

M I N N E S O T A

SAR Salute



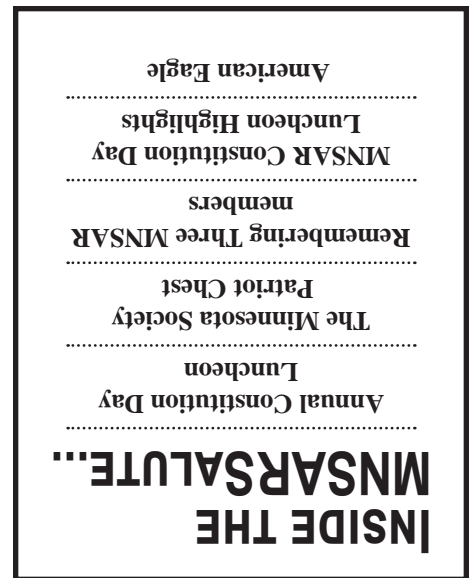
THE MINNESOTA SOCIETY SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION NEWSLETTER • www.MinnesotaSAR.org • AUTUMN 2021



ANNUAL CONSTITUTION DAY LUNCHEON

Minneapolis, Minnesota – On October 23, 2021, 37 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 Constitution Day Luncheon. Elsie’s Restaurant served a wonderful grilled salmon entree served with pineapple salsa, vegetable medley and scalloped potatoes. A generous portion of carrot cake followed.

Chris Moberg, President of the MNSAR, introduced each past president and officers of the society and Minneapolis and Saint Paul chapter officers who were in attendance. Secretary Ronald McRoberts introduced two new members who were in attendance. Norman Vanek and Kenneth Hoffmann (pictured) were presented a certificate and lapel rosette. Supplemental stars were received by Richard Smith and Marvin Jansma.



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Minnesota Society
Sons of the American Revolution
15111 Elmcrest Ave. N.
Hugo, MN 55038-8348





THE MINNESOTA SOCIETY PATRIOT CHEST

The Living History Team, a part of the Color Guard, makes American Revolution presentations to schools and to the general public using the Patriot Chest. The Patriot Chest provides hands-on replicas of period items to bring history alive to students. A grant through the National Society by a Colorado patriot has helped equip the chest. The contents of the chest were on display at the MNSAR Constitution Day Luncheon.

MNSAR Color Guard members Craig Whiting and Richard Howey provided an in depth look at the Patriot Chest. Whiting explained that Revolutionary War history is primarily taught to fifth graders. The hands-on replica artifacts helps students understand the lives of the soldiers during the Revolutionary War era.

MNSAR Color Guard member Richard Howey wore his Pennsylvania Regiment Musicians uniform of red. He explained that the musicians uniform colors were the opposite of soldiers uniforms. Howey played calls on his fife such as reveille and many others.

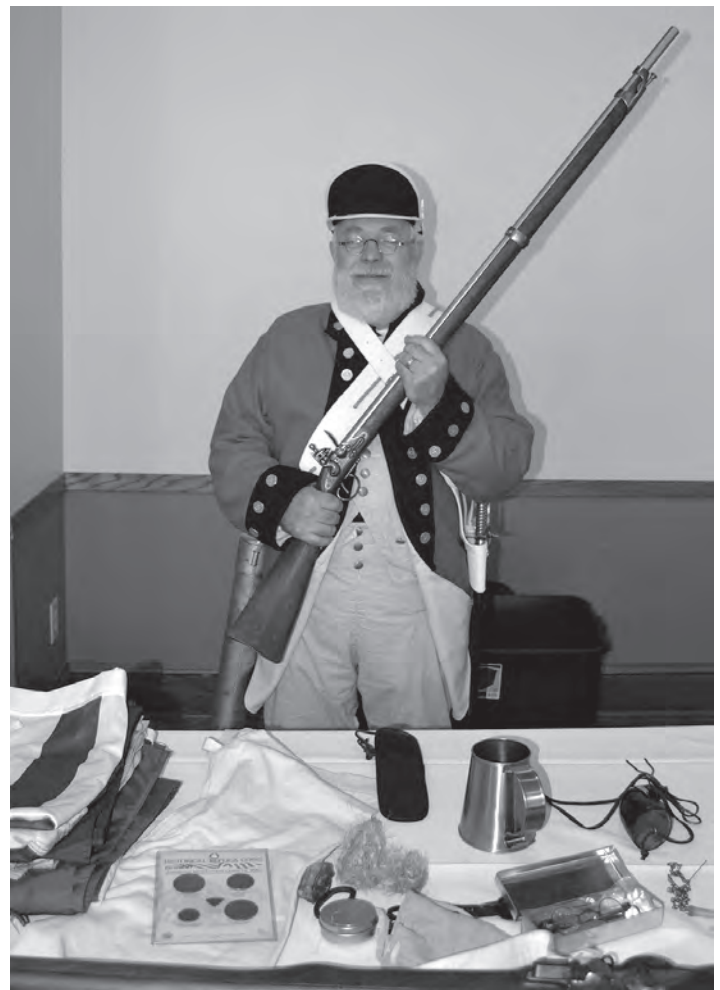
Whiting displayed and explained many of the items from the Patriot Chest including a lantern made of perforated tin as opposed to glass; a

