“VERT A COLLEDGE . . . .”

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College of William and Mary in Virginia

by DONALD M. SWEIG

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by Donald M. Sweig*

The College of William and Mary in Virginia is the only American college or university granted a coat of arms by the College of Arms in London. These arms are a unique facet of the William and Mary heritage. It is therefore somewhat surprising to find that during the more than two-hundred-eighty-year history of the college no less than three distinctly different arms have been used in the college seal and on official college documents, one being so different from the issue of the College of Arms as to be totally incorrect. Interestingly enough these changes were made with so little public notice, indeed with so little public or private record, that the reasons for and the critical circumstances surrounding the changes are not now evident. While some of the confusion may be attributable to old records having disappeared, an incident in the 1780s (when the first major change in the seal occurred) makes it plain that there was confusion even then. Soon after the first change in the seal had been made, a document issued by the college and bearing the new seal came into the hands of the governor of Virginia. Not recognizing the seal he returned the document to the college, asking whether it might not be a forgery. Recent research has made it possible to trace the history of the arms used by the College of William and Mary and to gain some insight not only into what happened and when, but also into why and how changes occurred, and who was involved.

Fortunately, copies of the very earliest warrants and other documents relating to the original grant of arms are preserved by the College of Arms in London. The earliest document is a warrant, dated May 2, 1694, from

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1 This was true at least until the early twentieth century. Since that time, other American colleges may have purchased a coat-of-arms from the College of Arms. Regrettably, as research at the College of Arms must be done by the heralds, it was not possible to investigate this fully.

2 William and Mary Quarterly, 2nd ser., X (1910), 161.
Henry, Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal of England, to the Kings of Arms, ordering and appointing them to “Devyse, Grant and Assign” arms to the trustees of the College of William and Mary, and requiring them to enter the warrant and grant of arms in the records of the College of Arms. This grant, dated May 14, 1694, contains the blazon of the arms granted to the College of William and Mary: “Vert a Collidge, or Edifice Mason’d Argent in Chief a Sun rising Or the Hemisphere proper, as in the margent hereof is more plainly depicted.” Roughly translated, this becomes a stone college building or buildings in silver, on a green field, with a blue sky above containing part of a golden sun. On the original grant there would have been an emblazonment, and there is still a sketch in the rolls which depicts these arms. The document goes on to “Grant Ratify and Confirm” that coat of arms “unto the aforesaid Trustees [of the College of William and Mary] and their Successors, to be used as their Common Seal for ever hereafter by them and their Successors for the Doing, Executing and Confirming all and singular their affairs and businesses.” It is all spelled out quite clearly; the arms are assigned to the trustees of the college to be in their seal always and used in all matters whatsoever.

There was undoubtedly a document representing the grant of arms. It probably was engrossed and illuminated on vellum; it would have contained the full text of the grant and a colored depiction of the arms being granted, as well, perhaps, as the arms of the College of Arms and the royal arms, while the signature and seals of the Kings of Arms would have been placed at the bottom of the document. The question remains how and when this document got to America. The Reverend James Blair had secured and transported the charter of the college to Virginia in 1693, and it is most likely that the arms were granted in response to a later letter from Blair to the bishop of London. However, Blair was in Virginia from September of 1693 until late spring of 1697, so he could not have received the grant of arms in 1694. It is possible that the grant was sent to Blair by the bishop of London or that it was kept in London until Blair arrived in 1697. This entire matter is unclear, for while Blair could have received the grant while he was in London in 1697, the financial records of the college from 1693 to

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3 Sir Thomas St. George, Knight Garter, Principal King of Arms, and Sir Henry St. George, Knight Clarencex, King of Arms.

4 *William and Mary Quarterly*, 2nd ser., X, 161-162

5 A blazon is a description of the arms written in standard heraldic terminology. It is written in Anglo-Norman in a formal and specific manner so that any herald reading the blazon should be able to draw the arms.

6 “Rolls” is the term used to describe the records of arms granted at the College of Arms. At one time these records were actually kept on rolls of parchment.
April 16, 1697, include the following item: “To the Seal of the Colledge £45—02s.”

If the seal, which would have contained the arms granted to the college, had been finished and paid for by April of 1697, questions arise over where it was made and by whom. If there were an artisan in the American colonies during the 1690s who was capable of engraving such a seal, and if he was in fact commissioned by the college for the task, he would have needed the grant of 1694 in order to copy the arms onto the seal, meaning that the grant would have to have been sent to Virginia before 1697. Yet the seal may have been cut in England—possibly in London under a commission from the college’s chancellor, the bishop of London—and then either kept in London until Blair returned to England or sent to Virginia after its completion. Unfortunately, the actual place of execution of the seal cannot be determined. Perhaps the best guess, given the available information, is that the seal was made in England and sent to Virginia prior to April of 1697, for it seems rather doubtful that the college would have paid for a seal which had not yet been received.

On October 13, 1698, another warrant was issued by the earl marshal which ordered the College of Arms to transfer the arms granted in 1694 from the trustees to the “President and Masters or Professors of the College of William and Mary in Virginia.” This transfer was accomplished in a document issued by the College of Arms on October 18, 1698. Business with the earl marshal and the College of Arms was now complete, and the College of William and Mary had a coat of arms and a seal bearing those arms.

