



THE JAMES MONROE MUSEUM

908 Charles Street, Fredericksburg, VA 22401 540-654-1043 www.jamesmonroemuseum.org
An historic property administered by the University of Mary Washington

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Regents, James Monroe Museum
FROM: Scott Harris, Director, James Monroe Museum
DATE: April 13, 2015
RE: Director's Report

I am pleased to present the following report on the activities of the James Monroe Museum since the last meeting of the Regents.

Public Programs and Outreach

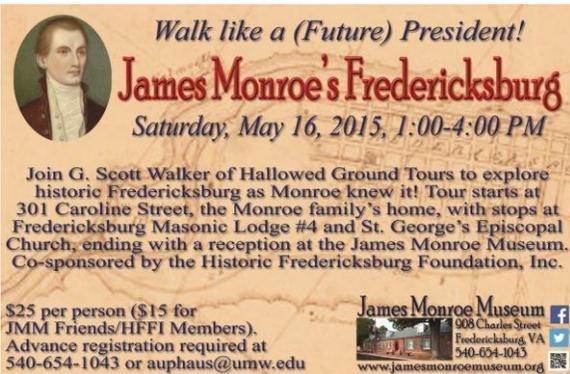
The Museum's public programs continued to attract significant audiences during the fall and winter of 2014 and into the spring of 2015. The 27th Annual James Monroe Lecture, *The Evil Necessity: British Naval Impressment in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*, was delivered by Dr. Denver Brunzman, Associate Professor of History at George Washington University. December saw the perennial holiday favorites *Deck the Halls* and *A Monroe Christmas*. In January the Museum showcased its recently-conserved silver collection during a *Chocolate and Silver* reception that featured hot chocolate from a period recipe. Collaborations with other UMW departments sponsored two winter programs. The Third Annual Black History Month Lecture, *The Enslaved Community of James Monroe*, by Loudoun County historians Lori Kimball and Wynne Saffer, described ongoing research into the enslaved population of Monroe's estate Oak Hill. The Third Annual Black History Month Lecture, *Never Caught: The President's Runaway Slave Woman*, by Dr. Erica Dunbar, Associate Professor of Black American Studies and History at the University of



Delaware, told the story of Ona Judge Staines, the African American woman who escaped slavery from the household of George and Martha Washington. [Dr. Dunbar endeared herself to the audience when she graciously delivered an engaging lecture despite an unexpected breakdown in audiovisual support.]

Marketing and Promotion

Efforts to promote the Museum via social media increased through a daily series of “On This Date” posts on Facebook and Twitter, and the addition of Instagram as a venue. Paid advertisements were placed in targeted publications, including *Recreation News* (DC Metro area), the *Free Lance-Star* and *Front Porch* (both Fredericksburg region), and the Riverside Dinner Theatre (Fredericksburg).



Walk like a (Future) President!
James Monroe's Fredericksburg
Saturday, May 16, 2015, 1:00-4:00 PM

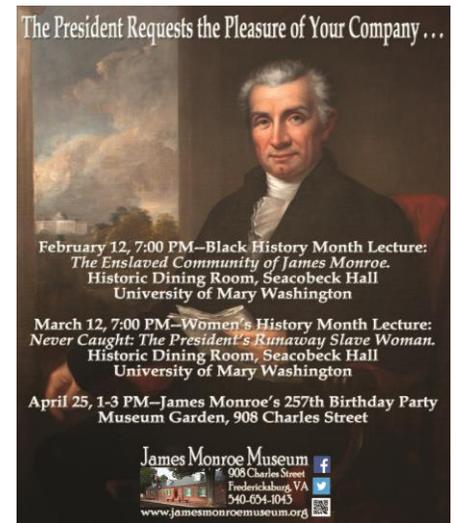
Join G. Scott Walker of Hallowed Ground Tours to explore historic Fredericksburg as Monroe knew it! Tour starts at 301 Caroline Street, the Monroe family's home, with stops at Fredericksburg Masonic Lodge #4 and St. George's Episcopal Church, ending with a reception at the James Monroe Museum. Co-sponsored by the Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc.

\$25 per person (\$15 for JMM Friends/HFFI Members). Advance registration required at 540-654-1043 or auphaus@umw.edu

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The Museum's main brochure and 2015 program schedule are distributed at three Virginia Welcome Centers along the I-95 corridor and at 70 certified tourist information centers throughout the Commonwealth.

