



# The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR. LIBRARY

WINTER 2021

NEWSLETTER

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## PHOTO IDENTIFICATION PROJECT



*Albert Durant's photographs provide a backdrop for Ethell Hill (left), Gertrude Brown (middle), and Rev. Dr. Reginald F. Davis (right) as they ring First Baptist Church's newly restored Freedom Bell in honor of peace and justice during the "Let Freedom Ring" event in February 2016.*

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The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library are proud to be the repository of important photo collections, such as the Albert Durant Photography Collection recently highlighted for African American History Month. African American life in Williamsburg and the surrounding region from the early 1930s through early 1960s is captured in the collection of approximately ten thousand photos taken by Albert Durant, the first city licensed African American photographer in Williamsburg and a graduate of James City County Training School. As he

## PHOTO IDENTIFICATION PROJECT

(continued)



**R&B singer Ruth Brown performing in a Williamsburg area nightclub during the formative years of her career, Albert Durant Photography Collection.**

documented everyday life in his community, Durant focused upon achievements such as educational pursuits, business ownership, leadership in churches and organizations, and civic involvement to emphasize the important strides they were making forward despite living with racial discrimination. A renewed commitment to preserving and providing access to these vital resources has led the Rockefeller Library to launch a photo identification project in collaboration with the Library of Virginia.

Many of the images in the Albert Durant Photography Collection have limited or no identification information. Since its acquisition in 1992, the Rockefeller Library has worked in coordination with the local community to identify and catalog the Durant photographs and to feature them in exhibits, special events and publications to enrich understanding of local African American history. An early outreach effort involved collaboration with the staff of Williamsburg Regional Library to mount an exhibition of Durant's photographs and solicit input from residents to provide missing places, names, and dates. Oral history community nights and a "Do You Remember?" byline in the Virginia Gazette led to many more identifications of key individuals, such as R&B singer Ruth Brown in the formative years of her career. More recently, the "Let Freedom Ring" event, held in 2016

## PHOTO IDENTIFICATION PROJECT

(continued)



***Albert Durant's photos of student life are a highlight of the Bruton Heights School Exhibition, Bruton Heights School Education Center, which opened in April 1997.***

at First Baptist Church, provided an opportunity for the Rockefeller Library to help celebrate African American History Month by mounting an exhibition of Durant's photos in its own exhibit space. A Wall of Remembrance allowed exhibit guests to sit down and examine copies of unidentified photos in notebooks and add any information they could. Over the course of the year, the library obtained over sixty new identifications for photos.

Despite these efforts, Library staff felt that they could do more to give voice to the people depicted by harnessing the power of community memory to identify the individuals, places, and events portrayed in these photos. Crowdsourcing is one methodology that has been used successfully by libraries to cast a wider net to communities who may be able to help fill in the gaps with some of these critical details. Archival materials, whether they be photos, documents, maps, or ephemera, are mounted online and the public is invited to transcribe or comment upon the objects to assist with compiling more information about their historical significance. The Library of Virginia has leveraged community expertise through its collaborative *Making History: Transcribe* site, where individuals can help to transcribe historical documents to improve access to their content. During the pandemic, public participation rose dramatically, and the staff found it challenging to keep up with supplying new projects. Thus, the Library of Virginia has sought to include other libraries in the state who have an interest in harnessing the power of crowdsourcing with their own collections.

## PHOTO IDENTIFICATION PROJECT

(continued)



***Wall of Remembrance with identification notebooks, Albert Durant: A Lens Focused Upon African American History exhibit,  
John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, 2016.  
Photo by Marianne Martin.***

A test batch of twenty-five images from the Albert Durant Photography Collection have been sent to the Library of Virginia. They will be mounted on a password-protected site for interested community groups and individuals to view and comment upon if they can offer names, dates, places or other details about the individuals and events pictured. The Rockefeller Library will be inviting community partners to participate and help flesh out the stories of Williamsburg's African American residents. Upon successful completion of this initial batch, additional photos will be made part of this project. More details will be available soon.

## LINDA HUNTER ROWE



*Linda Hunter Rowe  
Colonial Williamsburg image*

Linda Hunter Rowe was an exceptional and well-beloved historian for Colonial Williamsburg, retiring from the Foundation in 2017 with fifty years of service. As Cary Carson, retired Vice President of the Research Division and Director of the Department of Historical Research said of Linda: "Her knowledge of place—early Virginia—and period—the 18th century—was deep and rich." Knowledgeable, gracious, kind, helpful—all words former colleagues use over and over to describe Linda Rowe.

Linda's career path was not typical of public historians entering the field today. After obtaining her B.A. in English Literature from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 1967, Linda landed at CW in Historical Research and shortly thereafter became a Research Assistant. She was promoted to Research Associate in 1985 and to Historian in 1994. She earned her M.A. in American Studies at William & Mary in 1989. Her thesis, "Peopling the Power Structure: Urban Oriented Officeholders in York County, Virginia, 1699-1780," was an outgrowth of her involvement with the York County Project, a six-year NEH-funded study of the urbanization of Yorktown and Williamsburg based on biographies of their inhabitants.

## LINDA HUNTER ROWE

(continued)

When the York County Project received its funding in 1979, Linda became the supervisor of a young, aspiring, and somewhat unruly crew hired to transcribe the York County records and create the biographical card file and biographies. She was a patient mentor who taught the necessary skills of beginning research, including the intricacies of reading 17th-century handwriting, evaluating evidence, and writing reports.

