

Samuel Powell Morris

Samuel Powell Morris was born, lived, and died in Philadelphia Pennsylvania. Born in 1734, he married Rebecca Jansen Wistar in 1755 and they had nine children: Sarah, Benjamin, Caspar, Anthony, Luke, Isaac, Catherine, Samuel, Israel, all with the middle name of Wistar, honoring their mother. He served several terms in the legislature. Morris died in Philadelphia, July 7, 1812.

In 1776, he was elected governor of the social club known as The State in Schuylkill and re-elected annually until his death. He was also a founder and president for many years of the Gloucester Fox Hunting Club. After the Revolutionary War, the Fox Hunting Club was revived and continued for over fifty more years. In 1798 one hunt is said to have gone all the way to Salem, twenty-four miles from the Inn. Foxes did a great deal of damage to the local farmers, so fox hunters were hailed as heroes by the farmers.

The Light Horse Troop of Philadelphia was formed on November 17, 1774, by a group of gentlemen charged with the duty of defending the colonies by the Continental Congress. When it was organized, no fewer than twenty-two members of the fox hunting club were enrolled in its ranks, including Samuel Morris. Many of the original members were businessmen and merchants who supplied their own uniforms, military equipment, and horses.

The Light Horse Troop carried the Flags where ever George Washington went. The flag originally had the British Union in the corner, but the artist was instructed to paint thirteen stripes to represent the united colonies. The Troop escorted General Washington from Philadelphia to take command of the Continental Army, assembled outside of Boston in June 1775. With Morris as its captain, the troop reported for duty in the Continental Army and served through the campaign of 1776–77, seeing action in the battles of Trenton and Princeton. At the Battle of Princeton, Samuel's brother, Anthony, ensign of the troop, was killed. After the British surrender at Yorktown on October 19, 1781, the captured British standards were placed in the care of the Troop.

General George Washington temporarily relieved Samuel Morris' command from duty in January 1777. Washington returned his "most sincere thanks to the captain," and added that, although the troop was "composed of gentlemen of fortune," its members had "shown a noble example of discipline and subordination." Because he took part in the Revolutionary War, Captain Morris was disowned by the Quakers, but he continued until his death to wear their dress and use their language, worshiping with them regularly.

Today the Troop is certainly the oldest mounted military unit and quite possibly the oldest military unit of any kind that has been in continuous service to the Country. The Troop operates as a National Guard unit and although a cavalry unit, now serve on tanks and Humvees, not on horseback.

The Reynolds-Morris House, built in 1787 and purchased in 1817 by Samuel's son, Luke Wistar Morris, still stands in Philadelphia. Designated a National Historic Landmark in 1967, it is currently operated as a hotel.