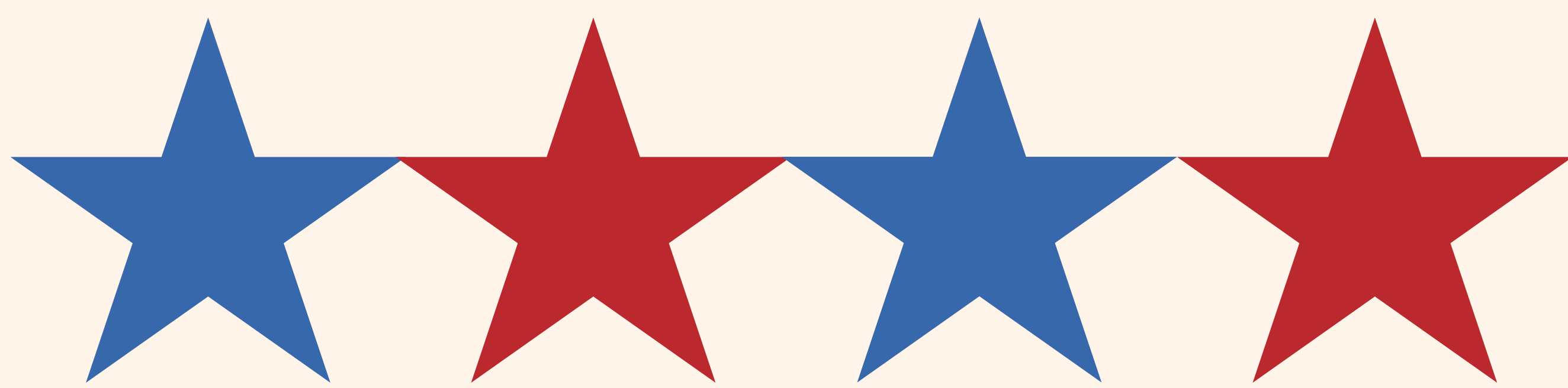


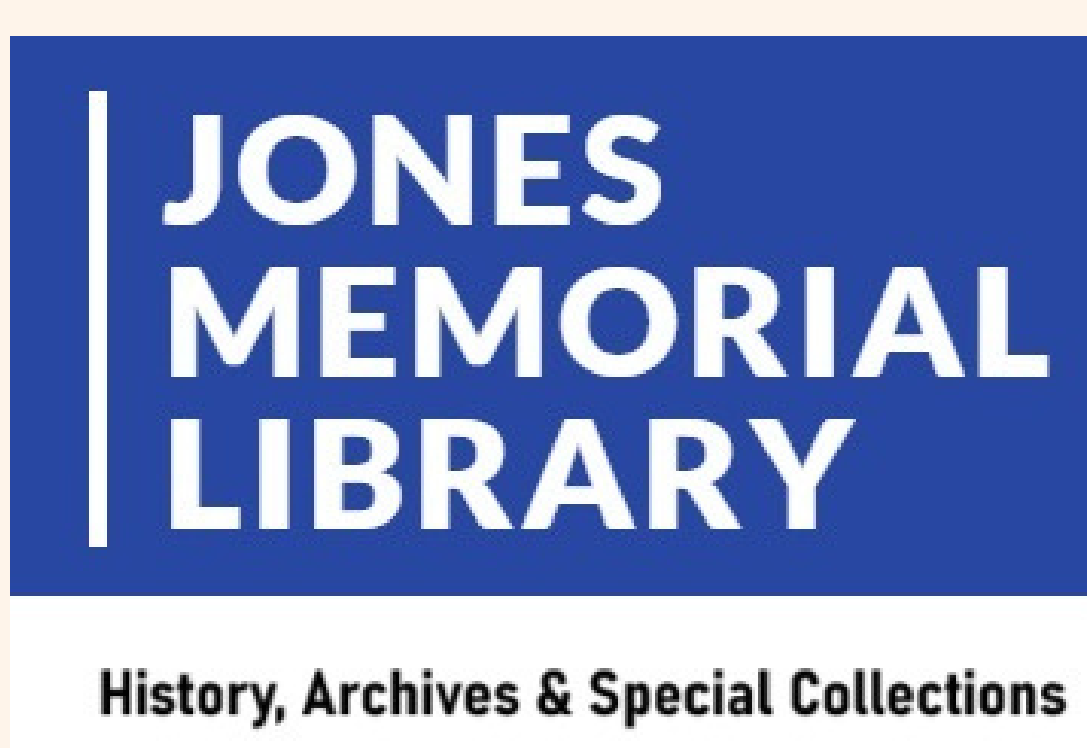
**SELECT  
SUPPRESS  
CENSOR  
BAN  
BURN  
REVISE  
~~READ~~**

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO READ FREE IN CENTRAL VIRGINIA?**



**October 7, 2025 - March 6, 2026**

On exhibit in the Reading Room  
Jones Memorial Library  
2311 Memorial Avenue  
Lynchburg, VA 24501



