



# The Railsplitter

The Newsletter of the Department of Illinois,  
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War



SPRING 2021

## OFFICERS:

### Commander

Tom Oestreicher, PCC

### Chief of Staff

Dennis Maher, PCC

### Senior Vice-Commander

Joe Hutchinson, PCC

### Junior Vice-Commander

Gary Gunderson, PCC

### Secretary

Steve Aarli, PCC

### Treasurer

Bill Johnson, PCC

### Council

Dave Wildemuth, CC

Gene Walker

Leigh Franklin, CC

### Patriotic Instructor

Michael J. Zafran, CC

### Chaplain

Jerome Kowalski

### Graves Registration

Steve Aarli, PCC

### Civil War Memorials

Steve Aarli, PCC

### Historian

Terry Dyer, PDC, CC

### Guide

Patrick McConnell

### Guard

Rob Hauff, PCC

### Color Bearer

Leigh Franklin, CC

### GAR Highway Officer

Wayne Wehrheim

### ROTC Coordinator

Nick Kaup, PDC, CC

### Eagle Scout Coordinator

John Bigwood, PDC, PCC

### Department Councilor

Nick Kaup, PDC, CC

### Department Organizer

Nick Kaup, PDC, CC

### Signals Officer

Robert Welch

### Real Sons Liaison

Joe Hutchinson, PCC

### Fraternal Relations

Leigh Franklin, CC

### Department Quartermaster

vacant

### Department GAR Records

vacant

## UPCOMING ENCAMPMENTS:

May Encampment will be at Petersburg, IL on Saturday, May 22 with social activities on Friday evening, May 21.

Dept. Website: <https://www.suvcwil.org/>

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Chaplain's Corner  
Patriotic Instruction  
Memorials  
Camp News

And MORE!

## Commander's Corner



Brothers,

It's certainly been a very trying year for all of us. It has been my extreme honor to have been your Department Commander. This position had been something that I truly looked forward to for several years.

Unfortunately

because of COVID-19 all my plans and I'm sure many of yours had to be put aside. I personally looked forward to visiting your camps and sharing our common interest and fellowship. Such was not to happen. I know that several camps have been able to perform various functions outside, but for the most part we have been relegated to ZOOM meetings. I hope this changes in the near future although Illinois is experiencing a new surge in COVID cases.

I have seen a few advertisements regarding re-enacting events that are primarily public historical events minus battles.

These might serve for recruiting new members. Many re-enactors that I know are descendants like most of us, but are unaware of our Order. If you know of such an event in your area, please take advantage of these opportunities.

With such a year behind us before our Encampment on May 22, I regret to inform you that I will not be presenting any of our normal achievement and recognition awards this year. I simply do not feel comfortable doing so. I sincerely regret this decision but you should certainly understand.

As a final note, I encourage you to review the proposed by-law addition and any other information that may come along prior to the Encampment. Please be looking for emails from Brother Aarli that will contain details about the Encampment. If do not receive his emails, please check your spam folder.

Again, thank you for your trust and confidence in me as your Department Commander.

In Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty,  
Tom Oestreicher, DC



The Department of Illinois  
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War  
Invites you to the 138th Annual Encampment



Saturday May 22, 2021 at 1 pm.

Riverbank Lodge, 522 S. 6th St., Petersburg, IL 62675.

A block of rooms has been reserved Friday night May 21 & Saturday night May 22.

Book reservations by phone (217) 632-0202. Toll Free (866) 459-3040.

Cost per night is \$89.00. Mention "Sons of Union Veterans" for discount.

To check out their beautiful facility, go online to [riverbanklodge.com](http://riverbanklodge.com).

Meal information with meal reservation form appears later in the Railsplitter.

Plans dependent on COVID restrictions and subject to change.

## CHAPLAIN'S CORNER:



Many of us attended the SUVCW National Encampment in August of 2019. Prior to that date I had a cardiologist at Loyola University Hospital tell me that I need to have open heart surgery. I felt as if an elephant were sitting on my chest and nothing I did or took alleviated the pain.

Word got around during the Encampment that I had this coronary situa-

tion, and that I was going to wait five months - after Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year to get "fixed." One of the first Brothers who pulled me aside to chide my slowness of action, was a Brother from Missouri. He told me that I was a valuable asset to the Order, and that I had to take care of myself.

Other Brothers and Sisters encouraged me to do the same. While still at the Encampment, I called my cardiologist to set up an appointment. When I got to his office, he told me that only 5% of his patients asked to have the surgery. Most waited until the heart attack, stroke or other problems.

Within weeks of the Encampment I was on the operating table, had a triple bypass and an aorta replacement. If that Brother from Missouri had not been so vocal, forceful and encouraging, I would not have had the surgery done.

What we say to others is extremely important: Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty requires us to think about others - especially their health, happiness and wellbeing. Thank You Brother BOB PETROVIC for saving my life.

In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty,

*Chaplain Jerry*

## In Memoriam:



Terry Ray Dyer of Roscoe, Illinois, passed away peacefully in his home on March 21, 2021. He was born at Rockford Memorial Hospital on December 12, 1946 to Raymond Nelson and Mildred Louise (Nelson) Dyer.

Terry grew up primarily in Ro-

schelle, graduating from Rochelle Township High School in 1968.

He met Carol Lundberg in 1973 and married on June 29, 1974. They made their home in Sycamore until 1986, later moving to Roscoe, where he spent the rest of his life.

