



# News & Events

## George Washington Chapter

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### Pennsylvania Society ~ Sons of the American Revolution

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#### **FEBRUARY MEETING**

***Due to the ongoing COVID pandemic our regular George Washington Chapter meeting has been canceled. Please see 2021 calendar and President Winter's message on the last page of this newsletter.***

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#### **Minutes ~ Saturday, December 5, 2020**

**Call to Order:** President Kurt J. Winter called the annual Chapter Christmas party to order at the Union Grill in Washington, PA at 12:10 PM. President Winter gave an Invocation.

**Attendance:** Seven (7) people: Guests (1) **Compatriots (6): Sam Mellon; Michael D.C. Merryman, Ronald E. Miller; Karen & Philip J. Neubauer, Gary W. Timmons; Kurt J. Winter.**

President Winter held an abbreviated meeting. Gary Timmons reported on the Wreaths Across America Campaign for 2020 (see report in this newsletter). President Winter presented Karen Neubauer a certificate of appreciation for the Washington County Chapter-DAR's participation in the Wreaths Across America. Michael Merryman received 2 Oak Leaf Clusters for his work recruiting new members. Michael reported that 14 applications have been approved this year.

A Benediction was offered by President Winter.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 1:35.

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***Wreaths Across America 2020 – National Cemetery of the Alleghenies***

#### **Welcome Aboard**

The George Washington Chapter is honored and delighted to extend the warm hand of friendship to our two newest members, Seth Russell Lemley and Collin Kevin Miller. Compatriot Lemley's Patriot ancestor is Richard Tennant who was a drummer in McIntosh's Campaign and also received depreciation pay for his Continental Line service as a private in Westmoreland County. Compatriot Miller's Patriot ancestor is Berhardt Zimmerman who was a First Lieutenant in the companies of Captains Bretz and Hedrick, in the regiment of Colonel Henry Spyer in Berks County. Again, this past year, through the hard work and determination of chapter VP, Genealogist and Registrar, Michael D. C. Merryman, our chapter has welcomed 15 new and junior members to our ranks. Kudos to Michael on all his efforts. Keep up the great work



The George Washington Chapter has had another great year of collecting wreath sponsors. We received sponsorships for 1,917 actual wreaths and the National Cemetery of the Alleghenies received 3,187 in our name with the bonus wreaths. Thanks goes out to everyone who participated in any way. Whether you helped stuff envelopes at our chapter picnic, sponsored a wreath(s), or helped place wreaths this past December, we thank you! This year we stuffed over 400 envelopes to previous sponsors requesting their participation again in 2020. Form these letters we received almost a 23% response. This year we received 478 responses. Most new sponsors were due to newspaper articles that were published in Weirton and Wheeling, West Virginia, Steubenville and Martins Ferry, Ohio as well as the Washington Observer-Reporter. We received donations literally from coast to coast. From as far away as California, Florida and South Carolina to Maine. Then on December 17, after a 7" snowfall, Compatriots from our George Washington Chapter as well as a member from Washington County Chapter - DAR met at our George Washington Chapter "boulder" in the National Cemetery of the Alleghenies for a photograph at our marker.



*2020 Participants braved 7" of snow to participate.*

This year, due to COVID restrictions, only a limited number of volunteers were allowed in the cemetery starting on Wednesday December 16, Thursday, Friday and finished up on Saturday. This year, over 14,200 wreaths were delivered and for the fifth consecutive year, with graves that were already decorated by families, again this year every grave

was marked! We would like to acknowledge this last list of corporations, individuals and groups that have sponsored wreaths since our last newsletter: 84 Lumber, Donna Antone, Riger & Betsy Ashcraft, Julie Barkhurst, Deborah Bartz, Shelvajean Baysinger,



