



### Spring Training in the Pennsylvania Legislature

Since the early days of the Commonwealth's legislature, Pennsylvania's Representatives have come from a wide variety of occupational, educational, and political backgrounds. Many Members had other careers in addition to their legislative service; the individuals featured here had impressive careers in organized baseball. Celebrate this year's season with a look at some early

20th century all-stars, and some more recent Members as well. For many of these sportsman-legislators, details about their athletic careers are hard to come by; we've compiled as much as we can below.

**Ralph Tennyson Jefferson**

represented the 21st District of Philadelphia County from 1941-1942. Born in Texas and educated at Atlanta University,



**Indianapolis ABCs, 1921** (Photo courtesy of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum) – R.T. Jefferson, who played for the ABCs in 1921, is pictured here in the first row, far left.

**Frank E. Hoffman** (Allegheny, 1929-1934) – unknown teams

**Kenneth Gramley Haines** (Centre, 1939-1942) – Scranton Miners, Elmira Colonels, Williamsport Grays

**Jacob A. Elpern** (Westmoreland, 1937-1938) – unknown teams

**Ralph Tennyson Jefferson** (Philadelphia, 1941-1942) – Indianapolis ABCs, Brooklyn Royal Giants, Atlantic City Bacharach Giants, Washington Potomacs, Cuban Stars East

**Elmer John Kilroy** (Philadelphia, 1935-1942) – unknown teams

**Gaynor Cawley** (Lackawanna, 1981-2006) – Thomasville Tigers, Modesto Colts, Moultrie Colt .22s

**Russell P. Letterman** (Centre, Clearfield, Clinton & Lycoming, 1971-1990) – Pittsburg Browns (Kansas)

*Note: This list may not be exhaustive. If we missed anyone, please don't hesitate to share with us!*

Jefferson was an avid sportsman, active in football, baseball, track, boxing, and wrestling. After graduating from college, he became a journalist, going on to work as a salesman and a cabinetmaker. Throughout the 1920s he worked as a manager for several baseball teams in the Negro League, including the Brooklyn Cubans (1924), Texas Eagles (1925), Philadelphia Giants

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**Retiring and former Members of the PA House – We'd love to interview you!**  
**If you'd be interested in completing an oral history with us, please feel free to call or email us with questions or to schedule an interview!**

# Pennsylvania gains its first state park: Valley Forge

## *‘vested in the State of Pennsylvania, to be laid out, preserved, and maintained forever’*

Valley Forge National Historic Park is today a popular historical attraction, seeing approximately 1.2 million visitors annually. Schoolchildren across the United States are regaled with tales of the storied past of the ground where Washington walked and patriotism was born. The winter that the Continental Army spent at Valley Forge was notoriously difficult, with harsh weather and scarce provisions.

This excerpt from The George Washington papers at the Library of Congress (below) discusses efforts to keep track of the army’s meager supplies. But it took over 100 years after the 1777 encampment that made it famous before it was officially preserved. In 1893, former Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Henry K. Boyer put forward House Bill 727, “providing for the acquisition by the State of certain ground at Valley Forge for a public park, and making an appropriation therefore,” which was passed successfully and became Act 130 of 1893. The act covered the grounds, “on which the Continental Army under which General George

Washington was encamped in winter quarters at Valley Forge...including Forts Washington and Huntingdon and the entrenchments adjacent thereto.” Ten commissioners for the park were accounted for in the legislation, to be appointed by the Governor for a 5-year term.

Local officials and history enthusiasts had recognized the value of the land at Valley Forge as a memorial for those who served the revolutionary cause. One of the most well-known supporters of preserving the grounds at Valley Forge was Dr. Isaac Anderson Pennypacker, eminent physician and educator in southeastern Pennsylvania, who began advocating for the formation of a park there in 1842.

Dr. Pennypacker solicited backup from recognizable 19th century figures William H. Seward, Daniel Webster, and Henry Clay. Pennypacker did not live to see his ambitions become a reality, but his son later acted as one of the first commissioners for Valley Forge State Park.

After Dr. Pennypacker’s death, interest in the project continued,

and in 1877 the Valley Forge Centennial Association was formed by prominent local businessmen and officials to commemorate the historical, political, and military significance of the land surrounding the Revolutionary War encampment site. Interest peaked in this period largely as a result of the nation’s centennial commemoration of the war for independence, and the associated surge in popularity of President Washington as a figurehead of the “patriot generation.”



*Washington’s Headquarters at Valley Forge are pictured here during the state’s management of the national landmark.*

The Centennial Association, however, was unsuccessful in its petition to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for an appropriation to create a park at Valley Forge in 1878. Private fundraising efforts continued, and did facilitate some caretaking of the grounds. Valley Forge had its fair share of distinguished patrons, such as wealthy Pennsylvania native Mary E. Thropp Cone, founder of the Valley Forge Memorial Association. Philadelphia businessman Francis M. Brooke, descendant of Revolutionary War veteran General Anthony Wayne, also petitioned the Pennsylvania Legislature to establish a state park there in 1892.

*Head Quarters, Valley-Forge - Dec 24. 1777.*  
Parole: \_\_\_\_\_  
Commissary \_\_\_\_\_  
Every regiment is to draw provisions, to complete their rations, for to morrow; and the whole army being supplied up to that time, the Issuing Commissaries are then to make return, to the Commissary General of Issues, of all the provisions they have on hand.

