



*The American Legion
Department of Florida*

**American Legion Post &
American Legion Riders (ALR) Chapter
Historian's Manual**

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“History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illuminates reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life, and brings us tidings of antiquity.”

- Cicero

THE AMERICAN LEGION POST AND RIDER HISTORIAN: A GUIDE TO PURPOSE AND WORK

This manual serves as a “guideline” for the Historian in the creation of a Post or ALR History. The Post or ALR Historian performs a vital function for the Post or ALR Chapter -as is found in the Post Officers Guide regarding the Installation Ceremony “Charge of Duty” to the Historian:

“Your office is an important one. To you is given the responsibility of preserving and compiling the records of this Post. The future can only be judged by the past. Be mindful that the lamp of recorded experience may do much in guiding the footsteps of those who follow. Ever remember that without the recorded history of this Post, its policies and accomplishments will be a blank to the ones who come after we are gone.”

AMERICAN LEGION POST AND RIDERS (ALR) HISTORIES

The work of collecting, preserving and recording the activities of The American Legion and the ALR Chapter is an important endeavor and demands much detail work; hopefully you will find it inspiring and rewarding.

At the start of the new year, the historian begins making a permanent record of the organization for the year ahead, from the installation of officers up to (and including if desired) the installation of next year’s officers. The history should include the founding/background history as an introduction, however focus should be on the one-year events/activities as this will be the majority of what is compiled in the history narrative and/or yearbook. Be ever mindful that text, photos, graphics, etc. must be “tasteful” and may not contain images of alcoholic beverages, obscenities, nudity, etc. -as these references detract from our organization’s main objectives and purposes. Every picture should have a caption with event and person(s) in photo identified. The “rule of thumb” is that for under 7 people in a photo, all must be named; if over 7, then a “group name” may be used (i.e., “Members of Post xxx” or “Members of ALR Chapter xxx”).

CONTESTS

Every year at the Department of Florida Convention (June timeframe), the Post or ALR Historian may submit the narrative and/or yearbook for their Post or Chapter’s past year to the Department contest which is judged by the Department Historian. These history submissions must be at the Convention at a time to be determined and provided by the Department Historian, and bear in mind that late submissions cannot be accepted to ensure the contest remains fair and impartial. Each submission must also contain a completed “Certification Form” in order to be eligible for the contest. These forms are mailed from Department to the Post and/or Historian (if name and address were provided to Department

from the Post Officers report form). Winners will be announced during the Convention at a time to be announced on the Convention schedule.

These ongoing Department and National contests will give stability and continuity to the recording of Post events for future generations of Legionnaires or ALR Chapter members. The Department Historian will notify Posts of any National contest changes that may occur.

GETTING STARTED

The History of the Post or ALR Chapter is best recorded in a separate volume for each year from the current Post/ALR Chapter Installation of Officers to the next Installation of Officers. In order to accomplish recording of the history, the Historian must first determine what format is preferred: narrative (which contains all text with very few pictures) or a one-year yearbook (which is mostly pictures and not much text).

The following outlines and judging standards are meant to assist the Historian in presenting the yearly activities and events in an advantageous way to promote historical content and follow the contest guidelines. If you do choose to submit your Narrative or Yearbook History to the Department Contest, it is recommended to make a copy of it, but is not required. A copy would be for your Post or ALR Chapter in the case that your entry wins Department and National Contests, and National requests the permission to archive your entry into The American Legion National Headquarters Library for visitors to view.

OUTLINE AND JUDGING STANDARDS FOR NARRATIVE HISTORY

Note that PART I, PART II, PART III, and PART IV, as identified below, coincide with the categories of the judging standards used by both Department and National. Total Points of Narrative Entry: 90 Points.

PART I – Format (40 Points)

Page format suggestions

Use plain and un-ruled 8½ x 11 white and/or colored bond paper for your history binder filler. The history should be typed or computer generated on one side of the paper using black ribbon or print. Single sheets of paper may be placed back-to-back using transparent plastic protective covers. Margins are a must for neatness, readability and standardization. Use a 1-inch margin on all sides (except one inch from the perforation side of paper, if necessary). Where feasible, provide double-spaced copy on pages with a three-to-six-space indentation for new paragraphs and single-spaced lines for photograph identifications. Use a dictionary and double-check the spelling of all names. Your very last page should have nothing on it except the words “This Page Left Intentionally Blank”, centered in large font.

