

**President Barry Schwoerer****THE ESCAPE OF JOHN  
CHAMPE****Guidon of the U.S.  
Light Dragoons****Newsletter Editor:  
Barry Schwoerer.****Email:****[barry@schwoerers.com](mailto:barry@schwoerers.com)**

# THE CIPHER

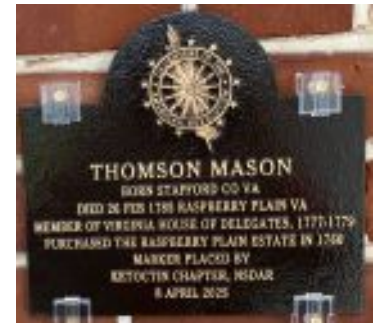
## SGT MAJ JOHN CHAMPE CHAPTER

VIRGINIA SOCIETY SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

### DAR Plaque dedicated Thomson Mason honored

**Raspberry Plain Manor, Leesburg, VA. April 9, 2025**

The chapter led a multi-chapter color guard and musket volley at the Ketocin DAR Chapter dedication of a plaque honoring Thomson Mason, significant Loudoun County personality in pre-Revolution, Revolution, and post Revolution affairs. The plaque was placed on the exterior wall to the right of the entry door. Participating for SMJC Chapter were President Barry Schwoerer, Vice President Mark Sink (color Guard and musket squad commander), and Steve Van Deusen. From Fairfax Resolves, Jim Cordes, and from Col. James Wood II Paul Christensen, Chip Daniel and Marc Robinson.



### Honor Flight for Vets From Chicago to Dulles

**Dulles International Airport, Sterling, VA. April 9, 2025**

The Chapter combined with the Col. James Wood II, and Fairfax Resolves chapters to honor 114 veterans of WWII, the Korean and Vietnam Wars. One vet served in WWII 12 in Korea, and 101 in Vietnam. Barry Schwoerer



# 250th Anniversary “Shot heard around the World”

**Lexington & Concord, April 19, 2025**

Ken Bonner represented the Chapter at an all-day commemoration of the Battle that changed the world and opened the Revolutionary War. A SAR team marched across the Old North Bridge. The celebration started in Boston on April 18 with a commemoration of the ride of Paul Revere and William Dawes to warn the patriots.



Ken Bonner in center with dark waist coat

# 250th Anniversary “Shot heard around the World”

**Champe Farm in Aldie, VA April 19, 2025**

The chapter sponsored a commemoration of the Battle of Lexington & Concord on the field at Champe Farm, location of the obelisk to John Champe. A musket squad started at a spot simulating Lexington, fired a volley, then individual random fire, stopped fire, moved to a second location (Concord), fired a second volley followed by random fire. While the muskets were firing a narrator described events as they unfolded on the battlefield. Narration was assisted by two men dressed in the uniforms of the British 65th Regiment of Foot. They were Sergeant Lloyd Harting and Lieutenant Bernie Way. After the narration, the names of the first 8 patriots killed at Lexington were read and a bell rung to honor their memory. SAR chapters supporting the effort were Col. James Wood II and Col Wm Grayson.

Preceding the commemoration of Lexington and Concord a short Commemoration of our Chapter namesake, John Champe, was held.



# President James Monroe 267th Birthday

**Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond, VA April 28, 2025**

The last President to serve in the Revolution is buried in Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond, VA. Fifty-six patriotic organization participated to commemorate the late President. Revolutionary War General Lafayette visited President Monroe in 1825 during his return visit to the United States. Chapter President Barry Schwoerer represented the Chapter by presenting the chapter wreath in honor of President Monroe.



# YOUTH PROGRAMS

## Brochure Contest

The Chapter submission to VASSAR **won 1st place** for the state contest. That brochure was submitted by Lasya Gampa, 8th grade student at Willard Middle School in Aldie.

The Chapter teamed with the George Washington Chapter on both the Brochure and Poster contests. That meant the 2nd place winner for the brochure contest administered by SMJC was given to GW Chapter to submit as their winner. That Brochure won 2nd place in the VASSAR contest. That brochure was submitted by Nichka Kayapanda, also of Willard Middle School. Martin Johnson is Vice President of the George Washington Chapter and their representative for youth programs

An awards ceremony for presentation of checks from VASSAR is pending.

