OUR DEAR LORD YOU HAVE CALLED US TO BE FAITHFUL AND WE HUMBLY ASK FOR YOUR BLESSINGS, AS WE ASSEMBLE HERE TO MARK THE FIRST MEMORIAL DAY REMEMBRANCE OF A NEW DECADE AND EMBARK UPON THIS HALLOWED EMPRISE-TO PAUSE WITH GRATITUDE-TO UNITE TOGETHER TETHERED WITH HUMILTY OF HEART AND ANCHORED BY DIVINE DEVOTION.

A PASSAGE FROM THE MEMORIAL DAY PROCLAMATION OF 1914 BY INDIANA GOVERNOR SAMUEL RALSTON TRANSCENDS THE YEARS-“UNION SOLDIERS LIVING AND DEAD HAVE AN ABIDING PLACE IN THE HEARTS OF THEIR COUNTRYMEN. AS THE YEARS COME AND GO OUR NATION’S LOVE FOR THEM GROWS STRONGER. OF THEIR SERVICES TO THEIR COUNTRY THERE IS APPRECIATION, BUT FOR THEM NO ADEQUATE COMPENSATION. THEY ACHIEVED MIGHTILY. THEY INTERPRETED FOR THE AGES THE LANGUAGE OF OUR FLAG. THEY ASCRIBED TO IT LOFTIER SENTIMENTS AND FLUNG IT HIGHER IN THE HEAVENS, THAT OTHER NATIONS MIGHT CATCH ITS SPIRIT AND FOLLOW IT. AND AS WE MARK WITH THE FLAG AND STREW WITH FLOWERS THE GRAVES OF THOSE WHO ARE DEAD AND CHEER AND HONOR WITH SONG AND PRAISE THOSE WHO ARE LIVING, MAY THERE COME TO US THE PROPER INSPIRATION FOR THE DISCHARGE OF OUR CITIZENLY DUTIES.”

A PORTRAIT PHOTO OF A YOUNG CONFEDERATE SOLDIER ON THE FRONT COVER OF ‘SHILOH’, AN ADMIRED BOOK IN THE VOICES OF THE CIVIL WAR COLLECTION IS REVEALING, BUT THE CAPTION ABOVE IT EXEMPLIFIES THE DAY AND ARE THE STRIKING COGENT WORDS SPOKEN BY A SOLDIER-“STRANGE THAT A SUNDAY SHOULD HAVE BEEN CHOSEN TO DISTURB THE HOLY CALM OF THESE WOODS.” THE CRIES OF WOUNDED AND DYING MEN ON THOSE FIELDS BETWEEN THE ARMIES COULD BE HEARD IN THE UNION AND CONFEDERATE CAMPS THROUGHOUT THAT STORMY NIGHT AND THROUGH THE FORMIDABLE EYES OF GENERAL GRANT WE VIEW THAT BATTLEFIELD AND ARE AWESTRUCK-“I SAW AN OPEN FIELD IN OUR POSSESSION ON THE SECOND DAY, OVER WHICH THE CONFEDERATES HAD MADE REPEATED CHARGES, SO COVERED WITH DEAD THAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE TO WALK ACROSS THE CLEARING, IN ANY DIRECTION, STEPPING ON DEAD BODIES, WITHOUT A FOOT TOUCHING THE GROUND.”

AS DAWN WOULD BREAK ON MONDAY APRIL 7TH 1862, THE UNTESTED INDIANA 29TH WOULD ENTRENCH WITHIN A MASSIVE FORTY-FIVE THOUSAND U.S ARMY COUNTERATTACK LED BY ARMY COMMANDERS’ GRANT AND BUELL, AGAINST A MUCH LESSER CONFEDERATE FOE OF TWENTY-EIGHT THOUSAND. SURROUNDED BY HORRIFIC CARNAGE, DIN OF ARTILLERY AND MUSKET, AND WITH ALL THE COURAGE WE CAN ONLY READ ABOUT, WILLIAM LANDON, A SOLDIER IN COMPANY D, WOULD LAY DOWN HIS LIFE IN THOSE BLOODY WOODS. PRIOR TO THE CIVIL WAR, WILLIAM WAS ENJOYING EVERY DAY LIFE IN NORTH BEND TOWNSHIP, AND THE WHOLE COUNTY BEING SHOCKED AT THE NEWS OF HIS DEATH, FOUND SOME RELIEF IN NAMING THE FIRST GRAND ARMY POST IN HIS HONOR.PRIVATE WILLIAM LANDON IS INTERRED WITHIN THE SACRED GROUNDS AT THE SHILOH NATIONAL CEMETERY SHILOH, TENNESSEE.

