

# G.A.R. Dispatch

Newsletter of

**MICHIGAN'S GRAND ARMY OF THE  
REPUBLIC MEMORIAL HALL AND MUSEUM**

**224 S. Main Street  
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## *NEW PORTABLE DISPLAY*



## *Museum Hosts Guest Speakers*

The G.A.R. Memorial Hall and Museum hosted Jack Dempsey on November 14 September 24 as part of the museum's continuing seminar program. Mr. Dempsey's presentation was two fold – the memoir of Eunice Hunt Taylor, wife of the first Medical Director of the army of the Potomac and secondly, Charles S. Tripler, a medical officer during the Spanish-American War and on the eve of the Civil War, was charged with medical care of the largest American Military force in our history. 2024 promises more excellent programs for our community. There is no charge for admission to the presentations (donations are appreciated to help maintain the museum) and light refreshments will be served.

## *2024 EVENTS AND PRESENTATIONS:*

April 23 – 7:00pm – Kira O'Donnell-Allen – Belles of the Ball: Women soldiers in the Civil War

May 21 – 7:00pm – John Urshell – Andersonville

June 18 – 7:00pm – James Jackson – Genealogy, Putting it All Together

August 20 – 7:00pm – Matt VanAcker – Lansing, Michigan in the Civil War – book talk

September 15 – 10:00am-4:00pm – 11<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration with special exhibits

September 17 – 7:00pm – Ron Carley – Abraham Lincoln

October 17 – 7:00pm – Scott Cummings – 30<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary of “Gettysburg-the Movie

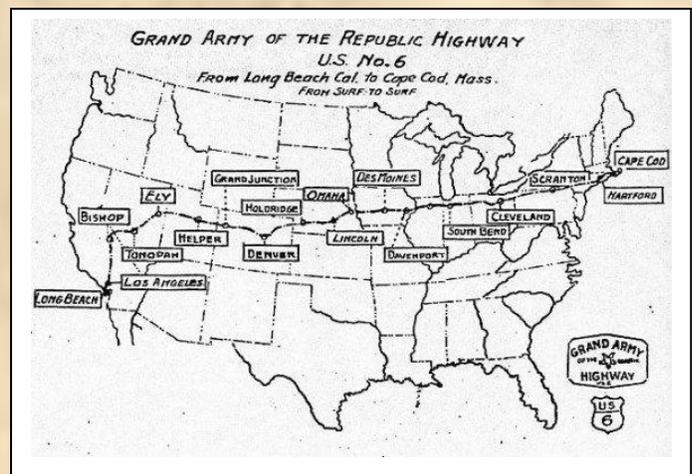
## *CIVIL WAR DISCOVERY CAMP*

August 13 – 10:00am to 3:00pm – Civil War Camp of Discovery (\$20.00) for children age 7 to 14 years. Starting on G.A.R. Island Park, planned activities include learning the Civil War manual of arms with wooden muskets, how to march, how Civil War soldiers lived and much more. Students will also be allowed to fire a reproduction Civil War musket (with prior parental approval). Lunch is provided on the Island. After a mock battle, students march to the Museum where they will be discharged from the army and paid \$13 in replica 1860's federal money.

## *U.S. 6 - Grand Army of the Republic Memorial Highway*

At the National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic in 1936, it was proposed that US 6, which runs from Provincetown on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, to Bishop, California, be designated as the Memorial Highway. Because this highway passes through or near the metropolitan areas of New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, the West Point Military Academy, as well as many small cities and towns, it is often called Main Street, USA.

The highway is a main route of the United States Numbered Highway System. The route has been modified several times. The highway's longest-lasting routing, from 1936 to 1964, had its western terminus at Long Beach, California. During this time, US 6 was the longest highway in the country.



## UPCOMING PROGRAMS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

### Museum Hours

The museum is open the first and second Wednesdays of the month, plus the third Saturday, 10:00am to 4:00pm, along with patriotic holidays and by appointment. Beginning Memorial Day, the museum will be open every Wednesday thru Labor Day. Feel free to call and make an appointment, we do it regularly for groups as large as one! Also in 2024, the museum is open the third Saturday each month from 10:00am to 4:00pm.

