

Minutes - Department of Indiana Mid-Year Encampment November 4, 2023

The Department of Indiana, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War 2023 Mid-Year Encampment was called to order at the Newburgh Chandler Public Library, Newburgh IN, November 4, 2023. Dept. Commander Thomas Schmitt opened the meeting at 9:23 AM.

The 2023 Department of Indiana Mid-Year Encampment was called to order by Commander Schmitt.

Secretary Adams called the roll of officers as follows:

Commander, Thomas L. Schmitt, Present
Sr. Vice Commander, Travis J. LeMaster, Present
Jr. Vice Commander, David Hoesli, Present
Secretary/GAR Highway Officer, William R. Adams, PDC Present
Treasurer, Dennis C. Hutchinson, PDC Present
Council Member #1 Dennis H. Rigsby, PDC Present
Council Member #2 Timothy J. Beckman, PDC Present
Council Member #3 Alan Teller, PDC Absent
Signal Officers, Timothy J. Beckman, PDC Present
Historian/GAR Records Officer, Bruce R. Kolb, PDC Present
The Legion Editor, Jonathan P. Swarts, Present
Chaplain, J. Alan Teller, PDC Absent
Civil War Memorials /Eagle Scout Coordinator, Michael W. Beck, PDC Present
Patriotic Instructor, Brian J. Mexin, Absent
Graves Registration Officer, David Hoesli, Present

Brother Dennis Hutchinson gave the opening prayer in the absence of Chaplain Alan Teller.

Co. D, 27th Indiana Infantry SVR Members Bruce Kolb and Dennis Hutchinson presented the Colors.

All recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Commander Schmitt then proceeded to complete the meeting opening per the SUVCW Ritual.

Commander Schmitt explained that we would not have a National Representative at the Encampment. He stated per a letter he received from the National Chief of Staff that the National did not send representatives to Midyear Encampments. The stated reasons were very few Departments had more than one Encampment per year and also due to the extra cost associated with sending a representative.

Courtesies were presented by Brother Dennis Hutchinson. He announced the location of restrooms and that there was bottled water available in the rear of the meeting room.

Commander Schmitt asked for a motion to approve the April 29, 2023 Department minutes. A motion was made by Brother Bruce Kolb that the minutes of the 137th Annual Encampment of April 29, 2023 be accepted. The motion was seconded by Brother Tim Beckman, there was no further discussion, the motion to accept the minutes as presented passed.

Department Officers Reports:

Commander Schmitt reminded the Encampment that we would not be reading the Department Officer reports. Secretary Adams reported that all Department Officers Reports were received. Commander Schmitt then asked if there were any additions, deletions, or corrections to the published reports.

Department Secretary Adams asked to speak and announced that with the end of Commander Schmitt's term of office in April 2025 he too would be retiring from his position as Secretary. He asked that all of those who would be interested in the position to contact Commander Schmitt, Sr. Vice-Commander LeMaster, or himself. A question followed about Assistant Department Secretary Jon Swarts filling the position? Brother Swarts who was present answered that in addition to his Camp positions, and Legion Editor he also had been elected Commander of the Indiana Mollus Commandery. Due to all of the current positions he was not able to also perform the functions of the Department Secretary.

Treasurer Dennis Hutchinson reported since assuming the position of The Department Treasurer he had moved the Department account to Fifth-Third Bank because there were so many locations across Indiana. His hope is that the next Treasurer will not need to move the account to another bank. He reported that the account has \$9,257.46 as of 10/31/2023. Copies of the Treasure's Report were distributed to the attendees for review. A copy is on file in the Department Records.

The Chaplain's report was read by Secretary Adams at the request of Chaplain Alan Teller in his absence. Brother Teller's report noted the passing of Ben Harrison Camp member John J. Copland. Brother Adams also noted that he had received word of the passing of John Anderson Camp member Brother Mike A. Prebeck. After a brief review of facts about each brother, Secretary Adams asked for all to bow their heads for a brief moment of silence.

Camp Reports:

Secretary Adams noted that he had received reports from all Camps except William Benton Camp #28, before the meeting. William Benton Camp Commander Thomas Ashley then presented the report to the Department Secretary.

