**Outline for a one-year post narrative history**

This outline has been developed to be helpful to the historian. It would be advantageous to check any

compilation against this outline so as to include as much of the material suggested here as possible.

**Part I – Format**

**(1) Cover** A standard three-ring binder, or similar type, to accommodate 8 ½ x 11 bond paper must be used

with The American Legion emblem centered (left to right) on the cover with the name and number of the post.

Binders with embossed American Legion emblems are available through Emblem Sales.

Each book is not to exceed three inches between the front and back cover. If you submit two or more

binders, you must indicate on the cover and title page the wording “Volume 1,” “Volume 2,” etc.

**(2) Name/address of compiler** The full name and complete mailing address of the history author should

appear on the inside front cover in the lower left corner. It will be neatly typed or computer generated and centered on a 3x5 index card.

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**(3) Title page** This will be the first page facing the reader as the history book is opened. It should be centered on the page (left to right, top to bottom) and in a logical arrangement with double spacing or more and contain as a minimum the following:

**History of**

(Name of post) **Post No.** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Number of post)

**The American Legion**

(city and state)

**For** 20\_\_\_\_\_ to 20\_\_\_\_

**By** (person compiling history)

**(4) Introduction** Every history should include a forward or introduction setting forth the reasons for the organization and may include:

Mention of the national organization’s founding with a tie-in of the department and post. (See

**www.legion.org/history** or “Capsule History of The American Legion,” listed later, as a possible

beginning, and see your department historian for a capsule history of the department.)

Selection of the post name. If named for a departed comrade or comrades, include a short biographical sketch of their lives and include available photographs.

If possible, a brief résumé of your community’s history, especially the part played by that locality in

furnishing men and women during wars and conflicts.

A photograph of the post and street address, if your post has a post home.

Acknowledgment of any assistance or contributions used in compiling the history.

**(5) Table of contents** This is a “must” for any good history, which will list the pages of the chapters and

appendices and should be in the front of the history immediately following the introduction. If there is more

than one volume, each volume should contain a complete table of contents.

**(6) Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion** Identifying the principal aims of The American

Legion, the preamble is a fitting introduction and should follow the table of contents. It should be centered on

the page and spaced in a neat and logical arrangement. Multicolored 8½ x 11 prints of the preamble may be

purchased through Emblem Sales.

**(7) Index** The alphabetical index is a “must” for any good history. This comprehensive index of names, places

and events mentioned in your history, with page references, shall be at the end of the history following the

appendices. Be sure to include every person and activity in the history. If a person has a title, put that in with a

cross-reference to the name. If there is more than one volume, each volume should have a complete index.

**(8) Page numbering** Do not forget to number the pages. Be consistent in placing page numbers, either at top

or bottom of pages. Numbering will start with the title page.

**Order of page numbering** The above pages should appear in order with Arabic numerals or Roman numerals:

Title Page 1 or i

Introduction 2 or ii

Table of Contents 3 or iii

Preamble 4 or iv

List each page in consecutive order using Arabic numerals. If you use Arabic numerals, the next number will

follow your last number (e.g. if the preamble is 4, the first page of the history is 5). If you use Roman numerals,

then the first page of the history is 1 (e.g. if the Preamble is iv, then the first page of the history is 1).

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**Chapters**

Following the preamble, the chapters may be sequenced in this suggested manner:

**Chapter 1 – Roster of Post Officers** Photographs of current post officers should be included in the history. If it is

not possible to obtain photographs of every officer, make a special effort to include photographs of the

commander and the adjutant.

**Chapter 2 – Roster of Post Chairmen** Include a roster of post chairs with photographs, if available.

**Chapter 3 – One-Year Post History** This should be a one-year post chronicle. The history is to cover one year,

beginning with the installation of officers, up to and including the installation of the next year’s officers. This

timeframe may vary in some departments. This is the most important chapter in your history, and must be as

complete as possible with a graphic account of the post and its activities. The historian should relate in narrative

form, and in chronological order, all important events and programs conducted during the year by the post or

events conducted jointly with the Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, or county, district, department and

national levels. (Remember, this is the post’s history, not the department or National Headquarters.)

Historians may use information from the minutes of meetings as a basis for information about the post’s

activities. Then contact members who were chairs of the committees for further details. Include anything that

you deem a special attribute of the post, setting it apart from all others.

