



George Washington Chapter Sons of the American Revolution

Newsletter

Volume 9, Issue 2

February, 2009



IMPORTANT CHANGES TO FEBRUARY MEETING DETAILS

This year, everything is happening on Presidents' Day Weekend. The VASSAR Annual Meeting begins on Friday evening, February 13; the VASSAR Business Meeting and Awards Ceremonies are scheduled for Saturday, February 14 - which is also the date of our Chapter's normal "second Saturday" luncheon meeting and Valentines Day; Alexandria's Washington Birthday Parade will be held on Monday, February 16.

The conflicts on Saturday, February 14, are the most vexing. It is important for our Chapter to be well represented at the VASSAR business meeting - because we are the largest chapter in Virginia and because the VASSAR membership will be asked to approve a large number of amendments to the VASSAR Handbook. To accommodate both the VASSAR meeting and our regular chapter meeting, your Board of Managers voted to support a Road Trip as described below.

For those who were unable to attend the January meeting, here's the deal:

1. All members are encouraged to attend at least the VASSAR General Membership Meeting. This portion of the Annual Meeting will begin at 8:30 a.m. in the Shenandoah C Room of the Holiday Inn Select in Richmond, Virginia.

2. Those attending will join a car pool which will be organized at the Belle Haven Country Club. Please arrive at the Club at 6:45 a.m. Our convoy to Richmond will depart at 7:00 a.m.

3. During the VASSAR meeting's mid-day break, G. W. Chapter members will convene for a

no-host lunch and hold the Chapter's February business meeting. Location of this Chapter meeting will be announced later.

4. G. W. Chapter members will re-join the VASSAR meeting for the Annual Awards Presentation which will begin at 2:00 p.m. in St. John's Church.

5. After the presentation of VASSAR's Annual Awards, G. W. Chapter members will return to the Belle Haven Country Club, where we expect to arrive around 5:30 p.m.

The agenda of the VASSAR Annual Meeting is posted on the Society's web page which you will find at www.sar.org/vassar. Please consult the agenda and recognize that other modes of participation are available. Some members may wish to attend more of the meeting than the just the General Membership Meeting and the Annual Awards Presentation.

Here is what you need to do if you wish to participate:

1. Notify Chapter President Dave Walker by e-mail at davewalker4@cox.net if you plan to attend the VASSAR event and if you are willing to drive in the car pool caravan leaving Belle Haven Country Club at 7:00 a.m. on February 14. Also, indicate whether you plan to attend only the General Membership Meeting and Annual Awards Presentation or any of the other events during the VASSAR meeting.

2. Using the attached 2009 Annual Meeting Registration Form, register for the event. The registration fee is \$25. **Your registration must be received by VASSAR not later than Friday, January 23, so time is of the essence.** This is particularly important if you plan to attend one or both of the dinner events. Last year, we were permitted to register for the General Membership Meeting and

Annual Awards Presentation when we arrived. The Registration Form can also be downloaded from the VASSAR website.

Don't miss this opportunity to bond with your G. W. Chapter compatriots while participating in an important VASSAR Annual Meeting - a once a year opportunity.

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**Wreath Laying at the Tomb of the
Unknown Revolutionary War Soldier
and
Alexandria's Washington Birthday
Parade**

Our Chapter will again participate in a ceremonial wreath laying at the Tomb of the Unknown Revolutionary War Soldier and march in Alexandria's Washington Birthday Parade on Monday, February 16. These are always memorable events. The wreath laying ceremony with the Honor Guard from the 1st Virginia Regiment is held in the burial ground behind Alexandria's Old Presbyterian Meeting House. It is a solemn but colorful ceremony. Compatriots should assemble in the burial ground at 10:00 a.m.

After the wreath laying ceremony it is an easy walk to the corner of Wilkes and St. Asaph Streets, where we will assemble for the Birthday Parade at 12:30 p.m. **See the Parade Map at the end of this newsletter.** Thousands of citizens will line the streets and cheer as we march along the parade route. We hope that many Chapter members will participate in these two events.

Details on the parade may be found on the web at www.washingtonbirthdayparade.net. Also, watch your personal e-mail for more details.