The earliest document extant which bears the seal is the certificate issued in April 1729, which appointed Edmund Gibson, the bishop of London, chancellor of the college. The same seal appears on a surveyor’s license issued by the college in 1749, on a land lease of 1762, on a surveyor’s

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7 William and Mary Quarterly, 1st ser., VIII (1900), 166-169.
8 It is doubtful that there was an artisan in Virginia capable of making quality seals at this early date. While there may have been one in the colonies somewhere, it would have been as easy to have had the seal made in England. In a letter to the author September 6, 1973, Peter Walne, County Archivist, Hertfordshire, England, mentions that there is a possibility that the seal matrix was engraved either by Henry Harris or John de Roettiers, both of whom were engravers at the Royal Mint. It is not possible to determine the engraver for certain without examining the matrix, which is no longer extant.
9 William and Mary Quarterly, 2nd ser., X, 162-163.
10 Ibid., p. 163
11 Original in William and Mary College Papers, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.
12 Original in William and Mary College Papers, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.
13 Original lease of land in Sussex County, Virginia, from President and Masters of William
Plate I. The original colonial seal of the College of William and Mary, from an impression on a document issued by the college in 1749.
license issued to Thomas Jefferson in 1773, and finally on a diploma for the
degree of Doctor of Laws awarded to Thomas Jefferson, dated January 20,
1783. There is no doubt that this original or colonial seal was used from
1694 until 1783.

After 1783, the first extant document with the seal of the college is a
diploma for an honorary degree given to St. George Tucker, March 6, 1790,
which has an entirely different seal affixed. It has been variously referred
to as the second seal, the temple seal, or the Jeffersonian seal. “Temple Seal”
would seem to be the best term to use as it most clearly differentiates this
seal from the other. The term “Jeffersonian” has been used rather indiscriminately in referring to this seal. It has been occasionally suggested that
Thomas Jefferson, an admirer of classical architecture, was perhaps responsible for changing the seal when he was governor of Virginia in 1779 and
was involved in making great changes at the college. It is logical to think
that the seal was changed at the time of the Revolution, when there was
great hostility toward all things English. The state seal of Virginia had been
changed in 1776 and Lyon G. Tyler, writing in 1894, observed:
The Revolution was, in Virginia, a revolution not only in government, but in
church, education, and sentiment generally. Monarchy in every guise became
odious. The Roman Republic presented at that time the highest exemplars of
virtues and heroism known to history. . . Heraldy, the history of pedigrees,
fell into utter disrespect.

The facts prove that the Jeffersonian label for the college seal is not
justified. The colonial seal was still used on Jefferson’s honorary law degree
diploma of 1783, so the assumed chronology is incorrect. That the temple
seal was cut in Philadelphia in the last months of 1782 is clear from the cor-
respondence of James Madison, who was a delegate from Virginia to the
Confederation Congress meeting in Philadelphia. The Reverend James
Madison, president of William and Mary, wrote to his cousin in Philadelphia
on January 16, 1783, “As to the Seal, we shall take it very kind of you to
forward it as soon as convenient. The Money shall be paid by a Bill with-
out Delay.” As this was an answer to a now lost letter from Madison in

and Mary to Augustine Claiborne, January 1, 1762. Photo stat in William and Mary College
Papers, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.
14 Thomas Jefferson’s surveyor’s license for Albemarle County, Virginia, June 6, 1773,
15 Original in Massachusetts Historical Society, as verified by Mr. John Cushing, librarian
16 William and Mary Quarterly, 1st ser. III (1894), 90-91, italics added
17 Later, fourth president of the United States.
18 The Papers of James Madison, edited by William T. Hutchinson, William M. E. Rachal
et al. (University of Chicago Press, 1962- ), VI, 49.
Philadelphia which presumably mentioned that the seal was finished, it is clear (considering the time it took a letter to travel from Philadelphia to Williamsburg) that the seal must have been executed in late 1782. It is interesting to note that Jefferson's honorary degree awarded in January of 1783 still bears the old seal, even though the new one was finished. It is probable that had Jefferson been responsible for the design of this new seal, the college would have waited and used it on the diploma.

The next letter dealing with the seal was again to Madison in Philadelphia, this time from Joseph Jones in Richmond, May 25, 1783: "The Seal and Letter for the President of the College is committed to the care of Mr. Wyr[he] who takes his departure for Williamsburg today." Again, on June 4, 1783, the Reverend James Madison wrote to his namesake in Philadelphia: "I rec'd the Seal by Mr. Jones and am much obliged to you for the Trouble you have given yourself relative to it. The offer you made of having the Bill safely lodged with Scott the Engraver has induced me to enclose it to you."

Robert Scot was a logical choice to engrave the new seal. Born in Edinburgh in 1745, he had established residence in Fredericksburg by 1775. He engraved currency for Virginia and on May 12, 1780, was awarded £2103.8 "for his Services and expences in detectg some persons concerned in counterfietg the paper currency." "On requisition from the Executive," Scot executed an Indian medal for the State of Virginia in 1780 of which Thomas Jefferson wrote, "The workmanship was extraordinary good." On May 30, 1781, Governor Jefferson wrote requesting Scot to make another medal, "of the kind formerly made" for an Indian chief who was then visiting Jefferson. There is no evidence that this medal was made or even that the letter got to Scot. However, on May 27, Scot had advertised in a Philadelphia paper as "Late Engraver to the State of Virginia." He had moved to Philadelphia, probably in April or May 1781, and lived there for the remainder of his life. He was appointed engraver to the United States Mint in 1793 by President Washington on a recommendation from Secretary of State Jefferson.

