

Remarks by David Walter, Westtown Twp. Historical Commissioner on May 20, 2023 for the dedication of the Westtown Militia Monument.

WELCOME, EVERYONE, TO THIS DEDICATION OF THE MONUMENT TO THE WESTTOWN MILITIAMEN, BURIED HERE IN THE TOWNSHIP, WHO SERVED THE CAUSE OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR. APPROPRIATELY, TODAY IS “ARMED SERVICES DAY.”

THIS MONUMENT WAS FIRST SUGGESTED BY A DESCENDANT OF COL. TAYLOR, SUSAN VAN VONNO OF MELBOURNE, FL, MORE THAN EIGHT YEARS AGO. WE FINALLY HAVE IT ON THIS SITE NEAR WHERE THESE MILITIAMEN STILL LIE BURIED.

THIS MONUMENT WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY MANY CONTRIBUTORS. THE CONCEPT WAS DESIGNED BY ARCHITECT DAN CAMPBELL. WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP PROVIDED THE LAND AND THE MARKER YOU SEE HERE. O’ROURKE & SONS DESIGNED, FABRICATED AND INSTALLED THE GALVANIZED STEEL FRAME IN WHICH THESE MONUMENT STONES REST. THE MARIS GROVE WOODSHOP CLUB PROVIDED THE CYPRESS WOOD AND CARPENTRY WORK THAT CLADS THE MONUMENT. DOZENS OF OTHER INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS PROVIDED MONEY AND SUPPORT TO THE PROJECT. OUR HEARTFELT THANKS TO ALL OF YOU.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT WE RECOGNIZE THESE UNHERALDED MILITIAMEN SOME 250 YEARS AFTER THEIR SERVICE?

THE LATE HISTORIAN, DAVID MCCULLOUGH, WROTE:

“THE LAWS THAT GOVERN US, THE FREEDOMS WE ENJOY, THE INSTITUTIONS THAT WE OFTEN UNFORTUNATELY TAKE FOR GRANTED, REPRESENT THE HARD WORK OF OTHERS STRETCHING BACK FAR INTO THE PAST. ACTING INDIFFERENT TO THIS FACT DOES NOT JUST SMACK OF IGNORANCE, BUT RUDENESS. HOW CAN WE CLAIM INDIFFERENCE TO LEARNING ABOUT THOSE PEOPLE WHO MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO BECOME CITIZENS OF THE WORLD’S GREATEST COUNTRY? THE FREEDOMS WE ENJOY ARE NOT JUST A BIRTHRIGHT, BUT SOMETHING FOR WHICH MILLIONS HAVE STRUGGLED, SUFFERED AND DIED.”

SO LET’S TAKE A MOMENT TO LEARN THE HISTORY OF THE TAYLORS.

THE FIRST TAYLORS – A QUAKER FAMILY - CAME TO WILLIAM PENN’S NEW COLONY IN 1682 FROM FLINTSHIRE, WALES ON THE SHIP “LYON”. THOMAS AND FRANCES YARDLEY TAYOR BROUGHT THEIR YOUNG FAMILY, INCLUDING TWO YEAR OLD PHILIP. IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER THOMAS DIED ABROAD SHIP AND WAS BURIED AT SEA OR DIED SHORTLY AFTER ARRIVAL. THE TAYLORS HAD PURCHASED 400 ACRES BETWEEN THE RIDLEY AND CHESTER CREEKS IN WHAT IS NOW MIDDLETOWN, DELAWARE COUNTY. FRANCES REMARRIED AND PHILIP AND THE TAYLOR CLAN GREW. A FAMILY GENEALOGIST IDENTIFIED OVER 6,000 DESCENDANTS OF THOMAS AND FRANCES IN 2001.

PHILIP MARRIED ANN CONWAY AND, IN 1719, AT AGE 39, PURCHASED 200 ACRES IN WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP AND THEY BECAME THE FIRST SETTLERS ON THIS LAND ACROSS THE STREET.

THEIR SON, JOHN (1706-1764) MARRIED PHOEBE TOWNSEND AND THEIR SON WAS COL. THOMAS TAYLOR, WHO MARRIED MARTHA WOODWARD.

WHEN PHILIP DIED IN 1732, THE TAYLORS ESTABLISHED A ½ ACRE BURIAL GROUND ON THE FAMILY FARM. OVER THE NEXT 135 YEARS, THE TAYLORS, THEIR EXTENDED RELATIVES, AND NEIGHBORS WERE BURIED HERE FOR CONVENIENCE OR BECAUSE THEY WERE DENIED BURIAL IN THE BIRMINGHAM FRIENDS CEMETERY.

