

# SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

DEPARTMENT OF COLORADO / WYOMING

Vol. 5

Spring 2010

WESTERN

TRIBUNE



**Sons of Union  
Veterans  
of the Civil  
War**

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## IN SEARCH OF NATHAN KNIGHT BY JIM GOTSCH

**M**y great-grandfather, Nathan Knight, was a Civil War veteran who for most of the conflict was a Sergeant attached to Company K, 56th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment, yet beyond a few vaguely recalled remarks and skimpy public records, we know little of the man. His origins, his education, his politics and much of his life are at this point a mystery, a litany of facts yet uncovered. Most regrettable is that while I was a teenager and young man, four of his children, my grandfather, two great uncles and a great aunt were very much alive, but I was foolishly trying to create my own legacy when I could have been asking questions about family history.

Though we have not seen the entry, Nathan Knight is reputed to have appeared in an 1855 Sullivan County, New York census as a son of George and Christine Knight. In the 1860 national census we found Nathan living in the Town of Neversink, Sullivan County with his mother Christine as head of household, two older sisters and three apparently unrelated males, their presence explained by Christine's occupation: boarding house keeper. (*Towns* in many eastern states are actual political entities, mini-counties within counties with their own level of government as opposed to *townships* in western states which are simply units of land, squares approximately six miles on a side.) Nathan, age 19, was listed as a "day laborer" and it is safe to say that the future Lieutenant Knight had no inkling how much his life would be changed in the next five years.

As we know of no existing diaries, letters or other personal documents we have to rely on bland military records and various publications to follow Nathan Knight's Civil War service. The 56<sup>th</sup>'s activities can be divided into two parts, the first being McClelland's failed 1862 Peninsula Campaign. The remainder was spent in relatively minor skirmishes in coastal South Carolina which though terrorizingly real to the participants, usually rates little more than a paragraph or footnotes in most Civil War history books. Our principal reference was "A Condensed History of the 56th Regiment" written by two veterans after the fact. With this document, we must keep in mind the old adage that "history books are written by the victors" but will give the benefit of the doubt as to its veracity. Occasionally their reports of casualties did not square with the official record. The Peninsula Campaign is well documented and we frequently referred to more scholarly publications for depth and balance in that phase of the conflict. We found we could easily track the movements and actions of the 56th

(Continued on page 13)

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(Continued from page 2)

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# REMEMBER OUR VETERANS ON MEMORIAL DAY



**Camp 12 2010 Officers:** (L-R) Commander, Duane Smith; SVC, James Davenport, PDC; JVC, Jerry Crawford, PDC; and (separate photo) Dan Senjem, Sec./Treas. And past Department Sec./Treas.

## COMMANDER'S COMMENTS:



**M**y Thanks to all

As I come to the end of my term as your Department Commander, I wish to thank all those members of the department who gave so much in giving of their time, efforts and abilities to help build upon those firm foundations laid by the past commanders and their staffs.

As many may know when I assumed command of the department it was our 80th anniversary of the Department of CO/WY. Together we have built a website; honored Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday; helped with the dedication of a new Veteran's park; made ROTC presentations; marched in many parades and attended Veterans Day Dinners across our department area; discovered many gravesites; uncovered many names, histories and photos of our past Department Commanders; and worked on the G.A.R. Highway preservation. We also are involved in the planning of monuments to our forefathers, and we found two real sons living in our Department, all this and more because of the hard work of our camps and department.

All of our camps have increased in membership and elected new officers. This comes from all of you, who helped bring a fresh breeze of renewed hope by continuing the memory of the "Boys in Blue".

I wish to thank the Department Officers that served this past year: Brothers Rhy Paris PCC, Senior Vice Commander, Eric Richhart PCC Jr. Vice Commander, Gary Parrott, PDC Secretary Treasurer, William Buvinger, PCC, James Davenport, PDC and Daniel Senjem, PCC as Department Councilors.

Plus all who served in department positions.

One item from "my neck of the woods" was the honoring of the 31st Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic, Department of CO/WY that took place on May 12 to 14, 1910 in Grand Junction, Colorado at the site of the current Mesa County Courthouse & Grand Junction City Hall.

On May 10, 2010, the Mesa County Commissioners issued a proclamation honoring over 800 former Union Soldiers that met here in Grand Junction for a photo on May 13, 1910. (See page 20 for proclamation.)

They issued the proclamation so the faces of those "Boys in Blue" won't be forgotten. When we met at the Mesa County Courthouse on May 10, 2010, two of our local members of the Legion of the West Camp No. 7, had ancestors in the photo. Brother Harry Butler and Brother Bennett Young, whose ancestors, Elijah Hines, H.D. Smith, and George Evans were in the photo 100 years ago, accepted the proclamation on behalf of Department.

Brother Young brought George Evans parade rifle from the 1910 event, and Department Commander Garry Brewer gave the Museum of Western Colorado one of the two known ribbons from the 1910 encampment, so it might be preserved with the records of the GAR.

Brother Danny Agajanian played "Marching through Georgia and Miss Trish Yeager in Civil War Dress sang "Johnny Has Gone for a Soldier" for the event.

It was a fine day to stand on the very spot where so many of our "Boys in Blue" stood over 100 years ago. You could feel them smiling from the picket line, telling us "Well done!"

Again as I close my year as your Department Commander, I wish each and every one of you the blessing of The Lord in all your endeavors in the future.

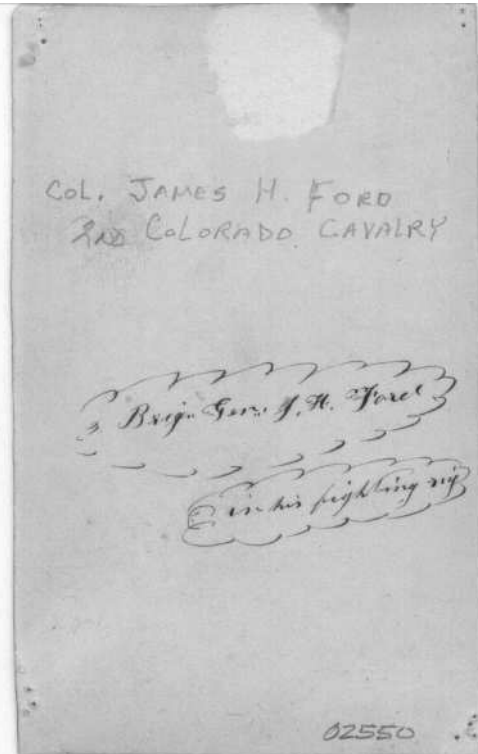
Regards,

Yours in Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty

Garry Brewer DC  
Commander  
Department of CO/WY  
SUVCW  
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## JAMES HOBART FORD INFORMATION PROVIDED BY JIM DAVENPORT

