

## SALUTE TO OUR PROPOSITI

Lieutenant Nathaniel Lawrence (Laurence)  
Second Regiment North Carolina Continental Line.  
Original Member.

*[Editor's Note: Following is a regular column honoring our Society's forebears by publishing in each issue a short summary of the life and service of one of our Propositi. Members are heartily encouraged to submit articles for publication in this column.]*

*The* Lawrence family settled in Newtown, Queens County, New York as early as 1665 – 1666. Newtown was located on the northwest side of Long Island, facing Manhattan. The Lawrence, Sackett, Berrien, Fish, and Betts families were the most prosperous ones in the town, held many leadership positions, and intermarried. Nathaniel Lawrence was born on July 11, 1761 at Newtown, the son of Capt. Thomas Lawrence and Elizabeth Fish. He entered the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) May, 1776 at age fourteen.

As the Revolutionary War gained steam, Lawrence left Princeton and went to Valley Forge where he was commissioned as an ensign in the Third Regiment of the North Carolina Continental Line on June 1, 1777. It is unknown why he did not go to the New York contingent, but it may be that he was under age.

Lawrence was at the Battles of Brandywine (September 11, 1777), Germantown (October 4, 1777), and White Marsh (December 5-8, 1777). He spent the winter of 1777 – 1778 with the Third Regiment at Valley Forge. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant on June 1, 1778. Subsequently, he was at the Battle of Monmouth, New Jersey (June 28, 1778) with the Second Regiment and then served in the Hudson River Valley.

Lawrence was stationed with four other officers and 70 to 120 enlisted men at Fort Lafayette at Verplanck's Point on the North River. Fort Lafayette fell on June 1, 1779. Lawrence was imprisoned on a prison ship in the New York Harbor where he endured, as he wrote in a letter on April 6, 1781, "a very long and disagreeable captivity" because his captors knew of his connection with the Whig Lawrence family in Newtown. This treatment left him weakened, and it is believed to have shortened his life. While a prisoner, he was promoted to lieutenant on January 23, 1781. He was part of a prisoner exchange on April 18, 1781, and he

returned to the Second Regiment as a member of General Robert Howe's staff and then as a captain in an independent corps of the New York Continental Line. He retired as a lieutenant on January 1, 1783.

Lawrence returned to Princeton around February, 1783 and graduated on September 27, 1783 with a BA degree. The college records referred to him as a captain and a distinguished scholar. During the rest of 1783 he studied



and practiced law with the New York attorney general.

On December 4, 1783 Lawrence had the honor of being present at Fraunces Tavern in New York City when General George Washington gave his farewell address to 120 officers of the Continental Army. In 1783 he became one of the Original Members of the North Carolina Society of

the Cincinnati. For his Revolutionary War service, in 1785 North Carolina granted him a warrant for a tract of 2,560 acres located in Western North Carolina (now Lebanon, Tennessee, 32 miles from Nashville).

In 1787, Lawrence married Eliza Berrien (1762 – 1799), the daughter of Judge John Berrien and a member of one of the most distinguished families in Newtown and Rocky Hill, Princeton, New Jersey.

Lawrence moved into public service where he had a distinguished—if short-lived career. In 1788 he was a delegate from Queens County to the Constitutional Congress Convention, and in 1790–1791, he was Secretary of the University of the State of New York. He represented Queens County in the New York State Assembly in 1791 and 1792. From December 24, 1792, to November 13, 1795, he served as Attorney General of the State of New

York. Even after he was forced to resign due to declining health, he still represented Queens County in the New York State Assembly in 1795 and 1796, and he served as the Assistant Attorney General for the New York First District from February 16, 1796 until his death.

Lawrence died of consumption at Hempstead, Long Island on July 5, 1797 at age 35. He left a young widow and daughter. Their daughter Margaret Elizabeth Lawrence married Dr. Philip Lindsley in 1813 in Newtown. Dr. Lindsley became the acting president of Princeton in 1822, was elected president in 1823 but declined to become the first president of the University of Nashville.

Written by Stanley Frazer Rose, representing Lt. Col. Hardy Murfree in the NCSOC, with permission of his cousin Oscar Cromwell (Crom) Tidwell, III who represents Lt. Lawrence. Rose and Tidwell are Lawrence's great, great, great, great, great grandsons.

Sources: Francis J Cypher Jr., New York State Society of the Cincinnati, 2004, 256.  
Stanley Frazer Rose, compiler. [Philip] Lindsley Family [Northern] Genealogical Collection 1784-2016. Tennessee State Library and Archives.