Terry shared his love of history by working at Memorial Hall in Rockford and public speaking about Camp Grant, President Roosevelt, his father Ray's service during WWII and numerous other subjects pertaining to Rockford and Northern Illinois.

He joined the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War in 2005 and was a charter member of Gen. John A. Logan Camp #26 in Rockford, IL and served as its first commander. He served as Department Commander 2010-2011.

He was also a member of the Rock River Valley Civil War Roundtable

and the Rockford Historical Society.

Terry performed an instrumental roll in the Dr. Benj. Stephenson gravesite improvement project to ensure that the project was something the Sons could be proud of.

Surviving are his wife of 46 years, Carol; sister, Virginia Dyer; children Lauri (Jeff) Paulsen, Cindy (Roger) Diedrich, Steve Lundberg and Jennifer (Matt) Mickelson. Grandchildren Tim (Cassie) Paulsen, Chris (Katie) Paulsen, Matthew Paulsen, Jake and Ashley Diedrich, Ruadhan Lundberg and Corran Mickelson. Great-grandchildren Olivia, Nola and Brielle Paulsen and Freddie and Frankie Paulsen. He was preceded in death by his parents and grand-daughter in law, Alexis Paulsen.

A Celebration of Life is planned for June 3 at Memorial Hall in Rockford from 3-7 PM.

\*\*\*\*\*



Daniel W. Hans, 81, of Inverness, Florida passed away on April 8,

2021 in Inverness. He was interred in PA (Photo from Bob Kurek, taken in 2001.)

Brother Hans was last a member of General Eugene A. Carr, Camp #5, Ocala, FL, serving as Patriotic Instructor.

From PCC Gary Gunderson: Dan was a Life Member of the Sons and Sheridan CC 1999-2000. He transferred out of Sheridan Camp #2 January 28, 2004 and moved to Florida.

From Brother Nick Kaup: A good friend of mine, originally a member of our Camp 1, the only active chartered camp in Illinois at the time. On my second

term as DC, Sheridan Camp 12 (originally located in Oak Park, Illinois) was rechartered. They renumbered and became Camp 2 twenty six years ago. His name is on that charter and I signed it. He was the DC when I chaired the 2002 national Encampment in Springfield. Upon retirement, Dan became DC in Florida after he moved from Bartlett, Illinois. Dan worked hard for the Order and Illinois back in the "Illinois reorganization period" from 1990 on.

Our "Blue Line" just got thinner.



## KEYBOARD KLACKING

*From DSVC Joe Hutchinson*



Brothers,

It has been a privilege and an honor to serve as editor of the Railsplitter these past three years. Without your contributions of content, it would have been very difficult for one person to create a newsletter of any size with the quality that we expect.

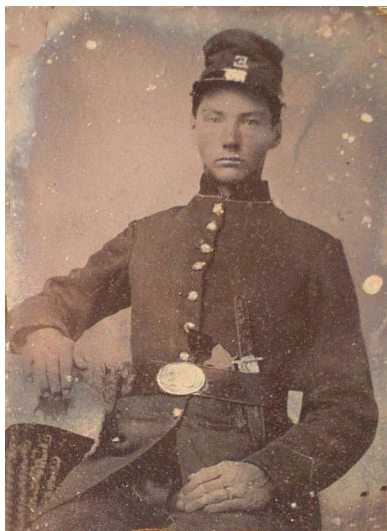
This is the last issue that I will be producing as my term is up and I may be moving up to Department Commander with your consenting vote.

The past year has been difficult for us personally as I'm sure many of you know of someone who had contracted COVID-19 and perhaps someone who succumbed to it. Many of the ceremonies and events that we as Sons participate in were cancelled, rescheduled or put online. That did not stop members from holding personal remembrances and memorials and I am grateful to those Brothers for sending them in to the Railsplitter. Hopefully in the not too distant future things can restart again.

Please continue to support the Railsplitter by sending in your articles, photos and events to the incoming DSVC.

I would like to take a moment to give a quick biography of myself so that the body present for the upcoming Department Encampment can make an informed vote.

I am a lifelong Peoria area native, my paternal ancestors settling in rural Peoria County in the late 1830's after a long trek from Virginia. Not much is known of their reasons for making the long journey overland that took a year off in Ohio for the birth of a child before continuing to Illinois. Was it the promise of good land? Was it opposition to slavery? I don't know. I'm sure that other lines of the family who were in Virginia were possible slave owners.



My Civil War ancestor whom I derive membership from was James Hutchinson, born May 22, 1845 in Rosefield Township in Peoria County, the ninth of ten children born to John and Mariah (Dawson) Hutchinson. He joined Company E of the 77<sup>th</sup> Illinois Volunteer Infantry as a Private August 6, 1862 at age 17. The banner town of the regiment was Elmwood, Illinois and they trained at Peoria before leaving on the march south. Unfortunately James became ill from Measles and dysentery near Memphis, TN and was given a medical discharge on January 7, 1863. A neighbor from home who was visiting a son in hospital, also from the 77<sup>th</sup>, took James home.

He was not expected to live, but he recovered and married. He returned to farming but he rejoined the fight, this time joining Company I of the 58<sup>th</sup> Illinois Consolidated Infantry March 27, 1865. He enlisted using his father's name. Perhaps he

was concerned that his prior medical discharge would disqualify him. He served until the end of the war, ending up discharged as a Sergeant at Montgomery, Alabama on March 26, 1866. Family lore states that he was made the Company secretary due to his excellent penmanship. His first child, a daughter, was born while he was in service.