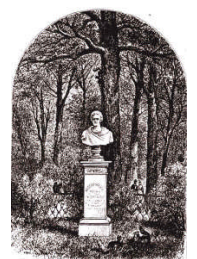
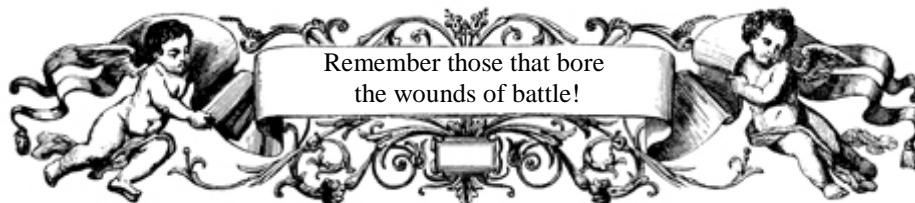


Above is a copy of a photo I recently received from a friend in Missouri. It is of James Hobart Ford. Born May 22, 182 in Painsville, OHIO. He died Jan 12, 1867 in Akron, OHIO. Mr. Ford enlisted Dec 21, 1861 as a CAPT in CO.A, 2nd COLO INF in Denver, Colorado and was promoted to the rank of Major on Nov 1, 1862, and again promoted to Colonel on Nov 5, 1863 (Cavalry). His final promotion was to Brig. General on Dec 10, 1864. He was discharged on June 30, 1865. He is buried in the Glendale Cemetery, Akron, Ohio and has an tall obelisk civilian gravestone.

I have another photo of him in a bit more 'formal' dress also.

I thought that the notation on the back of the photo was great, "In his fighting gear".

(Editor's Note: Bro. Jim Davenport, PDC, is currently Secretary/Treasurer for Thomas E. Bowman Camp 12 in Durango, CO.)



## ANNOUNCED CANDIDATES FOR DEPARTMENT OFFICE

The following pages include the information supplied by those Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War who have indicated that they will be running for office. No endorsement is being made by anyone, or for anyone. This information is supplied in order to better give you, the individual member, an idea of these individuals qualifications and desire to run for a given office. Nominations will still be accepted from the floor on the day of the annual encampment.



### FOR COMMANDER:



**Rhy Paris**—I have been a member since 1994 and have served in various capacities at the camp level as Treasurer, Senior Vice Commander, and Commander. I am presently serving as my camps Treasurer and at the Department level as Senior Vice Commander and Organizing Officer. Since assuming the position of SVC last June I have been instrumentals in developing several spreadsheet templates (In Excel) to handle the Department roster, Checkbook Ledger and other sheets designed to give the Department a better handle on the who, what, when and where of operations. I have worked with Eric Richhart to establish a more inclusive webpage for the Department. This web page is constantly growing and expanding in great part due to Eric’s dedications to it. I have worked closely with the current Department Commander, Secretary/Treasurer and Jr. Vice Commander to establish a firm foundation for the history of the Department which has been one of the main goals for the officers this year. We want to bring all the history together and get it converted into electronic format so that it is available to all who may wish to us and have access to it. Additionally, I have turned out a quarterly Department newsletter.

My past and present experiences include being the President of the Vietnam Veterans of America Colorado State Council since 1995 or so and I continue to serve in that capacity. I am a life member of VDFW, American Legion, VVA, Vietnam Security Police Association, DAV, NRA and a member of SCV as well as my membership with SUVCW. I am also president of two other not-for-profit organizations and serve in various capacities on several boards and committees which has given me the opportunity to learn and understand what it takes to be a leader. If you want to be a good leader you have to be a good servant of the people you lead and give them the opportunities to grow and prosper in the various areas of their desires.

I desire to be the next Department Commander in order to carry one the work that we have started and to be able to work with the camps to assist them in whatever way is needed to allow them the opportunity to take care of the programs and activities that each of their camp members wish to see accomplished within their respective camp.



### FOR SENIOR VICE COMMANDER

**Eric Richhart**—Jr. Vice Commander, Eric Dan Richhart was born in Lynwood California graduated from West Covina High School, went into the Navy right from high school during the Vietnam War. Went to Radioman School in San Diego. He served on the USS Mauna Kea, USS Ajax and the Island of Guam. Eric spent a semester at College and went on a LDS Church mission to Birmingham England Mission. He got Married in 1978 to the former Marilyn Gail Jen-

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## ANNOUNCED CANDIDATES FOR DEPARTMENT OFFICE (CONT.)

*(Continued from page 6)*

sen in January 1978 and have two Children Jared (former PCC of Lot Smith Camp) and Heidi. Worked at various jobs from vending repair at Coca Cola Bottling of Salt Lake to Skil power tools repair.

Mr. Richhart retired from the Federal Government in Law Enforcement and Security after 28 1/2 years of Federal Service. Present day he is currently Semi-retired, and has a Security License from the State of Utah, until a good job comes along. Past PCC of Lot Smith Camp # 1 and Sec/Treas of same Camp. Past Sec/Treas of CO/WY Dept for 9 1/2 years and Web Master. Has been a member of the SUV since 1996 and has also been a member of the Sons of the American Revolution. He has been the Vice President General of the SAR Intermountain District, National Trustee and Alternate Trustee for the Utah Society SAR. Eric served as State Society President, Vice President, Genealogist, Web Master and Sec/Treas. He also served as Chapter President and Sec/Treas. Has been a delegate for the Republican Party numerous times. A quote from Eric, "I think we need to continue to teach Patriotism and our true history and teach others to remember what our ancestors fought and died for, because if we don't we are doomed to repeat history and many lives will be lost. So many youth as well as adults don't seem to understand how great this nation is and could be by showing tribute to our ancestors and the great document that formalize this great Country." Currently two project are at the fore front for his. The first is getting the Name GAR Highway name back on the Green River to Spanish Fork leg of US 6. Second is a monument or statue at the Utah State Capitol in honor of the GAR and Lot Smith who lead the Utah Soldiers in defense of the Union during the Civil War. I desire to be Senior Vice Commander to further assist in the development of this great fraternal order in the Department and Nationally.



## STRANGE CIVIL WAR FACTS

**D**id you know that in the Civil War, General Stonewall Jackson walked around with his right hand in the air to balance the blood in his body? Because he was right-handed, he thought that his right hand was getting more blood than his left, and so by raising his hand, he'd allow the excess blood to run into his left hand. He also never ate food that tasted good, because he assumed that anything that tasted good was completely unhealthy.

During the Civil War, glasses with colored lenses were used to treat disorders and illnesses. Yellow-trimmed glasses were used to treat syphilis, blue for insanity, and pink for depression. Thus we get the term, To see the world through rose-colored glasses.

Centuries before and decades after the Civil War, including the war itself, doorways were wide, not because of the width of women's skirts, but so coffins could be passed through, with a pallbearer on either side.

Did you know that the average American in the 1860's could not afford to paint his house, and a painted house was a sign of affluence? In order to keep up appearances, they used cedar clapboards.

