

# A Proposal to Identify and Mark the Graves of Revolutionary War Soldiers Buried in Montgomery

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by

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Background: On 18 Sep 1991, past chapter president John A. Walter wrote a memorandum for the record concerning a possible project for our chapter members. "The project would involve locating and identifying with SAR markers those soldiers of the Revolutionary War who are buried in Montgomery." He also suggested beautification of the burial sites and solicitation of others in this project.

Discussion: The purpose of the Sons of the American Revolution is threefold: historical, patriotic, and educational. One historical purpose is to commemorate and provide memorials for the people and events of the American Revolution. As the city of Montgomery and our chapter were named for a hero of the American Revolution, General Richard Montgomery, a project to locate and identify with SAR markers those soldiers who are buried *in Montgomery* is worthwhile and appropriate. This would also be a meaningful project for our members who wish to get further involved in chapter activities.

There are other patriots' graves outside city limits but still within Montgomery County. A follow-on study could be planned to identify and mark these graves, as well. Additionally, patriots' graves outside of Montgomery County, but within those counties served by the General Richard Montgomery Chapter, SAR, are candidates for further research and commemoration.

This report documents the undersigned's efforts in locating those soldiers' graves located within the Montgomery, Alabama city limits. Names in bold print are of those soldiers.

Sources:

- Thomas M. Owen, *Revolutionary Soldiers in Alabama* (Montgomery: Brown Printing Company, 1911), owned by Compatriot John Ewell Green. Included in this book are biographies of **Thomas Brown, John Caffey, Dixon Hall, Rev. George G. McWhorter, Thomas Oliver, and Robert Ware**. The Alabama Department of Archives and History has placed a transcription of Owen's book at the web site [http://www.archives.state.al.us/al\\_sldrs/~start.html](http://www.archives.state.al.us/al_sldrs/~start.html)
- Louise Milam Julich, *A Roster of Revolutionary Soldiers and Patriots in Alabama* (Montgomery: Parchment Press, 1979), owned by Compatriot Robert Martin Cheney and DAR member Jane Gordon. Included in the book are brief sketches of **John Breedlove, Thomas Brown, John Caffey, Dixon Hall, Rev. George Gray McWhorter, and Robert Ware**.
- Ronald Head, "Revolutionary Soldiers of Montgomery County, Alabama," published in the *Montgomery Genealogical Society Quarterly* Volume 1, Number 1 (Winter 1994): 2-9, provided by Compatriot Ronald Head. In compiling his article, Ron used the Owen and Julich books, as well as Blue's "A Brief History of Montgomery," Gandrud's *Alabama Soldiers*

(*Revolution, War of 1812, and Indian Wars*), Gilmer's *Sketches of Some of the First Settlers of Upper Georgia of the Cherokees*, and the Author, Owen's *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, and Williams' *The Early History of Montgomery and Incidentally of the State of Alabama*.

- A plaque memorializing the Revolutionary War soldiers who resided in Montgomery County, placed by the Francis Marion Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution in 1913 in the post office. When the post office was moved, the plaque was given back to the chapter, and placed in the county courthouse in 1957 and rededicated, according to Jane Gordon, a current member of that chapter. The plaque lists 14 names: Bryant Adams, James Courson, **John Caffey**, Samuel Fleming, William Martin, **Thomas Brown**, John Temple, Barnet Brewer, George Gilmore, Charles Hooks, Isaac Langsdale, Jacob Mitchell, William Robinson, and Benjamin Thompson. The plaque currently resides on the left wall of the hallway inside the south entrance to the Montgomery County Administration Building and Courthouse Annex, located at the corner of South Lawrence and Adams Avenue. Many of the patriots listed on the plaque were buried outside the city of Montgomery, perhaps even outside the state of Alabama.
- A plaque memorializing the Revolutionary War soldiers who resided in Montgomery County, erected by the Francis Marion Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution in 1941 in the Alabama Department of Archives and History Building, 624 Washington Avenue. In addition to the 14 names listed on the 1913 plaque, the following four were named: Jesse Cone, James Lucas, Thomas Wallace, and **Robert Ware**. Preceding the names, the plaque is inscribed, "This tablet was placed by the Francis Marion Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in memory of the soldiers of the American Revolution who later lived in Montgomery County, Alabama." The names are followed by the inscription, "Montgomery, Alabama, 1941." The plaque is affixed to the north wall of the west wing, second floor, of the Alabama Department of Archives and History Building.
- Alabama Society Preservation Alliance web site, <http://www.alabama-cemetery-preservation.com>.
- National Society, Sons of the American Revolution, *SAR Patriot Index: Edition III*, CD-ROM (Progeny Publishing, 2002)
  - National Society, Sons of the American Revolution, *SAR Revolutionary War Graves Register; 2000 Edition*, CD-ROM (Progeny Publishing, 2000)
  - Mrs. Eldred Martin Yochim, President General, *DAR Patriot Index: Centennial Edition*, 3 volumes (Washington: 1990)

Using the above sources, and with help from chapter members, I located the following graves in Montgomery. I also took photos (35MM and digital) of the sites and stones. Cemetery and next of kin information is held by the author, as is information on descendants who belong to the SAR/DAR.

