

THE AUXILIARY VOICE

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE AUXILIARY TO SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

Happy New Years to all! Each New Year allows us to start fresh with our endeavors. Will you dedicate more patriotic time as we celebrate United States of America's 250th Birthday? Will you participate more often as an Auxiliary sister? We all have lots to be thankful for to our veterans and our service men and women. Could one of your actions involve visits to Soldiers' Homes or VA Hospitals in your area?

Did you think of a New Years resolution involving the ASUVCW? During the winter months we, especially those of us in the northern States, would prefer to stay home to avoid the snow, cold, and icy weather. That is the time I read about our American history, stories of our heroes or do research. I also plan on sewing catheter bags for the VA hospital, cross stitch, and create quilts. How can you use your gifts?

Another resolution is to work more with our auxiliaries, communicate, and participate with our sisters. To do that, I need to know how I can help, participate, put on workshops, or communicate with our Auxiliaries. Feel free to call me, email me, or send a text. Include the place, time, date. February starts my travels: Lincoln Birthday in Washington DC, Florida encampment Feb 20-21. Share your activity dates and encampment dates. I do not have a personal aide so please contact me directly with your information.

The Autumn Newsletter had an article from our Historian, that will explain the purpose of the "Yellow Ribbon" campaign presented by the Chief of Staff members (see page).

As you mark important dates on your calendars, reserve the dates July 30-Aug 1 for our National Encampment at the Aspire Hotel or Eisenhower Hotel in Gettysburg ,PA. If you have not attended any National Encampments, please don't hesitate. It is a beautiful, inspiring affair. There are many PNPs that's can explain the procedures and your presence matters to our future. Be part of our history.

I wish you well with your resolutions and hope to hear of your activities.

Danielle Michaels
National President



National President's Report

Wreaths Across America at Wood National Cemetery celebrated December 13 started off as a cold (single digits) wintery day. The snow lay as a continuous blanket encompassing all the graves as the ceremony began. Civil Air Patrol Color Guard members presented the Colors and then lay the wreaths from the branches of the military and the POW. Taps was sounded and all present were asked to place wreaths on the many graves. I was privileged to honor 5 veterans by saying their names out loud, present them with a wreath and render a salute of respect. Other Auxiliary members and Sons presented their wreaths at the same time.



After participating in Wreaths Across America at Wood National Cemetery, Auxiliary #4 and K. Pier Badger Camp #1 drove up the hill to the Zablocki VA Hospital. The caravan of cars unloaded the many gifts, coffee, snacks, and blankets. We transferred the items to 5 wheelchairs to help us transport the gifts to the Palliative care unit. After checking in at the nurses' station, we were able to walk the halls, stopping in each room, presenting the veterans with Christmas cards, a blanket, and bag of goodies. Each veteran was thanked for their

service, our Sons asked them which branch they served in and assisted in wheeling the items around. At the nurses' station we delivered extra blankets, coffee, bottles of deodorant, skin creams, and shampoo and conditioner. The nursing staff was given protein bars, a box of chocolates, and snacks as a thanks for taking care of our veterans. Our youngest Camp Son, age 11, held a fund raiser to put together all the goodie bags that were presented. Because of the combined efforts of the Sons and Aux., we were able to bring the holiday spirit to their unit.



National Vice-President

I pray that everyone had a wonderful holiday season with family and friends. As we shift into the New Year I would like to remind everyone that now is when all those spring and summer events are being planned. Oftentimes since we are a non profit, a table/booth can be set up for little to no cost. It is a great way to meet new people and possibly gain new members. Historical societies are also a great place to set out brochures or information about our great Auxiliary as well.

Last month I asked members to share ideas that they had for recruiting. I received some great ideas to share with you. One idea was a tea social to have with the wives, daughters, grand-daughters, and significant others of Sons Camps. I thought this was an



amazing idea to encourage fraternity between the Sons and Auxiliary. Another one was to place information at Women's Places such as Salons, Nail Care, and waxing establishments. I

have given several talks at libraries and to other historical groups in the area that have sparked some interest in the organization, I had several ladies who set up at craft sales who were fundraising for their auxiliary and set out information on those tables as well. I think one of my favorites was "just ask." Talking to people and seeing your excitement for the organization sparks a lot interest for people. Share the joys of being a sister of our order with others and see their face light up as much as yours does when you talk about all the great things that our Auxiliary does. Thank you to all the sisters who shared the ideas with me. They are all great and educational.

