



# EVERY DEPARTMENT HAS A STORY

THE AMERICAN LEGION OF

## ARKANSAS

### Jess Norman Post 166, Augusta Arkansas

American Legion Post 166 is housed in a vernacular log meeting hall. It was constructed in 1934 through local efforts with the assistance of the Depression-era Civil Works Administration (CWA). The post was named for Jess Norman, the first man from Augusta to be killed in action during World War I.

The CWA approved \$1,779 for the project, of which \$1,120 was earmarked for labor. Over 300 cypress logs were cut and floated across the river to frame the exterior of the building. The 20,000 shakes needed to cover the roof were made onsite.

By May 24, 1934, everything was done except construction of the stone fireplace and chimney and the addition of a rail around the balcony. On June 21, the Legionnaires announced that a barbecue would be held on July 4 to bring the hut officially into service. Some 150 people attended the opening, and the local newspaper reported: "Although the event had been advertised as a barbeque, it turned out to be a banquet. Never before was such a dinner served here. There were three kinds of barbeque: Mutton, goat and pig, dishes and dishes of salad, cakes, pies, and every other good thing to eat."



White River flooding May 4, 2011 brought water up to the floor boards of the Hut. The river crested 14.8 feet above flood stage.

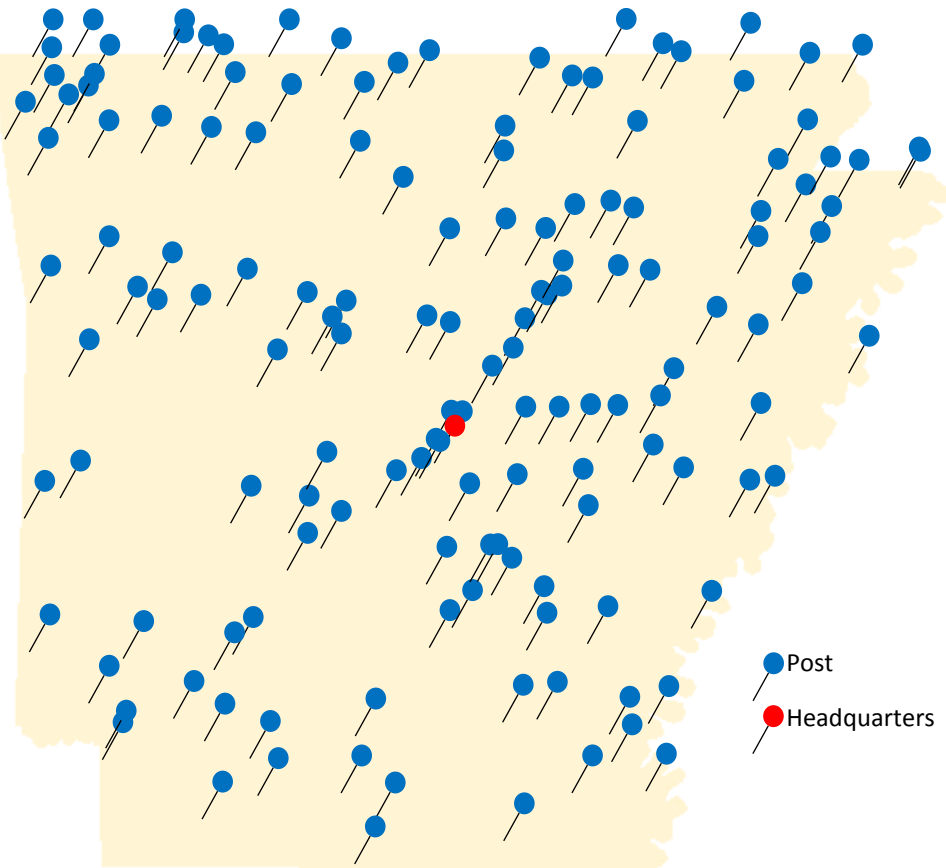


under his arm, stopped at the White House door.

Sam provided much of the legislative know how to help create the bill. At the time, he was serving as U.S. District Attorney. He was an active Legionnaire serving Arkansas as Department Commander 1936-1937 and on the National Executive Committee.