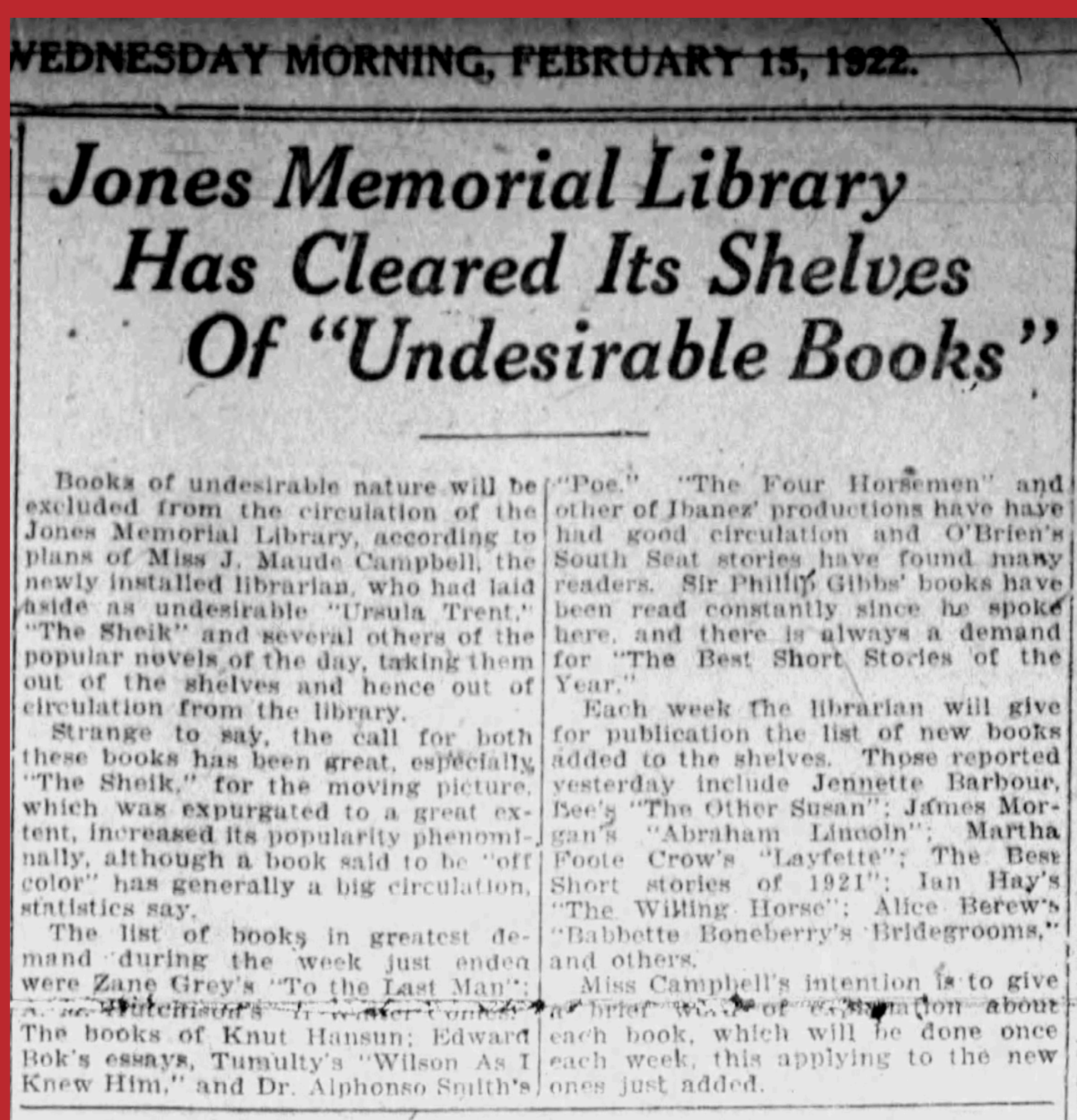
DIGITAL EXHIBIT

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO READ FREE ?

## LYNCHBURG: 1922

# SELECTION

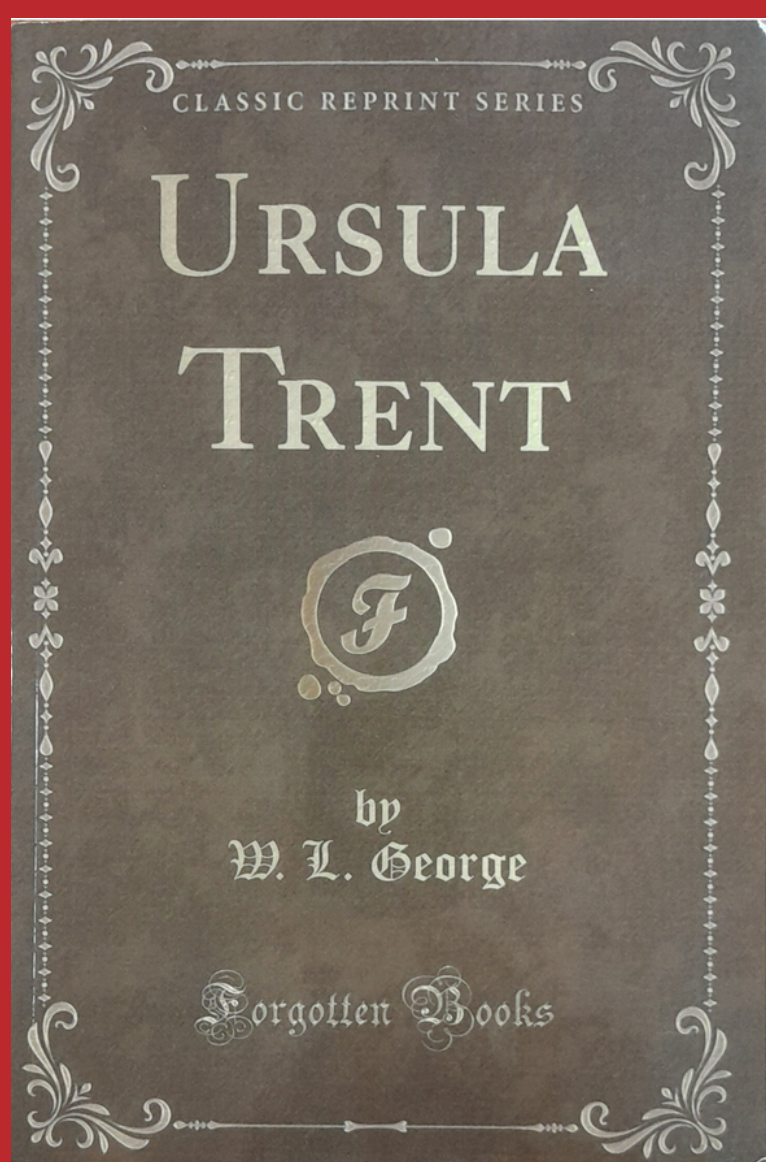
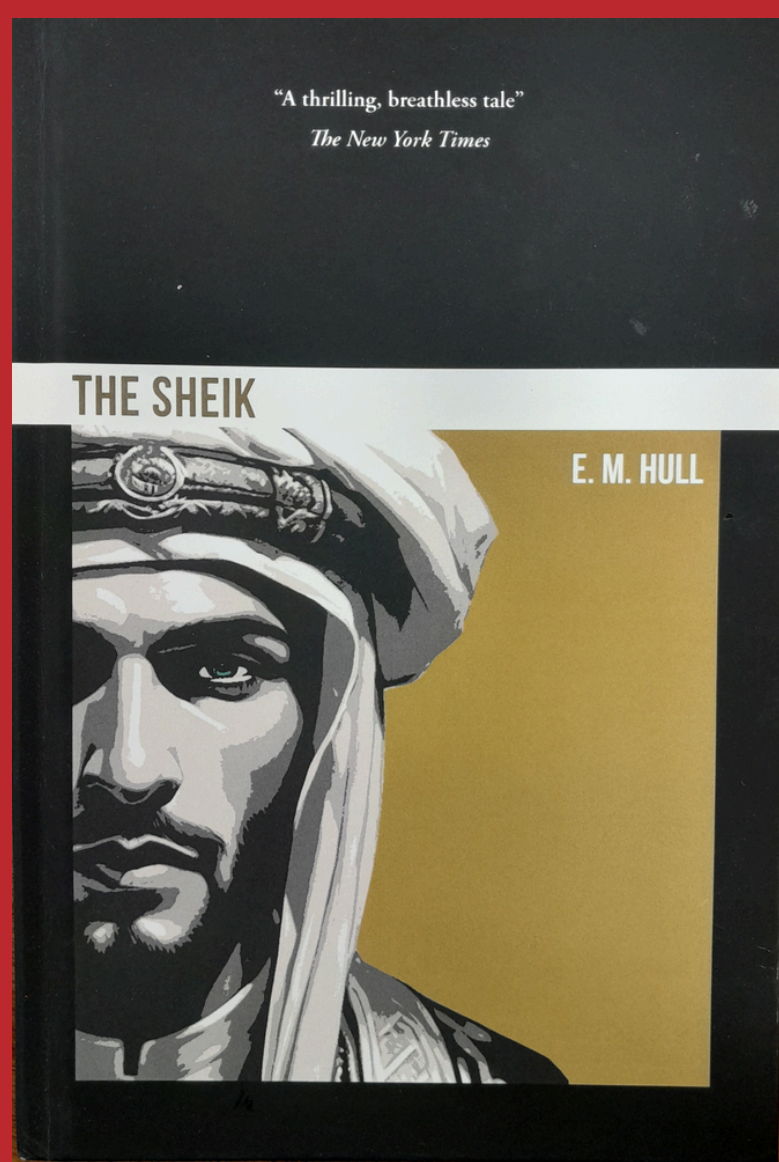
In 1922, when Jones Memorial Library operated as a public library, Head Librarian J. Maud Campbell removed "undesirable" books from the library's circulating collection. *Ursula Trent* and *The Sheik* were popular novels of the day, but Campbell felt they were inappropriate for the reading public. Thirty years later, Lynchburg's newspaper reported that 'racy' publications remained popular with local readers.



