

Carlyle

Connection

"It's a fine beginning"

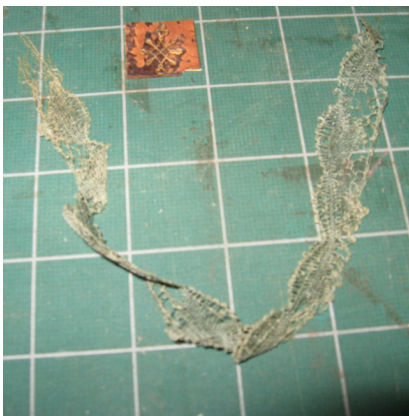


Preserving Pages: A Writer's Peek Inside a Book Restorer's Workshop

Jean Marie Ward

Do you ever think about what happens to your books after you're gone? I mean long gone, as in two-hundred-years-after-your-grandkids gone? Recently, I had a chance to find out. As a volunteer guide at the Carlyle House in Alexandria, Virginia, I was invited to tour the workshop of Thomas Albro, the restorer working on John Carlyle's family bible.

Like many of his contemporaries, Carlyle used blank pages in his family bible, a massive sixteen-by-ten inch tome published in London in 1759, to record the births and deaths of his two wives and eleven children. In the two hundred sixty years since, the book was rode hard and (all too literally) put away wet. The bible had it easier following the conversion of the house to a living museum in 1976. It rested in a specially constructed display case, its pages carefully turned by cotton-gloved curators on a schedule designed with preservation in mind. Despite the staff's best efforts, however, by 2010 the pages had browned to the point where it was hard to read the text, much less the family notes scattered throughout. The binding—the bible's second—was crumbling, to say nothing of the debris trapped between the pages.



Green lace found trapped in the pages of the Bible.

What kind of debris? According to Mr. Albro, they ran the usual gamut of the good (a wisp of green lace used as a bookmark, minute copper sequins and



Pages of the Bible undergoing conservation alongside embossing tools used to recreate the original binding of the Bible.

thread from the sleeve of an 18th century gown, the book's original label stamped with the words "Holy Bible With Cuts"), the bad (grease, possibly from candle drippings) and the ugly (mold, mildew and rat droppings). On the plus side, there wasn't any bacon.

That's right, bacon might've been an issue. Eighteenth century worthies apparently brought their bibles to the breakfast table. In addition to breadcrumbs and coffee and tea stains, books from the 1700s typically preserve bits of bacon. "Sometimes you find a whole strip of bacon," Mr. Albro said, "almost as if they used it as a bookmark."

Carlyle's bible was spared that indignity. But it was in desperate need of cleaning, conserving and restoring. Each conservation and bookbinding job is different, but



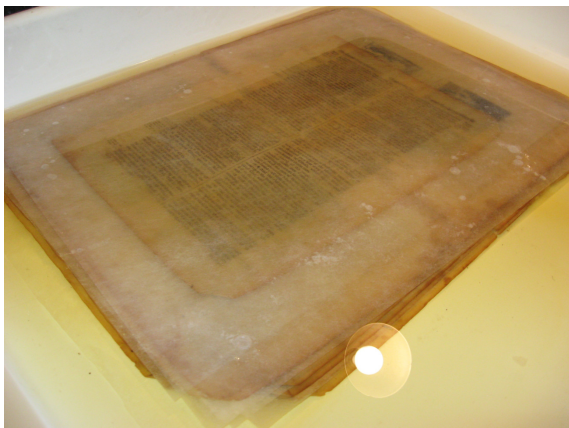


Conservator Tom Albro, Site Administrator Sarah Coster and Friends Board Member Carole Smith examine the Bible in Tom's studio

Mr. Albro's twenty-five years of experience restoring books at the Library of Congress and his extensive work as an independent consultant equipped him for everything the Carlyle bible had to offer.

First, he removed the binding and prepped the individual pages for washing. Dunking old paper in water may seem like the last thing you want to do with it, but according to Mr. Albro, "Paper comes from water. It's an important component of the whole."

