

Sidney L Smith

post #24 of

The American Legion



2005 - 2006

HISTORY OF
Sidney L Smith

post #24 of

The American
Legion

ABERDEEN, SOUTH DAKOTA

FOR 2005 TO 2006

Compiled by: Charles D Strom Post Historian

Introduction

History The American Legion

A group of twenty officers who served in the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in France in World War I is credited with planning The American Legion. AEF Headquarters asked these officers to suggest ideas on how to improve troop morale. One officer, Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., proposed an organization of veterans. In February 1919, this group formed a temporary committee and selected several hundred officers who had the confidence and respect of the whole army.

When the first organizational meeting took place in Paris on 1517 March 1919, about 1,000 officers and enlisted men attended. The meeting, known as the Paris Caucus, adopted a temporary constitution and the name The American Legion. It also elected an executive committee to complete the organization's work. It considered each soldier of the AEF a member of the Legion. The executive committee named a subcommittee to organize veterans at home in the US.

The Legion held a second organizing caucus in St.

Louis, Missouri in May 1919. It completed the constitution and made plans for a permanent organization. It set up temporary headquarters in New York City and began relief, employment, and Americanism programs.

Congress granted the Legion a national charter on September 16, 1919. The first national convention, held in Minneapolis, adopted a permanent constitution and elected officers to head the organization.

The charter was amended in 1942 to admit World War II veterans and again in 1950 to include veterans of the Korean War. Later it included soldiers who had served in conflicts in Lebanon/Grenada, Panama, Persian Gulf and has been open since August 2, 1990 until congress closes the dates.

The Legion's major concern has always been the veterans. It played an important role in the creation of the US Veterans Administration and the enactment of the GI Bill of Rights for World War II and Korean Veterans. Also important has been the community, youth, and Americanism.

The American Legion national headquarters is located at 700 N Pennsylvania St, in Indianapolis, Indiana.

History South Dakota Department of The American Legion

The South Dakota Department of The American Legion was organized simultaneously with the national organization. South Dakota Adjutant General William A. Morris named Theodore R. Johnson of Sioux Falls to select a committee of representative exservice men to attend the first caucus in St Louis, Missouri, May 810, 1919.

After the first national caucus, a temporary South Dakota organization was formed at Vermillion on May 15, 1919 with Theodore R. Johnson as chairman. The first state convention was held in Sioux Falls on July 14 and 15, 1919. Myron L. Shade of Mitchell was elected the first Department Commander. Fortyeight posts had been organized by convention time.

The South Dakota Department now consists of about 260 posts with about 26,000 members.

One of the American Legion programs with South Dakota roots is American Legion baseball, now a nationwide program. It was conceived at the state convention at Milbank in 1925. Frank Sieh of Aberdeen originated the idea. A granite monument at Milbank commemorates the

formation of Legion Baseball there.

The South Dakota American Legion Department Headquarters is located in the Codington County courthouse in Watertown. The South Dakota Legion contributed to the construction cost of that courthouse and thus was granted rentfree space in the courthouse for the life of the building.

History Sidney L Smith, Post #24 Aberdeen, SD

Like most towns in the great plains, Aberdeen was started as a railroad town. Charles H Prior, the town site agent for the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St Paul railroad filed the first papers at the land office in Watertown, part of the Dakota Territory, for a town to be located at the spot where his employer's rail line was expected to intersect the Chicago Northwestern's proposed line. Alexander Mitchell, president of the Chicago, Milwaukee, & St Paul, named the town-to-be Aberdeen, after his own hometown in Scotland. The first plat of land was deeded on the 3rd of January, 1881 and the first train arrived July 6th with the post office established that August. In 1885, Aberdeen was named the Seat of Brown County.

The railroad continued to play a large role in the growth of Aberdeen, after the initial two lines met in 1881, seven more were added so that by 1906 nine sets of tracks lead into what would become known as the Hub City; four lines for the Chicago, Milwaukee, & St Paul, two lines for the Chicago Northwestern, one line for the Great Northern, and two lines for the Minneapolis & St Louis.

