

The Dispatch

General Meade Society of Philadelphia, Inc.

Newsletter – Fall 2016

Meade's Letters to his wife, Margareta

Headquarters Army of the Potomac, August 16, 1864

"I am right glad the dear children are enjoying themselves. I wish I could be with you and them; but this is out of the question, and there is no use thinking about it. I have made up my mind to stick it out here, regardless of every consideration, except that of doing my duty at all hazards. They shall not say that any personal considerations caused me to turn my back upon the enemy."

Headquarters Army of the Potomac, October 3, 1864

"On the second day, whilst I was on horseback on the field, talking to Generals Griffin and Bartlett, surrounded by my staff and escort, a shell fell in our midst, grazing Humphrey's horse, grazing and striking my left leg, just below the knee, passing between Griffin and Bartlett, and embedding itself in the ground in the centre of a group of officers, covering them with earth, but without exploding or injuring a soul. A more wonderful escape I never saw. At first I thought my leg was gone, as I felt and heard the blow plainly, but it only rubbed the leather of my riding-boot, without even bruising the skin. Afterwards Colonel Lyman had the shell dug up, and is going to preserve it. How would you like me back minus a leg and on crutches?"

Election Results – We are fortunate to have our returning Officers and Board Members who have volunteered their service to the Meade Society for the coming year. We welcome our newest Board Member, Bill Linhart. He has been an active Society member for sometime and is committed to the Society's goals

"Picnic Day" – The General Meade Society will host a commemoration of 20th Anniversary (1996-2016) of The Society on Saturday, September 17, 2016, from 1-5 p.m., on the grounds of the Meade Monument in Fairmount Park on Lansdowne Drive on the river side 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 and selected activities. Please plan to attend with family and friends. **NO RAIN DATE**. Side dishes and desserts are welcome. The 20th Anniversary Committee will provide other foods and refreshments. For your comfort, please bring folding chairs.

The General Meade Society of Philadelphia is an educational non-profit 501c3 organization chartered by the Commonwealth of 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.

Board of Directors

Officers

Andy Waskie, PhD, President
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Jerry McCormick, Treasurer
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Gettysburg “Adopt a Position” – The Leister House Garden - The spring 2016 garden clean up was a success! Our garden staff was (besides Tom and me) .. Jeanne O'Toole, Jeanette McVeigh and Ken Garson, Mary Darden and Nick Romaninsky (friends of Jeanette), Pat Bradley, Ed McLaughlin, Kerry Bryan, Nancy Kelsey and Dick Schute (soon-to-be newlyweds!) Geri Roland (Nancy's friend), Pete Romieka, Dick Simpson and Jerry and Betty McCormick. What a crew! We weeded and put in 28 more mint plants and 2 lavender plants in the center barrel. A beautiful day - clear and cool. Perfect for the garden clean up. The Park Service is always so helpful with tools, mulch, trash bags and gave us all a 2016 Centennial pin! In the past they have given us t-shirts, volunteer pins and hats! Thank you all so very much for your help! Join us again in the fall ... and to anyone else who would like to help (no pressure ... do what you can to your ability). We ended this glorious day with a wonderful lunch at the Farnsworth House Inn (Thank you Betty for arranging...). A spectacular job by all! Our next clean up is scheduled for Sunday, October 23, 2016, at 10:30 a.m. (Ginny Benner)

20th Anniversary Gala – On Saturday, October 29, 2016, the General Meade Society will gather at the Cannstatter Volksfest Verein, 9130 Academy Road, Philadelphia, to celebrate the 20th Anniversary (1996-2016) of the Society. Roast beef sandwiches, baked ziti, German potato salad, garden salad with dressings and beverages will be served at 6:00 p.m. The gala will end at 10:00 p.m. Special recognition awards will be presented along with testimonials and prizes. Feel free to bring photos and memorabilia. Cost is \$30.00 per person; \$55.00 per couple. To reserve please contact Jerry McCormick at gedwinmc@msn.com or at 215-848-7753. Make checks payable to the Gen. Meade Society and mail them to P.O. Box 45556, Phila., PA 19149. Reservations should be made by October 24.

17th Annual History Symposium – On Sunday, April 10, the Meade Society held its annual History Symposium at West Laurel Hill Cemetery. It was titled, “History of the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) Union Veterans of the Civil at the 150th Anniversary.” It was co-sponsored by the Grand Army of the Republic Museum and Library. Our first speaker was Brian Matthew Jordan, author of Marching Home. Union Veterans and Their Unending Civil War. It was a history finalist for the 2016 The Pulitzer Prize. It exposes the mental and physical infirmities that beset Civil War veterans, maladies that echo in the experiences of many veterans today.

