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*"Glory to God in the highest
and on earth peace to those on whom
his favor rests."*
(Luke 2:14)

Christmas in Revolutionary Times

The Christmas proclamation of joy must have seemed like a distant memory for those people living in Revolutionary America. Their world at Christmas was at war, and therefore they could only hope for a day of peace, a time for healing and reconciliation. They may have wondered how God could favor them when now they were shrouded in the darkness of uncertainty. The quotations on Christmas that follow were gathered from several primary sources. These eighteenth-century voices offer us some clue, some picture, some personal feelings expressed on paper of Christmas during the war for American independence. Not all of the writers were united in the American cause, not all of them were blessed by Christmas's glad tidings, but whether they acknowledged it or not, their future Christmases would be forever changed.

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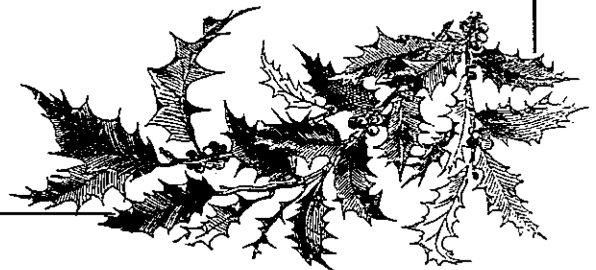


Staunton, Virginia, December 25, 1775
Christmas Morning.—Not a Gun is heard—Not a Shout—No company or Cabal assembled—To Day is like other Days every Way calm & temperate—People go about their daily Business with the sa[me] Readiness, & apply themselves to it with the same Industry, as they used—The Air of Virginia seems to inspire all the Inhabitants with Hospitality—It has long been a Characteristic of the lower Counties—I am sure these Western ones deserve it— Everything they possess is as free to a Stranger as the Water or the Air...Since I left Stephensburg I have seen no Coffee, Chocolate—Tea is out of the Question; it is almost Treason against the Country to mention it, much more to drink it...But in the Place of these plenty of rich Milk in large Basins, & Noggins; to which you may put your Mouth, & drink without Order or Measure—Large Platters covered with Meat of many Sorts; Beef; Venison; Pork;—& with these Potatoes, Turnips, Cabbage, & Apple beyound your Asking—A low Bench for a Table you will have covered with such Provisions three Times every Day—And the Air, & customary Labour, or Exercise, will set you down to each of them with a raging Appetite. The Journal of Philip V. Fithian.

> After leaving Nomini Hall in October 1774, Fithian returned to New Jersey to prepare for his preaching examination before the Presbytery of Philadelphia. He had anticipated that the presbytery would examine him with questions on natural and moral philosophy, geography, and divinity. On December 6, 1774, Fithian successfully completed his examination and received his preaching license. He soon left New Jersey to begin missionary work in Virginia and Pennsylvania. On the frontier, Fithian encountered people whose lives were much simpler than those of the gentry of Westmoreland County, Virginia. His new flock consisted primarily of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who were settling in the western regions of Virginia and Pennsylvania. After spending over a year as a missionary, Fithian returned to New Jersey where in July, 1776, he enlisted in the New Jersey militia as a military chaplain. He died at twenty nine in New York City on October 8, 1776.

1775–1777 Pea Hill, Loudoun County, Va.—Monday, December 25th, 1775
Christmas Day, which we spent at Mr. West's . . . Wednesday, Dec. 27th, 1775. The sharpest frost las[t] night I ever knew, we slept in a very small room and had a large fire. It froze the wine in the pot, whi[ch] did not stand more than five foot from the fire. Left Pea Hill. Mr. West treated us with the greatest civility. Went to town.

Leesburg, Va.—Thursday, December 28, 1775. A Methodist meeting in town, great numbers of people came in sleighs. They are something like our sleds.

Sunday, Dec. 31, 1775. This is the last day of the year 1775, which I have spent but very indifferently. In short I have done nothing, but wore out my clothes and constitution, and according to the present prospect of affairs, the New Year bears a forbidding aspect. I am here a prisoner at large. If I attempt to depart and don't succeed, a prison must be my lot. If I do anything to get a living, perhaps I must be obliged to fight against my King and Country, which my conscience abhors. I will wait with patience till summer and then risk a passage.

Pennyroyal Hill, Frederick County, Virginia—Wednesday, Dec. 25, 1776
Christmas Day, but very little observed in this country, except it is amongst the Dutch. [probably German settlers]

Thursday, Dec. 26, 1776. The Snow fell last night two feet thick and level. This is the greatest fall of snow I have seen in this country.

Monday, Dec. 30, 1776 . . . Winchester . . . News that General Howe had retreated to Brunswick, Washington had harassed his rear, taken a good many prisoners and played the devil.

Tuesday, Dec. 31st, 1776. This is the last day of the old Year, which I have spent in worse than Egyptian bondage. No prospect of altering my situation speedily . . .

Wednesday, January 1, 1777. This is the first day of the New Year, which I am afraid will be spent, by me, to as little purpose as the two last have been. I am now in a disagreeable and precarious situation . . . In fear of going to Jail every day on account of my political principles, and no prospect of this unnatural rebellion being suppressed this Year . . . Spent the day very happily at Mr. Gibbs with a few of his friends, dancing and making ourselves as merry as Whiskey, Toddy and good company will afford

Scotland, Loudoun County, Virginia—Monday, Jan. 6, 1777
News that Washington had taken 760 Hessian prisoners at Trenton in the Jerseys. Hope it is a lie. This afternoon hear he has likewise taken six pieces of Brass Cannon. Journal of Nicholas Cresswell.

> Young adventurer, soldier of fortune, opportunist, and quite possibly a British spy, Nicholas Cresswell arrived in Virginia from England in May 1774. During his three years in America, he traveled to several colonies, the island of Barbados, and into the Ohio Territory. Cresswell painted an early portrait of the American rebellion through his journal entries, a rebellion he found very distasteful and disturbing. His political, social, and religious opinions of the Americans were clearly expressed, yet throughout the journal, he remained an enigmatic figure.

Baltimore: December 25, 1776
Dear Sir, Inclosed you have a Letter from the Committee of Secret Corres.[pondence] to the Commissioners in France which you'll please to Sign and send with the other Papers to those Gentlemen by the first opp[ortunit]y with proper orders for their being Destroyed rather than the Enemy should get them. I need not suggest to you the Prejudice it would be to us if they should fall into their Hands . . . For Gods sake send us some News . . . If you wish to please your Friends Come soon to us, but if you desire to keep out of the Damdest Hole in the World come not here. My Compliments to my Friends. I wish you and them a Happy Xmass; a merry one you can not have Divided so far and on such an occasion from those you Love. Benjamin Harrison of Virginia to Robert Morris in Philadelphia.

> A distinguished member of one of Virginia's great families, Benjamin Harrison (1726–1791) began his long career in government by serving as a burgess from Charles City County (1749–1775). In August 1774, he was appointed a Virginia delegate to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, a position he held until October 1777. Harrison signed the Declaration of Independence in July 1776 and later served as governor of Virginia (1781–1784). When he wrote to Robert Morris on Christmas Day, 1776, Harrison was in Baltimore, where a good number of the delegates to Congress were meeting. At that time Philadelphia was under threat of a pending British invasion, a fact noted in a letter from George Washington to Robert Morris. It is obvious that Harrison was not pleased to be spending Christmas in Baltimore.

Head Quarters, December 25, 1776
Dear Sir: I have your obliging favors of the 21st. and 23d. the Blankets are come to hand, but I would not have any of the other Goods sent on, till you hear again from me. I agree with you, that it is in vain to ruminate upon, or even reflect upon the Authors or Causes of our present Misfortunes, we should rather exert ourselves, and look forward with Hopes, that some lucky Chance may yet turn up in our Favour . . . From an intercepted Letter from a person in the Secrets of the Enemy, I find their Intentions are to cross Delaware [River] as soon as the Ice is sufficiently strong. I mention this that you may take the necessary Steps for the Security of such public and private property as ought not to fall into their hands, should they make themselves Masters of Philadelphia of which they do not seem to entertain the least doubt. I hope the next Christmas will prove happier than the present to you . . . Gen. George Washington to Robert Morris in Philadelphia.

> A prominent Philadelphia merchant, Robert Morris (1734-1806) remained an influential figure in Pennsylvania politics for many years. He signed the nonimportation agreement along with many Philadelphia merchants in 1765. Morris served as a Pennsylvania delegate to the Continental Congress from 1775 to 1778. In 1776, he was opposed to independence, but decided to sign the Declaration. Possessed with a sound penchant for business success and land speculation, Morris was widely admired and respected by many people. He remained a close friend of both George Washington and Benjamin Harrison. When the federal government moved from New York to Philadelphia in the early 1790s, Morris owned a large portion of the site of the new federal capital. He served in the United States Senate from 1789 to 1795.

York, Pa., 24th December 1777
Dear Sir, I hope this will meet you perfectly happy in domestic enjoyments. Nothing I have at present to offer is intended to interrupt them one moment. I bring you tokens of peace, good will & benevolence . . . A Vessel containing 70 Hogsheads of Rum & 6 Hogsheads of Sugar with some other goods intended from Granada to New York for the use of the Enemy had been carried into Charles Town [Charleston, S.C.] by the Mate & Crew, who had dispossessed the Master of Command. The whole was adjudged, in pursuance of the Resolution of Congress, prize to the Captors. This is the first retort upon that Spices of British policy calculated for encouraging infidelity & Treachery among Seamen in the service of these States. I have no doubt but that in a few Months they will experience an hundred fold retaliation of their infamous Example—which nothing but dire necessity could have induced virtuous Americans to copy . . . I have been closely confined Sixteen Days past by a heavy attack of the Gout in both feet. I have drank 16 Bottles less Madeira than I should otherwise have done & consequently have 16 times 20 or 25s. the more to spare for Christmas Boxes . . . I wish you through Life free from pain & all unhappiness . . .
Henry Laurens of South Carolina to James Duane.

A wealthy merchant from South Carolina, Henry Laurens, like Robert Morris, played a prominent role in South Carolina politics before and after the American Revolution. In the 1760s, Laurens, along with most of Charleston's merchants, became entangled with British customs officials over their interference in local politics. Once holding contempt for the local Sons of Liberty, Laurens now joined them in a bitter opposition of the customs officials. This launched Laurens's political aspirations and in 1775 he was selected to represent South Carolina in the Continental Congress. In his letter to James Duane, Laurens sounds like a merchant as he describes the capture of a British vessel. Laurens was president of the Continental Congress from 1777 to 1781. In 1783, he was appointed one of the American negotiators in the preliminary meetings for a peace treaty with Great Britain.

