



The Iowa Compatriot

The Journal of the Iowa Society, Sons of the American Revolution

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We the descendants of the heroes of the American Revolution, who by their sacrifice established the United States of America, reaffirm our faith in the principles of liberty and solemnly pledge to defend them against every foe.

Passing by our Past

By George DeMoss



Have you ever passed by a cemetery, but then later something tells you that you should have stopped and looked around? After passing by a small country cemetery many times, I decided to stop, check out a few names on the stones, and look at the dates. Being an SAR member has made me inquisitive.

The cemetery is located at 4400 150th Avenue, Polk City, Iowa. It is about six miles north of Polk City, or two miles southeast of Sheldahl, or a couple miles south of Slater. It is tiny, maybe two acres, and the grass is frequently mowed. Somebody is taking care of this little cemetery.

The stones are aged, and many are leaning in various directions. Some are “baby” stones without inscriptions. One grave has a bronze star with “GAR 1861 – 1865.” The cemetery is in the corner of a farm field, has no lanes, no fences, no trees, and no signs. I needed to hunt for information, and I will share my findings.

A farmer named Willie Coons provided the land for the cemetery. The cemetery is known variously as the Willie Coons Farm Cemetery, the Willie Coons Family Cemetery, the Lincoln Church Cemetery, and the Lincoln Evangelical Lutheran Church Cemetery. The Board of Trustees for Lincoln Township, Polk County, provides tax dollars for the regular grass mowing, which is the only activity in caring for the cemetery. Lynda Lehman is clerk for the Board and pointed me in the right direction. A local resident of the area said that he thought there were 32 or

more burials in the cemetery. I used internet searches to discover this little cemetery is not a secret.

The Iowa Genealogical Society included the cemetery in a 1990 project to find and document cemeteries in Iowa. The Willie Coons Farm cemetery was listed as “abandoned.” (1) The Iowa Gravestone Photo Project (an IAGenWeb special project) has some photos of course, but they also have 10 approved burial records for the cemetery. Find a Grave also lists some memorials for this cemetery. Their information is copyrighted. BillionGraves.com has a list of burials, as does PeopleLegacy.com. Look at them and decide for yourself which service you like.

If you are searching for ancestors, here is a list of burials from PeopleLegacy.com (2):

Andrew Annon	xxxx – 1877	
George Annon	1842 – 1889	
George E. Annon	xxxx – 1882	
Infant Annon	xxxx	(three of these)
Infant son Annon	xxxx – 1877	
Ingwell Annon	xxxx	
Isabele Annon	xxxx – 1892	
Anna Halverson	xxxx – 1881	
Julia Halverson	xxxx – 1892	
Melinda Halverson	xxxx – 1887	
Ole Halverson	xxxx	
Mrs. Peter Johnson	xxxx	
Peter Johnson	xxxx – 1883	
Halvor Olsen	1845 – 1872	
Carl O. Quinsland	1883 – 1884	
Infant Quinsland	1882 – 1882	
Infant Quinsland	1897 – 1897	
Knudtson E. Quinsland	xxxx – 1899	
Oliver Quinsland	xxxx	

When you look at the dates of births and deaths, you can imagine the struggles, the challenges, and the heartbreaks of the people. I noticed infants born and died, probably on the same day; a baby dated 1877 and another in 1882. The death dates were between 1872 and 1899. Probably there were additional burials later, when the world suffered through two years of influenza (Spanish flu) from 1918 to 1920. It was the first and largest pandemic the world has seen. The numbers are staggering; 500 million cases (about one third of the population) with 25 to 50 million deaths. Undoubtedly many burials occurred without funerals, without gravestones, and without cemeteries, using any way possible to expedite the burials.

In about 1830, immigrants from Norway started arriving in the United States looking for a new and better way of life, usually through agriculture. Then a few years later, immigrants from Sweden and then Denmark arrived. The new frontiers across the Midwest attracted settlers wanting to raise crops and livestock, build new towns, cities, and churches and raise families. Descendants from those early settlers in Iowa can probably be found in any state in the United States today. But you can also find concentrated populations of Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish heritage in our Iowa communities, towns, and cities. We are familiar with the names: Decorah, Lake Mills, Radcliffe, Story City, Forest City, Roland, and many more. The city of Slater, Iowa, is listed as number 46th on a list of Iowa cities according to their population of Norwegian heritage (22 percent). (3)

The SAR has helped to rejuvenate many graves and cemeteries. These cemeteries are better now than before we came. We WALK INTO OUR PAST and look for a project that we can do.

