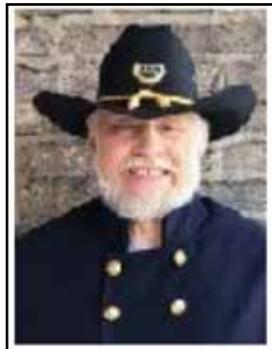




Commander's Corner

By Michael Zafran
Department Commander



Brothers, I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and a joyous New Year's celebration. I am pleased to report that the Department of Illinois is performing the work of the Order.

While we have paused our outside activities while celebrating the holidays, please use this time to plan your celebrations for 2026, for Memorial Day, Flag Day, the Fourth of July, Armed Forces Day and Veterans Day. Last year, I attended and participated in 15 ceremonies and parades for these holidays.

This year we will be celebrating the 250th anniversary, The Semiquincentennial, of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Our Command-

er-in-Chief has set out guidelines for our Order for this milestone for our great country. Please include them in your ceremonies.

Many of our brothers have been to schools sharing the history of the Civil War, and I commend this work. This is close to my heart, as these are the activities that support our mission to keep the memory alive for the Boys in Blue.

This is also the time to do your gravesite research for the upcoming cemetery work and order your markers for the upcoming spring season.

I have contacted a former educator,

Ron Marketti, to present his extensive Civil War collection on **April 25 in Coal City, Illinois, from 2 until 4 p.m.** A flyer will be distributed for this event.

Fallen brother

On a sad note, Brother Leigh Franklin passed away at the age of 56 after a battle with cancer on Dec. 31. Brother Leigh was a member of **P.H. Sheridan Camp #2** and the founding Camp Commander of U.S. Grant Camp #1863. May he rest in peace.

In Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty. ★

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The Railsplitter is a publication of the Department of Illinois, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW).

For more information about the Department, visit our Website:
<https://www.suvcwil.org/>.

Our Facebook page is [here](#).

More information about the SUVCW and becoming a member is here:
www.suvcw.org.

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Signal Officer: Bobby Welch

Fraternal Relations Officer:
vacant

Real Sons Liaison: Joseph Hutchinson

Quartermaster: Bill Johnson

For submissions to the newsletter, email *The Railsplitter* editor, Gerald Sonnenberg at gsonnenberg@hotmail.com or lestweforget1861@outlook.com.

Chaplain's Corner



By *Jerome Kowalski*
Chaplain

You may have been wondering, what happened to me, Chaplain Jerry.

Well, after one of the most memorable National Encampments in Texas, while on my way back to my home in Illinois, I sat in an airplane seated next to two young sisters who couldn't stop sneezing. They didn't cover their faces, but sneezed the entire trip.

I couldn't get a mask to help protect myself, so whatever they had, I got.

Then came a week in a Recovery Center, and great difficulty in getting free from whatever it was that they had. Even today, months later, I still have problems that medical professionals can't cure. I need your prayers, so that I can get back to attending meetings and doing articles-like this one.

In Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty.



Chaplain Jerry



About the SUVCW Department of Illinois

The Department of Illinois, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) is comprised of 11 camps. To learn more about our camps, [click here](#).

The SUVCW is a fraternal organization dedicated to preserving the history and legacy of heroes who fought to save the Union.

In 1881, the [Grand Army of the Republic \(GAR\)](#) formed the SUVCW as the Sons of Veterans of the United States of America (SV) to carry on its traditions and memory long after the GAR ceased to exist. Membership was open to any man who could prove ancestry to a member of the GAR or to a Veteran eligible for membership in the GAR. In later years, men who did not have the ancestry to qualify for hereditary membership, but who demonstrated a genuine interest in the Civil War and could subscribe to the purpose and objectives of the SUVCW, were admitted as Associates. This practice continues today.

Many GAR Posts sponsored Camps of the SV. In 1925, the SV name was changed to SUVCW, under which its federal charter was issued in 1954. The SUVCW is legally recognized as the heir to, and representative of, the GAR. It became the SUVCW in name in 1925 and is the legal successor to the GAR, first founded in 1866. Today, the National Organization of the SUVCW, headed by an annually elected Commander-in-Chief, oversees the operation of 32 Departments, each consisting of one or more states, a Department-at-Large, a National Membership-at-Large, and over 200 community based camps.

The SUVCW is one of five Allied Orders of the GAR. The other four Orders are: Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic, Woman's Relief Corps, Auxiliary to the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War and Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

If you are not a member and have an interest and/or a direct connection to the civil war or interest in an associate membership, or know of someone else who may, please consider applying for membership and passing the word along to others. [Click here to learn more](#).



