

HISTORY

OF

BLUE RIDGE CHAPTER D. A. R.

Lynchburg, Virginia

BY

MRS. E. C. HAMNER

In giving a history of the Blue Ridge Chapter, I feel inclined to elaborate the story, many details of which can be eliminated when this paper is typewritten. I have not done this already, because before it is put on record, there may be many inaccuracies which the members can assist me in correcting.

The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution have recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of its existence. Of course when the Society was formed, we read about it, but it never occurred to any one in Lynchburg that we might become a part of it.

Mrs. Wm. D. Cabell of Nelson County, well known in Virginia, but living at that time in Washington, became the chief organizer of the National Society. She immediately thought of Jefferson, his home and his neighbors, and she wrote to acquaintances in Charlottesville, and asked them to form a chapter there. For a long time Albemarle claimed to be the first chapter in the State, but they were a little long, as we were, in getting the requisite membership, and the Old Dominion, in Richmond, really got the first charter, in January, 1892.

By that time the National Society was getting well organized, and they began to appoint State Regents. Mrs. Putney of Richmond suggested Mrs. Henry as State Regent of Virginia. She was appointed the latter part of 1892, and early in 1893,

Mt. Vernon was formed with five great-great nieces of Washington.

Mrs. Henry set to work in earnest to build up the membership throughout the State. She wrote to relatives and friends in various towns, asking them to start a chapter and accept her appointment as Regent of the same. She wrote to her sister-in-law, Mrs. Emma Henry Ferguson, who was a resident of Lynchburg at that time, and made this request of her. Mrs. Ferguson was very much occupied with her own pursuits in music and literature and she could not undertake it, but she thought of her friend whose energy and enthusiasm seemed peculiarly fitted for the work, so she came and asked Mrs. E. C. Hamner to form a Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution here, and offered herself and niece, Miss Ella H. Miller, as members. By her convincing arguments, she left no room for denial, and with self distrust and much hesitancy, my application papers were made out and sent to Mrs. Henry, who endorsed them, and forwarded them to the National Board.

At that time, Mrs. Caroline Scott Harrison was the President General of the National Society, and the membership paper was returned bearing her signature, with National number 1864; and my appointment as Regent of Lynchburg was received from Mrs. Henry October 11, 1893.

The time of organizing extended over a period of two years, before we got the full membership required to obtain a Charter. The meetings were held monthly at the home of Mrs. E. C. Hamner. Miss Ella Miller, her faithful assistant, was always present, and Miss Mollie Early was a most encouraging

member on account of her confidence in our success. She brought in Mrs. Anna Willing Dornin, a woman who was an ornament to any society and who helped us to build up our Chapter by sending her carriage for all delinquent members, for the elements combined against us, and we always had rain when we had our meetings, so that D. A. R. weather became proverbial.

Miss Lucy Davis, at that time the principal of Monroe School, was a most delightful and useful member, ever ready to contribute to the literary program. A very notable contribution from her was an account of the Indian legends, as collected by Longfellow and published by his son-in-law.

Mrs. Jack Slaughter was always present. On one occasion she gave a history of the Quakers, her grandmother being one of them, and went so far in detail as to have two dolls dressed in the correct Quaker costumes for the women and men.

Mrs. C. I. M. Jordan was a frequent visitor, and in her charming style entertained the company.

Miss Eliza Russell Payne never missed a meeting, and contributed valuable reminiscences, being descended from one of the Kings Mountain heroes.

Mrs. R. G. H. Kean became so interested she would never be absent, and sometimes brought with her Mrs. Mayre, and so these programs were replete with the wit and wisdom of our best society.

Mrs. Hamner acted as Secretary as well as Regent and had preserved these records, which were unfortunately destroyed by a fire at her home.

Although these ladies were so interested, they said they were too old to join, and at the close of the winter, 1893-4, we had only eight members, and the following papers were sent on to Washington in May, 1894, and returned the 6th of June, 1894:

Mrs. Anna Willing Dornin	no. 5402
Miss Mary J. Early	5403
Mrs. Mary Otey Mitchell	5404
Miss Lucy Davis	5405
Mrs. Peter J. Otey	5406
Mrs. Natalie Otey Ward	5407
Miss Ella H. Miller	5408

During the winter of 1894-5 we had Mrs. T. M. Terry to join us - No. 9404 - which shows how rapidly the women were coming in - in six months the National membership was almost doubled. With great triumph, Miss Mollie Early brought in the name of her sister, Miss Ruth Early, who hitherto had been too much occupied to consider membership, and Mrs. Slaughter presented the papers of her daughter, Rosalie Slaughter, who was then a student at the College of Medicine in Philadelphia. Miss Slaughter's number was 9892, and Miss Early's 9893.

