



# Liberty Gazette

"Give me Liberty or give me Death!" Patrick Henry - Richmond, Virginia - March 23, 1775

Spring 2026

Richmond ★ Virginia ★ Sons of the American Revolution



## January Meeting

The Richmond SAR was honored to be joined for its January meeting by Virginia DAR State Regent Kathleen Mayer Rugh, who brought greetings. The meeting also featured new members, special recognition, celebrating patriot ancestors and a special guest presentation.



Author Barbara VornDick discussed her book and leading the effort to return President James Monroe's daughter Eliza for reburial in the U.S.



Chris Ackiss was awarded the Virginia SAR Chapter Service Medal



Jim Russell was awarded the Henry Knox Achievement Medal



Drew Wajciechowski was Richmond SAR's nominee for the essay and oration contests



Welcome new members!  
L-R: Frank Ashby, Thomas Clements, and Bradley Story



Virginia DAR State Regent  
Kathleen Mayer Rugh with President Barnard



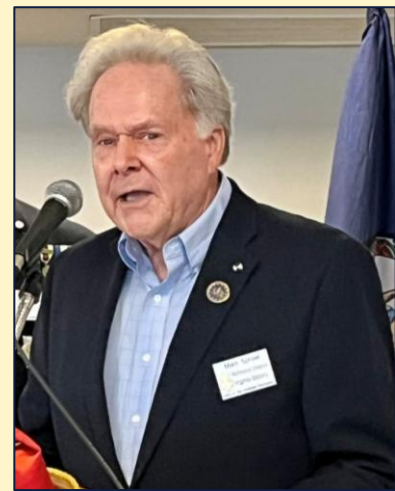
President Barnard recognized: L-R - Brett Martin, Dana Law, Jim Russell, Jay Why, Mark Brennan and Chris Ackiss for their roles in the 250<sup>th</sup> reenactment of Patrick Henry's *Give me Liberty or Give me Death* speech observed in March, 2025



Bill Nash shares his Patriot Ancestor Mathew Harris' history



Chris Ackiss shares his Patriot Ancestor Robert Mebane's history

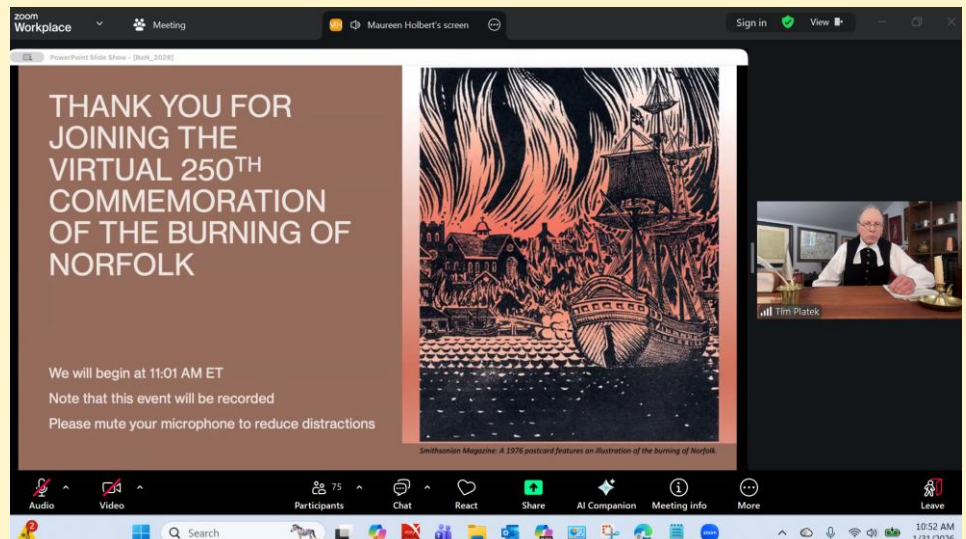


Mark Sprowl shares his Patriot Ancestor William Pangborn's history

## The Burning of Norfolk

As the Virginia SAR continued marking the ejection of Lord Dunmore and British rule from Virginia, the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the burning of Norfolk commemoration took place on January 31, hosted by the Norfolk SAR.

Tim Platek, pictured, was the keynote speaker, delivering his portrayal of a local Norfolk clergyman and witness to the events leading up to the burning and its aftermath.



# Virginia SAR Annual Meeting

The Virginia SAR held its annual meeting on February 6-7 at the Virginia Crossings Conference Center.

Aside from the Chapter's usual role as meeting co-host, Richmond SAR members received multiple honors during the meeting. President Philip Barnard served as National SAR President General Michael Elston's Aide de Campe. Registrar Bill Haskins earned the Virginia SAR Meritorious Service Medal and Drew Wajciechowski represented the Chapter in both the Youth Essay *and* Orations competitions.



