

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION
SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

CIVIL WAR MEMORIAL ASSESSMENT FORM

PLEASE:

- Type or print, using a ball-point pen, when filling out this form. Legibility is critical.
- Do not guess at the information. An answer of, "Unknown," is more helpful.
- Include a photograph of each viewable side and label it with name & direction of view.

- Thank You.

Type of Memorial

____ Monument *with* Sculpture
 ____ Monument without Sculpture

☐ Monument with Cannon
☐ Historical Marker ☒ Plaque
☒ BUILDING

Affiliation

☒ G.A.R. (Post Name & No. _____) ☐ M.O.L.L.U.S.
☐ W.R.C. (Corps Name & No. _____) ☐ Other Allied Order
☐ SUVCW (Camp Name & No. _____) (Please describe below)
☐ DUVCW (Tent Name & No. _____)
 Other: _____

Original Dedication Date 1901 Please consult any/all newspaper archives for a local paper's article that would have information on the *first* dedication ceremony and/or other facts on the memorial. Please submit a copy of your findings with full identification of the paper & date of publication. Thank you.

Location

The Memorial is *currently* located at:

Street/Road address or site location 1942 Grand River Ave
City/Village Detroit Township Detroit County WAYNE

The front of the Memorial faces: North South X East West

Government Body, Agency, or Individual Owner (of private cemetery that Memorial is located in)...

Name SEE ATTACHED NEWS CLIP Dept./Div. _____

Street Address

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Contact Person _____ Telephone () _____

If the Memorial has been moved, please list former location(s)...

Physical Details

Material of Monument or base under a Sculpture or Cannon = ☒ Stone ☐ Concrete ☐ Metal ☐ Undetermined
If known, name specific material (color of granite, marble, etc.) _____

Material of the Sculpture = ☐ Stone ☐ Concrete ☐ Metal ☐ Undetermined
 If known, name specific material (color of granite, marble, etc.) _____
 If the Sculpture is of metal, is it solid cast or "hollow?" _____

Material of Plaque or Historical Marker / Tablet = Limestone

Material of Cannon = ☐ Bronze ☐ Iron - Consult known Ordnance Listing to confirm
 Markings on muzzle = _____

Markings on Left Trunion _____ Right Trunion _____

Is inert ammunition a part of the Memorial? ☐ If so, describe _____

Approximate Dimensions (indicate unit of measure) - taken from tallest / widest points

Monument or Base: Height _____ Width _____ Depth _____ or Diameter _____
 Sculpture: Height _____ Width _____ Depth _____ or Diameter _____

For Memorials with multiple Sculptures, please record this information on a separate sheet of paper for each statue and attach to this form. Please describe the "pose" of each statue and any weapons/implements involved (in case your photos become separated from this form). Thank you!

Markings/Inscriptions (on stone-work / metal-work of monument, base, sculpture)

Maker or Fabricator mark / name? If so, give name & location found _____

The "Dedication Text" is formed: ☐ cut into material ☐ raised up from material face

Record the text (indicate any separation if on different sides...) Please use additional sheet if necessary.

" Memorial to the Soldiers and Sailors of 1861-1865 "

Environmental Setting

(The general vicinity and immediate locale surrounding a memorial can play a major role in its overall condition.)

Type of Location

<input type="checkbox"/> Cemetery	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Plaza/Courtyard
<input type="checkbox"/> "Town Square"	<input type="checkbox"/> Post Office	<input type="checkbox"/> School
<input type="checkbox"/> Municipal Building	<input type="checkbox"/> State Capitol	Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Courthouse	<input type="checkbox"/> College Campus	<u>MAIN STREET</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Circle	<input type="checkbox"/> Library	_____

General Vicinity

☐ Rural (low population, open land)
☐ Town

☐ Suburban (residential, near city)
☒ Urban / Metropolitan

Immediate Locale (check as many as may apply)

☒ Industrial ☐ Commercial
☒ Street/Roadside within 20 feet ☐ Tree Covered (overhanging branches)
☐ Protected from the elements (canopy or enclosure, indoors)
☐ Protected from the public (fence or other barrier)
 Any other significant environmental factor _____

Condition Information**Structural Condition** (check as many as may apply)

The following section applies to Monuments *with* Sculpture, and Monuments *without* Sculpture - including the base for Monuments with *Cannon*. Instability in the sculpture and its base can be detected by a number of factors. Indicators may be obvious or subtle. Visually examine the sculpture and its base.

