



AMERICAN LEGION POST 526 HISTORY



Also known as **Dignam-Whitmore** Post 526

526 Legion Lane, Fairborn, Ohio

One of the compelling reasons for starting the American Legion was to provide care and medical treatment for the disabled veterans who had returned from overseas in enormous numbers. The armed services provided medical care for those actually in service; when they were discharged or otherwise honorably separated from active service, the responsibility for such care was to be assumed by other agencies. In 1919 we did not have the Veterans Administration, with its hospitals and clinics and other services; we had at least four separate Government Agencies attempting to meet the needs of the disabled. With the best of intentions, the agencies then existing were unable to handle the load so suddenly placed upon them, so the veteran's organizations got busy. As a result the Veterans Administration was established, the Legion has worked along with it ever since.

In 1920 Post 526 was established in Old Osborn and named after George E. Dignam, the first Bath Township casualty in WW I. The first Commander was Rev. Harry E. Crowell, a WW I Chaplain.

In 1921 Post 211 was established in Fairfield. The first commander was William R. Morgan, followed by Cornelius (Cappy) Wantz.

In 1923 one of the first activities of Post 526 was to provide Memorial Services at Fairfield and Byron cemeteries. At one of the early Memorial Services that year a huge boulder was dedicated at Byron Cemetery. The Lot for this was donated by Post member John Hower.

On February 13, 1924 George E. Dignam Post 526 was formed by the merger of George E. Dignam Post 526, Osborn and Fairfield Post 211, Fairfield. The first Commander of the merged post was Walter M. Moore. Mr. Moore enjoys the distinction of being the first "life-member" of the Post as presented to him by his comrades on November 24, 1949 for his continuing service as Adjutant for 25 years.

During 1925, 1926, and 1927 assistance to disabled veterans, boy scouting, participation in District activities and sponsoring of athletic events were particularly emphasized.

In 1927 and 1928 carnivals were held at the building then used as a gymnasium at Patterson Field (Area C). The profits from these carnivals were so large that the Post was able to purchase the house and lot on Main Street that it now occupies. It was purchased from the Lynn estate for five thousand dollars. It was not modern at the time of purchase, but it has been remodeled several times. It was used as a Public School annex for more than a year, the Board of Education renting the building for use during school hours only. After the Board of Education lease expired, the Rotary Club met for its weekly luncheons at the Legion building. The lunch was served each week by American Legion Auxiliary.

In May 1928 the Post purchased a Memorial Plot in Fairfield Cemetery. The Bath Township Trustees donated additional lots to enlarge the plot. A permanent flag pole was purchased and installed by the Legion.

During the year of 1930 we were able to obtain what is now a valuable piece of property at 16 N. Broad Street. In October, the Forsythe Trophy---a handsome silver cup---was presented to George E. Dignam Post 526 by the Ohio American Legion Department as the outstanding American Legion Post in Ohio during 1930.

Red Cross drives were sponsored in 1931 and 1932 with \$1,356 received and donated to the Red Cross. Remember, this was the Depression years; Euchre parties, a coon chase and other events were also undertaken in 1932.

The 1933 Commander presided at the noteworthy Armistice Day observance on November 11, 1932 with music, patriotic addresses, and a social hour. Each year since then, Armistice Day has been appropriately observed by the Post and Auxiliary Unit.

In July 1933, the flag pole and memorial plaque in front of the Legion building were dedicated at a public meeting. Sgt at arms John Leggett maintained the plaque as of 1995. During this time a large German Field Searchlight was presented to the Post as a field trophy. George E. Dignam Post 526 was represented in the National Rifle Association tournament.

During 1933-1934, potato and tomato gardens were sponsored so the produce could be donated to the Welfare Association of Bath Township

In 1936 the first boy was sent to Boys State.

In 1937 a Legion essay contest was sponsored, the winners in Bath Township being rewarded with a trip to Spring Hill State Park, Indiana. The carnival was started at the request of Osborn with the Post netting \$18.00 and \$30.00 worth of equipment.

