

Elizabeth Tyler Miles

Mrs. Miles is the only living child<sup>\*</sup> of the late Lyon G. Tyler, president of William and Mary from 1888 to 1919. She now lives in Charlottesville. Although somewhat apprehensive about being tape-recorded, she was pleased to recall her days in the President's House. Her letters are also filed with this transcript, as they, too, are descriptive of the era.

\* No - Lyon G. Tyler, Jr., is alive & well

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Interviewee Elizabeth Tyler Miles

Date of interview Oct 15, 1975

Place 9 Raleigh Court, University Circle, Charlottesville, Va.

Interviewer Emily Williams

Session number 1

Length of tape 45 mins.

Contents:

Approximate time:

Tyler's becoming president	2 mins.
description of President's House	3 mins.
college finances	2 mins.
physical layout of campus	2 mins.
rate of W&M in education	4 mins.
description of Tyler, Billups	8 mins.
entertainment, life in President's House	17 mins.
Tyler's retirement	2 mins.
retrospect	5 mins.

Elizabeth Tyler Miles

October 15, 1975

Charlottesville, Virginia

Williams: Why would your father, Lyon G. Tyler, have taken over this struggling institution that has been closed?

Miles: Because he was so intensely interested in history. His father attended William and Mary, and he was a student and later professor of belles-lettres, as well. He was just so interested in the college, ~~but~~ he felt that it might be destroyed entirely, and he just couldn't bear to think of that. He was in the state legislature, and he urged them to appropriate some money; it was only a pittance: \$10,000. I don't see how they ever opened the college on that! (Well, they did have a little money. I don't know where that ~~money~~ came from, but at one time it had amounted to \$60,000, but after the War <sup>between the States</sup> it was only about \$30,000. Now this is what I've always heard.) So it was opened on that.

He came to William and Mary, and the President's House was in a terrible state of repairs. The walls had been whitewashed; they hadn't been painted or papered.

and Colonel Ewell, who was such a grand old man and grand president, had come in and rung the bell, but he'd always bring his hunting dogs with him, and the dogs would sleep in the room that he used as his library, and so when my father arrived he said the house was just alive with fleas! But they soon got rid of <sup>them,</sup> ~~that~~ because he loved dogs, too, and we always had animals of every description -- two saddle horses and buggy horses, a cow and a calf, <sup>and</sup> turkeys.

Williams: Right there on the president's house grounds?

Miles: Yes, on the campus. He got a flock of turkeys; He said he thought it would be much more profitable than peacocks, who were just beautiful, but ~~turkeys~~ you could eat turkeys, too.

And he always kept corn in his pocket, and when he walked over to the college, the turkeys would follow him. So the students <sup>who</sup> would be standing or sitting on the college steps would say, "Gobble, gobble, gobble,"-- to his amusement. And the turkeys roosted in the trees around the buildings at night, but finally they were all gone because at Thanksgiving and Christmas the students would go <sup>when it was dark</sup> out and catch them by the tail and pull them out of the trees and take them down to <sup>the</sup> ~~this~~ little restaurant that was owned by a man -- he said he was Indian -- Jim Galt. And Jim Galt would cook the turkeys for the students. Then they had a club called the Wish Bone Club, and they'd wear the turkey wishbone on <sup>the</sup> ~~their~~ lapel of their coat. Well, so the turkeys didn't last too long. But we had rabbits and

\* The Main Building was then called "the College."

guinea pigs and all kinds of birds, and he really was a lover of animals.

Williams: In one of your letters to me you spoke of these as "the poverty years of the college."

Miles: Well, the poverty years were when he first started there. His salary was \$1800; the professors' salaries were \$1500. Imagine that today. Of course, we did have the house but little by little the Board of Visitors would have a little money and help to restore the house -- paint it and paper it. My mother just made it charming (she was a real interior decorator) and with all the lovely old furniture, that they came from Charlottesville, that she inherited from her mother and father, Elizabeth Kilmer Tucker - H. St. George Tucker III

Williams: Well, did he see the state financial support -- you said he pleaded before the General Assembly or for the General Assembly to give the college money. Did he see this as the only way to re-open the college?

Miles: Yes, no one had any money. It had been too long after the War between the States, and everyone was poor. Oh goodness, the only source of revenue would be from the state and they all ready had the University of Virginia as a state college, so they were reluctant to have another state college on their hands but when my father just pleaded for it, the history of it, the great men that had been students there, had taught there, I suppose they couldn't resist, and did appropriate the \$10,000, and that's what the college was opened on with the "Seven Wise Men." Then later on, I think -- I'm not sure of the year --

\* 1906  
 but I think it was ~~1890~~ or 1895 <sup>later</sup> ~~that~~ the state was induced  
 to take the college over as a state college.

