"These were his most productive years, but they were also very unhappy," Jennifer Hurst-Wender tells us, referring to Patrick Henry, who lived in this house from 1771 to 1778. Hurst-Wender is the director of museum operations and education for Preservation Virginia. She’s also our guide to Scotchtown, the Henry estate in rural Hanover County.

Built around 1719, it’s one of the oldest surviving eighteenth-century homes in Virginia, and it was from here that Henry rode to Richmond, famously declaiming on the subjects of liberty and death. It was here, too, that his wife, Sarah Shelton Henry, gave birth to their sixth child and where, soon after, she was confined to a more feminine version of a straitjacket—something called a strait-dress.

“That was in the basement,” Hurst-Wender says. “Don’t worry, we’ll get there.”

It’s a rainy Thursday and four of us from Encyclopedia Virginia (EV)—an online project of Virginia Foundation for the Humanities—are here to document Scotchtown using Google Street View technology. Preservation Virginia has been generous in allowing us access to its properties, including the John Marshall House, in Richmond, Smith’s Fort Plantation, in Surry County, and Bacon’s Castle, also in Hanover County.

**Encyclopedia Virginia** uses Google Street View technology to bring its users inside Scotchtown and other historic sites in Virginia.

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**INSIDE**

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Surry County, which is thought to be the oldest brick house still standing in the former British colonies of North America.

Now, on EV's website, readers can find virtual tours of these and about a dozen other sites attached to relevant entries. For instance, you can read about Arthur Allen, the tobacco merchant who built Bacon's Castle in the 1660s, and Bacon's Rebellion (1676–1677), from which it got its name. And then you can click on the tour and “walk” through the three-story house as if you were there. We’ve also documented Henry’s retirement home at Red Hill, in Charlotte County.

“Teachers kind of freak out about this,” EV editor Matthew Gibson says. “I mean, they already love our site because it provides a free, authoritative source on Virginia history. We’ve got entries, media, primary documents. But now we’ve got this thing that almost literally allows them and their students to leave the classroom and to take a virtual field trip.”

For now, though, we’re taking the real kind. Hurst-Wender shows us Henry’s map table and his spare, almost spartan bedroom furnished with a chair original to Scotchtown. “He had seventeen children altogether,” Hurst-Wender explains, “so you can imagine how his possessions scattered after his death.” The few objects that have been returned to Scotchtown are proudly displayed, but Henry didn’t have much stuff to begin with. Spare was his watchword.

In the same way that Monticello, with its elaborate, experimental architecture, classical paintings, and bright colors, gives you a sense of Jefferson the man, so does Scotchtown. It’s plain, even severe—like Henry himself.

“You really need to see this place to get that,” EV programmer Peter Hedlund says, setting up a camera tripod in the map room.

Which is where Google Street View comes in.

GOOGLE COMES TO CHARLOTTESVILLE

So what exactly is Google Street View? You may have used it already to look at your own neighborhood. If not, try it now. Find yourself on Google Maps, then drag the little yellow man—there he is, in the lower right-hand corner of the screen—to the street in front of your house. Voilà! You are now immersed in a high-resolution, 360-degree view of your neighborhood with the ability, by clicking on the arrows, to move up and down the streets. You can cruise your hometown this way, scout out a road trip ahead of time, or even visit a foreign country.

And now you can virtually step inside. Using the same fisheye cameras, but mounted on tripods instead of moving cars, Google has given its users access to selected buildings and historic sites around the world.

EV’s participation in the Street View project began when Hedlund attended a conference at Google’s Mountain View, California, headquarters in 2012. “The idea [of the conference] was to bring nonprofit people together and talk about how they used Google’s mapping tools,” Hedlund says. “Street View came up and I was like, ‘We could really use this!’”

A few months later a Google employee traveled to Charlottesville and trained Hedlund and Gibson to use the camera and the software necessary to stitch together the digital images online. Now the pair travels

ABOVE: A mannequin is outfitted with a strait-dress like the one sometimes worn by Sarah Shelton Henry. PHOTO BY PETER HEDLUND

RIGHT: The dining room at Scotchtown is set for dinner. PHOTO BY PETER HEDLUND

The main house at Scotchtown, in rural Hanover County, on the day EV visited. It is one of the oldest surviving eighteenth-century homes in Virginia. PHOTO BY PETER HEDLUND
across Virginia documenting historic sites. The Street Views are published by Google and subsequently embedded on Encyclopedia Virginia. In the meantime, the General Assembly has allocated $85,000 to help fund the endeavor.

“People are excited about this,” Gibson says. “It’s a teaching tool, sure, but it’s also a tourism tool and even a preservation tool. Not all of these structures will be around forever, but we hope that our virtual tours will be.”

**LOOKING AHEAD**

“There are lots of ways to be innovative,” Gibson tells me. “With the encyclopedia, we’re creating a resource that doesn’t otherwise exist out there, whether online or in print. And by pairing these great entries with hard-to-find media objects and transcriptions of primary documents—that’s not something most other folks are doing.”

He takes a sip of coffee. We’re following a twisty highway back home to Charlottesville now.

