

Battle of Homestead Foundation

Special Edition July, 2005

George W. Rutter: Veteran of The Forgotten Charge at Marye's Heights – Shot at the 1892 Battle of Homestead



The image above shows the steep banks of the Monongahela River and the burning barges that carried the 300 Pinkerton Agents to Homestead.

Rutter served with the 123rd Pa Infantry at some of the major Civil War battles: 2nd Bull Run, Antietam, Marye's Heights, and Chancellorsville.



Union Forces repel the Confederates

Our history story begins in 1889, when the Amalgamated Association of Iron & Steel Workers Union (AAISW) negotiated a contract for new wages with Carnegie Phipps, & Company at the Homestead mill. Their labor contract ran for three (3) years and was due to run out on June 30, 1892.

The Battle of Homestead in 1892 began as a lockout of the steel mill property. In June, Henry Clay Frick had his carpenters build a fence around the Carnegie, Phipps & Co. mill to prevent the members of the Amalgamated Union (AAISW) from coming onto the site. The wooden fence was even whitewashed by the carpenters hired by Frick. The residents of the town of Homestead began to refer to the fence and the mill property as "Fort Frick."

Frick's plan was to break the Union and bring in "scab workers" from outside the area to run the plant.

The Amalgamated Union's contract was expiring and the members of this Union were in negotiations with Carnegie, Phipps & Co. to get a fair wage. Their group numbered about 800 of the 3,800 workers employed in the Homestead steel mill by Andrew Carnegie and Henry Frick, the major owners of this steel company.

The AAISW was holding meetings at the current site of the Bost building on the corner of Eighth Avenue and City Farm Lane. This building was newly constructed and used as a hotel at that time in history. The third floor meeting room had a line of sight overlooking the mill property.

The contract negotiations came to a halt and the Advisory Board for the

Union told the workers that they could expect Frick to send in men to occupy the mill site. Lookouts were placed along the Monongahela River to report on any unusual activities.

On the morning of July 5, 1892 the 50 members of the advisory committee met in a secret session at 10:00 a.m. to dissolve their committee. They disavowed support of any actions taken on the part of the steel workers. Their official documents were burned.

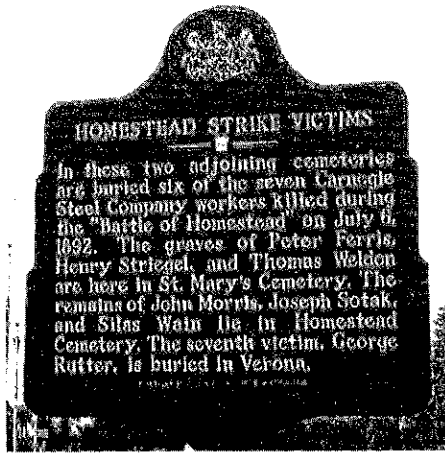
The night of Tuesday, July 5, 1892, the men in Homestead received word that a group was assembling in Bellevue, PA, just west of Pittsburgh on the Ohio River.

In the early hours of July 6, 1892, two enclosed model barges, the *Iron Mountain* and the *Monongahela*, with hired Pinkerton Agents on board were towed up the river from Bellevue by the tugboat *Little Bill*, with Captain William B. Rodgers at the helm.

These two barges held 300 armed guards who brought 401 rifles. They were recruited in Philadelphia, New York and Chicago. Forty of the men were veteran guards and others were young men looking for some money and a summer adventure away from home. They may not have known their destination. None of them expected what would come to be a historic labor confrontation in Homestead.

In the day long battle, 3 Pinkertons and 7 workers were shot and died of their injuries. We are going to focus on one of those casualties, George W. Rutter, age 46, a veteran of the Civil War, who was the oldest of the men to die of his injuries from the battle. ☞

The Battle of Homestead Foundation became a non profit 501(c)(3) in 1997 to preserve the Pump House, the last structure standing from the 1892 confrontation between 300 Pinkerton Guards and the steelworkers and townspeople of Homestead.