Judy Beichner, Bethel Fife & Drum Chapter-DAR, Judith Blanton, Leo Boissy, Kenneth Bonnell, Dorothy Bowman, Susan Burchett, Tori Calvert, Gary & Roberta Cameron, Shirley Carl, Diane Clark, Shirley Clark, James & Lynn Comerci, Anna Cowden, Bob & Lois Crawford, Gayle Crile, Cheryl Cunningham, Samuel Cushey, James Diplacido, Terry & Barbara Divelbliss, Kenneth & Dora Dornbush, Ebenezer Zane Chapter-SAR, Deborah & Donna Farabee, Joan Ferrari, Patricia Findling, Ken & Peg Foreman, Fort Jackson Chapter-SAR, Jay Frey, Tina Frost, Maureen Galish, Gen. Anthony Wayne Chapter-SAR, Gen. Arthur St. Clair Chapter-SAR, Peggy Glaser, Lois Gnagey, Stephen & Katherine Gray, Jean Gump, Jay Hammers, Sandra Harton, James & Jill Heather, Cheryl Henry, Dave & Judy Homerosky, Marilyn Izzi, Doretta Jacob, Janet Jobes, Laverne Johnson, Stan & Cindi Karoleski, Gladys Kelley, Knights of Columbus Assembly 802, Cheryl Kondik, Renee Korpus, Thomas Kreger, Laboratory Presbyterian Church, William Lantz, Howard Laur, Lewis Wetzel Rifle & Gun Club, Bruce Littleton, N. Jane Lloyd, Pamela Maniecki, Martha Washington Garden Club, Jim & Nancy Matjevich, Rodney & Nancy McCracken, Esther McElravy, Beverly McVeigh, Judy Meadows, Nancy Metz, Virginia Mickitsch, Mid-Mon Valley Shipmates, Robert Miller, Sally Minter, Michael Moore, Patricia Morgan, Janice Morse, Jay Morton, Donna Nardine, Lynn Nelson, Barbara Null, John O'Leary, Ray O'Neil, Onondaga Lodge-OA, Eleanor Pantely, Judy Parks, Amy Pasquarelli, Joe Perebzek, Jeanne Phillips, Sandra Phillips, Polaris Lodge 375 F&AM, Jacqueline Preaux, C. W. Prettyman, Fred & Ann Puchany, Doug & Mary Pudany, Ronda Puskarich, Rita Reidenbaugh, Andrea Remish, Karen Renne,

Judith Ridge, Michael Ritchie, Sandra Robbins, Vincent Romano, Gerrie Rossetti, James & Cynthia Rowan, Donna Rush, Jeanne Russo, Calvin Seibel, Joe Sites, Starkweather LGAR, Alicia Steele, Stephen Bayard Masonic Lodge 526, JoAnne Sullivan, Elizabeth Szoke, Lance Tarr, Rebecca Taylor, Joe & Nancy Tencer, Valley Electric, VFW Aux. Barto Post 6553, VFW George O'Neal Post 747, Keith & Nancy Waddle, Washington County Chapter-DAR, Washington FOP Lodge 95, Robin Wertz, Mary Ellen West, West Alexander American Legion Aux 656, Wheeling Elks Lodge 28, Sandra Whetsell, Glenn White, Richard White, William & Betty Wilson, Beth Work, Mary Ann Yankavitch, Zanes Trace Chapter-DAR, Carl & Bonnie Zellie

With the help of these generous sponsors and the ones listed in the last couple issues of our newsletter, Our George Washington Chapter continues to be the largest out of 34 other groups to gather sponsors for this cemetery. Thank you!



### In Memory

The chapter has suffered the loss of Compatriot Vaughn B. Curry on December 23, 2020 at age 89. Vaughn was a long time member of our chapter and lived in Virginia Beach. The Chapter wishes to express its deepest sympathy to his family.

**Knight Essay:** The Chapter is privileged to have an entry for the Knight Essay contest which is open to all high school juniors & seniors. The following essay will be judged at the Annual Pennsylvania Society meeting in May. Good luck Caitlin!

