



The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER JR LIBRARY

WINTER 2024

NEWSLETTER

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A CHANGE AT THE TOP



Outgoing Library Director, Carl Childs.

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Dear Friends:

It is with mixed emotions that I announce the retirement of Carl Childs, the Abby and George O'Neill Executive Director of the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library. Carl's last day with the Foundation will be April 30.

Since joining Colonial Williamsburg in 2013 and leading our corporate archives and Library teams, Carl has played an instrumental role in transformational projects, including the move of the corporate archives from the Goodwin Building to the Rockefeller Library, greatly increasing the Library's community outreach, securing a grant from

A CHANGE AT THE TOP

(continued)

the Institute of Museum and Library Services and other funding to install high-density shelving at the Library, initiating an ambitious conservation and digitization program for the Library's collections, and so much more.

Those of us across the Foundation who have had the honor of working with Carl describe him as a congenial colleague who is quick to lend a hand and extremely knowledgeable about a wide variety of topics. We will miss his warmth and hospitality.

I am also pleased to share that Emily Guthrie will join the Foundation as Carl's successor in early April. Emily brings to Colonial Williamsburg a wealth of experience in the library field, most recently as the Librarian at the Library Company of Philadelphia since 2021 and before that as library director at Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library.

Please join me in wishing Carl the best in this new chapter and welcoming Emily to the organization. Thank you for your continued support of Colonial Williamsburg and our educational mission.

Sincerely,

Mia Nagawiecki

The Royce R. and Kathryn M. Baker Vice President for Education Strategy and Civic Engagement

MARY ANN GOODE RETIRES



Carl Childs and Mary Ann Goode.

The staff of the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library bids a fond farewell to a very special colleague, Mary Ann Goode, who retired from the Foundation effective February 1, 2024.

A Pennsylvania native (and devoted Steelers fan!), Mary Ann began her career at Colonial Williamsburg in 1982 as a casual employee in the Funds Development. She continued working there through 1987. In 1996, she returned to the Foundation as a clerk in Office Services and transferred to the Archives and Records Department in 1997. With that department's consolidation with the Rockefeller Library in 2015 and subsequent move from the Goodwin Building to the Bruton Heights complex in 2018, Mary Ann became a fixture at the library and a key contributor to its success.

Mary Ann helped set the standard for customer service across the Foundation and in 2007 was presented with the Eugenia Corrigan Award by then Colonial Williamsburg President Colin Campbell. The Corrigan Award was created to recognize Foundation standards of excellence in guest focus, communication, collaboration, stewardship, and accountability.

Mary Ann's knowledge and expertise working with records made her an invaluable resource for colleagues throughout the Foundation. More importantly, she helped make the Foundation and Rockefeller Library a better place. We wish her all the best in her retirement!

AISHA DOWNS JOINS THE ROCKEFELLER LIBRARY STAFF

Aisha Downs recently joined the Rockefeller Library staff on Monday as our new administrative assistant. Aisha holds a B.A. in Museum and Heritage Studies from Randolph College and is pursuing an online Master of Library Science (MLS) degree from St. John's University. Aisha was most recently employed as a Visitor's Services Associate at Jamestown Rediscovery. Before that, she completed two Colonial Williamsburg internships, one in the Silversmith shop and another last summer with The Bob and Marion Wilson Teacher Institute. We are delighted to have Aisha as part of the library team.

NEGATIVE CONSERVATION PROJECT REVEALS NEW IMAGES OF WILLIAMSBURG'S BLACK HISTORY



Oleg Baburin of Chicago Albumen Works, right, and Visual Resources Librarian, Marianne Martin, left, pose by a cart with the boxes of negatives ready for transport to the vendor's conservation lab in Housatonic, Massachusetts.

Photo by Carl Childs.

In celebration of Black History Month, the Rockefeller Library is pleased to offer a first glimpse at some never-before-seen images in the Albert Durant Photography collection. This extensive collection of photographs taken by Albert Durant, the first licensed Black photographer in Williamsburg, provides a priceless visual history of Black life in Williamsburg, Virginia, and surrounding communities from the late 1930s to the early 1960s.

