

# THE FRANKLIN CAMP MONTHLY BULLETIN

OFFICIAL DISPATCH FOR THE FRANKLIN CAMP #5  
DEPARTMENT OF KANSAS  
SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

VOLUME 6, No. 3

MARCH 16, 2026

## **JOHN BROWN: THE BACKSTORY TO HIS RADICALISM**



The SUVCW Franklin Camp held its regular monthly meeting on February 26 with another good turnout of about twenty members.

The gathering welcomed its newest Brother, Dale Walters, who joins the camp through the service of his great-grandfather, Private Thomas Jefferson Wright, of Company K, 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment Kentucky Infantry.



The business meeting began with a final recap of the membership renewals. Franklin Camp lost three members, two who voluntarily dropped and one who never responded to communications. As of March 1, Franklin Camp has forty-four members. Commander Jim Thornton then proceeded through several more business items on the agenda, including the camp's participation in the Old Shawnee Days parade in June, the upcoming Department of Kansas Encampment, the America 250 Celebration events (including a wreath laying on Memorial Day), and a proposal for a van for Kansas delegates to travel to the National Encampment.



Now it was time for those in attendance to do a little psychological analysis of one of the most radical characters in pre-Civil War history – John Brown. What was it that drove Brown? What turned him into such a fiery and violent individual? Brother Richard Miller attempted to answer those questions with his presentation for the evening.

Richard took a deep dive into John Brown's life before his move to Kansas Territory in the late 1850's. Richard brought many facts, previously unknown to most of those in attendance, about Brown's childhood, first marriage, his children, his beliefs, and his early confrontations with others over racial issues. It was an enlightening and informative presentation that helped uncover what drove the man to commit the acts he did.

It turns out, when you put all the pieces together, John Brown was simply driven over the edge. All his experiences early in life molded the firebrand we are all familiar with. Brown was a stubborn man, set in his ways and convictions. What he went through in his early years simply reinforced his beliefs and he decided no one was going to get in his way. Richard shed a spotlight on these facts and helped those listening to understand John Brown a little bit better. Once you know the backstory, it is easier to know the full story.

# **BROTHER DAN STILLEY PROVIDES PROGRAM** **FOR SHAWNEE INDIAN MISSION** **WESTERN ACADEMY LECTURE SERIES**



On Saturday, March 14, Franklin Camp Brother Dan Stilley was the featured speaker for the Old Shawnee Indian Mission Western Academy Lecture Series. Dan spoke to the gathering on the Battle of Westport and was able to tie in the Shawnee Indian Mission to the battle.

With close to 60 (maybe more) in attendance, Dan focused on the build up to those days in October 1864 when the area was threatened by Confederate forces under General Sterling Price. He also explained how it wasn't just "one large battle" but rather a series of engagements that culminated in the final confrontation around Loose

Park and the Brush Creek area. Using maps, detailed descriptions, and explanations of what is in those locations now, Dan gave those in attendance a better understanding of who, what, and where of the Battle of Westport.

Those from Franklin Camp attending the lecture in support of Brother Dan Stilley were Brothers Jim Thornton, Bill Stoker, Richard Miller, Ronnie Thompson, David Simmons, and Bill Stilley.

The program was well received by those in attendance, and many remained afterwards to engage Dan in conversation and questions on specific points of his presentation.

Shawnee Indian Mission Site Director, Jennifer Laughlin, expressed her gratitude to Dan and to the Franklin Camp for our work in supporting the historic site.

