Captain-Lieutenant William Miller of Revolutionary Service

by EMORY L. CARLTON
Vauters Church, Essex County, June 17, 1979

Mr. Wellford, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen—

I feel honored that I am taking part in this memorial service in commemoration of Captain-Lieutenant William Miller, a most distinguished Revolutionary War Officer.

Captain Miller’s descendants caused a beautiful leger stone to be placed at the grave here at Vauters. Captain Miller being an original member of the Society of the Cincinnati, it was appropriate that the insignia of the Society, the Cincinnati Eagle, as it is called, be placed on the leger stone. You will see this brass insignia there on the stone, with the following inscription:

WILLIAM MILLER
CAPTAIN-LIEUTENANT
1st REGIMENT CONTINENTAL ARTILLERY
SERVED IN REVOLUTIONARY WAR
JULY 1775-JANUARY 1783
DIED 1793
ORIGINAL MEMBER
SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI
PLACED BY HIS DESCENDANTS AND OTHERS
1979

The descendants of Captain Miller are to be commended for the placing of this stone at the grave, in memory of so gallant an officer, who sacrificed so much to gain freedom for the citizens of this country.

Daisy Taliaferro Gouldin was the leader of the descendants in the placing of the stone and the arrangements for these ceremonies. Our thanks to you Daisy!

PROGRAM

Presiding ..................Hill B. Wellford, President, Essex Historical Society
Invocation ..................The Rev. Ralph E. Fall, Rector of Vauters Church
Special Music ...............By Diana W. Dickinson
Welcome from Vauters ...........The Rev. Ralph E. Fall
Remarks by .....................James W. Rawles, President Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Virginia, Lt. Colonel U.S. Army Reserve, World War II.
“Liberty in the Balance”........Henry J. Schroeder, Jr., Brigadier-General, U.S. Army, Retired
Special Music ...............By Diana W. Dickinson
The program will be continued in the north church yard.

Placing of Wreath Ceremonies ...............Franklin Durham-Essex Post No. 64 of the American Legion, Frank B. Martin, Jr., Staff Sergeant U.S. Army, Korean War, Commander.

Benediction ......................Douglas H. Robertson, Sergeant First Class, U.S. Army Reserve, Retired Chaplain, Franklin Durham-Essex Post No. 64 of the American Legion.

Reception following the ceremonies in the Parish

(Continued on page 2)
Captain-Lieutenant William Miller
(Continued from page 1)

House, given by the Auxiliary of Franklin Durham-Essex Post No. 64 of the American Legion.

Captain Miller served in the Revolutionary War from July 1775 to January 1783, a period of seven years and seven months. He died 1793 and was buried in the old Miller cemetery in Essex County, Virginia. His mundane remains were removed from this cemetery to the cemetery of Vauters Church on April 2, 1974.4

It may be of interest to relate some of Captain Miller's forebears, who were of old Rappahannock County and then of Essex County; namely,

1. Simon Miller1 the first of this family of old Rappahannock County purchased 1000 acres land situate and lying in the freshes of Rappahannock River and on the north side thereof, a part of a tract known as "Nauzemand", and being in Sittingbourne Parish, by deed from John Proser, dated 13 April 1669, in consideration of 11,700 pounds of tobacco in caske.5 On May 13, 1670, Symon Miller, Boat Wright, purchased 625 acres land on the south side of the Rappahannock River by deed from John Meador for the consideration of 6000 pounds of tobacco in caske.6 Simon Miller made his will dated February 16, 1679, and probated in 1683, naming his wife Margaret as his executrix. He names his son Simon and other children.7

2. Simon Miller, Junior,8 died just prior to 16 September 1765. An appraisal of his estate was made on this date.9

3. Simon Miller9 made his will dated 18 February 1792 and probated 15 October 1792. He devised to his son, William Miller, "the plantation where I now live, in Saint Ann's Parish in Essex County for life, then to his grandson, Simon Miller, son of William."

