

**SONS OF UNION VETERANS
OF THE CIVIL WAR**



RECRUITMENT GUIDE

FORWARD

This Recruitment Guide is dedicated to our many Brothers, both past and present, who have worked toward making the **SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR** (SUVCW) a nationally recognized organization with an ever-increasing membership.

The ideas and suggestions in this guide are the contributions of the SUVCW's National Membership Committee, comprised of the Junior Vice Department Commanders and chaired by the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

The object of this guide is to provide Departments and their Camps with *tried and true* methods that have been employed to recruit new Brothers and to retain them in the Order. This guide by no means covers all of the possibilities that can be utilized for the growth of our Order. Rather, it is intended to serve as a catalyst for the exploration of new ideas and methods to aid our efforts.

Recruiting is EVERY Brother's job.

PROGRESSIVE VIEWPOINT

All Brothers are encouraged to have a basic knowledge of the SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR (SUVCW) and our relationship with the GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC (GAR) before setting out to recruit new Members, Juniors and Associates. The SUVCW offers male descendants of honorably discharged Union soldiers and sailors (plus gentlemen without *ancestry*) a unique organization within which to honor our combined heritage. Much has been done to maintain the memory of those who "Saved the Union," but the effort should be an ever on-going enterprise. We need a steady growth of the organization, to allow established local chapters (Camps) to continue their work AND to allow for the formation of new Camps in areas that have not yet benefited from the special *Purpose and Objects* of the Order.

The GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC

The idea of forming the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) was conceived by Major Benjamin Franklin Stephenson, a surgeon with the 14th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment. He and former *comrades in arms* formed the first Post of the GAR, chartered in Decatur, Illinois on April 6, 1866. This fraternal organization, dedicated to the well-being of Union Civil War veterans (and the families of those who did not survive the war), grew rapidly and spread throughout the country. Its influence would impact both public and political culture. Our nation's "Memorial Day" tradition of honoring deceased veterans by decorating their graves was initiated by the GAR on May 30, 1868.

By 1890, GAR membership exceeded 408,000 Comrades. Local Posts were eventually formed in 46 Departments (state level organizations). From this peak, each successive year began to take its toll on GAR membership. As the organization only admitted those who had been Union soldiers & sailors of 1861-1865, it was destined for extinction with the death of its last member. Recognizing its fate, the GAR officially designated the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War as its successor and legal heir. The last National Encampment of the GAR took place at Indianapolis, Indiana in 1949 with six surviving members attending.

The Order ceased to exist, with the passing of its last member, Albert Henry Woolson, who died on August 2, 1956 at the age of 109 in Duluth, Minnesota. A veteran of the 1st Minnesota Heavy Artillery Regiment, Comrade Woolson was the "*sole officially listed survivor*" of more than 2,675,000 men who answered President Abraham Lincoln's call to help *Save the Union*.

The SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

The organization that is known today as the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) is the result of several like-minded organizations combining to honor Union soldiers and sailors of the American Civil War, 1861-1865. In 1878, the Anna M. Ross Post No. 94 of the GAR (located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) formed a "GAR Cadet Corps," consisting of sons of Union soldiers, sailors and marines. It became known as the Philadelphia or Eastern Pennsylvania Sons of Veterans. About the same time, Edwin M. Earp (of Lynn, Massachusetts) formed another Sons of Veterans group that became popular in New England. In 1881, the Sons of Veterans of the United States of America was organized by Major A. P. Davis in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The organization's first annual encampment took place in 1882. Through consolidation with the Eastern Pennsylvania group, and its own growth, this particular Order grew to be recognized by the GAR as the sole organization of "Sons of Union Veterans."

At its 42nd annual encampment, the organization voted to officially change its name to "Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War," to better identify its heritage. As time and nature took its toll on the ranks of the GAR, the Union veterans came to recognize and then designate the SUVCW as legal heir to, and representative of the Grand Army of the Republic. In 1954, the SUVCW was granted a Congressional Charter by passage of Public Law 605 during the 83rd Congress.

