64th Annual Ceremony to Honor the Signers of the Declaration of Independence

This annual event was again hosted by the Gen. David Humphreys Branch No. 1. On the morning of July 4th, at the historic Grove Street Cemetery in New Haven, members of Branch #1 conducted the moving ceremony to honor the signers of the Declaration of Independence with special tributes paid to Rogers Sherman and David Humphreys. Branch President John Towle hosted the event. Honored participants of the ceremonies were the 2nd Company Governor’s Foot Guard, 6th Conn. Regt., Company of Light Infantry and flag bearers from Boy Scout Troop 5. Speakers for the event were Damien Cregeau, CTSSAR State 1st Vice-President and Dave Loda on his horse Huckleberry. Wreaths were presented and placed at both grave sites by members of the C.A.R. Compatriots from the Humphreys Branch, our new CTSSAR State President, Ethan Stewart, as well as members of the DAR and C.A.R. were in attendance. If you have the opportunity, consider taking two hours of your July 4th morning to attend next year’s ceremonies. Those who love their country and our sacred history, owe it to show up and support this event.

National Knight Essay Winner from Connecticut Society

For the first time, the Connecticut state winner, Matthew Penza of New Fairfield was selected as the National winner and received his $2,000 cash award after reading his winning essay at the National Youth Luncheon on Monday June 29th at the 125th National Congress of the SAR held in Louisville, KY.

Eagle Scout State Winners become members of the Connecticut SAR

On Saturday, August 29th, past Eagle Scout state winners, Andrew and Jackson Gelinas, along with their father John Gelinas, also an Eagle Scout became the newest members in the CTSSAR joining the Rev. Baldwin Branch #9. The swearing in ceremony was held at the Rev War encampment site, now Putnam State Park in Redding, CT. Branch President, Richard Hubert swear in the Gelinas family and Eagle Scout Chairman, Tim Wilkins pinned each of the members with their SAR rosettes. Also in attendance were State President, Ethan Stewart; 2nd Vice President, William Robbins and past President Dave Perkins.
The annual Let Freedom Ring ceremony on the Litchfield Green was very loud and colorful. Beginning at 1:45 pm, the First Litchfield Artillery Regiment fired 13 cannon salutes to honor the original 13 states that, as colonies, united for the cause of independence in 1776.

This year, for the first time, the flags of the 13 original states were also present. They were obtained by Compatriot Ken Buckbee. Each flag was presented by SAR Color Guard members when each state was saluted. Once the cannon salutes were completed, the bells of the town's four churches tolled 13 times, simultaneously at 2 pm, as part of the national observance of Independence Day.

The Let Freedom Ring ceremony has been held on Litchfield Green for more than 50 years. In 1963, two Connecticut men, Eric Sloane, and First Litchfield Artillery Regiment co-founder Eric Hatch, proposed the idea that bells across the nation, including the Liberty Bell, ring out at the same moment on Independence Day each year. Their idea was featured in an article entitled “Make Freedom Really Ring” which appeared in the Feb. 17, 1963 issue of This Week Magazine. The two Erics obtained the endorsement of Gov. John Dempsey and Sen. Abraham Ribicoff. Senator Ribicoff took their idea to Congress and the nationwide ringing of bells, now known as Let Freedom Ring, was adopted by Congress on June 26, 1963.

It was Compatriot Buckbee’s desire to bring more of a Revolutionary war presence to the Let Freedom Ring ceremony this year. It worked! Eighteen SAR Color Guard members – from as far away as New Jersey and New Hampshire – participated. A total of 33 SAR members were in attendance.
Many things have transpired since the last report. Let me begin with the War Office. Work is 99% complete with the exception of the plexiglass window coverings, phase 2 of the alarm system and landscaping, to be completed under the grants for 2015. Remaining work to the floors and upstairs will be done at a later date pending submission of future grants. This was quite an undertaking and we should thank Steve Marshall and the many contractors for their fine workmanship. We have delayed the opening until Lebanon’s Walktober on October 3rd, in order to complete display layout. Even though we were closed, Bob Rivard managed to satisfy several school groups, scheduled through the Lebanon Consortium.