1938 found Legionnaires helping on the construction of a house to replace a dome destroyed by fire and the sending of two boys to Boys State.

In 1939 the captured German searchlight, which proved to be something of a white elephant, was sold as junk for \$13.60.

In 1940 helping to lay the cornerstone of the Osborn Post Office on July 4, purchasing eye glasses for school children; and the preliminary work on incorporation of the Post as a Non-profit organization were highlights.

In 1941 the purchase of an electric clock with chimes for the Blind Ward at the Veterans Facility, formerly know as the Soldiers Home and the purchasing of large quantities of cod-liver oil tablets for the children at the OS&SO Home, Xenia, as the State was short of funds.

On January 6, 1942 our Post joined the Osborn Defense Council and continued to work with the National Defense Establishment for many years. A discussion of the possibility of affiliating the Legion with the veterans of the present war was made by several members. About three years later, this became a reality. Authorities were notified that the Legion Post was available for use as a hospital. No boys were sent to Boys State as all would be working. The mortgage on the Legion Building was burned on April 21, 1942.

In 1943 the Jaloppy Roundup, whose purpose was to collect as many tons of scrap metal as could be obtained for the war effort became a major project for the year. A brief Memorial Day services were held on May 30.

1945 was the year of victory – Victory over Japan (VJ) Day (is the celebration of the [Surrender of Japan](#), which was initially announced on [August 15, 1945](#) ([August 14](#) North American date), ending combat in the [Second World War](#). A formal Surrender happened on September 2nd). Activities included a supper for service men at the USO, purchase of war bonds by the Post, the return of a Post member after three years of hardship as a prisoner in the Philippines; a carnival, in cooperation with the Fairfield Police Department, on Post property, and presentation of a flag flown over the Capital to the Gray family who had six brothers in the armed services.

In 1946 our Post was granted its non-profit 501(c)(19) status by the IRS. The official non-profit organization name is “American Legion Post 526”. This was the same year large numbers WWII veterans were received as members. Plans were made for the enlargement and improvement of the Legion building.

In 1947 members enlisted in the Auxiliary Traffic Patrol, after completing a traffic seminar and practical test. On April 1, 1947 a committee of 13 hard working Legionnaires were appointed for the 4th of July celebration. Two boys were sent to Buckeye Boys State. One of the boys was selected by Boys State to attend the National Boys State or National Forum where he talked to President Truman and the Justices of the Supreme Court.

In 1948 the Post reached an all time high in membership (427 members) under their first WWII Commander. One of the new projects was the collection of thousands of books for the Township Library, to replace the books destroyed in the fire which consumed the USO building, including the Library. This was the year our Post began to refer to itself as the Dignam-Whitmore Post 526 as the Post wished to honor George E. Dignam who was the first Bath Township casualty in WWI and [Robert F. Whitmore](#) who was the first Bath Township casualty in WWII (killed during the “Battle of the Bulge”, December 24, 1944).

In 1949 Beggars night parade was held with the boys and girls marching from Central School through the main part of town to the stadium at Central Park. It was noted the Post had more than seven thousand dollars in the bank and no debts. Of the seven persons who were the officers of the Post in 1924, the year when the two posts consolidated, five remained active.

One of many other activities accomplished for several years was the placing of flags along Main Street in Osborn for the two blocks comprising the business section, and at selected locations on Main Street, Fairfield on all legal holidays.

January 1st, 1950 Osborn and Fairfield were no longer – it became Fairborn. This called for changes in not only the city name but the name of many streets in addition to the Legion charter. The early fifties also saw the change in the Legion year with officers now being elected in May.

In 1952 our Post participated in A Tide of Toys for children of Europe, Puerto Rico and the Philippine Islands. Donations were collected from the community with the Post paying the shipping charges.

In 1953 a wheel chair was purchased for a crippled Main Street vendor. For 1953 & 1954, the 4th of July continued along with the Essay contest.

