**Virginia’s Top 10 Endangered Artifacts - 2019 Honorees**

List of 2019 Honorees, including details of each selected artifact and media contact for each museum.

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**Anne Spencer Memorial Foundation - Lynchburg, Virginia**

“Cocktail Party” oil on canvas painting by artist Dolly Allen Mason

Media Contact: Shaun Spencer-Hester, curator
shester44@yahoo.com
202-246-3619

When poet Anne Spencer and her husband Edward Spencer decided in the 1940s to redecorate their arts and crafts style home, the couple found the help of African American artist, Dolly Allen Mason, who created this oil on canvas depiction of the Harlem Renaissance era of which Anne Spencer was a notable literary figure. She was also a well-loved area librarian and civil rights activist whose home on Lynchburg’s Pierce Street was a center of scholarly and artistic gatherings for the African American community.

*If conserved, the painting will be repaired and rehung. Additionally, the plaster wall underneath will be examined using ultraviolet imaging to determine whether believed items such as poems, notes, lists and keepsakes adorn the wall underneath the existing wallpaper.*

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**Gunston Hall - Fairfax County, Virginia**

“Truro Parish Register”; 1818

Media Contact: Melanie Johnson, Director of Marketing & Public Relations
mjohnson@gunstonhall.org
703-550-9220 x240

This manuscript dates from 1818, and records taxes paid by members of Truro Parish, an Anglican church in Fairfax County Virginia. Taxes were paid in cash as well as in goods, such as tobacco, but in some cases also the sale and purchase of slaves. This important book documents the existence of thirty-five enslaved workers of the Mason, Washington, and Custis families. Other volumes from Truro Parish are in the collections of the Library of Congress, George Washington’s Mount Vernon, and Pohick Church.

*If conserved, the manuscript will be made available for research and short term exhibition. The museum would also like to host a summit of surviving Truro Parish registers to remember the enslaved people documented within its pages.*

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**Historical Society of Western Virginia – Roanoke, Virginia**

“Eliza Breckinridge Watts Receipt Book”; 1818-1857

Media Contact: Ashley Webb, Curator of Collections & Exhibitions
curator@vahistorymuseum.org
540-266-7196

Eliza Breckinridge Watts, daughter of Col. James Breckinridge of Fincastle, Virginia and wife of Roanoke County’s first commonwealth attorney, started this detailed recipe book in 1818. Receipt books or “cookbooks” contained not just recipes for food such as cakes, puddings and meat dishes, but also household items and remedies for common ailments. Cookbooks were valuable assets to running a household and were passed down through the family. This book is also important for providing a wealth of material culture by documenting domestic practices and medical knowledge of the day and for highlighting social connections of an area.

*If conserved, the museum would like to feature the receipt book in an upcoming exhibition celebrating Botetourt County’s 250th Anniversary, as well as have it digitized and available for future research.*
Zachary Taylor’s presidency was preoccupied with the growing issue of slavery and the threat of secession. He believed that slavery should not be allowed to expand into the new territories acquired in the Mexican-American War and was a staunch anti-secessionist. This fascinating presidential inaugural ball banner bridges the strife of the mid 1800s Mexican-American War and the looming Civil War as it appears to have been created for Taylor by a group of Mexican-American War veterans that included William T. Sherman, Winfield Scott, George B. McClellan, and George C. Mead, who would go on to become prominent generals of the American Civil War.

*If conserved, the banner will be the star in a 2021 exhibit focusing on the Mexican-American War as a precursor to the Civil War. The ideal display case will allow for both unique sides of the banner to be visible to museum visitors.*

It’s rare to find correspondence that is authored and signed by Patrick Henry. In this handwritten letter to Brigadier General Martin, who had developed a positive rapport among the Cherokee people during the American Revolution, Henry’s character as a man ahead of his time shines through as he writes to advocate for the rights of the Cherokee in the fledgling United States. His support and sympathy for the Native American people and his growing concern with coexistence is a concern that still resonates today in American society.

