



EVERY DEPARTMENT HAS A STORY

THE AMERICAN LEGION OF

IOWA

Nearly 600 American Legion posts and some 50,000 members fill nearly every corner of Iowa. The Hawkeye State is home to Legion Baseball legends, war heroes and veterans who chose lives of public service. Future President Ronald Reagan broke into broadcasting here, the same state where he trained to serve in the U.S. Army during World War II. The Iowa American Legion Family, including the American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion and Legion Riders, always make a splash at national events and parades, cornstalks in hand. Hundreds of Iowans have been mentored through Hawkeye Boys State, Junior Shooting Sports, Oratoricals and other wholesome, healthy youth programs.

Iowa Legionnaires



Hanford MacNider, of Mason City, a combat officer of the American Expeditionary Forces, was fourth national commander of The American Legion and led a U.S. victory tour for France's Marshal Ferdinand Foch in 1921. He later served as assistant secretary of war and as a commanding general in the Pacific during World War II.

Sal Giunta, of Hiawatha, was the fourth member of the U.S. Armed Forces to receive the Medal of Honor for actions in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. A member of American Legion Post 735 in Hiawatha, he received the medal after stopping an enemy ambush and killing a high-value Taliban combatant who was trying to drag away one of Giunta's fellow soldiers. After learning that he would be nominated, Giunta didn't like being singled out. "If I'm a hero, every man that stands around me, every woman in the military, everyone who goes into the unknown is a hero." He received the Medal of Honor on Nov. 16, 2010.



U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst, a member of Stanton American Legion Post 407, was the first female veteran to be elected to the U.S. Senate. A former lieutenant colonel in the Iowa Army National Guard, she has been a frequent speaker at the American Legion Auxiliary Iowa Girls State.

The race to be No. 1

The American Legion Department of Iowa began accepting applications for post charters on May 12, 1919. As in many Legion departments, it was determined that the post whose charter was submitted and approved first would become Post 1. Thus was staged the great race between Council Bluffs and Spencer.

