



# Drumbeat

with *Flintlock & Powderhorn*

News of the Sons of the Revolution

Volume 28 Number 4

Winter 2010



## The Baltimore Report: *Business-like, professional and fraternal*

Members from nearly twenty State Societies attended the 2010 General Society Board of Managers Meeting held in Baltimore, Maryland, during the weekend of September 16–19, 2010. Those present were of singular mind to conduct business as gentlemen and enjoy each other's company while doing so.

The ambiance could not have been better.

"In the sense of charting more congenial waters, a new era of the General Society has been initiated under the leadership of General President Terry Davenport," said General Secretary Curtis P. Cheyney III. "The captain of the ship is intent on



*l-r: The Maryland State House and, inside, the 13-star flag hanging from the cupola.*

directing us away from all shoals and tempests."

In the previous issue of the *Drumbeat* (Vol. 28, No. 3), it was said the Baltimore meeting would be "a terrific opportunity for members to mingle with GSSR officers and learn more about the Society. It

is also a chance to build friendships, enjoy touring the area, and take part in SR traditions."

That's exactly what transpired.

### The Ways of Old

Mr. Cheyney reported that the General Society's

current strategy is three-pronged: 1) to be supportive of all state societies, both large and small;

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## Keeping a Good Man Down: *Georgia Society Re-inters a Revolutionary War Hero*

By COL Gordon B. Smith  
General Historian  
Past President, Georgia Society

You can't keep a good man down, the old saying goes. That may be literally true in southeastern Georgia, near Darien, where the remains of Revolutionary War veteran Col. John McIntosh have resurfaced from the bosom of the earth twice in the past 184 years.

On October 23, 2010, the Georgia Society, Sons of the Revolution along with the McIntosh (County) Historic Preservation Commission sponsored a most unusual and unique service: the third funeral and second re-interment of this hero of the American Revolution.



*A beautiful horse and hearse arrive at Mallow Cemetery. Team provided by Tommy Day of Blackshear, GA.*

John McIntosh gained fame in 1778 while defending Georgia's Fort Morris, a stone's throw from his final resting place. British Colonel Lewis Valentine Fuser had informed him that four

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## President's Message

*"Believe the Good Thing Can Happen!"*



Good things happen when hope and expectation are maintained. Everywhere I look, good things are happening in the Sons of the Revolution. Members continue to fulfill our organization's great purpose of Keeping Alive the Memory of George Washington and our Founding Fathers.

This clearly was the case at our Board of Managers meeting in Baltimore. Great appreciation is extended to all of the members of the Maryland Society for their hospitality and hard work in making this year's meeting a success. President Frank Shriver and Committee Members General President Emeritus Hall Worthington and Region II General Vice President Richard Patterson are to be commended for their tremendous efforts.

The tours, business sessions, and banquets were fantastic! Great camaraderie was had by all. Two highlights in the business session require special mention. First, General Historian Gordon Smith of Georgia provided a wonderful overview of the many recent activities occurring at the State Society level throughout the General Society. His report was so significant that it has been posted on the General Society's web site!

The second highlight concerned the revival of an old SR tradition. Each State Society President in attendance gave a separate report on their Society's current undertakings and future plans. Those Presidents were: **Frank Steward Hale, II**, of Rhode Island; **Harry B. Kelleher, Jr.**, of Louisiana; **Benjamin C. Frick, Esq.**, of Pennsylvania; **COL Charles C. Lucas, MD**, of New York; **Charles D. Carroll** of the European Society; **Thomas Vance** of Virginia; **Frank Shriver** of Maryland; **Paul Jeffrey Lambert** of North Carolina, and **George J. Hill, MD**, of New Jersey.

The overall effect allowed all members in attendance to "see" just how active the Sons of the Revolution is and what a difference we are making.

I would also be remiss if I did not call attention to General Chaplain G. Clayton Ames III and Maryland Society Chaplain Reverend Thomas E. Davison. Their prayers, words of faith, and singing stirred the heart and soul!

Other good things happening include the capital fund raising campaign, which is off to a tremendous start, thanks to Committee Chairman and Region IV General Vice President David Rutherford. The response has been fantastic! I thank all persons for their donations. A complete list of contributors (as of December 21, 2010) can be found on Page 2 of this issue.

We all should remember that George Washington and his brave men crossed the Delaware River on Christmas Eve, 1776, with tremendous hope and expectation, and THE GOOD THING HAPPENED! In this season of Hope, let us reflect on the positive things this organization is doing and on the positive difference that each of us can make. ■

*Terry L. Davenport*

—*The Baltimore Report, continued from page 1*

2) to consider unique opportunities to assist state projects and programs which otherwise could not or would not proceed; and 3) to encourage each state society with creative efforts for the “furtherance and fulfillment of our constitutional purposes.”

General President Davenport opened the three-day event with a prayer of his own, in the absence of General Chaplain Reverend G. Clayton Ames III, who had an emergency call from a parishioner. He opened each session of the meeting by reading from the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

A past tradition of the business sessions, which he very effectively revived, was to allow each state society sufficient time to report on its activities and to share what works and what doesn't, as it relates to the topics under consideration. A past officer

state. Plans include providing greater layers of information and deeper interconnectivity among the state society websites. The complete rollout will also feature different state programs of general interest.

Aside from publications, General President Davenport announced a new Patriotic Awareness Committee and the ongoing work of the Strategic Planning Committee for long-range development of the General Society.

He emphasized the importance of recognizing the Fourth of July and further developing the Let Freedom Ring program.

Related to the theme of patriotism, the tours of Fort McHenry in Baltimore and of John Paul Jones' Tomb at the Navy Academy, in Annapolis, were appreciated. During Saturday evening's banquet, members enjoyed a spell-binding impersonation of Capt. John Paul Jones by Maryland Society member Bill Young.



of the General Society said, “The effects of this cordial exchange of ideas were most impressive. We have a General President very much in control who is demonstrating the way forward.”

Members present, mostly presidents of the various state societies, expressed genuine enthusiasm for the openness that occurred during the sessions. All decisions of the Board of Managers were taken by consent and affirmation, without any dissent following full debate and discussion.

Besides leading all members in the opening convocation, Reverend Ames reached out to the state societies by giving an uplifting memorial service in honor of all members who had died in the year.

### **Emphasizing Patriotism**

The General Society's publications were reviewed for their usefulness, and its website was reported as still being under development. An immediate goal is to develop an electronic calendar of upcoming patriotic programs by

One member commented, “We had just visited [John Paul Jones'] tomb that afternoon, so the two events taken together were a great way for everyone to understand and *feel* this early juncture of our history.”

Members taking the tour of the Maryland State House saw George Washington's original letter of resignation from the Continental Army, dated December 1783. The General Society was recognized for helping sponsor the preservation of that letter, on display in the old Senate Chamber, where it was read to Congress 227 years ago.

### **Looking Ahead**

By the time it was all over, there was a unanimous feeling that the week-end meeting had been a big success. Many members expressed enthusiasm about their current projects and goals, and stated that they looked forward to the next Board of Managers Meeting, scheduled for October of 2011 in Boston. ■

—*Editor*

# Camaraderie in Maryland



All Maryland photos courtesy of David L. Rutherford and Richard M. Patterson.

—*Keeping a Good Man Down, continued from page 1*

separate armies were moving against the state, that the fort's defenders were in a hopeless position, and that he (Fuser) would spare the inhabitants and their property if they did not resist.

