

The PALIMPSEST



Centennial of Memorial Day

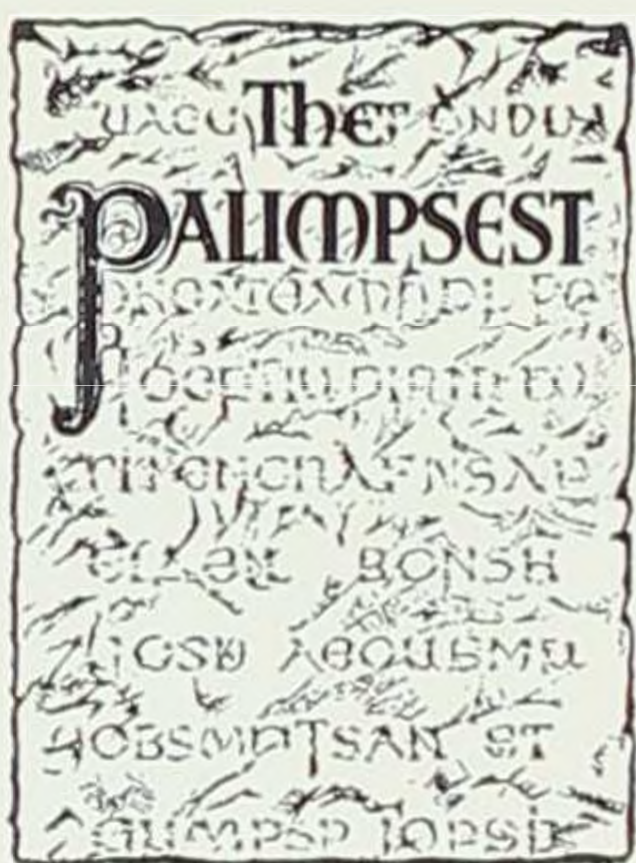
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The Meaning of Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the record of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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Cover

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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

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Memorial Day

Sweetly with loving touch, mem'ry embalms them all,
Loyal, obedient, they answered duty's call.
All that man hath to give they at her mandate gave;
What tribute worthy to deck a soldier's grave?

Memorial Day was the fourth legal holiday to be established in Iowa. Although Christmas, New Year's and the Fourth of July had been recognized as early as 1862, the General Assembly took no further action with regard to legal holidays until 1880. As a consequence Memorial Day may be considered the first in a series of five holidays which have been set aside by Iowa legislatures between 1880 and 1920. Like many other holidays it had been observed in Iowa for many years before it was recognized by law.

The first formal observance of Memorial Day, or Decoration Day, as it was popularly called for many years, dates back to 1868. The idea however is old, for the Greeks and Romans decorated the graves of their dead. Actually the women of the South are known to have placed flowers on

the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers as early as 1863. On April 26, 1865, Southern women decorated the graves of soldiers at Vicksburg where many of Iowa's heroic warriors laid down their lives. Not long after the Grand Army of the Republic was formed, in the spring of 1866, at Springfield, Illinois, that organization began considering the idea of a uniform date for the decoration of the graves of Union soldiers throughout the country. Credit for Memorial Day seems to belong to some unknown Union soldier who suggested the idea to Adjutant General Norton P. Chipman because the custom had prevailed in his native Germany. The latter passed the idea along to General John A. Logan, Commander-in-Chief of the G. A. R., who heartily approved the plan.

On May 5, 1868, General John A. Logan issued General Orders No. 11 from his Headquarters of the Grand Army of the Republic in Washington, D. C. No better explanation of the purpose and significance of Memorial Day can be found. It read as follows:

I. The 30th day of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defence of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet church-yard in the land. In this observance no form of ceremony is prescribed, but Posts and Comrades will in their own way arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit.

We are organized, Comrades, as our Regulations tell us, for the purpose, among other things, "of preserving and strengthening those kind and fraternal feelings which have bound together the soldiers, sailors, and marines who united to suppress the late rebellion." What can aid more to assure this result than by cherishing tenderly the memory of our heroic dead, who made their breasts a barricade between our country and its foes. Their soldier lives were the reveille of freedom to a race in chains, and their deaths the tattoo of rebellious tyranny in arms. We should guard their graves with sacred vigilance. All that the consecrated wealth and taste of the nation can add to their adornment and security, is but a fitting tribute to the memory of her slain defenders. Let no wanton foot tread rudely on such hallowed grounds. Let pleasant paths invite the coming and going of reverent visitors and fond mourners. Let no vandalism of avarice or neglect, no ravages of time testify to the present or to the coming generations that we have forgotten as a people the cost of a free and undivided Republic.

If other eyes grow dull, and other hands slack, and other hearts cold in the solemn trust, ours shall keep it well as long as the light and warmth of life remain to us.

Let us, then, at the time appointed gather around their sacred remains and garland the passionless mounds above them with the choicest flowers of spring; let us raise above them the dear old flag they saved from dishonor; let us in this solemn presence renew our pledges to aid and assist those whom they have left among us a sacred charge upon a nation's gratitude, the soldier's and sailor's widow and orphan.

II. It is the purpose of the Commander-in-Chief to inaugurate this observance with the hope that it will be kept up from year to year while a survivor of the war remains

to honor the memory of his departed Comrades. He earnestly desires the public press to call attention to this Order, and lend its friendly aid in bringing it to the notice of Comrades in all parts of the country in time for simultaneous compliance therewith.

III. Department Commanders will use every effort to make this Order effective.

Iowa cities and towns were quick to obey General Logan's order for a Memorial Day in 1868. On May 27th Post Commander Sam S. Sample announced in the *Weekly Gate City* that the Keokuk G. A. R. would join in the national exercises on May 30th. No other city in Iowa could observe Memorial Day more fittingly than the Gate City of Iowa. At Keokuk was located Camp Ellsworth, the first military camp in the State. Here the First Iowa Infantry was mustered in and from here most of Iowa's troops embarked by steamboat for the South. Three other military camps were located at Keokuk during the Civil War. The thriving city at the foot of the Lower Rapids contributed two hundred commissioned officers to the bloody struggle. Samuel Ryan Curtis of Keokuk was one of four Iowa men to attain the high rank of Major General; Brigadier General William W. Belknap of Keokuk was destined to become Secretary of War in General U. S. Grant's cabinet in 1869.

It is not for camps and officers alone that Keokuk is singled out, for other Iowa cities contributed freely of their young manhood. It is because

Keokuk became a great hospital center for wounded soldiers during the Civil War where thousands of sick and wounded were brought aboard such hospital boats as the *Express*, the *D. A. January*, the *Diligent*, the *Gladiator*, the *Sunnyside*, and many others.

When the steamboat *Decatur* docked at Keokuk in July of 1862, that city had opened its fourth hospital in a public school building. By the close of the year 1862 it was estimated that more than seven thousand men were being treated in Keokuk. The same scenes were reënacted in 1863; on December 24th the record showed that 7396 sick and wounded soldiers had been brought by steamboats from the South to Keokuk. Of these, 617 had already died. In all, six hospitals were ultimately opened in Keokuk.

Because of the large number of deaths the Federal government established a National Cemetery in Keokuk, the only place of its kind in Iowa. Here sleep over seven hundred of the "Boys in Blue" who gave their all to preserve the Union. A sprinkling of the "Boys in Gray" also sleep peacefully at Keokuk. The National Cemetery at Keokuk should always serve as a symbol for those thousands of Iowa's heroic dead who slumber far from home — at Pittsburg Landing and Vicksburg, at Corinth and Shiloh, and along the road that marked Sherman's March to the Sea.

The editor of the *Keokuk Gate City* strongly

supported the observance of Memorial Day in 1868. "The military will attend in force," he declared. "Little girls from the various sabbath schools in the city will scatter the flowers. Our citizens are asked to join in the procession and the commemorative ceremony. It is purposed that everything shall be done decorously and in order. Further announcement will be made of the order of exercises. The event will appeal direct to the heart and willing minds of our people. Only a few short years separate the grievous, perilous past — which was the present when those graves were made — from us. . . . So remembering the glory, and merit, and brave endeavor of the soldier's life, of these men who sleep in our cemetery, and with devotion and love for the cause for which they fell, the citizens of Keokuk will at once gladly and sadly join in the ceremony to which the veteran soldiers of our city invite them."

The ceremony in Iowa's only National Cemetery in 1868 was impressive. Only a brief notice had been given and it was hardly to be expected that a large number of people would attend. The *Weekly Gate City* accordingly felt that Keokuk had "honored itself" as well as the Union soldiers buried in the cemetery by turning out in such large numbers on Memorial Day. The editor felt the "outpouring of people of all ages and conditions, the lengthy and imposing procession, the hearty spirit and success of the whole affair, was

a glad surprise to everybody. Its spontaneity was the charm of it. 'Republics are ungrateful' has long been the aphorism of their enemies, and quoted with the tacit sanction of their friends. A self-governed people have been accused of ingratitude to their benefactors. The people of Keokuk cannot be accused of forgetfulness or of indifference towards her fallen soldiery — of the men who died for the life of the nation."

The Sabbath schools were nearly all represented, and the little folk were there, attended by their teachers. The members of the various societies were there, with the citizens coming afoot and in carriages. The excellent military band, the profusion of flags and banners, and the lavish display of flowers and evergreens combined to make a very colorful procession. "We heard no estimate of the number of people in it," the editor declared, "but it was one of the largest and best we have ever seen in Keokuk. A noticeable and worthy feature of it was the large attendance of soldiers, principally members of the Grand Army of the Republic."

Upon arriving at the cemetery, Post Commander Sam S. Sample gave the order to strew flowers upon the graves. The Reverend John Haines of the Chatham Square M. E. Church opened the services with prayer. The band played martial music, and the choir of the Congregational Church sang "America" and "The Star Spangled

Banner." The inter-denominational character of the services is attested by the three ministers who participated in concluding the services. "Then it was evening," the *Gate City* records, "and the crowd left the dead sleeping under their flowers."

Although Memorial Day did not become a legal holiday in Iowa until 1880, Keokuk continued to observe the day in a fitting manner. Five years after General Logan issued his proclamation, the *Keokuk Weekly Gate City* of June 4, 1873 recorded:

Decoration Day in Keokuk was observed with appropriate ceremonies. It is gratifying to know that our citizens maintain the proper interest in this praiseworthy practice of assembling annually at the graves of our patriotic dead and paying a fitting tribute to the memory of those who sacrificed their lives that we as a nation might live.

The attendance was not so large of course as it would have been had the weather been more favorable. Notwithstanding this drawback several thousand people turned out to participate in the exercises.

Between eleven and twelve o'clock the steamer Cricket arrived bringing a delegation from our neighboring city of

FT. MADISON.

This numbered nearly one hundred persons and consisted of ex-soldiers and their families. They were received at the levee by Torrence Post No. 2 G.A.R., and conducted to the Hall of the organization on Main street, where a lunch had been prepared for them. Here a social time was

had until half past 1 o'clock, the time for the assembling of those to take part in

THE PROCESSION.

This was formed on Blondeau street and proceeded on its march in the following order:

Martial Band.

Torrence Post No. 2 G.A.R., in uniform.

Ft. Madison Delegation.

Battery.

Citizens in vehicles.

Col. A. G. McQueen officiated as Marshal of the Day, assisted by Gen. L. T. Barney and Major Harry Kenderdine.

Owing to the muddy condition of the streets the procession was not large. It was nevertheless an imposing one, and large numbers of our citizens congregated on the pavements to witness it.

The column proceeded along the line of march designated, and from thence to the cemetery, where a large crowd of our citizens had assembled.

THE CEMETERY

Never looked more beautiful than at this time. Many of the graves were decorated for the occasion, and everywhere were to be seen evidences of care and attention on the part of those who have friends buried there.

After strolling about the grounds admiring the taste and skill of kind hands which had been at work there, the large concourse of people proceeded to the

NATIONAL CEMETERY.

Where the exercises of the day took place. These were opened with an impressive prayer by Rev. J. W. Chaffin, Pastor of Chatham Square M. E. Church, followed by a song by the Glee Club and music by the Martial Band.

Then came the oration by Lee R. Seaton, Esq. This was a fine production, and patriotic devotion to the cause for which so many of his brave comrades laid down their lives. The oration was listened to attentively throughout, and was pronounced by many to have been one of the best they had ever heard in Keokuk:

Following the oration a volley of musketry was fired by Torrence Post, after which there was an interval, during which the interesting and impressive ceremony of strewing flowers upon the graves took place under the direction of the ladies of the Decorating Committee.

After martial music, another song by the Glee Club, and the Benediction, the exercises closed and the crowd dispersed to their homes.

Gen. J. C. Parrott was President of the Day.

The National Cemetery is in excellent condition, and reflects the highest credit upon Mr. Clayton Hart, who has charge of it. Everything about the house and grounds presents a neat and attractive appearance and gives evidence of much care and attention. The Government was fortunate in selecting Mr. Hart for this important trust.

A handsome speaker's stand has been erected in the center of the grounds, which adds much to their appearance.

During the afternoon nearly all the business houses in the city were closed and the day was generally observed as a holiday.

Memorial Day continued to be observed in Iowa although with varying degrees of emphasis and for some years without the sanction of State law. When the Eighteenth General Assembly met at Des Moines in 1880, Representative Bruce T. Seaman of Scott County introduced a bill on January 22nd amending the Code of Iowa to make May 30th a legal holiday. The bill was passed by the House by a vote of 90 to 9. The Senate approved the same measure by a 40 to 1 vote and the bill was signed by Governor John H. Gear on March 12, 1880.

The State of Iowa was thirty-four years old in 1880, but its youth forms no measure of the magnitude of its sacrifice in the Civil War. In four years Iowa lost almost twice as many men killed in action or died of wounds as did the thirteen original colonies in the seven long years of the American Revolution! The sacrifices of the Hawkeye State were recognized by the *Iowa State Register* in the following editorial on May 29, 1880:

"This is Decoration Day — sacred to the heart of every lover of his country. It is an old theme, but one very dear to those who shouldered their muskets and tramped out the weary years that marked the bloody era of the great rebellion. It awakens memories of that great struggle that flood the soul with joy and with grief — joy that the struggle, dark, gloomy and nearly without

hope at times, ended with a country saved from dismemberment; grief, at the death of the thousands of the men who died that we might enjoy the blessings of free government, under a great and prosperous nation. The memory of these brave souls, who made the supremest sacrifice known to man — of life itself — ought, and always will be treasured with holy patriotism, by those who believe that this people should be a nation, strong in all its attributes of power, freedom, and happiness of its people."

After pointing out how Iowa had marshalled nearly eighty thousand men, who won the "plaudits of the world" by their "unflinching valor" at such battles as Wilson's Creek, Donelson, Vicksburg, Shiloh, Corinth, Nashville, Lookout Mountain, and on Sherman's March to the Sea, the editor continued: "The future Iowa people — those who shall come with centuries yet to follow — need never be downcast at the record of Iowa men who went forth in the brunt of the battle that wiped out forever the foul blot of human slavery and its attendant horrors. 'Storied monuments and animated busts' will arise to proclaim the valor and heroism of our Iowa Soldiers."

Originally scheduled for Saturday, May 29th, the 1880 Decoration Day services at Des Moines had to be postponed until Sunday because of rain, but the program was carried out to the letter. The parade started promptly at two o'clock in the

afternoon, the booming of the signal cannon being followed by the ringing of all the church bells in the city for twenty minutes. The order of procession was:

- Kinsman Post
- East Side public schools
- Catholic schools
- West Side public schools
- Veteran Soldiers and Sailors' Association
- Crocker Post
- Joe Hooker Post
- Military companies escorting the vehicles containing the thirty-eight little girls, representing the different States
- Fire companies and civic societies
- Citizens on foot
- Carriages containing the president and orators of the day, city council, decoration committee, etc., etc.
- Citizens in carriages

Bands were assigned their positions in the parade by the marshal. Upon arriving at the ground the following order of services was observed: decoration of graves by committee and friends; calling to order at the stand by the President of the Day, Colonel Conrad; prayer by Chaplain W. W. Thorpe; music by the band; music by the quartet; address by Chaplain D. R. Lucas; music by male quartet; address by Comrade Robert Afton; music by quartet; volunteer addresses; benediction.

Each family had been asked to contribute at least one bouquet but flowers were sent in such

profusion that, in addition to supplying each grave with two wreaths and three bouquets, there were enough to allow flowers to be strewn over all.