Paper made from rags, like that used in the Carlyle bible, is also sturdier than the wood pulp paper used today. It takes to water very well, as long



Pages of John Carlyle's Bible soaking in water.

as you take the correct precautions, such as placing each page on a larger sheet of nonwoven polyester (much like the polyester interfacing used by home sewers) for support. Several sheets can be washed at once. The number depends on the size of the wash tub and the number of drying racks available. (Mr. Albro's workshop boasts a rolling "baker's rack" of roughly twenty stacked screens.)

Several pages from the Carlyle bible were soaking in a basin of filtered water when my tour arrived. It reminded



Two pages of the Bible, one before sun bleaching and one after.

me of brewing tea. After an hour in the tub, the water was about the same color, too. Mr. Albro gently pressed the pages to circulate the grime and then lifted the stack of paper and polyester sheets out of the water onto an angled slab of glass or acrylic to drain. While they were draining, he prepped a sizing solution, which acts as a preservative.

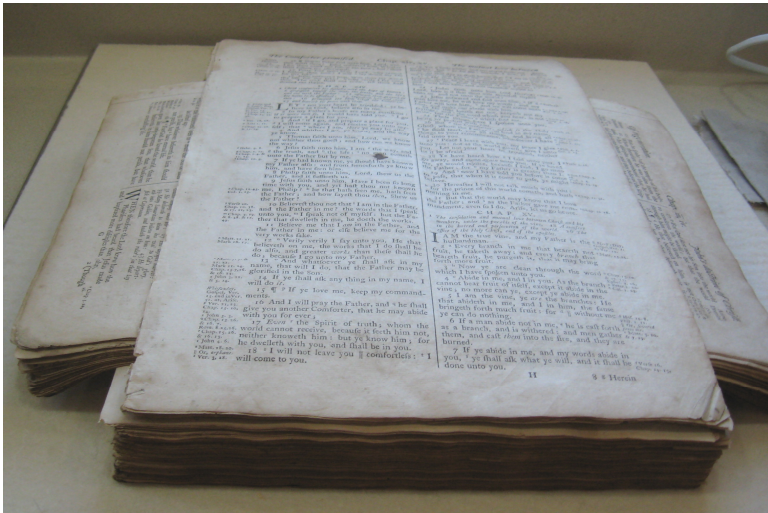
"You can't write or print on paper without sizing," he said. "The surface isn't smooth enough to take the ink."

The mixture he favored for this project features methyl cellulose, which, despite its chemical-sounding name, is a benign compound used in everything from toothpaste to liquid tears. It also helps inhibit the growth of bacteria, an important consideration when you're conserving a book for the ages.

Following sizing and drying, many of the pages with engraved illustrations (the so-called "cuts"—an abbreviation for wood-cuts—mentioned on the bible's label) were allowed to bleach in the sun. The effect of a few hours of sun exposure was amazing. The washed pages were the color of old ivory. The bleached ones looked like fresh cream.

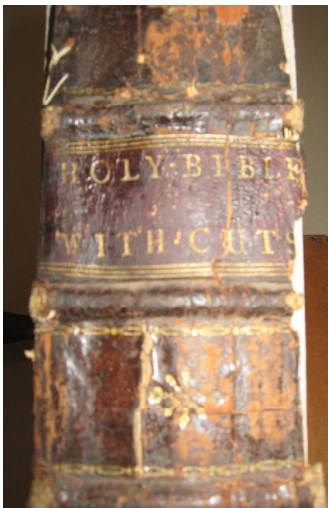
Not all the illustrated pages received this treatment, however. Although printers ink is impervious to sunlight, the ink used by Mr. Carlyle and his

granddaughters to make their notations is not. It would fade as quickly as a watercolor—not an option when those notes are among the reasons for preserving this particular book.



Pages of John Carlyle's Bible stacked in Tom Albro's lab.

But dirt and grime weren't the bible's only problems. Many of the pages were crumpled and torn. The washing and sizing process takes care of unwanted folds. Handmade Japanese paper dyed to match is used to mend damaged pages and replace ripped corners. After patching, the paper is cut to the original dimensions of the page to aid in binding.