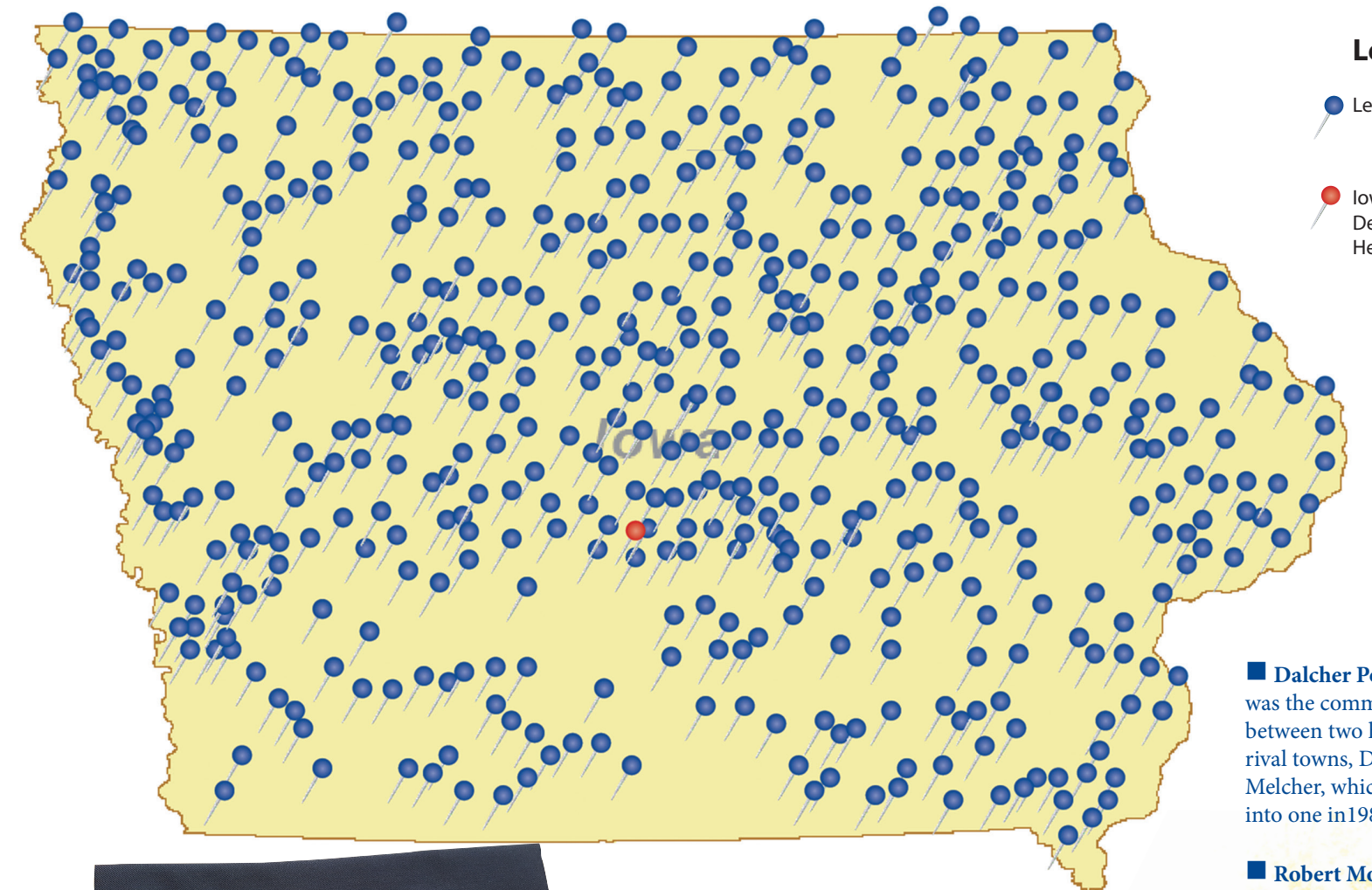
At the stroke of midnight on May 12, 15 veterans of each city signed application forms, had them notarized and got them on their way. The Spencer group set out in a Ford, hoping to beat the train to Des Moines from Council Bluffs; the train carried the other application. The Spencer team ran into bad roads, abandoned the car, boarded a train at Carroll, called a taxi at Des Moines and rushed to submit the application just five minutes ahead of the delivery from Council Bluffs. Thus Spencer was Post 1, Council Bluffs Post 2.



IOWA BACKROADS: See an online gallery of historic Iowa American Legion posts
www.iowabackroads.com/category/american-legion-posts



In a tradition that dates at least as far back as the 3rd American Legion National Convention in Kansas City in 1921, the Iowa delegation continues to hoist cornstalks during annual American Legion National Convention Parades.



Legend

● Legion posts

● Iowa Legion Department Headquarters

Dalcher Post 632 was the common bond between two historically rival towns, Dallas and Melcher, which merged into one in 1986.

Robert Morgan Post 701 in the Meskwaki Nation was formed after 46 tribal members – including eight code talkers – served in World War II.

Albaugh-McGovern Post 42 in Ankney is a top national distributor of U.S.-made flags through the Emblem Sales Flag Rewards Program, selling upwards of 400 a year, in return for credits to buy items for the post and community.



Hawkeye State Attractions



Historic Camp Dodge in Johnston – home of the Iowa National Guard – is also the location of American Legion Hawkeye Boys State each summer. The Legion-supported **Iowa Gold Star Military Museum** there offers historical displays, weapons and a research library.



Fort Des Moines Museum and Education Center honors the history of African-American and female military service with extensive galleries and film areas dedicated to both, supported by The American Legion. In 1917, Fort Des Moines was the first U.S. military base to train black officers and in 1942, it became the national training center for the Women's Army Corps (WACs).



The Sidney Iowa Championship Rodeo was launched by World War I veterans of **Williams-Jobe-Gibson American Legion Post 128** in 1923 and is now a top-level major professional event that seats 8,000.



