
EPISODE FOUR

BENTLEY HALL DEDICATION, JULY 5, 1820

[An old lady in a wheel chair, pushed by a man-servant, appears from center right, even as an old man comes hobbling down from upper left. A small boy of eight or nine holds his hand. He constantly pulls at it, or runs on ahead to listen]

CARLETON. Good morning, Mrs. Miller.

MRS. MILLER. Good afternoon, Captain Carleton. How is your rheumatism?

CARLETON. Fine, fine, madam. It must be this dry weather, not a drop of rain till that shower at noon to-day, and the thermometer ranging for days from 86 to 92. It's just my weather.

MRS. MILLER. I haven't known so hot a fifth of July as this in ten years, not since 1810, when my sister Malviney's daughter, was married.

[The child, who has broken away, comes running back]

CHILD. Grandad, they're coming. Listen!

[All listen. The band may be heard faintly playing "Newburgh"]

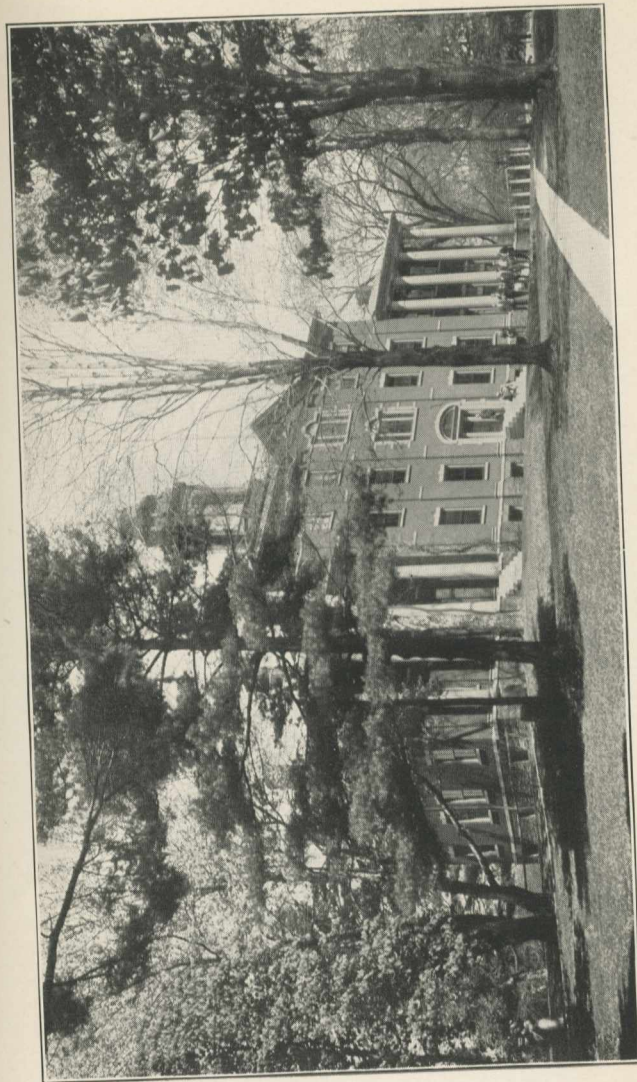
CARLETON. *[Looking at his watch]* They've been gathering for the procession since long before 2 o'clock. I never before saw such a crowd of people in Meadville.

MRS. MILLER. Well, it's nearly 3 now. They ought to be here.

CHILD. Listen! Listen! I hear them.

[The band is heard playing "Newburgh" much more clearly.]

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The old lady gestures as to where she wishes to be placed so as to see the procession to advantage. The CHILD drags the old man toward the procession, and then retreats as it comes into the grounds, clapping his hands. As the procession files through the gate, everyone begins to sing "Newburgh." When the column is abreast of Bentley Hall, it divides, letting the marshalls pass to the other end. They then return to the center of the line, which opens before them. Turning, they lead the procession down to the corner stone. The women and girls strew the path of the dignitaries, as they pass, with flowers.

As soon as the procession is in position about the corner stone SAMUEL LORD steps forward from the group of Trustees]

LORD. I have the honor and the very great pleasure to present to you, Major Alden, as President of the Board of Trustees, this deed, dated this day.

ROGER ALDEN. *[With a bow, accepting the document]* Mr. Selden, as Chief Marshall of the day, I ask you to read the important sections of this document to the audience here assembled.