In 1955 & 1956 “Grace” cards were placed in restaurants as part of the “Back to God” program. This required many return trips as they kept disappearing. The 4th of July carnival changed to a week long event as this was a great moneymaker.

In 1956 & 1957 donations were provided to the Boy Scout Tecumseh Council for capital improvements. This was a \$600.00 donation that was made over a period of time. In 1957 the Post sponsored Fairborn's only organized baseball team solely for high school boys.

In 1958 we saw the first rain delay for the Fourth of July parade, which resulted in many hours of repair to the floats for the following day.

In 1959 the Post hosted a County Initiation. We also had a scouting program in which Harold St. John received a 25 year scouting pin.

In 1960 most of the WWI legionnaires who had held office in the Post relinquished this honor to the WWII members. Our Post received a National Citation for outstanding service to Children and Youth.

In 1961 a First Aid Course was offered to all members, Flag Disposal was conducted and a National Certificate for Americanism was received.

In 1962 our drill team took first place in its division in the District Parade. Back to God program was promoted.

In 1963 literature was purchased and distributed on Anti subversive tactics, and furnished fillers for local church bulletins for Back to God program. Our Post also hosted a reception for the Third District Commander Howard McClimans and District President: Rose Snider, who were both from Fairborn.

In 1964 (March 23rd) ground breaking for this building took place.

In 1965 (May 9th) we dedicated our new \$60,000 Legion home in the rear of this property. This new home is a permanent memorial to our departed comrades and a tribute to the WW I members who made it all possible. At this time wearing of the Legion cap became compulsory. The Department SAL Convention was held with 500 in attendance. They camped at the YMCA with their sleeping bags and were fed at the Post. The property on the Northeast and Northwest corners of North Second Street and Pine were purchased.

In 1967 a major Flag program was undertaken in the elementary (Central) school. Our Post, American Legion Auxiliary and the Scout troop split the cost of a dishwasher. Legionnaires were in charge of installation which was completed just before the Mother-Daughter Banquet. It marked the first time they had cooked, served and didn't have to wash all those dishes in a low sink in the kitchen.

In 1968 monthly dances were held, with a group of our Post and Auxiliary members making decorations for all occasions.

In 1969 the 50th Anniversary was celebrated with the Post still having 58 WWI members.

In 1970 monthly dances continued. Our Post was at quota by November 11. Air conditioners were purchased and installed in the front windows.

In 1971 Veterans Day was celebrated with a Flag Disposal, beans at noon and a family covered dish and entertainment in the evening.

In 1972 our Post helped with the expense of painting the water tower at Central Park Red, White and Blue.

In 1973 Posting Colors required dark dress suit, white shirt, black socks and shoes, plus cap. The Post 50th Birthday party concluded with the Auxiliary presenting the Post Commanders Plaque to the commander. In April, there was a vote to build the lounge was announced in the newsletter, with this final statement: "If you do not attend and vote either for or against this, forever hold your tongue."

Lounge addition was under roof by November 1974. All inside labor was donated by Post members. Carnival profit was \$2404.50.

In 1974 the 4th of July Carnival was moved to Hebble Homes from Central Park and opened immediately after the parade.

In 1975 our Post was made available to the Fairborn Committee '76 (Bicentennial) group.

In 1976 a list appearing in the newsletter stated the Post had contributed to Ohio VA Hospitals, Greene County Home for Aged, American Cancer Society, and Greene County Counsel. Our Service Officer had taken care of 15 requests; 30 flags were given to Five Points School, 11 Color Guard support activities, and we received a plaque for personal flag flying. Ten members were on the Bicentennial Committee, help with park development and our Post donated for the Senior Citizen meetings and the Blood Program. The carnival was moved to Community Park East in October. Our Post had 688 membership dues into the American Legion Department with 242 being new members.

In 1977 the air conditioners were a problem, which seemed common place to the members of our Post. The window air conditioners were removed and were put up for sale. Post and Auxiliary members joined together for Back to God services at Mary Help of Christians.

