

2023 Autumn Newsletter

Sharon Hare, Editor

The Colonial Dames of America

Letter from the President

Dear Dames,

It gives me great happiness to introduce a newsletter filled with information about the many community building events that the Dames have participated in or are upcoming, as well as information on some of our members and contributions of those with whom we work in other organizations.

Our trip to Boston and Plimoth Patuxet was fun and productive. The trip was sold out. Dames came from many of our chapters and from as far as California and Florida. The clubs in Boston were beautiful and elegant, Brenton Simons and Ryan Woods of American Ancestors/NEHGS erudite and entertaining, and we were blessed with the soft breeze and sunshine of a perfect September day on the coast of Massachusetts, as well as the generous hospitality of Richard Pickering of Plimoth Patuxet and Dame Lisa Pennington and her husband David Furlow at their historic home near the water.

I hope to see many of you at our upcoming holiday festivities. We will once again be in the Union Club for Christmas carols and good cheer Monday, December 4. Please let the office know if you are coming into New York City from out of town. Dame Holly Hunt has graciously offered to host us for hot chocolate Sunday, December 3rd. Her apartment is on Park Avenue in the area that is closed to traffic for the Park Avenue tree lighting ceremony. We plan to be among those who fill Park Avenue to sing carols in front of the Brick Church, and then head nearby for an informal dinner in a local restaurant.

The Annual Meeting in the spring will be quite special as we are celebrating three important anniversaries connected to our Museum.

I will let other authors give more detail. Let me just say that those I have come to know and work with over the last two years make me proud to be a Dame.

With best wishes,
Rebecca Madsen
President General



Note from the Editor



Dear Chapter Members,

I am so excited to present this edition of our Autumn Newsletter! Three renowned experts in their fields agreed when asked (begged), to write something for this issue. Sincere thanks go to Brenton Simons, Ryan Woods and Richard Pickering; this is like hitting the trifecta. A new feature is that in each issue, we will now be showcasing board members and other worthy Dames, such as committee chairs, our juniors, and the chapters themselves. These ladies come from many chapters and volunteer their time to support our goals. I want to show you the personal side of these Dames; they are incredible women. Look out, I will be coming your way to share your stories, too.

You will read a report on our Boston-Plymouth trip and I cannot stress enough how much fun it is to get together again with other Dames. Another new feature you'll notice is a story by our Garden Correspondent. Part One is in this issue, so stay tuned to discover the conclusion of this charming narrative.

Finally, a huge thank you to our President General, Rebecca Madsen. So often, we talk about our accomplishments, which is the reason CDA exists, but honestly, it is the members, the friendships, the joy in seeing friends that makes CDA so special.

Sincerely,
Sharon Hare
President, Chicago Chapter

Saturday April 27, 2024

MVHM Anniversary Gala and Benefit



Honorary Chair Brantley Knowles. past President General
Chairman of Benefit Committee Anna Rich

Get out your dancing shoes! Cocktails, dinner, dessert and dancing at
The Colony Club.

Sunday, April 28th and Monday, the 29th will feature our Garden Party and
Book Awards and the Annual Meeting.

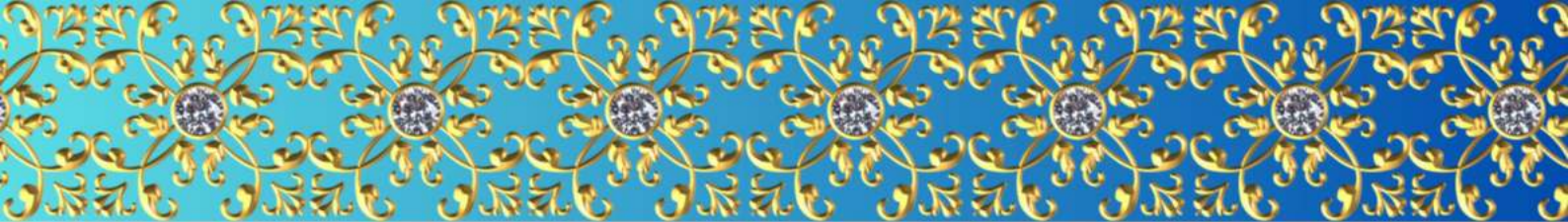
BOSTON AND PLYMOUTH TRIP

I am thinking of the song ON THE ROAD AGAIN, simply because CDA events have become a fixture of happy times. On Thursday, September 19th many of us arrived in Boston. After some individual sightseeing, we had a wonderful reception at a charming private club. It was so exciting to see friends, some of whom one hadn't seen in months or even a year. There was so much catching up to do!

