



The Musket Report

Newsletter of the Wiregrass Chapter, ALSSAR
Enterprise, Alabama
"Home of the Boll Weevil Monument"



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SAR/DAR Constitutional Week Awards Luncheon

September 21st at 11:30 at the Rawls Hotel will be the place to be for the 6th annual Constitutional Week Awards Luncheon hosted by the chapter in conjunction with the ladies of the John Coffee Chapter, DAR. The luncheon is one of the highlights of the year and the new regent of the Al Society DAR, Shelby Dean Ward, will be our guest speaker. Attendance at this meeting **will require advanced reservations**. Cost is \$13.50 per person and must be submitted to President Fuller **NLT 16 September**. The ladies from several DAR chapters in the area have been invited as have SAR members in the area. ALSSAR State President Larry Cornwell and Leanne will be joining us for this special occasion. Seating is available for approximately 70 people and as of this writing 35 reservations have been received. A reservation form is enclosed, so get that reservation in now. Great time to bring a prospective member!

Wright's Chapel Cemetery

This photograph was taken 18 August and speaks volumes about the hard work put in by Mark Steetle and



the other members of his Grave Marking Committee over the past several months. There is still additional clean up to be completed before the 14 October 2006 grave marking program, but the cemetery is beginning to take shape. Do not be shy to volunteer to help for a few hours. As of yet no snakes have been seen, but John Ray Fuller did come home with a fair ration of chiggers! Sulfur powder around the waist band and ankles will help keep those critters at bay! Through Mark's efforts the Henry County Commission signed a proclamation declaring 8-14 October as "Solomon Wright Week" in the county. Letters will soon be going out to Wright descendants in the area and the use of a local church or community center is being investigated as a changing area for the color guard and a place to hold a small reception. Mark your calendar now, as you will not want to miss this event in October.

AUGUST FAMILY PICNIC

The Chapter wishes to extend a very big "Thank You" to Judge and Mrs. Brunson for once again hosting the August Family Picnic at their farm near Elba. The fried chicken along with all the salads and deserts provided by the ladies of the chapter (plus Rex's famous banana pudding) were a big hit with everyone. The chapter was pleased to have ALSSAR State President



Judge Brunson keeps a sharp eye on the deserts! Photo Jim Gilmer

Larry Cornwell and his lady Leanne join the group for a couple of drum sticks! Despite the heat (normal for this time of year in Lower Alabama), a great time was had by all and it afforded everyone the opportunity to catch up on what had been going on since the chapter's last meeting in June. The picnic also represented the chapter's kick-off of the second half of the year and some great events are yet to come.

MEMBERSHIP

The chapter is pleased to report that new membership applications for **David M. Jonas, Jr.** who descends from Nathan Baldwin (p.2) and **Christopher R. Alford** based on his patriot ancestor Frances Cypert, Jr. have been submitted. Chris assisted in the clean up of the Wright's Chapel Cemetery last month. Youth membership papers for "**Little**" **John Kelsoe** are also on their way to National Headquarters.

Congratulations are also in order for **David Finch** on the recent approval of his supplemental application based on his patriot ancestor, Jacob Pouder.

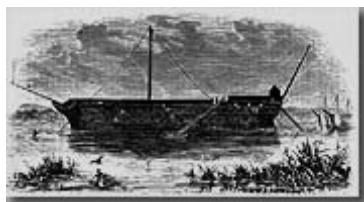
DUES

Chapter Treasurer John Kelsoe reports that several chapter Compatriots have already submitted their 2007 dues and expresses his thanks while encouraging everyone to make an early submission of their dues. There is considerable paperwork involved in getting monies submitted to the state secretary in a timely matter. By waiting until the very end of the year, it places an unnecessary burden on the chapter treasurer in that these documents have to be prepared during the holiday season, plus the chapter misses the state society's November 1st deadline. You can help by getting that \$50.00 check payable to the Wiregrass Chapter, into the mail early to: **John Kelsoe, 1654 County Road 606, Enterprise, AL 36330.**

17 September: Call to arms for Color Guard Members and others to help support Glenn Nivens at a special grave marking and cemetery dedication in Harpersville at 2 PM. Contact John Wallace (347-0661) for additional information.

HMS Jersey

The 64-gun *Jersey* was built in 1735 during a time of peace in England. Her first battle was in Admiral Edward Vernon's {known by the nickname of "Old Grog" as he prescribed a ration of rum to each man on his ships} ill-fated attack on the Spanish port of Cartagena, Colombia, around the beginning of the War of Jenkins's Ear. {One of a series of wars caused by colonial rivalries in the new world. The Spanish excluded English traders from their American colonies, leading to smuggling and resentment. In 1738, Captain Robert Jenkins appeared before Parliament with his ear, which he claimed had been cut off by the Spanish when they boarded his ship seven years earlier. War was declared in 1739.} The *Jersey* next saw action in the Seven Years' War and she also took part in the Battle of Lagos under Admiral Edward Boscawen on August 18-19, 1759. In March of 1771, the masts of the aging warship were taken down and



she was then converted into a hospital ship in Wallabout Bay, New York, which would later become the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Despite her battle honors, however, the *HMS Jersey* will always be remembered as an infamous British prison ship.