Captain William Miller4 married Susannah Neale, daughter of Richard Neale and Catherine Neale, of Richmond County, Virginia.8 William Miller made his will dated November 11, 1792 with codicil dated 29 January 1793, probated 15 April 1793. He named in his will his wife, Susannah, and five children, John, Kitty, Susannah, and William and Simon.9

When the Revolutionary War was over, in 1783, Captain Miller became an original member of the Society of the Cincinnati.10 In May of 1783, the war having been won, American independence having been achieved, the officers of the Revolutionary War gathered together on the banks of the Hudson River to bid each other farewell. No more might they hope to meet in large gatherings, but by the happy thought of General Knox, Washington's Chief of Artillery, a way was found to preserve the friendships which had been forged through eight years of war, and cemented by their blood. The Society of the Cincinnati was instituted. They asked their mighty leader, the Cincinnati of the West, to become the head of their newly formed Society, and General Washington gladly accepted the call and became the first President General. The officers returned to their several states where it was designated that they form branch Societies of the Cincinnati. The senior Brigadier-General of the Virginia line, Peter Muhlenberg, called the Virginia officers to meet in Fredericksburg on October 6, 1783, to establish the Virginia Society. The officers obeyed the summons and came to Fredericksburg and assembled at the Town House. When the officers had come together, a letter was read from General Muhlenberg stating that illness prevented his being present, and so Brigadier-General George Weeden, the next officer in rank, and a native of Fredericksburg, had the honor of being chosen first President of the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Virginia. The officers subscribed to the Institution as drawn up in previous May on the Hudson and the State of Virginia Society was born.11 Captain William Miller being an original member, participated in the organization of the Society of the Cincinnati and he was an active member until his death in 1793. This Society was dear to the heart of Captain Miller because he had made many friends which had been forged through his active service of nearly eight years of war.

The violent clashes between British regulars and American minutemen that took place at Lexington and Concord inspired concerned men to take up arms in 1775 to defend America. William Miller of Essex County was one of the first to enter the service of his beloved country. He entered the service in July 1775, exactly one year before the signing of the Declaration of Independence.12

Captain Miller became an artillery officer after November 26, 1776, when Congress resolved "that a regiment of artillery, to be armed with musquets and bayonets, instead of fuses, be raised in Virginia," and then issued Commissions to Charles Harrison, Edward Carrington and Charles Homer four days later, thus soon thereafter the 1st Regiment of Continental Artillery came into existence.

The field officers of 1st Regiment of Continental Artillery 1776-1783, were:

Colonel Charles Harrison, brother of Benjamin Harrison, a signer of the Declaration of Independence (Nov. 30, 1776-June 17, 1783)
Lt. Colonel Edward Carrington (Nov. 30, 1776-June 17, 1783)
Major Christian Holman (Nov. 30, 1776-June 17, 1783)
Major William Brown (Jan. 31, 1781-June 17, 1783)

Among the other officers attached to the 1st Regiment of Continental Artillery were:

Captain-Lieutenant William Miller of Essex County (1776-1783)

Captain-Lieutenant Lewis Booker, original member Society of Cincinnati, of Essex County, who lived at "Laurel Grove" and a prominent citizen of Essex

Captain James Pendleton of Newtown, King & Queen County, who was acting Governor of Virginia —Dec. 11-19, 1799

(Continued on page 3)
Captain-Lieutenant William Miller
(Continued from page 2)

First Lieutenant Francis Taliaferro Brooke, original member Society of Cincinnati, and his twin brother, First Lieutenant John Taliaferro Brooke, who lived at “Smithfield”, 4 miles below Fredericksburg on the Rappahannock.

Francis after the war lived in Tappahannock, practiced law, Judge of the District Court, represented Essex County in the House of Delegates 1794-1795, Senator (Virginia) and President of the Court of Appeals of Virginia.

Captain-Lieutenant Ambrose Bohannon, original member of the Society of the Cincinnati, native son of Essex County. He was attached to the 1st Regiment of Continental Artillery. His brother Joseph was an officer of the Essex County Militia.

Capt. Lieut. Ambrose Bohannon made his will on 24 Feb. 1776, probated 15 December 1800, leaving all of his property to “my dear brother Joseph Bohannon.” His will contained this statement—“from a conviction of the shortenings and uncertainties of human life, and of the many dangers and diseases to which it is exposed, make this my last will and testament” . . .

Witness to his will
Thomas Miller
William Miller
Dorothy Miller

Because of the specialized nature of artillery, the enlisted men were ranked as bombardiers, gunners, or matrosses according to their skill and mathematical skill. The first two ranks included the men capable of estimating range and of loading, sighting, and firing a cannon. The matrosses were the unskilled privates who man-handled the guns.13

Captain Miller’s 1st Continental Regiment of Artillery, made up of nearly all Virginians, fought in nearly all, if not all, of the major battles of the war.

