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Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War  
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(To be read in the Camps and retained in Camp files)

- 1.) This past week we observed the 150<sup>th</sup> observance of three notable events. The Allegheny Arsenal Explosion, which was the Civil War's worst civilian disaster and the city of Pittsburgh's deadliest industrial accident, The Battle of Antietam which would become the Civil War's single bloodiest day of fighting, and the issuance by President Lincoln of an order that would come to be known as the emancipation proclamation.
- 2.) The Allegheny Arsenal, established in 1814, served as a supply and manufacturing center for the troops in the west. Its peak years came during the Civil War, especially when the manufacture of cartridges, became a high priority. One hundred-fifty-six women and girls and thirty men and boys, worked in the main lab rolling .54 and .71 caliber cartridges and filling 10-pounder and 12-pounder cannon shells. On Wednesday, September 17, 1862, around 2 pm, the arsenal exploded resulting in the death of 78 workers and injuring over seventy more, mostly young women. Fifty four bodies were unidentified, and are buried in a mass grave in Allegheny Cemetery.
- 3.) The explosion of the Allegheny Arsenal was overshadowed by the Battle of Antietam, which occurred the same day. This battle resulted in about 23,000 casualties on both sides making it the bloodiest single day in American military history. Although the battle ended in a draw, the ensuing Confederate retreat gave Abraham Lincoln the "victory" he desired before issuing the Emancipation Proclamation.
- 4.) In the wake of the Battle of Antietam, President Abraham Lincoln issued on Sept. 22, 1862, a preliminary proclamation freeing all slaves in the Confederate states. Lincoln's action, which he would make formal in an executive order on Jan. 1, 1863, ordered the military to help escaped slaves and to prohibit their return south, and, more important, symbolically elevated the abolition of slavery as one of the goals in crushing the Confederacy.
- 5.) All Camps are urged to discuss, remember and honor the memory of these events and participants at your next Camp meeting or event. Each event stands alone in terms of how it affected our nation. These events are now widely forgotten by the American populace and many of our younger generation

have no knowledge of their occurrence. It is our duty as members of the SUVCW to reverse this trend. Please consider public speaking events, school contacts or consider having your Camp host a program focusing on these events. If we don't encourage others to remember, who will? Please consider forwarding a brief synopsis of your event to the Battle Cry of Freedom and The Banner for future publication.

By order of

Richard R. Essenwein

Commander Pennsylvania Department