

BRANT CEMETERY CANNON

Stands as stark reminder of Memorial Days - Past & Present



Over the past many years, the observance of Memorial Day has changed. Most notable is the fact that the day is now an occasion for honoring all those who have died in all our nation's wars, from the Revolutionary War to Afghanistan. The observance has also been extended to include honoring civilian personnel, as well as military. Moreover, the date of Memorial Day is now fixed by law as the last Monday in May. It was President Lyndon Johnson who signed that legislation on June 28, 1968, ironically 100 years after the first Memorial Day.

The cannon in the photo was placed on its base in the Brant Cemetery on May 20, 1899, and I am sure that all those who visit the cemetery on Memorial Day, or in fact any day, will perhaps, as generations did before them, wonder how it got there. Well, the story was recently uncovered in the archives of the

Brant/Farnham Historical Society and it makes for interesting reading.

The story begins in March 1893, when the sons and daughters of several Civil War veterans met at the home of E. G. Fenton in Brant to organize an association to raise money for a monument in memory of the soldiers and sailors from the Town of Brant who had enlisted in the Union Army. Officers and trustees were chosen, but nothing was done about the cannon until four years later in 1897, when several association members, led by E.G. Fenton, M.L. Clark, A.S. Parker and Seba Velzy traveled to Angola in a horse-drawn wagon to pick up the cannon and transport it to the Brant Cemetery. The cannon and one solid shot of 100 pounds was a gift from the federal government. The transportation costs to the local association was \$20.10.

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It took two more years, but finally on May 10, 1899, several G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic) veterans, led again by messieurs Fenton and Clark, met at the cemetery to build a foundation for the cannon. The cost was \$45. Ten days later, the cannon was mounted on the base and as a large crowd looked on, it was on May 30, 1899 that the James Ayer Post No. 202 hosted dedication services held at the site. The group photo showing the Civil War veterans from Brant and Angola was taken in 1892 in front of Froehley's Furniture Store in Angola (It's interesting that at the turn of the century, there were also Froehley Furniture Stores in both the villages of Blasdell and Hamburg).

During the Civil War, there were several father and son teams who fought side-by-side in the Union Army. Such was the case with Morgan L. Clark (first row, sixth man from left in photo) and his father,

Charles S. Clark. Morgan was just 16 years old when he entered the service in 1861. His father, Charles, was 43. Following the wars, Morgan became very active in the movement to honor the memory of veterans from the war, and later became secretary of The Soldiers and Sailors Monument Association of Brant, Erie County, NY.

Photo – the group photo below was provided by Clark L. Borngraber, great-grandson of M.L. Clark. Material for this story was provided by Patty Friend, Town of Brant historian, and Bev Wasmund and Josie Battaglia, Village of Farnham historians.

*This column is written each week by Hamburg Town Historian
Jim Baker*



In the photo L to R First row: Sam Hobson, Mr. Velsy, George Britting, Ed Berry, Charles Harper, Morgan L. Clark and C.C. Robinson. Second row: William Stocking, A.E. Diamond, John Horton, Louis Ludlow, L. Bundy, F. Phelps, David Warrior, Jessie Turkey and Jacob Friend. Third row: William Meyers, Joseph Froehley, J. B. Miller, Robert Taggert, William Townsend and Oliver Silverheels.