

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XV

4-72-93

No. 12

THE ASA C. HILL MONUMENT

Presently, volunteers in New York State are collecting information on outdoor sculpture in a program entitled Save Outdoor Sculpture (SOS). This is a joint project of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution and the National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property. Locally, one outdoor sculpture which qualifies for inclusion in this survey is the Asa C. Hill monument located in Millville Cemetery in the Town of Shelby. In fact, it is one of a very few local monuments which does meet the standards. Basically, it was not a stock item. It is a unique, one of a kind, and highly personalized sculpture. Generally, figural subjects such as angels and cherubs in cemeteries are stock items out of monument dealer's catalogue. Indeed, too many to inventory and for no real purpose. But Asa is different. SOS is trying to seek out subjects which give testimony to a sculptor's ability and a client's unique situation. Asa makes it!

Asa is a full relief granite figure dressed in a Civil War uniform holding a rifle. He stands over six feet in height atop a 24 or 25 foot granite shaft. To my knowledge, this is the only full relief, life size, representation of an actual person that we have in Orleans County. Asa is special!

He is poised looking slightly to the north west. According to legend, this was done on purpose, so that the statue appears to be looking in the direction of the Hill Family Farmstead (his home) which was located on Sanderson Road two miles west of the cemetery. Asa has seen many changes over the last one hundred years or so. In fact, "Hill Top Farm" as it was known is all but obliterated. The once-stylish house, tenant house, barns and out buildings are all gone. But Asa stands erect, looking homeward, giving homage to not only his own participation in the great conflict but to all Civil War veterans. He is depicted as though ready to leave for battle. His patriotism and ideals are portrayed eternal.

In the base of the monument are four shields, three of which contain information. The south face reads:

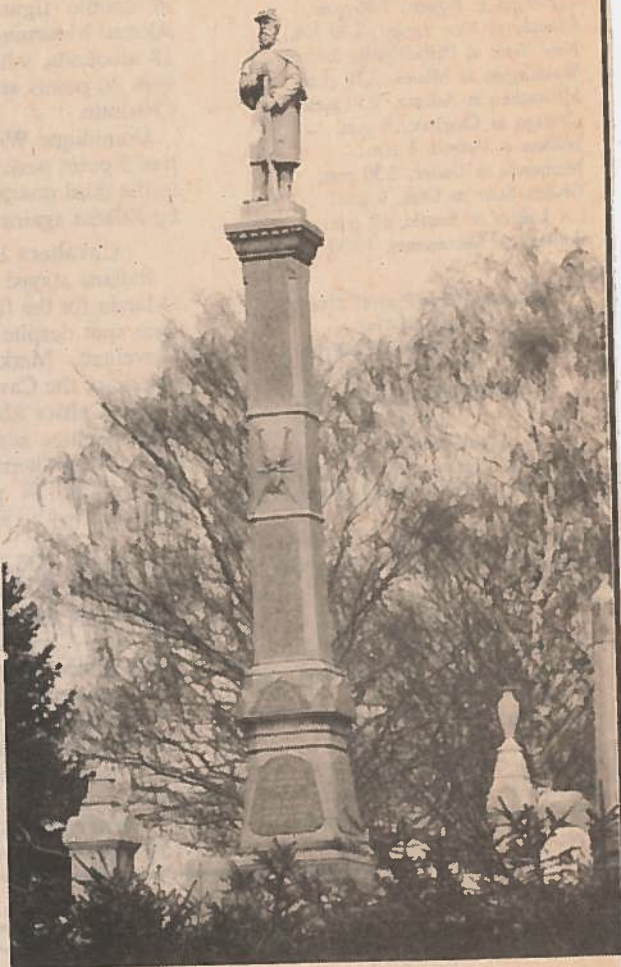
Asa C. Hill
Enlisted Nov. 14, 1861
Wounded Aug. 9, 1862
Taken Prisoner
Aug. 18, 1862
Taken to Libby Prison
Sept. 25, 1862
Exchanged Oct. 6, 1862
Discharged Jan. 14, 1863

The west face reads:

Asa C. Hill
Born Aug. 19, 1837
Died April 25, 1881
At 7 P.M.
Kate Bodine
Wife of Asa C. Hill
Born Feb. 3, 1844
Died Sept. 27, 1938

The north face reads:

Asa B. Hill
Son of A C and K B Hill
Born Jan. 18, 1879
Died Aug. 7, 1937
Bertha B. Peek
Wife of Asa B.
Born Aug. 22, 1881



Floyd J. Hill

May 28, 1908 - Aug. 15, 1910

The Asa C. Hill memorial is a bold monumental statement. One which would have been costly at the time it was made. It's a statement which to me, indicates that Asa never got over his involvement in the war and the sacrifice he made. Landmarks of Orleans County indicates that Asa was discharged on account of the loss of a limb, caused by a wound received in the battle at Cedar Mountain, Va. on Aug. 9, 1862. It is interesting that the statue does not portray him as imperfect in his physical appearance as he is shown with all limbs intact. This cemetery monument is also unusual in that unlike many, it is patriotic in theme rather than religious. We note the crossed American flag medallion part way up the shaft.

Flashback

Two weeks ago in Vol. XV No. 10 in this column was a picture of three unidentified girls listening to a vintage radio. Dick Eberle, Josephine Tuttle and Evelyn Kemp all called to make identification. In fact, Evelyn Kemp is the older girl who was seated in the photo. Her sisters in the picture are: Arlene (deceased) who later married Dr. Kenneth Clark and her other sister Neva Eichbauer. Their father, George Whitney bought the A.J. Richards photo studio over Metz Brothers store on Main Street in Medina when Mr. Richards retired. However, George Whitney didn't run the business very long as there was no money in it at the time. The photo which was shown here was taken in the Whitney home on County Line Road near Jeddo about 1933.