

William Carey celebrates 250th anniversary

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You might not count lighting 250 candles on a cake as one of life's shrewd ideas. Myron Noonkester, dean of William Carey University's Noonkester School of Arts and Letters, put his finger on a few of the potential hazards as he proudly unveiled a birthday cake for the school's namesake Monday.

"Lots of folks have said if you put 250 candles on the cake, the icing will melt, or you'll set off the smoke alarm, or you may trigger the sprinkler system," Noonkester told the assembled students, faculty and staff who came to celebrate Carey's 250th birthday at the student conference center.

And, in the process, water the rare William Carey lithograph that you unveiled minutes earlier.



Members of the William Carey 250 committee light candles during the 250th birthday celebration for William Carey, the missionary and the university's namesake. / Ryan Moore | Hattiesburg American

Upcoming events

Famed Baptist missionary William Carey was born on Aug. 17, 1761. Students, faculty and staff celebrated his 250th birthday on the first day of classes Monday. Here are some other upcoming events celebrating his life.

- Sept. 14: Crockett chapel lecture
- Oct. 3-Nov. 9: Art exhibit at the Lucile Parker Gallery
- Oct. 17: Carey lectures
- Oct. 18: International Food Fair
- Dec. 6: Carey Center exhibition
- April: Scholarly symposium and Carey-lympics

So Noonkester and company resorted to tactics, slowly lighting and extinguishing the candles in sections signifying such key numbers as the years Carey lived.

Then they ate cake. But, before that, they got a lecture about that precious lithograph.

It's the iconic painting of Carey with a Brahmin pundit now housed at Regent's College in London. Carey lived in India from 1793 to 1834.

Noonkester and Bennie Crockett, professor of religion and philosophy, recently purchased the lithograph - dated 1813, just two years after the original painting - from Grosvenor Prints in London. It will now become a prominent part of the Carey Center that they co-direct on campus.

"As far as we know we are the only repository in the world that has a copy of this item," said Noonkester.

One reason for its rarity? Carey wasn't the kind of guy who posed for a picture.

"Carey was intensely uncomfortable during his life with celebrations of his life, of biography itself," said Noonkester.

Cade Jarrell, a history graduate student in attendance, noted this irony in light of the yearlong celebration of Carey that lies ahead.

"I don't think he minds," Jarrell said with a laugh.

In fact, the real issue is getting more folks to learn about him. Jarrell got a first-hand glimpse at the school's vast Carey resources by working at the Carey Center over the summer.

"It's on campus. It's just getting people to go to it," he said. The students who participated in the candle-lighting, certainly know about it. Because Chelsey Maywalt, Nafiyah Younes and Marian Mauseth are Carey scholars on top of being members of the student government association, they must visit the center once a year.

It's not a chore, Maywalt said, explaining the appropriateness of the school being named after the Baptist missionary.

"When you think of missions, you think of William Carey," said Maywalt, the student body president. "Also my mother is a mini-feminist, so I like the things he did for women in India, such as outlawing widow-burning."

Meanwhile Younes, the vice-president, cited Carey's varied interests from botany to languages.

"He can be incorporated into every major at Carey, so that's pretty cool," she said.



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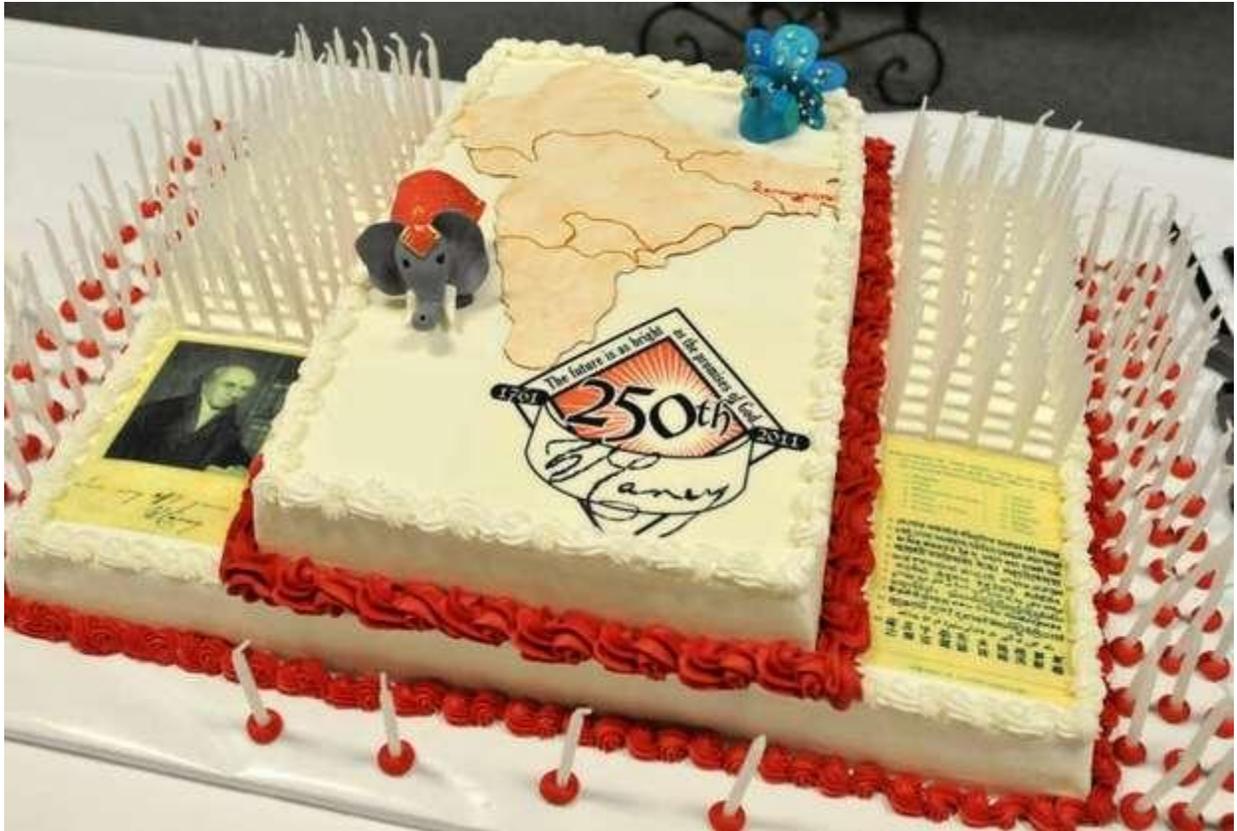


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A birthday cake for the 250th birthday celebration for William Carey, the missionary and the university's namesake.



William Carey University professor, Myron Noonkester, left, speaks about the history of William Carey as Bennie Crockett, looks on during the 250th birthday celebration for William Carey, the missionary and the university's namesake.



Students and faculty looks on during the 250th birthday celebration for William Carey, the missionary and the university's namesake.



William Carey University professor Bennie Crockett unveils a print of William Carey during the 250th birthday celebration for William Carey, the missionary and the university's namesake.



Members of the William Carey 250 committee light candles during the 250th birthday celebration for William Carey, the missionary and the university's namesake.