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One Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary of the Foundation of The First Law School in America: Taught by Chancellor George Wythe, Signer of the Declaration of Independence and Member of the Federal Constitutional Convention and Preceptor of Marshall, Jefferson, Monroe and Clay

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ONE HUNDRED FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE FOUNDATION OF
The First Law School in America
TAUGHT BY
CHANCELLOR GEORGE WYTHE
Signer of the Declaration of Independence and Member
of the Federal Constitutional Convention and
Preceptor of Marshall, Jefferson,
Monroe and Clay

COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY IN VIRGINIA
WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA
"AND they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

—Daniel, 12:3
“The Seminary of Statesmen”
Re-established

The Marshall-Wythe School of Government and Citizenship of the College of William and Mary in Virginia was established January 14, 1922. This school was founded for the purpose of reviving special interest in those studies which gave the college some of its earlier priorities and which caused it to be called “The Seminary of Statesmen.” Its contributions in the field of statesmanship are believed to be without parallel in history. Prior to the war between the states it had, out of a student body rarely reaching a hundred in number, furnished to the country Presidents Jefferson, Monroe, and Tyler, and the great Chief Justice Marshall. It had trained—

16 Members of the Continental Congress
4 Signers of the Declaration of Independence
3 Presidents of the United States
4 Judges of the United States Supreme Court
27 Governors
29 United States Senators
4 Speakers of the United States House of Representatives
13 Cabinet Officers
22 Judges of the Supreme Court of Virginia
19 Ambassadors and Ministers
58 Congressmen
11 Generals
ITS OBJECTIVES

The Marshall-Wythe School of Government and Citizenship has three objectives:

First—To train every student who enters the college

(a) In the knowledge of the Constitution of the United States,

(b) In the knowledge of the governments, National, States, and Local, under which he lives,

(c) In the great benefits derived from government, and

(d) In the problems and responsibilities of citizenship.

These studies are required of ALL students in their freshman and sophomore years.

Second—To train for leadership in government those advanced students who have shown special aptitude in the field of governmental science. These students are taught the constitutional history of the United States and of England, a comparison of the governments of the world, international relations, political parties, current problems of government and citizenship, parliamentary law and debate.

Third—To train lawyers not only for the practice of their profession, but for governmental leadership. This was the conception of Chancellor Wythe, first law professor in this institution and
the first in America. History records that he regularly assembled his law students in the Old Capitol, or House of Burgesses, and presided over their moot parliaments in which public questions were discussed by the students and where they were trained in parliamentary procedure and debate. Wythe’s idea was abundantly justified by results. He was the preceptor of Marshall, Jefferson, Monroe, and Clay, and of a large number of other early American statesmen.

From the ranks of the lawyers must be taken a large proportion of the leaders in political life, especially in the field of legislation. The school in its department of jurisprudence will, therefore, seek not only to train lawyers, but will send forth its graduates well instructed in the fundamental principles of our government, with the will and the ability to expound those principles and to defend them against attack. It will be the ideal and purpose of this school to develop in its students statesmanlike vision and to train them to be the guardians and defenders of the ideals which are essential to the preservation of the liberties of the people and the fundamental principles of justice and equity.

Endowment

It is our purpose ultimately to seek an endowment of $1,000,000 for the Marshall-Wythe School of Government and Citizenship.

The first substantial contribution to this endowment came through the generosity of the late James Goold Cutler, who, in 1926, donated securities
approximating in value $100,000.00. At least $400,000.00 additional is immediately needed to put the work of the school on a firm basis. The school should confidently look forward to an ultimate endowment of $1,000,000.00.

It is in the accomplishment of our third objective that additional endowment is chiefly needed. The work to be done in this department is in no sense a mere duplication of the work done in the scores of law schools in this country.

1929—The Sesqui-Centennial of America's First Law School

In 1779, upon the initiative of Thomas Jefferson, then Governor of Virginia, living at Williamsburg, and serving as a member of the Board of Visitors of the College, America’s first law school was established with Chancellor George Wythe as its first professor, with the title of "Professor of Law and Police." "Police" had the general meaning of the Greek "politeia"—public administration.

During this sesqui-centennial year of the establishment of the famous school, an effort is being made to raise the sum of $400,000.00 as an additional endowment for the law library and four professorships. It is hoped that an arrangement may be made with those responsible for the Williamsburg Restoration by which a part of the Restored Capitol, or House of Burgesses, may be secured for the use of this school and by which some of the Restored Colonial residences may be leased as homes for the Professors of the Endowed School.
It would be most appropriate if the use of some part of the restored House of Burgesses could be secured for classrooms for this School, as it was in this building that George Wythe taught as the first professor of Law in America.