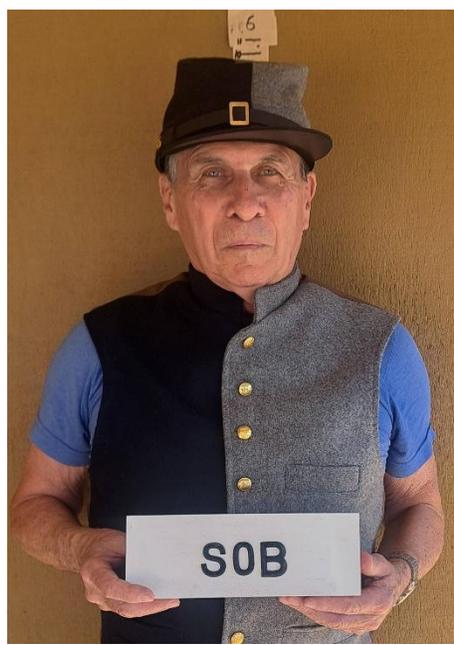


# The Mythical S.O.B (Son of Both) Exists!!

We have all heard chilling stories of the mythical creature known as an *S.O.B.* or *Son of Both*. This creature seems to have a split personality. One moment they are **BLUE** and represent the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War Franklin Camp. The next moment this creature is **GRAY** and represents the Sons of Confederate Veterans Major Thomas J. Key Camp.

Recently, this creature was captured on film. Is it a confused life-form that doesn't know who or what it is? No!! The *S.O.B.* is simply someone who has ancestors who fought on both sides, Union and Confederate, during the American Civil War and wishes to honor both sides of his heritage.

Here are the photos capturing this mythical creature in all its glory:



Should you encounter one of these gentlemen, do not be frightened. They are simply expressing their pride in their ancestors. Talk to them and ask about the organizations they belong to – the SUVCW and the SCV. Ask about how to join one or the other. In fact, maybe you can join BOTH! You may actually be a mythical *S.O.B.* as well.

## Friday Night March 27, 2026, Department of Kansas SUVCW Dinner

In honor of our 30<sup>th</sup> year as a Department, we will hold an Encampment Dinner on Friday evening March 27, 2026, at 6:30 PM at the Kansas National Guard Museum, 125 SE Airport Drive, Forbes Field, Topeka, Kansas. All brothers and their spouses or guests are welcome to attend. The event will be catered by Bill's BBQ from Eudora, KS. The event will be buffet style, and the menu will include pulled pork, BBQ beef, 2 sides including baked beans, dessert and drink. Cost for the meal is \$25.00 each, which includes tax.

Brother Alan Russ has put together a short history of the 30 years of the Department of Kansas SUVCW to share with the group. This will not be a formal affair, so jackets are not required. It will be a time to eat, share and visit with other members of the department. This is something we usually don't get to do at our regular Department Encampment meeting.

To register and pay to attend the dinner please complete the form below and mail it and your check, made out to "Department of KS – SUVCW" to: Rocky Bartlow, 125 NW Courtland Ave., Topeka, KS 66606.

Or

Payment can be made using Venmo as follows: @rocky-bartlow. If you pay electronically, email the completed form to [chiefstaff@suvchwks.org](mailto:chiefstaff@suvchwks.org)

Hope you can attend the dinner. It should be a great time. Also please try to attend the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Encampment of the Department of Kansas SUVCW the following day, Saturday, March 28, at the Topeka History Museum with registration starting at 10:30 am and the Memorial Service at 11:00 am.

Tom Schmidt, PDC  
Chairperson Dept. Encampment Committee

### **RESERVATIONS AND PAYMENTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MARCH 20, 2026**

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Department of KS SUVCW Dinner on Friday March 27, 2026, at 6:30 pm at the Kansas National Guard Museum, 125 SE Airport Drive, Forbes Field, Topeka, Kansas.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of attendees: \_\_\_\_\_ X \$25.00 = \$ 0.00 total

Send completed form and check made to Department of KS SUVCW to

Rocky Bartlow  
125 NW Courtland Ave.  
Topeka, KS 66606

or you can pay by Venmo as follows - @rocky-bartlow and email the form to [chiefstaff@suvchwks.org](mailto:chiefstaff@suvchwks.org)

