

Sac City Monument Square Historic District

(Excerpted from National Register of Historic Places Nomination by Bruce Perry)

Sac City's Monument Square, an area planned and begun by members of the Grand Army of the Republic, is a vital tie to the group founded by those who fought in the United States Civil War. The Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) united veterans into a brotherhood that not only continued the memory of the Civil War into the Twentieth Century, but one that exerted a profound influence on the future of local, state, and national policy and politics. General Sherman Hall honors the service of William T. Sherman to the Union Army and his innovations and life-long commitment to the United States Military. The American Legion continued the G.A.R.'s vision when it purchased land adjacent to Monument Square to erect the American Legion Building as a combination meeting house and memorial to those from Sac County who lost their lives in WW I.

Sac City Monument Square Historic District not only commemorates the life of General Sherman, but honors Sac County residents who have served in war throughout the period of significance, making it a commemorative property as noted in Criteria Consideration F.

The individual resources in Monument Square are significant representations of ways people have honored those who have gone to war. The 1892 G.A.R. building (General Sherman Hall) is a fine example of Classic Revival architecture on a modest scale. Even though the 1935 addition caused the building to lose its classical symmetry, the edifice remains one of the few extant examples of a structure erected by the G.A.R. movement in Iowa. The Memorial Statue is a wonderful representation of the work of New York sculptor Maurice J. Power and the National Fine Art Foundry, as well as a reminder of the artistic monuments to the Union Soldiers made possible through voters' passage of special taxation to fund memorials. The 1922 American Legion Hall represents a combination memorial and meeting hall that became typical of many WW I commemorative properties. The four World War II era Howitzers that flank the statue are at once an oxymoron and a stark reminder of the universality of memorializing those who have fought in war. The three marble tablets that commemorate those from Sac County who lost their lives in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Viet Nam Conflict are all in keeping with the original intent of the area. The Viet Nam monument is non-contributing because of the 50-year rule. The land itself has been a focal point in Sac City since 1855, when the land was designated as a part of the City Square or Court House Square. The period of significance begins with the construction of General Sherman Hall in Monument Square and ends in 1965, in keeping with National Register of Historic Places 50-year rule.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Sac County and the Civil War

When the United States Civil War broke out, Iowa was less than 20 years old. The 1860 census listed the population of Sac County at 247. (Hart, p. 146) Presidential proclamations gave each state quotas of men to help defend the Union. Most states set quotas for each county; Iowa was no exception. State law provided counties the opportunity to provide monetary rewards for those who volunteered to go to war. (Freese, p. 283)

On September 11, 1862, the [Sac County] Supervisors levied a four mill tax levy on all taxable property and provided that \$300.00 would be paid out of the fund for each man who would volunteer for military service in the Union army, with orders to be drawn on the fund to draw interest at the rate of ten percent annually until paid. The fund was also used to pay living expenses of the wives and children of men who left for the service. To further induce volunteers, \$4.00 was paid to cover the fare to Fort Dodge, the place of departure. (Freese, p. 283)

Although the exact number of Sac County residents who volunteered for the Union Army is unclear, records indicate at least 20 men joined the fight to protect the Union. (Hart, p. 147-148; Freese, p. 283.) Even though this number was relatively modest compared to the total of 80,000 Iowans in the war, having at least twenty percent of available males in Sac County go to war certainly left a lasting impact on local residents. The memory of those who served paved the way for an active G.A.R. organization in Sac City.

Background of the Grand Army of the Republic

The Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) was a nationwide, fraternal organization founded in 1866 by Dr. Benjamin Stephenson--the first post being established in Decatur, Illinois in April of that year. Membership was limited to honorably discharged Civil War veterans of the Union Army, Navy, Marine Corps or the Revenue Cutter Service that served between April 12, 1861 and April 9, 1865. After its inception, the G.A.R. spread rapidly and members from ten states as well as Washington, D.C. attended the first national encampment in November of 1866. The G.A.R. reached its peak in the early 1890s with nearly 500,000 members. The organization came to an end in 1956 when its last surviving member died at the age of 109 years. The G.A.R. was founded on "three cardinal principles," namely fraternity, charity, and loyalty. Unlike many other fraternal organizations, these principles had strong roots in the military. For example, an 1884 G.A.R. handbook states that the word fraternity was not used "as the world understands the term," but was instead used to describe the brotherhood and bonds that were created from serving together in the Union Army. The same handbook argues that the principle of loyalty was not shared by any other fraternal organization, and that this principle was largely tied to the idea that G.A.R. members would be willing to once again bear arms to protect their nation if they were needed.

Perhaps the most important of the three principles, however, was that of charity. The founders of the G.A.R. saw an urgent need to protect the soldiers and the families of the soldiers who were injured or killed during the war. In the 1880s, aid was given to around 9000 families per year. It is estimated that in the ten-year period from 1887 to 1897, the national G.A.R. provided over \$2,000,000 to those in need, and in the last two decades of the 19th century, the Iowa G.A.R. distributed between \$2,000 and \$7,000 dollars annually. The G.A.R. also worked hard to protect the memory of the war. They helped donate Civil War artifacts to museums, court houses, and city parks. They worked to preserve battlefields, donated flags to schools and helped fund memorials. In 1868, the organization gave what is one of its most lasting legacies: an order that May 30 of every year would be Decoration Day. The order stated that

members of the G.A.R. should remember those who died during the war. Over the years, Decoration Day has turned into what we now know as Memorial Day.

The G.A.R. was one of the first organized advocacy groups in American politics. Unlike veterans of previous wars, Civil War veterans refused to accept public indifference, instead moving quickly to support the organization of the United States Soldiers and Sailors Protective Society, which was established in New York City in August, 1865. With the creation of the G.A.R. the following year, the issue of veteran benefits was pushed to the forefront of the American political scene.

