



The American Legion Barrington Post #158 charter certificate.

The American Legion

HISTORIC ORIGINS FOR THE CENTENARY OF AN
HONORED COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUP

PARIS, FRANCE IN FEBRUARY 1919, three months after the “War to End All Wars” has left a devastated continent. Twenty officers of the Allied Expeditionary Forces had gathered at the request of their Headquarters to discuss the need to improve troop morale. One of the officers was Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., the eldest son of the 26th President. He made the proposal of an organization of veterans. This group formed a temporary committee and selected several hundred officers who had the confidence and respect of the whole army.

In March, almost 1,000 officers and enlisted men attended the first organizational meeting which became known as the Paris Caucus. They adopted a temporary constitution and the name “The American Legion”. They moved swiftly, being officially founded on March 15, 1919.

The American Legion was chartered by Congress on September 16, 1919 as a community

service nonprofit organization, with membership limited to those honorably discharged veterans, and current personnel of the armed services who have seen at least one day of active duty in enumerated wars. In 1919, there were only two eligible wars, now there are seven.

Two days after the Congressional Charter, Barrington Post #158 of the American Legion was chartered here on September 18, 1919. Many of that original membership were from second- and third-generation pioneer families, including the names Otis, Rieke, Plagge, and Lageschulte. Their descendants can be found here today. The American Legion has become the nation’s largest veteran’s service organization, fulfilling and expanding the mission of its Charter to move with the times. Historically the Barrington Post has supported veterans through visits to hospitals and homebound veterans; helping to fund medical equipment for local veterans’ hospitals, and providing support for

orphans of veterans and non-veterans. The Post supports American Legion baseball, college scholarships, and a High School Oratorical contest.

Their greatest visibility is on Memorial and Veterans Days. Leading up to Memorial Day, their volunteers can be found in prominent locations selling the poppies that are a symbol for remembering the fields of war. On Memorial Day, their members, many veterans pulling out their uniforms, join with the VFW to visit cemeteries in the Barrington area where veterans are buried to conduct short commemorative ceremonies. They will march in the parade through downtown Barrington to Evergreen Cemetery, where solemn remembrances are conducted at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument. In this, the centenary year of the American Legion, several events will mark the centenary of Barrington Post #158. On June 10, the Barrington Village Board will issue a Proclamation at its Meeting, and the Legion’s 100th Anniversary will be the theme for this year’s Fourth of July Parade.

Survivors of active duty, the members of the American Legion support each other, and serve their communities in countless unheralded ways. We salute them. 