

HIST-397/615/688; AFAM-390

Mason Legacies:

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

Spring 2023

This class meets most weeks in-person in Innovation 336. (Exceptions noted below.)

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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 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, which will offer users a cumulative portrait of a significant subset of the population of Loudoun County in the post-revolutionary era. This year's class will focus primarily, but not exclusively, on researching and writing about the lives of the enslaved people whose names appear in the account book.

By reading, transcribing, and annotating the Mason Family 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 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. We will be doing significant in-class work, though 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) 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 great introduction to Slack, 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, are accessible online through the Fenwick Library catalog. Readings that are not accessible through the library catalog are either posted on Blackboard in the Course Content area or available via hyperlinks embedded in the course syllabus, below.

Grades for this course will be determined as follows:

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

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

Course Schedule:

Wednesday 25 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 *Wikipedia* entry on Armistead Thomson Mason: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armistead_Thomson_Mason
- Read Gregory S. Schneider, “Where’s Kitty Cary?: The Answer Unlocked Black History Richmond Tried to Hide,” *Washington Post*, 28 Oct. 2022: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/10/27/richmond-shockoe-african-burying-ground/>
- Read four model student-written biographical entries in Course Content on Blackboard

****Guest: Prof. Wendi Manuel-Scott: “From the Enslaved Children of George Mason to Black Lives Next Door”**

****Guest: Dianne Tomasek, Project Intern**

Wednesday 1 February: Foundational Reading I (The Masons’ Northern Virginia)—plus Introduction to Transcribing and Annotating

- Jackson Turner Main, “The One Hundred,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 11 (1954): 354-84.
- Warren R. Hofstra and Robert D. Mitchell, “Town and Country in Backcountry Virginia: Winchester and the Shenandoah Valley,” *Journal of Southern History*, 59 (1993): 619-46.

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

****Editor's Library: Core sources and databases (in-class introduction)**

In-class work: transcribing folio 47.

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.

Writing assignment due: Based on this week's foundational reading, write a 3-5-page essay (double-spaced) describing what you believe to be the salient features of the Masons' world in Loudoun County. Be sure that you state the thesis of your essay in the first paragraph and that you draw on all of the assigned readings (except for the Editorial Method and Style Guide documents).

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

Folio 10: Joseph Williams

Folios 10 and 58: Coromantee Jack

Folio 10: J. Tucker

Folio 10: Dr. Shaftoe

Folio 10: Samuel Perry

Folio 10: Benjamin Newman

Folio 10: Mrs. Taylor

Folio 10: A. Mitchell

Folio 10: William Cole

Folio 10: James Hughes

Folio 10: J. Harrison

Folio 10: J. Rhody

Folio 26: Charles Eskrdige

Folio 28: Miss B. Armistead

Folio 34: Benjamin Shreeve

Folio 34: Robert Hereford

Folio 37: Mrs. Mason

Folio 42: William West

Folio 50: Thomas Harrison

Folio 52: William Mitchell

Folio 52: Robert D. Fowke

Folio 52: James Ewell

Folio 53: Stephen C. Roszel

Folio 53: Elizabeth Holtzton

Folio 53: William Wright

Folio 57: Thomas Taylor

Folio 91: John Minor

Folio 100: George Rust
Folio 101: Mary Mason
Folio 170: William T. T. Mason
Folio 181: John Shaw

Wednesday 8 February: Foundational Reading II (Money and Accounting)

- Henry K. Sharp, "Research Notes: New Discoveries in Old Sources: A Neglected Ledger Reveals the Persons and Processes of Building in Late Colonial Virginia," *Buildings and Landscapes*, 27 (Spring 2020): 79-89.
- Ellen Hartigan O'Connor, *The Ties that Buy: Woman and Commerce in Revolutionary America*, chap. 3: "Family Credit and Shared Debts"
- 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.

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

Wednesday 15 February: Doing Local History Research: Transcribing and Annotating

Class will meet in the [Thomas Balch Library](#)

Writing assignment due: Draft of first biographical entry.

Wednesday 22 February: Foundational Reading III (Slavery and Enslaved People)

- Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South*, chap. 6: "The Nature of Loudoun Slavery."
- Damian Alan Pargas, "Work and Slave Family Life in Antebellum Northern Virginia," *Journal of Family History*, 31 (2006): 335-57.
- Loren Schweninger, "The Underside of Slavery: The Internal Economy, Self-Hire, and Quasi-Freedom in Virginia, 1780-1865," *Slavery and Abolition*, 12 (1991): 1-22.
- 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.
- Timmia King's biographical entries on Greenfield's Nate and Old Tony

****Guest: Stephen Hammond, independent scholar and family historian**

Discussion: How do we identify enslaved people in the Mason Family Account Book?

