



Historical Women's Group Restores Oregon Trail Markers and Wins National Award

www.thurstontalk.com/2017/07/07/historical-womens-group-restores-oregon-trail-markers-wins-national-award/

By Anne Paxton Hammond



Chapter Historian Jane Vander Brook stands by a restored Oregon Trail marker in Tumwater. Photo credit: Anne Paxton Hammond

Thurston County has its own piece of the Oregon Trail and a determined group of citizens are watching over it.

The Sacajawea Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) is winning state and national awards for protecting the monuments that mark one of the alternate routes of the Oregon Trail. More specifically, they restore the historical metal plaques, called markers, that were first placed on the monuments more than 100 years ago.

TRA Medical Imaging

"Our members volunteer several thousand hours per year in our local community doing everything from working at the fair, helping at the food bank, assisting at schools, restoring historical markers, assisting with genealogy, helping homeless vets, and getting kids food to help them learn at school," says Shirley Stirling, chapter regent (or president). "We help honor new U.S. citizens and promote love of country by giving out flag pins and marching in parades."

The women meet monthly to coordinate projects that advance the groups' focus on historic preservation, patriotic activities, and promoting education, according to DAR Chapter Historian Jane Vander Brook.

"Members clean veteran's graves on Memorial Day," says Vander Brook. "I think the group does a lot of things very quietly. I love the friendship of the ladies."

So, exactly who is a DAR member?

A person with direct lineage to someone who participated in or supported those who participated in the Revolutionary War can join, says Sacajawea Chapter Registrar Ann Olson, who is a 40-year member. Olson is adept at helping people figure out if they qualify.

"It's like a puzzle," says Olson. "Every time you fill out a form, you leave a recorded trail."

It's easy to see why someone would want to belong to this group of energetic, optimistic, supportive citizens.

"I joined DAR because it's an organization that combines community service with genealogy and patriotism," says Stirling. "Best of all, there are a lot of great women in the organization and I've made wonderful friendships."

DAR has been able to accomplish something that transcends differences.

"I really like the fact that DAR is patriotic beyond politics and partisanship," says Stirling. "We are all Americans first and foremost. We work together because what we have in common is so much more important than how we differ."

"DAR elevates people's awareness and understanding of United States history," says Vander Brook.

They sometimes work with the [Sons of the American Revolution \(SAR\)](#) such as when they restore Oregon Trail markers that have both a SAR emblem and a DAR emblem. Men also get involved when they're married to a DAR member and become a HODAR, Husband Of a DAR. They often enjoy working on the projects alongside their spouse.



Chapter Historian Jane Vander Brook stands by a restored Oregon Trail marker in Tumwater. Photo credit: Anne Paxton Hammond



DAR and SAR members dress up to visit Thurston County schools. Photo credit: Shirley Stirling

Chuck Hornbuckle grins as he recalls when he first learned about HODAR.

"On one of our DAR/SAR restoration days I wore my SAR sweatshirt," says Hornbuckle. "Someone said to me, 'I didn't know you were a Son of the American Revolution.' I replied I wasn't but was with the Thurston County Sheriff's Office as a Search and Rescue volunteer for 15 years and that was what his SAR stood for. That brought a few smiles," recalls Hornbuckle.

"I received the HODAR award and pin in 2001, when Suzanne (his wife) was Regent of the Sacajawea Chapter, for assisting her in planning and gathering information," says Hornbuckle. Chuck and Suzanne were active together for many years in DAR. When she passed on in 2015, Chuck continued to serve with the local DAR chapter.

"We appreciated the camaraderie we had with friends in DAR," says Hornbuckle. "We became interested in our family genealogy. We enjoyed the women in the group and the feeling of being sincerely welcome at meetings and when working on projects."

Hornbuckle, whose ancestors arrived on the Mayflower in 1620, also has Cherokee ancestors.

"The Thurston County Sacajawea Chapter of DAR has created a lot of community spirit, is increasing awareness of our local heritage, and recognizes outstanding students' with an interest in our heritage," says Hornbuckle. He is referring to awards that DAR gives local students.

These students have excellent role models in their local DAR chapter. After winning Washington State's first-place DAR award for Historic Preservation, Stirling flew to Washington, D.C., at the end of June with state head regent Julie Pittmann, to accept the national first-place DAR Historic Preservation Award.

But that's not all. The Sacajawea Chapter will receive the national Distinguished NW Service Award from the Oregon-California Trails Association in August for their work on restoring the historical markers.

Whether they are restoring Oregon Trail markers or showing up in period costumes at a local school, DAR members are making a positive difference in the lives of younger, older, and future citizens of Thurston County.



Volunteers replace the DAR and SAR emblems and shine the raised letters on this Oregon Trail marker in Tenino. Photo credit: Anne Paxton Hammond



DARs, HODARs, and helpers restore another Oregon Trail marker after 100 years of wear and tear. Photo credit: Anne Paxton Hammond