

Post 250 celebrates 100 years of history

Hinsdale's American Legion can point to many achievements since its founding in 1919

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When Congress chartered the American Legion in 1919 and Hinsdale Post 250 was formed shortly after, the goals of the organization — as stated in the preamble to its constitution — were straightforward. And lofty.

“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 100 percent Americanism; to preserve the memories and incidents of our association in the Great War; 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.”

Post 250 had additional goals, according to a one-page article in the Memorial War Review it published in April 1920. The group was not looking for parades and recognition for its members, according to the article, but to serve as a “vital force shaping the future of our country and demanding a spirit of true Americanism from all its citizens and respect and admiration for all foreigners.”

And the Legion has done so in many ways, said Joe Craig, a 20-year member who is a past commander currently serving as judge advocate and service officer.

Caring for veterans has been an ongoing theme since the end of World War I. Craig said old post newsletters addressed the benefits that should be provided to veterans of the Great War and the Civil War. Three decades later, the topic was supporting veterans of World War II.

“It’s almost like the same discussion we’re having today about how we’re caring for the Gulf War veterans and the Vietnam veterans,” he said.

The American Legion was instrumental in helping convince Congress to pass the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944, more commonly known as the GI Bill. That bill enabled Craig to attend college after serving in the Marines during the Vietnam War. That support in turn left him with enough funds to continue his education in graduate school.

At the local level, Post 250 found a variety of ways to support members of the Armed Forces while they were serv-



George Hogrewe and other members of Hinsdale’s American Legion Post 250 are on hand during Veterans Day assemblies, such as this one at Madison School in 2017, to share their stories. (file photo)

ing and once they returned home, first from World War I and then from World War II.

Post member Don Lindsay has enjoyed researching the many ways the post, with help from village residents, supported the war effort in the early 1940s. At age 90, he’s in a position to remember much of what he’s reading firsthand.

“I can recall collecting tin cans as a kid and going house to house, supplying bags for them to put the tin cans in,” said Lindsay, who served in the Army in Korea and is chairman of the post’s 100th anniversary committee.

He’s read about residents who served as volunteer air raid wardens and conducted scrap metal and blood drives. He’s been impressed by the accomplishments of the legion’s Ladies Auxiliary, which worked with high school students to sew bandages and surgical dressings and send cookies and cakes to the troops overseas. Of course the Ladies Auxiliary is an impressive group, largely responsible for the drive to raise fund to build the Memorial Building (more to come in a future article).

Lindsay discovered one article about a simulated air raid in 1943, designed to show the devastating effects if Axis forces dropped 1,225 bombs on the village.

“Those are interesting side stories that you pick up along the way,” he said.

He shared one story he has heard about a German soldier who was talking to his American counterpart about the U.S. soldiers’ high morale.

“The home front really takes care of your people,” he reportedly told the GI.

The post’s work didn’t end during

peace time, of course.

Often its efforts have focused on the country’s younger citizens. The post sponsored Boy Scout Troop 8 until about 1947, Craig said, postulating that the end of that sponsorship coincided with another responsibility the post assumed. In 1947, the U.S. government appropriated millions to bring back the bodies of soldiers who had been buried overseas.

“The legion, it’s my guess, decided they couldn’t handle the Boy Scouts any more because they were planning hundreds of burial ceremonies as the bodies were coming back from both theaters of operation,” Craig said. “That was going to consume the American Legion for another year or two years, just doing rifle ceremonies at cemeteries.

Other post activities include fundraising on Poppy Day (with proceeds handed over to the Ladies Auxiliary), hosting ceremonies and the procession through downtown Hinsdale on Memorial Day, sponsoring high school juniors to attend Boys and Girls State, holding an essay contest and speaking to school children on Veterans Day.

The post’s efforts help ensure students today are learning enough about history, geography and civics, Craig said.

“You really need to appreciate the past and look at the successes of the past and the efficiencies of the past to become a leader for the future,” he said. “A big thing of the American Legion is to promote some sort of Americanism, to appreciate what the country is and how you can make it better.”

■ MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Making a Difference is a partnership between The Hinsdalean and the American Legion Post 250 in Hinsdale, whose mission is to support veterans and their families, the community, youth and the programs of the national organization.

American Legion, Post 250 dates to remember

- **Sept. 16, 1919** — Congress char- ters the American Legion and soon after Hinsdale Post 250 is chartered, with Frederick McElhone as the first commander of the post
- **April 9, 1920** — the post publishes a Memorial War Review of World War Patriotism to commemorate efforts in Hinsdale from 1917-19. Eleven pages are dedicated to 11 young men who lived or worked in Hinsdale and died in the war.
- **April 9, 1921** — The Ladies Auxiliary holds its first general meet- ing at Union Church and Mrs. Henry Holverscheid is elected president
- **Nov 12, 1927** — the cornerstone of the Memorial Building, then called the Hinsdale Soldiers Memorial, is laid on Armistice Day
- **July 4, 1928** — the new Memorial Building is dedicated
- **Oct. 6, 1928** — Post 250 holds its first meeting in the new Memorial Building, in “their own headquarters, amid pleasant environs and pleasant companionship”
- **Oct. 29, 1942** — Congress amends the charter to open American Legion to open membership to vet- erans of World War II. Later amend- ments allow the legion to welcome veterans of the Korean conflict; Vietnam war; hostilities in Lebanon/ Grenada, Panama and the Persian Golf and current war campaigns.
- **Aug. 24-30, 2018** — The American Legion National Convention is held in Minneapolis, site of the first national convention. Centennial events and activities begin.
- **Nov. 11, 2018** — Post 250, in coordination with the village, holds a ceremony commemorating the 90th anniversary of the dedication of The Victory of Hinsdale” sculpture by Oskar Hansom, which sits in Memorial Hall