

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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HOUSE.

No. 52.

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FEDERAL RELATIONS

ON THE

GETTYSBURG SOLDIERS' NATIONAL CEMETERY.

The Joint Standing Committee on Federal Relations, to which was referred the Report of the Commissioner for Maine of the Soldiers' National Cemetery, asking an additional appropriation by the Legislature for the erection of a monument to the heroic dead who fell on the battle-field of Gettysburg, and whose remains repose in said cemetery, have had the subject under consideration, and submit the following Report.

Desirous of becoming acquainted with all the facts relative to the inception, progress and plan of this great national work, in order that we might not only form a correct opinion as to the necessity of extending further aid, but also be able to give such information on the subject as could not fail to be of interest and value to the citizens of our State, we requested the Commissioner, Hon. B. W. Norris of Skowhegan, to appear before us and give a detailed account of the enterprise. Cheerfully complying with our request, Mr. Norris made a most interesting statement of the facts connected with the inauguration and progress of the work, and from his account and the reports and other documents he has placed in our possession, we are able to present an array of rea-

sons which satisfy us, as they can but satisfy the Legislature, that this memorial enterprise deserves every encouragement and all needed appropriations on our part to complete it according to the plans of the Commissioners.

The idea of inaugurating a Soldiers' National Cemetery, in which should be buried the remains of the heroic dead who fell in the terrific battle of Gettysburg on the 1st, 2d and 3d of July, 1863, appears to have originated with David Wills, Esq., who as special agent of the State of Pennsylvania was called upon, in the performance of his duties, soon after the terrible struggle, to frequently traverse the battle-field. The sight of the partially covered remains of our fallen braves, and the knowledge that in a few months decay and the necessary agricultural operations on the arable soil on which the battle was fought, would obliterate all traces of the names and resting places of the heroic men who had given their lives to successfully breast the tide of rebel invasion, led Mr. Wills to conceive the plan of gathering together these remains and having them decently interred in order in a cemetery near the spot.

The reasons for doing this in the case of the dead at Gettysburg rather than those of any other battle-fields, were such as to command universal assent. Not that the noble men who had given up their lives on other fields of conflict had borne themselves less heroically, or had merited less honor, but for the reason that this had been the only battle of note on free soil, and on its result more had probably depended than on the result of any other conflict of the opposing hosts in the present war. Had the Union arms been seriously defeated at Gettysburg, it is perhaps not drawing too dark a picture to say that in all probability Baltimore, Washington and Philadelphia would have fallen into rebel hands, and darkness would have brooded over the land. As Everett has well said in his ever memorable consecration address, "Wheresoever throughout the civilized world the accounts of this great warfare are read, and down to the latest period of recorded time, in the glorious annals of our common country, there will be no brighter page than that which relates the battles of Gettysburg."

In view of these facts, Gov. Curtin of Pennsylvania promptly approved of a proposition and plan of inaugurating a Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg, submitted to him by Mr. Wills, July 24, 1863, and directed Mr. W. to open a correspondence on the subject with the Governors of the States having soldiers dead

on that field. The Governors of the States, among them Gov. Coburn of Maine, seconded the project, and subsequently assented to the details. By direction of Gov. Curtin, Mr. Wills in August selected and purchased appropriate grounds for the contemplated cemetery, and the State of Pennsylvania gratuitously tendered the same to each State having dead to be buried there. The grounds selected embrace seventeen acres on Cemetery Hill, the key to the Union position in the Gettysburg battles, and especially dear to every son and daughter of Maine from the fact that on that spot our own gallant christian Howard stood like a wall against the terrific onsets of the rebel hosts, and through the strength of the position which he had chosen and the bravery of the army, saved the day. The grounds lie adjacent to the village cemetery, north and west of the same, fronting on the Baltimore turnpike, and extending to the Taneytown road, and contain about seventeen acres. They embrace the highest point on Cemetery Hill, where Howard's artillery was massed and poured in so destructive a fire on the rebel attacking columns, and upon which so terrible a cannonading was concentrated by the rebels in the last day's struggle, and commands a view of the whole battle-field stretching for miles around.