James Madison's papers also contain a receipt from Mr. Scot: "Philada. June 16 1783. Recd of J Madison an order on Messrs Biddle & Co. for eight pounds fifteen shillings, which on being paid, should be a discharge in full

19 George Wythe, professor of law at William and Mary
20 Papers of James Madison, VII, 153.
21 He is referring to the bill of exchange sent as payment for the seal
of the sum due for a seal by me engraved for the University at Williamsburg. 
Rot. Scot.” 23 There is certainly no doubt that by June 4, 1783, the new seal 
was in Williamsburg and that by June 16 the financial matters were settled. 
This new seal was quite different from the colonial seal. The ornate English 
Renaissance pile24 of the colonial seal was replaced by a Roman temple. 
The temple, a rather simple building with three steps and four large columns, 
appears to be of two stories, as there are clearly two levels of windows. The 
roof is of a simple style, with a pediment pierced by a circular window, and 
the cornice and peak of the roof are tipped by finials in the shape of urns. 
Above the building, a full sun inscribed with a human face,25 emanates many 
long rays. Up to this point the seal could still conform to the blazon, for the 
exact appearance of a “Colledge or Edifice” was never specified. However, 
the new seal departs entirely from the old one and from the blazon as well 
in the depiction of a phoenix rising from the flame below the steps of the 
temple and in the inscription on the temple itself. On the frieze is written: 
“TEMP. MINERVAE.” (the temple of Minerva, the Roman goddess of 
Wisdom); on the steps, reading from top to bottom, is written: “LOGIC,” 
“GEOM.” (geometry), “GRAM.” (grammar); and finally, on the columns, 
there are letters which are almost indecipherable. The extreme left column 
bears the letters, “ARS MED.” (medical arts);26 the next column is inscribed, 
“NAT. PH.” (natural philosophy); the third is inscribed, “MOR. PH.” 
(moral philosophy); and the inscription of the extreme right column is 
“JURISP.” (jurisprudence). The legend on the outer border of the colonial 
seal begins at the top and reads, clockwise, “SIG:COLLEGII: R.8 E:R.8 
GULIELMI: ET: MARIAE: IN VIRGINIA” (Seal of the College of 
King and Queen William and Mary in Virginia). On the temple seal this 
has been changed to “SIG: COLLEGI GULIELMI ET MARIAE IN VIR- 
GINIA” (Seal of the College of William and Mary in Virginia)27 with the 
legend starting at the bottom of the seal. 
The identity of the designer of the temple seal is still uncertain. The man 
most often credited with designing it is Thomas Jefferson, for the presence 
of a classical temple as the central device quickly suggests Jeffersonian in- 
fuence to the viewer. At close examination, however, his influence appears

23 Papers of James Madison, VII 153, italics added.  
24 There appear to be several closely connected buildings in the original arms; the front 
façade, representing one building, seems to be joined to the towers and dome behind it. See 
Plate I.  
25 The colonial seal had a part of a three-quarter sun, also with a face and shorter rays.  
26 A medical school was established under the college reorganization of 1779 and continued 
until 1785.  
27 The royal titles have been conspicuously removed.
Plate II. The second or Temple seal of the College of William and Mary, made by Robert Scot, first used in 1783.
somewhat less strong. The building appears far too crude to have been
drawn by Jefferson. Not only do the basic proportions of the building
lack the care and finesse of the Jeffersonian hand, but the windows neatly
divided into four panes are highly unusual in classical architecture. Ralph
Griswold, a Williamsburg architect and an authority on Thomas Jefferson's
architectural designs, points out that Jefferson, who derided finalis, would
never have put them on the temple. Also, the steps on the side of the portico
are out of proportion and badly drawn; Mr. Griswold concludes that Thomas
Jefferson could not have drawn the building. Finally, it is extremely doubt-
ful that Jefferson would have covered the building with inscriptions. There
is no record of any kind among Jefferson's papers to indicate that he was in-
volved in the designing or changing of the William and Mary seal. Certainly
a man who kept records as carefully as Jefferson did would have made some
notation of any involvement in redesigning the seal of his own college.

Of the multitude of other men who may possibly have designed the seal,
the best case can be made for George Wythe, professor of law at William
and Mary. The key to assigning the design to Wythe lies in recognizing the
varied talents and interests of this man, as well as in the knowledge that he
was in Williamsburg at the time the new design was made—teaching at, and
vitaly interested in the affairs of, the college. This latter point can be ac-
cepted without question while the former point needs to be examined before
attributing the seal to Wythe. Lyon G. Tyler, in writing of the Virginia
Convention of 1776, attributes the design for the new Virginia state seal to
Wythe: "In Girardin's continuation of Burke's History of Virginia, it is
said that Wythe proposed the device adopted by the Convention; and, as
Girardin wrote under the supervision of Mr. Jefferson, who was keenly alive

28 Dr. Richard I. Morton, late Chancellor Professor of History, Emeritus, at the College of
William and Mary also believed that Jefferson would have designed a better building than the
temple that is on the seal.

