

Undergraduate Colloquium in Mathematics
Wednesday, Feb 10th 3-4 PM
STV 401

**The Man Who Vandalized a Bridge in the Name of Science:
Hamilton and His Quaternions**

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This would make a good name for a rock band (actually, it appears that there is some band named “Quaternions”), or a secret society headed by Alexander Hamilton the Founding Father (and of course, there is a band named “Founding Fathers”), but Sir William Rowan Hamilton was a 19th century scientist who made several important contributions to mathematics and physics, some of which you would encounter in Linear Algebra, Calculus, Abstract Algebra, and various Physics classes --guess whom the “Hamiltonian” was named after. You don’t have to be experts in any of these areas to enjoy a historical talk about this fascinating Irishman who was looking for some “field” structure in 4-D real space, where we supposedly live, and instead came up with quaternions, which were later chopped up into “vectors” and “scalars” by physicists. And yes, he did carve his equations on a bridge.

