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Name Calling: It's What's Not There That Matters

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Abstract

The article in the *Adams Sentinel* May 17th, 1863 was innocent enough.

David McConaughy, prominent local lawyer, moderate Republican and progenitor of the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association was passing along a simple request. "I am very anxious to have a collection of trophies and interesting relics from the Battle-field of Gettysburg," Margaretta Meade wrote to McConaughy. The famed General's wife was appealing to Gettysburg to create one of the central attractions for the Great Central Sanitary Fair in Philadelphia that summer. [*excerpt*]

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Interpreting the Civil War: Connecting the Civil War to the American Public is written by alum and adjunct professor, John Rudy. Each post is his own opinions, musings, discussions, and questions about the Civil War era, public history, historical interpretation, and the future of history. In his own words, it is "a blog talking about how we talk about a war where over 600,000 died, 4 million were freed and a nation forever changed. Meditating on interpretation, both theory and practice, at no charge to you."

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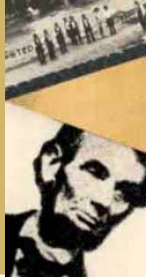
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TUESDAY, MAY 13, 2014

The article in the *Adams Sentinel* May 17th, 1863 was innocent enough.

David McConaughy, prominent local lawyer, moderate Republican and progenitor of the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association was passing along a simple request. "I am very anxious to have a collection of trophies and interesting relics from the Battle-field of Gettysburg," Margaretta Meade wrote to McConaughy. The famed General's wife was appealing to Gettysburg to create one of the central attractions for the Great Central Sanitary Fair in Philadelphia that summer.

"I am sure," Meade continued, "that you will agree with me in thinking that a collection, coming from a place, which will always be memorable in the history of our country, will be an object of great interest and curiosity."

And Gettysburg responded.

McConaughy traveled the town. Reading his list of signatories in order is like walking Gettysburg's streets door to door. First, McConaughy climbed Seminary Ridge and had Dr. Schmucker and Dr. Krauth at the Lutheran Seminary. Then he returned to the center of town, rounding the Diamond and garnering support from aging tavern owner John H. McClellan, shopkeepers John L. Schick and George Arnold along with newspaper editor John T. McIlhenny. Down Baltimore Street, McConaughy met the Fahnstock Brothers. Ricocheting across the town, the journey ended on the campus of Pennsylvania College, where professors Huber, Muhlenberg, Stoeber and Jacobs signed their names.

Through that journey across the borough, gathering the names of nearly every upstanding moderate and Republican town leader, one name was conspicuously missing: David Wills.

A missing name might not seem earth shattering at first. But there might be more to the omission than simply missing Will's door, forgetting a street in town. McConaughy after all lifted the heavy knocker on Joel B. Danner's front door, spitting distance from Wills' home and office.

The date of Margaretta Meade's request and McConaughy's response shed a bit more light on the



Perhaps Lincoln left behind some sour grapes at the Wills House in 1863.

question. The wife of the great hero General of Gettysburg wrote McConaughy on April 1st; the local lawyer replied with his attached list of supporters almost immediately. But the note wasn't published in the *Sentinel* until May 17th.

The letters appeared May 17th, long after the call and long after shells need be collected. But it *did* appear just 7 days *after the Adams Sentinel* briefly announced that, "Persons having articles for the 'Great Sanitary Fair,'" could drop their wares and goods at, "the general depository for the county." And that depository just so happened to be, "at the house of David Wills, in the Borough of Gettysburg."

McConaughy would not be outdone. Wills had his laureled Cemetery; McConaughy had his prestigious Memorial Association.

And if David Wills' wife was grasping for the honor of coordinating the county's support of the war effort, McConaughy would at least leave a breadcrumb trail of evidence that *he too* deserved some of the accolades and credit.

Even a simple request for help, a fundraiser to support the troops, can get perverted by petty local politics.