

# interpreter

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## Carter's Grove

*As vice president, programs and exhibitions, Peter A. G. Brown has been charged with new and revised interpretations at Carter's Grove. He gives us a brief progress report.*

The Carter's Grove Planning Committee is making good progress. Anticipating additional funds from the Winthrop Rockefeller Charitable Trust, the group is actively at work on exciting future programs.

The members of the committee are: Peter Brown, chairman, Robert Birney, Diane Dunkley, Randall Foskey, Kevin Kelly, Ivor Noël Hume, Dennis O'Toole, Nicholas Pappas, Earl Soles, William Tramosch, Jean Van Tol, and Mark J. Wenger.

We have divided our ambitions into six major categories, and here is a brief word about each of them.

### The Mansion

A subcommittee under Bill Tramosch and John Caramia has devised a new interpretive plan that makes use of the McCrea stable (our former entrance facility) much like we use the West Advance Building as an introduction to the Palace. After a live introduction with visual exhibits about the house, its architecture, and the role of the Burwell family, groups will be led to the riverside door and will tour the house in a new pattern that makes use of the servants' quarters above the kitchen. This will allow visitors to view one of the remarkable McCrea bathrooms, see Miss Mollie's room from a new direction, and avoid traffic congestion on the main staircase.

### Capital Projects

This category deals with a number of additions and improvements, some of them underway already. These include the completion of the Wolstenholme Towne presentation and the "Granny Site" across the ravine; the stabilization of the white barn east of the stable; the development and construction of

modern support buildings for animals, equipment, agricultural and landscape materials, and security operations; improvements to the service road and the superintendent's house. On a longer range basis we are studying the possibility of some sort of transportation.

### Services

Here we have a lot to do. We are improving the security at Carter's Grove; we are making a new survey including aerial photography and accomplishing a great deal of continuing research on plantation life, the architecture of slave dwellings, and the rural economy of the eighteenth-century Tidewater. A parking lot for handicapped visitors and our staff will be  
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## Carter's Grove Revisited

*Shirley Jenkins, site supervisor of Carter's Grove, and Nancy Milton, instructor, department of interpretive education, explain the new traffic pattern for the mansion and the upcoming training program that will help implement it.*

"What's behind all the doors?" Every historical interpreter has heard this question over and over again, not only at Carter's Grove, but in every exhibition building. It seems we are all innately curious about that which is not obvious or visible. With the expansion of interpretation at Carter's Grove, we will be able to satisfy at least a part of visitor curiosity.

The Carter's Grove Mansion Committee, first chaired by Bill Tramosch and later by John Caramia, and made up of representatives from several departments, has been hard at work for over two years brainstorming, studying, and experimenting with different traffic patterns and interpretive objectives. Their goal is to provide visitors with the best interpretive experience possible, an experience  
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### **Carter's Grove, *continued***

developed, and the former visitors' parking lot will be removed in favor of the McCrea horse paddock and exercise fields that were in that area. Additionally, some archaeological research remains to be done.

### **Agriculture and Slave Life**

One of the largest and most dramatic opportunities lies in our agricultural interpretation plans. We expect that much of our resources and energy will be spent to make this perhaps the most apparent new endeavor to be perceived by our visitors. Preliminary experiments have been conducted for several years. Earl Soles and his colleagues have developed a carefully planned program for a logical sequence of interpretive elements. This will involve a small staff of agricultural workers and interpreters who will pursue field and domestic activities year-round. With Roy Underhill's group, they will complete the tobacco barn and other agricultural buildings developed by Ed Chappell. They will introduce livestock, and that will require authentic fencing in some quantity not yet determined. They will be developing and making many of the tools, equipment, and other needs.

A good start on this program has begun. Earl Soles and his associates have already started on the development of a cider press and have high hopes of having it in operation later this year. Earl feels confident that our own orchard will be able to supply the major portion of the apples required for the cider production.

