

FOREWORD

After being just a dues-paying member for a number of years, I finally became active once again when I consented to being elected Post Adjutant. I was reelected to this post in 1992. Because of health reasons I had to struggle to finish out my term. As much as I enjoyed this office, I had to ask not to be nominated for reelection.

About this time three things happened that resulted in the writing of this history. The meeting hall was scheduled for a thorough cleaning and painting; the then historian decided not to renew his membership; and I got interested in the history of the post which was to be 75 years old on December 1, 1994.

So I asked to be nominated for the office of Historian. Even before I was elected, I started to work on the history when four large boxes containing just about everything were delivered to me. After sorting this all out, it was apparent that first a master membership listing was needed. This was done by listing each member, past and present, on a separate sheet with as much information as was available. There are over 800 pages involved, and they are housed in two volumes.

I used only one footnote in writing this history and that was only because I ran out of space. When referring to the minutes of any particular meeting, instead of a footnote I would set the meeting date in parenthesis. Of the works in the bibliography, I drew heavily on "A History of the American Legion" by Richard Seelye Jones, especially in chapter 3 describing the formation of "The American Legion." I also incorporated practically all of Arthur Graf's history of the Post researched and written by him in 1976.

Although not complete, this history is as complete as possible under the circumstances. A number of the minutes are missing and others probably not written up. For sure, the listings of the District Commanders and Division Commanders are incomplete. There are undoubtedly some errors, most probably from misreading the material available.

I wish to thank all of you who were helpful in writing this history. My special thanks go to Adjutant Eugene Krupala and Finance Officer Emil Frietsch and his wife, Alice. And a big ten to my daughter, Jennifer Prihoda, for the unenviable job of doing the typing.

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Post Historian
July 1994

1. IN THE BEGINNING

Many, many years ago, it is believed that man lived in caves. His lifestyle was very primitive, with much of his time spent in hunting for food. His weapons were wooden clubs and various combinations of wood and stone. He was a part of a clan, or a number of clans in some cases, and each of these clans claimed certain hunting areas. Often, disputes arose, and fighting developed.

In time, man was able to harness fire, and it is presumed that he spent the early part of the night around these fires discussing the day's hunt or the battles in which he participated. This was a sort of veterans organization, not in the true sense, but in the sense that he was willing to sit down with his fellow man and hold orderly discussions.

Later in history, after possibly many other such type discussion groups, King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table were organized. There was more order to this cabinet-like organization, but was very limited as to the number of men eligible to participate. In addition to relating battle stories, this group planned ahead the operations of its next adventure.

As the United States was developing, she was involved in a number of wars -- the French and Indian Wars, the American Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Mexican-American War. And in our backyard the Texas war for independence was won in 1836. There is no evidence that a veterans organization came into being after any of these wars. There exist the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the American Revolution, but these are made up of descendants of service men who fought in the Revolution. Similar organizations were formed after the Texas Revolution, and all of these organizations are active today.

The true veterans organizations came into being after the War Between the States (Civil War) with the Grand Army of the Republic and the Confederate Veterans of America being established. Also, the Spanish-American Veterans was formed after the Spanish-American War. However, these ceased to exist after the last veteran of each died. The oldest existing veterans organization was founded during the time of the Spanish-American War, the Boxer Rebellion in China, and the Philippine Insurrection at the end of the 19th century. This is the Veterans of Foreign Wars. This organization is comparatively small because membership requires overseas duty during wartime.

A number of attempts were made after World War I to set up veterans' societies -- soldiers and sailors councils (which barred officers), World War Veterans, Inc., Combat Veterans of the A.E.F. (which was in a way similar to the

Veterans of Foreign Wars), and several others. But they all failed to survive. A small organization, the Disabled Veterans Association, was organized in 1922 and it still exists today.

The largest veterans organization, "The American Legion," came to life on March 17, 1919, after the idea was brought forth at a preliminary meeting on February 15, 1919. The first full year of membership showed 843,013, with Texas accounting for 24,498.

