



The Indiana Legion

Department of Indiana • Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War
Thomas L. Schmitt - Commander

Issue 1-25

Special Edition May 2025



I am truly honored and humbled to have been elected to the office of Department Commander at the Annual Department of Indiana Encampment held April 26, 2025. I want to congratulate and thank past Department Commander Thomas Schmitt for his leadership and service to the Department for the past two years. Additionally, I would like to thank all of the members, elected and appointed, who have continued to serve the Department in any capacity. The work of the order can not successfully be performed without your most able and generous service. Congratulations and thank you to all Brothers elected and appointed for choosing to serve in Department of Indiana offices for the next year.

Taken from Department Order #1.



Travis LeMaster (left) is congratulated after being elected Department Commander of Indiana by installing officer Robert R. Payne.

From the Editor

Please remember to forward your camp events and projects with images, information and dates etc to me for publication in the next edition of *The Legion*. The more images to work with, the better.

Also if you want to write a page, or portion of a page on some topic that you've been researching or care to share, forward that to me as well. I can be reached at:

Xatluxain@gmail.com



Department of Indiana

Officers

Commander: Travis LeMaster, PCC
Senior Vice Commander: David Hoesli, CC
Junior Vice Commander: Fred Leickly
Council Member: Dennis H. Rigsby, PDC
Council Member: Thomas L. Schmitt, PDC
Council Member: Timothy J. Beckman, PDC
Secretary: Dennis C. Hutchinson, PDC
Treasurer: Drew Godby
Patriotic Instructor: Jonathan Swarts
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: Taylin Allen
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)
William Bumgarner # 33 (Bluffton)
David D. Porter #116 (Valparaiso)
John B. Anderson #223 (Columbus)
Ben Harrison #356 (Indianapolis)

UPCOMING Events

May

26th/30th: Memorial Day
Nationwide

June

21st: Dr. Almyra Fifield
Marker & Grave Dedication
Marker at the corner of
Indiana & Franklin Street Valparaiso, Indiana
and grave dedication at
Old City Cemetery

July

12th: Thraikill Monument Re-dedication
522 N 800 W 27, Converse Indiana
3 miles north of Swayzee
10:00 a.m. EDT

September

20th: 19th Ill. Train Wreck Monument Dedication
220 Capital Ave, Shoals Indiana 47581
Grounds of the Martin County Museum
Time: TBD

The next issue of *The Legion* will be due about the end of June or early July. Be sure to message the editor about future events so they can be listed.

I can be reached at Xatluxain@gmail.com



139th Annual Encampment Department of Indiana



Brothers of the Department of Indiana pose for a photo at the conclusion of the 139th Annual Encampment.

Kicking off at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 26th, the Department of Indiana held its annual encampment inside the Commandant's Home, located at the Indiana Veterans Home in West Lafayette. Some twenty-five brothers were in attendance. For a full recap, brothers will have to wait for the minutes to be published. The following are a few items that the editor thought appropriate to publish.

After some discussion about conflicting events and general availability of some brothers in attendance as well as a number of known brothers who have been unable to attend the past few encampments, it was motioned and approved that the 2026 Annual Encampment be held on **April 18th**. Location will again be at Commandant's Home.

New officers were elected by the department and installed by our representative from National, Robert R Payne, past Department Commander of Michigan and a member of the Council of Administration. Newly elected officers were as follows: Travis LeMaster as Commander, David Hoesli as Senior Vice Commander, Fred Leickly as Junior Vice Commander, Dennis Hutchinson as Secretary and Drew Godby as Treasurer.

