

Martha Morgan Pierce  
Gravesite Marker Dedication Ceremony  
Walnut Grove Ceremony  
Meriden, Connecticut  
June 10, 2007

Introduction  
Irving D. Moy

On Sunday, June 10, 2007, members of the 14<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Volunteer Infantry in uniform and civilian attire conducted a dedication service for a marker at the gravesite of Martha Morgan Pierce, the wife of Joseph Pierce, the most renowned Chinese Civil War soldier, who fought with Company F in the original regiment with the Army of the Potomac from 1862- 1865. During the August 6, 2006 dedication ceremony of a Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) marker at Pierce's gravesite, Michael Kroll, Superintendent of the cemetery, mentioned that his wife was buried in the adjacent unmarked plot. The ladies of the 14<sup>th</sup> decided to raise funds for an engraved headstone. Donations by the great grand-daughters and members of the 14<sup>th</sup> Connecticut paid for the marker. Its installation was completed by the cemetery staff at no cost. The engraved stone reads,

Martha Morgan Pierce  
Wife  
+  
Died March 10, 1926  
AE 67

During the service attended by three of Joseph and Martha's great grand-daughters, Patricia Pierce Haight, Joyce Pierce O'Neill and Mary Ann (Mimi) Vargas, opening and closing prayers were offered by Paul and Lauren Martinello, introductory remarks by Irving Moy and the main dedicatory remarks were given by Susan Kirsch, who spoke about the strength and commitment of Martha, a white woman married to a Chinese man, had as a wife of a veteran in helping to acclimate him back to civilian life and the life they shared together in a new Nation created by the North's victory in the Civil war.

Peter Hrechanyk recited part of Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, while Julie Moy and Marge Bucholz assisted Susan Kirsch and Lauren Martinello in the singing of the hymn, "For the Beauty of the Earth." An honor guard at the Pierce gravesites consisted of Kevin Doyle, Paul Martinello, Peter Hrechanyk and Irving Moy. The service had great meaning for the great

grand-daughters for it brought them together after an absence of 15 years to be able to finally acknowledge and take pride in the unspoken “family secret” that they were Chinese also. It was with great pride and joy that the 14<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Volunteer Infantry was able to bring this about for the Pierce descendents.

Opening Prayer  
Paul Martinello

As we gather here today to dedicate this headstone for Martha Morgan Pierce, beloved wife of our very own Joseph Pierce of the 14<sup>th</sup> CVI, I remember the day we dedicated his GAR marker, just about a year ago, and how I felt privileged to participate in the first dedication of that memorial to his life and service during the Civil War. Now we have the honor of recognizing Martha’s place beside her husband. Together in life and together in Heaven, their faith in God and his prophet saw them through difficult times, brought Martha to Joseph and created for them, a happy life together. Let us pray now.

Heavenly Father, thou Great Spirit who rules in glory and majesty over worlds without end, beloved Father to us all, Thou to whom all thy children are alike, we approach Thee in prayer, in humble gratitude for the privilege of honoring a beloved wife and mother to her family. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we dedicate this completed monument that stands over the final resting place of a strong and loving woman, Martha Morgan Pierce. We memorialize also the children, grand-children and great grand-daughters of Martha and Joseph, some of whom are buried near this gravesite.

May this be a sacred place---a place of peace and contentment, a place where generations of not only family members and lovers of history, but of all racial descent can come and see where love and history overcame prejudice and opened eyes; to see two people accomplish great things in life together. We can only contemplate the goodness of a humble, faithful, compassionate soul, as Martha. May this final resting place and monument continue to be protected against the ravages of time and the elements. May we here contemplate the eternal nature of the family and sacred bonds, which bind parents and children together through all generations of time. All this we do, in abiding gratitude for Thy goodness and mercy, in fond remembrance of Martha Morgan Pierce, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

## Dedication Remarks

Susan E. Kirsch

There is so much we would like to know about Martha Morgan Pierce---at least I, for one, would have liked to meet her. To our knowledge no pictures of her have been identified, so we cannot see whether or not she was a great beauty. But what she looked like is a mere fraction of my interest. Students of history are well known for drawing parallels between past and present, and so please indulge me in some of those comparisons now.

