PP Bliss Gospel Songwriters Museum Annual Newsletter

www.ppbmuseum.org | May 2017

Bliss Cenotaph

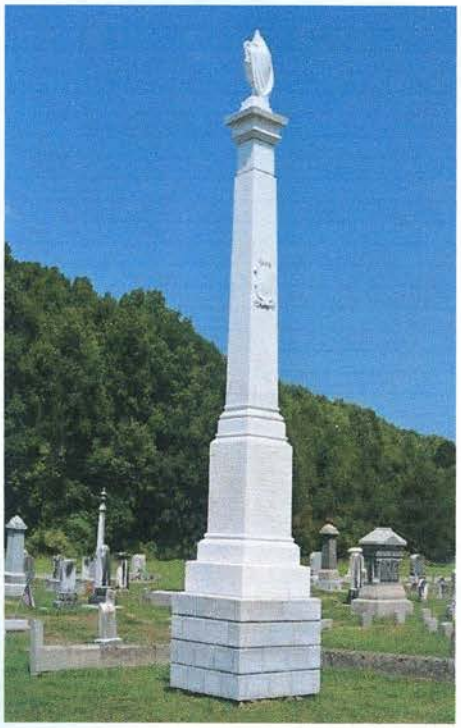
By: David Lenington

"Over three thousand Sunday Schools, including more than 500,000 scholars, in this country, England, Scotland, Ireland, and Canada had contributed nearly 12,000 dols. for the monument and the education of the two orphan children of Mr. Bliss."[1]

The draped urn at the top of the cenotaph is "a reverential and softening acknowledgment of death." It also signifies "the partition between Earth and the heavens."[2]

P. P. BLISS AND HIS WIFE, THE SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRONICLE, (London: Sunday School Union, August 10, 1877), page 69.

[2]September 2, 2016 e-mail from Douglas Keister.



Bliss Cenotaph
Rome Cemetery
Rome, Pennsylvania

Museum Annual Meeting

Please join us on Sunday, June 18th at 3PM in the Rome Park for a gospel song concert by a Mennonite Men's Accapella Quartet and hymn sing along. Bring your own lawn chairs, family & friends. We will provide beverages and cookies. Please feel free to extend your stay by bringing along a picnic supper.

Blissful Reading

The addition of an official Little Free Library to the museum front porch put Rome on an international map of more than 50,000 little free libraries in over 70 countries. The library was created and placed by Guy Abell this past year. It contains books for children and adults. Please feel free to stop by and take a book. Visit littlefreelibrary.org for more information on this fast growing library movement.

Belated Birthday Celebration

The traditional date for our annual Bliss Birthday Celebration has been changed this year due to the schedule of the performers. Join us on Saturday, **August 12th** at North Rome Wesleyan Church. The Aversboro Road Baptist Church Music Team under the direction of Tim Stevens will be performing at 3 PM. Please join us for what is sure to be an entertaining and inspirational time of fellowship.

President's Message

By: John Histand

About My Father's Business

Greetings to our supporters and friends,

"How are you today?" So often we have been asked or have asked someone we meet this question. Glibly we may answer "good" or "fine". If we knew we just had a short time to live or the person we were talking to would be taken into eternity by a tragic accident, how different might our response be?

The 12 year old child Jesus after being questioned by His parents when they couldn't find him for three days, responded "Didn't you know I must be about my Father's business?" Throughout our Lord Jesus' youth and manhood, we see that he kept his goal to do His Heavenly Father's will. We are especially grateful that throughout the conflict and passion of His betrayal, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection He was victorious.

Philip Bliss was raised by godly parents who guided his growing years wisely. At the age of 12, he also decided to follow Jesus by making a confession of faith in Him. His love of the Lord and music were hallmarks that carried him through many hard times. He worked hard at various farm and lumbering jobs as he grew and these led him to the Towanda and Rome Pennsylvania area. God's hand guided him to the Oscar Young home (still a residence on the south end of Rome) where he met his future wife, Lucy. Here in Rome he also formed friendships with J. G. Towner and his son, D. B. Towner. His musical abilities were strengthened through the teaching of J. G. Towner. Time rolled on, Philip and Lucy were married in Wysox, had two sons, Philip and George and God continued to bless their lives. They became associated with the work of D. L. Moody and later Daniel Whittle.

In 1876, Bliss after a very meaningful Christmas celebration with friends and family in the Rome area, realized he must also "be about the Master's work". He prayed with his two young sons Philip and George and then he and Lucy began the journey west by train in a blinding snow storm. After several delays because of mechanical problems and the storm slowing them down they approached Ashtabula, Ohio. Just before reaching the station a trestle bridge is crossed but due to the age and the snow the bridge collapsed sending many to their deaths. Though never fully substantiated, some said that Philip survived the fall but went back in the burning wreckage to try to save Lucy. What a tragedy! we say and rightly so, but they were about their Father's business and were trusting Jesus to carry them through to Glory. The sobering questions I ask myself and you are: Are you about your Heavenly Father's business? and Are you ready to meet Him?