## Poster Contest

The George Washington Chapter partnered with SMJC for the Elementary school poster contest. They administered the bulk of the contest, selected a winner and let SMJC select a poster from the remaining posters which we submitted as our sponsored Poster. Our poster won 4th place in the VASSAR contest, while the George Washington selected poster won 3rd place. Our poster was submitted by 4th grade student Alina Imtiaz from Balls Bluff Elementary School in Leesburg.

An awards ceremony for presentation of checks from VASSAR is pending.

## Virginia History Day

**Richmond, VA April 26, 2025**

Zachary Pyle represented the chapter as a judge for Virginia History Day where District winners were displayed and judged. This is the first year the chapter has participated in History Day. THANK YOU Zachary !



L-R: Mrs. Paula Schwoerer, Barry Schwoerer, Lasya Gampa, Martin Johnson



L-R: Mrs. Paula Schwoerer, Barry Schwoerer, Nichka Kayapanda, Martin Johnson



Poster on Benjamin Franklin by Alina Imtiaz



## Registrar's Corner

No new members were registered in April.

I am pleased to announce that the chapter installed a new Registrar on April 5, 2025 at the chapter meeting. Mike Watson took the oath as registrar after spending the last six + months training under the watchful eye of former DAR Registrar Valerie Sink. Mike completed his first new member application with the applicant signing his application on April 16. Please join me in welcoming Mike into the position.

If you wish to submit a supplemental application proving another patriot in your line contact Mike for assistance.

CONGRATULATIONS MIKE WATSON



**Mike Watson taking the oath as Registrar for the SMJC Chapter. Officer giving the oath is NSSAR Secretary General Michael Elston, candidate for NSSAR President General in July 2025**

## HISTORIAN'S CORNER

### Williamsburg's Gunpowder Incident: The Theft Heard Round the World

By David Welker, SMJC Historian

Why was the “shot heard round the world” fired in New England, rather than Virginia? After all, both regions were hotbeds of Patriot fervor that had marched more or less hand in hand toward independence. And British officials in both regions were moving in late April to seize weapons and gunpowder the Americans had stockpiled. We all know about the events in Lexington and Concord, but to understand why the Revolution's opening shots weren't fired in Virginia, we need to discuss Williamsburg's Gunpowder Incident.

Virginians had begun forming militia companies and gathering weapons and gunpowder to arm those troops since early 1775, stepping up these efforts following Patrick Henry's fiery "Give me liberty or give me death!" speech at the Second Virginia Convention on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Royal Governor Lord Dunmore decided that given this "it [was] prudent to remove some Gunpowder which was in a Magazine in this place [Williamsburg]." Lacking British Army troops—they were pulled from Virginia in September 1774, following Massachusetts' Gunpowder Alarm—Dunmore turned to the Royal Navy, which had several ships hovering in the nearby James River.

On April 21, 1775, Lieutenant Henry Collins of HMS Magdalen quietly led a company of British sailors (sometimes reported to be Royal Marines) into Williamsburg under cover of darkness. By 4:00 a.m. they had successfully removed 15 half barrels of powder from Williamsburg's famous octagonal brick Magazine and placed them aboard the Magdalen.

Despite Dunmore's precautions, locals quickly discovered the act and instantly sounded the alarm, calling out the militia and sending riders to spread word of the incident. In response, an angry Patriot crowd gathered in front of Williamsburg's Governor's Palace—Dunmore's home—and threatened the governor if he did not return the stolen powder. As Dunmore later wrote, the colonists resolved “to seize upon, or massacre me, and every person found giving me assistance if I refused to deliver the Powder immediately into their custody.”

Although Dunmore had armed his servants and household staff as an emergency measure, he knew physically stopping the mob was unlikely. Instead, knowing that Virginians feared a slave revolt as much or more than they feared England, Dunmore used perhaps the most effective weapon available – his silken, deceptive tongue. The governor spun a Grinch-like tale, claiming he had removed the powder for the colonists' own good, to prevent it from being used by slaves in an uprising he had conveniently just learned was being planned. And it worked.

Spooked by this unexpected threat, Peyton Randolph and other colonial leaders agreed to meet with Dunmore inside the Governor's Palace to discuss the incident. According to Lord Dunmore, they were now mainly “apprehensive of Insurrection among their slaves (some reports having prevailed to this effect)” and agreed to leave the powder safely aboard the British ships.

