

Collection #  
M1511  
BV5565-BV5572  
OMB 0177

**NATIONAL SOCIETY OF THE COLONIAL DAMES OF AMERICA  
IN THE STATE OF INDIANA  
RECORDS, 1896-2021**

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Processed by

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## COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	8 manuscript boxes, 8 bound volumes, 1 half-sized box photographs, 2 OVA folders, 1 color PAC album, 1 box color photographs, 3 oversized manuscript boxes
COLLECTION DATES:	1896-2021
PROVENANCE:	The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Indiana
RESTRICTIONS:	None
COPYRIGHT:	
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.
ALTERNATE FORMATS:	Membership applications have been digitized.
RELATED HOLDINGS:	Hoosier courthouses collection, 1963-1966 (M0954); Portrait survey for the Smithsonian Institute (ND230.I6 P67 1972); An Indiana sampler (F526.5 .I52 1979); Domestic views : historic properties owned and supported by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America (E159 .S47 1992)
ACCESSION NUMBERS:	2006.0245; 2011.0192; 2021.0109; 2022.0045
NOTES:	<p>Membership applications are arranged chronologically. They have been digitized, along with an index of names. Please ask for assistance with these records before requesting hard copies.</p> <p>Color photographs are kept in cold storage and require at least four hours to acclimate to room temperature. Patrons are advised to call ahead if they wish to view those items.</p>

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America (NSCDA) was created in Philadelphia in 1891 “to study and to preserve the records and relics of the Thirteen Colonies and to teach the lessons of patriotism that are found therein.” Members were residents of one of the original thirteen states and were descendants of someone “who came to reside in an American Colony before 1750, and whose services were rendered during the Colonial Period.” About six months later, a similar organization, the Daughters of the American Revolution, was formed in Washington, DC. The distinction between the two was that membership in the Colonial Dames required descent from an ancestor whose “services rendered” occurred up to and including the signing of the Declaration of Independence on 4 July 1776, but not during the Revolutionary War battles which followed.

Examples of such qualifying services given in the Indiana Society’s bylaws are “the founding of a commonwealth or of an institution which has survived and developed into importance,” or holding “an important position in the Colonial government.”

Over the next few years, it became evident to Colonial Dames leadership that many women descending from colonial ancestors who lived in non-colonial states were “just as proud of them as those living in the original thirteen states.” The Indiana society was organized on 19 April 1896, and incorporated 30 June 1896. At the annual council of the National Society in 1898, seventeen state societies, including Indiana’s, were accepted onto the roster.

Some of the earliest activities of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Indiana were studies of the Mound Builders and of LaSalle’s exploration of the Old Northwest Territory, and a donation of money and supplies to a hospital ship during the Spanish-American War. For Indiana’s statehood centennial in 1916, the Indiana Society published *Once Upon a Time in Indiana*, written by Charity Dye.

Over the next century, the Colonial Dames in Indiana took on several projects throughout the state that demonstrated the group’s values of Patriotic Service, Historic Preservation, and History Education. During the Second World War, they furnished a library in the Indianapolis Servicemen’s Center and two recreation halls at Fort Benjamin Harrison. Since 1940, they have presented flags to new American citizens at naturalization ceremonies. They have provided historical markers at Fort Ouiatenon, Whetzel Trace, the Michigan Road Toll House, and other historical sites of early Indiana.

In the 1950s, the Indiana Dames provided funds for the restoration of the Little Cedar Grove Baptist Church in Franklin County, believed to be the oldest church in Indiana still on its original foundation, and also acquired the David Lenz House in Historic New Harmony. The restoration, preservation, and furnishing of the Lenz House and its gardens continues to be a favorite project of the Dames.

In 1973, the Indiana Dames participated in the Smithsonian Institute’s national survey of portrait paintings done before 1850, and also furnished two 18<sup>th</sup> Century period rooms for the Indianapolis Museum of Art. In 1975 they completed two similar rooms for the Indiana

State Museum to celebrate America's Bicentennial and George Rogers Clark's arrival in Vincennes in 1779.

In 1981 the Dames established a relationship with the circa 1843 J.F.D. Lanier Mansion overlooking the Ohio River in Madison, Indiana. The Indiana Society continues to assist in renovations and furnishment of this property today.

Sources:

Materials in the collection

Metamer Studios, "National Society of the Colonial Dames of America," YouTube, [https://youtu.be/VpZjNbz6\\_AY](https://youtu.be/VpZjNbz6_AY)

National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Indiana, "History," <http://nscda-indiana.org/history/>

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

This collection has been arranged in four series according to the major types of Colonial Dames activities.

Series I is the largest and consists of general internal records. This includes but is not limited to annual reports, member directories, tax documents, event planning correspondence, meeting minutes, and membership applications as well as scrapbooks and instructional binders kept by members.

Membership applications consist of family lineage documentation reaching back to one of the original 13 colonies. During the application process, all the necessary material is gathered and sent to the Dames Society in the original state for approval. If approved, the candidate is given a number for that society (often with “-A” added for “associate state member”), the papers are returned to Indiana, and an Indiana number is assigned. These application materials are arranged according to these application numbers. They have also been digitized along with a name index. Patrons are encouraged to ask for assistance before requesting hard copies.

Series II consists of material related to the Colonial Dames’ Patriotic Service projects. This includes scholarship awards, naturalization ceremonies, flag programs, and interviews with military veterans.

Series III consists of material related to Historic Preservation projects such as the Little Cedar Grove Baptist Church, Michigan Road Toll House, and the Lenz House at New Harmony.

Series IV consists of material related to History Education, including museum exhibits and publications.

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