

The Dispatch

General Meade Society of Philadelphia, Inc.

Newsletter – Fall 2017

“Forget Not His Deeds”

From Bloody Crimes: The Chase for Jefferson Davis and the Death Pageant for Lincoln’s Corpse by James L. Swanson

“The death pageant was both a civic and a religious event. Through the national funeral obsequies, Americans mourned the death of their president and elevated him to the pantheon of American political sainthood, equaled only by George Washington. They honored his achievements: he had won the war, saved the Union, and set men free. They united behind his principles and vowed to bear the burden of his “unfinished work.” And they reaffirmed, by the tributes they paid to him, that his great cause was worth fighting and dying for.”

“His traveling corpse became a touchstone that offered catharsis for all the pain the American people had suffered and stored up over four bloody years of civil war. For whom did they mourn?” “...not for this one man alone but for all the men: for every son, every brother, every lover, and every husband, and every father lost in that war. It was as though, on that train, in the coffin, they were *all* coming home. Lincoln’s death pageant for Abraham Lincoln was a glorious farewell to him and to the three hundred and sixty thousand men of the Union who, like their Father Abraham, had perished for cause and country.”

General A. A. Humphreys Portrait Presentation by The Meade Society – ‘Open House’ Civil War History Presentation, Sunday, September 10, 2017 at 1:30pm. Historian Jay Howard – Author of the Letters and Diary of Capt. Hall, 4th New Jersey. Special Presentation Ceremony of the newly conserved portrait of General A. A. Humphrey. FREE & Open to the public. GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC MUSEUM, Historic Ruan House • 4278 Griscom Street, Philadelphia, PA 19124.

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.

Officers

Andy Waskie, PhD, President
Mike Peter, Vice-president
Jerry McCormick, Treasurer
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Election Results – We are fortunate to have our returning Officers and Board Members who have volunteered their service to the Meade Society for this year. We welcome our newest Board Members, Herb Kaufman and Ed Zongolowicz. They have been active members for many years, and they both possess an invaluable source of knowledge that will aid us in meeting the Society's goals.

Meade Society's Adopted Position – Meade's Gettysburg Headquarters, the Leister House Garden Clean up - I hope you are enjoying your summer ... heat, storms and all! I will take 90 degrees and humid over 23 degrees and icy any day!!! I will be sorry to see summer end! As some of you may know, there was a danger of Monarch butterflies surviving this year. Not sure why, but I would guess weather conditions had something to do with it. We planted some milkweed this year (that is the only plant they lay eggs on and the larvae eat!) and have plenty of butterfly bushes and a variety of other flowering plants. We have had a couple fluttering around the house and on our plants for weeks now so I am hoping there will be little Monarchs in time to migrate to Mexico in the coming weeks! I may sneak a few Butterfly Weeds in the garden for next spring to help the Monarch population in Gettysburg. Mums the word!

Our clean up is planned for **Sunday, October 1, 2017**. As usual, we will meet around 10:30 and work until noon at the Leister House - then a lovely lunch before the journey home. I hope most of you can make it - I am guessing this heat and humidity has encouraged the weeds so many hands will be needed! Kindly let me know who can come (already on the list are Jeanne & Tom O and Ken & Jeanette). Hoping for a beautiful, cool fall day! Email me at ginnyqop@aol.com

The Lydia Leister house on the Gettysburg battlefield holds a special significance. Lydia was a widow of 3 years with 6 children (3 older has left home, 2 younger still at home and one son away in the army) when the troops arrived in the little farming town of 2400 residents in July 1863. When the battle started many residents packed up and left for a safer place to stay, as did Lydia. Little did she know that Union commander Gen. George Gordon Meade would use the little whitewashed house as his Headquarters and hold a council of war with other Union generals there on July 2nd 1863. The battle lasted 3 days and took 51,000 casualties including wounded, missing and dead. Most every building was used as a hospital because a substantial number of the 40,000 wounded and dead remained in this little town. The Leister House was a hospital after the battle as well. Gettysburg was devastated. Water was contaminated, crops ruined, livestock confiscated by hungry troops, houses and farms suffered damages. Lydia and her neighbors struggled to restore their town.