# 2026 Department Encampment

**Saturday, March 28, 2026**

**WHERE:**

**Conference Center Meeting Room**

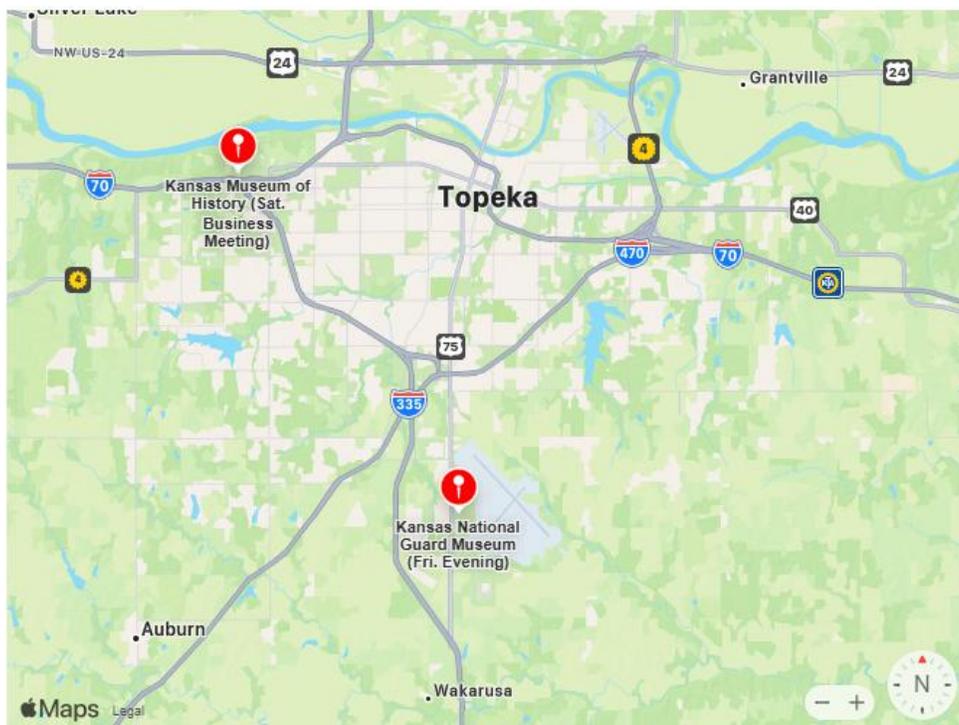
Kansas Museum of History  
6425 SW 6th Avenue  
Topeka, Kansas

**WHEN:**

Registration opens at 10:30 A.M.  
Memorial Service/Business Meeting starts at 11:00 A.M.  
Meeting will be over by 4:30 P.M.  
[see Department Order No. 8 for additional information]

## FRIDAY EVENING DINNER

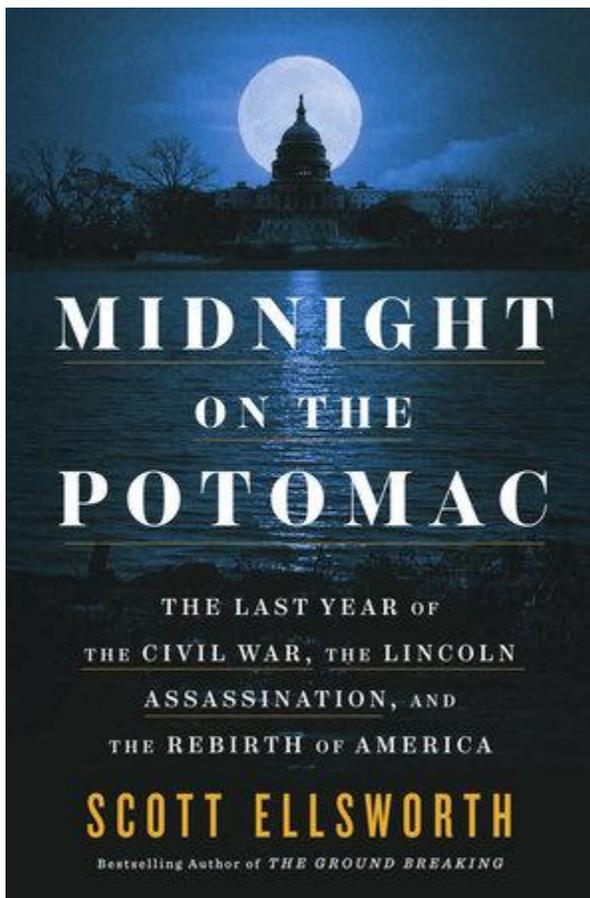
There will be a buffet dinner on Friday evening, March 27, 2026, at the Kansas National Guard Museum, 125 SE Airport Drive, Topeka, beginning at 6:30 P.M. Cost of the meal is \$25.00 per person, and advance registration and payment are required by March 20, 2026. See the reservation form for details.



