



PANNEBAKKER FAMILY NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE PANNEBAKKER FAMILY ASSOCIATION

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“Too Much for Human Endurance”

The George Spangler Farm Hospitals And the Battle of Gettysburg

The George Spangler farm at Gettysburg was a major Union XI Corps field hospital and a key piece of terrain that played a crucial role in the Army of the Potomac's final victory. Until now, no full-length history of the Spangler family or the doctors, nurses, civilians, and patients who toiled and suffered there has been told. Thankfully, noted journalist and Spangler farm expert Ronald D. Kirkwood brings these people, their experiences, and the importance of this property to life in “Too Much for Human Endurance”: The George Spangler Farm Hospitals and the Battle of Gettysburg.

A host of notables spent time there, including Union officers George G. Meade, Henry J. Hunt, Edward E. Cross and Francis Barlow. Pvt. George Nixon III, great-grandfather of President Richard M. Nixon, would die there, as would Confederate Brig. Gen. Lewis A. Armistead, who fell mortally wounded at the height of Pickett's Charge. This book also includes the most complete lists ever published of the George Spangler farm dead and wounded, and of the surgeons who worked there.

Of particular interest to readers of this newsletter is the fact that one of the nurses at the Spangler farm was Rebecca Lane Pennypacker Price.

“Rebecca Lane Pennypacker Price didn't have to be at the XI Corps hospital after the battle of Gettysburg. She wasn't recruited, conscripted, or ordered to be there. Once she heard of the great bloody battle, though, she realized it was where she wanted to be. Indeed, it was where she needed to be. So she packed her bags, climbed aboard a small dark railroad cattle car in the middle of the night in Baltimore and got to Gettysburg within a couple days of the close of the fight.”

“Rebecca came from the prominent Pennypacker family of eastern Pennsylvania. First cousin Galusha Pennypacker would be a Union brigadier general by the end of the war at just 20, and he was awarded a Medal of Honor for his bravery at the Second Battle of Fort Fisher in North Carolina in January 1865. Samuel Whitaker Pennypacker, governor of Pennsylvania from 1903 to 1907, was her second cousin, and her fifth cousin was none other than George Armstrong Custer, the gallant cavalryman who fought at Gettysburg and throughout the Civil War only to die at the Little Bighorn in 1876. By the time she stepped off the cattle car



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in Gettysburg, her 22-year-old brother-in-law, Sgt. Elhannan Price of the 116th Pennsylvania, had been dead almost seven months, killed in the devastating December 1862 defeat at Fredericksburg. Nursing ran in the Pennypacker family: Rebecca's mother, Elizabeth, ran the Union Army hospital in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, as its matron."

"Rebecca was an idealistic 25-year-old and full of energy when she left Phoenixville first for Baltimore and then Gettysburg. She was on the tall side, judging by her photos. Her short dark hair, slight smile, and warm eyes suggested the compassion lingering inside while masking the toughness and strength that allowed her to take charge and handle horrific situations that most men and women could not stomach. She would need every ounce of that toughness and compassion at the Spangler farm."

"History remembers Rebecca because she left a descriptive and detailed account of what she encountered at Gettysburg. Her writings of what transpired on the Spangler farm are unmatched in length and detail..." "Rebecca wrote her account in a long letter to her children in 1894 in which she described her time at... Gettysburg"

"...after a long and tiresome journey, we arrived in Gettysburg at 1 o'clock a.m. The stench was sickening. The dead were not all off the field and then so many wounded!"

"Soon I stepped into the nearest tent to ours in which were four badly wounded men. Can I ever forget the glad smile, the look of surprise, comfort and joy, which spoke more eloquently than words? I felt that I was receiving a hearty welcome. I was a substitute for mother, wife and sister and in their eyes no stranger, but a friend."