“But we also need to be innovative on the digital level,” he says. “That’s to stay competitive for funding and it’s also, you know, to pique the interest of our users, to engage students, to give people an experience that’s new. History doesn’t have to be a textbook, and Google Street View is a huge part of that approach for us.”

Teachers certainly love it. In 2014 the Virginia Council of the Social Studies presented to Encyclopedia Virginia its Friend of Education Award. Gibson, meanwhile, is always thinking big, always looking ahead.

“We’ve been experimenting with cardboard goggles, fitted with your phone and the Street View images, that allow you to go into complete virtual reality mode,” he says, his voice rising with excitement. “Imagine putting one of those in every social studies classroom.”

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**A SAD END**

“Okay, the basement,” Hurst-Wender says. We buzz with excitement, having read in various, not necessarily reliable corners of the Internet that Scotchtown is haunted by the ghost of Henry’s first wife, Sarah, who spent her last years in the basement. Believe what you want about such things, but Hurst-Wender is quick to fill us in on the sad reality of Mrs. Henry’s life and death. The couple was married in 1754, and Sarah Henry bore six children, the last of whom arrived around the same time the family moved to Scotchtown.

Perhaps already suffering from mental illness, Mrs. Henry came down with what today might be considered a case of severe postpartum depression. In the eighteenth century, however, her behavior was deemed lunacy. A new asylum opened in Williamsburg in 1773, but out of either shame or concerns about the conditions there (or both), Patrick Henry decided to keep his wife at home. He made a room for her in the cellar.

We ducked our heads under the low ceiling beams and peered into a small, sparsely furnished—which is to say, typically Henry-esque—cell: two beds (one, presumably, for an enslaved servant), a trunk, a brick floor that in the Henry’s day was dirt. In the center of the room a mannequin wears the ominous-looking strait-dress. Small windows admit only a tiny bit of light.

In a new book, *The Founders as Fathers*, the historian and EV contributor Lorri Glover suggests that Sarah Henry, who died in February 1775, may have killed herself.

“These were unhappy years,” Hurst-Wender tells us.

Patrick Henry remarried in 1777; he sold Scotchtown a year later.

We take one last look and then climb out of the cellar, back into the day.
From the end of the Civil War to the 1960s, the dream of American progress was serenaded by a steam-whistle. The cradle of modern American culture rocked to the thunder of steel wheels on the rails.

Trains. The pictures and the sounds of a steam engine rolling across the open landscape, pulling a long chain of passenger or freight cars behind it, inspired just about every distinctively American art form in the twentieth century, especially music and song. Think Hank Williams, Jimmie Rodgers, Johnny Cash, Odetta, Big Joe Turner, Bob Dylan, Blind Willie McTell ...

The images and sounds of steam engines bore deep into the American psyche, and they remain there more than half a century after the last steam-powered locomotive was retired from service.

Today, almost every American knows something about trains. But what most Americans, including many Virginians, may not know is that the most technically advanced steam locomotives ever made were designed and built in a place called Big Lick, later known as Roanoke.

Beginning in 1941, fourteen J-class locomotives were produced in Roanoke’s East End Shops. They were engineering masterpieces, the most powerful steam passenger locomotives in the world, capable of speeds well above 100 miles per hour.

They were also streamlined works of mechanical and visual art, combining power and precision, beauty and strength in a way that took hold of the imagination of just about everyone who saw them. Or heard their baritone steam-whistle in the distance.

Today, only one of the original fourteen J-class engines survives, the 611. It took its last excursion run in 1994, and for twenty years it was the centerpiece of the collection at the Virginia Museum of Transportation, in Roanoke.

But apart from train buffs and visitors to the museum, few Americans knew the story of the 611 or the stories of the men who designed and built it; the porters, waiters, conductors, and engineers who worked on it; or the passengers who rode it. That’s about to change.

In December 2014, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities (VFH) awarded grant funds to support an hour-long film documenting not just the history of the 611, but also its restoration and return to service, a process that began in June 2014 and is now well underway.

The museum has made a commitment to restore the 611, using the original design and engineering specifications. It has also committed to documenting, through this film, the restoration process and to exploring the histories of the 611, the J-class locomotives, and the era of steam-powered rail transport.

The story of the 611 begins with the creation of a Norfolk & Western railroad hub in Big Lick. It follows the story of American railroads to an eighty-five-acre complex in east Roanoke—to the motive building (design) shop and the pattern, blacksmith, machine, boiler, and assembly shops where the J-class engines were produced.

It includes interviews with the people, many now in their eighties and nineties, who were part of the Roanoke story, and with others who worked on the passenger trains pulled by J-class engines—the Powhatan Arrow, the Pocahontas, and the Cavalier—that rode from Bristol to Norfolk, and into Ohio and West Virginia.

Here, the story intersects with an earlier VFH-funded oral history project called Cotton to Silk, which documented the experiences of
African American railroad workers on the Norfolk & Western, later Norfolk Southern.

Along the way, the film looks into the boiler, the firebox, the flues and superheaters, the pistons and air-compressors of the 611, and at the crucial balance of the wheels that allowed the engine to maintain high speeds over long distances. It visits the immense turntable where in May of 1950 the 611 “took her first turn and was set free to ride the high iron across the Commonwealth” (Virginia Museum of Transportation).

