

The Sunflower Picket

Recipient of the 2006 Marshall Hope Award for Best Department Newsletter
www.suvcwks.org

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

SUVCW "AMERICA 250" MEDAL



The new SUVCW "America's 250 Medal" honoring the 250th anniversary of the United States of America. This medal was announced in Special Message No. 11, issued by CinC Kevin P. Tucker on December 12, 2025. It is available from the National Quartermaster Store online at <https://suvcw-qm-store.square.site/> at a cost of \$35.00 plus shipping. It is authorized for wear through 2033 as an SUVCW Class D Medal.

NEW BROTHERS, SEPTEMBER 1, 2025 – DECEMBER 31, 2025

Name	Date Joined	Camp	Ancestor
Beyard, Brandon M.	10/16/2025	Pvt. John N. Eckes Camp 10, Winfield	Pvt. Richard H. Hunt
Bluthardt, Douglas L.	9/4/2025	Old Abe Camp 16, Topeka	Pvt. Lorenzo R. Hastings
Ibendahl, Isaac A.	12/4/2025	Old Abe Camp 16, Topeka	Pvt. George M. Koehler
Seipel, James L.	9/4/2025	Old Abe Camp 16, Topeka	Pvt. George W. Burns
Simmons, David L.	10/23/2025	Franklin Camp 5, Olathe	Pvt. Isham C. Simmons

OUR FALLEN BROTHERS

Since April 5, 2025

"The faults of our Brothers we write upon the sand, their virtues upon the tablets of love and memory."

Name	Deceased	Ancestor	Camp
Boyd, Robert Dean II, PDC	4/25/2025	Private John Boyd	Humboldt Camp 9, Humboldt
Gilliland, Donald Darrel	4/28/2025	First Lieut. David Henry Danhauer	Old Abe Camp 16, Topeka
McGovern, Douglas Edward, PCC	7/21/2025	Private Samuel Cowan (McCown)	Corp. Patrick Coyne 1, Wichita
Fisher, Conrad Max, PDC	9/13/2025	Corporal Conrad Fisher	Old Abe Camp 16, Topeka

IN THIS ISSUE

SUVCW "AMERICA 250" MEDAL	1
NEW BROTHERS, SEPTEMBER 1, 2025 – DECEMBER 31, 2025	1
OUR FALLEN BROTHERS.....	1
FROM THE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER	2
CAMP STRENGTHS, DECEMBER 31, 2025	3
PDC ROBERT DEAN BOYD II MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE	3
2026 DEPARTMENT ENCAMPMENT	3
2025 REMEMBRANCE DAY	3
2026 NATIONAL ENCAMPMENT	3
DEPARTMENT OFFICERS REPORTS	4
SENIOR VICE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER.....	4
JUNIOR VICE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER.....	4
SECRETARY.....	5
TREASURER & CHIEF OF STAFF	5
PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTOR	6
EAGLE SCOUT CERTIFICATE COORDINATOR	6
CAMP NEWS	6
PVT. PATRICK COYNE CAMP 1.....	6
Camp Officers.....	6
2026 Wreaths Across America.....	6
SGT SAMUEL J. CHURCHILL CAMP 4.....	7
Camp Officers.....	7
FRANKLIN CAMP 5.....	7
Camp Officers.....	7
Presentation of Quilts Brings Tears.....	7
HUMBOLDT CAMP 9	8
Camp Officers.....	8
PVT JOHN N. ECKES CAMP 10.....	8
Camp Officers.....	8
OLD ABE CAMP 16.....	8
Camp Officers.....	8
OFFICIAL	8
DEPARTMENT OFFICERS 2025-2026.....	8
DEPARTMENT COUNCIL ACTIONS.....	8
DEPARTMENT ORDERS ISSUED SEPTEMBER 1 TO DECEMBER 31, 2025.....	9
Commander Kent M. Melcher, PDC.....	9
IN CONCLUSION	9
FROM THE ARCHIVES OF <i>The Sunflower Picket</i>	9
Just a Little Background	9
<i>The Sunflower Picket</i>	9

FROM THE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Kent M. Melcher, PDC

In October, I sent my Department Commander's report to Commander-in-Chief Kevin Tucker, as required for the fall meeting of the Council of Administration. Humbled by, and proud of, the work our Camps are doing, here is what I wrote: "Since becoming Commander in April, I have made official visits with all six Camps. I can assure you that the Department of Kansas is alive and well."

