MINNESOTA
SAR Salute

THE MINNESOTA SOCIETY SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION NEWSLETTER • www.MinnesotaSAR.org • SPRING 2022

2022 Annual Washington Day Luncheon

February 26, 2022 – Minneapolis, Minnesota – Members of the Minnesota Society, along with spouses, guests, and members of the Society of the Sons of the Revolution in the State of Minnesota, gathered for the Annual Washington Day Luncheon. Jax Café had prepared beef tenderloin tips for the group, with a vegetarian alternative of roasted ravioli for those desiring such.

Special guests, included former Minnesota DAR state regent Dianne Latham and Stephen Taylor descendant Barb Whipple. They are pictured with the days keynote speaker, MNSAR Corresponding Secretary, Ronald McRoberts, who spoke about Stephen Taylor, the only Revolutionary War patriot known to be buried in Minnesota.

INSIDE THE MNSAR SALUTE...

Has your address changed?
If so, please inform the MNSAR at the above address – *Thank you.*

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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Patriot Stephen Taylor

Known Knowns and Known UnKowns

Compatriot, COL. Ronald McRoberts was the keynote speaker at the MNSAR Washington Day Luncheon. His topic was about Stephen Taylor. Taylor is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, Winona, Minnesota. In addition to an old headstone as well as a bronze marker, the fort memorial also contains the following legend on a metal plate: "A courageous soldier, and member of Ethan Allen's immortal band of 83, who took part in the surprise attack on the British garrison at Fort Ticonderoga, and the only Revolutionary War soldier known to be buried in the state of Minnesota."

It is by no means certain that Taylor fought at Ticonderoga, or was born in 1757, or was 100 years old when he died.

McRoberts listed known knowns about Stephen Taylor: He was born between 1757 and 1768; he enlisted in the First Massachusetts Regiment in March 1781; he stated he was from Sheffield, Berkshire County, Massachusetts; he later lived for a time in Ontario and then Allegany Counties, New York; he moved with his extended family to Winona County in the Minnesota Territory in 1854; and he died 2 June 1857.

Known unknowns include: he possibly participated in the capture of Ticonderoga in 1775; he possibly was at the siege and surrender at Yorktown.

Revolutionary War records of New York list the name Stephen Taylor with at least three militia regiments and the 1790 census of New York State lists five Stephen Taylors, but none can be positively identified as being the one who later traveled to Minnesota.

Records pertaining to Taylor's career raise doubts that he was old enough to have fought with the New York militia or at Ticonderoga in 1775. Pension records in 1818 indicate that he was fifty-two. He would have been born in 1766, only nine years old at the time of the attack on Ticonderoga in 1775. The 1766 birth year would also mean that he died in 1857 at the age of ninety-one instead of 100.

Taylor's claim to have been among the Patriots who attacked Fort Ticonderoga on May 8, 1775, has been challenged. The evening before that attack, 150-200 Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont volunteers under the joint command of Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold (yes, that Benedict Arnold) rallied on the southeast shore of Lake Champlain in preparation for the attack. However, because of a lack of boats, only 83 crossed the lake to make the initial assault; the remainder followed later. The identities of the 83 are well-documented, but the identities of the rest of the force have not been fully documented. Assuming Taylor was old enough, he could have been among those unidentified Massachusetts volunteers who participated in the attack but did not make the initial assault.

A Stephen Taylor is well-documented to have been a member of Colonel John Brown's Berkshire County militia regiment from September 6 to October 2, 1777, the same period during which a Patriot force was defeating the British at Saratoga 25-30 miles to the south of Fort Ticonderoga. As part of this Patriot effort, on September 18, Brown's regiment unsuccessfully attacked Fort Ticonderoga which the British had retaken earlier in 1777. Assuming the same Stephen Taylor, he likely participated in this second attack on Fort Ticonderoga.

It is also unlikely he participated at the siege of Yorktown. As ascertained earlier we know that the Stephen Taylor linked to Minnesota was living in Sheffield, Berkshire County, Massachusetts in March 1781, when he enlisted in the First Massachusetts Regiment. Lafayette and the Continental Regiments marched toward Yorktown in February 1781.

Ten years ago, on June 9, 2012, ten members of the MNSAR enjoyed a pilgrimage to the final resting place of Stephen Taylor at Woodlawn Cemetery along Highway 61 in Winona, Minnesota. MNSAR Past President, Marvin Stonecipher (Stoney) organized the event. James Foster, MNSAR Color Guard member, conducted a flag ceremony. Flowers were also placed at the grave site. COL Ronald McRoberts, recited a brief history about Stephen Taylor. McRoberts was MNSAR President at that time.

