Admiral Carey Foundation Partners With The VFW, The Saving Hallowed Ground Foundation, And The World War One 100th Anniversary Commemoration Commission In Their World War One Memorial Tree Planting Program

The National World War One Centennial Tree Project, of which this memorial project is a part, follows suit of a very successful program that began at the end of that Great War in 1919. The original program planted Oak trees around the world as memorials commemorating soldiers who died during World War I. That program began in 1919 and continued into the post war years. As a part of the United States National World War One 100th Anniversary Commemoration Commission events recognizing America’s role in that “Great War”, the Commission is sponsoring a Memorial Tree Planting Program throughout the United States, and in participation with the “Saving Hallowed Ground” program that manages these memorial tree plantings, two memorial trees have been planted at the Berlin, Wisconsin VFW Post 2925 honoring the service of Sergeant Robert Emmett Carey, 325th Army Remount Squadron, Calvary and Corporal John Eugene Carey, First Army Corps Cavalry. Both men were born in Berlin, WI and served in France in World War I. Sergeant Carey was a United States Army Remount Service, World War One Memorial Commemorative Commission (the USA entered into WWI in 1917 whereas Europe began fighting in 1914 and thus there are European 100th Anniversary commemorative efforts that have been taking place since 2014) these two Memorial Trees Planting is in Berlin, WI and note to recognize the patriotic military service of these two Berlin, WI men for almost 100 years. Sergeant Carey’s son, Rear Admiral (Ret.) James Carey, who grew up in Berlin and graduated from Berlin High School in 1956, has spent two years serving on the Board of Directors of the USA World War One 100th Anniversary Centennial Memorial Tree Planting Program. He is the sponsor officer with a Memorial Tree through this program. The Admiral Carey Foundation: www.AdmiralCareyFoundation.org. Further details on the USA efforts commemorating World War One are available on the Commission’s website which can be viewed at the following URL: http://www.worldwar1centennial.org and additionally information regarding the National World War One Centennial Memorial Tree Planting Program can be found at the Saving Hallowed Ground website: http://www.shgb.org/tree/1-centennial/memorial-tree-plantings/dtl/. Also, the Berlin Area Historical Society (BAHS) has been particularly helpful in this World War One Memorial effort. Their research with regard to both Carey men’s World War One military service was very significantly helpful in that the military records of all World War One soldiers were destroyed in a large fire at the Military Personnel Records Archives in St. Louis, MO in the 1970’s. Details and photos resulting from their research are shown below and further information regarding BAHS is available on their website at www.BerlinAreaHistoricalSociety.com.

Of interest, both men were born in Berlin Wisconsin in the late 1800’s, where the Carey Family were known as significant horsemen and horse racers and trainers. At the time, there was a large racetrack in Berlin, WI and the family had large horse stables and both men raced there. It is their expertise and proven experience in horse training and horse racing that undoubtedly led to their both serving in the cavalry in the Army in World War One. Further details regarding their horse training and racing years are available through the Berlin Area Historical Society and it’s website URL shown above. While Sergeant Carey had to eventually leave horse racing and training due to declining eyesight, Corporal Carey remained in those endeavors for his entire life, keeping stable at the Winnebago County Fairgrounds in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and racing into his ‘60s and training well into his ‘70s.

Two women, Barbara Selletti and Sara Pilling, who serve as Saving Hallowed Ground Program Advisors, created the National Centennial World War I Memorial Tree Project. Their goal is that these trees become living reminders of the sacrifice made by American soldiers who died in both World Wars. The trees have been planted on both sides of the highway across the country and around the world. When the project was passed on to Saving Hallowed Ground [SHG], this goal was passed on, too. The first SHG National World War I Centennial Memorial Tree was dedicated on September 11th, 2016 at Veteran’s Park in Wayne, Pennsylvania, in the United States. This tree is a White Swamp Oak, (Quercus bicolor) and was donated by Chanticleer Gardens, located in Wayne, PA. Tree #1 was dedicated to Wayne American Legion Post #668, which is named after Post Members John Bateman and Johnathan Gallagher, who paid the Ultimate Sacrifice during World War I. Their mothers were instrumental in the Gold Star Mothers Association, which was an organization that advocated for a federally sponsored pilgrimage for mothers, wives, and daughters who lost family members to the war in Europe, and had been buried at sea. This was a successful program where 6,693 women were able to travel to Europe to pay their respects to their loved ones.

