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From the President General

As the newly elected President General of NSDAR, I'm excited to be part of the creative team behind the National Society’s publications, including American Spirit. We look forward to three years full of sharing stories devoted to historic preservation, education and patriotism.

Our cover story on Colonial cartography shows how early American mapmakers set out in uncharted territory to survey and sketch the boundaries of a new nation. The feature also includes a review of the challenges that changing place names present to genealogists, as well as the story of how the DAR acquired a rare 1892 replica of a map of America made in 1500.

In the early 1920s, with the 150th anniversary of 1776 approaching, the DAR gave Will Hays, then president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, the idea to make an uplifting film about the nation’s founding. The idea found its way to director D.W. Griffith, who exhaustively researched the era to make “America” in 1924. We go behind the scenes of that film and explore its connection to the Colonial Williamsburg restoration.

Another cinema-themed feature takes readers back to the 1933 invention of drive-in movie theaters, which exploded in popularity in the 1950s and early 1960s. Although the number of outdoor theaters has declined precipitously since their peak, our Visions of America department showcases resourceful entrepreneurs who continue to deliver the nostalgic experience of watching a movie under the stars.

We also honor the entrepreneurial spirit in our story on the John Stevens Shop, considered one of the oldest continuously operating trade businesses in the United States. Three generations of the Benson family, which has owned the shop since the 1920s, have become known for their stone-carving craftsmanship, visible on national memorials such as the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial and the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial.

The Octagon, a Federal-style mansion built in Washington, D.C., in 1799, is an architectural marvel, designed by brilliant self-taught architect William Thornton, who also designed the U.S. Capitol. Best known for its War of 1812 connection—it served as James and Dolley Madison’s temporary presidential residence after the British burned the White House—the stylish home’s history includes the story of its first owners, the Tayloes, and its decline before being restored by the American Institute of Architects.

The NSDAR recently honored Russ Davidson of Montana as its 2013 Outstanding Teacher of American History. We pay tribute to his 35 years of teaching dedication in our Class Act department. In the Today’s Daughters department we meet Michelle Bouchard, president of HealthCorps, a peer mentoring program working to improve the nutrition, fitness and mental resilience of teenagers.

I hope you enjoy this issue and share it with your friends.

Lynn Forney Young

4 Daughters of the American Revolution
MICHELLE BOUCHARD SAYS she always has been a risk-taker who was willing to “jump off a cliff” for an idea she believed in. She was once a corporate spy for a software company. She ran for public office. She also writes plays and sings opera. So in 2007, when her good friend, heart surgeon and talk-show host Dr. Mehmet Oz, asked her to head up a national initiative that would tackle the problem of obesity among teens, she didn’t hesitate to say yes.

Armed with her fearless attitude and a long history of successfully leading nonprofits, Ms. Bouchard became president of HealthCorps, a high-school peer mentoring program that aims to improve the nutrition, fitness and mental resilience of teenagers through fun and experiential in-school and community education.

When she became president of the organization in 2007, HealthCorps had an annual budget of $600,000 and was active in seven schools in New York and New Jersey. Six years later, the organization’s budget has grown to almost $9 million, and the program spans 66 schools in 14 states. By 2015, Ms. Bouchard says HealthCorps hopes to be active in 100 schools across all 50 states.

In addition to providing at-risk schools with full-time program coordinators (college graduates who serve as peer mentors to high-school students), HealthCorps also offers curriculum training, allowing virtually any high school to teach the HealthCorps principles of good health.

The success of the program is a reflection not just of Ms. Bouchard’s vision and leadership, but also of the need for this type of education in communities across the country.

“When it comes to childhood obesity, no one was really focused on teenagers,” says Ms. Bouchard, a member of Lady Washington Chapter, Houston, Texas. “They thought that if teens were obese, it was too late to do anything. But Dr. Oz felt that was wrong and that it would be possible not just to turn a teenager’s health around, but also to turn the teen into an activist, spreading the principles of healthy living to their friends and family members.”

Today, much of her job is focused on raising money for the organization. “I spend a lot of time on airplanes,” says Ms. Bouchard, who lives in Sacramento, Calif., with her 9-year-old daughter, Liberty.

She says she is able to log the miles and the long days away from home knowing she’s making a difference. “A big part of the curriculum teaches teens that everything starts with their mind, and that’s where they have to go first to build a positive attitude,” she says. “It makes me so happy to know that I’m contributing in some way to help young people build that.”

She also sees a connection between her work with HealthCorps and her involvement with DAR. “I love DAR because I feel it is keeping our history alive, and it’s helping us to remember who we are and the sacrifices that were made on our behalf,” she says. “When we look back at the Patriots, they had incredible physical strength and mental fortitude. That’s what you need in this world. At HealthCorps we’re trying to help teach children that there’s a connection between the mind and body, and that resilience in both is important.”

When she’s not crisscrossing the country for HealthCorps, she enjoys spending time with her kids (she also has a 23-year-old son, Alex). “Since I travel a lot, being with them is the most special time for me,” she says.

She also spends time writing. Right now, she’s working on a one-woman show. “I haven’t been active in the theater for a long time, and I’m starting to get the itch again.”

Reversing the Trend  As president of HealthCorps, Michelle Bouchard tackles the problem of obesity among teens

By Lena Anthony  |  Photograph courtesy of Michelle Bouchard

“ar big part of the curriculum teaches teens that everything starts with their mind and that’s where they have to go first to build a positive attitude. It makes me so happy to know that I’m contributing in some way to help young people build that.” –MICHELLE BOUCHARD
National Treasures
Step inside the DAR Museum for a closer look at its fascinating collection.

Tayloe Family Ties

THIS DOUBLE PORTRAIT of sisters not only illustrates the romanticized style of mid-19th-century painting, but also relates to Washington D.C., history through family, artist and architectural associations. Estelle Frances Tayloe (1833–1867) and Eugenia Phoebe Tayloe (1835–1913) were the daughters of Benjamin Ogle Tayloe and his first wife, Julia Marie Dickinson. Both girls display the rosy cheeks, tumbling curls and sweet smiles of idealized girlhood. Eugenia holds her little black dog while her older sister Estelle places a protective arm around her. The unsigned painting is attributed to the artist Charles Bird King because of his signed portraits of the Tayloe parents and grandparents.

The girls’ grandparents, Colonel John Tayloe and Ann Ogle Tayloe, owned the historic Octagon mansion, a well-known Washington landmark. (For more on the Octagon, see this issue’s Historic Home story on page 33.) Another family residence, the Benjamin Ogle Tayloe House built by their father at 21 Madison Place, across from the White House, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Charles Bird King lived and worked in Washington from about 1819 until his death in 1862. He painted hundreds of portraits of famous and prominent residents. However, he gained lasting fame from more than 100 portraits he painted of American Indian delegates invited to the capital by the U.S. government during the years 1822–1842.

This painting was a gift of past Curator General Rolfe Towle Teague.
Virginia DAR members help preserve state history

The return of this volume is particularly significant given the incomplete status of Stafford County’s early court records. Stafford County, created in 1664, has long been known in research circles as a “lost” or “burned” records locality, a designation given to counties or cities that have suffered significant losses of their records due to military activity, courthouse fires and/or natural disasters.

In Stafford’s case, the challenge is particularly thorny as the county lost many of its pre-Civil War court records to vandalism by Union troops during that conflict. Only a few volumes that record deeds, court orders and wills still exist. Therefore, any official public records that are discovered help fill in the gaps in the county’s history.

The book’s pages help provide some clues to its remarkable journey. Inside the front cover is a handwritten note stating “Taken from Stafford Court House, March 30 1862 by Capt. W. A. Treadwell, 4th N. York Regiment,” presumably in Treadwell’s own hand. Why Treadwell chose this large, unwieldy book as a souvenir of his visit is unclear, but the widespread damage to Stafford’s official records was well-documented. One newspaper account described the scene: “Pillaged court records were strewn all about the courthouse steps and yard, in drifts at least 15 inches deep.”

Capt. Treadwell appears to have shipped his “spoil of war” back to his native Massachusetts. The book’s cover contains a shipping manifest indicating its delivery to Boston in 1863 and a note that Treadwell would eventually call for the book. Although the rest of its journey is less clear, in the 1930s, the book was given to the Historical Society of Hudson County (N.J.), whose collection eventually transferred to the Jersey City Free Public Library. The Stafford book remained there, largely forgotten, until being rediscovered by Beekman in 2011.

After returning to Virginia in October of that year, the tattered volume was evaluated by the Library of Virginia’s in-house conservation vendor, Etherington Conservation Services. The volume was badly in need of professional cleaning and mending, so the book was placed on the agency’s “Adopt Virginia History” webpage, a resource that allows individuals and organizations to donate funds for records preservation.

In March 2012, Virginia DAR State Regent Patricia Musick Hatfield gave $5,896 in member donations to the library for the volume’s complete conservation and reformatting. Researchers can now access the book digitally at vamem.com/scb.

— Carl Childs, director of Local Records Services, Library of Virginia
Strawbery Banke Forever

Restored seaport neighborhood turned unique museum connects visitors to four centuries of history

The Strawbery Banke outdoor history museum in downtown Portsmouth, N.H., uses restored houses, exhibits and interpretive programs to transport visitors into a typical New England seaport neighborhood from the late 17th to the mid-20th century. The museum—originally named Strawbery Banke by circa-1630 British settlers for the wild berries growing there—traces 375 years of history in one of America’s oldest continuously occupied neighborhoods. The 10-acre site features authentically restored houses and shops, period gardens and costumed role players who engage visitors in the daily lives of ordinary people who lived here from Colonial times to World War II.

Open for daily tours from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., the museum now features the following exhibits. For more information, visit www.strawberybanke.org.

Tapping Portsmouth: How the Brewing Industry Shaped the City
Through October 31, 2013
This exhibit explains how the town’s famous taverns inspired revolutionary passions, as well as Portsmouth’s transformation into one of America’s biggest beer producers in the 19th century.

First Nations’ Diplomacy Opens the Portsmouth Door
Through October 31, 2013
This year marks the 300th anniversary of the Treaty of Portsmouth between the English and the area’s American Indians. A special commemorative exhibit will include artifacts from the period and replicas of the original treaty, which is housed in the Library of Congress.

Twilight Tours
Friday, August 16, 2013
5–8 p.m.
The Portsmouth Historic House Associates will open seven historic houses in downtown Portsmouth for a special evening tour complete with a harpsichord concert in Pitt Tavern.

Rockingham:
Scenes From the Last Days of the Revolution

AS THE CONTINENTAL ARMY moved from one battle to the next during the course of the Revolutionary War, General George Washington set up headquarters at dozens of different locations. Only one of them, however, was the site from which he both wrote his famous "Farewell Orders to the Armies of the United States" and learned of the signing of the final version of the Treaty of Paris.

Rockingham, originally located in Rocky Hill, N.J., served as Washington’s temporary residence from August to November 1783. The home’s original two rooms date to about 1710, but Rockingham owes its current form to Judge John Berrien, who bought the home, also known as the Berrien Mansion, in 1735 and enlarged it in the 1760s. While meeting in nearby Princeton during the summer of 1783, the Continental Congress requested Washington’s presence. Upon arrival the general and his entourage moved into Rockingham. During the two and a half months of his stay, Washington entertained Revolutionaries including Thomas Paine and Nathanael Greene, and sat for two portraits, in addition to composing his farewell address.

