



SINCE

1841

WOODLAND

HISTORIC CEMETERY & ARBORETUM



Dayton's Role in the Origins of the Veterans Administration

Known as the “peacemaker of the Dayton bar”, Lewis B. Gunckel graduated from Cincinnati Law School and began to practice law in Dayton in 1851.

Two years later, he met and formed a partnership with a young attorney named Hiram Strong.

Their firm, originally Gunckel & Strong, has existed under various names ever since; making it one of the oldest law firms in Ohio.

In 1862, Gunckel was elected to the Ohio state Senate.



Lewis B. Gunckel

10/15/1826 – 10/3/1903

Above: Lewis B. Gunckel; illustration published by the Dayton Daily News, 10/3/1903.

It was not long after the Civil War began that the nation's social movements began to sound the alarm. The official military structure was not equipped to provide sufficient care for wounded or disabled soldiers; aid for widows and orphans of those killed in service to the Union was more aspiration than policy.

A long-time supporter of Abraham Lincoln and stalwart Union man, Lewis B. Gunckel used his position in the state Senate to address these problems. Gunckel's legislation granted Ohio soldiers in the field the right to vote, supported the effort to send medical aid & other supplies to the front lines, and provided relief to widows and orphans.

After Hiram Strong's death in 1863, Gunckel focused his efforts on the establishment of a state home for returning soldiers. The next year, when Ohio Governor Brough of Columbus established such a home, Gunckel offered support by serving as one of the home's trustees.

When Congress created the National Home

The horrors of the Civil War must have felt all too close to home when he received word that his friend & colleague, Hiram Strong, had volunteered with the 93rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry.



Col. Hiram Strong

10/28/1825 – 10/7/1863

"In 1847, there came to Dayton from a country village, a tall, slim, ungainly youth. He was awkward, bashful, slow and hesitating in speech [...] People wondered that he should attempt the law; but he studied diligently, perseveringly, and after admission, opened an office. Slowly clients came to him, but [...] when they came, they came to stay. He soon gained the confidence of the bench and bar, and he retained it to the end of his life..." *

In August of 1862 Hiram Strong, "without any taste for military life or

for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in 1865, Dayton was chosen as the location of the central branch & national headquarters largely due to Gunckel's instrumental role in the program's creation. In 1867, Gunckel was appointed the Home's Resident Manager, a role he would hold for the next decade.

Above Right: from a photograph of Hiram Strong, published by *the Dayton Daily News*, 7/1/1917.

ambition looking to the pomp and circumstance of war" * left the law firm of Gunckel & Strong behind to enlist with the 93rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry.

Promoted to the rank of Colonel, Hiram Strong was mortally wounded during the Battle of Chickamauga, at the Tennessee/Georgia border.

Col. Strong died as a result of his wounds on October 7th, 1863. His body was returned to Dayton for burial at Woodland Cemetery, where he rests today in section 87, lot 272.



* The Bench and Bar of Dayton: A Paper read at a joint meeting of the Dayton Historical Society and the Montgomery Bar Association, 3/3/1900. By Hon. Lewis B. Gunckel.

Left: Grounds map of the National Soldiers' Home ca. 1870; courtesy VA Archives.



Rev. William Earnshaw
5/12/1828 – 7/17/1885

In July of 1867, Rev. William Earnshaw was appointed as the chaplain of the Soldiers' Home in Dayton.

The purpose of the Soldiers' Home was to provide wounded and disabled veterans all the comforts of home—including chapels for religious services, concert & lecture halls, hospitals, libraries, telegraph & postal services—even stores and various workshops.

Veterans' employment (of all kinds) was encouraged at the Home, which fostered a sense of agency and independence in the residents.

They didn't feel like they had entered the poorhouse, but were instead aware and proud that their own efforts were merely supplemented by the United States government.

During its first winter, the Soldiers' Home resident population numbered 750; by the next winter that number

He oversaw the construction of the Home's first stone chapel, holding religious services in a wooden building until it was complete.

Rev. Earnshaw also served as the Soldiers' Home's first librarian & teacher. In the beginning, the library was simply a collection of books, mostly donated by veterans. The collection was greatly expanded in 1868, thanks to a large donation of books by a Mrs. Lowell Putnam. Rev. Earnshaw assumed responsibility for cataloguing and setting up both libraries—then housed on the 2nd & 3rd floors of the Administration Building. By 1880, both collections had grown large enough to warrant the construction of a library building.

In addition to his work at the Soldiers' Home, Rev. Earnshaw was active in the creation of the Grand Army of the Republic (or G.A.R.). His comrades honored his dedication by first electing Earnshaw as the first Grand Commander of the national G.A.R.

Victim of an unlucky accident, Rev. William Earnshaw died July 17th, 1885, at the age of 57. His last words were "Tell the veterans I loved them all."

