

The Day the Dewey Cannon Roared

Recollections of Warren F Ellison

Between 1895 and 1909, Warren Ellison lived in Three Oaks, Michigan. In 1899, the town was awarded a cannon sent by Admiral Dewey in the Spanish-American War. Here is the story of how that happened and Warren's tale of the day the cannon was fired.

ALIEN RIVER

GAZETTE

Michigan's Prize - Winning Weekly Newspaper

THREE OAKS, MICHIGAN, THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 1963

NUMBER 44

'Dewey Cannon Day' Scheduled for May 25

Plans to celebrate the dedication of an historical marker at the Dewey Cannon in Three Oaks are being rounded into final shape by a local committee.

Saturday, May 25, is the date set by the committee as "Dewey Cannon Day" for an all-day celebration of the dedication of the marker. This will be the final day of Michigan Week. By having the dedication on Saturday, the committee hopes to have a maximum turnout from the village and surrounding area. James Hausmann is committee chairman.

Letters were sent out this week to local clubs and civic groups, asking their help and support for the Dewey Cannon Day project. Donations are being sought to cover expense of the metal marker, which will cost about \$225. It will be the standard historical marker used throughout the State of Michigan.

Representatives of the State Historical Commission are ex-

pected to be on hand for the celebration, as well as a speaker, as yet unnamed.

Organizations or individuals who have pictures or other information relating to the Dewey Cannon are asked to loan them to the committee for use during the celebration.

They may be left at The Gazette office, 110 North Elm, and will be returned to their owners after being used to help prepare a special "Dewey Cannon Day" edition of The Gazette, and will also be used for a historical display in Three Oaks during Michigan Week.

Glendale, Calif.
May 11, 1963

DEWEY CANNON COMMITTEE
Three Oaks, Michigan.

Gentlemen:

I remember the Dewey Cannon and some of the events before and after the unveiling.

The Spanish cannon captured at Manila was to be awarded to the city or town contributing the most per capita to a certain war memorial. Mr. E. K. Warren made this his pet project and went after that award tooth and nail. Everyone was induced to contribute and even all of us kids put in our hard-earned pennies. I suppose Mr. Warren added a generous amount to assure the award to Three Oaks. I think the total amounted to \$2.08 for each person in the locality including the babies.

Not too long after the money was sent in the rumor had it that the award would not be given to Three Oaks. The town wasn't important enough. Mr. Warren made a flying trip to Washington to present his side to the Memorial committee with only partial success, I take it, because from there he went to New York and hired a tug to take him to the battleship anchored in N. Y. harbor, to contact some navy V. I. P. He apparently captured the whole U. S. Navy single handed because in due time the cannon arrived in Three Oaks from Manila via San Francisco. E. K. had a way with him and usually got what he wanted, or else.

The gun was stored in the fire engine house, pending the time when the park was finished and a mount for it was completed.

The gun wasn't spiked and someone had the bright idea of firing it. A Mr. Jessup, former navy gunner, agreed to do the actual firing so the gun was run out to the main intersection of the village, four pounds of powder was inserted and rammed home with a lot of newspaper wadding. The village blacksmith came running from his shop with a long rod red hot on one end. Mr. Jessup applied it to the touch-hole and there was a deafening bang and