	Sculpture	Base
If hollow, is the internal support unstable/exposed? (look for signs of exterior rust)	_____	_____
Any evidence of structural instability? (look for cracked joints, missing mortar or caulking or plant growth)	_____	<u>Y</u>
Any broken or missing parts? (look for elements (i.e., sword, musket, hands, arms, etc. - missing due to vandalism, fluctuating weather conditions, etc.)	_____	<u>Y</u>
Any cracks, splits, breaks or holes? (also look for signs of uneven stress & weakness in the material)	_____	<u>Y</u>

Surface Appearance (check as many as may apply)

	Sculpture	Base
Black crusting	_____	_____
White crusting	_____	_____
Etched, pitted, or otherwise corroded (on metal)	_____	_____
Metallic staining (run-off from copper, iron, etc.)	_____	_____
Organic growth (moss, algae, lichen or vines)	_____	_____
Chalky or powdery stone	_____	<u>Y</u>
Granular eroding of stone	_____	<u>Y</u>
Spalling of stone (surface splitting off)	_____	<u>Y</u>
Droppings (bird, animal, insect remains)	_____	_____
Other (e.g., spray paint graffiti) - Please describe...	_____	_____

Does water collect in recessed areas of the Memorial? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unable to tell

Surface CoatingDoes there appear to be a coating? ☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Unable to determine

If known, identify type of coating.

☐ Gilded ☐ Painted ☐ Varnished ☐ Waxed ☐ Unable to determineIs the coating in good condition? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unable to determine**Basic Surface Condition Assessment (check one)**

In your opinion, what is the general appearance or condition of the Memorial?

☐ Well maintained ☐ Would benefit from treatment ☒ In urgent need of treatment ☐ Unable to determine**Overall Description**

Briefly describe the Memorial (affiliation / overall condition & any concern not already touched on) .

Building has been vacant for 8 years - legal proceeding
in progress - see news article attached.

Supplemental Background Information

In addition to your on-site survey, any additional information you can provide on the described Memorial will be welcomed. Please label each account with its source (author, title, publisher, date, pages). Topics include any reference to the points listed on this questionnaire, plus any previous conservation treatments - or efforts to raise money for treatment. Thank you.

Inspector IdentificationDate of On-site Survey 11 Nov 2001Your Name RICHARD E. DANESAddress 2612 Burns City DearbornState MI Zip Code 48124-3204 Telephone [REDACTED]

Please send this completed form to:

Douglas R. Armstrong
Civil War Memorials Officer
Department of Michigan - SUV.C.W.
236 L Frederick Ave.
Lansing, MI. 48906-3226

Thank you for your help, and attention to detail.

SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR
National Civil War Memorials Committee

DOW**-71.06**

Closing 10,905.83

NASDAQ**+8.91**

Closing 3,857.46

DOWNSIZING | DOW CORNINGMidland maker of silicone-based products might cut 800 jobs. **PAGE 8G.**

BUSINESS

DETROIT FREE PRESS

A battle for a landmark

*Veterans group fights Ilitch over historic GAR Building*By DANIEL G. FRICKER
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

Descendants of Civil War veterans are mounting a battle to stop Detroit from selling the Grand Army of the Republic Building, a castle-like landmark four blocks west of the Fox Theatre, to pizza and sports mogul Mike Ilitch.

It's the latest dispute involving

Ilitch and property west of Woodward Avenue, in the city's rapidly changing entertainment district.

Ilitch is one of the city's best-known entrepreneurs, owning the Little Caesar Pizza chain, the Detroit Tigers baseball team and Red Wings hockey team, as well as the Fox. In the past, he has said he would like to build a new hockey arena for the Wings somewhere near the theater

and Comerica Park, the Tigers' new stadium.

Many downtown property owners think he wants to build the arena behind the Fox because, with the help of the city and Wayne County, Ilitch has been quietly accumulating properties behind the theater.