Leading some 127 Continentals and a group of local militiamen, McIntosh sent the British navy a laconic reply: "Come and take it!"

When the English ships subsequently withdrew without firing a shot, this native son of Georgia—a fiery Scot—was hailed a hero. (Never mind that the British came back several months later and decisively took the fort.)

McIntosh served his country again during the War of 1812, when he was named a Major General in charge of hundreds of men in the Georgia Militia. Despite that honor, he is most known by his Revolutionary War rank.

### A Fitting Tribute

At the October 23rd burial, under ancient oaks garlanded with Spanish moss and cooled by the sweet fragrance of the sea breeze flowing across nearby marshes and whispering through pines, a crowd of hundreds paid their last respects to McIntosh and his family members as they were re-interred at Mallow Cemetery.

The cemetery is approximately 50 miles south of Savannah and very near the old McIntosh homestead of Fairhope plantation, on the Sapelo River. Georgia Society President Stephen R. Lufburrow, 1st Vice President Charles B. Spillane Jr., and 2nd Vice President Christopher K. Frame were among those in attendance.

Last rites were administered in the Scottish tradition, as befitting this proud family. When the

horse-drawn hearse made its final approach, Sam Smith rang the field hands' ancient bell at Mallow to call the crowd's attention. At this signal, the Savannah Pipe and Drum commenced with the skirl and beat of "Going Home," a most *lugubre harmonie*.

"Mallow Cemetery was given to the county by the McIntosh family, so it's very fitting that Col.

McIntosh and his family members be buried here," said William 'Billy' Sutherland McIntosh, third great-grandson of the deceased and principal organizer of the re-interment.

Following Billy McIntosh's welcome, re-enactors in Continental uniform from Fort King George Historic Site and Fort Morris Historic Site (both nearby) fired a musket volley into the heavens, leaving behind the authentic smell of black powder and the sight of white smoke.

On cue, the Color Guards of the Georgia Society and the NSSAR then posted colors.

Yet, for all it represented, this dignified and significant ceremony almost didn't happen. It was a moving conclusion to a process that was indeed fraught with many delays and significant frustrations.

### Modern-Day Odyssey

Four years ago, a rusty iron container was discovered sticking out of a bank of the Sapelo River, adjacent the old family

cemetery at Fairhope. Initially, the elongated box was thought to be an old fuel tank, but it was later identified as a nineteenth-century coffin made by Almond D. Fisk of New York.

For all intents and purposes, Fisk coffins were very expensive, meant for the patriarchs of the well-to-do, and they were designed to be air-tight.



**Top photo:** Pallbearers lower the remains into a deeper gravesite; **Bottom photo:** Gordon B. Smith scoops in a symbolic shovel full of dirt as burial proceeds.

It seems over time the river had eroded enough of the bank away to reach the cemetery and expose the cemetery remains.

Notified of the situation, Billy McIntosh, who is a Georgia Society member, took action. Blessed with an irrepressible spirit in the true McIntosh tradition, Billy contacted the county coroner of McIntosh County for permission to re-bury his distinguished ancestor.

As anyone who has read about Georgia history might understand, the office of coroner, presently an elected official in McIntosh County, carries with it a big stick. The coroner is *ex-officio* the county sheriff in the absence of the actual High Sheriff and has the authority to summons and conduct inquests in cases involving death.

In the case of Col. McIntosh, the coroner had the coffin placed on a gurney, which remained outside in the carport of a local undertaker in Darien. This decision partially exposed the rusted-out coffin to the elements, as well as to the vicissitudes of South Georgia winters and summers. For two long years, the coroner adamantly refused to allow anyone to re-bury the coffin.

Frustrated but determined, Billy sought help from other sources but was repeatedly rebuffed in his efforts. In his attempt to have the Colonel re-interred in the McIntosh family lot at The Ridge, near Darien, he was told the McIntoshes did not have a family lot there, even though in his hand were photographs proving otherwise.

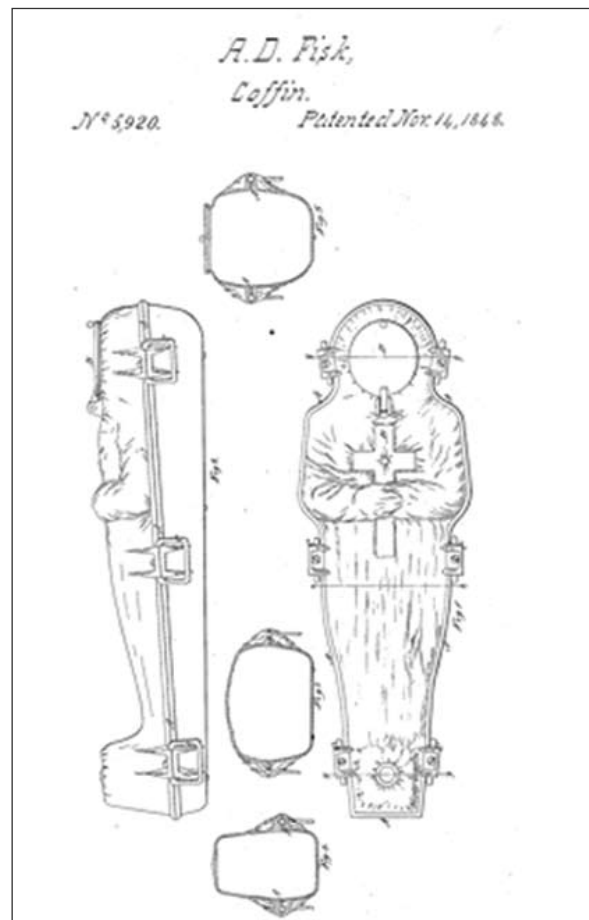
In the throes of such resistance, he contacted Missy Brandt of the McIntosh County Historic Preservation Commission and finally received the

assistance he had been searching for. Working as a team, these two individuals were able to arrange for the re-burial of Col. McIntosh at nearby Mallow Plantation, resting place of the McIntosh family members who had remained loyal to the Crown.

"I'm tickled to death this has finally happened," Billy later said.



Billy McIntosh with his ancestor in Darien, GA.



size of the casket matched the large size of John McIntosh; 3) not many families of the day would have been able to afford a Fisk; and 4) investigators did

### The Ups and Downs

The war veteran's first funeral naturally occurred following his death on November 12, 1826. His obituary said, "Noble Soul! How the spirit of Washington will greet thee."

Historians have deduced that the Colonel was washed out of his original gravesite after successive hurricanes in the 1850s. Graves back then were only three- to four-feet deep in this area.

"You had two issues coming together back then: shallow graves and lots of water," said Missy Brandt.

For his second funeral, family members decided to re-inter him in a new kind of casket: an iron Fisk coffin, introduced in 1848. While the remains inside the old Fisk were never scientifically examined for absolute identification, there were plenty of factors that convinced family members that Col. John McIntosh had indeed made his second reappearance.

Those factors included the following: 1) John McIntosh had been the only male buried at Fairhope plantation, where the Fisk was found; 2) the large

—*Keeping a Good Man Down, continued from page 7*

retrieve a piece of men's clothing (a leather chap) through a hole in the deteriorating box.

### The Third Time

At the third funeral, after the Color Guards posted colors, representatives of the NSDAR, NSSAR, Georgia Society SAR, and the US Daughters of the War of 1812 placed wreaths at the open gravesite, where the McIntosh tartan was on display.

