



Silicon Valley Chapter Sons of the American Revolution



Founded as the Palo Alto Chapter in 1955



In This Issue

Pages 1-4
Native Sons of
Liberty

Page 4
Independence Day
Observance on
July 4, 2006

Page 5
Independence Day
Observance Event
Announcement

Important Events

July 4, 2006
Saratoga Independence Day Observance

September 16, 2006
Next Chapter Meeting

October 8, 2006
California Family History Month at Santa Clara Library

November 3-4, 2006
CASSAR 131st Fall Managers' Meeting

November 11, 2006
San Jose Veterans' Day Parade

December 9, 2006
Christmas Social

Native Sons of Liberty

By
Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

On June 11, 1823, a man named John Redman walked into the courtroom of Judge Charles Lobb in Hardy County, Virginia, to apply for a pension, claiming to be a veteran of the Revolutionary War. Redman, more than 60 years old, testified that he had been in the Light Dragoons from 1782, serving initially as a



Howell. The Light Dragoon horseback, using sabers, They marched from Winchester, in the fall of 1779, Savannah. The following Charleston, South Carolina capture in a rout by the regiment fought the Creek Indians and the British early in 1782, ultimately triumphing over them in June at Sharon, Georgia, near Savannah. After the war, Redman settled in Hardy County, where he and his wife kept a farm.

First Virginia Regiment of Christmas 1778 through waiter to Lt. Vincent

goons fought mainly on pistols, and light carbines. Chester, Va., to Georgia, they laid siege to year, they fought in line, narrowly escaping British. Redman's regi-

Four decades later, a neighbor and fellow veteran named John Jenkins affirmed Redman's court testimony. A few weeks later, Redman was granted his Certificate of Pension, receiving the tidy sum of \$8 a month until his death in 1836.

Yet standing before Judge Lobb in his courtroom that morning in 1823, John Redman had every reason to be nervous, for his appeal was anything but ordinary. Redman was the rarest of breeds: not just a patriot, but a black patriot - both a free Negro in a nation of slaves and a black man who had fought in a white man's war.

In 1790, only 1.7 percent of Virginia's population consisted of free people of
(continued on page 2)





Native Sons of Liberty (continued from page 1)

color; in the 13 former colonies and the territories of Kentucky, Maine and Vermont, the combined figure was even smaller. Historians estimate that only 5,000 black men served in the Continental Army, whereas tens of thousands fled slavery to join the British.

The story of John Redman is illuminating because it opens a window on an aspect of the Revolutionary War that remains too little known: the contributions and sacrifices of a band of black patriots. But it is particularly fascinating to me because, as I learned just recently, John Redman was my ancestor.

I have been obsessed with my family tree since I was a boy. My grandfather, Edward Gates, died in 1960, when I was 10. After his burial at Rose Hill Cemetery in Cumberland, Maryland, I have been buried there since 1888. I found my grandfather's scrapbooks, containing pages of newspaper clippings, obituaries, and other documents, to my astonishment, of a midwife and former slave named colored woman," the



After his burial at Rose Hill Cemetery in Maryland, I have been buried there since 1888. I found my grandfather's scrapbooks, containing pages of newspaper clippings, obituaries, and other documents, of a midwife and former slave named colored woman," the

I wanted to know from the mysterious and in the depths of the black old Negro boy living blissfully in a stable, loving family in Piedmont, West Virginia circa 1960, in the middle of the civil rights movement.

how I got here from there, shadowy preserve of slavery past, to my life as a 10-year-

I peppered my father with questions about the names and dates of my ancestors, both black and white, and dutifully recorded the details in a notebook. I wanted to see my white ancestors' coat of arms. Eventually, I even allowed myself to dream of discovering which tribe we had come from in Africa.

More recently, in part to find my own roots, I started work on a documentary series on genetics and black genealogy. I especially wanted to find my white patriarch, the father of Jane Gates's children. The genealogical research into my family tree uncovered, to my great wonder, three of my fourth great-grandfathers on my mother's side: Isaac Clifford, Joe Bruce and John Redman.

All were black and born in the middle of the 18th century; two gained freedom by the beginning of the Revolutionary War. All three lived in the vicinity of Williamsport, a tiny town in the Potomac Valley in the Allegheny Mountains, in what is now West Virginia.

I am descended from these men through my maternal grandmother, Marguerite Howard, whom we affectionately called "Big Mom." When Jane Ailes, a genealogist, revealed these discoveries to me, I

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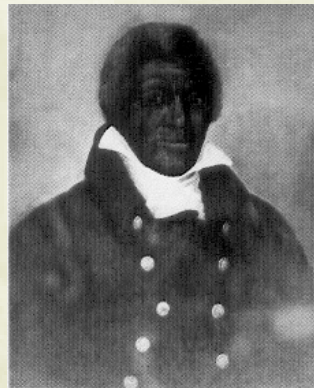


Native Sons of Liberty (continued from page 2)

could scarcely keep my composure. In searching for a white ancestor, I had found - improbably - a black patriot instead.

