

HATT June Meeting

June 8, 2017 at Clymer Library

Attendance - 33 Members and 12 Non-Members

The meeting was opened by Rick Bodenschatz, program chair with thanks to the supportive program members who set up the Clymer Library room. He invited us to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. He then announced the July program on the Railroads of Tobyhanna Township and asked for volunteers to distribute fliers. He stated that there were books – Arlington and Lutherland books as well as a DVD of Lutherland available for sale with all the proceeds going to Clymer Library. He then introduced our speaker for today's talk on "PA's Contributions to the Civil War" by Jim Forcella.

Mr. Forcella began by stating Pennsylvania was the largest contributor of resources and manpower to the Civil War than any other state. He challenged the audience to respond to his question about how many commonwealths there are in the USA. There are four and there is no difference between a commonwealth and a state – they both function politically the same.

The Leni Lanape Indians were part of the Delaware tribe and were the first residents of NEPA when William Penn formed the area known as Pennsylvania (translated means "Penns Woods") on March 2, 1661. The area attracted many German and Scotch/Irish immigrants and was one of the few northern states to have slaves at that time. However, the Quakers and Germans were against slavery and so it was abolished as it became one of the thirteen original states of the USA and was one of the first to declare abolition.

Pennsylvania has always supplied manpower for all the wars but none more so than the Civil War. The then governor, Andrew Gregg Curtin was committed to organizing the manpower with training camps in Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Easton and Philadelphia. Curtin was politically involved as well, supporting Abraham Lincoln in his bid for the White House. But along with political aspirations and the training of troops, he also organized reserve forces who trained in the camps. He then formally established the cemetery at Gettysburg. He was instrumental in the formation of the 420,000 participants in the Union Army – only New York had more. Most all of these soldiers fought in the Eastern Theatre. There was a draft which was in effect and it was interestingly noted that you could 'buy' your way out of the draft for \$167.00.

The Pennsylvania reserves division was the only division where all of the soldiers were from PA although many didn't speak English – almost all were immigrants. The Philadelphia Brigade was composed of all Philadelphians which was also unusual. There also existed a Corn regiment who wore interesting yellow uniforms!

The number of PA soldiers awarded the Medal of Honor was 187 which included 2 members of the "Colored Regiment". PA was targeted by the Confederate Army because we were a border state.

Resources were also plentiful emanating from PA – Pitt produced Cast Iron used for mortars and the largest guns. Bethlehem Iron Works produced iron for ships at the navy yard. Eighty percent of all iron used in the Civil War was from PA. We also had food because of the abundance of farms and farmers. We also manufactured tents used by the troops.

Politically, Pennsylvania was behind Governor Curtin and his support of Lincoln and proved it by voting heavily for Lincoln to become president.

There is now established a National War Museum in Harrisburg. It is the largest Civil War collection in the nation especially focusing on the years 1861 – 1865. People who served in the war are all named but those who were not of PA origin are not names. There are a few great websites mentioned – one in particular was the works of photographer, Mathew Brady.

The talk ended with Mr. Forcella reiterating the vast contributions made by all, families, soldiers, farmers and people of all stations who supported the troops even if they were not directly in combat. He then fielded questions from the group.

HATT member David Morrison stood up to announce that this weekend it was Civil War Days in Harrisburg. There will be bus tours throughout the city. David also said that he would be giving a walking tour of the City. There will be so many spots to stop and visit during the weekend. Gettysburg is only famous now because General Lee wanted Harrisburg at any cost, but unfortunately for him got stopped in Gettysburg.

Another Hatt member also pointed out that Abraham Lincoln's replacement for the Civil War came from Monroe County.

Rick Bodenschatz also added that there are many Civil War Cemeteries for both the North and South. He also added that perhaps Chambersburg was burned to the ground because when invading Generals were on the move, the townspeople took their horses and fled to parts unknown so that they wouldn't be captured.

Rick thanked Mr. Forcella for his fine presentation and presented him with a certificate of appreciation. The meeting ended at 6:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Peggy Rapp

Peggy Rapp, Secretary