

History

The General Society of the War of 1812 traces its origins to the huge collection of American militia companies which were called to meet the British thrust at Baltimore following the occupation of the National Capital. Those veterans led by General Samuel Smith, set great importance upon their record against "Wellington's Invincibles" at North Point on September 12, 1814.

With the loss of the lionized Major-General Robert Ross to tree-hidden American sharpshooters, the British advance toward the city slowed whilst the powerful fleet lay useless against Fort McHenry because of the tremendous amount of blockage which had been dropped into the channel.

By September 18 the enemy withdrew several miles below the harbor's entrance, and Francis Scott Key reached a Baltimore hotel where the final touches were made to his epic poem "The Defence of Fort M'Henry" [sic] to be circulated on Tuesday, the 20th. Uncertain of the next British move, the jubilant soldiers remained fairly in place and gained the sobriquet "Defenders" from the local citizenry.

On the first anniversary, Tuesday, September 12, 1815, the "Defenders" turned out from their work to witness the laying of the Battle Monument cornerstone and to view the Fort McHenry U.S. garrison and some of Maryland's Fifth Regiment parade in the adjacent streets. Ever after, the celebration and remembrance of the veterans and their turning back the British has continued in both Baltimore and Maryland with the "Defenders' Day Cavalcade". Also in Baltimore and Maryland, a day to commemorate the "Old Defenders" has been officially designated "Defenders' Day", and is observed as a "bank holiday."

In 1841 the Defenders met to establish a more formal organization. The following year a national encampment was held, with veterans attending from Pennsylvania, Virginia and the District of Columbia. President John Tyler reviewed the parading veterans. On the 14th of May 1842 the veterans received their first organizational charter in Maryland recorded in the Circuit Court of Baltimore as "THE ASSOCIATION OF DEFENDERS OF BALTIMORE" and had as their purposes the encouraging of love of country, commemoration of the war, defraying of funeral expenses of veterans who were impoverished and the education of their children.

Meanwhile Pennsylvania's veterans met at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, 9 January 1854 (anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans), and perfected the organization of the society of the War of 1812. As the 19th century drew to a close, the ranks of the 1812 veterans grew thinner. In 1893 the Maryland group was reorganized to include the sons and male descendants of veterans; it was incorporated in 1893 as The Society of the War of 1812 in Maryland of Baltimore City. The Pennsylvania Society of the War of 1812 had incorporated in 1892 as The Pennsylvania Society of the soldiers of 1812. In 1894 the Maryland and Pennsylvania societies met at Independence Hall, along with delegates from similar societies in Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York.

On 14 April 1894 these societies formed the General Society of the War of 1812, with each of the constituent societies becoming a state society. In time the General Society chartered groups throughout the United States. For members who do not live in a state having an organization the General Society has a class of members-at-large.

Qualifications

Genealogical documentation or proof is required for each generation from the veteran ancestor to the applicant. Forms will be provided for this purpose. All application papers are examined carefully by competent genealogists before approval for election to membership is granted.

Genealogical qualifications are:

Any male person who is a lineal descendant of one who served during the War of 1812, in a military service of the United States, offering proof thereof satisfactory to the State Society to which he may make application for membership, and who is of good moral character and reputation, may become a member of this Society when approved of by said State Society, under such regulations as it may make for passing upon applications for membership.

The following service and no other shall be regarded as satisfying the requirements of the preceding paragraph:

(1) Service as an officer, warrant officer or enlisted man in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Revenue Marine, Flotilla Service or Voluntary Corps at any time between November 7, 1811 and July 18, 1815;

(2) Service at any time between November 7, 1811 and July 18, 1815, as a member of the ship's company on any public armed vessel of the United States or any vessel sailing under Letters of Marque and Reprisal issued by the United States;

(3) Service in the militia of any state or territory or the District of Columbia duly called out for service against an armed enemy or for coast or border defense between November 7, 1811 and July 18, 1815;

(4) Service in the forces of the United States at the Battle of Tippecanoe on November 7, 1811;

(5) Service as the President of the United States, Secretary of War or Secretary of the Navy between November 7, 1811 and July 18, 1815.

(6) Service as a Governor or Adjutant General of a state or territory of the United States between November 7, 1811 and July 18, 1815.

No service, however, shall be regarded as qualifying if the person who rendered such service voluntarily bore arms against the United States at any time between the dates named or if such person's latest service between said dates was terminated by a separation from the service under conditions other than honorable.

Collateral descendants, who is deemed worthy, may be admitted to represent the said participant.

Provided, always, that such representation shall be limited to the descendant of either a brother or sister of the participant in the war, in right of whose services application for membership is made.

