, to be held at the same place on the afternoon of Monday, May 7th, and at an early hour a large number of persons were on the ground, from all parts of the city and county. "No one will hesitate to say," are the remarks of the Public Ledger, "that the Native American party, having called a public meeting, had perfect right to carry on their proceedings in peace, undisturbed by any persons, and that the disturbance they met with from persons opposed to the objects of the meeting, was as gross an outrage as was ever perpetrated upon the rights of any body of free citizens. The citizens who composed the meeting were assembled in the exercise of a right which is guaranteed to them by the Constitution, and it has come to a pretty pass, if, availing themselves of their constitutional rights, they are to be assailed by others, and their lives sacrificed in the streets..." [4]

Many persons ran from the meeting, to seek shelter elsewhere, but the majority adjourned over to the market, on Washington street, above Master. During the time they were running in this direction, to avoid the rain, a great deal of hallooing and shouting was kept up, and every one in the street seemed to be excited, but apparently with no angry feelings.

A few minutes after the meeting was re-organised under the market house, a commotion occurred from some cause or other, and some twelve or fifteen persons ran out of the market, on the west side, pursued by a-

bout an equal number. A scuffle ensued; two desperate fellows clinched each other, one armed with a brick, and the other with a club, and exchanged a dozen blows, any one of which seemed severe enough to kill an ordinary man. Some stones and bricks were now thrown on both sides, and several pistol shots were fired by persons on both sides. At the report of the fire-arms, the majority of the meeting dispersed precipitately, while a number took position at the south end of the market, where they displayed the American flag.

Several stones were thrown against the Hibernia Hose House, situate in Cadwalader street, west of the market, and some persons were pursued up Master street. A frame house in the latter street, between Cadwalader street and the Germantown Road, was stormed, and the windows and doors demolished. Two other frames in Cadwalader street, below Master, shared the same fate. Two or three muskets were discharged at this time by the retreating party, and a rally attempted. The persons who had been in the meeting still kept their ground, and volleys of bricks and stones were continually kept up by both sides. A number of persons, evidently Irishmen, then rallied at Germantown Road and Master street, and came down at a brisk pace upon the others with stones and two or three guns. The Native Americans retreated, but maintained a fire with stones, and one or two pistols. Several persons were severely wounded at this point of time, and the rioters became furious. The Native Americans again rallied, and recovered a temporary advantage, but finally retreated, under a sharp fire of every kind of missiles, and two or three discharges of a musket carried by a gray-headed Irishman who wore a seal-skin cap... [6]

While the contest raged with its greatest fury, the main body of the belligerent parties were posted east and west of the market house, in Master street, each rallying and retreating in turns, while others were engaged in skirmishes in every direction, for some distance round. Houses were attacked, and the inmates driven out with the utmost consternation and alarm. While a party of the Irish were being pursued down Cadwallader street, below Master, a man fell into the doorway of the residence of Edward Develin, and in consequence of the first floor being below the pavement he rolled into the house. Mr. Develin was sitting at the door, and in an instant retreated inside, when between the two the front door was shut. The house was then assailed by the pursuing party with brickbats and stones, some of the latter weighing seven or eight pounds, the windows and window frames broken out, and the place otherwise spoiled. Mr. D. was struck with the gutter pipe, which was wrenched off by a man, and his Wife with two or three children narrowly escaped injury. [8]

Other houses in the neighbourhood were more or less injured. At The commencement of the melee, when fire arms were discharged from both parties between the market house and Cadwallader street, a ball was fired into the door of the dwelling of John Brown; carter, just at the moment he had gone into the house and closed the door. The ball was sub-

sequently found in the front room. In this street a number of stones were thrown at and into the Hibernia Hose company's house.

The Irish population were in a dreadful state of excitement, and even women and boys joined in the affray, some of the women actually throwing missiles. Many of them when they temporarily retreated, returned armed with fire arms, which they discharged sometimes with particular aim at individuals engaged on the other side, and at other times firing indiscriminately in the several groups, on the larger body of the belligerents.

Many of the women who were not engaged with weapons, incited the men to vigorous action, pointing out where they could operate with more effect, and cheering them on and rallying them to a renewal of the conflict whenever their spirits fell or they were compelled to retreat. [9]

As in most other riots which we have noticed in our city and county, small and half grown boys formed no inconsiderable portion of the combatants on both sides, and contended with the most sanguinary spirit.

From what we could see and gather from persons on the spot, we believe the following is the origin of the affray.

After the re-organisation of the meeting in the market house, and Mr. Levin had taken his position with the view of resuming his speech, some difficulty occurred on the Western side of the market house, just inside, between two persons, named Fields and M'Laughlin, which originated in some discussion, and led to an interference on the part of two or three others, one of whom, a young fellow, drew a pair of pistols, threatening to shoot the first man who should dare molest him. At this instant, a man who had taken some part in the affair stepped off towards the Hibernia Hose house, and defied him to fire. A shot then took place, which was followed by repeated discharges from both sides, from one of which Patrick Fisher received his wounds.

The contest continued for more than an hour. At dark, large bodies of men and boys were congregated at various points, and every thing indicated a resumption of the outrages. The Sheriff was on the ground after the severest part of the conflict, and was effecting arrangements to secure future peace and quietness. Those that were injured were engaged in the tight.

Twelve o'clock.- We have just returned from the scene of the riot. About ten o'clock in the evening, a mob collected in the vicinity of Franklin and Second streets, and commenced breaking into the houses on both sides of the street, destroying the furniture, demolishing the windows, and rendering the houses completely uninhabitable. The inmates of all the dwellings in the neighborhood fled with precipitation, abandoning their homes to the ruthlessness of the mob. [10]

This continued for some time, without any resistance being offered. At length an attack was made upon a Seminary at the corner of Second and Phoenix streets, formerly occupied by the Sisters of Charity, and a number of persons were about tearing down and setting fire to the fence, when

some persons advanced from above, and fired a volley of ball and buck-shot among the crowd.

Several individuals who had left their homes during the day were afraid to return, some of them having left wives with small children unprotected. It having been rumored that an attempt would be made to fire the Catholic Church on Second street, many of the residents retired from their houses to it, with arms, determined to protect it at the hazard of their lives. Up to twelve o'clock, no attempt upon the church had been made. At that hour, individuals were seen leaving the neighborhood. The greatest consternation prevailed; no man knowing at what moment he would be shot down, nor by whom. Squads of men on all sides were armed, and the passer-by or looker-on was at no place safe from harm. Fire-arms were discharged from houses, and behind fences, and from alley ways.

[11]

About this time there was an alarm of fire, which was caused by the burning of a barn on Turner's Lane, below the Ridge Road. Many of the fire companies proceeded to the scene of the riot, under the impression that the cause of the alarm proceeded from a fire in that quarter.