# General Meade
# "Witness Tree"
# Laurel Hill Cemetery

Bill Linhart
Member of the Board, General Meade Society
Tour Guide, Laurel Hill Cemetery

Based on presentation delivered Oct 2016
At Meade Society 20th Anniversary Dinner
Cannstatters V.V., Philadelphia, PA
About 55 were in attendance

# Sunday 29 May 2016
# Philadelphia Inquirer
# Front Page

# Excerpt

" . . . Ulysses S. **Grant**, Benjamin **Harrison**, and Rutherford B. **Hayes** - all Civil War generals and U.S. presidents - once sheltered beneath its branches at Laurel Hill Cemetery in the city's East Falls section. Legendary Union Gens. Philip **Sheridan**, William Tecumseh **Sherman**, Joshua Lawrence **Chamberlain**, and Dan **Sickles** were there, too, . . . "

*Edward Colimore is a former Inquirer reporter who has written extensively about the Civil War and the history of Philadelphia.* ecolimore@comcast.net

*Source:*
*http://www.philly.com/philly/news/20160529_Laurel_Hill_Cemetery_s_legendary_Norway_maple__witness_tree__is_felled.html*

# 31 Dec 2014

**Compare trunk diameter to man standing next to it.**

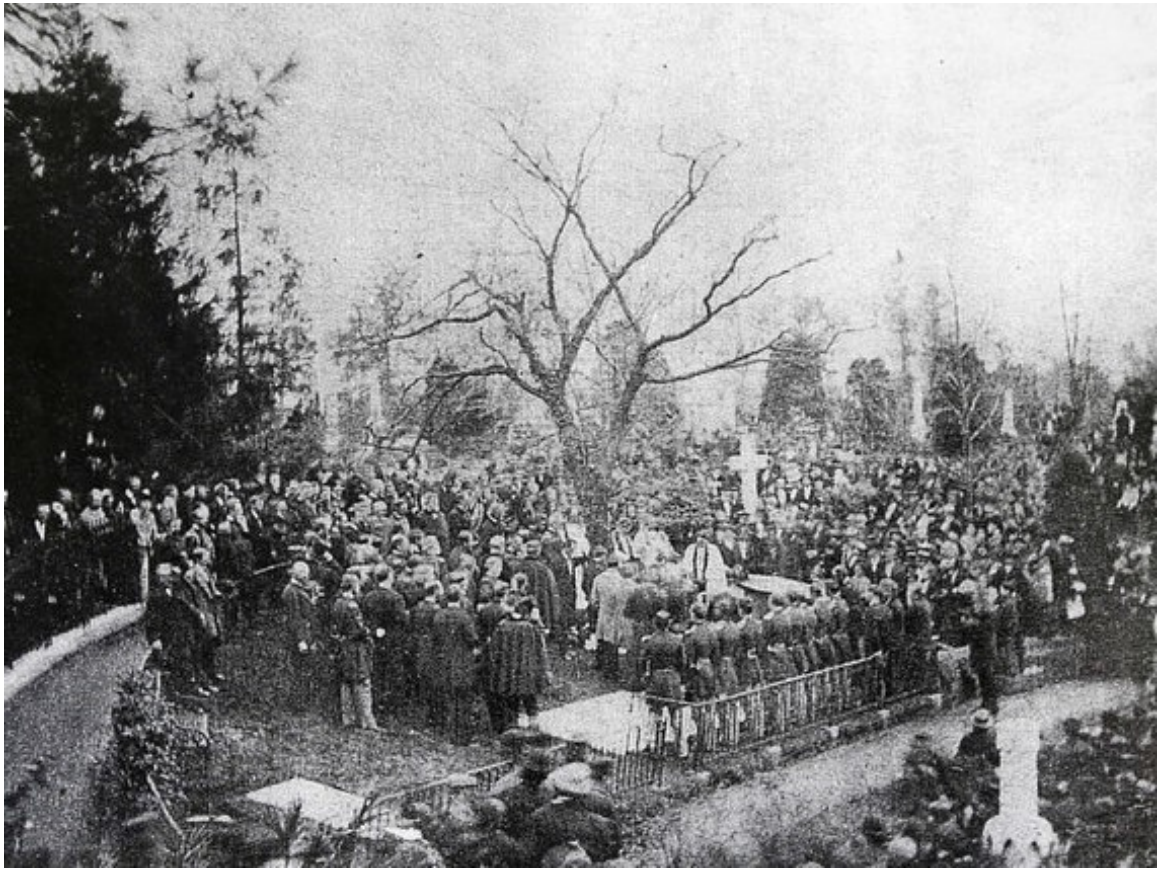
Source: Meade Society flickr.com

# After tree limbs removed 28 May 2016

Certified arborist Matt Ward of John B. Ward & Co. Tree Experts removed the tree.

# Trunk Removal 28 May 2016

Source:
http://www.philly.com/philly/news/20160529_Laurel_Hill_Cemetery_s_legendary_Norway_maple__witness_tree__is_felled.



# General Meade's Burial 11 Nov 1872

**Note "Witness Tree" in center of picture.**

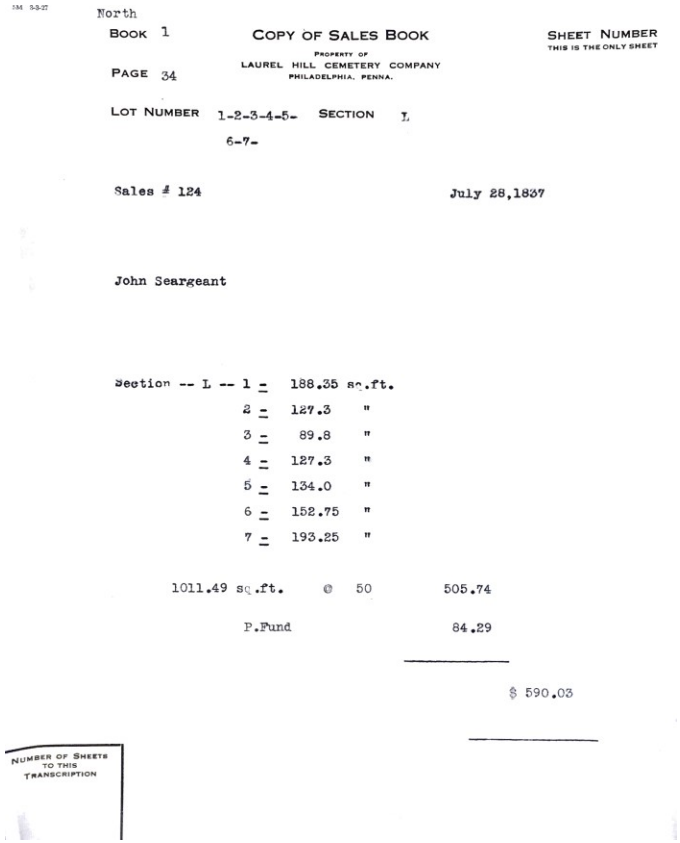
Source:
http://media.philly.com/images/600*450/20160529_inq_ptree29-a.JPG

# How old was this Norway maple?

- typical life span is 150 years or less
- can grow to a height of 100 feet
- can reach a diameter of 5 feet at eye level
- What do we know?

# Location

- Near General Meade's Grave
- Laurel Hill Cemetery North Section
- formerly the Simms Estate
- 1836 purchased by cemetery



North

BOOK 1 — COPY OF SALES BOOK — SHEET NUMBER

PROPERTY OF
LAUREL HILL CEMETERY COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA, PENNA.

