



HAMPDEN-SYDNEY  
COLLEGE

Climbing the Hill

*African American  
History at  
Hampden-Sydney  
College*

Caroline S. Emmons



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VOLUME V

in a series of booklets published  
on the occasion of the

250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF  
HAMPDEN-SYDNEY COLLEGE

in 1775-1776

*250th Anniversary Volumes*

To celebrate its two and a half centuries of service to Commonwealth and Nation, the College commissioned this set of six studies on various aspects of its institutional history. The Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE), a program of the Council of Independent Colleges supported by the Lilly Endowment and member dues, generously funded this project.

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ON THE COVER

Portrait of Stokes Brown, born a slave in 1846.  
He worked at the College for an astonishing 75 years  
until his death in 1939.

*(Photograph courtesy Atkinson Museum)*

The marbled paper was produced by  
Ean Larsen '25  
in the class "English 360: Authorship and the History of the Book,"  
taught by Evan Davis.

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*Some of the Black “servants” of the College. From top, clockwise: unidentified woman, 1900; John Thomas Anderson, 1910; unidentified mother and child, 1890; two unidentified men, 1922; and John Evans plowing, 1895.*

**I**N 1814, BILLY BROWN, AN ENSLAVED MAN who lived and worked on the campus of Hampden-Sydney College, was manumitted, surely one of the most profound moments of his life. Brown, whose enslaver, Daniel Allen, leased him to the College to work, had acquired the funds to purchase his freedom by performing odd jobs for students and through a loan from a local landowner.

Virginia law stated that upon being emancipated, he would be required to leave the state. The mere presence of emancipated individuals of African descent was considered too dangerous to be permitted, perhaps because of fears that they would incite disobedience amongst enslaved people. Or perhaps even more importantly, their presence as independent residents within slave-owning communities put the lie to arguments that Black people were inherently servile and incapable of living outside of white supervision.

Brown submitted the necessary petition to the Virginia General Assembly in 1824, requesting permission to remain in the area. The supporting documentation noted his “unsullied character for probity & good demeanor,” and the request was signed by several local notables, including judges. The request was denied. The next year, he submitted another request, this time including a note of support that added Brown had “been for many years the servant for Hampden-Sydney College & demeaned himself with great propriety & integrity” with “the character of an honest, unoffending, industrious man.” The appeal passed in the House of Delegates but failed in the Senate. Despite this failure, documentary evidence suggests that Brown, eventually referred to as “Old Billy,” continued to work on campus, perhaps as late as the 1850s.<sup>1</sup>

Brown’s case reveals several significant aspects of the ways in which African American history is intertwined with the history of Hampden-

Sydney College. From the College's founding in 1775, Black men, women, and children lived and worked on Hampden-Sydney's campus. Their labor helped build the physical campus and sustain its operations. These individuals provided service to the students and faculty and, although their contributions await formal recognition, the evidence is bountiful of their impact and presence as part of the campus community. In addition, for the period when slavery was still legal, the status of Black people as property raised ongoing questions about the religious and political beliefs of the College's leadership, faculty, and students. Could the practice of slavery be reconciled with the commitment to liberty and equality which these men professed and which is embedded in the College's mission 'to form good men and good citizens?'

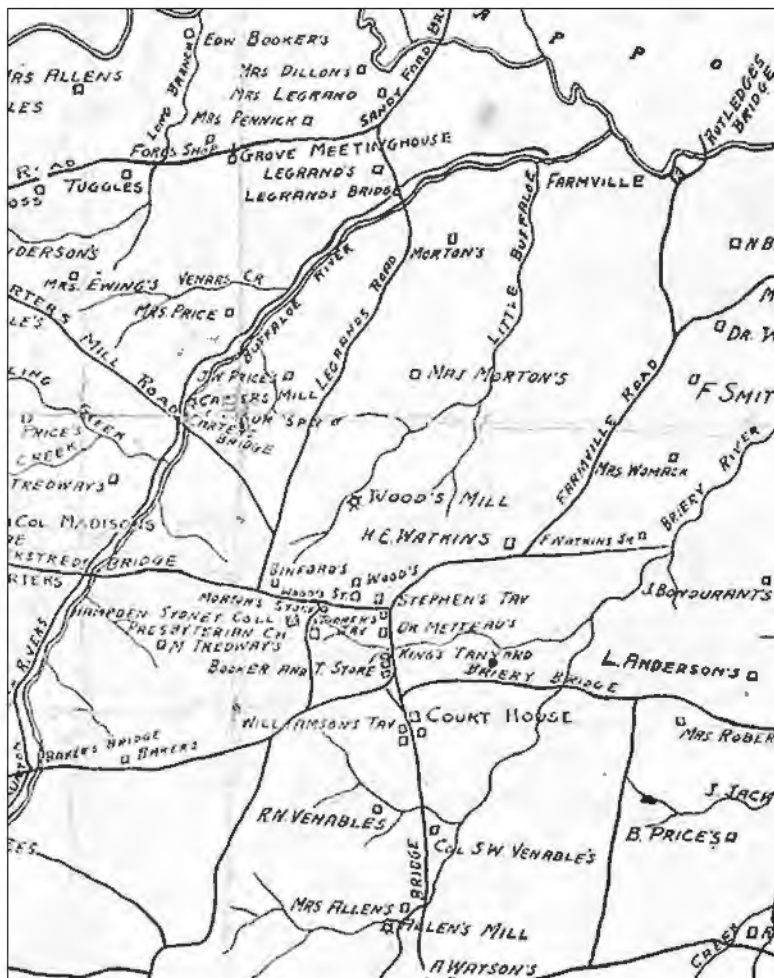
Through the Civil War and Reconstruction, slavery was an ongoing and at times contentious debate on campus, reflecting the broader societal struggle over the issue. Beyond the philosophical and political dimensions of that debate, it is also an institution that profoundly shaped the daily life of campus and its students. Slavery has had a long afterlife in the South, and the African American experience on campus was shaped by the historical forces of Jim Crow and the civil rights struggles that took place a century after slavery's end and which continue even into the present.

Over the last twenty years, institutions of higher education across the nation have engaged in efforts to recognize and reveal the contributions of enslaved and free people of color to the creation and operation of their campuses.<sup>2</sup> This work continues to generate new questions about the implications of the historical information that has been produced. To consider the reparative work that an acknowledgement of this history might necessitate, the history itself needs to be documented and made accessible. In doing so, we have an opportunity to better

acknowledge these contributions. We can try to imagine how it was possible for so many institutions in the United States, dedicated to the expansion and dissemination of knowledge based on the principles of a free society, to reconcile their rhetoric and mission statements with the denial of those same values to those with whom they lived and worked daily, whether within the structures of slavery, the Jim Crow era, or their aftermath. It is not surprising that the effort to reconcile this hypocrisy has oftentimes been challenging and painful, and well into the 21st century, we find that colleges and universities continue to struggle and even resist the reality of the historical record.

This pamphlet seeks to introduce readers to the experience of African Americans such as Billy Brown, Agg, Elizabeth Keckley, David Ross, Stokes Brown, Lancaster Brown, and others as important members of the College community. Up until 1968, the experience of Black people on campus was primarily confined to physical labor, but after desegregation of the student body in that year, when Alphonso O'Neil White matriculated, African Americans' opportunities on campus widened to include access to the education the College provided and, eventually, positions of leadership on campus. Over the last fifty years, Black men and women have become students, faculty and staff members, and from 2009-2016, with the appointment of Dr. Christopher B. Howard, even president of the college.

It is not possible to cover the entirety of the Black experience on campus in a single document. It is a long, complex, and mostly undocumented story. This pamphlet seeks to introduce readers to the broad contours of this history, in hopes of illuminating and acknowledging the profound contributions made by African Americans to the history of Hampden-Sydney. It is a beginning, and much work remains. As the College marks its 250th anniversary, this essay focuses primarily on the period from 1775 to the early 20th century.



Detail of Wood's map of 1820, showing the College neighborhood.

It would have appeared much the same in the 1770s.

"Stephen's Tavern" is in Kingsville; "Courthouse" is now Worsham.

"R. N. Venables" is Slate Hill plantation.

