

THE FOUNDING MOTHERS: 1900 to 1939

In 1900, the West Virginia story began when twelve strong and determined women from all parts of West Virginia arrived by horse and buggy to Charleston to launch the West Virginia Society. From the beginning, these founding mothers were motivated by a love of God, family and country. In 1911 at their first Annual Meeting, the Dames joined in *The Lord's Prayer* and offered toasts to "Our Ancestral Grandmothers" and the "Colonial Women of West Virginia." Their first project was to establish historical markers honoring the patriot-pioneers who established settlements; their second project was to award prizes to pupils in patriotic essay contests. The Dames also helped raise funds for numerous historical homes and historical projects including the Sulgrave Manor Fund (George Washington's ancestral home in England), the Washington Monument Fund, the Arlington National Cemetery Memorial (dedicated to the fallen soldiers of the Spanish-American War). West Virginia joined with NSCDA as the first women's organization to erect a monument in Arlington National Cemetery. From the beginning, Dames were always dedicated to aiding new citizens, orphans, and paying tribute to the soldiers who kept America free.

*Refer to the FOUNDERS section under the WV SOCIETY on the NSCDA-WV website for a more detailed history of the Founders.

*Acronyms will be used for the Historical Activities Committee (HAC) and the Patriotic Services Committee (PSC).



Colonial Dames Monument in Arlington National Cemetery paying tribute to the men and women engaged in military service.

1937-47

During the war years, the West Virginia Dames main role was mainly that of patriotic service. Dames contributed generously to all emergency needs, and hosted a weekly “Cookie Day” for servicemen in various counties in West Virginia where 14,991 veterans were registered. Dames also knitted scarves and gloves for soldiers.

A program of citizenship training created by Dames awarded copies of citizenship manuals, written in different languages, to small branch libraries in many towns. Dames were friends to new citizens in a new land, providing them with American flags and a copy of the American creed.

West Virginia Dames supported the new national project: The Restoration of Gunston Hall, home to patriot George Mason, author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights. Mason was among the first to call for such basic human liberties as religious toleration and freedom of the press. A Colonial Dame donated the Mason house and property to the Commonwealth of Virginia; today, the 550-acre landmark is a National Historic Landmark that is open for public tours.



George Mason
Father of the Bill of Rights

1948-1956

Celebrating their Golden Jubilee in 1950, West Virginia Dames had inspired pride in members with programs about the values and guiding principles from early America that led to American freedom, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The Dames also worked toward the restoration and preservation of buildings connected with America's early history. Instructive programs included *The Ideals of Colonial Dames*, *The Bill of Rights* and *Important Women in History*.

NSCDA-WV promoted a statewide pilgrimage to Gunston Hall and leased the *Bill of Rights* film for viewing in public schools. Within a two year period, the film was seen by 7,450 senior and junior high pupils and 100 boy scouts. Colonial Dames joined with Governor Okey Patteson in proclaiming Bill of Rights Day on December 15, 1951.

Seven active County Committees sent books and magazines to Veterans Hospitals. A Speaker's Bureau was established composed of women from fourteen countries who were available as speakers for educational programs and as interpreters to help the War Brides Project in the aftermath of World War II.

To promote knowledge of history, the HAC sponsored a newspaper quiz, *Know Your Own State*, and awarded cash prizes to students. A scholarship was also awarded to a West Virginia University student engaged in graduate work in early American history.

The West Virginia Dames encouraged the preservation and recording of old land grants, manuscripts, church records, wills, and snapshots of ancestral portraits – all a vital part of early American history.

1957-1969

West Virginia Dames represented the Society at Colonial Dames Day in May 1957 at the Jamestown Celebration. Dames sponsored a project called "The Mayflower Sails Again" which involved Great Britain's creation of a replica of the original ship that would be given to the United States as a token of friendship. An educational program was held on *Impressions of the Indians by Early American Colonists*.

Over 300 people attended a Dames Silver Tea held at Governor Cecil Underwood's Mansion to benefit Gunston Hall. The first lady of West Virginia and the NSCDA-WV president serving as hostesses. The national George Mason stamp was released and statewide publicity made the public aware of Bill of Rights Day and George Mason Day.

The state society continued to support the national projects: scholarship awards, the Indian Nurses Training Project, and the Americanization of immigrants. The Cabell County Society initiated a scholarship for a Marshall College American history student. The West Virginia Society adopted the Ten Mile School, a one-teacher school with thirty-two children, by providing clothing and instructional supplies

1961-1969

West Virginia accepted the call of national in support of four projects: placing a bronze historical tablet on the Arlington Monument, studying old laws pertaining to women, creating a repository for historic organizations, and creating a publication for every state society.

