

Soldiers Orphan's Home 400

THE SOLDIERS ORPHANS' HOME

In April, 1903 Mrs. Mary Scott, a widow of Hugh D. Scott, and John R. Scott sold their property adjoining the National Cemetery to W. T. Zeigler, W. C. Sheely, and David M. Wolf.

The sale of this property recalled its interesting history. The property, known better as the Soldiers Orphans' Home, had quite a history. The first owner as far as recollection goes was Captain John Myers. The original mansion was the brick portion. The weatherboard wing was once part of the barn on premises and when the Orphans' Home was opened was moved to the house and altered and put in its present shape.

The National Homestead at Gettysburg for the orphans of soldiers and sailors was incorporated by Act of Legislature of Pennsylvania, March 22, 1867. Among the incorporators were such distinguished soldiers as Generals George G. Meade, O. O. Howard, and Nathaniel P. Banks. The local corporators were David McConaughy, Edward McPherson and R. G. McCreary. Possibly the most interested individual in the movement was Dr. James C. Burns, of Philadelphia. He came to Gettysburg frequently to look after the management of the Homestead.

Though incorporated in March, 1867, the movement had started before that time and the Homestead was opened about Sept. 1866, and received then the first Soldiers Orphans to enter the institution. Two ladies, A Mrs. Tilden and a Miss Howe were then in charge. The Homestead likely had State help but was also the recipient of contributions from charitable people all over the country.

In the seventies the Homestead was out in charge of one Rosa J. Carmichael and she proved to be the Jonah to the institution. It is of her regime that all kinds of stories are told. Orphans were punished by confinement in the dungeon in the cellar, they were suspended by the arms in barrels, they were placed in shackles, the same being preserved now in the G. A. R. post room. Investigation were made by the directors but the children who showed the effects of their cruel punishment were hidden until the inspection was over. It was a long land of cruel treatment of the orphans of men who had given their lives for their country, but it had a turning.

At the August court, 1874, Rosa J. Carmichael was indicted for aggravated assault on an orphan, Geo. J. Landon, at the Orphans' Homestead. The case was continued and tried at the November court, 1876, and on November 14, she was found guilty by a jury. She was sentenced to pay a fine of \$20 and the costs of prosecution. This was the beginning of the end of the Orphans' Homestead.

Baltzer Newport, a baker, obtained a judgment against the National Homestead at Gettysburg, also Geo. B. Stover, a butcher then, and Henry J. Falmestock and others. The first execution issued was in June, 1876, and next in October of the same year, then February, 1877. Finally April 17, 1878, Sheriff Joseph Spangler sold the property to Isaac Hereter, Henry J. Falmestock and George B. Stover. In 1881 Hugh D. Scott bought the interests of the two last mentioned and in 1887 of the one first mentioned.

The departure of Rosa J. Carmichael cannot be definitely stated, but according to best recollections it was shortly after her conviction.

MORE HISTORY ABOUT THE SOLDIERS' ORPHANS'
HOME.

General O. O. Howard, in command of the 11th Corps used the building during a portion of battle as his headquarters.

On the ground of the Homestead was located part of the Third Division of the 11th Corps under General Carl Schurz. Part of the Second Brigade of this Division being on the Homestead land and part in the National Cemetery.

The celebrated Mumiston children whose father, Orderly Sergeant of the 154th New York, was found on the battlefield tightly grasping their photograph, were enrolled in the Homestead and remained several years.

The Homestead did not receive help from the State. In the first place all persons paying annually \$5 or \$50 as a life contribution to the Homestead were to be considered members of the association or corporation. It was supported largely by Sunday Schools, nearly two thousands on 18 states having sent contributions. Many private individuals also sent gifts to the institution. Appeals for help were occasionally sent out. It was national in its aim, as a home and school for the orphans of the soldiers and sailors of the whole country. About 400 orphans from 16 states of the Union attended the Homestead during its existence.

Gettysburg Compiler

4/22/1903