29 The matter of the letters on the building bears some examination. The only impressions
of this seal on which the letters are clearly visible are two made in wax and one made in
paper in the twentieth century. In the paper impression, made about 1930, only the letters
on the columns are visible. It is this impression which made it possible to decipher JURISP
on the extreme right column. In none of the early impressions of this seal can any letters be
seen. This does not mean, however, that they were not on the matrix. A set of matrices for
this seal still remains and when trial impressions were made at the time this paper was written,
no letters could be seen—though visual examination of the matrices reveals that they do con-
tain the letters which are on the wax impressions. The trial impressions were made on several
types of paper and thin cardboard, and none of these were any letters present. There is no
evidence that a second set of matrices was ever made and the wear of the extant set testifies
to long use. In addition, the letters on the first column are: "ARS MED" (medical arts) and
as the medical school was discontinued in 1785 there would have been no reason for
letters added later to refer to a school of the college that no longer existed. It is therefore
safe to conclude that the lettering on the temple was there in the original design of 1782
to all such matters, there can be no reason to doubt the fact.” This point is substantiated by Wythe’s own words. Writing to Jefferson on November 18, 1776, he notes, “I understand by the person employed to draw the figures for our great seal that you intended to propose an alteration in those on the reverse. I wish you would propose it; for though I had something to do in designing them, I do not like them.” Therefore, both Jefferson’s statement to Louis H. Girardin and Wythe’s own words support the position that he designed the Virginia state seal.

Interestingly, the reverse of the 1776 Virginia seal, which Wythe said he helped design, contains: “AETERNITAS, with the globe and phoenix.” The phoenix is the most striking addition to the temple seal; and here it appears in another seal, with none other than Thomas Jefferson attributing the design to George Wythe. The case for Wythe as the designer of the 1782 William and Mary temple seal may be summarized briefly. Wythe was both willing and able to design seals; and a seal which he had designed contained an unusual device, the phoenix, which later appeared in the temple seal. Finally, there is no one else for whom so strong a case can be made as Wythe. This is not to say that he might not have consulted with others on the design; Jefferson and Wythe were friends, and it is entirely possible that Jefferson may have mentioned the idea of a temple for the William and Mary seal to Wythe. Certainly Madison, president of the college, would have been consulted. However, the actual execution of the temple in the design, the use of the phoenix, and the use of the inscriptions on the temple all indicate that the designer was George Wythe.

There is no known evidence to indicate by whose authority the seal was changed in 1783 or exactly when the new seal was first put to use. Many records from that period of the college have been destroyed or lost, and a check of both of the Virginia Gazettes from November of 1782 until July of 1783 failed to produce any mention of the change of the seal. Furthermore, that the entire matter was carried out with minimal notice is well attested by the confusion caused when the new seal was first presented to Governor Benjamin Harrison in early 1784.

It is known that the seal was in Williamsburg by June 4, 1783. It is also known both that the decision to make a new seal was obviously made by December of 1782 (if not earlier) and that in 1783 the College of William

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30 William and Mary Quarterly, 1st ser. III (1894), 91; Papers of Thomas Jefferson, IV, 36.
31 Italic added
32 It is worth noting that Wythe’s father-in-law, Richard Taliaferro, was among the foremost architects in Virginia. Taliaferro, who died in 1773, had designed the Wythe house in Williamsburg and had executed architectural designs for the Governor’s Palace.
and Mary was the only institution in Virginia authorized to grant a surveyor's license. However, Governor Harrison, on January 27, 1784, wrote to the Reverend James Madison and other professors of the University of William and Mary:

Gentlemen:

A Mr. Morris produced to me a recommendation from your society for the appointment of Surveyor of the Counties of James City and New Kent. The signatures of the names appeared to be the handwriting of each of the gentlemen but the seal was not that of the College... you will please forward a new one [recommendation] with the proper seal to it and he shall be countersigned and I beg the favor of you in future to use, no other than the proper seal which will affectually prevent any being imposed on

B. Harrison

This letter makes clear not only that in the twelve or more months since the decision to change the seal was made and in the six months since the new seal's arrival in Williamsburg, the governor had not been informed of the change, but also that, at that time, the importance of a seal in authenticating documents was very great. The governor's letter makes this latter point quite forcefully. Regrettably, the Reverend Mr. Madison's reply is no longer extant.

The temple seal was used without change or further question concerning its authenticity until about 1922. In that year, a Boston physician, Howard M. Buck, began a rather lengthy correspondence with Dr. Earl Gregg Swem, the librarian at William and Mary, concerning the college seal and other matters. In a letter of October 17, 1922, Dr. Buck wrote:

I... suspect that interpretation of the blazon of the College of Arms in the present day seal is wholly postrevolutionary. From your silence on the subject of the blazon aforesaid, I fancy the original document lost long ago... The Dictionary of Heraldry by Charles Norton Elvin, N.A. (1889 pub.) Lond... under "College" gives the latter as borne in the arms of "Williamsburg". The demi-sun (lower half) with fully developed rays is on a larger scale, and the "edifice" is of a different type, a small entrance tower in the centre with two

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33 Which makes the seal used to authenticate those documents of more than casual importance.

34 Italicics added. This is the first record of the new seal being used. The document to which it was affixed is no longer extant.

35 He is referring to the old colonial seal with which he would have been familiar.

36 Executive Letterbook, 1783-1786, p. 246a, Virginia State Library.

37 Although there were two fires at the college during the nineteenth century, the seal was mentioned as being saved from each. The college was also closed during the War between the States and then later from 1881 to 1888; however all available records indicate the seal was safe and undamaged when the college resumed operation in August of 1888.
wings of several buildings in echelon on the dexter\(^{38}\) an interior high tower . . . . . . .

where Elvin particularizes in this way I have found him, in other cases, very accurate.\(^{39}\)

Dr. Buck goes on to suggest that, if the original grant of arms were lost, a duplicate might be obtained from the College of Arms in London.

This letter is important for two reasons. It was perhaps the earliest indication to William and Mary since the eighteenth century that the arms used in the college seal were not those originally granted in 1694 (the original grant of arms—the parchment document—had long since disappeared, as had the dies for the colonial seal). Furthermore, the college at this date owned no document, and apparently knew of no document, impressed with the colonial seal. It is not at all unlikely that no one even realized there had been a colonial seal different from the one then being used; and obviously no one knew of the 1783 change to the temple seal.