THREE POSSIBLE PLANS

The College hopes to secure the initial additional endowment of $400,000.00 by one or all of the following plans:

(1) To obtain this entire initial sum of $400,000.00 (or the ultimate sum of $1,000,000) from a benefactor who would be willing to re-establish the famous law school to be named in his honor (just as the Harvard School of Business Administration is named in honor of George F. Baker, its founder). The four chairs could then be named for four distinguished men designated by the founder; or

(2) To obtain $100,000.00 from each of four benefactors for the founding of four professorships to be named as the donors may designate; or

(3) To obtain contributions amounting to $10,000.00 each to establish what will be known as a lectureship, the interest on the sum to be applied in part payment of professors’ salaries, and for the teaching of specific subjects—the donor to name the lectureship. To illustrate: The ______ Lecture-ship on Constitutional Law, The ______ Lecture-ship on International Relations, The ______ Lecture-ship on Corporations, The ______ Lecture-ship
on Contracts, The _______ Lectureship on English Constitutional History, The _______ Lectureship on Roman Law, The _______ Lectureship on Historical Jurisprudence, etc.

The initial endowment would further provide for other expenses incident to the conduct of the school.

**Views of the Late Judge Parker**

The late Judge Alton B. Parker in his notable speech on the occasion of the establishment of the Marshall-Wythe School in 1922 said:

"To inculcate sane views of our form of government is conceded to be an important function of education. The intelligent exercise of American citizenship, as a patriotic duty, must be regarded as a subject of major importance in our colleges.

"The establishment of such a school at the ancient College of William and Mary, founded in 1693, at Williamsburg, Virginia, is contemplated. No better site could be selected than this, midway between Jamestown and Yorktown, where many stirring scenes of our colonial and revolutionary drama were staged. The very atmosphere is an education in the science of government—like a laboratory to physical science.

"No college has higher claims upon the nation. She educated Thomas Jefferson, who drew the Declaration; Edmund Randolph, the able coadjutor of Madison in the Federal Convention, and James Monroe, who gave us the Monroe Doctrine.

"Founded in 1779 and continuing to the Civil
War, William and Mary's Law School was the oldest in this country. Its sole predecessor in the Anglo-Saxon world was the Vinerian Chair at Oxford, where Sir William Blackstone lectured. Chief Justice Marshall, expounder of the Constitution, was a law student at William and Mary, under George Wythe, Signer of the Declaration, and father of legal instruction in America.

"This law school educated four justices of the United States Supreme Court, more than half of the judges of Virginia Court of Appeals, and countless incumbents of the nisi prius courts, both State and Federal.

"The great need of present-day education is to train the coming generation in the conception of the duties of citizenship as well as its privileges. The treatment for anarchy should be prophylactic rather than curative. This school is intended, not for expectant lawyers alone, but for expectant citizens; though the full course will have in view an adequate preparation for public life in legislative, educational and diplomatic lines, as well as legal."

Contributions for endowment will be received through Dr. W. A. R. Goodwin, Director of the Endowment Campaign of the College, Williamsburg, Virginia.

J. A. C. Chandler, President, College of William and Mary in Virginia, Williamsburg, Virginia.

Opinions

GEORGE WASHINGTON, who was appointed surveyor by the College in 1749, and who was its Chancellor 1788-1799, said: "The seat of literature at Williamsburg has ever, in my view, been an object of veneration. As an institution important for its communication of useful learning and conducive to the true principles of national liberty, you may be assured that it shall receive every encouragement and benefaction in my power toward its re-establishment."

THOMAS JEFFERSON, a graduate of the College and a member of its Board of Visitors, wrote: "Dear Sir—I cannot but approve your idea of sending your eldest son, destined for the Law, to Williamsburg ... the pride of the institution is Mr. Wythe, one of the Chancellors of the State and Professor of Law in the College. He is one of the greatest men of the age, having held without competition the first place at the Bar of our General Court for 25 years, and always distinguished by the most spotless virtue. He gives lectures regularly, and holds Moot Courts and Parliaments wherein he presides, and the young men debate regularly in Law and Legislation, learn the rules of Parliamentary Proceeding and acquire the habit of public speaking. Williamsburg is a remarkably healthy situation, reasonably cheap, and affords very genteel society.

JUDGE BEVERLY TUCKER, Professor of Law in the College in 1845, addressing his law students said: "Next after that truth on which the eternal welfare of man depends, what study can be so important to the youth of this republic as that of our own institutions? What work of man deserves so much to engage your attention as those charters in which your rights and your duties are alike defined? What philosophy so worthy of your profoundest thoughts as the philosophy of government? ... The function of a sovereign citizen is an affair not of right alone but of duty also; and he who presumes to act in that exalted character, far from being subject to no law but his own will, no reason but his own caprice, is exercising a high duty to which he is called by God Himself, whose unworthy instrument he is, in his great work—the moral government of man."