York Town [Pa.] December 29, 1777
Dear Sir, . . . If the late Generous Spirit of Virginia in their Act for Cloathing and Measures for preventing of Forestalling does not Inspire the other States with a Virtuous Emulation the Avarice of Individuals will be more Fatal to the Liberties of America than the Sword of the Enemy . . . In Short the Avarice and disaffection of the people here is so great that they refuse any price that we can give for the Necessary provisions for the Army, and the Generals last Letter Couch'd in terms Strong and pathetic holds out a probability of the Armys Desolveing unless they are more fully and Constantly Supplied. You would Execrate this State if you were in it. The Supporters of this Government are a set of Weak men without any Weight or Character..Your Supply of Cloathing came very Opportunely to Cover the Shivering Limbs of our poor Naked Soldiers. Thousands of them are now in the Hospitals for want of even Wrags to keep them from the Cold. We hear Two Hundred thousand pounds worth of Goods (at Exorbitant prices) has been purchased in Massachusetts. We hope they will be soon forwarded to the Army. There is no late Interesting Intelligence from either of our Army's. General Washington is now in Forge Valley about twenty three miles from Philadelphia where they will probably remain Inactive the greatest part of the Winter . . . It would take a much wiser man than me to Unravel the Misterious Conduct of the French Court. They have not yet given us any publick Avowal of their patronage . . . Some weeks past we daily expected to hear that they had taken a dicisive part for us . . . this we have Obtain'd in the Surrender of Burgoyne [at Saratoga] of which the French Court are now or must Shortly be Acquainted . . . John Harvie to Thomas Jefferson in Virginia.

John Harvie (1742–1807) was a native of Augusta County, Virginia. He served in the Virginia militia from 1775 to 1776 and was a delegate to the Virginia conventions in 1776. In 1777 he represented Virginia in the Continental Congress, a position he held when he wrote to Thomas Jefferson on December 29. Harvie's impressions of war conditions and American morale are clearly stated in his letter. The winter of 1777–1778 looked very bleak for the American army. After the war, Harvie was a mayor of Richmond in 1785–1786.

Head-Quarters, Valley Forge [Pa.] December 29, 1777
Without arrogance or the smallest deviation from truth it may be said that no history now extant can furnish an instance of an army's suffering such uncommon hardships as ours has done and bearing them with the same patience and fortitude. To see men without clothes to cover their nakedness, without blankets to lie on, without shoes (for the want of which their marches might be traced by the blood from their feet), and almost as often without provisions as with them, marching through the frost and snow, and at Christmas taking up their winter quarters within a day's march of the enemy, without a house or a hut to cover them till they could be built, and submitting without a murmur, is a proof of patience and obedience which in my opinion can scarce be paralleled. Diary of George Washington.

Philadelphia: [December 23–25, 1778.]
23. Congress sit from 9 till 3 and from 6 till 9. General Washington arrived here last evening.
24. Genl. Washington was admitted into Congress and informed that Congress sent for him to consult with him about the affairs and operations of the army the coming year. 25. Christmas Day. I dined at the Presidents of this State [Joseph Reed]. Genl. Washington and his lady and suit, the president of Congress, Colo. [John Laurens, aide to Washington] Lawrence, my colleagues, General Whipple and Don Juane [Don Juan de Miralles, Spanish emissary] dined with us. Diary of Samuel Holten.

Philadelphia, December 24, 1781
Dear Sir: I have received your favors of the 12th. and 18th. Instant. Doctor Cochran is of opinion that the season is favorable for the inoculation of all those who have not had the small pox. The new Contractors have agreed to furnish Stores necessary for the Patients, and the moment things are in readiness, you will be pleased to have the work begun . . . I am glad to hear you are so well supplied with provisions and I hope the Troops are by this time getting on some of their new Cloathing. I may on these accounts venture to hope that you will spend a happy and merry Christmas, a thing that has not happened for some years past. General George Washington to Major General William Heath.

Philadelphia, December 24, 1777
Sally and Nancy spent the Afternoon at their Uncle Johns. James Logan, Rebecca James, Junior Rebecca, Walton and Jessys Wife called. This is Christmas Eve, and the few Troops that are left in this City I fear are Frolicking.

Christmas Day, 25 I heard Cannon I thought about 12 o'clock last night; last Evening there was an attack made on the lines, but did not succeed, a Cannon Ball came as far as the Barracks —tis said that the Americans are very Sanquine, and talk of coming soon into the City—Janny Maxel the Soldiers Wife who lives in our Water Street House, came to desire I would make a pair Stairs for her to get into the House, I put her off and desir'd she would take Care of it that was in her power, which she promis'd. . . .

December 27, 1777 . . . A certain something a piece of Clockwork, A Barrel with Gunpowder, &c was found in our River [Delaware], which blew up near the Rock-Buck Man of War, and distroyed a boat near it . . . The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker.

Elizabeth Drinker's (1735-1807) diary provides a rare opportunity to view the world of an eighteenth-century woman. She was a member of Philadelphia's importantQuaker community. Her diary entries during the Revolutionary War years explore the harassment of the Quaker community, particularly at the hands of the American government. During the war, Quakers were subject to frequent illegal searches and seizures, and many were imprisoned for voicing sympathy for the British cause. Drinker's Christmas 1777 account brings the war into Philadelphia.

Setting a Fine Table: The Christmas Season

by Wendy Howell

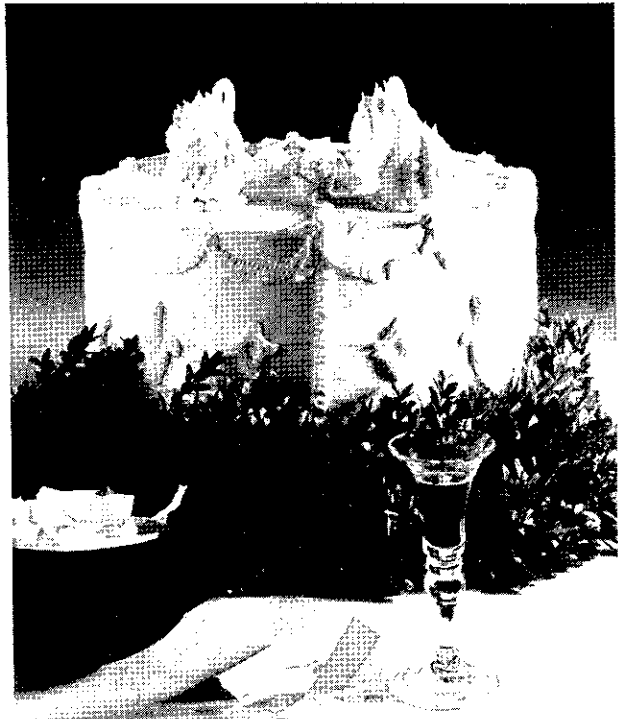
Wendy is a foodways specialist in the Department of Historic Buildings's Foodways Program.

Feasting and celebration were a big part of the Christmas season in colonial Virginia. Then, as now, families and friends gathered to celebrate the holiday with the best their tables could offer. In eighteenth-century Virginia, the holiday season began on December 24 and ran through Twelfth Night on January 6.

Philip Vickers Fithian noted in his diary on December 25, 1773, "Our dinner was no otherwise than common, yet as elegant a Christmas Dinner as I ever sat Down to." Fithian did not mention what was offered, but we have more information about a Christmas dinner from Martha Daingerfield Bland Blodget. She describes the celebration at Cawson's in Prince George County in 1796: "Christmas a very large rock [fish] from Chickamony: saddle of the finest mutton I ever saw, ham of new bacon, wild ducks and roast turkey, veal's head, cabbage pudding, colliflowers, artichoakes, cheese-cakes, gooseberry tarts, jellys, creams, raisons, grapes, nuts, almonds, apples &c." Throughout the holiday season, William Byrd also noted some of the meats that were offered at his table: spareribs, tongue and udder, roast goose, goose giblet, boiled turkey and oysters, roast turkey, cold souse, boiled chine, beefsteak, venison pastry, roast beef, and roast venison. Other favorites included a Christmas cake (probably a Rich Cake or other fruited cake), plum pudding, and suet pudding. Puddings did not require expensive ingredients, elaborate equipment, or extraordinary culinary skills. All one needed was a cloth in which to wrap the mixture, and a pot of boiling water.

In addition to diaries, eighteenth-century cookbooks are good sources to find out what was being used and consumed, not just at Christmas, but throughout the winter season. Most explain what foods were available at market for each month of the year, and also suggest monthly menus. Some receipts specified Christmas season usage of preserved fruits and vegetables. Hannah Glasse, *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy,* included such receipts as "To keep Green Peas, Beans, &c. and Fruit, fresh and good till Christmas" and "To keep Green Gooseberries till Christmas." Mrs. Glasse also explained how "To make a Yorkshire Christmas-Pie." It required the cook to make a thick standing crust into which were placed several kinds of boned poultry, and game, seasonings, and butter. The pie was topped with a thick crust and baked for several hours. Mrs. Glasse tells her readers that "these Pies are often sent to London in a Box as Presents." The Carters may have served a similar pie at their table as Fithian noted on December 29, 1773: "Had a large Pye cut to Day to signify the Conclusion of the Holidays." Although Fithian might have viewed late December as the end of the holiday season, for many, Twelfth Night held that honor.

For centuries, Twelfth Night was really the highlight of the holiday season. Although this celebration was not deeply rooted in the American colonies, in the eighteenth cen



Twelfth Night Cake

Photo courtesy of Winterthur Museum

tury it was celebrated in Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. Nicholas Cresswell, an English traveler who was invited to attend a Twelfth Night party in Alexandria in 1775, wrote:

Last night I went to the Ball. It seems this is one of their annual Balls supported in the following manner: A large rich Cake is provided and cut into small pieces and handed round, every guest at the same time draws a ticket out of a Hat with something merry wrote on it. He that draws the King has the Honor of treating the company with a Ball the next year . . . .The Lady that draws the Queen has the trouble of making the Cake.

Landon Carter noted in his diary on January 7, 1770,"Captn. Beale had invited this family yesterday to a dinner and a twelfth cake."

Numerous balls and assemblies occurred during the holiday season. Fithian wrote on January 3, 1774, "Squire Lee is as Miss Prissy told me, preparing to make a splendid Ball, which is to last four or five Days." The following notice appeared in the *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon) in 1769:

Williamsburg, Dec. 28. Last Tuesday [Dec. 26] his Excellancy the Governor gave a ball and elegant entertainment at the Palace to the Gentlemen and Ladies of this City.