On March 24, Dr. Buck again wrote to Dr. Swem:

Have you got at the College the actual parchment Grant-of-Arms or an authentic certified copy? (I have no success in asking this question) . . . . . . I suppose I place an excessive value on that original design for the Seal, the College or building, not the Present? Jeffersonian\(^{40}\) substitute.

This was answered by Dr. Swem on April 5, 1923:

I am not able to give you any more satisfactory information in regard to the original design for the seal. So far as I have been able to find out, there is not at the College the actual parchment grant of arms. I do not know of any authentic certified copy \(^{41}\)

There is no additional correspondence between Dr. Buck and Dr. Swem available; however, certain doubts had been planted. If Dr. Swem thought the matter over, and, further, if he had checked *A Dictionary of Heraldry* by Charles Norton Elvin, to which Dr. Buck had referred in his 1922 letter, he would have found the following under "college": "as borne in the arms of the College of Williamsburg" \(^{42}\) If he also checked the same book for the figure or drawing used to illustrate the word "college," he would have seen that the drawing did indeed show a central tower with buildings receding.

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\(^{38}\) This refers to the left side of the arms, as seen by the viewer.

\(^{39}\) William and Mary College Papers, Swem Library, College of William and Mary

\(^{40}\) Note the use of "Jeffersonian" to refer to the temple seal.

\(^{41}\) William and Mary College Papers, Swem Library, College of William and Mary

\(^{42}\) Charles Norton Elvin, *A Dictionary of Heraldry, with Upwards of Two Thousand Five Hundred Illustrations* (London, 1889), p. 32, italics added
in echelon on both sides of the tower, one large domed tower on the right, and a half sun with conspicuous rays overhead.

Undoubtedly, Dr. Swem did check and probably he was both interested and a little puzzled. An interesting fact which Dr. Swem could not have known is that the drawing in Elvin's book does not closely resemble the arms on the colonial seal of the college. So Elvin must have taken the drawing, not from an impression of that seal, but from the rolls at the College of Arms in London. It cannot be determined whether or not Dr. Swem and Dr. J. A. C. Chandler, president of the college, discussed the possibility of checking with the College of Arms at this time. In any case, no action was taken in the early 1920s.

Chance and coincidence now entered into the affair. In 1926 Mrs. Harry Leiby of Ventnor, New Jersey, sent to Dr. Chandler a surveyor's license issued by the college in 1749 which contained an exceedingly well-preserved impression of the colonial college seal.43 Mrs. Leiby had found this valuable document folded in a copy of Don Quixote which she had bought at a used book sale. She appended a short note: "To whom it may concern: Enclosed find an old document that I found in a book I purchased second hand. It seems to be a real old relic and I thought you might like to have it."44

The document and Mrs. Leiby's note were received by President Chandler, who referred them to Dr. Swem with a note: "You will probably want to frame it because this is probably the same form that was given to George Washington. You will note that it was granted in the very same year that Washington received his surveyor's license. Have you one older?"45 Dr. Swem then wrote to Mrs. Leiby on January 3, 1927: "The president of the College has handed over to the library the very interesting document which you sent to him. This proves to be the earliest original commission now in existence granted by the College."46 Although unintentional, Dr. Swem's letter was a masterstroke of understatement. The surveyor's license was not only the earliest commission the college possessed, but was also the only one with the original seal. Ironically, the seal was apparently totally unnoticed in the concern over the license having been issued in the same year as the one given to Washington. In due time, however, the seal itself was examined.

Within sixteen months, by early April of 1929, Dr. Chandler was in Lon-

43 This is the best impression of the six examined for this paper. The author knows of no better impression.
44 William and Mary College Papers, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.
45 Ibid.
46 William and Mary College Papers, Swem Library, College of William and Mary, italics added
Plate III. The emblazonment of the arms of the College of William and Mary on the certificate prepared by the College of Arms in London in 1929.
don on other business and took the opportunity to check with the College of Arms about the original grant of arms to the College of William and Mary. There is no way of knowing whether or not it was Dr. Buck's correspondence, the seal on the license, or a combination of these and other things which prompted this inquiry. Also, no record exists which mentions whether or not Dr. Chandler took the 1749 document with him to London or which states exactly what he expected to find at the College of Arms. Probably, he went to the College of Arms to inquire about the grant of arms to William and Mary, and the heralds suggested the form of the document which he brought back with him to Williamsburg.  

Apparently, Dr. Chandler first visited the College of Arms on April 8, 1929, for a letter of that date from the College of Arms to Dr. Chandler at his London hotel begins: “With reference to your visit this morning . . . .” In this letter, Dr. Chandler was told that copies of the text of the two Grants of Arms and the text of the earl marshal's warrant could be prepared and that the cost of these “with a facsimile of the Arms (uncoloured) as you saw in the book” will be £3 (three pounds sterling). Dr. Chandler had apparently asked about having a copy made in a style similar to the original, for the letter concludes with a reference to “looking into” this.

The letter to Dr. Chandler from the College of Arms on April 11, 1929, is worth quoting at length:

I have now been able to find out particulars of making out a fresh Certificate of the original Patent, on vellum with the Arms painted in etc., similar to the one I showed you when you were here. On thinking the matter over, I do not think it would be wise to try and reproduce the style in vogue in 1694. After all we cannot be certain, exactly how the original was drawn, or what extra Arms or decoration was used in the heading, consequently, any attempt to reproduce a document on those lines, is in danger of being taken for a fake. I would recommend therefore that you have a document on vellum set out in the present style in use, which will bear a copy of the original Grant, with the Arms granted, and the Royal Arms, at the top, and at the bottom, a certificate of its authenticity, over the Common Seal of the College.

