Significant Date:
Two World Wars and the Depression (1915-1945)

Registry Year: 1988   **Erected Date:**   1988

Marker Location

Address: White Chapel Cemetery, 621 W. Long
Lake Road (18 Mile Rd)

City: Troy

State: MI   *ZipCode:*   48098

County: Oakland

Township: Troy

Lat: 42.58439700 / Long: -83.16516400

Web URL:
pbma.grobbel.org

Front - Title/Description

The Polar Bears

In the summer of 1918, President Woodrow Wilson, at the urging of Britain and France, sent an infantry regiment to north Russia to fight the Bolsheviks in hopes of persuading Russia to rejoin the war against Germany. The 339th Infantry Regiment, with the first battalion of the 310th Engineers and the 337th Ambulance and Hospital Companies, arrived at Archangel, Russia, on September 4, 1918. About 75 percent of the fifty-five hundred Americans who made up the North Russian Expeditionary Forces were from Michigan; of those, a majority were from Detroit. The newspapers called them "Detroit´s Own"; they called themselves "Polar Bears." They marched on Belle Isle on July 4, 1919. Ninety-four of them were killed in action after the United States decided to withdraw from Russia but before Archangel´s harbor thawed.

Back - Title/Description

The Polar Bears

In 1929 five former "Polar Bears" of the 339th Infantry Regiment returned to north Russia in an attempt to recover the bodies of fellow soldiers who had been killed in action or died of exposure or disease ten years earlier. The group was selected by the members of the Polar Bear Association under the auspices of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The trip was sponsored by the federal government and the State of Michigan. The delegates recovered eighty-six bodies. Fifty-six of these were buried on this site on May 30, 1930. The Polar Bear Monument was carved from white Georgian marble, the steps, from white North Carolina granite. The black granite base symbolizes a fortress, and the cross and helmet denote war burial.