



## George Washington Chapter Newsletter in Alexandria, Virginia

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Visit us online at [www.gwsar.org](http://www.gwsar.org)

March 2024

# Washington's Birthday

## Annual Ceremonies

RIGHT: Past Virginia SAR President, Bill Schwetke, of the Culpeper Minutemen Chapter, doffs his hat at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier of the American Revolution.



Photo by **Tom Roth**

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# President's Corner

## *Compatriots,*

### **GREETINGS.**

I've been delighted to see and talk with so many of you at our recent events. Though we held no February chapter meeting, we enjoyed many opportunities this month to gather, pay respects to our ancestors, and strengthen our compatriot ties.

Secretary Jaymie Cook, a relatively recent transfer into our chapter, has quickly become one of our most active members and is contributing greatly to the success of our chapter communications, meetings, and events. Alas, duty calls, and Jaymie and his family will be transferring overseas in a few months. While we're fortunate to have Jaymie around for a while longer, it's not too soon to start thinking about who will assume the Secretary office when he departs. Please reach out to me by phone, email, or in person if you think you might be interested or have questions about this important and rewarding role.



The George Washington Chapter turned out in great numbers at the Virginia SAR Annual Meeting in Richmond to witness Compatriot, and now Past State President, Ernie Coggins pass the gavel to Dr. William Greaf. Our chapter and its members were honored to receive many awards recognizing their significant efforts on behalf of our state's society.

Some of the most notable recipients include Past C.A.R. State President Will Elston for Outstanding Young Member Medal (Silver), and his parents Treasurer General Michael Elston (State Henry Knox Achievement Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster) and Julie (Virginia Society Dolly Madison Medal).

Compatriot Mark Jackson and Chaplain Paul McComb received the Billy Flora Medal (Mark's with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters) for their contributions to the Color Guard. Paul was also awarded the Distinguished Service Certificate for his service as Assistant Chaplain of the Virginia Society. Our public service committee, led by Compatriot John Blair, again brought home a literal boxful of awards. Our chapter was the sponsor of the state-wide winners of Hero of the Year, Best Fire Safety Person of the Year, and Best EMS Person of the Year. Once again for 2023, our chapter was also honored to receive the John Blair Award. Past President David Thomas was recognized with the Virginia State Service Medal for his contributions as the state's Assistant Registrar, and Past President Tom Roth received the Patriot Medal for his service as State Historian.

Past Chapter President Rand Pixa was awarded the Silver Meritorious Service Medal. State Roger Sherman Medals were presented to Jamie Callender (Patriot Research System) and Rich Sherman (Knight Essay Contest). State Henry Knox Achievement Medals were received by Vice President Scot Bryant, Past President General Joseph Dooley, Past President Don Reynolds, Past President Paul Walden, and me. Certificates of Appreciation were given to Edgar Bates (America 250), John Blair (Public Service and Heroism), and Past President Richard Rankin (Color Guard Committee).

Last, and certainly not least, hearty congratulations are due Scot Bryant. Our newsletter was selected as the best in the state, and Scot as Newsletter Editor of the Year. Our website was also named the best in the state, and Scot as Webmaster of the Year.

Late February brought the always popular trio of events related to George Washington's Birthday (along with, thankfully, sunshine and pleasant temperatures). The morning of February 19 began with the placement of wreaths at the Tomb of the Unknown Revolutionary Soldier, followed by the annual parade through the streets of Old Town Alexandria honoring General Washington.

The U.S. Army Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps again set the pace for our unit this year. Our chapter banner was carried by Secretary Jaymie Cook and his son, Compatriot Elliot Cook, followed by a Color Guard contingent representing several Virginia SAR chapters, and the blue coat brigade along with many family members. Ernie Coggins escorted Virginia SAR President Dr. Bill Greaf in his Saab convertible, while Compatriots Bill and Doug Wilson escorted Virginia C.A.R. President Nora Stuftt in their Jaguar. The Sergeant Major John Champe Chapter again joined us with their patriotic float, always a favorite with the parade watchers. Please take a moment to enjoy a [parade highlight reel](#) on our chapter website.

