

M I N N E S O T A

SAR Salute



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MNSAR COLOR GUARD AT MEMORIAL DAY EVENT

Saint Paul, Minnesota – Minnesota Society SAR Color Guard members Paul, John, Steve and Craig presented the Colors at a wreath laying ceremony at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in St. Paul, Minnesota. Also participating in the event were members of the Knights of Columbus and the Park High School AFJROTC Color Guard and their advisor. The officiating officer was of the Military Order of the World Wars Fort Snelling Chapter.

The Minnesota SAR Color Guard participation was the result of a request by the Fort Snelling Chapter of the Military Order of the World Wars and the Colonel William Covill Camp of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

The Soldiers and Sailors Monument was built in 1903 and stands 53 feet high. Atop is a statue of a Civil War soldier, reportedly representing Josias King, the first Minnesota volunteer to serve in the Union Army.

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MNSAR SALUTE...**

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Independence Day MNSAR
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Awards Programs

American Eagle

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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MNSAR COLOR GUARD

Supporting the Wayzata Chapter, C.A.R.

MNSAR Color Guard Blog at <http://www.sarmnccg.blogspot.com>



Wayzata, Minnesota – The annual Fourth of July Flying Pancake Breakfast celebrating Independence and also honoring US military veterans was again held at the historic depot in Wayzata, on the shore of Lake Minnetonka. This is a major event each year for the Wayzata Chapter of the Minnesota Children of the American Revolution and it has grown in popularity over the years. This year over 1,600 people attended. Besides the breakfast there was face painting and living history. The Mayor of Wayzata presented honors to attending veterans of WWII, Korea and Vietnam.

Supporting the C.A.R. project were members of the Lake Minnetonka Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the 7th Pennsylvania re-enactment group and the Color Guard of the Minnesota Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution. The D.A.R. ladies wore dress of the era and played the parts of women who actively served in the revolution. The 7th PA, in authentic uniform, provided a tent and a display of equipment

common to the army. The MNSAR provided living history soldiers. All these supporting volunteers interacted with the guests throughout the day, telling their personal stories, explaining aspects of the army life and answering the many questions asked by adults and children. During the five hour event the uniformed members of the 7th PA and the SAR performed displays of the manual of arms and several times marched to the pier and fired volleys with their muskets.

The exposure to interested adults and children of this sampling of life and service in our quest for independence was warmly and excitedly absorbed. Especially exciting to the hosts and supporting organizations was the interest shown in the living history by children whom many, if not all, went away with a curiosity and interest to learn more about our American Revolution.

Color Guard members participating were Col. Paul Theisen, color bearers John Sassaman and John McCallum, guard Craig Whiting and drummer Steven Hyde.

2016 MNSAR MEDALS AND AWARDS PROGRAMS

Minnesota Society ROTC Awards

Once again the Minnesota Society presented medals in nearly all of the ROTC-JROTC units in the state. There are 7 college units and 12 high school units.

The Minnesota Society expresses its appreciation to the following Compatriots for doing the presentations:

MAJ Geoffrey R. Bodeau, M.D., Dennis G. Croonquist, David A. Foster, Steven J. Hyde, Hon. William Johnson, John Hallberg Jones, Robert A. Minish, T. Truxtun Morrison, John C. Sassaman, LTC A. Dean Shepersky, and Marvin E. Stonecipher.

Minneapolis and St. Paul Chapters Bronze Good Citizenship Medals

The Minneapolis Chapter continued the program of Bronze Good Citizenship Medals in 2016. This chapter has one of the largest programs of any chapter in the country.

In 2016 we awarded the medal in 23 area high schools and one Naval Sea Cadets squadron.

In all, it was a fine program once again.

Medals were also awarded to eleven St. Paul area high school students this year.

The criteria for the recipient of the Bronze Good Citizenship Medal is Scholarship, Leadership, Character, Service and an appreciation of patriotism.



Flag Certificates

On Flag Day five Saint Paul area businesses were presented with flag certificates by the Saint Paul Chapter SAR for showing patriotism and love of country by flying the flag. This years recipients were:

- Harley Automotive, Oakdale
- Honsa Family Funeral Home, St. Paul
- Metcalf Moving & Storage, St. Paul
- Thorsen Breidinger & Novak PA, No. St. Paul
- Truck Utilities Inc., St. Paul

The Saint Paul Chapter is grateful to its president, John McCallum for presenting the certificates.

Next Meeting

The Minnesota SAR's annual Constitution Day Luncheon will be held at Jax Cafe on Saturday, October 1, 2016. Watch for detailed information to be mailed to you.