candle making kit using bee's wax; eating utensils such as a tin plate, iron knife, fork and spoon and even a fork made from twisted wire; and a wooden trenchon for two. He explained that tent mates were called a mess and were provided with raw food from the quarter master that they had to cook themselves. He also showed a wooden canteen that soldiers would make themselves if they couldn't afford a tin canteen. A brush made from banded straw used for cleaning was also on display.

Whiting talked about camp followers, usually wives and even children of the soldiers who did the washing, mending and cooking. He displayed a wooden wash board and children's toys such as a cup and ball toss toy and primer books.

Whiting unfurled flags of the era including the Gadsden Don't Tread on Me flag; the Grand Union Continental flag with red and white alternating stripes and the Union Jack in the upper left corner; and the Bunker Hill flag of blue with a white field in the upper left corner and a red cross and green pine tree.

Whiting displayed two replica muskets; the Brown Bess, the British Army's muzzle-loading smoothbore flintlock Land Pattern Musket. The



musket design remained in use for over a hundred years. He then showed us the French Charleville's 0.69-inch caliber musket. The barrel was slightly smaller than its main competitor, the 0.75-inch caliber Brown Bess produced by the British. The smaller round was intentionally chosen to reduce weight in the field, but still had enough mass to be effective as a military round. The Charleville's stock was

usually made out of walnut. Whiting then explained the contents of the cartridge box and how soldiers loaded their weapon with paper cartridge, ball and gun powder. He also explained the fear soldiers faced when the enemy attached the bayonets.

President Moberg presented Whiting and Howey with a replica Revolutionary War era coin set as a donation to the Patriot Chest.



REMEMBERING THREE MNSAR MEMBERS



Hon. Paul Kent Theisen

We have recently learned that our compatriot Paul Theisen passed away last summer.

Paul Kent Theisen, age 83 of Sauk Centre, died Saturday, July 3, 2021 at Fairway Pines Assisted Living in Sauk Centre, Minnesota.

Paul was born August 2, 1937 in Rapid City, South Dakota to Herbert and Florence (Beck) Theisen. The Theisen family moved to Wichita, Kansas during the war years and at wars end in 1945, the family moved to Sauk Centre and operated the White Spot gas station.

Paul graduated from Sauk Centre High School in 1955. Soon after, he attended a welding school in Atlanta, Georgia through the National Guard. Paul served in the National Guard from March of 1953 until his honorable discharge in 1961. He was united in marriage to Sandra Jean Robertson on May 8, 1965 at St. Ambrose Cathedral in Des Moines, Iowa where Paul worked for the Western Electrical Company. He later transferred

to Northwestern Bell Telephone Company and retired in 1977.

He purchased the Hillcrest Motel from his parents and started the Sauk Centre Fire Equipment Company, retiring from both in 1994. Paul served on many boards including St. Paul's Catholic Church and Cemetery Boards, Sauk Centre Opportunity Board, Sauk Centre Planning Commission, Sauk Centre City Council for two terms, and served as mayor of Sauk Centre for 11 years. He helped to introduce the community to the Merciful Jesus Devotional and was instrumental to the Devine Mercy Chapel in 1982.