Mrs. Mary Lightfoot Garland, the most prominent and charming old lady in Lynchburg, became interested in our Chapter, and asked to become a member. We found that she was a genuine daughter - or Real Daughter as they were afterwards called - but to show how imperfect are the war records of the Revolution, no mention of her father or grandfather could be found, though the latter was Col. Nelson Anderson and well known in this community as a Revolutionary officer. Mrs. Garland had lived with her grandfather and knew his record by often hearing him

tell of his experiences. She therefore went before a notary public and declared the truth of it, and her paper was accepted. At that time she was 94 years old, and although she lived to be 98, she never could be induced to attend a meeting of the Chapter, though the members were very attentive to her and presented her with a gold spoon, the gift of the National Society to all Genuine Daughters.

In September, 1895, Mrs. Addie Lyons Bohmer joined us, and her papers completed the necessary membership - her National number was 9900, and Mrs. Garland's 9914.

Our Charter was immediately applied for. The name for our Chapter was suggested by Mrs. Lyons of Richmond, who was visiting here, and in talking of a suitable name, she said, "there ought to be none other when you have the Blue Ridge", and so we gladly accepted it. On the 2nd day of October, 1895, we received our Charter with the following names as Charter members: Mrs. Hamner; Miss Miller; Miss M. J. Early; Miss Ruth Early; Mrs. Garland; Mrs. Terry; Mrs. Dornin; Miss Slaughter; Miss Lucy Davis; Mrs. Peter J. Otey; Mrs. Natalie Ward; Mrs. Mitchell; Mrs. Bohmer, and Mrs. Emma Henry Ferguson.

So rapid is the stream of passing events, in eight years there were only five of the Charter members enrolled in the membership, and those five still remain: Mrs. Hamner; Miss Miller; the Misses Early, and Miss Lucy Davis.

In compliment to Mrs. Hamner, who had served under Mrs. Henry's appointment during the period of formation, she

1896

was elected the first Regent of the Blue Ridge Chapter, with Mrs. Bohmer, Secretary, Miss Miller, Registrar, and Miss Mollie J. Early, Treasurer. Mrs. Norwood Mitchell was appointed Chairman of the Committee on By Laws, and very courteously presented the Chapter with fifty copies neatly gotten up in pamphlet form. After we received our Charter and became a Chapter, responsible to the National Society and to the community, we assumed more formality in the meetings. The duly elected officers followed strictly the Constitution and By Laws, and the members began to entertain the Chapter at their homes as they do at present; and our dear delightful visitors were no longer invited, but were told that none could enter the inner circle of this exalted band but members.

About this time we discovered that there was another Real Daughter in Lynchburg - Mrs. Asburyna Tilden Phelps - a beautiful old lady who was the daughter of Col. John Bell Tilden, a member of Washington's Guard. She was invited to join the Chapter and became very much interested in the Society, and was a constant attendant for some years - always relating a cherished recollection of her father and what he had told her of his life during the Revolutionary War. She also was presented with a gold spoon by the National Society, and was the recipient of many attentions from this Chapter.

While Mrs. Hamner was Regent in 1896, she and Miss Mollie Early represented the Blue Ridge Chapter at the National Congress, held in the Church of our Father - and just like a home coming of children whose ancestors had wandered away

generations before. There never was a more cordial reception given delegates, or a more harmonious congress. Then it was that the beautiful Frances Folsom Cleveland gave us an informal reception, mingling with the ladies and conversing with each one, and seemed to enjoy it as much as her visitors.

In 1897, Mrs. Hamner's term of office having expired, Miss Ella H. Niller succeeded her, and put into the work all the energy and prompt attention to details that characterize her. I wish to emphasize especially the valuable services rendered by Miss Miller in establishing this Chapter. The Regent was sometimes inclined to give it up, but with her, there was no such word as fail, nor thought of turning it over to another; her command was, "Mrs. Hamner, you must do it."

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I wish to put on record also some mention of the gratitude felt by your first Regent for the loyal support she received from all the members, culminating, before her retirement, in a token of affection, the presenting of a badge of the Society, which she has cherished and worn ever since as the emblem of these sacred days.

Soon after the election of Miss Miller, the State Regent called a conference of the Chapters in Richmond. She went there to represent the Blue Ridge, and for the first time met members of other chapters as D. A. R., the chapters in the State then numbering eight. It was at this conference that the Daughters decided to promote the study of history by instituting the gift of a prize or medal to the pupil in the

public school who wrote the best essay on a historical subject - this custom was kept up by the Blue Ridge Chapter for many years.