2. EARLY WARS

Before 1873, Schulenburg did not exist. Where present day Schulenburg is located was just farmland -- open fields and grazing land. This was part of the Stephen F. Austin grant from the Mexican government. The first men to settle in Fayette County were Buckner, Powell, and Jesse Burnham in 1822. More settlers followed, mostly from the southern states. A great many came from Germany and Austria at a later date -- first the Germans, and then the Czechs.

Indians were present to a large extent. In the late 1830's, the Indians attacked the Lyons family at sundown, killing Mr. Lyons and capturing his 8 year old son, who lived twelve years with the Indians. He was allowed to visit his mother and decided not to go back to the Indians. There were other instances of Indians killing settlers.

Since Texas was part of Mexico until 1836, no one from this area was involved in the French and Indian Wars, and the American Revolution, or the War of 1812. However, in the Texas Revolution, a large number of men from Fayette County participated. In the very first encounter on June 26, 1832, Captain Wm. J. Russell of Fayette County commanded the schooner Brazoria. He attacked the Mexican garrison at Velasco. The ground attack was led by John G. Robison and his son, Joel W. Robison.

The Texans at the Battle of Gonzales on October 2, 1835, were under the command of Colonel H. Moore of Fayette County. And at the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836, a cavalry company of scouts was under the command of Captain Henry W. Karnes of Fayette County. At that battle, Joel W. Robison was one of the captors of General Santa Ana. There were, no doubt, many others from Fayette County present at these battles as well as at the Alamo and at the signing of the Texas Declaration of Independence on March 2, 1836.

In 1842 the Mexicans harassed the settlers along the border and came into Texas as far as San Antonio under the leadership of General Woll. They were met and defeated by 300 mounted men under the command of Colonel Matthew Caldwell at Salado. A company of 53 men from Fayette County led by Nicholas Dawson was annihilated -- 41 dead, 2 escaped, and 10 taken prisoner of which four were wounded, one later dying in prison. A retaliatory expedition was sent against Fort Mier with a large number of men taking part. They finally had to surrender and were taken prisoner into Mexico where they escaped but were recaptured. Every tenth man -- 17 in all -- was shot. A joint monument to these two forces is erected on the square in La Grange.

No doubt men from Fayette County served during the Mexican War in the late 1840's, but no mention of it has been found.

Lyons, sometimes called Lyonsville, was located about one mile south of present-day Schulenburg on part of the league of

land (4428 acres) granted to Kesiah Crier (Cryer) in 1831 by the Mexican government through Empresario Stephen F. Austin at San Felipe de Austin. DeWitt Clinton was named postmaster on May 22, 1846, and the town was established in 1857. It hit its peak in 1860, and declined rapidly after the end of the War Between the States (Civil War). Lyons prepared to support the Confederacy and the Lyons Mounted Riflemen were formed with Captain A.J. Murray in charge. Other men went to La Grange to enlist. John Crier Taylor enlisted in the Confederate Army, but was excused from active duty to develop a repeating rifle he had been working on. This he finished just before the war was over. Someone else patented his invention under the name of "Gatling Gun."

High Hill is located three miles northwest of present-day Schulenburg and was a combination of three communities, the oldest being Blum Hill organized in 1847, the other two being Wursten and Oldenburg. Present-day High Hill is located at the Oldenburg site. In 1858, the name High Hill was given to this area so that a Post Office could be established.

It was difficult for the German settlers to understand the reasons for the war between the states since they worked their own land and were not slave owners. Some men refused to fight for either side, with some hiding from officials and some going to Mexico. Some were allowed to haul cotton to Mexico instead of serving in the Confederate Army, who, with scouts, had military status. However, many from the High Hill area did serve in the military, most of them with the Confederacy.

Joining the battery of artillery commanded by Edmund Creuzbauer and Charles Welhausen were: John Bruns, Ferdinand Fahrentold, Ernst Goeth, August Richter, William Schwartz, Otto Templin, Edward Schubert, and Edgar Merrem. Ferdinand Fahrentold died of wounds suffered on May 11, 1864, at the Battle of Calcasieu Pass.