Purpose and Objects

"To perpetuate the memory of the Grand Army of the Republic and of the men who saved the Union 1861 to 1865; to assist in every practicable way in the preservation and making available for research of documents and records pertaining to the Grand Army of the Republic and its members; to cooperate in doing honor to all who have patriotically served our country in any war; to teach patriotism, and the duties of citizenship, the true history of our country, and the love and honor of our Flag; to oppose every tendency or movement that would weaken loyalty to, or make for the destruction or impairment of our constitutional Union; and to inculcate and broadly sustain the American principles of representative government, of equal rights, and of impartial justice for all."

Eligibility

To become a **Member** or **Junior** in the SUVCW you must be male and 14 years of age or older (6 to 14 for Juniors), and have the following three points apply.

1.) Be **directly** descended (as a son, grandson, great grandson, etc.) from a Soldier, Sailor, Marine or member of the Revenue Cutter Service who was regularly mustered into, served honorably in, and was honorably discharged from (or died while in service to) the Army, Navy, Marine Corps or Revenue Cutter Service of the United States of America or in such state regiments that were called to active service and were subject to the orders of United States general officers, between April 12, 1861 and April 9, 1865.

Or – be **directly** descended from a brother, sister, half-brother, or half-sister of a Union soldier or sailor etc. (as described above), thus being his nephew, grandnephew, great grandnephew, etc.

2.) Never have been convicted of any infamous or heinous crime.

3.) You and your ancestor, through whom membership is claimed, must never have voluntarily borne arms against the government of the United States.

Many Americans have ancestors who served the Confederacy as well as other ancestors who served the Union. Membership is granted in the SUVCW as long as the ancestor who served the Union was never in service to the Confederate States of America.

Documentation

Member and *Junior* applicants are respectfully reminded that documentation of an ancestor's honorable service to the Union must accompany an application. This can be substantiated by a photocopy of: the veteran's Discharge Certificate; a written entry describing his muster-out (or death-in-service) on a "Company Muster Roll" from his regiment; an approved pension document that was issued to the veteran (or his widow & family); or a brief service record in the Adjutant General's Report from the state that your ancestor served in a regiment from.

Surviving Pension Records at the U.S. National Archives provide basic information on the military unit a soldier or sailor served with, plus information on his immediate family. Requests for this information are processed via "NATF Form 85." This form may be obtained from the Archives by telephoning (202) 501-5390 or (202) 501-5385 and then selecting the 'keypad link' to the information that you desire. Requests for Military Records require the use of NATF Form 86. Both forms list the fees for photocopies of

the records. Forms may be requested by e-mail (inquire@arch2.nara.gov). It's important to specify which form, how many are needed, and the USPS mailing address to send them to. Forms may also be obtained by writing to –

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION (NARA)
700 PENNSYLVANIA AVE
WASHINGTON DC 20408-0001

If the National Archives do not have information on file for a Union soldier or sailor, a state-level Adjutant General Report may have a brief description of his military service (if he served in a state volunteer regiment rather than in the “regular” United States military). This would then be acceptable as proof of honorable service to the Union. This type of brief service record is available from corresponding State Archives and from larger public libraries (that house the Civil War related Adjutant General Reports for various states that organized volunteer regiments).

Associates

A gentleman who is not related to a Union soldier or sailor (as described above) but still wants to help us in our efforts, is welcome to join the SUVCW as an **Associate** – provided that the second and third provisions of eligibility (as stated above) also apply to him, personally. *Associates* are welcome and encouraged to take an active part in all SUVCW activities.

[Please consult ARTICLE VII, Sections 2 and 3 of the CONSTITUTION portion of the SUVCW's Constitution and Regulations (C&R).]

Sons of Veterans Reserve

The Sons of Veterans Reserve (SVR) is the authorized military component of the SUVCW. To be eligible for and in order to maintain membership in the SVR, a Brother shall be a *Member* or *Associate* in good standing in the SUVCW.

[Please consult CHAPTER IV, ARTICLE I, Sections 1 through 6 of the REGULATIONS portion of the SUVCW's Constitution and Regulations (C&R).]

Recruiting

Each and every Brother of the Order, whether he is a Member, Junior, or Associate can be a recruiter. It's been said many times that if each of us were to recruit just one new Brother a year, our membership would immediately double and thereafter multiply. As stated in the SUVCW's "Purpose and Objects," there is much to be done and membership growth assures that these efforts will be maintained and improved upon.