If Memorial Day was postponed by the forces of Nature at Des Moines in 1880, the forces of Man almost postponed the Des Moines observance in 1899. In that year the Modern Woodmen of America, assisted by the Royal Neighbors, held their annual memorial service on Sunday. The *Iowa State Register* of May 29, 1899, records:

There were more interesting features connected with the observance than had been advertised. To begin with, the Iowa State Military Band had been engaged to furnish the music for the parade. This band was to lead the west side camps, and the east side camp had arranged to have Agnew's band furnish the music for their part of the procession. When the union men of the State Military band heard of this arrangement there was music not on the programme. In short, the union men flatly refused to march in the same parade with the non-union men of Agnew's band. The Modern Woodmen officials pleaded and exhorted, but in vain. The refractory and indignant bandsmen were politely told that they were hired to do what the Woodmen wanted them to do, and if they were not willing to perform on that basis, they could pack their drums and horns and go home. They went home and the parade marched without one band.

During the programme another incident happened which caused quite as much excitement as the band episode. Dr. J. Everst Cathell, the popular rector of St. Paul's church, furnished the excitement during his ad-

dress, which was the main one of the afternoon, and in the nature of an annual memorial sermon. Dr. Cathell proceeded much along the usual line during the early part of his address. The order of Modern Woodmen was especially commended for its many excellent features, especially its insurance department. He then turned to the subject of modern day marriage relations and commended the Modern Woodmen for the close fraternal relations existing between the wives and husbands in the Modern Woodmen camps in the auxiliary lodge, the Royal Neighbors. These remarks were much appreciated, so far as there was no excitement. But at this point the worthy doctor took occasion to denounce, in caustic terms, the prevalence of divorce and the lightness made of the marriage relation in many instances. He referred to the fact that divorces permit another marriage by either one or both of the parties, and cited cases recently in the Polk county District court, where persons who have been granted divorces have proceeded from the court room to the office of the county clerk to get a license for another marriage. This practice the speaker denounced in unmeasured terms, and he then proceeded to give a prominent minister of the city censure almost as severe for making light, as the speaker called it, of the marriage service in another way. The act referred to was the performance of the marriage services by Dr. E. L. Eaton, of the First Methodist church, of two couples from the balcony of the Equitable Building during Seni Om Sed week last fall. Dr. Cathell said that the preacher who performed this ceremony holds himself high above most people in denouncing many things which other people deem of small importance, but in thus belittling the sacredness of the marriage service, he was doing a thing which most men, not divines, would scorn to do. The arraignment of Dr. Eaton, while his

name was not mentioned, was so severe that little less than a sensation was caused.

The memorial services were largely attended. The big auditorium of the Tabernacle was filled to overflowing. Jas. D. Rowen presided. The West Side camps formed about 1 o'clock and marched across the river to the lodge rooms of the other camps where the camps all united and marched to the Tabernacle. America was sung, and the invocation was pronounced by Rev. Otto Gerhardt. Dr. Cathell delivered his address, after which a hymn and the lodge ode was sung, when the procession formed and marched to the cemetery, where the usual memorial rights of the order were performed. The parade was an extremely long one and made a fine appearance.

The pattern followed by Des Moines in 1880 and 1899 is typical of memorial services in Iowa. The fact that Memorial Day became so strongly entrenched in the hearts of the people was in large measure due to the heavy sacrifices that Iowa had sustained in the "War Between the States," to the large number of widows and orphans who were left to mourn the dead, and to the strength of the G. A. R. in Iowa. In 1886, for example, there were about four hundred Civil War veterans living in the city of Keokuk alone. And Keokuk was not one of Iowa's largest towns.

The political influence of the G.A.R. is attested by the number of Civil War soldiers who have been elected governors of Iowa. Their names, home towns, and years in office as governor follow:

Colonel William M. Stone, Knoxville, 1864-1868

Colonel Samuel Merrill, McGregor, 1868-1872

Colonel Cyrus C. Carpenter, Fort Dodge, 1872-1875

Captain Joshua G. Newbold, Mount Pleasant, 1877-1878

Captain Buren R. Sherman, Vinton, 1882-1886

Lieut. Colonel Francis M. Drake, Centerville, 1896-1898

In 1890 the Iowa Department of the Grand Army of the Republic reached its peak strength — 20,324 members in 435 Posts. In 1918 a total of 4700 comrades from 289 Posts visited 543 cemeteries to decorate 27,400 graves on Memorial Day. In 1935 only sixty-two members attended the Sixty-first Annual Encampment in Waterloo. When Memorial Day was observed in 1944 less than a score of veterans remained of the 79,000 Iowans who responded to the call of "Father Abraham" in those stirring Civil War years. The Iowa Department of the G.A.R. lost its last member with the death of James P. Martin of Sutherland on September 20, 1949.

Memorial Day was inaugurated in 1868 as a distinctly northern holiday, the South observing its own Confederate Memorial Day on April 26th. In 1873 New York adopted "Decoration Day" as a public holiday, the first Northern State to do so. Rhode Island made the day a legal holiday in 1874, Vermont in 1876, New Hampshire in 1877, Wisconsin in 1879, and Iowa in 1880. Ohio and Massachusetts legalized Memorial Day in 1881. Since then it has gradually become a

legal holiday in all the Northern States and in the Territories.

For many years after 1868 Memorial Day orators used the occasion to glorify the success of the Union over the Confederacy. Time has done much to mellow this bitter spirit — historians, writers, and poets have endeavored to deal with both sides of the question with sympathy and understanding. When sons of the men who had worn the Blue and Grey charged up San Juan Hill, a new nation was forged out of the courage exhibited in that epic event. Early in the 20th century General John B. Gordon, a famous Confederate general, told Union veterans at St. Paul that "The reason it took you so long to defeat us was that we were Americans like yourselves."

In 1913, the whole nation thrilled when more than fifty thousand veterans of the Civil War met in a grand reunion at Gettysburg. "It was an army united in sentiment and united in fact, for the blue linked arms with the grey. They marched the dusty road together from the village; they sat down at the same mess tables, and they talked over the war before the campfires." The crowning event came when the survivors of Pickett's Charge marched through the wheat fields and up the hill to clasp the hands of the surviving members of the Union force who had held that position against them. General Sickles, the only corps commander of the Union Army at Gettysburg

who was living in 1913, was the recipient of hundreds of salutes from the "Boys in Grey."

Since that memorable reunion at Gettysburg the United States has passed through the fiery cauldron of World War I, World War II, and the Korean conflict where the American soldier fought a relentless, treacherous foe, with one hand virtually tied behind his back. Memorial Day has taken on a wider, a deeper, and a more intimate meaning in Iowa and the Nation. Veterans of the Spanish-American War and the American Legion now bolster the thinning ranks of the G.A.R., holding aloft the Stars and Stripes as grateful tribute is paid to the memory of our soldier dead.

And now a host of new names must be entered on the obelisk of fame that will mark the military exploits of our Iowa warriors. At Pearl Harbor and Bataan, Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan, the Midway Islands and the Coral Sea, Kiska and Attu, in Africa, Sicily, Italy, France, Germany, Korea, Iowans match their exploits with the heroes of old and many will pay the supreme price of freedom. By some divine alchemy the heroism of men becomes the heritage of the world. At no time is this more keenly felt than on Memorial Day.

Witness, for example, the memorial services held at Des Moines on September 10, 1944, when the Seventy-eighth National Encampment of the G. A. R. was held in the capital city of Iowa.

Seated in the Coliseum with bowed heads, fourteen Union veterans paid reverent tribute not only to their departed comrades but to the heroic dead of World War II. Addressing his words directly to the sorrowing relatives and friends of those who have given their lives in Africa, in Europe, in Asia, and in the South Pacific, 95-year-old George A. Gay of Nashua, New Hampshire, declared: "This memorial is not only to our G.A.R. but it is for every citizen in this hall. You have lost your loved ones and we have lost ours. But they are not dead — they live and they walk beside us."

Seventeen years later, in 1961, the United States began its four-year commemoration of the Centennial of the Civil War. Memorial Day in 1961 has taken on even greater significance as such names as Laos, Algeria, the Congo, Cuba, and a score of other sore spots throughout the world threaten the peace. It has been estimated that 90,000 war veterans are buried in Iowa cemeteries, veterans who have fought for their country from the Revolutionary War to the Korean conflict. Memorial Day is dedicated to the memory of these men and the honors they won for themselves, for their families, and for their country.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Education and Patriotism in Iowa

The year 1968 marks the 100th anniversary of the observance of Memorial Day. It is a day that all Iowans should commemorate, more so, perhaps, in 1968 than ever before. As we look back over the past century it may come as a surprise to some of the present generation to learn that their forebears had made an honest effort to instill love of home and family, of school and community, in the everyday classroom work in the public schools. It was the firm belief of our forebears that if this were done there would be engendered in students a respect for law, a thoughtfulness for the rights of others, and a true love of country.

To foster these virtues it was the policy of the Department of Education to issue each year a *Special Days* book which, in 1902 for example, embraced 104 pages devoted to the legal holidays and to such days as Arbor Day and Flag Day. In his introduction to this volume, Governor Leslie M. Shaw wrote on December 10, 1901:

It is comparatively easy for the old to define the duties of the young, and youth has no difficulty in distinguishing exemplary old age. It is more difficult, however, for the present day man and woman to know and do the present day duty, and be the ideal citizen of the hour. The faults and weaknesses in our lives need never be from want of

SPECIAL DAY ANNUAL

1908-1909

THANKSGIVING

PEACE DAY

CHRISTMAS

FLAG DAY

LINCOLN

MEMORIAL DAY

WASHINGTON

BAND OF MERCY

ARBOR AND BIRD DAY

ISSUED BY THE

Department of Public Instruction

knowledge, for the state gives each boy and girl ample opportunity for development. Failure is usually for want of application rather than from want of opportunity. Every boy knows enough to let cigarettes alone; every man knows better than to become a drunkard; every woman has judgment sufficient to be respectable, and to keep her house in order. The erring are not so much in need of more knowledge as of more wisdom.

He who does his best today will be more likely to do well tomorrow than the one who illy performs the duties of the present. *Now* is the time to prepare for that useful citizenship that is due our country. To do the duties of today well, results not only in gratifying consciousness

of meritorious conduct, but develops strength for the better performance of the duties of tomorrow, and the ever enlarging and more burdensome duties of future years; and it is on strength thus acquired that the state must depend. No section of our country possesses a more ideal body of young people than ours, and upon them will very soon rest the burdens of business life, political life, home life, and church life. But those who wait until the greater responsibilities arise before making a supreme effort will surely fall short of their present hopes of usefulness.

In 1902 Richard C. Barrett was Superintendent of Public Instruction. In his "Greeting" to teachers Mr. Barrett declared in part:

Special Day Exercises, rightly conducted, may be the means of intellectual and ethical growth. Only the *time-server* permits these occasions to become artificial and thus encourages boldness, self-consciousness, and vanity instead of loyalty, patriotism, charity and love; the *true* teacher uses these opportunities to impress lessons which will remain with his pupils long after their school days . . .

The learning of memory gems is becoming a recognized part of legitimate school work. No mere doggerel, but only those poems which develop a love for poetry and stimulate the impulse toward beautiful thought and unselfish action, should be stored in the mind of the child.

Since this issue of *The Palimpsest* is devoted to Memorial Day, and since Memorial Day is one of our great patriotic days, it is interesting to note the role that teachers were urged to play in instilling patriotism.

The teaching of patriotism in our public schools should receive due attention but we must not forget that waving

the flag and singing national airs is but a small part of patriotism.

All proper lessons in patriotism should first create respect and love for father and mother, brothers and sisters. . .

Let us pledge the children first to love and obedience at home, then to obedience at school. Respect and reverence for the laws of their community, their state and their country will naturally follow. . . .

Let history and geography be alive with suggestions of what has contributed to the prosperity of the nation, and what has detracted from its welfare.

There is something wrong in thinking that patriots must be soldiers or sailors. To be a patriot is to love one's country, to serve it faithfully, to support its government intelligently, to obey its laws, to pay fair taxes into the treasury, and to treat his fellow-citizens as he, himself, would like to be treated.

The following quotations have been gleaned from various issues of *Special Days* that were distributed to schools early in the 20th century.

They afford a clue to the thinking of educators between the Spanish-American War and the outbreak of World War I. The predominance of the Civil War motif is readily understood since thousands of Iowa veterans of that epic struggle were still living in the period between 1900 and 1917. The newly dug graves of other thousands were also fresh in the memory of many Iowans. Several of the poems reflect a healing of the wounds inflicted by the "War between the States" and a reconciliation of the Blue and the Grey.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

MEMORIAL DAY HONORS THE SOLDIER DEAD
From Revolutionary Days to Vietnam



Photo Courtesy Mrs. E. E. Ward

Samuel Lewis (Virginia)
Revolutionary War Soldier Buried in Brighton Cemetery



Des Moines Register Photo

Lawrence VanHook (New Jersey)
Revolutionary War Soldier Buried in Andrew Cemetery



Des Moines Register Photo

Memorial Day 1938 at Des Moines



Des Moines Register Photo

Memorial Day in 1940 at Des Moines



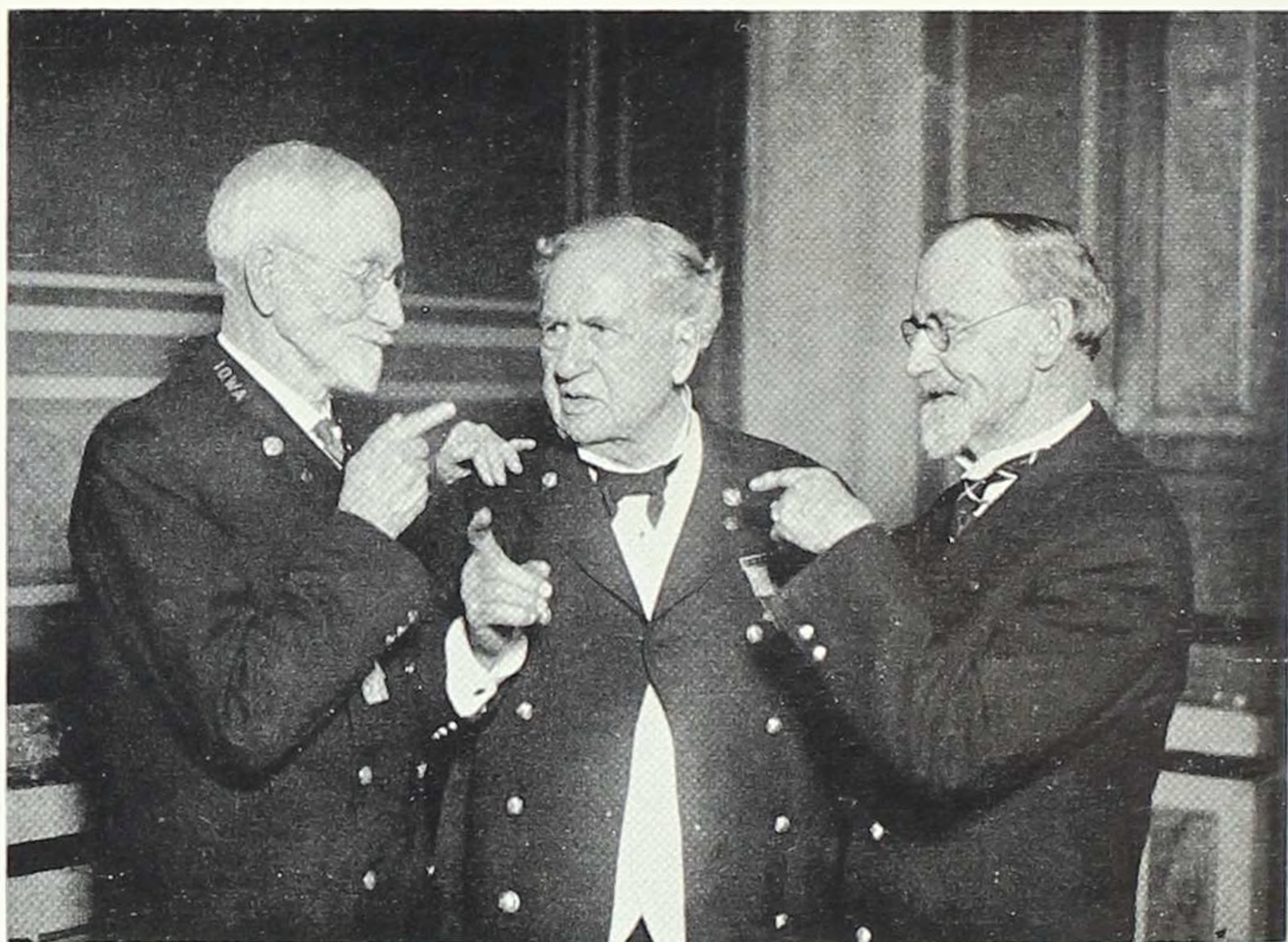
At Pine Hill Cemetery in
Des Moines (1935)

