

CHESTER TIMES –September 13, 1915 - HISTORIC DAY AT BIRMINGHAM –
Impressive Celebration of Anniversary of Battle of Brandywine Attended by Several
Thousand Persons

Thousands of residents of Delaware and Chester Counties on Saturday participated in exercises at the dedication of markers placed on important points on the battlefield of Brandywine in celebration of the 138 anniversary of the conflict.

From all parts of the counties farmers, businessmen, professional men, with their families, went to the old Friends' meeting house at Birmingham, which lies between Chadds Ford and West Chester, and helped to make a holiday.

Men prominent in the affairs of the counties in this State and in international affairs were in attendance as speakers, Members of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission were on hand to represent that body, and military bodies from this city and West Chester added a touch of color to the scene.

NOTABLES PRESENT – More than 5000 persons attended the services, which were held in a tent on the grounds of the Birmingham Friends' Meeting House. Among the notables in attendance were Jean J. Jusserand, the French Ambassador to the United States, and Lieutenant Colonel Murrough O'Brien, military attaché of the British Embassy at Washington.

Hundreds went from this city and county to witness the great event. More than one thousand automobiles were parked in the fields close by the old meeting house.

Previous to the services in the tent the members of the historical societies erected 16 tablets on the battlefield to indicate how and where the battle waged. The markers cost about \$1250. Of that sum \$1000 was contributed by the Pennsylvania Historical Commission, while the balance was raised by the historical societies.

Judge William B. Broomall, president of the Delaware County Historical Society, delivered the address of welcome and presided at the exercises. The invocation was given by the Rev. Dr. Philip H. Mowry pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, this city.

"Americans are able to remember and mark places associated with the early events of the country's history as an inspiration for others," said Ambassador Jusserand. "Your young nation has been civilized from its birth and has a great many advantages.

"The Battle of Brandywine was of great importance to your country. It was in that battle that a man with a French name and an American heart fought for liberty. That man was Lafayette. He came here with a pure heart to serve your cause.

"France did not help America because of its hatred of the English. The thing most in our mind was liberty. The love of liberty was in the bosom of every Frenchman. The Frenchman wanted liberty and it was your liberty he was given his first opportunity to fight for. Frenchmen fought to put liberty into the world and sew it where people were willing to die for it.

"You are a neutral country, I suppose. I represent a nation against whom war has been declared. You cannot expect that I am a neutral. Today is not only the anniversary of the battle of Brandywine, but is also the anniversary of the battle of the Marne, which saved Paris, saved France and saved, I doubt not, the ideals which we have in common with you.

"In your neutrality we have greatly admired your humane feeling and the aid you have given suffering refugees. When Americans appear on the battlefields in Europe our wounded smile. The action of the United States since the outbreak of the present war has

endeared her to my nation more than anything that went before. "In the midst of the calamity one thing stands out, and that is your humanity to your co-republicans. The increasing Franco-American friendship is to last forever."

PRAISE FOR WILSON – State Senator William C. Sproul, chairman of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission, explained that the erection of tablets Saturday was one of the first steps taken by the commission to educate the people of Pennsylvania and to inculcate the spirit of patriotism.

He asserted that most of the history of Pennsylvania's connection with the war was written by New England writers. He said it was time the history was studied from a nearer viewpoint instead of from the rocky hills of New England.

"If there is one thing that this war bids us," said Senator Sproul, "it is the hope of destruction of militarism forever and the return to true culture. "Republican as I am, I must express my appreciation and approbation of the course so far pursued by the President of the United States. Quaker as I am, I expect to stand by the preparations to keep this nation put of war and to prepare for war whenever that dire calamity is necessary for the preservation of our national integrity."

Senator Sproul spoke on the objects and works of the Commission and how rich this community is in historical events. Concluding, he said: "Republican, as I am, I propose to stand back of President Wilson (applause), and as a Quaker I intend to stand by the Administration in whatever it plans to keep this nation out of war, and to prepare it for a successful war whenever that dire alternative may become out integrity and rights."

RETELLS BATTLE STORY – Professor Smith Burnham, teacher of history at the West Chester state Normal School, gave a descriptive story of the battle of the Brandywine, and paid a glowing tribute to the valor of Washington, Lafayette, Wayne and the other officers, as well as the enlisted men.

Miss Lydia Eyre Baker, of this city, registrar of the D. A. R., gave a short address on "Some of the Revolutionary Women" and their great work.

Judge Isaac Johnson, of this county, mad an address on "The Plowshare has Succeeded the Sword," in which he referred to drafting of the early Constitution, and how it has been defended and supported by Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, John Marshall and others.

President Wilson, cordially invited to be present, was unable to do so, and sent this characteristic letter of regret:

"I am sincerely sorry that I cannot be present on September 11 to take part in the dedication of the bronze markers which the State Historical Commission of Pennsylvania has placed on the battlefield of Brandywine and its approaches. I should be greatly enjoyed at the opportunity to say how thoroughly worthwhile it seems to be to do things of that sort and to keep bright and definite in the minds of the people of the country the events, both great and small, of that great period when the nation was brought into being by the sacrifices and the heroism of men whose example it is our privilege and duty to follow."

General Tasker H. Bliss, United States Army, was unable to be present to speak on "National Preparedness," but sent a letter of regret. Governor Brumbaugh also sent a letter regretting his inability to attend the celebration.

Besides the address, there were several vocal selections by a quartet of voices from the First Baptist Church of this city, and the reading of a poem by Professor John Russell Hayes of Swarthmore College.

SIGNIFICANT BATTLE – The battle of Brandywine was of great significance during the war because it was preliminary of the British occupation of Philadelphia. It was during that battle that Lafayette was wounded.

Because of the conflicting accounts carried to Washington regarding the advance of the enemy. Washington, according to history, was prevented from striking a telling blow at the battle of Brandywine. Prior to the battle Washington and Lafayette rode their horses in front of the advance detail of the enemy, which was hidden, and only the humanity of Major Ferguson, a British officer, saved their lives. Major Ferguson had ordered two sharpshooters to shoot them down, but later countermanded the order. He later learned the identity of the two men.

Cornwallis gained an early advantage on the day of the battle when he led his troops across the Brandywine and surprised Washington. The Continental forces of Sullivan and Sterling were driven from their positions at Birmingham Meeting House before Washington and Green could render assistance. Meanwhile Wayne was forced from his position at a fording place by the Hessians. Then the Continental forces began a general retreat.

The Continental Army proceeded to Chester and on the following day to Philadelphia. The British encamped at Dilworthtown for five days. Then followed engagements at "Great Valley, East Goshen Township, Chester County, the Paoli massacre, the Battle of Germantown and the capture of Philadelphia by the British. The American troops went into camp at Valley Forge in December.

Aiding the committee in charge of the exercises were two details of Civil War veterans. They were the General Henry P. Guss Post of West Chester, and the General George A. McCall Post No. 31 of West Chester. The First Aid Corps of the West Chester Y. M. C. A. was in charge of a temporary hospital on the grounds.

KEITH LOCKHART COLLECTION