THE TAYLOR PROPERTY WAS SOLD OUT OF THE FAMILY IN 1864. HOWEVER, THE CEMETERY WAS RESERVED AND SUBSEQUENT DEEDS MADE CLEAR THE CEMETERY WAS TO BE ACCESSIBLE IN PERPETUITY. AT SOME POINT, PERHAPS IN 1917 WHEN THE PROPERTY PASSED TO THE JONES FAMILY, THE CEMETERY'S PROTECTION DISAPPEARED.

REALIZING DEVELOPMENT WAS INEVITABLE, THE JONESES ALLOWED DR. MARSHALL BECKER OF WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY TO CONDUCT AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECOVERY EXCAVATION OF THE CEMETERY IN THE EARLY 1970S. DR. BECKER AND HIS RESEARCHERS ESTIMATED THERE WERE ABOUT 150 BURIALS IN THE CEMETERY.

WHEN THE PLEASANT GROVE RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY WAS BUILT, THE CEMETERY WAS COVERED OVER AND ACCESS HAS BEEN LOST.

AS WE WELL KNOW, WAR CAME TO THE NORTH AMERICAN COLONIES IN 1775, WHEN PATRIOTS TOOK UP ARMS AGAINST THE BRITISH CROWN BECAUSE OF A "LONG TRAIN OF ABUSES AND USURPATIONS" (AS THOMAS JEFFERSON PUT IT). INDEPENDENCE WAS DECLARED IN PHILADELPHIA AND A NEW NATION WAS PROCLAIMED. PROCLAIMED, YES, BUT ESTABLISHED ONLY THROUGH A CONTEST OF ARMS!

HOW WOULD COLONISTS LIKE THE TAYLORS RESPOND? JUST IMAGINE THE STRUGGLE OF CONSCIENCE THAT THOMAS TAYLOR AND HIS SONS WENT THROUGH.

STAY LOYAL TO HIS KING OR JOIN THE REVOLUTION, A RISKY VENTURE, TO CREATE A NEW COUNTRY? AND FAMILY TIES? SOME OF THE TAYLOR BRANCHES STAYED LOYAL OR WERE NEUTRAL. AND HIS FAITH? THE QUAKERS WERE PACIFISTS WHO CONDEMNED MILITARY SERVICE. IMAGINE ABANDONING YOUR LIFELONG RELIGION IN ORDER TO COMMAND THE LOCAL MILITIA AGAINST THE CROWN? AND, IN FACT, THE BIRMINGHAM FRIENDS MEETING DISOWNED CAPT. TAYLOR IN DEC. 1777.

THE TAYLORS JOINED THE REVOLUTION AND OFFICERED THE LOCAL BATTALION OF THE CHESTER COUNTY MILITIA. THE MILITIA (ALL MEN BETWEEN AGES OF 18 AND 45 WERE REQUIRED TO BELONG) DRILLED RIGHT ON COL. TAYLOR'S FARM ACROSS THE STREET. WE KNOW THE NAMES OF AT LEAST 25 FROM WESTTOWN WHO SERVED.

THE WAR SWEEPED OVER CHESTER COUNTY IN SEPT. 1777 AND THE LARGEST ONE DAY LAND BATTLE OF THE REVOLUTION OCCURRED ABOUT TWO MILES THAT WAY (POINT) ON SEPT. 11,1777. SOME 400 MILITIA WERE PRESENT AT THE BATTLE. WE DON'T KNOW IF THE TAYLORS WERE INCLUDED, BUT BOTH OF THE FAUCETT MEN HONORED HERE WERE REPORTED AS TAKEN PRISONER.

AFTER THE BATTLE, THE HESSIAN FORCES RAIDED ALL THE LOCAL FARMS FOR SUPPLIES AND LOOT. THE TAYLOR FARM SUFFERED THESE "DEPRADATIONS." HERE'S A LIST OF WHAT WAS STOLEN, AS REPORTED BY THOMAS' MOTHER-IN-LAW, TO SQUIRE THOMAS CHENEY (BRANDISH THE PAPER) LIVESTOCK TAKEN INCLUDED 2

HORSES, 1 COW, AND 29 GEESE, AND EVEN SILVERWARE, CURTAINS AND APRONS WERE STOLEN!

COL. TAYLOR DID NOT LIVE QUITE LONG ENOUGH TO SEE THE TREATY OF PARIS THAT ENDED THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR IN 1783. BUT HIS SONS DID, AND THEY WERE VALUED AND COMMITTED CITIZENS OF WESTTOWN TWP., CHESTER COUNTY, THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

AND, PLEASE, EVERYTIME YOU STAND IN FRONT OF A MONUMENT MARKING THE RESTING PLACE OF A MILITARY MEMBER, SAY HIS OR HER NAME AND SAY "YOU ARE **NOT** FORGOTTEN. YOU **ARE** REMEMBERED."
