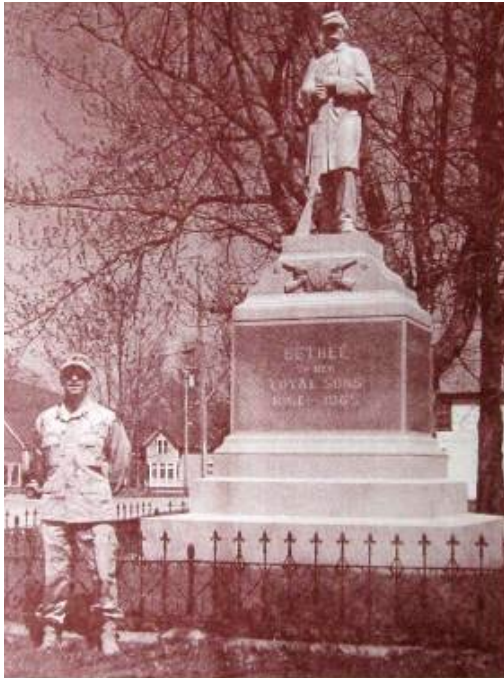


Bethel's Civil War Soldier Monument



Bethel's 2004 Town Report cover carried this photograph of the Civil War monument emplaced and dedicated on Memorial Day 1908. The soldier standing at parade rest is Ernest Aguilar. The annual town report that year was dedicated to men and women from the greater Bethel area who have served in the military in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Bethel's Civil War monument was dedicated on Memorial Day 1908. The 2008 Town Report gave a brief account of the day's celebration 100 years ago. The report's cover included a photograph taken at the time of the ceremony when the monument was unveiled.

Within a year after the War of Rebellion had ended and Bethel's soldiers had returned home, public expressions of patriotism and pride of military service took form—the Brown Post, Grand Army of the Republic was organized and hopes for a public monument that would symbolize the town's support of its country and soldiers were high.

Bethel's post war veteran's organization took the name of Harlan P. Brown who had been killed early in the war at the battle of Antietam while leading his company within the 7th Maine Regiment. The depth and breadth of national feeling toward its just ended effort to defend the Republic may be difficult to realize in the 21st Century. A permanent monument to the bravery and devotion of its sons was a most highly esteemed goal of the Bethel citizenry. However, such

a monument was very expensive.

June 30, 1897 News : A soldiers' memorial? *After a week's delay, the meeting to address a soldiers' monument was of no consideration at all. It is probably safe to say that the old soldiers will never be called upon to assist in erecting their own monument in the town of Bethel.*

Two Parrott guns and round ball shot had been donated to the Brown Post G.A.R. in Bethel if the Post accepted the offer and would pay for transporting the guns and equipment from the Kittery Navy Base to Bethel. Possibly much of the recent enthusiasm for a memorial monument or building came from a series of War Remembrance articles about the Bethel Company. These articles appeared weekly on the front page of the Bethel News. However, in the end, at the postponed meeting there was **no decision to continue.**

The advent of the Spanish-American War in 1898 rekindled patriotic spirits and determination to acquire a suitable monument. Finally, in 1908 with a combination of renewed fund raising efforts and a town appropriation the monument's proponents reached their goal and could order a granite monument topped by a figure of an infantry soldier standing at parade rest. Inscribed on the granite pedestal are the words: **BETHEL to her Loyal Sons 1862—1865**



Memorial Day 1908 the long sought memorial to Bethel's Civil War soldiers was dedicated with speakers and band music.

E. E. Whitney's monument company of Bethel was given the contract to acquire the piece. Smith Granite Company of Westerly, Rhode Island, manufactured the blue granite foundation and soldier figure then shipped it by rail to Bethel, at a cost of \$1,550, where Whitney took over and installed the granite work where it stands at the south end of Mechanic Street.

Dedication of the monument involved a large parade with the twenty five piece Rumford Falls Band, mounted riders, and a variety of marching units. Over a dozen speakers, town officials and distinguished guests made up the program at the new monument. Following this assembly, a camp meeting was held at Odeon Hall.

Bethel now had a monument that all could be proud of.