Department Standing Committee:

Visitation Committee update was provided by Brother Gib Young. Brother Young reported he had visited and toured the Indiana Soldiers Home in West Lafayette with representatives of the facility. Brother Young felt that it was an excellent location to have future Annual Department Encampments. They offer meeting rooms and facilities at a minimal cost to us. He also emphasized the importance of the history and the importance of that history to the SUVCW. Brother Gib reported that the ISH representative he met with was very excited about having us meet there! Commander Schmitt also noted that the history of the GAR and SUVCW to the ISH made it an ideal location for our Encampment. He also felt that since we have little presence in the Lafayette area this would possibly increase the awareness of the SUVCW to those living there. Bruce Kolb made a **Motion:** That we establish a committee of three (3) to explore making arrangements to have the Annual Encampment next year at the Soldier and Sailors Home in West Lafayette. Support by Brother Jonathan Swarts. *Motion Approved*

NOTE: A committee composed of Commander Schmitt, Gib Young, Mike Beck and Bruce Kolb was established.

Department Special Committees:

Last Union Veteran Project: Committee Chair Gib Young passed the update to Brother Mike Beck. Brother Beck presented information on a medallion available from Ben Harrison Camp as an alternate method of marking Last Union Veteran's graves. The Medallions cost \$10 and can be affixed direct to the Veteran's Headstone. The other method available for marking graves are the Brass Star markers sold by the National Quartermaster. Mike Beck's concern with the National markers are they say GAR on them and all Last Union Veteran's may not have been GAR members. (see minutes of the 137th Annual Encampment, "Last Union Veteran Grave Markers") Brother Beck reported he had sent to all Camp Commanders a map marked with the counties that had been marked and those still needing the Last Veterans Grave marked. It was determined during discussion that there were errors in the map. Brother Beck indicated he would collaborate with Brother Tim Beckman who maintains the Department's website list of all Last Union Veterans to produce an updated map. He said he would send this map to all Camp Commanders. Brother Beckman also remarked that the current Website list is accurate to his knowledge but if anyone knows of an error, please report it to Brother Tim Beckman. The discussion then became if a uniformed location on the grave marker should be established? After some discussion it was decided that due to various types and shapes of Headstones it would be difficult to define a location.

Indiana Monuments: Monuments Officer Beck referred the reporting on the civil War Monument in Grant County to Department Sr.-Vice Commander Travis LeMaster. Brother LeMaster reported that Somers Camp #1 in Kokomo has a project to restore a damaged Civil War monument located in the Thrailkill Cemetery north of Swayze. They are working with the Swayze Odd Fellows and the Sims Township Trustee to raise the \$12,000 required to restore the monument. To date they are one-third of the way to that goal. Brother LeMaster said his purpose today was raise awareness to the fund raiser and to encourage help from anyone on the project.

26th Indiana Vicksburg Monument: Brother Bill Adams Reported that there had been no change in the situation with the 26th Indiana Monument since his report at the Annual Encampment April 29, 2023. Due to severe erosion problems and lack of funding to correct those problems quickly the park cannot begin to turn its attention to the relocation of the 26th Indiana Monument. Brother Adams did note that the "Friends of Vicksburg" are active and do have the responsibility for the care and upkeep of the monuments. To highlight that point he reported that recently a Rhode Island Monument at the Park had been damaged during a tornado. The Friends of Vicksburg provided the funding and ensured the repair of that monument. Adams also mentioned that it had come to his attention that Foster Camp had also been working on this same issue with the 26th Indiana Monument. He said that they had also been in contact with the VNMP. Brother Adams explained that having various different voices within the SUVCW communicating with VNMP will only confuse and make it more difficult to complete the project. He therefore recommended to Commander Schmitt that Foster Camp Member Brother Eric Sprouls be added to the committee. Commander Schmitt agreed and added Brother Sprouls.

Department Records Storage: Secretary Adams reported that he had made contact with the Center for Fraternal Collections and Research. He spoke to the Director, Dr. Heather Calloway and she indicated that based on our discussion the Department of Indiana SUVCW fits the profile of the organizations they want to partner with. It was discussed that she would meet with us at some central point to review samples of our records and discuss the process. One possible location discussed was the Kokomo Library. Secretary Adams indicated he would like to move ahead with the review but had requested of PDC Floyd at the April Encampment that he appoint two additional Brothers to the committee. Since PDC Floyd left that task to the incoming Department Commander Schmitt, Secretary Adams requested that the Commander appoint two additional Committee members. Commander Schmitt asked for volunteers. Hearing no volunteers, Secretary Adams asked to appoint Brother Alan Teller. It was agreed that if Brother Teller agreed he would be on the committee.