It also includes interviews with historians and engineering and other rail technology experts. Among them are Deena Sasser, archivist and curator at the transportation museum; Jennifer McDaid, historical archivist with Norfolk Southern Corporation; and William Withuhn, curator emeritus with the Division of Work and Industry at the National Museum of American History (Smithsonian Institution).

The story of the 611 has many parts, and the film is designed to appeal to many audiences. First and foremost, this is a Roanoke story. But it’s also a Virginia story, an American story. And a story that resonates worldwide.

When Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone was first published in 1997, its cover featured not a British locomotive, but an O. Winston Link photograph of a J-class engine to represent the Hogwarts Express.

The so-called STEM disciplines and the humanities are often seen as separate, having little relationship to one another. This film and the effort behind it prove otherwise. The 611 has been recognized as a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark by The American Society of Mechanical Engineers. Its story is also recognized, increasingly, as one of the great stories of Virginia’s—and America’s—history.

Soon, Virginians and visitors to the state will once again be able to ride behind the mighty 611, an experience from the golden age of steam-powered travel. At about the same time, film viewers throughout Virginia and far beyond will have an opportunity to learn the stories behind and within this spectacular and uniquely American feat of engineering and design.

VFH is honored to be among the supporters of this important and one-of-a-kind documentary effort.

Between July 1, 2014, and April 1, 2015, VFH awarded twenty-eight grants totaling $121,310. These awards were made to twenty-eight separate organizations, including eight first-time VFH grantees. For a complete list of recent grants, visit VirginiaHumanities.org/Grants.
A CONVERSATION WITH
LAURA BROWDER

A writer helps bridge the gap between military veterans and the public

BY CAITLIN NEWMAN

If “war was always here,” as Cormac McCarthy wrote in his 1985 novel Blood Meridian, then the human struggle to comprehend war is almost as ancient. And in the twenty-first century, as Americans experience the consequences of sustained armed conflict for the first time since the Vietnam era, we must reconsider what we think we know about war and those who serve.

For Laura Browder, a writer, documentary producer, and professor of American studies at the University of Richmond, that meant bringing the lives of women in combat into sharp focus using the lens of the humanities. She collaborated with photographer Sascha Pflaeging to create When Janey Comes Marching Home: Portraits of Women Combat Veterans, an exhibit and book that paired American servicewomen’s stories, collected by Browder, with their portraits, taken by Pflaeging. The exhibit, funded in part by a grant from Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, premiered in 2008 and has traveled to four Virginia cities. The book was published by the University of North Carolina Press in 2010.

We spoke to Browder by e-mail about how the Janey project changed and deepened her understanding of the experience of military veterans. This interview has been condensed and edited.

VFH: Laura, you’ve worked with VFH a number of times—as a Fellow, as a guest on With Good Reason, as a book festival participant, and as the project director for a number of grant-supported projects, including When Janey Comes Marching Home: Portraits of Women Combat Veterans. Tell us about your inspiration for that project.

LB: When Janey Comes Marching Home grew directly out of a book I wrote called Her Best Shot: Women and Guns in America [2006]. That book ends with a short discussion of wounded women vets returning from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars—and how the deployment of hundreds of thousands of women to a combat zone might affect our centuries-old fantasies about armed women. This question led me directly to creating the Janey exhibition—and then book—with photographs by Sascha Pflaeging.

VFH: How have women in the military traditionally been portrayed?

LB: Although women have until very recently been barred from serving in combat roles in the United States (and this inability to serve on the front lines of war has been offered as a reason to deny them full citizenship rights), female soldiers have been a staple of popular culture since Revolutionary War days—and they have often appeared as either completely incompetent or as sexually out of control, or both.

It probably goes without saying that none of the women I interviewed came close to reflecting any of these stereotypes.

VFH: Did working on this project change your understanding of war and what it means to serve?

LB: I learned so much by doing this project. I don’t come from a military family, and though I thought I knew something about serving in war from all the research I had done, I soon realized that I was in fact completely naïve. Every interview I did shattered another misconception and taught me something new. It certainly took me a while to understand how compelling the experience of being in a combat zone could be...
for the women I talked with. I had assumed that because most people think of women as being marginal in the military, that the female soldiers I interviewed would see themselves this way—as women first, and soldiers second. I was completely wrong on this score: their military identity was absolutely central to them. Many of them had volunteered to deploy to Iraq or Afghanistan, even when they had young children at home—it was what they had trained to do. As a culture, we applaud men who do this, but condemn women: how many heart-warming photos have you seen in your local newspaper of fathers in uniform reuniting with the children they haven't seen in a year? We see very few such images of mothers at war.

VFH: The NEH recently launched an initiative called Standing Together to encourage programs about war and military service. Why is it important to view these topics through the lens of the humanities?

LB: It's important for many reasons—first of all, because one of the things that really struck me when I was interviewing military women is how completely separate the military and civilian worlds are in this country. They exist as parallel universes. The experience of going to war is profound and life-altering, and we really need the humanities to help bridge the gap between those who have had their lives changed this way, and those who may never have given it a second thought. When I was talking with women combat veterans, it was very common for them to say to me, “We went to war, and America went to the shopping mall.” The humanities can help us to understand how war changes the world and the people who experience it.

