

CAMP GRANT

The Coles County Fair Grounds notwithstanding, in 1859 a group of Mattoon investors organized as the Union Agricultural Fair Association, with the purpose of establishing a fair ground at the northeast edge of Mattoon. Its boundaries encompassed present day Logan and 6th Street between Piatt and Shelby Avenue.

They acquired a tract of land of about 90 acres. Barns were built that almost surrounded two sides of the perimeter and a one mile; figure 8 horse track was graded. Races were held and small agricultural fairs were held in 1859, 1860 and 1861.

With the passage of the Ten Regiment Bill, each Illinois Congressional District was called upon to raise a regiment. The Union Agricultural Fair Ground was pressed into service as the recruiting camp for the Illinois Seventh Congressional District.



The campground was designated Camp Terry. When the first regiment was raised at Camp Terry, Captain U S Grant was sent to Mattoon by Governor Yates to swear the volunteers in. Captain Grant swore the 7th Congressional District Regiment into service on 15 May 1861 at Camp Terry.

The men of the regiment were so impressed by Grant that they elected to rename their camp Camp Grant. This was all, of course, before Grant achieved his later fame, and the Mattoon Gazette commented on 17 May 1861:

The paper was referring to Grant by his previous Regular Army title of Colonel, other than his then state rank of Captain.

So even though the Camp Grant name fell into general usage, the camp continued to be referred to as Camp Terry in contemporary documents and reports.

On Monday the Companies took the oath of allegiance, administered by Col. Grant, a Government officer, The name of the encampment has been changed to Camp Grant, but we know not wherefore.

The 126th Illinois Infantry was organized in Alton with Colonel Jonathan Richmond, from Mattoon, commanding. The unit was sent to Camp Grant for training after being formed in Alton. A recruit of the 126th Illinois Infantry, from Hillsboro, described his experience at Camp Terry thus:

"Our barracks were long buildings, boarded up and down, with three tiers of bunks and straw for two.

The camp was surrounded by the usual tight board fence customary to inclose (sic) fair grounds. A picket line was stationed on the inside at about three-hundred-yard intervals.

We had orders to drill six hours per day, in company drill and in squads and the barracks after the last tap of the drum were as still as a mouse afterward.

The city of Mattoon, a mile away, was full of soldiers. It must be remembered other regiments were coming in and departing."

Camp Terry had been established to serve the Seventh Congressional District but it was retained throughout the Civil War.

In addition to the five regiments raised here in Mattoon: the 21st, 79th, 123rd, 135th and 143rd, Camp Terry became a center for other regiments to rendezvous and for veteran units to rest and rehabilitate on furloughs from the war zone. The retention of Camp Terry for this purpose was greatly facilitated by the two major railroad lines that crossed through Mattoon.

Among other units that spent their furlough at Camp Terry were the 12th, 38th, 41st, 54th, 62nd and 66th Illinois Infantry Regiments, the 6th Illinois Cavalry, as well as several Cavalry companies.