**“In the Shadow of Lafayette”** by Caitlin Grabowski

In 1781, the Patriots achieved a decisive victory at Yorktown, a battle that symbolized the end of the war between Britain and its colonies. In the weeks before, Patriot forces commanded by Benjamin Lincoln, Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, and the Marquis de Lafayette had been tightening the noose around the British army in Yorktown, Virginia (Stember 196; Symonds105). British forces under Charles Cornwallis were trapped by George Washington’s armies on land, the French naval fleet in the Chesapeake Bay, and an uncrossable river to the north that prevented an escape to Henry Clinton’s army in New York. (Symonds 105). The morning of October 19 Cornwallis finally surrendered, the telling cadence of a lone drum announcing the capitulation of the British in Yorktown. Upon arriving in America, the Marquis de Lafayette had proved to be an essential ally and participated in many offenses such as Yorktown, but the triumph of the Patriots that day--and the virtual conclusion of the war-- was possible only with the services of another Lafayette. In 1757, the Marquis was born at the chateau de Chavaniac in Auvergne, France to a family of military and noble lineage (“Marquis de Lafayette”). About three years later, James Armistead Lafayette was born in New Kent, Virginia, the property of William Armistead (Rappaport and Verniero 79). Like most African Americans in the eighteenth century, James spent his days working on a plantation, but at the age of twenty-one he left to join the Patriots in the spring of 1781 after receiving his owner’s consent. In Williamsburg, where the Marquis was headquartered in the south, the young Frenchman recognized the value of James’s knowledge of the local region and the potential advantages of his position as a black man. That day he enlisted James not as a soldier but as a spy in the Revolutionary War. The first assignment given to James was to infiltrate Benedict Arnold’s camp in Portsmouth (Rappaport and Verniero 83). His guise: a runaway slave willing to serve the British in exchange for freedom, a common situation, as both the British and colonial forces recruited black troops during the war. Because of the frequent enlistment of runaway slaves and the widespread mentality that blacks were less intelligent and subordinate to white people, James was easily admitted into Arnold's camp and eavesdropped on British officers’ discussions (Koslow and Kranz 10). Often, black servants were disregarded and their abilities underestimated; these

were both factors that underlined how prevalent racist sentiments were, but they helped James successfully gather intelligence for the Marquis. During the months he spent amidst the redcoats, he was never once suspected of being an enemy agent. After James's assignment in Portsmouth, he was ordered to gather intelligence from inside Cornwallis's camp. Again, he posed as a runaway slave, offering his services as a manservant and forager for the British army. James tended to Cornwallis personally and gained the commander's trust to such an extent that Cornwallis had James spy on the Marquis. As a double agent, James's work became significantly more valuable: the Marquis began having him report false information to Cornwallis to disrupt his progress. All the while, James continued to provide accurate information on British movements. Within the spy network of the Marquis, James was one of the most reliable agents. His reconnaissance was known for its detail that provided reliable estimates of the position and number of troops, ships, and guns (Koslow and Kranz 10). The Marquis wrote a letter to General Washington dated August 25, 1781 where he remarked "I have Got Some Intelligences By the Way of this Servant I Have once Mentioned—a Very Sensible fellow ... I Hear that they Begin fortifying at York." This "sensible fellow" could very well be James and multiple sources assert that it is. One of James's reports revealed that Cornwallis was marching to Yorktown and was expecting reinforcements from General Henry Clinton in New York numbering nearly 5,000 (Symonds 105). Indeed, the support Cornwallis anticipated may have cost him the war, as he chose to remain in Yorktown and withdraw to the inner defenses of the city to wait for his reinforcements (Stember 196). Meanwhile, Washington and his generals devised the brilliant siege of Yorktown. Washington swiftly marched several regiments toward Virginia to prevent Cornwallis from escaping, left a small force in New York to occupy Clinton, and ordered the French navy to block British vessels from bringing the reinforcements Cornwallis expected, all leading to the triumph of the Patriots at Yorktown, a triumph only possible due to the espionage of one man (Symonds 105). The war officially ended with the signing in Paris and that same year the Emancipation Proclamation of 1783 was issued that granted African American slaves who had fought in the revolution their freedom. Yet, within these lines, it was mandated that spies would not be permitted the same

