05.1.02 PIEDMONT CHAPTER HISTORY

The Piedmont Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution was chartered on the 17th of March 1994 in Roswell, Georgia.

Instrumental in the forming of the chapter were Frank H. Darwin, Jr., Edgar B. Sterrett, Jr., Merril Law and Aubrey R. Morris assisted by Col. Robert B. Vance and Col. Robert F. Galer. Both Col. Vance and Galer are former GASSAR Presidents, Col. Vance a Former President General of the NSSAR.

Merril Law arranged for the organizational meeting to be held at Roswell Methodist Church on February 12, 1994. Attendees were Ed Sterrett, Frank Darwin, Merril Law, Ken Meeker, Eric Szweda, Ken Howell, Aubrey Morris and Col. Galer. Several names were suggested for the new chapter serving the Roswell-Alpharetta area. It was decided to let the location within the state determine the name. And so it was - ***Piedmont****, at the foot of the mountains*.

On March 7, 1994 a charter dinner was held at Robert’s Restaurant in Old Roswell Mill. There were eighteen charter members by this date. Officers for the initial year were:

 Frank H. Darwin, Jr. President

 Merril Law Vice President

 Claude H. Snow, Jr. Secretary

 Edgar B. Sterrett, Jr. Treasurer

 Douglas Stansberry Chaplain

 C. Kenneth Meeker, Jr. Registrar

 Eric A. Szweda Chancellor

 Kenneth L. Howell Sergeant-at-Arms

The first anniversary and President’s Day were celebrated on February 20, 1995 with a gala dinner. FPG James Westlake was the speaker. At this first anniversary there were thirty-eight members.

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The SAR Piedmont Chapter has a reason to celebrate on February 21, 2019 and that reason is their Piedmont Chapter’s 25th Anniversary!

The members of the SAR Piedmont Chapter in Roswell, Georgia are male descendants of men who served in the American Revolutionary War who contributed to establishing the independence of the United States of America. They are dedicated to perpetuating American ideals and traditions.

They are planning now to make this a very special event for their SAR membership of 82 members! Cocktails then Dinner will be starting at 6:30 pm at Houck’s Grille in Roswell, Georgia and they will be inviting special guests from all six SAR Chapters that they helped start in Georgia along with honored SAR Georgia State Representatives and Larry T. Guzy (PG 2017- 2018) will be their guest speaker. The SAR Piedmont Chapter will also be celebrating George Washington’s Birthday and the start of 250th Anniversary of the United States of America, which will span over several years representing the Revolutionary War years and not just one year.

**The Founding of the SAR Piedmont Chapter on February 12, 1994**

Founders:  Frank H. Darwin Jr. & Edgar. B Sterrett, Jr.

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| First Year Officers:• Frank H. Darwin Jr., President• Merril Law, Vice President• Claude H. Snow Jr., Secretary• Edgar B. Sterrett Jr , Treasurer• Douglas Stansberry, Chaplain• C. Kenneth Meeker, Registrar• Eric A. Szweda, Chancellor• Kenneth L. Howell, Sergeant-at-Arms | http://www.piedmontchapter.org/images/Founding/FrankDarwin2.jpgFrank H. Darwin Jr. | http://www.piedmontchapter.org/images/Founding/EdgarSterret.jpgEdgar. B Sterrett Jr. |

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| Charter Members:Robert V. BlackwellJohn I. BrunoIan Campbell, Jr.Colin R. CampbellFrank H. Darwin, Jr.Charles R. DarwinJames K. Darwin | Jay F. DarwinRobert A. GriffithEdward L. HerefordJames S. Holmes, Jr.James S. Holmes, IIIKenneth L. HowellMerril LawC. Kenneth Meeker | C. Phillip MeyerAubrey R. MorrisPaul Grady Moss, Jr.Claude SnowDouglas StansberryEdgar B. Sterrett, Jr.Eric SzwedaEric Thorstenberg |

