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A Sherman legacy lives on through painting

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By approving the purchase of the Susan Wolfe painting of Oliver Wilcox Norton, and donating the work to the Minerva Free Library, the Village of Sherman uncovered an important page of Sherman's history.

The village board approved a resolution to purchase the painting for an amount not to exceed \$495. The painting is being partially donated by the artist. It is the intention of the village to commemorate and honor Oliver Wilcox Norton, the man who commissioned

the construction of the Minerva Free Library.

The Minerva Free Library building and the lot that it is situated on were donated by Oliver W. Norton on Jan. 1, 1909. The Library was first organized by the Minerva Club in May 1907.

Like Norton, the artist, Susan TeWinkle Wolfe, has ties to Sherman and to the entire county. She grew up in a household where art was important and encouraged. Teachers began commenting on her artistic ability when she was in Kindergarten.

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A plaque for the painting is pictured.

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Wolfe attended the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, where she studied commercial art. "That led to work doing fashion layout and illustrations for newspapers," she said. "Then my mother suggested I try portraits, saying that I had a natural talent for them."

Wolfe said her foray into portraits was the beginning of a wonderful career. She has done hundreds of different types of commissions. She has been a resident artist at Peek n' Peak Resort in Findley Lake since the early '70s and has also sketched many portraits at the Chautauqua Institution. "Collectors of my portraits are located throughout the U.S. and many other parts of the world," she said.

Regarding the painting of Oliver Wilcox Norton, Wolfe's brother suggested the idea of a portrait of Oliver to help make Sherman residents more familiar with his ties to Sherman, as well as to help people understand why he did so much for the village. "I decided to paint this stately portrait of OWN as a bugler in the Civil War. I felt it was the best way to rebirth his legacy and spur conversation," she said.

Oliver Wilcox Norton left behind a lasting military legacy, as well as an inspiring personal legacy. He is considered a Pennsylvania native, but, according to a piece in *The Chautauquan Daily*, "Norton lived part of his young life in nearby Sherman, New York." He stayed in close contact with his sister, a Sherman resident for many years, writing about his experiences in many battles during his Civil War years which included Gettysburg. These letters were then donated to the library.

There is an article in the *Taps Bugler* titled "Soldier, Author, Bugler: The

extraordinary life and lasting military legacy of Oliver Willcox Norton." The author, Theodore J. Karle, explains why Norton's life was one of commitment, courage and generosity of spirit.

According to Karle, "Norton's Civil War service included the perils of combat, the joy of perfecting a classic bugle call and leading men of color into battle." Norton, who was a teacher and farmer in northwest Pennsylvania, was already a member of the Girard Guards when the Civil War began. He became a member of Col. John McLane's "Erie Regiment," and followed McLane into the newly formed 83rd Regiment of PA Volunteers, where he became the bugler of Company K.

Karle describes how Norton was wounded at Gaines' Mill, VA, but "survived and returned to duty." Shortly after the Battle of Malvern Hill, Norton joined General Daniel Butterfield's staff as bugler. "While encamped at Harrison's Landing, he and Butterfield perfected an old French bugle call into present-day Taps," Karle wrote.

Neither Norton nor Butterfield fully appreciated what they had achieved. Norton became the first bugler to sound the new Taps, probably at "Lights out" sometime in mid-July 1862. Taps spread throughout the Army of the Potomac, and soon found its way to other Union armies, and even some Confederate forces.

Wolfe's painting remains a work in progress at this point. "After more research on OWN I am planning on more details in the painting," she said. Once Wolfe's portrait is complete, it will be officially presented to the library.