His regiment took a conspicuous part in the Battle of Monmouth, the day long battle fought in temperatures approaching 100 degrees. He and many of his fellow officers and men proved their patriotism, fortitude and bravery in the battle on that sultry day June 28, 1778.

I shall recite from statements of witnesses to this great battle taken from their “diaries and letters.” “(General) Clinton (of the British Army) brought up his artillery and posted it on a hill across from Washington’s line. It was now eleven o’clock and the sun bore down with smoldering fury. The cannon of both armies began to bark at each other. The first major assault by the enemy was directed at Stirling’s division on the right. The light infantry, the Forth-Second Foot, and the Black Watch pushed forward. As they moved through the open fields they were shelled from the left wing by Edward Carrington’s First Regiment of Continental Artillery; at the time it was said to have been the “severest artillery fire ever heard in America.” Washington’s great white horse had died from the heat and exhaustion, and he now galloped along the lines on a chestnut mare, encouraging his men as they poured volley after volley into the advancing red line. When the First and Third New Hampshire and the First Virginia moved out through the thick woods on the left and “fell with great vigor” on the right flank of the enemy, the British fell back to regroup.

The heat had drained a great deal from both sides, but the British, still dressed in heavy woolen uniforms, suffered more than the Americans. The next assault, led by Cornwallis in person, was directed at Greene’s division on the right and was executed by the finest troops in the British army. Enflaming fire from the American artillery on Comb’s Hill shredded their ranks. Greene’s musketry blazed in a solid sheet of flame. Still the British pushed forward. Then, caught in artillery crossfire and faced with the concentrated musketry to the front, they once again retreated.”

In addition to the Virginia infantry regiments and detachments, portions of Colonel Charles Harrison’s 1st Regiment of Continental Artillery were present at Charleston, South Carolina. General Nathaniel Green was the theater commander of the American forces in this region.

A portion of the 1st regiment of Continental Artillery were engaged in the battle and siege of Yorktown, under the command of Lt. Colonel Edward Carrington. There were about 25 gunners and matrosses of this regiment there.15

Captain William Miller was among the many who endured the cold winter of 1777-78 at Valley Forge. The Virginia Troops were very naked for clothing, as was indeed the Army in general, especially for shoes. There were shortages and privations in every quarter. Death was common place, instances occurred in the amputation of a hand or foot because of freezing. The suffering and horrors of Valley Forge is beyond description.15 Captain Miller survived; however, his constitution was weakened during his nearly eight years service in the army to such an extent that he lived only ten years after the close of the war in 1783.

Captain Miller, native son of the County of Essex, fought for liberty which we have enjoyed for so long. Captain Miller and his companions in arms called the struggle “That Glorious Cause.” General George Washington said that we must “preserve, inviolate those exalted rights and liberties of human nature, for which they have fought and bled, and without which the high rank of a rational being is a curse instead of a blessing.”

We are gathered today for a grateful and patriotic duty of the utmost solemnity. The purpose of our gathering is to pay meet respect in behalf of the Community of Essex County to the hallowed memory of a distinguished son of Essex who fought and bled in the Revolutionary War for nearly eight long years so that we may have and enjoy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Captain Miller’s sacrifice has served to shield not only our country, but the people of this his native county throughout all our days.

By the payment of our humble tribute, through the medium of this memorial service, we again avail ourselves of the opportunity of re dedication of our living selves to the service of our country and what it

(Continued on page 4)
stands for—Justice, Freedom, and Democracy. We pledge ourselves here today to renewed loyalty to Our God and to Our Nation.

Today we are faced with serious international threats to our existence. This we all know and recognize; we want to take all reasonable and appropriate measures to guard against any Communist attack upon this country. We are also trying to hold back the threat to the security of the free world generally.

It is most appropriate that we are here in memory and in honor of Captain Miller and all the others of the Revolutionary War and those after them who have fought that liberty might endure.

NOTES

2. Suit papers, Clerk’s Office, Circuit Court of Essex County, Virginia, of State Highway Commission of Virginia vs. The Heirs, Devisees and Successors in Title of Simon Miller, deceased, etc. order entered April 15, 1974.
3. Records Clerk’s Office, Circuit Court, Essex County Virginia. Deeds, etc. No. 4, page 134.
4. Records said Clerk’s Office, Deeds, etc. No. 4, page 266.
5. Records said Clerk’s Office, Deeds, etc. No. 6, page 266.
8. Records said Clerk’s Office, Deed Book 33, page 345.

