



COLOR GUARD MANUAL

OF THE

ALABAMA SOCIETY

SONS OF THE AMERICAN

REVOLUTION

27 July 2015

INTRODUCTION

*The purpose of this handbook is to provide general information about Color Guards, and especially for the Color Guard of the Alabama Society, Sons of the American Revolution. Much of the information in this handbook was published in various issues of The SAR Guardsman magazine, beginning in the year 2000. Some material has been obtained from the NSSAR Handbook, the NSSAR History, Volume III (1983-2000). Some material has been borrowed from Color Guard handbooks prepared by various SAR state societies and chapters across the country. **This manual is a guide and the Color Guard Commander has sole authority to deviate from this manual in all aspects except safety.***

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1.0 HISTORY OF THE COLOR GUARD

The Color Guard of the 21st century is primarily ceremonial in terms of purpose and duty. However, the origins of the Color Guard are based in military practicality. The following is a concise history of the origin of the Color Guard. During the 18th and 19th centuries, flags were commonly referred to as “the Colors.” These colors were of primary importance to the military regiment or brigade as the line of battle was formed around the colors of the unit which were placed at the center of the line. These colors were easily seen through the smoke of battle. If the colors advanced, the line would advance. If the colors retired, the line would retire. As battles would progress and casualties mounted, the line would contract to the colors. In effect, the colors would serve as a rallying point if the line was broken or the men became dispersed. Thus, success in battle was often dependent on the handling of the colors. The importance of the colors was so significant that a ceremony was performed before battle called “*The Trooping of the Colors.*” *The men of the regiment or brigade were assembled on the parade ground in camp and the colors were paraded before them.* This way, each man would see and thus be certain of his colors before taking the field of battle. Likewise, while there could be many diverse objectives in a battle, one of the most important was capturing of the colors of the enemy unit. This would deprive the enemy of their primary means of control and rallying point during the battle. To prevent this, regiments and brigades would select the most valiant men to protect the colors and color bearers. These men comprised the “Color’s Guard,” a posting of great honor and source of pride. As in years past, this posting continues to be a position of honor.

2.0 WHAT IS THE ALABAMA SOCIETY COLOR GUARD?

The Alabama Society Color Guard is made up of those Compatriots who come to SAR meetings and events properly uniformed as either Continental Soldiers or Militiamen, or attired as Revolution-era clergymen. These men seek to visibly promote the stated objectives of the SAR which are declared to be Historical, Patriotic and Educational. Therefore, it is important that a Revolutionary War uniformed Color Guard fielded by the Alabama Society to be historically correct as possible so as to not compromise these objectives. Every time an Alabama Society Color Guard makes a public appearance, the members are fulfilling all three objectives. In fact, the Color Guard is the most visible and effective public relations tools available to the Alabama Society SAR.

2.1 Color Guard Operations

The Color Guard Commander is the Point of Contact for all Color Guard performance requests for declaration as a State Event and all requests must be routed to him. He will review the request for appropriateness and poll the Color Guard members to determine if sufficient manpower would be available to support the request. **All Color Guardsmen should respond to a poll promptly to enable the Commander to determine if there is support for the event.** Upon determining that the event can be supported, the Commander will contact the President for final approval. All State, District and National events must be coordinated with the State Color Guard Commander.

Once an event is approved, the event will be announced and sanctioned by the Alabama Society Color Guard. The Color Guard Commander will contact personnel to finalize the roster for the event and keep them fully informed regarding details of the event (date, time, location, special requirements, etc.). It is suggested that the Color Guard Commander identify a local point of contact who would be responsible for gathering and forwarding details regarding the event, particularly last minute changes.

Major media events, revenue producing appearances, support of DAR & CAR activities, etc., should be treated with “maximum effort.” In all cases, the appropriate number of guardsmen should be evaluated based upon the particular event.

For those Chapters hosting a local event - Chapter meeting, local Grave marking, school programs etc, and this manual is a guide for you to follow and should help you with your event. For those who desire to elevate their event to a State level event the process to follow is as follows:

1. Notify the State Color Guard Commander of your request. The State Color Guard will notify the State President of the request. The State President will determine if the event warrants being a State level event. Once he determines the event qualifies, he will advise the State Color Guard Commander to send out a call to arms and post the event as tentative on the schedule and for him to notify the Event coordinator that the event is tentatively approved as a State event.
2. The State Color Guard commander will send out a Call to Arms for Color Guard Members to support the event. If he gets a sufficient number of positive replies, he will schedule the event on the web site. If he fails to secure enough support, he will notify the State President and the event coordinator. The State President will then authorize him to remove the event from the calendar. Only the State President can authorize an event as a State Event or once approved authorize its removal.
3. For an event to be declared a District Event, it must first be declared a State Event by the State President. If the District VPG determines if it should be declared a District Event the State President will be notified. Within the State, the State President is the ranking SAR officer.
4. The procedure for having an Event declared a National Event is in the NSSAR Handbook.