A brief history of past Washington Birthday Parades will be found later in this newsletter.

If you cannot join us, we solicit your prayers for favorable weather.

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**A Message from Our New Chapter
President**

Compatriots of the George Washington Chapter,

I am pleased and honored to serve as President of the George Washington Chapter of the

Sons of the American Revolution for 2009. I am particularly pleased to have the opportunity to lead the G. W. Chapter since Washington was our nation's first President and Mary and I reside on land that was once owned by General Washington.

Fortunately, I was dealt a much better hand by former Chapter President Kenan Torrans than President Obama was dealt by President Bush (43). Our chapter is in a strong financial position, in large part due to a recent approximate \$23,000 bequest from our former compatriot Charles Mosher's estate. Our future also looks brighter at the beginning of my term than our country's at the beginning of President Obama's.

As chapter President, I hope to focus on three key issues during my tenure. First, I would like to activate our existing membership and try and expand our base. To do so, I plan to call each active member over the next month or so to encourage them to attend our monthly meetings and various special events. I have also recruited my youngest brother Steve, who recently moved back to the Washington area, as a new member for our chapter and I will pursue additional candidates in the future.

Second, I want to ensure that we implement a web site for our chapter. This will help us communicate with our members, other chapters and the general public. It should also help us in connection with recruiting new members and activating our existing members.

Third, I would like to increase the amount of engagement that our chapter has with VASSAR and NSSAR. We are the largest chapter in the state and one of the largest chapters in the world. As such, I believe that we should be more involved at the state and national level. In that regard, the Board of Managers agreed that we would have a caravan of cars go to the VASSAR Annual Meeting in Richmond on Saturday, February 14, in lieu of our normal monthly meeting. About 15 members signed up to make this "road trip" at our January luncheon. This trip will help make sure that our chapter's views are heard in connection with key issues. Furthermore, I have accepted NSSAR's invitation to give the keynote speech to the national leadership meeting on March 7. Several chapter members plan to go with me to Louisville.

I look forward to working with all of you in the coming year. Working together, we can help commemorate the patriots who fought for our independence and have some fun, too. Happy New Year to each and every one of you. I hope to see you in Richmond next month.

Dave Walker
Chapter President

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Challenges Facing Our Nation Goals for Our Chapter

In his first address as our Chapter's President, Dave Walker gave us a concise overview of the major challenges facing our nation and its new president. Some of the problems seem almost overwhelming. Current problems include the recession; various rescues and bailouts; the troubled housing industry; and the ever-expanding federal budget deficit with increasing amounts of American debt held by foreign entities and governments. Internationally, we are involved in two wars and unrest or conflicts are raging in several other parts of the world.

To address our fiscal and other key sustainability challenges, he cited a need for a system of metrics against which progress can be



Chapter President Dave Walker

gauged. There is also a need for a "Fiscal Future Commission" made up of government and private sector experts. It would take a year or more to complete this work. Then the attack on fiscal problems could be designed to treat the disease, not just the symptoms.

Dave's goals for our chapter are summarized in his message, above.

After his remarks, Dave called Past-President Kenan Torrans to the podium and presented a handsome plaque to honor Kenan's service to the chapter.



President Walker honors Past-President Torrans service to the George Washington Chapter.

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Alexandria's Washington Birthday Parade

The George Washington Birthday Celebration Committee is one of the very oldest community organizations in Alexandria. It is that committee that carries the heavy responsibility for planning the celebration scheduled for Monday, February 16. From the time of the Revolutionary War, the people of Alexandria have celebrated the birthday of George Washington. Whether through marching in parades, reenacting historic events, musical performances, or

dancing at the birthnight balls, the annual remembrance of the Father of our Country has always been considered important and worthwhile. Our chapter will proudly march in the parade again this year.