He is survived by his daughter and son, two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Paul will be greatly missed and he holds a special place in all our hearts.



Harold T. Mitchell, Jr.

Minnesota SAR Life Member Harold Thomas Mitchell, Jr., of Bloomington passed away at the age 89. Harold joined the Minnesota Society SAR in 2014.

He was born at home in

1932 to Harold and Lucy Harsin Mitchell in Louisville, KY. Born again at 13. Absent from the body and present with the Lord July 21, 2021. Harold married Genevieve Bess Rickman in June 1955, beginning a wonderful marriage of love and service till her passing on January 29, 2020. Harold leaves four children, eight grandchildren, four great-grandchildren and ten foster children. His male children are also members of the MNSAR.

Harold was an electrical engineer with a distinguished career spanning Bell Labs, Boeing, Honeywell and, for 27 years beginning in 1964, 3M. He led a miraculous life, being one of the earliest survivors of a traumatic liver separation following a vehicle accident at 16.



Bruce A. Aiton

Compatriot Bruce Aiton passed away in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, on 18 October 2021. Bruce transferred to our society from the Arizona Society in 2011.

Bruce was born in 1938

to Gerald and Catherine Aiton in Grand Rapids, Minnesota where he grew up and attended school. Bruce served in the United States Navy, serving three tours of duty as a Hospital Corpsman in Vietnam. After his retirement, Bruce returned to Grand Rapids, where he worked for Blandin Paper Company and started several small businesses around the area.

While living in Grand Rapids, Bruce was active in many groups and organizations: the Grand Rapids City Council, the Grand Rapids Historical Society (where he served as president), the Colony Square Association President, the VFW, American Legion, DAV, Sons of the Revolution, and Navy Fleet Reserve. The special friendships made, during all of these activities, are something he held dear to his heart.

Bruce loved history and spent many hours setting up the veteran's exhibit with his friends at the Grand Rapids Historical Society; documenting the local cemeteries on FindaGrave.com to be used in genealogical research; and donating resources to Coat Rack Charities.

He is survived by his wife, Kathryn; two sons and a stepdaughter. He also leaves behind five grandchildren and four great grandchildren.



MNSAR CONSTITUTION DAY

LUNCHEON HIGHLIGHTS

MEMORIALS

Minnesota Society SAR Chaplain, Michael Scott Swisher, conducted a brief memorial service for six Minnesota Society members who passed away since we last met in person. Swisher honored Leonard Charles Wilson (1930-2020); Mark Dean LaGrange III (1939-2020); Leland “Lee” Dean Swanson (1932-2021); Hon. Paul Kent Theisen (1937-2021); Harold Thomas Mitchell, Jr. (1932-2021) and Bruce A. Aiton (1938-2021).

A SPLASH OF COLOR

Steven Hyde, Commander of the MNSAR Color Guard spoke of the origins of the MNSAR Color Guard: Recently deceased Paul Kent Theisen created our Color Guard with the help of Craig Whiting and the late James Church. The three worked closely in training, equipping and planning. In 2007 the Color Guard began posting colors at meetings and attending public events.

Paul saw the Color Guard as the face of the Minnesota SAR. Until his retirement from the Color Guard in 2018 he tirelessly sought ways for us to honor the

revolution and our independence in public. He led the Color Guard to events such as the CAR Wayzata July 4th celebrations, naturalization ceremonies, school presentations, Freedom Day (July 3) in Nisswa, flag and wreath placement at cemeteries, Memorial Day service in St. Paul and attending MNCAR meetings. Paul contributed so much to the MNSAR and most certainly deserved his Patriot Medal.

Commander Hyde showed us the sword given by Theisen to the Minnesota Society Color Guard. It had belonged to Theisen’s brother at West Point.

