



This is NewsLetter Issue No. Three ~ For the year 2018

## The Cocked Hat

The basic *cocked hat* consisted of a dome shaped crown surrounded by a wide brim. The brim would be lifted at one, two or three points and attached to the crown by means of pinning, buttoning or lacing.

A wide brimmed hat with one 'corner' of the brim raised and attached to the crown was called a *fantail*. The fantail was usually worn with the 'cocked' corner to the back so that the remaining lowered brim would shield the eyes from the sun and rain. A wide brimmed hat with two 'corners' of the brim raised and attached to the crown was called a *bicorne*. The bicorne became popular after 1800. And finally, a wide brimmed hat with three 'corners' of the brim raised and attached to the crown was called a *tricorne*.

The cocked hat was constructed of beaver fur or wool felt or leather. A basic dome shaped crown

would be blocked by a hatter. That process involved repeated striking of a pile of shaved beaver *muffoon*, or under-fur, with a taut sheep-gut string. The string, strung tightly between the two ends of a bow, called a



*stang*, would vibrate as it passed into and again out of the pile of fur. The process was called 'stirring the pile.' The vibrations caused the fibers to cross over one another, sticking together by barbs on their naturally scaly surface. The more that the fur stuck together, the larger the piece of felt grew. The process of stirring the

pile continued until the loose hairs were all sticking together in a mass of felt.

The mass of felt would be patted into a rounded triangle measuring about three feet on each side. A slatted paddle would be used to flatten the mass into what was called a *batt*. The batts were piled one on top of another, separated by wet sheets of linen, called *in-layers*. Later, the batts would be removed from the pile and pulled off the linen in-layers. In the process of removing the felt batts, they would be shaped into a conical *hood*. The hoods were boiled for six to eight hours, causing them to shrink and thicken.

The hoods were next placed in the *battery*, a large kettle filled with a mild acid in water that was kept boiling. The hatters would grab a hood and pull it out of the acid boil. They would pound it with a club to force the acidic water out. As it began to dry out, the hood would again be dipped in the acid boil and then beat with the club again forcing the liquid out and compacting it very tightly in the process.

When a hood was deemed ready, it would be stretched over a round wooden block and onto the flat work table into which the wooden block was affixed. Stretching the mass of felt over the block and table began the process of forming the crown and brim. Using wooden tools, any wrinkles and imperfections would be smoothed out. When finished, the wooden block, with its rough hat in place, was removed from the work table and placed with others on racks in a drying oven.

The next day, the hatter would remove one of the rough hats from the oven rack and replace it on the work table. The brim would be trimmed so that it measured about five inches at the back and between three and four inches at the front. The entire surface of the hat would be smoothed with a pumice stone. The nap would be brushed in one direction and any excess material was cut off. A leather sweatband was stitched inside. Lastly, buttons might be sewn onto the crown for the purpose of attaching the cocked brim.

It was at this point that the hat would be cocked by raising and attaching either one, two or three corners to the crown. First, the hat might be lightly steamed to prevent the brim from cracking as it was bent. The corner would be positioned and taped in place and left overnight to dry and harden into shape.

Beaver skin is naturally brown, so to obtain a black hat, it would have to be dyed that color. Multiple hats would be placed on pegs sticking out from the face

of a large wooden wheel that turned in a large vat. The vat would be filled with dye and as the wheel was turned, the hats would be repeatedly introduced into the dye and then removed.

Cocked hats were first seen in Flanders in the Seventeenth Century, worn by Spanish soldiers. The Spanish wore a broad-rimmed round hat. They began to raise part of the brim and attach it to the crown of the hat so that the brim would not interfere with the muskets they held and frequently shouldered. During the war over the Spanish Netherlands between the Spanish and French, the hat was seen and liked by the French. King Louis XIV's court wholeheartedly embraced the new hat style and by his influence, it spread throughout Europe.

For the Continental Army, the tricorne was specified to be worn with one front corner positioned at the soldier's left temple. That cocked corner would be the one at which a regimental cockade would be attached.

The cockade was a piece of cloth folded and gathered at the center with a string in a round shape faintly reminiscent of a flower. The word *cockade* came from the Sixteenth Century French *cocarde*, meaning rosette.

General George Washington issued General Orders on 23 July 1775. Those orders included: "*As the Continental Army have unfortunately no Uniforms...it is desired that some Badges of Distinction may be immediately provided, for Instance, the Field Officers may have red or pink colour'd Cockades in their Hats: the Captains yellow or buff: and the Subalterns green.*"

When France began to support the rebelling colonists with actual troops, General Washington gave general orders for the cockades to be worn by the officers in his Continental Army. At the time, the Americans wore cockades of black; the French wore white cockades. On 19 July 1780, his General Orders included: "*It is recommended to the officers to have black and White Cockades; a black Ground with a white relief emblematic of the expected union of the two Armies.*"

Just as a side note, unrelated to the American Revolutionary War, the traditional Irish phrase *the wearing of the green* is connected to the cocked hat and its cockade. During the Irish Rebellion of 1798, the revolutionary Society of United Irishmen began to wear sprigs of evergreens in their hats in place of a standard cockade.





