



THE AMERICAN LEGION

*Veterans Strengthening America*

# 2025 Historian's Guide

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# 1. American Legion Historians

The American Legion strongly encourages the preparation of histories at all levels of the organization, including department, area, district, county and post. Maintaining a history, whether through a narrative style or yearbook style, can help tell the story of important events including the purpose, when and where the events took place, and who was involved. A well-developed history can draw readers into events and make them feel like they are part of the experience. Histories also serve as important records for future generations.

While serving as an American Legion historian, regardless of level in the organization, it is important to develop a history that is comprehensive, accurate, easy to read and follow, interesting, and able to be used as a reference by future generations. Typically, it is best practice for historians to begin developing a permanent record of their organization for the year ahead, from the installation of new officers up to and including the installation of next year's officers.

There are many great resources that can be used by historians to develop their history. These can include consolidated post reports, meeting minutes, photos, social media posts, event flyers/programs, newspaper clippings, etc. The work of collecting, preserving and recording the activities of The American Legion is an important endeavor and requires much detail work. Hopefully as a historian you will find it inspiring and rewarding.

Posts, counties, districts and areas should contact their department historian for additional information and ideas on recording histories. Additional ideas may include using a digital voice recorder or video camera to record oral histories and interviews of American Legion leaders to capture firsthand history.

The following pages provide guidance, along with judging standards, for departments who wish to enter their history into the national-level history book contest. There is also guidance for posts who want to submit their work to the national showcase. Departments may also choose to hold their own history book contest and can use these standards as a basis.

Please keep in mind that these guidelines can also be used by county, area and district historians throughout The American Legion for the development of a well-rounded history, whether they enter their work into a department-sponsored contest or not. Ultimately, developing an American Legion history at any level is more than just about entering a contest – it is about providing future generations with a tangible resource to help them remember what was done in the past and remain inspired to continue moving The American Legion forward.

## 1.1 One-Year Department History Contest

At the national level, the national historian will conduct a one-year **digital** history contest for department-level entries as either a narrative or yearbook. A narrative is a written account of events that primarily uses words to portray historical events, whereas a yearbook primarily uses photos with descriptive captions. Entries in the department digital contest should consist of one PDF file not to exceed 100MB and should be submitted digitally no later than Aug. 1, 2025. Submission details, including the website for submission, will be provided directly to department adjutants via communication from the national historian. Department adjutants should ensure they forward this information to their department historians. All department histories will ultimately be posted on the following website for everyone to view and use as inspiration to develop their own histories: <https://legionhistoryshowcase.omeka.net>.

## 1.2 One-Year Post History Showcase

The national historian will also accept, from each department, **one digital entry** and **one hard-copy entry** of a post history (in narrative or yearbook format) to be displayed as part of the post showcase. The entries do not need to be from the same post. Post histories will not be judged in the national-level contest (as per [Resolution #20 – Authorization for Conducting Department History Contest and Post History Showcase](#)); however, they will be posted online at <https://legionhistoryshowcase.omeka.net> (if in digital format) and displayed at the national convention (if in hard copy format) for others to see and use as

inspiration in developing their own histories. Those posts who have a history book in the showcase will receive a special certificate of appreciation from the national historian. Post submissions for the national showcase (digital and hard copy) need to be received by the national library no later than Aug. 8, 2025. Submission details, including the website for digital submissions, will be provided to department adjutants via communication from the national historian. Department adjutants should ensure they forward this information, and copy the department historian, to post commanders, who should then forward to their post historians.

## 1.3 Outline for a one-year history

The following outline describes elements that should be included in a one-year history and can be used by departments, areas, districts, counties and posts.

### 1.3.1 Format

**Margins and page formatting:** Margins are a must for neatness, readability and standardization. Use a 1-inch margin on all sides. Where feasible, provide double-spaced copy on pages with a three- to six-space indention for new paragraphs and single-spaced lines for photograph identifications. For hard copy created histories, use plain and unruled 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.