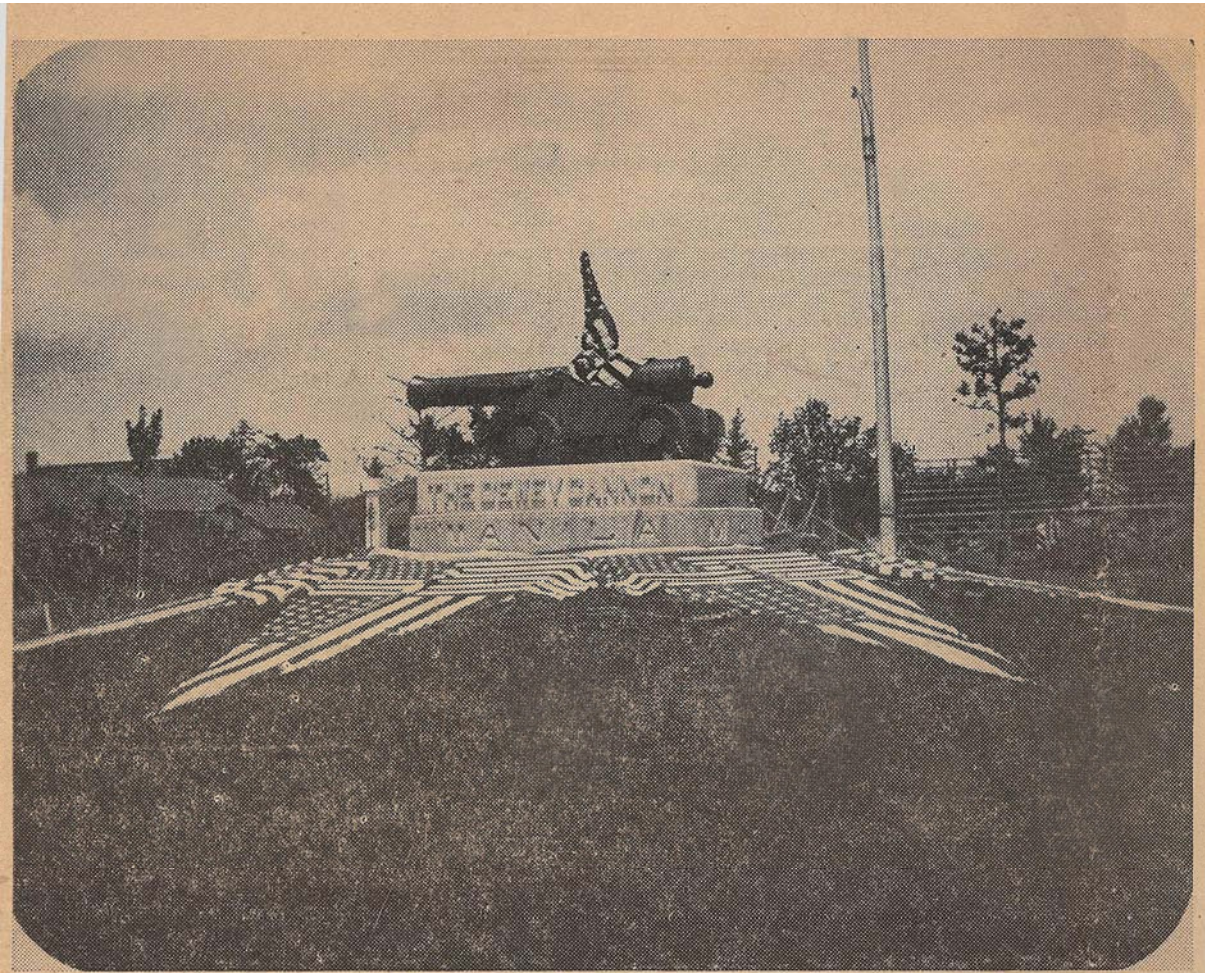
then all Hell broke loose. The concussion broke windows for a half block in all directions - the windows in the post office on one corner and Dr. Helkie's office was a shambles with medicine bottles shattered and spilled all over his desk and some of his medical books ruined. I suppose E. K. Warren picked up the tab on that one too, but no one will ever know.

On the day prior to the unveiling, people began to drift into Three Oaks from all directions. There were no accommodations for them and when the Ellisons awoke that next morning there were four sleeping on our front porch - one in the hammock and three on the floor.

Bleachers had been erected on the west side of the park and the seats covered with gay colored bunting. All the little boys were dressed in white and the girls in red dresses and arranged to form a red cross in honor of Helen Gould who was one of the dignitaries in attendance. I remember my mother putting up quite a squawk because I got red all over the seat of my white pants.

The canopy concealing the cannon was designed and constructed, supervised by my father, A. D. Ellison. It was a hexagonal canopy - straight sided part way up and cone shaped to an apex, held together by a fusible wire. When Helen Gould pressed the button the wire melted. The sides were weighted in such a manner that the segments fell slowly outward to form a many-sided star around the contour of the mound on which the cannon rested.

I can remember the special train pulling onto the siding next to the park and President McKinley and E. K. Warren with other V. I. P.'s walking along a railed walkway to the speaker's stand and at the same time Helen Gould arriving from the other side riding in a carriage drawn by four pure white horses, each one led by a navy man. I suppose there were songs and band music and speakers. I don't remember that part of it - after how many years?



WHEN CANNON WAS UNVEILED June 28, 1900, this is how it appeared. A six-sided canopy enclosed the cannon, coming to a point at the top. When Helen Miller Gould, the guest of honor,

threw a switch, it released the flag-covered panels, revealing the cannon. Wooden wheels and chassis of cannon were replaced about 1914 with present base, according to Bert Stavenger of Three Oaks.

EPILOGUE

Oh, the fun we had with the cannon!

We used to pour a pail of water into it and then get some unsuspecting kid to see if he could swing the gun on it's trunnions by hanging his weight on the end of the barrel. Two or three of us could then lift on the other end and the water would drench him. Some of the younger ones would go crying home to their mothers - the older ones would usually take it good-naturally and Kenneth Taggart wanted to fight the whole bunch of us with one hand. We managed to soothe him however and from then on he was really one of the gang.

These are the events as I remember them. I hope I haven't embellished or neglected anything.

