

**MEMOIR OF SAMUEL BRECK,
LATE PRESIDENT OF THE
PENNSYLVANIA INSTITUTION
FOR
THE INSTRUCTION OF THE BLIND**

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Memoir of Samuel Breck, late president of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind by J. Francis Fisher

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J. FRANCIS FISHER

**MEMOIR OF SAMUEL BRECK,
LATE PRESIDENT OF THE
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THE INSTRUCTION OF THE BLIND**

MEMOIR
OF
SAMUEL BRECK,

LATE PRESIDENT OF THE

Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind.

READ BEFORE THE

BOARD OF MANAGERS, AND THE OFFICERS

OF THE INSTITUTION,

May 7, 1863.

J. F. Fisher
BY J. FRANCIS FISHER,

PRESIDENT.

PHILADELPHIA:
C. SHERMAN, SON & CO., PRINTERS.
1863.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF MANAGERS.

A stated meeting of the Board of Managers of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind, was held at the Institution on Thursday, September 3d, 1862.

The chair was taken by J. Francis Fisher, the senior Vice-President.

Before the Board proceeded to the consideration of the business of the day, Dr. Casper Morris arose, and said:

“As one of the oldest members of the Association for the Instruction of the Blind, and one long favored with the personal friendship of Samuel Breck, our late revered and honored presiding officer, I must request permission to invite the Board of Managers, at this, its first meeting after his death, to pause, in order to pay a solemn tribute of respect to the memory of one who, during more than twenty-one years, was our fellow-member, and who, during twelve years, presided over our deliberations;—one for whom every member of the Board must have felt an affection resembling that of children for a parent;—and of whom it would scarcely be an exaggerated expression to speak as THE FOSTER FATHER of our helpless charge.

“Favored as has been our Institution in the honorable character of the gentlemen who, from its commencement, have

filled this responsible position, to none of our Presidents could we turn with more profound respect and veneration. No one of them exceeded Mr. Breck in kind, affectionate, sympathizing feeling for the pupils, and earnest, self-denying, laborious devotion to their interests.

“Ever solicitous for their advancement in learning, whether in letters or handicraft, he cheered their progress by the expression of his cordial approbation, and the soft touch of his gentle hand, accompanied by that, to them unknown, manifestation of his love, a smile radiant with heartfelt gratification.

“Ever thoughtful of their welfare, he devised plans for its promotion, and earnestly applied his efforts to secure the success of such plans, when sanctioned or adopted by the Board.

“Genial, kind, parental in his demeanor to the pupils and officers, the same spirit marked his action when presiding at the meetings of the Board; and unless some one of kindred spirit be raised up to fill the vacancy caused by his lamented, though not untimely, death, the Institution must languish from the want of the impulse his presence and counsels ever imparted.”

On motion of the Hon. Anson V. Parsons, the Board directed the following entry to be made upon its Minutes:

“The Board of Managers of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind have heard with deep regret of the decease of their venerated President, **THE HONORABLE SAMUEL BRECK**, for more than twenty-one years one of their most efficient members, and for twelve years their presiding

officer. By his high sense of justice, his dignity and urbanity of demeanor, he commanded the respect and won the attachment of those whose happy fortune it was to be his associates.

“In the death of Mr. Breck, the Board of Managers have lost the most valued of their members, the Institution one of the most ardent of its supporters, and the inmates of the Asylum a sincere and sympathizing friend.