By the 1890s, the Rocky Hill Quarry Company was using a deteriorating Rockingham as housing for its workers and their families. Rocky Hill native Katherine McFarlane became determined to preserve this relic of her town’s Revolutionary history. Hoping to generate support, she wrote letters to government officials and reached out to civic groups, but the project did not gain momentum until she met with Princeton DAR Chapter Organizing Regent Josephine Thomson Swann.

The Washington Headquarters Association of Rocky Hill, with fundraising help from Mrs. Swann and support from other early chapter members, purchased the home in 1896. In 2001, it was relocated along the Delaware and Raritan Canal at the Rockingham State Historic Site in Kingston, N.J.

Today the property is administered by the state of New Jersey, which has owned it since the 1930s. Princeton DAR Chapter members continue to serve as volunteers and trustees. The home is open Wednesday through Sunday for guided tours. For more information, visit www.rockingham.net.
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Marking Fort Mims
Association Commemorates 200th Anniversary of Bloody Clash

The 200th anniversary of the Fort Mims massacre will be commemorated at Fort Mims, in Tensaw, Ala., from August 30 to September 1, 2013. The Fort Mims Restoration Association will join with descendants of the survivors and members of the Creek Nation, as well as the general public, to remember the lives of more than 500 white settlers, Creek American Indians and enslaved Africans who died or were captured on August 30, 1813.

The weekend’s events, held at the reconstructed fort about 40 miles north of Mobile, Ala., will include daily battle re-enactments, living history demonstrations, period music, native plant tours, period weapon and clothing lectures, and Creek American Indian cultural presentations. The event will also feature crafts and trades of the early 1800s, including covered wagons, arrowheads, wool spinning, blacksmithing, quilting, pottery, watercolors, skinning, flint knapping and basketry.

The conditions that led up to the Creek Indian War, which resulted in the Fort Mims massacre, began before the start of the War of 1812. In the early 1800s, the loosely federated tribes of the Creek Nation numbered somewhere between 18,000 to 24,000 people who primarily inhabited present-day Alabama and western Georgia.

In the years following the Revolution, the United States, Great Britain, Spain and France all sought alliances with the Creeks as they attempted to diminish their rivals’ influence in the region. The Creeks had signed four treaties with the new American government by 1805, but animosity between England and America would spark the Creek War as an extension of the War of 1812.

By early August 1813, about 550 settlers and slaves from the surrounding area had crowded into the tiny stockade in Tensaw along the Alabama River. On August 30, around 700 warriors of the pro-British Red Stick faction of the Creek Nation descended on the fort, killing hundreds and capturing around 100 slaves, women and children. Only about 36 of the settlers survived.

Schedule of Events:

Exhibits open: Friday, August 30–Sunday, September 1, 2013, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

Pioneer church service: September 1 at 10 a.m.

Admission: $5, children under 12 free.

Re-enactments: August 30 at noon, August 31 and September 1 at 2 p.m.

To learn more, visit www.fortmims.org or the related Facebook group, email fortmims@gmail.com or call (251) 533–9024.
Captain Jesse Leavenworth Chapter, Leavenworth, Kan., honors the name of a Revolutionary Patriot from Connecticut who served as a lieutenant in the Second Company of the Governor’s Foot Guard, captained by Benedict Arnold. In the spring of 1775, when news of the Battle of Lexington reached New Haven, 58 members of the guard, including Leavenworth, marched to Cambridge to assist their fellow Patriots. In 1777, as a captain, Leavenworth commanded a company at Ticonderoga. He later served in the Connecticut Legislature. Captain Jesse Leavenworth also was the father of Colonel Henry Leavenworth, a veteran of the War of 1812 who in 1827 founded Fort Leavenworth, one of the oldest active U.S. Army posts west of Washington, D.C.

The namesake of Linares Chapter, San Diego, Calif., is believed to be the first white child born in Alta California. Salvatore Ignacio Linares was born on December 25, 1775, at Santa Catherine near a property later known as Warner Ranch. Ignacio and Gertrude Linares, Salvatore’s parents, were two of the 200 men, women, children and soldiers Captain Juan Bautista de Anza led on a trip to establish an overland route from Monterrey, Mexico, to San Francisco via Alta California. A different Linares inspired the name of a small city in the state of Nuevo León, Mexico. Founded April 2, 1712, by Sebastian Villegas Cumplido, Linares was named in honor of the serving viceroy of New Spain, Fernando de Alencaster Noroña y Silva, Duke of Linares.

Henry County, Ga., wasn’t formed until 40 years after the Revolutionary War ended, but a number of Patriots, including Andrew McBride—who inspired the name of Andrew McBride Chapter, McDonough, Ga.—settled there. Originally from South Carolina, McBride fought for independence while he was still a teenager. Decades later he became one of the early settlers of Henry County, purchasing a lot in the village of McDonough in 1823. The home he built now houses the Genealogical Society of Henry and Clayton Counties. At one time operated as a hotel by the Brown family and now known as the Brown House, it is among the oldest surviving buildings in the county. McBride, who neither married nor had children, died in 1837 and is buried in the McDonough City Cemetery.

If your chapter has an interesting story, send it to americanspirit@dar.org.

Colonel Andrew Jackson mobilized three state militias to retaliate against the Red Sticks. At the March 1814 Battle of Horseshoe Bend, he defeated the Red Sticks, ending the Creek War. The defeat eventually led to several American Indian tribes being banished West on the infamous Trail of Tears.

The modern history of Fort Mims is entwined with the Fort Mims DAR Chapter, Stockton, Ala., founded in 1949. In the mid-1950s, Organizing Regent June Whiting Slaughter and her husband Carl were asked by the Alabama Parks and Conservation Department to assist in clearing brush in the area adjacent to their north Baldwin County property, where they had been finding arrowheads and pieces of pottery. The discovery of charred ruins established that the original site of the fort was near the Slaughters’ land.

In the mid-1980s the first re-enactment of the battle was held, a tradition which continues. Gregory Waselkov, director of the Center for Archaeological Studies and Archaeology Museum at the University of South Alabama, started a dig at Fort Mims and wrote a book called A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813–14 (University of Alabama Press, 2006).

Artifacts recovered from the fort, including some found by Waselkov’s archaeological teams, will be on display during the anniversary weekend.

—Sharri Whiting, a member of Pax Romana DAR Chapter, Rome, Italy, and associate member of Fort Mims DAR Chapter

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American Spirit | July/August 2013 11
The NSDAR Special Projects Grants program invites nonprofit organizations to apply for matching-fund grants to support local projects related to historic preservation, education and patriotism. Begun during the administration of President General Merry Ann T. Wright (2010–2013), the National Society is thrilled to announce that this well-received program will continue through the administration of current President General Lynn Forney Young.

It can be difficult to translate a feeling or principle like patriotism into a tangible form, but a $10,000 Special Projects Grant helped the Historical Society of Orange Park, Fla., do just that. The grant provided the funding needed to complete the construction of a veterans’ memorial at Magnolia Cemetery.

The central feature of the partially walled memorial, which includes a flagpole and three benches, is a granite monument “shaped like a flowing flag, to honor those serving,” according to Historical Society President Cynthia Cheatwood. Carved into the monument above the image of a folded flag commemorating those who have died are the words “Duty, Honor, Country.” The brick walls surrounding the memorial are lined with plaques dedicated to each of the U.S. military branches. Nearly 400 inscribed memorial red-brick pavers cover the ground. One donated paver honors Chief Warrant Officer Michael Duskin, who was killed in action in Afghanistan in October 2012, just two weeks before the memorial’s dedication. Veterans, their families and several hundred patriotic citizens attended the dedication ceremony to pay tribute to fallen military members and all veterans. Rear Admiral Jimmie W. Seeley served as the guest speaker.

The Sophia Fleming DAR Chapter, Orange Park, Fla., sponsored the grant application. The chapter also dedicated a granite bench and presented a Braille flag at the memorial.

For more information about the DAR Special Projects Grants program, visit www.dar.org/grants.
THOUGH HE HAS taught history and government at Colstrip High School in Colstrip, Mont., for 35 years, Russ Davidson works diligently to ensure his teaching doesn’t get stale, staying responsive and adaptable to the new faces that greet him every year.

“I keep it fresh because it is still fresh to me,” he says. “Kids notice quickly that I really care about them. You can be the most gifted historian on earth, but if the kids don’t trust you and believe you care for them, you might as well fold your tent and find a different profession.”

Early role models steered Davidson to teaching. His father taught at Eastern Montana College (now Montana State University at Billings), from which Davidson would eventually graduate.

“My dad taught me the work ethic it takes to be a teacher,” he says. “I spent many hours helping him set up labs and clean up for his science class. I had two terrific high-school teachers, and a couple of college professors who lectured like they were telling stories. They made the decision to teach final.”

Davidson’s history of the 1960s class is one of his most popular. “We focus in on the major events from Camelot to Woodstock,” he explains. “We study the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, and talk about the lessons we’ve learned—or forgotten. In addition to the cultural changes, we study the music of the era. By the time the class ends, students know about surf rock, the British invasion, Motown and the psychedelic rock of Haight-Ashbury. I’ve turned a lot of kids into Beatles fans.”

In addition to his teaching workload, for the past 28 years, Davidson has taken his government students to Washington, D.C., with the Close Up Foundation, an educational program that promotes participation in the democratic process.

“I have kids come back and tell me the Close Up trip was their favorite moment in high school,” he says. “I got as much from the Close Up trips as the students did and became enthralled by the Civil War as a result. I’ve built four PowerPoint presentations on the Civil War, and I’ve expanded those to cover World War I, the Roaring 20s, the Great Depression, the Holocaust and World War II. I share these presentations with other teachers to use however they like.”

Teaching is a family affair: Davidson’s wife’s Darla teaches history and geography, and their daughter Katie teaches history and government on the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming. Their son Josh died five years ago; Davidson says he was “just as much a history fanatic as the rest of us.”

Davidson’s commitment to students and passion for history education were recently honored with the 2013 NSDAR Outstanding Teacher of American History Award. He also won the Linda Myers Chosin Award for Civic Teaching excellence from the Close Up Foundation, was named educator of the year by the Colstrip Faculty Association three times, and received the Community Outreach award for his radio broadcasting of high-school sports.

“You can be the most gifted historian on earth, but if the kids don’t trust you and believe you care for them, you might as well fold your tent and find a different profession.”

—RUSS DAVIDSON

Staying Enthralled By History

By Nancy Cooper | Photography courtesy of Russ Davidson

American Spirit | July/August 2013
In 1675 the Mount Hope lands, the site of present-day Bristol (probably named after Bristol, England), were the setting for the first battle of King Philip’s War. This conflict pitted the Wampanoag American Indians and their leader, King Philip, against the English settlers and their allies. During the course of the war, about 10 percent of all men in New England between the ages of 18 and 40 were killed, devastating the population. The conflict ended with a treaty in 1678, two years after the death of King Philip himself.

In 1680 Plymouth Colony granted the Mount Hope lands to John Walley, Nathaniel Oliver, Nathaniel Byfield and Stephen Burton, four wealthy Boston merchants, for 1,100 pounds. As Congregationalists, one of the settlers’ first orders of business was to begin the process of setting up a church.

In “An Account of the Origin and Settlement of the Town of Bristol and the Congregational Church therein,” written by Benjamin Bourne in 1785, the author remarks that the same year the town was founded, they invited “the Rev. Mr. Woodbridge to preach the gospel among them; since which time public worship has been constantly upheld in this town.”

Almost 100 years after its founding, the Bristol area became a stage for another, much larger conflict—the
Revolution. Although his actions would later be overshadowed by the Boston Tea Party, Bristol resident and privateer Simeon Potter spearheaded one of the Colonies’ first acts of rebellion against the British by leading a group of men out to Narragansett Harbor to burn the hated British ship Gaspee in 1772.