Creuzbauer's battery, C.S.A. was organized in Fayette County in 1861 by Edmund Creuzbauer, a former Prussian artillery officer. It consisted of about 150 men, 4 cannons, 72 horses and 39 mules. It served as both light and heavy artillery at Fort Brown, Sabine Pass, and other points in Texas and Louisiana. In May, 1864, at Calcasieu Pass, it attacked and captured two Union gunboats. During a 75 minute fight, one boat was hit 65 times. Wm. Kneip was killed and three of the wounded later died. Captain Creuzbauer soon after that resigned and his brother-in-law, Captain Welhausen assumed the command.

Henry Meyer served in Company B of the 2nd Texas Infantry in the Confederate Army. Charles Bittner, whose daughter married Henry Meyer's son, was conscripted into the Confederate Army in Captain S. Alexander's company in La Grange, but escaped to Mexico from where he went to New Orleans to join the 1st Texas Cavalry of the Union Army.

Others to serve from this area were Christian Baumgarten under General Magruder and George Schleichach.

George Schlebach served in the Confederate Army from September 26, 1862, to June 9, 1865, with some of that time as a prisoner in Illinois. He died on April 20, 1891, and was buried in an unmarked grave in the old High Hill cemetery. On September 14, 1991, a memorial and dedication service was held at his grave for the presentation of a grave marker by the U.S. government. This headstone is the first in history to be issued to a Civil War Confederate veteran buried in Fayette County. George Schlebach was the great grandfather of Adolf Ulrich, retired, Sergeant-at-Arms of McBride Post No. 143.

Other military units organized in La Grange during the Civil War were:

- Fayette Guards -- Captain A.R. Gates
- Rough and Ready Rebels -- Captain Ben Shropshire
- Company raised by Ira G. Killough
- Company raised by B. Timmon; later commanded by S.C. Iazard
- Company raised by Duff Brown
- Company raised by Captain M. Cook
- Company of Conscripts raised by Captain Victor Sladezyk

The town of Schulenburg was founded because of the expansion west of Houston of the Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railroad (later the Southern Pacific Railroad). The depot was known as "Schulenburg Station." A map of the square mile area set aside for a town was filed at the county courthouse in La Grange on October 20, 1873. A post office had already been established on January 13, 1873. Schulenburg was officially incorporated on May 24, 1875. Much of High Hill, including some of the buildings, moved to Schulenburg.

In 1898, America again found itself at war -- this time with Spain. The following companies were formed in La Grange during this period:

- Company H, 1st Texas Infantry
- Troop H, 1st Texas Cavalry
- Troop C, 1st Texas Cavalry
- Troop G, 1st Texas Cavalry

Men from the Schulenburg area serving in the Spanish-American War were: Andrew J. May, Dr. I.E. Clark, Dr. William Wallace Walker, Henry Sengelmann, Bill McKinnan, J.P. Gibson, Fred Bittner, Anton Stavinocha, Roy H. Hall, and Ernest Russek.

Then came World War I -- "the war to end all wars," "the war to make the world safe for democracy." The United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, and many casualties were suffered until the armistice was signed on November 11, 1918. Many young men from the Schulenburg area volunteered or were drafted, with a large percentage of them going overseas. There were a total of over 5,000,000 men and women in the service during this period.

3. "THE AMERICAN LEGION" IS BORN

The first extensive effort to form an inclusive society of veterans of the A.E.F. in France was made through members of the following groups because they had greater freedom of movement:

Young Men's Christian Association
American Red Cross
Salvation Army
Knights of Columbus
Jewish Welfare Fund
Corps of Chaplains

