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1948–1962: Dudley W. Woodbridge (Acting Dean  
1948-1950)

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1962

# Burgess Day 1962: Tributes in Recognition of Dudley Warren Woodbridge

College of William & Mary

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## Repository Citation

College of William & Mary, "Burgess Day 1962: Tributes in Recognition of Dudley Warren Woodbridge" (1962). *1948–1962: Dudley W. Woodbridge (Acting Dean 1948-1950)*. 1.  
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*Dudley  
Warner  
Woodbridge*

*Tributes on the Occasion  
of Burgesses Day  
September 22, 1962*





*Dudley W. Woodbridge, now Dean Emeritus of the Marshall-Wythe School of Law of the College of William and Mary in Virginia, accepts a framed copy of the resolution of the Board of Visitors commending his long service, from the Rector of the Board, the Hon. Sterling Hutcheson, left.*

BURGESSES DAY 1962

*Tributes in Recognition of*  
**Dudley Warner Woodbridge**

*Held in the West Court of the  
Sir Christopher Wren Building  
on Saturday, September 22, 1962*

WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA

## BURGESSES DAY

Burgesses Day is held annually in the fall at the College of William and Mary in Virginia, with members of the General Assembly and executive officers of the Commonwealth as guests, in commemoration of the periods 1700-1704 and 1747-1754 when the House of Burgesses met in the Sir Christopher Wren building on the campus. The first period extended from the removal of the colonial government from Jamestown until completion of the new capitol building in Williamsburg. The second period occurred when the capitol burned and was being rebuilt.

## THE CHAIR OF GEORGE WYTHE

On December, 1779, the Board of Visitors of the College enacted a general "statute for the reform" of the curriculum, and among other things created the first professorship of law in America. Within the month, according to the faculty minutes preserved in the College archives, the Hon. George Wythe had assumed this professorship and was participating in the teaching program. The following month there enrolled under him as a student the young John Marshall, later to be the great Chief Justice of the United States.

The present School of Law of the College of William and Mary in Virginia takes its name from its first teacher and its most famous former student. The chair of George Wythe has been occupied by a long line of distinguished successors, both for the period 1779-1861 and for the period since 1922 when the College revived for the service of the contemporary profession its distinguished priority in legal education.

## THE PROGRAM

Welcome	Dr. Davis Y. Paschall <i>President, The College of William and Mary in Virginia</i>
Resolution	Sterling Hutcheson <i>Rector, Board of Visitors of the College</i>
Presentation	David O. Williams, Jr. <i>President, William and Mary Law School Association</i>
Artist	Tommy L. Groom, '63
Acceptance	Dr. Paschall

## *President Paschall*

We are honored on this occasion of Burgesses Day to welcome to the campus so many of Virginia's leaders of government. It is fitting that today's program should take place here, before the very building where the government of colonial Virginia met for two different periods in the eighteenth century, and where America's first classes in law were taught.

We are pleased to have with us, to share in the recognition of their colleague and ours, the deans of the other Virginia law schools — Dean Frederick D. G. Ribble of the University of Virginia, Dean William T. Muse of the University of Richmond, and Dean Charles P. Light, Jr., of Washington and Lee University.

It is now my happy privilege to present a distinguished jurist and alumnus, the Honorable Sterling Hutcheson, Rector of the Board of Visitors of the College of William and Mary in Virginia.





## *Judge Hutcheson*

President Paschall — Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are pleased and honored at having with us on this occasion such a numerous and distinguished group of alumni and friends of the College.

Permit me to add my welcome to that so well expressed by President Paschall.

One of the most significant priorities of the College of William and Mary in Virginia is its establishment of the first chair of law in the United States. This action was taken by the Board of Visitors on December 4, 1779, and thus established at William and Mary the second such professorship in the English-speaking world — only a quarter of a century after the first such chair was established at Oxford University and occupied by the renowned commentator on the common law, Sir William Blackstone.

William and Mary's chair of law was first occupied by an equally distinguished counselor, scholar and jurist — George Wythe. Mr. Wythe's distinguished public career is well known, but he deserves better recognition for the educational ideas he contributed to the new position of law and "police" which he took over a few weeks after the Board of Visitors' action in 1779. Mr. Wythe anticipated some of the best thinking of modern legal education when he introduced the case system of study—a teaching method which was not emulated elsewhere until late in the nineteenth century. He also used the moot court method of trial practice, and apparently drilled his devoted young students in the practical details of legislative procedure and parliamentary law. As one illustration of the influence of Chancellor Wythe upon the development of American law, I call attention to his carefully reasoned opinion in *Commonwealth v. Caton*. He there spelled out the principles enunciated more than twenty years later by his former pupil, the then Chief

Justice Marshall, in the celebrated case of *Marbury v. Madison*.