After returning from the war, he had two more children, sons, with his first wife. After she died, he moved to Champaign County and farmed awhile with an older brother. He remarried, moved back to Peoria and became a carpenter. He had three more children with his new wife, two of which survived, a son and a daughter. My Grandfather Merlin was that son, born in 1882.

My grandfather Merlin married in 1905 and my father, Harold was the firstborn, born in 1906.

I am the product of my father's second marriage, coming along when he was 57 (!) and my mother who was 42. I have a brother who is nine years older.

My father had a love of history that he passed along to us kids. He loved to tell family stories of what it was like for the pioneers and his own growing up in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. His dream was to become an attorney but lost his backing and couldn't afford law school so he switched from a history degree to business. He acted with the Peoria Players for about 15 years and developed a hobby in photography. He was drafted at age 36 and served in World War Two. He loved to tell stories of his time in service, though he didn't see combat.

My journey to Sons membership was convoluted. I didn't learn about the SUVCW until after I turned 40. Though my Great-grandfather was a member off and on of Col Bryner Post 67 of the GAR, I hadn't known of the organization until my wife, who worked as a reference assistant at a branch of the Peoria Public Library met a regular patron who she and her husband were members of the Friends of the GAR Hall, a group working on restoring the home of Bryner Post 67. (A side note: My G-grandfather, passed away in March 1910, only three months after the hall opened in December 1909). I saw what the group was doing and thought it worthwhile. I was introduced to the Commander of Col. Bryner Camp 67, which had been restarted in 2001 and named in honor of the old GAR Post.

I ordered my G-grandfather's compiled service record from the National Archives and officially joined Bryner Camp in September 2003. From almost the first meeting I attended, I started on the road to involvement, first as Guide/Guard/Color Bearer, then to Graves Registry Officer which I still am. I rose through JVC, SVC, and on to Commander. I also held the office of Secretary from 2005 until 2018 concurrently with the other offices I held. I currently am JVC again.

I received a call from Brother Nick Kaup and began my first Department office as DJVC. I have been DSVC for three years.

I hope, if I am elected to Department Commander, to continue to further the Objects of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. I may not be able to attend all functions and ceremonies, but hope to be able to further Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty in our ranks in any way possible and assist those in office any way I can.

In Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty,  
Joe Hutchinson, DSVC

## **PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTION: Religious influences during the Civil War**

After the attack of Fort Sumter in April 1861, the vast majority of religious communities, with the exception of the historic "peace" churches, ardently supported the war for the Union. Of these groups, Protestants still enjoyed a significant numerical and cultural dominance at that time. Catholics and Jews provided notable support for the war. Protestants, with their numbers and position in American life, contributed religious or theological justifications of war that had wider social and political implications. All Northern churches supported the "boys" in preserving the Union and their religious ways of life.

First, the churches emphasized that the Union had to be preserved because of the special place that America occupied in world history. With its republican institutions, democratic ideals, and Christian values, The United States supposedly stood in the vanguard of civilization's forward march. The success of the Confederate rebellion would imperil that progress. If the South succeeded in dissolving the Union, republican government would be deemed by people everywhere to be a failure. It would no longer appear to be the wave of the future, and the advance of liberty around the globe would be slowed or even halted. Thus, in fighting to maintain the federal union, Northerners were struggling on behalf more than a single nation. They were contending for the future of humanity itself.

Then, Christian ministers often portrayed the war for the Union in millennial terms. Drawing on Revelation and other parts of the Bible describing events near the close of history, they suggested that a Northern victory might prepare the way for the Kingdom of God on earth. Perhaps the victory would prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus that would occur after the millennium or the thousand years of earthly bliss foretold in the twentieth chapter of Revelation. Thus, one Baptist minister, preaching in Philadelphia in 1863, claimed that the defeat of the rebellion would bring a time that the Founding Fathers of the Republic "pictured and dreamed about, and prayed for. It will come with blessings, and be greeted with hallelujahs. It will be the Millennium of Political Glory; the Sabbath of Liberty; the Jubilee of Humanity." Such rhetoric served to underscore the immense responsibility resting upon the [then] current generation. If it faltered all is lost, was the attitude of religious leaders throughout the North. A quote spoken by a Northern preacher was, "We shall stand in history as the most beneficent and maleficent of human generation, and as the most faithful or the most false in the eye of God."

Finally, the issue of slavery was considered. The sense that God was decisively at work in the crisis of the Union also profoundly altered the way in which church leaders dealt with the problem of slavery. At the war's outset, Northern churches were far from unanimous in their attitude toward human bondage. A few denounced the practice as a sin and called for immediate emancipation or abolition. At the other extreme, some argued that the Bible treated slavery as a morally legitimate institution. For example, parts of the Old Testament law recognized and regulated slavery. Jesus lived in a world where slavery existed, and he apparently uttered not a single word of censure against it. The letters of St Paul contained explicit commands that slaves be obedient to their masters. Therefore, ran the argument, that contemporary Christians had no business condemning as sinful a

social arrangement that the Bible itself sanctioned. Most church leaders appear to have fallen somewhere between these extremes. They considered slavery less than ideal and believed that it would eventually be eradicated by slow and peaceful means, but they also abhorred the abolitionists' attack on the slaveholders as sinners and their demand for immediate emancipation. Suspicious alike of proslavery and abolitionists positions, they were prepared to await God's providential resolution to the issue.

