



2024 Winter Newsletter

Sharon Hare, Editor

# *The Colonial Dames of America*

## *Letter from the President*

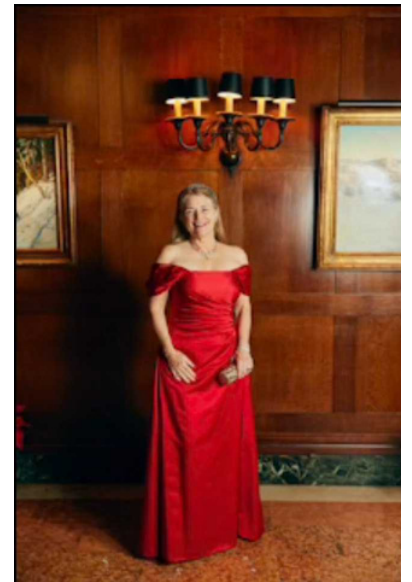
Dear Dames,

It makes me so happy to be writing a letter to accompany the second newsletter from our Newsletter Chair, Sharon Hare.

As many of you know, my platform three years ago had four principal goals: building community; moving our files to American Ancestors to be digitized and preserved; restoring the Alice Ireys designed garden attached to headquarters and starting the restoration of our museum building; and expanding our educational outreach.

In my Summer Newsletter I covered each of these goals, so I will not dwell on them. However, as every President General stands on the shoulders of committed members, I do want to make a couple of special mentions, the first related to building community, the second to facilities management.

*President General Rebecca Madsen at one of her many events.*



Brantley Knowles has handled our social media communications for the past six years. Like many of you, I have gotten to know our members—and how interesting they are—through her posts. Her eye for beauty, and her genuine affection and pride in our members, shone through her posts about weddings, family, accomplishments, gardens and buildings.

Thank you, Brantley! I know such curated posts take hours to create. I cannot tell you how many Dames have mentioned your posts to me with smiles on their faces as they talked about CDA's people and projects. I, and all the Dames, are grateful to Brantley for the dedication to making our Facebook page the best of all the hereditary societies. Our Junior Dames are thriving in New York, thanks to the work of Board member Lauren Rose, who planned many imaginative and fun outings for them which attracted new members. Junior Chairs Coco Hein and Camilla Bowden have continued her work. Camilla, the granddaughter of past President General Ellie Penniman, hosted a lovely party last spring at the Museum for Junior members and prospectives. Thank you, Lauren, Camilla and Coco for your work chairing this important committee. Finally, I want to thank both Erskine Ramsay, husband of our Registrar General, and Corresponding Secretary Sandra Pearl, for their contributions in making contacts with contractors, negotiating, and keeping costs down with respect to repairs in our headquarters.

I hope you enjoy the profiles of Dames herein. We will continue to feature significant contributors from across the country in future newsletters. Those of you who serve, whether in committees, as Chapter President, or in board positions form the backbone of our society.

## **From 1890 to Today**

My proudest accomplishment was not part of my original platform. When I assumed my role I was dismayed to learn that the office was operating fairly closely to the way it did in 1890. Brantley Knowles and Registrar General Laura Ramsay made progress by computerizing the Claims process, but we had a long way to go. Many other aspects of office work needed to be automated, and all processes needed to be made transparent to leadership. Our files were mostly paper and not organized. Much time was inefficiently spent trying to locate documents. Leadership could not see whether orders had been filled, checks processed and accurately attributed, necessary contracts signed, or when claims were received or acted upon. There was no blueprint for staff explaining CDA's priorities and expectations. Thus, staff could be sidetracked by small matters while members waited a long time to see acknowledgments of donations, fulfillment of insignia orders, and the processing of claims. Committee chairs came into their roles with no explanation of their tasks and were unable to see precedents from prior committee work. There was no shared calendar with leadership. Any change in our small staff led to absolute chaos, as any new person would have no idea what to do or where to find precedents from which to work.

