

Black History 1900s – 1950s A Detailed Timeline

1904

African Americans in the Williamsburg area lose most political power. “The vast majority of African Americans lost their voting rights under the 1904 Virginia Constitution, which restricted black enfranchisement by means of property and poll taxes as well as a literacy test. The number of registered black voters in Williamsburg dropped from 190 in 1900 to 36 in 1904” (Hahamovitch 8)

1910s

By World War I, Jim Crow is fully in place in Williamsburg. Following Virginia law, theaters, restaurants, and transportation in Williamsburg are segregated. Black businesses continue to operate, but they only mainly have customers from the black community. (Hahamovitch 9)

1914

The original Civil War plaque is erected as a tribute to what would have been the 50th reunion of the Class of 1864, but the school was closed for the Civil War. Instead, they decide to make a plaque for the soldiers that gets warped and the plaque is designed with the Confederate flag and only lists students who served in the Confederacy. The plaque is removed from the Wren Building center hallway in 2015, along with Confederate symbols on the College Mace. A new plaque is put up in September of 2018 that has ALL of the students; those who served the Union are marked with a "U.S."



1920s

“Co-education helps revitalize the College but Jim Crow practices continue to exclude all black students, male and female.”

1928

Discussions go on about John D. Rockefeller restoring the land to the colonial era. They plan on meeting, discussing the plans, and taking a vote with the town on if they should go through with the restoration. The African American community is not invited to attend this vote. (Hahamovitch 14)

The Restoration largely creates the segregated atmosphere in Williamsburg. To create Colonial Williamsburg, many families are moved off of their property in central Williamsburg, mainly



the Black and Hispanic communities. Many blacks feel there is nothing they can do, since the Restoration favors white families when purchasing property. African American families rarely receive a relocation option; instead, they are pressured to move and literally forced out. African American families receive less money for equal property and are restricted to relocating to new segregated neighborhoods in less desirable areas. In contrast, white residents with prominent housing are offered temporary lodging or new housing, assistance in their housing search, or are resettled. They are also paid more for their property and given more freedom to move. Special treatment is given to the town's white elite with certain lots of land saved for 'whites only.' (Hahamovitch 15)

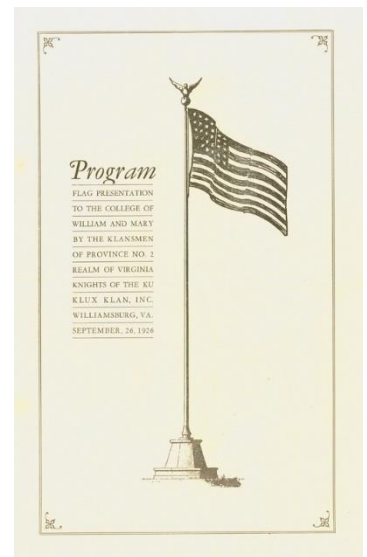
1930s-1950s

Working at the College is a "guaranteed job." "Most African American employees at the College coo[k], clea[n], serv[e], and maintai[n] the grounds. The College also employ[s] skilled African American craftsmen, like brick masons, for tasks such as constructing the walls surrounding the campus" (Hahamovitch 25)

"Still, Black employees at William & Mary suffer wages too low to support themselves and supervisory roles are still held by white workers. Many also suffer the indignity of waiting for buses beneath a flagpole given to William & Mary by the Ku Klux Klan in 1926. The flagpole is recycled during Massive Resistance to fly the Virginia flag at James Blair Hall, an affirmation of state rights."

The Restoration leads to financial gain and more beneficial living standards with new sewer systems, road improvement, fire and police protection, etc. but these changes never make their way to segregated Black neighborhoods. (Hahamovitch 17)

The Restoration also leads to increased segregation. Merchant's Square pops up to try to replace the business districts that were lost in the Restoration, but the spaces are only available for white shop owners. "An African American business district [is] promoted in the triangle formed between Prince George, Scotland and Boundary streets, removed from the heart of the town and the Restoration. The courthouse and train/bus station constructed by the Restoration feature[e] segregated waiting rooms, while their predecessors had not. The Restoration ingrai[n] segregation in the public buildings of Williamsburg.