**Presentation of Material and Readability:** The emphasis can be on the narrative (telling the story with words) or the graphical (i.e., yearbook) style (telling the story with pictures). Use your imagination and be original in thought and presentation. A background as a professional writer or graphic designer is not essential to success, but the reader should be able to follow the organization's story without difficulty or confusion. The most common error is not writing in the third person. This means you should write as an observer, not as a participant. For example, "The post held a fundraiser dinner on Oct. 1 to help raise funds for the National Emergency Fund" rather than "I attended a dinner at the post on Thursday

night where they raised funds for NEF.” The history should be a chronological and detailed account of events arranged in order of time, 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.

**Photographs:** All photographs must be identified by occasion, individuals, date and place of event except for individual photographs of officers and chairs (name and title/committee only), and who took the photo, if possible. Identify, from left to right, who is in the photo 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 or cigarettes in them.

### 1.3.2 Cover

The American Legion emblem centered (left to right) on the cover with the name of the post (and number), county, district, area or department. For hard copy-created histories, a standard three-ring binder, or similar type, to accommodate 8 ½ x 11 bond paper with the American Legion emblem centered (left to right) on the cover with the name of the post (and number), county, district, area or department. Binders with embossed American Legion emblems are available through Emblem Sales. Each book should not exceed three inches between the front and back cover. If there are two or more binders, indicate on the cover and title page the wording “Volume 1,” “Volume 2,” etc.

### 1.3.3 Name/address

The full name of the compiler and complete mailing address of the post, county, district, area or department should appear on the inside front cover in the lower left corner. When creating a hard copy history, this information should be neatly typed and centered on a 3x5 index card and affixed to the lower left corner on the inside of the binder cover.

### 1.3.4 Page numbering

Be consistent in placing page numbers, either at the top or bottom of pages, and be consistent if you use Arabic (1, 2, 3, 4...) or Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, iv...). Numbering will start with the title page, and each page after will be in consecutive order.

### 1.3.5 Title page

This will be the first page when the file is opened (after the cover). It should be in a logical arrangement with double spacing or more, centered on the page, and contain as a minimum the following:

For **Departments**, use the following:

**History of**  
**Department of \_\_\_\_\_**  
**The American Legion**  
**(city and/or state)**  
**For 20\_\_\_\_ to 20\_\_\_\_**  
**By (person(s) compiling history)**

For **Posts**, use the following:

**History of**  
**Post Name/Number**  
**Department of \_\_\_\_\_**  
**The American Legion**  
**(city and/or state)**  
**For 20\_\_\_\_ to 20\_\_\_\_**  
**By (person(s) compiling history)**

**Note:** Counties, districts and areas can use this title page information. Just replace the word “post” with your applicable organization.

### 1.3.6 Introduction

Every history should include a forward or introduction setting forth the reasons for the organization and may include:

- Mention of the national organization's founding (including the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion) with a tie-in of the department history. See [www.legion.org/history](http://www.legion.org/history) (redirects now to <https://www.legion.org/about/organization/history>) or "Introduction of the History of The American Legion," listed below, as a possible beginning. If you are creating a post, county, district or area history, see your department historian for a possible introduction to the history of the department.

#### **"Introduction of the 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. 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 on Nov. 10-12, 1919, adopting a permanent constitution and electing officers to head the organization. Delegates also voted to locate the Legion's national headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana. The Legion continues to support the four pillars of service and advocacy upon which it was founded: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth.

- If named for a departed comrade or comrades (such as a post), include a short biographical sketch of their lives and include available photographs.
- If possible, a brief résumé of your community's history, especially the part played by that locality in furnishing men and women during wars and conflicts.
- A photograph of the building and street address, as appropriate.
- A photograph of the commander, adjutant and office staff.
- Acknowledgment of any assistance or contributions used in compiling the history.

### 1.3.7 Table of contents

This is a "must" for any good history, which will list the pages of the chapters, appendices and index and should be in the front of the history immediately following the introduction. For hard copy-created histories, if there is more than one volume, each volume should contain a complete table of contents.

### 1.3.8 Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion

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. Be sure to include the most recent version of the preamble: <https://www.legion.org/about/organization/preamble>.

