85th Anniversary

CHAMBERLAIN POST, NO. 1, G. A. R.

The second post under Gen. John A. Logan founded the Grand Army of the Republic, eleven returned soldiers from the Civil War met here on April 10, 1865, and organized the first Post in Vermont. Those signing the charter that memorable night were W. G. Cummings, P. D. Blandgett, H. K. Ide, F. L. Babcock, G. P. Moore, L. B. Heald, E. F. Griswold, A. K. Colburne, A. L. Miller, Wheaton Livingston and C. F. Spaulding. Capt. Blandgett was chosen Commander, being later one of the four members of the Post to head the state organization as Department Commander.

The post was named for George E. Chamberlain, a brave officer and a man of noble character. Within 12 days after Lincoln's first call for volunteers he had raised a company of 112 men of which he was chosen Captain. Joining the Eleventh Vermont he was advanced to Lieutenant-Colonel, in command of his troops in the Third Battalion at Cold Harbor and Petersburg. On August 22, 1864, he was shot from his horse mortally wounded.

For the first dozen years the Post carried on with little increase in membership or interest, but it took a new lease of life when it was re-organized January 8, 1889, with that gallant officer Gen. Horace K. Ide as Commander. In the years that followed it soon became the largest Post in Vermont and when Capt. E. L. Harvey was Commander in 1889 it reached its highest mark with 208 members. In the 70 years' existence it has had 929 soldiers in its membership.

Many will recall with a patriotic thrill those camp fires that Capt. Hovey staged in Music Hall as the closing feature of a full program on Memorial Day. A choice musical program was interspersed with speeches, and, believe it or not, on one occasion there were 15 spellbinders that were limited to four minutes each, and the oratory was all over in an hour. Many local speakers appeared as Memorial Day orators, but sometimes outside talent was secured. Prof. Charles D. Hazen of Columbia, a distinguished former resident, gave a scholarly address, and at the writer's suggestion the Post had in 1907 Peachment's most distinguished son, Col. George Harvey, then editor of Harper's Weekly and the North American Review. He gave a stirring address on "The Soldiers of Two Republics."

Heroes of two wars appeared at the Post's invitation on other occasions. Gen. John A. Logan addressed 1200 people in Music Hall at the close of a fair to aid the Woman's Relief Corps and declined any remuneration as his contribution to a week's fair that had receipts of $2000. After the Spanish-American war Capt. Charles E. Clark, the hero of the Oregon trip around Cape Horn, told inside history at a reception tendered him in Union Hall where the Post had headquarters until after the disastrous fire. How Admiral Dewey learned from a British officer that he had cut only one cable at Manila and how the British Ambassador casually remarked to our Secretary of the Navy where the Spanish fleet was hidden in Cuba were two bits of news behind the news.

Through the good offices of Congressman William W. Grout two Parrott guns were secured from the War Department and Charles F. Carpenter, A. W. Roberts and Capt. Edward F. Griswold easily raised $100 to set the cannons on Courthouse Square.

With only four members Chamberlain Post is still today the largest Post in Vermont and the only one that maintains regular bi-monthly meetings, a record maintained since 1889. Its loyal members are Department Commander Harvey S. Powers of Lyndonville, Charles A. Heyer, Moody H. Evans and George C. Nelson, all of St. Johnsbury. We all salute this great quartette in the closing words of Col. Harvey's St. Johnsbury address: "All honor, then, to you veterans of the great war who still live, and to those who have died, peace everlasting."

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