



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Soldiers & Sailors monument honors the memory of over 450 men who lost their lives during the Civil War.

## Soldiers & Sailors Monument; a countywide Civil War memorial

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Passing through the sandstone arch of Mount Albion Cemetery, one may catch a glimpse of the towering monument atop the highest point in the area. The Soldiers & Sailors Monument is perhaps the most impressive and beautiful war memorials in our area, but the true significance of the shrine is often overshadowed by the novelty and "thrill of the climb" up the winding steel staircase. There is a commonality between the circumstances surrounding the efforts to erect this monument to the memory of over 450 men who lost their lives during the Civil War and the war itself. In the face of grave sacrifice, a community struggled to memorialize the hundreds of young men, sons, brothers, and fathers, who left the security of home for ideals far greater than themselves.

Efforts to construct a county-wide memorial were initiated in 1864, but the association struggled to raise the

necessary funds to complete the project.

In 1868, the Orleans County Monument Association was established with Ezra T. Coann, H. J. Van Dusen, E. K. Hart, Joseph Cornell, Calvin Beach, John N. Proctor, Charles A. Harrington, John Hull White, Walker Mattison, Seth Spencer, Henry A. King, and Hiram Sickels as directors. Fundraising was slow, but the group was persistent in their labors. By 1874, the organization had raised \$3,000 and construction began soon after with an additional \$2,000 from the Cemetery Association.

On July 4, 1876, as the nation celebrated its centennial, Orleans County dedicated the newly completed Soldiers & Sailors Monument.

"The Tower" remained a permanent fixture on Albion's horizon and over the years became a destination for local youth, with varying intentions, who trekked to the top. Time chipped away at the monument and by the 1970s was in significant need

of tender care and attention. The Orleans County Historical Monument Corporation, with involvement from notable local residents including C. W. Lattin, Harold Breuilly, and Donna Rodden, shouldered the burden of raising the necessary funds to restore the local landmark.

With over \$20,000 raised, the tower was repaired and rededicated on July 4, 1976; the centennial of the monument and bicentennial of the nation.

On two separate occasions, the community labored tirelessly to preserve the memory of local soldiers. Although erected to memorialize those who sacrificed their lives during the Civil War, perhaps the tower is more a monument to the perseverance of a community; a community that values the preservation and understanding of the past. With a monument that is 142 years old and a cemetery celebrating 175 years, we are fortunate to have such breathtaking landmarks scattered throughout our area.