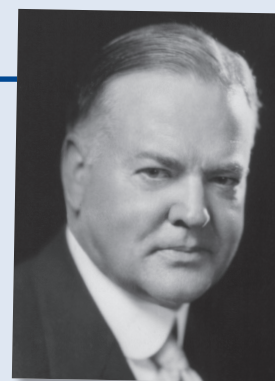
The Iowa Veterans Cemetery near Van Meter, was completed in 2008 with support from The American Legion. It is the final resting place for more than 2,000 Iowans and others who served in uniform and their families. Monuments and a visitor center can be found on the picturesque hilltop. Newly rebuilt **American Legion Post 403 in Van Meter** offers a veterans reception center for families visiting the cemetery.

1919

The Department of Iowa accepts the charters of **352 American Legion posts** across the state in the first year of the organization's existence.

1930

On July 21, **Herbert Hoover**, the only U.S. president from Iowa, signs the American Legion-supported executive order consolidating three federal bureaus into one Veterans Administration.



1932

The American Legion of Iowa leads the effort to **raise funds** to construct what would become the **first VA medical center** in the state, in Des Moines.

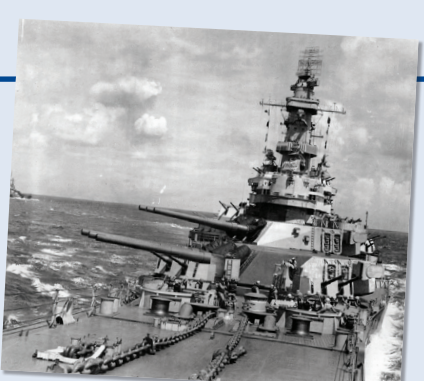
Future U.S. President and American Legion member **Ronald Reagan**, 22, breaks into the broadcasting field by announcing University of Iowa football games for WOC Radio in Davenport and, soon after, WHO Radio in Des Moines.

1935

Ray Murphy, of Leo McNamara Post 61 in Ida Grove, is elected as the 18th American Legion national commander. World War I veteran Murphy had been a star football and basketball player at the University of Iowa.

1943

The USS Iowa, which became known as "the world's greatest naval ship" due to her big guns and speed, is first commissioned, beginning more than 50 years of service that includes 14 battle ribbons around the planet. Known as the battleship of presidents, she ferried President Franklin D. Roosevelt to Tehran for a secret meeting in late 1943 with Allied leaders Winston Churchill of Great Britain and Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union.



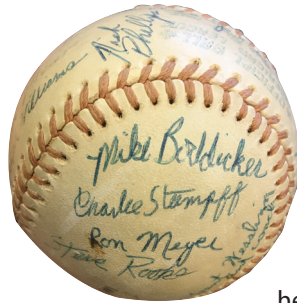
THE HEATER from Van Meter

Bob Feller proudly displayed in his office a trophy engraved with the following: *Presented to Bob Feller The First American Legion Baseball Graduate Enshrined in Baseball's Hall of Fame Cooperstown, N.Y., July 23, 1962.*

With a wiggling fastball of 100 mph or more, Feller was known as the “Heater from Van Meter.” He started playing American Legion Baseball at 12. Five years later, he made his Major League debut, at 17, for the Cleveland Indians and struck out 15 batters. Two weeks later, he struck out 17. The next season, the teen phenomenon was on the cover of *Time* magazine.

In 1941, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Feller enlisted in the U.S. Navy, the first professional sports star to jump into the war. He served on the USS *Alabama* and finished as a chief petty officer in 1945, with six campaign ribbons and eight battle stars. He was a member of The American Legion and one of the greatest American Legion Baseball alums of all time. More than 70 Legion players would follow him into the Hall of Fame.

The Bob Feller Pitching Award is presented annually to the American Legion player who throws the most strikeouts in the regional and AL World Series tournaments.



Mike Boddicker: Sportsmanship to championship

Pitcher Mike Boddicker, from the town of Norway, which was made famous by the movie “The Final Season,” was Major League Baseball’s American League Championship Series MVP in 1983 when he and the Baltimore Orioles went on to win the World Series. The following year, Boddicker led the American League in wins and earned run average. He played for the Cedar Rapids American Legion Post 5 baseball team and in 1976 received the James F. Daniel, Jr., Memorial Sportsmanship Award, presented to the American Legion Baseball World Series player who “best embodies the principles of good sportsmanship.”

