



Newsletter of Sgt. William Pittenger Camp #21

The General

*Department of
California & Pacific*



*Sons of Union Veterans
of the Civil War*

Volume XVII Number 1

Jan 29, 2011

Camp Commanders Corner ~ by Jeff Malone

Greetings,

I would like to extend my best wishes to our Brother members and their families for a Happy New Year! 2011 will begin the commemoration of the Civil War Sesquicentennial. The National Order has challenged all Departments and Camps to "name an event a Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War Sesquicentennial Signature Event." The primary purpose of the event will be to educate the public on the legacy of the valiant work done by all United States Military Forces between 1861 and 1865. Please let me know what you would like our Camp's "Signature Event" to be during the 2011-15 time frame. Please visit this website to find out more: <http://www.suvcw.org/CWsesquicentennial/CWSEQ.htm>

Planning is already in the works for Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Turkey Shoot, Department and National Encampments. I invite everyone to attend and participate in these events as you are able. If you can't attend a meeting, send us your thoughts or opinions by e-mail or snail mail. I want to express my thanks to everyone for their hard work over the past year and look forward to working with all of you to observe the Civil War Sesquicentennial. I am confident that with your hard work and support, our Camp will succeed in honoring our Union ancestors while conducting ourselves with 'Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty.'

Now I want to draw your attention to Recruiting for our Order. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dave Allyn for revising and updating the Camp's "Recruiting Newsletter." It will be circulated soon via e-mail and can be obtained by contacting Dave. As with any organization, we need new members in order to continue our work. In addition to our Camp's "Recruiting Newsletter," the "National Organization SUVCW" has prepared a Recruitment Guide for our use. Please take the time to read and apply what it has to offer. It can be "downloaded" from the following website: <http://www.suvcw.org/ftp.htm> Here are some excerpts: "...All Brothers are encouraged to have a basic knowledge of the SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR (SUVCW) and our relationship with the GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC (GAR) before setting out to recruit new Members, Juniors and Associates. The SUVCW offers male descendants of honorably discharged Union soldiers and sailors (plus gentlemen without ancestry) a unique organization within which to honor our combined heritage. Much has been done to maintain the memory of those who "Saved the Union," but the effort should be an ever on-going enterprise. We need a steady growth of the organization, to allow established local chapters (Camps) to continue their work AND to allow for the formation of new Camps in areas that have not yet benefited from the special Purpose and Objects of the Order..." "...The GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC. The idea of forming the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) was conceived by Major Benjamin Franklin Stephenson, a surgeon with the 14th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment. He and former comrades in arms formed the first Post of the GAR, chartered in Decatur, ILL on April 6, 1866. This fraternal organization, dedicated to the wellbeing of Union Civil War veterans (and the families of those who did not

survive the war), grew rapidly and spread throughout the country. Its influence would impact both public and political culture. Our nation's "Memorial Day" tradition of honoring deceased veterans by decorating their graves was initiated by the GAR on May 30, 1868. By 1890, GAR membership exceeded 408,000 Comrades. Local Posts were eventually formed in 46 Departments (state level organizations). From this peak, each successive year began to take its toll on GAR membership. As the organization only admitted those who had been Union soldiers & sailors of 1861-1865, it was destined for extinction with the death of its last member. Recognizing its fate, the GAR officially designated the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War as its successor and legal heir. The last National Encampment of the GAR took place at Indianapolis, IN in 1949 with six surviving members attending. The Order ceased to exist, with the passing of its last member, Albert Henry Woolson, who died on August 2, 1956 at the age of 109 in Duluth, MN. A veteran of the 1st Minnesota Heavy Artillery Regiment, Comrade Woolson was the "sole officially listed survivor" of more than 2,675,000 men who answered President Abraham Lincoln's call to help Save the Union...." "...The SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR. The organization that is known today as the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) is the result of several like-minded organizations combining to honor Union soldiers and sailors of the American Civil War, 1861-1865. In 1878, the Anna M. Ross Post No. 94 of the GAR (located in Philadelphia, PA) formed a "GAR Cadet Corps," consisting of sons of Union soldiers, sailors and marines. It became known as the Philadelphia or Eastern Pennsylvania Sons of Veterans. About the same time, Edwin M. Earp (of Lynn, MA) formed another Sons of Veterans group that became popular in New England. In 1881, the Sons of Veterans of the United States of America was organized by Major A. P. Davis in Pittsburgh, PA. The organization's first annual encampment took place in 1882. Through consolidation with the Eastern Pennsylvania group, and its own growth, this particular Order grew to be recognized by the GAR as the sole organization of "Sons of Union Veterans." At its 42nd annual encampment, the organization voted to officially change its name to "Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War," to better identify its heritage. As time and nature took its toll on the ranks of the GAR, the Union veterans came to recognize and then designate the SUVCW as legal heir to, and representative of the Grand Army of the Republic. In 1954, the SUVCW was granted a Congressional Charter by passage of Public Law 605 during the 83rd Congress."