Did you know that when a woman mourned for her husband in the 1860's, she spent a minimum of two-and-a-half years in mourning? That meant little or no social activities: no parties, , no outings, no visitors, and a wardrobe that consisted of nothing but black. (Shame on Scarlet O'Hara) The husband, when mourn-

*(Continued on page 8)*

## LOT SMITH CAMP REPORT FOR APRIL 2010

Department Commander Garry Brewer,

In 2009 the Lot Smith Camp # 1 consisted of only eight members. We had no Memorial Day observances. We strived to rebuild our membership. We found out that the State of Utah had in the 2009 General Session had renamed part of US 6 – Grand Army of the Republic in honor of a politician ie; Utah Code Ann. 72-4-211, Highway 6 from Interstate 15 to Interstate 70 being designated as only the “Mike Dmitrich Highway” This was discovered when contacting the Utah Department of Transportation about additional signage, that this bill was passed. I immediately contacted local representatives and was promised this would be looked into. These people ignored this and nothing was done. So far in 2010 our membership has grown to 19 members and a valiant struggle was attempted to get the leadership of Utah to change this. They again ignored our request and this will be an ongoing struggle. At the same time we are proceeding with plans to erect a monument in honor of our camps namesake. At our meeting that occurred this day 24 April 2010 all parties were present. New member Stan Watts, sculpturer, presented to the other members his plans and was accepted as also from the family representative Bert Smith grandson of Lot Smith. Bert is 90 years old and a true patriot and constitution backer Camp Commander Gerald Mosley PDC offered to Bert and his relatives that any person that donates above the membership fee to this project will be accepted into membership.

On the Department Side I have been in close contact with the National JVC and have sent to the various Camps many applications that I have received from national to Camps in Montana and Colorado. At the same time have personally recruited or reactivated 13 members

This is the report to this date.

In F. C. & L  
Eric Dan Richhart PCC  
Junior Vice Commander  
Colorado/Wyoming Department  
Sons of Union Veteran of the Civil War

## STRANGE CIVIL WAR FACTS (CONT.)

*(Continued from page 7)*

ing for his wife, however, spent three months in a black suit.

Surgeons never washed their hands after an operation, because all of the blood was assumed to be the same.

Did you know that during the Victorian era, the dead were either laid out in their parlors, or, as the Southerners preferred, in their bedrooms? There was no such thing as a funeral home; death was a part of life, and the dead remained in the house up until they were buried. The tradition of flowers around the coffin comes from the Victorians trying to hide the scent of the deceased.

Did you know that when a child died, parents would have a photograph taken of the child? They wanted to preserve the memory for as long as possible. A lot of photographs taken of sleeping children are actually of deceased sons or daughters.

After the Battle of Gettysburg, the discarded rifles were collected and sent to Washington to be inspected and reissued. Of the 37,574 rifles recovered, approximately 24,000 were still loaded; 6,000 had one round in the barrel; 12,000 had two rounds in the barrel; 6,000 had three to ten rounds in the barrel. One rifle, the most remarkable of all, had been stuffed to the top with twenty-three rounds in the barrel.



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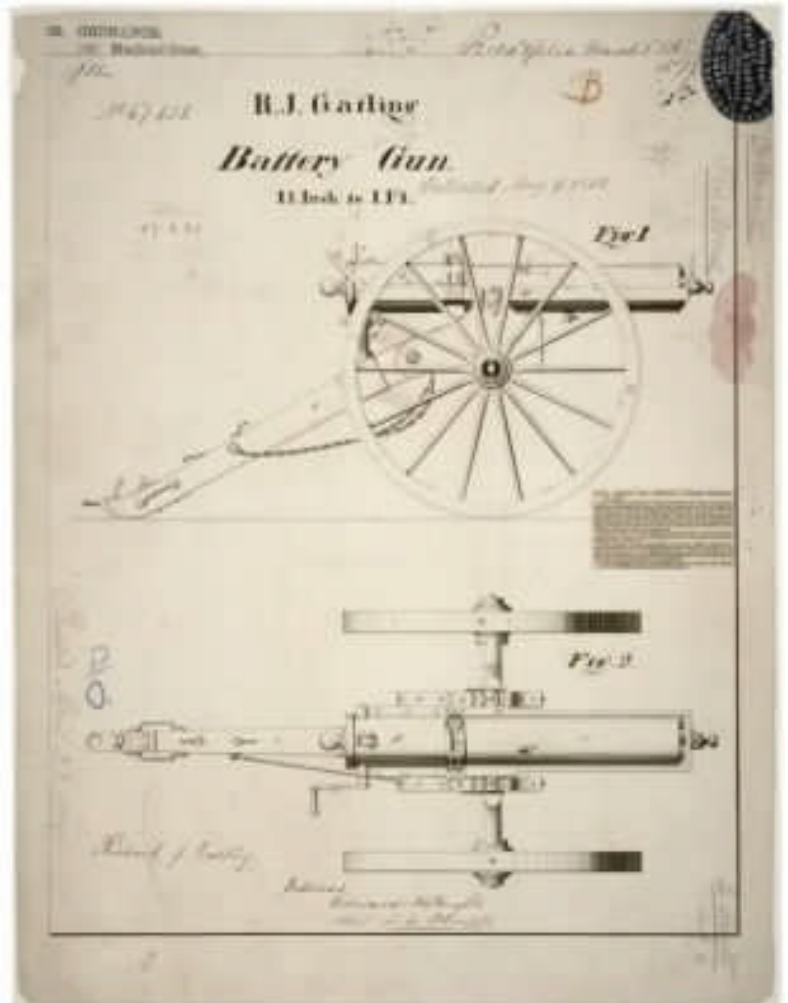
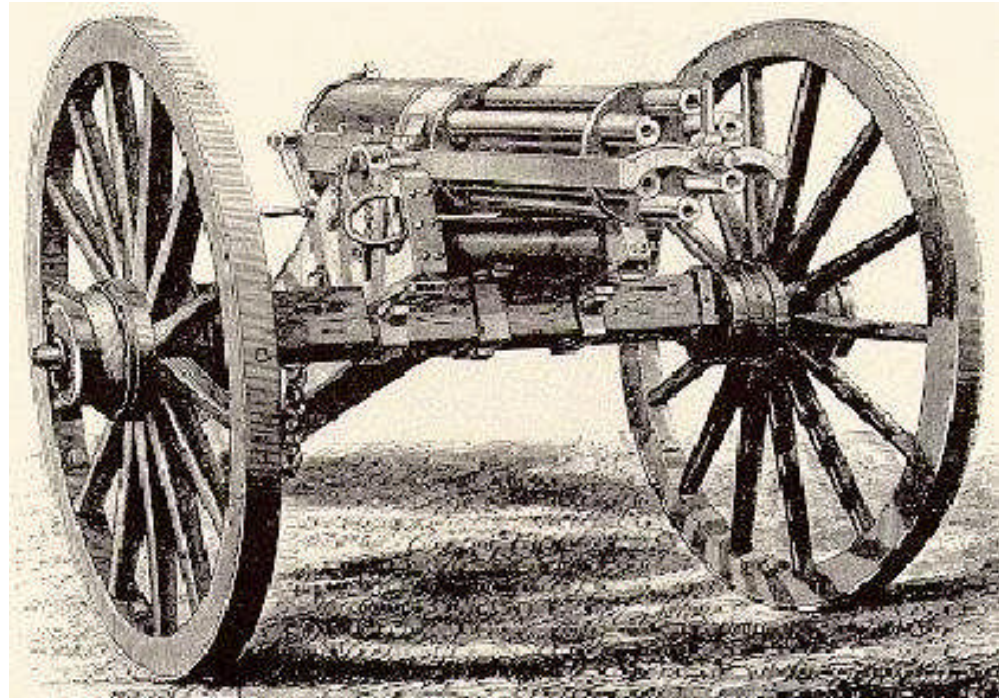
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## ***CIVIL WAR PRESIDENTS BY DONALD L. MARTIN—NATIONAL PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTOR***

Generally when we think of Civil War presidents we think only of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis. But, the Civil War helped propel several other men into the White House. Seven Civil War veterans became president of the United States; six of them were army generals.