G.A.R. founder Dr. Benjamin Stephenson saw that the road to adequate care for the organization's membership was political activism. To that end, the G.A.R. focused on insuring that no Northern politician opposed to veterans' benefits bore a chance of election. Despite the need for adequate veteran services, politicians and the general public resisted providing aid to veterans, fueling the fire that brought about the rise of the G.A.R. as the most powerful lobbying organization of the 19th century. (McDowell, pp. 8-9)

G.A.R in Sac City

The G.A.R. in Sac City was organized on February 11, 1884, as Sac City Post No. 284 and retained that name until the death of General Sherman. (Phillips, *Reflections*, p. 266) By 1889, the post had grown from the original 25 charter members to include 81 men. Although there were additional Sac County posts in Early, Grant City, Schaller, Odebolt, and Wall Lake, nearly half of the county's 188 G.A.R. members were associated with Sac City Post. The Post met in various places, but most often at the Sac City Opera House.

In 1891, the name was changed to General Sherman Post by order of the state department, as documented by the following record:

Cedar Rapids, Iowa, March 11, 1891. Special Order No. 113 (series of 1890-91). Post No. 284, Department of Iowa, G.A.R., having made the first and earliest claim to assume the name of Gen. W. T. Sherman, which the death of that eminent and esteemed commander made possible to do so, and having by vote of said post duly certified to these headquarters adopted such name of Gen. W. T. Sherman in lieu of "Sac," by which it has since been known, such change in name is hereby approved and the said post will hereafter be enrolled and known as the Gen. W. T. Sherman Post No. 284, Department of Iowa, G.A.R. (Hart, pp. 151-152)

General W. T. Sherman Post was very active in the community and as a leader among the numerous posts in Northwest Iowa. The men of General Sherman Post hosted several large regional encampments.

In September, 1884, there occurred a splendid old soldiers' Grand Army campfire, in the beautiful grove of the late Judge Eugene Criss, a half mile to the east of Sac City, lasting three days and over. It was participated in by many adjoining towns and cities, and thousands of comrades attended, besides as many more civilians. The grounds were in excellent condition and at their entrance there stood several brazen cannon ready to belch forth on a moment's warning. (Hart, p. 144)

The 1886 reunion in Sac City brought more than 500 veterans together and featured not only a battle re-enactment, but the re-enactment of hanging a spy and the "drumming out of camp of a supposed hog thief." (Hart, p. 145) The great reunion of 1890 brought thousands of former soldiers to the community.

The encampment in 1899 brought more than one thousand people to Sac City. The city ran water to a campground on the north edge of town for the week-long event. For one dollar, the former boys in blue received a specially struck medallion (see images 42-45. pp. 69-70), use of a tent, and two meals a day for the veteran and his spouse. Speakers, campfires, and good times were plentiful. (*Sac Sun*, 6 July 1899) In fact, there were too many good times for some members of the community. Less than a month after the reunion, *The Sac Sun* printed a report (using the headline "Sac City Women are Aroused") that the local chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was most upset that intoxicating spirits were available in an area near the camp grounds. (*Sac Sun*, 3 August 1899)

By the time General Sherman Post hosted a regional encampment in 1907, the fervor of the 1890's had diminished; attendance was significantly decreased from the 1899 event and information about the three-day encampment is minimal.

In addition to activities within the larger G.A.R. organization, the post played an important and lasting role in local politics. Prominent members of the post, most notably Phil Schaller, served as elected county officials. James Miller, Commander of General Sherman Post, was elected to Congress and owned and published *The Sac Sun*; his numerous editorials frequently espoused the need for veteran's support. His antipathy for Democratic candidates was often expressed in venomous verbiage. Reading the rival newspaper, *The Sac County Democrat*, one finds very few references to any G.A.R. activities; the omission of meeting notices certainly was not completely accidental. Nevertheless, the total absence of county elected officials from the Democratic Party from 1890-1910 is a testament to the political clout the G.A.R. wielded in the area.

The aging population of veterans caused the G.A.R. to gradually wane in Sac City, as it did throughout the United States. The Sac County Board of Supervisors' minutes would indicate that General Sherman Post was struggling by 1917. The last Sac County soldier to serve in the Civil War died in 1926, taking with him the memories of the service for the Union Army.

General Sherman Post and Monument Square

When Sac City was originally platted, the location for Sac County Court House was in the middle of what is now Main Street. In 1873, when the third court house was erected, it was decided to move the location one half block north to eliminate the turns around city square. This move made it much easier for horses to pull their loads up the rather steep Main Street hill. The result was a vacant half-block area to the south of Main Street. The only known uses for the area were storing some of the city's fire equipment and having hitching posts for horses when farmers came into town. The court house burned in 1888 when a prisoner set it on fire. The fourth (and current) Sac County Court House was erected soon after. (The Sac County Court House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.) Presumably, the county owned the land when the court house was sitting on it. At some point, the land must have been

transferred to the City of Sac City, but records of the transfer were either never recorded or lost in the 1888 fire.

The relatively vacant half block in the center of town became an ideal location for those working to aid Reconstruction after the United States' most divisive war. "Reconstruction demanded nothing less than that the nation and its people re-imagine themselves. Public monuments were at the center of this highly abstract, and yet terrifying, conflict...that lasted long after Reconstruction's official demise." (Savage, p. 4) Members of Gen. W. T. Sherman Post were instrumental in the establishment of Monument Square in the area created by moving the court house location; not only did they construct General Sherman Hall and lead the charge to erect the monument in the square's center, but they worked with the county and city to obtain the rights to use the property as Monument Square. General Sherman Hall Association, whose "object shall be to build and maintain a Hall in Sac City, Iowa, as a tribute to the memory of Gen. W. T. Sherman" was incorporated 14 July 1892. (General Sherman Hall Association Journal, p. 1) The Association was to have a capital stock of \$10,000 sold as 2000 five dollar shares. Work had begun to secure funding prior to the incorporation. Members of the post voted to call their loan to the Opera House Association at 8% interest on 29 February 1892. (General Sherman Post Journal 1888-1901, p. 71) The Post itself purchased 40 shares of the stock on 28 May 1892. (General Sherman Post Journal 1888-1901, p. 73) General W. T. Sherman's son was one of the shareholders.