I went on to say, "In every visit, I have learned about (a variety of Camp projects) ... With every passing month, cemeteries in our communities are being tended with care. Headstones are being reset, and both headstones and

monuments are being cleaned. New headstones are also being set and dedicated ... "

Brothers, I believe that our cemetery work, both the routine monthly maintenance and the placing and dedication of new headstones, has a triple impact. We are:

- 1) "Keeping green the memory" of the valiant warriors who preserved the Union, which is our primary task,
- 2) Exemplifying patriotism, and
- 3) Generating important recognition in our communities.

That recognition alerts prospective members to the SUVCW and its purpose, which generates opportunities for recruitment. It is no secret that our order is advancing in age. We need new recruits, especially younger ones, who will carry on the work after we old guys have gone to our final muster.

In my report I named some significant events: The dedication by Humboldt Camp 9 of a brand-new civil war soldier sculpture in the Mt. Hope Cemetery; the Isaac Bonsall headstone dedication in Riverside Cemetery in Arkansas City, planned and carried out by Eckes Camp 10; and Veterans' Day events that were being planned in our communities. Several members from our Camps also attended and participated in graveside ceremonies for our late Past Commander-in-Chief, Brad Schall, who was buried in his hometown of Hutchinson. We also celebrated the lives of our late brothers, PDC Robert Boyd and PDC Conrad Fisher.

Since that report, Coyne Camp 1 encountered outdated headstone regulations for the procurement of a headstone to honor a Civil War Nurse. The diligence and perseverance of Brother Michael Halfman overcame those complications, and the stone was dedicated in a respectful ceremony in Wichita.

Our Camps are also doing good work recognizing ROTC cadets and recognizing Scouts who have received the rank of Eagle Scout.

Brothers, while the membership numbers of our department are smaller than most of our eastern counterparts, I believe nevertheless that we are robust, active, and impactful.

I am privileged to serve with a dedicated and capable group of elected and appointed Department officers, to whom I owe a debt of gratitude for their counsel and support.

As you may already know, the Department is at work on providing our Camps with creative and workable ideas as suggestions for commemorating the 250th Anniversary of the birth of our nation. The 250th Committee plans to conclude its work and provide a report to the Camps no

later than mid-February. A focus, of course, will be on the July 4th commemoration. But the 250th Anniversary will be a year-long celebration, with lots of opportunities for events in our communities. This milestone celebration gives us a unique opportunity to interact with our citizens with the purpose of re-energizing true patriotism.

I congratulate and thank every Camp and every brother in the Department for the dedication you show in remembering and honoring the Boys in Blue.

Huzzah!

In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty,

Kent M. Melcher

Department Commander

CAMP STRENGTHS, DECEMBER 31, 2025

As of December 31, 2025, Kansas listed **168** brothers, including one junior and seven dual brothers. This is a net change of **four** within the Department since March 31, 2025, which gives it a reportable strength of **160**.

<u>Camp Name & Number</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Net Change</u>
Corp. Patrick Coyne Camp 1	28	-1
Sgt. Samuel J. Churchill Camp 4	27	+1
Franklin Camp 5	45	+1
Humboldt Camp 9	10	-1
John N. Eckes Camp 10	20	+2
<u>Old Abe Camp 16</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>+2</u>
DEPARTMENT OF KANSAS	168	+4

PDC ROBERT DEAN BOYD II MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE

The PDC Robert Dean Boyd II Membership Challenge was announced in D.S.O. 2 (Series 2025-2026).

Camps are challenged to recruit three new brothers during the period April 6, 2025, through March 21, 2026.

Qualifying Results so far are:

Camp 1	0	Camp 4	1
Camp 5	1	Camp 9	1
Camp 10.....	2	Camp 16	★★★.....3

2026 DEPARTMENT ENCAMPMENT

March 28, 2026

The 2026 Annual Department of Kansas Encampment is scheduled for Saturday, March 28, 2026, at Topeka. This is the thirtieth anniversary of the Department, with the Department hosting the Encampment.

The encampment is to be held at the Kansas Museum of History, 6425 SW 6th Ave., Topeka. This is the fourth time

an encampment has been held at the Kansas Museum of History, with the others being 1999, 2002, and 2006.