SELDEN. *[Stepping up on the platform by the corner stone, reads from the document]* THIS INDENTURE, Made the fourth day of July in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty, between Samuel Lord of Mead Township, Crawford County and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Esquire, and Rebecca, his wife, of the one part, and the President and Trustees of the Allegheny College for the use and benefit of the said Allegheny College, of the other part, WITNESSETH, That the said Samuel Lord and Rebecca, his wife, have granted, bargained, sold, aliened, enfeoffed, released and confirmed, and, by these pre-

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sents, do grant, bargain, sell, alien, enfeof, release and confirm unto the said President and Trustees and to their successors for the use and benefit of the said Allegheny College

ALL That the following described piece or parcel of land situate in Mead Township, Crawford County:

Beginning at a stone set for the northeast corner on the west side of the Susquehanna and the Waterford Turnpike Road, thence north, sixty-seven and one half degrees west, forty perches to a post; thence south, twenty-two and one half degrees west, twenty perches to a post; thence south, sixty-seven and a half degrees east, forty perches to a stone set for the southeast corner; and thence north, twenty-two and a half degrees east, twenty perches by the Turnpike Road to the place of beginning, containing five acres, neat measure, being numbered on the general plan or draft of out lots laid off by the said Samuel Lord, Esquire, Twenty, and being part of a larger tract of land granted to the said Samuel Lord by Patent dated the sixteenth day of January, 1808, from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

[As he hands back the deed to MAJOR ALDEN, the crowd cheers LORD. PRESIDENT ALDEN comes forward.]

As the applause ends, MEITHROP and BARLOW, representing the Knights Templar step forward. BARLOW hands ALDEN his white rod of office. ALDEN, assisted by members of the Lodge, lays the corner stone, sprinkling it with corn, oil and wine, and pronouncing it well laid and sure. Programs and themes are placed in the stone. ALDEN then passes to the Architect the tools of his trade bidding him see that his work is "fully and finally done." Finally, ALDEN and the junior and senior wardens facing their gathering, bow their heads in prayer]

¹This ceremony is in no way offered as an exact copy of the original, but merely as a greatly shortened substitute.

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ALDEN. O, God, bless this work of our hands this day; now and forever, and may Thy blessing be upon these benefactors of Allegheny College; its officers, present and to come; its alumni now and of all succeeding generations. Above all, O merciful God, let Thy blessing rest on this great assemblage, gathered for this interesting and joyous occasion.

[He now gives up his staff to BARLOW. Then he returns to the platform by the corner stone. A decided hush falls]

ALDEN.¹ *[As he looks over the gathering]* Representatives of our beloved country and of this great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Trustees and Benefactors, Fellow citizens of Meadville, Students of Allegheny College. Has any people, without the intervention of miracles, ever been so highly favored as the American? Let Him, who protects the feeble, debases the proud, and exalts the humble, have all the glory, the honor and the praise. It is He who has preserved us, fought our battles, and carried us, from one grade to another, till we are become a great, powerful and independent nation. It is He who has made this desert to rejoice and blossom like the rose. Look about you. All around, where the hills girdle us about, even as did the hills that stood watch over Jerusalem, is beauty, promise of fertility, and quietude. Sixty-seven years ago, that man, chosen later by God to bring our nation through war to triumph and the beginnings of our present prosperity, George Washington, gliding upon the bosom of French Creek there below, the In-nun-gach of the Senecas, noted the exceeding fertility of the site of our dearly loved town. When he wrote in his diary, "We passed through several extensive

¹This speech is based on an outline of the original still in existence. Parts of it are taken from writings of Timothy Alden.

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and very rich meadows, one of which—the site of our town—I believe was nearly four miles in length and considerably wide in some places," the Cussewago rolled silently from the West to join the In-nun-gach; Indian trails were the only paths; and no settlers had upturned the soil lying rich on every hand. Note how, in the blessing of God, we have prospered in the thirty-two years since Meadville was founded. Now a prosperous and growing community of over six hundred souls prospers in the lovely valley before our eyes. No longer is the wilderness trackless. Roads are on all sides. No longer do the rivers move silently. They hum as they turn the wheels of the busy mills. On their bosoms loud are the cries of the boatmen passing from Waterford to Pittsburgh.

But a people to be happy must have more than quiet homes and food in plenty. They must have enlightenment. General information is necessary that the path of duty may be descried. It is a matter of fact as we conceive, that, in those parts of our country where the people have been the most attentive to the education of youth and the warmest patrons of religious institutions, there we, in general, find, not only the most profound regard for the rights of man and the laws of heaven, but the greatest prevalence of peace and plenty, harmony and love.

Ever mindful of these truths, the citizens of this town have provided, since its earliest days, needed schools. Five years ago a group of men, on most of whom my eye rests at the present moment, met in yonder Court House on the Diamond to lay the foundation [*Turning to the students*] for the College of your affections, Allegheny, in name eternal, to be eternal as a fount of truth and, so, of life. Today we meet, a gathering greater than this