Essential to recruiting success is public recognition of the SUVCW and the accomplishments of its membership. Public relations can start with any of the physical work that's done at the local level, to honor Union Civil War soldiers and sailors. Leadership officers at the Camp, Department, and National levels can then help publicize these accomplishments. The objective is to create more public recognition of the SUVCW and to provide examples of achievements that will attract new Brothers to the Order.

One such example is the work to restore a GAR Monument or other Civil War Memorial that honors Union soldiers and sailors. Rededication ceremonies should be planned that include participation by other veterans' organizations plus local and state dignitaries who attract attention from the various news media. In addition to coverage of particular functions, newspapers, radio stations, and local access television channels often extend interview opportunities to organizations such as ours.

Further interaction with other veterans' groups for Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and other observances will establish and maintain community recognition.

Efforts should also be made to establish an ongoing supportive relationship with Civil War Roundtables, Historical Societies, Genealogical Societies, and other military oriented heritage organizations, including the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS). These are potential sources of recruits. The same applies to Civil War reenactor groups in your locale.

The memberships of the other Allied Orders of the GAR [Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic (LGAR), the Woman's Relief Corps (WRC), Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War (DUVCW), and the Auxiliary to the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (ASUVCW)] are a potential source of male relatives who qualify for SUVCW membership. A referral of potential membership candidates can be of mutual benefit between the 'Allied Orders.'

History teachers at local schools often welcome speakers to address their classes. This allows an introduction of the SUVCW to a younger generation in many communities.

Camp and Department level volunteers are encouraged to actively recruit new Brothers by setting up display booths and greeting the public at community heritage festivals, county & state fairs, Civil War Roundtable expos, Civil War relic & collectable shows,

Civil War reenactments (from the local size to the large national scale events), premier exhibitions of Civil War theme motion pictures, and historical & genealogical seminars.

Passive recruiting can take place by gaining permission to set up and stock displays of our recruiting brochures at libraries and various government offices. Continuously updated webpages on the Internet can communicate what the SUVCW is all about and attract new Brothers as well. Such efforts should be coordinated between Camp, Department and National level *Communication & Technology officers*.

New Camps

The organizing of a new Camp within a Department and a Camp-at-Large elsewhere, is a major building block in the growth of the SUVCW. As the true work of the organization occurs at the local level, new Camps allow for more work to be done over a greater area. A Camp can be Chartered with as few as five Brothers who are Members of the Order.

[Please consult CHAPTER I, ARTICLE I through X of the REGULATIONS portion of the SUVCW's Constitution and Regulations (C&R).]

Retention

Retaining membership is as essential to the success of an organization as recruiting is. Each and every Brother deserves the satisfaction of knowing that his membership is important and that he is a valued part of a team. This can be achieved by good communication at all levels. Brothers who are assigned to a membership-at-large (at the Department and National levels) as well as those who cannot attend Camp meetings need to be made aware of developments in the Order and the various activities that they can take part in. Newsletters (however brief they may be) are important at all levels. Those who have Internet access can also benefit from current information provided on Camp, Department, and National level websites.

Camps are encouraged to have regular meetings and to provide programs that will boost interest and attendance from their membership. Memberships should be surveyed in order to learn areas of expertise that Brothers may be willing to share for the promotion of the SUVCW's interests, and the Order itself, overall. Brothers should be encouraged to not only take part in the SUVCW's important projects but to also take a turn with the responsibilities of an office that interests them.

In Review

- Keep in touch with the community. Be involved. Promote our organization.
- Maintain involvement in Memorial Day observances and other activities in your area.
- Support and maintain use of newsletters and updated Internet websites.
- Encourage membership participation in one or more SUVCW projects / activities.
- Publicize special accomplishments made by the SUVCW and its membership.
- Have interesting programs at Camp meetings, on a regular basis (invite the public to hear a special speaker...)
- Department officers are encouraged to tutor their Camp level counterparts in successful methods of recruiting and retention.
- Utilize a membership committee to study recruitment methods in your area.
- Promote enthusiastic and energetic leadership at all levels of the organization in order to prevent 'stagnation.'