



HENRY P. FLETCHER

Diplomat, Statesman and Rough Rider

by Glen L. Cump

John G. Palmer, a Greencastle Justice of the Peace, presented a paper to the Kittochtinny Historical Society on March 26, 1953. The same, an honor roll, listed the names of 153 Franklin County natives who attained high station in life. The name of the one whose name was recorded more often than any of the others was a native of Greencastle who I knew well. It was my pleasure to have worked for him for a period of five years.

Henry Prather Fletcher was born in Greencastle, Franklin County, on April 10, 1873. He was the son of Louis Henry Fletcher and Martha Ellen (Rowe) Fletcher. She was a descendant of Col. James Watsoy who fought in the Revolution. Mr. Fletchers' grandfather, James Rowe was Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, also Surveyor General of the State. His uncle, D. Watson Rowe, was a Lieutenant Colonel in the 126th. Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers, also President Judge of the Courts of Pennsylvania.

His family moved to Shippensburg during his early childhood years at which time he was a student in the Training School at the Shippensburg State Normal School. The oldest Alumni of the Normal School was fortunate in having him in their training class. After the family returned to Greencastle he then was educated in the public school as well as Professor

Zeigler's Select School. Later, still in his early teens, he entered the Chambersburg Academy from which he graduated in 1889 as Valedictorian of his class.

Upon completion of his course at the Academy he entered the law office of his Uncle, Judge Rowe, in Chambersburg, during which time at the age of eighteen, he was Franklin County Court stenographer. He was admitted to the Franklin County Bar in 1894 and then to the Supreme Court in 1898. He was also from 1891-1898 official reporter of the 39th Judicial district.

When the Spanish American War broke out Fletcher enlisted as a private in Troop K of the famed Rough Rider's of Col. Theodore Roosevelt in engagements at Las Guisimas and San Juan Hill. How he made his desire to enlist a reality is typical of his determination to succeed.

At age 25 Fletcher became anxious for some war experience. He and a friend, Harry Buchler, of Gettysburg believed they could recruit a troop of Cavalry in the area of Adams and Franklin Counties. They appealed to Governor Hastings and were advised the National Guard would be called out first, but if the war lasted long enough, "you might have your chance".

Several days later, while having breakfast with his Aunt and Uncle, Judge Rowe, reference was made to the regiment which Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt, was raising in the Western Territories and for which he was enlisting men from the East. "That regiment", said Rowe, "Should see fighting and it would be an honor to serve as a private".

With no letter of introduction and vague as to what to do Fletcher departed the next morning for Washington. Staying at the St. James Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue, he arose early and read in the morning paper that Roosevelt was leaving that night to join with his regiment in Texas. He sat under the trees in Lafayette Square until the Navy Department opened. Being the first person to get into the secretary's office he chatted with a secretary and was told there wasn't a chance of being chosen because Roosevelt had already refused 5,000 to 6,000 applications.

When Roosevelt came in and started around the room explaining his gratitude for their offers but the regiment was filled, Fletcher walked to the end of the line so he would be the last to be reached. When Roosevelt started to tell him the same story Fletcher interrupted and said "yes Colonel I have heard you tell that to all of these men, but I have come down here to join you and there must be some way to manage it". Roosevelt said, "I like your spirit, but to show you its impossible, here is a note I just received from President McKinley in behalf of a young man I had to turn down a few days ago". After looking at the note, he said," All right Colonel, I will get you a note like that". Fletcher rushed to the Senate and asked to see Senator Quay, stating on his card that he was a nephew of an old friend and army comrade, Judge D. Watson Rowe. He was advised by the secretary that the senator did not want to bother the president in behalf of one wanting to be a private.

Senator Quay offered Fletcher a commission as a captain of volunteers. He replied that he didn't have enough military knowledge to be a captain and he wanted to get to Cuba. The senator, one of the most powerful and influential men in the Republican Party, wrote a note to Roosevelt explaining there were no men from Pennsylvania in the regiment.