Department Projects: Committee Chair Brother Alan Teller in his absence requested Brother Adams to report for him that there had been no requests since the Annual Encampment in April.
Report from the National Encampment: Brother Dennis Hutchinson, PDC presented his report on significant recommendations and actions from the 143rd National Encampment held at Nashua, New Hampshire in August. Brother Hutchinson’s report can be viewed at the Department Website, www.suvcwin.org. A copy of the report is also filed with the Departments records for this Encampment.

Special Encampment Business-Vote on General Order #2, CC&R Amendment: Commander Schmitt noted that this subject had been discussed in depth at the Annual Encampments in April. He briefly reminded everyone that at the recent 142nd National Encampment, changes were proposed to the National Constitution on membership requirements. There are four recommended changes that are to be voted on. Those recommended changes were distributed to all Department members through General Order #2 previously as well as to those members attending today’s meeting. Commander Schmitt provided an explanation on how the vote was to be taken. He clearly wanted it understood that there was to be one vote for all four recommendations. We are to either approve or disapprove all four together. Commander Schmitt informed the encampment that the we would vote by a paper ballot because some brothers had felt some may be intimidated to vote their true position. He said the only ones present in the room during the vote would be members. Everyone would receive a ballot and everyone had to mark the ballot. The ballots would have a box to abstain but all ballots are to be marked and a count of ballots handed out had to equal the number returned. He expressed his frustration that some members had distributed incorrect information about this vote which resulted in confusion and much time wasted by himself and the department Secretary to clarify the correct process. He said he had contacted the National Parliamentarian Jim Phal for his direction on taking this vote. Brother Pahl also suggested that the Sr. Vice Commander, Treasurer, and one Council Member count the ballots together. Lastly Commander Schmitt said we would not allow voting via Zoom because of the requirement only members should be present during the vote and there was no way to secure a member’s home if using Zoom. Commander Schmitt then called on Secretary Adams who had requested to speak. Brother Adams expressed that we are pass the time where we could have prevented the recommendations being advanced to department vote so there was little left to be said but to move ahead to the vote. Next Brother Tim Beckman requested to address the encampment. In a prepared statement he said he had expressed his feelings about the recommended changes at the Annual Encampment in April so all knew his position. He passionately and clearly explained his reasons why he was against each of the four recommendations. He urged all brothers to vote to disapprove the four recommended changes to the National Constitution. Commander Schmitt asked if there were any others comments. Hearing none Brother Dennia Rigsby called the question. 19 ballots were handed out to those present and 19 were collected. The clerk/tellers were Sr. Vice Commander LeMaster, Treasurer Dennis Hutchinson, PDC and Council Member Dennis Rigsby, PDC. The results on the vote were:

<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Abstain</u>	<u>Total</u>
1	16	2	19

The Department of Indiana **rejected** the four (4) Constitutional Changes. Commander Schmitt informed the encampment that those results would be reported to National.

Break: The Chaplain closed the Bible and a 10-minute break was taken at 11:07 AM – Returned and the Bible opened at 11:20 AM

Old Business:

Department By-Laws Revision: Commander Schmitt questioned if anyone knew why this item was originally on the agenda. Secretary Bill Adams informed everyone that this item was added by PDC Floyd at the 2023 Mid-year Encampment. It appeared because PDC Floyd reviewed the Department Constitution and saw that it instructed us to visit both Knightstown and the Indiana Soldiers Home. Since the Knightstown location no longer existed, we should amend the Department By-Laws. However, it was discovered that PDC Floyd had referenced an old copy of the By-Laws and the current version had removed Knightstown. Therefore no action required and this item can be dropped from the agenda.

Past Department Commanders Badge: The Commander asked PDC Tim Beckman if he had anything further to add on this item? Brother Beckman responded that he did not. He said the company in Pennsylvania still had the stamp. Brother Beckman also noted that he had not received any inquires. It was requested that Brother Beckman distribute the contact information for the company to all Past Department Commanders, Brother Beckman agreed to do so.

SUVCW.ORG Domain: Commander Schmitt asked for clarification if we needed to act on renewing the suvcw.in.org domain. Signals Officer Tim Beckman, PDC said no. The Domain license was on a 2-year renewable basis. Signals Officer Beckman, however, informed the Encampment that The Departments Zoom account will be up for renewal on April 29, 2024. Because that is very close to the Annual Encampment date and since we are gathered today, he made the following

Motion: That the Department approve renewing the Department of Indiana's Zoom account at the annual rate of \$139.90. Upon support the Encampment voted, *Motion Approved*. The period covered is from April 29 2024 to April 29, 2025.

