



The Florida Society of the Sons of the American Revolution Fort Lauderdale Chapter Newsletter



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Highlights of May Chapter Meeting

by Oscar Kraehenbuehl

Vice President Joe Motes called the May 8th meeting to order at noon. He reported that presentation of NSSAR awards to local high school JROTC cadets is underway, with a total of 21 planned for this year. This outstanding program is well received by the cadets and their leaders and Joe was commended for handling the activity again this year.

A refund of \$117 has been received for the chapter having submitted the annual dues and report to the state in a timely manner. Oscar Kraehenbuehl noted that to meet the deadline it was unfortunate that a total of 15 members had to be dropped because their dues were not received in time. The good news is that 8 of these members have subsequently reinstated. This has required some extra effort on everyone's part, missed bulletins and magazines and a modest extra fee. The necessity to follow this practice in the future will be noted when dues are solicited and it is hoped everyone will cooperate. (A related but unplanned event occurred when Henry Fancher presented his check for 2004 dues (plus a Trust donation). He is leaving until January and would have missed the year end notice. That is true cooperation !!)

It was noted that the wife of FLSSAR Registrar William (Steve) Stevenson died April 25th after a long illness. Ruth was buried in Hillcrest Memorial Gardens, Fort Pierce, with military honors by Veterans of Foreign Wars. She was a U.S. Navy Veteran of World War II and a member of the Military Order of Purple Heart, Ladies Auxiliary.

Matthew Sellers Death

It is with regret we report that Matthew B. Sellers, III died on May 12th at the age of 83. Matt was President of the Ft. Lauderdale Chapter 1971-72, Florida President 1973-74 and NSSAR Genealogist General and then President General 1976-77. His SAR awards included the Minuteman Medal, Patriot Medal, Gold, Silver and Bronze Good Citizenship Medals and numerous achievement certificates. He and his wife, Marilyn, attended our 2002 annual chapter meeting and inducted the current officers. He will be missed by many.

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Oscar Kraehenbuehl presented the Certificate of Appreciation to Dan Barney-Dragonetta for his presentation during our May chapter meeting.

Gib Buckbee passed away Saturday, 5/17.

Another Compatriot has fallen. Gilbert L. Buckbee died May 17th at the age of 71. He currently was the Ft. Lauderdale Chapter Chaplain but his long and faithful SAR service in other offices began in 1991 and included Secretary, Treasurer, Historian and Chapter President. Gib served in the Army and retired as a Captain from the reserves after 35 years. He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Marianne, and a son and daughter. His passing will leave a significant void in many lives and in our chapter.

NEXT MEETING - JUNE 12th

TOWER CLUB !!!

\$20.00 INCL. TAX AND TIP

11:30 SOCIAL 12:00 LUNCH

28TH FLOOR BANK OF AMERICA

1 FINANCIAL TOWER

SE 3RD AVE & BROWARD BLVD

FORT LAUDERDALE

FOR RESERVATIONS CALL:

954-441-8735

Members living in North Broward need to dial the area code plus the phone number, or e-mail me at: JoeMotes@aol.com

The Battle for Philadelphia

Part 9 of 12 continues from last month

Lydia Darragh's house

And a Quaker woman, Lydia Darragh -- at the risk of her life -- walked through snow to deliver a vital message to George Washington. In the process she outwitted a British spymaster while saving countless Americans.

Background

On October 29, George Washington and the Continental army remained in a holding pattern. After the American setback at the Battle of Germantown on the 4th, Washington had spent the next several weeks watching the British in Philadelphia. Now the Americans were nearing the end of their second week encamped in Whitpain Township, 15 miles north of occupied Philadelphia and two miles from Whitemarsh.

Wanting resolve, Washington called a council of war.

Council of War

Here is the situation the war council had to take into consideration: The British occupied Philadelphia. The Americans controlled the Delaware River -- the all-important supply channel into the capital. Howe, and a good portion of his army and navy, were desperately trying to capture the American-held forts along the Delaware. A teeny American force and a tiny state navy, dwarfed in numbers and firepower, were desperately trying to hold the British off.