Finally, on February 22 we placed a wreath at George Washington's tomb at his Mount Vernon estate. Dr. Greaf was again on hand to deliver inspirational remarks on General Washington's leadership lessons. Compatriot Don Francisco performed our National Anthem on fife, as Color Guard members Joe Dooley and Paul McComb (**RIGHT**) stood solemn watch for the duration of our ceremony. Please be sure to [watch the video](#) of this moving ceremony.



Our March chapter meeting promises to be both educational and entertaining. I've had the good fortune of running into David Heiby, our March speaker, twice in the last couple of months--at the Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex and at the Old Presbyterian Meeting House. David's grasp of, and enthusiasm for, Alexandria's history are without match. And, as Superintendent of the Presbyterian Cemetery and owner of Gravestone Stories, his is a unique perspective. I look forward to seeing you there.

Looking ahead one month, please plan on attending a special meeting celebrating the 70th anniversary of our chapter's founding on April 13. More details to follow.

*Fraternally,*

**Scott Walker**

*President*

*George Washington Chapter*





# George Washington's Birthday Ceremonies

Alexandria, Virginia, Feb. 19 and 22 (Photos by Compatriot Tom Roth)



**LEFT:** Members of the Chapter march through Old Town Alexandria as part of the city's annual George Washington Birthday Parade.

**BELOW RIGHT:** Chapter President Scott Walker lays a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier of the Revolutionary War.

**BELOW LEFT:** The George Washington Chapter wreath laid by President Walker.

See more photos of the events on Tom Roth's [flickr site](#).

**GEORGE WASHINGTON CHAPTER** members participated in several annual events last month commemorating our namesake's birth in Westmoreland County, Va. on Feb. 22, 1732, by the Gregorian calendar.

On the morning of February 19, the Chapter joined Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) members at the Old Presbyterian Meeting House Churchyard Burial Ground in Old Town Alexandria. There, before the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier of the American Revolution, newly elected Virginia SAR President William Greaf joined Chapter President Scott Walker and DAR leadership in a wreath-laying ceremony that also featured the Virginia State Color Guard.

Next, SAR members marched in the George Washington Birthday Parade on the 275th Anniversary year of the founding of Alexandria. The Chapter brought together the U.S. Army Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps and reenactors dressed as George and Martha Washington, who led various elements of the Virginia SAR in the parade to pay tribute to our first and greatest president.





On February 22, Virginia SAR President Greaf and George Washington Chapter leadership and members gathered at the Washingtons' Tomb on their Mount Vernon estate south of Alexandria. Dr. Greaf provided remarks, after which both he and Chapter President Walker presented a wreath at the Tomb. Dr. Greaf outlined some of President Washington's characteristics that made him a great leader, including how he learned from mistakes at Fort Mifflin, staying cool under fire and surveying his environment before acting, and how he effectively managed his personal affairs. Thirteen members of the Chapter were present along with representatives of the Williamsburg and Col. William Grayson Chapters and the DAR.

Also of note that morning at Mount Vernon, past Chapter President (2021) and current Virginia SAR Historian Thomas M. Roth III had the honor to not only lead 63 new U.S. citizens from 60 different countries in their first Pledge of Allegiance but also to share with them, as well as the ceremony's presenters and additional attendees in the audience, a brief history of the Sons of the American Revolution.

One of the most moving parts of the ceremony occurred when the new U.S. citizens stood with their hands over their hearts and recited together the Oath of Allegiance:

*"I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God."*





# Annual Meeting of the Virginia Society SAR

Richmond, Virginia, Feb. 9 and 10 (Photos by Compatriot [Tom Roth](#))



**ABOVE:** Chapter President Walker delivers welcoming remarks at the 134th Virginia SAR Annual Meeting in Richmond, Feb. 9.