VFH: How has your relationship with VFH influenced your work?

LB: My relationship with VFH has probably been the greatest influence on my work—of anything. Coming to VFH in 1997 was an eye-opening experience for me: I began to see new possibilities for how to bring challenging and complex ideas to a broad audience by moving outside of traditional scholarship. The public humanities afford us an opportunity to bring people from very different walks of life together to experience complicated truths—whether through an exhibition, a docudrama, or a documentary film.

The public humanities approach has also profoundly shaped the way I teach. I see how it changes my students when they interview someone about how the historical events of his time have shaped him, or watch someone whose life they have represented in an exhibition stand in front of her portrait and words and see her own experiences in a different light. I love the surprises and life-altering moments that come with this kind of work—and it has provided me with many great lessons, as well, in rolling with the punches.
Observing the Sesquicentennial

BY DAVID BEARNER

Officially, the Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War has passed. But the urge to understand the war and its legacies continues. In fact, Virginians’ fascination with America’s “defining conflict” seems to have grown even stronger since 2009, when the Sesquicentennial was formally launched.

Over the past seven years, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities (VFH) has explored the war and its lingering impact extensively, through scores of entries in Encyclopedia Virginia, radio programs, research fellowships supporting new scholarship, and events at the Virginia Festival of the Book.

Two long-term partnerships, one with the Museum of the Confederacy (now called the American Civil War Museum), the other with the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission, have also made important contributions to Virginians’ understanding of the war, its causes, and the changes it set in motion.

Both partnerships involved programs that traced the progress of the Civil War year by year. Both have been supported by a series of VFH grants. Both have brought fresh approaches to the understanding of this period in American history. And both have created new audiences for emerging scholarship.

In April, the seventh and final program in an annual series of “Signature Conferences” on the Civil War was held at the University of Virginia. All seven events were organized by the Sesquicentennial Commission, and each was hosted by a different state-supported college or university in Virginia.

“Causes Won and Lost: The End of the Civil War” explored topics ranging from surrenders and assassination, to the countervailing “Lost Cause” and “Union Cause” frameworks for understanding the war, to African American interpretations and the ways the war is remembered 150 years later.

Presenters included many of the best-known Civil War historians working today, including Edward Ayers, David Blight, Thavolia Glymph, John Coski, Gary Gallagher, and James McPherson.

Like its predecessors, this year’s event included scholars, teachers, students, community historians, journalists, and many others. Print publications are making these landmarks in Civil War scholarship accessible to an even wider audience.

In July, the American Civil War Museum, which was created in January 2014 when the Museum of the Confederacy merged with the American Civil War Center, will explore some of the same themes in a five-day summer institute for teachers titled “The End and the Aftermath,” the latest in a series of Civil War institutes inaugurated in 1995. VFH has supported each of the institutes during the Sesquicentennial years, beginning in 2009.

This year’s program will explore the events leading up to Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox, the flight and capture of Jefferson Davis, the fall of Richmond and President Abraham Lincoln’s visit to the city, Lincoln’s last days and the impact of his assassination, and the early stages of Reconstruction.

A stellar faculty makes this institute an exceptional opportunity for teachers. Museum staff are also producing an impressive binder of primary and other Virginia Standards of Learning–related resources that teachers can use directly in their classrooms.

Years, even generations, from now, when Virginians look back at how the state observed the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, these two series of programs will stand out as important landmarks: examples of how scholarship ventured beyond familiar territory to create new opportunities and resources benefitting Virginians of all ages.
In Search of Freedom
African Americans After the Civil War

Virginia’s first enslaved Africans—“20. and odd Negroes,” as John Rolfe famously put it—arrived in 1619. In 1860, on the eve of the Civil War, the federal census counted more than 490,000 slaves, the largest such population in the United States.

And yet, five years later, they were all free.

“The social upheaval that followed is hard to imagine,” says Brendan Wolfe, managing editor of Encyclopedia Virginia (EV), an online project of Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. “An institution that took hundreds of years to build was gone in the blink of an eye.”

So how exactly did these half-million men, women, and children gain their freedom? And what happened to them once they were free? For the last three years, EV, in partnership with the Library of Virginia, has explored these questions with a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

“One of the amazing things is how much we don’t know,” Wolfe says. “I mean, it seems like every last thing during the Civil War was documented. But African American men like Miles Connor, say, or Caesar Perkins, both members of the House of Delegates in the 1870s—we have no idea how they became free.

It seems like every last thing during the Civil War was documented. But African American men like Miles Connor, say, or Caesar Perkins, both members of the House of Delegates in the 1870s—we have no idea how they became free.

Explore on Encyclopedia Virginia:
- Virginia’s First Africans
- Miles Connor
- Caesar Perkins
- Abolition of Slavery
- Thirteenth Amendment
- Fourteenth Amendment
- Fifteenth Amendment
- Republican Party in the 19th Century
- Readjuster Party
- Conservative Party
- Debt Controversy
- William Mahone
- Disfranchisement
- African American Churches
- Freedmen’s Education

Biographies of Connor, Perkins, and their colleagues put names and in some cases even faces to the experiences of newly freed slaves, some of whom became politically active.

