



PATRIOT



President's Message

Compatriots,

Thank you to everyone who helped make our Constitution Day Dinner such a successful and enjoyable evening. The wonderful attendance, fellowship, and support of our members and guests made it a fitting celebration of the Constitution and the enduring principles of our nation's founding.

Our next major activity is the Benny Bus Tour fundraiser during the Mojave Mayhem event, November 13–15. This unique event allows us to share local history, introduce new audiences to the mission of the Sons of the American Revolution, and raise funds for our chapter's programs. Its success will depend upon the generous support of our volunteers, and I encourage everyone who is able to sign up and help.

I am grateful for the enthusiasm and dedication you continue to bring to the Signers Chapter. By working together, we strengthen our chapter, serve our community, and keep the legacy of our Patriot ancestors alive for future generations.

David Bentley, President, Signers Chapter, Nevada State Society, Sons of the American Revolution

Upcoming 2026 Events

Saturday, Oct. 3, 9 am, Breakfast meeting, Egg Works Restaurant, Summerlin

Saturday, Nov. 7, 9 am, Breakfast meeting, Egg Works Restaurant, Summerlin

Friday – Sunday, Nov. 13-15, Benny Bus Tour Fundraiser Event

Friday, Dec. 18, 5 pm, Annual Signers Chapter Christmas Party at the Las Vegas National Golf Club

September 2026 Events

The Signers Chapter met at the Egg Works Restaurant in Summerlin for their breakfast meeting on Sept. 5th. Thirty-six attendees listened to a presentation about medical care during the American Revolution, by compatriot Eric D. Swanson, MD, FACS. Eric highlighted the types of medical care that patriot soldiers received when they suffered wounds in battle and how Continental Army General George Washington saved his troops from the dreaded smallpox disease by permitting them to be inoculated by variolation.

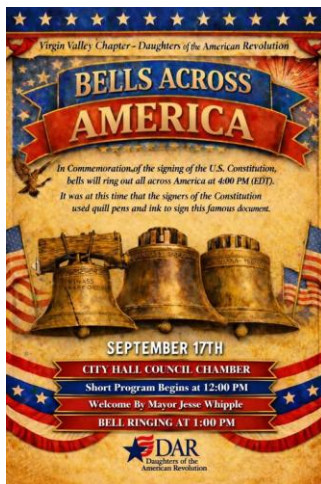
President David Bentley thanked compatriot Don Walsh for volunteering to join the chapter leadership team as Speakers Committee Chairman. Don had already joined compatriot Anthony Connolly on the Awards Committee. Don's extensive background in first responder firefighting and EMS response adds to the committee's ability to recognize local heroic acts with Chairman Connolly's Police Force career experience.

America250 Committee Chairman Bob Reed confirmed that the chapter's America250 monument at the Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Boulder City, was further etched on the back side, enhancing its recognition of contributions by America's first veterans.

NSSDAR Las Vegas Springs Chapter Regent, Wendy Kelly, discussed their chapter's upcoming Zoom meeting when author Ted Hart will speak about his book, *A French Soldier at Yorktown: The Story Behind Vineyards to Victory*, on Sunday October 4th.



On Sept. 17, the Signers Chapter participated in the NSSDAR Virgin Valley Chapter's **Bells Across America** event celebrating Constitution Day and Citizenship Day in Mesquite. Compatriot Bob Haywood and the Mesquite Veterans Honor Guard presented the colors and compatriot Gary Watson spoke about the Constitution in the City Hall's chambers to an audience of school children, their teachers, DAR chapter members, veterans, first responders and seniors.



On Saturday, Sept. 19, the NSSAR Signers Chapter hosted a Constitution Week dinner event with the NSSDAR Silver State Chapter at the Las Vegas National Golf Club facility. Signers Chapter President David Bentley and Silver State Chapter Regent Teresa Rodrick presided over the event, which featured speaker Lauri-Oakden Binder. Lauri's topic was founding mother, Mercy Otis Warren, an influential Anti-Federalist who successfully campaigned for the Bill of Rights to be established after the US Constitution was ratified by the states.

Leigh Roessner, Regent of the NSSDAR Virgin Valley Chapter, received from the Signers Chapter the Henry Knox Achievement Medal for her leadership and significant contributions to the July 8 reading of the Declaration of Independence and the Bells Across America event for the Constitution Day and Citizenship Day celebration in Mesquite, in which Signers Chapter compatriots participated.