And as all of you know, all our finances were done primarily by check. We frequently got calls indicating checks were mailed which we never received. And who even orders checks anymore? We often had to wait for a crisis to occur to know that there was a problem, and that created stress and anxiety. We have now:

--Established clear expectations/priorities for office staff and reasonable deadlines for accomplishing tasks.

--Created a system that will allow leadership to see what staff are accomplishing—and perhaps not accomplishing--in the office.

--Placed precedents in Sharepoint computer files so that incoming committee heads and staff can see what has been done in years past, to give them a starting point for their work.

--Revised the employee handbook. (Thanks to Pegi Ivancevich and Laura Ramsay, for working with me on this project, and to Past PG Sharon Vaino and Board members Jenny Wallace Dobbs, Kathy Springhorn, Vicki Smith and Sharon Hare for their edits!)

--Created a thorough calendar that contains a list of all work to be done in the office and the dates at which work should be started and completed.

--Made it clear to our limited staff that if they cannot accomplish work in the time frame allotted, that they should share that information with leadership so that

Dames can volunteer to take on tasks, or leadership can reprioritize or consider whether we have the finances to increase staff. These changes have allowed us to clear embarrassing backlogs in claims, insignia orders, and newsletters. Our volunteers have performed wonders. Registrar General Laura Ramsay addressed more than 90 claims that had been languishing in the office, which she did in one month. Sharon Hare and I stepped forward to do these newsletters, which had fallen by the wayside following staff changes last year. We do not expect to experience such disruptions in the future as we have created file systems that enable anyone new, whether volunteer or staff, to step in and see what needs to be done and when.

Our amazing Treasurer, Evelyn Aucoin, implemented a compliance calendar for financial obligations, tax forms and so on, and worked to make our financial operations more efficient. Evelyn has also lent her expertise as an experienced Executive Coach to lead Executive Director Nicole Scholet through every aspect of our finances and operations. She has spent hours on this task. I am so grateful as her time is worth many thousands of dollars to CDA. I often say that the two most important members of the Board of Managers of the Dames are Laura Ramsay and Evelyn Aucoin. Both bring professional expertise and care to their work, and both devote an extraordinary amount of time to the tasks they take on.

With gratitude,  
Rebecca Wetherill Howard Madsen  
President General  
Colonial Dames of America

## **Calendar of Events**

### **CDA International Tea**

Thurs, April 11, 2024. 3-4:30 pm,  
Metropolitan Club of the City of Washington

### **Lecture by Lisa Pennington and David Furlow 1799: Year of Wonders**

Fri, April 26, 2024. 6:30 pm,  
Union Club, New York

### **MVHM&G Anniversaries Gala**

Sat, April 27, 2024. 6:30 pm Cocktails,  
7:30 pm Dinner  
Colony Club, New York

### **CDA Garden Party**

Sun, Apr 28, 2024, 4-6pm, MVHM&G;  
preceded at 3 pm by Council of Proprietors  
Toast and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for  
Museum Shop Reopening

### **133rd Annual Meeting**

Mon Apr 29, 2024, Colony Club, 11:45 am-2 pm  
(Reading of Chapter Reports 10-11:15 am)



## **GALA**

### Mount Vernon Hotel Museum & Garden 2024 Anniversaries

This year is a banner year for Colonial Dames: 225th anniversary of the building's construction, 100th anniversary of the building's purchase by Colonial Dames of America, and the 85th anniversary of the opening of the public museum.

President General Rebecca Madsen and the Board of Managers are very proud of owning and maintaining the building for 100 years, and particularly all of the tours and educational programs that reached so many people.

On Saturday, April 27, there will be an Anniversary Gala at the Colony Club in New York. Music by the Bob Hardwick Sound and White Tie is optional. The Gala is the start of a yearlong fundraising campaign.

Ticket levels are as follows: Benefactor \$1500 for one ticket, Patron \$1000 for one ticket, Supporter \$750 for one ticket, Friend \$475 for one ticket, and Junior Dame is \$375, which is a two ticket maximum per Junior Dame. The tax-deductible portion of each ticket will be any amount over \$200. If you are unable to attend and would like to contribute, The Colonial Dames of America would be pleased to accept your help in furthering our goals. For any questions, please contact our office.

