

The Dispatch

General Meade Society of Philadelphia, Inc.
Newsletter – Fall 2015
“Forget Not His Deeds”

General Meade Spring Trip, May 2nd, 2015

The day dawned bright and warm, with nary a cloud in the sky. Forty plus Meade Society members as well as others interested in the Civil War, gathered at **Laurel Hill Cemetery**. The topic: **Meade Sites in Philadelphia**.



After our itinerary and some background by Andy Waskie, off we went on a full day of activities, visits to churches, graveyards, monuments and ... well, things that aren't there anymore. First stop, the **Federal Navy Yard** on Federal Avenue, the Old Navy Yard and **“refreshment saloons”** of that area near Front and Water Street.

The General Meade Society of Philadelphia is an educational non-profit 501c3 organization chartered by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The mission of the Society is to promote and preserve the life and service of Major General George Gordon Meade (USA), Commander of the Army of the Potomac. The Society's Board of Directors meets at the Cannstatter Volksfest-Verein, 9130 Academy Road, Philadelphia, PA 19114, on the 2nd Thursday of designated months starting at 7:00 P.M. All Society members are welcome.

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www.generalmeadesociety.org meade@generalmeadesociety.gmail.com 215-204-5452
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This section of the city was a staging area and encampment for many thousands of troops. Volunteers from **Southwark** were to become known as models of patriotism.

From there, on to **Old St. Joseph's**, the first Catholic Roman Church in the city, where St. Joseph's and St. Joseph's Prep originated.



Across the street we entered first the cemetery and then the church of **Old St. Mary**. Our knowledgeable tour leaders filled the group in on Meade family history. General Meade's grandfather and grandmother are interred in its cemetery. In addition, several Revolutionary War supernumeraries are buried there, most notably the father of American Navy, **Commodore John Barry** and signer of the Constitution, **Thomas Fitzgibbons**.



Once inside, **Pastor Paul DiGirolamo** gave the tour members the wonderful history of the beautiful church and pointed out several of its finest architectural features. **John Adams** attended church here and wrote of it to his wife, Abigail, and was the **site of the first religious commemoration of the Declaration of Independence.**



Next, on to the **Union League**, home of a veritable homage to Meade and other saviors of the Union. There we saw the Gettysburg frieze, busts and portraits of Meade, an impressive statue of Lincoln and the Meade Room. We also saw the League's exhibit devoted to the Civil War for the 150th anniversary.





When the Meade Society is in Center City, we frequent the storied **McGillin's Olde Ale House** for beverage and wonderful lunch fare. Today was no different, and the food was its customary high quality and value. Proprietor **Chris Mullins** gave us the interesting history of the restaurant. Did you know the place opened the year Lincoln was elected president? Many thanks to the family that owns the pub for its kindness to our group, this day and in the past!

Following lunch, we boarded the bus for **Memorial Hall** and the **Meade Statue**. Along the way, Andy pointed out several of the houses where the Meades lived in center city including the house the city gave the general at 19th and Delancey Streets, for his service to the country. After our customary group photo with the General on his steed, **Old Baldy**, the tour headed for **Meade's** final resting place.



At **Laurel Hill Cemetery** we capped off the day with some leg-stretching trots around the grounds, visiting the **Silent Sentry** overlooking the GAR Post No. 1 graves, several graves of the Meade family—**Richard Meade Bache**, to name one—and the good general and his wife and confidant, **Margaretta**.



Additional Meade family insight up to the current day was filled in by an engaging member of the Meade family, **John Newhall**, great-great grandson of Meade through his daughter, Sara Meade Large.



It was a full day and most rewarding trip, to both remember and learn more about one of our fair city's august citizens:

General George Gordon Meade!

- Ken Garson



MEADE SOCIETY MAY 2, 2015 - TRIP TO PHILADELPHIA

by Carole Lokan Moore
Camp Olden Civil Round Table Member

For a mere \$60 per person, any history buff, could have attended the Saturday, May 2nd bus Tour of Philadelphia with about 40 others who met at 8 am at the Historic Laurel Hill Cemetery, on Ridge Pike. Our comfortable bus was roomy, and the Society had provided refreshments which were available in the back of the bus... cold water bottles, snacks, sweets...

