

“In Defence of the Union” & More

by Marion M. Dumond

Former Town of Wawarsing Historian
& Ellenville Public Library Director (Retired)

His name was Pelataiah Ward and he was pastor of the *Methodist Episcopal Church* of Ellenville when the War Between the States broke out in 1861. Prior to that, he had studied law in Poughkeepsie, but “was converted under the preaching of Rev. J. B. Merwin.”

“He was moved to listen to his country’s call and under his impassioned appeal, some 130 men rallied to the standard within ten days.” The record shows that he enlisted about the 25th of September, 1861, at Kingston with the rank of Captain in Company E of the 20th Regiment of the New York State Militia or the 80th volunteers. How it could be an “either/or” is puzzling, but that is the record.

“Captain Ward was a brave officer and died defending the colors of his Regiment at the second battle of Bull Run. He died about August 30, 1862,” less than a year after his enlistment.

A long sketch in the *Ellenville Journal* of June 6, 1863, noted that “He intended to accompany them (the 130 who enlisted because of his appeal) as chaplain but they demanded that he lead them as captain...”

This is the information about only one Civil War soldier from this area whose battlefield exploits are recorded in an impressive volume in the Local History Collection of the *Ellenville Public Library & Museum*. The cover of the volume reads “Grand Army of the Republic, Department of New York,” and the title is “Personal War Sketches of the Members of Ward Post No. 191 of Ellenville.” Many more local men are included.

The Preface describes the purpose of the volume: “This volume is designed to contain the record of the war services (1861-1865) of the living and deceased members of this Post; the living to certify to the statement of their services, and the facts relating to the dead to be certified to by the Post Historian.”

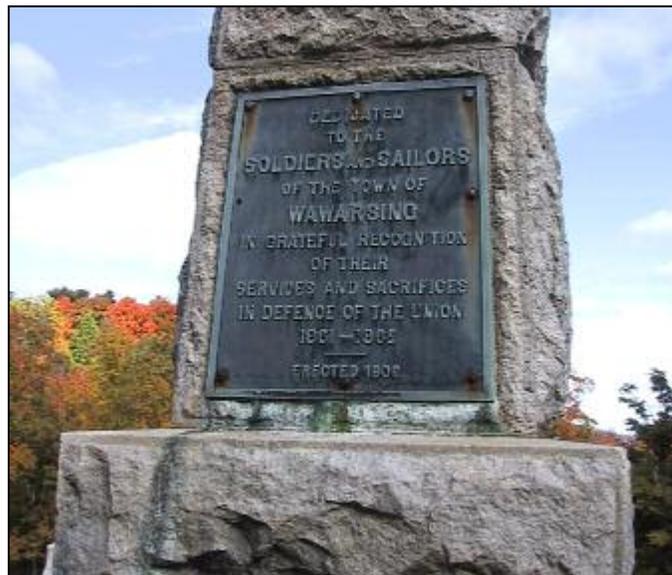
More than 200 sketches are included, a list of some very familiar local family names: Hiram H., Nat, Thomas M., David B., Peter, and B. H. Terwilliger; Dwight Divine; Harrison Tice, Joseph Goldsmith; Cornelius Countryman; Thomas Thornton; Andrew T. Newkirk; Samuel Geary; J. B. and Moses Burlison; Levi VanKeuren; Oscar B. Seaman; James VanVleet; and John Rippert, to name only a few. The sketches are in no particular order, but there is a three-page index, also in no particular order.

The preface continues, “When the post shall have surrendered its charter, this Volume can be preserved by the local municipality if a suitable depository for safe keeping is provided, or it can be preserved in the archives of the State.” Fortunately for us, the *Ellenville Public Library* proved to be a suitable depository.

“The Volume is respectfully dedicated to the last surviving comrade of the Post.”

The last three surviving comrades were Levi VanKeuren, Joseph Clark, and Charles Michel, all dying between Memorial Day services in 1937 and those in 1938. Levi VanKeuren was the last of the trio to pass away, thus bringing to a close Ellenville’s personal association with the “War of the Rebellion.”

The GAR book of war sketches was presented to Ward Post No. 191 by Mrs. John F. Norbury in memory of her father, Phineas Stoddard, in 1897. All that information



is beautifully recorded on the cover in gold leaf.

The book of war sketches and the **Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument** (see cover) in the **Fantinekill Cemetery** are our two memorials to our veterans of the Civil War. As early as February 1865, there was talk of a plan to erect a monument on **Sam’s Point** to honor the soldiers of Ulster, Orange and Sullivan Counties who had died or been wounded “in the service of the Union against the Rebellion.”

The plan ultimately fell through, but the idea of some memorial to Civil War veterans kept surfacing. Every once in a while, *The Soldiers’ Monument Association* would reorganize in one form or another.

In 1898 a new organization was set up: *The Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument Association of Wawarsing*. By 1902, they agreed to adapt a memorial to the funds that had accumulated through the years. The *Fantinekill Cemetery Association* had dedicated land for such a monument in 1872 and, after looking at several other locations, the *Monument Association* chose **Monument Hill** in the *Cemetery*. The monument is a handsome shaft made of Shawangunk Mountain stone, erected at a total cost of \$972.50.

The plaque reads: DEDICATED TO THE SOLDIERS & SAILORS OF THE TOWN OF WAWARSING IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION OF THEIR SERVICES AND SACRIFICES IN DEFENCE OF THE UNION 1861-1865. ERECTED 1906.

The approaching observance of Veterans Day triggered the research into local tributes to our veterans, and a personal affection and respect for the war sketches in the GAR volume, plus admiration of the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument, led to the choice of the Civil War for this column, but it is important to remember that Veterans Day actually began as commemoration of the armistice ending World War I, the “war to end all wars,” on November 11, 1918.

For many years, November 11th was Armistice Day, beginning with the first anniversary in 1919. President Woodrow Wilson issued a proclamation which said, in part, “To us in America the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country’s service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations.”

On Nov. 11, 1921, the remains of a US soldier, in a 