



The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR LIBRARY

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NEWSLETTER

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DRAWINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS FROM PERRY, DEAN ROGERS PARTNERS



Carl Childs, Executive Director of the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, and Sarah Nerney, left, and Donna Cooke, right, Corporate Archivists, are pleased to receive the first box filled with tubes of architectural drawings at the Packets Court Records Center on January 9, 2023.

Photo by Marianne Martin

IN THIS ISSUE

Drawings and Photographs:	p. 1-4
Colonial Heritage Group Visit:	p. 5
Friends Fund Newspaper Purchase :	p. 6
Felicity in Williamsburg Collection	p. 7-8
Frenzel Photograph Collection:	p. 9-11

Early January marked the arrival of hundreds of architectural drawings and several boxes of black and white photographs from Perry, Dean, Rogers & Partners Architects of Boston, who designed the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library. The firm evolved from Perry, Shaw & Hepburn, the architectural team hired to oversee Williamsburg's initial restoration from the late 1920s to the 1930s. One of the founding architects for Colonial Williamsburg's restoration program. William Graves Perry served as lead architect for the Boston architectural firm of Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn, which he opened in

DRAWINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

(continued)



***Portrait of William Graves Perry, founding architect of Perry,
Shaw, and Hepburn of Boston.***

By Fabian Bachrach, late 1920s

1922. In 1927, his firm began to assist with the restoration of several buildings in Williamsburg as Dr. W.A.R. Goodwin and John D. Rockefeller Jr. worked as silent partners to acquire various properties. Later, after the announcement of Rockefeller as the benefactor for the project in 1928, the firm became the official project architects for the full-scale restoration of Williamsburg's historic district.

Like Colonial Williamsburg, Perry, Dean, Rogers & Partners will soon be celebrating its centennial. Preliminary planning for the observance led Perry, Dean, Rogers staff to begin review of many of its archived projects, including the significant work completed by its Williamsburg office towards the beginning of the firm's existence. They discovered three hundred sixty-nine rolls of architectural drawings, along with loose pages from a photo album, documenting both the progress of restoration and reconstruction work underway in Williamsburg and architectural precedents in the region studied in connection with the project. After reviewing their contents, the firm contacted the Rockefeller Library to see if it would be interested in adding a portion of the items to its extensive Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn archives, which encompasses documents, scrapbooks, photos, and drawings.

DRAWINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

(continued)

A contracted art handler delivered the drawings and photos to the Corporate Archives storage facility located at Packett's Court on January 9, 2023. A total of 187 tubes plus one bundle of drawings and four records cartons of photographs arrived safely. The items will be quarantined to check for the presence of pests or mold to prevent migration to existing collections. Small quantities of materials will be brought to the library over time for careful comparison with existing architectural and photographic archives. Staff will develop appraisal criteria for the selection of drawings and photos from the records transfer to add to the permanent collections at the Rockefeller Library. We are hoping to discover some new treasures amidst this acquisition that can be utilized in exhibitions, publications, and digital media being planned for the celebration of Colonial Williamsburg's centennial celebration in 2026!



Sarah Nemej, Joel Voron, Marianne Martin, and Donna Cooke examine boxes of photos at the Packets Court Records Center.

Photo by Brendan Sostak

DRAWINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

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Joel Voron, Senior Integrated Pest Management Technician, and Sarah Nerney, Associate Archivist, check photographs from one of the records cartons for signs of pest or mold damage at the Packets Court Records Center.

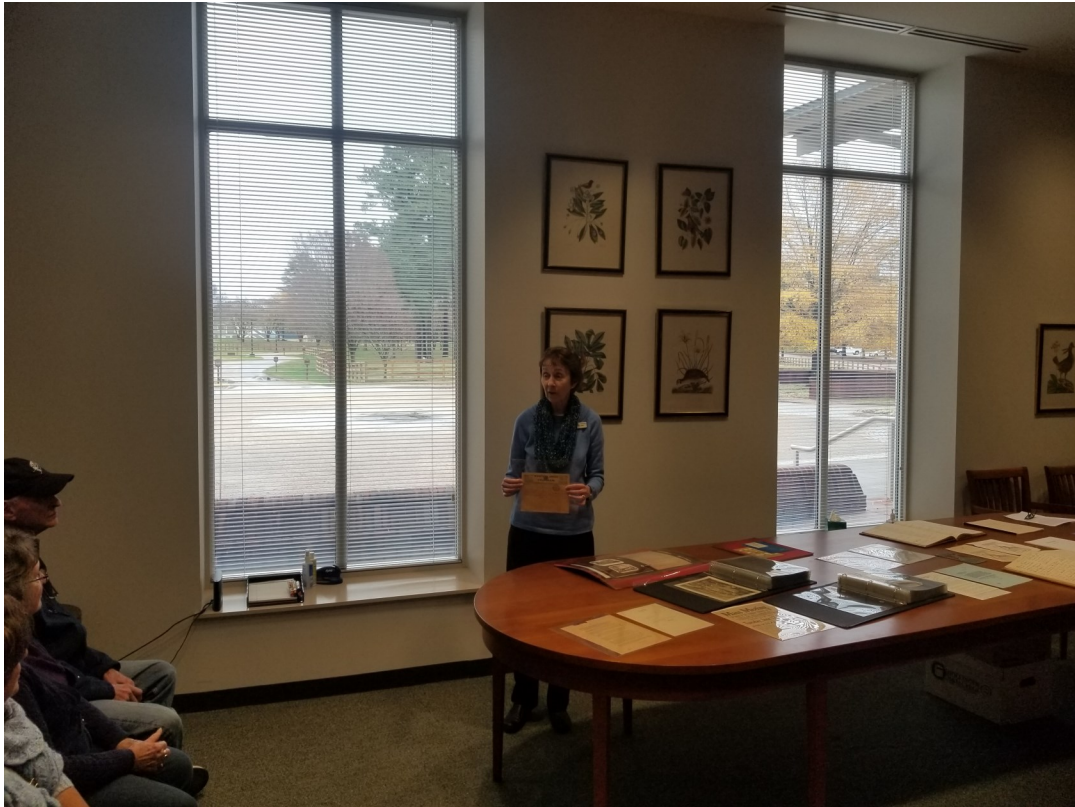
Photo by Brendan Sostak.



