



Voiture 1379 Communiqué for April 2017

Membership is currently at 45 with our goal of 55 for the 2017 membership year. So keep on the lookout for those deserving veterans as possible members of the Forty and Eight.

It is also that time of the year for reports. If everyone would take a little time and make a note of your information for the past year (July 2016 to June 2017), that would help make our reports better. Generally the Directeurs are looking for total number of hour's volunteered, total number of miles driven and total dollars donated to various community and veteran projects.

There's no question that the Liberty Bell is the most enduring, powerful, yet approachable symbol of our country. What is less appreciated is how this bell became The Bell. It was, after all, abandoned and sold for scrap in the early 1800s, after the national capital moved from Philadelphia to Washington and the state capital to Harrisburg, and the old Pennsylvania State House, where it hung, was scheduled for demolition. It was saved only by inertia; nobody got around to knocking the building down for years, and in 1816 a local newspaper editor went on a crusade to save the structure where the Declaration of Independence had been signed—which he rebranded as “Independence Hall.” Its clock tower was restored in the 1820s with a new bell, and the original was rehung inside from the ceiling and sounded only for historic events. It was rung in 1826, for the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration, and a few times in years afterward in memory of some founders. But it wasn't called the “Liberty Bell” until 1835, and that was in a snide headline in an antislavery pamphlet, above an article noting all the slaves for whom the bell had never tolled. And its ascension as a national relic still had decades to go. The Bell reportedly cracked after being rung for Washington's Birthday in 1844. (What seems to be the first mention of its being cracked appeared that year in the Philadelphia North American.) In an attempt to fix it, the city had the hairline crack drilled out to half an inch and rivets inserted on either end of the new, more visible crack, thinking to make the bell more stable and even occasionally ringable. Soon after, it was brought to lie in state on the first floor of Independence Hall. At the 1876 world's fair in Philadelphia, more visitors saw replicas than the real thing because the fairgrounds were so far from the Hall.

The actual Bell was taken on a half-dozen field trips between 1885 and 1904, to the two world's fairs in Chicago and St. Louis and to New Orleans, Atlanta, Charleston and Boston, but it was retired from travel on the grounds of fragility without ever appearing west of the banks of the Mississippi. While popular, the Bell didn't truly come of age as a national symbol until World War I. Its rise to glory began with a hastily organized train trip across the country in the summer of 1915, as President Wilson, former President Theodore Roosevelt and other leaders felt the need to whip the nation into a patriotic frenzy to prepare for the war to end all wars, and culminated in the war-bond drives of 1917 and 1918. In three short years, the Liberty Bell changed America and empowered America to change the world. During its excursion in 1915, nearly a quarter of the nation's population turned out to see it; in each of the 275 cities and towns where it stopped, the largest crowds ever assembled to that point greeted it. Many more Americans gathered along the train tracks to see it pass by on its specially constructed open car. At night a unique generator system kept a light on it, so it glowed as it traversed the countryside, a beacon across the land.

This month's Promenade will be on April 25th at Post 33 Cameron, MO with dinner and Promenade at the Post starting at 18:00 HRS.

Thank you for your service to Our Great Nation, and your service to the 40et8 through Voiture 1379. If we all work together we can and do make a difference.

Robert C. Emery, Correspondant Locale, Voiture 1379