



Pages in Time



Individual Supporters:
Lyn & Joe Rowden, Fairfield

Togus National Cemetery: hallowed ground for a diversity of soldiers

by Lyn Rowden

Togus National Cemetery is the only national cemetery in Maine. Its 31.2 acres in Chelsea is divided into two plots, East and West, and contains more than 4000 graves.

The cemetery covers land which was once a hotel and resort known as Togus Springs, Togus being the Algonquian word for mineral water. The resort failed due to the Civil War and its owner died. The federal government purchased the property and established a care facility for veterans. The first veterans were admitted on November 10, 1866.

The West Cemetery officially opened in 1867. Major Cutler, who was in charge of Togus Soldiers Home at that time, said he preferred that attractive hilltop to the old graveyard established in 1865. The first burial was on April 20, 1867, when the bodies of six veterans who had died at the home were moved to the new location. An enlightened thinker for his day, Major Cutler believed the factors of color, rank and religion were of no importance, so the dead were buried side by side since they had been soldiers together.

In 1889 General Stephenson planned the Memorial Monument in the

West Cemetery. One veteran living at Togus was a marble worker. He designed and helped build the monument. With the exception of the cement, everything, from

cannon balls decorate the corners. All of the monument's stone and most of the headstones were from quarries in and around Augusta and Hallowell.



Soldiers' Monument, at Togus National Cemetery, in Chelsea, from a 1906 postcard. The monument was erected in 1889. Internet photo

designing to stone cutting was done on Togus grounds by the men who lived there. Civil War

The East Cemetery was opened in 1936 after the west side closed for interments. In 1949 the Garden Club Federation of Maine created around the cemetery a "living memorial hedge" of lilacs backed by Maine white pines. The Garden Federation main-

tained the living memorial until the federal government took over in July 1957. Today, only the white pines remain. The last veteran burial was on June 30, 1961. It is a closed cemetery, but some widows of veterans were buried since then.

Among those buried here, some received considerable recognition. Marine Private David John Scannell, (March 30, 1875 – May 7, 1923), the cemetery's only Medal of Honor recipient, is buried in West Cemetery, Section C. His grave is unique with a gold engraved marker.

A Boston native, the private enlisted on February 1, 1898. Scannell earned the Medal of Honor, the U.S. military's highest decoration, for action in China during the Boxer Rebellion, which occurred between 1898 and 1901. In Beijing (then, Peking), from July 21 to August 17, 1900, Scannell helped erect barricades despite heavy hostile fire. One year later, on July 19, 1901, he was awarded the Medal of Honor for this action. His official citation reads: In the presence of the enemy during the action at Peking, China, 21 July to 17 August 1900. Throughout this period, Scannell distinguished himself by meritorious conduct.

Scannell was discharged from the Marine Corps on March 6, 1903, after five years of service. He died two decades later, at age 48.

Togus Cemetery has three Buffalo Soldiers including Robert Warren Washington, in East Cemetery, Section Q; William H. Smith, in West Cemetery, Section P; and Edwin Wight, in West Cemetery, Section K.

Buffalo Soldiers were African-Americans who

served in African-American regiments of the regular U.S. Army formed shortly after the Civil War. Most saw combat with Indians in the opening of the West during the last half of the 19th century, encountering the Cheyenne Indians along

Kansas-Pacific Railroad lines. Fierce in battle, they won the respect of the Cheyenne who called them "Buffalo Soldiers" because their hair and dusty coats reminded them of a buffalo's mane. The Buffalo Soldiers accepted the moniker as a badge of honor.

The Buffalo Soldiers assisted in maintaining law and order, pursuing outlaws, cattle thieves and Mexican revolutionaries. They constructed Army posts and strung thousands of miles of telegraph lines while mapping the uncharted wilderness. The unit continued dedicated service with Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders in the Spanish-American War, on the Mexican Border in WWI, and as part of the Second Cavalry Division in WWII, until their decommissioning in North Africa in 1944.

No special marker notes the grave of Private Joseph Zisgen, in the West Cemetery, Section L. He, however, was a member of 16th New York Cavalry, and part of the detachment that cornered and killed President Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth, on April 26, 1865.

As Major Cutler foresaw, each and every grave is a hallowed resting place for one who gave to this country, whatever race or rank. To locate a veteran buried at any national cemetery including Togus see the Nation-wide Burial Locator at <http://grave-locator.cem.va.gov/>.

SUBWAY
eat fresh
5 Old Point Avenue
Madison 696-4400
FOOT LONG SUBS

Bee's Snack Bar
Established 1947
1 Lithgow St., Winslow, ME
872-9893
BREAKFAST AND LUNCH SPECIALS

KENNEBEC SAVINGS BANK
Your community bank since 1870
150 State Street, Augusta 622-5801
226 Main Street, Waterville • 872-5563
84 Main Street, Winthrop • 377-5801
35 Bridge Street, Gardiner • 588-5801

D & D SERVICES GARAGES PLUS
Decks • Steps Additions Vinyl Siding
649-2212 • 592-4595

The Villager Restaurant
Serving the Public for Over a Quarter Century
Make Your Day a Little Sweeter by Visiting Our Fruit & Candy Shop
872-6231
40 W. Concourse, Waterville

FAIRFIELD ANTIQUES MALL
#382
Fairfield, ME 04937
2.5 Miles North of I-95, Skowhegan Road
207-453-4100
The largest antiques mall in Maine
8:30 am to 5 pm Seven days a week
Owners Wayne & Brenda Gamage
WEB: fairfieldantiquesmall.com

FERRIS VARIETY
Established 1935
Main Street, North Vassalboro
SPECIAL - DELI - SANDWICHES
\$8.99 - PIZZA KITS
• 5 Shells
• 1 lb. cheese
• pint sauce
872-8861
Open: 7 Days a Week 6 am to 9 pm
Sunday & Monday 'til 8 pm

CMD
Locally Owned & Operated/
Customer Satisfaction since 1973
"If it's Trash, We Do It!"
Call 24 Hours a Day
1-800-549-8257
www.centralmainedisposal.com

With your name listed as a "Pages in Time" supporter you can be a visible sponsor of your community's history. A \$10 tax exempt, charitable donation to our non-profit newspaper will list your name and town on this page. Businesses, please call Marlene at 445-2234 or 692-3040 to place your display ad.