On February 29, 1892, the minutes of the General Sherman Post record:

On motion of Comrade Hiersche, the post voted to ask the Council of Sac City to grant the grounds, now partly occupied by the Hose House for the monument and Memorial Hall and to move said hose house. (General Sherman Post Journal 1888-1901, p. 72)

On March 14, 1892, the Sac City Council passed a resolution giving permission to Sac County and its Board of Supervisors "to occupy that part of the public square of Sac City lying south of Main Street for the purpose of erecting thereon the Sac County Soldiers Monument and General Sherman Hall and for no other purpose." The resolution further specified that any other use of the property would cause the agreement to be null and void and allow the city to resume control of said ground. (Sac City Council Minutes Book 2, pp 71-72)

The Sac County Supervisors granted permission to the General Sherman Hall Association to use the land for the building.

Whereas there has been organized in Sac County an incorporation known and designated as the General Sherman Hall Association for the purpose of perpetuating the memory of the valiant deeds and heroic service of the Union Soldiers in the late war, and,

Whereas, the said Association is desirous of locating a Memorial hall on that property in the public square in Sac City, Iowa, lying south of main street (*sic*) as located in said town, and,

Whereas, said Hall is deemed to be in the nature of a public improvement, and not for pecuniary profit, therefore be it

Resolved, By the Board of Supervisors of Sac County, that in so far as the said Sac County is interested in the fee simple title to and control of said land, the said General Sherman Hall Association is hereby permitted to use and occupy the west forty feet of said tract of land for the purposes aforesaid and for none other, provided that nothing herein shall be construed to be a vacation of said premises or the abandonment of the same. Or shall the said premises fail or cease to be occupied for the said purposes then any interest or title vested in said Association by virtue of this resolution shall cease and terminate and the same shall revert to said Sac County. (Sac County Records, Book 3, p. 460)

Since 1892, Sac County has acted as owner and caretaker of Monument Square, even though the verbiage seems to be unclear of ownership.

Exact details of the construction of General Sherman Hall are sketchy at best. Minutes do list some workers and allude to executing the building's plan, but the names of a general contractor and the architect are lost in the annals of time. Several of the listed workers were also members of General Sherman Post, which could lead one to speculate that the building was designed and built by the membership to cut costs. The local Masonic Lodge laid the corner stone (presumably the dated *bas relief* sculpture) in regular form at 3:00 p.m. on 5 August 1892. (Occidental Lodge #178 minutes; James Miller letter August 4, 1892) The postscript of Mr. Miller's letter to the General Sherman Women's Relief Corps, apologizing for only one day's notice of the event, may be indicative of the organizational skills of the leaders of the General Sherman Hall Association. "I thought of this three or four times but forgot to send it. I can only ask pardon--you know how busy and forgetful I am. Put on your best dress and come." (James Miller letter 4 August 1892)

The foundation was completed by October 26, 1892. (*Sac Sun* 26 October 1892) Not all members of the community were overly-enthused about the new building; the removal of the city's hitching posts to clear the land for the building was not too popular amongst members of the business community.

Our attention has been called to the fact that since the hitching posts have been removed from the square south of the court house there are scarcely any places in town where farmers who come here to trade can hitch their teams...If we want people to trade in Sac City we must have some accommodations about us. (*Sac Sun*, 26 October 1892)

Stone for the building was purchased from Marble Valley Stone and Lime Company of Gilmore City and C. W. Babcock & Company, Kasota, Minnesota. Paint came from the Sherwin Williams Company in Chicago, Illinois. S. R. Mix was in charge of the brick and stone work; W. B. Jensen superintended the interior and exterior painting. P. W. Graft and C. E. Lane, members of the Association board, completed the cornices and ceilings. (General Sherman Hall Association Journal, p. 8)

Regular accounts of meetings in General Sherman Hall indicate that work on the interior of the building continued for several years. Discussions of flooring and furnishings are highlighted in the minutes of several 1894 meetings. Minutes of the General Sherman Post are unclear as to the exact date the building was first used as a meeting hall. There is no mention in *The Sac Sun* or *The Sac County Democrat* of any

public dedication ceremony. In addition to the meetings of General Sherman Post, the building was home to the Women's Relief Corps and Sons of Veterans.

At the Sac County Supervisors meeting on 14 February 1917, the following resolution was adopted.

Whereas the G.A.R. Hall located on the land of Sac County in the City of Sac City, Iowa, has reverted to and is the property of Sac County, and is now under control of the Board of Supervisors of said county, and is being maintained by said Board. Therefore be it resolved: that the use of the G.A.R. Hall above referred to by and the same is hereby given to Gen. W. T. Sherman Post, the W. R. C. [Women's Relief Corps] and the sons of veterans of Sac City. Said organizations shall have the exclusive use of said building as long as they have any need therefore, and no other organization or person whatsoever shall have any rights to the use or occupancy of said building. (Sac County Records, Book 7, p. 143.)

By 1934, the Women's Relief Corps was the only organization using the building. The county decided to enlarge General Sherman Hall and make some other changes to Monument Square. *The Sac Sun* details the changes.

This week, work was started on improving the G.A.R. Hall in the park and making changes in the park itself. New cement [concrete] foundations have been constructed for the four large cannon, placing them near each corner of the monument.

Work will also start at once on the new 15 1/2 x 21 addition to the west (*sic.*) side of the Hall. Excavation will be made for a basement under this addition which will house a furnace and also provide public toilets with an outside entrance.

The main part of the new addition will be used as a modern kitchen. The ladies in charge of the hall have found it very inconvenient to serve meals because of the fact that there is no kitchen in the building.