October 2026 Planned Events

The Signers Chapter will meet again for its monthly breakfast meeting at 9am Saturday, October 3rd at the Egg Works Restaurant at 2025 Village Center Circle, Summerlin.

The featured speakers will be new compatriot, Gary Fike, and compatriot Gary Watson. They will cover the controversial **Battle of Point Pleasant**, which took place in the Ohio River Valley in territory claimed by the Commonwealth of Virginia, on October 10, 1774. The single day's battle has been called, by some, the first battle of the American Revolutionary War, even though it took place six months before the April 1775 Battles of Lexington & Concord in Massachusetts, which SAR considers the beginning of the war.

Gary Edward Fike, whose patriot ancestor John Wood served at the Battle of Point Pleasant, comes from a third-generation Las Vegas family, including his six children. His stepmother of nearly seventy years was born in Las Vegas in 1930, before gambling was legal, and lately recalled that in the 1930s, the edge of town was Main Street and Charleston. Gary's father, Ed Fike, was elected Lt. Gov. of Nevada in 1966, serving with Gov. Paul Laxalt. After graduating from USIU in San Diego in 1973, Gary returned to Las Vegas and built his career in real estate appraisal.

Over the years, Gary has been an avid martial artist who trained with Chuck Norris in the late 1960s, a rock climber with numerous first ascents in Southern Nevada, a mountain biker and long-distance cyclist, and a longtime outdoorsman with many hiking/rafting trips through the Grand Canyon. At 75, he is now a struggling golfer.

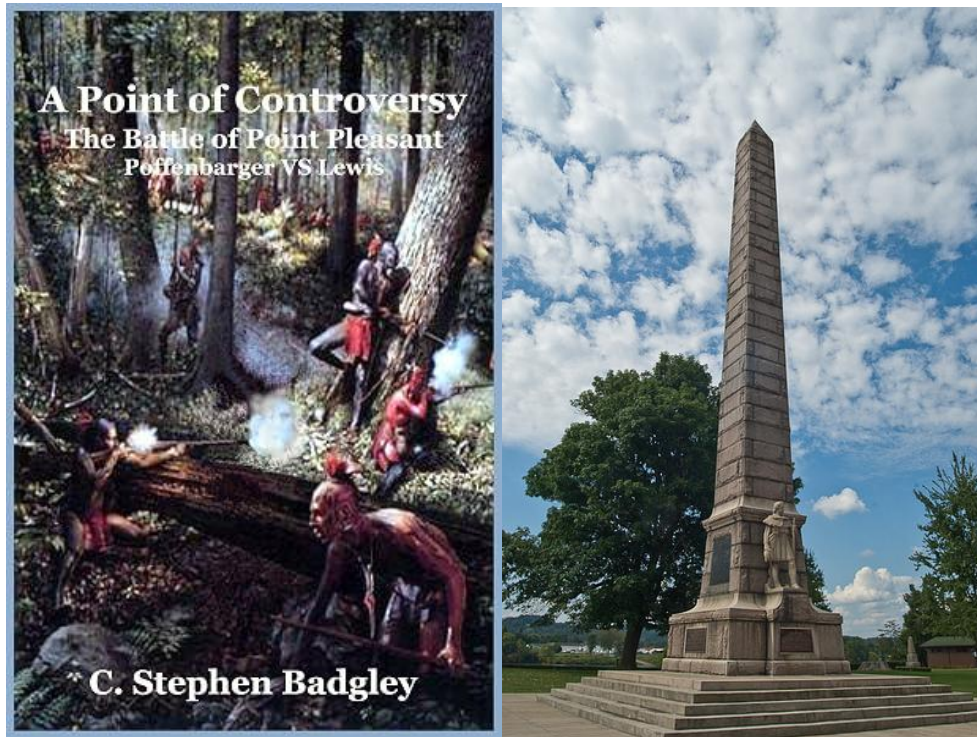
Gary's interest in genealogy began after his grandmother shared her grandfather's Civil War mementos and her handwritten 1930 DAR application. His research into his sixth-great-grandfather, John Wood, led to extensive study of Lord Dunmore's War, the 1774 Battle of Point Pleasant, and Revolutionary-era service on the Virginia frontier.

