



**PRESIDENTS  
WEEKEND**

SEE P. 2

**AMERICANS**  
*Becoming* **TODAY**  
NO. 1 IN COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

**BLACK  
HISTORY  
MONTH**



SEE P. 2

**WINTER 1773**

Newsline

1770

May 21–June 28

The General Assembly meets in Williamsburg

June 27

The House of Burgesses agrees unanimously to petition the king to interpose his authority to prevent Parliament from levying taxes in America

October 15

Lord Botetourt dies, and William Nelson of Yorktown, the president of the Council, becomes acting governor

1771

July 11–20

The General Assembly meets in Williamsburg. Lord Botetourt's successor, Lord Dunmore, dissolves it and orders new elections on October 12.

September 25

Transferred to Virginia just a year after he had been appointed governor of New York, John Murray, fourth earl of Dunmore, arrives in Williamsburg to succeed the deceased Lord Botetourt

1772

February 10–April 11

The General Assembly meets in Williamsburg. Because an interlude of relative peace between Great Britain and her colonies prevails, the Assembly proceeds in routine fashion without disrupting the calm.

1773

March 4–15

The General Assembly is in session in Williamsburg

March 12

The House of Burgesses establishes a Committee of Correspondence to communicate with legislatures of other colonies over matters of common concern, specifically the appointment of a British court of inquiry to investigate the burning of the *Gaspee* off Rhode Island in June 1772



**BEST YEARS OF YOUR LIFE?**

MR. RIND,  
Please to insert the following piece in your next paper.  
ON MARRIAGE.

IT is one of the greatest unhappinesses of our times that matrimony is so much discountenanced, that in London, and other great cities, so many never marry, and that the greater part have got into the unhappy and unnatural way of wasting the best years of their lives in a giddy round of vain amusements, and criminal pleasures.

*Virginia Gazette* (Rind),  
February 4, 1773.

**HEAR YE!**

**WILLIAMSBURG**, February 11.  
Doctor GRAHAM, so well known for his peculiar Abilities in curing the Diseases of the Eyes and Ears, is, we hear, expected in this City about the Middle of April next.

*Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon),  
February 11, 1773.

**WINTER 1773—THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM**



Virginia in the winter of 1773 was an agricultural colony with a diverse population whose dominant culture was firmly British, though in continuing conflict with policies imposed by the parent government. As the governmental, religious and social center of the largest colony in the British Empire, the capital city of Williamsburg was in the forefront of many of the events that were to lead to independence and the establishment of a new, democratic, pluralistic—distinctly *American*—society that continues to evolve today.

In the winter, as farmers and planters stayed close by their hearths in the countryside, the city was quieter than during the spring and fall when the General Court was in session. Families continued their visits with friends and relations, and winter was a favored time for weddings, when the festivities could continue without concern for neglected crops. However, rumblings of discontent were beginning to be heard in the colony in the winter of 1773.

In June of the previous summer, a Rhode Island merchant and his followers attacked and burned the British revenue schooner *Gaspee*, which had run aground off Providence. By early January, people in Williamsburg had learned that the British ministry intended to transport the culprits across the ocean to England to try them. This was considered by many in North America to be in violation of the rights of colonists under the British constitution to a speedy trial by a jury of peers, another strand of oppression in a string that had been stretching over a period of several years. On March 12, the Virginia House of Burgesses was the first to establish a Committee of Correspondence for the purpose of communicating with other colonial assemblies about matters of concern such as the *Gaspee* incident.

Due to a homegrown crisis, the Burgesses had been called into session early. In late January, Robert Carter Nicholas, treasurer of the colony, informed Virginia's royal governor, Lord Dunmore, that five-pound treasury notes emitted in November 1769 and July 1771 were being forged. It had been suspected for some time that the bills were being counterfeited. The governor summoned the Assembly into session on March 4 to deal with the crisis and offered rewards of five hundred pounds for the discovery and apprehension of those responsible for the forgeries and one hundred pounds for the apprehension of anyone knowingly passing the notes.

Over the next weeks, actions were taken that, though seemingly prudent and necessary at the time, nevertheless caused some concern by the manner in which they were executed. Suspects from Pittsylvania County were apprehended and transported to James City County for questioning. One prisoner whose innocence was apparent was released. The others were jailed and ordered taken to York County a week later for further questioning. At that time they were found guilty and sentenced to be tried in the General Court, the only body with the authority to try capital crimes. These actions were taken due to the belief that, if the usual procedures were followed and the Pittsylvania authorities were allowed to call the suspects before the court in that county, the suspects, some of them "people of fortune and credit in the County," might put up an armed resistance or attempt to flee.