## *In the Beginning*

In rural Southside Virginia, about 60 miles west of Richmond on the rolling eastern edge of the Virginia Piedmont, Hampden-Sydney College was founded in 1775. It was one of several schools established by an energetic generation of Presbyterian clergymen, based at the College of New Jersey (Princeton), and their congregants, who sought to create an educated and pious community in this quiet and sparsely populated region. These men had a strong interest in scientific, philosophical, and political questions as well as religious ones. They dedicated much of their time and energy to first imagining and then seeking to build a new society, and were full of hope for its prospects. While first promoted under the name Prince Edward Academy, the founders of the College quickly decided instead to name it after John Hampden and Algernon Sydney, men who gave their lives in the 17th-century English civil wars, opposing monarchical rule. Dedication to the principle of liberty informed virtually all their early decisions regarding the school's name, purpose, and curriculum. Thus would students be taught to become "good men and good citizens" in the new society they hoped to usher in.

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*Volume Four covers the founding of the College in the context of the American Revolution.*

But these men did not seek to reinvent all aspects of their society. Despite their innovative and even radical ideas about governance, they did not envision a new economic order. In fact, part of their motivation in contemplating separation from the British crown was a desire to ensure the continuance of the slave economy which had taken shape in Virginia over the course of the colonial era.<sup>3</sup> As so many of these men wrote to each other and in their private journals, they recognized the hypocrisy of their position.

Patrick Henry, a figure closely associated with Hampden-Sydney as a member of the founding Board of Trustees and the father of several sons who attended the college, wrote that it was not possible to justify the practice of slave-owning, but he could not bring himself to pay the economic price to do what he knew to be the moral choice. As he wrote to a Quaker friend in 1773, “Would any one believe that I am a master of slaves of my own purchase! I am drawn along by the general inconvenience of living without them, I will not, I cannot justify it.”<sup>4</sup>

The origins of Hampden-Sydney are closely linked to the College of New Jersey which, by the late 18th century, had become a center for dissenting religious views from the politically privileged and dominant Anglican church.

Among the early luminaries of Princeton were John Witherspoon, a prominent Presbyterian and signer of the Declaration of Independence, and Samuel Stanhope Smith, Witherspoon’s protégé and future son-in-law (Smith married Witherspoon’s daughter Ann in 1775). It was Smith who was dispatched to rural Virginia to serve as a religious and later educational emissary to the Presbyterian inhabitants of the area, which stretched from Richmond to the Blue Ridge mountains. Prominent planters in this region, among them Nathaniel Venable of Prince Edward County, had lobbied for permission from the Presbyterian synod to create a new educational enterprise, and Smith arrived in time to help set the plan in motion.



*Patrick Henry*



*Samuel Stanhope Smith*

Funds were scant for this endeavor, as well as for the general support of the Presbyterian churches in the region. To try to raise more revenue, several local Presbyterian churches (Briery and Cumberland in particular) had already begun the practice of purchasing enslaved individuals, then leasing them out. The proceeds from this investment were directed towards the payment of the minister, the maintenance of the church itself, and other activities. As Jennifer Oast has documented, among these other activities was the preparatory work for creating an educational institution, which eventually became Hampden-Sydney.<sup>5</sup>

In 1775, under the auspices of the Hanover Presbytery, Venable and other local planters drafted documents formally establishing the new school. Through a gift of almost 100 acres of land from Peter Johnston, the physical location of the school was situated about two miles northwest of Prince Edward Courthouse, then the county seat and today known as Worsham. The early curriculum of the college, or academy, would follow the Princeton model and although early leaders said all religious faiths would be welcome, the school was led by and closely tied to the Presbyterian Church. By the summer of 1775, Samuel Stanhope Smith had been selected to lead the effort to establish this new educational enterprise.

The founders of the College published their first advertisement in September 1775, penned by Smith, that described the mission and curriculum of the new academy. Classes were to commence in November 1775, even as buildings suitable for boarding students as



*Smith's first advertisement, September 1775*

well as holding classes were still under construction. In the context of late 18th-century Virginia, this almost certainly meant that the labor of cooking, cleaning, and caring for these young men would be performed by enslaved people. Even before students began arriving, the physical labor to construct the new College's buildings relied on the use of enslaved labor. It is interesting to contemplate that, in this regard, slavery began on campus even before classes did.

The main academic building on the original campus was completed in the momentous year of 1776. The first buildings to be constructed included a large three-story brick building, which attracted notice from across central Virginia due to its imposing size, a residence for the rector (or president), and a smokehouse.<sup>6</sup> One contemporary said that the original academic building, or "Academy House," was the largest brick building in the colonies west of Williamsburg. The president's home included a separate kitchen, characteristic of the architecture of the era, which was almost certainly staffed by enslaved laborers. College records (and contemporary practice) indicate the likely presence of slave quarters and other outbuildings. None of the 18th-century buildings still stand.

Samuel Stanhope Smith's own views on slavery and race reflect many of the contradictions characteristic of intellectuals of the era. His famous father-in-law, John Witherspoon, owned slaves even though he preached against the institution of slavery. Smith became an enslaver but also wrote several essays defending the inherent equality of all human beings. As with Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and others, these men recognized that their defense of freedom, however eloquent and passionate it might be, was weakened by their willingness to enslave others.

Smith himself was not resident on campus for long. Leaving his

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*Volume Six deals with the College's built environment and the archeological dig on the site of the Academy Building.*

brother, John Blair Smith, as his successor at Hampden-Sydney, Stanhope Smith returned to Princeton in 1779 as a professor; he would assume the presidency in 1795. He later wrote several influential essays that, for the time period, express a progressive view of race, arguing that people of African descent were human beings and, as such, were also endowed with the inherent freedoms so important to the men of this generation. However, he also felt that environmental factors had led to a hierarchy of race, and whites of European descent were superior to Blacks. Just as Jefferson had done in his *Notes on Virginia*, both men found a way to rationalize their practice of enslaving others. Sources show that Smith owned at least one individual while resident in New Jersey, and he would almost certainly have relied on the labor of enslaved people while resident in Virginia.<sup>7</sup> His brother married into a slave-owning family in Virginia as well. Thus, while his writings on the subject reflect a comparatively advanced position for the time, he nevertheless, as with so many others, was unable or unwilling to offer a true challenge to the system which enabled him to live a privileged life of the mind.<sup>8</sup>

Up through the Civil War and Emancipation, members of the Board of Trustees, College officials and faculty, and others employed by the College all participated directly in the institution of slavery as enslavers themselves or through their involvement in leasing out enslaved people. In addition, minutes of the Board of Trustees show that students regularly brought enslaved people to the college to serve them, including in dormitories. There is no evidence currently available that documents direct ownership of slaves by the College, but as with other institutions of that era, the use of slave labor through lease arrangements is abundant in the sources. The economy of Virginia in the 18th and early 19th century was heavily dependent on enslaved labor for almost every type of physical work from agricultural

to domestic work to construction.

The trustees of the College, most of them prosperous planters from the surrounding region, were deeply enmeshed in the slave economy that had solidified by the turn of the 19th century. Enslaved people represented a large percentage of the Prince Edward County population. The 1810 census reported 12,409 residents in the county, of whom 6,996 (56.4%) were enslaved.<sup>9</sup> In a typical example from the archival record, Richard N. Venable, son of Nathaniel, recorded several entries in his account book from May 7, 1799, in which he charged the College “five days attendance of a man and a boy” to Robert Adams, who was evidently making bricks for campus projects.<sup>10</sup> Additional charges were made on May 16 and August 17 of that year. There are many such examples in the College’s archives.

As enrollment at the College grew, so did the need for more student accommodations. Private boarding houses were once numerous on campus, although few of them are still standing. These facilities also relied on the labor of the enslaved for their operation. References to “servants” (use of the term “slave” was avoided by most Southern whites) appear in financial records, letters, and other documents describing the early operation of the College. Firewood cut and fires stoked, water brought to students’ rooms, classrooms swept, meals prepared: all these tasks are described in the source material as having happened almost by magic. Recovering the names and personal characteristics of those who carried out these chores is often impossible. They are present but silent and anonymous in generic ledger entries. Listings for “a man and a boy” or a “laundress” or a “laborer” provide the scant recognition that they received.