Again, thanks Dave for assisting all of us with our "Recruiting Duties" by providing the updated "Recruiting Newsletter."

In Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty,

Jeff Malone

Camp Website - <http://www.suvpac.org/camp21.html>

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THE GENERAL is the official newsletter of Sgt. Wm. Pittenger Camp 21, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. It's published each odd-numbered month for Camp members. It's also available by newsletter exchange to other SUVCW or Allied Orders groups. Such groups are welcome to reprint articles from *The General* with attribution. Brief articles are invited: send to Newsletter Editor listed above: space limitations may require editing.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS should be mailed to Camp Secretary at address above. Failure to notify Camp of change of address will result in missed issues of *The General* and *The Banner*.

CAMP EMAIL DIRECTORY. If you wish to be included in the Camp Email Directory, send your permission & email address to Dave Allyn at:
svrsuvcw@yahoo.com

SONS OF VETERANS RESERVE (SVR) is the uniformed contingent of the SUVCW. Uniforms are encouraged but not required. You need not be a reenactor to join. Annual dues are \$6.00. Interested SUVCW Brothers should contact the SVR Representative listed above.

My Union Ancestor by Tom Helmantoler

John Henry Clay Absher was born on May 19, 1839, in Gallia County, Ohio, and was obviously named after the, "Great Compromiser," from Kentucky. Giving children a double middle name of a famous person was rather common in the 19th century. I know virtually nothing about his life until his Union service, except that he had a sister. When, on April 12, 1861, Ft. Sumpter was fired upon, President Lincoln asked for 75,000 troops to be raised as volunteers from the states. This order was issued on April 15th and two days later, Absher enlisted in the 18th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, Company A, for 90 days service, becoming one of the original 75,000. At that time in the War, The States were expected to fund the units each raised. Virginia was, by far, the most fractured of all the States and when Virginia left the Union, the western counties left Virginia. Although not a state yet, survival of what became West Virginia was dependent on the Union winning the War. It seems plausible that the Union was willing to fund West Virginia units and so a large number of Ohio men began joining West Virginia units, probably thinking there was a greater chance of them getting paid or being better equipped. Many of them were German immigrants or of German ancestry. Absher was also one of those. He resigned from the 18th Ohio and joined the 2nd West Virginia Cavalry on the same day, August 28, 1861, in Ironton, Ohio. The 2nd West Virginia, early in the War, was also referred to as the "2nd Loyal Virginia Cavalry." He was a member of Company G and was a private throughout the War. The 2nd West Virginia Cavalry was part of the Middle Division of the Union Army, with their symbol being a "Star of David." He served until November 29, 1864, and was mustered out of Union service in Wheeling, West Virginia having served three years, seven months and twelve days. He served, at least nominally, under Phil Sheridan, George Custer, and George Crook. All were to become famous (or infamous!) in the Indian War period in later decades. As a unit, the 2nd West Virginia, did not see many major engagements and was mainly a scouting unit. They were, however, in several minor skirmishes and were also in the Battle of Cedar Creek, in 1863. He was never wounded but did spend about a week dismounted with diphtheria in Hagerstown, Maryland. Why he left the service could be a matter of conjecture, especially with the end of the War only about three to four months away. He may have seen the end of the War coming, or maybe he did not see it coming and got out while he was still alive. He may have been encouraged to leave by others since he could do it. He may have had "A Soldier's Heart," as PTSD was called back then. At any rate, his enlistment was up. After the War ended, the 2nd West Virginia Cavalry was chosen to lead the Grand Review in Washington, DC. Absher, of course, wasn't there. He was honorably discharged and in 1866, the State of West Virginia awarded members of the West Virginia military units, which totaled 31,000, a medal for their service. He probably never knew he was awarded the medal, or possibly simply didn't care. I discovered that it existed in the West Virginia State Capitol in 1999, and applied for it. I received it in the spring of 2000, as I am a direct descendant. In his papers, he was described as 24 years old, five feet, nine inches tall, having a light complexion, blue eyes, and dark hair. He was listed as a laborer and usually worked through

