

A History of the Mississippi Color Guard

by John R. Taylor, Jr.

2018

Within the time frame of 1998 to 1999, three members of the Jacob Horger Chapter decided to buy Revolutionary War uniforms and participate in patriotic events around the state. These distinguished gentlemen, Clinton Calhoun Welburn (now deceased), Wayne Wright (now deceased) and Royce T. Stringer, were very quickly put to work. Mr. Stringer recalls his first ceremony was somewhere north of Oxford, MS and it was a Patriot's grave marking. The Patriot's name has been forgotten, but the SAR member there who had requested his help was a Mr. Davis. Not to long after that, Royce and Dr. Dexter Nettles (now deceased) donned their uniforms and marked the grave of Compatriot Edgar Crisler in Claiborne County.

A few years later, John Floyd Sumner, III of the Jacob Horger Chapter bought a uniform and joined the group. In 2002, John R. Taylor, Jr. transferred in from North Carolina and immediately purchased a uniform then we were a strong five. The first event that we all attended was the grave dedication of Patriot John Wheat, in the swamps of Pearl River County. We all recall attending patriotic events at the YWCO in Laurel many Times, Veterans Day events held at the Veterans Museum, combined SAR and DAR events held at West Jones High School and several Christmas parades in Laurel and Ellisville. At least one or more-Color Guardsman attended summer library programs,

In 2003, we attended three Memorial Day events at churches in Soso, Taylorsville, and Moselle, presented the Colors at the SAR state convention in Bay St Louis (the first of many for the next fifteen years, and rode in the fourth annual Biloxi Veterans Day parade. It was also in 2003 that we found out that Stewart L. Herron had a uniform. We welcomed Lynn into our group.

In 2004, we started off with the state convention in Biloxi, followed by a Memorial Day ceremony held in Gallman, MS with the Ladies Auxiliary Military Order of the Purple Heart. Then, it was off to Meridian Community College for Kids and the annual YWCO event in Laurel. In November, we attended the Scottish Highland Games and Festival was held in Lyman, MS.

In 2005, the state convention held in Vicksburg, MS Started us off. Lt. Col. Glenn Nivens of the Alabama Color Guard invited us to the first Blue Star Salute held at The American Village in Montevallo, AL. Despite the interruption of Hurricane Katrina, we were able to participate in the dedication of LT William Tabor grave in Louisville, MS and the grave of David Murphree somewhere near Bruce, MS (ask Larry Hellums). Four grave markings of Patriots in Al were attended (scattered from Birmingham to south of Montgomery).

In 2006, the State DAR Regent invited us to participate in the opening ceremony of the DAR One Hundredth State Conference (it was the first of many attended by the Color Guard). The SAR State Convention in Oxford was next, followed by a grave marking for Patriot Zoah Spooner, which was held in Southwest, GA. Compatriot Taylor was the only MS Color Guard present and was dubbed the Lone Ranger by Mrs. George Thurmond of GA DAR. Governor Bob Riley's Blue Star Kick off in Montgomery was next, then The Blue Star Salute held at the Shelby County Airport, YWCO back in Laurel. The NSSAR Congress was held in Dallas, TX and we had a presence there, two more grave markings were held in Harpersville, AL and Patriot Solomon Wright (Wayne Wright's Patriot Ancestor) was dedicated in Henry County, AL. Our good friend, John Wallace from AL got his members to clean up this cemetery for the well-attended ceremony. The Color Guard was present at the Louisiana Convention in Baton Rouge.

In 2007, Compatriot Edward Holland of Ellisville became a member of the Color Guard. Events that year included SAR State Conventions in MS, AL, and LA, a presence at the Williamsburg, VA, Congress, the Blue Star Salute in AL, an Eagle Scout Court of Honors ceremony for seven new Eagle Scouts in Ellisville, a Fourth of July Celebration at West Ellisville Baptist Church, a Silver Star Medal Presentation for PFC Johnathon Millican KIA in Iraq held in Locust Fork, AL, a grave dedication for Patriot Samuel Brown held at Rials Creek Methodist Church in Simpson County, MS. (Glenn Nivens & Bob Melton of the AL Color Guard also attended this event). We were invited by The Louisiana Society to participate in the Dedication of the George Washington Bust located on the capital grounds in Baton Rouge. John Taylor uses a photo of this on his Quartermaster General page in "The Encampment". This is a publication of the Society of the Descendants of Washington's Army at Valley Forge

In 2008, events included the DAR State Conference in Jackson, SAR State Conventions in MS, AL, TN & LA, the 225 Anniversary Commemoration of The Arkansas Post, the Blue Star Salute at the American Village in AL, Veterans Day Memorial Service held at Providence Baptist Church near Moselle, MS.