Although the GAR Building site might not be needed for the arena itself, it could be part of an enter-

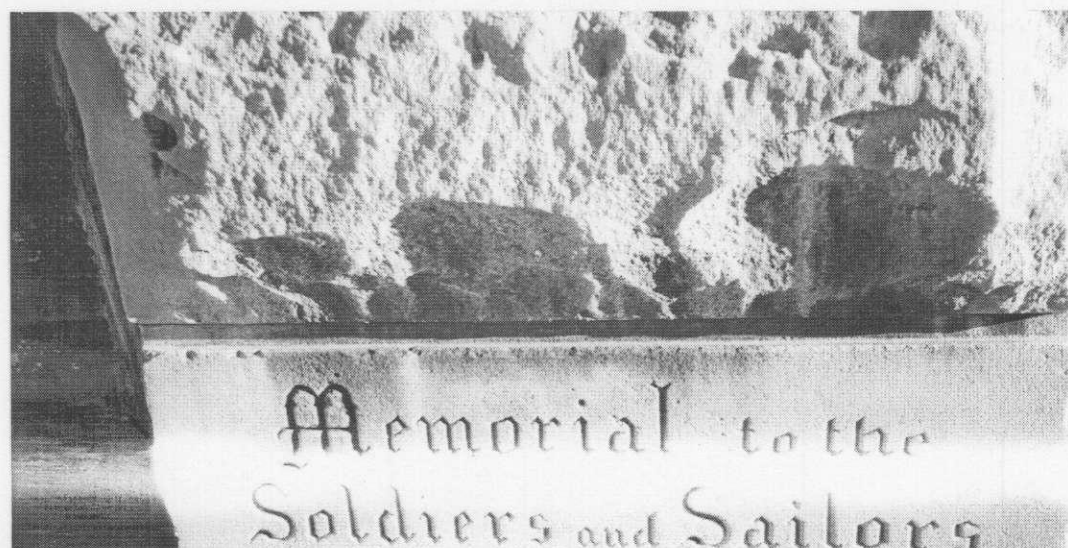
tainment district extending west from Woodward and including the hockey rink.

But if Ilitch wants the GAR Building, he and the city will have to tussle with the state and local chapters of the Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

The Daughters and a local chapter of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War have filed a claim of ownership with the register of deeds

Please see **LANDMARK**, Page 2G





Memorial to the
Soldiers and Sailors

♦ LANDMARK | Possible sale disputed

From Page 1G

to keep the landmark at 1942 Grand River from being sold. By mid-October the Daughters say they could sue to stop the city from selling the 99-year-old building.

"The last thing they would like to see happen is to have that building conveyed," said John Tragge, the lawyer representing the Daughters. "We'd hate to see it turned into an entertainment venue."

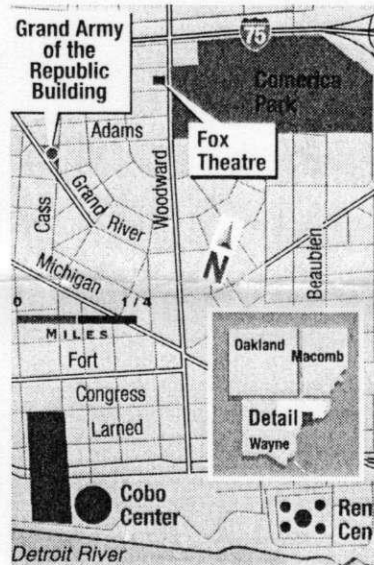
"We really don't want that building sold to anyone," said Joan Yates, president of the Daughters' local post. "We want that building used for its original purpose as a memorial to the Union veterans and all veterans."

The Daughters have applied for a grant from the Kresge Foundation to restore the Romanesque-style building, which has towers with ramparts and exterior alcoves for large statues. The five-story stone structure has been vacant and boarded up for 8 years.

"The Ilitches have great respect for the history of the GAR Building as well as its preservation," said a statement released by **Ilitch Holdings Inc.** "They also respect the the Daughters of the Union Veterans of the Civil War. The family has illustrated its commitment to historic preservation with its restoration of the Fox Theatre."

But the Ilitches declined to comment further because of the possibility of legal action.

"If it's been a monument to anything, it's been a monument to blight and decay in the area that kids from Cass Tech walk by on a daily basis," said Greg Bowens, a spokesman for Mayor Dennis Archer. "So I'm not really sure what the interest is after leaving the building vacant and open to years of neglect. Surely it



cannot be the appropriate kind of monument to Civil War veterans and their descendants that the lawmakers of the 1800s may have been talking about."