Removing a badly done c.1950s cover revealed parts of the original spine, including the title "Holy Bible With Cuts."

The final step, rebinding the bible, may prove to be the most challenging. In addition to collating and hand stitching all the pages of the Old and New Testament (not all of which were numbered) Mr. Albro plans to create a cover similar to the original, possibly out of goatskin. "It'll probably be brownish black with reddish stamps to reflect what we have of the original."

It might even have gold embossing. Mr. Albro found an embossed stamp—a one inch square of reddish leather

used to decorate the spine of the original 18th century binding—when he disassembled the bible for washing. He's pretty sure he can find a matching punch among his collection of antique embossing tools. The result might not be identical to the book Carlyle brought from London two and a half centuries ago, but it's sure to be a thing of beauty and a joy for a very long time to come, if not forever.

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Thank you to Jean Marie Ward, a volunteer docent at Carlyle House and a professional writer, who volunteered her writing talents to compose this article.

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John Carlyle's family bible returned home this May. The staff of Carlyle House is extremely grateful to the Friends of Carlyle House for funding this important conservation effort. In its safer, more stable condition, the Carlyle bible is poised to last for another 250 years and beyond. We hope you will join us on June 10th at our Annual Friends of Carlyle House meeting to celebrate this amazing effort.



Conservator Tom Albro brings the newly conserved bible back home to Carlyle House. Tom spent countless hours cleaning and repairing each page of this massive book

News From the Curator

Helen Wirka

Carlyle House was greeted by a busy-bee spring! We had eight days of school tours in April and two out-of-state school tours visit us in May, totaling 415 students plus their chaperones. We will continue to have school programs throughout the month of June, and we look forward to welcoming more pre-school age children to our Hands on History Tent (HOHT) on Tuesday, June 28th from 10 am – 1pm. You are invited to bring your children and grandchildren ages 3-12 to our HOHT for a fun hands-on day of learning what it was like to be a Civil War spy in Alexandria 150 years ago.

Braddock Day took place on April 9th and was met with much success as we had over 400 visitors join us in commemorating this event! A small, yet hardy crew of cooks prepared a beautiful and bountiful feast for the



Governors and volunteers to enjoy. The visitors were delighted to learn about the history of the “Grandest Congress” and to learn about colonial kitchen practices. Please see the recipe below for Apple Pudding as adapted by Ms. Kimberly Walters:

To make an Apple Pudding.

Take twelve large Pipins, pare them, and take out the Cores, put them into a Sauce-pan, with four or five Spoonfuls of Water, boil them till they are soft and thick; then beat them well, stir in a quarter of a Pound of Butter, a Pound of Loaf-sugar, the juice of 3 Lemons, the Peel of two Lemons cut thin, and beat fine in a Mortar, the Yolks of 8 Eggs beat; mix well together, bake in a slack Oven, when it is near done, throw over a little fine Sugar. You may bake it in Puff-paste, as you do the other Puddings. (Glasse, Volume IV, p. 137-138 as adapted by Kimberly K. Walters as attributed by Trula Mae Fisher Glasse, p. 211)

The Friends of Carlyle House’s 2011 Annual Garden Day Herb & Craft Sale took place on April 16th in spite of rain, floods and tornado watches and met with a profitable result. Almost 500 visitors had come through the gates of Carlyle House before the weather closed down the sale at 2 o’clock in the afternoon. We sold almost all of the plants from both Mount Vernon and Homestead Gardens, with only a few flats returning to the nurseries. The Herb Sale committee met on Monday, May 16th to keep the momentum going from an event where all we could do was ask for better weather. With a fabulous array of vendors and delicious selection of baked goods and cookbooks for sale, everyone walked away a little bit soggy, but happy to have met with a good day’s work.

Our Spies and Scouts event on Saturday, May 21st continued our trend for high attendance with 560 visitors coming to visit our Nurses, Spies & Soldiers exhibit and to tour the house in a 3-hour period. We were open for free open-house style tours, in conjunction with the activities taking place on Market Square to commemorate the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War in Alexandria. The event was entitled “Witness to War and Reunion,” and staff and volunteers manned a table in Market Square, which helped draw families across the street to the museum. Families participated in a scavenger hunt, dressed up like spies, made paper dolls, created secret messages and decoded spy messages using cipher disks! There was also a Book Nook where children were able to have some quiet time in the shade and read stories about life at the time of the Civil War.