In the afternoon Fletcher returned to the Navy Department and handed the letter from Senator Quay to Secretary Roosevelt who shook the hand of Fletcher and smiled his famous smile. That smile implied to Fletcher that he was on his way. He returned to Chambersburg, borrowed a Marlin rifle, went out to Graffensburg and practiced shooting at tin cans.

Receiving a telegram the next day which read "Will enlist you if you come at once". It was signed T. Roosevelt. Fletcher left for Washington that night; showed his telegram; got his physical examination; and was mustered in. He left the same night for San Antonio.

His bravery and keen intelligence together with fine soldering made him a trusted friend of Teddy Roosevelt. That his services were appreciated by the government was attested to by the fact President McKinley tendered him a commission in the regular army.

After returning from Cuba he engaged in the practice of law in his uncle's Chambersburg office. The army having a greater appeal to him than the law, he enlisted in the regular army and served with the 40th. U. S. Infantry in the Phillipines during which time he was promoted to 1st. Lieutenant and then Battalion Adjuant dealing with the Chinese, Japanese and Spanish as well as the rebellious natives of the islands. It could be said that this was his first diplomatic experience.

After expiration of his enlistment Fletcher was named Under Secretary of the U. S. Legation at Havannah in 1902. The following year he was appointed Second Secretary of the Legation at Pekin, China.

His next promotion was to First Secretary of Legation of the U.S. at Portugal. While there he had the privilege to play tennis with the Queen of Portugal. From the Lisbon Court he was sent back to China as the First Secretary of the Pekin Legation in 1907. There he shared in the last days of the Chinese Empire, to have letters and gifts sent from the Empress and to dine with the Imperial Palace guests. There to snatch the opportunity that was to mean fame for him and a Far East future for the United States. President Taft promoted Fletcher from the secretaryship to that of Minister to China. While Charge-de-affairs at Pekin he suddenly sprang into prominence by the manner in which he handled American interests in connection with a Chinese loan.

It was there that he won his first recognition as one of the coming men of American Diplomacy. President Taft delegated him to continue as our Chief Diplomatic Representative in China until the spring of 1910.

Fletcher subsequently became the first Ambassador to Chile in 1910. He went there at a time when the feeling against the Great Republic of North America was very bitter, when we were on the verge of war with Chile. Five years later he left with the most affectionate

farewell ever accorded a retiring foreign representative. The press at Chile was very enthusiastic in its praise for Mr. Fletcher and his work not least did they pay tribute to the charm of his personality.

In 1916, during the Wilson administration Fletcher was transferred to Mexico to handle the delicate problems south of the Rio Grande, This at a time when the Mexican government had killed more than one thousand American citizens in the past two years. In a news release prior to his leaving he stated, " I am going to Mexico to iron out the tangles that have been getting worse and worse ever since the overthrow of Huerta". This was the man who was sent to Mexico with the heavy burden of establishing peace. Going apparently, to a country where there would be none to welcome him and millions to curse him.

The only reference I have read of a body guard for Mr. Fletcher was during his stay in Mexico. His handsome German police dog, a constant companion, was referred to as such. With the utterance of the word "Greaser" she would instantly bristle up and growl. The dog died in Greencastle in 1920.

Prior to Fletchers departure to Mexico an intimate interview was held in his Washington bachelor's apartment. The same was made by a young lady who referred to having known him since he was three years old and of being a classmate in the Old Chambersburg Academy. She, "Pigtails"; was the daughter of Honorable Judge Stewart who succeeded Fletchers' uncle David W. Rowe as President Judge of the 39th. Judicial District. In reminiscing she recalled her dad always referred to and called Henry as "Had".

The following paragraph is a part of the interview. Had, I remember very well the night you graduated from the Chambersburg Academy, the first in your class". He replied " I had to be first, Pigtails, with a half dozen younger brothers needing the Academy and not sure of getting it. I knew that I could not attend college".

Another quote from "Had" reads as follows, " I got into the Rough Riders with a letter from your father, the last but one to be chosen". I previously informed in this paper that it was Senator Quay who provided said letter. The newspaper article that provides the name of Senator Quay is featured in the Greencastle Echo Pilot dated September 7, 1939.

Regarding my source of information revealed in this paper I assure you that all has been gleaned from newspaper except my closing remarks.