# MVHM&G Anniversaries Celebration Committee

Rebecca Madsen, *President  
General*

Brantley Knowles, *Honorary  
Chairman*

**Anna Rich**, *Chairman*

Renee Anderson

Ashley Bernhard

Katherine Johnson

Angela Masand



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## 134th Annual Meeting April 26th-29th In New York

President Rebecca Madsen and the Board of Managers would be delighted to see you this April in New York. Festivities start off with a great talk by CDA Member and Mayflower National Governor General Lisa Pennington and her husband David Furlow on April 26th at the Union Club.

On Saturday the 27th come join us to celebrate the MVH&G Anniversaries at the Colony Club. It is a chance to celebrate CDA, our anniversaries and connect with all your friends for a wonderful evening.

Sunday the 28th is a busy day. You will be able to see our museum when there for the Council of Proprietors Toast and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the museum reopening. Council of Proprietors, Past Presidents General, Chapter Presidents, Museum Committee and Board Members and special guests are invited.

Afterwards, join us for the Garden Party. The garden is beautiful. You do not have to wear a hat, but it is so much fun to do so.

Monday April 29 at the Colony Club starts with the reading of chapter reports, followed by a beverage reception. Our Annual Meeting and luncheon is a lovely occasion to listen to all that CDA has been doing for the year, and take care of business.

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# CDA AND THE AMERICAN LIBRARY IN PARIS

By Sharon Hare



Read just about any history book or biography of Americans that takes place, at least in part in Paris from 1914 to the present, and you'll come across The American Library in Paris.

Anne Morgan and Edith Wharton were among the first trustees. Henry Miller wrote letters to the librarian asking why there weren't more books on Zen Buddhism. Mary McCarthy complained that they did not have enough of her books. Ernest Hemingway and Gertrude Stein contributed articles and book reviews to the library's periodical, EX LIBRIS, which is still published today. Sylvia Beach donated books, Richard Wright, Julia Child, and Collette were frequent guests. The list of American authors who frequented the library is endless.

The American Library in Paris was founded in 1920. Originally known as the American Library Association, The American Library in Paris was established from a core collection of the approximately 2 million books donated by libraries throughout the United States during WWI to provide American soldiers with ample, quality reading materials. It was incorporated under the laws of the state of Delaware.

Charles Seeger Sr., father of the American poet Alan Seeger (*I have a rendezvous with death*), and who died in the war, donated an initial gift of 50,000 francs derived from the royalties of Alan Seeger's books *POEMS* (1916) and *LETTERS AND DIARY* in 1917.

An early chairman of the board was Clara Longworth de Chambrun. She was the sister-in-law of Alice Roosevelt Longworth and sister of Nicholas Longworth, Speaker of the House from 1925-1931. During WW2, her son-in-law, Pierre Laval, Prime Minister of France, ensured that the library remained open. Unfortunately, during the Occupation, Jews were banned from the library, in compliance with Nazi anti-Jewish laws. Rather heroically, their staff found ways to deliver books to them. In 1923, having been open for just 3 years, the reference room was visited by 35,000 visitors. It is now the largest English language library in Europe.

My search for a CDA connection started with reading the CDA Annual Reports online which go back to 2006. We also have a selection of correspondence and some reports from as far back as 1901.



*Permission to use photo given by the American Library in Paris*

I next wrote to the American Library in Paris for information on the Paris Chapter's involvement with the library. I was thrilled to hear back from them. Their records show that the Paris Chapter lent early support as far back as 1923 to be used to supply books to ex-servicemen. Moreover, they also instituted and funded an internship program on a yearly basis at The American Library in Paris. Their hope was to enable a young person to better understand the longstanding connection between France and the United States.

They also authorized me to use any of the text and images on their history page.

