



HAMPDEN-SYDNEY COLLEGE
BOX 745, COLLEGE ROAD
HAMPDEN-SYDNEY, VA 23943

www.hsc.edu/museum

BELOW: Student Museum Board members Tim O'Connell '26, Owen Russell '27, and chairman Charles Adams '25 served up gingerbread cake in the Settle Hall Rotunda to celebrate Hampden-Sydney College's birthday on November 10.



MUSEUM

THE ESTHER T. ATKINSON MUSEUM OF HAMPDEN-SYDNEY COLLEGE

Student Boo-ard Members Lead Ghost Walk



Under the guidance of Student Museum Board members, parents and their sons toured the darker places of Hampden-Sydney's spirited past.

The Student Museum Board, under the leadership of Charles Adams '25, welcomed students' families to the October 2023 edition of Family Weekend.

In keeping with the tradition of the weekend, they offered haunting tales of Hampden-Sydney's historic ghosts and legends. Preparations began with a presentation by Dr. Ray Gaskins on the cemeteries of the College at a Student Museum Board practice session.

Dr. Gaskins gave information on some of the stories he had collected and historical information on the locations of the College Church and Seminary cemeteries—and their attendant spirits.

The Friday of Family Weekend at dusk was the gathering time for the tours and guides to begin their walks among the College buildings, finishing up at the

cemetery along College Road. As the evening's long shadows crossed their paths, the families heard their Student Museum Board guides recounting in hushed tones the haunting cries of the Kings' baby, bewailing his stolen tombstone; the occasional appearances of the White Lady on her table tomb; and the antics of Cushing's not-so-living occupants, headless ghosts, along with other College tales.

Approximately 120 people went on the Ghost Walk this year and another 50 attended

presentations at the Museum on Friday and Saturday. Saturday also featured Dr. Charles Pearson's discussion at the site of Old College and the planned archaeological work in the area.

If you haven't experienced a Family Weekend at Hampden-Sydney College, please consider yourself invited to attend next year and join us on one of the tours or presentations.

The Student Museum guides are ready and willing to share their haunting adventures.

Student Museum Board guides offered haunting tales of Hampden-Sydney's historic ghosts and legends.

MUSEUM



THE ESTHER T. ATKINSON MUSEUM OF HAMPDEN-SYDNEY COLLEGE

FALL 2023

“Madam Steward”

Martha Smithson King, Hampden-Sydney College’s First Recorded Female Employee

Dr. Charles E. Pearson

ON MARCH 17, 1846, THE TRUSTEES of Hampden-Sydney College met at the school and their minutes note “Mrs. Martha King was elected Steward of the College.” Martha was the widow of George King, owner and operator of the well-known King’s Tavern in the community of Kingsville, just two miles east of the College. Martha Smithson King remained in her position of Steward, residing in the Steward’s Hall, the building later known as the Alamo, until her death in April 1850.

Records of the employees of the College at the time are incomplete, but it appears that Martha King was the first woman actually employed by the school. A few women operated private boarding houses for College students, and a small number of women worked as cooks, washer women, and the like, but most, if not all, of them were enslaved. Hampden-Sydney was essentially an all-male domain at the time, and, with the exception of Martha King, the school would remain a male preserve into the twentieth century.