privilege (Quinn). Consequently, James returned to New Kent and William Armistead's plantation after the war. James petitioned the Virginian government a multitude of times over several years for his own independence, after having helped win the nation's. It wasn't until 1787 with the powerful testimonial of his past commander, the French marquis, that he was given his freedom (Morgan). In the letter the marquis wrote: "This is to certify that the bearer by the name of James has done essential services to me while I had the honour to command in this state. His intelligences from the enemy's camp were industriously collected and faithfully delivered. He perfectly acquitted himself with some important commissions I gave him and appears to me entitled to every reward his situation can admit of. Done under my hand, Richmond, November 21st, 1784. Lafayett". James became a freed man and changed his name to be James Armistead Lafayette. Only once more in 1824 did the Marquis see James. During a public parade for the Marquis in Richmond, Virginia, he supposedly recognized James and embraced him (Rappaport and Verniero 89). Eight years later, James passed away-- an unknown, unhonored hero of the American Revolution. It is unfortunate that James was never given the public praise his French companion was for his contributions during the war. This lack of recognition is apparent in New York's Prospect Park where there is a statue depicting the Marquis standing beside his horse and a black groomsman (Brennan). While there is no staunch evidence that confirms the identity of the black man, most sources on the subject maintain that it is James Armistead Lafayette. The description beneath the statue merely denotes "Lafayette and his horse." Not a single word is dedicated to the African American man standing beside the Marquis-- yet alone any statement that may shed light on his role in winning the siege of Yorktown and the war. Whether or not the man in the shadow of the marquis in Prospect Park is James, the fact that he, an enslaved man, fought for the very country that permitted his enslavement makes his voluntary service all the more commendable. Let it be known that there were two Lafayettes of the Revolutionary War: a French aristocrat and a humble African American man.



## President's Message

Compatriots!

Happy New Year! May we all look forward to a new year with the hope of ending the COVID crisis.

This is the time that plans are made for the George Washington Chapter activities for 2020. A leadership meeting was held on January 9, 2020 to work on a schedule. As with every year, the goal of this planning is to better serve the chapter membership with the communication of events and to schedule meetings with quality programming consisting of interesting and informative speakers.

Due to current COVID restrictions, our first meeting will be on April 17 at the historic Century Inn located at Scenery Hill, PA. Later meetings are planned for Meadowcroft Village, Breezy Heights and the Union Grill. Our annual events include the Claysville Memorial Day Parade, the Whiskey Rebellion Festival in Washington and Wreaths Across America. Mark your calendars!

At the state PASSAR level we have been operating with Zoom Meetings to enable increased chapter participation. These meetings have facilitated the brainstorming of ideas to improve our organization both at the state and chapter levels. The goal is to ensure our members feel valued and that we provide every opportunity for the membership to be involved in carrying out our society objectives.

The SAR objectives are the promotion of patriotism, history, education and service. Come join your fellow compatriots with these endeavors this year.

Your humble and obedient servant,  
Kurt Winter

*Kurt Winter*

## Save the Date Dates to Remember 2021

Apr	17	GW meeting - Century Inn
May	1	PASSAR Annual meeting - Beaver
May	31	Memorial Day Parade – Claysville
Jun	19	GW Meeting – Meadowcroft
Jul	10	Whiskey Rebellion – Washington
Jul	31	Fort Laurens – Bolivar, Ohio
Aug	6 & 7	PASSAR BOM meeting - Uniontown
Aug	21	Picnic - Cross Creek Park
Sep	4 & 5	Fort Henry Days – Wheeling, WV
Oct	2 & 3	Battle Days – Point Pleasant, WV
Oct	16	GW meeting - Breezy Heights
Dec	4	GW Christmas Party – Union Grill
Dec	18	Wreaths Across America

## Attention Compatriots

The George Washington Chapter, SAR is YOUR organization and we would like **YOU** to become involved. Being a decedent of a Revolutionary War patriot is probably why 95% of us joined the SAR. We are proud of our patriot ancestors and our country. Beyond this, we would ask for your active participation and support of our objectives of patriotism, education and history. There are many ways you can become involved with your chapter. You can start today, by volunteering to support one of your chapter's activities or becoming a member of one of the various committees of your chapter. Attend your chapters meetings (see dates above). Please feel free to contact any of your George Washington Chapter officers for more information.