May 10, 2019

Honorable Rick Perales, Chair, and
Members of the Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee
Ohio House of Representatives
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Ohio Representatives:

Re: HB 155 Ohio Veterans’ Heritage Protection Bill.

In 1898, Grand Army of the Republic Hiram Strong Post 79 in Dayton, Ohio, obtained through federal legislation a 13-inch seacoast mortar on long-term loan from the U.S. Navy for public use as a veterans’ memorial. The Model 1861 mortar had seen combat service on a Mississippi River gunboat during the siege of Vicksburg in 1863. At a public ceremony, the mortar and 13 cannon balls were installed for display as part of the Post 79 burial section. As of 1997, it was one of 27 of 162 seacoast mortars built for the U.S. Army and Navy known to still exist. The cannon balls disappeared long ago.

Old Greencastle Cemetery, located along South Broadway St. in Dayton, is the final resting place for approximately 300 veterans. The site contains about 6,000 graves dating to 1817. The overall 5.5 acre cemetery was founded in 1849 by the United Brethren Church. Old Greencastle was operated and maintained actively into the 1990s by the Harrison Township Cemetery Association. About 1998, the last Old Greencastle Cemetery trustee sold the seacoast mortar to a private collector in Emmaus, Pennsylvania for about $10,000 plus a representative, inert tube resembling a 19th century artillery piece. The cemetery itself was sold to commercial owners who focused attention on still active New Greencastle Cemetery located roughly a mile away on Nicholas Rd.

In 2011, Dayton’s WRGT TV-45 aired a news story concerning the overgrown, abandoned cemetery. A SUVCW Sherman Camp 93 member observed that there were graves of veterans among waist-high weeds in Old Greencastle Cemetery. Shortly thereafter, the Camp initiated their ongoing, voluntary program to restore honor to, and maintain, the GAR section, all veterans’ graves throughout the cemetery, and basically the overall property. As part of the effort, they confirmed burial locations for all Civil War veterans there, installed tombstones upon Civil War veterans’ graves, and placed flag markers on veterans’ graves throughout Old Greencastle. Research by Camp 93 documented graves at

I am a past member of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War national Council of Administration, a Past Department of Ohio Commander, and Past Camp Commander of the Major General William T. Sherman Camp #93 in Dayton. I served three years on the Governor’s Sesquicentennial of the Civil War Committee. I am a retired U.S. Air Force officer.

I very much hope for, and encourage, support of HB 155. Passage of the bill into law is urgently needed to safeguard our state’s many monuments, memorials, and artifacts that honor all United States Armed Forces veterans and their service defending our nation. The law is an important step to prevent the loss and destruction of veterans’ monuments and memorials as happened to Dayton’s seacoast mortar at Old Greencastle Cemetery.

Fredric C. Lynch

FREDRIC C. LYNCH
Senior Vice Commander

Dayton’s Seacoast Mortar being removed by collector - 1998

GAR Post 79’s Seacoast Mortar outside in Emmaus, Penn. - 2017

Solid metal fake cannon tube at Old Greencastle Cemetery - 2017