In short, the churches contributed to the radicalizing of the Northern war effort. Believing that God was using the conflict to establish His Kingdom on earth and that there had to be a reason for military reversals the Federal armies were experiencing, churches made what had started as a war for the preservation of the Union into a war of liberation.

On at least three occasions, President Lincoln proclaimed public fast days when he urged Americans to go to their house of worship, to confess their sins humbly to the Almighty, and to ask God's blessing. These and other less designated times of confession provided opportunities for ministers to express the conviction that the war was a baptism of blood. The pouring out of blood was cleansing the nation of its sin and preparing it for a moral rebirth. That moral rebirth required more than the abolition of slavery; it required citizens to surrender their selfishness and individualism and to subject themselves more unquestioningly to duly constituted authority. A true and worthy American nationality could be born only to the extent that citizens were prepared to sacrifice themselves for it. The clergy told their people that far more blood not only would be shed, it needed to be shed if the war were to attain its God-appointed purpose.

The blood baptism received a final ritual enactment on April 14, 1865 (Good Friday) when President Lincoln was shot in the head by John Wilkes Booth only five days after Lee's surrender to Grant. Northern ministers were not unmindful of the symbolism. Like the death of Jesus, said the clergy, Lincoln's blood--a token of all the blood shed over four years--purchased new life for the nation.

It is my opinion, that if Lincoln lived to serve out his second term and guided the reconstruction of the Union we would be closer to God's ideals for us.

Respectfully submitted in F. C. L. ,  
Michael Zafran CC, Patriotic Instructor, Department of Illinois



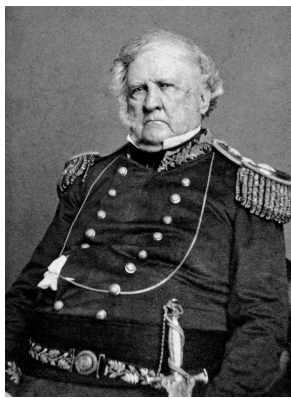
*Photo of the Dunker Church, Antietam (Sharpsburg), MD.  
Posted on Pinterest.com*



## Civil War Medals of Honor and the Board of Generals

Submitted by Chuck Murphy, Patriotic Instructor, Camp 4

Consistent with the Patriotic Instructor's role to educate and provide information that will help foster patriotism, this past March 25 was National Medal of Honor Day. Though by now this year's 31st anniversary is in the rearview mirror, it is, nonetheless, an opportune time to reassess the medal's checkered infancy during the Civil War. A patriotic calling to further examine the particulars not only enhances our understanding of the medal's tarnished history, but better equips us to offer instruction on the medal's formative years that effectively extended up through WW1.



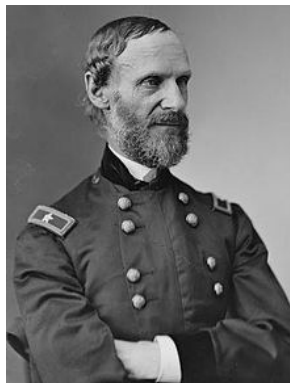
In 1861, the Commanding General of the U. S. Army, Winfield Scott, (left) was adamant, and his answer was an emphatic, NO! As a younger, promising officer he had served as an attache in France to study French military techniques. He learned that the only soldiers who wore medals in the French military were those of royal and upper-class families. Ergo, when influential U. S. family members and politicians approached him about medals for those young men who served gallantly at

First Bull Run and Wilson's Creek, he mumbled something about "foreign foolishness", and demurred.

The United States Congress was having none of it. But what could it do? In reality, the army had no medal, let alone a pyramid of medals, as is the case today. Since General Scott would not relent, the Congress proceeded to establish its own medal by going over the commanding general's head. In 1862, Congress legislated that the "Congressional Medal of Honor" was to be awarded by the President of the United States for "gallantry in action and other soldier-like qualities..."

Even more so than General Scott, President Abraham Lincoln was not looking for more to do, and though he was not opposed to medals, he handed the matter off to his Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton. Stanton surely had little time for such projects, and he passed it down to West Pointer, Edward Townsend, class of '37 (right), the Assistant Adjutant General, and a medal advocate.

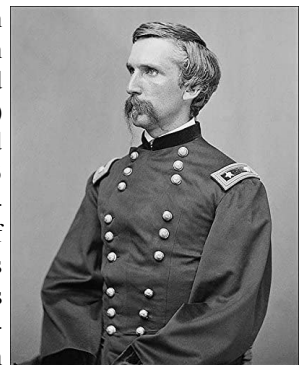
An attorney, Stanton never served in the military but he opined that surely the most obvious symbol of both valor and victory was to gallantly overpower the enemy and capture his flag. Although Stanton's thinking was not only the safest lane for Townsend to maneuver in, it made sense. Of the 1200 plus Civil War Medals of Honor ultimately awarded to army personnel, 400 were for capturing a flag and another 120 were ac-



corded for carrying a flag. Of particular interest to the Department of Illinois, is that of the 91 Civil War army recipients awarded medals while serving in Illinois batteries, troops, and regiments, 6 were for capturing a flag and 8 were for bearing it.