A historic call to service:

Civil War contingent requested for 2026 Memorial Day parade

By Kevin P. Tucker

Commander-in-chief

Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

Brothers and Living Historians,

The year 2026 marks a singular milestone in our national story; the 250th anniversary of the birth of the United States of America. Such moments come along only once in a lifetime, and they carry with them a responsibility—especially for those of us charged with preserving and interpreting our nation’s history.

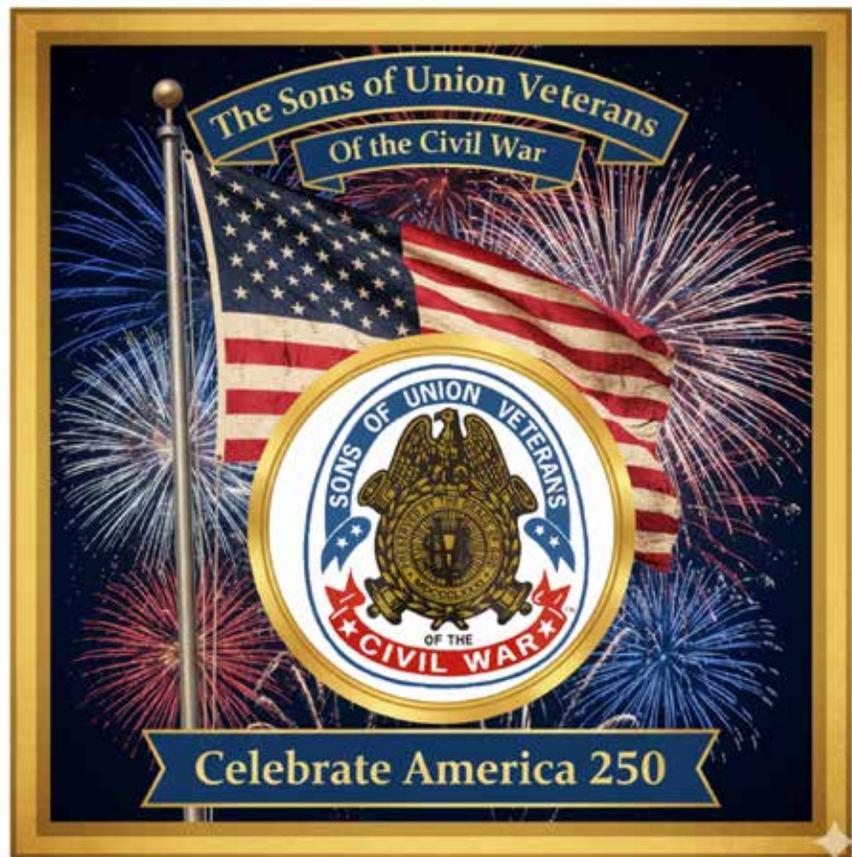
On Monday, May 25, 2026, the 46th Pennsylvania Brass Band will lead the Civil War Contingent in the Memorial Day Parade in Washington, DC. This distinguished, 40-piece ensemble performs exclusively on original Civil War-era instruments and is composed of musicians from across the country who are traveling to the nation’s capital to honor the generation that fought to preserve the Union.

The Band has invited the Sons of Veterans Reserve, the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, and allied Civil War Reenactment Organizations to join them in forming a unified, uniformed Civil War presence. Their goal—and ours—is to assemble the largest possible contingent of authentic Union impressions for this nationally significant event.

This event is especially meaningful given that Memorial Day itself is rooted in the Grand Army of the Republic.

In 1868, G.A.R. Commander-in-Chief General John A. Logan issued General Order No. 11, establishing “Decoration Day” as a time for the nation to honor the Union dead by decorating their graves with flowers. Marching in a Memorial Day parade—particularly in Washington, DC—connects us directly to the origins of this sacred observance and to the Veterans’ organization from which our Order descends.

The 250th anniversary year offers us a unique and powerful opportunity to remind the American public that the survival of the United States was not secured in 1776 alone but was preserved anew between 1861 and 1865 through the sacrifice of the Union Army and Navy. Their service upheld the Constitution, pre-



served the Union, and ensured that the American experiment endured through its gravest internal crisis.

Imagine the impact of a disciplined, dignified Civil War contingent marching through Washington, DC—led by period music—as part of the National Memorial Day parade during this Semiquincentennial year. Imagine, further, what a statement it would make if we could assemble 250 uniformed marchers for the 250th birthday of the nation. Such an achievement would be both symbolic and substantive, demonstrating unity, commitment and historical stewardship on a national stage.