Many thanks to Double Dame Carrie Hawley for arranging a tour of the NSCDA-MA National Historic landmark, the William Hickling Prescott House, in the morning. The tour was followed by a superb lunch at a private club. Ryan Woods gave a special presentation on the American Ancestors/NEHGS, explaining the preservation of CDA's lineage papers. Certificates were given to Brantley Bolling Knowles, past President General and Laura Ramsay, Registrar General, for their continuing work for CDA. Did I mention that Laura was the Trip Coordinator, with helpers Sharon Hare, Honey Taylor, Cindy Speake and her daughter, Alden Cayse?

A cocktail reception and dinner at another historical club featured Brenton Simons, whose speech was both brilliant and had everyone laughing in stitches.





Thursday, the 21st, found us aboard a comfortable bus, heading towards Plimoth Patuxet Museums, with Richard Pickering, Deputy Executive Director and Tim Turner giving us personalized tours. Lunch featured 17th century recipes and time to explore the Visitor Center and stores. Yes, we shopped.

In the town of Plymouth, we were given a wonderful tour at the National Pilgrim Memorial Meeting House, followed by a personal tour of the historic home home, owned by Lisa Pennington, Governor General of the General Society of Mayflower Descendants, and her husband David Furlow. Relaxing outside, sipping a glass of cranberry shrub and listening to Lisa and David talk about their home and the time period, made one imagine that we were in a different century. Thanks to Lisa and David for sharing their home and their knowledge. Treasurer Evelyn Aucoin presented them with lovely outdoor chimes from the CDA, donated by a member of the Houston chapter.

A short walk past many historic buildings, all with beautiful views of the water, brought us to the Mayflower II. There is a lovely outdoor entertaining area set up with drinks and appetizers. The weather was perfect and we were able to climb up and down in the historically accurate replica of the original ship.

We arrived back in Boston, exhausted, happy and already hoping for another CDA adventure.



A Partner of the Colonial Dames of America: D. Brenton Simons

On the recent visit by the Colonial Dames of America to Boston and Plymouth, Massachusetts, our members had the opportunity to visit with D. Brenton Simons, President & CEO of the nation's founding genealogical institution (1845), the New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), today widely known by its public identity of American Ancestors. Mr. Simons spoke to our group on his award-winning book, *Witches, Rakes, and Rogues*, and shared his personal connections to the CDA. "My late half-sister, Kitty Egan, was a double Dame, and my grandmother, Mrs Frederic B. Fitch was a member of the NCD, and so I have long felt a kinship to both societies." He also cites his friendships with Brantley Knowles, Rebecca Madsen, Laura Dean Ramsay, and many other Dames as inspiration for his work with our organization. Simons's Boston-based organization is digitizing the application records of the CDA and he has been a frequent speaker at regional events, including visits in 2023 with CDA chapters in Palm Beach and Philadelphia. In the latter visit, arranged by his family friend and chapter president Colleen MacCauley, Simons was presented with the Frances Wister Award, for his contributions to the field of family history. "I was so honored to be recognized and am very grateful to the Dames for this kind gesture." When he is not busy running NEHGS, Simons serves also as President of both the American Patrons of St. George's & the Descendants of the Knights of the Garter and the International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences. He lives in Boston with his English cream longhaired dachshund puppy "Dash" who is a frequent presence on Facebook and who Simons says "is a becoming a little bit of mascot in the field of family history and among hereditary society friends."



Member Spotlight

Get to know your Dames



EVELYN AUCOIN *Board of Managers*

Evelyn is serving her third term on the Board of Managers. Her career as a CFO for law firms has made her invaluable as our Treasurer. Evelyn loves to travel and has been to 19 countries so far. In her spare (?) time she has 700 hours of certifications in yoga and Pilates. Evelyn now lives in New Mexico, having spent most of her life in Texas. She and her husband Chris have been married 33 years and have two children, four rescue dogs, and her beloved horse, who is a great grandson of Seattle Slew.