We visited not only the homes of Meade and his family, but also the churches, and grave yards, and with tour Guide Andy Waskie (Professor at Temple University) at the microphone, we were also enlightened to every aspect of Philadelphia History in his repertoire, especially the Union League, which was on our tour and which included the Lincoln Library and Meade Dining Room.

Our lunch at an Old Pub was included in the cost, and the buffet was "all you could eat" with a sampling of lemonade or "house" beer, if desired. Rested from our walking, we moved on to the next leg of the trip, ending up back at the Laurel Hill Cemetery for Dr. Waskie's continued interpretation at the gravesites inside the confines of the cemetery.

Not to be completed yet, the tour ended with a cocktail party, presented by Members of Carney's Kitchen Crew, including sodas, rolled meats, home made breads with

butter, and sweets (cakes). The weather cooperated entirely, by not being too hot or too cold, and the sun shone on us just enough to be comfortable with a light jacket.

My compliments to the Meade Society for another successful adventure supporting the history and legacy of General George Gordon Meade. The trip was well presented to both novice and experienced historians, at a reasonable price that most could afford. Having a good bus driver made the turns in Old City a breeze.

Annual Memorial Day Service of Meade Post 1, Sunday, May 24, 2015 - At 12 noon we met at Laurel Hill Cemetery to remember those who died while serving in the United States armed forces. The holiday originated as Decoration Day after the Civil War in 1868, when the Grand Army of the Republic established it as a time for the nation to decorate the graves of the war dead with flowers. This year's included a dedication service for a new marker at the grave of Pvt. Joseph White, Co H, 71st Pennsylvania Volunteers. We then proceeded to the grave of Major General George Gordon Meade, Victor of Gettysburg, to hear our keynote speaker Scott C. Brown, Director of Veterans Office, City of Philadelphia inspiring address. He highlighted recent successful efforts to find graves for veterans' remains that were never claimed.

Meade Society Presents its annual Scholarship at the General George G. Meade Elementary School - On Wednesday, June 17, 2015, the General Meade Society of Philadelphia, on behalf of Anthony Waskie, PhD, President, its Board of Directors, and membership presented its 16th Annual Scholarship Award at the General George G. Meade Elementary School, 18th & Oxford Streets in Philadelphia. The award was presented to graduating 8th grader and class valedictorian Christian Christberg. Christian, an outstanding student and leader, was one of a select group of Meade School graduates that had attended the school since kindergarten.

Jerry McCormick, Society Treasurer and Chairman of the Annual Scholarship Committee, presented Christian with a facsimile of a \$1000 check. The scholarship award may be claimed upon Christian's graduation from high school, and upon attending an institution of higher learning, Christian told us he will be attending Mastbaum High School, in the city. The General Meade Society of Philadelphia wishes him the very best in his scholastic endeavors.

Officiating at the graduation ceremonies on Wednesday were: Raqueebah Burch, Principal, Meade Elementary School, Jacob White, Dean of Students, and Deborah Hansen, Teacher Lead. Also in attendance were distinguished guests, Dr. Sonja Harrison, Assistant Superintendent, the Philadelphia School District, and Charlotte Greer, Legislative Assistant to Hon. Rep. W. Curtis Thomas, House of Representatives, of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Representing the society at the ceremonies, in addition to Jerry McCormick, were two Meade School alumni, Ken Garson and Albert El. Also attending were Board Members Jeanne & Tom O' Toole and Michael Wunsch.

Thank you all for your continued support of the General Meade Society of Philadelphia and its mission to “preserve and promote the life and service' of Major-General George G. Meade, (1815 - 1872)”.