Williams: Your father worked for this, I assume.

Miles: Oh, yes, he worked for that <sup>hard</sup> ~~hard~~ because there was no way  
 of getting any money. No one had any money to give. But  
 when they wanted to build a library, ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> did go up north.  
 The Carnegie Foundation would appropriate so much, (\$30,000)  
 if they would raise \$30,000, so he went up in the North, and  
~~had~~ some of his friends <sup>who</sup> ~~became interested and they~~ donated  
 money <sup>so that</sup> and he raised the \$30,000 ~~and that was the library~~  
~~which I don't know that it's still there. Is it?~~

Williams: ~~Yes, it's now part of the law school. They added to the building~~

Miles: Of course ~~the library when he first went there was back~~  
 of the chapel <sup>in the college</sup> ~~the rooms back of the chapel in the Wren~~  
 Building was the library. I have a picture of that.

Williams: Everything was in <sup>what</sup> ~~it~~ was called the Main Building, or I  
 think you referred to it as "the College." ~~It was also~~  
 called ~~the College.~~

Miles: We never called it the Wren Building. We, of course, knew  
 that the architect was Sir Christopher Wren, but it was  
 "the College" or "the Main Building, usually "the College."

Williams: And everything was in there?

Miles: Everything took place in there -- except the dances. During  
 that early period the dances were held down at the Colonial  
 Inn in their dining room, which they would turn into a ball-  
 room. Then when the gymnasium was built -- I don't know how

they got the money for ~~that~~ the first gymnasium -- then that would be turned into a ballroom, and they would have entertainment there. But when <sup>my father</sup> he first went to the college, ~~the~~ Board of Visitors <sup>and all the guests</sup> always were entertained in the president's house, ~~and all the guests~~

Williams: The advertisements for William and Mary at the time -- ~~they~~ advertised it as a teacher training school. Was that his concept of the role of the college, ~~was~~ to train teachers?

Miles: Yes, to teach young men to be able to teach in the public schools of Virginia, ~~and~~ they would get a discount on their expenses while there. Also, ~~theological~~ students ~~(those~~ who were going to be ministers) would come at a much ~~less~~ lower rate.

Williams: ~~Judge Spratley was telling me about this; he was trained as a teacher.~~ What then did Dr. Tyler think went in to making up an educated man? Now, ~~this~~ this is sort of a hypothetical question, I realize.

Miles: A man with <sup>training, which</sup> liberal arts ~~and I don't believe that, included science at that time -- the liberal arts.~~ I'm not sure, it may ~~have.~~ <sup>Science was taught by</sup> I know that <sup>Dr. Van Garret</sup> was the professor of chemistry; <sup>was</sup> and his laboratory <sup>over</sup> what is now called the Great Hall, ~~and it was three two floors.~~ <sup>it was two floors.</sup>

Williams: ~~That's right, it was only two stories.~~

Miles: ~~And he was one of the sweetest men I've ever known -- Dr. Garrett.~~ ~~I just -- he was wonderful, and he married Miss Nichols from New Orleans who was the governor of New Orleans, his daughter~~

~~of Louisiana, don't you mean?~~

~~and of course, Cara and Suzanne and Ray and Van, the son.~~

Mrs. Garrett always had a little Bible class Sunday afternoon. She said she did that to keep <sup>vs</sup> herself out of ~~trou-~~  
~~bles~~ <sup>mischief</sup> on Sunday afternoon. ~~And~~ she would see me coming across the Court House green, and she said I always climbed in the window; I never went through the door.

Williams: I asked a question about the educated man; it was during your father's administration that women were first admitted to the college.

Miles: He was enthusiastic about that; he really was. ~~He really~~  
~~was responsible for that.~~ He fought for that and I think that was (the year <sup>1918</sup> ~~1919~~, wasn't it?). As I remember, the first girl that matriculated in ~~coeducation~~ was from Newport News, and her name was Faith, ~~I don't know her last name but~~  
~~Faith~~ and my father said that was a good omen.

Williams: Did he have a hard time getting the alumni and the General Assembly to agree?

Miles: Oh, some of the alumni -- one of the alumni asked to have his name taken off of the rolls of the college, ~~was~~.