Does your local Auxiliary have a FaceBook Page or Instagram Account? Setting them up is easy and a great way to spread the news of the Auxiliary. Share pictures from events and post about upcoming events. The pages are easily shared with all members and prospective members can see the local work and sisters in action.

As always, I am easy to get in touch with if you have questions or activities to report. Please text or email during the day and I am available evenings and weekends by phone.

Hope Parker PDP

National Vice President

Phone: 315-720-2911

51 South Hamilton Street, Jordan NY 13080

National Charitable Activities Chair

Hello Sisters,

Happy New Year!!! Hope everyone's holidays were wonderful.

My name is Vicki Weiss, I live in Michigan and am the State Secretary/Treasurer. I am also your National Charitable Activities Chairperson.

Be sure to keep track of all your miles driven, money spent on Auxiliary activities, Blood Donations, Volunteer Hours, and Material Donations. See Charitable Activity Report Form A10 for your individual Auxiliary activities. State Charitable Activities person will use form D10 for a total sheet for your state.

After your State Encampment is over, PLEASE send your D10 report to me at

.Vicki Weiss
1420 Gerry Drive
Jackson. MI. 49202.

Thank you. Hope to see many of you in Gettysburg.

In Faith, Charity and Loyalty.

Vicki Weiss

National Charitable Activities Chair

National Officers 2025-2026

Go to the asuvcw.org website for email addresses of the following officers:

National President
National Vice President
National Treasurer
Council 1
Council 2
Council 3
Chaplain
Press Correspondent
Supply Officer
Historian
Co-Counselor
Co-Counselor
Personal Aide

Danielle Michaels, PNP, WI
Hope Parker, PDP, NY
Amy Miller, PDP, OH
Rosemary Martin, PNP, Ches
Julie Huttick, PAP, TN
Connie Horning, PDP, MI
Coleen Swafford, OH
Barbara Lynch, DP, OH
Jane Graham, PNP, OH
Denise Oman, PNP, WI
Allison Pollitt, PNP, WI
Stephen Michaels, PCinC
Ramona Greenwalt, PNP, OH

The position of Chief of Staff has not been filled. The PNP's realize that this is an important office that raises funds for the National Order. They, as leaders of the ASUVCW, have decided to make sure that the duties are fulfilled.



National Chiefs of Staff

– DONATIONS REQUESTED! –



Your 2025-2026 National Chiefs-of-Staff, who constitute all Auxiliary to Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War Past National Presidents (PNPs), request donations from anyone, especially each Department and each Auxiliary to raise funds for the National Auxiliary.

Please send your donations made out to the National Organization ASUVCW and note it For Chiefs-of-Staff Fund to either National Treasurer Amy Miller or a Past National President who will be attending the 2026 National Encampment (e.g., Danielle Michaels, Nancy Hilton, Jane Graham, Linda Kronberg, Denise Oman, Ramona Greenwalt, Rosemary Martin, etc.). Most of their addresses are available in the Members Only section on the ASUVCW website, <https://asuvchw.org>, under ASUVCW Living Past National Presidents. If you need the password, please contact Rosemary Martin 301-682-7336. One who is missing on the website and approved her address to be available in this newsletter is Rosemary Martin:

Rosemary Martin

8209 Skipwith Drive

Frederick, Maryland 21702

The Chiefs-of-Staff position has a very important function in raising of funds for the National Auxiliary in that the National Organization ASUVCW depends on these donations to continue to function in terms of operating expenses.

Also, 50/50 drawing tickets will be drawn Saturday evening, August 1, 2026, at the banquet at National Encampment in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Once \$1,000 is raised, the pot will start over for the second drawing. Tickets will be \$5 for 6, \$10 for 13, and \$20 will give you 31 tickets!



Lastly, we need items to sell/raffle/silent auction for the Chiefs of Staff table at the National Encampment! Again, please contact a Past National President as above who will be attending the National Encampment if you have an item to donate. Hope to see you in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania!

Rosemary Martin, PNP



National Patriotic Instructor

Happy New Year to all! As your National Patriotic Instructor, I was busy in November for Veteran's Day celebrating in Jackson, MI. It was very cold and windy but all those present were able to properly celebrate the day. December found me helping with Wreaths Across America in Hudson, MI. — again a cold and windy event. We celebrated the Marine Corps Birthday at Ann Arbor, MI Veteran Hospital passing out goodie bags to our service men and women. In January, I spent time with Veteran's helping to get them the benefits they deserve for serving our country.