Frankly, it had never occurred to me that I, or anyone in the many branches of my family - Gateses, Colemans, Howards, Bruces, Cliffords, and Redmans - had even the remotest relationship to the American Revolution, or to anyone who had fought in it. If anyone had told me a year ago that this summer I would be inducted into the Sons of the American Revolution as the descendant of a black patriot - 183 years almost to the day after John Redman proved his claim - I would have laughed. I had long supposed that slavery had robbed my ancestors of the privilege of fighting for the birth of this country.

Like most African-Americans of my generation, I had heard of the Daughters of the American Revolution, unfortunately, because of contralto, Marian Anderson, the right to responded to the group's racism with defiance, holding her Easter Sunday memorial instead.



In part to make amends for their the American Revolution have begun so far they have documented about the Sons of the American Revolution and bounty land warrant applications of these names to census records from

their refusal in 1939 to allow the great perform at Constitution Hall. Anderson sonorous concert on the steps of the Lincoln Me-

treatment of Anderson, the Daughters of counting the number of black patriots; 3,000. Harvard's Du Bois Institute and are now researching the 80,000 pension Revolutionary War veterans to compare 1790 to 1840.

Already, in just a few weeks, we have discovered almost a dozen African-Americans who served in the war and whose racial identity had been lost or undetected. With this systematic approach, we hope to expand substantially our knowledge of African-Americans who served in the Continental Army and, eventually, to reach a definitive number.

Once the research is completed, we will advertise for descendants of these individuals and encourage them to join the Sons or Daughters of the American Revolution, thus increasing the organizations' black memberships beyond the meager few dozen or so the two groups have now. (If all of my aunts, uncles and cousins who are also descended from John Redman join, we will quadruple the number of black members in both organizations!)

We want to establish the exact number of descendants of African-Americans who served in the Continental Army, great American patriots, defenders of liberty to which they themselves were not entitled.

Of course, it is perfectly irrelevant, in one sense, what one's ancestors did two centuries ago; but

(continued on page 4)



**Native Sons of Liberty (continued from page 2)**

re-imagining our past, as Americans, can sometimes help us to re-imagine our future. In doing so, it may help to understand that the founding of this Republic was not only red, white and blue, it was also indelibly black.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., a professor at Harvard University, was an executive producer of the PBS series "African American Lives."

Independence Day Observance

- Purpose:** Celebrate the third annual neighborhood patriotic ceremony observing Independence Day. Come and celebrate the birth of America and our freedoms.
- Invitees:** Saratoga residents and visitors are invited to attend. Everyone is encouraged to wear patriotic colors and carry a flag. Children and adults are encouraged to decorate their bikes and pets with red, white, and blue.
- When:** Tuesday July 4, 2006, 10:15 AM to 12:00 Noon
- Where:** Saratoga's Azule City Park (Behind Blue Hills School on Goleta Avenue near Sea Gull and across the freeway from Kevin Moran Park)
- Activities:** The ceremony will include the following. Following the ringing of the bell we will conduct a Family Patriotic Parade around the park, which will include small bikes, pets, strollers, groups, adults, etc. After the parade children will receive an ice cream or otter bar.
- *Singing of patriotic songs
 - *Ben Franklin in costume
 - *Handbell musician playing Yankee Doodle Dandy
 - *McCartyville Marching Band
 - *Spirit of 76 drummer and fife
 - *Sons of American Revolution (SAR) in period dress
 - *Ringing our Liberty Bell 13 times for the Colonies and Freedom
 - *Honoring our Soldiers
- Artists:** Saratoga Drama Group
- Dress:** Patriotic casual
- Cost:** Free
- Deadline:** None
- Information:** Organized by the neighbors near Azule Park and Blue Hills School. Call Jack Mallory at 408-252-7447 or email at mallory58@aol.com for information to volunteer or to donate. The Event Announcement is on page 5 of this newsletter

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Sons of the American Revolution
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www.svsar.com





Independence Day Observance

**Tuesday July 4th
10:15 am to 12:00 Noon**

Saratoga's Azule City Park

(Behind Blue Hills School—On Goleta Ave near Sea Gull and
across the freeway from Kevin Moran Park)

Saratoga residents and visitors are invited to attend the third annual neighborhood patriotic ceremony observing Independence Day. Come and celebrate the birth of America and our freedoms.

Everyone is encouraged to wear patriotic colors and carry a flag. Children & adults are encouraged to decorate their bikes & pets with red, white, and blue.

The ceremony will include:

- Singing of patriotic songs with words provided
- Ben Franklin in costume
- Handbell Musician playing Yankee Doodle Dandy
- McCartyville Marching Band
- Spirit of '76 drummer, fife
- Sons of American Revolution in period dress
- Ringing a large old bell 13 times for the Colonies & Freedom
- Honoring our Soldiers

Following the ringing of the bell we will conduct a Family Patriotic Parade around the park. (Small bikes, pets on leash, strollers, groups, & adults too). After the parade children will receive an ice cream or otter bar.

Organized by the neighbors near Azule Park & Blue Hills School.

Call Jack Mallory 252-7447 or e-mail: Mallory58@aol.com for information, to volunteer, or to donate.

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