

If Caesar Rodney Had Not Made His Heroic Ride, Americans Might Not Now Be Celebrating the Fourth of July!

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)
THANKS to the poets, the story of the rides of Paul Revere and Gen. Phil Sheridan are an imperishable part of American tradition. But, so far, no bard has sung of the heroic ride of Caesar Rodney—at least, none has given us a poem about it so familiar as those of Henry W. Longfellow and Thomas Buchanan Read.

Yet here is truly an epic theme—the story of how death rode in the saddle with this heroic horseman and how history might have been changed if he had failed in his mission. The events leading up to Caesar Rodney's ride were these:

On June 7, 1776, a resolution introduced by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia in the Continental congress, declaring that "these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States," was accepted in a committee of seven of the colonies—a bare majority of one. If this revolutionary step of severing the ties which bound the colonies to the Mother Country was to be taken successfully, there must be greater unanimity among them. So the leaders in the move for independence set about to win over those who hesitated to take such a radical step.

Jonathan D. Sargent hurried across the Delaware river into New Jersey where delegates were being chosen and succeeded in securing the election of men pledged to independence. A few days later the Maryland convention, which had previously been opposed to the idea of declaring for independence, reversed its position and adopted resolutions instructing its delegates to vote for the Lee resolution. Next South Carolina was won over, as was Pennsylvania, although its delegation was split on the issue. The delegates from New York, though personally in favor of independence, could not vote for it until receiving approval from the convention in their colony, though it was certain that such approval would be forthcoming.

A Divided Delegation.
There now remained only the vote of Delaware to make the decision of the Thirteen Colonies unanimous. She had three delegates to the congress—Thomas McKean, George Read and Caesar Rodney. McKean was one of the most outspoken advocates of independence but Read, influenced by John Dickinson of Pennsylvania, was opposed to declaring for freedom at this time. This left the deciding vote in the Delaware delegation to Rodney, who was also speaker of the Delaware assembly and had returned to Dover to reside over it.

On July 1 the Lee resolution came up for discussion and all during that day and far into the next the momentous decision was the subject of a hot debate. Late in the afternoon of July 2 it was put to a vote. Eleven of the colonies, by the votes of the majority of their delegates, cast their ballots in favor of independence. The votes of two—New York and Delaware—were not recorded.

If such a decisive step were to be taken, it must be unanimous, else the results might be disastrous. Meanwhile a committee headed by Thomas Jefferson was drafting a Declaration of Independence, and Thomas McKean was making an important decision. He knew that Rodney was also in favor of independence and if he were brought to Philadelphia he could break the deadlock in the vote of the Delaware delegation.

At his own expense he hired a messenger and sent him speeding to Dover to explain the situation to Rodney and urge him to come to Philadelphia at once. It was nearly midnight of July 1 when the messenger started for Dover 80 miles away and he did not arrive there until 24 hours later. Rodney was at his home a few miles further on, so it was not until the early morning hours of July 3 that he was aroused from sleep and given McKean's message. At daybreak, mounted on the strongest horse in his stable, Rodney was on his way to Philadelphia.

For years Rodney had suffered with a cancer on his face. Before the opening of the Revolution he had been urged to go to England in search of relief from the dread disease, but his sense of duty to his colony in the troubled times ahead kept him in America. In a letter to his sister he described his case as "truly dangerous, and what will be the event God only knows; I still

Philadelphia July the 4th 1776

Sir I have inclosed you a summons directed to the Sheriff to hold a court the 22d day of July at Newcastle on the 22d day of this Instant which I hope you will have put into his hands as soon as possible after it comes to hand. I arrived in Congress the 21st by Thunder and Rain I found enough to give my Voice in the matter of Independence. It is now determined by the Thirteen United Colonies with out even one dissenting Colony. We have now got through with the whole of the Declaration and ordered it to be printed. Hand-bills of it will be printed and sent to the Armies, Cities, County Towns &c. to be published or rather proclaimed in form. Don't neglect to attend closely and carefully to my Harvest and you'll oblige

Yours
CAESAR RODNEY

The only surviving letter, dated July 4, 1776, written by any signer of the Declaration of Independence and referring to that document. It is Caesar Rodney's and it refers only briefly to his heroic ride.

live in hopes and still retain my usual spirits."