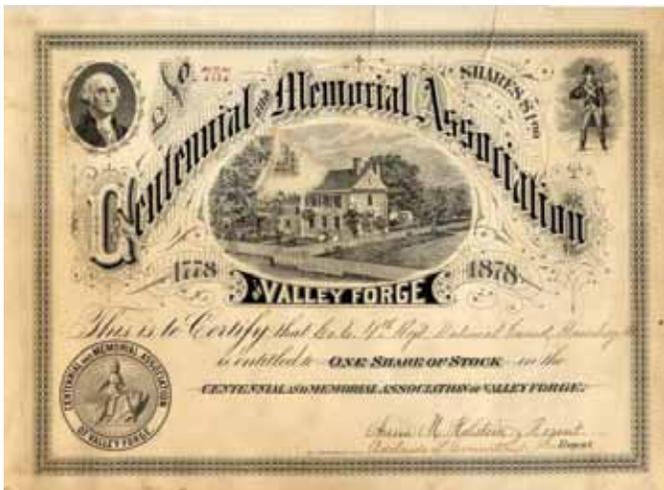
**Head Quarters, Valley-Forge, December 24, 1777. Parole --.**  
*Countersigns -- Every regiment is to draw provisions, to complete their rations, for to morrow; and the whole army being supplied up to that time, the Issuing Commissaries are then to make return, to the Commissary General of Issues, of all the provisions they have on hand.* Original held at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

But it was not until the House approved the acquisition of land at Valley Forge on May 30, 1893, that it would become the Commonwealth's first state park. The legislature held the Commonwealth responsible for this remnant of national history for over 80 years. In 1976, the state's holdings at Valley Forge were given as a gift from the Commonwealth to the United States as part of the bicentennial celebrations that year. Since then, Valley Forge National Historic Park has been managed by the National Park Service.



*A souvenir badge from the park, circa 1965.*

**More information can be found at [www.nps.gov/vafo/](http://www.nps.gov/vafo/).**



*Individuals who donated to the Valley Forge Memorial Association in the late 1870s would have received a certificate of donation like this one in recognition of their contribution to preserving the land at Valley Forge.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

**On May 26, 1764, Benjamin Franklin was “unanimously chosen Speaker and accordingly placed in the Chair,” according to the Legislative Journal of that day. He would serve one term as the 23rd Speaker of the Provincial Assembly. In total he spent 14 years as a member of the House and 15 years as its Chief Clerk.**



## Recent Acquisitions for the House Archives Library

- *If I'm Still Around, I Can't Be Dead* by Harris Ominsky (2000) (Biography of Joseph Ominsky, Philadelphia, 1935-1940)
- *Memorial Services...of Herman P. Eberharter* (1959) (Allegheny, 1935-1936)
- *Autobiography of Philip H. Dewey* (1933) (Tioga, 1921-1922)
- “*Read this and Sing!: For voice students, chorus and choir singers*” (1945) (Clyde R. Dengler, Delaware, 1957-1966)
- Report of the Committee Appointed to Investigate the Railroad Riots in July 1877
- Personal Papers of Martha G. Thomas, 1923-1926 (Chester, 1923-1926), Barbara McIlvane Smith, 2006-2010 (Chester, 2007-2010), and Jeff Coleman, 2001-2004 (Armstrong, 2001-2004)

**Do you know of any intriguing House stories that haven't been featured yet?  
Please share!**

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## Baseball *(Continued from Page 1)*

(1926-1928), Harrisburg Giants (1928-1929), and the California Giants (1930). He was active in party committees and regional associations before serving in the House.

**Kenneth Gramley Haines** studied economics and sociology at Penn State in the 1920s, going on to coach baseball and football in a few Pennsylvania high schools. From 1928-1931, Haines played baseball in the New York-Pennsylvania League before becoming superintendent of schools in Centre County and serving as Director of Farmers National Bank and Trust Company in Millheim, PA.

**Russell P. Letterman** played baseball for the St. Louis Browns in Pittsburg, KS. Letterman also worked as a barber before beginning his political service in the legislature.

**Gaynor Cawley** attended the University of Scranton and worked as a department store manager before picking up a career in baseball, pitching with farm teams for the Detroit Tigers. He later held careers in public works and business before serving in the legislature.



*Special thanks to the Archives of the Thomas County (GA) Historical Society*

### BASEBALL

Messrs. PRESTON and BOHN offered a resolution which was twice read, considered and adopted as follows:

Whereas, This Session of the Legislature is gradually coming to a close, and many of the Members are anxious for a little recreation, and

Whereas, There are many Members with previous professional baseball experience who have been anxious to participate in a baseball game with the Senate, and

Whereas, The ages of the Senators are such that they would be unable to stand the grind of a nine inning ball game, and

Whereas, The single members of this House have been issuing constant jibes at the married members with regards to sports, poker games and whatnot,

Now Be It Resolved, That the single members of this House of Representatives issue a challenge to the married members to a baseball game to be played at a place and time set by a committee to be appointed by the Speaker of this House; the loser of said ball game to treat the winner to a dinner at a place chosen by the committee on the part of the single and married members, it being definitely understood that said dinner is not to be at "Peanut Joe's."

*(Above) This playful House Resolution from May 5, 1937, was issued as a challenge for House members with baseball experience to show off their skill in a friendly game between legislators.*

*(Left) Rep. Gaynor Cawley is pictured here in Thomasville Tigers uniform. Cawley played baseball in the 1960s.*