### Arkansas Legionnaire has Major Role in G.I. Bill

June 22nd, 1944, Mr. Sam Rorex of Little Rock, co-author of the G.I. Bill of Rights, was distinguished to personally present the Serviceman's Re-adjustment Act to President Roosevelt at the White House for his signature. This photo was taken as Sam, with the bill



Posts Within the Department of Arkansas



### Arkansas Legionnaire Broke Glass Ceiling

Arolina Rauser of Clarksville was the first woman elected District Commander in Arkansas. After her election in May of 1953, it was learned that she was the first female District Commander in the Nation. She joined Bunch-Walton Post 22 in 1946 and quickly became the Post adjutant. She also served as Post Child Welfare Chairman, on the National Rehabilitation Commission and as the Johnson County Service Officer.



The original Arkansas State House was renamed by the Arkansas Senate to the Arkansas State War Memorial and became the home of Department of Arkansas American Legion from 1921 to 1949.

### Department of Arkansas Firsts

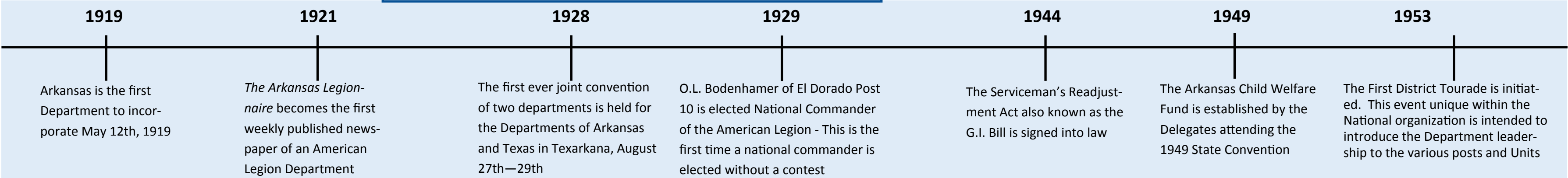
- First Department to Incorporate on May 12, 1919
- First Department to have a its own weekly newspaper (January 21, 1921)
- First elected President of the American Legion Press Association was Claude Brown from Arkansas
- First and only department to win the General Henri Gourard Trophy three years in a row
- First department to have every post in the state reach its assigned quota (1939)

### Child Welfare Foundation

#### Landowner's gift launches American Legion grant program to assist other groups.

A National American Legion committee was authorized to study the feasibility of a special fund for children's programs after former American Legion Department of Arkansas Commander Dr. Garland Murphy, Jr., offers to the national organization fractional rights to 10,000 acres of oil-rich land he owns in the Williston Basin of Montana and North Dakota. In return, Murphy asks that proceeds from the contribution be used solely to serve children. Out of this contribution is born the American Legion's Child Welfare Foundation. On July 9, 1954, the foundation is incorporated as a distinct non-profit organization whose mission is to benefit young people with physical, mental or environmental challenges

The first three CWF grants, totaling \$22,500, were awarded to the Delinquency Control Institute, the National Association for Retarded Children and the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness. Through its first 64 years, the CWF has awarded nearly \$17 million to associations, programs and organizations that help young people in need, and continues to do so today





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## Americanism and Youth Programs



2016 - Post 58 in Texarkana wins the American Legion World Series



In 1963 future President Bill Clinton was elected as Arkansas' delegate to Boys Nation. While in Washington, D.C., he shook hands with President John F. Kennedy, only four months before President Kennedy was assassinated.

## Military Presence in Arkansas

Historically, Arkansas has been prime real estate for military installations. Since the 1800's forts, posts, installations, and bases have dotted the landscape. Fort Smith was established 1817 as a military outpost to patrol the neighboring Indian Territory.

Camp Robinson was developed in 1917 to support the war effort. Originally the home of the Eighty-seventh Division, the post served as a replacement training facility after the division deployed to France and then as a demobilization station and home for the U.S. Third Infantry Division after the war ended. With the start of World War II, the post took on a new role as a replacement training center. Initially, there were two centers, one for basic training and the other for medics. In 1944, the two were combined into the Infantry Replacement Training Center.