#### April, 2024

Wednesday, April 10<sup>th</sup> (10 AM - 4 PM) - Museum Open

Thursday, April 11<sup>th</sup> (7 PM) - Board Meeting

Saturday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, (10AM – 4PM) – Museum open

Tuesday, April 23 – 7:00pm – Kira O'Donnell-Allen –  
Belles of the Ball: Women soldiers in the Civil War

#### May 2024

Wednesday, May 1st (10 AM - 4 PM) - Museum Open

Wednesday, May 8th (10AM – 4PM) – Museum open

Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup> (7 PM) - Board Meeting

Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup> (10AM-5PM) Museum Open

Tuesday, May 21<sup>st</sup> – 7:00pm – John Urshell – Andersonville

#### June, 2024

Museum will be open every Wednesday - (10am to 4pm)

Thursday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, (7 PM) - Board Meeting

Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup> (10AM-5PM) Museum Open

Tuesday, June 18 – 7:00pm – James Jackson – Genealogy, Putting it All Together

## *Museum Receives Certificate of Appreciation*

Saturday, January 13, the Jackson Civil War Muster Host Committee hosted a recognition dinner at the Commonwealth Conference Center in Jackson. They recognized Michigan's G.A.R. Memorial Hall and Museum with a Certificate of Appreciation for the support the Museum provided to the 2023 Jackson Civil War Muster.

This support consisted with our Museum's display tent, loan of the Museum's Kid's Wooden Muskets and our "Woody" and medical supplies and in honor of Keith's keeping the Muster going from the beginnings. "Camp Harrison" was integrated in the Muster. Accepting the Certificate is our President, Chris Allen.



## *Museum Receives Community Grant*

Eaton Community Bank believes the vitality of our communities is at the heart of everything we do. The Bank believes in supporting like-minded organizations that help make our communities great. To underscore this commitment, they donated a total of \$9,000 to five local, non-profit organizations, based upon community votes as to who would receive a \$5,000 grant, with the remaining finalists receiving a grant of \$1,000.00.

Voting was brisk and concluded with the Museum receiving a \$1,000 grant. President Chris Allen attended the ceremonies and accepted the check on behalf of the museum.

## *Museum's Popcorn Machine at Christmas Parade*



Thanks to our volunteers who staffed this very busy stand. There was never a break in the line.

## *RECENT ACQUISITIONS*

Our “1890s” PowerPoint was recently removed from the wall to allow a preservationist better access to evaluate the condition of the piece and to quote a cost of repair and restoration. The painting was mounted to a wooden bar across the top and a second wooden bar along the bottom. The painting was tearing away from the bottom bar to the point that re-hanging the piece may cause further damage. So after detailed photographs were taken, the piece was placed in storage. Our Special Advisor, Bob Griggs, applied his skills in photograph editing and then his family paid for and donated a 10 foot photograph for display. Thank you very much!



## *Museum Hosts Christmas Party*

The Austin Blair Camp #7, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War met at Michigan's G.A.R. Memorial Hall and Museum for their annual Potluck Christmas Dinner. Great time was had by all, including the white elephant auction.



## *Your Organization can hold your event at the Museum*

Contact the museum at [GARmichigan@gmail.com](mailto:GARmichigan@gmail.com) – rates vary depending on the type of organization and the length of the event. Museum volunteers will be on hand during your event to provide tours of the museum.

## *RESTORATION PROJECT UNDERWAY*

You may recall that we received a painting of General Butler in a somewhat damaged condition. We have retained the services of a renovation expert, who is working on restoring the painting. Photos will be in the next newsletter.

## *Last Union Veteran: Albert Henry Woolson*

Born in Antwerp, Jefferson County, New York, on February 11, 1850 (he may have insisted on the 1847 date to appear older when he enlisted), Albert Henry Woolson spent most of his life in Minnesota. The Woolson's arrived in Minnesota sometime after 1855, settling in near the frontier town of Mankato. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Woolson's father, Willard Paul, enlisted in the 4th Minnesota Infantry as a musician, a trait his son would follow later in the war. Due to a disability, the elder Woolson was discharged during the Siege of Corinth in 1862. A little over two years later, Albert enlisted in the 1st Minnesota Heavy Artillery. With a musical background and at the tender age of 14, Woolson became the bugler for Companies C and D. The unit spent most of the remainder of the war on garrison duty near Chattanooga, Tennessee and did not see combat. Woolson was discharged on June 26, 1865, and returned home to the Mankato area.

Woolson worked as an engineer in the Grist Mill and by the 1890s, he accepted a position as one of the State Boiler Inspectors for Minnesota. After wife Jane passed away in 1901, Woolson married Anna Hagen on September 1, 1904. The marriage added four children to the surviving seven from Woolson's first marriage, all but one outliving the old soldier.