Williams: What arguments, then, did he use in favor of making William and Mary coeducational, do you know that?

Miles: He always felt that a woman should have all the privileges and rights <sup>and</sup> that a man had, that she should be as well educated as her husband, ~~as a man~~. Oh, he worked hard for that.

Williams: Would you say that he was ahead of his time or were his critics behind their time?



Miles: I think he was a little ahead of his time, wouldn't you say so?

Williams: I would think. In his relationship with students, many of the people that I have spoken with who knew your father, remember him very fondly as being rather absent<sup>#</sup>minded.

Miles: He was very absent<sup>#</sup>minded, which I think they say of most college professors ~~that they are absent<sup>#</sup>minded.~~ But he would do some very absentminded things. The students would have a number of jokes <sup>on the</sup> and his absent<sup>#</sup>minded things he did.

Williams: Can you think of some examples?

Miles: Well, let's see. I remember one. <sup>6</sup> He was holding class ( At ~~X~~ that time, he was teaching ~~too~~ besides being president), and it was a warm spring day and the students had spring fever, I guess, <sup>in</sup> so ~~when they went over to the classroom~~ my father said, "Mr. Jones, will you answer the question?" And Mr. Jones <sup>replied</sup> ~~said~~, "Doctor, I don't think I know anything about that question." "Well, Mr. Brown, will you answer the question?" "Well, Doctor, I don't know what the question is." My father said, "Well, I don't know what it is either. Class dismissed." That was one of the jokes they told on him. And another one was <sup>when he asked</sup> ~~they told~~ Henry Billups, the janitor, one evening ~~at night~~ when it was quite dark, "Go out to the sun<sup>o</sup>dial, Henry, and tell me what time it is." Henry said, "Dr. Tyler, it's dark out there. I can't see what time it is." "Well, light a match and you'll see," <sup>was the answer.</sup>

Williams: Did you know Henry Billups personally?

Miles: Oh <sup>of</sup> goodness, course I did. He came there when my father came; he hired him <sup>^</sup> ~~when he was~~ about fifteen years old to wait on the tables over in the Ewell ~~Building~~, where the dining hall was. And I remember his old father who was working ~~there~~ at the college ~~then~~. He really was the janitor ~~and~~ his father was old and not well, so they had to get someone in his place, and my father appointed Henry as the janitor to ring the bell, which he did -- well, he was there for about ~~sixty-five~~ <sup>sixty-five</sup> years ~~when he rung it.~~

Williams: He ~~apparently~~ was a very legendary character as well.

Miles: Oh, he was. He was a real character and a real gentleman. When he died ~~I went to his funeral, and I was so sorry~~ I think it was during the summer, ~~so~~ so the college was more or less closed, and they didn't toll the bell. I wanted them to toll the college bell at his funeral.

Williams: What kind of a person was Henry Billups?

Miles: Well, he was just a fine gentleman, I would say ~~and~~ and he was always agreeable, always cheerful, and would do anything that he possibly could for either the students or the faculty ~~and~~ and when they'd send him to look for a student that the faculty wanted to talk to, he would never find him. He just couldn't find him, ~~whether he could or not.~~

Williams: He was very close to the students, I've heard.

Miles: Oh, yes. He knew all their troubles and joys. He always called himself a Kappa Sigma and wore a Kappa Sigma pin on his lapel.

~~but~~ he was a Kappa Sigma and "professor of <sup>B</sup> Boozology" <sup>so he said.</sup> We always <sup>after</sup>

had him over to wait on the table when we had guests.

Williams: I'm not giving you a chance to refer to your notes. Maybe I should pause there.

Miles: I've ~~got~~ <sup>have</sup> here that you've ~~got~~ <sup>had the idea</sup> ("the aspirations when he became president.") It was to <sup>make it</sup> be a first-class liberal arts college.

Williams: He had taught at William and Mary, you were telling me at lunch.

Miles: Just for a year.

Williams: But his education was at the University of Virginia?

Miles: Well, his higher education, yes. He, of course, studied law <sup>there</sup> ~~here~~ and had many stories about the students' pranks ~~here~~ at the university that I loved to listen to.

Williams: Was he a good story-teller?

Miles: Oh, excellent. He would tell wonderful stories.

Williams: Of course, he is known primarily as a scholar because of the ~~his~~ <sup>his</sup> history <sup>ies</sup> ~~that~~ he wrote. Would you say that he was more of a scholar, say, than a disciplinarian?

