

Memorializing locals in the Civil War

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In the summer of 1862, President Lincoln's call for more volunteers was heard all across the north, including Orleans County. A few days later at the Holley Academy yard, several young men enlisted in Company G, 151st Infantry. One was William DeWolfe, right, who had clerked in the Holley Hotel and had been employed as a bank watch on the canal.



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After falling ill some time later, he was assigned to a military hospital in Washington, D.C., and was privileged to have seen the president several times. One night, DeWolfe was awakened by the rattling of sabers and the voice of the ward master announcing that President Lincoln had been assassinated. John H. Stevens of Knowlesville was in Washington on the great day of rejoicing when General Lee surrendered at Appomatox. He said it was "a magnificent site to see those large public buildings

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so brilliantly illuminated and so nearly decorated." Stevens was present at Ford's Theater and witnessed the tragic shooting of the president. He wrote, "how silently everybody seemed to move about. Those handsomely decorated buildings of the day before were ... transformed into places of mourning."

John Stevens waited in the vast crowd to view the remains of the president lying in state. But he gave it

up as impossible. William DeWolfe waited it out and passed through the East Room of the White House. Thus he was privileged to have a last look at the sad and noble countenance, bewhiskered because of a little Orleans County girl by the name of Grace Bedell who had suggested it.

That flag-draped April day long ago was a sad one for young DeWolfe of Clarendon and Stevens of Knowlesville, and indeed for all who ever struggled, before or since for government of, by and for the common people.

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