



FORT HARRISON SENTINEL

Fort Harrison Chapter

Sons of the American Revolution



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Compatriots, the Fort Harrison Chapter begins not only another year but also has entered our 25th as a Chapter. We were chartered on the 23rd of November, 1987. Over the years our Chapter has grown until, at the end of 2011, our membership now stands at 63 Compatriots. Over these years, our Chapter has participated in a number of local, Virginia Society and National Society programs. We continue to support and participate in the Naturalization Programs held both here in Harrisonburg and also at the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton as well as support the annual 4th of July program held by Compatriot David Hatmaker. We recognize Eagle Scouts for their achievement of this honor and members of both Law Enforcement and Fire and Rescue Units for their exemplary service to our local communities. We also recognize outstanding Cadets in both the ROTC Program at James Madison University and the JROTC Program at Harrisonburg High School. Local individuals, businesses, fraternal organizations, community volunteer units and governmental agencies are recognized by our Chapter for properly displaying the American Flag and the Harrisonburg Elks Lodge was so recognized on January 5th. The list goes on from there. At our February meeting, we also recognized our local CAR Chapter and have begun again to support their efforts. Through the efforts of our Chapter Registrar, Compatriot Hugh Hutchens, we continue to register and mark the graves of local Patriots who either served in the Revolutionary War or contributed to the war effort. A number of our Compatriots have served, or are now serving, as VASSAR officers or Chairmen of VASSAR committees. We remain a very viable and active Chapter.

Since our last newsletter, a significant change has occurred with our Chapter. At our January meeting, VASSAR President Mark Brennan installed our new Officers who will serve our Chapter for the next two years. Compatriots Hank Almond (President), Vic Diehl (1st Vice-President and President-elect), Tim Knight (2nd Vice-President), Jim Nelson (Treasurer), Hugh Hutchens (Registrar) and Kirk Sheap (Chaplain) were so installed while Compatriot Tom Pettit, who was absent at that meeting, was installed as Recording Secretary at our February meeting. Mark also gave a wonderful program on the history of the Virginia Society with information taken from the minutes of VASSAR meetings. These minutes are now being preserved and will be kept in the Virginia Historical Society. VASSAR Historian Larry Aaron is also in the process of placing this information on the VASSAR website. One of the duties of the President-elect is to serve as Program Chairman and Vic is off and running with a wonderful slate of programs for this year. In February, Mark Thomas gave a wonderful presentation exhibiting a number of items including not only knives and eating utensils but also leather goods and a flintlock long rifle which were commonly used by our ancestors here in the Valley in colonial times and had been superbly crafted by him. He even had a colonial "pocket lighter". Our Chapter members should have received a tentative schedule of upcoming programs and each of them looks to be very informative. In fact, while in Richmond for the VASSAR Annual Meeting last weekend, I did meet Dennis Fritts who will be speaking to us in March on Colonial uniforms. This should be an excellent presentation.

On the 18th of February, Compatriot Hank Almond and I, along with my wife, Norma, attended the annual Crossing of the Dan Ceremony held in South Boston by the Dan River Chapter. This was a superb program and a number of VASSAR Chapters, including ours, along with several DAR Chapters and the North Carolina Society of the SAR marked the event by presenting their Chapter or Society wreaths. Compatriot Almond and I also represented our

Chapter at the Annual Meeting of VASSAR in Richmond on the 24th and 25th of February. At that meeting, the Fort Harrison Chapter was recognized for our participation in the VASSAR Flag Program as well as for participation/attendance at all three of the 2011 VASSAR Presidential Initiatives (the Memorial Dedication at St. Paul's Church in Norfolk, the Memorial Dedication at Shockoe Hill Cemetery in Richmond and participation in a 9/11 commemoration). I want to thank Compatriots Hugh Hutchens and Vic Diehl for their participation and attendance at the Norfolk and Richmond programs and to all who attended the commemoration of 9/11 held in Elkton. Our Chapter received streamers for these efforts. We were also awarded two stars to be added to the streamer we now have for our participation in the Forgotten Patriots program. We were so recognized due to the efforts of Compatriot Vic Diehl whose Patriot Ancestor, William Sproul of Augusta County, had not been previously recognized by the DAR and SAR for his service during the Revolutionary War. While there, I was recognized with a Certificate of Appreciation for my efforts this past year as Chairman of the VASSAR Flag Committee. This year at the Annual Congress of NSSAR, the Virginia Society will receive its 11th consecutive Admiral William R. Furlong Award for its successful participation in this program. This also will mark the second consecutive year VASSAR has accomplished this with all 26 of its Chapters having been recognized for awarding Flag Certificates. This is an apparent first for any State Society. Hank and I came away from that meeting with a number of ideas for possible participation of our Chapter in other VASSAR programs, ones that could be of great benefit to the youth of our area. However, such participation will depend upon the participation of our Compatriots. We need several to "step up to the plate" and help with these. Locally, several of our Compatriots were present on February 12th at the annual Lincoln Day Program held by Compatriot Philip Stone at the Lincoln Family Cemetery in northern Rockingham County. While a cold and blustery afternoon, it was well worth it. The program was excellent and, if you have not attended this in the past, it is well worth doing so.

In closing, I would remind you that the success of our Chapter depends upon the participation of our Compatriots. We can not succeed with only a few Compatriots being active and the majority "sitting on the sidelines". There are many potential opportunities for participation, be it large or small. Our upcoming programs are quite good and, again, many thanks to Compatriot Vic Diehl for arranging for these speakers. In March, as mentioned above, Dennis Fritts will speak on Colonial uniforms. In April, our own Compatriot Tim Knight will discuss electronic genealogy and how it can help in our family searches. In May, our own Compatriot Dan Pinnell will discuss colonial lighting. Also, on April 14th, the annual Multi-Chapter Meeting will be held at Graves Mountain Lodge in Syria, VA. I look forward to seeing you at one of our future meetings.

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