Des Moines Register Photo



Iowa City Press-Citizen Photo

Veterans Honor Soldier Dead in Iowa City (1944)



Des Moines Register Photo

Oley Nelson, James W. Willett, John P. Risley
Civil War Veterans at Governor Hammill's Inaugural Ball (1929)



Des Moines Register Photo

Civil War Veteran J. J. Neuman
Soldiers of Four Wars at Woodland Cemetery, Des Moines (1941)

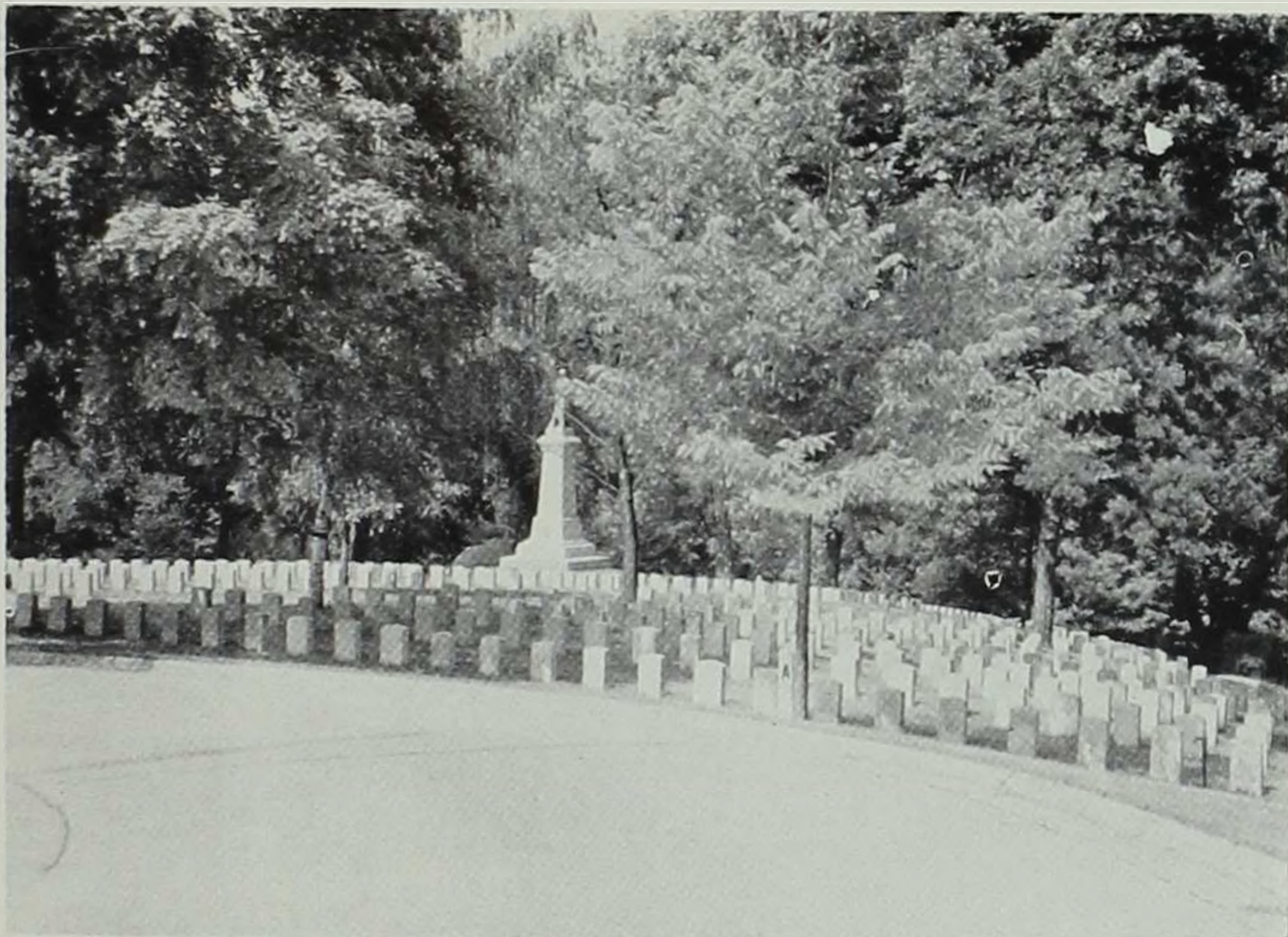


Photo Courtesy Herb Hake

National Cemetery at Keokuk



Photo Courtesy Herb Hake

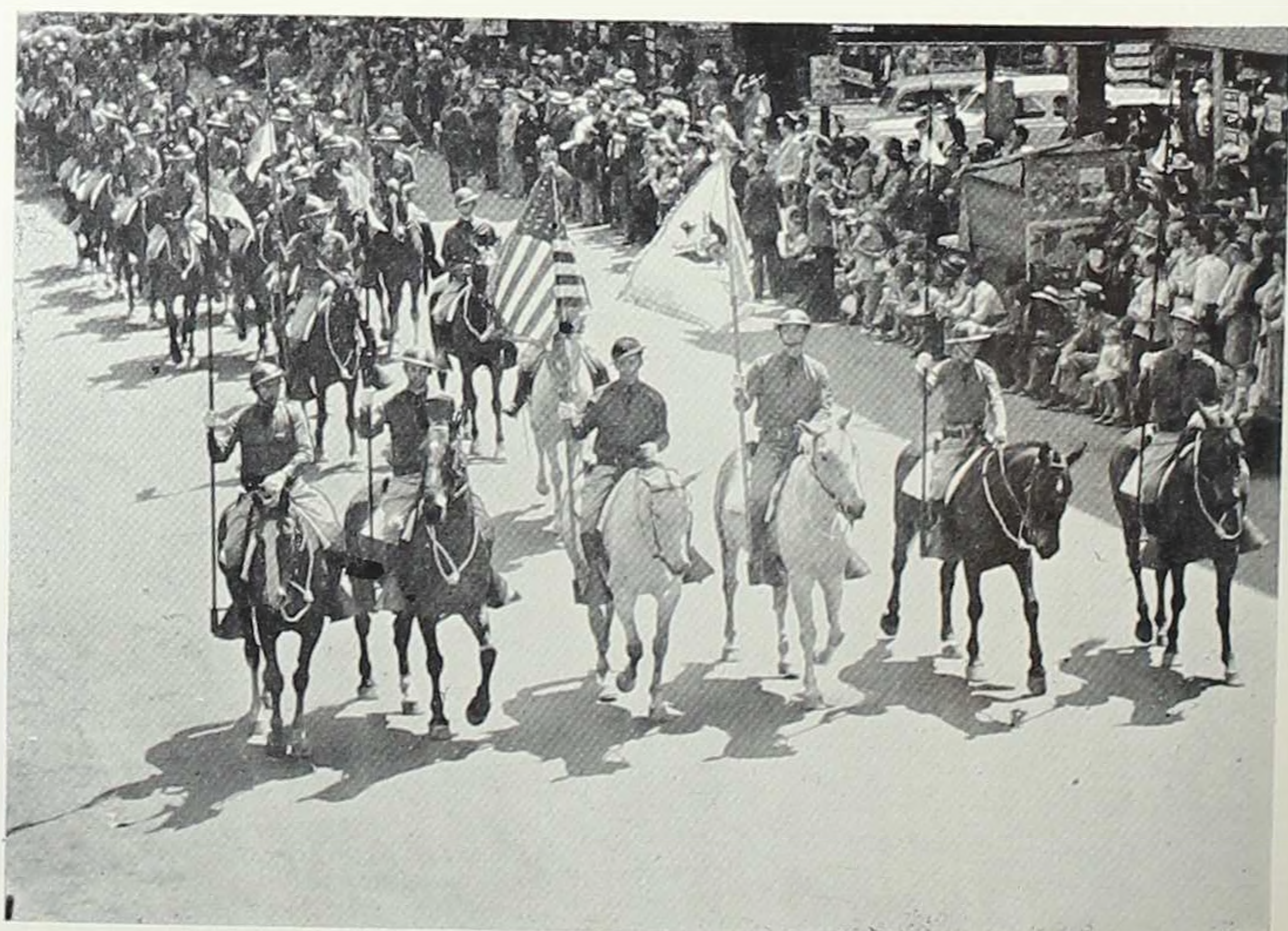
Site of Battle of Athens — At Croton

MEMORIAL DAY IN IOWA'S



Des Moines Register Photo

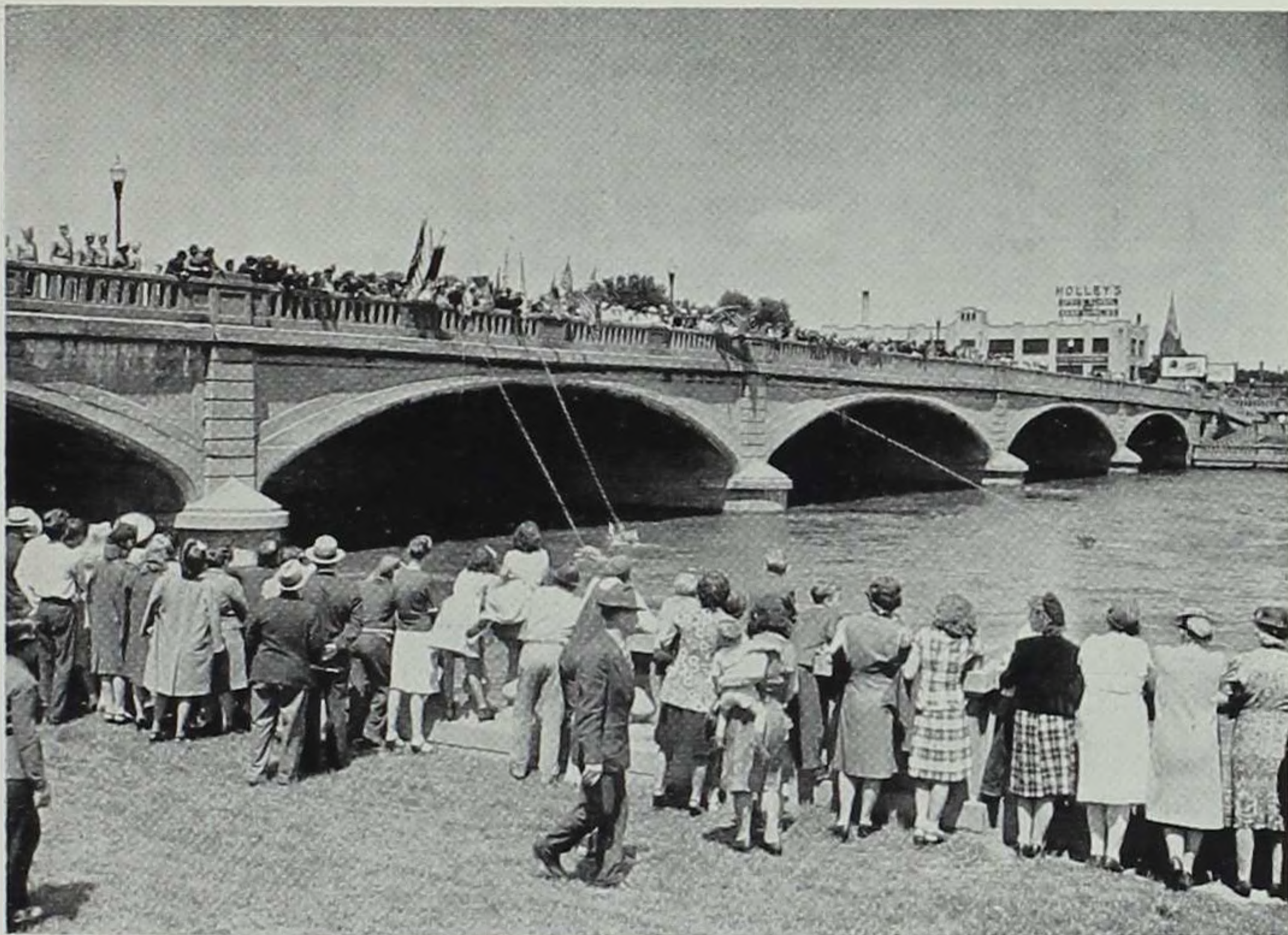
