



George Washington Chapter Sons of the American Revolution

Newsletter

Volume 9, Issue 3

March, 2009



IF YOU DIDN'T TURN OUT FOR PRESIDENT'S DAY WEEKEND,
YOU MISSED A BANG-UP TIME!



Road Trip to Richmond

The weekend began for several Compatriots when they drove to Richmond on Friday to participate in the opening activities of the 119th Annual VASSAR Meeting. Others followed them on Saturday morning and our Chapter had a record turn-out for the General Membership Meeting - a total of 17, which was the largest of any chapter participating in this year's meeting.

The members dealt with a full agenda. During the business meeting Chapter President

Dave Walker was presented a certificate recognizing his service as Vice Chairman of the NSSAR Congressional and Government Relations Committee. Other details of the business meeting and the annual presentation of awards are contained in the President's Column, below.

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Washington's Birthday Activities

On President's Day, members of the Chapter participated in the annual wreath-laying at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier of the Revolutionary War. That ceremony, organized by

the 1st Virginia Regiment, was held at 11:00 a.m. in the burial ground behind the Old Presbyterian Meeting House. Wreaths were presented by the Regiment, the Kate Waller Barrett Chapter of the DAR, and our own Chapter.



Chapter President Walker makes brief remarks after presenting the wreath at the Tomb of the Revolutionary War Unknown Soldier

Following the wreath-laying, Compatriots marched in Alexandria's Washington Birthday Parade where they were escorted by a contingent from the VASSAR Honor Guard and Compatriot Bob Carr's handsomely restored World War II jeep.



The SAR Banner (carried by Paul Briggs and Covert Beach) and Bob Carr's Jeep lead the GW Chapter element in the Washington's Birthday Parade.

Our day in Olde Town was completed with a very special treat. We were invited to a reception at the headquarters of the Daughters of the Confederacy where we were treated to good food and drink, a visit to their museum, and an opportunity to meet Confederate Army reenactors who had also marched in the parade.

These activities are always a lot of fun. Please join us when the event is repeated next year.

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Mark Your Calendar for March 14

On March 14th we will resume our regular "second Saturday" meeting schedule and return to our customary meeting place, the Belle Haven Country Club. Our guest speaker will be Dr. Daniel Dreisbach. Dr. Dreisbach is a Professor of Justice, Law and Society at the American University in Washington, D.C. He was the 2008 recipient of the University's highest faculty award, "Scholar/Teacher of the Year." He received a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Oxford University, where he studied as a Rhodes Scholar, a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Virginia, and a B.A. from the University of South Carolina-Spartanburg. He served as a clerk on the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. Dr. Dreisbach has authored or edited seven books, including *Thomas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation Between Church and State* (New York Univ. Press, 2002). His scholarly articles have appeared in such journals as the *American Journal of Legal History* and *Constitutional Commentary*.

Please use the form found at the conclusion of this newsletter to make your reservation for this meeting.

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President's Column

The George Washington Chapter conducted a "road trip" in lieu of our regular monthly meeting in order to attend the annual VASSAR meeting in Richmond, Virginia, on February 14. (Yes, they held it on Valentines Day!) Nonetheless, we had the most

representatives of any Virginia chapter, including Richmond.

The VASSAR business meeting on Saturday morning included several moments of spirited debate. The most controversial issue was a proposal by NSSAR President General Bruce Wilcox to have VASSAR endorse NSSAR in seeking a \$5 million loan to refurbish the newly acquired headquarters building in Louisville. After an impassioned plea from our own Dan McGuire and comments from several other chapter members, including yours truly, the motion was defeated and VASSAR is not to take a position on the issue. This issue will come up at the NSSAR Trustees and Leadership meeting in March. I am scheduled to give the keynote speech at this meeting.

Our chapter was fortunate to win a number of statewide awards during the annual awards ceremony at St. John's Church. Specifically, we won the Baldwin Award (yes, our Don Baldwin) for the most new members; a Chapter Excellence Award; and the Outstanding Very Large Chapter Award. Members who attended the awards ceremony were treated to a reenactment of the debate among members of the pre-Revolutionary War Virginia legislature. The reenactors included individuals who portrayed George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry among other great patriots. It was truly a special and impressive event.

Several of our chapter members attended the management meeting and dinner on Friday. Others attended the formal dinner on Saturday night and several brought their spouses, including me. I thank all compatriots who took the time to make this trip. We clearly showed that the GW Chapter is a force to be reckoned with.

I look forward to seeing all of you at our next meeting. We will return to our normal schedule for our monthly luncheon meeting at Belle Haven Country Club on Saturday, March 14.