The very Reverend Charles H. Brent, an Episcopal bishop, was Senior Chaplain of the A.E.F. Under his leadership "Comrades in Service" was formed, but it was not too successful. Then opportunity sprang up for representatives of twenty different segments of the A.E.F. to meet together and discuss the general welfare of the army. After the armistice morale had declined and there were many A.W.O.L.'s and other troubles into which soldiers were getting. The problem was getting 2,000,000 military home after they had done their job. Twenty Reserve and National Guard officers were ordered to Paris to meet with some regular and intelligence officers to consider how to improve the morale. It started a program that was to carry the formation of the American Legion. The first meeting was held in Paris on February 15, 1919, and the twenty officers were:

Lt. Col. Francis R. Appelton, Jr., Second Army
Lt. Col. G. Edward Boyton, 82nd Division
Lt. Col. Bennett C. Clark, Ex 35th with 88th Division
Lt. Col. Ralph D. Cole, 37th Division
Lt. Col. D. J. Davis, Ex 28th Div. attached to G.H.Q.
Lt. Col. Franklin D'Olier, Q.M., S.O.S.
Col. W. J. Donovan, Rainbow Division
Lt. Col. David M. Goodrich, G.H.Q.
Maj. T.E. Gowenlock, Ex 1st Division with 1st Army Corps
Col. Thorndick Howe, A.P.O. Department
Lt. Col. John Price Jackson, Peace Commission
Maj. Delancey Kountze, G.H.Q.
Lt. Col. R. W. Llewellyn, 28th Division
Capt. Ogden Mills, Ex 6th Div. attached to G2, S.O.S.
Lt. Col. Benjamin Moore, 82nd Division
Lt. Col. Theodore Roosevelt, 1st Division
Lt. Col. R. C. Stebbins, 3rd Army Corps
Maj. R. C. Stewart, 1st Division
Lt. Col. George A. White, Ex 41st Div. att. to G.H.Q.
Lt. Col. Eric Fisher Wood, Ex 83rd with 88th Division

Lieutenant Colonel Roosevelt, 26th Infantry, 1st Division, was the eldest son of the twenty-sixth president of the United States. He had been wounded in the leg and gassed at Soissons.

He again served with the 1st Division in World War II as Brigadier General in Normandy on June 12, 1944.

Lt. Col. Roosevelt invited the officers to have dinner with him at Allied Officers' Club, Rue Faubourg Honore on February 16, and all attended. After the dinner he talked about forming a veterans' society with everyone being enthusiastic about it. It was brought out that Russia's surrender to Germany and the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 freed about 1,000,000 German troops to move to the Western Front and was one of the main concerns of this group. It was agreed that a veterans organization should be formed and should be all-inclusive of those who served in American uniforms at home as well as overseas; it should be civilian and not military; and it should be composed of man-to-man membership regardless of rank. It should also formulate principles of its own and be democratic in form.

It was decided that two organizational meetings were to be held -- one in France and one in the United States, with Lt. Col. Roosevelt to proceed to the United States for organization there. It was planned to meet in Paris with both officers and enlisted men from each combat unit and from each major unit of the services of supplies as delegates to the caucus. It was a problem to get enlisted men to Paris and they almost had to be smuggled in. A dozen members of "Stars and Stripes" were allowed to register, but only five showed up.

The delegates assembled on March 15, 1919, and the meeting was called to order by Eric Fisher Wood. Bennett Charles Clark was elected Chairman and Wood Secretary. Committees were formed to report at the next meeting, which was held on March 17. A brief temporary constitution was adopted. After considerable discussion, the name proposed was "The American Legion." As there had been at least two recent organizations with this name that had ceased to function, waivers and clearances would have to be obtained.

The committee set up to name a city in the United States in which to complete organizing could not agree on one. Finally, a second committee was named and they recommended that a general congress of veterans be assembled in the United States on November 11, 1919, at 11:00 a.m.

An executive committee was appointed as follows: Milton J. Foreman of Chicago, Chairman; George White, Secretary; and Richard C. Patterson, Assistant Secretary. They were to promote an organization that would not take form until the following November and had no funds, no office, no staff, or no literature.