Memorial Day Parade in 1944



Des Moines Register Photo

Memorial Day Parade in 1940

CAPITAL CITY — DES MOINES



Des Moines Register Photo

Memorial Day Services at Grand Avenue Bridge in 1945



Des Moines Register Photo

Ceremonies at Base of Soldiers and Sailors Monument in 1956

MEMORIAL DAY OBSERVED



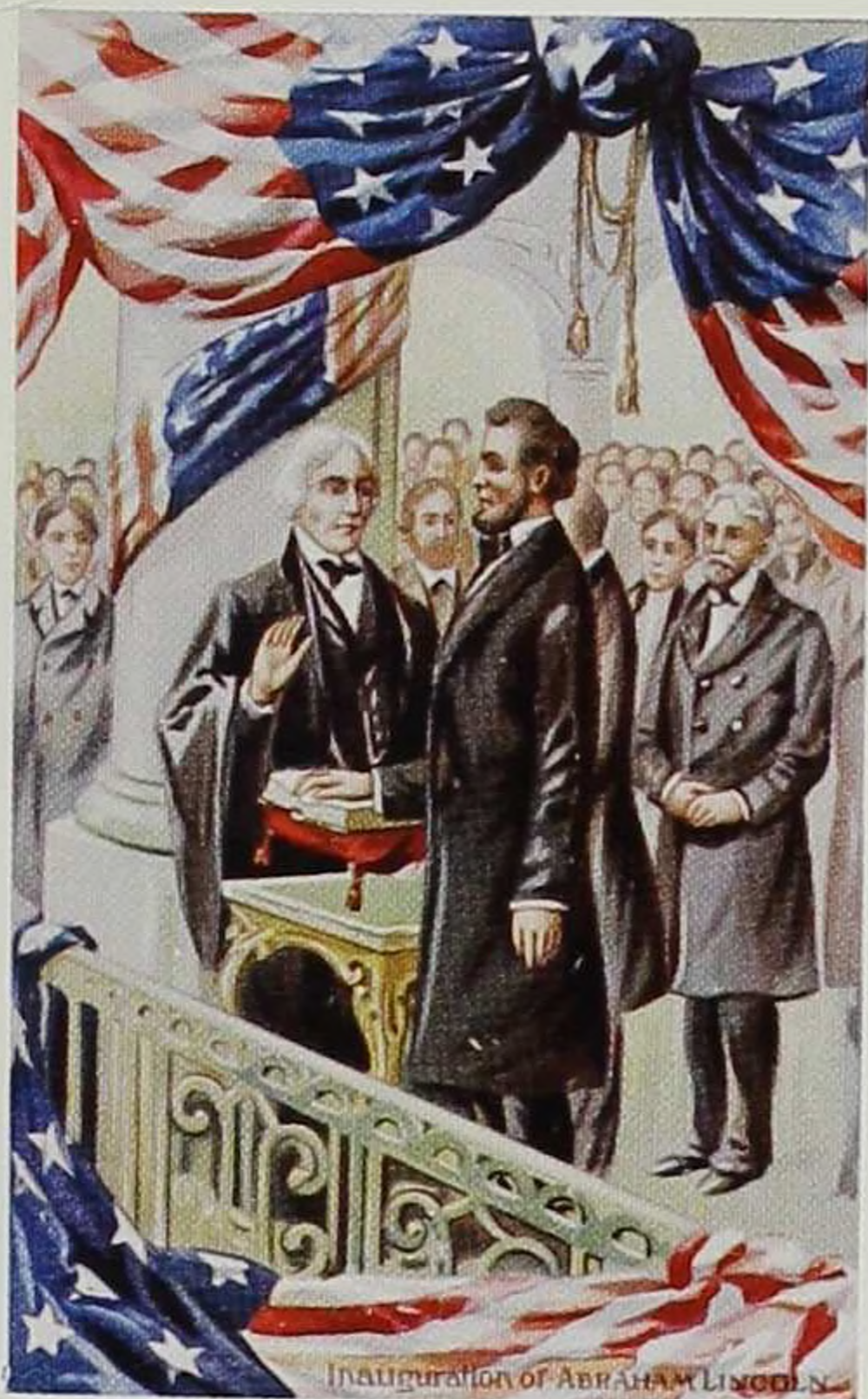
Des Moines Register (INS) Photo

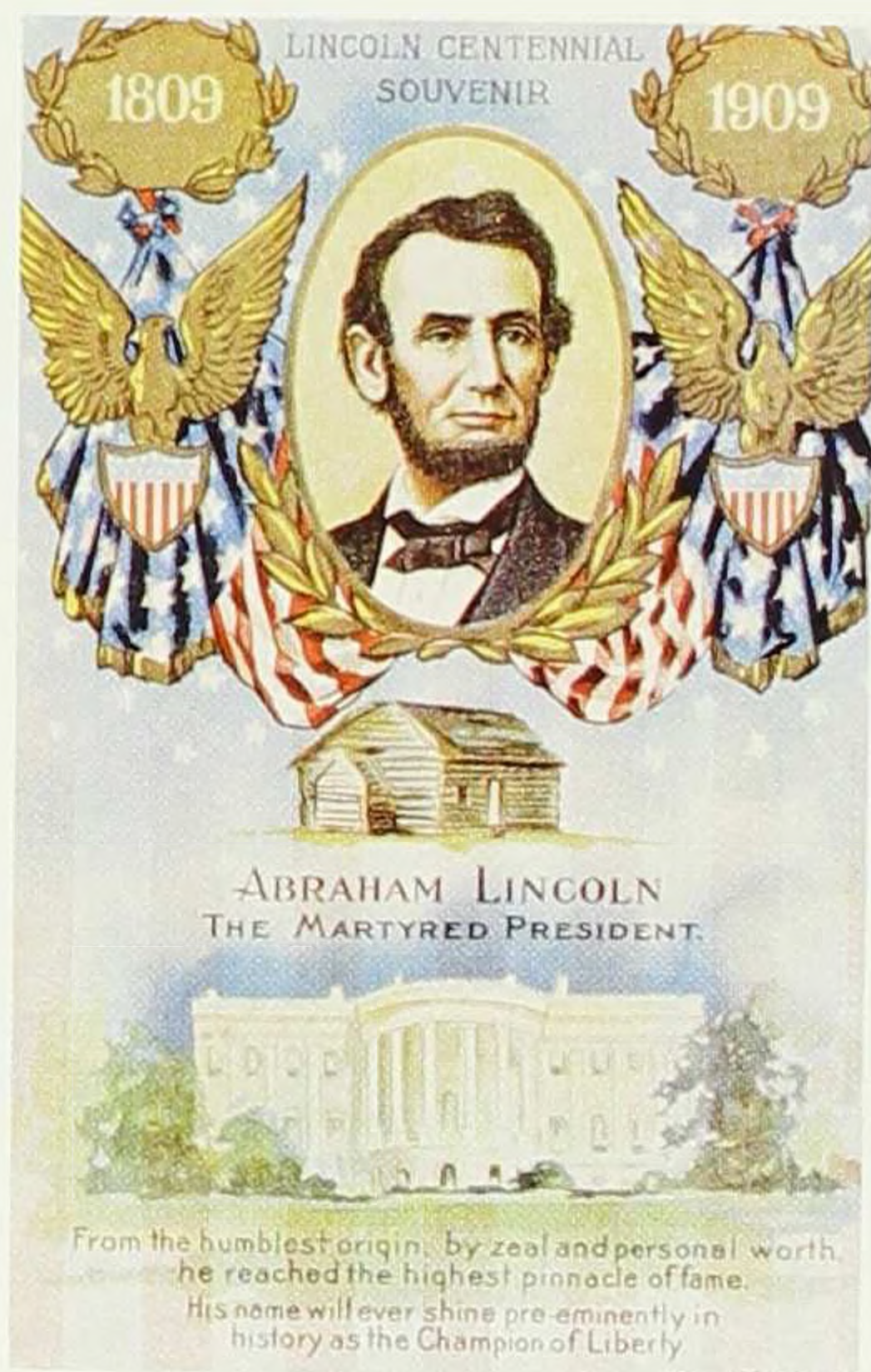
Memorial Day at St. Avold, France, Honors American Dead
French Girl Waves Small American Flag

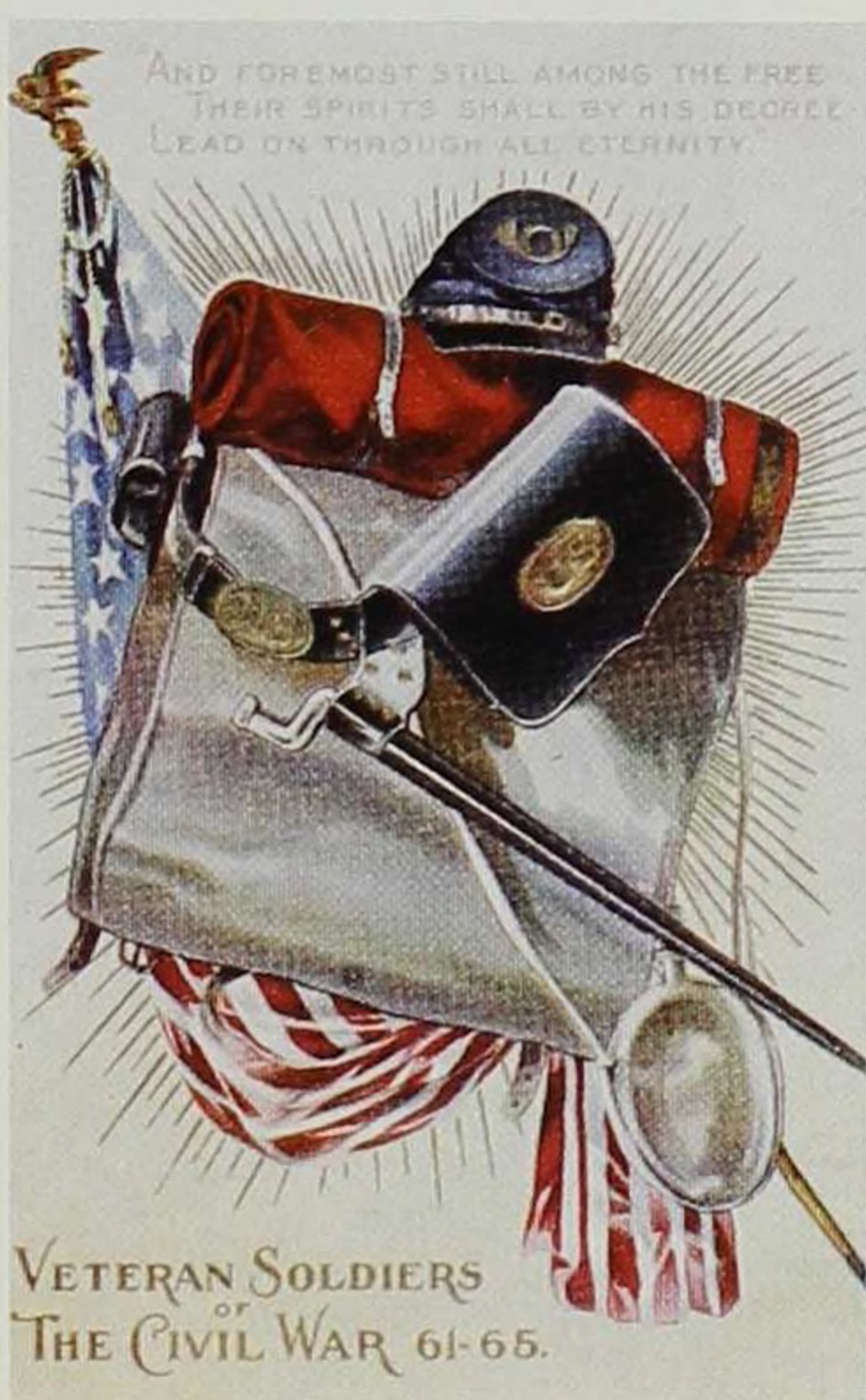


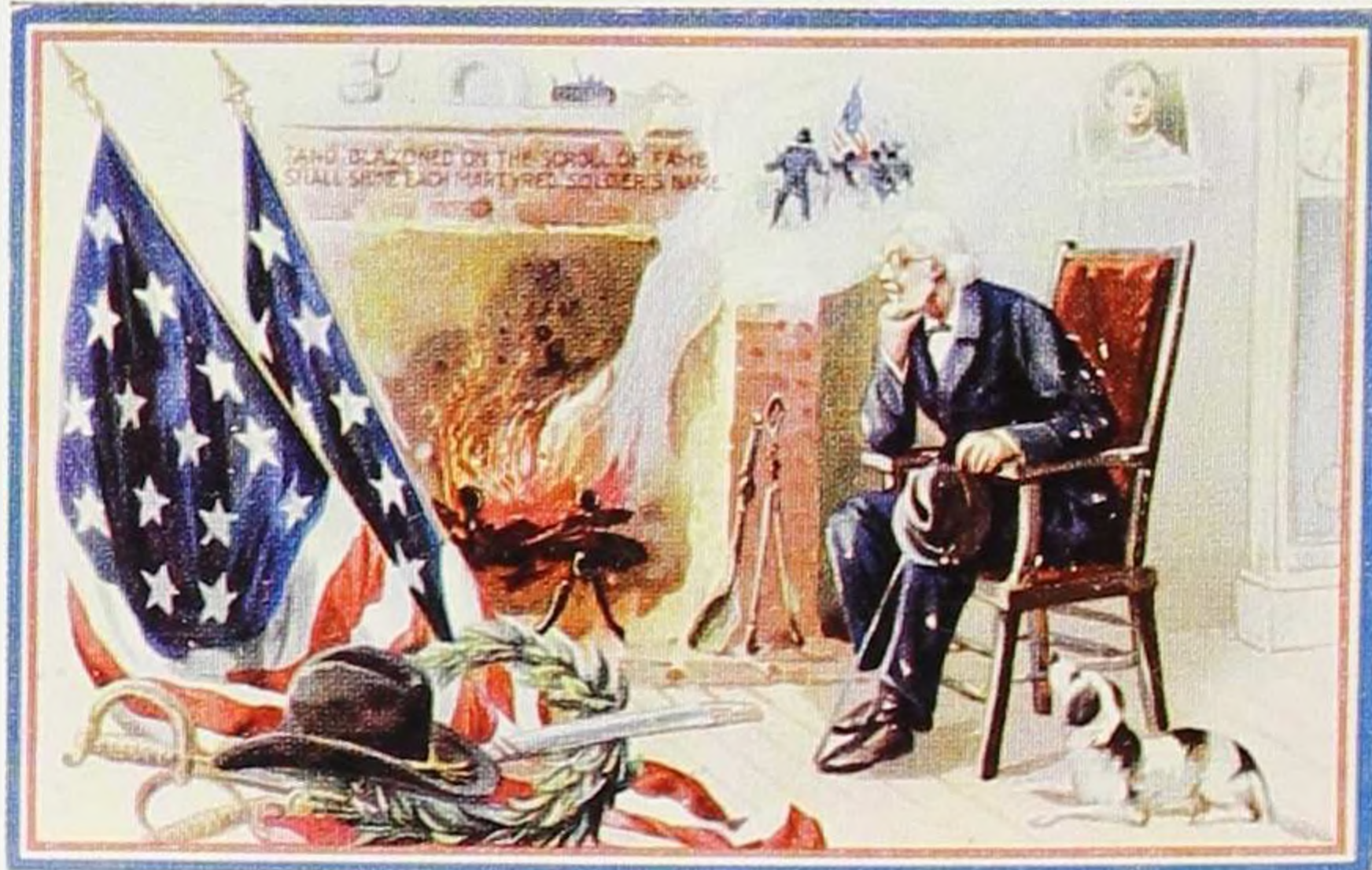
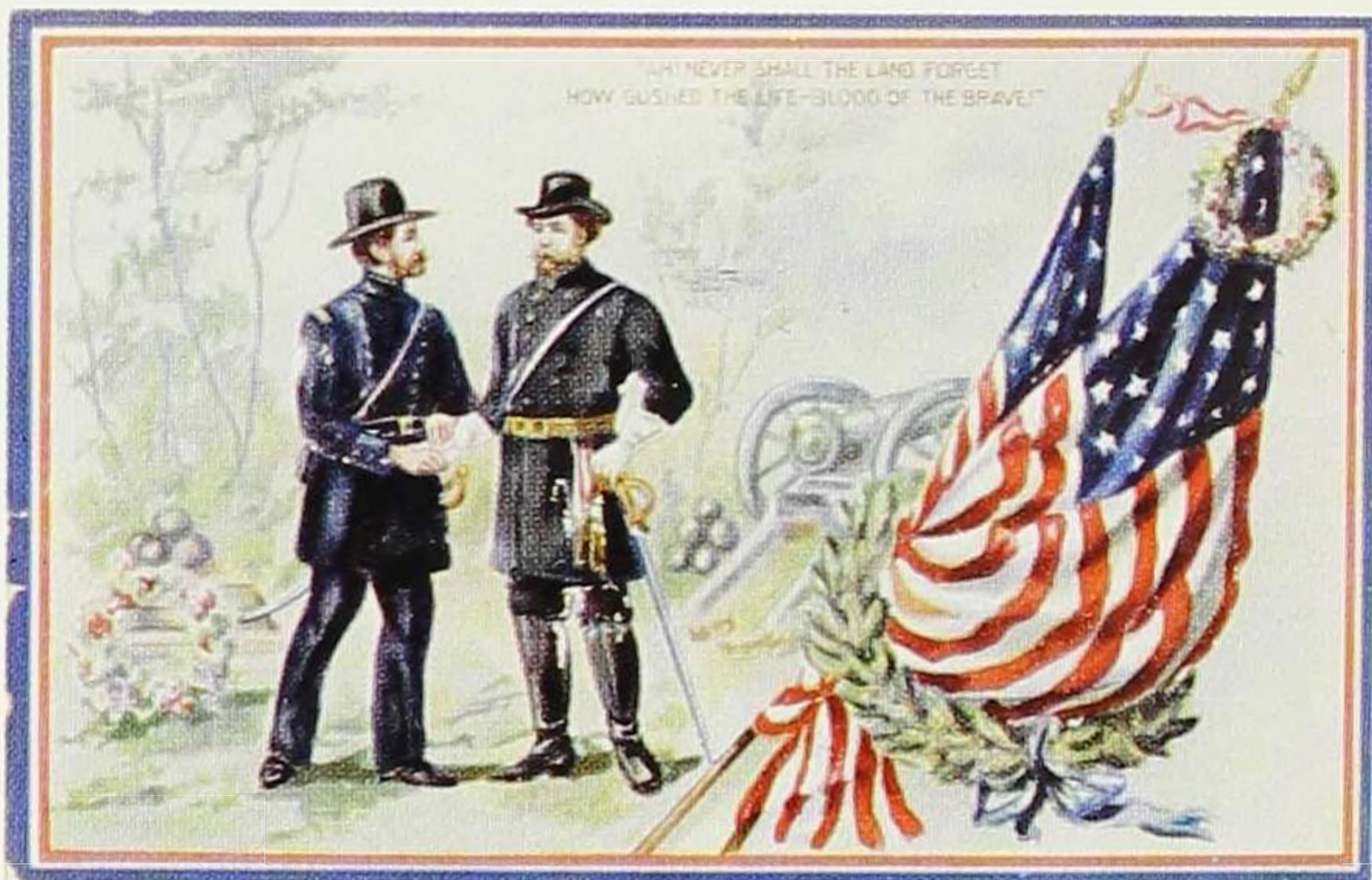
Des Moines Register (INS) Photo

