

HIST-397/597/615

Mason Legacies:

Editing and Explaining a Mason Family Account Book, 1792-1820

Spring 2024

This class meets most weeks in-person in Innovation 328. (See details below.)

Dr. Cynthia Kierner (ckierner@gmu.edu) Horizon Hall 3165

Dr. George Oberle (goberle@gmu.edu) Fenwick Library 4002

Please feel free to contact us at any time via Slack or regular Mason email.

This course is both a contribution to the university's Mason Legacies initiative and an introduction to documentary editing. Students will transcribe and annotate sections of an account book that belonged to Stevens Thomson Mason (1760-1803), nephew of George Mason IV (the famous George), and his son Armistead Thomson Mason (1787-1819), which is currently available in Fenwick Library's Special Collections in an unedited digitized format:

https://scrc.gmu.edu/finding_aids/masonaccountbook.html. This branch of the Mason family resided in Loudoun County at Raspberry Plain plantation.

The digitized Mason Family Manuscript Account Book, with students' transcriptions and annotations, will be published as a [born-digital project](#) accessible to the public. The centerpiece of the project will be biographical sketches of all of the people mentioned in the account book—men and women, white and Black, free and enslaved—which will offer users a cumulative portrait of a significant subset of the population of one northern Virginia community, Loudoun County, in the post-revolutionary era.

By reading, transcribing, and annotating the Mason Family Manuscript Account Book, students will learn about family relationships and finances, legal practice and fees, medicine, slavery, the plantation economy and local trade, and other related topics. They will also develop certain digital and documentary editing skills.

Class format and structure: Our class meets most weeks on Wednesday at 4:30. Because this class is in part a collaborative workshop/seminar, attendance is essential. Most weeks, students will need laptops or tablets to do in-class work. Although we will be doing substantive work in class, students should also anticipate conferring with both their instructors and their classmates as needed via Slack.

Slack works best--i.e., fastest--as an app on your phone or tablet, but you can also access it through their website on your laptop. You can use this tool to share research information (including files and screenshots) with each other, to collaborate on difficult transcriptions, and to consult with your instructors as needed outside of class time (though we are also available via email). To join the Slack group, use this link: https://masonfamilyac-a9b2741.slack.com/signup# and for a useful introduction to Slack basics, by Dr. Abby Mullen, go to:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1OamaBqHmWnh_90F-zY9tZgEn6zT7drQv

Required texts: Students should purchase Michael E. Stevens and Steven B. Burg, *Editing Historical Documents: A Handbook of Practice*, which is available from the university bookstore and from Amazon and other online sellers. The premier guide to documentary editing, this book will be used

less as a basis for class discussion than as a reference work that we will consult from time to time over the course of the semester.

Most other required readings, which provide historical context to inform both your written work and our class discussions, consist of articles and book chapters that are accessible online through the Fenwick Library catalog. Readings that are not accessible through the library catalog are posted on Blackboard (in either the Course Readings or Course Content area, as specified below) or are available via hyperlinks that are embedded in this course syllabus.

Grades for this course will be determined as follows:

• Short essay (due 1/24)	10%
• Draft of first biographical entry (due 2/21)	5%
• Draft of second biographical entry (due 2/28)	5%
• Revision of first biographical entry (due 3/13)	5%
• Revision of second biographical entry (due 3/20)	5%
• Transcriptions (due 3/27)	10%
• Third biographical entry or research report (due 5/1)	15%
• Fourth biographical entry or research report (due 5/1)	15%
• Annotations and glossary (due 5/1)	5%
• Attendance/participation (including in-class work and Slack)	25%

Students will submit all written work on Blackboard. Note that more explicit and detailed directions for all written work are posted in the Assessments section of Blackboard.

Other information:

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please contact Disability Services at 993-2474, <http://ds.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through Disability Services.

For a list of the varied and extensive services the university offers for graduate students, go to <https://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/graduate/graduate-student-resources/grad-student-life>. Similar information for undergraduates is can be found at <https://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/undergraduate/resources-and-support-services>

Finally, please note that all students are subject to the George Mason University Honor Code (see <http://ijju.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/honor.htm>). The penalty for cheating or plagiarism on any assignment will be—at a minimum—a grade of F for this course.