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My Union Ancestor by Tom Helmantoler *(Cont from Pg 2)*

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his life in the coal and steel industry. Around the end of the War, his life changed greatly and led to my family. He moved near Portsmouth, Ohio, and took a job at the local iron works. He was living in a boarding house operated by Catherine Miller Heiman, a woman whose husband was away in the Union Army, for her brother-in-law. He became involved with Mrs. Miller, which resulted in Elizabeth Absher, my great-grandmother, being born on March 30, 1866. Then Mr. Heiman returned from the War! This caused a huge fight, including, depending on who one believes, either Elizabeth being given to Mr. Absher, or court action giving him Elizabeth. Mrs. Heiman already had three other children, and Mr. Heiman did not want Elizabeth. Absher didn't get custody of Elizabeth until she was five years old. Not coincidentally, by this time, Absher had married a lady from Berlin, Germany, by the name of Amelia Ashmond, on March 25, 1871. They had no children of their own, but it was probably necessary back then for Absher to be married to get custody of his daughter. The Abshers lived in the Ken-

tucky/Tennessee coal regions where Absher made coke for steel making until 1885. At that time, they moved to Metropolis, Illinois. Why they moved is unknown, except that by this time, Absher was 46 years old and may have developed arthritis. On July 25, 1890, Absher applied for an Invalid Pension under the law known as, "the Act of June 27, 1890," which was one of the first veteran-assistance laws and intended for Union Civil War veterans. His application stated that he was totally disabled due to, "back and hip injuries that resulted in rheumatism in his whole body." His application also says that he was 55 years old at that time, but in fact he was only 51, a bit of, "creative fibbing," on the application. His pension was \$12 a month and was awarded him on May 19, 1891, it being retroactive to August 1, 1890. This was very little money even then but apparently it was enough to survive on in those times. By comparison, at that time common factory work paid about \$20 a month. (Note: Greg Carroll of the West Virginia Department of History and Culture, explained to me that back then when the

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Camp Calendar: Event, Location (* = SVR participation)	Time, Month, Day, Year	Contact Persons
* 72nd Lincoln Shrine "Pilgrimage," downtown Redlands muster at Redlands HS, Citrus and University Sts.	10:00 am 5 February <i>muster by 9:30</i>	Jerry Sayre, Will Tisch
Regular Camp Meeting, DeGheri Alumni Center, USD, San Diego	4:30 pm 12 February	Jeff Malone, Bob Rainbolt
* "Massing of The Colors," Forest Lawn Cemetery, Burbank <i>hosted by Sons of Liberty Chapter, S.A.R.</i>	3:00 pm 20 February <i>2:30 muster</i>	Jerry Sayre, Will Tisch
* Memorial Service, VMMC, San Diego	12:30 pm 26 February <i>12:00 muster</i>	Jerry Sayre, Will Tisch
* Civil War Reenactment, Steam Engine Museum, Vista	5-6 March <i>9:00-5:00</i>	Jerry Sayre, Will Tisch
125th Dept. Encampment, NCO Club, Camp SLO, San Luis Obispo <i>check Dept. webpages for details when available</i>	11-12 March	Jeff Malone, Bob Rainbolt
Regular Camp Meeting, DeGheri Alumni Center, USD, San Diego	4:30 pm 9 April	Jeff Malone, Bob Rainbolt
* Memorial Service, VMMC, San Diego	12:30 pm 28 May <i>12:00 muster</i>	Jerry Sayre, Will Tisch
* Memorial Day, Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery, Pt. Loma	10:00 am 30 May	Jerry Sayre, Will Tisch
* Memorial Day, GAR Hill, Mt. Hope Cemetery, San Diego	1:30 pm 30 May	Jeff Malone, Bob Rainbolt
* Memorail Day, VANC, Oceanside	<i>Open TBA</i>	John May
* Memorial Day, El Cajon Cemetery with Elk's Lodge 1812	<i>Open TBA</i>	Deane Poole