The work is all being done under the leadership of Wm. Peacock. Men on the relief roll are given 16 hours of work a week, for which they are paid 40 cents per hour. Under this arrangement progress will be naturally quite slow, although some 40 men are at work at different times. (*Sac Sun*, 12 July 1934)

In all probability, there were federal funds that assisted with the cost of the addition. Both the Work Progress Administration (WPA) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) were active in Sac City. As the county was still reeling from the economic turmoil of the Great Depression, it is unlikely the Sac County Supervisors would have been able to fund the addition without an influx of funding. The addition was completed by 30 May 1935. (*Sac Sun*, 30 May 1935)

The Women's Relief Corps continued using General Sherman Hall through 1979. The building became the home of the Sac City Congregate Meals Project on 31 December 1979 and has continued in that capacity to this day. (Phillips, *Sac City, Iowa Established 1855*, p. 137)

General William Tecumseh Sherman

William Tecumseh Sherman (1820-1891) was one of eleven children of Charles Robert and Mary Hoyt Sherman. Charles, a justice on the Ohio Supreme Court, died unexpectedly in 1829, leaving his widow with little inheritance to raise her children.

Nine-year-old William was raised by Thomas Ewing, a neighbor, family friend, and attorney in Lancaster, Ohio. Ewing was a United States Senator and later appointed as first secretary of the Interior.

In spite of the significant challenges in early life, William T. Sherman was raised among many successful people. Older brother Charles Sherman followed in his father's footsteps and became a federal judge. Brother John served as a United States Senator, cabinet secretary, and authored the Sherman Anti-trust Act. Younger brother Hoyt Sherman became a very successful banker whose name is well known in Iowa as a prominent philanthropist and builder of Hoyt Sherman Place. (*Hoyt Sherman Place History*)

W. T. Sherman began his military training as a 16-year-old West Point Cadet. His military career took him to California, Missouri, Louisiana, New York, and Kansas prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. His personal views strongly supported a solid Union, yet he sympathized with slave owners in the South. Throughout the War Between the States, Sherman fought at Bull Run, Paducah, Shiloh, Memphis, Vicksburg, Chattanooga, and Knoxville. In Atlanta, Sherman was pushed to rescind his order to evacuate the city because of the hardships for women and children. His 12 September 1864 response to the request for leniency summarizes his love of country, desire for peace, and ultimately his compassion for all people.

You cannot qualify war in harsher terms than I will. War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it; and those who brought war into our country deserve all the curses and maledictions a people can pour out. I know I had no hand in making this war, and I know I will make more sacrifices today than any of you to secure peace. But you cannot have peace and a division of our country. If the United States submits to a division now, it will not stop, but will go on until we reap the fate of Mexico, which is eternal war [...]

I want peace, and believe it can only be reached through union and war, and I will ever conduct war with a view to perfect and early success. But, my dear sirs, when peace does come, you may call on me for anything. Then will I share with you the last cracker, and watch with you to shield your homes and families against danger from every quarter. (Letter by Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman to the Mayor and City Council of Atlanta, September 12, 1864)

Following the Civil War, Sherman worked for Reconstruction and ultimately became Commanding General of the United States Army in 1869. Sherman's career was checkered with disagreements with Secretaries of War, perhaps caused by his outspoken tendencies. His name was bantered about as a Republican candidate for the 1884 presidential election. "I will not accept if nominated and will not serve if elected" keenly summarized his political ambitions. (Sherman)

The men of Sac City Post No. 284 wasted no time in requesting permission to honor Sherman by renaming the Post "General Sherman Post;" in fact, the name change became official less than one month after the General's death. General Sherman Hall has served as a tribute to one of the foremost Civil War soldiers for more than 120 years.

Soldiers' Monument

About the time the local G.A.R. began planning for a meeting hall, members of the various G.A.R. posts in Sac County began planning for an imposing monument to

remember those who had served in the Civil War. Iowa code allowed for tax levies to erect monuments to honor Civil War Veterans. In the November, 1891, general election, Sac County voters approved a one mil levy to fund such a monument. The measure passed with 1587 votes for and 612 votes against the special tax for the monument. To put things in perspective, the one mil monument levy received 253 more votes of support than the 1/2 mil levy for the poor farm. (*Sac Sun*, 3 November 1891) The various G.A.R. organizations in Sac County voted to place the monument in the area south of the Sac County Court House. (*Sac Sun*, 22 November 1894)

A meeting of the posts [in Sac County] was held to appoint commissioners to superintend the erection of the monument. The Wall Lake and Odebolt posts chose Hon. A. B. Smith; the Sac City and Grant City posts, Hon. Phil. Schaller; and the Early and Schaller posts, Wm. Patterson. The commission organized by electing A. B. Smith chairman and Phil. Schaller secretary.

After advertising widely for bids, the contract was let last spring [1894] to Woods & McNeely Bros., of Marshalltown, Iowa, to construct a monument of Barre granite. Through the agency of Mr. Schwartz, of Storm Lake, a contract was made with Maurice J. Powers (*sic.*), the eminent sculptor of New York, to construct a copper bronze statue. The services of Hon. George D. Perkins, congressman from the Eleventh district, were also enlisted to secure the appropriation of four condemned cannon for the monument grounds. (*Sac Sun*, 22 November 1894)

The end result was a 19 foot tall granite and bronze monument, costing \$3472. Although some activities of General Sherman Post are not well-documented, there is no shortage of writings about the unveiling of the Soldiers' Monument.

Wednesday morning opened up auspiciously for a great day for the unveiling and dedication of the Soldiers' Monument. The hard wind which prevailed all day Tuesday, on Wednesday had subsided, and instead the sun shone brightly, making glad the hearts of our people who had labored so assiduously to make the exercises a success.

The business houses, offices and dwelling houses were elaborately decorated with bunting, making the city present the appearance of a Fourth of July celebration.