MINUTES OF THE SOCIETY

The Essex County Historical Society met on July 15, 1979 at “Warner House” on Water Lane, the home of Mr. Charles W. H. Warner, our vice-president. It was a beautiful summer afternoon, with a lovely breeze off the river. Mr. Hill Wellford, president presided. The Treasurer’s report and the Minutes of the spring meeting were read, filed and approved. Mr. Wellford announced that Mr. Ryland had brought to his attention some old Registrar’s Voters Lists books which were very interesting and he thought our organization should preserve them. Mr. Wellford then turned the meeting over to Mr. Warner who gave a short historical sketch about the location of his home on this beautiful bluff overlooking the river, which site was a part of an original land patent to Bartholomew Hoskins in 1645 and later belonged to Benjamin Goodrich who sold the 50 acre tract for Tappahannock Towne.

Mr. Warner then presented our guest speaker, Mr. Paul Hudson of Williamsburg. Mr. Hudson is the author of many books and articles relating to Jamestown archeology, history and cultural objects which have been excavated at Jamestown. Mr. Hudson is a member of the Vestry, Historian, and in charge of the guides of Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg. He is executive secretary of the Jamestown Committee of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, and a member of the board and a director of the Colonial Capitol Branch of the Archeological Society of Virginia. Mr. Hudson has worked closely with the excavations in Hampton and Elizabeth City Parish dating back to 1624 and where the oldest communion service is at St. John’s with a 1618 silversmith marks on it. He is at present compiling a list of all Colonial period churches which have disappeared in Virginia.

Mr. Hudson said that he was sorry not to be able to show his slides along with his talk about the colonial churches because they would emphasize and encourage our interest in these churches which were used on many other occasions besides for divine worship, such as meeting places for council, forums, etc. like Patrick Henry’s famous speech at St. John’s Church in Richmond. He said Captain John Smith refers to this in his Journal of a General Assembly in 1619 taking place in the Jamestown Church.

At this time all persons had to attend divine worship morning and evening and all men had to bring their arms with them. The important ruling body of the church was the vestry. The Anglican Church in Virginia was under the Bishop of London who never visited the colonies.

Between 1607 and 1776 there were approximately 250 churches built in Virginia, about 50 are still standing and in use: 46 Anglican, 1 Presbyterian, 1 Friends, 1 Baptist, 2 Lutheran. Most of these churches have an altar facing East which means you are facing the Holy Land. Many of the churches had towers like St. Luke’s in Isle of Wight, Bruton Parish, and St. Peter’s in New Kent for the bell and storage. Usually two or more churches were built on the same site, the first of frame or timber, and later rebuilt in brick. Fifteen per cent of the churches were named after Indians. William Byrd wrote in his Diary that Abingdon

(Continued on page 5)
Church in Gloucester is the most beautiful church in Virginia. Mr. Hudson told many other interesting things about the colonial churches.

Following this most interesting talk the meeting adjourned and Mr. Warner invited us into the house for delicious refreshments and a delightful social hour.

Anne T. Wright, Secretary

The Essex County Historical Society met at "Lily Mount" the old colonial home of Mr. and Mrs. Spotswood Taliaferro in upper Essex, Sunday afternoon, October 21, 1979. It was a gorgeous Indian Summer day with a balmy breeze so the meeting took place outdoors under the beautiful old trees. Mr. Hill Wellford, president, greeted a large number of members and guests and asked Mr. Taliaferro to say a few words about "Lily Mount." He said it was built 1740 of Georgian architecture, and is located a short distance above Caret well back from the Tidewater Trail on a knoll. It is believed that the earliest occupant was Nathaniel Fogg who died in 1753. Later it was owned by Ulysses Sullivan and then for almost a hundred years by the family of Edward Powers. It was purchased by the Taliaferros in 1942 from Mrs. J. E. T. Hunter, a daughter of Mr. Powers. It had about 300 acres of land which the Taliaferros have increased to over 750. It was restored by the Taliaferros as an informal farm house. The original architecture has been preserved and a later addition altered to conform to the lines of the original house. It is of smooth red brick laid in old English style and has two stories built on a high basement. Inside the rooms are on different levels with short stairways connecting the different levels, as we find today in our split level houses, which made it so interesting to see as well as the beautiful antiques with which it is furnished.

Mr. Wellford introduced our speaker, who is one of our members and a former president, Mr. Robert L. Pettigrew. Mr. Pettigrew grew up in Montana and received his engineering degree from Montana State University. He served in the Navy in World War I. Following the war he settled in Haiti where he was in charge of a large corporation growing sisal which is used in making rope. When he moved from his managerial position, he settled in Tappahannock in 1946 and is one of our outstanding citizens.

Mr. Pettigrew's topic was "An Unsung Virginia Hero and the most Decisive Battle of the Revolution." Our curiosity was finally satisfied when Mr. Pettigrew said his hero was not like Washington, Jefferson or many others of revolutionary fame, and then he started talking about Daniel Morgan, who was born near Winchester, Virginia. Morgan was an enormous man, weighing over 200 pounds, and a wagoner. If he had lived today, he would probably have been a teamster and a leader of its union. He served in Braddock's army and was court-martialed and given 500 lashes because he hit an officer who had treated him unfairly. To have survived this, he had to be a man of tremendous strength.

In 1775 a whole year before the Declaration of Independence, the battles of Concord and Bunker Hill were fought in Massachusetts and Washington was appointed Commander-in-Chief by the Continental Congress. At this point Canada was a large part of the continent, including most of Ohio, Illinois and all of the Great Lakes area, and was strongly fortified by the British. Washington picked Gen. Arnold to take care of the Canadian campaign. Dan Morgan and some Virginia Riflemen were in Arnold's troops of 600 men who were to meet Montgomery close to Montreal with about 400 men to attack the most fortified fort in America. Naturally the battle was lost and Dan Morgan was captured in March 1776. He was later exchanged in a prisoner exchange and fought many more battles. Burgoyne had a plan to amass three large British armies around Albany and Washington sent Gates and Arnold in command of the Revolutionary forces. Howe who had evacuated Boston and was in New York, decided to move on to Philadelphia instead of joining Burgoyne. Burgoyne finally crossed the Hudson and was attacked about 4 miles from Bemiss Heights. Losses were great on both sides, but Morgan lost few men. He was a forerunner of guerilla warfare, signaling to his men by "turkey calls" which led to victory in the second battle of Saratoga. On October 17, 1777 Burgoyne surrendered and this was the "Decisive" battle of the Revolution. It brought in the French on our side. It had one side effect which was not too good, it pushed up Gates so that there was a movement to make him Commander in Chief instead of Washington, which fortunately did not succeed.

The War moved from the North to the South where the bloodiest fighting took place. Savannah and Charleston were captured by the British in 1779, Gates was sent down with 3,000 men. He attacked at Camden and was defeated by Tarleton and the British in August, 1780. General Nathaniel Greene replaced Gates and took Gen. Morgan with him. With far outnumbered forces, the British were defeated by Greene and Morgan at the battles of Cowpens, and Guilford Court House, even though the British were left in possession of the ground at Guilford Court House, they had suffered 25% casualties. Cornwallis then started the long march into Virginia where he was defeated in the battle of Yorktown October 19, 1781, which ended the Revolution when he surrendered.

General Nathaniel Greene, who was from Rhode Island, has been honored with monuments in several states. However, we have never heard of General Morgan being honored in this way, so he was "The Unsung Virginia Hero."

Following this most interesting talk, the minutes of our July meeting were read and the treasurer's report given. Mrs. Taliaferro then invited us to tour her home and to have refreshments in the dining room. She thanked Mrs. Robert L. Ellis and Mrs. Wythe Bowe for helping with the refreshments and the meeting adjourned.

Anne T. Wright, Secretary
Officers of the Society

President .................. Mr. Hill B. Wellford
Vice President .......... Mr. Charles W. H. Warner
Treasurer ................ Mrs. Spottswood Taliaferro
Secretary ................. Mrs. William A. Wright

+++  

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

Chairman, Mr. Charles W. H. Warner; Members: Mrs. William A. Wright, Mrs. J. M. Evans, Mrs. Charles N. DeShazo.

+++  

Meetings are held quarterly in the Essex Court House, in an historic home or church of the County. Dues are $3.00 per year. For copies of publications send $1.00 to Mrs. J. M. Evans, Box 8 Tappahannock, Virginia.

---

FOR COPIES  
OF  
PUBLICATION  
SEND $1.00  
to  
MRS. J. M. EVANS  
P. O. BOX 8  
TAPPAHANNOCK, VIRGINIA 22560