Rev. Earnshaw and his family are buried in section 103, lot 2117 at Woodland Cemetery.

Click [here](#) to learn more about Rev. Earnshaw.

reached one thousand.

By 1884, the Dayton Soldiers' Home was a thriving community of more than 7000 veterans, making it the largest such veterans' sanctuary in the world.

Always welcoming and fascinating to visitors, the Home was visited by hundreds of thousands annually, becoming one of the most popular destinations for travelers west of the Alleghenies.

In 1930 the Veterans Administration was established, to consolidate all veterans' programs into a single Federal agency.

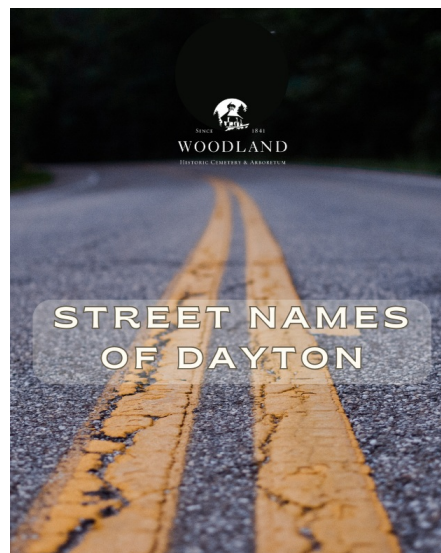
Lewis B. Gunckel died at the age of 77 in 1903. He was inducted into the Dayton Walk of Fame in 2006.

The Gunckel family plot is located in section 48, lot 1008 at Woodland Cemetery.

Upcoming Events!



[Almost Winter Bird Walk](#)



[Street Names of Dayton](#)



Save the Date!

Woodland's annual winter Remembrance Program will be held on December 5, 2025
6:00 - 7:30pm

More information to come soon.

November						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	Veteran's Day 11/11 & Thanksgiving 11/27					

Don't get caught by surprise:

Please be sure to bring home all decor items that you wish to keep.

Key:

Dark Green = Weekly Clean Off
Orange = Do Not Clean Off
Soft Grey = At Woodland's Discretion

Support Woodland:

Woodland is proud to remain an active part of the Dayton community as a popular place to walk, relax and enjoy.

We invite you to contribute to the Woodland Arboretum Foundation to ensure that what's meaningful to you today, continues tomorrow! Your gift makes an immediate impact on the horticulture, arboriculture, and restoration efforts needed to maintain one of Dayton's most historic and beautiful outdoor museums.

Thank you for your generous support of Woodland Cemetery and Arboretum.

[DONATE ONLINE!](#)

Come Visit Us!



Office Hours:

Monday-Friday
8am-5pm

If you need help finding where someone is buried, need directions to a particular area, or have questions about pre-planning or funeral services, Woodland's Staff is here to assist you!

Volunteer opportunities

Woodland is seeking volunteers to give presentations to community groups on subjects such as local history, notable biographies, and trees.

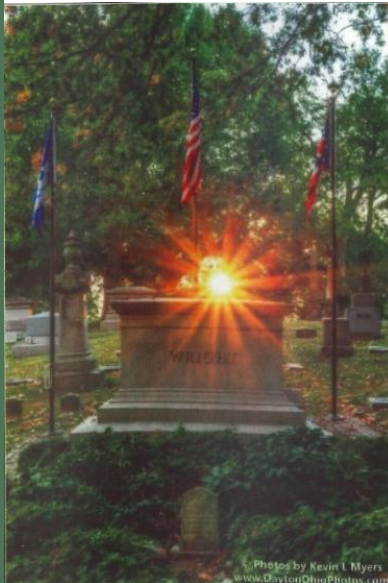
Not into public speaking? Consider getting involved with our horticulture team, or assisting with special events & research projects.

*If there is something you'd like to see here at Woodland please reach out to us & suggest it!

Tours & More:

We welcome walkers, runners, and wanderers -- leashed dogs & school groups.

Register for a guided tour: visit the Woodland Cemetery website! Learn about fascinating Daytonians resting peacefully in one of America's oldest rural garden cemeteries! Or check out our **virtual tours!** (if you really don't want to go outside)





SINCE 1841

WOODLAND

HISTORIC CEMETERY & ARBORETUM

Committed to providing dignified and caring funeral services and burial options to families of all faiths since 1841.

Woodland Cemetery and Arboretum
118 Woodland Ave.
Dayton, OH 45409
woodlandcemetery.org

Beautiful. Timeless. Still Available...



Discover the men and women who made it great in Dayton on a guided walking or bus tour. Self-guided tours are available on our mobile app.

For information call 937-228-3221 or e-mail info@woodlandcemetery.org

Woodland Cemetery & Arboretum | [Visit our website!](#)

Woodland Cemetery & Arboretum | 118 Woodland Ave. | Dayton, OH 45409 US

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