About 8 years ago we (The General Meade Society) took over a garden restoration of the four raised garden beds at the Leister house planting herbs found in most every garden for hundreds of years, being used for culinary and medicinal purposes, via the GNMP's Adopt-a-position program. With an average of 15-17 volunteers we go out in spring and fall to weed, trim and plant. As you can imagine, it is difficult to manage a garden with only two visits a season, but we do our best to keep the appearance of a working garden. It is our privilege and pleasure to work this hallowed ground in an effort to restore it as it might have looked in 1863.

Look for our article and photos in *Civil War News*, August 2017, p. 46-47. – **Ginny Benner**

18th Annual Symposium, April 2, 2017, “History of the U.S. entry into the Great War (1917) on the 100th Anniversary with a focus on Pennsylvania and Philadelphia”. Co-sponsored by the Pennsylvania National Guard and American Legion Post 405 of the Union League -

The first speaker for the Meade Society’s 18th annual history symposium was Peter Williams. He is a lifelong resident of Philadelphia, an attorney and amateur historian with a special interest in World War I. Mr. Williams credits his grandparents’ tales about the times in which they lived with enkindling his interest in the period. He gave an enthusiastic talk about Philadelphia during the years of World War One, citing his book, *Philadelphia: The World War I Years*, published in 2013 by Arcadia Publishing. Photographs for this book were selected from sundry collections of public and private museums, libraries; many of them not seen for almost 90 years. [Mr. Williams also blogs weekly on the topic at: <http://philadelphiawwiyears.com/life-in-the-city/>. He said that if you would like to read a daily entry about events, please visit the **Life in the City** section of the web site. Those who have a story you would like to share about a family member or just something about the city or its people during that time, please email him at PhillyWWIyears@gmail.com.]

One hundred years ago Philadelphia was the third largest city in America, filled with immigrants of Irish, German, Italian, Polish and Jewish origins; in addition, thousands of African-Americans had migrated from the South. Racial and ethnic tensions were greater then than today. Two and three story row homes, common to the city at that time, were often made of brick, due to the proximity of local brick works. At that time Republicans were the ruling political party.

When war broke out in Europe in 1914 many Americans did not wish to enter the conflict. In fact, America did not enter the war until late in 1917. The Germans had reinstated unrestricted submarine warfare and the memory of the sinking of the Lusitania still simmered in the American consciousness; the intercepted Zimmerman Telegram from Germany to the Mexican government stirred Congress to action in early April. War was declared and Philadelphia, with its many manufacturers and channels of distribution, navy yard, ports and harbors made it a prime mover for the country’s martial development.

The names that we know today that mark Philly’s industrial and manufacturing history, Baldwin, Disston, Stetson, and Drexel, came to the fore to assist in mobilization. Whitman’s and Hershey contributed to the war effort.

The city’s topography changed itself, too. War gardens bloomed around the city. Eastern Penitentiary had a roof garden. Franklin Field was used for trainees to have mock battles. Hog Island got its name for raising pigs for food. City Hall devoted its fourth and fifth floors to become army sleeping quarters and mess halls.

And although women weren’t allowed to vote, they went to work in the munitions plants, sometimes becoming casualties in explosions. Women even joined the navy as “marinettes”.

Peter Williams writes:

“The ‘Great War’ years would forever change the city’s landscape and its people. Philadelphia would experience sweeping change, and the people of what its founder, William Penn, called his ‘greene country towne’ would come together as never before to support the war effort at home and their boys over there. And they did it the Philadelphia way, with the values that Philadelphians from all the social, economic and ethnic groups agreed on – hard work, perseverance, stubbornness and a dogged determination to get the job done and win the war.” – **Ken Garson**

Lunch Break and Second Speaker –

The Kearney “Kommissary” once again worked their magic and provided a bountiful lunch buffet. The main dish was chicken a la king over rice pilaf, accompanied by fresh green salad with choice of Italian or ranch dressing. There was a plethora of dessert offerings and beverages, the latter including “Allied beers,” i.e. Stella Artois from Belgium, Bass Ale from Great Britain, and Yuengling from the United States. The room buzzed with lively conversation as we enjoyed the repast.