Pennsylvania State Historical memorial marker was erected by the Battle of Homestead Foundation in 1993 to commemorate the strike victims.

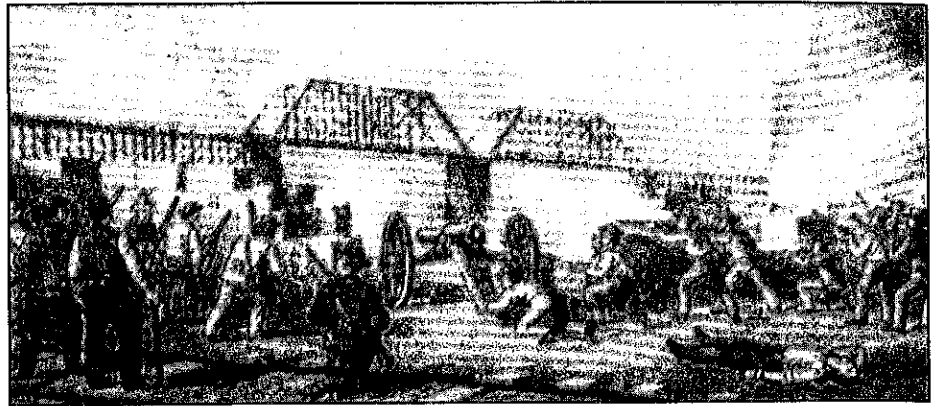
The Battle of Homestead Foundation, a local non-profit group, has been active in commemorating the fallen workers, who became martyrs for the cause of Unionism in Homestead at the turn of the century.

In 1993, the state plaque shown above was installed at the intersection of 22nd Avenue and Main Street in Munhall. It is located at the top of the hill leading to Homestead Park from the Homestead Grays Bridge, formerly called the Homestead Hi-Level Bridge. This historic plaque lies between two cemeteries, and indicates that there are three (3) men buried in St. Mary Magdalene Cemetery and three (3) more buried in Homestead Cemetery across the street.

The marker goes on to state that "The seventh victim, George Rutter, is buried in Verona."

George Rutter was shot at about 8:00 a.m. on the morning of July 6th and was later (about noon) transported to the hospital. He lived for 11 days and died of his injuries at 5:30 a.m. on Sunday, July 17 in the Homeopathic Hospital (Shadyside Hospital).

Linda and John Asmonga, members of the Homestead & Mifflin Township Historical Society, have been looking into the battle because of an uncle, Istvan "Stephen" Aszmongya, who was injured during the battle. In doing research, they have discovered that although George W. Rutter's body may have been transported to the Verona train station, he was not buried in Verona, PA. George Rutter was taken to Bethel Cemetery in Lower Burrell, PA and buried in his family plot.☞



Edwin Rowe, Sr. created a broadside of the events surrounding the 1892 Battle of Homestead. The illustration above depicts "Workmen cannonading the barges."

Biography of George W. Rutter (1846 - 1892)

Ethnicity: Native-born American of German ancestry

Appearance: 5'-7" Dark hair, Hazel eyes, fair complexion

Age at Death: 46 years old

Born: 1846, Chartiers, Westmoreland Cty., U.S. Citizen

Wife: Married to Alwilda Morrison

Children: One son, name unknown

Residing: Boards at 225 Fifth Av., Homestead, PA in 1892

Worked as: Mill Gateman, Iron worker

Cause of Death: Shot in the right thigh and stomach, died 11 days later of effects of a gunshot wound
(Verified in *Coroner's Reports*)

Funeral: Services in Verona, Pa

Burial: Bethel Cemetery in Lower Burrell, PA

George Rutter (Retter) was the oldest of the fallen men during the lockout and was shot at about 8:00 a.m. He was a longtime member of the AAISW.

Rutter was a Union Army Veteran of the Civil War, and a member of the G.A.R., who was reported to have been wounded at Gettysburg. From our research, George was never near the battlefield at Gettysburg.