We can only imagine the amount of work involved in preparing a table laden with desserts to provide the colorful climax to the festive evening. The use of miniature scenes, edible or not, to create an elaborate centerpiece display was very popular throughout the eighteenth century. Certainly William Sparrow (Lord Botetourt's head cook in 1769) could set out a grand table. An early description of an English dessert table appeared in the London paper *The Tatler* in March 1709:

The whole, when ranged in its proper order, looked like a very beautiful winter-piece. There were several Pyramids of candy'd sweetmeats, that hang like Icicles, with fruits scattered up and down, and hid in an artificial kind of frost. At the same time there were great quantities of Cream beaten up into Snow, and near them little plates of Sugar-plumbs, disposed like so many heaps of Hail-stones, with a multitude of Congelations in Jellies of various colours.

In *The London Art of Cookery* (1783), John Farley included a section on "Elegant Ornaments For A Grand Entertainment" that gives directions on how to make a Chinese Temple and Obelisk. At the end of her receipts "To make a Hedge-Hog," "The Floating Island," "Hen and Chickens in Jelly," and "To make a Desert Island," Mrs. Glasse mentions the dishes look "pretty in the middle of the table for Supper" or are a "pretty decoration for a grand table."

Elizabeth Raffald, *Experienced English Housekeeper* (4th ed., 1775), included the same receipts as Mrs. Glasse and also tells how to make "Solomons Temple in Flummery," which "is proper for a corner dish for a large table." Of "Moon and Stars in Jelly," she says that "it is a pretty corner dish, or a proper decoration for a grand table." In fact, Mrs. Raffald devotes a whole section to "All kinds of Confectionary, particularly the Gold and Silver Web for covering of Sweet-meats, and a Desert of Spun Sugar, with Directions to set out a Table in the most elegant Manner and in the modern Taste."

Confectionary items could be made at home or purchased at shops. In the *Virginia Gazette,* December 14, 1769 (Purdie and Dixon), Sarah Pitt listed among the goods she had to sell "just imported" from London "shapes, ornaments, and mottoes for desserts, of different sorts and figures." These items could have been confections, molds, or even porcelains.

The exuberance of the decoration and the food offered at the table always depends on the talent of the cook and the funds available. Although tastes and styles have changed over the centuries, the emphasis of the holiday season remains the same: it is still a time to gather with friends and family.

If you wish to set out a dessert table in an eighteenth-century manner this holiday season, you may want to follow the advice Mrs. Raffald gives in her "Directions for a Grand Table"

I have endeavoured to set out a desert of sweetmeats, which the industrious house-keeper may lay up in small at a small expense and when added to what little fruit is then in season, will make a pretty appearance after the cloth is drawn and be entertaining to the company; before you draw your cloth, have all your sweetmeats and fruits dished up in china dishes, or fruit baskets; and as many dishes as you have in one course, so many baskets or plates your dessert must have; . . . as ice is very often plentiful at that time, it will be easy to make five different ices for the middle, either to be served upon a frame or without, with four plates of dried fruit round them; apricots, green

gages, grapes and pears; the four outward corners, pistacho nuts, prunelloes, oranges, and olives. The four square, nonpareils, pears, walnuts, and filberts; the two in the centre betwixt the top and bottom, chestnuts and Portugal plums; for six long dishes, pine apples, French plums, and the four brandy fruits, which are peaches, nectarines, apricots and cherries. ■

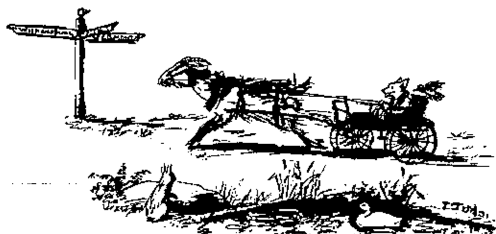
Mulled Wine

Grate ½ a nutmeg into a pint of wine and sweeten to your taste with loaf sugar—set it over the fire and when it boils take it off the fire to cool—Beat the yolks of 4 eggs very well—strain them and add to them a little cold wine—then mix them with your hot wine gradually pour it backwards and forwards several times till it looks fine and bright—then set it on the fire and heat it very gradually till it is quite hot and pretty thick and pour it up and down several times—Put it in chocolate cups and serve it with long narrow toasts.

Blancmange

Take 1 oz. Isinglass shred it and put it over the fire with as much water as will cover it, and let it boil till it dissolves —Pour to it 3 pints sweet cream and sugar to your taste—and let it boil till it will jelly which must be ascertained by trying a little in a spoon before you take it off the fire—This done strain it thro a napkin and stir it till quite cool —Let it settle and then fill your shapes first dipping them at the moment of filling in cold water—If you like to flavour with cinnamon put an ounce to boil with the Isinglass, and let it continue to boil with the Cream—If you prefer rosewater put in to your taste while the Cream is boiling.

From the Tucker Family Cookbook



Take Joy! The World of Tasha Tudor

News from the Curators

by Jan Gilliam

Jan is assistant curator of exhibitions in the Department of Collections, and was the exhibit curator for "Take Joy! The World of Tasha Tudor."

The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center is celebrating the life and art of Tasha Tudor with the exhibit "Take Joy! The World of Tasha Tudor." Tasha Tudor, world-renowned illustrator of children's books for over fifty years, is a passionate gardener, avid collector, skillful weaver, adept toy and doll maker, caring mother, and talented cook. She has lived all her life in rural New England, currently as a resident of Vermont in her home, Corgi Cottage. At eighty-one she has no regrets and continues to find excitement and satisfaction in living an active life.

"Take Joy!" highlights the variety of talents of this remarkable woman. Collecting antiques has been a part of her life since she attended her first auction at age nine. Objects from her collections of antique costumes, nineteenth-century pink lusterware tea services, and copper kitchen items appear in the exhibit. Tasha's favorite period is the 1830s. She has accumulated a large selection of cotton-printed gowns from that time, a few of which are on display. Her collection also includes eighteenth- as well as late nineteenth-century pieces. A few of the earliest objects from her collection are on exhibit at the Wallace Gallery in the textile gallery.

Tasha is very proud of her ancestors and has ensured that the past not be forgotten. She has inherited and preserved many family pieces including an eighteenth-century spinning wheel used by an industrious ancestor and a musket owned by Colonel William Tudor, first judge advocate general of the United States and a friend of George

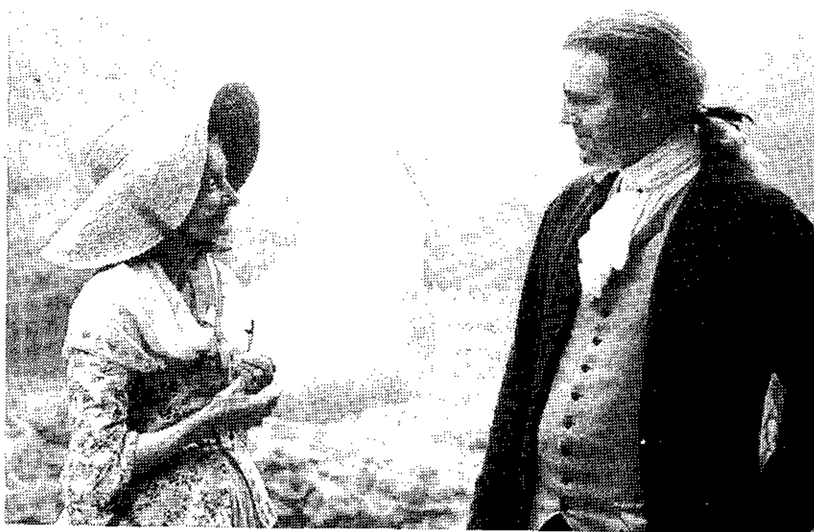
Washington. Viewers familiar with Tasha's art will recognize many of the objects. Her art and philosophy reflect her affinity for the past, and her dedication to preserving a legacy of traditional handcraft, American historical and literary heritage, and family ritual. Like Colonial Williamsburg, Tasha believes that the present can learn from the past.

Although Tasha has many interests, it is through her art that she has been able to support herself and her family. Tasha's illustrations have delighted children and adults alike for more than fifty years. Tasha wrote and illustrated some books, like her first, *Pumpkin Moonshine,* while she made favorite classics like *A Secret Garden* more enjoyable by the addition of her detailed drawings. A section of the exhibit explores her career as an award-winning illustrator. Included is a selection of illustrations from those Tasha did as a child to her most recent work completed only a few months ago. Tasha's favorite book is *Corgiville Fair,* and her most recent accomplishment will be publishing a sequel entitled *The Great Corgiville Kidnaping* that will appear in 1997. Interspersed with objects of her illustrating career are samples of the numerous activities—cooking, weaving, knitting, sewing, candle making, and so forth—that have filled the hours when she did not have a paint brush in hand. Tasha loves to be active and creative.

One gallery at the Folk Art Center is devoted to Tasha's unique world of toys and dolls. Tasha has a wonderful imagination that not only provides the inspiration for stories and art but also the impetus for numerous fun activities that often involve family dolls and toys. Each stuffed animal or doll has its own personality and individual history that make it very real. Tasha made several of the dolls and toys displayed in the exhibit over the years, and they will be recognized by anyone familiar with her art. The highlight of this gallery is the 19-foot dollhouse created by a talented corps of volunteers at the Folk Art Center. The volunteers spent months planning, designing, and making the two-story house, attached conservatory, and adjacent goat shed just so Tasha's dolls, Emma and Captain Thaddeus, might be comfortable during their visit in Williamsburg. Tasha made or collected all of the furnishings arranged throughout the house.

The last gallery celebrates Christmas and the Tudor family traditions that have been shared over the years through Tasha's cards and books. A large Christmas tree decorated with ornaments similar to those that are found on Tasha's tree stands in the corner. Several original advent calendars are on display. This gallery also highlights marionettes made by Tasha and used in performances by her children and friends. Tasha adapted favorite stories like *The Rose and the Ring* and created all of the characters and backdrops needed to make the performance complete. Tasha has a theater in her barn in Vermont where performances are still presented by and for friends and family.

