

**devils lake**  
Tourism

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### G.A.R. CEMETERY

September 6, 1891 at a meeting held in the F.P. Mann store, Devils Lake, a Grand Army of the Republic cemetery association was organized and by-laws adopted. Frank W. Mann was elected secretary-treasurer. Other members of the board included J.N. Miller, J.E. Jenks and D.G. Duell.

On May 11, 1892 the Association received a deed for five acres of land from M.R. Doyon who sold the property for \$250. Additional land to the north was purchased from John Christopherson — deed dated May 22, 1895. Two lots were set aside June 10, 1895 for use of the Grand Army of the Republic and the bodies of five soldiers were reburied in the site designated for the burial of war veterans. The G.A.R. monument, here pictured, was placed in about 1912 in memory of the 1861-1865 war veterans.

John Christopherson sold cemetery land to St. Joseph's Catholic church August 26, 1922. In August 1930 John Maher made a gift of a six acre addition to the local Catholic cemetery and an additional piece of land to be used for road purposes running from the south line of 7th street to the southeast corner of the new addition, comprising about 1.3 acres.

An account dated Nov. 19, 1930 reveals this addition to the cemetery: "Members of the Women's Relief Corps have completed a project which has been an aim of the organization for several years with the completion of the erection of the new memorial arch at the entrance to the G.A.R. Cemetery.

"The arch over the entrance is a sixteen foot span of steel and is lettered, "G.A.R. Cemetery" in gold. The pillars are made of North Dakota stone and on a copper plate the following inscription has

been made — "Dedicated to the General George Crook Post of the G.A.R. by W.R.C., 1930."

The cost of the arch was over \$300. and Mrs. John Ruttle was chairman of the committee in charge of the work. The Jenson Contracting Co. of this city was employed on the construction work and Herman Stenseth, secretary of the G.A.R. Cemetery Association, supervised the erection of the arch.

A further project of the Women's Relief Corps is to furnish the cemetery chapel with an organ, chairs, and other furniture to make it convenient to hold funeral services there. Formal dedication of the new arch will be made in the spring when the weather will be more pleasant for the G.A.R. veterans to attend."

The City of Devils Lake purchased the last 40 acres of the cemetery October 18, 1971. There are sixty-one acres total in the G.A.R. and Catholic parts of the cemetery as of March 1982. The chapel-tool house is located at the east edge of the G.A.R. part.

A vault was built in 1951 and enlarged in 1979. In 1981 numerous trees were planted in the new parts of the cemetery and water mains extended throughout.

A February 1947 report showed more than 2,000 persons having been interred since the Cemetery Association was formed in 1891, and since 1948 there have been another 3,200 burials. Burials have not been restricted to the immediate city of Devils Lake.

Several years ago it became necessary to revise the financial operation of the cemetery, so the duties of the Cemetery Association were shifted to the Devils Lake City Commission. Balzer Kurtz, member of the commission, is cemetery commissioner and Myron Asleson is cemetery superintendent as of April 1982.



Monument at the Devils Lake Cemetery honoring the war veterans

## Grand Army of the Republic Monument

**County:** Ramsey County, North Dakota

**Location:** Devils Lake Cemetery

**Coordinates:** N48°06.963' W98°50.460'

In the Devils Lake Cemetery stands a historical monument bearing the legend legend, "Erected to the Memory of the Soldiers and Sailors of 1861-1865." Also emblazoned on the monument are the motto-words of the Grand Army of the Republic, "Loyalty," "Charity," and "Fraternity."

This is a Grand Army of the Republic monument similar to others across the country's northern states. Atop the monument stands at parade rest a vigilant infantryman wearing a winter overcoat and carrying equipment typical of the early years of the Civil War, including an 1842 Springfield musket.

As the frontier community of Devils Lake crystallized on arrival of the Northern Pacific railroad in 1883, present among its enterprising citizens were many union veterans from across the country. They sought fraternity by forming Grand Army of the Republic Camp General Crook #33.

Unfortunately, specific documentation of the memorial emplaced by General Crook #33 is lacking. In 1948, the old Civil War soldiers mostly gone on to the great encampment in the sky, the records of Camp Crook #33, and those of the GAR Cemetery Association, were passed to the City of Devils Lake, along with the cemetery the veterans had established around the monument. Never properly housed, most of the GAR records were lost to water damage and rodents.



Fortunately, soldier monuments are made of things like granite, which survives better than paper, but is sometimes less informative. The monument bears no indication of when it was built. Likely it was emplaced after 1891, and not much later than 1900.

As memory of the Civil War veterans faded, their memorial cemetery was rededicated to commemorate all veterans: those of the two world wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and Operation Desert Storm. The expansion of the war memorial was largely the idea of Korean War veteran Balzer Kurtz, a long-time Devils Lake city commissioner.

Gathered around the original DAR monument, however, are the old comrades at rest. Here lies Private Alonzo Bartlett of the 35th New York Infantry, who saw heavy combat with the Army of the Potomac in Virginia. Here lies Private Martin Bennett, who campaigned with Grant at Shiloh and Vicksburg and marched with Sherman to the sea. Here lies Private Henry Day of the 4th California Infantry, who probably never heard a shot fired in anger. In all there are twenty-nine marked graves of Civil War veterans, eleven of them with simple but informative white headstones, the others possessing only modest bronze GAR markers.--Research by Den Bolda, HIST 489, 2010

### Recommended Reading

Brown, Thomas J. *The Public Art of Civil War Commemoration*, Boston: Bedford St. Martin's, 2004.

Blight, David. *Race and Reunion*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2001.

Kammen, Michael. *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991.

Grand Army of the Republic Museum, "A Brief history of the Grand Army of the Republic," <http://garmuslib.org/>.





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