

# Loyal Legion

## HISTORICAL JOURNAL



Winter 2018

[www.mollus.org](http://www.mollus.org)



Members of MOLLUS and DOLLUS pay homage at the grave of Elizabeth Van Lew in Richmond's historic Shockoe Hill Cemetery.

## Another Event-Packed Congress Wraps Up

2018 Congress provided opportunities to learn, serve, and honor.

For the third time in their histories, the Loyal Legion and the Dames of the Loyal Legion convened a Congress in Richmond, Virginia—the capital of the Confederate States and a prime destination for Civil War enthusiasts. Members of both groups found time to enjoy the City as well as do the important business

*Continued on p. 4*

## Remember the Loyal Legion Memorial Fund and Preserve Our History

Help preserve Civil War History for future generations when you contribute to the Loyal Legion Memorial Fund.

Among American hereditary orders, none stands more proud in its unwavering allegiance to our Republic and its ideals than the Loyal Legion. Founded in sorrow as the nation reeled from the death of Abraham Lincoln, it has stood the test of time and remains true to its promise to remember and to honor.

The Loyal Legion Memorial Fund, through its financial support of various initiatives, helps provide the means by which our Order lives out its promise. When you read the *Loyal Legion Historical Journal*...when you attend the annual Lincoln ceremonies in Washington and Springfield...when organizations like the American Battlefield Trust save blood-soaked land from being developed, or the Abraham Lincoln Foundation in Philadelphia mounts a new museum exhibit...when you see our historical documents being identified and preserved...you are seeing how the Memorial Fund can affect our world for the better. Your support of

*Continued on p. 6*

## Loyal Legion Releases Video on YouTube

A promotional video is available to share with prospective members.

Attention companions! After a year of diligent work, the new MOLLUS promotional video has been uploaded onto our YouTube channel! As current times require more of a digital and visual presence on the Internet and social media, the Pennsylvania Commandery has produced a first class presentation—with special mention of our videographer, Amanda Stevenson,

*Continued on p. 7*

## COMPANIONS IN THE NEWS



### Hobart Kistler Appointed to White House Post

Lt. Hobart King Kistler, SC, USN (PA Commandery), Financial Officer for the Office of Naval Reactors, Washington, DC; was recently appointed to an indefinite assignment as Military Social Aide to the President, in the administration of President Donald J. Trump. In his new role, Companion Kistler assists in planning and executing White House social and state events in support of the President and First Lady.☀



Col. Eric A. Rojo  
2017-2019 Commander-in-Chief

As we prepared to attend Remembrance Day we were, again, told that some cowardly terrorist wannabe had sent a message suggesting we would be at risk if we kept to our tradition. I do hope he/she/it got our message of invitation to face us and enjoy the consequences. Of course, cowards would never answer a call of honor, nor we will ever cow down to their demands, even if they have the wherewithal to keep their threat.

On the good side of life, we had a great Congress in Richmond, would like again to thank the Virginia Commandery, Past Commander-in

Chief Jeffrey Burden and Kathleen Burden for the effort made to graciously host the event. Of great importance, as part of a substantive business meeting, we are looking to make some changes as to the time and order of all future national meetings. Most important, is to give all the time we need for our business meeting and not be governed (rushed) by a set time, which has proven always short. To this end, we are extending the business day, include a working lunch, and finish when all business has been discussed. Should the host commandery offer an afternoon tour, this would be optional for accompanying family members and friends. As of now, two national business meetings per year with a limited time are not enough to fully cover all of our needs as we look towards growth, making necessary changes and set our path for the future of our beloved Order.

Furthermore, we continue to be active outside our inner circle, providing support along with the Grant Monument Association and the Grant Association to promote the issuance of commemorative stamps and coins; as well as, lobbying the City of Arcadia, California that, in a wrongful attempt to be politically correct, intends to take down the statue of President and Companion William McKinley.

We continue to have a communications problem. Many Commanderies did not respond to a necessary survey sent by the Senior Vice Commander in Chief, needed to ascertain many details of each Commandery. I urge all Companions to ensure that their Commanders and Recorders are in fact doing the job we all are committed to. Furthermore, we are not accomplishing our recruitment goals because some recorders are still using outdated applications that cause delays in approval, or even rejection of paperwork, discouraging potential Companions from pursuing membership. Only the current application should be used, which you can find posted on the Loyal Legion website. In the meantime, we are looking to make further changes to the process in order to expedite the accession of new Companions.

I urge all to read and review the minutes of the Congress to be up to date on important action items that need further discussion and follow up.

Hope to see many of you in D.C.

— Colonel Eric A. Rojo



## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

### Hereditary Companions

John Bryant Livengood , 22740 IN  
Oakley Rudolph Able, 22741 OH  
Robert Joseph Wolz, 22742 OH  
John Marvin Huffman III, 22743 OH  
Philip Melvin Prentice, 22744 OH  
Griffin Matthew Deckerd, 22745 OH  
Crockett Keith Dennis, 22746 OH  
Bryce Marshall Dennis, 22747 OH  
Gavin Reese Dennis, 22748 OH  
Charles Edward Dorkey, III, 22749 NY  
John James Duncan, Jr., 22750 OH  
Martin Allan Pruett Treppa, 22751 MI  
Patrick John Pruett Treppa, 22752 MI  
Dash Almanzo Javier, 22753 VA  
Jason Alexander Wolz, 22754 OH  
Jackson Charles Reiff Wolz, 22755 OH  
Charles Hoover Bogino, 22756 DC  
Grant Robert Wolz, 22757 OH  
Scott Blackford Meacham, 22758 VA  
Austin William Lamac, 22759 PA  
Major Frank Russell, 22760 TX  
Paul Anthony Tucci, 22761 PA

### Associate Companions

Daniel A. Hearlihy, A318 OH  
Vincent Michael Alexander Chesney,  
A319 PA  
John A. Jorgensen, A320 PA  
Hector Relativo Javier , A 321 VA  
Larry Micah Dicks, A322 VA  
James Jerome Knights , A323 PA ☘