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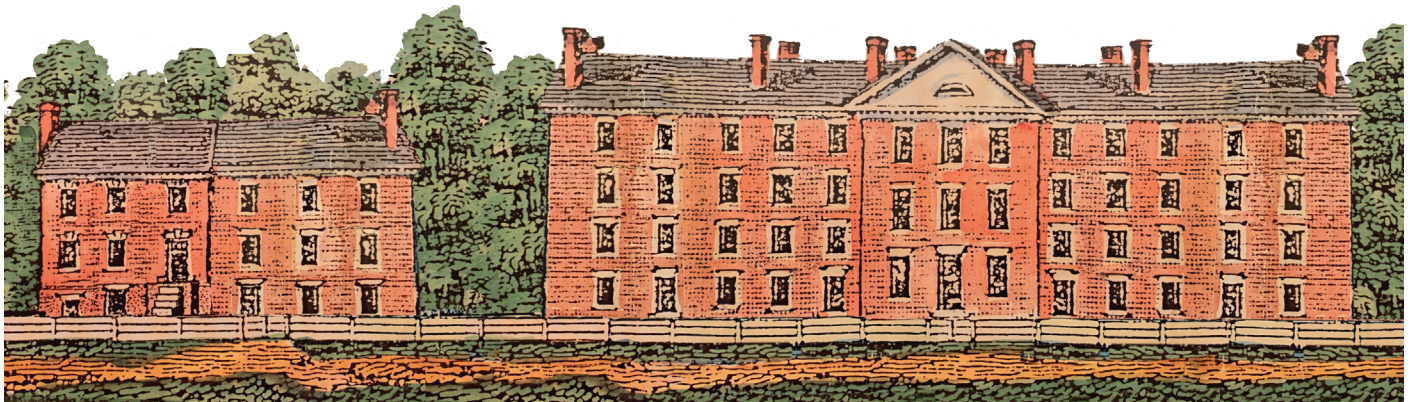
The single-line entry in the Trustee minutes noting the election, or hiring, of Martha King as “Steward” fails to convey the importance of this position to the operation of the College. The Steward was the person responsible for feeding students, making arrangements for their

housing on campus, and insuring the upkeep of that housing. “Feeding the students” involved all facets of this task, including purchasing, processing, cooking, and in some instances, raising the necessary food. The duties of the Steward were first formalized in the set of laws and regulations published by the College in 1784.

The Trustees also established requirements for the student

diet to insure it was wholesome and adequate. These requirements mention foods like milk, butter, salted meat, puddings and pies, all to be provided by the Steward. The mention of milk and butter implies there were buildings for storing these products, such as a “dairy” or icehouse. In addition, there were stables and barns for the cows used in milk production.

Martha King served in the Steward’s Hall, just west of Cushing. After parts of the later Victorian false front were partially destroyed in the 1935 hurricane, its profile reminded people of the Alamo; the name stuck.



THIS IMAGE OF THE 1835 CAMPUS WAS CREATED TO USE ON THE COVER OF JOHN BRINKLEY’S ON THIS HILL. IT CONTAINS THE ORIGINAL 1846 WOODCUT OF CUSHING AND A MATCHING RECONSTRUCTION OF THE STEWARD’S HALL BY RICHARD MCCLINTOCK. IT WAS HAND-COLORED BY DEBORAH MCCLINTOCK.

DR. CHARLES PEARSON is an Adjunct Assistant Professor at Hampden-Sydney College, and a Senior Archæologist with Coastal Environments, Inc., an environmental consulting firm headquartered in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. A native of Georgia, he now lives in Appomattox, Virginia. He received his bachelor's degree in archæology from the University of New Mexico and an MA and Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Georgia. Dr. Pearson has conducted archæological research on historic and prehistoric sites in the southeastern United States for over 40 years and has published widely on this work. One of Dr. Pearson's specialties is maritime history and archæology and he has undertaken studies of a number of historic shipwrecks in the Gulf of Mexico, the Lower Mississippi River Valley, and along the Texas coast. Dr. Pearson teaches a summer course in Historical Archæology at Hampden-Sydney College, leading a long-term archæological study of founding trustee Nathaniel Venable's Slate Hill Plantation.

The statement about salted meat infers a facility for salting meat, often placed within a smokehouse. In fact, in May 1822, the Trustees authorized the construction of a smokehouse at the new Steward's Hall (*i.e.* the Alamo) "suitable for the purposes of the Steward." The Steward had to operate and maintain these various facilities and to provide the servants necessary to feed students and keep their rooms clean. The Steward was also specifically directed to provide meals and rooms for the Trustees, as well as their horses, when they met on campus.

