

Liberty & Learning

"Knowledge will forever govern ignorance."



G A Publication of the James Madison Center G

A Message from the Director

Supreme Court Justice, Clarence Thomas, made his second visit to the JMU campus on March 14th to participate in the University-wide celebrations surrounding the 251st birthday of James Madison. The previous year, Thomas delivered the Madison Day address in Wilson Hall. While on campus, he expressed a desire to return to meet personally with undergraduates in a smaller, more intimate setting. The newly opened James Madison Center proved the ideal site for such a forum which involved some 25 specially invited students selected mostly from the University's Honors Program.

Justice Thomas requested that his formal remarks be kept off-the-record in order to facilitate a lively and open discussion. As a result, no member of the press was in attendance while no questions were considered "off limits." For over two hours, Thomas eloquently discussed a wide array of issues including the *Bush v. Gore* decision, his views on affirmative action, and the role of the Supreme Court in contemporary American society. Interestingly, he also revealed that he attended Yale Law School at the same time that Bill Clinton and Hillary Rodham were enrolled there.

After graduation from Yale, Thomas practiced law in the offices of the Missouri Attorney General before being appointed by President Ronald Reagan to the position of Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights with the US Department of Education. He later served as the head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and as a justice on the US Court of Appeals before being named to the high court by

...Continued on Page 3

Donald Robertson: An Educator for the Leaders of the New Republic, Part II

Dorothy A. Boyd-Rush, Ph.D.

After leaving the presidency, James Madison was honored in numerous ways. One of the last honors he received came from the Virginia Historical Society (VHS), founded in 1831. James Madison became its first honorary member when he was 80 years of age. It is, therefore, fitting that the original account book kept from 1758-1775 by Donald Robertson, his first mentor, is a valued part of the society's archival collection: VHS, Mss5:3 R5456:1, Record No. 25916.

Measuring 7 by 4 ½ inches, with 190 pages, Robertson's leather bound book is worn and stained, with damage being particularly severe at the very end of the volume. Miss Sue A. Bradford, a descendant of Donald Robertson, donated it to the VHS in 1924. In recent years it has been meticulously conserved and mounted.

In addition to possessing the classical skills valued by the community leaders of the day, the men and women who could afford to send their children to a private school, an eighteenth-century schoolmaster had to be a businessman in every sense of the word. The almost daily entries in Robertson's account book range from overseeing house repairs and the costs associated with mending clothing and laundry for his pupils to keeping track of outstanding bills, maintaining an appropriate inventory of imported books available for purchase, securing appropriate housing for his

charges and providing individual attention as needed. Robertson's account book also records his detailed financial transactions with the families of his pupils, including the father of "Master Jamie" Madison.

"Jamie" was a pupil at Robertson's school for approximately five years, from 1763-1768. From Robertson's account book we learn that the young Madison needed to have a hat replaced at a cost of 17 shilling and six pence; that he purchased copies of Horace, Justinian's *Institutions* and one of Cornelius Nepos's Latin biographies from Robertson; and, that his yearly tuition cost his father, Colonel James Madison (1723-1801), exactly £5. To put the latter into perspective, it should be noted that £5 in 1765 had the purchasing power of approximately £416 in 2001.

While informative, the entries, unfortunately, often appear to be impersonal. Yet, the writer of the entries clearly made a significant difference in the lives of many of his pupils – including a future president of the United States.

Suggestions for Further Reading:

A few portions of the Robertson account book have been published. They appeared in the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, XXXIII (1925), 194-198, 288-292; XXXIV (1926), 141-148, 232-236; and XXXV (1927), 55-56.

Did you know ...



That Nancy Chappellear Baird (class of 1940) is related to Dolley Madison. They are 1st cousins five generations removed. Their common ancestors are Williams Coles (died 1781) and Lucy Winston (died 1787). Chappellear Hall is named for Mrs. Baird's late father, George Warren Chappellear, former head of the biology department at James Madison University (then Madison College). Mrs. Baird and her husband, Alvin V. Baird, Jr., live in Harrisonburg. The Madison Center would like to hear from other descendants of Dolley or the Madison family. E-mail us at boydruda@jmu.edu.

4 That James Madison's father, Colonel James Madison, paid personal property taxes in Orange County on 84 slaves in April of 1782 but that when he helped conduct the October 1782 census in the same county he recorded that his household consisted of 6 white and 88 black persons? Why the discrepancy? There were four free Negroes within his household – all indentured servants.

4 That James Madison graduated from the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) in 1771 with an A.B. degree?

4 That James Madison was one of the founders of the American Colonization Society and served for a time as its president? Nevertheless, he remained dependent on slaves to run his estate and remained a slave-owner until his death.

4 That great controversy has surrounded the first name of President Madison's wife? Her given name has been variously cited as Dorothea, Dorothy, Dolley and Dolly. The controversy was not settled until 1958. Consult the following for the inside story:

<http://moderntimes.vcdh.virginia.edu/madison/overview/name.html>

Dorothy A. Boyd-Rush, Ph.D.



