

Department of NY Mid-year meeting (via ZOOM) - October 27, 2024

Department Commander Stump, presiding.

The meeting was called to order at 3:15pm with 19 members total attending at some point during the meeting.

Commander Stump asked the Brothers in attendance to introduce themselves, their Camps and their duties at the Camp and Department level

The Commander thanked PDC Castler for completing the "Last Veteran" in each County in NY. He discussed other States' efforts and the markers that are to be installed. He highly encourages each Camp to start working on this project, perhaps with a proper ceremony in each County. Done properly, it could mean good coverage for each Camp.

There has been no response to the Department Order to include friends and family contact information in the fundraising efforts.

Brother Duffy raised the question about whether a Veteran was, or not, an original member of the GAR. If the veteran did NOT want to be in the GAR, do we still mark the grave? Is there another version that isn't specifically GAR? Per Commander Stump, the markers are produced by one of the Camps, which sells them to the SUVCW and there's only one version. Not likely they'll produce a second one.

SVC Rivera is on active duty with the Canadian Armed Forces – no report.

JVC Phillips reports membership inquiries have been received and passed on to the respective Camps.

Dep't Sec Pugsley described the demographics of the Department across the 17 Camps of the Department. There was a discussion of Honorary Member status- how it's awarded- and could we give them out to prominent persons for publicity sake? Later in the meeting, Brother Phillips added to the discussion in a positive manner.

Dep't Treasurer – Not Present- Brother Ellis-Graham passed on that there's been no financial activity to report.

Department Council- PDC Castler – no report.

Department Council – Ellis Graham - Brother Duffy inquired about raising the Encampment registration to \$15. There's been no decision, per the by-laws it doesn't go up unless approved at the previous Encampment.

Ass't Sc'y Everdyke – Very quiet – will be compiling the minutes of this meeting. He is also on Starlink internet now and can now do the entire Encampment minutes as a whole.

Newsletter Editor Everdyke – Going well, a little short on material for the 4th Quarter edition. The Camps need to send pictures and write-ups of their activities to me to show the Department that we're healthy and active.

Patriotic Instructor Brenner – Has had several offerings during the year. He’s asking for feedback from the Brothers and Camps. The Camp PIs should get their annual reports to him on time.

Department Council Wheeler –

Eagle Scout Coordinator Phillips – Fewer awards on Long Island, but still over 100. Scouting itself has slowed down.

Archivist Castler – Discussed security and climate control for storing the Archives. The Cemetery we’re storing things at currently has asked us to remove the material. We still don’t have a place to move it. Extensive discussion on privacy, digitizing, cost, storage, etc...

Historian Orton – Suggested an award or ribbon or pin to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the US. He also has a pension list from 1940 that could go on the web site. A lot of the SUV and GAR records are at St. John Fisher College. We used to give money to the Scythe Tree, it’s actually deeded to the GAR and therefore the SUVCW, but it’s mostly gone now. He has many boxes of records but doesn’t know what to do with it when he passes on. His stepson knows about the material and is a Department member. Brother Orton has a list of about 300 Camps that have existed in NY.

Commander Stump proposed a Department level award (Gordon Bennett Award) for donating \$500 or more to the Department.

GAR Highway officer Hereford – Not present, but is looking to buy highway signs. Many have degraded or disappeared.

Graves Registration – Dennis Duffy- There are now 8 Brothers actively entering grave data into the system. There are now over 98,000 NY soldiers entered into the database. Should be over 100K by the next encampment. At least 15 headstones ordered through the V.A., they are in various stages of installation. Work on the new database is continuing slowly, The CofA didn’t budget much for it, but it should be a huge improvement over what we have now.

Commander Stump read (absent) Brother Schwarzmuller’s report. He attended several dedication ceremonies and GAR Post tours. There are more Pomeroy Foundation markers coming in the next year or two. There will be a monument in Lyons, Wayne County dedicated next summer to the 111thNY, portraying Sgt. Judson Hicks. Namesake of the current Hicks Camp.

