



- DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA -

Entrusted With History's Future

Newsletter for the National Society of Colonial Dames of America in the District of Columbia

Volume 18, Number 1

Fall 2020



You're Invited to the Sixty-Third Biennial Council

We hope that you will join us in October, with Dames from across the country, for the Sixty-Third Biennial Council that will be held virtually! Co-chaired by DC Dames Ellen Boomer and Gretchen Bukowski, this event will be unlike any Biennial that has preceded it. Because it is virtual, we have the opportunity to welcome more Dames than ever before to participate in a full week of exciting and informative programming.

From Tuesday, October 13th through Thursday, October 15, a series of engaging presentations, workshops, and panels will be offered on topics ranging from the preservation of Historic Jamestown to best practices in Virtual Programming to Sampler How-tos, and much more. Attend as many sessions, meetings, and presentations as you would like and connect with fellow Dames through round table discussions and special events.

And on Friday, October 16th you are invited for the official Biennial Council Kick-off Celebration as we commemorate the wonderful accomplishments that NSCDA and the State Societies have achieved. On Saturday afternoon join us for the Biennial Council Meeting and on Sunday we will welcome our new National Officers and hear remarks from a prominent historian.

The Schedule of Events appears on the next page. Detailed information can be found on the NSCDA website NSCDA.org. No matter what your passion or interest, we will have something for you!

For additional information and to Register for Biennial:

Enter the "Member Login" Section of the NSCDA Website: NSCDA.org.

Username: history

Password: future

Early Bird pricing for the entire week of Biennial programming is \$25 dollars. After September 18th, the price will increase to \$40.

Once you register, you will receive an email from the Member Services Team with information on signing up for the Biennial Council Business Sessions and Educational Breakout Sessions.

Sixty-Third Biennial Council // October 13–18, 2020

Schedule of Events

Biennial Council Business Sessions: Friday, October 16 – Sunday, October 18

Friday, October 16

- 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM National Board Meeting (for National Board Members only)
Official Business Session
The National Board consists of National Executive Officers, Corporate Society Presidents, and Standing and Special Committee Chairs
National Board Members have received a separate sign-up link for this meeting
- 6:00 PM Welcome Event for all Dames
Presidents' Remarks, Lamar Awards & Roll of Honor Recognition

Saturday, October 17

- 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM Biennial Business Sessions & Voting
Committee Reports, Voting, State Highlights & Presentation of Campaign Celebration
- 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM Evening Speaker TBD, Time tentative

Sunday, October 18

- 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM Closing Ceremony
Farewell to outgoing Execs & installation of new officers, Arlington Speaker, and New President Introduction

Educational Breakout Sessions: Tuesday October 13 – Thursday, October 15

Tuesday, October 13

- 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM DNA and The Search for Unknown Ancestors: Strategies for Success
- 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM Welcome to the New Era of Travel Dames Style with Dr. Michael Jarvis and Kathryn Walker
- 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM Patriotic Services in the Time of COVID-19
- 2:30 PM – 3:30 PM Keep the Donor Love Alive: Major Gift Fundraising on a Post-Campaign Era
- 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM Social Media and Smartphone Photography Basis

Wednesday, October 14

- 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM How to Read a Sampler
- 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM Embracing the Challenge of Conducting Society Business: Options for Corporate Societies During the Pandemic
- 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM Behind the Screen: Learn How to Plan and Host Engaging Virtual Programs in the Age of the Coronavirus
- 2:30 PM – 3:30 PM Beatrix Farrand: The Life and Gardens of a Noted Landscape Architect
- 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM First Women at the United States Military Academy, West Point

Thursday, October 15

- 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM Telling the Whole Story: How Three Museums are Broadening their Narratives to Paint a More Complete Picture
- 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM Bringing Dames Together with Book Groups
- 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM Reimagining the Membership Process
- 2:30 PM – 3:30 PM Leading Change with Christy S. Coleman: Executive Director of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation
- 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM Inspiring Lamar Award Winners...Engaging with Excellence

[Register at NSCDA.org](https://www.nscda.org) [Member Login](#)
Username: history Password: future

President's Message

This has been an unusual season to say the least. Since mid-March, the many events planned by our DC Society fell by the wayside, taken over by Covid 19, with no end in sight. Not only did we miss out on several planned events but, very sadly, we missed out on our Annual Meeting at which time we would have thanked our past President Marta Dunetz for an outstanding year. The Gala at Betsy Nottingham's was the highlight for our Society back in October, where we raised funds not only for the NSCDA Comprehensive Campaign, but also for the Riverside Garden Restoration at Gunston Hall and the new George Washington Room at Sulgrave Manor. The Winter 2020 newsletter described it all, which you can read again on our new Website.