The salary of the Steward came out of the room and board payments of students. In 1775, the Trustees established for the first Steward, Philemon Holcombe, a salary of £8 for providing food and £3 for laundering students' clothes and maintaining their rooms. By 1832, the Steward was paid a \$1200 annual salary. Presumably, Martha King was paid a similar amount as her salary.

She and other Stewards were able to supplement their income by providing various services to students and faculty. For instance, the Steward was allowed to cut firewood from College property and sell this to both faculty and students.

The Steward, however, did have a variety of expenses. For example, Martha King as Steward had to pay a lease on the Steward's Hall, as did her predecessors. In addition, the Steward had to maintain any servants (generally enslaved persons) she brought to campus.

Over the years, the Steward's position at the College created problems for the Trustees. The Steward's income was often insufficient to fund the duties of the Steward and maintain a family. As a result, there was a high turnover in this position for the first 70 years of the school's existence. The first Steward, Philemon Holcombe, hired in 1775, left his position less than two years after he took the post. The Steward prior to Martha King, a Mr. W. M. Lewis, absconded during the school vacation with some of the money that student boarders had paid in advance.

Born in Lunenburg County in about 1772,

Martha Smithson married George King in 1796 and by the 1820s lived with her husband in the community of Kingsville, named after the tavern they operated. This tavern was housed in a large brick building constructed in the 1750s by the Scottish mercantile company Alexander Spiers John Bowman & Company. This imposing structure, often referred to as "French's Store" or "French's Old Store" in early records, stood where the Finch House now stands in Kingsville at the intersection of Highway 15 and Highway 133, the road leading to Hampden-Sydney.

George King seems to have been running the tavern at this location as early as 1826, the year he was issued a license to operate an "ordinary." Subsequently, he purchased the tavern property from Hampden-Sydney College. Martha was fully involved in running the tavern with her husband, and she operated the business with her son William after George's death in 1839.

The King family and the tavern were well known to College Trustees and there is no doubt these men were familiar with Martha King's abilities as a tavern-keeper. Mrs. Anne Royall, who stayed at King's

Mrs. Anne Royall, who stayed in 1829 at King's Tavern, complimented Mrs. King as a hostess, noting that King's Tavern was "one of the best taverns" she had encountered in her travels.

Tavern in 1829, complimented Mrs. King as a hostess, noting that King's Tavern was "one of the best taverns" she had encountered in her travels. When the post of Steward came open in 1846, Martha, with her years of experience in the tavern business, would have been an understandable choice for the position. The College Trustees knew of Martha's experience, but they must also have been impressed with her as a person, if they hired her for what was typically a male-only occupation. Martha's selection seems all the more surprising, considering that she was 74 years old when hired, an advanced age given that the average life expectancy of white females in the United States at the time was less than 40 years.

When Martha took the position of Steward, she moved to campus and lived in the Steward's Hall, a two-story brick building erected in 1822 that stood a short distance west of present-day Cushing Hall. The first floor served as the dining room for the College, the second floor contained living quarters for Martha as well as other rooms where students or faculty lived and where Trustees stayed when meeting at the school.

The building also had a large attic, occasionally referred to as a “garret,” where servants and, apparently, students lived. Given her responsibility for feeding the many students at the College, Martha King had to have access to a large and well-equipped kitchen. It is not known if this kitchen was located in the basement of Steward’s Hall or if it was in a separate adjacent building.

On her move to Steward’s Hall in the spring of 1846, Martha King reportedly took with her ten enslaved persons. In a deposition made in March 1852, Edward M. Mettauer stated that these individuals were named Randolph, Sam,

Betty, Mary, Ellen, George, Giles, Martha, Nancy, and Jane. Martha employed these enslaved individuals in her duties as Steward. Their work included preparing and serving meals, possibly the cultivation of gardens and tending animals such as chickens and cows, and cleaning student rooms on campus. Some of the women may have served as washerwomen for both students and faculty members. The men might have been involved in kitchen work, including cutting firewood, a large quantity of which was needed in the Steward’s kitchen and some of which was sold to faculty and

Continued on page 6

Kingsville in Martha King’s Time

Much like Prince Edward Court House, the county seat down the road, Kingsville grew because of its placement on a crossroads and its proximity to a customer base, namely students at the nearby College, residents of surrounding plantations, and the Court and attendant lawyers and clients.