The first speaker after lunch was Wesley Craig, Major General U.S. Army (retired), and the former commandant of the Pennsylvania (PA) National Guard, who spoke about “The 28th Division, PA National Guard in World War I.” Posing an impressive figure in his dress uniform, General Craig overcame a “snafu” -- he could not show the PowerPoint slides he had prepared due to a technical glitch-- by means of his powerful voice, expertise in the subject, and cogent presentation.

He touched on the history of the 28th Infantry Division and the PA National Guard, which can trace their lineage to colonial militia groups and a succession of 19th-century infantry units. In 1879 Major General John Hartranft became the first division commander of the National Guard of Pennsylvania, which has since become renowned in American military history. General Craig presented an overview of some complex iterations of the PA National Guard in the early 1900s leading up to World War I, some of which involved conversion to field artillery and mobilization 1916 in response to the threat of Poncho Villa in Mexico (the troops had lots of training in El Paso, but never crossed the border).

After the United States declared war on the Central Powers in April 2017, the PA National Guard was galvanized: they secured infrastructure and began holding maneuvers in Fairmount Park, as well as state parks and game lands. The 28th Division quickly was recruited to full strength for federal service in the fall of 1917. They were sent to Camp Hancock in Georgia for training-- but arrived to find the camp only about 25% completed in its construction. Within four months, the 28th soldiers had completed the building of their own camp. So it would seem that they had been trained more for barracks than for field operations.

Orders to ship overseas came in early 1918. The 28th was transported by ship to Dover in southern England and from there to a “rest camp” in Calais, where nobody got any rest, as they could hear the distant, steady booming of artillery.

They were soon in the thick of it, taking up a defensive position along the Marne River east of Chateau-Thierry in July 1918. Their line was subject to a fierce barrage of German artillery before the assault of the enemy infantry. The courage and ferocity of the 28th in this battle, during which the Germans were repelled, earned them the salutary sobriquet of the "Men of Iron," as declared by General John Pershing, the commander of the American Expeditionary Force. He cited the division as being "mission focused" and demonstrating "superior leadership."

The trench warfare and bitter fighting would continue in the Argonne Forest that fall, where it was also very difficult to manage communications. A battle in early October resulted in a 40% casualty rate. In the five months that the 28th PA Infantry served in the field, it suffered 14,139 casualties (2,165 killed and 11,974 wounded).

Eventually after the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, the surviving troops of the 28th PA were marshaled back to Ft. Dix, NJ, and then in May 1919 were welcomed home with an exuberant parade in Philadelphia.

In the century or so that have followed, the 28th Infantry of the PA National Guard has continued to answer calls of duty, to prove its mettle, and uphold its honorable reputation, including during World War II and after 9/11. Our thanks to General Craig and to all who have served in the PA National Guard! – **Kerry Bryan**

The 79th Division (Pennsylvania Draftees) in WW1 by Colonel Ken McCreedy –

The U.S. army ranked 17th in world with 133,000 personnel. When the United States entered the war on 6 April, there was an immediate need to house and train large numbers of newly drafted men for service. Camp Meade, Maryland, was one of sixteen new cantonments opened to fulfill this need. Over 9,000 acres were purchased by the War Department and construction began in July. The newly established 79th Division, composed primarily of draftees from Maryland and Pennsylvania, was the first unit to arrive at Camp Meade in September. After a year of training the Division sailed on the U.S.S. Leviathan for France. The Division saw extensive combat in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive where it earned the name of "Cross of Lorraine" for their defense of France. Throughout its entire World War 1 campaign, the Division suffered 6,874 casualties with 1,151 killed and 5,723 wounded. The division was deactivated June 1919 and returned to the United States.