In addition to fourteen boxes of black and white photographic prints, the collection also encompasses over five thousand cellulose acetate negatives. Cellulose acetate negatives replaced the highly flammable nitrate negative in the 1930s. While less of a fire hazard, the acetate negatives are subject to a form of deterioration known as vinegar syndrome. Over time, the acetate base begins to shrink and furrow, eventually rendering a negative unprintable. A strong smell of vinegar is usually the first sign that a negative is starting to decay. Soon after the collection's acquisition in 1992, the Durant negatives began to emit a vinegar odor. Library staff put them in cold storage in frost-free refrigerators to slow down their deterioration. As a result of this preliminary step to preserve the negatives, they are still in the early stages of decay and can be preserved through digitization and, in cases of more significant deterioration, via a more complex procedure that involves removing the emulsion from the decaying base, cleaning and relaxing the remaining film pellicle, and scanning the salvaged image. Time is of the essence if we are to save the images captured on these negatives.

NEGATIVE CONSERVATION PROJECT

(continued)



Example of a negative in an advanced state of deterioration due to vinegar syndrome.

Thanks to a generous gift from the Frank K. Webb Charitable Trust, these at-risk negatives are undergoing needed conservation treatment and digitization at Chicago Albumen Works, a vendor located in Housatonic, Massachusetts, that specializes in the reformatting of cellulose acetate negatives and the capture of historically significant images in digital format. In October 2023, a staff member from Chicago Albumen Works picked up all the Durant negatives and the vendor's highly experienced team is currently scanning and preserving them.

An early sample batch of digital images received from the vendor revealed some new images of Williamsburg's Black history that are not represented in the black and white prints within the collection. The two photos shown here both document Black residents' participation in a William & Mary Homecoming parade held in October 1950. One portrays Colonial Williamsburg coachman Benjamin Spraggins Sr., who worked as a coachman from 1934 to 1953. He is pictured driving two unidentified men, possibly William and Mary officials, in a Colonial Williamsburg carriage along Richmond Road, either before or after participating in the Homecoming procession on Duke of Gloucester Street.

NEGATIVE CONSERVATION PROJECT



Colonial Williamsburg coachman Benjamin Spraggins Sr. driving William & Mary officials, including President John Pomfret, left, in a carriage during the William & Mary Homecoming parade, October 1950, as a military transport vehicle filled with soldiers passes on the opposite side of Richmond Road.



A group of Black residents watching the William & Mary Homecoming parade as a float passes by on Merchants Square, October 1950.

The second photo captures a large crowd watching a Homecoming float pass by on Merchants Square. Among the crowd are a group of Black families, including quite a few children who are standing at the curb looking on with excitement at the parade participants. The Rockefeller Library is looking forward to many more discoveries such as these as the negatives are digitized. We hope to begin sharing them online with the public over the next year. We are grateful to the Frank K. Webb Charitable Trust for funding this project before the images on the decaying negatives are lost forever.

“TAGGING” THE ROCK



Felicity Meza-Luna checks our work.

With the help of twenty volunteers, Rockefeller Library staff recently completed a project to install new RFID (Radio Frequency ID) security gates and to “tag” over 70,000 items in its reference and circulating collections. This move to RFID technology upgrades the security of our collections and facilitates check-in/check-out of materials as well as ongoing collection maintenance and inventory tasks.

Library staff and volunteers worked a total of 766 hours over four months to place new RFID tags in each book and pair that tag with the item’s existing barcode. This was repetitive and physically demanding work, but our volunteers performed it with good cheer. Several volunteers confessed to being occasionally sidetracked by the fascinating books in our collection! We were fortunate in the project’s timing because it allowed us to recruit many wonderful “taggers” from areas like Landscape Services and Coach & Livestock that slow down in the winter months.

As the weeks went by, we tracked our progress on a “tagging tower” that Library and Archival Assistant Felicity Meza-Luna created from the cardboard reels that held the RFID tags. An image of Library Director Carl Childs slowly ascended the tower, with “huzzahs” going up each time he reached a new level.

"TAGGING" THE ROCK

(continued)



Library volunteer, Rose Roberts, adding tags to books.



The tower surmounted.

“TAGGING” THE ROCK

(continued)



Emily Petermann separating the RFID tags.

Once tagging was complete, staff did a follow-up inventory using our new RFID scanner to catch errors, locate misshelved books, and evaluate the inventory process. We look forward to the opportunities this new system provides to keep better track of our resources and we offer hearty thanks to the volunteers who made it possible!

Lorraine Allison Liz Burns Ann Byrne Jen Campbell Spud Davis Sandi Des Fosses Shirley Devan
Loretta Fetsko Eileen Gaughan Carol Kozek Helene Kriner Janie Moyers Vanesa Neilsen Michelle Newton
Sharon Ochsenhirt Caroline Olsen Lee Pettit Rose Roberts Karen Simon Frank Smith

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Please visit [Friends of John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library](#) for information on how you can help support the Library and don’t forget to like and follow us on Facebook: [Rockefeller Library at CW](#).