- **Thomas Brown** (1752-1827), buried in the Brown Plantation Cemetery just south of Wares Ferry Road and just east of North Burbank Drive. Entrance to the completely fenced cemetery is on the north boundary of Eastdale Baptist Church, 400 North Burbank Drive. The gate is about midpoint on the boundary, recessed about 12 feet north of the church property line. The cemetery has very few stones, but one large memorial plaque was set into the ground in 1980 by "Eagle Scout Project, Troop 16, by Luke Finkelstein" to commemorate those buried there.

Included on the stone is “Thomas Brown Apr 22, 1752 – Jan 9, 1827.” **There is no DAR or SAR marker**, and the stone lends itself perfectly to the addition of a SAR Revolutionary War patriot grave marker. Descendants belong to the SAR, but not the DAR. The GPS reading for the cemetery is N32.23504 W086.11858, and is registered with the Alabama Cemetery Preservation Alliance as cemetery 51-001529. The gravesite is not in the *SAR Revolutionary War Graves Register, 2000 Edition*.

- **John Caffey** (1757-1826), originally buried in a family cemetery on Woodley Road, was moved to Oakwood Cemetery by developers. His grave is located in the Masonic Section, located just inside the main entrance, up the grade and to the right along the road. His stone reads, “John Caffey, Continental Line, Revolutionary War, 1751 - 1826.” A stone erected behind it with the Masonic symbol, reads, “Our Brother John Caffey 1757 – 1826 Served under General Washington and Lafayette.” Julich in her book states that “The DAR marker placed at the grave on Woodley Road by the Francis Marion Chapter, DAR, was moved and placed at grave in Oakwood Cem.” However, **the DAR grave marker is missing. There is no SAR marker**. Descendants belong to both the SAR and DAR. The GPS reading for the roadway adjacent the stone is N32.22992 W86.17822. The Oakwood Cemetery is recognized by the Alabama Cemetery Preservation Alliance with ID# 51-001305. The gravesite is not in the *SAR Revolutionary War Graves Register, 2000 Edition*.

- **Dixon Hall** (1755-1820), buried in the Gunter Industrial Park near, and visible from, the intersection of 2700 Gunter Park Drive and 1100 Mid Park Drive. His original stone, reassembled and laying flat on the ground, states that he was “A Soldier of the Revolution.” A more modern headstone states, “Dixon Hall, VA line, Rev. War, 1755 – 1820.” **There is no SAR or DAR marker, but the Peter Forney Chapter marked the grave on Flag Day, 1929. It is believed that the DAR marker was removed when the Gunter runways were built**. Descendants belong to both the SAR and DAR. The Alabama Cemetery Preservation Alliance recognizes the cemetery as the Dixon Hall Grave Site. The GPS reading for the site is N32.24261 W86.13.699, and is registered with the Alabama Cemetery Preservation Alliance as the Gunter Industrial Park Cemetery, ID# 51-001656. The gravesite is in the *SAR Revolutionary War Graves Register, 2000 Edition*, but erroneously recorded as “On Maxwell AFB, Montgomery, Montgomery, AL.”

- **Reverend George Gray McWhorter** (c. 1765-1829), buried in the Oakwood Cemetery across the roadway from John Caffey, in Section 2 of the original part of the cemetery called the Scotts Free Burying Ground, just inside the main entrance, up the grade and to the left along the road. His stone reads, “Sacred to the Memory of Rev. Geo. Gray McWhorter He was a Minister of the Gospel of the Presbyterian order forty years.” The DAR marker reads, “Revolutionary War Soldier George Gray McWhorter 1775 – 1783, placed by William Bibb Chapter **D.A.R.**” There is no SAR marker. Descendants belong to both the SAR and DAR. The GPS reading for the roadway adjacent the stone is N32.22992 W86.17822. The Oakwood Cemetery is recognized by the Alabama Cemetery Preservation Alliance with ID# 51-001305. The gravesite is in the *SAR Revolutionary War Graves Register, 2000 Edition*, listed as the “Scott’s Free Burial Ground, Montgomery, AL.”