“Many whites retreated from politics in the immediate postwar years,” Wolfe explains, “leaving a vacuum eagerly filled by African American men, some of them former slaves. Some were only recently literate even.”

They joined the Republican Party mostly and later the biracial Readjuster Party, led by the former Confederate general William Mahone. Eventually, however, white conservatives organized in opposition, passing legislation that limited the African American vote. By 1902 Virginia, a state that thirty years earlier had swung for Ulysses S. Grant in the presidential election, was firmly back under white control.

Political involvement is not the whole story, of course. Wolfe points to entries on African American churches and freedmen’s education as helping to fill in the social context of the time.

“It’s spring, and with the sesquicentennial we’re thinking about events like Lee’s surrender at Appomattox,” Wolfe says. “We’re thinking about the end of the war, which is fine. But it’s easy to forget that 150 years ago, something else was just beginning.”
A TOAST TO OUR 21st!

BY JANE KULOW

It started with beer, wrapped up with a live radio show about a boy called Stink, and—because this was the Virginia Festival of the Book—offered plenty of books and book discussions in between.

Beer. Not long after Beth Macy, author of Factory Man: How One Furniture Maker Battled Offshoring, Stayed Local—and Helped Save an American Town, agreed to speak at the 2015 Leadership Breakfast, she shared the news that Salem-based Parkway Brewing Company had created a custom beer in honor of her book: Factory Girl. To take advantage of this unique opportunity (Books! Beer! Music!), Virginia Folklife director Jon Lohman partnered with the Festival to produce and host a musical performance by National Heritage Fellow and luthier Wayne Henderson, a reading by Macy, and plenty of Factory Girl beer.

Books. With almost 200 programs featuring a few dozen topics, Festival attendees could hear authors speaking on football, women of the Civil War, mental health issues, southern romances, writing by veterans, how to make a picture book, and so much more. Luncheon attendees enjoyed Frances Mayes’ charming and lyrical stories about growing up in the South. Kate DiCamillo, current National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature, spoke to a sold-out crowd of children and adults at U.Va.’s Culbreth Theatre on Thursday night, then to 2,400 wildly enthusiastic third- and fourth-graders from area public and private schools the following day.

U.S. Poet Laureate Charles Wright shared the Culbreth stage on Friday with his former U.Va. student (and 2013 National Book Award recipient) Mary Szybist for a poignant evening of poetry. Saturday night featured renowned and beloved authors Blake Bailey, Maureen Corrigan, Edwidge Danticat, and Katherine Paterson talking with host Tim Reid about the stories in their lives and the stories that have influenced their writing.

Stink. Celebrating the tenth anniversary of her series about Judy Moody’s younger brother, Stink, Megan McDonald joined radio host Peter Jones for a live broadcast of the WTJU radio program Tell Us a Tale. Parents and children alike delighted in her lively stories.

The 2015 Festival celebrated stories and the connections they offer between authors and readers. That connection—getting to hear how a glass-bottomed boat influenced Kate DiCamillo, listening to Beth Macy explain what drove her reporting on the unemployed in Southwest Virginia, hearing the family tragedy behind Edwidge Danticat’s memoir, laughing along with the delightfully witty Katherine Paterson—is one that Festival attendees can find here year after year.
VISITING AUTHOR

Kate DiCamillo

BY SARAH MESSHAM

On Friday, March 20, students from all over Charlottesville and Albemarle County zipped raincoats, boarded field trip buses, and made their way through the rainy city to St. Anne’s-Belfield School (STAB). More than 1,200 students from public and private schools, in one of two sessions that served a total of 2,400 students, gathered in the STAB Convocation Center and sat, tapping their feet and twiddling their thumbs nervously. There was electricity in the air as everyone waited for the lights to dim and the speaker to arrive.

When the speaker finally stepped on stage, the applause nearly shook the ceiling. Students were on their feet yelling, clapping as loudly as they could, yelling phrases like “I love you!” and “You’re awesome!” So who was this mystery speaker?

Rock star, setting up to play a set …?

NFL quarterback talking about his famous touchdown pass …?

Famous actress reciting lines from her newest film …?

Nope.

The speaker who garnered so much excitement, electricity, and joy was Kate DiCamillo, humble and hilarious author of some of the most beloved children’s books in recent history.

DiCamillo might not be a traditional rock star, but here in the Learning Leopard Library, she has achieved honorary rock star status—her Mercy Watson and Bink and Gollie series are constantly checked out, the cover of Because of Winn Dixie elicits squeals and sighs upon sight, and last year’s Newbery winner Flora & Ulysses has more holds in the library system than you can shake a stick at. When it comes to authors for children, DiCamillo is about as cool as it gets.

So when she grabbed the microphone, dimmed the lights, and greeted us, you could hear a pin drop. DiCamillo spoke to her entranced audience honestly, highlighting the difficult and painful process that helped her to grow. She gave us the long list of illnesses that kept her in the hospital for months at a time during elementary school. She shared personal and touching truths with students, like the fact that she struggled to understand why her father didn’t live with their family for most of her childhood. She invited us to share some of her most difficult moments, like the recent loss of her mother. She described people in her life who seemed to be rooting for her to fail, and pushing her to settle. With each slide, she let us into her life, her heart, and her mind—and inspired students to keep moving, working, and striving.