The convergence of rail lines made Aberdeen a natural stopping point for troop trains delivering recruits to the US Army in both World Wars, and when the USO and Red Cross built a canteen in the Milwaukee Rail depot in 1943, they couldn't have known that it would become one of Aberdeen's most memorable locations. From it's opening on the 14th of Aug until just before Christmas of 1943, the canteen provided over 150,000 free meals to troops passing through the station, a remarkable endeavor, but the real history was still to come.

Local farmers, still eager to contribute to the canteen despite being well past the harvest season, donated pheasants from recent hunts to the canteen and started a trend that would lead to the canteen becoming unofficially renamed the "Pheasant Canteen". With an average of over 500 soldiers per day traveling through the depot, the Pheasant Canteen continued to give a free meal to every serviceman, highlighted by the now famous pheasant sandwiches. Any soldier arriving at the depot on their birthday would also receive a special cake, and there was a decorated tree each Christmas and colored eggs each Easter. When the Pheasant Canteen closed on the 31st of March, 1946, between 510,000 and 600,000 servicemen had been feed, all at no cost to themselves or the military. Every meal

was donated by the residents of Aberdeen and 40 other towns within a 75 mile radius.

Of course, support for the serviceman was nothing new to the Aberdeen area.

The VFW had formed a presence here as early as 1903 (fourth oldest continuously active post), and The American Legion followed in 1919 when the call first went out to constitute posts. By 1921 the American Legion was running their own veterans employment program in the city, and had a theatrical troupe that performed annual plays at the local theater, along with a post band.

The post chose the name of Sidney L Smith, in honor of Private First Class Smith who was killed in action while serving as a dispatch runner in Soissons France, July 20th 1918 as part of Co. L, 18th U.S. Infantry, 1st Div.

While born in Canton, Il (1896) and having gone to military school in Roswell, NM,

Sidney L Smith had moved to Aberdeen in 1915 and had joined the military as part of the South Dakota national



Sidney Laurence Smith

guard. He was stationed at Camp Pontis in Mobridge, SD when he transferred to the 148th Machine Gun Battalion. He later transferred again to the 1st Infantry Division, 18th Brigade, Company L where he saw action at the Battle of Cantigny, and was in the trenches for 70 days at Montdidier, France. In Fosh's big drive, Smith's company took part in the battle of Chateau-Thierry, and then Sessions, where he was listed as missing in action for 9 months before Congressman Royal C. Johnson assisted the Red Cross' efforts to determine his fate. Smith's status was changed from MIA and a telegram was sent to his family from the adjutant general's office at Washington, DC, it reads as follows:

"Pvt. Sidney L. Smith, Infantry previously reported severely wounded in action between July 18 and July 24, now reported Killed in action July 20." [1918]

Thanks/Acknowledgments

Sincere thanks is given to all of the following for all their help in providing the information used to in this introduction:

Charemon Dunham, Historian for the Department of South Dakota, for the information on the national and state organization's histories.

The Alexander Mitchell Library and the Dakota Prairie Museum, in Aberdeen, SD, for the information on Aberdeen's origins and military history.

The-roundup, Honolulu, Hi (<http://www.the-roundup.com>), for all their information on Sidney L Smith in their family genealogy.

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Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion

For God and Country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes:

To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America;

to maintain law and order;

to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism;

to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars;

to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation;

to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;

to make right the master of might;

to promote peace and good will on earth;

to safeguard and transmit to Posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;

