

OUR HISTORY

The Virginia Society Daughters of the American Colonists has been a small but thriving hereditary society. Since its beginning, restorations of old records have remained a primary concern. Other interests that have continued through its 92 years of activity are the marking of historical places, support for the history taught in the schools, correct usage and respect for the Flag of the United States of America, National Defense, Veterans Service, recognizing outstanding students, and donations to libraries.

- ✦ The society was organized April 7, 1922 in the Richmond home of *Mrs. James Branch Cabell* who was appointed State Organizing Regent by the National President, *Mrs. George Thatcher Guernsey*. Officers elected were:

Regent Mrs. James Branch Cabell

Vice Regent Mrs. B. H. Ellington

Secretary Mrs. John D. Clothier

Treasurer Mrs. Albert H. Hunts

Registrar Mrs. W. O. Wood

- ✦ Members present were:

Mrs. Benjamin L. Purcell

Mrs. Warner Moore

Mrs. Robert N. Williams

Mrs. Stuart Michaux

Mrs. L. Hawkins

Mrs. William Hugh Nelson

Mrs. Melville C. Branch

Miss Mary Anna Nesbett

Miss Margaret Conway

The program for the day was a discussion of work done by and qualifications of members of NSDAC.

- ✦ On April 11, 1923 the name Pocahontas was chosen. *Mrs. Ashton Gray* was elected Vice Regent.
- ✦ In May 1924 a wreath was placed at Monticello.
- ✦ The following year, the National Society placed a fence around the ancient foundations at Jamestown. It was dedicated during the visit of the *National President Mrs. Guernsey*. And 1,000 pages of old records were restored.
- ✦ In 1928, *Mrs. James B. Cabell* was elected National Vice President Southern Section.
- ✦ Virginia became a State Organization in 1931 with the birth of a second chapter, the Chanco Chapter.
- ✦ Two years later, NSDAC laid the corner stone for the cross at Cape Henry.
- ✦ The first annual meeting of the Virginia Society, Daughters of the American Colonists was held March 13, 1935 in Petersburg.
- ✦ The Memorial Cross at Cape Henry was dedicated on April 26th.
- ✦ By 1938 there were 90 members of the State Society.
- ✦ Numerous old records and will books were restored during the early years.
- ✦ Regents' homes were determined to be the headquarters for the respective chapters.
- ✦ In 1943 and 1945 State Assembly meetings were not held. Members volunteered for numerous war efforts.

- ✦ The first annual Fall Board Meeting was held November 11, 1943 in the home of *Mrs. M. M. Fitzhugh, State Regent*. Members continued to restore records and work in the VA hospitals.
- ✦ On October 17, 1947 an oil portrait of Dr. Lyon G. Tyler, past president of the College of William and Mary was presented by the Virginia Daughters to the Virginia Historical Society.
- ✦ In 1948 a State Regent's pin was purchased.
- ✦ In 1953 the first Memorial Service was held at the State Assembly. That same year the National President was presented a pin that was a replica of the Norfolk Mace.
- ✦ During these years the Virginia Society continued to restore old records and books throughout the state. Magazines were contributed to the Veterans Hospitals. Members from other societies and neighboring DAC societies were frequent guests. Some years the Virginia DAC had joint meetings with other societies. Pledges and gifts were also presented to the National Society.
- ✦ During the Viet Nam era, a strong focus was placed upon veteran service. Membership climbed to 210. Virginia DAC continued the tradition of restoring old records and donating books to libraries. Gifts of American and NSDAC flags and bible records were donated to the National Society. A gavel from the only known tree standing on Jamestown Island at the time of the first arrivals was presented to the State Society. It is still used at the discretion of the State Regent on special occasions.
- ✦ Virginia Daughters were on hand when Berkeley Hundred was identified as the site of the first official Thanksgiving Day in America.
- ✦ In 1969 the State Society hosted the National President and Executive Board and the State Regents when the national project was dedicated at Berkeley.
- ✦ During the 70's the Virginia Society marked the grave of *Elizabeth Bassett Harrison* 1730-1792. By 1979 membership was 242. National Defense messages were emphasized.
- ✦ Over the years, numerous state daughters have served as national officers in a variety of positions.
- ✦ In the earliest years, history scrapbooks were presented to the Virginia Historical Society. More recently, State Regents have served as the eventual Curators for these histories of their administrations.
- ✦ The Park Service has received special recognition and support over the years.
- ✦ The State Regent's Project during *Mrs. G. Humphrey Bryan, Junior's* administration was a teak bench built in England and designed in the style reminiscent of the Colonial era for placement at St. Luke's Church, Isle of Wight County. A number of distinguished national and state leaders from NSDAC and several other Historical societies were present at the dedication.
- ✦ The State Society donated numerous books and money to the National Library.
- ✦ Membership in 1983 was 285. Records preservation and book contributions continued to serve as priorities for Virginia DAC.
- ✦ On March 7, 1984 the Pocahontas Chapter dedicated a grave marker in memory of *Mrs. James Branch Cabell*, the Organizing State Regent and Honorary National Vice President. Virginia was the second state to mark the grave of its Organizing Regent.
- ✦ All chapters supported the restoration of The Statue of Liberty.