Pallbearers then brought forward the antique casket. Georgia State Representative Debbie Gignilliat Buckner presented a state flag, which was draped over the casket. The Rev. Danny Grace, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Darien (the Kirk of Darien), pronounced the invocation and followed it up with a fine Scots prayer.

"Thanks be to God for the life of Col. John McIntosh and all his family buried here," the pastor said. He added that John McIntosh and his family were "missionaries" of their day, helping others and seeing the good in people.

Following the minister's words, pallbearers lowered the fragile casket into the ground the old-fashioned way—with thick ropes suspending a wooden platform on which the coffin rested.

Immediately following, members of the Scottish Clan Donald bid old John McIntosh another type of farewell: After passing around a flask of 12-year-old scotch, one of the gentlemen poured a little of the good stuff into the grave.

Regarding the history of the McIntosh Clan (of Borlum), they were originally ensconced in the Highlands of Scotland. The clan's motto was, "Touch not the cat bot a glove." The McIntoshes

figured prominently in the Jacobite Rising of 1715 under Brigadier Mackintosh of Borlum. For that they lost their land, and the given name Lachlan ("Lackland") well described the person and the status of the father of John Mohr (or "Big") McIntosh of Borlum.

Enticed by promises of new land and a fresh beginning, Big John brought his Highland family to America's Southeast, the far-different, tidal area along the Altamaha River—a land of magnificent vistas as well as terrible storms, poisonous reptiles, and deadly fevers. Their intention was to settle the "march," the disputed area between the English colony centered at Savannah and the Spanish colony around St. Augustine.

In the course of their destiny, one of Big John's sons became Brigadier General Lachlan McIntosh, commander of the Georgia Continental Line during the ensuing American Revolution. Another was Lieutenant Colonel William McIntosh, commander of the Georgia Continental Light Horse Regiment at the same time.

So the fighting spirit was infused in Colonel John by generations of Scottish blood and Highland temperament. For what is hoped to be the last time, he is at rest again, this time in his family's cemetery, surrounded by the old oaks as his guardians. For Billy McIntosh, Missy Brandt, and perhaps even the Colonel himself, the service represented long-overdue closure.

As he was reburied, the mockingbirds whistled their farewell, and the salt breeze bore our prayers for the safekeeping of John McIntosh to heaven and the heroes who await there.

"Loch Moy!" ■



Participants assemble for the funeral of Col. John McIntosh



## PEACE AND WAR

### Observations of RADM J. Robert Lunney, NYNM (Ret.), General President Emeritus and Chairman, National Preparedness Committee

This year the American combat mission in Iraq officially ended, but 50,000 troops will remain as advisers through 2011. This seven-year war, questioned by many observers, cost the lives of more than 4,400 Americans and wounded over 35,000. In addition, at least 100,000 civilian Iraqis died. Hundreds of billions of dollars were spent on this war. However, the positive outcome was the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's autocratic rule and the beginnings of democratic measures.

President Barak Obama, in thanking the American military effort in Iraq, stated, "At every turn, America's men and women in uniform have served with courage and resolve... There were patriots who supported this war, and patriots who opposed it. And all of us are united in appreciation for our servicemen and women and our hopes for Iraq's future." He added that it was time to put disagreements over Iraq behind us.

However, despite the stirrings of democracy, there still remains great difficulty in forming an Iraqi government even months after national elections. Indeed, insurgent attacks have increased recently. In the face of these problems, President Obama has vowed to work with Iraq to help build a stable country, and, thus, the United States is still not free from this conflict.

Meanwhile, America continues to face the challenges of a ten-year war in Afghanistan. Unfortunately the Iraq war directed military resources away from the more critical fight in Afghanistan, and the cost of this war is rising. Over

600 coalition forces, including 400 Americans, have been killed this year. Yet, according to United States military and intelligence officials, an intense military campaign aimed at crippling the Taliban has failed so far to inflict more than fleeting setbacks on the insurgency or to put meaningful pressure on its leaders.

It is acknowledged that the Karzai government is riddled with corruption, in addition to recent reports that President Karzai receives "bags of cash"

from Iran. In recent parliamentary elections, for example, over 1.3 million votes were invalidated. But according to some reports, Karzai, with Washington's help, is holding peace talks with Taliban leaders.

Washington states that its goal remains unchanged in its desire to defeat al-Qaeda and prevent its return.

Yet it still plans to begin withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan by July 2011. It is hoped that Afghans themselves can assume more and more responsibility for their country's security. Based upon Afghanistan's transition plan, the United States will help it meet its goal of taking the lead on security by 2014.

Despite the Afghan government's lack of credibility, Ambassador Susan E. Rice at the United Nations recently confirmed that the, "U.S. remains steadfastly committed to helping Afghanistan achieve a peaceful and prosperous future that the people of Afghanistan so deserve."

Thus, as with Iraq, America will not be free from this conflict for a long time. ■





## AT LARGE

GSSR At-Large member Mike Rowley in Iowa joined in a fundraising effort with the Iowa Chapter of Soldiers' Angels held in early October at the American Legion Post in South Des Moines. The Soldiers' Angels is a volunteer-led nonprofit organization with the sole mission of aiding and supporting the brave men and women of the military and their families, wherever the flag of the United States of America is raised. Volunteers work tirelessly to demonstrate care and concern for veterans, the wounded, deployed service members and their families.

—submitted by Mike Rowley

## CALIFORNIA

The Sons of the Revolution in the State of California met on October 16 for a board meeting and luncheon at the Annandale Golf Club. The speaker for the Saratoga-Yorktown Luncheon was Colonel John Fer, USAF (Ret.), a former POW during the Vietnam conflict. Colonel Fer spoke of his wartime experience, including being shot down over North Vietnam on February 4, 1967, and spending more than six years as a prisoner. He shared a cell at the infamous "Hanoi Hilton" with future Senator John McCain.

Colonel Fer was a Command Pilot and accumulated 1,300 flying hours during his Air Force career, flying the B-47 Stratojet, RB-66 and EB-66 Destroyer, T-38 Talon, and F-111 Aardvark aircraft. Among his many decorations are: the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit, the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star, and the Distinguished Flying Cross. Fer holds two Master's degrees and became a school administrator following his Air Force career. He currently serves as the Director of Ministries at Mary Star of the Sea Parish in San Pedro.

## GEORGIA



The Georgia Society Color Guard presents colors at the 231st anniversary of the Battle of Savannah.

—photo courtesy of Chris Frame

## INDIANA

The Indiana Society held its annual meeting Sept. 4 at the Woodstock Club in Indianapolis. During the business session the dues amendment and financial situation were discussed, and new officers were elected, including W. Clarke Wyllie as President and Brad Hedrick as Secretary. The membership heard a report on the SR exhibit at the annual "Back to The Days of Kosciuszko" festival in Warsaw, Ind., located in Kosciuszko County. The county's namesake (slightly Americanized) is taken from Thaddeus Kosciuszko, the Polish nobleman who fought with George Washington in the Revolutionary War. The annual weekend event is staged by living-history volunteers who present a realistic portrayal of military and civilian life during the formative years of America, 1746–1817.



l-r: Barbara Moore, Allen Moore, Robert D. Rati, Graham Morey, Carol Hedrick, Donald Gradeless, Brad Hedrick, Margaret Rati, Neil Pitts, Annette Pitts, Lee Ann Teller, Alan Teller, and Robert H. Rati.

