

Milford Moments in Time

By Joyce M. Clark

Milford residents enjoy four distinct seasons throughout the year. And the season peaking right around the corner is summer! Even though our calendar lists June 21 as the first day of summer, most of us will agree that Memorial Day weekend kicks off our summer fun.

But Memorial Day is about more than picnics, swimming, and golfing. Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day set aside to remember those who have died in our nation's service. Memorial Day was first officially observed on May 30, 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery.

Throughout the history of Milford, residents have stepped forward to help protect our freedom. According to Linda Dagenhardt, resident Oak Grove Historian, Oak Grove Cemetery has eight veterans who served in the War of 1812, the Mexican War, or the Spanish-American War. It also has at least 100 Civil War veterans and well over a hundred veterans from World Wars I and II. Linda's current census also documents four veterans from the Korean War and 10 from Vietnam. Linda still has plenty of work ahead of her in documenting the graves, so she knows there are even more veterans to be acknowledged.

Two of Milford's Civil War veterans, Silas and George Bullard, were often heard telling their stories around town about their involvement in the war. As part of Company E of the Fourth Michigan Cavalry, Silas and George helped capture Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate States. They both shared in the \$100,000 reward and Silas brought home to Milford the bridle of Davis' horse. Both Silas and George are now buried in Oak Grove Cemetery.

After the Civil War, veterans usually congregated informally but in 1919, after World War I, the United States founded the American Legion. The American Legion is an organization for veterans of the United States armed forces who served during wartime. In addition to organizing commemorative events that honor those who have served our country, the American Legion offers support to veterans and their families regarding veteran benefits such as pensions, and the Veterans Affairs hospital system.

Milford's Ernest F. Oldenburg American Legion Post is located at 510 West Commerce and was built back in that late 1940's. Prior to that, members met at the G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic) Hall which was located in what is now the north parking lot of Clancy's Restaurant on Main Street.

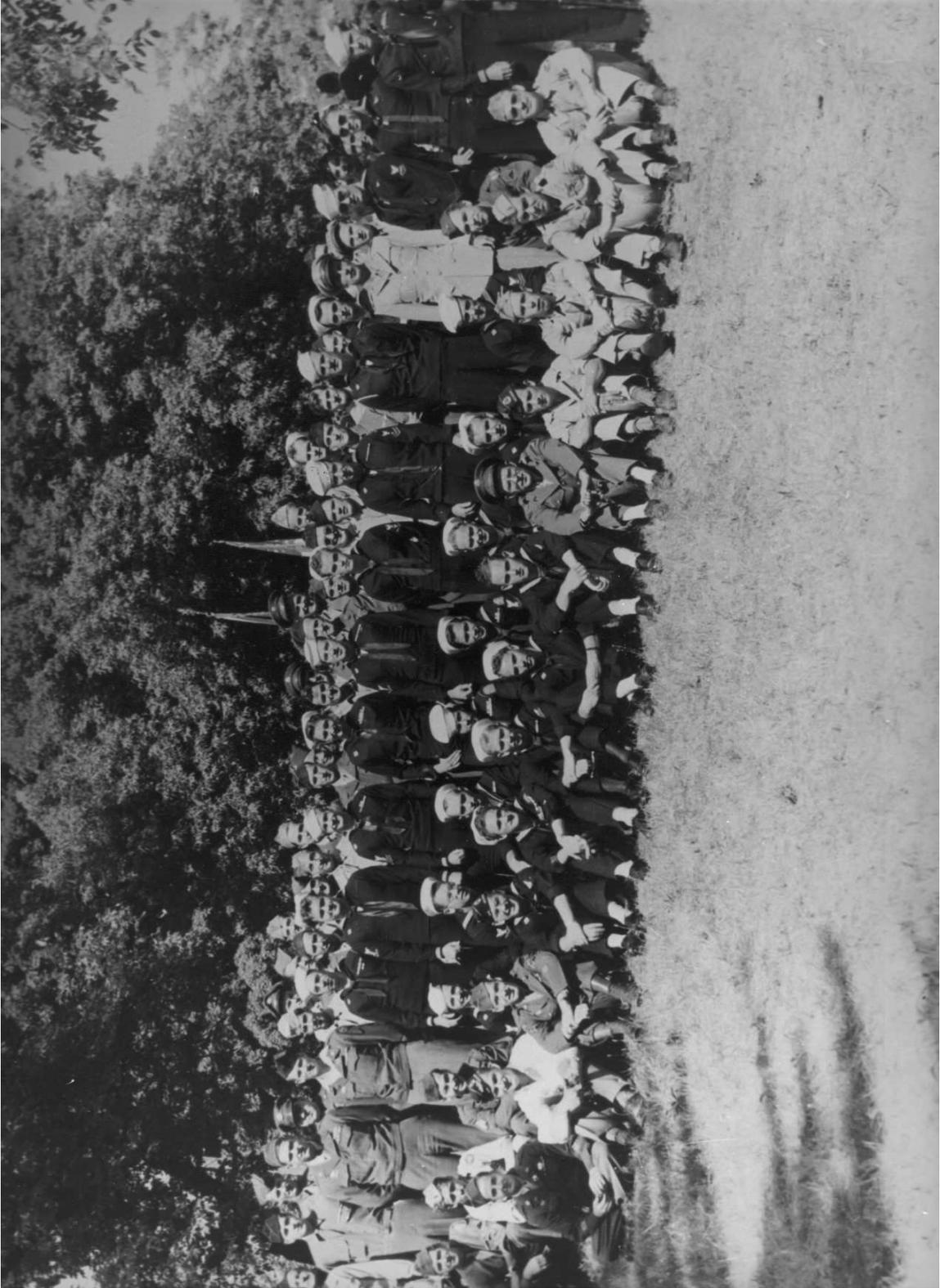
According to Joseph Salvia, recent Milford American Legion Post Commander, Ernest F. Oldenburg was a World War I soldier in the 32nd Red Arrow Division and the first local soldier killed in action during that war. Ernest is buried in the Wixom Cemetery and each Memorial Day our American Legion decorates his grave.

But Ernest is not the only grave the American Legion decorates. The American Legion honors its veterans buried in Milford's local cemeteries as well. They currently decorate over 241 graves in Oak Grove Cemetery, not to mention the graves they decorate in Milford Memorial Cemetery.

A grateful Henry Ford sold his property to the Ernest F. Oldenburg American Legion Post for one dollar (\$1.00) so the veterans could establish their current building. You might not be able to make that type of donation today, but you can still carve a little time out of a great weekend schedule and thank our veterans.

Milford's Annual Memorial Day parade marches down Main Street on Monday, May 28 starting at 11:00 am. Following the parade is a short service in Milford's Central Park conducted by the American Legion. For more information, you can checkout the American Legion's website at: www.milfordlegion216.org.

2007 is the 175th Anniversary of Milford and in celebration of this major milestone, we are asking you to share some of your stories with the rest of the community. If you have a little Milford history to pass along, please contact Sue Bullard, Milford Historical Society President, 248.685.7308 or milfordhistory@yahoo.com. The Milford Historical Society is happy to document your story and share it with others.



Caption: Local World War II veterans meet in Milford's Central Park in the Spring of 1946. (Photo Courtesy of Murray Burley, Milford American Legion Historian)