

KANSAS VFW AUXILIARY

OPERATION: FLOUR SACK

Mission.....Sack It To 'Em



2025-2026 HOSPITAL PROGRAM

Pack a Sack for a Hospitalized veteran and assist them on their journey to healthiness and happiness.

Auction a Sack to raise funds for the Department Hospital General Fund.

Buy a Sack and bake some cookies, brownies, a pie or a cake for a nice treat for hospitalized veterans.

Donate a Sack of food to the VA or Veterans Home food pantry.

Sock a Sack. Fill a sack with socks (or other clothing items) and donate to the local VA or Veterans medical facility clothing bank.

Mix a Sack with salt, water, vegetable oil and food coloring to make modeling clay for craft projects.

Stack a Sack. Send a stack of sacks (tote bags/wheelchair bags) for veterans to carry their belongings as their journeys unfold.

Empty a Sack of flour into balloons to make homemade stress balls.

The ditty below paints the flour sack as more than just a container – it's a dynamic vessel of life's quirks, delights, and hidden gems. It invites you to think about what can be carried along, be it tangible treasures or the intangibles that shape a journey.

In the heart of Kansas, where the sun kisses the prairie, A clandestine mission unfolds, both daring and merry.

Our target? The mundane, the humdrum, the gray, To infuse life with whimsy, to brighten their day.

We gather our tools with imagination and glee, Our mission is simple: Sack It To 'Em, you see.

We'll sack the monotony, the routine and the bore, And replace it with laughter, surprise, and much more.

So gather 'round and listen clear. Each day we'll load sacks with tons of cheer.

Dreams and whimsy, hopes untold, candies and cookies, or treasures to hold.

We'll craft origami creatures, oh so neat, And pack them in sacks, a unique little treat.

Life in hospital is often lonely and hard, Help spread some good cheer by sending a card.

Let's leave no veteran sitting and pouting, Help raise funds for the occasional outing.

The days continue and winds blow from the north, Donate a blanket or gloves, and share the warmth.

Hospital time ticks hour by hour, Think of something to send made with flour...or flower.

In our sacks, the mundane transforms, A carnival of life in all its forms.

A spark of laughter, a warm sweet hug. A chat and some coffee in a piping hot mug.

Mission: Sack It To 'Em- let's pack it whole. Every piece, every item, a part of our soul.

A bag of holding, a treasure stack, Unveil surprises, we won't hold back !

So if you are ready, join in the fun, We'll Sack It To 'Em beneath the bright Kansas sun.

We've chosen our items so carefully, only the best for our veterans, with our love, the VFW Auxiliary.



Reuel Colt Gridley was born and raised in Hannibal, Missouri in 1829, and lived there at the same time as Samuel Clemens (aka Mark Twain), with Clemens claiming Gridley was a schoolmate of his. Gridley served in the Mexican War (1846-1848) and later joined the great California Gold Rush in 1852.

Gridley was successful as a shopkeeper and popular in town. In 1864, he ran for mayor of Austin as the Democratic candidate and struck up a friendly wager with the Republican candidate, Dr. H.S. Herrick: whoever lost the race would have to carry a 50-pound sack of flour for more than a mile while a marching band played a tune of the other's choice. Gridley lost, and so, carrying the 50-pound flour sack decorated with red, white and blue ribbons and accompanied by his teenage son (who was carrying an American flag) and a marching band, Gridley marched from Austin to Clinton.

A good crowd had gathered at the saloon where the two opponents ended the day. As neither Mayor Herrick nor Gridley wanted the flour, it was suggested they auction it off and send the proceeds to the U.S. Sanitary Commission, an organization established to aid wounded Union soldiers.

At the time, Samuel Clemens was in the neighboring town of Virginia City. As he wrote in 1872's *Roughing It*, Nevada's residents in the 1860s were flush from the proceeds of their silver mines, and accordingly had more money than they knew what to do with.

In that environment, the flour sack was auctioned off with the winning millman bidding \$250. According to Samuel Clemens, when the millman was asked where he'd like the flour delivered, he stated, "Nowhere- sell it again!"

Getting into the spirit of things, miner after miner lined up to bid on it, and each time it was sold, following the millman's example, it was re-donated, such that by the end of the day, \$5,000 (about \$75,000 today) had been collected in Austin.

The story of the flour bag auction spread and other towns requested that Gridley come, with Virginia City being the first to send him a telegram stating, "Fetch along your flour sack!" Realizing he was on to something, Gridley did indeed hit the road.

However, in Virginia City, initially the auction brought in less than had been seen in Austin. To rectify this and restore their town's pride, a second auction was held. Clemens noted. Till late in the night the citizens were at work arranging the next days campaign.

At eleven the next morning a procession of open carriages, attended by bands and a moving display of flags filed along C street. Gridley stood up and asked who would make the first bid for the National Sanitary Flour Sack. Gen W. said: "The Yellow Jacket silver mining company offers a thousand dollars, coin!"

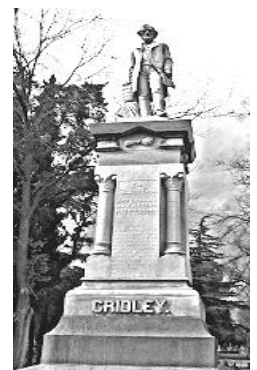
After this successful auction, Gridley traveled to other wealthy mining areas, and then throughout California. Exhausting the West, he traveled east and continued to sell the flour sack for charity, ultimately stopping the campaign in St. Louis, where the flour was used to bake little cakes that sold for \$1 each (the proceeds of which also went to the Commission).

In the end, the single, 50 lb. bag of flour raised close to \$275,000 (about \$4 million today) in the various auctions it was sold at.

Sadly, Gridley spent his entire life savings financing the 15,000 mile charitable campaign. To make matters worse, shortly after he returned to Austin, the silver boom ended ultimately killing his General store. Suffering from a rheumatic condition, in 1868, he moved to Stockton, California where his sister lived. He died two years later in 1870 at the age of 41.

The Reuel Colt Gridley Monument is located in the 75-acre Stockton Rural Cemetery near its southeast corner. The memorial was erected by Rawlins Post of the Grand Army of the Republic and the citizens of Stockton in honor of Gridley, who rendered services to Union soldiers during the War of the Rebellion.

The monument, depicting Gridley and a sack of flour, was erected in 1887. Gridley's story was told by his school chum from Missouri, Mark Twain, in a chapter in his 1873 book, *Roughing It*.



Some sources claim that small bags of flour were sold to raise funds for Gridley's monument, while other sources claim that the small booklet titled "A Tribute To The Memory of Reuel Colt Gridley" was sold for 25 cents each, to raise funds. Whatever the case, the funds were raised and the monument was successfully erected in honor of this hero.

"To the poor, he was generous, and the needy never left his presence empty handed. He was in fact too whole-souled and too kind hearted to accumulate wealth, but he grew rich in kindly deeds and Christian grace." (excerpt from booklet).

The Nevada Historical Society museum has Gridley's FLOUR SACK on display at the University of Nevada, Reno campus.