Professional librarians operate under the principle of selection rather than censorship, guided by their library's policies and established criteria to build collections of merit that serve their entire communities. Collection management, or curation, involves ongoing professional decision-making. Weeding is the systematic removal of outdated, damaged, or rarely-used materials—it is essential to collection maintenance and differs from the removal of controversial materials based on content or ideological objections. The use of transparent policies and procedures, creating accountability and consistency in collection decisions is fundamentally different from censorship, which seeks to suppress ideas based on ideological objections rather than professional library standards.

In colonial Virginia, book selection was limited by economic factors and social hierarchies. The establishment of Virginia's public education system in the 1870s introduced new selection dynamics. By the mid-20th century, professional librarian standards began influencing selection practices. The American Library Association developed intellectual freedom principles that challenged existing selection criteria, though Virginia communities sometimes resisted these changes. Central Virginia counties including Bedford and Henrico maintained selection policies that favored traditional literature and excluded works addressing certain topics including sexuality, racial inequality, or religious diversity.

Selection committees today navigate multiple pressures: professional standards calling for diverse, age-appropriate collections and community voices demanding adherence to specific moral frameworks. Jones Memorial Library's own selection history demonstrates that collections can reflect a librarian's particular values and perspectives. Patron requests for materials may influence selection and questions about whether multiple perspectives receive consideration in the decision-making are part of the process at most circulating libraries.



Top: "Jones Memorial Library has cleared its shelves of 'undesirable books.'" *The News and Advance*. Wednesday, February 15, 1922. Page 8.

Middle: In 2025, Jones Memorial Library restored reprints of *The Sheik* and *Ursula Trent* to the Collection.

Bottom: "Survey Shows sale of racy publications heavy here." *The News and Advance*. Thursday, December 4, 1952. Pages 1 & 17.



READ

"SELECTION & RECONSIDERATION POLICY TOOLKIT FOR PUBLIC, SCHOOL, & ACADEMIC LIBRARIES." AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO READ FREE ?

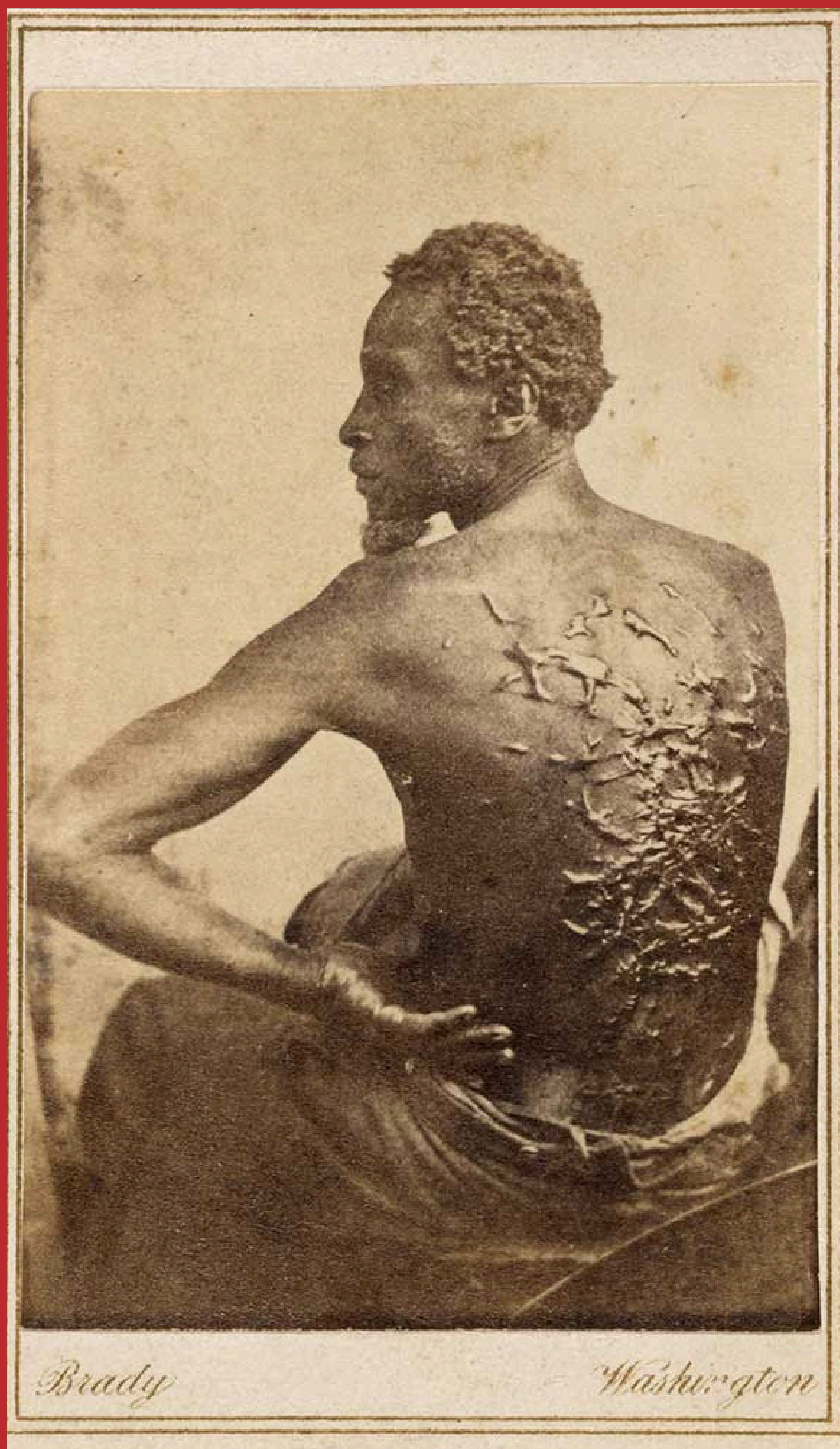
**VIRGINIA: 1660**

# SUPPRESSION



Above: Postcard circa 1900 of the Quaker Meeting House in Lynchburg (JML Manuscript collection 1280).