The 1772 Foundation Grant submitted for repairs and painting at East Haddam has been rejected and will set us back another year. We will reapply again in the near future. I am still looking for a solution to lighting the flag pole, we have not flown the Flag there all year. Another option is to remount the flags to the building. Good news, the 3 picnic tables donated by Compatriot Burt Chapman and his wife, were constructed and delivered.

Nathan Hale in New London is progressing slowly. To date the permit for the AC system has been issued and work will begin shortly. This work is within our $10,000 Frank Loomis Palmer Fund grant, with additional permit fees falling on our properties budget. The lease with the City of New London is on hold, we are waiting for their response to our latest offer.

The Docent schedule for the remainder of the year looks rather bleak. There is only 1 person signed up in New London from Sept. 12 – Oct. 11. If we are to remain open on weekends, we will be forced to bring in our paid workers. It isn’t as bad in East Haddam, but is still disappointing. Again, this year the majority of our docents have been the Daughters of the American Revolution.

There are several upcoming events worth mentioning. We have been contacted by ABC News in New York. They want to film the schoolhouse in New London with a family visiting and learning about Nathan Hale. We Have Damien Cregeau and Debra Dickey lined up to handle this in October.

I have been in contact with Courtney Reardon, author of Haunted Mystic: The History Press-Haunted America Series. We spent a day visiting all 3 museums. Since then, Courtney and her husband have volunteered as docents in East Haddam. I have scheduled 3 evenings with her and her crew to investigate spirit movement at our locations. There is the possibility of a fund raiser at a later date. Courtney has assured me that her goal is within historical preservation rather than a spooky attraction.

The New London Fall Food Stroll is set for Wed. October 14th. We have been invited to open the schoolhouse for beer tasting conducted by the Charter Oak Brew Co. Pending any insurance issues it’s a go. Late this afternoon we were able to confirm 7 school group visits in New London from late September through October. Our paid docents have already committed to assist.

To date we are within budget. There have been a few added expenses due to repairs and operating costs increases. Docent expenses are lower, mainly because we are down from five to two.

Our long time Property Committee member, Burt Chapman has submitted his resignation on the Properties Committee, but will remain as a Docent. For his dedication, Burt was awarded the CTSSAR Meritorious Service Medal and Certificate. To fill his vacancy, Damien Cregeau volunteered and was approved by the Committee and received the approval of President Ethan Stewart.

Respectfully submitted, David Packard - CTSSAR Real Property Steward

Historic Military Encampment, Griswold Bicentennial

Dear Compatriots,

HUZZAH! Great event weekend (July 25/26) in Griswold, Connecticut! The Connecticut Line CTSSAR participated in the Historic Military Encampment, part of the Town of Griswold Bicentennial. Compatriots Derek Brockhoff, Lee Gerlander, Randy Gerlander, John Keeney, David Packard, David Perkins, Tyler Smith, Russell Wirtalla and myself were there for the whole weekend. We did some colonial cooking, we did some musket firing, we camped out, it was a well organized event!

Thanks to CTSSAR President Ethan Stewart, Richard Kendall, Dan Dudley and Lee Gerlander for photos. Several CTSSAR members visited the encampment, as well as some old reenactor friends that I have not seen in years. I attached 7 photos of the Connecticut Line CTSSAR, including our camp, demonstrations, and our colonial cooking.

Put your faith in God and keep your powder dry,

Todd L. Gerlander
Colonel Commanding
President’s Foot Notes

As your new President I want to thank everyone for their support. With your help I am confident we can continue to make progress in making the business of the CTSSAR more efficient.