2.2 Color Guard Size

The optimum minimum number of men that form a Color Guard unit consists of four (4) men: Two (2) Color Bearers who carry the United States National Flag and the State or SAR Flag; Two (2) Musketeers or Riflemen who escort the Color Bearers. More Color Bearers and Guards are added as needed and available. An absolute minimum Color Guard consists of three men, one Guard and two Color Bearers. In either situation, the Commander of the Color Guard will either be the Musketeer guarding the National Colors or the Guardsman carrying the National Colors. As the Color Guard grows, the Commander will march ahead of the National Colors separate from any other rank.

3.0 UNIFORMS and WEAPONS

3.1. Militia:

With respect to the **Militia** uniform, the basic uniform consists of the following:

- A hat – either tri-corn or round;
- A hunting shirt or hunting frock;
- A white or checkered shirt;
- Long britches or fall-front trousers;
- Shoes (not necessarily buckle since the long pants leg will cover the buckle area) or moccasins.

3.2 Continental:

A hat – usually tri-corn or helmet style for cavalry

White shirt

White or buff waistcoat

White or buff knee Breeches or long trousers

Blue Coat with proper facing and cuffs - Colors vary by Colony and research is required, usually red, white or buff

White stockings

Buckle shoes or boots

3.3 Civilian Attire:

Civilian attire varies widely and should be research to determine historical accuracy.

While these are the basics for each uniform, variations will exist and participation will not be discouraged based on these variations. Another important consideration of the uniform is the type of fabric used in making the uniform and the accessories that accompany the uniform. A discussion of these fabric and accessories will follow below .Due to the time and expense of obtaining an uniform made from natural and more authentic material, many color guard members chose to obtain a less expensive uniform made from modern fabric, most often polyester or gabardine. These uniforms made from modern fabric are perfectly acceptable for all events except for those where the guardsman will fire a musket but should be historically accurate in appearance. For safety reasons, the SAR does not allow guardsmen in modern fabric uniforms to fire a weapon due the danger of melting fabric causing severe burns. For those guardsmen who wish to fire a musket, the uniform should be made out of natural fiber material such as wool and linen. If a spark from a fired musket lands on uniforms made of these materials, the fibers will smolder and can be easily extinguished before causing injury instead of melting quickly.

In addition to the uniform, many guardsmen seek to add to their appearance by adding equipment and other accoutrements. For the purposes of the Alabama Society Color Guard it is recommended that Color Guardsmen carry minimal ancillary equipment. Color Guardsmen in Continental uniforms should limit themselves to a maximum of Cartridge Box, Haversack and

Bayonet. Swords are to be carried only by the Color Guard Commander unless otherwise authorized. What follows is a brief discussion of common items:

3.4 Headwear:

While many in the general public identify the Tri-corn hat as the exclusive headwear of the Revolutionary era, this was not the case. Many different types of headwear were worn including helmets (predominately cavalry units), woven caps, and flat round hats. If wearing a specific unit's uniform, the correct headwear must be worn. For purposes of the Alabama Society Color Guard, a simple black tri-corn will suffice.

3.5 Footwear:

During the Revolution, most shoes were made to fit either foot with the determination of right and left coming only after long wear where the shoe molded to the foot. Obtaining period, buckled shoes can be expensive. As such, many guardsmen elect to purchase buckles that can slide over modern shoes and give the appearance of buckle shoes. Another option is to have either gaiters made (secured with buttons and garters just above the calf) that cover the lower leg and tops of the shoes thus hiding the fact the shoes have no buckles or by having long pants made as part of the uniform that have facings that extend over the face of the shoe and are secured using either elastic or leather straps below the shoe that also obscure the lack of a buckle of the shoe. An important consideration is both the comfort and safety of the guardsmen in walking or marching in a parade since period correct footwear can cause blisters or may not provide appropriate traction on modern surfaces. **BE COMFORTABLE AND SAFE!**

In the case of Militia, commercial moccasins. Buckle shoes or boots may be worn as well as handmade moccasins.

