

History of the Jefferson Davis  
UDC NO. 2477 - Division NO. 204  
Town: Galax, Virginia  
Date Organized: Aug. 8, 1983  
Chartered: Sept. 3, 1983

Jefferson Davis 2477 was formed through the efforts of two UDC transfer members Alice and daughter Karen Sweeney, who were members of Col. John Milton Sandidge 2347 Bastrop, Louisiana. Alice recruited 18 new members from Galax, Carroll and Grayson Counties.

The first organizational meeting was held on Aug.8, 1983 at the Vaughan Memorial Library in Galax. The following officers were selected: President—Hilda Walters, Vice President—Ellen Bobbitt, Secretary—Evelyn Botschen, Treasurer—Ethelene Martin, Historian—Karen Sweeney, Registrar—Alice Sweeney, Recorder of Crosses—Delle Reavis. The following twenty members signed the charter, those with \* denote Granddaughters: Ava Willie Alderman\*, Ethel P. Andrews, Ellen Watters Bobbitt, Evelyn Hawks Botschen, Robin E. Botschen, Irna Robertson Chitwood\*, Love Worrell Cox\*, Lacona Elizabeth Diamond\*, Jane Adams Edwards, Joye Lineberry Flanagan, Elizabeth Early Hale, Jane Chitwood Halsey, Ethelene Martin Martin\*, Annie Austin Patton\*, Delle Wofford Reavis\*, Bonnie Ray Reeves, Alice J. Sweeney\*, Karen Sue Sweeney, Mamie S. Taylor, Hilda Walters. The following names were considered for the Chapter name: Lt. Col. Alexander Hayes (Fancy Gap), Robert E. Lee, Molly Tyne, JEB Stuart and Jefferson Davis receiving the most votes. The Chapter also selected the following Committee Chairs: Program Chair—Alice Sweeney and Ellen Bobbitt, Monuments and Grave Markers Chair—Joye Flanagan and Patriotic Service Chair—Mamie Taylor. The Chapter also adopted a Motto: “People who do not look backward to their ancestors will not look forward to their posterity”, Flower: The Galax Leaf and the Colors of red and white.

Jefferson Davis 2477 was chartered on Sept. 3 1983 and with that became the first new chapter in Virginia Division for the year 1983-1984. Upcoming meetings were advertised in the Gazette, the local newspaper. The first guest speaker was Judge Jack Matthews of Galax, who presented a program on the War Between the States. As a boy the Judge had attended many Confederate Veterans Reunions and he fondly recalled the many stories that were shared by these Veterans. The Judges grandfather was also a Confederate Veteran.

The Chapter welcomed five new members July 6, 1984. The Chapter had the honor of welcoming a Real Daughter Verna Bengé, another Granddaughter Cora Lee Bengé Testerman as well as Nancy Fay Reeves, Patsy Phipps Taylor and Ruth H. DeZern. By 1985 two additional members were welcomed, Linda Richardson and Leona Osborne Ray.

In 1986 Chapter members dressed in period clothing and participated in a re-dedication of the 1908 Court House in Independence, where the Confederate Monument still stands and has been the site of several Memorial Services throughout the years.

In 1988 the Chapter presented a mock trial on Dr. Samuel Mudd, which was well attended by the community. The same year the Chapter received the Virginia Division Vice President’s Award for the chapter ordering the most insignias.

The Chapter donated copies of the UDC Magazine and several books of The Historical Regimental Series to the local libraries. Members visited museums, battlefields and many historic sites. They conducted graveside Memorial Services, placed grave markers and held dedication ceremonies as well as cleaning and repairing tombstones. Special Confederate Days have been and continue to be observed. Members have attended District Conferences as well as Virginia Division Conventions and General Conventions.

In 1993 Grayson County celebrated it's Bicentennial. A history of the Chapter was contributed to a time capsule that was buried at the conclusion of the celebration. The Chapter also welcomed a new member Janet M.G. Hill.