Centered around the early general store established by a Scottish mercantile firm, Alexander Spiers, John Bowman, & Company, the village gradually added taverns and utilitarian businesses like blacksmith shops, livery stables,

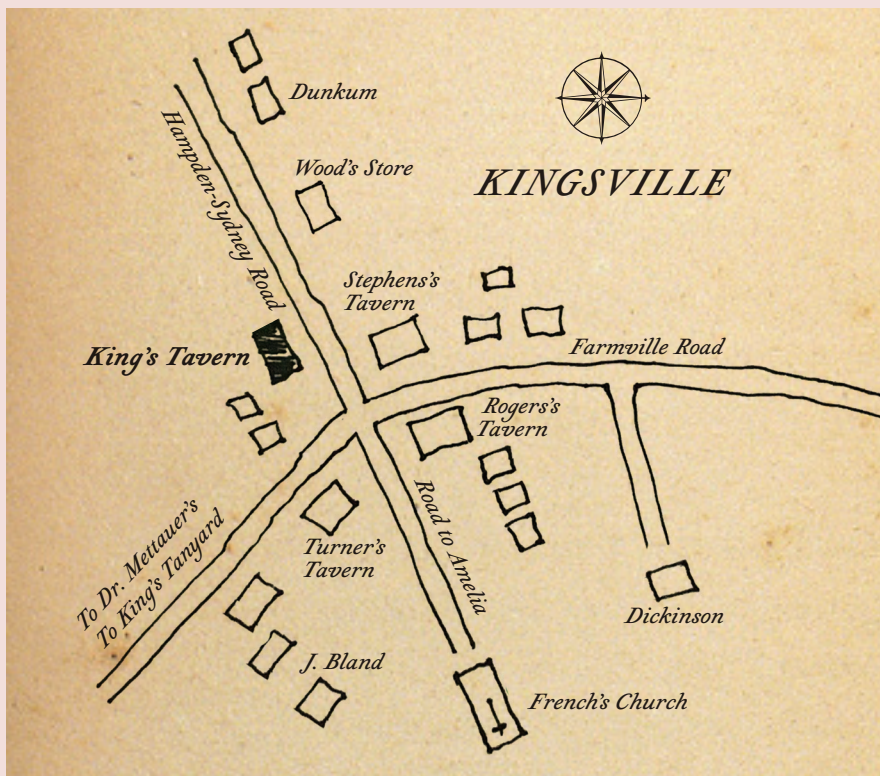
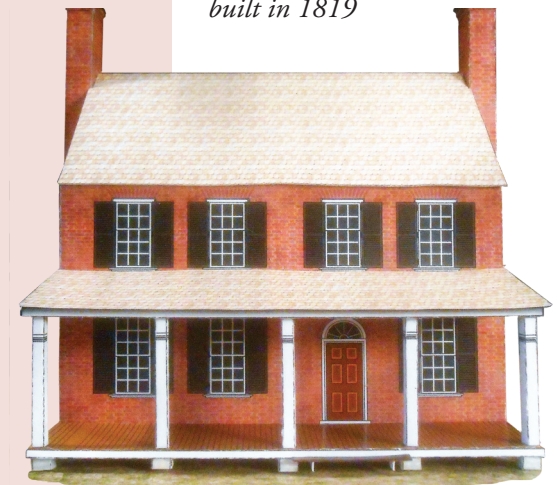
and wheelwrights.

Apparently there were other attractions as well, since the Trustees several times had to enact Rules for students, forbidding them to go to Kingsville for gambling and other wicked amusements.

