

# Alton Jaeger Guards Captivate Crowd With Authentic Portrayal At Memorial Day Parade

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
June 3 2021 10:21 AM



ALTON - The Alton Jaeger Guards captivated the crowd with their authentic portrayal of the men of the Civil War at Monday's Memorial Day Parade.

Steve Schwartz of the East End Improvement Association said the Jaeger Guard was impressive to those in attendance with their dress and portrayal of Company A. He said he was very thankful to the Jaeger Guard for their effort.

Zach Hardin of the Alton Jaeger Guards provided the information below:

"This year for Memorial Day, we portrayed the men of Company A, 9th Regiment Illinois Infantry as they would have appeared at the Battle of Shiloh," Hardin said. "This company was organized in Alton, Illinois, and was among the first companies to arrive in Springfield after Lincoln's Call to Arms. The men of this Company were organized from a German and Swiss Pre-War Militia unit, known as the Alton Jaeger Guards. They would be assigned to the predominantly German-speaking 9th Regiment of Volunteer Infantry.

"In 1868, John Logan established Decoration Day, now called Memorial Day to honor the dead of the Civil War. Alton was among the first to start a tradition of a parade on this day. It began as a group of veterans marching from what is now the National Cemetery, up to Upper Alton Cemetery to lay flowers and decorations and perform military honors in respect of their fallen comrades.

"This tradition was carried on and is now known as Memorial Day. The parade route still runs in Upper Alton, and still ends at the original spot it ended over 150 years ago."

Although the men of the 9th had already seen the elephant at Fort Donelson, the Battle of Shiloh is when the regiment earned its namesake, "Bloody Ninth". The German and Swiss immigrants, many from Alton, suffered the highest Federal casualty rate of the entire battle, as they desperately held the line. Throughout the battle, wounded men from the 9th Illinois were seen walking back to the line and jumping into other formations to continue fighting long after the unit was almost completely destroyed.

The regiment would continue to serve through the rest of the war and was one of the most storied regiments to come out of the State of Illinois.

Hardin closed by saying: "It's an honor to portray these brave men and follow in their original footsteps when they started this tradition in 1868. Part of our efforts this year included completing a full-scale 6-foot by 6-foot exact copy of the Regimental flag carried by the 9th Illinois, which was given to them in Belleville, Illinois.

"Thanks to a generous donation of over 300 carnations from Kinzel's Flower Shop, after the parade we returned to the National Cemetery and paid our respects. Flowers were left on the headstones of over 300 brave heroes, whose names and faces are now simply names in a book, known only to those who lay to their right and left."

The Alton Jaeger Guards is a 501(c) non-profit organization, a group of dedicated living historians whose mission is to bring to life the memory of those who fought to preserve the Union during the Civil War. The Alton Jaeger Guards are based in Alton, Illinois.