# **BOOK REVIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Most of us, being students of the American Civil War and members of organizations such as the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War and the Sons of Confederate Veterans, are very familiar with the events of that era. But do we know what was going on behind the scenes and events everyone is familiar with? How many of us are familiar with the drama and intrigue taking place in the lives of the central figures? What was going through their minds? And how did they make their final decisions? Most importantly, what were the small, seemingly insignificant actions that were key to these events of historic proportions?

Wanting to know more about the details no one talks about or are written about, I went looking for factual based books on these behind-the-scenes events. I have recently completed two books that meet these criteria. Here are my reviews of those two books.



*“Midnight on the Potomac”* by Scott Ellsworth is a 2025 book that re-examines the final year of the Civil War, arguing the Lincoln assassination was part of a larger Confederate plot, not the act of a lone gunman, and highlights the crucial roles of Black Americans, women, and a diverse coalition in securing the Union's victory. Not just a rehashing of Lee vs Grant, or the Siege of Petersburg, this book covers military events like the Battle of Monocacy, political struggles, and the Confederate terror war, presenting a new interpretation of the assassination and the "rebirth of America".

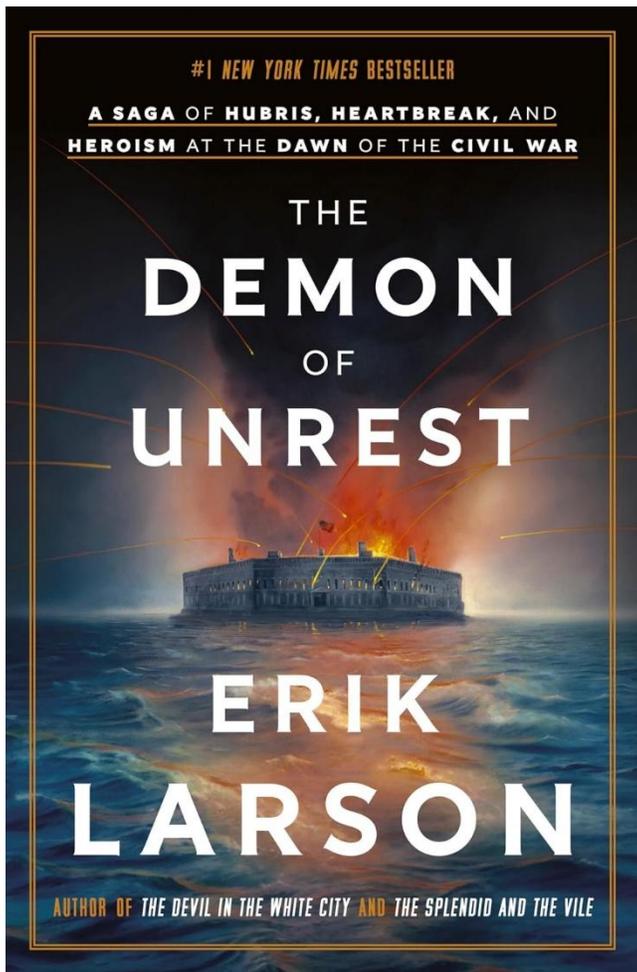
*“Midnight on the Potomac”* will also shatter some long-held myths. For more than a century and a half, the Lincoln assassination has been portrayed as the sole brainchild of a disgruntled, pro-South actor. But based on both obscure contemporary accounts and decades of long-ignored scholarship, Ellsworth reveals that for nearly one year before the tragic events at Ford's Theatre, John Wilkes Booth had been collaborating closely with agents of the Confederate Secret Service. And the real Booth is far from the one we've long been presented with.