Perhaps the most intriguing part of their endeavor will be the realization of a long held ambition: the opportunity to tell, demonstrate, and give life to the study of the black slave and the contributions blacks made to the economy and social structure of a tidewater plantation. This will be accomplished by the construction of slave dwellings, support structures, garden plots and yards, and an overseer's house.

### **Other**

This catchall category contains a number of initiatives that do not fit the other categories. Principal among them is the establishment of an overall, on-site, full-time, energetic, imaginative manager for Carter's Grove. Dennis O'Toole is looking for this person and will be ready to announce something soon. With all that will be going on at Carter's Grove, this person will have plenty on his or her plate.

### **Archaeological Museum**

The dramatic story of the discovery of Wolstenholme Towne and the remarkable pieces of history that Ivor Noël Hume brought from the ground will be found in a museum at Carter's Grove now being planned by a committee headed by Bob Birney. The location and form of the building have not been determined, but a schematic concept of the exhibits and the story line are well in hand.

The six categories outlined above are the basic ingredients in our most immediate plan.

There are a number of additional objectives at longer range in our planning process. All I have outlined so far will take us quite a way toward exhausting our current grant. In that connection, I should also report that we continue to study the impact all of these improvements will have on our operating costs and income projections. Carter's Grove cannot have a future without a sound, protected economic base.

A powerful and important piece of history will be communicated to visitors here. We believe it will have enormous impact, and we are already very proud of the start we have made.

### **Carter's Grove Revisited, *continued***

that combines the efforts of the committee members as well as the suggestions and creativity of Colonial Williamsburg's interpreters.

The interpretive objectives for the new tour are:

- 1) To interpret change over four centuries in the use of the land, the river, the mansion, and other buildings on the property.
- 2) To interpret the life-style, activities, and interpersonal relationships of the owners, their families, and all who lived and worked on the property.
- 3) To compare Carter's Grove with other Virginia plantations, and to show relationships between rural and urban settings.
- 4) To define the colonial revival movement and describe its impact on life-styles, and to demonstrate how the McCrea's possessions reflect colonial revivalism.

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## The Agricultural Story

*As manager of the agriculture program, Wayne Randolph has been in charge of the development of agricultural interpretation since he came to the Foundation three years ago. He describes initiatives that are both in progress and planned for the future at Carter's Grove.*

Home at last! The men and women of the agriculture program who interpret plantation work have now begun site development of a typical tidewater home quarter at Carter's Grove. This new site lies just north of the mansion among the orchard and fields that flank the former entrance road. It promises to be an active open attraction where visitors of all ages can participate in the diverse seasonal activities and tasks that occurred on the land.

Already the field just beyond the old parking lot has a good stand of winter wheat, which was shown last fall using Bonny, the program's spirited work horse. She will be helping to cultivate the adjacent cornfield by pulling a harrow between the rows of Virginia Gourdseed corn hills. Virginia Gourdseed is a tall soft white corn, which was typically grown in our region for human and animal consumption during (and after) the colonial period. Grain harvesting is actually a series of activities beginning with the cutting of barley, rye, wheat, and oats in that order during June and July.

Corn is topped, and its blades are pulled in September for winter fodder, with removal of the dried ears from October to as late as Christmas.

But tobacco was really the crop of most concern on colonial tidewater plantations and still captures the interest of visitors because of its unusual management. From tiny seeds nurtured in special beds through the spring months, it is transplanted into hills to be carefully tended through its middle life, as each expanding leaf receives painstaking attention. Visitors will be encouraged to help cultivate, pick off the scourge of tobacco—hornworms—and cut and hang the plants for curing in the nearby tobacco house. Striking, stripping, sorting, tying, and packing the valuable chestnut brown leaf completes the tobacco cycle in late fall and early winter.

