

ION
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## Boalsburg fights for Memorial Day recognition

**By DAVID KINNEY**  
Associated Press writer

**BOALSBURG** — There's nothing like bronze to help solidify this town's claim to be birthplace of Memorial Day, James V. Dearing figures.


Dearing, a Civil War buff, is raising money for a statue to honor three women who came to a cemetery in this Centre County town in October 1864 to lay flowers on the graves of soldiers. By 2000, he hopes to have the town's claim written in stone, so to speak.

The final arbiter, the federal government, officially credits Waterloo, N.Y., with the first organized Memorial Day festivities. And several other towns have staked claims to the honor, from Columbus, Ga., and Vicksburg, Miss., to Petersburg, Va., and Columbia, Miss.

But as Dearing duly notes, no other place bothered to put a statue up.

"They just can't beat our date here," Dearing said Monday morning at Boalsburg's Memorial Day celebrations. The former state trooper was wearing the sword and great coat of a Union lieutenant colonial, cigar dangling from his bearded mouth. "This'll be the final stamp. They can claim all they want. This is where it started."

The statue would be carved in the likenesses of Emma Hunter, Elizabeth Myers and Sophie Keller. Myers accompanied Hunter to decorate the grave of her father, Dr. Reuben Hunter. Along the way that October day, they ran across Keller,



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**William Mayer of the East Berlin VFW Post 8896 places a flag on the memorial of Vietnam veteran Green Bere James Wyneford Welsh during the Memorial Day Program at Spring Grove Cemetery in Spring Grove on Sunday.**

where they volunteered to turn a glass- and trash-strewn lot into a little veterans memorial park made in honor of three "local boys" who died in the Vietnam war, the Korean war and World War II, respectively.

Every day, about a dozen World War II veterans can be seen sweeping the grounds, tending the gardens and resting in the shade behind the plaques, flags and freshly painted benches.

A few hundred people attended a mass at the park Monday morning.

"It speaks volumes to what people thought and continue to think about the people who died from this neighborhood," said Hank Fox, a cousin to the soldier who the park is named after — Patrick Ward. "This here is a source of pride."

In Pittsburgh, members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars 4040 — which members say is the area's most active black chapter — gathered at a monument on a street corner in the city's Homewood section. The monument includes lines of flags and a three-column stone statue for those who died.

Nathaniel Young, a staff sergeant who served in the U.S. Army's 25th Division in the Korean War, said Memorial Day is a reminder that people need to find better ways than war to settle their differences.

Retired Lt. Col. George N. Char ton Jr. was stationed in Algiers in World War II as one of the Army Buffalo Soldiers, blacks who fought in segregated units.

He remembers being refused service in the South and Pittsburgh as a young man because of his color and is disappointed that the country he served hasn't done more to end racism and youth violence. But he is not giving up.

"I'm 76," he said. "I've got 20 more years here. I'm hoping that my grandchildren won't have to deal with it."

**at the cemetery to honor her son, Amos.**

The life-size bronze statue, to be sculpted by Lorraine Garety-Jacobs of Dallastown, would stand between the driveway to the Boalsburg Cemetery and business Route 322. Evergreen bushes would circle the figures.

The only question now, of course, is money. Dearing needs more than \$150,000 to build it, and so far, the fund raisers haven't been able to hit that home run. At the town's Memorial Day celebration Monday, Dear-

ing and his friends sold prints, T-shirts and sweatshirts with a painting of the three women.

So far, they've raised \$15,000, and he said two county tourism groups have also pledged to help the cause.

Across other parts of the state, few have heard of Dearing's cause. But many continue to practice the tradition of the Boalsburg women.

For the past 31 years, residents in one North Philadelphia neighborhood have led a procession down to the corner of their rowhouse-lined block on Memorial Day. It is here


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