

THE BEGINNINGS - MARY CUSTIS LEE CHAPTER NO. 7 and 17TH VIRGINIA
REGIMENT CHAPTER NO. 168 - UNITED DAUGHTERS OF THE CONFEDERACY
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

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In the Fall of 1894, a group of women met in Nashville, Tennessee to formally adopt a constitution and by-laws for a new organization - the National Daughters of the Confederacy. There were three major endeavors: First, to unite all Southern women now organized; Second, to cultivate ties of friendship among the women who had not only lost loved ones but shared the commonalities of danger, suffering, and privations; Third, instill a proper respect into the descendants of the people of the South through accurate and authentic information about the Confederacy.

Shortly after this initial meeting applications for charters were received. From September 11, 1894 through April 17, 1895 seven chapters were chartered. No. 1 from Nashville, Tennessee; No. 2, Savannah, Georgia; No. 3, Wilmington, North Carolina; No. 4, Charleston, South Carolina; No. 5, Jackson, Tennessee; No. 6, Dallas, Texas; No. 7, Alexandria, Virginia - the Mary Custis Lee Chapter. And in November 1896 a second chapter was chartered in Alexandria, Virginia - the 17th Virginia Regiment, No. 168.

It is the Chapters organized and chartered in Alexandria, Virginia on April 17, 1895 and in November 1896 that are the subjects of this history.

Alexandria, Virginia was occupied by the Union on May 24, 1861 at the beginning of the War Between the States. The citizens were governed under the United States government from the time of occupation until the end of the war and beyond. Many of the people who lived in Alexandria left everything behind and relocated further South during the war. Those who chose to remain either did not want to leave or did not have the means to do so.

After the war was over and Alexandria's soldiers and citizenry had returned, daily life slowly settled into a new routine. In the years following, those who had fought and those who had made the ultimate sacrifice were not forgotten. Many of the organizations, clubs, and churches found ways to remember through programs, placing flowers on graves, and helping those who had suffered so much.

The women of the community wanted to do more but it would take women who were staunch Southerners and Confederate supporters to start a movement giving the women a voice. Such women were Jean Lloyd Yeatman and Mary Lee Lloyd daughters of John Lloyd who were cousins of General Robert E. Lee.

The sisters talked with other women in the area about the National Daughters of the Confederacy and forming a chapter in Alexandria. Initial meetings were held and

temporary officers elected. Application was made to the national organization and a charter was granted April 17, 1895 to the Mary Custis Lee Chapter No. 7. The goal of the chapter was to honor those who served and to perpetuate the truth about the war and those involved.

On May 24, 1896 a meeting was held at 220 No. Washington Street in the home of the Lloyd sisters and the official election of officers was held. Mrs. Philip T. (Jean Lloyd) Yeatman was elected President; Miss Mary Lee Lloyd, Vice-president; Mrs. Robert Powell, Secretary; Miss Kate Mason Rowland, Historian; and Mrs. Howard, Treasurer. The name chosen for the chapter, Mary Custis Lee, was in honor of the wife of General Robert E. Lee.

Several months prior to the Mary Custis Lee Chapter being chartered, another group of women in Alexandria decided to form a second Daughters chapter. On March 25, 1896 a meeting was held in the home of Mrs. R. C. Powell to form the chapter to be known as the 17th Virginia Regiment Chapter. The primary object of the chapter would be to preserve materials which would provide information about the members of the 17th Virginia Infantry. This Infantry unit was primarily made up of the nine companies who originally left Alexandria on May 24, 1861.

Fifteen members signed their names to the charter application. A month later in April, a meeting was held and officers elected for the 17th Virginia Regiment Chapter No. 168. Mrs. William A. Smoot was elected President; Mrs. R. C. Powell, 1st Vice-president; Mrs. Edgar Warfield, 2nd Vic-president; Miss Alice E. Coquhoun, Corresponding Secretary; Mrs. S. B. Davis, Recording Secretary; Mrs. Thomas Perry, Treasurer; and Miss Kate Mason Rowland, Historian. The chapter was chartered in November 1896.

It must be noted during the November 1895 meeting in Nashville, Tennessee for the national organization, the name was changed from the National Daughters of the Confederacy to the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Each state would be recognized as a Division of the national organization. Virginia, with four chapters registered, had the honor of being named the first Division of the national organization.

Both of these Chapters worked diligently to not only meet the goals each had set for themselves by to also assist the R. E. Lee Camp #2, Confederate Veterans which was formed in 1884. There was nothing too small or too big the ladies would not tackle to help the members of the Camp or those living in the community who had served in any way. With both the Mary Custis Lee Chapter and the 17th Virginia Regiment Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy assisting the Camp, raising money for various projects, assisting in the care of those who were in need, remembering those in cemeteries with flowers - so much was done and so many helped and remembered. These ladies were true Daughters.

As the years passed and the membership of the Veteran's Camp dwindled, the two Chapters were approached by the Camp's members. It was suggested the two chapters

merge in order to take over the management of the Camp's home at 806 Prince Street. This is where the Camp and both UDC chapters held their meetings. The Camp actually demanded in a letter they merge under a different name with inference if they did not the Camp would not deed the property to the combined chapters.

Sometimes gentlemen do not always get their way. On May 27, 1919, the two Chapters merged to be known as the Mary Custis Lee - 17th Virginia Regiment Chapter No. 7. The national organization allowed the new chapter to retain No. 7.

Officers of the respective chapters resigned and new officers were elected for the newly formed chapter. Miss Loula Smoot was elected President; Mrs. James E. Alexander, 1st Vice-president; Mrs. George T. Klipstein, 2nd Vice-president; Mrs. Walter McCaffery, Secretary; Mrs. Charles Barrett, Treasurer; Mrs. George Pior Anderton, Registrar; and Miss Laura J. Zimmerman, Historian.

On December 5, 1921, the R. E. Lee Camp #2, Confederate Veterans formally transferred to the Mary Custis Lee-17th Virginia Regiment Chapter No. 7, United Daughters of the Confederacy the beautiful home at 806 Prince Street in Alexandria, Virginia. The Camp had met in the house for 37 years so the "letting go" was bittersweet. Yet the few remaining members of the Camp were happy to know the Daughters would take care of the home and contents.

In January 1922 the State Corporation Commission granted a charter to the Mary Custis Lee - 17th Virginia Regiment Chapter No. 7 permitting them to own and hold personal property of every kind whatsoever and dispose the same.

The transfer of property became legal with a deed dated January 1, 1924 and filed with the City of Alexandria.

The Mary Custis Lee - 17th Virginia Regiment Chapter No. 7, United Daughters of the Confederacy has over the ensuing decades been the loving caretakers of a stately old house built in 1852. The Chapter continues to honor the original goals the United Daughters of the Confederacy set in writing to long ago - to Live, Pray, Love, Dare, and Think. In doing so we remember the men, women, and children and the history made.

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