Although Tasha Tudor can only be present during the opening weekend in November, visitors to the exhibit will share her life through a video filmed in June 1996 at her home, Corgi Cottage. "Take Joy! The World of Tasha Tudor" has something to offer everyone from long-time admirers to those new to her work. Viewers can partake of the life and art of this creative, vibrant woman who finds such pleasure in sharing her joy with others. ■



Tasha Tudor meets Thomas Jefferson

Soul of a Sharecropper

"Mary Lou's Life"

By Sandra Johnson

Sandra is an interpreter at Carter's Grove in the Museums Division.

****Go tell it on the mountain,***
Over the hills and everywhere
Go tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.

So begins my interpretation of Mary Lou, a nineteenth-century sharecropper. The idea for portraying her dates from 1991 when I was asked to be a member of the Forum for Women in History and to participate in the interpretive planning and special focus programming for Carter's Grove. Since the history of Carter's Grove spans almost 400 years, it was imperative to find characters representing the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries. I volunteered to portray a nineteenth-century sharecropper.

The first phase of my research work involved searching the census records for a female slave who had lived at Carter's Grove during the ownership of Thomas Wynne (1839–1854) or Lewis Ellison (1856–1868). Since no names were listed, I decided to create a generic character. I called her Mary Lou, the name of my great-grandmother on my mother's side of the family.

Phase two focused on reading a number of slave narratives for character monologue, reviewing primary sources from the Reconstruction era, and obtaining advice from the Costume Design Center about appropriate period clothing. When theWomen's Forum presented "The Women of Carter's Grove" in March 1994, I was Mary Lou.

Mary Lou did not surface again until last year when a visitor asked one of my coworkers a question in the butler's pantry at the mansion. She couldn't wait to share the query with the staff, and especially with me. The visitor asked very seriously, "How hard was it to train the slaves to use the electric stove." Our first reaction was to laugh, and we did. But then we realized that visitors were not making a historical transition from the eighteenth-century slave quarter to the twentieth-century mansion. At that point, I decided to move forward with a program proposal to develop the nineteenth-century story of Mary Lou.

My research and documentation expanded to involve several departments within the Foundation—Historical Research, Costume Design, Education, Historic Trades, Collections, African-American Interpretation and Presentations, and Archaeological Research. After obtaining approval from the Museum Division's management team and the Educational Administrators Group, I began to present "Mary Lou, Soul of a Sharecropper" at Carter's Grove in the spring of 1996.

Mary Lou is a composite of many African-American women of her time. She comes to Virginia from Corn Hill plantation near Fort Sumter, S. C., where she was living when the Civil War began in 1861. Mary Lou was at Corn Hill when the fighting ended in 1865. "Well, after the 'freedom war' there was such crying, praying, singing, shouting, yelling, and knocking down everything!" says her character. But Mary Lou's joy turns to dismay as she faces the realities of the postwar period.

> *Then came the calm. So many folks dead, families separated, maybe never to see each other again, things tore up, and no where to go. We just sort of huddled around together like scared rabbits. Some stayed on the plantation like mothers with small children, 'fraid of being hungry and having no home. Every mother's son run off in search of his mother, every mother in search of her children whom they bade farewell to at the auction block.*

After Mary Lou's mistress tells the slaves

they are free, she informs them that there is no money to pay them salaries. If they will stay on the plantation, however, the mistress will provide food and shelter. If Mary Lou will card and spin the cotton and wool into cloth, she offers to make some dresses for Mary Lou.

I stayed on, and carded and spinned the cotton and wool, and she make me just one dress. Mistress go off 'bout a week, and when she come back I see her get some money, but she didn't give me any. Den I starts to feeling like I ain't treated right. So one night I just put that dress in a bundle with some bedding, got that dog to catch the rabbit with and set foot right down the big road.

Mary Lou heads north toward Virginia. She spends a few days at "Freedoms Fortress" (Fort Monroe) in a settlement called "Slabtown," then travels on to James City County in search of land to till. She becomes a sharecropper for a man called Samuel Harris. "The landless Negro gots to be a share tenant or sharecropper. Share tenants had their own stock and tools and get a portion of the crop they 'gaddered.' " The landlord furnished quarters and rations (four pounds of pork and a peck of meal each week), and a small garden patch for vegetables. He also provided wood for cooking and warmth.

Mary Lou finds herself locked into a credit system that strips her of any economic opportunity.

At the end of the planting season, when the crop is gaddered, we go to him and add up the deducts and the charges at the store, and we got to pay the balance due. We gotta pay for all the food, clothes, medicine and doctor bills, fertilizer, and feed for stock that we had while making the crop. On settling-up day, I see that I worked all year for a few dollars and then got to pledge my labor to the landlord for another year.

And so goes the story of the sharecropper. Following the monologue, I come out of character, introduce myself as Sandra Johnson, and answer visitors' questions. These question-and-answer sessions offer a wonderful opportunity to expand on the educational impact of the program. One of the most frequently asked questions has to do with the clothing I wear. Visitors want to know if the outfit is typical. My answer is yes. The everyday dress had a semi-fitted bodice buttoned up the front and long, loose sleeves.The skirt was gathered into a waist band. This skimpy frock was not a dress but an under-dress or chemise that was practical for hot summer work. Homespun was worn during the week, calico dresses for Sunday. Black women also wore a turban like head wrap. Jackets or coats called "roundabouts" or "sacks" were made of a rough-textured textile and lined with homespun. Leather work shoes were called brogans.

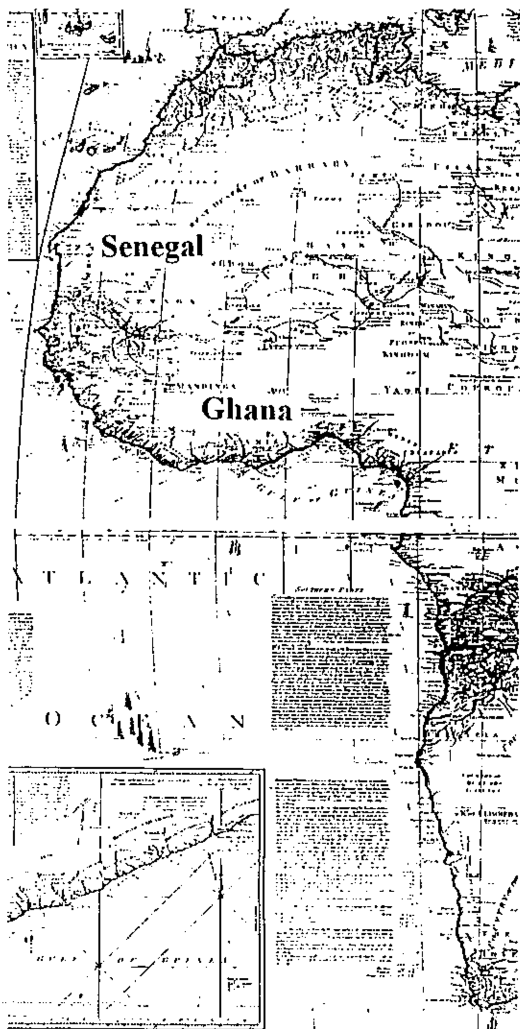
Visitor surveys conducted this summer indicate that the program has helped provide the missing historical link between the period of slavery and that of segregation. Shirlene Spicer from the Museums Division who conducted the visitor surveys, provided the following visitor comments: "We just can't really relate to how these people felt or were feeling at the time, but I think after talking to her [Mary Lou], she sort of put us in a setting and made me understand the things that were happening." "Instead of telling us this is what it was like, she actually acted out the part. I don't know how you do better than that . . . and she did it so convincingly." I hope that Mary Lou's message of the endurance and inner strength of these newly freed slaves has given visitors a better insight into that period of our history.

From a personal point of view, I find the Civil War and Reconstruction eras to be fascinating because of the historical knowledge I have gained from studying the period. I've felt the impact of nineteenth-century black women such as Susie King Taylor, who served as a nurse and laundress in a black Union regiment; Mary S. Peake, the first black missionary teacher whose school was the forerunner of Hampton University; and Mary Elizabeth Bowser, who performed intelligence work for the Union Army during the Civil War. These stories helped to broaden my understanding of Mary Lou's world and showed me numerous ways that black women participated in and contributed to changes brought about after the Civil War.

Mary Lou hopes to continue to be a part of the Carter's Grove interpretive program next year, and she invites you to come for a visit. ■

Nobody knows the trouble I seen.
Nobody knows but Jesus.
Nobody knows the trouble I seen, Glory, Hallelujah.
Sometimes I'm up; sometimes I'm down. Oh, yes, Lord.
Sometimes I'm almost to the ground, Oh, yes, Lord.

* The spirituals begin and conclude Mary Lou's story.



Touching Our Past: A Study Visit to West Africa

by Robert C. Watson

Robert joined Colonial Williamsburg in 1989 as assistant director of African-American Interpretation and Presentations, became director in 1991, and joined the Research staff in 1994. He left the Foundation in August to join the faculty of Hampton University as an assistant professor of history, political science, and philosophy. This article takes the form of a conversation Robert had with the editor and assistant editor of the interpreter *about the study visit he led this summer to the West African countries of Ghana and Senegal.*

It has long been my belief [and the belief of a number of Colonial Williamsburg staff members] that people learn best about what they interpret, what they research, and what they teach if they [have an opportunity to] actually go to places they talk about in their interpretation. A great deal of time is spent in training, researching, and interpreting the African-American past. One of the ways [to get a better handle on the African-American past is] to understand the African past better. Because most slaves were brought to the New World from West Africa, we thought that going to West Africa and visiting the places from which those Africans were brought would be a great way to enhance interpretation by giving us on-site experiences as opposed to just reading about them in a book.

I welcomed the decision by Colonial Williamsburg to support the two-week trip to Ghana and Senegal that I arranged. Twelve of us, Harvey Bakari, Bridgette Jackson, Sylvia Tabb Lee, Michael Lord, Christy Matthews, Carolyn Randall, Marcel Riddick, and myself from Colonial Williamsburg; my wife, Aysia; Dylan Pritchard; and two former students of mine, Dawn Williams and Jerry Belton, boarded an Air Afrique flight in New York on July 28. We arrived the following morning in Dakar, the capital of Senegal, cleared customs, and then boarded a plane for Accra, the capital of Ghana, where we spent the first week.

This was the first time that most folks in the group had visited a developing country, so there was some culture shock. Ghana is not modern in the sense that we think of modern. You don't see any American cars, although there are a lot of Japanese cars and some English- or German-made autos. People go to work carrying loads of goods on their heads. They were walking at a very slow pace. Nobody seemed to be in a hurry. This was the first time the group really felt we were in Africa. We began to talk about what we were seeing and how excited we were to be in a place we had read about for so long. We began to see and experience the warmth of the people, the varieties of food, and, of course, the shopping opportunities! We felt relatively safe in the streets any time of the day or night because there is very little crime.

