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# The Childhood Beginnings of a Master Linguist

## *Carey Center houses namesake's spelling book*

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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 lofty spelling and grammar 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.



Photo By CHRISTOPHER DIXON

### **Carey's childhood spelling book.**

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 benefit 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 num-

ber of locations.

It was in 2004 that providence brought the book into the hands of the Carey Center. Calvin and Tillie Remmert, a couple from Houston, Texas, 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. The name 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."