Rodney's Modest Story.

So it took courage of the highest kind for him to set out upon the hasty 80-mile trip to Philadelphia, because the exertions of such a journey might easily cause his death. Apparently he never thought of that—his only thought was that his presence was needed in the Continental Congress where a momentous decision was about to be made. In the letter (reproduced above) which he wrote after completing his journey, he makes little mention of the hardships of that journey. It says:

Philadelphia July the 4th 1776

Sir: In have inclosed you a summons directed to the Sheriff to (Call) Summon the Members for our County to meet in Assembly at Newcastle on the 22d day of this Instant which I hope you will have put into his hands as soon as possible after it comes to Yours—I arrived in Congress the 21st by Thunder and Rain; time enough to give my Voice in the matter of Independence. It is now determined by the Thirteen United Colonies without even one dissenting Colony. We have now got through with the whole of the Declaration, and ordered it to be printed so that you will soon have the pleasure of seeing it. Hand-bills of it will be printed, and sent to the Armies, Cities, County Towns &c. to be published or rather proclaimed in form. Don't neglect to attend closely and carefully to my Harvest and you'll oblige

Yours—
CAESAR RODNEY

Being "detained by Thunder and Rain" was probably the least



of his difficulties, for we know by contemporary accounts that the weather was extremely hot and the necessity for haste must have taken a heavy toll of the energies of both man and beast. Where Rodney stopped for the rest and food that was absolutely necessary for both is unknown but since he did not arrive in Philadelphia until the morning of July 4, it is evident that he must have paused somewhere along the way for a brief breathing spell for his horse and a few moments of relaxation from the saddle for himself.

Meanwhile Jefferson, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin had drafted the Declaration of Independence and the final vote on it was set for the morning of July 4. It is not difficult to imagine the anxiety of McKean as the hour for the congress to assemble drew near. Would Rodney arrive in time to support him in casting Delaware's vote for independence? He hoped that he

would but he could not be sure.

According to one account, McKean was striding up and down the brick walk outside Independence hall after the other members of the congress had filed in when he saw a horseman speeding along the dusty street toward him. A moment later this rider drew up in front of the hall and, as he swung wearily down from the saddle, McKean recognized the dust-covered, grimy-faced man as Caesar Rodney.

There was a brief handclasp, then the two men entered the hall, Rodney still "booted and spurred and travel-stained." A few minutes later the roll call on the adoption of the Declaration of Independence began. It started with New Hampshire, the most northerly of the colonies and proceeded through Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, (New York was passed for the time being, although her delegates were favorable) to Pennsylvania.

The Crucial Vote.

So far the vote of these colonies has been for adoption of the Declaration. The Pennsylvania delegation is divided but by a vote of three to two her voice speaks for independence. Then comes the crucial vote of Delaware.

As was expected McKean votes in favor of adoption of the Declaration and Read votes against. When Rodney's name is called, some of the delegates turn in surprise—it is the first intimation they have of his return. They know how important his vote is, so they hang on his words. Those words made such an indelible impression upon some of them, among them McKean, that they remembered them for years afterwards. He said:

"As I believe the voice of my constituents and of all sensible and honest men is in favor of independence, my own judgment concurs with them, I vote for independence."

So Caesar Rodney cast the deciding vote for Delaware and Delaware's vote was an all-important one. The rest was a foregone conclusion. Delegates from the remainder of the colonies also voted for the charter of liberty and thus the Declaration of Independence was adopted. So Caesar Rodney's heroic ride had not been in vain. Had he not made it, July 4 might not have been the important date that it is—in the history of the United States and of the whole world!