The plan being so cordially seconded by the Executives of the various States, all expressing entire confidence that on the assembling of their respective Legislatures the needed appropriations of money to carry it out would be made, Gov. Curtin directed Mr. Wills to proceed with the work of preparing the grounds and to make arrangements for the removal there of the bodies scattered over the battle-field. The distinguished rural architect, Mr. William Saunders, plotted and laid out the cemetery grounds in an original and appropriate style. The highest point was reserved for a monument, and the State lots laid out in different sizes according to the number to be buried, in a semi-circle converging towards the square reserved for the monument—the remainder of the grounds being devoted to walks, trees, shrubs, &c. The arrangements had been so far perfected by October, 1863, that proposals were invited and bids received for removing the dead from the places where they had fallen and been hastily buried, to the lots prepared for their reception. The work was awarded to the lowest bidder at \$1.59 each, and was carefully performed under the direction of the Superintendent, Mr. Samuel Weaver of Gettysburg. Previous to the inauguration of the cemetery enterprise,

about one thousand bodies had been removed by their friends, but when it became understood that arrangements had been perfected for the burial of the slain in grounds consecrated for that purpose, by common consent all disinterments for removal to other places ceased, and the friends of the dead generally expressed much gratification at the arrangement. The work of removal commenced about the first of November, and was completed about the middle of last March. Every precaution was taken to preserve the temporary boards erected by those who had buried the slain, and other marks of identity were carefully noted. Through the efforts of the Superintendent the names of the occupants of many unmarked graves were ascertained by letters, papers, receipts, memorandums, photographs or other articles found about their clothing. In every case every article of value, and every memorial, however insignificant, discovered about any body, was labeled and preserved. In this way friends who could learn nothing of their loved ones, except that they were missing, ascertained that they fell at Gettysburg, and were consoled with the knowledge that their remains lie buried in marked and honored graves in a cemetery dedicated to the nation's fallen braves.

The remains of the dead were each put in substantial coffins gratuitously furnished by the United States government, and interred in the appropriate State lot, with a temporary head-board to be replaced by a granite head-board, giving the number, name, State, regiment and company, so far as could be ascertained. A register was also kept showing against the number of each grave all the essential facts respecting its occupant. The number of interments in each State lot was as follows :

Maine,	104	New Jersey,	78	Minnesota,	52
N. Hampshire,	49	Pennsylvania,	526	Indiana,	80
Vermont,	61	Delaware,	15	Illinois,	6
Massachusetts,	158	Wisconsin,	72	Michigan,	167
Rhode Island,	12	Maryland,	22	U. S. Regulars,	138
Connecticut,	22	W. Virginia,	11	Unknown,	979
New York,	866	Ohio,	131		

Total number interred in the cemetery, 3,549.

A large proportion of the unknown are among those in the First and Eleventh corps, who were killed in the first day's fight north of Gettysburg. The Union forces were obliged to retire without having an opportunity to bury their dead, and the rebels who took

possession of the ground neglecting to perform this duty, when three days after our forces again occupied the ground, few of the bodies could be recognized. This will account for the large number of unknown dead in the Sixteenth Maine regiment, which was in the First corps.

The Cemetery was consecrated with appropriate ceremonies November 19, 1863. The oration was delivered by the lamented Everett, and the dedicatory address was made by President Lincoln, in the presence of a vast concourse of spectators. On the 17th of December, a meeting of Commissioners appointed by the Governors of the States interested, (Hon. B. W. Morris representing Maine,) was held at Harrisburg, and estimates were made of the cost of enclosing and ornamenting the grounds and removing the bodies, placing it at \$38,500, which, with \$25,000 estimated as the cost of a monument, would make the whole expenditures \$63,500. This sum was apportioned among the several States having dead buried in the Cemetery, according to their representation in Congress, Maine being called upon for \$2,102.65. In the belief, however, that more would be needed than had been estimated, the Legislature of Maine, at the last session, appropriated \$2,500, half of which has been paid, and many other States did likewise. All the New England States promptly responded. New York appropriated \$30,000; Pennsylvania, \$20,000; the Governors of Maryland, Indiana and Minnesota took the responsibility to advance the sums apportioned to those States, and Governor Cannon of Delaware, on the refusal of her disloyal Legislature to make an appropriation, caused a subscription paper to be circulated among the people, allowing no one to subscribe over two dollars, by means of which twice the sum required of that State was at once made up. Illinois, which has only six soldiers interred at Gettysburg, and West Virginia have not yet responded to the assessments made upon them, although it is confidently expected that both States will do so. The whole amount thus far appropriated by the States, conditionally and unconditionally, is \$96,099.36.

To give a legal and permanent character to the project, the Legislature of Pennsylvania, on the 25th of March, 1864, passed an act incorporating the Commissioners from the several States, and their successors, under the name of the *Soldiers' National Cemetery*, the Commissioners to hold their office for three years.

