

## Michigan at Chickamauga for 150th Anniversary

With permission from the Chickamauga National Military Park, the Michigan Historical Commission's Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee, placed a commemorative wreath at the Loomis' Battery (1st Michigan Artillery, Battery A) monument on the Chickamauga Battlefield. The wreath, made of Michigan evergreen boughs and white pine, was placed on Friday, September 20, 2013, in honor of all Michigan soldiers who fought and sacrificed during the Chattanooga and Chickamauga campaigns of 1863. The campaigns were described afterward by one Confederate soldier as "the death-knell of the Confederacy."

The 1st Michigan Light Artillery, Battery A (Loomis' Battery) is featured in the new Park Service film at the Chickamauga Visitor Center and was the subject of the ranger-led talks on the battlefield both Saturday and Sunday. Park ranger Chris Young, who portrays the battery's commander, Lieutenant George Van Pelt, in the film, led the tours. Starting at the Visitors Center and concluding at the Loomis' Battery Monument, ranger Young recounted the 1st Michigan Artillery story with great passion, inspiration and conviction, making the sacrifice made by Michigan men during the battle relevant and personally meaningful for all those in attendance. On Saturday alone more than fifty people, including many youth, braved the damp cool rain to visit the monument and to hear the battery's story.

During the weekend, Matt Switlik of Monroe and others from Michigan exhibited artifacts and items from the Loomis' Battery at the Chickamauga Battlefield Visitor Center. Among the artifacts on display from Michigan was Parrott gun #23, one of the six Loomis' Battery cannon that was engaged and subsequently captured on September 19, 1863, during the Battle of Chickamauga. Also on display were nearly one hundred reproduced images of battery members, many of whom fought at Chickamauga and struggled so mightily to preserve their country.

The Loomis' Battery monument was dedicated on September 19, 1895, in a ceremony where surviving battery members spoke, noting that on this day thirty-two years ago Michigan had "laid upon the alter of freedom" their comrades in defense of flag and country. This impressive monument has a visually stunning bronze bas relief illustrating the battery in action. The obverse side details in stone its story during the battle. The monument stands at the location where Lt. George VanPelt and five other battery members were killed while defending the guns. After firing 64 rounds of canister and percussion shell, Confederate infantry rushed upon the battery in overwhelming numbers, compelling the Federal infantry support to fall back. With nearly 46 horses killed and many cannoneers killed or wounded, the battery was over run, losing 5 of its 6 ten pounder Parrott guns. Several of the Loomis' Battery's guns were re-captured during the fighting the following day, and all were re-claimed before the end of the war.

During the American Civil War, the nation lost approximately 2.5% of its population. New research puts the number of deaths close to 750,000. It is vitally important, especially during the Civil War Sesquicentennial, to commemorate and remember the sacrifice made by those who came before us.