After eighteen years in the diplomatic branch, four of which were in Mexico, Fletcher resigned with regret and without any particular plans for the future. He reasoned that he could no longer be helpful in cultivating proper relations with Mexico as long as President Carrange remained in control there. Then too, there was the issue of his inability to agree with Wilson's policies.

He was reticent as to his retirement except to say he disliked very much to give up a \$17,000.00 a year job. "I had to come back to the United States on business". he recalled "And instead of sending me back he sent General Pershing".

Fletcher's remarkably successful diplomatic career had been brief up to this time, yet from the stand point of personal achievement, much of his training he had given himself. Officially and unofficially he had become acquainted with many people and had learned not only half a dozen languages but also numerous dialects.

It was during the Mexican experience that Fletcher married Beatrice Bend whom he met eight years previously at the Legation in Peking. Miss Bend, a Long Island society girl was a traveling companion of Miss Dorothy Whitney Strait. Little mention is made of Mrs. Fletcher during his various assignments.

One local news item dated 5-17-1920 states that Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher recently returned from a two month tour of Europe.

A news head line of 10-26-1919 states "Peking or Rome". President Wilson is expected to name Henry P. Fletcher, currently special assistant to the Secretary of State as Ambassador to Rome".

In May of 1921 a Greencastle newspaper informs that Greencastle offers the name of Fletcher for nomination at the 1922 Primaries for Governor of Pennsylvania. Mr. G. Fred Zeigler, publisher of the Echo Pilot newspaper, who did not agree with Henry's philosophy said of him "He has infinitely more personality than any other conservative candidate. He has had wide experience at home and abroad, more than many presidents. He looks, walks, talks and acts like a Governor should. He is the ideal man for the place".

While being considered for assignment to the Japanese Embassy he was made First Assistant Secretary of State to Charles Evans Hughes by President Harding shortly after his inauguration in 1921. It was reasoned that he was acquainted with diplomatic work and could be of great service to the Secretary.

The Washington Observer, dated October 21, 1921, bears this statement regarding a successor of Senator Knox of Pennsylvania. "Except for the high regard in which the President and Secretary Hughes hold his services at the State Department, Fletcher would command unquestionable influential support for the senatorship vacated by the death of Mr. Knox". At that time Mr. Fletcher's time and energies were concentrated on more important duties, particularly those concerned with the Armament Conferences.

President Harding named Fletcher to be Ambassador from the United States to Belgium in 1922. As Under Secretary of State at the time and participating in the Fifth and Sixth Pan-American Conferences, he did not go to Belgium until after the Armament Conference was over. It was at this time that his name was mentioned as Ambassador to England, a higher diplomatic post.

Later, in 1924, he was appointed by Calvin Coolege as Ambassador to Italy serving four years during Mussolini's Dictatorship. Ten years after completing his assignment there, a Washington newspaper revealed Mr. Fletcher as an Italian agent, a cruel, if unintentional misrepresentation. The writer stated that Fletcher reported himself receiving \$6,600.00 as an agent for Italy.

While discussing the issue in his Greencastle home, the ex Ambassador said "it is preposterous to say that I acted as a paid propagandist for Mussolini". He explained that the Italian American Society was organized a long time ago to promote cultural relations between the United States and Italy. Chief Justice, Charles Evans Hughes, was one of its first presidents. The purpose of the Society which every former living Ambassador was an honorary vice-president, was to entertain American and Italian Ambassadors.

Mr. Fletcher was one of the group with President Coolege who went to Havana for the opening of the Pan American Conference in 1928. Some of those in the party were: Mrs. Coolege, Secretary of the Navy, Curtis D. Wilbur, Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes, Delegate James B. Scott and Americas well loved wit and cowboy philosopher, Will Rogers.

Later in the same year, Mr. Fletcher was a part of the United States Delegation, headed by President Hoover, who visited South America on a good will mission. They sailed aboard the battleship Maryland. In 1930 Hoover appointed him as Chairman of the United states Tariff Commission.

