

Town Civil War Veterans

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Daniel M. Hooley, interviewed by John F. Crowley, 10/29/73 .

I know that the Grand Army veterans went all over to visit the schools prior to Lincoln's birthday, and also prior to Memorial Day, which was then called Declaration Day. Those men in those days were probably in their early 70s, and our teacher used to tell us the minute they entered the room to stand up and show them respect. And that we would do. And then she would put us through a little patriotic exercise that the men would simply enjoy immensely.

And I knew some of those men. One who stands out in my mind was Constant F. Oakman. Now they used to call him "Old Oak". And Constant Oakman had a slight disability from wounds incurred in action during the war — had a very light limp, hardly noticeable. In the old Grand Army parades he used to carry a guidon identifying the unit as Post 36 Gran Army of the Republic. And Constant Oakman used to tell us a lot of interesting stories about when he was a boy, and also briefly on his war service. He had little chin whiskers coming down up to his ear lobes and surrounding his lower jaw. And he used to drive the livery wagon from the Boston and Maine Railroad Station in Arlington Center for anyone that desired to use his service. He was a splendid character, a little cherubic appearing man.

Then there was Murdock McLeod, who I knew for many years even when I resided as a child on Medford Street. And he was the nearest exemplification of Santa Claus in appearance you could imagine. Long, white flowering beard, rosy cheeks and all. And when they (*the parade*) would be going by the house on Medford Street to Mount Pleasant Cemetery he would always hold his cane up and point it at me and say, "I got you Danny!" which made me feel pretty good. . . .

I remember another fellow whose name was Robert White. Robert White was the exact exemplification of Buffalo Bill, and in that period of time a great many of G.A.R. veterans would sit out in front of the police station which was located in the then Town Hall, . . . and they used to sit out there and talk. . . . One time my father took me in to see the Buffalo Bill show in Boston. And later that evening my mother and I were walking in the Center, and much to my amazement there was this man standing there with a white goatee and long white hair. I said to my mother, "There's Buffalo Bill talking to Daddy." "Oh" I said "My goodness!" She said, "That's not Buffalo Bill, that's a man named White." "No," I said, "Its Buffalo Bill." So finally I let it drop at that. . . . Well, this Bill White was a school janitor, and a very colorful character. (*Turned out he lived near D.H. with two other C.W. veterans named Marden who were in the Battle of Gettysburg. Bob White was taken prisoner and spent time at Libby Prison. When he got out and got his health restored, he became a school custodian — maybe Locke School. The custodian at Crosby School was Major Rensselear Knight, another veteran*) . . .

I was living as a child in an environment where all those old veterans were living right around my neighborhood. I was absolutely fascinated with them. Between them

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and my own grandmother, who lived during that period as a citizen of Boston, I learned more history of that period than I did during my years at Harvard College. . . .