

HARD TIMES COME NO MORE

By 1876 the men of RI GAR Slocum Post No. 10 were beginning to challenge the control of RI GAR Prescott Post No. 1. They began to realize they needed more delegates to attend and vote at the RI GAR Annual Department Encampments, especially on issues concerning Veterans Relief. RI GAR Department Commander Williams reported at the January 1876 Encampment that Babbit Post No. 4 of Bristol RI had relinquished its RI GAR Post Charter and folded due to poverty and "Hard Times". However former Post 10 Commander Dr. William F. Hutchinson had gathered almost 50 new Veterans and started the formation of Arnold Post to be located in Providence. Commander Williams decided to award Arnold Post the Babbit Post number four (4) and RI GAR Arnold Post No. 4 was born.

Arnold Post directly received its name in honor of Captain William A. Arnold the most loved and well-known commander of Battery A, 1st regiment RI Light Artillery. Arnold was also considered one of the State's heroes of the Battles of Malvern Hill, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, the Wilderness and Petersburg. Boss Brayton, who himself saw very little action during the war, saw this as a direct threat to the power he controlled in Prescott Post No. 1 and a challenge to the influence Post 1 held over the entire RI Department GAR. He also saw the move as a potential threat to his power over public State elections and his control of the RI Republican Party. In spite of this, Arnold Post No. 4 was Chartered on January 9, 1877. Since it was a new Post, in accordance to RI GAR rules Arnold Post 4 would be required to completely be up and running and functioning for "one full year" before it could attend and field a Post 4 delegation at the annual RI GAR Department Encampment when new GAR officers on the State GAR level would be elected.

By the 11th RI GAR Department Encampment, held on January 30 1878, Department Commander and US Congressman Henry J. Spooner, also a close friend of Elisha Hunt Rhodes, announced at the opening of the Encampment that Dr. Hutchinson as Commander of "Arnold" Post No. 4 had 63 members and was attending with 3 elected delegates (one per each of its 20 members). By this time E.H. Rhodes (with Ambrose Burnside's support as Past Commander-in-Chief) was National GAR Sr. Vice Commander-in-Chief. Post 4 fielded a full delegation at the 1878 RI Department Encampment. The Post 4 Delegates at the convention with Post 4 Commander W.F. Hutchinson were: Frank H. Brown, John S. Coggeshall and Marcus A. Vose, all very well respected RI Civil War Veterans. As RI Department Commander Spooner was about to bang the gavel to open the Encampment, Boss Brayton (a Past Post Commander of Post 1 and Past Dept. Commander) rose to challenge the legitimacy of the Post 4 delegation attending its first RI GAR Department Encampment. Brayton claimed to have affidavits proving that Post 4 had inducted four men after their 4th quarter reports were submitted to the Department showing membership. He asserted the men could not be counted as

members of Post 4 in time for the Encampment. The delegation of Post 10 argued in favor of the true delegation of Post 4, as did Hutchinson and his delegation. Hutchinson argued there was no official deadline rule prohibiting counting the four Post 4 members. The new men of Post 4 were all members in good standing, even though they became members after the quarterly report to the Department just prior to the Encampment. There is some indication the argument got quite heated. Since it was common for men to carry pocket pistols and other small arms as a normal way of life during the mid and late 19th Century, the National GAR required all Departments and Posts to enforce a rule to check all arms at the door before entering any GAR Meeting Hall for any reason. This kept the argument over the Post 4 delegation from getting out of control. In the end however, since Brayton had a majority of established delegates in his favor, Department Commander Spooner had no choice but to put the matter to a vote and Post 4 and its ally Post 10 lost on the issue. Brayton then claimed he also had affidavits to prove that Post 10 had improperly reinstated members of their Post after the last quarterly report and therefore Post 10 was not entitled to its full delegation count.