At Whitemarsh, the Continental Army under Washington numbered about 15,000, including militia. These men were needed here because Congress had asked Washington to prevent British forays into the countryside surrounding Philadelphia. Washington also needed to prevent a British attack toward York, where Congress was now meeting, as well as the supply cities of Reading and Lancaster.

Nine Courses Considered

The American commander in chief enumerated nine possible courses of action. He listened attentively without weighing in, while his commanders debated possible strategies. The option most vigorously discussed was an attack on Philadelphia. In the end, this was considered unfeasible, because the British had erected impassable defenses around the city.

Instead, the Council recommended moving to a safer series of hills around Whitemarsh where the army could continue to watch Howe and offer protection to the countryside. The council further suggested detaching any troops that could be spared to the Delaware forts.

Washington complied with the Council's recommendations, and, on November 2, moved to Whitemarsh, which was about 13 miles northwest of Philadelphia. The army immediately began building redoubts and connecting works on three principal elevations in the area: Militia Hill, Fort Hill, and Camp Hill.

Whitemarsh: Part 2 of 8

Drunk During Battle

General Washington, who had seen three of his officers brought before courts-of-inquiry within the last month -- and acquitted -- started off the Whitemarsh encampment with yet another trial.

Now it was General Adam Stephen's turn. Though a laundry list of charges was brought against General Stephen, everyone present at his court-martial knew that the most serious accusation was for leading his troops while drunk during the Battle of Germantown. During the battle, Stephen's men broke into a crazed retreat, and the inebriated officer was unable to control them.

General Sullivan, who on October 10 had himself been "honorably acquitted" of charges stemming from conduct in battle, presided over Stephen's court martial. The trial, which began on November 3, ended 17 days later in Stephen's conviction on "unofficerlike behavior and "drunkenness." Washington approved the court's recommendation that he be dismissed.

The Marquis de Lafayette was given command of the dismissed Stephen's division.

"In a Manner Shocking to Humanity"

While Stephen's trial was proceeding, Washington took time to initiate a prisoner exchange with General Howe. Disturbing reports of the Draconian treatment of American prisoners had begun reaching Washington, who on November 14, urged an immediate swap of captives. The Americans, according to Washington, were being treated "in a manner shocking to humanity."

Howe, never one to act swiftly, took his time responding.

After nine days passed without word from Howe, Washington wrote anew on the 23rd, demanding a response. When the British commander in chief finally did reply, he agreed to a parole of officers only, but put off an exchange of regular soldiers.

Once an officer was paroled, he was in effect out of the war, until an official exchange of prisoners could be worked out. The paroled officer had to sign a pledge promising not to fight until said exchange was worked out.

Howe was happy to be relieved of the burden of caring for the paroled American officers, while at the same time he recognized that until he signed a formal exchange of prisoners, the Americans would have a hard time finding new, qualified officers to take their place. Conversely, Howe did not agree to an exchange of soldiers, as it would have benefited the Americans.

Library of Congress

This lampoon is entitled "Qualifying for a Campaign." It shows British soldiers playing at silly war games. Throughout the American Revolution, criticism of the British army grew constantly. This cartoon links British misfortunes in America with an inadequate army. On the wall is a map entitled "Seat of War in North America."

Meanwhile, paroled British officers were shipped back to England, where the British had a seemingly endless supply of officers being pumped out of military schools.

Concurrently, Washington sent the Commissary of Prisoners, Elias Boudinot, to Philadelphia to look into prison conditions. All the rumors of British maltreatment proved shockingly true. American prisoners were living in unheated jail cells swarming with lice and other vermin. Many Americans starved, while some became desperate enough to eat shoe leather to survive.

Library of Congress

The Walnut Street Gaol. Built sometime after 1770 by Robert Smith of Philadelphia Carpenters' Company, the prison was the locale of horrible deprivations during the War. In 1777, American prisoners died in droves from starvation or disease and were unceremoniously buried across the street in unmarked trenches in Washington Square. In 1778, after the Americans reoccupied Philadelphia, British prisoners were kept in the jail.

