

Jubal Early 553

The Jubal Early UDC Chapter, formed originally in 1902 and reactivated in 2000, holds a unique spot in history: having erected two Confederate monuments on the county courthouse lawn.

The original chapter was formed with the goal of erecting a monument to the Confederate dead of Franklin County, Virginia. Through donations (including one from former slave turned educator and statesman Booker T. Washington who gave in 1905 in honor of the soldier family that once owned him), sales of lemonade at five cents a serving, events for soldiers, sales of ribbons for patriotic occasions, teas, concerts, an essay contest and collections of change from school children, the original monument was erected and dedicated Dec. 1, 1910. Chapter ladies drew a veil of white featuring red stripes for each of the thirteen Confederate states, when the statue was dedicated. The women had raised about a third of the \$1,800 cost of the 23-foot-tall granite statue. The ladies were responsible for securing the remainder which included a \$600 donation from the county and the balance necessary from a Confederate veteran county native. That original chapter was able to fete actual Confederate veterans, help with expenses as they grew older and infirm and have a visible presence in the county with regular meetings and events reported in the local newspaper. A number of Cross of Honor awards were made with meticulous records kept by the ladies.

Original chapter President Essie Smith (whose name was actually Celestia Adelia Wade Butler Smith, 1872-1963) was the driving force behind starting the chapter and working to get the monument bought and paid for. Miss Essie, as she was known, served in various local and state capacities including that of Virginia Division President and Honorary President General 1959/1960. She published numerous writings including "Forty Years with the Virginia Division" and "Virginia Leads" with the Confederate theme of firsts in the Commonwealth and which was distributed to Virginia school children. She was also an active participant in the restoration of Lee Chapel and Mausoleum at Lexington, helped draw a plan for restoration of the Lee Mansion at Arlington National Cemetery, and worked directly with the original sculptor of the Stone Mountain Confederate carving. Among many other endeavors, Miss Essie offered the resolution in 1919 that led to establishment of a permanent home for the UDC in Richmond.

Jubal Early chapter became inactive in 1980. Linda Nezbeth began a campaign to reactivate the chapter which culminated with a ceremony Sept. 23, 2000. A new charter was presented at the 105th annual Virginia Division Convention held Oct. 5-7, 2000 with the swearing in of officers. The first Recording Secretary, Doris H. Eames, continues as a member and in 2023 is serving as chapter president. She is the great-great granddaughter of James H. Sink, Co. E 19th VA Infantry.

Nezbeth said her effort to reactive the chapter was based on the fact that so many men (a known 2,500) served the Confederacy from Franklin County. More than 20 of them were her direct relatives. Her joining ancestor was her great grandfather W.J.O. Byrd of Co. D, 2nd VA Cavalry. Nezbeth served as chapter Registrar from 2000 until her death in 2021 and began and edited the chapter's award winning newsletter as well.

Franklin County raised sixteen companies to serve the Confederate military and it was Mrs. Nezbeth's goal, passed on to today's chapter, to never let them or their patriotism be forgotten.

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The reactivated chapter's stated goals were to "help promote Confederate history in Franklin County by helping raise money for the Jubal Early Homeplace restoration project, provide information about scholarship programs for Franklin County students, honor Confederate soldiers by locating and marking their graves in Franklin County and surrounding areas, promote Confederate heritage; and by recruiting new members to the UDC." Those goals have been met many times over with a continuing annual scholarship to a local high school graduate who has a Confederate ancestor, hundreds of hours donated to the Jubal Early Homeplace project, numerous grave marking ceremonies complete with installation of headstones and/or iron crosses, and participation wearing period clothing in local and area events.

Chapter members, spurred by Mrs. Nezbeth's "Windows of Time" project, continue to seek and display photographs of CSA veterans. A soft cover book, "A Moment in Time" now in its third printing, features photos of more than 600 county veterans.

Various publications by her and other members feature roster lists from Franklin and surrounding counties, East Hill Cemetery CSA burials, "Facts of the War Between the States" and more.

That original Confederate monument was virtually destroyed by a wayward pickup truck in June 2007. It was broken into hundreds of pieces. Through the Jubal Early Chapter's intervention and insistence, the county and its insurance company footed the bill as those pieces were carefully reassembled by a Vermont company whose sculptor used the ruined statue as a model to carve a new monument. With chapter members planning and executing the ceremony, this exact replica was dedicated Aug. 7, 2010 in the original location on the courthouse green. Chapter ladies again pulled a veil of white with thirteen red stripes during the moving ceremony attended by hundreds of re-enactors, UDC and SCV chapter members and the public.

The original reassembled statue is on permanent display at Franklin County History Museum where many chapter members volunteer.

Jubal Early Chapter was pleased to locate a Real Daughter, Mrs. Isabelle Hammock Hodges, living in our County. She was most pleased to be recognized and became a member Jubal Early Chapter.

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57th VA SCV from New York Living History Encampment



Holiday Remembrance, High Street Cemetery, members placing wreaths on Confederate Graves



(l-r) Chapter President Doris Eames with Linda Nezbeth, who reactivated the Jubal Early Chapter, and Delores Smith, the ex- Virginia Division President at a ceremony honoring Veterans at High Street Cemetery.