

## Story of the Post #2 'Army Mule'

When the beloved old war horse of General George G. Meade: "Old Baldy" finally expired in December of 1882, ten years after the death of his master, General Meade in 1872, some members of the Meade Post #1, Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) in Philadelphia, decided to retrieve the head of Old Baldy to preserve and display in their Post Hall in Downtown Philadelphia on Chestnut St..

The head and front hooves were obtained, preserved and tastefully displayed for all to view in order to honor the service of the old war horse that had played such a vital role in the career of General Meade in his War service.

Now, there had developed a great rivalry between Post #1 and Post #2 in Philadelphia. Both Posts had battled over the rights to be named the first Post in Pennsylvania at the outset of the new Department of Pennsylvania in October of 1866. Post #1 won out by being chartered first on October 16<sup>th</sup> leaving Post #2 angry and humiliated at its date of October 17<sup>th</sup>. Both Posts tried to recruit the most well known and influential veterans, and both had fine post halls and featured excellent programs and entertainments for their members. But it always seemed to Post #2, that they would lose out in prestige to the more socially prominent Post #1. Post #2 had even wanted to name itself after General Meade; the most distinguished Civil War Commander from the city, but again lost out to Post #1. Post #1 won the contest to enroll the president of the United States, General Grant. Post #1 had close ties to the Union League, and even met there.

You can imagine the chagrin of the members of the Post, when they then discovered that Post #1 had even beaten them to the remains of Old Baldy! After the head of Old Baldy was displayed in the Meade Post #1 Hall, the members of Post #2 considered different methods to 'one up' their comrades in Post #1.

They finally hit on an idea!

Yes, Post #1 had the head of Old Baldy, but they would obtain, preserve and display the animal that had really won the war - the old Army Mule! Thus in January 1884, one year after the appearance of 'Old Baldy' at the Meade Post #1 Hall, Post #2, which in a pique decided not to take a name, displayed the head of the 'Old Army Mule' in their Post Hall on Spring Garden Street. After all, the army mule had served the nation and army well by its undaunted service pulling the wagons that kept the troops supplied with the necessities of war, and arguably had contributed as much if not more to the war effort than Meade's Old Baldy!

Probably, the mule head had been obtained from the army Schuylkill Arsenal Quartermaster Depot, and was a grizzled old veteran of war service. Though old, haggard, and balky, never the less, the Old Army Mule was a real War Hero! What began as a trick of one-upmanship became a true shrine of honor to loyal service.

His head has hung in honor ever since in the Post Hall of Post #2, and now in a similar place of honor in the G.A.R. Museum & Library, Philadelphia.

(Andy Waskie - from the records of Post #1 and Post #2 at the G.A.R. Museum, Philadelphia)

See my article: **"Old Baldy" General Meade's Warhorse**