Webmaster- (absent)- No report other than the web site is up and running well.

Danny Wheeler – The Halsey Valley GAR hall is in horrible condition, the Camp in that area hasn’t been heard from.

Camp Commanders:

Don McMahon- Baldwin Camp – They’ve been busy. A very busy Eagle Scout program, in the Spring there’ll be headstone dedications, they’ll be inviting local dignitaries. They’ve picked up members from being active and visible.

John Swartwout- Willard Camp – In 2023 Willard Camp entered into an agreement with the City of Troy to use up to \$12K to preserve the old and new Mt. Ida Cemeteries with tree work and monument repair and preservation. At Old Mt. Ida, the tree work was completed and over 100 monuments were repaired

over 30 days of work. At New Mt. Ida in 2024, over 15 days of work, 63 monuments were preserved. In October over 15 more days of work, 56 more monuments repaired. More repair work to be done starting in Spring of 2025.

The Camp participated in several ceremonies and wreath layings, more to come.

Twelve Eagle Scout certificates awarded.

Darin Everdyke – Lincoln Camp – A very quiet year, several marker dedications. The Camp meets at Mt. Hope Cemetery's Chapel. The cemetery is huge and has thousands of damaged or toppled stones. They are going to begin using trained volunteers to start repairing monuments. The Camp Commander will be involved in that and will use that activity to help gain more visibility for the SUVCW. PDC O'Brien has stepped back from all activities to take care of his wife. That includes the 126thSVR and all Camp activities.

Doug Brenner – Tanner Camp – They have 11 members, but 6 or less active. Attracting new members isn't going well, but they're trying. They do gravestone repair work when they can. Their new meeting room is the Old Stone Fort in Schoharie, they were greatly welcomed.

Commander Stump gave remarks illustrating how, with better fundraising, the Department should be able to help smaller Camps like Tanner to get projects done. Losing Camps creates a vacuum, geographically.

John Portanova- Ireland Camp- Commander Gardner recently passed away. (Commander Stump declared a Department Order of a 30 day mourning period). The Camp has only 14 members, many retired, many live farther away. They're still doing events and dedications, with more planned for 2025. They're also contributing heavily to the grave registration project.

Newsletter Editor Everdyke reminded the Brothers to send their schedule of events to him for inclusion in the newsletter. It goes to the entire Department, including the Daughters and Auxilliary.

Paul Ellis-Graham – Ellis Camp – Their difficulty is their large geographic area, they mainly meet on ZOOM. They're looking at a monument restoration/protection project for the 124thNY.

Danny Wheeler – Sydney Camp – The Halsey Valley GAR hall is almost completely gone, not worth saving. There were 3 brothers trying to keep it going, but they haven't been in contact in a long time. The Fire Dep't would like to buy the land. There's a lovely small cemetery next to it with GAR members and a Medal of Honor winner.

Commander Stump will propose a "petty cash" fund for immediate use for projects, memorials, etc , rather than wait to get approval through the monument fund or through an encampment. It would be subject to a vote by the elected officers of the Department.

Brother Duffy asked about resolutions passed at the last Encampment. National isn't going to move on them. How do we get them back to National in a form they then have to consider? Commander Stump replied that several of the resolutions we passed aren't true resolutions, but simple requests or suggestions. There are other more appropriate channels to get them accomplished. You can talk to your government Representatives on your own. Maybe we can offer Honorary Memberships to get their attention.

There will be another mid-year meeting in February (date TBA) where we can address motions or by-laws changes, that would be a good time to present them for vetting.

The actual Encampment in May will be much slower and more meticulous. Anything heading up to National will be vetted and correct before sending it up.

Department Secretary Pugsley has been passing out our SUVCW pamphlets in public places. They're basically free (we pay postage and shipping).

The meeting was adjourned at 3:25pm.