to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

Sidney L Smith

post #24 of

The American Legion



The Year that was 2005

by Charles D. Strom, Historian

Chapter One: Roster of Post Officers



2005 Post Commander - Al Sebert



First Vice Commander - Dick Adams



Second Vice Commander - Ken Stuart



Second Vice Commander - Steve Nemmers



Adjutant - Gene Schumacher



Chaplain - Greg Vande Kamp



Sergeant at Arms - Curt Mislitz



Assistant Sergeant at Arms - Sid Beckler



Finance - Rich Kezar



Historian - Dale Strom



Service - Tom Gohn

Chapter Two: Post Committee Chairs



Americanism - Dale Strom



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Athletics - Tom Perrizo



Children and Youth - Steve Nemmers

Chapter Three: Post Chronicle

Commander Al Sebert and the 2005 officers for post #24 started their term on the 18th of April, in the year of our Lord 2005 when they were duly elected by the members of the Sidney L Smith post, convened in regular session at the VFW building, 821 Circle Drive, Aberdeen, SD. The complete slate of officers, all nominated by committee and elected with a unanimous ballot, are as follows:

<u>2005 Post Officers</u>	
Commander	Al Sebert
1 st Vice	Dick Adams
2 nd Vice	Ken Stuart ⁺
Finance	Rich Kezar
Chaplin	Greg VandeKamp
Sergeant @ Arms	Curt Mislitz
Asst sgt@Arms	Sid Beckler
Historian	Dale Strom
Employment	Gary Warne
Athletic	Tom Periso
Americanism	Dale Strom
Service	Tom Gohn
Adjutant*	Gene Schumacher

* Adjutant Schumacher was appointed by the commander and approved by the floor in the May regular meeting.

+ Ken Stuart had to resign for health reasons in Nov and Steve Nemmers was appointed and confirmed by the floor to fill his chair

The new officers had to hit the ground running, as the saying goes, with one of the Post's most man-power intensive months starting just weeks after their election.

May 3rd (Tue) was the presentation of citizenship medals to two students from Aberdeen Central High School, followed just a week later by the same awards for Aberdeen Roncalli students.

Orientation was held for the local students selected to attend Boys State, and members of the prior class attended to talk about their experiences. Parents and Boys Staters alike found the session informative and helpful.

Throughout the month the post continued to sell joint raffle tickets with the VFW for a boat, motor, and trailer to raise funds for Baseball. By the time the drawing was held at the horse races on Memorial Day, over 6,000 tickets had been sold and just over \$1800 was raised to split between the two programs.

The extra requirement of having ticket sellers for the boat raffle made it harder than normal to line up enough workers for the horse races, but unfortunately the point was made moot as the weather failed to cooperate. Chill weather and rain made the track unsafe for jockey and horse alike, and the races were called off early twice and canceled entirely once. When there were races, however, there were Legionaries present; letting chilled

race fans know that the American Legion was still a part of the community and still retained our affiliation with this long running event, even if not at the levels we had before turning the operation over to the Aberdeen Area Horseman's Association.

With all the cold, wet weather that had plagued us in May, it was an even more welcome blessing when Memorial Day dawned bright and (relatively) clear.

As per tradition, the first service of the day was held at 8:00am before the monument of The Grand Army of the Republic at Riverside Cemetery. After Chaplain Vande Kamp's invocation, the roll call of each era was read; 1123 graves of fellow servicemen - from the Civil War through the Persian Gulf - each marked the previous Thursday with a 4"x6" American Flag that legion members would return to collect later in the week.

After Commander Sebert had announced the number of interments for each era, wreaths were presented by area organizations (VFW Auxiliary, American Legion Auxiliary, Eagles Auxiliary, Girl Scout troop #168, and Boy Scout troop #51).

The Sidney L Smith color guard then rendered the 21 gun salute, and Don Mogen played *Taps*.

Roll Call, prayers, the salute, and *Taps* were also held at St Mary's Cemetery (8:45) and Sacred Heart (9:15), with Don

Whittlinger, commander of the VFW in Aberdeen, as the master of ceremonies. Where the VFW had previously posted American flags for each grave (264 in St Mary's, 262 in Sacred Heart). Don Mogan and the post's color guard performed at all three services.

