

# Veteran's Organization

## Rhodes American Legion Post 456



Color Guard at Eden Cemetery. From the left; Rev. Nancy Nichols, Harlan Kloppenborg Jr., Larry, Lawrence and Danny Guckert and Dennis Kloppenborg.

The Legion was first chartered in 1920. Due to lack of interest and non-participation the charter was cancelled in 1927.

Memorial Day Services have always been a patriotic tradition in our town. On one of these occasions, Memorial Services were held in the Opera House, with the band playing a selection on the street before the program opened with the Star Spangled Banner. The flag was presented. The audience sang a number of patriotic songs before an invocation was given by a minister. There was also readings and addresses made by different members of the community.

The procession led by the Marshall of the day would proceed to the Cemetery. In those days there were sidewalks to the cemetery. Here the soldiers' graves were strewn with flowers. A eulogy was given and the salute to the dead was fired. The grave of the unknown soldier was decorated, with taps being sounded and the echo heard.

"Jake" Sperling, our only Civil War Veteran, living in Rhodes at this time, carried the 45 star flag under which he so proudly served. It was on one of these



John "Jake" Sperling



John Sperling - Civil War Veteran

occasions that this gallant Civil War veteran and companion could not quite make the entire journey. It was when the crowd was returning to town that "Jake" with great sadness, presented this flag to Henry Buck, to care for as he could not carry it anymore. The Alfred Buck family presented this 45 star flag to the Rhodes American Legion-Post 456 in May of 1976. The Legion still proudly carries this flag each Memorial Day. "Jake" was honored on one of his last Memorial Day celebrations, as the band played the Star Spangled Banner, with the audience singing, while Wayne Hildreth and Alfred Buck carried "Grandpa Sperling."

In August of 1945, the following 16 persons obtained a temporary charter: Gayle Snedecor, Leo A. Baie, Don Luing, J. Ben Overman, John Maas, Joe L. Ward, Harry Eddy, Elmer Baie, Virgil Work, Keith Hoy, Carroll Falor, Charles Elliott, Wayne Hildreth, Fred Allen, Fred Schultz and John Guckert. They had an all time high membership the following year with a total of 66 members.

In 1946, the Legion sponsored a homecoming celebration to be held July 22 and 23, to welcome home the more than 100 men and women of this community, who had served in the armed forces. In the early days, Rhodes was known as a town that knew how to celebrate. The Legion felt that it had arranged a

program that would live up to that reputation, which was started by the pioneers.

The celebration opened informally Monday night when the carnival moved in and a free dance was held. Tuesday afternoons program included a band concert, music by the Son Fellows, of radio fame, and a nonpolitical address by Frank Mills, editor of the Legionaire for twenty-five years. The evening's entertainment included a band concert by the Rhodes Band, vaudeville acts and a free show. All the carnival concessions were in operation throughout the day. The last event of the day being a platform dance.

Our community still honors each Memorial day with services at Eden, St. Joseph's and Day or Ball Cemeteries. Flags are placed at each soldier's grave and a miniature cemetery is made with 50 white crosses and one large white cross all decorated with poppies. A wreath is then placed at the head of the large white cross by either Girl or Boy Scouts of this community. A scroll is placed nearby listing all of the deceased veterans in the Eden and St. Joseph's Cemetery. A very impressive sight.



Brownies, Roxane Thill and Tina Mercer in 1982.

Many fund raisers have been held through the years, these being mainly to buy new Legion markers, to mark all the deceased Veterans' graves. Just to name a few of the fund raisers; a donkey ball game held at the park; Hunters breakfast and dinner served at the cafe, (many of the men make good waitresses and dishwashers); street dances and a tractor pull.