Goals:
Some of my goals as your President are:

1. Increase membership with the help of Ken Buckbee and Greg Thompson.
2. Appointed an Executive Board made up of 8 officers. This will be to help better plan our State meetings and hopefully get more accomplished.
3. Try and get our branches and other members involved in the State Society. We will do this by recognizing branches and members with certificates and awards for their accomplishments. By identifying other areas where the CTSSAR needs support, this action will open other areas where other compatriots can get involved and contribute.

Summary of activities:
The first half of 2015 has been very busy:

- Attended Color Guard events in Westport, Wethersfield and Griswold.
- Attended the Coast Guard Academy to give out the Alexander Hamilton Award with Bob Rivard.
- Reviewed with Dean Gaugler and Bob Serow the 125th Campaign and I also met with Jen Eifrig our grant writer.
- Attended a Flag Day Celebration with Mary Clap Wooster Chapter of the DAR in Hamden.
- Attended the annual Grove Street 4th of July Ceremony in New Haven, organized by the Gen Humphreys Branch.
- Held an Executive Board meeting and one Special BOM meeting that was very successful.
- Attended Property’s meeting and moved museum items from the storage trailer into the finished War Office.
- I continue to work with Dave Perkins to create a new directory which should be out this month.

Visititation:
Need feedback from our Branch Presidents about upcoming Branch meeting and activities so that I can plan a visit to your branch. It is one of my other goals to visit each Branch during my Presidency.

Summary:
In summary, I am very encouraged with our new and old Officers and their enthusiasm about moving forward in a renewed direction with the State Society. I would like to thank the entire Society for their continued support while we move toward a bright future.

Patriotically yours, Ethan Allen Stewart, Sr.—CTSSAR President

Trustee’s Report from the 2015 Congress

I attended the 125th Congress in Louisville, KY, held June 27th to July 1, 2015. At the Congress, I actively participated in all meetings of the Trustees. Also attending from Connecticut was Alternate Trustee, David Perkins.

The highlight of the Congress was listening to Connecticut’s own Matthew Penza read his essay at the Youth Awards Luncheon. Matt was the Knight Essay Contest First Place Winner and received a $2,000 scholarship.

Most notable business conducted at the Congress evolved around dues. After much debate annual dues were raised $5.00. As the Connecticut Trustee, I voted against the increase. However it passed by a slim majority. NSSAR membership as of July 1 was 32,623.

There were several contested elections. New Hampshire’s John (Jack) Manning was opposed by two other candidates for the position of Historian General. Jack was elected by a clear majority. There were three candidates for two At-large positions on the SAR Foundation Board. The At-large members serve a 4 year term on the Board. The candidates were Rick Hollis of Tennessee, Michael J. Elston of Virginia, and President General Lindsey Brock. Rick Hollis and Michael Elston were elected to the Board. The last contested election was for Vice President General (VPG) of the New England District. Douglas Wood was nominated from the floor opposing Bruce C. MacGunnigle. Doug Wood was elected to serve a second term as VPG.

I was honored to accept many awards on behalf of the Connecticut Society. I accepted the Liberty Medal for Ken Buckbee (2 OLC), Russ Wirtalla, and Tim Jacobs. Additionally I accepted The George S. & Stella M. Knight awards for participating and sponsoring the winner of the Essay Contest, The Admiral William R. Furlong Memorial Award Certificate and Streamer, the ROTC/JROTC Participant Certificate and Streamer, and the Arthur M. King Eagle Scout Scholarship Contest Participant Certificate and Streamer. I was disappointed that we did not receive the C.A.R. Activity Award and Streamer as the report may not have been submitted. We annually exceed the requirements for that award. We also received the Partnership in Patriotism (PIP) Award as well as PIP Awards for the Wolcott and Huntington Branches. And finally, the Rev. Baldwin Branch received a President’s Initiatives Streamer for submitting the requisite percentage of patriot biographies to the Patriot Index.

Respectfully Submitted, Kenneth Duane Roach—National Trustee