The Chapter having increased greatly in membership, decided to compliment their Regent by giving a reception in her honor. The Hill City Lodge was then new and was secured for the occasion, which proved to be a brilliant affair, and brought together the prominent people of the city. A general interest in the revival of local history was awakened, and the older people took great pride in the Daughters.

In 1899, Miss Ruth Early became Regent. She had already begun research work in the county records, which resulted in "By Paths of Virginia", and her intimate knowledge of the history of the State made her a most acceptable delegate both to the Conference and to the Congress of the Society.

In 1901 Mrs. James Lewis was made Regent, and to her we owe our deepest gratitude for she carried us successfully through a meeting of the State Conference, which was a tremendous responsibility. She planned and consummated a Banquet, given at the Hotel Carroll - which was the first and I think the only one ever given by women in this city - where a feast of reason and flow of soul was mingled with the many delicious courses. At that time women didn't realize what good speakers they might be if they only tried, and we had no other thought than to get a man to be Toastmaster. Mr. Don Halsey filled this position most gracefully, and many fine speeches were

made by the men, Mrs. Tuttle being the only woman who rose to her feet in response to the many flattering things they said about us.

In 1903 Mrs. R. I. Owen was elected Regent. She served only a short time, but was so efficient the Chapter would have her back.

At the Conference in Danville, 1903, the Chapters determined to assist in reproducing Monticello at the St. Louis Exposition, and because a member of the Blue Ridge Chapter, Mrs. Horsley, initiated the movement, this Chapter was given the privilege of naming the hostess of the Building. Through Mrs. Horsley and our Regent's efforts, we contributed \$382.00 towards the erection of the Building. A little later Mrs. Wm. M. Strother, then of the Blue Ridge, was elected Hostess, and by her gracious courtesy made not only the Virginia D. A. R., but all Daughters welcome in the home of Thomas Jefferson.

In 1904, Mrs. Horsley was made Regent of Blue Ridge. She became towards the Chapter, a hospitable a matron as she was, as indulgent as a mother to her daughters. She gave of her means and personal possessions to the D. A. R. house at Jamestown, but in the name of Blue Ridge. She suggested that we prepare for an exhibit at Jamestown, and gave, perhaps, the most enjoyable entertainment the Chapter has ever experienced. She invited all the members to spend the day at Sweet Briar. The weather was perfect. We took the early train and arriving at the station, found carriages to meet us and take us for a drive all over the estate, then we were shown over the house

and the many beautiful things there interested us vastly. A sumptuous dinner was served, for which we had a keen appetite, and whiling away the afternoon on the lawn, made glorious with the drooping sun, the appearance of the carriages reminded us that we must say goodbye to our dear hostess.

In 1906 Mrs. Owen was again elected, and assisted the Chapter in working up a most creditable exhibit for the Jamestown Exposition. In fact, the Virginia historical exhibit was by far the most interesting place on the ground, and was crowded all the time with visitors. Circumstances kept Mrs. Owen out of town a great deal during this term of her Regency, and the Vice Regents presided.

The Chapter had now grown to such proportions and so many were clamoring for admission, whose applications could not be accepted, on account of the limit set upon membership, Mrs. Wm. M. Strother requested to be transferred to the National Society, in order to found a new Chapter here. Miss Paschal Hall and Mrs. Maloney withdrew with her, and in a short time they had so many applications, a Charter for the Lynchburg Chapter was asked for, with about eighteen members. Mrs. Strother was the founder and first Regent.

Mrs. Frost was elected Regent of the Blue Ridge Chapter in 1908, and was indefatigable in her care of the Chapter and in providing for successful monthly meetings. She re-organized the Childrens Chapter - called Charles Lynch - and interested the members in the district nurses, giving them a shower of

thirty articles; and in every way made the value of the Blue Ridge Chapter felt in this community.

In 1910 Mrs. Owen was re-elected. She began in earnest to raise the money for a Tablet to John Lynch, the founder of Lynchburg, which was erected during her term, chiefly through the generosity of herself and her family. We recall the beautiful address she made on this occasion, and the response by Mr. King, President of the Board of Aldermen. It was while she was Regent, we conceived the idea of trying to help preserve the will of Patrick Henry, by enclosing it in a glass case, so it could be read but not handled. She and Miss Miller took the Committee to Charlotte C. H., in their automobiles, where we were met by Mr. Cullan Carrington and a delegation of ladies, who escorted us to the Court House and after going through the ceremony of placing the will in the frame, Mr. Carrington made a handsome address of thanks to the ladies. This our Regent, Mrs. Owen, replied to, in a natural and graceful manner, which added to her laurels as a worthy representative of this Chapter.