LOYAL LEGION  
HISTORICAL JOURNAL

VOL. 75, NO. 4

**Commander-in-Chief**  
Col. Eric Armando Rojo

**Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief**  
Joseph Thomas Coleman, Ed.D.

**Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief**  
Col. Robert D. Pollock

**Recorder-in-Chief**  
Dr. Gary Grove

**Treasurer-in-Chief**  
Lee Allan Tryon

**Registrar-in-Chief**  
Adam P. Flint

**Chancellor-in-Chief**  
Michael Timothy Bates

**Judge Advocate-in-Chief**  
Gerald Fitzgerald Fisher, Esq.

**Chaplain-in-Chief**  
Kevin Lee Martin

**Surgeon-in-Chief**  
Dr. Daniel Henry Heller

**Council-in-Chief**  
Harold L. Colvocoresses Jr.  
Lawrence Alan Converse  
Peter Arrott Dixon  
Linn M. Malaznik  
Clifton Potter, Jr., Ph.D.  
Lt. Ryan B. Weddle

The *Loyal Legion Historical Journal* is a quarterly publication published by the Memorial Fund of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, which was founded April 15, 1865. Pertinent materials will be welcomed by members and the public. Articles and news should be submitted to Shawn Beyer, Editor ([shawnbeyer1@verizon.net](mailto:shawnbeyer1@verizon.net)). Content must be formatted in MS Word and submitted electronically. High resolution photographs and artwork should be submitted in JPG format and be accompanied by a description or caption.

Submission deadlines are the 15th of February, May, August, and November.

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### *Note from the Journal Editor in Chief*

As all have noticed, we have changed the cover and structure of our historical journal. Like any other change, it has been subject to praise and criticism, and we are glad to have both as it is an indication that it has been noticed. The number of those liking the new format is larger than those who are against the change.

The new banner was approved and it shows how we acknowledge the sacrifices made during the Civil War, and the message is that we are passing the story of the War to younger generations and that is what is important, to this end the little girl with the flag. If we replace it with a Matthew Brady type photo, it won't be dynamic and the message will be lost. Our history and the charge we have is to teach and remember, it belongs to every American, even little girls. We honor it in a way that makes sense in the present day.

Then again, any change is not set in concrete, we are open to any and all suggestions that meet our responsibility to history and how we pass it to the next generations ensuring it lives.

—Colonel Eric A. Rojo

*Congress, from p. 1.*

of their organizations, with the Virginia Commandery serving as host.

On October 12, early-arriving Companions and Dames took advantage of a beautiful fall day to get a close-up look at the Cold Harbor and Gaines' Mill battlefields, situated about a mile apart, just north of Richmond in Hanover County. Both sites are integral parts of the Richmond National Battlefield Park, and the National Park Service has done an outstanding job in interpreting what happened there, and why. Importantly, the NPS is in the process of acquiring new acres of battlefield land and adding them to the Battlefield Park. Companions and Dames also paid tribute to honored dead during a visit to the nearby Cold Harbor National Cemetery.

The Congress occurred on the bicentennial of the birth of Elizabeth Van Lew, the patriot and spymaster who developed a highly effective espionage network in Richmond during the Civil War. Following the business meetings on October 13, Companions and Dames visited her gravesite in Richmond's historic Shockoe Hill Cemetery to honor her by placing flowers and other mementos. Past Commander-in-Chief Jeffrey Burden spoke about her role in the War and the need to revere her memory. Shockoe Hill is also home to a memorial marker, placed by the Virginia Commandery in 2002, for Union POWs originally buried near the Cemetery (before being moved to Richmond National Cemetery). Companions and Dames paid their respects there as well.

The Commandery hosted an elegant social hour and banquet at the Richmond Omni on October 13. Highlights included:

- Decorative centerpieces created by the Dames, which featured facsimiles of the hollowed-out eggs used by Elizabeth Van Lew's spy network to smuggle messages out of Richmond. Once opened, the eggs revealed secret messages that diners decoded using the same cipher the Van Lew network used.

- The premiere of a new MOLLUS promotional video, produced by Pennsylvania Companion Paul Lader and supported by the Pennsylvania Commandery. It's now available for viewing on the Order's YouTube channel.

- An excellent after-dinner talk from the University of Virginia's Elizabeth Varon on the life and heroism of Miss Van Lew. Dr. Varon followed the path of Elizabeth's life, from a privileged Richmond upbringing, to holding a cautious anti-slavery stance, and finally to being a committed Unionist and abolitionist.

She stressed the utter commitment of Miss Van Lew to her wartime work, including the extreme danger she faced, and the challenges (and benefits) of operating in a society that had a hard time believing that a "mere woman" could undertake such a daring operation. Dr. Varon finished with a survey of Elizabeth's post-War career. That included providing equal opportunity and pay to all employees, black and white, as Postmistress of Richmond.

The Virginia Commandery thanks all who attended, and looks forward to a return visit by the MOLLUS and the DOLLUS in the future. More photographic highlights of the 2018 event appear on page 6. 🌸



*Commander-in Chief Eric Rojo welcomes attendees to the dinner banquet during Congress.*



*DOLLUS members gather to remember the patriotic contributions of Elizabeth Van Lew.*



*Congress attendees tour Cold Harbor Battlefield.*



*DOLLUS President Ellen Higgins places a wreath on the grave of Union spymaster Elizabeth Van Lew.*

## Preserving History: The Civil War Museum of Philadelphia

In October 2017, the Orphans Court of Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Attorney General's office gave final approval of the transfer of artifacts from the Civil War Museum of Philadelphia (CWMP) to the Gettysburg Foundation. This action was the result of the unsuccessful, years-long attempt to replace the former Civil War Library and Museum, which had been located at 1805 Pine Street in Philadelphia, with a new museum in the city. The Board of Governors of the CWMP labored endlessly in an attempt to seek both funding sponsors and viable real estate locations. While sensing success when a Pennsylvania capital funding allocation promise of \$10 million was established (line items in a capital funding budget are only promises, not appropriations) and a site, the Second Bank of the United States building, was identified and assessed with plans for renovations developed, the capital budget allocation was ultimately redirected to another museum project in the city. The CWMP investigated several other potential locations only to meet mounting frustrations and funding obstacles.