Participation in this event will:

- Publicly honor the soldiers and sailors who preserved the Union
- Highlight the indispensable role of the Union war effort in safeguarding the nation’s future
- Affirm Memorial Day’s origins in the Grand Army of the Republic
- Demonstrate cooperation among heritage, music and living history organizations
- Educate and inspire the public during

a landmark year of remembrance

****Units and Brothers who are interested in participating or who would like additional details regarding coordination, uniforms, travel and logistics are encouraged to contact First Sergeant Brian E. Withrow, Commander, Irish Rifles Infantry Company, Sons of Veterans Reserve (SVR) Email: brianasgrant@outlook.com Phone: 540-656-0150. Brother Withrow will coordinate the order of march with the 46th Pennsylvania Brass Band.****

I strongly urge SUVCW members, SVR units, and Civil War reenactment groups to begin planning now and to discuss participation within your Camps, Departments and organizations.

Opportunities of this magnitude are unique, and the responsibility to answer the call rests with us.

Let us ensure that during the 250th anniversary of our nation’s birth, the generation that preserved it is remembered, respected and prominently represented.



Patriotic Instruction Kentucky victory highlights Illinois pride, impact during war

By Gerald Sonnenberg
Dept. of Illinois Patriotic Instructor, editor



The Civil War was nearly a year old when Union victories occurred at the Civil War battles of Forts Henry and Donelson 164 years ago. These victories were significant for several reasons and helped make Illinois' military contribution to the war effort stand out.

Strategically, Fort Henry sat on the Tennessee River just below the Kentucky-Tennessee border, while Fort Donelson sat on the Cumberland River below the same border. The two forts blocked the U.S. army from penetrating into the heart of the South through central Tennessee and northern Alabama. Taking control of the forts would be a major accomplishment for Union forces, and General U.S. Grant recognized the situation as a great opportunity to damage the Confederacy.

When Fort Henry fell Feb. 6, 1862, it marked the Union's first major victory and allowed Grant to advance into Tennessee and control key waterways.

Fort Donelson's surrender Feb. 16 forced the Confederacy to evacuate Nashville and Columbus, Kentucky and led to the opening of Tennessee to Union advances. These victories not only bolstered Union morale, they also established Grant as a key figure in the war.

In a fundamental way for Illinois, these victories signaled the beginning of the state's real military impact on the war.

Union armies at the time were primarily named after rivers to reflect their operational bases and the geography of the region. Had they chosen to name armies after the state most represented in them, this particular army could have been named the Army of Illinois.

The 24,000-man army Grant commanded would later be named the Army of the Tennessee after the river. However, it had 56 units; thirty-two of which were from Illinois. After these victories, Illinois residents of the time would have taken pride knowing units from their state took part. They certainly had a chance to read about them.

In an article in Belleville, Illinois' *Semi-Weekly Advocate* newspaper dated Friday, Feb. 21, 1862, it listed in detail several Illinois regiments and their disposition during the fight for Fort Donelson, noting, "Charging under a hot fire up the steep hill on which was the outer redoubt, our troops gained the high breastworks and with hardly a pause went over them, planting the Stars and Stripes over the walls in most perfect order, under a most

galling fire."

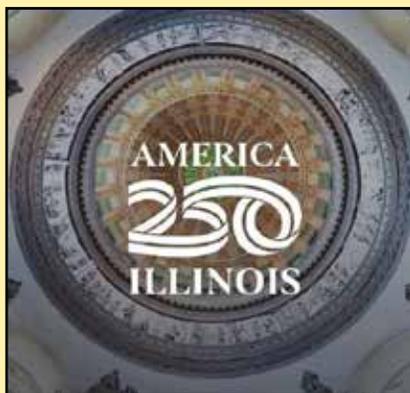
The units highlighted were the 11th, 20th, 17th, 48th, 29th, 18th, 8th and 30th Illinois regiments.

From the Feb. 18, 1862 *Chicago Times* regarding the same battle, "A formidable attempt was made last night to take Taylor's battery by the enemy, who approached under cover of darkness, but they were gallantly repulsed by the 20th Illinois."

Officially, 256,297 men from Illinois served in the Union Army during the war making it the fourth largest contributor of troops behind New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio. Illinois had a population of 1.6 million in 1860. That means approximately 16% of the state's population served in the Union Army. There would have been men from other states who served in Illinois regiments, just as my grandfather and uncles, who hailed from western Pennsylvania, served in Ohio regiments. This might account for several thousand men, but this does not take away from Illinois' impact on the war effort.

In the end, 150 infantry regiments, 17 cavalry regiments and two light artillery regiments were mustered. Illinois also suffered significant casualties during the war with approximately 31,000 military dead. This includes both combat-related deaths and those who died of disease. In addition, Illinois supplied many of the Union Army's top officers with a total of 177 Illinois generals serving at some time during the conflict.

Illinoisans can take pride in their service and sacrifice to help save this nation as their contribution in men and resources was significant.