George enlisted in the Union Army as a private in Company I, of the 123rd PA Volunteers on August 9, 1862. He mustered out on May 13, 1863. During his brief 9-month enlistment, he fought in four major battles in the Civil War: 2nd Bull Run or the 2nd Battle of Manassas; Antietam (Sharpsburg); and at Marye's Heights on Dec. 13, 1862, in Fredericksburg; and Chancellorsville.

After his first 9-month enlistment, he reenlisted in Thompson's Battery C on February 22, 1864 for one year, where he continued fighting the Confederates. Rutter served in the 147th Regiment, Company E on October 22, 1864. He later transferred to the 5th

Artillery, 204th Regiment, Battery I, P.V. on January 12, 1865. He mustered out of the military with the men of Co. E, 147th Regiment on July 15, 1865.

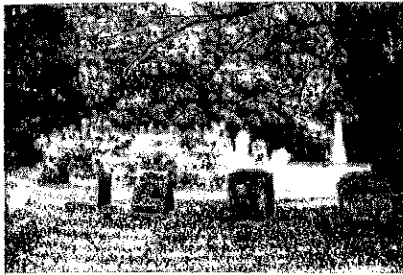
Information about Rutter or his family for the years following the Civil War was not available for us to trace his movements. The 1870 U.S. Census shows his wife Alwilda Rutter, age 21, as the head of household and nowhere do we find her husband, George.

We could not determine the kind of jobs that he had, nor the conditions that led him to come to Homestead from his home in Westmoreland County to take employment in the steel mill.

He lived like many steelworkers of the time, boarding in a house at 225 Fifth Ave., a short walk to the mill. He would have taken that final walk to his job in the mill for the last time on the morning of June 28, 1892. The next day the lockout was imposed.

As an AAISW member, Rutter was at the Pump House on the morning of the fateful July 6th confrontation. After he was shot, he was taken to the Homeopathic Hospital (Shadyside Hospital) where he laid in a hospital bed next to Pinkerton Captain Frederick H. Heinde, age 41. Capt. Heinde had led the hired guards on the barge *Iron Mountain*, which landed at the Pump House in Homestead about 4:45 a.m. the morning of July 6, 1892.

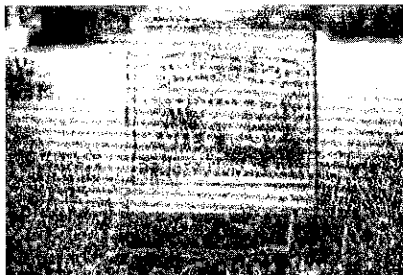
George's parents were James & Elizabeth Rutter, who may have still been living in 1892. Rutter was expected to survive his injuries. However, he died of complications at 5:30 a.m. on Sunday, July 17 in the Homeopathic Hospital. Rutter was taken to Braeburn Station AV RR for his interment on July 19, 1892 at Bethel Cemetery.☞



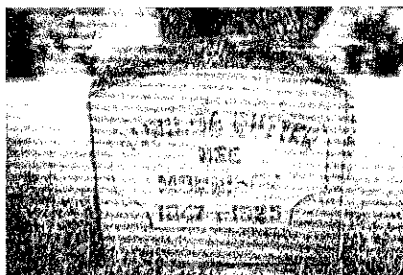
Rutter Family Plot in Bethel Cemetery



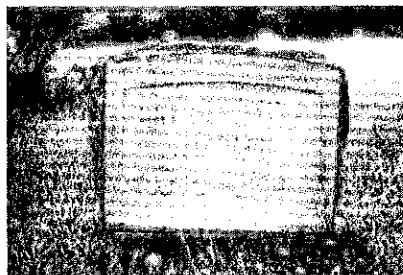
George W. Rutter 1846-1892



Elizabeth Rutter—Died 1892



Alwilda Rutter nee Morrison 1847-1925



Margaret J. Rutter 1853-1883



George W. Rutter is buried in the Bethel Cemetery

Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church was originally organized in 1843 in Westmoreland County. They had a frame structure erected c.1846 and located behind the present Lower Burrell City Hall. The church burned to the ground in the early 1920s and was never rebuilt.