As we were unable to have our Annual Meeting in May, several of the officers assembled at Betsy Nottingham's in June where Marta handed over the gavel to me and we thanked her for her excellent leadership. Ellen Boomer was also present and we surprised her with the announcement that she would be elected to the NSCDA Roll of Honor at this year's Biennial Welcoming Event on Friday, October 16, 6:00 PM. I hope that you will all be there! This will be the first Virtual Biennial and it will give us all an unusual opportunity to participate; to attend meetings and take part in workshops. There will even be a prize for the Society with the best percentage of participants. Normally Dames travel to Washington from all over the country, and then must pay for hotels, dinners etc. Instead this year, for very little cost, any member in every Society can come and join in. I encourage each of you to take a look at all the offerings, enjoy the outstanding speakers and learn more about your National Society.

Finally, I cannot thank our Board enough for their outstanding support in this difficult time. Thanks are due especially to Leslie George for leading us into the future with our very accessible new website and for all her work on the membership directory; to Randy O'Donoghue and Eleanor Nading for putting together this year's program of events, and to Terrell McDermid for creating this newsletter.

Louise Pierrepont Muir
President of the DC Society: NSCDA



Marta Dunetz Presents the Gavel to Incoming President Bunny Muir



Ellen Boomer learns that she will be named to the NSCDA Roll of Honor

Upcoming Programs: Save the Dates!

David Givens: Jamestown Rediscovery's Director of Archaeology Tuesday, November 10 at 10:30 AM via Zoom

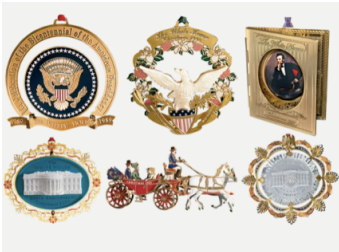


Last year marked the 400th anniversary of Virginia's first General Assembly, the first governmental body in English North America. Meeting during an extremely hot July in 1619, twenty-two Burgesses assembled in the second church at Jamestown, a timber frame structure at the center of the growing town. The Jamestown Rediscovery team, under the leadership of Director of Archaeology David Givens, has spent the last three years excavating the 1617 buildings and the people, which had been lost to history. This exciting project at the first successful English settlement in North America reminds us that history evolves continually and is vibrant and alive.

Mr. Givens's presentation will highlight the latest work of the Rediscovery team – their findings and ground-breaking discoveries. Many questions have been raised by this project. How did the Europeans adapt to the North American environment? What can we learn about the people whose lives at Jamestown were undocumented? How can material culture describe the relations between the English and the native peoples? What can the archaeological remains tell us about experiments in industry, trade, and agriculture in 1619? We hope you will join us to find out.

Instructions on how to register for this virtual event will be provided by email three weeks prior to the event.

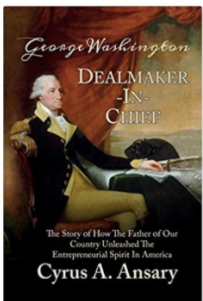
Lina Mann, Historian, The White House Historical Association: "Official White House Christmas Ornaments" December, Date/Time to be Announced, via Zoom



Lina Mann, a historian with the White House Historical Association, will delight us with a program about the White House Christmas ornament program. Since the launch of this program in 1981, the ornaments have become a sought-after and beloved collector's item for millions of families around the country. Each year's ornament honors either an individual president—working our way from Washington to present day—or a significant White House anniversary. Ms. Mann will talk about these ornaments and the fascinating history of Christmas at the White House.

