



# The Quill & Parchment

Omaha Chapter  
Nebraska Society, Sons of the American Revolution



EDITORS: PAUL BURRIGHT, BILL WEBB



## OMAHA LEADERSHIP 2020-21

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- Paul Burrignt—Vice President
- James Sly—Secretary
- John Parsons—Treasurer
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## FROM THE DESK OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

My fellow Compatriots,

I hope this message finds you all safe, healthy, and navigating this COVID-19 pandemic as best as you can.

As you all know, we have had to cancel our last two Chapter meetings, in April and May, and many of our upcoming events, such as Memorial Day Parades and Ceremonies, as well as the Ralston Independence Day Parade, have also been cancelled. It has definitely been a rough start to 2020 but we do have some good news to celebrate.

With National SAR headquarters closed, the genealogists have still been working to approve applications and we have 2 new members that were approved on May 8,

2020. Please welcome Joseph and Daniel Maxwell to the Omaha SAR family! They are brothers who are descended from Patriot William Fitzwater (PA). Congratulations to these two new members and we hope to be able to install them in September, when we are hopefully able to meet again.



Real. Hopefully he will be approved before we meet again in the fall as well.

Please plan on helping out at our first clean up day for our plot adoption at Prospect Hill Cemetery on Saturday, June 6 at 9am. If we have plenty of help, it shouldn't

take us long and it will help keep our SAR area looking good throughout the season. We also have paperwork in for a member reinstatement for a prior Omaha SAR member, Nicholas Mizaur, SAR #160582. Welcome back, Compatriot Mizaur! We have 1 more new member application that is being processed for prospective member, Chuck

take us long and it will help keep our SAR area looking good throughout the season.

Have a great summer and see you all soon! Huzzah!!

Paul H Burrignt

Vice President—Omaha SAR

## PATRIOT BIOGRAPHIES

Omaha Compatriots,

Thank you so much to those of you that have sent in biographies of your Patriots, these last few weeks. We have 21 biographies submitted to National by the Nebraska SAR, and all 21 have come from our Omaha Chapter. We are get-

ting close to our all time biography submission amount of 24, which happened back in 2017.

If we don't have a biography on your Patriot yet, please write it up and send to Paul Burrignt or Bill Webb. Let's get to 100% for the Chapter!



## THIS MONTH IN THE REVOLUTION

**Menace to All**

In light of our own COVID-19 pandemic, here is a little article about something the Continental Army had to deal with.

They took a cow with them to supply milk and ducked out of sight for seven weeks. Father, mother, and four children—all six isolated themselves inside a house in Boston. And sick? You bet! The children “puke every morning but after are comfortable,” reported the mother.

One unfortunate child didn’t respond too well. He had to be inoculated three times before he caught it, broke out in ugly spots, and became delirious from raging fever for two entire days.

Once they experienced—and survived—the preventative “cure,” however, the people of the eighteenth century were immune to one of mankind’s worst scourges: smallpox. Never mind that the primitive “inoculation” methods of the day made the recipient pretty darn sick (and contagious to others), the cure still was better than catching the disease itself.

For the leaders—and soldiers—of the American Revolution, “the smallpox” was both a deadly threat and a vexing problem. Disease of all kinds was especially common among the young men gathered in

military camps, often in unsanitary conditions, after years spent in isolated rural communities and thus lacking in immunity. Among the illnesses they now suffered, the dreaded “pox” was a real killer. And if anyone needed convincing, the proof came early in the fighting—smallpox, rather than the British enemy, took the greatest toll among the American rebels sent to attack Quebec in late 1775. Of the hundreds sent to fight the British, a fourth or more contracted smallpox.

All told, more than five thousand were lost to combat, desertion, and disease, but it was the smallpox epidemic that John Adams, for one, bemoaned the loudest. “The smallpox is ten times more terrible than the British, Canadians, and Indian together,” he wrote after a visit with still-ill veterans of the Canadian campaign.

Adams, himself, incidentally, had undergone the risky inoculation procedure earlier—at the hands of Dr. Joseph Warren, the Patriot leader killed at Breed’s Hill in June 1775.

None other than George Washington—himself the survivor of a teenage bout with the deadly pox—had to grapple with the issue from the day he assumed command of the fledgling Continental Army encamped around British held Boston in 1775. Indeed, the smallpox incidence in Boston was one reason he held back on storming the city. “if we escape the smallpox in the camp and the country

around about, he said at one point, “it will be miraculous.”

The miracle he needed, of course, was inoculation preventing onset of the disease, but the inoculation method of Washington’s day was primitive, dangerous, and most controversial. It was in Boston, in fact, that the famous colonial era minister Cotton Mather had espoused inoculation as a means of avoiding the smallpox epidemics that repeatedly swept through the American colonies. So controversial was inoculation however, that one critic tossed a bomb through his window, while another set a cooperating physician’s house on fire.

All that was during the smallpox epidemic of 1721, which laid low an estimated 5,000 persons and killed 844 of them. Among the 286 who had braved the inoculations, only 6 died.