To complete my research, I visited the American Library in Paris in November of 2023. It is located at 10 Rue du Ge'ne'ral Camou 7500 Paris. They offer a one hour tour on Fridays- you will need to sign up prior to attending as seating is limited. If you are going to Paris, write to them as soon as you know the Friday(s) you will be there. You will find the tour fascinating. The audience consisted of visitors from all over the world and they were enthralled. A long question and answer period followed. The tour guide was excellent; very knowledgeable and we were able to visit afterwards and discuss the CDA's support of the library.

I was never so proud to be a member of CDA as when I researched what Paris Chapter IV has contributed to for so long. Our objectives of preserving historical buildings, important artifacts, education, and instilling patriotism have been successfully accomplished in France. Merci beaucoup to them!

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## LAURA D. RAMSAY

Laura is a member of XXXIX Chapter, a member of the Board of Managers for CDA, and serves as our Registrar General. A sixth generation Alabamian, Laura lives in Birmingham with her husband Erskine. The Ramsays have two wonderful sons and four amazing and adorable grandchildren who all live in Birmingham. Laura has a BA in Studio Art and taught Art and English in a private school for 12 years.

CDA is lucky that Laura has been involved in Genealogical research for over 25 years and has several certificates from the Genealogical Institute of America (GIA).

She says she is fortunate that her husband is interested in genealogy and belongs to several lineage organizations. Erskine also has donated his time and expertise to help the CDA in a myriad of issues, along with being a fan favorite at the CDA events.

In her spare time Laura enjoys spending time with family and friends at their mountain home in North Carolina. She and Erskine also love to travel.

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## KATHLEEN ELIZABETH SPRINGHORN



Kathy has been a very active member of CDA since 1999. She is a member of the Parent Chapter, a courtesy member of Palm Beach Chapter XVII, served for 18 years on the Board of Managers, and as well as being Chair of Events, Calendar & Hospitality Committee. She is a member of the Personnel Committee, and has worked on the Membership Committee, Development Committee, and the MVHM&G committee. She is a regular member of The 1890 Society and was awarded the VRA award.

In her non CDA time, she serves as a Trustee on the Sir John Soane's Museum Foundation since 1991, is a Trustee of The National Museum of Women in the Arts, and was a Trustee for The Heritage Museum Foundation.

Kathy's resume in the field of museums and arts is very extensive, but we love Kathy for her sense of humor, her supreme knowledge of protocol, floral and table designs, and of course, her adorable dog Chloe.

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## AUDREY SVENSSON



Audrey is a Past President of Colonial Dames of America from 2006-2009. She served as Chair of the Books Awards Committee for years. She is a former board member of Founders and Patriots of America and belongs to many lineage societies. She is especially proud of belonging to Descendants of Colonial Governors, Order of the Crown of Charlemagne, Descendants of Royal Blood and others.

Audrey has a Bachelor of Arts from York University in Toronto, Canada, a Master of Arts from Columbia University and attended the Imperial Society Teachers of Dancing, Classical Ballet, Toronto, Canada.

Audrey lived in Canada for 11 years, belonged to AFTRA (American Federation of Television and Radio Artists) under the name Audrey Chapin, also belonged to the Professional Skaters of America where she served as a traveling coach., also under the name of Audrey Chapin. She loved to say she was a teamster.

Audrey is a deacon of the First Presbyterian Church in Englewood New Jersey and loves being surrounded by her loving family.

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## CHRISTINA WHITE MORRIS



Christy is the 2022-2024 President of Atlanta XXIV. She became a member of the chapter in 2013 and has served on the chapter board since 2014. Christy served as a member of the Council of Proprietors for the years 2017-2022. She has supported the Society by attending the CDA Annual Meetings in New York, the International Tea in Washington DC, and Fall Benefits. She has been a member of the 1890 Society since 2014. Christy has resided in Atlanta Georgia for 64 years where she and her husband, John G, Morris, a retired attorney, have raised four adult children and have 3 grandchildren.

