

July 4, 2011



PARK PICKS
by
FRIENDS OF THE ALLENTOWN PARKS



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“The Liberty Song” (first American Revolutionary War song, 1768) composed by patriot John Dickinson, author of *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*.

Come, join hand in hand, brave Americans all,
And rouse your bold hearts at fair Liberty's call;
No tyrannous acts shall suppress your just claim,
Or stain with dishonor America's name.

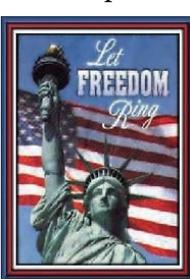
Our worthy forefathers, let's give them a cheer,
To climates unknown did courageously steer;
Thro' oceans to deserts for Freedom they came,
And dying, bequeath'd us their freedom and fame.

Then join hand in hand, brave Americans all,
By uniting we stand, by dividing we fall;
In so righteous a cause let us hope to succeed,
For heaven approves of each generous deed.

Did you know?

In September of 1777, the republic was only a year old and its army, commanded by Gen. George Washington, faced another crisis. Washington was unable to keep the British out of the capital city of Philadelphia, having lost the Battle of Brandywine. The new nation was about to fall into enemy hands. The British believed that if they could occupy the capital, this “colonial rebellion” could be stopped.

During war, metal becomes scarce, so it was feared that the British might melt down the city's church bells and the bells of the State House, including the bell we now know as the Liberty Bell. The Supreme Executive Council decided to remove the eleven bells from the city so they would not fall into enemy hands. The bells would eventually make their way to a distant village of Northampton Towne, presently called Allentown, 50 miles to the north, for safekeeping while the British occupied Philadelphia.



A train of 700 wagons was organized to carry military stores to Bethlehem. Carefully camouflaged by hay and manure, the Liberty Bell and other bells were transported on sturdy wagons. The trek began and the wagons, with their guard of 200 cavalymen, arrived in Bethlehem on September 24, 1777. That night the bells were hauled to Allentown where they were hidden under the floorboards of old Zion's Reformed Church. There, they remained

in safety until the following July.

By the end of June, 1778, the British had evacuated Philadelphia and the Liberty Bell and the church bells were restored to their rightful places.

“Proclaim Liberty Throughout the Land”

These words are inscribed on the most famous bell in the world, the Liberty Bell.

Allentown's West Park (16th & Linden Sts) is host to a wonderful summer concert series sponsored by the Allentown Dept. of Parks and Recreation. On July 3rd the Allentown Band (America's oldest civilian concert band whose first documented performance was July 4, 1828) performed its annual “Sousa Concert” - a tribute to

America's march king, John Philip Sousa. It was a beautiful summer evening, the calming sound of the flowing fountain, a warm breeze, period music and one could almost envision the days of yore with ladies in long skirts and gentlemen with their hats, sitting or milling about enjoying similar concerts.

As the crowd listened, several people gathered at the gazebo to read the latest schedule of events, a history of West Park, and, admire a replica of America's symbol of freedom, the Liberty Bell.



Others walked through the park amazed at the great variety of trees (listed on identification plaques). And many more stood at the monuments reflecting on those who gave their lives for our freedom – the patriots of the Revolutionary War, the First Defenders of the Civil War and servicemen on the USS Allentown.



Today, let us remember all those who fought or continue to fight on behalf of American freedom and liberty.

Did you know?

The Liberty Bell Trolley Line was a 45-mile interurban trolley that ran from Philadelphia to Allentown from 1900 to 1951. Operated by the Lehigh Valley Transit Company (LVT), the tracks followed Bethlehem Pike on the route used in 1777 to transport the Liberty Bell to Allentown. The Liberty Bell Line had a terminal in each town, with a waiting room and a ticket agent. Coming south from its downtown Allentown terminal, the trolley served Coopersburg, Quakertown, Perkasio, Sellersville, Souderton, Hatfield, Lansdale and Norristown. Its third-rail-equipped cars then continued on the high-speed Philadelphia and Western to the Upper Darby 69th Street terminal. Portions of the Liberty Bell Line right-of-way still exist. Stretches of the rural corridor remain as an ad-hoc greenway. In urban areas, little remains of the former line but one may find vestiges of the infrastructure, such as generator houses, substations, bridges and their abutments and train stations.