Deeply researched yet captivatingly written, *“Midnight on the Potomac”* is a different kind of book about the Civil War. In it you will read about the Confederate attempt to burn down New

York City, how Lincoln almost lost the presidency, about the Rebel general who nearly captured Washington, and how thousands of enslaved African Americans freed themselves—and helped secure their nation's survival. It concludes with a section titled “Notes” which includes extensive references (including several diaries and long forgotten documents) and supplemental discussions.

I learned so much from this book. Although written in dramatic fashion, not just reciting facts, the author has taken a deep dive into the actions taking place away from the battlefields we are all familiar with. I can guarantee you will learn something new; for example, the attempt to burn New York City. There was so much going on in those last ten months that few know about. This book proves that it is impossible to know the full story – there are simply too many small pieces that make up the whole.

I highly recommend this book and give it nine out of ten stars.



“*The Demon of Unrest*” by Erik Larson is a historical narrative about the five months between Abraham Lincoln's election in November 1860 and the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861, which started the Civil War. The book details the political turmoil, miscommunications, and personal stories of key figures like Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, and Major Robert Anderson, using primary sources like diaries and letters to create a gripping account of the nation's descent into war. Quotes from diaries and personal letters are frequently used throughout the narrative to emphasize and prove the author's points.

Larson covers just a few months of American history—but perhaps the most consequential few months. Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, and other well-known figures from the period play key roles, but so too do a British journalist on assignment, a young private stuck in the besieged fort and a Southern society woman (the well-known diarist Mary Boykin Chesnut) watching the events unfold. They aren't key characters in the grand arc of the Civil War or the country's history, but they did write a lot down. Their accounts help Larson propel the narrative without relying entirely on the stories of people who have already been the subject of hundreds or thousands of other books.

The author begins in 1860 with a focus on President James Buchanan and his indecision. Larson details how Buchanan, who had already promised he would serve only one term when elected in 1856, simply ignored the growing disharmony in the country and assumed “it would all work out as it always did.” Using long forgotten documents and written observations, Larson shows how Lincoln, as the incoming president, attempted multiple times to confer with Buchanan on the secession crisis between his election in November 1860 and his inauguration in March 1861. There was no cooperation between the two.

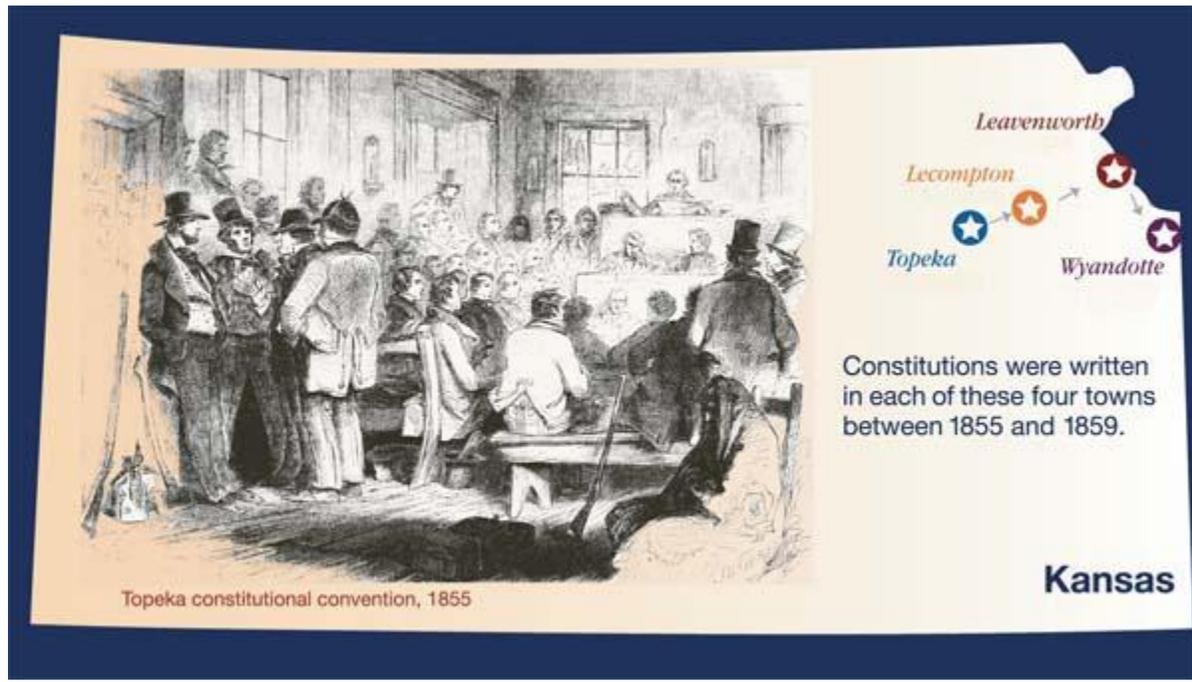
Radical secessionist and fire-eater Edmund Ruffin also plays a key role in Larson's writing. Ruffin was much more than the man who pulled the lanyard to fire the first shot at Fort Sumter. Little-known documents from various southern states indicate he was a very influential speaker and protagonist on the secession issue. Besides Ruffin, numerous other characters spend time in the spotlight throughout the book.

