

MILITARY ORDER OF THE LOYAL LEGION OF THE UNITED STATES



Loyal Legion Vignettes



**MAJOR WILLIAM WARNER, 44TH WISCONSIN INFANTRY, USV
(1839 Wisconsin - 1916 Missouri)**

**Insignia Number 3819, Original Member of the Missouri Commandery
Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States
[17th Commander-in-Chief, Grand Army of the Republic \(1888/1889\)](#)**

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An enumeration of those men of the present generation who have won, honor and public recognition

for themselves and at the same time have honored the state to which they belong, would be incomplete were there failure to make prominent reference to the one whose name initiates this paragraph. His is a sturdy American character and a stalwart patriotism, manifest again and again in important public service. In this country where no man is born to prominence, but where the road to public honor is that of public usefulness, the life history of one who has arisen from comparative obscurity to prominence cannot fail to prove of widespread interest, containing, as it does, lessons of value, incentive and inspiration. Such has been the history of William Warner, United States senator from Missouri and one of the distinguished lawyers of the Kansas City bar.

Born in Lafayette County, Wisconsin, on the 11th day of June 1839, he was left an orphan in early childhood and since the age of six years has depended upon his own resources for a livelihood. He was employed in a store between the ages of ten and fifteen years and his educational advantages were, necessarily limited, but he was ambitious for intellectual advancement and eagerly embraced every opportunity for study, in the meantime carefully hoarding his earnings until he had saved enough to enable him to pursue a brief academic course during a part of the years 1855 and 1856. He then obtained a teacher's certificate and for several winter seasons engaged in teaching, his evening hours during that period being devoted to the study of law. At different times he was a student at Lawrence University of Wisconsin and Michigan State University, but is not a graduate of either. In the year in which he attained his majority he was admitted to the bar. Strongly desiring to enter upon practice as his real work, he nevertheless put aside all business and personal considerations that he might respond to his country's call for aid, enlisting in the Thirty-third Regiment of Wisconsin Volunteers. He was commissioned adjutant and afterward Captain of Company B, serving in Tennessee and Mississippi during the Grant campaign of 1862 and in the operations which ended in the capture of Vicksburg in 1863. On the day of the surrender of the city, July 4th, he read the declaration of independence between the two lines. In 1864, he was promoted to the rank of Major of the Forty-fourth Regiment of Wisconsin Volunteers and served until the close of the war, in the mean-time holding various staff assignments.

With a most creditable military record, Mr. Warner returned to the north and in 1865 located in Kansas City, where he began practice. He has been a close and discriminating student of the principles of jurisprudence and his broad knowledge, his assiduous and unrelaxing attention to the duties of his practice and the ability which he displayed in the courts soon won him a good clientage and gained for him public recognition, which resulted in his election in 1867 to the office of city attorney, on which occasion he overcame a strong Democratic majority. The following year he was chosen circuit attorney and acted in that capacity until elected mayor in 1870, an election which indicated his personal popularity and the unqualified trust reposed in him by his fellow townsmen, for he was the only candidate on the party ticket elected. That year marked the beginning of some of the most important municipal movements and public enterprises that have redounded to the benefit and growth of Kansas City. His administration was businesslike, practical and progressive. characterized by the introduction of various needed reforms and improvements, the value of which all loyal public spirited citizens acknowledged. Though a republican, Mr. Warner assisted in the election of Turner A. Gill, democratic nominee for mayor in 1875, in order to oppose the designs of the National Waterworks Company, a course which has been characteristic of him through life, as he has ever held the public good before partisanship and placed the general welfare before personal aggrandizement. The same year he was a member of the committee which drafted the new city charter. In the meantime, in 1872, he had served as a Republican elector. He continued in the practice of law with constantly growing success and from 1882 until 1884 was also United States District Attorney. In the latter year he was elected to the 49th Congress and proved an able working member of that body. He secured the enactment of thirteen bills, which he introduced, and was connected with much important constructive legislation, the work done in the committee rooms. In 1892, he received the Republican nomination for Governor and succeeding in greatly reducing the usual Democratic majority. In February 1898, entirely without his solicitation, he was appointed United States District Attorney for the western district of Missouri. On the 18th of March 1895, he was elected United States Senator and has since continued a member of the upper house of the

national legislature. His work in the council chambers of the nation is too well known to need further recounting here. He has long been regarded as one of the influential men of his party, whose opinions have borne weight in state and national councils. He served as a delegate to the national Republican conventions of 1884 and 1888 and was delegate at large in 1892, 1896, and 1908.

Aside from professional and political honors that he has gained and justly merits, William Warner has attained distinction in Grand Army circles, having twice been elected Commander of the Department of Missouri, while in 1888 he was elected Commander-in-Chief of the national body. To his efforts is largely due the establishment of the Soldiers' Home at Leavenworth. He is a member of the Missouri Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion and is deeply interested in all that pertains to the military history of the country.

In March 1886, Senator Warner was married to Mrs. Sophia F. Bromley, a sister of T.B. Bullene, a prominent dry goods merchant of Kansas City. He thoroughly enjoys home life and takes great pleasure in the of his family and friends. He is always courteous, kindly and affable and those who know him personally have for him warm regard. Without invidious distinction he may be termed one of the most popular men of Missouri. As an orator he is eloquent, strong and convincing in argument and logical in his deductions. A man of great natural ability, his success at the bar from the beginning of his residence in Kansas City has been uniformly rapid, while in public life he has gained honors that have come in recognition of his fidelity to trust. Today a man of national reputation, he started in life without any of the advantages which come through wealth or influence. As has been truly remarked, after all that may done for a man in the way of giving him early opportunities for obtaining the requirements which are sought in schools and in books, he must essentially formulate, determine and give shape to his own character, and this is what Senator Warner has done. His life has been varied in service, constant in honor, fearless in conduct and stainless in reputation.

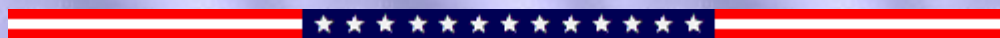
Major William Warner, 44th Wisconsin Infantry U.S. Volunteers assisted in the organization of the 33rd Wisconsin Infantry and was mustered in as First Lieutenant and Adjutant September 11, 1862. He was promoted to Captain of Company D of that Regiment March 14, 1863. From October 1863 to September 1864, he served as acting Assistant Adjutant General of the 4th Division, 17th Army Corps, and was promoted to Major of the 44th Wisconsin Infantry September 13, 1864. He was mustered out August 28, 1865. William Warner became a member of the Missouri Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Insignia #3819. He was elected a member of the Post No. 8 at Kansas City, Missouri, Missouri Department, Grand Army of the Republic, Member #372,960, was the first Department Commander of Missouri, and was elected Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief in 1887 and the 17th Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic in 1888. He died October 4, 1916 at Kansas City, Missouri, at the age of 77.

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Sources:

- 1) *Register of Companions of the Missouri Commandery of MOLLUS*, 1895.
- 2) *Register of Companions of the Missouri Commandery of MOLLUS*, 1901.
- 3) *Register of Companions of the Missouri Commandery of MOLLUS*, 1908.
- 4) *Kansas City Missouri, Its History and Its People 1800-1908*, 1908. By Whitney, Vol.III, p.470-473.
- 5) *Final Journal of the Grand Army of the Republic*, 1957. Compiled by Cora Gillis, Jamestown, New York, Past National President, Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, 1861-1865, Inc. and last National Secretary of the Grand Army of the Republic.
- 6) Photograph: *Final Journal of the Grand Army of the Republic*, 1957. Photograph provided by George G. Kane, July 2001.

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