

Waltham Civil War Veteran honored for his heroic actions

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• Photos



Gerard Davidson plays taps at the wreath ceremony in honor of Maj. George Maynard, a Civil War Medal of Honor recipient.



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The Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts members, from left, Lt. Eric Sigillo of Marlborough, 1st Lt. John Moynihan of Norwood, 2nd Lt. Paul Colella of Winchester and Lt. John Mitchell of Burlington stand before Maj. George Maynard grave yesterday at Mt. Feake Cemetery in Waltham.

By Jeff Gilbride/Daily News staff

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WALTHAM —

On George Maynard's grave is a worn carving of an eagle holding a five-pointed star, a badge of courage the Waltham man earned on the fields of Fredericksburg 146 years ago.

A new generation from an ancient military society paid their respects yesterday to the only Medal of Honor recipient from Waltham.

Each year, members of The Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts lay a wreath on Maynard's grave in Mt. Feake Cemetery.

"We're here to honor a member," said the company's 1st Lt. John Moynihan of Norwood. "He fought with distinction and helped wounded and fallen comrades on the skirmish line."

A watchmaker, Maynard, 25, enlisted as a private in the 13th Massachusetts Infantry on July 20, 1861, and was eventually promoted to captain and then major.

At a ceremony on March 20, 1898, Maynard received the Medal of Honor for heroism at the Battle of Fredericksburg on Dec. 13, 1862. The citation reads: "A wounded and helpless comrade, having been left on the skirmish line, this soldier voluntarily returned to the front under severe fire and carried the wounded man to a place of safety."

As a member of the 13th Massachusetts, he had also fought with distinction at the Battle of Antietam on Sept. 17, 1862, the bloodiest single day of the Civil War, according to company records.

Maynard mustered out of the 13th in February 1863 and later served as a captain in the 82nd U.S. Colored Infantry, according to records. In Florida in September 1864, the federal troops defeated Confederate forces in a pitched battle in a graveyard at Marianna, Fla.

According to an account offered on a Civil War Web site on the Florida skirmish, a union officer convinced the overwhelmed Confederates to lay down their arms. As they did so, other Confederates fired and wounded the officer, angering the federals and reigniting the battle.

Another union officer again convinced the Confederates to surrender. Troops from the 82nd, still angry over the wounding of their officer during the initial surrender, fired on the Confederates.

A furious Maynard put his pistol to the head of one of his own men and vowed to shoot the next man who fired on the surrendering prisoners.

Maynard's Medal of Honor and his Civil War coat are on display at the Ancient and Honorable's armory/museum at Faneuil Hall, according to company Lt. Eric Sigillo of Marlborough. Also on display is an oil painting depicting Maynard's rescue of his fallen comrade at Fredericksburg.

Maynard died in Waltham on Dec. 26, 1927 at the age of 91.

Sigillo, who works across the street from the cemetery at Nova Biomedical, said one of the artillery company's obligations is to honor members who served in wars. He said company plans a trip to Normandy in October, to honor U.S. soldiers who died during World War II.

Founded in 1638 in Boston, the company has more than 1,000 member across the country, five of whom are Waltham residents.

Yesterday, Sigillo, Moynihan, 2nd Lt. Paul Colella of Winchester and Lt. John Mitchell of Burlington stood before Maynard's grave, while company bugler, Gerard Davidson played taps.

The men wore blue blazers with the company's motto sewn on:

"Facta, non verba." Latin for "deeds, not words."

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