

ABOUT THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF MARYLAND

The German Society of Maryland was founded in 1783, 6 years before George Washington was inaugurated President of the United States. It applied to the General Assembly of Maryland for incorporation and the legislature enacted a law incorporating The German Society of Maryland in 1818. It served to assist immigrants from German speaking areas of Europe. Those areas included the four German Kingdoms of Prussia, Westphalia, Bavaria, Baden-Wurtemberg, as well as more than a hundred lesser sovereign entities, which in 1870 joined together to form the German Empire, now the Federal Republic of Germany. It also included German speaking areas of France, Switzerland, Austria, Poland and even Russia.

The story of the German Society has been told in its 1909 history by Louis P. Hennighausen, and the 1958 **Pioneers in Service** written by Klaus G. Wust. Its history for the past 60 years has yet to be written.

The mission statement of the German Society reads as follows: "The purpose of the German Society of Maryland is to preserve and promote the German heritage and traditions through educational, social and benevolent programs and to develop the unity and continuity of the German American community in the State of Maryland." The German Society consists of about 600 members. It is governed by a Board of Directors which meets quarterly and by an Executive Committee which meets 8 or more times per year.

For the past 25 years, the German Society has promoted the study of German language by high School students, by awarding \$5,000.00 per year for distribution among those Maryland students scoring in the top 10 percent in the National German Examination. It also makes substantial monetary awards to college students with majors and minors in German. In recent years, a summer program in Germany was paid for by the Society through its Gerhard Meinzer Scholarship Program. Honorees at our annual banquet have included many leaders in government, education, the professions, and business and community leaders who traced their ancestors to a German speaking nation.

Visit the German Society of Maryland on the web @ <http://www.germansociety-md.com/>

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* = past president

THE SGT. HENRY GUNTHER 100TH ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

Chairman:

Robert Wisch

Members:

Theodore J. Potthast, Jr., Esq., James D. Schaub, Ph.D., Anton Smoot, Brig. Gen. M. Hall Worthington, Jr.

Advisor:

Walter Mathers

THE BROADCAST OF THE SGT. GUNTHER 100TH ANNIVERSARY CEREMONIES

The ceremonies including the performance by the Dan Meyer Choir will be broadcast live from the cemetery on the internet radio station: **germanamericanradio.com**. Those who are unable to attend the ceremony in person can hear it on their computer, smart phone, or HD radio. The ceremonies will also be recorded and rebroadcast at various intervals on the internet station. It can also be heard by going to the website of **germanamericanradio.com** and by clicking the link which is located there. Thus, the ceremony will be heard around the world. germanamericanradio.com has completed 5 years of service to the community and has several thousand regular listeners. It primarily broadcasts German folk music and announcements of interest to the German American Communities in the Mid-Atlantic States.



The German Society of Maryland

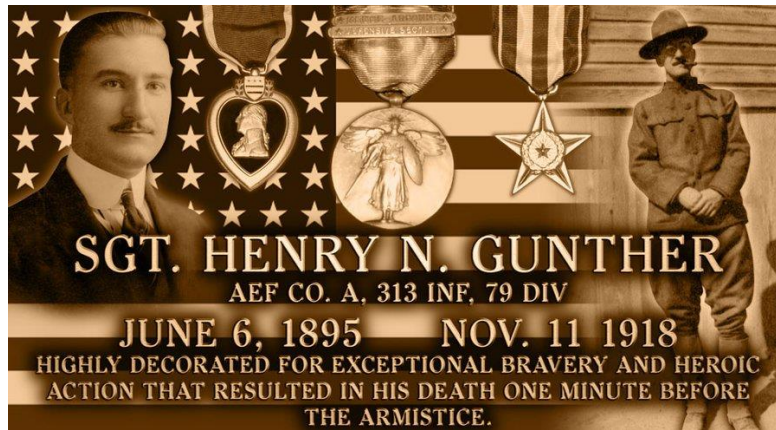
THE SGT. HENRY GUNTHER
100th ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION

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The German Society of Maryland in cooperation with
The Most Holy Redeemer Cemetery of Baltimore, will honor the memory of
Sgt. Henry Gunther on the
100th Anniversary of his death. The commemoration will be held on
Sunday, November 11, 2018, at 10:30 AM at the cemetery where Sgt. Gunther is
interred- The Most Holy Redeemer Cemetery at Moravia Ave. and Belair Rd. in
Baltimore City.



Above is a marker placed at the grave of Sgt. Gunther on November 11th, 2010. It was dedicated at a ceremony sponsored by the German Society of Maryland. The marker was designed by Michael DiCiurcio, Director of the Redemptorist Cemeteries of Baltimore, which provided the marker.