These celebrations have a somewhat checkered history and their elegance may reflect the energy and enthusiasm of the members of the venerable planning committee. The citizens were scolded by the publisher of the *Alexandria Gazette* with this article which appeared in the evening edition of that paper on February 22, 1902:

“Today is the 170th anniversary of the birth of George Washington. Apart from the ringing of some of the bells of the city there was nothing in Alexandria to call attention to the fact, and numbers in whom it had not occurred that it was the 22d of February, stampeded toward engine houses when the bells rang out. While the present meteorological conditions would have rendered a parade a failure, that a more public recognition of the day should have been made is the opinion of many in Alexandria, a city in which Washington always manifested interest. The State, however, as a whole, seems to be equally remiss in this matter. New generations have entered the arena of life. Some of them never visited Mount Vernon and are as thoughtless of the coming and going of the 22d of February as of Ground Hog Day. As the years come and go the departure from the manners and customs of their fathers and grandfathers becomes more pronounced. In by-gone days the anniversary of Washington’s birthday was celebrated in Alexandria with parades, cannon-firing and balls at night. It was a general holiday and probably next to Christmas as a festive occasion. But the last third of a century has brought many changes and the observation, *Tempora mutantur*, etc., well fits the days in which we live. Washington sleeps on a few miles south of what he regarded as his city, but it has long ceased to honor the day of his birth, while the nation he founded on the principles of liberty as opposed to oppression has just wiped the blood from its hands after pouncing upon a weaker country, is endeavoring to crush out the inhabitants of a far-away land and virtually allying itself with a government against which the Father of His country amid many privations strove for seven long years.”

Well, the publisher’s scolding had the desired impact. The following article appeared in the *Alexandria Gazette* the next year on February 23, 1903:

DAYS WE CELEBRATE

“Alexandria today entered into the public celebration of George Washington’s birthday, and to many of our older citizens the affair brought to mind reminiscences of by-gone years when, apart from Christmas, the 22d of February was anticipated by Alexandrians with more pleasant expectations than any other day on the calendar. The affair was, in a measure, a reproduction of those of other years, and honest enthusiasm has been manifest in every seal. It has been a gala day from start to finish, and success has crowned the efforts of the committee having the celebrations in charge; hence the 22d of February 1903 will long be remembered.

“The birthdays of two illustrious Virginians - - as great men in every sense as have ever appeared in history - occur within about a month of each other. The 19th of last month was observed as the anniversary of a truly noble and great son of the Old Dominion who was extemporaneous with most of us. The event met with the usual observance, and the memory of Robert E. Lee, ever green in the hearts of the people of the southern portion of the United States, received the honor it deserves.

“Today is the anniversary of the birth of another immortal Virginian, George Washington, who has slept within a few miles of Alexandria for a century and over. Amid the greatest hardships and followed by a gallant and determined band for seven long years, he finally compelled the mother country to order its forces out of this portion of North America and acknowledge the fact that another English-speaking nation had appeared on the map. His mission was crowned with success - unlike that of the other great chieftains who for four years kept at bay an army overwhelming in numbers while contending for the rights guaranteed by his mother State when it entered the federal compact. While it is meet to celebrate the birth of Washington with joy and gladness, another spirit comes over us when our thoughts are turned to the great commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. It is then we are reminded of gentleness, true greatness, genius and Christian character blended in one who was more noble in failure than were any of

his contemporaries in success. We bow in reverence to him and the principles for which he contended. His memory is not perpetuated in storied urns, fretted vaults nor imposing mausoleums, but in the hearts of a grateful and loving people.

“Washington, possessing similar virtues and genius, had a more prolonged military career and labors and anxieties after he had placed his sword in the scabbard.

“He had brought to birth a republic which at times was unruly. He had his enemies and critics, but with a fixed and steady purpose of mind and undeviating path of rectitude, he lived to see his course approved, and when at last his eyes were sealed in death, an entire country lamented that he was no more.

“It would be bringing coals to Newcastle for the *Gazette* to sketch Washington’s life - certainly to an Alexandria clientele. It has been in our nursery literature and incidents from it were in our school readers while some we knew in our early days saw and conversed with him. There have been many orations delivered on the illustrious hero from all standpoints, and he now stands out as a great historical figure invoking our contemplation. Alexandria has performed its duty today in honoring the memory of Washington. He always evinced interest in her welfare, and when he was gathered to his fathers Alexandria realized that she had lost one of her best friends and that a familiar figure had passed from our midst to become a fixed star in the galaxy of the great which have appeared in this world.”

