

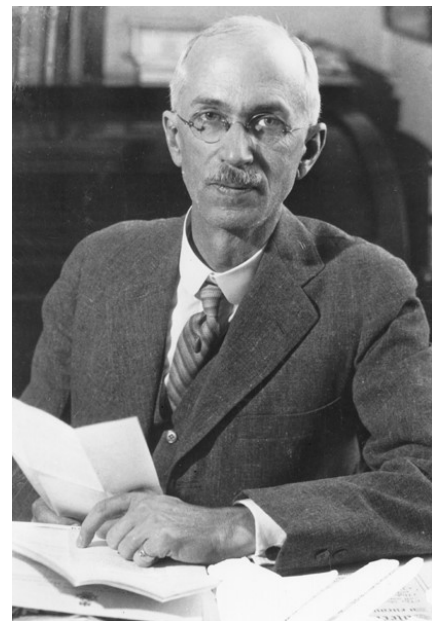


Arizona SAR Historian's Newsletter
Celebrating the 130th Year of the
Arizona Sons of the American Revolution
Instituted May 18, 1895
Chartered June 13, 1896



Issue No. 2 August 2025

Arizona SAR Officially Chartered on June 13, 1896— Rechartered on May 23, 1934



On June 13, 1896, the Arizona Society Sons of the American Revolution was officially chartered through the efforts of its first president and “Father of the Arizona SAR,” Herbert Fulwiler Robinson (pictured left).

The Arizona Society faced challenges during the early 1930s and was successfully rechartered on May 23, 1934, due to the leadership and commitment of Dr. Gurden M. Butler state president 8 times—7 times in succession—until 1942.



Arizona SAR Charters

By David A. Swanson, Arizona SAR Historian

In the first newsletter, the “institution” of the Arizona SAR in 1895 and its official organization (chartering) in 1896 were briefly outlined. Before moving on to future newsletters, let's cover our second charter—and then the third, which was designated as a “Memorial” charter.

The Arizona Society Sons of the American Revolution Centennial Register *June 13, 1896 – June 13, 1996*

Published in 1996 in celebration of the Arizona SAR's 100th Anniversary, this volume was compiled by Arizona SAR Historian John A. Williams. In the introduction he writes: “We have called this book a *register* as opposed to a *history*, because the majority of the material is more ‘list of names,’ than it is a comprehensive narrative history.” That said, it contains some very good history, so I am going to reprint most of the opening page:

The Arizona Society Centennial
June 13, 1896 – June 13, 1996

There were at least three charters of the Arizona Society Sons of the American Revolution (AZSSAR). The first charter was signed on June 13, 1896 by President General Horace Porter of New York, and Secretary General Franklin Murphy of New Jersey. A second charter was signed on May 23, 1934 by President General Arthur M. McGrillis of Rhode Island and Secretary General Frank B. Steele of New York. A third charter was a “Memorial Charter,” signed May 15, 1950, by President General Wallace C. Hall of Michigan and Secretary General Edgar Williamson, Jr. of New Jersey.

First Charter" members were Herbert Fulwiler Robinson, William Henry Robinson [his brother], Omar Asa Turney, Lewis Wilfred Coggins, John Ernest Walker, J. Frank Elwell, George W. Christian, Harry Roswell Barden, Charles Bennett Christy, Lemuel Campbell Butler, and George Dorr Christy. Lloyd Bennett Christy, Shirley Addison Christy, Alfred Perry Walbridge, James W. Benham, Samuel Seay Stout, Prosper Powell Parker, Henry Adelbert Thompson, John Dennett, Jr., and Rev. Lewis Halsey, DD.

The 20 signers of the June 13, 1896 First Charter may be inferred from the records of their applications as being in three categories: a. "certain," b. "probable" and c. "possible" in modern usage only. Arizona membership numbers 1 - 8 were assigned prior to the charter date. Arizona numbers 9 - 17 were assigned on 27 June 1896, after the charter date. Arizona numbers 18, 19, and 20 were assigned prior to the June 13, 1897 anniversary date. Current custom is for the Charter to be left open for signers until the first anniversary date.

The "second Charter", was signed by 40 AZSSAR Compatriots in the following order: G. M. Butler, Evan L. Stallcup, J. Rockwood Jenkins, Franklin D. Lane, Lewis W. Coggins, Walter L. Ingalls, Frank T. Alkire, M. B. Hazeltine, R. G. Lanmeade, Corydon R. Dusenberry, Elkanah A. Babcock, III, Charles A. Carson, John Dennett, Jr., Howard S. Reed, George W. P. Hunt, Lloyd B. Christy, Everett E. Ellinwood, Harold Baxter, L. J. Taylor, H. Greenway Albert, Kenneth G. Freeland, Julian Dorsey, R. Lyle Thomas, P. W. Hodges, Robert A. Greene, G. N. Burcham, T. Carlyle Roberts, Jr., James R. Ahl, E. D. Ball, A. E. Douglass, Talbot T. Smith, A. H. Caldwell, Jr., Leonard J. Curtis, K. E. Parke, Dr. Laurel W. Moffitt, Frederick E. Johnson, Wyatt W. Jones, A. R. Buehman, Frank C. Kelton, and E. D. Gardner.