A new state project involved the printing and distribution of a teacher syllabus on *Teaching Patriotism* for elementary and secondary schools. HAC completed the collection of the portraits of the wives of the first fifteen Governors of West Virginia, a collection presented to

the Archives and History Library of West Virginia in the State Capitol Complex. The HAC announced the Court House project designed to conduct research on the history of old Court Houses in West Virginia.

Instructive programs included *Historical Houses in West Virginia*, *Colonial Gardens and Gardeners*, *Early Settlers Throughout West Virginia*, *Lewis and Clark* (presented by a West Virginia Dame related to Meriwether Lewis), and *The Restoration of Blennerhasset Island*.

The Society sent Christmas boxes to show appreciation and support for the airmen in harm's way serving in Alaska. Dames also supported the Viet Nam Project that provided 24,000 ditty bags to two hospital ships off the coast of Vietnam.

The Mercer County Committee sponsored a TV quiz on Colonial History modeled after the G.E. College Bowl program. All county high schools participated and the grand prize was a scholarship to Concord College.

The PSC offered the "Pageant of Flags," a program of 18 slides with script and taped music assembled by the Freedoms' Foundation Library, to be shown in libraries, schools and at club meetings.

The state Society's seal, created in 1901 by the Founding Mothers, was reconstructed as an authentic replica of the original design.

In 1969 two Charleston historical homes were offered for purchase to the NSCDA-WV. The need for a headquarters for the West Virginia State Society was becoming increasingly apparent and a fund was established for this purpose. Meetings were held in members' homes, church halls, hotels, the YWCA, and Edgewood Country Club. An official from the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation of

the United States Department of Interior recommended that the Dames purchase the Craik house because of the Craik family's close ties to George Washington.

The state Society also funded a district history scholarship, a state scholarship and the Indian Nurse Project. The Cabell County Committee, in cooperation with the Junior Bar Association, initiated a pilot program in three high schools consisting of a two-week course of study of the Bill of Rights as part of the regular American History course in the eleventh grade.

1969-1981

The 1834 Craik-Patton House, also known as Elm Grove, was accepted to be used as a headquarters and museum house. The house would be moved to a new location in Daniel Boone Park – it had already been moved in 1906 to its current location – without destroying its historical value. Split into three sections, the house was moved on flatbed trucks and meticulously restored to its original state. Construction continued from 1973 until 1980; a grant from HUD was matched with Dames' fundraising efforts and a capital campaign. The Dames undertook many research projects related to the reconstruction and discovered the original foundation of the house was much higher. This created the English basement space which could be used as a meeting room.

Over many years, the Dames had accumulated an extensive collection of books and manuscripts which needed to be housed in a library. The manuscripts related to West Virginia history, including *Pioneer Women in West Virginia*, *Unexplored Sources of West Virginia*,

Historic Homes in West Virginia, and Early Taverns in West Virginia (a tavern functioned as an inn during colonial times).

The Dames then began acquiring appropriate furnishings for the house. Many members generously donated family heirlooms that reflected the early history of the Kanawha Valley and West Virginia. The Ruffner sideboard was one such object: it was loaned to the Governor's Mansion for use in their dining room until the house was completed.

Funds for the reconstruction were researched and grants requested; the Kanawha Garden Club donated landscape plans for an appropriate period garden and surrounding land; the Briar Hills Garden Club began implementing these plans with stone wall and walkways.

The HAC continued its projects. A list of 18th and 19th century portraits owned by members in West Virginia was sent to the Smithsonian Institution; an album of news articles, pictures and many ancestral sketches was created. Stories of Mary Draper Ingles and Margaret Lynn Lewis were sent to NSCDA. At the Region IV Conference held at the Greenbrier Hotel, Huntington attorney F. A. MacDonald spoke on the topic *Four Heroines of West Virginia*. The subjects were Betty Zain, Martha Tackett, Anne Bailey, and Ann Royal. "A Biography of Juliet Craik – First Lady of Elm Grove" – was completed and sent to the National HAC to be published in *Biographies of Women – Colonial and Pioneers*.

The Dames also continued their support of state scholarships, a district history scholarship, and the Indian Nurse Project. The Cabell County Committee, in cooperation with the Junior Bar Association, initiated a pilot program in three high schools consisting of a two-week

course of study of the Bill of Rights as part of the regular American history course in the eleventh grade. New citizens continued to be welcomed by Colonial Dames in the Americanization ceremonies.



