

#### **Description of Wednesday, May 9<sup>th</sup> events from *A Full and Complete Account of the Late Awful Riots in Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: John B. Perry, 1844.**

*Scene of the Riots—Eight o'clock Wednesday Morning*—The Monroe Guards, under the command of Captain Small, have just arrived on the ground, agreeably to the order of General Cadwalader, issued last night. The Jackson Artillerists, Captain Hubbell, and the National Guard, Captain Tustin, who have been upon duty all night, are about moving off, being now relieved by the Philadelphia Cadets, Captain White, and the Monroe Guards. A large number of persons have already assembled to view the scene of last night's devastation, but all seemed peaceable and orderly. Guards are stationed at various points for the protection of property, and the indications are that no further violence will be resorted to, although several exciting rumors are afloat.

The neighborhood of the late riots is crowded by hundreds of persons. Some as spectators, others engaged in searching the premises of the remaining Irish inhabitants for fire arms. In several houses, which were partially deserted, fire arms were found, and also in out-houses and cellars. A large pig-sty, on the lot immediately in the rear of the scene of conflagration, was demolished by some of the mob and a gun found under the floor. A detachment of the military are posted there, a portion of them on guard around the ruins of the fire, with the view of keeping away the crowd so as to enable workmen in one or two cellars to recover the remains of a quantity of money said to be lost. One of the tenants of a house destroyed, it is said, had seven hundred dollars in her house, which is at present the object of the search. The Irish population are removing from every quarter in the vicinity unmolested. An Irishman was taken from a house where it was suspected there were fire arms. At first he denied there being any there, but upon examination two or three pieces were found heavily loaded. He was arrested and taken to the lock-up house in the Northern Liberties. On the way down he was beset and almost killed by the mob, which was highly incensed at him. In St. John street, near Poplar, a number of voices cried out, "hang him, hang him," but this was not done and he was with the greatest difficulty put into the lock-up. A portion of the military are posted around the dead body of an Irishman, named Joseph Rice, who was killed the night before while looking over a fence, from behind which, it is alleged, he had fired at the crowd. It is reported by a man who resided in the centre of the scene of riot, that seven or eight of the tenants of one of the houses destroyed by fire perished in the flames. We have no doubt of the truth of the report, and believe that many others per-

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ished of whom we have no account, and perhaps never will know anything definitely...

*Eleven o'clock, A. M.*—Groups of boys, who have been actively engaged in pulling down the tottering walls and chimneys of the houses destroyed by fire, are beginning to manifest symptoms of uneasiness and are attracting the attention of persons of more mature years to houses from which it is said shots were fired yesterday upon the Native Americans. The back buildings of one of the row of houses, fronting on Washington Street Market, which were destroyed last night, are just discovered to be on fire. The kitchen of a house on Cadwalader street, from which the tenants are moving in great haste, has taken fire from the above premises, and an Engine and Hose Company have arrived in consequence of the alarm. Some, fears being apprehended for their security, Capt. Small has thrown a guard around them and they are in a fair way of suppressing the flames. [23]

As soon as the fire above referred to was suppressed, another was discovered in a court, running from Cadwalader street, above Jefferson. Two Engines and several hose companies are in service, under the protection of the Monroe Guards. A large number of persons entered a house opposite this court, belonging to the Messrs Whitecar, of Spring Garden, for the purpose of searching for arms, but were induced to leave the premises upon the remonstrance of a military officer. They had not left more than twenty minutes before smoke was seen issuing from the trap door, and it was discovered that the loft of the building was on fire. The timely efforts of the firemen saved this building, but the court referred to, consisting of four or six frame houses, was entirely destroyed. [24]

*Twelve o'clock, Noon.*—The excitement is increasing with the crowds of persons gathering in the district. Families are removing from their dwellings in every quarter for squares around. Some of the military are still upon the ground, to protect those removing, and to allay the excitement. A row of frame dwellings, from which the tenants have removed, were fired, and soon after another row, likewise untenanted, just in the rear of Cadwalader street, in the immediate vicinity of the late fire, were fired and destroyed. A short time afterwards, two three-story buildings, at the corner of Jefferson and Washington streets, likewise untenanted, were set on fire and shared the same fate.

*Half past Two o'clock.*—The Catholic Church, called St. Michael's, on Second street, above Master, has just been fired, which, with the dwelling of the Priest, on the north, and small frame dwellings on the south, are destroyed. The Priest, under the protection of a body of the military, quit his residence, and was carried away in a cab. It was with extreme difficulty that he secured a safe retreat. Several fire companies exerted themselves to the utmost to save the adjoining property, some of which the fortunately rescued from the flames. During this time, the two brick buildings on the corner of Jefferson and Washington streets, are burning without an effort to extinguish them. The residents in a row of small brick houses have

displayed from their windows small American flags, in one of which General Hubbell has his headquarters.

Four o'clock, P.M.—The Female Seminary, at the corner of Second and Phoenix streets, has been fired, and remains a heap of ruins. The excitement increases and great consternation prevails, and families at more distant points are quitting their houses. Various rumors are afloat as to armed bodies of Irishmen coming from Richmond and Manayunk and other points, which produce still more feeling. By many the reports were not credited. The fact that the Irish had driven Abraham P. Ayre, and the men in his employ, engaged in building a wharf at Richmond, from that place during the morning was no doubt the foundation of a portion of the rumor; at this hour, however, we do not know but the rumors may have some basis so far as regards those employed at Richmond. [25]

We learn that previous to the firing of the church, Mr. Donahue, the priest, gave up the keys to Captain Jonas P. Fairlamb, of the Wayne Artillery Corps, who examined the premises, but found no arms, except in the dwelling, where there was an old rusty musket. This was about ten o'clock. The Captain then locked up the church, and after patrolling the district with his command, the attention of the military was directed to an attempt to fire a house, corner of Washington and Jefferson streets, and during their absence from the church it was fired.