**Challenge of Winter**

Winter weather in the colonies complicated and shaped family life and life's activities. All but the wealthy struggled for protection from winter's blast, anxiously watching their supply of food and firewood dwindle. In Williamsburg as elsewhere in the colony, the citizens resigned themselves to monotonous diets of fresh meat, corn and root vegetables and the long cold dark days and nights of winter. Tradesmen had a difficult time of it with shorter daylight hours and bitter cold while farmers struggled to tend their livestock and prepare their fields for spring planting.

Death was more prevalent in winter months, and families were haunted by the fear of respiratory and other illnesses. Dr. deSequera's *Diary* describes the illnesses of winter 1774: "The Winter produced some Colds & Bilious Peripneumonies; After the Inflammation was removed gentle Purges were of Service, but when attended with Expectorations; the Purges were left, & drinking plentifully Pectoral Decoctions was of service."

In Williamsburg there was no hospital for the ill and dying; therefore, all people were cared for at home by family members if they were available. Families often had several members sick at the same time, making care most hard in cold and unlighted places that were difficult to keep clean. Prudent housewives prepared herbal medicines from their gardens and woods while the apothecaries in town sold various European remedies. But, with antibiotics not available, many people suffered and sometimes died of secondary infections.

Travel from plantations to town was difficult on icy roads, limiting supplies coming into Williamsburg while winter weather complicated agricultural and commercial enterprises. But commercial trade continued as long as incoming ships found the James and York Rivers clear of ice.

[Submitted by Anne Willis]

The guest experience in Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Area during winter 2005 will reflect life in the capital of Virginia in this last period of calm before the eruption of the American Revolution in the spring of the next year, 1774. Each week will highlight the stories of 1773 at different Historic Area sites. Guests will encounter colonial residents of Williamsburg as they go about their lives and business. Special projects underway in Historic Trades shops will be featured in each week of the winter season as well.

**THE GASPEE INCIDENT—WHO IS JUDGING WHOM?**

**Boston**, December 17.

... If the burning the *Gaspee* schooner was a matter of serious importance, much more so are the methods pursued by the British administration in consequence of it. This affair was transacted within the body of a county, in a free English government; one would think therefore it should be the subject of the enquiry of the grand jury of inquest for the same county. Instead of which we are told that five Gentlemen, four of whom are of superior rank in different colonies, the other, indeed, a judge of the admiralty, are appointed by commission to make the enquiry. By a Gentleman, lately from Rhode Island, we are informed that three of these commissioners are empowered to act, at whose call the army and navy are to attend; that any persons accused, against whom the commissioners shall judge there is evidence sufficient to convict them, are to be apprehended, and, together with the evidences, sent to England for trial; ... To have a set of crown officers commissioned by the Ministry, and supported by ships and troops to enquire into offenses against the Crown, instead of the ordinary ... of a grand jury, carries an implication that the people of that colony are all so deeply tinctured with rebellious principles, as that they are not to be trusted by the Crown.

*Virginia Gazette* (Rind),  
January 21, 1773.



**GOTCHA!**

**WILLIAMSBURG**, February 25.

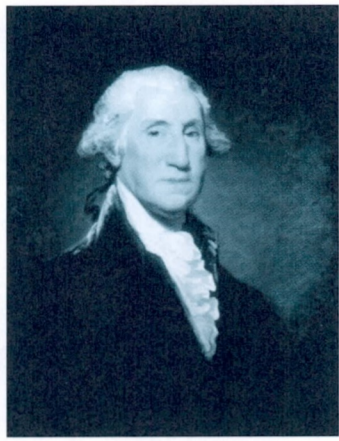
We hear that the plot laid for the making and passing of the counterfeited money of this country has been fully disclosed to his Excellency the Governor, and that Benjamin Cook, Joseph Cook, Benjamin Woodward, and Peter Medley, of the county of Pittsylvania, some of the capital offenders in this detestable scheme, have been brought before the Governor by virtue of his warrant, and stand committed, in order to be examined by the county court of York on Tuesday next.

*Virginia Gazette* (Rind),  
February 25, 1773.

TO BE SOLD,  
BEFORE THE RALEIGH,  
ON FRIDAY THE 5TH OF FEBRUARY,  
FIVE OR SIX VERY LIKELY  
RIDING HORSES.

*Virginia Gazette* (Rind),  
January 14, 1773.

## PRESIDENTS WEEKEND



### Presidents Weekend, February 19–20, 2005

Presidents Weekend is our yearly opportunity to commemorate the lives of the first three presidents who called Virginia home and to interpret the special relationship that each had with Williamsburg.

George Washington obtained his surveyor's license from the College of William and Mary and was a burgess and part-time resident of Williamsburg from 1759 through 1774. Washington had a warm friendship with the last royal governor, Lord Dunmore, in the years just before the Revolution.