I grew up in Three Oaks and I cherish all my memories - the woods and the fields - the lakes and the streams - and above all the town folks themselves. In the words of the song: "I love those kind hearts and gentle people who live and love in my home town".

Ever yours,

(Warren F. Ellison)

Cannon Roar Shook Town

(Editor's note: The day the Dewey Cannon roared is recalled vividly in this letter written to James Hausmann, village council member, by Warren Ellison, now a resident of California.)

Dewey Cannon Committee
Three Oaks, Michigan

May 11, 1963

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Continued on page 14

Arch Pz

off with the contest's prize — the Dewey Cannon. It appeared July 16, 1899.

Cannon Roars

Continued from page 11

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Ever yours,
Warren Ellison
523 Milford St.
Glendale 3, Calif.

Tip of the Hat To Helpful Friends

The Gazette extends its thanks to the many people who brought in historical material for use in preparing background material on the Dewey Cannon in this week's Gazette.

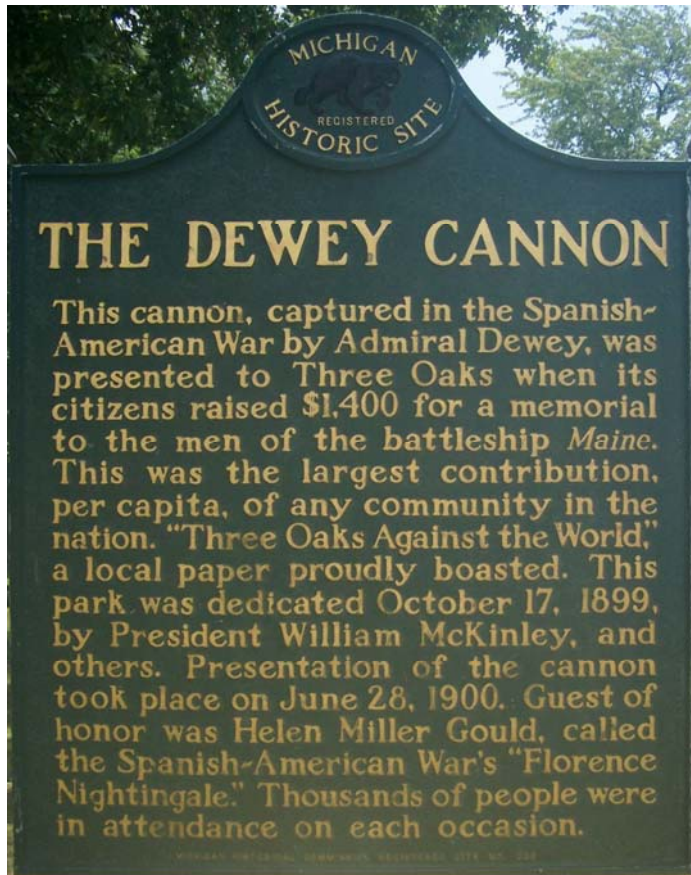
Among those who generously loaned materials were John Kramer, Lynn Pardee, George Gluth, Mrs. Haven Lee, the Toddle Inn, Bert Stavenger and Mr. and Mrs. Howard Krone.

Various circumstances prevented publication of a special edition devoted entirely to the cannon, as originally planned, but the Gazette staff hopes you will enjoy the material found here.

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AFTER THREE OAKS won the Dewey Cannon by contributing the most, per capita, to a fund for a monument to the Spanish American War heroes, the Chicago Tribune ran this cartoon, showing the nation's largest cities looking enviously at little Three Oaks walking off with the contest's prize — the Dewey Cannon. It appeared July 16, 1899.





HAUSMANN MOTOR CO.

3 West Ash Street Telephone 5511
THREE OAKS, MICHIGAN



June 11, 1963

Mr. Warren H. Ellison
523 Mifflin St.
Glendale 3 Calif.

Dear Sir,

I wish to thank you for your interest in our Dewey Cannon Celebration. Also for your letter which described the shooting of the Dewey Cannon. I read this letter at our Mayor's Day Exchange Luncheon and brought hours of laughter.

I am enclosing a clipping from the South Bend Tribune that I am sure will be of interest to you.

Very truly yours

James W. Hausmann

Dewey Home Fund Now \$14,120.

WASHINGTON, July 14.—Contributions to the Dewey home fund to-day amounted to \$411, making a total of \$14,120.

Three Oaks Gets Dewey Cannon.

The village of Three Oaks, Mich., has won the cannon which Admiral Dewey sent from Manila for the Maine Monument Fund. The cannon was to be given to the city or village making the largest contribution in proportion to its population. Three Oaks, with a population of from 800 to 1,000 persons, raised \$1,132, representing more than \$1 per capita.

The New York Times

Published: July 15, 1899

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