**The History and Purposes of the Philadelphia Continental Chapter**

**Sons of the American Revolution, as compiled by Past Presidents Armstrong and Cole**

Philadelphia Continental Chapter is the largest chapter in the state, and one of the five largest chapters in the National Society. In its 117-year history, the Chapter's Compatriots have engaged in a wide range of patriotic, educational, and historical activities. The Philadelphia Continental Chapter - SAR was approved March 29, 1901, receiving its charter June 4 in that year from the Pennsylvania Society - Sons of the American Revolution. That was about eight years after the State Society itself was organized in Pittsburgh in November 1893. It was 12 years after our national society was established at Fraunce's Tavern in New York City - where General George Washington bid farewell to officers of the Continental Army in 1783. Our Chapter is Pennsylvania's oldest in continuous activity, the previous two having closed down for some time before their later reactivation.

Philadelphia Continental Chapter members have served the four-county area of Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia Counties now over 100 years. In that time, our Chapter has spawned two smaller SAR chapters. Members from Germantown, Philadelphia, formed the separate Continental Chapter in December 1927, but 30 years later, in 1958, the two chapters were reunited - assuming our present name. In November 2001, a second spin-off - inspired by our Chapter's Past-President Russ Greenspan - was the Washington Crossing Chapter, of Bucks County. It received its new charter at our Annual Installation Dinner in Philadelphia from then States Society President Arnold Emerson, of Hollidaysburg.

Both our Chapter's membership and its activities have grown rapidly over the years, with its Compatriots - as SAR members are called - engaging in a wide range of patriotic, historical, and educational activities promoted by the Society. The Chapter regularly wins the State annual Activities Award and has won the National Society award also in past years. Our quarterly newsletter has won awards twice. One of the largest SAR chapters in the country, we have over 400 members.

Many of our Chapter's members have held high offices at both the State and National levels. Prominent among them was Warren G. Hayes, Jr., Chapter President in 1970, State President in 1976-7, and National Society President-General in 1983-4. Past President Rev. David A. Hockensmith served as National Chaplain General in 2005. Long-time Chapter Secretary, William G. Dorwart, our President in 1982, became State President in 1989-90. Our 1996 President, James E. Musslewhite, was State President in 1998-9, and then served as PASSAR Treasurer. J. Thomas Showler, another past Chapter President, served as State Society President from May 2002 to 2003. Many other Chapter compatriots have served as State officers and committee chairmen, and the trend continues today. [Additional Presidents of the Pennsylvania Society supplied by the Philadelphia Continental Chapter in more recent years include Lanny Patten in 2008, J. Thomas Showler again in 2010, Gregory Shively in 2017 and Wayne Strasbaugh in 2019.]

In 1922, our Chapter's Board of Management commended Philadelphia's mayor for vetoing a City Council bill that would have allowed the temporary removal of the Liberty Bell to other sections of the country. In 1925, the Chapter voted to oppose renaming Valley Forge a "Cantonment." In September 1931, Chapter President Lawrence Hickman served as chairman of the reception committee for greeting the USS Constitution ("Old Ironsides") when it visited Philadelphia for 13 days. In 1932, we formed our first Color Guard - dressed in Continental Army uniforms - and it helped us celebrate in 1935 Ben Franklin's Birthday on January 17th. In 1937, one of our members, Atwater Kent, provided funds for the much-needed restoration of the Betsy Ross House in Philadelphia. In 1976, we hosted the National Society's Annual Congress that celebrated the 200th Anniversary of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence. In 1996, our Color Guard changed its uniform to resemble that of Washington's Life Guard - complete with scarlet vests, white cross-belts for the musketeers, and distinctive white-on black rosettes on the tri-corn hats. Color Guardsmen sport red bow ties with their formal wear when attending our chapter officers' Installation Dinners.

In 1976, it hosted the National Society's Annual Congress for the 200th Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration.

The Chapter has donated funds to organizations which support and celebrate the American Revolution, including:

* Major commitment to the new Museum of the American Revolution in downtown Philadelphia,
* Paoli Battlefield Preservation Fund toward the purchase of the 45-acre battlefield site in Malvern, Pennsylvania
* Washington Square restoration
* Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route in Pennsylvania (W3R-PA)
* Washington Memorial Chapel at Valley Forge National Park restoration