The focus of the CWMP became the preservation and display of the treasures accumulated by the Loyal Legion and displayed for many years at 1805 Pine Street. The primary goal became securing partners with ability to manage, maintain, preserve and display these priceless treasures. The result of these efforts became a fortuitous partnership with the Gettysburg Foundation and the National Constitution Center (NCC) in Philadelphia. The agreement provides for the preservation of the artifacts at the state-of-the-art facilities of the National Park Service at Gettysburg with the Visitor Center Museum incorporating the items into its displays. The NCC has committed



*The former Civil War Library and Museum, located at 1805 Pine Street in Philadelphia.*

space to develop a stand-alone exhibition highlighting the Civil War and Reconstruction tying together the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution. This gallery will incorporate artifacts, on a rotating basis, from the CWMP collection at Gettysburg thus maintaining in Philadelphia the presence of materials from 1805 Pine Street, our Loyal Legion headquarters which became the Civil War Library and Museum and then the Civil War Museum of Philadelphia before closing its doors in 2008.

The Heritage Center and the non-profit Abraham Lincoln Foundation (ALF) at the Union League of Philadelphia are other significant partners with both MOLLUS and the CWMP. All of the library books from 1805 Pine Street are maintained at the Union League under a long-term loan agreement with the CWMP. Various Loyal Legion archives including those of the Commandery-in-Chief (with the exception of those at the Army Heritage Center at

Carlisle), Pennsylvania Commandery, New York Commandery, and select portions of archives from other state Commanderies, are maintained in its archival storage vault. Additionally, all Loyal Legion artifacts (mostly insignia badges, rosettes and other items related to the history of Order) from the CWMP collection at Gettysburg with Loyal Legion insignia provenance were separated from the collection and are now housed at the Heritage Center of the Union League.

Four MOLLUS Companions continue to serve on the board of governors of the CWMP. Many hours and personal financial support have been freely committed over the years in an effort to create a new Civil War museum in Philadelphia. After years of challenges and frustrations, the completion of the Gettysburg Foundation/National Constitution Center/CWMP agreement (along with the older agreements between the CWMP/ALF and MOLLUS/ALF covering the papers, books and manuscripts housed at the Heritage Center) has provided a guarantee that the treasures of the Civil War gathered by our ancestors will be preserved for history while maintaining the connections between the collections.

The work of the CWMP, although significantly diminished with an agreement that guarantees the preservation of all the items from 1805 Pine Street, continues. The development and establishment of the dedicated exhibit at the National Constitution Center using the preserved treasures from the CWMP collection is tentatively scheduled to open in 2019. The CWMP has been involved with the administration of the NCC in oversight of the tripartite agreement to guarantee its fulfillment and continuance. ❁

## Virginia Commandery

The Virginia Commandery thanks all Companions, Dames and others who traveled from across the country to attend the 2018 Congress in Richmond! We enjoyed hosting everyone, and trust all attendees found their visit interesting and productive. ❁

Photo captions:

1. Commander-in-Chief Eric Rojo making remarks during the banquet.

2. MOLLUS Commander-in-Chief Eric Rojo (right) and Companion Harold Colvocoresses enjoying lively conversation at the pre-banquet reception.

3. Companion Brian Maloney (right) accepts the Daugherty-Thompson Cup (greatest number of new members) on behalf of the Pennsylvania Commandery from Commander-in-Chief Eric Rojo.

4. Capt. Alan Jowziak, Jr. (left), Vice Commander-in-Chief Robert Pollock (OH) (center) and Companion Capt. Justin Rojek looking forward to the banquet.

5. Surgeon-in-Chief Dan Heller (center) accepts the Grant Cup (greatest percentage increase in new members) on behalf of the Indiana Commandery from Commander-in-Chief Eric Rojo (right) and Companion John Grant Griffiths.

6. Companion Lt. Hobart Kistler (PA) (right) receives the Lincoln Medal for new member recruitment.

7. Marker and patriotic memorial decorations at the grave of Elizabeth Van Lew.

1



3



4



5



6



7



### Union Veterans Honored in Hawaii

Virginia Companion Larry Dicks, currently serving in Hawaii as a Major in the USAF, joined the Hawaii Civil War Roundtable on Veterans Day weekend in honoring United States soldiers buried at O'ahu Cemetery. The cemetery contains a G.A.R. plot, where more than 25 Union veterans are buried. The Roundtable members, many wearing Federal uniforms as part of a color guard, placed flags at all veteran graves and rendered honors. . ❁





## President's Message

I extend to all DOLLUS members an invitation to attend our upcoming meeting to be held from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at the Sheraton Suites Hotel in Alexandria, Virginia on February 11, 2019. This meeting is in conjunction with the annual Lincoln Birthday events in Washington, D.C. For more details, see the meeting announcement on page 8. Please make plans to attend and learn more about our organization and to celebrate the birthday of President Lincoln.

—Ellen M Higgins  
DOLLUS National President



*Video, from p. 1.*

who did a great deal of work. Filming began last October at the Congress in Gettysburg, with narration provided by Past Commander-in-Chief Jeffrey Burden, and further commentary provided by Past Commander-in-Chief Kinny Post, current Commander-in-Chief Eric Rojo, and Lieutenant Hobart Kistler. We can all be proud of the final product. You are encouraged to view the video at [https://youtu.be/CuER0daNF\\_g](https://youtu.be/CuER0daNF_g) and share the link with all who express an interest in joining. ❁

*Memorial Fund, from p. 1.*

## TRUSTEES' CORNER

### Support the Loyal Legion Memorial Fund

the Memorial Fund is crucial to its mission.

An envelope is included with this issue of the Journal. Please consider using it to make a tax-deductible gift to the Memorial Fund. Gifts from Companions, Dames and friends are crucial to maintaining the health of the Fund in these uncertain times, and especially as we face the threat from those who want to erase our history and identity. Your generosity means the Fund remains a vibrant resource for our Order's present and future.

— *The Trustees of the Loyal Legion  
Memorial Fund*

## Pennsylvania Commandery

### Remembrance Day Festivities Held in Gettysburg

Thanks to Tom Kearney of the General Meade Society for his photos of 2018 Remembrance Day held in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania and for the festivities surrounding the annual anniversary of the Gettysburg Address by Lincoln.

The General Meade Society participated with wreath laying ceremonies for General Reynolds and General Meade. Mr. Ed Bearss delivered greetings and Bob Hanrahan portrayed his alter ego, General Gibbon. In attendance were supporters from the Pennsylvania Commandery of the Loyal Legion; the Twenty-eighth P.V. and Camp #1 of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War; members of COUG, as well as friends and members of the public. Thanks to all! ❁



Loyal Legion observed Remembrance Day in Gettysburg. Shown (l to r): Companions Paul Lader, Gary Grove, Eric Rojo and Linn Malaznik.



