

Stratford History - Always Amazing

By David Wright, Editor
Stratford Historical Society's
CUPHEAG CORNER

While Memorial Day, originally known as "Decoration Day", was not celebrated in Connecticut until 1876, in Noank, Stratford's Company K was organized in 1863 to defend Connecticut while its enlisted men were waging war. After the Civil War ended, one of Company K's additional duties was to commemorate those soldiers killed during the Civil War. Company K may have been one of the first organizations in America to formally observe a Memorial Day. They did so with military exercises and with a parade.

The Bridgeport Daily Standard

April 28th, 1869

STRATFORD

The annual April parade and target practice of Co. K, 8th Regiment, C. N. G., took place on Saturday, the 24th inst. The company turned out with full ranks, and though many familiar faces were missed, (nearly all of the original charter members of the Company having been recently discharged by reason of the expiration of their term of service,) their places were filled with new men, who really reflected great credit upon themselves, and upon their able and popular commander, Captain Gray. The morning was occupied in, drill, (evolutions and the manual of arms,) and

after an hour at noon for rest and refreshment, the Company formed line, and followed by carriages, containing the gentlemen selected to act as judges of the shooting, (Messrs. J. H. Stagg, Ezra Whiting, Albert Wilcoxson, and Samuel W. Beardsley,) proceeded to the "Academy Hill" where parade was formed, and a fine photograph of the command was taken by that enterprising artist, Wilson, of your city, after which the line was resumed, and the Company proceeded to the spot selected for target practice, in the lower part of the town, near ("Fresh Pond," falsely so called,) where the preliminaries were soon arranged, and the firing commenced; one hundred and forty-four shots were fired, sixty-seven of which entered the target, the remainder being judiciously

distributed over the "Great Meadows," and surrounding country. Three rounds were fired by each man, and at the close of the firing, it was announced that nine of the men had hit the target three times each, thirteen, twice each, and fourteen once each. The remainder "could not see it."— The two nearest shots to the centre were fired by Lieut. Russell and private Cozier each being $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches from the centre. The "leather medal," which is always awarded to the person making the farthest shot from the centre of the target, became a matter of competition between Lieut. Judson and private Wilcoxson, which the 'toss of a cent' decided in favor of the Lieut. and private Wilcoxson wears his honors for a year.



Frash (Fresh) Pond c 1907. Photo by E. M. Wells.