Registration will start at 10:30 a.m., with the Business Meeting beginning at 11:30 a.m. and running until 4:30 p.m.

An optional Friday evening meal is being planned. Details will follow, shortly, by way of a Department Order.

Please put this on your calendar as we close out our first thirty years and begin the next.

2025 REMEMBRANCE DAY

The Department of Kansas had two participants attend the November 15, 2025, Remembrance Day activities in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Brothers PCC Barrett E. Young and PDC William E. Fischer Jr. attended the events. Brother Young and Brother Fischer both belong to Humboldt Camp 9, with Brother Fischer being a dual member of the camp. Brother Fischer is also the immediate Past Department Commander for the Department of Pennsylvania.



PDC Fischer and PCC Young in front of the Gen. Meade statue.

2026 NATIONAL ENCAMPMENT

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

July 30, 2026, through August 2, 2026

The 145th National Encampment of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War will be held Thursday, July 30 through Sunday, August 2 at the Eisenhower/Aspire Hotel, 2634 Emmitsburg Road, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

SUVCW business meetings are held on Friday and Saturday. The pre-encampment Council of Administration meeting will be held Thursday evening, and the post-encampment CofA meeting is Sunday morning.

Optional tours (to be announced) will be available on Thursday at additional expense. The traditional "campfire" and entertainment is Friday evening at no additional cost. The Allied Orders Banquet will be held on Saturday evening (additional cost).

This is a great opportunity to visit the Gettysburg battlefield and attend the National Encampment.

DEPARTMENT OFFICERS REPORTS

SENIOR VICE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

James D. Thornton, PCC

Well, we have now reached the end of 2025. As we prepare to begin 2026, the 250th Anniversary of the United State of America, we, as descendants of Union Veterans of the American Civil War, should stop a moment and think about our special connection to this anniversary. It was our ancestors who were responsible for the preservation of the Union and allowing our nation to reach this milestone intact.



Currently, our Department of Kansas is doing just that. The Department has formed a “Department of Kansas 250 Committee” to brainstorm special events and to assist the camps of Kansas with ideas for becoming involved in local and community celebrations of this special time. It is my hope that all six camps within the Department of Kansas will be able to participate in events around our state this summer.

This 250th anniversary of our nation is an opportunity to promote our organization and to encourage the public to research their family tree for Union ancestors by explaining the importance of those ancestors in the preservation of the Union. This opportunity holds especially true for our SUVCW Brothers who are also members of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR).

Think about that for a minute. As a member of the SAR, you claim lineage to ancestors who founded and formed the United States of America. As a member of the SUVCW, you claim lineage to ancestors who preserved the United States of America ninety years later! How cool is that to be able to claim membership in both organizations?

And it isn't that hard to find eligible SUVCW members within the SAR. My own Franklin Camp has several brothers who are SAR members. If you are one of those with SAR membership, I challenge you to attend your chapter meetings and promote membership in the SUVCW. Our membership application process is not that difficult, in fact, it's pretty simple, especially for someone who has already traced their family tree to join the SAR. Offer to assist them with the application process or put them in contact with your camp secretary. Remember, the SUVCW accepts collateral lineage.

The year 2026 brings us a golden opportunity to grow the SUVCW by using the “preservation of the union” platform. Granted, the United States would probably still exist today had the outcome of the Civil War been different, but it would be fractured as six of the original thirteen colonies/states left the Union to join the Confederacy. Thus, we would not be celebrating the 250th Anniversary of the original United States.

Our ancestors preserved the United States as we know it today, 250 years later. Let's make sure no one forgets.

In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty,
Jim Thornton, PCC

JUNIOR VICE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Thomas E. Schmidt, PDC

For the June 2025 *Sunflower Picket*, I wrote an article about the membership challenge. I had proposed for each camp to recruit three new brothers (associate or member) during the period of April 6, 2025, through March 21, 2026. Our Department Council named this endeavor the 2025-2026 PDC Robert Dean Boyd II Membership Challenge. Further details were included in Department Special Order No. 2 dated May 8, 2025. You can go to the Department website to find the order.

How are you coming with the challenge? My, how time flies. It is 2026 already. It is sometimes hard to find people who are interested in our organization, but they are out there. In the month of December, I received two emails through our website from individuals wanting to become new members in our organization.