AMERICAN EAGLE

News of Yesterday Reported Today

Friday January 9, 1778

WASHINGTON'S ARMY WINTERS AT VALLEY FORGE

Valley Forge, Pennsylvania – In December 1777 General William Howe eased into comfortable winter quarters in Philadelphia. For British officers warfare remains a seasonal business, and they see no reason to sacrifice unduly as cold winds blow. “Assemblies, concerts, comedies, clubs, and the like make us forget that there is any war, save that it is a capital joke,” says a Hessian captain, reflecting the overly confident attitude that prevails among British and Hessian officers after the Brandywine and Germantown victories.

George Washington struggled with the baffling question of where to house his vagabond, threadbare army during the frigid months ahead. The specter of a harsh winter was alarming: four thousand men lacked a single blanket. If Washington withdrew farther into Pennsylvania's interior, his army might be secure, but the area already teems with patriotic refugees from Philadelphia. Such a move would also allow Howe's men to scavenge the countryside outside Philadelphia and batten freely off local farms. Further complicating his decision was that he has to ensure the safety of two homeless legislatures, now stranded in exile: the Continental Congress in York and the Pennsylvania legislature in Lancaster.

Valley Forge lay at the junction of the Schuylkill River and Valley Creek. Actually, it is not a valley but high ground – a thickly wooded slope two miles

long overlooking the Schuylkill River. Another capable French engineer named Duportail had laid out the camp's fortifications so skillfully that Lieutenant General Charles Grey – the villainous “No-Flint” Grey – after a thorough reconnaissance reported that Valley Forge is virtually impregnable. The lines run from a promontory in the middle called Mount Joy to the Schuylkill on the left and Valley Creek on the right. Knox's artillery is emplaced on the high ground, while Washington's headquarters, with its blue flag with thirteen white stars, occupied the triangle formed by the junction of the river and the creek.

When Washington decided to march his army to this encampment about twenty miles from Philadelphia, many Patriots criticized him bitterly for failing to attack Howe in the Quaker City. The Pennsylvania Assembly, with the politicians' customary conviction that armies move on maps, rather than on earth, chided him so unjustly that for one of the few times in his career, he lost his temper and replied: “The gentlemen reprobate the going into winter quarters as if they thought the soldiers were made of sticks or stones. I can assure these gentlemen that it is a much easier and less distressing thing to draw remonstrances in a comfortable room, than to occupy a cold bleak hill, and sleep under frost and snow without clothes or blankets. However, although they seem to have



little feeling for the naked and distressed soldiers, I feel superabundantly for them, and from my soul I pity their miseries which it is neither in my power to relieve or prevent.”

In choosing Valley Forge, Washington rejected advice to winter farther from Philadelphia in comfortable quarters west of the Schuylkill at Lancaster, Reading or Allentown because it is his experience that armies in soft billets usually deteriorate. He had listened when the bellicose General Anthony Wayne argued that to winter far away might suggest to the enemy that the Continental Army is afraid. Moreover, Valley Forge was well chosen, for it protects a considerable area of rich country against British foraging, while covering Lancaster and Reading from an enemy offensive. Finally close enough to watch Howe, it is far enough away to guard against surprise. Of course, George Washington, having spent one trying winter striving to form an army in

Cambridge and another near-disastrous one from which his daring strokes at Trenton and Princeton rescued him, now expected that in this, his third winter, he would have the opportunity to preserve his exhausted force and mold it into a tough, professional army. Fully expecting to be armed, fed and clothed from the well-stocked bases at Lancaster and Reading, he had no way of knowing that at Valley Forge he was embarked upon one of the most miserable Winters of privation and pitiless suffering ever endured in the annals of modern arms.

Troops there go hungry because nearby farmers prefer to sell to the British in Philadelphia for hard cash, rather than for those worthless Continentals; because New York's grain surplus is diverted to New England civilians and the British soldiery in New York City; and because Connecticut farmers refuse to sell beef cattle at ceiling prices imposed by the state.

Soldiers go half-naked because merchants in Boston will not move governmental clothing off their shelves at anything less than profits of from 1,000 to 1,800 percent. In response to Washington's appeals for supplies, Congress passed the buck by authorizing him to commandeer them from the countryside. This he is reluctant to do among a people supposedly engaged in throwing off a tyrants chains, even though his army, after arriving at Valley Forge on December 19, "decreased two thousand from hardships and exposure in three weeks." Only 8,200 men are fit for duty.

Orders went out immediately to divide the men into parties of twelve to build their own huts. Because so many of Washington's soldiers are farm boys, they are familiar with axes and saws and fell to with enthusiasm – encouraged by their commander's offer of a prize of twelve dollars for the best-built and soonest-completed hut in each regiment. Because the British had burned the local sawmill, there was no lumber, but the ingenious Yankees cut and trimmed their own building material out of the timber growing on the wooded slopes, using mud or clay to fill the chinks between the logs.