At a meeting last December, Ilitch's daughter, Denise Ilitch, president of Ilitch Holdings, told the Daughters the privately held company planned to offer entertainment in the building, Yates said.

"We asked if we could share that building, and she said no because what we wanted and what they wanted was not compatible," Yates said.

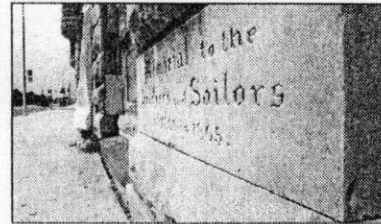
Denise Ilitch told the Daughters that Ilitch Holdings might erect a plaque on the building's exterior "but don't count on it," according to Tragge.

In 1996, the city's planning and development department recommended that the city sell the GAR Building and 12 other properties to the Tigers for \$1.6 million.

The properties were to be part of the team's Comerica Park development and the GAR Building was to be used for "retail, entertainment or other commercial use compatible with the theater/stadia district," according to a city council resolution.

But Tragge asked how the building — which is west of Woodward, the side opposite Comerica Park — can be considered part of the baseball stadium's development.

The city and the Ilitches have never signed a purchase agree-



JOHN COLLIER/Detroit Free Press

The GAR Building, erected between 1898 and 1901, has been vacant for 8 years.

ment for the GAR Building and no money has changed hands, Tragge said.

The state's Monumental Buildings Act of 1889 forbids municipalities from selling buildings jointly constructed by municipalities and the GAR, the Civil War equivalent of the American Legion, as meeting places for veterans, Tragge said. The law says the buildings "shall be forever dedicated to the memory of the Union soldiers of the War of the Rebellion."

The GAR Building was erected between 1898 and 1901 at a cost of \$44,000. The city sold \$38,000 in bonds, while local GAR posts contributed the rest.

The building was home to the GAR's Fairbanks Post until 1942 and a meeting place for descendants of Union soldiers until 1973. It later served as a senior citizen recreation center, Tragge said.

In July, a Wayne County Circuit Court judge ordered the city and county not to give almost an acre behind the Fox to Ilitch and return the land to its original owner, Freda Alibri.

The authority purchased the parking lots for \$264,551 after it threatened to condemn the parcels for Comerica Park and Ford Field.

But the judge ruled the authority did not have the power or the money to condemn the properties and relied on a loan from Ilitch to purchase them. The authority was preparing to transfer the properties to Ilitch. Alibri claims the parcels are worth \$1.9 million if they are needed for a hockey arena and not just parking lots.

Contact **DANIEL G. FRICKER** at 313-222-5943 or fricker@freepress.com.

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Grand Army of the Republic Building

Towering over the corner of Grand River and Cass is Detroit's castle, the Grand Army of the Republic Building. While its turrets and battlements make it look like some sort of ancient fort built to defend the city from invaders, it's origins are far more humble: It opened in 1900 to serve as a hangout for the city's Civil War veterans.

The Grand Army of the Republic was a nationwide organization organized in 1866 by union surgeon Dr. Benjamin F. Stephenson. In 1881, the GAR had only 87,718 members; by 1890, it claimed more than 490,000. This made the organization one of the most potent political forces in American politics. To a degree, it also was one of the first highly organized group lobbying on a nationwide level. "There was a time when a GAR badge was necessary for election to any office in the North, from President to village constable," Frank B. Woodford reminisced in a 1949 Detroit Free Press column. Such pulling power meant that the group had no problem pressuring the City of Detroit to build them a base of operations, the largest GAR hall ever built in Michigan.

Building Detroit a castle

The building's cornerstone – marked as a memorial to the soldiers of 1861 to 1865 – was laid July 4, 1899, on land that had been willed to the city by Gen. Lewis Cass in 1866. Cass is one of the city's most storied and important figures and a onetime governor of the Michigan territory, as well as U.S. secretary of war and a presidential candidate. "Memorial to the Soldiers and Sailors of 1861 to 1865," the GAR's cornerstone reads on one side in a Gothic font. "A.D. 1899," it says on the other

But Cass' will carried a catch: It said the land belonged to the City of Detroit on the condition that it forever be used for a "market place." The interpretation of "market place" was broadened to include storefronts, so it was decided the memorial would have shops.

