

History of Rose-Harms Post 355 American Legion Grafton



FRED JOHN ROSE: born in Town of Grafton, Ozaukee County on August 20, 1891.

Son of William and Emma (Koeppke) Rose

Lived R.F.D.#1, Grafton, Wisconsin.

Entered service at Port Washington, Wisconsin on May 25, 1918; member of Company D, 343rd Infantry, 86th (Black Hawk) Division.

Rank: Private, Corporal.

Trained at Camp Grant, Illinois; foreign station Winchester, England. Died of pneumonia at Winchester, England, September 29, 1918. Buried at Magdelina Hill, Winchester, England.

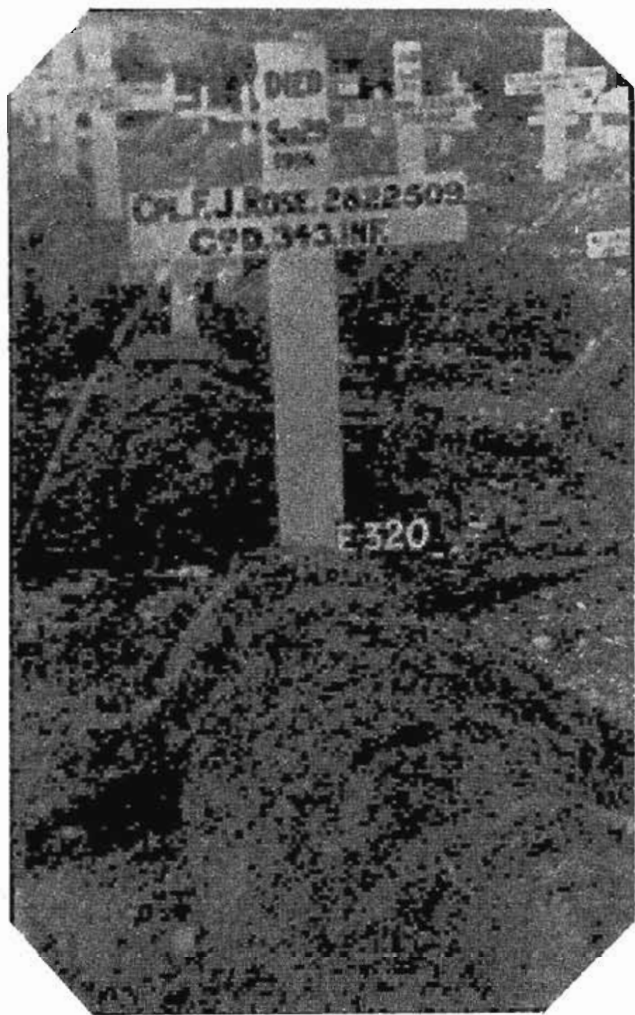


Photo copy of the grave of Fred John Rose
Taken at the military cemetery at Magdalina Hill, Winchester, England.



Roy Coulson Harms, Grafton Wisconsin.
1st Lt. 329th Bomb Squadron, 93rd Bomb Group
Born August 24th, 1916, Entered Service 9/11/39
Killed in action August 1st, 1943
Ploesti Oil Fields, Roumania

OFFICERS OF THE POST

Officers of the Post are elected in May. Any member in good standing is eligible to be a candidate for office. Any member desiring to be a candidate for office may express his desire to any member of the nominating committee which is composed of the past three commanders. The Post offices are as follows:

COMMANDER

The main officer is the Commander. His function is to run the Post in an efficient and orderly manner. He appoints the Post Adjutant and operational committees.

POST ADJUTANT

The Post Adjutant is the secretary of the Post and main assistant to the Commander. He is appointed by the Commander.

FIRST VICE COMMANDER

The main objective of this office is membership. He is also second in command in the absence of the Commander.

SECOND VICE COMMANDER

The duties of this office include developing patriotic observances, Post activities, and is the contact man between the Legion and Auxillary.

FINANCE OFFICER

He is in charge of the year's budget and collecting, disbursing, and investing all funds.

SERVICE OFFICER

It is his duty to keep the Post up to date on Veterans affairs.

SARGEANT AT ARMS

Two are elected each year. He is the custodian of the colors, responsible for meeting security and operations of the firing squad.

CHAPLAIN

This officer is the religious advisor to the Post. It is also his duty to keep the Post informed of such members and officiate at funerals of our departed comrades.

HISTORIAN

Preserve and compile records of the Post and its yearly activities.

JUDGE ADVOCATE

Handles the Post legal matters and procedures.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

One is elected each year for a three year term. This committee meets once a month, before regular meetings. They approve the bills, discuss items of interest, and make their recommendations to the Post on appropriate action. The members of this committee are:

Post Commander
Post Vice Commander
Post Second Commander
Finance Officer
Building Chairman
House Chairman
Three-3 Year Men
Three Past Commanders

FRED ROSE POST #355

ORIGIN

As tradition has it, the original organizational meeting of the Fred Rose Post was held at a site known as "Erdman's Grove." The meeting was formulated as an informal gathering to consider the establishment of an American Legion Post at Grafton. At this time the majority of the members eligible to the Legion, were members of the Peter Wollner Post #288 at Cedarburg, Wisconsin. There being enough members residing in or near the village to merit the conception of a Legion Post at Grafton, kindled the spark of enthusiasm and interest ran high with the thought of a "home town Post". Thus the first meeting became a reality and plans were proposed by which an American Legion Post might be organized at Grafton.