"Rebecca served at the XI Corps hospital for about five weeks, almost the entire time it was open. She and Edwin [Price] went on to have a daughter Cora in 1869 and son George in 1874. George became a professor and neurologist at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. Rebecca spent the rest of her life doing charitable work. She prized a Red Cross pin given to her by Clara Barton, founder of the Red Cross, and was a member of and for a time president of the National Association of Army Nurses of the Civil War."

The full story of what happened at the Spangler farm and additional information about Rebecca can be found in Ron Kirkwood's book, which is available on Amazon.

"What makes this volume so valuable is that it not only establishes the strategic importance of the property, but introduces the readers to the untold stories of the Spanglers, the soldiers who were brought there wounded and dying, and the medical personnel who labored to save their lives."

Excerpts from the book are presented in quotes. The writings of Rebecca are in italics.

Obituary

William Boone Pennebaker Jr, one of the vanguard of researchers who developed the videoconferencing technology that has kept the world connected through the pandemic, passed away peacefully on 8 September 2021, at home and surrounded by loving family. Born on 23 October 1935, Bill, as he was known to his friends, earned his bachelor's in engineering at Lehigh University in 1957, where he was a member of the Delta Chi fraternity, and his doctorate in physics at Rutgers University in 1962. Bill spent his entire career at the IBM Thomas J Watson Research Center in Yorktown Heights, NY, where he was a leading developer of the JPEG and MPEG compression algorithms and contributed to fax and video compression systems, filing over 35 patents and publishing over 50 papers.



During IBM Ski Club weekends at Mad River Glen, Bill met and fell in love with his future wife Margaret. After their marriage in 1967, Bill and Margaret had two daughters. An expert woodworker, Bill spent his weekends restoring a mid-1800s era farmhouse, doing all the finish carpentry himself, and creating custom toys for his daughters, including a dollhouse with working electricity and plumbing. He also “tinkered” (as he called it) with electric bikes, and in 1980 he filed one of the earliest eBike patents. In 1993, Bill and Margaret fulfilled their dream of retiring to Vermont, where Bill was elected to two terms on the Shaftsbury Select Board. In his well-equipped basement workshop, Bill designed circuit boards for an advanced generation of DIY eBikes and crafted miniature furniture so exquisite that it was featured in a special exhibit at the Bennington Museum.

In 2015, Bill was diagnosed with Progressive Supranuclear Palsy, a rare neurodegenerative disease that slowly robbed him of nearly everything except the personal integrity and soft-spoken kindness that made him respected and beloved by all who met him. Bill was predeceased by his wife Margaret, his parents, his sister Sallie, and his nephew Jeff, and is survived by his daughter Patricia Pennebaker Rutins, Patricia's husband Erik and their son (Bill's grandson) Aleksandrs; his nephew John and his nieces Deborah and Susanna and their children and grandchildren; and his final “nuclear family”, his daughter Elizabeth Allen-Pennebaker, Elizabeth's husband Andrew, and Andrew's mother Leslie. A celebration of Bill's life will be held in the summer of 2022 in Shaftsbury. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the United Negro College Fund.

Welcome New Members!

Mary Noonan

Hendrick, Peter, Margaret, Elizabeth Dotterer, David Troxell, Lewis, John, Elizabeth, Mary Noonan (Kelley)

Wendy Pennebaker

Hendrick, Peter, Samuel K./William, William/Elizabeth, Joseph, Daniel, Myrven D., Myrven W., Wendy Pennebaker (Matthews)

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Pannebakker Family Association



The Pannebakker Family Association is an outgrowth of the family reunion held at Pennypacker Mills, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania on July 2-4, 1999. The reunion celebrated the 300th year wedding anniversary of Hendrick Pannebecker and Eve Umstat, in Germantown, Pennsylvania in the year 1699. In the words of the Steering Committee of the reunion, "We hope that the 1999 Pfannebecker-Umstat Reunion will lead to the growth of a family association, which will provide a forum for conversation, collection and preservation of information, and a sense of lasting community among the heirs of this rich cultural heritage."