Flags aside, while gallantry in action may have generally been recognized as life-risking valor, there was general uncertainty relative to what all might be encompassed in the phrase "...other soldier-like qualities...". But It was Congress's medal and the War Department's to issue, and the army had no formal role so no policies, no regulations, no procedures, no criteria, no time frames, no chain of command involvement, and no approval process was promulgated and funneled down through the ranks. Nearly the only document written by uniformed personnel during the war years was in late 1864, when General Meade indicated in a letter to his corps commanders that a medal could be recommended for actions other than solely for capturing a flag. Though some Generals and other select officers knew of it to varying degrees and a few soldiers may have read about it in newspapers or letters, most either didn't know or were unclear about what it was, who it was for, or how to get one.

Nevertheless, medals began to be awarded to army personnel on March 25, 1863. The feat that earned Colonel Joshua Chamberlain (right) a medal for action on Little Round Top at Gettysburg on July 2, 1863 was known throughout the land within a week, and by fall, was the talk of many European armies. If medals were awarded as early as 1863, it is curious why his medal was not conferred until some thirty years later, in 1893.



Looking back, records show that a total of 19 army medals were awarded in 1863. In 1864, the War Department dispensed 95 Medals of Honor to army personnel and of the 188 medals that had been awarded by the end of the war, 75 percent were for capturing a flag. By the end of the 1860s, 389 medals had been conferred. Through the 1870s and 1880s, a few books were published about the medal, but only 28 were bestowed in the 1870s and through the 1880s, 42 were awarded. In the 1900s, 20 were conferred, and records show that the date for 27 awards is unknown. Surprisingly, 694 medals were issued through the decade of the 1890s and it raises the question, why did Colonel Chamberlain and 693 others have to wait so long?

The incident with the 27th Maine is what helped bring the issue to a head. On duty in the nation's capital, the enlistments for both the 27th and 28th Maine infantry regiments were set to expire June 30, 1863. Convinced that more muskets were needed to help protect Washington City, President Lincoln and Secretary Stanton agreed that both regiments would be approached and offered medals of honor if they would extend their enlistments until more was known about General Lee's movements.

You can't blame them a bit. As Bobby Lee marched his army north in late June 1863, Lincoln and Stanton were both worried. Although a series of artillery installations were posted in defense of the capital city, it was vulnerable to a surprise attack, and Marse Robert was forever the surpiser.

*Continued on Page 6*

*Civil War Medals of Honor continued from Page 5*

General George Meade had just been appointed commander of the Army of the Potomac but, as Lincoln and Stanton knew from past experience, good commanders were few and far between and the two officials could not always accurately predict who was up to the job. At that moment, Meade was untested.

The 28th Maine turned them down cold and headed home on July 1, as did 555 officers and enlisted men of the 27th Maine. However, 309 of the 27th Maine exercised what could be deemed, "...soldier like qualities...", by voluntarily remaining at their posts until the crisis was over. After not having fired a shot, on July 4 they too retired for home. After the war was over, "by some inadvertence", instead of just 309, Stanton caused 864 medals to be sent to the governor of Maine along with the request that they be dispersed to the boys of the 27th Maine.

The 27th Maine affair was widely known and represented a particular sore spot. The President had the sole authority to award medals, and it was unclear what recourse was available, if any. It was nothing personal, but the boys of the 27th Maine were generally thought to be undeserving and, in comparison, it seemed patently unfair that an unknown number of deserving others, such as Colonel Chamberlain, had been snubbed.

As the years passed the medal's integrity came under increasing scrutiny and festered significant morale problems. Uncertain what to do, in 1886 the army published for the first time a list of all army medal recipients. But as you might imagine, it served to focus even more attention on the probity of the 27th Maine's medals. However, at long last, as the GAR enjoyed its peak membership, and while sequential volumes of the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion (OR) remained in publication in the 1880s and through the 1890s, the prolonged and burgeoning endeavor to champion the medal's integrity finally hit pay dirt.

In 1888, the army sent notices out to all personnel and veterans to report the facts of any deed or service which might warrant consideration for a medal. One could nominate himself or anyone else, but if the pluck wasn't documented in the OR, affidavits from two eyewitnesses were required. There is no record of how many total medal requests were submitted, but it was this development that led to 694 medals being issued through the 1890s, including 72 of Illinois's total of 91.

In an attempt to make further progress, in 1889 provisions for awarding medals of honor were included in the manual of army regulations, but the weight of the 27th Maine still hung heavily. Of significance was that on April 23, 1890 recipients met in Washington City to organize the Medal of Honor Legion to restore the integrity of the nation's highest military honor. Legion members became tireless and effective advocates for the medal's integrity among political and military leaders alike.

After years of controversy, legislation was passed and finally on June 3, 1916, the nation's 47<sup>th</sup> Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, established a Medal of Honor Review Board. The purpose of the board was to consider "...the question of persons entitled to medals of honor, under the provisions of the act of Congress approved April 27, 1916, and of section 122, act of Congress approved June 3, 1915...". Section 122 provided that the board convene for the expressed purpose of investigating

and reporting upon past awards of the congressional medal of honor with a "...view to ascertain what Medals of Honor, if any, have been awarded or issued for any cause other than distinguished conduct by an officer or enlisted man in action involving actual conflict with the enemy...". Moreover, the section provided that if such cases were found the names of the recipients were "...to be stricken from the official medal of honor list."