Ghana gained its independence from Great Britain in 1957. Structurally, their government is similar to that of Britain. They have a one-house parliament with elected representatives from the different regions. Both the government and the educational

system are based on the British model. English, the primary language, is spoken everywhere. Native languages like Ga and Twi are also spoken, especially in the traditional villages.

The population of Accra is more than a million. People from all over the world—Americans, Europeans, Asians—were there as tourists, diplomats, university students, and business people. Christianity is the dominant religion in Ghana. Along the coastal areas is a mix of Christianity, Islam, and some traditional African religions. There are a lot of Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Methodists, and a few Catholics in the major urban areas in the south. Christianity is practiced in the villages, although we found more of the traditional religions, too. For example, Medicine Men have a powerful influence on the everyday lives of the rural communities. Muslims live in the desert regions to the north.

The highlight of our first day in Africa was a welcoming ceremony by a group of Ghanians who performed the traditional dances and songs of the various ethnic groups from the country. Then we attended a lecture by a professor of African studies from the University in Accra who gave a slide presentation and presented a video showing some of the places that we would be visiting.

He also talked with us about the impact of the European slave trade on Africa. He made an interesting comment about how differently African-Americans react from Africans when they visit the slave dungeons in Ghana for the first time. We tend to be overcome with emotion because we are seeing the actual spaces where our ancestors were held before they were shipped to the New World. Africans have a very different feeling about them. "We understand that these places are important in history," he said, "but we would be better served if we could turn them into places where people in the surrounding communities could earn a living." He suggested that some dungeons be turned into elementary school classrooms, or even into restaurants. You can imagine our reaction when he said "restaurants." Several of us in the group got very defensive. The professor responded, "I understand your concern. I understand your point, but we Africans need to provide a better opportunity for education for our people in these villages, and better work opportunities. If you Americans feel that strongly about it, then you should not just come and see these places, but you should help us maintain them by contributing some funds for the upkeep." Nobody had any argument with that.

The next day we visited the national museum in Accra and saw artifacts that had been collected from villages throughout the country. The ten regions in Ghana are all represented at the museum's collections. I was particularly interested in the exhibits from Ashanti because that's the area of Ghana

Native pottery in National Museum in Accra, Ghana

we emphasize at Colonial Williamsburg because of its involvement in the slave trade. The exhibits included many artifacts, especially carved Ashanti stools. We saw the stool that the first Prime Minister of Ghana (Kwame Nkrumah) sat on when he was inaugurated in 1957. *(Stools are important symbols of power in their culture. One of the first gifts a father gives to his child when he starts to crawl is a stool.)*

Our visits to the museum gave us a chance to talk with museum professionals who had a perspective on the slave trade and thoughts about modern day issues in Ghana. They knew a lot about our country, and I have to admit that they were more aware of current events in the United States than we were about Ghana.

The highlight of our trip to Ghana was the visit to the slave dungeons at Elmina. Emotions run the gamut when you are in those dungeons. Everybody in my group is used to dealing with tough issues, but when they went into those cells, everybody was crying. And it wasn't just the people in my group. I saw a white woman who went into one of the dungeons, came out, sat on the steps, and started crying. All of us understood why she was weeping. People would walk by and touch you on the shoulder or they would stop and ask, "Are you alright?" That was very uplifting.

Our group asked questions everywhere we went. The members impressed people in the villages by really taking an interest in what was going on, and by stopping and talking with the children. We had conversations with people who could give us insights into what we were seeing and hearing.

In one of the traditional villages—a fishing village—we met the chief and some of his tribal elders who included two of his sons. My group asked him questions about his culture, for example, whether polygamy or monogamy was practiced. Sylvia Lee asked if he was married, and he responded "yes." She asked how many wives he had. He said two. Sylvia inquired how he treated his wives; he replied that he treated them very well. Then he turned to one of his sons and said something in the traditional language that we didn't understand. Even though the chief spoke English, we talked to him through his linguist. Naturally our group wanted to know what he said to his son. The linguist answered that the chief wanted to know if Sylvia was married. If not, did she want to become his third wife!

Another interesting trip took us to Ghana's goldfields. Ghana is the world's second larget producer of gold after South Africa. We met with the president of the mining company who took us to the boardroom, showed us a map where the goldfields were located, and told us that during the era of the slave trade, this part of Africa was being mined for gold. A map on the wall showed the sites of goldfields that had not been mined yet. Historically, Ghana provided gold to the coastal areas and to Arab traders who took it to Spain, Portugal, and into Egypt and the Middle East. The mines were at least a half-mile to three-quarters of a mile underground. We saw people actually mining the raw gold after it was brought up. The mines were well guarded by men with AK-47s.

Elmina Castle, Ghana

Photo by Harvey Bakari

We left Ghana on August 4 having spent a very eventful seven days that I'm sure changed the way all of us thought about the past.

Our experience in Senegal was not quite as good as the experience in Ghana. One reason was that language was definitely a barrier. Another was that the trip was not as well planned by the travel agency. Nevertheless, we still saw some incredible sights. Senegal, a former French colony, gained its independence in 1960. French is still the official language. Wolof, Mandingo, and Diola are also major languages and widely spoken in rural and urban communities.

Fishing Village, Ghana

Photo by Harvey Bakari

Although fishing is an important part of the economy, tourism is probably number one. So many Americans go to Senegal because it's the closest African country between the New World and the Old. The people are not as friendly as the Ghanaians. They are very nice if you get to know them. If not, they will not bother to get to know you. This is very unlike Ghana where people speak to you everywhere you go. They wave to you. They say "excuse me" if they bump into you. You could sense that they wanted you to have a great experience. While the Ghanaians can't provide a lot of material things, they were willing to talk and assist us during the visit. The Senegalese don't tend to get very excited about seeing Americans, perhaps because they're more international in outlook and experience.

The government of Senegal is modeled after the French. They have a president and a representative assembly. In the capital city of Dakar we visited the university, which is a world-renowned center of learning. Many of the country's leaders, past and present, trained there. Although the country is a mix of Muslims (92%) and Catholics (2%), Islam is more dominant here than in Ghana. There are many mosques in Dakar. There are also more Catholic churches in Senegal than in any other African country with the possible exception of the Ivory Coast.

One of the highlights of the trip to Senegal was a visit to a fishing village called the Pink Lake about sixty miles from Dakar. Until 1985, it was a fresh water lake and fishermen inhabited the village. Then a microorganism got into the water and changed it in such a way that on days when the wind is blowing, the water turns pink—literally pink! Nothing can live in the lake now. The villagers who used to be fisher people are now mining the lake for salt. Huge mounds of salt are everywhere. The people take buckets with holes cut into the bottom, dip them into the lake, pull them out, and the buckets are full of salt which they carry onto shore and dump in piles to dry out. Inspectors

then come by and identify the various salt mounds as to ownership. Today the village provides salt for all of Senegal. This happened only eleven years ago, causing that village's whole way of life to change almost overnight. Scientists come from all over the world to study this phenomenon, which has made the people in that village very wealthy. In fact, they are among the wealthiest in Senegal.

Another highlight was our visit to Goree Island. Goree Island has one of the most famous (or infamous) slave dungeons in the world. There Africans encountered the "door of no return" that led them to the slave ships and an unknown future. Several documentaries have been made about Goree. *National Geographic* magazine and Black Entertainment Television have also done major documentary programs about Goree.

The classic example of our group really trying to maximize our experience occurred during our visit to Goree. We were welcomed to the island by some villagers playing drums. Michael Lord, the only white member in our group, asked the drummers if he could play the drums with them. When they said yes, he started playing the drums with them. The villagers were very impressed because a white could play the drums—and could play to the same rhythm that they were!

Fifteen to twenty million Africans passed through Goree. It was the French headquarters for the slave trade to the Western Hemisphere islands of Haiti, Martinique, and Guadalupe. Owned originally by the Dutch, they used it to transport Africans to Jamaica and to the Spanish colonies in South America. Today, approximately eight hundred people live on Goree, half Protestant, and half Catholic. One of the largest Catholic churches in Senegal is located there. When the pope visits Africa, he generally goes to Zaire, to the Ivory Coast, and to Senegal, including the island of Goree.

The climate in both countries is temperate, although Senegal was hotter than Ghana. We even enjoyed a couple of cool mornings in Ghana, which was less humid than Senegal.

The foodways in the two nations are similar in part to those in the American South. Rice with fish or chicken was eaten every place we went. There are also yams, cassava (a tropical plant with a large, starchy root imported from the Americas in the sixteenth century), peanuts, and hot peppers. Fruits, especially apples, oranges, and bananas, are popular. The food in Senegal, especially the way the food is cooked, is both traditional and demonstrates the French influence. If you eat at cafes or restaurants owned by the Wolof, you can sample the native dishes.

Goree Island, Senegal

Photo by Harvey Bakari

Robert and village children, Ghana

This was my third visit to Africa and my second to Ghana and Senegal. My first time was in 1968 when I was a student and went as part of "The Experiment in International Living Program." In 1984 I took a group of students to Kenya and Tanzania. I've also been to Togo, Upper Volta, which is now Burkina Faso, Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Morocco. Some of my colleagues and students at Hampton University have already asked me to try to arrange another trip to Africa and also one to the Caribbean.

Chinese food is also popular. There is a large Asian population. Most come from China, although there are Japanese now in both Senegal and Ghana.

We had a chance to sample palm wine, another local product at a roadside stand in Ghana where some had just been made. It's very strong. The production process is interesting. The men go to a forest, cut down a palm tree, and stick a straw through the palm wood, which is soft inside. As the sap rises in the tree, it drips into a pot and is allowed to ferment. It isn't covered because it would become too potent. Although there are other local wines, most are imported into Senegal and Ghana.

We encountered beggars everywhere we went in Senegal and Ghana. We also noticed the poor physical conditions of many of the people. While there is a very healthy and very vibrant population on the one hand, we also saw more people in poor physical health. Those kind of images stick in our minds.

When people think of Africa, they tend to think of wild animals. We saw none except a few monkeys on chains near a zoo. We did not see any snakes either. We occasionally saw antelopes being barbecued along the side of the road. That was the closest we came to encountering any African game.

Both countries border the Atlantic and have beautiful coastal beaches. The terrain is very hilly in some places. There are some mountain ranges in the interior. Forested areas are found in the middle of Ghana.

