



THE MISSIVE

The newsletter of the Michigan Commandery of the
Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States



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Michigan Commandery Announces Our Newest Headquarters!

Following some organizational and policy changes at the Plymouth Historical Museum, it became clear that we could no longer conduct our meetings there without paying an exorbitant fee for use of a room and our budget does not allow this. Because of this, a new meeting location was necessary and in the interest of keeping a historical connection to our Civil War past, Historic Fort Wayne in Detroit became an obvious choice.

On 28 June, 2008 the Michigan Commandery will hold its annual business meeting at Historic Fort Wayne. The meeting will start at 1:30 PM.

Note: Upon arrival, please let the guard know you are with MOLLUS and he will direct you to the building where the meeting will be held.

Restoration efforts have been underway at HFW for years under the direct involvement of the Historic Fort Wayne Coalition (for more on this 501(c)(3) organization go to: www.historicfortwaynecoalition.com/) and if you haven't been to the Fort in some time, you will be surprised as to what that group has accomplished in preserving and renovating one of our nation's last surviving star (shaped) forts. I also believe the Commandery can become an ally in the effort to preserve and promote the Fort thru an annual contribution to the Coalition.

At this meeting, I would entertain a motion to contribute annually to the Coalition and to the Plymouth Historical Museum for the sole purpose of helping maintain the Lincoln

room exhibit as it does relate directly to our 16th President and our Order's purpose.

In keeping with our tradition of meeting for lunch before our meetings, I am inviting all Companions and guests to meet at the Ten Eyck Tavern (restaurant) at the Dearborn Inn (Marriott hotel) - 20301 Oakwood Boulevard, Dearborn, Michigan. (See map at end.) We will gather for lunch at 11:30 AM.

Annual Membership Dues

Over the past few years, I have sent out dues notices at different times of the year, which may have caused some confusion. I know many organizations request dues be submitted within the first three months or the last three months of the calendar year for any given year.

To help eliminate any question on when our dues are actually due, **I am requesting you begin submitting your 2008 dues to the Commandery Treasurer now (with a deadline of 30 August, 2008).** I will then ask that 2009 dues be submitted again to the Commandery Treasurer between 1 January and 31 March, 2009. Payment of dues in the future will be 1 January thru March 31 each year.

The reason for this is that National bases our Commandery membership upon those Companions we have as of 30 April each year. Membership dues must then be submitted to National by 1 September of each year.

As always, you are encouraged to submit tax-deductible donations to the Commandery to help support our efforts in restoration and/or preservation of Civil War memorials and

with the printing of material for our various events and memorial ceremonies. A dues form is included in this newsletter which includes the mailing address of the Treasurer.

ROTC Awards

The Michigan Commandery continues to do the work of the Order. Under the direction of Senior Vice-Commander, Companion W. Fred Roberts (22248), our Commandery has once again proudly participated in the presentation of the merit awards. A total of five (5) ROTC medals were presented in 2008; one at Eastern Michigan University, two (2) at the University of Michigan and two (2) at Michigan State University.



U of M – Air Force Cadet William Garvey (left), W. Fred Roberts (center), and Navy Midshipman Matthew Schuster (right).



EMU – W. Fred Roberts (right) and Army NCO Cadet of the Year Anthony M. Vennekotter (left).

Recent Events

On May 17, the Commandery also participated in a special dedication ceremony at the Oakhill Cemetery in Grand Rapids, MI. This ceremony, conducted jointly by the Michigan Commandery and the Gen. John A. Logan Camp No. 1, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War involved dedicating 14 new headstones for soldiers that had previously buried under a marker titled “Unknown” or “U.S. Soldier”. In addition, eight other headstones were rededicated as replacement markers as well as a cast iron memorial urn. The first burial, Joseph Proper, Third Michigan Infantry, Co. K, had taken place on May 8, 1861 and over time, a total of sixty-six soldiers were buried there – all but two never saw action as they had died in local training camps and hospitals. By 1868, the wooden headboards that had marked their graves had rotted and with no one to care for the plot, the identities of the men buried there had become lost to time...or so some thought.

Here is the story:

This is a story of how efforts at various times through the years have never quite been able to retrieve the lost history of all the wartime burials in this Soldiers’ Burying Ground, and still do not achieve that goal. The first lists of the men buried here were published in 1868 by the Federal Government. It was called the Roll of Honor and it was incomplete. Less than three years after the end of the Civil War, of the 61 men listed as buried in this section, there were only 35 with names and 26 no longer known.

