

Roberts-Johnson Post 2189

Local World War I veterans Post established the Roberts Johnson VFW in 1931. They included Charles Meskers, Charlie Harty, Farrest Conover, Frank Force, Lou Koerner, and John Young. John Young, 94 at the time of the established post, was one of the oldest living veterans in Somers Point. He served in the Navy during World War I.

They met first at City Hall and eventually built their headquarters at 500 Bethel Road. Edwin Rafter and Charles Merett were awarded the Legion of Merritt in 1928. The national VFW organization had been created in 1913 by the merger of three national societies of overseas war veterans that were founded shortly after the Spanish-American War in 1899. These societies were the American Veterans of Foreign Service, chartered in Ohio in 1899, The Colorado Society of the Army of the Philippines in 1899, and the American Veterans of Foreign Service of Altoona, PA.

Membership in the VFW was restricted to: "Any make officer or enlisted man, or any honorably discharged male officer or enlisted man, who is a citizen of the United States".

The basic aim of the VFW is to ensure the national security through maximum military strength, to assist the disabled and needy vets and to assist the widow, orphans, and other dependents of disabled vets, to promote Americanism through education in patriotism and constructive service.

Citizens of Somers Point have fought in every war engaged in by the United States from the time of the Revolution up to the War in Afghanistan. Richard Somers served as a colonel in the state militia and skippered a privateer. Captain Andrew Steelman was killed at the Long Beach Massacre in the War of 1812. Other local men rode off with Teddy Roosevelt during the Spanish American War. Many local men died during World War I and II. Those veterans who survived established local organization to assist other veterans and widows of their comrades who died in their service to their country.

The Post was named after two service men killed in World War I. George W. Johnson was born in Oceanville, NJ and lived in Somers Point He was accidentally killed by a rifle about October 19, 1918. He served overseas from August 3, 1918 until his death at about age 34. His mother, Cinderella Johnson was notified of his death.

George Roberts was also given the honor for the name of this post. He enlisted at age 19 and was the only person from Somers Point killed in battle during World War I. He was 21 when he was killed.

The VFW traces its roots back to 1899 when veterans of the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Philippine Insurrection (1899-1902) founded local organizations to secure rights and benefits for their service: Many arrived home wounded or sick. There was no medical care or veterans' pension for them, and they were left to care for themselves.

In their misery, some of these veterans banded together and formed organizations with what would become known as the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. After chapters were formed in Ohio, Colorado and Pennsylvania, the movement quickly gained momentum. By 1915, membership grew to 5,000; by 1936, membership was almost 200,000.