

John A. Logan School
by Bruce B. Butgereit, Commander
Commandery of Michigan

Respect and Remembrance. This was the theme for the program conducted at the John A. Logan School in Detroit, MI, on Friday, September 11, 2009. The story though, doesn't start there nor does it end there simply because the ceremony has concluded.

The story begins -

On a trip to Detroit earlier this year, some friends took me past the John A. Logan School in Detroit because they knew I am a member of the General John A. Logan Camp No. 1 in Grand Rapids and that I might be interested in a school named after our Camp namesake. Naturally I was more than just a little interested when I saw the words Est. 1925 above the entrance to the school. Why would a school be named after a Civil War general so long after that was had ended?

After a couple of email exchanges with the school principal, Mr. Mauro Cruz, I drove over to meet with him and to obtain a small packet on the school's history.

I learned that the school had first been established in 1867 and so named by the returning soldiers who had served with General Logan. After several additions to the school in 1893 and 1903, the school was destroyed by fire in 1921. (Parts of that original building still exist after the being salvaged and bought for \$80 by a local resident to use in the construction of homes in the neighborhood.) The students met in portable buildings while the current building was being built and the school officially opened again in November of 1926.

I also learned, as I walked thru the halls and offices, that there were no images of General Logan or anything offering some history of the General's connection to Memorial Day. However, after a brief conversation about who I am and what we do as Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, I knew Camp 1 was about to adopt a school and change that.



I also saw the opportunity to have the Commandery of the State of Michigan, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, participate in this event in honor of General John A. Logan, an original companion of MOLLUS.

The question that verified our relationship was asked by Principal Cruz when he asked, "Can you help me get a new flag?" The wheels of opportunity turned quickly and I, without hesitation, replied in the affirmative.

I saw an opportunity to form a relationship wherein Camp 1 and the Commandery could partner with the National Woman's Relief Corps in getting the school a flag (for their 50' flag pole). I also envisioned an educational opportunity where we could provide living history programs on the Civil War for the students which would include an annual patriotic essay and poster contest. My vision of course included a nicely framed image of General John A. Logan and some history of Memorial Day hanging proudly in a conspicuous place in the school.

In preparation -

Knowing the long history of the National Woman's Relief Corps' involvement with schools thru educational and patriotic exercises, I excitedly shared the news of my visit to the school with my wife Marcia Butgereit, President of the National Woman's Relief Corps. It took only one phone call to the National Secretary of the WRC, Lurene Wentworth of New Hampshire, to start the process of purchasing a new flag for the school. Sister Wentworth promptly ordered a new 8' x 12' flag to be presented to the school as a gift from the Woman's Relief Corps. (It should be noted that Sister Wentworth used her own finances to purchase this flag.)

In an effort to brighten up the area surrounding the school's flag pole, Sister Jeannine Trybus (WRC) and Wenda Fore (DUVCW), both of Grand Rapids, joined Marcia and I and three of our grandchildren on Saturday, August 29th as we cleaned up the grounds and planted new mums. Also assisting with encouragement and a steady supply of water for the flowers was Marie Trybus, a long time resident of the neighborhood and cousin to Jeannine's husband Chet Trybus.



(Naturally, being in Detroit, we had lunch at the American Coney Island and then visited the Michigan Soldier's and Sailor's Monument in Campus Martius to show the grandchildren some history.)

September 11, 2009 -

The day began a little hazy and quickly turned into a glorious morning filled with sunshine. Around 8:30 AM, the participants in the program began to arrive. Seeing this event as an opportunity to also partner with other members of the Allied Orders, my invitation to attend

and assist in this event was readily accepted by Sgt. John S. Crosby Camp No. 427, Dearborn, SUVCW; Sarah Sterling Tent No. 3, Detroit, DUVCW; Champlin Corps No. 41, Grand Rapids, WRC; National Membership-at-Large, WRC; and Eva Gray Tent No. 2, Grand Rapids, DUVCW. Shortly before 9 AM, the 500 plus students of the school began to assemble in the area surrounding the flag pole.

The Color Guard was made up of Brothers from Camp 427 and included Keith Kushnir, Ian Kushnir, Howard Fite, Jerry Olson, Ed Binkley, Aaron Schrader, Jerry Radloff, and Rick Danes.

The program's speakers included the Executive Assistant to Detroit Mayor Dave Bing, Superintendent Teresa Gueyser of Detroit Public Schools, and State Representative Rashida Tlaib. Leading us in a moment of silence for the victims of 9/11 and for those currently serving in our nation's military was Sister Wenda Fore. Sister Jeannine Trybus read the words from a 1926 flag dedication ceremony conducted by the WRC. Also joining us was Sister Bennie Latimer, retired Detroit teacher and member of Tent No. 3

Presenting the flag to Principal Cruz and representing the office of the National President of the WRC was Sister Cindy Zerkowski, National Membership-at-Large and resident of Detroit. Assisting the students in raising the flag was Camp 1 Commander Bill Truss and my son Colin Butgereit (member of Camp 1 and the Commandery).

One of the highlights of the program for me was when Past National President of the Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, and retired teacher of the Detroit Public Schools, Sister Celestine Hollings led us in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. The sound of over 500 patriotic voices speaking in unison was a moving experience.

The program ended with a round of applause and thanks from the staff and students of the school. (It officially ended for all of the participants after we shared coffee and donuts in the Principal's office.)



In conclusion –

This event served many purposes on many levels.

By reaching out to this school, we met the challenge of perpetuating the memory of the Grand Army of the Republic and those who wore the Blue in the Civil War. As Allied Orders of the Civil War; the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, the Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War and the Woman’s Relief Corps, all worked together in the principals Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty. The event also allowed the continuance of the partnership between MOLLUS and the Allied Orders.

We answered the call of educating our youth in the proper respect for the flag of the United States. The call for patriotism was met in remembering the sacrifices that allowed us to raise the flag that morning. By “adopting” the John A. Logan School, we have committed ourselves to more than just a one-time event.

The future –

Plans are underway to create a John A. Logan School Color Guard. Working with local business Mindfield USA, who is designing a suitable image for use on t-shirts and sweatshirts, we will offer special opportunities for students to “earn” the privilege to serve in the Color Guard. As an introduction to learning more about the flag, each student received a copy of the SUVCW Flag Facts Flyer.

We will also return in May of 2010 to conduct educational programs on the Civil War and Memorial Day and its connection to General Logan.



Figure 1 National Woman’s Relief Corps Member-at-Large, Cindy Zerkowski, presents new flag to Principal Cruz.

Figure 2 Raising the new flag





Figure 3 Past National President of the Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Celestine Hollings, leads the students in the Pledge of Allegiance



Figure 4 Lowering the flag in honor of 9/11

Photo credits:
School by Marcia Butgereit; Garden Crew by Marie Trybus;
and Event by Cally Butgereit