

**MILITARY ORDER OF THE LOYAL LEGION OF THE UNITED STATES**



*Loyal Legion Vignettes*



**MICHIGAN MONUMENT AT ANDERSONVILLE PRISON REDEDICATED**

By  
**Bruce B. Butgereit, Commander, Michigan Commandery**  
**Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States**  
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*It is a far cry from Michigan to Georgia, but Michigan will not forget or cease to honor the men who filled*

*the ranks of her volunteers...* Such were the words of General James H. Kidd [Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS) Insignia 03749], 6th Michigan Cavalry, at the May 30, 1904 dedication of the Michigan monument at Andersonville, Georgia. One hundred years to the day, the people of Michigan were there once again to prove those words were true.

It was shortly after the National Woman's Relief Corps (WRC), the Auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), had purchased the Prison Pen at Andersonville (Georgia), known as Camp Sumter by the Confederates; efforts were made to erect memorials at the site.

On May 28, 1904 a special train, carrying Michigan Governor A. T. Bliss [MOLLUS Insignia 04718] and other dignitaries, left Detroit bound for Georgia. Their destination was the National Cemetery at Andersonville, one of the most infamous prisons during the American Civil War. The purpose of their journey was to dedicate a new monument to the Michigan soldiers who had been imprisoned and died there. On Friday, May 28, 2004 a group of people traveled by air from Detroit on a special mission to rededicate that same monument; they were later joined by others traveling by auto from several states.

The Michigan monument, with its life-size weeping angel, is considered by many to be one of the most beautiful memorials on the grounds of the Andersonville National Historic site. It is also one of only a few to actually be erected within the stockade of the prison. Created by the Lloyd Brothers Monument Co. of Toledo, Ohio, the State of Michigan authorized the purchase of the \$5,500 memorial. Missing a bronze laurel wreath for many years, through the efforts of Mercene Karkadoulis, of Karkadoulis Bronze Art, Inc, of Cincinnati, Ohio the memorial was restored to its original 1904 condition. The entire cost of restoring the wreath was borne by Mrs. Karkadoulis as "her contribution to the dedication and efforts of Bruce and Marcia Butgereit (of Grand Rapids, MI) in restoring and preserving our Civil War memorials" (Mercene is a nationally renowned conservator whose company she established in 1971 has restored hundreds of sculptures, monuments and statues across the United States including the 119-year-old Kent County, Grand Rapids, Michigan Civil War Monument).

The Michigan Monument is constructed of light gray Vermont granite and is about 10 feet tall. The inscription on the front face reads:

*IN MEMORIAM*

*Erected by the State of Michigan to her soldiers and sailors  
who were imprisoned on these grounds.*

In 1904, that special train was met at every depot along the route to Andersonville by throngs of open-armed citizens of the south, usually with plenty of refreshments. In Nashville, the Governor of Tennessee led a tour of the city's points of interest. Upon arriving at their destination, the group found special trains bringing in a large number of ex-slaves for the event, estimated at six thousand. The City of Fitzgerald, established in 1896 by ex-Union soldiers who, after suffering through the 1890 depression or with the drought that crippled the mid-west decided that they could start their lives anew in Georgia, sent an official delegation and 10 carloads of people on a train to the event. The GAR Posts from Fitzgerald, GA and the WRC were there in force. The Central Congregational Church of Atlanta provided their Reverend and a vocal quartet for the service.

For several months leading up to the rededication date, we had received an outpouring of invitations to visit numerous sites throughout the area and everyone was anxiously looking forward to our visit. Upon our arrival in Americus, Georgia, a number of our party stayed at the Windsor Hotel (est. 1892), an elegant Victorian hotel where we received our first taste of southern hospitality, 2004 style.

In an effort to repeat history, the good people of the Andersonville Guild, a local group dedicated to preserving history of the prison and which conducts annual living history events for the public on Memorial Day and once again in October, requested those of us attending the 2004 rededication ceremony to "bring our Michigan flags and march with us in our parade." The Americus, Georgia-based Alexander Stephens Camp No. 78, Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) officially welcomed the

## **2004 travelers at the start of the parade.**

**The Color Guard stepped off smartly with the flags of the United States, the flag of the State of Michigan, the Michigan Commandery of MOLLUS, the Department of Michigan of Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) proudly blowing in the breeze, marking the first time in anyone's memory that men in Blue had marched through the streets of Andersonville. Following the march, a Brother in gray escorted each of us to a local restaurant where we were once again welcomed and where they then provided a delicious lunch for all of us. The SCV Camp 78 Color Guard would also stand side-by-side with us at the rededication ceremony the next day.**

**Several days before our journey south, I had received a call from Mr. Charlie Newcomer, a resident of Georgia whose ancestor Alfred Newcomer had served in the 7th Michigan, Company H and who had been one of the founders of the City of Fitzgerald. Charlie and his wife served as our tour guides both Saturday and Sunday of our stay.**

**Following the lunch, our party was escorted to Fitzgerald, where we were given a tour of their Blue and Gray Museum, and had our picture taken with the Michigan flag which will be placed on their "wall of honor." We were then driven around the city to see the various historical sites, the cemetery, their blue and gray sidewalks and fire hydrants as well as their famous wild chickens.**