THIS IS THE ONLY SHEET

PAGE 34

LOT NUMBER 1-2-3-4-5-6-7- SECTION L

Sales # 124 July 28,1837

John Seargeant

Section -- L -- 1 = 188.35 sq.ft.
2 = 127.3 "
3 = 89.8 "
4 = 127.3 "
5 = 134.0 "
6 = 152.75 "
7 = 193.25 "

1011.49 sq.ft. @ 50 505.74

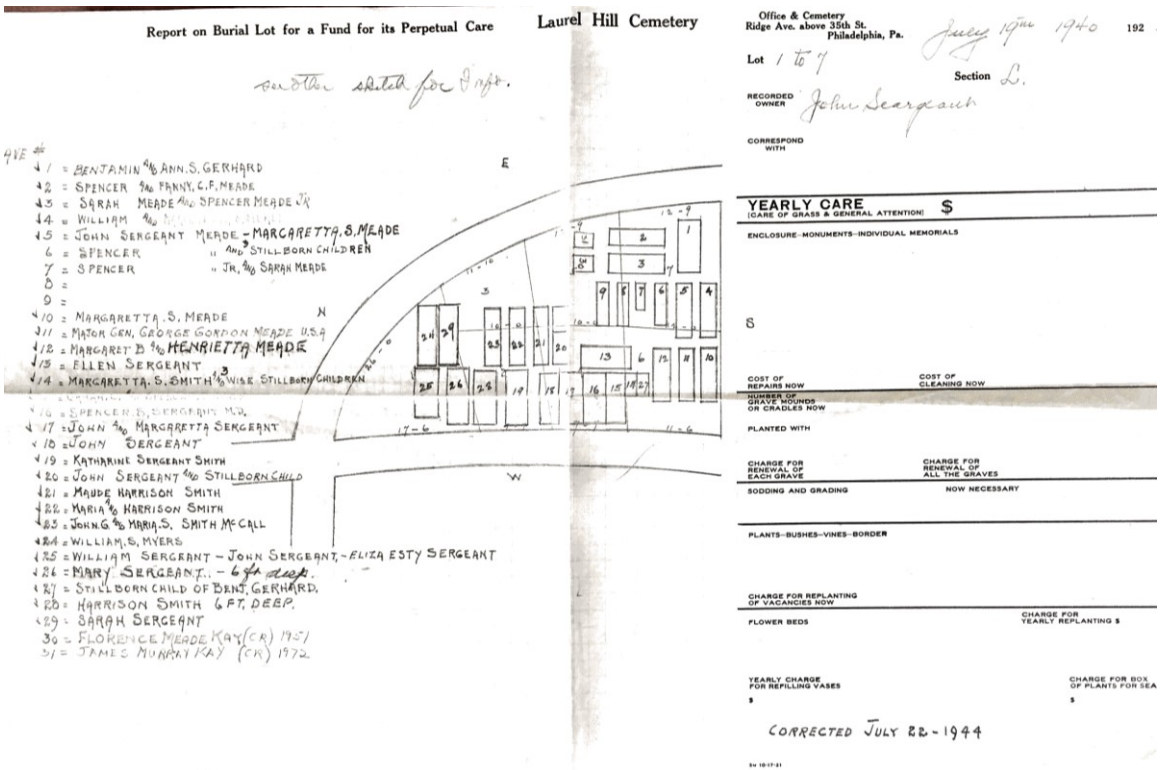
P.Fund 84.29

$ 590.03

NUMBER OF SHEETS TO THIS TRANSCRIPTION

# Extract of Cemetery Sale Books
# Sale of plot to John “Seargeant” on 28 July 1837

Source: Laurel Hill Cemetery Archive



Report on Burial Lot for a Fund for its Perpetual Care

Laurel Hill Cemetery

another sketch for Dept.

Office & Cemetery
Ridge Ave. above 35th St.
Philadelphia, Pa.

July 19th 1940 192

Lot 1 to 7 Section L.