Despite the College’s remote location, debates over slavery developed on campus as they did across the nation. In 1823, Rev. John D. Paxton assumed the pulpit at Cumberland Church as well as

responsibility for leading the congregation at affiliated College Church. He soon discovered that his salary was being paid, in part, through hiring out slaves owned by the church. In discovering this, he said, "I felt more and more uneasy, and desired much to do something for them."<sup>11</sup> He became a supporter of the colonization movement, which had attracted widespread attention from white slaveowners troubled by the institution but unwilling to accept the presence of freedmen as neighbors in their communities. The American Colonization Society was popular in Virginia at this time, especially among slaveowners who expressed discomfort with slavery but even more discomfort with the prospect of free Blacks living alongside whites. Paxton tried to establish a branch of the ACS but was unsuccessful in doing so. He did, however, emancipate his own slaves (who had been given to his wife by her father), and resettled them in Liberia.<sup>12</sup>

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*Volume Three deals with slavery in the religious context of the Founding.*

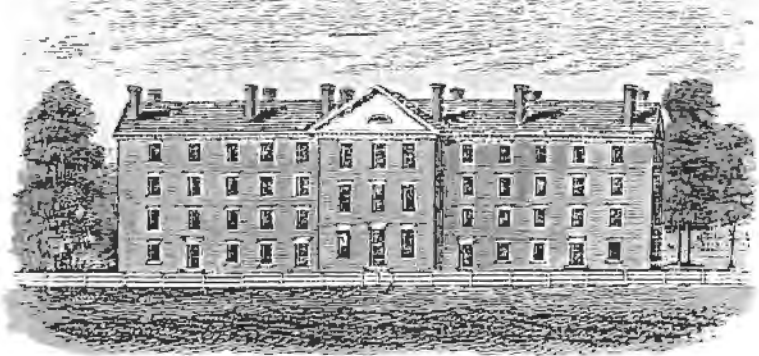
However, Paxton's outspoken discomfort with slavery was too much for his congregation and he eventually resigned his position and returned to the north. About the same time was the case of Billy Brown, whose emancipation led to his petition to the General Assembly to remain in the state. An 1806 law prohibiting manumitted slaves from remaining in the state made his continued residency in Virginia tenuous. Although denied, it seems he remained in the community.

These two examples from the 1820s show the instability of the institution of slavery within southside Virginia at this time. It was pervasive but not immune to the growing criticism from within and without its own community. As an educational institution, it was impossible for Hampden-Sydney entirely to avoid discussions of whether or to what extent all men were, in fact, created equal. Students wrestled with these controversies. In 1826, a student secretary for the

Union Literary Society, a student debating club, left a prescient note that if the debates over slavery were not soon resolved, he predicted the nation would find itself at war.<sup>13</sup>

Around the same time that controversy was developing at College Church, John Holt Rice, a tutor at the College and later president of Union Theological Seminary, reportedly spent time with a man known as “Uncle Jack” or the “African Preacher.” This man was described as having been born in Africa, sold into slavery, and later owned by a planter in Nottoway County. Sometime probably in the very early 19th century, Jack said that he encountered several Presbyterian ministers, notably John Blair Smith (president of Hampden-Sydney upon his brother’s departure back to Princeton) and Rev. Archibald Alexander (fourth president of Hampden-Sydney and after that a professor at Princeton). Jack reportedly said, “I had a very wicked heart, and every thing I did, to make it better, seemed to make it worse. At length a preacher passed along; they called him Mr. President Smith.” Jack said it was Smith who “turned my heart inside out.”<sup>14</sup> After Jack’s conversion, he became a well-known preacher in the area, funds were raised to purchase his freedom, and he was the focus of a letter published in 1827 in the *Virginia Literary and Evangelical Magazine* as well as a longer biography by Reverend William White.<sup>15</sup>

During the 1820s, the controversy around Paxton’s tenure as College Church minister, debates about African American colonization, Billy Brown’s petitions to the General Assembly, and the story of Uncle Jack demonstrate the degree to which the College community struggled to reconcile the presence of slavery with the ways it understood its religious and educational mission. While most enslavers were unwilling to emancipate their slaves, some of those who did, such as Paxton, ended up leaving the area entirely. For those who stayed, they promulgated accounts such as their success



*New College, now Cushing Hall, in an engraving from 1846.*

in converting Jack, who was held up as an example of the beneficial impact of Christianity. This reflects a shift by the 1820s from the ambivalent attitude towards slavery shown by figures like Henry and Jefferson to a more assertive defense of slavery as a positive good. At the national level during the 1820s, lines were hardening with the Missouri Compromise and the increasingly heated rhetoric of figures such as John C. Calhoun. As an institution, slavery seemed ever more deeply embedded in the political and social structures of Virginia and the South. The rise of the cotton economy had provided lucrative opportunities for Virginia slaveowners to sell their slaves South. Individuals like Paxton found that there was no room for someone with reservations over the institution and so he left, a division that was growing nationally and locally.

By 1830, the physical campus of the College had changed significantly. Gone was the original Old College building, its bricks used in the construction of a new building, a residence for the President now known as Graham Hall. A large and impressive new academic building (today known as Cushing) was constructed, situated on a hill to the south of the original campus structures, with sufficient

room to house students as well as classrooms. According to minutes of the Board of Trustees, enslaved men were hired to perform the manual labor necessary to keep the building functioning. In addition, these men were permitted to perform small tasks for students in exchange for payment. It seems this practice may have been widespread, since the Board eventually issued a directive that work for students may only take place after sundown, perhaps to address concerns that some individuals were making money doing odd jobs for students when they were supposed to be engaged in other tasks. In addition, the Board made provision for students who brought their own slaves with them. In at least one example, a student's tuition was covered by the services of an enslaved man leased to the College as payment. Enslaved men served as chemistry lab assistants and in other classroom tasks.<sup>16</sup>

Although official college histories have mostly excluded or minimized the presence of enslaved people in their descriptions of the early to mid-19th century campus, a closer look at the sources shows that Black and white individuals spent much of their day alongside one another, certainly in an unequal relationship to one another but nevertheless in almost constant contact. As historian Philip Morgan has written, the community bonds between free and slave members of communities were complex, often transactional, and fluid.<sup>17</sup> Although there can be no doubt that Black people were kept subordinate, in danger of being sold, punished, or otherwise at the mercy of the white power structure, they nevertheless helped shape college life.

As an example, in 1838, the Board of Trustee minutes authorized payment of \$70.00 to Dr. Draper for "servant hire this year." Draper was a professor of chemistry, later renowned for building the first camera in America, while he taught at Hampden-Sydney. He also was an enslaver who apparently was able to profit twice, both from the labor which enslaved men provided in the labs and classrooms and



*Union Seminary in an engraving from the 1840s.*

then from charging the College for their use.<sup>18</sup> At the same meeting, the Board ordered payment of two other transactions involving “servant hire”: \$192.68 to Peter McNair and \$8.00 to “Dr. Caroll for Moses Treadway.”<sup>19</sup>

The use of enslaved men as lab assistants appears regularly in College records. In September 1840, Dr. Gardner was to receive payment for “servant hire for the year, paying him only for such services as he may have rendered in the chemical room.”<sup>20</sup> In another example, a man called “Uncle Jacob” was the subject of a reminiscence published in the February 1888 edition of the *Hampden Sidney Magazine*. Like many Lost Cause reflections by white people on relationships with Black people, the tone is affectionate, patronizing, and humorous. Uncle Jacob is described as hanging around the post office, always ready to share folk wisdom with students and other passers-by. This account also describes the role Jacob played in the chemistry lab, assisting Dr. Holladay with experiments and sometimes serving as the subject of them. The story says that Dr. Holladay used to demonstrate electricity by asking Jacob to hold on to a machine (presumably a Faraday machine) that made his hair stand up.