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| **A message from Edgar. B Sterrett, Jr.** "Frank Darwin and I, both members of the Atlanta Chapter and both living in North Fulton County, were the originators of the idea for a new SAR chapter in the Roswell/Alpharetta area. The first discussion about a new chapter , and our first planning meeting, was at the Senior Enriched Living Center in Alpharetta. Both Frank and I were attending a class on genealogy at the center that Frank's wife, Anne, was teaching. Over lunch, our thoughts turned to the SAR and the possible need for a new chapter in the northern Metro area. We decided that a new chapter should be started in North Fulton, so efforts were begun.""We both came up with some names of prospects and we both started doing some phoning to invite those on our lists to a meeting to discuss the prospective chapter. The first meeting was held at the Roswell Methodist Church on February 12, 1994. If my memory serves correctly, there were about 10 people in attendance at that first meeting, including the then GASSAR state president Colonel Robert Galer. Everybody at the meeting was in favor of starting a new chapter, and Aubrey Morris suggested we name the new chapter the Piedmont Chapter. Aubrey's suggestion was accepted and so the chapter was named. We also had a discussion on when the chapter meetings should be held and it was decided that we should meet early on a Saturday morning in order to accommodate the greatest number of people, especially those who worked during the week. At that time the Atlanta Chapter was meeting at noon on Tuesday at a restaurant at the Peachtree DeKalb Airport which meant few members, who were working, could attend the meetings and we wanted very much to avoid that problem and thus out meeting time was established for Saturday mornings. Everybody in attendance that day was assigned the responsibility to talk to the prospective members on our list. Frank and I put mailings together to spread the word, and Anne acted as genealogist/registrar to help prospective members who needed assistance with their applications. An organizational meeting was scheduled for March 7, 1994 and GASSAR President Bob Galer presented the charter. Eighteen charter members were in attendance.""The first chapter anniversary meeting was celebrated on February 20, 1995, at which time new officers were installed, and Frank and I were awarded the Silver Good Citizenship Medal."If you like to learn more about your family’s history, please contact Ron Redner of the SAR Piedmont Chapter by email ronredner@renderad.com or cell 404-401-0204. |

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**25 years of making a difference**

**Piedmont Chapter History “as Told by Larry Guzy” (PG NSSAR 2017-2018)**

It is hard to overestimate what difference one chapter can make to a whole Society. From the beginning in 1994, the Piedmont Chapter started doing something different: it met on a Saturday morning so that it could attract many who worked and found it difficult to make an evening meeting. But what does it take to establish a chapter AND what does it take to make others want to participate or even to retain their membership?

I believe the answer is LEADERS and LEADERSHIP.

When the Piedmont founders decided to split with the Atlanta Chapter, there was a tremendous amount of resistance since it would mean reducing the size and influence of Atlanta, then the only real mover in Georgia. Atlanta met then, as now, during the week for lunch. When this chapter was founded in March 1994, Georgia growth had been very slow, even though it had supplied two National Presidents General in the prior 5 years.

Just note these numbers:

In March 1994 when the Piedmont Chapter was founded, Georgia only had 722 active members of 2645 who had ever been a member in Georgia! 72 years since the Georgia Society was founded there were only 722 active members! 25 years later, there are 1989 active members, 1267 more than at the start of the Piedmont Chapter!

NEW MEMBERS and RETENTION has been the key to Georgia growth, but what causes men to join and remain?

I believe it is due to a desire to MAKE A DIFFERENCE, ACTIVITY, and NEW CHAPTERS.

I, and I am sure those ahead and behind me, wanted to do something to make a difference. When I was asked to run for chapter president, I told them that this meant that someday I would be National President! Think about WHY you want to be a member, or leader: it is always personal, and what it can do for YOU. It can satisfy your need to make a difference.

The Piedmont leadership did indeed lead. In the first years, it supplied State Level officers like Frank Darwin as Secretary and Ed Sterrett as State President in 1999 followed by four more State Presidents through 2011. Allen Greenly should be added as the most recent State President although he had already founded Forsyth and was a primary member there. We were a force: Ed was followed by me in 2000, Roger Lamb in 2001, then George Thurmond 2004 and when he could not get enough, again in 2005, and Bob Sapp in 2011. It is no secret that Piedmont led the State.

Do you realize that one third of the Chapters of Georgia were formed through the influence of Piedmont members? Yes, 12 chapters, 7 of which were formed from 1999 to 2002—just three years!

Ed Sterrett and Frank Darwin founded the **Piedmont** Chapter in 94. Ed started the next new chapter formation by founding **Gwinnett** in 1999. He also was influential in founding **Dalton** January 2000, **Blue Ridge Mountains** April 2000, and **Valdosta** June 2000. I founded **Collins** in October 2000, Bob Bauchpies helped found **Casimir Pulaski** October 2001, Doug Stansberry founded Marquis de Lafayette in 2002, Roger Lamb co- founded **Cherokee** in 2005 with Billy Templeton during George Thurmond’s second term as State President. **Sons of Liberty** came out of Collins in 2006, **Robert Forsyth**, by Allen Greenly in 2013 with the help of Bob Sapp and finally **Mount Vernon** in 2017 by Shep Hammock and others.

