



The Musket Report

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



John Ray Fuller, President (fullers65shelby@aol.com)
334 347 - 4213

John R. Wallace, Editor (johnrx@snowhill.com)
December, 2006 334 347 - 0661

Chartering and Installation of Officers Banquet

The Chapter's annual Chartering and Installation of Officers Banquet will be held **14 December 2006** at the Rawls Hotel. Social time at **6:30 PM** with the banquet starting at **7:00 PM**. This is a "By Reservation Only" event at a cost of \$13.50 per person. Your reservation form and check should be sent to John Ray Fuller as soon as possible. Ted Urquhart will be our special guest speaker: door-prizes, a raffle along with the presentation of a Law Enforcement Award and membership recognition are all planned for the evening. At the same time our new 2007 officers will be installed:

John Fuller - President
Jack Oden - Vice-President
Bruce Taylor - Secretary
John Kelsoe - Treasurer
John Wallace - Registrar
Joe Graves - Historian
Rex Everage - Chaplain
Andy Spann - Sgt-at-Arms

The chapter has had a very busy and successful year, and this event represents the culmination of a year of hard work by the compatriots of the chapter. Certainly an ideal way to start the Holiday Season and demonstrate our support of all our new and former chapter officers.

New Member



The Chapter wants to extend its congratulations to **Christopher Alford** for the recent approval of his membership application. As some may remember Christopher helped with one of the clean up days at the Wright Chapel Cemetery. His application was based on his decent from Francis Cypert, Jr. and was approved 19 October 2006 - what a day to have your SAR application approved - the 225th anniversary of Yorktown!!

Christopher does live in Kentucky, but is down this way to visit his grandmother on occasions.

State Convention

The ALSSAR Annual State Convention is scheduled for **February 16 - 17, 2007** at the Drury Inn in Montgomery. Room reservations need to be made NLT 16 Jan 2007 to obtain the special \$64.00/ night room rate. A reservation form and information was included in the last state newsletter or you can down load the pertinent information from the state web site <www.alssar.org>. New state officers will be installed at this meeting and PG Nathan White will be in attendance along with several other general officers. The Chapter would like to have a good showing at the meeting and everyone is encouraged to plan to attend. Certainly a great time to meet our general officers, and the new state leadership.

2007 Dues

While dues collections for 2007 have gone very well, Chapter Treasurer John Kelsoe reports that there are a few compatriots who have yet to submit payments for 2007. If you have not done so already, please get that \$50.00 check payable to the Wiregrass Chapter into the mail as soon as possible: **John Kelsoe, 1654 County Road 606, Enterprise, AL 36330**. It is your individual support that allows the chapter to be involved in so many different programs within the area. Your timely submission of dues will preclude unnecessary work on our chapter secretary and treasurer during the holiday season. Thanks!!

Chapter Wreath Presentation

At a grave marking program in Duplin County, NC jointly sponsored by the North Carolina and Georgia Societies to honor four patriots, former Wiregrass Chapter



President Jim Gilmer presented the Chapter wreath and brought greetings from our group. The program honored Elizabeth White Grimes, James Grimes, SR, Joseph and Sampson Grimes. The Grimes family members remembered were ancestors of Jim's wife, Nell Grimes Gilmer. Nell, the former regent of the John Coffee DAR Chapter, presented a wreath on behalf of the John Coffee Chapter. There son, William, a member of our chapter also attended.

The chapter wreath is available to any member who would like to represent the Chapter at a grave marking program or other patriotic event. Contact John Fuller for information.

New Application Preparation



As we identify more potential members, and work to start a new chapter in Troy, the chapter needs to train some additional compatriots so they can assist potential members with the documentation and completion of application forms. The overall appearance of the blank application form can be very daunting to a potential member, and he usually requires assistance not only with the form, but the types of documents required to support the application. If you might be interested in learning more about the application process, please contact Chapter Registrar John Wallace. You will find this to be a very interesting and rewarding experience.

Walter Buchanan Meek, Sr.