“Yesterday was the 171st anniversary of Washington’s birthday, and today our people are celebrating it. To the few who have read the General’s farewell address, and the fewer who remember it, the day naturally brings a realizing sense, not only of the great difference between the great character of the first and the best of the country’s Presidents, but of the contemptuous disregard with which the wise advice contained in the address referred to is now treated by the people of the country of which the author was indeed the father. Crowds of pleasure seekers still go to Mount Vernon and look at the spot where his bones lie, but his wise principles and just policies have ceased to be

operative in the nation he created and made good.”

“The first celebration of Washington’s birthday appears to have been held at New Port by the French troops in 1781. The next popular celebration was by the Society of St. Tammany, New York, in 1790. Then followed the grand ball in Philadelphia in 1790.”

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The enthusiasm for this celebration carried over to the next year, when the *Alexandria Gazette* reported on February 22, 1904, as follows:

TODAY’S PARADE

The Affair a Success Notwithstanding the Condition of the Streets

“The George Washington Birthday associations, by inadvertence, failed to propitiate Jupiter Pluvius or the ground hog, and the parade fixed for today was somewhat interfered with by the elements. Conditions yesterday morning were ominous and the Weather Bureau was powerless to shed a ray of hope as to the meteorological conditions likely to prevail today. The wind was from the east and varied first to the southeast and then to the northeast. The heavens were threatening and in the afternoon a light rain, or, more properly, a heavy mist made outside conditions uncomfortable. Later the rain fell more heavily and after dark and several times during the night there were heavy downpours. Day broke with a drizzle and with most of the sidewalks and streets again encased in ice. The decorations which had been put up last week hung limp and bedraggled and there was a manifest depression all over the city. The military organizations and other associations which had been invited here arrived yesterday and this morning, and every attention was being paid to their comfort, but most of the members were compelled to remain in doors on account of the pitiless rainfall and the ice-clad streets. The United States dispatch boat *Dolphin* anchored off the city yesterday, and this morning she was beautifully bedecked with flags. Notwithstanding the unfavorable conditions, active preparations were made yesterday for today’s festivities. Decorations were being placed on the fronts of houses and the snow and ice removed from streets and carried away in carts.

“By 10 o’clock this morning the streets became animated by the arrival in the city of organizations which had been invited to participate in the

celebration, while each train landed numbers of persons here. Drum taps and occasional music from the various bands began to make things lively, and at noon a salute from the dispatch boat *Dolphin* seemed to drive off whatever lethargy might have previously been shown. About this time the sun struggled from behind the clouds while the stiff northwest wind started an evaporation which bid fair to improve conditions. Soon thereafter the skies became clear and the weather overhead was all that could be desired.”

But in 1905 the celebration hit the skids again and on February 22, the *Gazette* reported: “The anniversary of the birth of George Washington did not seem to appeal as much to Alexandrians this year as it has on several occasions recently, and while two or three organizations will honor the occasion by giving banquets, the general trend of business will not be materially interfered with. No attempt was made to have a parade, without which the day is Hamlet minus Hamlet. The George Washington Birthday Association gave a banquet this afternoon which was an interesting feature, and speeches by Governor Montague, Lieutenant-Governor Willard and several officials and representative citizens of Alexandria rendered the occasion exceedingly interesting. Alexandria-Washington Lodge of Masons will give their annual banquet tonight, and the Friendship Veteran Fire Association will celebrate Washington’s birthday in a similar manner. The present generation, apart from those in a few places in the southern country, pay but little attention to the memory of George Washington.”

Moving forward in time to 1914, we find this account of another Washington Birthday Celebration recorded in the *Atlanta Constitution*, 24 February 1914,

**WILSON BRAVED BIG SNOWSTORM
To Do Honor to Memory of George Washington –
Alexandria the Scene of the Washington Pageant.**
Washington, February 23.—

“President Wilson crossed the ice-jammed Potomac today in the naval yacht *Sylph*, and, from a glass inclosed stand, reviewed a civic and military parade in Alexandria, Va., which marched through a frigid snowstorm in honor of the first president of the United States.

