

COLUMBIA POST NO. 706 GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC

Affiliated with St. Bernard Commandery No. 35



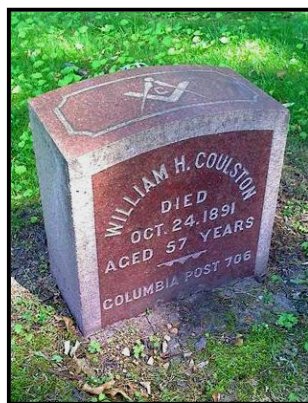
The Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) was a fraternal organization for Union Army veterans who served in the American Civil War. It was founded on the principles of "Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty" on April 6, 1866, in Decatur, Ill., by Bro. Benjamin F. Stephenson, a graduate of Rush Medical College.

Membership peaked at 490,000 in 1890, and a National Encampment was held every year from 1866 to 1949. In 1956, after the death of the last member, the GAR was dissolved and succeeded by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW), composed of male descendants of Union veterans.

The GAR was organized into "departments" at the state level and "posts" at the local level, with military-style uniforms worn by members, and assisted by a women's relief corps. Of more than 600 posts in Illinois was Columbia No. 706 of Chicago, organized October 16, 1890. Dozens of members of St. Bernard Commandery No. 35 served as officers as well as escorts to GAR memorials and ceremonials.

In 1867, Commander-in-Chief General John A. Logan established May 30th as Decoration Day, later known as Memorial Day. The occasion was used to commemorate the memory of the Civil War dead by decorating their graves with flowers and flags.

St. Bernard joined with Columbia Post in burial services at Forest Home Cemetery in Forest Park, historic Rosehill Cemetery in Chicago (right), and Union Ridge Cemetery in Norwood Park, and as parade escorts at National Encampment gatherings.



The Chicago Cultural Center (below) was formerly the dual-purposed Chicago Public Library and GAR Meeting Hall. Completed in 1897, it stands at Michigan Avenue and Randolph Street, on land donated by the GAR. Columbia Post No. 706 met here on second and fourth Tuesdays for much of its history.



A 1908 membership directory featured this history:

"The first meeting looking to the formation of the Post, was held Thursday, September 18, 1890, in the rooms of the Chicago Military Club, 125 Dearborn street, pursuant to a call of Comrade H. G. Purinton, and was attended by the following comrades: H. B. Brooks, L. W. Campbell, W. H. Coulston, Frank B. Davis, J. R. Darroch, J. G. Everest, and H. G. Purinton, all of whom came in as Charter Members, except J. R. Darroch. Excuses were received from five comrades, who were absent from the city. At this meeting the present name was adopted and the principles upon which we proposed to organize were fully and freely discussed and firmly established, as follows:

That we recognize as first and foremost the fundamental principles of the Grand Army of the Republic, but at the same time are of the opinion that there yet remains among the old soldiers, or enough of them at least, that *esprit de corps* and pride in (over)

every and all things of a military character to maintain a Post, established and conducted upon the principles which follow. In so doing, we shall show to the masses of the people that we can submit to discipline as cheerfully as in the days of '61 to '65, and by so doing help to inculcate that spirit of patriotism which is so dear to the heart of every comrade.

Columbia Post is limited in membership to 150 comrades, not from any idea of selection or exclusiveness, but because it was believed by the founders of the Post that a compact body of enthusiastic workers in the sacred cause of "Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty" could accomplish more good than a larger and necessarily more unwieldy body. And it is this pride in the Order and the Cause that prompts the comrades of Columbia Post to maintain a strict military discipline and appear on all official occasions fully uniformed and equipped, thus demonstrating that the military spirit acquired in the trying days of the war of the rebellion is not extinct."

Rev. 04.26.11 Reprints contact: oldchicagoyorkrite@msn.com



Columbia Post No. 706 Drill Corps (above), assembling to march outside Davis Business College, at the 42nd National Encampment, held at Toledo, Ohio, on September 1, 1908.

Forest Home Cemetery memorial event (middle) on June 8, 1913, along west bank of the Des Plaines River near bridge; St. Bernard members in background, beauseant next to flag.

At the Columbia Post No. 706 grave section, Forest Home Cemetery (bottom left) on June 8, 1913; monument of soldier was donated for scrap metal recycling during World War II.

Punch bowl (bottom right) presented with "compliments of the Bushwhackers" to Columbia Post No. 706 in 1896, later to St. Bernard by the Department of Illinois, on July 12, 1922.