Later in the war the British Navy bombarded Bristol twice. Captain James Wallace sailed into town on October 7, 1775, demanding provisions for his men on HMS Rose. The townspeople refused, so Wallace bombarded the town. Bourne wrote of the experience: “A day in which it was called to share in the dangers and hostilities of the late war, and to experience great distress, together with the kind preservation of divine Providence! For on this day a fleet of British men of war, under the command of Captain James Wallace, commenced a severe and heavy cannonade upon this town.”

William Bradford, the first deputy governor of Rhode Island, negotiated a cease-fire.

A second shelling on May 25, 1778, was even more destructive: It ended with British troops marching through town burning structures and taking prisoners.

Preserving Bristol

Although the roar of battle cannons has long passed, Bristol still retains the scars of the devastation it experienced at the hands of the British, says longtime Bristol resident Mary Millard, a member of both the Bristol DAR Chapter and the prominent DeWolf family, early settlers of Bristol. (George DeWolf was a legendary privateer, and James DeWolf served as a U.S. senator from Rhode Island from 1821 to 1825.)

“The fact that most of the buildings on our main street postdate the Revolution reminds us that the British burned most of the houses and a church on Hope Street,” she says. One

Worth a Stop

**Blithewold Mansion, Gardens and Arboretum**

Blithewold (Old English for “happy woodland”) is a 45-room mansion and landscaped historic public garden on Bristol Harbor with views overlooking Narragansett Bay. The home was originally built in 1896 in the Queen Anne style, but when a fire destroyed it in 1906, a larger, English Country Manor-style mansion was built on the same site. The property was designed as a horticultural sanctuary, complete with a 10-acre great lawn, a rock garden, a rose garden, more than 500 different kinds of trees and shrubs, and a 90-foot sequoia. For more information, visit [www.blithewold.org](http://www.blithewold.org).

**Herreshoff Marine Museum**

The Herreshoff Marine Museum, dedicated to honoring the area’s yachting culture and the history of the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company, is located on Narragansett Bay where the old yacht building company once stood. This maritime museum also is home to the America’s Cup Hall of Fame, which honors those who have made outstanding contributions to the prestigious yachting competition. For more information, visit [www.herreshoff.org](http://www.herreshoff.org).

**Linden Place**

Linden Place, a Federal mansion built in 1810 by George DeWolf, originally housed the DeWolf and Colt families. The mansion was featured in the 1974 film “The Great Gatsby” starring Robert Redford. Guided and self-guided tours of the estate give visitors a window into the legendary exploits of the DeWolfs, whose history ranges from privateering and slave trading to financial ruin to the founding of United States Rubber (now Uniroyal). The museum is open for visitors between May and October, in December or by appointment. For more information, visit [www.lindenplace.org](http://www.lindenplace.org).

**Mount Hope Farm**

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Mount Hope Farm was first settled by Nathaniel Byfield, one of the founders of Bristol. Isaac Royall, a subsequent owner of the farm, built a Georgian mansion on the site in 1745. The mansion later became home to the William Bradford family and other leading Rhode Island families, including the Haffenreffers of brewing industry fame. Today the Governor Bradford Inn at Mount Hope Farm is open for guests. For more information, visit [www.mounthopefarm.org](http://www.mounthopefarm.org).
exception is the circa-1700 Joseph Reynolds House, a National Historic Landmark on Hope Street, which was used as the Marquis de Lafayette’s headquarters during the 1778 Battle of Rhode Island.

The community has made an effort to preserve its historical treasures. “With much gratitude to the historic preservation program that moved to Bristol about 30 years ago with Roger Williams University, the community became sensitive to the incredible historic resources we have,” Mrs. Millard says. “It has always been a lovely waterfront community, but under the guidance of teachers at the college, buildings were saved and a Historic District Commission as well as a historic district was instituted to maintain our historic properties in an authentic manner.”

Not only are Bristol’s citizens sensitive to the preservation of existing buildings and monuments, but its leadership also works to protect the town’s unique character. In addition to conserving historic homes, the community has also enacted a zoning ordinance that discourages franchise businesses in the downtown area in order to preserve its historic feel.

Every year local fourth graders take part in a program called “Sense of Pride,” which provides a historical booklet and a walking tour of downtown Bristol to educate young people on their town’s history and noted events.

Today, the former manufacturing community has grown into a diverse recreational town. In addition to historical walking tours of downtown, visitors to Bristol can enjoy a biking trail that leads all the way to the state capital in Providence, as well as some smaller parks and a beach.

**Centuries of Independence Day Celebrations**

Bristol is so dedicated to the sentiment of patriotism that a permanent red, white and blue stripe down the town’s main street marks the route of the annual Fourth of July Parade. Its patriotic roots go back to July 4, 1777. On that day, British officer Frederick MacKenzie recorded in his journal the first sounds of an Independence Day celebration: “This being the first anniversary of the declaration of the Independence of the Rebel Colonies, they ushered in the morning at Providence by firing 13 cannon (one for each Colony we suppose).”

Several years later, in 1785, Bristol celebrated its first official Independence Day Patriotic Exercises, established by Revolutionary War veteran Reverend Henry Wight of the First Congregational Church.

Today, the celebrations start on Flag Day, June 14, and culminate with the 3.5-mile Military, Civic and Firemen’s Parade on Independence Day, an event that draws more than 200,000 spectators from around the nation. Other highlights of the Fourth of July celebrations include a competition between top U.S. and Canadian drum and bugle corps groups and nightly patriotic concerts from June 21 until July 4. (See sidebar below for more information.)
Preserve Our Nation’s History

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More than 30,000 objects are conserved in the DAR Museum. Please fill out and return the enclosed postcard to learn how you can create your legacy by supporting one of the foremost collections of pre-Industrial American decorative arts for generations to come. Or visit us online today at www.mypatriotandme.org for more information.

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NATHANIEL PHILBRICK’S just-released account of the Battle of Bunker Hill could well have been subtitled “A Paean to Dr. Joseph Warren,” the extraordinarily talented and energetic Patriot who played such a crucial role in the run-up to rebellion.

Warren’s name may not resonate in the popular mind as strongly as that of Adams, Hancock and Revere, but his abilities as an organizer, strategist, planner and leader shaped the movement and kept it alive when enthusiasm flagged.

In Bunker Hill: A City, A Siege, A Revolution (Viking, 2013), Philbrick brings to vibrant life the roiling chain of events leading to the outbreak of armed resistance. The author deftly weaves little-known details into the larger narrative, bringing the turbulent streets into sharp focus.

For example, Boston was known for its unruly mobs. Patriot leaders worried that violent outbreaks after the Boston Tea Party in December 1773 would cause a public opinion backlash in the Colonies (and alienate America’s friends in England). Part of their response was to call upon Joyce Junior, a masked and caped figure (actually a Patriot and the son of a Harvard professor) familiar to Boston rowdies, who declared he was in charge of tarring and feathering. The leaders hoped this ploy would let them divert or even channel the crowd’s anger as they needed it.

Philbrick takes us into the Patriots’ secret meetings and illuminates the often-conflicting political and social philosophies of a group once described as “ambitious beyond reason to excel.”

We also become well acquainted with British General Thomas Gage, who emerges as a hapless, indecisive leader who was reluctant to attack his fellow Englishmen—and thus misjudged how far from England the colonists had journeyed in the past 150 years.

But Warren is always the central figure. Warren is everywhere, from tending the wounds of militiamen, to heading the Patriots’ Committee of Safety, the Committee of Correspondence and the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, to delivering an incendiary oration at Boston’s annual Massacre Day assembly, to his fatal decision to join the fighting on Breed’s Hill.

Warren drafted the Suffolk Resolves, a major step toward declaring independence. Acting on his own, he called out the militia to defend Concord and Lexington—which violated standing orders of the Continental Congress regarding the circumstances in which armed force could be used. Warren also was one of the leaders who decided to capture and fortify Bunker Hill.

The Battle of Bunker Hill actually took place primarily on and around nearby Breed’s Hill. For reasons still unclear, the officers who were ordered to fortify Bunker Hill instead bypassed it and located the redoubt on a smaller, lower hill. This decision placed them within range of British artillery and farther from reinforcements. Though they worked under cover of night, they could not muffle the noise of shovels and picks, and the British soon realized what was happening.

When daylight came, the exhausted troops realized their frantically constructed defense had serious gaps. Worse, they were short of ammunition and seriously outnum- bered by the approaching British.

Philbrick vividly describes the desperate fighting on June 17, 1775, which included the Patriots’ torching of Charlestown to keep the British from attacking on that flank. Contemporaries who had been in both battles said the fighting that day was far more violent than that at Lexington and Concord.

The British ultimately won a pyrrhic victory—1,054 of the 2,200 troops who launched the attack were killed and many more were wounded. The Patriots had 115 dead and 305 wounded. One of those dead was a huge loss—Dr. Joseph Warren.

Warren’s death is not the end of Bunker Hill; the book continues with the Siege of Boston that eventually resulted in the British troops and many of their loyalist supporters evacuating the city.

By this point, General George Washington had begun his long, frustrating task of trying to create a truly Continental—and American—army out of men whose loyalties were to their home Colonies, not some abstract republic.

Philbrick ponders, briefly, whether Washington would have had an easier time dealing with the New Englanders had Warren lived. As a general on Washington’s staff, Philbrick writes, Warren could have been a liaison between the general and the headstrong Yankees.

Thanks to Philbrick’s wonderful style and eye for detail, Bunker Hill will broaden any reader’s understanding of the early days of our quest for independence. —Bill Hudgins
Seeking Authentic Analysis

The article “Battle Detective” on Acqunetta Anderson in the January/February issue nicely illustrates the value of archaeology in telling a more complete and highly authentic story of historical events and historical buildings. Archaeological investigations will provide details that do not appear in historical accounts, and archaeology has the power to elucidate information about people’s lives who never get a mention in history books. The archaeological studies for the Battle of the Little Bighorn and the ongoing work at Monticello are just two high-profile examples of this fact, as is the article about Mrs. Anderson’s efforts to gain accurate information on the Battle of Bladensburg. I should point out that archaeological investigations represent scientific endeavors that must be directed and performed by professionals who are highly trained in the scientific methods of archaeology, behavioral science and a variety of data related to uses of artifacts, historic land use, common cultural traditions, architecture, etc.

Michael Sampson
San Diego

 Memories of Maine

The article “Criminal Justice in Colonial America” featuring photos and a description of the Old Gaol in York, Maine, brought to mind our trip to Maine for the National Blaisdell Family Reunion in July 2005. My dad’s direct ancestor, Ralph Bleasdale, lived in York shortly after arriving from England at Pemaquid Point, Maine, on August 15, 1635. Their ship, the Angel Gabriel, went down in a hurricane the morning after their arrival. The family later moved to Salisbury in northern Massachusetts. Thank you for your always interesting articles.

Brenda Blasdel Higgins, Chapter Regent
We-Ah-Tah-Umba Chapter, Germantown, Tenn.

Getting Our Gaols Straight

It may be little more than civic pride that compels me to write, but I must offer a small correction to the otherwise very interesting article, “Criminal Justice in Colonial America,” in the January/February issue. The caption under the photo of the Old Gaol in York, Maine, built in 1719, says it is the “oldest English public building in North America.” However, the Old Powder Magazine here in Charleston, S.C., was built seven years earlier, in 1712, to store gunpowder and other munitions needed to defend the city from pirates, Spanish invaders and other troublemakers. It served various purposes over the centuries, and today serves as one of our city’s many fine museums.