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town has ever known before, to lay the foundation, the very corner stone even, of a building which commemorates for you a generous giver, for me a dearly loved friend, and for all of us a fine, rich liberal spirit. From the earliest conception of my plans for this College, he has known them; he has advised and cheered me. In his last letter, written just before his untimely death last December in the plenitude of his power, he wrote me of his admiration for this Commonwealth and his continued interest in our College. [*Reading*] "I think often of your talk with me six years ago, of your plan for this College you have founded at Meadville. I see that you chose wisely a region of great fertility, sure to have within a few years a great population. I see that you chose well, too, when you placed it in a commonwealth where the ambition, foresight and justice of William Penn reappear in his successors." William Bentley's legacy attests the sincerity of these words. He has left us his rich collection of lexicons, dictionaries and Bibles, one of the rarest in the country. So valuable is it that at least one sister institution, Harvard, has viewed it, let us say not with covetous, but discerning eye. To William Bentley, and to those who hold him in fondest memory, no memorial could be more fitting than this building which we plan to raise above and around this corner stone. His beloved nephew and heir, William Bentley Fowle, Esquire, writes me: "I find it hard to choose fitting words to express my sense of gratitude for the honor you do my distinguished and dearly loved uncle, the Rev. William Bentley, by giving his name to the first building of Allegheny College. It is pre-eminently fitting that he who loved, guided and formed more than a generation of the youths of Salem, and in turn was honored and loved by them, should be commemorated

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by a structure forever dedicated to the instruction of young men in their duties to God and mankind." As I stand here, some oft-repeated words of William Bentley come back to me. "Superstition has its cause in ignorance of natural laws, bigotry in ignorance of mankind." This institution, as yet in its infancy, is dedicated for all eternity to fight these two forces condemned by William Bentley—superstition, which bewilders the mind, bigotry which dries up within us the milk of human kindness. Today, we stand about the corner stone of a building yet unbuilt. Yet build it we shall. Lumber and brick have been promised us, and labor too. Nor does the College fail to make some return for such generosity. We are granting to all persons who give above a certain amount of labor or material to this hall, the right to perpetual use of our rich library. Even if, as yet, there be not enough money in sight to make the completion of the building sure, I cannot believe that a community which, five years ago, raised over fifty-five hundred dollars to start this college, or the friends elsewhere who gave over four thousand, will permit this work to go unfinished. The splendid generosity of Samuel Lord, unflinching since the outset of plans for this college, you have just seen. For the Trustees, for the undergraduates of today and the future, I thank him. In my mind's eye, and in the Providence of God Almighty, I see this Bentley Hall the center of many another stately building dedicated to the needs which have already arisen and which, shall, though yet unforeseen, arise. May friends spring up for this our College of Allegheny. May her students increasing, spread her reputation wherever men speak the English tongue, and even in lands where fired with the spirit of missionaries, they may penetrate to people of alien race and speech. And wherever they go, may they take

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with them, as an inspiration, the teachings of the men, who, in the years to come, shall be chosen to guide them in this building for which our hands today have laid the chief stone—a group of men who may say, in the words of the hymn dear to many of us,

"My tongue, by inspiration taught,
Shall parables unfold:
Dark oracles, but understood,
And owned for truths of old.

"Which we from sacred registers
Of ancient times have known,
And our forefathers' pious care
To us has handed down."

Let us all join in singing to the tune of Mear, verses one, four and five of this, the 77th Psalm.

[*The Assemblage sings*]

"Give ear, ye children, to my law,
Devout attention lend;
Let the instructions of my mouth
Deep in your hearts descend.

"Let children learn the mighty deeds
Which God performed of old,
Which in our younger years we saw,
And which our fathers told.

"Our lips shall tell them to our sons,
And they again to theirs—
That generations yet unborn
May teach them to their heirs."

[*As the singing finishes, ALDEN raises his hands in silent benediction. Murmured "Amens" are heard. Marshalls*

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hurry up the line directing the groups in reforming. The band, striking up "Newburgh," falls in behind the Meadville Blues. The other groups, also falling into line begin the next to the last verse of "Newburgh". Singing, they pass out into the street and disappear]

EPISODE FIVE

THE RESIGNATION OF ALDEN, AUGUST 2, 1831

[From the right over the bridge, JOHN DICK and REYNOLDS come into sight walking slowly. As they cross the bridge, they mop their brows.]

REYNOLDS. 'Tis something of a climb up here on a hot August day like this.

DICK. The dog days are certainly upon us, even if today be but the second of the month. *[Looking about]* But Alden is not waiting for us.

REYNOLDS. Yet surely at his house there in the fields *[Pointing in the direction of Spenser Hospital]* we were told that he had left special word we should find him here before Bentley Hall.

DICK. Well, Alden never fails to keep his word.

REYNOLDS. He must have had some strong reason, considerate as he always is of others, for making us come this long distance on a hot day. Certainly we should wait.

[As they seat themselves, the center door of Bentley swings slowly open. ALDEN, lost in his sad thoughts, almost as if unseeing, closes the door slowly behind him. He locks it, lingering over the task. The two men turn at the noise of the door and start to rise, but something in the sadness of the figure arrests them, and they motion to each other to wait. As he comes from the building, ALDEN turns once and looks at it. As he approaches, he sees the two men and greets them with a stately bow. But he is thinking, lost in thinking. He looks much older than in the last scene. As he comes nearer he is seen to be carrying something in his