Woolson proudly joined the local G.A.R., and for the final fifty years of his life belonged to Willis A. Gorman Post No. 13 in Duluth. Woolson attended the last National Encampment in Indianapolis, Indiana in August 1949, where six of the surviving sixteen men attended. Woolson and the other five attendees rode in a parade through the Indianapolis to the cheering thousands. In the parade, Woolson carried the colors of Company C, 1st Minnesota Heavy Artillery.

When James A. Hard died in 1953, Woolson became the last Union Soldier. All of Duluth turned out for Memorial Day that year to honor him. Still fit at 103, Woolson wore the uniform of the G.A.R. and presided over the ceremony as the honorary grand marshal of the parade. Later, he laid a wreath at the soldiers' and sailors' monument, received honors from the Duluth Lions Club, the national Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion, and proceeded to the cemetery to honor the dead veterans.

Even in his last year, Woolson attended the annual Memorial Day parades in Duluth. In 1954, he reviewed the Duluth branch of the University of Minnesota ROTC class. In something that must have amazed Woolson, the parade featured a formation of F-86 Sabrejets and a helicopter from Duluth's 515th Air Defense Group. After Memorial Day 1956, Woolson's "remarkable stamina" finally turned for the worse, and he entered St. Luke's Hospital, where he spent the rest of his life. On July 26, he lost consciousness and passed away one week later August 2, 1956. With his passing an era came to an end, and the books to the GAR were officially closed. Cora E. Gillis, the GAR's final secretary, fittingly wrote that "The final taps have sounded, with the passing of the last member of that once great army, Albert Woolson, of Duluth, Minn. Their memory will remain forever."

Shortly after his death, Albert Woolson was immortalized by appearing on the Grand Army of the Republic monument at Zeigler's Grove, Gettysburg National Military Park. August 12, 2023, Park Hill Cemetery in Duluth, Minnesota, the [William Colvill Camp 56, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War](#), hosted the Last Union Veteran ceremony for Pvt. Albert Woolson, St. Louis County. The ceremony was inaugurated by the firing of an original Napoleon cannon from Battery I, 1st US Artillery. The 1st Minnesota Infantry marched in at the sound of the cannon and performed "Rest on Arms" maneuvers near Woolson's gravesite. Woolson's Last Union Veteran ceremony was performed to a large crowd of spectators, including three relatives of Woolson.

## *Message from our President, Chris Allen*

I want to take a moment to look over the past year. I realized it was not possible to fill Keith's shoes and I needed to find my own way. We have accomplished a lot due to the support and assistance of our Board of Directors

The Museum's collection has continued to grow with the donations and loans of some amazing artifacts. We have also received some significant donations, grants and sponsorships.

Our presentations have garnered some good publicity and we have the 2024 schedule full. Our store is up and running and will hopefully be available soon for sales through our web site.

We have received a number of requests for research and our research team has been able to answer many questions while the person is still taking the tour.

We have been changing our displays and rotating our artifacts to allow our members and visitors a chance to see more of the collections. We have one display case devoted to our new acquisitions, so we can immediately put items on display as we determine a more permanent place for each artifact donated.

Our Day of Discovery for children has increased our presence on the island and we have already received registrations for the 2024 event in August. Also, for the first time, we had a request from some 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers to give a tour of the G.A.R. Island Park to their students. Dewitt Schools and the VFW Home have also made inquiries.

Marketing – I have wanted to increase our marketing efforts and using some new software, we can send our emails and announcements out safely. We have created an Instagram presence thanks to former board member Cody Orr, while also increasing our present on other social media. We still have work to do with our on-line presence and will be a priority in 2024.

Our success is totally due to the support and devotion of our members and supporters. I also want to thank our Board of Directors for stepping up and helping out as we chart our future, building upon our past. We will be open the third Saturday of each month in addition to Wednesdays, to help better serve.

*Chris*

Chris Allen - President

## *GAR Island Park Brick Program*

We have been asked over the years about the possibility of placing additional bricks around the gazebo on the G.A.R. Island Park. After discussions with the City of Eaton Rapids Parks Department, the museum is now selling bricks for placement on the island.

Two sizes of bricks are available – 4x8 and 8x8, along with two colors. You can honor anyone you choose. Bricks will be ordered in batches and then installed by museum volunteers two or three times per year. Proceeds will help the museum in their mission of preserving the history of the Grand Army of the Republic.

