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National Patriotic Instructor

**Monthly Patriotic Instruction
April, 2015**

For the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, this month is one of celebration and mourning. We remember the sesquicentennial of surrender of the Confederate armies at Appomattox and Durham Station. We honor the reunification of our country. When we gather in Springfield in the middle of the month, we honor President Abraham Lincoln, and remember the sesquicentennial of his death. On April 6, we also remember the founding of the Grand Army of the Republic in 1866.

In this month of respect and remembrance, we must recall the words and actions of the Union forces at Appomattox. As the Confederate troops of General John Brown Gordon passed by, Chamberlain ordered what he called “a marching salute,” and it was returned in kind by General Gordon. For both men, the war was over, and it was time to render honors between respected combatants.

As we celebrate several programs this month, let us remember the bond of fraternity, the first value of our Order. We are brothers, bound together. We stand united for the purpose of honoring our Civil War ancestors and the causes for which they fought. Benjamin Stephenson knew and understood the bond of fraternity. The bond born of service in the Union forces was unbreakable.

After we return to our homes from the Lincoln Tomb, we celebrate Patriot’s Day, remembering the Battle of Lexington in 1775. When the men at Lexington lined up on the green, there is no doubt in my mind that they knew they could not stop the large force of British troops who marched into their town. Still, they stood together, doing what they believed to be right.

Our Union ancestors and our Confederate ancestors did the same thing. The causes of the American Civil War were many, and will be debated forever. In the end, we must remember that our ancestors on both sides did what they believed was right when they enlisted. They stood together, side by side, and rarely parted company after the war was over, opting instead to form fraternal organizations and stay close until death.

As we close the month, let us remember our Confederate “cousins,” who observe their Memorial Day on April 26th. We can never forget that without them, there would be no “us.”

On April 26, 1866, General John A. Logan attended a memorial service for fallen Union soldiers at Woodland Cemetery in Carbondale, Illinois. Local lore suggests that this ceremony inspired his decision to write the famous order for Decoration Day. Whether or not this is true or not, what remains as Memorial Day today took root as survivors of the war took time to gather together and remember the lives of those who did not come home alive. These ceremonies took places in every city and town across the entire nation and united those present in bonds of fraternity, just as we should be today.