



## HISTORY OF THE MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE

Just as member of the United Spanish American War Veterans had much to do with the foundation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, they also had a prime part in the start of the Military Order of the Cootie. In late 1919 several Spanish American War Veterans, members of the **Imperial Order of the Dragon** (a higher degree of the USAWV) conceived the idea of a similar order for the VFW. Fred C. Madden, a Past Grand Viceroy of the Dragons, was assisted by another Past Grand Viceroy, F.L. Gransbury and several other **I.O.D.** members.

The VFW was nearly as old as the United Spanish American War Veterans and was due for the influx of members from World War I, which they thought could be helped with the formation of an Honor Degree with fun as one of its objectives.

The rolls were opened for membership at the Oxford Hotel in Washington, D.C., **September 17, 1920**, and nearly 300 VFW members signed up. Fred C. Madden became the first Supreme Seam Squirrel; and a complete list of Officers was ratified at a special meeting held in the Calvary Baptist Church in New York City. Madden developed the constitution and by-laws. F.L. Gransbury authored the rituals and became editor of the "**Cootie Tickle**", six issues of which were printed prior to the VFW encampment in Detroit. There a committee was formed consisting of Commander-in-Chief Hartund and VFW Council Members Allen of New York, Jones of Oregon and Jones of Washington. They met with Supreme Cooties Gransbury #3 and E.S. Davis #12, to make the MOC a part of the VFW. The favorable report of this committee was accepted by the VFW National Encampment about 9:00 PM, Saturday, **24 September 1921**, making the MOC a part of the VFW.

At midnight that same day, acting Assistant Supreme Seam Squirrel Davis called the first Supreme Scratch to order, reported the result of the committee conference and VFW endorsement and conducted the first Supreme Election. William E. Eighmey was the first Supreme Seam Squirrel to be elected.

In 1922, William Kime was elected Supreme Commander at Seattle, Washington and re-elected in 1923, at Norfolk, Virginia. During his term of office, the first Cootie Uniform was approved and became the official uniform of the Order. A committee was appointed to prepare By-Laws for the Order and to re-write the Ritual covering the Third Degree. The new By-Laws and change in Rituals were adopted at the Supreme Scratch in 1923.

In 1923 at Norfolk, Virginia, the Military Order of the Cootie proposed the idea of a national Home (This can be verified by the Newspaper Special Edition of Norfolk, Virginia issued during the National Encampment). A Copy of said edition was presented to the national Home several years after the founding of the Home. In Atlantic City, in 1924 the VFW Organization decided to approve of the National Home although it was a "Brain Child" of the Military Order of the Cootie.

In 1924 the official Cootie uniform as announced, according to records provided by Kalamazoo, Michigan as well as the Original Drafts of Ritual and By-Laws.

Tomb Trek to the Tomb of the Unknowns, Arlington National Cemetery, was first inaugurated in 1934 by TNT Pup Tent. This annual observance has continued each year since and the members attending have increased each year.

Supreme Commander Victor B. Gallaway requested permission to build an athletic field at the national Home, which was granted by the VFW C of A in New Orleans in 1933. Incoming Supreme Commander William J. Crehan appointed PSC Tommy Ryan as Chairman, and the Cootie Field fund was started in 1936. Construction started in 1937 and continued until dedication in the term of Supreme Commander Ashley Beck, August 1941, with Otto C. Steinberger as Chairman. Total cost was \$15,000.00.

In 1941 Supreme Scratch at Philadelphia authorized the swimming pool fund which grew slowly to \$16,000.00 in 1948 under the chairmanship of Joseph Stalarum appointed by Supreme Commander Tommy Wheaton. Dedication took place 2 September 1950, with Wheaton and Stalarum as co-chairmen, immediately after the Supreme Scratch at Chicago. Total cost was approximately \$40,000.00 and donations equaled \$48,836.39

With the outbreak of World War II the MOC visualized the need for Hospital visitations and presentation of entertainment for hospitalized veterans. A program of **“Keep ‘Em Smiling in Beds of White”** was inaugurated as soon Cooties were regularly visiting the patients in the VA Hospitals, and other Hospitals, throughout the United States. The Hospital visitation program is one of the outstanding programs of the MOC.

Prior to 1948, the VFW Booster Program was first adopted. This program has been a continuing dedicated effort each year by Cooties, and Auxiliary members as well to assist the parent organization in their membership drives.

“Operation Fire Department” for the National Home was the brain child of two members of Buckeye Pup Tent #2 of Ohio, Collin Small and Charles Millard in 1950. The drive was brought to fruition in the term of Supreme Commander Ernie Moore, resulting in a fire truck and a building to hold it. The Grand of Maryland continued a mythical Fire Dept., commissioning fire department “Officers” upon payment of a fee and these fees throughout Supreme enabled Maryland to make annual contributions of equipment and money to upgrade the Home Fire Department which is manned by boys of the Home.

In 1959, a National Home Scholarship Fund was taken over by Supreme at the 40<sup>th</sup> Supreme Scratch in Philadelphia after being started by the Grand Pup Tent of California. It was eventually named for its perennial Chairman the late Christie Braun, is **now self perpetuating** from its investments. From the start of \$500.00 annually for one boy and one girl, it has grown to an annual amount of \$2,500.00 each until graduated, plus lesser amounts for students attending vocational schools.