

# REGION

## A monumental day for Connecticut

*New marker to honor soldiers from state who died at Vicksburg*

By **CLAIRE BESSETTE**  
Day Staff Writer

More than 150 members of the Ninth Regiment Connecticut Volunteers died at Vicksburg, Miss., during the Civil War, but you couldn't find their names on any of the 1,350 monuments in the Vicksburg

National Military Park — until today.

About 40 people from Connecticut will complete a three-year, \$60,000 effort today by dedicating a granite monument at Vicksburg to the Ninth Connecticut.

"It's been a long road, but we've met some wonderful people and heard some wonderful stories," said Bob Larkin of Cheshire, project chairman.

He said Vicksburg residents

are just as excited, because today will mark the first new state monument dedicated at the battlefield in 30 years.

But the so-called "Irish regiment" did not fight in the Siege of Vicksburg, which ended July 4, 1863.

The Connecticut soldiers toiled in conditions just as deadly a year earlier to divert a portion of the Mississippi River into a canal so Union vessels

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## Monument at Vicksburg will honor soldiers from state

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could avoid Confederate guns firing from shore.

*"Hundreds worked with the pick and shovel.*

*"Hundreds gave their sweat and blood.*

*"Hundreds sick with yellow fever.*

*"Laid down and died in the Mississippi mud."*

That's the chorus of a song "Williams Canal," written by Tom Callinan of Norwich, the inaugural Connecticut state troubadour. Callinan will perform the song at today's dedication. He also will sing "Connecticut's Ninth," a tribute to the regiment he wrote to the tune of a 19th century folk song.

"They would have recognized the tune," Callinan said in a telephone interview Monday morning as he and others prepared to tour the battlefield park.

Callinan, who believes some family ancestors were members of Connecticut's Ninth, was in charge of verifying ranks and uniform insignia for the men depicted on the memorial stone.

The monument features a 10-foot tall granite obelisk with head and shoulder etchings created from original photographs of soldiers. At the bottom is an etching of the canal construction created from a photograph of Civil War re-enactors acting out the scene.

Graphic artist Kerry Sheldon of Durham turned the photographs into etchings. Stacy Mathieu of Mathieu Memorial & Granite Works in Southington hand engraved those etchings onto the black granite.

On the flanks of the obelisk, shorter green granite panels feature two plaques in the shape of Connecticut that give the history of the regiment. The base reads "Ninth Regiment Connecticut Volunteers."

Callinan said the entire experience has been quite moving and astonishingly emotional even 146 years later. His favorite story wasn't even about the canal project.

The Ninth Connecticut was involved in a skirmish near Vicksburg in April 1862 and captured the crisp new flag of the Third Mississippi Infantry Regiment. The flag was paraded through the streets of New York City and then given to the state of Connecticut.

It was stashed away and quickly forgotten. Twenty years after the war ended, someone decided to give it back to Mississippi in a gesture of reconciliation, but found it in tatters. Several Connecticut women repaired it as best they could before it was handed back to Mississippi.

It was dubbed "the Friendship Flag."

The flag had been on display on the first floor at the Beauvoir Museum — Confederate President Jefferson Davis' retirement home — when Hurricane Katrina struck the region in 2005. Someone had removed all the artifacts from the first floor prior to the storm that ravaged the building, saving the flag once again.

Others scoured the countryside to recover other Civil War artifacts scattered by the storm. One item recovered intact was the sword of a Sgt. Doyle of the Ninth Connecticut.

"It just feels kind of good to have something in common," Callinan said.

c.bessette@theday.com