A special thank you to the public officials of Lincoln Township, Polk County and Sheldahl, Iowa for their assistance.

1. Iowa Genealogical Society, 628 E. Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50309
2. PeopleLegacy.com: This website includes a statement that they use data provided by the public, and there are errors in the data submitted. Users should be aware of that fact as genealogists will agree it is one of the pitfalls of genealogical research.
3. ZipAtlas.com: A structured collection of zip code, area code, city, and state demographic, social, and economic profiles.

George Washington's Secret Six

By Randy Lyon

With the intriguing introduction, "Washington did not really outfight the British, he simply outspied us!" (Major George Beckwith, British intelligence officer 1782-1783), Brian Kilmeade and Don Yaeger introduce us to the thrilling story of how a courageous band of five men and an unidentified woman led us to military success in the American Revolution.

The potential reader may be quick to doubt the relative importance of these intrepid souls. What about the efforts that Benjamin Franklin undertook at the French court convincing this European power to finance our war

effort? What of the prowess brought to the American side by various European military leaders? Baron Friedrich Von Steuben, a German officer, served with the Continental Army by training the forces stationed at Valley Forge during the winter of 1777-1778. Despite not speaking a bit of English, Casimir Pulaski was later called the "Father of the American Cavalry." Appointed a brigadier general in the Continental Army cavalry, by 1778 he had taken over a role as commander of the "Pulaski Legion," an independent cavalry unit composed of American and foreign recruits. The Marquis de Lafayette became a close confidante of General George Washington, and later served with distinction at the Battles of Gloucester, Barren Hill, and Monmouth. Tadeusz Kościuszko oversaw the damming of rivers and the destruction of bridges to delay the British advance. He set up the fortifications that secured the Continentals' crucial victory at the Battle of Saratoga and when transferred to the war's southern theater, he was placed in charge of building fortifications, scouting territory, and constructing troop transport boats. Baron Johann de Kalb of Germany commanded a division at Valley Forge and participated in the Battle of Camden where the 59-year-old Baron was slashed with a saber, shot three times, and repeatedly bayoneted. Taken prisoner by the British, he died three days later, supposedly after uttering the words, "I die the death I always prayed for, the death of a soldier fighting for the rights of man."

Winning generals in their decorated uniforms leading troops in parade always win admiration, and for good reason. Those who write history find it easy to point to the glories of such individuals. This, after all, was one of the generations in which valor in battle (e.g., de Kalb) was the prize. Marching in bright colored uniforms in straight lines into enemy fire was noble and the manly way of combat.

In the spirit of the last statement lies the value of remembering the importance of collecting information about the enemy. Although he may never have known of Sun Tzu, George Washington practiced the former's philosophy as stated in Chapter 13 of *The Art of War*, the importance of developing good information sources. As the patriot's control of New York slipped away, Washington realized that the American cause depended upon outmaneuvering rather than overpowering the enemy.

The path of cultivating information was deadly. Nathan Hale, an individual unfamiliar with the area he was to observe, was caught and hung in 1776. Nathaniel Sackett's attempts to establish a spy network failed in early 1777.

And that, dear readers, is where I must leave you. Washington, using a well-known tradesman, planted a rumor among British military leaders in Trenton, New Jersey, leading them to think that the revolutionaries would never attack given the losses they had suffered. Overcome with holiday "spirits" and misplaced faith in the tradesman, the Hessians were quickly beaten. Washington and his troops were buoyed by this success. Better yet, six individuals came forward to ensure, in their own clandestine way, an American victory.

Who were these heroes of American history who sought no commendation, not even being seen with an American troop? Are you perhaps a relative? Enjoy reading *George Washington's Secret Six*. I certainly have!

Dubuque's SAR Members Yearn for Spring

By Randy Lyon

One of the many projects "in the works" for Dubuque's group of SAR members is refurbishing tombstones. Linwood Cemetery has over one thousand tombstones, of which a limited number have ever seen a good cleaning. With information provided by Mike Rowley and the experience of two dedicated local stone cleaners, we are looking forward to attacking years of dirt and vegetative life with plastic cards (for scraping) and D/2 Biological Solution, a stain remover recommended for such work.

There is even a plan afoot to work with members of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War on cleaning well in advance a monument in a nearby cemetery. This will be the site of our Memorial Day celebration. The warm weather is eagerly anticipated!

