

November 2021 Patriotic Instruction

Brothers,

As we reach the month of November and many of us will be meeting in Gettysburg for the Annual Remembrance Day Ceremonies, we will take time to memorialize the graves of the men who gave the last full measure of devotion at Gettysburg. Taking time to memorialize those who are buried at places like Gettysburg, Shiloh, or Antietam remains, and will always be, an important aspect of our roles as Brothers in the Sons of Union Veterans in the Civil War. I feel like there is a "BUT" coming...why can't I shake that feeling, oh wait it's because I am the author and I know there is, BUT there is a lot more that we can do outside the battlefields themselves. Many of us focus on the local cemeteries that we clean up and restore, and this is amazing. However, we cannot forget about the monuments that we drive by every day in town squares, outside city halls and sometimes even in cemeteries themselves.

Many of these monuments have sustained damage of the years, either from the elements, vandals, or other unforeseeable circumstances. It often takes years to fix as they tend to cost more money and time to fix them than a gravestone. These monuments are just as important as the final resting spots of our brave Union men and should be given as much time an appreciation as headstones. One way we can help get these monuments maintained is to remember that we are part of a community. What do I mean by this? It doesn't fall solely on our shoulders to fix and restore these markers; we can reach out to local businesses to donate money or volunteer services. We can also reach out to other fraternal organizations to assist us with these projects. To throw a corny quote in there (as you all know I love to do) teamwork makes the dream work!

Another way in which we can team up with the community is to reach out to our local governments. Town & City Halls may not know the significance of these monuments and sometimes an email or phone call to an elected officials could be the kick in the pants that is needed to get a project going. One such project that is going on currently to restore a local monument is that of the Rhode Island Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Downtown Providence Rhode Island. The SUVCW has been working with a committee whose members include the City of Providence, Downtown Providence Parks Conservancy, The Providence Foundation, and others to help restore the monument. The committee worked together to get a fundraising video produced, that featured Brothers of the Department of Rhode Island, Senator Jack Reed, Mayor of Providence Jorge Elorza, and a guest appearance by Ken Burns. When we work together with our community, we can make large projects like these extremely successful.

As we walk around Gettysburg this month, or our local towns, if you see a monument that needs repair or cleaning, don't think "wow this needs to get fixed who will fix it?" Think "How can I make this happen?" "Who from my community will help me and my Brothers tackle this?" We have amazing community resources at our fingertips that sometimes all we have to do is ask. Sometimes these groups might not be able to help, and that's okay, there is always another door to knock on to ask for help. We can't let the fear of rejection stop us from doing our work. Now is the time where I normally wrap this up about how the topic is Patriotic, but I feel this one is self-evident and requires no explanation. I look forward to seeing all your work on monuments going forward and hopes this inspires some to take on a big project as it is worth the work!

In Fraternity Charity and Loyalty,
Br. Ben Frail, PDC
National Patriotic Instructor