

# Donations boost effort to honor Civil War unit

By Roberta Tuttle

Associate Editor

BLOOMFIELD – Robert Larkin's campaign to honor his great-great-grandfather's Civil War unit has received help from an ally whose heritage traces back to the same unit.

Mr. Larkin, whose ancestor, Pvt. John J. Marlow, died in a Mississippi swamp, has for several years been on a crusade to honor the men of Ninth Regiment Connecticut Volunteers with a monument at the Vicksburg National Military Park.

He recently received a pledge of \$10,000 from the Knights of Columbus, whose first Grand Knight, James T. Mullen, was a sergeant in the Ninth Connecticut who served at Vicksburg.

Despite the generational and geographical expanses the project bridges, Mr. Larkin and about 30 cohorts say it is high time for the Ninth Connecticut to be honored. About 150 soldiers from the unit, including Mr. Larkin's great-great-grandfather, died over a four-month period while digging a canal at Vicksburg a year before the key siege there.

Monuments to those who fought and died at Vicksburg dot the 1,700 acres of the national park and cemetery along the Mississippi River at Vicksburg. Twenty-six states have monuments there. Connecticut is one of only two states whose soldiers served there but are not yet honored with monuments.

The Ninth Regiment, formed in 1861 in New Haven with 845 men, was known as the "Irish Regiment" because it comprised predominantly Irish Catholics.

Many of the survivors and relatives of the Ninth were early members of the Knights of Columbus, said Mr. Larkin, a Cheshire resident who chairs the committee campaigning for the monument.

The committee includes members of the Irish American Historical Society, Irish History Roundtable and Civil War Roundtable in New Haven.

Mr. Larkin, himself a member of the Knights of Columbus Santa Fe Council No. 2978 of Cheshire, said it was Susan Brosnan, archivist for the Knights of Columbus Museum, who first alerted him to Sgt. Mullen's connection to both the Knights and the regiment.

She recognized the name of the first Grand Knight on a flier one of the Irish organizations published and forwarded information about him to Mr. Larkin.

"So they [the Knights of Columbus] became involved early on and wanted to support it, so I kept them abreast of it, and not long ago they came through with a letter indicating their pledge," said Mr. Larkin, whose father was a member of the Knights of Columbus San Salvador Council No. 1 in New Haven.

Sgt. Mullen was discharged from the Ninth Connecticut in December 1862, five months after the digging of the canal, because of illness.

He was a fire commissioner in New Haven for 13 years and was among the founders of the Knights of Columbus. He is credited with the choice of the word "Knights," as opposed to "Sons" of Columbus and with designing the Knights of Columbus emblem.



Sgt. James T. Mullen

Mr. Larkin's ancestor, Pvt. Marlow, was an Irish immigrant who served in the same company as Sgt. Mullen until his death in July 1862, eight months after enlisting.

His widow, left with five children, worked for a number of years as an oyster opener. Her last pension check totaled \$12.

Both Pvt. Marlow and Sgt. Mullen served in the regiment's "C" company.

The regiment lost 250 men during the war.

After participating in the Union capture of New Orleans, the Ninth Regiment was transported in 1862 up the Mississippi River as part of a task force. Its mission was to divert the Mississippi River by building a canal, thus allowing the Union to bypass the fortifications at Vicksburg.

Dysentery, malaria and other diseases took a heavy toll in the swampy environs. Soldiers also fell victim to heat exhaustion and sunstroke as they worked in temperatures that reached 115 degrees and with drinking water in short supply.



**MODEL OF MONUMENT** – This is a model of the monument to the men of the Ninth Regiment Connecticut Volunteers that is proposed for Vicksburg National Military Park. Known as the "Irish Regiment" because it was predominantly made up of Irish Catholics, it lost some 250 men during the Civil War. The proposed monument will include a black marble centerpiece standing 8 feet, 10 inches high with two emerald green granite wings. Its black granite base will be 10 feet wide. (Photos courtesy of Robert Larkin)

The committee envisions a black granite monument that stands almost 9 feet tall and bears images of the regimental flag, faces of prominent soldiers and a scene of soldiers digging the canal.

The monument was designed by Mathieu Memorials and Granite Works of Southington, an agent of Royal Melrose, a company involved in such major monument projects as the Korean War Memorial and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial, both in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Larkin said the Knights of Columbus pledged \$5,000 for when the National Park Service approves the design and \$5,000 for when the monument is installed.

Other major contributions for construction of a monument were received from AT&T Connecticut, which donated \$2,500, and the Mortensen Foundation, which donated \$3,000 for the placing of granite benches on the monument's site.

The three major contributions, plus donations from other organizations and individuals, bring the total raised thus far to \$18,000. The estimated total cost for the project is about \$25,000.

Information is available from Mr. Larkin at (203) 272-6301, [robertolarkin@yahoo.com](mailto:robertolarkin@yahoo.com) or [www.jimlarkin.com/9thRegiment/9thRegimentHome.htm](http://www.jimlarkin.com/9thRegiment/9thRegimentHome.htm).