Companion Ed Bearss (left) and Andy Waskie (center) providing a history lesson at the Gettysburg Battlefield.

## Thank You!

*Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Joe Coleman thanks the 12 Commanderies that participated in the recent survey. A compilation of survey results was emailed to the Commanders of the participating Commanderies. ❁*



# Loyal Legion Midwinter Meeting & Abraham Lincoln's 210th Birthday Celebration

**February 10-12, 2019**  
**Washington, DC**

## Sunday

10

1:30–4:30 p.m.

### **American Indian Museum Tour**

Come early and join us for a tour of the National Museum of the American Indian. American Indians fought in both the Union and Confederate armies during the Civil War.

Registration fee \$35/person

4:30–6:30 p.m.

### **Welcome and Registration**

Lobby of Sheraton Suites Old Town Alexandria.

6:30–8:30 p.m.

### **Dutch Treat Dinner**

Meet in the hotel lobby to join us for a dutch treat dinner in Old Town Alexandria.

## Monday

11

### **Annual Business Meetings**

Sheraton Suites Old Town Alexandria

Registration fee \$40/person

10:00–Noon & 2:00–4:00 p.m.

### **MOLLUS Midwinter Meeting**

Ballroom

9:00–Noon

### **DOLLUS Membership Meeting**

Board Room

6:30 p.m.

### **Military Order of the Loyal Legion Lincoln Birthday Dinner**

Sheraton Suites Old Town Alexandria

6:30–7:30 p.m.

### **Reception**

Cash bar at Fin and Hoof Bar & Grill off hotel lobby.

7:45–8:00 p.m.

### **Patriotic Opening**

U.S. Armed Forces Color Guard  
Ballroom

8:00 p.m.

### **Lincoln Birthday Dinner**

Registration fee \$85/person  
Ballroom

Formal dinner and toasts followed by a presentation by John Muller, journalist, historian, playwright, and author on “Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass—The Lion of Anacostia. Suggested attire is black tie/white tie, or uniform with decorations and orders for gentlemen; evening wear for ladies. Guests welcome.

## Tuesday

12

### **Lincoln Memorial Ceremony**

Washington, DC

(see details on pg. 13)

10:30 a.m.

### **Board Bus to Ceremony**

Bus will board at the Sheraton Suites Old Town Alexandria. Wear warm clothing, including socks, hat, and warm shoes or boots.

11:45 a.m.

### **Musical Prelude by Military Band**

Noon

### **Memorial Ceremony**

Ceremony honoring President Abraham Lincoln's 209th birthday.

1:30 p.m.

### **Lincoln Birthday National**

### **Commemorative Committee Luncheon**

Registration fee \$45/person

Event begins with a cash bar in the lobby of the Sheraton Suites Old Town Alexandria. Lunch and program will start promptly at 1:30 pm. Enjoy a presentation by Marc Leepson, author, journalist and historian, on “Flags During the Civil War Era.”

Join us on President's Day weekend to participate in Abraham Lincoln's birthday festivities and the Loyal Legion Midwinter Meeting. Events will be held at the Sheraton Suites Hotel located in historical Old Town Alexandria, Virginia and only a few minutes away from the Washington sights. Attend business meetings, lectures, and tours during the day and socialize with your Loyal Legion Companions in the evening. This event will be packed with interesting people to meet and exciting places to see.

**Don't miss this annual event. Send your registration by JANUARY 31!**

Please complete registration form(s) and return with payment to:

Peter Arrott Dixon  
111 Duke Street  
Alexandria, VA 2231  
(703) 549-7428

Each form must be accompanied by separate payment.

Keep a copy of registration form(s) for your records.

Wear your badge to all events held at the Sheraton Suites Hotel.

**Make Your Hotel Reservations Before Jan. 15**

A block of 20 rooms has been reserved at the Sheraton Suites Old Town Alexandria under MOLLUS, Military Order of the Loyal Legion. Rooms available: 1 King Bed or 2 double beds (all are mini-suites) - \$132 plus 14.50 tax per night. Hotel parking is free. Complementary shuttle to National Airport and the Airport Metro. MOLLUS room rates will be honored February 7-15 and **rooms must be booked before January 15.**

SHERATON SUITES  
OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA  
801 N. Saint Asaph Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314  
Reservations: 1-888-627-7049 or 703-836-4700, ext. 6106  
(Please identify yourself with MOLLUS)

**Registration Form**  
**MEETING, TRANSPORTATION AND LINCOLN BIRTHDAY DINNER**  
**DEADLINE JANUARY 31, 2018**

Midwinter Meeting registration Includes bus to/from the American Indian Museum on Feb. 10, and to/from Lincoln Memorial on Feb. 12 (Bus only on Feb. 12 —\$15)

Midwinter Meeting and bus No. \_\_\_\_ x \$40 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Bus on Feb. 10 ONLY No. \_\_\_\_ x \$15 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Tour of the American Indian Museum No. \_\_\_\_ x \$35 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Lincoln Birthday Dinner - Sunday, Feb. 11 No. \_\_\_\_ x \$85 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Indicate quantity next to each meal selection  
( ) Fish ( ) Filet Steak—Medium ( ) Vegetarian

**Make check payable to DC MOLLUS** TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(Please print)  
Member: \_\_\_\_\_  
Tel.: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Guest(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**Registration Form**  
**LINCOLN BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON**  
**DEADLINE JANUARY 31, 2019**

Lincoln Birthday Luncheon—Monday, Feb 12 No. \_\_\_\_ x \$45 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
**Make check payable to LBNCC**

Indicate quantity next to each meal selection  
Choose: ( ) Salmon ( ) Breast of Chicken ( ) Vegetarian

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
Tel.: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Guest(s): \_\_\_\_\_

## John White Geary *Giant of His Times*

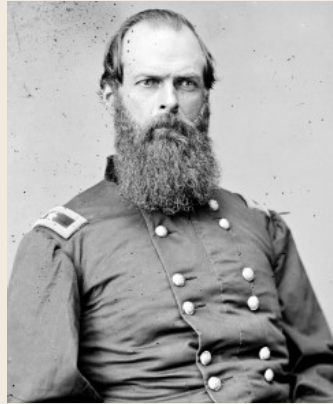
*Dr. Andy Waskie, Pennsylvania Commandery*

### Early Life

Few men have ever had such an impact on the history of their times, nor contributed more to the development of their nation and state, and, were thrust into more crucial and pivotal roles at the very flash point of action, nor more often influenced the course of historic events than John White Geary.