Lower Burrell was formed in 1852 and named in honor of Judge Jeremiah Murry Burrell. The division of Burrell Township was approved by the County Court in 1879. The eastern or upper division became Upper Burrell and the western section became Lower Burrell.

Bethel Cemetery is a small cemetery and may be adjacent to another small cemetery called Gladeview Cemetery. We are not sure if they are both under separate title or deed.

During various periods, the cemetery was called: Glade, Glade View (Gladeview) and then Bethel Cemetery. The name commonly used has been Bethel Methodist Cemetery. This cemetery today is no longer connected with any church or congregation and is privately maintained. Early burials date to c.1846.

George Rutter was interned at Bethel Cemetery on July 19, 1892. His family had a plot in this cemetery with the earliest family burial indicated as 1861. Besides his wife, Alwilda, he left a son, whose name is lost in history.

Geo. W. Rutter, Co. E 147th Penna Vet Vol 1846-1892 is buried next to his wife, Alwilda [nee-Morrison] Rutter, 1847-1925. There is another plot with a marker nearby for the Morrison family.

Other family members buried in the Rutter plot at Bethel Cemetery are: James & Elizabeth Rutter (parents); a tombstone exists for Elizabeth Rutter, died 1892, the mother of George; also Margaret J. Rutter, 1853-1883 (age 30); Nancy, daughter of (Rutter?); Joseph Rutter, b.1838 - d.25Feb1861, son of James & Elizabeth, aged 23 yrs, 4 mo 19 da.; Wm. Gar___ (Rutter) and a worn illegible marker.

The Tarentum Genealogical Society has done transcriptions of this cemetery. There are nine (9) markers installed on the Rutter family plot.☞



John Asmonga points to the name of Private George W. Rutter on a bronze memorial plaque for the 147th Regiment at the Soldiers & Sailors Hall and National Museum in Oakland. Standing next to him is his wife, Linda, and Bill Reynolds.

George W. Rutter fought in several major battles in the Civil War, and was unscathed by the bullets. He was struck down by a shot fired by a Pinkerton Guard at the Battle of Homestead in 1892.



Federal Troops going into battle

25th Reunion for the 123rd

The 123rd Regiment held their first reunion on August 25, 1887, 25 years after the end of the Civil War. Pittsburgh newspaper reports of the era indicated that 205 survivors, officers and men attended. They all met at Allegheny City on the North Side of Pittsburgh and boarded a special train that took them to Ross' Grove on the West Penn Road.

It was estimated that with the veteran's, their wives and families, almost 1,000 people attended. 14 men from George Rutter's Company I were there to pose for a picture.

We wonder if George attended the 25th reunion celebration and posed for a group photograph?

Rutter was a Patriot and Volunteer

George W. Rutter, at the age of 18, enlisted to fight in the Civil War, with another young man, Thomas K. Rutter, also age 18. They wanted to go to fight in a war that was not supposed to last very long. They may have been brothers or cousins, the facts are unclear.

President Lincoln had called for men to volunteer to fight in the War. Pennsylvania was granted a 9-month voluntary enlistment, but other states had three year terms of enlistment.

According to information received from the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg, George was a farmer who came from Chartiers, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania and Thomas was shown as a butcher. They were part of Company I, numbering 101 volunteers who came from Tarentum, Turtle Creek, and Port Perry. These men signed up under Col. John B. Clark at Allegheny City in Pittsburgh, PA.

These men would have received \$13. a month as a private. They came for a "great adventure" and some time away from their mundane lives as farmers, miners, laborers, clerks and factory workers.

Company I was made up of men mostly under the age of 25. These recruits were considered "Greenhorns" and joined on August 9, 1862. They assembled in Allegheny City and practiced marching and drilling. The men went to Camp Curtin in Harrisburg[h] Pennsylvania by railroad train to receive their equipment and some military training.