Note that Lloyd Bennett Christy, Lewis Wilfred Coggins and John Dennett, Jr., also signed the June 13, 1896 charter. Frederick E. Johnson is an active member today.

No copy of the First Charter has been found. The Second Charter is in the custody of the AZSSAR Historian. Mounted in a frame behind glass, the condition is very faded and very brittle. Charter 3, a "memorial" charter signed May 15, 1950 by President General Wallace C. Hall of Michigan and Secretary General Edgar Williamson Jr. of New Jersey, contains no member names. A copy is in the custody of the AZSSAR Historian.

[Unfortunately, the first, second, and third charters have been lost to the ebbs and flows of history. In 1950, the SAR claimed that “apparently no State Charters were ever issued by the National Society” apart from those granted in that year to state Societies—more on that later.]

Events leading to the reorganization

The Arizona SAR was quite active from its inception in 1896 and there are quite a few newspaper articles about it and its Compatriots.

Annual state meetings were held in Phoenix from 1896 until 1934, when they were held in Tucson—though meetings in the early 1930s are presumed rather than documented. During the 1920s, Dr. Gurdon Butler made two unsuccessful attempts to establish a local chapter in Tucson. In fact, no local chapters existed in Arizona from 1896 until 1964, when the Tucson Chapter was finally organized. (More on Arizona Chapters in a future newsletter.)

During the 1930 meeting: “A considerable portion of it was devoted to discussion of membership and to formulation of plans for increasing the society’s membership in Arizona. It was declared that while the society had made its largest membership gain during 1929 under the leadership of [President] Gurdon Butler, there were still many Arizonians eligible to membership.” But despite the large membership gain in 1929 storm clouds were on the immediate horizon for the Society—and I sometimes wonder if those storm clouds were the ones that also heralded The Great Depression.

In the October 1931 issue of the *Sons of the American Revolution Magazine* under “Officers of State Societies” Arizona is listed with the following:

“*President*, [vacant]

Secretary, Howard S. Reed, Phoenix; *Treasurer*, Lloyd B. Christie [sic], Phoenix; and *Registrar*, Richard E. Sloan, Phoenix.”

The October 1932, and 1933 issues of the magazine contain the same officer information but the hammer falls with the April 1934 issue which lists the following officers for Arizona: “Inactive.” That one word says it all but there is light at the end of that “inactive” tunnel.

The July and October 1934 issues have “*Acting Secretary-Registrar*, Dr. G. M. Butler, University of Arizona, Tucson and finally, the January 1935 issue shows: “*President*, G. Montague Butler, University of Arizona, Tucson; *Secretary-Treasurer*, Frank C. Kelton, Tucson.”

It seems as though the 1931-33 notices to the *SAR Magazine* were sent almost on “auto pilot” by somebody in the Arizona Society—possibly Howard Reed—who is another of our unsung heroes—since all three years contain the same information including the misspelling of treasurer Lloyd B. Christy’s last name.

A November 1933 article in the *Arizona Daily Star* is very informative:

SAR Chapter to be revived

The Arizona chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution will be revived in the state and an application made to the national body for a new chapter, it was announced yesterday by Dr. G. M. Butler, former president of the Arizona society. This year Arthur M. McCrillis, national president general, requested Dr. Butler to revive the society by applying for a new charter. Dr. Butler began this work about a week ago and already has the signatures of 20 former members on the petition that will be presented. The first Arizona chapter of the sons was formed in 1895 and abandoned about three years ago, despite a membership of between 75 and 100. It had been active in good citizenship work, presenting medals to high school children for this; took part in ceremonials and celebrations incident to the national holidays and anniversaries and had made a good record for itself in the national organization. Dr. Butler said yesterday that the charter membership in the revived organization will be kept open for several weeks and applicants for membership may sign the petition now . . . the cost is \$5 [\$5 in 1933 equals about \$119 today] but will be twice that after granting of the charter. Headquarters of the new society will be located in Tucson rather than in Phoenix.

One of the few letters that I have in the state historian file is one written on December 20, 1993, from Compatriot Fred E. Johnson to Compatriot L. Bernard Schmidt (then chairman of the Arizona SAR Centennial Committee) and it reads in part: “In 1934 my good friend Gurdon M. Butler, Dean of College of Mines and Engineering at the University of Arizona led the move to revive the Arizona Society, SAR The only state meetings in the 1930s were held in Tucson during and after 1934.”