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MNSAR Award Presentations

President Moberg presented several awards during the Washington Day Luncheon. Compatriot Rick Smith received a Silver Roger Sherman Medal for his outstanding service rendered to the state society. Compatriot Smith has been the Eagle Scout Chairman for three years and is currently our state treasurer and web master. He has been a strong voice for positive change in our organization, and among other things has been the host for all the monthly Zoom meetings.

President Moberg next presented Corresponding Secretary Ronald McRoberts a State Medal of Distinguished Service for his outstanding support given to the State President. While Compatriot McRoberts is known to the society as Corresponding Secretary, long-time leader, and outstanding presenter, he has also been the mentor of MNSAR President, Chris Moberg, answering hundreds of questions and providing much needed guidance. In response, Compatriot McRoberts noted the significant amount of work that John Hallberg Jones had done over the years, and how difficult it has been for Compatriot Smith and himself to cover all the things that Jones handled during his tenure as Secretary-Treasurer.

John Sassaman, MNSAR Genealogist and Registrar, was awarded several Liberty Medal certificates for having signed as first-line sponsor, membership applications for ten new members.

MNSAR ROTC Awards

University of Minnesota – On March 19, 2022 Compatriot James Hagen presented the Sons of the American Revolution Silver ROTC Medal and Certificate Award to (left to right) Army Cadet Isaiah W., Air Force Cadet Carson J., and Navy Midshipman Zachary A.

Stars and Stripes

by Stephen Vescelus

Upon occasion, I drive around my neighborhood or in the area where I live. Being a Vietnam Veteran, sometimes I notice an American flag flying on a pole, shredded from the wind and long use. I note the address and make an effort to go purchase a replacement flag for that person.

About two years ago, I noticed a shredded flag at a neighbors pole. I went to the local American Legion and after explaining to them why I wanted a new flag, they donated one. I went to the neighbors house that afternoon. An elderly woman answered the door. I told her that I had a new flag to replace her old one. She seemed very pleased and said, "it would be nice." As we were affixing the flag to the grommets, she related to me that the flag meant a lot to her. She said her brother had died in Vietnam. We finished, then stepped back and watched as the new flag waved in the wind.

Just recently, I saw another tattered flag flying from the pole of a local home. I went to a nearby store and purchased a nice replacement flag. Returning to the home, I knocked on the door and told the man who answered that I had a new flag to replace his old one. A neighbor of his helped me attach it to the pole. As I was leaving, he said thank you and shook my hand.

Whenever you see a worn out tattered flag flying, you can do something to help replace it. You can make a difference in their lives. Remember to take the tattered old worn out flag to a local VFW or American Legion to be properly disposed of.

Next Meeting

The Minnesota SAR's annual Constitution Day Luncheon will be held at Jax Cafe on Saturday, October 15, 2022.

Watch for detailed information to be mailed to you.

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Bloomington Eagle Scout Wins Minnesota Competition

Caleb Brennan Smith of the Northern Star Council Boy Scouts of America is the Minnesota winner of the SAR's Eagle Scout Scholarship and Awards Program. Caleb, from Bloomington, Minnesota, was honored at the annual George Washington Day Observance and Luncheon where he received the Spreading Wings Bronze Eagle Trophy as the Minnesota winner. His mother and grandfather were also in attendance.

Caleb's application, four generation ancestor chart and his patriotic essay were sent to National SAR headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky to compete with other state winners for a $10,000 scholarship. $6,000, $4,000, $2,000 and $1,000 runner-up scholarships were also chosen. Caleb placed in the top-ten nationally and received a $500 scholarship.

His winning essay is printed below.

Although the June 21 summer solstice is astronomically the longest day of each year, in 1778, Sunday June 28 proved to be the longest day of battle in the Revolutionary war, plus one of the largest and hottest. With half as many deaths from heat stroke as from weapons, the Battle of Monmouth, New Jersey tested and demonstrated each soldier's determination, developed for many while surviving brutal hardships of extreme winter at Valley Forge.

After the strong showing at the Battle of Saratoga months before, the French chose to provide military aid to the Americans. In response, Sir Henry Clinton directed the British retreat to New York harbor, including a 1500 wagon supply train with 17,000 men. Seizing the opportunity, General George Washington ordered an offensive attack on British rear guard, introducing a more-trained, skilled, and unified Continental Army.

