

RI GAR ARNOLD POST NO. 4

"I see in every direction through our broad land the goodly fruits of those months of warlike activity, of tedious watching, even of occasional inglorious defeat. In the South, prostrated as she was by the strife, there is steadily growing a sentiment of faith in the common country, and of loyalty to the common flag, which will, in time, blot out all rancor, obliterate all hate, and make us one in heart as we are in bond. This cannot be expected soon. This, and perhaps the succeeding generation, must pass from the scenes of action before the last drop of bitter blood can disappear, before the Southerners will cease to date all important occurrences 'so long after the war.' But in the future, I can see no shadow of parting between us, and know that someday the whole world will turn with, reverence and pride to the vast empires of the West, the glorious American Republic, as the exponent of right, an asylum for the oppressed, and the defender of universal liberty."

Dr. William F. Hutchinson, Ship's Surgeon USN
Infantry Major, USV
Founder, RI GAR Arnold Post No. 4

Rhode Island Grand Army of the Republic Arnold Post No. 4 was named in honor of Captain William Albert Arnold. Captain Arnold was perhaps the most well known commander of 1st Regiment RI Volunteer Light Artillery, Battery A. Arnold led the unit with great distinction during the Civil War from the time of the Battle of Fredericksburg in December 1862 to the siege of Petersburg in June 1864. He led the bulk of the unit back to Providence when their three-year enlistments had expired. He also led Battery A at the Copse of Trees on Cemetery Ridge during the Battle of Gettysburg and helped stop Pickett's Charge, the High Watermark of the Confederacy. The veterans who formed Arnold Post also admired the service of Major General Richard Arnold of Rhode Island and his skills commanding artillery during the war at the Battle of Port Hudson and Mobile, as well as Captain Fred Arnold who was the last commander of Company D, 2nd Regiment Rhode Island Volunteer Infantry. Fred Arnold also became one of the most highly regarded Department (State) Commanders of the RI GAR.

Since the rules of the National GAR stipulated only Past Post or Past Department Commanders were qualified to form new GAR Posts within the organization Dr. William F. Hutchinson, Past Post Commander of RI GAR Col. John Stanton Slocum Post No. 10, agreed to organize Arnold Post upon America's Centennial in 1876. RI GAR Department Commander Charles H. Williams approved final formation of the Post, its Charter and assigned it the number four (4) on January 9, 1877.

Founding Members of Post 4 were (US Army Major/US Navy Surgeon) William F. Hutchinson (001) PPC, Frank H. Brown (002), Cyrus M. Thornton (003), Willard H. Greene (004), Davis Cook, II (005), Major George H. Pettis (006), Ervin F. Mann (007), 1st Lieutenant Michael Joseph Higgins (008), Charles H. Dyer (009), and Samuel R. Englestone (010). They were quickly joined by Marcus M. Pierce (011), William H. Knight (012), David H. Newcomb (013),

James L. Sweetland (014), Courdail Robinson (015), John McCausland (016), Welcome Johnson (017), Edwin F. Pierce (018), Daniel W. Nicholas (019) and 1st lieutenant Dutee Johnson, Jr.

The Post 4 Charter bears the signatures of 15 veterans of the Civil War. Dr. Hutchinson (Post 4-ID# 001) and eight of the first ten veterans (Post 4 ID#s 003-010) who assisted with the formation of the Post were the first men in order to sign the Charter, i.e. Thornton, Greene, Cook, Pettis, Mann, Higgins, Dyer, and Englestone. It appears Frank H. Brown (002) probably was ill and unable to attend the signing. He died 15 November 1889. Of the first 100 original members of the Post (Post 4-ID#s 011 to 100), six additional veterans were selected by lot to sign the Post 4 Charter as well, to equal 15. The six additional signers were Marcus M. Pierce (011), David H. Newcomb (013), 1st Lieutenant Dutee Johnson, Jr. (020), William F. Young (042) brother of the famous Henry Young who was Chief Scout for General Philip H. Sheridan, (who was killed serving with Col. McKenzie on the Rio Grande fighting Apaches after the war), Henry Sperry (058), and Freman Gee (089).

It appears Major Hutchinson was a close friend of Col. Elisha Hunt Rhodes. Both men were very popular with Rhode Island Veterans, because of their work to care for their needs and protect their pension rights. After General Ambrose E. Burnside completed his two consecutive year term as the third Commander-in-Chief of the National GAR, and then was elected to the US Senate, both were Rhodes and Hutchinson (and others) became Burnside's eyes and ears back home. Opening a new RI GAR Post during this time had a major impact on the RI GAR, as well as Rhode Island state-wide politics. Most of the men who started Post 4 transferred to the new Post from Slocum Post. Therefore, the names on the Post 4 Charter are Hutchinson, Thornton, Greene, Cook, Pettis, Mann, Higgins, Dyer, Englestone, Pierce, Newcomb, Johnson, Young, Gee and Sperry.

The total Post 4 Membership averaged from 100 to 120 veterans on its roster in good standing each year for about 40 years, from 1878 to 1918. After 53 years the Post was officially closed in 1930, due to the death of Nicholas Ross, the last Post 4 Commander.