Membership Eligibility

The General Society of the War of 1812 and its State Societies accept gentlemen. Ladies may apply to the National Society, U.S. Daughters of 1812, 1461 Rhode Island Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Gentlemen who wish to apply for membership-at-large should communicate with the Vice President General—Members at Large Timothy Charles Harris, 6184 Stinson Blvd. NE, Fridley, MN 55432

State Societies are at present:

Alabama	Louisiana	North Carolina
California	Maryland	Ohio
Colorado	Massachusetts	Pennsylvania
Connecticut	Michigan	South Carolina
District of Columbia	Minnesota	Tennessee
Florida	Mississippi	Texas
Georgia	Missouri	Virginia
Illinois	New Jersey	West Virginia
Kentucky	New York	Wisconsin

Organizing Delaware, Indiana, and Washington

Some State Societies accept junior members. The General Society's members-at-large must be at least 18 years old. For information concerning admission to a State Society, gentlemen should communicate with the Secretary General: E. Paul Morehouse, 27 Casterton Avenue, Akron, OH 44303-1001.

Organization

The General Society is a confederation of highly autonomous State Societies, all of which conform to the General Society's constitution and bylaws, and all maintain membership admission requirements, that is, eligibility and proof thereof as a descendant of a War of 1812 veteran. In addition State Societies may impose requirements that are not in conflict with the General Society. Some states have adopted a limit on the number of members they will accept. For more information about a particular State Society, follow the links below:

Purposes

The objectives of the Society are the collection and preservation of rolls, records, books, and other documents relating to the War of 1812; the encouragement of research and the preservation of historical data, including memorials to patriots of that era in our national history; the caring for the graves of veterans of the War of 1812; the cherishing, maintenance and extension of the institutions of American freedom; the fostering of true patriotism - love of country.

In carrying out these objectives, the State Societies hold meetings for their members and guests at which programs relating to the War of 1812 and intelligent patriotism are presented. Over the years the membership has been fortunate in attracting gentlemen of high caliber, intelligence and gracious demeanor. The General Society and its affiliated State Societies are sensitive to the high ideals espoused by our Founding Fathers and they feel the duty that ever

President Generals

John Cadwalader (PA) *	1894-1925
Reynold Webb Cox (PA) *	1925-1925
James Davidson Inglehart (MD) *	1925-1934
George Meads Holden (NJ) *	1924-1940
Col. Frederic Gilbert Bauer (MA) *	1940-1944
J. Hall Long (NY) *	1944-1946
Milo F. McAlpin (NY) *	1946-1950
Samuel F. Houston (PA) *	1950-1950
Eugene Pendleton Carver, Jr (MA) *	1950-1954
Randall Grove Hay (PA) *	1954-1956
William Henry Pitcher (MD-PA) *	1956-1960
Henri Richmond Favrot (LA) *	1960-1964
Stanley Denmead Kolb (MD-PA) *	1964-1968
John Whelchel Finger (NY) *	1968-1970
Gordon Malvern Fair Stick (MD-PA) *	1970-1975**
Malcolm De La Houssaye (LA) *	1975-1978
John Ward Willson Loose (PA-MD)	1978-1981
Edward Charles Beetem, II (MD-PA) *	1981-1984
Nicholas Donnell Ward (DC-MD)	1984-1987
Samuel R. Slaymaker, II (PA) *	1987-1989
Clement Dumont Erhardt, Jr (MD) *	1989-1993
B. Allen Young (MN)	1993-1996
Herbert Keyser Zearfoss (PA) *	1996-1999
Carl F. Bessent (MD) *	1999-2001
Dandridge Brooke (MD-CT)	2001-2005
Richard Dana Smith, Sr (PA-MD)	2005-2008
M. Hall Worthington (MD-DC)	2008-2011

* Deceased

** Biennial conventions changed to triennial; terms limited to three years

The War of 1812

- ☞ While not a large and devastating war, established the USA as a full-fledged nation in the eyes of the world. The War of 1812 brought the USA the respect the Revolutionary War established on a tentative basis.
- ☞ Encouraged the USA to become a largely self-sufficient commercial and manufacturing economy.
- ☞ Opened the western USA for expansion.
- ☞ Created a spirit of national unity.
- ☞ Brought about a reunion with Great Britain whose cultural values had become the heritage of our Republic, a bond of friendship and mutual assistance that has flourished and grown over the years.
- ☞ Opened two centuries of peace with our Canadian neighbors.
- ☞ Brought us our National Anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner."

General Society of The War of 1812



Information
for
Prospective Applicants

www.societyofthewarof1812.org