Mike Laskavy
Charleston, S.C.

We much appreciated the January/February issue’s article “Resurrecting Historic Cemeteries.” We were able to identify and confirm a family cemetery where Lt. Joshua Treat is buried.

– Fran Grant and Guy C. Grant

A Family Stone

We much appreciated the January/February issue’s article “Resurrecting Historic Cemeteries.” We were able to identify and confirm a family cemetery where Lieutenant Joshua Treat, the first permanent white settler on the Penobscot River, and members of his family are buried. With assistance from other family members and town officials, we were able to dedicate a military stone in his memory at Sandy Point, Maine, on July 19, 2008. It is now a small but lovely park area.

Guy C. Grant and Fran Grant, Chaplain
Penobscot Expedition Chapter, Searsport, Maine

A Good Prospect for Recognition

Readers who enjoyed the article “Resurrecting Historic Cemeteries” might be interested to know that actor/filmmaker Peter Riegert (“The Good Wife,” “Local Hero”) is making a documentary about Prospect Cemetery. Although the fundraising for the project is over, details can be seen at www.kickstarter.com under Prospect Cemetery. The film is due out in January 2014.

Barbara J. Underwood
Ezra Parker Chapter, Royal Oak, Mich.

Send your letters to americanspirit@dar.org.
Newer isn’t always better. Just ask Nicholas Benson, whose business, the John Stevens Shop, has been designing and creating one-of-a-kind inscriptions on headstones, buildings and national monuments across the country for more than three centuries.

A mechanical sandblasting process creates almost every carved stone design made today. But Benson and the artisans who work for him use a highly specialized and rare skill.

“What distinguishes us from production monument companies is that most all of our work is generated by hand with a broad-edged brush, much like the great Roman inscriptions,” says Benson, who took over ownership of the Newport, R.I.-based business in 1993 after his father, John E. Benson, retired.

“There are very few remaining people who do what we do.”

Considered one of the longest continuously running trade businesses in the United States, the John Stevens Shop was established on Thames Street in Newport in 1705. The Benson family acquired it in the late 1920s when Nicholas’s grandfather, John Howard Benson, bought it from the Stevens family, which had run the shop for more than 220 years.
“My grandfather, John Howard Benson, grew up in Newport and had a strong artistic eye and wonderful sense of design,” Benson says, noting that his grandfather went to the Art Students League in New York City to study painting, printmaking and wood engraving. “He was always enamored with old Colonial gravestones because he recognized them for the complicated and accomplished works of art that they are.”

**CARVED IN STONE**

After Benson’s grandfather finished school and returned to Newport, he began visiting the stone-carving shop in the neighborhood where he’d grown up. A friend whose mother died asked him to make her gravestone, so he rented the John Stevens Shop for a year. That’s when he realized stone carving was something he truly enjoyed, and he purchased the shop from the Stevens family.

“He threw the conventional approach of the 1920s out the window and took it back to the Colonial era—right back to the Roman letterform,” Benson says.

John Howard Benson’s designs and hand-carved inscriptions appear on buildings at Yale, Harvard and Brown universities, as well as the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial (also known as the Iwo Jima Memorial).

Benson’s father, John E. Benson, began working for his dad at age 15. He studied sculpture at the Rhode Island School of Design before returning to work full time in the shop. In 1964 he was commissioned to design and carve the inscriptions at the John F. Kennedy Memorial in Arlington National Cemetery. At the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, D.C., he engraved many of FDR’s most famous quotations. He also carved gravestones for Tennessee Williams, Lillian Hellman and George Balanchine.

John E. Benson also was interested in the relationship between lettering and architecture, and his work appears in buildings such as the Prudential Center in Boston, the Boston Public Library, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the Dallas Museum of Art and the Chicago Mercantile Exchange Center.

**LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON**

Even though his father and grandfather contributed to some of the major American monuments and architecture constructed in the 20th century, Nicholas wasn’t all that interested in his family’s business during his childhood. “When you grow up in a situation like that, you take it all for granted,” he says. “It was just the place where my dad worked. I began carving lettering in 1979, but I didn’t give it much thought until I got to college, and that’s when I realized what an interesting place the shop was.”

After studying drawing and design at the State University of New York at Purchase, Nicholas spent a year in Basel, Switzerland, where he studied calligraphy, typography and drawing under world-renowned designers.
During his time at the helm of the more than 300-year-old shop, Nicholas Benson has witnessed the explosion of technology and has grappled with how to apply it to an age-old art form.

“The computer is a wonderful tool, but it’s just that—a tool,” says Benson, who often uses original digitally designed templates for his hand-carved works. “My product has more to do with the hand carving we do in the shop every day than with the machine.”

The jobs tackled by Benson in his two-decade career are as diverse as the nation’s landscape, and he’s challenged to choose a favorite. “The Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial in Washington, D.C., was highly rewarding,” he says. “To carve those kinds of words in stone and then step back and read them and understand how profound they are is very satisfying.”

He also lists the stone carvings on the Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Park on New York City’s Roosevelt Island as gratifying work. “It was [renowned architect] Louis Kahn’s last design before he died, and it is the most perfectly realized piece of civic memorial work I’ve ever been involved in.”

Benson still carves commissioned gravestones and says that it’s rewarding to “help people deal with the complicated emotions of death and mourning.”

His family’s reputation helps his business secure major jobs like national memorials and famed architectural work. “Washington, D.C., is a perfect example of how we’ve benefited from our pedigree,” Benson says. “My grandfather’s Iwo Jima Memorial designs helped my father get involved with the JFK Memorial in Arlington Cemetery, which is how I got involved with the World War II Memorial.”

**PASSING ALONG THE SKILL**

But with the advantage comes responsibility. “Whenever you’re given an opportunity through connection, you have to rise to the challenge,” Benson says. With so few people practicing this specialized method today, there’s concern about the skill dwindling away. But Benson is hopeful that the hand-carved stonework tradition will survive. “The younger generation is getting really interested in craft skills,” he says, citing the resurgence of letterpress printing in recent years.

Benson recently trained an intern from the Rhode Island School of Design who he describes as very bright and talented. “Like his peers, he was born with the computer, so the idea of designing with the computer is a total given to this generation,” Benson says.

But not all young adults are especially enamored with technology, and many are interested in learning ancient methods. “The old has become new again, which is really wonderful,” Benson says. “Final Marks,” a documentary about lettercutting in monumental inscriptions and on gravestones, follows the work of the craftsmen of the John Stevens Shop. One portion of the film shows John E. Benson walking through and commenting on the 18th-century stones of Newport’s Common Burying Ground. The film can be viewed here: www.folkstreams.net/film,141.
REVVIN’ UP FOR THE MOVIES

The Continuing Attraction of Drive-in Movie Theaters

By Jamie Roberts

Marrying two of America’s loves—automobiles and movies—was the genius connection made by Richard M. Hollingshead Jr., who opened the first drive-in movie theater in Camden, N.J., in the summer of 1933.
Hollingshead was a movie buff and a businessman, and he believed his invention—an open-air theater where people watched from inside their cars—would attract a group of people who were either uncomfortable in indoor movie theaters or unwilling to make the effort to go. “More than just a movie was offered to the ticket holder,” write Elizabeth McKeon and Linda Everett in *Cinema Under the Stars* (Cumberland House Publishing, 1998). “There was no need to get all dressed up, you didn’t have to hire a babysitter, parking was included in the price of the ticket, and dinner was just a quick walk to the concession stand.”

Hollingshead’s first experiment with the drive-in concept reads like a movie script starring a resourceful, eccentric inventor: He mounted a 1928 16 mm Kodak projector on his car, projected an old home movie on a white bedsheet nailed between two trees and placed a radio behind the screen. From this first test, he experimented with different techniques of projection, figured out how best to amplify the sound, simulated rain with a lawn sprinkler to test against inclement weather and designed a series of ramps to place the cars at the best angles for viewing the screen. Once he perfected his system, Hollingshead drew a large crowd to the opening of his Park-in Theaters on June 6, 1933, charging 25 cents per car and 25 cents per person to see the British comedy “Wife Beware.”

Other entrepreneurs began building drive-in movie theaters around the Northeast, sometimes in violation of Hollingshead’s licensing agreement, and despite many legal fights, his patent was overturned in 1949. Aided by the post-war boom and the burgeoning car culture of the 1950s, drive-ins began popping up all over the country, especially in California and Florida where weather conditions allowed them to be open year-round.

In *The American Drive-in Movie Theatre* (Motorbooks International Publishers, 1997) Don and Susan Sanders tell the story of Harvey Elliott, manager of the New York’s Whitestone Bridge Drive-in, who personified early owners’ confidence in the new trend: “Fad! Let me tell you that the drive-in theater is no fad; this is a country on wheels. We like to eat on wheels ... and listen to the radio on wheels. Why not see a movie on wheels?”

More than 4,000 drive-ins were open by the mid-1960s. “American Graffiti,” a classic coming-of-age movie set in Modesto, Calif., in the summer of 1962, opens with a gang of teenagers in front of a drive-in.
Clockwise from top left: Hollingshead used the back of his giant drive-in movie screen in Camden, N.J., to advertise and show admission prices. • Despite Hollywood studios’ belief that they would be a short-lived phenomenon, the popularity of drive-ins, like Detroit’s 8-Mile Drive-in, soared in the 1940s and 1950s. • A drive-in movie “detective” checked cars to make sure teenagers were behaving. • At dusk before the start of the feature, cars began filling the lot at California’s Rancho Drive-In Theater in 1948.
The drive-in boom began waning by the late 1960s, when moviegoing demographics changed from mostly families to primarily teenagers and young couples. Theater owners also neglected to keep up with indoor movie theaters’ technological advances.

Although drive-ins had always tended to show low-budget “B” movies—movie studios sent their first-run movies to the indoor theaters to maximize ticket sales—when the novelty of drive-ins began to wear off, moviegoers weren’t content to pay to watch old, lower-quality movies outdoors.

Desperate to generate profits, some owners even resorted to showing adult films, harming the industry’s family-friendly reputation. The trend toward home entertainment hurt the drive-in business, too.

Yet some small-business owners hung on, banking on drive-in movie theaters’ affordable prices, unique setting and carnival-like special features to attract new audiences.

Although the soaring cost of real estate and the expense of transitioning to digital cinema are the industry’s new villains, the United Drive-In Theater Owners Association estimates that about 357 drive-ins were still in business as of March 2013. The ease of piling family and friends into a car, the lure of a blockbuster film and the comfort of a warm summer evening under the stars drive the continuing nostalgia of the outdoor movie experience.
Today’s drive-in entrepreneurs have upgraded their offerings to first-run movies and cult classics like “Rocky Horror Picture Show.” By embracing diverse audiences, the latest movie technology and creative promotions, the following theaters are ensuring the American drive-in movie endures as a fun cultural touchstone.