In 2009, events included SAR State Conventions in MS, LA, TN and AL, Memorial Day Service at the Veterans Museum in Laurel, MS, a DAR marker dedication at Dunn's Fall near Enterprise, MS, attended a Veterans Day program at Mason Elementary School in Laurel, and presented two programs at the Laurel Library and one program at the Ellisville Library.

In 2010, events included the SAR State Conventions in MS, LA, TN & AL, a huge Grave Marker Dedication of Patriot Matthew Carter held in Old Americus, Jackson County, MS (this ceremony was carried by the media and viewed all over the nation).

In 2011, events included the SAR State Conventions in MS, AL, LA & TN, presence at the Dedication of Patriots Park and the Captain William Lytle Cemetery in Murfreesboro, TN, and the Dedication of Avoyelles Patriots Plaque, in Mansura, LA honoring at least thirty-six soldiers serving under Bernado de Galvez.

In 2012, Gerald P. Brent and Kevin McDonald became members of the Color Guard. Events attended included the MS State Convention, a DAR Marker Dedication at Greensboro, MS, The Gathering at Sycamore Shoals, the dedication of Captain Christopher Taylor's Grave near Jonesborough, TN (Colin Wakefield's Patriot Ancestor), and Grave Marker Dedications for four MS Compatriots.

In 2013, events attended included MS DAR State Conference, SAR State Conventions in MS, AL, TN & LA, The 54th Annual George Washington Ball in Lafayette, LA, the Dedication and Grave Marking of Patriot Lazarus Reeves near Summit, MS.

From 2014 to 2017, The State Color Guard participated in many SAR and DAR events along with many other events due to my activity with other organizations as a national officer. I was also very busy helping SAR chapter in the Southern part of our state reorganize and gain membership. I became dependent on my old computer. It bit the dust this past March and activities that were recorded could not be recovered. I had a backup disk, but it wouldn't work and I didn't keep a paper trail to follow.

I will add this, William Horne, Buddy Irving and Michael Schenk have joined our group. Bryant Boswell has also worn different uniforms to support our cause. The latest addition, is the new State Color Guard Commander Julius Hite who has added a beat to our step and will serve the state well.

The Mississippi State Color Guard has traveled thousands of miles and has participated in over one hundred events at the chapter, state, district and national levels throughout the nation since the Laurel group first purchased uniforms.

Addendum

by Bryant R. Boswell
2021

Beginning in 2018, MS SAR members starting serving as Color Guard members for the MS Society of the SAR and the MS Society, War of 1812. At times, they combined their efforts presenting a Color Guard of both Wars of Independence. This was the case at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the MS SAR in Columbus, MS. Where, at Friendship Cemetery, both Color Guard units honored Gen. William Cocke, a patriot of both wars.

The MS SAR Color Guard once again presented the Colors at the Annual DAR State Meeting in Jackson on Valentine's night, February 14, 2019. In May of 2019, the men once again put on their War of 1812 uniforms and formed a Color Guard for the unveiling of the Society of the War of 1812 monument placed at French Camp, MS.

Julius Hite became Color Guard Commander at the MS SAR Annual Meeting in March 2019. He served until March 2020. He resigned due to the fact that he moved his residence to Knoxville, TN. Julius was also a drummer. His leadership and participation in the Color Guard was sorely missed. Bill Horne was asked to replace Julius and performed as Commander until March 2021. Both men served admirably.

During Julius Hite's year as Commander, the Color Guard participated in Grave Marking Ceremonies for Capt. Samuel Peden at Smyrna Cemetery in Kemper County, and supported the Dancing Rabbit Chapter of the MSSDAR with marking the grave of Pvt. William McIntosh in Noxubee County, MS. Also, in 2019, they supported the Alabama Color Guard at the American Village near Montevallo, AL, and the Tennessee Color Guard at Sycamore Shoals, TN. They presented the Colors for the MSSDAR in Natchez in support of the annual Rosalie Day.

COVID 19 struck the Nation in March, 2020, thus causing the MS SAR Annual Meeting to be cancelled. Bill Horne took over as Commander at that time, but was severely hampered by the viral pandemic. Only one Grave Marking ceremony was held that year, again with the Dancing Rabbit Chapter of the DAR at Brooksville, MS. However, it was a very special event being not only a grave marking, but also a Wreaths Across America ceremony placing Christmas wreaths on the graves of Veterans. It was the initial presentation of the Marquis de LaFayette to the MS SAR Color Guard. He is portrayed by Jerry Lilly of Oxford, MS.

Bryant Boswell took over as Color Guard Commander at the COVID restricted Annual Meeting in March, 2021. Bill Horne had to resign due to family health issues. He served admirably during the terrible Corona Virus pandemic, falling victim himself, but thankfully surviving.