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Black River students clean historic grave markers

Photos



Stephen Kloosterman/The Holland Sentinel
Seventh-grader Sal Ingrassia, left and eighth-grader Eric Harmsen scrub the tombstone of a civil war veteran at Holland's Pilgrim Home Cemetery Tuesday afternoon. A class of Black River Public School students are cleaning tombstones as part of a class project.

By **STEPHEN KLOOSTERMAN**
The Holland Sentinel
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Holland, MI — Sixth-through-eighth-graders at Black River Public School brushed the dirt off of Holland history Tuesday afternoon — literally.

Students in Marguerite Stephens' Investigate Holland class at Black River are scrubbing the grave markers of Civil War veterans at Pilgrim Home Cemetery. They started the work Sept. 18 and intend to come back later this week to finish the job.

Stephens, a history teacher, said the idea for the project originally came from her students.

"I think it's sad that so many of them are dirty, and nobody took care of them," said sixth-grader Claire Farrell. Some students brought brushes and a bucket from home for the job.

A group of tombstones on the north side of Pilgrim Home Cemetery on 16th Street mark the graves of Civil War veterans. On the same site, a column topped with a metal statue of a soldier memorializes "our absent dead, volunteered from Holland in defense of the Union and never returned" who "lie buried in known and unknown graves in

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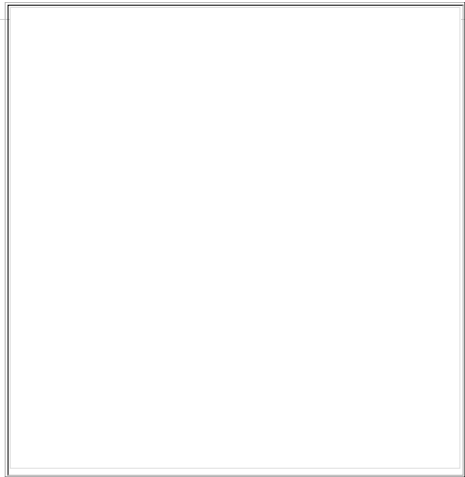
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the South."

For homework, Stephens assigned each of the students to research a name from one of the markers. Many of the markers list the units veterans served in.

Seventh-grader Sal Ingrassia and sixth-grader Jonathan Logan compared the military companies listed on the markers.

"I've only found two or three from the same brigade," Ingrassia said.



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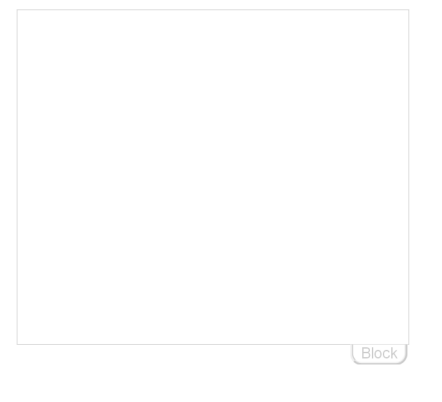
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