Well into the 20th century, it was still common for students to walk to Kingsville to purchase snacks and supplies.



A large brick structure, King’s Tavern may have looked something like Morton’s Tavern (above), which was the first building in Farmville in 1798, or the Clover Hill tavern (below) in Appomattox Court House, built in 1819



In and Out of a Canal: The Story of a Rare Book

Peggy Atkinson Jerome Chandler

How a precious copy of an early edition of Algernon Sidney's Treatise on Government came to the Museum.

Discourses Concerning Government by Algernon Sidney (1623–1683) expounds on the ideas of a representative republic versus a monarch's divine right to rule. While a nation might suffer under the whims of a ruler, true rights were “natural,” with liberty and equality of mankind a truth “evident to common sense”—a view that Jefferson would include in the Declaration of Independence. The Atkinson Museum displays a copy of the Discourses in book form published almost one hundred years after the execution of Sidney for those ideas. Below is the story by Peggy Jerome Chandler, granddaughter of Mrs. P. T. Atkinson and daughter of Esther Atkinson Jerome, about how the book was acquired.

I am the procurer. My name is Peggy Jerome Chandler. May I begin by saying how delighted I am that Museum cherishes the book. It actually cost Sydney his life, after all. I'll start at the beginning.... I've been an Anglophile since reading *Robin Hood* at the age of 7. I wrangled my Junior Year Abroad in the United Kingdom in 1968, finished my

degree, worked for a year to provide my own grubstake (financial support), and returned to England in 1970. In order for ‘aliens’ to have a valid work permit, they had to show that no Brit wanted the job. It follows therefore that the jobs I had for those four years were not the best paid nor highly sought after. The concept of Trial by Ordeal is highly ingrained in the British psyche!

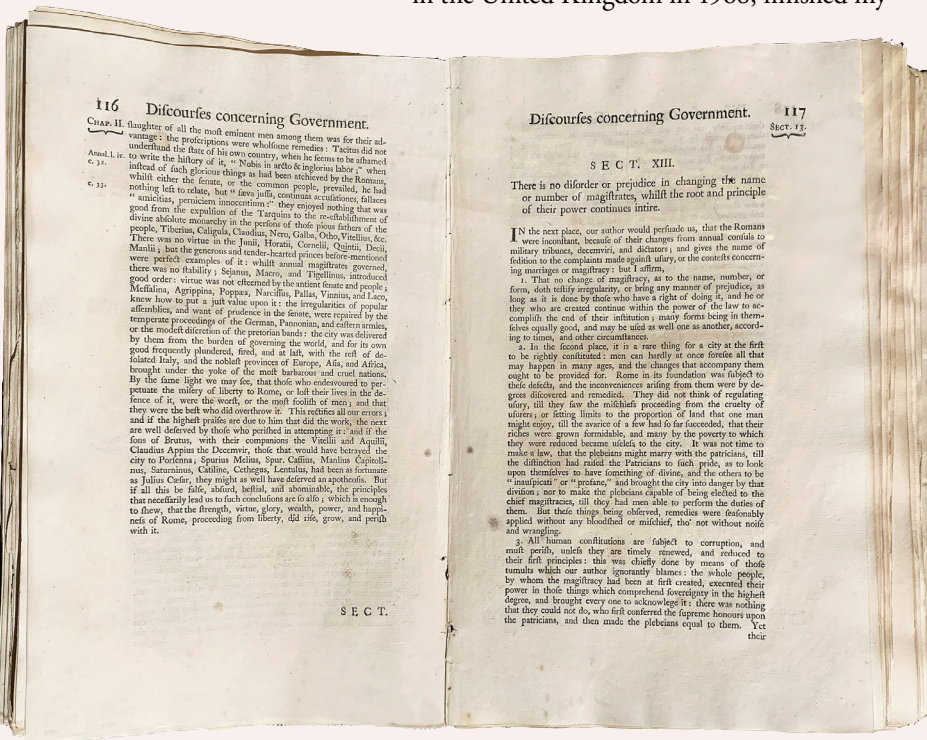
As I was trudging to work one morning, I spied *Discourses Concerning Government* in a beat-up bookshop's window. The shop was not open and I had to be at work on time, so you can imagine my mental state. I scribbled a note and pushed it through the letterbox, “Please don't sell *Discourses* to anyone but me.” Luckily they didn't. However the price was £60 and my weekly salary was £5 (it would have bought 20 gallons of petrol). I was emboldened to ask and receive a raise to £10. I paid the extra £5 to the shop each week and 3 months later the book was mine. What a treasure!