Structural development of the new site includes acquisition of Virginia rail or zig-zag fencing to enclose special breeds of cattle, sheep, and hogs. Tall post-and-rail fencing

will be built to protect the authentic cider apple orchard, whose produce will soon be processed in a mill and large press currently under construction.

A number of agricultural support buildings will be erected in the next few years, beginning with the completion this summer of the tobacco house, followed by a small corn house, a three-unit slave quarter for interpreting domestic life, a granary, overseer's house, and various simple sheds for livestock and equipment protection. All of these will be constructed in period fashion by the carpenter crew, who will be at Carter's Grove through 1989.

Interpreting the products, methods, management, and lives of laborers who worked on tidewater plantations such as Carter's Grove is an ambitious and challenging endeavor. It is hoped that those who experience selected elements of that story will learn and appreciate the key role agriculture played in the development of Virginia society.

## Wolstenholme: That Worrisome Word

*Ivor Noël Hume, Foundation archaeologist, speaks authoritatively, both as an Englishman and as a scholar, on the many ways "Wolstenholme" has been pronounced.*

"WHAT'S IN A NAME?" asked Juliet without waiting for an answer from the love-lorn lad in the shrubbery below. The question was a good one just the same, and it comes frequently to mind when we hear C.W. employees trying to get their tongues (as well as their typewriters) around "that place" at Carter's Grove. 'Twas ever thus. In a 1620 letter, Dudley Carlton wrote of "young Worsnam," referring to Henry, son of Sir John Wolstenholme. The recipient of the letter had three years earlier written the name only marginally better, spelling it "Worstenham."

Anyone not well acquainted with the family and hearing the name pronounced in that way could be forgiven for corrupting it even further, as Archbishop Laud did in his diary entry for July 17, 1632: "Consecrated the church at

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### Wolstenholme, *continued*

Stanmore Magna built by Sir John Walsterham." Twelve years later, on trial for his life and accused of consecrating a Popish chapel, Laud answered "No, Sir, it is a parish church erected by Sir John Worsterham."

How we read names now and how *they* pronounced them then is a constant problem for interpreters, and consistency is not our strong suit when grappling with Wolstenholme Towne. The problem is made potentially the more treacherous by the fact that the English have a sneaky talent for pronouncing names quite differently from the way they are spelled. Who would suspect, for example, that Cholmondeley is pronounced "Chumley" or Fetherstonhaugh "Fanshaw"? Wolstenholme, fortunately, hides no such traps—though Sir John married a lady who spelled her name as Catherine Fanshawe.

A descendent, Sir Gordon Wolstenholme, has explained that during the First World War, in the face of anti-German hysteria that saw British zealots murdering dachshunds, several members of the family chose to change their name—perhaps having heard it gutterally pronounced "Vol-sten-home" by the Hun hunters. In reality its various branches had lived in the north of England since the twelfth century and had no known Germanic roots.

Sir John (1562–1639) was one of the wealthiest of London's merchants and gave financial support to most of Britain's early seventeenth-century attempts at commercial exploration. In 1600 he was an incorporator of the British East India Company; he was on the council of the Virginia Company of London in 1609; and in 1610 he helped finance Henry Hudson's ill-fated expedition in search of a Northwest Passage, as well as William Baffin's attempt five years later. Hudson showed his gratitude by naming a promontory at the mouth of Hudson's Bay "Cape Wolstenholme," and Baffin gave him back-up immortality by naming both a sound and an island after him. Fortunately there was no one around at Hudson's Bay or on Greenland's icy shores who needed to pronounce the new names. Not so in Bermuda where Sir John got himself a bay. But there the mapmakers had it wrong from the start, the first of them printing it as "Worsenholme"; thereafter, between 1682 and 1775 at least five cartographers dropped the last "e," and one in 1752 tossed out

the "n" to create "Worseholme Bay." Perhaps it was about this time that Bermudians began thinking that with a name like that, they were better off with none at all. And so it remains today.

