

## MIDWEST TRAVELER

## Honoring vets in Rochester

Soldiers Field Veterans Memorial remembers Minnesotans who died from the Civil War on.

By SARAH JOHNSON  
Special to the Star Tribune

Bells toll at noon from the nearby Mayo Clinic carillon as I join hospital workers in scrubs on a partly sunny summer afternoon to view the 2½-acre Soldiers Field Veterans Memorial in Rochester, Minn. Located in a city park that also sports a swimming pool, tennis court and softball field, the memorial is an enduring tribute to those who have served our country.

Modeled after the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., the black granite behemoth is dominated by the 12- by 50-foot Wall of Remembrance, which lists the approximately 3,000 service members from southeastern Minnesota who died as a result of injuries sustained in the military from the Civil War to the present day. (I wouldn't be a Minnesotan if I didn't notice there are plenty of Andersons, Johnsons and Olsons.)

The area is silent except for the sound of six flags behind the monument flapping in the breeze. They bear the insignias of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Merchant Marines.

The memorial was conceived at the 173rd Airborne Unit's reunion in 1995, and it is obvious that it was well planned. In addition to the Wall of Remembrance, the area also includes 50 blaze maple trees (one for each state) and four benches representing the four doomed flights on Sept. 11, 2001.

The inscription on another bench catches my eye: "Dedicated to the loved ones left on the homefront who are coping with stress and anxiety when a loved one is in harm's way."

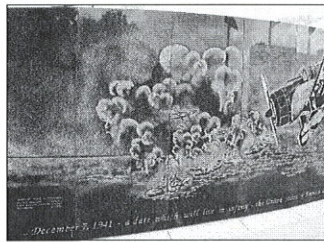
Although estimates for the monument came in at more than \$6 million, it was ultimately built for approximately \$2 million thanks to donations of time, talent and materials from the community. It was funded completely by private donations and is maintained by a perpetual fund set up by a local memorial committee.

It is open year-round and illuminated at night. I look down and see yellow flowers next to one of the nearly 6,000 inscribed 8- by 20-inch pavers available for anyone living or dead who has served honorably with the U.S. Armed Forces or our allies. Each bears the name, branch of service and conflict or year they entered service.

They stretch from the beginning of our country to



The Wall of Remembrance lists about 3,000 folks from southeastern Minnesota who died from injuries sustained in the military. Photos by SARAH JOHNSON • Special to the Star Tribune



Engravings depict historic scenes such as the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941.

the present day:

1st Continental  
William McCillis  
American Revolution

Union Army  
Daniel L. Aughey  
Civil War

Army Nurse Corps  
E.M. Betty Hopkins  
World War II

Air Force  
Eugene Kreinbring  
Vietnam

Dedicated in 2000, the memorial has enjoyed visits from many well-known Americans, including former Secretary of State Colin Powell and former U.S. Sen. Bob Dole. When Dole visited in 2006 and told former President Gerald

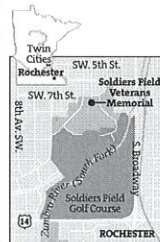
Ford, who was at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester at the time, about the memorial, Ford requested on the way to the airport that his helicopter hover over the memorial.

Two cannons flank the memorial: a World War I cannon given to the city by the American Legion and an Iraqi anti-aircraft cannon given by the local army unit.

#### Homefront history

The exterior walls serve as a veritable history lesson, containing graphics of interest from the Civil War to the Gulf War, complete with intricate engravings of scenes including medics helping soldiers onto a helicopter in Vietnam and the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Markers show interesting facts relating to our state's history.



Source: maps4news.com HERE

viewing this memorial to seek stories of others who served our country, for each story not told here is further evidence that freedom isn't free."

#### Checking in

With its neon sign looming above downtown Rochester, the Kahler Hotel is nearing its 100th anniversary. Built in 1921 at the request of the Mayo brothers, the local icon is directly connected to the famous clinic and the 60-store Grand Shops complex (hekahlerhotel.com).

#### Eating out

Opened in 2015, Forager Brewery is quickly becoming a go-to spot, with a full menu available while you sample various small-batch beers. Yes, it also offers tours if you're interested in how the pale ale is made onsite (foragerbrewery.com).

#### Getting there

Rochester is about 85 miles southeast of the Twin Cities via Hwy. 52. Soldiers Field Veterans Memorial is located at 300 7th St. SW.

#### More information

Pavers are available for purchase for \$350 each (fully tax-deductible). Visit the website: soldiersfieldmemorial.org.

Sarah Johnson is a Minnesota-based freelance writer who covers history, sports, food and travel for a variety of publications.

#### QUICK TRIPS



**LITTLE CHUTE, WIS.**  
Experience the rich flavors and history of Wisconsin cheese during the Great Wisconsin Cheese Festival Friday through next Sunday at Doyle Park. Visitors can watch cheese carving, enjoy cheese curds and other cheesy treats, check out a Saturday morning parade (10:30 a.m.) as well as play chip golf and join a 1-mile walk/run (1-800-236-6673, littlechutewi.org/cheesefest).



**LANESBORO, MINN.**  
Celebrate rhubarb during the Rhubarb Festival Saturday. A farmers market and a 1-mile or 5K run will start at 9 a.m. (registration at 8 a.m.). Festivities will continue at Sylvan Park through 3 p.m., and you can taste and vote for your favorite rhubarb treats, check out a rhubarb stalk throw, golf, games and a fashion show and enjoy music by the Sweet Rhubarb, the Rhubarb Sisters, Tom Schramm and others (rhubarbfestival.org).



**WINSTED, MINN.**  
Grammy Award-winning singer Keith Urban will co-headline the Winstock Country Music Festival (June 9-10) at 10:45 p.m. June 9 on the festival grounds. Music fans from around the Midwest will be in town to hear more than a dozen performers. Pre-festival events on June 8 include the opening of the campgrounds, a beanbag toss contest and a beer tent party with live music. On June 10 co-headliner Brantley Gilbert will perform at 10:30 p.m. Also Saturday, a beer tent party with more music and prizes will be held at 10:30 a.m. Other performers are Little Big Town, Lyrnyrd Skynyrd, Dylan Johanson, Drake White and the Big Fire, Chris Hawkey, Lindsay Ell, Tucker Beathard, LoCash, Runaway June, Shane Martin, Brooke Eden and Ryan Hurd (1-320-485-4287, winstockfestival.com).

COLLEEN A. COLES

#### VIEWFINDERS PHILIPPINES

## A scramble to school among rice terraces

**THE TRAVELER:** Brad Benson of Minnetonka.

**THE SCENE:** A boy dashes across the rice fields of Batad, a village in the province of Ifugao on Luzon, the Philippines' largest island and home to Manila.

**THE TRIP:** "I travel to Asia frequently, as my wife is originally from Malaysia. I try to take side trips; this was my first time to the Philippines," Benson wrote in an e-mail. He added that the Ifugao rice terraces have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. "These rice fields, of which Batad is just one of several, have been cultivated for over 2,000 years. The vistas are stunning, and the people are friendly. I hired a guide to take me on three treks in the area and loved every moment."

**HOW I GOT THIS SHOT:** Benson woke up early and perched on a high elevation so he had a good view of the sunrise and the terraces. He wrote, "I patiently watched and waited as the village slowly woke up. I took several photos of people heading off to work in the rice fields, but I got this shot of the boy hustling home after returning from the community bathing area. He was running late to get to school."

**EQUIPMENT:** Sony A7III camera with a Tamron 18-270 lens.

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