Shankweiler’s in Orefield, Pa., a rural area close to Allentown, wears the mantle of America’s oldest drive-in, and it has been in continuous operation since 1934. A hurricane blew down the original in 1955, but the rebuilt theater is now run by Paul and Susan Geissinger, who took over the business in 1984. It remains a nostalgic experience for those who may drive hundreds of miles to catch a double feature, yet it embraces the promotional aspects of today’s social media: Fans can follow Shankweiler’s on Twitter to get the latest movie schedule.

www.shankweilers.com

Located in historic Watertown, Tenn., the Stardust Drive-In Theatre is a 45-minute drive from Nashville, and attracts audiences with its first-run movies and state-of-the-art technology. Originally constructed in 2003, the Stardust features digital projection, with sound broadcast via an FM car stereo. “Gone are the days of speakers hung on your window,” says its website, full of helpful FAQ for viewers.

www.stardustdrivein.com

At the Stardust Twin Drive-in Movie Theater, in Chetek, Wisc. (shown above), owner Paul Javener’s two screens can pack in around 350 cars. The theater’s prices are a bargain: For only $8 patrons can pay for one movie and stay for both.

www.stardustdriveinmovie.com

Silver Moon, opened in 1948 in Lakeland, Fla., reminds moviegoers of its storied past at a concession stand decorated with photos of old drive-in theaters, and ensures continuing success by showing a double feature of first-run movies seven nights a week.

www.silvermoondrivein.com

For more information on drive-ins, visit the website of the United Drive-in Theater Owners Association at www.driveintheatre-ownersassociation.org.
D.W. Griffith Films
The Revolution

By W. Barksdale Maynard

Actors playing soldiers and American Indians stood at the riverside steps of Shirley Plantation for a scene in the film.
Costumed re-enactors with tricorn hats and powdered wigs, clambering out of carriages and bowing to ladies in swishing silk gowns—it’s a regular occurrence at today’s Colonial Williamsburg. But few recall that similar scenes unfolded well before that town’s restoration, when one of the most famous directors in the world, D.W. Griffith, arrived in Tidewater Virginia to film what he hoped would be his greatest picture ever, “America.”

His colorful episode of 1923 has been almost entirely forgotten—along with the movie, doomed to box-office failure and historical oblivion. Ninety years later, it’s worth recalling Griffith’s foray into Colonial Virginia and his stimulating encounter with the Reverend W.A.R. Goodwin, who was already dreaming of the restoration of Williamsburg.

Kentucky-born Griffith pioneered moviemaking in Hollywood a century ago. He achieved fame for “The Birth of a Nation,” his landmark film portraying the Civil War and Reconstruction (now condemned for its positive portrayal of the Ku Klux Klan).

In 1919 Griffith returned East to be near historic locales and built an enormously expensive studio at Mamaroneck, on Long Island Sound. This proved to be a blunder: His box-office clout was waning, and he fell $2 million in debt. Griffith banked everything on a new, lavish spectacle.

The idea for “America”—the uplifting story of the founding of this country—came from the Daughters of the American Revolution. With the 150th anniversary of 1776 just around the corner, they approached Will Hays, head of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America. Hays embraced their
suggestion, thinking that a patriotic foray would help salvage his industry’s reputation after a series of scandals.

Griffith was a natural choice as director. He had a lifelong love of the Revolution—he was married in Boston’s Old North Church. Before he began making movies, he was a poor playwright who wrote and starred in the vaudeville playlet, “In Washington’s Time” (1901). Six years later he wrote an unproduced four-act play, “War,” about the period. And in 1909 after becoming a movie director, Griffith made the short film “1776, Or the Hessian Renegades,” with actress Mary Pickford.

For “America,” Griffith hired bestselling historical novelist Robert W. Chambers to write a screenplay, in concert with historian John L.E. Pell. (Griffith had been stung by criticisms of historical inaccuracies in “The Birth of a Nation.”) Into this mix, he wove elements of “War.” The result was an improbable plot centered around a love affair between Lexington, Mass., farmer Nathan Holden and Nancy Montague, a belle from a James River estate.

Holden was played by Neil Hamilton (decades later, police commissioner Gordon on TV’s “Batman”), and Montague was played by the long-separated Griffith’s current girlfriend, the birdlike, coquettish Carol Dempster. The movie’s lustful villain, Capt. Walter Butler, was expertly acted by Lionel Barrymore.

As with “The Birth of a Nation,” Griffith plunged into historical research. He studied soldiers’ diaries and visited New England battlefields. Filmmaking is grounded in illusion, but Griffith was obsessed with achieving authenticity. He recreated the Battle of Lexington down to the exact number of soldiers on each side; actual pistols and a drum used in 1775 were featured in the film. The joke went around the studio that Griffith once said, “Find out for me how many buttons Sam Adams wore on his underwear.”

He planned an exhausting campaign of on-location shooting in the fall of 1923 at sites in New York, Massachusetts, Virginia and Pennsylvania. Many scenes were authentic—the Old North Church shown is the real thing—but Paul Revere’s ride was filmed from the back of a speeding car in both New York and Massachusetts, and the Battle of Bunker Hill was filmed in Somers, N.Y.

Griffith was renowned for battle scenes, and now he aimed to outdo himself. At Fort Myer, Va., he borrowed the Third U.S. Cavalry to portray Morgan’s Rangers—typical of the high-level assistance he received for his all-American epic. He trained them in Revolutionary War tactics and weaponry, then filmed them in buckskin making charges along with their commander, Major Jonathan Wainwright.

The decision to film part of “America” in Tidewater Virginia came naturally to Griffith, who was familiar with the area’s rich history. For the Jamestown Tercentenary in 1907 he had acted in the pageant “Pocahontas” at the Colonial Theatre in Norfolk. He had family ties to the area—his stern mother likely spun stories of the Revolutionary War exploits of his great-grandfather, Salathiel Griffith, in southeast Maryland, and of Daniel Griffith, his grandfather, in the Virginia Militia in the War of 1812. She claimed descent, perhaps erroneously, from the Carters of Shirley Plantation.

Filming in the Tidewater immediately threw Griffith together with the irrepressible Goodwin, later to be godfather to the Williamsburg restoration.

Goodwin was professor of religion at William and Mary and rector of Grace Episcopal Church in nearby Yorktown. He tirelessly raised money for the college, while dreaming of Williamsburg’s restoration. Griffith soon won Goodwin’s affection, telling him of his desire “to get a little of the real spirit and importance of dear old Virginia in the picture.” Goodwin cheerfully pointed the director to suitable locations for filming.

After shooting scenes at Westover and Shirley plantations, the Griffith entourage of 60 arrived by train at the Navy Mine
was filmed reading a letter from his Brafferton building, constructed in 1723. The huge, bare-limbed elms at the historic tripod stood amid fallen leaves beneath the hand-cranked camera on its wooden tripod stand amid fallen leaves beneath Caucasus, he called for dozens of retakes. He gave orders in a low tone and sometimes sprang up to show the actors how to perform. They seemed to know nothing about the plot—barely comprehensible in any case—but merely did what Griffith told them.

Then the crew moved to the circa-1730 Nelson House, where local grand dame Adele Blow greeted them from the porch, looking festive in her Colonial garb. Goodwin wrote to a friend, “It would have done your heart good to see George Washington riding around on his horse, Colonial dames stepping out of Colonial carriages ... and Colonial carts, drawn by Colonial oxen, repeopling the old streets of Colonial Yorktown with its old Customs House and its old Colonial Taverns, and Mansions, with the scenes and scenery of long by-gone days. It was all very colorful and tremendously interesting.”

In all of this, Goodwin must have gotten a foretaste of what Williamsburg could someday become, fully restored and open to the public as what he called a “dreamland playground.”

Ever the fundraiser—wealthy widow Blow was his first major donor—Goodwin was thrilled that the College of William and Mary would appear in the movie. The film crew arrived there the next day. Griffith had returned to New York, turning direction over to his assistant, Herbert Sutch. The hand-cranked camera on its wooden tripod stood amid fallen leaves beneath huge, bare-limbed elms at the historic Brafferton building, constructed in 1723.

An undergraduate Thomas Jefferson was filmed reading a letter from his love interest, “Belinda”—foreshadowing a long series of Jefferson re-enactors at Colonial Williamsburg. Because the Brafferton had originally been an American Indian school, student actors wore beaded leather and greasepaint for the camera. Undergrads crouched in the dust at the corner of the Brafferton, then scattered as bewigged professors huffed around the corner.

Among those professors was Goodwin himself, portraying Commissary Dawson, president of the college, in lemon-yellow stockings, black velvet breeches and a wig. He was joined by colleague Walter Montgomery and law school dean John Garland Pollard, who later became governor of Virginia.

Griffith Studios was famous for elaborate sets. Back in Mamaroneck, the director built interior mockups of the palace of George III, the Houses of Parliament, Independence Hall and the Virginia House of Burgesses. The final scenes were filmed on location at Valley Forge, taking advantage of winter’s first snowfall.

The finished “America” would tie with “Intolerance” as Griffith’s longest film ever, 14 reels. It premiered on February 21, 1924, at the 44th Street Theatre in New York.

“Tears were drawn last night,” The New York Times reported, “and sighs and sobs came from trembling women.” But the critical reception was mixed—The New York Herald.

Lights, Camera, DAR Action:
A close-up of the DAR connection to the 1920s film industry

The idea for the film “America” was born from the National Society’s desire to reverse the nature of films of the time, which were seen as “not only objectionable, but nauseating in their vulgarity and suggestiveness,” with “lewd and immoral suggestions,” according to the proceedings of the 31st Continental Congress, held in 1922. At the same convention, the Bonny Kate Chapter of Knoxville, Tenn. introduced a resolution to create an initiative for “better moving pictures.” The initiative urged all film directors “to make their productions meet the high standards of honor, purity, courage, home sanctity, patriotism and reverence for religion, and that educational and historical films be given much greater attention and space in the future.”

To spur Hollywood to make better and more patriotic films, the DAR approached Will Hays, president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (later the MPAA), to form a committee that would review films to ensure worthy content. In addition to reviewing new films, the resulting Public Relations Committee—of which the DAR and several dozen patriotic and civic organizations were members—also encouraged filmmakers to write stories of the Revolution, particularly as the nation approached its 150th anniversary. According to an article by Hays in the November 1923 DAR Magazine, the committee’s suggestion of a Revolutionary film was picked up by D.W. Griffith. Though he had been planning a film about Patrick Henry, Griffith broadened the storyline and began the film “America.” — Jamie Roberts
wrote, “The general trend of Mr. Griffith’s spectacle is downhill. The later reels are incoherent and wearisome, and the finish extremely flat.”

Griffith needed a blockbuster, but public response proved tepid. Moviegoers were shunning serious-minded history lessons for more exotic productions like “The Ten Commandments” and “The Thief of Baghdad.”

“America” recouped its huge cost—nearly $900,000—only after years of reissues. Meanwhile, a bitterly disappointed Griffith slid toward ruin. He made a few more movies before his career ended in drunkenness and oblivion.

The failed movie cast a pall over future attempts to portray 1776 on the screen. “It was a great cautionary lesson for Hollywood,” film historian Russell Merritt said in an interview. “There are few subsequent films about the Revolution.”

An exception was shot on location in the Tidewater 33 years later—“Williamsburg: The Story of a Patriot,” still shown today in the Colonial Williamsburg visitor center.

“America” still survives, but in mutilated form. It was once hailed for the stunning visual beauty of its location shots, but this is difficult to appreciate today. The existing master copy at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (released on videotape in 1996) looks coarse and has lost its original delicately tinted coloration—night shots, for example, were once deep sea-blue.

Nor can we ever see the film in its original length. It was drastically shortened by several reels, and the extant copy is the British version, chopped still further when censors objected to how Redcoats were vilified. Innumerable scenes are missing. From days of filming in the Tidewater, only a few grainy frames remain, including those showing the Customs House. All the rest is gone.

Just five days after “America” premiered, Goodwin was in New York speaking to a Phi Beta Kappa banquet, trying to raise money for a new building at William and Mary. In the audience sat John D. Rockefeller Jr., whom Goodwin met for the first time that night—the start of a fruitful chain of events that soon launched the Williamsburg restoration.