Her best advice? If you want to be a writer, you have to WRITE!

DiCamillo made us laugh, made us think, and made us feel that the whole world was within our reach. But, to be honest, it wasn’t her words that made me tear up.

Toward the end of her presentation, DiCamillo went through her complete works, giving each book its own slide and asking students for their opinions. The results were deafening. 1,200 kids were on their feet hooting, hollering, and cheering with all their might. The joyful noise grew with each slide until, when she finally reached Flora & Ulysses, I thought the roof was going to fall on top of us.

While the rest of the room roared, I grinned through tears. I have adults ask me all the time what it’s like to work with a generation of students who choose video games over picture books. The opinion seems to be that today’s children have lost their passion for reading in the digital age—but do you want to know a secret? That’s not true. Passionate readers still exist; I am lucky enough to work with approximately 350 tiny ones every single day. And when you combine these young readers with positive mentors and wonderful literature like that of DiCamillo, something magical happens. They grow to become well-rounded, successful, and compassionate adults.

Sitting in that Convocation Center, I knew that those cheerers weren’t for video games. They weren’t for MTV artists or basketball players. That cacophonous jumble of noise and memories and love was all about books that had opened our eyes, captured our hearts, and changed our lives.

I can’t think of a single better reason to stand up and cheer.

Sarah Messham is the school library media specialist at Johnson Elementary School. This piece appeared on the Johnson Elementary School Library blog at johnsonlibrary.wordpress.com/2015/03/27.
any of us have become fans of the Virginia Arts of the Book Center’s collaborative projects, stunning print work, and the annual spectacle that is the Raucous Auction. But a recent survey of graphic arts studios and print collectives in the Mid-Atlantic revealed another uniqueness: VABC has the largest collection of publicly accessible lead type in the Commonwealth.

Why has this remained such a well-kept secret? VABC lacks a basic resource to make its type more visible to artists: a comprehensive specimen book of its typefaces.

Back in 2004, internationally renowned book artist Johanna Drucker began an effort to correct this, a project that would yield both an artist’s book and a specimen book called Speaking in Faces. To date, hundreds of passages by dozens of printers have already been printed, but overall our progress with this “slow technology” has lived up to its reputation.

This spring, however, a team of accomplished printers and innovative designers is poised to undertake new introductory signatures and a blend of traditional and creative type specimens.

VABC has launched a Kickstarter to help move the project into high gear. And support for the project has been coming in from all over the country and world—Denmark, the Netherlands, and Brazil!

A major premise of the project is that typefaces communicate with a mix of verbal and visual communication—just as human faces do. A more visible catalog of this collection will inspire the next generation of artists, book makers, printers, and typographers who can use Speaking in Faces to let their own projects beam or glower or wink.

Incentives for your financial pledges of support—“rewards” in the Kickstarter jargon—are now online. Rewards range from handmade prints to limited-edition VABC collaborative projects to a broadside of a poem by current U.S. Poet Laureate Charles Wright. But what is already the most popular reward so far? An affordable, facsimile version of the completed Speaking in Faces (due in late 2016).

Visit online to see how close we are to making the $12,000 goal by May 19—it’s all or nothing. Your pledge now could make the difference! Visit Kickstarter.com (search for “Speaking in Faces”) or find a link via VirginiaBookArts.org.

Two of the broadsides designed by VABC members are Kickstarter rewards: work by Jeannette Marie Sayers (above, right) and U.S. Poet Laureate Charles Wright (below).
2015 VIRGINIA WOMEN IN HISTORY AWARDS

“Being Present in History”

BY CAROLYN CADES

On March 26, the Library of Virginia in Richmond honored eight women who have made outstanding contributions to their fields and to life in the Commonwealth. Three of the eight honorees have also made enduring contributions to the work of Virginia Foundation for the Humanities (VFH).

Among the honorees were Karenne Wood (Monacan), who has served as director of Virginia Indian Programs at VFH since 2007; Dorothy Shoemaker McDiarmid, who represented Fairfax County in the House of Delegates for more than two decades; and Nikki Giovanni, an internationally acclaimed poet and teacher. All three women are former members of the VFH Board of Directors.

KARENNE WOOD has worked with Native communities across the country and with the Virginia tribes officially recognized by the Commonwealth. A linguistic anthropologist and widely published poet, her books include Markings on Earth (Arizona University Press) and The Virginia Indian Heritage Trail (three editions, VFH).

Wood greeted attendees at the award ceremony with a prayer of welcome in Tutelo, her tribal language and the subject of her doctoral dissertation. She then spoke about her work in helping to revise Virginia’s textbooks and Standards of Learning to more accurately reflect the role that Native peoples have played in American and Virginia history and the vital presence of tribal communities in Virginia today.

When asked about her proudest achievement, Wood points to her efforts to help repatriate sacred objects and ancestral remains, including the return and reburial of four collections of human remains at a site in Amherst County that is sacred to the Monacan Indian Nation.

Wood chaired the Virginia Council on Indians during the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown in 2007. She also developed an exhibit called “Beyond Jamestown,” which has been displayed at sites throughout Virginia, including the State Capitol in Richmond.