Miles: Well, his main theme, of course, was honor ~~and~~ William and Mary was the first college to establish the honor system, ~~I think,~~ and ~~that was just beyond the pale - anything that wasn't honorable,~~ <sup>was just beyond the pale.</sup> ~~But~~ he was most friendly with the students and always called them, "my boys." ~~It's a wonder that Judge Spratley didn't say that he was one of Dr. Tyler's "boys."~~ I heard Governor Tuck the other day and I remember he was speaking at William and Mary when he was governor and he said, "Oh, I couldn't believe anything else because I was

*Judge James Spratley and Governor Tuck -  
My father always called them "my boys" -  
He was very proud of them.*

~~one of Dr. Tyler's "boys."~~ I've just forgotten what it was about but anyhow, that's the way he expressed it.

Williams: Would students be in your home? ~~I know Judge Spratley spoke of how delighted the boys were that Dr. Tyler had two such lovely daughters.~~

Yes,  
Miles: Well, my mother ~~was lovely and she~~ would have a group of them over for supper very often.

~~Williams: The college was much, much smaller.~~

*President's*  
Miles: Of course, ~~In~~ those days, all the entertainment was in the house and the students -- oh, we'd have as many as twenty callers over there in the evening ~~and we~~ had to play games and make fudge; ~~We~~ didn't have all the things the young people have now -- radio and television -- we just had to have our own amusement, which we certainly enjoyed. ~~We had all kinds of games we played. Made candy down in the kitchen.~~

Williams: I think you said <sup>that</sup> when you first moved into the president's house, they didn't even have electricity.

Miles: No, we had lamps ~~and I know~~ the lamps were the first things in the morning that had to be cleaned. I don't know what year

it was that we got electricity and a bathroom. We had no bathroom, ~~and my mother's friends would come up, bring a towel.~~ <sup>got her towels &c.</sup> Dear Mrs. Hall, her dearest friend, and Mrs. Geddy <sup>a dear friend,</sup> ~~would~~ all ~~id~~ come <sup>may</sup> up and say, "Mrs. Tyler, ~~can~~ we take a bath?"

We would be delighted -- there were no bathrooms in Williamsburg at that time.

Williams: Was the president's house one of the first to get one?

Miles: Yes. ~~They'd come up there to get a bath.~~

Williams: I have heard, too, that your father was one of the first people in Williamsburg to get a car.

Miles: He was, <sup>he from Mr. Person</sup> got a Ford. And you should have seen our horses!

They were always pastured out ~~there~~ in back of the campus, where the buildings are ~~right there~~ now, but the horses ~~were out there~~. And when they saw this automobile, they kicked up their heels and ran around in the pasture --

which was the campus. <sup>oh,</sup> their day of freedom had come, they felt. I always rode horseback. I know all the woods; <sup>I rode</sup> we'd ride through the woods ~~around there~~ on horseback. *as far as Jamestown - and King's Mill -*

Williams: And you were telling me before lunch <sup>about</sup> when you would go ~~down~~ to Jamestown, you would go ~~down~~ in a wagon.

Miles; Yes. We called it hay ride. We'd go on a hayride to Jamestown <sup>to</sup> to celebrate the <sup>13<sup>th</sup></sup> fifteenth of May, I think it <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ -- the landing, you know. Oh, goodness, that was a big day! We'd take the most wonderful picnic lunches: fried chicken and deviled eggs and chocolate cake and have a perfectly wonderful time. Filled the wagon with our friends *Boys and girls* ~~boy students, boys and girls~~

Williams: Was that the biggest day of the year?

Miles: That was really a big day.

Williams: Maybe second to finals. <sup>They had</sup> Would you say finals were even bigger?

Miles: Yes, second to finals. Japanese lanterns and ~~the~~ bunting

on the <sup>for William of Orange and Mary of York</sup> colleges ~~(orange and white)~~ you know for finals.

Williams: You were describing earlier the Japanese lanterns being strung --

Miles: All around the campus . They'd be lighted at ~~five o'clock~~ 5:00

in the afternoon when the orchestra from Washington would arrive, <sup>they</sup> and would play on the campus from <sup>5:00</sup> ~~five~~ until <sup>7:00</sup> ~~seven~~

and (they would usually sit between the president's house and "the college" and everybody in town would come <sup>to the college campus</sup> up there, and it would be just like a big festival with the lanterns and the music and all the students and the girls that had come for the dances.