Tubes of rolled drawings relating to Colonial Williamsburg in situ in the attic storage area of Perry Dean Rogers Partners Architects.

Photo by Mark Freeman, 2022.

COLONIAL HERITAGE GROUP VISIT



Associate Archivist, Donna Cooke, shows key documents from the history of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

The library welcomed 30 members of the Colonial Heritage History Club on Wednesday November 30th to tour the facility and to see some of the library's treasures. Colonial Heritage is a Williamsburg community designed for active adults and their history club was started shortly after the first residents moved into the development. The club's mission is to offer residents an opportunity to explore local historical sites and attend presentations on a wide variety of topics.

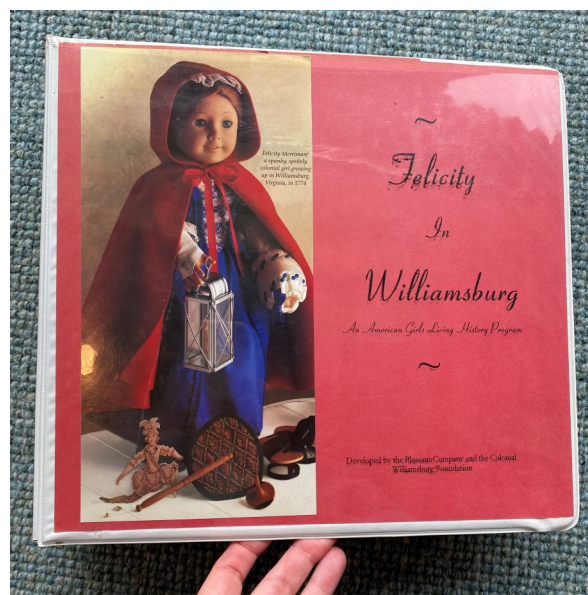
Attendees received an overview of the library's circulating and reference collection by Melissa Schutt and treated to behind-the-scenes tours of Corporate Archives by Donna Cooke, Media Collections by Tracey Gulden and Jenna Simpson, Special Collections by Doug Mayo, and Visual Resources by Marianne Martin.

Attendees saw treasures such as including home movies showing Bruton Parish Church and Black coachmen navigating the Historic Area in the 1950s, the Harvard Footage, which shows Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Area in the early Restoration began, and music from the 1950 Williamsburg Quintet album, composed of five local Black residents that performed around Colonial Williamsburg, the December 7, 1926 telegram from "David's Father" (John D. Rockefeller, Jr.) authorizing the purchase of the Ludwell Paradise House, the printing plate for the bags of meal ground at Robertson's Windmill, a printing of the Declaration of Independence in the Virginia Gazette dated July 20, 1776, a French translation of the Articles of Capitulation agreed to by Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1781, and some of the earliest conceptual drawings for the Historic Area and Merchants Square dating to the late 1920s. The group also learned how the work of library staff informs the interpretive programming seen in the Historic Area and exhibitions in the Art Museums.

