



Mark and lantern

Uncle Sully, (Mike Abel)



Unveiling The Lantern (Mike Abel)



THE AMISH EXPERIENCE *Mark Sullivan (aka 'Dr Phineas T. Firefly')*

Here at the Amish Experience in little Bird-In-Hand, Pennsylvania, we have just wrapped up our first year as a full-time Magic Lantern Theater. What a year it was! Between bus groups, our *Patriotic Show* and our *Christmas Show*, I have performed over 100 shows to over 3,000 people in the Plain and Fancy Theater.

When we opened our *Patriotic Show* our concerns regarding attendance for a 'new' and rarely seen art form made us quite anxious. But rather quickly those feelings went out the window as the Magic Lantern Show was embraced. Enthusiastic reviews, great press and a genuine interest gave us true feelings of accomplishment. That feeling was boosted even more when the soundtrack for the *Patriotic Show*, which was performed and recorded by seven local musicians and is an integral part to the show, received a Grammy nomination!

We were thus very excited and positive as we put together our *Christmas Show*. With a strong marketing plan and even more press and 'buzz' being generated, the energy was strong for a successful show. And it was a huge hit! We sold out a couple of times and had great houses for the entire run. Performing two shows on Saturdays for four weeks until the week of Christmas and New Year's then performing two shows on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and one on Christmas and New Year's Eve was very tiring. But, very rewarding.

So it is with great anticipation that I look forward to 2016. We have already tripled our bus group bookings and we look forward to huge growth with both the *Patriotic Show* and the *Christmas Show*.

I have been in the entertainment business most of my life, from performing to directing. But I have to say that I'm enjoying doing the Magic Lantern Shows more than almost everything I've ever done.

And for both shows, in order to create more of a story to tie our historical and Christmas slide sets together, we asked local artist Mike Abel to do original artwork. His thirty-five plus slides represent a rare modern case where an artist has been commissioned to create original magic lantern slides – in wooden frames made by an Amish toy maker! And it should be noted that neither show would have been possible without the help and many images from Terry and Debbie Borton. Thank you, Terry and Debbie!

I want to extend an open invitation to any members that find themselves in Central Pennsylvania that might be interested in seeing a show. We would love to have you join us in an art form that we know and love!

Blessings!

Mark Sullivan – Artistic Director and, as well, 'Professor Phineas T. Firefly' – Showman
 Magic Lantern Shows in Plain and Fancy Theater at The Amish Experience in Bird-In-Hand, Pennsylvania: www.MagicLanternTheater.com, and 'Magic Lantern Shows at Plain and Fancy Theater' on Facebook.

THE PROVENANCE OF TWO GREAT LANTERNS

Lester Smith



At our Birmingham meeting in October 2014, I gave a presentation using recently discovered information about Frederick Gordon, the original owner of the 'Servant of Light' triurnal lantern, now owned by the City of Birmingham and the centrepiece of our 2001 Convention. After the Convention I wrote about the history of the lantern for our December 2001 Newsletter (no. 66). I discovered that it was commissioned by Frederick Gordon, who bought Bentley Priory, Stanmore, north London, in 1882 and turned it into a country hotel. It is known that he was a very keen photographer and lecturer and he may have commissioned J. H. Steward to build the lantern, perhaps to amuse his guests. As the Priory was the home of Augustinian monks in the twelfth century, he may have thought the very distinctive temple-like cupola on top to be appropriate.

This lantern is the finest triple lantern ever built, probably by J.H. Steward in the early 1890s.

I have puzzled long and hard over who those initials belonged to: F.G.H. or F.H.G? Then it suddenly hit me! Frederick Gordon Hotels! Frederick Gordon was a double millionaire who by 1900 owned five major hotels in London, and ten elsewhere. Who else could afford to commission such a beautiful lantern with enamel embossed initials on the 'flasher caps' of each projection lens?

Doug Lear of 'Lears Magic Lanterns' owned it for a number of years before it was sold at Christie's auction on 18 January

1996 for a world record price of £30,000, plus 20 per cent commission and VAT. Doug bought it while on one of his many canal trips around Britain with his wife Anita on their canal boat Phantasmagoria. They regularly stopped at towns and villages and spread the news to the locals that they were putting on lantern shows that evening. Whilst moored up in Stoke-on-Trent, a local antiques dealer approached him to say that he had a large collection of slides. Doug, very keen to have a look, jumped on his moped and met up with him at his shop. He liked the slides very much but they were very expensive. Together with loans from Anita and her family he managed to pay the amount required. As an afterthought the dealer mentioned that there was a sack at the back of the shop with some lantern bits in it.

After several journeys back and forth to Phantasmagoria transporting the slides, they continued on their way along the canals giving shows here and there, the lantern parts lying forgotten in the hold of the boat. It was not until about six months later that he had the chance to open the sack and pull out all the 'bits' of this fabulous triurnal lantern. Amazingly, it was complete apart from one missing lens – but with three sets of three lenses with three different focal lengths (8, 10 and 12 inches) this was not exactly a disaster!

NOTES

For further information about Frederick Gordon and his extraordinary success as a hotelier, the Stanmore Tourist Board website has a detailed biographical account at <http://www.stanmoretouristboard.org.uk/frederick-gordon.html>. Sadly, there is no information about his interest in the magic lantern. I would dearly love to find photographs of either of these splendid lanterns inside Bentley Priory or at one of his other hotels!

Although Christie's auction catalogue mentions the maker as being J.H. Steward, I have never seen a manufacturer's name on either lantern. They could equally have been made by W.C. Hughes or John Wrench, both of London.