3.6 Rank Insignia:

A variety of items were used to denote rank within the Revolutionary army. Most common were sashes, gorgets, hat cockades, and epaulettes. As a matter of note, the private in the Army did not have any sashes or epaulettes on his uniform coat. Epaulettes denoted rank through both color and placement on a specific shoulder. If the guardsman wishes to include rank insignia, it is highly recommended that this be researched so that historical correctness is maintained

3.7 Gorget:

This ornamental metal device is worn suspended from the neck. This alludes back to its original purpose as the component of metal armor that protected the neck of the wearer from swords and other non-projectile weapons. By the time of the Revolution, this had become an ornamental accessory to a military uniform denoting a certain rank or as an indication of performing a certain duty. As such, research should determine if wearing a gorget is appropriate with the type of uniform that is worn. For purposes of the Alabama Society, the gorget is most often worn by either the Color Guard Commander or a past commander.

3.8 Belts & Straps:

When in the Continental uniform, all belts and straps used for carrying other equipment should be made of white leather or heavy white canvas or cording. Equipment that was supported by a belt or strap includes swords, the cartridge box, the haversack, bayonets and canteens.

3.9 Cartridge Box:

Continental soldiers used a cartridge box when in battle. The cartridge box should be made of black or brown leather attached to a hanger.

3.10 Haversack:

The haversack carried the basic necessities of the soldier including rations, smaller mess kit items, wallet, etc. Today, it is an ideal place for the guardsman to carry his wallet, cell phone, glasses or other necessary items. It should be made of linen or some similar material. It should be worn on the left of the uniform.

3.11 Canteens:

Authentic Revolution-era canteens can be made of metal or wood.

3.12 Knapsacks:

These should be made of linen, canvas or similar material and worn using white leather or canvas straps. While part of the Continental uniform, these are not commonly worn by members of the Alabama Society Color Guard.

3.13 Powder Horn / Tomahawks / Knives:

These items are not parts of the Continental uniform. They are identified with the Militia uniform and should only be worn or carried by those guardsmen in that uniform. These items can be carried using rawhide or leather strings or other materials. They can also be inserted in belts or other woven sashes. As a matter of personal and corporate safety, edged weapons (including swords above) must have the blades covered or secured within an appropriate scabbard.

3.14 Weapons and Firelocks:

Weapons should be historically accurate in appearance and use. Since the Alabama Society Color Guard does not require the firing of weapons, non-firable replicas are acceptable and in fact preferred. No weapon should ever be loaded unless specifically authorized by the Color Guard Commander. **Prior to appearing at schools and other activities weapons must be safety checked by the Color Guard Commander or his delegated safety director. All edged weapons must have the blades covered or secured within an appropriate scabbard. All firelocks must be in an unloaded state. No weapon may be loaded except upon direction of**

the Color Guard Commander and after being checked by the safety officer (CG Commander or his delegate). Weapons must be handled in a safe and responsible manner. **Safety violations will result in immediate dismissal from the event and possible dismissal from the Color Guard. The Color Guard Commander has sole discretion as to who may or may not fire at an event in the State of Alabama.**

3.15 Weapons Policy

Our main concern is safety for the individual and the environment. The 1763/66 French Charleville and 2nd Land Model British Brown Bess are considered the “weapon of choice” for color guard events. Other period specific black powder flintlocks, such as Pennsylvania rifles, may also be appropriate, especially with frontiersman clothing and hunting frocks. Pistols were primarily cavalry, officers or men of importance/wealth. Pistols should only be carried by such. Like all firearms, muskets employed by the color guard are inherently dangerous. They must always be treated as loaded and potentially deadly. Blank charges can also cause injuries, especially at close ranges.

A. Musket/Long rifle Guidelines

1. Ball or other projectile shall never be loaded or carried.
2. Muskets shall be maintained in a clean and serviceable condition.
3. Muskets shall be equipped with leather frizzen covers.
4. All fired muskets shall be equipped with metal flash guards, if the Musket/Longrifle is so designed to accept one.
5. Only powder dispensed from paper cartridges shall be used.
6. Charges shall consist of no more than 100 grains of ffg black powder.
7. Muskets shall remain unloaded until instructed to load.
8. Paper cartridges shall be discarded and not used as wadding.
9. Ramrods and other objects shall not be inserted into charged bores.
10. Charged muskets shall be carried at half-cock
11. Muskets shall always be pointed in a safe direction.
12. Muskets shall never be fired toward anyone.
13. Muskets shall never be fired over anyone within 100 feet.

B. Firing of Muskets

On certain occasions a musket/rifle salute is deemed appropriate and shall be conducted according to the following guidelines:

A SAR Safety Officer, Division Commander or State Commander will perform a safety inspection of firearms prior to the beginning of the ceremony. It should be conducted as follows:

- a. The rammer should be pinged to show that the weapon is clear, and it should be hung by the trigger at half cock to make sure that it will not go off accidentally.