Evansville Memorial Coliseum Update: Foster Camp member Brother Brian Lankford presented a detailed report on the progress of this project. He noted that the project was to save and digitize the records from the Farragut GAR Post #27. This Post formed in Evansville in 1881 and held regular meetings until February 1934. The Post met at the Evansville Memorial Coliseum but through the years the post records were not safely stored or properly protected. In 2015 an initiative by several local organizations including John Wallace Foster Camp #2 SUVCW began to save the documents. Eventually 8 boxes of documents were taken to the University of Southern Indiana for digitization and storage. To date the USI has a 5-page list of digitized documents. The digitalized documents can be viewed online by going to digitalarchives.usi.edu . Brother Langford provided pictures of the inside of the Post meeting room and other documents in his report. The report is filed with the Department records for this Encampment.

Sultana Memorial Project: Brother Bruce Kolb, PDC thanked Department Commander Schmitt for his help in obtaining the stone to mount the Sultana plaque and for his work on putting together the dedication ceremony. The dedication was well attended and received great media attention. The plaque and monument are on the grounds of The National Veterans Memorial Shrine in Fort Wayne. Brother Kolb said that there is also a time capsule that has been prepared and it will be buried at the foot of the monument. Commander Schmitt commented that next to the Sultana monument will be another similar type monument to a Civil War nurse Mother George.

Graves Registration: Graves Registration Officer David Hoesli presented his usual complete and detailed report on graves registration. High lights from Brother Hoesli's report: There were a total of 39,488 Civil War veterans buried in Indiana who are registered on the National Graves Registration database. This total reflects an increase of 700 veterans that have been added to the Indiana total since the 137th Annual Department Encampment in April 2023. He personally has added 526 new names to the National database and made 133 adjustments to existing graves data since January 1st. Throughout the United States there are 53,228 Indiana veterans that have been located and added to the National Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Graves Registration database. This is an increase of 837 since the Annual Department Encampment in April 2023 and 1,473 since January 1, 2023. This is just under 27% of the roughly 200,000 that served from Indiana. Brother David said that one of the biggest issues effecting Indiana records is that there are 669 listings with no named counties. This is down from 2558 from 18 months ago. Brother Hoesli urged

when entering data try to enter as much as possible including the county. The report is filed on the Department website and with the Department records for this Encampment. It was noted that Brother David Hoesli is to be commended for his fine work as the Graves Registration Officer and the Department is very grateful for his service.

Kimmel Park LGAR/DUV Monument: No change, nothing to report.

The Indiana Legion: Legion Editor, Brother Jon Swarts, thanked everyone who contribute articles to the Legion. He stressed that he needed everyone to contribute articles and pictures. Brother Swarts pleaded to not wait for his request for articles but continuously send them in as events dictate. Commander Schmitt also stressed the importance of writing articles for the Banner as well. He further clarified that there is a mistaken idea that the Banner editor is responsible for forwarding articles to the Banner. This is not true and is not in the job description. Each Camp needs to ensure they provide articles to both the Legion and Banner. Legion Editor Swarts suggested that maybe a lead person who's responsible to focus on supporting Camps sending in articles to both the Legion and the Banner is needed in the Department.

Lunch Break: Adjourn for lunch at 11:52 AM

Program presented during lunch:

Patriotic Instruction – “A Son of Evansville” prepared by Brian Mexin and presented by David Hoesli.

Return from lunch: The Encampment meeting reconvened at 12:33 PM.

Eliza Ann Hardy-Boston: Commander Schmitt asked how we could gather more information on Civil War era nurse, Eliza Ann Hardy-Boston. She is buried in Pendleton Cemetery. As he indicated at the Annual Encampment in April, he thought a dedication honoring Civil War nurses was important. He noted that during National Women's History Month news media is very interested in articles on subjects like Eliza. He asked if the Camps could start working on discovering more about this Civil War Nurse.

