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## The Third Annual George Wythe Lecture (Program)

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# The Third Annual George Wythe Lecture

Delivered By  
Professor William W. Van Alstyne



*Sponsored by The Marshall-Wythe School of Law*

January 19, 1979  
8:30 p.m.

Moot Court Room  
Marshall Wythe School of Law

## The Third Annual George Wythe Lecture

The George Wythe Lecture series was begun in the 1976-77 academic year to honor the 250th anniversary of the birth of George Wythe, and to provide a forum for occasional topics of current interest to the legal profession.

The first George Wythe lecturer was Francis A. Allen, the Edson R. Sunderland Professor of Law at the University of Michigan. Professor Allen's Wythe Lecture, entitled "The Prospects of University Law Training," was reprinted in three national publications including the AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION JOURNAL and the JOURNAL OF LEGAL EDUCATION.

The second lecturer was the Honorable Paul C. Reardon, retired Associate Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts and principal author of the renowned report on "Fair Trial - Free Press" prepared by a joint commission of the American Bar Association and the American Newspaper Publishers Association.

This year's lecturer William W. Van Alstyne, Perkins Professor at Duke University School of Law, will speak on "The First Amendment and the Predicaments of the Press." Professor Van Alstyne, is a much sought-after lecturer - particularly on topics related to current constitutional questions. He has been a frequent guest on the television show "The Advocates."

Professor Van Alstyne taught at Ohio State law school before joining the Duke faculty in 1965. He is past president of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and has served on the National Board of Directors of the American Civil Liberties Union. A graduate of the University of Southern California, Professor Van Alstyne received an LL.B. from Stanford University and a Certificate in International Law from the Hague Academy. Professor Van Alstyne was a visiting Professor at William and Mary during the fall semester of 1977.

## George Wythe

GEORGE WYTHE was born in 1726 and attended the College of William and Mary. By 1760 he had established a regular habit of directing studies of young men aspiring to the bar. He served as a

burgess for the College in the colonial assembly, was a delegate to the Continental Congress and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Upon the reorganization of the College curriculum in 1779 he became the first occupant of the chair of law and police, and thus the first professor of law in the United States. He taught from 1779 to 1791, before moving to Richmond to become presiding judge to the High Court of Chancery, where he issued a famous dictum on judicial review in *Commonwealth v. Catron*, 4 Call (8 Va.) 5 (1972).

## The Marshall-Wythe School of Law

Created in 1779 by the Board of Visitors at the urging of Thomas Jefferson, the chair of law at William and Mary was the first established in the United States. The first occupant of the chair was George Wythe, in whose offices studied Thomas Jefferson, John Marshall, James Monroe, and Henry Clay. Wythe, who was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a member of the Federal Constitutional Convention, became a powerful force in the development of American legal education. During the decade of his professorship, he developed a comprehensive course of law study which emphasized the acquisition of practical skills in such areas as legislative drafting and oral advocacy.

The growth of the law school at William and Mary was abruptly halted by the beginning of the War Between the States. The commencement of military campaigns on the Virginia Peninsula compelled the College to close its doors. It would be another sixty years before the historic priority in law could be revived in a modern program that is now more than a half century old.

Today, the Marshall-Wythe School of Law enrolls 450 students from all regions of the nation. Over 2,400 applications for 150 spaces in the entering class were received last year. As a state supported institution, the Law School maintains a student body composed of 70% Virginians and 30% non-Virginians. The legal education offered, however, is national in scope, since Marshall-Wythe graduates are engaged in the practice of law throughout the United States.

A new law building is under construction adjacent to the National Center's headquarters building and is expected to be completed by Spring 1980.