Development of new Museum Store products continued, with introduction of several new books, toys, and craft items. Work has also begun on publication of a children's book based on a family's visit to the Museum, to be ready later this year.



The President Requests the Pleasure of Your Company...

February 12, 7:00 PM—Black History Month Lecture:
The Enslaved Community of James Monroe.
Historic Dining Room, Seacobeck Hall
University of Mary Washington

March 12, 7:00 PM—Women's History Month Lecture:
Never Caught: The President's Runaway Slave Woman.
Historic Dining Room, Seacobeck Hall
University of Mary Washington

April 25, 1-3 PM—James Monroe's 257th Birthday Party
Museum Garden, 908 Charles Street

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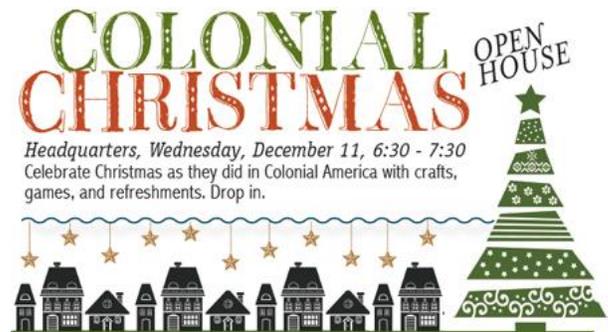


The Museum took part in two promotional events locally in December: the Central Rappahannock Regional Library's *Colonial Christmas* and a homeschool event at the Riverside Dinner Theatre. I spoke to the Colonel Fielding Lewis Chapter, Virginia Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, in November, and the Fredericksburg chapter of the National Society of Active and Retired Federal Employees in February. Also in February, I was Col. Art Buswell's “understudy” for a talk at the Lane's Mill Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Centreville, Virginia (Col. Buswell's daughter is a member).



CENTREVILLE, VIRGINIA

Lane's Mill Chapter DAR
Daughters of the American Revolution®



COLONIAL CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE

Headquarters, Wednesday, December 11, 6:30 - 7:30
Celebrate Christmas as they did in Colonial America with crafts, games, and refreshments. Drop in.

Future Project: Monroe Birthplace Timeline Walk

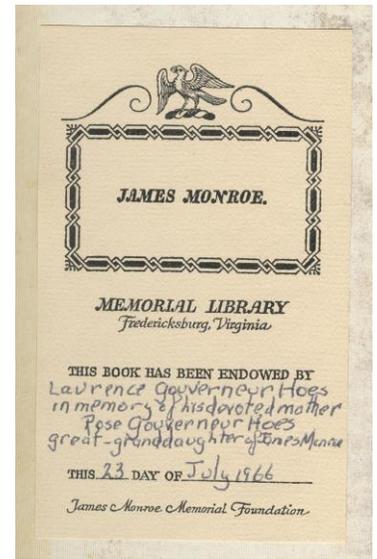
In late February I met with Glenn Stach, Preservation Landscape Architect with Hill Studio, PC. Mr. Stach's firm is the prime consultant for the James Monroe Birthplace Timeline Walk project under development by Westmoreland County. Mr. Stach asked the Museum to assist with writing text for interpretive markers featured in the Timeline Walk. Additionally, pylons at various locations on the site will display QR (Quick Response) codes that will allow visitors to access additional interpretive information from the Museum's website via smart phones and tablets. This effort will involve no direct expenditure of funds by the Museum, and relatively little investment of staff time, while offering a new promotional opportunity.

Artifacts and Archives

Conservation. In addition to overseeing ongoing conservation of the Museum's silver pieces, Curator Jarod Kearney obtained quotes from several book and manuscript conservators to resume restoration of books in the Museum's collection. Funding for this endeavor comes from the James Monroe Memorial Foundation via the Bookplate Endowment Program that was discussed at the October, 2014 meeting of the Board of Regents.

Outgoing Loan. The Valentine Museum in Richmond, Virginia has asked to borrow a Greek textbook belonging to Maria Monroe for a special exhibit from May, 2015 to February, 2016. Consideration of this loan is on the agenda for the April 16 meeting of the Board of Regents.

