

The Ladies, God Bless Them

Written by Allen, Joy

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“The Ladies, God Bless Them”, the headline of a 1937 Star News article, is also the title of a new program by historian Christine Lamberton that will debut on October 15. The talk and slide presentation explore the dominant role of women in the historic preservation movement, focusing on the work of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America (NSCDA) and its associate organization in North Carolina, the NSCDA-NC.

The NSCDA-NC played a pivotal role in the historic preservation movement in Wilmington with its purchase of the Burgwin-Wright House, formerly known as the Cornwallis House. Local members of the NSCDA-NC were distressed upon learning that a New York businessman planned to purchase the house, dismantle it, and reconstruct it in Connecticut, conveying the land to Standard Oil for a gas station.

The ladies purchased the circa 1770-71 house in 1937 for \$21,000. Its restoration became a labor of love that would continue for the remainder of the 20th century. Today, the property, located at the corner of Market Street and South Third, is a museum focusing on the interpretation of colonial history. It also serves as the headquarters of the NSCDA-NC, which owns three additional historic properties in North Carolina: the Fourth House in Old Salem, and the Joel Lane House and Haywood Hall both located in Raleigh.

The efforts of North Carolina Dames also saved Rosedale Plantation in Charlotte and the Oval Ballroom in Fayetteville. In addition, the NSCDA-NC and individual members support the ongoing maintenance of Dumbarton House, a federal period house located in Washington, D.C. that is the headquarters of the National Society. NC Dames also contribute to the preservation of Gunston Hall, the home of George Mason, father of the Bill of Rights, and Sulgrave Manor, George Washington’s ancestral home in Great Britain.

“The Ladies, God Bless Them” tells the story of each of these historic properties and the preservation efforts that saved them. The program will take place at the Burgwin-Wright House on Thursday, October 15 at 6:30 p.m. Admission is \$5.00.

Lamberton, who is also the manager of the Burgwin-Wright House museum is available for speaking engagements. For more information, contact Lamberton at (910) 762-0570.

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