Below: "Peter (formerly identified as Gordon)". By Mathew Brady Studio. Copy after William D. McPherson, Copy After Mr. Oliver. 1863. Albumen silver print. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian.



Photographs by Mathew Brady were often considered too graphic or shocking to be printed in newspapers at the time. Like anti-slavery pamphlets and books, Brady's photographs were highly influential in shaping public opinion.

Suppression of Quaker literature in colonial Virginia began with the first ban on books enacted in March 1660. The General Assembly and Governor Sir William Berkeley passed an ordinance against the Quakers which outlawed publication of their books, pamphlets, and other written works.

Comprehensive anti-Quaker statutes forbade any ship master from bringing members of this religious sect into the Virginia colony under heavy penalty. Laws required imprisonment of detected Quakers until they swore to leave and never return, and "rigidly proscribed" the circulation of their books and pamphlets. This literary suppression continued throughout the colonial period until the passage of the Act of Toleration by the British Parliament in 1688.

The suppression of the freedom to read in the pre-Civil War period represented one of the most systematic and severe restrictions on intellectual liberty. On April 7, 1831, just months before Nat Turner's Rebellion in Southampton County, the Virginia General Assembly passed "An Act to amend the act concerning slaves, free negroes and mulattoes," which declared that "all meetings of free negroes or mulattoes, at any school house, church, meeting-house or other place for teaching them reading or writing, either in the day or night, under whatsoever pretext, shall be considered as an unlawful assembly." While Virginia never explicitly banned the education of enslaved people, it made such education practically impossible and extremely dangerous.

The campaign against dangerous reading materials extended beyond formal education to encompass censorship. Southern post offices became battlegrounds, with mobs seizing and burning abolitionist literature while states throughout the South reacted with legislation prohibiting circulation of abolitionist literature and forbidding enslaved persons to learn to read and write. The suppression of reading freedom in Virginia thus revealed both a recognition of literacy's revolutionary potential and the indomitable human desire for knowledge that no law could fully extinguish.



**READ**

"APRIL 7, 1831: VIRGINIA LITERACY BAN ENACTED."



**READ**

"ABOLITIONISTS AND FREE SPEECH" BY THURMAN HART



**READ**

"THE HISTORY OF BOOK CENSORSHIP IN VIRGINIA" BY KEITH WEIMER

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO READ FREE ?

LYNCHBURG: 1962

# CENSORSHIP

Censorship in Virginia has operated through both visible removals and quieter restrictions that limit intellectual access. Unlike outright banning, censorship has sometimes appeared as accommodation or as a protective measure.

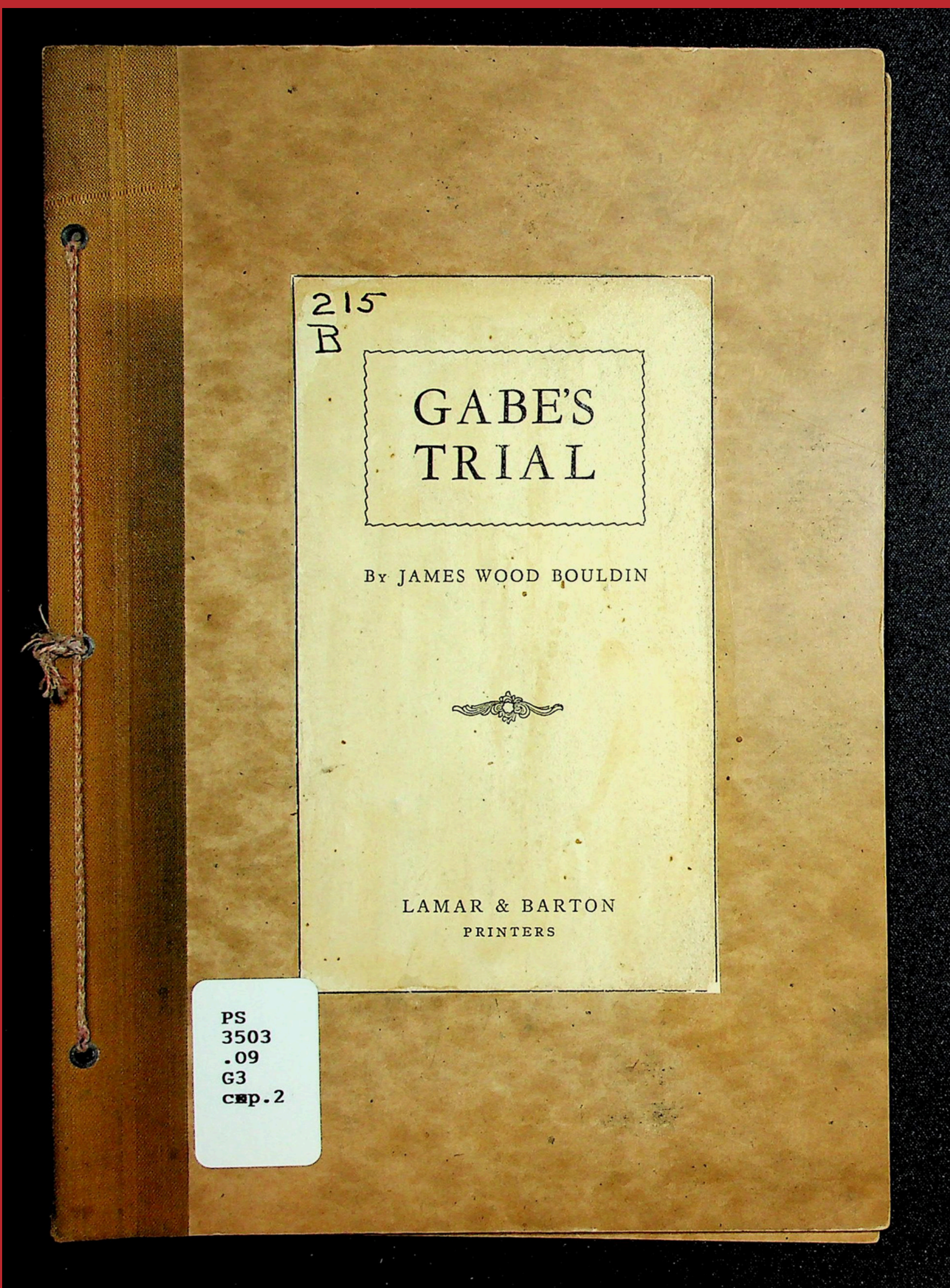
Virginia's censorship patterns have shown connections to periods of social concern. The 1925 Butler Act, while focused on evolution education, established precedent for content-based restrictions in Virginia schools. Literature classes began avoiding works that contradicted certain religious teachings, creating informal restrictions through institutional responses.