Sir John's family had moved south to Stanmore in Middlesex early in the sixteenth century and remained there until they died out in 1738. Thereafter the most prominent branch was located in Sheffield where George Wolstenholm (without an "e") in 1745 established a still-existing company of cutlers. Two descendants, Dean Wolstenholme, father and son, were distinguished animal painters in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and another, Joseph (1829–1891), was a Cambridge mathematician famed for creating ingenious examination questions known as "Wolstenholme's Problems." Today, the family has a no less renowned descendant in physician Sir Gordon Wolstenholme, a past president of the Royal Society of Medicine.

On a visit to Carter's Grove, Sir Gordon explained that he pronounces the name "Wolsten-home," but it is clear that in the seventeenth century that was not so. The frequent insertion of an "r" leaves little doubt that the first syllable was pronounced "War." Nobody but Archbishop Laud and the Bermuda cartographers had much trouble accepting the second as "sten"—though they almost certainly softened the "e." Likewise, at least in the eighteenth century, writers had few problems with the last syllable, even if some did omit the last "e." But how did they pronounce "holme"?

By itself the word came from old and medieval English (meaning the sea, an islet, and low ground beside a river) and was pronounced "houm" or "home." However, in Sir John's day (between 1601 and 1644) we find at least five occasions in which the last syllable is spelled "ham," suggesting that then, as now in England, the last spoken syllable faded into a mumbled "hm" and more often to an "um." All in all, therefore, while in modern usage "Wol-stn-home" is acceptable, the evidence indicates that in its lifetime the town of Wolstenholme would have been pronounced WAR-STN-UM.

So, as Hamlet would have commanded: "Speak the name, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue . . ."

## Carter's Grove Revisited, *continued*

- 5) To give visitors a sense of participation in the interpretation.
- 6) To make visitors aware, throughout the tour, of other programmatic opportunities on the property.
- 7) To ensure that visitors have an enjoyable learning experience.

A sixteen-hour training program will be developed to update historical interpreters. This program will provide interpreters with different perspectives on Carter's Grove.

The topics that will be addressed during those sessions include new information on Archibald and Mollie McCrea using documentary sources such as home movies and family photographs, an update on the furnishing changes and rearrangements as they reflect the McCreas' life-style, the Grove during the nineteenth century as the important link between the Burwells and the McCreas, an examination of the colonial revival movement and its impact on the McCreas' interpretation of Carter's Grove, the 1930s depression and its impact on Virginia, an architectural review of three centuries of structural changes to the house, and an orientation to Carter's Grove's black program and agricultural program.

Tours will begin in the McCrea stable where a curatorial exhibit will give us many exciting opportunities to explain architectural evolution from 1755 when the house was completed until the time of the McCrea purchase in the late 1920s. With the use of a take-apart-put-back-together model of the house, interpreters will no longer have to rely so heavily on guests' abilities to visualize architectural changes.

From the stable orientation, groups will be led around the east side of the house to the riverfront entrance where the Wolstenholme site and the James River will give us the opportunity to explain the occupation of this land by human beings over many centuries.

The physical evidence of Carter Burwell's intention to build a "power house" should become immediately evident to the visitor as he comes into the spacious entrance hall and views for the first time the magnificent hand-carved woodwork.

Following a brief look into the library, guests will be asked to regroup in the McCrea dining room. There interpreters can compare eighteenth- and twentieth-century dining spaces as well as emphasize the growing im-

portance of the landside of the house.

Visitors will be reminded of the model showing how the house was enlarged and will see how effectively integrated the additions are as they move from the drawing room through the morning room and into the kitchen.

