



# Michigan War Veterans Memorial



DEDICATED TO MICHIGAN'S VETERANS AND WHAT THEY DID

DEDICATED SEPTEMBER 10, 1939



## Ground Is Broken for Vet Memorial —July 19, 1939

Eugene I. Van Antwerp, national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, turned the first ground for the tower, with a spade handed him by Paul W. Tara, president of the allied Veterans Council.

With representatives of a score of veterans' organizations participating, ground was broken today for the **Michigan War Veterans Memorial** at the State Fair Grounds.

The memorial is to be a stone tower, 35 feet high built of stones contributed by 700 posts of veterans groups throughout the State, with an ever-burning light fed by natural gas at the top. The site chosen is at the southwest corner of the Fair Grounds, close to Woodward avenue.

Councilman

Also taking part in the ceremonies were Henry G. Smith, deputy marshal of the United Spanish War Veterans; W. B. Waldrip, state commander of The American Legion; Frank Holland, state commander of the Military Order of the Purple heart; Charles Jones, commander of Harmony Post of the Canadian Legion, and C.H. Dusenberry director of musical entertainment at the Michigan State Fair who conceived the idea for the Memorial.

**August 2, 1939**

The cornerstone of the Michigan War Veterans Memorial which when completed will

contain engraved stones bearing the names of more than 300 veterans organizations was laid Monday by Paul Tara president of the Allied Veterans Council, and Dr. Linwood W. Snow general manager of the Michigan State Fair.

Located in the southwestern corner of the fair grounds, the memorial has advanced to a stage of construction where it already contains the stones of more than a score of posts.

Clarence H. Dusenberry, director of veterans' activities for the fair, said the pillar is the first activity to unite all of Michigan's veterans organizations. It contains tribute to Michigan's war dead in every engagement since the Civil War, he said.

Among the sponsoring groups are the United Spanish War Veterans, The VFW, The American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Canadian Legion and the Grand Army of the Republic. In his brief address Dr.

Snow dedicated the memorial "to the memory of those living or dead, who served their flag and country so unstintingly."

"We trust that this memorial when completed, will serve as a constant reminder to the youth of Michigan and the nation that this nation shall never perish from the face of the earth," he said.

Among those participating in the ceremony were John W. Gilmore, past department commander of the American Legion; Eugene I. Van Antwerp, commander-in-chief of the VFW; Frank Peterson representing the Great Lakes Command of the Canadian Legion; M.A. Whalen, department adjutant of the Disabled American Veteran; Andrew Johnson and George Tomlinson, members of the State Fair board of managers. The memorial will be completed before the fair opens, Dusenberry said. It will be unveiled officially on Veterans Day

Saturday, Sept. 9, 1939.

## September 9, 1939 Kindle Flame for War Vets Fair to See Dedication of Memorial

Dedication of the Michigan War Veterans Memorial was the principal event at the Michigan State Fair today. The memorial was built from stones donated by most of the posts of veterans organizations in the state. It stands in the southwest corner of the Fair grounds. Natural gas drilled from the ground only a few feet away will furnish the fuel for the eternal flame which will burn at the top of the memorial. The principal speeches at the dedication were made by Secretary of State Harry F. Kelly and Attorney-General Thomas Read. A representative of the G.A.R. Lighted the eternal Flame. Following the dedication, a drum and bulge corps contest was held on the Mall.

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### *Peace Flame Flares at Fair* War Veterans Memorial Is Dedicated

With a prayer for peace, the Michigan War Veterans Memorial was unveiled at the Michigan State Fair Saturday in the presence of 5,000 persons, most of them veterans of the World War and their

families.

"This is a monument created to honor peace," said Harry F. Kelly, secretary of state, the principal speaker at the dedicatory exercises. He expressed the wish it would be up to the veterans of the last war to make the next decision as

to when if ever, our country shall go to war. "We veterans here dedicate ourselves to the preservation, in war or peace, of the American theory of government," Kelly said in conclusion.