Thomas Jefferson's association with Williamsburg dates back to 1760, first as a student at William and Mary, then as a law student under George Wythe. He practiced law in the General Court, served as a burgess and delegate to the Virginia Assembly from 1769 through 1778 and was governor in Williamsburg from May 1779 through March 1780. Jefferson was a cousin to the Randolphs.

James Madison's relationship with the capital began with his entrée into colonial politics in May 1776 as a delegate to the Virginia Convention that adopted the Resolutions for Independence. As a member of the new government, Madison contributed to the drafting of the Virginia Constitution and the Declaration of Rights and served as a member of the Governor's Council in Williamsburg until March 1780.

[Submitted by Bill Weldon]

**WASHINGTON, GEORGE** (1732–99), soldier, public official and first U.S. president. Born on February 22, 1732, in Westmoreland County, Virginia, Washington grew up on the family plantation. . . .

On April 30, [1789,] he was inaugurated at Federal Hall in New York City. As the first president of a new and unsure government, not the least of his responsibilities was to avoid creating potentially harmful precedents. He constructed his cabinet with an eye to sectional and ideological balance, strove to the utmost to maintain cordial relations with and among all his officers, and conducted himself with republican decorum and restraint. His first term without major crisis, but his second witnessed a heated and inevitable clash between Jefferson and Hamilton, the resignation of the former, and the polarization of politics into party camps. While seeking to steer a middle course, he more often than not found himself aligned with the Hamiltonian Federalists particularly in issuing his proclamation of neutrality upon the outbreak of the Anglo-French War in 1793, in sending troops under Hamilton to suppress the Whiskey Rebellion in western Pennsylvania in 1794, and in signing the Jay Treaty with England in 1795. The treaty provoked a particularly bitter attack from the opposition, and the president resisted an attempt by the House of Representatives to gain a share of the treaty-making power. In 1796 he firmly rejected pleas that he accept a third term (setting a precedent that endured for 144 years and that was later made law), and in September he delivered before Congress his "Farewell Address," which owed much to Hamilton, and in which he advised his country on its future course. In March 1797 he returned once again to Mount Vernon. . . . He has remained in the century and three-quarters since his death, in the words of Henry Lee's famous eulogy, "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

**JEFFERSON, THOMAS** (1743–1826), public official, public leader, philosopher and third U.S. president. Born on April 13, 1743, on his father's plantation "Shadwell" in Goochland County on the western fringe of settlement in Virginia. . . .

In the election of 1800, the Republican candidates for president, Jefferson and Aaron Burr, defeated the Federalists but were themselves tied in the electoral college. In the House of Representatives, Jefferson was chosen and was the first president to be inaugurated in Washington, D.C. There soon followed a controversy over federal appointments as, though his actions were greatly exaggerated by the Federalists, Jefferson first introduced something like a spoils system. His first administration was signaled, however, by the Louisiana Purchase, an action that, in the irony of practical affairs, violated Jefferson's political principles in having no constitutional authority behind it. Nonetheless, he demonstrated his freedom from doctrinaire policy on France's financial difficulties to acquire a vast new territory for American expansion. Soon after his re-election in 1804, he was faced with the almost impossible problem of maintaining neutrality in the war between England and France. Determined to avoid war, he resorted finally to the Embargo Act of 1807, which, though based on firm constitutional grounds, was again a great extension of federal power and was widely criticized. In 1809 he retired permanently to Monticello and remained there for the rest of his life.



**MADISON, JAMES** (1751–1836), political philosopher, public official and fourth U.S. president. Born in Port Conway, King George County, Virginia, on March 16, 1751, Madison was of a moderately wealthy family of Virginia planters. . . .

In 1808 he [Madison] was the clear successor to the presidency. He won a strong victory over his Federalist opponent and continued the policies of Jefferson unaltered. The difficulties with Britain and France continued and worsened, particularly with the former; Madison was apparently deceived by Napoleon into issuing a nonintercourse proclamation against Great Britain in November 1810, making war with that country virtually inevitable. In June 1812 war was formally declared, beginning a painful and dangerous period for the nation, which was totally unprepared and part of which—New England—was totally unsympathetic. Military disasters fostered the growth of popular discontent. New England seriously considered secession, great areas of the Northwest were lost to British forces from Canada, and Washington, D.C., was burned. Nevertheless, Madison managed to win reelection in 1812. The war was ended by the Treaty of Ghent in December 1814, with the United States having failed to gain a single one of its war aims and having had to bargain from weakness simply to regain its territory. But the mere fact that the war was over, coupled with a few spectacular though belated victories—notably by Gen. Andrew Jackson at New Orleans—restored to the president much political favor. The remainder of his administration was marked most prominently by his brief backing away from Jeffersonian principles in approving both the charter of the second Bank of the United States and a system of protective tariffs. Madison retired to "Montpelier" in 1817.