The Cold War era saw increased censorship efforts. Virginia libraries removed books considered sympathetic to communism, while schools avoided literature critiquing American foreign policy or economic systems. The 1954 massive resistance campaign against school integration in the South extended beyond racial policies to encompass restrictions on civil rights literature and progressive social critiques.

Jim Crow era practices represented systematic censorship through segregated access. Contemporary censorship takes various forms. Restricted access policies place controversial books in separate collections requiring special permission. Age-classification systems remove young adult literature from teen sections based on content concerns rather than developmental research. Digital filtering systems block online resources containing certain keywords, preventing students from accessing some academic content.

The distinction between age-appropriate guidance and censorship involves examining process and intent. Content curation may involve transparent criteria applied across ideological perspectives. Other approaches employ standards that target specific viewpoints while protecting opposing views, sometimes through procedures that challenge defenders rather than evaluate content systematically.

Virginia's censorship developments show how restrictions may expand over time. Current limitations may become precedents for future restrictions.



Above: Evolution was a controversial concept in the 1800s. James Wood Bouldin was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives between 1834 - 1839, during which he served on the Committee on the District of Columbia. Bouldin opposed abolishing slavery in Washington D.C. *Gabe's Trial* by Bouldin is a fictional treatise against evolution, written in a stereotyped, black southern English style.

Below: In the 1960s, public libraries across the country received unsolicited political propaganda materials, sent by the Soviet Embassy. At Jones Memorial Library in 1962, these materials were available to adults but children were officially discouraged from access.

## Library Extends Red Book Policy

The Board of Trustees of George M. Jones Memorial Library extended its existing policy concerning receipt of Russian propaganda Wednesday with the provision that such material be so stamped.

Under the existing policy, such material had been placed on the shelves of the adult section of the library available to all, but children had been discouraged from taking it from the library. Both practices under the present policy will continue.

The decision of the trustees came following a recommendation last week by the Library Committee of the Board of Trustees to scrutinize the matter of the receipt of unsolicited Communist material.

JONES MEMORIAL Library recently received three pamphlets sent from the Soviet Embassy in Washington. It was one of an estimated 25,000 libraries throughout the United States receiving such material.

Carter Glass III, chairman of the library committee, said Wednesday to the board's knowledge the only propaganda received has been sent either by the Soviet Embassy or Crosscurrents Press, which is registered under federal law as an agent of the Russian government.

The pamphlets received were: "Khrushchev's Report to the 22nd Congress of the CPSU," "Khrushchev on the Future, Vol. II", and "Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union."

The New York publishing organization, Crosscurrents Press, Inc., recently gained news coverage when its president Myron Sharpe took the See LIBRARY Pg. 5, Col. 1



READ

COMMUNIST CONTROL  
ACT OF 1954

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO READ FREE ?