From a very early point in her career, Linda also took an interest in women's history, African American history, and the history of religion in Williamsburg and Virginia. These research interests continued to define her career at Colonial Williamsburg. She developed women's history tours, programming, workshops, and training. A congregant of Bruton Parish, Linda assisted with the church's Heritage Center exhibits, and she and former CW Historian Lou Powers produced the current, definitive transcription of the parish register used on the church's website. At the time of her death, Linda was updating Bruton Parish's guide to the burials in its churchyard. She was Colonial Williamsburg's principal expert on the Church of England.

The history of First Baptist Church was also close to Linda's heart, and she worked with the congregation for many years to discover as much as possible about the Church's founding and development. Her biography of Gowan Pamphlet was published in *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* ("Gowan Pamphlet: Baptist Preacher in Slavery and Freedom," 2012). She served on the Board of Directors of the church's Let Freedom Ring Foundation. Her work with Bruton Parish Church, First Baptist Church, and others have produced a much deeper understanding of the religious landscape in Williamsburg during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Linda Rowe contributed greatly to Colonial Williamsburg's interpretation of African American history for the last forty-one years. In addition to religion, African American education was another area of research in which she was deeply engaged. Her research formed the basis of the exhibit at Bruton Heights School and resulted in her report "A History of Black Education and Bruton Heights School, Williamsburg, Virginia" (1997).

Like most public historians, Linda's knowledge was disseminated more through the museum than through academic journals. She was an assistant editor, editor, and contributor to *The Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter*, a publication written by interpreters and research staff to disseminate new findings. She wrote for the *Colonial Williamsburg Journal*, the predecessor to *Trend & Tradition*. She assisted in developing site plans, interpretive plans, and training. She mentored interpreters. Her fund of knowledge was immense, and she shared that knowledge with kindness and grace. At the time of her death, she was still working diligently with the Foundation, providing historical context to the archaeological excavation of the early First Baptist Church site on Nassau Street.

Linda Rowe passed away October 23, 2020, but her important contributions to Williamsburg and Virginia history live on.

## STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

# 2020 @ THE ROCK

30,392

### DIGITAL ASSETS

added to "The Source," Colonial Williamsburg's digital asset management system for Media Collections.

Media Collections processed **560** orders of official Colonial Williamsburg photography in 2020.

16,000+

### PAGES & IMAGES SCANNED

as we pivoted to provide digital research help during the pandemic.

Scanning efforts led to an impressive increase in items added to the Library's Omeka website: over **500** manuscripts, rare books, and newspapers, over **2,200** CW publications, and over **1,250** visual resources!

2,351

### CHECKOUTS

from the Library's circulating collection:  
1,322 during normal operations  
1,029 through "curbside checkout" (started in June)

504 items lent to William & Mary faculty and students  
64 items lent through Interlibrary Loan

1,454

### MEMBERS

joined the Rockefeller Library & Historical Research at CW Facebook group. In its infancy when the pandemic struck, this group became an important outreach tool. As our posts increased, membership grew from 300 to over 1,400 between March 2020 and March 2021.  
Engaging with the Library's fans and supporters through this group was one of the bright spots of 2020 for us!

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### BLOG POSTS

contributed by Library & Historical Research staff to Colonial Williamsburg's Blog.  
Topics ranged from Researching 40 Years of African-American Interpretation to "Dad Bodz and Teacups."

Historical Research staff members also lent their expertise to **8** livestreamed presentations & lectures.

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### VIRTUAL TOURS

of Colonial Williamsburg sites. Though the idea of producing virtual tours was already in the works, pandemic restrictions accelerated their pace.

So far, tours include the Governor's Palace, the Capitol, Architectural Preservation/Coffeehouse, and the Art Museums!

## PHOTOGRAPHY IN SNOW



***Volunteer Photographer Wayne Reynolds at work in the snow on Palace Green.  
Photo Courtesy of Jason Betzner***

In Williamsburg you never know if snow will come each year or not. So, when snow fell on the Historic Area last month library volunteer photographer Wayne Reynolds was right there to photograph it for us. Wayne trekked around the snowy streets looking to capture the look and feel of the town in winter. While this was not the first snow of the season (that was in January), this is the first time that someone was able to record Wayne at work in it! A fellow photographer named Jason Betzner (Instagram @jbetzner) was out at the same time and caught Wayne in the field. Included here is Jason's image as well as a few of the images that Wayne captured that day. Wayne's images are kept in our digital asset management system to help CW staff illustrate lectures and publications, exhibits, social media, products, marketing pieces, press releases and more. Our volunteer photographers help us capture the visual history of CW so that years from now we will have a record of what CW looks like today. Many thanks to Wayne and all our volunteers who give us their time and talents. We are fortunate to have them help us do all the many things that we do here at the Rockefeller Library.

## PHOTOGRAPHY IN SNOW

(continued)



*Leicester Longwool sheep in pasture.  
Photo courtesy of Wayne Reynolds.*



*Capitol in the snow.  
Photo Courtesy of Wayne Reynolds.*

## PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE SNOW



*George Wythe House in Snow.*

*The image Wayne Reynolds was shooting when he was photographed.*

*Photo courtesy of Wayne Reynolds.*

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

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