

HEADSTONE REDEDICATION SERVICE

The following service is adapted from the 1917 Service for the Use of the Grand Army of the Republic. It was used to dedicate a headstone for a Civil War veteran. It is offered here as a basis for similar ceremonies in which a Camp may be involved. The ceremony involves the following: Camp Commander, Camp Chaplain, 3 additional Brothers to place items at the grave, an Officer of the Day (could be the Camp Guard Commanding Officer), a honor guard to fire a salute (could be the members of the Camp Guard or a reenacting unit) and a Bugler to play "Taps." Items laid on the grave are: a small American flag, a wreath of evergreen, a single rose, and a wreath of laurel. The service takes about 20 minutes to conduct.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

Arriving at the grave the Camp will be arranged in such manner as may be most appropriate to the occasion and nature of the ground. The Commander will take his position at the head of the grave, Chaplain at the foot, music in rear of Chaplain, Colors in the line, Firing Squad to right or left of the grave as directed; friends opposite or in rear of the Commander. The Commander will give the command,

COMMANDER:

"Camp, attention."

"Parade, rest!"

The Commander will then say:

COMMANDER:

"Brothers, we have met here as Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War to consign to that house prepared for all the living, the memory of a soldier of this country, (name of veteran here). The march of this soldier is over. Let us remember Comrade (last name here) here at rest under the blue skies of Heaven, guarded by the silent stars that in life watched over him when he bivouacked on the battlefields or lay down weary and foot-sore on the soil of the Southland. May we, as we stand here by this grave remember that it is our duty, as Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War to honor the memory of the men who stood shoulder to shoulder on the bloody fields of battle, who guarded so faithfully, so honestly and so well the sacred bonds of Statehood and who fought for liberty and the dear old Flag. They have passed away to

their final review and upon us has devolved by sacred right of heritage the duty of perpetuating the principles for which they fought."

"May we not forget as the years roll on that we too shall have battles to fight, that in time we too shall be carried to the silent city of the dead and that our lives here should but fit us for the great bivouac of Eternity."

"The Chaplain will invoke the Divine Blessing."

"Uncover."

CHAPLAIN:

"God of battles and peace. Ruler of the destinies of countries and of men. In this silent camping ground of the dead we come before Thee asking Thy blessing as we honor the memory of this defender of our country's honor, (veteran's full name here). Wilt Thou in Thy infinite tenderness comfort those who mourn him. Wilt thou speak words of comfort and consolation to their sorrowing hearts. Look in mercy, we pray Thee, upon the widows and orphans of deceased veterans everywhere. Bless and save from every evil the country for which this soldier and our fathers fought. Preserve it in purity and integrity. Bless the members of this Order as they have gathered here in response to the call of love and duty, to perform these rites of remembrance over one of our Nation's preservers, and at last grant that we may all meet before Thy throne and to Thy name shall we ascribe praise both now and forever. Amen."

ALL RESPOND:"Amen."

COMMANDER:

"As we remember (veteran's name here), let us cherish his example as a patriot and defender of those principles he believed to be right. Let us forget his failings, for he was human, remembering only his virtues. Let us so live that when that time shall come those we may leave behind may say above our graves, 'Here lies the body of a true hearted, brave and earnest defender of the Republic!'"

"Officer of the Day, let the guard of honor set up the symbol of the army, and let a soldier be detailed to guard it."

[A musket with fixed bayonet, canteen and haversack hanging from it, knapsack leaning against the stock, is set up against the monument. A soldier in full uniform, armed with a musket with fixed bayonet, stands guard.]

FIRST BROTHER: (laying a wreath of evergreen upon the grave)

"In behalf of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, I give this tribute, a symbol of an undying love for the comrades of the war."

[The Brother should take one step back and render a salute before returning to the line.]

SECOND BROTHER: (laying a single rose upon the grave)

"Symbol of purity, we offer at this lowly grave a rose. May future generations emulate the unselfish devotion of even the lowliest of our heroes."

[The Brother should take one step back and render a salute before returning to the line.]

THIRD BROTHER: (laying a laurel wreath upon the grave)

"Last token of affection from the Sons of Comrades in arms, we crown these remains with the symbol of victory!"

[The Brother should take one step back and render a salute before returning to the line.]

COMMANDER: (stepping forward and laying a small American flag upon the grave)

"In behalf of the Grand Republic for whose integrity and unity our late Comrade (veteran's name here) offered his services during the War of the Rebellion, I deposit this flag."

[The Commander should take one step back and render a salute before returning to his position.]

CHAPLAIN'S ADDRESS:

"It seems well we should leave Comrade (veteran's last name here) to rest in honor where over him will bend the arching sky, as it did in great love when he pitched his tent, or lay down, weary and footsore, by the way or on the battlefield for an hour's sleep. As he was then so he is still – in the hands of the Heavenly Father. Let us also then remember those honored dead who did not return to hearth and home, but lie in resting places known but to God:

The Unknown Dead

Above their rest there is no sound of weeping,
Only the voice of song-birds thrills the air;
Unknown their graves, yet they are in God's keeping,
There are none 'missing' from His tender care.

He knows each hallowed mound, and at His pleasure
Marshalls the sentinels of earth and sky;
O'er their repose kind Nature heaps her treasure,
Fanned by soft winds which 'round them gently sigh.

Bravely they laid their all upon the altar,
Counting as naught the sacrifice and pain,
Theirs but to do and die without a falter ---
Ours to enjoy the victory and the gain.

They are not lost; that only which was mortal
Lies 'neath the turf o'erarched by Southern skies;
Deathless they wait beyond the heavenly portal,
In that fair land where valor never dies.

In the great heart of coming generations
Their fame shall live, their glory never cease;
Even when comes to all earth's troubled nations
God's perfect gift of universal peace.

"He that loses his life for My sake shall find it."

SALUTE: Three volleys by firing squad.

[All Brothers should go to "Present Arms", either rendering honors through a hand salute or by placing the right hand over the heart. Remain at "Present Arms" until "Taps" has finished.]

TAPS: By Trumpeter.

CHAPLAIN:

"May the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Ghost and the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, rest upon and abide with us forever. Amen."

COMMANDER:

"Our service of dedication is ended. In the name of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War I thank you, for your courtesy in permitting us, who are bound by special ties to them, to honor our dead."

"Taps are sounded – Lights are out – the Soldier sleeps."

Dismiss the Camp.