I think Colonial Williamsburg and the museum community benefitted by supporting this project. What the interpreters learned will greatly enhance their interpretations. I hope that Colonial Williamsburg will continue to support such study visits, and will use the knowledge that was gained on this trip to expand the Foundation's interpretation and understanding of the African-American story. It was an incredible experience for all of us! ■

IN EVERLASTING MEMORY
OF THE ANGUISH
OF OUR ANCESTORS
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MAY THOSE WHO RETURN
FIND THEIR ROOTS.
MAY HUMANITY NEVER AGAIN
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WE THE LIVING
WILL UPHOLD THIS.

Plaque at the slave dungeons
Elmina Castle, Ghana.

Questions & Answers

Of A Legal Nature

By Mike Haas

Mike is an attorney-at-law and a historical interpreter in the Department of Historic Buildings.

1. Today we use various terms to refer to people engaged in the practice of law—lawyer, attorney, barrister, solicitor. Are there differences in the terms and why are there so many?

The English language contains such a rich legal vocabulary because, as various tribes and groups invaded England, each brought its legal system and legal terminology. "Lawyer" is an old English word from the Scandinavian, meaning one versed in the law. Today it is the primary American word for a member of the legal profession; one who conducts suits in court and advises clients. With the Norman invasion of 1066 came the Norman French legal system and its vocabulary. "Attorney" is from the old French word "atorné," meaning a person who is appointed or constituted. An attorney is appointed or ordained to act for another as an agent, deputy, or commissioner. We see this usage today in "attorney-in-fact," a person appointed by a letter or power of attorney to act for another. An "attorney-at-law" is a properly qualified legal agent practicing in the courts of common law in England. In America, the term is generally interchangeable with lawyer. "Solicitor," also derived from old French, initially meant one who urges, prompts, or instigates. In England it came to mean an agent or representative, one who transacted business on behalf of another. During the reign of King George II, "An act for the better regulation of Attornies and Solicitors" stated that solicitors had to be enrolled in the Court of Equity. While this is still true today in England, solicitors can also practice in the common law courts, so practitioners are both solicitors and attorneys. Solicitor is not generally used in the United States interchangeably with attorney, but we do find the Solicitor General who represents the state in suits affecting the public interest.

"Barrister" comes from the French word for bar (barre), although the term developed at the Inns of Court in London, not in France. A bar separated the newer students or inner barristers from the more experienced students or utter barristers. The great

English legal reforms of the Judicature Act of 1875 simplified the various names for legal practitioners by stating that those who had passed the tests necessary to plead cases in the criminal and common law courts would henceforth be called "Barristers-at-Law," while those who dealt with clients, prepared cases for court, and practiced estate and property law would be called "Solicitors." There is some evidence to show the words "lawyer" and "attorney" were not chosen by the legal reformers because of the rather underhanded connotation each had developed!

In the eighteenth century, lawyer and attorney seem to have been the words of choice for those trained in the law. Virginia formally licensed lawyers after 1732.

2. The Virginia General Court in the eighteenth century heard all legal matters except admiralty cases, which were heard in a separate court. What is admiralty law and why is it different from other legal practice?

Admiralty law is the law of maritime trade and the sea. It developed separately from English Common Law, has very little in common with it, and is usually referred to as "civil" or "continental law." This law contains basic Roman legal concepts with the added rules and procedures of merchants in Mediterranean, Atlantic, North Sea, and Baltic ports. In the thirteenth century King Edward III of England took this European law system, which never included a jury (all decisions were made by judges only), and developed it for reasons of commercial convenience. Admiralty law is the oldest body of recognized international law. The English High Court of Admiralty, named for the chief naval officer of the realm, was founded in 1360, and vice-admiralty courts were created along the English coast. The courts in American colonies were begun in the seventeenth century. Virginia's admiralty court was established in 1698.

Admiralty courts both in England and in the colonies used procedures and remedies that often differed from common law to aid in the settlement of maritime cases. These courts looked upon seamen as wards who had to be protected. Mariners were able to win judgments against owners or masters of their vessels by using medieval codes permitting the recovery of damages even if the sailors were partially negligent. Under common law, fault on the part of the seaman could limit the liability of the owner or master.

The court was organized with a judge, a registrar or register who was the clerk, and a marshal who, like a sheriff, carried out the orders of the judge and arrested or seized vessels. Attorneys who practiced in English Admiralty courts were called advocates or proctors and were trained as Doctors of Law at Oxford or Cambridge rather than at the Inns of Court. They were well versed in ecclesiastical as well as admiralty law. A person seeking relief in an admiralty court was called a libelant, and the written document stating the complaint was called the libel. The *Virginia Gazette* sometimes mentioned libel, meaning an admiralty complaint, not defamation in print.

3. What was benefit of clergy and how was it used in Virginia?

After Henry II's conflict with Thomas Becket in 1170, clergymen could be exempted from capital punishment in common law courts by proving they were "clerks in orders." They were then handed over to the ecclesiastical authorities to be dealt with according to Canon law. Those handed over could escape further punishment by either undergoing purgation (taking the oath of innocence supported by the oaths of twelve compurgators who swore the defendant spoke the truth) or spending time in church prisons which were notorious for easy escapes. Those claiming to be clerics would not be believed if they were not in clerical dress or could not read.

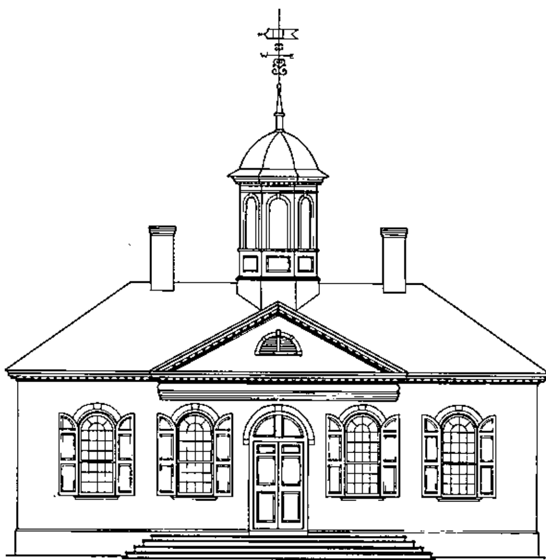
In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when the punishment for many crimes was death, judges saw benefit of clergy as a way of avoiding the use of the mandatory death penalty. The judges disregarded physical appearance, and the ability to read became the sole test of clerical status. If found guilty, a defendant could fall to his knees and "pray the book." He would then be given a passage of the psalter to read, often Psalm 51, which became known as the neck verse: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." One study of English court records between 1559 and 1624 shows 47 percent of the felons claiming clergy. Because women were incapable of ordination, they were not permitted to claim benefit of clergy until Parliament extended the privilege to them during the reigns of James I and William and Mary.

In order to control the indiscriminate use of benefit of clergy, an enactment in 1489 permitted laymen to claim clergy only once. Convicts permitted to claim benefit of clergy were branded M (manslayer) or T (thief) in the brawn of the left thumb. Over the years, the benefit was withdrawn from certain crimes such as murder, burglary, burning of houses, horse stealing, and robbery, then sometimes reintroduced. After 1718, those found guilty as thieves could be transported to America in lieu of branding on the first conviction.

A Virginia Act of Assembly in 1732 did away with the reading of a verse, expanded the benefit to women in all cases where men could claim it, and allowed Negroes, Mulattoes, and Indians to claim the benefit except in cases of "manslaughter, or burglary, or house breaking and stealing to a value of five shillings sterling." Benefit of clergy was abolished in Virginia in 1796.

4. Recent criminal trials remind us that a modern jury must find a defendant guilty "beyond a reasonable doubt." What was the standard needed to find guilt in the eighteenth century?

New Kent County Justice of the Peace George Webb in *The Office and Authority of Justices of Peace* states that the jury consists of "24 or 12 men sworn to deliver the truth, upon such evidence as is produced to them touching on the matter of fact in issue." The oath taken by the jury foreman and other members generally stated that their verdict should be "according to the best of your cunning." While available court records sometimes tell us that the jury is given their charge by the judge after the final counsel arguments, we are not told how the charge is actually phrased. Modern scholars agree that finding a defendant guilty "beyond a reasonable doubt" is a product of the nineteenth century, when many changes evolved that made trials more fair to defendants. Eighteenth-century juries were expected to apply their common sense to the facts presented in determining guilt, and court records show a reasonable number of people were found not guilty.



5. Were English courts brought to Virginia directly in 1607? How did courts develop here?

In 1607 the Council as determined by the Virginia Company was both the government and the court. The Council and its president were later succeeded by the Governor and Council. While the earliest records are now lost, we know that complaints were laid before the Council by either written or verbal petition. The instructions from the Virginia Company stated that the colonists were to be governed by the existing laws of England and the church. In cases where there was known precedent, these instructions seem to have been followed. Where there was no precedent, the Council took the action that appeared best for the community and then issued a proclamation governing the repetition of the circumstances involved.

As the settlement expanded, new boroughs, hundreds, and plantations were created. Their leaders were told to hold monthly courts for the trial of civil differences when the amount in controversy did not exceed 100 pounds of tobacco. These local courts also acted with limited jurisdiction (scope and authority) in the trial of petty criminal offenses with the right to appeal reserved to the courts of the Governor and Council. Procedure was simple. Minutes of the cases were not required, but records were kept of dispositions. The Council acted legislatively or judicially depending on the character of the business at hand until enough legal business warranted quarterly sessions, which came to be called Quarter Courts. These were the highest courts, hearing appeals as well as retaining original jurisdiction in both civil and criminal cases. In 1661 the name was changed to the General Court, "a name more suitable to the nature of them as being places where all persons and causes generally have audience and receive determination."

(Hening, Statutes at Large, II, p. 58)

With the adoption of county government in 1634, civil cases below a value set by the Assembly were given to the county courts. Felonies, including all crimes where the penalty was death, remained in the Quarter or General Courts, although lesser criminal offenses came to be assigned to the county courts also.

The relationship of Parliament vis-a-vis Virginia was never very clear in the eighteenth century. The royal governor and Council seemed to invoke parliamentary statutes when convenient, but with no reliable pattern.

6. What permitted Williamsburg to have its own hustings court and what jurisdiction did this court have?

When Williamsburg received its royal charter of incorporation in 1722, it became a self-perpetuating corporation and was able to establish its own municipal courts. The government of Williamsburg was patterned after English municipal boroughs, as were the governments of Norfolk, New York, Annapolis, and other colonial cities. The borough government raised revenue, controlled expenses, passed laws and ordinances, held fairs and markets, and conducted judicial trials.