Cover (5 Points)

A standard three-ring binder, or similar type, to accommodate 8½ x 11 bond paper must be used with The American Legion emblem centered (left to right) on the cover with the name and number of the Post. Binders with embossed American Legion emblems are available through Emblem Sales. Each book is not to exceed three inches between the front and back cover. If you submit two or more binders, you must indicate on the cover and title page the wording “Volume I, Volume II,” etc.

Name/Address of Compiler (3 Points)

The full name and complete mailing address of the history author should appear on the inside front cover in the lower left corner. It should be neatly typed or computer generated and centered on a 3x5 index card.

Title Page (5 Points)

This will be the first page facing the reader as the history book is opened. It should be centered on the page (left to right, top to bottom) and in a logical arrangement with double spacing or more. (See “APPENDIX A” for an example).

Introduction (5 Points)

Every history should include a forward or introduction setting forth the reasons for the organization and may include (See “APPENDIX B” for an example of “POST” and “APPENDIX C” for an example of “ALR Chapter”):

- Selection of the Post name. If named for a departed comrade or comrades, include a short biographical sketch of their lives and include available photographs.
- If possible, include a brief résumé of your community’s history, especially the part played by that locality in furnishing men and women during wars and conflicts.
- Make mention of the National organization’s founding with a tie-in of the Department and Post.
- If your Post has a Post home, you may want to include a photograph and street address.
- Consider including a biographical background of the current Post commander and/or the author of the history with photographs included.
- Acknowledge any assistance or contributions used in compiling the history.

Table of Contents (5 Points)

This is a must for any good history, which will list the pages of the chapters and appendices and should be in the front of the history immediately following the introduction. If there is more than one volume, each should contain a complete table of contents. (See “APPENDIX D” for an example).

Preamble (2 Points)

Identifying the principal aims of The American Legion, the preamble is a fitting introduction and should follow the table of contents. It should be centered on the page and spaced in a neat and logical arrangement. (See “APPENDIX E” for an example).

Chapters for Narrative (Points included in the Below PARTs II, III, and IV)

Immediately following the “Preamble”, begin your History Chapters:

- **Chapter 1** - A roster and photographs of current Post/ALR officers should be included. If it’s not possible to obtain photographs of every officer, make a special effort to include photographs of the Commander and the Adjutant or Director and Road Captain.
- **Chapter 2** - Include a roster of Post/ALR chairs with photographs, if available.
- **Chapter 3** - This should be a one-year Post or ALR Chapter chronicle. The history is to cover one year, beginning with the installation of officers, up to and including the installation of the next year’s officers. This is the most important chapter in your history, and must be as complete as possible with a graphic account of the Post and

its activities. The historian should relate in narrative form, and in chronological order, all important events and programs conducted during the year by the Post or events conducted jointly with the Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, or District, Department and National levels. Historians may use the minutes of meetings as a basis for information about the Post's activities. Contact members who were chairs of the committees for further details. Include anything that you deem a special attribute of the Post, setting it apart from all others. **Do not use any photographs or newspaper articles in this chapter** of your narrative history. However, photographs may be included in dedicated committee chapters (information in following paragraph) and newspaper articles in the appendices.

- **Other Chapters** -The activities of all standing Post committees should be given considerable coverage, particularly if one committee performs an outstanding service. You may want to include each committee in separate chapters: Americanism, Membership, Boys State, School Award Medals, Oratorical Contest, Junior Shooting Sports, Baseball, Children & Youth, Sons of The American Legion, patriotic observances, Post parties, Boy Scout troops and other sponsored groups, to name a few. Collect and record for Posterity all Post activities. Including photographs in the committee chapters adds to the attractiveness of the entry. Give attention to the arrangement of illustrations in relation to the text and use of captions.

Appendices for Narrative (Points included in the Below PARTs II, III, and IV)

Statistical data that should be carried at the end of the history, following the chapters and before the index, and might include (Suggestions only):

- The organization of the Post/ALR Chapter with a list of charter members and the dates of the temporary and permanent charters.
- A roster of all past Post commanders and adjutants or Directors and Road Captains since the charter date with their years served.
- If the Post or ALR Chapter is not too large, add a roster of members listed in alphabetical order. This may include, after each member's name, the member's branch of service or the date he or she joined the Post.
- A record of the Post/ALR Chapter's citations and awards received, as well as awards presented by the Post.
- A list of members who served as Officers or Chairs within the District, Area, Department, or National; delegates to the District Constitutional Conference, Department and/or National Conventions.
- Complete records of annual elections showing all nominations and votes received by various nominees.
- The Post/ALR Chapter's membership standings by year since the charter date; a list of new members for the current year; a list of life members and Paid-Up-For-Life (PUFL) members; etc.
- In Memoriam," also known as Taps or Post Everlasting, listings for the current year; the Post/ALR Chapter's constitution and by-laws; the annual budget; and any other important statistics.