Geary was born in Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania on December 30, 1819. He was descended from the sturdy Scotch-Irish pioneers who had scratched out farms from the vast wilderness. His father, Richard Geary, was well educated and refined for his day. He had failed at the iron business and opened a school where he taught for the remainder of his life. Geary's mother, Margaret White, hailed from Washington County in Western Maryland. Geary grew to be a giant in stature, reaching 6 feet 6 inches tall, and weighed over 250 pounds. He had a sturdy and athletic physique, a long dark beard, dark piercing eyes, and a dark complexion, all which gave Geary a most commanding presence.<sup>1</sup>

Geary's father educated his two surviving sons and sought to instill in them his love of learning and an intense ambitious quest for success. John White Geary, after a firm preparation by his father's school, entered Jefferson (now Washington & Jefferson) College in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania. After his father's death, Geary withdrew from college to provide for the family by opening his own school at the age of 15. By working hard at a number of jobs (including teaching in a school he opened) and following a thrifty lifestyle, Geary was able to return to Jefferson College and graduated. After graduation, Geary passed through a period in which he experimented with a variety of occupations including the mercantile trade, civil engineering, and law.<sup>2</sup>



*Brigadier General John White Geary (PA #198)  
1819-1873*

### Engineering

Geary found work as an engineer for the state of Kentucky on the Green River Rail Road. Having obtained financial security through land speculation and investment in Kentucky, he was able to return home to Western Pennsylvania to pursue his engineering work.<sup>3</sup>

Employed by the Alleghany Portage Rail Road as assistant superintendent and engineer, he successfully produced the rail path over and through the Alleghany Mountains to Pittsburgh from Philadelphia. His ingenious designs enabled the trains to be transported via inclines up and over the mountains. The same innovation later became part of Pennsylvania's famed Horseshoe Curve. Geary's designs attracted worldwide attention and brought many to marvel at his achievements.<sup>4</sup>

Among his many interests was military history. Geary joined the Pennsylvania militia and rapidly rose in rank. He devoted himself to improving the volunteer system, even representing the Cambria and Somerset counties' Brigade of the Twelfth Division of the Pennsylvania militia as the elected brigadier general at the National Military Convention in Washington D.C. in 1842.<sup>5</sup>

### Mexican War

At the outbreak of the Mexican War, Geary quickly formed a unit of volunteers which he named American Highlanders.<sup>6</sup> Geary's company was incorporated into the Second Pennsylvania Regiment, then forming in Pittsburgh. (Geary later used the same nickname for the Twenty-eighth Pennsylvania Volunteer Regiment which he raised in early 1861 for the three years' service in the Civil War). Soon Geary was elected Lieutenant Colonel of the regiment under the command of Colonel W. B. Roberts.

Geary's Highlanders departed in January 1847 down the Ohio River, with flags flying amidst large crowds of enthusiastic well-wishers. After a long journey of 11 days and several delays for repairs, the boat reached New Orleans where they would board a ship for Mexico.<sup>7</sup>

Geary kept a detailed diary of his experiences at war beginning in December 1846 at the outset of his service. His entries present an informed look at his Mexican War service as well as the adventure, his travels, duty, and sacrifice.

After sailing many days in calm and storm, cases of smallpox began to appear among the men as their ship approached the Mexican shore. Although the U.S. troops were to rendezvous on Los Lobos Island in preparation for General Winfield Scott's invasion of Mexico, an epidemic was feared and their ship was diverted to a quarantine station.

Geary remained with three of his companies until all signs of disease had disappeared. Geary and his quarantined men finally reached Vera Cruz on April 12, 1847, after the city had already fallen to Scott. Scott and the U.S. Army had already begun

the advance to Mexico City. Geary and his men had finally reached the rest of the regiment on April 23 outside Jalapa. The Second Pennsylvania had already seen action under Colonel Roberts at Cerro Gordo.

After some garrison duty, Geary and his unit began the advance. Geary alternated in command of the advance guard, skirmishing, and fulfilling other official duties. Chafing at inactivity, Geary hoped to be sent forward, but news of an armistice and peace treaty negotiations at the very gates of the city of Mexico soon dashed his hopes. Peace negotiations failed however, and General Scott was now forced to capture the capital city. Geary, in command of his regiment as part of General John Quitman's Brigade, was ordered to attack at Chapultepec. Here, he was slightly wounded and was present with the storming party as they captured the castle. Later, he counted five bullet holes in his uniform.

Scott ordered Geary's men onto the Belen Gate, where they heroically fought. The next day, the Mexicans raised the white flag and the Second Pennsylvania was the first command to enter Mexico City. Geary could be justifiably proud of his Pennsylvanians and his own service.<sup>8</sup>

Peace was finally came early in 1848, and Geary and his men triumphantly returned home, although there was an attempt by a disgruntled rival to impugn Geary's record, but this effort was found baseless. The officers of his regiment and his superiors all expressed high regard for Geary, his men, and the record of the regiment.<sup>9</sup>

### **Postmaster of San Francisco**

After only a brief return home, Geary was appointed U.S. Postmaster in California by President James K. Polk, an ally Geary had duly supported so resolutely in his election bid. This appointment seemed like a well-deserved recognition of his stellar service in the Mexican War.

Geary planned the arduous journey via the Isthmus of Panama with his wife and young son, Eddie. The story of the adventuresome journey to California could

constitute an entire work by itself. His sailing to Panama and perilous journey on to the Pacific at Panama City and his brave and resolute battle with bandits and hostile natives, and struggle against sickness is all the stuff of legends. After an epic adventure, Geary and his family finally reached San Francisco in the middle of the legendary gold rush of 1849.<sup>10</sup>

Geary had been appointed Postmaster of San Francisco and mail agent for the Pacific Coast with authorization to establish U.S. Post Offices and name postmasters for them. In addition, he was to lay out mail routes ensuring security in the mail delivery throughout California.<sup>11</sup> Geary undertook his duties in San Francisco with characteristic energy, efficiency, and management skill, which brought an order to the process and was admired by citizens for his successful operation.