Instructions on how to register for this virtual event will be provided by email three weeks prior to the event.

Cyrus A. Ansary: *George Washington Deal Maker-In-Chief: The Story of How the Father of Our Country Unleashed the Entrepreneurial Spirit in America* Thursday, February 18, 2021 (Time and venue to be announced)



International lawyer, financier, educator, and philanthropist, Cyrus A. Ansary, has been a lifelong scholar of the life of George Washington. Utilizing substantial new research, Mr. Ansary presents a riveting account of how George Washington sought to put in place, in America, an economic system that was the antithesis of what had existed in the colonies under British rule. The entrepreneurial economy – which nurtures and rewards innovation and inventiveness – did not take root in the United States by sheer happenstance. It was crafted by our first President. He painstakingly laid the foundation for it, but it was not established without a struggle. Mr. Ansary lays out the step-by-step process that Washington instituted to fulfill his vision. Furthermore, the author believes that many scholars have failed to link “Washington the capitalist with Washington the President,” and he argues that Washington's early commercial experiences were “crucial contributions to his enduring economic legacy.” President Washington needed all his extensive political and personal tools to overcome fierce opposition to his program. For most Americans, George Washington's economic initiatives are the least well-understood facets of his busy and productive life. This economic vision expanded the opportunities of the nation, led to a flourishing entrepreneurial climate, and built an economic model upon which we rely to this day. Please save the date and consider reading this fascinating book prior to the lecture! Additional information will be circulated closer to the date.

Looking Ahead:

March 24, 2021: Elisabeth “Betsy” Griffith, who spoke to the D.C. Dames a few years ago, will discuss her soon-to-be published book covering Women in America since Suffrage from 1920-2020. Dr. Griffith’s wide-ranging political and social history on the centennial of this momentous movement and the ensuing progress of women’s rights will enlighten and enliven us with extraordinary facts as we celebrate a remarkable era in American history.

April 2021 (Date TBA): A lecture, followed by a tour of **Mount Zion Cemetery**, which abuts the DC Dames’ historic Dumbarton House property and has a fascinating history of its own, is planned for next April. Founded in the 1800s, it is a physical reminder of African-American life and the evolving free Black culture in the District of Columbia from the earliest days of the city to the present. It illustrates the contribution of African-Americans to the development of Georgetown and the work of an early benevolent society organized by Black women for their own benefit.

Young Dames Buddy Initiative

In June, one of the Young Dames proposed an idea for a “Buddy Initiative” to allow some of the younger Dames the opportunity to learn from the experiences of the senior Dames and to develop friendships and relationships during a time when we can’t meet in person. There was a lot of excitement among the Young Dames to pursue the idea so they decided to move forward after sending out a Google sheet for those interested. The co-chairs of the Young Dames; Whitney Hansen, Spencer Bridgers and Elizabeth Webster, assembled a list of almost 50 Dames. With advice and coordination from the President, Bunny Muir, they paired them up with the Young Dames who expressed interest in contacting a “buddy” via phone or email.

“The initiative may serve to boost the spirits of those who may live alone during these scary times and, also, enable Young Dames to meet some of the older members,” Spencer explained. “It could also serve as an opportunity for us to stay connected as an organization while we cannot be together in person.”

The initiative was conducted over a four-week period with a Happy Hour held at the end to hear feedback about how it went. “I really enjoyed the experience of getting to know my “buddy” via phone conversations,” Elizabeth reported. “She had very interesting stories and because she has rarely been able to attend meetings (back when there were in-person meetings and activities!) we wouldn’t have otherwise had the opportunity to make a connection with each other.”

Unfortunately, some Dames were not able to connect with their buddy but, for the most part, many of the Dames had great conversations and really enjoyed the connections and friendships that they were able to make. In addition, the Florida society heard about the Buddy Initiative and reached out to learn more about it and to hear about the variety of the DC Young Dames’ activities. “Spencer and I spoke with them last week,” said Elizabeth. “It was nice to make a connection with another state and hopefully provide some good ideas!”

If they are able to do the initiative again next year, the Young Dames have several good ideas to continue strengthening these relationships by, perhaps, running the program for longer than 30 days and by organizing a joint luncheon or gathering for everyone.

