

The Officers of GAR Arnold Post No. 4, 1888

George R. Saunders, Post Commander; Andrew B. Presley, Senior Vice Post Commander; William B. Peck, Junior Vice Post Commander, Nelson H. Arnold, Post Adjutant, George P. Smith, Post Quartermaster Officer; George L. Munroe, Post Surgeon; George W. Ford, Post Chaplain; George M. Twitchell, Post Officer of the Day; Joseph D. Taylor, Post Officer of the Guard; Merritt Tillinghast Post Sergeant Major; and Cyrus W. Lindsey, Post Quartermaster Sergeant. The official RI Department Grand Army of the Republic, RI GAR, 1888 roster, shows 109 members in good standing in Post No. 4 during that year. The total Civil War Veteran membership of RI GAR Arnold Post No. 4 from 1877 to 1930 was 494. Four men were never assigned ID numbers. The first member of Post 4 was William F. Hutchinson ID# 001, and the last member to join the Post was Charles H. Smith. ID# 490. The last Post Commander of RI GAR Arnold Post No. 4 was Nicholas Ross ID# 214.

After the war, RI GAR Arnold Post 4 began and ended its long history as one of the larger R.I. GAR Posts. Post 4 was one of the last GAR Posts to close in the R.I. Department. Post 4 was primarily made up of professional men in civilian life. Many of its members were or became doctors, lawyers, politicians, clergymen, artists, craftsmen, tradesmen, scholars, farmers, laborer leaders and businessmen after the war.

By 1888, Post 4 Commander George R. Saunders, (who lived at 138 Oxford Street, Providence, and served as a Private in the 60th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, Company E), announced at the 21st Annual R.I. Department GAR Encampment-Convention that among the 21 R.I. GAR Posts active at that time, Arnold Post 4 had a membership of 109 men. This was about the largest membership count that Post No. 4 would reach in any given year during its long tenure as a R.I. Grand Army of the Republic, local Post of Civil War Veterans.

By 1910 there were 26 GAR Posts in Rhode Island. Of about 26,000 Civil War Veterans buried in the State of Rhode Island, about 2,600 were members of the GAR, holding most positions in state and local government as well as private industry.

The Uniform of GAR Arnold Post No. 4

The standard late 19th Century GAR uniform of Arnold Post No. 4 was a double breasted six button polished wool, wide winged lapel, dark blue cotton-tick lined blazer, topped off with shiny brass GAR "Dough-Boy" buttons. Their buttons were similar to the

brass buttons worn by Union Officers during the war except GAR buttons were marked GAR on the button face. Although World War I Veterans were called "Dough Boys", the GAR was the first to coin the phrase.

In the fall, winter and spring the Post 4 Comrades wore black polished wool trousers with suspenders (called braces), and a solid white cotton dress shirt. Their shoes or booties were black. All men wore a dark polished blue wool vest with a top pocket for their watches, with their watch chains affixed to the top button hole of their vest. For special ceremonies, such as the funerals of their comrades, members of Post 4 wore white cotton gloves, and their Post Officers and Past Post Officers wore white buff kid gloves. The general membership also wore their GAR ceremonial swords with black leather belts around the waist of their blazers. Post 4 Officers wore the same, but with white buff leather belts. The hilt (or handle) of the swords of general members was rapped with black leather. The hilts of the swords of all Post Officers and Past Officers was rapped with white buff leather. The S of V did the same.

In the summer months all RI GAR Posts were authorized by the RI GAR Department to wear "white" cotton trousers. Rhode Island GAR men were the only men in the country ever to wear white pants. The National GAR held its National Encampment-Convention in the summer months. If a parade was held, Rhode Islanders in their white trousers always stood out in the procession of GAR Posts. All other GAR Posts in the country wore their black or dark blue wool trousers year-round. The white trousers distinguished all Rhode Island Veterans in the same way the famous "Red" Rhode Island Bedroll" distinguished Rhode Islanders in uniform during the Civil War. Post 4 men also wore a black fedora hat with the GAR brass wreath insignia on the front. Each hat sported a gold and dark blue hat cord. In the 19th and early 20th Century it was improper for any reasonably cultured man to wear his hat indoors, however in the RI GAR all men wore their hats indoors at all RI GAR meetings and functions. The only time hats were removed was for the pledge to the flag, the passing of the Colors, a memorial or during prayer. For the most part the S of V did the same for all these matters. From about 1867 to about 1885 RI GAR men wore a five button post Civil War period sack jacket. They changed to the eight button double breasted wool blazer about 1895. By the turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries many of the GAR men who were also members of the S of V with their sons changed from wearing the traditional GAR uniform to wear the 1902 (Span-Am style) dark blue military tunic and wheel cap. However, by about 1910 all RI GAR men went back to wearing

the double breasted blazer.

All men wore their Past GAR officer medals and/or membership insignia on the top left of their blazer. Post officers wore an officer's rank insignia bar affixed to the top of their badge designating their office in place of the GAR eagle. Past Post Officers wore their GAR Office rank emblem in the middle of their membership insignia across the U.S. flag ribbon and re-attached the eagle at the top when their duties ended. In the button hole of the left lapel of their blazer they wore their brass GAR button hole insignia. Below their "button-holer" on their left lapels members of Post 4 wore a round Arnold Post No. 4 pin. The U.S. flag ribbon of all GAR membership insignia hung between the GAR eagle and the bottom GAR star. The local level ribbon of Post Officers was trimmed in light blue. Department level ribbon was trimmed in red and the National GAR ribbon for officers of the organization was trimmed in gold. All members who held no office in the GAR had no trim color on the U.S. flag ribbon portion of their insignia or medal. The ladies of the Women's Relief Corps, (WRC - The Auxiliary to the GAR) were noted to say the Rhode Island men were among the most handsomest men in the GAR.

History by PDC Gregg A. Mierka, RI SUVCW