



# The Indiana Legion

DEPARTMENT OF INDIANA • SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR  
THOMAS L. SCHMITT, COMMANDER

Issue 4-23

December 2023



Brothers of the Department of Indiana:

In the last few months, we have had a National Encampment in New Hampshire, the Triple Dedication in Ft. Wayne, a Mid-Year Department Encampment in Evansville, and the Remembrance Day Parade in Gettysburg with seven brothers in attendance. So we have been a little busy!

Now is a good time to enjoy family and friends. However, we do need to focus on camp officer elections and installations. It is my plan to do all the installations myself at least this year, if possible. Orlando A. Somers Camp #1 and John W. Foster Camp #2 have been completed and I have the information for John B. Anderson Camp #223 in Columbus and for David D. Porter Camp #116 in Valparaiso.

I would request that the other camps provide information on their installation meeting as soon as it is set so I can get it listed on my calendar. I would request a date, a start time and a street address location. I will be asking about bonding for those who handle camp funds. We are also moving forward on the plans to have the next Department Encampment at the Indiana Veterans' Home and will have an answer by the first of the year.

In the meantime, thank you for all that you do to keep our Order strong in the Department of Indiana. I hope everyone had a very Merry Christmas and all the best for a Happy New Year!

In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty,

Tom

## Mid-Year Encampment Hosted by John W. Foster Camp #2



### Department Officers During the Encampment

The Department of Indiana met for its Mid-Year Encampment on November 4, 2023 in Newburgh, Indiana. Hosted by John W Foster Camp #2, the encampment was the second to follow the revised schedule in which Annual Encampments are held in the spring and Mid-Year Encampments are held in the fall.

The brothers in attendance spent much of the day receiving updates on the business of the Department. The main item of business was a vote expressing the position of the Department of Indiana on the proposals regarding membership qualifications passed at the 2023 National Encampment and contained in General Order #2. The result was a vote by the Department against these proposals.

The next department gathering will be the 138<sup>th</sup> Annual Encampment, to be held on April 27, 2024.

See additional encampment photos on page 4.



## Department of Indiana

### Officers

**Commander:** Thomas L. Schmitt, PCC  
**Senior Vice Commander:** Travis LeMaster, PCC  
**Junior Vice Commander:** David Hoesli, CC  
**Council Member:** Dennis H. Rigsby, PDC  
**Council Member:** J. Alan Teller, PDC  
**Council Member:** Timothy J. Beckman, PDC  
**Secretary:** William R. Adams, PDC  
**Assistant Secretary:** Jonathan Swarts  
**Treasurer:** Dennis C. Hutchinson, PDC  
**Patriotic Instructor:** Brian Mexin  
**Chaplain:** J. Alan Teller, PDC  
**Graves Registration Officer:** David Hoesli, CC  
**Historian:** Bruce R. Kolb, Jr., PDC  
**Civil War Memorials Officer:** Michael W. Beck, PDC  
**Eagle Scout Coordinator:** Michael W. Beck, PDC  
**Counselor:** Bruce R. Kolb, Jr., PDC  
**GAR Highway Officer:** William R. Adams, PDC  
**Signals Officer:** Timothy J. Beckman, PDC  
**Legion Editor:** Jonathan Swarts  
**GAR Records Officer:** Bruce R. Kolb, Jr., PDC

### Camps

**Orlando A. Somers #1** (Kokomo)  
**John W. Foster #2** (Evansville)  
**John Auten #8** (South Bend)  
**Champion Hill #17** (Huntington)  
**William P. Benton #28** (Centerville)  
**David D. Porter #116** (Valparaiso)  
**John B. Anderson #223** (Columbus)  
**Ben Harrison #356** (Indianapolis)

## UPCOMING Events

### February

11: 100<sup>th</sup> Annual Lincoln Day Ceremony (SVR)  
Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial  
Lincoln City, Indiana  
2:00 p.m. CST

### April

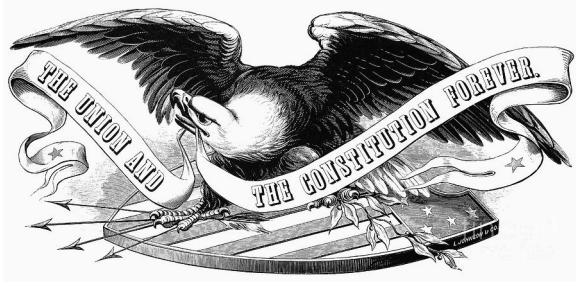
13: Annual Lincoln Tomb Ceremony (SVR)  
Oak Ridge Cemetery  
Springfield, Illinois  
10:00 a.m. CDT