On page 3 of this issue there is chart of how each camp is doing. It looks like Topeka is leading the pack, but there is still time. What is each of us going to do to try to help our camp get to the goal? Invite someone you know to come to a camp meeting or camp activity. Each of you, as camp members, knows someone who is not a member now but has a Civil War interest. Even if they don't know if they have a Union ancestor, have them join as an associate and then you or someone else can help with their research to determine if they might just have someone who served the Union. My hope is that each camp can be successful in reaching the goal of the challenge. Camp members are the life blood of our organization.

There is still time if each of us makes it a priority. Let's try to catch up with Old Abe Camp 16 in Topeka and fill our camps' ranks!

Thomas E. Schmidt, PDC, Junior Vice Dept. Commander

SECRETARY

Alan L. Russ, PDC

Camps will soon be starting on their SUVCW Form 27 (Annual Camp Report). Here are a few things to keep in mind.

- Do NOT use nicknames on the form. Use the **full** name to avoid future confusion.
- Also ensure you attach a current camp roster to the report.
- The form must be completed and signed by the camp commander, camp secretary, and camp treasurer (or secretary/treasurer).
- The completed and signed form must **arrive** to the Department Secretary no later than April 30, 2026. The earlier it arrives, the better, as it must be consolidated into the Annual Department Report.
- You are encouraged to send a “work copy” of your report to the Department Secretary as early as possible so it can be reviewed before you prepare the final report.

Also, do not forget to check the National website at www.suvcw.org in the “Governance & Forms” section to ensure you are using the latest official forms.

As always, if you have any questions, contact the Department Secretary.

In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty,

Alan L. Russ, PDC

Department Secretary

TREASURER & CHIEF OF STAFF

Rocky L. Bartlow, PDC

Brothers, since the last issue of the Picket I have been busy in both of my roles as Department Treasurer and Chief of Staff. I have hosted and attended several Zoom meetings for the Department Council and the Department 250th Committee. I was also honored to help, along with my wife Kathi and daughter Kellie, the December 13 Wreaths Across America event at Maple Grove cemetery in Lawrence along with Churchill Camp 4. It was well done and gave me some experience with the process since Old Abe is going to attempt it in 2026.

As treasurer, I would like to remind camp treasurers to prepare for filing our EIN report in late January. We like to get on it quickly to make sure it's done and we're not “the nail sticking up” when National looks for offenders!



Most of our camps file in January and I'll notify you when the IRS site is ready to go. As treasurer, I also hold onto department property which includes encampment banners, department flags, charter, and our Lincoln Tomb wreath. If you should have any need of those, please let me know.

As Chief of Staff, I have been busy helping and supporting Department Commander Melcher in keeping up with his duties, which are many. He has had a busy last few months attending camps and installing officers as well as chairing the 250th committee which is preparing for the United States 250th anniversary. In support, I installed Franklin and Eckes camp officers for 2026.

Speaking of the 250th, I was going to promote the committee's work, as well as the work of national. However, SVDC Jim Thornton recently sent an email so well written that I am going to shamelessly quote it since I can't imagine writing it any better!

“As you are all well aware, the coming year of 2026 marks the 250th Anniversary of our nation. Celebrations are well under way across our country to mark this historic event. The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War are also deeply involved in planning to join in on the festivities and the re-igniting of patriotism. The SUVCW is an official partner of the "America 250" organization. It was, after all, our Union Ancestors who preserved the United States and made it possible for us to achieve this anniversary.

“Our Department of Kansas has also been deep in discussions on how to spread this excitement across our camps and across our state. Commander Kent Melcher formed a Department of Kansas 250 Committee a couple of months ago to brainstorm ideas, suggestions, and events for our camps. In the next few weeks, the committee will be sending out a list of ideas, suggestions, and website links to camp leadership to utilize in getting involved in your communities and their celebrations sure to occur in 2026.

“In the meantime, it is not too early to begin celebrating and promoting the SUVCW association with ‘America 250.’ National Headquarters has designed and developed an amazing selection of graphics for our use on camp letterhead, banners, and signage. These graphics, logos, and symbols can be accessed on the national website. Please visit <https://suvcw.org/America250-graphics> to view these bright, colorful, and bold graphics.

“I encourage all camps to begin using these logos and graphics in their communications, community signage, and event banners. Let's take advantage of America's 250th Birthday and promote the SUVCW and our

ancestor's role in preserving our United States of America."