—photo by Delia Rati

Society member Alan Teller concluded with a talk on "DNA from A Layman's View – Testing for Genetic Genealogy." He spoke of three DNA tests that are often used in genealogical research.

The luncheon featured delicious pork loin or salmon and an irresistible ice cream turtle pie.

The following officers were installed:

*President*, Stanley Clarke Wyllie, Jr.  
*1st Vice President*, Jerry Alan Teller  
*2nd Vice President*, Rickey Leon Gann  
*Secretary*, Bradford Hunt Hedrick  
*Registrar*, Dr. Donald E. Gradeless  
*Treasurer*, Rex Lavern Gradeless  
*Surgeon*, Dr. Neal Chase Pitts  
*Historian*, Robert Dean Rati  
*Chancellor*, Rex Lavern Gradeless, II  
*Rep. to General Society*, Robert Dean Rati  
*Chaplain*, Allen Wendell Moore

—submitted by Robert D. Rati

## LOUISIANA

At the Louisiana Society's annual meeting on December 4th, the following officers were installed:

*President*, Harry Bartlett Kelleher, Jr.  
*1st VP*, David Blackshear H. Chaffe, III  
*2nd VP*, Dr. David Wyatt Aiken, Jr.  
*3rd VP*, John Edward Walker  
*Secretary*, Joseph Walker Sullivan, Jr.  
*Deputy Secretary*, Rutledge Carter Clement, Jr.  
*Treasurer*, Stephen Michael Schoenfeld  
*Genealogist-Registrar*, Dalton Leo Woolverton  
*Historian*, Pierre Armand McGraw  
*Deputy Historian*, Martin Rene de Laureal, Jr.  
*Chancellor*, Maj. James Ryan, III, USAF (Ret.)  
*Deputy Chancellor*, Thomas Mente Benjamin  
*Captain of Color Guard*, Gerald Pipes Guice  
*Deputy Capt. of Color Guard*, David Barr Gooch  
*Surgeon*, Dr. Robert Lee Hewitt  
*Deputy Surgeon*, Dr. George Dewey Lyons, Jr.  
*Chaplain*, Rev. William Gedge Gayle, Jr.

—submitted by LA Society

## MICHIGAN

Recently, Society President Gary Gibson attended a DAR Conference in Grand Rapids and spoke on behalf of the Sons. Prior to that occasion, the Michigan Society's Color Guard once again led the July Independence Day Parade in Richland.



*President Gary Gibson*

Along the parade route, the Color Guard was greeted with applause, shouts of "Good job!" and the occasional child's inquiry, "Are you a Pirate?"

Following the parade, Society members and guests gathered for the annual meeting at the "Blackhawk," a re-built 1850s stagecoach stop. At the conclusion of the luncheon and meeting, toasts were offered to the Founding Fathers; our Patriot Ancestors; the Armed Forces of the United States; His Excellency and General George Washington, and to all veterans who served in Vietnam.

We would be remiss if we didn't acknowledge last year's passing of Past Society President and President and Historian, James T. Lyons. Jim was a Korean War veteran and helped revitalize the Michigan Society. He belonged to several other genealogical societies, including the Order of the Cincinnati. His energy and enthusiasm are missed by his lovely wife, Catherine, and his family, friends and fellow patriots.

Officers elected for the 2010–11 year were:

*President*, Gary L. Gibson  
*Vice President*, Michael B. Culp  
*Secretary/Registrar*, Geoffrey A. Hickok  
*Treasurer*, Keith G. Harrison  
*Chaplain*, Reverend Jan D. Dewitt  
*Chancellor*, James R. Neal, Esquire  
*Captain of Color Guard*, David E. Miller  
*Rep. to General Society*: LTC Max J. Riekse (Ret)  
*Rep. to CAR*: Anders Garner

Board of Managers:

Lavern Aves  
 Richard Wood  
 Paul D. Hodges  
 Charles O. Harthy  
 David H. Eddy  
 Hon. Donald A. Johnston III  
 Donald E. Gradeless  
 William C. Meyers  
 Ronald G. Shull  
 John D. Parry

—text and photo submitted by Geoffrey A. Hickok

## MINNESOTA

The Constitution Day meeting of the members of the Sons of the Revolution in the State of Minnesota met, pursuant to notice, on September 25, 2010. The Society met with the Sons of the American Revolution for a joint luncheon at Jax Café in Minneapolis.

Minnesota S.A.R. President James Foster called the assemblage to order at 12:00 p.m. The Rev. Richard Vork, before rendering the invocation, asked all those present to keep in their prayers Past President John Hallberg Jones, whose grandson suffered a tragic death. In the way of business, the Secretary reminded all SR members that the Society's annual meeting has been moved to February, to better coincide with the calendar year and the Society's fiscal year.

Following the luncheon, the joint membership listened to the Hon. Mark Ritchie, Secretary of State of Minnesota, guest of honor. He spoke of Minnesota's venerable tradition of civic-mindedness, extending back to the days of the Minnesota Territory of 1849. In that vein, he reminded the audience that the nation's first Better Business Bureau (BBB) had been established in Minnesota. In another example, Governor Harold Stassen (1939–1943), who was elected to three terms, succeeded in passing a balanced budget during his last term then resigned the powers of Governor to join the Navy and fight in World War II. Mr. Ritchie said that tradition of civic-mindedness is why he, a native of Georgia, moved to Minnesota.

—submitted by Duane L. C. M. Galles

## MISSOURI

Transatlantic cartoons in Anglo-America (1742–1784) were discussed at the October meeting of the Kansas City Chapter of the Missouri SR. The guest speaker was Louis W. Potts, PhD, Professor of American History at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Dr. Potts discussed how cartoons both broadened the Patriot base and fostered the growth of the printing industry in America.

The colorful cartoons were presented via a PowerPoint presentation. Dr. Potts was a Fulbright Distinguished Lecturer at Moscow State University (Russia) and co-authored the book, *Russian-American Dialogues on the American Revolution*, University of Missouri Press, 1995.

The Kansas City Chapter was honored by the attendance of Captain Robert Rati USN (Ret.), General Vice President of SR Region V, and his wife. VP Rati was able to meet and talk with several members of the chapter.

The following Chapter officers were elected at the meeting: President, William Gann; Vice President, Tom Little; Secretary, William Buckner; Treasurer, Larry Simmons; Genealogist, Tom John; Flag Custodian, Robert Grover; and Chaplain, Kevin Lewis



Society President William R. Gann, far right, welcomes General VP Robert Rati and Margaret Rati to the Kansas City Chapter meeting.



Two of the many colorful and informative political cartoons presented at the meeting.



—story & photos submitted by Sec. William Buckner

**NEW JERSEY***New Jersey's SR Garden Party*

The New Jersey Society of the Sons of the Revolution and The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of New Jersey co-hosted a Garden Party at the Dames' historic colonial-revival home, "Peachfield," in Westampton, on Sunday, July 11.

Seven other lineage societies in New Jersey participated, which was attended by 73 respective members, prospective members, and guests. The theme was vaguely Victorian, Edwardian, or "Roaring Twenties," with background music ranging from Sousa to Sinatra. Everyone had a wonderful time.

—submitted by Society President George Hill



—photos by Lanie Hill, Andrew Huston, and Laura Johnson

## NEW YORK

### Battle of Brooklyn Anniversary

On Sunday, August 29, the New York Society's Color Guard and the Veteran Corps of Artillery in the State of New York paid tribute to the 234th anniversary of the Battle of Brooklyn (a.k.a. Battle of Long Island). Every year, the SRNY and the VCA NY honor the 200 casualties and the 900 prisoners taken during that battle.