Then it was on to Sunset Memorial Gardens for the main Memorial Day program. Along with the full opening ceremony (advance of the Colors, national anthem, pledge of allegiance, and invocation), the reading of General Logan's orders, and the recognition of special guests, this program included the official roll call of service members from each era, Taps, and the 21 gun salute, as well as music, a moment of silence for POWs/MIAs, and keynote speaker, before the closing ceremony (Taps, benediction, and retiring of the Colors). The keynote speaker this year was US Representative Stephanie Herseth

After the mad rush of May, June settled into a more normal pace. Several members attended “Legion Day” at Boys State to get a first hand view of one of The American Legion’s premier programs, but the main focus of June was, as always, the Department Convention.

Discussions on the floor of the post meeting in May had lead to the decision that, rather than endorsing specific candidates or resolutions in advance, the delegates would be empowered to make decisions based solely on their interpretation of the information presented at the convention.

This convention had special meaning for Post #24 as the outgoing Department Commander was Gene Schumacher, member and Adjutant of our post. As a token of thanks for his good work representing the Department of South Dakota, the post presented him with an American Eagle statuette for his desk.

Also in June, the Post decided to again pay the first year’s membership for active duty troops (at least one day served after 9-11) who’d never been Legion Members before, and decided to look into a plan presented by Todd Bitz on behalf of the Aberdeen DAV, to have all Aberdeen service organizations contribute their colors to a float for the state Vietnam veterans parade in Pierre (Sept 06). The Aberdeen DAV will provide the trailer and vehicle for the float and will contact us again as we get nearer to the date

of the parade.

The rest of the summer was a slow one for Post #24. In August we set up both at the Brown County Fair to pass out literature on The American Legion's programs and membership qualifications.

Gary Warne was the Post's sole representative at the Department Commander's Homecoming in Piedmont, but he reported that it was a well run event.

In an uncharacteristic year, brought on by the cost of travel to attend, Gene Schumacher was the only member of Post 24 to attended the National Convention in Honolulu Hawaii.

September once again saw the post participating in Northern State University's Gypsy Days parade. The commander rode in a vehicle, while two members (Chaplain Vande Kamp and Americanism chair Strom) walked along side and tossed out candy. This annual event is a great public relations opportunity for the post, and one that allows the community to see that we are still active and involved.

Another great PR program, is Monster Burger Mondays (also one of the post's main fund raisers) at the VFW. With their summer vacation over, the kitchen crews again returned to this great program in September, cooking an average of 125 burgers

for approximately 200 guests every Monday from through the end of April.

For the second year in a row, the post also invited our sponsored Boys State participants to speak at the Sept and Oct meetings.

October was the annual charity night, or turkey shoot; games of chance to win prizes and raise funds for Legion programs. A new program for these funds was also started in Oct when the executive committee allocated \$500 to a veterans support fund to provide emergency assistance to area veterans. The fund will be jointly administered with the VFW, with both commander's required to approve the dispersal of any funds, and is intended to cover minor costs for area veterans that are either not reimbursable through the county service officer, or are two time critical to wait.

The month ended on another good note when the post received a Certificate of Support from the Aberdeen chapter of the DAV, informing us that our donation had helped them to reach their goal and purchase a van to be used to transport area veterans to their appointments at the Sioux Falls or Fargo VA hospital. With many elderly veterans needing to make the three hour trip to either facility, the van is a great asset to have available and is sure to get much use.

November started on a bad note as health concerns prompted second vice commander Stuart to resign his post. His letter of resignation was read and accepted by the executive committee, and Commander Sebert appointed Steve Nemmers to replace him. This appointment was upheld by the floor at the November meeting. As the head of post activities, he was given an instant initiation too; even as the appointment was awaiting approved by the floor, the post was busy with their Early Bird membership dinner on the 10th, and the Veterans Day program on the 10th and 11th.

The annual Early Bird feed, coordinated by membership chairman Adams, provided a free supper for all members who had their 2006 membership paid up by 6:00PM on the 10th. The meal was very well received again this year with close to 200 members attending.