Course Schedule:

Wednesday 17 January: Course Overview

- Read Stevens and Burg, *Editing Historical Documents*, chap. 1
- Read these two brief pieces from Smithsonian: <https://amhistory.si.edu/american-enterprise/merchant-ledger/> and <https://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/decoding-colonial-ledger>

- Read the *Wikipedia* entry on Stevens Thomson Mason:
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stevens_Thomson_Mason_\(senator\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stevens_Thomson_Mason_(senator))
- Read the following student-written Mason family biographical entries (accessible through [the "People" tab on the Mason Family Account Book site](#)): Abraham Barnes Thomson Mason; Armistead Thomason Mason; Emily Mason McCarty; John Thomson Mason; (Mrs.) Mary Elizabeth Mason; William T. T. Mason

Wednesday 24 January: Foundational Reading I (The Masons' Northern Virginia)

- Jackson Turner Main, "The One Hundred," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 11 (1954): 354-84.
- Thomas J. Humphrey, "Conflicting Independence: Land Tenancy and the American Revolution," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 28 (2008): 160-82.
- A. Glenn Crothers, "Agricultural Improvement and Technical Innovation in a Slave Society: The Case of Early National Northern Virginia," *Agricultural History*, 75 (2001): 135-67.
- Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South*, chap. 6: "The Nature of Loudoun Slavery" (in Course Readings on Blackboard)

****In-class work: Editor's Library, core sources and databases**

Writing assignment due: Short paper. Please follow the directions on Blackboard and submit your work there.

Each student will choose two of these comparatively easily researchable (and almost certainly white) people as subjects of their first and second biographical entries:

Folio 10: A. Mitchell
 Folio 31: David James
 Folio 34: Solomon Littleton
 Folio 42: William West
 Folio 44: Sampson Littleton
 Folio 50: Thomas Harrison
 Folio 52: William Mitchell
 Folio 53: William Wright
 Folio 57: Thomas Taylor
 Folio 75: Thomas Mason
 Folios 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101: Stephens Thomson Mason Jr.
 Folios 100, 103, 135, 139, 142: Thomson Mason
 Folio 105: John Simpson
 Folios 105, 105, 155: Thomas Hagan
 Folio 106: Aaron Greg
 Folio 106: Dr. Tyler
 Folio 106: John S. Martin
 Folios 106, 128, 146, 162: Charles Thornton
 Folio 123: Mrs. C.E. Mason
 Folio 151: John T. Mason Jr.
 Folio 154: Miss Mary Mason

Wednesday 31 January: Foundational Reading II (Money and Accounting)

- Christopher Densmore, "Understanding and Using Early Nineteenth Century Account Books," *The Midwestern Archivist*, 5 (1980): 5-19.
- Ellen Hartigan O'Connor, *The Ties that Buy: Woman and Commerce in Revolutionary America*, chap. 3: "Family Credit and Shared Debts" (in Course Readings on Blackboard)
- Caitlin Rosenthal, "Slavery's Scientific Management: Accounting for Mastery," in Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, eds., *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development*, pp. 62-86 (in Course Readings on Blackboard)

****Guest: Alison Herring, independent scholar and accountant**

Wednesday 7 February: Doing Local History Research. Virtual tour and orientation for the [Thomas Balch Library](#).

- Read Editorial Method and Project Style Guide (both in Course Content on Blackboard)
- Read Stevens and Burg, *Editing Historical Documents*, chaps. 3-4
- Read History Citation Guide (in Course Content on Blackboard)

Wednesday 14 February: Using Local and State Records for Historical and Genealogical Research and Introduction to Transcribing and Annotating

- David Armstrong, "['Not Satisfied with the Provisions Made for Her': Elizabeth Mary Ann Barnes Hooe, the Mason Family, and the Transfer of Property in Early Virginia](#)"—pay particular attention to the different sorts of public records David Armstrong used to research this exhibit for the Center for Mason Legacies
- Library of Virginia Guide to Using County Records (in Course Content on Blackboard)

In-class work: transcribing folio 133.

Note: As part of the transcription process, we will begin to generate our list of terms that the class will ultimately annotate or define more briefly in the project glossary. Each student should collect these terms in a single Word file to be submitted at the end of the semester.

Wednesday 21 February: Foundational Reading III (Women, Property Law, and Domestic Life)

- Suzanne D. Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg*, chap. 2: "The Political Economy of Marriage" (in Course Readings on Blackboard)
- Kirsten E. Wood, "Broken Reeds and Competent Farmers: Slaveholding Widows in the Southeastern United States, 1783-1861," *Journal of Women's History*, 13 (2001): 34-57.
- Susan Kern, "The Material World of the Jeffersons at Shadwell," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 62 (2005): 213-42.