RECORDED OWNER John Sergeant

CORRESPOND WITH

1 = BENJAMIN 4/6 ANN.S.GERHARD
2 = SPENCER 1/6 FANNY, C.F. MEADE
3 = SARAH MEADE 1/6, SPENCER MEADE JR
4 = WILLIAM 1/6
5 = JOHN SERGEANT MEADE - MARGARETTA.S.MEADE
6 = SPENCER " AND 3 STILLBORN CHILDREN
7 = SPENCER " JR, 1/6 SARAH MEADE
8 =
9 =
10 = MARGARETTA.S. MEADE
11 = MAJOR GEN. GEORGE GORDON MEADE U.S.A
12 = MARGARET B 1/6 HENRIETTA MEADE
13 = ELLEN SERGEANT
14 = MARGARETTA.S.SMITH 3/6 WISE STILLBORN CHILDREN
15 = SPENCER D. SERGEANT M.D.
17 = JOHN 1/6 MARGARETTA SERGEANT
18 = JOHN SERGEANT
19 = KATHARINE SERGEANT SMITH
20 = JOHN SERGEANT 4/6 STILLBORN CHILD
21 = MAUDE HARRISON SMITH
22 = MARIA 1/6 HARRISON SMITH
23 = JOHN.G 4/6 MARIA.S. SMITH McCALL
24 = WILLIAM.S. MYERS
25 = WILLIAM SERGEANT - JOHN SERGEANT, - ELIZA ESTY SERGEANT
26 = MARY SERGEANT. - 6 ft deep.
27 = STILLBORN CHILD OF BENJ. GERHARD.
28 = HARRISON SMITH 6 FT. DEEP.
29 = SARAH SERGEANT
30 = FLORENCE MEADE KAY (CR) 1951
31 = JAMES MURRAY KAY (CR) 1972