Illinois played a crucial role in the American Revolution, primarily through military campaigns led by George Rogers Clark, which helped secure the region for the United States.

The Illinois Campaign

The Illinois campaign, led by George Rogers Clark, was a significant military effort during the American Revolutionary War. The Illinois Territory originally included lands that became the states of Illinois, Wisconsin, the eastern portion of Minnesota, and the western portion of the upper peninsula of Michigan.

In July 1778, Clark and a small force of about 175 men captured the British-held village of Kaskaskia without firing a shot, taking the British garrison by surprise. Following this, Clark's forces moved to capture Cahokia and, later, Vincennes, in present day Indiana. The successful capture of these key locations weakened British control in the region and established

American claims to the Illinois Country.

In February 1779, Clark launched a winter campaign to retake Vincennes after it was briefly recaptured by the British. His forces besieged Fort Sackville at Vincennes, leading to the surrender of British Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton. This victory was pivotal, as it not only secured the Illinois territory but also bolstered American morale and territorial claims in the Northwest.

Illinois' involvement in the American Revolution was marked by strategic military actions that not only secured the region for the United States but also significantly impacted the local populations and the future of American territorial expansion.





Around the Department: Camp activities throughout Illinois



Veterans Day

(Left) Local scout members, SVR unit Battery "L," 1st Illinois Volunteer Light Artillery, and members of **Old Glory Camp #6165** participated in the annual Veterans Day program. The ceremonies are held each year at Union Ridge Cemetery, Chicago.

(Below) Illinois Department Commander Michael Zafran speaks at the Veterans Day ceremony at Union Ridge Cemetery in Chicago. Earlier that day he sang *The National Anthem* and spoke at Rosehill Cemetery in Chicago. (courtesy photos)



(Photo left) On Nov. 11, members of the **Col. Friedrich K. Hecker Camp #443** participated in the annual Veterans

Day parade, sponsored by the O'Fallon, Illinois' VFW Post 805. (Left to right) Past Camp Commander (PCC) Greg Zelinski, Camp Secretary Gerald Sonnenberg, PCC Garry Ladd and Camp Treasurer Richard Piper march down North Lincoln Street in O'Fallon. In the trailing vehicle, Volunteer Donna Rees drives Hecker Camp Commander Russell Schleicher during the parade. (Photo by Denise Sonnenberg)

Upcoming events

***The DuPage County Genealogical Society Annual Conference** will be held Saturday, March 7, 2026 at Northern Illinois university in Naperville.

***Annual Lincoln Death Day Ceremony**, Springfield, Illinois and Dr. Benjamin Stephenson GAR Memorial, Petersburg, Illinois. SVR April 11, 10 a.m.

***Civil War & Military Extravaganza**, DuPage County Fairgrounds, Wheaton, Illinois Saturday, April 18.

***Display of an extensive Civil War collection** on April 25 in Coal City, Illinois, from 2 p.m until 4 p.m.

***The 145th National Encampment** of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War and the Allied Orders will be held in Gettysburg, PA, July 30-Aug. 2, 2026.

***Remembrance Day** is Observed each November on the Weekend closest to the Anniversary of President Lincoln giving The Gettysburg Address.





*This picture shows several members of the **U.S. Grant Camp 1863** officers sworn in during their November meeting. In the image left to right (front row) are U.S. Grant Camp 1863 Commander Nick Sauer and Department of Illinois Commander Michael Zafran. Left to right (back row) Sr. Vice Commander Michael Gregory, Camp Council Member Jim Arnold, Camp Treasurer Bob Kurek, and Camp Secretary Owen Doak. (Courtesy photo)*

Oaths of office

Commander's award



*Brother David Marshall (left), recipient of the 2025 **Old Glory Camp #6165** Camp Commander's Award. The honor was presented by Camp Commander Jeff Kaup. (Courtesy photo)*



*(Above, left to right) On Dec. 6, 2025, Brothers John Stanton, Richard Piper, Russell Schleicher and Gerald Sonnenberg took their oaths as reelected officers of the **Col. Friedrich K. Hecker Camp #443**. The only brother not available at the time was Junior Vice Commander Donn Cooks. (Photo by Denise Sonnenberg)*

Citizenship award



Brother Dave Totsch (left) received the 2025 **Old Glory Camp #6165** Citizenship Award, presented by Camp Commander Jeff Kaup. (Courtesy photo)

Master of ceremonies

Department Commander Michael Zafran was MC at Moraine Valley Community College in Palos Hills, Illinois for a holiday concert Dec. 6, 2025. The concert was sold out with 600 attending. As MC, he was able to promote the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. (Courtesy photo)



