

ALBERT WOOLSON

**LAST UNION CIVIL WAR
SOLIDER**

**LAST MEMBER OF THE GRAND
ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC**

**HONORARY COMMANDER-IN-
CHIEF, SONS OF UNION**

**VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR
1953 / 1954**



The nation saw the end of an era on August 2nd when Albert Woolson, 109, sole surviving Union veteran of the Civil War, died. Comrade Woolson was born in the New York farm hamlet of Antwerp, 22 miles northeast of Watertown, on February 11, 1847. Willard Woolson, his father, was a carpenter and musician, and when President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers in 1861, he and his fellow musicians enlisted in a body. When his family did not hear from him for more than a year, they traced him through Army records to a hospital in Minnesota suffering from a leg wound received at the battle of Shiloh. Shortly after the family was reunited, his leg had to be amputated and he died.

Col. William Colville organized a Minnesota heavy artillery regiment of 1,800 men. Albert Woolson got his mother's consent and was accepted into Company C, First Minnesota Volunteer Heavy Artillery. His military service dated from October 10, 1864. Enlisted as a rifleman, he eventually was assigned as a drummer and bugler. Late in 1864, the regiment joined the Army of the Cumberland in Tennessee. The First Minnesota sat out the spring and early summer of 1865 in the shadow of Lookout Mountain, near Chattanooga, and in August the Regiment was ordered home. Comrade Woolson received his discharge on September 7, 1865.

Following the war, Albert Woolson joined the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), rising to the position of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Comrade Woolson participated in the last GAR National Encampment in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1949, and was the last surviving member of that organization. He was made an Honorary Commander-in-Chief of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) at its National Encampment in 1953.

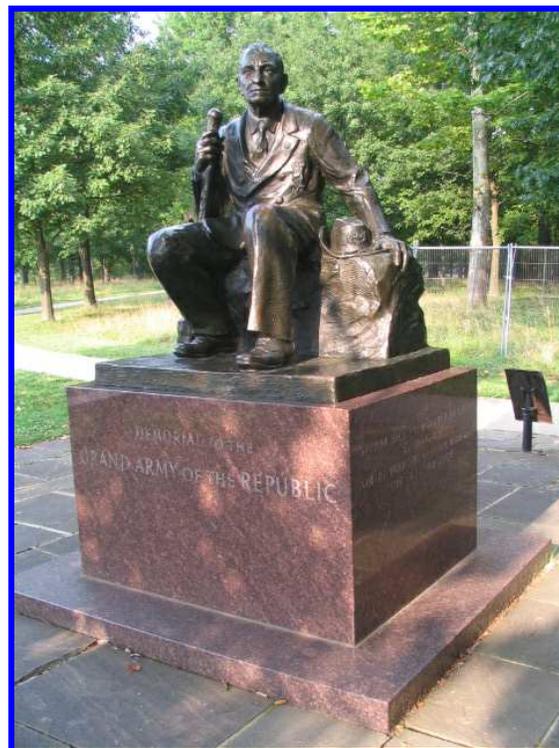
On August 6, 1956, Comrade Woolson, the Union army veteran who outlived all his comrades, was laid to rest in the family plot in Park Hill Cemetery, Duluth, Minnesota as thousands paid final tribute. Secretary of the Army, Wilber Bruckner, headed a delegation of political and military dignitaries including Assistant Secretary Hugh M. Milton, Senators Hubert H. Humphrey and Edward J. Thye, Representative John A. Blatnick, Lt. General William H. Arnold, Chicago, Fifth Army Commander; Governor Orville Freeman, and Maj. General Jos. E. Nelson, Minnesota Adjutant General. More than 1,500 persons attended the 2 p.m. funeral in the Duluth armory; hundreds more lined the route to the cemetery, and about 2,000 watched as the bronze casket was set down with full military honors.

At 1:45 p.m., an Army drum and bugle corps, stationed outside the armory with an army marching unit of 109 men (one for each of Comrade Woolson's years), blew retreat. A military guard of honor, lining the walk to the armory door, snapped to attention. Military men saluted and the Fifth Army Band played a funeral processional. Six Army Sergeants, acting as pallbearers, carried the casket into the armory, following Lt. Col. Augustine P. Donnelly, a Presbyterian chaplain attached to Fifth Army Headquarters, Chicago. As the procession entered the armory, the Carillon Chorus Club sang the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. Col. Donnelly, who conducted the services, started the ceremony at 2:03 p.m. with, *I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord*. The service ended with a short prayer at 2:45 p.m.