The triangular-shaped building would open a year later at a cost of \$44,000 (about \$1.08 million today). To pay for the construction, the City of Detroit sold \$38,000 in bonds, while local GAR posts pitched in the rest. The GAR was erected from a design by architect Julius Hess and is one of Detroit's best examples of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture, a 19th century style named for renowned master H.H. Richardson that produced castle-like buildings with heavy stone blocks, small windows and arches. One of the city's other best examples, the Light Guard Armory, was designed by Richardson himself but torn down more than half a century ago. Hess' design was selected because the stone fortress, with its turrets and battlements, were said to look as strong as the republic the veterans had fought to preserve.

Hess was no stranger to Detroit, having done the High Victorian Gothic-style Trumbull Avenue Presbyterian Church (1887-1889), a church dotted with towers and turrets that is still in use though in rough shape. He also is the man behind the Romanesque parish house for St. Mary's Catholic Church in Greektown, built in 1876. According to the "AIA Detroit" guide, Hess died during the GAR's construction, and his partner, Richard E. Raseman, took over.

The city gave the building on a 30-year, rent-free lease to the GAR, which had close to 500,000 members at the turn of the century and was still a powerful force in politics at the time. Thirty-five years after the war had ended, the so-called Boys in Blue moved in to their new fraternal hall. The ground floor of the GAR was rented to shopkeepers, to meet the terms of Cass' will, and the veterans used the rent money to maintain the building. The first floor once housed a bank. Fourteen GAR-affiliated organizations shared the use of the building. The rest of the building was, more or less, a GAR frat house, complete with an auditorium.

For decades after the war, gray-bearded vets congregated inside their castle to play cards and checkers, swap stories and remember the battles they fought in. In 1930, when the 30-year lease expired, the city extended the lease from year to year. By this point, when the survivors met to play cards in the GAR, it was usually only three or four at a time. By 1934, only two shops – a barbershop and a tire store – remained. The veterans said they were getting too old and too tired to conduct business.

A new battle for the vets

There were only 24 Civil War vets in Detroit still alive in 1934. William J. Fraser, life secretary-treasurer of the Fourth Michigan Calvary Association, and his fellow Boys in Blue voted on May 7, 1934, that it was time to give up their beloved home. The lease was to expire on May 10, and the Common Council granted an extension until July 1 in order to give the soldiers "just one more Memorial Day" in their old HQ.

"They aren't fit to conduct business, and except for a little sentiment the old soldiers don't care whether the building is saved or not," Fraser, then 87, told the Free Press in May 1934 of his fellow Civil War vets. Fraser, by the way, had belonged to the regiment that captured Jefferson Davis in Georgia and had four horses shot from under him during one summer during the war.

"We used to get \$16,000 a year (about \$190,000 today) revenue from the ground floor stores, but the amount now is so reduced we don't make enough to pay for heat and light," Fraser told the Detroit News in 1934. "Anyway, we don't need a building anymore, and I'm not fit to conduct business. I can't see very well and can't hear. No one else is any better off.

"All we ask now is a room where once in a while we can see each other as long as we last. I know that I'll be completely happy when I walk out of here the last time, though I want to say the City has been very good to us in every way."

So even though the veterans said they didn't care what happened to the GAR, a petitioning group composed of the local Women's Relief Corps (an auxiliary organization to the GAR); the Ladies of the GAR; the Daughters of the GAR; the Children of the GAR; the Daughters of Union Veterans; and the Ladies National League formed the GAR Memorial Association in an effort to have the building saved as a memorial. These groups also wanted to be allowed to use the building for their meetings.

Fraser and some of the other men were indifferent to the women's efforts to save the building so long as "they don't use the GAR name," he said. "When the last men of the GAR is dead, the National Encampment wants the name to die." Other reports of the time had the aging Boys in Blue pitted against the girls in a nasty he-said-she-said battle that played out in the newspapers. Some of the soldiers argued that the women were being selfish and what they wanted was a clubhouse for themselves.

For a time, the vets had thought about asking the city to remodel the GAR, but it needed a lot of work, and the hydraulic elevator – crucial for old-timers who had a hard time getting around – needed to be replaced.

