

Charleston Mercury

JANUARY 2016

THE PAPERZINE WITH A COSMOPOLITAN ATTITUDE

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Lowcountry Rambler



Catting about on King Street

We were not surprised to see the streets filled after Christmas, especially as a cruise ship was in town. Nonetheless, we found no way to be prepared to witness a pedestrian walking a cat on a leash. You might say we don't ramble as far afield as we should or that cat walking hints at the political heavy lifting required for 2016 as the GOP especially tries to herd felines into supporting some electable candidate. One sharp-tongued observer suggested we may have stumbled upon a Renaissance Weekend visitor preparing for a session with Dr. Ruth Westheimer.

British purebred put to pasture

Few cats know and love their English antiques as Charlestonians do; thus it is with great sadness we note the passing of a British icon beloved in the Lowcountry and around the world. After nearly 70 years of continuous production, the timeless Land Rover Series/Defender is no more. Born of post-war rationing, the indefatigable little off roader has long been driven off American shores due to bureaucratic regulations. It's no Hepplewhite chair, but with its combination rugged construction and classic charm, it's just as sought after and just as beloved.

Take down the yard sign

Senator Graham has officially called off his improbable bid for the White House. Our senior senator at least provided the positive takeaway that we noted during the past few months. For one thing, when he's not talking about sending American soldiers to fight over eve-

Drayton Hall's 'bad boy'



IMAGE COURTESY OF THE DRAYTON HALL PRESERVATION TRUST

Carter C. Hudgins, Ph.D., at the opening of Colonial Williamsburg's exhibit, "A Rich & Varied Culture: The Material World of the Early South."

By Robert Salvo

Sometimes failure fuels success.

Carter C. Hudgins was a sophomore at Hampden-Sydney College taking a survey course on American history. He was assigned a paper on the history of the Jamestown settlement. Simple enough, he thought; not only was his father, Carter L. Hudgins, part of the team that was actively working on discovering the settlement's history, but young Carter had spent the summer working a field school at the archeology site.

"I failed," he says with a laugh. "I took the opportunity to craft this paper using what I had learned working at Jamestown and

the discoveries we were making there ... The teacher gave me an F because none of what I had been citing had been published. Here we are in the field rewriting the history book, and then I try to bring that in the classroom with this traditional professor ... (he) gave me an F."

While the "F" was surely frustrating, it set off a spark in Hudgins. "That was a wake-up call for me to say, 'Holy smokes, history is alive.' It's the daily work that changes it and influences it." By being out in the field and putting in the work, young Carter really had achieved what many college students only act as if were true — he knew more on the subject than the professor. That

was the moment he decided to dedicate his career to history.

It doesn't take long to see its legacy in his work today. It imparted, as he put it "a little bit of 'bad-boy' attitude to change the traditional understanding of a place. I'd like to think that I and my staff bring that to Drayton Hall."

It's a welcome attitude for a landmark that can be a too-quick stop for the visitor. Although the staff is excellent, most of the Drayton Hall experience is the remarkable, but empty, home.

"A lot of folks think about Drayton Hall as an empty house, but we have well over a million

The spectacle from the sidelines

By DeWitt Zemp

To say the 2016 presidential race is bizarre is an incredible understatement.

My first memory of a presidential election was as a 10-year-old child growing up in Charleston and overhearing my parents debate — argue — about the 1976 presidential election between a peanut farmer and former Georgia governor, James Earl "Jimmy" Carter, and a politically embattled lawyer/politician, Gerald Ford. I knew nothing about President Carter and all I knew about President Ford was that he fell a lot.

It was not that I was overly eager to learn more about politics or had an interest at all ... it was just loud. My next memory was the election of President Ronald Reagan. He seemed to be such a "star" and his toughness could be felt, even by an uninterested teenager with zero inclination to politics. My only interest was figuring out how to get out on the boat in Charleston Harbor ... with or without my parents permission.

My first experience to vote was in casting my vote for the re-election efforts of President Ronald Reagan. I remember the excitement I felt in voting

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Hudgins, cont.

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artifacts, numerous pieces of furniture original to the house ... an elaborate collection of manuscripts ... and we want to bring the history of these collections to the public," he says.

The same goes for the grounds. He describes an approach of "stabilization and preservation rather than restoration. There's a middle ground, and that's particularly true with the landscape. It's largely been left to its own devices." Projects on the table include removal of dangerous and invasive vegetation. Hudgins notes the work "will enhance the historic features that are there and let people get out and see the historic features that survive."