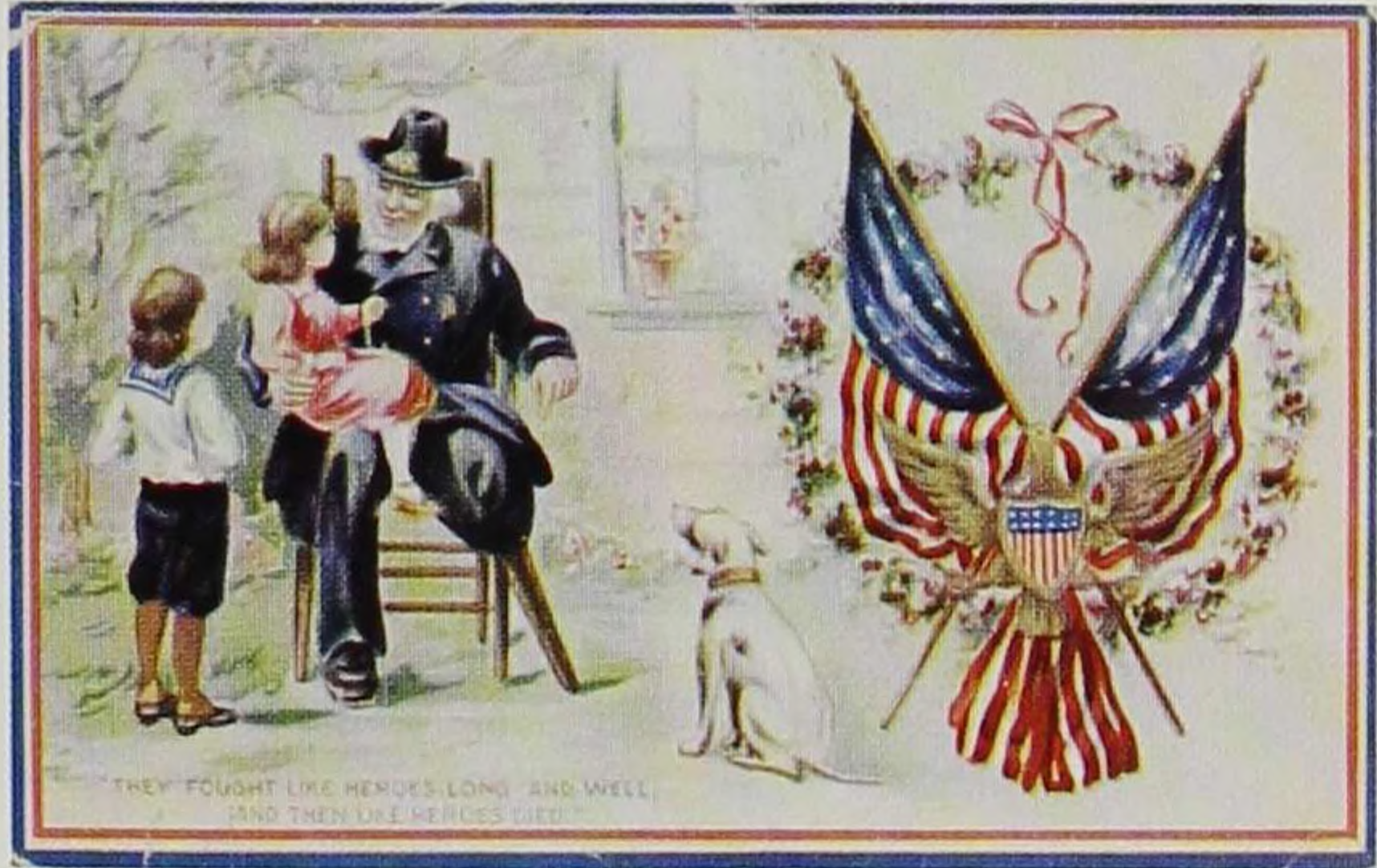
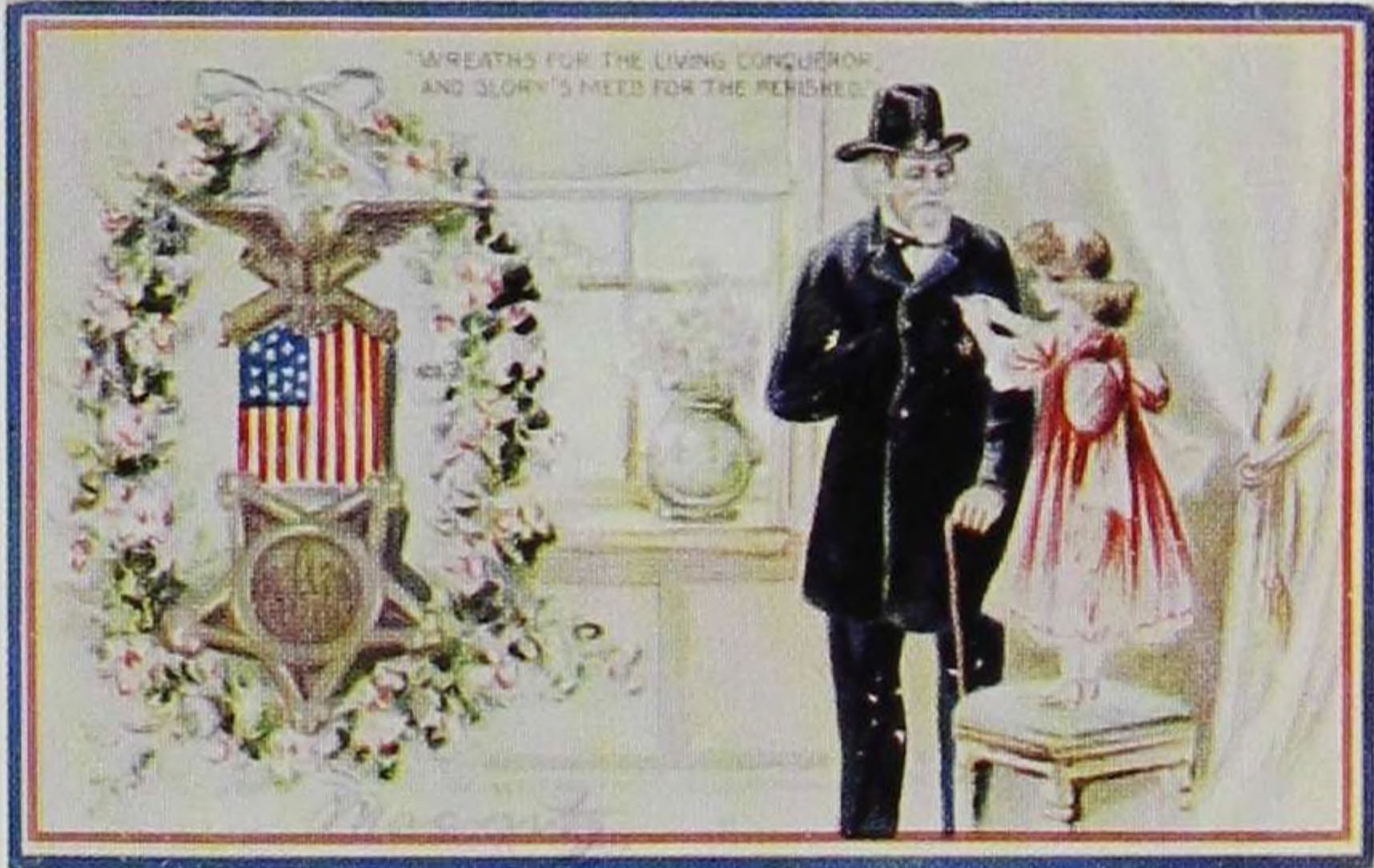
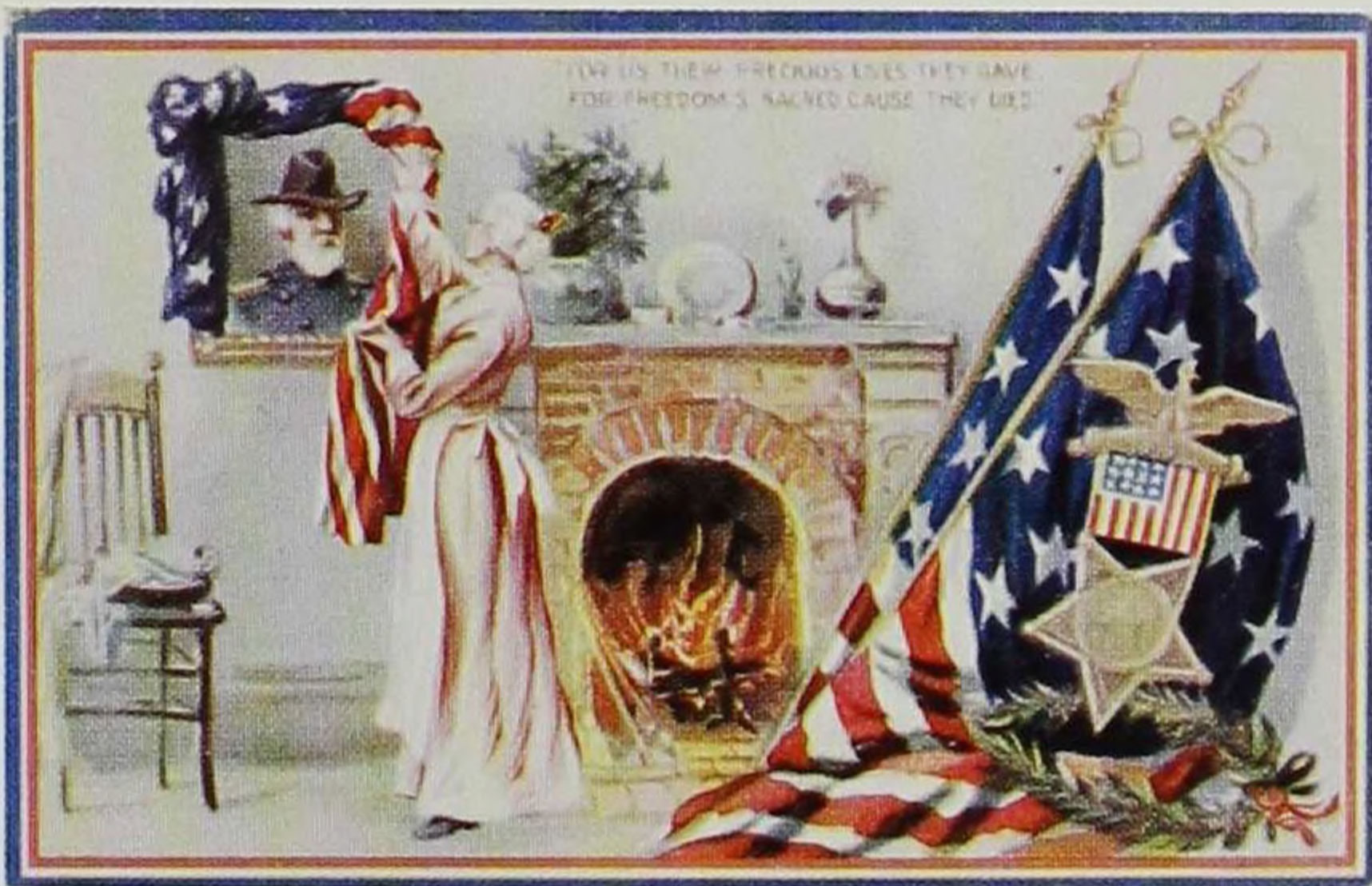
Taps at Memorial Day Rites at U. S. Military Cemetery in Hamm, Luxembourg
Cemetery is Final Resting Place of Gen. George S. Patton, Jr.