Private Henry Gunther, the last American soldier to be killed in action during the War served with the 313th Infantry Regiment of the 79th Division. The Armistice with Germany was signed by 5:00 a.m., local time, but it would only come into force at 11:00 a.m., November 11. Gunther's squad approached a roadblock of two German machine guns in the village of Chaumont-devant-Damvillers near Meuse, in Lorraine. Gunther got up, against the orders of his close friend and now sergeant, Ernest Powell, and charged with his bayonet. The German soldiers, already aware of the Armistice that would take effect in one minute, tried to wave Gunther off. He kept going and fired "a shot or two". When he got too close to the machine guns, he was shot in a short burst of automatic fire and killed instantly.

Men of the 314th Infantry Regiment built a log cabin at Meade in 1917 to serve as an officer's club and day room. They used trees felled on post and salvaged materials such as Spikes forged from old horseshoes and chandeliers fabricated from wagon wheels. They left the cabin behind at Meade when the Division embarked for France.

After the War, the surviving members of the 314th set out to create a memorial to the men of the regiment who fell in battle. They raised the necessary funds and purchased the cabin from the Army. The cabin was then disassembled and moved to Valley Forge, where it was rebuilt and dedicated on 30 September 1922 as a memorial. The cabin became a focal point for veterans of the Great War, who donated material to be displayed inside to illustrate to the public the experiences of the 79th Division's Doughboys.

The memorial cabin remained at Valley Forge until the descendants of those WWI Veterans generously donated the cabin back to the Army. In 2013 it was again disassembled and returned to Fort George G. Meade. The material contained inside the cabin, including uniforms, weapons and equipment used during the War, were also donated to the Army and transferred to the Fort Meade Museum. The cabin will continue to be a memorial to the men of the 314th and soldiers who have served at Fort Meade both past and present. – **Joe Perry**

Our final speaker, Meade Society President Andy Waskie, told the story of a Philadelphia born Civil War veteran and world recognized Biblical scholar, Caspar Rene Gregory. In 1864 completed his bachelor's degree at the University of Pennsylvania in 1864 and went on to do his post-doctoral work at the University of Leipzig. In 1884 he became an associate professor in 1889 and a full honorary professor in 1891.

While still a student at Penn, Caspar joined the 'University Artillery', a militia unit. After graduation in 1864, he joined the 'Gray Reserves', a famous Pennsylvania militia and National Guard asset. Their monument stands in front of the Union League. The 103rd Engineers Battalion of the 28th Division, PA National Guard claims lineage to the Gray Reserves and even back to Colonial times.

In August 1914, Gregory, who had been a citizen of Saxony, Germany, since 1881, enlisted in the German Army as its oldest wartime volunteer at age 69. He became a second lieutenant in 1916 and was killed in action on April 9, 1917.

Special thanks to Jim Schmick, of Civil War and More, 10 South Market Street, Mechanicsburg, PA, for bringing his stores books, prints and collectables to our Symposium. www.civilwarandmore.com

The topic for next year's 19th Annual History Symposium will be the Spanish-American War of 1898 at its 120th Anniversary.

Neshaminy Re-enactment - Once again, the General Meade Society "set up shop" at the annual Neshaminy State Park Civil War Re-enactment in Bensalem, PA on Saturday, April 29th and Sunday, April 30th. Aided by great weather and the generosity of large crowds, our efforts at fund raising to help our mission of historic preservation and education were a success.

We held a raffle on both days for a chance to win a spectacular woven throw, which commemorated the 100th anniversary of Fort George G. Meade in Maryland. Congratulations to the winners -- our own JUDY FOLAN, and TONY TRUSSO of Union, New Jersey. Many thanks go to those who helped us staff our display for the weekend: Joe Hauptmann (our merchandise chairman); Nancy Kelsey; Jeanne & Tom O'Toole; Ed Zongolowicz; Betty McCormick; Mike Wunsch; and of course, Mike Peter for his time and efforts in the set up. MANY, MANY, THANKS, Mike!! – **Jerry McCormick**

Spring Trip – “Rail Lines and Grape Vines”, May 6, 2017 – By order of the General Superintendent, Passenger Service, the Meade Society completed a round trip passage from Pottstown, PA to Boyertown, PA and all points intermediate on the Secret Valley Line, Colebrookdale Railroad. Completed by soldiers home from the Civil War just four months after the Transcontinental Railroad united the nation. The Railroad is eight-point six miles long and cuts through the heart of Schuylkill Valley’s earliest iron industries.

