Nestled near the women’s dormitories, next to the new Tatum Theatre and within the walls of Donnell Hall, lies a real treasure trove of history that is greatly relevant to students of William Carey University.

Founded in July 2000, the Center for the Study of the Life and Work of William Carey has become one of the premier museums devoted to the life and work of the University’s namesake: William Carey.

The extensive catalog of artifacts and documents related to spelling and grammar and his work in India has drawn visitors from both within and outside the university. This has been especially illuminating and the magnificent accomplishments of Carey, is divided into five sections: William Carey as a missionary, a linguist, a social reformer, scientist and Bible translator.

In the middle of Gallery A, there is an intriguing artifact called a “palanquin.” This was essentially a 19th-century taxi in British India. Found within the “Bible Translator” section are numerous translations of dictionaries and Bibles into many dialects within the Indian language, including Bengali, Hindi, and others.

Other features within the exhibit include various coins and letters from Carey’s era, multiple paintings and portraits of Carey and the regions he worked in, and Carey’s childhood spelling book given to him by his father.

In 2001, the Carey Center launched its website, further expanding the museum’s content to visitors worldwide. Shortly after, the Australian-based Asian Studies Monitor, a clearing-house for academic study of Asian-related materials, awarded the Center a “Five-Star Essential” rating. The website opens the museum’s doors to scholars and enthusiasts alike over all the world, allowing its numerous visitors to view a vast amount of historical images and documents owned by the museum, said Dr. Myron Noonkester, one of the Center’s co-directors.

The Carey Center has no intentions of stopping there but has rather ambitious plans for the future, hoping to eventually become a primary research and research center for the life of William Carey, said Dr. Noonkester.

At the moment, the museum is in the process of digitizing its wide array of historic documents for online display, as well as attempting to attract more visitors.

The Carey Center is open Monday through Friday from 1 until 5 p.m. with tours led by student workers Patrick Goode and Cade Jarrell. Students are welcome to come by during this time for a tour through the museum.

It is the hope of Dr. Noonkester and his fellow co-director Dr. Bennie Crockett that the Center will continue to give people a sense of respect and appreciation for the life and work of the late and great William Carey.

The Childhood Beginnings of a Master Linguist

Carey Center houses namesake’s spelling book

Within a small glass case inside of the ever-interesting Carey Center here on campus rests a fascinating artifact from the life of William Carey: a child’s spelling and grammar book used by the man himself.

Appropriately titled “The New Spelling Dictionary: Teaching to write and pronounce the English tongue with ease and propriety,” the name itself could stand as a lesson and training exercise for children today. William Carey was given the book from his father at around the age 5 with a distinct and unique inscription just inside the back cover containing the date 1766, along with the signature of Carey’s father Edmund Carey.

Edmund Carey served as the parish clerk in Pauler’s Pary, the English village in which William Carey was raised. The position of parish clerk was essentially the lowest position one could attain within the Anglican Church state at that time, and the compensation would have been scant.

Among the many duties asked of the parish clerk was local schoolmaster. Due to local poverty, the school would have been extremely limited in its educational resources. There would have been, however, one very particular, very fortunate benefact of being the local schoolmaster: the schoolmaster’s children were allowed attendance into the school. Otherwise, Edmund Carey would not have been able to afford education for his son.

The education of William Carey by his schoolmaster father, along with this foundational spelling and grammar book, undoubtedly planted a seed that would someday sprout into William Carey’s prolific linguistic works. During his missions in India, William Carey famously translated the Bible into an astonishing amount of Indian dialects.

The spelling and grammar book, written by John Entick, a famous lexicographer of the 18th century, was published as a second edition in 1766. While it was common during its day, the book is now only available for public viewing in a limited number of locations.

It was in 2004 that providence brought this book into the hands of the Carey Center. Calvin and Tillie Remmert, a couple from Houston, were driving along Highway 49 while on vacation in south Mississippi. Along the way, they stumbled across a small campus titled William Carey College, Gulf Coast campus. They immediately rang a bell, bringing them to recall a small, antique book containing an odd inscription that they had purchased in a rare bookshop in London as far back as the 1960s.

They immediately stopped by to inquire of a possible connection, and the rest is history. The Remmert couple donated the compelling find free to William Carey University, and it now rests proudly in the Center.

As Dr. Myron Noonkester, co-director of the Carey Center, relates to the importance of the early spelling and grammar book in Carey’s life, he states, “It brought him a love of language from a very young age and a love for the study of how languages are constructed.”
The Childhood Beginnings of a Master Linguist
Carey center houses name sake’s spelling book

By Christopher Dixon
Senior Staff Writer

Within a small glass case inside of the ever-interesting Carey Center here on campus rests a fascinating artifact from the life of William Carey: a child’s spelling and grammar book used by the near-six-year-old.

Appropriately titled “The New Spelling Dictionary: Teaching to write and pronounce the English tongue with ease and propriety,” the name itself could stand as a lofty and time-consuming exercise for children today. William Carey was given the book from his father at around the age of five with a distinct and unique inscription just inside the back cover containing the date 1766, along with the signature of Carey’s father Edmund Carey.

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