My work permit finished, meaning I could apply for normal jobs, so I went to teach in London. By now I had acquired a boyfriend and a wooden canal boat and commuted into Town from a mooring near Heathrow. I was at a party on a Friday night when I was told that the boat had sunk—with the book on board. What a disaster!

Turns out one must not just dry out a book in such conditions. Instead it is necessary to soak each page in a mixture of distilled water, rubbing alcohol, and a liquid antiseptic called TCP, and then allow it to dry with paper towel sheets between each page. I think I recall that the museum staff (who were working on a low budget themselves) sent the book to a conservation person, I think for \$1000.

If you've not seen the book, it's about 3 inches thick, by maybe 12 inches wide and maybe 18 inches high. What a task. I don't now remember how the book finally got to Hampden Sydney, who delivered it or when.

But at least it is there, and not on the bottom of a canal.



Madam Steward, continued from page 4

students. It appears these enslaved persons had experience in these types of duties, since most seem to have previously worked at King's Tavern.

It is unreported where these enslaved people lived on campus. Some resided in the Steward's Hall, probably in the garret or basement, although others may have lived in adjacent buildings. In 1841, the Steward at that time requested that a "Negro house" be erected on the "Steward's premises." The Trustees apparently approved this request and some of the enslaved brought to campus by Martha may have lived in this building.

The Trustee minutes contain numerous references to Stewards whose actions displeased the Trustees and, occasionally, Stewards were dismissed because of their poor performance. There is no indication in the minutes that the Trustees had any problem with Martha King or her work. In fact, in June 1849, the Trustees authorized that a new contract be drawn up with Martha King for leasing the Steward's Hall for the following year at a rent of \$30. Apparently, the rent would be partially satisfied in repairs made by Martha King to the Steward's facilities. In addition, the lease required Martha to board the "College tutor and servant" and provide meals to the Trustees at their meetings as well as feed and "attend to their horses." Martha's lease also stipulated that two rooms in the Steward's Hall would be reserved for the "use and control" of the Trustees. By August 1849, the lease between the Trustees and Martha King had been signed, signaling the desire of the Trustees to keep Martha on as the College Steward.

An entry from the Trustee minutes for June

12, 1850, records a "vacancy in the Office of Steward, occasioned by the death of the late incumbent." This minimal statement on the death of Martha King, without even a mention of her name, is no more elaborate than the single sentence reporting her initial hiring four years earlier. The United States Census Mortality Schedule for 1850 reports Martha died in April 1850 of "inflammation of stomach," after an eight-week illness. The Schedule notes that Martha was 78 years old at her death. The exact illness referenced for her death is unknown, but it was likely due to complications from acute gastritis. Other than the mentions in the Trustee minutes and the 1850 mortality records, no other announcement of Martha King's death has been found. Nor is it known where Martha King, or her husband George, were buried.

King's Tavern occupied a large brick building constructed in the 1750s by a Scottish mercantile company.

Professor Ray Gaskins speculates they may have been interred near their Tavern, in that area just south of the present Finch House in Kingsville on Hampden-Sydney College property. If so, these graves are now unmarked.