"The building is old. The roof leaks. The plumbing needs fixing. Those women expect the city to fix it up and keep it as a memorial. But we've got the monument on the Campus Martius, and that's enough," Fraser said, referring to the Soldiers and Sailors Monument.

The veterans moved out, giving their furniture and relics to the Sons of Veterans. On Aug. 3, 1939, the Common Council leased the GAR to the city's Welfare Department for its Aid to Dependent Children Bureau, but made it clear that the city, not the agency, retained ownership. The city had given the surviving vets a room and assured them that they would never be denied access as long as they lived. Every vet had a key to the building. In 1940, the city wanted to take the first and second floors of the GAR for a municipal printing office, but the women's groups threatened "a rebellion," the Free Press reported, and the printing facility was taken to another building and the women stayed on in their second-floor home.

Detroit heroes die – as does the GAR

On Oct. 6, 1942, Detroit's last vet, John C. Haines, died at age 100. Haines had visited the GAR hall two weeks before he died, the Free Press reported in his obituary. "All my life is contained right here," Haines said of the GAR. The city threw a three-day farewell for Haines. Wayne County's last GAR member, George L. Morgan of Grosse Pointe Park, died April 15, 1945, at age 97. He had fought with Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman in the march through Georgia.

There were only 16 surviving Civil War vets across the country when the 83rd and final encampment of the GAR was held from Aug. 28 to Sept. 1, 1949, in Indianapolis, a city selected for the event because it also hosted the first encampment on Nov. 20, 1866. Only six of the 16 were able

to attend the last gathering. All were at least 100 years old. The organization was officially disbanded when Albert Woolson, the last GAR member, died on Aug. 2, 1956. He was believed to be 109 years old.

The cards and checkers return

Meanwhile, the city's Department of Parks and Recreation had taken over the GAR from the Welfare Department in the early 1940s. Shortly thereafter, the building was redubbed the GAR Recreation Center, a popular meeting place for groups from Alcoholics Anonymous to dance troupes to the GAR Memorial Association. The Recreation Department sponsored activities inside like youth bands, parties for "single persons over 40," theater rehearsals, card, checkers and chess tournaments and other activities for decades.

But as a cost-cutting move, Mayor Coleman A. Young closed the center in 1982, citing the lack of residents nearby, and had it boarded up to stave off deterioration. Detroit architect Roger Magerum bought the building around 1984 and hoped to rehabilitate it into office space, but that plan didn't happen. The GAR eventually fell into the hands of the city.

Over the years, various proposals have been floated for the building, from a Bed and Breakfast to condos. There was interest from the Knights of Columbus and other groups in buying it. It even qualifies for historic tax credits for redevelopment as it was added to the National Register of Historic Places on Feb. 13, 1986. But one of the biggest challenges to redeveloping the GAR has been the Michigan Monumental Buildings Act of 1889, which forbids governments from selling buildings jointly constructed by municipalities and the GAR. The law says the buildings "shall be forever dedicated to the memory of the Union soldiers of the War of the Rebellion."

The battle for the GAR

In 1996, the city's Planning and Development Department recommended that the GAR and 12 other properties be sold to Ilitch for \$1.6 million. The original plan was to include the GAR in the Comerica Park development, using it to sell souvenirs or as an entertainment venue. In August 2000, descendants of Civil War vets mounted a battle to stop the city from selling the GAR to Mike Ilitch, who, rumors had it, wanted to include it in his entertainment empire around Grand Circus Park. The Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War and a local chapter of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War filed a claim of ownership with the register of deeds to keep the landmark from being sold. The stipulation in Cass' will about keeping a "market place" was again brought up. It was doubtful that Cass had people grinding to Sisco's "Thong Song" in mind when he meant "market place."

"We really don't want that building sold to anyone," Joan Yates, president of the Daughters' local post, told the Free Press in 2000. "We want that building used for its original purpose as a memorial to the Union veterans and all veterans."

The Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War drafted a proposal that would have returned a bank to the ground floor, as well as a gift shop. They planned to use rent money to pay outstanding debts and to defray the costs of running the GAR. The second floor would have hosted seminars, banquets and conferences and had meeting rooms. The third floor would have housed a military museum and an archives area. The proposal called for the museum to have exhibits with film footage, documents and historical items on display. "Military life and battles will be brought to life through original letters, human interest stories and artifacts," a proposal from the group says. "The museum will offer motivational hands on activities and programs for children as well as adults. ... The museum and use of archives will be free to Detroit's youth." The fourth floor was to be used for balls, parties and fund-raising events to benefit the community and national holidays. It was to be available free of charge to local high school ROTCs for special events and balls. There also was to be a Victorian tearoom on the fourth floor; "A piano is also proposed for this room so that music accompanies the afternoon tea," the proposal says. The fifth floor has a balcony and 432 square feet of floor space that the group proposed making available to the Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit and for re-enactment groups.

The Daughters applied for grants from philanthropic organizations, but the plan didn't come through. The Ilitches backed off and the GAR continued to sit empty.

On May 12, 2005, the City of Detroit filed a Complaint to Quiet Title, seeking to have the Michigan Monumental Buildings Act annulled and to terminate the Sons and Daughters groups' rights to the building. The groups argued that the city could never vacate the deed and must maintain ownership of the building forever. The city agreed in August 2006 to settle the suit, clearing the way for it to be sold and redeveloped. The following month, Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's administration ramped up its efforts to find a buyer to restore the building and said any proposal must preserve the GAR's historic architecture. The asking price was set at \$220,000, and a bidding process was submitted for proposals.

"It was built by the veterans and for the veterans and it's a memorial for the veterans, so why shouldn't it be there?" Celestine Hollings of Dearborn Heights told BuildingsofDetroit.com in July 2009. Hollings is the great-granddaughter of Civil War veteran Jacob Allen of the 107 G Co. out of Kentucky. She also is the former national president of the Daughters of Union Veterans, becoming the first African-American to hold the post when elected in 2002.

"There are not a lot of us left," said Hollings, who turns 90 in Jan. 3, 2010. "I've been working on this all this time, and I thought I'd see this happen in my lifetime. ... But we haven't given up. That's one thing you can be sure of."

When the bids came in that November, there were six contenders. Olympia Development, a subsidiary of Mike and Marian Ilitch's pizza and entertainment empire, proposed moving its offices into the building and adding a restaurant on the first floor. Brothers David and Tom Carleton of Mindfield Pictures, a marketing and Web design company, proposed making the GAR the new HQ for their new media operation. The brothers

also are responsible for the successful restoration of the the Library Lofts and the rest of the building, which houses Vicente's Cuban Cuisine. They bought the building, the former Good Housekeeping Building, in 1992.

The winner of the bidding process was Ilitch, who had continued to buy up most of the real estate near his Fox Theatre and Comerica Park empire. The City Council, which had to approve the sale, was skeptical of the low selling price.

Hope for the future

After sitting on the building for a couple of years, the sale of the GAR to Ilitch was rescinded by the city. Now, Mindfield is in negotiations again with the city to buy the GAR. Any sale would require a small space to serve as a tribute to the Civil War veterans, though it is unclear whether the stipulation of a "market place" is still in place.

"We're definitely into preserving and rehabbing historic buildings," David Carleton, Mindfield's executive producer, told BuildingsofDetroit.com. "We're working closely with the Sons of Civil War Veterans and have been in contact with the Daughters. We've got everyone on board who should be."

Hollings said the Daughters still want some kind of museum in the GAR and want the tile mosaic at the building's main entrance preserved. If it's converted into office space, that's fine, she said, but "they can't just put a nightclub in there. They have to represent the veterans."

The building has been well-secured from the elements and trespass, and its wooden support structure is in remarkable condition given the neglect it has suffered at the hands of the city. The worst problem, Carleton says, is that the building has "basically been a giant pigeon coop" for years, so he's confident the building can be restored to its former glory.

Until then, the GAR continues to sit, waiting for the deal to be finalized so it continue living, having outlived all of those it was built to serve.

Note: It should be pointed out that the dates of the building's construction vary from 1897 to 1900, especially on the Internet, where erroneous information runs rampant. Newspapers from the 1930s also list the date when construction started as 1898. However, this Web site is going with 1899 for two reasons: First and foremost, the building's cornerstone says 1899, and it's unlikely the builders didn't know which year it was; and two, old newspaper clippings say the city's Common Council was invited to "be present and participate in the ceremonies attending the laying of the cornerstone of the GAR Memorial Building on July 4, 1899."