Working with Nevada State Registrar Gary Watson, the Garys successfully proved John Wood's service and participation at the Battle of Point Pleasant after the application had twice been rejected at the national level.

Gary was elected this year to the Order of the First Families of Maryland through Mary Grayless, his 7x great grandmother, a 19-year-old unwed mother who was convicted in a June 1734 Dorchester Co., MD court of fornication and bastardy, and immediately sentenced to 10 lashes on her bare back at the public whipping post. Her son went on to become Captain Jesse Grayless in the Maryland Revolutionary militia, retaining his mother's surname.

Gary is now pursuing additional lineage work through Edmund Beauchamp, first Clerke of Somerset Co., MD, and son of John Beauchamp of the London Merchant Adventurers, whose members financed the refitting of the Mayflower and the early Plymouth Colony. He has also received permission to proceed with an Order of the Founders and Patriots of America application through his ninth-great-grandfather Jan Gerritsen van Immen, who received a New Jersey land patent in 1654 and whose great-grandson signed a November 1780 petition urging the New Jersey legislature to replace the ineffective short-term enlistment system for Revolutionary troops.

Gary remains committed to primary-sourced genealogy and preserving his family's history for his four living children and five grandchildren.



Battle of Point Pleasant

West Virginia

Native American Hero Chief Cornstalk

Brigadier General Andrew Lewis

Heroine of the Kanawha Valley "Mad" Anne Bailey

Royal Governor John Murray known as Lord Dunmore

Tu-Endie-Wei State Park Point Pleasant, WV

Bulletin Board

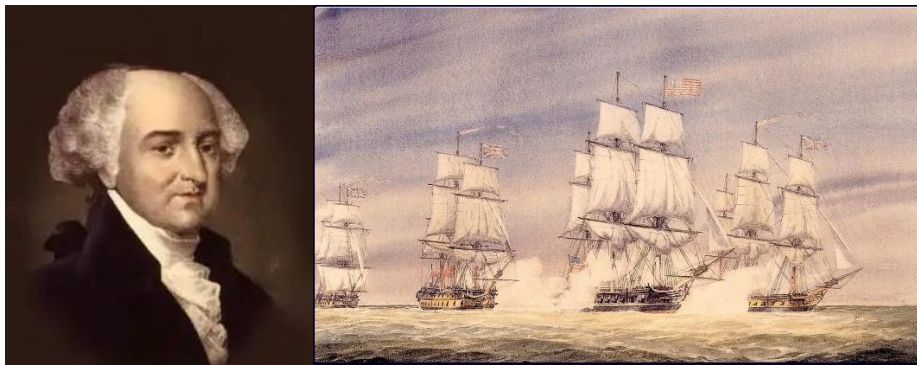
Founding of the Continental Navy

John Adams, future President of the United States, proposed at the Second Continental Congress the outfitting of privateers, which could attack enemies of the United Colonies at sea. The naval proposal met with considerable pushback. Adams was persistent. He knew the battle on land would take precedence, but as fighting with British forces gained traction, the war at sea gained steam. Adams succeeded and delegates of the Congress agreed to the formation of the Continental Navy.

In the closing months of 1775, the Battles of Lexington and Concord and the Battle of Bunker Hill were already long past. As promised, on October 13th, John Adams and the Marine Committee authorized the purchase of a merchant ship named *Andrew Doria I*. In the harbor shipyards of Pennsylvania, Wharton and Humphrey shipbuilders were commissioned to strengthen the ship's hull, open gun ports, and supply the vessel with provisions. A month later, three more merchantmen, *Alfred*, *Columbus*, and *Cabot*, were converted as well to create a naval fleet.

Stepping into the role of Commander in Chief of the new navy was Commodore Esek Hopkins, a native of Rhode Island, who served during the French and Indian War. Starting on the 4th of July 1776, the fleet navigated down the eastern coastline with orders to clear the waters of any British warships.

Adams created the first set of regulations for the Navy in November. The document, *Rules for the Regulation of the Navy of United Colonies of North America*, consisted of 44 articles that described orders for every captain and seaman to follow under any circumstance. On December 8, the regulations were sent to the captains of the ships in the new navy.



Content for some of this story contributed by Signers Chapter compatriot Jay Berkley. Some content from an article by Mason Hickman.