## *HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!*

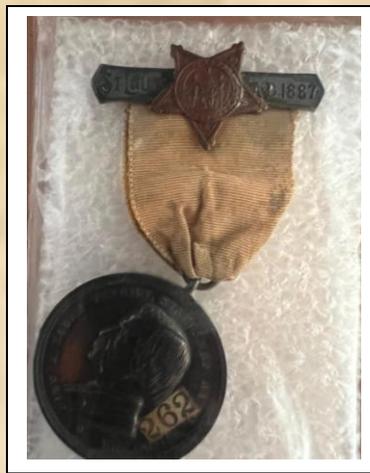
April 6, 2024 was the 158<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Grand Army of the Republic. The museum hosted several G.A.R. collectors who brought in part of their collections to share with our visitors.





## RECENT ACQUISITIONS

The museum was recently contacted by the Civil War Museum of Philadelphia. That museum, founded in 1888, is considered by this editor to be one of the premium museums on the G.A.R. in the country. In their collection were five Michigan pieces and they thought these items would be better placed in our museum. Many thanks to our good friend Ben Cwayna, who picked up the artifacts' for us.



*Thanks to Ace Hardware of Eaton Rapids!*

Many thanks to Ace Hardware of Eaton Rapids for their donation of a Milwaukee Packout rolling tool cabinet. This will become an integral part of our new, revised traveling museum exhibit. We've made appearances at the Curwood Festival in Owosso, the Jackson Civil War Muster, the Henry Ford and more!

### MUSEUM HOURS

The museum is open on the first two Wednesdays, the 3rd Saturday, (10a-4p), patriotic holidays, special events, and by appointment

### MICHIGAN'S

### G.A.R. MUSEUM

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President-Chris Allen  
 Vice President-Jim Pahl  
 Secretary- Gary Gibson  
 Treasurer-James Kaiser  
 Directors: David Kimble,  
 Ron Tyrl, Matt Allen,  
 Pam Colestock, & Kira  
 O'Donnell-Allen  
 Special advisors: Bob  
 Griggs & Howard Lloyd



*We now accept credit cards*



*Thank you to all who have  
 visited the museum and  
 who generously gave a  
 donation or became a  
 Sponsor!*

TRI-RIVER  
 HISTORICAL  
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**MICHIGAN'S  
GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC  
MEMORIAL HALL & MUSEUM**

**224 S. Main St., Eaton Rapids, Michigan 48827**

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James B. Brainerd Post #111 Memorial Hall and Museum, Inc.  
*Email:* GARmichigan@gmail.com *Web:* <https://GARmuseum.com>  
*Telephone:* 517-922-6427

*Face Book:* GARBrainerdPost111MemorialHallAndMuseum

This collection of post-Civil War history is displayed on the two floors of the original James Brainerd Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) Post #111 in downtown Eaton Rapids. The 1886-built G.A.R. Hall is just a short walk from G.A.R. Island Park where annual G.A.R. encampments were held in August in 1886, 1893, 1901, and then each year from 1908 until 1929. Your support is needed to help us chronicle and preserve the significant contribution of the G.A.R. to our state's and country's history..

**ANNUAL SPONSOR LEVELS**

\$ 200	President Abraham Lincoln G.A.R. Post	_____
\$ 175	Governor Austin Blair G.A.R. Post	_____
\$ 150	Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant G.A.R. Post	_____
\$ 125	Major Gen. William T. Sherman G.A.R. Post	_____
\$ 100	Major Gen. Philip Sheridan G.A.R. Post	_____
\$ 75	Bvt. Major Gen. Alpheus S. Williams G.A.R. Post	_____
\$ 50	Bvt. Major Gen. Russell A. Alger G.A.R. Post	_____
\$ 25	Lt. James B. Brainerd G.A.R. Post	_____

**OTHER SPONSOR LEVEL**

\$1,000	Life-time Patron	_____
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Email: \_\_\_\_\_

If paying by check, make your check payable to *G.A.R. Museum*. If you wish, you also may pay by credit card by filling out the bottom of this form. Mail completed form and payment to address above.

Credit Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code \_\_\_\_\_

(3 digit code-back of card)

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ Credit Card Billing Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

The Museum is open the first two Wednesdays each month, patriotic holidays, **and by appointment**.  
Museum Admission is Free.

The Michigan's G.A.R. Memorial Hall & Museum is a federally recognized 501 (c) (3) tax exempt, Michigan nonprofit corporation.  
All donations to Michigan's G.A.R. Memorial Hall and Museum are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowable by law.