At an early hour wagon loads of farmers and their families began to arrive from the surrounding country, soon making our streets look like a Fourth of July gathering, and at eleven o'clock the excursion trains from Odebolt and Schaller arrived with hundreds of people from these towns and intervening points. These people were met at the depot by a committee of citizens and the procession, led by Chief Marshal Geo. M. Parker...was about four blocks in length, taking about ten minutes to pass a given point...

Upon arriving at the beautiful monument President Phil Schaller called the large crowd to order and, after music by the coronet band, introduced Comrade H. C. Nash who invoked the Divine blessing upon the assembled people and the day. He then introduced the fifer, I. A. Cory, who played the fife upon these identical grounds for the recruiting of volunteers in 1861...Hon. A. B. Smith, of Clinton Township, chairman of the monument commission, was then introduced, who, in few but appropriate words, presented the monument to the board of supervisors of Sac County...

After these exercises the people repaired to the opera house to listen to the dedicatory speech by Hon. Geo. D. Perkins, M. C. Hundreds, however, were turned away on account of the lack of room, the house being crowded from top to bottom...

It was a day long to be remembered in Sac City. (*Sac County Democrat*, 23 November 1894)

In spite of the grand celebration and outpouring of public support for the new monument, not everyone was totally pleased with the festivities. Elsewhere in the same edition of the *Sac County Democrat*, the editor cited promotions from *The Odebolt Chronicle*, *The Schaller Herald*, *The Wall Lake Blade*, and *The Sioux City Journal*, all of which gave far more attention to the Republican Congressman George Perkins than the unveiling of the monument itself. (It bears noting that Perkins was also editor of *The Sioux City Journal*.)

It looks as if getting Hon. Geo. D. Perkins here to deliver the address on the dedication of the monument was a political scheme of the g. o. p...Geo. D. Perkins was made the central figure, and not the occasion; and, by the way, while *his* praises were sounded on every person, we failed to hear a word of commendation for the generous democratic congress that gave us the cannon. (*Sac County Democrat*, 23 November 1894)

Not surprisingly, *The Sac Sun* responded with an acerbic pen the following week.

In its decrepitude the *Democrat* is becoming exceedingly whimsical and suspicious. It thinks it has discovered in the action of the monument commission which invited Congressman Perkins to speak at Sac City "a political scheme of the g.o.p."- just as if the Republicans really deemed it necessary to import a speaker to inform the people the Democratic party has all the symptoms of a political corpse...

"Generous Democratic Congress!" we will forget the stinginess which thou didst mete out pension money to suffering soldiers, we will forget the destruction and poverty caused by the meddling with the tariff -- an instrument of which thou wert totally ignorant -- we will forget these things and remember thee only for reluctantly permitting the people of Sac County to haul four useless cannon out of the people's navy yard and plant them in Sac City. (*Sac Sun*, 29 November 1894)

One can only imagine the turmoil that would have been caused if those who commissioned Maurice J. Power to execute the bronze statue had been aware of the artist's strong Democratic political leanings.

Public monuments were meant to yield resolution and consensus, not to prolong conflict. The impulse behind the public monument was an impulse to mold history into its rightful pattern. And history was supposed to be a chronicle of heroic accomplishments, not a series of messy disputes with unresolved outcomes...It is true that the *process* of commemoration often leads to conflict, not closure, because in defining the past we define our present. (Savage, p. 4)

Erecting Soldiers' Monument in Sac City was indeed a textbook example of a monument's leading to conflict as the country tried to define its present.

Maurice J. Power

Maurice J. Power (1838-1902) was born in County Cork, Ireland. He and his parents immigrated to the United States when he was 3 years old. Power began to study monumental stone sculpture with Robert Launitz when he was only twelve years old and continued in this profession for nearly 20 years.

In 1868 Maurice Power turned his attention to bronze sculpting and founding when he established the National Fine Art Foundry on East 25th Street in Manhattan. Among the notable pieces of bronze sculpture produced by the foundry were battle monuments at Trenton and Monmouth, New Jersey; Newburg, Albany and Buffalo, New York; Augusta, Maine; Manchester, New Hampshire; Clinton, Holyoke, Lawrence and Springfield, Massachusetts; and others in Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Georgia and North Carolina.

Power was very active in the Democratic Party. He was appointed Police Court Justice by Mayor Cooper; United States Shipping Commissioner for the Port of New York by President Cleveland; and Aqueduct Commissioner by Mayor R.A. Strong. (*New York Times*, 9 September 1902)

For the Soldiers' Monument in Sac City, Power cast a bronze soldier that appears to be an identical design to the one atop a monument in Ossining, New York.

Cannon in Monument Square

As previously mentioned, Congress appropriated four Civil War cannon to be placed in Monument Square. (See image 49, p. 72) They were originally placed facing out from each of the four corners of the square. Whether it was idle curiosity or absence of thought that caused Phil Schaller to fire one of the cannon to awaken the town on July 4, 1895, one will never know. The force of the cannon fire broke all the windows on the south side of the court house and many windows in the Main Street business district. (*Sac City, Iowa*, p. 19)

The cannon continued to guard Monument Square until Charles Hacke, editor of *The Sac Sun* published the following editorial:

All over the United States there are stationed in parks and public places, heavy cannons (*sic*) and tanks and guns of various sorts...So far as accomplishing anything worthwhile, they are of little value.

Now our government needs iron and steel...Millions of tons of good material are contained in these old relics and practically every bit of material may be used in the production of implements of war...

The people of the United States have never learned the necessity of sacrifice in time of emergency. Most of us have always been able to have most of the things we have wanted. But if these old cannon, these tanks and these old guns are needed for the production of implements of war necessary for the winning of this big scrap, then let's give these up willing and let's speed up the coming of victory. (*Sac Sun*, 3 September 1942)

Shortly after this editorial, Mr. Hacke and his friends supervised the removal of the cannon from Monument Square. In spite of the well-intentioned efforts, the cannon probably did little to aid the war effort; it is believed that at least two of the weapons

are now displayed in other war memorials. (Buckley) It would not be surprising if this were the case.