Dave Walker
Chapter President

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Registrar's Report

Membership

Our Chapter has experienced a slow down in the number of new members, transfers and reinstatements during the past several months. Since my report in October, we have in process at NSSAR three transfers, five new members and two supplemental applications. I am presently working on two new member applications and over 30 supplemental applications. Five new members are awaiting induction.

Of the five new applications pending at National, three applications have been "Pended" by NSSAR for additional information. All three were *pended* as a result of the recent announcement by NSSAR regarding DAR's use of the single large check mark down the middle of the page or on the margin, rather than marking each genealogical fact as verified.

Presently there are eleven prospective members in various states of work. Compatriots with names of prospective members should contact Bob Carr at 703-780-3066 or e-mail the prospective member's telephone number and home address to capt7cs@aol.com. A New Member packet with application instructions and membership benefits information will be provided. If you would like a New Member packet to give to a prospective member, pick a packet up from Bob at the next meeting.

Application Notes

You may recall the October, 2008, newsletter, in which I discussed in detail the uproar caused by NSSAR's recent announcement regarding the policy on the use of DAR Record Copies that had central proof marks on each generation rather than verifying each genealogical fact. This announcement has continued to draw fire from many quarters. A number of state societies have taken exception to the announcement and will make a major push to reverse this decision during the National Trustee and Genealogical Committee meeting at Louisville in March.

If not reversed, what this will mean, for

any future applicant who may be joining SAR based on the DAR membership of their mother or grandmother, is just this: all the documentation used to verify the DAR application will be required to accompany the SAR application along with the DAR Record Copy if it does not have the verification of each genealogical fact. Many of us view this as overkill and unnecessary work and expense for new applicants, which will in turn discourage qualified applicants.

Stay tuned, we should know more next month.

Bob Carr
Registrar

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Progress on the Chapter's Web Site

Two proposals have been obtained for developing a web site for our Chapter. The costs of each proposal are reasonably comparable. Paul Briggs and Mike Elston are evaluating the merits of each proposal. A decision to accept one of them will be announced shortly. Once that decision is made, work on the web site can begin.

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Looking Forward

Here are some dates you might wish to note in your calendar:

MARCH

- 5-7 NSSAR Spring Trustees/Leadership Meeting, Louisville, KY
- 14 GW Chapter Luncheon Meeting
- 14 St. John's Episcopal Church - Hampton, VA. Plaque Presentation & Wreath Laying Ceremony, Lunch - 1:00 pm - Program - 2:30 pm
- 14 Battle of Guilford Courthouse - Greensboro, NC, 1:00 pm
- 16 President James Madison's Birthday - Montpelier, VA

APRIL

- 11 GW Chapter Luncheon Meeting, Guest Speaker TBA.
- 13 Thomas Jefferson Birthday - Naturalization Ceremony & Wreath Laying - Monticello - 10:00 am
- 18-19 Battle of Petersburg - Historic Battersea -

Petersburg, VA 9:00 am-6:00 pm Saturday - 9:00 am - 4:00 pm Sunday

- 19 Patriot Day Celebration, Cumberland County (VA) Courthouse - 10:00 am - 4:00 pm. This is the 5th annual festival located at the courthouse square where the first call for independence was made on April 22, 1776.

- 28 President James Monroe's Birthday - Richmond, VA - time TBA

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The Hazzards of Travel in Washington's Time

Our drive to Richmond on a February 14 was a very pleasant experience. It was a bright, sunny Saturday morning traveling in a warm, comfortable car. In light traffic, it only takes about two hours to cover the 100 miles to the venue of the VASSAR meeting. With the remarkable assistance of GPS, we didn't even need to consult a map to find the hotel.

Contrast that with the following experience recorded in the journals of the Chevalier de Chastellux.¹ Near the end of December, 1780, Chastellux and his party were trying to reach Albany, New York. They were traveling over snow-covered ground in extremely cold weather. Here is Chastellux's remarkable story:

"Accordingly, we set out the next day (December 29) at sunrise in five different sleighs. General Schuyler took me in his. We crossed the Mohawk River on the ice a mile above the cataract. It was almost the first attempt, and succeeded with all but Major Popham, whose two horses broke through the ice and sunk at once into the river. This even will appear disastrous to Europeans; but let them not be alarmed at the consequences. It is a very common accident, and is dealt with in two ways. One is to drag the horses onto the ice, if possible with the help of a lever or a plank to lift them up. The other is to strangle them with their halter or the reins: as soon as they have lost their breath and motion, they float on the water, and are then hauled by their forefeet onto the ice; then the binding is gradually loosened, they are bled, and in a quarter of an hour are harnessed up again. As there were

a great many of us, the first method, which is the safest for the horses, was used; in five minutes' time we had pulled them out of the river. All this may be readily understood, but some people may ask what became of the sleigh, and how we dared approach the hole opened up by the horses? My answer is that these animals, being much heavier than the sleigh which is hung on four slender bases, break the ice under their feet, without ever causing the sleigh to sink, because this sleigh is itself light and its weight is supported by long pieces of wood which serve as shafts. The travelers are no less safe, the ice always being thicker than is necessary to bear them. As for the horses, they easily keep themselves on the surface of the water, by means of their four legs, and by resting their heads upon the ice.