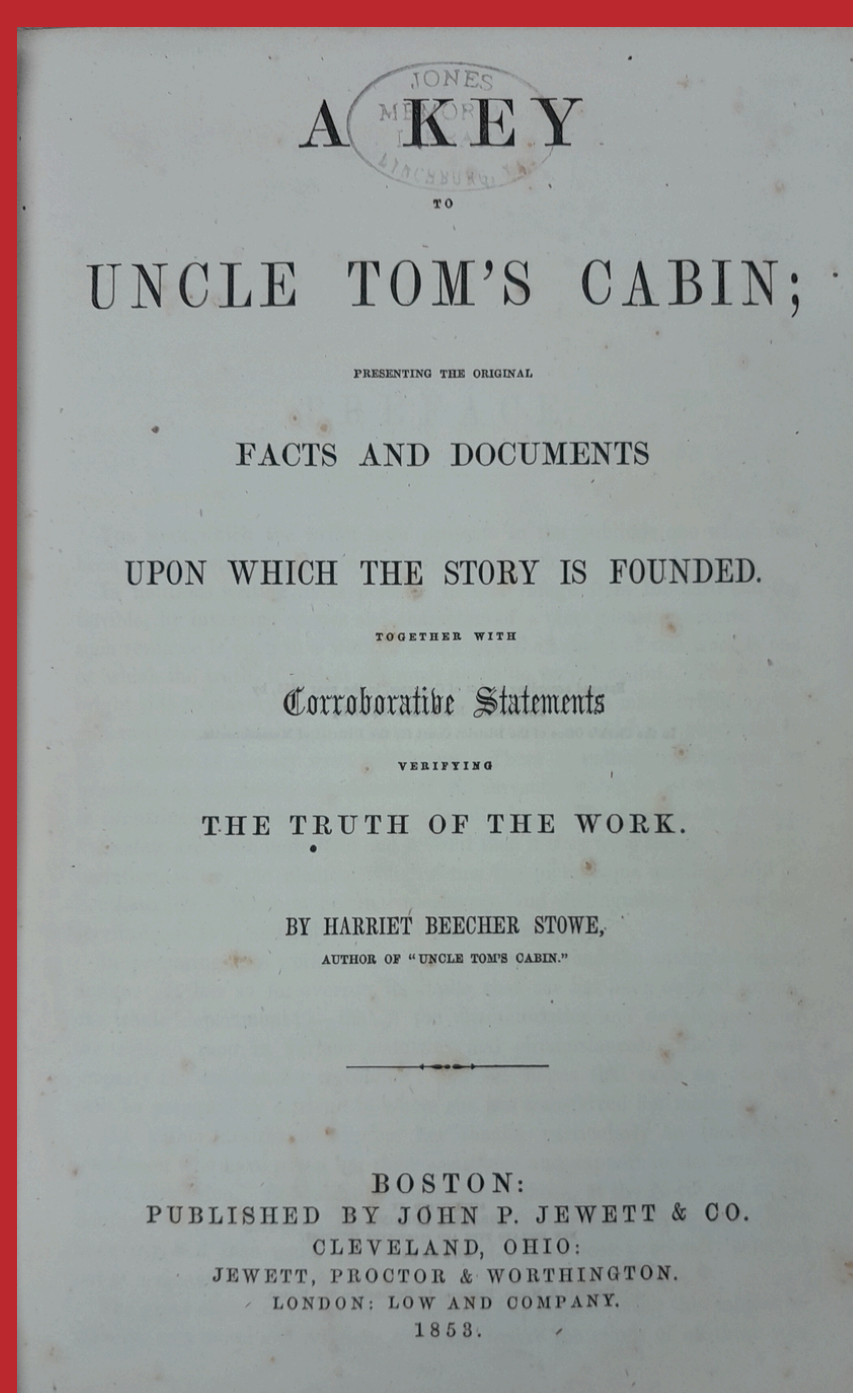
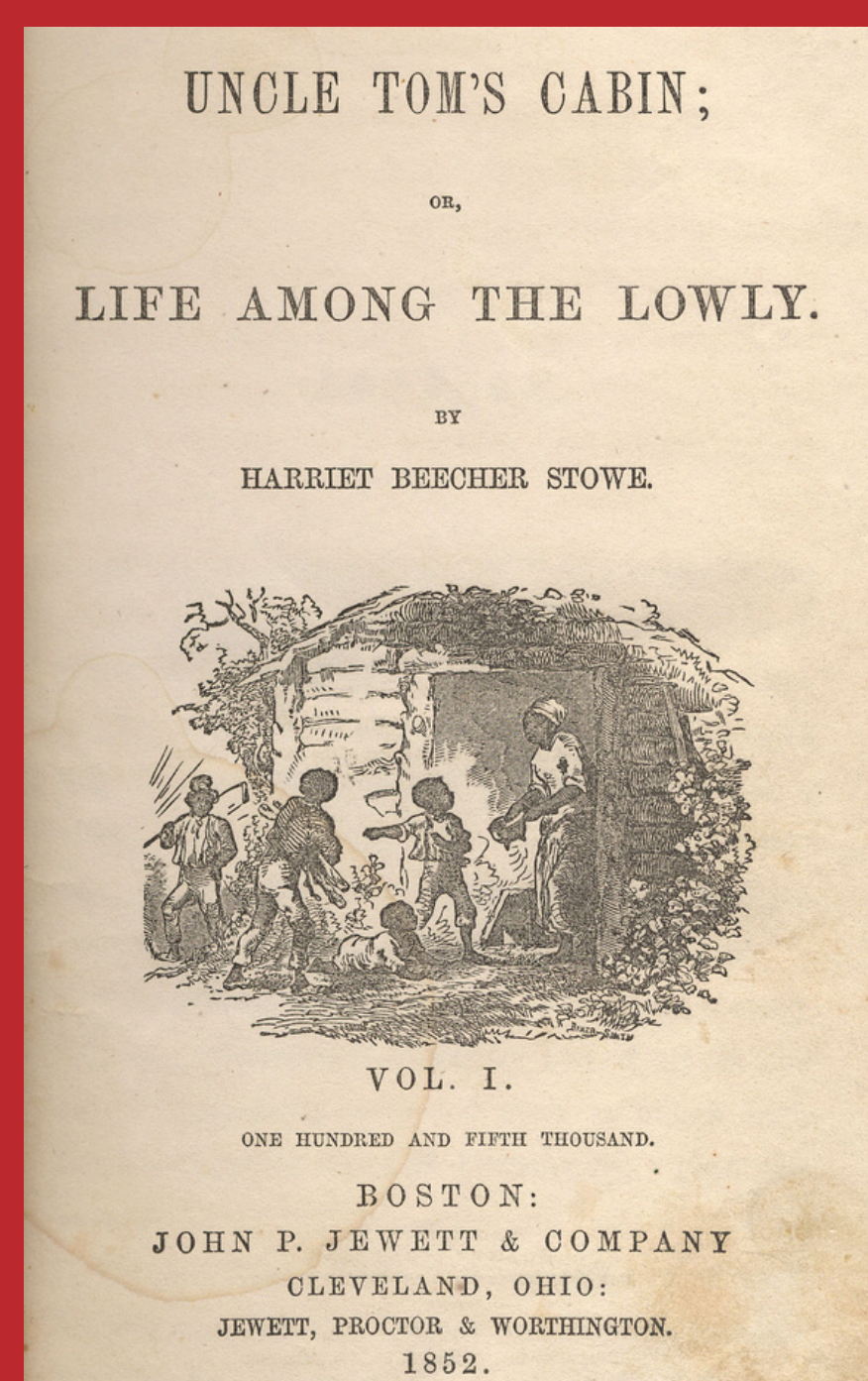
LYNCHBURG: 1940

# BANNING

Lynchburg's Paramount Theater was the center of controversy about the showing of an educational documentary film, "Birth of A Baby." The City had attempted to prevent the theater from showing the film, which had been approved by the State Board of Motion Picture Censorship. The case went to the State Supreme Court, which ruled in 1940 that no city in the state could ban a film approved by the Board. The film was later shown at the Trenton Theater.



Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published in 1852. Stowe's work was so influential that Abraham Lincoln was said to refer to her as the "little woman who wrote the book that made this great war." Her book received much resistance. Stowe was moved to share the factual basis of her work in a later book which listed her sources (*A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*). Stowe's work was also the target of revisionist rebuttals.



The novel *Beloved*, which depicts infanticide by an enslaved mother, has been frequently challenged as required reading in school curriculums. Cases of infanticide by enslaved women appeared in Virginia papers in the 1850s. Below: coverage in the *Richmond Enquirer* (1852) and *The Daily Virginian* (1856 & 1857)

Gov. Johnston has granted a respite until the 12<sup>th</sup> November to Lucy Randolph sentenced to be hung yesterday for infanticide.

INFANTICIDE.—In Powhatan county Court. April 7th, Opha Jane, a female slave, the property of Edward Scott's estate, was set to the bar and arraigned for the crime of infanticide.—The trial occupied the day, and was concluded in the night.—She was found *guilty* and sentenced to be hung on the 4th Friday in May.

Susan, a slave to Dr. Chas. W. Ashby, has been sentenced to be hung at Culpeper Court-house, for infanticide.

Book banning has represented censorship's most visible form, transforming restrictions into public declarations about acceptable thought and expression. Virginia's banning history has reflected cultural conflicts over race, sexuality, religion, and political ideology, with books serving as symbolic representations of competing social visions.

Virginia's early book bans targeted religious dissent. Colonial authorities prohibited Quaker and Baptist texts that challenged Anglican Church orthodoxy. The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom protected belief but did not extend these protections to written expression, allowing continued restrictions on religious literature.

