

# **The Last Soldier Ceremony For the Sons of Union Veterans Of the Civil War**

COMMANDER: Honored guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. On behalf of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War I wish to thank you for coming today. We are here today to honor and forever mark the resting place of the Last Civil War Soldier of

\_\_\_\_\_ County. As nothing worthy of merit can be accomplished without Divine guidance I ask you to bow your heads as the Chaplain invokes His Divine blessing.

CHAPLAIN: Supreme Ruler of the universe. God of battle and of peace. We thank thee for this day and hour; for this blessed privilege of meeting here as sons of soldiers to pay homage to a nation's dead.

We thank Thee that in the day of trouble and the hour of danger that Thou in Thy infinite wisdom raised up men who were ready to do battle, and if need be, to die so that this country might be preserved. Grant us we beseech Thee, a continuance of Thy watchful care.

Grant Thy blessing upon these sacred ceremonies consecrated as they are to the memory of brave and loyal hearts who dared stand for the right and were not afraid to bare their breasts to a storm of steel in defense of human liberty, a united country and the brotherhood of man.

Bless our country. Preserve it in purity and integrity. AMEN

MEMORIALS OFFICER: The reason we assemble today is best explained by Past Commander in Chief Perie L. Fouch when he addressed the last Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic in 1949. He said in part "The records of three hundred fighting regiments show, that of their number, one in three was either killed or wounded.

They stood at Antietam, they faced the heights of Donelson and Fredericksburg, and stood among the cedars at Stone's River, met the fearful shock at Shiloh, became granite columns with the rocks of Chickamauga, formed a living wall against treason's mightiest power at Gettysburg, moved unfaltering in the slaughter pens of Cold Harbor, and climbed up to rocky precipice and mountainside to the portals of glory on Lookout, Kenesaw, and Mission Ridge.

Can we comprehend the loss of human life, even that comprehension will be but a dim picture of the reality unless our imagination be vivid enough to fill all its lines and spaces with privation and suffering, unless we can call up the summer's tempest, and winter's sleet, unless we can behold them fording streams and battling alike with the enemy, ice and swift currents; marching day after day through swamps. Standing on the lonely picket post until too wearied to be even wakeful; unless we can behold the gaunt starvation making hollow the cheek and dimming the light of the eye. Unless we can see the long lines of shroudless bodies and hear the pitiful cry for water and the prayer for succor. I believe our imagination will come far short of reality.

It was the privation, wounds and death there; it was the suspense, loneliness and suffering here. The roar of cannon and the crash of musketry on the plains and forest of the Southland were echoed by the cries of the orphans and wail of the widow amid the vales and hills of the Northland. The blare of trumpets and the bugle sounding charge yonder became the dry lamentation and the funeral dirge here.

The outlay was not alone shattered limbs and wasted forms, but desolate hopes, ruined homes and broken hearts; not alone the piled dead yonder, but the sacrifice and sorrow worse than death itself.

In the shadow of 500,000 graves in the daily presence of those of those that returned diseased and broken down, with Libby still vocal with the echo of suffering, with the memory of Belle Island, Salisbury, Millen and Andersonville lighted as though with lurid fires of hell, standing under the clouds of grief that darkened half a million homes, we proclaim a roll of honor of the Grand Army of the Republic.

That roll was made and completed in days of old, it was written with the red blood from human hearts, its letters more bright and more precious than were they writ in the purest gold and they were effaceably burned on the pages of life. Therefore, we the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, gather at this memorial in sacred memory of our fathers and their sacrifices."

If I may be so bold as to quote from the epitaph from another time and place "Tell them of us and say, For their tomorrow we gave our today."

As all the veterans here gathered are aware, a Soldier can not leave his post without being properly relieved. \_\_\_\_\_(Last Soldier's name) you are now relieved, I have the post.

Rest in peace.

COMMANDER: \_\_\_\_\_ is the Last Soldier of  
\_\_\_\_\_ County (State). He was born in \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_.  
He enlisted (was commissioned) as a \_\_\_\_\_ (rank) in Company \_\_\_\_\_ of the  
\_\_\_\_\_ regiment of the Union Army. This unit was involved in the following  
activities/engagements during his enlistment:

COMMANDER: Honor Attendants, remove the covering. Honor Guard Commander  
take Charge. FIRE SALUTE

COMMANDER: Chaplain, the benediction please

CHAPLAIN: Heavenly father we again ask your blessing on all here and your protection  
as we depart this hollowed ground. Teach us to be ever mindful of the sacrifices of  
those that have gone before us and hold in your tender mercies the defenders of this  
Great Country. AMEN