In January 1932 Fletcher caused considerable surprises in the Diplomatic circles when it became known that he came out openly as a candidate for the appointment as American Ambassador to Great Britain. Leaders of Congressional groups were not disposed to support him despite the fact they acknowledged his fitness for the job.

After his election as Chairman of the Republican National Committee by President Roosevelt in 1934, he was welcomed to his Greencastle home by a parade of citizens led by the Scotland Band. A brief message was made by Judge Watson Davison, his cousin.

Nomination of Henry P. Fletcher, Chairman of the Republican National Committee was urged by Benjamin K. Foch in 1936. Foch was one of our State Representatives in Congress who for many years represented the Eighteenth District of which Franklin County was a part.

Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher registered as citizens of Rhode Island in 1937. They had just previously purchased Faxon Lodge in fashionable Newport where they lived in season. Mrs. Fletcher died September 10, 1941 at Rosemont. She was interred in Arlington Cemetery, Washington, D. C..

Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, named Fletcher as a delegate to an informal conference of the Big Four of the United Nations which was held in Washington on August 14, 1944. This mission of the four countries, United States, Great Britain, Russia and China, among other things was to discuss the use of force to maintain post-war peace and security. Another

Greencastle native who served on this committee, often referred to as the Dumbarton Oaks Conference, was Lt. General Stanley D. Emrick.

Near the close of the year Mr. Fletcher was retained by the Secretary of State, Edward Stettinius, as a consultant on matters of foreign policy. Later, in 1946, under President Truman he was a special advisor to the Secretary of State attending the Brenton Wood Conference, which was the forerunner of the United Nations.

The Greencastle Chamber of Commerce honored its distinguished ambassador at a Presentation ceremony held at the Citizens' National Bank, September 30, 1948.

In 1952, during the Truman administration, he served as parliamentarian of the Republican National Convention and as council to the National Committee for many years.

He was a member of the American Society of International Law and Council on Foreign Relations. He received honorary degrees from Dickinson, Lafayette, and the University of Chile. Few diplomats from the United States have risen from the position of Second Secretary of Legation to Ambassador. Neither financial or social backing entered this Pennsylvanians promotion. He rose by his courage, industry, intellect and personality.

Having served in some capacity under eight United States Presidents, five Republicans and three Democrats, he never wrote an autobiography. It is reasonable to assume he was too busy making history that he did not have times to record it.

He purchased his Rosemont estate in Greencastle from Thomas Nill in 1921. The mansion house built by Judge Rowe in 1872 was located near Ridge Avenue. It faced South Allison Street, Addison and Rowe Avenues. A house, still standing on the South West corner,



was referred to as the Cottage. It was used as his library as well as guest quarters. This was the week-end home of President Herbert Hoover in 1929. The estate, a block square tract of land, was surrounded by a six foot high wire fence covered by honeysuckle vines. At each end of a driveway that wound around a golfing green in the center of the lawn were two iron gates, presented to him by Mussolini.

This writer can testify as to his personality and concern for others. As caretaker of his Rosemont Estate, 1947 - 1951, I learned to know him quite well. He would stop me at my work and reminisce about his boyhood in Greencastle. I recall his showing my son the meal grinding stone he found at Tayamentasachta when he was a lad.

Fletcher loved to point out his prized possessions: the dining room furniture that was given to him by the Empress of China, the dueling pistols on the mantel in his reading room and his Frank Feather canes.



On occasion when escorting me through the Cottage he would talk of past experiences, pointing out the desk given to him by the Chili Government and the engraved casing, one of a twenty two gun salute, fired when he returned home from the Hoover Mission.

He spent more than an hour with me on the attic of the Cottage looking for a light he wanted to give me to hang on the lawn of my new house, then being built. The same was given to him by Mussolini. It graced my lawn for thirty three years after which time it was given to my son, this in compliance with Mr. Fletcher's suggestion.

Mr. Fletcher generally occupied his Rosemont home in the spring and in the fall. He spent summer months at his Newport home. His last stay at Rosemont was in the month of July, a bit later than usual.