While one wonders how amusing Jacob found this to be, it is worth noting that the story suggests Jacob was present in classrooms and performing (or experiencing) various lab experiments.<sup>21</sup>

During the early years of the College, it was customary to hire a tutor who had several responsibilities. In addition to providing academic support, the tutor also served as a sort of resident advisor, overseeing the residential life of students. In undertaking this work, he was placed in charge of enslaved people living on campus. In 1842, the Board created an explicit list of duties assigned to the tutor, noting that “the tutor shall be bound to superintend the College servant and see that his time is fully occupied in his duties and to exercise all the authority of a master to enforce commands.” The Board instructed the tutor to disallow any fees paid to the “servant” for doing extra work for students during the daytime and should require this individual to bring water to students’ rooms once a day, clean the rooms, repair windows, and undertake any other tasks the tutor assigned.<sup>22</sup>

Adjacent to the Hampden-Sydney campus, construction was completed by the late 1820s on Union Theological Seminary, located along the south side of Via Sacra. Construction on its main campus building, now known as Venable Hall, began in 1824, designed and built by Dabney Cosby, a prolific architect who worked with Thomas Jefferson and whose buildings can be found across central Virginia. Cosby relied extensively on the labor of enslaved men, including skilled artisans. One of those men, Albert, worked for years as a plasterer and roughcaster for Cosby, and apparently resided in Prince Edward County while the Seminary buildings were under construction. In April 1854, this man “absconded,” much to the dismay of Cosby, who went to some lengths to try to recover him by offering a \$600 reward. An advertisement placed by Cosby in the April 28, 1854, *Richmond Enquirer* stated that Albert had “been permitted to live with his family

in Richmond for the last 18 or 20 years . . . and is supposed to be in some cities of the North.”<sup>23</sup> Cosby notes that Albert was “well known in middle Virginia. . . and made a fair and favorite impression.” As historian Melvin Ely has documented in his study of the emancipated population living at nearby Israel Hill, the presence of Black men and women living independently in the area, despite laws and other efforts to curtail it, continued to be a feature of the local society.

Perhaps the best-known enslaved person to reside on the Hampden-Sydney campus was Elizabeth Keckley, later known for her autobiography recounting her service to Mary Todd Lincoln as a seamstress. Keckley was born in Dinwiddie County, owned by her father, Col. Armistead Burwell, who would serve as steward at Hampden-Sydney in the early 1820s. As a young child of only four, Keckley recounts an experience she never forgot. Mrs. Burwell left her in charge of an infant, advising her to rock the cradle if the baby cried. The little girl tried to follow instructions but rocked too vigorously, dumping the baby on the ground. In her fear, she then attempted to pick the baby up with a fire-shovel. This led to her to being “taken out and lashed . . . The blows were not administered with a light hand. This was the first time I was punished in this cruel way but not the last.”<sup>24</sup> Keckley also wrote about witnessing the grief of an enslaved cook after Burwell sold her son. “One day, she was whipped for grieving her lost boy. Colonel Burwell never liked to see one of his slaves wear a sorrowful face, and those who offended in this particular



*Elizabeth Keckley  
in later life.*

way were always punished. Alas! The sunny face of the slave is not always an indication of sunshine in the heart.”<sup>25</sup>

Keckley’s memoir is the only first-hand slave narrative from Hampden-Sydney. It illustrates one of the challenges in documenting the presence of enslaved people on campus: documentation of their work is found in the records of their enslavers and not always in the College records, or if so, only indirectly. For example, in the early to mid 1780s, Francis Watkins, who served as Trustee as well as Treasurer for the College, hired out a woman named Agg, who was owned by his nephew and ward, Robert Watkins, to a man named Henry Jones. This lease arrangement was renewed over a period of several years, including a prorated period when Agg was “lying in” and presumably had borne a child. At least some part of the payment Jones made for her labor was apparently credited against the board charged to Robert Watkins, who boarded with Jones while attending school.<sup>26</sup> The name Agg appears repeatedly in the records of College trustees, and although it is impossible to confirm whether it is the same woman, the small size of the community makes it reasonable to conclude that Agg lived, worked, gave birth, and spent most of her life on or adjacent to the campus. It is possible, maybe likely, that she is buried there too.

Another example of the ways in which privately owned slaves played an integral role in campus operations is the example of Martha King. While most of the stewards employed by the College were men, King is an interesting exception. The steward was responsible for providing room and board to students, a role that had “extreme importance to the operation of the college.”<sup>27</sup> King was the widow of George King (the man who loaned Billy Brown the money to help purchase his freedom), and they owned a tavern in nearby Kingsville. She took over as College steward in 1846, when student meals and some accommodations were provided in the Steward’s House, built at

the same time as Cushing Hall.<sup>28</sup> As steward, King owned, or through her husband's will had use of, at least ten enslaved people who labored to provide cooking, cleaning, and laundry services to students. An 1852 deposition lists their names as Randolph, Sam, Betty, Mary, Ellen, George, Giles, Martha, Nancy, and Jane.<sup>29</sup> Archæologist Charles Pearson notes that in 1841, a request had been made to the Board for a "Negro house," to be constructed near the Steward's quarters (west of Cushing Hall) as a dormitory for them.

Richard McIlwaine, class of 1853, who later served as President of the College, wrote in his memoir about experiences with enslaved people on Hampden-Sydney's campus. In his reminiscences, he discusses "Uncle Dennis Evans and Aunt Matilda, his wife," who were the property of the Reverend F. S. Sampson, professor of Oriental Literature at Union Seminary. McIlwaine lived in their household as a student and wrote fondly of the "famous buckwheat cakes" prepared by "Aunt Matilda," among her "other culinary accomplishments."<sup>30</sup> McIlwaine also described the conversion of "a large number of students and of white and colored people in the community by Rev. Sampson." Among these converts was an enslaved man named David Ross, "one of the college servants when I was a student, and a great favorite with the boys."<sup>31</sup> Ross and his wife Rachel hosted dinners for fraternity members in their cabin, with, according to McIlwaine, a variety of dishes "served by the genteel old woman and her husband in the best style. After dinner, cigars floated around in abundance, but no wine of spirituous liquors of any kind."<sup>32</sup> The familiarity portrayed in this scene is powerful evidence of the intimacy of the relationships between Black and white people.

David Ross became the subject of an 1872 lawsuit, in which Asa Dupuy Dickinson sued for nonpayment of \$804.70 due for Ross's work at the College prior to and during the Civil War. The case was

filed in Prince Edward County, but moved to the circuit court in Lynchburg, which ordered the sum to be paid to Dickinson.<sup>33</sup> Ross and his family thus occupied a precarious position in which their fate was ultimately determined by Dickinson, whose own family had long ties to the College, dating back to its founding period. Sources show that Ross likely spent his days working on campus and interacting with students to the extent that he hosted them in his home (most likely for payment) and tolerated them engaging in behaviors not otherwise allowed (such as smoking cigars). He was one of many residents of the area who participated in the religious revivals of the era. Ross died during the war and did not live to see emancipation. But even after his death and seven years after slavery ended, the labor Ross had provided to the College was the subject of a lawsuit, showing that litigation over slavery extended farther than perhaps many realize and even beyond the grave of those enslaved.

While the physical campus expanded in the 1820s with the construction of Union Theological Seminary (now Venable Hall) and the New College building (now Cushing Hall), expansion was taking place in other respects as well, including an ambitious new program. In December 1837, the Board of Trustees adopted a resolution to “establish a medical department in the city of Richmond.” The Board minutes record that “after much discussion on the subject, the following regulations for the management of said department were adopted” including hiring six professors, describing their duties and privileges, creating rules regarding tuition and exams, etc.<sup>34</sup> The idea for a medical college in Virginia originated with a group of physicians with only indirect ties to the campus. One source suggests that the Hampden-Sydney connection may have come through Professor John Peter Mettauer, a local physician of some renown, who might have proposed it at a social event in Richmond. Another well-known

Hampden-Sydney faculty member, Socrates Maupin, was one of the first faculty hired at the new medical college. However the idea arose, the group of physicians approached Hampden-Sydney to organize under its charter in order to meet legal requirements of the state of Virginia.