The next meeting of the Frontier Patriots Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution will be held on 08 September 2018 starting at 12 Noon, ~ at The Dream restaurant, 1500 Allegheny Street, Hollidaysburg, PA

Prior to the NSSAR Congress held this past summer, the Virginia Society proposed an amendment to the Constitution suggesting that adopted children be accepted into the SAR. The Sons of the American Revolution was established as a 'lineage society'. By definition, a lineage society means that the descent is by bloodline. You might have read about it in the SAR Magazine. If and when you read anything in either the PASSAR or the SAR magazines that you disagree with, do not hesitate to contact the President of either body to express your opinion. You should, of course, be civil in all communications, but you are not denied the right to express your opinion. And, of course, always feel welcome to contact me if anything in this Chapter newsletter warrants discussion. ~ Larry



## Chapter By-Laws Amendment Proposal

Pursuant to By-Law No. 9, Section 9.01 (*These Bylaws may be amended by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of members in good standing present and voting at any Business Meeting of the Chapter, provided that written notice of the meeting shall be directed to all members, with a copy of the proposed amendment or new Bylaws enclosed, at least ten (10) days before the meeting.*), the following amendment is proposed:

### Section 4.05 Registrar.

The current by-law presently states: The Registrar shall keep a roll of the members, and in his hands shall be lodged all proofs of membership, qualifications, and all historical and genealogical papers, manuscripts or other, of which the Chapter may be possessed. He shall keep copies of such documents as the owners thereof may not be willing to leave permanently in the keeping of the Chapter. He shall verify all statements of Revolutionary Service of ancestors that may be made in the application for membership. He shall make a report of activities at all Quarterly Business Meetings.

Proposal that the section be amended to state: The Registrar shall assist applicants in the preparation of their SAR Membership Applications. He shall verify that each and every application forwarded to the PASSAR Registrar is properly and accurately filled out and accompanied by the proper proof documentation. He shall forward to the PASSAR Registrar two copies of the completed Membership Application and one set of proof documents. For the Chapter files, he shall maintain one copy of the Membership Application. He shall make a report of activities at all Quarterly Business Meetings.

This amendment is proposed for the purpose of bringing the By-Laws description more in line with the duties which the position actually performs.



# Adopted Children Amendment Defeated

Recently it was announced in the SAR Magazine that the Virginia Society intended to propose that the SAR Constitution and ByLaws be amended to allow membership to accept adopted children to be included in the application process. The announcement sparked some heated debate on social media. Individuals who have adopted children were, of course, in favor of the amendment, but the SAR was founded on the basis of membership only through bloodline, so passage would be absolutely contrary to the SAR's foundation. The decision whether to accept the amendment proposal was ultimately up to the delegates at the 2018 National Congress. On Wednesday, 18 July, Eric Troutman sent out an email to let everyone know that the proposed amendment had been defeated.



## Inoculation To The Small Pox

Doctor James Thatcher kept a journal during his experience in the American Revolutionary War. He published *Military Journal* after the War. Thatcher's entry on 20 April 1781 discussed the inoculation of the soldiers against Smallpox.

"All the soldiers, with the women and children, who have not had the small-pox, are now under inoculation. Of our regiment, one hundred and eighty seven were subjects of the disease. The old practice of previous preparation by a course of mercury and low diet has not been adopted on this occasion; a single dose of jalap and calomel, or the extract of butternut, *juglans cinerea*, is in general administered previous to the appearance of the symptoms. As to diet, we are so unfortunate as to be destitute of the necessary comfortable articles of food, and they subsist principally on their common rations of beef, bread, and salt pork. A small quantity of rice, sugar or molasses, and tea, are procured for those who are dangerously sick. Some instances have occurred of putrid fever supervening, either at the first onset or at the approach of the secondary stage, and a few cases have terminated fatally.

Many of our patients were improper subjects for the disease, but we were under the necessity of inoculating all, without exception, whatever might be their condition as to health. Of five hundred who have been inoculated, four only have died, but in other instances the proportion of deaths is much more considerable. The extract of butternut is made by boiling down the inner bark of the tree; the discovery of this article is highly important, and it may be considered as a valuable acquisition to our materia medica. The country people have for some time been in the practice of using it, and Dr. Rush . . . has recommended the employment of it among our patients, as a mild yet sufficiently active cathartic, and a valuable and economical

substitute for jalap. It operates without creating heat or irritation, and is found to be efficacious in cases of dysentery and bilious complaints. As the butternut tree abounds in our country, we may obtain at a very little expense a valuable domestic article of medicine."

Thomas Dring was captured and sent to the British prison ship, *Jersey*. He realized that he needed to be inoculated against Smallpox, but there was no one to do it.

"The next disgusting object which met my sight was a man suffering with the smallpox; and in a few minutes I found myself surrounded by many others laboring under the same disease, in every stage of its progress.

As I had never had the smallpox, it became necessary that I should be inoculated; and there being no proper person on board to perform the operation, I concluded to act as my own physician. On looking about me, I soon found a man in the proper stage of the disease, and desired him to favor me with some of the matter for the purpose. He readily complied, observing that it was a necessary precaution on my part, and that my situation was an excellent one in regard to *diet*, as I might depend upon finding that *extremely moderate*. The only instrument which I could procure, for the purpose of inoculation, was a common pin. With this, having scarified the skin of my hand, between the thumb and forefinger, I applied the matter and bound up my hand. The next morning I found that the wound had begun to fester; a sure symptom that the application had taken effect.

Many of my former shipmates took the same precaution and were inoculated during the day. In my case the disorder came on but lightly, and its progress was favorable; and without the least medical advice or attention, by the blessing of Divine Providence, I soon recovered..."

For those of you that receive this newsletter by US mail, if you have an email address, we would appreciate you sending it to us to use for future newsletters. Printing and mailing these newsletters is very expensive. Please send to our Secretary Melvin McDowell at [melvin.mcdowell@gmail.com](mailto:melvin.mcdowell@gmail.com)