



**Excerpts From: *A Full and Complete Account of the Late Awful Riots in Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: John B. Perry, 1844.**

#### **TREMENDOUS RIOTS IN SOUTHWARK**

The next incident—the proximate cause of the disturbance, was the discovery, that, on Friday, muskets were taken into the church of St. Philip de Neri, in Southwark. There are various statements relative to this matter, as to how the guns came there, nor have we yet seen an entirely reliable and official account. One statement is, that a company of volunteers had been organized and detailed, for the defence of the church, under command of Wm. R. Dunn, a brother of the officiating Priest of St. Philip; and that twenty-five muskets were furnished from the State Arsenal.

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A gathering of thousands of people immediately took place, and the district watch and magistrates exerted themselves successfully, to prevent any violence until the arrival of the Sheriff, who had been sent for, and who promptly came to the church, having on the way down called on General Patterson with a request for aid. On the appearance of the Sheriff an examination was called for. After a search of about half an hour, the Sheriff and Aldermen, came out with about twelve muskets, with bayonets, which they had found in the interior. These were given to the volunteer posse, who stationed themselves in front of the Church, and tried the guns with the ramrods, and proved to the crowd that they were not loaded. They then marched off to the Commissioners' Hall, where they deposited them. The Sheriff then addressed the crowd to the following effect :-

"I have, in company with Aldermen Hartz and Palmer, been into the Church, and have taken possession of all the arms we were able to find. A number of your own citizens, selected by your own Aldermen, are here to prevent any more arms from being taken in, as well as to protect the Church from injury. I therefore beg of you all, as good citizens, to disperse, and retire to your homes. Further measures will be taken to-morrow to allay the excitement and to preserve the peace."

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A portion of the assemblage here cheered the Sheriff, and a few of those around retired, but the great body remained upon the ground as late as 11 o'clock. As matters still looked ominous, Mr. Wright Ardis, (one of the wounded in Kensington,) addressed the crowd, and selecting a posse of twenty men, entered the church with the Sheriff, and perhaps one or two of the Aldermen of the District. A shower springing up, the crowd in a great measure dispersed.

At about 12 o'clock the City Guards, Captain Hill, came upon the ground. Meantime Mr. Ardis, with his posse, and Alderman McKinley, had found in the church, in addition to the 12 muskets taken out before —53 muskets and fowling pieces, 10 pistols of different kinds, a keg of powder, and a box of cartridges. Of the guns found, 23 were loaded, some so heavily that they could not have been fired without bursting the pieces. The greater part of the guns were "cancelled" or condemned United States arms. There were also found slugs, and bayonets fastened to poles, to use as pikes. In the church were found a number of the congregation, the Rev. Mr. Dunn, and others, who were prepared to defend the building in case of an attack.

The military then took possession of the building. The arms were taken out, and carried to the Commissioners' Hall. The crowd outside were addressed in a brief speech by the officer in command, and given five minutes to disperse in. The men found in the Church were taken before Alderman McKinley, and put under bonds to keep the peace, and on Saturday morning all was apparently quiet.

[5]

### **SATURDAY**

The City Guard held possession of the Church on Saturday morning; and during the day, though large crowds gathered, no violence was attempted. But the story of the seventy or eighty stand of arm found in the Church was doing its work among the multitude, and was beginning to be retailed from mouth to mouth, creating immense excitement. Alderman Saunders, in a speech, besought the throng to retire, and in doing so, he assured them that every weapon and all ammunition had been removed from the Church, and that there was no cause for further excitement. He begged all to use their exertions to allay the present ill feeling.

About half past two o'clock in the afternoon Gen. Cadwalader rode into the street on horseback, and, in a short address to those gathered about, endeavored to persuade them to retire to their homes, but without having any effect. In reply to questions put to him as to the authority by which arms were taken into the Church, he stated that an order for twenty muskets had been issued under the authority of the Governor, and they had been delivered before he knew any thing of the order. He then repeated his endeavors to persuade them to disperse, but he had to retire without being able to accomplish any thing.

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During the afternoon on Saturday, Gen. Hubbell, having learned that Wm. H. Dunn, who had been elected as captain of a new company was an unnaturalized citizen, proceeded to his house, in company with Dr. Stafford, and demanded his commission papers—these were given up, and of course the company was disbanded.

The excitement was increasing every hour. Women seemed more earnest than men, in their conversation upon these most exciting topics, and some of them used language most bitter and inflammatory. As night approached, the crowd swelled, till at last the place before the Church,

and up and down the street in each of the four directions, became a dense mass of human beings. Extra constables were sworn in, and large bodies of peace police organised—but every incident, as is usual, only swelled the excitement. If a man tripped or stumbled, it caused a rush—the mass, of course, eagerly claiming to know the meaning of every motion into which they were compelled—each ignorant as the other.

St. Philip's Church is situated in Queen street, between Second and Third streets; and it maybe as well to remind our distant readers that the streets here cross each other, with few exceptions, at right angles, and (the larger streets) at regular intervals. The first street to the North, or "above" [7] Queen is Catharine, and the next German. On the South, or below, the next street to Queen is Christian. There are in the neighborhood a vast number of narrow alleys, which placed the soldiery under great and fatal disadvantages during subsequent stages of the proceedings.