Vets of Valor

A 12-hour Vets of Valor radiothon on 93.3 KIOA in 2016 raised more than \$112,000, doubling the previous year’s donations, to help The American Legion of Iowa provide veteran and community services.



The Iowa Idea: Serve in peace as we served in war

Community support is often considered the fifth pillar of The American Legion, and the so-called “Iowa Legion Idea” of the early 1920s planted seeds of local service that spread nationwide and continues today. The idea was simply that Legionnaires can and should volunteer their time, raise funds and substantially support other values-driven civic organizations and efforts in their communities.

Hanford MacNider, who was elected national commander of The American Legion in 1921, was a leading proponent of the original Iowa Idea. “We must continue to serve the country in the same spirit we had in war, and we can do that only if we have every post doing something for its community,” MacNider said in the early years of the organization. “The Legion, because its members are in nearly all other organizations and in all the churches, and because it represents so many different types of Americans welded by war service, comradeship and working for a common cause, can do things no other groups can do.”

The Iowa Idea was the buzz of 1923’s fifth American Legion National Convention in San Francisco, “for the betterment of schools, recreation, park and playground facilities... Boy Scout work, medical clinics, municipal music concerts, public forums,

community buildings, city planning and all forms of better citizenship.”

Inspired by the original Iowa Idea, The American Legion of Iowa Foundation was incorporated on Nov. 29, 1978, reinvigorating the concept by raising funds and disbursing grants to deserving local programs and organizations. Now with more than \$2 million in the corpus – and having awarded over \$2.3 million over the years – The American Legion of Iowa Foundation supports programs and activities ranging from Junior ROTC at high schools to medical equipment for clinics that help the needy to museum exhibits that honor POWs and MIAs.

In 2016 alone, over \$100,000 in grants were awarded from the Iowa Foundation, including some \$30,000 in scholarships.

“I’m most proud of the generosity of the members of the Legion Family who have made this possible,” American Legion of Iowa Foundation President David Rehbein says. “We do a lot of good things out there ... lasting things.”

To learn more about The American Legion of Iowa Foundation, call (515) 282-5068 or send a tax-deductible donation to: **Iowa American Legion Foundation, 720 Lyon Street, Des Moines, IA 50309.**



A May 25, 2008, tornado ripped through Parkersburg, killing seven and destroying hundreds of homes, soon followed by severe storms and flooding in New Hartford. **American Legion Post 285** in Parkersburg quickly transformed to become a relief center, serving more than 30,000 meals in a six-day period. The devastated area received numerous American Legion **National Emergency Fund** grants. Post 285’s response inspired creation of the national NEF Post Excellence Award.

Did you know?

Michelle Johnson of Spencer was elected senator at the American Legion Auxiliary Iowa Girls State in 1976 before going on to the U.S. Air Force Academy, where she is now superintendent. Lt. Gen. Johnson is the first woman to lead a U.S. military service academy. She was the American Legion Auxiliary’s 2014 Woman of the Year.



Contact The American Legion of Iowa

John Derner – Department Adjutant

720 Lyon Street
Des Moines, IA 50309

☎ 515.282.5068 🌐 www.ialegion.org

Join The American Legion

🌐 www.legion.org/join



“The American Legion has a lot better customer service, better understanding, and is more open-minded than most people know. The Legion really takes pride in going the extra mile for veterans, family members, widows, everyone.

Because we do such a good job – all of our staff, as service officers – word is slowly getting out about what is available. What better way to reach out and help the people who served next to you, and behind you, and in front of you – than to get them a little compensation for what they may be suffering?”

Heather Dillwood, a member of Des Moines Post 274, a former U.S. Army medic who deployed to Afghanistan, and now helps veterans with their benefits claims



“This organization is for everybody. The service officers that we have, how we fight for veterans, and the legislative projects that are sponsored by the Legion – those are our biggest assets. Getting that out into the public’s eye has been a big help. It’s been my best experience since I got out of the service. I tell the guys all the time that I should have done this 20 years ago when I first got out. It gives me a sense of camaraderie, the stuff you miss from the service.

That’s what really pulled me in.”

Marine Corps veteran Darrin Alderson, Commander of American Legion Post 34 in Oskaloosa and 2016 National American Legion College graduate