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING December 11, 2010

Present: Brothers Dave Allyn, Andrew Brooks, John Finch, Tom Helmantoler, Jeff Malone, John May, Deane Poole, Bob Rainbolt, Jerry Sayre, Dave Shaffer, Will Tisch, and guests Janice Shaffer and Kim Sayre.

The meeting was called to order by Commander Jeff Malone at 3:50pm at the Alumni Center Board Room, University of San Diego, San Diego, California. The opening prayer was offered by T. Helmantoler and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by W. Tisch.

I. Officers' Reports

- 1) Minutes of the last meeting were unavailable.
- 2) Treasurer J. May reported a balance of \$3393.48.
- 3) Secretary J. May reported correspondence from Br. Nate Dorn, thanking the Camp for helping him out during a difficult situation.
- 4) J. May announced the reception of membership applications from Bruce Brandes, whose ancestor served in the 56th IL VOL INF. A motion (May/Sayre) to accept his application was approved unanimously.
- 5) J. May asked for an increase in dues to cover the National increase of \$5. A motion (May/Brooks) was carried to raise our annual dues to \$38.
- 6) Chap. T. Helmantoler reported that Br. Brian Bingham is ill and that Br. Nate Dorn is doing better.

III. Committee Reports

- 1) J. Malone reported for the Mt. Hope Restoration Committee that there may be hundreds of unmarked graves of Union veterans in Mt. Hope. In regards to the mortar, J. Sayre will find plans for a carriage, D. Shaffer will look at the one in Rancho Santa Fe, and B. Rainbolt has enlisted the help of the Gillespie Field Aircraft Museum.
- 2) D. Shaffer mentioned that for the Minters' Ranch Project to proceed, more money needs to be raised.

IV. Upcoming Events

- 1) Next Camp meeting will be devoted to planning for the Civil War Sesquicentennial. It will

be at 4 pm on 2/12/11 at the Alumni Center Board Room of USD.

V. Old Business

A motion (Rainbolt/Brooks) to form a Membership Committee was passed. It will be chaired by SVC B. Rainbolt and members include all present.

VI. New Business

Election of Camp Officers for 2011 were conducted.

- 1) Jeff Malone (nominated by A. Brooks) was elected Commander.
- 2) Bob Rainbolt (J. Malone) was elected Senior Vice Commander.
- 3) Deane Poole (T. Helmantoler) was elected Junior Vice Commander.
- 4) Jerry Sayre (D. Poole), Will Tisch (T. Helmantoler), and Tom Helmantoler (J. Sayre) were elected to the Council.
- 5) John May (J. Sayre) was elected Secretary/Treasurer.

VII. SVR Report

No SVR report.

VIII. Members Minutes

No Members Minutes

IX. Program

No program was scheduled in order to have time for election of officers.

The closing prayer was offered by T. Helmantoler and the meeting was adjourned by Cmdr. J. Malone at 5:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

John May, Secretary



Welcome New Brothers!

Bruce Brandes of Kapolei, HI whose ancestor served in the 56th Illinois Inf.

Glen T and Aaron K. Johnson of San Diego whose ancestor served in the 21st New Jersey Inf.

David Suydam of La Mesa whose ancestor served in the 9th New Jersey Veteran Inf.

"DECADERS"

**Andrew Brooks 07-00
Larry Fillhard 09-00
John Finch 12-00
Ralph Gustafson 10-00**

Congratulations on attaining 10 years of membership in the SUVCW

Thank you Brothers for your continued commitment to the objectives of our Order !