Garden Tea, Tour & Concert

On September 10th the museum will be the site of a garden tea hosted by Deb Barrett. It will feature a museum tour, beverages & finger foods and the music of Jim & Marie Parks. Festivities begin at 3:30 PM with a museum tour followed by the tea and mini-concert. Ticket price is $5.00 per person and available by sending your request to P.P. Bliss Museum PO Box 84 Rome, Pennsylvania 18837 The tea is limited to the first twenty people to respond.

Homer Rodeheaver

By: David Lenington

Homer Rodeheaver
1912

Homer Rodeheaver (1880-1955)—"called 'Rody' by associates and reporters alike—had a genial, extroverted personality."[1] He served with evangelist Billy Sunday for twenty years as vocal soloist, song leader, and directed choruses "from a few hundred to as many as two thousand volunteers…."[1] "In the days before electronic amplification, Rodeheaver quickly discovered that his trombone could be heard when his voice or the piano could not. He often led congregational singing with his trombone, switching from playing to directing half way through the song and then allowing the trombone to hang on his elbow."[1]

He owned the Rodeheaver Company, "the nation's first record company devoted solely to gospel music."[1]

Homer Rodeheaver led the singing at the Bliss Centennial Celebration in Rome. *The Evening Times* reported that the choir was comprised of 500 voices.[3] Mr. Rodeheaver had "one section of the crowd, then another, then the choir, then those along the highway and in cars … each sing one line of a familiar" gospel song.[3]

The humorist, Will Rogers, said, "Rody is the fellow who can make you sing whether you want to or not…Everyone sings for Rody!"[4]

Homer Rodeheaver[2] Center with Trombone
Rome, Pennsylvania July 17, 1938

[1]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homer_Rodeheaver [2]Photo from *The Daily Review.* Copied with permission.
[3]*The Evening Times,* Sayre, Pennsylvania. July 18, 1938. p. 2.
[4]http://www.pulpithelps.com/www/docs/1175-9929

2016 Bliss Birthday Celebration CD Now Available

If you missed the last Bliss Birthday Celebration or just want to hear it again, it is now available on CD. It features guest speaker, Harold Dean Miller of Clarkson, Kentucky on P. P. Bliss's Life in Word and Song : Commemorating 140 years, 1876-2016. The cost is $5.00.

Spring Work Bee

April 15th was a day of cleaning and repair work at the museum, several of the board members gathered at the museum to complete a few repairs and ready the museum for the season. Restorations were made to the the side porch and stones were cut and moved into place. The inside also received an old-fashioned Spring cleaning

2000 Plus Songs

By: Guy Abel

Anyone reading this article already knows a bit about the "Music Men Of Rome", that amazing trio: P. P. Bliss, James McGranahan and D. B. Towner. The stories of each of these men and their music have been told many times and fortunately we have a small museum in the tiny town of Rome, PA dedicated to preserving their heritage.

P. P. Bliss is certainly the most famous of the trio because, even now a century after his tragic death, his hymns are still sung in churches and chapels across the nation. James McGranahan is less well known, but his collaboration with Bliss on the hymn "I will Sing Of My Redeemer" and his hymn "Showers of Blessings" keep his music in most church hymnals to this day. Perhaps Daniel Brink Towner is the least appreciated of the three and, in fact, the only hymn of his that many of us know is "Trust and Obey".

According to the legend, D. B. Towner overheard the words trust and obey at one of Dwight L. Moody's evangelistic meetings, and shared the words with his friend, John Sammis. Sammis then wrote the five verses of the hymn, and D. B. Towner composed the music.

What is even more amazing is that this is just ONE of the 2000 plus musical compositions that Towner wrote, far more than Bliss and McGrahan combined, ever created. Bliss is estimated to have written about 300 songs. All three men were greatly influenced by J. G. Towner,

Daniel Brink Towner

Daniel's father, and the teacher and muse of both Bliss and McGrahan. It is claimed that J.G. Towner was moved to tears when he first heard his son sing, and soon named him the "the wonderful boy bass".

Over a long career as a writer, singer, conductor, and teacher D.B. came to the attention of Dwight L Moody. Moody and Ira Sankey made up what was probably the most famous evangelistic team of the mid to late 1800s. They proceeded to take the music of the music men of Rome around the world on their many international crusades.

