



# BIVOUAC

KENT CIVIL WAR SOCIETY \* P.O. Box 3671 KENT, OH 44240  
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## **“FRATERNITY, CHARITY, LOYALTY: THE GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC”**

**A TALK BY TODD ARRINGTON, MENTOR  
SHELTER HOUSE, FRED FULLER PARK, KENT  
TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2024, AT 7:30 P.M.**

We will again enjoy a talk by James A. Garfield National Historic Site Manager Todd Arrington. He spoke here in 2017 about Garfield and in 2019 about the Gettysburg Address. Now he brings us a tale of the most famous postwar organization of the Union Army.

The "Grand Army of the Republic" was a Union veterans' organization after the Civil War. It became politically influential and advocated for such issues as pensions for U.S. veterans and even racial equality in the wake of the war that brought slavery to an end. This program will educate listeners about the GAR's history and influence on many facets of post-Civil War society.

As stated above, Todd is currently the Site Manager of James A. Garfield National Historic Site in Mentor. He has been an historian and ranger with the National Park Service for twenty-five years and has also worked at Homestead National Monument of America in Nebraska and Gettysburg National Military Park and Eisenhower National Historic Site, both in Pennsylvania. He has served in temporary leadership assignments at Cuyahoga Valley National Park (Ohio), First Ladies National Historic Site (Ohio), and Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument (Montana). He is a veteran of the United States Army and holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

He has been published several times on subjects related to the American Civil War, the early Republican Party, the Reconstruction era, and America's westward expansion. His essay "Industry and Economy during the Civil War" was published in *The Civil War Remembered*, the National Park Service's official handbook commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. He has written and edited for several popular history blogs, and the University Press of Kansas published his book *The Last Lincoln Republican: The Presidential Election of 1880* in September 2020.

Our optional before-meeting dinner will be at Eddy's Deli & Restaurant, 4581 Kent Road in Stow, beginning around 5:30 p.m.



G.A.R. Medallion

## Grand Army of the Republic

Excerpted from <https://www.emergingamerica.org/exhibits/how-civil-war-veterans-transformed-disability/cast-characters/grand-army-republic#:~:text=Instead%2C%20like%20many%20other%20veterans,and%20a%20political%20advocacy%20group>

In the decades after the Civil War, there was no separate organization representing disabled Union veterans. Instead, like many other veterans, they joined the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). The GAR became very effective in pressure politics, especially in its promotion of veterans' pensions in the late nineteenth century. It was, in effect, both a fraternal organization and a political advocacy group.

Fraternal organizations were popular in nineteenth-century America. These included Temperance societies, Freemasons, the Odd Fellows, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, and the Knights of Columbus. These gave men a place to socialize and to get support during a time of great changes in society. Under the slogan, "Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty," the GAR met similar needs for Union veterans.

Founded on April 6, 1866, by Major Benjamin F. Stephenson, a surgeon with the 124th Illinois Infantry, the GAR grew rapidly in the 1880s and reached its height in the 1890s, with 450,000 members and 7,500 Posts nationwide. It sought to recreate the comradeship of military service, and its organization mirrored military hierarchy, including a national "commander-in-chief." Local posts modeled meetings and initiations on the rituals of Masonic lodges.

One of the biggest benefits of the GAR were many annual encampments. These gatherings lasted for days and included camping out, formal dinners, speeches, and ceremonies. The encampments brought economic benefits to host sites. They are an example of how memorializing the Civil War made money for some in the late nineteenth century.

The Grand Army of the Republic did help disabled veterans but often used amputees, or "living monuments," as symbols leveraged to ensure more generous pensions for all Union veterans. The stress on amputation as the quintessential Civil War disability meant that those with less visible, and more common, disabilities received far less sympathy, attention, and assistance.