



## Washington Prize Celebrated at Mount Vernon and Washington College

On Saturday, May 7, the inaugural George Washington Book Prize was awarded to Ron Chernow for his groundbreaking biography *Alexander Hamilton*. Conceived and administered at the Starr Center—in partnership with the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History and George Washington's Mount Vernon—the \$50,000 award takes its place as one of the largest nonfiction literary prizes in the nation. Awarded annually, it will recognize the year's best book on Washington and the founding era. The distinguished historians Don Higginbotham, Philip D. Morgan, and Barbara Oberg comprised this year's jury.

*"Ron Chernow's Alexander Hamilton*

is a magnificent achievement, bringing new life to an often-overlooked founder and restating how essential the Washington-Hamilton partnership was to the creation of the republic," said Ted Widmer, director of the Starr Center. "This is a most worthy first recipient of the George Washington Book Prize."

James C. Rees, Executive Director of Mount Vernon, receives our heartfelt thanks for hosting the award ceremony at Washington's home, a memorable event featuring a sunset reception on the piazza overlooking the Potomac River. Approximately fifty Washington College guests—including President Baird Tipson, administrators, faculty, staff, and students—attended the black-tie gala.

The celebration continues this fall in Chestertown. On Thursday, September 15, Chernow will travel to Washington College to deliver a lecture, "Alexander Hamilton: The Man Who Imagined Modern America," at 5:00 p.m. in Tawes Theater. The lecture will be preceded by a book signing, which will begin at 4:30. Copies of *Alexander Hamilton* are available through the Washington College Bookstore.

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Ron Chernow, pictured here accepting the George Washington Book Prize at Mount Vernon, will visit campus September 15.



## From the Custom House

The heading is a bit of a misnomer, because I will be away from Chestertown for most of the semester to work on a book project tracing the history of American ideas about liberty. During my sabbatical, I expect to spend some time in the library of Harvard University (where I will be a non-resident fellow of the Du Bois Institute), in New York City (as a Gilder Lehrman Fellow) and in Paris, where I will spend a short residence at the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques. I'm grateful to all of these organizations, and especially to Washington College, for making this research possible.

Last spring, as you will read elsewhere in this newsletter, our plans for the George Washington Book Prize came to fruition on a beautiful moonlit night at Mount Vernon, when Ron Chernow received the inaugural award. We are thrilled that he will be joining us in Chestertown this September, and look forward to many other prize-related activities in the years ahead. I'm particularly pleased to announce our jury for 2006: Gordon Wood (chair), Walter

Isaacson and Carol Berkin. Save May 2006 on your calendars!

We're also delighted that the first Washington College Fellow has been chosen by the Boston Athenaeum – John Ruddiman, a Yale Ph.D. candidate working on the wartime experiences of young men in the Continental Army and the ways in which they returned to civilian life. We look forward to welcoming him to Chestertown later in the year.

I'd like to close by saying a special word of thanks to Adam Goodheart, Kees de Mooy and Jean Sucharewicz for the enormous work that they do on behalf of the Starr Center, day in and day out, planning events, welcoming students, reaching out to the people of Chestertown and making sure that we stay rooted as we continue our journey forward. I look forward to seeing them and everyone else in the Washington College community in the near future.

Warmly,

Ted Widmer

On Friday, September 16, Chernow will participate in a public question-and-answer session on his work as a writer and historian at 10:30 a.m. in Norman James Theatre. Both events are free and open to the public. Colonial reenactments and other festivities are being planned for the occasion of Chernow's visit to Chestertown, so stay tuned for further announcements. ✱

## ASI Conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh

During the summers of 2003 and 2004, the Starr Center, in partnership with the U.S. State Department, hosted the American Studies Institute, an intensive program teaching democracy and American history to Muslim students from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. From March 8-12, 2005, the institute's participants—including a Washington College contingent led by Ted Widmer, Donald McColl, and Kees de Mooy—were reunited in Dhaka, Bangladesh, for an exciting five-day conference in a location as far from Chestertown as it is possible to imagine.