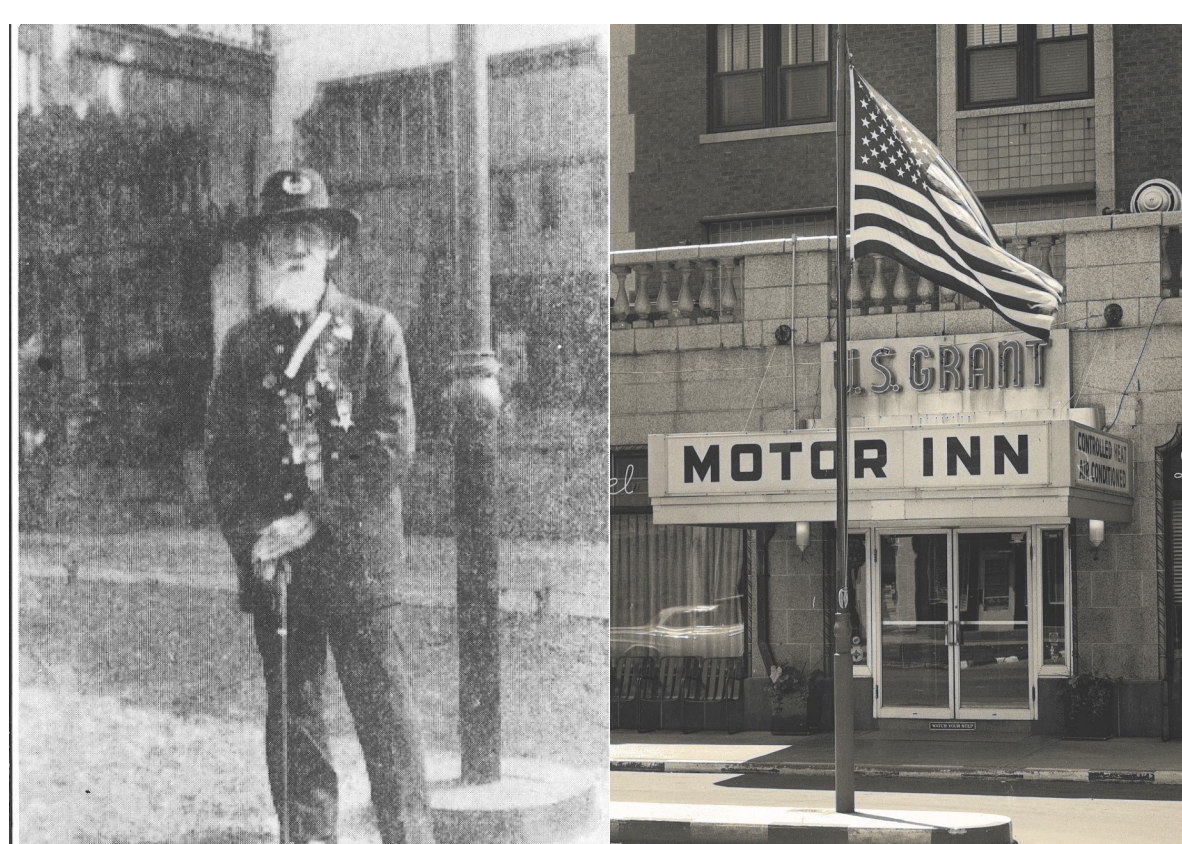
Col. Pugh's gallant veteran 41st regiment and Capt. Hannah's company of the 54th are still in the barracks here. A public dinner is being given them to-day.

In January of 1864, additional barracks were built in Mattoon between Charleston and Wabash Avenues at the eastern city boundary. These barracks accommodated the large influx of soldiers on furlough or awaiting assignment.

The 18 May 1864 Mattoon Gazette noted:

"Parts of some twenty companies of hundred day men have arrived in barracks here, the aggregate number being over 1000."

The 54th and 62d, are ordered to rendezvous at this place, and the barracks are now in course of erection in the east part of town near the corporation line.



Dr Samuel A Campbell, served in the 151st Illinois Infantry Regiment, and after graduating from the Baltimore Dental College in 1869, moved to Mattoon and began the practice of Dentistry. Dr Campbell practiced dentistry in Mattoon for 55 years. Campbell was very active as one of the founding members of Mattoon's Grand Army of the Republic chapter, 404. He came into possession of the Camp Grant flagstaff and in 1928 donated it to the newly built U S Grant Hotel.

The flagstaff, now restored, is preserved inside the Mattoon Public Library, and a replica proudly stands in front of the Library.