Recent historical studies indicate that the scrap drives were more important as morale boosters than in providing essential products for the war effort. But, the general public did get caught up in the patriotic enthusiasm...Sometimes they went too far in their collection of scrap metal. Many items were sent to the scrap pile which were later missed, including cannon, monuments, and other historical objects. (NebraskaStudies.org)

The void left by the cannon's departure was partially filled after World War II when four 105 mm Howitzers came from the federal government to replace the missing armaments. These guns remain on display in Monument Square.

American Legion and the American Legion Building

By the outbreak of World War I, Sac County's population was nearly 17,500. It is estimated that 870 Sac County men and women served in the military during the war. 40 of those men gave their lives in service to the country. (*Sac County, Iowa*) Five per cent of the population went to war, which was considerably less than the eight per cent who served in the Civil War. Nevertheless, the impact on the county was significant. Residents of Sac City and Sac County were extremely supportive of the war cause. Bond drives, Red Cross auctions, and even programs aimed at school children helped finance the war. Each of the four bond drives in Sac County was fully subscribed, with a total result of \$3,733,900 in sales. (Freese, p. 296) Although the success of bond sales may have been a testament to the residents' patriotism, it was also a testament to the tenacity of the drives' organizers.

The organization was so thorough that a statement of the worth of each individual in the county was tabulated and the apportionment for each person was figured according to wealth. Lists were given to the precinct workers, the drive was meticulously made, and each person was told the amount of bonds expected to be purchased. The method was 100% successful. However, in a very few cases, considerable "pressure" had to be used -- the extreme was painting the front of the house yellow. This method was also used when Germans refused to stop speaking their language in public. (Freese, p. 296)

The tremendous success of bond sales even led to the US Navy naming a boat the USS Sac City. All the war activities reflect the town's desire to support the country and those serving in its military.

After Armistice Day (11 November 1918) and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles (28 June 1919), the desire to honor all who had served in The Great War mirrored the earlier desire to honor those who had served in the Civil War.

A group of twenty officers who served in the American Expeditionary Forces (A.E.F.) in France in World War I is credited with planning the Legion. A.E.F. Headquarters asked these officers to suggest ideas on how to improve troop morale. One officer, Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., proposed an organization of veterans. In February, 1919, this group formed a temporary committee, and selected several hundred officers who had the confidence and respect of the whole army.

Then the first organization meeting took place in Paris in March, 1919, about 1000 officers and enlisted men attended. The meeting, known as the Paris Caucus, adopted a temporary constitution and the name "The American Legion." It also elected an executive committee to complete the organization work. It considered each soldier of the A.E.F. a member of the Legion. The executive committee named a subcommittee to organize veterans at home in the U.S.

The Legion held a second organizing caucus in St. Louis, MO in May, 1919. It completed the constitution and made plans for a permanent organization. It set up temporary headquarters in NY, NY and began its relief, employment and Americanism programs.

The American Legion was chartered by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic, mutual-help war-time veteran's organization. The American Legion is a community-service organization which now numbers nearly 3 million members – men and woman – nearly 15,000 American Legion Posts worldwide. These posts are organized into 55 Departments – one each for the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, France, Mexico and the Philippines. (*American Legion Brief History*)

United States Congress formally chartered the American Legion on 16 September 1919. American Legion Cantigny Post No. 195 in Sac City was organized and chartered 25 September 1919. (Phillips, *Sac City Iowa*, p. 141) The post was named in honor of the first offensive of WWI in which U. S. soldiers were involved: the Battle of Cantigny on 28 May 1918.

The post's first large project was to raise funds to erect a building that would not only honor those who had sacrificed their lives in WWI but also serve as a meeting hall for Cantigny Post. Memorials, gifts, and pledges soon gave the post \$28,000 to purchase land and build what would become the American Legion Hall. The post purchased a plot of ground overlooking the existing Monument Square from August and Lizzie Hunefeld on 12 June 1920 at a cost of \$5000. (Transfer Book H, p. 72) Photographic evidence shows a barn-like building on the property. (See images 38-39 p. 66-67)

For some reason, building a new meeting hall was delayed until 1922. The local newspaper ran the following announcement:

Cantigny Post No. 195, American Legion, has decided to get its plans in hand and put up its building the coming season. Low prices of material and labor and the necessity of having a home in order to keep up the interest of the boys in the post are the considerations that press for immediate building.

The general sentiment of the Post in the adjourned meeting of Friday evening was reflected in the action of the building committee on Monday evening. Marten & Sutherland of Storm Lake [Iowa], the architects, will be asked to have the plans ready to proceed with work as soon as the building season opens.

It is now planned to put up a building to cost not exceeding \$20,000, and there is every reason to believe that for such a sum as good a structure can be obtained as if \$30,000 or more had been expended at the time the funds were raised [1920]. (*Sac Sun*, 9 February 1922)

The contracts for the building were let at the beginning of May, 1922. A. C. Brown Construction Company of Spirit Lake was awarded the general construction contract for \$17,420. Spencer Construction was awarded the heating and plumbing contract for \$2,300. W. A. Irvine of Sac City won the wiring contract for \$270. (*Sac Sun*, 11 May 1922)

The building will be constructed according to the plans previously announced. It will be 50x60 feet with lobby, lounging rooms, billiard room, auxiliary room, card room, coat rooms, office and toilets, besides the boiler rooms occupying the first floor--fuel and ash pits on the outside at the west. On the second floor will be an auditorium 32x58 feet with ladies' room, kitchen and gentlemen's toilets.