I'm now looking for donations of cash or things to sell at the MI Department Meeting in April and at National in Gettysburg in July.

Nancy Patton

National Patriotic Instructor

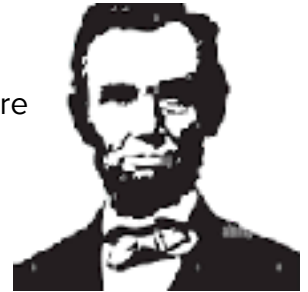


National Press Correspondent

ASUVCW activities of fall and the holidays are now wonderful memories of Remembrance Day, Veterans Parades, Wreaths Across America, social gatherings and making some of the delicious recipes shared in the wonderful Auxiliary Christmas Newsletter (access under Communications at asuvcw.org)! Wouldn't you like to share those memories nationwide with your Auxiliary sisters on the National Auxiliary facebook page? (Address: <https://www.facebook.com/asuvcwNational>) Please send photos with text to me at bglynch5041@gmail.com so that we may enjoy those memories with you.

Many of you will be planning or attending dinners in honor of President Abraham Lincoln's birthday on February 12th. I know some auxiliaries are planning joint events with their SUV Camps. Some are holding mid-winter gatherings. There seems never to be enough time at Department and National Encampments to connect socially while we conduct the business of our Order. Help us stay in touch with one another throughout the year by sharing photos of your activities. I look forward to hearing from you!

Barb Lynch,
National Press Correspondent, DP Ohio



2026 National Encampment

The National Encampment of the Allied Orders of the Grand Army of the Republic will be held in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, July 30-August 2, at the Eisenhower Hotel and Conference Center, which includes the Aspire Hotel in which the ASUVCW will be meeting on July 31 and August 1. Please wear your whites!

A link for the Aspire Hotel soon will be available on the ASUVCW website, <https://asuvw.org> under "NATIONAL ENCAMPMENT."



A tour of the Gettysburg Battlefield is planned for Thursday morning, July 30. Keep checking the ASUVCW website for updates. Hope to see you in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania!

Sister Anthony O'Connell Auxiliary



Back Row: Kim Villalva, PDP; Shari Milburn, Dept OH Press Correspondent; Sarah Milburn; Karen Schwarz, Nat'l Newsletter Editor; Wanda Leaman; Jenna Osborn, Dept Chief of Staff; Teri Dunlap; Front Row: Barb Lynch, Dept OH President, Nat'l Press Correspondent; Wanda Langdon, PNP, Nat'l Webmaster, Dept OH Counselor; Joyce Vogel; Judy Brown, Dept OH VP and Personal Aide

On a very cold Saturday, December 13, 2025, as the snow began to fall, a large group of people gathered in Spring Grove Cemetery, in Cincinnati, Ohio, for a Wreaths across America celebration. The snow came down but spirits were high as members of Sister Anthony O'Connell joined the crowd to place 1,330 wreaths on graves of veterans. SAOC Member, Jenna Osborn, is the Wreaths Across America Location Coordinator for Spring Grove Cemetery.

Spring Grove has a special section where 999 Civil War veterans are buried and each grave received a wreath. At a different cemetery, the Department of Ohio President, Barb Lynch, placed a wreath on the grave of her husband, who died last year, to honor his service.

All in all, it was a moving day! Moving in the sense that sisters, members of the local DAR, and others, were impressed by the sacrifice of those men and women who served and in some cases, gave the lives for their country. It was also moving as everyone was eager to move back inside to get out of the cold!



Wreaths arrive and must be unpacked.



Denny & Judy Brown



Kim Villalva, PDP, Judy Brown, Chapter Treasurer & Department VP, Jenna Osborn, Chapter President, & Wanda Leaman, Historian





On November 16, SAOC members, Jenna Osborn, President; Judy Brown, DVP, Treasurer. PAP; and Barb Lynch, Ohio DP, PAP, Historian; participated in the funeral of Kerry Langdon, husband of PNP Wanda Langdon. Other members of the Chapter and their spouses were also present. Kerry and Wanda shared a love of history, patriotism, and family heritage. Together they participated in several lineage and patriotic organizations. Kerry was a proud member of the Gen. William H. Lytle Camp #10, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, where he served as Camp Commander, and Past Department Commander of the Ohio Department, and the Cincinnati Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution.