In the meantime, Roosevelt was organizing the servicemen who had not gotten overseas. The caucus met in Shubert-Jefferson Theatre in St. Louis on the afternoon of May 8, 1919, with 1100 delegates present. The name committee also adopted the name "The American Legion." The meeting place selected was Minneapolis, Minnesota on November 11. The constitution presented was also short. And Frank White, William H. Curtiss, and Redmond C. Stewart separately wrote preambles which were

so much alike that they were combined to make the preamble adopted. Since then only one change was made when in 1942 the word war in clause five was changed to wars to make membership open to veterans of World War II.

Department and Post Charters were issued before the convention in Minneapolis, and these were eligible to send delegates to the national convention. Dues were collected at 25¢ per capita for the balance of 1919.

At the first national convention, held in Minneapolis beginning November 11, 1919, Harry D. Lindsley of Dallas, Texas, was Chairman, having been elected so at the St. Louis caucus. Franklin D'Olier was elected as the first National Commander, his term of office to begin after the convention adjourned. Alvin Owlsey was elected National Commander at the national convention in New Orleans in 1922, the first from Texas.

The preamble to the constitution, which is recited at the beginning of each meeting, tells why "The American Legion" was organized. From its beginning it was set up to help veterans get legislation favorable to them passed by Congress. In 1919, with the veterans returning from overseas, most with very little money, there was the problem of finding jobs. And with all the wounded being returned, all hospital space was soon filled to capacity. Government agencies at that time to help veterans were practically non-existent. These problems could not all be solved at once, but by being organized, the Legion was able to influence Congress to set up programs to help the veterans, both financially and physically.

From the beginning, the Legion favored a strong military force consisting of a fairly large standing army and a Reserve and National Guard force to back it up. They did not want to be caught unprepared again, but they were not able to fully convince Congress of this. However, Congress did get away somewhat from its isolated stand and passed a peacetime draft in 1940. But America was far from being fully prepared when Pearl Harbor was attacked on December 7, 1941.

All that is required to join "The American Legion" is to have been on active duty at the proper time, have an honorable discharge, and pay the current dues.

"The American Legion" is an organization of self-discipline among its many Posts. The only requirements laid down are that each Post pay its state and national dues and avoid any violent breach of the national and state charters. Bulletins, directives, and guidelines are sent to the posts and these may be followed in their entirety, partially, or not at all. There is no requirement to have regular meetings or to keep minutes, but when meetings are held, the uniform rule is to open all sessions by advancing the national colors.

4. "MCBRIDE POST NO. 143" IS BORN

On December 1, 1919, a meeting was held to organize a branch of "The American Legion," with 27 ex-servicemen attending. Captain A. Schlafli, Commander Company I, gave instructions on how and why to organize. It was agreed to organize a post to be known as "Schulenburg Post." The following officers were elected:

Commander -- Joe Stelzig
Secretary -- Rudolph Seeberger
Adjutant -- F. W. Ueckert
Sergeant-At-Arms -- Fred Kautske

Meetings were to be held on the first Monday of each month, and Captain Schlafli gave his permission for the post to use the armory as its meeting place. The Adjutant was instructed to apply for a charter carrying the names of 29 members. The charter was received in February 1920 and Schulenburg was assigned Post No. 143. The names of the charter members were:

Ralph F. Baumgarten
Alfred F. Flocke
Geo. C. Fowlkes
Horace E. Glass
Frank J. Haas
Freddie J. Kautske
Charles Krook
Wm. J. Lichnovsky
Alfred P. Moser
R. Roeder
W. J. Schaefer
Chas. Schindler
Fred J. Schindler
A. Schlafli
Rudolph Schlottman
Emil Schulz, Jr.
Herbert T. Schulz
H. A. Schulz
R. G. Seeberger
Alex Sengelmann
Chas. Sengelmann
David Shapiro
Herman Stanzel
Jos. Stelzig
F. W. Ueckert
Charles Ulrich
Valentine Vleck
Robert Vogt

The time for meetings was changed (03-14-20) to 3:00 p.m. on the first Sunday of each month. There was some discussion of forming an auxiliary, but this was relegated to unfinished business. Total annual dues were set at \$3.00 (12-05-20),