In 1978 & 1979 our Post presented the Auxiliary with a Nylon Banner for their 50th Anniversary. Our Post took part in the District Four Chaplains program. A new building fund was started and the JROTC Dinning Out was held at the Post.

In 1979 the First Legion Picnic was held at the Polish Picnic grounds in September.

In 1980 the mortgage for this building was burned on March 22nd. In June our Post hosted its first Third District Convention and parade in 17 years. Later in the year and early into 1981 individuals loaned money to the Post so we could purchase the farm.

In 1982 the 52-250 Club was offered for the first time in November.

In 1983 the new addition to the front of the Hall (Bingo storeroom) was completed. Quanset Hut for the farm was dismantled at the base, moved to the farm and rebuilt. To our knowledge, Commander Bozarth was the first Commander to be cited by the police during the Fourth of July. He had reported to police that some of the other organizations who had concessions at the park were gambling. When the police cited the VFW, they also cited him as the representative in charge, although this was a community project. In August the Post pulled out from the 4th of July Carnival after 40 years because harmony could not prevail.

In 1984 a contest was held and the farm was named American Legion Memorial Park. This was the beginning of a new Carnival which was held at the American Legion Memorial Park. All City organizations participated as they had before.

In 1985 a Color Guard and Post Everlasting team provided their services to honor POW/MIAs for a weekend reunion of the 375th Troop Carrier Group of WWII. Donation was made to Police Department for special training. Our Post spent almost \$14,000 to support over 40 organizations in and around the community.

In 1986 activity with the POW/MIA program excelled. Council approved the Memorial and work began on design and raising money. Flag disposal for the community was held on Flag Day. A circus was setup at the Farm.

In 1987 a replica of the Veterans Monument was made and displayed for Memorial Day. Many organizations were planning functions to raise money for this program. Ground breaking for the Veterans Memorial was September 13th, with dedication taking place November

8th. The cost of project was \$75,000.00 – final payment and a celebration party was held March 26, 1988.

In 1990 – 1992 the Michael Galato Award for the outstanding Children and Youth activities report was received at Department Convention. Our Post participated in the Avenue of Flags and fund drive for the repair of the Soldiers Monument at the Dayton V.A. The building on Broad Street was demolished. The farm property was put up for sale. A replica of the Constitution and Bill of Rights was presented to the high school. We participated in the Kaufman Avenue Flag project. A major project for years had been the removal of illegal dumping in a wetlands cite at the farm. The Wetlands Foundation, EPA, Corp of Engineers, County Engineers and our Post finally reached an agreement and the project neared completion. We also finally received paved parking lots on the other side of Pine Street.

In 1995 the plans for the new building to be built on the Broad Street property were made available to see and discuss.

Obviously this is where we are currently housed and continue to run daily operations.



So during all these years we have taken part in the Memorial Day, 4th of July, Veterans Day, OVCH home, baseball, Christmas at the VA, Special Olympics, ROTC program, A&G Test, oratorical, Gift to Yanks, Buckeye Boys State, Flag detail for school and community, Ritual Team and many other events, activities, and programs. American Legion Post 526 has always supported the programs of the American Legion, having sponsored a Boy Scout Troop for over 50 years (the longest continuous sponsorship by any other in the Tecumseh Council). Each year we take the local "Americanism and Government" winners to Columbus for a visit at the State Capital.

It has been previously stated by a past Commander "These brief paragraphs have been written not as a complete history, but simply to remind us of some of the work accomplished by American Legion Post 526. The mistakes that have been made should teach us not to make the same errors in the future. The American Legion does not live in the past; it lives in the present and it looks forward to the future. May the Legion always stand for justice, righteousness and helpfulness."

We acknowledge with deep appreciation for the years of hard work in carrying out the many fine programs of the American Legion, by our Comrades, who have gone before us, and we dedicate ourselves to continue their fine example.

Just what is a 501(c)(19) status? 501(c)(19) is the section of code as outlined in [IRS Publication 557](#) and [T.D. 8818](#) and is granted to Post or Organization of Past or Present Members of the Armed Forces.