

[This is an attempt to write it in the journalistic style of the mid-19th century.]

News from the 126th National Encampment

Missouri Members Elected To National Office.

Phelps Camp Receives National Funds.

Miscellaneous Goings On.

2nd MO Infantry's 1st Corporal.

THE STORY OF A MISSOURI G.A.R. CHARTER & GAVEL

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ST. LOUIS, MO. --- AUGUST 12. Missouri's national SUVCW encampment is finally over and while a lot of us are still exhausted with aching arms from carrying boxes, a lot of important news, including one really big item of news, came out of it for us; hence this article.

TWO NEW NATIONAL OFFICERS.

First and foremost, Don Palmer of US Grant Camp 68 and 3 time past department commander was elected as the national secretary of the SUVCW. He previously served as national chief of staff as did Steve Leicht from Grant Cam. Back around 2000, Bob Petrovic had been elected to the Council of Administration and had been the only Missourian to ever hold national elected office until Don. Later on Saturday, Bob Petrovic was elected to serve on the national Council of Administration again. Congratulations to both men.

FUNDING FOR A MISSOURI MONUMENT.

At the encampment, Missouri had over thirty people present. People from every camp except two (Phelps and Moore camps) had at least one person in attendance. This didn't stop the Phelps camp from getting a pledge for \$500 from the encampment to help with their proposed monument to the Union troops at Battle of Lexington State Historic Site. The site currently has a monument only honoring the Missouri State Guard (rebs). The Phelps camp

is trying to raise \$5,000 for the monument that has been approved by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, the owners of the site.

THE MISSOURI DELEGATION.

Missouri had over 30 people present at some time or another during the encampment and we were entitled to 17 votes. We managed to get enough people there to have 15 of them (two past commanders did not make the event). If you were from the Missouri delegation and you showed up you were generally put to work as well. I would be remiss not to credit all the Missouri delegation with some work, but, as always, some examples stand out in my mind.

ALL HANDS...MAN YOUR POSTS!

Major Jack Grothe, SVR 4th Military District, was assisted by many members of Missouri's SVC Emmett Taylor's 5th Mo Cavalry unit in posting the colors and serving as provosts for the event. The national encampment committee was particularly served by Maggie Grothe and Cher Petrovic, who were on top of everything for several days. I don't think I ever saw Maggie out from behind the table selling items to help us profit from the encampment. These two members of the Auxiliary to the SUVCW need to be thanked by everyone who sees them for their help in giving Missouri a good name among the delegates.

A PERSONAL THANKS TO MY CAMP!

A lot of members of the Grant camp stopped by to help as they could although some couldn't stay for the whole encampment. Jim Hubbard, Chris Hunter and Gary Scheel stopped by on Thursday to help out while the setting up was the most hectic. This was particularly hard for Gary as he was supposed to be getting his own business ready for the Jour de Fete in Ste. Genevieve this same weekend. Steve Leicht showed up on Friday and Saturday and committed himself all-the-day-long (and into the evenings) to troubleshoot any and all problems. This allowed the members of the encampment committee to be free to work in other areas.

SAVING THE DAY!

Much of my time Thursday, Friday and Saturday was sitting at the credentials table. The committee needed someone who had a laptop and had Access on it, so I was elected. They attempted to network three computers and what they had tried in Washington, D.C. just days earlier, no longer worked. Desperate to have the 3 computers talk to each other, I contacted my brother, Dave from the McCormick Camp. He asked if I tried something

(which I forgot now what it was) and as soon as I did, the computers were talking! Even though he could not be at the encampment, he really saved the day.

BANQUET DOINGS.

The banquet went off without a hitch with great food, prizes, and ragtime - river boat music being performed by the Old Towne Ragtime Band of St. Louis. Someone, I don't know who, asked the band to play *Dixie* to honor a guest at the dinner, Ron Casteel, national Lt. Commander of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Fortunately, I found out about this and had them play *Marching Through Georgia* instead.

The banquet was historic for reasons other than having an officer from the SCV present. It was the first time in almost 50 years that the Daughters of Union Veterans were present. The Daughters usually hold their encampments separately from ours due to a incident involving General US Grant IV back in the 1950s. However, at this encampment, they joined in having their meetings along with the Ladies of the GAR, the Auxiliary to the SUVCW, and us. The Women's Relief Corp did not meet during our encampment, but their new president was at the dinner.

ATTENTION!

As the evening began to wind down, Sons of Veterans' Reserve Brigadier General David Medert came to the podium and spoke to George Grover Williams, not the oldest member of the US Grant Camp but the camp's only real son. General Medert assisted by Major Grothe and brevet 1st Lieut. Robert Amsler (awaiting approval on the commission) pinned the Sons of Veterans' Reserve medal on George's coat and advised him he was now 1st Corporal of the 2nd Missouri Infantry, Company A, the SVR unit started by the US Grant Camp.

THE BIGGEST NEWS OF ALL.

So the encampment was an overall success for Missouri, but the biggest news occurred earlier in the day on Saturday. One of the vendors, who was showing a very large collection of GAR memorabilia, got a lot of his collection from the estate of one of the last GAR members in Missouri. The vendor had almost every encampment medal of the GAR from the 1880s through the last years. Apparently most of them were originally owned John L. Pierson when he died in 1940. The vendor, Jack Powell of St. Louis, had these medals on display, but what he brought in addition to those was a wooden gavel that had a family note attached to it saying that it was the

gavel for the Frank Blair Post No. 1 of St. Louis and an aged yellow envelope with a Missouri State Charter for the Grand Army of the Republic dated 1888 in it! Torn and needing cleaning and restoration, it is a priceless document for us. Jack at first advised that he would sell it to us and throughout the day, we talked trying to work out some arrangement. Then suddenly and totally unexpectedly, Jack simply handed it over to me saying that it belongs with us and then handed me the gavel. It took more than a moment for this to sink in, but the Department of Missouri now has a GAR charter and its original SUV charter! Once this is cleaned, mounted and preserved it will be stored with the SUV charters and displayed at appropriate times.

Jack Powell makes his living by buying and selling militaria and he certainly could have asked a pretty sum from us and we would have most likely tried to buy it. As he collects GAR items for his own gratification, this certainly would have fit in his collection for years to come. He didn't have to do this. His gift is something all members of this department should treasure and all members of this department should thank him and treat him as an honored guest and friend of the SUVCW at anytime and any place.

FINAL NOTES.

Finally, I have to credit the national encampment committee with making this event a huge success. Bob Petrovic and his wife, Cher, ramrodded this committee for more than a year and it would not have been as nice as it was without their efforts. Don and Kim Palmer, Jack and Maggie Grothe, and John Avery spent the most time on the committee. This group got the encampment polo-shirts, red fluted glasses, goody bags and everything together. They managed to get a large donation from Emerson Electric and smaller one from Harrahs of St. Louis for the encampment. These same committee members were also responsible for setting up everything each day at the encampment. They did a lot of work to make Missouri look good.

There are still items for sale that can be had. Red fluted champagne glasses can be bought as can some polo shirts and the complete goody bag. The encampment medal and encampment souvenir medal can also be bought. When a list is developed an e-mail will be sent out to all members.

Next year is Boston and your humble correspondent is apparently going.

WALTER E. BUSCH

