

The Civil War was a time of much activity for the Kensington Congregational Church. During the winter of 1862, the idea of a soldier's monument was developed. Nelson Augustus Moore, noted landscape painter and church member designed the monument. Rev.



N.A. Moore sketch – Kensington Congregational Church archives

Elias Brewster Hillard was instrumental in developing the idea. At the 50th anniversary of the monument, Selectman George Cowles was given credit for his part in the project. Church members and Kensington neighbors raised the funds through a subscription to commemorate the soldiers from Kensington who had died during the war. One newspaper account gave the cost as \$350 dollars with most subscriptions between one and two dollars. Another newspaper article put the total cost as \$475 dollars. The brownstone shaft was obtained from a quarry in Portland, CT

The Berlin-Peck Memorial Library has the contract between NA Moore and the Bacon Quarry in East Berlin dated March 16, 1863: *I, AA Bacon of Berlin agree to build and erect for the Kensington Monument Association a monument of first quality of brown stone. The monument shall be about 18 feet high, the base 5 feet square. It shall be made like the design drawn and given me for a model and accompanying this agreement. The monument shall be made and finished in a careful and workmanlike manner. There shall be cut in bas relief on the shaft the coat of arms of the state of Connecticut. The proper inscription for the soldiers who have already died shall be appropriately cut on the monument. All the work of making, hauling, and setting the monument I will do. The monument shall be finished and erected on some spot designated by the committee near the Kensington church on or before July 4, 1863. signed AA Bacon. In consideration of the above agreement, we (the committee) agree to pay the said Bacon the sum of \$265 when the monument is finished and erected according to this agreement. Signed NA Moore.* The monument consists of a base with two risers, an obelisk with a pyramid top. The monument was brought to Kensington on a sledge drawn by 14 yoke of oxen.

Originally the monument was to be dedicated on Saturday, July 4 but was delayed until Sunday, July 28, 1863. It was a hot, sweltering day. The principal oration was delivered by US Senator Lafayette S. Foster. Edward W. Robbins, son of the Rev. Royal Robbins, wrote an original poem for the occasion. The Hartford Courant noted that “it is

the first monument erected in CT for the object stated. Its purpose is a noble one, to carry down to posterity, in an enduring form, the names of the brave heroes who fought and died in defense of their country, when a wicked and causeless rebellion armed itself to destroy the liberties of a free people. No better fame could award the true and the brave.” At the time there were six names on the monument: James Bailey, Leverett Gladding, John Kent, George Horten, Henry Allen, and Birdsey Beckley. Today there are 15 names on the monument plus a plaque with a 16th name. All are Kensington youth except Elijah Bacon who was from Berlin. All died during the war except Nelson Ritchie who died in 1869. There are two sets of families: father & son Richard & James Ringwood and brothers: William & John Warner.

Ten years later, in 1873, the wrought iron fence was designed by NA Moore was added. In 1913 an authentic Civil War cannon was added for the 50th anniversary of the monument.

The 50th anniversary was held on Saturday, July 26, 1913. According to the organization committee it was the biggest day in Kensington history. It was attended by Gov. Simeone E. Baldwin, Senator George McLean, and officers of all of the Connecticut GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) posts. Every Connecticut Regiment had representatives and reunions. Houses along Main Street and Percival Avenue were elaborately decorated with flags and bunting. Special trolleys ran for the events. There were many luncheons and dinners.



The Judge Lewis family at the corner of Robbins Road and Percival Avenue on Saturday, July 26, 1913 reprinted in the New Britain Herald, May 23, 1993

The Hartford Courant noted “*With a bright sun shining in the blue sky overhead, and under the canopy of trees which shade the green behind the Kensington Congregational Church nearly 1,500 people*

gathered yesterday to observe the semi-centenary of the dedication of the Kensington soldiers monument to pay tribute to the sons of the village who fought and died in the Civil War to dedicate a memorial boulder and cannon near the oldest monument of its kind in the nation and to show above all else that the old Kensington parish and the



Photo – Kensington Congregational Church Archives, July 26, 1913

people of Berlin and of Connecticut are imbued today with the same patriotism that inspired their fathers to go out fifty years ago to fight for God and country. The affair that was held on the hill, near the simple, but beautiful shaft of Portland brownstone, was not a celebration, in the general meaning of the term. It was rather a commemoration of the birth of an idea. It was a gathering of old soldiers, of younger men and women of Kensington, and out of town guests, assembled to honor a shaft of stone and the ideal that the shaft represented. It was a day very similar in weather conditions to that one fifty years ago, when the monument was dedicated, according to the stories of a small handful of people who attended both affairs. The crowd for the semi-centenary was somewhat larger for in the days of the war, the men were haying and some could not leave the fields for the monument dedication.” The Hartford Courant noted that “*those who erected the monument acted from a feeling of gratitude and respect that also spoke a grace of patriotic duty. Each of these men from Kensington did their part and it is a proud distinction for their village that it was the first place in the whole United State to commemorate in this lasting way during the Civil War the nobility of sacrifice of life for country.*”

The cannon was unveiled by Martha Moore, granddaughter of NA Moore, and Rose Kiniry, granddaughter of John Fagan, a Civil War soldier.