Only honorably discharged Union Civil War Veterans were eligible to become members of the GAR. From 1867 to 1917 the GAR was the most politically powerful organization in America. From 1900 to 1930, Post 4 supported and shared many of its functions and activities with RI GAR Prescott Post No. 1, RI GAR Slocum Post No. 10, and RI GAR Brown Post No. 25. When Post 4 closed it was one of the oldest GAR Posts in Rhode Island. From 1877 to 1909 the Post 4 general membership met every Monday evening, 7 p.m. at a hall on the corner of Greenwich St. & Friendship St., Providence. From 1909 to 1930, by permission of the RI Dept. GAR, Post 4 changed its location to meet in the Old Arsenal at 176 Benefit St., Providence. In 1909 the benefit Street Arsenal became the headquarters of the RI Department GAR, as well as the headquarters of Prescott Post, Reno Post, Slocum Post, Arnold Post, and Brown Post. It was also the headquarters of the RI Division Sons of Veterans USA (RI Dept. SUVCW), the WRC, the LGAR, the ASUVCW, the DUVCW, RI S of V Governors Elisha Dyer Camp No. 7 and RI SAUVCW Governors Elisha Dyer auxiliary No. 2 (The Allied Orders of the RI GAR). The permanent establishment of the Old Arsenal as the headquarters of the RI GAR and its Allied Orders was written into RI Law by the General Assembly, 30-10-11, and signed by RI Governor Lippitt in 1909.

In 1886, Post 4 veterans allowed their young sons to become its Post Cadet Corps. As their sons grew older they became "Associates" of Post 4. By 1908, Post 4 authorized its veteran members and their sons to form and apply for a RI Division Sons of Veterans USA Camp Charter. On January 17, 1909 the year of the Abraham Lincoln Centennial in America, Governors Elisha Dyer Camp No. 7 was officially chartered. The S of V changed its name in 1936 to the current name of the Order, the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, but Camp 7 of the S of V and Camp 7 of the SUVCW are still today one and the same. All Camps of the Order were re-issued back dated Charters to reflect the name change by the National SUVCW organization so all would retain their legal history. The name Sons of Veterans United States of America was changed the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War partly to identify the organization more clearly with the Civil War and to extend to the grandsons and so on, into perpetuity, membership within the Order, carrying on the GAR. In 1926 Nicholas Ross, with the understanding of the National GAR and the RI Dept. GAR, legally turned Post 4 over to Camp 7. In 1956 Albert Woolson, the last member and senior officer of the National GAR turned the National GAR over to the National SUVCW, with the provision the National SUVCW must recognize all previous actions taken by State and local GAR entities. During this time, men such as Ulysses S. Grant, III, Douglas MacArthur and Dwight Eisenhower attained US Congressional Chartered Status for the SUVCW as the legal heir to the GAR nationwide.

GAR Arnold Post 4 and SUVCW Elisha Dyer Camp 7

From 1909 to 1930, RI Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Elisha Dyer Camp No. 7 assisted RI GAR Arnold Post No. 4 with all Post No. 4 business and activities. To some degree Camp 7 did the same for Prescott Post and Brown Post. It was common for the men of Post 4 to attend Camp 7 meetings and events. The same was true for the men of Camp 7 for Post 4 meetings and events. From the early 1920s to the last days and final closing of Post 4, the Camp 7 Camp Commander, Camp Secretary, Camp Treasurer, Camp Senior Vice Commander, Camp Junior Vice Commander and the Camp Patriotic Instructor were required to additionally attend all Post 4 meetings at the Old Arsenal at 176 Benefit Street in Providence, where Camp 7 also met from 1909 to 1992. Camp 7 Officers performed all business and organizational duties on behalf of RI GAR Post 4, as the Grand Old Fellows in Blue of Post 4 were getting on in their years. These duties were performed in addition to all necessary duties required by Camp 7 for the SUVCW. In effect, all Camp 7 officers did double duty for Camp 7 and Post 4 for 21 years.

In September 1926, RI GAR Post 4 Commander Nicholas Ross presented RI SUVCW Camp 7 Commander Enoch Hoyt with final NYC District Court certified documentation making Camp 7 the SUVCW legal successor of RI GAR Post 4. This signed and sealed will or deed (two documents, a first original document and a second amended original) connected Camp 7 & Post 4 forever. They are the most important documents within the Camp 7 legal and historical archives. A set of original certified copies of these documents were also placed in the Cranston City Archives. They prove RI SUVCW Camp 7, founded by Albert M. Bennett of Post No. 4, to be the true legal SUVCW successor of RI GAR Post 4 (all things tangible and intangible, real, financial and historical). To date, Camp 7, founded by RI GAR Post 4 members and their sons, is the oldest SUVCW Camp in Rhode Island and one of only two remaining Camps of the RI SUVCW (chartered by the National SUVCW in January 1909) which has continually functioned thus far without any breaks in its history during its first 100 year tenure in the National and RI

SUVCW. It is the true, rightful and only legal SUVCW representative of RI GAR Arnold Post No. 4 in America.

Research compiled from 1994 to 2009 by: G.A. Mierka, PDC, RISUVCW