

History of General Robert E. Lee 233

General Robert E. Lee 233, Virginia Division 56, Falls Church, VA, was chartered June 20, 1898. Charter Members were Mrs. George Heal, Mrs. Armistead Donalson, Mrs. Charles Mankin, Mrs. R. P. Buckner, Mrs. Robert B. Smith, Mrs. L.E. Gott, Miss Mary B. Smith, and Miss Lillian H. Watkins. Mrs. R. P. Buckner was the Organizing Chapter President. Throughout the history of the chapter, focus has been on bestowing crosses of honor, locating and marking Confederate graves, cleaning cemeteries, and placing and restoring tombstones, iron crosses and markers. Patriotic activities consisted of some form of War Work during WWII, supporting the Red Cross, donating surgical dressings, selling bonds, knitting lap afghans for hospitalized veterans, and placing flags at cemeteries on Memorial Days. The chapter's One Hundredth Anniversary was celebrated on June 13, 1998, at Dulin Methodist Church in Falls Church, where the chapter was organized.

An outstanding achievement in 1927 was the placing of thirty markers on Confederate graves. Another outstanding activity starting in 1974, for several years nine thousand Christmas cards were sent to three thousand veterans in hospitals to send to their loved ones. In 1953 a silver plate in memory of Flora Baker Hiatt, a charter member, was placed on the pew adjoining that of General Robert E. Lee in the Vestry of the Falls Church. In 1976 a bronze plaque was dedicated to two Confederate ancestors at Spottsylvania Court House. In addition many Confederate burials have been researched and headstones, footstones, plot markers, and UDC crosses restored.

Gen. Robert E. Lee 233 has distributed many historical books to libraries. In 2022, member Patricia Wartell distributed 180 books in the collection of Mr. Walter DeGroot, a historian and reenactor of the Civil War, who passed away in August 2021. The collection went to the DAR Library, the Library of Virginia in Richmond, Mary Riley Styles Public Library's Falls Church History Room, the Prince William County Office of Historic Preservation's Civil War Library located at Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park, and the Bull Run Civil War Round Table.

The chapter has placed three memorial marble benches. In September 2002 a marble bench was dedicated in Oakwood Cemetery, Falls Church, in memory of the Confederate dead buried there. In 2012 a marble bench was dedicated in Oakwood Cemetery, Falls Church, in memory of Charles Mankin. His wife, daughters, and granddaughter were chapter members. Mrs. Charles Mankin was a Charter Member, Ruth Mankin Hildebrand, Ella Hirst, and Mae Hirst Real Daughters, and Marie Yochim, a Real Granddaughter who attended the dedication of the bench. In 2018 member Virginia Rouse donated a bench in Abbeville, SC in memory of her ancestor, Capt. Eustace St. Pierre Bellinger, at the Memorial for Signers of South Carolina's Ordinance of Secession.

Gen. Robert E Lee 233 is proud to have had 37 Real Daughters with five serving as Chapter President: Mrs. A. H. Barbour 1909-1912, Mrs. Charles W. Lee 1913, Mrs. R. W. Birch 1916, Mrs. Harry A. Fellows a total of 32 years: 1920-1929, 1933-1945 and 1949-1960, and Mrs. Ruth Mankin Hildebrand 1985-1987.

Several chapter members have been recognized for outstanding service. Mrs. Mary Swann and Mrs. Cordelia Sansone, Chapter President 1977-1980, received the Jefferson Davis Historical Gold Medal in 1976 and 1980, respectively. In 1989, Mrs. Sansone received the Winnie Davis Medal and was elected Honorary President of Virginia Division. The Minutes of the 108th Annual Convention in 2003 were dedicated to her. Mrs. Dianne Robinson, Chapter President 2003-2011, received the Judah P Benjamin Award and the Stonewall Jackson Award in 2007, and the Winnie Davis Medal in 2008.

Gen. Robert E. Lee chapter supports Confederate Memorial Day; the birthdays of Gen. Robert E Lee, Stonewall Jackson and Commodore Maury; Veterans Homes and Hospitals; White House of the Confederacy; Confederate Home for Women in Richmond; Warren Rifles Museum; the Appalachian Relief Fund; Ronald McDonald House; The Final Salute; CofC and SCV projects; Coupons for Troops, and Stamps for Veterans.