Williams: You were telling me earlier about the dances.

Miles: Oh, they were just wonderful. We always had a house full of young people for the finals -- girls coming ~~down~~ from Richmond, and the Booths <sup>coming</sup> from "Carter's Grove" would always come to our house and stay the night, ~~and~~ we would have to sleep on a pallet.

Williams: You must have looked forward to finals every year.

Miles: I don't see how my mother ever did the housekeeping for so many people, but she did, and we always had a wonderful cook and a little housemaid that helped.

Williams: I didn't get you to go into detail at lunch ~~about you were~~ talking about the Germans, the dances?

Miles: The Germans were given by the four fraternities: Kappa Sigma, Kappa Alpha, Pi Kappa Alpha, and Theta Delta Chi. They would usually start off with a march, ~~at~~ the chaperones and all the

young people would line up for a march around ~~I remember~~  
~~that mostly~~ ~~in~~ the gymnasium. ~~And~~ then we would waltz  
 and polka. They were beautiful dances. They were usually  
 led <sup>by Jimmy Christies</sup> (later on ~~led~~ by Jeff Stubbs, who was the son of Profes-  
 sor of Thomas Jefferson Stubbs; ~~he was there at the college~~  
~~later on and he would lead the Germans~~ He was a beautiful  
 waltzer.

Williams: I think you said that the fraternities<sup>s</sup> vied with each other <sup>A</sup>

Miles: Oh, yes, they would vie with each other to see who could  
 put on the most charming, delightful dance, ~~which would have~~  
~~the most beautiful dance~~ Then the last dance would be the  
 final ball, and <sup>ch, that</sup> ~~that~~ <sup>e</sup> ~~we were~~ going to say good-  
 bye the next day, you know, and when they'd play "Auld  
 Lang Syne" that was very sad. We'd all cry ~~and~~ the college  
 would close.

Williams: Because the next day would be commencement?

Miles: Well, the next day the college would be over, you see, ~~it would~~  
~~end. That would be the ending -- the night of the final ball~~  
 They would have delivered the degrees and medals that morning  
 in the chapel.

Williams: Yes, you were telling me that the degrees were granted in the  
 chapel. On the subject of the social life, would you say  
 that at the time that we're talking about, which is basically  
 1888 to 1919, that the college and the town -- could you have  
 separated the two in your mind, as far as social life was con-  
 cerned?

Miles: No, because the townspeople always were <sup>part of</sup> ~~with~~ the social life  
of the college.

Williams: One thing, I think ~~was~~ <sup>it</sup> in the Sage of the Lion's Den that I  
found rather interesting, <sup>was</sup> ~~it said~~ something about your father  
"desiring to spread the temperance sentiment." I wondered what  
was meant exactly by this.)

Miles: ~~I don't understand that either. Where did you see that?~~

Williams: ~~I think it was Sage of the Lion's Den that I read that.~~

Miles: ~~Well, I know that sometimes we'd call him the "peacemaker."  
He would always, sometimes I would say, "You're taking all  
the romance out of history, out of things that have a lot  
of romance," He would always say, "I want the truth. I  
like romance and sentiment but I want the truth."~~

Williams: ~~So, temperance was not something he preached? That was an  
idea I got from reading --~~

Miles: Temperance? Oh, he didn't preach that. ~~Where alcohol is con-  
cerned?~~ Oh, he didn't preach <sup>temperance</sup> ~~it~~, but the town had so many  
barrooms ~~in it, you know~~ that when local option came ~~he~~ he was  
for local option because of the college students. He said  
that the students had the influence of all these barrooms that  
were ~~there~~ in Williamsburg <sup>at that time</sup>. He used to say that some of the  
old gentlemen that had known of the War Between the States, ~~that~~  
~~those~~ who did drink too much, it was their only solace because  
they had lost everything ~~else~~ -- their homes, their money, many  
of their sons and family -- ~~so if anyone imbibed too much, he~~  
would say, "Well, you can't blame him too much because that's his



~~solace, after all he's suffered."~~ But he was certainly no  
 teetotaler, but he <sup>certainly</sup> believed in ~~certainly~~ not drinking too much.

~~In moderation~~

Williams: That's how historical mis<sup>3</sup>information can get started. When I read that, I assumed perhaps he was a teetotal<sup>2</sup>er.

