

## The Founding of the American Legion in Paris March 1919

The American Legion was founded in 1919 by veterans returning from Europe after [World War I](#) and was chartered by Congress in the same year as a patriotic, war-time veterans organization, devoted to mutual helpfulness. It is headquartered in [Indianapolis, Indiana](#) and also has offices in Washington D.C. It is a not-for-profit community-service organization which now numbers nearly 3 million members, men and women, in nearly 15,000 American Legion posts worldwide. Paris Post #1 is one of those posts.

The American Legion's *Post Officers Guide* recounts the organization's founding: "A group of twenty officers who served in the American Expeditionary Forces (A.E.F.) in France in World War I is credited with planning the Legion. A.E.F. Headquarters asked these officers to suggest ideas on how to improve troop morale. One officer, Lieutenant Colonel Theodore (Ted) Roosevelt, Jr., proposed an organization of veterans. In 1919, this group formed a temporary committee and selected several hundred officers who had the confidence and respect of the whole army. When the first organization meeting took place in Paris in March, 1919, about 1,000 officers and enlisted men attended. The meeting, known as the Paris Caucus, adopted a temporary constitution and the name "The American Legion". It also elected an executive committee to complete the organization's work. It considered each soldier of the A.E.F. a member of the Legion. The executive committee named a subcommittee to organize veterans at home in the U.S. The Legion held a second organizing caucus in St. Louis, Missouri, in May 1919."



Attendees at the First American Legion Caucus in Paris in 1919



Plaque at Site of First American Legion Caucus at 14 rue Ernest Psichari in Paris

There was a race to see which post would be the first to be chartered by the American Legion and Paris Post #1 was left behind. Its application for a charter was approved in November 1919 and the charter was dated December 13, 1919. In the meantime a number of posts in the US received their charters. As is confirmed by The National Library of the American Legion and its official supporting documents, the first post of the American Legion is George Washington Post 1 in Washington, D.C. Organized March 7, 1919, it obtained the first charter issued to any post of The American Legion on May 19, 1919.

Note: In subsequent meeting in New York, Ted Roosevelt was nominated to become the Legion's first national commander but declined to accept the nomination. He went on to become an American political and business leader. He was a Medal of Honor recipient who fought in both World War I and World War II. He was the eldest son of President Theodore Roosevelt. He served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Governor of Puerto Rico (1929-32) Governor-General of the Philippines (1932-33), Chairman of the Board of the American Express Company, and Vice-President at Doubleday Books, and as a Brigadier General in the United States Army. He died in France during the World War II on July 12, 1944 and is buried at the American Cemetery in Normandy.