

## DeGlopper Park Beautification



Members of the East Park Garden Club and DeGlopper Memorial Expansion Committee decorating park in spring of 2019. From left, Fay McDonald, Ray DeGlopper, Rich McDonald, Mary Cooke, and Rosemary Madejski. (Photo courtesy of Robert Haag)



Mary Cooke at the DeGlopper Memorial last spring with geraniums. (Photo courtesy of Mary Cooke)



Original garden around the KIA Monument with a former gas station at the top of the photo. (Photo courtesy of East Park Garden Club)

club members, and four white iron benches were also donated by the American Legion and its Women's Auxiliary. With the addition of a water fountain at the north end, the memorial park became "a sitting park," according to the garden club book.

The garden club's executive

committee supervised the planting of the trees and nursery stock and the 2,100 annuals, consisting of St. John's Salvia, Paleface and Comanche Petunias and Carpet-of-Snow Alyssum were planted by members of the Girl Scout Troop 1054, Campfire Girls, GaWeNot Troop, Brownie Troop and members of the garden club, who also planted the tulip bulbs. In addition to its executive committee, the garden club also had a chair and members for the following committees: Pinching Back, Weeding and Labeling. William Disbrow provided permanent wooden signs and Mrs. Olmstead lettered them with the names of the trees and nursery stock.

The focal point of the park back then was the KIA Monument, surrounded by white marble chips and the flowers.

In the historical garden club book about the park opening, it is written: "As the park

matures, more and more Islanders will visit it in a contemplative mood, reflecting on the past and the great implications of the memorial. It is our hope that in some small way this memorial park, as well as the thousands of others throughout the world, will help remind people of the horrors of war and augment the desire for world peace."

The book also contains several testimonial letters to the garden club about their work at the DeGlopper Park. "I want to thank your group for the exceptional job," wrote Thorne. "From the number of glowing comments, we have received relative to the park, we know the citizens of Grand Island are also well pleased."

Ray Griffin, manager of Lane Drugs, which used to be in the plaza, wrote: "The triangular piece of land that comprises the DeGlopper Memorial Park is now a delightful exhibition of beauty at the very center of Grand Island. May I express not only my compliments but also those of the many residents and tourists who have commented to me about this charming picture that the DeGlopper Park presents to the passing motorist."

Town Building Inspector Harold J. Doerr wrote: "Not only is the garden alive, refreshing and active with its lovely color changes from time to time as it enshrines the DeGlopper Memorial area, but the faithful raising and lowering of our National Flag in its central location daily presents this garden of honor and beauty as a breathing shrine."

Because of restrictions against large gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic, last year's Memorial Day ceremony was not held for the public, but McDonald is hopeful things will change this year, which also includes the unveiling of the statue.

"Now that everything is reconstructed, the park looks great," said McDonald, who has discussed the plants they will need for this year with her committee. Her husband, Rich, is a veteran and he assists with the gardening.

"At this point in our lives, it makes us feel so

proud to be an American, especially with all we have been through this past year," she said. "Even during the pandemic, we would meet at the park during the summer to weed the gardens. It would make us feel so good."

McDonald is especially pleased to see how all veterans will be recognized at the DeGlopper Memorial. "Deservedly so, a lot more attention seems to be given to our veterans. This has become far more than when we began, but to see all that has gone on there with so many volunteers from our community is impressive. I have worked with Dan Drexelius on the gardening project for years and I know what a passionate man he is. There are so many like him on this project and this particular project for our veterans is one of the reasons I have stuck with it all these years."

Rosemary Madejski, president of the East Park Garden Club, is extremely proud of McDonald's dedication to the park and her members efforts each year. "We have enhanced the beauty of the park," she said.

During Mary Cooke's term as town supervisor, she attended the Erie County Sheriff's Citizen's Academy in 2014, and one of the tours was through the Erie County Correctional Facility in Alden. During the tour, she became aware of the horticulture program it offers inmates and the three green houses to grow vegetables and flowers. She also learned flowers are available at no cost, but they cannot be sold, and must be placed in public places. She then applied for the flowers using Grand Island Town Hall and the DeGlopper Memorial Park as the destination for them.

"Once we were approved, I contacted a few friends and we drove a trailer to Alden and received 90 geranium plants, which we split between Town Hall and the park," Cooke recalls. "We have now been providing them to Fay every year. It was an amazing experience for me, and it is an excellent program for the prisoners."

In addition, McDonald receives flowers for the park from the greenhouses at McKinley High School through Dan Robillard, a teacher in the school's horticulture program and the administrative chair of the DeGlopper Memorial Expansion Committee.

Cooke, who is not a member of the garden club but volunteers with them at the DeGlopper Memorial, cannot say enough about the club.

"The gardens in this park would not be possible without the dedication of these members," she said. "The town could never take on such a project. With their experience, they know exactly what plants and shrubs will work there and they plant and maintain them throughout the summer and fall. They are extremely well organized."

**HERITAGE STRUCTURES**  
WE BUILD ON SITE  
**SHEDS, GARAGES & GAZEBOS**  
WE MOVE, LEVEL & REMOVE BUILDINGS  
FREE Delivery Lifetime Warranty  
  
[www.wheatfieldgardenandgifts.com](http://www.wheatfieldgardenandgifts.com)

**WHEATFIELD Garden & Gifts**  
2921 Niagara Falls Blvd. 946-3364  
Near Ward Rd.

## Charles N. DeGlopper Memorial Statue and Killed in Action Plaques Unveiling

Saturday, June 5, 2021, 9:45 a.m.

Grand Island Boulevard at the corner of Baseline Road



**CHARLES A. SMITH**  
August 15, 1915 - March 19, 1945



Private First Class (PFC) Smith graduated from Kenmore High School and was an officer in his family's business, Smith Boys, Inc. He enlisted in the Army for officer training in April 1943.

PFC Smith was wounded in action in France on February 10, 1945 and spent three weeks recovering in a Paris hospital. In a March 18 letter to his parents, he wrote that he was with the First Army and handling mail. He was killed in action in Germany the next day, four months after his brother George E. Smith lost his life in a war transport plane crash in California. He was awarded the Purple Heart.

PFC Smith was married and had a six-year-old son. He was buried in the temporary Henri Chapelle Cemetery in Belgium and his remains were returned to the United States in December 1947 when a funeral was held and he was laid to rest in Forest Lawn Cemetery.

**SAVE THE DATE, 78 DAYS TO GO...**

Sponsored By:

**Come see the All New**  
**FUCCILLO**  
AUTOMOTIVE GROUP

CHEVROLET HYUNDAI TOYOTA



\* Co-Sponsored by



Grand Island Auto Tech and



Niagara Frontier Publications, Pennysaver/Island Dispatch

\* You can help support the Charles N. DeGlopper Memorial by donating to: <http://degloppermemorial.org/get-involved/>