The peace motif also was stressed in the speech of Atty.-Gen. Thomas Read, who said: "Here today we can look overhead and see nothing more fearsome than clouds. We have nothing to fear from above except the gentle rains"

### Bond Of Friendship

There exists between the United States and Canada, he said, "a bond of friendship that can never be erased."

The signal to remove the swathing from the monument was given by Augustus F. Chappell, commander of the Michigan department of the GAR. As the canvas dropped, a cloud of homing pigeons was released and the eternal flame on the top of the monument sprang into light.

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Present at the exercises were representatives of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, United Spanish War Veterans, Grand Army of the Republic, Disabled American Veterans, Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Polish Legion, Canadian Legion and South African War Veterans, Detroit, Mayor Reading and Dr. Linwood W. Snow, State Fair manager.

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### *Veterans to Relight "Eternal Flame" at Fair-May 27, 1958*

The flame that has only fitfully lighted the Veterans Monument on the State Fair grounds soon will burn with the "eternal light" originally intended.

On the eve of Memorial Day, at 8 p.m. Thursday, a new electric torch will be lighted over the spire at Woodward and State Fair in a ceremony to be attended by governmental, civic, patriotic and veteran leaders.

The new torch, constructed through co-operation of the Detroit Edison Co., Walker Sign Co. and the Public Lighting Commission, bears moving electric lights that realistically stimulate a flame. It has been proclaimed as the only such memorial light in the nation.

### Other Lights Failed

Other lights for the spire, which is decorated from top to bottom with numerous carved memorial plaques,

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have proved transitory.

The spire was completed Set.9, 1939, on a site donated by the State Fair Board at the behest of the Allied Veterans Council. It was built of memorial stones sent by veterans groups throughout Michigan and Sept. 9 since has been designated as Veterans Day at the Fair.

Natural gas pumped up from the site was the original

“eternal” flame, but it burned out in a few years and until 1954 there was no light at all. Then the Michigan Consolidated Gas Co. piped gas to feed the flame on days when the Fair was in progress.

### Dark Last Year

After the close of the fair in 1956, Donald C. Shand, then public lighting commissioner and a VFW leader suggested a light which really would burn

perpetually.

“While this idea was being put through, the monument remained dark through 1957”, said Michael Whalen, Allied Veterans Council secretary. “Veterans will be happy to see it lit Thursday night, to burn day and night from then on, we hope.”

### Prologue

There is a reason that the veterans and patriotic citizens who comprise the **State Fair Veterans Memorial Committee (SFVMC)** has come together at this time to undertake this project.

It is the spirit of the Veterans Memorial which inspired the same type of group back in 1939 to erect it in the first place; **War Veterans should be remembered and honored.**

The SFVMC has come together to restore this treasure which sits in the state’s largest city. It is to my knowledge the only Memorial Dedicated to the memory of War Veterans in the City of Detroit. During this time of new construction and revitalization going on in downtown Detroit and elsewhere, nothing would be more appropriate than including the War Memorial.

We will be needing the same type of patriotic support from our city council members, the mayor, governor, Veteran Service Organizations and our citizens, that Clarence H. Dusenberry, director of Veterans’



activities for the Fair had in 1939. Our goal is to complete the restoration and relight the eternal flame on the Memorial by September 9, 2009. That would be the 70th year anniversary of the dedication of the Memorial.

I’m sure that our predecessors would be proud of us if we can succeed.



VETERANS IN 1939

STEPPED UP TO PROVIDE THIS TRIBUTE TO VETERANS.

VETERANS IN 1957

STEPPED UP TO RELIGHT THE FLAME

VETERANS IN 2007

ARE STEPPING UP TO RESTORE THE MONUMENT FOR THE PURPOSES IT WAS INTENDED VETERANS AFTER US WILL CONTINUE THE EFFORT.