In 1994, the UDC inaugurated a project to collect and preserve the oral histories of as many living Confederate Daughters as possible. In the next two years, over one hundred and thirty Daughters were interviewed. Our member, Verna Bengé was interviewed and her story was one of the twenty one stories selected for a book, "Papa was a boy in Gray" written by Mary W. Schaller.

In 2001 "Papa was a boy in Gray" was published. As part of a summer book tour, author Mary W. Schaller visited our Chapter and Ms. Verna was on hand to sign books. It was a very special day for our Chapter.

In 2003, members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, Jubal Early Camp 1691, presented Ms. Verna with a medal and certificate honoring her as a living Daughter of a Confederate Veteran. Commander Jackson told Ms. Verna that "we wanted to adopt you into our camp as our real Daughter of a Confederate Veteran." After the presentation Ms. Verna stated, "Your uniforms look really nice, all of you."

In 2010 Chapter members participated in a dedication ceremony at the 1908 Court House for the completion of repairs to the Confederate Monument

Since 2003, the Chapter has added the following new members; Ann A Hodges, Ellen M. Yarbrough, Teresa L. Smith, Susan R. Story, Claudia Wolford, Shirley Jean Tucker, Anita Jean Roberts, Cindy Abbott, Suzanne L. Bledsoe, Barbara Hall, Dorothy S. Orr, Laura E. Leighton, Molly M. Stansfield, Tryphena Y. Horsley, Mary T. Felicito, Mary Lou Richardson, Deanna Amsler, Anne S. Cannon, Ina Horton, Shirley Keene and Nancy Jesch. Through the years the chapter has remained active in our objective in preserving our Confederate Heritage, by attending and participating in re-enactments, placing wreaths at monuments as part of Ceremonies Honoring our Confederate Ancestors as well Honoring and celebrating all Veterans who have served in all Wars. Members have donated money and items to VA Hospitals as well as visiting hospitalized veterans. Many members are very involved with their churches, volunteering many hours of their time and talents, as well as monies and items, in support of local communities. Members are also active with the local VFW and Rotary Clubs. Donations have been made to the Red Cross, Special Olympics, animal shelters, Meals on Wheels, Feeding Ministries and soup kitchens to name a few. Members work in local and family cemeteries, locating, cleaning, repairing or obtaining markers for Our Confederate Veterans. Members help support events at Laurel Hill, Birthplace of JEB Stuart, where three members sit on the Board of Directors at the Birthplace. The Chapter has continued to send cards and monies to Real Daughters and the Recipient of the Mrs. Norman V. Randolph Relief. The Chapter has awarded five Military Service

Awards to members of the Grayson VFW Post 7726 and one is pending approval in 2022. Our goal is to award at least one Military Service Award per year. Members continue researching their family history and finding eligible ancestors for Supplementals. We are actively searching for new members and will continue to do so.

#### Chapter Members Accomplishments:

Hilda Walters has served as President for 23 out of 39 years. Alice Sweeney has served as Registrar from 1983-2021. Linda Richardson has served as Treasurer from 1987 to the present. Alice Sweeney has been a member of the UDC since 1967, celebrating her 55<sup>th</sup> year in the UDC, joining when she was just 32 years old. We are honored to have had a Real Daughter as a member, Verna Benge, and nine Granddaughters; Ava Alderman, Irna Chitwood, Love Cox, Lacona Diamond, Ethelene Martin, Annie Patton, Delle Reaves, Alice Sweeney and Cora Testerman. Alice and Cora still very active members in the Chapter today.

#### Chapter Awards:

1988 Chapter received the Virginia Division Vice Presidents Award for ordering the most insignias.

2019 Chapter received a Certificate of Award offered by Virginia Division President Ginger Stephen, to the chapter in 1<sup>st</sup> District with the largest increase in membership, which was a 4-way tie.

2021 received the Virginia Division Recorder of Military Service Awards for the chapter bestowing the most Military Service Awards, a tie with Loudoun 170.