

The Eagle Has Landed in Iola

IOLA - The American Legion Sheveland-Taylor Post 14 started a contest in early 2020 to create a Patriotic Mural for the Veterans Memorial Park, located at 200 N. Main Street in Iola.

Entry was open to people of all ages from Iola or Scandinavia with the winner receiving \$500. The winning Mural is painted on the back of the large concrete monument with the State of Wisconsin on the front and the mural facing Lake Iola.

The area where the mural is located has been luminated with two LED light fixtures, with a sidewalk that encircles the six grey panels of the Memorial Monument and the new mural. This will allow the American Legion to engrave additional names on the back of the current six panels of the Memorial Monument.

Mary Gipp of Iola, submitted the winning mural, voted on by the members of Post 14. She served in the U.S Air Force for 10 years and retired as a staff sergeant.

The mural shows a bald eagle named Old Abe, with a United States Flag in the background.

Everything came to a complete halt when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The mural was finally painted during the first week of November when the temperatures reached into the 60's and 70's.

Who was Old Abe? In early 1861 Chief Sky a Chippewa Indian, captured a young bald eagle near the Chippewa River in Chippewa County. He was subsequently traded to local farmer, Daniel McCann, for a bushel of corn, who in turn sold him to the 8th Wisconsin's Company C for \$2.50.

Company C, named the eagle after President Abraham Lincoln and designed a special perch on which they carried the bird into battle. Old Abe participated in numerous battles during the Civil War and quickly became legendary, screaming and spreading his wings at the enemy.

Confederate troops called him the Yankee Buzzard and made several attempts to capture him. but never succeeded.

Several times Old Abe lost feathers to bullets and saw his handlers get shot out from under him. When passing by, Generals Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman, and William Rosecrans were known to doff their hats to the eagle.

In 1864, Old Abe returned to Wisconsin with several veterans who did not reenlist. Nevertheless, he remained famous and was invited to the 1880 Grand Army of the Republic National Convention; the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; other events. When not at public events, his caretaker kept him in the Wisconsin State Capitol.

Old Abe died from smoke inhalation in a fire at the Wisconsin State Capitol in 1881. His body was mounted and remained a centerpiece of the Capitol. The mount, along with most of the capitol building, was destroyed by a second fire in 1904.

A replica of Old Abe presides over the Wisconsin State Assembly Chamber and Old Abe is on the Wisconsin Memorial at Vicksburg National Military Park.

Photo Caption.

American Legion Post 14 member, Lyle Mork presents Mary Gipp with a \$500 check for her winning entry of the patriotic mural that was recently added to Iola's Veteran Memorial Park. *Holly Neumann Photo*



Old Abe and Color Guard of the 8th Wisconsin's Company C, at Vicksburg, July 1863: from left to right: Ed Homaston, Christopher Darius Gorman, Sgt. Ambrose Armitage, unidentified and Myron Riggs.