As the battle was fought on grounds that now belong to Greenwood Cemetery, the two organizations hold a commemorative ceremony and parade the colors starting at the highest point in the cemetery: the memorial altar commemorating that battle. Built by Irish immigrant Charles M. Higgins, the altar is topped with a statue of the Roman goddess Minerva, who salutes the Statue of Liberty across the harbor.

### Nathan Hale Honored

On September 22, New York City and the Sons of the Revolution paid tribute to Nathan Hale, school teacher and army captain who volunteered as a spy for George Washington and tried to infiltrate the British just days after they had taken control of the city. The ceremony commenced at 12:00 pm at City Hall Park on the very day Hale was hanged by the British in 1776.

Capt. Hale, a graduate of Yale, is reputed to have said at the time, "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." That one life ended at age 21.

The colorful event included a reading of The Mayor's Proclamation and the laying of a wreath at the foot of the Nathan Hale statue which faces City Hall. The SRNY Color Guard presented historic Revolutionary War flags, and the Veteran Corps of Artillery provided historic Field Music. Members of the Nathan Hale Homestead of Coventry, Conn., were also on hand.

### Downtown Culture Pass

In an effort to highlight the multiple cultural attractions located in lower Manhattan, several downtown museums, including the Fraunces Tavern Museum, created the Downtown Culture Pass.

Ticket holders will be granted unlimited admission and/or other discounted benefits for three full days to any and all participating museums, plus discounted tours conducted by *Wall Street Walks*. Annaline Dinkelman, president, will lead the walking tour.

The Downtown Culture Pass program will run from Nov. 4, 2010 through Feb. 28, 2011. The pass may be purchased online at [www.downtownculturepass.org](http://www.downtownculturepass.org), or in person at either the Museum of American Finance or

the Museum of Jewish Heritage.

In addition to seeing permanent exhibits, visitors to the Fraunces Tavern Museum will see "Revolution and the City"—the story of life in New York under British occupation during the Revolutionary War. The exhibit runs through January 2011.

—submitted by Anthony Wellman



**Top photo:** The Color Guard and VCA descend steps from Greenwood memorial altar; **Bottom photo:** Jonathan Ridgeway stands at base of Nathan Hale statue in City Hall Park.  
—photos by Lynn Ridgeway

## NORTH CAROLINA



North Carolina Society President Jeffrey Lambert, second to left, joins other patriots at Kings Mountain National Military Park. —photo courtesy of Jeffrey Lambert

The Charlotte Chapter of the North Carolina Society is organizing. Dr. Gus Succop was named Interim President of the Chapter while its by-laws are established, a chapter name is selected, and new officers elected and installed. “These are exciting times in the Tar Heel State,” reported Jeffrey Lambert, State Society President.

Meanwhile, on October 7, several states from the General Society were well represented at the 230th anniversary of the Battle of Kings Mountain held at the Kings Mountain National Military Park along the border of the Carolinas (near Blacksburg, SC). SR members from North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida and the District of Columbia were present. No fewer than 50 wreaths were presented on behalf of the SR, SAR, DAR, CAR and the Overmountain Victory Trail Association (OVTA).

—submitted by Jeffrey Lambert

## PENNSYLVANIA



l-r seated: ARC Chairman H.F. (Gerry) Lenfest, Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter, Governor Edward G. Rendell, and Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar.

—photo courtesy of ARC

On September 10, members of the Pennsylvania Society of the Sons of the Revolution (PSSR) Color Guard and First City Troop of Philadelphia stood at guard during the signing and completion of a historic land exchange between the National Park Service and the American Revolution Center.

The exchange smooths the way for the construction of the Center’s Museum of the American Revolution just steps away from Independence Hall and brings closure to earlier efforts to construct the museum on privately owned property within the boundaries of Valley Forge National Historical Park. The Center exchanged its 78 acres in Valley Forge for a government building at Third and Chestnut Streets in downtown Philadelphia. The acreage was merged into the public lands of the Historical Park.

Over 200 cultural, educational, and civic leaders gathered to watch the ceremony, which was broadcast by the local ABC News affiliate. Signing the exchange were Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell, Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter, National Park Service Northeast Regional Director Dennis R. Reidenbach, American Revolution Center Chairman H.F. (Gerry) Lenfest and Center President and CEO Bruce Cole.



l-r: PSSR members Robert McNelly, John James, Eric Werner, Ron Fenstermacher, and Richard Walkup (as Captain, First Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry).

—photo courtesy Lanny R. Patten.

The museum will house the Center’s distinguished collection of objects, artifacts and manuscripts from the American Revolution. Earlier, the PSSR Color Guard had given a sizeable donation to the Center toward the restoration of General Washington’s field standard, which was flown to indicate his presence on the battlefield.

CEO Bruce Cole said the museum will be the nation’s first to commemorate the entire story of the American Revolution, not just a single battle or a limited geographic region. “[The public’s] continued interest and support are critical to making this museum a reality,” he said. For information, please visit [www.AmericanRevolutionCenter.org](http://www.AmericanRevolutionCenter.org) or call toll-free, (877) 740-1776. —Editor

## RHODE ISLAND



*The Newport Artillery Company in Washington Square.*

—photo courtesy of R.I. Society

The Rhode Island Society of the Sons of the Revolution recently had the following website created, and a video has been posted of the SR's Independence Day celebration at historic Washington Square in Newport. The Rhode Island Society welcomes all to view the video.

Just visit the following site or copy and past this URL into your browser: <https://sites.google.com/site/rhodeislandsonsoftherevolution/>

—submitted by Bruce Hale, III

## SOUTH CAROLINA

The Sons of the Revolution in the State of South Carolina is pleased to announce new officers for the 2010/2011 year:

*President*, Charles Swoope

*Vice President*, Jeff Jordan

*Secretary/Treasurer*, Ed Latimer, Esquire

*Genealogist*, Dr. Jack Meyer

—submitted by Jeff Jordan

## TENNESSEE

On Sept. 17, 2010, Tennesseans and North Carolinians gathered on the lawn of the old county courthouse in Knoxville, Tennessee, to commemorate the 265th birthday of John Sevier. Colonel Sevier was a courageous frontier military leader who helped lead the famous Battle of Kings Mountain, and he was the first governor of Tennessee.

This year's ceremony was organized by the Tennessee Society Sons of the American Revolution. The TNSSR placed a wreath at the gravesite memorial and led three cheers.

TNSSR Marshall and Overmountain Victory Trail Association (OVTA) member Gerald "Jerry" Mustin recently spent four weeks with the OVTA retracing the route of the Overmountain militiamen on their epic march to Kings Mountain. Along the way, he and others met with numerous school and civic groups to recount and re-enact parts of this historic event. The yearly march culminates at the national military park, site of the battle.

In mid-October the John Rice Irwin Chapter in Anderson County spent four days in period dress at the Museum of Appalachia, during the Tennessee Fall Homecoming event.

—submitted by Society President David Whaley



*Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park*



*Roan Mountain, highest point on the trail*

## TEXAS

Members of the Texas Society of Sons of the Revolution met on October 16 at the Doubletree San Antonio for their annual meeting and elected the following new officers for a two-year term.

*President*, Donald Leslie Stone, Jr.