27: 138<sup>th</sup> Department of Indiana Annual  
Encampment  
Location: TBD

*SVR: Indicates event at which Sons of Veterans Reserve members are encouraged to participate in uniform.*





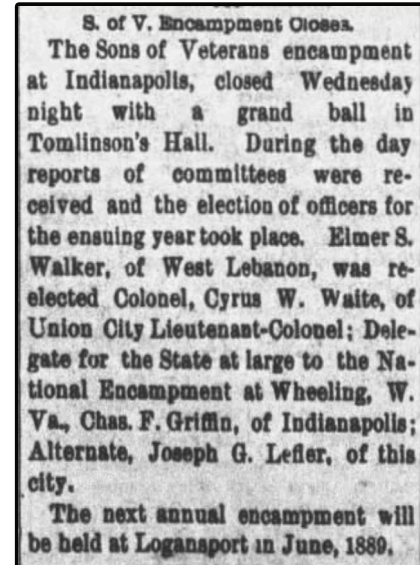


## PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTION

BRIAN MEXIN, PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTOR

### Elmer S. Walker, PDC

Brother Elmer S. Walker, PDC was born in 1862 in Indiana to Augustus Clement Walker and Ann Maria Sherman. His father, Dr. Augustus Walker, had studied medicine at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of New York. He served as a surgeon with the 63<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of Indiana Volunteers from July 1862 to June 1865. Brother Elmer lived in West Lebanon, Pike Township, Warren County in 1880 and his occupation at the time was listed as "at school." Brother Elmer married Clara Jane Robb, the daughter of a carpenter, on December 24, 1883, in Williamsport, Washington Township, Warren County. Brother Elmer was elected Department Commander of the Sons of Veterans at the 1887 Department Encampment which was held in Richmond, Indiana. He was elected to a second term in 1888 when the Department Encampment was held in Indianapolis.



Muncie Evening Press,  
June 8, 1888



Commander Tom Schmitt and Alan Teller, PDC present the ledger to Mark Voorhees outside the Friendship GAR Hall.

On the way to the National Encampment, in August, Department Commander Tom Schmitt presented a ledger from the GAR Post of Friendship, New York for the years 1911 to 1932 to Mark Voorhees, the historian of the town of Friendship. See the full story of the ledger in the January 2023 issue of *The Legion*.





## Scenes from the Department Mid-Year Encampment







## Triple Dedication in Fort Wayne

September 30 saw a unique triple dedication of Civil War memorials in Fort Wayne. The first was the dedication in Lindenwood Cemetery of a headstone for Private Daniel H. Amsden, who served in Co. B, 12<sup>th</sup> Indiana Cavalry. Through the efforts of Department Commander Tom Schmitt, Pvt. Amsden, whose grave had been unmarked since his death in 1881, was finally properly honored with a headstone dedicated by the brothers of the Department of Indiana.

The venue then shifted to the Veterans National Memorial Shrine and Museum a few miles away for the dedication of two other Civil War memorials. The second dedication was of the memorial commemorating the over 1700 victims of the explosion of the steamship *Sultana* on April 27, 1865, many of whom had been prisoners of war. The monument was the result of the efforts of Brothers Bruce Kolb, PDC, Tim Beckman, PDC, and DC Tom Schmitt. Finally, a new Civil War memorial was dedicated at the Veterans National Memorial Shrine and Museum, joining monuments to the veterans of the other armed conflicts of the United States.







## Remembrance Day in Gettysburg with the 27<sup>th</sup> Indiana, SVR

The Department of Indiana and the 27<sup>th</sup> Indiana, SVR were well-represented in Gettysburg on November 18 for the 67<sup>th</sup> Annual Remembrance Day Parade.

Participating were Brothers Alan Teller, PDC, Mike Beck, PDC, Bruce Kolb, PDC, DC Tom Schmitt, Fred Leickley, Randy McNally, Stephon Hagman, and Andrew Hagman.







# CAMP DISPATCHES

## ORLANDO A. SOMERS CAMP #1



Department Commander Tom Schmitt installed the 2024 officers of Orlando A. Somers Camp #1 on December 16, 2023.