They were mustered in at Harrisburg[h] on August 21, 1862. Their unit was a part of the 5th Army Corps, 3rd Division, 2nd Brigade, 123rd Regiment, Company I, a part of the Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry. There were 1,010 local Western Pennsylvania volunteers in the 123rd Regiment.

Almost 1,000,000 men died in the fighting during the Civil War. To the credit of George Rutter, he survived all of his battlefield engagements.

Of all of the volleys of bullets he managed to elude, it would be another

battle, at a much later date, which claimed the life of George Rutter.

The first engagement of his Company was at 2nd Bull Run, also called the 2nd Battle of Manassas, VA, fought on August 29-30, 1862. The men had been in the military for only eight days. Some of the Harper's Ferry rifles (Austrian muskets) that they had been issued were defective and would not fire. Eventually, they would be given newer Springfield rifles.

The second battle was at Antietam creek, Sharpsburg, VA on September 17, 1862, and was won by the Union.

On December 11-13, 1862, At Fredericksburg, VA, the men of the 123rd Regiment were faced with their greatest challenge. The attack was on a Rebel held position at Marye's Heights at Antietam creek, on December 13, 1862, near Fredericksburg. It was one of the bloodiest battles of the war, with 186,500 troops on the battlefield, and 15,500 soldiers killed or wounded. The Confederate forces were victorious.

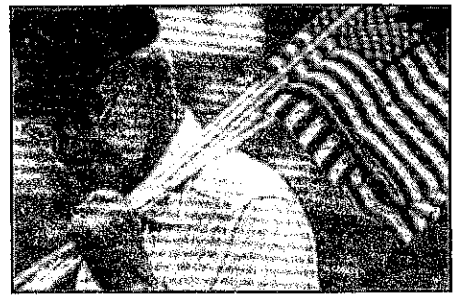
The Union troops bivouaced over the winter at Camp Hancock, near Brandy Station, Virginia.

Chancellorsville was the fourth major battle that their unit was involved in on May 1-4, 1863. It was also the last engagement that the 123rd would have with the Rebel troops.

The 5th Army Corps, 3rd Division, 2nd Brigade, 123rd Regiment returned to Harrisburg[h], PA and was disbanded on May 13, 1863, only about a week after their last battle. Only 630 men (62%) were left of the 1,010 original volunteers and 380 lives (38%) had been lost to the perils of war. Losses of the original 101 men in Company I were: 10 died, 13-15 wounded.

As stated in the biography outline on page 2, George reenlisted in the military and served in several other units. None of the remaining years of the war brought the level of conflict that George and his unit had experienced in the first nine months of duty.

On July 15, 1865, George was on his way home, with others, to a heroes welcome in Westmoreland County.☞



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To locate Bethel Cemetery, we had to enlist the help of a WWII veteran and cemetery researcher, William "Bill" Reynolds. Mr. Reynolds has an extensive collection of books and research papers on our local cemeteries. Through his research resources, he was able to find the local cemeteries outside of Verona, PA and to locate the Bethel Cemetery.

William "Bill" Reynolds has been trying to commemorate local veterans and he walks the cemeteries and tries to find the tombstones for veterans.

His project is to see that every veteran receives a marker on their grave and a flag for Memorial Day. He has been doing this for over 10 years. Bill will turn 88 this year and is still walking cemeteries. Most of us would like to be able to keep up his pace.

Bill is a member of many groups, including the Homestead & Mifflin Township Historical Society, and Davis Star Camp, an early G.A.R. Post for Civil War veterans.

Bill is a regular volunteer at the Soldiers & Sailors Hall and National Museum in Oakland.

Many people in our community are grateful to Bill for helping them to locate their ancestors, who served our country and paid for our freedom with their heroic actions and in some cases, their lives.

Because of his dedication to veterans burials, Bill has given us the impetus to locate the final resting place for George Rutter and tell his story through the battles he fought, culminating in the 1892 Battle of Homestead.☞

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