

Post No. 28 History

Brief History of Post No. 28 of the American Legion, 1919 – 1972, Spartanburg, S.C.

compiled by John D. Rush, October 1971

An attempt to do a brief history of Post No. 28 of the American Legion covering its first 52 years must, of necessity, be subjective as well as limited to documentaries as many of the earlier leaders who could have made it more complete, now rest silently in their graves.

Credit is due the following who have contributed helpfully in the preparation of this paper: Marion W. Burgin, Judge Bobo Burnett, Mrs. Madga Calus, J. Wm. Davenport, M. Frank Edwards, John L. Farmer, Mrs. Miller C. Foster, Chas. E. Godfrey, Dr E. I. Johnson, Harvey W. Johnson, Dr. Lionel Lawson, Broadus R. Littlejohn, Carl W. Littlejohn and Sam Manning. (Given to Jesse Campbell by Mike Burgin in 1973)

For the half century (1919-1971) in the life of the Post, the brave hope of World War I—that it had been fought and won to end all wars—was set back three times by World War II and the interventions in Korea and Vietnam.

Aside from the function of keeping the memories and incidents of battlefield experiences alive in a return to a busy industry-minded civilian life, the membership successfully fed by returning veterans from all of these four wars, knowing the tragedy of war was determined to help defend in the future our homeland and to care for the indigent old soldiers and needy families of those who laid down their lives as a patriotic duty.

Following authorization by Congress of September 16, 1919, Spartanburg Post No. 28 with County Court Judge Bobo Burnett, now retired, as Commander and the late John D. Hamer, Adjutant, was organized October 1, 1919 and received its charter June 29, 1921.

There were 184 charter members, a majority having served as either non-com or commissioned officers. Membership rose to about 1200 immediately following the end of WW II. The present annual membership ranges from 500 to 600. Current officers of the Post for the 1971-72 year are: John D. Rush, Commander; M. Frank Edwards, First Vice Commander; Frank M. Stallings, Second Vice Commander; Carl W. Littlejohn, Adjutant; J. Gordon Hughes, Finance Officer; Rev. Francis T. White, Chaplain; Donald S. Crum, Sergeant-At-Arms; and members of the Executive Committee are: Marion W. Burgin, Ralph W. Caldwell, Dr. E. I. Johnson, W. F. McMillan, and Mason Sullivan. Currently members of the City Council's Memorial Commission for the American Legion Home are: Ralph M. Caldwell, Col. T. B. Ertle, and John D. Rush.

The first meeting place in the fall of 1919 was the office of Blowers Livery Stable, a site later used by the Chamber of Commerce, at present a parking lot just east of the new Herald-Journal Building on West Main Street. The second meeting place was held every Friday night in the law offices of John D. Hamer on Morgan Square. The third meeting place in the 1920s was the unoccupied second floor of Hallman's Filling Station and Garage at the corner of Magnolia and Short Wofford Streets. The budding Drum & Bugle Corps practiced there after each meeting, winding up with a march through downtown streets to keep in trim. During the 1930s, the next

meeting place was on the top floor of Dr. N. T. Clark's drug store, corner East Main and S. Dean Streets. With the completion of the Legion Home in Duncan Park in 1937, meetings have been held there since.



Post 28 Cornerstone

The cornerstone of the new Legion Home was laid in 1936 by the late Olin D. Johnston, then governor. The first regular business meeting in the new home Friday evening, June 25, 1937, coincided with the termination of the 1936 – 1937 term of Dr. E. I. Johnston, Post Commander. The formal dedication followed as part of the Armistice Day program, November 11, 1937 at 4:00 P.M., with a stirring address by the late Miller C. Foster, assistant to Monroe Johnson, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Commerce, Washington D.C. A quote from his dedicatory address is as follows:

“It is my wish, my prayer, that this building may stand 100 years or longer; and that, so long as it stands, it shall never be forced to look upon our people engaged in war again.”

The honor of leading the dance music at the grand opening of the new modern Legion Home went to “Bill Davenport’s Orchestra.” The members were:

- Walter Britton, deceased
- Raymond Westbrook, Technician WSPA
- Woodrow Taylor, Draper Corp.
- Oneal Landrum, deceased
- Bill McCarter, Shipyards Charleston
- Johnnie Blowers, Law Librarian County Courthouse
- Alvin Jolly, NY Airlines
- Harold Millwood, City Waterworks
- J. Wm. “Bill” Davenport, Probate Judge, member of Post No. 28, and Director of the Orchestra
- Henry Williams, NC Dentist

Historically, members of Post No. 28 represent the fifth link in a chain of association of veterans of major wars of this country from The Revolutionary War, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, and the Mexican War. As time has now virtually erased the rolls of those former veterans, save for a few widows, and has made deep inroads in the World War I group, returning soldiers and sailors from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, have either been assimilated into the ranks of the Legion, or hold membership either in the Veterans of Foreign Wars, AMVETS, or Disabled American Veterans. Some hold membership in two or more of these associations.

Some legislation for needy veterans had already been sought by previous war veterans; for example, the [Bureau of the War Risk Insurance](#) (1914), the [Federal Bureau of Vocational Education](#) (1917), as well as aids to veterans of both the Civil War and the Spanish-American War. The Legion pushed for establishment of Veterans Hospitals throughout the country and immediately after the [Veterans Bureau](#) was established in 1921, hospital construction was started. In 1903 a branch of the [National Home for Disabled Veterans](#) was established in neighboring Johnson City, Tennessee.

Because of military or naval service interruption of regular employment, the Legion backed the movement to give returning veterans a 5-point civil service credit as an aid in getting early employment in the Federal Service. Another credit to the work of the Legion was the establishment of a Veterans Affairs Service Officer quartered in the Spartanburg County Courthouse. Such officer is kept busy advising returnees of the GI Bill of Rights, claim procedures and in opportunities for further training and education. Carl Littlejohn, Post Adjutant,

who had held this office many years, retired in 1969 and was succeeded by M. Frank Edwards, Vice Commander of the American Legion and Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post No. 9539.

What is The Legion's Future?

What is past is prologue. Over time how shall ideals work out in a practical world? Chaplain John W. Inzer, speaking to the delegates at the St. Louis Caucus, May 8, 1919, voiced this high sentiment:

“You are organizing not a mere veterans society, but a crusade of righteousness, liberty, democracy, and justice.”

Should the Legion last for a thousand years, it could do no greater than to follow those precepts uttered more than a half century ago out of the heartland of America.