



SAR Alabama



Volume 39, Number 1

March, 2025

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear members of the Alabama Society,

It is with great honor and excitement that I address you today as the new president of our esteemed organization. I am deeply grateful for the trust and support you have shown in electing me to this position and I am committed to serving the Alabama Society with dedication and integrity.

After my installation on Feb 22, I had a couple of days to participate in several National zoom calls before packing my suitcase and heading off to National Headquarters for leadership training.

During my stay in Louisville, I was able to take in 10 National Committee Meetings plus the new trustees meeting.

The next weekend, I was invited to the Alabama State DAR meeting in Auburn. It was truly a grand event, sharing time with both DAR and CAR members from around the state.

The next week was focused on completing the Americanism reports, swearing in new officers for the Tennessee Valley chapter and a trip to Birmingham to speak to their chapter. By the weekend, it was time to head to Lebanon, Tenn., to participate in their state convention.

I am packing again to head off to

See MESSAGE, Page 2



—Photo by Janice Jennings

Outgoing ALSSAR president Michael Martin attaches the neck ribbon to newly installed president Benny Hannah at the state convention.

Hannah selected as 2025 ALSSAR president

The Alabama Society state convention was held on Feb. 21-22 at the Hoover Embassy Suites Hotel, highlighted by the induction of the 2025-2026 state officers.

Prior to the kickoff of the convention, two well-attended educational workshops were conducted by ALSSAR registrar Ron Bearden on the topic “How to Complete the SAR Application,” followed by a live Zoom call with noted genealogist Aimee Cross’ presentation of “Exciting Things: New Tools for the Family

History Detective.” Both workshops were aimed at membership enhancement, not only through new sources from which to find lineage proof documents but also how to correctly cite them on the SAR application.

The significant attendance demonstrated the ALSSAR chapters are aware of the importance of sustainability through growth of our membership, one of the major themes of the convention.

See CONVENTION, Page 4

Inside this issue:

Donate to ALSSAR Endowment Fund	3
In Memory... James Solze, Mack Clark	4
Marquis de Lafayette returns to Alabama	5
ALSSAR supports Lafayette in Mississippi	6

Black Warrior River has right look in chili cookoff

The Black Warrior River chapter took advantage of an opportunity to get directly involved with the Tuscaloosa community and with other local agencies in the annual Tuscaloosa Exchange Club’s Chili Cookoff on Feb. 8.

The challenge was to create

a “chili” from the 18th century. Compatriot David Jones tapped into an excellent source for information, Victoria Brady, a former member of the ALSSAR Ladies Auxiliary.

“Victoria gave me a list of ingredients that were available and used in soups during the

American Revolution,” Jones said. Under Mrs. Brady’s guidance and suggestions, he created a very tasty “chili.”

“We made close to three gallons for the contest,” he said, “and we ran out before

See CHILI, Page 2

Message

(Continued from Page 1)

central and south Alabama to participate in Lafayette's 1824/1825 return to America, starting at Fort Mitchel and Lucas Tavern, then on to events at the Alabama State Capitol and beyond.

Looking Ahead

This year promises to be an eventful and transformative period for our society as we move forward with events that supports celebrating Lafayette's return to America in 1825 and all the preparation and planning required for our country's 250th anniversary in 2026 as well as our ongoing planning and fund raising for SAR's first Congress sponsored by a district. (Southern District consisting of Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi & Louisiana)

I am eager to implement initiatives that will enhance our engagement with the community, foster community spirit and strengthen our collective impact, increase the number of schools that work with us through our youth programs and educate chapter members via our online SAR University.

My focus will be on the following key areas:

- **Educational Programs:** We will introduce and make available new workshops, seminars and educational events to provide our members with valuable knowledge and skills using Zoom and SAR University.
- **Community Outreach:** Building connections with local communities and other like-minded groups will be a priority. We aim to collaborate on projects that benefit our state and create lasting positive relationships.
- **Membership Growth:** Expanding our membership base is crucial. We will launch campaigns to attract new members and ensure that our society continues to thrive, including programs like "Half Price April" for new members and the new awards program for DAR members recruiting for SAR.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Creating spaces for networking and professional growth will be a cornerstone of our activities. This year, more focus will be placed on chapter members and recognition for the things that they do for SAR.