Many thanks to all of the volunteers, museum teachers and staff who helped make these events such a great success! They would not have been possible without your energy and support.



Bylaws Change

Members present at our Annual Meeting on June 10th will vote on the following amendment to the bylaws.

One May 3rd, the Friends of Carlyle House Board voted to increase the minimum annual dues to \$35 and to change the wording in the Bylaws to reflect this amendment.

Rationale—Most nonprofits have gotten away from trying to fix elements of their finance—even their member dues—into their bylaws (a cumbersome and inflexible procedure at best), and look instead to the best judgment of their board to determine such matters in the overall context of the organization’s budget.

From Bylaws ARTICLE VI , Section 1 ANNUAL DUES

Braddock Society	\$1000
Benefactor	\$500
Patron	\$100
Contributor	\$50
Member	\$25
Member	\$25

Change Article VI To read as stated below

Article VI ANNUAL DUES

“The dues will be set at the discretion of the board.”

Report from the Nominating Committee

Three new board members will be on the slate at our June meeting. They include:

Jason Ankele

Jason is general counsel for Lucidity Consulting Group, an Oracle software implementation company based in Dallas, Texas. Jason attended Austin College, a small liberal arts college in Sherman, Texas, and obtained his law degree from Baylor University. His prior board experience includes service on the board of directors of a professional theater company and also on the board of directors for a non-profit organization dedicated to

assisting victims of domestic violence obtain competent legal representation in family law court. Jason and his wife and their two kids all love to travel and seldom miss an opportunity for foreign adventure.

Henry Desmarais, MD, MPA

Henry has been a weekend docent at the Carlyle House since 2002 and a weekend docent at the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum since 2007. He served on the Board of the Alexandria Historical Society from 2007 to 2010. Henry is a principal at Health Policy Alternatives, a Washington, DC-based consulting firm, which provides strategic advice and technical support on legislative, regulatory and other health care policy issues to a broad range of association, corporate and foundation clients. Henry has held senior staff positions in the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate, the Department of Health and Human Services, the American College of Surgeons, and the Health Insurance Association of America. He earned his M.D. from the Yale University School of Medicine and his Master of Public Administration degree from George Washington University.

Chantal P. Jennings

Chantal has served several historic sites in many capacities, including Colonial Williamsburg, Woodlawn/Pope-Leighey and Carlyle House. She was also Vice President and Director for The Jennings Foundation and is an Emeriti Member of the Harvard Business School Board of Dean’s Advisors.

Chantal and Michael have lived in Old Town for 35 years. Their two children, Charles and Elizabeth, were raised here. As a former member of Carlyle’s Board, Chantal is excited to again join this supportive group of individuals that has worked tirelessly to make Carlyle House the outstanding museum it is today. In 1996, Chantal enjoyed organizing the house tours for the Carlyle Spring Event and is looking forward to helping with more special events and projects at the Museum. Chantal and Michael donated the funds for Carlyle House to purchase the table linens.

**“A dish of Tea to cheer me”:
A Tea Tasting & Lecture**



**Sunday, June 5th
2-3:30 p.m.
Magnolia Terrace**

**Admission is \$15
RSVP to Carlyle House at
carlyle@nvrpa.org or 703-549-2997**

Presentation will cover:

a brief history of tea in the 18th-century

**the different types of tea, including white,
green, oolong, black, and herbal**

**the characteristics of tea and what drives the
differences in tea type, taste, and properties**

**a demonstration of proper preparation and
tasting of each**

**a Q&A session including discussion of
afternoon tea and etiquette**

***This event is co-sponsored by
the Carlyle House Historic Park and
the Spice & Tea Exchange of Alexandria***



**Upcoming Events
Carlyle House**

**Sunday, June 5: 2-3:30 pm
“A dish of Tea to cheer me”:
Tea Tasting & Lecture
\$15**

On Sunday, June 5th, Carlyle House Historic Park and the Spice & Tea Exchange of Alexandria will be presenting a tea tasting on the Magnolia Terrace of Carlyle House from 2 to 3:30 p.m. This program will include a short historical overview of tea practices in the 18th-century as well as a full tasting of various teas.