In retrospect, the parallels between Griffith and Goodwin are remarkable. Born just six years apart, both of these 50-something dreamers were sons of Confederate soldiers, proud of their Virginia roots. Both sought to turn back time, creating a vivid impression of Colonial life and surroundings, with the lofty goal of educating the public.

Both had a larger agenda involving what Griffith called “the spread of Americanism” in an era of unsettling modernization. And both waxed quasi-religious in selling their projects.

Goodwin constantly used terms like “a sacred trust” and “a city redeemed”; Griffith told actress Lillian Gish that motion pictures were “something predicted in the Bible and called the universal language”—they might “even bring about the millennium.”

In the end, Goodwin’s achievement in partnership with Rockefeller was the mightier. In his recreation of Colonial streets, bewigged gentlemen and ladies in silk gowns, D.W. Griffith rolled back the clock for only a day in a now-forgotten effort. But Goodwin did it for all time, delighting a never-ending audience of millions.


THE OCTAGON HAS STOOD at the corner of 18th Street and New York Avenue Northwest in Washington, D.C., for 214 years, yet it is best known for a brief period in 1814–1815 when it served as James and Dolley Madison’s temporary presidential residence after the British burned a path through the city. Undeniably, the first couple’s stay was historically significant—President Madison signed the Treaty of Ghent, which officially ended the War of 1812, at the Octagon—but the home’s rich history includes much more than the Madisons.
A SHOW OF SUPPORT

John Tayloe III may be the least-known of the historical figures tied to the Octagon’s history, but during his lifetime he was a distinguished member of Virginia society. Tayloe was born in September 1771 at Mount Airy, the plantation his father, John Tayloe II, built overlooking the Rappahannock River in Richmond County, Va. The only surviving son of a large family, Tayloe inherited Mount Airy when his father died in 1779.

After being educated in England he returned to Virginia to oversee the plantation and assorted other family ventures, including an iron foundry and several hotels. He also imported and bred racehorses. Tayloe was active in the local militia and the U.S. Army’s Light Dragoons. A Federalist, he served nine years in the state legislature. He is believed to have been one of the wealthiest men in the state in the first decade of the 19th century. In 1792 Tayloe married Ann Ogle, whose father Benjamin Ogle served as governor of Maryland. Together they had 15 children.

Circa-1799 painting of Ann Ogle Tayloe and daughters Rebecca and Henrietta by an unattributed artist

Like many plantations, Mount Airy was a grand but isolated estate. Tayloe, as a man involved in public affairs, wanted a second home in a center of social and political activity. He considered Philadelphia, Richmond, Baltimore and Annapolis, where his wife’s family lived, as possible locations, but ultimately chose Washington, D.C.

Any home Tayloe built in Philadelphia, Richmond, Baltimore or Annapolis would be just another affluent residence in an established city, but building in Washington took on a deeper meaning.

“Tayloe’s decision to construct not just a part-time dwelling but a fine town house a short distance west of the still-unfinished President’s House—in an area then largely farmlands and woods—amounted to a heartening expression of confidence that the new community would indeed become a city,” writes George McCue in The Octagon: Being an Account of a Famous Washington Residence: Its Great Years, Decline and Restoration (AIA Foundation, 1976). The District of Columbia had been chosen to be the country’s permanent capital only after members of Congress spent years lobbying for various contenders, including New York City, Annapolis and Philadelphia. In the late 1790s, few were eager to invest in the emerging federal city, which was conjured into existence by the Residence Act of 1790 and given just 10 years to prepare for Congress and the president to arrive. Many found it difficult to believe that city planner Pierre L’Enfant’s ambitious vision could be executed at all, let alone within a decade. Lots were slow to sell, and many that did sell remained vacant.

George Washington, who chose the site for the city and whose Mount Vernon estate is less than 15 miles away, felt pressure to help the new capital succeed. “Creating the city and putting it in readiness to begin functioning as the United States capital in 1800 was one of the pressing concerns of Washington’s presidency and the last years of his life,” McCue writes. Washington supported the cause by personally building two townhouses near the Capitol, and he recruited friends and associates to do the same.

Tayloe was among those Washington successfully convinced. In April 1797, he paid $1,000 for a lot at the corner of New York Avenue and 18th Street Northwest. Self-taught architect and District Commissioner William Thornton, whose involvement with the property was just beginning, brokered the deal.

A DEMOCRATIC DESIGN

When spending time in the city after the Mount Airy planting and harvesting season ended, Tayloe wanted space to
accommodate his large family, an ample staff of servants and guests at the many parties thrown by Ann Ogle Tayloe, the Octagon’s resident hostess years before Dolley Madison arrived. Designing the Tayloes’ Washington home was a formidable job that required a reputable architect. Evidence shows that Tayloe consulted Benjamin Henry Latrobe early on, likely even before he selected a site, as Latrobe’s plans were incompatible with Tayloe’s lot. The site featured an acute angle created by the diagonal orientation of New York Avenue. It sloped too.

The irregular lot created challenges. “It’s the hardest design problem for architects: How do you enter the corner of a building?” says Erica Rioux Gees, AIA, executive director of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Foundation, which operates the Octagon today. When Thornton, who several years earlier had won the Capitol design competition, stepped in as architect in 1799, he embraced the problem-solving aspect of the job.

“Recognizing that the site was incompatible with the rigid order of the conservative Georgian aesthetic, Thornton embraced the clean, volumetric ordering of Neoclassicism and produced a design that used the awkward site to advantage as a form-generating asset rather than an obstacle,” Ridout writes.

Brick walls extending from the house run parallel to the facing streets, enhancing the sense of harmony between house and site. Thornton set the house back from the street and pointed the circular entry pavilion directly toward the corner.

“This projecting round form with a portico on the main facade creates a gesture that reaches out to say ‘Welcome. Come in,’” Gees says. Beyond the front door, which is curved to follow the line of the structure rather than interrupt it, “The elegant circular entry hall makes a very democratic statement—you enter here and everybody is equal.”

That welcoming entry hall may be the source of the home’s name. Records show that the Tayloes routinely called their D.C. home the Octagon, but the exterior has only six sides, not the eight its name suggests. To create a round room, explains Gees, “You built an eight-sided room in wood and plastered in the corners to make it smooth.” Octagonal, or round, rooms were popular at the time, but were more often situated at the center of a house.

The use of a fashionable design element in an unexpected way illustrated the young country’s tendency to reference both beautiful and functional. A well-placed window bathes the Octagon’s main staircase in light. “When a nation is forging its identity it does a lot of borrowing from other places that represent an ideal for them. Thornton imbued the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment and Classical Greece into this house.” — Erica Rioux Gees, AIA

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traditional forms while developing its own architectural sensibility. “When a nation is forging its identity it does a lot of borrowing from other places that represent an ideal for them,” Gees says. “Thornton imbued the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment and Classical Greece into this house.”

Unlike other hastily built structures in the area, the Octagon had been planned in painstaking detail. Thornton’s deceptively simple design relies on three shapes familiar to any beginning geometry student—the circle, rectangle and triangle—but the way they fit together is remarkable. The floor plan flows from the entryway to a hallway area dominated by the main staircase, with large rectangular drawing and dining rooms placed on opposite sides. Smaller triangles fitted between these large rooms provide discreet access points for servants, as well as storage space.

Second- and third-story rooms follow the same arrangement, with the large rectangular spaces divided to create bedchambers, dressing rooms and sitting rooms. From the basement to the third floor, south-facing windows saturate interiors with light. The grounds included gardens, a privy, stables, servants’ quarters and an icehouse, completing an urban plantation compound influenced by the Virginia gentry culture Tayloe grew up with, yet uniquely adapted to its downtown location.

At some point the construction of virtually every home is beset with delays and cost overruns, and the Octagon was no exception. Construction costs were over budget by about one-third. Major construction was finished by 1800, but the interior wasn’t fit for habitation until late 1801. On June 14, 1801, Tayloe wrote to William Lovering, his building superintendent, “My object is to be done with the building as quickly as I can—with the least trouble and vexation—for the expence [sic] of it already alarms me to death, whenever I think of it.”

Time and money weren’t the only difficulties Tayloe faced: Some materials simply never arrived. He intended for the fireplace surrounds and mantels in the drawing and dining rooms to be made of Coade stone, a type of composition clay produced in England and prized for its resistance to weathering. Tayloe ordered a design featuring rosettes and female forms for the drawing room and one with nautical motifs for the dining room. The side pieces arrived safely but the mantels never did. Unwilling to wait for replacements, Tayloe installed wooden mantels and had the ensembles painted white to camouflage the difference in materials.

**THE OCTAGON IN WORLD HISTORY**

On August 24, 1814, the British marched into Washington, D.C., and treated themselves to dinner at the evacuated Presidents’ House before setting fire to that building and many others, including the Capitol. Despite its proximity to the Presidents’ House, the Octagon was unharmed. One possible explanation is that French Minister Louis Serrurier, to whom the Tayloes temporarily leased the house, was in residence at the time. “The French flag was flying over the residence,” writes Laura Bergheim in *The Washington Historical Atlas* (Woodbine House, 1992). “Though longtime enemies of the French, the British were not then at war with the Gallic nation, and spared the building that flew the French flag.”
After the British withdrew from the smoldering city, Madison pledged to rebuild. As evidence of his resolve, he opted to find temporary lodging in Washington instead of defecting to another city. Although the Federalist Tayloe opposed the war, his support for the preservation of the United States outweighed his partisan views. He was one of several wealthy property owners to offer the first couple use of his home. In September 1814 the Madisons moved into the Octagon, where Dolley soon resumed the lively, inclusive entertaining schedule for which she had become famous.

Madison used the circular room on the second floor, above the entry hall, as his office. It was there, at a round pedestal table ringed with labeled drawers, that Madison signed the Treaty of Ghent, formally ending the War of 1812. The terms of the treaty had been agreed upon by Christmas Eve 1814, in Ghent, Belgium, but the hard copy took almost two months to cross the Atlantic Ocean. Madison added his signature in mid-February 1815. The Madisons left the Octagon later that same year to move into another temporary home on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Years later the AIA’s San Francisco chapter bought the treaty table at auction and returned it to the Octagon, where it is displayed in what is now known as the treaty room. The leather box in which the Treaty of Ghent was delivered to Madison is part of the Octagon Museum collection.

**PRESERVING AN ICON**

Tayloe died in 1828, and sometime after Ann died in 1855, the family left the Octagon. (Tayloe descendants still live at Mount Airy today.) Later used as a school and a Navy office, by the late 19th century the Octagon was an abandoned, trash-filled squatters’ den occupied by as many as 10 homeless families. Then the house captured the attention of preservationist and AIA member Glenn Brown.

The AIA was founded in 1857 in New York City, but after about 40 years the organization began planning to relocate to Washington, D.C. Excited by the opportunity to save an architectural landmark, AIA leased the Octagon in 1897 and bought it in 1902.

“The Octagon provided a way for AIA to start preserving historic structures in historic cities,” Gees says. The move to Washington also afforded the organization proximity to the national government, one of the country’s biggest building clients and the source of federal funding.

After rehabilitating the house the institute moved its offices into the space. When the organization’s needs outgrew the Octagon’s capacity, AIA built a new, modern headquarters building behind the mansion. The building was completed in 1973, freeing the Octagon for use as a museum.