- b. As determined by the event commander, musket firings shall be aimed in a direction which protects against all possible injury to persons and property.
- c. All guardsmen who are assigned to fire muskets shall be certified as to their competency by the TNSSAR Color Guard Commander, Division Commander or designated safety officer, based upon the following criteria:
 - (1) Demonstrated knowledge of and compliance with the above stated standards.
 - (2) Demonstrated efficiency in breaking down, cleaning and assembling musket.
 - (3) Demonstrated efficiency in safely loading and firing musket.

4.0 COLOR GUARD BEHAVIOR

4.1 Decorum

Since the Color Guard is the most visible aspect of the SAR, it is expected that the members will adhere to the highest behavior standards. At all times, a Color Guardsman must behave with the utmost decorum. This is interpreted to mean that the Color Guardsman may not break ranks even when at rest during a ceremony unless they are going forward to present a wreath or render honors during a ceremony. The Color Guardsman will not take photographs during an event or ceremony. A Color Guardsman may acknowledge the master of ceremonies if their name is called out for recognition during an event or ceremony. The Color Guard Commander, at his discretion, has the authority to eject any Color Guardsman from an event for improper behavior.

4.2 Hand Salutes.

As with current military custom, only the Commander of the Color Guard and those members carrying muskets will Present Arms when called to salute. No Color Bearer ever renders a hand salute, unless specifically ordered immediately after the posting of colors, since the Commander is understood to present the salute for the entire unit. Historically the salute is a bow rather than a hand salute as in the modern military services.

4.3 Prayers

Likewise, during prayers, Color Guard members only close their eyes. At no time does the Guardsman bow his head or remove his hat. This also applies during the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem. When not in ranks Color Guardsmen in uniform should render the proper salute.

5.0 CLOSE ORDER DRILL

A variety of sources of instruction on close order drill will provide a variety of descriptions and guidelines. Color Guard members will often cite their own marching background in one of the military services, from a high school or university marching band, from a veteran's group color

guard, or such other experience in support of executing a drill command in a given way or using specific drill language. The important consideration is only that the chosen set of drill commands and their execution are consistent within the organization.

5.1 The Components of Drill Commands

Drill commands usually have three parts: (1) the alert to an upcoming set of commands tells the color guard or designated unit to prepare for a set of commands, (2) the preparatory command states the movement to be carried out and mentally prepares the individual for its execution, and (3) the command of execution tells when the movement is to be carried out (for example, **COLOR GUARD – to the front – March**). For purposes of this set of guidelines,

- (1) The alert to an upcoming set of commands will usually name the unit (for example, **COLOR GUARD, COLORS, COLUMN, or LEFT COLUMN**) or use a term such as **STANDBY**. These “alert” commands are usually only used when there has been a period of no commands.
- (2) A preparatory command will be in bold, upper and lower case print (such as **to the front**).
- (3) A command of execution will be in bold, upper and lower case, and underlined print (for example, **March**).

The alert command may be followed by two consecutive preparatory and execution commands, in which case the alert command is not repeated. Some Commanders may also delete the alert command when they consider the alert command unnecessary.

5.2 Drill Manual

The following are based on Baron Von Steuben’s commands used to instruct George Washington’s Guard and other units in order to add discipline and order to the fledgling American Continental Army.

Fall In – The unit will fall in line into their previously designated places with their muskets and flags and stand at ease. Each member will face the direction designated by the Commander.

Attention – Stand straight with heels 2” apart, toes turned out, and hands at sides.

- **Attention (flag bearers)** – Stand as above with the flagstaff on the right side, close to the body, butt resting on the ground. The right hand should be straight down and holding the flagstaff.
- **Attention (musket bearers)** – Stand as above with the butt of musket on the ground beside the right foot, firelock to the rear. The right arm should be close to the body and bent so as to grasp the musket just below the muzzle.

Shoulder . . . Arms – Stand at attention with flags and muskets supported as follows:

- **Shoulder Arms (flag bearers)** – With the left hand, reach across the body and grasp the flagstaff. Release the right hand and with the left hand raise the flagstaff about 6” and re-grip the flag staff with the right hand to hold it in that position. Return left hand to the side.
- **Shoulder Arms (Color Guard musket bearers)** – For short marches, slide the right hand down the barrel to the swelling and lift the musket. With the left hand grasp the musket below the right hand and re-position the right hand and fingers around the firelock and trigger guard. Quit the left hand and return it to the side. Carry the musket against the right shoulder with the right arm extended straight down and holding the musket by the firelock and trigger guard.

For long marches, slide the right hand down the barrel to the swelling and lift the musket up, across the body, and at the same time rotate the musket counter-clockwise. The left hand is then placed under the butt of the musket. The musket is supported with the first three fingers and the stock rests on the left shoulder.

