



City of Cambridge

In City Council

May 5th, 1931.

RESOLUTIONS ON THE DEATH OF HENRY F. LEHAN, LATE CITY TREASURER AND
COLLECTOR OF TAXES OF THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, WHOSE DEATH OCCURRED ON
APRIL 10, 1931.

WHEREAS: The so-called "Lehan issue" has been settled, forever, by a power greater than that of a municipal mayor, by a power greater than that of a City Council, and the soul of Henry F. Lehan - - at peace with his God - - has passed on to eternal life, and

WHEREAS: The petty political problem of which he was the center, even dividing, as it did, opinion in a city of 125,000 residents, pales to insignificance in the light of the Divine Decision, and

WHEREAS: The earthly remains of Henry F. Lehan, borne to the Cambridge Cemetery by his relatives and friends, sleep under the sod of the city in which he was born, and

WHEREAS: His passing was mourned by citizens of the City of Cambridge in whose midst he lived all his life, and a touching tribute was tendered to him in Death by leaders in the affairs of the City, County, and Commonwealth, and

WHEREAS: The President of the City Council of Cambridge called a special meeting of that body, which met in the City Council Chamber, on the day on which he left this life, the announced purpose of the meeting being to draw resolutions and to take suitable and necessary action on his death, and



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WHEREAS: His Honor, the Mayor, at the special meeting of the City Council of Cambridge, saw fit to send to that body official notice of the death of the late City Treasurer and Collector of Taxes and to suggest that the City Council take proper and fitting action relative to the death of Henry F. Lehan, and

WHEREAS: A Committee of five members: Councillor Patrick J. Delaney of Ward 3; Councillors at Large Edward J. Sennott, Charles H. Shea, and Joseph M. Stokes; and Councillor Francis D. Coady of Ward 1, were selected by the chair to prepare suitable resolutions to be presented to the bereaved family and to be spread upon the records of the City Council, as a tribute by the citizens of Cambridge to perpetuate the memory of Henry F. Lehan.

Pursuant to that purpose the following resolutions are presented:

Henry F. Lehan, the late City Treasurer and Collector of Taxes of the City of Cambridge, was a private citizen and public servant who typified the finest of the offspring of immigrant ancestry, who, now, make up the greater portion of our Cambridge citizenry. His forebears came to Cambridge from Ireland; they settled in East Cambridge. Both his immediate parents were known and loved in the section where they were one of the pioneer families of Irish extraction. His mother was Ellen Ford, his father, Daniel J. Lehan. Both parents were of that



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sturdy, simple stock whose characteristics are inspirational to those whom they bring into the world.

Fifty-six years ago on September 16, 1874, when Henry F. Lehan was born in East Cambridge, the immigrants and their descendants were the minority population, even in that district from whence have migrated to every corner of the city the representatives that have made them the majority population. Incoming numbers of those God-loving and God-fearing souls crossed the seas with their families to Cambridge to start a new life in a strange country. Natural, normal multiplication of those already here had not completely changed the complexion of Cambridge when Henry F. Lehan was a boy, to what it is today.

Throughout his boyhood and youth, he watched those who came here from foreign shores, filled with boundless ambition and a will to work, with their gain in numbers, start to win their way in the new surroundings.

Arrivals from alien lands came to Cambridge, strong in physique, but wanting in material wealth. Most of them made the adventure in the hope of bettering the living conditions of their loved ones. The family of Henry F. Lehan was no exception to this rule. He had to forego secondary education to assist in the struggle for sustenance. Upon completion of his course in the Putnam Grammar School, he began his career in the services of a Boston brokerage house, where he worked during his formative years.

As Henry F. Lehan advanced towards his majority, popular participation in politics, as a means of rendering service to his city, attracted



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his attention. Gifted with vision, he looked forward to the day when he would enter the public service to stand in the forefront of a people whose power was yet to come. From that purpose he never swerved; to the people around him he dedicated his life. As a leader, he was their natural choice.

Briefly sketched, his service to his city follows: As a mere youth, he was elected to the very kindergarten of public office--the Common Council, where he served during the years 1899-1900 in this elementary school of public affairs. Following this, in the years 1903-1904, he represented his district in the lower branch of the General Court, the Massachusetts House of Representatives. For ten years, during the early days of the Democratic party in Cambridge, when the minority group needed a real pilot at the helm, he directed the destinies of the party as Chairman of the Democratic City Committee. Powers of political organization and the capacity for political direction which he displayed during that decade ever afterward made him a leader in the affairs of his party. On April 7th, 1914, he was elected by the legislative branches of the Cambridge City Government to the office of City Treasurer and Collector of Taxes--an office which he held until his death.

Henry F. Lehan was a dominant, dynamic, and dramatic force in public affairs. He was ever the fearless foe, always the fair fighter. Sprung from a race, which Byrne describes as one "that affirms the Divinity of Jesus, and yet believes in the little people of the hills,



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a race that loves its own land and yet will wander the wide world over, a race that loves battle," he has lived and died, true to his Irish heritage. In command when there was no hope of victory, he did not pass on until he saw his people the conquerors. His spirit never wavered in defeat.

With the wheel in his hand, he never faltered from the course of righteousness. Politics, in its finest understanding, was his profession. Public service he made his life study and work; he ennobled it. He fought long and hard for the proper development of his ideals--he died fighting.

