

Wilkes, Jane Renwick Smedberg ^[1]

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by Eva Burbank Murphy, 1996

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Jane Renwick
Smedberg Wilkes.
Image courtesy of The
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Story.

Jane Renwick Smedberg Wilkes, [Charlotte](#) ^[2] civic leader, was born in New York City, the daughter of [Charles Gustave Smedberg](#) ^[3] (1781–1845), a Swedish merchant, and Isabella Renwick (1797–1862) Smedberg. Her parents owned an estate in the Catskill Mountains. Shortly after Jane married former New Yorker [John Wilkes](#) ^[4] (31 Mar. 1827–6 July 1908) on 20 Apr. 1854, the couple took up residence for about four years near St. Catharine's Mills in [Mecklenburg County](#) ^[5]. By the mid-1870s they had moved to West Trade Street in Charlotte.

Although Mrs. Wilkes was brought up in the [Presbyterian](#) ^[6] church, after her marriage the family belonged at one time to St. John's Episcopal Church in High Shoals ([Gaston County](#) ^[7]) and later to St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Charlotte. She and her husband had nine children, several of whom died very young: Charles (d. 6 Aug. 1873), Jeanie Jeffrey (d. 5 Nov. 1868), Rosalie (September 1860–9 Oct. 1925, m. Lockwood Jones), Agnes (m. A. G. Rankin), John Frank (May 1864–4 Feb. 1953), Paul (d. 5 May 1894), Eliza Isabella (d. 19 Aug. 1868), James Renwick (July 1871–13 Jan. 1939), and Isabella Wilkes, whose tombstone in the family plot indicates the death date of 1 Sept. 1857.

Mrs. Wilkes's civic efforts centered around two institutions that she helped establish in Charlotte: St. Peter's Hospital and the Good Samaritan Hospital. She was on the board of managers of St. Peter's and nurtured the cause from suggestion to beginnings in the Church Aid Society and at last to a two-room building on East 7th Street in 1876. She served as president, secretary, and treasurer at various times during its growth. In the 1880s she also assisted in the establishment of the Good Samaritan Hospital for blacks.

Her other affiliations in Charlotte were with the Ladies Memorial Association, the Stonewall Jackson Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the Woman's Auxiliary to the Board of Missions of the Episcopal Church, and the Episcopal Churchwomen. She helped place the United Daughters of the Confederacy tablet marking the [Confederate Navy Yard](#) ^[8] on 3 June 1910. Mrs. Wilkes was the executive secretary of the Woman's Auxiliary in the Diocese of North Carolina for the terms 1882–95. In 1906 she was appointed "permanent president," having been a "President of former years." In the records of the diocesan Episcopal Churchwomen, she was listed as having been appointed honorary secretary of that organization in 1897 and president for the years 1904–9.

She died at her home on West Trade Street. The funeral, conducted by the Right Reverend [Joseph Blount Cheshire](#) ^[9], bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina, took place on 20 Jan. 1913 at St. Peter's. She was buried in Elmwood Cemetery, Charlotte.

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Additional Resources:

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Wilkes-Smedberg Papers. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Story: <http://www.cmstory.org/sites/default/files/Manuscript/papersWilkes.pdf> ^[11] (accessed July 1, 2013)

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