The Story of 'Billy Yank'
Contributed by Donna Brock

When the call for Civil War volunteers came from President Lincoln, the men of Warren County and Hackettstown responded. Both Captain Holt's Company and Company B, 15th Regiment of the New Jersey Volunteers were manned with volunteers from Hackettstown and the surrounding areas.

The men and boys returned to their homes after the war, but it was another thirty years before the town erected a monument to commemorate the local residents who fought, and those that died, while serving to preserve the Union during the Great Civil War of 1860-1865.

J.W. Fiske Iron Works of New York City was contracted to manufacture the 19 foot tribute to Hackettstown's Civil War heroes. On the top stood a life-sized, bronzed statue of a Civil War soldier. It also included a drinking fountain for humans, basins for horses and smaller areas for dogs. The statue was funded by three sources; the Hackettstown Area School Children Monument Penny Collection ($300.00), local businesses ($200.00) and the Hackettstown Town Council ($200.00). It was a splendid tribute to those from the area who served during the Civil War.

The Monument was unveiled and dedicated with elaborate celebrating on Decoration Day. May 30, 1896. The pastor of the Presbyterian Church, Reverend J.C. Chapman delivered the dedicatory oration. There was a parade, firemen in uniform, war veterans and children carrying American flags. It was all quite impressive.

Thirty years later, this original tribute to the Civil War soldiers was lost. On December 29, 1926, under a Court Order to widen State Highway Route 46, the monument affectionately known as 'Billy Yank' was toppled and the metal sold for junk.

The New Billy Yank

In May 1998, several local residents began a campaign to replace the destroyed Civil War Memorial Statue. A donation of land approximately 90 feet from the original site was received from Valley National Bank and Warren County and a contract for the Statue pedestal and park site plan, which included personalized pavers for the walkways, was negotiated.

With the assistance and support of All Aboard for Hackettstown, the Hackettstown Civil War Memorial Monument Committee successfully spearheaded the effort to replace 'Billy Yank' as a lasting tribute to our Civil War Soldiers.

The new 'Billy Yank' was five years old on May 28, 2006. It may have taken many decades, but through the patriotism of local residents, the Civil War monument for which Hackettstown's school children collected 30,000 pennies in 1896, was finally replaced.

Purchase a Paver

The Monument Committee continues to ensure the maintenance and upkeep of the Statue. Pavers can still be purchased in the walkways as memorials or to honor family members. Click here to open the purchase form.