Eventually, the actual locations of many of the men from the original 1868 list were also lost to history because the wooden markers were rotted, broken or misplaced. In addition to that, a fire destroyed a large portion of the early cemetery records and much will never be recovered

Interestingly, there were 66 soldiers buried here at the time, not 61. The five missing from the list include the first soldier buried here, Joseph C. Proper of the Third Michigan Infantry Co K and four men from the 8th Michigan. Their names are recorded in the partial cemetery records that had been saved after the fire.

Despite these hurdles, the Civil War veterans who belonged to the A.B. Watson Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) Post No. 395 (est. 1888) were the first to take on this task of identifying and caring for the graves. By this time, (late 1880's and early 1890's) the effort to give permanent identification and recognition to the wartime dead buried in this section was further hindered by the ravages of time, fading memory, and lack of technological tools such as we have available today.

Those Civil War veterans were committed to assuring that future generations would not forget who these soldiers were or what they did. They secured as many government military headstones for those original names as they could and the rest received a headstone simply marked "U. S. SOLDIER". Unfortunately the loss of identity increased from 26 to 44.

Why would these names disappear? The majority was simple neglect and a lack of local concern for these strangers who came to Grand Rapids and died alone far from home, which caused the identities of forty-four soldiers to be interred in Oak Hill cemetery to be neglected into namelessness.

Over the decades, some research had been done to identify those buried here. In the 1920's and 1930's there was a man named Francis E. Hall who was a member of the Sons of Veterans (early name of Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War). He did extensive research to identify the location of

the veterans graves buried in every cemetery in Kent County. He died in 1939, but his research, his records and files are now housed in the History Collections at the Grand Rapids Public Library.

The most recent efforts were revived in the early 1990's with Steve Soper and Manuel Gentile. Steve is a former resident of Grand Rapids and has spent many years researching the history of the Third Michigan Volunteer Infantry (the first regiment from the west side of the State (Grand Rapids)) and has recently concluded a 900-plus page book on that regiment. Mannie now resides in Maryland where he is a Park Ranger at Antietam National Battlefield. Previously, Mannie was the educational coordinator for the Public Museum of Grand Rapids. Both men researched the unknown soldiers here at Oak Hill and have compiled an unpublished manuscript with their scholarly conclusions. Their research has identified several of the men with the strongest terms possible as "MOST LIKELY".

In 2006, a local veteran of the U.S. Air Force, Eloise Haven, while looking for something on another project, noticed that many of the 100-year-old headstones placed by the G.A.R. were deteriorating. Nine illegible headstones were replaced and fourteen new headstones were put in place thru the assistance of Trudie Anderson, the City's Cemetery Director and enlisting the research efforts of Marcia Butgereit (DOLLUS and National President of Woman's Relief Corps),. While this does not complete all the UNKNOWN Civil War soldiers buried here, it does get us one step closer to more accurately preserving a portion of our history.

The A.B. Watson GAR Post was named after Maj. Amasa B. Watson, b. 1826 - d. 1888. (Major 8th Regiment, Michigan Volunteer Infantry, August 19, 1861. Wounded in action at Port Royal, S.C., January 1, 1862.)



Maj. Amasa B. Watson

The 8th Michigan Infantry recruited in August and September of 1861. By October, the regiment was on ships bound for South Carolina where they joined the campaign to seize Confederate installations on the Atlantic coast.

By November, 1861, when Port Royal, South Carolina fell, the men of the 8th were no longer raw recruits. On New Years' Day, 1862, during a skirmish with the rebels at the Coosaw River on mainland South Carolina, Major Amasa B. WATSON was shot through the thigh. He returned to service and continued on with the regiment as it made an attempt to capture Secessionville, South Carolina. Major Watson's horse was shot out from under him during this battle.

In July, of 1862, the regiment was sent north to join the Army of the Potomac in Virginia. Major Watson was discharged for disability on September 24, 1862 and returned home.

When he died a grand mausoleum was built in the Oak Hill Cemetery. The cost to build this Egyptian style structure, in 1888, was estimated to cost around \$500,000 and may be the most costly of its kind in this cemetery.

