

## VMPWI NEWS!

(Veterans Memorial Park of Wichita, Inc)

December 1, 2009

### Veterans Memorials being prepared for Civil War Sesquicentennial

Veterans Memorial Park of Wichita, Inc, through Operation Ensign, is making great strides in preparing two Civil War memorial in Wichita for the upcoming Sesquicentennial (150<sup>th</sup> anniversary) of that war in 2011. The city of Wichita is planning certain activities to observe that historic occasion. Plans for those activities have not been finalized or announced.

**Garfield Post 25, GAR Memorial pavilion in Maple grove Cemetery, 1100 N. Hillside,** consists of a magnificent circular native stone pavilion surrounded by two concentric circles of grave stones of Civil War Union veterans. This memorial was originally built in the years 1897-1901, and dedicated on Memorial Day 1901. Over the next century the shifting ground, typical of a cemetery, and the effects of severe Kansas weather had so damaged the structure of the Pavilion that it presented a public safety hazard. Through the Maple Grove Heritage Association, plans for refurbishing were initiated. In 2004 Operation Ensign, a project of VMPWI, obtained funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to refurbish a number of Veterans' Memorials including this historic jewel. A portion of those finds were allocated to this project.



GAR Insignia

All stonework of the Pavilion has been completed, roofing and interior refurbishment is complete. Work remaining consists of replacing the 100 stones in the two concentric circles around the Pavilion and supporting concrete walkways. It is expected to be finished in time for an observance on Memorial Day, 2010. It must be recognized, however, that because the environment within a crowded cemetery is sensitive to heavy equipment movement, completion of the project may be affected by weather conditions.

**The Eggleston Post 244, GAR Memorial** was also constructed and dedicated in that same time period in Highland Cemetery just across Hillside Avenue west of Maple Grove Cemetery. That memorial originally consisted of a central display of a Civil War cannon mounted on two columns of native limestone, a granite marker engraved as memorials to both GAR Post 244 and its counterpart, the Caroline Harrison Post of the Woman's Relief Corps, with four large concrete meditation benches and on the four corners of the plot, concrete pillars, each with an 8" cannon ball. At the center of the rectangular plot on the south side was placed a 50 foot flagpole. The Eggleston Section, or Section 2 of the cemetery, is a triangular plot adjacent to Hillside near 9<sup>th</sup> Street. It contains only graves of Civil War Veterans and their immediate



family members. Again, time and the inherent conditions of a cemetery have caused great deterioration to the beauty of the memorial. This was possibly the first cemetery in the City of Wichita, and is home to a great many of the original founders of the city. By the ending of the twentieth century the usable and marketable space for additional graves rendered the cemetery unprofitable as a business and as a result the City took ownership.

Again, VMPWI and Operation Ensign funded refurbishment of that significant memorial. The cemetery is now maintained by contract mowers and the very design of the Memorial tended to make the components subject to easy damage by power mowers. Because of this, a surrounding concrete walkway was added to the original design to protect the meditation benches and to minimize further damage from soil subsidence.



After completion of the Memorial refurbishment, it was evident that the remainder of the Eggleston Section required much work to bring the condition of the 50 or so Civil War grave markers up to respectable condition for the Sesquicentennial observance. Because that refurbishment was beyond the scope of the original HUD Grant, VMPI enlisted the voluntary aid of the local post of the Sons of Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW).

On three Saturdays in the summer of 2009 that volunteer group cleaned grave markers and reset stones which were subsiding or tilting seriously. These were lifted from their previous settings and reset in a level manner at approved depths. There were found to be a total of 53 Civil War Veterans in the plot, with nine stones damaged or deteriorated to the extent that they required replacement. New stones have been ordered from the Department of Veterans Affairs and will be installed during the spring and summer months of 2010.



It should be noted here that there appear to be at least three veterans of the Confederacy buried in the Eggleston Section. In accordance with Government policy, all Civil War veterans are treated equally regardless of which warring faction they had previously served.



CSA Insignia

Public Law 85 - 425: Sec. 410, states: *“The Administrator shall pay to each person who served in the military or naval forces of the Confederate States of America during the Civil War a monthly pension in the same amounts and subject to the same conditions as would have been applicable to such persons under the laws in effect on December 31, 1957, as if his service in the military or naval forces of the United States.*

*Approved May 23, 1958-*

*Source: U.S. Statutes at Large*

*Volume 72, Part 1, Page 133- 134*

*By Federal act of Congress ( May 23, 1958 ) all confederate Veterans are United States Military Veterans, and deserve all the rights and honors pertinent to such service. ”*

*\*\*\*They are thus not only recognized as United States citizens, but fully as Federally-recognized member of the United States military (with Veteran's status as well.*