Independence of thought and action were his marked characteristics. He interpreted literally the Declaration of Independence, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness". He recognized no aristocracy. He was the soul of Democracy.

"What shadows we are and what shadows we pursue," are words attributed to Edmund Burke, greatest of Irish statesmen, when commenting on the passing of an opponent, struck down in the heat of public conflict. Henry F. Lehan was pursued by a shadow, the so-called "Lehan issue". Death has ended the pursuit. The soul of Henry F. Lehan has left its earthly residence to take up its eternal abode with an almighty and all-righteous God.

"A loving heart is the beginning of all knowledge," says Carlyle. Henry F. Lehan had a loving heart. Men and women were only as loyal to



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him as he had been, or they knew he would be, to them. He was beloved because he loved. He had friends because he knew friendship. From a little wayside home in East Cambridge, he came to enshrine himself forever in the hearts of the people he loved.

In Henry F. Lehan was to be found the personification of that spirit which is the joy of life. His daily life was simple and good. His family was his first thought; everything was secondary to his love for them. The predominating characteristic of the man was unselfishness. He lived for his friends, with them in their sorrows and joys. His pleasures were few. His joys came not from indulgence of the body. He asked nothing more of a bountiful world than a life of peace among his fellowmen. As a private citizen, he lived an exemplary life. As a City Treasurer and Collector of Taxes, he stands out as the best official that has ever held that office--honest, capable, efficient. Combined with these qualities, he was a humanitarian in the conduct of his office.

His monument is the light of love which glows in the hearts of those who were the recipients of his friendship and generosity.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED: That this City Council, which never was given an opportunity to confirm his appointment as City Treasurer and Collector of Taxes in life, confirm his character as a public servant and private citizen in death: character which made his name a symbol of love and loyalty in hundreds of homes scattered over every part of the City of Cambridge; character which made him an outstanding private citizen; character which made him an excellent public official since he was old enough to assume the duties of citizenship; character which made



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his personality the axis on which the globe of government spun in his city; character which made him a Christian nobleman; character that never allowed him to forget he was but one of God's creatures, working in the vineyard of the Creator, among others of his kind; character which made him know that human laws were made by men to be enforced under the Golden Rule of "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you"; character which made him a friend to all who sought his friendship; character which made him know no service too great nor any detail too small to be undertaken for a fellowman; character which made the sufferings of all who suffered, his sufferings; character which knew misfortune and trouble and befriended the unfortunate and troubled; character so exalted that hatred could not live in its presence; character which opened to all who needed sympathy a large, warm, and sympathetic heart.

What more reveals the soul of the man than his message "from the Valley of the Shadow of Death" to his latest and last political enemy. Dictated from a hospital cot, from which he never arose, his last communication ends with a prayer for his foe:

"I am asking the Lord to forgive you, as I beg forgiveness for my own trespasses."

Nothing startlingly original about it, a paraphrase of the Lord's prayer, but it does show the size of the man. On the brink of the beyond, the smallness of the struggle must have confronted him. On the threshold of death, he must have seen that all his strife was but a finite nothingness compared with the vastness of eternity.



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AND BE IT FURTHER
RESOLVED:

That this City Council spread upon its records this tribute, in honor of the memory of Henry F. Lehan, prepared by those who loved him, in an effort to assuage in some measure the grief of a stricken family, to whom we express our deepest sorrow, and to attest the loss the City of Cambridge has sustained. May his soul rest in peace.

MAY 5 1931

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*Adopted unanimously by a
rising vote*

Frederick W. Burke City Clerk

Executive Department **MAY 7 1931**

Approved _____

Mayer

City of Cambridge.

MAY 7 1931

Presented to the Mayor
for approval.

Frederick H. Burdett
City Clerk

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

April 10, 1931

To the Honorable, the City Council:

It becomes my sad duty to officially notify you of the death of Henry F. Lehan, city treasurer and collector of taxes in Cambridge for sixteen years. He was formerly a member of the old common council of Cambridge and served as a representative in the legislature from a district in this city.

For more than thirty years he has been an important factor in the political life of the city. He was a leader of extraordinary sagacity, a charming personality, a courageous fighter, always aggressor, never defender. In his death his friends have lost a staunch ally, and the community a picturesque and dominating personality. He will be missed by all alike. Personally, I shall cherish always the memory of the game fighter who would never admit defeat.

As a tribute of respect to his memory, I recommend that suitable resolutions be adopted by the city council, in which tribute I shall be glad to join.

Yours respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Richard W. Rance", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Mayor

RMR:LMK

COMMUNICATION

from the Mayor, transmitting
~~the~~ nature of death of
City Treasurer Henry F. Lehan.

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Referred to Special Committee
Councillors Delaney, Stokes, Shea,
Sennott and Lundy.

Frederick H. Burke City Clerk

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The Special

Committee on Resolutions on the Death
of Henry F. Lehan

~~Resolutions~~

Reports, Recommending the adoption of the
accompanying resolutions.

For the Committee.

Frank J. Delaney

REPORT

Special
Committee on *Resolutions*
Death of Henry F. Lahan

Recess 8. 38 - 8.45

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