A Call to Action

I invite each of you to actively participate in our upcoming events and initiatives. Your involvement is essential to the success and vibrancy of our society. Together, we can achieve great things and make a significant difference in Alabama.

Closing Remarks

I want to express my gratitude for your unwavering support and enthusiasm. I am confident that, with your collaboration, we can navigate this year with success and bring our society to new heights. Let us embrace this journey with optimism and determination.

Thank you for your commitment to the Alabama Society.

—Benny Hannah



—Photo courtesy of David Jones

Black Warrior River compatriot David Jones, left, president Cade McCool hold first-place trophy.

Chili

(Continued from Page 1)

the end of the event."

Black Warrior River chapter president Cade McCool spent two months hand sewing the oversized "Betsy Ross" flag for the backdrop and the logo theme "Don't Tread on Our Chili."

"From the time we walked into the door and through setting up our booth, people were complimenting us," McCool said.

The chapter used this opportuni-

ty to jump start a new recruiting campaign for SAR. Recruiting cards designed by past ALSSAR president Jim Griffith were handed out to potential members along with invitations to the chapter's monthly meetings. Stickers promoting "Revolutionary War Rarities" were handed out to kids and adults alike.

The result? The chapter won first place in the category "Best Costume."

—David Jones



—Photo courtesy of Benny Hannah

ALSSAR supports CAR chapters

Sarah Cagle, Alabama CAR president, joined ALSSAR president Benny Hannah at a CAR meeting on Jan. 12 at Latham Church in Huntsville as Hannah presented a medal, certificate and check to CAR chapter presidents from the John Sevier chapter in Athens and the John Hunt chapter in Huntsville.



—Photo by Janice Jennings

ALSSAR officers installed for 2025-26

The ALSSAR officers for 2025 are, from left: Rev. Buddy Irving, chaplain, Black Warrior River; Jack Tribble, recording secretary, Birmingham; Scott Martin, treasurer, Cahaba-Coosa; Ron Bearden, registrar, Little River; Ron Dains, vice president, Gen. John A. Elmore; Benny Hannah, president, Tennessee Valley; Bill Carter, secretary, Cahaba-Coosa; past ALSSAR president Michael Martin; Earl Gillian, genealogist, Gen. John A. Elmore; and Jay Maples, chancellor, Tennessee Valley. Not pictured are historian Bill Dean and sergeant-at-arms Joe Barker.

Consider a donation to the ALSSAR Endowment Fund

In 2015 the Alabama Society established an endowment with the Community Foundation of South Alabama for the purpose of raising funds for the ALSSAR youth programs. Over the years the endowment has grown tremendously from its beginning.

The best way for the endowment to continue this upward trend is for more donations to be made.

The easiest way for members or chapters to donate (tax deductible) is through the society website at www.alssar.org. Click on the “more” tab and scroll down to the endowment link. A letter from the committee chairman explains everything about the endowment and links to the Community Foundation of South Alabama’s website to donate. If donating online with a credit card or Pay Pal is not

for you, there are sample letters to send by mail when writing a check.

If every chapter would contribute to the endowment via memorials of members who pass, regardless of the amount, ever little bit helps. Donations are accepted by anyone and are not limited to members of the Sons of the American Revolution. If your business or corporate office is looking for tax deductible donations, please suggest the ALSSAR Endowment Fund. The Community Fund of South Alabama will send an official receipt to each individual or business that donates.

Please consider donating annually, monthly, memorials, or special occasions.

—David Jones

In Memory...

James Wesley Solze Jr. Leon Malcolm Clark

The Gen. Richard Montgomery and Gen. John Archer Elmore chapters recently lost two valuable members who passed away.

JAMES WESLEY SOLZE JR., who passed away on March 15, had been a member of the Gen. Richard Montgomery chapter since 2008. He was 85.

Solze was a graduate of Green Springs (Ohio) High and Ohio State University. He retired from the United States Air Force and the state of Alabama Department of Archives and History.

An accountant that spent many years in several private businesses after retirements, he had served on the Maxwell Credit Union board of directors for 38 years.

He was a long-time member of Eastern Hills Baptist Church and had the opportunity to serve the Lord as a deacon, Sunday School teacher and Royal Ambassador leader and coach.