At 7 o'clock, the Sheriff arrived from the city with a posse of about one hundred and fifty strong. With this force he succeeded in driving the throng that was congregated there towards the east end of the street. When all was clear from Second to Third street, lines of men were stationed, who prevented all ingress, except to those living within the square.

In Third street, matters appeared to have a serious aspect. Stories having been thrown, and the officers in command struck by them, preparations were made to discharge the field piece stationed there. The address of Gen. Cadwalader, begging the mob to disperse, was received with groans and hisses, and he was bantered and dared to fire!

As this was a crisis, Gen. C. slowly and distinctly gave the command [8] to take aim! The crowd quailed and were disposed to waver, when Hon. Charles Naylor, late a member of Congress, stepped before the gun, and told the general, as in one account it is stated, that he "had no right to fire!" Other accounts say that he countermanded the order, or called upon Gen. C. to do so; and said if any one was killed he would be the first. He was immediately arrested, by order of the general, and put under guard, in the basement of the church. The mob cried out for his release, but the steady front preserved by the military awed them, and the mob gradually dispersed. Wherever any sign of disturbance was shown, immediate arrests were made under the direction of the military. Their moderation, firmness mid decision had preserved peace, only to be broken on the next day, with most fearful consequences.

### **SUNDAY**

In the morning, the district seemed almost entirely deserted, and the military were drawn off, with the exception of the Markle Riles, the Mechanic Rifles, and the Hibernia Greens, who took charge of the church and relieved the City Guards. About 11 o'clock the crowd which had collected, began to threaten that if Mr. Naylor was not released, the Church should be attacked. Up to this time, no guns had been discharged on either side. Nor do we believe any person supposed, except a band of desperadoes, that

the Sabbath was to furnish this first instance in which the civil authorities of the country, supported by the citizen soldiery, who had endured taints, blows, hisses, and insults,- without retaliation, were to be attacked by an armed mob.

A four pounder, loaded to the muzzle, was dragged to the front of the church, by some villains, and a demand was then made for the release of Mr. Naylor. One of the Aldermen of the district, Mr. Hertz, defeated their villainous and murderous purpose, by pouring water into the priming; and thus foiled or diverted, pieces of scantling were brought, the door was broken in, and just at this moment Mr. Naylor, having been conditionally liberated, made his appearance, was loudly cheered, and led off an immense concourse as he went from the church to his residence. Meanwhile, a portion of the desperadoes were in Christian street, with an eighteen pound cannon, which they fired at the circular windows in the rear of the church, near the top. [9]

The gun was taken down to the wharf for the purpose of reloading, and about 1 o'clock it was brought back again, and with it another piece, regularly mounted on wheels, was posted in rear of the church. One of them, loaded with large pieces of iron, was discharged, but with little effect on the wall, the missiles with which it was charged rebounding to a distance of a hundred yards, to the greatest fright of the neighbors.

At this time, Thomas W. Grover and Lewis C. Levin arrived, and the latter, mounting one of the pieces, made an address to the crowd. That portion of a crowd which generally gather in case of riots to look on, assembled around him, and listened to his speech, during which he was repeatedly cheered. But at the same time stones were flying against the walls and the window on the left side of the altar.

Mr. Levin, Mr. Grover and others who had pledged themselves that the church should be saved, had hard work to keep the mob out. While they were addressing those who would listen, others were breaking the church windows; and although the main door was manfully defended by those who had pledged themselves to do so, the mob broke down the yard wall, and, entering at a side door, dispersed over the building. The defenders of the church now gate up the front door as hopeless, and the building was filled with people. [10]

After they had possession for about an hour, a smoke was seen issuing from the cellar. A few persons went down and extinguished it in a short time. The throng then gradually left the building and at last it was taken possession of by a committee of twenty, who guarded the doors and allowed no one to enter, but all to go out that desired to go. [11]

At about 7 o'clock the military arrived on the ground in great force. The crowd showed a most fatal determination to resist, and an attempt was made more than once to dismount Gen. Cadwalader. His bridle rein was seized, and without turning his head he disabled the arm with his sword which had attempted to stop his horse. In every place there seemed to be [12]

a resolute determination to disregard the military. The crowd were earnestly besought to retire, but obstinately disregarded the appeals of the officers. The military proceeded to take up the positions that had been assigned to them. [13]

Cannon were placed so as to command Queen street, east and west, and Second street, north and south. Platoons of soldiers were stretched across the street at Third and Queen, Second and Queen, and around the Commissioners' Hall.

This disposition of force being made, Gen. Cadwalader informed Mr. Grover that the military would protect the church, and that the citizen force might be discharged, which was done, the men marching out two and two and mingling quietly with the crowd. On receiving the church from the voluntary police, General Cadwalader said to Mr. G., " Mr. Grover, you deserve the thanks of all good citizens for what you have done this day;" a sentiment which is echoed by all who know the circumstances.

