

# In the Spotlight

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## LIVING HISTORY



by Gene Pisasale

# The Civil War comes to Chester County

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casualties from the shelling but, ironically, during an allowed 100-gun salute in the surrender ceremonies, an explosion killed two U.S. Army soldiers. The Civil War had begun, a four-year long conflict which destroyed billions of dollars of property and wreaked havoc on several states. The maelstrom claimed over 600,000 lives or two percent of the population, equivalent to more than six million people dying today. The war nearly ripped the country apart: brother fighting brother, fathers fighting against sons. Highlighting the many curiosities of the national struggle, Joshua Chamberlain's character in the film Gettysburg says: "We are an Army out to set other men free..."

Chester County, Pennsylvania was well-represented in the conflict. According to the Chester County History Center, men served in approximately 208 Pennsylvania regiments, ten colored regiments for black troops and

26 state regiments. Among those individuals, 52 served in the Union Navy and 42 were surgeons; and five were graduates of the Military Academy at West Point. Two men served as Army paymasters; and seven were engineers. The 1st Pennsylvania Reserve Regiment, also known as the 30th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, was part of the famed Pennsylvania Reserve Division in the Army of the Potomac for much of the war. It saw action in several important battles, including Antietam, Fredericksburg and Gettysburg.

One man who served was Charles F. Taylor. Taylor was born in Kennett Square on Feb. 6, 1840, a sibling of celebrated author Bayard Taylor. After President Abraham Lincoln issued his call for 75,000 volunteers to suppress the rebellion, Taylor pleaded with others in Kennett Square to join him and fight. His brothers-in-arms unanimously chose him as their captain. Taylor's company was later incorporated into a group popularly known as the "Bucktails." It became part of the Thirteenth Pennsylvania Reserve Regiment, also known as the 42nd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, the 1st Pennsylvania Rifles.

Taylor and his men were there on that fateful day at Gettysburg on July 2, 1863, when Robert E. Lee and his Confederate Army clashed with Union troops. Before the battle, Taylor had been elevated in rank; he was the youngest Colonel in the Army of the Potomac. He was killed leading his troops as they defended Little Round Top. Union General Meade had pronounced him one of the most promising young officers in the Army. A granite monolith on the side of Little Round Top marks the spot where he fell. His gravestone is next



A Charles F. Taylor monument.

Courtesy photos

to his brother Bayard at the Longwood Cemetery in Kennett Square.

There were approximately 200,000 black troops who fought for the Union, despite the fact that they were often frowned upon and mistreated. Camp William Penn in nearby Cheltenham was the largest camp to train black soldiers. Designated the U.S. Colored Troops (USCT), there were several from Chester County who volunteered. In her book *Hinsonville's Heroes: Black Civil War Soldiers of Chester County, Pennsylvania*, author Cheryl Renee Gooch delves into the fascinating story of 18 black men who served in this great conflict. Hinsonville was a small community in southwestern Chester County, now the location of Lincoln University. Several of the USCT are buried at the Hosanna AME Cemetery there. Brothers Wesley, William and George Jay



A U. S. Colored Troops recruiting poster.

fought at the bloody Battle of Fort Wagner, depicted vividly in the film "Glory." Isaac Hollingsworth and Abraham Stout were among the black regiments who cornered Lee's troops late in the war, leading to his surrender at Appomattox. John Beck and Frank McNally of the Kennett Square Civil War Club note that USCT James Anderson, now buried at Mt. Olive Cemetery near West Grove, also fought at Fort Wagner. George Duffy was in the only black regi-

ment in Lincoln's funeral procession in 1865.

Reminders of the bravery of these men surround us in Chester County. At the Unionville Cemetery, there are many Grand Army of the Republic markers, their brass five-cornered plaques gleaming in the sun. One memorial in West Chester remembers a child of war: "Dedicated to the memory of Drummer Boy Charles Edwin King (1848-1862) the youngest soldier killed in battle in the Civil War... He attained the rank of Drum-Major before he died on September 20, 1862... at the Battle of Antietam." King enlisted at the tender age of 12 in Company F, 49th Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers. Historians believe King was actually buried in a mass grave with other soldiers at Antietam. This marker was placed to honor him near his parents' graves at Green Mount Cemetery. His stone tells the story of how he, along with so many others, gave their last full measure defending the freedoms we enjoy today.

Gene Pisasale is an historian/author based in Kennett Square. He's written ten books and conducts an historical lecture series around the Philadelphia area. His latest book is "Forgotten Founding Fathers: Pennsylvania and Delaware in the American Revolution." His books are available on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) and his website at [www.GenePisasale.com](http://www.GenePisasale.com). He can be reached at [Gene@GenePisasale.com](mailto:Gene@GenePisasale.com).

One hundred sixty years ago, at 4:30 a.m. on April 12, 1861, America changed forever.

South Carolina militia Lieutenant Henry S. Farley fired a 10-inch mortar round toward Charleston Harbor. The shell missed its intended target, exploding in the sky over Federal Fort Sumter, but it was a signal to secessionist militia around the area to begin a general bombardment. The cannonade lasted 34 hours, terrorizing the soldiers and citizens nearby. There were no



Charles F. Taylor, Colonel in the Union Army.



The gravesite of Charley King, the youngest Union soldier killed in the Civil War.



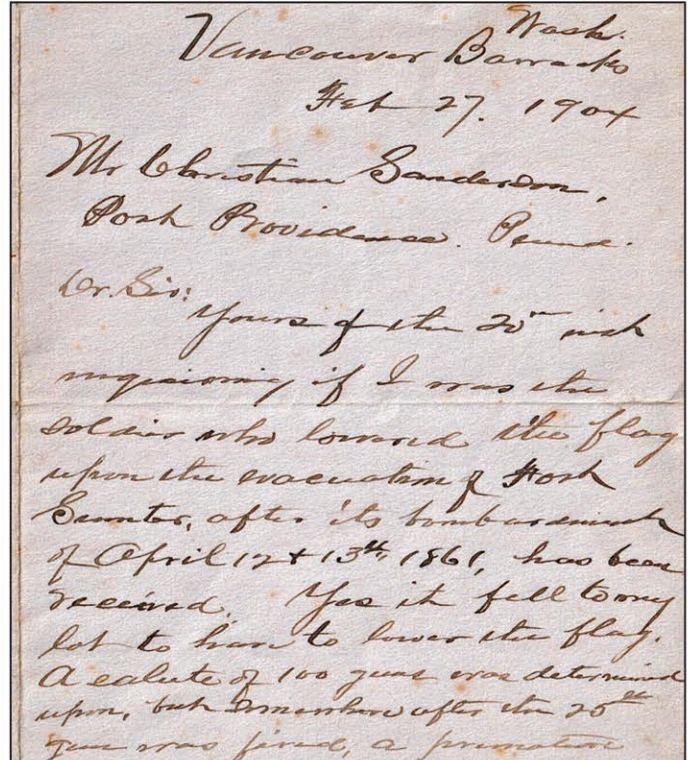
The bombardment of Fort Sumter by Currier and Ives.



Civil War Union ammunition bag, courtesy of Sanderson Museum.



GAR marker at the Unionville Cemetery.



A Civil War letter from a soldier who took down the flag at Fort Sumter, courtesy of the Sanderson Museum.