Hosted by the State Department and the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka, the conference was every bit as fast-paced as the original Institute. Between meetings with parliamentary leaders and delicious South Asian meals, the participants held sweeping conversations on a wide range of issues, including human rights, women's rights, economic opportunity, political transparency, and the challenges posed by health crises, environmental degradation and terrorism. The conference also provided an opportunity to share post-Institute



*Aashna Rahman and Zeehan Abedin tour Dhaka by bicycle rickshaw.*

These essays will be judged by a panel of historians, who will award prizes to the top three submissions: \$500 for the first-place essay, with \$250 and \$100 presented for the second and third place finishers.

Essays will be judged on their relevance to the larger American story, for original or groundbreaking research, and for elegant and engaging writing. The deadline is March 10, 2006. For more information, or to discuss possible topics, please contact Kees de Mooy, Program Manager of the C.V. Starr Center, at [kdemooy2@washcoll.edu](mailto:kdemooy2@washcoll.edu) or 410-810-7156. \*

## Teaching American History Update

The Teaching American History grant project, now in its final year, is continuing to provide teachers from across the Eastern Shore with instruction in American history. Five-day institutes are offered this summer, including the Sultana Live Aboard, featuring history and navigation aboard

the Schooner Sultana; the Chesapeake Waterways Institute, on the history of the Chesapeake Bay's tributaries; and the African-American History and Culture Institute, an examination of Maryland's black history from the beginnings of slavery in the Chesapeake to the present. The Fall 2005 schedule includes Saturday Seminars, the annual conference on October 7-8, and a Learning and Teaching History graduate course which will be taught at Washington College. (For more information, contact Director Connie Schroth at 410-778-7120.)

Among other Teaching American History courses this summer was a new, two-week Archaeology Apprenticeship Institute, designed to provide practical experience in various phases of archaeology, from research to field excavation and laboratory methods. Elizabeth Seidel, director of the Washington College Public Archaeology Laboratory, taught a group of teachers from Kent and Queen Anne's counties how to use archaeology in the classroom, using the Charles Sumner Post for their field experience.

Lectures, slide presentations and work with documents and artifacts took place at the Custom House. At the Sumner Post, participants worked alongside staff and students of Washington College's 2005 Summer Field



*Local history teachers get their hands dirty at the Sumner Post.*

experiences, network among alumni, and build relationships between the alumni and the United States. \*

## Chestertown 300<sup>th</sup> Birthday Symposium/Essay Competition

In 2006, Chestertown will celebrate the 300th anniversary of its founding. To celebrate the occasion, the C.V. Starr Center is sponsoring a special weekend symposium on April 21-22, 2006 devoted to local history. The conference will bring together Washington College students, outside scholars, and the larger community to explore the unique past of this Eastern Shore town through lectures, exhibits, and other events. Topics covered will range from Chestertown's colonial and Revolutionary heritage to the present day; from race relations to archaeology and historic preservation.

The Starr Center invites Washington College students to submit papers for presentation at the symposium.

To receive electronic announcements of Starr Center events, send your e-mail address to [jsucharewicz2@washcoll.edu](mailto:jsucharewicz2@washcoll.edu)

School in Archaeology. Under Seidel's supervision, participants explored the multi-disciplinary nature of archaeology and discovered ways to use its techniques in the classroom to excite their students. At the end of the course, participants developed original lesson plans and hands-on activities for use in their classrooms. These lessons, and the experiences gained during the Institute, will be shared with other educators at the conference in October. ✱

## Civil War: Then and Now

### National Geographic Feature Story by Adam Goodheart

C.V. Starr Scholar Adam Goodheart published a major article in the April issue of *National Geographic* about the threat to America's historic Civil War battlefields. Visiting sites in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, and South Carolina, Goodheart reported that "many of the places where the Union and Confederacy clashed are now caught up in another struggle – far quieter but perhaps, in its way, no less epochal – between a quickly vanishing America of small farms and crossroads villages and a newer landscape of megamalls and sprawling McMansions."

The article's publication was celebrated at a March 16th reception at the U.S. Capitol for members of the House and Senate and other dignitaries, sponsored by the National Geographic Society and the Civil War Preservation Trust, whose executive director hailed the piece as "a powerful argument for battlefield preservation."



