

Corbit's Charge observances, set for June 29, began with Tom LeGore – June 23, 2024

It is difficult to study Carroll County's Civil War history without encountering the name G. Thomas "Tom" LeGore. On Saturday, June 29, 2024, the Pipe Creek Civil War Round Table (PCCWRT) will commemorate Corbit's Charge (also known as the Battle of Westminster) for the 22nd time on the grounds of Westminster's City Hall (Emerald Hill). Tom was instrumental in starting that annual event as well as the Round Table.

Tom's interest in Civil War events probably began in childhood. While still attending Westminster High School in 1963, he helped Frederick Shriver Klein gather material for "Just South of Gettysburg," a book which has been reprinted multiple times and is considered an excellent authority on Carroll County's role in the Civil War. In Klein's preface he wrote, "The enthusiastic interest and valuable historical research contributed by Mr. G. Thomas LeGore have been responsible for the discovery of much new material, and his knowledge of local history has been indispensable." Tom also served on Carroll's Civil War Commemorative Committee as a high school student.

According to Klein, he, LeGore and Rev. W. Harold Redcay assembled their material for "Just South of Gettysburg" as follows:

"Because the history of any event starts with the original sources, the committee, appointed by the Historical Society of Carroll County to prepare a Civil War Centennial publication, decided that a documentary history would be of most permanent value as an historical record, and would provide a valuable collection of many first-hand accounts which had never been assembled. Although some previously published accounts have been included in this collection, many new descriptions of Civil War events in Carroll County have been discovered. These documents speak for themselves, and provide an unusual opportunity to understand the effects of the war on Carroll County as it was described by those who were living at the time."

Over the next 40 years, Tom LeGore, accompanied by his wife, Mary, gathered more and more Civil War material while residing in Carroll County but traveling widely to uncover leads. He contributed the stories he unearthed to this newspaper and spoke at a variety of venues including Civil War events at the Carroll County Farm Museum, the Historical Society of Carroll County, the Union Mills Homestead, and a Civil War symposium run by Carroll Community College and the Historical Society of Carroll County.

Tom was busy during the summer of 2002 when Newt Gingrich and William R. Forstchen were writing "Gettysburg: A Novel of the Civil War." The authors, learning of Tom's expertise during their local research for the book, approached him for help and later relied heavily on information he provided. He offered historical reference points they could incorporate in the novel which featured a battle plan General Robert E. Lee might have pursued but never did. The authors found Tom's help "invaluable" and were "in awe" of his understanding of Carroll's countryside, the actual battle plans of Generals Lee and Meade, and other details of the Gettysburg campaign. When the novel was published in the summer of 2003, the authors included Tom in several of their book signing events.

By the 140th anniversary of Corbit's Charge in June 2003, Tom had located a sizable number of descendants of the 1st Delaware Cavalry who participated in the June 29, 1863 gallant but futile Corbit's Charge. He and Westminster Mayor Kevin Dayhoff welcomed the descendants and others at the first Corbit's Charge Commemoration which was held in front of the Carroll County Courthouse and on the nearby grounds of Ascension Episcopal Church on Westminster's North Court Street.

Carroll's Tourism Bureau recognized Tom the same year for his contributions in showcasing and promoting the County's rich Civil War history. His self-guided walking tour of places in Westminster associated with Corbit's Charge was available to Civil War enthusiasts who stopped by the Tourism Office.

In 2006 Tom worked with Westminster's mayor, Common Council, and the County Commissioners to erect a Corbit's Charge monument near the Carroll County Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Willis Street next to the Courthouse. The large marker honors "the brave men of the 1st Delaware Cavalry and the vanguard of Gen. J.E.B. Stuart's Cavalry who fought and died during this engagement in the Gettysburg Campaign. We commend the citizens of Westminster for selflessly opening their hearts and homes to care for the wounded."

Each year since 2003 as June 29 rolls around, the Pipe Creek Civil War Round Table continues to commemorate Corbit's Charge. After the initial event, more space became available on North Center Street opposite the Carroll County Office Building. A small cavalry encounter took place there one year using horses brought just for the occasion. In 2009 attendees were treated to an inspiring speech delivered by Michael Crutcher, a well-known Frederick Douglass reenactor. The real Douglass spoke in Westminster back in 1870. The Round Table tried to add something new for the public to enjoy at each Corbit's Charge event and Tom played an important role in all of them. Sadly, he passed away in November 2017 and was laid to rest in Evergreen Cemetery in his beloved Gettysburg. The opening ceremony of the Corbit's Charge event in 2018 included a tribute to him and his preservation of Carroll County's wealth of Civil War history.

This year the public is once again invited to the Corbit's Charge Commemoration. It will include walking tours, a band concert, activities for children, informative lectures for adults, exhibits of Civil War militaria and Civil War-era clothing. As always it is a free and fun experience for the entire family.

Mary Ann Ashcraft is a volunteer at the Historical Society of Carroll County.

Image 1: Submitted photo

Caption: Tom LeGore, dressed in Civil War-era attire, speaking with Michael Crutcher, a Frederick Douglass re-enactor, in front of the Opera House Printing Office on Westminster's East Main Street in 2009. In October 1870, the real Douglass spoke at the same location when it was called Odd Fellows Hall or Westminster Opera House..

Image 2: Submitted photo

Caption: Corbit's Charge Memorial marker paying tribute to the Union and Confederate cavalrymen who died during Corbit's Charge on June 29, 1863, and the citizens of Westminster who cared for the wounded from the battle.