

The Grand Army of the Republic and United Confederate Veterans in Southeast Missouri

by Walt Busch,

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[I] encourage the men who "saved the Union" to be of good cheer; to meet often at campfires' sing their old songs; tell their stories with reasonable exaggerations, and always cultivate the comradeship begotten of war, the charity which blesses him who gives as well as him who receives...

---General William T. Sherman, "Campfires of the G.A.R.," The North American Review, Nov 1888

Such were the sentiments commonly held by veteran groups in the 1880's. The late war was a distant, still haunting memory to many, but the days of waving a bloody shirt to rally the troops to a political cause other than veterans' benefits had waned. Unlike Illinois where Confederate organizations were rare and Georgia in which Union organizations were even rarer, Missouri, particularly Southeast Missouri, was home to those who wore the blue and those who wore the gray.

As the Civil War came to a close, Dr. Benjamin Stephenson of Illinois began an organization to promote fraternity, charity and loyalty amongst the returning Union soldiers known as the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). Immediately popular with veterans hoping for pension benefits, the organization grew. Cape Girardeau's post organized on 22 Sep 1866 as the first post in the state of Missouri and second in the nation. Unfortunately, the politics of Republican versus Democrat and Radical Republicans versus everyone quickly imbued itself into the organization and by 1870, the organization virtually disappeared from American society.

Confederate veterans got off to a much slower start. Being on the losing side and with the war a present memory throughout the 1870s, few could dare to wear the gray or butternut of their youth or fly the flag they had followed on the battlefields. Only southern women dared to express their allegiance to the cause, mainly through the decoration of soldiers' graves and gatherings for annual memorial services. Decorating graves quickly expanded into public gatherings in which picnicking in cemeteries and speechifying by local politicians became major components. Thus, supporters of the Lost Cause had a limited political voice during this time. By 1889, Radical Republicans had virtually disappeared from the landscape; the notion of a noble Lost Cause was gaining ground even in the north; and Confederate veterans started wearing the gray once again.

The GAR never really disappeared, but it took the members almost a decade to reorganize and expunge most of the politics from the group. By 1882, Missouri had its own department again and on 21 June 1884 the Union men of Cape Girardeau formed the Captain Henry Justi Post 173. A few other posts rapidly sprung up throughout Southeast Missouri and up until about 1912 the organization continued to add posts.

GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC POSTS IN SOUTHEAST MO

NUMBER	NAME	LOCATION	COUNTY
46	Perry V. Fletcher	De Soto	Jefferson
99	Gen. Ord	Richwoods	Washington
100	Franklin Shanks	Lutesville (Marble Hill)	Bollinger
114	Robt. L. McCook	Poplar Bluff	Butler
171	James N. Whitehead	Victoria	Jefferson
173	Capt. Henry <u>Justi</u>	Cape Girardeau	Cape Girardeau
174	Maj. Hiram Gavitt	Fredericktown	Madison
184	Erich Pape	Zalma	Bollinger
205	Wilson	Doniphan	Ripley
215	Picket	Farmington	St. Francois
258	Mitchell	Gatewood	Ripley
272	Vidette	Malden	Dunklin
273	Difani	Perryville	Perry
284	Geo. G. Bryan	Belgrade	Washington
310	Hazen /Maj. A.B. Carroll	Jackson	Cape Girardeau
314	John D. Rohye/Rayhe	Cedar Hill	Jefferson
318	Jesse M. Harbin	Puxico	Stoddard
321	Caruth	Kennett	Dunklin
326	Lt. Col. J. Felix St. James	Ste. Genevieve	Ste. Genevieve
333	Gen. Jas. H. Hart	Piedmont	Wayne
346	Iron	Ironton	Iron
348	Henry C. Beckett	Mineral Point	Washington
350	Capt. Jas. Johnson (Johnston)	Arnsberg (Freidheim)	Cape Girardeau
354	Serg't Pinckney P. Mabrey	Center Ridge (Chaonia)	Wayne
365	Appleton	Appleton	Cape Girardeau
379	Capt. Tom Walker	Leora (Zion)	Stoddard
382	Commerce	Commerce	Scott
390	Jacob Yount	Heitman's Mill (Yount)	Bollinger
394	Lieut. Wm. Brawner	Patton	Bollinger
396	Frank Cole	Coldwater	Madison
402	Capt. L.F. Bierwirth	Cape Girardeau	Cape Girardeau
431	Joseph L. Wray	Egypt Mills	Cape Girardeau
439	C.M. Anderson	Advance	Stoddard
448	Com. Foote	New Madrid	New Madrid
451	Dexter	Dexter	Stoddard
457	Warren T. Stewart	Morley	Scott
464	Capt. Mace	Centerville	Reynolds

