

# We Remember

by Lynne Belluscio

For the past couple of years, the Historical Society has organized the volunteers at Machpelah Cemetery for the placing of the Veterans' flags. Again this year, we will meet at 9 am on Saturday, May 25 at the entrance on North Street. Anyone is welcome to help honor those who have served in military service.

Originally Decoration Day was a day to honor those who had fallen in battle, but over the years, flags are placed on all military graves. I think that it is only fitting that as the flag is placed at the grave site, the name of the veteran is recalled. For many of the sites, no one has visited the grave since a year ago. So at least, once a year the name is read aloud, and we, the living, remember.

Several years ago, we began a notebook with information about the veterans - - if we could find it. The cemetery records often do not include the military record, so we look for an obituary, or genealogical information that might give more information. Sometimes we don't even know what branch of the service the veteran served in. This is an on-going project that is challenging and rewarding.

Several years ago, I remember listening to Garrison Keillor on Prairie Home Companion tell a story about the man who had been selected to give the Memorial Day speech in Lake Wobegone. He had given it a lot of thought, and finally he told the crowd that no words that he would say, could ever convey the honor that should be bestowed upon the Veterans. And he didn't say anything more. Everyone stood there amid their own thoughts, remembering fathers and grandfathers, mothers, brothers, sisters who served their country and who now lay beneath the verdant cover. His wordless salute to the Veterans was not the first. In 1868, at the first Memorial Day address at Arlington National Cemetery, only a few years after the end of the Civil War, the Honorable James A. Garfield, who served as a General in the Civil War and later was elected President of the



BERTHA FRANKLIN MARLIN BANGS

BORN AUGUST 28, 1892 - DIED DECEMBER 9, 1976

U.S. ARMY NURSE CORPS RESERVE - 1917-1920

MAN'S INHUMANITY TO MAN HAS CAUSED COUNTLESS THOUSANDS TO MOURN

**Bertha married Charles R. Bangs of LeRoy, retired Director of the American Telephone & Telegraph Company in 1928. So far nothing has turned up about Bertha and her service during World War I. Her husband Charles served in World War I in the American Red Cross, and perhaps that is where they met. We would not know of her service, except for the inscription on her gravestone.**

United States in 1881, addressed the crowd:

"I am oppressed with a sense of the impropriety of uttering words on this occasion. If silence is ever golden, it must be here beside the graves of fifteen thousand men whose lives were more significant than speech and whose death was a poem that music of which can never be sung. With words we make promises, plight faith, praise virtue. Promises may not be kept; plighted faith may be broken; and vaunted virtue be only the cunning mask of vice. We do not know one promise these men made, one pledge they gave, one word they spoke; but we do know they summed up and perfected, by one supreme act, the highest virtues of men and citizens. For love of country they accepted death and thus resolved all doubts, and made immortal their patriotism and virtue."

For many, Memorial Day is a three-day weekend ... the first weekend of the summer. For others it is a day for a BBQ or a picnic. It's the day to open the pool and clean the summer cottage. But lest we forget, our freedoms and

American way of life have been preserved by these brave men and women. For a brief moment, let's remember and acknowledge their service.

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