DOROTHY MCDIARMID (1906–1994) was a lifelong champion of public education who first ran for a seat in the General Assembly in 1959, opposing the state’s official policy of Massive Resistance to court-ordered public-school desegregation. She has been described as one of the most influential women ever elected to the House of Delegates, where she became the first (and remains the only) woman to chair the House Committee on Appropriations.

McDiarmid was the second Chair and one of six original members of the VFH Board of Directors, appointed in 1974.

NIKKI GIOVANNI is a teacher, poet, scholar, and advocate for civil rights and equality who published her first book of verse in 1968. Since then, she has published more than two dozen works: poetry, essays, edited anthologies, and children’s books. She is an internationally recognized speaker and a much-beloved member of the faculty at Virginia Tech, where she has taught full-time since 1989.

Like her two fellow honorees, Giovanni’s service on the VFH Board was marked by eloquence, passion, keen intelligence, and a deep commitment to the humanities and belief in their importance to Virginia’s public life. VFH is honored by its connection to these three women who have made—and are making—Virginia history.

Sonnet for Women in Virginia History

I visited a graveyard yesterday
And viewed the name on stone, dates of his life,
But when I walked around the other way
Saw chiseled words that merely read, “His wife.”

Our history books have often failed to list
The women with no statues in the Square:
Reformers, artists, and philanthropists,
And chiefs, and legislators with long hair.

Include Ms. Walker’s bank just down the block,
And Nikki Giovanni’s straight-talk books,
Monica Beltran’s valor in Iraq—
They didn’t give a fig leaf ‘bout their looks.

They manned up, spoke out—
they’ve been noncompliant.
We stand on lace-trimmed shoulders of these giants.

— Karenne Wood
Ted DeLaney, a fourth-generation native of Rockbridge County and a Lexington resident, joined the VFH Board in July 2010. After graduating from an all-black high school in 1961, he worked for more than twenty years. Only then, in 1985, did he earn his undergraduate degree from Washington and Lee University. He earned his PhD ten years later from the College of William and Mary. As an associate professor of history at his alma mater, he has focused on the history of discrimination in the United States and relationships among race, gender, and sexual orientation. His recent research involves the story of school desegregation in four western Virginia counties. He spoke with VFH development director Elizabeth Piper.

**EP:** Had you heard of Virginia Foundation for the Humanities before you became a Fellow here?

**TD:** Actually my introduction to VFH happened in 2004. My W&L colleagues and I had gotten together to discuss celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education.* We conducted a conference in Lexington, but it received only a very local audience. Then the General Assembly contacted me because they had ruled that Virginia would commemorate the case but wouldn’t permit tax money to be spent on it. They wondered if W&L would do something. Having done a conference the year before, we weren’t prepared to fund yet another. So we applied to VFH for a grant and eventually did an oral history on four Virginia counties, jointly sponsored by VFH and W&L research funds. We trained students to do oral history interviews over the summer. It was a wonderful dynamic, sending twenty-year-olds out to do these interviews with community members. I quickly discovered the challenges of oral histories. Memory is fraught over a fifty-year time span, and the only people that would talk to my students were supportive of [the decision]; those opposed had changed their minds in the intervening years.

**EP:** So you don’t feel like you got both sides of the story?

**TD:** No, I didn’t get both sides. But then I ended up here at VFH on a Fellowship in 2009–2010 to complete the research on this project.

**EP:** Why are the humanities important, and what role do they have in today’s society?

**TD:** As a college professor, I worry about the humanities. Liberal arts colleges are seeing incredible competition with undergraduate schools of business. For example, the most popular major at W&L used to be history, and now it’s business administration. Across the country there is this cost-analysis basis for education … majors in literature, history, and the arts are declining as more and more students think they need business degrees to survive in the modern world. And that leads me to worry about how literate people will be. Literature is extremely important—it’s a way of broadening your horizons, something that helps you dream beyond who you are. Books, especially fiction, are so important to our culture. I worry about this new generation that seems to think that life is centered on making a lot of money and making it fast. Being a part of an organization that focuses on the humanities is what I should be doing as someone who teaches the humanities. The humanities are my life. If I hadn’t gone to college as a forty-one-year-old, I would have been an art major.

**EP:** Do you credit your area of teaching (civil rights and African American history) with your upbringing in the segregated South?

**TD:** My major field in graduate school was nineteenth-century American South; my minor fields were colonial America and colonial Latin America. I applied for Civil War history jobs, and the first job I landed was at the State University of New York, [where] they wanted me to teach African American history. Then W&L called me and wanted me to come back. It took me five minutes to say yes. But they, too, wanted me to develop a course on African American history, and the only thing qualifying me to do that was the color of my skin. The nice thing about being on the faculty at W&L is that you are permitted all kinds of latitude with regard to developing new courses.

The classes were overwhelmingly white, only one to two black students in a class of twenty. It really tore at my heart that these kids had no idea about any of this stuff. I used *Eyes on the Prize* in class, and I would hear students gasp—they would leave class with tears running down their faces. Then I started taking students down south for [what became] the most meaningful course I’ve ever done. It has been a tremendous development for me. Even though I started teaching African American history for the wrong reasons, I came to love the material. I have since developed the Africana Studies minor at W&L.