The military then returned to the premises, but too late to prevent the building from being destroyed. While it was burning the lots back were crowded with unfortunate people, who were driven from the adjoining frame houses by the flames. We saw a number of females standing by the remnants of their furniture which they had saved from the rake of the devouring elements, and weeping bitterly at the misfortune which had overtaken them. Some had lost all they possessed in the world and were driven from their homes and deprived of all shelter. [26]

The number of children thus turned out of doors was great; they appeared to be exceedingly frightened, but they had recovered somewhat, though they looked dejected. One of the most affecting exhibitions was the burial of an infant in the church yard, while the church and adjoining buildings were in a blaze. The only funeral service which was performed over the grass, consisted of the brief and bitter ejaculations of the parents, accompanied by the crackling of the burning timbers of the church...

*Five o'clock*- The Seminary has been destroyed. The Temperance Grocery Store of Mr. Joseph Corr, at the north-east corner of Phoenix and Second streets, opposite the Seminary, and from which it was said the volley was fired on Monday evening which killed Mr. Wright, was completely riddled, and every thing in the house destroyed.

The First Brigade, under the command of General Cadwalader, who was under the command of Major General Patterson, has arrived upon the ground, accompanied by Sheriff McMichael; the Sheriff and the Major General riding side by side. Colonel Lee is acting as Aid to General Cad- [27]

walader.

The troops approached from Fourth street, and at Fourth and Franklin they separated into two divisions—one under the General, composed of the Philadelphia Grays, with two pieces of artillery, the Junior Artillerists, and one or two other companies, with the First City Troop in front, proceeded down Franklin to Second, while the other division, under Colonel Page, proceeded up to Jefferson street, and down that to Second, where a junction was formed. Previous to the junction, however, the mob made a rush upon the bayonets of Page's troops, and defied them with loud threats. The moment was critical, when the Colonel appealed to them as American citizens, upon which they gave him three cheers and retired.

*Six o'clock.*— The rioters have proceeded to the house of Alderman Hugh Clark, at the corner of Fourth and Master streets, and have entirely gutted it out. The windows have been demolished, the furniture thrown out of the windows, the beds cut open and the feathers scattered about in the wind. All the papers of the Alderman have been destroyed or lost.

About half past six o'clock information was received by Mayor Scott, [29] that an attack was contemplated on St. Augustine's church, in Fourth street, below Vine, and that a large crowd had already gathered in its vicinity. He immediately repaired, upon horseback, to the spot, with a body of the city police, and addressed the crowd. The police were posted around the chapel. The crowd still increased. The First City Troop were immediately ordered out, and were upon the ground in a short time.

In consequence of this state of things, the Mayor issued the following proclamation :

There is reason to believe that the spirit of disorder raging in the county, is about to extend itself into the city, and to seek vent in the destruction of property and attack upon life. All good citizens, desirous to preserve the public peace, are, therefore, required to prepare themselves to patrol the streets, to resist all invasions of property, and to preserve the public peace, by resistance to every attempt to disturb it.

Each ward is requested to meet immediately at the place of their usual ward election.

JOHN M. SCOTT, Mayor.

Subsequent to the issuing of which, the citizens of Walnut Ward held a meeting, and appointed four persons from each block to patrol the ward.

The crowd still continued to increase at the church above referred to, and at about ten minutes before ten o'clock, fire was communicated to the vestibule of the church, it said, by a boy about fourteen years old. It [30] increased with rapidity after once under way, and dense masses of smoke curled out from every window.

In a few minutes, the flames reached the belfry, and burst out from the upper windows in broad sheets. The whole steeple was soon wrapt in the devouring elements, and presented a terrific aspect. The Chapel clock struck ten while the fire was raging in its greatest fury. At twenty minutes past ten o'clock, the cross which surmounted the steeple, and which re-

mained unhurt, fell with a loud crash, amid the plaudits of a large portion of the spectators.

*Two o'clock, A. M.*—Councils have just adjourned, after having provided for a public meeting of the citizens this morning, at ten o'clock, and requested the Mayor to call meetings of the citizens of each ward, to report to him the force each can bring to the support of the public peace. [32]

During the whole of the day a large and torn American flag was displayed at the corner of Second and Franklin streets, over which was a printed placard, announcing that "This is the flag which was trampled upon by the Irish Papists." This created great excitement, and what was surprising was, that the Sheriff nor any of the police thought it worth while to take charge of and remove the exciting placard. Throughout the day, boys were firing of pistols in every quarter; evidently for the purpose of keeping up the excitement.

*Amount of Loss and Distress.*—The St. Michael's Church and the Seminary, in Kensington, cost for building from thirty-five to forty thousand dollars, and St. Augustine's not less than thirty thousand dollars. The amount of property thus far destroyed cannot be less than one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. No less than two hundred families have been compelled to remove from their homes.

The sights presented during yesterday and last night were truly sickening. Men with their wives, and often six or seven children, trudging fearfully through the streets, with small bundles, seeking a refuge they knew not where. Mothers with infants in their arms, and little ones following after them, carrying away from their houses whatever they could pick up at that instant, passing along with fearful tread, not knowing where to turn. [33]