Well said Commander Thornton. I hope you all have had a joyous Christmas season celebrating "God with us-Immanuel" and I'm looking forward to a successful year for camps, department, and order.
In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty,
PDC Rocky Bartlow,
Department Treasurer/Chief of Staff

PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTOR

Michael J. Hadl, PCC

I want to encourage all camps to have their own Facebook page. Recently I set up a second Facebook page for Camp 4. We have 90 members on the page. This is a

good way to keep in touch with one another. Feel free to put what you have all been doing on the Camp 4 page. If we're not friends, please send me a friend request.

F C L,
Mike Hadl, PCC

EAGLE SCOUT CERTIFICATE COORDINATOR

Eric L. Crittenden

For more information on the program please check out the National SUVCW website with the following link or contact me.

<https://suvcw.org/eagle-scout-recognition>

Eric Crittenden – Dept of KS ESCC

Email: suvcweckes10@gmail.com

CAMP NEWS

PVT. PATRICK COYNE CAMP 1

Wichita

Camp Officers

Camp Commander
Senior Vice Commander
Junior Vice Commander
Secretary/Treasurer
Council

Patriotic Instructor
Chaplain
Historian

Steven W. Hamlin, PCC
Timothy A. Baxter
Adam P. Harrison
Thomas E. Schmidt, PDC
Dale L. Rouse, PCC
James H. Graves, PCC
Bruce F. Burke
Randolph J. Colby Jr.
Dale L. Rouse, PCC
Michael L. Halfman, PCC

2026 Wreaths Across America

Submitted by Camp Commander Steven W. Hamlin.



Diane Rosell, DUVCW, sings the National Anthem, while SUVCW brothers Steven W. Hamlin and Randolph J. Colby salute.

Cpl. Partick Coyne Camp 1 hosted a "Wreaths Across America" ceremony on December 13, 2025, at the Grand

Army of the Republic (GAR) Woman's Relief Corps (WRC) pavilion at Maple Grove Cemetery in Wichita. Camp Commander Steve Hamlin organized the event, and Patriotic Instructor Randy Colby was the emcee for the ceremony.

Members of Mrs. John A. Logan Tent 6, Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War 1861-1865 (DUVCW), along with Washington Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), and Martha Loving Ferrell and Eunice Sterling, representing the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and Friends of Wichita Pioneers, cosponsored the ceremony.

Members of Company A of the 8th Kansas Volunteer Infantry provided a rifle volley followed by Taps by bugler Don Hansen.



Three hundred and nineteen wreaths were placed by approximately forty volunteers on veterans' gravestones honoring those who served.

SGT SAMUEL J. CHURCHILL CAMP 4*Lawrence***Camp Officers**

Camp Commander
 Senior Vice Commander
 Junior Vice Commander
 Secretary
 Treasurer
 Council

Patriotic Instructor
 Chaplain
 Historian
 Civil War Memorials Officer

Michael D. Heck, PCC
 Brent D. Whitten
 Geoge E. Goff Jr.
 Thomas E. Schmidt, PDC
 Michael A. Todd, PDC
 Joseph L. Bodine
 W. Patrick Myers, PCC
 Paul Jefferson, PCC
 Michael J. Hadl, PCC
 Roy A. Lafferty, PDC
 Michael J. Hadl, PCC
 Paul Jefferson, PCC

FRANKLIN CAMP 5*Olathe***Camp Officers**

Camp Commander
 Senior Vice Commander
 Junior Vice Commander
 Secretary
 Treasurer
 Council

Patriotic Instructor
 Chaplain
 Graves Registration Officer
 Historian
 Eagle Scout Certificate Coordinator

James D. Thornton, PCC
 Matthew T. Archambault
 Jeffrey A. Winters
 Daniel W. Stilley
 Richard T. Miller
 William D. Stilley
 William J. Stoker, PCC
 Ronnie R. Thompson
 Lane D. Smith, PCC
 Floyd E. Guliford
 Joshua S. Gillihan-Young
 Roger B. Miller
 James D. Thornton, PCC

Submitted by Camp Commander Jim Thornton, PCC

Presentation of Quilts Brings Tears

For the 2025 Veterans Day Ceremony and Quilt-of-Valor presentations, the SUVCW Franklin Camp had one of its best turnouts of members ever. Sixteen (16) Franklin Camp Brothers were in attendance to assist: Jim Thornton, John Hansen, Bryan Wampler (Quilt Recipient), Walt Schley, Jerry Coffelt, Bill Stilley, Lane Smith, Bill Stoker, Jeffrey Winters, Ted Lockwood (Quilt Recipient), Rick McPherson, John Thorup, Phil Hansen, Richard Miller (not pictured), Dan Stilley (not pictured), and Ronnie Thompson (taking the photo).