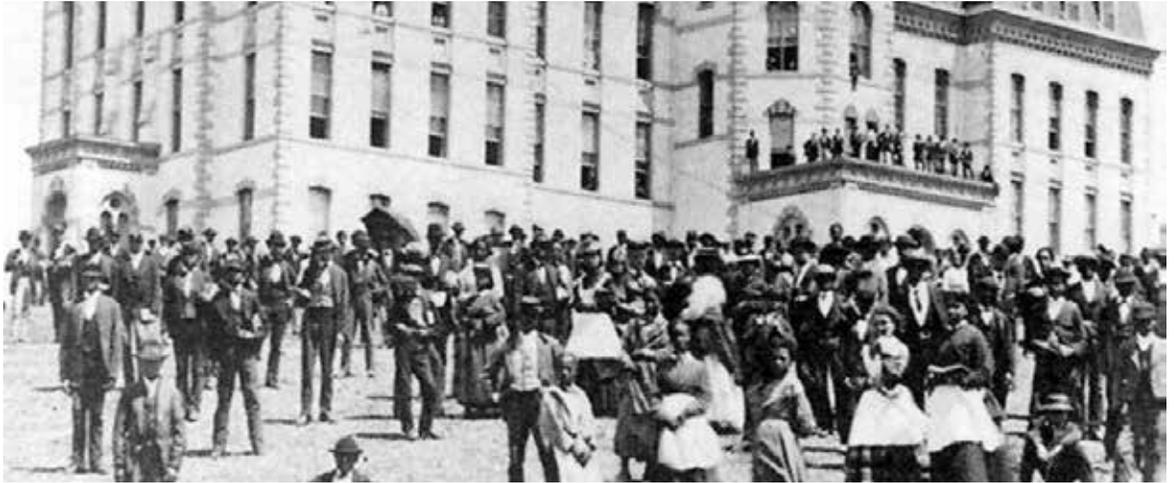
Cousins

Pictured here are Sister Maryann Dosen, and DC Michael Zafran (aka "Santa") at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Naperville, Illinois for a senior luncheon Dec. 9, 2025. The Sister and DC Zafran are DNA cousins, which they just recently found out from Ancestry, even though they knew each other for over 10 years. (Courtesy photo)



Comparing medical schools of today to medical schools during the Civil War

In 1870, students and others gathered outside Howard University Medical School in Washington D.C., established in 1868. (courtesy photo)



*By Dr. Garry "Doc" Ladd
PCC Hecker Camp #443*

Medical education in the United States has changed significantly since the Civil War era (1861–1865). During the nineteenth century, medical schools lacked standardization and scientific understanding, while modern medical education is highly regulated, research-based, and focused on patient safety. Comparing these two periods highlights the progress made in training physicians.

During the Civil War, medical schools were largely unregulated and varied widely in quality.

Many institutions were privately owned and operated for profit, with minimal admission requirements. Students often did not need a college degree or prior scientific education to enroll (Flexner, 1910). Medical programs usually lasted two years, and students attended the same lectures each year. Clinical experience was limited, and many graduates had never treated a patient before practicing medicine (Bollet, 2002).

In contrast, medical school today is highly standardized and competitive. Students must complete a four-year un-

dergraduate degree, fulfill science prerequisites and succeed on a medical school entrance exam before admission.

Medical school now lasts four years and is followed by several years of supervised residency training. Students receive extensive hands-on clinical experience in hospitals and clinics, ensuring they are prepared to provide safe and effective care (Association of American Medical Colleges [AAMC], 2023).

Medical knowledge during the Civil War was also limited. Germ theory was not widely accepted, and doctors did not understand how infections spread. As a result, sanitation was poor, and diseases such as infection and dysentery killed more soldiers than combat injuries (McPherson, 1988).

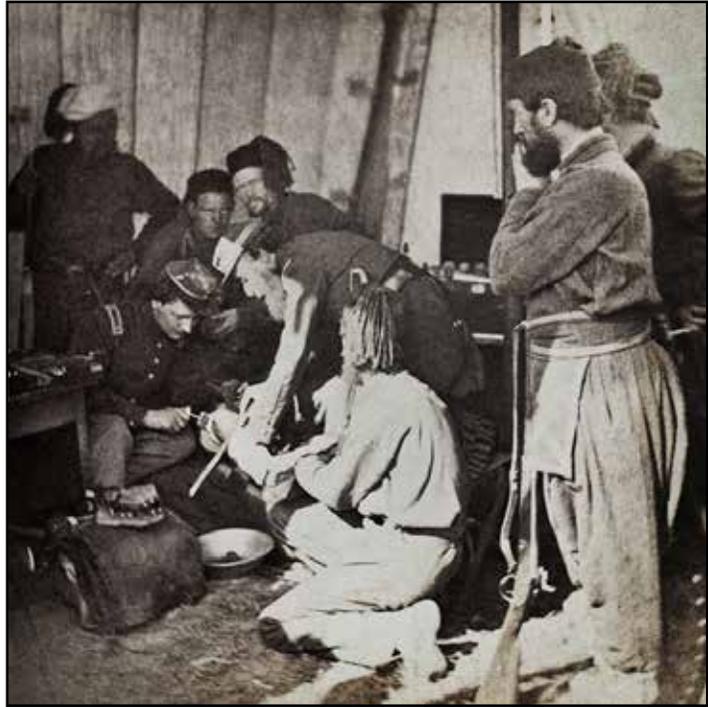
Common treatments included blood-letting, mercury-based medicines and amputations performed without sterile techniques or advanced anesthesia (Bollet, 2002).