**One hundred years ago, the delegation from Fitzgerald had failed to deliver their official greetings and an invitation to visit their fair city due to the severity of a sudden storm and the decision to quickly conclude the ceremony; one hundred years later, that invitation was finally delivered as Mr. Cam Jordon, representing the City, came and graciously welcomed us and shared some more history of the city.**

**Exactly one hundred years to the date of the original dedication, on Sunday, May 30, 2004 at 11 AM, the Michigan Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion and the Department of Michigan, of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, with assistance from the Woman's Relief Corps and Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War (DUVCW) performed the 1917 Grand Army of the Republic Service of Rededication. This ceremony marked the first time on record that any state had officially returned to rededicate the memorial erected to their sons who wore the Blue.**

**The morning of Sunday, May 30 opened a bit overcast but soon gave way to sunshine and a temperature in the mid-nineties. Shortly after the service began, a cooling breeze came about, which was referenced to as a "Michigan breeze" by the National Park Service Superintendent of Andersonville, Mr. Charles Fenwick (might it been a small thank you from those boys to whom we were paying our respects too that day?)**

**As Commander of the Michigan Commandery of MOLLUS and Past Department Commander of the Department of Michigan, SUVCW, Bruce B. Butgereit conducted the service of rededication. Although traditionally a service performed solely by members of the GAR in the past and the SUVCW today, Butgereit often modifies such ceremonies to include parts for the Order's fraternal sisters in the WRC, DUVCW, and Auxiliary to the SUVCW. Marcia Butgereit, National Chaplain of the WRC, read the poem, *Those Rebel Flags*, in keeping with the same theme of peace extended by Michigan Governor Bliss in 1904. Sister Wenda Fore, Department Chaplain for the Michigan DUVCW, offered the prayer of rededication. Sister Jeannine Trybus, WRC, also participated by placing a wreath of Michigan evergreen at the monument with her husband Mr. Chester Trybus. All four of these individuals were dressed in period clothing of 1904; the ladies making their outfits and large straw hats especially for this occasion and Mr. Trybus' outfit complete with a straw "boater" hat of the period.**

**In attendance at the 1904 dedication, the Central Congregational United Church of Christ of Atlanta was once again represented with a coed-quartet consisting of Ms. Jill Hendrix, Ms. Maureen Jenci-Shelton, Rev. Donald Miller, and James Hilden-Minton who sang *Nearer My God to Thee*. Ms. Hendrix and Shelton also sang two songs they had written. Ms. Shelton, an ordained minister of the church also provided the opening prayer, as written by Rev. Edward Martin Brown, III, the grandson of a 15-year-**

old Confederate guard at Andersonville and member of the church.

Also participating in our ceremony was Mr. Cam Jordan and his wife Pam, who, again representing Fitzgerald, delivered a commemorative plaque and a key to the City. Ms. Sherri Butler, staff writer of the *Fitzgerald Herald-Leader* (and member of the Michigan WRC), with assistance from her brother, placed a wreath at the monument.

While simply the name Andersonville conjures up scenes of immense suffering, hardship, and death, the purpose of our mission was not to cast stones, accuse or place blame, but to simply honor those soldiers from Michigan who were imprisoned there.

Taking a page from the 1904 speech of Governor Bliss (a prisoner himself at Andersonville as a cavalryman from New York), our thoughts echoed the same today in 2004 -

*...seven hundred men from the peninsular State are entombed within the precincts of the war-time prison, and we of Michigan are here, this Memorial Day, to dedicate to their memory a granite monument, testifying for all time that a great people do not forget their heroes, and to proclaim the pride we take in the faithfulness of those dead sons of our commonwealth.*

*...Gray headed men, once foes, have mingled in bonds of fraternity again and again, and the years have made it possible for the representatives of our far northern State to come here in the hospitality of this far southern State and dedicate a memorial to patriotic devotion that neither may forget.*

*The war and its suffering, the anguish of crucified hearts, and the burden of those days belong to the dead of the past, but the lessons, the memories, and the patriotism are a living part of national life. A monument to the soldier of either army is a monument to the American soldier, and true men and women everywhere proudly acclaim that it in that wider, larger, charity, that far reaching love of country, which constitutes a great nation. We feel that this monument in its greater significance will to the end of time teach the nation, our nation that we are one people, and that the sacrifice of those Michigan soldiers are for the common glory as they were for the common welfare...*

Taps were played by Brother Mark Heath of Jackson, Michigan who was wearing a replica uniform of that worn by Caleb Green of the pre-Civil War militia unit called the Jackson Gray's, which later became part of the 1st Michigan and who is buried in the Andersonville cemetery.

Before closing the service, Brother Dick Hutchins and his wife Mary sprinkled some soil, gathered from 14 of Michigan's 25 SUVCW Camps, in front of the monument as a way of bringing a piece of home back to those men who were to never step foot on the soil of their native state again. This brought to a close a project that had been two years in the making.

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