But the affair had reached its turning point—from riot to civil war. The crowd in Queen street refused to give way. The soldiers were then commanded to charge, but the crowd resisted and stood before the bayonets. While the committee were going out of the church a collision occurred between the soldiers and citizens at the corner of Second and Queen. Capt. Hill of the City Guards, was disarmed and thrown down. An attempt was made to stab him with his own sword;—there was imminent danger that he would be trampled to death—at this moment the lieutenant of the Guards gave the word—fire!

Groans and shrieks filled the air, and the crowd now broke in all directions. Every body was struck aghast at the performance of a terrible duty, often threatened by proclamation, but habitually disregarded, and for a time a terrible quiet reigned, disturbed only by the groans of the wounded, and the shrieks of the women. [14]

After this there was a rush on the part of a portion of the crowd for arms. Terribly exasperated, the mob —that is to say the active portion, now became regular assailants of the military. They broke into the Hall, and took therefrom a considerable number of the muskets, which had been brought from the Church. Threats were made against a number of soldiers, who were stationed in the lower part of the Hall, and finally a gathering was had at the Hay Scales, near the Wharton Market, below the Southwark Railroad, and about 9 o'clock, a body of men came down Federal street preceded by a four pounder cannon, roughly mounted and drawn with ropes. The men who followed in the rear were armed with muskets in part, and with other instruments of offence. They proceeded to Front street, and up Front street to Queen, where they quietly placed the cannon at the middle of the junction of the street, so as to range along Queen street towards Second, at which latter street a body of military and a six pounder were placed. The darkness favored their operations, and they were undisturbed until they had fired the piece, which was heavily loaded with fragments of [15]

iron, that had been hastily collected. At the same time, the mob fired with muskets in the same direction, from such covered positions, -as they could find, and the fire was immediately answered by a volley from the military, and the discharge of the field piece. The firing on both sides was then kept up at intervals until about 10 o'clock, when it temporarily ceased. The mob had at that hour two pieces, placed so as to range Queen street, and had also a fifteen pounder, which they could not use, because it was not mounted.

During the night, the military were kept as much as possible under shelter, but were exposed to continual discharges. Rifle balls whistled from alleys; and the heavy guns of the mob were wheeled about in perfect silence, in the darkness, and the first intimation of the approach of an enemy was the discharge of their pieces, raking the street. They were evidently well drilled and officered, and pursued their work with a satanic malignity without parallel. Wherever an object was seen to move it was greeted with rifle or musket balls, from the places where the assassins lay concealed. When the door of a shop occupied as a temporary hospital was opened, whoever stood or walked in the range of its light, served as a mark for the concealed murderers. [16]

The mob had four piece of cannon, which were worked by sailor and watermen, with unexampled tact and ability. Their mode of attack was, to load at a distance, with pieces of iron and other metals, such as nails, pieces of chains, stonecutter's chisels, knives, files, spikes, broken bottles. &c. The wheels of the cannon were muffled, and three of them were used with great effect. One of the most fearful shots was that fired from all three cannons at once, in the following manner. One was placed on Queen street wharf, unknown to the military—one in Queen street between Sixth and Seventh—one in Third street, about four squares south of Queen. Slow matches were applied; and, as if previously understood, all three were fired at once—making dreadful havoc. They were no sooner fired than dragged off into hiding places, unheard and unseen. Long drag ropes had been attached to them, and they were whirled off in an instant, and before the military could return the fire with any effect.

General Patterson sent a messenger express to Washington, to the President of the United States, with a request for an order for the U. States troops at Carlisle, in this State; for those at Fort Mifflin, and for Captain Ringgold's Flying Artillery, at Fort McHenry, Baltimore, to be here at the earliest moment. He also sent, by express, a messenger to Harrisburg, asking the Governor to order troops from Lancaster, Harrisburg, and other places in the State, to proceed to Philadelphia forthwith. [19]

#### **MONDAY**

All was comparatively quiet, if we, except the movements of the military at different points, the frequent arrival of country troops, giving the city the aspect and bustle of a garrison town, and the knots of men at every corner, anxiously discussing the terrible events of the day and

night previous. No violence took place after day-light on Monday morning, though bitter threats were made, and it was said that tremendous preparations were going forward by the rioters.

A Committee also waited on the Sheriff for the same object, and, that, after a consultation with the Judges of the Court of Quarter Sessions, the Sheriff and Major General concluded, from the Courts recommendation, to withdraw the troops, and General Patterson then issued an order to withdraw the troops. The County Board, by advice of the County Commissioners, joined in the recommendation. The following is the correspondence which took place upon the subject.

*Southwark, July 8th, 1844.*

*Major General Robert Patterson:*

Sir—From the representation of a number of citizens of this District, we are persuaded that if the military be removed from the neighborhood of St. Philip's Roman Catholic Church, in Queen street, order will be immediately restored, and the citizens will protect the Church. We give our every exertion for the furtherance of the object. We do not hesitate to say that peace and good order will be immediately restored.

With much respect, we are respectfully,

R. PALMER,  
CHARLES HORTZ,  
N. MCKINLEY,  
JAMES SAUNDERS  
{aldermen}