**BELOW:** Meeting attendees gather in front of the Virginia Washington Monument on the public square in Richmond.



**FOLLOWING TWO WEEKS** of virtual workshops hosted by Compatriots Rand Pixa, Scott Walker, and Scot Bryant, the George Washington and Richmond Chapters co-hosted the 134th Virginia SAR Annual Meeting in Richmond, Va., Friday, February 9 - 10. Our George Washington Chapter led the way by having the most members registered for the conference. SAR members and their spouses or partners enjoyed a well-paced series of presentations, receptions, and meals. Also of note, the organizers were pleased to offer for the first time a Ladies Luncheon, Friday, held at the Historic Jefferson Hotel before the start of the Annual Meeting.

The meeting began Friday with the traditional Scrapbook Contest, a multi-patriot Grave Marking and Commemoration at nearby Shockoe Hill Cemetery, a new Virginia SAR Color Guard Drumhead Muster event, an update on Virginia's SAR and DAR relations, a Ladies Program Game Night, and a handsome reception hosted by outgoing Virginia SAR President (and beloved George Washington Chapter Compatriot) Ernie Coggins.

The General Membership meeting, followed by the Rumbaugh Orations Contest and Youth Awards ceremony, kicked off Saturday. Then, conference attendees were bussed to the nearby State Capitol to conduct a memorial service for Virginia SAR members who passed away in 2023. The new state officers (minus the President) were installed, and Public Service and 2023 Chapter Winner awards were presented. After the proceedings inside, attendees and guests gathered in the public square, in front of the impressive, renovated Virginia Washington Monument, of George Washington on horseback, for a group photo. Attendees then returned to the Omni Richmond Hotel.

The conclusion of the weekend's meetings and celebrations began with a black-tie banquet dinner to install the 104th Virginia SAR President, Dr. William D. Greaf, and to conduct the bi-annual Color Guard Change-of-Command. The time together with fellow Virginia SAR compatriots and guests officially wrapped up with an exquisite reception hosted by President Greaf.

The George Washington Chapter and its members were heavily honored for their service to the SAR during the meeting. The Chapter received a Certificate of Commendation and Thanks for having co-sponsored the meeting and received a number of Chapter awards, which will be presented at a later Chapter meeting. These included the John Blair Award for having presented awards in all five of the Public Service Awards categories. The Chapter was noted as having placed second among Very Large Chapters in the Outstanding Chapter and Virginia President's Cup award competitions.

The Chapter's nominees were selected for the State Awards in three of the five Public Service Categories. In addition, a number of our members were recognized for their personal service.

Outgoing Virginia SAR President Ernie Coggins and Historian Tom Roth were honored with the Patriot Medal. Past Chapter President Rand Pixa received the Silver Meritorious Service Medal. Past President General Joe Dooley, former Virginia SAR and Chapter President Don Reynolds, Treasurer General Mike Elston, Chapter President Scott Walker, and Chapter Vice President Scot Bryant received the Silver Henry Knox Achievement Medal. Compatriots Richard Sherman and Jamie Callender received the Silver Roger Sherman Medal. Dave Thomas received a second Virginia Society State Service Medal. William Elston received the Silver Sgt. Joseph Plumb Martin Outstanding Young Member Award. Virginia SAR First Lady Diane Coggins and former First Lady Julie Elston received the Virginia Society Ladies State Service Medal, and former First Lady Diane Coggins also received the Lydia Darragh Medal.

For more photos of the annual Virginia SAR meeting, please visit Compatriot Tom Roth's [flickr site](#).



***Clockwise, from TOP LEFT:** Chapter President Scott Walker and Chapter Vice President Scot Bryant receive the Silver Henry Knox Achievement Medal from outgoing Virginia SAR President Ernie Coggins; Chapter Compatriot Dave Thomas receives his second Virginia Society State Service Medal from President Coggins; and the Richmond and George Washington Chapter presidents each receive a Certificate of Commendation and Thanks for having co-sponsored the annual meeting.*



# Francisco Menéndez and Joseph Cinqué

*Freedom Fighters who Changed America*, by Compatriot [John Haseltine](#)

**FRANCISCO MENDEÑEZ** and Joseph Cinqué were two freedom fighters against tyranny. They lived at different times, yet both would rise to the challenge of fighting back against bigotry and winning their freedom. They both became icons in the fight to end slavery and help shape the future of a growing nation.