Major-General Charles Lee lead the initial advance of 14,300 troops, yet when he learned that Lord Cornwallis and British reinforcements were closing in, Lee ordered a retreat. Washington was enroute to the battlefield when he met retreating American soldiers. Historians report his instant fury, first that Lee disobeyed orders, second that the decisive win was now a potential disaster, and third that Lee had failed to communicate real-time intelligence from the front line. All these factors led to the ultimate removal of Lee from his military position, but in that moment, Washington needed to decide whether to attack or back away.

In a scene depicted in period paintings including the famous work by Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze, Washington seized the moment and rallied the American ranks, pointing his sword to the sky, compelling the patriots to return and fight with him. If not already solidified, this battle highlighted Washington's role as military leader and an emerging legend among the troops and the country.

Another legend would emerge that day at Monmouth – a woman nicknamed Molly Pitcher bringing water in sweltering one hundred plus degree heat to prevent the men from overheating, highlighting women serving in war. When her husband William sustained injuries, Mary Hays stepped into his artillery role and her memorial resides at Monmouth State Park.

By the end of this longest battle day of the Revolutionary war, both sides claimed victory as the British continued their retreating march to the ocean. Just like the solstice sun, the battle signified a tipping point, providing an immense boost to the morale of the Continental Army who would eventually win the war, and positioning George Washington to become the leader of the new country.

My direct ancestors were patriots from Virginia, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, men whose families would never meet in their generation, but they fought together on the same Monmouth battlefield for the same goals of safety, opportunity, and freedom. That day helped create the possibility for Americans in my family to raise children, to worship, to explore, invent and start businesses, to dream, teach and author books, to serve in the military and government, to put a man into space, and to now pass that torch of opportunity and freedom down to me.

AMERICAN EAGLE

News of Yesterday Reported Today

Saturday May 13, 1780

Charleston Falls to the British

Charleston, South Carolina – Yesterday Charleston fell to Sir Henry Clinton, along with about 5,500 imprisoned Continentals, 391 guns, about 6,000 muskets, 33,000 rounds of small-arms ammunition, over 8,000 round shot, 376 barrels of powder, all the American ships in the harbor and a great quantity of other military stores. The siege had cost the British only 76 men killed and 138 wounded, against 89 Continentals killed and 138 wounded, and about a dozen casualties in the militia. The Siege of Charleston, then, could not properly be called a battle – yet it was the most disastrous defeat of the Revolutionary War.

Sir Henry Clinton had decided to open the campaign of 1780 by an all-out attempt to subjugate the South. He believed with Lord George Germain that the South was Toryland. With Georgia – or at least its populous eastern half – restored to the Crown, he could use Savannah as a base to conquer the Carolinas and then Virginia, after which, with his army augmented by a huge influx of Tories, he could move to reduce the North in similar detail. If he failed there, he would at least have saved the huge southern region for King George. The centerpiece of the campaign was to be the capture of Charleston, with its great port and strategically vital rivers.

Every circumstance seemed favorable to the project. In October the British withdrew their 3,000-man garrison from Newport, Rhode Island, to bolster the southern war effort. Clinton's strength in December 1779 stood at twenty-five thousand men and would allow him to spare a sufficiently large body of troops for the operation. Washington's army, wintering in New Jersey, was too small to attempt to save the city and was too far away to make a winter's march through New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, where the weather could also be cruel. Further the Patriots of the Carolinas were much disheartened by the loss of Savannah and the disappearance of the French. General Benjamin Lincoln's garrison at Charleston was also woefully weak, and the Carolinas were resentful of the fact that they could expect little help from the North, even though Virginia and North Carolina had sent their Continentals north to save Washington's army in 1777. Finally, winter in Charleston would provide excellent campaigning weather.

Charleston occupied the narrow end of a low-lying peninsula formed by the broad Ashley River on the west and the equally wide Cooper on the east. These two streams converged at the tip of the peninsula to flow into Charleston Harbor, which was bounded on the north by the mainland and Sullivan's Island – scene of the 1776 repulse – and on the south by James and Morris islands. Two forts constituted the harbor defenses: Moultrie (formerly Sullivan's) on Sullivan's Island and Johnson on James Island. Fort Moultrie had fallen into disrepair and Fort Johnson was in ruins, so the harbor was undefended against enemy warships.

Charleston was also vulnerable on the land side. Its peninsula was connected to the mainland by a long and narrow isthmus called the Neck. All that a besieging force needed to do was blockade the harbor and seize the Neck and thence to advance on the city by digging siege parallels. Charleston simply could not be held. Yet the assembly voted unanimously to defend the city "until the last extremity."