Abraham Lincoln's tragic death allowed his vice president Andrew Johnson to become the 17th President of the United States. Johnson was a Democrat serving in the United States Senate from Tennessee when the war started. Tennessee left the Union and joined the Confederate States of America, but Johnson remained loyal and stayed in Washington. When Tennessee was conquered in 1862 Lincoln appointed Johnson military governor of his home state with the rank of brigadier general. In 1864 he was nominated to run as vice president with Lincoln on the National Union Party ticket.

The 18th President of the United States was Union Army hero Ulysses Simpson Grant. Grant who graduated from West Point had served in the Mexican War, but when the Civil War started he was a civilian living in Illinois. Governor Yates commissioned him as colonel of the 21st Illinois Infantry Regiment. Eight months later he was a major general of volunteers and following his victory at Vicksburg on July 4, 1863 he was commissioned a major general in the regular Army. On March 9, 1864 he was given the rank of lieutenant general and at the end of the Civil War on July 25, 1866, Congress gave him the rank of General of the Army; a title given only to George Washington before the Civil War. General Grant, a man who had never held an elective office before the Civil War, was elected President of the United States twice.

General Grant was followed in office by Rutherford B. Hayes who was elected the 19th President of the United States. Hayes was appointed a major in the 23rd Ohio Infantry in June, 1861. He was severely wounded in the left arm at the Battle of South Mountain on September 14, 1862 causing him to miss the Battle of Antietam. In October, 1862 he was promoted to colonel and named commander of the 23rd O.V. I. In July, 1863 he engaged Morgan's Raiders in the Battle of Buffington Island along the Ohio River. In October, 1864 he wrenched his ankle as his horse was shot out from under him during the Battle of Cedar Creek. He was promoted to brigadier general of volunteers and in March, 1865 was brevetted major general of volunteers. He took part in over 50 engagements. He was wounded several times, and had his horse shot out from under him four times.

General Hayes was followed by James A. Garfield, who was elected the 20th President of the United States in November, 1880. In August, 1861 Garfield was commissioned a lieutenant colonel in the 42nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry. In November of that year he was promoted to colonel. As Commander of the 18th Brigade he defeated Confederates at the Battle of Middle Creek in eastern Kentucky in January, 1862 and was promoted to brigadier general. At the Battle of Shiloh he contracted camp fever and went home to Hiram, Ohio for two months to convalesce. He served as chief of staff for Major General William S. Rosecrans, Commander of the Army of the Cumberland. At the Battle of Chickamauga, under heavy enemy fire, he conveyed vital information from flank to flank. His horse was wounded. He was promoted to major general. He resigned from the army in December, 1863 to accept a seat in the United States House of Representatives. He was elected in September, 1862. He took office as President of the United States on March 4, 1881. He was shot by an assassin four months later on July 2, 1881, and died from his wounds on September 19, 1881.

Garfield's vice president, Chester A. Arthur finished his term becoming the 21st President of the United States. In 1857 before the Civil War started he was appointed judge advocate of the Second Brigade, New York State Militia. In 1860 he was appointed engineer-in-chief on the staff of Governor Morgan with the

*(Continued on page 17)*

## ***2010 DEPARTMENT ENCAMPMENT***

The Department of Colorado/Wyoming will be holding its  
Annual Encampment on:

# **June 12, 2010**

# **Starting at 1:00 PM**

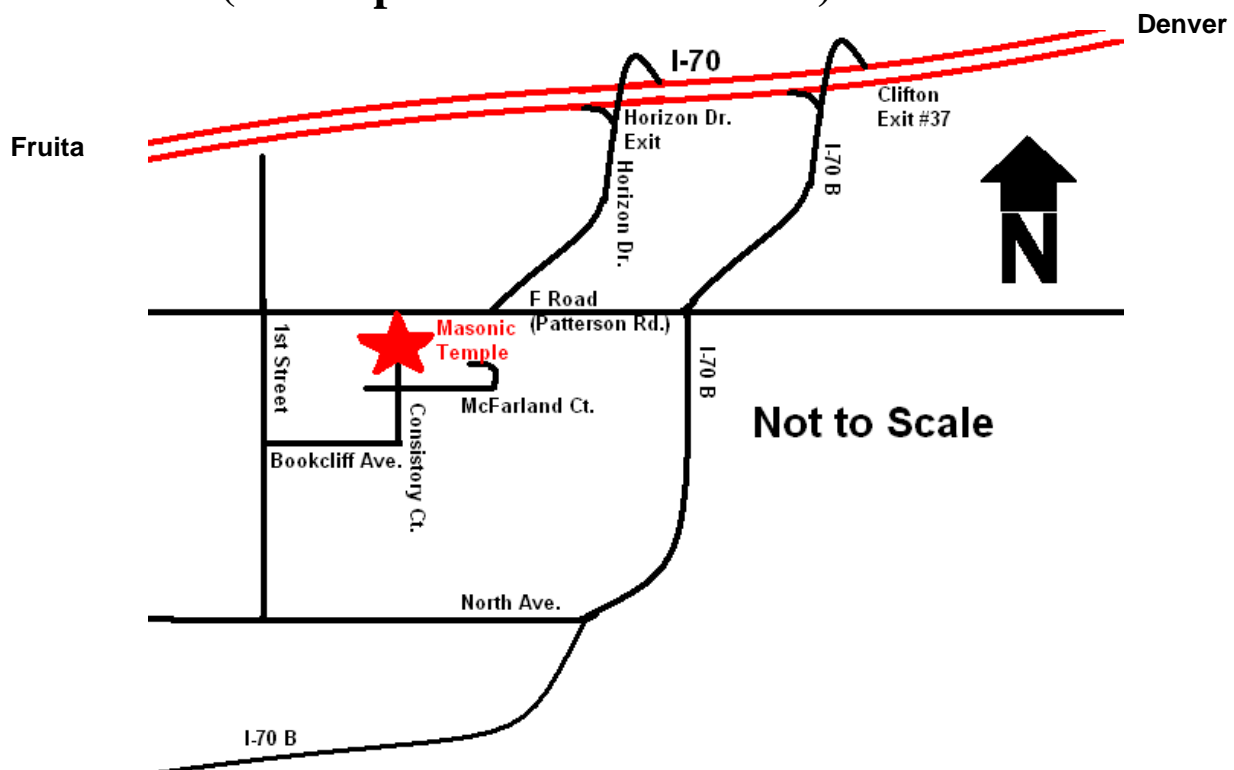
**(12:00 Noon—1:00 PM Social Gathering)**