PG Elston awards President Barnard his Aide de Campe pin



PG and First Lady Elston with President and First Lady Barnard



Bill Haskins earns the Virginia SAR Meritorious Service Medal



Drew Wajciechowski presents his oration

**Richmond SAR**  
Large Chapter Competition

Best Chapter – 2<sup>nd</sup> Place  
Virginia Society Cup – 2<sup>nd</sup> Place  
Chapter Excellence

In the Large Chapter category, the Richmond SAR continued its recognition streak, earning the Chapter Excellence award, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place for Best Chapter and 2<sup>nd</sup> Place in the Virginia Society Cup

# Virginia SAR Annual Meeting

Richmond SAR members stepped up once again this year as registration table volunteers.



Brett Martin



Mark Sprowl and Jason Gagnon



Williamsburg SAR's Steve McGuffin

## New Virginia SAR President

Compatriot Darrin Schmidt took the oath of office to become the new Virginia SAR President. He designated our 2026 theme as *Witness to History* and outlined the following 2026 priority initiatives:

### Community engagement:

Welcome your neighbors and community to events.

### America 250 efforts:

Recognize locations that witnessed the reading of the Declaration.

### Historic Endview:

Visit this 1769 Newport News site on the army's route to Yorktown.



Virginia SAR President Darrin Schmidt

## President's Community Challenge:

### Employ outreach awards and events:

- Present awards in front of recipient's peer group
- Educate recognized people/groups about SAR
- President's Challenge awards
  - External collaboration with community groups
  - Exceptional media efforts
  - New initiatives
  - Quality programming
- Community outreach recognition

### Chapter event protocol:

- [SARwitnessstohistory@gmail.com](mailto:SARwitnessstohistory@gmail.com)
- Send 1-4 pictures with single 2-3 sentence caption
- Include meetings
- Post on social media and repost media coverage

# Richmond SAR Event Participation

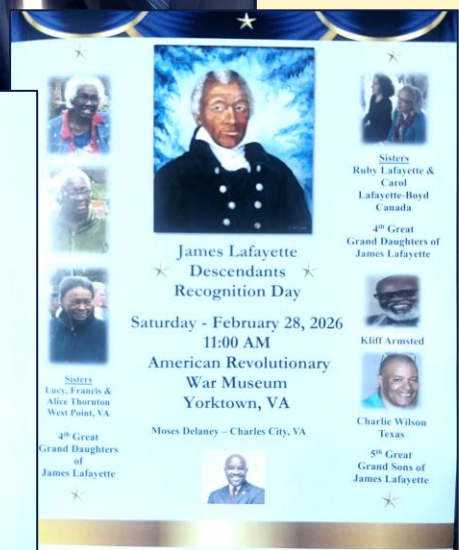
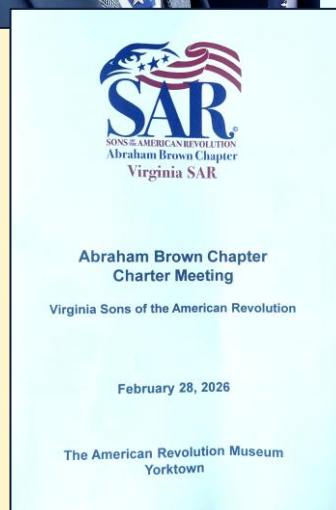
The Chapter has been active in supporting a multitude of events across the state. Philip Barnard presented the Richmond SAR wreath at the February 28 George Washington birthday celebration at the American Revolution Museum in Yorktown. Jason Gagnon and Chris Yohn represented the Chapter at the chartering of the new Virginia SAR Abraham Brown Chapter and attended the accompanying event honoring James Armistead Lafayette.



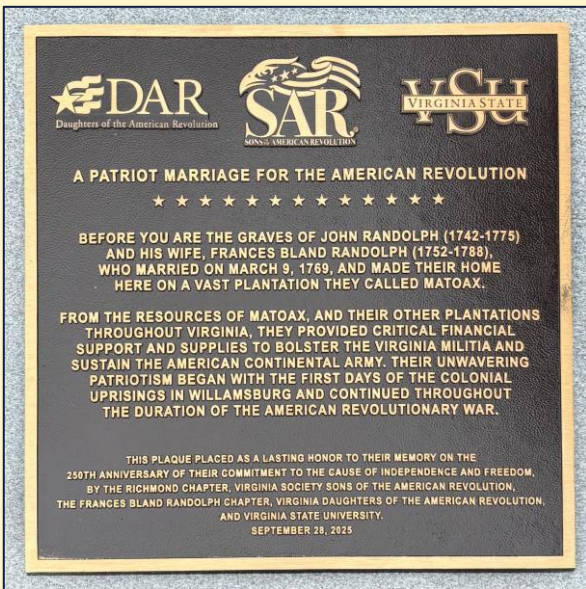
Philip Barnard at the George Washington birthday celebration



Chris Yohn, Jason Gagnon and Atticus Yohn at the Abraham Brown SAR Chartering and James Armistead Lafayette commemoration



Abraham Brown SAR Chapter Chartering



**Follow up:** The plaque commissioned for the Richmond SAR John and Francis Bland Randolph grave markings last September has been installed and looks fantastic!