The frigid weather broke in time to allow the cleanup of wreaths placed by the SAR in Dubuque's Linwood Cemetery during Wreaths Across America last month. The greenery was still full and the setting with the American flags set out by the American Legion was truly beautiful.

One of the things learned in 2022 was to get started early. A contribution toward wreaths in 2023 at Linwood has already been received. I imagine Woodland Cemetery in Des Moines has also reopened its Wreaths Across America account. Help us make 2023 an even bigger year with a contribution made to one or both cemetery funds. You can find the necessary information at www.wreathscrossamerica.org and a generous contribution would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

A Summary of Iowa's First Stark Report

By Randy Lyon

With the caveat that we have no previous reports with which to compare, society members have much to be proud of in our first Stark Report:

- a) We have a member appointed to a VA Hospital Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) committee. There is a security check involved which has been completed, but the results have not been announced. Therefore, there have been no hours served. This is an area which should see a lot of growth in the coming year.
- b) Three members visited veterans in hospitals, nursing homes, or private homes which was not covered in (a). In 2022, three members logged 4.5 hours and 317 miles accomplishing this goal.
- c) There were no gifts of personal care items donated to veterans in VA or state hospitals.
- d) A total of \$200 was donated to organizations whose primary clients were veterans. This category includes cash, checks, gift cards, and clothing.
- e) A total of 13 new magazines were donated to the Iowa Soldier's Home.
- f) There was no participation in the SAR Wounded Warriors Program.
- g) A total of 291 hours of participation and 362 miles of driving were invested by society members in recognizing or supporting veterans in cooperation with other organizations.
- h) A total of 872.5 hours of participation and 5,945 miles of travel were devoted to decorating veteran graves and attending funerals. In one instance, 24 hours and 1,101 miles were involved in participation in a veteran's funeral. In another instance, 10 hours and 1,470 miles were involved in participating in a funeral for a veteran killed in the line of duty.
- i) A total of \$545.30 was donated in the form of new or used working items to an organization whose primary clients are veterans.

The computerized form for recording this information was six pages long. Supplemental details to support each of the items above totaled seven pages. Points were assigned for each item in the report. Your society received 25,291.58 points.

The Stark report will serve as an annual yardstick by which to measure year-to-year growth. Some areas of the report should receive more attention than others. For example, the SAR Wounded Warriors category would cost our society a great deal of money presenting wounded soldiers with certificates and commemorative coins. Such an effort might not be viewed positively by all soldiers. To be reminded of their injury instead of their effort to overcome that injury might be negatively received. The loss of a leg reduced to a piece of paper and a token? Better yet, in my belief, would be a visit, as three of our members did in 2022.

Your Board of Managers welcomes your response to this report and opinions on where additional efforts can be made. I am VERY proud of our efforts as indicated by this report and salute everyone who had a role in making it possible.

Outstanding Citizenship Certificate in Dubuque, Iowa

By Randy Lyon



Reverend Rick Mihm works in an overstuffed office above the Mission Store in downtown Dubuque. Under his leadership, the goals of providing food and shelter to those in need has expanded to include a second site to be opened this month.

Flag Certificate Presentation in Ankeny, Iowa

By George DeMoss

Dave and Sherry Kubalsky of Ankeny, Iowa, were presented a flag certificate for flying Old Glory outside of their home for most of the year and lighted at night. They are a retired couple who enjoy their family and mix in some travel in their motorhome.



Dave and Sherry Kubalsky proudly display the American flag

Flag Certificate Presentations in Dubuque, Iowa

By Randy Lyon



Janet Freiburger was on duty at the Dubuque Labor Union Hall when I visited. We were both surprised because I had seen her during the summer at the wedding of her daughter Emily, a former student of mine who is now expecting. We had a good chat and she said to express her thanks to the Iowa SAR for the certificate.



Jodi Beringer of Asbury was all smiles and wanted to know all about how I found all the houses I had visited and how I got their names (county records online). She thought the project was a wonderful idea and was anxious to surprise her husband with the certificate as soon as he returned home.



They may be at home, but that's no assurance they will open the door. Milton Severson thanked me for the certificate, but said they were getting ready to leave the house and asked that I leave it at the door.



Terrence Smith used part of the stand for his mailbox for holding his flag. "Rain or shine," he said when asked when he flew the flag. "I'm proud of it."

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Let us remember our obligation to our forefathers, who gave us our Constitution, The Bill of Rights, an independent Supreme Court, and a nation of free men.