Among the Commissioners thus incorporated were Hon. B. W. Norris of Maine, Chief Justice Perley of New Hampshire, Gov. Ramsey of Minnesota, T. W. Ferry, M. C., of Michigan, C. D. Hubbard, M. C., of West Virginia, John R. Bartlett, Secretary of State of Rhode Island, and other gentlemen well known in all parts of the country. An organization under this act was effected April 6th, 1864, a code of by-laws adopted, and the Superintendent, Mr. Wills, directed to proceed with the work of enclosing the grounds, notwithstanding it was at that time uncertain what response many of the States would make to the assessments made upon them to carry out the plans.

Another meeting was held in June, at which time it became evident that, in consequence of the increased cost of materials and labor, it would be impossible to bring the expenditures within the original estimates. The work must be abandoned, and the idea of having a monument given up, or else calls be made upon the States for additional appropriations. At this meeting Governor Blair of Michigan was present, and strenuously urged that the plans should be fully carried out, and a monument worthy of the event commemorated erected. He was sustained by Governor Ramsey of Minnesota and other prominent Commissioners, all of whom expressed entire confidence that the Legislatures of the loyal States would second their resolutions. Consequently, it was determined to instruct the Executive Committee to go forward with the work. At the annual meeting in December this Committee made a detailed report of their doings, indicating the utmost economy and faithfulness in the discharge of their duties, and presenting the following statement of sums already expended and required to be expended to complete the grounds and inclosure :

Expended up to December, 1864,	\$23,851 09
Required to complete the wall,	3,932 00
do soil the graves and lay out avenues,	2,500 00
do purchase and plant trees,	1,500 00
do front fence and gateway,	4,150 00
do granite head-stones,	17,990 00
	<hr/>
	53,923 09
To which add estimated cost of monument,	55,000 00
	<hr/>
	\$108,923 09

As the amount originally apportioned among the States was only \$63,500, with some uncertainty as to whether Illinois will pay

her proportion of that sum, the Commissioners estimate that at least twice that amount will be required to complete their work and erect the beautiful monument contemplated, and provided for the necessary superintendence of the Cemetery after the plans shall have been carried out. Maine's proportion of this sum, including the \$2,500 already appropriated, will be \$4,205.30, leaving \$1,705.30 to be provided by the present Legislature. Your Committee unanimously concur in the opinion that it is not only just and proper that this additional appropriation should be made, but that such an opportunity to do honor to the memory of the brave men from Maine who have fallen in defence of the Republic should be gladly embraced. In our judgment, the Commissioners have acted patriotically and wisely in their determination to make the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg worthy of the great victory commemorated and of the heroes whose memory it perpetuates. The examination of their detailed report satisfies us that all the expenditures have been made with care and with a due regard to economy. We cannot, in justice to the Commissioner from this State, refrain from bearing testimony to the solicitude and faithfulness with which he has discharged his duties in representing the interests of Maine, notwithstanding the small per diem compensation allowed him only for time actually employed.

Inasmuch as application has been made to Congress for an appropriation to cover the amount necessary to complete the work, which may be granted and thus render further aid from the State unnecessary, your Committee ask leave to report a resolve conditionally appropriating \$1,800 as the proportion required of the State of Maine in case Congress shall neglect to respond.

LEWIS BARKER,
JOHN B. WALKER,
WILLIAM W. VIRGIN,
NELSON DINGLEY, JR.,
AMBROSE H. ABBOTT,
REUBEN S. HUNT,
WILLIAM J. PHILLIPS,
RUFUS P. TAPLEY,
O. R. BACHELLER,
B. LYFORD, JR.

STATE OF MAINE.

RESOLVE in favor of the Soldiers' National Cemetery at
Gettysburg.

Resolved, That there be and hereby is appropriated
2 the sum of eighteen hundred dollars, to defray Maine's
3 proportion of the expense of completing the Soldiers'
4 National Cemetery at Gettysburg, and erecting a suit-
5 able monument therein; and that the governor, with
6 the advice and consent of the council, is hereby au-
7 thorized, in case congress shall not appropriate a suffi-
8 cient amount for this purpose, to draw his warrant
9 for so much thereof as may be needed to discharge
10 the obligations of this state.

STATE OF MAINE.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, Feb. 17, 1865.

Reported by Mr. DINGLEY, from the Committee on Federal Relations.

HORACE STILSON, *Clerk*.