Meade Society at the Phillies - A great crowd of General Meade Society members and friends came out to see our “Phabulous Phillies” take on the Los Angeles Dodgers at Citizens Bank Park on August 4th. We welcomed Jimmy Rollins back to Philly with a standing ovation in the top of the first. The Phillies prevailed in a 6 -2 victory thanks mainly to a Grand Slam home run by 3B Maikel Franco. Our 11 year record is now 7 wins 4 losses. Game organizer, Tom Kearney would like to thank the 40 fans who came out to enjoy the game and camaraderie.

Leister House Garden Clean Up - The May 9th clean up at Meade’s Headquarters, Gettysburg, this year was yet another success! Attended by Nancy Kelsey, Jeanne and Tom O'Toole, Dick Simpson, Tom and Beth Ann Huntingdon, Pat Bradley, Ed McLaughlin, Pete Romeika, Jeanette McVeigh, Joe Perry, Jerry McCormick plus Tom and me. We did our best to remove those pesky weeds from the herb garden and the park service was kind enough to provide some mulch this year! Everyone worked so hard as usual and we wrapped up with a delish lunch on the Meade Society at Farnsworth House. All who attended received a cap with a Leister House pin. If you missed this one, don't fret!!! Our next clean up is Sunday Oct. 18th. I have been trying to recruit some Girl Scout troops to help as community service and will get back with additional information. That would be a huge help, plus we get to pass along some interesting historical facts to these young ladies! There will be a surprise for those who attend ... Shhh ... a secret for now! - Ginny Benner.

Meade Essay Request - December 31, 2015 will mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of George Gordon Meade, the Union general who led the Army of the Potomac to victory at the Battle of Gettysburg, July 1-3, 1863. General Meade was victorious despite his having been in command but three days prior to the opening rounds of the battle and that he was facing the most formidable of Confederate foes, General Robert E. Lee. To help honor this notable anniversary, the Meade 200 Committee of the General Meade Society of Philadelphia is requesting that members and friends like you submit a brief essay reflecting personal thoughts on General Meade and/or highlighting some aspect(s) of his life and career.

The Committee proposes to publish these collected essays, which should each run no more than several paragraphs, in the fall of 2015 as The Gen. Meade 200th Anniversary Testimonial, intended to serve as a fundraising booklet and a lasting tribute to General Meade by the society that was founded in his honor in 1996.

The subject matter is of your choosing. However, it is the hope of the committee that collectively we may touch on as many points as possible regarding General Meade's multi-faceted life, such as the Meade family, George's early life and years at West Point, his accomplishments as an engineer, his distinguished military service, and his post-Civil War accomplishments in his 'hometown' of Philadelphia.

The deadline for submission of your essay, which is subject to editorial review by the Meade 200 Committee, is September 18, 2015. Publication of the booklet will be in October, thus leaving time for wide circulation before General Meade's anniversary year celebration culminates at Laurel Hill Cemetery on December 31, 2015.

Please forward all submissions by e-mail to generalmeadesociety@gmail.com or by USPS to General Meade Society of Philadelphia, PO Box 45556, Philadelphia, PA 19149.

Meade 200 Event - 'PICNIC DAY' ON THE GROUNDS OF THE MEADE MONUMENT -

The General Meade Society of Philadelphia will host a 'Picnic Day' to commemorate the 200th birthday of General Meade, the event will be held on the grounds of the Meade Monument, in Fairmount Park on Lansdowne Drive, north of The Please Touch Museum (Memorial Hall). The commemoration will include picnic style foods, toasts to General Meade, and a wreath laying ceremony at the monument. The event is to take place on the afternoon of Saturday, October 3rd, from 1 - 5 PM, please plan to attend with family and friends. **NO RAIN DATE**. Side dishes & desserts are welcome, other foods and refreshments will be provided by the MEADE 200 COMMITTEE of the General Meade Society of Philadelphia. Also, for your comfort please bring folding chairs. For additional information, e-mail to generalmeadesociety@gmail.com

Meade 200 Event – General George G. Meade Anniversary Dinner – On Friday, November 6, 2015, at 6:00 p.m. we will gather to honor the Commander of the Union Army of the Potomac, victor of the Battle of Gettysburg, eminent scholar, engineer and citizen.

