



# The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR LIBRARY

WINTER 2019

NEWSLETTER

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## WOMEN OF THE RESTORATION

Many people are familiar with the contributions of men such as architects Perry, Shaw & Hepburn and landscape architect Arthur Shurcliff to Colonial Williamsburg's inception. Fewer know that women also played an important role in the effort to restore Williamsburg to its eighteenth-century appearance. While their contributions are not necessarily well known today, their often behind-the-scenes work, was critical to the success of the Restoration and its development as a visitor destination. This article highlights one key female contributor to Williamsburg's successful beginning. Additional features will follow in subsequent newsletter issues.

### Elizabeth Hayes

Everyone has heard the adage that "behind every great man is a great woman." Dr. W.A.R. Goodwin is known as the "father of Colonial Williamsburg"—it was his dream that convinced John D. Rockefeller Jr. to fund the restoration of the town to its colonial glory. But by his side for all of his time with the Restoration was his personal secretary Elizabeth Hayes helping him to realize



*Elizabeth Hayes, circa 1930.*

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## WOMEN OF THE RESTORATION

(continued)



***Historical Notes and Tentative Suggestions Relative to the Restoration of Colonial Williamsburg Capital of Colonial Virginia by W.A.R. Goodwin, March 1927***

the dream. From the crafting of the famous binder of building photographs and histories (today known as the Hayes Notebook) used to convince Mr. Rockefeller to fund the Williamsburg project, to the research of various historical topics, to the management of Dr. Goodwin's voluminous correspondence related to the early business of the Restoration, Elizabeth Hayes was responsible for executing it all. Additionally, Hayes created two of the most important documents in the Foundation's archives. The first is the typescript with the amazing title *The Background and Beginnings of the Restoration of Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia Compiled from Dr. Goodwin's Files and From her Contemporaneous diary notes*; by Elizabeth Hayes, Secretary to Dr. Goodwin. Written in 1933, it is still the authoritative account of the earliest years of the Restoration, covering the years 1927-1928. The second document is the oral history she completed in 1957 titled *A Memory Sketch of Dr. W.A.R. Goodwin* in which she chronicled her early years with Goodwin, information about his family life, and her pre-Restoration time in Williamsburg with observations about the college, the town, Bruton Parish Church, and the people that she knew there. Hayes's history paints a delightful portrait of a people and a town in transition. As you stroll through Colonial Williamsburg today, take a moment to think of Elizabeth Hayes and how her work touched every aspect of the Restoration's early years.

## THROUGH THE LENS: WILLIAMSBURG IN BLACK AND WHITE, 1870-1935

The period between 1870 and 1935 led to the creation of a core group of historical black and white photographs now housed at the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library that continues to be studied and carefully preserved for future generations of scholars. A variety of town residents, architects, contractors, and professionals all contributed photos to this archive as they sought to assist with both the practical and promotional aspects of developing Williamsburg's historic district. The Williamsburg preserved in black and white is one that spans the town's evolution from the quiet backwater community of the post-Civil War era to its birth as a busy tourist destination and monument to one of the first large-scale historic preservation efforts in the country. With each decade of change, a portion of the town known and loved by residents disappeared forever. Fortunately, the cameras of many different individuals captured lost architecture, businesses, streetscapes, and activities in photographs that now comprise a valuable and fascinating archive of the past – a Williamsburg that only exists in black and white.

Architects and townspeople used photography to document the appearance of streets and buildings in Williamsburg prior to its restoration. These images were intended to serve as an historical record of the town before physical changes were made to architecture, layout, and gardens. A number of individuals assisted with this photographic effort. Elizabeth Coleman, Earl Gregg Swem, and Clyde Holmes, three Williamsburg town residents, played important roles in helping to amass visual documentation of streets and buildings between the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Williamsburg office of Perry, Shaw & Hepburn acquired their collections to aid research in the late 1920s.



*Frank Nivison working in his photo studio, circa 1930 .*



***The Bathurst-Peachy House being moved across Palace Green, Williamsburg, Virginia, circa 1930. In the background, the old Williamsburg High School is shown prior to its demolition. Photo by Susan Higginson Nash .***

## THROUGH THE LENS

(continued)

The architectural team also included a number of staff members who utilized photography as part of their methodology for studying a site. Construction contractors Webster Todd and J.A.O. Brown compiled a collection of over eight hundred images of each building along Duke of Gloucester, Nicholson, and Francis streets prior to any restoration work taking place. Their photos now comprise a priceless archive of the many civic, business, religious, and residential structures that had to be either torn down or moved because they did not date to the eighteenth-century.