Miles: Oh, no<sup>2</sup> why, when the Board of Visitors came over to have dinner at our house, the first thing they would be served would be a cigar and a little mint julep. That was the custom in those days. And I would always want the sugar left in the glass of the mint julep. No, he was no teetotaler, but he believed in ~~abstinence~~ <sup>e</sup> *moderation* -

Williams: If you had to identify <sup>f</sup> the greatest influences on his character, the things that went into making him the way he was, ~~at~~ what influences would you cite?

Miles: Well, as he would always say when he was writing, "I want the truth." No matter what it is, if I am recording history, if it's bitter or not, I want the truth." And he felt a great <sup>e</sup> sense ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> honor ~~at the college~~ <sup>there</sup> ~~about everything was to~~ be ~~honorable~~.

Williams: One more thing I thought of I wanted to ask you was about famous or special guests that you had at the president's <sup>3</sup> house. Can you recall?

Miles: Well, I think I wrote you a number <sup>1</sup> <sup>of them.</sup> I know that we entertained President Taft -- this was in the president's <sup>3</sup> house <sup>3</sup> President and Mrs. Wilson <sup>1</sup> My mother had known Mrs. Wilson all her life. She was visiting <sup>1</sup> the Bollings, who lived in Wytheville,

when my father wrote her that they could be married because he'd gotten a job down in Memphis, Tennessee, <sup>as</sup> ~~so she came~~ and they were married at a cousin's in Pulaski County.

*Principal of a boys school*

~~The Reverend George Gilmer was her cousin, were married there, then went down to Memphis.~~ Pierpoint Morgan, French Prince Ambassador Jucherand -- oh, we entertained so many.

These are just a few that I can remember.

*My uncle, Judge D. Gardiner*

Williams: Can you remember, maybe, special preparations or special things that happened? Just that they came?

*always stayed with us when he had court in Williamsburg*

Miles: No, ~~I told you my father was walking down to watch a~~ <sup>sometimes</sup> ~~with~~ <sup>towards the gate</sup> ~~this gentleman and he would just bring them~~ <sup>people</sup> ~~in to dinner; my mother wouldn't know ahead of time at all. So she saw him once~~

*on the Campus*

~~with a gentleman, and she~~ <sup>said</sup> ~~say,~~ "I know I'm going to have a guest for dinner, so I better add something." And the only thing that she had that she could add was a dish of scrambled eggs and she added that, and the guest was Pierpoint Morgan, who was always known as a gourmet, ~~you know,~~ but he told my mother, "You couldn't have had anything better or that I like more than scrambled eggs." ~~I don't think she told him that she'd added it.~~

~~Williams: When she saw him coming up the walk.~~

~~Miles: Yes. But I do recall~~ <sup>once</sup> ~~once we had a guest.~~ -- I think it was Professor Hart from Harvard and we had oyster <sup>SOUP</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> so many people came in that day to have dinner with us that she my mother hastily had to get the cook to add more milk to the oyster <sup>soup</sup> ~~soup.~~ ~~Dr. Hart said, "Oh, this soup is delicious, Mrs.~~

*reminded me of beautiful old Canton China soup with an old ribbon soup bowl*

Tyler, may I have some more?" ~~And~~ she said, "Certainly."  
 By that time there was only about one oyster left, and the  
 little maid leaning over my mother's shoulder to look  
 while she was ladling out the oyster ~~soup~~ said to my mother,  
 "'Dar he ~~is~~; 'dar he ~~is~~ pawing at the one and only oyster."  
 That was very embarrassing.

Williams: You had written to me that the days you spent in the presi-  
 dent's house were very happy ones.

Miles: I don't remember a single day that wasn't happy -- except  
 when my mother was ill once or twice, ~~then I was unhappy be-~~  
~~cause of her, not of anything else.~~ We were all very hap-  
 py. <sup>I remember</sup> ~~And~~ my father would join in at Christmas. We always  
 had fireworks at Christmas instead of ~~at~~ the Fourth of July,  
~~We'd have them at Christmas and he'd always come out on~~  
 the porch and help us fire off the fireworks and the Roman  
 candles and celebrate Christmas with us -- hanging up stock-  
 ings, helping to fill them.

Williams: Your father enjoyed being president of the college?

Miles: Oh, very much. He loved it. It was a challenge <sup>e</sup> ~~and he just --~~  
~~The college really, really had no money to speak of until~~  
~~just recently, in the last -- now it's been left a lot of money,~~  
~~hasn't it? We were so happy that Mr. Johns left --~~

Williams: Oh, yes, Mr. Johns left some money to it, yes, you're right.

