

Hollins Day

Celebrating 175 Years

Voices From Our Past

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Note: text in italics (year, name, source etc.) is not read. It will be included in slide projections which the audience will see as the text is read.

1840 & 1857 – Charles Lewis Cocke, President

Sources: W. R. L. Smith's biography *Charles Lewis Cocke: Founder of Hollins College* and Charles Lewis Cocke's *Reports to the Board*, Hollins, July 1857.

While still a student at Columbian College, Charles Lewis Cocke wrote [...] "I want to devote my life to the higher education of women in the south, which I consider one of our greatest needs. In this decision, my promised wife concurs...

...This plan recognizes the principle that in the present state of society, young ladies require the same thorough mental training as that afforded to young men..."

1899 – Flora Webster, Student

Source: article "The Social Side of Hollins" by Flora Webster in *The Semi-Annual* (Literary magazine; Feb 1899)

"Did you ask if we ever went to Roanoke? Ah, if you could see the exodus on Saturday mornings! Owing to Mr. Cocke's extreme unwillingness to have us attend public entertainments and theaters in Roanoke—and he is always very frank and open in stating his objections (bad roads and night air and measles and chicken-pox and whooping-cough—and boys)—we prefer to get up those amusements for ourselves."

1864 – Eliza R. Horsley, Student

Source: "An Interesting Letter" by Eliza R. Horsley in *Hollins Alumnae Quarterly* (October 1930)

"I recall most vividly the stirring times during the 'War Between the States,' especially when the Federal troops were raiding through Virginia and it seemed probable that they would come to Hollins. I well remember Mr. Cocke's look of deep anxiety, with many girls to care for and a raid of enemy soldiers imminent! One night we were all called to Chapel. There, Mr. Cocke met us, he said no one was go to bed that night, but to go to our rooms and dress ourselves as if for traveling; hats, coats, gloves; then we were to all sit quietly together on the upper porch directly in view from his office. We quickly carried out these directions and there we sat, a scared lot of girls trying bravely to steel ourselves to face whatever might come. As I now recall, we sat there most of the night, until a Yankee deserter came, bringing the glad tidings that the raiders had turned off and taken a road not leading to Hollins..."

1863– Clem Bolden, Groundskeeper

Source: "Statement made by Clem Bolden and taken down by Jos. A. Turner. January 30, 1925." Hollins Archives.

Eliza Horsley's war was different from Clem Bolden's. Mr. Bolden worked on campus as a grounds keeper. He was enslaved. In 1863 he was forcibly drafted:

"I was born in Henrico and belonged to the estate of Mrs. Clem Read. When I was a very little boy I came to Mr. David Read's place in Roanoke County. Mr. Charles L. Cocke hired my father and mother and family [from the Reads] sometime before the war. I waited on table in dining room. Mr. Dick Walrond came here in Fall of 1863 and everybody he put his hand on had to go. I got on a train at Salem and went down about Petersburg and Richmond. Then we walked to a place called Dutch Gap. We was on one side of the river and the Yankees was on the other side. They was shooting at us all the time. We could see the big cannon balls and dodge 'em, but we couldn't dodge the bullets...

Them dead bodies started smelling.' Us colored men had to bury them fast as we could. Sometimes the ground be hard and cold and diggin' took all of our strength. But with the help of the Good Lord, we got them buried, but there was always more bodies to bury. Couldn't bury no coloreds near the whites. You get beat if you did. Longest two years of my life. Just wanted to get back home to see the flowers growing and blooming. The smell of death was enough to make anyone want to get back to livin."

1914 – Hollins Magazine

Source: "Distinguished Visitors" by staff writer in *Hollins Magazine* (Alumnae magazine; Nov 1914)

"The Equal Suffrage League of Virginia lately held its Annual Meeting in Roanoke, and on Sunday, November 8, several of the more prominent members of the League visited Hollins. Not everyone at Hollins became a suffragist forthwith, but a surprising number of suffrage buttons were seen in the next day or two, and all who heard the able and earnest addresses realized that at least no woman of today has a right to be indifferent towards this much mooted question."

1955 - Judith Hillman Paterson, Student

Source: *The Remembered Gate: Memoirs by Alabama Writers*. University of Alabama Press, 2002.

"The Hollins faculty was staffed in those days by an enthusiastic set of youngish male professors and an older generation of intellectually liberated women who had been the suffragists and reformers of their day. I was hardly settled in, it seemed, before I was reading W. J. Cash's "Mind of the South," C. Vann Woodward's "The Strange Career of Jim Crow," and learning about Thorstein Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption....

[Judith Paterson continues]

....A girl [...] on my hall went home to Richmond one weekend during her freshman year, showed her parents her books, and told them that her professors were saying things about race, gender, economics, and religion very different from what she had learned at home. She returned just long enough to pack her bags and go. I think, 'What a fool to tell her parents.'"

1964 - Georgia Murdock Berner, Student

Source: *Hollins Class of 1964 50th Reunion Book*, 2014.

"At that time Hollins had a policy that young girls could not have a drink off campus unless we were with a man. Two of our class members were turned in by she who shall not be named for drinking and were threatened with expulsion. We gathered signatures from a large number of our class stating that we had all been drinking, figuring correctly that they would not expel the majority of the Senior Class. We were called to testify to the board, and informed them that among other things, a few of us young ladies were picking up Pepsi truck drivers and shoe salesmen to take us drinking. Oh, the horror of it! It worked, the rule was eliminated."