Do not use any photographs or newspaper articles in this chapter of your narrative history*.* However,

photographs may be included in dedicated committee chapters and newspaper articles in the appendices.

**Other chapters** While many American Legion programs and post projects are of a continuing nature and may

run through several administrations, such activities might be better covered in a separate chapter following

those devoted to the individual administration.

The activities of all standing post committees should be given considerable coverage, particularly if one

committee performs an outstanding service. You may want to include each committee in separate chapters:

Americanism, Membership, Boys State, School Award Medals, Oratorical Contest, Junior Shooting Sports,

Baseball, Children & Youth, Sons of The American Legion, patriotic observances, post parties, Boy Scout troops

and other sponsored groups, to name a few. Collect and record for posterity all post activities.

Including photographs in the committee chapters adds to the attractiveness of the entry. Give attention to

the arrangement of illustrations in relation to the text and use of captions (identification) under each

photograph.

**Appendices**

Appendices are pages of statistical data that should be carried at the end of the history, following the chapters

and before the index, and might include:

Organization of the post with a list of charter members and dates of temporary and permanent charters.

A roster of all past post commanders and adjutants since the charter date with their years served.

If the post is not too large, add a roster of members listed in alphabetical order. This may include, after

each member’s name, the member’s branch of service or the date he or she joined the post.

A record of the post’s citations and awards received, as well as awards presented by the post.

A list of members who served as delegates to the national and department conventions, or national and

department officers and commission and committee appointees, including the county and district.

Complete records of annual elections showing all nominations and votes received by various nominees.

The post’s membership standings by year since the charter date; a list of new members for the current

year; a list of life members and Paid-Up-For-Life (PUFL) members; ”In Memoriam,” also known as Taps or

Post Everlasting, listings for the current year; the post’s constitution and by-laws; the annual post budget;

and any other important statistics.

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**Part II – Graphic Account / Readability**

The emphasis should be on the narrative rather than the statistical style of presentation. Use your

imagination, and be original in thought and presentation.

A high degree of literary style is not essential to success, but the method of presentation should be pleasing

to the general reader. The reader must be able to follow the post’s story without difficulty or confusion.

The most common error is in not writing in the third person. This means you should write as an observer,

not as a participant. The history should be written as a chronological and detailed account of events arranged in

order of time without any analysis or interpretation.

Statistics are of great value but should be included in the appendix rather than being placed indiscriminately

throughout the book.

**Part III – Illustrations**

All photographs must be identified by occasion, individuals, date and place of event with the exception of

individual photographs of post officers and chairs (name and title/committee only). Provide left-to-right subject

identification, and if necessary, by row.

Be sure all photographs are clear, as blurry prints will not aid materially and will take away from rather than

enhance your history. Proper arrangement with the text is a must to achieve an eye-catching history book. Avoid

using pictures with alcohol or cigarettes in them.

**Part IV – Judges Option / Originality**

Under this category, judges will consider a number of qualities or items of content in the history that are not

readily cataloged under the preceding headings. Some histories, for example, have a complete roster of

members. In other words, judges will determine features that make a history especially attractive or useful, i.e. a

spine label, etc. By the same token, if inaccuracies come to the judges’ attention, they would have a negative

scoring effect.

**Page format suggestions**

Use plain and unruled 8½ x 11 white and/or colored bond paper for your history binder filler.

The history should be typed or computer generated on one side of the paper using black ribbon or print.

Single sheets of paper may be placed back-to-back using transparent plastic protective covers.

Margins are a must for neatness, readability and standardization. Use a 1-inch margin on all sides (except

one inch from the perforation side of paper, if necessary).

Where feasible, provide double-spaced copy on pages with a three- to six-space indention for new

paragraphs and single-spaced lines for photograph identifications.

If you have any doubt of the spelling of a word, use a dictionary. Also double-check the spelling of all names.

Some entries would have a better chance in the contests as a yearbook, even though they were submitted

as narratives. Consider your entry. Is it a narrative or a yearbook? There is a difference. Read the outlines for

each category.

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**National judging standards**

You will note that Part I, Part II, Part III and Part IV, as identified, coincide with the categories of the national

judging standards. The “etc.” listed after several of the scoring elements shows that there are additional

requirements necessary to achieve total score points. It is suggested that you re-examine the outline, using the

standards as a checklist, before submitting your contest entry.