Establishing precedents for each and every detail was of fundamental importance to Rockefeller and his architects and provided additional opportunities for photography to aid restoration efforts in a significant way. Williamsburg Restoration staff, including landscape architect Arthur Shurcliff, interior designer Susan Higginson Nash, and architectural draftsman John Barrows, traveled throughout the mid-Atlantic states and abroad looking for eighteenth-century buildings and gardens that might serve as models for the structures to be reconstructed in Williamsburg. During their research, they amassed a large group of images of these architectural precedents.

Professional photographers employed on a contract basis to document each stage of work at sites where buildings were under reconstruction or restoration created a highly detailed visual record of the archaeological, architectural, and landscape features as they took shape. Thomas Layton, a Richmond based photographer, took some of the earliest images of archaeological investigations and restoration work at sites between 1929-1930. He was followed by Frank Nivison, a photographer from

## THROUGH THE LENS

(continued)

Massachusetts who spent five years in Williamsburg photographing each phase of progress at building sites. With over 7,000 prints and negatives, the Nivison collection is the largest compilation of restoration era images and encompasses every aspect of the meticulous work undertaken with each building restored or reconstructed. Nivison's progress photos were supplemented by those taken by contractors Todd & Brown Inc. and by various staff members, such as Shurcliff and Nash, who continued taking images of projects in process in addition to their more formal duties with landscape and interior design, respectively.

Once the initial phase of restoration work was completed, Colonial Williamsburg staff realized they needed to supplement record photography with aesthetically pleasing photos to attract visitors to the new historic site. Several photographers, including Ansel Adams, Samuel Gottscho, Wendell MacRae, and F.S. Lincoln, applied for the job of creating a photographic portfolio of Williamsburg buildings and gardens. F.S. Lincoln was ultimately awarded the position in 1935 due to contacts with magazine editors in New York City. Many of Lincoln's photos appeared in the December 1935 and November 1936 issues of *The Architectural Record*. During the same period, Frank Nivison continued to photograph for Colonial Williamsburg on a contract basis, recording such events as the dedication of Duke of Gloucester Street by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, as well as the opening of individual exhibition buildings. By 1935, promotional photography had become an integral component of the photographic history of the restoration.

Interested in learning more? Selected photos, along with information about the photographers and their collections, can be viewed on the Rockefeller Library's Omeka site: [rocklib.omeka.net/Browse Collections](http://rocklib.omeka.net/Browse_Collections).

