

Ceremony to salute Civil War heroes

By MIKE PERKINS
Editor

A ceremony Saturday afternoon at General Slack Park will honor the Civil War military man for whom the park is named, as well as more than 1,800 other Huntington County men who wore the blue of the Union Army during the Civil War.

The marker has been erected a few yards off the main Guilford Street entrance to the park. It is a joint project of the Huntington Parks and Recreation and the Champion Hill Camp 17, the local chapter of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. The Sons raised \$3,600 for the marker and the Parks Department provided the labor and materials for the concrete base, as well as the landscaping.

Gib Young, the Huntington businessman and the Indiana commander of the SUVCW, will emcee Saturday's dedication, which will feature several color guards, members of the Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, and SUVCW artillery units.

"Even if you're not at the ceremony you'll hear us if you're downtown for Heritage Days," Young said with a laugh. "That's the direction the cannons will be pointed."

The five Huntington County residents who attained the rank of colonel or higher in the Union Army are mentioned on the marker, as are three enlisted soldiers from the county with "notable" war experiences. The center plaque on the west face of the monument salutes the more than 1,800 Huntington County residents who served in the army, and the 208 among that number who died in the war.

Young spearheaded the effort to erect the marker, which he said was originally envisioned as "something a little more grand and unique" than the final design, which he said represents "kind of a compromise" addressing the concerns of cost, location, and security from vandalism that the Sons group and Park Board shared. At a national SUVCW meeting last fall, Young saw samples of bronze tablets crafted by a Chicago company and felt they would be ideal for the text on the markers. The shape of the concrete base — approximately 3 1/2 feet high, 6 feet long and 3 feet deep — was "reminiscent of the tent of the ordinary soldier," Young explained.

"We had looked at the Courthouse for the monument but we preferred it to be in General Slack Park because of the Civil War connection," he



Photo contributed

"The Company Singers," comprised of members of the Champion Hill Camp 17 of the Sons of the Union Veterans of the Civil War, perform last month in Memphis, Mo. The group will be part of Saturday's Civil War monument dedication. From left are Eric Fricke, Jim Kline, Don Morgan, Rick Henly, Gary Bugge, and Rich McConnell. The singers were the opening act at a Memphis community playhouse production of "An Evening With the Lincolns."

The names on the plaques

In addition to Brevet Major Gen. James R. Slack, individuals named on the marker plaques are:

- **Col. Cyrus L. Briant**, colonel of the 88th Indiana Regiment
- **Col. George Pride**, chief engineer on the staff of Gen. Ulysses S. Grant from November 1861 to July 1863
- **Col. Robert G. Morrison**, colonel of the 34th Indiana Regiment of Volunteers
- **Brevet Col. Samuel L. Zent**, lieutenant colonel of the 13th Indiana Regiment
- **Lesell Long**, a member of the 13th Indiana Volunteer Infantry, author of "12 Months in Andersonville"
- **Francis Huff**, wounded three times as a member of three different units, including the 13th Indiana and 19th Indiana infantry
- **Edwin Sexton**, a member of the 130th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, the last living Union soldier in Huntington County, "still remembered" by people living in 2005.

added.

A major donation toward the marker's cost came from the national SUVCW organization. Funding also came from contributions at various appearances of the Champion Hill Camp's "Company Singers," which will perform a couple of Civil War-era songs at Saturday's ceremony.

One tablet honors Brevet Major Gen. James R. Slack (a brevet general was one who had the title and command responsibility of a general, but was paid at the level of a lower-ranking officer). Slack, identified on the tablet as "School Teacher, Canal Builder, County Auditor, Attorney,

State Senator, Ardent Abolitionist and War Democrat," commanded many Huntington County soldiers in a unit of the 47th Indiana Regiment of Volunteers known as "Slack's Brigade." The brigade was instrumental in crucial Union victory at the Battle of Champion Hill, Miss., on May 16, 1863. The defeated rebel forces retreated into Fort Vicksburg, 16 miles to the west, on bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River. The re-

sulting Union siege of Vicksburg essentially ended Confederate resistance in the West, something Young says could not have happened had the South prevailed at Champion Hill.

"Even the lowliest Union private knew that after that battle, if the North had the will to win, it would win the war," Young said.

When Slack returned to civilian life after the war, his home was on the site that eventually became Huntington High School, later Crestview Middle School and now General Slack Park.

No pets allowed at festival events

Pets will be banned from downtown Huntington during Heritage Days.

Heritage Days organizers pushed for — and received — a city ordinance last year that would allow them to ban pets from festival events. Signs will be posted in The Marketplace and midway areas banning pets from those areas. Service animals will be permitted.

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