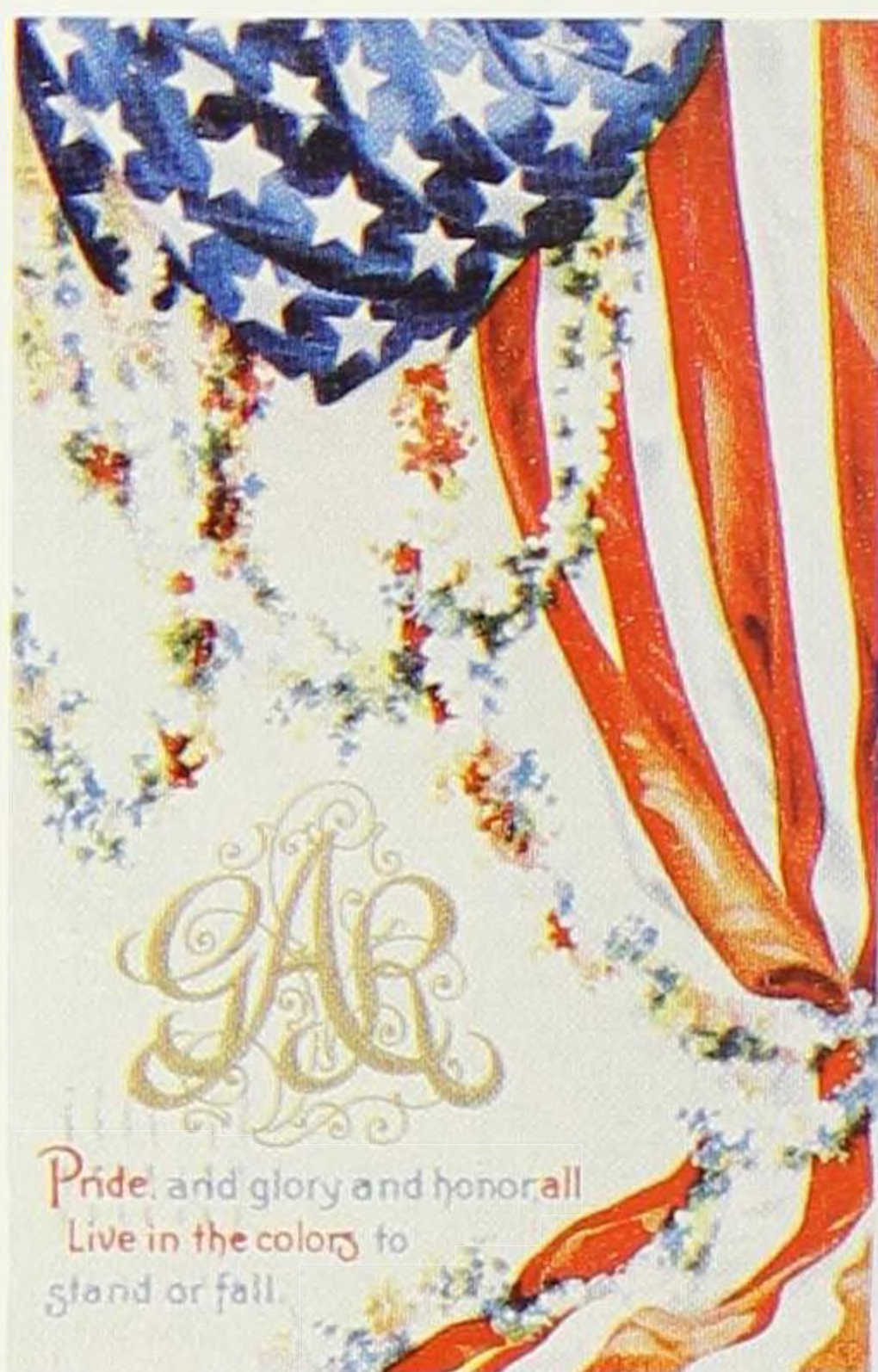










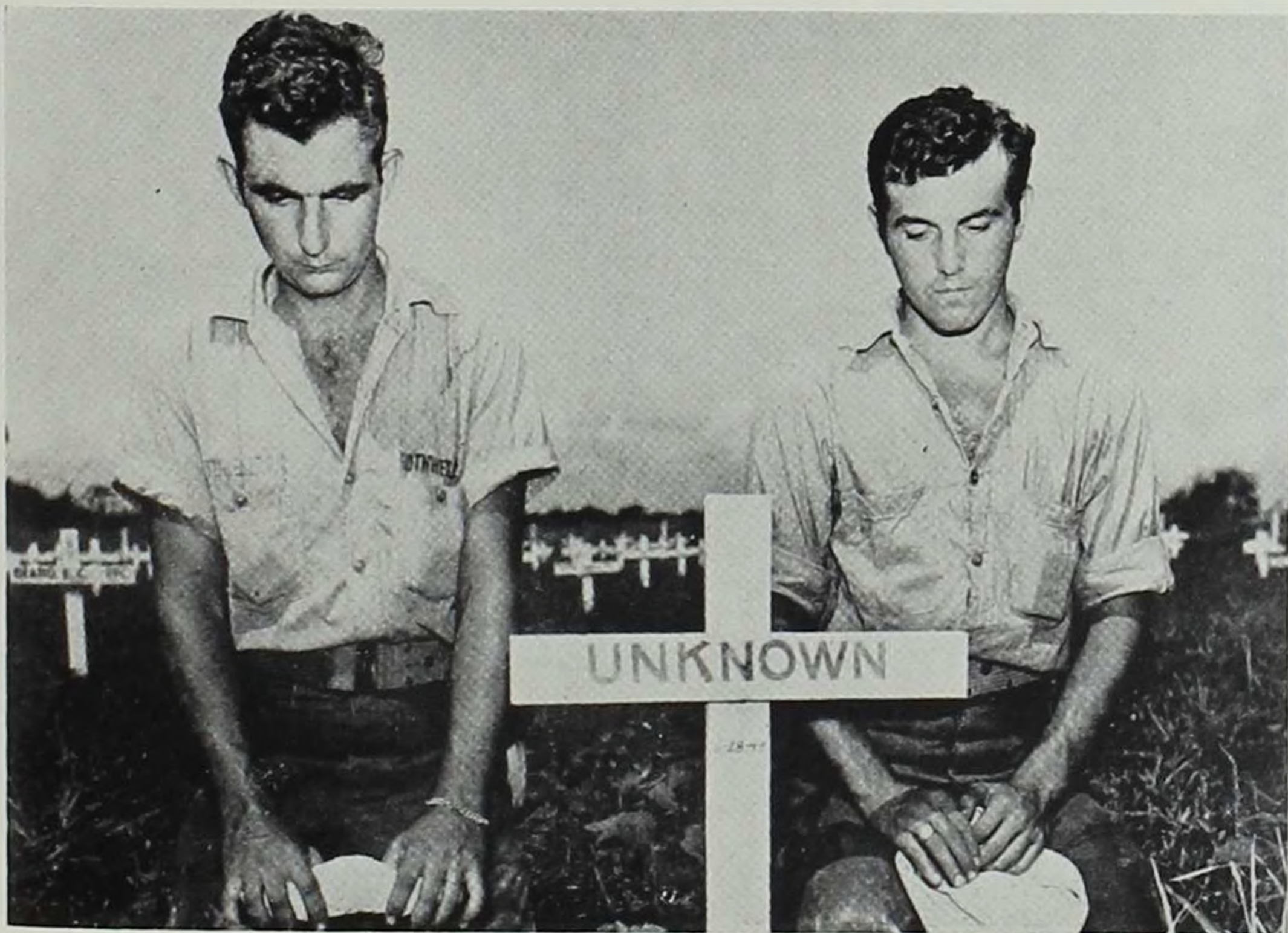


THROUGHOUT WORLD IN 1946



Des Moines Register (INS) Photo

Floral Tribute to Navy Men at Entrance of New York Harbor



Des Moines Register (INS) Photo

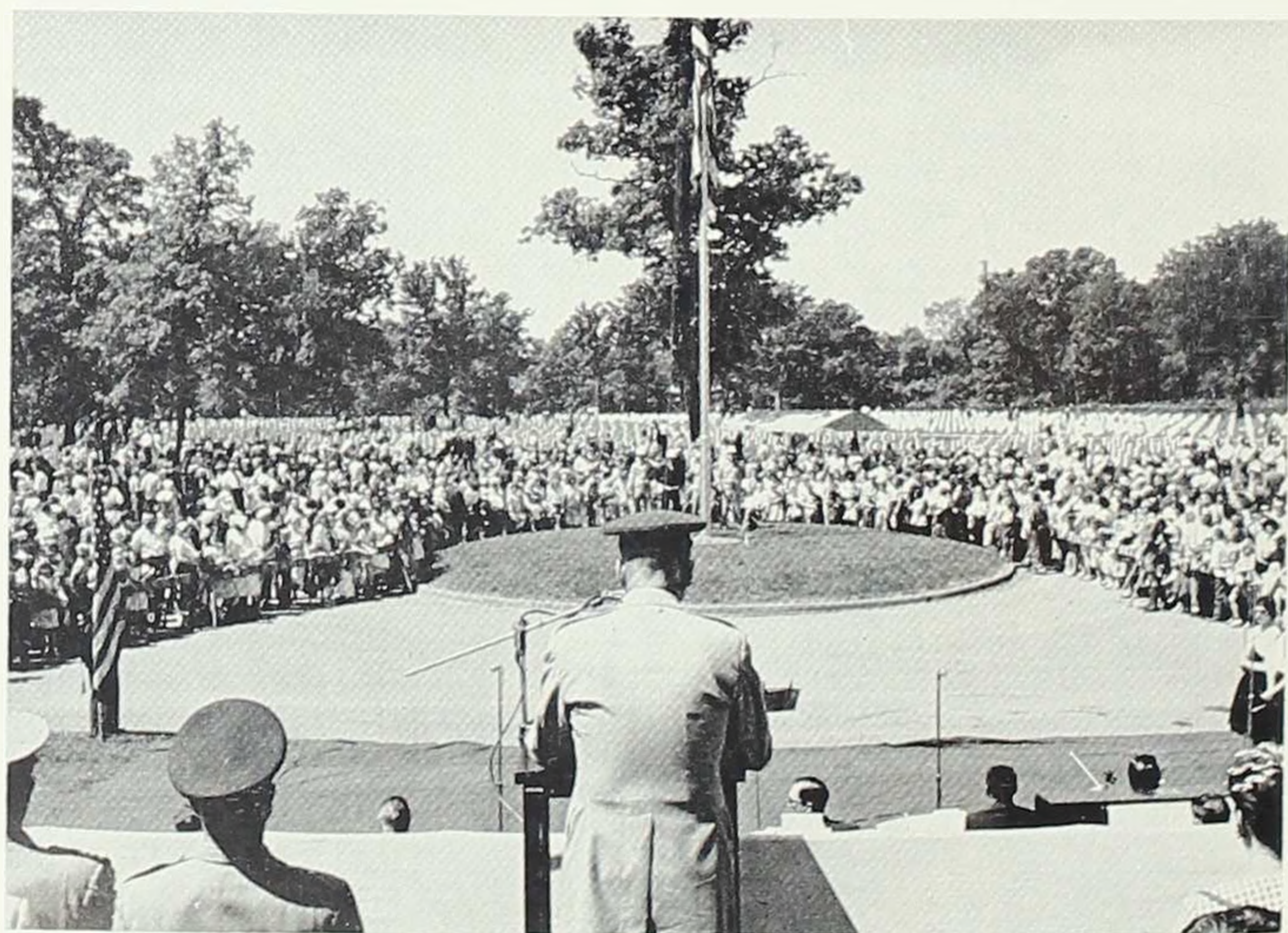
Coast Guard Honors Saipan Dead on Saipan Island

DAVENPORT JOINS ROCK ISLAND-MOLINE IN



Davenport Democrat Photo

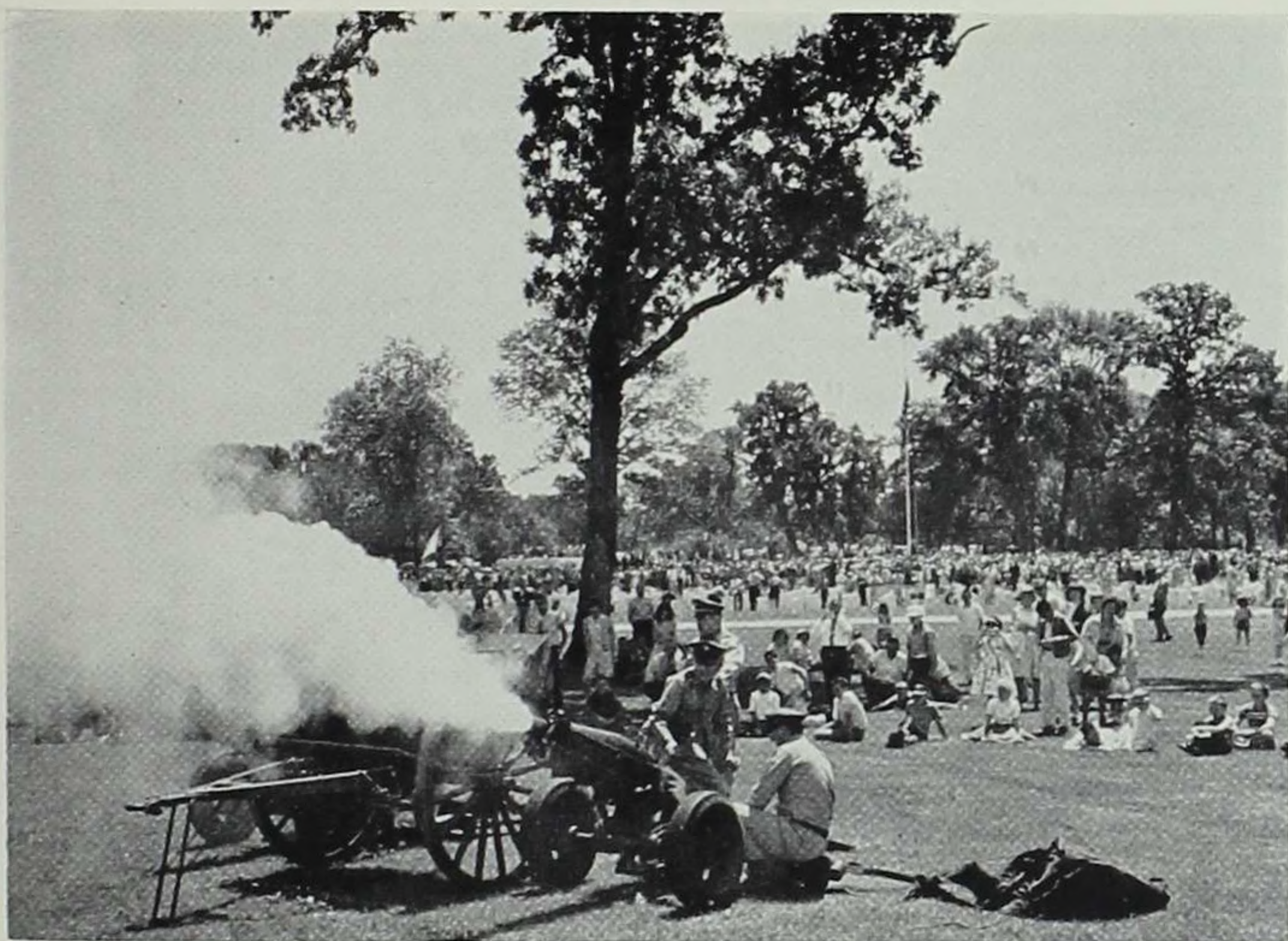
Colorful Parades



Davenport Democrat Photo

Memorial Day Address

MEMORIAL DAY SERVICES ON ARSENAL GROUNDS



Davenport Democrat Photo

Salute to the Departed



Cedar Rapids Gazette Photo

Private Residences Display Flags on Memorial Day in Cedar Rapids

IOWA CITY OBSERVES MEMORIAL DAY



Iowa City Press-Citizen Photo

Navy Pre-Flight Band Leads off in 1944



Iowa City Press-Citizen Photo

Pre-Flight Band Leads Parade in 1945

WRC PLAY PROMINENT MEMORIAL DAY ROLE



Des Moines Register Photo

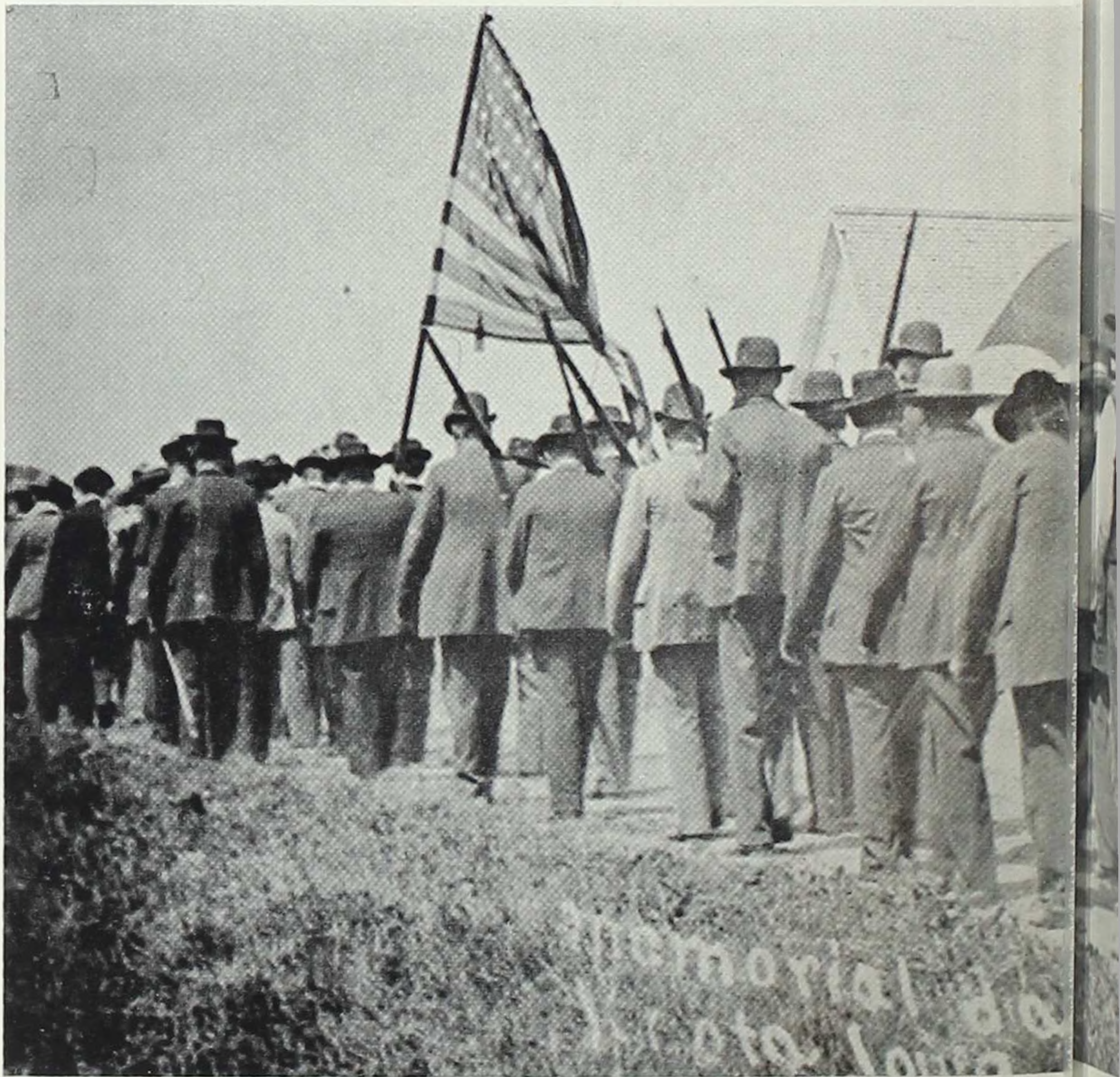
Woodland Cemetery Services at Des Moines in 1934



Des Moines Register Photo

WRC Prepare Flags and Wreaths in 1961

MEMORIAL DAY AT KEOTA (1889?)