Solze is survived his wife of 57 years, Linda Monk Solze; his daughter Sonja Peaspanen (Tom) and son J. Wesley Solze III (Ginger); his grandchildren, Thomas and Lauren Peaspanen, Kaylee Hart (Michael), and Kristopher (Lauren) Baker; great granddaughters, Riley, Indie, and Toni; as well as her sister, Marlene Jasper.

Services were held on March 24 at Alabama National Cemetery in Montevallo.

LEON MALCOLM CLARK, or Mack, passed away peacefully on Jan. 6, just 11 days shy of his 87th birthday.

A founding member of the Gen. John Archer Elmore chapter, Clark was a local historian in Autauga County who knew just about everybody.

Clark was a founding member of the Autauga County Genealogical Society and was a member of the Old Autauga Historical So-

ciety. He was always the one to ask about old cemeteries. He had explored just about every remote one in this county.

In recent years, he was the driving force for OAHs adopting the old Taylor Cemetery at Autaugaville. He donated the starter funds to kick off the preservation effort.

Clark had deep roots in Autauga County as a descendant of William Hightower Sr (1746-1837), who has one of the oldest graves (unmarked) at Ivy Creek Cemetery. He also descends from Nelson Clark, Henry Davis Holmes, the Macon family, McGraw family and Price family.

He had served on the Autauga County GOP executive committee for many years and was elected to serve on the state Republican Executive Committee. Local and state officer candidates would contact him to get advice on how they were being received by voters in Autauga County.

Dedicated to the ideals of the SAR, he played a crucial role in disseminating the Articles of Association of 1774 to numerous school children throughout the state and served as the chairman for the chapter's poster contest which aimed to foster an appreciation for patriotic history among students in Autauga County.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Nadine Curry Clark; his son, Dr. L. Malcolm Clark Jr. (Dr. Manay); his daughter, Athenia Clark-Tanner Weldon (Glen); and five grandchildren — Logan Pool (Ariel), Bailie Hildebrand (Dave), Charlotte Higginbotham (Alex), Cooper Tanner (Kameryn), and Reagan Tanner.

Services were held on Jan. 9 at Ridouts Prattville Chapel, with burial to follow at Prattville Memory Gardens. Honorary pallbearers were members of the Autauga Genealogical Society and members of the Gen. John A. Elmore chapter.

Convention

(Continued from Page 1)

Southern District Vice President General David Billings opened the meeting with a report that included linked topics of membership recruitment, retention, and reinstatement; the importance of supporting the 2027 New Orleans Southern District Congress; and increasing program involvement by all chapters.

Southern District Secretary General John Fulwider presented his report which included an update on the planning for the 2027 Southern District Congress to be held at the New Orleans Marriott, 555 Canal Street, New Orleans, on July 9-15.

Following Dr. Fulwider's report, each of the Southern District state presidents provided reports on the major events, programs and activities in their respective states, one of which is Lafayette 200 commemorating the Marquis de Lafayette's "Farewell Tour" and retracing his original tour as the "guest of a nation" made during 1824-1825 — encompassing visits to 24 states, 13 months, and some 6,000 miles!

Also part of the Saturday business meeting were reports from NSSAR Secretary General Michael J. Elston, Chancellor General Edmon McKinley and Librarian General Keith Wessinger.

Elston gave a presentation on the state of the NSSAR and spoke on the preparations for the upcoming America 250 celebration, which included two special items that will soon be avail-

able on the SAR Website Store — an SAR Henry Rifle with special engravings relating to America 250 and an SAR bourbon that will similarly honor America 250. He proudly shared that the state of Kentucky has made a \$5 million grant toward the SAR Library in Louisville, leaving the remaining goal of \$15 million. His closing remarks were to embrace change by elevating our brand and advancing our principles through engaging local media, educating and serving our communities and focused citizen awards and project.

The business meeting included a report from treasurer Scott Martin that the ALSSAR fundraising pledge for the 2027 Southern District Congress is \$15,000; past NSSAR President General Bruce Pickette reporting on the 2025 ALSSAR Financial Forecast and line item estimates; the importance of chapter liability insurance and risk exposures, particularly black powder used by the Color Guard; and creating an ALSSAR flag committee to design an appropriate flag for the Color Guard and all state chapters.

