



The Musket Report

Newsletter of the Wiregrass Chapter, ALSSAR
Enterprise, Alabama

"Home of the Boll Weevil Monument"

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June Meeting

The June meeting of the Wiregrass Chapter will be at 11:30 a.m. at the Charleston House on 19 June. Please let President Oden know NLT THAN Tuesday, June 17 if you will be attending so reservations can be made. Cost will be \$15 per person. John Kelsoe will present the program on his Revolutionary War ancestor.

Our May 15 meeting program was entitled "The American Soldiers: A Personal Perspective" by Mike Kozlowski. Mike dressed in period costume portraying a New England Minuteman and gave a dramatic monologue as that soldier sharing his thoughts on the events from 1763 to 1781. It was truly a very dramatic program thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who attended.



Pres. Oden presents Mike Kozlowski with a gift certificate

William Wicker Grave Marking

This successful event was held Sunday, May 4 at the Ramah Primitive Baptist Church Cemetery in the Josie Community in Northern Pike County. Approximately 80 people attended the event. ALSSAR State President Jim Wardlaw made brief remarks and presented the State Wreath. About ten descendants of Wicker attended the dedication. Mrs. Karen Bullard, gave the family salute and her brother, J.C. Connor, spoke following the unveiling of the headstone. Floral tributes were presented by the Southern District, SAR; the Wiregrass Chapter; the Tri-State Chapter; the John Coffee Chapter of the D.A.R., and the Dothan, D.A.R. chapter. Compatriot Nelson Gwinn performed Amazing Grace on the bagpipes and Luke White, youth member of the Wiregrass Chapter, performed TAPS. State Chaplain, Dr. Walter Reeder, delivered the invocation and benediction. A reception was held for all attendees in the fellowship hall of the church. A great big thank you those members who were involved in preparing and carrying out this event. The Wicker family descendants were most appreciative of this honor of their patriot ancestor.



Left:
Bob McLendon,
John Kelsoe, and
Andy Spann fire
a three-volley
musket salute

Below:
Advancing the
colors -ALSSAR
Color Guard and
Boy Scout Troop
116.

ALSSAR News

The Board of Managers Meeting was held May 17 at the historic courthouse of Columbiana. Those from our chapter attending the meeting were President Jack Oden and State Committee JROTC Awards chairman John Ray Fuller. Among the items of note presented at this meeting were the following: SAR members can now subscribe annually on your home computer to Footnote.com for a \$19 discount off the regular subscription service.

To take advantage of this opportunity go to <http://www.footnote.com/SAR>. Footnote .com contains military records from the Revolutionary War and the Civil War, Naturalization Records, and Personal Histories. You cannot share this information with non SAR members.





Black Revolutionary Seamen

Unlike the Continental Army, the Navy recruited both free and enslaved blacks from the very start of the Revolutionary War -- partly out of desperation for seamen of any color, and partly because many blacks were already experienced sailors, having served in British and state navies, as well as on merchant vessels in the North and the South.

To both the enslaved and free, privately owned vessels were more attractive than the Continental or state navies. For runaway slaves, there was less chance of being detected by slave catchers, and for all crew members, there were greater financial rewards. Philadelphia's free blacks, for instance, were more inclined to serve on privateers than in Pennsylvania navy.

One of the most famous black seamen was James Forten, who enlisted on the privateer Royal Louis as a powder boy, was captured along with his ship's crew, and spent time on a British prison barge before being released in a prisoner exchange. Forten went on to become a successful businessman and a leader of Philadelphia's African American community.

Although Black seamen performed a range of duties, usually the most menial ones, they were particularly valued as pilots. Others served as shipyard carpenters and laborers. Both Maryland's and Virginia's navies made extensive use of blacks, even purchasing slaves specifically for wartime naval service. Virginia's state commissioner noted that it was cheaper to hire blacks than whites, and that whites could get exemption from military service by substituting a slave.

In his memoirs, U.S. Navy Commodore James Barron, who served as a captain in the Virginia navy during the war, recalled several black men among the "courageous patriots who... in justice to their merits should not be forgotten." He mentions four slaves: Harry, Cupid, Aberdeen (who subsequently befriended Patrick Henry and was freed by the Virginia General Assembly) and the "noble African" pilot known as "Captain" Mark Starlins.

In 1775, Jeremiah Thomas, a pilot, fisherman, "and Free Negroe of considerable property," was hanged and burned in Charleston for allegedly plotting an insurrection, timed to coincide with the arrival of the new British governor. Henry Laurens, a slave trader and the president of South Carolina's patriotic First Provincial Congress, reported that Thomas was "puffed up by prosperity, ruined by luxury and debauchery and grown to an amazing pitch of vanity and ambition."

Two slaves, one of them Thomas' brother-in-law, testified that Thomas had urged other blacks to assist the British Royal Navy in capturing Charleston harbor, assuring them that "the War was come to help the poor Negroes."

Thomas was not the only African American seaman to ally himself with the British. Many royal naval vessels were piloted by blacks -- some of them runaways, other enslaved to loyalist masters, and still others pressed into service. Possibly a quarter of the slaves who escaped to the British made their way onto ships, some signing onto the ships' crews or joining marauding expeditions of bandits commonly referred to as "Banditti."

From Africans in American Resource Bank – Part 2: The Revolutionary Period
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2p51.html>

REMINDER

There will be NO meeting in July. The next meeting will be the annual family picnic Saturday, August 16, at 11:30 A.M., at a place to be determined.

Constitution Week, 18 September, 11:30 A.M., at the Fellowship Hall of St. Luke United Methodist Church, Enterprise