- **Robert Ware** (1759-1827), buried on private property behind the residence at 162 West Rosemary Road. His magnificent monument can be viewed from the rear parking lot of Seton Haven, 2721 Wares Ferry Road, near the intersection of Wares Ferry Road and the Atlanta

Highway. The current owners of the cemetery (which is actually located on a city easement) have spent the past five years reclaiming the cemetery from thick vegetation overgrowth. The main monument is a huge obelisk with one side inscribed, "Robert Ware, Sen. Born Oct 10, 1759, died May 8, 1827." Julich erroneously reports in her book (page 608) that he was buried in Oakwood Cemetery in the Ware lot. Actually, the Robert Ware buried in that lot was his son, Dr. Robert James Ware, and the Oakwood Cemetery caretaker confirmed this. There is a brass plaque near the monument which reads, "Revolutionary War Patriot Robert Ware 1759 – 1827, Magnolia State, MS & Ann Phillips, AL CHS [chapters], NSDAR March 14, 1997." There is no SAR marker. Descendants belong to the DAR, but not the SAR. The owner of the property said that there was another metal plate that had been removed by her husband to safeguard it (perhaps a historical marker?). The GPS reading for the site is N32 23.191 W086 15.119, and is registered by the Alabama Cemetery Preservation Alliance as the Ware-Green Cemetery, ID# 51-000014. The gravesite is not in the *SAR Revolutionary War Graves Register, 2000 Edition*. Other patriots' graves, locations not precise:

- The grave of **Thomas Oliver** (-182-) may be in the same cemetery as **Thomas Brown**. Julich recorded this confusing entry (page 460): "Oliver, Benjamin (b. 5-1752 Fairfax Co. VA / d. 9-7-1840 Marshall Co. AL) Burial place in Marshall Co. unknown. BURIED: About six miles from Montgomery. His tombstone relates that he was in the War of Rev. from Culpeper Co. VA; was at King's Mt. and Yorktown. He d. 182- in Montgomery Co. AL. (Veteran bur. In Montgomery may be different man.)" Owen reported that **Thomas Brown** was buried "in the popularly known 'Oliver Cemetery,' (though it should be 'Brown Cemetery') about five miles out on the Ware's Ferry Road near the old Ledyard property." Compatriot Wylie Johnson confirms this is the cemetery in which **Thomas Oliver** is buried. No descendants belong to the SAR or DAR. Owen wrote that, "'The writer has been told that the grave of this soldier may be seen near one of the public roads about six miles from Montgomery. His tombstone relates that he was in the War of the Revolution from Culpepper County, Virginia; he was at King's Mountain and Yorktown. He died in 182—in Montgomery County, Alabama. Nothing more has been learned of this history or family.' Mrs. P. H. Mell in *Transactions of the Alabama Historical Society*, Vol. iv, p. 558." Since there is **neither a DAR or SAR marker**, it would be appropriate to locate Oliver's descendants to perhaps confirm the burial location and plan an appropriate grave-site marking ceremony.

- **John Watkins Breedlove** (1749-1833) was probably buried at his home (later the home of William Lowndes Yancey) across from the Gunter Air Force Station in Montgomery, and, at the time, just up the road from Kilby Prison, according to Compatriot Ron Head. Descendants belong to both the SAR and DAR. (Neither Owen or Julich lists him.) The gravesite is not in the *SAR Revolutionary War Graves Register, 2000 Edition* If anyone knows of other Revolutionary War patriots buried in Montgomery, or has other information to add or correct, please advise the author, so he may improve upon this report.

Recommendations:

- That this report be freely and widely disseminated, in order to solicit inputs and generate interest within the Montgomery area for identifying and marking patriots' graves. This report should be posted on the chapter web page, <http://sarmontgomeryal.org> .

- That members continue the search for Revolutionary War soldiers' graves in Montgomery, using the above clues. They should document their findings, including ruling out locations searched.

- That the 2006 General Richard Montgomery Chapter president, C. Bruce Pickette, or chapter secretary should (a) disseminate this report via USPS to those local chapter members not having an e-mail address, and, (b) formalize and legitimize further efforts to identify and mark patriots' graves within Montgomery by appointing a committee to accomplish the same.

- That this committee meet regularly to accomplish this report's objectives, and report regularly to membership on its activities. First, identify descendants of the patriots as points of contact so they may grant

permission for possible marking of the grave sites. Check with NSSAR to see if a SAR marker may be placed on a grave if there has been no SAR member joining under the patriot. Second, these descendants should be invited to play a major role in planning for an appropriate SAR grave marking ceremony. Third, other Montgomery heritage, historical, and genealogical groups should be invited to participate in all phases of the project. This should include, as a minimum, the Anne Phillips Chapter, DAR; the Captain William Bibb Chapter, DAR; the Francis Marion Chapter, DAR, the Peter Forney Chapter, DAR; The Montgomery Genealogical Society, The Alabama Historical Commission, The Old South Historical Society, The Capital Colony, Society of the Mayflower Descendants, re-enactors at Ft. Toulouse, and the Alabama Cemetery Preservation Alliance.

- That a SAR patriot grave marker be placed where there is no DAR marker already in place. While the National Society, DAR, requires a lengthy application and approval process before a grave is marked, the National Society, SAR, requires no formal approval. However, the NSSAR requests notification when graves are found and marked, so its records can be updated. A SAR patriot grave marker (bronze medallion) may be obtained from the merchandise catalog from the National Society. Funds for purchasing the markers may come from the chapter treasury, George Washington Endowment Fund disbursements, or from private donations.