Soon however, the Taylor administration in Washington brought a new appointee to Geary's office. In approbation of Geary's labors, he was thereafter elected to the office of Alcalde (the Mexican office of mayor and chief magistrate), the last in California history by the people of San Francisco, and shortly thereafter was also appointed Judge of First Instance by U.S. Major-General Bennett C. Riley, military governor of the territory.<sup>12</sup>

On May 1, 1850, in the first election under U.S. administration, Geary was elected the Mayor of San Francisco by a large majority.

During this period, the state constitutional convention met in Monterey. Geary could not participate, as he was already strenuously engaged in his duties in San Francisco, but he exerted enough personal influence on the delegates of that convention to insert the Free State Clause into the new constitution, essentially aligning California with the Union and against slavery.<sup>13</sup>

At the age of 31, Geary declined a petition to run for a second term as mayor, but he accepted an appointment as president of the Board of Commissioners of the Funded Debt and, under his astute direction, the

city debt was controlled and eventually eliminated.<sup>14</sup>

Geary's wife had been in poor health since they departed for the West. After the birth of their second son, Willie, Margaret Anne Geary never fully recovered and Geary came to the realization that it would be best to send his family home. Finally, in 1852, Geary decided to return home to Pennsylvania temporarily but the ensuing death of his wife and other relatives caused Geary to change his plan and he decided to remain in Pennsylvania.<sup>15</sup> He never returned to California.

### **"Bleeding Kansas"**

After the death of his wife, Geary threw himself into farming and personal business pursuits, fully intending to spend the rest of his life so engaged. However, his background and hard-earned experiences in education, engineering, and the law, as a resolute and courageous war hero in Mexico, as well as service as a successful politician and administrator in California, all begged further useful service, especially in the gathering crises on the national scene. Geary's devotion to his country and to his Democratic Party affiliation did not go unnoticed in Washington. The administration of Democrat Franklin Pierce, a Mexican War comrade of Geary's called on him to except the governorship of the contentious territory of Utah in 1855, which, however, Geary declined.

In 1856, Pierce called Geary once again to Washington to offer him the governorship of Kansas Territory. Since adoption of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Kansas had become a battleground between pro- and anti-slavery factions in the territory. Already two territorial governors had failed to quell the sectarian violence. President Pierce prevailed upon a reluctant Geary to accept the office on patriotic grounds and out of friendship to Pierce. Geary had nothing to gain in accepting this difficult trust. The territory was torn between factions; support by federal authorities was doubtful; the attempts of predecessors

had miserably failed; there were even death threats against anyone who attempted reconciliation. Geary was happy and prosperous at home. He was needed as a single parent for his sons and as master of his own self interests.<sup>16</sup>

Despite his reservations, Geary excepted the charge. He was assured of complete support by the national government, of the military and federal judiciary, and given complete authority to govern to a single charge, i.e., "...to maintain the public peace, and to bring to Punishment against all acts of violence or disorder by whom perpetrated and on what ever pretext."<sup>17</sup>

Based on the pleas of the President, the needs of the nation, his devotion to liberty and assurance of support, Geary accepted the governorship. He arrived at Fort Leavenworth on September 9, 1856. He appeared before the territorial legislature in Lacompton soon after and pledged to govern faithfully and with impartiality under the provisions of the United States Constitution and the Law of Kansas Territory. He promised to administer equal and exact justice to all.<sup>18</sup>

Geary could hardly imagine the firestorm into which he was thrust. In steering a strict impartial course, the new governor built up resentment and resistance from both factions.

The partisan groups supported by their equally partisan press did not receive the new governor or his policies with approval or support. A campaign of vilification and slander against the new governor, unique even in that age of vitriol was now unleashed.<sup>19</sup> Governor Geary ordered the immediate disbandment of all armed groups roaming the territory, regardless of affiliation.

When pro-slavery forces from Missouri moved on the town of Lawrence yet again as in the past, Geary threatened them with the use of federal troops, a sign of resolute strength that seemed to stagger the Missourians. Later, Geary demonstrated his impartiality and dedication to his pledge by capturing Free State marauders, who

had attacked Hickory Point. Geary had to contend with an invasion by a territorial militia of well-armed Missourians amounting to almost 3,000 men. They moved to attack the Free State town of Lawrence, which braced for the attack. Geary rushed to confront the forces he found arrayed for battle. Bravely, he strode into the very midst of the invaders and conferred with their leaders. The fearless veteran of many battles exhorted the militia to disperse. He threatened to use the 300 federal troops who were on hand. He accused the leaders of acting against both Kansas and United States law, and in the name of the President of the United States, he ordered them to desist and withdraw. Seeing the wisdom of the governor's words, the force reluctantly acceded and removed itself.<sup>20</sup>

The new governor's firm policies brought the support of the army, without which he could not have restored order. Soon, a relative calm descended upon Kansas. Geary, however, had serious opposition to his administration. Most of Pierce's federal government appointees in the territory were decidedly pro-slavery in sentiment and policy. These officials wanted to ensure slavery in Kansas. After Geary's unequivocal and impartial stance, they began an active campaign to thwart the new governor. They sought to end free-state immigration and to resist all efforts of the governor to enforce law and order.

Geary wrote to President Pierce in September 1856 complaining of the incompetence, or worse, active undercutting of his authority. Geary asked that several federal judges be removed and a new federal marshall, attorney general, and secretary of state be appointed.<sup>21</sup> All entreaties to President Pierce fell on deaf ears. It was an election year and the Democrats had picked another candidate to run for president, Pennsylvanian James Buchanan, who had no record on Kansas. It soon became clear to Geary that instead of receiving the support for his efforts in Kansas, in fact, the Pierce administration was undermining him and his policies and actively sought

the introduction of slavery into the territory. Without that support, Geary was a mere figurehead.

Geary's impartial policies and firm enforcement of laws had brought peace to the territory. The pro-slavery Democrats now sought to bribe Geary to favor their cause with promises of future higher office in the state government. Despite the offers, Geary remained firmly behind his stated policy.