Thus, from 1837 to 1854, the Medical Department of Hampden-Sydney operated in Richmond. Although the Hampden-Sydney Board of Trustees oversaw the hiring of faculty and the awarding of diplomas, the Medical Department was more or less operated independently from the college. Medical professors relied on the use of the bodies of living and deceased African Americans, probably all of them enslaved, as subjects of dissection and experimental medical treatment. In fact, founders of the medical school promoted Richmond as an ideal location due to a “most abundant supply of subjects for dissections and surgical operations on the dead body.”<sup>35</sup>

Recent studies have shown how closely the practice of medicine was intertwined with the institution of slavery.<sup>36</sup> One of the most prominent physicians of his day was John Peter Mettauer, who attended Hampden-Sydney but graduated with a degree in medicine from the University of Pennsylvania in 1809. Mettauer’s father, Francis Mettauer, purportedly arrived in Prince Edward with French soldiers during the Revolutionary War and remained in the area, acquiring property near the College. Upon his death, the senior Mettauer freed several slaves, but his sons continued to enslave people up to the time of emancipation.<sup>37</sup>



*J. P. Mettauer*

By the 1830s, J. P. Mettauer was on the College faculty and had

established himself as an innovative surgeon, now credited with developing pioneering techniques in the treatment of cleft palates and birth injuries such as fistulas. In 1847, Mettauer published an article in the *American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, in which he described performing eight surgeries over a two-year period on a 20-year-old enslaved woman to attempt to repair a fistula.<sup>38</sup> He had performed a similar surgery on a local white woman, apparently successfully. However, the surgeries experienced by the young Black woman were not successful, an outcome he attributed to ongoing sexual activity. The lack of agency that Black people, and particularly Black women, had over their bodies is thrown into disturbingly stark relief in this example.

Mettauer also appears in the legal records of Prince Edward during this time period, as he was named in a suit filed by several of his family members. In an 1847 chancery case, he is accused of retaining possession of several enslaved individuals who were not lawfully his property but of whom he claimed possession, since he served as guardian of Edward Mettauer, his nephew. The courts ordered the enslaved men, women, and children to be divided by parcel and distributed among the heirs.<sup>39</sup> It is unknown if the woman upon whom he operated is among these individuals or not. One also imagines the impact on families broken apart by lawsuits such as this, regarding the division of human property. The historical record makes clear that Mettauer, while achieving distinction in medical science, was deeply connected to the institution of slavery and indeed relied on it in order to perform his medical research.

Meanwhile, the Medical Department was eager to advertise the benefits of its location in a city populated by a large number of slaves. Factories such as Tredegar Iron Works utilized slave labor in their operation, and the accessibility of Black bodies, both living and dead, was presented as a resource for the school's students. There was a steady

demand for cadavers on which to perform dissections and, although grisly to contemplate, the lack of any personal legal protections for slaves made it easy to appropriate them. While modern readers flinch at this reality, the availability of Black bodies was promoted as an important advantage in the school's recruitment efforts during the antebellum period. By the 1850s, the relationship between the Medical Department and the College had become strained to the point of rupture. When the Hampden-Sydney Board tried to force the hire of a professor related to the College president, the faculty at the medical school refused. This was the final dispute in a long list of disagreements, and the official relationship was terminated in 1854. The medical department became the Medical College of Virginia, a state-supported school now affiliated with Virginia Commonwealth University.

Nationally, tensions were on the rise by the 1850s and a closer look at the debates over slavery on campus demonstrates that, although isolated, Hampden-Sydney was not immune to these debates. One way to track discussion on campus is by examining the records of the literary and debating societies. The Union Society, founded in 1789, is the second oldest collegiate debating society in the U.S. A rival organization, the Philanthropic Society, was formed in 1805. Each week, students in these societies would assemble to hold debates over various topics, which were recorded into a ledger. The audience would vote as to which side it thought had offered a more convincing argument. As early as 1809 and continuing regularly after that, students debated issues related to slavery: abolition (immediate or gradual), colonization, education of enslaved people, the status of enslaved people, etc.<sup>40</sup> As historian of the College Herbert Bradshaw notes, after a January 1851 debate on the question "Is slavery itself of itself right?" the judgement of the audience was no.<sup>41</sup> Yet this remained an academic debate, at least for the moment, with slavery still deeply embedded into

campus life.

A decade later, the debate was no longer academic, and the tide had shifted decisively towards war. Although some College histories portray the coming crisis as only incidentally touching Hampden-Sydney, which remained a sleepy out of the way place, the Hampden-Sydney campus was as caught up in the turmoil as communities across the rest of the nation. Although Virginia was not in the first wave of Southern states to secede, in May 1861, after a debate in Richmond that contemporary accounts say included young men shouting in the streets and demanding that Southerners take up arms against the Union, the Commonwealth voted to do so. Hampden-Sydney students, although fearful of war, were eager to join in. One source claimed that it was all the students could talk about, with an article in the College magazine relating that “The chief terror present to his imagination is a negro insurrection, filling his thoughts by day and by night. . . as he places his unquiet head upon his pillow he views the dreadful forms entering his chamber, approaching his side—the axe is uplifted, it falls and he is no more.” The story continued by adding that “some have gathered around their person a choice selection of unleaded pistols, and awaited, arms in hand, the stealthy foe; others, unprovided with this formidable defense, placed beneath their troubled pillow crow-bars.”<sup>42</sup>

The same issue of the magazine reported that “To defend the rights of the South—to oppose the legions of abolitionists—to endow themselves with a military training, and to develop their physical nature,” a small militia unit of Hampden-Sydney students (Company G, 20th Virginia Regiment) organized themselves to prepare for war.<sup>43</sup> The unnamed author of the item was less than kind in his assessment of the unit’s military preparation but the company continued training and did eventually march off to war, under the command of the College’s president.<sup>44</sup> These short articles document that on the cusp of war,

students understood clearly that the war was about slavery. Indeed it appears that at least for some, the motivation to begin training for war was fear that the enslaved would rebel (fears no doubt stoked by the raid John Brown had led at Harper's Ferry only a few months earlier).

The period of the Civil War and Reconstruction was a challenging one for Hampden-Sydney as the most of its students and many of its faculty left to serve in the Confederate Army. With few students and little income, the campus languished. The



*Mercy Seat Baptist Church*

African American community, many of whose members had been enslaved by local property owners and leased to the College, found new opportunities in the wake of slavery's end, even in the face of significant economic challenges. A new church, Mercy Seat Baptist, located about a mile south of campus in the unincorporated community historically known as Mercy Seat, was founded in 1870 by freedmen, many of whom had previously attended College Church (in segregated seating in the balcony, which is still extant in the building today).

Residents of Mercy Seat continued to work at the College, now as paid employees. Among them was Stokes Brown, who was born in 1846 and died in 1939, and worked at the College for an astonishing 75 years. He



*Stokes Brown at the Bell Tower near Cushing Hall, 1914.*

had been enslaved by the Watkins family, which had close ties to the College and for whom Watkins Bell Tower is named. A local historian has written that Brown and his family lived on campus beginning in 1864. He eventually opened a small general store in Mercy Seat and sold gas to the first cars on campus.<sup>45</sup>

An 1871 map shows a cluster of homes known as the “old servants’ quarters,” about a half-mile west of campus and adjacent to the College observatory. Several families lived there, including the Randolphs, Evans, and Browns, all of whom had family members who worked at the College over several generations. This group of cabins, now mostly in ruins, speak to a different time, when in some ways very much had changed because of emancipation but in other ways things had remained very much the same.