The very first recorded meeting of the Fred Rose Post #355 as it was known as for a period of fifteen years, was held at the Village Hall at Grafton, January 28th, 1934.

The first Commander of the newly organized Post was Walter Just, who, as the minutes indicate, immediately appointed those committees necessary to the proper function of the Post at that early date. These committees were the Executive and Entertainment Committees respectively. Their chairmen being Ernst Schnabel and Al Puerling.

At this first meeting the temporary schedule of monthly meeting dates was also decided, which remains unchanged at the present time. The second Monday of each month, a system of notice cards is utilized to remind the membership prior to the meeting. This plan also remains in effect at the present.

The first money making scheme of the Post which immediately followed the first meeting was the Post Dance, which since then, has become an annual affair in the community. The first event was held as a grand success February 12, 1934. William Weiss served in charge of the initial dance, making all the necessary arrangements.

As the months sped by, other plans and methods of entertainment and recreation were coming into the Legion's whirl of local activities. In June 1934, Dr. E.H. Liebenstein, as chairman of the committee organized the Legion membership and local youths in the formation of baseball teams which the reader may fondly recall.

On April 13, 1942, the question arose before the Post membership regarding the admission of World War II veterans to the American Legion. This question was answered by our own individual Post at this meeting with an undivided, unanimous vote of approval to allow same. On June 11, 1945 a special committee was appointed to solicit the returning veterans eligible to the Legion as members of the Rose Harms Post #355. The members were appointed as follows, Walter Just, John Long and William Hilgart, with the latter serving as chairman.

November 7th, 1948 was the date on which the first proposal to change the name of the Fred Rose Post was suggested for consideration. Comrade Ralph Zaun moved that the Post Name be changed to incorporate that of a World War II veteran. The veteran eligible in the locality as being the first World War II casualty was Lt. Roy Coulson Harms of Grafton. This move was passed by a unanimous decision of the floor, there being a goodly representation of both World War I and World War II veterans present. The letter drafted to the parents of Lt. Roy Harms, requesting the use of his name for the title of our Legion Post #355 and also the letter in answer to our request from his parents may be found otherwise in this History.

The first mention of a Legion Auxiliary to the Rose Harms Post #355 was first noted on November 13, 1944. Later discussion followed on July 10, 1945 and this first meeting of same was held July 17, 1945 with definite organization in mind. Comrade Walter Just moved at this time that the American Legion Post #355 donate ten dollars to the prospective Auxiliary to defray some of the organizational expense. The Rose Harms Post Auxiliary has been most cooperative with the Legion Post itself since its original inception. They have done much for the post by their assistance and help at Christmas time and other holiday seasons of the year. The distribution of gifts, sponsoring of gala Halloween Parties and lunches served have been very commendable. Their assistance at our past annual Picnics and Parades has been a very helpful phase of their local activity and they have truly proven themselves a credit to our organization.

ORIGIN AND ACTIVITIES

On January 13, 1947, at the regular meeting of the Rose Harms Post, it was decided upon the motion of Mr. William Hilgart that eligible women veterans desiring membership to the American Legion be admitted to Post #355 and allowed the full rights and benefits of regular Legion Members. This motion was passed unanimously by the members convened. The three women who first joined the Rose Harms Post are as follows: Alice Berger, Lucille Phillips and Marceline Hilgart.

The very first Carnival Picnic sponsored by the American Legion Post #355 was held August 23rd and 24th at the Grafton Mill Pond Park in the year 1947. Wilson Jones, George Hilgart and Bob Clapham comprised the original Picnic Committee. This picnic which included two mammoth parades, street dancing and the usual concessions and amusements netted three thousand one hundred and forty seven dollars as reported October 13, 1947. Twenty five hundred dollars was placed in the Permanent Rose Harms Building Fund and the balance of the seven hundred fifty nine dollars was placed in the Youth and Athletic Fund.

The second Carnival was held on August 14th and 15th, 1948 upon the same plan as the previous picnic and netted the Post three thousand and thirty three dollars. Comrade Wilson Jones also served as the Committee Chairman at this second legion picnic for the Post.