What they took part in and witnessed was a memorable ceremony this year with a large crowd, lots of tears from quilt recipients and their families, AND two local TV Stations in attendance to film the ceremony and conduct interviews.

Thanks to the efforts of Brother Richard Miller in crafting a press release sent out to local news media, both WDAF-TV4 and KCTV-5 sent reporters and video crews.

Both stations conducted interviews with quilt recipients and the Prairie Point QOV Quilters. You can access the news videos by following these links:

Channel 4: <https://fox4kc.com/news/local-heroes-honored-with-quilts-of-valor-ahead-of-veterans-day/>

Channel 5: <https://www.kctv5.com/2025/11/09/local-volunteers-honor-veterans-with-handcrafted-quilts-valor/>

Another first for the ceremony occurred when quilt



Quilt Recipients (L - R) Robert L. Shannon, Christopher Crowley, Margaret A. Sullivan, Jan Marie Rice, Bryan Wampler, and Theodore Lockwood.

recipient Lew Shannon asked to say a few words after receiving his quilt. This set the stage as all six veterans would make a statement upon being presented with their Quilt-of-Valor. It was very emotional as Lew Shannon and Jan Rice both broke down in tears.

The tears and emotions continued as Commander



Thornton went around the gathering asking if those in attendance wished to speak and pay honor to a family

member, living or deceased, who served our country. Many in attendance would raise their hands to remember aloud a loved one who was a veteran. Some would choke back tears as they spoke the veteran's name.

Words really cannot do justice to the events and emotions of the day. Thanks to Brothers Ronnie Thompson and Jerry Coffelt, we have over a hundred photos of the ceremony. Ronnie's photos are found on a Google Photo Album at: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/JJvsVe2FhfZR4QJv7> and Jerry's photos may be viewed on our camp's Facebook Group Page at <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1DKpzhgf5e/>

HUMBOLDT CAMP 9

Humboldt
Camp Officers

Camp Commander
Senior Vice Commander
Junior Vice Commander
Secretary
Treasurer
Council

Patriotic Instructor
Chaplain
Historian
Civil War Memorials Officer

Rocky D. Ansell, PCC
Randy A. Downey
Barrett E. Young, PCC
Barrett E. Young, PCC
Randy A. Downey
William F. Schomaker
William R. Hartford
Dean L. Dillard
William F. Schomaker
William F. Schomaker
Bridger P. Keyes, PCC
Rocky D. Ansell, PCC

DEPARTMENT OFFICERS

2025-2026

Department Commander
Sr. Vice Dept. Commander
Jr. Vice Dept. Commander
Secretary (term exp. 2028)
Treasurer (term exp. 2028)
Council Member (IPDC)
Council Member (term exp. 2026)
Council Member (term exp. 2026)
Council Member (term exp. 2027)
Chief of Staff
Patriotic Instructor
Chaplain
Counselor
Historian & CW Memorials Officer
Graves Registration Officer
GAR Records Officer
Eagle Scout Certificate Coordinator
Signals Officer

Kent M. Melcher, PDC
James D. Thornton, PCC
Thomas E. Schmidt, PDC
Alan L. Russ, PDC
Rocky L. Bartlow, PDC
Conrad M. Fisher, PDC
James H. Graves, PCC
Barrett E. Young, PCC
Roy A. Lafferty, PDC
Rocky L. Bartlow, PDC
Michael J. Hadl, PCC
Jeffrey A. Winters
K. Kirk Nystrom, PDC
Joshua S. Gillihan-Young
Joseph E. Chrisman, PCC
Gregg L. Talkington
Eric L. Crittenden
Thomas E. Schmidt, PDC

