

History of the SAR Rocky Mountain District



This brief history will add to a greater understanding about the formation of geographical “districts” within the SAR and specifically our Rocky Mountain District (and coincidentally about the early formation and duties of Vice Presidents General).

The SAR has always had various standing committees one of which was the “Committee on Organization” (authorized in 1890). During the 1895 Congress, a report was made by the Historian General who was also the chairman of the Committee on Organization (which had three members): “It was made the duty of this committee first to revive the inactive Societies of . . . and next to promote the planting of the Society in thirteen States and five Territories in which our Society had never been organized. Our committee was exceedingly anxious to discharge the important duty entrusted to them, but were confronted at the outset, by an entire lack of funds. The receipts of the National Society were so small, as to be insufficient for anything except routine expenses”¹

Well, all of this changed for the better throughout the years. In his May 1913 address to the Twenty-Fourth Annual Congress President General James H. Richardson even went so far as to suggest that Vice-Presidents General should have responsibility for districts: “We need to provide our Vice-Presidents General something to do beside contemplating their names upon the list of officers. We might make them serviceable by dividing the country into five Vice-Presidential Districts, and placing responsibility upon them for the condition of the Societies within their respective districts. The far western district might include Hawaii and the Philippines and the eastern district France.”²

In 1916 five districts were created under the Committee on Organization umbrella (from 1908—1916 there were three districts—in years prior there was simply the Committee on Organization); however, there were no Vice-President Generals assigned.

In 1918 the five geographical districts were: (1) New England District (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut); (2) Middle and Coast District (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida); (3) Mississippi Valley, East District (Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi); (4) Mississippi Valley, West District (Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas); (5) Mountain and Pacific District (Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, California, Hawaii, and the Philippines).

It wasn’t until the Twenty-Ninth Annual Congress held in Rochester, NY, May 20-21, 1918, that these specific organizational districts each obtained its own Vice President General. (Previous to this the various districts generally had a chairman and vice chairmen e.g., the New England District had a chairman and the specific geographical areas—Maine, Vermont etc., had vice chairmen.) The following amendment to the SAR Constitution was approved: “In the election of the five Vice-Presidents General, one shall be chosen from each of the five districts”^{3,4} Thomas A Perkins of San Francisco, California was elected as the first Vice President General for the Mountain and Pacific District.⁵

It is interesting to note that before the vote was taken a short history of Vice Presidents General was given by Executive Committee member Lewis Curtis: “As this question of Vice-Presidents General has been my baby for many years, I want to . . . tell you how it came about. I yield to no man in my admiration of our Constitution. It was written by Judge Beardsley and Judge Stockbridge . . . but when they wrote it I think they

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themselves were just a little bit embarrassed to know what to do with the Vice Presidents General. As you know, we elect five Vice-Presidents . . . They establish their precedents by drawing lots, and then they disappear from the surface. They have no function, no duties; they are not members of the Executive Committee, in fact they are, if the gentlemen will excuse me, pigeon-holed. They could be elected from certain districts, so as to scatter them properly over the country, and then they ought to be made use of in the work of the society in these sections. I consulted with the authors of our Constitution . . . and this resolution which you have heard read has been written with the consent and approval of the authors of our Constitution. In fact, I may say further, that Judge Beardsley is largely responsible for the wording of it. Mr. Clark is largely responsible for the division of the districts, but the districts are only put in there arbitrarily so that we can elect under this plan this year—something to start with.”⁶

As time went on more districts were added (along with the requisite number of Vice Presidents General). In 1924 the Mountain and Pacific District was renamed the Pacific District and Alaska was added.⁷

In 1926 the Pacific District was split and the Northwestern District was created. The Pacific District now comprised: California, Hawaii, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah and Colorado.⁸

On May 22, 1929, at the Springfield Congress, the redistricting and renaming of the Pacific and Northwestern Districts was approved. The Pacific District was renamed the Pacific Coast District and the Rocky Mountains District was created (the Northwestern District then ceased to exist). The Rocky Mountains District comprised the states of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming.⁹ This was done at the suggestion of the Colorado Society, in part because “the suggested districting is more natural and conforms, to as far as the continental areas are concerned, with the area having mountain standard time, with the districting of the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company and the Pacific Telephone Company, respectively, and, likewise with the Federal Judicial Districts . . .”¹⁰ J. Wilfred Corr of Colorado was elected as its first Vice President General.¹¹ (The name Rocky Mountains District was in use until 1952 when it was referred to as the Rocky Mountain District.)

In 1960 the Rocky Mountain District was split and the Inter Mountain District was created. The minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting held at the SAR National Headquarters in Washington, D.C. on October 10, 1959, shows: “The Vice President General of the Rocky Mountain District, Dr. T. Earl Pardoe, pointed out that the seven States of his district comprise an area larger than Europe and said that Chairman Sargent of the Constitution and By-laws Committee had been asked to recommend an amendment providing for the area to be made into two districts.” (This was still small in comparison to the Pacific District of 1924 which comprised 11 states and three territories—Alaska, Hawaii and the Philippines!)

During the 70th Annual Congress on May 16, 1960, an amendment to the current By-Law No. 6 was approved “which provided for the division of the Rocky Mountain District into two districts and the election of another Vice President General.” This created the Intermountain District (Idaho, Montana, Utah and Wyoming) and changed the composition of the Rocky Mountain District to only include the states of Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico.¹²

The composition of the Rocky Mountain and Intermountain Districts has remained the same to date but the total number of districts has increased from the original five to fifteen.

Notes

1. National Year Book 1895 The National Society Sons of the American Revolution, p. 166
2. National Year Book 1913 The National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, p. 63
3. National Year Book 1918 The National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, p 94
4. Ibid., p. 97
5. Ibid., p. 3, p. 188
6. Ibid., p. 95
7. The Minute Man Official Bulletin of the National Society Sons of the American Revolution October 1924, p. 44
8. The Minute Man Official Bulletin of the National Society Sons of the American Revolution June 1926, p. 3
9. The Minute Man Official Bulletin of the National Society Sons of the American Revolution July 1929, p. 61

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10. The Minute Man Official Bulletin of the National Society Sons of the American Revolution July 1928, p. 30
11. The Minute Man Official Bulletin of the National Society Sons of the American Revolution July 1929, p. 2, p. 8
12. Sons of the American Revolution Magazine July 1960 p. 8

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