



SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR
General Alfred Pleasonton Camp 24

NEWSLETTER for MAY 2020

Editor: Steve Johnson Camp Commander: Robert Mayer

CAMP ACTIVITIES UPDATE

Like all non-essential organizations in the state, every camp of the Sons of Union Veterans has had to curtail its activities because of the pandemic. All the Living history Days on Alcatraz, Fort Point, and Angel Island have been suspended until further notice. Although the shelter-in-place restrictions may be loosened in the coming weeks, large gatherings of people will no doubt still be curtailed until a vaccine is available. That is months away. So it is doubtful we can have our camp meeting in June at the Benicia Museum, as proposed at the last meeting. The officers are working on an alternate plan to have a Zoom video conference if we can't meet in person. We will send you more information at the beginning of June.

MEMBERS UPDATE

Since we will not be meeting anytime soon, we thought it would be a good idea to give an update on how our camp brothers are doing.

Here are the results of my phone/email/Facebook conversations with our members.

Brother Joshua Barger is working at home, and like many workers is doing virtual conferencing via Zoom. He has kindly offered to help any brothers in need (as do I).

Brother Chris Wimmer Brother Chris reports that he is currently at home, waiting to go back to work at his BioTech Company. His son-in-law **Brother Shane Bridger** is working for the same company which supplies life-saving medication for cancer patients. Chris' son and daughter are still working and everyone in the family is well.

Brother Ken Felton is retired and is staying at home. He is spending time working around the house and — always dedicated to the cause — is doing

research on the G.A.R. soldiers buried at the cemetery at Hanford (in Kings County, south of Fresno). He is verifying that the grave markers correspond to the Union military records of the individuals.

Brother Brad Hatton is busier than ever as a real estate agent who specializes in working with the deaf. His main obstacle right now is conflicting messages from the state vs. the city as to whether his is an essential occupation (state says yes, city says no). He is charging ahead because many home deals cannot wait for the shut down to end. He and family are well.

Brother Gary Hormel is busy having work done on his house and running the meetings of the homeowner's association.

Brother Brad Schall is living the quiet life with his wife Patti, but he misses being around his noisy and energetic grandkids. His son who lives nearby keeps them well supplied with groceries. His sons, **Brothers William Schall** in New York and **Christopher Schall** in Colorado, are doing well, along with their families.

Brother Dale Smith is working on projects around his house, which he now has time to do since he is housebound like the rest of us. His wife Sylvia is in the hospital for treatments (not virus-related) and I will be sending her a get-well card from all of us in Camp 24

Brother Robert Mayer is on the job with a security company. His security uniform now includes a mask and gloves, which is now part of the daily routine for each of us as we venture out into the larger world.

Brother Charlie Mabie and his wife and sons were in Europe when the news of the virus was being carried by all the media. A friend in the medical field advised them to come home immediately and they were able to fly home before the airports became jammed with people. His son **Brother Ben Mabie** is a book editor and can work from his home in New York, and **Brother Mark Mabie** is also working online at home teaching high school and college students. Charlie is no longer working as a chef but I am sure has no trouble producing some fine stay-at-home meals.

Our far-flung member **Brother Mark Wilson** up in Humboldt County reports very few cases of the virus there, though the county is expecting their peak to come this summer. Brother Mark is waiting to hear if the Battle of the Little Big Horn will be re-enacted again this year in Montana; if so he will portray Gen. Terry, Custer's superior. Brother Mark also related

something he did a few years ago and wants to do again. There is an unknown soldier of the 1870's buried along Highway 299, where a small marker notes his resting place. On a Memorial Day Mark dressed in a Union uniform and placed a flag next to the marker and sat there in a vigil for the soldier. Passers-by would honk and even some would stop to talk. I thought this small gesture was a wonderful tribute to a soldier who was not forgotten on that day.

Please stay safe all of you. Our ancestors faced the great challenge of the Civil War, and now it is our turn to face the greatest challenge of our time. Like them, may we confront this trial with courage and determination.

THE ORIGIN OF MEMORIAL DAY

The idea of honoring those who gave their lives in the Civil War started as early as June 1861, when the grave of John Quincy Marr - reputed to be the first soldier killed in the war - was decorated in Warrington, Virginia. After the war the largest day of remembrance was initiated by former slaves in Charleston, South Carolina in May of 1865. They dug up the bodies of 257 Union soldiers buried in a former prisoner-of-war camp and gave them proper burials in a new, landscaped and fenced cemetery. Then a procession of 10,000 people walked to the cemetery, led by hundreds of black school children who scattered spring blossoms on the graves. In 1866 four women in Columbus, Mississippi, decided to decorate the graves of both Confederate and Union soldiers buried there. (It was a hospital town and soldiers were brought there after the battle of Shiloh). After reading about this kind gesture, Francis Finch wrote the poem "The Blue and the Gray" (which can be read here: <https://www.civilwarhome.com/blueandgray.html>) But it was the city of Waterloo, New York, that was recognized by Congress as the birthplace of the formal occasion we now call Memorial Day. Back in 1866 the village was decorated with flags, houses were draped in black, speeches were given, bands played, and all soldiers' graves were decorated with flowers. Two years later, Major General John A. Logan of the Grand Army of the Republic proposed the whole nation should decorate war graves every May 30 (that's when spring flowers are in bloom) and call it Decoration Day. Congress officially declared the occasion as Memorial Day

in 1967, and the next year fixed the date to the last Monday in May. The SUVCW still prefers the May 30th date.

Resources: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorial_Day

<https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/memorial-day/> (recommended reading)

THE UNION CEMETERY IN REDWOOD CITY

In 1859 an association was formed to create a cemetery in the area for the repose of the dead. An area of 6½ acres was purchased and the city grew all around the cemetery. In 1886 the first Union veteran was buried there, and not long after the Grand Army of the Republic, General George Evans Post #72, was formed. An area was set aside for the G.A.R, and eventually 46 Union soldiers were buried there.



In 1889 a statue of a Union soldier, donated by Mrs. Leland Stanford, was placed at the G.A.R. plot, and in 1936 James Baxter, the last Union veteran living in our state —who was wounded at Gettysburg — was laid to rest at the foot of the statue. Over the years the statue was vandalized and in 1968 it was toppled and broke into pieces. The replacement statue was torn down by teenagers just one year later. With the statue gone, sometimes a re-enactor would stand on the pedestal during annual Memorial Day ceremonies. Finally a more durable statue was set upon the pedestal in 1999, where it stands today. Carrying on the tradition

of that first G.A.R. post, Memorial Day ceremonies are conducted every year by the Phil Sheridan Camp #24 and sometimes joined by members of our camp.

Resources:

<http://www.historicunioncemetery.com/History.shtml>

https://www.smdailyjournal.com/news/local/civil-war-statue-toppled-in-redwood-city/article_c162ef84-8b6b-11e7-a74c-33a62d2e6355.html