### JOHN NORTON & SONS PAPERS ONLINE

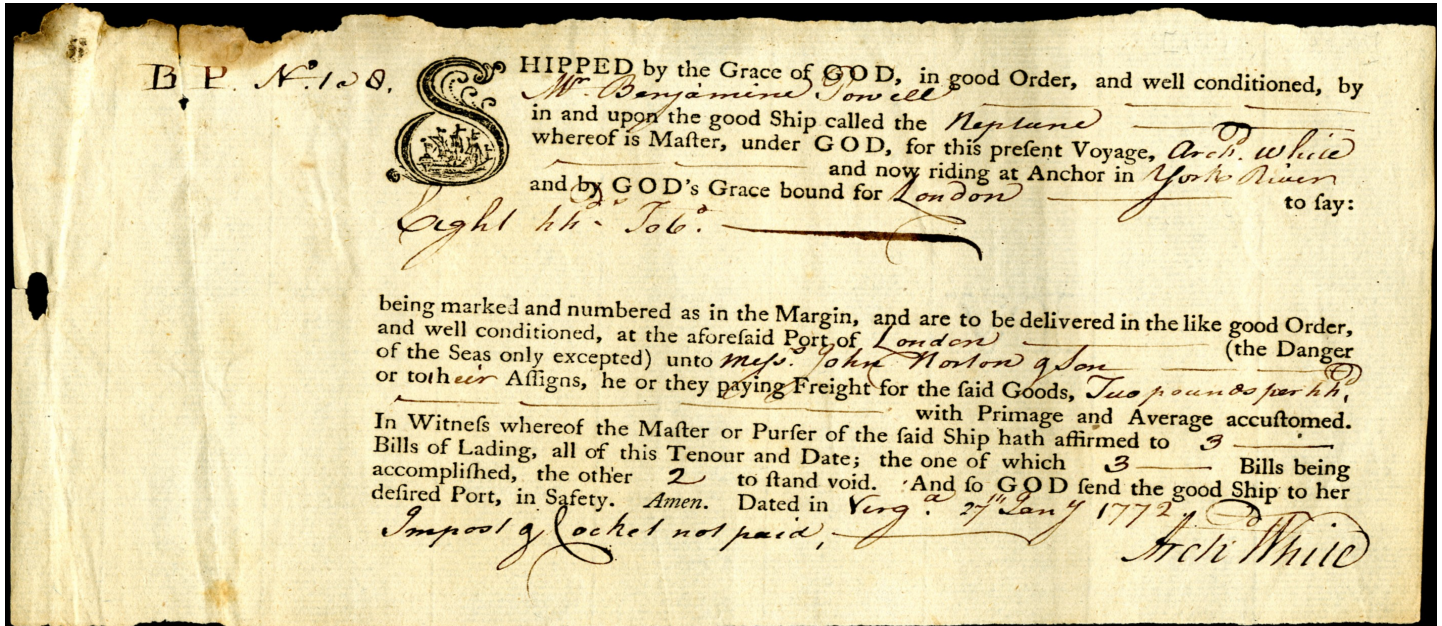
Special Collections is currently digitizing and transcribing the papers of John Norton & Sons, merchants of London, England and Virginia. Containing just under two thousand three hundred letters and documents, the John Norton & Sons papers is one of the largest collections of 18th-century manuscripts at Colonial Williamsburg. While Norton & Sons was engaged in the tobacco trade, the content of the letters cover much more than the shipping and sale of tobacco. They are also a great source of information on the politics of the time as well as natural history, material culture and social life. The correspondence of many prominent Williamsburg residents including Governor Botetourt, George Wythe, Robert Carter Nicholas, John and Peyton Randolph, John Page, Jr. and Thomas Everard comprises a large proportion of the materials. The letters of local tradespeople, professionals and merchants such as James Craig, James Carter, John Carter and Catherine Rathell form part of the collection. There are also many letters from women outside Williamsburg such as those of Martha Goosley of Yorktown and Rebecca Chamberlayne of New Kent County. The collection includes the largest accumulation of correspondence written by or about women in Special Collections.