Yellow Ribbon Society



Become a Charter Member of the Yellow Ribbon Society

We believe in: HOPE for the future of our ASUVCW — SUPPORT financially for the projects of the ASUVCW — REMEMBRANCE of the “Boys in Blue”

History of the yellow ribbon: The support of the yellow ribbon dates back centuries. In the 17th and 18th centuries women would wear ribbons to signify love and fidelity while waiting for a loved one to return from battle. During the Civil War era soldiers’ families displayed yellow ribbons to show loyalty and remembrance. During World War I and World War II the families hung the yellow ribbons in their windows. 1970’s families tied yellow ribbons around trees to welcome soldiers or loved ones home. 2026 the National Guard still calls their event prior to deployment a “yellow ribbon event” and along with the financial and legal necessities, the family is given a yellow ribbon to use to honor their soldier while they are gone.

How do I become a member of the Yellow Ribbon Society?

1. You must be a member of the Auxiliary to Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.
2. Dues are \$15.00 per year with check made payable to the National Organization ASUVCW.
3. Subordinate Auxiliaries may join by donating \$20.00 per year.
4. Departments may join by donating \$25.00 per year.

All individual members will be given a yellow ribbon to wear proudly on their badge. All Auxiliaries and Departments will be given certificates of appreciation at the National Encampment in Gettysburg this summer.

If you are interested in joining some of the others who are already sending their donations, please fill send your check to : **Jane A. Graham, PNP; 626-2 West Vine Street; Alliance, OH 44501.** Be sure to include your name, full address, email, Auxiliary name, and Department. This year’s proceeds will be donated to the National Chief of Staff fund.

Louisa Volker Auxiliary #215 at Large

The ladies of the Louisa Volker Auxiliary #215 (At-Large) in Missouri have had an extremely busy season. First, October 3rd & 4th some of our members helping with the Liberty Days annual event at the National Stars & Stripes Museum in Bloomfield, Missouri. Friday was a school day and had over 500 public, private, & home-school students come through the timeline from 1760s-1970s. Next, October 10th saw us at the Governor Thomas C. Fletcher Historic House for their annual "Ghost Walk. This is a historical character night with a tour of the



house, followed by a night-time Civil War encampment / living history (with our brothers from Fletcher Camp #47). We also held our annual bonfire/potluck meeting on October 13th, where we inducted two new sisters into the auxiliary – Jill Doty and Nancy Wood.

Following this, on October 18th, two of our members (along with our counselor, Chris Warren, Fletcher Camp Commander) helped with the Farmington, Missouri Historical Cemetery tours by portraying the Gen. James R. McCormick, his wife Caroline, and

their daughter Martha, for this historic night. The next day, October 19th, after planning, fundraising, re-planning, lots of paperwork, and more than four years of preparation, we (along with Fletcher Camp #47) were able to hold a monument dedication to our namesake – Louisa Volker Macklind (who was the first female U.S. Army Military Telegraph Operator during the Civil War). This was held in Potosi, Missouri and attended by National President Danielle Micheals (and Past CinC Steve Michaels); WRC National President Kathy Bower (and Aide-de-Camp of Logan's Brigade, Ed Bower); SUVCW Missouri Department Commander, Mark Coplin; members of Louisa Volker Macklind Tent #24 D.U.V.C.W.; SUVCW members of Fletcher Camp #47, St. James Camp #326, & Grant Camp #68; and Louisa Volker Macklind's descendants (as well as about 50¹⁰ members of the public).



Then, November saw us participating in back-to-back Veterans Day Parades (November 1st & 8th). The earlier one was in Farmington, Missouri and the second in DeSoto, Missouri. We always try to honor our area veterans by doing both parades to cheering crowds lining the streets. We took a short break to allow our members time with their family and friends for Thanksgiving, but were



soon back at it. December became busy as well, as on the morning of December 6th we joined our brothers in the St. James Camp #326 & Fletcher Camp #47 to march in the annual Sainte Genevieve, Missouri Christmas Parade. This town is the oldest settlement west of the Mississippi River. That evening, we also joined the Fletcher Camp and marched in the DeSoto, Missouri Christmas Parade

as well. The next day was Sunday, December 7th, and as we remembered Pearl Harbor Day, we also did our civic duty and rang bells for four hours to fund raise for the local food pantry at Walmart in DeSoto, Missouri. Our Civil War attire tends to attract attention (along with our brothers in their uniforms) and we helped raise \$2,000 in one afternoon.