When George Wythe retired, after ten years of teaching, to become judge of the Chancery Court in Richmond, the law program at William and Mary was fortunate to find as his successor an equally distinguished leader in the law — St. George Tucker, an alumnus who was also a product of the famous English Inns of Court. St. George Tucker's intimate knowledge of the English common law ably equipped him to prepare the first authoritative American edition of Blackstone's *Commentaries*. His profound study of the American Constitution also inspired one of the first significant commentaries on our own legal system. And perhaps the most important contribution to the future of American law, especially in Virginia, was the fact that he founded a family which, throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, has produced a succession of great legal scholars, teachers, law makers, and practitioners.

It is particularly significant that William and Mary's pioneer chair in law contributed substantially to the development of legal education in Virginia — in that graduates of this early law school encouraged the beginning of legal studies at the University of Virginia and at Washington and Lee. Throughout its first eighty years of activity, in all, the program in law at William and Mary produced a remarkable roster of successful attorneys, political leaders, state and Federal officials and foreign service personnel. From Virginia to Louisiana and Texas, and to Kentucky and Missouri, graduates of the William and Mary law program influenced the building of a new nation.

One of the most grievous losses to this College in the Civil War of a century ago was the necessity of closing its doors on this remarkable law school. It was to be sixty years before the College was able to revive this important priority. The late Robert Morton Hughes, the Elder, of the Norfolk Bar, writing in the *Journal* of the American Bar Association of June, 1921, voiced the wishes of the friends of the College as follows: "Let us hope that some philanthropist

may yet re-endow this, the first law school in America, and restore it to the rank it held so long." One year later the embryo of this hope was conceived with the formal opening of the Marshall-Wythe School of Government and Citizenship. This year we rejoice to observe the fortieth anniversary of the rebirth of the law program, which bears the proud name of its first professor, George Wythe, and of John Marshall, one of its first students who became the legendary Chief Justice of the United States.

It is particularly fitting at this time that we should pay tribute to the leadership in legal education and in public service which is so conspicuously identified with the College of William and Mary. For this year marks the one hundred and seventy-fifth anniversary of the work of the Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia in the hot summer of 1787. It was on this very week — on September 17, 1787 — that the convention rose from its labor, and there began that momentous epoch in the history of human freedom that marked the debates and ultimate ratification of the document that an English statesman later called one of the greatest achievements of the mind of man. Virginia political philosophy and statecraft — very largely the product of eighteenth-century leaders educated at William and Mary — formed the basis of that historic document. It was Virginia's ratification, together with New York's, that gave practical assurance that the new government devised by this constitution would be able to launch our ship of destiny. It is especially appropriate that at this time we rededicate ourselves to the preservation of the constitution in its true meaning.

In its twentieth century era the Marshall-Wythe School of Law continues to inspire great teachers; to produce effective and worthy practitioners of a noble profession; and to earn for the College additional significant priorities in the field of legal education. Among the renowned scholars who have served on its faculty in recent years are such men as the late Professor Emeritus Charles P. Sherman, one of America's authorities on Roman law; Professor Frederick

K. Beutel, whose successive editions of Brannan's *Negotiable Instruments* are widely used by students of commercial law; Judge Oscar L. Shewmake, whose published address, "The Honorable George Wythe," will yet inspire the long-awaited biography of Wythe; and Blake T. Newton, Jr., presently the executive vice-president of the Institute of Life Insurance. And the College itself is proud to claim as a graduate of its liberal arts curriculum the distinguished dean of the University of Virginia Law School, Dr. Frederck D. G. Ribble.

Eight years ago in this same week — on September 25 — there was created the Chair of Taxation and the latest in the long list of priorities which endow this College, the offering of the Degree of Master of Law and Taxation. It is still the only one of its kind in this country today, designed to bring together into one comprehensive discipline the skills in economics, business administration, law and taxation that are essential to a thorough comprehension of the diverse facets of tax law.

On this occasion, and within the very walls where this significant contribution to American professional education was first made, the Board of Visitors of the College of William and Mary in Virginia is gratified to pay tribute to the latest in the distinguished line of successors to the chair of George Wythe.



