

Lycoming Daughters of the American Revolution

Preserving history and making it widely available



By MARY SIEMINSKI

One diverse thing Williamsport women like community leader Anne Higgins Perley, Sun-Gazette, April 10, 2016, and musicians Louise Holmes Stryker, Oct. 8, 2017, and Mary Landon Russell, Feb. 8, 2015, have in common is that all were regents of the Lycoming Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, an organization for women who could

prove a lineal bloodline descent from someone who had served in the Revolutionary War.

The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution was founded on Oct. 11, 1890, during a time marked by a revival of patriotism and intense interest in the beginnings of the United States of America. When the Sons of the American Revolution had been founded a year earlier, women had been excluded from membership.

Frustrated by their exclusion, the "daughters" founded their own organization, also known as DAR. The organization is dedicated to promoting patriotism, preserving American history and securing America's future through better education for children.

The Lycoming Chapter was organized on Nov. 23, 1896, six years after the national organization and 103 years after the end of the Revolutionary War.

History Preserved

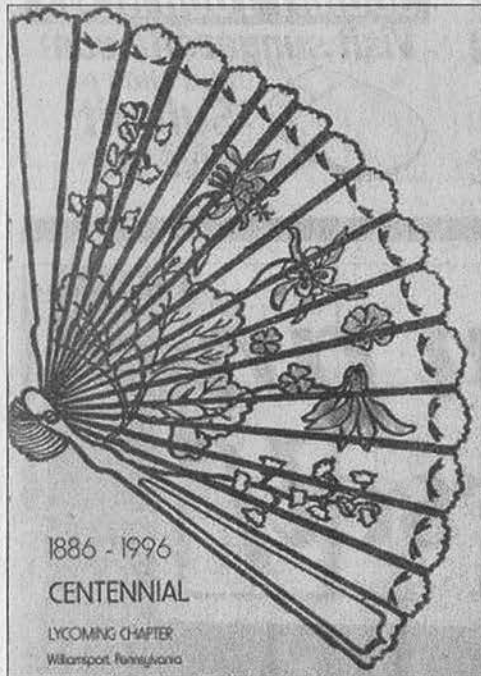
Thanks to the foresight of the local leaders, the organization's own history has been preserved. The archival records of the daughters, like the records of many other local organizations, used to pass from officer to officer as the group's leadership changed, a practice that has caused records of some groups to disappear into attics or basements, never to be seen again.

Due to the farsightedness of local leaders, the archives of the Lycoming Chapter are now preserved at the Lycoming County Historical Society. Regent Cris Gansell-Whitcomb oversaw the transfer of the archival material, including scrapbooks, memorabilia and other artifacts, which previously had been stored in multiple plastic boxes and overflowing file cabinets.

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Lifestyle



PHOTOS PROVIDED

From left, cover of the program from the Lycoming Chapter of the American Revolution Centennial Luncheon held Nov. 9, 1996. Satira Christie of Dunnstown, was the daughter of William Nutt, a soldier in the American Revolution and is considered a "real daughter." Nutt was in the Battle of Yorktown and witnessed the surrender of Cornwallis and the handing over of his sword. Her father was 16 when he enlisted served until the close of the war. Her grandfather also served in the Revolution. Portrait of Mary White Gamble Emery, the organizing and first regent of the Lycoming Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution at its founding in 1896. Her grandfather was Colonel Hugh White who settled near Pine Creek. On April 19, 1775, he was commissioned "Captain of a company of foot in the First Battalion of Associators in the county of Northumberland." In 1778 he was promoted to colonel and served for as commissary and was untiring in his efforts to provide supplies for Washington's army.

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Volunteer Alicia Skeath, a Lycoming College and Penn State graduate, spent an entire year processing the Daughters of the American Revolution's extensive collection and creating a comprehensive finding aid, which explains how and where to find particular materials. The papers are now in 13 archival boxes, and all materials have been labeled, housed in acid-free folders and listed in the finding aid.

"Working on the DAR collection was really exciting. I discovered something new about the organization each day I processed the collection, and it is amazing how much history was contained in those boxes of materials," Skeath said.

Women's history collection

The Historical Society is a partner, along with Lycoming College, the James V. Brown Library and Penn College, in the Lycoming County Women's History Collection. This cooperative community project, now ten years old, grew out of the groups' recog-

nition of the historical value of making archival material and can be visited at www.lycoming.edu/orgs/lcwhc.

The Lycoming chapter generously provided funding to add approximately 1600 pages of documents to the online collection of primary resource material relating to the history of women in Lycoming County and also to make an annual contribution to support upkeep of the collection. Chosen for scanning were a variety of historical documents, photographs, and other primary source material, such as plays, skits and songs composed by members and never before published.

All material, including the annual yearbooks from 1899-1900 to 2010, is online and will become part of the Digital Public Library of America, which links to collections across the country.

Included in the papers preserved is an unsigned history of the Lycoming chapter. There were 16 charter members in 1896; the first regent was Mary White Emery. The organization's initial project, to promote a library for the city,

was taken over by the second regent, Carile Cone Higgins Brown, the wife of James V. Brown.

Three early members of the Lycoming chapter — Statira Nutt Christie, Mary Jane Lynn and Helen Allen Sloan — held the special designation of "real daughters;" that is, each woman's own father had been a Revolutionary War soldier. More information about these women is now available online in the Lycoming County Women's History Collection.

The local organization was instrumental in the establishment of many public institutions — the Home for the Friendless, now the Williamsport Home, the Girls' Training School and the Boys' Industrial School, among others. The group also preserved local history by installing markers at local historical sites and on the graves of Revolutionary War soldiers.

"We are grateful to have this collection from an important regional organization here in our archives, and we appreciate the DAR's foresight in taking the steps to preserve the collection

for future generations of researchers," Scott Sagar, curator of collections at the Historical Society, said.

The collection is an important addition to materials from a variety of women's organizations — including the Williamsport Hospital Training School for Nurses, the YWCA, the Home for the Friendless and the Williamsport Music Club — now housed at the Lycoming County Historical Society, many of which are available online in the Lycoming County Women's History Collection.

Heading the advice of Abigail Adams, we in Lycoming County are "remembering the ladies."

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