Pickette made a motion that was approved to donate \$5,000 to the American Village Independence Hall construction project.

Another issue was the importance of chapter members being aware of the SAR's Youth Protection Training module on the NSSAR's website in the SAR University.

See CONVENTION, Page 7

Marquis de Lafayette returns to Alabama!



—Photos courtesy of Jason Williams



The Alabama Society and the Richard Henry Lee chapter were well represented on March 30 when the Bicentennial of Lafayette's Fairwell Tour crossed the Chattahoochee River into Alabama at Fort Mitchell. Reenactors including Michael Halbert as Lafayette, John Land as Indian agent John Crowell and Dr. Gary McIntosh as Creek Chief Chilly McIntosh joined with the SAR, DAR and CAR to recreate Lafayette's 1825 meeting at Fort Mitchell with Muskogee Creeks, who entertained him with stickball and other ceremonies before he continued his journey through Creek territory and into the state of Alabama along the Federal Road to Montgomery and later on to Mobile.



ALSSAR compatriots support Lafayette's return to Mississippi



—Photos courtesy of David Jones



ALSSAR compatriots took part in Lafayette's return to Mississippi as the Mississippi Society incorporated the reenactment into their annual meeting in Natchez on March 27-29. Black Warrior River chapter compatriot David Jones took charge of the Color Guard for three grave markings (one being the first Territorial Governor for Mississippi/Alabama) and the inspection of troops by Gen. Lafayette (below). Compatriot Joe Barker led the Honor Guard with members from the Alabama Society that included Cade McCool, Don Wolfe and (at left) Buddy Irving, Randal Jennings and Bill Somers. MSSAR compatriot Jerry Lilly portrayed Lafayette and Julien Icher portrayed Lafayette's personal assistant, Auguste Levasseur.





—Photo courtesy of Benny Hannah

Law Enforcement Medal

Tennessee Valley chapter committee chairman Benny Hannah, left, and Color Guard member Lawrence Hillis, right, present the Law Enforcement Commendation Medal and certificate to Huntsville Police Officer Joel Stephens on Jan. 7 at the Huntsville Police Department.

Convention

(Continued from Page 1)

Color Guard and Black Warrior River chapter member David Jones delivered a powerful and necessary message to all attendees about why this training and awareness is so important. Discussion also included the need for a formal NSSAR position on the use of membership background checks.

The nominating committee of Edmon McKinley, Jim Maples, Bill Daniels and David Jones presented a slate of officers for 2025, including president Benny Hannah, vice president Ron Dains, secretary Bill Carter, recording secretary Jack Tribble, treasurer Scott Martin, registrar Ron Bearden, genealogist Earl Gillian, chaplain Rev. Buddy Irving, chancellor Jay Maples, historian Bill Dean and sergeant-at-arms Joe Barker.

At the Saturday evening banquet, ALSSAR president Michael Martin recognized chapters and individuals who achieved recruiting milestones.

The compatriot with the largest number of first line sponsorships of new members in 2024 was Ray Vaughn Cassell of the Tennessee Valley chapter with 21. Little River's Ron Bearden was second with 19, followed by Ronald Frank Bridges of the Tennessee Valley with 10.

There was a tie among the compatriots with the largest number of new supplemental applications approved in 2024 between Charles Otis McMurry of the Tennessee Valley chapter and Charles Roberts Stone of the Little River chapter, each with four.

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The Tennessee Valley chapter was honored for adding the largest number (38) of new members in 2024, while the Black Warrior River chapter was honored for the largest number of retained members, keeping all of its members between 2023 and 2024.

The SAR Patriot Medal, the highest medal that may be presented to a compatriot by a state society, was awarded to past ALSAR president James K. Griffith Jr. and ALSSAR Color Guard commander Joseph D. Barker Jr.

The SAR Medal of Distinguished Service, presented to a compatriot in recognition for conspicuous service to the state society and to the state president, was awarded to Ron Bearden. The Meritorious Service Medal was awarded to William E. Daniel Jr. and

Ronald N. Dains. The Silver Roger Sherman Medal, presented to a compatriot in appreciation of outstanding service to the society, was awarded to James E. Dotherow, Robert L. Anderson Jr. and Benny H. Hannah.

