

Dayton's American Legion

By Carla Rowe

Compiled from research from C.B. Polly

The Dayton American Legion, The Frank E. Bauers Post No. 42, began in 1919, the same year the national organization was chartered and incorporated by Congress as a patriotic veterans organization devoted to mutual helpfulness. Nationally, the American Legion is the largest veterans service organization, committed to mentoring and sponsorship of youth programs in communities, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting a strong national security, and continued devotion to fellow service members and veterans.

The post is named after Frank Ernest Bauers, of Company M, 361st Infantry, 91st Division, wounded October 2, 1918 in the battle of Argonne in France. He died October 11, 1918. The Columbia County Dispatch, printed in the death notice, "The young man was born and reared in Dayton and was very popular in school. He was inducted into the service last fall." A memorial service was held for him on a Sunday morning at the Dayton Congregational Church on February 9, 1919.

A total of 465 young men from Dayton had been inducted into the military for what would become know as World War I, which began in July of 1914 and ended in November, 1918.

According to the June 9, 1917 issue of the Dispatch, "Over 600 young men in Dayton and Columbia County appeared at the the registrations booths Tuesday and complied with the new federal law. The registration passed off quietly and there was not a single one to refuse to register. Of the total number registered, 609, there were 348 who claimed exemptions, one alien enemy was registered and 16 aliens. There was only one negro."

From the December 18, 1918 issue of the Dispatch, by Judge C.F. Miller outlined the service of several divisions who had Columbia County boys. The article provides a brief overview of the Division of which Frank E. Bauer was a part. It is learned the 91st or Sunset Division was organized and drilled at Camp Lewis. "The left New York in July and landed early in August. After doing guard duty for a short time, they were placed in the line of battle and from September 26th to October 10th did some of the hardest fighting of the war, in the advance through the Argonne forest down the valley of the Meuse. There they gained the name of the fighting 91st and many of them earned medals for valor. It is said that during a few days, fifty per cent of the officers of this division were killed or disabled."

Several months after the war came to an end, an article in the July 12, 1919 issue of the Dispatch titled "Columbia's War Record from the history kept by Judge Chester F. Miller" listed the names of the 13 men who died either in battle or as a result of war

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B. Carl Rowe

Compiled from research from O.A. Polly

The Dayton American Legion, The Frank B. Evans Post No. 42, began in 1918, the same year the national organization was chartered and incorporated by Congress as a public utility organization devoted to mutual helpfulness. Nationality in the American Legion is not a barrier to membership. The organization is committed to monitoring and sponsoring of youth programs in communities, advocating veterans and honor providing a strong national to youth and continued devotion to fellow service members and veterans.

The post is named after Frank B. Evans, founder of Company, M. 381, Infantry, 31st Division, wounded October 1918 while on duty at Argonne in France. He died October 1, 1918. The Columbus County Register, printed in the death notice, "The young man was born and raised in Dayton and was very popular in school. He was inducted into the service last fall. A national service was held for him on a Sunday morning at the Dayton Organizational Church on February 2, 1918."

Frank B. Evans was a 462 young man from Dayton who had been inducted into the military for World War I service in World War I, which began in July of 1917 and ended in November 1918.

According to the June 27, 1917 issue of the Dispatch, "Over 600 young men in the city and vicinity appeared at the registration booth on Thursday, and the number of registrations was not a single one less than the total number registered, 602, there were 348 who claimed exemptions, and also a number was registered and 16 others. There was only one negro."

From the December 14, 1918 issue of the Dispatch, by Judge G. E. Miller outlined the service of several divisions who had Columbus County boys. The article provides a brief overview of the Division of which Frank B. Evans was a part. It is found in the Dispatch, "The first boys in the Division were organized and drilled at Camp Lewis. They left for France in July and landed early in August. After being organized for a short time, they were placed in the line of battle and from September 10th to October 10th, the name of the hardest fighting of the war in the Argonne forest. The boys were the only ones to be killed. There they gained the name of the fighting 31st, and many of them earned medals for valor. It is said that during a few days, fifty per cent of the officers of this division were killed or disabled."

Several months after the war came to an end, an article in the July 12, 1919 issue of the Dispatch stated, "Columbus County boys kept by Judge Charles E. ... stated the names of the 13 men who were killed in the Argonne forest as a result of war."

injuries, along with a complete listing of all the men who served and what branches they served with.

