

## Reflections On the Ohio SAR Participation in the 241<sup>st</sup> Celebratory Surrender of Lord Cornwallis to George Washington



'Twas a Grande and wondrous day, Wednesday October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The Continentals and militiamen were glorious as “a mighty army with banners”. Not a cloud in the sky, virtually no wind, and 53 degrees; it was like a Hollywood day. Thousands lined the battlefields to behold the victory parade. We mustered between 9-10 am. at Ye Olde Historic Episcopal Church in the old Yorktown Village. Then our national commander called us to form ranks, we posted colors and formed ranks accordingly, a contingency force that numbered about 70 men. At 10 am. a beautiful tribute service was held in honor of Admiral Nelson, and a wreath laying ceremony followed. Many dignitaries were a part of this great event.

The national Color Guard Commander gave orders to form up for the parade. As ranks and columns were formed, the sounds of fife and drum were heard, and the various colors of each State were raised. The command came to, ‘take care’. Then we heard, ‘fix bayonets’, followed by, ‘shoulder firelocks’, and we began to march.

The Ohio SAR representation was strong. The following names represent those from our great State, most of them involved in the parade with the exception of the wives and Jack Bredenfoerder, our State President, who had 2 days earlier slipped on rainy concrete and broke his arm.

The names of the Ohio contingency are as follows:

*Jack & Laurie Bredenfoerder  
Steve & Patty Kaplan  
Ed Bonniwell  
Bob Hill  
Troy & Christine Bailey*

*Gary & Mary Duffield  
Gregg & Kathe Ballman  
Steve & Venie Hinson  
Bruce & Robin Bennett*

As we moved forward and then did a right wheel, hundreds of people lined the narrow road taking pictures and clapping. Most of us felt transported back to that glorious moment when Lord Cornwallis surrendered to George Washington. The British



had only about 5,500 fighting men. Malaria and small pox was in their camp. They had arrived with only what they could have carried, having chased Nathaniel Greene and his small army of a thousand continentals, and a thousand militiamen, from Savannah to the Dan River that forms the southern border of Virginia. Two days earlier, after a 3-week siege, and unrelenting cannon fire, with Washington commanding 21,000 men, Cornwallis, shamefaced, hid in his cave on the banks of the York River and sent an underling to surrender his sword.

The battlefield itself resonated with the sounds of cannon and musket, and clashing bayonets. It was at Yorktown that General George Washington drew a line in the sand. "Either they will surrender, or they will die, the choice is theirs." On October 17<sup>th</sup>, the

white flag went up; and as the French General Rochambeau told Washington at Princeton, "If we put our forces together and push south, and defeat Lord Cornwallis, we will defeat England."

In some ways our nation was born on that day of victory at Yorktown. It's an irony of history that the State which had virtually no fighting in it gave audience to the great battle that ended the American Revolution.

Other wonderful things happened. I had the privilege of bearing witness as our State Color Guard Commander, Bob Hill, who has given extraordinary leadership, received an amazing award, "The National Von Stueben Color Guard Medal" awarded to him by our State President Jack Bredenfoerder. As you can see from the picture, Jack held the ceremony from his bedside with a broken arm and heavily medicated.



By mid-day the event was over and many of us had lunch on the banks of the York River, settling in at various restaurants. That night the Ohio contingency gathered for a

sumptuous repast in Uniform at the King's Arms Tavern, and it was, "Finger licking good." While it wasn't exactly a 'King's meal at a peasant's price', it was a King's meal to be sure. Also note some of the pictures: Dr. Bonniwell, former Ohio State Chaplain, is seen standing at the pulpit at the old Episcopal church, exhorting like the Chaplains of the American Revolution; and notice the picture of Gregg Ballman, facing me in the ranks back of our line. Also note the line of men forming up, and that must have been what it looked like as they marched into Battle.

Prior to the dinner, Bob Hill, Ohio State Color Guard Commander and Dr. Ed Bonniwell in full battle array and carrying weapons, walked the streets of Williamsburg and were engaged by many visitors and tourists, some of them wanted their pictures taken with us. By the time the Ohio contingency finished dinner, everyone left the Tavern and we were the last ones out. There are a few witnesses who say that not a crumb was left on the dessert plates! Divine providence was certainly in play at the Battle of Yorktown, and the Ohio SAR counted it a privilege to remember the rock from which we had been hewn. Start planning now for next year – it's coming faster than you think. This is something that you really should do.

A personal word. As we were forming ranks with the sound of fife and drum, I snapped the pictures of the men in front of me. It must have looked like this at Yorktown. Washington's army was ready; the Continentals had learned hard lessons, and had become a fighting force; and thus, those men secured victory and liberty which continues for us to this very day.



Submitted by: The Rev. Dr. R. Edgar Bonniwell  
Former Ohio SAR State Chaplain