The South Carolina Line of Continentals, through death, wounds, desertion and the expiration of enlistments, had dwindled from 2,400 men to about 800. Along with the 800 Continentals, Lincoln at first commanded about 3,600 men, to be augmented later by 1,450 North Carolina and Virginia Continentals whom Washington sent south from his New Jersey encampments. Eventually Lincoln's strength would rise to well over 5,000 soldiers.

Clinton had brought about 6,000 soldiers with him from Georgia, and this number would be more than doubled in the spring, when Lord Charles Cornwallis and Lord Francis Rawdon would arrive with strong reinforcements, so that his ultimate command numbered 13,500 men supported by a strong fleet.

Immediately after entering the broad waters of Edisto Inlet to land unopposed on Seabrook, Clinton sent part of his fleet to blockade the harbor, but then, having acted with celerity on the foreign element of Water, he moved with tortoise-like speed on his own element of land. Even Howe on Long Island and at White Plains, or Cornwallis at the Assunpink, moved more rapidly than Clinton did at Charleston. First Clinton seized the Stono River Ferry connecting Johns Island with adjoining James Island; then he occupied Johns Island itself, bridging the narrow but rapid strait or creek known as Wappoo Cut that separated James Island from the mainland. Then he crossed the cut to erect artillery batteries on the west bank of the Ashley menacing the town. These were all the right moves, but they were made at that languid pace so characteristic of the British Army in America, and thus it was not until March 29 that Clinton's guns were safely emplaced on the peninsula itself.

Clinton began to move with more speed. After crossing the Ashley in force, he broke ground a little more than a mile above the American positions across the middle of the Neck and began to dig parallels, that is trenches cut into the ground parallel to the enemy fortifications for the purpose of covering the besieging force. While thus closing the gap on land, he also sealed off the city by water.

On April 11 eight British frigates, under Admiral Arbuthnot, upped anchor in Five Fathom Hole at the mouth of Charleston Harbor, spreading their sails to a favoring wind and making for Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island. Because Moultrie was thought to be invulnerable, crowds of spectators lined the Battery at the tip of the Charleston Peninsula to watch the discomfiture of the British, while the shore of James Island was packed with British redcoats and Hessians in black and green cheering the fleet onward. It was a holiday scene with the white of the enemy's billowing sails standing stark against a blue sky reflected in the wind-whipped harbor waves or blotched by the puffs of cannon smoke shredded by the wind. But it was no contest, except for a lucky shot from Moultrie that toppled the mainmast of the Richmond, killing or wounding twenty-seven sailors and Marines.

Many Charlestonians were shocked by the ease with which the British fleet slipped past their most formidable fort to take possession of the harbor and thus seal the city off by sea. Soon small boats, loaded with passengers and their personal possessions, could be seen

crossing the Cooper to the sanctuary of the mainland. But in another three days that route would also be slammed shut by probably the two most successful British leaders of the war: Colonel Banastre Tarleton and Major Patrick Ferguson.

Tarleton and Ferguson hated Yankees with a fierce venom. Their American Volunteers were also Loyalists, a corps of trained riflemen. Both these units were joined by about fourteen hundred British light infantry under Colonel James Webster. They outnumbered the Americans of generals Isaac Huger and William Washington by about three to one and were seasoned veterans, infinitely better trained.

On April 13, 1780, as Tarleton's column trotted north toward Monck's Corner, his advance guard saw a black slave dart into the woods beside the road as though in fright. Giving chase, they captured him and searched him, finding on his person a letter from General Huger to General Lincoln. The letter gave the disposition of the American troops in detail, while the slave, "for a few dollars," was also helpful. Huger's cavalry had been posted on the Charleston side of the Cooper, with the rest of his forces on the other side. His militia was stationed at Biggin Church commanding Biggin Bridge. With this lucky bit of intelligence, Tarleton decided to make a surprise night attack.

Commanding his legion to strict silence, Tarleton proceeded slowly up the road. With dark, his dragoons dismounted to walk. At three o'clock in the morning of April 14 they encountered Huger's mounted sentries, driving them before them and pursuing them right into the American camp, where they charged the stunned Yankee horse with such ferocity that the Americans broke and fled on foot into a swamp. General Huger and Colonel Washington were among the fugitives, preferring to risk the jaws of snakes and alligators than the wrath of Ferguson's rifles and Tarleton's sabers. Major Paul Vernier, commanding Pulaski's Legion, and a few other officers and men who stood their ground were killed or wounded, while Vernier, horribly mangled by those same sabers, was carried dying into a nearby house and laid upon a bare wooden table. There, gasping and cursing, he condemned his comrades for their cowardice and damned the British for sabering him after he had asked for quarter. But that, of course, was Banastre Tarleton's policy: he never gave quarter if there was a chance to slaughter terrified men.