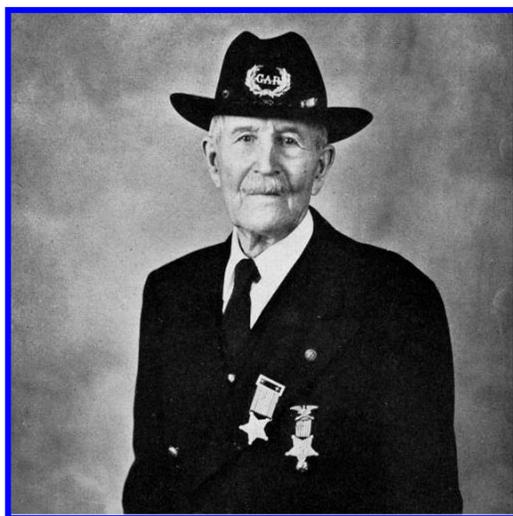
The procession left the armory with the band - the drums were decked in black - playing Chopin's Funeral Dirge. Behind the band came the army marching unit plodding in slow cadence in the 85-degree heat. At 4 p.m. the band's drums could be heard at the cemetery. The Mt. Vernon, Ohio Fife and Drum Corps of the SUVCW took over the procession's lead at the cemetery gate and played *Onward Christian Soldiers*. The color guard followed the fife and drum corps. Behind them marched Col. Donnelly followed by the hearse and numerous automobiles.

At 4:17 p.m. pallbearers brought the casket and Col. Donnelly presented a short funeral oration. The pallbearers, who had been holding the casket flag two feet above the casket, folded it and gave it to Secretary of the Army Bruckner, who in turn presented it to Mrs. Kobus. The GAR funeral service was then conducted by members of the SUVCW, as they placed a wreath, a rose, and a miniature United States flag atop the casket. An Army firing squad fired three volleys. The bugler sounded *Taps* while military men saluted. The group was silent. The firing squad marched away. The fife and drum corps faded into the distance with the fifes whistling the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*.

On September 12, 1956, a monument to Albert Woolson and the GAR was dedicated by the National Auxiliary to the SUVCW in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania in the Gettysburg National Military Park (Ziegler's Grove, east side of Hancock Avenue). Each year since, in November, the SUVCW and the other Allied Orders of the GAR come together in Gettysburg to conduct a memorial in tribute and remembrance to Albert Woolson and the GAR.



ORLANDO LEVALLEY
MICHIGAN'S
LAST CIVIL WAR UNION SOLDIER AND
LAST GAR MEMBER



Orlando LeValley was born September 19, 1848 and grew up in Lapeer County on a farm just east of Columbiaville, Michigan. Just days after his 16th birthday he enlisted as a substitute and was mustered into Company E, 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry. This regiment was, at the time, serving in the west under overall command of General George Thomas. Orlando LeValley arrived at the front just in time to help turn back Confederates under General John Bell Hood in the Tennessee battles of Spring Hill, Franklin, and Nashville. Now a seasoned veteran, LeValley found himself headed eastward with the Union 23rd Corp to be put onto troop transports to Wilmington, North Carolina to help with the mopping up operations there. After the cessation of hostilities, in June of 1865 he was transferred to the 28th Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry and was discharged on October 14, 1865.

Orlando LeValley returned to Lapeer County where he purchased 80 acres located between Caro and Fairgrove, Michigan. There, he would marry, raise six children and live out his life as a farmer and respected citizen of his community. He also would join and later become active member in the Whiteside Post #143 of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR).

In 1940, Mr. LeValley was elected Junior Vice Commander of Michigan Department of the GAR. The following year he was chosen Senior Vice Commander and, as the United States plunged into World War II, he assumed command of the Department in the spring of 1942. He would command the Department for one year and then would return to position of Department Commander in 1945, there to serve until his death on April 19, 1948. On the GAR national level, Mr. LeValley also served as Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief and member of the Council of Administration until his death. He was laid to rest in the LeValley family plot in Brookside Cemetery, just outside of Fairgrove, Michigan. He was Michigan's last Civil War veteran and last member of the Michigan Department of the GAR.

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FAIRGROVE — This week, the first major battle of the Civil War was fought 150 years ago at Bull Run and in memory of those who served in that war, a Tuscola County veteran was honored Saturday for his part in the conflict that threatened to split the U.S. A monument at Brookside Cemetery in Fairgrove, Michigan was dedicated to Civil War Veteran Orlando LeValley with about 100 of his family members in attendance.

During the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) ceremony, it was recounted how LeValley tried to join the service when he was just 13-years old. He was turned away, but managed to join when he was 16-years old; even though the required age was 18. He enlisted in the 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry. During the war, some of the action he saw were battles in Franklin and Nashville, Tennessee, the Atlanta Campaign, and the final engagements of the war in North Carolina. He was honorably discharged in Raleigh, North Carolina in December 1865.

Among some of those who spoke at the dedication were Commander of the Department of the Michigan SUVCW, Don Shaw, Eric Jylha with WNEM-TV5, and David Neese, who is a member of the SUVCW LeValley–Heusted Camp #255 SUVCW, and who coordinated the event.