Numbering 1 million on May 1, 1865, the roster of men in the Union forces fell to 152,000 by the end of the year. For hundreds of thousands of veteran the transition from military service to civilian life was profound challenge. Jordan presented a number of arguments that reminded the audience that it left veterans with physical and psychological scars. Veterans were reluctant to reconcile with former Rebels because they felt that they fought for an infinitely superior cause. He expressed the gulf that developed between veterans and people on the home front who did not experience the reality of military service. Veterans were subjected to suspicion wherever they went. Amputees and former prisoners scarcely moved the hearts and minds of the northern public. A reluctant nation did create a pension system. At the turn of the century the pension expenditures amounted to one third of the government's entire budget.

Former veterans offered empathy and help. On April 6, 1866 they founded a veterans organization, the G.A.R. (The Grand Army of the Republic). Membership reached 490,000 in 1890. It was a powerful lobbying group - one of most significant social-welfare organizations of the nineteenth century.

One newspaper near the turn of century observed that the war “touched the depths” of its veterans’ souls. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. put it another way in his Memorial Day address at a G.A.R. gathering in 1884. The “awful orchestra” of the battlefield, he wrote, had noiselessly “set apart” Union veterans from a civilian world still grappling with the implications of a conflict that – perhaps even more convincingly than beehive of immigration and the new smokestacks of the late nineteenth century – announced the arrival of modernity. (from Marching Home, page 103)

Quoting the *Civil War News*, “The research is impeccable and writing finely crafted... This excellent work is highly recommended.” We agree and were very fortunate to hear his enjoyable and informative presentation. (Joe Perry)

Our next speaker was Dr. Barbara A. Gannon, who currently teaches at the University of Central Florida and is author of the award-winning book *The Won Cause: Black and White Comradeship in the Grand Army of the Republic*. In this work Dr. Gannon challenged the traditional presumption that white Union veterans were at best indifferent, at worst hostile, to their black former comrades-in-arms. Through meticulous research, she found that many white G.A.R. posts and members honored the service and sacrifice of the black veterans and, despite the deep racial prejudices of the late 19th century, made efforts to make the fraternal organization inclusive.

In a private interview before the symposium began, Dr. Gannon outlined some of her major sources: 19th century African-American newspapers, and G.A.R. departmental records from 23 states, including post minutes, annual encampment proceedings, and more. She found that “the G.A.R. records are almost color blind”; the G.A.R. was integrated at the states’ level and sometimes locally. There were more than 500 integrated posts, 35 in Pennsylvania alone. In communities with large black populations, the veterans of the U.S.C.T. and other black regiments would often choose to form their own posts, even though they were usually not barred from the white posts. The Mississippi-Louisiana G.A.R. was dominated by blacks who held offices in this strong department. Dr. Gannon’s research also indicated that the black posts tended to have especially active women’s auxiliaries, which helped expand the posts’ connections with the wider community.

In her riveting presentation, Dr. Gannon stated that “white soldiers remembered that black soldiers had fought by their side, and they welcomed them into the G.A.R.” In turn black veterans honored their white comrades. For example, many black posts adopted the name of Robert Gould Shaw, the white Colonel of the black 54th Massachusetts regiment who led the July 18, 1863 assault on Fort Wagner in South Carolina. Shaw died and was buried there in a mass grave with his men. Dr. Gannon effectively argued that among Union veterans after the war, “all were comrades,” united by the “Won Cause.” (Kerry Bryan)

Our next speaker, Andy Waskie, President of the General Meade Society, highlighted the founding the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) on April 6, 1866 when the very first Post was chartered and opened in Decatur, Ill. by founder Dr. Benjamin F. Stevenson. The appeal was great and quickly starting in the Mid-West and spreading nationwide from there. Departments (state wide organizations) and individual posts were founded and chartered by the G.A.R. It was a quasi-military organization whose ritual and ceremonies were adopted from the Masonic Order. After some initial faltering steps that were met with disapproval, such as a rank structure in the membership, and overt political action sanctioned by the posts, the order settled down to its prime mission: Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty.

Fraternity meant comradeship and shared experiences in war, the chance to act together with comrades and swap stories of service and preserve the history of the men who served in the Union armed services.

