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News

Tribute to Civil War-era Connecticut Regiment's service at Vicksburg unveiled

By Governor Rell's office

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Governor M. Jodi Rell today unveiled the centerpiece of a new state monument that will be placed at "Grant's Canal," part of the Vicksburg National Military Park at the site of the Civil War battlefield in Mississippi.

The ceremony was held at the Governor William A. O'Neill Armory in Hartford.

"I have often come to this Armory to send our current generation of citizen-soldiers off to active duty around the world," Governor Rell said. "And on happier occasions I have been here to welcome them home. But I am far from the only Governor to have that awesome responsibility, and can think of no more fitting place to honor the citizen-soldiers of our past who helped preserve our nation."

The monument pays tribute to the 9th Connecticut Volunteer Regiment, known as the "Irish Regiment," one of 30 regiments the state contributed during the Civil War. The 9th Connecticut, which contained volunteers from 70 Connecticut towns, was central to the effort to dig a canal across DeSoto Point, a peninsula created by a bend in the Mississippi River near Vicksburg.

Union General Ulysses S. Grant's plan was to send Union gunboats through the canal, bypassing Confederate strongpoints, then shell Vicksburg, which sits on a bluff overlooking the river.

The canal effort, undertaken during the height of the summer in malarial river swamps, took a dreadful toll on the 9th Connecticut. Of the 252 fatalities the unit suffered during the war, 150 fell at Vicksburg. The canal effort ended after about a month and the 9th Connecticut was withdrawn.

Vicksburg National Military Park has more than 1,350 monuments and memorials – including 28 state memorials – and hosts nearly 1 million visitors a year.

"It is time – indeed, past time – that a tribute to the citizen-soldiers of Connecticut was placed there as well," Governor Rell said. "This monument will serve as a lasting memorial to the gallant men of the 9th Connecticut."

Vicksburg, known as the "Citadel of the South," was besieged for 46 days and eventually surrendered on July 4, 1863 – a day after Confederate General George Pickett's doomed final charge at Gettysburg. The Confederacy would fight on for nearly two more years but never recovered from the twin blows of Gettysburg and Vicksburg.

In August 2005 Governor Rell authorized the 9th Connecticut Regiment Memorial Committee, under the direction of the Adjutant General, Air Force Major General Thad Martin, to commission a memorial to the citizen-soldiers who served at Vicksburg. The monument, approximately 10 feet high by 10 feet wide, consists of a base, a centerpiece and two wings. In all, it weighs 13,597 pounds.

Made of black and green granite, it bears two brass plaques. Vivid etchings on the centerpiece were hand-etched by Stacy Mathieu of Mathieu Memorials in Southington.

The Connecticut memorial is scheduled to be installed at Vicksburg on October 14.



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