The structure will be two stories in height with a fine colonial porch on the north. The face brick selected is a smooth brownish red, manufactured at Danbury, Ill. (*Sac Sun*, 11 May 1922)

It is an interesting coincidence that James N. Miller, one of the founders of General Sherman Post of the G.A.R. and first publisher of *The Sac Sun*, died on the same day the contract was let for the new American Legion Hall. The passing of the torch from one generation of veterans to the next could have had no greater sign.

Construction of the building progressed relatively quickly, and the American Legion Hall was almost completed by its November, 1922, deadline. At the time of the dedication photos, windows were not fully installed. Nevertheless, the building was cause for a great celebration that bore striking similarities to the dedication of Soldier's Monument 28 years earlier. A grand parade with more than 1000 people, assembled dignitaries, and nearly a score of decorated floats set the tone of fervent patriotism as the hall was dedicated on 23 November 1922.

Amid a patriotic enthusiasm akin to that in the stirring days of the war, the beautiful new \$25,000 American Legion building in Sac City was dedicated last Thursday with appropriate ceremony.

"It is given so that it may stand in Sac City as a fitting memorial in honor of the boys who did not come back and that it may be a fitting memorial to the self-sacrifice and devotion of the boys who did come back" said Malcolm Currie, president of the Kiwanis Club, in presenting the building in behalf of the citizens of Sac City and vicinity. "With it goes the best wishes, the good will, the heartfelt appreciation, and the Godspeed of this entire community." (*Sac Sun*, 30 November 1922)

Raymond Hamilton, commander of Cantigny Post, accepted the building and promised that the Legionnaires would treat the building with the utmost respect.

We are deeply grateful for what you have done for us. We not only want to express it in words. We want to live it and make you know we are grateful. We are not forgetful of the responsibility that we accept along with this gift. We want to keep the building as a memorial as much as a clubroom or a place of pleasure. Every member has pledged that it will be kept clean. (*Sac Sun*, 30 November 1922)

Hamilton further stated that the post had unanimously voted that any member caught in the building with "intoxicating liquors or caught gambling would be summarily expelled from membership." (*Sac Sun*, 30 November 1922)

The first speaker of the day, Mr. R. Files of Fort Dodge, Iowa, echoed many of the political sentiments for which the G.A.R. lobbied thirty years earlier.

The speaker referred to the aims of the American Legion, and to the big, constructive program that is theirs, which he believes is worth of the support of the nation. "The organization started clean," Mr. Files said, "and it is going to keep clean," he declared emphatically, and a rousing applause greeted his assertion.

"We are going to see that the less fortunate buddies who came back get what they are entitled to, if we have to fight. We want for them the very best America can give. Isn't it too bad that veterans' wounds must be bound with red tape," he added. "The responsibility rests upon every man and woman," the speaker declared. (*Sac County Bulletin*, 29 November 1922)

Following the speeches, people had the opportunity to tour the new Legion Hall. *The Sac County Bulletin's* description of the building is surprisingly complete and detailed.

The building is 50x60 of colonial design, and is constructed of tile and red faced brick with white mortar. A portico with second floor balcony is set off to fine advantage by imposing white pillars 20 inches in diameter...

Passing through the main entrance, one enters into a vestibule and then on into the lobby, a room 16 feet wide. On either side is a colonial stairway.

Passing on through the French doors one finds himself in a very comfortable lounging room, 34x17 feet. A fireplace will add a cheerful atmosphere to this room. On the west is a library, 10 1/2 x 11 1/2 feet, and an office. A telephone booth is one of the provisions the thoughtful committee included in the plans. On the east side is a card room, 11 1/2 x 12 1/2, connecting with the billiard room, 19 1/2 x 30 feet. A toilet is also connected with this room.

A home for the American Legion Auxiliary is also provided on the main floor. and faces the front of the building. A cloak room and toilet is provided.

The second floor plans include an assembly room, 32x58 feet, and a kitchen, fully equipped with cupboards, tables, and sinks. There is also a dressing room for the ladies.

The floors of the building are of hard maple and will be polished. The finish is white ivory, with mahogany doors.

According to the chairman of the building committee, the home will be ready for occupancy shortly after New Year's. It will at once become the center for social affairs. (*Sac County Bulletin*, 29 November 1922)

The exact source of funding for the building is a bit hazy; Cantigny Post purchased the property and let the contract, yet the building was presented to them on behalf of the citizens of Sac City. An examination of city and county minutes give no indication that there was any governmental involvement. The most likely scenario is that the presentation of the building to Cantigny Post was symbolic of the Legion's

appreciation of the community support that led to the construction of American Legion Hall.

During the 1920's, dances were held in the building each Saturday night. The famed orator William Jennings Bryan spoke from the American Legion Hall's balcony, no doubt espousing his strong views advocating peace and prohibition while attacking the theory of evolution. (Phillips, *Reflections*, p. 193)

As the years passed and The Great Depression took its toll, Cantigny Post found it increasingly difficult to maintain their hall. Donations for a bricks and mortar project are much easier to obtain than donations for day-to-day upkeep. By 1938, Cantigny Post deeded their building to the City of Sac City and Jackson Township for the sum of one dollar, at which time it began to be known as the Community Building. As a condition of the sale, Cantigny Post would be able to meet in the Community Building free of charge as long as the post existed.

In 1939, Works Project Administration (WPA) workers devoted time to the building at the same time they erected the Stone Shelter House in Chautauqua Park Historic District (also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.) Judging by the dedication speech, the American Legion Hall must have fallen into disrepair.

We are here and now dedicating this beautiful shelter house and a very useful Community Building. The one a complete new structure; the other repaired, reconstructed, and redecorated so that it has been reclaimed from a useless shell into a beautiful and desirable public building. (*Sac Sun*, 29 June 1939)

For many years, the Community Building was widely used. Jackson Township maintained the east room on the main floor as a township hall where meetings, voting, and even magistrate court were held. Sac City Federated Women's Club utilized the south room with the fireplace as its regular meeting place. Boy Scouts met in the upper level and even in one of the basement rooms. Kiwanis held weekly meetings on the upper level. The American Legion used the northwest room as their home and also occupied one of the basement rooms for storage of guns and other equipment. The building was frequently rented for family gatherings, showers, and receptions.