*Vice President*, Peter T. Baron

*Secretary/Treasurer*, Dr. John William Via III

*Registrar*, David Howard Peterson

*Chancellor*, Robert Murel Clark, Jr.

*Historian*, Dr. Robert James Devine

*Chaplain*, Charles Edward Luna

*Genealogist*, Gerald Wayne Irion

*Representative to GSSR*, Ed Butler ■

—submitted by LTC Lawrence K. Casey, Jr.



# Flintlock & Powderhorn

## ARTICLES OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

## Platt Family of Connecticut and New York: *Die-hard Patriots & Savvy Pioneers*

By David W. Swafford, Editor

The history, service, and adventures of the colonial Platt family veterans make for a “storied story” in the annals of the Revolutionary War. By one family member’s count, at least fifteen Platt men battled the British in the struggle for American independence.

Most of those men, if not all, lived either in Connecticut or New York at the time, and it was within that narrow region of the map where their collective contributions were made and later recorded.

A smattering of the names includes Stephen Platt (b. 1762), who was already a lieutenant by age 19. There’s Jonas Platt (b. 1727), who marched forty miles from Redding, Connecticut, to Fishkill, New York, during the Burgoyne campaign. There’s Joseph Platt (b. 1754), who, upon retreating from the battlefield at Long Island, tripped over a dead Hessian and had the presence of mind to pick up the poor man’s musket.

Benjamin Platt (b. 1755), an officer, witnessed British soldiers torch a Continental Army supply depot in Danbury, Connecticut. Nathaniel Platt (b. 1741) was entrusted to transfer a large cache of arms and ammunitions from eastern Long Island—just prior to British occupation—to a place of safekeeping on the mainland.

Richard Platt (b. 1755), a nephew to Nathaniel, started his military career as a 20-year-old second

lieutenant in the 1775 Canada campaign. He is said to have resembled the Commander-in-Chief “in form and feature more than any other person.”

### A Matter of Pride

It was not just the number of Platts serving and sacrificing that characterized the family; the Stubbornness and Pluck of these men would soon become legendary.

Just one example of that trait was when 74-year-old Zephaniah Platt, a zealous patriot, refused to evacuate the family’s cherished property on Long Island after British occupation. Another was when his great-nephew, Richard, twice resigned his military post in order to seek “more justified” rank.

**“Few families in New York State  
have produced so many distinguished citizens  
in the civil service.”**

—*Genealogical and Family History of Northern New York:  
A Record of the Achievements of Her People . . . (N. Y., 1910)*

The first resignation came following his distinguished fighting in the Canada campaign of 1775. He had signed on as 2nd Lt. of

the First Company of the New York regiments, a.k.a. McDougall’s [Col. Alexander] Company. Nearly a year later, in April 1776, he was a 1st Lt. under the command of Col. Lt. Rudolph Ritzema. But after a reorganization of the Army on June 25, 1776, the Continental Congress commissioned Lewis Dubois to raise a regiment for the duration of the war, of which the very next day Richard was named a captain. As soon as he and others of similar experience discovered they would be answering to lieutenants of younger

—continued on page 18

—Platt Family, continued from page 17

age and lesser seniority, they flatly resigned. By late summer of the following year, Richard was reassigned as a brigade major in Col. Alexander McDougall's brigade and later received appointment as a captain in the Second New York Regiment.

### Jail for Some

Early in the course of the war, more than one Platt was taken prisoner. Of those, Ebenezer Smith Platt (b. 1753) was conveyed to London's Newgate Prison (the equivalent of death row) at the end of 1776 on charges of treason. Ebenezer was a brother



Reproduced portrait of Richard Platt by Nelly Rieske.

to Richard. Their father, Jonathan, brother to Nathaniel, died two years prior. Before Jonathan died, he sent Ebenezer to Savannah, Georgia, with a shipload of cargo to sell. The plan was to use the proceeds to buy a 5,000-acre plantation, from which father and son would launch a business in the slave trade. Yet those plans abruptly changed when Jonathan died shortly after arriving in Georgia. Ebenezer's mother soon came to her son's assistance but she, too, died shortly thereafter.

Orphaned, Ebenezer launched a career as a trade merchant and by late 1775 had involved himself in the politics of the coming revolution, according to historian Robert S. Davis, Jr. "His activities eventually placed his name on the list of Georgians deemed to be traitors by the Loyalist colonial government," Davis writes.

In January 1776 off the coast of Georgia, Ebenezer was caught transferring arms for local rebels aboard the ship *Philippa*. Taken into British naval custody and chained, he became a problem for the Crown. He was transferred from ship to ship for many months—he even spent time confined

aboard a British warship in New York.

The issues behind his capture were complex. Did Ebenezer stand before the English judicial system as an English citizen guilty of treason, or was he to be considered a civilian prisoner of war? In whichever case, what would be the consequences in America for loyal British subjects and for patriots later taken as prisoners? Did his seizure represent a legal arrest or an act of kidnapping by the British?

"An attorney for Platt argued for his trial before the Appellate Court of the King's Bench," Davis writes. "The court refused on the grounds that should Platt be found guilty of treason and hanged, the American rebels would retaliate against loyal British subjects. A trial of Platt threatened to expose the scandal that the British navy had received orders in Jamaica to prey upon American commercial shipping months before Parliament legalized such seizures...."

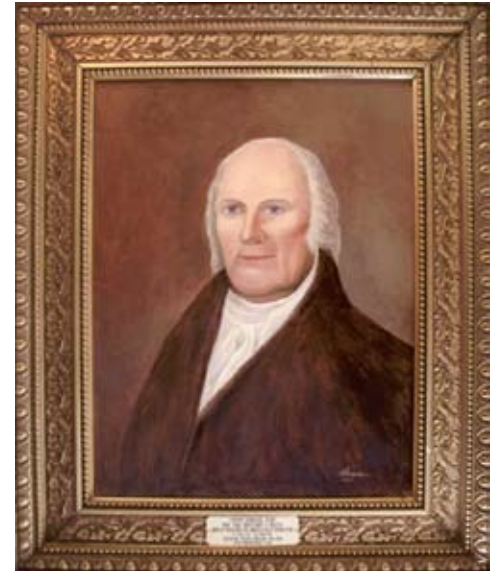
Meanwhile, with characteristic Stubbornness and Pluck, Ebenezer pressed for his own release. He contacted Benjamin Franklin, following up more than once with the famed diplomat/inventor/publisher. His plight made headlines around the world and ultimately grabbed the attention of a woman named Patience Lovell Wright. She was an American sculptress who enjoyed success in Europe, and, being a vocal patriot, she interceded on his behalf. Because she knew many influential persons, she contacted Benjamin Franklin, a friend, regarding Ebenezer's case.

Eventually, things turned out well. He was released by King George III in 1778. After his release, he married Mrs. Wright's daughter, Elizabeth, and the couple returned to New York, where he became a clock maker.

Eventually, things turned out well. He was released by King George III in 1778. After his release, he married Mrs. Wright's daughter, Elizabeth, and the couple returned to New York, where he became a clock maker.

### Patriarch Zephaniah Platt

The hardness of resolve that characterized both Richard and Ebenezer undoubtedly was passed



Reproduced portrait of Nathaniel Platt by Nelly Rieske.

down through generations. One need only look to their great-uncle, Zephaniah Platt, Capt. Nathaniel's father.