Amasa B. Watson was also a member of the Michigan Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States. (MOLLUS) Upon his death, the Commandery offered condolences to the family which included the following Resolutions:

The Membership of our Commandery has again been broken, another honored name transferred from the army of the living, to the ever lengthening role of those already gone to join the invisible post beyond. In obedience to a Commander greater than any who have led

us from victory to victory, one of our esteemed Companions, Major A. B. Watson, has been mustered into that "greater army" which, for multitude, no man can number.

Peacefully he sleeps beneath "the low-green tents whose curtains never swing out", the sentinels of heaven standing body guard around him until the sound of reveille.

Expressive of our own sorrow and alike appreciative of the sterling qualities of our friend, we offer the following resolutions:

Resolved, That in this sudden bereavement we as Companions record our testimony as to his unqualified excellence of character, whose sympathy of heart and strength of purpose, made him the friend of all.

For these he was revered by a community, and mourned by us, his associates.

Resolved, That not alone by us is this affliction realized, but a deeper grief has fallen upon those bound by fonder ties than ours of Companionship, and to that sorrowing family we extend our heartfelt sympathies.

Resolved, That this Commandery offer to the family their sincere condolence, and that a copy of this report be forwarded to them.

By command of
Bvt. Brig. General Henry B. Clitz, U. S. A.,
Commander
George W. Chandler, Bvt. Major U. S. Vols.
Recorder

Part of our ceremony included the rededication of a cast iron memorial urn. First mentioned by the Watson GAR Post records, this memorial urn was dedicated in 1898 and over time, became weathered and abused by time which had caused portions to deteriorate and break off. Thru the financial contributions of the Michigan Commandery (\$300), Gen. John A. Logan Camp 1, SUVCW (\$500), Wenda Fore, descendant of Watson Post member Peter Simmons (buried a few feet from the urn)(\$100), and Bruce and Marcia Butgereit (\$250) we were able to obtain a new urn.



The new urn

In honor of the occasion, Marcia Butgereit wrote the following poem which she read during the ceremony –

‘NEATH THE SHADOW OF THE URN

‘Neath the shadow of the Urn
 Our forefathers lie.

Filled with flower and of fern,
 We need not ask why.

For as sentinel she’ll stand,
 O’er the men who did die,

Men of the Army called Grand,
 Who rest safely nearby.

Still watching over the grave,
 No matter the sky,
Lest we forget those so brave
 For whom the flags fly.

*Written by Marcia Butgereit -
In Remembrance of all who gave their lives
while serving in this Nation’s Armed Forces*

May 17, 2008 (Armed Forces Day)

Our membership

The Commandery membership stands at twenty-four. Our newest Companion is Adam William Gaines who resides in Harrow, Ontario, Canada.

Final thoughts

Thank you for your continued support for the Michigan Commandery. While attendance may be impossible at times, your dues and contributions are equally important to our continued existence and success.

The next newsletter will have an updated list of future events and meetings at Historic Fort Wayne.

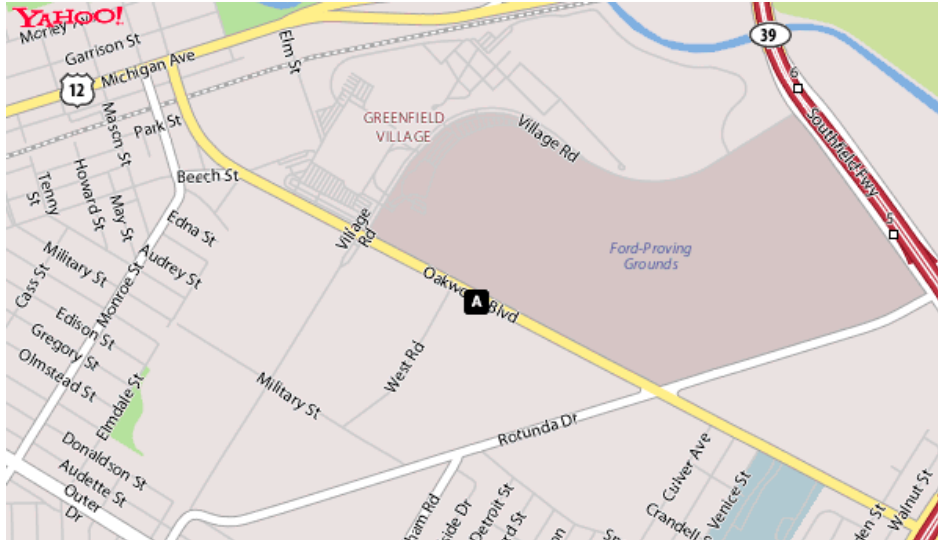
I also encourage each of you to feel free to ask any questions or to express thoughts or ideas on things you’d like to see in this newsletter to me.

