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REMARKS OF THOMAS D. CALDWELL UPON PRESENTATION OF THE PORTRAIT OF ANDREW GREGG CURTIN

Mr. President, Dean Hitchler, Distinguished Guests and Fellow Alumni of the Dickinson School of Law:

In words almost as appropriate now as then, a Pennsylvania Governor spoke to our Legislature on a day of great peril to our country. He said: "You meet together at this special session, surrounded by circumstances involving the most solemn responsibilities, the recollections of the glories of the past, the reflections of the gloomy present, and the uncertainty of the future,—all alike call upon you to discharge your duty in a spirit of patriotic courage, comprehensive wisdom, and firm resolution. Never in the history of our peace-loving Commonwealth have the hearts of our people been so stirred in their depths as at the present moment. And I feel that I need hardly say to you that, in the performance of your duties on this occasion, and in providing the ways and means for the maintenance of our country's glory and our integrity as a nation, you should be inspired by feelings of self-sacrifice kindred to those which animate the brave men who have devoted their lives to the perils of the battle-field in defense of our nation's flag. Gentlemen, I place the honor of the State in your hands. And I pray that the Almighty God, who protected our fathers in their efforts to establish this our great constitutional liberty—who has controlled the growth of civilization and Christianity in our midst, may not now forsake us; that He may watch over your counsels, and may, in his Providence, lead us back again to perfect loyalty, and restore peace, harmony and fraternity to our distracted country."

This eloquent statement of our danger and duty came from a relatively young man, then just forty-three years of age, who had been called to the helm of our state government. The declaration I have just read and his subsequent utterances came to be regarded as second only to those of Abraham Lincoln in espousing and defending our country.

The man who uttered these words was graduated from our alma mater in the class of 1837 at the age of twenty years. Twenty-two years later he was elected Governor of Pennsylvania. His higher education was received solely at the Dickinson School of Law. The minutes of the Board of Trustees of Dickinson College for July, 1837, showed that a communication from Judge Reed, head of the Law School, was received "certifying that A. A. Anderson, Alfred Nevin, E. A. McMurtrie, and Andrew G. Curtin, in pursuance of the statutes and in virtue of having complied with the requirements of same are entitled to the degree of B.L.," and a resolution was adopted directing and commanding the faculty to confer "publicly and according to custom the degree of Bachelor of Law" upon the four named men.

Andrew Gregg Curtin was born on April 22, 1817, at Bellefonte, Centre County, Pennsylvania. His father, in 1807, had erected a forge on Bald Eagle Creek about four miles north of Bellefonte. There to this day stands the hamlet of Curtin, and there remains of the old forge can still be seen. Governor Curtin received his preliminary education at the Harrisburg Academy and the Milton Academy. He then returned to Bellefonte where he commenced the study of law in the office of William W. Potter, afterwards a member of Congress from that District. He decided to enter the Dickinson School of Law, conducted by Judge John Reed, who was regarded as one of the ablest lawyers in the State. After graduating in the Class of 1837, he returned to his home in Centre County and commenced to practice in partnership with one John Blanchart, an eminent lawyer. One biographer states: "At the very opening of his career he took a leading rank in his profession. Of commanding presence, and ready elocution, he was able, from his well-stored mind, to hold the attention alike of judge and jury. Possessed of exuberant spirits, and a keen sense for wit and humor, he was often able, by a few master-strokes of ridicule, to make what seemed in his opponent's case to be plausible, appear utterly indefensible. In criminal cases he was especially successful, and it was before a jury in such cases that his power was most conspicuous, and in conducting which he took delight. His tastes and training qualified him for the political arena, and he early entered it embracing the principles of the Whig party of that day, of which he soon became a most successful advocate. In 1840 he labored for the elevation of General Harrison to the Presidency, and in 1844 made a successful canvass of the State for Henry Clay, exciting great enthusiasm wherever he appeared. In 1848 he was placed upon the electoral ticket and contributed largely in raising and maintaining that tide of enthusiasm which carried the hero of the first Mexican campaign to the Presidential chair. He performed a like office for General Scott in 1852, serving again upon the electoral ticket. In 1854 he was strongly urged to accept the nomination for Governor, but refused, and took instead the laboring oar in securing the election of his friend James Pollock, acting as chairman of the State central committee of the party, conducting the canvass with unexampled energy and zeal, and with the most flattering success. Recognizing this eminent qualification for the position, Governor Pollock appointed him Secretary of the Commonwealth, a post of signal honor and responsibility, as in addition to the duty of Secretary proper, he was ex-officio superintendent of Common Schools. During his term as Secretary of the Commonwealth, he recommended the establishment of the system of State Normal Schools for educating teachers, which forms such a corner stone of our educational system today. This fact is not generally known about Governor Curtin as his fame has always been that of the War Governor of Pennsylvania.

