

Did you know.....(?)

The Hammonton First World War Memorial in Hammonton's Veterans Park has a secret.

The impetus for the Memorial came from the Chamber of Commerce, and especially from Thomas B. Delker who was the Publicity Chairman for the Chamber. Mr. Delker, Editor of *The South Jersey Star* newspaper, was involved in local politics as a councilman and a member of several boards. He devoted several column inches each week to news of the Memorial, appeals for names to be inscribed on the tablets, and printing of the names submitted so that additions or corrections could be made. This continued through most of 1920, up to a few weeks before the erection of the Memorial. William L. Hoyt of *The South Jersey Republican* newspaper was also heavily involved in this project.

Donations were solicited from businesses, organizations and individuals in Hammonton and the surrounding area as well as from Town Council. The Council, not being sure of the legal ramifications, asked for and received an opinion from the Town Solicitor, Mr. Joseph A. Corio of Atlantic City. His reply, dated Jan. 21, 1920 was:

“The body having the control of the affairs of any Town in this state may, in its discretion, pay the expense of the erection and completion of any soldier's monument to an amount not to exceed one tenth of the cost thereof”. (P.L. 1905).”

To this end, the Town appropriated \$250.00 to the Memorial.

The monument itself was constructed and erected by the O.J. Hammell Co. of Pleasantville. Constructed of South Carolina granite, the Memorial stands 13 feet tall to the top of the bronze eagle. It was designed to have bronze tablets on the face to detail the names of those who served, while tablets on the sides to note those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. As it stands now, only the front tablets are mounted. The names of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice are memorialized on a separate plaque located under the main plaque and on individual stone markers located around the walkways. The total of those who served is well over two hundred, from a small town of approximately 6,000. [Not surprisingly,] The list also contains the names of some young ladies who joined the war effort. The Memorial was erected in May of 1921 and dedicated on Memorial Day, May 30, 1921.

Now, as to the secret. At the time the Memorial was erected a MEMORIAL BOX was enclosed in the base. The box contained newspapers, coins, stamps, lists of Officers of various Clubs, Societies and Organizations, local and County publications, letterheads of businesses and other paper items of note at the time.

One wonders if, after 90 years, is the box still there, in what condition are the artifacts and documents, and does any town organization have documentation indicating a date for opening this Secret Memorial Box?

If you know, please get in touch with the Historical Society of Hammonton - our address is: 333
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From the files of the Historical Society of Hammonton