Howe, busy with all the aspects of occupying a city, and satisfied with a prisoner exchange arrangement that benefited the British, was blithe to the pain of the American captives.

Baby, It's Cold Outside

At Whitemarsh, many Americans were suffering also. Eating was never guaranteed, as food was scarce. Sometimes the soldiers supped on soup so thin as to be nearly translucent. Often the main ingredients in this mess were weeds.

Thomas Jones, Deputy Commissary General of Issues stationed at Whitemarsh wrote this desperate plea to another commissary officer in Lancaster.

The present is to advise you of the approaching calamity, which I expect here every moment. Not a single barrel of flour, I declare upon my honour, have I to deliver out to the troops this morning. I need not point out to you the distress I labor under, for Dog's sake exert yourself in this affair or all's over.

At night, the temperature had already started dipping into the 20's. Blankets and warm clothing were lacking. Shoes, for those lucky enough to have them, were worn to a near-translucent thinness. All-in-all they probably tasted better than the soup.

In desperation, Washington offered a reward of \$10 out of his own pocket "to any person who shall produce the best substitute for shoes made out of raw hides. The Commissary of Hides is to furnish the hides & the Major Genl of the Day is to judge the essays & assign the reward to the best artist." It's not recorded who, if anyone, won the prize. It is known that less than a month later, hundreds of barefoot American soldiers left the snow red with trails of blood while marching to Valley Forge.

Though conditions were hard, Washington tried to make life in the camp as orderly and disciplines as possible. For instance, a post office opened. An announcement read, "the postmaster has paper to sell at the price he gave for it." Orders on the 9th, decreed that men on guard duty should be shaven, have their hair combed, and be in clean uniforms.

In the meantime, the cold, hungry, soldiers hadn't been paid for two months. Washington sent officers to various states begging for supplies and aid. They usually came back empty-handed.

The soldiers who could afford it, entertained themselves by drinking. During the Whitemarsh encampment, the boozing appeared to be getting out of hand. The General Orders of November 24th ordered tippling houses suppressed. Operated by "divers of the late sutlers and some of the inhabitants," Washington threatened to confiscate the liquor being sold at these ad-hoc hooch houses and to "banish the sutlers from the army."

Congress Complains

Just when the situation looked as if it couldn't be bleaker, Congress stepped in to make it worse. Fort Mifflin had finally fallen on November 16th. And Congress, which had recently taken up quarters in York, Pennsylvania, was tired of waiting for Washington to do something. On the other hand, Howe seemed to do anything he wanted. Word of the Congress's dissatisfaction reached Washington who fired off a letter to that distant Body late in November.

I am informed that it is a matter of amazement, and that reflexions have been thrown against this army, for not being more active and enterprizing. I refer you to the returns of our strength; the wonder will be, how [the army] keeps the field at all this season of the year.

Library of Congress

Major General Horatio Gates

Washington also fumed that General Gates, the celebrated October 7th victor at Saratoga, took so long in sending reinforcements south after the British surrender there. The commander in chief felt he needed more troops for any effective action. Alexander Hamilton, an aide to Washington, was sent north to attend to the situation. Hamilton was received coldly by the Gates who wanted to run his theater of operations independently from Washington.

Finally, on November 18th, Colonel Daniel Morgan's troops arrived at Whitemarsh from Saratoga. Morgan, chafing to be actually fighting again, instigated his own release from the service of Gates. Gates also released the brigades of Glover, Paterson, and Poor. They would arrive just in time to spend the winter at Valley Forge.

On the 24th, Washington held another War Council to determine a course of action. The main point of discussion was whether Philadelphia should be attacked. In the end, 11 members voted not to attack, while four voted in favor of such an action. Washington decided to table the motion until several key generals, currently away on duty, could weigh in on the matter. Washington in particular wanted to hear from the trusted Nathanael Greene. At present, Greene was in New Jersey scavenging and, at times, skirmishing with Lord Cornwallis.

The next day, Washington reconnoitered Philadelphia personally. He wanted to make sure that the reports of the city's impregnability were true. They were. "I had a full view of the left, and found their works much stronger than I had reason to expect for the accounting I had received." Now Washington concurred with the majority of his generals -- no attack should take place.

