



Perry Tourtelotte, *Benedict Hall*: 4 April 2015. Courtesy of the artist.

In the spring of 2015 the Sweet Briar College community—students, faculty, staff, alumnae, neighbors and friends—endured an upheaval of astounding proportions following the school’s then-leaders’ announcement of their decision to close the 114-year-old institution. In the hours, days, weeks, and months that followed members of that whole community—whether working together or striking out on their own, making brash public pronouncements or planning quietly behind the scenes—engineered a historic reversal of that decision and laid out a path for recovery and renewal. It is a remarkable story. History, as all touched by these events have realized daily, is messy and uncomfortable when it you are in the middle of it. This installation, *We Are Sweet Briar: A Community Rises*, was conceived as a way to mark the beginning of a fall semester that six months ago no one deemed possible. It is also a bookend of sorts to the installation, *Landmark, Symbol, and Tradition*, that was mounted in this same space for students returning to campus from spring break in March just two weeks after the shocking announcement. As the Sweet Briar College community moves ahead into a year of fresh possibilities, its varied members will undoubtedly continue to sift through their individual and collective experiences in order to come to terms with the achievements as well as the losses of this tumultuous period. We have all learned a great deal about ourselves and about each other.

From the perspective of the art gallery and museum staff one lesson from spring 2015 looms large: Stand up and fight for what you believe in. Sometimes the good guys win.

Karol A. Lawson
Director

Art Collection and Galleries and The Sweet Briar Museum

CHECKLIST

Alphabetical by artist's last name.

Meridith de Avila Khan

Students

March/April 2015

Courtesy of the artist

Meridith de Avila Khan

The Quad: The Class of 2015 graduates

16 May 2015

Courtesy of the artist

Meridith de Avila Khan

The Quad: Students, alumnae, faculty and staff march to Sweet Briar House

3 April 2015

Courtesy of the artist

Nancy McDearmon

Monument Hill: Flowers from Alumnae Reunion left at the grave of Daisy Williams, in whose memory the College was founded

6 June 2015

Courtesy of the artist

Meridith de Avila Khan

The Quad: National media at graduation

16 May 2015

Courtesy of the artist

Nancy McDearmon

Monument Hill: Mementos left at the grave of the College's founder, Indiana Fletcher Williams

17 July 2015

Courtesy of the artist

Meridith de Avila Khan

Fletcher Arcade: Professors add armbands to their robes for graduation

16 May 2015

Courtesy of the artist

Perry Tourtelotte

West Dell: #SavingSweetBriar in the snow

8 March 2015

Courtesy of the artist

Banners

Collection of the Sweet Briar Museum; Gifts of various faculty and staff.

The selection of banners shown here represents only a small sample of the many home-made signs displayed—some still proudly fly from high perches—across campus from March through the summer of 2015. Made by students and alumnae and hung from the Bell Tower, dormitories, the Fitness Center, academic buildings and the Library, or used in marches and TV appearances, these gave voice to the community's varied responses to the crisis: defiance, humor, fellowship, and grief. Quoting from Revolutionary War symbolism ("Don't tread on me") to Restoration drama ("Hell hath no fury...") to Gandhi ("First they ignore you..."), the banner-makers showed off their liberal arts education to good advantage. The banner referencing Kool-Aid refers to the coincidence of Interim President James (Jimmy) Jones's name to that of infamous cult leader Jim Jones.

Pens

Collection of the Sweet Briar Museum; Gift of Sarah Clement '75.

Pens used on 23 June 2015 by Amherst County Commonwealth's Attorney Ellen Bowyer, William Hurd of Troutman Sanders LLP, and Michael Shepherd of White and Case LLP to sign the settlement agreement resolving the litigation in three lawsuits brought against the former leadership of the College to enjoin their announced decision to close the College in August 2015. Ms. Bowyer represented the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Mr. Hurd represented Saving Sweet Briar Inc. Mr. Shepherd represented the College's faculty.

Letters

Collection of Cochran Library Archives

Selection of letters returned to the College by alumnae and student families. The printed letters were mailed as a supplement to President Jones's 3 March 2015 email message announcing plans to close the College. In a quiet but effective groundswell of resistance, alumnae and families refused delivery of the letter or sent it back to President Jones with commentary.