## JOHN AUTEN CAMP #8

### Last Union Veteran of Elkhart County Honored

On August 19, 2023, John Auten Camp #8 conducted a ceremony to honor George R. Parsons, the Last Union Veteran of Elkhart County, at South Union Cemetery in Nappanee, Indiana. George Parsons served as a private in Co. A, 184th New York Infantry. He enlisted at the age of fifteen and passed away at the age of ninety-three on May 3, 1944. In addition to the members of John Auten Camp #8, brothers from Orlando A. Somers Camp #1, Champion Hill Camp #17, and David D. Porter Camp #116 also participated in the ceremony. SUVCW Department of Indiana Commander Tom Schmitt made remarks and Julie Parke from the Elkhart County Historical Society spoke about the life of George Parsons. Sisters Elizabeth Thurston and Penny Bucks of Arsinoe Martin Circle #78, Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic, presented a wreath on behalf of the LGAR. Musical accompaniment included trumpets, bagpipes, and drum and a volley was fired.





### Door Village Harvest Festival

Continuing a tradition, John Auten Camp #8 participated in the Door Village, Indiana Harvest Festival on September 9 and 10. This annual family festival is focused on veterans and history. It covers the period from the early pioneers in the area to the current day with activities for seniors and children. It is an ideal environment for teaching the values and purpose behind the SUVCW.

The information tent was visited by an estimated hundred plus people. On Saturday the LGAR partnered with Auten Camp in reaching and teaching the visitors. Camp Commander Bill Adams and Department Commander Tom Schmitt also participated in the living history Cemetery Walk both days representing local Civil War soldiers.



### President Lincoln Comes to Bristol Indiana

On December 9, excitement reached a high pitch at the Bristol, Indiana Public Library. Over twenty-five excited local citizens were present to hear a firsthand account from President Abraham Lincoln on how he developed the Gettysburg Address. President Lincoln, portrayed by Kevin J. Wood, presented a very informative presentation on the development of his famous speech that included audience interaction.

President Lincoln's security detail included Department Commander Thomas Schmitt and John Auten Camp #8 Commander Bill Adams. Arranging Mr. Lincoln's appearance was the LGAR Arsinoe Martin Circle #78 President Elizabeth Thurston and Penny Bucks. After the President's presentation, Sisters Thurston and Bucks served refreshments to those in attendance.







## **CHAMPION HILL CAMP #17**

### **Induction of New Brothers**

On Tuesday night, November 21, Champion Hill Camp #17 held the second largest induction ceremony of new members that the camp has ever had at one time. The meeting was held in the GAR room of the Huntington County courthouse in Huntington, Indiana.

The brothers inducted consisted of two men coming back into Camp #17 after a short absence and seven new brothers joining while they are forming a new camp in Blutton, Indiana. The reenlisting members of the camp are Kash Vanover and Rod Stine. A new member is T.J. Brandenburg. New members coming into Champion Hill Camp until their camp is formed are Kent Nelson, Jeff Lemler, Craig Persinger, Irv Turner, Curtis Vanover, and Robert Vanover.

The planned new camp will be William Baumgarner Camp #33. Private Baumgarner was in Co. A, 4th West Virginia Infantry, and was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions at Vicksburg. He is buried in Liberty Center in Wells County, Indiana. The number 33 is in honor of the first GAR post in Bluffton Indiana. Kash Vanover will also transfer to Camp 33 and should be credited for forming the camp and bringing nearly all the original brothers.



(L to R) Brothers Gib Young, PDC; Jay Brown; Jeff Lefler; Rod Stine; Kash Vanover; Craig Pereinger; Irv Turner; Robert Vanover; Curtis Vanover



## **DAVID D. PORTER CAMP #116**

### **Veterans Day Show at the Memorial Opera House**

On Saturday, November 11, David D. Porter Camp #116 attended a show “Honoring Our Veterans” at the Memorial Opera House in Valparaiso. The show included performances by the South Shore Orchestra, LimeLights (the Memorial Opera House's Youth Theater Program), and various vocalists, as well as presentations by our camp's color guard and past camp commander.

The orchestra performed a variety of patriotic songs, including the Armed Forces Salute medley, asking veterans to stand during their respective branch's anthem. The youth theater performed “snapshots,” stories from various veterans and their families about what it means to serve in the armed forces. Brother Steve Mockler's speech detailed the history of the Memorial Opera House and its founding by the Chaplain Brown Post No. 106 of the Grand Army of the Republic, as well as President Lincoln and Porter County's calls to arms at the beginning of the Civil War.

Our camp enjoyed seeing this wonderful show at the Memorial Opera House, a building which holds such historical significance to our group.



Brother Steve Mockler discussing the building of the Memorial Opera House by the Chaplain Brown Post No. 106 of the G.A.R,



Father and son color guard, Brothers Rick and Trevor Smurdon, with Brother Pat Cave leading the Pledge of Allegiance.