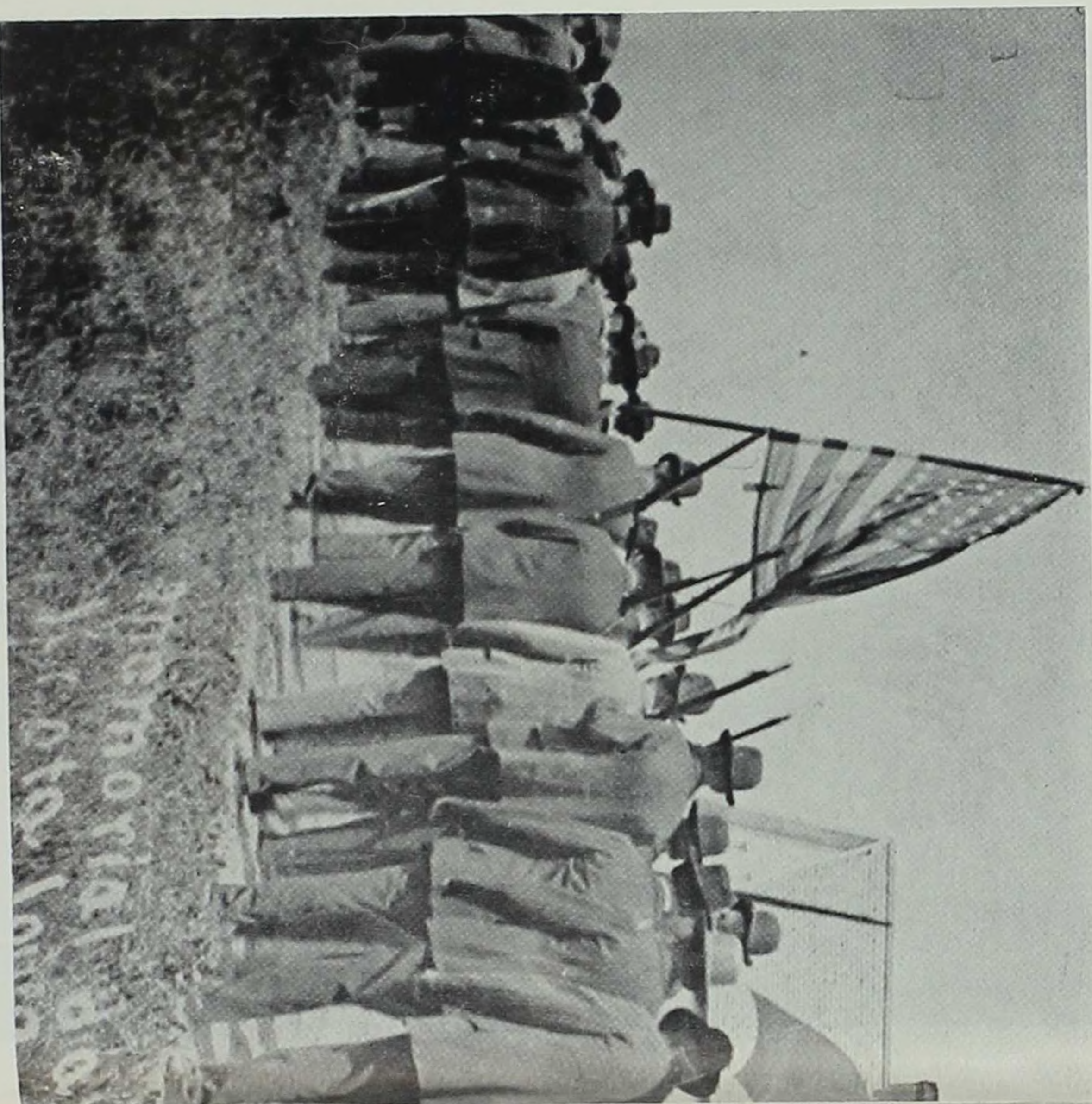


92) Ed Carris Post No. 333, G.A.R.



Photo Courtesy Amy Noll — Iowa Department, G.A.R.

MEMORIAL DAY AT KEOTA (1889?)



Ed Cartis Post No. 333, G.A.R.

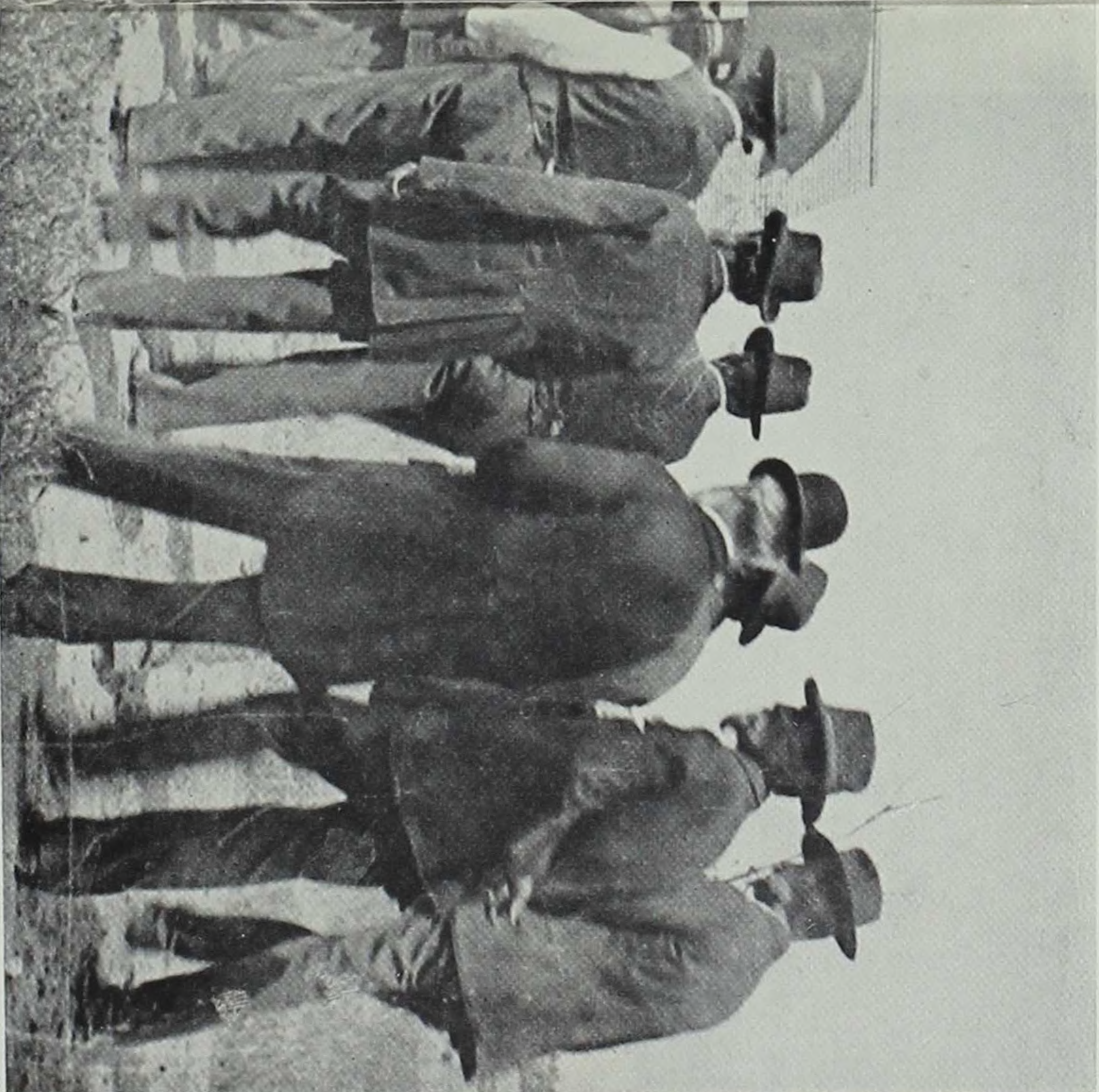
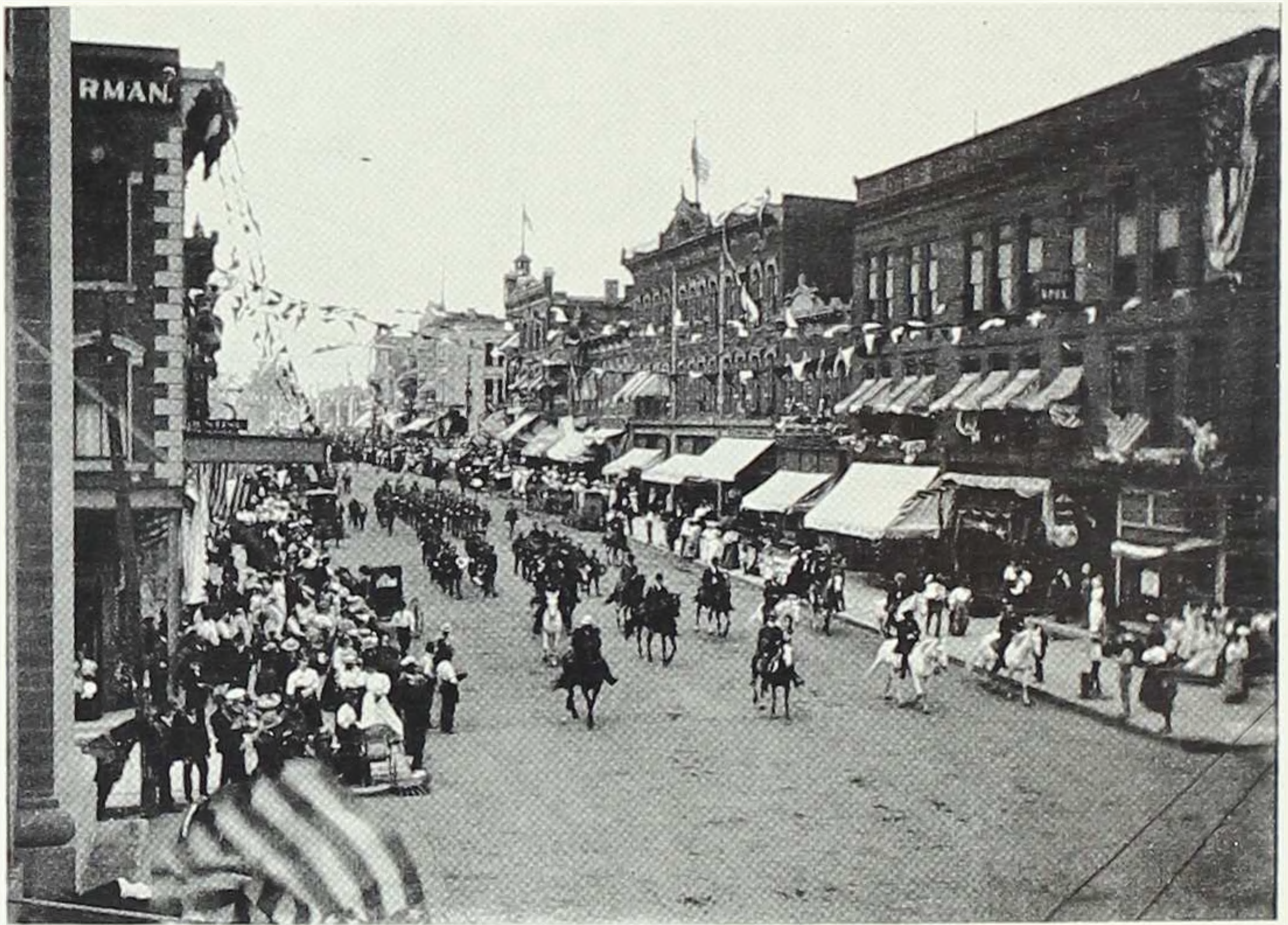


Photo Courtesy Amy Noll — Iowa Department, G.A.R.



Memorial Day Parade in Boone (1905)



Storm Lake Pilot-Tribune Photo

Governor Erbe Delivers Memorial Day Address at Storm Lake

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won;
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;

But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is hung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribboned wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding;
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;

Hear Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head;
It is some dream that on the deck
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;
The ship is anchored safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won.

Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
But I, with mournful tread,
Walk the deck where my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

Walt Whitman

THE BLUE AND THE GRAY

By the flow of the inland river,
Whence the fleets of iron had fled,
Where the blades of the grave-grass quiver,
Asleep are the ranks of the dead:—

Under the sod and the dew;
Waiting the judgment-day;
Under the one, the Blue;
Under the other, the Gray.

These in the robings of glory,
Those in the gloom of defeat;
All with the battle-blood glory,
In the dusk of eternity meet;—

Under the sod and the dew;
Waiting the judgment day;
Under the laurel, the Blue,
Under the willow, the Gray.

From the silence of sorrowful hours
The desolate mourners go,
Lovingly laden with flowers,
Alike for the friend and the foe;—

Under the sod and the dew;
Waiting the judgment day;
Under the laurel, the Blue;
Under the willow, the Gray.

So with an equal splendor,
The morning sun rays fall,
With a touch impartially tender,
On the blossoms blooming for all;—

Under the sod and the dew;
Waiting for judgment day;
Broidered with gold, the Blue;
Mellowed with gold, the Gray.

So, when the summer calleth
On forest and field of grain,
With an equal murmur falleth
The cooling drops of rain;—

Under the sod and the dew;
Waiting for judgment day;
Wet with the rain, the Blue;
Wet with the rain, the Gray.

Sadly, but not with upbraiding,
The generous deed was done;
In the storm of years, now fading,
No braver battle was won;—

Under the sod and the dew;
Waiting for judgment day;
Under the blossoms, the Blue;
Under the garlands, the Gray.

No more shall the war cry sever,
Or winding rivers be red;
They banish our anger forever
When they laurel the graves of our dead;—

Under the sod and the dew;
Waiting for judgment day;
Love and tears for the Blue;
Tears and love for the Gray.

Francis Miles Finch (1827-1897)

FOR GRANDPA'S SAKE

My grandpa went to war long years ago.
I never saw him, but they told me so,
And how after a battle, sad news came,
Among the "missing" was my grandpa's name.

They never heard of him again, they said,
And so we know that grandpa must be dead;
And when I think of him so good and brave,
I wish we knew just where he found a grave.

When Decoration Day comes, every year,
I feel so sad and sometimes shed a tear,
To see the Soldiers' graves all spread with flowers,
While grandpa's cannot have one rose of ours.

So if some little Southern girl should know
A nameless grave where never blossoms grow,
I'd love her so, if there some flowers she'd lay,
For grandpa's sake, this Decoration Day.

Youth's Companion

THE PALMETTO AND THE PINE

There grows a fair palmetto in the sunny Southern lands;
Upon the stern New England hills a somber pine tree stands,
And each towers like a monument above the perished brave;
A grave 'neath the palmetto—beneath the pine a grave.

The Carolina widow comes this bright May day to spread
Magnolia and jessamine above her soldier dead.
And the Northern mother violets strews upon her son below,—
Her only son, who fell so many weary years ago.

Tears for the gallant Yankee boy—one of Grant's heroes he.
Tears for the stalwart Southern man—the man who marched with Lee.
But love, and only love, between the lonely ones who twine
Their wreaths 'neath the palmetto—their chaplets 'neath the pine.

Oh, tried tree of the Southland; from out whose trunks were wrought
The ramparts of that glorious fort where Sergeant Jasper fought;
Oh, true tree of the Northland! whose pictured form supplied
The emblem of our earliest flag, that waved where Warren died.—

Still watch the dead you've watched so long, the dead who died so well;
And matrons mourn, as mourn you must, your lost dear ones who fell;
But joy and peace and hope to all, now North and South combine
In one grand whole, as one soil bears the palmetto and the pine!

Manley H. Pike

THE VETERANS

Every year they're marching slower,
Every year they're stooping lower,
Every year the lilting music stirs the hearts of older men;
Every year the flags above them
Seem to bend and bless and love them
As if grieving for the future when they'll never march again!

Every year that day draws nearer—
Every year the truth is clearer
That the men who saved the nation from the severing southern sword
Soon must pass away forever
From the scene of their endeavor,
Soon must answer to the roll-call of the angel of the Lord.

Every year with dwindling number,
Loyal to those that slumber,
Forth they march to where already many have found peace at last,
And they place the fairest blossoms
O'er the silent, mould'ring bosoms
Of the valiant friends and comrades of the battles of the past.

Every year grow dimmer, duller,
Tattered flag and faded color;
Every year the hands that bear them find a harder task to do.
And the eyes that only brightened
When the blaze of battle lightened,
Like the tattered flags they follow are grown dim and faded too.

Every year we see them massing,
Every year we watch them passing,
Scarcely pausing in our hurry after pleasure, after gain;
But the battle flags above them,
Seem to bend and bless and love them
And through all the lilting music sounds an undertone of pain!

Denis A. McCarthy, (1870-1931) New York Sun

MUSTERING OUT

Say, boys, have you heard what the newspapers say?
One hundred and fifty old soldiers a day,
Foot sore and weary have dropped out at last,
Back on the road where the column has passed.

Every week—seven days—keep the number in mind,
Another full regiment lagging behind;
We bid them good-bye with a tear and a song,
And the column keeps steadily marching along.

Every three weeks another brigade
Back of the silent old church is laid;
One look at the spot where they peacefully sleep,
And each at his place in the column must keep.

Sixty days—a division forever at rest,
No pickets thrown out, no foes will molest;
And let it be morning, at noon, or at night,
The column moves onward—is soon out of sight.

