

## VETERAN MEMORIAL SITES IN THE ROCKFORD AREA

The Rockford area has a number of significant memorials honoring our citizens with military service. Several museums display military artifacts and exhibits of local military camp history. Peace, the fervent hope of veterans of past wars, is the subject of another local site.

### Veterans Memorial Hall and Museum

211 N. Main St., Rockford - 815-969-1999

Located in downtown Rockford just south of Jefferson Street between Wyman and Main Streets



Dedicated in 1903 in ceremonies that included a dedication speech by President Theodore Roosevelt, Memorial Hall is a tribute to Rockford citizens who have served in the Armed Forces. Large wall plaques list names of fallen veterans, and display cases contain Armed Services artifacts including memories of the Civil War, the World Wars, and Camp Grant. Murals of battle scenes are on some walls. Memorial Hall is the first war memorial building in the United States. Original architects were Charles Bradley and Frank Carpenter. The building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

Free parking in the lot on the south side at Mulberry and Wyman. Elevator available on the lower level on Wyman Street side on south end of building.

The Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau office is located two blocks south at Main and West State St. on the northwest corner.

## Civil War Memorial

Located at Veterans Memorial Hall and Museum, 211 N. Main St., Rockford



The statue of a Civil War infantryman rests atop a stone Corinthian column, saved when the old public library was razed.

The Soldier sculpture, by an unknown artist, originally stood in the foyer of the old Winnebago County Courthouse and was a gift from the G.A.R. Auxiliary in 1877. In 1967, the infantryman was moved to the Winnebago highway garage on Springfield Avenue, and, in 1970, was moved to the foyer of the present courthouse. In 1975, the statue was enclosed in safety glass, due to vandalism, and a bronze plaque was set at the base inscribed, "Well Done-Good and Faithful Servant."

Funding for relocation in 1984 came from a Community Development block grant, from the City of Rockford's War Memorial Fund, and private donations. The Main & Auburn Business Association spearheaded the effort.

The sculpture was moved to its present location at Veterans Memorial Hall in 2017.

The statue is 5' tall and made of cast zinc. Its total height is approximately 19 feet.

## Victory

Located in downtown Rockford at the corner of Mulberry and N. Main Streets, near Veterans Memorial Hall and Museum, 211 N. Main St., Rockford



The sculpture has six figures depicting men and women and diverse ethnic groups from all branches of the Armed Services. They represent veterans of World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the Persian Gulf. The figures are placed in an inclined base and framed by an abstract "V". The local artist, Gene Horvath (1927—1995), has many works in public spaces throughout Rockford. The statue, 14' by 10' made of aluminum and bronze, was dedicated on May 30, 1994.

"These figures just came off the line, in fighting uniforms - not dress parades. They are tired, but aware of the job they have done. They are responding to the acknowledgment of the crowd in a liberated city," Horvath said.

No element of the sculpture was cast. Thousands of individual pieces were cut, hammered and welded together for this bronze and aluminum sculpture. It took over three years to complete and represents a donation of over \$150,000 worth of the sculptor's time.

## Field of Honor

Located near Loves Park City Hall, 100 Heart Blvd., Loves Park



Located in the Arthur W. Anderson Peace Park, near Loves Park City Hall, it was conceived by Mr. Anderson as a memorial to honor veterans who served in the five wars of the 20th century. Five vertical columns and eight resin-composite life-sized statues are set before a series of 40 American flags. A small column honors civilian contributions to the war efforts.

Christopher Bennett of Keosauqua, IA, is the artist. Designed by Gene Horvath with landscape design by John R. Cook & Associates. Maintained by the Rockford Park District. Dedicated November 10, 1995.

## Vietnam Veterans Honor Society LZ Peace Memorial

Located on the grounds of Midway Village & Museum Center  
6799 Guilford Rd., Rockford



The LZ Peace Memorial features a Huey helicopter that meant so much to Vietnam veterans.

“If it wasn’t for that helicopter, none of us would be here,” said Joe Falzone, a Vietnam vet. “There were no roads in Vietnam. The helicopter meant everything - ammunition, food, supplies, mail from home, med-evacs. If you got in trouble, you called for a helicopter. You’d take one look around and you knew you weren’t walking out of there. A helicopter was your only hope.”

Designed by Rockford Vietnam veteran Nick Parnello. The site includes a black granite wall engraved with the 72 names of Winnebago County residents who died in Vietnam or later due to war injuries. The LZ Peace Memorial was dedicated May 31, 2005. The cost of about \$180,000 was covered mostly by donations of money and labor.

Midway Village Museum has displays of Camp Grant, a local WW I and II training facility that housed as many as 68,000 men.

*Source: Rockford Register Star article May 30, 2005.*

## Camp Grant Museum

Inside Command Post Restaurant, 1004 Samuelson Rd., Rockford



A few of the many displays in several rooms of the original Camp Grant building. Photos, post cards, maps, official documents, military uniforms and gear and popular sheet music of the time on exhibit.

The Command Post Restaurant houses the Camp Grant Museum in an original Camp building that once served as a fire station and later as the induction and muster out center. Camp Grant came into being in the early months of World War I. Construction began June 30, 1917 and in just two months' time, 1,100 buildings were completed. The Camp was named in honor of U.S. Grant on July 15, 1917. By 1918 the Camp housed 50,000 officers and enlisted men and covered 5,460 acres of land.

An active Army site until 1924, it was then turned over to the Illinois National Guard. In 1933 the Civilian Conservation Corps stationed about 1,100 men at the Camp who were put out of work by the Great Depression. In 1940 the Camp reverted to regular Army use for World War II as an induction center, training center, prisoner of war camp and a medical training unit.

Much of the Camp land is now the Chicago Rockford International Airport.

## Keeling-Puri Peace Plaza

Located on Perryville Rd. just south of Riverside Blvd.  
Parking lot entrance is off McFarland Rd.



Though not a veteran memorial, this site is included in the tour because the fervent wish of most war veterans is for a lasting peace. The Harmony Atlas depicts the world inside a pair of two-dimensional planar circles. Originally conceived as a globe by project benefactor Jim Keeling, who borrowed the concept from a peace-theme display at a Colorado church.

A court of flags depicts the major native countries of Rockford's many thousands of first-generation immigrants. Other related features include peace poles and a timeline of immigration in Rockford. The planar circles are stainless steel and aluminum with copper coatings and are 27 by 42 feet and weigh 7,000 pounds.

Lee T. Sido, a Northern Illinois University Professor and head of its sculpting department, is the artist. The flat design, which does not hide any land masses from full view as a globe would, works better for viewing and for the general theme of the plaza, Sido said. "Viewing it now, a person can take in the entire world from one point of view. The idea of peace, that's really what it's about - that there is no difference between any of the geographic regions."

Installation date September 2001.

Benefactors: James Keeling and Sunil Puri