Charles Willson Peale, 1783, Portrait Gallery (Second Bank)
Henry Laurens

Along with Washington on his reconnaissance mission was aide John Laurens, the son of the President of Congress, Henry Laurens. Knowing that Congress would be displeased by Washington's continued inaction, Laurens sent a mollifying missive to his father which attempted to explain Washington's decision.

Our Commander-in-Chief wishing ardently to gratify the public expectation by making an attack upon the enemy -- yet preferring at the same time a loss of popularity to engaging in an enterprise which he could not justify, went to view the works...we saw redoubts of a very respectable profit, faced with planks, formidably fraised, and the intervals between them closed with an abattis unusually strong. General du Portail declared that in such works with five thousand men he would bid defiance to any force that should be brought against him.

Back in Congress, some wondered aloud about Washington's capabilities, while others kept their misgivings to themselves. Saratoga proved that the British could be beaten -- so why wasn't Washington doing anything? Congress dispatched a three-man delegation to talk to Washington about the possibility of pursuing a winter campaign. Generally, armies rested in the winter, but Congress was anxious to confront the British.

No doubt Washington pointed out to this delegation that his troops were not being fed, not being paid, were wearing rags, and were always scuffing for supplies. Meanwhile, the British were well-entrenched in Philadelphia -- in fact preparing for a season of theater and parties.

Congress agreed that the army should look for Winter quarters instead of pursuing battle.

Burning Down the Houses

Washington would not let the British rest in peace. Though Washington ruled out a full-scale attack on Philadelphia, he nonetheless posted skirmishers outside the British defenses north of city. These troops harassed the British positions. The British found the raids so irksome that they burned down houses that had been launching points for American troops during the raids. At least ten families, and probably closer to twenty, lost their homes. A local Quaker woman reported that the British talked of "burning all houses within four miles of the city without the lines." The destructive torching campaign helped build a bonfire of resentment against the British.

Library of Congress

Joseph Reed

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November ended with yet another war council, this one to determine where winter quarters should be. Three choices were proffered: a camp at Wilmington, a movement west toward the supply cities of Lancaster and Reading, or a line of troops which would stretch between the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers. Each plan had its merits and drawbacks as well as supporters and detractors. Washington could not make a choice and so asked his advisors to put their thoughts in writing. The commander in chief was torn by his own indecision. To trusted advisor Joseph Reed he wrote, "I am exceedingly embarrassed not only by the advice given me but in my own judgment."

Yet more immediate concerns made the matter moot.

Loose Lips

On the same day the War Council met, American spy, Major John Clark, Jr., operating in Philadelphia, got word to Washington that the British were "in readiness to march" with an end to a surprise attack on the Americans. These reports were corroborated by General Armstrong who wrote, "Every intelligence agrees that General Howe now, no doubt with his whole force, is immediately to take the field in quest of this army."

Washington's army spent the next three days on alert. But he was "disappointed that no attack had come." Washington knew the Americans were in a strong defense position and could give the British all they could handle.

He wasn't disappointed for long though.

On the 3rd, he again received word from his master spy, Major Clark, this time stating that "the enemy are in motion; [they] have a number of flat-bottomed boats and carriages and scantling, and are busy pressing horse and wagons. Clark's information was in essence correct, but came a day early.

That same day, Washington also received news that the British were on the move from an unlikely source: an middle-aged Quaker woman named Lydia Darragh. Darragh, whose house was being used by the British for meetings. She brought a message out of the city saying the Howe would be mounting a major attack on the 4th. Captain Allen McLane of the light horse independently reported a similar message to Washington.

The British, nearly 10,000 strong, began moving out at 10 P.M. on the evening of the 4th. General Howe was in part acting on information from his spies, who told him that the Americans were moving to a new camp. He hoped to catch the Americans out in the open.

As was Howe's custom he broke into his troops into two columns. The advance column led by Lord Cornwallis, headed up the Germantown Pike to Chestnut Hill, three miles from the American right. The main column, led by General Knyphausen, started out for the American left.