Well, Dr. Butler was indeed successful!

On May 23, 1934, the second charter was signed by President General Arthur M. McGrillis. As previously noted, that charter is lost and other than newspaper clippings and general information in *The Arizona Society Centennial* there is nothing that lists the May 23rd date.

While I was preparing this newsletter I came across the digitized July 1934 edition of the SAR *Official Bulletin* that I had squirreled away many years ago and had forgotten about. (The SAR website has copies all of the SAR Magazines/Bulletins except for this particular issue, which the library now has!).

So as anticlimactic as it is, here is what was written about the Arizona SAR and its second charter:

Digest of the Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting

Sunday, May 20, 1934, 10:30 A.M.

Arthur M. McGrillis, President General, presiding

[Among many other items in the report the following is listed]: "Presentation of an application for a new Charter for the Arizona Society and recommendation that same be approved by Board of Trustees." [p 5]

Digest of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Sunday, May 20, 1934, at 8 P.M.

"The Minutes of the Executive Committee meetings held during the year as printed in the S. A. R. Magazine were presented and on motion approved as were the Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on the date, May 20, 1934, and the actions of the committee ratified and confirmed." [p 6]

Monday Afternoon Session

"Past President General Millspaugh: I move that a telegram be sent to Dr. G. Montague Butler expressing the thanks and appreciation of the Society for his efforts in reorganizing the Arizona Society.

The motion was duly seconded and on being put was carried and so ordered." [p 15]

Digest of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Wednesday, May 23, 1934

"The following actions were then taken upon motions duly made, second and adopted:

A new Charter granted to the re-organized State Society of Arizona." [p 36]

What about our third—the "Memorial" Charter?

The *SAR Magazine* August 1950 edition covered the May 1950 Annual Congress and on page 7 under "Program of Annual Congress" shows "Presentation of State Charters" and the synopsis of the Annual Congress, page 18 states, "The Presentation of Charters to each of the State Societies, authorized by the Board of Trustees, was followed by . . ."

Interestingly, during the February 25th Board of Trustees and Executive Committee meeting: "An excellent draft of a proposed State Charter was submitted for consideration by the Chancellor General, it being explained that apparently no State Charters were ever issued by the National Society and that there is no supply on hand of such certificates. In this connection it should be recalled that some State Societies were in existence before the National Society was formed."

The Arizona Society Centennial shows that we apparently had two physical charters: "No copy of the First Charter has been found. The Second Charter is in the custody of the AZSSAR Historian. [Interesting, since the SAR "apparently" did not issue physical charters prior to the one issued in 1950.] Mounted in a frame behind glass, the condition is very faded and very brittle. Charter 3, a 'memorial' charter signed May 15, 1950 by President General Wallace C. Hall of Michigan and Secretary General Edgar Williamson Jr. of New Jersey, contains no member names. A copy is in the custody of the AZSSAR Historian."

Perhaps the term 'memorial' came to commemorate a Society's official charter date, marked by the issuance of a physical charter by the SAR—especially since each charter distributed in 1950 included only that information.

Below is a copy of the 1950 Alabama SAR Charter as an example:

The National Society
of the
Sons of the American Revolution

To the Officers and Com patriots of the
Alabama *Society of the Sons of the American Revolution:*

*In accordance with the Charter granted by the Congress of the United States,
and the Constitution and By-Laws of the National Society, and by authority of the
Board of Trustees this*

Charter

*is hereby issued in commemoration of the Organization of your Society on the
twenty-seventh day of June ... A.D. 1903 and its subsequent admission into
the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution.*



Attest:
Frank B. Stule
Secretary General

*Given under our hands and the Seal of the Society
this fifteenth day of May ... A.D. 1950*

John Whitelch Finger
President General

Who was Dr. Gurdon Montague Butler?

He was the “Dean of the College of Mines and Engineering (1915-1940); Dean of Engineering (1940-1941); director of Arizona Bureau of Mines (1918-1940) at the University of Arizona.” (<https://lib.arizona.edu/special-collections/collections/gurdon-montague-butler-papers>).

In 1928 he was elected as Arizona SAR state president, elected as a National Trustee in 1929, between 1933 and 1934 he resurrected our Society, in 1935 he received the “Ohio Traveling Banner,” which at that time was awarded annually at the national Congress to the society enrolling the largest number of members under thirty years of age for the year passed and in 1936 was elected Vice President General of the Rocky Mountain District. Butler was elected to the office of state president 8 times—7 times in succession—and I think we would have to look long and hard to find anyone who was more dedicated to the Arizona SAR. He certainly has my vote as “Second Father of the Arizonan SAR!”

To be continued!