Finally, as we went to wrap up our year, we held our annual Christmas Banquet (with Fletcher Camp) and installed our officers for the 2026 year. With our brothers and families, we had 36 in attendance. Then, on the evening of December 12th, two of our members & our counselor (Twyla Warren & Abigail Warren – along with Christopher Warren) assisted in the Hunter-Dawson State Historic Site's Victorian Candlelight Christmas Tours. This was held in the 1860s historic mansion located in New Madrid, Missouri. They helped portray part of the family explaining Christmas traditions, details of the home, and the actual family who lived in the house during the 1860s, while in period attire. That evening had 205 visitors come through the historic site.



Well, as we draw to a close, we want to wish you all a Blessed New Year in 2026. Until next time!

Twyla Warren,
Co-Founder, Past President, & Treasurer
Louisa Volker Aux. #215 (At Large), Missouri



Sarah Emma Seelye Auxiliary

Sisters of the Sarah Emma Seelye Auxiliary, Texas, joined the Edward Lea Camp of Houston to participate in the Battle of Galveston Memorial event in January. President Val Reyes laid a white rose at the Edward Lea grave and Secretary Jana Marsh read the Poem "The Unknown Dead". The weather was a perfect 70 degrees! National Commander in Chief, Kevin Tucker, was in attendance at the beautiful service and we were privileged have him in join us in a picture. Sisters in attendance were Val Reyes, Jana Marsh, Norma Pollard, Lisa Riley and Jill Schneider (who was also representing the Dames of the Loyal Legion of the US).



Officer of the Day, Herb Powers and Sisters Lisa Riley, Vali Reyes, Commander in Chief Kevin Tucker, Jana Marsh, Norma Pollard and Jill Schneider



In November the Auxiliary once again joined the camp in a service to recognize Capt Mahlon E Davis. A grave marker was added at the foot of his grave which outlined the veterans military service.

Sister Lisa Riley, at the right, members of the Daughters of the Union Veterans and the Edward Lea Camp

Antietam Auxiliary #3 - Department of the Chesapeake



December 13, 2025 Smithsburg, Maryland. Auxiliary to Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (ASUVCW) Department of the Chesapeake President Denise Thompson organized Wreaths Across America at Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church in Smithsburg, Maryland. She and ASUVCW Past National President Rosemary Martin led the Wreaths Across America Ceremony along with Mt. Bethel's Pastor Andrew Brown inside the church prior to the laying of the wreaths in the cemetery. Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) Past Commander-in-Chief Kevin Martin participated in laying a wreath at the grave of the Last Living Union Soldier, Thomas H. Shelton of Frederick County, Maryland.

ASUVCW Past National President Rosemary Martin (left) and ASUVCW Department of the Chesapeake President Denise Thompson leading the Wreaths Across America Ceremony prior to the laying of wreaths outside at Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church in Smithsburg, Maryland



ASUVCW Department of the Chesapeake President Denise Thompson, SUVCW Past Commander-in-Chief Kevin Martin, and ASUVCW Past National President Rosemary Martin at the grave of the last living Union soldier of Frederick County, Maryland, Thomas H. Shelton.



ASUVCW Past National President Rosemary Martin (left) and ASUVCW Department of the Chesapeake President Denise Thompson conducting the laying of the wreaths at Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church's cemetery in Smithsburg, Maryland.

National Supply Officer

Happy 2026

This year has been very busy and with the start of the celebration of the United States 250th Birthday many new items are making their way to the shelves of the National Supply Officer.

Beautiful blue jackets complete with embroidered logo have made their way to several closets this holiday season. Sisters who attended the Remembrance Day Ceremonies in Gettysburg tried on the samples and their orders were delivered in time to be wrapped under the tree. This is a special order item and more information is available from the National Supply Officer.

Vest samples are also available.

Red T-shirts with embroidered logo are available in various sizes.

We also have sets of two beautiful books: WOMEN OF THE GRAND ARMY and MEN OF THE GRAND ARMY, both authored by Past Commander in Chief

Robert J. Wolz. Original price for each book was \$39.95, but if you purchase from the National Supply Officer, they are \$30.00 each or \$55.00 for the pair.



Beautiful bow-shaped pins with patriotic accent stones are available for \$5.00 each. These would look great on a jacket lapel or make a wonderful gift.