Activities for Veterans Day, coordinated by the VFW, spanned two days this year as Aberdeen Central High School was closed for the 11th, making their auditorium unavailable that day and forcing the public memorial to be held on the 10th. The Color Guard posted and retrieved the Colors for the event, and many legionnaires were present. Activities continued on the 11th with a dinner at the VFW post home, and the dedication of the third (and final) veterans memorial statue at the Aberdeen Regional airport.

With the local and district oratorical contests looming, the post agreed to once again provide prize money at the local level. Unfortunately this was a moot gesture in the end as no local contestants entered.

Other post business conducted in November included donating 2006-2007 calenders to go with the care packages for the 452 (deployed), also included were Legion benefits and membership pamphlets.

December was an organizational and planning month more than anything else. With the holidays and their associated travel, no major activities were conducted, but the post did make some important decisions.

First was to get involved in the Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter/EMT of the year program for the first time in recent memory. Nomination packets were issued to the four local law enforcement offices (Aberdeen City Police, Brown County Sheriff to gen

The post also provided a case of coffee, along with cookies and crackers to the Aberdeen VA CBOC (Veterans Affairs Community Based Outreach Clinic) as a thank you to all that they do to help area veterans.

January lost one of it's major events when the Oratorical Contest had to be canceled due to lack of participation. All three area high schools had been contacted repeatedly, but no interest was shown by any student.

The Law Enforcement Officer of the year almost suffered the same fate, and the Firefighter/EMT award did, as the combination of the short time frame (only three weeks had been given to each agency to pick their nominee), holidays, and uncertainty conspired to limit the returned nomination forms. The last factor, uncertainty, was the biggest as many supervisors were leery of picking one person from among their group to be singled out as "better" than the others without a history of the program to look at, and with fears that the program would not be continued in the future to allow other worthy candidates their opportunity. Despite these concerns, however, the inaugural year of the program was still a success as the post was able to name the very worthy Daryl VanDover as our 2005 LEO of the year, and received word that the Department of South Dakota had gone on to select him as the State recipient as well.

February brought an upswing in post activities with the Mid Winter Conference, Post Past Commanders Night, Service of the Four Chaplains, and the return of Government Day.

The post again had good representation at the Mid-winter, with five members attending and reporting back.

All three Aberdeen schools were provided information on attending County Government day, but Aberdeen Christian had no students in their government class and both Roncolli and Central had communication problems with the faculty in charge of setting up such a field trip taking vacations and their replacement's not following through. It was still a learning experience for the post, however; more lead time will need to be given to the schools in the future to eliminate similar problems.

Chaplain Vande Kamp organized the second annual Four Chaplains memorial service, held this year at Holy Cross Lutheran Church. Attendance was down some from last year, however, and discussions were held on making this a semi-annual event in the future.

February is also the post's traditional observance of Past Commanders Night. It was the post's 50th year hosting this event, which features a meal for all living past commanders, and a memorial for all departed past commanders and all post members that passed in the prior year.

March saw the Post's year starting to draw to a close, the Nominations Committee was formed and presented their recommendations for the next year's slate of officers at the March meeting.

The post also continued the practice of interviewing all Boys State applicants that was started the year before. Fifteen boys attended the interviews over three weekends, and all were selected to join the Journalism City student in representing Aberdeen at this year's Boys State.

The post was scheduled to present the LEO of the year award at it's March meeting, but Sgt VanDover had to attend training out of town so the presentation was moved to April.