Seven Corporate Presidents at Semi-Annual Meeting at Edgewood Country Club (Nov. 9, 2011): (l. to r.) Katherine Forbes Wellford, Mary Henderson Hodges, Tate Brewster Hudson, Catherine Tuckwiller McKinney, Virginia Point Kauffelt, Elizabeth Davis Keightley and Jane Heywood Boylin

1981-1994

In the spring of 1981, the Craik-Patton House opened as a functioning museum house, attracting many visitors and volunteers. Programs were researched and developed. Presenting the history of West Virginia and the Kanawha Valley through the Craik and the Patton families was a priority. The first Christmas Open House was held offering a western Virginia Christmas with a “cup of cheer.” Simple

period decorations and dulcimer music filled the house, and a small bake sale/boutique helped offset the cost. Later open houses included a Christmas tree with handmade period decorations, larger boutiques, and interesting special exhibits of antique toys.

The HAC and Craik-Patton House committee continued to work jointly to preserve and restore the house. Historical research continued with the arrival of a scholar-in-residence who prepared a manual on local families of the 1830s. A program of “student days” was offered to area fourth and fifth graders and included hands-on activities such as quill pen writing and candle dipping. Craftsmen demonstrated skills such as blacksmithing, basket weaving, spinning and weaving wool and a tinker offered his tinware. A costumed docent met children at the door with the admonishment, “Sssh, quiet, the children are asleep and Mrs. Craik has stepped out for a few minutes.” Other docents gave detailed explanations of the lifestyle and activities of the family as school children were taken through the house.

Additional programs were held for families and included costumed docents and re-enactors; a favorite was the pioneer woodsman using a flintlock rifle. A pioneer encampment was set up on the grounds which included Indian lore and flintlock rifles, cooking and camping. Visitors called it a “breathtaking show.” Reading days and Storytelling were held for smaller children during the summers.

In 1983 the Dames co-sponsored, with the Huntington Galleries and the Humanities Foundation, a traveling exhibit to be called “Ladies Home Companion” that featured articles of the 1835-1865 period, the time corresponding to the Craik-Patton House era. Six three-dimensional glass cases were created to display the collection. For a

year, Mr. and Mrs. Churchill Hodges transported the exhibit to various counties in West Virginia; because of its impact, it was included on the program at the NSCDA Biennial Meeting in Washington, DC.



Mary Henderson Hodges

A very popular exhibit, “Elinor’s Dolls,” was held in 1990 at the Craik-Patton House. From the collection of Sue Tuckwiller McKinney, antique dolls of all shapes and sizes were displayed throughout the house for a week; more than five hundred visitors enjoyed the

experience. One doll exhibit was kicked off with a cruise on the Kanawha River followed by dinner and a tour. In 1992 photos of old barns were paired with locally made quilts and exhibited. Other exhibits during these years included teddy bears, trains, and paintings of rustic barns.

The Craik-Patton House Meeting Room was made available to the community as a center for exhibitions, lectures and community activities.



During this period, Colonial Dame Jane Ray created embroidery of the NSCDA-WV seal that was to be placed in the Dumbarton House in Washington, DC, the national headquarters of NSCDA. "The Mountains

Are Always Free” declares the seal of the West Virginia Society, as does the pioneer depicted crossing the Allegheny Mountains to reach the new world in the land that would become West Virginia.

Six active County Committees – Cabell, Greenbrier, Marion, Mercer, Ohio and Wood – carried on the work of the Society. Greenbrier County Dames invited Mercer County members to tour the historic homes in Lewisburg. Mercer County invited Cabell County members for a tour of Bramwell homes and a visit to the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine.

Bill of Rights Day and George Mason Day were celebrated with articles in state and local newspapers in various counties. The Dames continued their support of scholarships in the state and the NSCDA district scholarship. New citizens were welcomed, and the Board of Managers voted to purchase two copies of the County Histories for the West Virginia State Archives.

A special West Virginia recognition pin for NSCDA-WV was designed by Dame Sallie Stone in 1993. The design is a stunning circle pin with mountains in the center that reflects West Virginia pride.

A newsletter, *The Link*, was introduced to keep members apprised of events and projects.