The location will be the same as last year:

**Masonic Temple  
2400 Consistory Court  
Grand Junction, CO**

**Contact Commander Garry W. Brewer (970) 241-5842 Or  
Secretary/Treasurer Gary Parrott, PDC (970) 243-0476  
For additional information if needed.**

(see map below for directions)

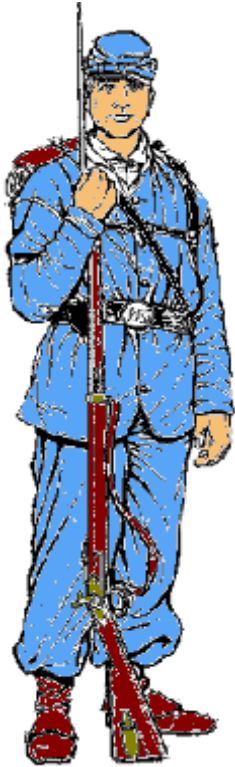




## THE LITTLE BRONZE BUTTON THIS ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY GARRY BREWER



### The Little Bronze Button



How dear to the heart of each gray-headed soldier  
Are the thoughts of the day when he still wore the blue;  
While memory recalls every trial and danger,  
And scenes of the past are brought back to his view,  
Though long since discarding the arms and equipment.  
There is one thing a veteran most surely will note---  
“Tis the little bronze button, the sacred bronze button,  
The Grand Army button he wears on his coat.

How much did it cost?” said a man to a soldier---  
“That little brown button you wear on your coat?”  
“Ten cents, in good money,” he answered the stranger,  
“And four years of marching and fighting to boot.  
The wealth of the world cannot purchase this button,  
Except for the buyer, who once wore the blue.  
And it shows to mankind the full marks of a hero,  
A man who to honor his country was true.”

Then let us be proud of this little bronze button,  
And wear it with spirit both loyal and bold;  
With love in his heart for the comrades of old.  
Each day musters out whole battalions of wearers,  
And some will be missed, the token so dear;  
But millions to come will remember with honor  
The man with the right, that bronze button to wear.



*By Captain A. H. Keene*

*Captain Aaron H. Keene, a Civil War Veteran, he entered the war as a Private in company E, 14<sup>th</sup> Maine and ended the war as Captain of the 109<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Volunteers. he was chaplain of John A. Logan Post 21, G.A.R. in Grand Junction, Colorado, he was living with his daughter, Mrs. Adelaide Mead of Pomona, Mesa County, Colorado when he wrote this.*

**T**his poem was written by Capt Aaron H. Keene of Pomona, Mesa County, Colorado. he was living with his daughter for a short time in 1910 Mesa County. He is also in the 1910 census with his wife Rebecca W. Keene of Massachusetts. So he made the census in two states, Colorado and Massachusetts. It was printed in the Daily Sentinel.

He is a life insurance salesman, he is back in Massachusetts in 1920 in the old soldiers home as a inmate (name for old soldiers then) I don't have a death date for him, but it states on the 1920 census he was still married (born in 1838)

He was a private in Company E, 14th Maine, the promoted to 2nd Let, then to Capt of Company D, 109th Colored Volunteers.



## IN SEARCH OF NATHAN KNIGHT (CONT.)

*(Continued from page 1)*

throughout the war, but Nathan Knight is never mentioned by name or is Company "K" ever singled out, so we are forced to assume he was there, did that.

The 56<sup>th</sup> New York (also known as the Tenth Legion though the name was never recognized by the War Department) was organized with men from Ulster, Orange and Sullivan counties by congressman Charles H. Van Wyck, politician turned soldier, in July 1861 and headquartered in Newburgh, New York. Nathan Knight enlisted in the army on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1861. Later that month a contingent from the Town of Neversink that would become Company "K", presumably Nathan Knight included, arrived at the 56th's training grounds on a plain above the Hudson River at New Windsor, just south of Newburgh. Less than a month later, on November 6<sup>th</sup>, the entire regiment, 1,130 men strong, equipped with new uniforms, gear and Enfield short rifles left Newburgh on a steamer for New York City. The next day they were presented with a banner in Union Square, marched down Broadway, crossed by ferry to New Jersey and arrived by train in Baltimore. Because another military unit, the 6th Massachusetts, had passed through that city earlier and had been attacked by a mob, the 56th marched through Baltimore with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets, but without incident, and was transported by train to Washington.

After an ugly month of camping in the open, the 56th was moved into the relative comforts of Carver Barracks at Meridian Hill, Washington on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1862. The next three months consisted of drills, parades, and a visit to the White House where my ancestor may have shaken hands with President Lincoln. Their Enfields were exchanged for Springfield rifled muskets. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of March, the 56th marched to Alexandria, VA, camped overnight in four inches of snow, and departed the next day on a steamer which became stuck in the Potomac River mud. (Over the next three years we counted at least four instances where boats transporting the 56th ran aground.) Pulled off by tug the next day, the steamer continued on to Newport News, however enroute the 56th came under enemy fire for the first time, from Confederate shore batteries whose cannonballs fell well short.

From Newport News the 56th marched to Yorktown, the old Revolutionary war battleground and joined the assault up the peninsula toward Richmond, the Confederate capitol. On April 16th the regiment repulsed a rebel attack at Lee's Mills, and on May 4<sup>th</sup> participated in the battle of Williamsburg, suffering through three days without food and sleeping in the rain. On May 9<sup>th</sup> they departed Williamsburg through the woods and swamps on short rations, dogging the retreating enemy. May 19<sup>th</sup> saw the Army of the Potomac, as it was known, driving the rebels across the Chickahominy River at Bottoms Bridge and crossing the river the next day under light resistance. For the next ten days the 56th was engaged in picket duty, reconnaissance, and scouting which took them within four miles of Richmond where they could see church steeples and the enemy earthworks. (Lest I give the impression that the 56th New York was fighting the war by itself, keep in mind that it was a one-thousand man regiment among the 105,000 men under McClellan's command on the peninsula at the time. Officially, the 56<sup>th</sup> was one of the five regiments in the First Brigade under the command of General Naglee, itself a part of the Second Division, Fourth Corps of the Army of the Potomac.)

On May 28<sup>th</sup>, Naglee's brigade was placed in a battle line stratteling the Richmond and York River Railroad west of Fair Oaks Station. The 56th was detached and placed in a picket line a mile in front of the rest of the brigade. The Confederates counterattacked in force on May 31<sup>st</sup> in the indecisive battle of Seven Pines/Fair Oaks. The 56th fell back, but before the main enemy battle line reached their position, they were ordered to an open field to protect an artillery battery that never showed up. They took enemy fire, fell back into the woods, fought for two hours, were relieved and marched back to Nine Mile Road. The next day defended

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## IN SEARCH OF NATHAN KNIGHT (CONT.)