Heading west out of Pottstown, the railroad leaves the mainline of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad and travels north along the millrace of the old Pott’s family’s upper gristmill. The gristmill, then owned by the Gable Brothers, burned down on 3 December 1877, apparently from a spark from the Colebrookdale Railroad locomotive.

Joseph Bailey, who was the primary proponent of the Railroad, founded the Colebrookdale Iron Company, located just south of Boyertown on Farmington Avenue, in 1835.

All enjoyed our 2-hour ride aboard the meticulously restored century-old passenger car. The dining car was a nice touch. Another trip back in time for the Society.

We had lunch at Durango’s Saloon on the first floor of a former hotel.

The final stop was to The Manatawny Creek Winery, Amityville, PA. It is a privately owned business nestled on a 90-acre farm in a valley surrounded by mountains. Manatawny is a Native American term meaning, “Where we Meet to Drink”. The owner conducted the tour and wine tasting was available for the thirsty “Meadites”. We packed up for home with a cargo of wine.

Special thanks to Joe Hauptman and Bill Linhart for planning the trip. – **Joe Perry**

Gravesite placement of veterans’ flags at Laurel Hill Cemetery Sunday, May 21, 2017 - The Meade Society and friends placed U.S. flags on the graves of veterans’ of all wars. We also placed flags at nearby Mt. Peace and St. James the Less cemeteries. Laurel Hill Cemetery contains the graves of thousands of Civil War veterans. Many of those who engaged in battle, fighting on the sides of both the Union and Confederacy or on the home front now rest at Laurel Hill. The site also holds sacred the remains of many prominent Civil War-era Philadelphians, including volunteer nurses, surgeons, and supporters of the war effort.

Annual Memorial Day Observed at Historic Laurel Hill Cemetery, Sunday, May 28, 2017 - Recreating the Original G.A.R. Decoration Day Service, the traditional Decoration Day service of the Grand Army Meade Post #1, the Meade Society and friends gathered at noon to remember the fallen.

Laurel Hill is the site of the first Memorial Day Observance in Philadelphia on this date in 1868. Special bronze veterans' markers were dedicated at the graves of veterans. Speakers, ceremonies and pageant highlighted this special ceremony. Afterwards the entourage gathered at the grave of General Meade, hero of Gettysburg, to perform the traditional service to honor all veterans who fell defending the Nation. Wreath-laying, speeches, music and honor guards enhanced the ceremony. Our Keynote Speaker was LTC Michael Rounds (USMA). Tours of the historic cemetery were provided.

Co-sponsored by the General Meade Society of Philadelphia; Friends of Laurel Hill; American Legion Post #405; MOLLUS, Union League; Sons of Union Veterans.

Meade at the Phillies - On a perfect night for baseball, 44 Society members and friends gathered at Citizens Bank Park on August 10th, to see our Phillies take on the New York Mets in the opening game of a four game 'Alumni Weekend' series. Someone forgot to tell the Mets that we were the home team and we took it on the chin by the score of 10 - 0. However, we did maintain the Society's winning record. Since we started going in 2004, we are 8 - 6 against Major League teams'. – **Tom Kearney**

Brigadier General Horace Porter on General Meade from his memoirs

“General Meade was a most accomplished officer. He had been thoroughly educated in his profession, and had a complete knowledge of both the science and the art of war in all its branches. He was well read, possessed of a vast amount of interesting information, had cultivated his mind as a linguist, and spoke French with fluency. When foreign officers visited the front they were invariably charmed by their interviews with the commander of the Army of the Potomac.

He was a disciplinarian to the point of severity, was entirely subordinate to his superiors, and no one was more prompt than he to obey orders to the letter. In his intercourse with his officers the bluntness of the soldier was always conspicuous, and he never took pains to smooth any one's ruffled feelings.”

Reprint from the *The Dispatch* Oct.-Nov. 1998.