According to the official Encampment Proceedings documenting the convention another "serious and vexed" discussion occurred. In the end the Department voted to accept Brayton's so called affidavits (which were in reality blank sheets of paper in his briefcase---a little trick Senator Joe Macarthy pulled quite often in the 1950s during Senate hearings on Un-American Activities). Therefore, Post 10 lost on their delegate issue as well. As result of the arguments Marcus A. Vose was removed as a delegate representing Post 4 at its first convention.

Post 10 lost as well and was forced to remove a delegate from their Post Delegation. The election and debate over certain issues were so close both men were needed to sway the outcome against Brayton's views. All this ensured the RI GAR election of department officers went the way Brayton wanted. Dr. Hutchinson and his Post 4 delegation were furious, as were the Commander and delegates representing Post 10. It originally was determined that Post 4 had the second largest Post membership in the entire RI Department GAR at the time, next to the membership of Prescott Post No. 1 the largest and Post 10 the 3rd largest. Arnold Post 4 was originally entitled to one per each 20 members of their Post. This was the only negative aspect that impacted on the beginning of Arnold Post No. 4. It's first year of operation was in all other ways are a remarkable beginning. Dr. William F. Hutchinson would go on to become one of the most well respected members of the entire RI GAR up to his death in 1898. Although Hutchinson was a well-respected Past Post Commander of Posts 10 and 4, he never went on to become RI GAR Department commander.

At the 1878 National GAR Encampment Boss Brayton went on to use his political influence to prevent E.H. Rhodes from becoming National GAR Commander-in-Chief. In 1881, when RI US Senator Ambrose E. Burnside unexpectedly died in Bristol of a heart attack, Brayton engineered Congressman Nelson W. Aldrich to replace him. Together Brayton and Aldrich controlled Rhode Island until 1913.

Senator Aldrich went on to become known as "America's Financial Manager" and changed America's tax laws to include family wages as taxable income with the US Internal Revenue Act, the system we have today. The offspring of Aldrich (formerly of rural small town of Foster RI) married into the Rockefeller family, which eventually helped greatly increase his personal wealth in Rhode Island. President Theodore Roosevelt had no choice but to compromise with Aldrich in the U.S. Senate in order to rebuild the US Navy and follow through with his plan to project American Naval Power around the world at the start of the 20th Century. Thus, the IRS and Federal Reserve System became the rule in America. The only member of RI GAR Arnold Post No. 4 to ever hold the office of RI Department GAR Commander was George R. Saunders, in 1924, after he had transferred to Brown Post 25 and after the Machine Party Political Eras of Brayton and Aldrich were over.

There is some indication that RI GAR Arnold Post No. 4 had a very talented band. Several of its members served as musicians during the Civil War. Nelson H. Arnold was for the most part the Arnold Post 4 bandleader until his death in 1897. The band played at Post 4 Annual Bivouacs (or annual Post meetings), Department Encampments, Memorial Day Ceremonies, Independence Day Parades and annual summer outings that members of Post 4 enjoyed with their families and closest Providence GAR Posts Comrades like members of Slocum Post 10, Brown Post 25 and the Women's Relief Corps. A good contingent of Post 4 attended the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg events as well as the ceremonies commemorating the completion of the RI State House containing an impressive collection of Civil War displays in 1903. Since the Post closed unofficially in 1926 and officially in 1930, none of its members were able to attend the 75th Anniversary of Gettysburg in 1938 featuring the greetings presented by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Only Charles Bullock, of Brown Post 25, representing Rhode Island, was well enough to attend. Unfortunately, many of the Post 4 Civil War Veterans fell victims to the series of influenza epidemics that swept Rhode Island between 1890 and 1910 and again just after World War I. Since many of its members were professional men in private life, Post 4 was one of the wealthier GAR Posts of the RI Department GAR. For many years its headquarters was at the Old Arsenal on Benefit Street in Providence, where most of its artifacts still are today, and it assisted the Department with the management of the facility as prescribed by the General Assembly and the State. Most of its members lived and worked in Providence and Cranston. Most of its members were buried in Pocasset Cemetery and Oakland Cemetery in Cranston, as well as Swan Point Cemetery and Old North Burial Ground in Providence.

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