Modern medical education is based on scientific research and evidence-based practice. Students study subjects such as microbiology, genetics, pharmacology and pathology.

See MEDICAL next page ...



(Above) During Belleville Days in 2022 in front of the Koerner House, Brother Garry Ladd, whose uniform is that of a Union regimental surgeon because of his military experience as a hospital corpsman, set up a field hospital display on the property. (Photo by Sheila Wildermuth)



Union medical staff care for a patient in the field. (Courtesy National Archives)



MEDICAL continued ...

Advances in anesthesia, antibiotics, infection control and medical technology have greatly improved patient outcomes. Ethics, communication skills, and teamwork are also emphasized in medical training today (AAMC, 2023).

In conclusion, medical schools during the Civil War were short, inconsistent and based on limited scientific knowledge.

Today's medical schools are rigorous, standardized and grounded in modern science. These improvements have greatly enhanced the quality of medical education and patient care.

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An overview of Union Civil War Veterans

By Richard Piper, Hecker Camp #443
treasurer, patriotic instructor

Editor's Note: On Veterans Day, we honor those who have served and defended our country. These individuals aren't just heroes on the battlefield serving this nation, they are human beings. What about those heroes from the Civil War? This article takes a look at some of those who made up the Union Army, the grim reality of injuries they suffered, as well as what happened to many after the war.

On July 1, 1861, the Union had 183,588 soldiers in the Army. By Jan. 1, 1865, the number swelled to 620,924. There were 179,000 African-Americans in the Union Army and 10,000 in the Union Navy.

Foreign-born soldiers who also served the Union numbered some 175,000-200,000 Germans; 144,000 Irish; 45,000 British; 4,000 Norwegians; and 3,000 Swedish-born Union soldiers. There were also large numbers of French, Poles, Scots, Canadians, Belgians and Hungarians who, with the other immigrants, made up about 25% of Union troops.

Casualties

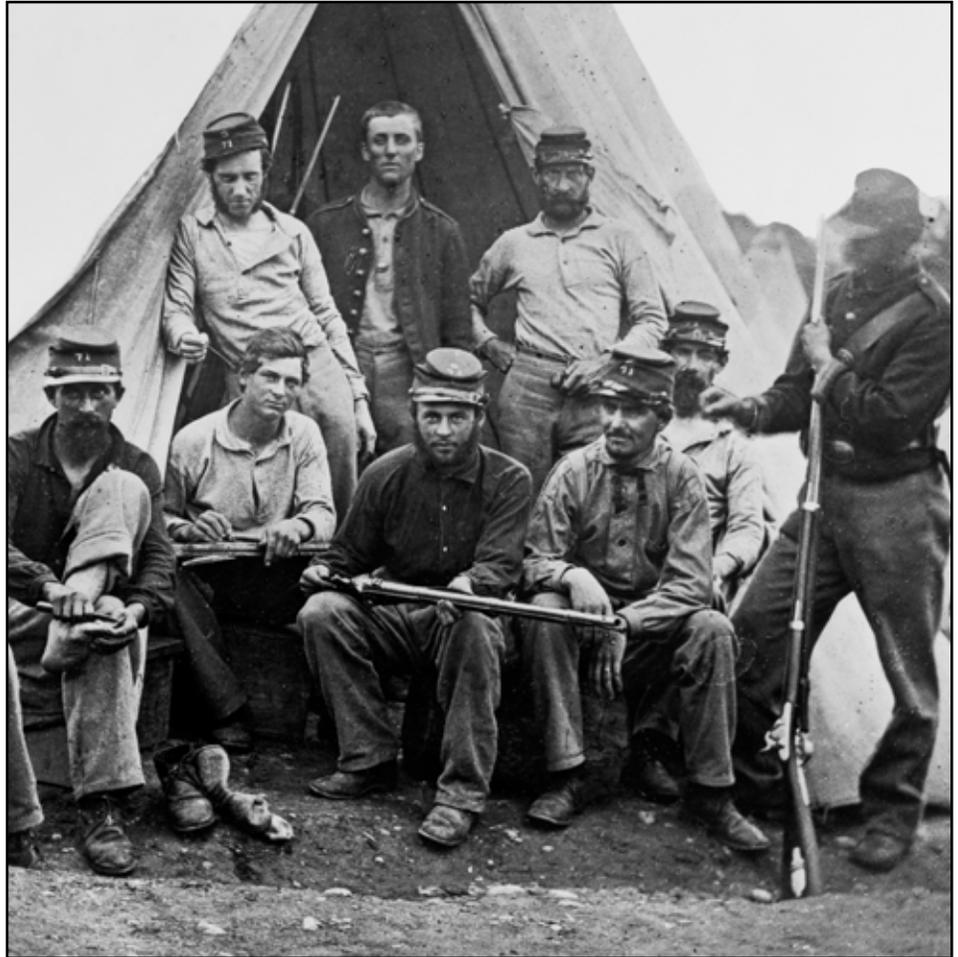
For those who were injured, bullets caused 93% of the wounds, artillery pieces 6% and swords and bayonets injured less than 1% of casualties.

