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A tribute long overdue

By [Tom Mitchell](#)
LEADER TIMES

Monday, May 7, 2007



Buzz up!

TEMPLETON -- It took more than a century for their heroism and sacrifice to be recognized, but yesterday the graves of five black Civil War veterans from Armstrong County received long-overdue recognition for service to their country.

About 90 people were on hand for the tribute by the Sons of Veterans of the Civil War, John T. Crawford Camp 43, and Camp 43, Sarah Crawford Auxiliary at the Belltown Cemetery.

Sons' graves registration officer Richard Essenwine said the burial site was discovered after researching county records sometime in the early 1990s. The Sons began a detailed search of military records to confirm the deceased men's veteran status.

"There are actually seven Civil War veterans buried there," Essenwine said, "but we could confirm records of only five."

story continues below



The five veterans honored Sunday were William H. Barrett, Abraham Enty, William Jones, John Sutherland, and Lewis A. Steele. Essenwine said the men were members of six companies of the 43rd Regiment, United States Colored Troops, and were organized and equipped at Camp William Penn. The men later were assigned to the First Brigade, Fourth Division, Ninth Corps, under the command of Lt. Col. Hall. Essenwine said that according to official Army records,

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white enlisted soldiers were paid \$13 a month but black soldiers were paid \$10 a month. The black troops of the 43rd thought they should receive equal pay and ultimately refused to accept their pay.

At the outset of the war, he said black soldiers were assigned "fatigue duty," building fortifications under heavy enemy mortar and small arms fire and suffered many casualties. However, at Old Church, Va., the troops proved their worth in combat by assaulting a well-fortified Confederate position, saving an entire Union division that was pinned down under heavy artillery fire. It later was reported that a number of wounded from the 43rd had been bayoneted on the field by Confederate troops rather than being taken prisoner. The 43rd fought heroically in many battles from April 1864 into 1865.

Essenwine said that after confirming the service records of the five veterans, Sons Camp 43 applied for and received new grave markers from the national Department of Veterans Affairs. The stones were set in early October. A dedication ceremony was set for later that month but was postponed due to scheduling conflicts.

At yesterday's dedication, 35-star flags and presidential citations were presented to several people and organizations including one direct descendant of one of the veterans.

Mrs. Timmie Wimms, of Ford City, a great-great-granddaughter of Abraham Enty, was presented with the flags and citations. Her son, Army Sgt. Harry Wimms, was asked to place a marker flag on Enty's grave. Enty was the only veteran who had the date of birth and date of death recorded on his tombstone. Cpl. Enty was born March 28, 1844, and died March 29, 1914.

Also receiving flags and citations were the Rev. Kent Commodore, pastor of Second Baptist Church, Ford City; Shawn Stivason, commander of AMVETS Post 13; Kimberly Judge, commander of Post 13 Auxiliary; and Pine Township Supervisor Douglas Kennedy. Kennedy said the flag and citation will be displayed in the Templeton Post Office.

Essenwine told the dedication audience that the service of the men of the 43rd Regiment is a proud chapter in the history of Armstrong County.

"These men were denied many of the basic rights others took for granted," he said, "yet they fought gallantly and heroically for the Union. We should be very proud of these heroes. The members of Camp 43 are equally proud to belong to the Sons of Union Veterans and be able to initiate this project. Our goal is to make sure every Civil War grave in the county is marked. We've located thousands of graves and we are perhaps half way toward our goal. Our county had an inordinate number of men who sacrificed their lives for the cause of freedom."

Essenwine said the Sons are willing to rededicate the grave of any Civil War veteran. Anyone with information on Civil War grave sites may call Essenwine at 724-664-2424.

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