Having averted a crisis by succeeding in disbanding the rival militias, and quieting conflicts in the state legislature, Governor Geary then addressed the legitimate albeit the pro-slavery legislature in Lecompton in January 1857. In his address to the assembly, Geary reiterated his resolute and steadfast adherence to "equal and exact justice," and support for democratic principles. Geary also set forth several sound recommendations for civic improvements that were remarkable for their farsighted commonsense.

The legislature took little heed of Geary's recommendations and passed a number of measures antithetical to his policy. The governor's vetoes of these measures were overridden forthwith. Geary was even subjected to the indignity of an armed confrontation on the very floor of the legislature, which immediately condemned Geary's moderate resolution of protest.

More unjust laws were followed by indignant vetoes, followed by legislative overrule. His governance was stymied. Geary wrote to President-elect Buchanan in February to appeal for the new administration's support against the evil machinations of the pro-slavery forces. Finally, he stated that, "without said support, my usefulness here must be materially diminished, and the sooner I am relieved, the better will I be satisfied."<sup>22</sup>

Finally convinced that Buchanan would no more support fair popular sovereignty any more than Pierce did and frustrated by the constant battles against partisan officials and a hostile legislature, Governor Geary sent in his resignation on the day of Buchanan's inauguration, March 4, 1857.<sup>23</sup>

Geary left Kansas hurriedly, never to return. Despite his best efforts to remain true to his principles and fulfill his charge, Geary had been thwarted. Later, he wrote, "I have learned more of the depravity of my fellow man than I ever before knew. I have thought my California experience was strong, but I believe my Kansas experience cannot be beaten."<sup>24</sup>

## War of the Rebellion

Geary had returned to his home to resume his life and enterprises, recoup his shattered health, and observe the political disputes that threatened to erupt into open conflict. In late 1857, Geary met a young widow at a Harrisburg reception. She was Mary Church Henderson of Carlisle Pennsylvania. After a brief courtship, they married. Soon thereafter, the couple welcomed their first child, Mary.<sup>25</sup>

Upon hearing of the firing on Fort Sumter, Geary was instantly at work recruiting troops for the cause of Union. He requested from the War Department and received authority to raise a regiment for the federal service, and journeyed to Philadelphia, second most populous city in the nation and fertile ground for recruiting troops. He established a camp of rendezvous and training in Oxford Park in the Frankford section of the city.

Knowing of Geary's background, experience and vaunted reputation as a war hero, 66 separate companies from throughout the Commonwealth applied for acceptance into his regiment. Geary was authorized a 15-company unit, divided into three battalions. Geary was able to pick the best organizations and quickly assembled the men, even having enough men to create a battery of artillery attached to the regiment (later known as Knap's Battery, named for the patron who donated the guns to the battery). Geary's regiment was mustered into federal service on June 28, 1861 and designated numerically the Twenty-eighth Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers (which Geary called his American Highlanders and Cold Stream Guard

in obvious remembrance of his brave men of the Second Pennsylvania Regiment in Mexico; and that respected British Army unit of renown). The regiment was quickly assigned to field service under General Banks in Western Maryland guarding the Potomac River border with secessionist Virginia; and securing the railroad and canal connections to the West.

In October 1861, Geary and his men saw their first action at Bolivar Heights above Harpers Ferry. The winter was spent guarding, patrolling, and in constructing projects. Early in 1862, Geary and the Twenty-eighth Pennsylvania crossed the Potomac River and captured the rebel stronghold of Leesburg. As a reward for his admirable service, in recognition of his experience and military skill, Geary was promoted to Brigadier General in the United States Volunteer Army on April 25, 1862. He was immediately assigned to command the First Brigade in Banks' Corps containing his own former regiment.

On August 9, 1862, Geary and his brigade were engaged at the battle of Cedar Mountain against the Confederates under Stonewall Jackson. In this action, Geary was severely wounded, almost losing his right arm to amputation. After convalescence at his home, General Geary returned to the army. He was promoted to command of the Second Division of the newly designated Twelfth Corps under General Slocum. Geary was continuously in command of this famed division through to the end of War and established an enviable reputation for meritorious service in many bloody conflicts. Named the White Star Division after the designation of a star insignia for the corps in the Army of the Potomac beginning in March 1863, the White Star Second Division of the Twelfth Army Corps would prove itself a fine fighting force in all the battles in which it was engaged in both the eastern and western theaters of operations during the Civil War.

Geary's White Stars were heavily engaged at Chancellorsville and at Gettysburg. It was at Gettysburg that Geary's

men bravely held the right flank of General Meade's army on Culp's Hill while steadfastly resisting heavy assaults by the enemy.

After the costly Union defeat at Chickamauga in Northern Georgia in September 1863, the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps of the Army of the Potomac, including Geary's White Stars were detached and sent to join General Grant and Sherman's army besieged in Chattanooga.

The army took advantage of General Geary's experience as a railroad engineer and he was entrusted with management of important aspects of the unique and monumental transfer of two entire Army Corps by rail from one theater of operations to another. In less than two weeks, the force had traveled from Virginia and reached Tennessee in a timely manner. Geary was assigned the military governorship of Murfreesboro, Tennessee for a time after arrival there in deference to his administrative experience.

On the evening of October 27, 1863 General Geary left with a small force to defend the critical valley approach to Chattanooga where he was attacked by superior numbers of Confederates. Called the Battle of Wauhatchie, Geary's men stood heroically and repelled the repeated assaults of a desperate enemy. General Geary's own son Eddie, who was an officer in Knap's Battery, was involved in the intense fight and killed in action. Eddie Geary died in his father's arms.<sup>26</sup>

At Lookout Mountain, Geary requested of his commander that he lead the assault. In a bold attack led from the front by General Geary, the White Stars fought their way to the summit, securing the vital position for the Union army. This action is often called the Battle above the Clouds, as the forces passed through fog-shrouded layers to reach the summit. When Geary's battle flags waved from the top of the mountain, they were greeted by thunderous cheers from the soldiers waiting below in the valley.