NEW CORPORATE ARCHIVES ACCESSION: NOTEBOOK FOR FELICITY IN WILLIAMSBURG: AN AMERICAN GIRLS LIVING HISTORY PROGRAM

As 2022 drew to a close, Corporate Archives received a very delightful new accession indeed: a notebook documenting the Felicity in Williamsburg: An American Girls Living History Program from the late 1990s. The Felicity in Williamsburg program was a partnership between Colonial Williamsburg and Pleasant Company, creator of the American Girl dolls and books. The Felicity Merriman doll was the fourth doll in the American Girl series, released in 1991, featuring a girl from Williamsburg, Virginia, who lived in the year 1774. Accompanying her over the years were an array of books, clothes, furniture, and accessories that were very popular. This gave Colonial Williamsburg a prime opportunity to provide education and entertainment to young girls and their families in the town where “Felicity lived” and partnered with Pleasant Company to devise a two part program: a walking tour through the Historic Area that integrated the adventures of Felicity with the real-life people, places and events of Virginia’s 18th century capital city; and lessons with Miss Manderley, the department teacher in the books, where a character interpreter would portray the teacher and provide lessons to visiting girls in how to stitch a pincushion, perform an 18th century dance, and to properly serve tea. The notebook sent to Archives documents the program goals, tour, lesson outlines, in addition to program brochures and ephemera like buttons, and provides internal information about the various Miss Manderley interpreters and tour mechanics. There are house guides for the Everard House part of the tour, where visitors observed objects that would have existed in a house like Felicity’s. There are snapshot photos of visiting little girls with their Felicity dolls, in colonial costume, and interacting with the tour guides and Miss Manderley. There are several pieces of correspondence from girls thanking Miss Manderley and updating her on their sampler progress. One page has an extremely adorable clothespin doll of Felicity wearing her blue Holiday Gown made by a visitor and sent to one of the Miss Manderley interpreters. Many young girls grew up with Felicity and still have fond memories of her and of their visits to Williamsburg even though they are now in their 30s (and dare I say inching into their 40s?). Records like these are a wonderful reminder of a very special experience that many of them had at Colonial Williamsburg with Felicity in Williamsburg and we are pleased to add it to the other documentation that we hold about this program.

The collection will be available for research once it is fully processed and conserved.



Cover of Felicity in Williamsburg.

FELICITY IN WILLIAMSBURG

(continued)



Felicity in Williamsburg program guides.



Felicity buttons.

THE GEORGE & DOLORES FRENZEL PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION



Residence with door decorated in the Williamsburg style with a fruit fan of apples, oranges, pomegranates, and a pineapple and windows decorated with accents made of pine branches, pineapples, and pomegranates in neighborhood along West 11th Street in Brooklyn, NY.

During the month of December, the Rockefeller Library staff has been posting a series on our Facebook page about our favorite Colonial Williamsburg Christmas decorations. As the year concluded, we turned the focus of the series outward to look at the impact of Colonial Williamsburg's holiday decorating style upon other communities. Many repeat visitors who love to visit the Historic Area during the holiday season are inspired to take some of the decorating ideas and activities back to share with their hometowns. One such couple, George and Dolores Frenzel, spent many years accompanying Dolores's father on annual holiday trips to Williamsburg. After his passing, they decided to bring a Colonial Williamsburg Christmas to their block in Brooklyn, New York. They inaugurated a colonial themed holiday celebration in connection with the 350th anniversary of the Gravesend area where their neighborhood is located on West 11th Street.

Mr. Frenzel recalls in a letter "...that first year we went all out with our colonial soldiers, fife and drum, horse and carriage, professional colonial musicians playing on 18th century instruments, and practically everyone on costume." Each resident also decorated the exterior of their home with wreaths, garlands, and plaques made of the natural fruits, nuts, dried flowers, seed pods, berries, leaves, and evergreens used in many of Colonial Williamsburg's decorations. Several created wreaths with unique objects that related to the professions and interests of the occupants. In addition, the neighbors gathered for a special Yule Log Ceremony. The fifty-three families on the block found the experience to be uplifting as they all joined together to help each other with decorations and participate in the activities. All agreed to revive the event the following December, giving birth to an annual tradition.

THE GEORGE & DOLORES FRENZEL PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

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The door on a residence decorated in the Williamsburg style with a pine garland accented with clove studded oranges in neighborhood along West 11th Street in Brooklyn, NY.

FRENZEL COLLECTION

(continued)



Door wreath decorated in the Williamsburg style with seed pods, apples, limes, magnolia leaves, berries, and doves in neighborhood along West 11th Street in Brooklyn, NY.

The Williamsburg Christmas block in Brooklyn eventually received attention from the media and both the Brooklyn Spectator and the Virginia Gazette published articles about the neighborhood's holiday spirit. On Christmas Eve 1996, the Virginia Gazette featured an account written by George Frenzel himself that recounted the ways in which the event had grown beyond a celebration of the colonial history of the neighborhood to encompass "...being thankful for the heritage we have of freedom and liberty, and of reaching out to neighbors in support." He concluded "All felt they were in the spirit of our early settlers by admiring the things of nature that God had given us and of only taking what was needed and leaving the rest for future generations. And they felt that was the whole spirit of Williamsburg."

After fifteen years of overseeing their neighborhood's emulation of a Colonial Williamsburg Christmas, George and Dolores Frenzel had an opportunity to meet with a member of Colonial Williamsburg's landscape and floral design staff, Libbey Oliver, who referenced Brooklyn's Williamsburg Block in her publication Williamsburg Christmas. The couple developed a friendship with Oliver and sent her regular updates on their block's evolving decorations and customs through letters, news clippings, and photo albums. Earlier this year, Oliver donated the photographs and associated documentation to the Rockefeller Library where they will be preserved as the George and Dolores Frenzel Photograph Collection. Together, the items in the collection illustrate how Colonial Williamsburg's holiday decorations and celebrations reach far beyond the Historic Area to strengthen other communities and encourage exploration of colonial history and heritage.

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

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Please visit [Friends of John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library](#) for information on how you can help support the Library.