In the aftermath of the war, as African American families began lives as freedmen while remaining connected to the campus through their work and proximity, others at the College began developing a set of interpretations about slavery, the relationships between Black and white people, and the Civil War itself. This collection of beliefs, based on support for white supremacy and denial of civil and political rights to Black people, became known as the Lost Cause. One of its most vocal early authors was Robert Lewis Dabney, who lived in an impressive neo-Italianate house called Westmerton only a few hundred yards from the Old Servants Quarters. In addition to his work as an author and theologian, he was also an architect, who designed College Church. Dabney was alarmed by the presence of free Blacks living so close to his home and the Seminary where he taught. In 1876, he supported a resolution to be submitted to Hampden-Sydney President J. M. P. Atkinson “to aid the faculty in any feasible plan to prevent the settlement of an undesirable population in the vicinity of the Seminary.”<sup>46</sup>

Dabney was not the only person at the College or Seminary committed to the development of Lost Cause ideologies. In 1883, Richard McIlwaine became President of Hampden-Sydney, a position he held until 1892. His presidency is one that saw the introduction of many modern features to the campus, but he also worked to ensure that students received a pro-Southern interpretation of history and culture. In his memoir, he writes of teaching a text called “Christian Ethics,” which he calls an “unusually accurate and good book” except for the section on “Liberty and Slavery.” In that section, he wrote that the authors’ perspective was “that of the old radical abolitionists, unhistorical, irrational, unscriptural.” Concerned that his students seemed to accept this interpretation, he convened a special evening class to continue the discussion at the conclusion of which, McIlwaine notes with satisfaction, “every one had come to an understanding and adoption of the Southern points of view.”<sup>47</sup>



*Richard McIlwaine*

McIlwaine also served as a delegate to the 1902 Virginia Constitutional Convention, a gathering explicitly convened to limit political rights for African Americans as well as restrict their access to education and other civil rights. At the conclusion of the convention, delegates were given an oak seedling, to carry back to their respective counties where it could be planted and serve as a symbol of Virginia’s commitment to white supremacy. Constitution Oak, as it became known, stood on campus near Cushing Hall until the early 21st century when age and bad weather brought it down. Just as the oak trees grew in different corners of the state, so did the mutually reinforcing narratives of Jim Crow and white supremacy.

On the campus of Hampden-Sydney, the early twentieth

century was a quiet period after the turmoil of the Civil War and Reconstruction era. The status quo of the antebellum period had been restored and while African Americans were no longer enslaved, neither were they “full-free.”<sup>48</sup> During this period, the famous author and intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois, at the time a young scholar who had just a few years earlier become the first African American man to receive a PhD from Harvard, accepted an assignment from the U.S. Department of Labor to write a sociological study of a ‘typical’ Black Southern community. Du Bois chose to write about Prince Edward County, and while his report does not focus on Hampden-Sydney specifically, it offers us a window into the economy, culture, and society of African Americans living in the region at the turn of the twentieth century.

Du Bois observed that poverty, lack of access to education, and limited economic opportunities were major challenges within the Black community. But he also notes that there were others who had achieved economic success; for example, “the entire brickmaking business of Farmville and vicinity is in the hands of a colored man—a freedman, who bought his own and his family’s freedom, purchased his master’s estate, and eventually hired his master to work for him.”<sup>49</sup> Du Bois noted that this man owned a thousand acres of land in Cumberland County, property in Farmville, and “had repeatedly driven white competitors out of business.”

As has been extensively documented by historians, the generation of African Americans who emerged from slavery had a singular focus on ensuring educational opportunity for their children. As Frederick Douglass had noted decades earlier, education was the surest path to freedom, in personal, intellectual, and economic respects. In 1867, Robert R. R. Moton, a prominent Black educator at the turn of the twentieth century who succeeded Booker T. Washington as president

of Tuskegee Institute (now University), was born nearby in Amelia County. His father worked on the plantation of Samuel Vaughan, where Moton moved as a young boy. Moton's mother gave him reading lessons, and during one of their sessions, they were surprised by Mrs. Lucy Vaughan, wife of Samuel. Though apprehensive about the reaction of a white person to this activity, Moton and his mother were relieved to find that Mrs. Vaughan was not only supportive but willing to assist with lessons and materials.<sup>50</sup> Later in life, Moton still remembered with gratitude the kindness and encouragement of Lucy Vaughan. The grandson of Samuel and Lucy Vaughan, Lieutenant General Samuel Vaughan Wilson, became president of Hampden-Sydney in 1992.

By the early twentieth century, the patterns of life under Jim Crow were well established in Prince Edward County and on the campus of Hampden-Sydney. Although free now and working for wages, Black men and women continued to perform much of the labor necessary for the operation of the College. But change was coming, quietly at first and then (at least to many whites) more suddenly. During World War I, many African Americans began leaving the South for better economic opportunity elsewhere in an exodus that became known as the Great Migration. Black Virginians sought employment in cities along the eastern seaboard, including Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and Philadelphia. When these individuals returned home for visits and holidays, they now had stories to tell about a wider world outside of Southside Virginia. Lancaster Brown, son of Stokes Brown, was drafted into the U.S. Army during World War I and served in Europe.<sup>51</sup> The local impact of their experiences began to accelerate calls for change.

Among the issues that continued to be at the forefront of the minds of many African Americans was better educational access, since Southside Virginia lacked a high school for Black children.

An organization of Black women, the Martha E. Forrester Council, which was part of a network of Black women's groups, engaged in years of political activism to demand the creation of a high school. Finally, funds were allocated and the R. R. Moton High School opened in 1939. It was overcrowded on the day it opened and lagged far behind the facilities available to white students. As in the rest of the South, debates over educational access and equity were far from settled.

Also in 1939, Stokes Brown died at the age of 93. The arc of his life serves as an example of the complexity of campus race relations. Although a familiar presence on campus for seven decades, whether enslaved or free, he was a subordinate who worked in menial labor positions, regardless of how well-loved he may have been. In 1933, Robert Brock wrote in *The Record* (the alumni magazine) about Stokes Brown and his brother Marshall:

“There were many others whose names I do not recall at this moment. But two of these famous characters, at one time so familiar about the grounds and dormitories, now remain: Marshall Brown, in his younger days butler par excellence, Chesterfieldian in manner, who even now, though past eighty, stands behind Professor Whiting's chair in that hospitable dining room; and Stokes Brown, his brother, who was janitor for a period close to fifty years but retired some ten years or more ago. He was a famous mimic, and it was the delight of the students to gather around him and have him ‘take off’ the various professors. He is still remarkably active for his age and his appearance has little changed. He has a nice, comfortable home near ‘Mercy Seat’ Church, and is frequently seen around the College. He must be now close on to eight-six years of age.”<sup>53</sup>

The Brown family's connections to the College were generational. Lancaster Brown, born in 1890, worked at the College and at the Chi Phi house for 50 years; he ran the family store in Mercy Seat until

1968 when it closed.

Mercy Seat is an important community in the story of African American history at Hampden-Sydney and in Prince Edward County. Its mostly African American residents have close ties to the College, many of them having been employed there and virtually all of them interacting with the College regularly due to its proximity to campus. In 1928, the Rosenwald Fund, a philanthropic initiative begun by the heir to the Sears fortune to build schools for African American children in underserved areas, constructed the Mercy Seat School, which served Black children in the community up until 1959, when all public schools in Prince Edward were closed.<sup>53</sup> (The building is now a country store called Granny B's, popular with community and campus residents alike).

At times it felt (and can still feel) that Hampden-Sydney and Mercy Seat resist the passage of time, given the rural nature of the region and its many historic structures. But even in these remote areas, the mid-20th century brought dramatic change, particularly with regard to race relations.

In 1892, in Darlington Heights, only a few miles from Hampden-Sydney's campus, a Black man named Vernon Johns was born. Johns recalled that, as a child, he had been taught by Dr. James Hardy Dillard, who traveled from Hampden-Sydney in his buggy to visit African American schools and teach them poems and songs.

Johns became a well-known minister whose reputation extended far beyond Virginia, and he was particularly known for his denunciations of Jim Crow and racial prejudice. In the early 1950s, Johns served in the pulpit of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, from which he was later fired and replaced by Martin Luther King, Jr., whom parishioners hoped would be a less fiery and troublesome leader for them.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, in 1951, Johns' niece, Barbara Johns, initiated

a dramatic series of events culminating in a showdown over race, education, and opportunity in Prince Edward.

The story of the Prince Edward school desegregation case, which became part of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 and which led to the closing of all public schools in the county in 1959 as part of the Massive Resistance effort, is outside the scope of this pamphlet. The school closing crisis put Prince Edward at the center of national debates over race and education. There are many excellent studies of what happened in Prince Edward between 1951 and 1964, some of which are included in the bibliography. Our focus is on Hampden-Sydney, where the impact of the Prince Edward school desegregation case was felt, although official responses to it remained muted.

