

The American Legion is 100 years old! The Ames Post of The American Legion will kick-off our celebration of that Centennial during Ames' celebration of the Fourth of July. The Post will host an ice cream social at 225 Main beginning at 10AM. The public is welcome to come in anytime after 10 and especially during and after the parade.

Birthday cards will be available to decorate and add a message. Prizes will be awarded in two age groups. There will also be food available off the grill in front of the post. Proceeds will be used for the various projects at the post supporting veterans and the community.

As World War I came to an end in Europe, a group of officers under the leadership of Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. began discussion of a veterans organization to maintain the ties that had developed among the servicemen that fought that war. That group was able to assemble a delegation from every division in France to meet in Paris on March 15-17, 1919 for initial planning.

Two months later, May 8-10, 1919, a second group met in St. Louis to finish creation of the organization to be known as The American Legion. They prepared a constitution, appointed temporary leaders to organize the first convention in Minneapolis, set some initial purposes and most importantly established the process for formation of local American Legion posts around the country.

The Ames Post was the 37th post chartered in Iowa. Fifteen WW I veterans signed their names as the chartering members and the charter application was submitted. The temporary charter was granted on June 16, 1919. A permanent charter was applied for and granted on September 24, 1923.

The Ames Post originally bore the name of Snedden E. Winter. Cpl. Winter was serving with the 168th Infantry Regiment of the 34th Division when he was killed in an artillery bombardment on July 15, 1918 on the Champagne front. Many American Legion posts are named after the first resident of the town killed in action in WW I and then later in WW II.

We believe that Cpl. Winter was originally thought to have been the first Ames resident killed in action during WW I and thus the post was named after him. Within just a few days, that was changed, and the name removed due, we think, to the realization that another Ames resident, James Luke Mattingly had been killed earlier. An Ames community history published in 1964 states that in November 1917 "All

stores closed for the military funeral of James Luke Mattingly, Ames' first boy to die in the service of his country.”

Dr. Earl Bush served as the first Commander of the post with ISU Engineering Professor Anson Marston being a prominent member. Prof. Marston left his position as Dean of Engineering to enlist in 1917 and served for the duration of the war. He is one of the 15 who signed to apply for the post charter. We are unsure of the meeting location used in those early years but are confident that the Post has been located in the downtown area throughout its 100-year lifetime.

Many noteworthy events in the history of the Ames Post have been uncovered and will be the subject of future articles. These include; formation of the Story County American Legion, development of lights on police cars in the city of Ames, operation of the Ames airport during 1920s, a Christmas toy closet for Ames children during the 1930s and many others. We plan a monthly article highlighting those events.

The Ames American Legion Post and American Legion family with the American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion and Legion Riders invite you to visit the post on July 4, enjoy some ice cream on a July afternoon and help us kick-off the centennial of The American Legion in Ames. We look forward to seeing you.

This article was published in the July 2, 2018 issue of the Ames Tribune.