The following review by Barbara Vines Little originally appeared in the *Virginia Genealogical Society Newsletter*, vol. XXVIII, no. 5, October 2001, 7:

Ann L. Miller, *The Short Life and Strange Death of Ambrose Madison* (2001) 83 pp.; maps; unindexed; perfect-bound; softcover; \$11.95. Order from Orange County Historical Society; 130 Caroline Street, Orange, VA 22960. Please include \$2.00 postage. Va. Residents add 4.5% sales tax.

Ambrose Madison (ca. 1696-1732) was probably born in King and Queen County. The grandfather of President James Madison, few of his personal papers survive. In fact, only fragments of

an account book can be strictly labeled as personal papers. Deeds, patents, county orders, letters to Madison surviving in other collections form the basis of most of the information available on Ambrose. Although due to the record destruction in King and Queen and Caroline counties, a complete picture of Ambrose Madison's early life cannot be reconstructed, through the use of a variety of surviving records the author has managed to reconstruct the major activities in which he was involved. Due to the loss of the records of the General Court and the Spotsylvania County loose papers, details of his death are sketchy. We learn the cause – poisoning, the names of the perpetrators, and their punishment. The type of poison and how it was administered is lost to history. This monograph will be of interest to students of the Madison family or early history of the area as well as those who wish to learn more about how to reconstruct the life of an individual when only fragments of records survive. bvl



...*Director's Message Continued*

President George Bush in 1991, replacing the retiring Thurgood Marshall on the bench.

The James Madison Center plans each year to host other such symposia with scholars, dignitaries, and public officials in an effort to encourage educated and informed debate on the JMU campus. Indeed, during the early years of the American republic, the nation's public dialogue was frequently intense and passionate but was tempered by a respect for divergent beliefs and moderated by a sense of personal integrity. With only a few notable exceptions, ideological disagreements were separate and distinct from personal attacks. As historian Lance Banning writes in his book, *Jefferson and Madison*, “[Madison] believed that a republic ultimately rests on mutual respect among its citizen and on a recognition on the part of all that they are members of a free community of mutually-regarding equals.”

Justice Clarence Thomas' visit to the Madison Center helped students evaluate the Judge in relation to his beliefs and convictions without the filter of the news media or some other secondary commentary.
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Regardless of their own political perspective, all were universally impressed with the sincerity of Thomas' convictions and his steadfast commitment to the principles of the United States Constitution. Whitney Pack, a junior Political Science major, astutely observed, “Clarence Thomas allowed himself to be thrown in a room with a group of JMU students who may or may not have shared his particular political views. That in itself is commendable. I was particularly impressed with his forthright answers to students' questions. He never once averted a question or threw back a ‘no comment.’ Thomas is a conservative voice on the Supreme Court—and his remarks aligned with that position. He made no apologies for his libertarian leanings. While some in the room may have disagreed with his Supreme Court decisions, I believe all recognized the reverence and allegiance Clarence Thomas feels toward the position to which he was appointed.” Justice Clarence Thomas graciousness and his willingness to engage in an intellectually stimulating dialogue did much to advanced James Madison's legacy on the JMU campus as well as to promote the University's unwavering commitment to his philosophical principles.



Photo: Diane Elliott

Justice Clarence Thomas discusses his views on the Supreme Court with JMU students during Madison Week Celebrations on Campus. Center Director, Philip Bigler, moderated the discussions.

Is There A Place for History?

Conley L. Edwards
State Archivist

A year ago, a Web site was unveiled that provided access to the names of nearly 23 million immigrants who entered the United States through Ellis Island and the Port of New York. Information available includes the immigrant's country of origin, name of the ship on which the immigrant came, and the immigrant's destination. Digital images of handwritten documents listing the names are just a click away.

The opening ceremony for the site attracted local and national media attention. Tom Brokaw was there, as were descendants of Irving Berlin, whose parents were among the thousands of immigrants who came to this country between 1892 and 1924. During the first six hours of operation, 8 million visitors used the Web site. During the same period, 42 million visitors were unable to connect to the site. Designers had seriously underestimated interest in the information.

Last fall, a story in the *New York Times* reported on the growing number of people turning their vacations into expeditions to find their ancestors at state archives, local courthouses, and county historical societies. The article quoted the clerk of court in Sussex County, Virginia, as saying "We get one or two people a day and more every year." In 1995, a survey for *American Demographics* magazine found that 4 in 10 adults, or 113 million people, were at least somewhat interested in family history. That figure grew to 6 in 10 adults by 2000. Year after year, local and family history continue to be the most popular topics of interest at the Library of Virginia in Richmond.

The broad appeal of history crosses age and income lines and has many facets. One of the more obvious facets is the popularity of the History Channel, A&E Biography, and current cinema such as "Saving Private Ryan." The appeal of history led the tourist industry and the historical museum community to develop programs and events that appeal to "heritage tourism." There are few stronger programs of this type than those in Virginia.