Francisco Menéndez is believed to have been born in the Gambia, a country in West Africa, before 1709. Early in life he was captured by slave traders and shipped to the Carolina territory of North America. At some point he escaped from his captors and hid in the swamps of Spanish Florida, evading slave hunters for at least a decade. He decided to come out of hiding and when he learned that the Spaniards were offering refuge to any escaped slaves who volunteered to serve in their local militia. His services proved instrumental in the nine-year war between Spain and Great Britain that erupted in 1738. Known as the "War of the Jenkins' Ear," most of the fighting took place around the Caribbean Islands, though a number of pivotal battles took place in the territories of Georgia and Florida. Francisco Menéndez was in the middle of one of these crucial engagements.

To prove his loyalty to the Spanish Crown, Menéndez was given command of a small outpost (and a garrison of a few dozen former slaves) named Fort Mose, outside of St. Augustine, Florida. In June of 1740, a small British force of 170 regulars and native warriors invaded Florida from Georgia. As the enemy force approached Fort Mose, Menéndez realized he was severely outnumbered. He quickly retreated to St. Augustine and then returned with reinforcements.

At dawn on June 15, Menéndez and 300 free blacks, Seminole warriors, and even some Spanish regulars returned to Fort Mose and launched a brutal attack that caught the British completely off guard. With swords, muskets, war clubs, and tomahawks, the joint force slaughtered more than half of the British force within less than two hours. When it was over, British casualties were 75 killed and 34 captured. Menéndez's army had lost only 10 killed and 20 wounded. What remained of the British army quickly fled into the marshes in complete disorder.



*An illustration of Francisco Menéndez from the [Slaves No More](#) historical marker in St. Augustine, Fla., erected by [Historic Tours of America](#) and photographed by [Cosmos Mariner of Cape Canaveral](#).*

~  
Joseph Cinqué was born in 1814, in British Sierra Leone. His original name was Sengbe Pieh of the Mende Tribe. He grew up as a rice farmer before being kidnapped by African slave traders and sold to the Spanish. He was then put on the slave ship *Tecora*, taken with hundreds of other enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean, and sold to man named Jose Ruiz. Cinqué, with 52 others, was then transferred to another slave ship, *La Amistad*. Although the situation seemed to be dire, Cinqué had no intention of remaining enslaved. He intended to regain his freedom or die trying.





*Portrait of Joseph Cinqué. The original is held by the New Haven Colony Historical Society of New Haven, Conn. Digital image courtesy of the Wikipedia Commons.*

On the night of July 1, 1839, Cinqué used a nail file to pry off his manacles and those of his fellow captives. Once free, they armed themselves with cane knives, quickly slaughtered most of the *Amistad's* crew, and took control of the ship. They spared two members of the crew and demanded to be returned to Africa. However, the two surviving Spaniards tricked the freedmen into sailing north along the coastline of the United States. On August 26, an American cutter named the U.S.S. *Washington* approached and apprehended the *Amistad*. Cinqué and all the other former slaves were taken into custody in New York.

What followed was a series of legal cases about what was to be done with the *Amistad*, its surviving crew, and the former slaves. Spanish authorities demanded that Cinqué and the others be turned over to Cuba to face punishment. The case was known as *United States v. Schooner Amistad*. At least three different trials were held in Connecticut. Among those to defend Cinqué was former American President John Quincy Adams. Finally, in March of 1841, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of Cinqué and the Mende people. They were officially released on March 9. A year later, Cinqué and 35 others boarded an American ship and were returned to Africa.