Having used deception to diffuse the situation, the next day, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, Dunmore turned the threat around, warning that if he or any British official was harmed, he would “declare Freedom to the Slaves, and reduce the City of Williamsburg to Ashes.”

Williamsburg residents might have been fooled by Dunmore’s mix of deception and bluster, but not Richmond’s Patrick Henry. He vocally demanded Dunmore return the powder or pay the colonists its full £330 value, and began raising militia to march on Williamsburg to enforce his demands. When news of what had occurred at Lexington and Concord reached Virginia by April 28, it so enraged Dunmore that he declared “I have once fought for the Virginians, and by God I will let them see that I can fight against them.” He next ordered Henry’s militia dismissed or he would free and arm Virginia’s slaves. Yet on May 4<sup>th</sup>, it was Dunmore who this time blinked, moving to deescalate tensions by paying Patrick Henry for the powder. Once again, it seemed as if Dunmore had won.

In the final analysis, the “shot heard round the world” was fired in Massachusetts, rather than Virginia, largely because these two English governors took very different approaches to London’s orders to seize the rebellious colonists’ military supplies. In New England, military governor General Thomas Gage used open, aggressive, armed force to take Patriots’ weapons leading to the Revolution’s first armed conflict. In Virginia, Royal Governor Dunmore used trickery and deceit to accomplish the same task, avoiding a fight.

Yet Virginia colonists, motivated by Williamsburg’s Powder Incident, began forming ever more militia companies and it would be Virginia regiments that would have the final word later in 1775 and beyond about the Powder Incident’s lasting impact.

## VETERAN SUPPORT

### Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

There is an effort underway to establish a DAV Chapter in Loudoun County. Chapter Compatriot Robert Fagan volunteered to work with DAV to help with forming the Loudoun Chapter. We have several Veterans with disabilities in the Chapter. If you are one of them and wish to affiliate with DAV contact Compatriot Fagan at his email [rjfm1f99@hotmail.com](mailto:rjfm1f99@hotmail.com). Compatriot Fagan please accept my sincere appreciation for stepping up and helping disabled veterans.

**PLEASE SEE A CALENDAR OF EVENTS NEXT PAGE**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS MAY & JUNE 2025

10 May, VFW Berryville 10:00am Color Guard Workshop VFW Post 425 S Buckmarsh St, Berryville, VA. Your opportunity to learn how to march like a Revolutionary and be introduced to black powder flintlock weapons.

26 May, National Memorial Day Parade Washington DC. Float will be entered

26 May, Hamilton Memorial Day Parade. Mini-Float with bell and SMJC color guard leading the parade. Followed by static display in Hamilton town park. **We need Compatriots to march in the parade as lead color guard and ride the mini-float.**

01 June 2:00pm. Commemoration of General Anthony Wayne's Army crossing the Potomac. Loudoun County Courthouse at the Spirit of Loudoun. Could be at Lucketts if a new commemorative sign is installed. Also commemorate the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Loudoun Committee of Safety's resolution for Patrick Henry's march toward Williamsburg in response to the Gunpowder incident

07 June 10:00am 1. Naturalization Ceremony-SAR presents Colors; 2. Display and demonstrations by SAR. Stratford Hall, seat of the Lee family of Virginia, ancestral home of two signers of the Declaration of Independence and Light Horse Harry Lee.

14 June. Grave Marking of George and Martha Washington at Mt Vernon, 9:00am muster, 10:00 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration of founding of U.S. Army, 11:00am grave marking. Registration required

20-22 June Fort Loudoun 18th Century Market Fair @ Ft Loudoun Historic Site, 1720 North Brooklyn Road, Ft Loudoun, PA. 9am-5pm Friday and Saturday, 9am-2pm Sunday.

21 June 11:00am. Chapter meeting with a commemoration of the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill, private residence, 39338 Little River Turnpike, Aldie, VA

LOOKING FORWARD TO JULY. **we need volunteers to help with parades**

4 July

- Leesburg: parade with the float, followed by reading of the declaration of Independence at the Courthouse
- Historic Village of Waterford: hand towed bell with SMJC Color Guard leading a parade followed by the reading of the Declaration of Independence on the north-west side of town