DR. HERBERT B. ADAMS, late professor of history at Johns Hopkins University, said: "Virginia is called the mother of presidents, but the
United States Senator Fess said: "It was in the atmosphere of this town and college where the spirit of liberty was so fanned into a consuming flame that caught up all the country. Here was the famous Raleigh Tavern, immortalized by the direction of such men as Patrick Henry, who frequently led the conversations which grew into heated debates. It was here while Jefferson was attending college he went to the crowded courthouse to hear, if possible, for the first time the prophet of the Revolution. Although he could not get closer than the door, he was so stirred that he left the crowd with the observation, 'Gracious God, what an orator.' Could some power repeat today the wonderful utterances and revive the uncontrolled feelings at various times heard and felt within the range of this historic seat of learning we would live over again the emotions which stirred the Colonies into final resistance in the war for American independence, which declaration of principles was written by a son of William and Mary. We would see anew the workings of a stupendous brain, which gave to the world her greatest modern judicial mind, which early in our national existence became the strong arm of nationality. In fact, a recital of the power and influence of this seat of learning would go far to write the growth and early development of the great Republic."

The late President Harding said: "Its genius for drawing close to the spirit of the times, for always contributing greatly to the leadership of great affairs, has been the abiding glory of William and Mary. The spirit of human liberty—of that liberty that dares to build, to experiment, to found new institutes of association and conduct—has always thrived here. Here, I think we may safely infer, where the campus was the common ground between the old State House and the college structures, is to be found the oldest inspiration of the State university system which has done so much for liberal and truly democratic education. Here came Jefferson, author of the immortal Declaration, to expand a medieval college into a modern university on lines as broad as his own concept of human rights; here he found an atmosphere in which to develop those noble sentiments of mankind's fraternity which enabled him, years after writing our own Declaration of Independence, to become one of the moral inspirations and intellectual counsellors of the French Revolution. Here Washington was granted a degree, and here he served as chancellor. From this institution were graduated three Presidents—Jefferson, Monroe and Tyler. The great lawgiver of the young Republic, John Marshall, was another alumnus; and so was George Wythe, signer of the Declaration and preceptor to Marshall and Jefferson."
The Students' Conception of Citizenship

WILLIAM AND MARY CITIZENSHIP CREED AS ADOPTED BY THE STUDENTS BY RESOLUTION OF 1922

We, the members of the classes in Virginia Government and Citizenship of the Marshall-Wythe School of Government and Citizenship, of the College of William and Mary, at Williamsburg, Va., after a series of open discussions in the classroom, and after obtaining suggestions from leading public men and scholars in this State and other States, do declare that without undertaking here to enumerate those private virtues and those social and religious duties which enter into the making of a good citizen, the following is a summary of our conception of our duties as citizens to the governments under which we live.

MY DUTIES AS A CITIZEN

I—To acquaint myself with those fundamental principles embodied in our constitutions and laws which experience has shown are essential to the preservation of our liberties and the promotion of good government, and to defend those principles against all attacks.

II—To inform myself on all public issues, and on the character, record and platform of all candidates for office, and to exert actively my influence in favor of men and measures in which I believe.

III—To vote in every election, primary and general, never using my vote for personal or private ends, but only for the public good, placing the welfare of my country above that of my party, if the interests of the two should ever conflict.

IV—To connect myself with the political party which most nearly represents my views on public questions, and to exert my influence
within the party to bring about the nomination of good men for office and the endorsement of measures for the public weal.

V—To have the courage to perform my duties as a citizen regardless of the effect upon me financially or socially, remembering that a cowardly citizen is as useless to this country in time of peace as a cowardly soldier is in time of war.

VI—To stand for honest election laws impartially administered.

VII—To obey all laws whether I deem them wise or not, and to uphold the officers in the enforcement of the law.

VIII—To make full and honest returns of all my property and income for taxation.

IX—To be ever ready to serve my country in war, and in peace, especially in such inconspicuous capacities as juror and election official.

X—To acquaint myself with the functions of the various departments of my government and to spread the knowledge of the same among my fellow citizens in order that they may enjoy to the fullest extent the advantages offered by the government, and may more fully recognize the government as a means of service to the people.

XI—To encourage good men to enter public service and remain therein by commending the faithful performance of their duties and by refraining from criticism except such as is founded on a knowledge of facts.

XII—To seek to promote good feeling between all groups of my fellow citizens and to resist as inimical to public welfare all partisan efforts to excite race, religious, class and sectional prejudice.

XIII—Not to think alone of what my government can do for me but more about what I can do for it.

XIV—To inform myself with respect to the problems which confront my country in its foreign relations, and to support policies which safeguard its legitimate interests abroad and which recognize the responsibilities of the United States as a member of international society.