- ✦ On March 7, 1985 *Mrs. Gary L. Holder* was elected the first Golden Acorn State Regent. Her State Project was compiling the history of the Virginia State Society. Much information from her literary efforts was offered by Mrs. Holder and utilized in this history.
- ✦ In 1987 Virginia and West Virginia received an award from the Southern Section for having the most Golden Acorns attending the General Assembly.
- ✦ DAC Daughters in the Commonwealth assisted with the restoration of National Headquarters.
- ✦ During the administrations of Regents *Shipp, Muller and Gordon* Virginia continued numerous restoration projects. During *Honorary Regent Gordon's* term antique chairs dating to the period 1683 in the Lynhaven House were restored, both the chairs and seats. In *Regent Osborne's* term the Virginia Daughters continued their service to America's heroes. Beautiful boxwoods were planted along the carriage path to historic "Village View" at Emporia during the administration of *State Regent Mrs. Charles Featherston*. Tree pins were sold to help fund the project. The graveyard at Red Hill, the last home of Patrick Henry, was rededicated on the 200th anniversary of his death. Veteran Service and National Defense were priorities. Membership was reported at 270 during that time.
- ✦ During the recent administration of *State Regent Mrs. Russell Bersch*, Virginia Daughters adopted her project to restore Will Book 13 in Brunswick County.
- ✦ The State Society supported the National President's Project that was marking the most heavily traveled road in Colonial America, The Great Indian Warrior/Trading Path located from the northern to southern borders of the Commonwealth. That dedication was held at Stanton.
- ✦ *Mrs. Bersch* represented the National Society as color bearer at the annual Yorktown Day Ceremony on October 19, 2000. NSDAC Patriotic Book Marks were placed in several schools. *State Regent Bersch* created and presented a special program exhibiting and explaining the various NSDAC insignia at her official chapter visits. She also honored three Centenarians during her administration. Parties for patients were held at a local Veterans Medical Center.
- ✦ During *Mrs. Charles Odom's* administration, the State Regent's project was a pair of paintings presented to Jamestown in support of the approaching Quadra-Centennial. She provided a series of programs featuring the history of religious freedom in America. Revision of state by-laws aided fiscal procedures. Grants, comfort items, gifts, manufacturers' coupons and visits honored veterans. Hampton Spanish American War Cemetery received flags at a grave marking ceremony. The Regent restored a marble tablet for historic Mason's Hall that had formerly served as a veterans' hospital in America's second war for independence. Violet Bank Museum was aided in seeking accreditation.
- ✦ *Nancy Ackerman* and *Carol Stone* were appointed to organize two new chapters. *Sharon Stine* assisted in establishing the first web site. Implementation of computer technology facilitated operations.
- ✦ *Betty Shackelford* coordinated marking Meander Plantation as a State Project.