The dinner follows the 95th anniversary of 1910 by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and the 140th anniversary of the awarding of the 4th Gold Medal of the Union League to General Meade in 1866. It will be in the Meade Room at the Union League of Philadelphia, 140 S. Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102. There will be honored guests, toasts, testimonials, followed by dinner and special awards. Cost of the dinner, dinner beverages and Meade Anniversary Medal is \$75 per person. Co-sponsored by the General Meade Society of Philadelphia, American Legion Post 405, Armed Services Council of the Union League, Abraham Lincoln Foundation of the Union League, Major Maceuen Civil War Round Table and the Loyal Legion. Make checks out to The General Meade Society and mail to Blair Thron, 1011 Essex Avenue, Voorhees, NJ 08043.

Remembrance Day at Gettysburg, Saturday – This is an annual event that will be held on Saturday, November 21, 2015, Saturday, features numerous Civil war military groups and

Organizations that parade through Gettysburg to the G.A.R. Woolson memorial and the High Water Mark Monument to commemorate the soldiers of the Union Army.

The event is sponsored by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, which sponsors a wreath laying ceremony at 11 AM at the G.A.R. Woolson Memorial. The parade through Gettysburg begins at 1:00 PM and proceeds through Gettysburg to the Battlefield and recreates and commemorates the parade to the new Soldiers National Cemetery and its dedication featuring Lincoln's immortal Gettysburg Address on November 17, 1863.

The Meade Society will sponsor an honor ceremony at the Pennsylvania Monument at 10:00am, followed by a wreath laying at General Meade's Equestrian Monument at 10:30am to honor General Meade, his officers and the Union veterans of the Battle.

Meade 200 Event - The General Meade Society of Philadelphia invites you to be a part of the **General Meade at his 200th Anniversary Symposium**. The event will be held November 20, from 6:30 - 9:30 pm at the Gettysburg Heritage Center (former Wax Museum). The focus of the symposium will be: **Reflections on Meade's Decisive Role as Victorious Commander of the Army of the Potomac at Gettysburg**. The symposium will be held in three sessions, each lead by guest speaker. The sessions are as follows:

- **1st session:** General Meade and his combat career in the Civil War up to his appointment as commander of the Army of the Potomac - Dr. Andy Waskie
- **2nd session:** General Meade's command and leadership at the Battle of Gettysburg highlighted - Jim Hueting, Licensed Battlefield Guide
- **3rd. session:** Lee's retreat and General Meade's pursuit of Lee after the Battle of Gettysburg - Guillermo Bosch, Licensed Battlefield Guide

Admission to the **Gettysburg Heritage Center** and **Gettysburg: Animated Map** presented by the Civil War Trust, is included. Tickets for the event are \$25.00/person. Seating is limited, don't delay! Purchase tickets by contacting the Gettysburg Heritage Center at [717-334-6245](tel:717-334-6245) or online at www.GettysburgMuseum.com.

“I felt very sad when you drove off, and could hardly shake off the idea that I was looking on you perhaps for the last time – at any rate, for a long while, but I trust matters will be more favorable to us, and that it will please a just and merciful Providence to permit us to be happy once more, united, and free from immediate trouble.”

... Letter from George Meade to his wife, Margaretta , September 22, 1861.

MEADE'S "DEAREST LOVE": MARGARETTA

Contributed by Kerry Bryan

Congressman John Sergeant initially did not approve of the young U.S. Army officer who was courting his eldest daughter Margaretta in 1840. Lt. George Gordon Meade's prospects may not have seemed promising to the Congressman, who wished to protect and promote the best future possible for his bright and well-educated daughter. He was familiar with the financial woes of the Meade family: George's father Richard had tried unsuccessfully for many years to obtain compensation from the U.S. Congress for the enormous loans that he had made to the Spanish throne when it was under attack by Napoleon during the Meade family's sojourn in that country (George Gordon Meade was born in Cadiz); Spain subsequently balked at repaying Richard Meade; then these delicate financial matters had had been thrown over to American jurisdiction by an 1819 treaty between the Spain and the United States, where the Meade family's claim for compensation was never honored. But apparently George's intelligence, character, and unswerving devotion to Margaretta -- and her evidence of reciprocal love for him-- eventually swayed John Sergeant to give his blessing to their marriage. They were married in Philadelphia on December 31, 1840, which was also George Gordon Meade's 25th birthday.