And the Dames traveled. An annual trip to the Cincinnati Opera in June was popular with Dames and guests from Charleston and Huntington; this trip continued annually until 2003. A tour to Pleasant Hill visited Shakertown as well as Keeneland; a trip to Blennerhassett Island included a boat ride and lunch; and a Fall Foliage Tour

transported Dames on a three day excursion around West Virginia, hosted by the County Committees.

1995-2012

Since 1994 the West Virginia Society has worked to establish a Strategic Plan, address membership decline, and develop a plan for supporting Craik-Patton House, our headquarters, which is operated by a community board, Craik-Patton Inc. It has been a seventeen year period of transition from the time when the West Virginia Dames had the museum house as its primary focus both for volunteer efforts and for fund raising to the present when Dames focus on support activities for Craik-Patton House, scholarship awards, membership growth, and new forms of communication with our statewide membership. Our mission is to ***Keep History Alive in West Virginia!***



Sandy Smith and Katherine Forbes Wellford Names to NSCDAWV
Roll of Honor for 2011 and 2012 at Biennial Council
in Washington, DC 1995-2012

These challenges have been addressed in numerous ways. The dedicated Registrars who have spent countless hours working with candidates have kept our membership from dropping below 130 and now in 2012 we are increasing despite attrition. Lynn Goldsmith, Registrar since 2009, has made great strides in streamlining the process, encouraging the members to propose and never letting the membership forget that proposing members is the way we guarantee that the West Virginia Society continues its important mission.

Our museum, Craik-Patton House, has had many changes since its founding and is now moving into an exciting period with the hiring of a full-time director whose job is to keep the house open for tours at least five days a week. The new director is working on educational programs and building the Friends Volunteer Membership. The Craik-Patton Inc. Board and the West Virginia Society Board of Managers are working together to create a plan for the museum house to be self-sustaining.



Dames Presidents 1997: (l. to r.) Mary Frances Hodges, Betty Chilton, Ouida Davis, Virginia Point, Nancy Hindsley, Canky Brown and Ditsy Keightley

Each NSCDA-WV president from 1995 to present has worked to strengthen the Colonial Dames organization. Sue McKinney held membership meetings in different towns throughout West Virginia; Tate Hudson was responsible for placing the George Washington Workbooks created by The Mount Vernon Association in every fourth grade classroom in West Virginia; Katherine Wellford completed the restoration of the Sun Dial Monument on Kanawha Boulevard in Charleston, West Virginia.

The West Virginia Society looked to the National Society during this time by inviting Stuart Cobb, National President 2004-2008, to visit and speak to the membership. The Society entertained Hillary Gripekoven, National President 2008-2012, who addressed the membership at the Semi-Annual Meeting in 2011, inspiring members with her comments on *Keeping History Alive*. Laura Rutherford, Trustee, Friends of Sulgrave Manor, gave a stirring picture of the successes and financial needs of Sulgrave Manor. The Society was visited by Karen Daly, Executive Director of Dumbarton House, NSCDA Headquarters, and by Sally Congdon, Region IV Vice President from Philadelphia, PA. Each of these national officers and the Dumbarton House Executive Director offered fresh perspectives on the mission all Dames share, along with new ways to carry out that mission.

With the direction of the current president, Jane Boylin, a new emphasis has been placed on technology and its relationship to better communication. The newsletter, published by the president and issued

three times a year, will be sent electronically in 2013. Rebecca Steorts, Communications Chair, developed a website for the West Virginia Society. She also collaborated with Liz Forman, chair of the NSCDA Branding Committee, to create two videos highlighting West Virginia Dames and the Christmas Open House at Craik-Patton House. These videos were shown at the National Board Meeting and the Biennial Council Meeting as examples of what all states might do to showcase their state societies and museum houses.

The West Virginia Society has a voice in the 21st century. We stand on the work of past West Virginia Dames – from the Founding Mothers to the present- as we build new programs to carry out our mission: ***Entrusted With History's Future.***

*Rebecca Steorts, Jane Boylin and Priscilla Lawson have compiled this history from historians' reports, Society minutes, NSCDA-WV archival material, newspaper articles, and a 1976-1904 HAC report by Sandy Smith. The Editor thanks past presidents Virginia Mairs, Mary Frances Hodges, Virginia Point Kauffelt, Tate Hudson, Sue McKinney, Katherine Wellford, and current president Jane Boylin for their assistance with interviews. The Editor and the Communications Committee will be pleased to consider all requests for revisions to the *Story of the West Virginia Dames* because The West Virginia Dames Story is a continuing history – your history as Dames in West Virginia.