

CINCINNATI FOURTEEN





Members and guests of the New Jersey and Pennsylvania societies convened on April 25 on a perfect Spring Saturday for a tour of Fort Mifflin, south of Philadelphia. The New Jersey group started at Fort Mercer on the eastern bank of the Delaware River and were joined by the Pennsylvanians at Fort Mifflin on Mud Island on the western bank. Lunch was served inside the fort, followed by a guided tour of the stone fortress and demonstration of musketry and Revolutionary War cannon. The dogged defense of Fort Mifflin by American soldiers under constant bombardment from 250 British warships from October to November 1777 denied the British Navy use of the Delaware River and allowed the Continental Army to regroup for the Battle of White Marsh and then, withdraw to Valley Forge for the winter.



Hunter Lowell Davis, son of Pennsylvania Society member Brad Davis and grandson of former president Lowell Davis, was admitted as a successor member this fall. A student at the Friends School in Baltimore, Hunter is spending the fall at the prestigious School for Ethics and Global Leadership in Washington. The Davis family traces its lineage to two brothers who served as officers in the Pennsylvania line.

Friends of Independence National Historical Park; the National Park Service; Bartram's Gardens (oldest surviving botanic garden in North America); the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts; the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, Free and Accepted Masons; The Barnes Foundation (art museum); and The Barnes Arboretum (gardens). Cynthia MacLeod, superintendent of Independence National Historical Park, was the guest speaker at the state society's Washington's birthday luncheon in February 2014.

"We want as little busing to get to venues as possible," said Jim Pringle, the state society's vice president. "By staying in the historic district, we can minimize all forms of transportation," Pringle explained. "We will concentrate the activities so they're easily walkable, as much as possible." The goal now is to secure 600-1,000 hotel rooms in the Old City. "We want to make this the most welcoming and inclusive triennial ever held," declared Tom Etter, president of the Pennsylvania Society.

"Philadelphia has the largest historic district in the country. It is our intention to utilize smaller boutique hotels that are a stone's throw from where this country was founded," Ward said. The committee's plan is for a walkable, first-class triennial focused on the Revolutionary War and Philadelphia's role as the nation's first capital.

But reaching that goal will require a lot of people to help with the logistics of what could be the largest triennial ever held. The Pennsylvania Society will be asking its members to lend their talents and expertise in the effort. "We're looking for all of our members to come together as a championship team to make this triennial an outstanding weekend for all Cincinnati Society members," Ward said.

More hotels and restaurants are planned for Colonial Philadelphia over the next three years. Another major boost will come with the opening of the Museum of the American Revolution in the historic district and an easy walk from Independence Hall.

Randolph Smith

Planning the 2019 Triennial

The Society of the Cincinnati of Pennsylvania

Inspired by Virginia's example, the Pennsylvania Society has begun planning in earnest for the 2019 Triennial, which will be held in the historic district around Independence Hall.

"Virginia's upcoming triennial in historic Williamsburg has energized us to get moving on the plans for our triennial by focusing on Philadelphia's rich history as the center of our

country's founding," said Lowell Davis, past president of the Pennsylvania Society and a member of the triennial planning committee.

Mark Ward, the state society's treasurer, has been scouting party and lodging locations in the Old City historic district for three years. He also has been reaching out to friends in the leading historical and cultural institutions in the city: the

The Apologia of Lewis Nicola

Col. Lewis Nicola (1717-1807) is remembered as the man who proposed that George Washington should be king of the United States. Colonel Nicola wrote to the general on May 22, 1782, about the future of the republic. General Washington replied to this letter with a swift and unqualified rebuke: “I am much at a loss to conceive what part of my conduct could have given encouragement to an address which to me seems big with the greatest mischiefs that can befall my Country. . . . Let me conjure you then, if you have any regard for your Country, concern for yourself or posterity, or respect for me, to banish these thoughts from your Mind, and never communicate, as from yourself, or any one else, a sentiment of the like Nature.”

Colonel Nicola knew that his views might not win universal approval. “Republican bigots will certainly consider my opinions as heterodox,” he admitted to General Washington, “and the maintainer thereof as meriting fire & faggots.” But he added that he was “persuaded I run no risk, & that, tho disapproved of, I need not apprehend their ever being disclosed to my prejudice.”

Colonel Nicola was wrong about that. For nearly two hundred years, Lewis Nicola has been treated as a monarchist determined to overturn America’s republican revolution—a perfect foil for the determined idealism of General Washington.

Was Lewis Nicola really a monarchist, determined to place George Washington on a throne? His current representative, Clifford Butler Lewis of the Pennsylvania Society, has been exploring this question, and shares with us the following document, “found,” he says, “among Colonel Nicola’s papers.”



TO THE HONORABLE THE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS OF THE FREE AND INDEPENDENT UNITED STATES

It has come to my attention that a letter I wrote to the late esteemed General George Washington twenty-two years ago has been found among his papers. A small portion thereof has found its way into the public press and raised a controversy so opposite to my original intent, and so injurious to my character and reputation, that I feel compelled to address the outcry. It was never the intent that His late Excellency, General Washington, would be King of this country, as has been construed from one paragraph of that letter. Was this not the type of government for which we shed so much blood, and incurred so much pain, and loss of homes, finances, and health to get free of?

Most assuredly it was. I say with humility, and probably some good basis in fact, that I was among the oldest, if not the oldest, who donned a uniform and put his health, liberty, and life at stake to ensure such an outcome. To attest to those who like myself lost much in the war, I write this from the house of my daughter in Alexandria, with whom I live, as I have not the means to support myself anymore. I am not alone in having lost much, for many of my companions have already died in worse financial and physical condition than I am now, for want of just compensation by our government. The War is long past for many in the country, even though we face continuing challenges with the British, and therefore it is hard for some to understand what the soldiers and officers felt as the War was coming to an end. Allow me to better acquaint you with those times through my eyes, and then perhaps you will better understand the intent of the letter.

I was no stranger to the life of a soldier. I had been in the military most of my adult life; becoming an Ensign, in 1740, at the age of twenty-three, in His Majesty’s forces and served primarily in Ireland until 1765. At that time, due to financial embarrassments (an inheritance I had expected did not come my way), a family growing beyond my ability to maintain on my Major’s pay, a rank I had held since 1755, and no possibility of advancement, I resigned my commission and came to Philadelphia, arriving here in August of 1766.