Charity meant supporting efforts to care for the disabled and debilitated veterans, the widows and orphans of their fallen comrades and to provide for the surviving veterans' needs. It also strove to honor comrades who had died in action or in service and provide them with graves, markers, services and commemoration each year on Decoration Day, which became Memorial Day.

Loyalty meant patriotism and love of country, shown by reverence for the flag, its symbols and ceremonials, adopting a national anthem, establishing the true story of their service by authoring unit histories, marching in parades and supporting the government.

Like other public institutions, there were occasionally conflicts within the G.A.R. and one local rivalry between Meade Post #1 and Post #2 (no name) was a mostly friendly/comradely competition to be the 'elite' post of Philadelphia.

One characteristic that made the G.A.R. unique in American history up to that time was the complete and unconditional acceptance of black veterans into equal membership in the G.A.R.! The 'Colored' Soldiers and Sailors had served nobly and bravely during the war. This was a new and singular practice in an otherwise segregated society.

The Grand Army was in many ways a true American icon and should be remembered for its innovation in social policy that is with us today. (Andy Waskie)

Our final speaker was Hugh Boyle, President of the Grand Army of the Republic Museum and Library, 4278 Griscom Street, Philadelphia PA 19124.

Those who attended the Symposium know and understand what these men, who fought the war, mean to this country and how what they did still resonates today. It is always important to understand our past and to remember the sacrifices people made so we are able to enjoy our lives today. I had the opportunity to review the importance of the men of the G.A.R. and how we choose to honor their sacrifices.

Each year when we celebrate and remember those who gave their lives for this country on Memorial Day, we can thank the G.A.R. for that day. The members of the G.A.R. held reunions each year and gave parades so others could remember their efforts. They created G.A.R. Posts the same way that the Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion Posts were created. These men are remembered with the many cemeteries that dedicated people put out flags for them each year. They are remembered with the many monuments around our city.

The G.A.R. Museum and Library is dedicated to their heritage. Our artifacts, that we treasure, all came from a member of the G.A.R. or their families. You can see a piece of the blood-stained pillowcase that was on the bed where Abraham Lincoln died and view the handcuffs owned by John Wilkes Booth. We have Mary Walker's medical kit. And of course our Meade room contains "Old Baldy", the head of General Meade's horse. Our Atkinson Lecture hall features a wall of portraits of Civil War generals and members and leaders of the G.A.R.

Our Library is full of books about the G.A.R. and regimental histories that are used by historians and authors. Our archives are full of records from G.A.R. Posts - a complete tool for research.

We cannot forget our monthly open house where a noted historian or author gives a free lecture on the first Sunday of each month. We offer tours for groups. The mission of the G.A.R. Museum is to remember the heritage of the Civil War and the men who served and were members of the G.A.R. I asked the assembled crowd to join us in our efforts and to be part of the Museum as a member, to volunteer and help us continue our work. Membership is the lifeblood of the Museum. We are an all-volunteer Museum. We are fortunate to have a dedicated Board of Directors and a dedicated group of volunteers. The Museum is open on each Tuesday from 12:00 till 4:00 and on the first Sunday of each month, also from 12:00 till 4:00. We will set up special tours, just call the museum at 215-289-6484.

Join us and preserve their heritage. (Hugh Boyle)

Meade Society Spring Excursion - There were 27 of us on board as we departed from the Laurel Hill Cemetery shortly after 9 a.m. on Saturday, May 6, in a bright yellow school bus with Hagey Coach & Tours driver Dave Leslie at the wheel and Andy Waskie on the mic, shortly after 9 a.m. on Saturday, May 6. The focus of our tour this day would be Philadelphia sites honoring veterans, including but not limited to those of the American Civil War. Given that the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) was founded 150 years ago in the spring of 1866, it was appropriate for us to visit memorial sites this year.

Our first stop was Leverington Cemetery in Roxborough, where we visited the grave of Civil War nurse Hetty (Harriet) Jones. After one of Hetty's brothers was killed in action fighting with the 55th PA Volunteers, she first served at a military hospital on Filbert Street. When that site was converted into a soldiers' home in late 1863, she departed for the front, where she served at City Point Hospital located strategically 15 miles from Petersburg, VA. Hetty was not a young woman, and she worked herself to the point of fatal exhaustion-- she died in her field tent. Carved onto her gravestone is the image of a tent with an open flap: either Hetty is symbolically welcoming us to enter, or she is ready to emerge to resume her faithful duties. To honor her service and sacrifice, G.A.R. Post 12, which was based in Roxborough, adopted her name and became the Hetty Jones Post.

