

W&M BRAY SCHOOL LAB

*Uncovering, documenting, preserving,
and sharing broadly the history and
legacies of the Williamsburg Bray School
(1760 - 1774) and its students.*



wm.edu/braylab

The William & Mary Bray School Lab is a key component of the Williamsburg Bray School Initiative, a ground-breaking and innovative partnership between William & Mary and The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation with the shared goal of uncovering, documenting, preserving, and disseminating the history and legacies of the Williamsburg Bray School. As we reconstruct the Bray School's history, we aspire to transform traditional accounts of America's history into a multi-layered story that centers Black legacy at the heart of U.S. democracy. **We use a framework we like to call "Stories and Structure."**

The Williamsburg Bray School (1760 - 1774):

- Began in a 17' by 33' tenement building which was moved to its current site at Colonial Williamsburg in February 2023
- Was started by the Associates of Dr. Bray, a London-based religious charity whose mission included educating Black and Indigenous children in the Americas
- Offered an Anglican-based education that emphasized Christian morality and utility while also teaching reading, various domestic skills—and probably, writing
- Likely served some 400 children—most enslaved, some free—from 3 to 10 years of age
- Had just one teacher, Ann Wager, during the school's 14 years of operation
- Has a Descendant Community with deep roots in the Williamsburg area and beyond

The William & Mary Bray School Lab:

- Invites Descendants, students, faculty, staff, alumni, and other interested thought partners to explore Bray School history and culture and the broader landscape of education in Virginia
- Launched in October 2021 and began its blog, A Reasonable Progress, in February 2022
- Is part of W&M Strategic Cultural Partnerships— Ann Marie Stock, Presidential Liaison

Contact:

- General: braylab@wm.edu | 757-221-1173
- Physical Address: Barrett House, 341 Francis Street W, Williamsburg, VA 23185
- Mailing Address: William & Mary Bray School Lab, P.O. Box 8795, Williamsburg, VA 23187
- Maureen Elgersman Lee, Lab Director | Tonia Merideth, Oral Historian
Elizabeth Drembus, Genealogist | Nicole Brown, Graduate Assistant