

CHAPTER HISTORY

CAPTAIN SALLY TOMPKINS

The first chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in Mathews County, Virginia, was chartered in 1908 as the Captain "Sallie" Tompkins Chapter and was deactivated in 1955.

It was a group of ladies from Mathews, Virginia who met to form a committee to investigate the erection of a monument to honor the local soldiers and sailors who fought in the War Between the States. These dedicated women named the chapter after a native of Mathews, Miss Sally Louisa Tompkins who was born at Poplar Grove Plantation in Mathews County, Virginia, in 1833.

During the Civil War from 1861-1865 Sally founded the Robertson Hospital in Richmond, Virginia, to care for our Confederate wounded. In 1861 private hospitals were no longer able to draw medical supplies from the government and were forced to close. Because of her hospital's excellent reputation, President Jefferson Davis commissioned Sally a Captain in the Confederate Cavalry, thus enabling her to draw government supplies and to continue operating her Robertson's hospital, which had the highest rate of recovery of any military hospital, North or South.

With perseverance that would have made Sally proud, these new Daughters of the Confederacy struggled for 4 years doing research, holding endless fund raisers, designing and commissioning their monument. By 1912, after amassing what would be \$25,000.00 in today's currency, they were able to erect the monument which still stands today on the Court House Green in downtown Mathews. The event was attended by a huge crowd and the festivities went well into the night. The chapter was active until 1955 when it was deactivated.

In response to a July 1999 article in the *Gloucester-Mathews Gazette-Journal*, a small group later began meeting and on August 22, 2000, the Captain Sally Tompkins Chapter #2626 was chartered. Owing to the misspelling of Sally's name in the first charter, the current chapter began as a new chapter, rather than reinstating the old chapter name and number.

In 1905, Sally herself was elected Honorary President of the Virginia Division United Daughters of the Confederacy. Captain Sally died July 25, 1916 at the age of 82 in the Confederate Home for Women in Richmond. She is buried in Christ Church Cemetery in Mathews.

Over the last 21 years the chapter has grown to an average membership of about 30 women. We are strong community members who support the history of America and of the Confederacy and the women who were part of it. We hold fundraisers, as our fore bearers did, for monument preservation and a \$1,000.00 scholarship which is awarded yearly to a local student planning a career in medicine. Every year we honor Sally with a visit and wreath laying at her grave on her birthday and Memorial Day. And at the same time, we lay a wreath at the foot of the Confederate Monument in Mathews. We maintain her grave which is in a lovely cemetery affiliated with Kingston Parish. She worshipped there as a child and her sister was instrumental in reinstating the church which had fallen into disuse since colonial times. In the past, we have also cleared the (deeded to us) resting place of Chesty Puller's ancestors in Gloucester.

As a chapter, one of our most prized possessions is a large, quite faded Battle Flag which was given to the original chapter in 1939 by descendants of Sally. Thorough research in various locales and with flag conservationists has led us to believe that the flag was never flown over Robertson's Hospital as originally claimed, but rather was the flag that Sally proudly and defiantly hoisted over the site of her patient reunion in 1896 in Richmond! What a treasure it is!!

Our hope is to continue our work in honoring our ancestry and educating the public on the true story of the South. We Daughters will prevail!