1970 – Allie Frazier, Professor of Philosophy and Religion

Source: "Afterthoughts" by Joe Leedom in *Hollins* (Summer 1997)

"During the 1970 Cambodian invasion, the student leaders of the peace movement proposed that we close the college down for a day and engage in different forms of peace activities. And they did. They closed the college."

1994 - Marisa Parmelee, Student

Source: "The Changing Face of Hollins" by Marisa Parmelee in the *Hollins Columns* (Student newspaper; Sept. 26, 1994)

"Women who are going places start at Hollins. I remember first reading those words as a junior in high school. Wow! What a statement! It caught my attention, and after other inquires, I decided that this was the place for me. But was Hollins really the place for me? I began my first year in September 1991 with much excitement and many hesitations. 'Would I fit in? Did I make the right decision?' There seemed to be an air of conservatism and intolerance, and I was not prepared for it. I wanted activism! I wanted controversy! I wanted feminism!

But I stayed for another year...I began to see some changes on campus. I will never forget National Coming Out Day. I believe I remember that day as the time when traditional, conservative views were challenged... I was beginning to truly believe that I made the right decision to come to Hollins."

1934-2010 – Emma Bruce, Staff

Source: "Bruce, Mary." Obituary. *The Roanoke Times*, 9/21/10

1910 – Emma Bruce, Laundresses

Source: *From Whence Cometh My Help: the African American Community at Hollins College* by Ethel Morgan Smith. University of Missouri Press, 2000 .

"Miss Emma graduated from Lucy Addison High School and pursued a nursing degree, but due to height and weight restrictions she was unable to fulfill her dream. It was at that time she became employed at Hollins College in 1934 in the Chemistry Department. She was responsible for cleaning the labs and setting up experiments. She also took on work for a few of the professors. In 1976, she retired from the college and received the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award, an award that recognizes members of the campus community who have shown by daily living those qualities that evidence a spirit of love and helpfulness to other men and women. In May 2004, the college bestowed the highest honor you can receive, a Dr. of Law degree. In August 2010, at Hollins University, family, friends and the campus community celebrated Dr. Mary Emma Bruce's 100th birthday."

When asked if she recognized any of the laundresses that appeared in Hollins yearbooks, Emma Bruce recollected: "No, I don't, but it was a common sight around here. Everyone, at least the ones close to my age, remembers being told about them. They were just called washerwomen. You can imagine that they washed all of the bed linens, table linens, laundry for the students, as well as laundry for members of the Cocke, Turner, and Pleasants families. So they must have been busy all the time."

1940 – Bessie Carter Randolph, President

Source: Report to the Board of Trustees, June 20 1940.

"The college owes each year a debt of gratitude to this group on our staff. In positions important or humble both races serve us faithfully. In some future memorial it is my desire to see an adequate commemoration of the work done by our colored people for nearly a hundred years."

1930s – Allie Frazier, Professor of Philosophy and Religion

Source: "Afterthoughts" by Joe Leedom in *Hollins* (Alumnae magazine; Summer 1997)

"My undergraduate education was a liberating experience. It was a liberal arts education and that's why I'm interested in promoting the liberal arts. I grew up in Shaw, Mississippi, which had 1,100 black people and 900 white people and was a completely segregated society. I grew up with all the prejudices you could have in the '30s and '40s in the state of Mississippi. It took philosophy to break me out of all those prejudices."

1964 - Sarah Lawrence Holland, Student

Source: *Hollins Class of 1964 50th Reunion Book, 2014.*

“Here is what I had when we left Hollins: delight in the life of the mind; love of words and an English major’s skills to use them; Hollins Abroad French; marvelous friends; the ability to form an opinion and the courage to share it; reverence for tradition and grits with my eggs; the comforting sense that, even young, I was already a citizen of the world.”

1920 –Student

Source: *Member of the student Literary Society, writing in Hollins Magazine (Literary magazine; Dec. 1920)*

“At Hollins everyone, a Senior first of all, combines the seriousness and the fun of life. The two are always intertwined, and we love it. This isn’t just a phase at Hollins—it *is* Hollins.”

2016 – Nancy Gray, President

Source: *Roanoke Times, M. Maxey, “A Not-So-Hidden Treasure: Nancy Gray Has Transformed Hollins University,” Nov. 20, 2016.*

“She came to Hollins twelve years ago as its 11th president. Since that time, she has taken an outstanding institution of higher education and made it better and stronger. Hers are marvelous accomplishments. As part of her efforts, Hollins has affirmed its core commitment to excellence in women’s higher education and in liberal learning for women in that setting. At the same time, she has led Hollins in adapting and changing with the challenges of the times. The treasure that is Nancy Gray has always been in plain view. We have this year, Hollins 175th, to celebrate her work among us.”

1930s - Mildred Reynolds Trivers

Source: *“We Steered by the Stars: a Reminiscence of Hollins From the Class of 1934” by Mildred Reynolds Trivers. In Hollins (Alumnae magazine; October 1985)*

“While our teachers were educating us, Hollins was nurturing us in beauty. ‘Beauty crowds me till I die’ says the poet, and if you will sit on a stone in front campus and listen to the gentle voices of the past, listen to the tinkle of Louis’ triangle as he summoned us to the ceremony of dining and to the sound of the library clock as it ordered the hours of the day, beauty will crowd you.”

These texts originate in documents provided by the Hollins Archives. They have been selected, excerpted and edited for the purpose of a public reading. For more information and full text, contact Beth Harris, Archivist and Special Collections Librarian at Wyndham Robertson Library:

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