**EP:** What other causes do you have a passion for?

**TD:** I used to be on the Woodrow Wilson Library Board. I am also involved with Omicron Delta Kappa, the national leadership fraternity founded at W&L. I’m a voting faculty member on that and enjoy it. W&L students are as polite as they can be. Not only are they polite, but they are also kind, and they have always been that way since I started there decades ago. It is a joy to work with those kids.

With great sorrow, we announce the February 20 passing of Walter A. Jackson, one of our Spring 2015 Residential Fellows. Jackson, a twentieth-century American history scholar and associate professor at North Carolina State University, was researching the lives of Gunnar and Alva Myrdal, the Swedish couple who each earned Nobel prizes, but in different fields. Jackson authored the 1990 text Gunnar Myrdal and America’s Conscience: Social Engineering and Racial Liberalism, 1938–1987, as well as shared his expertise on Gunnar Myrdal’s role in the American history of race relations in the documentary American Denial that aired this spring via PBS stations. Jackson earned his PhD from Harvard University in 1983 and was the devoted father and husband to daughter Sarah and wife Rachida, a humanities professor at Shaw University. Great friends of VFH, the Jacksons were profiled in our Spring 2007 VFH Views, following Jackson’s Fellowships in 1993 and 2002. His gentle demeanor and deep scholarship involving issues of race are greatly missed.

VFH WELCOMES New Staff Members

ROBERTO I. ARMENGOL joins VFH as BackStory editor from a background in print journalism. He holds a PhD in anthropology from the University of Virginia and has taught at UVA, Roanoke College, and Washington and Lee University. He is currently working on a book based on two years of field research in Cuba.

Photographer PAT JARRETT joins VFH as digital media specialist. His work has been published by the Washington Post, the New York Times, the Guardian, and NPR, among others. Jarrett is married to a fire-breathing seamstress and prefers two-wheeled transportation to four any day of the week. He believes the low-and-slow method is best for cooking meat, luck is a manifestation of hard work, and daily newspaper photography is a surreal art form.

GARRETT QUEEN is program director of the Virginia Arts of the Book Center. His involvement with the VABC began in 2007. As a volunteer he assumed the role of Printer in Residence, maintaining the center’s presses and equipment. Queen has instructed in letterpress printing and bookmaking and has helped manage a number of members’ projects. In 2013 he was honored as a Virginia Master Folk Artist by the Virginia Folklife Program.

TRANSITIONS

HOLLY C. SHULMAN, founding director emerita of Documents Compass and research professor at the University of Virginia, will leave VFH in June 2015 to continue work as editor of the Dolley Madison Digital Edition and to complete her book on Madison’s widowhood.

Director of African American Programs and Virginia Africana LEONDRA BURCHALL left VFH in October 2014 to begin a position with the National Endowment for the Humanities as program officer for its Federal/State Partnership.

VFH Says Farewell to Five Board Members

June 2015 marks the close of five of our Board members’ tenures. With gratitude, we honor Scott Colley, William Freehling, Joanne Gabbin, Oliver Hill Jr., and Tom Mansbach for their unwavering dedication to VFH and the humanities in Virginia. As Board officers, community members, and committed individuals, they raised VFH to a new level of excellence in connecting people and ideas to explore the human experience and inspire cultural engagement.
Please, tell us if you’re ready for a change:

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SPRING 2015 VFH RESIDENTIAL FELLOWS

The Fellowship program at VFH is pleased to note the following scholars and authors are in residence for the spring 2015 semester: (from left to right) Beth Taylor, independent scholar, Barboursville; George Carras, senior research professor of classical studies and religion, Washington and Lee University; Emma Edmunds, independent scholar, recently retired from the University of Virginia; Paula Barnes, independent scholar, recently retired associate professor and chair of English, Hampton University; Earl Swift, independent scholar, Charlottesville; E. Ashley Hairston, associate professor of English and director of the Center for Law and Humanities, Elon University; and Lisa Russ Spaar, poet and professor of English, U.Va. Don Debats, not pictured, is American studies professor at Flinders University, Australia.

Isaac Reed, sociology professor at the University of Colorado Boulder, was in residence early in the semester, as was the late Walter A. Jackson, associate professor of history, North Carolina State University.

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VFH celebrates 40 years

On January 22, more than 250 people gathered at the Library of Virginia in Richmond to enjoy BackStory to the Future … Live!, a special program and reception in celebration of the 40th anniversary of VFH. Governor Terry McAuliffe, Lieutenant Governor Ralph Northam, and former VFH board chair Liz Young opened the event by highlighting the Foundation’s numerous achievements and contributions to the Commonwealth.

The live BackStory program featured American History Guys Ed Ayers, Brian Balogh, and Peter Onuf in conversation with the audience about how perceptions of the future have changed over time. Guests were delighted by lively commentary, thought-provoking questions, and historical images of the city of Richmond. During the reception, many guests also enjoyed a private viewing of the exhibition To Be Sold: Virginia and the American Slave Trade with remarks by its curator, Maurie D. McInnis, who is a VFH Board member, U.Va. vice provost for academic affairs and professor of art history, and former VFH Fellow in residence.

For a video of the event, visit VirginiaHumanities.org/backstory-future.