

OUR HISTORY

THE GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC

State and Federal leaders from President Lincoln down had promised to care for “those who have borne the burden, his widows, and orphans,” but they had little knowledge of how to accomplish this task. There was little political pressure to see that the promises were kept.

With that as a background, groups of men began forming together—first for camaraderie and then for political power. Emerging as the most powerful among the various organizations would be the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), which by 1890 would number 409,489 veterans of the “War of the Rebellion.”

Founded in Decatur, Illinois on April 6, 1866 by Benjamin F. Stephenson, membership was limited to honorably discharged veterans of the Union Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Revenue Cutter Service who had served between April 12, 1861 and April 9, 1865.

The GAR founded soldier’s homes, was active in relief work and in pension legislation. Five members were elected President of the United States, and for a time, it was impossible to be nominated on the Republican ticket without the support of the GAR.

SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

As **Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW)**, we are the legal heirs to the **Grand Army of the Republic (GAR)**. Our goal and purpose is to perpetuate the memory of the GAR; what they did in the Civil War and to preserve the Union, and to continue the work they started following the War. Teaching others about our flag, patriotism and citizenship were important to them and should be important to us all. Learning about the other cultures and histories that live among us today is important, but the basic history of the United States cannot take second place to that of others.

We are a National organization divided into Departments (States) and then Camps (local chapters). While perpetuating the memory of the GAR, we also work actively to locate and record the final resting place of all Civil War soldiers as well as work to restore and or preserve Civil War memorials. We also seek to honor the veterans of all wars. We participate in Memorial Day services as well as those on Veterans’ Day.



Sons of Union Veterans
of the Civil War

<http://suvcw.org>

To contact a local
Camp (Chapter):
Go to the above website &
click on website index,
scroll to Department (State)
Home Pages &
then click on Camps

The Adopt-a-School Program

"...the people...are the ultimate guardians of their own liberty ...by apprising them of the past will enable them to judge of the future."

- Thomas Jefferson



"...so that children could learn about the flag and the sacrifices that made it what it was today."

- 1889 National Encampment (Convention)
Grand Army of the Republic

Sponsored by the
Sons of Union Veterans
of the Civil War

Why the Adopt-a-School Program?

Recent studies have shown that the historical knowledge of young Americans is less than most educators and citizens would desire. Students' knowledge of history has suffered because of reduced course requirements and textbook treatments that are bland and voiceless and directed more toward trivial coverage of details than to the fullness needed to bring vitality and credibility to events of the past (Sewall 1987; Cheney 1987).

The teaching and learning of history in the elementary school is less focused on building definitive knowledge or formal thinking ability than it is aimed at more immediate and attainable ends. For young elementary students, an important purpose of education in history is to make the past seem real instead of remaining an untouchable abstraction held only in adult memories or hollow textbook passages. **History instruction will help children recognize their own relationship to history**, realizing that their actions and lives are a potential part of yet-to-be-written histories.

Special experiences pump life into children's history learning. Such experiences go beyond the "staples" of the classroom instruction and include field trips to museums and historical sites, simulations, craft and model-building experiences, individualized and in-depth National History Day projects, and oral history projects. When students are properly prepared for such experiences, the depth of understanding they build more than justifies the extra effort they entail.

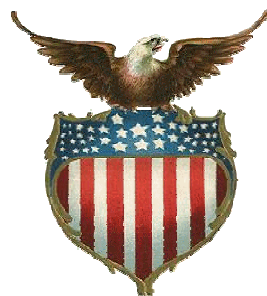
History improves judgment. This is perhaps the most often-cited practical reason for studying history, and it was foremost in the mind of Thomas Jefferson when he wrote that schooling in America's new democracy should

be "chiefly historical." He said, "...the people...are the ultimate guardians of their own liberty...by apprising them of the past will enable them to judge of the future. It will avail them of the experience of other times and other nations; it will qualify them as judges of the actions and designs of men."

We study the past in school not because students need to know a collection of old facts, but because history helps them understand how the world works and how human beings behave. **Knowledge of the past is required for understanding present realities.** When people share some common knowledge of history, they can discuss their understandings with one another.

Students familiar with history know their unique place in the stream of time; they have a sense of the trajectory of human development, where it may veer off course and how it might be kept on track. A democracy needs citizens with such judgment and wisdom; the past is the only place to find it.

The following offers suggestions on how we can help both you the teacher and your students in better understanding American history. Too often, history is perceived as dull; a special program, a presentation by a "living historian," fun contests, and interesting discussions can make history come to life and a memorable experience.



How we can help all grade levels!

Essay contests -

Writing an essay on "What Freedom Means to Me" or "What the Flag Means to Me" not only allows a student to express his or her thoughts, but includes using learned writing skills. This effort becomes fun when attached to a contest.

The contest details (theme, rules, and etc.) are to be finalized between you the teacher and the local Camp of SUVCW. The judging could be on content and/or grammar, punctuation and penmanship if handwritten. The contest could be between schools within a district or just one school.

How the "winner" (all win when something is learned or practiced) is rewarded is open to discussion but could include a new U.S. Flag or some other Civil War or history-related item.

Special flag programs -

Your school or class can host a "Red, White and True Blue" Day. The local Camp can share some history on the flag and rules of etiquette including raising and lowering the flag, saluting the flag, and more. Special Flag Facts fliers are available.

Special presentation on the Civil War -

Many members of the SUVCW are reenactors and/or living historians who can share a more personal look at the history of the Civil War and how it still affects us today. These programs vary in subject but can include the life of the soldier, women and their clothing, and more.

"Together...we CAN do it!"

This *service-learning* project is a winner! It combines 1) a short history lesson on the Civil War to the students, 2) an opportunity for the students to learn the character values of giving and sharing, 3) a Camp collects funds towards a local Civil War restoration project, and 4) the students can not only study history, but help save it.