For right shoulder carry, slide the right hand down the barrel to the swelling and lift the musket straight up with a counter-clockwise rotation. With the left hand, grasp the musket below the right hand and continue the lift and rotation. Quit the right hand and place it under the butt with the first three fingers and the right shoulder supporting the musket.

The Color Guard Commander will announce which musket carry method will be used.

Carry . . . Arms – Stand at attention with flags and muskets supported as follows:

- **Carry Arms (flag bearers)** – With the left hand, reach across the body and bring the flag to the front. Quit the right hand and then grasp the flagstaff lower with the right hand and raise it such that the butt of the flagstaff rests in the left hand, held at about belt level. Position the right hand such that it is at about shoulder level with the thumb of the right hand touching the chin. The flagstaff should be perpendicular to the ground.
- **Carry Arms (flag bearers with harness)** – The procedure is the same as above except that the butt of the flag is placed in the cup of the harness instead of the left hand. The left hand should be straight down at the left side.
- **Carry Arms (Color Guard musket bearers)** – Follow the same movements as for “Shoulder Arms.”

Present Arms – This command is given from the position of “shoulder arms,” or “carry arms” and is used as a means of a salute.

- **Present Arms (flag bearers) from Shoulder Arms** – With the left hand, reach across the body and bring the flag to the front. Quit the right hand and then grasp the flagstaff lower with the right hand and raise it such that the butt of the flagstaff rests in the left

hand, held at about belt level. Position the right hand such that it is at about shoulder level. Maintaining the left hand as a pivot, lower the flag to about 45 deg from perpendicular. This applies to all flags except the current National Colors. The National Colors are not lowered. Make sure that the eagle faces forward at all times.

- **Present Arms (flag bearers) from Carry Arms** - Maintaining the left hand as a pivot, lower the flag to about 45 deg from perpendicular. This applies to all flags except the current National Colors. The National Colors are not lowered. Make sure that the eagle faces forward at all times.
- **Present Arms (Color Guard musket bearers)** – With the left hand, reach across the body and grasp the musket at the swell. Bring the musket to the front in front of the left lapel and at the same time place the right foot slightly behind the left foot and pointed out. Place the right hand just below the flintlock. Hold the musket perpendicularly and close to the left knee.
- **Present Arms (no flags or muskets)** – With the right hand, grasp the front peak of the hat and at the same time take one step forward with the right foot. Lower the hat to waist level, directly in front of the right foot, with the crown down. Bend both knees slightly so that the body is in a slightly bowed position.

Order . . . Arms – This command is normally given from the position of “Present Arms” or “Shoulder Arms.” It involves returning the flagstaff or musket to the position of “Attention.” It also may be used to return to "carry arms" after "present arms"

- **Order Arms (flag bearers)** – If the flag bearer is at "carry arms" before going to "present arms" then order arms consist of using the right arm to return the flag to perpendicular. If the flag bearer was at "shoulder arms" prior to going to “present arms”, the flag bearer raises the flagstaff to perpendicular and brings the flagstaff back to “shoulder arms.” He then lets the flagstaff slide through his right hand so that the butt is resting on the ground. He remains at attention.
- **Order Arms (Color Guard musket bearers)** – If at “present arms,” quit the right hand at the firelock and grasp the musket at the swell. Quit the left hand and move the musket to the right side and lower the butt to the ground. Hold the musket near the muzzle as at “attention.” If at “shoulder arms,” reach across the body with the left hand and grasp the musket above the right hand. Quit the right hand and then grasp the musket at the swell. Return the left hand to the side and lower the butt of the musket to the ground beside the right foot. Hold the musket near the muzzle as at “attention.”
- **Order Arms (no flag or musket)** – Return to the position of attention and replace the hat.

Facing Movements – These movements are “heel and toe” movements of the more current military rather than “heel and heel” movements of the Continental Army. The reason for this

change is that the Color Guard performs many functions indoors where heel only movements are difficult.

- **To the right . . . face** – Turn briskly to the right on the heel of the right foot and the toe of the left foot. Bring the left foot to the side of the right foot without stomping.
- **To the left . . . face** – Turn briskly to the left on the heel of the left foot and the toe of the right foot. Bring the right foot to the side of the left foot without stomping.
- **To the right about . . . face** – Step back with the right foot bringing the buckle opposite the left heel. Turn briskly on the heel of the right foot and the toe of the left foot. Then bring the right foot back beside the left foot.
- **To the right and left . . . face** – This command is used when some participants must execute a right face and other participants a left face.
- **To the left about . . . wheel** – This movement is used to turn a rank in the opposite direction and to maintain the National Colors on the right side. The center of the rank, being a person or a space between two people acts as a pivot point. Those members to the right of center march forward, describing a semi-circle. Those members to the left of center march backwards, describing a semi-circle. It is important to maintain shoulder-to-shoulder contact during the movement to keep the rank in a straight line.