475	Gov. Andrew	Birch Tree	Shannon
478	New Union	Gamburg	Ripley
484	W.D. Porter	Hendrickson	Butler
486	C.S. Conover	Bonne Terre	St. Francois
488	L. Stevenson	Pocahontas	Cape Girardeau
498	Maj. Montgomery	Ardeola	Stoddard
503	Wm. Crockett	Doe Run	St. Francois
518	Wm. Broadwell	Bertrand	Mississippi
543	S.S. Bell	Festus	Jefferson
558	Garretson	Poplar Bluff	Butler
579	U.S. Grant	Pilot Knob	Iron
581	Dexter	Dexter	Stoddard
590	Capt. Hendricks	Poplar Bluff	Butler

Confederate veterans finally began their own nationwide organization in 1889. Up to that time, they really couldn't fly their flag or wear their uniforms in public. By 1887, the power of Radical Republicans had waned and we find Missouri electing a former Confederate General, John S. Marmaduke, as governor. Primarily the United Confederate Veterans (UCV) aspired to protect Confederate disabled soldiers, widows and orphans; preserve relics and memorabilia, and preserve the service records of their men, besides having fraternal functions. The Federal government refused to recognize their service as service to the United States, so the UCV had to convince individual states to provide pensions and soldier homes for their aging membership. The UCV never would come close to 600 posts that the GAR had in Missouri, but by 1900 they had 80 Camps throughout the state and had already established a home for aged Confederate soldiers and their wives at Higginsville, MO.

UNITED CONFEDERATE VETERANS POSTS IN SOUTHEAST MISSOURI

Number	Camp Name	Location	County
460	Maj. J. Parrot	Morley	Scott
712	Crow	Farmington	St. Francois
761	Col. Ben Holmes	Greenville	Wayne
779	Col. Solomon G. Kitchen	Dexter	Stoddard
780	Stonewall Jackson	Poplar Bluff	Butler
789	Col. William Jeffers	Marble Hill	Bollinger
790	Capt. S.S. Harris	Jackson	Cape Girardeau
791	Col. Amos C. Riley	New Madrid	New Madrid
792	John P. Taylor	Kennett	Dunklin

793	Col. I.N. Hedgepeth	Doniphan	Ripley
805	Col. Lowe	Fredericktown	Madison
# Not Known	Bloomfield	Bloomfield	Stoddard

By 1915 both organizations were losing members at a rapid rate due to the fact that even the youngest veteran would have already turned 60. By the 1940s, only a handful still lived in the area. One of the last members of either the UCV or GAR to pass away was GAR member Joseph Jackson Briggs of Sikeston. Briggs served during the war as a private with company E, 51st Illinois Volunteer Infantry, mustering in on 13 Feb 1865 in Chicago and mustering out on 25 Sept 1865 at Camp Irwin, TX. Briggs died on 21 June 1945. He was buried at Oak Grove Cemetery near Charleston.

The aging soldiers recognized the inevitable demise of their organizations and promoted groups to carry on in their places. The United Sons of Confederate Veterans (present day Sons of Confederate Veterans) organized in 1896, while the Sons of Veterans (currently Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War) had been founded some fifteen years earlier. The Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War followed the Sons of Union Veterans and established itself in 1885. The Daughters of the Confederacy organized in 1894 from many of the southern graves and memorial associations joining together.

As of this writing in 2012, two real sons of Civil War soldiers still live in the Southeast Missouri area. Luther Ortho Lucas is over 100 years old and still living in Washington County and was a son of a Confederate veteran. Herb Gremseispacher, the son of a Union veteran, was born 93 years ago and retired to Poplar Bluff.