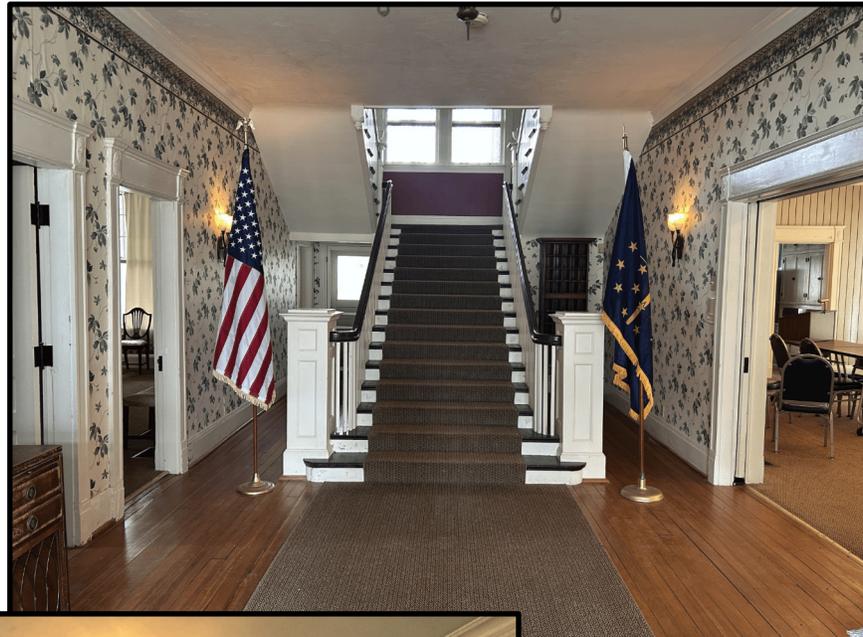
The 2025 Mid-Year Encampment's date is set for November 1st. Details to come in a future issue of The Legion.





Scenes from the Annual Encampment

The National and State Colors greet brothers before they proceed upstairs, where it was suggested at last year's encampment that we use the center hall on the second floor instead of the side room seen on the right.



There are several rooms on each floor of the building and most have their own bathrooms for convenience. A modern kitchen is located in the back that you can use if you want to bring your own lunch for the evening at next years encampment.



Brothers in attendance mingle and get seated before the opening of the encampment.





Outgoing Commander Tom Schmitt opens the encampment



Mike Beck (standing) discusses the possibility of and requirements for hosting a National Encampment



Robert R. Payne prepares to install the newly elected department officers



Newly elected officers are sworn in.



Department Commander Travis LeMaster closes the encampment.

First order of business from Department Commander Travis LeMaster

Circular 1 & General Order #1
Series 2025-2026

Brothers of the Department of Indiana,

It is my goal for each Camp in the Department of Indiana to continue to grow and in order to do that we must adopt a strategy of Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation. This strategy was laid out by Past Department Commander Hutchinson and it is still relevant today. We have recently been successful in adding a new Camp to the Department but there is much more work to be done. In order to succeed, it will require the participation of not just the leadership, but of each Brother in the Order.

Each member of the SUVCW has their own reason for joining. For some, the story of their Civil War ancestor has been passed down from generation to generation. For others, the discovery of an ancestor's service was a surprise and you wanted to document and preserve your family's story. Whatever path you took to become a member of the SUVCW, you are now an ambassador!

Recruitment - Recruitment is the most important thing we can do. Without recruitment, the SUVCW will not continue. As Commander, I ask that each of you invite people to become members of our fraternity. If someone is intimidated about doing the genealogy, let them know they can join first as an Associate and then you can help them work on getting the hereditary information for a full membership later.

Retention - We need to keep the members we have. Make an effort to reach out to Brothers who haven't been to a meeting in awhile and invite them to attend. Make sure your Camp meetings are meaningful, interesting, and most importantly - fun! Get people involved in special projects. Make sure that new members feel like they can contribute something to the group.

Reactivation - Our Camps lose members and we need to understand why. Reaching out could bring some back. If we work on Retention, we wouldn't have to worry so much about Reactivation.