“With the exception of brief exercises in the

Senate, the national capitol turned to Alexandria, in the environment where George Washington had lived, for the official celebration of the birthday. Vice President Marshall laid a wreath on the tomb of Washington, at Mount Vernon, and returning to Alexandria, joined the president, members of the cabinet and Governor Stuart, of Virginia, in watching the parade.

Scenes of Colonial Days.

“Besides the fraternal organizations of the city, the fire companies of ancient and modern equipment and floats showing scenes of colonial days, the army, and navy took a prominent part in the pageant. Boy Scouts trudged through the snow with the same fortitude as the soldiers, while the blizzard raged. Little girls in a covered float showed a school room in Washington’s time. On a blackboard was a drawing of the White House, which amused the presidential party very much. Here and there in the parade was a black-faced minstrel, a wagon load of equal suffrage advocates, and some children in grotesque Indian garb. Weather conditions interfered considerably with the plans for the pageant, and it was delayed in starting by the failure of the president to arrive on time, the ice in the river making a landing difficult.

Through Icy River.

“The president left the White House in one of the big government limousines and practically stepped from it to the gangway of the *Sylph*. He sat in the yacht’s cozy cabin chatting with Secretary Tumulty, Representative Carlin and high military and naval aides, while the little boat steered its way through the icy river way for seven miles to Alexandria. Ice was jammed thickly around the wharf, and the boat had to swing about several times and grind the jam away before it could get alongside. The president had to climb over the upper deck of the vessel to a gangway, but was almost instantly in another limousine. Several troops of United States cavalry escorted him to the reviewing stand, while a 21-gun salute was fired by the nearby ships. The return journey was made in the same way, though the *Sylph* experienced less difficulty with the ice. On reaching the navy yard several inches of snow had fallen, but the White House motors easily plowed through the heavy drifts and brought the president back home in quick time. The whole trip took less than four hours.”

Virginia Society
Sons of the American Revolution
2009 Annual Meeting Registration Form
February 13-14, 2009

Holiday Inn Select Hotel
Koger South Conference Center
1021 Koger Center Boulevard
Richmond, Virginia 23235-4756

Phone: 1-804-379-3800 Web: www.hiselectrva.com

Name: _____		Wife/Guest: _____	
____ Street: _____		Phone Number: _____	
City/State/Zip: _____		E-mail address: _____	
Chapter: _____			

	<u>Number</u>		<u>Total</u>
Registration (SAR Compatriots Only):	_____	@ \$25 each	\$ _____
Friday Night Buffet:	_____	@ \$25 each	\$ _____
Saturday Night Banquet:	_____	@ \$35 each	\$ _____
Total Amount Remitted:			\$ _____

	<u>Compatriot</u>	<u>Guest</u>
Do you or your guest need a name tag? (Yes/No):	_____	_____
	}	
Saturday Night Meal Choice (choose one) }	Prime Rib	_____
	Crab Cakes	_____
	Chicken Wellington	_____

Please make your check payable to “**Col. Fielding Lewis Chapter, VASSAR**”

Mail this form and your check to:

Col. Fielding Lewis Chapter, VASSAR

71 Hope Springs Lane

Stafford, Virginia 22554-5238

Hotel arrangements must be made directly with the Holiday Inn Select Hotel

Cutoff Date for Registrations and Hotel Reservations is Friday, January 23, 2009

For questions please contact:

Steve Atkinson, Chairman of the BOM, Richmond Chapter (stephenaatkinson@comcast.net or 804-425-5813)

- or -

Wayne Rouse, President, Col. Fielding Lewis Chapter (wrouse4sar@aol.com or 540-659-5258)

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THESE FUN EVENTS ON FEBRUARY 16!

WREATH LAYING CEREMONY

TIME: 11:00 a.m. (reservations are not required)

LOCATION: Courtyard behind the Old Presbyterian Meeting House, 321 So. Fairfax St.,
Alexandria, VA

GEORGE WASHINGTON BIRTHDAY PARADE

“The largest Parade Celebrating Washington’s Birthday in the USA!

TIME: 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. G. W. Chapter will assemble near corner of Wilkes Street &
St. Asaph Street no later than 12:30 p.m.

Please help us have a respectable showing for the largest chapter in



