President General Tom Lawrence Makes History Visiting Connecticut

By Damien Cregeau, Vice President, CTSSAR

Both President General Tom Lawrence and the Connecticut Society of the Sons of the American Revolution made history in May of 2016 when PG Lawrence visited Connecticut, making him the first president general to visit the Nutmeg State in many decades, or as long as any living CTSSAR compatriot could remember.

What immediately struck PG Lawrence was that the Connecticut Society is unique among all 50 of the U.S. state societies in owning historic properties, much as the DAR typically does. Not only does the CTSSAR own property, but actually three historic properties. Two of those are 18th-century schoolhouses where Connecticut’s state hero, Captain Nathan Hale, taught just before the American Revolution - one in East Haddam and the other in downtown New London. The third is the Governor Jonathan Trumbull War Office in Lebanon. The East Haddam schoolhouse and the War Office are each in rural, scenic locations, whereas the Hale Schoolhouse in New London generates thousands of visitors each year and is located near the three ferries to Block Island, Fishers Island and Montauk, Long Island. This location is also across the street from the future home of the U.S. Coast Guard Museum of History.

It was U.S. Coast Guard history that brought PG Lawrence to Connecticut. An OCS graduate who served in the USCG in Houston, he created the Alexander Hamilton Award about nine years ago. This was designed to pay homage to Hamilton as the founder of the Revenue Cutter Service in 1790, which later became the U.S. Coast Guard. The award is presented each year to a graduating cadet who composes the best senior thesis.

This year, that cadet was Caroline Miller, who majored in government studies and who wrote her thesis on the Coast Guard’s role in counterintelligence, and whose mother qualifies for and is interested in joining the DAR, so perhaps there is a prospective compatriot in the family. A New Jersey native, newly commissioned Ensign Miller will begin her career serving in San Diego and hopes to pursue a career focused on intelligence.
Before attending the USCGA’s Convocation on May 17th, PG Lawrence arrived at Hartford’s Bradley International, and was driven by VP General, New England District Doug Wood to historic and bucolic Lebanon, Connecticut, which served as one of the nerve centers of Connecticut’s contributions to the Revolutionary War effort, as it was home to Governor Jonathan Trumbull and was a large town at the time. To this day, Lebanon possesses a rich collection of 18th-century homes and other historic buildings. It also happens to be the town of one of the patriots of the author of this article, Sgt. Richard Lyman, who was an orderly sergeant to Major General Israel Putnam.

PG Lawrence was welcomed by a large contingent of CTSSAR’s Color Guard led by Col. Dave Perkins. Lawrence was given a tour of CTSSAR’s Trumbull War Office, which was recently restored to its 19th-century interior layout and boasts an amazing array of accurate reproductions of wooden barrels, muskets, shoes and other supplies for soldiers. It was in this building that many American and French generals met over the course of the Revolution to discuss provisions and conduct meetings of Connecticut’s Committee of Safety.

The tour of the War Office was followed by tours of the adjacent properties owned by the CTDAR - Gov. Jonathan Trumbull’s house as well as the horse stables built for Col. Jeremiah Wadsworth (namesake for a CTSSAR branch) and relocated to the Trumbull property in the 1950s. Numerous interesting items are in the Trumbull collection, including the Bible owned by Trumbull’s daughter, Faith, and her accomplished husband, Brig. General Jedediah Huntington. The Wadsworth Stable includes a rare Federal-era sleigh used by Colonel and Mrs. Wadsworth. One of the darlings of the CTDAR includes Jennie Rehnberg, who served the past three years as curator for the NSDAR’s museum near the White House in Washington, D.C.
President Stewart, CTDAR State Regent April Staley, PG Lawrence, NSDAR Curator Jennie Rehnberg, VP Cregeau and Trumbull House Docent and CTDAR Nancy Merwin in front of the Wadsworth Stable

That evening PG Lawrence was welcomed to the home of CTSSAR VP Damien Cregeau and his wife, Pamela (CTDAR), which was the home of BG Jedediah Huntington and built in 1765 in historic Norwich. (insert picture of leaders by front door?) The visit included a quick tour of the cemetery across the street, where Gen. Huntington and his wives, as well as his brother, Maj. Gen. Ebenezer Huntington (namesake for a one-time CTSCAR chapter), Signer Samuel Huntington and Col. John Durkee (one of the three Connecticut leaders of the Sons of Liberty) are all buried. A dinner for 20 CTSSAR leaders and color guardsmen as well as several wives included candlelight with chicken and side dishes reminiscent of colonial cooking, followed by a lively performance by neighbor and Connecticut State Troubadour Tom Callinan. During the Revolution, visitors to General Huntington’s house included General Washington, the Marquis de Lafayette and the famous painter John Trumbull. CTSSAR President Ethan Stewart and Trustee Dave Perkins presented PG Lawrence with a check for $3,035.00 towards his annual Alexander Hamilton Award presented at the USCGA.

