

1945 June 18-24

Veterans Memorial Park Dedication

Veterans Memorial Park near West Salem has been enjoyed by campers, picnickers, fishermen, and many others for many decades. Anita Doering, archivist at the La Crosse Public Library, has written a [history of the park](#) from its origin at a different location as Waterloo Park in the early 1900s, to its relocation near Highway 16 in 1936, to its renaming as Veterans Memorial Park in 1945, to its expansion in the 1990s.

At a La Crosse County board meeting in February 1945, supervisor Louis G. Nelson introduced a resolution to rename Waterloo Park. He proposed the name be changed to Veterans' Memorial Park in honor of La Crosse County veterans of World War I and World War II. He said there should be an appropriate plaque at the park entrance. In the *La Crosse Tribune* article about this meeting, Nelson's resolution was sandwiched between proposals to list delinquent property taxes and to appoint two full-time sheriff's deputies to crack down on gambling devices. At the same meeting, the board questioned the legality of contributing \$5,000 toward a "war veterans' memorial," so perhaps Nelson's resolution was intended as a cheaper alternative for honoring war veterans.¹

Nelson's resolution to rename the park was passed, in March 1945, at the next county board meeting. This action was accorded one sentence in the *La Crosse Tribune*. In the same sentence, it was noted that the bridge in the park would still be known as Waterloo bridge.²

Although the official act of changing the park name appears to have generated little fanfare, a dedication committee consisting of county supervisors Jack Martin, Otto Briggs, and Louis G. Nelson planned a large celebration for June 24, 1945.³

This week we present several newspaper articles about the park's dedication as Veterans Memorial Park.

Invite All County Residents To Attend Park Dedication

Citizens of La Crosse county are invited to attend the formal dedication of Veterans' Memorial park Sunday.

This park, formerly known as Waterloo park, was renamed by recent action of the La Crosse county board and is to be dedicated to the men and women of La Crosse county who have and are now serving in the armed forces.

Plans have been made to handle a capacity crowd. Parking arrangements are in the hands of the La Crosse county highway patrol, with the assistance of traffic officers from surrounding counties. The local State Guard also will assist in patrolling the park to guard against accidents. Boy Scouts will have a first aid station on the grounds.

The program is scheduled to begin at 11 a. m. with a baseball game between the American Legion Junior all-stars and a picked county team. At 1 p. m. the La Crosse city band will give a concert. The concert was made pos-

sible through the cooperation of the La Crosse park commission.

Formal dedication ceremonies will be held at 2 p. m. Representatives of three religious faiths have been asked to make an appearance at this time. The American Legion color guard, with the help of several veterans, will raise the flag on the newly-installed flag pole.

At 2:45 p. m. the WKBH barn dance group will present an entertaining program and at 3:30 p. m. Beanies Old Style Lager team will play the 1610 Headquarters and Service team of Camp McCoy. Dancing on the tennis court will start at 7 p. m.

Refreshments will be made available by the American Legion and Navy Mothers' club. The dedication committee appointed by County Board Chairman W. O. Van Loon consists of Supervisors Jack Martin, Otto Briggs and Louis G. Nelson.

South Africa has a campaign to save poor whites in rural areas.

(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 June 20, page 3)

Plan Extensive Program For Dedication Of Veterans' Park

An all-day program of entertainment has been planned for La Crosse county residents attending the dedication of Veterans Memorial park, formerly known as Waterloo park.

It was renamed through recent action of the La Crosse county board and dedicated to the men and women of La Crosse county who have and are now serving in the armed forces.

The program is scheduled to begin at 11 a. m. with a baseball game between the American Legion Junior all-stars and a picked county team. At 1 p. m. the La Crosse city band will give a concert through the courtesy of the park committee.

Ceremonies At 2 P. M.

Official dedication ceremonies will be held at 2 p. m. Participating in this part of the program will be the Rev. Robert Hanson, assistant pastor at St. Joseph's Cathedral; the Rev. Oscar S. Paulson, pastor of the Bethel Lutheran church; and Rabbi I. Mayefski of Chicago. The latter represents the congregation of the Sons of Abraham in La Crosse.

The flag will be raised by several county veterans with the assistance of the American Legion color guard and the Veterans of Foreign Wars drum and bugle corps. Included in the flag rais-

ing group will be Virgil Cullem of La Crosse and Donald Diesburg of Bangor, first county men to receive discharges under the point system.

At 2:45 the WKBH barn dance program will be featured and at 3:30 p. m. there will be a kitten-ball game between Beansies Old Style Lager team and 1610 Headquarters and Service team of McCoy. Starting at 7 p. m. there will be dancing on the tennis courts with Don Kaye's orchestra.