PVT JOHN N. ECKES CAMP 10

Winfield

Camp Officers

Camp Commander	Terry E. Justice, PCC
Senior Vice Commander	David W. Taylor
Junior Vice Commander	Dustin L. Jones
Secretary/Treasurer	Eric L. Crittenden
Council	Gregg L. Talkington
	Gordon L. Hare
Patriotic Instructor	Kent M. Melcher, PDC
Chaplain	Kent M. Melcher, PDC
Graves Registration Officer	Kent M. Melcher, PDC
Historian	Joe E. Chrisman, PCC
Civil War Memorials Officer	Gregg L. Talkington
Eagle Scout Certificate Coordinator	Joe E. Chrisman, PCC
Signals Officer	Eric L. Crittenden
	Kent M. Melcher, PDC

OLD ABE CAMP 16

Topeka

Camp Officers

Camp Commander	Ronald H. Martin
Senior Vice Commander	Robert J. Reeves
Junior Vice Commander	Jonathan A. Holder
Secretary/Treasurer	Rocky L. Bartlow, PDC
Council	Craig E. Dunstan, PCC
	Jack A. Sanders
Patriotic Instructor	Christopher R. Cardone
Chaplain	K. Kirk Nystrom, PDC
Graves Registration Officer	James L. Seipel
Historian	Jerry W. Reiman, PCC
Civil War Memorials Officer	Christopher R. Cardone
ROTC Coordinator	Jerry W. Reiman, PCC
Eagle Scout Certificate Coordinator	Jonathan A. Holder
	Gary W. Kraus, PCC

OFFICIAL

DEPARTMENT COUNCIL ACTIONS

Between September 1, 2025, and December 31, 2025

October 13, 2025 (Remote) Meeting

1. A regular meeting of the Department Council was held on October 13, 2025, for the purpose of discussing and acting upon the business that came before it.
2. Approved the minutes of August 18, 2025, Council meeting.
3. Approved the purchase of a new Department Commander badge from the National Quartermaster at a cost of \$50.00 plus shipping costs of up to \$9.00, for a total estimated cost at or below \$59.00. The current Department Commander badge shall be retired at the earliest opportunity and placed in safekeeping under the control of the Department Treasurer.
3. Approved a \$200.00 donation from the General Fund be made to the William Braden Schall and Willis T. Reed Memorial Fund in memory of PCinC D. Brad Schall.

DEPARTMENT ORDERS ISSUED SEPTEMBER 1 TO DECEMBER 31, 2025

Commander Kent M. Melcher, PDC

DEPARTMENT SPECIAL ORDER 5 (SERIES 2025-2026) September 16, 2025 DEATH OF BROTHER CONRAD MAX FISHER, PDC AND DECLARATION OF PERIOD OF MOURNING

1. It is with sadness and regret I announce the death of Past Department Commander Conrad Max Fisher on September 13, 2025. PDC Fisher was born on June 8, 1947, at Topeka, Kansas.
2. Brother Fisher joined the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War on July 20, 1996, as a National Member-at-Large. On December 13, 1997, he transferred to the newly formed Old Abe Camp No. 16 as a charter member of the camp. Although he took a break from the SUVCW in early 2002, he returned to Old Abe Camp on September 20, 2009, remaining active from then on.
3. He proudly honored his great-grandfather Conrad Fisher, who served as a Corporal with Company C, 18th Missouri Regiment, from December 26, 1861, until July 18, 1865.
4. Brother Fisher was elected and served as Camp Commander for Old Abe Camp No. 16 for 2013, earning him the honor of Past Camp Commander.
5. On January 12, 2019, Brother Fisher was elected to the Department Council for a two-year term, serving until January 9, 2021. Brother Fisher was then elected to the position of Junior Vice Department Commander on March 26, 2022, followed by his election on March 18, 2023, to the position of Senior Vice Department Commander.
6. On April 6, 2024, Brother Fisher was elected to be the Twentieth-Second Department Commander for the Department of Kansas. He served in this capacity until the end of his term on April 5, 2025. At that time, the Department awarded Brother Fisher the honor of Past Department Commander.
7. Brother Fisher opted for a green burial, so that will occur quickly. A memorial and graveside service will be announced for a later date.
8. I am ordering the Department charter and all Department of Kansas camp charters to be draped for a period of 30 days from the date of this order. Additionally, members should wear either the black "In Memoriam" ribbon or the black band on the drop of their membership badge in accordance with National Regulations Chapter V, Article VI, Section 9.