*(Continued from page 13)*

the crossing at Bottoms bridge to cover the retreat. For nearly a month the two armies postured in place, the Union bringing up men and supplies, the rebels (successfully, as it turned out) attempting to convince McClellan that their forces were much larger than actually existed. While historians generally agree that McClellan had sufficient forces on the ground to capture Richmond, his vacillation allowed the Confederates to bring up reinforcements and he finally called retreat on June 25, marking the beginning of the so-called Seven Days War. In one bazaar incident rivaling anything dreamed up in Hollywood, a train carrying supplies was abandoned, set afire, sent rolling full throttle down the tracks toward the Confederate lines only to crash at a burned out bridge in a tremendous explosion.

The 56th retreated on June 29<sup>th</sup>, crossed White Oak Swamp Creek, the last troops to leave White Oak Swamp and marched on to Malvern Hill. Their escape that night was marked by being scared by a runaway team of mules and at one point taking a wrong road and being turned back by rebel pickets. They were held in reserve at the battle of Malvern Hill and formed a rear guard for the final leg of the army's withdrawal to Harrison's Landing where they could be protected by Federal gunboats on the James River. On this march they were attacked at Carter's Hill but repulsed the enemy with no casualties. After a month and a half at Harrison's Landing, they made a hot, dusty march back to Yorktown where they would be stationed for the rest of 1862. In December they were part of a force that marched to Gloucester, VA and after a light skirmish, captured the city and a quantity of poultry, horses, mules and cattle. Because of an incident where some ducks reserved for the brigade officer's mess mysteriously disappeared, the 56<sup>th</sup> would receive a nickname that would follow it through the war: "Charlie Van Wyck's Chicken Thieves." On the march back to Yorktown, the 56th was ordered to drive 500 captured hogs but managed to lose them all.

At this point fate intervened in a decision to attach the 56<sup>th</sup> New York to Ferry's Division, 18th Corps for operations in South Carolina which would spare them from following the Army of the Potomac into the bloodbaths of Second Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. So on Dec. 29<sup>th</sup>, 1862 the 56th left Yorktown on a sailing ship towed by a sternwheeler. The authors of the 56th's history claim to have seen the Monitor before it sank in a storm that also parted their tow rope, forcing their ship to proceed on sail power. After several weeks in Morehead City, North Carolina where they were detailed to repair railroad engines and rolling stock and load the trains with supplies, they embarked on a large steam transport ship, part of a large fleet anchored in Port Royal harbor. On Feb. 6<sup>th</sup> the 56th landed at St. Helena Island for two months of routine camp life.

On April 1<sup>st</sup> they were transported to Seabrook Island, camping near Edisto Harbor under some of the worst conditions of the war. Quoting from the chronicles, "It was a terrible island, full of snakes and all kinds of vermin, the creeping, crawling, swimming and flying kind, the bayous full of alligators, water snakes, lizards and frogs: the ground infested with many kinds of poisonous snakes, tarantulas, and other poisonous reptiles, and air full of buzzards, birds of prey, mosquitoes and malaria. The water was very bad and the heat intense. Our duties were very arduous, and many of the men were sick and unable for duty; the well ones were almost continuously on duty of some kind and the enemy kept us in a continual state of excitement and anxiety." The mission of the 56th was to aid in the assault on Fort Wagner on nearby Morris island, lately made famous in the motion picture "Glory." On July 8<sup>th</sup> they were sent up the Point Stono river to the south end of James Island for a diversionary attack while other forces attacked and captured enemy works on the South end of Morris Island. Eight days later the 56th was attacked by a superior force but drove them off with the help of gunboats and captured 200 prisoners. The failed attack on Fort Wagner by the black 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts occurred on July 18<sup>th</sup> and the fort was finally abandoned by the rebels on September 7th after a heavy naval bombardment.

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## IN SEARCH OF NATHAN KNIGHT (CONT.)

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On August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1863 the 56th, in bad shape, poor health and depleted numbers embarked for Beaufort, SC where they would be stationed for over a year. There were clean, comfortable quarters and relatively easy picket, fatigue and provost guard duty. In March 1864, 400 new recruits reinforced the unit. The only interruption to this relatively pleasant interlude was a ten day expedition to Johns Island in July to create a diversion while other forces attacked Fort Johnson on James Island. This included a march on July 4<sup>th</sup> noted as "the worst of the war" where several men died of heatstroke. In September, the 56th was moved back to Morris Island where under fire at all times they supported the artillery batteries shelling Charleston and Fort Sumter. By October, the days were very hot, the nights cold and on the island, being all sand, there was no fuel. Scurvy struck rendering only 600 men fit for duty, but on October 12<sup>th</sup> 120 new recruits arrived.

Tracing the 56th's maneuvers on a map will show that they took place along the South Carolina coast but the war was moving on. Sherman had captured Atlanta on Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup>, made his famous "scorched earth" march through Georgia to the sea in November and December, and then turned his forces north into the Carolinas. The 56th received orders to proceed inland to support his advance. On November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1864 the 56<sup>th</sup> moved by steamer to Folly Island, then on to Hilton Head, then up the Broad River to disembark at Boyd's Point. While marching up the Grahamsville Road, a surprise artillery shell opened a battle where the 56th suffered 50 casualties. The next morning the rebel skirmish line was driven back and with rations running low, some sheep and cattle were captured. After constructing breastworks for the artillery, the 56th laid low for a week.

On December 6<sup>th</sup> the 56th was transported up the Broad River to Deveaux Neck where they advanced under heavy fire for only a mile with many casualties. The next day they were attacked in force, each Union soldier firing an estimated 60 rounds but the enemy was repulsed with the 56th following cautiously. Three days later the enemy was driven back across the Charleston and Savannah railroad which would form the battle line for then next month. The 56th captured the battle flag of the 5<sup>th</sup> Georgia Regiment. Earthworks were constructed and rebel deserters entered the lines. On December 11<sup>th</sup> they were forced to fall back 600 yards due to heavy artillery fire. The Union forces advanced twice on the 14<sup>th</sup> but were forced to return to their position. Five days later the 56th advanced to cover axe men cutting a swath of trees to clear a path for the artillery to practice on Fort Coosawhatchie. On Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup> Savannah fell to Sherman and for the next three weeks the rebel army was observed fleeing north along the railroad. An advance by the 56th into the woods on the 29<sup>th</sup> on the left of the Union position to determine the enemy position and strength accomplished its mission but with a cost of 17 casualties.

By the second week in January 1865, even greater numbers of rebel troops were observed passing in front of Union lines with the threat of attack imminent. By mid-month the rebels left their lines allowing the 56th to advance to the railroad, tear up the tracks, heat the rails red hot over burning piles of ties and bend them around trees. Fort Coosawhatchie was invested. Daily foraging squads brought in large quantities of food including cattle, pigs, chickens, and sweet potatoes, however, one squad were attacked near Robbinsville but was rescued by a detachment of Sherman's troops. With the enemy retreating, on February 16<sup>th</sup> the 56th began a leisurely march to Charleston marked by bad roads, no tents, only blankets, arriving a dozen days later to find the city in ruins.

