

SPOTLIGHT

Monumental task under way at Sewickley Cemetery

This monthly feature will serve to explain the efforts now under way to replace the Civil War monument and statue of Fame in Sewickley Cemetery.

This effort is borne by Citizens for Soldiers, a group of dedicated residents of the Sewickley Valley, but the success of this project is dependent upon the support of all the people of the valley.

For 138 years the Civil War memorial statue of Fame has stood in the cemetery overlooking the Sewickley Valley.

She occupies a circular plot adjacent to the first burials that was set aside for "public monumental purposes" when the cemetery was first laid out in 1860.

The board of managers of the cemetery could not have anticipated the space would be needed so soon, but for five years ensuing, dark days would traumatize the nation, and remembrance would become a crucial component of community.

In his annual report of July 1865 Superintendent David N. White noted, "Peace has once more smiled upon our land, and our veteran soldiers with shouts of victory are returning to their homes, but there are some who went out from our midst in all the pride and vigor of young manhood who will return no more. They sleep in far off bloody fields or rest in our lovely cemetery until the final resurrection.

"Do not the patriot citizens of this valley owe something to these dead heroes? Shall their names ever be suffered to perish without any record of their noble deeds? Shall we have no memorial in Sewickley Valley of the remarkable rebellion, of the wonderful victories, of the martyred President, of our slaughtered soldiers?"

The president was regarded to be as much a casualty of war as any soldier, and Mr. White had a special connection to President Lincoln as he had through his editorship of the Pittsburgh Gazette promoted the founding of the Republican Party.

Also Mr. White had paid for victory with his own blood. His second son, Albert James White, was mustered into Company A of the 38th Regiment, also known as the 9th Pennsylvania Reserves, in August 1861, only to be discharged on a surgeon's certificate two months later. The 18 year old died of disease at the family home, 225 Broad St., in April 1862.

In response to White's call, a commit-



AN ARTIST rendering of the new monument and plaza to be dedicated on July 12, 2005.

tee was formed consisting of himself, T. H. Nevin and J. W. F. White, \$4500 was raised and the marble monument of Fame we see today was dedicated on July 12, 1866.

The Fame monument constructed of Italian marble is very weathered. This has been a concern for many years. In the late 1980s chemicals were used unsuccessfully to seal the stone.

There was talk of redoing the monument in resin. However, the only permanent solution is replacement in imperishable granite.

In October of 2003 a group of citizens came together with resolve equal to that of the original builders to make this happen and further, to bring back the cannon that once graced the site and create a plaza remembering sacrifice in all of America's wars.

David White spoke of the difficulties involved in a venture such as this: "The amount of labor and anxiety endured by the committee in accomplishing the landmark undertaking can only be estimated by those who have gone through like services, but they are amply rewarded by the complete success of this undertaking."

Not shying from the challenge, the Citizens for Soldiers Committee is a number of your neighbors, citizens and soldiers, who have committed themselves to the perpetuation of this memorial.

Chairperson for Citizens for Soldiers is Carole Ford, a Sewickley Borough coun-

cilwoman and faculty member at the Sewickley Valley School of Nursing, who is the great-great niece of Joseph Moore, a member of the Sewickley Rifles, Company C of the 28th Regiment who died of disease in Frederick, Md., in 1862, one of 28 names inscribed on the Fame memorial.

Co-secretaries are Jean Homitsky and her daughter Melissa Wisen who reside in Moon Township.

Homitsky is proprietor of Riverside Builders Supply. The Homitsky estate monument is in Sewickley Cemetery, and they hold the cemetery dear in addition to being students of the Civil War.

Treasurer is Harton Semple, an English teacher, immediate past president of the Sewickley Valley Historical Society, a veteran of the 1st Infantry Division Artillery in Vietnam, and a Civil War re-enactor surgeon with the 63rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Regiment.

Co-vice chairmen are Tony Cicco and J. H. Reiser. Cicco is Sewickley Borough tax collector and prominent in every patriotic endeavor in the valley. He was a technical sergeant in the Army Engineers who served in the South Pacific and in the occupation of Japan. He is on the historical society board and is commander of the Sewickley Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Reiser served on destroyers and destroyer escorts as a radioman in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters. He is commander of the American Legion in Sewickley.

These gentlemen are ably assisted by Joe Gardner, past commander of the American Legion, a master sergeant and turret gunner on a B-24; and Greg Rice, who was a Spec-5 with the 1st Cavalry Division in Vietnam.

Legal counsel for Citizens is Robert J. Garvin Esq. of Goldberg, Kamin and Garvin, Pittsburgh.

Contributing most generously to the project is John Dioguardi of Beaver, owner of Rome Monument of Moon Township, who will donate the cost of the clay statue of Fame, the disassembly of the old monument, laying the foundation, and the assembly of the new monument.

Homitsky of Riverside Builders Supply will donate the rebar and concrete for the foundation.

The clay model of Fame is almost completed in the studio of Stanislaw Lutostanski, and the gray white granite for the monument has already been quarried in May from a single ledge at the Rock of Ages quarry in Barre, Vt., and awaits the chisels of the carvers.

Rededication of the new monument will be on July 12, 2005, a Tuesday, 139 years after the original dedication.

Citizens for Soldiers is a Pennsylvania not-for-profit organization. It has a 501(c)(3) designation from the IRS.

The committee meets bimonthly and welcomes your interest and contributions to: Citizens for Soldiers, Fame Fund, P. O. Box 293, Sewickley, Pa. 15143.

Visit www.CitizensForSoldiers.org or call 412-960-6013.