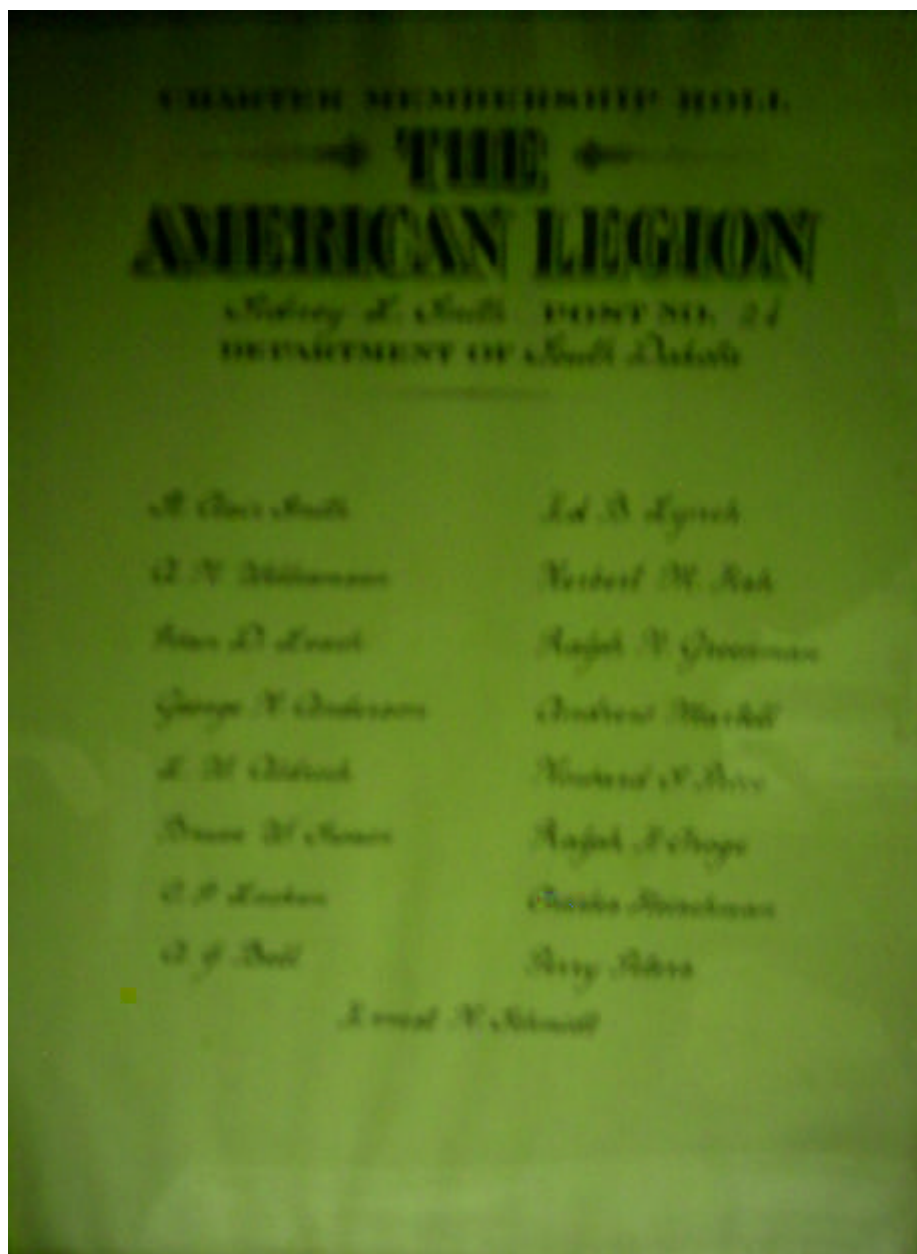
Along with the presentation to Sgt VanDover, April saw the post hosting the District 14 spring convention and the election of Officers for the new year.

Post legionnaire of the year Rich Kezar was selected to represent the district representative as well at the spring meeting, and post member Dale Strom was elected as the Brown County Commander.

Elections came at the end of the April post meeting, and officially brought an end to the post's year.

APPENDICES

Charter Members



St Clair Smith
A.N Williamson
Jordan D Leach
C J Locken
A J Bell
Ed B Lynch
Herbert M Fish
Ralph N Greenman
Andrew Martell
Howard J Price
Ralph F Troge
Charles Fleischman
Perry Peters
Ernest H Schmidt



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Sid Beckler **18**
Athletics
Tom Perrizo **21**
Chaplain
Greg Vande Kamp **17**