The cost of a Certificate of this nature, issued under the Common Seal is £20.0.0.

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47 If Dr. Chandler did not take the 1749 document to London it was an unfortunate mistake. The author is inclined to think that he left it in Williamsburg. There are no records to cover this point.

48 The original grant of May 1694 and the transfer of the arms from the trustees to the president and masters of the college in 1698.

49 This is undoubtedly a reference to the depiction of the William and Mary arms in the records of the College of Arms as noted in the blazon by: “as in the margin hereof is more plainly depicted.”

50 William and Mary College Papers, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.
If you could call in, I can show a similar example, and get your views on the style of the painting etc. 61

Dr. Chandler was notified by letter on April 17, 1929, that "The Painting and the Copy of the Patent are now ready, when you care to call for them."

The document which Dr. Chandler brought back to Williamsburg was much like that suggested in the letter of April 11. It would be improper to call this document the grant of arms to William and Mary, 62 for not only was the style open to question, but it contained both the text from 1698 and further text testifying to the authenticity of the document. Obviously, neither of these latter texts was in the original grant of 1694. It would be best to refer to this document as a certified copy of the grant of 1694 with the additional pertinent texts placed on the same document. The document itself 63 measures 16¾ inches by 18¾ inches and has been handpainted in color on vellum with the text engrossed in script. In the upper left-hand corner is a full color depiction of the arms of the College of William and Mary 64 measuring 6 inches by 7 inches. Next to these arms, across the top of the document and painted in full color (from left to right) are the arms of the Earl Marshal of England, the Royal Arms (of England), and finally the arms of the College of Arms. Below all this is the full text of the grant of May 14, 1694, followed by the transfer of the arms from the trustees to the president and masters of the College on October 18, 1698, and then by the certification of the entire document by the College of Arms dated May 1, 1929. 65 The document is signed by Algar. Howard, Windsor Herald of Arms, and a wax disc impressed with the arms of the College of Arms (placed in a metal container) is

61 William and Mary College Papers, Swem Library, College of William and Mary
62 In this monograph, such phrases as "the William and Mary arms" and "the arms of William and Mary" refer to the coat of arms of the College of William and Mary in Virginia, and not to the regal arms of the British monarchs for whom the American college was named
63 See Plate IV
64 See Plate III
65 The full text of the certification from the document given to Dr. J. A. C. Chandler in April 1929: "To all and singular to whom these Presents shall come We the Kings Herald and Pursuivants of His Majesty's College of Arms Certify that the foregoing written copy of a Grant of Arms under the hands and seals of Thomas St George Garret, Principal King of Arms and Henry St George Clarenceux King of Arms together with the endorsement under the hands of the said Kings of Arms have been extracted from the Records of the aforesaid College and that the above Document has been duly recorded in the said College of Arms. In witness whereof We have caused the Common Seal of our Corporation to be hereto affixed this First day of May in the Nineteenth year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Fifth by the Grace of God of Great Britain Ireland and the British Dominions beyond the Seas King Defender of the Faith & in the year of our Lord One thousand nine hundred and twenty nine."
Plate IV. The certificate prepared by the College of Arms in London in 1929 certifying the Grant of Arms to the College of William and Mary.
attached to the bottom of the document, which is now kept in the special collections of the Swem Library at William and Mary.

The first mention of the new certificate for the coat of arms appeared in *The Flat Hat*, the William and Mary student newspaper, on September 27, 1929: “The seal and Coat-of-Arms of the College of William and Mary will be changed to conform to the original . . . .” The October 4, 1929, issue of *The Flat Hat* contained both a black and white photograph of the new coat of arms and, again, the statement that it was to be adopted. The late J. T. Baldwin, Professor of Biology at William and Mary, was an undergraduate at the college at that time; he remembered that the students generally were not too concerned about the change. The February 1930 issue of the college *Bulletin* displayed the old temple arms; however, by April of 1930 the college catalogue displayed the new coat of arms. For all intents and purposes the temple arms were now discarded forever. (It is interesting to note that Chandler Hall, a women’s residence hall opened in 1931, had the old temple arms placed on the front of the building; they are still there.)

Surprisingly, there is no record of anyone’s having granted the authority to change the seal in 1929. There is no mention of the new seal in the minutes of the Board of Visitors for 1929 or 1930; and it is likely that President Chandler simply decided to make the change in his capacity as president of the college.

There can be little doubt that the intention in 1929 was to return to the original colonial seal of the college, for not only are the arms placed on a shield identical in shape and proportion to that of the colonial seal; but the ornamentation and embellishment between the shield and the seal’s inscription, which are entirely arbitrary and independent of the arms, are a virtual copy (albeit somewhat simplified) of those on the colonial seal. In addition, the wording of the legend itself has been returned to that of the colonial seal; that is, the Latin once again begins reading from the top, and the titles of King and Queen have been reinstated.

It is obvious, then, especially in regard to its shield, ornamentation, and inscription, that the new 1929 seal was copied from the colonial seal, undoubtedly using the seal on the 1749 surveyor’s commission as a model. For, had the colonial seal not been copied, it is doubtful that anyone would have known either that “king and queen” were in the original legend or exactly what the ornaments looked like.