Details and the history of VFW Post 2925 in Berlin, WI are available by clicking: http://jamesjcarey.us/docs/AJJCFWWIHistoryofVFWWellsPost2925.pdf. There are also significant and interesting details and photographs regarding the military service of Sergeant Robert Emmett Carey and Corporal John Eugene Carey in the information posted below, along with photographs of the actual tree plantings by Officers of VFW Post 2925. These Memorial Trees have been officially registered with the World War One Commission and their Saving Hallowed Ground Memorial Tree Program and may be viewed at http://www.savinghallowedground.org/centennial-tree-planting-project and then clicking on the locator symbol in the Wisconsin portion of the Locator Map. The Official Registration Tree Tags are shown below and these tags have been mounted on markers and placed at the base of their respective trees so that all who visit are aware that these trees are an official part of this National World War One 100th Anniversary Memorial Program. The Official Dedication of both trees was held on October 31st, 2016 at VFW Post 2925, the 124th Anniversary of Sergeant Carey’s birth in Berlin, WI. Sergeant Carey was one of the Founding Charter Members of VFW Post 2925 in 1945 and this is credited for the official charter number being VFW Post #2925. Corporal Carey joined John and other VFW Post members that were members of VFW Post and remained members until their deaths in Berlin, WI, where both are buried in Oakwood Cemetery there, officially recognized as World War One Veterans. Of interest, the Oakwood Cemetery Gate was donated by a White Oak Memorial that includes a photo of the gate and the World War One Memorial plaque that designates it a World War One Memorial posted below. Additionally, right behind the gate and leading up to the Cemetery Chapel, 30 trees were planted following World War One that line the roadway on either side and are each individually dedicated to the 30 Berlin, WI men who died in military service during World War One. It is identified as Berlin Area Historical Society & Veterans Memorial Gate and these World War One Memorial Trees that now lead the way to the final resting places in Oakwood Cemetery, Berlin, WI of Robert Emmett Carey and Corporal John Eugene Carey.
Sergeant Robert Emmett Carey, U.S. Army


Corporal John Eugene Carey, U.S. Army


Location Of The Memorial Trees
Private Robert Emmett Carey in Berlin, WI prior to deploying to France with the 325th Remount Squadron in World War One

General John Pershing, Commanding General of all American Armed Forces in France in World War One, planting a memorial tree in 1919 at the end of that war.

This plaque is installed on the Granite Entry Gate that serves as an official Memorial to World War One in Berlin, WI. Further details regarding this Memorial are available from the Berlin Area Historical Society via their website: www.BerlinAreaHistoricalSociety.com

The World War One Memorial Gate to Oakwood Cemetery in Berlin, WI, made from granite mined at the nearby quarry that borders the cemetery, and erected as a Memorial to all the men and women from Berlin, WI who served in military service in World War One. Both Sergeant Carey and Corporal Carey are buried in this cemetery, with official military service plaques certifying their service marking their graves.

VFW Post 2925, Berlin, WI plants a Memorial Flowering Lilac Tree honoring Sergeant Robert Emmett Carey, a World War One veteran who served in France in the U.S. Army 325th Remount Squadron. Pictured left to right fulfilling their planting duties are the Post Bugler Brian Zamzow, Post Chaplain Mike Trampf, and Post Commander Rich Brey.

VFW Post 2925, Berlin, WI planting the Memorial Flowering Pear Tree honoring Corporal John Eugene Carey, a World War One veteran who served in France in the U.S. Army Co. C, FIRST Army Corps Cavalry. Pictured after planting the tree is Post Chaplain Mike Trampf.
Four Questions for Rear Admiral James Carey

"Ensure the memories of these brave men do not fade into history"

By Chris Mullen

Director of Public Affairs, U.S. World War One Centennial Commission

Rear Admiral James Carey has had a long career of public service, and is now the process of working on memorial preservation projects. He led us to ask about the importance of remembering the past, and the meaning of local WWI memorials in communities around the country.

You are working on a memorable memorial project involving a stand of memorial trees from World War One. Tell us about the project.

I am actually working on two projects in Berlin, VA, my old hometown. The first is the planning of 2 Memorial Trees on the grounds of the local VFW Post. In memory of my Father and Uncle, both of whom served in the Cavalry in France in WWI. That project is almost complete and has been done in close cooperation with the VFW, the Belton Area Historical Society (BAHS), and the Saving Hallowed Ground WWII Commission project providing registry of WWII Memorial Tree plantings. Both of these trees have already been planted and dedicated and registered with Saving Hallowed Ground, and only need the arrival of the tree identity tags from Saving Hallowed Ground to be completed.