Governor Curtin was called to the Gubernatorial chair at a time when the gravest problems ever presented to American statesmanship were to be solved. One of his finest and most outstanding statements was contained in his inaugural address of January, 1861: "Ours is a national government. It has within the sphere

of its action all the attributes of sovereignty, and among these are the right and duty of self-preservation. It is based upon a compact to which all the people of the United States are parties. It is the result of mutual concessions, which were made for the purpose of securing reciprocal benefits. It acts directly on the people, and they owe it a personal allegiance. No part of the people, no State, nor combination of States, can voluntarily secede from the Union, nor absolve themselves from their obligations to it. To permit a State to withdraw at pleasure from the Union, without the consent of the rest, is to confess that our Government is a failure. Pennsylvania can never acquiesce in such a conspiracy, nor assent to a doctrine which involves the destruction of the Government. If the Government is to exist, all the requirements of the Constitution must be obeyed; and it must have power adequate to the enforcement of the supreme law of the land in every State. It is the first duty of the national authorities to stay the progress of anarchy and enforce the laws, and Pennsylvania, with a united people, will give them an honest faithful and active support. The people mean to preserve the integrity of the national Union at every hazard."

I had never realized the great part which Pennsylvania played in the Civil War in support of the Union until I read the stories of the Pennsylvania Reserve Corps and that of the Altoona meeting of the Northern Governors in the early days of the Civil War. Communication between the northern states and the national capitol had been cut off by the revolt in Baltimore. Governor Curtin had meanwhile called for 25,000 additional troops. Shortly communications having been restored, the national government decided not to accept these new troops. Governor Curtin refused to revoke his call and applied to the Legislature for authority to form a corps of thirteen regiments of infantry, one of cavalry, and one of artillery, to be organized and equipped by the State, subject to the call of the National Government when needed and to be at all times in readiness for immediate service. The authority was granted by the Legislature. When the nation stood appalled by the disasters at Bull Run and Washington was exposed to the attack of the enemy, Pennsylvania was able to immediately dispatch these troops to the defense of Washington. When the first regiment arrived in Washington it was met by President Lincoln in person and his greeting was: "God bless Pennsylvania; God bless her loyal Governor."

In the reorganization of the army after that defeat, the Pennsylvania troops by reason of the organized and drilled reserve corps became the nucleus of military discipline and efficiency.

One of the important events of the war in which Governor Curtin played a most conspicuous part is little known in history. It was the Altoona Conference of the Governors of the North which met in the old Logan House. The army of the Potomac had been defeated in front of Richmond and General Pope had met with disaster and been driven into the defenses of Washington. Volunteering had ceased; no national conscription law was then in existence and

there was distress bordering on despair in the hearts of the loyal people of the north. Governor Curtin, although desperately ill, suggested a meeting of the loyal governors and that they, speaking for their states, should ask the President to issue a call for 300,000 men, with the assurance that the states would promptly respond to it. The conference was fixed at Altoona and was fully attended and it was that conference and its patriotic utterance penned largely by Andrew G. Curtin that inspired the nation afresh, filled up the shattered ranks of the armies, and saved the Republic. Col. A. K. McClure, Curtin's closest friend, stated afterwards that the ex-vice president of the Confederacy told him that the severest blow the south received in the early part of the conflict was the result of the Altoona Conference.

In 1863, Governor Curtin was from his arduous labors, broken in health, and desirous of retiring. However, the pressure from the soldiers was so great that he stood for re-election and received a second term. He was the father of the Pennsylvania Orphan Schools organized and erected to care for soldiers' orphans. It is said that in the army hospital he solaced the dying, gave words of hope to the wounded and suffering and bore messages of affection to and from loved ones at home. No letter from a soldier at the front, whether officer or private, was ever received without being promptly answered.

In 1868 he was appointed Minister to Russia by General Grant and served with great distinction in this post. It is noteworthy that all the writers of the period say the election of Curtin to his first term was tantamount to making certain the election of Abraham Lincoln.

Through one of the strange happenings of politics, he supported Horace Greely in the campaign of 1872, thus estranging his republican friends, and he subsequently joined the democratic party. In 1878, he ran for Congress on the democratic ticket and was defeated. Two years later he ran again, was elected, and served three consecutive terms until his retirement in March, 1887.

He lived quietly the remaining years of his life in his mountain home and died after a severe attack of illness on October 7, 1894.

Pennsylvania has honored Curtin in posterity by the creation of its smallest State Park much less than a city block in extent, located on the grounds of old Camp Curtin in northern Harrisburg where the Pennsylvania Reserves and other Civil War troops were trained. Further, two hamlets in Pennsylvania, one in Dauphin County, the other in Centre County, bear his name.

The Dickinson School of Law has given three eminent sons to the Governor's chair in Pennsylvania. Two of those, fortunately, are here tonight. Since Andrew G. Curtin, the first of the group, has long since passed to his reward, I have been designated to present to the Law School a portrait painted for the alumni by a Pennsylvania artist, Mr. P. W. Munty.

I now take pleasure, Dean Hitchler, in delivering to you and the School this splendid likeness of our first graduate to achieve the Gubernatorial chair, Pennsylvania's Civil War Governor, Andrew Gregg Curtin.