

Knights of Pythias Honor Hero Who Saved Lives

Fraternal & Charitable Order rededicate Monument to Peter
Woodland

Saturday, October 26, 2013

The Order of Knights of Pythias, a great international, non-sectarian fraternity, and first fraternal organization to receive a charter under an act of the Congress, joined by members of Congress, State and Local Office honors a heroic member of its order who saved many lives at a rededication ceremony, Saturday, October 26, 2013 at 12:30 p.m., at Bayview-New York Bay Cemetery, 321 Garfield Ave, Jersey City, New Jersey, 07305 announced Past Deputy Supreme Chancellor (PDSC) Sir David Peltzer who chairs the committee organizing the effort. "Peter Woodland, a Pythian and member of Hector Lodge No. 49, of Philadelphia, worked as an assistant supervisor during the building of the Hudson Tubes connecting Jersey City and New York City beneath the Hudson River on July 21, 1880 when he sacrificed his life to save others when a blowout (escaping air) during the construction that day. This rededication project is the result of a visit to the cemetery by a group of Pythians who read about Woodland. Finding the Monument in such poor condition, they initiated this project to refurbish and rededicate this monument to our fallen brother."

"Brother Woodland, a member of our Order in its infancy, truly lived by our principles of Friendship, Charity and Benevolence," added David Peltzer "Working 60 feet below the surface of the riverbed, Woodland heard what New York Sun reporters called "the shriek of escaping air, "and shouted for fellow laborers to "make for the lock!" Eight men reached the air chamber and safety. Woodland then closed the door. The saved men could only watch at the bulls-eye opening as water and silt rushed in to drown Woodland, who stayed behind and died with the other trapped men. The death toll of 20 would have been far higher if not for the heroism of assistant supervisor Brother Peter Woodland."

Woodland's heroism and the sacrifices and endurance of other sandhogs were recognized in front page news stories of the period," explained Peltzer "Accounts of his heroism and self sacrifice appeared in newspapers across the country. He was deemed a Martyr." Following his death and recovery of his body and finding that the Woodland family lacked the funds to provide for proper burial, The Order Knights of Pythias undertook a fundraising project that encompassed all of the Grand Lodges and subordinate Lodges of the Order. The effort sought to recognize the heroism and self sacrifice of this Pythian Martyr.

This Pythian initiative raised sufficient funds to purchase cemetery property and erect a magnificent monument to his memory in the Bayview-New York Bay Cemetery. A procession and ceremony was held by the Knights of Pythias; the newspapers of that time reported that some 10,000 people attended the dedication.

Time and unforeseen events took a huge toll on the monument and grave site. A lack of attention left the monument badly damaged. The Knights of Pythias initiated the restoration effort with a Woodland Monument Refurbishment Fund campaign in 2009. The effort included the sale of commemorative coins and publication of the Peter Woodland Memorial Restoration Project brochure.

KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS

Founded in Washington, DC, in 1864, the fraternal order follows three distinguishing principles: Friendship, Charity and Benevolence. Domains of the Order exist in most states and provinces, and subordinate lodges are located in many cities and towns across the United States, Canada and Europe. Our order bases its lessons and builds its ritual largely on the familiar story of the friendship of *Damon and Pythias*. These historical characters lived about four hundred or more years before the beginning of the Christian era. They were members of a school, founded by *Pythagoras*, who was known as the father of Greek philosophy. Their loyalty to each other, the adventures that beset them, and the outcome of this noble friendship, form the basis for one of the most beautiful stories of history as exemplified in our ritual.

For more information, contact (516) 739-5000 or www.kopny.com

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Who: Knights of Pythias, Sandhogs Union of New York & New Jersey, Local & State Public Officials

What: Rededication of the Peter Woodland Monument

When: Saturday, October 26, 2013 at 12:30 p.m.

Where: Bayview-New York Bay Cemetery, 321 Garfield Ave, Jersey City, New Jersey 07305