Index (10 Points)

The alphabetical index is the last "must" for any good history. This comprehensive index

of names, places and events mentioned in your history, with page references, shall be at the end of the history following the appendices. If there is more than one volume, each volume should have a complete index. (See “APPENDIX F” for example).

Page Numbering (5 Points)

Do not forget to number the pages. Be consistent in placing page numbers, either at top or bottom of pages. Numbering will start with the Title Page. You may use lowercase Roman Numerals (i.e., i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, etc.) for the Title Page, Introduction, Table of Contents, and Preamble. The pages following the Preamble would then start your history as page “1”. Or, you may begin page numbering on the Title Page with “1” consecutively to the last page.

PART II – Graphic Account/Readability (30 Points)

The emphasis should be on the narrative rather than the statistical style of presentation. Use your imagination, and be original in thought and presentation. A high degree of literary style is not essential to success, but the method of presentation should be pleasing to the general reader. The reader must be able to follow the Post’s story without difficulty or confusion. The most common error is in not writing in the third person. This means you should write as an observer, not as a participant. The history should be written as a chronological and detailed account of events without any analysis or interpretation. Statistics are of great value but should be included in the appendix rather than being placed indiscriminately throughout the book.

- Narrative (10 Points)
- Presentation (10 Points)
- Clear/Grammatically Correct (10 Points)

PART III – Illustrations (10 Points)

All photographs must be identified by occasion, individuals, date and place of event with the exception of individual photographs of Post officers and chairs (name and title/committee only). Provide left-to-right subject identification, and if necessary, by row. Be sure all photographs are clear, as blurry prints will not aid materially and will take away from rather than enhance your history. Proper arrangement with the text is a must to achieve an eye-catching history book. Avoid using pictures with alcohol in them.

- Arrangement (5 Points)
- Clear Photographs (5 Points)

PART IV – Judges Option/Originality (10 Points)

Qualities of Items of content not readily cataloged under preceding headings – and features that make a history especially attractive or useful as a source of reference and historic value. By the same token, if inaccuracies come to the judges’ attention, they would have a negative scoring effect.

OUTLINE AND JUDGING STANDARDS FOR A YEARBOOK HISTORY

A Post yearbook is a pictorial history of the Post. Remember, though, that this is a permanent record that will be seen by others for years to come, so the suggested outline should be followed as closely as possible. Note that PART I, PART II, and PART III, as identified

below, coincide with the categories of the judging standards used by both Department and National. Total Points of Narrative Entry: 90 Points.

PART I – Format (40 Points)

Cover (5 Points)

The size of the yearbook cover must not be smaller than a standard three-ring binder or larger than 12x15 inches (standard scrapbook), with The American Legion emblem centered (left to right) on the cover with the Post's name and number. Each book is not to exceed three inches between the front and back cover. If you use two or more yearbooks, you must indicate on the cover and title page the wording, such as "Volume I, Volume II," etc. Acceptable yearbook binders and standard three-ring binders with the American Legion emblem embossed on the cover are available from Emblem Sales.

Name/Address of Compiler (3 Points)

The full name and complete mailing address of the history author should appear on the inside front cover in the lower left corner. It should be neatly typed or computer generated and centered on a 3x5 index card.

Title Page (5 Points)

This will be the first page facing the reader as the yearbook is opened. It should be centered on the page (left to right, top to bottom) and in a logical arrangement with double spacing or more. (See "APPENDIX A" for an example).

Introduction (5 Points)

Every history should include a forward or introduction setting forth the reasons for the organization and may include (See "APPENDIX B" for an example of "POST" and "APPENDIX C" for an example of "ALR Chapter"):

- Selection of the Post name. If named for a departed comrade or comrades, include a short biographical sketch of their lives and include available photographs.
- If possible, include a brief résumé of your community's history, especially the part played by that locality in furnishing men and women during wars and conflicts.
- Make mention of the National organization's founding with a tie-in of the Department and Post.
- If your Post has a Post home, you may want to include a photograph and street address.
- Consider including a biographical background of the current Post commander and/or the author of the history with photographs included.
- Acknowledge any assistance or contributions used in compiling the history.

Table of Contents (5 Points)

This will list the yearbook's sections with page references. If there is more than one volume, each should contain a complete table of contents. (See "APPENDIX D" for an example).