YEARLY CARE (CARE OF GRASS & GENERAL ATTENTION) $

ENCLOSURE—MONUMENTS—INDIVIDUAL MEMORIALS

COST OF REPAIRS NOW

COST OF CLEANING NOW

NUMBER OF GRAVE MOUNDS OR CRADLES NOW

PLANTED WITH

CHARGE FOR RENEWAL OF EACH GRAVE

CHARGE FOR RENEWAL OF ALL THE GRAVES

SODDING AND GRADING

NOW NECESSARY

PLANTS—BUSHES—VINES—BORDER

CHARGE FOR REPLANTING OF VACANCIES NOW

FLOWER BEDS

CHARGE FOR YEARLY REPLANTING $

YEARLY CHARGE FOR REFILLING VASES

$

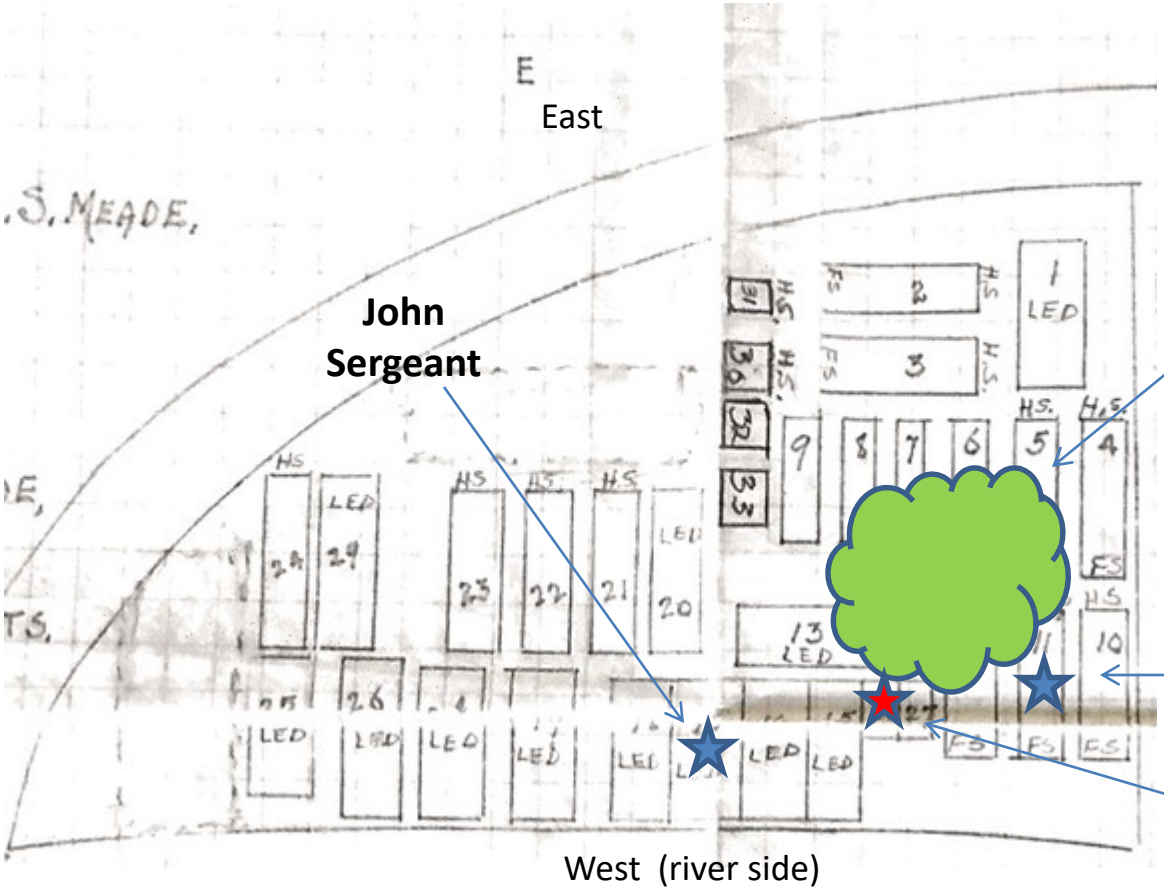
CHARGE FOR BOX OF PLANTS FOR SEA

$

CORRECTED JULY 22-1944

# 1940 Sketch of Section L Lots 1-7

Source: Laurel Hill Cemetery Archive




# Enlarged Section L Lots 1-7

Source: Laurel Hill Cemetery Archive

# Timeline
# Section L  Lots 1-7

(180) 1836 – founding of Laurel Hill Cemetery

(179) 1837 – purchase of Section L Lots 1-7 by John “Seargeant”

(175) 1841--  1st burial - stillborn grandchild of John Sergeant
(174) 1842 -- 2nd burial - stillborn grandchild of John Sergeant
*(The father, later became Confederate General H.A. Wise, “ . . . At Appomattox he was met by his **brother in law, Union Major General George G. Meade**. . . . “ Findagrave.com)*

(164) 1852 – burial of John Sergeant

(144) 1872 – burial of General George Gordon Meade
*(see picture was taken 144 years ago)*

# How old was the tree?

- 1st & 2nd burials in this plot (1841-1842)
  - Stillborn grandchildren of the owner of the plot
  - Located under the “Witness Tree”
- Common practice to plant a tree as a memorial
- Picture of Meade burial (1872) shows a tree that could be about 30 years old
- Most likely the tree was about 175 years old in 2016

# Plans for the wood

About 50,000 pounds of material

Drying and milling of the wood is being investigated

Small items are currently being crafted from smaller pieces.

- Coasters - $5
- flag holders - $7.50

Expect to see small items available for sale at the Meade Birthday celebration at the end of this year.

Creating some larger items is currently under active investigation.

# Replacement Tree Planting Agenda for Thursday 10 Nov 2016

**Marine Corps Anniversary Service at 10am**
Commemorate the 241st anniversary of the founding of the Marine Corps in Philadelphia on November 10, 1775.
At the gravesite of Brigadier General Jacob A. Zeilin, the first United States Marine non-brevet general, who served as the seventh Commandant of the Corps from 1864 to 1876.

**Followed by a brief tour**
Final resting places of the heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

**Planting of the Replacement Witness Tree**
Same location as before in Section L Lots 1-7

# The End