The pre-Civil War period saw banning of abolitionist literature. Following Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion, Virginia prohibited materials that questioned slavery or encouraged literacy among enslaved populations.

Reconstruction brought new banning targets. Virginia localities banned textbooks presenting certain views of federal intervention or equal rights amendments. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* faced prohibition in many Virginia communities well into the 20th century, while pro-Confederate histories received different treatment. The 1970s saw significant textbook controversies in Central Virginia.

The Cold War era expanded banning rationales beyond morality to national security concerns. Virginia schools banned books critical of American capitalism or foreign policy, while libraries removed works by authors with suspected communist associations. The 1962 Supreme Court decision regarding school prayer coincided with increased Virginia book banning as communities sought to maintain religious influence through literature control.

Book banning represents community choices about intellectual development. Virginia's history shows that banning practices have reflected power structures and particular values.



READ

INFANTICIDE IN  
CORONER'S  
INQUISITIONS AT THE  
LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA



READ

RACE, GENDER, AND MOVIE  
CENSORSHIP IN THE NEW  
SOUTH, 1922-1965

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO READ FREE ?

APPOMATTOX: 1962

# BURNING

### Movement To Ban Beatles Receives Mixed Reception

By JACK SUTOR

The "Ban the Beatles" movement which is sweeping the country has met with mixed reactions from Lynchburg's area radio stations.

The furor was touched off after a magazine article quoted John Lennon, one of the mop-haired British foursome, as saying the Beatles were more popular than Jesus.

More than a dozen stations in North Carolina and South Carolina have announced that they are dropping the Beatles' recordings. Little was heard from other Virginia stations, but the campaign was spreading rapidly across the nation.

Three area stations, WDMS, WLVA and WBRG have never played Beatles records, and thus are not affected by the movement. WDMS and WLVA do not play rock and roll music, and

WBRG plays only country and western music.

Station WLLL will continue to play the Beatles' recordings. "We would definitely have taken the Beatles off the air if we knew that what they said was true," said disc jockey Jerry Rogers, "but it has been reported that the Beatles were quoted out of context and we are keeping them on for the present time. We will take them off the air if we find out what they said was true, because we deplore the meaning of what they said."

Officials at WWOD could not be reached for comment.

In Bedford, a spokesman for station WBLT said we "stopped playing the Beatles as of yesterday."

Graham Jones, general manager of station WODI in Brookneal said that his station has not stopped playing Beatles records. "I think in all fairness we should wait to get the whole story," he said.

Some of the most infamous incidents of book burning occurred in the early 1930s in Nazi Germany, where books were burned to destroy materials opposed to Nazism.

In 1966, musical records by the Beatles were burned across the South in protest against comments attributed to John Lennon that 'the Beatles were more popular than Jesus.'

In 1962, the Appomattox County School Board held a special meeting to explain why student workbooks had been burned for "storage reasons and to prevent cheating."

### School Superintendent Explains Book Burning

APPOMATTOX—Schools Superintendent J. A. Burke last night told several irate parents that student workbooks at the elementary schools here were burned because of storage reasons and to prevent cheating.

Some students pass on completed workbooks to members of the next grade class, he said.

Burke gave the explanation during a special county school board meeting requested by G. P. Brannon who hurled charges of book burning.

Brannon, father of two Appomattox Elementary school children, charged one of his children's work books were burned after he requested them returned to him.

Brannon said he purchased the workbooks and the school had no right to destroy them.

He also claimed that his child's sixth grade teacher did not require the students to use the workbooks and that the instructor seldom graded any papers.

Burke said the responsibility of having the children use the workbooks was up to the individual teacher.

The board took no action during the meeting.

Brannon said prior to the meeting that he had approached school board members and school administration personnel with his complaint, but nothing was ever done before last night's meeting was called.

Book burning transforms intellectual disagreement into physical destruction, representing rejection of alternative perspectives through elimination of their material existence.

In Virginia book burning began with colonial religious conflicts. Some Puritan communities burned Anglican texts, while Anglican authorities destroyed Quaker and Methodist writings.

The Civil War era saw systematic burning of educational materials. Union forces burned pro-slavery textbooks, while Confederate supporters destroyed Union-sympathetic and abolitionist literature. These book burnings targeted ideas as well as materials, attempting to erase the intellectual foundations of opposing ideologies.

Reconstruction brought vigilante book burnings by groups who burned schools and their libraries to prevent Black education. The 1873 burning of the Freedmen's Bureau school in Norfolk destroyed hundreds of books specifically because they enabled Black literacy and political consciousness. These represented calculated attacks on intellectual development.

The early 20th century witnessed Virginia book burnings targeting evolutionary science and modern literature. The 1925 Scopes Trial inspired fundamentalist communities to burn textbooks containing evolutionary theory. Local revivals featured ceremonial burning of books deemed morally corrupting, including novels by authors such as Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis.

McCarthyism produced Virginia's most systematic book destruction. The 1953 burning of library books in several Virginia counties eliminated works by suspected communist authors.

The civil rights era saw renewed book burning targeting integration literature. The 1962 burning of civil rights books at a Virginia Beach rally destroyed both printed matter and symbolic representations of racial equality.

Top: "Movement to Ban Beatles Receives Mixed Reception." *The Daily Advance* (Lynchburg, Virginia). August 5, 1966. Page 27.

Bottom: "School Superintendent Explains Book Burning." *The Daily Advance* (Lynchburg, Virginia). Thursday, June 21, 1962. Page 21.