Marching Movements – The common step, since the Color Guard is not usually in a hurry, is about 14 inches with about 75 or less steps per minute.

- **To the front . . . march** – Step off with the left foot and march with a free and easy step.
- **Column to the right . . . hut** – The lead man pivots 90 deg to the right on his left foot and steps off in normal cadence with his right foot.
- **Column to the left . . . hut** – The lead man pivots 90 deg to the left on his right foot and steps off in normal cadence with his left foot.
- **Column to the right . . . wheel** – The front or lead rank looks to the left except for the man on the left. This permits the rank to dress on the man to the left. The rank executes a 90 deg turn to the right using the man on the right of the rank as a pivot.
- **Column to the left . . . wheel** – The front or lead rank looks to the right except for the man on the right. This permits the rank to dress on the man to the right. The rank executes a 90 deg turn to the left using the man on the left of the rank as a pivot.

- **Mark time . . . march** – Starting with the left foot, march in normal cadence without moving forward.
- **Close ranks . . . march** – The lead man in the column marks time as the other men in the column close to proper marching distance. When the men are in position they will continue to march at mark time until the command “to the front . . . march” is given.

Ready . . . Halt – The command is given on the left foot. Step normally with the right foot and bring the left foot up beside the right foot.

Salute – There are times when the Color Guardsmen are not carrying a flag or a musket and it is appropriate to offer a salute. When a quick salute is appropriate, the following commands are used.

- **Ready . . . Salute** – On the command “ready,” grasp the front peak of the hat with the right hand. On the command “salute,” smartly bring the hat down to waist height with the crown facing down. Hold the hat in this position while awaiting the next command.
- **Ready . . . Two** – Smartly place the hat back on the head.

Take Care – Used to notify the Color Guard that a command is about to be given. Usually used after an extended period when no commands have been given.

Rest – Stand in formation in a relaxed manner. Arms and legs may be moved as necessary to maintain circulation. Flagstaves should remain on the right side perpendicular to the ground. Muskets should rest with the butt on the ground at the right side. The musket should angle 45 deg in front of the body.

Dismissed – The Color Guard and Militia are finished with the exercise and may move at random.

6.0 CEREMONY PROTOCOL

Posting/Retiring Colors – Simple Single Column

Forming the Unit - The Commander will form the column of men into a single line away from the ceremony location, usually in an outside hallway or just inside the room. They will be in an at ease position. The Commander will give any last minute instructions at this time. . Each person should be gloved and should have removed any sunglasses. No nametags, pins, insignia, canteens, swords, or other such items will be worn on the Continental uniform. However, canteens, swords, tomahawks, etc., may be worn by compatriots in Militia uniform. Members of the unit should remain as quiet as possible so as not to disturb the beginning of any program that may be taking place and to hear any last minute instructions by the Commander.

The order of precedence of musket and flag bearers in single file will be as follows:

- Musket carrier(s)
- Current American Flag
- Historical American Flags
- State Flags (host state flag followed by order of admission to the union)
- Historical State Flags
- SAR Flag
- DAR Flag (if a DAR function, DAR precedes the SAR Flag)
- Other Historical Flags
- Musket carrier(s)

Marching to the Ceremony Site - Just prior to the designated time of entry or posting, the Commander will call, **COLOR GUARD – Fall – In**. If a few minutes may pass before the unit will be called to post the colors, the Commander may call the unit to attention, then to rest.

At the designated time of entry, the program coordinator will announce, “Present the Colors,” or make some similar announcement or order. At that time, the Commander will order, **COLOR GUARD – Attention** (pause as the guard comes to attention). The Commander will then call, **Carry – Arms**.

The Commander now gives the order, **To the Front – March**.

Depending upon the configuration of the meeting place the Commander will guide the guard to the location where it will post the colors.

As the leader of the column arrives in place for his final position to post colors, the Commander will usually call, **Mark Time – March**. When all of the guard is marching in place the Commander will call, **Ready - Halt**. The column will usually come in from the audience’s right and go across stage or the posting area from the audience’s right to their left.

Posting the Colors to a Flag Stand - If the flags will be posted to stands (indoors at meetings usually), the Commander will call, **To the Right – Face**. Upon execution of this command, the guard will be facing the stands located there to hold the flags.

