

"Funeral Obsequies for Pres. Jackson"

Carroll County Times article for 20 July 1997

By Jay A. Graybeal

The death of Gen. Andrew Jackson was observed with a funeral procession in Westminster on Saturday, July 19, 1845 in honor of the late president. Isaac Shriver, Chairman of the Committee of Arrangements, had invited the general public to attend and asked that everyone wear black crepe arm bands at the procession and also for thirty days following. He also requested that residents dress their houses in mourning and that businesses be closed, "at least during the proceedings." The July 24th issue of the Westminster Democrat and Carroll County Republican newspaper carried a lengthy article about the procession:

"The Funeral Obsequies of the immortal Jackson were duly celebrated in Westminster on Saturday last. Everything passed off as agreeably as the most sanguine friend of the Old Hero could have wished. The day was fine-the sun shining out in unclouded splendor; though, if there was any thing to be regretted, it was that his rays were a little too brilliant-the Military parade was large and imposing-citizens of every age and sex turned out by thousands, to a number never surpassed on any other occasion-the process was grand and striking-the music excellent-the ceremonies on the ground solemn and effective-the arrangements generally well designed, and fortunate in their execution-and the behaviour of the vast crowd in attendance worthy of all praise.

On Friday evening the "United Blues," from Hanover, Pa., arrived, commanded by Capt. FABER, and accompanied by the "Union Band," of Hanover. They were received by the "Westminster Guards" The Hanover Blues is a fine company, handsomely uniformed-and the Band is an excellent one, as their music, both on Friday night and on Saturday can attest. Both have put our citizens under great obligations for their generous attendance.

At an early hour on the 19th, the citizens of the place commenced dressing their houses with the sable habiliments of wo. A large number of houses were so decorated-and most of them in a manner tasteful, and creditable to the liberality of those concerned. A large United States' flag dressed in mourning, was thrown across the main street-the national flags floated at half mast from each mast of the extensive canvass of the New York Menagerie. Never did Westminster wear a more somber appearance-but it was only in consonance with the deep gloom which pervaded the hearts of our citizens on hearing the mournful intelligence of Jackson's death.

About 9 o'clock the "Unionville Greys," from Unionville, Frederick county, commanded by Major BROWER and Capt. CONDEN, and the "New Windsor Guards," under Capt. ECKER, made their appearance. They are handsomely uniformed companies; and will be gratefully remembered for their kind and patriotic spirit, in honoring our celebration with their attendance.

At 10 o'clock the procession was formed, at the lower end of main street, by the Chief Marshal.

The Funeral Car with its sable dress, and neat appearance, surmounted by a coffin, and followed closely by an elegant charger, equipped with the trappings of a General, and with empty saddle, had a most solemn and imposing effect. The Union Car, however, its huge sides dressed in black, and white top

gracefully hung with black festoons, together with its rich freight of Bounty, was generally regarded as the most attractive object of the procession.

On the ground, the Speaker's stand was dressed in mourning, with a likeness of General Jackson, surrounded with crape, in front. The Clergy, Military, the Bands, Choir, Cars, &c. being properly stationed, and as many of the vast crowd of citizens seated, as could be accommodated, the exercises took place in the following order:

Appropriate Music by the New York Band

Hymn by the Choir (Kir)

Introductory Prayer by the Rev. Isaac Webster.

Anthem by the Choir, (DENMARK)

Funeral Discourse by the Rev. William Collier

Patriotic Ode by the Choir, (AMERICA)

Music by the New York Band

Benediction by the Rev. T. L. Wilson

The exercises were solemn and appropriate to the occasion. The funeral discourse of the Rev. Mr. Collier was preached from Romans, 13th chapter and latter clause of the 7th verse-"Honor to whom honor is due." The text was handled with the ability power, and trilling eloquence for which the Rev. gentleman is noted. It was an admirable tribute to departed worth-and enchained the attention of the vast audience throughout, affecting many to tears. We forbear further notice at present, as we learn that Mr. C. has consented to furnish it to the Committee for publication. It has also been resolved to wait upon the Rev. Mr. Webster to furnish, for publication, a copy of the fervent, eloquent, and appropriate prayer, delivered by him on the occasion.

Upon the conclusion of the exercises in the grove, the procession was again formed in the order above described, except that the order of the Military was reversed, the left being in front. The whole company then returned in order to the place of starting and were dismissed, about 2 o'clock P.M. The Military in attendance were dined at the expense of the Committee of Arrangements. Great credit is due to the Military for their attendance which added so much to the eclat of the occasion."

The description of the funeral procession sheds some light on mid-nineteenth century funeral practices in general and also how Americans mourned the passing a national hero. The newspaper also noted that, "We were pleased to observe that many members of the Whig party assisted unreservedly throughout. They exhibited a patriotic and noble feeling creditable to themselves, and far more creditable to their party, than if they had kept aloof from the proceedings."

Photo Caption: Silk mourning ribbons were worn during the July 19, 1845 funeral procession in honor of President Andrew Jackson. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of George N. Shower and Robert Mcl. Unger.