

## A Snapshot of Williamsburg Chapter's History

In searching through Chapter records, minutes were found of the first meeting of Williamsburg UDC held on December 2, 1902, at the home of Annie Tucker Tyler who was the wife of Lyon Gardiner Tyler, the son of the tenth President of the United States as well as President of William and Mary College at that time. Mrs. Tyler was elected as our first President. There were 41 names on the roll call, thirty-one of which had original applications for membership on file.

The minutes of this meeting recorded that Chapter dues were set at fifty cents yearly plus the taxation fee of fifteen cents. Meetings were set for the first Thursday monthly for nine months each year. Business also included a contribution of \$25.00 to the Memorial window in Old Blandford Church in Petersburg. Subsequent meetings recorded that two headstones for \$5.50 were placed in the Confederate section of Bruton Parish Churchyard. Another meeting in April 1905 stated that the first convention (Division?) was to be held in Norfolk. A delegate and an alternate were elected.

An interesting entry about one of our founding members, Cynthia Beverley Tucker Washington, highlighted her philanthropic work which resulted in large part from the death of one of her daughters, Catharine Brooke Coleman, who died in early childhood. Mrs. Washington looked for a way to hold in memory this daughter by organizing her daughters' friends into a benevolent association. They made small items to sell and gathered ivy and early daffodils for sale in New York City's flower markets for the benefit of Bruton Parish Church. She later shifted her focus to preserving some of the historic structures in Williamsburg and eventually was influential in helping found the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (now known as Preservation Virginia).

In 1908 the Chapter erected the Confederate Monument on the Palace Green in conjunction with the City of Williamsburg and James City County for a cost of \$1528 with each contributing what they had raised. Earlier in 1905 the Chapter placed a marker in the Confederate section of the churchyard showing the trench which contained 253 bodies.

The minutes reflect that the Chapter observed the birthdays of Lee-Jackson and Jefferson Davis as well as the anniversary of the Battle of Williamsburg fought on May 5, 1862. This anniversary included having children place flowers and flags on the graves on May 5. Additionally, a noteworthy project for the Chapter was bringing home the records of the Daughters from St. Louis to Richmond (undated).

Skipping forward to 1935, the Williamsburg monument was moved from the Palace Green to several locations including the old courthouse yard, Cedar Grove Cemetery, Bicentennial Park and finally to Redoubt #6 at Ft. Magruder in April 2021. Our Chapter was bequeathed this redoubt in 1951 by three former members. This last move was made necessary because of the vandalism in late May 2020 when Black Lives Matter splashed paint on the monument. Negotiations between the City of Williamsburg and Williamsburg Chapter resulted in the City giving our Chapter a Deed of Gift thereby relinquishing their half ownership of the monument.

Today this monument stands proudly at Redoubt #6. Its rededication was held on May 1, 2022, with the keynote address given by Mrs. Linda Edwards, President General of UDC. A Southern garden party followed in honor of bringing the monument home as we celebrated our 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Also in 1935 Chapter records mention an important event held on October 1 when we presented a portrait of Robert E. Lee, owned by our Chapter, to Matthew Whaley School in Williamsburg. The keynote address was given by noted historian Douglas Southall Freeman. This portrait was painted by Ellis Silvette, a Richmond artist, who also gave a copy of this painting to the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond.

In 1977, Mrs. Charles M. Hunter, President of Williamsburg Chapter (and later in 1983 was Virginia Division President) scoured the records to learn the above information about this portrait which had disappeared from Matthew Whaley School. It was later retrieved from a storage closet where it likely had been stored during the school's renovation. This portrait was recently donated by our Chapter to the Memorial Building in Richmond in March 2022 in honor of Annie Tucker Tyler, our founding President.

In 1958, Arbela Booth Binns, Historian for our Chapter, reported in her presentation to the Virginia Division Convention on October 3, the early- on concerns of chapter members. Chief among these following the War Between the States was the dire need for Benevolent Services to lessen the suffering of women and children throughout the South. She commended the faithful women of the South who banded together and became united in recognizing the importance of erecting grave markers and monuments.

The Williamsburg Chapter today has twenty-nine members who are trying to carry on the work and dedication of our early members.

August 18, 2022  
Gerry Waring, Outgoing President