ELIGIBILITY FOR MEMBERSHIP

THE AMERICAN LEGION

Section 1 of Article IV of the national constitution provided eligibility for membership as follows:

"Section 1. Any person shall be eligible for membership in the American Legion who was regularly enlisted, drafted, inducted or commissioned and who was accepted for and assigned to active duty in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps or Coast Guard of the United States at some time during the period between April 6, 1917, and November 11, 1918, or during the period between December 7, 1941 to December 31, 1946 or June 26, 1950 to January 31, 1955, or December 22, 1961 to May 7, 1975, or who, being a citizen of the United States at the time of his entry therein, served on active duty in the armed forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during either of said World Wars; provided, however, that such service shall have been terminated by honorable discharge or honorable separation, and such

person either shall have broken his continuity of service and returned to a civilian status, or shall continue to serve honorably after the date of cessation of such hostilities as fixed by the United States Government; provided further, that no person shall be entitled to membership who, being in such service during either of said periods, refuses on conscientious, political or other grounds to subject himself to military discipline or unqualified service."

The first temporary charter was granted to the Post on November 8, 1933. The charter members were:

John Long	Alvin Mentzel
William Hilgart	Fred Hoppe
E. Liebenstein	Rich Sudbrink
George Freitag	John Dickmann
Ben Koopmann	William Weiss
Walter Just	Otto Last
Rich Krohn	George Sabell
Emil Erdman	

The permanent charter of the American Legion was granted to the Post on June 18, 1947.

The Constitution and By-Laws of Rose-Harms Post 355 were adopted October 13, 1947.

The first initiation of veterans into the Fred Rose Post took place on May 13, 1935 - Peter Wollner Post 288 officiating.

The first initiation of World War II Vets took place September 11, 1942.

The first firing squad of the Post was organized January 11, 1937. Springfield rifles were obtained and on October 9, 1939 Walter Just was appointed Squad Captain and renamed to this capacity until 1947. At that time Orville Gramoll took over as Sgt. at Arms and the squad was composed entirely of WW II Vets.

In the late 1950's the squad was taken over by George Hulka. It was under George's leadership that the first uniformed firing squad was organized.

George was joined by Gene Hadler around 1968 until 1982 when George retired. So many members wanted to join the squad that in 1986 it was voted to limit the squad to 25 members.

THE POST CLUBHOUSE

Clubhouse planning started on June 13, 1941. An offer was made by Mr. Rich Goldberg Sr., to donate the old M.E. Church which he owned on the south end of town. However, after much discussion, the committee decided that the cost of moving the building and remodeling it to suit the purpose of the Legion as a clubhouse was financially prohibitive. The matter was dropped as an activity at that time and later tabled due to the outbreak of World War II.

Following the cessation of hostilities in World War II, waves of veterans were returning home to resume life, where it had been interrupted prior to their entry into service. The American Legion Post of Grafton, then known as Fred Rose Post 355, consisted of about 25 members. Their meetings were held upstairs in the old fire house, which stood at the same site as the present fire house.

The World War I legionnaires were busy in recruiting the new Vets into the Legion Post and in a short time it reached a total of 100 members. The old fire house was getting too small for the post activities so on September 13, 1948, a committee was formed to investigate a site for a new clubhouse. Three sites were considered, and the one chosen was the land offered to the Post by the Ben Harms family in memory of their son, Lt. Roy Harms, who was shot down on August 1, 1943 over the Ploesti oil fields in Roumania. The Post graciously accepted their kind offer.

After a few successful picnics, enough cash was on hand to start the new clubhouse. The fund was bolstered by donations from individuals, businesses, and civic organizations, for which the Post is eternally grateful.

One of our members, Alphonse Schanen, was approached to draw up the plans and a steering committee was formed to get the ball rolling.

It was decided to build a block basement and hold our activities there until we had the necessary funds to erect the upper level.

Post member Frank Rilling erected the basement foundation with help of his masonry crew, consisting of volunteer Post members, who were paid \$1.00 per hour. William Hilgart Excavating did the digging and ground preparations. On August 11, 1951, the first Post meeting was held in the basement amongst the rubble, by Commander Marvin Hennings.

In the meantime our membership continued to grow, and in 1956 we had over 300 members. The street in front of the building was an unpaved dirt road, but as more homes were built the Village did their part by paving it with asphalt.

There were many trials and hardships along the way (too many to mention), but the members, undaunted, continued their hard work until it became what it is today.

The first sad and touching task for the Post happened about April 26, 1948, when the body of Clair Liebenstein was returned home from Europe for reburial by the Post. Clair was followed by Jerome Lorenz, Fred Hadler, Eugene Senger, Louie Viesselman, and Harold Powell, who was killed in Korea.

The flagpole in Mill Pond Park was donated by Richard Goldberg, Sr., and dedicated by our firing squad on Memorial Day 1948.

The Memorial Stone at the foot of the flagpole was donated by Elmer Sudbrink. Every deceased member of the Post has their name inscribed on this stone.

In 1986 a museum of war relics was started by then Commander LeRoy Paulin. Anyone having any relics can donate or loan them to the museum. Items of interest in the museum so far include captured Japanese flags, an autographed picture of General James Doolittle, a picture of the Iwo Jima flag raising autographed by the sole survivor John Bradley of Antigo, relics picked off the battlefield of the African Campaign, Nazi emblems, pieces from Heinrich Himmler's swagger stick, pieces of Japanese Zero, a Russian AK47, and many other objects.