

The New Market Historical Tour of Lexington, Va. and the National D-Day Memorial

On October 14, 2009, 18 members of the NMHS along with a few guests from the surrounding area engaged in a 4 vehicle caravan southward. The day included a visit to some historical points of interest in Lexington, Va. and the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford Va. We planned to arrive at the Visitor Center in Lexington around 9:30 to be accompanied by a docent who would guide and narrate our tour in the immediate area. Some points of interest included how a few of the streets were “cut down” in order too enhance travel up and down some of the hilly area. Some of the houses, including The Stonewall Jackson House bear some of those early markings. The first story became the second story above the street level. Another point of interest was the Lee Chapel (and to my surprise it is not and was not a church). The chapel includes the history of Washington College and of course later W & L, Lee’s office, other memorabilia, and of course the crypts of some of the Lee family. Also outside the Chapel is the burial ground of Robert E. Lee’s most famous horse – Traveller.



From this point, one can view some of the beautiful campus buildings of W & L as well as President Lee’s homes while President. On the brick walkway to the VMI campus, one could not help but notice the bricks which had been patterned long ago to prevent foot slippage.

VMI was the Nation’s First State Military College. Upon entering we walked to the George C. Marshall Museum and Library. One had to be in awe with his contributions as a Five Star General (there have been five and only five) and as Secretary of State under President Truman. While Secretary of State he initiated the infamous Marshall Plan which helped the economic recovery of Europe. One could not help notice his desk in the Command Center and in the background was the electric map portraying the war exercises in the world during WW II. Our attention was also drawn to him being awarded an Oscar and also the Nobel Peace Prize that was awarded a General.

Across from the Museum is the VMI Parade Field and in the background are the barracks. A new addition to the barracks was just added for this fall session due to the increased growth in enrollment. A stop was made at the VMI Museum which included some VMI and Jackson Memorabilia – especially a mount of Little Sorrell, his horse and the jacket he was wearing when wounded and the hole is still visible in the jacket. The



museum also gave credence to Moses Ezekiel (VMI’s First Jewish Cadet) for his talents mainly in sculpture which was well known at the time. Moses fought in the Battle of New Market, Va on May 15, 1865. He read from the Bible and nursed a cadet friend for two days while the cadet lay dying in the

house of Lydie Clinedinst in New Market. That friend was Cadet Thomas Garland Jefferson, a descendent of the third President of the U.S. President Lee of W & L, had encouraged this young man after he re-entered VMI to pursue his artistic talents, which he of course did. On the campus we did view the memorials of the ten cadets and some of the gravesites of those who had fallen during the Battle of New Market.

Next, on the agenda was a visit to the Stonewall Jackson House, near the Visitor Center. This was the only house Jackson ever owned. The inside was furnished with some Jackson furniture and some which was prevalent during that time period. Today the gardens outside are still maintained much as they were during Jackson's tenure there. During the tour of the House, four of us who had toured the House earlier in the year, picked up box lunches to be eaten on the beautiful drive across the Blue Ridge Parkway to Bedford, Va.



Bedford suffered the largest per capita losses of any community in the U. S. Their sacrifices and those of the thousands of American and Allied soldiers are eloquently memorialized in bronze plaques along the walls. These plaques list all the names of Americans and of Allies who were killed on the 22 hour invasion beginning on June 6, 1944. A tour guide is a must in order to grasp the entire planned invasion. The code name for this operation was OPERATION OVERLORD. A great amount of symbolism within the Memorial is brought out by the docent. One has to be overawed by the number of Bronze Plaques with individual names and companies mounted around the Memorial. Each individual name on the plaque has a story that could be told by someone. We had a wonderful guide who had a career in the Armed Services and had done his homework for the position he is now holding. He was very capable of holding our attention. It did rain on some of us but the Memorial was equipped for that, as some were sheltered in rain protected golf carts with their own private docent.



On the journey home all of us dined at the Country Cooking Restaurant in Lexington, Va. It was our lucky day as all the nonalcoholic beverages were free to all senior citizens and each of us was well qualified.

For further information about Moses Ezekiel, click on the link
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/mezekiel.html>

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