On Nov 19, 2006, the Alabama Society lost a very good friend with the death of Buck Meek. While serving with distinction as the President of the MSSSAR and as the Vice-President General of the Southern District, he will always be remembered as “Mr. GWEF”. His constant efforts through the early years of the GWEF resulted in an endowment fund valued at over \$900,000 which helps support the activities of various national committees.

Peanut Festival Parade

On Veterans Day, chapter members **Mark Steetle, Bruce Taylor** and **Andy Spann** joined members of the Tri-State Color Guard to ride on the SAR float in the National Peanut Festival Parade in Dothan. The Revolutionary War Era group received a warm reception from the crowds along with a salute from local Congressman Terry Everett. Thanks compatriots for representing the chapter at this event.

The Christmas Tree

At this time of year across the country families start thinking about putting up the traditional Christmas tree, and making plans to trim the tree with a wide variety of lights and ornaments. Many can remember going into the woods with a father or grandfather and actually cutting that special tree with which to celebrate the holiday season. In many cases this is a special event and a time to reflect upon past Christmas seasons. Often the ornaments have been handed down through the years or those special ones made by our children when they were very young or even one with the name engraved of a long departed special pet. There is not one among us who has not suffered through the frustration of trying to determine which “Twinkie Bulb” is dead, because none of the lights on the string would illuminate when plugged into the wall socket!! The Christmas tree is relatively new in the way we celebrate the Christmas season in this country and, like so many of our holiday traditions, its roots can be traced back to pagan times.

For many very early Northern European’s the winter solstice occurring around the 21st of December was extremely frightening. The sun was very low in the sky, the days were short and cold, and many believed that the sun was dying. To urge the sun to return, many early Europeans would build huge bonfires to encourage the sun to return. Early Scandinavians are said to have prayed to the fir tree because, unlike other trees, it did not appear to die and loose its leaves during the winter months. One legend has it that Martin Luther was the first to bring a fir tree into the house and decorate it. As the story goes Luther (1483-1546) was returning home one wintry night when he saw the stars twinkling in the sky through the tree branches. He was amazed by the sight and upon arriving at home, he was eager to tell his family about it. To help them understand, he went into the woods, and cut down a small fir tree. The early church reformer then brought it indoors and decorated it with candles. The custom soon spread across Germany and other areas of Northern Europe.



Early European Christmas tree lighted with candles.

The Christmas tree first came to England with the German Georgian Kings. At this time also, German merchants living in England would also decorated their homes with a Christmas tree. The British public were not fond of the German Monarchy, so did not readily copy the fashions at Court, which is why the Christmas tree did not establish in Britain at that time. In 1846, the popular Royals, Queen Victoria and her German Prince, Albert, were shown in the Illustrated London News with their children standing around a Christmas tree. Unlike the previous Royal family, Victoria was very popular with her subjects, and what was done at Court immediately became fashionable - not only in Britain, but with fashion-conscious East Coast American Society.

The Christmas tree tradition first most likely came to the United States with Hessian troops during the American Revolution, or with German immigrants to Pennsylvania and Ohio. Did a celebration around a Christmas tree on a bitter cold Christmas at Trenton, New Jersey, turn the tide for Colonial forces in 1776? According to legend, Hessian mercenaries were so reminded of home by a candlelit evergreen tree that they abandoned their guard posts to eat, drink and be merry. Washington attacked that night and defeated them.

To New England Puritans, Christmas was sacred. European Christmas traditions such as the Yule log, holly, mistletoe, and Christmas trees were viewed as “heathen traditions”, and the only proper celebration should be attending church. This joyless Christmas tradition continued well into the 19th century. In 1870 Boston schools remained open on Christmas Day and students who stayed at home could be expelled.

By the 1890’s the popularity of a Christmas tree was on the rise within the United States. Where the Europeans tended to use smaller trees, Americans wanted ones that were tall enough to reach the ceiling. Most decorations were hand made and garlands of dyed pop corn interspersed with nuts and berries were added to the tree. Hoops to hold candles were developed to light the tree. With electric bulbs the tree could be lit longer, and much more safely!

However you decorate your home for the Christmas season, it is hoped it will be a season full of joy, new memories and an opportunity to see both old friends and family members!

Merry Christmas and



Happy New Year!