In addition to its role in training soldiers, Camp Robinson also housed a large German prisoner of war facility, with a capacity of 4,000 prisoners. Today, Camp Robinson continues to serve as the home for the Arkansas National Guard's Joint Forces Headquarters and other Arkansas National Guard units.

Fort Chaffee was established in western Arkansas in September 1941. Originally designated as Camp Chaffee, the site included 72,000 acres of predominantly farmland. Combat training was initiated at Camp Chaffee in 1941 and most of the major buildings on the site were completed by the following year.

Former Air Force Bases include Blytheville AFB and the Titan II ICBM Launch Complex sites in central Arkansas which were in the Strategic Air Command while Walnut Ridge Air Force Station was part of the Air Defense Command Mobile Radar program.

Little Rock AFB in Jacksonville is home to the 19th Airlift Wing and supports the largest C-130 fleet in the world. Arkansas' Air National Guard 188th Wing in Ft Smith provides world-wide engagement of the MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft.

With the adoption of Act 141 of Arkansas' 91st General Assembly, military retired pay is exempt from Arkansas State Income Taxes. This is keeping retired veterans here and attracting veterans from other states.



American Legion National Scout of the Year, 1987

Clifford W. Bishop, Ozark, Arkansas

## Tribute To O.L. Bodenhamer

### Arkansas' First and Only National Commander

O.L. "Bodie" Bodenhamer, was the National Commander of The American Legion, 1929-1930 and the fifth Department Commander of Arkansas (1922-23). He attracted statewide attention in 1922 as commander of Roy V. Kinard Post 10 at El Dorado, when the membership jumped from 74 to 814 of 1,000 eligible veterans in the county.

He was an English teacher at San Marcos Baptist College in San Marcos, Texas when the United States entered World War I in 1917. He volunteered for military service, entering the Army in the infantry as a private and was discharged as a major 26 months later. He moved to El Dorado in 1921, lured by the oil lease and real estate business.

During his administration as department commander, the department membership reached a new high mark of 6,976 which was not surpassed until 1927. He was the principal sponsor of the Arkansas Service Bureau measure which assisted ex-service men in handling claims against the government for compensation.

At the 1929 National Convention in Louisville, "Bodie" was elected national commander by acclamation — the first commander to receive a convention's unanimous vote. By the time of the Boston national convention in 1930, Legion membership had reached a new high, almost one million members.

In his honor, the National O.L. Bodenhamer Trophy Award was created. This trophy is awarded to the department whose standing is number one in membership on Flag Day (June 14th). This department also leads the national parade.



## Did You Know

- The Old Statehouse in downtown Little Rock was our original headquarters and the Legion was the building Landlord
- The World Duck Calling Contest in Stuttgart, Arkansas was originally sponsored by Daniel Harder Post 48
- Dr. Horace Ruff of Magnolia attended the first two meetings in Paris, France that resulted in the formation of the American Legion.
- Arkansas Post 1 was the second post in the U.S. to be granted a temporary charter July 11, 1919
- Department headquarters use to be a bank building and the vault was converted into the Commander's office
- The first resolution passed by a state convention calling for terminal leave payments to enlisted men was written by Department Adjutant Bert Presson. The resolution was passed by the 1945 Arkansas convention and went on to be approved in substantial form by the national convention and then Congress.
- 106 Legion huts and community buildings were built in Arkansas beginning in 1933 through the Civil Works Administration "New Deal" program initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.



First Annual Arkansas Department Convention - October 8 & 9, 1919

1957

Land is purchased across from the state capital and construction begins on the new Arkansas Headquarters

1969

As a gift to the people of the United States, The American Legion's 50th Anniversary is marked by a presentation of a permanent lighting system for the Tomb of the Unknowns

1978

The American Legion takes leading role in identifying veterans that were exposed to "Agent Orange" in Vietnam and are now experiencing health issues

1988

The American Legion succeeds in its 20 year campaign to have the Veterans Administration elevated to a cabinet-level department

1998

Arkansas Legionnaires incorporate the American Legion Department of Arkansas Foundation to provide financial support for charitable programs conducted by the Department