But his fame does not rest entirely upon this one act. Eleven years earlier he had been a member of the Stamp Act congress which met in New York to protest against the acts of parliament which were to lead eventually to the Revolution.

Rodney was among those who urged the appointment of George Washington as commander-in-chief of the Continental army and he became one of Washington's most valued friends. He entered the war as a brigadier-general of the Delaware militia, was with Washington at the Battle of Trenton and despite the ravages of cancer, served throughout the Revolution. He came out of the war a major-general and lived to see the country win the freedom for which he had cast his historic vote. He died at Poplar Grove, Delaware, June 29, 1784.

Brims Are Wide, Wider, Widest In Chic and Flattering Ways

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



WHAT a merry chase fickle fashion is leading us this season in regard to the hats we wear. Starts us off at the dawn of spring with flower or fabric-drape toques so tiny (some of them) as to be almost amusing, yet withal so flattering and so chic, even the new broad brims cannot entirely wrest their well-earned honors from them. And then what does capricious fashion do—suddenly announces brims so tremendously wide they fairly amaze one. Which, summed up, means every fashionable wardrobe of hats this summer must necessarily include both types to be worn as time and occasion demand.

As to the new broad-of-brim vogue so full of promise for the coming months, no matter how big your hat with a brim, it will be none too large, according to fashion's way of thinking. None too dramatic either, since the new brims are daring indeed, and to make them appear the more so they are worn with a dash and a go that adds infinitely to their style.

The wide-brimmed, strictly tailored felts which proved themselves so definitely good-looking with the new spring suits continue to have a firm hold on the affections of well-dressed women. Outstanding among these striking felts are the simple, huge, sailor types, the stunning, large Bretons and the very new rippled or pleated, soft, flaring, felt brim that, to be perfectly chic, must be worn far back on the head. Of course the latter are necessarily dedicated to youth, for who but the ingenue smooth of brow dare venture so striking a fashion?

The fact that the off-the-face broad brims are essentially a young sophisticated item should not by any means imply that the vogue for enormous brims is confined to the

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Dangerous Insincerity
Of all the evil spirits abroad at this hour in the world, insincerity is the most dangerous.—Froude.

Search for Good
No good book or good thing of any sort shows its best face at first.—Carlyle.

Good Shoe News



Hear, hear ye the good news! It's about an exciting innovation—an innersole of a new synthetic material named Onco Insole-ated, which has recently been developed by Vincent De Liso. In creating this new innersole a slim layer between the outer sole of a shoe and the lining completely insulates the foot against the heat and cold of city pavements. Mr. DeLiso says this insole-ated sole is so deep and resilient it practically caresses the foot, causing the shoe to be molded at the first wearing, to the individual contours of the foot.

Summer Black
In the midst of all the welter of color shown for summer wear, sheer black, and black and white, zoom to an important place for hot weather.

'Companionate' Is Aim in Accessories

More and more fashion encourages the idea of companionate accessories. This season, more than ever, much ado is being made over establishing a family relation between this and that of one's costume. Such as for instance a costume ring to match the lapel gadget or clip. Also the idea of wearing flower costume jewelry to which is matched the color of your nail polish.

You can get blouses with hats of the same material and designers have even gone so far as to make gloves of the identical fabric.

Costumes that ensemble from head to foot include dress, hat, parasol and gloves of the same material. This is being carried out beautifully in the very fashionable cottons, especially flowered prints.

Dark Linen With Lingerie Frills

New on the style program and strikingly chic is the black or navy linen redingote dress the skirt of which flares open at the front revealing starch white petticoat frills, the very feminine treatment further carried out in dramatic collar and cuffs of matching snow-white embroidery and lace.

Fashion-alert women are also setting the pace with costumes of dark green linen with which red accessories complete a costume of outstanding mode. With dresses of linen in the new browns hats and details in the much talked about cocoa shades achieve pleasing contrast.

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