The Commander will call, “**Permission to post the colors, [Mr. President]?**” Permission granted [note, the Commander may dispense with this request and go directly to the next set of commands as follows], the Commander will call, **Post – Colors**.

The Commander will call, **Present – Arms**, followed by **Order – Arms** after the event.

The Commander will then call, **To the Left – Face**, followed by **Shoulder – Arms** (for the benefit of musket carriers), followed by **To the Front – March**. Commands will then be given for exiting the area, after which, the Pledge to the Flag and the SAR Flag, may be performed by the audience.

Posting the Colors in Place - If the guard will hold their flags in the post position (outdoors at grave dedications and at short ceremonies usually), after coming to a halt at their position in the ceremony, the Commander will call, **To the Left – Face**. Upon execution of this command, the guard will be facing the audience.

The Commander will call, **Present - Arms**.

[The Pledge to the Flag, National Anthem and SAR Pledge may be performed at this point. During the pledge to the U.S. Flag and the National Anthem, the Color Guard will remain at Present Arms, then will come to order arms.]

The Commander will call **Order – Arms**.

At this point, the Commander may call **Rest**, or later in the ceremony may call **Rest**.

Throughout the ceremony the unit may be called to Attention, Present Arms, Order Arms, and Rest as needed.

Upon completion of the ceremony, the Commander will be asked to retire the colors by returning the Color Guard to the location of the flags to retrieve them and exit. If the Color Guard has remained in position during an event, the Commander will then call the unit to attention, then call, **Carry – Arms**, followed by **To the Right – Face**, and **To the Front – March**. Commands will then be given for exiting the area.

7.0 MOURN MUSKETS

Mourn Muskets is a solemn tribute to fallen Patriots and may be performed during the benediction at a grave marking. Since it is not widely done, it is placed in this manual for information.

The movements are as follows:

The Color Guard is brought to attention and the order given to **Present – Arms**. The command is then given to **Mourn – Muskets**. The Color Guard then slowly rotate the muskets so that the muzzles are pointing straight down with the end of the barrel resting on the militiaman's left toe. The left hand is then placed on the musket butt followed by the right hand. The head is then bowed to rest on the hands. This position is maintained during the benediction. After the benediction, the command is given to **Recover – Muskets**. The procedure is then reversed by raising the head; removing the hands to the former position on the musket; and raising the musket to the present-arms position, all in slow motion. The command **Order – Arms** ends the movement.

8.0 FLAG RETIREMENT CEREMONY

The following is a guide a Chapter may use for a formal Flag Retirement Ceremony.

A dignified ceremony for the proper disposal of faded, torn, or otherwise unserviceable United States flags and other flags appropriate for ceremonial disposal may be conducted by an SAR Chapter or its Flag Respect Committee or jointly with other organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, scout groups, and the local fire department. Such events support the SAR's Flag Respect program.

Following is a suggested procedure for conducting such a ceremony:

The Chapter assembles outdoors at the place for the Flag Cremation. Members and guests are seated in 2 parallel rows 20-25 feet apart facing each other. The Chapter officers are at their stations as shown in the diagram at the end of this section. The Master-at-arms, Flag Detail and the Color Guard get into formation at the designated area. The Master-at-Arms will be in the center.

The President faces the Master-at-Arms (MAA) at the commencement of the ceremony. The assembly, in general, is standing "At Ease."

President:

Master-at-arms make your report.

Master-at-Arms: *"Compatriot President, we wish to present a number of unserviceable Flags of our Country for inspection and disposal."*

President: *"Compatriot Master-at-Arms, advance with your detail and present the Flags for inspection and disposal."*

The detail advances down the center until they are in front of the President. They leave enough room for a crossover or a "wheel" maneuver. The Sergeant-at-Arms advances to the President.

Sergeant-at-Arms: *"Compatriot President, we have the honor to present for final inspection and proper disposal these Flags of our Country. They have become faded and worn in a tribute of service, memory, and love and are unserviceable. It is recommended that they be fittingly destroyed."*

President:

"Former President _____ and Vice President _____, please conduct an inspection of the Flags presented for disposal."

The former President (FP) and Vice President (VP) close one another, turn and march together toward the Flag Disposal Detail, halting two paces before the MAA. The MAA calls his Detail to attention as the FP and the VP close the Detail. The MAA advances one pace once the FP and the VP are in place and faces the FP.

Master-at-Arms:

“Former President _____, we present these unserviceable Flags for your inspection.”

Former President:

“Master-at-Arms, are these unserviceable Flags in their present condition as a result of usual service as the Emblem of our Great Nation?”