The unappealing method of inoculation was to scrape up some pus from the blister on a smallpox victim and insert the ugly stuff directly into the willing patient’s bloodstream, usually through a small cut. The result in most cases would be a mild form of the disease—and afterward, blessed immunity for life!

To some critics, it was a “heathen,” unnatural, immoral practice. To some patients, it was dangerous—in the extreme, even a killer. Indeed, there is reason to suspect self-inoculations

as a cause of the epidemic among the soldiers engaged in the Canadian campaign of 1775-76. No surprise, then, that the inoculation's opponents blamed the practice itself for spreading the disease among the population.

Some colonies had gone so far as to enact laws forbidding the inoculation practice. Marblehead, Mass., had gone through a "smallpox war" on the eve of the Revolution, with townspeople so fearful, they burned down a smallpox hospital quarantined on an offshore island.

George Washington had insisted on inoculation for his wife, Martha, but as newly named commander of the Continental Army he at first bowed to local bans such as New York's 1747 prohibition of inoculations. From his New York headquarters in May 1776, in fact, he issued a fiat saying, "No person whatever, belonging to the Army, is to be inoculated for the smallpox." He soon followed up with still another,

rather violent decree: "Any officer in the Continental Army, who shall suffer himself to be inoculated, will be cashiered and turned out of the Army...as an enemy and traitor to his country."

Fortunately for both his army and his future country, Washington reversed himself when in winter quarters at Morristown, New Jersey, just months later. Now on the opposite side of the years-long debate, he ordered wholesale inoculation of his troops. "Finding the smallpox to be spreading much and fearing that no precaution can prevent it from running thro' the whole of our Army," he explained in a letter to army doctor William Shippen, Jr., "I have determined that the troops shall be inoculated."

It wouldn't be an easy road to travel, the commander in chief acknowledged. "This Expedient may be attended with some inconveniences and some disadvantages, but yet I trust in its consequences will have the most happy effect."

By now Washington was so convinced

that drastic steps were in order he also said, "we should have more to dread from it [smallpox] than the Sword of the enemy." He urged mass inoculation of his men, to begin "without delay".

Until now, the mortality rate in his army was 160 dead for every 1000 soldiers. After his fiat of Morristown, however, the Continental Army's mortality rate associated with the ancient disease would drop to 3 deaths for every 1000 men.

George Washington had made the right decision, the wise decision, while setting the precedence, historically, as instigator of the first command-wide immunization program adopted for military operations in either Europe or North America. Most important, he had guaranteed a pox-free future for many thousands of troops. Just as important, by ensuring his army a healthier future, he had taken a giant step toward final victory in the revolutionary cause itself.

*- From Best Little Stories from the American Revolution, by C. Brian Kelly*



## MEMBER BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES



### May Birthdays

Kevin Walden—May 1  
Gary Gray—May 19  
Jim Sly—May 19  
Scott Peterson—May 20

### May Anniversaries

Martin Beerman—May 31, 1990  
David Kentsmith—May 15, 2007  
Richard Ewing—May 19, 2010  
Jeremy Christensen—May 3, 2011  
Charles Marshal—May 8, 2015  
Tom Upton—May 15, 2015

Happy Birthday to those Compatriots listed for May!

For those Compatriots with anniversaries in May, thank you for your years of membership and service to the SAR!



**amazon**smile  
You shop. Amazon gives.

Check out our website at:

[www.nessar.org/omaha-chapter/](http://www.nessar.org/omaha-chapter/)

We are updating the Omaha Chapter link on the State website and adding more pages and content. Check back often to see what updates we have installed.

Also, check out, like, and follow our new **Omaha SAR** Facebook page.

Don't forget to sign up with **Amazon Smile** and support your Omaha Chapter! Here is the link:

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/47-6027779>



**The Omaha Color Guard is recruiting!** If you are interested in participating and joining our ranks, please contact Compatriot Chad Sherrets, Nebraska Color Guard Commander, at [OmahaColorGuard@gmail.com](mailto:OmahaColorGuard@gmail.com) or Paul Burrig, Omaha Color Guard Captain, at [pburrig72@gmail.com](mailto:pburrig72@gmail.com).

Show your support for the Society and your Chapter and State Color Guards!

**U P C O M I N G M E E T I N G S A N D E V E N T S**

- 17 May 2020—Spring State Meeting on Zoom. 1:30pm—**Check your email for details!**
- 25 May 2020—Memorial Day Ceremonies—Omaha National Cemetery—**cancelled**
- 06 Jun 2020—Clean up day at Prospect Hill Cemetery, 9am

**Planning ahead**

- 20 Jun 2020—Omaha Storm Chasers Baseball—Color Guard—**TBD**

**\*\*All meetings and events are tentative due to current COVID-19 concerns and social distancing rules.\*\***

**\*\*Updates will be given on cancellations and postponements\*\***



**“RESOLVE TO PERFORM WHAT YOU OUGHT. PERFORM WITHOUT FAIL WHAT YOU RESOLVE”**

**- BENJAMIN FRANKLIN—1789**

# Meeting Minutes—May 12, 2020

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The May 12, 2020 Omaha Chapter Meeting at Gorat's Steakhouse was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We pray all of you are safe and healthy.

May we all see each other soon.