Why is there a growing passion for history across our society? Our society has become a rootless one in which many families move to a new place every five to seven years. Our families are no longer the extended families of our parents or grandparents generation. Perhaps the answer is in part that history gives us a sense of being part of a larger picture of family, time, and place. When people get involved with the past, they begin to see themselves connected to others - family, community, nation, or a group defined by ethnicity, religion, work, or play. The result is a sense of belonging, direction, and meaning.

These ties are strongest at the local level. This is where history begins. It is at the local level that ideas were debated and argued, tried and then discarded if they did not work. At the time of the Revolution and since, there has been keen interest in the American experiment in democracy. James Madison was aware of this interest and wrote to James Monroe in 1824, "The U.S. are now furnishing models and lessons to all the world.... The eyes of the world being thus on our Country, it is put the more on its good behavior, and under the greater obligation also, to do justice to the Tree of Liberty by an exhibition of the fine fruits we gather from it."

Madison and the other leaders of Virginia and the new nation acted on a large stage, but their ties were to the citizens of their home and state. The ideas they represented grew out of their experiences at the local level and it was here they found support for the growth of the Tree of Liberty.

Virginia is fortunate to have some of the oldest local records of any state. The records document in detail the rich events of everyday life — the administration of local government through county courts, early efforts to provide support for the needy, education, military service, settlement of debts and other obligations, public safety, land ownership, and the settlement of estates.

Beginning in the mid-1970s, many of these local records were moved to the archives at the Library of Virginia for safekeeping and preservation. At the Library, professional archivists arrange, describe and preserve the records. Microfilm copies provide a means for researchers to use the records without damaging fragile originals and in some instances digitized copies of records allow for use over the Internet. The

PRIMARY SOURCE

Muster Roll, 12 August 1777

James Madison's Company of Virginia Militia
Orange County, Virginia¹

Transcribed by
Dorothy A. Boyd-Rush, Ph.D.²

In order to meet her quota of troops for the Continental army, Virginia had ordered the raising of six battalions. The number to be raised by each county and city was based upon the number of militia in the county. Concerned that the necessary number would not be raised in time, in May 1777 the General Assembly passed "An Act for the more continental army, and for other purposes." By the act, "every county, city, and borough, except the counties of Kentucky, Ohio, Monongalia and Yohogania.... [in which the] officers... have not, or shall not, on or before the tenth day of August next, enlist the quota of men allotted to such officer or officers, shall make up such deficiency by draughts, to be taken from their respective militias...[by dividing] the whole militia of each county, city, and borough, including captains and other inferiour officers, into as many lots as there may be men wanting to supply their quota,... taking care to allot to each division, other than that composed of the field officers and magistrates, as many able bodied men as conveniency will admit, having regard to the property of each individual composing such divisions, so as to make the number of able bodied men, and the property on each, as equal as may be; that each of the other divisions shall be required to furnish one man."³

The Division of the Militia here enrolled is appointed, according to an Act of Assembly for speedily completing the Virg^a Quota of Troops for the Continental Army, to raise a regular Soldier by the 29th inst: toward supplying the Deficiency of the Quota allotted to the officers of the County of Orange.

12th Aug^t 1777

James Madison⁴ C.L^t

1 st Division	[<i>second column</i>]
James Coursey	Henry Shackelford
W ^m Smith	Alex ^r Ogg
+ Stephen J K Smith	Martin Johnston
Tho ^s Harvey	Benj ⁿ Gartan [?]
+ Caleb Jennings	John Jones
David Powers +	Fran ^s Williams
John Davis	W ^m Jones
Joseph Ham +	Rich ^d Morrie
+ Lewis Coursey	John Wills
John Bell	Robert Golden
	Edmund Deer

Joel Simmons
Edward Lam +
Tho^s Herring
+ Tho^s Morrie J
James Earlie
John Bucher
William Vawter
Jessie Simmons
Sam^l Ham
Lewis Davis
Lenard Davis
John Ballard
Littleberry Lam

Lewis Ridle
Jonathan Simmons
Nathan Mallory

[Continued on the reverse.]

Wm. Estes
Rich^d Bullock
Martin Collie[r]
Ja^s Davis
Wm. Rogers
Benjⁿ Harvie
Nich^s Harvie
Rich^d Lamb
Thomas Snow

(Endnotes)

¹ The original is in the collection of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia: Mss 12: 1777 Aug 12:1. It measures approximately 13 by 2 3/4 inches, with text written on both sides.

² Dr. Boyd-Rush is a professor of history affiliated with the James Madison Center at James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Virginia. Support from the James Madison Center made this transcription possible: <http://www.jmu.edu/madison/center/>.

³ William Waller Hening, *The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia ...* (1821: reprint, Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1969), 275-8.

⁴ Colonel Madison (1723-1801) was the father of James Madison, Jr., who would later serve as the fourth president of the United States. He was also a successful planter, justice of the peace, sheriff, and one of Orange County's wealthiest citizens at the time of the American Revolution.

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The Madison Center

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