DC Society Pins Available!



Our charming gold-filled DC Society pin is again in stock. Why not purchase one for yourself or a DC Dame friend? Please contact Llewellyn Bensfield (lwben@comcast.net) to inquire about prices or to place an order.

The Story of the DC Dames President's Gavel

The story begins in 2014 when Lea Uhre and Judy Stover were working on the NSCDA National and DC Archives at Dumbarton House. Among hundreds of pieces of paper to be catalogued they found a list titled: *"Addenda" Gifts, Markers, Memorials (Please return to D.C. President)*.

The items enumerated on the list dated from 1895 through 1961. The Historical Activities Committee found the list interesting and, in 2018, Mary Calvert said that she would like to look into it. Mary proceeded to locate and photograph twenty of the thirty-three actual items that were listed. At the fall 2019 Membership Meeting she and Judy Stover gave a PowerPoint presentation about the items and told a story to go with each.



The first item, from 1895, had the following description: "A handsome silver bound gavel made from wood grown at Mt. Vernon was presented to the President of the District Society by Miss Katherine Cropper." Unfortunately, Mary had been unable to find the gavel. As Judy began the presentation, she looked into Marta Dunetz's lap where there was a gavel bound in silver that Marta had used to call the meeting to order. No wonder Mary couldn't find the missing gavel; the president had it! What a great "show and tell" moment for everyone.

Fast forward to July 27th of this summer. In *the Washington Post* "Metro" section there was an article about the last tree that George Washington planted at Mt. Vernon in 1780. The tree had recently fallen and Mt. Vernon held a ceremony as they honored the last mighty White Oak. This event piqued the historical interest of Bunny Muir and Marta who wanted to know if this could have a relationship with the DC Dames' gavel. Since the gavel was given in 1895, it clearly did not come from this last tree unless a limb was removed or had fallen. Judy looked through the DC Society's archive records to see what more might be found about the gavel. Bunny contacted Susan Schoelwer from Mt. Vernon who had spoken to the DC Society last February about its collection. Bunny told her about the gavel and asked if there was evidence in Mt. Vernon's archives of wood from the original trees being used to make memorabilia. Susan's answer was quite interesting. Mt. Vernon's records showed that John Augustine Washington III (G.W.'s great-great nephew who inherited Mt. Vernon) and the Ladies of Mt. Vernon had indeed sold wood to be made into souvenirs. They had a whole industry of "trinkets" made, especially canes, and sold them to the thousands of tourists who came to visit the house annually to help with the upkeep of the financially strapped plantation. There is a strong likelihood that this was where our gavel came from.

This led to another question: who was Katherine Cropper who donated the gavel to the DC Society in 1895? Marta put on her detective cap and found that the Croppers were a very distinguished Colonial family. Katherine was the granddaughter of a famous ship captain. Judy found in the DC Dames archive a handwritten letter from 1893 which listed Miss Cropper as one of the original 35 members of the DC Society when it was admitted into the NSCDA one year after it was founded. In addition to presenting the DC Society with the gavel, Miss Cropper also represented the Society in the first National Council held in Washington, DC at Tudor Place. Additionally, Miss Cropper submitted the design for the National Certificate that was made by Tiffany and Co., a copy of which was given to each member of the DC Society. There is still much more to be learned about how Miss Cropper obtained the gavel and who encased it in silver. Bunny is reaching out to past DC Dames Presidents to ask if they recall any information about the gavel. Whether they do or not, our gavel has been passed down from president to president for the 127 years of our Society. Pretty impressive since it has changed hands thirty-five times!

Judy Stover
Archive Committee

Our Three Book Clubs Adapt to Pandemic

Question: How are our three book clubs coping with the pandemic? And, here's the answer.

In March, when the coronavirus started affecting all our lives, the History Hounds and the Literary Ladies (our daytime book clubs) stopped meeting. Placing a high value on the benefits of gathering in person, and naively assuming the pandemic would end soon, they decided to wait until they could meet in person later in the spring or summer. Of course, that didn't happen.