MNSAR Color Guard member Kevin Sullivan recited the Concord Hymn by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

AWARDS

MNSAR President Moberg presented the Robert E. Burt Boy Scout Volunteer Awards to two of our SAR members. This award is a Boy Scouts of America-recognized Community Organization Award presented to SAR members who have displayed outstanding dedication to the Scouting Program. The medal is awarded by the National Society of

the Sons of the American Revolution upon nomination by a state society, and only two awardees may be nominated from a state society per year. This year, our award winners are Rick Smith and Richard Howey.

MNSAR Color Guard Commander, Steven Hyde presented Silver Color Guard medal to Chris Moberg. The requirement for the Silver Color Guard medal is participation in at least three District and/or National Color Guard events per year for three years. President Moberg participated in three events in his first year, four events in his second year, and 18 events in his third year, for a total of 25 events.

Secretary Ronald McRoberts presented the NSSAR Military Service Medal to Michael Stainbrook.

250TH ANNIVERSARY EVENTS

We are fast approaching the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution in 2026. The MNSAR have already started marking 250th anniversaries of events leading up to the revolution and will continue

to mark 250th anniversaries up to the signing of the Treaty of Paris. To encourage members to keep their focus on recognizing 250th anniversary events, the NS-SAR has created 250th Anniversary bronze, silver, and gold recognition medals. For each event that you attend in which the 250th Anniversary is mentioned or the 250th Anniversary SAR flag is displayed, you accumulate three points. If you attend the event in Colonial attire, you accumulate five points. With a total of 25 points, you become eligible to purchase a bronze medal, at 60 points a silver medal, and at 150 points a gold medal. The MNSAR plans to mention the 250th Anniversary in each of our meetings, so that anyone who is interested in these medals can accumulate points. However, it is up to you to keep track of which meetings you attended, and the number of points you have accumulated. If you are interested in more information, please contact MNSAR President, Chris Moberg.

AMERICAN EAGLE

News of Yesterday Reported Today

Sunday October 10, 1779

FRENCH-AMERICAN ALLIANCE SUSTAINS A TREMENDOUS BLOW

Savannah, Georgia – At dawn yesterday Franco-American forces under Admiral d’Estaing and General Benjamin Lincoln stormed the British fieldworks surrounding Savannah, Georgia. The expected diversion by militia under General Isaac Huger failed to materialize, as did three out of four allied assault columns. The only force to proceed, 1,200 French infantry and Continentals under General Lachlan McIntosh and Colonel John Laurens, charged repeatedly against the prepared works and were handily repulsed. Allied losses were 244 killed and 584 wounded, with a further 120 captured. The British under General Augustine Prevost lost only 155 killed and wounded.

In the summer of 1779, French Admiral Count Charles-Hector Theodat d’Estaing captured St. Vincent and Grenada in the British West Indies, tipping the balance there in favor of French naval superiority. D’Estaing’s powerful fleet was available for a joint operation with the Americans. The count soon received a flurry of letters from French diplomats and Maj. Gen. Benjamin Lincoln, Continental commander in the South, urging him to bring his fleet northward for a campaign against Savannah.

D’Estaing was enthusiastic about the proposal. The 50-year-old aristocrat was eager to make up for a failed allied operation against Newport, R.I., that had to be aborted the previous year because of poor

cooperation and poor weather.

The count arrived off the Georgia coast on September first with 37 ships, including 22 ships of the line, and 4,000 troops detached from duty in the West Indies. The formidable French fleet surprised and captured several British vessels near the mouth of the Savannah River.

The fleet anchored off Savannah Bar as the British ships withdrew upriver. The small garrison at Fort Tybee, on Great Tybee Island, guarding the entrance to the river, fired on the French ships with their two guns without effect. That night a French detachment occupied the fort, which they found abandoned.

On September 12, a vanguard of 1,200 French troops landed unopposed at Beaulieu beach on Ossabaw Sound, a few miles south of Savannah. The bulk of the French army disembarked, and a camp was established three miles from the city.

On September 16, d’Estaing arrogantly sent a formal demand to the British General Augustine Prevost that he surrender Savannah ‘to the arms of his Majesty the King of France.’ He reminded Prevost that he had captured Grenada with a far smaller force, and he held Prevost personally answerable for what might happen should siege operations drag on.