### 1.3.9 Chapters

Following the preamble, the chapters may be sequenced in this suggested manner:

**Chapter 1 – Roster of Officers:** Photographs of current officers should be included in the history. If it is not possible to obtain photographs of every officer, make a special effort to include photographs of the commander and the adjutant.

**Chapter 2 – Roster of Chairs:** Include a roster of chairs with photographs, if available.

**Chapter 3 – One-Year History:** This should be a one-year 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 timeframe may vary in some departments. This is the most important chapter in your history and must be as complete as possible, with a detailed account of the organization and its activities. The historian should relate, in chronological order, all important events and programs conducted during the year or events conducted jointly with the Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, or post, county, district, area, department and national levels. The history may be written as a narrative or illustrated using photos, newspaper articles or other graphics.

Historians may use information from the minutes of meetings as a basis for information about the organization's activities. Then contact members who were chairs of the committees for further details. Include anything that you deem a special attribute of the organization, setting it apart from all others.

**Other chapters:** While many American Legion programs and projects are of a continuing nature and may run through several administrations, such activities might be better covered in a separate chapter following those devoted to the individual administration. The activities of all standing 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 organization activities.

### 1.3.10 Appendices

Appendices are pages of statistical data that should be carried at the end of the history, following the chapters and before the index, and might include:

- Organization with a list of charter members and dates of temporary and permanent charters.
- A roster of all past commanders and adjutants since the charter date with their years served.
- If the organization is not too large (e.g., a smaller post), add a roster of current or historic members listed in alphabetical order. This may include, after each member's name, the member's branch of service or the date they joined the Legion. Do not include personal mailing addresses or contact information.
- A record of the citations and awards received, as well as awards presented.
- A list of members who served as delegates to the national and department conventions, or national and department officers and commission and committee appointees.
- Complete records of annual elections showing all nominations and votes received by various nominees.
- 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; "In Memoriam" (i.e., Taps or Post Everlasting) listings for the current year; post constitution and by-laws; annual post budget; and any other important statistics.

### 1.3.11 Index

The alphabetical index is a "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. Be sure to include every person and activity in

the history. If a person has a title, put that in with a cross-reference to the name. If there is more than one volume, each volume should have a complete index.

## 1.4 National Judging Standards for a One-year Department Digital History

This section is applicable only to department historians who wish to enter their one-year **digital** history into the national contest. These are the metrics judges will use to score the department digital history.

*Table 1. One-year department digital history judging metrics*

	<b>One-year Department Digital History Judging Metrics</b>
<b>10 points</b>	<b>FORMAT:</b> Does the file follow formatting guidelines (e.g., single PDF, margins, presentation of material, readability, spelling errors, clear photos, photo captions, etc.)?
<b>5 points</b>	<b>COVER:</b> Is there a cover page and does it contain the American Legion emblem?
<b>5 points</b>	<b>NAME/ADDRESS:</b> Is the complete name of the compiler and address of the department in the lower left corner on the inside of the cover page?
<b>5 points</b>	<b>PAGE NUMBERING:</b> Is the page numbering consistent in style and location and are all pages numbered?
<b>5 points</b>	<b>TITLE PAGE:</b> Is there a title page and does it contain all applicable information?
<b>10 points</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION:</b> Is there an introduction that describes both the national and department-level organizations?
<b>5 points</b>	<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS:</b> Is there a table of contents and is it accurate and complete (headings, page numbers, etc.)?
<b>5 points</b>	<b>PREAMBLE:</b> Is there a current preamble?
<b>25 points</b>	<b>CHAPTERS:</b> Are all applicable chapters contained within the history and are they logically presented?
<b>5 points</b>	<b>APPENDICES:</b> Are there appendices that present useful statistical information?
<b>10 points</b>	<b>INDEX:</b> Is there a comprehensive index?
<b>10 points</b>	<b>ORIGINALITY:</b> Are there elements to this history that make it stand out from others?
<b>100 points</b>	

## 1.5 Resources for Historians

### 1.5.1 Applicable Resolutions

- [Resolution #20 – Authorization for Conducting Department History Contest and Post History Showcase](#)

### 1.5.2 Department History Contest and Post Showcase Website

- <https://legionhistoryshowcase.omeka.net>