A BRIEF HISTORY OF US MILITARY VETERANS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

From the American Revolution through the current wars in the Middle East, University of Pennsylvania students, faculty, and staff have been members of our Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Navy. This booklet is a brief overview of some of those men and women of the Penn community who have served and defended our country.
REVOLUTIONARY WAR

John Peter Muhlenberg was a Penn student in the early 1760’s, eventually becoming a minister serving a congregation in Virginia. During the early years of the American Revolution Muhlenberg became a follower of patriot Patrick Henry. While preparing to go to war and bid farewell to his congregation Reverend Muhlenberg took his sermon text from the third chapter Ecclesiastes, which starts with "To every thing there is a season..."; after reading the eighth verse, "a time of war, and a time of peace," He then declared, "And this is the time of war," removing his clerical robe to reveal his Colonel's uniform. He served as officer in the Continental Army, fighting in the battles of Charleston, Brandywine, Germantown, and Yorktown.

WAR OF 1812

Samuel Jackson was born in Philadelphia, in 1787, the son of a pharmacist. He received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1803.

With the start of the War of 1812, Dr. Jackson joined the First Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry. The First City Troop is the oldest military unit in the US that is still in active service; members have served their country in the Revolutionary War through to Bosnia and Iraq. During the War Dr. Jackson and the First City Troop were involved in defending Baltimore and the Chesapeake Bay, as a defensive act to protect Philadelphia from the expected advance of the British forces. In 1827 Dr. Jackson joined the faculty of University of Pennsylvania medical school, where he remained until 1863.
CIVIL WAR

Many Penn faculty and alumni participated in the Civil War.

In December 1859 more than 200 students from the South withdrew from the Penn Medical School and returned South to continue their studies. This withdrawal was apparently motivated by John Brown’s body passing through Philadelphia.

Approximately 4,000 Penn alumni served in some capacity in the Civil War. 800 medical school graduates served as surgeons in the Union forces while more than 500 Penn graduates served as surgeons in the Confederate Army.

The Congressional Medal of Honor was established at the start of the Civil War to recognize the gallant actions of sailors and soldiers on the battlefield. That conflict alone produced 1,522 recipients of the Medal of Honor. Four of these winners were University of Pennsylvania alumni. One of these was William Robert Douglas Blackwood who graduated from University of Pennsylvania Medical School in 1862. As surgeon, Dr. Blackwood served with the 48th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment; he was wounded four times during the War. For his bravery at the battle of Petersburg, Virginia, in April 1865, Dr. Blackwood was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. The citation reads: "Removed severely wounded officers and soldiers from the field while under a heavy fire from the enemy, exposing himself beyond the call of duty, thus furnishing an example of most distinguished gallantry."

The number of University of Pennsylvania Civil War casualties has never been tabulated; a plaque dedicated in 1879 in College Hall commemorates the dead.
WORLD WAR I

Penn was operating as usual in the early stages of World War I, but when it became apparent that the United States would enter the war, the campus’ focus changed to preparing students to join the military.

As the war continued to escalate, the Penn campus became the site of military training exercises, with hundreds of students performing drills on the Quad while others participated in aviation training programs.

As part of the war effort, Base Hospital No. 20, whose officers, nurses and enlisted men were recruited almost entirely from the University, was set up in Chatel Guyon, France. The unit included medical officers, nurses, dentists, a chaplain, and more than hundred and fifty medically trained enlisted men. At Base Hospital No. 20 American and French soldiers as well as wounded German prisoners were patients. Injuries included those caused by gas warfare.
WORLD WAR II

In the late thirties, with many feeling US involvement in another war was inevitable; Penn’s R.O.T.C. unit seriously began physical testing of its members on the campus.

Penn president Thomas Gates volunteered the services of the University to the government, establishing "The University of Pennsylvania War Council." Thousands of Penn students, alumni, faculty and staff were involved in the war effort. Thousands more military personnel were trained in special programs carried out by the School of Nursing, the Moore School of Engineering and the University Hospital.

One such program for the Women's Army Corps (WAC) at the Moore School, trained women for work in ballistics research. Soldiers were taught Arabic, Chinese, Bengali, Hindustani, Russian, German, Spanish and Portuguese before heading overseas. Penn faculty conducted government sponsored research projects in such areas as "radar, the atomic bomb, and sub-surface warfare."

Penn students in parasitology conducted research to combat the malaria that could devastate soldiers serving in Asia and Africa.

The Penn University Hospital, with a history of service in both the Spanish-American War of 1898 and World War I, continued their efforts in World War II both at home and abroad. The US Army 20th General Hospital from the University of Pennsylvania was setup in Burma, continuing the tradition of caring for the dying and wounded American and British troops.
In the 1930s William Waldron Schieffelin Claytor pursued his graduate studies at Penn, becoming the third African American in the nation to earn a doctorate in mathematics. During the War Dr. Claytor served in the US. Army where he taught in the field of Anti-Aircraft Artillery.

A memorial service in May 1946, held in Irvine Auditorium, honored the three hundred and sixty-two members of the Penn

KOREA WAR

When the Korean War began in 1950, the campus of the University of Pennsylvania answered the call to service as it had past, during the other conflicts. At least of the Penn family saw active service in whom died in the War – the dead included of the Wharton School, the School of Mechanical Engineering. Campus blood drives were held to aid wounded soldiers, and admissions and registration rules relaxed to enable returning veterans to study under the G. I. Bill of Rights.
VIETNAM WAR

During the Vietnam War the University of Pennsylvania was a center of student activism - as much, if not more, than many of the other college campuses in the United States.

Penn students and faculty participated in the 1965 Washington March against the Vietnam War, which would occur on April 17. Teach-ins against the War were held in Irvine Auditorium. Petitions were signed calling for US withdrawal. On campus recruiting by Dow Chemical, the producers of napalm, and the CIA, were met with protests. The University Committee to End the War in Vietnam (UPCEWV) held rallies at Houston Hall. The draft propelled many of the protests. In 1969 students and faculty held a "Vietnam Commencement" in 1969 to commemorate those 1969 graduates who were expected to perish in the Vietnam War. At Hey Day in 1972, the University of Pennsylvania Marching Band was followed by protestors demonstrating against the war.

Despite the protests, members of the Penn community, either due to the draft or by volunteering, participated in the Viet Nam War.

Dr. Mary Ann Krisman-Scott served as a nurse in Viet Nam during the war before getting her doctorate in nursing at Penn. The mural honoring nurses at the corner of Broad & Cherry Streets includes a portrait of Dr. Krisman-Scott administering to the wounded in Viet Nam.
For more than two centuries military veterans have been a part of the Penn community. With the current wars our country is fighting, it is more important than ever for the University to recognize these men and women who have served their country and provide them with the support and services they need.

Complied by the Veterans@Penn Committee. The goal of Veterans @Penn is to provide support, resources, networking, and information for military veteran and active duty students, faculty, and staff at the University of Pennsylvania.

www.cis.upenn.edu/grad/veteranspenn.htm

Acknowledgements:
University of Pennsylvania Archives & Fine Arts Library
US National Archives
The Viet Nam War from the Delta to the DMZ