

FEATURE

The Only Chinese Soldier

A Dedication Ceremony for Corporal Joseph Pierce, Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) Marker at the Walnut Grove Cemetery, Meriden, Connecticut, August 5, 2006.

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Civil War re-enactors on Saturday, Aug. 5, will conduct a dedication ceremony at the Joseph Pierce gravesite at 2 p.m. in Walnut Grove Cemetery in Meriden. The gravesite is in Section D, Lot 10, Tier C near the superintendent's office (in the newer building adjacent to the original superintendent's brick building).

Members of the 14th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry will dedicate a Civil War marker in a ceremony at the gravesite of Joseph Pierce, a Chinese soldier who fought with the original regiment in the Army of the Potomac from 1862 to 1865.

Irving Moy, who portrays Pierce with the living history/re-enactment group said that Pierce "was believed" to have been the only Chinese soldier, who fought in the Civil War, achieving the rank of corporal. After the war he married an American woman and settled in Meriden on Meridian Street, where they raised a family. He worked as a silver engraver for the Meriden Britannia Co. The family attended Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church that was located on the corner of Cook and W. Main. When he died on Jan. 3, 1916 at age 73, his obituary did not mention his service during the Civil War but said, "he was well known and liked."

Michael Kroll, Superintendent and the Walnut Grove Board of Directors, enthusiastically gave their permission for the installation of the marker saying, "We need to support efforts to honor and promote recognition of the people and history of the City of Meriden."



Corporal Joseph Pierce, Grand Army of the Republic

Moy will present a program on Joseph Pierce and the Civil War on November 8, 2006 at the Meriden Public Library as part of its series of events to celebrate the bicentennial anniversary of the City of Meriden. Further information can be obtained from Victoria Navin, Affairs Director, at the library...

Opening Prayer By Paul Martinello

"Almighty God and Father, Ruler of the world and all mankind, we bless your holy and

righteous name. Thank you for all your blessings and keeping us in your favor. Forgive us for choosing wrong over right, pride over purpose, selfishness over sharing, acceptance over prejudice and materialism over morals. Forgive us our sins and all other evils, casting them aside, to be remembered no more.

Thank you for opening Amos Peck's eyes and heart to Joseph, to allow him to become a free man and an educated man, to learn what is good and righteous in this world. To stand up for what is right and to put his life on the line for a cause that was truly just. Thank you for keeping him safe throughout the war, allowing him to come home and start a family, to find employment, and with respect, raise an American family like all others.

With God's grace and surrounded by God fearing people, Joseph Pierce, in his own way, helped tear down the walls of inequity and close the gaps between races, adding to the history that many different peoples from all over the world, have helped to create the American way of life. May Joseph Pierce's legacy live on in the history of America, of Connecticut, of Meriden and of our own beloved 14th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry.

We respectfully submit this humble prayer in the name of Jesus, the Christ. Amen"

Dedication Remarks By Irving D. Moy

“The War of the Rebellion or the Civil War was the most defining event in this Nation's history. Over 620,000 casualties resulted more than all the wars combined this Nation has fought in. There was not a person who did not know of a family member or friend who had not suffer a loss during this conflict. Even before the end of the war families decorated the gravesites of their loved ones with flowers in memory of the ultimate sacrifice they made to preserve the Union.

On May 5, 1868, General John Logan, National Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, issued General Order No. 11 proclaiming that a day would be officially set aside to honor the memories of those who died during the war and the passing of each veteran. The first official celebration of Decoration Day took place on May 30, 1868. This day has since come to be known as Memorial Day. With the passing of each Civil War veteran a marker was



Joseph Pierce was a Chinese soldier who fought with the original regiment in the Army of the Potomac from 1862 to 1865. Irving Moy, who portrays Pierce with the living history/re-enactment group of the 14th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry dedicates a Civil War marker at his gravesite.

placed on his gravesite.

Today we are here to dedicate this GAR marker at the gravesite of Corporal Joseph Pierce, a member of the Company F of the original 14th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry. When he died on January 3, 1916 at the age of 73, his obituary in the Meriden Daily Journal did not mention his service during the Civil War but only said that he “was well known and liked.” If our government had not provided a grave stone, his gravesite would have been unmarked as the gravesite of Martha Morgan Pierce, his wife who is buried next to him. But his military records indicate that

Joseph Pierce enlisted in New Britain on July 26, 1862 as a member of the 14th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry. Less than a month later on August 23, 1862, his regiment was mustered into the Second Brigade, Third Division, Second Army Corps, Army of the Potomac, first under the command of General McClellan, and then under Generals Burnside, Hooker and Meade.

Its first battle on September 17, 1862 was the Battle of Antietam, the bloodiest single day battle with 26,134 casualties. At the time there were only 35 cities with this number of people. Then it was onward to Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville in the spring of 1863 and then on to the three day Battle of Gettysburg, the bloodiest battle on American soil with over 53,000 casualties. On September 1, 1863 Private Joseph Pierce was promoted to the rank of corporal. Pierce and the 14th Connecticut fought through other major engagements in the eastern theater of war until General Robert E. Lee's surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia on April 10, 1865. On May 23, 1865, he and the regiment marched in the Grand Review of the Armies in Washington, D.C. The regiment was mustered out of the United States Army on May 31st, and then upon arriving back to the state capital of Hartford, the 14th Connecticut was mustered out of state service on June 10, 1865. Of the 1,040 men who left the state in August 1862 only 215 or 21% of the regiment returned. Joseph Pierce was one of these veterans returning as the most famous and highest ranking Chinese soldier to have fought in the Civil War. It is, therefore, fitting that this marker be dedicated in his honor and memory.

But in doing so, we, in a larger sense are honoring the memory of all Union soldiers who died on the battlefields and the veterans, who contributed to the Northern victory that set this Nation on its course of a "new birth of freedom" to what it has come to symbolize today to the rest of the world as being, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, "the last best hope of man." In the Year 2009 this Nation will be celebrating the bicentennial of the birth of Abraham Lincoln. The

eloquence of his words still inspires us to this day. In another cemetery in Gettysburg, 143 years ago, he spoke these words and with these words, we dedicate this marker to Joseph Pierce.

'Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus so far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion—to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.'



About The Gettysburg Address

On November 19, 1863, President Lincoln went to the battlefield to dedicate it as a National Cemetery. The main orator, Edward Everett of Massachusetts, delivered a two-hour formal address. The president then had his turn. He spoke in his high, penetrating voice, and in a little over two minutes delivered this speech, surprising everyone by its brevity and leaving many quite unimpressed at first.

In the many generations that have passed since the Address, it has remained among the most famous speeches in American history. It is taught in classes about history or civics in the U.S. and around the world.

Over time this speech with its ending - "government of the People, by the People, for the People" has come to symbolize the definition of democracy itself.

The founder of the Republic of China Dr. Sun Yat-Sen's "Three Principles of the People" was inspired from that phrase.

Editor's Note: When I was a student in Shanghai, China in the 1940's, the Gettysburg Address was studied in our high school English class. The class studied the Civil War and had to memorize the speech. In our young minds, the Address inspired us a great deal and we felt a deep respect for America's sacrifice for justice.