The final question becomes one of why the depiction of the buildings, representing the wording in the blazon, “A College or edifice,” is different in
the 1929 seal and arms from the original, colonial version. There is no simple, single answer; however, several things are apparent. First, while the 1929 seal was cut in America and the details of the 1749 impression could have been (and obviously to some extent were) copied, the 1929 emblazonment of the arms themselves were prepared by the heralds at the College of Arms in London, and they used their own records and not the impression on the 1749 document as a model. As was previously noted, the written description of a coat of arms, called a blazon, is written in Anglo-Norman in a specific sequence which is designed to allow any herald at any time to make an accurate drawing of the arms from that blazon. Most heralds are familiar with the majority of standard armorial terms used in blazons. In addition, heralds are allowed a certain degree of freedom of interpretation in drawing any particular charge (heraldic device) in any blazon. Therefore, the word “College” in the William and Mary blazon, could be depicted differently by different heralds. After checking a number of standard heraldic reference works, covering a considerable time period, the only pictorial reference to “college” the author discovered was that in the 1889 edition of Elvin’s A Dictionary of Heraldry referred to by Dr. Buck.

The current York Herald of Arms, Dr. Conrad Swan, states that while the charge, “a college or edifice,” may not be unique to the William and Mary arms, “it is quite certain that it is an unusual term in heraldry.” Thus it is not unreasonable to assume that the herald who drew the arms for the document given to Dr. Chandler in 1929 might not have encountered it before. So when the herald who drew the William and Mary arms in 1929 read the words “College or edifice” in the blazon, he may initially have been unsure of what to draw. However, in the margin of the rolls is the sketch or drawing referred to in the blazon “as in the margin hereof is more plainly depicted.” The herald would probably have simply copied this sketch in the margin into the drawing of arms which he was making. That, in fact, is apparently precisely what happened; for the current York Herald of Arms states that the 1929 depiction of the William and Mary arms “was based absolutely on the original record entry in the records of the College of Arms ... the emblazonment (depiiction) on the certificate (secured by Dr. Chandler) ... was a very careful copy of the original record entry, having exactly the same number of windows, dormers, domes, chimneys and the like.” 66

66 Unfortunately, Dr. Swan, the York Herald of Arms, was unable to provide the author with a photograph of the “sketch in the margin” so it is necessary to depend upon his comparison of the 1929 emblazonment and the aforementioned sketch.
Plate V. The seal of the College of William and Mary made in 1929 or 1930 and currently in use.
Why, then, is there a significant difference between the buildings on the arms of the original colonial seal and those depicted on the arms of 1929? If the arms on the colonial seal were copied from the 1694 grant, the sketch in the margin was copied from this same grant and then the 1929 emblazonment was copied from the sketch, they should all three be the same, being copied from the same source. Before discussing the two most probable reasons for the differences, it would be well to describe the differences in detail. The "College" on both versions of the arms extends completely across the shield and recedes from the central entrance. However, in the colonial version, the building recedes distinctly only on the dexter side (the left-hand side of the arms as they are viewed), and in the 1929 version the building recedes sharply on both sides. In addition, in the colonial version, the dexter wing has three stories with an unbroken roof while the modern version depicts the dexter wing with two stories and a dormered roof. The colonial version is neatly divided by pilasters which extend from ground to roof; yet divisions in the modern version are made by shadowing and abrupt angles as the wings recede. On the dexter side of both versions of the arms a large dome is shown, while on the sinister (right-hand side, as viewed) there are two smaller ones. However, the dexter domed tower on the 1929 version (with its large, Roman arched windows) dwarfs the surrounding buildings; whereas that in the colonial version (with modest rectangular windows) is smaller and fits in more harmoniously with the buildings around it. Though the central entrance in the colonial version is capped by a pediment, the 1929 version shows a simple flat lintel above its central doorway. Finally, the many-rayed sun in the colonial arms is of modest proportions, but the 1929 arms depict a sun which is much larger both in terms of the amount of sky it fills and in relation to the buildings below.\footnote{The sun on all three versions of the arms (1694, 1781, 1929) is depicted with a human face. There is no provision for this in the blazon, but it may have been standard heraldic practice in 1694 and subsequent versions simply copied this feature.} Thus, the overall appearance of the colonial arms is one of delicate, balanced symmetry, with rather even skyline and foundation, while the 1929 arms present an irregular skyline and a sharply-angular ground line to bound the receding buildings. Of particular interest is the fact that the "College" on the 1929 version has been drawn to depict the receding wings as a separate but connected structure (showing both the ends and the sides of these buildings), while the "College" on the colonial arms is a single unified structure of which only the facade is shown. Taken all together, these differences in details result in two strikingly different emblazonments (or depictions) of the William and Mary arms.
The differences in the arms could potentially be explained by assuming either that the colonial seal was not accurately cut from the arms granted or that the sketch in the margin of the records of the College of Arms, of which the 1929 arms are supposedly an exact copy, was not a precise representation of the arms granted (that is, that whoever copied the sketch into the record did not copy the arms exactly). The first possibility, that the seal was not accurately cut from the arms granted, seems unlikely. For while even today a seal is frequently required to authenticate a document, in the 1690s the value of a seal—an exact seal—was much greater than now. (After all, the governor of Virginia did refuse a document in 1784 which was impressed with an unfamiliar seal.) Is it probable that an engraver, in the London of 1695, would have made such an inaccurate seal, or, in particular, that he would have made the seal more ornate, symmetrical, and balanced than the grant itself? Would the Reverend James Blair, or an officer of the bishop of London, have accepted such a seal? It seems quite improbable.