Soldiers Monument

Side 1 - 4 names - Plaque: 1st monument in the US dedicated to the soldiers of the Civil War erected on July 28, 1863

George Washington Horton : NOLA

New Orleans, Louisiana – died Oct. 6, 1862 of disease in New Orleans, LA at age 19. 9th Regiment, Company I. Son of Matthias and Eveline Horton. 1843-1862.

Henry F Allen : Pocotaligo Oct 22, 1862

Killed at the Battle of Pocotaligo, SC on Oct. 22, 1862 at age 19. Corporal – 6th Regiment, Company G. Son of Nelson and Lucy Allen.

Birdsey J Beckley : Fredericksburg Dec 13, 1862

Killed at the Battle of Fredericksburg, VA on Dec. 13, 1862 at age 22. Corporal - 14th Regiment, Company D. Adopted son of Emeline J. Landon. Buried in West Lane Cemetery.

Capt. Frank Allyn Cole: Washington DC October 4, 1864:

Aged 22. Died in a hospital at Washington DC of wounds from the Battle of Petersburg, VA. Wisconsin 37th Regiment, Company E. Son of Ira and Melissa Cole. Buried in South Burying Ground (Blue Hills Cemetery)

Side 2

Soldiers

Erected to commemorate the deaths of those who perished in suppressing the southern rebellion “How sleep the brave who sink to rest by all their country’s wishes blest” 1863

At the base is a bronze marker which was added in 1988:

Elijah W. Bacon

Medal of Honor

Corp Co F of 14 Conn Infantry

Killed in the Battle of the Wilderness, VA on May 6, 1864 at age 26. Corporal - 14th Regiment, Company F. Son of Betsy and Roswell Bacon Jr. He married Angeline Shelley and had two daughters: Jane ‘Mary’ Eliza and Jennie Maria. He earned the Medal of Honor in the Battle of Gettysburg during Pickett’s Charge for capturing a flag of the 16th North Carolina Regiment. His family made the monument from the Bacon Quarry in East Berlin. He is the only person honored at both Civil War monuments in town. 1838-1864

Side 3 - 4 names

James L. Bailey Cedar Mountain Aug 9, 1862

Killed at Cedar Mountain, VA on Aug. 9, 1862 at age 21. 5th Regiment, Company B. Son of Lester & Elizabeth Bailey.

Leverett H. Gladding NO LA Aug. 12, 1862

New Orleans, LA. Died Aug. 12, 1862 of swamp fever disease in a hospital at age 22. 9th Regiment, Company I Son of James and Martha Gladding. Buried in West Lane Cemetery. 1840-1862

John L. Kent Antietam Sept., 17, 1862

Killed at the Battle of Antietam, MD on Sept. 17, 1862 at age 24. 16th Regiment, Company G. Married to Matilda with a son named Leverett.

James Ringwood June 7, 1864 Cold Harbor

Killed at the Battle of Cold Harbor, VA on June 7, 1864. 14th Regiment, Company A.

Side 4 – 7 names

Danford J Davis : Morton’s Ford Jan. 1, 1864

Killed at Morton’s Ford, VA on Jan. 1, 1864. Corporal - 14th Regiment, Company F.

Charles H Stanley : Cold Harbor June 1, 1864

Killed at Cold Harbor, VA on June 1, 1864 at age 18. 2nd Regiment, Company E. Son of Oswin and Jane Stanley. 1845-1864

Roswell Root : New Haven May 5, 1865

Died on May 5, 1865 in a hospital from wounds he received on June 22, 1864 at Culp’s farm, GA. at age 37. 5th Regiment, Company I. Married to Ruth. Buried in South Burying Ground (Blue Hills Cemetery)

Wm W Warner: Charleston, SC Nov. 5, 1864

William – Captured at Bermuda Hundred, VA on June 2, 1864, in prison in Andersonville, died prisoner of war in Florence, SC on Nov. 5, 1864. 7th Regiment, Company C

John E Warner : Annapolis, MD Dec 28, 1864

Died in Annapolis, MD on Dec 25, 1864

Richard Ringwood : Andersonville, GA 1830-1864

Captured at North Anna River, VA on May 25, 1864, died prisoner of war in Andersonville of diarrhea on Aug. 25, 1864 at age 34. 14th Regiment, Company A. Married to Catherine with son James.

Nelson M. Ritchie Co C 16 CV

Died on Nov. 25, 1869 at age 23. Captured in Plymouth, NC on April 20, 1864, served as prisoner of war in Andersonville, pardoned. Corporal - 16th Regiment, Company C. Married to Katie. Buried in West Lane Cemetery.



Soldiers Monument July 28, 1863

Kensington Congregational Church
312 Percival Avenue - Kensington, CT 06037

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