Following the USCGA presentation, PG Lawrence was taken down the road to downtown New London to see the charming schoolhouse where Captain Nathan Hale taught when war broke out in 1775. Given Hale’s spy mission and status as Connecticut’s state war hero, numerous informational panels on the first and second floor detail both Hale’s life as well as the those he knew such as Major Benjamin Tallmadge, who was the case officer for the famous Culper Spy Ring of Long Island and New York. The Hale Schoolhouse is currently undergoing window renovations and receives the most visitors of the three CTSSAR-owned properties, given its proximity to the busy harbor of New London and the Amtrak and Metro North Train Station across the street.
Just across the Thames River from New London, PG Lawrence was able to enjoy the panoramic water view and rare, original 18th-century earthworks of Fort Griswold and the site where British forces detached from General Benedict Arnold’s command in New London massacred dozens of Groton-area militia, most famously their leader, Col. William Ledyard, for whom the nearby town of Ledyard is named.

President Stewart, PG Lawrence and VP General, New England District Doug Wood at Fort Griswold State Park, standing next to the site of the death of Colonel William Ledyard, killed by the British

Hopefully, PG Lawrence’s visit will encourage increased appreciation for Connecticut’s important role in the American Revolution and will result in future President General visits in the years leading up to the 250th of the Revolutionary War beginning in 2025.
August CTSSAR Grave Marking Ceremony at Patriot Graves’ Monument in Milford’s Cemetery

Connecticut’s Color Guard is joined by Dave Loda, members of the 6th CT Reg’t and Officers

President Ethan Stewart organized a memorable ceremony at the ceremony in the center of Milford to commemorate the 46 patriot soldiers buried there who suffered as POWs on a British ship after they were captured during the Battle of New York in 1776. Some of the soldiers were from Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, and one soldier was even from Spain. Milford’s mayor read his proclamation, saying how President Lincoln stopped to pay his respects to the monumental gravesite when he passed by on his train.
Compatriot Ken Buckbee has been working hard this year to make the Facebook page of the Connecticut Society of the Sons of the American Revolution more patriotic, educational, and historical. Since March, Buckbee has been posting images and brief descriptions of events that led up to and into the beginning of the American Revolution. The postings are mostly in an "on this day in history" format following events that occurred in 1775. However, earlier events are sometimes featured, such as the birth of people who played key roles in the war. Buckbee hopes to be able to keep this project going so that, eventually, it covers the entire war of the American Revolution.

Reminder: https://www.facebook.com/connecticutsar/ is also a good place to keep track of CTSSAR meetings and events. Just click on the Events tab to see our calendar of events. Ken has been trying to keep that updated too.

Also, We have reached another milestone!
As of July 29th, CTSSAR has received 800 Likes on Facebook. That is up 100 from March 2nd, when we had 700 Likes.

Q: What are the benefits of more Facebook Likes?
A: Each time visitors to the CTSSAR Facebook page click the Like button, informative postings from our site is shared with them and their friends via the News Feed, which can result in more traffic to our Facebook page and our website. That, in turn, helps us to inform more people and fulfill the objects of the CTSSAR; which are declared to be patriotic, historical, and educational.

Q: Can we reach 1,000 Facebook Likes by the end of the year?
A: I believe that we can. You can help. Go to https://www.facebook.com/connecticutsar/ and "Like" us. You will help us to perpetuate the memory of those who, by their services or sacrifices during the war of the American Revolution, achieved the independence of the American people ~ Ken Buckbee, Past President - CTSSAR (2003-2006)

Vernon Resident Bob Smith Donates Commission Signed by Governor Jonathan Trumbull from 1777 to CTSSAR

Todd Gerland holds the 15”x24” framed document with an 19th-century bookplate that includes the commission of Ensign Lemuel Hotchkiss of the 15th Regiment of the Connecticut Militia, who eventually became a captain in the 15th Regiment
Gen. David Humphreys Branch Hosts Annual Ceremonies on July 4th in New Haven

Humphreys Branch President John Towle led the annual ceremonies to commemorate Roger Sherman as one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, with CTSSAR Vice President Damien Cregeau speaking once again on the contributions of Mr. Sherman. Dave Loda once again portrayed Humphreys on horseback, and spoke while astride Huckleberry about Humphreys’ important contributions. Also in attendance as usual were the CTSCAR, The Mayflower Society, the 6th Connecticut Regiment and the Governor’s Foot Guard Band plus scores of people from the public.

Vice President Cregeau Speaks on Signer Samuel Huntington in Norwich on July 1st

Vice President General of the New England District Doug Wood attended a patriotic ceremony in Norwich, where CTSSAR Vice President and historian Damien Cregeau spoke on the important legacies of Samuel Huntington, who was not only one of Connecticut’s four signers of the Declaration of Independence, but also first president of the U.S. Congress under the Articles of Confederation as well as two-term governor of Connecticut. Also speaking were U.S. Congressman Joe Courtney and Norwich Mayor Deb Hinchey, along with a performance of a Huntington song by Tom Callinan of Norwich.
Actress Judith Kalaora Portays Cpl. Deborah Sampson for CTDAR and Humphreys Branch

Judith Kalaora of Boston, an actress who portrays historic female figures of various time periods, performed a very dramatic presentation of Corporal Deborah Samson, a woman who disguised herself as a man named Robert Shurtleff, and who enlisted in the Continental Army, was wounded in 1782, and was honorably discharged at West Point in 1783.