Even the benches in Merchants Square [are] segregated.”
Before, there was a neighborly attitude between Whites and Blacks, but now they are very segregated.
(Hahamovitch 19)

The New Deal-era Citizen’s Conservation Corps camp pops up to build the Sunken Garden, convert the area around Lake Matoaka, etc. This provides many jobs, but there is lower pay for Black workers. But the CCC does value education, so Black employees are able to attend night classes in basic courses in history, civics, reading, and composition. (Hahamovitch 44-45)



1935
Richmond-born **Alice Jackson Stuart** becomes the first female African American to apply for graduate school at UVA. She is denied for “good and sufficient reasons” that are not explained but it’s clear that it’s based on Jim Crow educational policies. Thus, the Virginia Assembly passes the Dovell Act, which provided scholarships for Black individuals to attend school out of state, in order to dissuade the Black community from applying to Virginia schools. Stuart took this money to earn a Master’s in English from Columbia University in 1937.

1936
Educational Equality Act on March 27, 1936

1945
On February 7, white student Marilyn Kaemmerle, editor of *the Flat Hat*, publishes “Lincoln’s Job Half-Done,” advocating for African American students at William & Mary and interracial marriage. The Board of Visitors removes Kaemmerle as editor and nearly expels her. Students are more upset that she was censored, rather than paying attention to her argument. The editorial makes nationwide news and even is inspiration for legislation. The Board of Visitors does not apologize until the 1980s. (Hahamovitch 50)

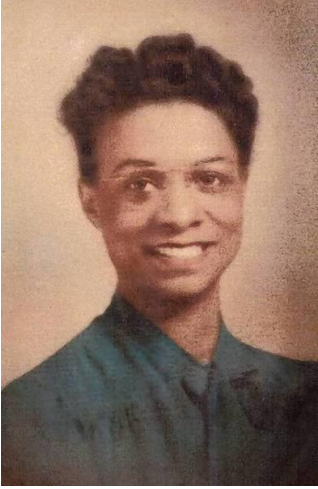


1951
Hulon Willis becomes the first black student to enroll at William & Mary when he begins a summer graduate program. He was a graduate of Virginia State College and a teacher in Norfolk. He graduates with a Master's in Education in 1956.

Edward Augustus Travis is admitted to the law school and in 1954 becomes the first African American to graduate from William & Mary, receiving a Bachelor of Civil Law degree on



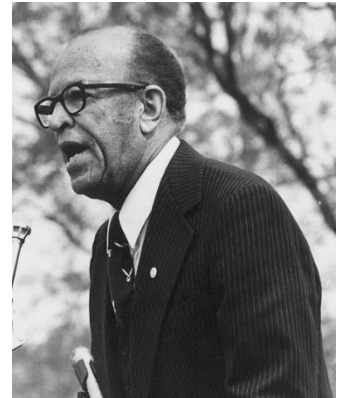
August 13, 1954.



1955

The first black woman to attend W&M is **Miriam Johnson Carter**. Carter was a schoolteacher in PA, living in Gloucester, who took sabbatical to take classes. She kept writing letters to W&M but they kept turning her down, citing that they were a “State institution” and had to “conform to State law.” She went on to apply for a position with the Institute of Early American History and Culture and then the graduate program in aquatic biology at the Virginia Fisheries Laboratory (the present-day Virginia Institute of Marine Science) before being admitted to the law school. But she withdraws at the end of the academic year. (Bloom 7-8)

“The first black person to teach at W&M in any capacity was **Dr. Hugh Gloster**, from Hampton Institute, who was engaged to teach English to Japanese students in a summer program for foreign students. Dean Gloster went on to be president of Morehouse College.”



Sources:

The Lemon Project (<https://www.wm.edu/sites/lemonproject/>)

The Lemon Project Historical Timeline

(<https://www.wm.edu/sites/lemonproject/researchandresources/historicaltimeline/index.php>)

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"African American Students" from Swem Special Collections Wiki

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Thank you so much to the Lemon Project for doing this important research!