Activity has been the cornerstone of Piedmont’s contribution to Georgia and the National Society. My first appointment as a chapter member was as Publicity Chairman. I proposed we present talks to organizations and groups, participate in newsworthy events, and make presentations to schools, among other ways to let the public know the SAR was here. As with all advertising campaigns, they took time to show results, but they immediately involved others in the chapter which is a key to growth.

These activities opened the doors to speaking engagements and newspaper articles.

In 1998, we participated in the rededication of Kettle Creek, the first since its establishment in 1930. It was there that I asked new member George Thurmond to chair the Graves Committee. The Chapter had spoken of doing dedications, but it never quite got off the ground. Give George a job, and it gets done! Our first was in Alpharetta behind Chadwick’s Store. It was a resounding success. Not many dedications had been done in the previous decades, so this effort revitalized the Society.

The State Color Guard existed since about 89, but the activity was light since there were few who had a uniform. At an early chapter meeting in 98, I challenged the chapter to get uniforms. George Thurmond took the challenge first and, that dog got his a few days before mine arrived and he wore it to a chapter meeting FIRST! That year we were able to participate in the Old Soldier’s Day Parade with two uniformed members. After a grave dedication in Columbus, George Thurmond and I met with a couple others there in Columbus to establish the guidelines for points for color guard medals. These were revised several times, and the rest is history. Piedmont Chapter President Paul Prescott knows the Color Guard well having served for several years as State Color Guard Commander.

Speaking engagements at schools were quite an ordeal. This Chapter, and I don’t believe any other chapters either, had ever done one. I practiced on a 5th grade in southern Gwinnett County and spoke about and showed the video of Kettle Creek. Lead balloons all around, but it was a start. We soon had several from the chapter going with me which led to other chapters imitating what we did. I remember the new guy Jack Ferguson in uniform standing in the background listening. One of the kids asked if he really had been there during the Revolution since he looked the part! Jack always joked about that first effort.

As a result of our activity, in 98 the Piedmont Chapter won both the USS Stark and State Americanism awards for the first time. Piedmont won the President General’s Cup for the most active chapter at the Boston Congress in 2000.

What a thrill it was for Georgia.

I thought that having a phone line for Georgia membership inquires was a good idea. I instituted it while State President, and paid for it for several years with mixed results. The calls came to my phone. We got more calls for the DAR than the SAR and they were referred to the appropriate chapter. The State had no money for such trivial things. Whenever someone at the State BOM asked for $25 or $50 for JROTC, Scouts, or other needs there was always a fight. The Georgia Endowment Fund was, and continues to be useless in that regard. I proposed a fund that would recognize its donors, and allow even all the funds, if needed, to be used for these miscellaneous items. It was called the Georgia Fellows Fund as a take-off of the National fund for this purpose, but more flexible. I am amazed that it has been so successful—thanks in large part to Paul Prescott. Now Piedmont, Mount Vernon and many other chapters have imitated this to serve the same purpose in chapters as the Georgia Fellows Fund does and it preserves and perpetuates the names of the donors unlike the Endowment Fund.

Charter member Doug Stansberry was the instigator of what became the National Poster Contest. The chapter Doug founded, Marquis de Lafayette, provided the other recent Georgia President General, Mike Tomme. The Traveling Trunk was also an outgrowth of Piedmont presentation activity, having developed methods to engage the interest of the kids in school.

Herman Tovey was a member of the Piedmont Chapter before moving to Columbus. He was the Editor of the Hornet’s Nest as was Jack McCord later. In 2000, Georgia considered hosting a National Congress, but it wasn’t until 2003 that it was approved for 2009. Yours truly got stuck with the Chairmanship since I was the one heading up the request. Little did I know that in 2006, I would become National Congress Planning Chairman holding both Host and National Chairman Jobs for the 2009 Congress. Now we have another Congress in the works, this time in Savannah in 2022. Piedmont former member Allen Greenly is heading up this effort.

Many Piedmont members have served the State in various positions besides the ones I have already mentioned: John Mortison as Bagpiper, Bobby Shaw as Treasurer, and Bob Sapp again as Registrar. State and National chairmanships and committee members from Piedmont are too numerous to mention.

I know there are other activities individuals from Piedmont started, however the point is that ACTIVITY has been the cornerstone of this chapter’s reason for being. If you as chapter members or leader can continue to develop new ways to engage the public to bring light upon the fact the SAR is here, your next 25 years will be as bright and glorious as has been your first 25.

Congratulations and happy trailblazing.