For those who died from their battlefield wounds, 87% were fatally shot in the abdomen, 63% in the chest area, 60% the head and 33% in the shoulder. Doctors dealt with severe wounds by amputations. The fatality rate depended largely where the wound was. Of 29,980 Union amputations the fatality rate was 90% at the hip, 50% at the thigh or knee joint, 25% at the upper arm and 7% at the ankle joint.

If you were not wounded, you tried very hard not to get sick. Of the 6,000,000 Union disease cases, diarrhea and dysentery killed 44,558; Malaria 10,063; catarrh and bronchitis 585; pneumonia 19,971; measles 5,177; and scurvy 771.

War's End

Finally, the war was over, and 200,000 Union troops marched down Penn-



(Above) Union Army Veterans in camp. (Courtesy photo)

sylvania Avenue in the Grand Review on May 23 and 24, 1865. The Eastern Army of the Potomac marched on May 23 in their new uniforms, polished brass and white dress gloves, while on May 24, Sherman's soldiers, nearly half of whom were western troops, wore shabby uniforms and ruined shoes.

Following demobilization, the ex-soldiers often became victims of crime. Thieves and swindlers swooped down on discharge points robbing men of their mustering out pay. Many soldiers became addicted to drugs and alcohol. Morphine addiction became a problem for those who had become dependent on it to treat the lingering pain of their wounds and to relieve the after effects of combat stress. This morphine dependency became known as "the army disease." In 1879, the army surgeon estimated 45,000 Veterans were addicted to morphine.

Roughly 300,000 soldiers were discharged each month at the height of demobilization in mid-1865, and by year's

end, nearly a million men had been released.

The U.S. Sanitary Commission opened employment bureaus to place Veterans in jobs. The North was still largely rural.

Some states showed a sharp rise in divorce. Ohio had a 40% increase from 1865-1866. However, most states also had an increase in marriages with Ohio having nearly a 40% increase in the same year.

More than 200,000 soldiers returned with wounds and many continued to suffer from diseases obtained in the army from chronic diarrhea to tuberculosis.

Pensions

Pensions were the usual form of compensation for war wounds. The Act of July 14, 1862 started the General Law pension system for Civil War Veterans who had sustained war-related disabilities. Pensions became available to widows, children under 16 years of age,

See **VETERANS** next page ...

VETERANS continued ...

and dependent relatives of soldiers who died in military service from war related injuries. A Veteran could get \$8 to \$30 a month depending on rank and disability.

However, many Veterans were unaware of pensions. Fewer than 10% of Union Veterans were on pension rolls through the 1860s and 1870s.

The Arrears Act of 1879 was a significant piece of legislation aimed at increasing pensions for Union Civil War Veterans. It mandated that pensions for those who died or were discharged from service would commence from the date of death or discharge and not from the date the pension law was passed. This act required states to retroactively pay arrears at the same rate as the original pension, which was a substantial increase for many Veterans.

These retroactive payments averaged \$1,000, and Veterans filed more than 9,000 new claims per month in 1879 and 1880, versus about 1,600 claims per month previously. The proportion of Veterans on the pension rolls more than doubled during the 1880s.

National Asylums

In March 1865, Congress authorized the creation of a National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers to provide care and support for Union soldiers who were disabled due to injuries sustained during the Civil War.

These asylums were designed to offer a safe and supportive environment for Veterans, helping them transition back to civilian life. The asylums were not only medical facilities but also planned communities that provided opportunities for employment, entertainment and socialization. The National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, which later became part of the Veterans Administration, was one of the most notable institutions of this type.