The board consisted of five retired generals; two Lieutenant Generals, two Major Generals, and a Brigadier General. They were to a man experienced and exceptional soldiers and well aware of both the politics and the import of their decisions, and they did not want to climb out on that limb too far. Due in part to all the attention over the years, some recipients had become celebrities and their cases were well-known among the parties, and beyond. Board members were understandably concerned about the likelihood of push back on some of their pending decisions, and the potential for political mischief. Because of its makeup, the board was unofficially known by some as the Board of Generals. Specifically, the Generals had concerns pertaining to matters of scope and jurisdiction. In the board's records in the National Archives is correspondence among and between the Secretary of War, the Adjutant General, the Army's Judge Advocate General, the military committee chairs in both the House of Representatives and the U. S. Senate, and the board's president, Lt. General Nelson Miles, (Left) the U. S. Army's former commanding general (1895-1903) and an 1892 medal recipient (Chancellorsville). The board inquired in writing not only about whether its jurisdiction applied to recipients who were not soldiers, but the fairness of changing the criteria after the fact, and then using the modified criteria to remove names from the recipient's list. Moreover, clarity was sought relative to whether the board's decisions would be appealable, and if its decisions alone would suffice to strike names from the Medal of Honor list.



recipients who were not soldiers, but the fairness of changing the criteria after the fact, and then using the modified criteria to remove names from the recipient's list. Moreover, clarity was sought relative to whether the board's decisions would be appealable, and if its decisions alone would suffice to strike names from the Medal of Honor list.

It was a dramatic and bold move and made all the difference. The perseverance of the Medal of Honor Legion, the mood of the country, and the abiding and ethical commitment of the nation's political and military leaders finally carried the day. Before delving too far into its work, the board received written assurance that it had jurisdiction over all recipients, soldiers and civilians alike, and that its decisions would be final and not subject to challenge or appeal. Moreover, it was confirmed that the board had the sole authority and, indeed, the duty to strike names from the Medal of Honor list, accordingly.

Objectivity during the board's proceedings was critical, and the board's staff presented each case using a number instead of the recipient's name. The board toiled through 1916 until January 17, 1917, and released its report on February 5, 1917. Out of a total of 2,625 medals that had been awarded to date, the board struck the names of 911 from the Medal of Honor list. Included on the list of stricken names were the 864 from the 27th Maine, the 29 officers and non-commissioned officers that escorted Lincoln's body on the train back to Springfield, and 18 other individual cases.



*Civil War Medals of Honor continued from Page 6*

The board acknowledged the dedication and patriotism of the 309 members of the 27th Maine and Lincoln's Funeral Train escort, as it was obvious that they had exhibited "...soldier-like qualities...". But board members simultaneously took note that in no way did their actions warrant medals of honor as they did not perform their duty "...in action involving actual conflict with the enemy...".

Some of the remaining 18 cases were of utmost interest. Though it was unquestionable that five scouts, including case number 976 (William Cody), performed gallantly against Plains Indians, the board had little discretion, as those recipients were not soldiers but civilians. Soldiers were included in the remaining cases but in every instance, their individual efforts did not rise to the new standard of gallantry, as set forth in Section 122. With respect to case number 996 (Dr. Mary Walker), plainly her work did not meet the new test for gallantry and besides, her status was that of a civilian contractor, which rendered her ineligible.

As a result of the board's efforts, the name Congressional Medal of Honor gradually faded and it came to be known simply as the Medal of Honor. In a way, General Scott's position on the issue of medals was a warning, but medal advocates were on to an idea whose time had come. After carefully examining the records of all persons on the Medal of Honor list, the board ob-

served that there are varying degrees of valor, heroism, and meritorious service, and that "other insignia" may need to be considered as a single medal does not fairly apply to all situations equally. Further, the board offered the suggestion that "other insignia" be considered for military "spheres of duty" unrelated to gallantry in action. And finally, the board noted that civilians "should be rewarded in some other way", as they should not be eligible for and awarded a medal authorized exclusively for military personnel.

In 1918 the board's influence was on full display. As American Doughboys were slugging it out in France during WW1, the military instituted badges for two additional categories of gallantry. Secondary to the Medal of Honor was the Distinguished Service Medal (DSM), and subordinate to the DSM was the Citation Star, which was later changed to a Silver Star in 1932.

Nelson Miles was 77 years old and the only medal recipient to serve on the Medal of Honor Review Board. If we could somehow persuade him to trade in his angel wings, coax him out of retirement, and brevet him a Patriotic Instructor, it is interesting to consider how he might offer instruction on the ticklish, but very patriotic subject of Civil War Medals of Honor and the Board of Generals.

Appreciation is extended to Dr. James Cornelius, PhD, of Springfield, IL and Dr. James Davis, PhD, of Dexter, Michigan, for their helpful suggestions.



Note how similar the Medal of Honor (*center*) is to the GAR badge. This similarity led to some confusion and resulted in the Medal of Honor being redesigned in 1904.

## PRESIDENT'S DAY

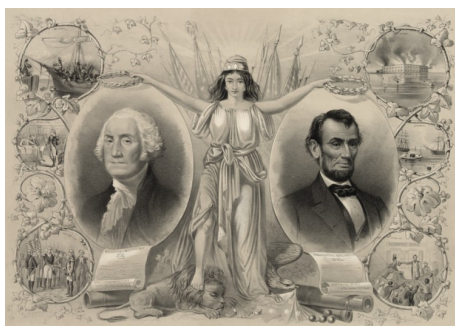


Photo from needhamhistory.org

Our Chicago area camps celebrated a postponed Presidents Day honoring George Washington & Abraham Lincoln. The celebration was hosted by Geo. A. Custer Camp #1.