*Trade card of Daniel Moore, gun maker of London, England.*

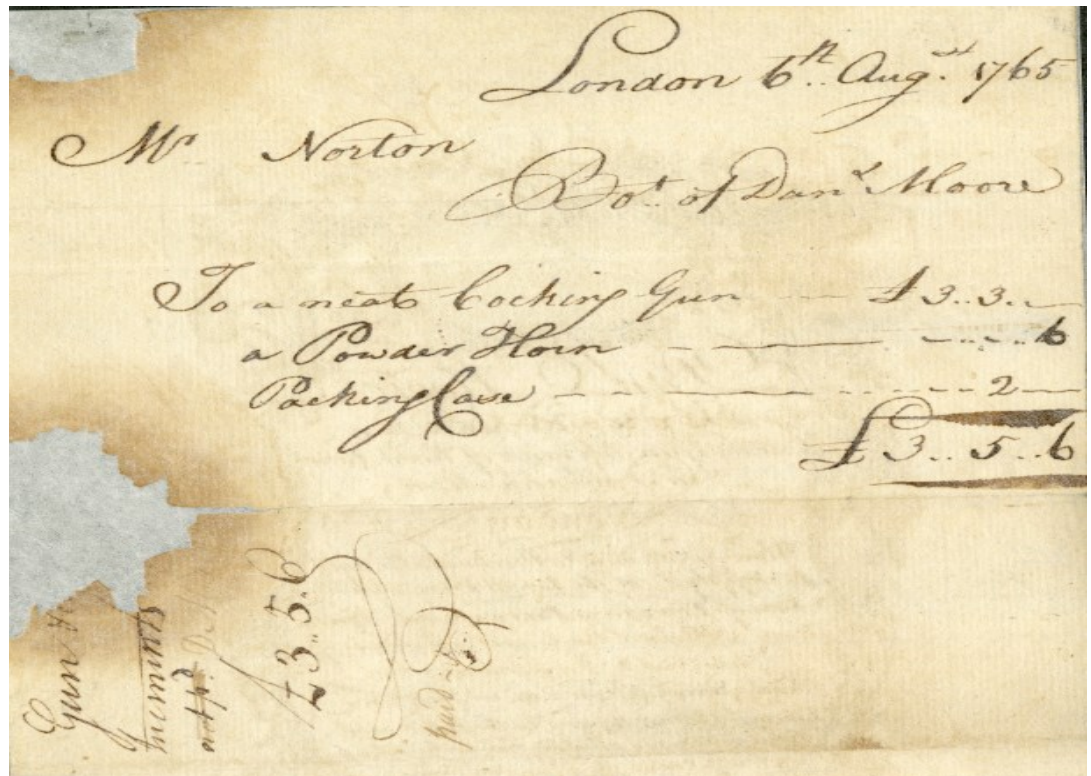
JOHN NORTON & SONS PAPERS ONLINE

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Bill of lading for eight hogsheads of Benjamin Powell's tobacco shipped from York River to London aboard the Neptune.

About one third of the items were transcribed and published in the various printings of Frances Norton Mason's John Norton & Sons: merchants of London and Virginia. Most of those items and many more have now been transcribed by Special Collection's volunteers Barbara Femenella and Margaret Gunn. Of those, about five hundred are currently available online. As the rest are scanned and cataloged, they too will be posted online. The collection may be viewed here: <https://rocklibnorton.omeka.net/>.



Verso of the Moore trading card recording the purchase of a gun, powder horn and packing case.

## EDUCATION RESOURCE LIBRARY OFFERS VIDEOS AND OTHER TOOLS ONLINE

Not every student can come to Colonial Williamsburg, so let's bring Colonial Williamsburg and its educational expertise to them! That was the philosophy when the "Electronic Field Trip" program was instituted in 1995. For over 20 years, the Foundation created educational video programs which were televised live at schools across the nation. Many addressed topics in colonial history, including government, commerce, slavery, and women's lives. The program eventually expanded to include other related historical subjects (such as the War of 1812, the Civil War clash of the "Ironclad" ships in Hampton Roads, and the injustices of the Jim Crow era) and to address math and science education through a historical lens. While designed for students in grades 4-8, these materials have been successfully used in other grade levels, and are of interest even to the general viewer.

While these programs are no longer being broadcast live, they remain a wonderful resource for students and educators – and they are now available for free, right in the comfort of your own home! Just go to the online Education Resource Library, currently at [resourcelibrary.history.org](http://resourcelibrary.history.org). To access the materials, users need to create a free account and password. Once logged in, you will find all sixty (!) of the electronic field trips ready to be explored. You can watch the video segments online, view related teacher guides, try specially-themed educational activities, and more! The resources can be browsed by title, or sorted by historical era, subject, or theme.

The Electronic Field Trip program (later known as HERO Live) was associated with both the Colonial Williamsburg Productions Department and the Teacher Institute. Its resources have been enjoyed by thousands, and many of the videos earned such high accolades as regional Emmy awards and film festival recognition. Check them out today!

MY RESOURCES MY ACCOUNT LOG OUT Search

*Colonial Williamsburg*  
EDUCATION  
Resource Library

**Welcome to the Colonial Williamsburg Education Resource Library!**

Here you'll find a variety of materials for teaching and learning American history and civics, including videos, interactive learning games, lesson plans, and more.

Video programs are designed for grades 4-8, but have been used successfully in other grade levels as well. Other resource types are listed by grade level, below, and can be sorted by era, subject, and theme.

[View FAQ](#)

*Colonial Williamsburg*  
EDUCATION  
Resource Library

**My Resources**

Sort by: TITLE ERA SUBJECT THEME

▼ Video Programs

A Call to Arms A Day in the Life A More Perfect Union A Publick Education

Backdraft Building History Buying Respectability Chained to the Land

*Landing page of the Colonial Williamsburg Resource Library*

# 2018 by the Numbers

## Selected activity and accomplishments



The *John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library Newsletter* is a publication of Colonial Williamsburg's John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library.

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