The San Diego Civil War Roundtable meets the Third Wednesday of each month, 7 PM at Palisades Presbyterian Church 6301 Birchwood St., San Diego & is open to the public. For further information, contact Pres. Dave Tooley 858-672-2593 or on the Web at www.sdcwrt.org

My Union Ancestor by Tom Helmantoler (Cont from Pg 3)

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Union Vets would come to the post offices to pick up their pension checks, the Confederate Vets would laugh at them!) I have no knowledge as to whether he was ever a member of the GAR. John Absher lived until June 1, 1905, when he died at Rosebud, Illinois. His death certificate says he died of malarial fever. Secondary reasons were bronchitis, heart disease and old age rheumatism. He was 66 years old. All the years in the coal business probably took its toll on his health and he may have had Black Lung as well. The main post script of this story is that Elizabeth Absher, known as Lizzie, married John E. Helmantoler, my great grandfather, on November 5, 1891. They were to have eight children, the second of which was my grandfather, Fred Helmantoler, born October 26, 1893. Eventually, most of the family moved to Peoria, Illinois in the period 1910-20. Most worked at the Peoria State Mental Hospital, where my grandparents met. My father, John Helmantoler, was born on January 6, 1919. He and my mother were married on September 1, 1940, and I was born on September 24, 1946. Our family moved to Encinitas, California in December, 1951. I have immense respect for my gr-gr grandfather for stepping up and volunteering, whatever his motivation, at the time when our country was most at peril. I am amazed that he served as long as he did and came through it without even being wounded, when about 14% of the Union Army died in the War. For this, he is my hero. But, then again, all of our Union soldiers should be our heroes!!

New Film ~ "THE CONSPIRATOR" ~ Coming April

While an angry nation seeks vengeance, a young union war hero must defend a mother accused of aiding her son in the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. Directed by Robert Redford, the film stars James McAvoy, Robin Wright, Kevin Kline, Evan Rachel Wood, and Tom Wilkinson. In the wake of Abraham Lincoln's assassination, seven men and one woman are arrested and charged with conspiring to kill the President, the Vice-President, and the Secretary of State. The lone woman charged, Mary Surratt, 42, owns a boarding house where John Wilkes Booth and others met and planned the simultaneous attacks. Against the ominous back-drop of post-Civil War Washington, newly-minted lawyer, Frederick Aiken, a 28-year-old Union war-hero, reluctantly agrees to defend Surratt before a military tribunal. As the trial unfolds, Aiken realizes his client may be innocent and that she is being used as bait and hostage in order to capture the only conspirator to have escaped a massive manhunt, her own son.

A suspenseful thriller with action throughout, The Conspirator tells the true story of a woman who would do anything to protect her family and the man who risked everything to save her.

Cmdr Jeff Malone reports our SCV Friend, Steve Smith, previewed this film and attests to it's accuracy. Jeff suggests we get up a group to see "The Conspirator" film together. More on this in the March edition. For more on the film, check out this site:

<http://www.theamericanfilmcompany.com/>

OUR NEXT MEETING: Sat. Feb. 12, 2011 NOTE Location, Date & Time !

Feb 12, 2011 4:30 PM

LOCATION
Degheri Alumni Center
University of San Diego
5998 Alcalá Park
San Diego, CA 92110

Our Program

Planning for our Civil War Sesquicentennial event(s) and planning this year's Mt. Hope Memorial Day ceremonies is the theme of this meeting. Bring your inspiring ideas to the table !

DIRECTIONS TO MEETING LOCATION:

From the North: Use I-5 South, exit Sea World Dr. and Tecolote Rd. and proceed left at stoplight toward Morena Blvd. Turn right on Morena, left on Napa, and left on Linda Vista Rd. Travel to the second stoplight to USD's Main entrance, turn left and enter campus.

From the South: Use I-5 North, exit Morena Blvd. (signs will say: Morena Blvd. use I-8 East) Stay to the right and follow the signs for Morena Blvd. Take the first right onto Linda Vista Rd. Travel to the third stoplight to USD's Main entrance, turn left and enter campus.

From the East: Use I-8 West, exit at Morena Blvd., go right onto Linda Vista Rd. and travel to the third stoplight to USD's Main entrance, turn left and enter campus.

The General

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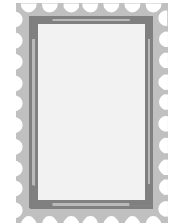


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Preserving the memory of the G. A. R. & "The Boys in Blue"

"In God We Trust"

"One Nation Under God"



HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY