

57th ANNUAL CONGRESS - General Meeting,  
Descendants of the Signers of the  
Declaration of Independence, Inc.  
Independence Hall, Philadelphia, Pa.

May 16, 1964

The meeting was called to order by the President-General, Mr. Marsden Churchill Smith, at 2:35 p.m.

Mr. Percy H. Goodsell, Jr., read the Society Prayer.

The Assistant Secretary-General, Daniel W. B. Flint, read the names of the Signers and the following members answered to their ancestors name:

Roger Sherman	2	Benjamin Franklin	1
Oliver Wolcott	1	John Morton	3
Samuel Chase	1	George Ross	2
William Paca	2	Richard Henry Lee	1
John Witherspoon	2	Benjamin Harrison	2
Francis Hopkinson	2	John Penn	1
John Hart	5	Thomas Heyward	1
Arthur Middleton	2		
Total:		28	

The minutes of the previous meeting (February 12, 1964) were approved as read.

Mr. Platt, Assistant Superintendent of Independence Hall, spoke on behalf of Mr. Anderson, Superintendent. He informed the Society of the recent developments in the Mall area.

REPORT OF THE BOARD

The President-General reported that the Board met and settled various matters of business including the election of new members.

Mr. Smith then read his report to the Society. A copy of same is attached.

REPORT OF THE REGISTRAR-GENERAL

The Registrar-General, Mrs. William Ward, III, reported the election of nine senior members, three junior members, and the death of Mrs. Frank Leonard Hiller, No. 1106. All standing, a silent prayer was offered in memory of Mrs. Hiller.

REPORT OF HISTORIAN-GENERAL

The Historian-General, Mrs. Addison Thomas, read editorials from various newspapers regarding Old Swedes Church, Wilmington, Delaware, and the fire that recently occurred there. The church was built in 1698 and is the oldest protestant church still used for services in the U.S. The damage caused by the fire amounted to \$75,000.

REPORT OF TREASURER-GENERAL

The report of the Treasurer-General, Mrs. Natalie L. Densmore, is attached.

REPORT OF SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

Miss Mildred Lee, Chairman of the Scholarship Committee, reported that our scholar, Richard Logan Scholl, descendant of Benjamin Franklin, is graduating from Brown University this year and has received a scholarship to study for a Master's Degree at Brown.

The Society's other scholar, Miss Lucy Day, has one more year and her grant will be continued for that year.

GOVERNORS REPORT

The Governors present made no report.

OLD BUSINESS

A resolution was passed to require Governors of each State Society to make a report at every General Meeting of the Society.

NEW BUSINESS

A Nominating Committee for the next year was selected. It shall consist of Mr. P. Goodsell, Jr., chairman, Miss Mildred W. Lee, and Miss Juliana T. Paca.

The Nominating Committee reported the election of the following officers for 1964-1965.

President-General: Marsden Churchill Smith  
 First Vice-President General: Rear Admiral Dashiell Livingston Madeira, USN (Ret'd)  
 Second Vice-President-General: Miss Cornelia Livingston Van Rensselaer Strong  
 Honorary Chaplain-General: The Reverend Dr. Ernest A. Harding  
 Chaplain-General: The Rev. Francis Hopkinson Craighill, Jr.  
 Registrar-General: Mrs. Richard Bruce Light  
 Historian-General: M. Addison Thomas  
 Treasurer-General: Miss Natalie L. Densmore  
 Assistant Treasurer-General: Wentworth Seton Simmons  
 Secretary-General: Thomas Graham  
 Assistant Secretary-General: Daniel W. B. Flint

There being no further new business, the meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

DANIEL W. B. FLINT

Assistant Secretary-General

THE REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT-GENERAL  
OF THE  
DESCENDANTS OF THE SIGNERS OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE  
MAY 16, 1964

Our Society was extremely fortunate to have a person so unusually well qualified to serve as our President-General for so many years immediately preceding my receiving that great honor.

But his eminent success as our President-General made it seriously more difficult for to escape a retrogression in the welfare of our Society that otherwise would follow our loss of his leadership.

It was believed that one of the best efforts to attain this constructive result was to request of our Board of Governors suggestions as to how our Society could increase the value of the Society to and to enhance the interest of our present membership. Also how best to enlarge our activities, increase our membership and to obtain that greater recognition that our foundation so richly deserves.

This was done soon after my coming into office by a letter to each member of our Board. In it I outlined several possibilities which seemed to merit their consideration; and urged that their comments be not limited to my suggestions. One essential stipulation was that for any suggestion to be of practicable value, a plan must be suggested to cover its cost.

This necessary stipulation proved to be an effective barrier to any effort to attain an enlargement of the activities of our Society, even though much desired.

In different words, your Board of Governors welcomed the opportunity to express their support of any plan that would increase the activities and recognition of our Society, but could find no way to do so except by an increase in our annual dues. And no one of the Board seemed sufficiently confident that any suggested new collective effort would be deemed of sufficient value by our members to incur the obvious risk that would result from an increase in our dues.

But this apparently discouraging conclusion can result in much good if our members should undertake, individually, the effort which our budget prevents being done collectively. In fact if the membership will consider themselves each to be 'a committee of one', dedicated to do all that they can to search out and to interest desirable new members and to such other action as will bring to our Society the greater recognition that is its due, it is certain that the success will far exceed any reasonable expenditure by your Board of Governors.

As an example: our constitution contemplates the formation of State Societies in each of the thirteen states formed from the original colonies, yet only New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia now have these local, organized activities. It is not difficult to imagine the great surge of interest that would follow the formation of several additional State Societies. Your Board will be glad to support any member or group who will initiate this desirable move.

Then as time passed, experience in the conduct of my office convinced me that our constitution and by-laws could be much improved.

Nothing in what follows must cast the least shadow of criticism upon any officer or member of our Society. It is solely a consideration of the advisability of seeking a more explicit guidance of our affairs; of bringing our laws into a closer agreement

with present practices and of creating a greater interest and support from our membership and those who are eligible for membership.

Hoping to attain this desirable end, I prepared a few suggestions and submitted them to three valued members of our Board of Governors. (An additional support for this proposal has since been received from our Treasurer-General in which she urges desirable innovations).

But these gentlemen whose assistance was requested considered this effort to be not necessary.

Because of my respect for their opinions I have no intention to pursue the matter any further, except to say that I feel that I am required by our constitution which requires these remarks to inform you of this action in regard to our constitution and bylaws and the reasons therefor, but without recommendation.

We may properly take pride in the successful efforts of Mr. Axford in our presentation to the Freedom Foundation at Valley Forge the handsome bronze plaque of the Declaration of Independence complete with our ancestor's signatures. This we look forward to dedicating tomorrow afternoon.

Our Society has been honored by invitations extended your President-General to attend meetings of the Colonial Dames of the XVIIth Century; the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the Confederate Veterans. When expressing my regrets it was my privilege to convey to each of them the most cordial greetings and best wishes from our Society.

You will be interested to know that he was also invited and did attend the unveiling of a bust of George Wythe by Bryant Baker. This bust of one of the Signers from Virginia was given to the State of Virginia and will stand in its Capitol, a gift of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Virginia State Society of the D.S.D.I. was privileged to contribute to the cost of this bust.

To Mrs. William Ward, III I now express the great appreciation of and thanks for her service as Registrar-General to our Society. I speak for all of us in regretting that she has found it necessary to resign and again express our gratitude.

I know that you will join me in expressing also our appreciation of the efforts of your other officers and I emphasize my pride in the great honor of serving you as President-General.