In speaking of entertainments the Chapter has enjoyed, I would like to mention the delightful dinner tendered this Committee by the ladies of Charlotte C. H. Never was a repast more refreshing nor hospitality more appreciated.

In 1911, Miss Lilla Miller was again made Regent, the Chapter ever relying on her good judgment and hand. Early in her administration, in February, 1912, we were called upon

Our next Regent, Mrs. Wm. Beasley, proved to be the most energetic worker we have ever had. She knows not how to refuse a request, either from the National Society, or from Chapters, and has been most liberal in her support. She conceived the idea and worked up Tag Day for the benefit of the Red Cross relief fund in Belgium. Many members of the Lynchburg Chapter joined in this effort, and the wonderful sum of \$689.00 was raised. This placed Blue Ridge far ahead not only of any Chapter in the State, but of any Chapter in the Society. When the President-General, Mrs. Wm. Cummin Story, visited Lynchburg, she put Blue Ridge in a niche to itself.

The visit of our President-General to the two Chapters in Lynchburg was a gala week in our history. A member of the Blue Ridge Chapter - Mrs. W. C. Ivey - entertained very handsomely in her honor, the Lynchburg Chapter gave an afternoon reception, to which all Daughters were invited, and the Poplar Forest Chapter entertained at luncheon for Mrs. Story and her party, at which time our Regent was an honored guest.

It might be mentioned here the many delightful and beautiful entertainments the Daughters have given at their homes, at the monthly meetings of the Chapter, when fine programs have been provided, often including speakers of distinction. On one occasion, the Vice President General from Virginia, Mrs. George Shackelford, addressed the Chapter, and was entertained at luncheon the following day by Mrs. E. C. Hamner.

Our Regent found us a Chapter given to generous deeds. We have borne our share in building Continental Hall; in paying for the Virginia Column; for the addition of land to the lot on which Continental Hall is built; the Jefferson bust, and the Virginia room. We gave \$10.00 to the restoration of the Richard Bland pew in Bruton Church; \$5.00 for the Manilla Tablet, where we sent 130 books; and 269 books to the soldiers in the Spanish-American War, together with a large package of hospital shirts, made by willing hands. We gave two book cases and 135 books to the Y. W. C. A., and lent 35 lineage books to the Jones Memorial Library; and the American Magazine, the organ of the Society, to the Woman's Club. We gave \$7.50 to the Memorial Window fund for Real Daughters in Continental Hall; \$2.70 to Francis Scott Key Memorial; \$1.00 to the Mary Desha portrait; \$1.00 to the portrait of Mrs. McLean. Two contributions to the Ragged Mountain Missions, \$10.00 each; \$5.00 to the 12th Street Kindergarten; \$5.00 to the Cumberland Gap Monument; \$25.00 for a boulder on the Daniel Boone Trail; and perhaps many other contributions which I may have forgotten.

Mrs. Davis, our former Treasurer, gives as a sum total \$2,000.00 expended. I think it is even more, including the annual contribution of each member to the National Society of \$1.00 apiece.

For eleven years we gave prizes or medals in the High School, which amounted to \$100.00. We have rarely turned down an appeal, always contributing to the various State funds, and

paying our quota of the expense of the State Conference and of publishing the proceedings. I must acknowledge though we have been indifferent in our support of the American Monthly Magazine, only a few copies being taken by the members.

The Blue Ridge Chapter has been recognized by the State Conferences in electing State Officers - Mrs. Judge Horsley was Vice State Regent for two years, and presided on several occasions. Mrs. E. C. Hamner was the first State Secretary, and served for two years. She was then elected State Treasurer, and served for four years. At the recent Conference, our Regent, Mrs. Beasley, was urged to allow her name to go up for nomination as State Regent, and I doubt not she would have been elected, but she felt it would be impossible to give up so much of her time as such an office demands.

For two years this Chapter has celebrated Flag Day, giving a picnic in the open country, where everybody has a good time. At the luncheon given at the Oakwood Club on Washington's birthday, 1914, it was decided to make it an annual affair, and as guest of honor in February, 1915, we have invited our former State Regent, Mrs. Jamison, greatly beloved by the Daughters, not only in this State, but in the National Congress.

I submit this record, imperfect I know, hoping the members will assist me in making the necessary corrections,

and additions, for it is only through the impressions of the entire membership that a true history of the Blue Ridge Chapter can be written.

(Signed) Mrs. E. C. Hamner,