- Continued -



The Ancestor Pool that we in the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War have to draw upon is enormous. We should not have any issue finding eligible descendants who qualify for membership. The issue is that we have to give them a compelling reason to join our organization and make sure it is something that they want to be a part of.

I challenge each Brother to invite potential members to the next Camp meeting as well as reaching out to those Brothers who haven't been to a meeting in awhile to make sure they understand they are a valued member of the organization.

Each of us plays a vital role in encouraging others to join the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, and a growing membership will ensure that we thrive for generations to come.

Yours in Fraternity, Charity & Loyalty.

Travis J. LeMaster

Department Order #2

Recognizing the importance of Recruitment and Retention to the success in sustaining the Order, I am hereby creating the following awards in the Department of Indiana to recognize individual Brothers and Camps for their recruitment efforts.

Oliver P. Morton Award - This award will be awarded to the Camp that recruited the most members during one year. For purposes of the award, the year will be considered to be the time period between Annual Encampments. Should there be a tie, both Camps will be presented the award.

Lew Wallace Award - This award will be awarded to the individual Brother who recruited the most members during one year. For purposes of the award, the year will be considered to be the time period between Annual Encampments. Should there be a tie, both Brothers will be presented the award.

Ordered this 29th Day of April, 2025

In Fraternity, Charity & Loyalty,

Travis J. LeMaster



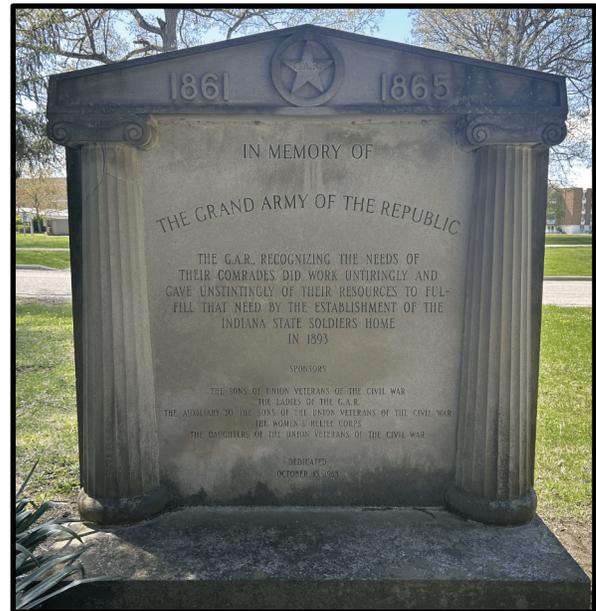
After the encampment, I took some time to visit points of interest and thought it would be nice to share some of these. I also visited the Indiana Veterans Home Cemetery and thought it would be neat to photograph a few headstones and then later do some research on the individuals buried there.



This soldier is one of two that stands guard on the steps of the Commandant's Home. Missing his rifle and a portion of his kepi, the statue is in need of some repairs. Some of you may be surprised to find that the soldier is made of zinc! Many of us who have spent plenty of time in cemeteries will have seen headstones made from the same material, giving them the moniker of "Zinkers." This style of monument was popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



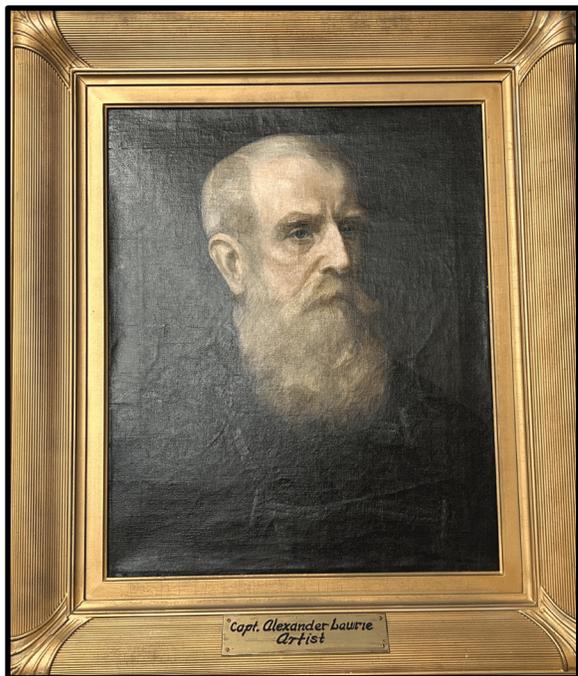
This is the bass relief mantle above the fireplace inside of the Commandant's Home. This depicts William Henry Harrison and soldiers from the Battle of Tippecanoe.