Buses will be available at the McCoy Transportation company depot at 9:30, 12:30, 1:30 and 3:30. Extra buses will be used if necessary.

Plan For Large Crowd

Plans have been made to efficiently handle a large crowd. Parking arrangements have been supervised by the La Crosse county highway patrol with the assistance of traffic officers from surrounding counties. The local State Guard also will help in patrolling the park to guard against accidents. Boy Scouts will have a first aid station on the grounds.

Refreshments will be made available by the American Legion and Navy Mothers' club. On the dedication committee, which was appointed by the county board chairman, are Supervisors Jack Martin, Otto Briggs and Louis G. Nelson.

You're Invited

to attend the Big Picnic and Formal Dedication of

VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK

Formerly Waterloo Park on U. S. Highway 16 near West Salem

SUNDAY, JUNE 24th

PROGRAM

11:00 A. M.—Baseball, American Legion All Stars versus Picked County All Star Team.

1:00 P.M.—Concert by La Crosse City Band.

2:00 P. M.—Park Dedication Ceremony with the following Clergymen officiating:
Rabbi I. Mayefski of Chicago, representing Congregation of Sons of Abraham of La Crosse.
Rev. Robert Hanson of Saint Joseph's Cathedral.
Rev. O. S. Paulson of Bethel Lutheran Church.

Flag Raising by local veterans assisted by American Legion Color Guard and Veterans of Foreign Wars Drum Corps.

2:45 P. M.—WKBH Barn Dance Program.

3:30 P. M.—Ball Game . . . Beans Old Style Lagers versus 1610 Headquarters and Service Team of Camp McCoy.

7:00 P. M.—Dancing with Don Kaye and his orchestra.

Refreshments

on the grounds by
American Legion
and Navy Mothers Club.

BUSES

will leave Camp McCoy station, 4th and King streets, at 9:30 A. M., 12:30, 1:30 and 3:30 P. M.

Plenty of Parking Space

Bring Your Picnic Lunch and Spend the Entire Day

**This Space Contributed by*

La Crosse Laundry & Cleaning Co.

Home of Nu-Luxe Better Dry Cleaning and Sunshine Family Washing



—Tribune Photo
A New Archway Has Been Built for Veterans' Memorial park, formerly Waterloo, on U. S. highway No. 16 near West Salem. The park will be dedicated by the county board of supervisors at exercises today.

Dedicate Park This Afternoon

Clergymen To Take Part In Exercises

Today's the occasion. Veterans' Memorial park, formerly known as Waterloo park, will be re-dedicated in special ceremonies. An all-day program of entertainment has been planned.

It was renamed through recommendation of the La Crosse county board and dedicated to the men and women of La Crosse county who have and are now serving in the armed forces.

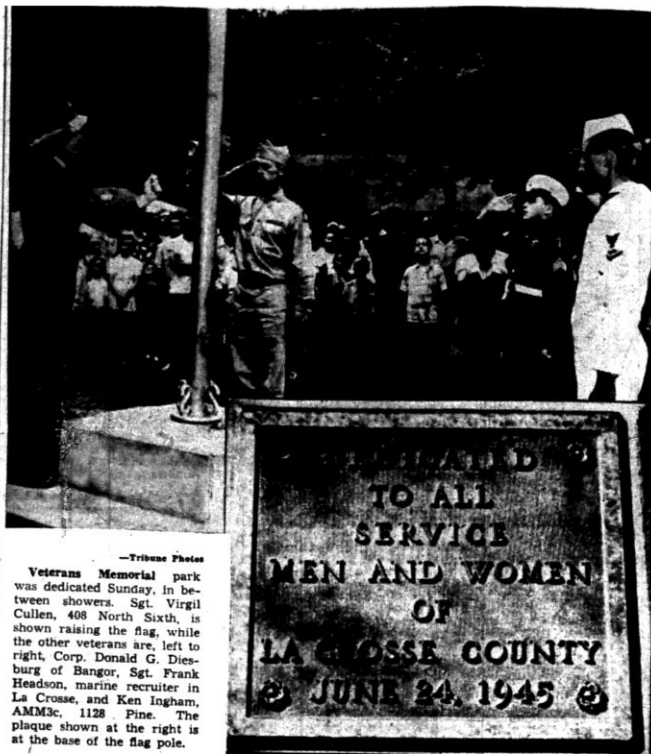
A baseball game between the American Legion Junior All-Stars and a picked county team will be held at 11 a. m. The La Crosse city band will play at 1 p. m.