The victory at Fort Mose had a major impact on the British invasion of Spanish Florida. Later in June, the British were soundly defeated at the siege of St. Augustine. Francisco Menéndez was later captured at sea by a British warship, but he escaped back to Florida and was granted his freedom. In 1759 he returned to the site of Fort Mose and established the first free Black community on American soil.

Unfortunately, this did not last very long. In 1763, Great Britain emerged victorious in the Seven Years' War. The treaties that came from that conflict forced Spain to trade Florida to the British. Menéndez and his fellow freedmen were then forced to abandon Fort Mose for good and evacuate to Cuba. From there, Francisco Menéndez disappeared from history.

Joseph Cinqué returned to Sierra Leone in November of 1841. To his horror, he found that most of his family had been killed in his absence. The Mende people had been plunged into a civil war that quickly engulfed the country. Cinqué was forced to become a trader along the African coast. Like Menéndez before him, Joseph Cinqué also disappeared from history and is believed to have passed away in 1879.

Although neither of these men knew it, their courage and valor in fighting for their freedom had had a major impact on the anti-slavery movement in the United States. Thousands of people across the country heard their stories and were inspired to support the abolition of slavery, including Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass. Today, both Francisco Menéndez and Joseph Cinqué continue to inspire millions of people around the world. I believe that they should be remembered among the greatest heroes in the history of humanity.

#### SOURCES:

<https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/staugustine/timeline/the-english-menace/>

<https://myfloridahistory.org/frontiers/article/79https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/news-wires-white-papers-and-books/menendez-francisco>

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[http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/amistad/AMI\\_BCIN.HTM](http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/amistad/AMI_BCIN.HTM)

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**COMPATRIOT EDGAR BATES** introduces himself as our Chapter's representative at the Alexandria City Council meeting on February 13, when the Council officially proclaimed February as *George Washington Birthday Celebration Month*.

The event was captured on video. Watch it online at <https://fb.watch/qgMpLUy2Ee/>.

*Huzzah!*



## March through the years with George Washington

- 1674** on the 1st--Patent including Mount Vernon land issued to John Washington.
- 1761** on the 14th--Washington takes legal possession of Mount Vernon.
- 1776** on the 11th--Washington forms the Life Guard.
- 1776** on the 17th--Washington leads Continental Army into Boston.
- 1781** on the 1st--Articles of Confederation go into effect.
- 1783** on the 15th--Washington delivers Newburgh address.
- 1785** on the 25th--Washington hosts Mount Vernon Conference.
- 1787** on the 28th--Washington agrees to serve as delegate at Constitutional Convention.
- 1789** on the 4th--The Constitution goes into effect.
- 1793** on the 4th--Washington takes oath for second term as president.

By signing the Declaration of Independence, the fifty-six Americans pledged their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor. Nine died of wounds during the Revolutionary War. Five were captured or imprisoned. Wives and children were jailed, mistreated, or left penniless. Twelve signers' houses were burned to the ground. No signer defected. Their honor, like their nation remained intact.





# Upcoming Events

**March 9: Saturday, 11:30 a.m.**

**March Chapter Meeting**

*Mount Vernon Country Club*

5111 Old Mill Road, Alexandria, VA 22309

*Guest speaker will be David Heiby, board member at Lee-Fendall House & Alexandria Historical Society, public historian and authority on Alexandria's cemeteries.*

**March 10: Sunday, 2 to 3 p.m.**

**Commemoration of Col. William Grayson**

*Grayson Family Vault*

2338 West Longview Dr., Woodbridge, VA 22191

*Join members of the Colonel William Grayson Chapter as they commemorate the life of their namesake Colonel William Grayson at his tomb.*

**March 15: Friday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Commemoration of the Battle of Guilford Courthouse**

*Courthouse*

2332 New Garden Road, Greensboro, NC 27410

*The battle of Guilford Courthouse in North Carolina on March 15, 1781, proved pivotal to the American victory in the American Revolutionary War (1775-83).*