This leads to my biggest problem with the book. It is simply too long. It's as if Larson cannot get out of his own way with his attention to minute details. “*The Demon of Unrest*” is nearly 600 pages long and extremely fussy and nitpicky with details at times. Frankly, in 600 pages, some of it is just a lot more interesting than other parts. Larson seemed hyper focused on many trivial details related to other events, meetings, speeches, ideas, people, etc. that slowed the pace of the narrative to a crawl. Long story short: lots of relevant content that brings forward numerous little-known facts that contribute to the outbreak of war but needed to be whacked down another 100-150 pages and I had trouble with how focused Larson's lens is.

With that said, I still highly recommend this book (maybe the audiobook would enhance the experience) to learn more about the months leading up to secession and the outbreak of war. Although tedious at times, “*The Demon of Unrest*” is an educational treasure. Because of the unnecessary length, I give it 7.5 out of 10 stars.

# **DID YOU KNOW?**

## **IT TOOK KANSAS FOUR ATTEMPTS FOR STATEHOOD**



The history of the Kansas State Constitution is rooted in the "Bleeding Kansas" era (1854–1861), featuring four distinct, conflicting drafts driven by the slavery debate: the free-state Topeka (1855) and Leavenworth (1858) constitutions, and the pro-slavery Lecompton (1857) constitution. The anti-slavery Wyandotte Constitution (1859) was ultimately adopted, leading to statehood on January 29, 1861.

### **The Four Proposed Constitutions (1855–1859)**

Between 1855 and 1859, four different conventions met to decide the future of the Kansas Territory, primarily clashing over the issue of slavery.

- **Topeka Constitution (1855):** Drafted by "Free-Staters" in opposition to the pro-slavery territorial legislature. It prohibited slavery but also sought to exclude all Black people (free or enslaved) from the state. Although approved by the U.S. House, it failed in the Senate.
- **Lecompton Constitution (1857):** A pro-slavery document drafted by Southern advocates. It protected slaveholding and excluded free Black people from its bill of rights. Despite endorsement from President James Buchanan, it was overwhelmingly rejected by Kansas voters in an 1858 referendum and ultimately failed in Congress.
- **Leavenworth Constitution (1858):** The most progressive of the four, this Free-State document banned slavery and notably used the phrase "all men" in its Bill of Rights without racial distinction. It also provided a basic framework for women's rights. It was never adopted by the U.S. Senate.
- **Wyandotte Constitution (1859):** The final and successful version, which prohibited slavery but initially restricted voting rights to white males. It established the current state borders, significantly smaller than the original territory. It was approved by the Senate only after Southern senators from seceding states abandoned their seats in 1861.

# THE COMMANDER'S COMMENTARY

MARCH 2026

Franklin Camp Commander Jim Thornton



Most of us have been involved in the construction or creation of something very special. Then, years later, we see our creation destroyed or irreparably damaged and torn asunder. Imagine if what you had been part of creating was a new nation; a nation based on philosophies and a form of government never tried before. And now, that nation which you helped create is being ripped apart.

For eleven men in 1861, this scene was coming true. Unbelievably, there were eleven veterans of the American Revolutionary War who were still alive at the time of the Civil War. All were between 98 and 103 years of age. Six of them are the only Revolutionary War Veterans for whom photographs exist.