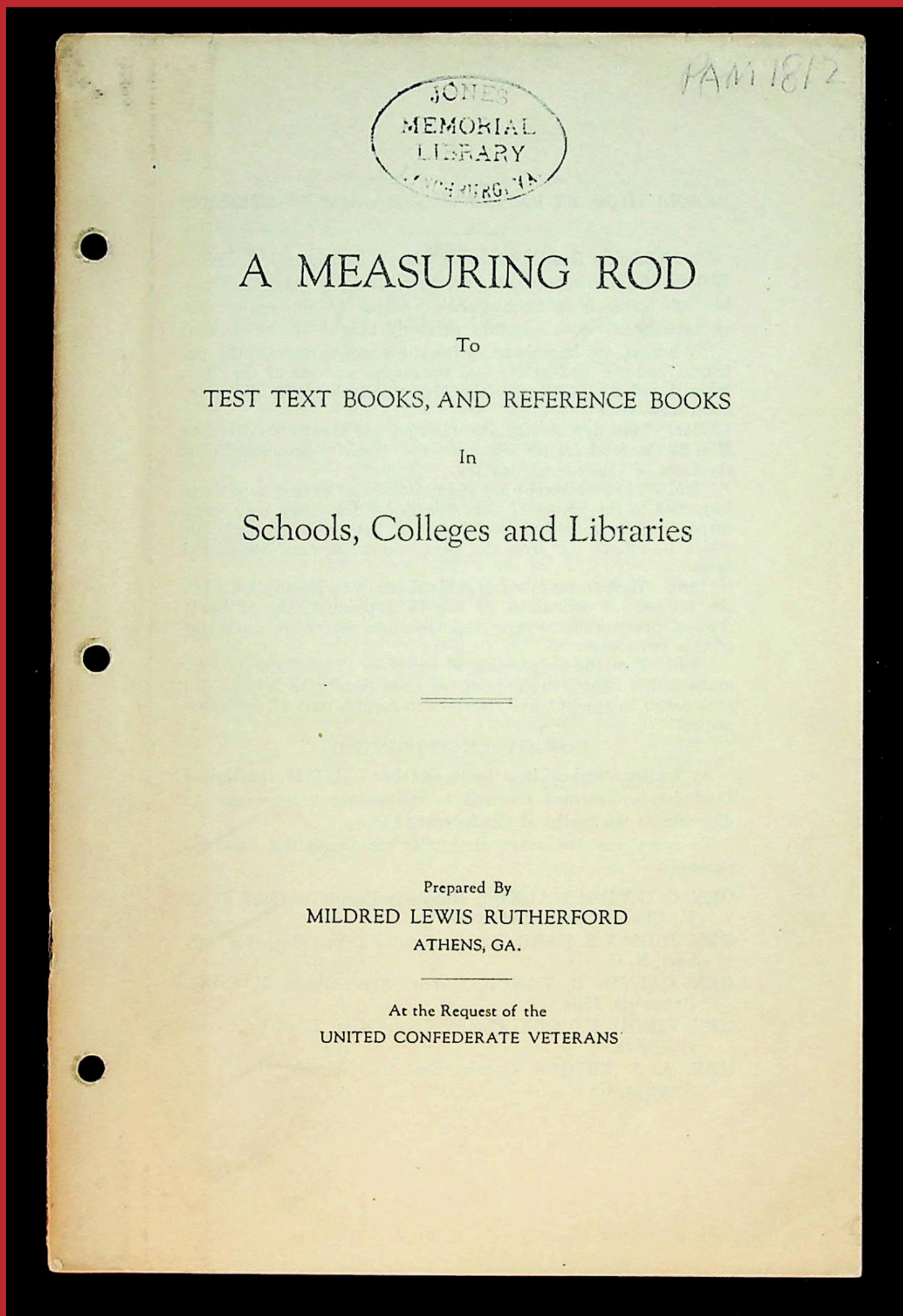
READ

"NAZI BOOK BURNINGS"  
HOLOCAUST ENCYCLOPEDIA  
UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST  
MEMORIAL MUSEUM

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO READ FREE ?

VIRGINIA: 1919

# REVISION



Mildred Lewis Rutherford sought to eradicate information found in history texts that was unfavorable to the South. She was influential in revising textbooks that were used in schools across Virginia for decades. Rutherford's *A Measuring Rod*, (above) published in 1919, asserted that the North had been responsible for the Civil War and claimed that the war was not about enslavement. She advocated that textbooks that did not meet her interpretation of events should be rejected by educational institutions. Rutherford also prepared lists of books that she felt should be banned. The lists were regularly published in *The Confederate Veteran*.



Above: American Library Association poster depicting the 2025 Banned Books Week theme. The Intellectual Freedom Committee of the ALA was established in 1965 to work with other First Amendment groups across the country. Banned Books Week was established in the 1980s.

Revisionism represents intellectual control through alteration rather than elimination. Revisionist practices include rewriting historical narratives to serve contemporary needs. Revisionism involves maintaining authority while altering content. Unlike banning, which generates controversy, revision may be justified and appear as part of the normal editorial process.

Revisionist practices in Virginia emerged following the Civil War. The Lost Cause movement sought to transform Virginia's defeat from one interpretation to another, rewriting slavery as a different kind of institution and secession as a constitutional principle. Textbooks like "A School History of the United States" (1896) described slavery and the deprivation of freedom for a large percentage of the population in often inaccurately rosy ways, while portraying Reconstruction as federal overreach.

Educational revisionism became systematic in early 20th-century Virginia. The United Daughters of the Confederacy successfully lobbied for textbook adoption committees, ensuring classroom materials promoted specific pre-Civil War narratives. Books describing slavery's harsh realities were revised to emphasize positive master-slave relationships, while accounts of Black resistance disappeared from official histories.

Modern revisionism has operated through textual manipulation. Contemporary examples include editing American history textbooks to adjust slavery's economic importance. Digital media has enabled new revisionist approaches. Online resources can be filtered to present selected information on controversial topics. Search restrictions may prevent students from accessing primary sources that contradict official narratives, while curated content can guide interpretation toward predetermined conclusions.

The effects of revisionism extend beyond historical accuracy. Virginia students studying revised materials may develop particular understandings of complex social issues, influencing critical thinking about contemporary problems rooted in historical patterns. Revisionist practices have shown that controlling interpretation can be more effective than controlling access. When communities cannot eliminate opposing perspectives entirely, they may seek to shape understanding through selective presentation and contextual manipulation, achieving ideological goals through apparent scholarly objectivity rather than more obvious censorship.



READ

"THE VIRGINIA HISTORY AND TEXTBOOK COMMISSION." ENCYCLOPEDIA VIRGINIA



READ

"THE 'MEASURING ROD' FOR SOUTHERN HISTORY"

# READ

## EXHIBIT GLOSSARY

**Selecting:** The professional process librarians use to choose materials for their collections based on established criteria such as community relevance, quality, accuracy, and diversity of viewpoints, guided by written policies rather than personal beliefs.

**Suppressing:** The act of limiting or restricting access to information or ideas, which can include removing materials from public access or imposing barriers that prevent people from encountering certain content.

**Censoring:** The act of some authority taking measures to suppress ideas and information within a book or other materials, typically motivated by moral, religious, or political objections to the content.

**Banning:** The most widespread form of censorship, occurring when books are completely removed from libraries, school reading lists, or bookstores because of objections to their content, ideas, or themes.

**Burning:** The practice of destroying books or other written material, usually carried out publicly and motivated by moral, religious, or political objections to the material with a desire to eliminate it.

**Revising:** The process of modifying or editing the content of books or materials to remove or alter passages deemed objectionable, often done to make content more acceptable to certain audiences, comply with censorship demands, or misrepresent historical events.

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## CREDITS

Jones Memorial Library's **READ** exhibit has been funded by a 2025 Judith F. Krug Memorial Fund Banned Books Week Programming Grant awarded by the Freedom to Read Foundation. For more information on the Judith F. Krug grant program and the Freedom to Read Foundation's work and mission visit [www.ftrf.org](http://www.ftrf.org).

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