The kitchen is a classic example of Mrs. McCrea's interpretation of the colonial revival movement. Following the Civil War, the face of America changed rather dramatically. Farms, small communities, and even large plantations with their relatively peaceful landscapes began to give way to urbanization and industrialization. Typical of all human beings everywhere was the uneasiness and discontent that resulted from rapid change. Consequently, people nostalgically climbed the stairs to search in dusty attics for discarded relics of the past and returned them to honored spaces in homes—once again to be treasured and admired. In *The Colonial Revival in America*, Celia Betsky says that Americans tried to "dispel the anonymity of metropolitan life by seeking after the 'personal' and 'individual' feelings of identity they associated with the internal accoutrements of the past." The colonial revival movement is much in evidence throughout the mansion.

We are frequently asked to give more information on the black presence at Carter's Grove. With the opening of additional rooms on the east side of the house, we will be able to present a clearer picture of this important, but often neglected, part of Virginia's history. With four centuries at our interpretive fingertips, we will be able to challenge the visitor's thought processes from slave life-styles in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the changes brought about in those life-styles following the American Revolution, the Civil War, and both world wars. Mrs. McCrea and her servants were certainly not excluded from these changes. Before World War II, the area over the kitchen was occupied at least part of the time by Mrs. McCrea's black cook and personal maid, Edna Washington—and perhaps others—while John Coleman, the butler, occupied quarters (which have since been torn down) located just off the present service road. During and after World War II, as job opportunities for blacks improved, live-in servants became a thing of the past at Carter's Grove. The upstairs rooms were then occasionally used as guest rooms.

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### Carter's Grove Revisited, *continued*

Ascending the back staircase to the second floor, interpreters will pause in the east dressing room to allow time for guests to reassemble, before proceeding to Mrs. McCrea's office. Again comparison techniques can be used to advantage. This room, impressive with its architectural detail, remains something of a mystery as to its eighteenth-century use. The arched opening with its Ionic orders suggests that it was used as some type of public space. Mrs. McCrea often used this area for dealing with correspondence or thumbing through well-worn books, which, in many cases, were gifts from guests or even biographies of former guests. The interpreter will also want to call attention to the addition of the third floor with its handsome hand-carved staircase, custom-made to the eighteenth-century staircase.

Guests will be led through Mr. and Mrs. McCrea's suite of rooms and will look into Grandmother's room. Toward the end of her life, Mrs. McCrea's mother lived at Carter's Grove, and her room is charming with its cozy alcove framed by a modern wall. This wall corresponds to an eighteenth-century wall that enclosed a closet-like area.

As guests descend the staircase, they will be invited to notice the dents and scratches on the banister. The Tarleton, Washington, and Jefferson legends can be related in the "Refusal Room." Mrs. McCrea loved the legends and frequently shared them with her numerous guests. They certainly appeal to the romantic side of most people, and we will continue to share these stories, myths though they may be.

The interpreter will lead the guests through Mrs. McCrea's room, the "New Sitting Room," to the last station, "Mr. McCrea's Smoking Room" (formerly called the plantation office). In the eighteenth century, this space served as a two-room laundry. The McCreas created a single room and extended the building approximately nine feet along the south wall. As one of the most informal rooms in the house, it became the main living space for the family. Archibald McCrea and his friends enjoyed relaxing in this room over brandy and cigars. It also reflects Mollie McCrea's love of history. The room is filled with material reminders of her fascination with the past.

As guests exit the riverside door, they will have journeyed back in time and will have

experienced the life-style of a family from their own century but removed from them by more than fifty years. More time travel will await them outside as their attention is turned to the seventeenth-century town of Wolstenholme, the re-created agricultural pursuits of the eighteenth-century plantation, and glimpses behind the scenes of slave life and work. All of these interpretive segments build on one another and will help the visitor envision Carter's Grove's four centuries of change over time.

### **Sleeping Village**

From College to Capitol

The eye sweeps an empty street.

The village sleeps in

Cool morning light,

Like a lingering dawn

Ending a two centuries' night.

The quiet taverns and

Empty shops

Seem ready to resume

The tumult and bustle

They scarce contained

In the day before they slept.

Donald Kline  
April 30, 1986

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