

The General Meade Society of Philadelphia tours the Peninsula Campaign

By Peter A. Romeika

The fog shrouded morning of October 6 saw the General Meade Society embark on its annual Pilgrims to the Battlefield series tour of the Peninsula Campaign of 1862 and selected historic sites through Monday October 8, Columbus Day weekend.

Later that morning we drove by Dover Downs, a Mecca for NASCAR fans, and Dover Air Force Base. Many farms and manufacturing facilities dotted the landscape. We soon crossed over a modern marvel of our day, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. The panoramic vistas were breath taking. This was a first crossing for this reporter.

Our first stop was Fortress Monroe casemate near Hampton Roads. This is where Jefferson Davis was incarcerated for two years after the war. It was near here that the naval battle between the *U.S.S. Monitor* and the *C.S.S. Virginia* took place on March 9, 1862. This was the first battle between ironclad ships. The fort is now a museum and very important as a historical timeline. Our guides were very courteous and knowledgeable. We then proceeded to the Yorktown battlefield. This site held prominence during the Revolutionary War. The American army under the command of Generals George Washington and Marquis De Lafayette laid siege to the British forces under General Lord Cornwallis in 1781. This was a very important victory for the American army. Andy Waskie, our guide, was excellent. We were able to see many impressive earthworks that were later used during the Civil War.

We ended our Yorktown segment with a self guided tour of old Colonial Yorktown and a photo opportunity at the Victory statue. This statue was commissioned by the U.S. Congress in the 1880's to commemorate the American victory at Yorktown.

The siege of Yorktown during the Civil War took place from April 5 through May 3. This is where Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan and his Army of the Potomac besieged the entrenched Confederate

army under the command of Gen. Joe Johnston and sent them back towards Williamsburg.

We stopped at the Yorktown National Cemetery where many soldiers from the Civil War are buried. The Meigs House could be seen on the property. The Civil War Soldiers considered this ground sacred.



Meigs House Photo courtesy of Pete Romeika

We soon headed back to Williamsburg and set up headquarters at the Holiday Inn.

Later that evening saw the annual Maj. Gen. Andrew Atkinson Humphreys memorial pizza party hosted by Betty and Jerry McCormick. I am sure that the General would have approved of the festivities.

Early Sunday morning we met our guide Mr. Randy Cleaver from the Richmond battlefield. This series of battles took place from June 26 through July 1, 1862, when General Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia attempted to bring the Army of The Potomac under the command of Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan away from Richmond.

Our first stop was Beaver Dam Creek, followed by stops at White Oak Swamp, Savage Station, Glendale and Malvern Hill, and Gaines Mill. Glendale/Frayser's Farm is important to the Meade Society. This is where Gen Meade was wounded during the Seven Days battle. That afternoon we held a memorial service at Glendale National Cemetery to honor the soldiers who served under Meade.

Sunday supper took place at the Rivers Inn at Gloucester Point Va. The service and food were excellent, and we soon returned to our hotel to rest up for yet another day of touring.

Monday morning saw the society arrive at the Mariners Museum at Newport News. The museum is dedicated to all things maritime. There are displays of ancient Egyptian and Phoenician reed boats to British and American men of war to more

modern warships and peacetime vessels. A full ½ scale model of the *C.S.S. Virginia* is on display. *Titanic* fans will not be disappointed.

We were able to see the turret and other artifacts from the *U.S.S. Monitor* in the Monitor Center laboratory undergoing constant preservation. It was awesome to this reporter. Keep in mind that the *Monitor* was ahead of its time in design.

Mid-afternoon saw a visit to General Douglas MacArthur's memorial in MacArthur Square in Norfolk. The memorial is the former City Hall of Norfolk. Gen. MacArthur and his wife Jean Faircloth MacArthur rest side by side in the

Rotunda and are surrounded by many mementos of their illustrious career together.

As we left the MacArthur memorial we turned the corner and saw the majestic and mighty WWII battleship *U.S.S. Wisconsin* berthed at Nauticus Maritime Center. A fitting way to end the tour.

Many thanks to all those who worked tirelessly to make this year's tour a big success. The tour was most informative and educational. I highly recommend that one be part of a General Meade Society tour. You won't be disappointed.