By 1870, these "homes" admitted more than 3,200 ex-soldiers in Maine, Ohio, Virginia and Wisconsin.

About 1,400 Veterans entered each year into homes in the 1870s and early 1880s. And when old age was classified as a disability after 1884, yearly admissions nearly doubled as more branch homes were added to the system.

Ex-soldiers had their service record verified, and in the early decades, their disability was war related. The homes furnished barracks for sleeping quarters and provided medical care, food, uniforms and supplies.

The men spent their time tending their institution's farm, reading in the library, working in the laundry or blacksmith shop. Or, in the early years, taking classes.

The residents often resisted the homes' discipline as life in one of these homes could resemble still being in the army.

While residents might steal from the kitchen, miss roll calls, get drunk and protest the handling of pensions. The homes

often withheld part or all of the payments to resident pensioners as essential to proper discipline. The managers did not want money spent on drink. The pensioners said it was their money, and the managers had no right to take it.

The higher a Veteran's pension, the more likely he would leave; often only a few months after arriving at a home. Managers kept the upper hand and punishments were given from revocation of furlough privileges to a dishonorable discharge from the home so order prevailed in them.

Grand Army of the Republic

The GAR or Grand Army of the Republic was founded in 1866 and provided charity for needy comrades. The GAR bought food, paid rent, covered funeral expenses of destitute Veterans and widows, as well as provided medical care to comrades in need. The GAR convinced states to fund Veterans' pensions and soldiers' homes. In addition, the GAR served as a disseminator of self control. Drunkenness was the most common infraction brought before courts martial. Veterans had concern with order and self-control which were qualities they believed were lacking in civilian society.

The GAR's most robust activity was its pension lobbying. The Dependent Pension Act legislation was sent to President Benjamin Harrison in 1890, who signed it. Veterans could now earn a pension if they were disabled for almost any reason, and widows would qualify if their husbands died from any cause.

Depending on the degree of disability, the scale of payments ranged from \$6 to \$12 per month. As a result, there was a tidal wave of new applications. More than 650,000 claims were filed in the first year of the new law.

The GAR which had been instrumental in making pensions available was now viewed by the majority of ex-soldiers as no longer needed. The GAR began to lose members in the 1890s when it lost nearly 1/3 of them due to waning interest and the death of members.

Many who stayed members did so as a way to cope with the passing of their generation.

The 1910 census asked older men if they served in the Civil War because detailed information from the 1890 census was destroyed in a fire.

By 1910, fewer than 1/3 of Union Veterans were still alive. The majority of Union Veterans never joined the GAR because they considered themselves "citizens first and soldiers second." At that time, virtually all living Union Veterans were on the pension rolls. The average payment was \$172 per year. Though a higher rank or multiple disabilities would qualify a soldier for as much as \$1,200 annually.

Federal homes admitted more than 3,700 new residents in 1900 and maintained a total population of 19,000.

The need to provide care for our Veterans is still ongoing. Service members dealing with wounds, disability and PTSD should never be forgotten. Veterans Day is an official holiday to honor them. To me, every day is Veterans Day to remember their deeds, service and sacrifice.



Plenty of Fighting Today



Plenty of Fighting Today - *The 9th Illinois at Shiloh* by Keith Rocco.

This image is a depiction of the 9th Illinois at the Battle of Shiloh, Tennessee, on April 6, 1862. The regiment was originally organized in 1809. In 1861, the 9th Illinois Infantry responded immediately to the call of President Lincoln, who served as a company commander in the regiment during the Black Hawk War. Many of those who mustered in were German immigrants.

The 9th was at Shiloh when the Confederate Army of the Mississippi struck at dawn. Some Union regiments fled in panic as Major General U.S. Grant ordered his division commanders to hold at all costs.

Sent to reinforce the Union left, the 9th was told, "There is going to be plenty of fighting today; there must be no cowards."

South of the Peach Orchard, the regiment was ordered to a tree-choked ravine, and found themselves in a race with Confederates for the same natural barrier. The 9th got there first. Confederate commander Albert Sidney Johnston remarked on the Illinois regiment's "stubborn stand" as the 9th Arkansas and 29th Tennessee joined the fight. Finally, renewed attacks collapsed the 12th and 15th Illinois on the 9th's flanks, and with their dead and wounded thick on the ground, the regiment had to withdraw.

The 9th suffered 103 killed and 258 wounded on Shiloh's first day; one of the highest totals of the entire Civil War.

Their 90-minute stand helped save Grant's left and prepared the way for the great Union counterattack the next day. The proud heritage of the 9th Illinois is carried on today by the 130th Infantry Regiment, Illinois Army National Guard.