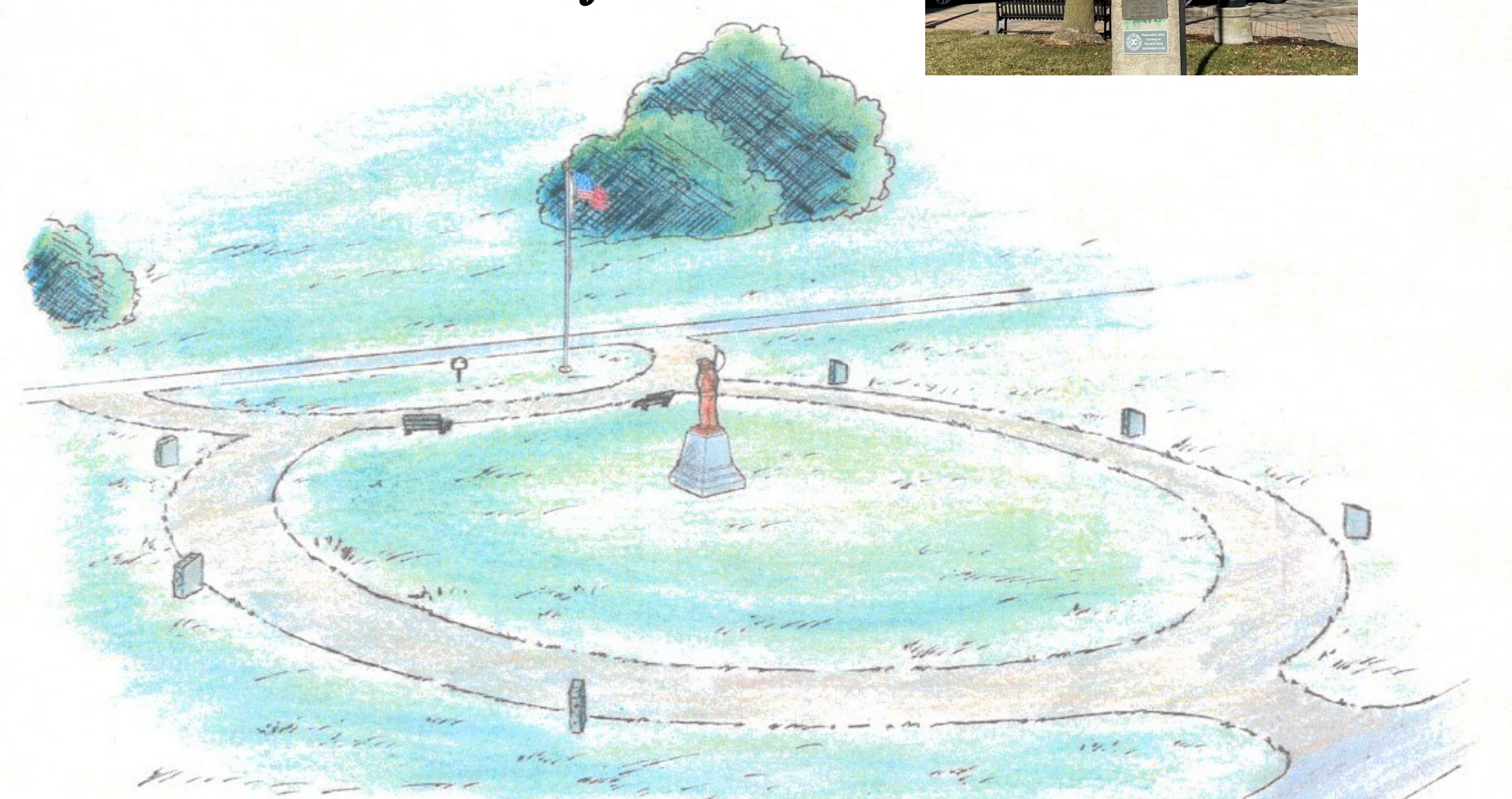
In later years the area encompassed by Camp Grant became known as Grant Park. The school district operated the Grant Park School in the neighborhood.

While the encampment was officially known as Camp Terry, the name Camp Grant fell into general usage and to avoid confusion, the designation Camp Grant is used throughout this Civil War Center.

Today, through the dedication of Steve Thompson and others, Camp Grant is memorialized at the Mattoon Civil War Memorial Ellipse.



Steve Thompson



Civil War Memorial Ellipse. Shelby and N. 2nd Division Street.