

OREGON DEPARTMENT HISTORY



On June 2, 1921 the comrades of five Oregon Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts got together and voted in favor of forming the Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Oregon at their first encampment together. There was no Auxiliary formed yet, and no Military Order of the Cooties yet. The beloved VFW Buddy Poppy was not even in place yet.

(Right - Carved from a piece of Oregon fir and presented to Headquarters of the Department of Oregon Veterans of Foreign Wars. Made by R.S. Glenn, member of Over-the-Top Post 81 and Senior Department Color Sergeant.)



The Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Oregon history can be looked at in a few different ways; by Department Headquarters, the comrades and staff working who worked in them, and the collection of posts around the state working to achieve the mission and goals of the VFW.



Sources for Department historical information are limited. In the last 100 years the methods of record keeping and the importance of record keeping has varied. One valuable resource that was used to find information on the Department has been the collection of rosters that stored at Department Headquarters. These rosters only go back to 1937. This could be because in 1921, with only five posts in the Department, there was no need to have a sharable list of the post officers with their contact information. With this limited information, it was easy to track the progression of Department locations, Department staff and posts since the late 1930s.

There have been nine locations for our Department Headquarters, all of them have been in Portland. Between 1937 and 1982 the first seven locations were in downtown Portland and six of them were on the west side of the Willamette River. In 1982, Department Headquarters moved from these inner-city locations to Seventeenth and Hawthorne in Southeast Portland.

After seven years at this location, the needs of the Department changed, and they moved to its current location at 124th and Halsey in Portland.



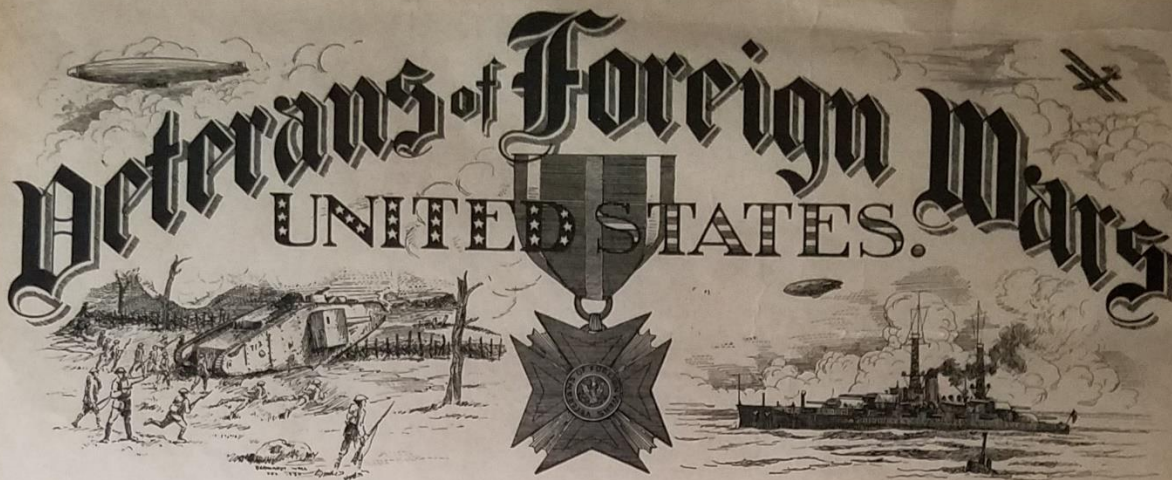
One of the most important people working at Department and for the Department is our Adjutant/Quartermasters. In our department history, since 1938, we have had fifteen Adjutant/Quartermasters. Five of our members served as Department Adjutants with three different Quartermasters when the job responsibilities were separated. Maynard Smith from Post 4273 has been our longest running

Adjutant/Quartermaster who served from 1991 to 1999 and as Adjutant from 2004 and again in 2005.

In 1921 we had our first convention, they called them encampments back then. The word encampment recalls pitching some military surplus canvas tents, cooking over a fire, and sitting on logs discussing and voting on by-laws and Department officers. However, records of this first encampment do not exist. We do know there were five chartered posts that year. They were 'Over the Top' Post 81 from Portland, 'Grizzly' Post 353 from Ashland, 'Willamette' Post 293 from Eugene, 'Linn' Post 584 in Albany and 'Marion' Post 661 in Salem. Three of these five posts are still around. Later that year two more posts, 'World War' Post 907 and the Jasper C. Lent Post 1442 were formed, both in Portland.

Over the next 60 years the number of posts in Oregon grew. In 1982 the Department could boast 164 posts with 17,080 members. After this year the number of posts started to decline but the membership was able to grow for the next thirteen years to its high of 19,661 in 1995. Since this time even though there were some years of growth, our membership has continued to decline though that does not deter us from our mission, goals and commitment to veterans and communities.

The following sections list the department members that have been elected state commanders, list the All American Commanders, our Legacy Life Members and a brief history of the Military Order of the Cooties



State Department Charter

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

BE IT KNOWN THAT, Pursuant to the Constitution, By-Laws, Rules and Regulations of the VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES, and in order to promote a fraternal, patriotic, historical and educational spirit; to preserve and strengthen comradeship among its members; to assist worthy comrades; to perpetuate the memory and history of our dead and to assist their widows and orphans; to maintain true allegiance to the Government of the United States of America and fidelity to its Constitution and Laws; to foster true patriotism; to maintain and extend the institutions of American freedom; and to preserve and defend the United States from all her enemies whomsoever; we hereby declare the Posts of the VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES now located within the State of Oregon, and which may hereafter be located within said State, to be organized as

THE DEPARTMENT OF

Oregon

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES and subject to the Constitution, By-Laws, Rules and Regulations of the VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES and of the NATIONAL ENCAMPMENT OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES and of the NATIONAL COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the Official Seal of the VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES, at New York, N. Y., this 1st day of June, 1921.

Reuel W. Elton
Adjutant General.

Robert C. Woodruff
Commander-in-Chief.



