

The Mt. Vernon Chapter

D. A. R.

of Alexandria, Virginia.

The Mt. Vernon Chapter has not the honor of being the first chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution organized in the State of Virginia, but it was only two years after the formation of the National Society that, on May thirteenth, 1893, a party of ladies from Alexandria gathered under the shadow of the spreading trees in the home of the Father of His Country, where the beauty of nature is blended with the loftiest patriotic associations, to take the first steps toward organizing a new chapter of the D. A. R. Here, upon the greensward once trodden by the feet of Washington himself, amid all the loveliness of the early spring, and upon the day made memorable nearly three hundred years before by the landing of the first emigrants upon the soil of Virginia, the Mt. Vernon Chapter had its inception, and from this source it drew the historic and patriotic inspiration which has ever characterized it.

Its charter members were Mrs. Louisa Fontaine Washington Chew, Mrs. Jean Charlotte Washington Willis, Mrs. Eliza Selden Washington, Mrs. Ann Maria Washington Tucker, Mrs. Eleanor Washington Howard, Mrs. Susan Taylor Blackburn, Miss Rebecca C. Powell, Mrs. Nellie Selden Lloyd Uhler, Mrs. Jean Charlotte Washington Yeatman, Miss Mary Lee Lloyd, Mrs. Nannie Mason Davis, Mrs. Julia Murray Schaeffer, Miss Fannie Mason, Mrs. Mary Harrison Spearing, Miss Nannie Marshall Norton, Mrs. Harriet B. Turner; and the officers of the Chapter, chosen at its first meeting, were:--

Regent:

Miss Susan Riviere Hetzel,

by whom it was organized;

Vice Regent: Miss Mary Lee Lloyd,

Secretary: Miss Rebecca C. Powell,

Registrar: Miss Eliza Selden Washington,

Treasurer: Mrs. Susan T. Blackburn.

The assistance of Mrs. F. Berger Moran, in its formation, was acknowledged by electing her Vice Regent at large.

It is interesting to note how many of the sons of Virginia especially distinguished in the military and civil service of the Country during the Revolutionary period, were represented by the Charter Members of the Mt. Vernon Chapter. Colonel John Augustine Washington, brother of the General, who, as acting County Lieutenant of Westmoreland County, was active in raising and disciplining troops, and defending the seaboard all through the war, was a member of the Convention of 1775, which appointed The Virginia Committee of Safety, and of that of 1776, which directed the Virginia Delegates in Congress to propose to that body to declare the United Colonies free and independent states; Richard Henry Lee, the patriot statesman by whom this resolution was offered upon the floor of Congress; George Mason, the distinguished author of the Bill of Rights; John Marshall, afterwards Chief Justice of the United States, whose interpretations of the Federal Constitution, and clear legal definitions laid the foundations of the laws of the Federal Government as now recognized; Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States, and founder of the Democratic Party; Colonel Levin Powell, who took the field first against Lord Dunmore as Major of Minute Men under a commission from The Virginia Committee of Safety, and was afterwards appointed by Congress Lieutenant Colonel of the Sixteenth Virginia Regiment of the Continental Forces; Colonel Charles Simms, who, entering the Army as aid to General Mercer, was commissioned Lieutenant Colonel of the Sixth Virginia Regiment,

served under General Washington through the whole war, and acted as pallbearer at the funeral of his distinguished Chief and personal friend, at the close of the century; and Dr. Selden, whose services to the sick and wounded in camp and field were acknowledged by Congress after the close of the struggle. These men are among the ancestors whose faithful discharge of patriotic duty in the times that tried men's souls entitle the members of the Mt. Vernon Chapter to call themselves "Daughters of the American Revolution".

During the first years of its existence the Chapter was weak, but its earnestness and enthusiasm never wavered. Its meetings were regular; a historian was soon added to its list of officers; a system of by-laws was carefully formulated, and a corresponding secretary elected; patriotic anniversaries were noted, and contributions made to patriotic objects, the first of these being the preservation of Jamestown, by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, to which the Mt. Vernon Chapter gladly lent its aid. At one time medals were awarded to the students in the schools of Alexandria for the best compositions treating of Revolutionary characters and events; at another a contribution was voted to The Virginia Historical Society in Richmond. The Chapter was early and actively interested in the building of Continental Hall, and the first contribution from Virginia toward that object was made by the Mt. Vernon Chapter, through its Regent, Mrs. Eliza Washington Hunter, at the Congress of 1897. Since that time steady effort has been made toward the accomplishment of the building, and the yearly contributions of the Chapter have been regular and liberal, the amount given up to the present time being \$ toward the erection of Continental Hall and \$ for the Virginia Column, Fifty Dollars of this sum being presented in

behalf of the Ann McCarty Ramsay Chapter of the Children of the American Revolution which was organized in 1901, under the auspices of the Mt. Vernon Chapter:

In 1899, in response to a request from Rocky Hill, New Jersey, once the headquarters of General Washington, the Mt. Vernon Chapter presented to the Rocky Hill Chapter a flag of the original style of 1779, with the thirteen stars in a circle, as a memento from the State of Virginia.

The Chapter has received many appeals for assistance towards patriotic objects outside of its own City and State, as well as within their limits, to all of which its reply of sympathy and aid has been ready and as liberal as its ability would permit.

In 1901 the Chapter took the initiative toward the restoration of Pohick Church, near Mt. Vernon, one of the most interesting relics of General Washington's time, since he was not only a vestryman of the Church, but it was built under his oversight, and from plans designed and approved by himself. This restoration is a subject of deep interest to the members of the Chapter, and is very near their hearts. They have carried on the work continuously since 1901, making regular contributions toward it themselves, and sending out letters and circulars throughout the whole Society, with the hope of awakening a general interest among the Daughters, in an object so closely associated with the Father of Our Country. Many liberal responses have been received, and the work has been so far successfully prosecuted, but funds are still needed for its completion, and the Chapter would again appeal to the Society for help to accomplish this.

Since its first organization its Regents have been: Miss Susan Riviere Hetzel, Mrs. Eliza Washington Hunter, Mrs. Bettie Lewis Smoot--a descendant of Bettie Lewis, the sister of Washington

and Mrs. Fannie Johnston Robinson; all of whom have shown decided capability in the management of its business, have presided with grace and dignity, and have assisted much in maintaining the high ideals and aims of the Chapter.

As the years have rolled by its membership has largely increased, and this is now limited to fifty five active members, residing in Alexandria and Washington, with others at a distance who cannot attend its meetings, and are therefore merely honorary. Four of its members have held office in the National Society; Mrs. Brockett and Mrs. Eleanor Washington Howard, having been successively National Vice President of Organization, Miss Susan Riviere Hetzel National Registrar, and Mrs. Smoot National Chaplain, while Mrs. Howard at the conclusion of her services on the National Board, was elected State Regent of Virginia.

The social feature has been emphasized by the Mt. Vernon Chapter, and its regular monthly meetings for business are followed, after adjournment, by a social reunion. This, it is believed, has drawn the members more closely together, and has kept them in touch and sympathy, and lent its aid toward promoting that spirit of cordial kindness, harmony, and absence of jealousy and clique, which has always been the distinguishing characteristic of the Chapter.