The Silver Henry Knox Medal, awarded to a compatriot or non-SAR member to recognize a specific outstanding contribution, achievement, accomplishment or deed that advances the mission of the state society, was awarded to Earl Gillian Jr., Randal Scot Jennings, Donald Jay Howton and Jack D. Tribble.

The Silver Good Citizenship Medal, recognizing outstanding and unusual patriotic achievement and service, was presented posthumously to Dr. J. Fred Olive III.

The SAR Martha Washington Medal was awarded to Mary Taylor Griffith, while the SAR Medal of Appreciation (presented to a DAR member) was awarded to Malinda Williams. The Molly Pitcher Medal, presented to a woman who has supported the SAR Color Guard, was presented to Janice Jennings and Susan Sommers.

The SAR Daughters of Liberty Medal, the highest lady's medal awarded for service to the SAR, was presented to Jessica Martin.

The Heroism Medal, recognizing outstanding bravery and self-sacrifice in the face of imminent danger, will be presented at a later date to Deputy Jonathan Eric Terrell from Etowah County.

The Outstanding Citizenship Award, presented to deserving students in recognition of high ideals of character and citizenship, was awarded to Sarah Cagle. The SAR Bronze Good Citizenship Medal, awarded in recognition of noteworthy services to the community, was presented to Children of the American Revolution state president Thomas Barton. The Silver Children of the American Revolution-Sons of the American Revolution Medal of Appreciation was presented to Alabama CAR senior state president Audrey Armstrong.

The NSSAR Youth Education Medal, awarded to a compatriot after 15 educational presentations have been made, was presented to Robert L. Anderson Jr., who has made 53 classroom presentations since 2021.

The Service to Veterans Award was presented to Harry Sesamen of the Cahaba-Coosa chapter and James Henderson of the Tennessee Valley chapter.

The Silver Color Guard Medal was awarded to Scott Martin.

—Jack Tribble



—Photo courtesy of William Rozier

Cheaha chapter, American Legion post gather to discuss flag history

Cheaha chapter members join the members of American Legion Post 111 at the March 12 meeting of the Cheaha chapter. Preston Hale, judge advocate of Post 111 along with other Post members, presented an “Adventure into Flag History.”



—Photos courtesy of William Rozier

Ben Franklin visits Cheaha chapter

ALSSAR president Michael Martin, dressed in colonial attire, delivered a presentation on “Ben Franklin and Freemasonry” at the monthly meeting of the Cheaha chapter in the Anniston-Calhoun County Public Library on Feb. 12. Martin posed with chapter compatriots, above, and with chapter vice president Ron Burson, far left in photo at left, and chapter president Eric Sloughfy. Following the presentation, Martin was presented the National Society’s Challenge Coin by Burson and Sloughfy.





—Photo courtesy of Jason Williams

Richard Henry Lee chapter honors Lafayette

Compatriot Sid Harden, above right with chapter president Will Mooty, presented a very informative and interesting presentation on “Favorite Father: Lafayette’s Journey Through the Creek Nation in 1825” during the Richard Henry Lee chapter meeting in March.



—Photo courtesy of Jason Williams

Compatriots discuss George Washington

Bill Sauser provided a presentation on the “Presidential Precedents Set by George Washington” at the February meeting of the Richard Henry Lee chapter. Compatriot Sauser, above right, is pictured with his wife and chapter president Will Mooty, far left.

—Photo courtesy of William Rozier

Cheaha’s new member

Cheaha chapter vice president Ron Burson presented a program on “Ben Franklin, a Renaissance Man” at the Jan. 8 meeting in the Anniston-Calhoun County Public Library. Burson, far right, is pictured with one of the chapter’s newest compatriots, Lamar Yarbrough.



**ALABAMA SOCIETY, SONS OF
THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALSSAR

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If you're submitting material for the next newsletter, please e-mail your pictures and information to timgaylesar@gmail.com or send information about your chapter's activities or upcoming events by June 10 to Tim Gayle at 3104 Cabot Street, Montgomery, AL 36110.



—Photo courtesy of Benny Hannah

ALSSAR, American Village continue their partnership to educate America's youth

ALSSAR president Benny Hannah, left, and American Village liaison Bill Daniel, right, present a donation to American Village CEO and president Alan Miller in early April. The SAR's support has allowed nearly 750,000 students to experience the American Village since it opened in 1999.