



BICENTENNIAL BULLETIN No. 35 **—Sheffield Celebrates 200th Birthday**

The Sheffield Bicentennial Commission will issue a *Bicentennial Bulletin* each Monday throughout 2015 that illustrates the rich heritage of our communities. **View them at — www.sheffieldbicentennial.org or sheffieldvillage.com**

103RD OHIO VOLUNTEER INFANTRY CAMPGROUNDS *5501 Lake Road, Sheffield Lake, Ohio*

On the bluff of Lake Erie at the northeast corner of Sheffield Lake rests one of the oldest, yet least publicized historical sites in Lorain County—a campground founded by veterans of the Civil War that is still carried on by their descendants. At the end of the Civil War, a group of men who had served in the 103rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment decided to build a place to hold reunions during the summer, to renew old friendships, and enjoy the comradeship of the men who had endured the war years together. Eventually the site in Sheffield Lake was selected and in 1907 four acres of land were acquired. The veterans decided that membership shares in the 103rd O.V.I. Memorial Foundation would only be available to the veterans, their wives and children, and descendants of the children. Soon

Gazebo and Historic Marker at 103rd O.V.I. Campgrounds



the veterans began building cottages so that the families could spend more time on the grounds under more comfortable conditions, and eventually a kitchen, mess hall, dance hall/community building was added, including space for a Regiment Museum. The organization is believed to be unique in the nation. An Ohio Historic Marker, which details the history of the organization, was erected in 1974.

The 103rd O.V.I. was recruited for Civil War service from Cuyahoga, Lorain, and Medina Counties.

The Regiment was organized at Cleveland, Ohio in August 1862 and served until 1865 in response to President Lincoln's call for 75,000 men. The 103rd Infantry distinguished itself as one of the Union's finest, having served in the battles of Blue Springs, Knoxville, Dandridge, and Spring Hill in

Tennessee, and Resaca, Kenesaw Mountain, and Atlanta in Georgia. The survivors of this historic regiment formed an association in 1866, which has been perpetuated through the years by their descendants.

Reunions of the veterans were held in Elyria, Cleveland Medina, Wellington, Painesville, Chagrin Falls, Solon, and Chippewa Lake from 1867 to 1878. The next year wives and families were invited to the reunion held in LaGrange and to reunions held at Ridgeville, Olmstead Falls, Bedford, Nottingham, Vermilion, and Brooklyn where tents were pitched for an extended encampment. In 1888 the first of a long series of reunions, until 1907, were held Randall's Grove, a resort in northwestern Sheffield Township. At the 1907 reunion a corporation was formed to acquire a permanent campsite, and the next year property was purchased from the Case Farm on the Lakeshore at the northeastern edge of Sheffield Township, at Stop 71 on the Lake Shore Electric Railroad.

Over the years, Casement Hall, named for the regiment's commanding officer—General John S. Casement, a barracks named *Elfordilno* in recognition of the work and donations of veterans Elsasser, Ford, Dillon, and Nodine, a mess hall, shelter house, pier on the lake, and other amenities have been constructed by the veterans and their families. *Elfordilno* now serves as a regimental museum. Today numerous cottages are located on the camp grounds that serve as dwellings for descendants. Several weekends each year the O.V.I. camp grounds and museum are open to the public for a pancake breakfast.

Casement Hall, campground headquarters



103rd O.V.I. reunion at Randall's Grove (circa 1900)



103rd O.V.I. Regimental Band at the Sheffield Lake campgrounds (circa 1910)



Elfordilno Barracks now house the 103rd O.V.I. museum