In 1864, the Rev. Elias Hillard of Connecticut compiled a biographical sketch of six of these surviving patriots with photographs. He then published these sketches in a book entitled "The Last Men of the Revolution." You can access this book for free from the National Archives website and read it online. The website for this book is: [https://archive.org/details/gri\\_33125012930976](https://archive.org/details/gri_33125012930976). It is also available for purchase (around \$9.00) on Amazon.

I do plan to read this book, just for curiosity, to see if any of the men interviewed share their views on what was transpiring at that time in the nation they helped to create. Of the eleven surviving Revolutionary War Veterans, four of them were from the Confederate States. Their thoughts on the events of the time must be fascinating and enlightening.

I cannot imagine the thoughts these patriots were having and the emotions they were living through, if their minds were intact at that age. I am sure depression had to be overwhelming. Just 80 short years before, these men had been part of what was known as "The Great Experiment". On January 9, 1790, George Washington himself said, "The establishment of our new Government seemed to be the last great experiment for promoting human happiness." A new nation with a new, untried form of government was the creation resulting from that experiment. And now it was being torn apart.

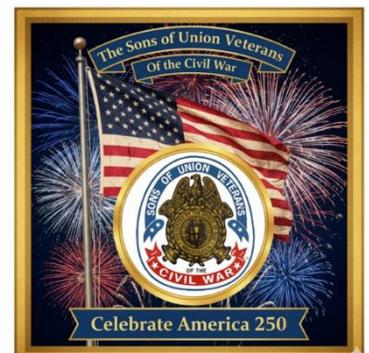
Were these surviving patriots aware enough to see and understand what was taking place? Could they see the similarities and hear the voices of the Confederate citizens calling this the "War for Southern Independence"? Did it make them angry? Did it make them sad to see their great experiment failing and the results not holding up?

We know how we feel when something we created or were part of creating is destroyed. Just try to put yourself in the place of one of these eleven living founders of our nation in 1861. You are a century old and proud of being part of the creation of the United States of America, only to now witness how it is brutally self-destructing. You know your time left on Earth is short. You now hope you survive long enough to see your creation survive. You do not want to pass from this life having witnessed both the creation of a new nation and its destruction.

I just cannot fathom the emotional storm these eleven men must have been enduring.

In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty,

*Your Commander,  
Jim Thornton*



# FRANKLIN CAMP MONTHLY BULLETIN

*The Franklin Camp Monthly Bulletin* is a newsletter published for the Franklin Camp #5 of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. The SUV is a non-profit organization with a patriotic, historical, and genealogical orientation and is not affiliated with any other organization. Opinions in this newsletter reflect the views of the writers and are not necessarily a statement of the views of the SUV, the Department of Kansas, nor any other camp. Comments and articles are solicited.

## **Franklin Camp Website Resources**

Franklin Camp Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/805798033688654>

Franklin Camp Webpage: <https://suvwks.org/franklin-camp-no-5/>

SUV National: <http://www.suvcw.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SUVCW/>

Department of Kansas Website: <https://suvwks.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Sons-of-Union-Veterans-of-the-Civil-War-Department-of-Kansas-124886647572266/>

## **Franklin Camp Officers**

<u>COMMANDER</u>	<u>SR. VICE COMMANDER</u>	<u>JR. VICE COMMANDER</u>	<u>SECRETARY</u>	<u>TREASURER</u>
Jim Thornton	Matthew Archambault	Jeff Winters	Dan Stilley	Richard Miller

## **NEXT MEETING**

Franklin Camp No. 5 meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of each month at Pegah's Restaurant, 12122 West 87th Street, Lenexa, Kansas. The camp does not meet in December.

The Franklin Camp will meet on **THURSDAY, MARCH 26**, at Pegah's Restaurant at 12122 W. 87<sup>th</sup> Street in Lenexa, Kansas, at 6 p.m. for dinner and conversation. Our featured program will be provided by Mr. Jeff Harrington who will be speaking to us on "*Civil War History of Morticians.*"

Come early and join us for camaraderie, dinner, and education! As always, your wife or significant other is welcome. Feel free to bring guests!