**March 16: Saturday, 11 a.m.**

**Commemoration of the 273rd Birth Anniversary of James Madison**

*Montpelier*

11350 Constitution Highway

Montpelier Station, VA 22957

*United States Marine Corps Color Guard will lay the presidential wreath at the Madison Family Cemetery at Montpelier. The ceremony is free and open to the public.*

**March 16: Saturday, 1 p.m.**

**Grave Marking Ceremonies**

*Presbyterian Cemetery at the Wilkes Street Complex  
Alexandria, VA 22314*

*George Washington and Fairfax Resolves chapters will conduct joint grave marker dedication and grave marking ceremonies honoring Fairfax Resolves signer Robert Adam and Rev War Patriots David Black and John Dundas. The Virginia SAR Color Guard is scheduled to participate.*

**March 16: Saturday, 1- 5 p.m.**

**Color Guard Workshop**

*VFW Post -1177*

401 Old Waterford Road

Leesburg, VA 20176

*Training will include: flag carriage and presentation, wreath presentation, basic marching commands, etc.*

**April 13: Saturday, 11:30 a.m.**

**April Chapter Meeting**

*Mount Vernon Country Club*

5111 Old Mill Road, Alexandria, VA 22309

*George Washington Chapter's 70th Anniversary!*

**April 20: Saturday, 10 a.m.**

**James Monroe Birthplace Commemoration**

*In front of the Birthplace House*

4460 James Monroe Highway

Route 205

Colonial Beach, VA 22443

**April 28: Sunday, 11 a.m.**

**Birthday Observance Wreath Laying Ceremony at 5th U. S. President James Monroe's Tomb**

*Hollywood Cemetery*

412 S. Cherry St., Richmond, VA



**Note: Details for "Events" are updated on the Chapter website at:**  
<https://gwsar.org/>

**\*Please remember that you must be logged in to view SAR members-only events in addition to the public events.**

**Please see the Virginia SAR calendar for upcoming, statewide SAR events:**  
<https://vssar.memberclicks.net/calendar>



# Chaplain's Corner

**COMPATRIOTS,** Saint Patrick's Day commemorates Saint Patrick and the arrival of Christianity in Ireland in the 5th century, and by extension, celebrates the heritage and culture of the Irish in general. A Saint Patrick's Day prayer:

**May the Strength of God pilot us. May the Power of God preserve us. May the Wisdom of God instruct us. May the Hand of God protect us. May the Shield of God defend us. May the Host of God guard us, Against the snares of the evil ones, Against temptations of the world. May Thy Salvation, Lord, Always be ours, This day, O Lord, and evermore. Amen.**

*For God & Country,*

Paul McComb  
Chaplain



*Past SAR President-General Joe Dooley and Chapter Chaplain Paul McComb before Alexandria's George Washington Birthday Parade, Feb. 19.*



*"A citizen, first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."*

*Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee,  
December 26, 1799.*

<i>President</i>	Scott Walker: 703-216-4798
<i>Vice President</i>	Scot Bryant: 703-922-4431
<i>Treasurer</i>	Jonathan Coles: 570-449-8197
<i>Secretary</i>	Jaymie Cook: 202-570-2008
<i>Registrar</i>	Richard Sherman: 301-654-6319

The George Washington Chapter was chartered in its present form April 2, 1954. With over 220 members, it is Virginia's largest SAR chapter.

Meetings customarily are held at 11:30 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month (June, July & August excepted).

*Immediate Past President:*

Rand Pixa: 703-622-7001

*Ride Share:* Members in need of a ride to a Chapter meeting or a Chapter-sponsored event may contact the Amenities Committee Chairman, Paul McComb, Chapter Chaplain, at 202-403-4463.

*Editor:* Eric Atkisson. Submissions from Chapter officers, committee chairmen and fellow Compatriots are always needed. Please send submissions and comments to Secretary Jaymie Cook at [vasargwsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:vasargwsecretary@gmail.com).