Don't forget to order your necessities...membership cards, rituals, and badges for membership, or officers who are changing positions.

Please remember that all prices quoted do not include postage. Shipping cost will be added to each order.

If you have any questions do not hesitate to call

PNP Jane A. Graham

330-680-9062

If I am not available leave a message and I will call you back.

Membership at Large

Sisters, please be reminded that your 2026 dues are now due. A check or money order for \$25.00 should be in the hands of the MAL Coordinator PNP Jane Graham no later than February 1, 2026. Please consider making a monetary donation to either the National Chief of Staff and/or the National Patriotic Instructor at the same time. All checks should be mailed to:

Jane Graham, PNP National MAL Coordinator
626-2 West Vine Street
Alliance, Ohio 44601

Auxiliaries at Large

HAPPY 2026

All Secretaries from Auxiliaries at Large are required to follow the same form schedule as a Secretary from a subordinate Auxiliary. That Sister is required to file all documents with their local Department Secretary in the timely manner required by the list of dates on the chart. This is the very first document on the National website, under forms for Auxiliaries. The only difference to be noted is that if you are Secretary for an Auxiliary under a Department your paperwork is sent to the Department Secretary...if the Secretary for an Auxiliary at Large, your paperwork is filed with the National Secretary utilizing the same dates and forms.

That being said, you should already be collecting your membership fees and having had your election and installation of Officers. Your installation should be recorded on form AO1 and is due

January 30, 2026.

If you have any questions feel free to contact me at 330-680-9062. If I am not available, feel free to leave a message and I will call you back.

Looking forward to seeing many of you soon.

Jane Graham, PNP

A Refresher Course in Badge Wearing!

Wearing an ASUVCW badge involves pinning the official membership badge on the left breast of your clothing, signifying membership and honoring Civil War heritage.

How to Wear It

1. Placement: Pin the badge on the left side of your chest, on the lapel if wearing a jacket, or in a similar prominent spot if not.
2. Occasions: Wear it at meetings, parades, and other events where you want to identify as a member of the Auxiliary to Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.
3. Respect: It's a symbol of honor, so wear it appropriately and with respect for the organization's mission.



Forms, Forms, Forms, Lists, Lists, Lists

Here we are getting ready to celebrate the 250th birthday of the United States and the 145th anniversary of the founding of our beloved organization and I come to all of you



Sisters, but especially those who hold the title of Secretary (whether it be subordinate Auxiliary or Department). We are in the process of applying for and obtaining a 501C3 designation from the Internal Revenue Service for our Auxiliary. This has required many hours of effort by your committee, but we are now asking for your assistance.

Step 1. Review the dates that specific forms and documents are required to be filed. (List can be found on the National Website at the bottom of the page under *forms* and then choose the level you need...Auxiliary, Department or National.) File necessary reports and forms as needed.

Step 2. Use the appropriate form for the information you are providing. DO NOT use old forms as they do not always require the same information.

Step 3. When filing your per capita tax, please provide a complete and updated **roster** of membership. Information for what is required on this roster can be found on the instruction page of form AO2.

Step 4. Have these documents in the mail in plenty of time, so that your Department Secretary can have these documents in plenty of time to complete her part and have them in the hands of the National Secretary by her due date.

Step 5. If you initiate a Sister, drop a Sister, or have a Sister pass, please file the Status Change Report as soon as possible.

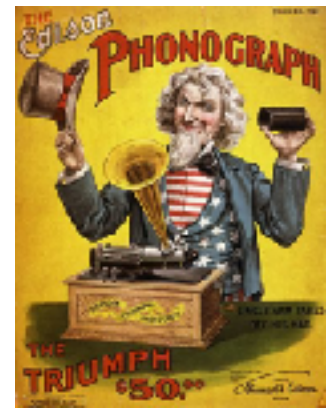
Thank you for your assistance in all of this. If you have any question or problems please contact me and I will walk you through it.

Nancy Hilton, PNP

Department Graves Registration Officer Department of the Southwest, SUVCW

Echoes of Memory: The Phonograph and Its Comfort to Union Civil War Veterans

When the last volleys of the Civil War had long fallen silent and the soldiers of the Union army had settled into the quiet twilight of their lives, a new sound began to fill the air of veterans' homes and public halls across America—the rich, resonant tones of the phonograph. More than a machine, the phonograph became a lifeline of memory and comfort for the aging men and women who had endured the war's hardships. From the late 19th century through the 1940s, countless Union veterans found solace in recorded music. These devices—often donated by patriotic groups or caring citizens—became symbols of compassion, connecting elderly veterans to the songs of their youth, to their comrades, and to the America they had helped preserve.