For the most part, College leadership at Hampden-Sydney remained silent on the subject. President Joseph Robert wrote in a report from summer of 1959, on the eve of the schools' closing, "What should the Board do? At the very minimum we cannot be indifferent to the situation." Yet his recommendation was simply to offer "a formal declaration of its concern."<sup>55</sup> Several months later, he continued to say that the situation could not be ignored, yet he seemed unwilling to offer any response, either by supporting or by condemning the efforts of Black parents and students to desegregate public education. He seemed most concerned with the effect of the school closing on the College's ability to recruit and retain faculty.<sup>56</sup>

With public schools shut down, white parents and county leaders soon began an effort to build a whites-only school, which became Prince Edward Academy. In advance of a physical campus being constructed, these families looked for temporary facilities. College Church agreed to allow its basement to be used for the education of white children. Nearby in Mercy Seat, a 19th-century community

building was utilized as an *ad hoc* ‘training’ center for Black children. Despite the College’s efforts to stay out of the controversy, the reality of the county’s commitment to segregated education was visible to all those who lived and worked on campus every day as Black and white children were educated separately, and unequally, within a few hundred yards of one another. Within a few years, the College trustees agreed to pay the tuition for faculty children attending the segregated private academy, an arrangement that continued into the early 1970s.<sup>57</sup>

Some faculty and students supported the efforts of the Black community, and a group of the latter students, encouraged by the College Chaplain, Arthur Field, became tutors in the Prince Edward County Free Schools as part of an initiative begun by President John Kennedy to offer a stop-gap solution to the school closings.<sup>58</sup> In 1963-1964, the Federal government assumed responsibility for the operation of public education in the county. Thirty Hampden-Sydney students and faculty volunteered to serve as tutors in these schools. In 1965, the public schools reopened,



*The Log Cabin preschool.*

although many white families, including Hampden-Sydney faculty and staff, continued to send their children to the academy. On campus, a group of faculty wives received permission from the college to open an integrated daycare in the Log Cabin building. Frances Scott, a Black woman who still lives in Mercy Seat, helped run the school and together, these women developed an innovative preschool curriculum.

In 1963, the College hired a new President, Taylor Reveley, who brought to the College a new perspective on many issues, one of which was the question of segregated education. He was committed to the desegregation of the college, a goal which he achieved in 1968 when Alphonso O’Neil White, Class of 1972, became the

first African American student to matriculate at Hampden-Sydney. (There may have been African American students admitted before 1968 but they did not matriculate.) In an oral history, White described the challenges he faced, primarily social ostracization and at times fear, but he did develop close ties to the local African American community, including with a white alumnus, Burwell Robinson, who was hired as an English teacher at the local high school.<sup>59</sup>



*Alphonso White '72*

By the 1970s, the College had enrolled a small but growing number of African American students and over time organizations were established on campus, such as the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity and the Minority Student Union, that provided a stronger sense of community and mutual support. Beginning in 1990, African American alumni began returning to campus for the Black Alumni Reunion Weekend (now the Minority Alumni Mentoring weekend), a tradition that is still going strong thirty-five years later. In 1998, the College created its first staff position focused on intercultural affairs and in 2001, the Intercultural Affairs Committee was established. Both initiatives were intended to foster a greater sense of belonging and inclusion on campus.



*Christopher Howard*

In 2009, Dr. Christopher B. Howard became the first African American to serve as President of the College.

## *Conclusion*

It is impossible in a short pamphlet to fully describe and acknowledge the contributions that African Americans have made to Hampden-Sydney without which the college would quite literally not exist. In the earlier period of the College's history, most of the contributions came through labor that was coerced and unremunerated. Over the course of the twentieth century, African Americans were able to participate in and contribute directly to the educational program of the College itself. Campus programs, curricular initiatives, and student organizations have emerged that embrace a more inclusive attitude. On the eve of the College's 250th anniversary, plans are currently forming to create a memorial to the enslaved on campus. Much work remains to be done. Before any serious acknowledgement of the history and contributions of African Americans on campus can take place, we must continue to seek out the individuals in the College's history who are hidden in the archival silences and who give voice to those whose presence is still powerfully felt in the halls and fields of the beautiful old campus.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Legislative Petition, William Brown, Prince Edward County, 1824.

[https://rosetta.virginiamemory.com/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE2845838](https://rosetta.virginiamemory.com/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE2845838); Herbert Bradshaw, *History of Hampden-Sydney College*, Vol. 1. Durham: Private Printing, 1976, 360-361. See Bradshaw for a more extensive discussion of Billy Brown's case. Jennifer Oast, *Institutional Slavery: Slaveholding Churches, Schools, Colleges, and Businesses in Virginia, 1680-1860*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016, 164-165. Melvin Ely offers a slightly different account, in which Brown borrowed money from a white man named George King in order to purchase his freedom when Allen left the state. Prince Edward County records indicate King freed him after county officials accused King of permitting Brown to "go about as a free man." Melvin Ely, *Israel on the Appomattox: A Southern Experiment in Black Freedom From the 1790s Through the Civil War*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 546.

<sup>2</sup> "Slavery and Justice: Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice" (Brown University, 2006)

<https://slaveryandjustice.brown.edu/sites/default/files/reports/SlaveryAndJustice2006.pdf>;

"Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation to the President of Georgetown University" (Summer 2015)

<https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/nzo1tx4elaerg13akjuxuwe3pv9sb03a>;

Craig S. Wilder, *Ebony and Ivory: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities* New York: Bloomsburg Press, 2013; Leslie M. Harris, James T. Campbell, and Alfred L. Brophy, *Slavery and the University: Histories and Legacies*. Athens: University of Georgia Press 2019. Rhondda Robinson Thomas, *Call My Name: Documenting the Black Experience in an American University Community*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2020. For links to many other college and university reports, see *Universities Studying Slavery* list of institutional members:

<https://slavery.virginia.edu/universities-studying-slavery/>

<sup>3</sup> Woody Holton. *Forced Founders: Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Patrick Henry to Robert Pleasants, January 18, 1773.

<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/patrick-henry-to-robert-pleasants/>

<sup>5</sup> Oast, 870.

<sup>6</sup> Charles E. Pearson and Bryan S. Haley, "Finding Old College: A Geophysical Search for the Original Hampden-Sydney College Buildings," *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archeological Society of Virginia*, v. 5, no. 1, March 2020, 41.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholas Guyatt, "Samuel Stanhope Smith." *Princeton & Slavery*.

<https://slavery.princeton.edu/stories/samuel-stanhope-smith>

<sup>8</sup> For an example of a contemporary who did follow his conscience in emancipating the enslaved people he had inherited, the story of Richard Randolph is a powerful one. With his widow's assistance, his vision of a community of freedmen became a

reality at Israel Hill in Prince Edward County. See Melvin Ely, *Israel on the Appomattox: A Southern Experiment in Black Freedom From the 1790s Through the Civil War*, (New York: Vintage Books. 2004).

<sup>9</sup> 1810 Prince Edward County, VA Census.

<http://s1030794421.onlinehome.us/population/pop1810numbers.html>

<sup>10</sup> Richard N. Venable Account Book, 7 May 1799. Box 2, Hampden-Sydney Archives, Bortz Library.

<sup>11</sup> Oast, “The Worst Kind of Slavery,” 875. Oast reports on an H-SC student, Jonathan Cable, originally from New York, who confirmed Paxton’s account of enslaved labor being hired out to pay for College Church operations. As Oast argues, the hiring out of slaves was especially devastating as contracts were typically for a year (sometimes longer) and resulted in continuous disruptions to the lives of those who were moved from one location to another.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> UPLS Records, H-SC Library.

<sup>14</sup> William White, *The African Preacher*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1849, 10.

<sup>15</sup> Letter to the editor by “Rusticus” (perhaps John Holt Rice), *Literary and Evangelical Magazine*, Vol. 10, 1827. <http://archive.org>.

<sup>16</sup> Hampden-Sydney Board of Trustee Minutes, September 25, 1838. Oast, 169.

<sup>17</sup> Philip Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry*. Williamsburg VA: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, xxii.

<sup>18</sup> Hampden-Sydney Board of Trustee Minutes, September 25, 1838.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Hampden-Sydney Board of Trustee Minutes, 9/9/1840. Bortz Library Special Collections.