Bonding of Department and Camp Officers: Brother Bruce Kolb, PDC addressed the issue of Bonding being the person directing the process for the Department Commander. Brother Bruce pointed out that the National CC&R requires that Camp and Department Officers require bonding. More specifically the Secretary and Treasurer. He also explained that bonding of these positions at the Department and Camp level are **mandatory** and failure to do so can result in that person being removed from their position. The Department Liability Insurance Carrier, State Farm Insurance, is able to provide the Fidelity Bond. Bruce said they only require a short questionnaire to be completed to complete the process. Brother Kolb asked each Camp Commander to check with their Secretary and Treasurer to confirm if they have sent their Questionnaire. He also said that there were blank questionnaires available and urged each camp present have someone take several to their camp if they should be needed. A question was raised that the National Treasurer had made comments that indicated he didn't take bonding seriously. Brother Kolb's reply was that for no more than it costs the Department to provide Bonding and because it is a requirement of the CC&R Bonding should be completed.

Upcoming SVR Events: Company D 27th Indiana SVR Commander Captain Michael Beck addressed the Encampment. He introduced the officers of the 27th Indiana SVR present. He then stated that he is implementing a recognition program to recognize deserving members of the SVR. He requested Brothers to contact him with names of deserving SVR members who have supported their local Camps or by supporting many Camps in Indiana. Captain Beck has several Badges that he will award at the Annual Encampment to those nominated for a job well done. Captain Beck then read the highlights of the SVR Activity Report submitted for this Encampment. Captain Beck's final

remarks were to encourage all SVR members to attend the various events, even if they don't have a uniform or musket. He pointed out that there are numerous jobs that can be done to support the event and the SVR without a uniform. The SVR report is filed with the Department records for this Encampment.

New Business:

Reimbursement of Department Officers: Department Treasurer Dennis Hutchinson reviewed and presented receipts for his and Department Secretary William Adams expenses incurred on behalf of the Department of Indiana. Dennis Rigsby made a **Motion** supported by Brother Bruce Kolb that the department reimburse both Treasurer Hutchinson and Secretary Adams the amount submitted on the receipts. *Motion Approved*

Hosting a National Encampment: Commander Schmitt said that at the Annual Encampment in April Brother Beck suggested that a committee be formed for the purpose of exploring Indiana hosting a National Encampment. Brothers Beck and Hutchinson indicated that they did a preliminary review of the requirements for hosting a National Encampment. They said it takes many people dedicated to helping for a long period. Another key point is that the location be with 10 miles of an International Airport. Brother Kolb suggested that we should have the Camp Commanders pole their camp members to determine how many would be interested and committed to this project. The camps could report the results at the Annual Encampment in April 2024. Brother Dennis Hutchinson made the following **Motion:** To form an exploratory committee for the purpose of determining manpower and costs to host a National Encampment in Indiana. The motion was supported by Brother Travis LeMaster. There being no further discussion the *Motion was Approved*. The Committee members are Mike Beck Chair and Dennis Hutchinson.

Purchasing Tables for Officers Stations: Commander Schmitt questioned why this agenda item was included? Secretary Adams said he requested the Encampment consider the purchase of tables because at the last Midyear Encampment it was approved to buy Station Banners for the Department. We have the Banners but no place to mount them with out table/stations. Secretary Adams said he had purchased Station Tables from Walmart for \$22 apiece for John Auten Camp. These tables are wider than those being used today and are light weight. After some discussion it was suggested that this item be tabled until the Annual Encampment so we can see what type of tables are available at the Indiana Soldiers Home. It was agreed: *Discussion tabled until Annual Encampment*

Other New Business:

- Brother Bruce Kolb addressed the change of Encampment dates. He reminded us that PDC Floyd had created a committee to consider alternate Annual and Midwinter Encampment dates. Moving the Annual from the first weekend in June to the last weekend in April and the Mid-winter meeting (now Midyear) from the end of January to the first weekend of November. Now that we had tried this for 1 year, how did we like it and should we revert back or maintain the new dates? After discussion and several positive points expressed about the new dates, it was agreed by all present to continue with the new Encampment dates.
- Commander Schmitt informed us that the Departments flag pole for the Department Flag was very unstable with a weak top section. He was concerned that at some point it could break or cause the flag to fall. He said we need to address this problem. A **Motion:** by Dennis Hutchinson Supported by Bruce Kolb was to purchase a new flag pole similar to one that Brother Tim Beckman purchased for Foster Camp. *Motion was Approved*
- Commander Schmitt then recognized the following Brothers with a Certificate of Recognition. Brother David Hoesli, Brother Jonathan Swarts, Brother Brian Mexin, and Brother William Adams

There being no further business to bring before this Encampment Commander Schmitt proceeded to the closing ceremony. The Colors were retired and the meeting properly adjourned at 1:37 PM.

Respectively Submitted,

William R. Adams

William Adams, PDC
Department of Indiana, Secretary