Ellen Tozer *Board of Managers*

Ellen is a member of the Board of Managers and is the Chairman of our Museum Committee. She has a great deal of experience for this position, having been involved in all operations of the museum shop retail business and retail itself, having worked for the Princess Cruise Lines, Tiffany@Co, and National Geographic, among others.

Ellen was born in Alabama, grew up in Georgia and moved to Washington where she met her husband of 33 years, David. They have two sons and three grandsons.

She is very active in her church and belongs to several lineage organizations. Although she and David have many hobbies, their favorite one is taking their grandchildren on trips.



Shelby Carr *Junior Dame*

Shelby is a member of the Parent Chapter, a courtesy member of Philadelphia II Chapter, and serves on their board. She has published a book, *The Queen of Denver: Louise Sneed Hill and the Emergence of Modern Society*. Shelby has both a bachelor and masters degree in history, certifications in genealogical research and appraising. Shelby is continuing her advanced research, is a professional dancer and is a member of the Philadelphia cheerleaders and has worked as the membership coordinator for the Sons of Revolution since 2021.

Recently, in June of 2023, she became engaged to Schuyler Neuhauser. When asked how they met, Shelby replied "they met in 2018 when she was debuting at the Pass Ball. Schyler was an escort for another debutante that evening but was assigned to dance with me to practice steps during the rehearsal dinner prior to the commencement of the evening's activities." We wish them the best of luck.



His Consort Accidentally Fell Overboard: The Mayflower Death of Dorothy Bradford

By Richard Pickering

Three days before her seventh wedding anniversary, Dorothy Bradford fell off Mayflower and drowned. She was twenty-three. The earliest record of Dorothy's death is her husband's notebook listing fatalities during Plymouth Colony's first winter. "Dec. 7. Dorothy, wife to Mr. William Bradford." In 1651, when Bradford drafted a list of Mayflower passengers, he wrote, "William Bradford his wife died soon after their arrival..." The earliest account of Dorothy Bradford's death with any detail is Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702) which says, "the governor, his consort accidentally fell overboard."

Dorothy Bradford's death has provided material for fiction so captivating that it has led historians astray for 150 years. A baseless suicide tradition has persisted since Jane G. Austin's short story *William Bradford's Love Life* published in *Harper's Magazine* (1869). Austin's Dorothy jumps overboard in despair that her son was left in Holland and in horror of the wilderness.

Austin unleashed conspiracy theories. It couldn't have been an accident. There was a cover up. Why didn't Bradford write about Dorothy? He must have been ashamed. This position ignores the fact that he didn't write about his second wife Alice, to whom he was married for thirty-four years. Conspiracy theorists also ignore Elizabethan attitudes toward suicide. They treat the act as an individual's psychiatric event without deeper familial impact beyond grieving. Suicide destroyed the survivors' reputations and marriage prospects. The entire family was tainted.

Distracted by melodrama, historians have paid no heed to weather conditions and maritime dangers. Dorothy Bradford was wearing leather or wooden-soled shoes on an icy deck. She did not swim. She was not among swimmers. Even mariners did not swim – knowing that recovery once overboard was almost impossible. Drenched woollens would have pulled Dorothy under quickly. In the dramatic imagination, she is alone on deck, slipping overboard unnoticed. No regard is paid to the round-the-clock nature of shipboard life and the constant presence of mariners working in endless rotation. There could have been horrified onlookers in her final suffering.



William Bradford was across Cape Cod Bay exploring Plymouth when Dorothy drowned. We will never know how he took the news. Bradford may not have written about his first wife, but there is a revealing Scriptural reference in the notebook that he kept while teaching himself Hebrew. "And rejoice with the wife of your youth." Proverbs 5:18.

NEW PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHT: NEW ENGLAND HISTORIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY AND COLONIAL DAMES

by Ryan J. Woods

Since its founding in 1845 as the nation's first genealogical organization, the New England Historic Genealogical Society (aka American Ancestors®) has endeavored to educate, inspire, and connect people through historical and genealogical research so that the families of America can benefit from the knowledge of their heritage and the context of history.

Through a collaboration between the Colonial Dames of America and American Ancestors, together, we are safeguarding the invaluable archive of CDA membership papers while simultaneously preserving the records and legacies of our colonial ancestors and the members of the Colonial Dames of America.

The first step of our multifaceted partnership is the physical care of the CDA membership papers, which date back to 1890. In total, there are an estimated 100,000 pages of material to conserve.

