



# EMPIRE PATRIOT

Empire State Society, Sons of the American Revolution

*Preserving the Past, Forming the Future*

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Spring Issue



*George Gydesen, President*

## Message from the President

Did you know in May of 1790 while Washington was in office a flu epidemic exploded in New York city of which Richard Henry Lee described Manhattan as a perfect Hospital, few are well and many very sick? Or the roll of disease in the Revolution?

Read in this issue about the history of the Flu - a topic pertinent to our time . And the effects of disease on the the Continental Army -- the smallpox epidemic was killing more of our soldiers than the British, and what General Washington dared to do about it.

I do hope that all are doing well in the current Corona Virus outbreak.

It has been necessary to cancel meetings. We are hoping to reschedule the Annual meeting in July.

Until then stay safe, keep all the safety procedure in place - protect yourself and your neighbors.

*George Gydesen*

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## In this Issue:

**Get Your ESS-SAR  
Patriot Certificate**

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## Upcoming Events

**July 18 2020 - Rescheduled  
ESS Annual Meeting  
Details to Follow**

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## Amendment to By Laws

In accordance with proper procedure the following motion is hereby published in the Empire Patriot newsletter and will be voted upon at the next Board of Managers meeting.

### PROPOSED BY-LAWS AMENDMENT

#### Section X Quorums

**1. Fifteen (old: Twenty-one) members of the Society shall constitute a quorum at its annual meeting or any special meeting of the Society.**

## Get Your ESS-SAR Patriot Certificate



To commemorate your ancestral patriot. The Empire State Society, Sons of the American Revolution has designed this beautiful certificate. Personalized with your name, your ancestors name, with your state and national member numbers. The certificate is custom printed using the highest quality professional equipment available.

Printed on premium quality heavy paper. A perfect reminder to you and your family who your revolutionary

ancestor was. The price for this valuable family record document is very modest at \$20. When you purchase a certificate, five dollars of the purchase price is donated to your chapter.

This beautiful heirloom certificate was designed by compatriot Joseph B. Fitzpatrick, President of the Leather Stocking Chapter, and Vice President of the Capital Region, ESSAR. Please use the following form to order your Patriot Certificate today.

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Here is some historic information to consider while we wait out the present pandemic.

## **The History of the Flu**

The flu is not new. Neither are pandemics. They've been documented since the mid 1500s. What has changed is the speed of transmission – airplanes instead of ships or shoes and population density – more cities and more humans on the planet.

1580 --There have been nine pandemics since 1580, the earliest on record. Most started in Asia. The earliest documented was the 1580 flu outbreak. It came out of Asia. Within six months it has spread to Africa, and Europe. Eventually it reached the Americas.

1729 – the next pandemic began in Russia. Within six months it spread throughout Europe, and made it worldwide within three years.

1781 – The third pandemic arose in China. It took one year to infect Russia, Europe and North America.

1830 - 1833 – the fourth one also began in China,. It raged until 1833, It was carried by ships around south Asia, infecting the Philippines, Indonesia and India. Then it made its way across Russia and into Europe. Europe suffered two bouts of the disease during the pandemic. The flu reached North America in 1831-1832. It is believed that this pandemic may have affected 20-25 percent of the world's population.

1889 – The fifth pandemic came out of Russia, It reached the American continent just 70 days after it began and ultimately affected approximately 40 percent of the world's population.

1918 – The Spanish flu pandemic (involve the H1N1 virus) – the deadliest in history did not originate in Spain, it's source is unknown. During the pandemic's 18 months run it is estimated that about 500 million people or one-third of the world's population became infected with this virus, and up to 50 million people died. That is far more than the roughly 17 million people killed during the First World War. More U.S. soldiers died from the flu than from battle in that war. Altogether about 675,000 deaths occurred in the United States.

1957 – Asian flu (caused by H2N2), killed 1.1 million people worldwide

1968 – The Hong Kong flu of 1968 (H3N2), which killed 1 million people worldwide.

