

Who Was Peter Woodland? A Pythian Hero

We would like to bring to your attention this most important story about a fallen Pythian and hero of our order. This is about someone who was a member of our Order in its infancy and truly lived by our principles of Friendship, Charity and Benevolence. We would appreciate if you would take a few minutes to read this story and relay it to all your brothers and friends.

The building of a tunnel beneath the Hudson River began without fanfare on November 17, 1874, when a group of laborers, following the direction of former Union Army colonel and railroad tycoon DeWitt Clinton Haskin, began digging a circular excavation at the foot of 15th Street in Jersey City.

Recognized as a risky project it continued onward slowly for many years.

On July 21, 1880, a blowout (escaping air) claimed 20 lives during the construction of the Hudson Tubes connecting Jersey City and New York City.

The death toll would have been far higher if not for the heroism of assistant supervisor Brother Peter Woodland. Peter Woodland, was a Pythian and member of Hector Lodge No. 49, of Philadelphia.

Working 60 feet below the surface of the riverbed, he 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.

Woodland's heroism and the sacrifices and endurance of other sandhogs were recognized in front page news stories of the period. 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 it was determined that the Woodland family lacked the funds to provide for proper burial.

The Order Knights of Pythias recognizing the heroism and self sacrifice of this Martyr undertook a fundraising project that encompassed all of the Grand Lodges and subordinate Lodges of the Order.

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.

After a group of Pythian brothers read this story, they visited the cemetery and, finding the monument in such poor condition, they initiated this project to refurbish and rededicate this monument to our fallen brother.

We plan to rededicate the restored monument in the Spring of 2013.

We need your help and ask you to make a contribution payable to the KOP Humanitarian Fund (Memo: Woodland Monument Refurbishment Fund) by purchasing a commemorative coin for \$15 (antique brass) or \$50 (Limited Edition Gold Clad).

Please view the Peter Woodland Memorial Restoration Project [brochure](#) or send your request to:

Woodland Monument Refurbishment Fund
% Grand Lodge of New York
Knights of Pythias
2347 Jericho Turnpike
Garden City Park, NY 11040

For more information, call Grand Lodge New York at (516) 739-5000

Thank you!