In addition to Hetty Jones, Leverington is the final resting place for many other casualties of the Civil War. To honor them, a Civil War monument with a statue of a Union infantry soldier was erected there in 1871, and General Meade spoke at the dedication service. The statue has been stolen twice in the years since, the last time being about 20 years ago. Fortunately, it was recovered and rededicated in a ceremony sponsored by the Roxborough Historical Society.

Our next stop was Market Square in Germantown, the site of the impressive G.A.R. Ellis Post 6 Civil War monument, which is surrounded by mortars from the siege of Petersburg and a cannon from the War of 1812. The monument is across Germantown Avenue from the Deshler-Morris House, the summer home of President George Washington and his family for several seasons in the early 1790s when Philadelphia was the first capital of the United States.

After a brief rest stop at a McDonalds, we were off to the Philadelphia National Cemetery where rest the remains of thousands of American servicemen, including Galusha Pennypacker, who became a brigadier general at age 19 and full general at 21, the youngest general in the history of the American army. (Pennypacker, a Medal of Honor recipient, would go on to serve in many capacities, including governor of Pennsylvania.) After the Philadelphia National Cemetery was established in 1884, the remains of many soldiers who had been first buried at various other cemeteries around the city were reinterred here, including the remains of U.S. Colored Troops who had died while in training at nearby Camp William Penn between 1863 and 1865. Likewise the Philadelphia National Cemetery became the final resting place for 184 Confederate soldiers and sailors who had been evacuated to Philadelphia hospitals and died here of their wounds or illnesses. A monument to these fallen sons of the South was erected in 1911.

Also notable at the Philadelphia National Cemetery was the Scott Legion Monument, which honors 38 soldiers who had served in the War with Mexico under General Winfield Scott. Originally buried at Glenwood Cemetery, these men were reinterred here in 1927.

We then rolled through sections of North Philadelphia and Kensington to see in passing several squares (pocket parks) that had been established to honor local Civil War heroes: one square was dedicated to home front heroine Anna M. Ross, who was a mainstay of the Cooper Volunteer Refreshment Saloon until her death from overwork in December 1863, and after whom the G.A.R. Post 94 had been named; another was Birney Square, named after General David Birney, who died of disease in October 1864 and for whom Post 63 was named.

We got off the bus at McPherson Square to view a monument to Charles Allen Smith, one of two young Philadelphian serving in the U.S. Navy who were killed in action during an incident off the coast of Vera Cruz in the spring of 1914 during the Mexican Revolution. In a spate of pre-World War I patriotism, various groups formed the Allied Monument Commission of Philadelphia to honor Smith's sacrifice. Also noteworthy at McPherson Square is the Carnegie library branch that occupies the top of the hill there.

Noon had come and gone, and we more than ready to quaff our thirst over a hearty lunch at McGillins Old Ale House on Drury Street in downtown Philadelphia. A generous buffet lunch awaited us in private dining space reserved for us on the second floor. As we enjoyed our repast, current owner Chris Mullens gave us an overview of McGillins' proud 156-year-history, dating back to 1860.

After lunch our Hagey driver Dave Leslie picked us up on busy 13th Street (not an easy accomplishment), and we were off to drive by the Korean and the Vietnam War Memorial near Penn's Landing. Across Columbus Boulevard we could see the *Olympia*, which we learned had been the ship that first transported the remains of three unidentified American World War I "dough boys" to Philadelphia, where a little girl picked one of them to be buried in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

Driver Dave was able to drop us off on Lombard Street near 6th for our next stop, a visit to historic Mother Bethel Church. After a brief introduction to the history of the church by one of its deacons, most of the group went up to the balcony to get a closer look at a magnificent stained glass window that centers around a rendering of the G.A.R. emblem with its five-pointed star. This window was presented to the Church by the G.A.R. in 1890.

After a brief stop at Reynolds Square in South Philadelphia, where we posed for group pictures, we drove past the Union League, City Hall, and the Azalea Gardens behind the Philadelphia Museum of Art where the walkway is lined with statues of heroes of the American Revolution. We then headed to West Fairmount Park to drive by the Smith Memorial and, of course, the highlight of the day - the Meade equestrian statue behind Memorial Hall. This magnificent sculpture, which was cast from melted down Confederate cannons and rests upon granite from Devil's Den, magnificently portrays Meade on Old Baldy at a critical moment at around 6 pm on July 2, 1863 at Gettysburg, when Confederate troops were threatening to break through a hole in the Union line. Meade was prepared to lead his small entourage in a suicidal charge that could gain a few minutes time for Federal reinforcements to arrive. Fortunately, reinforcements did arrive seconds before Meade could give the command, and the General would live to lead the Army of the Potomac in defeating of Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia the following day.