The huts are sixteen feet long by fourteen feet wide and six and a half feet high. Into each corner are built tiered bunks. Washington had hoped to overcome the lack of boards for roofing by offering one hundred dollars for the best substitute, but with only sapling poles and a compound of straw and dirt available, the replacements leak like a sieve after a few hours of rain or during a thaw. There are fireplaces with chimneys of wood lined with clay, but with only green wood to burn in them, they smoke horribly. Split slabs of oak are

used for doors and oiled paper for windows. It was not long before this two-mile double row of wretched log huts became a veritable Misery Road. It was surgeon Albigeance Waldo of the Connecticut Line, an extremely dedicated and cultivated physician and a great favorite with the troops, who gives the best description of life inside of them, even for an officer:

"Poor food – hard lodging – cold weather – fatigue – nasty clothes – nasty cookery – vomit half the time – smoked out of my senses – Devil's in it – I can't endure it – why are we sent here to starve and freeze? What sweet felicities have I left at home. . . . Here all confusion – smoke and cold – hunger and filthiness – pox on my bad luck! Here comes a bowl of beef soup, full of burnt leaves and dirt, sickness enough to make a Hector spue – away with it boys! – I'll live like the chameleon upon air."

As early as December 23 – two days before Christmas – Washington reported ominously to Congress that there was so little food that a "dangerous mutiny" had only barely been averted. There was "not a single hoof of any kind to slaughter and not more than twenty-five barrels of flour." Each night from these filthy, verminous, leaking huts there issued the dolorous croaking cries: "No bread! No bread – no soldier! No meat! No meat – no soldier!" The common diet shared by both officers and men is a paste of flour and water, cooked upon hot stones called Firecake." Thus the sardonic plaint arise twice daily: "Firecake and water for breakfast! Water and firecake for supper!" Even water is scarce, for there are no springs on the high hills of Valley Forge. Water has to be carried up from Valley Creek

in buckets. Sullivan's men found some clams, but when he passed a group huddled around a stone boiling in a kettle and asked why they were doing it, he was told: "They say, strength in a stone, if you can get it out."

In their appearance the Continentals might have been wild and again it is Waldo who describes them: "Here comes a soldier, his bare feet are seen through his worn-out shoes, his legs nearly naked from the tattered remains of an only pair of stockings, his breeches not sufficient to cover his nakedness, his shirt hanging in strings, his hair dishevelled, his face meager. His whole appearance pictures a person forsaken and discouraged. He comes and cries with an air of wretchedness and despair: 'I am, sick, my feet lame, my legs are sore, my body covered with this tormenting itch' (an affliction common in the camp)."

Blood on the snow was their sign – and this was no exaggeration. Washington himself reported that the path of his army's march from Whitmarsh to Valley Forge could be traced by the splotches of red in the snow.

In such rags, and with blankets so scarce, many soldiers sit up all night beating themselves for warmth, rather than risk freezing to death. When the young Lafayette arrived in camp, he was horrified to see soldiers whose legs had frozen black being carried from their huts and piled on wagons taking them to hospitals that are often no better than charnel houses – there to have their limbs amputated. Nothing is feared more than the Continental Army hospital.

Daily, meanwhile, the cemetery carts, known as "meat wagons" rattle through the camp with creaking wheels. Each time a wagon halts be-

fore a hut, men of the graves detail leap down to fetch the body of a soldier who had either starved or frozen to death during the night. Eventually the meat wagons are piled high with carcasses. The dead men's skins were blackened and wrinkled, and their limbs no bigger than sticks. Half of them were naked, for the ghouls of the graves detail always careful to strip the bodies of anything useful, especially shoes which, if they didn't fit, could be boiled and eaten. Sometimes the graves ghouls fought the dead men's comrades for possession of articles of clothing. To deal daily with ungainly death has also made the ghouls less than gentle or respectful, heaping the corpses onto the wagons helter-skelter and with calloused indifference. Some of the dead lay on their backs with sightless eyes upturned, their mouths drawn back from shriveled black gums. Other lay with their faces resting on the bare behinds of others or with their heads hanging over the side of the carts, their tongues lolling from their mouths. Should a cart rolling downhill go jolting over a bump, it might dislodge not only a carcass but one or two bloated rats that had been feeding there.

Such, then, is the ordeal of Valley Forge, a place of pain and horror, a hellish place like a painting by Hieronymus Bosch, to which George Washington had marched his men in high hopes of forging anew another army.

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