Prevost asked for a 24-hour truce to allow him to confer with civil authorities in Savannah; and d’Estaing foolishly agreed to his request. This al-

lowed Prevost to stall for time and strengthen the town’s defenses.

Prevost used the delay wrested from d’Estaing to put soldiers, townspeople and several hundred black slaves to work around the clock to finish the city’s fortifications. He also sent an urgent message to Lt. Col. John Maitland to bring his 800 troops down from Beaufort, S.C., to reinforce the Savannah garrison.

Maitland, commander of the Highland 71st Regiment, force-marched his men to the Savannah River. With the help of black fishermen as guides, he crossed upriver from Savannah, and he and his reinforcements arrived in the besieged town on September 17. With Maitland’s troops in place and his defenses strengthened, Prevost finally sent his reply to d’Estaing: No surrender!

Lincoln joined d’Estaing on September 23. His 3,000 troops included Georgia and South Carolina Continentals and militia. With d’Estaing’s 4,000 French regulars, the allies now had 7,000 men with which to take Savannah. Opposing them in the town were 2,500 British and Loyalist troops under Prevost.

At midnight on October 3, French artillery opened fire on Savannah. On October 4, 53 heavy cannon and 14 mortars began a five-day bombardment of the town.

The bombardment failed to crack the defenses but caused considerable damage inside the town. On October 6, Pre-

vost asked that the women and children be allowed to leave Savannah and take refuge in the ships anchored in the river. D’Estaing and Lincoln refused, fearing another delaying tactic.

Time was running out for d’Estaing. A month had been spent in front of Savannah, and the British position seemed no weaker than when operations had begun. The admiral had other worries as well. Hurricanes were a serious concern. And, if a British naval force should suddenly appear, d’Estaing might be cut off from his supply base in the West Indies.

On the morning of October 8, Major Pierce Charles L’Enfant, with a handful of troops, tried to set fire to the abatis of felled trees in front of the British lines; but the wood was too damp and did not catch fire. D’Estaing’s engineers told him they would need at least 10 more days before they could penetrate the British works.

D’Estaing decided that the only option left was a direct assault on the town. Otherwise, the siege must be lifted. He proposed a predawn assault on October 9. Lincoln agreed; and the allies prepared for one of the bloodiest attacks in the war.

D’Estaing hoped to exploit a weak point in Savannah’s defenses. Although the town was protected on the north by the Savannah River and shielded on the west by a wooded swamp, a narrow depression along the edge of the swamp afforded a way for the allies to move their troops near the

British defenses under cover of night before launching the attack. The allies decided to use this approach route to strike the enemy's right flank.

Prevost knew of the terrain west of town, however, and anticipated an attack there. A rebel deserter warned him of the allied plans, so Prevost strengthened his defenses on his right flank and put the skillful Maitland in command there.

Three forts or redoubts protected the British right flank. The most exposed one, Spring Hill Redoubt, was defended by South Carolina Loyalist troops led by Captain Thomas Tawse and the vengeful Lt. Col. Thomas Brown, who once had been tarred and feathered by Georgia rebels. The other redoubts on the right also were held by Loyalist troops. Thus, the bloodiest part of the battle would pit Americans against Americans.

Farther on the British right, Prevost had placed a naval battery of 9-pounders near the river. Another naval battery lay to the east of the Spring Hill Redoubt.

The allied plan called for a vanguard of 250 French grenadiers to rush the Spring Hill Redoubt, while two strong French assault columns, led by d'Estaing himself and by Colonel Stedingk, attacked the other two forts on the British right. Two American assault columns, under Colonel John Laurens and Brig. Gen. Lachlan McIntosh, would support the French.

The French planned diversionary attacks west of the town near the river and from their trenches near the British center. Brigadier General Isaac Huger, with 500 South Carolina and Georgia militia, would conduct a feint east of the town.

At about 5:30, d'Estaing's troops heard firing from the British lines and realized the diversionary attack by their troops in front of the enemy center had begun. A few minutes later, British sentries spot-

ted the assault troops and fired several rounds. Not all the allied troops were in place yet.

The allied diversionary attacks failed. D'Estaing and Lincoln would have to carry the Spring Hill Redoubt with no support.