The first week of March, 1865 found the 56th marching through the South Carolina mud to a place called Monk's Corners, then back to Charleston without engaging the enemy. On the 11<sup>th</sup> the 56th was transported by ferry to Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, which proved a good place to have duty while waiting for the

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## IN SEARCH OF NATHAN KNIGHT (CONT.)

*(Continued from page 15)*

war to wind down. However in one last expedition in early April, Companies "A" through "E" were dispatched to Kingsville to attack a railroad yard. They engaged the rebels at Dingle's Mill, captured an artillery battery and eventually reached Kingsville where they destroyed railroad engines, rolling stock and supplies.

During the summer of '65 the 56th was broken up into small squads and assigned to provost duty in towns around South Carolina. Though their discharges are dated 17 October 65, the regiment was disbanded, mustered out, and given their final pay on Hart's Island in New York harbor on November 10th

Nathan Knight did not participate in these final forays of the war. Apparently he had demonstrated leadership ability as he was mustered into the army as a Sergeant and though no exact date is specified in the records, he was later promoted to Sergeant 1<sup>st</sup> Class. On April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1865, five days before Lee's surrender at Appomattox, he was commissioned a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant and assigned as a white officer to Company S, 104th United States Colored Infantry Regiment, then being organized in Beaufort, South Carolina and composed entirely of ex-slaves. We will never know if he volunteered or was "volunteered" but given the privations of the previous three years, he must have gladly accepted the better pay, quarters and rations his new status would bring. Long before, at that time and to this day, rank has its privileges. Nathan Knight left the service in September 1865, the 104th itself being disbanded in February of the following year having spent most of it's short existence in garrison and guard duty.

Through a surviving carte-de-vistie photograph we came face to face with Nathan Knight. It shows him in his uniform, lieutenant's epaulets on his shoulders, standing before a balustrade with his officer's sword cradled on his right arm. He is tall, gaunt, clean shaven with a cereal bowl haircut, his face marked with age beyond his twenty four years.

Nathan Knight appears in the 1870 census as a farmer living in the own of Callicoon, Sullivan County, New York. By then he had a wife, the former Sarah Krom and a two- year old daughter. Nathan and Sarah would go on to have nine children, four of whom would die in early childhood.

My great-uncle John once told me that his father "lost his health" in South Carolina. This appears plausible as the chronicles of the 56<sup>th</sup> repeat endlessly themes of sleeping in the rain or snow without shelter, no rations or at best foraging the countryside for food, of disease, sunstroke, and malaria. Of the 2,176 men of the 56th which includes replacements, 64 were killed in action or died of their wounds compared to 216 who died of disease and other causes. In any event, in 1885 Nathan Knight appeared on the pension rolls as an "invalid".

In 1894 Nathan Knight made a real estate deal that would have a profound effect on my life. He purchased 150 acre, side-hill subsistence farm, part fields, part woodland, on Denman Mountain near Grahamsville, New York. Uncle John told of surviving the first winter on a crop of millet grown in a clearing near the farmhouse.

After Nathan's death in 1896, the farm passed on to my grandfather and it was here I would spend most of my pre-teen weekends and summers, isolated and safe from the polio epidemics of the early 'forties. There were brook trout to be caught, deer, squirrels, rabbits, woodchucks, grouse, coons to be hunted, trees to be cut for firewood and lumber, maples to be tapped for syrup and sugar, cows to be milked, pigs to be butchered providing hams to smoke, apples to be pressed for cider, hay to be cut, oats to be thrashed, and a hundred other prosaic and routine farm chores, every one a grand adventure for a small boy. It was a near per-

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## ***CIVIL WAR PRESIDENTS (CONT.)***

*(Continued from page 10)*

rank of brigadier general, New York State Militia. In July 1862 he was named quartermaster general with the rank of brigadier general. Arthur finished Garfield's presidential term but was unable to get the Republican Party to nominate him in 1884.

Grover Cleveland who paid a substitute to take his place in the Civil War was elected in 1884 as the 22nd President, but he was defeated in 1888 by Civil War General Benjamin Harrison. The 23rd President of the United States was born in North Bend, Ohio and graduated from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, but lived in Indianapolis when the Civil War started and was commissioned a 2nd lieutenant of Indiana Volunteers in July, 1862. He formed Company A, of the 70th Regiment, Indiana Volunteer Infantry, and was made captain. At the organization of the regiment he was commissioned colonel and went with the regiment to Kentucky and served until June, 1865. The unit distinguished themselves in the Atlanta campaign and at Nashville. By the end of the war Harrison had been appointed Brigadier General.

The last Civil War veteran to serve as President of the United States was Major William McKinley who was elected 25th President of the United States in 1896 and took office March 4, 1897. On June 11, 1861 he enlisted as a private in the 23rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment. This unit was led by Rutherford B. Hayes who served as our 19th President. In April, 1862 he was promoted to commissary sergeant. His action in keeping hot coffee and food at the front during the Battle of Antietam resulted in his being commissioned a second lieutenant. A monument in his honor has also been erected on the Antietam battlefield. In Feb., 1863 he was promoted to first lieutenant. In July, 1863 he was promoted to captain during the campaign in southern Ohio to capture confederate General John Morgan. March 13, 1865 he was brevetted major of volunteers for gallant and meritorious services at the battles of Opequan, Fisher's Hill and Cedar Creek. He was re-elected President in 1900 starting his second term on March 4, 1901 but was shot by an assassin on September 6, 1901 and died from his wounds a few days later on September 14, 1901

Holidays and other special days [http://suvcw.org/ftp/PI\\_handbook.pdf](http://suvcw.org/ftp/PI_handbook.pdf)

### **National, Federal and Special holidays – Days the Flag should be Flown**

#### **February 1 - National Freedom Day First observed on February 1, 1949**

The purpose of this holiday is to promote good feelings, harmony, and equal opportunity among all citizens and to remember that the United States is a nation dedicated to the ideal of freedom. Major Richard Robert Wright Sr., a former slave, fought to have a day when freedom for all Americans is celebrated. When Wright got his freedom, he went on to become a successful businessman and community leader in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Major Wright chose February 1 as National Freedom Day because it was the day in 1865 that President Lincoln signed the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. This amendment, an important change to our written law, outlawed slavery in the United States. Wright gathered national and local leaders together to write a bill declaring February 1 "National Freedom Day" and President Harry Truman signed the bill on June 30, 1948 making it official.

#### **February 12 – Union Defender's Day or Abraham Lincoln's Birthday First observed 1866**

Abraham Lincoln, perhaps our greatest President, gives us insight into the qualities desired in leadership. Clearly Abraham Lincoln is considered one of the greatest U.S. Presidents of all time. From his humble log

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## ***CIVIL WAR PRESIDENTS (CONT.)***

*(Continued from page 17)*

cabin beginnings to his martyrdom, his intellect, determination, humility, wit, and savvy is recognized. His determination to keep the nation together during the Civil War, his prowess in stopping the bloodshed, and most importantly his Emancipation Proclamation are hallmarks of his shortened presidency.