2009 – The Swine flu (a new influenza A H1N1 virus) started in Mexico in North America and spread throughout the world, killing up to 203,000 people worldwide.

Source: <https://www.history.com/topics/inventions/flu>

## **George Washington: Medical Activist**

### **War Hero, Founding Father, Medical Activist**

You know that George Washington was a Revolutionary War Hero, and an American Founding Father. But you may not know that General Washington was also medical activist.

As a man of the Enlightenment Washington was a believer in science. He used the innovative medicine of his day to save the Continental Army, and ultimately defeat the British. And did so against Continental Congress' orders! What was the medical problem Washington faced, and what did he do about it? It was Smallpox. And he dared to institute the first mass vaccination in military history.

Shortly after taking over the Continental Army Washington was faced by a smallpox epidemic. There were rumors that the British were deliberately spreading the dread disease among the the Colonists in Boston. True or not, the epidemic spread. As the old axiom says: Where Soldiers go, plague follows. And Wash-

ington's Army was particularly vulnerable as few of the Colonists had been exposed to the disease whereas most British had.

The effects of smallpox on the Colonial Army were devastating. And on the war effort. In 1776 nearly half of our soldiers in Canada were sick with smallpox and Major General John Thomas, Commander of our Northern Army in Quebec, died of smallpox. According to John Adams the epidemic was the cause of our retreat. We lost any chance of driving out the British and securing Canada as a future state.

Washington could not let what happened in Quebec happen to his army. He knew that persons who had survived smallpox were immune. He had the pox as a young man himself. His face showed light scarring on his nose, but he was immune.

He looked to “modern medicine” for a solution – inoculation with the smallpox virus. Although “variolation” as it was called was risky, it was better than waiting to catch the pox the usual way through contact with an infected person, or contaminants. The method had been used in Europe for a century or more, and even in Boston some 50 years earlier by Cotton Mather, but was now outlawed in some colonies and prohibited by Congress for use in the Army.

There were good reasons, The inoculation used live virus from a pox sore. The person receiving it developed the disease although usually in a milder form, but was contagious, so had to be quarantined for several weeks to prevent spreading the disease. Moreover the person was ill and unfit for duty during the isolation period. Obviously, this made inoculation unsuitable for the existing Army. Or so everyone thought. Although General Washington at first prohibited inoculating the troops he eventually decided it was strategically necessary.

So Washington became our first medical activist. And the Continental Army the first in history to be vaccinated. On February 5th of 1777, Washington notified the Continental Congress by letter, advising them that he saw no other way to prevent the spread of the disease than to inoculate the whole army. He did not wait for their reply before issuing his order.

In secrecy and with speed, Washington ordered the inoculation of all the troops encamped at Morristown. By the end of the year, about 40,000 soldiers had been inoculated and infection rates dropped from 20 percent to about one percent. The program was so successful that he repeated it in the Valley Forge winter of 1778. And the rest is history.

The American Revolution Museum sums up Washington's work:

“According to historian Elizabeth A. Fenn, who has chronicled the great smallpox epidemics that ravaged America from 1775-1782, 'Washington's unheralded and little-recognized resolution to inoculate the Continental forces must surely rank among his most important decisions of the war.'

“Moreover, Washington's decision for mass inoculation within the army reflects the first 'large-scale, state-sponsored immunization campaign in American history,' making Washington a key player in early American public health endeavors.”

Sources:

<https://www.armyheritage.org/75-information/soldier-stories/209-smallpox>

<http://www.revolutionarywarjournal.com/diseases-and-epidemics/>

<https://www.loc.gov/rr/scitech/GW&smallpoxinoculation.html>

<https://www.minnpost.com/second-opinion/2016/07/how-vaccinations-helped-win-revolutionary-war/>

<https://www.amrevmuseum.org/read-the-revolution/history/fighting-infection>

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Note from the Editor: If your chapter would like to have your stories, events and photos published in the *Empire Patriot* send your material to Editor Karl Danneil at [kdanneil@fairpoint.net](mailto:kdanneil@fairpoint.net)