The Union veterans were early adopters of this new technology. Remarkably, as early as 1878, just a year after Thomas Edison's invention of the phonograph, a Decoration Day festival in San Francisco featured a phonograph in its grand musical program. A local newspaper advertisement described the event: "Musical Festival! Pavilion. Decoration Day Grand Chorus and Orchestra! Bouquet of Artists! Great Array of Solo Talent! The Anvil Chorus! With Full Chorus, Big Drum, Anvils and Artillery. Grand Military Escort! Edison's Phonograph! Admission 50 cents. Boxes \$5. Reserved Seats." The phonograph was presented alongside live orchestras, choirs, and military pageantry, demonstrating how quickly Union veterans and patriotic organizations recognized its potential for public commemoration and ceremonial grandeur.



At veterans' hospitals and homes, the phonograph became an essential companion. In Los Angeles, Mrs. J.E. Ware of Hollywood began a fundraising drive in the 1920s to provide phonographs for the bedridden Union veterans of the Sawtelle Soldiers' Home. "The cheerless condition of two of the wards impressed her," one article read. The sick men "begged to try to find phonographs to help the bedridden ones pass the time." Similarly, in Dayton, Ohio, the Auxiliary to the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Auxiliary No. 89, presented a phonograph to the National Military Home, showing that Americans recognized the need for comfort and companionship through music.

The Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) and the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War played a central role in promoting this comfort. In 1926, Joseph B. Williams, Commander of the Kit Carson

Camp of Florida, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, presented the headquarters building of the GAR with a “handsome phonograph” for use by all patriotic orders holding meetings there. Earlier, in 1896, a GAR post in Ohio hosted a phonograph concert in the town hall, with proceeds benefiting the soldiers’ monument fund. One editorial from the time suggested expanding contributions to place the monument in a public park rather than the cemetery, noting that “a nice monument [would be] as ornamental as the band stand.”

The importance of records and music to veterans continued well into the 20th century. In 1946, the Woman’s Relief Corps, sent gifts to the veterans at Sawtelle Hospital, including phonograph records featuring harmonicas and violin string music. Reports noted that the veterans themselves requested these genres, highlighting not only their enduring love of music but the essential role it played in daily life. The collections of records and instruments allowed veterans to maintain connections to the songs, hymns, and instrumental tunes that had shaped their youth and sustained them through decades of change.

At the Old Soldiers’ Home near Fort Snelling and Minnehaha Falls in Minnesota, Union veterans listened to an Edison Phonograph boasting a collection of over one thousand records, including three hundred Blue Amberols. “They have become so familiar with the selections,” one article noted, “that they can tell the titles and artists’ names as soon as the first few notes are heard.” Some, “between the ages of eighty-five and ninety,” even danced the tango to the Edison Concert Band. Music, it seemed, could awaken not only memory but vitality. The veterans’ favorite selections included patriotic pieces such as *Marching Through Georgia* and *Spirit of Independence March*—songs that had once stirred armies and now stirred aged hearts.



Modern science has since confirmed what these old soldiers instinctively knew. A 2019 study published in *Frontiers in Psychology* found that listening to familiar music can enhance cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, and social connection in older adults, even reducing symptoms of depression and loneliness. For veterans who had witnessed a lifetime of change—from cannon fire to radio waves—music provided continuity. It kept minds sharp, emotions soothed, and memories alive. The phonograph’s rhythmic hum, the soft crackle of the needle, and the rising strains of a march or hymn all became part of the healing soundscape of aging. For many Union veterans, the phonograph filled the silence that followed comrades lost to time.

Sources:

- Los Angeles Evening Citizen News* (Hollywood, California), October 3, 1922, p. 2.
- Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, Ohio), June 2, 1925, p. 8.
- The Edison Phonograph Monthly*, December 1913, p. 5.
- Frontiers in Psychology*, “Music Listening and Older Adults: Cognitive and Emotional Benefits,” 2019.
- Tampa Bay Times* (St. Petersburg, Florida), March 24, 1926, p. 20.
- The Summit County Beacon* (Akron, Ohio), March 19, 1896, p. 3.
- The Bakersfield Californian* (Bakersfield, California), July 10, 1946, p. 6.
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