In 1963, there arose a disagreement between the City of Sac City and the officials of Jackson Township. The two entities could not agree how to divide the custodian's salary or who had the right to terminate the custodian's contract. Kirk Savage's assertion "It is true that the *process* of commemoration often leads to conflict, not closure, because in defining the past we define our present" came to new light. (Savage, p. 4) The city and township wanted to sell the building; Cantigny Post insisted it could not be sold. The courts ultimately ruled that all parties should learn to work together. The court did determine that the ownership and cost division for the building should be 55% city and 45% township. As time went on, and rentals of the building became less frequent, neither body could afford to maintain the stately Community Building. By the year 2000, laws had changed so perpetual covenants on property were no longer binding. The courts ruled that the building could be sold as long as proceeds were placed in a trust fund with the interest going to Cantigny Post to help pay for a meeting site. Towne House, Inc. purchased the property at auction for \$31,000.

In the process of converting the Community Building to a restaurant, there were a few structural changes to the building. The wall between the south west room and large

southern meeting room was moved several feet to allow for a larger kitchen. An additional rest room was added in the east room and the door to the restroom that had been in the vestibule was moved to the east room. Other than covering two windows on the south west corner and adding a sign to the balcony rail, there were no actual changes to the exterior. Refinishing wood floors, painting, and redecorating returned the building to much of its earlier splendor. Since the 2001 sale, the building has had two other owners. Frozen pipes caused some significant water damage to the floor in the west room which is being repaired using flooring from a nearby 1910 home that is being razed.

Through more than 90 years of existence, involving financial struggles, court cases, and a multitude of people using the building, Sac City's monument to those who lost their lives in WW I continues to stand and proudly watch over the Monument Square, fondly remembering its role in defining the past as the current owners work to define the present and future.

Band Stand

Photographic evidence shows a square band stand on the east end of Monument Square. The structure was built of concrete block and elevated about five feet above the listeners who sat on benches around a fountain in the square. The bandstand was in place by 1904. The city's municipal band and the local cornet band used the facility for weekly concerts during the summer. A pond west of the band stand was a popular attraction for visitors. Benches allowed listeners to sit in relative comfort while listening to the bands. By 1920, a roof covered the structure. The band stand was removed prior 1940. The location is discernible to this day when the grass grows unevenly and outlines the foundation of the former band stand. (See image 10, p. 47)

Fountain

Photographic evidence also shows a circular fountain located between the band stand and Soldiers' Monument. Some local residents remember fondly the fountain's spray while attending band concerts on a hot summer day. The fountain was probably removed at the time the band stand was razed.

Veterans' Monuments

Veterans of Foreign Wars (V.F.W.) Post 590 of Sac City erected three rose-colored granite monuments in Monument Square. The first, and largest, commemorates those who gave their lives in battle during World War I and World War II. Two smaller monuments of similar stone commemorate those who served in the Korean War and Viet Nam Conflict. All three monuments are placed along in the south east quadrant of Monument Square. One was erected after the period of significance for the area, but they all certainly continue the community's tradition of honoring those who risked or sacrificed their lives to protect the country. Placing the additional monuments in the area can be seen as a continuation of what was begun by the G.A.R. decades before. Although Kirk Savage's words were aimed at Civil War monuments, they hold true for all war. "Monuments attempt to mold a landscape of collective memory to conserve what is worth remembering and discard the rest." (Savage, p. 4)

Conclusion

Sac City's Monument Square has helped generations "conserve what is worth remembering." The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of late nineteenth-century areas designed to honor veterans. The combination of G.A.R. meeting hall, statuary, American Legion Hall, and memorial park creates an historically significant area.

Its association with the G.A.R. provides an important link to a group that has made a broad contribution to our history. As an area that commemorates the contributions of General W. T. Sherman, it continues to tell the story begun in his memoirs.

Nearly ten years have passed since the close of the civil war in America, and yet no satisfactory history thereof is accessible to the public...What is now offered is not designed as a history of the war, or even as a complete account of all the incidents in which the writer bore a part, but merely his recollection of events, corrected by a reference to his own memoranda, which may assist the future historian when he comes to describe the whole, and account for the motives and reasons which influenced some of the actors in the grand drama of war.

I trust a perusal of these pages will prove interesting to the survivors, who have manifested so often their intense love of the "cause" which moved a nation to vindicate its own authority; and, equally so, to the rising generation, who therefrom may learn that a country and government such as ours are worth fighting for, and dying for, if need be.

WILLIAM T. SHERMAN,
General

St. Louis, Missouri, January 21, 1875. (*General Sherman's Memoirs*, preface)

The association with the American Legion creates another link to an organization that has made a broad contribution to our history. In Sac City's Monument Square, one finds a link between the G.A.R. and American Legion that characterizes a similarity in their goals of political activism for veterans' rights and support. Both groups erected lasting monuments in Sac City. The amalgamation of their work becomes more powerful than any of the individual resources.

Monuments remain powerful because they are built to last long after the particular voices of their makers have ceased, long after the events of their creation have been forgotten...What power do these monuments to the Civil War era still have in today's world? Times have changed, yet the monuments, for the most part, remain. Throughout the country common-soldier monuments have been supplemented by newer monuments to more recent wars or simply by new inscriptions that commemorate a seemingly never-ending record of sacrifice and death. (Savage, p. 211)

Sac City's Monument Square continues General Sherman's call for all to contribute "by their acts to the honor and glory of the country" while reminding us of "a seemingly never-ending record of sacrifice and death." It is an historically significant reminder of an important era in United States history that continues to speak to all who visit.