On Sunday, April 10, a dozen Washington College students set out for Washington, D.C., on the Starr Center's first-ever weekend "road trip." The free daylong program, led by C.V. Starr Scholar Adam Goodheart and by Marc Pachter, director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery (center), explored the politics, art and architecture of Jeffersonian-era Washington. It included tours of the Smithsonian's special exhibition of Gilbert Stuart portraits and of the circa-1800 Octagon House, and wrapped up with a view of the springtime cherry blossoms from the Jefferson Memorial. The Starr Center plans more such road trips soon—watch for details.

Goodheart's essay – which called attention to, among other things, a Pizza Hut that stands at the center of an 1864 battlefield in Franklin, Tennessee – is already having a tangible impact. An executive with the restaurant chain's holding company read the article and decided that it would be "a great community gesture" to reclaim the historic site. The notorious Pizza Hut is slated for demolition later this year. Goodheart, meanwhile, is at work on his second *National Geographic* feature, on the history and landscape of the Great Smoky Mountains. ✱

## Starr Center Fellowships

The first year of the Frederick Douglass Fellowships, the Starr

Center's new program to support work in African-American studies and related fields, got off to an exciting start in the spring with an eventful weeklong visit by musician Marlon Saunders. Saunders, a local native who is an accomplished performer, composer and college teacher, worked on his ambitious new project, "Songs that Papa Taught Us," a multimedia composition exploring the musical heritage of Kent County's African-American community. As the College's inaugural Frederick Douglass Visiting Fellow, Saunders lived on campus and led a workshop for student musicians. He also spoke at a reception in his honor, treating a packed crowd at the Custom House to a heartfelt, impromptu rendition of "How Great Thou Art," a favorite hymn of his great-great grandfather, Albert "Papa" Walker.



Thanks in part to the Starr Center's support (in partnership with the Kent County Arts Council and the Prince Theatre Foundation), Saunders' project received a \$10,000 grant from the Maryland State Arts Council. "Songs that Papa Taught Us"—on which C.V. Starr Scholar Adam Goodheart is collaborating as writer and researcher—will premiere at the Prince Theatre in February.

Meanwhile, the first two undergraduate winners of Frederick Douglass Fellowships were hard at work on their own semester-long research projects. Sociology major Alyse Shelton '06 compiled an oral history of integration in Kent County's public schools, while education major Paula Potter '06 created an elementary school curriculum to teach students about the 1960s Civil Rights Movement using primary sources. The students' faculty mentors were, respectively, Professor of Sociology Steven Cades and Assistant Professor of Education Peggy Donnelly.

Now in their third year, the Comegys Bight summer fellowships continue to attract talented Washington College students who have research interests in the American past. The 2005 recipients are Cynthia Brown '06, Peter Knox '06, Brandon Righi '07 and Jeremy Rothwell '08—students whose majors range from creative writing to political science. Their diverse topics include the work of Henry Miller, the life of Hunter S. Thompson, the Civil War's impact on the Eastern Shore, and the story of the settlement at Turner's Creek.

For more information about the Starr Center's student research fellowships, contact Jean Sucharewicz, (410) 810-7161. The next application deadlines are November 1 for the Frederick Douglass and March 10 for Comegys Bight. ✱

## History Club Resurrected!

The C.V. Starr Center salutes the revival of the Washington College History Club. Juniors Kait Edwards and Amy Uebel were instrumental in getting the club started again, and they have ambitious plans for the years ahead. Members of the club will get a unique look at the history field as well as reach out to the campus and Chestertown community. "We want to give club members a chance to see what the history is all about—who works in the field, what they do, and how they tell their stories," Edwards says.

Members will travel to museums in the region, where they will get behind-the-scenes tours. The club will also reach out to local schools by providing historical reenactments and workshops to young children. The History Club should appeal to many students, whether they are seeking careers in history or simply looking for an interesting weekend outing. "All of our members have varying academic backgrounds and areas of interest," Edwards says. "The History Club provides a unique way to experience history in a fun environment." Working closely with the C.V. Starr Center and Sultana Projects, Inc., the group hopes to be actively involved in history-themed events in the coming years. There are ambitious plans to create an archive dedicated to recording student impressions of college life and the world beyond. The archive will be added to each year, and will be accessible to everyone.