Each student will choose one these (presumably) white women as the subject of their third biographical entry:

Folio 47: Mrs. Greenleaf
Folio 48: Mrs. Myres
Folio 58: Mrs. Lacey
Folio 66: Mrs. McCabe
Folio 69: Lidia Hough

Folio 73: Mrs. Butcher
Folio 75: Mrs. Littleton
Folio 77: Rachel Miles
Folio 81: Mary King
Folio 81: Sarah Williams
Folio 82: Ann Cunard
Folio 84: Mrs. Philips
Folio 85: Elizabeth McClaughlin
Folio 100: Mrs. Barry
Folios 102, 154, 155: Mrs. Edwards
Folio 110: Mrs. Gliver
Folio 111: Mrs. Herlop
Folio 120: Miss E. Hoyer
Folios 133, 139: Liddia Douglass
Folios 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 145: Mrs. Tebbs
Folio 137: Elizabeth Whitmore
Folio 137: Mary Whitmore
Folio 152: Catherine A. Barry
Folio 153: Mrs. Harrison
Folios 153, 154, 155: Mrs. Scott
Folio 171: Nancy Lightfoot

Writing assignment due: Draft of first biographical entry. Submit on Blackboard.

Wednesday 28 February: Digital History and the Archives. [The George Washington Financial Papers Project](#), [Founders Online](#), [Virginia Legislative Petitions](#), [Southern Campaigns Revolutionary War Pension Statements & Rosters](#), and more.

Find an open-access project that involves the digitization of manuscripts or other archival resources and come to class prepared to discuss it. The project you choose should be one that you would trust as a research source (and therefore it will likely have a .edu, .gov, or .org URL) and ideally one that would be relevant for our course.

****Guest: Dr. Alyssa Fahringer, Fenwick Library Digital Scholarship Consultant**

Students should come to class having chosen the subject for their fourth (and final) bibliographical entry. You may either choose from the unclaimed people from the lists on this syllabus or scroll through the “List of Account Book People” spreadsheet that is posted in on Blackboard.

Writing assignment due: Draft of second biographical entry. Submit on Blackboard.

****Spring Break—No Class****

Wednesday 13 March: Data Entry. Read the Guide to Data Entry (in Course Content on Blackboard).

****Guest: Tom Seabrook, Graduate Research Assistant, Center for Mason Legacies**

In-class work: Practicing data entry (using our transcription from 2/14—i.e., folio 133). Then, each student will be assigned a folio (or, in some cases, less than one full folio) to transcribe and enter

into the database on their own, a process they will begin in class. Folios for transcription (all of which pertain to the estate of Hugh Douglas) will be as follows:

Folio 134, debit (left side)
Folio 134, credit (right side)
Folio 135, debit
Folio 135, credit
Folio 136, debit
Folio 136, credit
Folio 137, debit
Folio 137, credit
Folio 138
Folio 146, debit
Folio 146, credit
Folio 147, debit
Folio 147, credit

Writing assignment due: Revisions of first biographical entry. Submit on Blackboard.

Wednesday 20 March: In-Class Transcription and Research Troubleshooting. Come to class prepared to share your research and transcription tips and problems.

Writing assignment due: Revisions of second biographical entry. Submit on Blackboard.

Wednesday 27 March: Research Week—No class meeting.

Writing assignment due: Transcriptions. Submit on Blackboard and enter data to project website.

Friday 29 March: Each student's cumulative annotation/glossary list is due on Blackboard by 5:00 p.m. Your instructors will alphabetize and collate the list, and divide the merged lists into sections, which will be circulated before next class meeting.

Wednesday 3 April: Annotation or Glossary? In-class discussion of annotations and glossary entries and when to use each. Review the Style Guide and come to class with questions/examples from the list you have been compiling over the entire semester.

Students should come to class also having read the pre-circulated collated list of prospective glossary entries and prepared to compose definitions for them. The class will divide into groups to do this work collaboratively.

Wednesday 10 April: Research and Writing Week—No class meeting.

Wednesday 17 April: Peer Editing. Submit drafts of your third and fourth biographical entries on Blackboard by 2:00 p.m. These will be recirculated and made available to peer reviewers for use in class.

Wednesday 24 April: Final Work and Post Mortem.

Wednesday 1 May (exam period): Final written work due on Blackboard.

Writing assignments due: Annotations and glossary; third and fourth biographical entries.