G.A.R. Memorial made from Bedford limestone, for their efforts in establishing the Indiana State Soldiers Home. Sponsored by the Allied Orders and dedicated on October 13th, 1963 during a Central Region Association conference that was held in Lafayette that same weekend. One notable speaker was U.S. Grant III, 1954 & 1955 Commander in Chief of the SUVCW and chairman of the Civil War Centennial Commission.



Photo taken during the 1963 Central Region Association Conference in Lafayette, Indiana. From left to right: General Ulysses S. Grant III, Indiana Auxiliary President Margaret Beasey, Past National Auxiliary President Ellinore K. Johnson and her husband, Department of Wisconsin Commander Thomas L. W. Johnson.



Alexander Laurie lived at the State Soldiers Home from 1902 until his death in 1917. Here he painted some 160 portraits of U.S. Generals of which you can find about a dozen at the Lawrie Library inside of the MacArthur Building where. These were once housed at the old library building near the Commandant's Home before it came into disrepair.

Alexander was a Captain in Company B, 121st Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry from September 1862 to June of 1863. He previously served as a private for three months with the 17th Pennsylvania Infantry in 1861.

He is buried at West Point Cemetery, southeast of Wolcott, Indiana. About 17 miles north of Lafayette.



A few of the portraits that line the wall of the Lawrie Library



A small portion of the Indiana Veterans Home Cemetery which we will take a closer look at on the next page. There are about 3,000 soldiers and their wives buried here.



The American flag waves over a Spanish cannon that was captured from the fortifications of Santiago, Cuba during the Spanish-American War on July 17th 1898. This bronze cannon was cast in 1796 and clocks in 4,800 pounds.

John A. Logan post #3 of the G.A.R. in 1899 managed to lobby the war department to give this cannon to the Soldiers Home through what the Lafayette Weekly Journal called their "hustling qualities." This came with a condition however, that the city or institution receiving the cannon would be responsible for payment of the freight charges.

John Whitehead, a veteran residing at the Soldiers Home provided the necessary funds for the transportation of and the erection of the cannon shortly before dying that same year. There is a slab at the base of the cannon the relates this story. He served in the 5th and 6th Indiana Cavalry regiments during the Civil War.



John Whitehead at the IVH Cemetery



James M Cook was born in 1837 and died in 1916. As evident by his stone, he was in Company B of the 9th Indiana Legion. He applied for an invalid pension in 1888 but seemingly did not receive one as he was not eligible for a federal pension. He was however given residency at the Soldiers Home from 1913 until dying from complications incurred by a disease in 1916. His widow, Millie was also housed at the Soldiers Home until her death in 1918. She however is buried at Crown Hill in Indianapolis.

Solomon Oblinger 1828 - 1910

Solomon served in the 147th Ohio National Guard Infantry. This was one of the "Hundred Days" regiments, the idea being that for a period of 100 days the regiments would perform garrison duties to free up veteran regiments for the 1864 campaign season. The 147th was one such regiment that saw action, being called upon to repulse Jubal Early at the Battle of Fort Stevens.

Sadly, Solomon took his own life at the Soldiers Home after two years of residency. He suffered from illness and was thought to be despondent over his deteriorating physical condition. His widow, Kathryn, lived another 20 years and is buried next to him.