The sun was starting to dip, as were the energy levels of many of us, so after a brief stop at Warminster Cemetery near West Laurel Hill, we were ready to return to Laurel Hill Cemetery, where Betty and Jerry McCormick welcomed us with libations and snacks.

Kudos to Andy Waskie for leading us on another highly informative adventure, to the McCormicks for all their work in organizing the trip and our refreshments, to our driver Dave who performed some near miracles in navigating the bus in and out of narrow city streets, to our friends at Laurel Hill Cemetery, and to all the cheerful members and friends of the Meade Society who enjoyed and contributed to the camaraderie of the 2016 spring trip. (Kerry Bryan)

Removal of General Meade's Witness Tree - The historic Norway Maple tree that shaded General Meade's gravesite in Laurel Hill Cemetery dates back to the Civil War era and sheltered war heroes, a United States president, dignitaries and ordinary citizens. It is considered one of the most historic sites within the cemetery. Unfortunately, the tree reached the end of its natural life and was removed on May 28, 2016. A ceremony to honor the occasion was open to the public and hosted by the Meade Society.

Memorial Day Observance at Laurel Hill Cemetery - We would like to thank all who brought treats and all who participated in the Memorial Day, May 29th.

Thanks to Andy Waskie for leading the way!

In The Kitchen:

- Ginny & Tom Benner
- Jeanne & Tom O'Toole
- Carol Ingald
- Beverly Rolfsmeyer

Staffing The Outdoor Tables:

- Betty & Jerry McCormick
- Linda & Joe Hauptman
- Rita Thomas
- Nancy Kelsey
- Debbie Shirk

And always thankful to the LHC staff. The Society did well, again. (Judi and Tom Kearney)

Meade Scholarship - On Tuesday, June 21, 2016, the General Meade Society again awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to an 8th grade student graduating from the Meade School, 18th and Oxford Streets, Philadelphia.

Meade Society members Ken Garson, Tom Kearney, Tom O'Toole, and Betty and Jerry McCormick were in attendance.

Jerry in uniform portraying Major General A. A. Humphreys and representing General Meade read a personal note from the “victor of Gettysburg” encouraging the class to achieve a great goal, as he did at Gettysburg, with the help of others. He stressed the importance of family as their source of encouragement and help.

Rasheed Robinson received the scholarship and will attend the Parkway School in Philadelphia this fall and has college as his goal. The runner up, Elijah Burriss received a \$100 gift certificate from Staples. (Jerry McCormick)

Meade at the Phillies - On Wednesday evening August 3rd, the Society had their annual visit to Citizens Bank Park to see the Philadelphia Phillies take on the San Francisco Giants in Major League action. 40 Society members and friends attended and a few were on hand to see 'Our Nine' come out victorious after a 12 inning battle. Our record now stands at 9 wins and 4 losses since 2004 - the year the 'Bank' opened. And we are looking forward to next year. (Tom Kearney)

City Hall Memorial - Octavius V. Catto, an activist, educator, writer, athlete, and speaker gunned down in election violence in 1871, will at last be fully honored by the city where he lived and died for his beliefs and for the color of his skin. The public memorial to Catto will grace City Hall's southern apron. The artist, Branly Cadet, based in Los Angeles, has produced an ambitious and allusive design focused on a 12-foot bronze statue of Catto. Arrayed behind the open-armed figure will be five granite pillars, fashioned like upturned streetcars. Catto's statue faces a stainless-steel ballot box resting on a broad table. Incised on the granite will be excerpts from his writing: “There must come a change ... which shall force upon this nation ... that course which Providence seems wisely to be directing for the mutual benefit of ... peoples.” The whole installation — called A Quest for Parity — alludes to two of Catto's most memorable public campaigns.

One was his successful effort to desegregate the city's horse-drawn streetcars in 1867 — nearly a century before similar actions fueled the civil rights movement in the South. The other was his push to fulfill the mandate of the 15th Amendment guaranteeing the right to vote, regardless of race or “previous condition of servitude.” Catto fought successfully for Pennsylvania's ratification of the amendment in 1869.

Then, as prospective black voters sought to exercise their new franchise in the racially charged, tension-filled election of Oct. 10, 1871, Catto was shot three times at Ninth and South Streets, near his home. He was only 32.