*If conserved, the artifact will be on view at the E. Stuart James Grant Museum Room at Red Hill as an example of Patrick Henry’s acceptance and advocacy of a minority group during a tumultuous time in American history and his legacy as a supporter of individual liberties.*

An entire museum lies within the pages of this scrapbook. Beginning around 1840, the granddaughter of Patrick Henry, Lucy Dorothea Henry of Red Hill, longed to escape plantation life in rural Virginia, and started writing to the world’s greatest minds of the day to request autographs and manuscripts for her album. Over 250 items fill the pages from 18th & 19th century historical figures such as writers Edgar Allen Poe, Charles Dickens and Lord Byron, to United States presidents John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and First Lady Dolley Madison. This book has miraculously managed to survive intact as a repository of handwritings of some of the greatest writers of her time and offers a glimpse into the literary scene of Poe’s day.

*If conserved, this untapped resource would be of interest to anyone researching nineteenth century history or literature and would be digitized for online research. Collaboration on exhibition or research with other museums would also be a goal once it is stabilized.*
Stratford Hall - Westmoreland County, VA

“Hannah Ludwell Lee’s Sewing Purse”; 1700s

Media Contact: Laura Fortsch, Director of Development
lfortsch@stratfordhall.org
804-493-1974

According to Lee family history, this 18th century sewing purse or “housewife” was made and used by Hannah Ludwell Lee and Thomas Lee, original residents of historic Stratford Hall and founders of a Virginia family dynasty. Thomas Lee was deeply involved in the affairs of the original Colony of Virginia, including president of the Council and serving as a member of the House of Burgesses and Council of State. The term “housewife” or “hussif” originated in Lancaster, a busy merchant port in England, and it was primarily used by sailors as a sewing kit. Throughout the 18th century, it was also adopted by women for this same purpose, and is a notable representation of life of an elite woman in Colonial Virginia.

*If conserved, the purse will be showcased in an upcoming exhibit, Stratford at the Crossroads: Atlantic Cultures and the Creation of American, opening spring 2020 to explore the female experience in the Atlantic world and commemorate the anniversary of the large group of women that arrived in Jamestown in 1620.*

The Valentine - Richmond, VA

“Sophie Meredith’s Congressional Union Banner”; 1918

Media Contact: Eric Steigleder, Director of PR & Marketing
esteigleder@thevalentine.org
804-649-0711 x 322

While most of the women in Richmond, Virginia were not actively supporting the equal voting rights movement in the decade before the states ratified the 19th Amendment, by 1915 the pro-suffrage crowd had grown and split into two camps – the moderate Equal Suffrage League and the more radical Congressional Union. This political banner was used by Virginia’s leader of the Congressional Union, Sophie Meredith, during high-profile tactics such as picketing the White House where she was arrested in 1918, a year before women were granted the right to vote.

*If conserved, this sign of women’s political activism will be on display as part of The Valentine’s upcoming exhibit Vital Signs, opening on July 4, 2020. It will showcase how protest signage has contributed to Richmond’s evolution and to celebrate the centennial of the adoption of the 19th Amendment.*

Virginia Beach History Museums - Virginia Beach, VA

“Folk Art Jugs”; 1700s

Media Contact: Anne Miller, Manager
amiller@vbgov.com
757-385-5103

This pair of leather folk art jugs are in the shape of barmaids and in the style of Toby Jugs from 1700s England. They are cherished items from the Virginia Beach History Museum’s Thoroughgood House original collection of artifacts gathered by esteemed Hampton Roads philanthropist and historic preservationist, Henry Clay Hofheimer II. They are noted in a 1792 letter as being a gift from Princess Anne, daughter of King George II, to an English innkeeper who attended to her recuperation following being thrown from her horse.

*If conserved, they will be part of a new exhibit focused on jugs of the period.*
Wilderness Road Regional Museum (Pulaski, VA)

“Registry of Free Blacks 1855-1864 and Witness Book 1871-1876”

Media Contact: April Martin, Programs Director
wrrm5240@gmail.com
540-818-3804

This journal offers a fascinating look at life in rural Virginia before and after the American Civil War. Divided into two sections, important genealogical information and physical descriptions of free blacks in Pulaski County are detailed in a registry, while the second part includes information on legal proceedings in the post-war period that offer a glimpse into everyday life of Pulaski County and surrounding counties of Southwest Virginia.

If conserved, the journal will be on permanent display and available for genealogical research.

For more information about the Virginia’s Top 10 Endangered Artifacts program, contact:

Christina Newton, Assistant Director
 cnewton@vamuseums.org
804.358.3170

Virginia Association of Museums
3126 West Cary Street, #447
Richmond, Virginia 23221

www.vamuseums.org