With a mission to preserve, protect and promote history, the club has a tall agenda. Interest among students,

faculty and other groups has been high, and club members are excited about the future. For more information, contact Kait Edwards at kedwards2@washcoll.edu. ✱

## Center to Support History Conference in Istanbul

From October 19-21, 2005, the Starr Center will co-sponsor a conference on "Ottoman and Atlantic Empires in the Early Modern World," to be held at Bogazici University, the sister university of Washington College, in Istanbul. The conference is being organized under the auspices of the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, but we are joining several other organizations in providing support, including the Huntington Library, the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul, and Bogazici University. Gordon Wood, from the Starr Center's Advisory Board, will be one of the principal presenters, and he will be joined by other Americanists and Ottoman historians exploring parallels between Ottoman expansion in the early modern period and the growth of the Anglo-American empire. The conference promises to cover a great deal of new ground, and the Starr Center is pleased to join both our friends at Omohundro and our colleagues in Istanbul to promote this worthy academic enterprise. We hope that friends of Washington College (including the many Bogazici students who have spent a year in Chestertown) will be able to join us. ✱

## Coming Events

(See our website at [starrcenter.washcoll.edu](http://starrcenter.washcoll.edu) for additional information)

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15**

Ron Chernow

*Alexander Hamilton: The Man Who Imagined Modern America*

Tawes Theater, 5:00 p.m.

Born in obscurity in the West Indies, Alexander Hamilton went on to become aide-de-camp to General George Washington, the leading author of *The Federalist Papers*, and the architect of the U. S. Constitution. Chernow examines Hamilton's controversial and complex legacy, in the process illuminating the man who was involved in every major political episode of late-eighteenth-century America. Chernow is the author of *House of Morgan*, *The Warburgs*, and *Titan*.

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16**

Ron Chernow

*A Conversation With Ron Chernow*

Norman James Theater, 10:30 a.m.



SEPTEMBER 15 & 16

An interview with George Washington Book Prize winner Ron Chernow, regarding his career as a writer and historian.

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29**

Paul Gilje

*Liberty on the Waterfront*

Cosponsored by Sultana Projects, Inc.

Part of the 2005 Maritime Lecture Series

Hynson Lounge, 7:30 p.m.

At the time of the Revolution, American sailors emerged as an important symbol of the spirit of the new nation. The stereotypical sailor represented a culture and value system that challenged the dominant ideals of both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Historian Paul A. Gilje will share highlights from his recent book *Liberty on the Waterfront: American Maritime Culture in the Age of Revolution*, which recently won the John Lyman Book Award from the North American Society for Oceanic History and the best book award from the Society of Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR). A book signing will follow.



OCTOBER 20

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20**

Sylvain Bellenger

*Black Apollo in the French Revolution: Girodet's Portrait of Jean-Baptiste Belley*

Cosponsored by the Department of Art

Part of the American Pictures Series (Rescheduled from March)

Hynson Lounge, 4:30 p.m.

Sylvain Bellenger, Chief Curator of the French Patrimony for the government of France, is curator of the exhibition "Romantic Rebel: The Art of Girodet," which will open next fall at the Louvre before traveling to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Art Institute of Chicago. This lecture—fifth in the Starr Center's "American Pictures" series—examines Girodet's 1797 portrait of Belley, a black soldier and statesman, born into slavery in Senegal, who participated in the American Revolution, the Haitian Revolution and the French Revolution.



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27

Helen Rountree

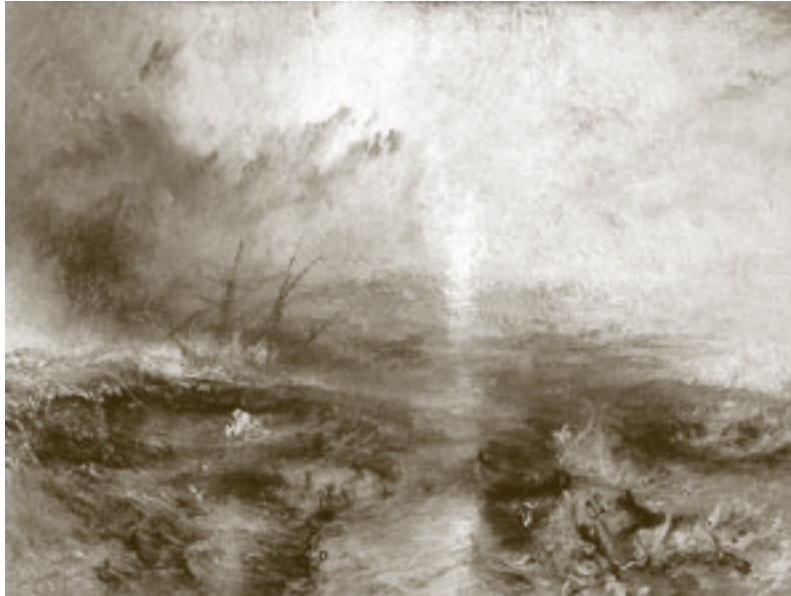
*Not Entirely Welcome: Indian Responses to English Arrival in the Chesapeake*

