



BELLEVUE MEMORIAL PARK ONTARIO CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

The Civil War Union Soldier Statue

At the East end of Bellevue Memorial Park, between rows of graves where the park's entrance used to be, sits a mound of rocks and a Civil War cannon; all that remains of the Civil War Memorial which once supported the 1908 copper statue depicting a Union soldier. After years of repeated vandalism and weather-related damage, with his head split in two places and dents and holes in his uniform, the Union Soldier statue had to be retired to the park's storage garage, to protect it from further damage.

The story of the Union Soldier began with the anonymous contribution from a widow of a Union veteran in Ohio. The widow arranged to have the statue cast in copper in Salem, Ohio, by the W.H. Mullins Co., and then had it shipped to Ontario. The base of the monument, (the mound of rocks along with the Civil War cannon) was paid for by the Women's Relief Corps of the Grand Army of the Republic at a cost of \$250.00. The statue was placed on top of the base, and was dedicated on "Decoration Day," May 30th, 1908, 43 years after the Civil War.



In 1953, 45 years after the dedication, the monument was in need of some upkeep, and another organization, Podrasnik Camp No.15 of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, restored the statue and the base, and the monument was re-dedicated.

In the 1970's, the statue was targeted by vandals who shot BB's at the soldier and even pushed it off the base. Damages to the statue resulted in the loss of the rifle the soldier was holding, as well the bayonet that was attached to his belt. In 1988, Bellevue Memorial Park once again put the statue back on its base, and constructed a wrought iron fence around it, only to find the Union soldier knocked off again two weeks later.

Since his relocation to the storage garage, several inquiries have been made about the Union soldier, one of them from the grandson of the W. H. Mullins Co., asking the cemetery to donate him to a museum in Ohio. There have also been inquiries about the monument's base, but as explained by previous cemetery manager Bud Christian, "I tell them that they are not mine to give away. The community put this monument up, and it's not the cemetery's prerogative to donate or sell any part of it." Repairing the Union soldier and returning him to his original location on the base could cost as much as \$30,000.00, which is prohibitive for Bellevue Memorial Park, a nonprofit facility.

Most recently, it was decided to bring the soldier out of storage again so that visitors and families could see the 102 year old statue, but because returning him to the original location in the park was not an option, the soldier has been carefully placed behind glass in the entryway of Bellevue Mausoleum. Here he stands proud once again as a reminder of all those who fought and died for our country. He helps us to remember that our soldiers lives have great meaning as we reflect on the liberties we enjoy.