In the opening spring campaign of 1864, as part of Sherman's army, the White Star Division formed part of the newly created Twentieth Corps and marched out to cut the Confederacy in two. General Geary and his men were engaged in almost continuous battle all the way to Atlanta, taking a leading role in every action in which they participated. At the pivotal battle of Peachtree Creek at the gates to the city of Atlanta, Geary's men found themselves in the very vortex of the Confederate attack. Their lines began to waver when one of Geary's trusted staff officers, Capt. Thomas Elliott of the Twenty-eighth Pennsylvania, waded into the midst of the troops just on the verge of collapse. He seized a battle flag from the Twenty-eighth Pennsylvania, then rallied the men to stand and hold the center of the line. Elliott fell here, rendering invaluable heroic service. Geary changed front to meet the heavy assault and led his men to victory.<sup>27</sup>

After the capture of Atlanta, General Sherman determined on a bold March to the Sea, severing the Confederacy and opening contact to the coast held by Union forces and to navy supply lines. Geary marched at the head of one of the march columns as the army approached the rebel stronghold of Savannah, Georgia. General Geary hurried a part of his command into Savannah and the city soon surrendered. Because of his bold initiative and vigilance at Savannah, Geary was rewarded by General Sherman, who made Geary military governor of the city. On January 12, 1865 General Geary was promoted to major general "for fitness to command and promptness to execute."<sup>28</sup>

In this spring campaign of 1865, the army advanced north through the Carolinas in pursuit of the fleeing Confederate army of Joe Johnston. Geary was in the vanguard of the Union army once again leading his White Star Division in action at Averasboro and Bentonville, North Carolina; and Geary was nearby when Johnston surrendered his army to Union forces on April 26 near Durham Station. For Geary,

the Civil War was over and won. The Union was preserved.

General Geary proudly marched at the head of his victorious troops in the Grand Review of the Western Army in Washington D.C. on May 24, 1865. Geary's old regiment, the Twenty-eighth Pennsylvania Volunteers was with him all through the war and up to disbandment in June 1865. Geary's regiments were the first to reenlist for the duration of the war as veteran volunteers. No regiment once assigned to Geary's command ever left until duly mustered out of service at the expiration of its term.

Major General Geary lost thousands of troops as casualties of war under his command, but he showed himself willing to endure the same dangers and hardships as his men. He demanded obedience; he led from the front, and suffered fatigue, wounds, and the loss of his own son in defense of the United States. General Geary ended his army career by serving on a military tribunal which tried Major Henry Wirz, commandant of the notorious Andersonville prisoner of war camp for war crimes. Wirz was found guilty and hanged in Washington in December 1865, thus closing out the war.

### Governor of Pennsylvania

Returning home after four full years of war, Geary contemplated his life and future. In the spring of 1866, the politicians of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania turned their thoughts to the gubernatorial election and a replacement for the popular war governor, Andrew Gregg Curtin. Soon the name of John White Geary was receiving much attention. Geary had been a lifelong Democrat, but the party had fallen from favor as a result of the war.

Geary now became associated with leaders of the Republican Party, such as Representative John Covode and party boss and former Secretary of War, Simon Cameron. Geary was playing his own poli-

tical games, however, negotiating with the Democrats while allowing himself to be courted by the Cameron political machine. Many doubted Geary's sincerity and loyalty to the Republican Party, but he was nevertheless nominated to run for governor on the Republican (National Union) ticket.<sup>29</sup> Friends and associates maintained that Geary's change in party affiliation was due to his war experiences and abhorrence of slavery.<sup>30</sup> Geary finally accepted the Republican nomination and began an active and vitriolic campaign against his Democratic opponent. The campaign revolved around the question of treatment of the South and President Johnson's policies, as well as domestic concerns, treatment of business, and the railroads.

Election appeals were made to the returned veterans of the Union to support the Republican ticket. Even General Grant had an opinion on the election. Grant told the *Chicago Republican* newspaper, "to ask any soldier to vote for such a man (Democrat Heister Clymer), of at one time known disloyalty, against another who had served through four years in the Union army with credit to himself and benefit to his country, was gross insult."<sup>31</sup> The election was decided on October 2, 1866 in favor of John White Geary. He had defeated Clymer by over 17,000 votes. Geary was inaugurated governor at Harrisburg on January 15, 1867.

As governor, Geary enjoyed two terms of successful administration. His policies were sound, and the state enjoyed prosperity and progress. He had reduced the public debt, increased revenues, and created a



Geary as Governor of Pennsylvania, 1872.

healthy business climate. Geary's administration provided for assistance to the less fortunate, and he helped to reform the laws to the benefit of the citizenry. Geary's place in the history of the government was now well earned.

### A Character Larger than Life

Despite the sterling qualities and remarkable character of a truly unique individual continuously placed in the vortex of events leading to momentous changes in history, John White Geary was first and foremost a politician,<sup>32</sup> beset by ambition as large as the man himself.

General Geary was recognized by his commanders for his administrative abilities, if not for his skill on the battlefield, and his executive experiences as an elected official. He had functioned as a military governor in the Mexican War and had acted as the governor of Kansas Territory before the war. After transfer to the western army, Geary was appointed commandant at Murfreesboro, Tennessee; garrison commander at the Atlanta, Georgia; and military governor of Savannah. By all accounts, he performed well in these duties. Geary was characterized in the history of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania as "a man of executive ability and of great energy rather than a man of brilliant intellectual powers."<sup>33</sup> Although he had shortcomings—a less than amiable personality, a propensity to exaggerate his own accomplishments, and an immense ego and ambition—Geary had excelled in every field in which he chose to work. He was a patriot who loved his country and volunteered to fight in two wars to support his nation.

John White Geary was indeed a patriot who loved his country. He was also a dedicated member of the Democratic Party, who nevertheless wholeheartedly supported the war effort against rebellion. By all evidence, he was against slavery, but was no abolitionist. As a staunch Presbyterian, he came naturally to his aversion to slavery and had personally witnessed the excesses of the "peculiar institution."

Having been out of office after two terms for only a brief period, the state and nation were shocked to learn of the sudden and unexpected death of the great man on the morning of February 8, 1873. He was only 54 years old. After a large and impressive state funeral, he was laid to rest in Harrisburg Cemetery overlooking the Susquehanna River. Few men had ever had such an impact on the events of their own days. Wherever trouble or a crisis seemed imminent, Geary seemed to appear and play a critical role in the outcome. John White Geary excelled in so many diverse fields and succeeded in accomplishing so much in his 54 years that one can only conclude that Geary was indeed a giant of his times. ❀

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