EARLY ON, THE YEAR 1920 HELD SO MUCH PROMISE HERE. THE ATTRACTIVE DRAWING AND PLANS FOR THE PROPOSED MEMORIAL TO THE STARKE COUNTY VETERANS OF THE RECENT WORLD WAR, TO BE BUILT IN KNOX, EXCITED THE MASSES AND COULD HAVE BEEN A MAJESTIC FORTRESS, BUT WE HAVE BEEN THE RECIPIENT OF THAT UNTIMELY VITRIOL FOR OVER ONE HUNDRED YEARS. WE DO TAKE HEED, MINDFUL OF THE PAST, YET NOT SCORNFUL OF IT. FURTHERMORE, ISAIAH CHAPTER 43 VERSE 18 CONVEYS-“FORGET THE FORMER THINGS; DO NOT DWELL ON THE PAST.” NEVERTHELESS, THERE DOES COME SEASONS WHEN WE MUST EXAMINE OUR TRAVELLED PATHS EVEN SO, WE DO EXPOSE OLD WOUNDS ONLY TO GIVE LOVE ITS BEST CHANCE. AND STRAIGHTWAY, WE SHALL GIVE LOVE ITS BEST CHANCE AND BUILD AND DEDICATE A LASTING MONUMENT AND IN DOING SO WE WILL WRITE OUR BRAND-NEW PAGES AND THUS OUR BRAND-NEW CHAPTERS INSIDE OUR BRAND-NEW HISTORY BOOK.

HARKEN INSPIRATION ONTO THIS MOMENTOUS MESSAGE FROM THEODORE ROOSEVELT- “THE DREAMS OF GOLDEN GLORY IN THE FUTURE WILL NOT COME TRUE UNLESS, HIGH OF HEART AND STRONG OF HAND, BY OUR OWN MIGHTY DEEDS WE MAKE THEM COME TRUE”. OH HOW THESE ABIDING WORDS FROM SO LONG AGO NOW UNIFIES OUR CAUSE TODAY-ONE COMMON OBJECTIVE-ONE COMMON THREAD-ONE COMMON BOND!

HERE AND NOW, WITH THIS SOLEMN PLEDGE OF A LIFETIME SET IN MOTION BEFORE US, ARE WE PURE OF HEART AND PURE OF HAND? FOR THIS HONOR WILL ENSURE OUR OWN ABIDING LOVE UNTO ALL OF THEM IS HENCEFORTH UNFAILING, ABSOLUTE, AND TRUE!

WHEREAS WE ARE OBLIGED TO BREAK GROUND AMIDST THIS ASSEMBLY ON MEMORIAL DAY 2020, AND IN DOING SO WE EXPRESS OUR LOVE FOR THE NOBLE COMPOSITION OF A VETERANS MEMORIAL PLAZA WITHIN THE EXCLUSIVE ORBIT COMPRISING THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF THE STARKE COUNTY COURTHOUSE PUBLIC SQUARE. LIKEWISE, WITHIN THIS SACRED PLAZA COMPLEX, WE SHALL MEMORIALIZE AND COMMEMORATE OUR OWN “HALL OF THE FALLEN, YET NEVER FORGOTTEN” WHEREBY THEIR NAMES AND HENCE THEIR LIVES WILL FOREVER BE ENSHRINED FOR THEIR SELFLESS SACRIFICE AND LAST FULL MEASURE OF DEVOTION UNTO OUR NATION. A BEFITTING ALLEGIANCE TO THE AMERICAN PATRIOTS OF THE GREAT WAR IS MEASURED BY THE EULOGY TO ARMY CORPORAL ALBERT W. WILLIAMS, SUSTAINING WOUNDS AND DYING IN FRANCE ON MARCH 27TH 1918. “THE HARDSHIPS THEY ENDURED NO ONE KNOWS, BUT THEIR WILLINGNESS TO DIE, IF NEED BE, THAT CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION AND WORLD FREEDOM SHOULD NOT BE TRAMPLED UNDERFOOT, GAINED FOR THEM THE UNQUALIFIED RESPECT, CONFIDENCE, AND ADMIRATION OF THE WHOLE WORLD”.

THE LONG AGO, THE LONG AGO,

THE SAD FAREWELLS, THE FEARS AND WOE,

ALL IN A DREAM RETURN TODAY,

THO FORMER SCENES HAVE PASSED AWAY,

THO FORMER SCENES HAVE PASSED AWAY.

GOD BLESS THE MEMORY OF OUR FALLEN, GOD BLESS THE FAMILIES OF OUR FALLEN, AND GOD BLESS THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

JEFF V. BERG

U.S. MARINE CORPS VETERAN

MASTER SERGEANT-U.S. ARMY RETIRED

PRESIDENT-KNOX CITY COUNCIL

HISTORIAN-VETERANS MEMORIAL PLAZA

5/25/20