

Isle of Wight Chapter 699 History
Smithfield, Virginia

Isle of Wight Chapter held its first meeting in Smithfield at Institute Hall on June 4, 1903. The chapter was chartered as Isle of Wight 699 on July 25, 1903 and Mrs. Richard Boykin was elected president. Members agreed to host meetings in their homes at 8:00 p.m. By August of 1908, there were seventeen members on roll; by September 1912 only seven ladies were on roll. On June 11, 1908, the chapter began the tradition of a Memorial Day Celebration held in Ivy Hill Cemetery. Ivy Hill Cemetery, established in Smithfield in 1886, is where many Confederate soldiers were interred. Chapter members wanted to keep the memories of those who wore the gray fresh and to ensure those memories did not fade into oblivion. Bands, choirs, politicians, re-enactors and locals attended the yearly event. Later, the George F. Dashiell American Legion Post #90 and the Smithfield Junior Chamber of Commerce participated in the ceremonies. The chapter erected a Confederate Monument in the cemetery in 1916 and a podium in 1961. In 1949, Mr. Fredrick M. Barrett II loaned the chapter ninety dollars for a coping to be erected around the memorials. Mr. Barrett and Mr. Jesse Jones, two Confederate grandsons, supervised the project which was completed April 20, 1949. Mr. Barrett's wife Nancy joined the chapter in 1924. The chapter repaid Mr. Barrett fifty dollars on September 5, 1950 and forty dollars on June 22, 1951.

A program from a May 25, 1980 Ivy Hill Memorial Day Service lists two WW I soldiers, Edgar T. Brock and Granville A. Starke placing wreaths at the monument. Retired Brigadier General George W. Dickerson, from Poquoson, Virginia was the guest speaker. The chapter always believed in honoring veterans from WWI and WWII by incorporating them in the programs. In addition to placing Confederate flags on soldiers' graves in Ivy Hill, members continue the tradition in Evergreen Cemetery and St. Luke's Church Cemetery.

Valuable chapter records are housed in the Isle of Wight Courthouse Records Room. Our original charter, treasurer ledgers dating from 1924 and secretary minute books from 1916 are found there. The treasurer's ledger shows dues were raised from one dollar to two dollars in 1953. Many programs from chapter hosted Sixth District Meetings are in the records with one from May 19, 1921. The meeting was held in a Sunday school room at Trinity United Methodist Church. A 1916 booklet on monthly programs for United Daughters of the Confederacy and Children of the Confederacy is with the records. A copy of the May 1911 magazine, "Confederate Veteran" is also with the records. February 22, 1937 members voted to endorse Mrs. R. Sidney Cox as Virginia Division President. At the time she was Isle of Wight UDC chapter president and state chairman of Education. The Isle of Wight chapter was proud that former Smithfield resident Mrs. Alice Whitley Jones was elected UDC President General 1968 – 1970.

Isle of Wight county citizens erected a Confederate monument placed in Monument Circle at the Isle of Wight Courthouse on May 30, 1905. Chapter members helped in raising funds for the erection of the monument. For many in the chapter and county, it was a cenotaph for family

members who did not come home from the war. A Confederate Monument Centennial Service and Confederate Memorial Day Service was organized by chapter members and the Urquhart-Gillette Camp #1471 SCV, on May 29, 2005. The ceremony was held at the monument located in front of the original Isle of Wight Courthouse. On that sunny day President Virginia Division Delores C. Smith was a guest speaker. Professor and author Brian Steel Wills also spoke to the large crowd. The monument was later moved to land near Walters Virginia. A rededication ceremony was held November 6, 2021 and chapter President Karen Grigg was a guest speaker. A large crowd braved wind and sleet to attend the ceremony.

On the chapter's 100th year anniversary, a celebration luncheon was held at the Smithfield Inn July 26, 2003. President Virginia Division Samba S. Lougheed presented the chapter with a certificate of merit. The chapter's original charter and a revised charter were on display for the event. A 100 year pin to commemorate the chapter's anniversary was designed by member Lynn Stallings.

On May 18, 2006, the chapter hosted a reception honoring historical artist Mort Kunstler at the Isle of Wight Museum, Smithfield, Virginia. Mr. Kunstler gifted the chapter with a signed New World Jamestown print.

A notable chapter project was the commissioning of the portrait of Randall Booth, a Black man, who saved courthouse records May 5, 1862. Mr. Booth hid county records in a wagon in Greensville and Brunswick counties until it was safe to return after Northern troops passed the area. Isle of Wight County is the guardian of some of the oldest and most complete court records in the United States. Mr. Booth was responsible for saving the invaluable courthouse records. His portrait, by artist Stephanie Faleski, was unveiled November 12, 2015 and is adjacent to the records room in the Isle of Wight Courthouse.

Present day chapter members enjoy taking field trips to numerous historical sites. Members frequently wear period dress to memorial services they attend. Yearly donations are made to Stratford Hall. Chapter scrapbooks and yearbooks are updated frequently. Currently the chapter has nineteen members including six who are great granddaughters.

The chapter presents military service awards to veterans of all conflicts.

Every other month food kits for homeless veterans are delivered to the Veterans Hospital in Hampton, Virginia. At the November meeting members sign Christmas cards for veterans.

Beloved chapter member Mrs. Mabel Cox Baird bequeathed the chapter funds to establish a scholarship for a Smithfield High School senior. Every year a deserving senior receives \$2,000 to be used at the college or university of their choice.

Members continue to support and work on projects alongside members of local Sons of Confederate Veterans Camps. Projects include Iron Cross ceremonies and maintenance of the Confederate Monument in Isle of Wight County. A shared love of heritage is the strong bond between the two organizations.

State and General Conventions, Spring Board and Sixth District Conferences are well attended by members.

Our members continue to honor all American war heroes. The chapter looks forward to many more productive years as we continue to honor our Confederate ancestors and to serve our community.

Marilyn M. Curtin,
President, Isle of Wight Chapter 699
July 24, 2023