*Webster's Guide to American History* (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriman Company, 1971), 1304–1306, 1048–1049, 1109–1110.



In recognition of Black History Month, Colonial Williamsburg will feature its second annual Black History Month Weekend programs on February 26–27, 2005.

These programs will explore how a diverse enslaved community used, survived, resisted and influenced the events of the American Revolution. Programs will be performed in the Historic Area and the Hennessee Auditorium.

The weekend events will begin with a presentation of the history of Colonial Williamsburg's African-American interpretation. A special walking tour through Historic Area houses and outbuildings will explore the lives of free black and enslaved people and their clashing interests and shared values.

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Other programs will provide insight into master-slave relationships as well as the enslaved communities' perspectives on the crisis of the American Revolution. Re-enactments of oyer and terminer trials of accused slave felons and a religious gathering will illustrate how Virginia's formative institutions attempted to control the enslaved people and how slaves attempted to make sense of the world in which they lived.

Evening programs such as "Remember Me, When Freedom Comes" and "Jumpin' Jonkonnu" underscore the survival of African culture and values within enslaved communities.

[Submitted by Harvey Bakari]

## Enslaving Virginia Time Line

1772

James Somerset, a slave taken to England by his master, sues for his freedom in the British court system and wins. Word of the case encourages a number of slaves in British North America to run away in attempts to reach Great Britain. Between 1773 and 1776, blacks in Boston write several petitions to the governor in hopes of attaining freedom.

1775

April 14: First abolitionist society in British North America established in Philadelphia.

Thomas Paine's *African Slavery in America* published; denounces slavery and demands that "Negroes" be given land.

November: Lord Dunmore proclaims the colony in rebellion and offers freedom to slaves and indentured servants of rebel masters who will fight for the king. As a result 800–1,000 blacks run away to the British.

December 9: Dunmore is defeated at Great Bridge.

December 13: Hoping to entice runaway slaves away from Dunmore's control, the Virginia Convention promises to pardon all slaves who return to their masters within 10 days. Few accept the pardon. Many of the loyalist slaves evacuate with Dunmore when he retreats from Virginia.

1776

Samuel Hopkins publishes *A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans*, which appeals to the Continental Congress to abolish slavery.

1777

Vermont's constitution makes slavery illegal. Several other states will follow suit during and after the American Revolution.

1782–84

An estimated 20,000 blacks—loyalists who fought for the crown during the American Revolution—evacuate the United States from New York, Savannah and Charleston, bound for the British West Indies, Canada and England. Some are relocated to Freetown, Sierra Leone.

1782

Virginia passes a manumission bill encouraging private manumission of slaves.

1783

Virginia enacts legislation for the emancipation of certain slaves who had served as soldiers in the Revolution.

Large-scale migration of Virginians to Kentucky begins. Migration from Virginia will continue throughout the first half of the 19th century, during which slave owners will take the institution of slavery with them into the new territories.

1784

Congress votes against Thomas Jefferson's proposal to prevent slavery from expanding into the western counties after 1800.

Quakers and others establish the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery, for the Relief of Free Negroes and for Improving the Condition of the African Race.

1787

July: Northwest Ordinance bans slavery from the Northwest Territories (north of the Ohio and east of the Mississippi Rivers).

September: U.S. Constitution adopted. The "three-fifths compromise" allows Southern states to count three-fifths of their slave populations in determining representation in the House of Representatives.

1791

Kentucky becomes the first new slave state admitted to the Union.

1793

Congress passes the first fugitive slave law, compelling judges to return runaway slaves to their owners.

Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin makes large-scale production of cotton profitable. Cotton plantations proliferate throughout the Upper South, Southwest and Deep South, expanding the use of slave labor. Forced migration disrupts slave families and communities.

1806

The Virginia legislature reverses the major provisions of the 1782 Manumission Law and requires all slaves manumitted in the future to leave the state within one year.

1808

January: U.S. Constitutional ban on the importation of slaves goes into effect, as does the British Abolition Act prohibiting British participation in the Atlantic slave trade.

1832

Nat Turner's Rebellion. In response, the Virginia legislature votes against gradual emancipation, makes the slave code stricter, prohibits the education of slaves and places limits on black preaching.

1833

American Anti-slavery Society founded in Philadelphia.

1834

August: Parliament abolishes slavery in the British Caribbean colonies.

1851

Slavery abolished in Colombia and over the next few years, in Argentina, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia.