

**Roanoke Public Libraries  
Virginia Room**

**Roanoke Committee of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the  
Commonwealth of Virginia Collection**

**Collection Description:**

**Repository:** Roanoke Public Libraries, Virginia Room

**Accession Number:** 1998.03.23

**Title:** National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the Commonwealth of Virginia, Roanoke Committee Collection

**Physical Characteristics:** 1 document storage box

**Donated by:** Katherine Tyler Ellett

**Arrangement:** Documents are arranged as donated, generally chronologically.

**Creator:** Frances Mingea Cocke; Belinda Tuley Spindle; Kathrine Tyler Ellett

**Reproduction Restrictions:** No known restrictions on publication. Virginia Room copy fees apply.

**Processor:** Angela Stiefbold, March 11, 2024

**Historical Note:**

The Roanoke Committee of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the Commonwealth of Virginia was founded in 1918, largely due to the efforts of Sarah Johnson Cocke (Mrs. Lucian H. Cocke Sr.). Sarah J. Cocke was active in many local civic efforts, including the Women's Civic Betterment League and serving on the Roanoke City Planning Board. There were 17 charter members of the Roanoke Committee; Sarah J. Cocke was the first chairman. In the 1930s the group had approximately 40 members; in the 1950s and 1960s there were about 60 members, though generally one third lived outside Roanoke, mostly in southwestern Virginia.

The national organization was founded in 1891; its headquarters are in Dumbarton House, Washington, DC. Membership is by sponsorship only, and members must be descendants of an ancestor who "rendered significant service to his country during the Colonial period before July 5, 1776." The Virginia chapter of the organization was founded in 1892, and its mission is to "promote our national heritage through statewide historic preservation, patriotic service, and educational projects, especially at Wilton House Museum."

The Roanoke Committee's first project was to place a bronze tablet with historic information on the front of the Roanoke Municipal Building. The organization has raised funds and given volunteer support to a variety of local and state efforts to document the colonial history of the region. Early chairmen of the committee were: Sarah Johnson Cocke 1918-1940 (Mrs. Lucian H. Cocke Sr.); Anne Davant Fishburn 1940-1959 (Mrs. Ernest Fishburn); Frances Mingea Cocke 1959-1966 (Mrs. C. Francis Cocke); and Kathrine Tyler Ellett 1966- ? (Mrs. Arthur T. Ellett).

## **Scope and Content:**

The collection includes information primarily from the 1950s into the early 1970s, as inherited, collected, and retained by Katherine T. Ellett. The bulk of the collection was amassed by Ellett during her chairmanship of the committee, beginning in 1966.

Earlier items are included, such as financial records for the committee from 1922-43 and membership lists from 1939 and 1940. A notebook of minutes, member lists, and ephemera related to the organization was compiled by Frances M. Cocke, 1954-59; a spiral bound transcription notebook containing minutes, 1956-61, is labeled with Belinda Spindle's (Mrs. C. Shelbune Spindle) name, but others appear to have used it. Items related to typescript histories written by members and donated to the Roanoke Library in 1956 are included as well.

The items from Mrs. Ellett's time as chairman include general correspondence and information related to the committee's fiftieth anniversary (1968) luncheon and tour in Fincastle, VA, as well as programs and documents from national conventions. Additionally, a number of publications from the Virginia and national organizations, including histories of both, are included in the collection.

The collection also includes membership election certificates 1955-73, arranged alphabetically by member name.

## **Container List:**

### Box 1 of 1

Folder 1: Mrs. Cocke's Handbook – Items removed from a leather-bound three-ring binder. Items are in reverse chronological order. They include lists of officers, committee lists, and member address lists, as well as meeting agendas from 1954-59. Newspaper and magazine clippings related to patriotism and history are interspersed in the book. Items that had been inserted between the bound items and cover include the 1960 organization yearbook and a 1940 list of members, as well as some correspondence.

Folder 2: Member Election Certificates – Arranged alphabetically. Include member numbers. Dates range 1955-1973. Also includes related correspondence and a pamphlet: "Requirements in the Preparation of Papers To Be Presented for Membership in the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Virginia." (1951).

Folder 3: Membership Lists, Luncheon Invitations – Membership books from 1952, 1960, and 1966. Invitations are for club luncheons and generally include hostess(es), place, time, and month and day, but not year.

Folder 4: Miscellaneous Items – Bank deposit book 1922-1936; undated membership list (ca. 1950s); committee rules; correspondence regarding donation of bedspreads to Smithfield (1972); program from 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Jamestown Settlement event (1957); program from presentation of bust of George Wythe (1964); correspondence regarding bequest from Charlotte Gale Hunter Estate (1971)

Folder 5: Correspondence and Ephemera 1947-1986 – Includes member lists from 1939, 1959, and 1966, list of meetings held 1966-1971, correspondence from 1947-1986, pamphlets on regional historic sites, information from 1973 Region IV Conference

Folder 6: 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary / Fincastle Tour – Information about event held April 2, 1968, including history of local committee and correspondence and newspaper articles related to the event

Folder 7: National Society of the Colonial Dames of America Diamond Jubilee. 1966 – Items from event in Washington, DC

Folder 8: National Society of the Colonial Dames of America meetings, 1967 and 1968 – Items from the events in Washington, DC, including a written history, “Roanoke’s Colonial Background”

Folder 9: Items Donated to Roanoke Public Library in 1956 – Includes letter of thanks from library director, correspondence and draft remarks related to the donation, and copies of: “Roanoke’s Colonial Background”; “History of the Roanoke Committee of Colonial Dames”; “Remarks on dedication of portrait of Lucian H. Cocke to Washington and Lee University”; “Bent Mountain Roanoke County, Virginia”; “The Willis Family”; “1975 Historic Landmarks Tour”

Check register, 1936-1943

Minutes notebook, 1956-61

“The Colonial Dames of America in the State of Virginia: Constitution and By-Laws” (n.d.) (3 copies: blank, Mrs. Shelburne Spindle; Mrs. Frances M. Cocke)

“Minutes of the Twenty-eighth Biennial Council of The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America” (1950)

“Brief Summary of the History of The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America and in the Commonwealth of Virginia” (1961) by Pamela Sparrow Williamson (2 copies: blank, Ellett)

“Register of Ancestors: The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America  
in the Commonwealth of Virginia” (1964)

“A History of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America: 1891-1966”  
by Marguerite Appleton

“The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the Commonwealth of  
Virginia Diamond Jubilee 1892-1967: Annual Report 1966-1967, Roster”