



# A Brief History of the National Home

VFW National Home for Children  
www.vfwnationalhome.org

Toll-Free Information: (800) 424-8360  
Referral Information Only: (800) 851-0238  
To Make a Donation: (866) 4VFWNHC

3573 S. Waverly Road  
Eaton Rapids, MI 48827  
Ph: 517/663-1521 - Fax: 517/663-3727

## The Idea

The idea of a National Home started with the Military Order of the Cootie. At their convention in Norfolk, Virginia, in August 1923, the Supreme Pup Tent gave the Supreme Commander the authority to select a site and work on the erection and maintenance of a home for orphaned children of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The city of Norfolk, Virginia, becoming aware of this action, offered the Cooties a free site for the home through the Widgeon Realty Company of Norfolk.

On January 19-20, 1924, the Supreme Council of Administration met in Kansas City and among the business transacted was consideration of the orphan home project. Frank P. Strickland, chairman of the committee, presented several offers of sites, but in view of a survey made to determine the number of children that the Cooties might be called upon to assume guardianship, it was determined that sufficient funds were not available to start the project. The project was therefore delayed and a call was issued to all Pup Tents to help raise funds. Although the Cooties were not able to get their noble idea in to action, the idea of a VFW National Home did not die.

## The Beginning

The actual beginning of the VFW National Home lies with a poignant story of a young girl named Amy Ross. One cold day in February 1922, Amy Ross, then just 23 years old, walked into the office of Dr. Clarence L. Candler, the Department of Michigan Commander. Amy Ross said that she had an idea which she thought could be put into effect for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, namely to find jobs for the thousands of veterans who were walking the streets of Detroit looking for any kind of work.

Dr. Candler wrote in the November 1924 issue of the *Golden Stripe*, Michigan's VFW Newspaper, "I didn't think she could do it, but anyway the limited facilities of the VFW were turned over to Miss Ross and she started to work. What followed is history (over 9,000 veterans were found employment), but not all of you know that the present high standing of the VFW in Michigan, our wonderful headquarters in the General Motors Building, the Yanks Convalescent Camp, Inc., our 300 grave burial plot at Roseland Cemetery, and our new \$500,000 VFW National Home, Inc. all came as a direct result of Amy Ross' sacrifices for the veterans of this community." Dr. Candler went on to describe how Amy Ross worked hard for the VFW until her untimely death in 1924.

It was through Amy Ross' efforts that a millionaire cattleman from Jackson, Michigan, named Corey Spencer came to meet with Dr. Candler in the summer of 1924. Mr. Spencer had heard about Amy's great work and the needs of the VFW. He had heard of the Yanks Convalescent Camp, and he knew about Moosehart -- and he had an idea. Mr. Spencer had 472 Acres of land near Eaton Rapids, Michigan, known as the Grand River Stock Farm, and he wanted to make it a gift to the VFW.

Spencer's offer was presented to the 1924 Convention in Atlantic City. The Commander-in-Chief appointed a committee to investigate the offer and report back to the National Council of Administration. On November 21, 1924, just before the VFW National Home became a reality, Amy Ross died, but her efforts have lived on.

At the tender age of 25 the VFW gave her a military funeral, but as Dr. Candler said, "Amy Ross dead? No, she has just commenced to live...When that new little city arises out of the ground near Eaton Rapids called the VFW National Home, you will hear Amy singing a lullaby to some veteran's orphan."

On December 6, 1924, just after Amy died, the National Council of Administration approved the idea of the VFW National Home, Articles of Incorporation were prepared, and on January 7, 1925, the dreams of Amy Ross and Corey Spencer and the Military Order of the Cootie came true. The Veterans of Foreign Wars had taken a giant step forward in fulfilling its pledge to "Honor the Dead by Helping the Living."

The December 1924 issue of the *Gold Stripe* devoted all of its content to the sad parting of Amy Ross and the great news of the VFW National Home. The editor wrote, "This VFW National Home is the greatest objective ever placed before any veterans organization. It will give each and every post something tangible to work for."

## **First Funds**

In 1922, the World Series ended in a tie between the New York Yankees and the New York Giants after the game was called due to darkness. Many ticket holders claimed that there was ample light, and that the only reason the game was called was to produce more profits through an additional game. The Baseball Commissioner, Judge Keneshaw Landis, decided that the new profits from the extra game should go to charity. Past Commander-in-Chief T.L. Huston, part owner of the Yankees at that time, obtained \$20,000 for the VFW and it was placed in a Trust Fund. This money was to be used for operating expenses of the VFW National Home for the first year.

The early months of 1925 saw the pages of *Foreign Service*, the official publication of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, filled with many articles about the unfolding drama of the VFW National Home. Finances were uppermost in the minds of the founders of the Home. There were many exhortations for financial support. Robert G. Woodside, a past Commander-in-Chief, was named general chairman of a campaign to raise ten million dollars for an endowment fund. And so the Home was launched.

## **First Children**

On March 2, 1925, Sgt. Edward Pollett, Ret., 48, traveled from Halfway, Michigan, to pick up his retirement check at Ft. Wayne in Detroit. While crossing the street in Detroit, he was hit by a street car and later died at a nearby hospital. Twenty-four hours after his death, Mrs. Pollett identified her husband at the county morgue and then found that she and her 6 children, ages 2 to 15 were left destitute since Sgt. Pollett's retirement pay stopped upon his death. The Halfway, Michigan VFW Post 1146 appealed to Dr. Candler, State VFW Commander, on behalf of the family, and arrangements were made immediately to send the family to the VFW National Home.

Sgt. Pollett was given a military funeral by the Detroit and Halfway VFW Posts and he was buried in the VFW plot at the Roseland Cemetery which Amy Ross had worked hard to get for the VFW. On March 9, 1925, Mrs. Pollett and her 6 children entered the VFW National Home as the first residents. The first Matron of the Home, Nora M. Abbott, and first supervisor, Roy Williams, supervised the housing of the Polletts in an old frame farmhouse.

In June of 1925, Nora Abbott wrote, "Maybe you would like to hear how things are going for the Polletts. My little mother and her children are settled and seem to be happy. She tells me how thankful she is that she could come here and have a home with her children. . . ."

**Thank you for your interest and support!**  
***A community of promises kept.***