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Massachusetts National Guard Ceremonial Unit
22nd Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, Inc.
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135th Anniversary Program

Morse Institute Library
Natick, Massachusetts

Sunday, January 4, 2009
1:15 p.m.



I. Presentation of the Colors

54th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment
Massachusetts National Guard Ceremonial Unit

22nd Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry
Honor Guard

II. Welcome

Dr. Joseph A. Keefe, President, Board of Trustees,
Morse Institute Library

III. Address

Honorable Judge John W. Bacon
(Portrayed by Dr. Joseph A. Keefe)

IV. Original Hymn

by Edwin C. Morse

On this beautiful birth-day of Truth and of Light,
In our wilderness journey below,
We have come to the rock which staves are to smite,
That the fountain of knowledge may flow;
Lo, the stream is now waiting to gush from its side,
And, thirsty, the multitude stand,
All eager to quaff from the life-giving tide,
That so freely shall water the land.

(Continued on next page)

Honorable Henry Wilson, former Vice-President (1812-1875)

He was born Jeremiah Jones Colbath in 1812 in Farmington, NH, the son of farm laborer Winthrop Colbath and his wife, Abigail. As a youth, he worked on a farm and attended the common schools as well as the Strafford, Wolfsboro and Concord Academies for short periods. Colbath had his name legally changed by the legislature to “Henry Wilson” in 1833. In Dec. 1833, he moved to Natick, MA where he learned the shoemaker’s trade. He soon was a manufacturer of boots and shoes and employed more than 100 men. Henry Wilson was generally known as “the Natick Cobbler.” He was also a fiery abolitionist.

Wilson was a member of the Massachusetts State Legislature between 1840 and 1852. He was elected to the United States Senate in 1859, 1865 & 1871 and served from Jan. 31, 1855 to Mar. 3, 1873. During a recess of Congress in 1861, Henry Wilson raised the 22nd Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry and was its first colonel, serving from Sept. 2—Oct. 29, 1861. Wilson was elected Vice-President of the United States on the Republican ticket with President Ulysses S. Grant and served from Mar. 4, 1873 until his death from a stroke in the Capitol Building, Washington, DC, Nov. 22, 1875. He was interred in Old Dell Park Cemetery, Natick.

54th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment (Massachusetts National Guard Ceremonial Unit). They will present the United States flag, the Massachusetts flag, and the 54th regimental colors. Six men from Natick, black and white, served with the 54th Regiment during the Civil War.

The 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment was reactivated on Nov. 21, 2008 at a Statehouse Ceremony and re-designated as the Massachusetts National Guard’s Ceremonial Unit which renders military honors at funerals. The revival pays homage to the group of black soldiers who fought on behalf of the state in the Civil War. The unit won praise for its doomed charge on Battery Wagner in South Carolina in 1863. The 1989 movie “Glory,” based on the letters of the unit’s commander, Colonel Robert G. Shaw, depicted the prejudice that the unit and Shaw faced.

22nd Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry

Know as the “Henry Wilson Regiment” after its founding colonel, U.S. Senator (later Vice-President) Henry Wilson from Natick, the 22nd served in the Civil War with the Army of the Potomac, seeing action in the Peninsular Campaign, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, The Wilderness, and the Siege of Petersburg among many other engagements. The regiment’s ranks included a chaplain and several enlisted men from Natick. For more information regarding both the original 22nd as well as the present day reenactor unit, visit www.22ndmass.org.

Some interesting notes about the people and the times:

Samuel Morse

In the early 1800s, Samuel Morse was among a group petitioning for a meeting of proprietors of a library to be called The Natick Circulating Library. Since, at this time, the establishment of a public town library was not authorized by the legislature, a small, semi-private, circulating library of 94 volumes was kept in the home of Samuel Morse. He was also the owner of the local tavern. Thirty-nine years later, that early circulating library evolved into the Citizen's Library and had accumulated 425 books. Henry Wilson was one of the original shareholders of that library. By 1860, that library was gone.

Mary Ann Morse (1825-1862)

Little is known about the life of Mary Ann Morse. She was the granddaughter of Samuel Morse. Her parents were Reuel and Mary (Parker) Morse. Reuel Morse operated a blacksmith's shop. Her parents manufactured and painted plows for purchase. They prospered in town. Miss Mary Ann Morse probably didn't receive more than a grammar school education. Her life was enriched by having books in her home. Her two brothers, Clarendon and Dorwin died before she was born. Hence, she was the only surviving child.

Miss Mary Ann Morse was a spinster and remained at home to take care of her parents until their death around 1850. After her parents died, she lived with the family of Dr. Ira Russell. She was a semi-invalid, herself, until she died of consumption (Tuberculosis) in 1862. Dr. Russell influenced her much in the final disposition of her property. Before her death, she decided to draw up a will and leave her entire estate to found a library. Her lawyer was Willard Drury, Esq. Miss Mary Ann Morse thought that it would be a good thing for Natick to have a "literary Institute for the use and benefit of all the inhabitants of [the] town."

Judge John W. Bacon (1818-1888)

Honorable John Bacon was born in Natick in 1818. He graduated from Harvard College in 1843. He received his legal education at the law school in Cambridge and in the office of Charles T. Russell, Esq. in Boston. He was admitted to the Bar in 1846. Shortly, thereafter, he set up a practice in Natick. At different times, he held some of the most important town offices. Judge Bacon was one of the citizens who did a lot of work in establishing the Morse Institute and he was a trustee for fifteen years. He was a Judge of the Superior Court of Massachusetts.

IV. Continued

Let the freshness of childhood, the wisdom of age,
And the bloom and beauty of youth
Approach the clear fount blessed by poet and sage,
And drink of the waters of truth;
But while gladly our goblets we plunge in the wave,
And our souls with pure gratitude glow,
Let us pause, and remember the dead in her grave,
To whose bounty these blessings we owe.

V. Presentation of the free use of the Library to the Inhabitants of Natick

Honorable Judge John W. Bacon
(Portrayed by Dr. Joseph A. Keefe)

VI. Reply for the Inhabitants

Honorable Henry Wilson
Vice-President of the United States
(Portrayed by Elliot Goodman, Library Trustee)

VII. Original Hymn

by Fred'k A. Benson

Art and Knowledge spread abroad,
Ever fill the printed page;
Else were lessons left untaught
Of a long forgotten age.
Thus comes inspiration's breath,
Down from long extended years;
Nerving us for conflicts oft,
Cheering us in all of our fears.

Scanned by multitudes unborn,
Will these honored volumes be;
Volumes filled with burning thoughts,
Thoughts that elevate the free.
Blessing on the Donor's name
Will descend from sire to son;
Loud and louder swell the strain,
As the streams of times flows on.

VIII. Closing Remarks

Honorable Judge John W. Bacon
(Portrayed by Dr. Joseph A. Keefe)

IX. America (My Country 'Tis of Thee)

by Samuel Francis Smith

My country 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the Pilgrims' pride,
From ev'ry mountain side
Let freedom ring.

My native country, thee,
Land of the noble free;
Thy name I love;
I love thy rocks and rills;
Thy woods and templed hills;
My heart with rapture thrills
Like that above.

Let music swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees
Sweet Freedom's song;
Let mortal tongues awake,
Let all that breathe partake,
Let rocks their silence break,
The sound prolong.