<sup>21</sup> “Uncle Jacob Interviewed,” *Hampden Sidney Magazine*, Vol. VI, No. 4, Feb. 1888, 77.

<sup>22</sup> H-SC Board of Trustee Minutes, 4/27/1842. Bortz Library.

<sup>23</sup> Barbara Day Bass and Ginger George Gentry, *The Cosby Family Builders: Virginia and North Carolina*. Lynchburg VA: Warwick House Publishers, 2020, 130.

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Keckley, *Behind the Scenes, Or, Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House*. New York: Penguin, 2005 (first published by G.W. Carleton & Co., 1868), 8.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Francis Watkins Account Book, 1782-1786, p. 67. Manuscripts and Special

Collections, Bortz Library, Hampden-Sydney College. Bradshaw, 359.

<sup>27</sup> Charles Pearson, "Madam Steward: Martha Smithson King, Hampden-Sydney's First Female Employee, 1846-1850," *Newsletter of the Atkinson Museum of Hampden-Sydney College*.

<sup>28</sup> The Steward's House, later called the Alamo, stood to the west of Cushing Hall and is no longer standing.

<sup>29</sup> Pearson, "Madam Steward," 3.

<sup>30</sup> Richard M. McIlwaine, *Memories of Three Score and Ten*. New York: Neale Publishing Co., 1908, 47.

<sup>31</sup> McIlwaine, 52.

<sup>32</sup> McIlwaine, 64.

<sup>33</sup> *A.D. Dickinson v. Hampden Sydney College*, 1872. Library of Virginia.  
<https://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxtf/view?docId=lva/vi03943.xml>

<sup>34</sup> Hampden-Sydney Board of Trustee Minutes, December 1, 1837. Hampden-Sydney Archives.

<sup>35</sup> Excerpts from the First Catalogue of the Medical Department, 1839. *The First 125 Years: 1838-1963*. Richmond: VCU, 1963, 12.

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<sup>36</sup> Deirdre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology*. Athens, GA: University of George Press, 2017.

<sup>37</sup> J.D. Eggleston, "Francis Joseph and John Peter Mettauer," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (April 1928) 96-99, 98.

<sup>38</sup> John Peter Mettauer, "On Vesico-Vaginal Fistulae," *American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, v. xiv (July 1847), 119.

<sup>39</sup> Chancery Case 147-1867-147, Prince Edward County. Library of Virginia.

<sup>40</sup> Bradshaw, 355-357.

<sup>41</sup> Bradshaw, 357.

<sup>42</sup> "Insurrection," *Hampden Sidney Magazine*, Nov. 1860, 383. H-SC Special Collections.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 382.

<sup>44</sup> McIlwaine, 337.

<sup>45</sup> Ray Gaskins, quoted in "Untold Story: Slavery and Black History at Hampden-Sydney College" website by Ebie Baker.

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<sup>46</sup> "Racism and Freedmen: Robert Lewis Dabney and Benjamin Mosby Smith."

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<sup>47</sup> McIlwaine, 341.

<sup>48</sup> Eric Foner. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*. New York: Harper, 2014.

<sup>49</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Negroes of Farmville, Virginia: A Social Study," Washington, D.C.: Department of Labor, 1898, 27. <http://blackfreedom.proquest.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/dubois30.pdf>

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<sup>51</sup> Lank's World

<sup>52</sup> Ebie Baker. "The Untold Story: Slavery and Black History at Hampden-Sydney" <https://blogs.H-SC.edu/untoldstory/groundskeepers/stokesbrownandfamily/>

<sup>53</sup> "Rosenwald Schools in Virginia," National Historic Register Places Documentation Form. [https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/012-5041\\_Rosenwald\\_Schools\\_2004\\_NRHP\\_MPD\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/012-5041_Rosenwald_Schools_2004_NRHP_MPD_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989, 21.

<sup>55</sup> Brinkley, 760.

<sup>56</sup> Brinkley, 761.

<sup>57</sup> Brinkley, 776.

<sup>58</sup> For an engrossing description of the PECFS project, see the comments of Ambassador William vanden Heuvel, appointed by President Kennedy to create the free schools. The Ambassador delivered this address at Hampden-Sydney during a 2009 symposium on the school closings.

[https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/journals/ambrev/ambrev559/jf\\_0016388\\_14186.pdf](https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/journals/ambrev/ambrev559/jf_0016388_14186.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> Alphonso O'Neil White. Interviewed by Aaron Moorer, April 20, 2021. "The Voice of Prince Edward" Oral History Project. <https://voiceofpec.omeka.net/items/show/41>



*Top: Trustee Edwin Booker with Pat Terry, 1933.  
Above, tennis team and friends, 1895.*

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## 250TH ANNIVERSARY VOLUMES

### I.

*Neither All the Questions nor All the Answers:  
A Brief History of Hampden-Sydney College*  
Thomas H. Shomo

Drawing primarily from the two official histories of the College—Brinkley and Bradshaw—this volume summarizes the College's history from the founding through the late 20th Century. The style is accessible and answers many frequently asked questions about Hampden-Sydney while encouraging readers to expand their knowledge through the other 250th Anniversary pamphlets and, for the more seriously interested, the many other publications and resources housed in the Bortz Library.

### II.

*John Hampden and Algernon Sydney:  
Making Heroes in the Seventeenth-Century*  
L. Nicole Greenspan

The lives, careers, and contributions of Hampden and Sydney shaped the fabric of seventeenth-century society, religion, and politics. Their struggle for liberty and opposition to tyranny, coupled with their reputations as heroes and martyrs of their time, later inspired American revolutionaries. Understanding the lives of Hampden and Sydney sheds light on why Hampden-Sydney College is named in their honor.

### III.

*Between Athens and Jerusalem:  
Enlightenment Faith, Religious Revival,  
and the Shaping of Hampden-Sydney College, 1774-1812*  
J. Michael Utzinger

In 1774 the Presbytery of Hanover met at Cub Creek Presbyterian Meeting House in Charlotte County, Virginia, to discuss hiring Samuel Stanhope Smith as the head of its proposed academy in Prince Edward County. Smith maintained a confidence in both human reason and revealed faith as complementary means to shape individuals and the wider society.

The creative tension between reason and faith continued to mark Hampden-Sydney College and its founding Presbyterian dissenters. Further, those associated with the College made important contributions toward conversations surrounding religious liberty and disestablishment, revivalism, and the ethics of enslavement.

#### IV.

##### *From Academy to College: Hampden-Sydney in the Revolution*

John C. Coombs

This volume examines the early development of Hampden-Sydney within the broader context of Virginia's transformation from British dominion to independent Commonwealth over the course of the revolutionary era. The tumultuous events roiling America in the last years of the imperial crisis with Great Britain—which president Samuel Stanhope Smith referred to as “the Distractions of the Times”—would exert a profound influence over the formative years of the new “public Academy” that extended far beyond the decision to name it after two great champions of English liberty.

Virginia's struggle for independence and adoption of a republican constitution not only created the political conditions that allowed the College's leaders to successfully secure a charter of incorporation from the General Assembly in 1783, but would also give new import to the stated mission “to form good men, and good Citizens, on the common and universal principles of Morality” and through constant attention to “the whole Circle of Education.”

#### V.

##### *Climbing the Hill: African American History at Hampden-Sydney College*

Caroline S. Emmons

In the early period of the college, enslaved individuals' labor and presence on campus helped shape the College's founding. While often unnamed in the College records, there is nevertheless abundant evidence of their contributions, which were critical in enabling the construction and operation of the campus.

The institution of slavery itself was regularly debated in a variety of settings.

After emancipation, African Americans continued to contribute in critical ways to the success of the college, as members of the staff and eventually, in the late 20th century, as students and even as President.

## VI.

*The First Buildings at Hampden-Sydney College:**Their History, Architecture, and Archaeology*

Charles E. Pearson and Richard C. McClintock

Construction at Hampden-Sydney College began in the summer of 1775 and, by 1820, a dozen or so buildings existed at the school. By 1850, the original campus of the school was abandoned and the locations of the first buildings were forgotten. A 2017 geophysical survey revealed the buried traces of several original buildings. This volume presents what is known about the earliest buildings at the school and what we can learn from their archaeological remains.