Preamble (2 Points)

Identifying the principal aims of The American Legion, the preamble is a fitting introduction and should follow the table of contents. It should be centered on the page and spaced in a neat and logical arrangement. (See "APPENDIX E" for an example).

Appendices for Yearbook

This is for information that does not necessarily fit in the Introduction or chronological

sequence of events, etc. Appendices are to be the end of the history, following the chapters and before the index, and might include (Suggestions only):

- A record of the Post/ALR Chapter's citations and awards received, as well as awards presented by the Post/ALR Chapter (these may be captured in pictorials and would not need an appendix page).
- A list of members who served as Officers or Chairs within the District, Area, Department, or National; delegates to the District Constitutional Conference, Department and/or National Conventions.
- Complete records of annual elections showing all nominations and votes received by various nominees.
- The Post/ALR Chapter's membership standings by year since the charter date; a list of new members for the current year; a list of life members and Paid-Up-For-Life (PUFL) members; etc.
- In Memoriam," also known as Taps or Post Everlasting, listings for the current year; the Post/ALR Chapter's constitution and by-laws; the annual budget; and any other important statistics.

Index (10 Points)

The alphabetical index is the last "must" for any good history. This comprehensive index of names, places and events mentioned in your history, with page references, shall be at the end of the history following the appendices. If there is more than one volume, each volume should have a complete index. (See "APPENDIX F" for example).

Page Numbering (5 Points)

Do not forget to number the pages. Be consistent in placing page numbers, either at top or bottom of pages. Numbering will start with the Title Page. You may use lowercase Roman

PART II – Programs and Activities / Readability (40 Points)

Yearbook material and content for your Post/ALR Chapter programs and activities will follow the "Preamble" and precede the "Index" and be in chronological sequence.

- Arrangement (20 Points)
- Identification (10 Points)
- Clear Photographs (10 Points)

Chapter 1 - A roster and photographs of current Post/ALR officers should be included. If it's not possible to obtain photographs of every officer, make a special effort to include photographs of the Commander and the Adjutant or Director and Road Captain.

Chapter 2 - Include a roster of Post/ALR chairs with photographs, if available.

Chapter 3 - This will be the one-year Post or ALR Chapter History. A record as vitally important as the history itself is a complete and accurate yearbook containing all newspaper clippings, photographs, copies of programs, tickets, badges and other items pertaining to the Post/ALR Chapter and its activities.

- All material recorded in the yearbook must be in chronological order with a systematic and logical arrangement.
- The reader must be able to follow the meaning of the illustrations (news clippings, photographs, etc.) with little difficulty and confusion.

- All newspaper clippings must include the name and date of the publication.
- Individuals in photographs must be identified by full proper names (nicknames in brackets), from left to right.
- Captions should also identify the occasion, dates and source. You may know who is in the photograph and why, but the reader may not.
- Be sure all photographs are clear and sharp, as blurry or fuzzy prints will take away from rather than enhance your yearbook.
- Proper arrangement with captions is a “must” for an eye-catching yearbook.
- Avoid using pictures with alcohol or cigarettes in them.
- Neatness and originality are even more important for the yearbook than the narrative history, since all the material in the yearbook must be properly identified to make it worthwhile.
- If the compiler cannot type or print well, he or she should have an experienced person do the printing or type inserts.

PART III – Judges Option/Originality (10 Points)

Qualities of Items of content not readily cataloged under preceding headings – and features that make a history yearbook especially attractive or useful as a source of reference and historic value. By the same token, if inaccuracies come to the judges’ attention, they would have a negative scoring effect.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR DISTRICT HISTORIANS

If you have been elected or appointed as a District Historian, your primary duty is to coordinate the records of Post activities within your District to ensure the preservation and accessibility of such records at all times. Travel to Posts within your District with the District Commander and his or her staff whenever possible, and speak at Post meetings. Emphasize the importance of adequate records and of giving all possible help and encouragement to Post Historians.

Many Posts have never tried to keep a history of any kind. You will have to begin by researching and compiling as much information as possible from past records, then focus on keeping your own records current. Be sure that every Post in your District has a Post Historian and that they are kept informed of the latest developments and material. It is your duty to give all possible aid to Post Historians within your District. Encourage the Post Historians to enter the Department Post narrative history or yearbook contest.

Although there is not a National District narrative history or yearbook contest, within Department of Florida the District Historians can enter the Department Contest as an “Open Entry”. They are therefore encouraged to compile Histories or Yearbooks using the outlines provided above, and changing the references to “District” where appropriate. It is also worth knowing that some material suggested for the Post entries would not be appropriate for District books.

