



GLASS CLUB BULLETIN

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The Falling of the Chandelier in the House of Representatives, 1840

Madison Express, Madison, Wisconsin
December 5, 1840

The splendid Chandelier lately suspended in the Hall of the House of Representatives, was lighted last Wednesday night; when a number of gentlemen attended to witness its effect. We understand from one who was present, that the effect was exceedingly brilliant. We had the pleasure of viewing and examining this beautiful chandelier last Thursday morning. It is certainly, without exception, the largest, most elegant and splendid Chandelier we ever beheld. We understand that it was manufactured to the order of the House of Representatives, by Messrs. N.H. Hooper & Co. of Boston, and cost four thousand dollars.

The following description of this unique and splendid luminary, kindly furnished at our request, by a gentleman attached to the House of Representatives, will, we have no doubt, interest the reader of the National Intelligencer:

The Chandelier is of cut glass, and of the best workmanship. It has seventy eight argand burners, arranged in two tiers or horizontal planes; the lower one has fifty-two, the upper one twenty-six burners, fitted with polished glass chimneys and ground glass shades; each burner having a distinct reservoir to contain the oil, and so arranged as to admit of removal separately from the rest.

The Chandelier has also immediately above the upper row of burners twenty-six metallic ornaments, representing shields, with the arms of the Union; it has also a band around the canopy, containing twenty-six metallic stars: the whole surmounted by an eagle, with the shield of the Union. The Chandelier contains two thousand six hundred and fifty cut-glass lustres and eight thousand cut-glass spangles; the bottom is finished with a cut-glass dish inverted, and a metallic skeleton ball.

The rod which sustains the Chandelier is made with a revolving joint, so as to admit of its being turned round, and is hollow to receive a glass tube hereafter, if necessary.

The suspension rod is made of iron, and of sufficient length to reach the lantern of the Hall, fitted with secure attachments for the Chandelier, and the chains of the balance weight are covered with brass; the chains are of iron, and made in the style of a watch chain; the pullies are also of iron; the balance weight is lead, cased with copper. All that part of the frame of the Chandelier, and its metallic ornaments, that are visible, are finished in burnished gold. The diameter of the Chandelier is thir-

teen feet; its weight seven thousand five hundred pounds; and counterweight the same. —Nat. Intel.

Tioga Eagle, Wellsboro, Pennsylvania
December 30, 1840

ACCIDENT IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The Globe of the 18th inst. says:- "At ten o'clock this morning, the large chandelier recently suspended in the hall of the House of Representatives, composed principally of cut glass, and with its counterpoise weighing between three and four tons, fell, and was broke into countless fragments. Had the House been in session, the consequences must have been lamentable, as the desks of many members were shattered by the falling mass. It appears that, on last evening, the chandelier had been lighted, by way of experiment, and this morning, at the time of the accident, several men were employed in cleaning it. Their escape was almost miraculous. The Chaplain, in a fervent prayer, returned thanks to ALMIGHTY GOD, the great disposer of all events, that the lives of so many had been thus mercifully spared. After remaining a short time in session, the House adjourned until monday [*sic*] next, in order to afford time for cleaning the hall and making the necessary repairs.

Madison Express, Madison, Wisconsin
January 23, 1841

A CRASH AND ESCAPE.—The Washington correspondent of the Baltimore Patriot under date of the 18th inst., gives the following account of the falling of the new chandelier in the House of Representatives:

"The magnificent chandelier of the House of Representatives, which attracted so much admiration, is a mass of ruins. About ten o'clock yesterday it fell with a tremendous crash, and the elegant lamp, shades and chrystal [*sic*] drops, and richly wrought ornaments, were shattered to pieces. The immense frame work broken up. Several desks and chairs destroyed—but most fortunately no one was injured.

"On Tuesday evening it was lighted to satisfy the curiosity of the members, many of whom were present, and highly pleased with the truly splendid effect it produced, when fully illuminated.

"Yesterday morning two attendants were engaged in cleaning it, and taking out the old oil, for the purpose of supplying the lamp with some of a superior quality. They suddenly found the chandelier begin to ascend, and in spite of all their exertions, by throwing their weight upon it, it went up along the whole rod to

the dome, and struck with great violence against the frame work below the sky light, and instantly the mass—chandelier, rod, fixtures and all, tumbled down. The two workmen and the Hon. Mr. Goode, of Ohio, who were standing near them, had barely time to get out of the way.

“Hon. Mr. Dennis, of Maryland, was also present, but was in a remote and safe part of the Hall.

“Most fortunately the House was not in session, else the consequences would have been such as we shudder to contemplate. Probably twenty or thirty members would have been killed or maimed for life.

“The eloquent Chaplain [Mr. Coolman] made an appropriate allusion to the circumstance in his opening

prayer and returned thanks to Divine Providence, on the part of the members, for their escape from the great danger.

“It is said there was a flaw in the chain by which the chandelier was suspended; but I forbear to speak of the causes of the accident.”

The National Intelligencer says: —“This chandelier was of American manufacture, weighed over seven thousand pounds, and cost four or five thousand dollars. It was thirteen feet in diameter, contained seventy-eight argand burners, and is said to have been ornamented by 2,650 cut glass lustres, and 3,000 cut glass spangles.”

—Clerc. Mer.