



# MICHIGAN'S G.A.R. MEMORIAL HALL & MUSEUM

**GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC, MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT,  
JAMES B. BRAINERD POST #111 MEMORIAL HALL AND MUSEUM, INC.**

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The Grand Army of the Republic, Michigan Department James B. Brainerd Post #111 Memorial Hall and Museum (Michigan's G.A.R. Memorial Hall and Museum) is a federally recognized 501 (c) (3) Michigan nonprofit corporation with the mission of bringing both an informative and educational exposure to the history of the post-Civil War Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) to the state of Michigan. The location for Michigan's G.A.R. Memorial Hall and Museum is the former James B. Brainerd Post #111 Grand Army of the Republic Hall located in Eaton Rapids, Michigan. Due to its

location in downtown Eaton Rapids and its designation as an historic district, the building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and houses (currently) over 4,700 historical artifacts and records relating to the Grand Army of the Republic and its Allied Orders. All of the historical artifacts and records have been donated or loaned to Michigan's G.A.R. Memorial Hall and Museum for the purpose of fostering the memory and preserving the history of the G.A.R. in an original historic setting.

When the Civil War broke out, Eaton Rapids and other cities and villages throughout the state sent their citizens to support the Union cause. Eaton Rapids men served their country in numerous infantry, cavalry, artillery, and naval units. On March 14, 1883, the Eaton Rapids area Civil War veterans who had served in the military were granted a charter by the Michigan Department and National Organization of the G.A.R. for the James B. Brainerd G.A.R. Post #111, one of eventually 512 such Posts in Michigan. In addition, on July 20, 1886, the National Organization and the Michigan Department of the Woman's Relief Corps (W.R.C.) granted a charter to Eaton Rapids' W.R.C. Corps #38. By the end of 1886, a two-story building had been constructed for the use by G.A.R. Post #111, W.R.C. Corps #38, and, for a short time, the Phil Sheridan Sons



of Veterans USA Camp #47 on South Main Street. This building also served as a location for G.A.R. and W.R.C. social gatherings and musical events until the Post disbanded in 1929. Between the years of 1929 and 2012, this building was used for a wide variety of other purposes including a drug store, milk packaging plant, hardware store, local Grange Hall, dairy, bowling alley, and a dance school to name a few. On May 14, 2004, the Eaton Rapids Area Historical Society, in conjunction with the Jackson, Michigan Austin Blair Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) Camp #7 and the Michigan Department of the SUVCW unveiled a historical marker for the building recognizing its connection to the Lt. James B. Brainerd G.A.R. Post #111. The building eventually became vacant and was purchased by a long-time G.A.R. memorabilia collector, Don Limpert, and then deeded to the Museum non-profit corporation. Michigan's G.A.R. Memorial Hall and Museum opened September 2013.

The building housing Michigan's G.A.R. Memorial Hall and Museum is an Italianate two-storied red brick structure, which originally had a balcony. Above the second story windows and door is a recessed brick area with the letters "G. A. R." The building's interior floor plan is simple with the first floor originally having been largely open and rented out to merchants to financially support the G.A.R. Post and W.R.C. Corps upstairs. The G.A.R. / W.R.C. meeting room and the W.R.C. Parlor (which, occasionally also served as the Post's Anteroom) occupied the second floor.



To the east of the G.A.R. building located in the middle of the Grand River is an island park. At the request of the James B. Brainerd G.A.R. Post #111, the city agreed to change name of the island to *G.A.R. Island Park* in 1909. It served from 1909 to 1929 as the venue for a week-long annual encampment of the Eaton County Battalion of the G.A.R. The Eaton County Battalion was composed of 10 G.A.R. Posts in Eaton County and one G.A.R. Post in Calhoun County. The annual encampments were discontinued after 1929 due to too few veterans left to carry on. In keeping with the historical significance, the Museum holds a day-long Civil War Discovery Camp on G.A.R. Island Park each year for children 8 - 14 years old.

Two Civil War-era cannon (30-pound and 100-pound Parrett Rifles), which had been loaned by the U.S. Government to the Brainerd Post, reside on the island as "Silent Sentinels" in tribute to all those who served in the Civil War. In 1915, a G.A.R. Monument to "*Our Fallen Heroes 1861-1865*" was moved to G.A.R. Island Park from its former location in the city's Rose Hill Cemetery. The monument had been purchased in 1893 by the W.R.C. Corps #38 at a cost of \$400.

The Museum is open the first two Wednesdays of each month, patriotic holidays, various city festivals and events, and by appointment. The Museum also can be opened any day and time for meetings and tours by contacting the Museum ahead of time and arranging a date. Admission to and use of the Museum are free, but *tax-deductible* donations are greatly appreciated. Also, different levels of annual *tax-deductible* sponsorships are available to the public to help defray the costs of operation and make needed repairs to the 1886 building.

Michigan's G.A.R. Memorial Hall and Museum is the only such museum in the state that is exclusively dedicated to ensuring that the memory, accomplishments, and humanitarian contributions of the Grand Army of the Republic and its members in Michigan are not forgotten. The Museum can be contacted by visiting its website at <https://garmuseum.com> and/or its Face Book page at *GARBrainerdPost111MemorialHallAndMuseum*; or emailing at [garmichigan@gmail.com](mailto:garmichigan@gmail.com).