*"Thirty infantry regiments formed in Michigan. Saginaw men were in five of them. The 23rd formed East of Saginaw and fought in 25 battles. One of those men was Orlando LeValley." After joining the 23rd, he was part of the group who pursued John Bell Hood's Army of Tennessee in battles at Spring Hill, Franklin, and Nashville. These were bloody battles meant to steer Sherman's Confederate forces away from protecting Atlanta, said Jylha. Orlando and the 23rd chased Hood's Army all the way to the Tennessee River. Jylha and the others who spoke said LeValley served his country well and after he returned home, he was an active supporter of veterans' rights and organizations. That fact was noted on the memorial, which read:*

*"The memorial was dedicated by the LeValley–Heusted Camp 255, Sons of the Union Veterans of the Civil War in honor of Orlando LeValley 23rd Michigan Infantry, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief National GAR, Commander Michigan Dept. GAR, Commander Whiteside Post 143 GAR, Michigan's Last Civil War Veteran."*

-- Modified from *Tuscolatoday.com*, *Tuscola County Advertiser*, July 26, 2011 --



**JOHN HENDERSON**  
**EATON RAPIDS'**  
**LAST CIVIL WAR UNION SOLDIER AND**  
**LAST GAR MEMBER**

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J. Henderson Is Last G.A.R.

Fine Old Man is Now 92. Came to Eaton Rapids in 1876. Retired in 1918

Only one veteran of the G.A.R. remains alive in Eaton Rapids today. John Henderson will reach his 92nd birthday on August 12, 1936. He was born in Henderson County, New Jersey, but moved to Ohio when a small boy and spent most of his early life there. He enlisted at the age of eighteen in Company G, 132d Ohio Volunteer Infantry at 1864, and was honorably discharged at the expiration of his term of service on September 10, 1864. He was in the front line at Bermuda Hundred, near Petersburg, VA, and for a short time also at White House Landing. His company was under the command of Gen. Butler.

In 1876 Mr. Henderson came to Eaton Rapids to live with his brother, Levi Henderson, located where the William A. Horner home now stands. He followed his trade of harness making in the upstairs room of their home until later he set up his shop in the hardware store of Datus Pierson and Levi Henderson. For ten years he occupied a portion of the Jopp block and in 1888 he bought the Al Hamlin building located where the present Chevrolet garage is now operating. He remained here for thirty years retiring from active business in 1918.

When the James B. Brainerd Post No 111, G.A.R. was organized in Eaton Rapids in 1883, he became a charter member. After serving as quartermaster-sergeant for about twenty years he was made quartermaster in 1922, succeeding J.J. Holmes upon his death in that year. He performed his duties of that office until the Post was officially discontinued in 1929. At that time, Col. Loren D. Chapman, affectionately known as "Dad Chapman" was commander. Henderson's last comrades to survive the life of the Post were John Lechler and Phineas Disbrow, both of whom reached the nineties and died within the last three years.

After the death of his wife in 1910, his daughter, Mrs. Mabel Hutchison, and her husband have lived with him at his home, 202 W. Broad street. His advanced age confines him to his home now, so that he probably will not be able to take an active part in the Memorial Day ceremonies as he has always been accustomed to do.

-- *Eaton Rapids Journal*, May 29, 1936, Eaton Rapids, Michigan --

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## Last Comrade Answers Call

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*John Henderson, Civil War Veteran, Died of Stroke Thursday Evening*  
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John Henderson, of Eaton Rapids grand old civil war veterans and highly honored citizens died at his home in this city last Thursday evening, at the age of almost 92 years. The direct result of a stroke. Funeral services were conducted from the home Sunday afternoon, Rev. Marshall Braund officiating. The body was placed at rest beside his wife in Rose Hill cemetery.

John Henderson, son of James and Eliza Henderson, was born on August 13th, 1844, at Bloomsburg, New Jersey. He was one of a family of seven children, four boys and three girls, only one of whom survive him, a sister, Mrs. Mary Couchman.

When a small child his parents moved from New Jersey to West Liberty, Ohio. At the age of eighteen, he enlisted in the 132nd regiment of the Ohio National Guards, Company G, and saw service at the front at Petersburg, Virginia.

After his return home he went to work in his father's harness shop, where he learned the trade which he followed later on. In November 1876 he came to Eaton Rapids and lived with his brother Levi. He continued to make harnesses and in 1888 he established a shop of his own. He retired from active business in 1918.

Soon after coming to Eaton Rapids, he joined the J.B. Brainerd Post, GAR. He was quartermaster-sergeant for about twenty years, after which he took over the duties of quarter-master until the post was disbanded in 1934.

He has been a member of the Methodist church for almost sixty years, joining soon after coming to Eaton Rapids.

On September 13th, 1885, he was united in marriage to Fannie O. Stevens of Keithsburg, Illinois. To this union were born two daughters, Ethel May, who died in infancy at the age of seven months, and Mabel Clare, who has made a home for him since the death of his wife on November 12th, 1910.

**-- Eaton Rapids Journal, June 19, 1936, Eaton Rapids, Michigan --**