

“Flags In”

by Lynne Belluscio

On the Historical Society’s recent trip to Washington D.C. it was important for us to visit Arlington Cemetery. And although it was a cold windy and very wet, day, we all left the comfort of our warm bus to walk over to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to watch the changing of the guard.

The ceremony is based on the highest military honor, the twenty-one gun salute. The guard marches twenty one steps, then faces east for 21 seconds and north for 21 seconds. He marches back 21 steps and faces east for 21 seconds and south for 21 seconds. The guards are all members of the 3rd U.S. Infantry known as the “Old Guard” which has served this nation since 1784. No other army unit has served longer.

It was given its name by General Winfield Scott during a victory parade during the Mexican War in 1847. In 1948, the Old Guard began placing flags



24, beginning at 9:00 am at Macpelah Cemetery, a group of volunteers will place 500 flags on gravesites. Everyone is invited to



on the graves in Arlington and also the Soldiers’ and Airmen’s Cemetery for Memorial Day. Every available member of the “Old Guard” helps to place nearly 300,000 flags on the graves, all in three hours. The event is called “Flags In.” (On Saturday, May

help. Volunteers also place flags at St Francis Cemetery.)

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was established in 1921 with the burial of an unknown World War I serviceman brought back from France. The large marble monument was not

completed and dedicated until 1932. The stone was quarried from the Yule Marble Quarry near Marble, Utah, where marble for the Lincoln Memorial and other monuments was obtained. The large marble block was shipped to Rutland, Vermont, where it was sawn and dressed. Then it was shipped to Arlington where it was carved by two Italian sculptors, Attilio and Furio Piccirilli under the direction of artist Thomas Jones.

The Piccirilli brothers also carved the colossal statue of Lincoln in the Lincoln Monument. The family, Attilio and Furio, their four brothers and their father came from Tuscany, Italy in 1888. They lived in the Bronx and gained a reputation for their skills as sculptors. (They also sculpted the two lions at the entrance of the New York City Public Library.)

There are three Greek figures carved in the panel that faces Washington, D.C. They represent Peace, Victory and Valor. When the panels were first carved, Valor was called “American Manhood” but was later renamed. The Western panel is inscribed with the famous words: “Here rests in honored glory an American soldier known but to God.”

Many years ago, cracks appeared in the 48-ton marble tomb. Several attempts were made to fill the cracks but they kept reappearing and were getting larger. There were plans to completely replace the tomb with a new piece of marble, but it was discovered that the new marble would eventually crack just like the original.

In the meantime, preservationists insisted that the cracks could be sealed and that it would be a travesty to totally replace the original monument. It was also determined that the cracks were not structural, however, they were very noticeable.

When we were at the tomb, the rain and wind were so severe, I don’t think that anyone noticed the cracks. During the past couple of years, severe weather in Washington has prompted orders for the guards to seek shelter, but in every case, the orders were ignored. The tomb remains guarded, twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. A tribute to the Americans who paid the ultimate price for our freedom.

If you know of anyone from LeRoy buried at Arlington, please let us know.



LEROYANS ...

As we turn to spring and look forward to summer activities, Botts-Fiorito Post #576 would like to encourage as many homes and businesses to fly the American flag, especially on the following days:

- Memorial Day - May 26th**
- Flag Day - June 14th**
- Independence Day - July 4th**
- Labor Day - September 1st**

There is nothing like seeing the Stars & Stripes flying in the breeze. Please consider this proposal to fly the National Colors as a symbol of Americanism.



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