BY THE BOARD OF VISITORS OF  
THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM  
AND MARY IN VIRGINIA

A RESOLUTION

*WHEREAS, We have, in our meeting held April 28, 1962, taken cognizance of the wish of Dr. Dudley Warner Woodbridge to retire as Dean of the Marshall-Wythe School of Law; and*

*WHEREAS, He has submitted his resignation, to become effective of August 31, 1962; and*

*WHEREAS, We wish to recognize and publicly to commend his good and faithful service to the College, commencing in 1927, and continuing until this date with distinction in the capacities of Dean of the Department of Jurisprudence, and since 1953, Dean of the Marshall-Wythe School of Law; and*

*WHEREAS, This long service has been characterized so notably by those attributes of mind and spirit that distinguished him as a great teacher; and*

*WHEREAS, His devotion to the law school, his enduring work with students, and his wise counsel shall be perpetuated in the William and Mary tradition;*

*NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That we accept with regret the resignation of Dr. Woodbridge as Dean, yet rejoice at his willingness to continue as a teacher in the law school;*

*AND, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That, in recognition of his outstanding contribution, our esteem for him, and respect for his faithful service, we do hereby designate him Dean Emeritus of the Marshall-Wythe School of Law.*

## *Mr. Williams*

It is my privilege to represent at this Burgesses Day event the William and Mary Law School Association, which desires to honor Dr. Dudley Warner Woodbridge upon the occasion of his designation as Dean Emeritus of the Marshall-Wythe School of Law of the College of William and Mary.

We of the Association regret that considerations of health have impelled Dr. Woodbridge to resign as dean of the law school. However, we are delighted that he will continue as a teacher in the law school, and that his wise and prudent counsel will be available to his successor.

Usually a man's biography is an uninteresting recitation of statistical data and should be avoided. But on this occasion, I believe it appropriate to set forth at least a summary of the background of Dr. Woodbridge. He was born in Bellaire, Ohio, February 24, 1896. After attending the University of Washington he received the Bachelor of Arts and the Doctor of Jurisprudence degrees from the University of Illinois. His education was interrupted by service in the medical corps of the A.E.F. in World War I. After completing his studies at Illinois, he came to William and Mary in 1927.

Dean Woodbridge has been named by *Life* magazine as one of America's eight "Great Teachers." He has served as a visiting professor at the University of Illinois, the University of Virginia, and the University of Florida. He is a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Order of the Coif, Omicron Delta Kappa, Phi Alpha Delta, and Tau Kappa Alpha. He is also a member of the American Society of International Law, the American Judicature Society, the American Law Institute, and the American and Virginia Bar Associations. He is the author of a number of significant law review articles that reflect both scholarship in, and practical application of, the law, and he has earned the gratitude of many members of the Virginia Bar by editing and publishing his

well known Virginia Bar Review notes. Dr. Woodbridge is married to the former Ruby Mendenhall, and they have four children.

But this brief summary of Dr. Woodbridge's distinguished background does not begin to tell of the place that he holds in the hearts and minds of his fellow men.

Possessed of a brilliant mind, Dr. Woodbridge is a recognized authority on property, contracts, torts, and negotiable instruments. As an outstanding teacher, he utilizes techniques which encourage student participation and original thinking and which develop in the student a deep insight into the nature of the judicial processes. But the Dean is not only revered as an eminent teacher, he is loved as a gentle, kind, and good man. Dr. Woodbridge has been an inspiration to everyone who has known him. As the years pass, we may not readily recall all the details and ramifications of the Rule in Wild's Case, or the Rule Against Perpetuities, but we will always remember his qualities of personality and character, which serve as a guide for our professional and personal lives. Truly, Dean Woodbridge's life is a continuing course in legal and personal ethics. He is the best of good men.

During the 35 years that Dr. Woodbridge has been associated with the law school, the school has continued to prosper. Thousands of volumes have been added to the library; the membership of the faculty has increased; the enrollment has reached an all time high; the program leading to the degree of Master of Law and Taxation has been initiated and firmly established; and an active and growing Law School Association has been formed. Many of these achievements, as well as others, are attributable either directly or indirectly to the untiring efforts of Dr. Woodbridge. He has been a sturdy link in the chain of great teachers who have been associated with the Law School.

The Association would like to add one more honor to the many which Dr. Woodbridge has received over the years. This particular honor takes the form of a portrait of

the Dean which was painted by Mr. Tommy L. Groom, a 3rd year student in the Law School. Mr. Groom, would you please stand?

*(Editor's Note: The portrait by Mr. Groom was unveiled)*

Dr. Paschall, in behalf of the William and Mary Law School Association, I would like to present to the College of William and Mary this portrait of our beloved friend, and teacher, Dr. Woodbridge.





*Dr. Paschall*

Mr. Williams, on behalf of the College of William and Mary in Virginia, I am happy to accept this portrait from the William and Mary Law School Association. I assure you that it will be treasured among the College's collection of portraits of its great teachers.





Virginia law deans and College officers honor Dean Emeritus Dudley W. Woodbridge at the Burgesses Day ceremonies. Left to right, Dean Charles P. Light, Jr., of Washington & Lee University; Mrs. Dudley Woodbridge; Dean Woodbridge; Dean Frederick D. G. Ribble of the University of Virginia; Dean William T. Muse of the University of Richmond; Acting Dean Joseph Curtis of the Marshall-Wythe School of Law.