Don't forget to bring a prospective recruit!

## **UPCOMING PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTION FOR THE FRANKLIN CAMP**

March 2026 – Jeff Harrington – Civil War History of Morticians

April 2026 – Dale Walters – The Art of Command

May 2026 – John Hamilton – The Bloody 100th Bomb Group

June 2026 – Bill Quatman – A Young General and the Fall of Richmond

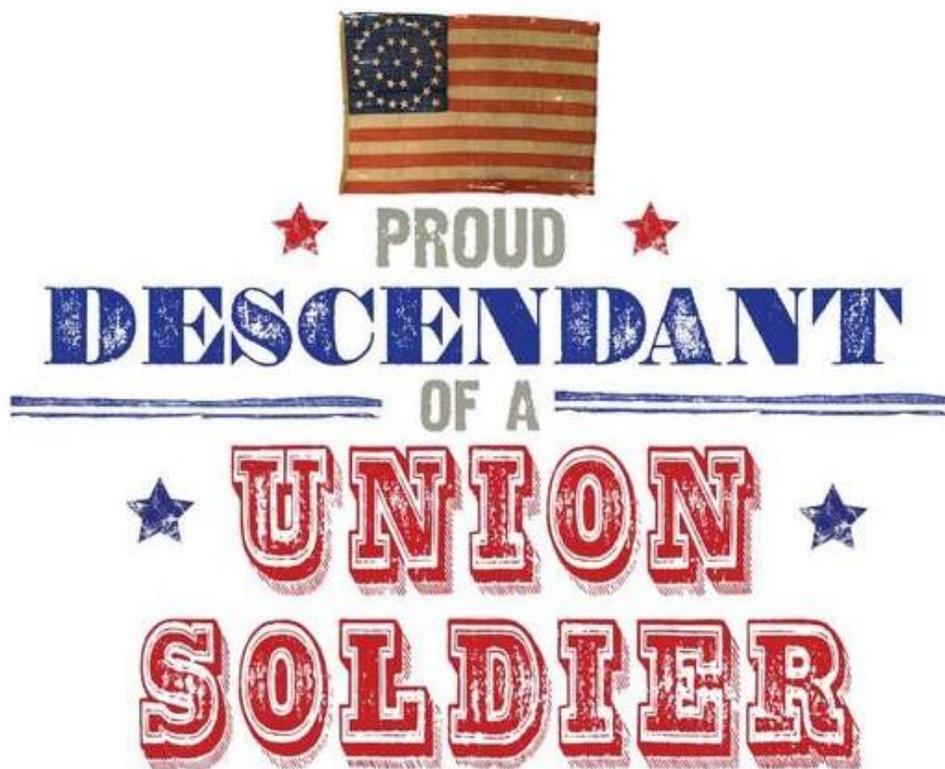
July 2026 – Matthew Archambeault – Salt and its Importance

**\*\*IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER TO PRESENT A PROGRAM AT A FUTURE MEETING, PLEASE E-MAIL A MEMBER OF OUR PROGRAMS COMMITTEE\*\***

## **WANTED: NEWSLETTER ARTICLES**

*The Franklin Camp Monthly Bulletin* is always looking for articles on topics of interest. If you attend a Civil War event or have something you would like to contribute to the monthly newsletter (maybe a book recommendation and review?), please notify our newsletter editor Jim Thornton at [JDThornton85@live.com](mailto:JDThornton85@live.com). This year, in commemoration of our nation's 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we would like to do a series of articles on what it means to you to be an American. What was your proudest moment as an American? Please submit your contribution in a WORD DOC or PDF format to Jim at the e-mail address above.

***“THE LAST FIVE LETTERS OF THE WORD HISTORY SPELL “STORY.” AND THAT’S EXACTLY HOW HISTORY SHOULD BE TAUGHT. NUMBERS AND DATES HAVE NO SOUL. SUCH PRESENTATIONS FALL FLAT, FOR HISTORY IS ALIVE AND RELEVANT.”***



**REQUIRED DISCLAIMER:** “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.”