

Opening remarks at Centennial Celebration:

Welcome – and thank you for coming to the Centennial Celebration of our Flag Bearer monument.

Because ON THIS DAY we honor the men and women who have given their lives in the service of our country, and because it is therefore a sacred day, I've asked Reverend Mary Langley of the Hillsdale United Methodist Church to offer an invocation.

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Let me begin by acknowledging that we have the privilege of sharing this day with our local veterans, many with the VFW Post 7552 Cadby-Shutts Post. We're grateful for your service and thank you for letting us kick off this parade by commemorating this monument.

On this site, on September 18, 1861, the first 30 men from Hillsdale, Austerlitz, and Copake were "mustered into service" for the Union cause.

Hillsdale would eventually send close to 150 men. Our neighboring town of Copake, already larger in size with its bustling iron works, sent close to 170 men. All in all, Columbia County sent some 2,700 men and New York State sent more men – and lost more – than any other state in the Union.

Three million men fought in the Civil War, north and south combined. Nearly a quarter of them would die.

The men who served from Hillsdale have their names inscribe on a tablet behind me. They were farmers and merchants and blacksmiths and sheep herders. They walked these streets and many of us live their houses. They loved this community the way we love it.

18 boys from Hillsdale never made it home.

One of the soldiers who made it home was Charles Lacey. He had a farm in Austerlitz and lived there until his death in the 1890s. His great-grand-daughter came through Town on Thursday to put flowers on his grave...and touch his name on the plaque behind me the way she does every Memorial Day weekend.

That kind of reverence – that kind of enduring admiration and respect for those who served is what makes Memorial Day so remarkable.

We don't know why Hillsdale was the only town to erect a grand memorial to the Union in Columbia County, but here it is. And we're grateful for it. 50 years after the war, while the Lincoln Memorial was under construction in Washington DC, a Civil War veteran and merchant named John K. Cullin, left \$10,000 in his will to fund the creation of this historic "Flag Bearer" monument.

## ON THIS DAY/CIPKOWSKI

The day it was dedicated in 1916 was quite something. According to the Hillsdale Harbinger, the local paper whose office was in a little building right there, 2,500 people came to the dedication. They came from all around the county and many of them traveled to Hillsdale by train. The Hillsdale Station was just down what was called Railroad Street in those days. And we know that the band that played at the dedication that day came from Philmont and arrived on the 1:30 train.

By the way, our Taconic Hills band is on the way from the Philmont parade right now – and hopefully they're not waiting for the train!

Also present that day were about 100 veterans of the Civil War from all around county. These men has been boys when they joined the Union forces.

There's a wonderful photograph of the occasion that shows the massive crowd, the decorations, the veterans of the Civil War standing right here.

Today we're joined by our local veterans of the Korean and Vietnam wars. Their names are appropriately inscribed at the Veteran's Monument down the road, along with the men who fought in the world wars. It's our privilege to honor all our veterans today.

Now. What we'll do is recreate some of the moments that were part of the 1916 ceremony. It's just going to take a few minutes.

First, we'll hear a short poem that was written in 1916 for the occasion by Hillsdale resident Tom Evans. Meg Wormley will read it for us – her grandparents, John and Lillian Mettler from North Hillsdale, were almost certainly in the crowd that day.

Next, the names of the 18 men who never made it home will be recited by Town Historian Jay Rohrich.

The Gettysburg Address will be read by Rusty Elster, a senior at Taconic Hills.

And finally, the national anthem will be performed by Lewis Cleale, who is currently performing in The Book of Mormon on Broadway.

After the Anthem, the Taconic Hills band will play as Helen Hall and Commander Gerry Roberts lay the wreath at the monument.

Meg...

CONCLUSION...

Thank you for joining us today. It's fitting that we began our 2016 Memorial Day Parade here – marking the Centennial of this great reminder that freedom is not free and is always worth fighting for.

ON THIS DAY/CIPKOWSKI

Now it's time to line up and enjoy the parade that will get underway shortly – we'll have more special events and refreshments at the Hillsdale fire house after the parade. You're all welcome to come along and hope to see you there. And THANK YOU for joining us this morning.