It is truly unfortunate that so little was written to record Martha King's life. What we do know suggests she was a remarkable and accomplished person. Her abilities certainly impressed the members of

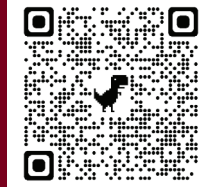
the Board of Trustees of Hampden-Sydney College, convincing them she could serve in the important position of Steward. Her four years in this role seem to have justified the Trustees' trust—an important accomplishment given that so many of her predecessors had been unable to satisfactorily undertake the duties expected of the Steward. It would be decades before the College employed another female in an important position, certainly a testament to the abilities of Martha Smithson King.

NOTE ON SOURCES

Information on Martha King and her tenure as Steward is derived from several sources. These include the *Minutes of the Hampden-Sydney College Board of Trustees*, particularly Volume 3, June 1842-June 1879, located in the Hampden-Sydney College Archives & Special Collections, Walter M. Bortz III Library, Hampden-Sydney College. Specific information on the enslaved people taken to the College by Martha King is derived from the Library of Virginia online Chancery Cause No. 147-1852-006, Prince Edward County, *A. Shelton vs Executors of George King*, Hampden-Sydney College, King's Tavern, and Kingsville information is derived from several sources, including the above referenced Chancery cause; *On This Hill: A Narrative History of Hampden-Sydney College, 1774-1994*, by John L. Brinkley (Hampden-Sydney College, 1994); *History of Prince Edward County, Virginia*, by Herbert C. Bradshaw (The Dietz Press, Richmond, 2003 [reprint]) and an article by Dr. Ray Gaskins entitled "The Kings of Kingsville" appearing in *The Farmville Herald*, November 13, 2009. Martha King's death records come from the United States Federal Census of Mortality Schedule for 1850 found online at Ancestry.com (www.ancestry.com/search/collections/8756/). Anne Royall's comments on King's Tavern and Martha King come from "*Mrs. Royall's Southern Tour or Second Series of the Black Book*" (Washington, 1830) by Anne Royall.

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Why Hampden and Sydney?

A question for Dr. John Coombs, Hampden-Sydney College Department of History

Q: Is there a connection to the naming of our College for Hampden and Sydney versus or because of the naming of William and Mary?

A: I've never researched this issue specifically, but my sense is that the college was named after Hampden and Sydney because they were among the most admired and evoked champions of English liberty in 1775. That year marked, of course, the final apogee of the imperial crisis of the 1760s and 1770s, and the issue of liberty, particularly the rights of Englishmen, was very much on people's minds.

But there were as yet no American heroes

for whom an institution relating to that issue might be named, so the College's founders looked to the English past for inspiration.

Samuel Stanhope Smith studied under John Witherspoon at Princeton, where Witherspoon (who would later sign the Declaration of Independence) used Sydney's *Discourses* in his class. Smith probably got his idea for the name from his professor and future father-in-law.

The fact that W&M, named after English monarchs, was a bastion of the established Anglican church, likely only added impetus to the Presbyterians' search for an historical counterpoint to the colony's "Royal" college.

Get your Museum History Books here!

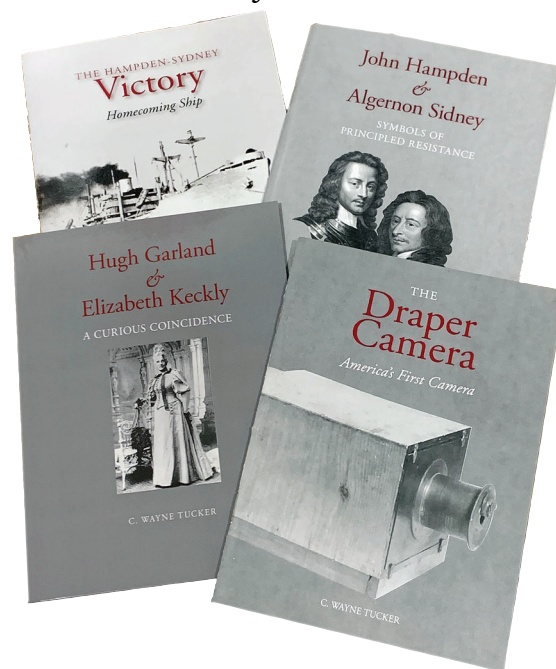
Collector's-item editions from the annual series are available for donors

For many years the Museum published a small annual research paper on varied topics relevant to Hampden-Sydney history. These were sent to donors as a thank-you token.