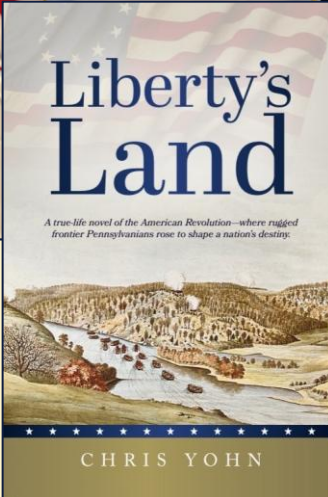
Robert Halpern coordinated with a local Chik Fil A to create a *missing man* table honoring fallen veterans

## March Meeting

The Richmond SAR met on March 8. Highlights featured presentation of the multiple streamer awards the Chapter earned in 2025. These include the awards announced at the annual meeting. In Patriot Ancestor recognition, Chris Yohn shared the story of his ancestor James Marshall of the Lancaster Co. PA Militia.



Chris also provided the day's presentation: *The American Revolution on the Pennsylvania Frontier*, sharing the little-known but pivotal history revealed in his book *Liberty's Land*. He's been traveling to deliver the presentation to multiple SAR, DAR and other historical organizations and kicked off the Historic St. John's Church Foundation virtual speaker series. For those who were unable to attend the March meeting, that [virtual presentation is available, here.](#)



*Liberty's Land* recounts the true story of the American Revolution on the West Branch of the Susquehanna River. The men, women and children who settled the valley made remarkable contributions to American independence and their real-life experiences are more compelling than anything that could have been imagined.

The action spans the course of the conflict as locals defend the valley and march with the Continental Army through the war's major events. But, more than a simple war story, the action evolves through layers of espionage, conspiracy and murder.

Richly detailed and deeply human, the narrative reveals how, through courage, self-determination and the relentless pursuit of liberty, these men and women helped forge a nation founded on the radical idea that all people are created equal.

LIVING HISTORY

## The Richmond SAR Memorial Fund



Your \$10 donation  
to this special fund  
honors your patriot  
ancestors and supports  
the programs and  
work of the  
Richmond SAR.

Philip Barnard

Joel Barnard ~ John Guliker ~ Simon Page, Jr. ~ Timothy Moors ~  
James Dickinson IV ~ Francis Harris ~ Samuel Walker, Sr. ~ Samuel Walker, Jr. ~  
Peter Wheeler ~ Simon Davis

Peter Broadbent

Lt. Richard Talbott ~ Lt. James Marshall Lotz

Taylor Cowardin

**John Cowardin**

Turner Cowardin

**John Cowardin**

Robert Halpern

**James Sproul**

Matthew Haskins,

**William Gannon ~ Moses Preston ~ Gilbert Stevens ~ Thomas Prather**

William M. Haskins, Jr.

**William Gannon ~ Moses Preston ~ Gilbert Stevens ~ Thomas Prather**

Dana Law

**Henry Law**

Brian K. Miller

**Theophilus Avery ~ Abel Sholes**

Dr. Jeffery Sellers

**John Laws**

Arthur H. Taylor III

**Silas Call**

Chris Yohn

**Joseph Potter ~ James Fitzsimmons**

## Richmond SAR Challenge Coins

### Richmond SAR logo coin - \$20

This coin features the famous Houdin George Washington statue housed in the Virginia State Capitol. It was manufactured using a newly available technique to achieve an incredibly detailed rendering and the unique coloring of this Richmond landmark. This coin represents the Richmond SAR and its proud history as the oldest chapter of the Virginia SAR, while also honoring our Patriot Ancestors' Commanding General and the *Father of our Country*.



### Richmond SAR Centennial Celebration Coin - \$15

This coin is based on the Richmond SAR member lapel pin design created during the Chapter's centennial celebration. It honors our Patriot Ancestors and our members' one-hundred years of patriotism. Designed and purchased before the announced disuse of the SAR/minute-man design, these challenge coins became instant collectors' items. A few remain available for purchase and are available only while supplies last. This design will not be reordered.



### Washington Monument Coin - \$15

This coin depicts the Richmond landmark Washington Monument and represents leadership. The famous statue, located on the State Capitol grounds, shows General Washington in action while surrounded by other Virginia Patriots and Statesmen of the Revolution: Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, John Marshall, George Mason, Thomas Nelson, Jr. and Andrew Lewis.



All challenge coins are available for purchase at Richmond SAR meetings. Proceeds support Richmond SAR historic commemoration events and activities.