My last visit with him was the day before he left Greencastle. As he accompanied me to the back lawn gate I noticed his frailty. Just as we approached the gate our High School Band entered Ridge Avenue while practicing. In as much as I was president of our Band Parents Association, I proudly spoke of our band, telling him of our first new uniforms that was supposed to arrive the following week. I also mentioned the need for more money to pay for the same. The following morning he called me and advised I was to pick up a check payable to the Association.

Henry Prather Fletcher died July 10, 1959 at his New Port home shortly after leaving his home in Greencastle. He was 86 years of age. Presbyterian services were held at his New Port home and a military interment was made in Arlington National Cemetery.

He never wrote an autobiography. His diary, correspondence, speeches, scrap books, photographs, newspaper clippings and other printed matter, a collection of about 6,500 pieces were bequeathed to the Library of Congress in 1960.

End of Cump's recollections



Henry Prather Fletcher Diplomat, Statesman and Rough Rider

Henry Prather Fletcher was born and raised in Greencastle, rode with Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders and served 51 years under eight presidents as a United States diplomat and statesman to six foreign countries. He was also Chairman of the National Republican Committee and invited President Herbert C. Hoover, as his guest, to Rosemont in Greencastle.



Front view of the mansion house built in 1872 by Judge David Watson Rowe (pronounced "row"). It was located near South Ridge Avenue; the front faced South Allison Street with Rowe and Addison Avenues on the north and south. The estate, a block square, was surrounded by a six-foot high, honeysuckle-covered wire fence. A driveway wound around a golfing green in the center of the lawn. Rosemont was also the Greencastle residence of Henry Prather Fletcher - diplomat, statesman, Rough Rider and nephew of Judge Rowe.



Henry P. Fletcher, retiring Ambassador to Italy, (in white suit) among other native sons of Greencastle during Old Home Week 1929. Left to right: H. Watson Davison, D. Watson Fletcher, Watson R. Snively, the Ambassador, Judge Watson R. Davison, Harry P. Kreps, J. Gilmore Fletcher, Charles W. Gaff, Charles W. Davison, Dr. J. Rowe Snively.

Events in the Life of Henry Prather Fletcher

1873 Born in Greencastle
 1889 Graduated from the Chambersburg Academy
 1894 Admitted to the Franklin County Bar
 1898 Enlisted as Private in Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders
 1901 Enlisted and served in the 40th U. S. Inf. in the Phillipines
 1902 Under Secretary of U. S. Legation at Havannah, Cuba**
 1903 Second Secretary of Legation in China**
 1905 Secretary of Legation in Portugal**
 1907 First Secretary of Legation in China**
 1910 Ambassador to Chile*
 1916 Ambassador to Mexico*. Resigned in discussed in 1920
 1917 Married Beatrice Bend whom he met in China
 1921 First Secretary of State to Charles Evans Hughes
 1921 Purchased Rosemont estate in Greencastle
 1922 Ambassador to Belgium*



1924 Ambassador to Italy* during Mussolini's dictatorship
1928 Along with Calvin Coolidge to Pan American Games in Havannah
1929 Along with Herbert Hoover went visiting South America
1929 Herbert Hoover weekend guest at Rosemont
1930 Named as Advisor of Commission to natives of Haiti
1930 Named Chairman of U. S. Tariff Commission
1934 Chairman of the National Republican Committee
1936 Nomination for President of United States considered.
1937 Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher register as citizens of Rhode Island
1941 Mrs. Fletcher dies at Rosemont
1944 Delegate to the Dumbarton Oaks Program
1945 Advisor to Secretary of State at Brenton Wood Conference
1952 Parliamentarian to the National Republican Committee
1959 Died in his Newport, Rhode Island home



Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher are interred in Arlington National Cemetery.

Fletcher served 51 years under eight presidents as a US ambassador to four countries and held various secretarial positions with legations to three other countries.

The presidents under whom he served are:

Theodore Roosevelt
William Taft
Woodrow Wilson
Warren Harding
Calvin Coolidge
Herbert Hoover
Franklin Roosevelt
Harry Truman

*** The four countries to which he served as ambassador are:**

Chile
Mexico
Belgium
Italy

**** The three countries to which he served in a secretarial position with a legation are:**

Cuba
China
Portugal