His birthday was first recognized in 1866, less than a year after his death. At a ceremony in the Capital building, President Andrew Johnson, his cabinet, and many other dignitaries were present. It wasn't until 1892, however, that it was officially recognized and that was in the state of Illinois only. Other states soon followed suit, but it wasn't until Lincoln's one-hundredth birthday that Congress officially sanctioned the holiday.

### **The Third Monday in February – President's Day**

The original version of the holiday was in commemoration of George Washington's birthday in 1796 (the last full year of his presidency). Washington, according to the calendar that has been used since at least the mid-18th century, was born on February 22, 1732. According to the old style calendar in use back then, however, he was born on February 11. At least in 1796, many Americans celebrated his birthday on the 22nd while others marked the occasion on the 11th instead.

By the early 19th century, Washington's Birthday had taken firm root in the American experience as a bona fide national holiday. Its traditions included Birth night Balls in various regions, speeches and receptions given by prominent public figures, and a lot of revelry in taverns throughout the land. Then along came Abraham Lincoln, another revered president and fellow February baby (born on the 12th of the month).

The first formal observance of his birthday took place in 1865, the year after his assassination, when both houses of Congress gathered for a memorial address. While Lincoln's Birthday did not become a federal holiday like George Washington's, it did become a legal holiday in several states.

In 1968, legislation (HR 15951) was enacted that affected several federal holidays. One of these was Washington's Birthday, the observation of which was shifted to the third Monday in February each year whether or not it fell on the 22nd. This act, which took effect in 1971, was designed to simplify the yearly calendar of holidays and give federal employees some standard three-day weekends in the process.

Apparently, while the holiday in February is still officially known as Washington's Birthday (at least according to the Office of Personnel Management), it has become popularly (and, perhaps in some cases at the state level, legally) known as "President's Day." This has made the third Monday in February a day for honoring Washington and Lincoln, as well as all the other men who have served as president.

### **George Washington's Birthday – February 22 First observed on February 11, 1782**

While there are a number of lingering questions about Washington, he was known as a man of integrity, possessing great leadership skills, and a true patriot. His role as commander of the Continental Army is legendary. He was later the presiding officer at the Continental convention of 1787 and was unanimously selected to inaugurate a new county's democracy as its first President. He also established the Constitution of the United States as a true guiding light for the new nation.

As early as 1775, his birthday was celebrated by some. Initial birthday celebrations were on February 11 because the Gregorian calendar wasn't adopted by the colonies in 1732, the year of his birth. It wasn't until 1796 that February 22 was officially adopted as the celebratory day.

## IN SEARCH OF NATHAN KNIGHT (CONT.)

(Continued from page 16)

fect childhood, an exposure to a peaceful, self-sufficient lifestyle probably not much different than that of Nathan Knight and his family.

We finally caught up with Nathan Knight at his final resting place, the tree shaded cemetery behind the Dutch Reformed Church in Claryville, New York. A single weathered stone obelisk tells of his military service and shows that he shares the family plot with his wife, the four children who died early in life and one adult daughter who never married.

There is no evidence that Nathan Knight ever capitalized on his wartime experiences. Quite to the contrary, as my great-aunt Carrie (speaking of her father in "Brass Buttons and Leather Boots", a book published by the Sullivan County Historical Society during the centennial of the Civil War) said, "he was not a member of the G.A.R. Post. I guess he had all of war and its results he wanted." Like so many others of the era, Nathan Knight was a common man who lived in extraordinary times.

(Editor's Note: Jim Gotsch is a Council Member for Chapman Compliment—Camp #2 and was kind enough to send this article to me for inclusion in this newsletter. He wrote the original article 13 May 2005)

## AN INTERESTING BIT OF INFORMATION PROVIDED BY JACK BUSCHMANN, LM, PDC

Although this is of the GAR, I thought it would be an interesting piece to the history of our Department that you're assembling. The following is from a work titled "Grand Army of the Republic Department of Wisconsin" by Thomas J. McCrory, Trail Books, Black Earth, Wisconsin, copyright 2005, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Foundation:

On pages 324-26 of this work are listed the "Seniority of Departments." The "Department of the Mountains" is #21 in seniority (of 45 departments that were organized and chartered) and was organized on 11 Dec 1879. Its name was changed to the "Department of Colorado" on 31 Jul 1882, and changed again on 28 Aug 1889 to "Department of Colorado & Wyoming."

From this one can see why our SUVCW department name is what it is. It appears they just adopted the name of the GAR department.

Yours in F, C, & L,

Jack Buschmann, LM, PDC



GAR John Logan Post #35—taken in 1900 in Grand Junction, Colorado. (Dept. CO/WY)





## PROCLAMATION FROM MESA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS 5/10/10



L-R: Harry Butler, Bennett Young, and Gary Parrott, PDC, holding the 1910 photo after the presentation of the proclamation from the Mesa County Commissioners in front of the old Court House May 10, 2010.



L-R: Garry Brewer, Dept. CO/WY Commander; Danny Agajanian; Gary Parrott, PDC, Cecil Tapey; and William "Bill" Buvinger inside the Court House holding the photo and proclamation.. (All are also members of Camp 7)

Proclamation was turned sideways in order to get maximum size for viewing on this page with the photos:

# Mesa County Proclamation

GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC WEEK  
MAY 10 - MAY 16, 2010

**WHEREAS:** on May 12th through 14th, 1910, the Grand Army of the Republic, Department of Colorado/Wyoming (Union Veterans) had their 31st Reunion in Grand Junction, Colorado; and

**WHEREAS:** after the parade on Friday, May 13th, 1910, the following organizations and floats assembled for a photograph on the grounds of the present day site of the Mesa County Courthouse and Grand Junction City Hall on that bright and sunny day: the Women's Relief Corp, Ladies of the G.A.R., Sons of Union Veterans, School Children of Mesa County, Girl's Mandolin Club and Indian Boys Marching Band, both of the Teller Indian School, Woodmen of the World, Grand Junction Fire Department, Dr. Bull & family in their motorcar, together with over 800 former Union Soldiers; and

**WHEREAS:** the Grand Army of the Republic was a unique organization. No child could be born into it; no proclamation of President, edict of King or Czar, or act of Congress could command admission. Only presentation of a bit of paper, which certified to an Honorable Discharge, would open the doors of membership. The doors of membership closed when the last Comrade of the Grand Army of the Republic was mustered out by a bugle call from beyond to be called forth into the ranks of that vanishing army.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Mesa County Board of Commissioners proclaim **May 10, 2010 through May 16, 2010 as Grand Army of the Republic Week** to honor the 100th Anniversary of this special event and the photo taken on the very spot of the present day Mesa County Courthouse and to honor those brave Boys in Blue, so that their record will be preserved for future generations of Americans of the Republic to view the faces of the men who saved the United States of America.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF,** We hereunto set our hands and cause to be affixed the official seal of Mesa County this 10<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2010.

*Garry Brewer*  
*Danny Agajanian*

