A Breeze reader recently requested that we reprint this historic, patriotic poem which was written about Wauneta and two of the town's early founding citizens, Civil War veteran Lest-er Baker, and his wife, Amoretta Lawrence Baker.

We proudly honor this request.

The Bakers moved to Wauneta in late February of 1887 where their son, Edwin Baker, and son-in-law and daughter, John and Grace Hann, had established the Wauneta Breeze newspaper. The Bakers built a sod house 1 mile west of Wauneta during the spring of 1887. Lester and Amoretta Baker were the grandparents of Beulah Hann Olmsted and the great-grandparents of longtime Breeze readers Gene Olmsted of Powell, Wyo., John Olmsted of Gothenburg, and Fred Olmsted of Ogallala.

Lester died in 1890, never having fully recovered from ailments associated with his service as a Union soldier in the Civil War. Amoretta Baker died in 1925. They are now buried together at Wauneta's Riverside Cemetery.

This poem was written by Samantha "Mantie" E. Bride (1847-1938), one of Wauneta's most talented early citizens. She was lauded for her abilities as a writer, public speaker, painter and musician.

This poem was written after Mantie moved with her husband, Charlie, to Wauneta in 1906. It is reprinted again in honor of Independence Day and in tribute to all those who have defended our nation's freedoms. (The stanzas from the original poem have been changed due to space limitations on this page.)

The Lone Grave on the Hill

By Samantha 'Mantie' E. Bride (1847-1938)

As I wandered to a hill-top, Near a quaint Nebraska town,

There a lone grave I discovered,

Where I paused and gazed around, But no other grave was near it.

All was desolate and still.

And I wondered whence it came there; That lone grave upon the hill. And strange thoughts came stealing o'er me. Thoughts my heart could not forget.

And I asked for information, of a stranger who I met. "I can answer," said the stranger, "Tis a soldier's grave," said he. "If you'll list, Ill tell the story, Tell it as 'twas told to me."

The Story

Faraway in old New England, Eighteen hundred sixty four; When our dear old Uncle Abram called for sixty thousand more. Then up-spoke young Lester Baker. "Come my wife and sit by me," Thus he spake, his wife beside him, And his infant on his knee:

"I have heard my country calling; For her sons that still are true; I have loved that country, loved ones; Only next to God and you. And my soul is springing forward to resist her bitter foe,

Shall I go, my Amoretta? Tell me darling, shall I go?

And she answered thro' her teardrops; In her eyes he saw them shine; "Tis your heart's responsive throbbing, to a higher claim than mine.

And though grief my heart is stirring; And my heart is sad with woe, I must answer yes, my Lester. Duty calls and you must go.

And where duty leads you, follow, though it leads you on to death. Pleasures only make life hollow; For noble things God gave us breath. While for Freedom you are fighting, God, who knows our cause is just, will watch o'er and guard you, husband; I commit you to His trust."

Amoretta, I believe you, go I will. God bless you, wife! For the Union I'll be fighting; How e're long or hard the strife. Faith will keep us, never doubt it, till I shall return to you. Victory! Victory, we will shout it; For the red, the white, the blue."

So he went long months enduring all the agony and woe, that which we, who stayed behind him, do not, and can never know. And the wife at home remaining, through the long and weary time, saw the shattered ranks returning; Saw her Lester in the line.

But his step was slow and halting; And his face was pale and grave, as he said "I've brought back darling but the wreck of what you gave."

Then came months of weary waiting; Months of suffering and pain. But with courage unabated, still he hoped for health again.

So they sought the western prairie, where the healthful breezes blow; Settled here in wild Nebraska, when the place was wild and new.

On the hill-side built their cottage, there the children romped with play, looking down upon the valley, where the river winds its way.

But the health he sought for came not, yet he fought for life so sweet; And he lived to see a village growing almost at his feet. Often he would climb the hill top, looking down upon the stream, saw Wauneta grow beneath him, seemingly as in a dream. But at last disease o'er came him, and he knew the end was near; And upon his death bed lying called his wife and children dear. And he said, "My Heavenly Father calleth me unto my rest;

I would fair remain among you, but our Father knoweth best.

"There is one thing I would ask you; It has often been my thought. Bury me upon the hill-top; Twas my favorite resort.

There I've sat and planned the future! Future that was not for me. And I love to think my children, There my resting place will be."

This the tale the stranger told me, as we walked toward the town. How his last request was granted, when to rest they laid him down. Months have passed, yet still I ponder, as my memory roams at will; O'er the sad and touching story of the "Lone Grave on the Hill."

And his friends do not forget him, on each sad Memorial Day.

And upon that grave so lonely, they their decorations lay.

Sons and daughters of our veterans, where he sleeps so strange and still, come and let us lay our offering.

On the lone grave on the hill.