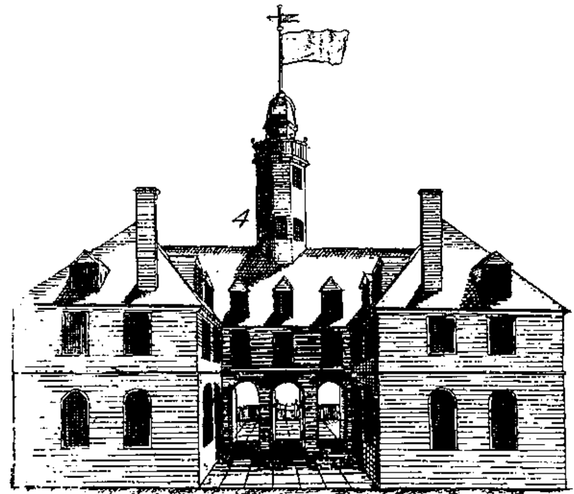
The government of the city of Williamsburg consisted of a mayor, a recorder, six aldermen, and twelve common councilmen. The mayor, recorder, and aldermen also served on the municipal court, called the court of hustings. The aldermen, including the mayor who was an alderman elected mayor by the other aldermen,were the magistrates in the court. Justices of the peace within the town limits had the power to appoint lesser officials and enforce all laws, ordinances, and statutes.

The jurisdiction of the court initially extended over trespass and ejectment in property cases, writs of dower, and other personal and mixed actions arising within the limits of the city and not exceeding £20 current money or 4,000 pounds of tobacco. In 1723 the hustings court was permitted to hear all complaints of masters, servants, and apprentices and to hold special courts to examine persons suspected of committing capital crimes and offenses that could be tried before the General Court or courts of oyer and terminer. In 1734 the court gained the right to hear suits brought for the recovery of small debts "without the solemnity of a jury"; two years later, it received jurisdiction in suits equal to any county court. Suits could be heard whether or not they were contracted within the city limits, but it does not appear the court could ever try slaves charged with capital crimes, and it did not probate wills.

The name "hustings" came from a Norse word meaning a house assembly or council held by a king or other leader. It was an assembly for deliberative purposes which lent its name to the supreme court of the city of London, that met in the guildhall.

As a court of record, the magistrates were to meet once a month and give judgment according to the laws of England and the colony. The aldermen acting as magistrates had authority over all ordinaries and taverns with the right to grant licenses to ordinary keepers and set prices. The magistrates also gave permission for attorneys to practice in the court. The magistrates' most important work was to preside over the court sessions, and the hustings court became known for conducting its business quickly and conveniently. The magistrates heard the case, pronounced judgment and awarded the rightful party with the assistance of a jury except in suits for small debts when no jury was required.

Suits for debt were numerous as were other cases for civil damages. The *Virginia Gazette* (Rind) of August 24, 1769, states a jury awarded Bartholomew and Mary Dandridge £2,000 damages against Richard Johnson, Jr., "for writing and publishing false and scandalous libel on Mrs. Dandridge." When Johnson brought a £5,000 damage suit against them for assault and battery, the same jury ruled for the Dandridges. ■



The Battle of Great Bridge—the South's Ticonderoga

by Woody Searles

Woody has worked as a visitor aide in the Department of Historic Trades/Presentations and Tours and as a historical interpreter in the Department of Historic Buildings. He is currently employed as a teacher, and continues to work some of the night programs at Colonial Williamsburg.

A decade of smoldering revolution in the American colonies exploded on April 19, 1775, in Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts. British troops, sent by General Gage to recover gunpowder and weapons from those two towns, were met by Massachusetts militia and the famous military confrontation ensued. Less than a month later, on May 10, Ethan Allen won a stunning and significant victory when he captured the British Fort of Ticonderoga, giving notice to England that the colonists would not be defeated easily.

A nearly identical scenario with a very similar outcome, took place in Virginia. On April 21, 1775, Governor John Murray, earl of Dunmore, ordered British marines to seize gunpowder from the Magazine in Williamsburg. The Gunpowder Incident sparked seven months of military and political confrontation in Virginia that was effectively ended by a much less-known, but equally significant, event, the Battle of Great Bridge. This confrontation on the banks of the Elizabeth River led to Governor Dunmore's retreat from Virginia.

Dunmore overestimated loyal support for the Crown in Virginia and underestimated the revolutionary sentiment and resolve of the people and leaders of Virginia. He was surprised at the colonists' reaction to the Gunpowder Incident. An angry mob formed in Williamsburg on the morning after the seizure of the gunpowder. During the next seven weeks, tension escalated in Virginia and throughout the colonies. The Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia starting in mid-May, and the Virginia Assembly convened in Williamsburg on June 1. Both meetings saw spirited debate and increasing demands for separation from England, as well as for arming and defending the colonies.

Dunmore vacated the Governor's Palace on June 8, 1775. Over the following weeks, both Dunmore and Virginia's leaders engaged in political posturing while at the same time making plans for military action. Governor Dunmore, angry at Virginia's leaders, was arrogantly certain that they did not represent the sentiment of most colonists. In late June, Dunmore ordered his British ships to Portsmouth, Virginia, where he commandeered two merchant ships, the *Eilbeck* and the *William,* and had them outfitted for warfare. Almost immediately, Dunmore began harassing fishing and shipping vessels in Hampton Roads.

The governor's goal was to rally support among Loyalists (whom he believed to be the great majority of Virginians) against the vocal, active, rebellious leaders in other parts of the colony. However, his aggressive, uncompromising personality caused problems for Dunmore from the very beginning of his campaign. His incessant demands for military and naval support aggravated British military leaders in Boston, support from his own officers was undermined by his confrontations with them, and a secret plan to isolate Virginia from the northern colonies by placing British troops along the Potomac River failed due to a shortage of troops and divulging of the plan to American leaders. As the weeks and months dragged on without success, Governor Dunmore became increasingly angry, frustrated, and impatient.

By September 1775, a tight blockade had been clamped on Hampton Roads by Dunmore's ships. The governor had shut down a Norfolk newspaper sympathetic to the revolutionary cause, seizing the press and chasing off the editor. In October, Dunmore stepped up his attacks on land, seeking to recover cannon, powder, and weapons from surrounding towns. The governor achieved several small victories in remote locations and succeeded in recovering weapons, but, significantly, he had not yet rallied the support that he had expected from the Virginians.

In his eagerness to crush the resistance in Virginia, Governor Dunmore published his famous proclamation on November 7. It called for raising His Majesty's standard, for all loyal citizens to come forward in defense of the Crown or risk seizure of their land

and property, and for freeing slaves owned by those in rebellion. But the governor needed an opportune time to announce his proclamation.

On November 14, Dunmore learned of a concentration of militia at Kemp's Landing (present-day Kempsville in Virginia Beach) and marched to meet them. The inexperienced militiamen were promptly defeated by Dunmore. The Virginians suffered seven deaths and eighteen men captured while the governor's forces experienced only one minor casualty.

The following day, Dunmore raised the King's Standard and won the support of about one hundred militia who had fought against him. Moving back to Norfolk later in the day, the governor succeeded in receiving an additional two hundred oaths of loyalty, including the mayor and aldermen of Norfolk. Along with the recently arrived British Fourteenth Regiment, Dunmore now had a rather imposing force in place in Norfolk. Among his key supporters were the Goodrich family of seamen and smugglers and several Scottish merchants and factors; these men knew the local waterways and shipping routes well, and advised Dunmore on the most strategic locations to block shipping up the James River.

Dunmore began to construct a ring of fortifications to run from river to river. Observing this, colonial military leaders realized that they would need to strike soon to thwart the governor's plan. In order to protect his food supply line through Princess Anne and Norfolk Counties, Dunmore ordered a fortification to be constructed at Great Bridge, the only route across the Elizabeth River from the south side.

At this point along the Elizabeth River, the ground is low and marshy. A narrow causeway had been built to support the bridge. No more than five or six men could walk abreast across it. The British built a small wooden fort on the north bank of the Elizabeth River and garrisoned by one hundred men, about half of them black. Two four-pound cannon protected the approach to the bridge. Virginia militia Lieutenant Colonel Charles Scott arrived at Great Bridge and positioned his men on the south side of the river. The Virginians constructed a barricade in the road just south of the bridge, and entrenched along both flanks away from the barricade.

Firing began on November 28, but with little gain by either side. Most of the fighting took place at a ford several miles downstream. Four days later, Virginia militia Colonel William Woodford's Second Virginia Regiment arrived at Great Bridge and he assumed command. Woodford recognized that the location was ideal as a defensive position, but presented problems for attack. Cautious by nature, Woodford became concerned when he learned his supply lines had been sabotaged by Tories, but Woodford also knew that a group of North Carolinians was marching north to aid in the attack.

On December 9, Dunmore sent the British Fourteenth Regiment under Captain Samuel Leslie to join the fort's garrison and attack the colonial militia. Confident that the British troops would easily defeat the "untrained colonials," Captain Charles Fordyce led the British charge forward across the bridge. The barricade was defended by seventy to eighty men under Lieutenant Edward Travis, who ordered his men to hold their fire until the British were almost upon them. When the colonials finally fired, the British troops were within thirty feet of them—and the result was dramatic. Fordyce

and 12 other men were killed instantly, while 19 others were wounded and captured.

Colonel Woodford's men charged up the road in support, and the British troops retreated in confusion to the small fort. Marching across the causeway, the Virginians captured the two British cannon and held Dunmore's troops in the fort. The battle lasted less than thirty minutes. It was a devastating loss for Governor Dunmore and for Great Britain. British casualties included one hundred and two men killed, wounded, or captured. The only Virginia casualty was a nicked finger on one man.

The British abandoned the fort and retreated to Norfolk on the day following the rout. Colonel Woodford moved into Norfolk on December 14, retaking the city for the Virginians. For two more weeks, the Loyalists and rebellious Virginians warily watched each other across the river. By January 1, 1776, most Loyalists, (along with Governor Dunmore), had boarded British ships. Norfolk was bombarded before the ships sailed for New York. Drunken soldiers looting Tory houses burned what was left of the city.

As had Ethan Allen at Fort Ticonderoga and George Washington at Bunker Hill, Colonel William Woodford and the Virginia militia stunned Governor Dunmore at the Battle of Great Bridge. Their victory caused Governor Dunmore to flee from Virginia and sobered England's scornful disdain for the colonial military. ■

Choosing Revolution—1996 Revisited

By Bill White

Bill is director of the Department of Historic Trades/Presentations and Tours and is the chair of the Choosing Revolution Story Line Team.