Master-at-Arms:

“These Flags have become soiled, faded, tattered or torn while marking the graves of our beloved, departed Compatriots and of our honored veterans, men and women of all Branches of our Military Services, the dead of all our Nation’s wars!”

The FP can then inspect the Flags to his satisfaction, returning to his position before the MAA. (The MAA should accompany the FP on his inspection.)

Former President:

“Thank you, Master-at-Arms.”

The FP turns to the VP.

Former President:

“Vice President _____, conduct your inspection.”

Master-at-Arms:

“Vice President _____, we present these unserviceable Flags, which have been inspected by Former President _____, for your additional inspection.”

Vice President:

“Master-at-Arms, have any of these Flags served purposes other than those you mentioned to Former President _____?”

Master-at-Arms:

“Some of these Flags have been flown proudly from flagstaffs before the homes of our individual citizens in remembrance of our several National Holidays and from public and commercial flagpoles as a constant reminder of the greatness of these United States of America!

The VP can then inspect the Flags to his satisfaction, returning to his position before the MAA. (The MAA should accompany the VP on his inspection.)

Vice President:

“Thank you, Master-at-Arms.”

Following the questioning of the MAA and cursory inspections of the Flags by the FP and VP, the FP and VP about face, cross over and march to stand before the President.

President:

“Have the two of you conducted inspections of the unserviceable Flags?”

Former President and Vice President:

“We have!”

President:

“Vice President _____, what are your findings and what do you recommend?”

Vice President:

“Compatriot President, I find that these Flags have become unserviceable as a result of proud and worthy service. I recommend they be honorably retired from further service and appropriately destroyed.”

President:

“Thank you, Vice President _____. Former President _____, what are your findings and what do you recommend?”

Former President:

“Compatriot President, I find that these Flags have become unserviceable . . . soiled, faded, tattered or torn as a result of their use in paying honor and tribute to our departed Compatriots and deceased Military veterans. I too recommend that they be destroyed with solemn dignity.”

President:

“Thank you, former President _____. You two may return to your initial stations.”

The FP and VP about face, cross over and return to their respective initial stations. Once they are in place, the President addresses the assemblage.

President:

“Compatriots, we have presented here these Flags of our Country, which have been inspected and condemned as unserviceable. They have reached their present state in proper service to our Country.

“A Flag may be a flimsy bit of printed gauze, or a beautiful banner of finest silk. Its intrinsic value may be trifling or great; but its real value is beyond price, for it is a precious symbol of all that we and our compatriots have worked for and lived for, and died for – a free nation of free men and women, true to the faith of the past, devoted to the ideals and practice of Justice, Freedom, and Democracy.

“Let these faded Flags of our Country be retired and destroyed with respectful and honorable rites and their place be taken by bright new Flags of the same size and kind, and let no grave of our soldier, sailor, or airman be un-honored and unmarked.

“Master-at-Arms, assemble the Color Guard, escort the detail bearing the Flags and destroy these Flags by cremation. Members and guests shall stand at attention.”

The Flag Disposal Detail about faces. The Color Guard forms on the Detail. Preceded by the Color Guard, the Detail marches down center to the burn site. National Colors cross over and take position on the right of the fire, facing the President. Chapter Colors take position on the left of the fire. The Detail forms up behind the fire, which is burning low.

President:

“The Chaplain will offer prayer.”

Chaplain:

“Our Dear Heavenly Father, Commander over all, we ask that you bless and consecrate this special occasion. We thank Thee for our Country and the many ideals for which it stands and for our Flag which visibly symbolizes these American aspirations. To clean and purging flame we commit these Flags . . . Flags no longer serviceable due to their previous, long, honorable and worthy service. As they give up their substance to the fire, may your Spirit touch all of us,

renewing and strengthening our dedication and devotion to our great United States of America. Amen.”

President:

“Hand Salute!”

Color Guards present arms. Chapter Colors are dipped. All Officers, guests and Compatriots, except those on the Flag Disposal Detail, salute. Members of the Flag Disposal Detail dip the unserviceable Flags in kerosene and place them on a rack over the fire. The Bugler sounds “To the Colors.”

President:

(At the conclusion of “To the Colors”) “Two!”

Following “Two!” the Color Guard resumes its station. Members of the Flag Disposal Detail resume formation behind the fire. The Color Guard advances up center and places Colors. With Colors in place the President closes the ceremony.

(If the situation is correct, neighbors aware of what you plan to do, and if a Firing Squad as well as a Bugler is available, the Firing Squad followed by the Bugler sounding “Taps” could replace “To the Colors” in the ceremony.)

President:

“My fellow Compatriots and friends. This completes our ceremony. Thank you all very much for sharing in this special event!”

Ceremony Placement Diagram