Following the Battle of Long Island in August, 1776, and the fall of New York City soon after, the British found thousands of prisoners on their hands, and the available prisons in New York filled up quickly. Then, as the British began seizing hundreds of seamen off privateers, they turned a series of aging vessels into maritime prisons. There were at least 16 of these floating prisons anchored in the bay on the East River for most of the war, and they were sinkholes of filth, vermin, infectious disease and despair. The ships were uniformly bad, but the most notorious was the *Jersey*. Virtually stripped except for a flagstaff and a derrick for taking on supplies, the *Jersey* floated, rudderless about 100 yards offshore. Its portholes were closed and supplanted by a series of small holes, 20 inches squares crossed with two iron bars. It has been reported that there were more than a thousand men at a time packed onto the *Jersey*. They died with such regularity that when their British jailers opened the hatches in the morning, their first greeting to the men below was: "Rebels, turn out your dead!"

In 1778, Robert Sheffield of Stonington, Connecticut, escaped from one of the prison ships, and told his story in the Connecticut Gazette. He was one of 350 prisoners held in a compartment below the decks. "Their sickly countenances and ghastly looks were truly horrible," the newspaper wrote on July 10, without identifying the ship. "Some swearing and blaspheming; some crying, praying, and wringing their hands, and stalking about like ghosts; others delirious, raving, and storming; some groaning and dying -- all panting for breath; some dead and corrupting air so foul at times that a lamp could not be kept burning, by reason of which the boys were not missed till they had been dead ten days."

There were 4,435 battle deaths during the Revolutionary War, according to the Department of Defense. One historian estimated that there were between 7,000 and 8,000 prison ship deaths, but other sources claim even more. A letter-writer from Fishkill in 1783 claimed that on the *Jersey* alone, 11,644 died. Although that figure is unlikely for the one ship, it is reasonable for all the prison ships and is a figure which is frequently cited. As many as eight corpses a day were buried from the *Jersey* alone before the British surrendered at Yorktown on October 19, 1781. When the British evacuated New York at the end of 1783, the *Jersey* was abandoned in the harbor.

In her Widow's Revolutionary War Pension Application of April, 1846, Avis Baldwin provided the following account. *That she was the widow of Nathan Baldwin who was a private seaman or mariner in the War of the Revolution that he shipped on board the American Brig of War* {The *Brig of War* was one of the first ships designed and built by Yankee craftsmen to out sail and outmaneuver the Old World sailing ships. They were commissioned as privateers to ravage enemy shipping along the Atlantic seaboard during the Revolutionary War. The British were so impressed with their speed and ease of handling that they copied a captured brig and built some for their own navy.} *New Defense at New Haven and state aforesaid on or about the 5th of September 1779 under command of Captain Charles Pond of said Milford and that on or about the 20th of October following, said New Defense attacked a British Man of War called the Vengeance* {Launched in 1774, this 74 gun ship first saw action in the American Revolution in July 1778. She had an active career during the Revolution, mainly in the West Indies taking part in numerous actions and skirmishes. She too eventually became a prison ship in January, 1808 in Portsmouth, England.}, *and that after a ??? battle of an hour and a half, the New Defense was captured by the Vengeance, and her said husband with all the surviving officers and crew of the New Defense were taken as prisoners of war, and put on board the prison ship Jersey where he was confined. (He was) confined until about the 20th April, 1780 when he was exchanged and returned home to said Milford exceedingly emaciated and enfeebled by sickness and hunger.* Writing in support of her sister-in-law, Mary Baldwin Durand noted: *that he (her brother Nathan Baldwin) was so enfeebled and exceeding emaciated in consequence of his confinement and suffering while on board of said Prison Ship and that he never fully recovered his health while he lived.* Both women stated that Nathan's brother David had been also captured with the surrender of the New Defense, but he had died aboard the *Jersey*.

Nathan Baldwin was born in November 1755 and did not marry Avis Durand until after the war in 1784. Their first son was named David, probably in memory of his brother who died aboard the *HMS Jersey*. Nathan Baldwin died in March 1803 - not yet 48 years old. His wife Avis, who did receive a pension in 1848, had outlived her husband by 48 years when she died in February 1851. Nathan Baldwin is David M. Jonas, Jr.'s 4th grandfather.