While there is no question that Mr. Moody. was a great evangelist, he was also an opportunist, salesman, entrepreneur and perhaps, con man. After he returned from his last overseas foray, he started what was known as the Moody Bible Institute. He soon hired D. B. Towner to be the music director of the organization. Both of these events were created just in time to take advantage of the 1893 Columbian Exhibition,also known as the Chicago World's Fair. The Columbian Exhibition was a huge success attracting over 27 million visitors in six months. Right in the middle of the midway, between the Ferris Wheel and Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, Moody erected a large tent with plenty of seating, short religious talks and lots of gospel music, for the foot weary visitors.

As anyone who has attended a huge event, a comfortable seat and a little music in the shade is a blessing indeed. D. B. Towner was in charge of most of the music and it is claimed he wrote a new musical composition every day for six straight months of the show. People who visited the tent were given free tickets to attend gospel music events in churches, arenas and stadiums throughout the city. Each night there would be several services featuring sermons by the best preachers in America and lots and lots of gospel music. Some of the most popular singing groups would make three or four stops at different venues each night. The Columbian Exhibition attracted 27 million visitors to see the products of ' modern America'. The Moody Bible institute claims 2 million visited, participated in the various gospel programs, and virtually all of them heard and sang some of D. B. Towner's 2000 songs.

After the great show was over, D.B. Towner continued as the music director, composer elite, and heart and soul of the Moody Bible Institute which still exists today.

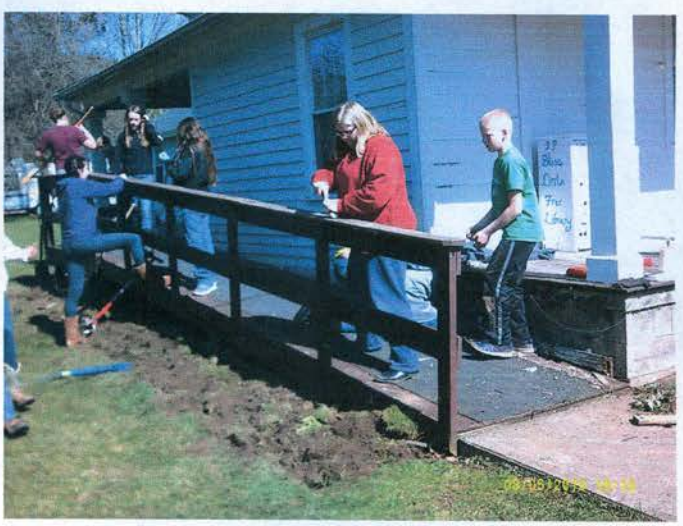
Student Volunteers

On Thursday, April 13th sixth and seventh grade students from North Rome Christian School descended on the museum. As part of their annual community service day, students gave the outside of the museum a much needed face-lift. Under the direction of teachers, Jim Wells & Brent Benjamin and museum board member, Myron Histand & his wife, Esther and Deb Barrett, the students painted and removed unsightly bushes and weeds. After scraping the peeling paint from the ramp railing, students gave it a fresh coat of paint. The cement porch foundation was painted in preparation for new lattice. A new planting area was created along the ramp. Students also scraped and primed the left rear corner of the museum. Several students unearthed two walkways on the ramp side of the museum. We are speculating that one originally lead to the Bliss outhouse. Their hard work has netted the museum many compliments.

Note the newly uncovered stone walks.

The challenge of digging out a stubborn bush took students about 3 hours to complete.

Digging out a new flower bed.



Scraping the ramp railing.

Museum Hours

Saturdays 1 - 4PM
May 27, 2017
June 10 & 24, 2017
July 8 & 22, 2017
August 5 & 19, 2017
September 2, 2017
OR
Open By Appointment
570-247-2228

Save the Dates

June 18th Annual Meeting

August 12 Belated Bliss Birthday Celebration

September 10th
Garden Tea Party
with Jim & Marie Parks

September 16th & 17th
Heritage Festival in Troy

Items for Sale

Music Men of Rome,
book...*$20.00*

Bliss and Tragedy,
book.....*$15.00*

Museum
Booklet……..$2.00

Gospel Hymns,
pamphlet.....*$4.00*

2010 Concert CD: A Tribute to the Music Men of Rome……..$5.00

2011 P.P. Bliss Birthday Celebration Concert: Carrie Hooper, Soprano and Dr. Bill John Newberg, Pianist...$5.00

2016 Bliss Birthday Celebration featuring Harold Dean Miller……..$5.00

Museum members receive a 10% discount on items. Please add $5.00 for shipping and handling. Please make checks payable to PP Bliss Museum. We are unable to process credit card payments.

Museum Membership

Your annual membership is important to our continued operation. Please join us at one of the suggested levels.

Single Membership-----$15.00

Family-----$25.00

Church------$30.00

Business-----$50.00

Thank you for your continued support.

Name:_____
Address:_____
_____
_____
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Church _____ Business ____

Please make checks payable to
PP Bliss Museum.
P. O. Box 84
Rome, PA 18837