



The Sunflower Picket

www.suvcwks.org



Publication of the Department of Kansas, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

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ANNUAL DEPARTMENT ENCAMPMENT HELD



Dept Cmdr Melcher addresses encampment attendees.
PDC Alan Russ (left) and SUVCW CinC Eugene Mortorff (right).

The Department of Kansas celebrated its 20th annual Department Encampment on Saturday, January 9, 2016, at the United Methodist Church of the Cross, 1600 Rush Street, Salina, Kansas. The milestone event was held in the same city where a Special Encampment was held in 1996 to organize the Department.

More than twenty Brothers welcomed Commander in Chief Eugene Mortorff to the Sunflower State while also enjoying renewed friendships, gaining new acquaintances, and sharing comradeship, all while attending to the business of the department. The Department of Kansas Ladies of the GAR held their annual meeting in conjunction and provided a delicious lunch; thank you, ladies.

Commander Kent M. Melcher presented awards for outstanding Department work. Huzzah to the following recipients:

**Corp Leonidas B. Davis and PDC Dean K. Speaks Award
for Recruiter of the Year**
PCC William E. Fischer, Jr.

Capt Patrick H. Coney Award for Brother of the Year
PCC Mark A. Britton

William W. Nixon Award for Camp of the Year
Humboldt Camp 9, Humboldt

Due to personal considerations that included a pending move to a new home, Commander Melcher believed it in the best interest of the Department to not seek a second consecutive term. Congratulations to Brother Mark A. Britton, PCC, who was elected Commander of the Department of Kansas.

Total Department strength as of March 31, 2016, was 133 members and associates, a net increase of two over 2014 strength.

1866 Memorial Day 2016



Leavenworth National Cemetery

Established as the Western Branch,
National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers Cemetery



BROTHERS REMEMBERED

A Memorial Service was held prior to opening of the Department Encampment. We honor and remember:

Ethan A. Schmidt, Cpl Patrick Coyne Camp 1

Gerald L. Stephens, Jr., Humboldt Camp 9

April 9, 1866. The House of Representatives overrides President Johnson's veto of the Civil Rights Bill of 1866, marking the first time Congress legislated on civil rights. The bill mandated that "all persons born in the United States, [except American Indians], are hereby declared to be citizens of the United States." The bill was the genesis for the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution, which was adopted two years later.



Incoming Dept Cmdr Britton, CinC Mortorff, and Outgoing Dept Cmdr Melcher at the 20th Department of Kansas Encampment.

May 1-3, 1866. The Memphis Massacre results in the deaths of an estimated 46 African Americans. Called a "race riot" by whites for nearly a century because it had its origins in an argument/disagreement/fight (whatever you want to call it) between black United States soldiers and white Irish Memphis police officers, it was simply an indiscriminate slaughter of black men, women, and children. Yet, through their martyrdom, they helped to ensure passage of the 14th Amendment.

Unfortunately, there was even controversy in 2015-2016 over the wording of a historical marker to commemorate this sad event:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2016/05/02/476450908/in-memphis-a-divide-over-how-to-remember-a-massacre-150-years-later>

UPCOMING EVENTS CALENDAR

May – Memorial Day services across the Department

May 28, 10:00am, Olathe Cemetery, Franklin Camp 5

May 28, Flags, Lawrence Cemeteries, Churchill Camp 4

August 10-14 – National Encampment, Springfield, Illinois

August 27 – Picnic in the Park (NPS 100th) at Fort Scott NHS

September 10 – Symbols of Sacrifice at Fort Scott NHS

November 11 – Veterans Day (take time to honor our Vets)

November 18-19 – Remembrance Day Weekend, Gettysburg

December 2-3 – Candlelight Tour, Fort Scott NHS

January 2017 – 21st Dept of Kansas Encampment, TBD

Corporal Conrad Fisher Company C, 18th Missouri Infantry (provided by Conrad Fisher, Old Abe Camp 16)

Conrad Fisher was born January 24, 1843, in the village of Herblingen, Canton Schaffhausen, Switzerland. He came to the United States in 1852, and settled in Platte County, Missouri. His Civil War service began December 26, 1861, when he enlisted at Parkville as a private in Company C, 18th Missouri Voluntary Infantry. He re-enlisted at Pulaski, Tennessee, on January 31, 1864, and was promoted to corporal the next day. That spring Conrad was wounded in the left leg at Cornith, Mississippi. He was discharged on July 18, 1865 at Louisville, Kentucky, and returned to Platte County.