In this skirmish the British had only three soldiers wounded, while the rebels suffered fifteen killed, seventeen wounded and another hundred taken captive. Although Tarleton had indeed cut Lincoln's line of communications, the British force was not sufficient to patrol all "the forks and passes" of the Cooper River area. But then Lords Rawdon and Cornwallis arrived with reinforcements, and Clinton ordered Cornwallis to occupy and hold the quarter between the Cooper and the Atlantic Ocean. The British besieging army now stretched from the Edisto to the Ashley to the Cooper, and from the Cooper to the Atlantic. With Tarleton's Tory dragoons patrolling the countryside to the north, Benjamin Lincoln's army was effectively bottled up. Nothing or no one could leave or enter Charleston.

On April 10 the first of Clinton's parallels was completed, about six hundred to eight hundred yards above the American lines on the Neck. On the twelfth his big siege guns were emplaced: fifteen twenty-four pounders and a huge mortar. They began a heavy fire on the city while sappers, working during the nights, began a second parallel. The use of carcasses, those perforated iron balls stuffed with burning pitch that had burned down Charlestown, Massachusetts, during the Battle of Bunker Hill, likewise set fires burning in Charleston, South Carolina. By April 19 the approaches were within 250 yards of the town. Hessian riflemen could now exchange shots with the Yankees, although little damage was done. But the constant bombardment was taking the town apart, street by street, steeple by steeple.

On April, 21, Benjamin Lincoln at last bit the bullet, proposing to Clinton a capitulation on incredibly naïve terms: an unmolested withdrawal by American troops with full honors of war, allowing them to march up the Cooper's east bank to whatever destination they chose. Clinton curtly refused, and the siege continued – small action by minor skirmish.

Two hundred Continentals wielding bayoneted muskets attacked the British parallels on the Neck, killing and wounding a few and taking a few prisoners. The British overran a small fort on Hadrell's Point on the mainland across the Cooper. Arbuthnot landed a party of sailors and Marines below Fort Moultrie, and the garrison of two hundred men surrendered without firing a shot. Tarleton attacked the remnants of Huger's cavalry at Lenud's Ferry, on the Santee, scattering them while killing or capturing thirty or forty of them. By May 8 the British approaches were so close to the American lines on the Neck that the soldiers on both sides could exchange shots and insults and British sappers were able to drain the "wet ditch" dry. Obviously prepared for the final assault, Sir Henry Clinton again demanded a surrender.

Lincoln was trapped and he knew he was trapped, but he still stalled – asking for a truce to discuss terms. But neither Clinton nor Arbuthnot would consent to Lincoln's reiterated demands.

Then for some unknown reason, the American garrison renewed hostilities. Some two hundred guns on the Neck opened fire simultaneously. Shells that collided with each other burst so that "it appeared as the stars were falling to the earth." It was an aimless and admittedly futile exhibition. An American cannon firing low-trajectory shot could not possibly drop a shell inside the approaches. Only vertical fire mortars could do so, and even they, only with luck. It was an outburst of sound and fury truly signifying nothing except the relief of the frustrated feelings of the beleaguered garrison. In return, the superior British ordnance responded with a cannonading that set many houses and buildings on fire and made the night so hideous for the townspeople that on the following morning they dropped all opposition to submission and actually demanded it.

General Lincoln then accepted Clinton's terms, which were a little more generous than those given to Burgoyne at Saratoga. The militia were to be allowed to go to their homes, being regarded, along with the civilians, as prisoners on parole. At eleven o'clock in the morning of May 12, the Continentals marched out with colors cased and their drums beating a Turkish march! – probably to forfend against any European military air being misconstrued as a violation of the terms – after which they piled their arms beside the Citadel. The militia followed them later in the day, and General Moultrie, already incensed at being made captive, was outraged to see that there were actually three times as many militia as had served on the line – suggesting that they had been in hiding throughout the siege.

So General Benjamin Lincoln surrendered Charleston to General Henry Clinton after a six-week siege. The militia were paroled and allowed to return home but the Continentals passed into captivity. General Clinton will return to New York. General Charles Cornwallis is appointed to theater commander in his absence.

Sources:

George Washington's War by Robert Leckie, HarperPerenial, 1993

Revolutionary War Almanac, by John C. Fredriksen, Infobase Publishing, 2006