The master of Ceremonies for the occasion is Robert Wisch, a Director of the German Society and Chairman of the Committee. The speaker for the event is United States Park Service Ranger, Vince Vaise, Chief of Visitor Services, National Capital Parks-East. He is an historian well versed in WWI. The choir of Dan Meyer will sing a special song which tells the story of Sgt. Gunther. The song was written by Dan Meyer the choirmaster. The ceremony will take place at a tent in close proximity to the chapel. At the conclusion of the ceremony the honor guard will proceed to the grave of Sgt. Henry Gunther for the laying of wreaths.

All organizations having a connection to Sgt. Henry Gunther are invited to lay a wreath at his grave. In addition to the German Society, those invited to place a wreath include: his parish, Sacred Heart of Jesus; The Knights of Columbus; Veteran Corps Fifth Regiment Infantry; Veterans of Foreign Wars; American Legion; Wells Fargo Bank; City of Baltimore; Baltimore City Schools and the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Bells are scheduled to ring at 10:59AM, exactly 100 years after his death. The ceremony will conclude with a benediction by The Rev. H.J. Siegfried Otto. The ceremony is scheduled to last approximately one hour. The public is invited to attend. Members of the German Society are urged to make a special effort to attend.

THE STORY OF SGT. HENRY GUNTHER

Henry Nicholas Gunther, the last soldier to be killed in WWI, was born on June 6, 1895 to George Gunther and Lena Gunther (Roth). His grandparents emigrated from Germany in the mid 1800's. He grew up in East Baltimore and attended the public schools there. He attended Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church. Drafted, Henry served in the 313th Infantry Regiment, nicknamed "Baltimore's Own". It was part of the larger 157th Brigade of the 79th Infantry Division. His unit was advancing toward Meuse when it was announced that the Armistice would take effect at 11:00 a.m. on November 11. Despite this, an attack was ordered and, as his unit was advancing, they ran into a German division near the village of Chaumont-devant-Damvillers. He charged with his bayonet and was shot within a few yards of the German position. General Pershing officially recognized him as the last American death in his Order of the Day for November 11 announcing the Armistice. Gunther was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and his body was returned home to Baltimore in 1923. His story is told in Joseph E. Persico's **Eleventh Month, Eleventh Day, Eleventh Hour: Armistice Day, 1918 World War I and Its Violent Climax** (bio by: Paul F. Wilson) Since 2010, the German Society has honored Sgt. Gunther with a graveside memorial. This is the 100th Anniversary of Gunther's death. Look for details, check your email. See also: www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-md-cikelly-column-gunther-20170331-story.html (*The forgoing is from an article written by Robert Wisch, The Gunther Committee Chairman, in the Oct. 2018 Newsletter of the German Society of Maryland.*)

FINAL DAY OF WWI

The combatants agreed that an armistice would commence at 11 AM on Nov. 11, 1918. This created an opportunity for pitch battle until that moment in time. Gunther's group stood in the midst of violent noise and thick smoke, while a German machine gun was pouring bullets all around them. Emotions were high.

GUNTHER'S FINAL CHARGE

To defend his comrades, Gunther charged the German machine gun nest, with his bayonet fixed. It was his final act of bravery. He was shot dead within a few feet of the enemy guns at 10:59 AM, November 11, 1918. One minute later, the shooting stopped and silence fell upon the battlefield.



POSTHUMOUS HONORS

Gunther was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the highest medal awarded by the Army. (Second only to the Congressional Medal of Honor) Very few such medals were issued for bravery in WWI.



ERRONEOUS REPORTING

Numerous accounts in the media have contended that Gunther committed “Suicide by Combat.” Those writers ignored the circumstances which existed on the battlefield that final day. They ignored the noise and the smoke, the emotions and ferocity of the battle. Henry Gunther was a true hero and his reputation should not be tarnished.



THE INTEREST OF THE GERMAN SOCIETY

One of the missions of the German Society of Maryland is to preserve Maryland’s German American heritage and Sgt. Gunther is a part of that heritage. His parents were German immigrants. He grew up in a German and English speaking home on Eastern Ave. across the street from Patterson Park.

OTHER GUNTHER RELATIONSHIPS

He was a parishioner of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Highlandtown, just a few blocks from his home. He attended the Baltimore City Schools. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus, The Santa Maria Council. At the time he entered the army, he was working for the Bank of Baltimore, which through several mergers is now part of Wells Fargo Bank.



THE FRENCH HONOR GUNTHER

Citizens of the French City of Chaumont-devant-Damvillers, erected a monument to Sgt. Gunther near the spot where he was killed. The dedication took place on November 11, 2008. The two photos above on this page, depict soldiers in French Army Uniforms of 1918, guarding the monument. This inspired the German Society of Maryland to seek a marker for Sgt. Gunther’s grave in Baltimore.