Combat honors include: Shiloh, Corinth, the Atlanta campaign, Resaca, New Hope Church, Kennesaw Mountain, Atlanta, Jonesboro, Sherman's March to the Sea, the Carolina campaign, including Bentonville and the surrender of Johnston's Army. Conrad also participated in the Grand Review of the Army in Washington DC.

Conrad married Sarah Bowman in Platte County MO in 1868. The family moved to Mill Creek Township, Pottawatomie County, Kansas, by the 1880 Federal census, then in 1883 moved to the town of Soldier, in neighboring Jackson County, where he resided until death. On February 24, 1902, Conrad was admitted to the Western Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, in Leavenworth KS, where he remained on the books until discharged at his own request on August 25, 1906. He died in Soldier shortly thereafter, on September 9, having painfully suffered from cancer of the ear.

Apparently Conrad continued to live with family and only traveled to Leavenworth for medical care since, according to his obituary, he was commander of James B. Kyle Post 166, Grand Army of the Republic, and chaplain (and a master mason) of Soldier Lodge 240 AF&AM at the time of his death.

One of the handed down family lore mysteries was that Conrad had served in the cavalry. Researching the history of the 18th Missouri bore that out, as he had served in one of the regiment's four companies of mounted infantry.

On Conrad's discharge from military service, he returned to his prewar occupation as a farmer. Being a practical man, he cut down his now unneeded saber to serve as a corn knife. My father remembers that he saw the hilt hanging from a nail in the barn. Conrad believed farming was *God's chosen vocation*. In a letter to his son William, he extolled the merits of farming; one could do well with 80 acres and a team of horses. He also counseled his son to be careful in the city, as William had taken a job with the Topeka trolley system. Conrad was concerned about the corrupting influence of an easy dollar, fast women, and taverns.

In 1987, I had the opportunity to pass through the village of Herblingen. The cemetery was full of Fischers but, unfortunately, I did not have the time or opportunity to look for ancestors.

Conrad Fisher.

Editor's note: Perhaps Brother Conrad is of the "saltwater" variety of Fischers. Members can contribute ancestor bios (about 500 words) for future issues.



Humboldt Camp 9 Brothers (from left) Robert Boyd, Eddie D. Henderson, Frank Schomaker, and PCC Eddie A. Henderson take a break from cleaning Union soldier headstones in Mount Hope Cemetery in Humboldt on a brisk morning in advance of Memorial Day.

(Photo by PCC Bill Fischer, who also participated)

July 28, 1866. The Army Reorganization Act authorizes regiments of black troops, who later become known as the "Buffalo Soldiers." There were to be four infantry and two cavalry units, which were reduced to two infantry and two cavalry regiments in 1869. It also authorizes the enlistment of up to 1,000 American Indians as "Scouts" to serve with the US Army in the western US Territories and Indian country.



PCC Dave Tolefson (holding US flag) at Franklin Camp 5 Veterans Day Ceremony at Olathe Cemetery in 2013. Dave passed away in January. Camp 5 also lost Brother Brent A. Lawrence in February.

An Enduring Memorial Tradition, by Doris Wolf.

(excerpt from VFW magazine, Vol. 103 No. 8, May 2016)

Fighting for Recognition

"Only Waterloo [New York] has received official recognition as *The Birthplace of Memorial Day*. But it was a long road. O.C. Cooper, the editor of the *Ovid Independent*, claimed in 1886 that he was not only an eyewitness but a participant in the first Memorial Day ceremony in the village. The Rev. W.S. Carter gave a speech in 1886 that told about the events of the first Decoration Day in Waterloo and campaigned for a memorial to honor John B. Murray as the man behind the first Memorial Day.

Nearly 80 years later, in 1965, a committee of veterans groups and village officials was formed to begin the long and exhaustive research necessary for Waterloo to prove its claim as the birthplace of Memorial Day. The Centennial Research Committee, headed by Richard T. Schreck and John Genung, showed that Waterloo had the *first formal, complete, village-wide, annual observance of the day completely dedicated to the war dead*.

The word "continuous" is vital in Waterloo's claim to be the birthplace of Memorial Day. While other communities may have reported earlier observances honoring Civil War dead, none can claim to have been so well-planned or complete. Nor can they claim that the ceremony has continued annually since 1866."

1886 Vicksburg GAR Post 72 Bible displayed during Fort Scott National Historic Site's Civil War Encampment in April