I’d also like to add a section to the newsletter where we would highlight the ancestor of each Companion. If you are interested in sharing any digital photos and/or family history, I would be happy to put that in the newsletter as a way of getting to know each other a little better or how you became a member of MOLLUS.

Respectfully,

Bruce B. Butgereit,
Commander

Ten Eyck Tavern

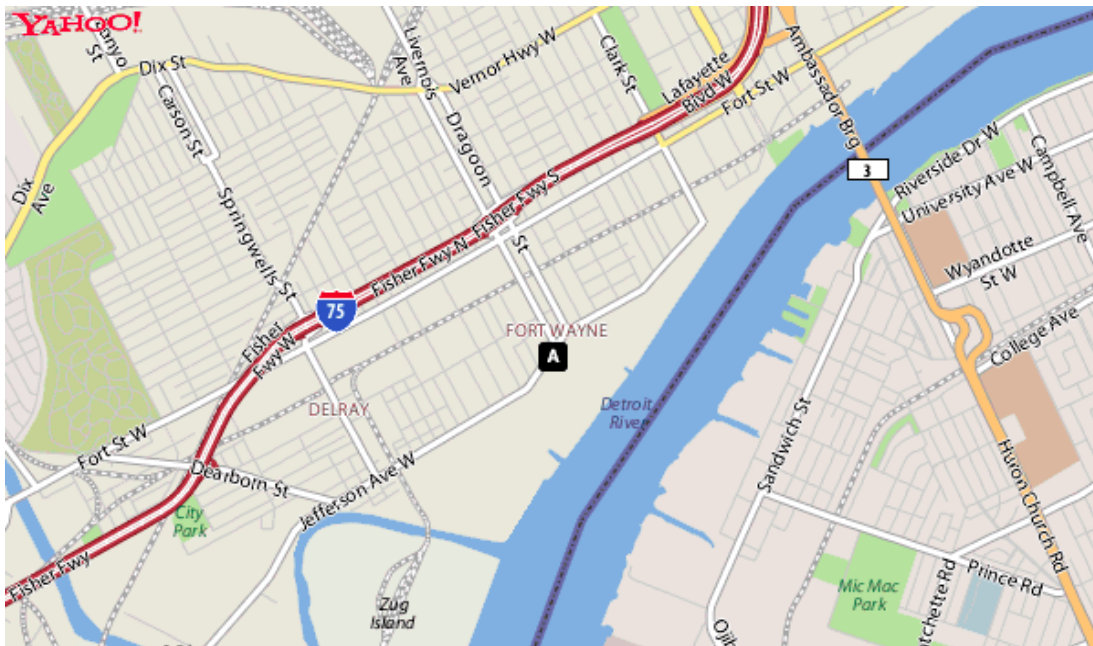


From the East:

Take I-94 W – go 16.5 mi (from Grosse Pointe area)

Take exit #206B/OAKWOOD BLVD NORTH onto OAKWOOD BLVD – go 2.0 mi

Arrive at 20301 OAKWOOD BLVD, DEARBORN, on the Left



From the East:

Take I-94 W - go 8.1 mi (from the Grosse Pointe area)

Take Left exit #215A/DOWNTOWN onto M-10 S - go 1.8 mi

Take exit #2A/FLINT/TOLEDO onto I-75 S toward TOLEDO - go 3.2 mi

Take exit #46/LIVERNONIS AVE onto FISHER FWY W - go 0.4 mi

Turn Left on LIVERNONIS AVE - go 0.6 mi

Turn Right on JEFFERSON AVE W

Arrive at 6325 JEFFERSON AVE W, DETROIT, on the Left

Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States

Michigan Commandery

Bruce B. Butgereit, Commander

1691 Summerfield St. SE

Kentwood, MI 49508-6499



PRESIDENT
ABRAHAM LINCOLN
FEBRUARY 12, 1809 -
APRIL 15, 1865