In starting to learn something about Martha, the first thing that came to mind was the strength of character that she must have had to live her life the way she did. And in this regard, Martha's courage can be seen in her marriage to a man originally from half the world away. We can only speculate whether this generated gossip, jealousy or admiration. Those people lived in a time when non-conformity could provoke scandal, and then, as well as now, the world loves scandal! Do we have the strength to follow our hearts, informed by our intelligence and our values, even when others disapprove?

Martha was not Clara Barton or Mary Chestnut; she was only a child during the War of the Rebellion. She married Joseph Pierce when she was 18 and he was 34. Although Martha did not face the heavy responsibilities of maintaining a family and a household during the war, doing double duty, she probably had a different task in being a wife of a veteran, in binding up whatever wounds of spirit, mind and heart that may have remained for Joseph.

Since Joseph was in some way formed and changed by the Civil War, not to mention the other events of his remarkable life, I believe it is safe to say that the marriage of Martha and Joseph took some shape from his war experience as well. Martha was probably like many women, then and now, in her domestic life with a man who had survived and returned home from a war. Many of us are wives, sweethearts, daughters, and mothers and otherwise connected; and now, husbands, lovers, sons, fathers, and more, of those who have gone off to war. I hope we are more conscious of how to help those who have returned, how to love them just that extra yard to ease them, and to help them to a life at home with different duties and demands.

Irving Moy's words follow, *"This country is now engaged in a battle on several levels comparable still to those of Union and slavery that were fought over during the War Between the States in the 1860's. The relationship between National and state governments, how powerful the National government ought to be and its role in our lives and race relations are continuing relevant issues of this day. Part of the fascination the Civil War holds for many is the*

*promise of what this country would be. These issues must not be allowed to tear the “mystic chords of memory” and the bonds we have amongst us. We must not allow them to shake our faith in this promise, no matter our ethnic background, respective politics and religious faiths.”*

It must have been Martha’s strength, and her faith that helped her to survive perhaps the greatest loss parents can know...the passing of children before her; and we too can draw on that source during the trials of our lives. And so rather than focus on the times, circumstances and details that may separate us from Martha, for at least these few moments let us gaze steadily at how we may be similar. It is one of my fondest hopes that human beings have much more in common and far fewer gulfs of separation. I think that Martha did not see a stranger or an alien in Joseph; I think she saw what they had in common: love, faith, humanity and persistence. I wish to share a poem.

To My Dear and Loving Husband

*“If ever two were one, then surely we.  
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee;  
If ever wife was happy in man,  
compare with me, ye women, if you can.  
I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,  
or all the riches that the East doth hold.  
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,  
nor ought but love from thee, give recompense.  
Thy love is such I can no way repay,  
the heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.  
Then while we love, in love let’s so persevere  
that when we live no more, we may live ever.”*

Anne Bradstreet, 1612-1672

With these words we dedicate this grave marker to the memory of Martha Morgan Pierce.

Closing Prayer  
Lauren Martinello

Lord God, loving Father, holy is Thy name and renowned Thy compassion, cherished by every generation. May everything we do begin with Thine inspiration and continue with Thy saving

help. Let our work always find its origin in Thee and through Thee reach completion. We praise Thee with our lips and with our lives and hearts. Our very existence is a gift from Thee. To Thee we offer all that we have and are. Thine is the beauty of creation and the good things Thou hast given us. Help us to live each day joyfully in Thy name and to spend it in loving service, that as Joseph and Martha Pierce, we may sing Thy praises forever in Heaven. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who lives, and reigns with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God forever and ever. Amen.