A far better case can be constructed for an inadvertent discrepancy having been entered in the records of the College of Arms. Assuming that the entry was made by the same herald who drew the arms themselves, he could have been tired, hungry, or in a hurry for some reason. Perhaps he simply did not feel it was important that the entry in the records should have exactly the same size domes and sun, and the same number of windows as the arms of the grant. If the entry was made by someone other than the herald who drew the arms, it may be that he was a less-capable artist and drew the best representation he could. Most importantly, for it affected whoever drew the entry, in 1694 Virginia was a remote and distant place from London; the College of William and Mary was a new school in this sparsely settled land (a small and very unimportant school); one may wonder whether anyone at the College of Arms would have been as careful or as concerned with arms for such a school as he would have been with arms for a peer of the realm or a member of the royal family. Considering the unlikelihood that the colonial seal differed from the grant of arms of 1694, and remembering the factual statement of Dr. Swan that the 1929 arms are an exact copy of the records of the College of Arms, the discrepancy is probably between the grant of arms of 1694 and the sketch of that date in the margin of the records of the College of Arms. In other words, the sketch in the margin of the records of the College of Arms was not an exact copy of the arms granted to the College of William and Mary in 1694.

It is interesting to note that while no records exist which mention who made the new seal in 1929, either the engraver or someone at William and Mary
noticed the difference between the new copy of the arms and the arms on
the seal from the 1749 document.\textsuperscript{58} For, in addition to the embellishments
and legend on the 1929 seal (which were obviously copied from the 1749
impression), there are differences between the arms which appear on the docu-
ment that Dr. Chandler brought back from London in 1929 and the arms on
the seal made the same year. These differences could only have been copied
from the 1749 impression and were a definite attempt to make the new seal
look like its colonial antecedent. Specifically, the pediment over the central en-
trance appears on the 1929 seal, copied from the 1749 seal in contradistinction
to the flat lintel of the 1929 arms, while the dexter tower has square windows
and the dexter wing has no dormers on the roof. The angle of recession of the
sinister wing is less severe in the 1929 seal and, again, shows only the front
façade. Much of the balance and symmetry of the 1749 impression, not present
in the 1929 emblazonment, has been restored to the 1929 seal. In each of the
above details the 1929 seal conforms to the 1749 seal and not the 1929 docu-
ment given to Dr. Chandler.

While William and Mary's letterheads, catalogues, class rings, mace, Presi-
dent's medal, and even the molding of the arms in cement on the gateway to
the new campus all copy the 1929 emblazonment secured by Dr. Chandler
from the College of Arms, for some reason a definite attempt was made to
have the new seal of the College of William and Mary more closely resemble
its colonial predecessor. Indeed, given a little more attention to the finer de-
tails of the building representing the "College" it would be an exact copy.
There is also no doubt that this seal, copied from the 1749 impression, was
made in 1929 or 1930, for examination of diplomas from 1931, 1932, and
1936\textsuperscript{59} all reveal impressions of the college seal which are identical to the
seal presently in use (1973), and obviously copied from the colonial model.

The enigma which remains is why and by whose authority the 1929 seal
was copied from the colonial version. It is unlikely that the engraver would
have made such important decisions on his own, and the minutes of the Board
of Visitors for those years make no mention of this matter. The most likely
person to have made such a decision would have been Dr. J. A. C. Chandler,
president of the college, or Dr. Earl Gregg Swem, the college's distinguished
librarian. However, in May 1930, Dr. Swem wrote in a letter that the legend
on the college seal was: "Sig Collegii Gulielmi et Mariae in Virginia," and in

\textsuperscript{58} Dr. Swem noticed the difference for he wrote to Dr. Chandler on October 12, 1929,
noting both the difference in the building and also the "R* ET R*" in the circumscription.

\textsuperscript{59} These diplomas were kindly supplied by Dr. and Mrs. Davis Young Paschall. Dr. Paschall
was president of the College of William and Mary, 1960-1971.
1934 Dr. Chandler wrote to a commercial firm planning to make plaques of the college seal and gave the legend exactly as Dr. Swem had done in 1930.60

In both cases the royal titles had been left out, and yet there can be no doubt that by 1931 the titles had been reinstated in the circumscription on the seal. Examination of the 1931, 1932 impressions reveals this clearly. Could the seal have been changed without either Dr. Swem or Dr. Chandler knowing? Could the change have been authorized quietly and unobtrusively by one of these men in order to regain as much as possible of the authentic heritage of the college by copying an impression of the colonial seal? If the latter were the case, why hide it and continue to use the circumscription without the titles elsewhere? Regrettably, not a scrap or shred of information has been uncovered to shed any light on these questions. Nevertheless, the dies presently being used to impress the seal on diplomas and other documents are a virtual copy of the colonial seal of the College of William and Mary. As mentioned before, with a little more care in the engraving of the buildings on the arms the copy would be exact.61

The College of William and Mary in Virginia may well thank whoever was responsible for copying the modern seal from the colonial impression, for it was a significant step toward regaining the heritage, fully embodied in the colonial seal, of being America's only college to have a seal bearing a coat of arms granted by the College of Arms in London.

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60 William and Mary College Papers, Swem Library, College of William and Mary
61 The author is aware that regarding the detail of the building in the William and Mary seal that a slavishly exact copy of the building is not imperative and that variations do not necessarily render the arms inaccurate or incorrect. The question is not whether a given representation of the arms is correct but rather how the variations came about.