I suppose I can admit it now. As 1996 began, I was very concerned. I felt as if I was on the short end of the stick. Everyone was pointing to the first year of the "Becoming Americans" theme. "Choosing Revolution" was the first story line to be implemented, and I was the team leader. The team had been meeting for several months. Those meetings yielded the barest sketch of a program. Suddenly 1996 had arrived. We needed firm program development plans, training materials, and courses, and everyone kept looking at me saying, "If you give me three more people I could . . ." Well, I did not have money for new people or materials. Just as I began to despair, people involved in the project acquired a "can do" spirit. Before I knew what happened, "Choosing Revolution" took on a life of its own. Six core sites developed their new programs. Community events focused on and emphasized the story line. Training materials got assembled, printed, and distributed. Every interpreter received at least twenty-four hours of training focused on "Becoming Americans" and "Choosing Revolution." A schedule of daily events was developed, and one by one—from tar, feathers, and liberty poles to President Roosevelt's motorcade—people went to work. We reassigned resources from all around the division to make sure "Choosing Revolution" was highlighted for our visitors.

The past several months have been hectic. Interpreters, curators, researchers, supervisors, instructors, and a host of others have been busy. I think it's a great example of what we can accomplish when we work together. And that is a large part of the success. Across the Historic Area, across departmental lines, across divisional lines, we made some profound and positive changes to our interpretive program. So, what are the results? Has this kind of interpretation helped make a difference in our educational program? Are visitors engaged by a thematic interpretation of the Historic Area? Well, here is what one visitor had to say:

This is my fourth time here, and I'd say this has been my richest visit so far. Made richer, I think, by the unified interpreters' theme. Clearly it highlighted, on several levels, the kinds of decisions that went into the choice for independence. . . . What I found wonderful was the fact that each interpretive experience that I had hit the same people in the same themes, but from a different angle. . . . There was also repeated emphasis on the different social strata in colonial Williamsburg. I can remember them with times I heard about gentry and middling sort and divisions within the middling sort, and the slaves. And how one's social position influenced how one perceived the question of independence or not independence.

This visitor was extremely articulate about the experience, and other visitors gave us similar statements. Randi Korn and Associates interviewed thirty-nine visitors in August just after their visit to the Historic Area. Interviewers asked each "What themes or ideas, if any, did interpreters throughout the Historic Area talk about?" More than three-quarters of those interviewed responded with some understanding of "Choosing Revolution." And there is more. Most of those interviewed understood that the American Revolution was more than a single event. They understood and could identify many ways in which Virginians struggled over a period of ten to twenty years. Visitors recognized the struggle Virginians endured as the Revolution forced them to make decisions. Even more exciting, a significant number of visitors recalled individual stories from the eighteenth-century Williamsburg community. Most important, they told us that this way of telling the Williamsburg story excites them.

Interpreters received very high marks. Visitors talked about how well-informed interpreters are and how well they communicate. They see interpreters and staff as teachers. One visitor said, "They all really gave us lots of information . . . to grasp onto. . . . They just gave us facts and . . . each of the things related to each other. It was lots of information in all the places that I went to. You really didn't feel like, 'Oh I didn't hear enough on that,' because everyone asks questions." Visitors find the sense of discovery important. They rely on the knowledge of interpreters to lead them through to their discoveries.

It is not just good history that excites our visitors, though. It is the way they experience the history of this community that makes a difference. Visitors enjoy traveling in time. Interpreters make "you feel like you're back in the eighteenth century and they're there with you . . . they act like real people." When we connect visitors to history with action and activity, they are transported back in time. When visitors meet character interpreters they travel in time. Whenever good interpreters engage them with dramatic and exciting stories of the people who lived here two hundred years ago, visitors lose themselves in colonial Williamsburg.

There is a lot of survey data yet to analyze. Besides the thirty-nine interviews, we conducted several focus group interviews, a mail back survey, interviews with interpreters, and assembled comments from our peers in the museum profession. As these reports become available, they will be widely distributed for managers and staff to read and review. First impressions from all the data, though, are very encouraging. Interpreters, supervisors, and support staff from across the departments and divisions—with much hard and dedicated work—made this initial year of "Becoming Americans" a success. Thematic interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg works. It improves the visitor experience.

The job is not finished yet. We still have five story lines to develop over the next three years. 1997 will focus on family. We also have to fine-tune some elements of "Choosing Revolution." It does not disappear on December 31, 1996. We have to build strong relationships between the "Choosing Revolution" and "Family" story lines. These stories relate to each other and give visitors exciting ways to see and understand this eighteenth-century community. Besides, it is not just a matter of piling one story line on top of the other.

Some of the best stories we tell are complex ones. There are already some good examples. The Randolph story is one. Peyton Randolph, his brother John, the younger Edmund, Betty, Aggy, and Eve have helped tell the story of the coming Revolution. Their stories also illustrate the relationships within families. It will not require an additional layer of objectives, but a deepening of the visitor's understanding. The Randolphs will, no doubt, help us illustrate the stories of slavery, of religion, of consumerism, and of land. With each look the story becomes more intricate. I believe visitors will enjoy that complexity.

We want our guests to see Williamsburg as a real community. We want them to understand how complex the story really is. We

want visitors engaged and excited by their visit with us. As we add subsequent story lines ("Enslaving Virginia" and "Freeing Religion" in 1998, "Claiming the Land" and "Buying Respectability" in 1999), our challenge increases. Given this year's success—and the considerable talent throughout the Foundation—I am confident we can meet those challenges. The "Family" team is hard at work programming for 1997. Many throughout the Historic Area have been helping design that program. Anne Schone and the "Family" story line team will distribute more information soon.

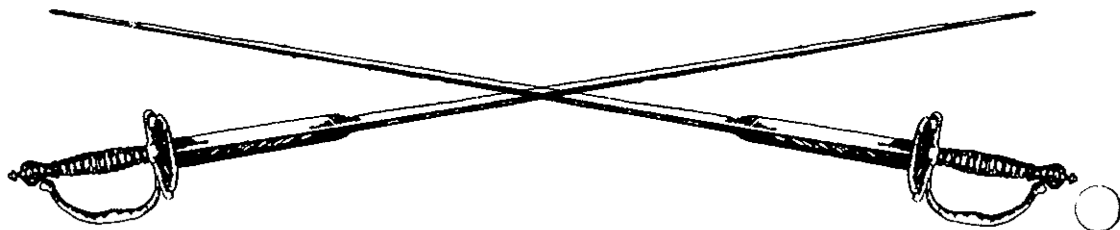
The "Choosing Revolution" team has some things to accomplish over the next year too. First, we will finish assembling and evaluating all the survey data. It's important that we listen carefully to our audience. Already they have given us some important clues on how we can tell a better "Choosing Revolution" story and the most effective ways to communicate that story. Here are some elements we need to improve next year.

When we began interpreting the Revolution this year, we knew that diversity would be a difficult topic. Surveys suggest we have not done as well as we might. We are not communicating the stories of middling and poor whites. The stories telling how Revolution affected women are not strong. Nor is the Revolution's effect on the free and enslaved African-American community of Williamsburg. Stories of loyalism need more prominence. It is too bad, really. There is a wealth of information—fascinating stories—that complement and reinforce those of Washington, Henry, Jefferson, Randolph, Robinson, Pendleton, and others. We have to do a better job. Visitors must understand that the coming Revolution forced Virginians of every social class to make choices about their future.

When we do not specifically address issues of diversity, visitors get confused. One recalled that "people were asking where were the slave quarters. And going though the Governor's mansion, we went into the cellars and they had different rooms where they had the provisions and a guy says, 'Oh, that' where they must have kept the slaves, they got bars on the doors.'" Visitors search for these answers and it is imperative that we guide them. The "Choosing Revolution" team will be advocates for these stories of the diverse community as we move into year two.

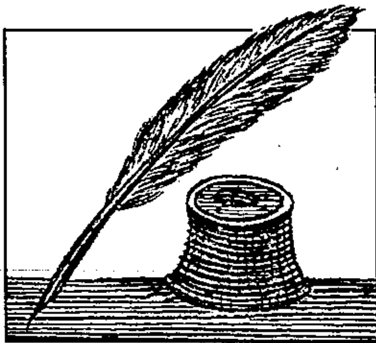
The largest challenge over the next few years for "Choosing Revolution" will be forging the links and connections with other story lines. I have already mentioned the Randolph family and "Choosing Revolution" connections. We must identify others. The "Choosing Revolution" team will look for ways to support "Enslaving Virginia" and "Freeing Religion" in 1998. The ambiguity of a slave society protesting and then fighting a war for freedom is one strong connection. So are Dunmore's Proclamation and Virginia's attempts to end slave importation. We have barely touched on the importance of dissenting religions to the coming Revolution. Connections between "Choosing Revolution" and "Claiming the Land" are strong. So are connections with the growing economy, commercial enterprise, and Virginia's consumerism we call the "Buying Respectability" story line.

I'm looking forward to the challenge. Visitors tell us they will return again and again because they find something new each time they visit Colonial Williamsburg. And making that experience rich and varied requires that we stretch ourselves. We must approach every interpretation with fresh eyes, searching for the new perspectives, the new understanding of Williamsburg's history. But that is why we work here. As we come to know the community of eighteenth-century Williamsburg we are drawn deeper and deeper into their world. For everything we come to understand, we discover new questions. The opportunities to discover this place and help guide our visitors as they do the same is a special way of life. ■



"Family" is coming! It will join "Choosing Revolution" as we continue to build the "Becoming Americans" story. Get ready for winter training where you will find the answers to questions like: "What do St. George Tucker, Anne Wetherburn, and Peachy Davenport have in common?" and "Why did little Humphrey Harwood sue his master?" In 1997 *the interpreter* will feature a number of articles about family, so we are asking you, our readers, to please help us now with suggestions about the family issues and people you would like to read about. Call me at extension 7622 with your ideas as soon as possible. Thanks!

—Anne Schone and the "Family" Story Line Team



Editor's Notes

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Christmas

For additional information on Christmas celebrations see "Christmas Customs" by Emma L. Powers, and "Another Look at Christmas in the Eighteenth Century" by David DeSimone in the Winter 1995-96 issue of *the interpreter.*

Africa

For additional information on Africa see "Some Important Facts about Africa" by Robert C. Watson in the May 1995 issue of *the interpreter.*

Winter