

Taunton graveside ceremony to pay tribute to Medal of Honor recipient

By Christopher Nichols

Gazette Staff Reports

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Taunton — The Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts will be in Taunton on Wednesday, May 23 to decorate the gravesite of Medal of Honor recipient and AHAC member Lowell Maxham.

The public is invited to attend the ceremony at Mayflower Hill Cemetery on Broadway. Around 20 AHAC members in full uniform will lay a wreath; plant an American flag, a Massachusetts state flag, a Medal of Honor recipient flag and an AHAC flag; and place flowers donated by Kane's Flower World in Danvers at Maxham's grave.

The day will begin at 9:30 a.m. at the grave of George H. Maynard at Mount Feake Cemetery in Waltham, and the group is expected to arrive in Taunton around 10 a.m., according to Lt. Eric Sigillo, of AHAC.

"The 1st Lieutenant of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company is charged with laying a wreath at the Mount Feake Cemetery at the grave of George H. Maynard (every Memorial Day)," Sigillo said. "We never as a group have organized anything where we've gone to all the gravesites... This is very special to us since this is the first time we've ever organized anything to visit the gravesites of the four past members who have received the Medal of Honor." In addition to Maxham and Maynard, the group will also visit the gravesites of Francis Snow Hasseltine at Wyoming Cemetery, in Melrose, and Gardner C. Hawkins at Lindenwood Cemetery, in Stoneham. All four AHAC members received the Medal of Honor for their actions during the Civil War.

Also in attendance at the day's ceremonies will be AHAC member and Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Capt. Thomas J. Hudner, Jr. A Fall River native and Navy pilot during the Korean War, he was awarded the Medal of Honor for his efforts to rescue a shipmate whose plane was shot down over enemy territory, according to the Congressional Medal of Honor Society's website.

About the AHAC The AHAC was officially chartered in 1638 by the Massachusetts Bay Colony and today is headquartered in Faneuil Hall in Boston. "We're the oldest chartered military organization in the Western Hemisphere and the third oldest in the world," Sigillo said.

According to the company's website, the AHAC was first organized as a militia for the protection of settlers following the landing at Plymouth and was led by Robert Keayne — a former member of the Honourable Artillery Company of London. Since that time, members of the AHAC have served in every military conflict of the United States, including the current conflict in Afghanistan.

"We have some members that are deployed right now," Sigillo said. The AHAC website also states that eight members have received the Medal of Honor and four members have also become presidents of the United States: James Monroe, Chester Alan Arthur, Calvin Coolidge and John F. Kennedy.

Today, the company serves as the honor guard for the governor of Massachusetts and participates in a number of parades in Boston and Plymouth. "We also support all the branches of the military," Sigillo said.