Two days of supplies, were loaded up and taken in reserve. This was to be a major British attack. Only a few regiments were left behind to guard Philadelphia.

At 3 A.M. on the 5th, alarm guns were fired in the American camp -- the British were coming.

Part 10 of 12 continues next month

continued from page 1

Highlights from a recent *Headquarters Dispatch* were reviewed. The credentials of Jim Randall, the new Executive Director, were presented. Status of fund raising to build the Center for Advancing Americas Heritage in Louisville noted that about \$3.7 million of the \$6M goal has been achieved. \$2M of this was contributed by Robert Proctor of the MA Society. The winter issue of the SAR Magazine will contain details of this program and a pledge form that solicits everyones help.

Other items noted that signatures are being collected on the website, , for support of a constitutional amendment to protect the statements in the pledge to the American flag and the national motto that refer to God. I also was noted that Congress has designated \$2.5M for land purchases near Valley Forge to permit the Park Service to purchase land near the historic site that had been destined for development.

Former FLSSAR President Ed Sullivan commented on the benefits and publicity gained by chapters that have a uniformed color guard or members who participate in community events dressed in colonial uniforms. (Currently, three chapter members have uniforms: Sullivan, Young and Kraehenbuehl.) A source of the traditional officers uniforms was listed in a the Nov. 2001 newsletter and currently costs about \$300. At the recent BOM, James Holyfield, from Gainesville Chapter and the FLSSAR Treasurer, displayed a Ranger outfit that could be obtained for about \$100, including some accessories. It requires the use of some old personal clothing but that is in keeping with the actual situation during the Revolutionary War.

The sources for such items will be published soon. He also is planning to establish a means for buying and selling used colonial uniforms. --- Participate !! Contact the Secretary for more details.

This led to a discussion of what can / should be done to increase membership and participation in our chapter. The following ideas were expressed.

These have been discussed previously but members that routinely attend have expressed satisfaction with present arrangements and NO ONE ELSE HAS VOICED AN OPINION. Please, if a change would result in you attending meetings please call / e-mail one of the officers. + Less expensive lunches at another location
+ Different day of week for meetings
+ Different time of day for meetings
+ Speakers on (??) subjects

Regarding this latter item, it was suggested that it is hard to ask and get busy, key speakers to a meeting that will be attended by only a dozen people. -- Participation needs to be assured first.

The recent FLSSAR annual meeting and BOM in Sarasota was attended by Ed and Betty Sullivan and Oscar Kraehenbuehl. President General Rice Aston was present. State officers were elected with Lauren (Larry) Bradley as President. The new state secretary is Kevin Yarnell in Tampa. His e-mail address is: kayarnell@hotmail.com. No overview report of the meeting was desired but can be read in the next Florida Patriot.

The guest speaker, Dan Barney-Dragonetta, is a recent retiree from the Veterans Administration and many years of other government service. He has applied for SAR membership and has many relatives in the DAR, all with distinguished colonial ancestors. His association and friends in military have included many men in the Special Forces. These US Military Special Operations Units includes the Navy Seals, Army Rangers, Delta Force, Marine Force Recon and others. Dan spoke about the history of such special tactical group beginning with Francis Marion in the Revolutionary War. This shrewd General, nicknamed The Swamp Fox, directed daring raids in which his men darted out of the marches to attach the British, then vanished before they could strike back. Another such fighter was the well known Confederate partisan ranger leader, Col. John S. Mosby of Virginia (known as the Gray Ghost), who tied down thousands of Federal troops in a relatively small area in Virginia. In many respects it is deemed that these men served as models for all United States rangers and special troops. Dan related these and current military incidences of interest. He was applauded for his presentation and welcomed as potential member of the SAR and our chapter.

Genealogy Resources at the Main Library
Carolyn Kayne, Genealogy Librarian, who spoke to our Chapter last October, has continued to alert your secretary about their new acquisitions and services being offered. Let me know at OscarK@pobox.com if you would like this information forwarded to you. She provided the following lead recently for learning the full potential of using Google to locate ancestral information on the Internet. Go to: and click on the topic entitled "Genealogy Search Tips" at the left of the screen. -- Enjoy !

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