After the British occupied New York, residents were required to take oaths of allegiance to the Crown. If they refused, their property could be confiscated. In response, many Patriots on Long Island fled to Connecticut in order to take up guerrilla warfare but legally maintain their properties. Zephaniah Platt refused to flee the family's cherished farm at Sunk(en) Meadows near Huntington, which had been handed down through generations.

"Not only does he refuse to take the oath of allegiance to the British Crown," said Max Riekse, descendant of the Platt family through his mother's side and Past President of the Michigan Society, "but he also engages in sedition. He allowed his barn to be used for hiding the whaleboats which the Patriots in Connecticut used for crossing the Sound at night to set fire to British garrisons."

In December of 1777, the British found the whaleboats. Immediately they burned the vessels and transferred the elder Platt to Manhattan,

where he was thrown aboard a prison ship, possibly the *Jersey*. Prior to organizing his transfer, they detained Zephaniah and dozens of other patriots by chaining them to a large elm tree outside his home.

Some time after Zephaniah had been taken away, his daughter, Dorothea Platt, meddled into the business of war. Upon hearing of her father's plight, she ventured into Manhattan, accompanied by a servant, and spoke directly to British General Sir Henry Clinton about his release.

"He is an arrant rebel," Sir Henry reputedly told her.

With tears in her eyes, she is said to have replied: "He is an old man who can never more injure your cause." According to the story, her tearful beauty and filial affection prevailed upon the General.

Four days after his release, however, Zephaniah Platt died of the smallpox he had contracted onboard the prison ship. He is buried in the family plot at Sunk(en) Meadows. ■

*Thanks to Max Riekse, and his wife, Nelly, for their collaboration and assistance in the telling of this story. Thanks also to Richard N. Platt of Milford, Connecticut.*



# Louis Le Bègue Duportail: Founder of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

By Daniel Jouve  
and Jacques de Trentinian

*The following article in its original form was published by Daniel Jouve in the French journal, les Amis de la Grive (Charleville-Mézières). This edited version for the Drumbeat, a two-part feature, was submitted to the GSSR by SR European Society member Jacques de Trentinian. It focuses solely on the prowess of Revolutionary War Chief Engineer Louis Le Bègue Duportail, who proved himself crucial to the Patriot cause and to the ultimate defeat of the British.*

In September 1775, French Foreign Minister Charles Gravier, count of Vergennes, gave the young secret agent Julien Achard de Bonvouloir a mission to sound out the government of the insurgent American colonies. De Bonvouloir met with Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia, who requested of the king's court "two skilled and well-recommended military engineers."

By the following year, when Franklin arrived in Paris to represent the insurgent colonies, his request had grown to four engineers. To head the effort, Minister of War Count Claude Louis de Saint-Germain turned to Louis Le Bègue Duportail. The young man's father was a lawyer in the King's Court.

Born in Pithiviers in 1743, Duportail entered engineering school in Mézières as a lieutenant in 1763. He was named captain by 1773 and promoted to lieutenant-colonel three years later, coinciding with Franklin's visit to Paris. In February 1777, he was given leave to "attend to his personal affairs."

## Military Engineers Sought

In fact, his leave was a secret mission to put together the team of military engineers which Congress had requested. The Continental Army relied greatly on foreign military engineers, mostly French, to construct fortifications and bridges, design encampments, and map vital terrain. Called Sappers & Miners, these early engineer-soldiers greatly influenced the development of engineering in the U.S. Army.

Duportail chose three other renowned Frenchmen to join him—Louis Deshays de la Radière, Jean Baptiste Joseph, the Chevalier de



*Louis Le Bègue Duportail*

Laumoy, as well as Jean Baptiste de Gouvion. They set sail from Nantes on March 5, 1777, using their noms de guerre. Due to the British blockade of America and other transportation difficulties, the four were not able to present themselves to Congress before July 5<sup>th</sup>.

Initially given the rank of Colonel of Engineers, Duportail's leap to Brigadier General came in just a matter of months. Throughout the war, he met frequently with Washington and, in addition to discussing engineering matters, his counsel significantly contributed to the

strategy that eventually wore down the British.

## Concerning Philadelphia (1777-1778)

As a general, Duportail first joined Washington at Coryells Ferry. Like the other generals, he sent Washington a memorandum in 1777. His memo represented a turning point in the war. Regarding the British occupation of Philadelphia, he opposed the idea of attack, which the American officers supported. In a ten-page report, Duportail demonstrated that it would be strategically better to remain near Philadelphia ... even to retreat slightly ... given the enemy's weak defenses. They would not be able to remain there long.

That is exactly what happened. On June 18, 1778, the English evacuated the capital and headed for New York—hastened by the news of the French alliance with the Colonies. (France was the only nation to recognize the independence of the U.S. before the treaty which ended the war in 1783.) After Washington engaged the rear flank of the retreating British at the Battle of Monmouth, the redcoats pulled back during the night and fled.

With that encouraging development, Washington continued north to White Plains and sent Duportail to defend a liberated Philadelphia, with the mission to fortify the city while Congress returned to its former home. Philadelphia remained an easy target for the English navy.

For his own part, Duportail had proposed to Congress the creation of three companies of miners and sappers to provide military engineering to American soldiers. In May of 1778, a Congressional decree authorized the creation of the Military Engineering Corps, with three companies of Sappers & Miners to receive instruction in erecting field works. Duportail was named Commander-in-Chief of that corps. It is reported recruitment took two years and activation of the units did not occur until August 1780.

### **Washington Shows Support**

During that lapse of time, after there had been several indecisive attempts to replace Washington as commanding officer, the French officers became discouraged and seriously considered returning to France. Their two-year leave was about to end. It took all of Washington's authority and the encouragement of Conrad-Alexandre Gérard (France's first Ambassador to the United States) to convince Congress to ask King Louis XVI to prolong

his officers' leave, to which the King obliged.

Meanwhile, in a supportive letter to Congress in November 1778, Washington spoke highly of the French engineers: "Concerning General Duportail, ... I judge him to be, not only highly qualified in his specialty, but also a man of sound judgment and great knowledge in the art of war. I also have a very good opinion of his companions ...."

His efforts seemed to have paid off. Thanks to the extension of leave, Washington sent Duportail with a message to Congress, asking that the fortification of the Delaware River estuary be undertaken immediately. After enduring much haggling between the Congressional Military Commission and the Governor of Pennsylvania, he was finally given the resources to accomplish his task—thanks, once again, to the Commander-in-Chief's intervention.

Before plans for a fortification on the Delaware River materialized, the top engineer was called back to West Point, where he assumed the command of 5,000 men. In July 1779, the patriot troops had charged the fort at Stony Point on the Hudson, captured the British stocks of arms and munitions, and destroyed the fort. However, the British had returned, rebuilt Stony Point, and constructed a second fortification at Verplank's Point. It was the Continental Army's initial plan to seize both. ■

### ***Thirteen Engineer-Officers Make All the Difference at Yorktown***

The burden of planning and executing the siege of Yorktown fell on the shoulders of thirteen engineer-officers in the combined armies. Their principal job was to dig the trenches approaching the enemy lines in parallel, zigzag formation, and clear the way during a direct assault.

A highlight of the siege occurred during the construction of the second parallel. Two strong British positions, Redoubts Nine and Ten, impeded progress and had to be taken. American infantry led by a contingent of Sappers and Miners, all under command of Colonel Alexander Hamilton, successfully captured Redoubt Nine while the French took Redoubt Ten.

The threat to British General Charles Cornwallis's position was now so formidable that he attempted unsuccessfully to escape. Surrender was inevitable; it came on October 19, 1781.