**PART I – FORMAT (40 POINTS)**

**(1) COVER** Standard three-ring binder for 8½ x 11 bond paper, emblem, etc. (5)

**(2) NAME/ADDRESS OF COMPILER** Inside front cover/lower left corner, etc. (3)

**(3) TITLE PAGE** Centered in logical arrangement/double spacing plus, etc. (5)

**(4) INTRODUCTION** Post background, tie-in with department and national, community, etc. (5)

**(5) TABLE OF CONTENTS** Page reference of chapters, appendices, etc. (5)

**(6) PREAMBLE** Includes Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion, etc. (2)

**(7) INDEX** Comprehensive alphabetical listing at end of history book, etc. (10)

**(8) PAGE NUMBERING** Table of contents, chapters, appendices and index, etc. (5)

Subtotal (40)

**PART II – GRAPHIC ACCOUNT/READABILITY (30 POINTS)**

**(1) NARRATIVE** Rather than a statistical style of presentation (10)

**(2) PRESENTATION** Chronological order and in third person, not to detract from general

readability (10)

**(3) CLEAR/GRAMMATICALLY CORRECT** Pleasing to the general reader (10)

Subtotal (30)

**PART III – ILLUSTRATIONS (10 POINTS)**

**(1) IDENTIFICATION** All photographs must have names, occasions, sources, dates, etc. Provide

proper left-to-right identifications. (5)

**(2) CLEAR PHOTOGRAPHS** Blurry or foggy prints detract from presentation, etc. (5)

Subtotal (10)

**PART IV – JUDGES OPTION / ORIGINALITY (10 POINTS)**

**(1) JUDGES WILL CONSIDER** a number of qualities or items of content in the history not readily

cataloged under the preceding headings.

**(2) JUDGES WILL DETERMINE** features that make a history especially attractive or useful as a

source of reference and historic value. (10)

**TOTAL POINTS OF ENTRY** (90)

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**Postscripts**

Consider making a copy of your entry in the event it should become a national contest winner. With your

permission, it will be retained in the library archives of The American Legion National Headquarters in

Indianapolis for visitors to view.

In the event that your post records are missing and there is no history, the post historian may search the

local newspaper files and interview past commanders, adjutants and older members. Many important post

events can be found using these methods.

Information about the post charter can be obtained by writing to the Charter Clerk, The American Legion,

P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

Many departments have organized department historian associations, patterned after the National

Association of Department Historians of The American Legion (NADHAL). These groups render assistance in

carrying out a successful historian’s program. Ask if your department has such an organization and join in its

activities. If there is no such department organization, consult your department historian.

The serious post historian will find informative and interesting any one of the following published histories

about The American Legion: Michael J. Bennett’s “When Dreams Come True: The GI Bill and the Making of

Modern America” *(*Brassey’s, 1996); Thomas A. Rumer’s “The American Legion: An Official History” (M.

Evans, 1990); Raymond Moley’s “The American Legion Story,” (Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1966); Richard Jones’

“A History of The American Legion“ (Bobbs-Merrill, 1946); and Marquis James’ “A History of The American

Legion” (William Green, 1923).

Where possible, use digital voice recorders or video cameras to record oral histories and interviews of

American Legion post founders and leaders to capture firsthand information about the post’s history.

**Capsule history of The American Legion**

A group of 20 officers who served in the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in France during World War I

is credited with founding the Legion. AEF Headquarters asked the officers to suggest ideas on how to improve

troop morale. One officer, Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt Jr., proposed an organization of veterans. In

February 1919, the group formed a temporary committee and selected several hundred officers who had the

confidence and respect of the whole army.

About 1,000 officers and enlisted men attended the Paris Caucus in March 1919. They adopted a temporary

constitution and the name The American Legion. The group also elected an executive committee to complete

the organization’s work. It considered each soldier of the AEF a member of the Legion. The executive committee

named a subcommittee to organize veterans at home in the United States.

In May 1919, the Legion held a second organizing caucus in St. Louis. It completed the constitution and

made plans for a permanent organization, setting up a temporary headquarters in New York City and beginning

its relief, employment and Americanism programs.

Congress granted the Legion a national charter in September 1919. The first national convention convened

in Minneapolis on November 10-12, 1919, adopting a permanent constitution and electing officers to head the

organization. Delegates also voted to locate the Legion’s national headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana. The

Legion continues to support the four pillars of service and advocacy upon which it was founded: Veterans Affairs

and Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children and Youth.