Invocation, posting of colors and Pledge of Allegiance began the day. Guests included DSV Commander Gary Gunderson, members of Sheridan Camp



#2 and Old Glory Camp #6165. The program included remarks by our Camp Patriotic Instructor, Historian and CLA battery commander. In attendance were members of the Chicago Light Artillery with their 3" Ordnance piece. They rendered a three volley cannon salute at the conclusion of the program with retiring of colors and benediction.

(*Right, top*) Members of Chicago Light Artillery (in uniform), DSV Gary Gunderson & Sheridan Camp #2 members. (*Right bottom*) Color Guard left.

SVR Battery L center. Custer Camp #1 on right.



Submitted by Nick Kaup, CC



## LINCOLN DEATH DAY ASSOCIATION COMMEMORATION ON APRIL 15

PDC and PCC Ron Clark is President of the Abraham Lincoln Death Day Association, and PCC Don Ferricks is Vice President. National Chaplain Emeritus Jerry Kowalski, Brother Richard Schachtsiek, PCC Robert Chestnut, and Alan Hembel serve on the board and Dr. Wayne Temple is Honorary Director. Chuck Murphy is Secretary-Treasurer. Up until his recent death, Jon Austin and been Secretary-Treasurer of the Death Day Association for over 15 years.



A beautiful day today at Lincoln's Tomb for The Death Day Association's ceremony.



Brother Ron Clark places a wreath during Death Day ceremonies at a Lincoln's Tomb



Brother Jerry Kowalski sets a wreath during Death Day ceremonies at Lincoln's Tomb.



Brother Larry Werline (Above) places a wreath during Death Day ceremonies at Lincoln's Tomb.

*Right top* PCC Don Ferricks.

*Right middle* Brother Gene Walker.

*Right bottom* The 114th IL Vol. Inf. Regt. Reactivated, at Death Day ceremonies at Lincoln's Tomb.

Submitted by Chuck Murphy, Camp 4





## SONS OF UNION VETERANS LINCOLN TOMB CEREMONY, APRIL 17, 2021

The annual SUVCW Lincoln Death Day commemoration ceremony was held on April 17, 2021 after being cancelled last year due to the COVID-19 shutdown.

There were some changes this year to protect the participants. Masks and social distancing was required and the participants came up individually, placed wreaths and returned to their positions.

C in C Brian Pearson and SV in C Michael Piquette were present from National, both speaking.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Michigan Vol. Infantry performed the posting of colors and the 33<sup>rd</sup> IL Vol. Infantry Band, provided music for the ceremonies.

Past National Chaplain and current Illinois Department Chaplain Jerry Kowalski performed the Invocation and benediction. The attendance was understandably less than previous years, but the turnout was still commendable. The weather was pleasant..



The 14th Michigan Volunteer Infantry Color Guard with Chaplain Jerry.



33rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry Band



Camp 4 SVC and Camp 4 CC Joe Kessler  
Center column, 1: C in C Pearson, 2: SV in C Michael Piquette, 3: Wreath bearers waiting.



Below: .



Right top: Group flanking Lincoln's bust.



Tomb photos by Chuck Murphy, Camp 4

A ceremony was held later in the day at the Dr. Benjamin Stephenson gravesite at Rose Hill Cemetery in Petersburg. Photos by PDC Stuart Stefany.



Chaplain Jerry gives the Invocation.



Posting Colors



PDC Stefany, center.



## COL. HECKER CAMP 443

We at Col. Friedrich K. Hecker Camp #443 spent these past 6 months under COVID- 19 restrictions. Hecker Camp has met with social distancing, but as a group have done no projects or ceremonies with the public.

Our Camp lost two members this past month, Brother William Jacobus and Brother Lewis Haines. May they both Rest in Peace.

We also have gained three new members, Brother Jacob Rose, Brother Gerald Sonnenberg and Brother Robert Herzog. Welcome aboard.

As Camp Commander last year I started what I call my Commander's Travels to share on Our Camp face book page.



GAR Monument in East St. Louis Illinois.

*Next Column, Top:* Site of the first GAR Post #1, Decatur Illinois.

*Middle:* Close-up of the historical marker and plaque.

*Bottom:* GAR Monument Decatur, Illinois



A Hecker Camp project was revisited. Several years ago, Brother Robert Mohrman of our camp led a project to place markers on Civil War Veterans graves in Smithton Illinois.

Bob raised funds to purchase bronze grave markers for both the City and Catholic Cemeteries. I as Commander

visited the site this past year and found that several of these markers were damaged or missing.

Boy Scouts placed the original markers in the ground, but being out too far from the gravestones they were being hit by the mowers. We reinstalled new holders placing them closer to the grave and our replacing five missing markers.





## COL. BRYNER CAMP 67

It has been a long winter without much activity. Bryner Camp has only met via ZOOM but is planning to hold its May meeting in person at the GAR Hall in Peoria with ZOOM provided for those not able to attend.

DSVC Joe Hutchinson was unable to attend the Tomb ceremony in Springfield and Stephenson memorial in Petersburg due to minor side effects from his second COVID shot.

A couple members of the Camp have been working on grave projects. Br. Jerry Martin, who lives in Nokesville, VA, became aware of a soldier buried in Ohio who is without a headstone. He is in the process of collecting the necessary information required for application for a government stone from the VA. Br. Jerry has contacted a Sons Camp that is close to the cemetery to assist. The subject is Sgt. John Humphrey, Company A, 4th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, interred in Miami Township in Ohio. Br. Jerry reports that SGT Humphrey has quite an interesting story that the camp will post at a later date.