The marriage remained ever strong, despite the stresses of sometimes long separations when Meade was assigned to field duty where his family could not follow him. He began faithfully writing letters to his beloved Margaretta, starting in 1846 when he left to fight in the Mexican-American War. The letters proved an essential line of communication between husband and wife during periods of separation, and he would often relate incidences to her in terms that he would not share publicly.

When the Civil War erupted in 1861, five of their children were still living at home, the youngest of whom was but 5 years old and the oldest only 14. With her husband in the field, Margaretta, like so many other women during wars past and present, essentially had to function for years as a single mother. Again, their exchange of letters kept the marriage close and viable.

On the morning of July 3, 1863, on the third day of the Battle of Gettysburg, although he had not slept for days because of the enormous stress of overseeing his new command, the Army of the Potomac, in its desperate struggle against the CSA Army of Northern Virginia under General Robert E. Lee, he penned this brief note to Margaretta, which is on file in the Meade collection of papers at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP):

Head Quarters Army of the Potomac
8.45 [a.m.] July 3^d 1863
Gettysburg

Dearest love,

All well & going on well with the army. We had a great fight yesterday, the enemy attacking & we completely repulsing them, both armies shattered. Today at it again, with what results remains to be seen. Army in fine spirits & ever one determined to do or die. George & myself well. Reynolds killed the first day. No other of your friends or acquaintances hurt.

The closing of the letter, the original of which is held in the Meade collection at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, was blotted out by an editor of *The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade*, which was published in 1904. The editor (probably their grandson) also indicated that “Dearest love” should be censured and replaced by the formal salutation “Mrs. George Gordon Meade.”

Despite her intense domestic demands, Margaretta Meade served on several committees for the Great Central Fair of 1864, including that of Arms and Trophies, as well as the Labor, Income and Revenue Committee. Evidently she wrote a slew of letters in March of 1864 to many Union officers to elicit autographs from them for an album to be auctioned at the Philadelphia Sanitary Fair to raise money to support medical care for the Union troops. She received many responses, including from the following: General Andrew Atkinson Humphreys, General Horatio Wright, General George B. McClellan, Mrs. Anderson on behalf of General John Anderson, General John Sykes, General Winfield Scott Hancock, General Hector Tynsdale, General George H. Thomas, General William Rosencrans’ wife on his behalf, General Herman Haupt, General George Cadwalader, General Oliver Otis Howard, General Irvin McDowell, General William B. Franklin, General Charles Griffin, General Alpheus Williams, General Benjamin Butler, and more.

Later in 1864 a new home was offered to General Meade by a group of leading Philadelphia citizens. When the general turned down the gift as being “excessive,” the group offered it to Margaretta, who accepted with alacrity. Fortunately for the general, she allowed him to live in her house!

General Meade died in that house six years later, on November 6, 1872, of pneumonia that basically could be traced back to the damage to his lungs that Meade had incurred via a gunshot wound received at Gaines Mills, VA, during the Peninsula Campaign of 1862. Margaretta was at his side as he passed, and her on-going mourning is reflected in the letters of consolation and the funeral memorabilia that she treasured, which are now preserved in the HSP collection.

Margaretta was forever George Gordon Meade’s “dearest love” and vice-versa. After her death in early January 1886, she was laid to rest next to him in Philadelphia’s historic Laurel Hill Cemetery. Their modest gravestones stand side-by-side -- as did George and Margaretta in life.