



RITUAL OF CELEBRATION FOR THE BIRTHDAY OF
LA SOCIÉTÉ DE QUARANTE HOMES ET HUIT CHEVAUX
March 15, 1920

CHEF DE GARE:

“Welcome fellow Voyageurs Militaire, honored guests and all who hold service to God and Country as sacred. This year marks the 100th Birthday of “La Société de Quarante Homes et Huit Chevaux” commonly known as the Forty and Eight, or La Société.

In March of 1920, Joseph W. Breen, a member of the newly formed American Legion and an officer of Breen-McCracken Legion Post 297, met in Philadelphia with fifteen other prominent Legionnaires where they originated the idea of The Forty & Eight. They envisioned a new and different level of elite membership and camaraderie for leaders of the American Legion. The box car of the French Railways, so familiar to American ground troops of the First World War, was chosen as the symbolic heart of the new organization. The French/Railroad theme was applied to officer titles and organizational functions.

During the last 100 years La Société has endeavored to seek out and satisfy the needs of our nations Veterans, Local Communities and the nation’s children.

For example in 1932 The Forty & Eight declared War on Childhood Diphtheria. Vaccination toxin was distributed via Voiture Nationale to children whose parents could not afford it. Physicians donated their services, and educational campaigns were carried out to combat the disease.

From 1932 through 1936, the Forty & Eight sought to influence Congress regarding veteran's benefits. These were the “Bonus March” Depression years when WWI veterans and the federal government were at times in open conflict. The Forty & Eight sponsored national radio programs, featuring well know political figures, to bring equitable treatment of war veterans to the national forefront. Realizing that power came with numbers, the Forty & Eight brought in 111,159 new American Legion members. The efforts of the Forty & Eight ultimately helped convince Congress to pass, over a presidential veto, the compensation act for America’s war veterans.

These endeavors only scratch the surface of the many accomplishments of the 40&8. In your program leaflet you will find a more complete history. As you read it you will understand the pride each Voyageur Militaire takes in having been invited into the ranks of La Société de Quarante Homes et Huit Chevaux.

Therefore, let us celebrate these accomplishments and the birthday of La Société de Quarante Homes et Huit Chevaux in the true spirit of “The fun and honor Society of American Veterans”.

Aumonier please bless this assembly with an opening prayer.”



AUMONIER:

Let us pray. Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, bless this assembly and its purpose in celebration of La Societies' birthday. Provide your peace upon those who founded our Société and have passed on to serve you in Heaven. Help us to carry on their great works and honor our oath to You, our fellow Voyageurs Militaire, Comrades and citizens of our beloved United States of America.

Amen.

CHEF DE GARE:

"Monsieur Conducteur, you will cause the Flag of our Country to be posted in the place of honor at the right of the podium."

CONDUCTEUR:

"Voyageurs, Gard a Vous! Color Guard, advance the Colors."

(After colors are posted and the Guard is at Present Arms)

"Monsieur [title], the flag of our country is in its place of honor and the Voyageurs are at the salute."

CHEF DE GARE:

"You will join me in pledging allegiance to the Flag."

[Recite pledge]

"Attention"

"The Color Guard is dismissed"

[Optional] "It is my honor to introduce our guest speaker." [Brief bio and introduction]

GUEST SPEAKER: [optional]

CHEF DE GARE:

"Thank you _____"

CHEF DE GARE:

Now, as it is our intention to celebrate the Birthday of our beloved Société, let us proceed!

Chef de Cuisine bring forth the Birthday Cake.

CHEF DE CUISINE:

[Chef de Cuisine brings forth the cake to a point in front of the podium]

The Chef de Cuisine salutes the Chef de Gare with the traditional 40et8 Salute and while holding the salute;]

"Monsieur Chef de Care, the celebratory confection has been placed in its position of honor!"

CHEF DE GARE:

"Monsieur Conductor, escort the oldest Voyageur and the youngest Voyageur to the Chef de Cuisine's side."



CONDUCTEUR:

[Salute and while holding the salute;] “Monsieur Chef de Gare, our oldest Voyageur and youngest Voyageur are in place.”

CHEF DE GARE:

“Monsieur Conducteur you may retire to your station.”

“Monsieur Chef de Cuisine, proceed with the cutting of the Birthday cake.”

CHEF DE CUISINE:

“Oui Monsieur Chef de Gare.” [As the first slice is made to the cake] “In Honor of our first Chef de Chemin de Fer, Joseph W. Breen and the 15 other Veterans of World War I who founded the 40&8 as an honor society for certain Legion members. The first slice is presented to the oldest Voyageur as a symbol of our founder Joseph Breen and honoring those that built La Société into what it is today.”

[As the second slice is made to the cake] This second slice is presented to the youngest Voyageur symbolizing the present and future members that will build upon that heritage.”

[The Chef de Cuisine then prepares two more slices of cake for the Chef de Gare and Guest of honor and presents each of the four their slice]

CHEF DE GARE:

“Eat in honor of La Société”

[Each take a bite of cake]

“Monsieur Chef de Cuisine, please retire the cake to the desert table.”

“Ladies and Gentlemen, you are invited to visit the desert table as you desire. But now, Monsieur Aumonier, will you please lead us in a prayer before we adjourn to dinner, dance, and comradeship.”

AUMONIER:

[Appropriate prayer]

CHEF DE GARE:

“Monsieur Conductor, you will call the hall to attention and cause a hand salute to be presented to the flag of our country.”

CONDUCTEUR:

“Oui Monsieur Chef de Gare!”

“GARD A VOUS!” “PRESENT ARMS!” “TWO!”

CHEF DE GARE:

“Thank you all for your participation and now.... **Laissez les bons temps rouler!**” [let the good times roll!]