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KALAMAZOO**150th anniversary of Civil War's ^{NEW!} start puts focus on Kalamazoo-area soldiers**

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Scott Harmsen / Kalamazoo

Gazette Many Civil War veterans are buried in Section H of Kalamazoo's Riverview Cemetery. This is the headstone of Cpl. Thomas Woodford, who served in Company K of the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry.

KALAMAZOO — Soldiers from Kalamazoo County played a significant role in the war that helped end slavery and kept a wounded nation from splitting apart.

About 3,200 men enlisted in the Civil War, a significant percentage of the county's population, which was 24,346 in 1860, a year before the war started, said Tom Dietz, curator of the Kalamazoo Valley Museum.

"It was a significant number, that's for sure," Dietz said.

Of the total enlisted, 207 died of disease, 80 were killed or went missing in action and 48 died of wounds inflicted in battle. Twenty-five died in Confederate prisons and five perished in accidents, Dietz said.

On April 16, 1861, just days after the war broke out after the Confederate shelling of Fort Sumter, S.C., 45 men enlisted at a meeting in Kalamazoo to discuss the war, said Steve Rossio, local historian at the Portage District Library.

The first man to sign up had a famous name — William Shakespeare — and was only 17 at the time. He would later be seriously injured and nearly die after being shot several times in battle.

His story was only one of several accomplishments by area soldiers who fought in the Union Army.

On July 4, 1863, the 25th Michigan Infantry Regiment, under the leadership of Col. Orlando H. Moore, won a stunning victory over Confederate forces at the Battle of Tebbs Bend.



Scott Harmsen / Kalamazoo Gazette

Many Civil

War veterans are buried in Section H of Kalamazoo's Riverview Cemetery near a monument erected by the Orcutt Post No. 79 of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). It is a granite column topped by a statue of a Civil War soldier. This photo shows the statue.

Moore, of Schoolcraft, saw his forces outnumbered about 175 to 1,000 at the Green River Bridge near Campsville, Ky., Rossio said. But his troops were able to beat back repeated rebel advances ordered by Confederate Gen. John Hunt Morgan.

The night before, Moore had ordered men on horseback to go back and forth over the bridge to make it appear he was receiving reinforcements when, in fact, there was no help for the outnumbered Union forces within 30 miles.

At the time, the significance of the victory was overshadowed by the Union win at the Battle of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania, Rossio said.

Then there was the story of Charles A. Thompson, who moved to Kalamazoo from Ohio and served in the 17th Michigan Infantry Regiment. He won the Congressional Medal of Honor for his protection of the flag at the Battle of Spotsylvania on May 12, 1864.

It took a while for him to receive the honor, however. He received it in 1896, four years before he died, Rossio said. *"there were so many achievements of local soldiers in the war," he said.*