As reported in a previous issue of the Railsplitter, one of our new members, James Nelson had found a veteran's headstone located in Howard Cemetery, located in the Howard Virgin Timber Reserve near Leroy, IL in McLean County that he thought should be replaced due to weathering.



After much looking online and frustration with unreturned correspondence, the camp was able to make contact with the McLean County Genealogy Society President who

was able to find a contact with someone at the Empire Township who could hopefully help. Contacts will be made to hopefully move forward.

The Camp also recently received a request from an individual for help in acquiring an historic marker for Tennessee Point Cemetery, also known as Black Walnut Cemetery near Tremont, in rural Tazewell County. The cemetery contains

quite a pioneer history of early Tazewell County.

The Camp is assisting on a committee tasked with creating a plaza with monument to honor the veterans and citizens, including the first slave freed by Abraham Lincoln, interred in the abandoned and destroyed Moffatt Cemetery in the south side of Peoria. This project was described in a previous issue. It is still in the preliminary planning stages as this is a large project requiring cooperation from the City of Peoria, the Peoria park District and others. The total cost is expected to be over \$74,000, not including sculptural elements. The GAR monument is expected to be around \$9000. These are preliminary numbers from one estimate and subject to change.



The elements will consist of:

A boulder represents Maine-born Pioneer, Aquilla Moffatt, who came to Peoria when it had only a few buildings four years after IL statehood and who sold the land in 1874 which became Moffatt Cemetery.

A large flat stone represents over 2,500 individuals of various ethnicities, nationalities and status who remain buried here, long forgotten under the concrete and commerce. Initially, Moffatt Cemetery was a respected place of earthly rest but later became the final abode for infants, immigrants and indigents by the hundreds and later went to ruin and neglect. Fewer than 100 individuals buried here were removed to other burial places in Peoria.

A monument resembling a tablet grave-stone lists the 49 who served during the Civil War Union and one removed to Springdale. One also served in the Spanish-American War, also so removed. 48 veterans rest here still, including one who was at Juneteenth in Texas to free the slaves there in June 1865. Here yet rests one who served in 1792. He was a double 'True Son of the Revolution' since both his father and father-in law were soldier Patriots in the Revolutionary War.

Standing storyboards will be placed as needed to tell the story of Moffatt Cemetery and its residents. In addition, extensive information will also be available for research at the Peoria Public Library Local History Section and the Peoria Historical Society files at the Bradley University Library Special Collections Section.

A centerpiece relief sculpture depicts Nance' Legins-Costly, the 'first slave freed by Lincoln,' who is buried here at Moffatt. When a very young lawyer, Abraham Lincoln took and pleaded her case for freedom from ownership before the Illinois Supreme Court in 1841. This favorable court decision effectively ended slavery and indentured servitude in Illinois. Perhaps as importantly, this early experience profoundly affected Lincoln's thinking toward slavery which no doubt influenced his 1854 Peoria speech and decision to run for President, and then ultimately to issue his 1863 Emancipation Proclamation.

Stone 'Soap Boxes' represent the remains of a very significant but unknowable number of Peorians removed from Old City Cemetery in 46 soap boxes to one common mass grave at Moffatt Cemetery when the City installed the Lincoln Avenue sewer line through a portion of that former cemetery property in 1903.

## RAILSPITTER SUBMISSION DEADLINES:

Fall: October 15 \* Winter: January 15 \* Spring: April 15 \* Summer: July 15

From the Editor: I encourage you to submit ANYTIME, but for time sensitive items like upcoming events, be sure to get them in early. Send to the Department Senior Vice-Commander.

*Remember, this is YOUR newsletter.*



**Office of the Department Secretary  
Department of Illinois  
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War**

Greetings All,

April 15, 2021

**Registration for Friday May 21, 2021 Pizza Party and Lunch on Saturday May 22, 2021**

I will be hosting a pizza party on Friday May 21, 2021 starting at 7:00pm at the River Bank Lodge.

All I ask is a \$10.00 donation per person. I will collect these funds at the time of the party.

NOTE: Make Pizza Party checks payable to "Steve Aarli.

I will attend Pizza Party\_\_\_\_\_ Number attending in your party \_\_\_\_\_

**Lunch on Saturday May 22, 2021 starting at Noon.**

You will have a choice of ONE of the following:

**Pulled Pork Sandwich with Potato Salad, Baked Beans and Desert. Cost \$13.00 per person**

I select this option \_\_\_\_\_ How many in your party for this item \_\_\_\_\_

**OR**

**Mostaccioli, Side salad, Garlic Bread and Dessert. Cost \$12.00 per person**

I select this item \_\_\_\_\_ How many in your party for this item \_\_\_\_\_

**Choose ONE of the following desserts:**

Strawberry Shortcake with Whipped topping \_\_\_\_\_

Texas Chocolate Sheet Cake \_\_\_\_\_

Peach Cobbler (served warm) \_\_\_\_\_

**Please complete this form and send with LUNCH payment made out to the Department of Illinois.**

NOTE: Pizza Party payment is SEPARATE (see above)

**Reservations must be in NO LATER than May 10**

Steve Aarli, Dept. Sec.

9903 Clay Ct. Roscoe, Ill. 61073

In Fraternity, Charity & Loyalty,

Steve Aarli, Dept. Sec.