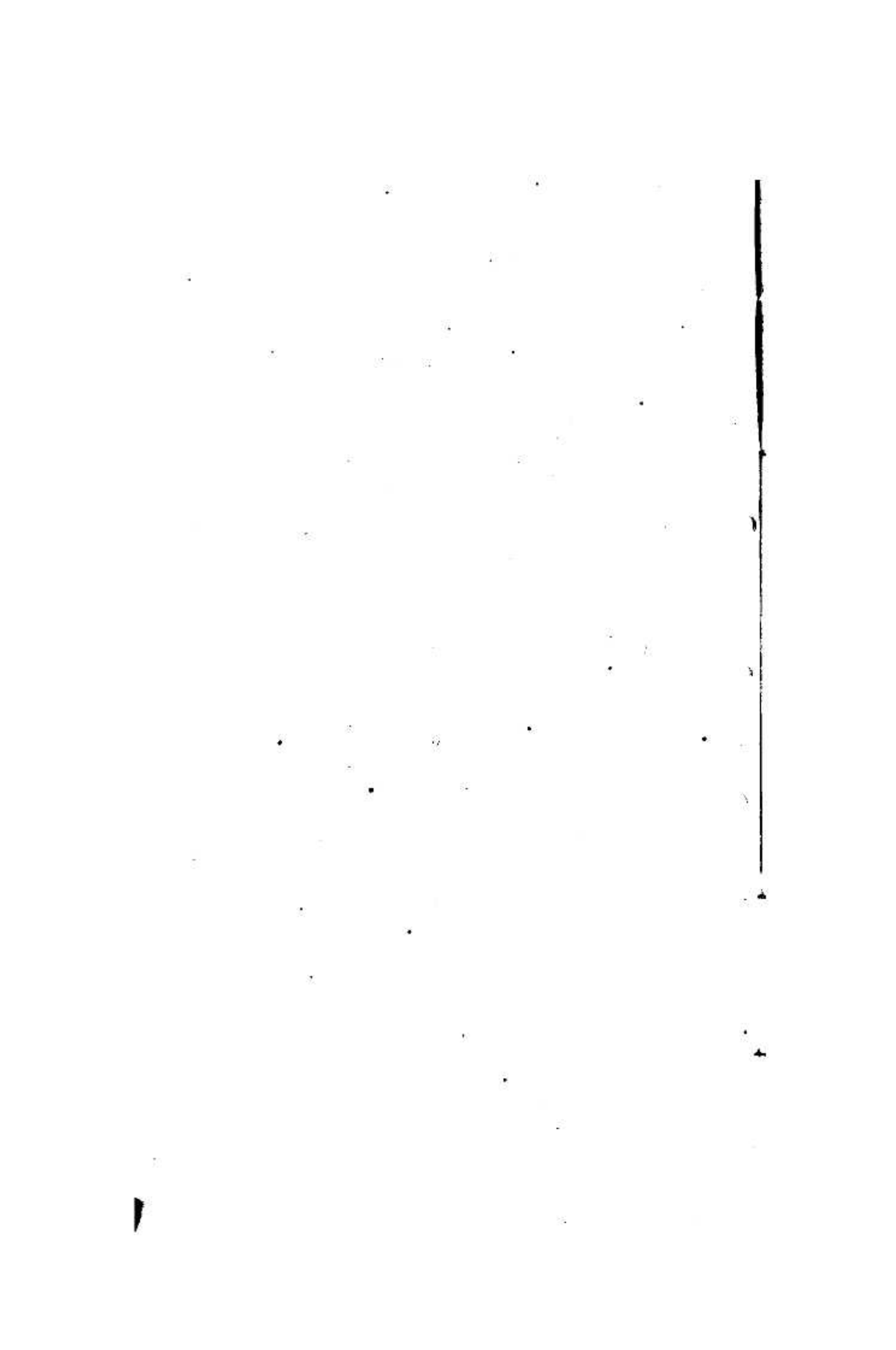
“While this Board bear in mind that Mr. Breck was often honored by the citizens of Philadelphia, in his election to stations of high public trust, which he filled with distinguished credit, yet they cannot but believe that his quiet labors in the reorganization of the Institution for the Blind, and in the establishment of its present successful system of administration, must prove the enduring record of his devoted labors in the cause of public benevolence.

“It is the wish of this Board that its senior Vice-President, Mr. Fisher, prepare a Memoir of the life of Mr. Breck, and such an acknowledgment of his labors in connection with this Institution, as may suitably be placed upon its records.”

Taken from the Minutes of the Board of Managers.

ROBERT P. KANE,

Secretary.



M E M O I R.

IN compliance with the request of the Board of Managers, I have prepared the following Memoir of our venerable friend and President.

It is in great measure a compilation from his own diaries, which have left me little to desire in point of materials. They were commenced in the beginning of the century, and continued with few intermissions till the year 1859. They are generally less a record of events than observations on them, and abstracts from his studies and various reading. He began, indeed, in 1830, an autobiographical memoir, carried from his earliest recollections to the year 1797. This is full of interesting anecdotes pleasantly told; and my embarrassment with it has arisen from the fear of quoting it too copiously. Hereafter it may be published with some extracts from his subsequent diaries.

I trust I may not exceed the limits which ought to restrain a memoir to be recorded on our Minutes; but I have felt I could not do justice to the subject, except by dwelling in detail on many incidents and traits of character, without which our successors would have an inadequate idea of the public services and private vir-

tues of this admirable citizen, this pure and noble-minded gentleman, who was, as none other has been, a Father to our Institution. We owe it to his memory to keep alive the affection he inspired, and to show in his bright example to our successors, his singular claims to our respect and love.

SAMUEL BRECK was born in Boston on the 17th of July, 1771. His father, of the same name, was a merchant of high standing and good fortune,—his mother, Hannah Andrews, of a family which has preserved its eminent social position to the present time.

His paternal ancestor, Edward Breck, who came from England with Governor Winthrop in 1630, and settled in Dorchester near Boston, was the progenitor of a numerous and prosperous race, among whom were always to be found, as at this day, men distinguished as well for their services as citizens, as for their private virtues, and their zealous devotion to the cause of the Christian Church.

He mentions in his memoir, that he was nursed at Lexington, the first battle-field of the Revolution; and that, according to tradition, not verified by his memory, he witnessed from some height in his nurse's arms the Battle of Bunker's Hill. Soon after this, his father carried him to Philadelphia, where he remained till the evacuation of Boston.

His first schoolmaster was a clergyman named Payson at Chelsea, but he afterwards went to the Boston