

Civil War soldiers to finally get their due

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Not forgotten but possibly a bit neglected for 150 years, Schoharie County soldiers who died in the Civil War will get their due respect this year.

A monument will rise at the Old Stone Fort in Schoharie, joining the markers honoring veterans of other wars. The work is being done by the Cpl. James Tanner Camp #134 of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War with help from the Fort staff and the community.

The \$50,000 project fills a void that exists for reasons unclear, according to Richard Sherman.

"Every crossroads, every hamlet has a stone or monument," said Mr. Sherman, who chairs the monument committee. "Not Schoharie County."

The Tanner Camp is currently raising money for the monument. (See related story.)

Direct descendants of Union soldiers, the Sons decided to tackle the project four years ago.

Bill Howe, an early member of the Sons' monument committee, came to an early meeting.

"He got us going," Mr. Sherman said. "He lit the fuse at the right time."

"Actually, this is what the Sons of Union Veterans are supposed to do—perpetuate the memory of those who served and take care of monuments."

Nobody's sure why Schoharie County doesn't have a monument already. Honoring the Civil War dead was commonplace elsewhere after the war, especially in the last 25 years of the 19th Century.

"It was the time of the country's centennial," Mr. Sherman said, "and there was a tremendous surge in national identity. But no monument went up here."

One explanation may come from Lester Hendrix' "The Slaughterers' History of Schoharie County," which notes considerable southern sympathy in the county.

Those times were long past, however, when the committee got going. But if members knew what they must do, there was little agreement on what to do.

Representing the Tanner Camp, besides Mr. Sherman, were Jeremi Sherman, Gerald Wright, Pete Lindemann, Roger Shafer, Melvin Bostwick and Richard Christman. From the community were Bill Cleveland, Mary Alice Molgard and Ted Shuart; and from the Stone Fort, director Carle Kopecky.

Meetings were often contentious about the monument design.

"People would argue and go away mad," Mr. Sherman said. "But that's because they really cared about what they were doing."

Members finally settled on a \$300,000 three-figure statue.

"That was right before the economy crashed," Mr. Sherman said, laughing. "And it wouldn't have fit well at the Fort, anyway."

The committee went back to work, and the result is a granite monument is eight feet wide with a riser seven high. On either side of the riser are bench-high wings.

The front of the monument has the badge of the Grand Army of the Republic—the Union veterans' organization—and inscriptions honoring Schoharie County's veterans.

On the back will be names of the 283 county men who died in the war.

Pavers, inscribed as a fundraising project, will be in front of the monument to form a "Tribute Walk" flanked by two cannons.

"We're very proud of what we came up with," Mr. Sherman said.

The monument will be to the right of the Fort, alongside the World War and Vietnam monument.

Cherry Valley Memorials is producing the monument and pavers.

"They've really helped us a lot and have been great to work with," Mr. Sherman said.

The Sons will have a monument fund to maintain the marker "so that it won't be a burden to taxpayers."

The monument will be dedicated on Memorial Day, May 30 this year, correcting the 150-year void.

"Those people paid an incredible price," said Mr. Sherman. "We're proud to do this."

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