CONCLUSION

Creating a unique and appealing History Narrative or Yearbook can be tedious, but also very rewarding when you and your comrades look back through it. Remembering a great year with shared photos and stories while showing how the Post/ALR Chapter supported the American Legion programs is a great way to have fantastic camaraderie. Remember, your Post or ALR Chapter History ultimately is an important part of the whole that makes our American Legion experience complete.

Suggestions are always welcome to improve this manual, and questions are always welcome as well – contact by email: Historian@legionmail.org; or mail: American Legion, Department of Florida, ATTN: Dept. Historian, P.O. Box 547859, Orlando, FL 32854-7859.

APPENDIX A: Example of the Title Page

(note: center top/bottom; left/right)

YEARBOOK OF
<<NAME OF YOUR POST>>
POST NO. xxx

THE AMERICAN LEGION
<<CITY>>, FLORIDA
FOR 2014 – 2015

By: <<Your Name>>, Post xxx Historian

APPENDIX B: Example POST Introduction

INTRODUCTION

POST HISTORY

(with photos if applicable!)

Sample labeling of photos:



(Photo of.....; Photo Credit)

COMMUNITY HISTORY

Brief résumé of your community's history, especially the part played by that locality in furnishing men and women during wars and conflicts.

CAPSULE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

A group of 20 officers who served in the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in France during World War I is credited with founding the Legion. AEF Headquarters asked the officers to suggest ideas on how to improve troop morale. One officer, Lt. Col. Theodore Roosevelt Jr., proposed an organization of veterans. In February 1919, the group formed a temporary committee and selected several hundred officers who had the confidence and respect of the whole army. About 1,000 officers and enlisted men attended the Paris Caucus in March 1919. They adopted a temporary constitution and the name The American Legion. The group also elected an executive

committee to complete the organization's work. It considered each soldier of the AEF a member of the Legion.

The executive committee named a subcommittee to organize veterans at home in the United States. Two months later, in May 1919, the Legion held a second organizing caucus in St. Louis. It completed the constitution and made plans for a permanent organization, setting up a temporary headquarters in New York City and beginning its relief, employment and Americanism programs. Congress granted the Legion a National charter in September 1919. The first National convention convened in Minneapolis, adopting a permanent constitution and electing officers to head the organization.

POST xxx RELATIONSHIP WITH THE AMERICAN LEGION

(i.e., District, Area, Charter date, etc.)

POST HOME

(address of post; pictures of past and present are appropriate here!!!!)

BIO OF CURRENT COMMANDER

(add picture as well!)

BIO OF CURRENT HISTORIAN

(add picture as well!)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS:

(newspapers, libraries, people, former historians, etc.)

APPENDIX C: Example ALR Chapter Introduction

INTRODUCTION

ALR CHAPTER HISTORY

(with photos if applicable!)

Sample labeling of photos:



(Photo of.....; Photo Credit)

CAPSULE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS

In the fall of 1993 Chuck (Tramp) Dare shared a dream with then Post Commander (Polka) Bill Kaledas at the American Legion Post 396 in Garden City, Michigan. The idea came about to start a motorcycle association that would operate within the American Legion. The idea was to provide an atmosphere where Post, Auxiliary and S.A.L. members, who shared an enthusiasm for motorcycles, could come together. It was meant to be a family oriented group. While the American Legion Riders was started in Michigan in the fall of 1993, Commander Clarence Hill, who later went on to become National Commander, made the ALR an official program of the Department of Florida during the 2002 Fall Conference in Orlando. Previous to this, there were already Florida Riders representing themselves as ALR, but Commander Hill made it official. Since that time, ALR membership in Florida has grown to be one of the largest in the country, in both membership and number of chapters.

ALR CHAPTER xxx RELATIONSHIP WITH THE AMERICAN LEGION

(i.e., Post, District, Area, and include Charter date, etc.)

POST HOME

(address of post; pictures of motorcycle activities or parking areas, etc.)

BIO OF CURRENT DIRECTOR

(add picture as well!)

BIO OF CURRENT HISTORIAN

(add picture as well!)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS:

(newspapers, libraries, people, former historians, etc.)

APPENDIX D: Example Table of Contents

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APPENDIX E: Example of Preamble

PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION
OF THE AMERICAN LEGION



For God and Country we associate ourselves together for the following purposes:

To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America;

To maintain Law and Order;

To foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism;

To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars;

To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the Community, State and Nation;

To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;

To make right the Master of Might;

To promote Peace and Goodwill on earth;

To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of Justice, Freedom and Democracy;

To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

APPENDIX F: Example of Index

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