(Discussion about Ashlawn and William and Mary.)

When your father retired, was it because of his health or his  
 age or he just felt it was time for a new president?

Miles: No, he just felt that the <sup>times</sup> ~~period~~ had changed and that some younger person should be president of the college, ~~and~~ he wanted to write, too. He spent the summers after he retired at a little cottage we had on the James River, which my mother named "the Lion's Den," and in the winter they lived in Richmond ~~and he had an office in Richmond.~~

~~Williams: But he did want to pursue his work when he retired?~~

~~Miles: And~~ he did a great deal of writing after he retired.

Williams: What did he see as his greatest accomplishment ~~at the college?~~

~~Miles: You mean in writing? I think he would say Letters and Times of the Tylors as far as writing is concerned.~~

~~Williams: No, as president.~~

Miles: You mean ~~at the college?~~ He did so many things. The greatest accomplishment -- I think he should be considered the second founder of William and Mary because if it hadn't been for him, probably ~~the buildings as the legislature had spoken of,~~ <sup>have been (as the legislature had spoken of)</sup> would ~~be~~ sold -- ~~just~~ <sup>with his love of history,</sup> the college would have been finished ~~and~~ that he just couldn't bear that ~~and I think he would say that~~ and then ~~he~~ added a number of buildings. Of course, the buildings then were certainly not the large and handsome buildings of today, but they did the best they could with the funds they had.

Williams: Did he have friends in the legislature that he could contact?

Miles: Oh, yes. ~~But~~ he had a number of friends in the north <sup>that</sup> contributed to William and Mary. Well, of course, <sup>he was involved with</sup> his William and Mary Quarterly which he founded and published until he re-

tired, ~~as his own~~ and then he retired he wrote under the name of Tyler's Genealogical and Historical Magazine.

Williams: After he retired, he lived for a number of years afterwards in which the college grew rapidly, both in students and in buildings. How did he view this?

Miles: Well, he viewed it with great pleasure. When he retired, it was just around World War I, you see, and so many of the students had left to join the armed forces, ~~and he thought that it would be wonderful~~ I'm sure he looked forward to what the college is today.

Williams: You think he'd approve of the college as it is today?

Miles: Oh, yes, of course, he would.

~~Williams: Dr. Kimbrough made the comment when I interviewed her that she's very sure that he would be very pleased at a project like this -- of getting down the history of the college.~~

~~Miles: Yes, oh, he would be. That was his, really, his life.~~ I can just always picture him sitting at his desk writing some historical article, ~~because so much of it,~~ so many of the old records were burned and that's another thing he did. He got the legislature to appropriate a very small sum -- as much as he could get, certainly not over \$1,000 -- to have the records at Yorktown and in Gloucester and all around in the old courthouses <sup>copied</sup> ~~written~~ and so many of the ladies in Williamsburg did it. He would get the records and bring them to their houses, and they would copy them, and he had them all <sup>n</sup> set up to the library in Richmond ~~and they're there.~~ My mother copied

one. Of course, all the ladies were paid something for  
 doing it -- maybe <sup>this work about \$50,</sup> ~~just fifty dollars~~, but they were glad  
 to get that in those days. They were all written in dif-  
 ferent handwritings, though. Each lady would have a dif-  
 ferent handwriting. \*

\* Mrs. Miles's letters (to be filed with this)  
 contain additional stories of life in the  
 President's House during her father's term, 1888-1919,  
 President Emertus, 1919-1935  
 until his death -

Letters

Elizabeth Tyler Miles to Emily Williams

June 27, 1975

The Wren Building, in my day, was always called "The College," though of course, we knew the main building, the President's House and Brafferton (first school for Indians) were designed by Sir Christopher Wren.

It was indeed "The College" -- the chapel, library, gymnasium, Burser's office, classrooms where the two literary societies and faculty meetings, graduating exercises held in the chapel -- everything took place in that main building, "The College." I think you can find my father's farewell address (June 1919) in the library, also. He tells of accomplishments made during the lean years while president, 1888-1919, president emeritus, 1919-1935, until his death, February 1935. While president emeritus he was often called upon to speak and take part in ceremonies. When President Coolidge visited The College, my husband was stationed at "The Navy Mine Depot," Yorktown, Virginia (Capt. Alfred Hart Miles, U.S. Navy). My husband met the president aboard his yacht "Mayflower" at the docks in Yorktown, and in full uniform regalia escorted President Coolidge to The College in Williamsburg. My father and President Chandler were there to greet him. It was an interesting and beautiful ceremony, presenting the president with an honorary degree.