Now is your chance to get one of these useful volumes again. Any donation of \$25 or more before the end of this school year will be acknowledged by a copy of one of the history chapbooks.

As long as supplies last, you may have your choice of the book about Elizabeth Keckley, who grew up at Hampden-Sydney and became Mary Todd Lincoln's dressmaker and confidante (a volume so popular that it has been reprinted several times); about the story of the *SS Hampden-Sydney Victory*, the World-War-II-era ship which carried supplies and troops across the Atlantic (the bottle used to christen it is in the Museum's collection); about the biographies of John Hampden and Algernon Sydney, English patriots for whom the College is named; and about the intriguing story of the Draper camera, likely the first camera in America, now displayed in the Museum.

Next year's book is scheduled to focus on the original campus and *The Eighteenth-Century Buildings of Hampden-Sydney College*.



While we already knew a good deal about them—despite the annoying fact that Dr. Draper did not photograph them when he had the chance in 1839—we know a lot more now. In the last few years, extensive surveys with ground-penetrating radar have revealed the location and size of the Old College itself and several accompanying buildings, among them the President's House and the first Steward's House.

RECENT & FUTURE EXHIBITS

Documentary Photography and Public History

How will future generations understand what the built environment looked like a century or more ago?

That is the mission of three programs, run by the Library of Congress, which attempt to document significant buildings around the country, which demonstrate how people built, lived, and worked over the years.

Established in 1933, the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) now preserves plans, drawings, and photographs for over 40,000 American buildings in its collection.

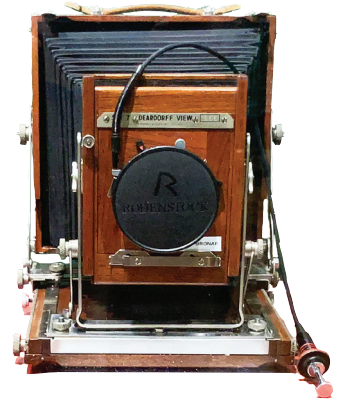
Added to HABS in recent years are the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), which concentrates on industrial and civil engineering sites, and the Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS), which documents the complementary natural or artistic surroundings of historic sites.

For nearly fifty years, our alumnus Brian Grogan '72 has been behind a very large camera—the kind with a black cloth over the photographer's head which you see in old movies—to create the images which go with those documentary files. From his first assignment, shooting bridges and roads in Yosemite National Park, through trips around the country to out-of-the-way places he never

imagined he would see, and even to American memorial cemeteries in France and Belgium, Brian has lugged his precious Deardorff view camera high and low in pursuit of the best shot. He strives for pictures which do more than document the look of a place, but try to capture the spirit and feel of the place in his favorite black-and-white medium. He estimates that the Library of Congress has as many as 10,000 of his negatives.

On June 4, 2022, the College recognized the impact of Brian's work with the Atkinson Award, given by the College Museum and sponsored by the Atkinson family, for his contributions to Public History and Culture. The presentation occurred during the opening reception of Alumni Weekend, in the presence of many of his classmates celebrating their 50th reunion. It also marked the opening at the Museum of a large exhibition of his photographs, which hung through October.

The next exhibit, the first in a series commemorating the 250th anniversary of the founding of Hampden-Sydney College, will open in January. Tentatively titled *Past and President*, it will feature the portraits, biographies, and achievements of the men who led the College for two and a half centuries.



Brian Grogan's vintage view camera. It makes a single 5x7 negative with each exposure.



Bob Atkinson (right) presents the Atkinson Award to Brian Grogan.



A general view of Brian Grogan's exhibit at the Museum. In the foreground are some of the books in which his photographs appear.