My 2nd project is related to 3 existing VFW entities in Berlin, VA, one related to an organization formed after the war for WWII veterans and thus more of a history project, and the other two related to the WWI entities. Memorial Trees in this cemetery were ordered from local sculptors and dedicated to the memory of the WWI veterans. I will be seeking your photo of the dedication plaque, which is mounted on the gate, shortly.

The other VFW WW1 existing memorial is the 20 trees lining the cemetery roadway directly behind the entry gate and leading up to the cemetery chapel. There were 20 original trees planted and dedicated individually to the 20 Berlin, VA, men killed in WWI. Dubuque Disease wiped out the original trees, which have since been replaced by maple trees, and a VFW member recently made the restoration efforts that I am founding. The Aldie Carey Foundation, an endowed fund created with proceeds from the sale of the property, supports these efforts and has provided funding to help with the replanting of the individual landmark trees for each surviving veteran. These trees are currently on a large display board and are kept in the chapel, where of course they are not seen by very many cemetery visitors, and thus need to be placed by the individual trees.

While I am involved, the VFW is not trying and does not know exactly how we would identify military personnel in the Civilian Brotherhood Section. The project is to remove the trees that are not being used from their location, and the people are all from the local communities and do the day to day work on this important memorial restoration project.

What challenges have you faced in trying to make this project a reality?

I have been fortunate that while many people lose their home town after high school graduation, never to return, I have always maintained my ties there because the area and the people there were very important to my training and education that led to my success in adult life. I have been involved in other "memorial projects" there and thus had the contacts and experience I needed to get these projects to be considered and then brought to fruition. In particular, I have worked closely with the BAHS on several projects and given them three with the US Army and Cavalry based. In all the communities, the people are the Civilian Brothers and Sisters that I have crafted to serve all of the VFW post entities and activities.

The SHF has been invaluable and very much key in making all these projects happen as they do "what they say they will do." What advice would you give to others for other folks around the country who are starting their own VFW memorial site in their local community? My advice is to start with their local historical society and their local veterans organizations.

Obviously, VFW has application to the veterans organizations and also in a number of things that are historical, given its impact on our local community at the time and the impact it had on local history and local families, and key WWII memorials that later came into being. I have always been thankful for the quality and character involved in it by key local veterans and community leaders when I was growing up, and thus feel an obligation to "pay back" to my hometown for all they did for me that later helped me to succeed in my career.

Tell us about your own background, and your own personal connection to World War One.

Both my Dad and Uncle served in France in World War One. Both were farm hands and only rose to officers prior to the war being essentially worked as being assigned to country units. I was raised playing with my Dad's WWII VFW Brownie, until one day when I was a little kid—the helmet [old iron and very heavy] and gas mask and leggings, etc. And from that time, I was able to talk to both my Dad and Uncle about their service, but I learned much more from a local book published following WWI that listed all the men and women who served in that war, along with their photos and a roster of their military service.

This was provided by the BAHS and was in MEMORIAL HELP in that all the military records of all the VFW soldiers were deployed in a film in the military personnel archives right in St. Louis in the 1980s and has never acquired copies of those service records and the VFW post could only get Green Laws and Muster Rolls but never the records that I was able to find.
Later in life, after a 35 year Navy career, I founded the Rear Admiral James C. Cary Foundation, dedicated to programs and projects in support of military veterans and their sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters, and nieces and nephews. Further details on those efforts are on the foundation website: www.AdmJamesCaryFoundation.org

All of us are aware of the sacrifice of those who served in our nation’s military. It is important to remember them ALL MILITARY VETERANS because they came a time in our nation’s history when they stepped forward at a time of national crisis and said “Take me, I am willing to put my life on the line to ensure that my children and grandchildren, my family, and friends, and all Americans will continue to be able to live in freedom and liberty.” This is a HUGE sacrifice that these men and women made—veterans of the Revolutionary War and onward on in World War One and Two, Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and every other threat to our nation. All of these men and women had the same chance to have a long life and their own families and a chance at happiness just like everyone else, but they came forward when truly every person threatened our nation and stepped forward to put their lives on the line for all of us.

As a nation we are to maintain our national dignity and gratitude, we absolutely must not fail to be foregiven for our continued commitment to the memory of these brave men who served in our behalf and the men of them who gave their lives for the rest of us. Given that this is the 100th Anniversary Commemoration of World War One, described at the time as “The Great War,” this is our chance to step up to the plate and ensure the memories of these brave men do not fade into history and that the sacrifices established 100 years ago in gratitude for their service are not allowed to fall into despair and faded memories. We owe them so much more than that, and this is our chance to show what we’re made of just as they showed us what they were made of 100 years ago.