

THE SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR HISTORY OF THE JOHN S. TOWNSEND CAMP #108

Nestled away in the rolling hills of Southeastern Ohio is a small hamlet along the Hocking River called Frost. Not visible from the state road, Frost has the look of being forgotten by time. Among its buildings stands an authentic GAR/SV/SUVCW meeting hall, complete and untouched as if the old fellows just had a meeting the other night. It is a traditional hall with a meeting room upstairs, and a gathering room downstairs. The building is paneled with buckeye wood. It was built by GAR veterans and their sons for its intended purpose of dutiful remembrance of service for the aging boys in blue. Established as the Hiram G. Frost GAR Post #341. Camp John S. Townsend #108 of the Sons of Veterans, has the unique history of having two Union soldiers named for it. Begun in 1888, this hall has a long history of service to the citizens of Southeastern Ohio, and continues the traditions begun by the GAR, carried on the SV, and continued today by the SUVCW.

During General Sherman's famous "March To The Sea" campaign, two Union soldiers from Ohio paid the ultimate sacrifice of service to their country. Isaac Weatherby enlisted August 11th, 1862 as a private in Company K of the 73rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry. He died of his wounds on October 3rd, 1864 most likely on the campaign to capture Millidgville, Georgia. He is buried in Marietta, Georgia. John S. Townsend enlisted on Oct. 3rd, 1861 as a private in Company B of the 53rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry. He died of wounds on June 20, 1864 at Allatoona, Georgia. Most likely private Townsend received his mortal wounding at the battle of Kennesaw Mountain. Both Weatherby and Townsend were to share some coincidences; they were both from Southern Ohio; they both served in Sherman's Armies; they would both die during the Atlanta Campaign and finally both would be honored by their surviving comrades and families by having two camps named for them belonging to the Sons of Veterans of the Civil War, the legal inheritor of the Grand Army of the Republic. These two camps would be inter-connected with each other during this early history.

Present camp records indicate that meetings were held unofficially for two years in a GAR hall beginning in 1886 before the camp charter was actually granted. Then on February 23rd, 1888 a new camp was

chartered in the recently founded Sons of Veterans of the Civil War. Camp #108 would be first meeting in a rented hall in Guysville, Ohio and named for the fallen Union soldier Private Isaac Weatherby of Company K of the 73rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry. The founding members listed on the camp charter are: Parrill Bean, Nathan C. Townsend, J.M. Weatherby, M.F. Thur, Wm. Willard, Whitman Bean, S.A. Parsons, Allen Secoy, Seldon Carsey, and Hiram Hall. The membership met every two weeks and kept the minutes of the meetings which are still in the possession of the Camp.

Camp Weatherby held meetings in a rented hall in Guysville for three years (1888 – 1892). If you take a look at the records it is hard to tell what subjects were discussed. The records indicate monthly expenses like coal purchases for heat, membership dues, and membership status. There is a “blackball” record book of members who, for one reason or another, were “blackballed” out of the camp. At some point it was decided to build a new meeting hall and move permanently into it. Camp Weatherby would cease its existence and re-charter a camp with a new name; John S. Townsend #108.

On January 25, 1892, John S. Townsend #108 was chartered with its new location in Frost, Ohio. Frost is only a few miles down the road from Guysville. From 1892 until the 1930’s this camp conducted the business of the Sons of Veterans. During the Great Depression the camp became inactive. I suspect there was no money to keep it functioning during those hard days. It remained inactive until 1997 when Howard T. Frost re-activated the camp in the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. Credit must be given here to the Auxiliary of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, especially Judy Morgan, Betty Coen and May Frost, who faithfully saw to it that the meeting hall was kept in current repair.

Since the re-activation of the camp, the brothers of John S. Townsend Camp 108 have spent time re-dedicating Civil War memorials, placing and dedicating new gravestone markers for veterans who never received a stone marker or for veterans who had deteriorated markers. The camp has also collaborated with the Athens County Historical Society in bringing and hosting the noted Civil War historian Edwin Bearss for a lecture at Ohio University. The camp has also supported the Congressional bill to award an African-American Civil War veteran

who had been by-passed by recognition for his services to his country. The camp has also given guest lectures to other SUV Camps and fraternal organizations on the history of the Civil War and veteran services to the Union. Today Camp John S. Townsend does all it can in keeping the memory of the Civil War alive

Past Commanders of SUV Camp 108

Isaac Weatherby	Camp 108	Chartered February 23, 1888 Rank 6 March 1886
John S. Townsend	Camp 108	Chartered January 25, 1892

Year(s)	Past Commanders
1886-1887	Capt. Parrill Bean
1888	Capt. N.C. Townsend
1889	Capt. W.A. Willard
1890	Capt. N.C. Townsend
1891-1893	Capt. O.O. Barrows
1894	Capt. O.O. Barrows & E.E. Rusvell
1895	Capt. C.E. Doan
1896-1897	Capt. J.T. Grubb
1898	S.R. Doan
1899	W.S. Turrill
1900	R.W. Burden
1901- 1915	???????????????????
1916-1919	C.O. Richardson
1920	C.O. Richardson & Theo Rosvell
1921	Theo Rosvell & Murray Hatch
1922	Clyde Richardson
1923	Cicil Richardson
1924	Wade Richardson
1925-1926	L.A. Little
1927-1928	Clyde Richardson
1929-1930	Fred Johnson
1931	Fred D. Russell
1932-1996	Inactive Camp
1997-2003	Howard T. Frost
2004-2006	Samuel R. Booth

2007-2009
2010-active

Martin W. Lowery Jr.
James H. Lochary

Submitted by Brother Samuel R. Booth on January 11, 2008.