It read: "Judge Miller's war history kept during the greater part of the period of our conflict with Germany shows Columbia County's record of heroism second to none. Four hundred and ~~sixty~~ sixty five of our young men entered the service, 13 of whom will never return, and 26 of whom were either gassed or wounded."

As soldiers returned home, the local American Legion began. In October, 15 men gathered at the Commercial Club to elect officers and begin planning for the upcoming Armistice Day on November 11. As reported in the November 12 issue of the Dispatch: "As the 11th hor sirens screamed, bells rang and cannon roared, marking distinctly the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of the year when the fighting ceased in the world war. The band played at the corner of Main and Second after the noise subsided. H.G. Moe sang a solo and R.R. Cahill delivered an address that everyone praised as just the right thing to fit the occasion. While these ceremonies were in progress all places of business were closed. There was to be a grand parade in the evening and two dances, so if you have ever attended an entertainment in Dayton, you can make a good guess at what took place during the hours up to midnight yesterday."

In January of 1920, the American Legion rented a portion of the Dantzscher building, on Third and Main, as a post headquarters and asked for donations of furnishings. Some time during 1921, according to the Dispatch, the group took up headquarters in the rooms formerly occupied by the school of music on the second floor of the Weinhard building.

Reading through articles printed in the Dispatch, a reader could surmise there were many gatherings at the Legion Hall, most featuring food and dancing. From the January 1, 1921 issued of the Dispatch - Quota Almost Raised: For some reason the drive to secure money with which to save the starving children of Europe did not progress very well at first, so the American Legion was asked to present the matter to the people in any way that would bring results. Accordingly, they sounded the fire siren Tuesday night and got everyone down town where a huge bonfire was found at the end of Main Street. Handbills were distributed announcing that Ed Davis had been arrested for starting this fire and that it would take, \$1,750, Columbia County's Quota, to bail him out. Last night the sum raised stood at \$1,217 and little fear was expressed that the entire amount would not be raised in a short time."

In 1925 the American Legion Auxiliary formed and they helped with events at the Legion Hall. They helped host Sweetheart and Fireman's Balls, potluck dinners and mailed care packages to servicemen.

By 1928 the Legion had 155 members. The American Legion raised money for the Soldiers Memorial Library Fund, Christmas money for friends who were "pinched tight," as well as helping needy children and assisting getting firewood for local elderly.

While in 1945 membership numbers dropped to 85; but the end of World War II boosted the membership numbers to 321 in 1946.

Frank E. Bauers Post 42 building located at 211 E. Clay Street, Dayton became the property of the American Legion in approximately 1948. It was a Christian Science Church owned and pastored by Ben Turner of Covello. The wife of Ben Turner donated it to the Legion after the death of her husband. It is unknown the exact date of construction for the building as county records begin in 1930.

After the building was gifted, members of the Legion dug a basement beneath the building. The space, used for recreational activities, is now being considered by the Legion to house a museum to display the many uniforms and other artifacts they have gathered over the years.

Once a place of gathering for civic planning, auxiliary functions and commaderie, the active members of the Legion are working hard to restore pride in their building, their organization and the community.

Brian Black, who without question is a driving force behind the emergence of the Legion shared "Before the hall, there were a number of World War II Veterans who were the quiet doers in the community."

He continued, "For years they meet at Terry's OK Tire Store and planned projects. We would like to get that kind of civic commitment back."

"The Legion always had some big project going – like bleachers at the school or the foot bridge across the Touchet River," Black shared. "They could really get things done."

Jim Harting is given credit for not letting the organization wither away during a time when it could have easliy slipped into the bygones. He and a few others, represented the Legion at funerals and set out the traditional cross and flag markers on the graves of Veterans in the Dayton City Cemetery over Memorial Day weekend for years.

Then in 2005, the All Wheels Weekend committee asked the American Legion to fly a large flag on the east side of town to welcome all who visitied. A crane was rented that year and a flag flew over the event as requested. However, when the 2006 event came around, a crane was not available in the area, so Black decided something permanent needed to be done.

In 2007, the American Legion emerged from a dormancy period of almost 20 years and elected a board of directors on January 7, consisting of Jim Harting, Eric Thorn, Jim Korsberg, Kent Shockly, Bob Budig, Owen Agenbroad, Bob Warren, Gene Turner, Tim Hoskins and Black. Together they began the planning of the Dayton's Veterans Memorial. Just a little more than two years later, the flag was raised for the first time on June 13, 2009 –in time for Flag Day on June 14. The results can be appreciated at the corner of 4th and Main in front of the American West Bank.

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