Today the AIA Foundation manages the property, located just two blocks from DAR Headquarters, as a museum that interprets the home’s history as well as and its architecture and design. “This house is like our welcome mat,” Gees says. “It represents the ideals of what we’re trying to do. Architecture is the background of our lives. It reflects and affirms who we are and at the same time it shapes who we are.”

The most recent restoration of the Octagon, conducted from 1990–1995, returned the home to the period of the Tayloes’ occupation and also addressed structural issues such as crumbling mortar and decaying wood. Original features still present in the home include the entryway’s black-and-white marble tile floor; the tiles were found stacked under a staircase and reinstalled.

The restoration turned up other surprises, too. The removal of more than 20 layers of paint from the drawing room fireplace revealed that the carved rosettes had originally been gilded. Analysis also uncovered the dining room’s original pistachio paint color, which has been recreated in the room.

Ongoing maintenance is aimed at issues common to historic structures. “We have a 200-year-old problem with moisture,” Gees says. Over time, changes in the use of space and interior finishes altered the dynamics of vapor movement in the walls, exacerbating an existing condition. Energy is also a focus. “You want to improve energy performance but also manage moisture in a way that preserves the integrity of the historic fabric,” Gees says.

With the expertise of an entire organization’s worth of architects at its service, the Octagon’s future looks secure. As Gees explains, “AIA recognizes the importance of preserving the cultural legacy embedded in the Octagon to help people understand how we lived in the past.”

**VISIT THE OCTAGON MUSEUM**

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During most of the Colonial period, maps were so expensive that they were mainly available only to “merchants, shipmasters and the political elite,” says Ronald Grim, curator of maps at the Boston Public Library’s Norman B. Leventhal Map Center. “It wasn’t until the 19th century, when maps began to be printed with lithography, that they became more available to everyone.”

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The Need for Maps

The whole process of colony-making—staking claim to and developing uncharted territories—made maps crucially important. Colonists needed to know where the boundaries of their Colonies were, and their old-world governing bodies needed geographic depictions to stake their claims.

“Cartographically, the 19th and early 20th centuries were characterized by the efforts of European colonial powers such as Britain, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Italy and Russia to acquire maps of their newly found possessions overseas,” according to the International Cartographic Association. “In this process large areas of the world, which were previously unmapped, were surveyed and mapped, either by government organizations working directly from the motherland or by local survey departments established in the colonies themselves.”

In many cases, colony boundaries were described, but not necessarily surveyed and mapped, and this practice eventually led to problems, Grim says.

For instance, the boundary between Virginia and Maryland was described to be the Potomac River “as far as its headwaters,” Grim says. That description assumed the river flowed in an east/west direction, rather than flowing in a northeast then southeast direction. Later, when the boundary was actually surveyed, the Colonies had different shapes and sizes than assumed. “That’s why Maryland becomes so narrow,” Grim says.

In addition to the need for maps to lay out territorial boundaries, they were also important for individual landowners to lay claim to their own property. “Acquiring land was the most important thing you could do [in the Colonies],” says Margaret Beck Pritchard, curator of maps for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and author of Degrees of Latitude: Mapping Colonial America (Harry N. Abrams, 2002).

As the Revolutionary War began, accurate maps became increasingly important for the armies on the ground, but they were difficult to come by. “The want of accurate Maps of the Country which has hitherto been the Scene of War, has been a great disadvantage to me,” wrote George Washington, according to John C. Fitzpatrick’s Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–1799. “I have in vain endeavored to procure them and have been obliged to make shift, with such sketches as I could trace from my own Observations.”

With experience working as a land surveyor since 1747, Washington had the knowledge to create his own field sketches. But the need for good maps was apparently so great that in 1777, he appointed Robert Erskine as the first geographer and surveyor general to the Continental Army. “For war, it was very important to know where roads and towns were so you could plan your strategy,” Grim says. “Areas where there were military activities, such as New York and Boston, became

THE WANT OF ACCURATE MAPS OF THE COUNTRY which has hitherto been the Scene of War, has been a great disadvantage to me. I have in vain endeavored to procure them and have been obliged to make shift, with such sketches I could trace from my own Observations.” — George Washington
very well mapped. But it was spotty; just a few miles from where battles were fought, maps remained inaccurate.”

For the battles fought by sea, there were reliable nautical charts and pilot guides to help direct the strategies of both the British and Continental forces. The English Pilot, the Fourth Book, was a nautical guide that provided sailing directions from Newfoundland south to the West Indies, Grim says. The book included nautical charts and maps of the major harbors and waterways of New England and the middle Colonies.

Until the 1750s, sailors only had “general directions of how to sail, such as landmarks to look for and very crude sketches of coastline, rather than maps,” Grim says. But after the French and Indian War, in which the British gained French territories in Canada, the British government undertook a detailed survey of those areas and the 13 Colonies. “By the time of the Revolutionary War, these charts had just become widely available and showed almost every inlet,” Grim says.

Historic maps can be helpful in researching your genealogy, but because maps and the places they represent changed over time, they can also present challenges.

Changing place names can impede researchers “in locating where records might be kept,” says DAR Head Genealogist Darryn Lickliter. For example, before 1749, the towns of Somers, Enfield, Suffield and Woodstock were in Massachusetts, but today they are in Connecticut. “Records pertaining to people who lived in these towns may be found in either Connecticut or Massachusetts,” Lickliter says.

When the names of towns were actually changed, “references to the old name may cause confusion,” Lickliter says. For example, what is now known as Nantucket, Mass., was known as Sherburn before 1795. Genealogists seeking people who lived in Sherburn would need to know about the name change.

“This problem is not limited to the towns of New England,” Lickliter says. For instance, Virginia created two different counties named Madison. The first, in what is now Kentucky, was separated from Virginia in 1792 when Kentucky achieved statehood. The second was created from Culpeper County shortly thereafter. “Researchers must be careful with references to such places, as they may end up looking for records in the wrong place,” he says.

Because the states “got their shapes gradually over time,” the changes on Colonial maps can affect research in many areas, Lickliter says. For instance, the boundary dispute that led to the creation of the Mason-Dixon Line settled final boundaries of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Virginia. For the years before that line was drawn, residents in that area may appear in records of any one of those states. “The same is true for southwestern Pennsylvania and portions of Virginia that are now the state of West Virginia,” Lickliter says. “Both Colonies claimed the same lands and settlers appear in the tax lists and court records of both jurisdictions. This can be very confusing.”

When working with old maps or places that may have undergone name changes, Lickliter recommends researching the history of the area. Atlases by John H. Long can be helpful, as they show the changes to county boundaries over time. “For towns, the best sources for learning about name changes are gazetteers or well-researched town histories,” he adds. “Published laws of the various states can also be useful in learning about name changes, as these often were affected by legislative action.”
Creating a Colonial Map

During the Colonial period, maps were printed with a copper plate engraving process. The process required that the map be drawn by a surveyor, inscribed in reverse on the copper plates, and then printed. If the map was to be in color, it would be colored by hand, Grim says.

To become an expert engraver required a seven-year apprenticeship, Pritchard says, and there were few engravers in the Colonies. “British engravers had no incentive to move here,” Pritchard says. “Aside from a couple of good ones, including one particular engraver in Philadelphia [James Turner], most maps were printed in England.”

Colonial land surveyors were very important in the process of mapping the New World, as they were the ones on the ground in the Colonies, measuring the terrain and drafting the lay of the land and bodies of water on paper to be sent to England. “Being a surveyor was a gentlemanly pursuit at the time,” Pritchard says. “It was almost an elite job, because acquiring land was the basis for gaining wealth here, and owning land meant nothing without an accurate survey.”

Property surveys were conducted frequently by notable surveyors such as Peter Jefferson, the father of Thomas Jefferson, and John Henry, the father of Patrick Henry. Although many Colonial landowners may have had surveys of their own property, it was rarer to see maps of an entire county or colony. To create larger maps required surveyors to go to various counties, gather up the work that had been done by independent surveyors and put all the various property surveys together, Pritchard says. It was a time-consuming endeavor, as was the copper plating and engraving process. And because only several hundred copies of such a map would be printed, large maps were quite expensive.

CARTOGRAPHERS TO REMEMBER

A number of well-known Colonial Americans played a role in early American map-making. Some of the most notable include:

**George Washington.** Working as a land surveyor from 1747 to 1799, Washington surveyed more than 200 tracts of land and held title to more than 65,000 acres in 37 different parcels. As he led the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, Washington sometimes found it necessary to make his own field sketches. Because most of Washington’s maps were for personal property, “very few were printed, and most exist in only one copy,” Grim says. However, Washington’s knowledge of geography and cartography played an important role throughout his life and has been explored in biographies such as *George Washington’s America: a Biography through His Maps* by Barnet Schecter (Walker & Company, 2010).

**Peter Jefferson.** The father of Thomas Jefferson, Peter Jefferson was a respected land surveyor. Working with Joshua Fry, he created “the most important map of Virginia in the 18th century,” says Margaret Beck Pritchard, curator of maps for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and author of *Degrees of Latitude: Mapping Colonial America*. That landmark map was first published in the 1750s. (See image above.)
Maps Make History

Maps were largely imprecise during the Colonial period, Grim says. And many areas remained unmapped for years. For instance, there were no actual maps of Virginia’s county boundaries until the 1790s. “There were verbal descriptions of where the county boundaries were, and the people who lived in the counties sort of knew,” Grim says. “[The description of a boundary] might be from one stream to another stream, but it was not precise. They went for 200 years without having an accurate map.”

But even the earliest surveys and charts were important foundations for the maps and mapmakers that would come later. “Maps from Colonial times were building blocks; they provided the beginnings for further maps,” Grim says. “It was a matter of gaining knowledge. As you gained more knowledge, you could draw more accurate maps.”

Some maps from the period, however, were extremely precise. The Atlantic Neptune, for instance, was a monumental marine atlas printed in the 1770s, and it was so accurate that it was not improved upon for another 100 years, Grim says.

The Boston Public Library’s Norman B. Leventhal Map Center is hosting an exhibit focused on this atlas, “Charting an Empire: The Atlantic Neptune,” until November 2013. The exhibit, which includes an online virtual tour, displays nautical charts, navigational instruments and ship models. It also explores the complex process of early marine surveying, with a focus on the period from 1763 to 1773, when Great Britain set out to accurately chart the coast and survey the inland areas of its empire in Atlantic Canada and the Eastern Seaboard from New England to the West Indies.

From compasses, sextants and telescopes that measured angles to the North Star to today’s satellites that can zoom in on street views, the process of making navigation more accurate continues to be a fascinating quest for amateur map-makers and professional cartographers alike.

Andrew Ellicott. Along with his brothers, Andrew Ellicott founded Ellicott City, Md., and was the land surveyor responsible for laying out the 10-mile square that became Washington, D.C. He also surveyed the Pennsylvania and New York boundaries.

John Mitchell. This Colonial doctor and botanist created the most comprehensive map of the eastern half of North America, which “became the standard map of the eastern Colonies,” Grim says. Now known as the Mitchell map, it was first published in 1755 and was used while negotiating the Treaty of Paris to define the boundaries of the newly established United States.

Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon. As respected British land surveyors, these two were hired by the Penn family of Pennsylvania and the Calvert family of Maryland to resolve a border dispute between their Colonies. Mason and Dixon surveyed the line that forms part of the borders of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware and West Virginia. Their work not only resolved the dispute and established the borders, but their Mason-Dixon Line also became known as a cultural boundary between the Northeastern and Southern United States.