When it was over, Duportail was quick to point out—and Washington wholeheartedly agreed—that the officers of the Corps of Engineers had contributed significantly to the outcome. Speaking with great respect for Duportail, Washington declared, "his plan and conduct of the late attacks in the successful siege of Yorktown afford brilliant proof of his military genius, and set the seal of his reputation."

At the end of the Revolutionary War, several officers, including MG Louis Lebeque Duportail, Chief Engineer, argued for a peacetime Army with a single Corps of Artillerists and Engineers as was customary in many European countries. Congress not only did not support the proposal but also disbanded the bulk of the Army, including the Corps of Engineers with its chief engineer and companies of sappers and miners, in November 1783.

***Editor's Note:*** The above text is reprinted from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers website.

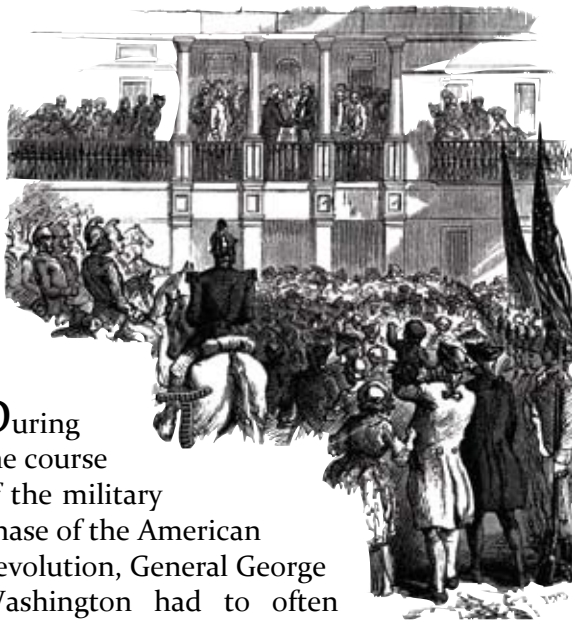


# George Washington: The First Administration



By David B. Mitchell, Esq.

*The following article, the first of two parts, examines the course of George Washington's first administration. Mr. Mitchell, Counselor in the Florida Society, gave a presentation on this subject in early 2010 to the Florida Society of Sons of the Revolution as well as to the Miami Chapter, SAR.*



During the course of the military phase of the American Revolution, General George Washington had to often prove his worth to command the American army to his doubters in the Continental Congress. He had to both encourage and manipulate the legislative body into funding his forces, which also caused some grumbling. The extraordinary defeat of Lord Cornwallis at the Battle of Yorktown—and of the British force in colonial America—silenced most criticism levied against the citizen-soldier and patriot.

The models of the day—indeed, throughout all history—called for such a man as Washington to assume permanent leadership. We have only to look to Genghis Khan, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, or Oliver Cromwell to see that trend. In fact, following Washington's victory, the national inclination to grant him extraordinary personal and political power was indeed strong. Yet the Commander-in-Chief, in his farewell address to Congress, would have none of it.

## A Different Role Model

Washington's personal model was quite different. Rather than copy the aforementioned

historical figures, he fashioned his career after the great Roman hero, Cincinnatus, consul of Rome in 460 BC. The latter was a great citizen-soldier twice called to lead his country in war and, after each victory, returned to his home and plough. The relinquishment of absolute power following personal victory was deemed then and now as the exemplar of personal morality and patriotism. This was the model Washington chose to emulate.

In fact, the Society of The Cincinnati, which Washington, Henry Knox and other generals founded, took its name from Cincinnatus.

Washington's political career continued after the war, albeit on a smaller scale for the first few years. He saw that the new loosely-structured nation was in real trouble. In rural New England, armed insurgents closed the Massachusetts courts, and Vermont schemed with Canada. Rhode Island and North Carolina remained outside the Union. British soldiers refused to leave the West. America had a tiny army and no navy. The new nation under the Articles of Confederation was broke and in debt. Local prejudices began to emerge.

In 1783, Washington sent a letter to representatives of the states urging a stronger national identity. He feared that his successful efforts to gain freedom from Britain might not lead to the new nation that he envisioned.

Three years later, at Mount Vernon, he worked with commissioners from Maryland and Virginia to create a workable program for use of the Chesapeake Bay and Potomac River. This resulted in the Annapolis Convention of 1787, which discussed for the first time the matter of interstate commerce.

The following year, Washington was chosen as a Virginia delegate to the Constitutional Convention, initially called to revise the Articles of Confederation. We all know the convention met behind closed doors to scrap the Articles and prepare the U.S. Constitution under the leadership of James Madison. Against Washington's wishes, he was elected as president of the Convention, but he provided few ideas for the new Constitution. Indeed, he did not actively campaign for ratification of the Constitution due largely to his sense of personal reserve.

Once again, after the Constitutional Convention, Washington wanted to return to Mount Vernon. Yet electors from the states unanimously chose Washington as our first President. Only his sense of patriotism compelled him to accept the office. On April 30, 1789, at the then-ripe old age of 57 years, at Federal Hall by Wall Street in New York City, Washington took the oath of office.

### A Formidable Challenge

Now, Washington, who was by no means an experienced political figure, was faced with the most formidable challenge of his life: How to breathe life into this new office, this new Constitution and this newly unified nation—to go where literally no one had gone before. He presided over the first democratic republic since the days before Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon and demolished Rome 1,700 years earlier.

Fortunately for America, Washington's sole motivation was his sense of duty, not personal gain. It is almost unimaginable today to place ourselves in Washington's shoes, in the days following his unanimous selection as our first President. He must have realized that every step, every action, every word, would set precedent for his successors and his nation. Could any of us have ably handled the pressures and responsibilities which he did?

As Washington himself wrote: "Few who are not philosophical speculators can realize the difficult and delicate part which a man in my situation has to act... I walk on untrodden ground. There is scarcely any part of my conduct which may not hereafter be drawn into precedent."

This personally reserved and deeply religious man, a Virginia patrician, possessed national perspective. A student of Greek, Roman and English history, he knew that every executive decision, every dealing with Congress and with

his opponents, would be monumental.

We can look to his first inaugural address to see the direction he wished to take as the nation's first President.

### His Three Desires

First, Washington stressed the elements that he hoped would guide his new administration and the nation as a whole. He proposed no specific measures, but said the new Constitution designated "the objects to which [Congressional] attention is to be given." He was, of course, referring to his deference to the Congress and his hope that its



Wall Street in George Washington's day. Federal Hall (City Hall) is on the right, with Trinity Church in the background. Federal Hall was demolished in 1812; the site is occupied today by the Federal Hall National Memorial.

members would display the talent, rectitude, and patriotism that would be required in abundance. Indeed, as if to emphasize the point, Washington publicly renounced any salary for his service, requesting only reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses for the Executive Branch.

Second, he hoped the new

government would be free of partisanship and motivated by simple problem solving across divisions. He said that on one hand, "no local prejudices or attachments, no separate views or party animosities, will misdirect the comprehensive and equal eye which ought to watch over this great assemblage of communities and interests, so, [on the other], that the foundation of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality, and the pre-eminence of free government be exemplified by all the attributes which can win the affections of its citizens and command the respect of the world."

Third, he warned the new public servants that God's laws were not to be ignored, "... the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained."

Can you imagine a modern President saying such a thing to Congress today? Washington actually did. ■

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