Christy, an interior designer, was a verifying genealogist for NSCDXVII Century from 2015-2020, and is in her second term as Governor of the First Georgia Company, Jamestown Society. She belongs to several lineage societies and is active in local groups. On top of all this, she has authored or co-authored several publications.

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## Part 2. From Our Garden Correspondent

By: Lili Neuhauser

All the while blooms merrily emerged from the their winter snooze. The azaleas, mock orange, lilacs, all were beginning to open. The birds would happily serenade our efforts. Another cute guy, our son Schuyler, would ride with me in my Volvo stuffed with plants. He had spent months at home with us, poor guy, and a day in town would start with heavy lifting lugging plant material up the stairs from the street. The soil is wonderfully rich, I can only imagine it was from years of horse manure back when it was a stable! Thank you!

Large, conical Ilex sentries now grace the front of the building in the Versailles planters, many herbs, and ultimately, cheerful annuals were put in place. Why did the 3 Pinky Winky standard hydrangeas become so popular? I think it is their cheerful name! They are now at home on the east side of the garden, where they give height and are happy with the little available light.

Once work is done, it is time to reward ourselves with lunch! Just 2 blocks away is our go to restaurant, Coco Pizzeria. Fast and reasonable, their truffle and mushroom pizza is swoon worthy. It is there that our work is celebrated, trips are shared and true friendships are solidified. Did I mention that we laugh? Yes, we do that a lot! Indeed, more wonderful outcomes on many fronts! I hop back into my trusty car, and creep along the East River, making my way to cross the Hudson River, on my way home, tired yet energized by a good day's work!



Late this summer Museum director Nancy Hinkel was walking with a jewelry designer, Katherine Kornblau, who has been enlisted to make some things for the gift shop. As they strolled the garden, a little face appeared from under a hosta leaf. It was a small, grey striped kitten! How did this weeks old baby find her way in a big, noisy city to our small green haven?

## Part 2. From Our Garden Correspondent Continued

She certainly could have weathered the numerous rain storms in our vibrant hosta beds! What a tale she could tell! A can of tuna was quickly acquired and eventually she was trapped for transport to the ASPCA. A brief stay there meant she was chipped, vaccinated and spayed. Katherine took her home to her apartment where her daughter, Sophia fell in love, slept with her, cradled her endlessly. They named her Ivy.

Nancy had sent around some photos and at the end was one of a kitten. What was this sweet thing all about? I asked. Nancy told me her story and I knew immediately that Ivy was to come home to Stable Road with me. I was in the car 2 days later, Braving the FDR Drive to fetch Ivy. Ellie, our very tolerant and gentle English Cocker, has a new friend, Charlie has a buddy for the football season, and I oddly find great joy in her climbing up my curtains and sneak attacking Ellie! Ivy has made our house more of a cozy home. Her purr is everything I need to put my day right! She is in my lap as I type, Ellie is at my feet.

The garden has done far more than any of us imagined! Like minded women, new friends, coming together for a common cause, bringing life back to a historical space. As with all living things, this botanical gem is and will continue to evolve, we will always keep its “roots” in mind, as Alice Ireys would have wanted. It has risen, much like a phoenix, to bring joy, friendship and life back to many of us and one sweet little kitten!



## **CDA International Tea**

One of the most looked forward to events during Hereditary Week, is the International Tea hosted by the Colonial Dames of America. This year it will be held at the Metropolitan Club in Washington DC on April 11th from 3-4:30PM.



A beautiful room, beverages and light food, flowers, and good friends; need I say more? Please join us before or after your other event. We look forward to welcoming you as a fellow Dame.

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## **December CDA Events in New York**

Many thanks go to Holly Hunt, who hosted a party for all Dames and guests who attended a Christmas Tree lighting ceremony. Her home was beautifully decorated for the holiday and filled with hot chocolate, drinks, and finger goodies. What a hostess!!!

December 4th was the annual Christmas Party, held at a private club. It is always beautifully decorated with live music for dancing. President General Rebecca Madsen especially loves the part where we all sing Christmas carols. Christmas in New York is magical.