Donation. Mrs. Anne Silver donated a signet ring associated with the Monroe family and a portrait of James Monroe (a copy of the Rembrandt Peale image), painted by Fredericksburg artist Keith Pitzer, ca. 1950. Consideration of this donation is on the agenda for the April 16 meeting of the Board of Regents.



Accession of Purchased Artifact. In November, 2014 the Museum was contacted by Michael Meyer, a fine arts dealer in Yonkers, New York, concerning two portraits of unidentified persons that he had bought at auction. Mr. Meyer believed that the paintings depicted James and Elizabeth Monroe, and he brought them to the Museum for examination.



The female portrait bears little resemblance to known images of Elizabeth Monroe, and displays hallmarks of the style of William Jennys (1774-1859), an American primitive portrait painter who was active from about 1790 to 1810. He traveled throughout New England seeking commissions in rural areas and small towns, and there is no evidence that he ever had any contact with the Monroe family. Based on these factors, the Museum declined to consider the painting.

Museum staff consulted a variety of experts to determine whether the male portrait is indeed Monroe, and whether it is a work of Monroe's era or one from a later time period. Staff talked to former JMM director John Pearce and former curators Meghan Budinger, Lee Langston-Harrison, and David Voelkel, all of whom agreed that the subject is James Monroe. The painting was also analyzed by curatorial and conservation staff of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, who confirmed it as a product of Monroe's era. Based on these findings and other research, the museum is confident that the painting is a previously unknown portrait of James Monroe, done ca. 1821. The Museum's research regarding the portrait's artist, and the circumstances that caused it to be made, continues.

Because of a timetable set by the seller, purchase of the portrait took place before the April meetings of the Board of Regents and the UMW Board of Visitors. Given that this was an extraordinary situation, UMW President Richard Hurley authorized me to negotiate the purchase and then bring a recommendation for accessioning the object into the Museum's collection to the two boards at their April meetings. In early March the Museum purchased the Monroe portrait for \$16,000. Private funds, maintained by the UMW Foundation, were used for the purchase.

The Board of Regents bylaws provide for review and comment on artifact accessions and deaccessions by the Regents before submission to the Board of Visitors. Consideration of accessioning the purchased portrait into the Museum's collection is on the agenda for the April 16 meeting of the Board of Regents. Following action by the Regents, the matter will be submitted to the Board of Visitors for approval.

Digital Database of Monroe Archives

The Museum is exploring a joint project with the Papers of James Monroe, Ash Lawn-Highland, and the Earl Gregg Swem Library at the College of William and Mary to create a public database of Monroe-related archival collections. Discussions are at a very preliminary stage, but the basic intent is to make both images and searchable transcriptions of selected documents available online. Collections would ultimately include not only those of the project partners but also those of other institutions, such as the Library of Congress and National Archives. In a separate but related matter, I met in March with personnel from the Miller Center at the University of Virginia to discuss the Museum's possible affiliation with *Connecting Presidential Collections* initiative, a website maintained by the Miller Center that collaborates with partners to create a place for users to search across presidential collections. Updates will be provided to the Board of Regents on these initiatives as they evolve.

Connecting Presidential Collections

Connecting Presidential Collections (CPC) is a free centralized site for searching across presidential collections. It is funded by the IMLS and U.Va.'s Miller Center.

Browse by President



More presidents coming soon!

Help us make CPC the best it can be... take the survey!

What is CPC?
Connecting Presidential Collections is a website that collaborates with partners to create a place for users to search across presidential collections.

Can my organization submit a collection and become a partner?
Yes! If you work with an organization that has a collection related to the presidency, contact us!

[READ MORE →](#)

Meet our Partners








[MORE ABOUT OUR PARTNERS →](#)

Financial Information

NOTE: Figures below reflect FY 2015 activity through the end of March, 2015.

- Museum visitation is 42.27% ahead of FY 2014 (5,405 visitors compared to 3,799).
- Admissions (including block tickets) are up 18.05% (\$10,766 versus \$9,120).
- Museum Store sales increased 31.32% (\$6,285 versus \$4,786).
- Total revenue increased 24.11% (\$17,495 versus \$14,096).
- Membership dues and contributions to the Friends of the James Monroe Museum totaled \$11,857 as of April 8, 2015. While the figure is roughly 30% behind FY 2014, this is likely a timing issue, as a large number of renewals are pending. The overall trend in Friends support over the past five years has been upward, and is expected to remain so.