"The accident which happened to Major Popham's sleigh did not detain us above seven or eight minutes; but we went a little astray in the woods we had to pass through in order to reach the main road."

Should we have had a flat tire on the road to Richmond, I doubt we could have recovered in seven or eight minute's time.

1. On March 1, 1780, Chastellux was one of three major generals who served under General Rochambeau in the forces France sent to our aid during the Revolutionary War. Fluent in English, Chastellux became an important intermediary in the French dealings with the Americans. It is obvious from his own account of his travels that the characteristics which had endeared him to his friends in France also endeared him to the Americans — to Washington, first of all, as well as to countless others in all walks of life. He was equally at ease in staff conferences, the drawing rooms of Philadelphia or Boston, and in roadside taverns.

Chastellux took an active part in the Allied campaign that culminated in the victory at Yorktown in October 1781. He remained in Virginia until the summer of 1782, then marched northward with the French army to New England. He returned to Paris in February, 1783, not only with the laurels of a victorious general, but with academic honors, which must have given him equal satisfaction: membership in the American Philosophical Society and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and honorary doctorates of civil law from the College of William and Mary and the University of Pennsylvania.

Early in 1784 he became the Marquis de Chastellux through the death of his eldest surviving brother, Philippe-Louis, who had previously carried this title.

He contracted a sudden illness, and died in Paris on October 24, at the age of fifty-four. He left for us an account of his travels in North America and his impressions of what he saw and of the people he met along the way. Published by the University of North Carolina Press, Chastellux's translated journal is in two volumes titled *Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781 and 1782*. This is not a soldier's report on the military events in which he played an honorable role, but rather an account of journeys made between campaigns, when he was freed from the active duties of his command. His story is very amply footnoted by both Chastellux and translator George Grieve.

Lawrence C. Wroth, a twentieth-century historian and connoisseur of Americana provides this description of Chastellux's book:

"A journal of a trip of this sort could be anything — a mere record, for example, of bed, board, bait, and mileage. The fact that Chastellux's journal is the purest delight, the most interesting work on the country in the period of the Revolution, is the good fortune of the American historian and general reader. Chastellux put down something about everything and everybody he saw — buildings, people, trees, birds, flowers, and the animals of forest and farm. He wrote of all this without the customary down-the-nose glance of many European travelers. If certain customs he encountered were primitive, they were not therefore contemptible; if manners were simple, they were not always without dignity. He sought to understand, and succeeded in understanding, and in recording for his friends in France, the life and thinking of the Americans, the physical feel of the country, and the shape of events in a period of crisis."

March 14, 2009
Lunch Meeting Reservation Form

Please use this form to make a reservation for the chapter's lunch at the Belle Haven Country Club, 6023 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria, Virginia. The lunch cost is \$35.00 per person. Check in and social time begin at 11:30 a.m. The meeting will be called to order at 12:00 noon. Feel free to invite your wife and friends as your guests. **RSVP no later than March 9th.**

Walk-ins will be accommodated if possible, but note that to cover the Club's charge for serving those without a timely reservation a walk-in price of \$37.00 is required.

Name: _____

A check for ____ persons in the amount of \$ _____ payable to **G. W. Chapter SAR** is enclosed.

Mail this reservation form with your check to:

F. Paul Briggs, Treasurer
7213 Regent Drive
Alexandria, VA 22307

You may also phone (703) 768-6910 and leave a message or e-mail gnpbriggs@cox.net. Please include "SAR reservation for (spell out name)" on the subject line of the e-mail.

It is important to provide advance notice of attendance to be sure you get a seat.

Valet parking is available.

The George Washington Chapter was chartered in its present form on April 2, 1954. With over 200 members, it is Virginia's largest SAR chapter. Meetings are held at 11:30 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month (June, July & August excepted) at the Belle Haven Country Club, 6023 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria, Virginia.

Present officers are:

President:	Dave Walker 703-619-9751
Vice President:	Vern McHargue 703-313-0671
Secretary:	Mike Elston 03-680-0866
Treasurer:	Paul Briggs 703-768-6910

This monthly newsletter is edited by Don Kraft, who depends heavily on inputs from Chapter officers and committee chairmen. Inputs from others are always welcome. Please send your inputs and comments to kraftdon@att.net or call 703-451-6132.