A huge turnout of over 50 members of the Humphreys Branch and the local Freelove Baldwin Stow Chapter of the CTDAR attended the dinner meeting at a restaurant in Stratford in June thanks to the efforts and organization of Ethan and Barbara Stewart, the latter the regent of the Stow Chapter. Two new compatriots of the CTSSAR were inducted that night.

CTSSAR Color Guard Displays History at Norwichtown’s History Day, August 28th

Pamela Cregeau, Russ Wirtalla, Ben Bullock, Dave Perkins and Todd Gerlander on Norwichtown Green With John Towle and Randy Gerlander seated in the background. Bonnie Towle & Lee also attended
Upcoming CTSSAR Events

09/04/2016 - NSSAR Battle of Groton Heights (September 6, 1781), 235th Anniversary Commemoration, Fort Griswold & Col. Ledyard Cemetery, Groton, CT. (NSSAR Historic Ceremony and Silver Color Guard Medal Event) 3:00 PM - CTSSAR Ceremony at Fort Griswold; 4:00 PM - CTSSAR Ceremony at Col. Ledyard Cemetery; 6:30 PM - Friends of Fort Griswold Candlelight Ceremony at Fort Griswold.

09/17/2016 - Constitution Day in the Constitution State, CTSSAR 229th Anniversary Commemoration of the United States Constitution (September 17, 1787), War Office, Lebanon, CT. 10 AM - 4 PM.

09/18/2016 - Woodbury Colonial Fair and Muster, Hurd House Museum, Woodbury, CT.

09/24/2016 - CTSSAR Captain Nathan Hale Memorial BOM Meeting/Luncheon, Carmine's Restaurant, New Haven, CT. 10AM

10/02/2016 - 125th Anniversary Commemoration of CTSSAR Ownership of the Historic War Office, Lebanon, CT.

10/02/2016 - CTSSAR Governor Jonathan Trumbull, Sr. 306th Birthday Commemoration Ceremony, War Office, Lebanon, CT.

10/02/2016 - (CTSSAR) Annual Massing of the Colors of the Hereditary Patriotic Societies of Connecticut, First Congregational Church, Lebanon, CT.

11/05/2016 - CTSSAR Connecticut's "Valley Forge" All Member Meeting/Luncheon, Lucky Lou's Restaurant, Wethersfield, CT. 10AM

President’s Footnotes:

I attended the 126th annual Congress along with my wife, Dave & Pat Perkins, Ken Roach and Russ Wirtalla. This was a very exciting time for me being the first Congress I ever attended. While there I met my 4th cousin Gary Green President of North Carolina and the Hawaiian State President Chris Tourtellot who my wife and I met while on vacation in Hawaii. Every day was full of activities and meetings. I met a lot of nice people.

Here is a list of the many things I attended:

Host Society Reception,
New Attendees Orientation, Memorial Service (Old South Church), Galvez Presentation, Council of State Presidents Breakfast, Opening session of 126th Congress, Youth Awards Presentation Luncheon, After noon session
of 126th Congress, Presentation of Minuteman Awards, Second secession of 126th Congress, Council of State Presidents Business meeting, President General Banquet, NSSAR 1000 Breakfast, Final session of 126th Congress and Installation Banquet.

Connecticut Society awards from the 2016 Congress in Boston

C.A.R. Activity Award Certificate and Streamer
Eagle Scout Youth Contest Participation Certificate and Streamer
JROTC Youth Contest Participation Certificate and Streamer
Admiral Furlong Flag Award Certificate and Star (add to existing streamer)
Partners in Patriotism Certificates for branches 4, 5, 7, 10, 11 and the state society
Patriot Biographies Award Streamer for submitting 20% of branch patriots to branch 1
Liberty Medal Oak Leaf Cluster to Russ Wirtalla
Liberty Medal to Dave Perkins
Certificate of Appreciation to Dave Perkins for work on the National Eagle Scout Committee

The following are the many things I participated in since the last State meeting.

16 April – Attended Mead Branch meeting and inducted a new member Christopher Kerin.
16 May – President General Tom Lawrence visit at the War Office and dinner at Damien’s home. Presented him with a check for $3,000. For the Alexander Hamilton Fund.
17 May – Coast Guard Academy to participate in the Alexander Hamilton Award along with P.G. Tom Lawrence, Damien Cregeau and Doug Woods.

27 May – Went to a memorial service at Pratt & Whittey in Hartford for SCG.
Herman Bakers Revolutionary War Soldier that died of Small Pox.
9 June – Attended a joint meeting with the Humphreys Branch and the Freeloave Chapter of the DAR.
04 July - Attended Grove Street Cemetery Ceremonies, New Haven, Humphreys Branch.
13 August – We had a Grave Marking Ceremony for the 46 Revolutionary Soldiers that died of Small Pox at Milford Cemetery, Milford, CT.
13 August – Had an Executive Committee meeting.

Patriotically yours,

Ethan Allen Stewart, Sr. CTSSAR President