

NEWS RELEASE

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UW-Stout to honor fallen Spanish-American War alum on Veterans Day

Memorial wall ceremony planned Nov. 11 at student center; Veterans Service office, Veterans Club to hold special events

[Story Link](#)

Photos attached

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nov. 7, 2022

Menomonie, Wis. — A special ceremony to honor the sacrifice of a Menomonie native and alum who graduated more than 125 years ago will highlight Veterans Day events at University of Wisconsin-Stout.

Cpl. Charles V. Cummings, an 1895 graduate of Stout Manual Training School, died of typhoid fever Nov. 8, 1898, while serving in the U.S. Army during the Spanish-American War in Puerto Rico. Born in 1876, he was 22.

A ceremony at 11 a.m. Friday, Nov. 11, Veterans Day, will be held in the Memorial Student Center, in Huff's Lounge on the first floor. A plaque with a photo of Cummings will be added to the university's [memorial wall to fallen service members](#). A [livestream of the event](#) also will be available.

Other events during the week include:

- All week, world map in student center where veterans can mark where they have served
- Monday, Nov. 7, flags to honor service members past and present will be placed outside the east entrance to the student center by the Stout Veterans Club
- Monday and Tuesday, Nov. 8, [Veterans Service Office](#) presentations on benefits and services by Chris Engen, Veteran Services coordinator
- Wednesday, Nov. 9, benefits and medical care presentations by a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs official

- Friday, 12 to 4:30 p.m., Stout Veterans Club dunk tank, on the student center south lawn, with proceeds going to the UW-Stout [Helping Hand Food+ Pantry](#).

45th alum to be honored

Cummings is the 45th alum — 43 students and two staff — who died serving their country to be honored since the wall was dedicated in 2013.

Scheduled to attend the ceremony are Cummings' great-great nephew, Chris Steensland, of Hugo, Minn., and his father, Kurt Steensland, of Burnsville, Minn. Viewing the livestream will be Michael Steensland, great-great-nephew, of Las Vegas, and Michelle Hampton, great-great-niece, of Orlando, Fla.

University Archivist Heather Stecklein conducted initial research into Cummings and in 2021 verified that he was an alum after finding names of graduates from 1892 to 1905.

However, she didn't have a photo of him; all other plaques on the wall include photos.

This past spring, student DJ Walker began a work-study research experience on Cummings' unit, U.S. Army Company H of Menomonie. Stecklein asked Walker to keep an eye out for a photo of Cummings.

"A few weeks into the internship, DJ walked into my office with the newspaper supplement that included Cummings' image. It was an archival miracle," Stecklein said.

Walker's research on the history of Company H, which began as the Ludington Guard militia and was renamed Company A in 1921, includes a historical display outside the entrance to Archives on the fifth floor of University Library.

"In the process of researching the unit's early history, I came across a newspaper article that discussed members of the unit who died while serving in the Spanish-American War. There were photos of some of the men, including one of Charles V. Cummings," Walker said.

"I am extremely excited that on this Veterans Day we will be able to give proper recognition to him, as UW-Stout has done for many of its other alumni, for his service and sacrifice to this country. I am fortunate to have played a minor part in this process and am thankful to so many other people, like Heather Stecklein, who have made it a reality," he added.

Walker, from Menomonie, is a senior majoring in [applied social science](#) with a minor in [military leadership](#) as part of his involvement with the Northwoods Battalion of UW-Stout's [Reserve Officers' Training Corps](#) program.

Cummings was valedictorian of his 1895 Stout class. Classmates, who called him "Charley," predicted he would become a professor.

Cummings' body was returned by steamship and train to Menomonie, where members of Company H, the Ludington Guard Band and community gathered. He is buried in Forest Center Cemetery in the town of Spring Brook, southeast of Menomonie.

"Every individual that we recognize in the Stout Hall of Heroes is memorialized as a loss to our entire campus community. While our nation and our liberties are protected by their sacrifices, the personal losses that these individuals and their loved ones have experienced is staggering," Stecklein said.

“These absences echo throughout the continuum of our campus. As long as we have a Stout community, we need to reflect on those who have left us in an effort to sustain our freedom and security. It is an honor to identify and recognize these individuals,” she added.

Stecklein will speak at the ceremony, along with Darrin Witucki, student centers director. Chancellor Katherine Frank will provide opening remarks.

The wall’s 45 inductees include five men from World War I, 28 from World War II, two from the Korean War, seven from the Vietnam War and now one from the Spanish-American War.

To inquire about veterans who could be added to the memorial wall, contact Stecklein, steckleinh@uwstout.edu, 715-232-5418.

Memorial Student Center

The Memorial Student Center is named in honor of those from the university community who died as a result of combat, disease or accident while serving in the U.S. military during times of war or crisis.

The original Memorial Student Center, now the Communication Technologies Building, opened in 1959 when the university was called Stout State College. It included an engraved stone honoring fallen alumni.

The current student center opened in 1985. The engraved stone was saved and can be found outside of the lower level, south entrance of the building, near the memorial wall.

UW-Stout is [Wisconsin’s Polytechnic University](#), with a focus on applied learning, collaboration with business and industry, and career outcomes. Learn more via the [FOCUS2030](#) strategic plan.

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Photos

Charles V. Cummings, an 1895 Stout Manual Training School graduate, died in 1898 during the Spanish-American War.

Cummings is buried in the Forest Center Cemetery in the town of Spring Brook, southeast of Menomonie.

A community send-off for Company H, which included Cummings, was held April 27, 1898, on Main Street in Menomonie on the steps of the Mabel Tainter theater. Sixty-eight soldiers went off to war.

Heather Stecklein, university archivist, did research that verified Cummings was an alum and eligible to join the university’s memorial wall.

DJ Walker, UW-Stout student and ROTC member, did research on Company H that uncovered a photo of Cummings.