As part of the physical care for the collection, our professional archivists are processing the papers in accordance with archival science guidelines for the conservation of historic documents. The work includes assessing and documenting the condition of the material, organizing the material into alphabetical order by member name, unfolding and flattening documents to prevent future tearing or holes, removing paper clips and staples to thwart the transfer of rust to the paper, rehousing all of the papers into acid-free folders and boxes, labeling all folders, barcoding all boxes, and finally, creating an archival finding aid for the collection to ensure easy and efficient future retrieval of items.

Our work also includes digitally scanning all pages at archival quality image resolution to ensure there is a second copy of all papers and back up to the physical materials.

By leveraging our collective experience and technology, the CDA membership archive will be professionally preserved in perpetuity, and CDA members will have more convenient access to the collection of historic membership papers.

These efforts, which we expect to complete in 2025, will ensure increased discoverability of lineages, performing a great service for those who seek to understand better our colonial ancestors, their descendants, and their collective impact on our nation.

American Ancestors is honored to partner with the Colonial Dames of America and its members to educate and inspire future generations.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: RYAN J. WOODS



An educator and historian, Ryan Woods is Executive Vice President & COO of American Ancestors/New England Historic Genealogical Society. For nearly two decades, he has led the development of award-winning experiences for exploring family history, heritage, and culture.

Ryan and his wife, Karen, are parents to two children whose names bear their family history: Nathaniel John Southworth Woods and Abigail Elizabeth VanDeusen Woods. When not with his family, sailing in the summer, or sport shooting in the fall, Ryan supports lineage society work. He is Lieutenant Governor of the Society of Colonial Wars in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and he serves on the Committee on Pretensions of the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Connecticut. He is also an active member of the Society of Mayflower Descendants, the Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Florida, the Sons of the Revolution in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the Saint Nicholas Society of New York City, among other organizations.

GARDEN CORRESPONDENT

by Lili Neuhauser

We all have Covid stories. Some are incredibly sad, frightening, in fact; the first few weeks were uncertain, and our lives were turned upside down. Many in New York City stayed sequestered in their apartments and those of us who were lucky to live further from the city, were able to pass our time outside, taking long walks with dogs, keeping family close and gardening. But what was happening in the city? The Mount Vernon Hotel Museum and Garden was still there, perhaps a bit shaggy, the plants all happily taking over. Yes, there was a skeleton staff, but no children or any visitors.



The garden had been all but abandoned in 2020 and 2021. An occasional impromptu cocktail party was had, after a push mower was run over the tall grass. It was time to put some serious effort into Alice Ireys's vision and put things right again for eventual visitors. There have been silver linings to the pandemic, I firmly believe this. This is a story of resurrection. When it was time to start my new position as Garden Liaison, my first visit to the museum to assess the work ahead was late in the autumn of 2021. I arrived, my iPhone firmly in hand, I was going to document everything that needed trimming, mowing, moving, in other words a huge dose of TLC!

I had spoken to my partner in crime, Isabel Warren-Lynch, on the phone, she was to facilitate the dozens of jobs all around the campus! We decided we were long lost friends from another life, so much in common and an outlook on most things that were eerily similar. I knew right away that we would have fun and truly make a difference in the condition of the forlorn garden. But it was far more than the garden that would emerge out of the pandemic, it was as Isabel described it, "a healing project" for her and for so many of us. The following spring of 2022, we got to work!

I found a wonderful stone mason, a young man of Greek origin, Joseph Spanos, online (much like a blind date!). He was enchanted by the museum and was just thrilled with the opportunity to help maintain a 1799 stone building in Manhattan. He was immediately enlisted to work on setting the wonky brick paths back to safe, level condition. He is still working on those walks and many other chores. Isabel and I decided it is fun to have a "cute guy" working in the garden, it makes our dirty jobs of weeding, digging, pruning far more fun, for some reason! In fact, many of those who come to our aid are "cute" and why not?!

Every surface was scrutinized, signs were rebuilt, furniture was rearranged, planters moved, the wrought iron gates were painted, suckers pruned along with box bushes. We enlisted the help of the NY Horticultural Society to assist with the initial days of major clean up and pruning. We dug up hostas and moved them to spaces devoid of plants.



This is Part 1 of a two-part series by Lili Neuhauser. Look for the sequel in our next newsletter!