Reservations Recommended: Call 703-549-2997

**Friday, June 10: 6-7:30 pm
Friends of Carlyle House Annual Meeting**

Join us on the Magnolia Terrace for our Annual Meeting. The business portion of the evening will be followed by light refreshments served by Great Blue Heron Catering. Business dress. Please RSVP, acceptances only, to carlyle@nvrpa.org or 703-549-2997.

**Tuesday, June 28: 11 am - 1 pm
Hands on History Tent: The Civil War**

When Alexandria was occupied by Union Troops on May 24, 1861, the citizens were forced to choose sides. Loyalties were often divided, and those who sympathized with the South had to live in an occupied city. Many people became spies, for both sides of the war. Carlyle House was a site known well by two civil war spies; Frank Stringfellow and Sarah Emma Edmonds. Join in on the action by making paper doll spies, decoding secret messages and trying your hands at disguise. What kind of a spy would you be?

This event is for children ages 3-12 and their caregivers and is FREE! For more information, contact Helen Wirka at Carlyle House Historic Park, hwirka@nvrpa.org or 703-549-2997.

Admission: Free



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Museum Staff

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Historic Site Administrator
Helen Wirka
Historic Site Specialist
Lacey Villiva
Education and Outreach Assistant

Phone: 703-549-2997
Fax: 703-549-5738
www.nvrpa.org

Carlyle House Historic Park is accredited by
the American Association of Museums



News from the Historic Site Administrator

Sarah Coster

New Staff Bring Exciting Ideas and Energy to Carlyle House

Since our last newsletter, we have filled two of the key positions on the Carlyle House staff. Helen Wirka, a long-time Carlyle House employee, will be directing the interpretation of the house, including room interpretation, docent training, research and new acquisitions. Lacey Villiva, who is just finishing her Master's in Museum Education at the George Washington University, has joined us as our Education and Outreach Assistant. Lacey will be handling school, scout and group tours and will assist with marketing and public programs.

We invite all members to drop by and meet the new faces here at Carlyle House. We hope you will enjoy some of the new programs we will be offering, such as a summer concert series, as we continue to build on Carlyle House's tradition of excellence in research, education and interpretation.

John Carlyle's Bible Returns Home Better Than Ever

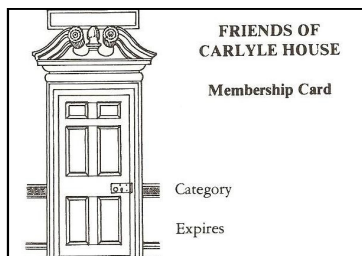
Please join us on Friday, June 10th at 6 pm for our Annual Meeting. At the meeting we will unveil the newly conserved Carlyle family Bible. The Bible returned in May looking better than ever thanks to conservator Tom Albro's painstaking work cleaning and repairing each individual page. We are so grateful to each and every one of you who donated to this cause. Your donations made a difference in preserving this treasure for generations to come.

Updated Membership Brochure

The new Friends of Carlyle House Brochure adds full color photographs and stunning design to our old brochure. We hope this eye-catching piece will bring us some new members. You can help by picking up a few brochures and distributing them to family and friends you think would enjoy being a Friend of Carlyle House.



New Members can now Purchase Memberships Online



To make it even easier to become a Friend of Carlyle House, new members can now purchase memberships through the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority website. Several giving levels are available. Please visit www.nvrpa.org/store to learn more. You can also sign up to receive e-mail updates on Carlyle House events at www.carlylehouse.org.

Carlyle House Historic Park

A property of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority

121 North Fairfax Street ~ Alexandria, Virginia 22314

www.nvrpa.org



Northern Virginia
Regional Park Authority