I thought my father looked very handsome wearing his collegiate cap and gown -- the gold tassel on his cap swinging as he strode into "The College." He was a tall, striking-looking man with a merry twinkle in his eye.

July 1975

There is so much I would like to talk to you about those "Golden Days."

I made a list of a few of the distinguished guests that were entertained in the President's House. During that period the Board of Visitors and guests of the college were entertained there. There were usually cigars and mint juleps before dinner. Henry Billups, the janitor, was called in to wait on the table, which he did with great eclat.

I remember well the Bishop of London's visit (1907) bringing a handsome Bible as a gift from the king to Bruton Parish Church. President Theodore Roosevelt presented the lectern on which it rests. The Bishop of London, wearing short satin trunks and long black stockings, stood on the steps of the Wren Building and spoke to the college students, ending his speech by saying, "Gentlemen, if you do not have a sense of humor, pray for it. You will need it in your journey through life."

One more thing I will mention which made a great impression on me. When he (my father) retired (1919), Dr. James Dillard of Charlottesville was rector of the college board. He delivered an address and presented my father with the honorary degree of L.L.D., also President Emeritus of William and Mary; this was in 1919. My mother and I sat in the front seat in the chapel where the ceremonies took place.-- Dr. Dillard, standing in front of my father who stood tall in his cap and gown, looking directly at him said, "Lyon Gardiner Tyler, gentleman by birth and education,



historian, author, educator, I present to you the honorary degree of L.L.D. and declare you president emeritus of the College of William and Mary." He also spoke of him as "Restor<sup>er</sup>~~er~~ of paths," the "soul of service." It was a moving occasion; my mother's and my eyes were filled with tears.

January 9, 1976

Dear Miss Williams,

You have asked me what my father's relationship was with the faculty. I would certainly say most friendly.

The faculty presented him with a medal, 1906, studded with a diamond. I enclose my sister-in-law's, Mrs. Harrison Ruffies Tyler, letter describing the medal. Also, when my father retired in 1919 the faculty presented him with a beautiful large silver pitcher, goblet, and tray. Mrs. John Tyler, my brother John Tyler's wife, has it now, and is very proud of it.

A number <sup>4</sup> of students he knew well gave him a very fine hammock to use and relax in at "The Lion's Den," his summer house on the James River. It is impossible for me to mention all of the close and friendly relationships he had with the faculty and students. The faculty presented my brother, John Tyler, student and professors, with a medal for his high scholarship in mathematics, and when I was married they gave me a beautiful large silver bowl.

January 5, 1976

A few of the admonitions my father, Dr. Lyon Gardiner Tyler, gave to his students, and to me:

"Never reply to a letter without rereading it. You may forget to answer questions, etc."

"Never write a letter or reply to one of any consequence without sleeping on it. In the morning you may change your mind."

"Never cut a clipping from a newspaper without the line, name, place, and date of paper. Otherwise, little good to anyone, especially historians."

"Never answer the door or phone without a welcome voice."

"Be temperate or moderate in all things."

"Regardless of all else, search and want the truth."

"Honor above all."

Advice to "my boys", the students at the College of William and Mary.

Elizabeth Tyler Miles

Mrs. Alfred Hart Miles

January 5th, 1976

Letter from Mrs. Miles' sister-in-law, Frances Payne Boatwright Tyler.

The inscription on the medal -- across the top, starting at the left is "Pres. Lyon G. Tyler, LL.D." Across the bottom: "College of William and Mary." In the center it is like this:

Mar. 5, 1888

---

from  
THE FACULTY

---

Mar. 5, 1906

On the other side in orange enamel on gold across the top (making  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a circle) is Gulielmi et mariae and across the bottom in while enamel on gold is "virginia • sig. collegii." In the center of a circle with a hole for the diamond on the top (I had it replaced and it fell out again) is a four columned Greek revival building with three oval windows on the side and three windows on the front for 2 stories, total of 12 windows with the date 1693.

I took the medal to Schwartzchilds, and it is made of copper with gold plate and white and orange enamel in two sections on the gold. When Harrison and Lyon divided their mother's jewelry (there was very little), Lyon took first choice and chose a diamond pin with 5 diamonds and 5 sapphires. Then Harrison chose this medal. Then Lyon chose his mother's diamond ring and wedding band, and Harrison took what was left: a cameo pin surrounded by seed pearls.