Cosponsored by the Department of Anthropology and Sultana Projects, Inc.

Hynson Lounge, 7:30 p.m.

The Algonquians who greeted the colonists at Jamestown in 1607 seemed friendly but were wary of British incursion into their territory. In a pattern that was repeated in many other parts of North America, including Maryland's Eastern Shore, awkward incidents led to violence on both sides, due in large part to very different cultural ideas about "proper" behavior. Helen Rountree, the author of *Pocahontas, Powhatan, Opechancanough: Three Indian Lives Changed by Jamestown*, will discuss the colonial period of British-Algonquian relations and the cultural differences that led to bloodshed.

A book signing will follow.



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 9

Eric Rosenberg

*Turner's Slave Ship as American Picture: Color and Painting in New York City at the End of Reconstruction*

Part of the American Picture Series  
Cosponsored by the Department of Art  
Hynson Lounge, 4:30 p.m.

Due to its presence in New York City between 1872 and 1876, Joseph Mallord William Turner's notorious painting "The Slave Ship" (Museum

of Fine Arts, Boston) was implicated in Reconstruction-era controversies over the direction of American art and American social relations. The painting's extremism of technique and subject galvanized anxieties concerning the value of color as a cultural marker and sign of identity on many levels. By the time of its auction from a New York collection in late 1876, the very political and economic future of the country was implicated in "The Slave Ship's" fortunes.



OCTOBER 27

THE C.V. STARR CENTER  
ADVISORY BOARDRobert W. Duemling,  
Chairman

Daniel Aaron

Dennis Fiori

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Jay Griswold

Ronald Hoffman

John Roberts

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

Thomas Stanley

Kathleen Kennedy Townsend

Gordon Wood

## Sumner Post Wins National Register Status

On July 6, 2005, the Charles Sumner Post was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in recognition of the building's singular importance to the nation. As one of only two African-American Civil War veterans' halls left standing in the country, the Charles Sumner Post serves as a monument to Kent County's U.S. Colored Troops, men who served in racially segregated units created through the efforts of abolitionists like Frederick Douglass. The Starr Center—particularly through the efforts of Program Manager Kees de Mooy—is spearheading the preservation of the Sumner Post, which has fallen into severe disrepair in recent decades.

At the end of the Civil War, over 400 black soldiers and sailors—most of them former slaves—returned to Kent County. Twenty-eight of the veterans formed a branch of the Grand Army of the Republic, the largest veterans' group in the country. Each year in Chestertown, the Sumner Post organized a parade on Decoration Day (later known as Memorial Day). Heading the procession were the former soldiers who, dressed in their GAR uniforms, marched first to the Chestertown Cemetery, where they placed flowers on the graves of white Union dead, and then to Janes Cemetery, where they similarly decorated the graves of their black comrades in arms. Before the advent of Social Security and Medicare, the Sumner Post and its Women's Relief Corps—the first such organization in Maryland—provided medical care and burial benefits for veterans, as well as aid to their widows and orphans. Operating under the motto "Fraternity, Charity, Loyalty," the men of the Sumner Post continued to serve the community until the last veteran died in 1928. Today, their legacy lives on in the building that stands on Chestertown's South Queen Street.

For information, contact Kees de Mooy at (410) 810-7156 or [kdemooy2@washcoll.edu](mailto:kdemooy2@washcoll.edu). ✱



*Calvin Frazier reading in front of the Charles Sumner Post.*



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