## **BEN HARRISON CAMP #356**

### **President Benjamin Harrison's Wreath Laying Ceremony**

The Ben Harrison Camp attended the Presidential Wreath Laying Ceremony on August 19, 2023 in honor of President Benjamin Harrison's birthday. President Harrison is buried in Lot 57, Section 13 in Crown Hill Cemetery, Indianapolis, Indiana, and that is where the ceremony took place. The master of ceremonies was Major Christopher Barnthouse, U.S. Army (Ret.), who is a cousin of President Harrison's first wife Caroline Scott Harrison. The national anthem was sung by Paige Fleming of North Central High School in Indianapolis. Civil War reenactors portraying the 19<sup>th</sup> United States Infantry rendered military honors and there were representatives from the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site also present. Brigadier General Todd Erskine, U.S. Army Reserve, brought greetings from President Joseph Biden and presented the wreath. Specialist Mindy Strahl, 338<sup>th</sup> Army Band, U.S. Army Reserve, performed a very moving rendition of Taps from a hillside near the President's grave. Representing the SUVCW Ben Harrison Camp #356 was Brian Mexin, Tim Beckman, and Joe Beckman.



and there were representatives from the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site also present. Brigadier General Todd Erskine, U.S. Army Reserve, brought greetings from President Joseph Biden and presented the wreath. Specialist Mindy Strahl, 338<sup>th</sup> Army Band, U.S. Army Reserve, performed a very moving rendition of Taps from a hillside near the President's grave. Representing the SUVCW Ben Harrison Camp #356 was Brian Mexin, Tim Beckman, and Joe Beckman.

### **President Harrison's Grave Marked with a GAR Star**

Ben Harrison Camp members Joe Beckman and Tim Beckman marked the grave of our twenty-third U.S. President, Benjamin Harrison, with a Grand Army of the Republic grave marker on August 27, 2023, after obtaining approval from Crown Hill Cemetery (See photos on next page.) It is unknown why President Harrison never had a GAR grave marker at his grave. He was a long-time member of the Grand Army of the Republic and upon his death was a member of the George H. Thomas Post #17 in Indianapolis. It was camp member Joe Beckman's idea to mark his grave with a GAR marker. Special thanks to Department of Indiana Commander Tom Schmitt, who supplied the very nice grave marker to Brother Tim Beckman some time ago.







"Christmas Eve" by Thomas Nast, *Harper's Weekly*, January 3, 1863





## Central Region Association Conference Held in Dayton

The 83<sup>rd</sup> conference of the Central Region Association of the Allied Orders of the Grand Army of the Republic was held October 6 and 7. Seventeen members and guests attended the conference activities in Dayton, Ohio.

The group toured the National Museum of the US Air Force on Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton. After the tour, CRA Commander Ed Kreiser, PCinC conducted the business meeting. One of the main takeaways was the relocation of the Women's Relief Corps Museum collection in Springfield, Illinois to the Gen. John A. Logan Museum in Murphysboro, Illinois. It was discussed how the CRA could help in the future to prevent other small museums in the region from closing.

Elizabeth Thurston of Indiana was elected 2024 CRA Commander. The 84<sup>th</sup> CRA will be held October 4 and 5 in Jasper, Indiana with plans to tour the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial. Additional plans are being made to have author and Lincoln historian Joshua Claybourn speak on the topic of Lincoln in Indiana. Josh is a PCC of John W. Foster Camp #2.

## Department and General Orders

### Department Orders - Series 2023-2024

#1 - 2023 Mid-Year Encampment (October 15, 2023)

#2 - Installation of Camp Officers (October 17, 2023)

### General Orders - Series 2022-2023

#28 - National Awards and Housekeeping (Amended) (August 5, 2023)

### General Orders - Series 2023-2024

#1 - Administration (Amendment) (August 11, 2023)

#2 - General Order on Membership Qualifications Ratification (Amendment) (August 10, 2023)

#2A - Disbanding of Colgrove-Woodruff Camp #22 Dept. of MI (August 21, 2023)

#3 - Relieving Patriotic Instructor (October 2, 2023)

#4 - Revocation of Charter (October 4, 2023)

#5 - Passing of a 80 Year Member of the SUVCW (October 10, 2023)

#6 - Reappointment Patriotic Instructor (October 29, 2023)

#7 - Passing of PDC Eric Schmincke (November 7, 2023)

#8 - Disbandment of Henry Wallace Camp #160 Dept. Of MI (November 14, 2023)

#9 - New Sons of Veterans Reserve Commander (November 18, 2023)

Full documents are available at <http://suvwin.org> (Department) and <http://suvcw.org> (National).