In fall 2011 the DAR added a significant map to its collection. During an official trip to Spain, President General Merry Ann T. Wright (2010–2013) was surprised by the presentation of an exact copy of the Juan de la Cosa map, which was drawn in 1500 and was the first map in history that included a representation of the American continent. Señor Don Juan Lago Novas, Marques de Castell Florite and president of the Association of the Map of Juan de la Cosa, presented the map to Mrs. Wright as a gift to the DAR.

Juan de la Cosa, the man who drew this significant map, had sailed twice with Christopher Columbus and was the owner of the ship known as the Santa Maria. His original map was found in 1853 and is included in the collection of the Spanish Naval Museum in Madrid. In 1892, an exact copy of the map was made in full-size and in color, to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America. This is the version of the map that was given to DAR. Only three other institutions in the United States have a copy.

Molly Fernandez de Mesa funded the framing of the map on behalf of the España DAR Chapter, Madrid, Spain. The artifact, shown below, now part of the NSDAR Archives collection, is displayed at DAR Headquarters in Washington, D.C.
Most Americans have at least a vague idea of who Paul Revere was, but outside of his home state of Delaware, far fewer know the name Caesar Rodney or why he is memorable.

Like Revere, Rodney also made a long, desperate dash at a critical moment in the course of the Revolution. Revere’s ride to warn Lexington and Concord that Redcoats were on the way prevented the capture of vital arms and several key Patriot leaders, and it rallied the militia to oppose the British.

Rodney’s ride from Dover, Del., to Philadelphia was crucial in securing a unanimous vote for independence among the Continental Congress. Unlike the robust Revere, Rodney was in bad health, yet he traveled at least part of the way in a carriage over 80 miles of muddy, rutted roads cut by more than a dozen streams.

For that alone he is worth remembering. But Rodney also was a well-respected, highly capable and effective public servant before and during the War for Independence. His tireless efforts helped further the cause of freedom from Great Britain and bring the “First State” successfully through those tumultuous times.

Early Days

Rodney was born in Dover, Del., on October 7, 1728, the eldest of eight children of Caesar and Elizabeth Rodney. Few details about his early life are known, other than the fact that he attended a Latin school in Philadelphia in 1743. When his father died in 1745, the young Caesar inherited his family’s farm and slaves. He never married.

By the time he was 40, Rodney had developed skin cancer on his face, which led to several attempted primitive cures. In a letter written in 1768, he mentions having unsuccessful surgery that left him disfigured. Rodney also suffered from asthma for much of his life and other health issues as he grew older.

At the First Continental Congress, John Adams described Rodney as “the oddest looking man in the world. He is tall, thin and slender as a Reed, pale; his Face is not bigger than a large Apple, yet there is Sense and Fire, Spirit, Wit, and Humour in his Countenance.”

Like many landed gentlemen, Rodney became involved in politics and public service. In A Gentleman as Well as a Whig: Caesar Rodney and the American Revolution (University of Delaware Press, 2000), Jane Harrington Scott writes that Rodney was respected for his honor, discretion, devotion to duty, courage, kindness and thoughtful demeanor.

Rodney generally got along well with people of different viewpoints, and could put political allegiances aside when it came to maintaining friendships. Unlike his highly partisan and headstrong brother Thomas, Rodney carefully thought through the implications of his actions and words, and he sought long-term solutions rather than short-term gains.

In 1755, Kent County voters elected him sheriff, and he held that powerful post for many years. He also served as a justice of the peace, a judge in the Colonial courts, and a captain, brigadier general and major general in the Kent County Militia.

Rodney was elected to a one-year term in the Colonial assembly in 1758, and was re-elected every year thereafter (except 1771) until the Colonial government was abolished in 1776. The assembly appointed him speaker in 1769, 1773, 1774, 1775 and 1776.

Rodney’s political star began rising in earnest in 1765 when he, Thomas McKean and George Read were chosen to represent Delaware at the Stamp Act Congress. When Parliament agreed to repeal the act, the three men were tapped to write a letter of thanks to King George III.
Who is eligible for membership?
Any woman 18 years or older, regardless of race, religion or ethnic background, who can prove lineal descent from a Patriot of the American Revolution is eligible for membership. DAR volunteers are willing to provide guidance and assistance with your first step into the world of genealogy.

How is Patriot defined?
DAR recognizes as Patriots not only soldiers, but also anyone who contributed to the cause of American freedom. To find out if your ancestor is recognized by the DAR as a Revolutionary Patriot, use the request form available online. Visit www.dar.org and click on “Membership.”

How many members does the National Society have?
DAR has 175,000 members in nearly 3,000 chapters worldwide, including chapters in 14 foreign countries and one territory. Since its founding in 1890, DAR has admitted more than 900,000 members.

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DO YOU HAVE A REVOLUTIONARY PATRIOT IN YOUR FAMILY TREE?
From this point on, these three men figured prominently in Delaware politics and government. Like Rodney, Read and McKean each held important posts in the Colonial and later state governments. In 1774, they were selected to represent Delaware at the First Continental Congress, and in 1775, they were picked again as delegates to the Second Continental Congress.

Though their views would diverge over the years, Rodney maintained cordial working relationships with them even when they disagreed.

**An Essential Vote**

Like the colonists themselves, the Second Continental Congress was divided over the issue of independence. Even as fighting erupted in April 1775 and relations with Great Britain decayed, many hoped for reconciliation.

Congress took up the question of independence on June 7, 1776, when delegate Richard Henry Lee of Virginia proposed, “That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States … and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.”

Congress debated Lee’s resolution for two days, then tabled it until July 1 so the delegates could seek new instructions from home. At the time, Thomas Jefferson noted that Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York and Maryland did not appear ready to endorse independence.

During this interval, Rodney left Dover to deal with near-insurrection in Sussex County, where Loyalists and Patriots had clashed violently. Read had written Rodney indicating that Congress would probably deal with other matters before taking up independence again. As a result, Rodney planned to return to Philadelphia sometime after July 1, Scott writes.

According to Scott, Rodney left Sussex sometime between June 25 and June 30, and planned to rest at Dover before continuing on to Philadelphia. He had not been home long before a rider delivered an urgent message from McKean: Congress had resumed debate and voted on Lee’s resolution on July 1. There would be a second, decisive vote on July 2, and Rodney had to come at once.

Under the rules of the Continental Congress, each Colony had only one vote, which was determined either by a vote within each delegation or by instructions from home.

On July 1, nine Colonies had voted in favor of independence, while Pennsylvania and South Carolina opposed it. New York abstained because its delegation had not been instructed to vote for independence. And Delaware did not cast a vote because McKean favored independence, while Read did not. Rodney would break the tie.

**Delaware’s Beginnings**

Tiny but proud, Delaware passed through several hands on its way to becoming a state. The Dutch were the first Europeans to try to settle Delaware with a trading post that was wiped out by American Indians. Sweden planted the first permanent European settlement, New Sweden, in 1638 near Wilmington.

The area remained under Swedish control until 1655, when a Dutch fleet under Peter Stuyvesant sailed from New Amsterdam and seized the small colony. Great Britain took control of New Amsterdam in 1664; the Dutch lost the war that followed and surrendered their American holdings.

In 1681, King Charles II granted William Penn the Colony of Pennsylvania, whose three “Lower Counties”—Sussex, Kent and New Castle—comprised Delaware. The king’s action touched off a lengthy dispute between Pennsylvania and Maryland over Delaware’s precise borders. Eventually, the disputants hired two English surveyors—Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon—to outline those borders.

As part of Pennsylvania, Delaware was a proprietary colony under the control of the Penn family, not a royal colony. This gave the Penns considerable latitude in directing the affairs of the Colony—including largely exempting themselves from many taxes.

In one of those ironies of history, in the years before the Revolution, Benjamin Franklin headed a party that unsuccessfully tried to persuade the Crown to revoke the proprietary charter and make Pennsylvania a royal colony.

When the Continental Congress urged the 13 Colonies to abolish the royal governments and establish their own independent governments, Delaware took the opportunity to break away from Pennsylvania and become its own state.

Delaware is known as the “First State” because it was the first of the 13 original states to ratify the U.S. Constitution. The unanimous decision to ratify took place at a state convention held in Dover on December 7, 1787.
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Though a majority vote could carry the motion, the pro-independence delegates felt that anything less than unanimity would betray weakness and lack of resolve. Hoping that some minds might change, Congress agreed to hold a second vote on July 2.

McKean’s message arrived in Dover around midnight on July 1. Contemporary reports say it was raining heavily, but, despite the weather, fatigue and his ill health, Rodney called for his carriage and left immediately. (According to an account Thomas Rodney gave years later, it was he who persuaded his brother to go.)

It’s about 80 miles from Dover to Philadelphia, and the roads were bad at any time. Besides stopping to change horses, the trip involved crossing 15 streams “by ford, bridge or ferry,” according to a letter from Rodney to Thomas. Rodney added that he “traveled all night, arriving (tho detained by Thunder and Rain) in time enough to give my Voice in the matter of Independence.”

By the time Rodney, still wearing riding boots and spurs, arrived on July 2 the situation had changed.

South Carolina had dropped its opposition and would vote in favor. Pennsylvania’s two outspoken opponents to independence, John Dickinson and Robert Morris, did not attend the session, which allowed Pennsylvania also to vote in favor. New York abstained because it was still under orders to seek reconciliation; new orders arrived a few days later that allowed New York finally to support the measure.

Delaware voted last. As before, Read was opposed to the resolution, while McKean supported it. Rodney broke the tie, telling Congress, “As I believe the voice of my constituents and of all sensible and honest men is in favor of Independence and my own judgment concurs with them, I vote for Independence.”

From Legislation to War

In the months after the historic vote for independence, Delaware’s conservatives and Loyalists mounted a reaction to Rodney’s vote. He was not chosen as a member to the state constitutional convention, and neither he nor McKean were elected to the new state legislature that replaced the Colonial assembly. Read, however, was elected.

So instead of legislating, Rodney went to war. He served on the Committee of Observation and Inspection charged with enforcing the boycott of British goods. He was also a member of the Council of Safety that endeavored to raise troops and supplies.

As brigadier general of the Kent County Militia, he spent time serving in a largely administrative billet with General George Washington’s army near Trenton, N.J., in early 1777. Later that same year, he was promoted to major general and tasked with organizing the removal of vital supplies to safer locations as British forces moved on Philadelphia.

By 1778, the Loyalist reaction in Delaware had waned, and Rodney returned to Congress. The legislature also named him president of the new state, a post he held until 1781.

Though re-elected to Congress in 1782 and 1783, Rodney did not serve. His health had significantly declined as the cancer worsened, prompting him to write a friend that “The Doctor must conquer the Cancer, or the Cancer will conquer me.”

Rodney died on June 26, 1784, at Poplar Grove, his farm near Dover, and was buried at Byfield, another farm he owned nearby.

Rodney had started his political career as a conservative, a member of what was called the “court party” that generally supported the Crown. Over time, as British abuses mounted, he had moved left. Loyalists, of course, branded him a radical, though he was never on a par with firebrands like Samuel Adams.

In a letter to an acquaintance quoted by Scott, Rodney describes his political outlook and philosophy as follows:

“When the contest between Great Britain and America first commenced, I stept forth among others in order to obtain a redress of Greivances (sic). This and no other was my aim until absolutely refused. The Question then was Independence or the Bayonet, I was at no loss in determining which to chuse (sic). Independence then and hope it will ere long be established, but Sir I always kept in View the good order well Being and Happiness of the people, more especially those over who I had lately the honor to preside, and Trust That none who know me believe otherwise.”

Though his daring journey secured his place in American history, his patient stewardship of local and national government was equally important for the early nation.
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