But, our enterprising Evening Explorers moved immediately to Zoom and already have had three successful meetings using a virtual platform. Gwinneth Clarkson even was able to participate from South America, where she has been visiting her family in Columbia.

As this article is being prepared, all three clubs are preparing for Zoom meetings in the fall. During the summer, the Literary Ladies read *Mornings on Horseback: The Story of an Extraordinary Family, a Vanished Way of Life, and the Unique Child who Became Theodore Roosevelt* by historian David McCullough, while the Evening Explorers tackled all 641 pages of *Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder* by Caroline Fraser. The History Hounds focused on our U.S. Presidents by reading Craig Fehrman's *Author in Chief: The Untold Story of Our Presidents and the Books They Wrote*.

For October, the Literary Ladies are focusing on Elizabeth Keckley's 1868 autobiography titled *Behind the Scenes: Or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House*, and the Evening Explorers are enjoying *The Widow Washington: The Life of Mary Washington* by Martha Saxton. The History Hounds have turned their attention to Nathaniel Philbrick's *Bunker Hill: A Siege, A Revolution*. Many will remember that Philbrick discussed this book at a popular DC Dames Lecture in May 2014.

Are you interested in joining one of our book clubs? Questions about the Evening Explorers should go to Judy Stover at 301-320-7449 or judy.stover@gmail.com. If the daytime History Hounds interests you, contact Tyrrell Flawn at 202-251-9282 or tyrrellflawn@gmail.com. The Literary Ladies, chaired by Marta Dunetz, is full and cannot accommodate new members at this time.

All who belong to our book clubs enjoy the books and appreciate the close camaraderie that is created. They treasure their close bonds of friendship. In fact, one of the breakout sessions at the upcoming NSCDA Biennial will be a panel titled "Bringing Dames Together with Book Groups."



Pandemic Protocol: L-R are Tyrrell Flawn, Marta Dunetz, and Judy Stover, practicing social distancing, wearing masks and staying outdoors while meeting to discuss book club plans for the fall.

The DC Society's New Website



The DC Dames have a new and improved website! While the address remains the same, nscdadc.org, you will find the website more attractive and functional. Our goals were to create a visually appealing, dynamic homepage, which leaves a good first impression on the general public when it visits our site, and also to create an easier to use, password protected ([dcdames1891](#)), members' only page, with more useful content. This content includes:

- A members' only landing page with upcoming events and news
- A traditional calendar
- A list of current officers
- A list of committee chairs
- A link to pay dues or make a contribution through PayPal
- A link to the directory

Web address: nscdadc.org

Password: [dcdames1891](#)

Please explore and enjoy our new website. We hope it will become your "go-to" home-base for all news and information on the DC Dames.

Registrar's Report

We currently have 298 active members in the DC Society, fifty-three Courtesy Members and eighteen candidates are working on their lineage papers.

Since February, we have welcomed eight new members: Kathryn Donaldson Baker, Jacqueline Ann Collamore, Jane Beazley Decell, Mary Page Fuger "Frisky" Hickey, Lucile Olson Huber, Carolyn Groves Lewis, Anne Gullett Maletta, and Elizabeth Blackwell "Beth" Roberts. Additionally, we have welcomed Kate Patterson (VA) as a Courtesy Member.

Calendar

September 16, 2020, 10:00AM	Board Meeting, DC Society (via Zoom)
October 13-18, 2020	NSCDA Virtual Biennial (The 63rd Biennial Council) (via Zoom)
• October 13-15	Educational Breakout Sessions
• October 16-18	Biennial Council Business Sessions
November 10, 2020, 10:30AM	David Givens: Jamestown Rediscovery (via Zoom)
December 2020 Date/Time TBA	Lina Mann: "White House Official Ornaments" (via Zoom)
February 18, 2021 Time/Venue TBA	Cyrus Ansary: <i>George Washington: Dealmaker in Chief</i>
March 24, 2021 Time/Venue TBA	Elisabeth "Betsy" Griffith, "Women in America since Suffrage"
April 2021 Date TBA	Mount Zion Cemetery: Lecture Followed by a Tour
May 19, 2021, 10:30AM	Annual Meeting at Gunston Hall, Lunch & Tour of New Garden