IN FRATERNITY, CHARITY, AND LOYALTY,

Kent M. Melcher, PDC
Department Commander

ATTEST:

Alan L. Russ, PDC
Secretary

DEPARTMENT ORDER 6 (SERIES 2025-2026) October 1, 2025

APPOINTMENT OF DEPARTMENT SPECIAL COMMITTEE SPECIAL COMMITTEE FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF U.S. INDEPENDENCE, JULY 4, 2026

1. As per Department of Kansas Bylaws Chapter V, Article III, Section C, the Special Committee for the Celebration of the 250th Anniversary of U.S. Independence, July 4, 2026, is established.
2. The purpose of the committee is to provide Kansas Camps with a list of ideas for celebrating the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.
3. The Committee will also generate ideas for participation of the Department of Kansas in the 250th celebration.

4. The Committee will meet by Zoom as necessary, completing its work with ideas sent to Camp Secretaries no later than March 1, 2026.
 5. The Committee will report its work to the 2026 Department Encampment, March 28, 2026.
 6. The following brothers are appointed to the Department Bylaws Committee.
- Eric L. Crittenden, Chairman - Pvt. John N. Eckes Camp 10
Rocky D. Ansell, PCC, Member - Humboldt Camp 9
Ronald H. Martin, Member - Old Abe Camp 16
William P. "Pat" Myers, PCC, Member - Sgt. Samuel J. Churchill Camp 4
James D. Thornton, PCC, Member - Franklin Camp 5
Brian W. Wampler, Member - Franklin Camp 5
Jeffrey A. Winters, Member - Franklin Camp 5
Kent M. Melcher, PDC, Member (ex officio) - Pvt. John N. Eckes Camp 10

IN FRATERNITY, CHARITY, AND LOYALTY,

Kent M. Melcher, PDC
Department Commander

ATTEST:

Alan L. Russ, PDC
Secretary

DEPARTMENT ORDER 7 (SERIES 2025-2026)

October 9, 2025

APPOINTMENT OF DEPARTMENT SPECIAL COMMITTEE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

1. As per Department of Kansas Bylaws Chapter V, Article III, Section C, the Special Nominating Committee is established.
2. The purpose of the committee is to put forth nominations for the various elected offices of the Department to the Thirtieth Annual Department Encampment, March 28, 2026.
3. The Committee is tasked with contacting and/or replying to prospective candidates, ensuring they meet the qualifications established for the office, and that they are willing to actively participate and perform the duties of the office.
4. The Committee will meet by Zoom, as necessary, to discuss possible candidates and decide as to whom to submit.
5. The Committee will report its work to the 2026 Department Encampment, March 28, 2026.
6. The following brothers are appointed to the Department Nominating Committee.

Alan L. Russ, PDC, Chairman - Old Abe Camp 16
Roy A. Lafferty, PDC, Member - Sgt. Samuel J. Churchill Camp 4
Michael A. Todd, PDC, Member - Sgt. Samuel J. Churchill Camp 4

7. Any brother of the Department may submit their name to the committee by sending an email to secretary@suvcwks.org .

8. Also, it is important to note that nominations for the various offices will also be requested from the floor of the encampment.

9. The following offices are up for election in 2026:

Department Commander (term expiring 2027)
Senior Vice Department Commander (term expiring 2027)
Junior Vice Department Commander (term expiring 2027)
Council Member (term expiring 2028)
Council Member (term expiring 2028)

IN FRATERNITY, CHARITY, AND LOYALTY,

Kent M. Melcher, PDC
Department Commander

ATTEST:

Alan L. Russ, PDC
Secretary

IN CONCLUSION

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF *The Sunflower Picket*

Just a Little Background

The Department Newsletter known as *The Sunflower Picket* was first published for the renewed Department of Kansas in the Summer of 1997 as *The Pickett*. It was three years before the next edition of the now renamed *The Sunflower Picket* returned

with a single issue in 2000. It returned in 2001 for an extended run. In our thirty years, fifty issues have been published.

The Sunflower Picket

The Sunflower Picket is the official publication of the Department of Kansas, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. Editor: Alan L. Russ, PDC – email: secretary@suvcwks.org

Individuals attending events hosted by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, by virtue of their attendance, agree to the usage of their likeness in the Banner, any Camp or Department Newsletter, any SUVCW website and/or on any SUVCW Social Media outlet, promotional brochures, or any other SUVCW material. [G.O. No. 7 (Series 2021-2022)]