House, land, archeological finds and written records — Hudgins is always bringing together constituent pieces to enhance the whole. It befits his formal background in material culture studies, "not necessarily a household term," as he puts it. "It's not anthropology; it's not history ... it's a holistic approach. If you're trained in archeology, you're going to research the historic documents. You allow each element to converse with each other to improve our understanding of whatever it is we're working on." Emphatically, Hudgins notes "that umbrella of material culture really symbolizes all we're do-

ing."

He's just as emphatic about the "we" part. When asked what excites him most about coming to work, he doesn't hesitate: It's the staff. Almost every question elicits a response about how effective and transformative his crew at Drayton Hall truly is. "The best in the business in doing historic preservation," Hudgins says, before noting the wide range of duties Drayton Hall's staff are called upon to perform. There's much more than meets the casual visitor's eye — archeology, architectural history, curation of the collections, interpretation and much more.

"Prior to (the preservation department's establishment), research had been conducted, but through staff and advances in technology, we've really been able to push the envelope and connect the archeology to the house. We're going to continue to expand that."

A range of expansion is in the forecast for the site; Hudgins notes how the collection is being connected not just to the history of the house, but to other internationally important museums and historic sites. As an example, objects from Drayton have been loaned to and are currently on display at the Dewitt Wallace Museum at Colonial Williamsburg. An expansion of the collection is on his to-do list: "Having this

improved appreciation for the collection," Hudgins notes, "We are actively interested in seeing objects return to Drayton Hall."

It will be an important part of preserving a Lowcountry legacy, the kind Hudgins values in his own life. "I have an affinity for the culture and character of a place, and I put a great deal of honor and pride into authenticity and accuracy. I have twin four-year old girls, and I really want them to have enriching experiences in the Lowcountry, particularly understanding their roots."

The child of a historian and archeologist, he laughs and says, "I was dragged around to every historic site on the East Coast, and I don't think that I consciously had an appreciation for

it ... but subconsciously I was taking everything in." As for his own girls, he proudly says, "My children can clearly recognize historic buildings. They clearly recognize buildings in disrepair. If we're driving by a house that needs a coat of paint, they wonder why no one's taking care of that house. They recognize it's a shame no one's taking care of that house." Dad thinks he's successfully "instilled (a preservation ethic) in the children ... though not necessarily intentionally."

Intentionally or unintentionally, there will be plenty for these future generations to study, research and appreciate thanks to those who combine a passion for history with vigorous action, like Hudgins.

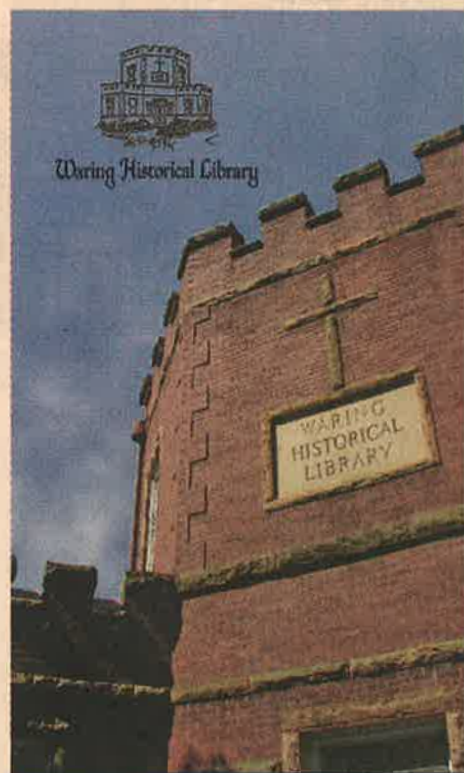
John Drayton's land-

mark Ashley River plantation stands as regally over the Lowcountry landscape as it has since its mid-18th century inception. Since then it has seen the birth of a new nation, countless hurricanes, the change of agriculture, the vicissitudes of politics, war, earthquake and much much more. It has been home to generations of use by the Drayton family and decades of management by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It has seen thousands and thousands of locals and tourists alike who have fallen in love with the home's combination of simplicity and grandeur. The property and collection were in the devoted care of George McDaniel for 25 years until his retirement late last year.

A tale of preservation

written in brick, Drayton Hall's story is being told with greater life and richness than ever thanks to its new president and chief executive, Carter Hudgins. As for what the future brings? The daily discoveries of the fine staff, of course; a new book on the plantation, too. Hudgins makes one last promise: "In the next 12 months, Drayton Hall will go through a transformative experience that will include an enhanced visitor experience, enhanced staff capacity and building a greater connection to residents in the Charleston area."

We're pretty certain Hudgins will get an A+ this time.



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