Official dedication of the park will be at 2 p. m. Taking part will be the Rev. Robert Hanson, assistant pastor of St. Joseph's Cathedral; the Rev. Oscar S. Paulsen, pastor of Bethel Lutheran church; and Rabbi I. Mayefski of Chicago. The latter represents the congregation of the Sons of Abraham in La Crosse.

The flag will be raised by La Crosse county men in service. All veterans are invited to take part. They will be assisted by the American Legion color guard and the Veterans of Foreign Wars drum and bugle corps.

WKBH's barn dance will be featured at 2:45 p. m. and there will be a kittenball game between Beans Old Style Lager team and 1610th Headquarters and Service team of McCoy. Starting at 7 p. m. there will be dancing on the tennis courts with Don Kaye's orchestra. Heileman's mules will be at the park to give free rides to children.

(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 June 24, page 2)



—Tribune Photos
Veterans Memorial park was dedicated Sunday, in between showers. Sgt. Virgil Cullen, 408 North Sixth, is shown raising the flag, while the other veterans are, left to right, Corp. Donald G. Diesburg of Bangor, Sgt. Frank Headson, marine recruiter in La Crosse, and Ken Ingham, AMM3c, 1128 Pine. The plaque shown at the right is at the base of the flag pole.

Showers Halt Park Program

Clergymen Of Three Faiths Are Speakers

Intermittent heavy showers interrupted the all-day dedication program at Veterans Memorial park, formerly known as Waterloo park, Sunday.

Many La Crosse county residents arrived in the morning, only to go home for a change of clothing and come back for the afternoon program. More than once picnickers gathered up food and scurried to cars and the one shelter house in the park.

But despite the rain, many remained for the formal dedication of the park about 2:30 p. m. Representatives of three faiths were introduced by Louis G. Nelson, along with the park committee of the La Crosse county board.

Clergymen Give Talks

Speaking were Rabbi I. Mayefski of Chicago; the Rev. Robert Hansen, assistant pastor at St. Joseph's Cathedral; and the Rev. Oscar S. Paulson, pastor of the Bethel Lutheran church.

Rabbi Mayefski told the audience that 40 members of the Hebrew faith from the county are serving their country. "In the Hebrew language which is the official language of the Jews, there is no present tense," said Mayefski. "Everything is in the past or future. Let us forget the present and remember the terrible war which has engulfed the world and build for the future. Let us remember what happened when we dedicated this park and make it possible that we never again have to dedicate such parks as this." "The American men and women in the armed forces are fighting to preserve the way of life we love," said Rev. Hansen. "The hardships they have endured and are enduring I need not review for you now. The sacrifices they are making must be apparent to us all.

Symbol Of Gratitude

"It is singularly appropriate, then, that this beautiful park should be the symbol of our gratitude. And that is what we are making of it today. For in naming it Veterans Memorial park we are saying thanks to them in the most eloquent way we know how."

"I say it is singularly appropriate that a park should be chosen as the symbol of our gratitude, because in a way, a park like this with all its natural beauty, its welcoming openness, its stimulating freshness, is in itself a symbol of the American way of life for which all our veterans will have fought," concluded Rev. Hansen.

"From homes in the coulees and valleys and from villages and the city within the borders of this county, thousands of young men, and maidens too, have gone forth to battle the foes of freedom and decency," stated Rev. Paulson.

"They furrowed the sea with their ships, traveled the unseen paths of the airplanes and their battle shoes have left their marks on the lands of the Fascists and Nazis. The islands of the vast Pacific have heard their battle cry and songs of victory.

Respect For Farm Lads

"The world has a wholesome respect for the farm lads, shop lads, store lads and men from every walk of life who forced the surrender of the foe at their bayonet's edge.

"The entrance to the park will remain as a reminder for all time of their sacrifices. The words spoken here will be forgotten but those who played here, lived near here, only to grow up and fight and die, will not be forgotten," Paulson concluded.

Immediately after the addresses the flag was raised by several veterans with the assistance of the American Legion color guard and the Veterans of Foreign wars drum and bugle corps.

The WKBE barn dance group began its program but another shower about 4 p. m. ended all activities for the day.

Refreshments were served by the American Legion and Navy Mothers' club. On the dedication committee, appointed by the county board chairman, were Supervisors Jack Martin, Otto Briggs and Louis G. Nelson.



The bridge at Veterans' Memorial Park, West Salem, Wisconsin

(Jeff Rand, 2009 May 7)

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Sources & Notes:

¹ "Seek Opinion About Funds," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 February 15, page 9.

² "Board Votes Salary Boost," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 March 16, page 2.

³ "Invite All County Residents To Attend Park Dedication," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 June 20, page 3.