Surging forward with a cry of Vive le Roi! the French vanguard advanced on Spring Hill Redoubt at the double quick. The British and Loyalist troops in the fort opened up on them with a vicious cross-fire of muskets and cannons. The white-coated grenadiers cleared the abatis in front of the fort; then in the smoke and fog and under heavy fire, they thrust their way up the parapet. But the supporting French column was slow in following them. By the time they arrived to reinforce the vanguard, enemy fire had driven the grenadiers back.

Leading his troops forward, d'Estaing was wounded in the arm just before he reached the redoubt. The fighting became intense. The attackers were sprayed with musket fire and grapeshot – pieces of scrap iron, nails, bolts, steel blades, and chain. Fire also came from a British galley in the river.

D'Estaing's troops were thrown back on the second French assault column led by Stedingk. The columns became entangled, lost formation, and were cast into utter confusion. Stedingk's column was shoved back into the swampy ground on the French left, where more than half were killed or left stuck fast in the mud.

D'Estaing urged his troops forward, crying, "Advance, my brave grenadiers, kill the wretches" while British and Loyalist troops from the redoubt bellowed, "Kill the rascal French dogs, and God save the King!"

For a moment the sheer fury and determination of the French attack nearly overwhelmed the defenders, and the French managed to raise their flag over the parapet.

But the defenders were de-

termined, too. Despite three brave assaults on the fort, the French could not stand up to their firepower, and d'Estaing reluctantly ordered a retreat. As the French fell back, British troops rose up from the parapet and delivered a point-blank volley. D'Estaing was wounded for a second time, in the thigh, and was nearly left for dead.

Continental light infantry under John Laurens, former aide to General George Washington, now arrived, and then the second column under Lachlan McIntosh, whose wife and children were in Savannah.

The Patriots arrived near the Spring Hill Redoubt at the height of the battle's confusion, as the wounded d'Estaing tried to re-form his troops. McIntosh's troops, thrust far to the left in the swamp, were exposed to British naval fire from the river, as well as heavy grapeshot from the fort. Major John Jones, the General's aide, was within paces of an enemy cannon embrasure when he was cut in two by a cannon shot. McIntosh was driven back under heavy enemy fire in the allied retreat.

Continental of the 2nd South Carolina, led by Francis Marion, succeeded in reaching the redoubt; in brutal hand-to-hand combat on the parapet Captain Tawse, the Loyalist commander, died after striking down three of the attackers with his sword.

Sergeant William Jasper placed the 2nd South Carolina's colors on the ramparts but was shot down. Jasper already was a hero because of his actions in 1776 at Fort Sullivan near Charleston, where he raised his regiment's flag in defiance of the British naval assault. Now, as he lay dying, he passed the colors to Lieutenant John Bush, who also fell.

As fighting raged for control of the parapet, Maitland committed his reserves. British marines and grenadiers launched a devastating bayonet charge that drove the attackers back from

the ramparts and into the ditch below. Allied assault troops, helpless and exposed to deadly musket and artillery cross-fire, were butchered in the ditch. A British officer described the scene: "Their assault was as furious as ever I saw; The ditch was choke full of their dead."

Full daylight now revealed dead and dying French and American soldiers, many of them impaled on the abatis, for 50 yards in front of the ditch. Mangled grapeshot victims littered the field for 100 yards beyond. At the sight of them, John Laurens threw down his sword in disgust.

While the desperate allied gamble played itself out in the bloody ditch in front of Spring Hill, Brig. Gen. Kazimierz Pulaski, with the rebel cavalry, led a bold but reckless attempt to breach the British lines between the redoubts. Riding at the head of his 200 horsemen, Pulaski reached the abatis but was struck down by enemy canister fire. Exposed to deadly fire and demoralized by the loss of Pulaski, the allied cavalry withdrew in confusion. The attempt to capture Savannah was over.

The contest lasted less than an hour. When it was apparent even to d'Estaing and Lincoln that it was useless to continue, they withdrew their devastated troops and counted losses. Only at Bunker Hill had a single side sustained such casualties as did the allies that foggy morning before staggering back to their camps.

A golden opportunity to retake Savannah and alter the course of the war had been lost.

Sources:

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