Each student will choose two (presumably) enslaved people from the following list as subjects of their third and fourth biographical sketches:

Folios 14, 96, 106, 100, 101, 106, 107: Bob
Folio 14: Milley
Folio 14: Cudjo
Folios 28, 78, 105: Harry
Folio 28: Cargo
Folio 28: Camilla
Folio 31: Betty

Folio 31: Fanny
Folios 34, 66: Billy
Folio 39: Davy
Folios 47, 58: Jack
Folio 63: Humphrey
Folio 98: Isac
Folio 101, 103, 135: George
Folios 102, 105, 153, 154, 155, 156: Jerry
Folios 102, 153, 154, 155: Caty (and children)
Folios 102, 154, 155: Duanna (or Duanne)
Folios 102, 154, 155: Phil
Folios 102, 153, 154, 155: Scylla
Folios 102, 103, 104, 105, 123, 153, 155, 156: Phillis (or Philis)
Folio 103: Moses
Folio 104: Sophia
Folio 105: Barney
Folio 105: Adam
Folio 123: Ariana
Folios 135, 153, 154, 155, 185: Joe
Folio 135: Amy
Folio 138, 147: Ajacks (or Ajack)
Folios 138, 147, 185: Isacc
Folio 153, 154, 155: Hester and children
Folio 153, 154, 155: Becky (or Beck)
Folio 153, 154, 155: Baker
Folio 153, 154, 155: Mary
Folio 153, 154: Betsy (and children)
Folios 153, 156: Nelly
Folios 153, 156: Eady
Folio 154, 155: Betty and children
Folio 182: Easter

Wednesday 1 March: Introduction to Data Entry

- Read the Guide to Data Entry in Course Content on Blackboard

In-class work: Practicing data entry (using our transcription from 2/15—i.e., folio 47).

Each student will be assigned a folio (or, in some cases, two folios) to transcribe and enter into the database on their own. Folios for transcription will be as follows:

Folio 48
Folio 49
Folio 50
Folios 51-52
Folios 53-54
Folios 55-56
Folios 57-58
Folios 59-60
Folios 61-62

Folio 63
Folios 64-65
Folios 66-67
Folios 68-69
Folios 70-71
Folios 72-73
Folios 74-75

****Guest: Jayme Kurland, Graduate Research Assistant, Center for Mason Legacies**

Writing assignment due: Draft of second biographical entry.

Wednesday 8 March: Digital History and the Archives. [*The George Washington Financial Papers Project, Founders Online, The Race and Slavery Petitions Project*](#) and more.

- Read Jordan E. Taylor, "Newspaper-Brokered Slave Trade Advertisements in North America, 1704-1807," *Journal of Slavery and Data Preservation* 2, no. 2 (2021): <https://jsdp.enslaved.org/fullDataArticle/volume2-issue2-newspaper-brokered-slave-trade-advertisements> (including StoryMap linked to note 3).
- 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).

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

Friday 10 March: Writing assignments due: Revisions of first biographical entry and transcriptions.

Wednesday 15 March: Writing assignment due: Revisions of second biographical entry.

Wednesday 22 March: Doing Research in African American History and Genealogy

****Guest Cara F. Griggs, CA, Reference Archivist, Library of Virginia: "Who Was Forest Griffith: A Virginia Genealogy Case Study"**

Wednesday 29 March: In-Class Research-a-Thon (The Editor's Library and Other Resources)

****Guest: Dianne Tomasek, Project Intern**

Wednesday 5 April: Research Week—No class meeting.

Wednesday 12 April: More In-Class Transcribing and Research Troubleshooting. Folios for transcription TBD. Come to class prepared to share your research tips and problems.

Friday 14 April: 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 19 April: Annotation or Glossary? In-class discussion of annotations and when to use them. 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 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 26 April: Research and Writing Week—No class meeting.

Wednesday 3 May: Final Work and Post Mortem.

Wednesday 10 May (exam period): Final written work due.

- **Completion of glossary (if necessary).**
- **Annotations.**
- **Third and fourth biographical sketches and/or research reports due.**