Every six months a full army corps
Goes into camp on the furthestmost shore,
No break in the column—the evening is damp,
But never mind, boys, *we'll soon be in camp.*

A. H. McGregor

DECORATION DAY

'Mid the flower-wreathed tombs I stand,
Bearing lilies in my hand.
Comrades, in what soldier-grave
Sleeps the bravest of the brave?

Is it he who sank to rest
With his colors round his breast?
Friendship makes his tomb a shrine,
Garlands veil it; ask not mine.

One low grave, yon trees beneath
Bears no roses, wears no wreath;
Yet no heart more high and warm
Ever dared the battle-storm.

Never gleamed a prouder eye
In the front of victory;
Never foot had firmer tread
On the field where hope lay dead.

Turning from my comrades' eyes,
Kneeling where a woman lies,
I strew lilies on the grave
Of the bravest of the brave.

Thomas Wentworth Higginson

BY THE GRAVES OF HEROES

An hour, a flower, a memory, perchance a tear or two,
These give me from our life to them; Nation, what gave they you?
What of the silent partings, too solemn and sad for tears?
What of the homesick sighing which only the night-wind hears?
What of the waking picket, guarding the nation's sleep?
What of the cold and the hunger? What of the thirst and heat?
What of the midnight marching, where weary, footsore, drenched,
The pallid weeping morning shows the enemy entrenched?
What of the shriek of the battle? What of the after-hours?
Oh men! in the name of God, can ye heal such wounds with flowers?
Look to your lillies, Columbia! stainless they should be as snow,
To rest on hearts burned white in the battle's furnace glow;
And your roses, red as the blood that flowed on fields of death,
Their fragrance full sweet to stifle the smell of battle's breath!
Alas! if our flowers were all that we laid on each nameless grave—
Alas! for us and for them and the sacrifice they gave.
But over those lowly hillocks, as over the hills of God,
A glory breaks from the flower-cups withering on the sod.
For they are the pledge of the promise—"What you give us we will keep;"
The oath of the Nation's waking sons to her sons who are asleep.

Frances Denoyer Ten Eyck

THE OLD BLUE COAT

Father's musket, brown and rusty,
Hangs inside his study door;
Just above it, worn and faded
Is the old blue coat he wore
When he marched with dashing Sherman
From Atlanta to the Sea,
'Neath the tatters of "Old Glory,"
In the war to make men free.

CHORUS

Yes, the old blue coat so faded,
Tells to me a story true,
How a soldier fought for freedom,
When that dear old coat was new.
Shake the dust and smooth the wrinkles,
From the coat he used to wear;
Brush the cobwebs from the musket—
Lay him in his vacant chair;
Hark, the muffled drum is beating,
There's a sound of trampling feet;
See, his aged comrades marching,
Clad in blue, adown the street.

CHORUS

They will strew his grave with flowers,
They will speak in whispers low;
Sing again the songs of war-time,
As he sang them long ago;
Now he answers to the roll call,
From that far off spirit shore;
While we lay a snow-white blossom
On the old blue coat he wore.

CHORUS

Lillian Barker Beede

GRANDPA'S OLD CHUM

My grandpa he was in the war,—
Grandpa and his old chum,
Who lives down there at Engle Bar;
It's fun to have him come.
And grandpa shakes him by the hand,
And pounds him on the back—my land—
'Tis fun to see them laugh, and I
Have seen them laughing when they cry.
When his old chum said he had been
To the encampment, and had seen
Those fellows they call G. A. R.
Who'd fought with grandpa in the war,
Then grandpa cried. Tears in his eyes,
He laughed and said, "Now don't tell lies;
You say that you saw Tom McClure,
I'd give a hundred dollars sure
To see that fellow. And say, was he
As jolly as he used to be?
There's many a time we would have died
Of home-sickness and sick beside,
But for his monkey shines—and say,
How he could sing! Well, anyway
He was a trump! And lanky Jim,
George Jones and Bill and Bob Balloo;
I wish that I had gone there too.
What's that, old chum, I heard you say?
You're going? No! You're going to stay
And lunch with me;" and grandpa he
Just makes him stay; and ma and me,
And little sister what's just come,
He don't like as well as his old chum.

Libbie C. Baer, in Wisconsin Memorial Day Annual

NATIONAL MONUMENTS

Count not the cost of honor to the dead!
The tribute that a mighty nation pays
To those who loved her well in former days
Means more than gratitude for glories fled;
For every noble man that she hath bred,
Immortalized by art's immortal praise,
Lives in the bronze and marble that we raise,
To lead our sons as he our fathers led.
These monuments of manhood, brave and high,
Do more than forts or battleships to keep
Our dear-bought liberty. They fortify
The heart of youth with valor wise and deep;
They build eternal bulwarks, and command
Eternal strength to guard our native land.

Henry Van Dyke in June Century (1852-1933)

THE GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC

Day by day their ranks are thinning, one by one they disappear,
And at each succeeding roll call fewer voices answer "Here!"
Glorious tales of gallant service echo still on every hand,—
Charge and seige and bitter hardship,—comrades lost on sea and land.
Now a reunited nation joins to bless the honored dead,
May we not forget the living, who have likewise fought and bled.
Hats are reverently lifted to the heroes lying here;
Lift them to the living heroes,—hail them all with cheer on cheer.
Not for long will they be with us; soon each regiment will be
Tented here beneath the blossoms of the land it helped to free.


Elsie Florence Fay

LOVE OF COUNTRY

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,

 "This is my own, my native land!"
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turn'd,
 From wandering on a foreign strand?

If such there breathe, go, mark him well;
For him no minstrel raptures swell.

 High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim,
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
The wretch, concerted all in self,
Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down,
To the vile dust from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonored, and unsung.

Sir Walter Scott

THE FLAG GOES BY

Hats off!

Along the street there comes
A blare of bugles, a ruffle of drums,
Hats off!

The flag is passing by.

Blue and crimson and white it shines,
Over the steel-tipped ordered lines.
Hats off!

The colors before us fly,
But more than the flag is passing by.

Sea-fights and land-fights, grim and great,
Fought to make and to save the State:
Weary marches and sinking ships;
Cheers of victory on dying lips;

Days of plenty and years of peace;
March of a strong land's swift increase;
Equal justice, right and law,
Stately honor and reverent awe;

Sign of a nation, great and strong
To ward her people from foreign wrong;
Pride and glory and honor—all
Live in the colors to stand or fall.

Hats off!

Along the street there comes
A veteran band, to the sound of drums,
And loyal hearts are beating high.
Hats off!

The flag is passing by.

Henry Holcomb Bennett (1863-1924)

MEMORIAL DAY

Time only enhances the lasting value and demonstrates anew the true significance of these inspiring observances.

Whatever may be the character of its temporary problems, this liberty-loving nation is not and never can be forgetful of the immortal heroes of the Civil War.

The debt of gratitude which we owe to the Nation's defenders can never be repaid, either by this or future generations; yet the acknowledged gift of the obligation each year, in various forms and in a multitude of places throughout this broad land purifies our ideas and brings us all together in sympathy of sentiment and unity of purpose.

Generations come and go and the issues for which they fought and died soon pass into history. But the principles of undertaking, worthily accomplished for an unselfish purpose, abide forever and guide us to a nobler destiny and still greater achievements as a nation.

President McKinley

THE GREY-HAIRED VET

We hear so much in these latter days
Of things that are new in this land of ours;
Of bustle and hurry in many ways,
And changes that come with the fleeting hours.
We rejoice in the rush and strife and din
Of this changeful age, that's ever new,
And scarcely think of the days that have been—
The days that are old but are tried and true.

With bands of steel we have bound our land,
We whisper a message from shore to shore,
The lightning obeys our least command,
The earth gives up its hidden store.
For newer things we look and strive
For stranger things as yet untold,
For things to help mankind to thrive
And bring new fame, or power or gold.

But while with heart and will and might
We strive to find the strange and new,
And while we praise, as is but right,
Our soldier boys so brave and true,
We think today of other days
Our people never should forget,
And bring our homage and our praise
And offer to the grey-haired Vet.

We heard way back in Sixty-one
The rebel shells on Sumter fall.
When pealing like a minute gun
There came the martyred Lincoln's call.

He left his home, his child, his wife,
He left his all—he did not lag;
He went forth to the mighty strife
To save his country and his flag.

He marched with Grant through Vicksburg's gates;
He bore the flag up Lookout's heights;
He tramped with Sherman through the states;
He followed Logan in his fights;
He saw the mighty crimson tide
At Gettysburg in breakers dash;
He saw the strife on Mission's side;
At Chancellorsville he heard the clash.

And when at last the white flag waved
At Appomattox' apple-tree,
He found a nation had been saved;
He found a race had been set free.
He found each star in yon blue field
Fixed firm as those that shine afar.
He found a people ne'er to yield
To the horrors of a civil war.

And as a nation now we turn
To seek the strange, untried and new.
With all our progress let us learn
Not to forget the brave and true.
Remember those who've passed away,
Remember those who linger yet,
And deck with laurel leaves today
The memory of the grey-haired Vet.

by F. F. Faville, Storm Lake, Iowa

HIS MOTHER'S SONG

Beneath the hot midsummer sun
The men had marched all day;
And now beside a rippling stream
Upon the grass they lay,
Tiring of games and idle jest
As swept the hours along,
They cried to one who mused apart,
"Come, friend, give us a song."

"I fear I cannot please," he said
"The only songs I know
Are those my mother used to sing
For me long years ago."
"Sing one of those," a rough voice cried,
"There's none but true men here;
To every mother's son of us
A mother's songs are dear."

Then sweetly rose the singer's voice
Amid unwonted calm,
"Am I a soldier of the Cross
A follower of the Lamb?
And shall I fear to own his cause?"
The very stream was stilled,
And hearts that never throbbed with fear
With tender thoughts were filled.

Ended the song; the singer said
As to his feet he rose,
"Thanks to you all, my friends, good-night,
God grant us sweet repose."
"Sing us one more," the captain begged,
The soldier bent his head,
Then glancing 'round with smiling lips,
"You'll join with me?" he said.

"We'll sing this old familiar air
Sweet as the bugle call,
'All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Let angels prostrate fall;' "
Ah! wondrous was the old tune's spell,
As on the soldier sang.
Man after man fell into line,
And loud the voices rang.

The songs are done, the camp is still,
Naught but the stream is heard;
But ah; the depths of every soul
By those old hymns are stirred,
And up from many a bearded lip
In whispers soft and low;
Rises the prayer that mother taught
Her boy long years ago.

Selected

THE NATION'S DEAD

Hail to the dead—the nation's dead—
Who sleep by wood and field and shore!
To them we come with loyal tread
And kneel beside their graves once more
With notes of bugle-song and drum,
With flying flags and sweet May flowers,
And grateful hearts, again we come
To deck these soldier graves of ours.
With hopes undimmed by flying years,
And faith renewed by the great past,
We see amidst our funeral tears
The glory that was born to last.
Once more beside each verdant grave
We gather, and with pride recall
How heroes' blood alone could save,
How heroes' sons alone could fall.
They sleep today in silent lines,—
Heroic men, whom Fame hath lent
The glory that forever shines,
To be their lasting monument.
And years and men may pass, but they,
Shrined in their country's bosom, live
In fairer forms than flesh or clay;
The fitter forms than Fame can give.
Sleep on, sleep on, heroic dead,
It little recks what we may say,
For there, beyond your narrow bed,
Shines the new light, your better day;
And midst the music of the spheres
That sounds the soldier's reveille,
Where march and countermarch the years,
Ye wait the Peace that is to be.

(Written and read by Iowa-born S. H. M. Byers at the Decoration Day services in Washington, D. C., 1881, at the special request of Gen. W. T. Sherman.)

Memorial Day, 1965

Address by Donald E. Johnson, National Commander, The American Legion, At Fort Dodge, Iowa, May 31, 1965.

My fellow Americans:

We gather once more on this annual observance of Memorial Day to honor the sacred memory of our nation's heroic dead, and to pledge ourselves anew to the principle that they shall not have died in vain.

How we need to remember their bravery, their courage, their sacrifice, that we may take from them the inspiration to dare to live today for the principles and the ideals for which they died.

Our honored dead, who in the prime of life, dared to lay their lives upon the altar of freedom did in that same act pass on to us the torch of liberty and in so doing they expressed in us their confidence that we would forever hold it high.

Countless tears have been shed, deathless eulogies spoken and tender, loving prayers offered at the final resting places of those who sleep the eternal sleep beneath land and sea, yet time and space are slow to heal the void in the lives of those who mourn a loved one who made the supreme sacrifice.

While memory lingers for those who suffered personal loss, and for those of us who shared their burden of battle but were spared our lives, we find unfortunately that memory is a fleeting thing to so many who knew no personal loss, and to them this day should ever serve as a reminder that our heritage of freedom was dearly won and has been dearly held.

Since the founding of the Republic nearly one hundred

and ninety years ago, more than a million young Americans have laid down their lives that you and I might live in freedom and in peace.

Yet, on this Memorial Day, 1965, nearly a century after the first formal observance of Memorial Day, we find only a portion of that objective accomplished — we live in freedom, but we do not live in peace.

This very day the foes of freedom make a mockery of peace and are once more testing the will of the free world, and particularly the will of the American people, to see if we hold fast to our beliefs that freedom is worth the price.

I have just returned from Vietnam where freedom today faces its most severe test. I have had the privilege of talking with some of today's American fighting men who man the ramparts of freedom in that remote quarter of the globe. I am proud of what I have seen and heard, for here are young Americans with a purpose, with a sense of duty, and an understanding of the necessity for performing that duty and performing it well.

They know that they now represent the first line of defense against the forces that would destroy freedom, and they know the importance of holding that line. The alternative, and they know this too, is to abandon all of Southeast Asia to the forces of aggression and to endanger the Philippines, Nationalist China, Japan and South Korea.

I prefer to believe that here we find the true spirit and character of the rising generation of Americans, for it is a reflection of the spirit of those whom we honor in these Memorial Day ceremonies. They are young Americans with a sense of patriotic duty. They are young Americans who pride themselves in the heritage that is theirs. They are young Americans who love freedom enough to pay the price of defending it. They are young Americans who are worthy heirs of those whom we honor today.

These young men want and deserve the wholehearted support of the American people in the cause the American people have sent them to serve. They are, in reality, fighting for the very same ideals and principles for which every generation of Americans has fought since George Washington led his ragged Continental Army to victory in the war for American independence.

They fight your fight and mine. They fight for the bearded beatnik who lacks a sense of direction. They fight for the undecided Senator who isn't sure whether or not we should be in Vietnam or what we should be doing there.

They fight for the fuzzy-minded professor who contributes to the confusion of his students by conducting "teach-ins" in protest of the American presence in Vietnam and, with a sense of abject defeatism, call for our withdrawal. They fight for all of these who, at the moment, are contributing nothing constructive to the cause of freedom and who, by their obstructionist tactics, may well be making the job of our fighting men more difficult by encouraging the enemy to greater effort.

We may be eternally thankful that the confusion and indecision which exists on the home front does not exist on the battle front, and it is precisely because of conditions such as this that The American Legion considers the proper observance of our patriotic holidays to be so vitally important. In paying tribute to our nation's hero dead we, the living, become their voice to our contemporaries, and we believe it to be our responsibility to carry on their work and advance it to the best of our abilities.

Their final act was to give their all in the seemingly never-ending struggle for liberty, for justice and for peace. The only fitting memorial we can build to them is an America united in the causes for which they died — an America strong and brave, an America forever free.

Americans never have faltered in their march toward this destiny and, God willing, Americans will not falter now. If Americans could sustain in time of peace the standards of heroism which they have achieved in time of war, I believe the long cherished dream of a just and lasting peace on earth might by now be a reality.

The message of those million American heroes whom we honor this day thunders across this land to all of the living imploring us to be heroic in time of peace that we may not again be forced to the heroism that is born of war.

Let all Americans listen today and take new hope, stronger faith and firmer resolve from the words of an anonymous author who wrote of Memorial Day:

"It is a day of memories, a day when we meet in the hallowed past and hold communion with our holy dead. A day when we recall the glorious aspirations which thrilled men's souls in that heroic time, when to love one's country was to lay down one's life; a day filled with that same spirit of freedom, patriotism and devotion which breathed into the common dust of ordinary humanity the sublime inspiration of heroic deeds."



"Ding" Darling
Do They Come Back Remembering While We, Alas, Forget?

