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interpreter

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Thomas Jefferson and the Virginia State Capitol

by Mark R. Wenger

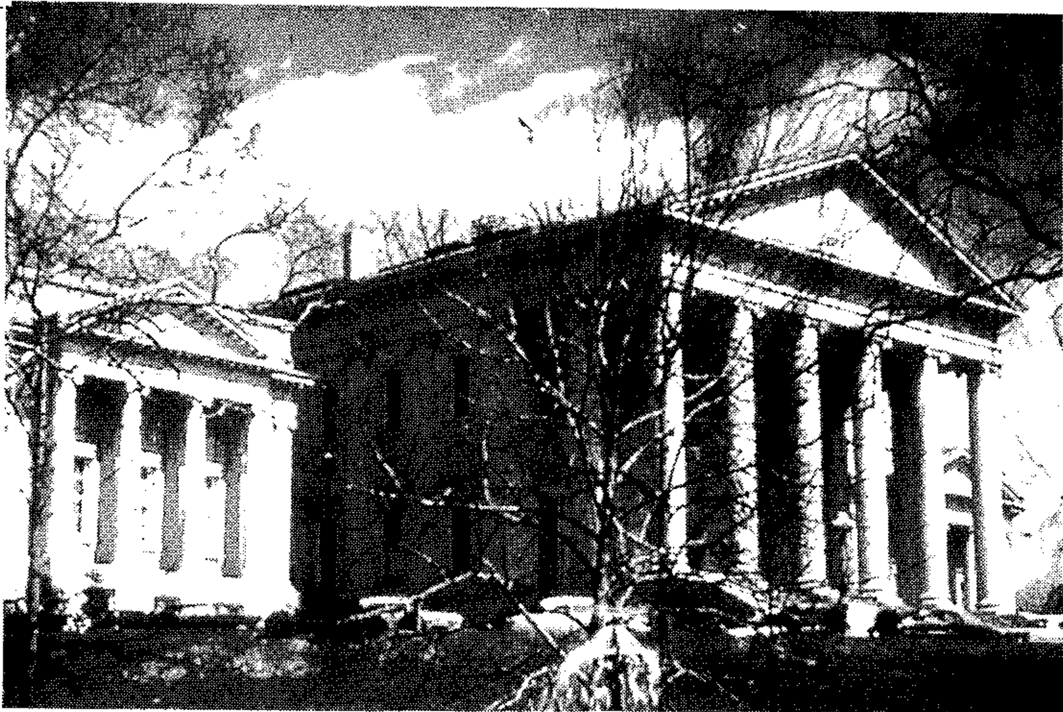
Mark is an architectural historian in the department of Architectural Research. This article derives from a longer one published in the Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (VMBH, 101:1 [January 1993] : 77-102). We want to thank the editor, Nelson Lankford, for permission to reprint this version.

In the fall of 1776, Thomas Jefferson rose before the newly constituted House of Delegates and introduced a bill for moving the government out of Williamsburg. This proposal was only the latest in a series of similar attempts, and, like earlier bills, it failed to win approval.

What did Jefferson hope to achieve by moving the government? Why was a new capital city necessary? His stated reasons included the growing inconvenience of Williamsburg to the western counties, its vulnerability to attack in the event of war, and its poor situation for the conduct of trade and commerce—commercial success was necessary if any town were to sustain the kind of physical and social amenities requisite in a capital city.

More important than these practical considerations, though, was Jefferson's conviction that Williamsburg provided no fitting display of architectural magnificence. This deficiency involved more than the mere absence of tasteful architecture. Thomas Jefferson was deeply interested in the symbolic function of public architecture, and it was in this symbolic dimension that the public buildings of Williamsburg had become obsolete.

Just what did the old town and its buildings symbolize? Williamsburg had been cre-



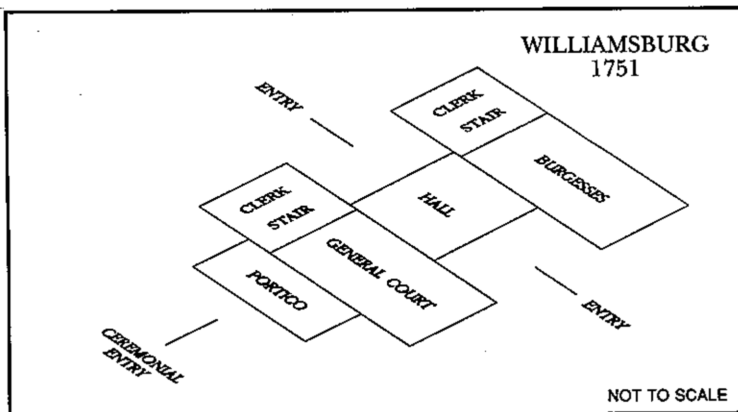
A modern view of the State Capitol in Richmond.

ated in 1699 to redeem a land of unfulfilled promise, for Virginia remained at that time a wild and untamed country. Reporting to authorities in England on "The Present State of Virginia and the Colony," Hartwell, Blair, and Chilton expressed concern over the colony's backward condition:

> As to the *natural advantages* of a Country, it is one of the best, but as to the improved ones it is one of the worst of all the English Plantations in America . . .[Virginia] looks like a wild desert, The plantations and cleared grounds bearing no proportion to those which remain rough and uncultivated.

After nearly a century of English settlement, Virginia was still a wilderness, dotted about with widely dispersed tobacco plantations. There were no towns to speak of, and none of the benefits towns customarily provided. The latter half of the seventeenth century saw repeated attempts to set matters right by legislating towns into existence, but with few exceptions, these efforts failed.

Williamsburg, with its broad avenues and massive public buildings, was to be a new beginning—a magnet around which the colony would gather and thrive. To comprehend the meaning and impact of this magnificent ensemble, we must remember that many Virginians were still living in rude houses of one or two rooms that had no wooden floor, no interior plaster, and no glazed windows. Most often, the exterior of these dwellings consisted of wooden posts set directly into the earth, nailed over with a primitive covering of riven boards, a wooden chimney providing the only source of heat. In a landscape of clapboard dwellings and wooden chimneys, Williamsburg's "massy" and fashionable public buildings proclaimed the efficacy of Virginia's social institutions and the imperial system they upheld.



Floor plan of the Williamsburg Capitol in 1751.

Unlike most European cities, Williamsburg was a wholly new undertaking, laid off in accordance with a single grand conception. Lieutenant-Governor Francis Nicholson appears to have been the author of this scheme. Just a few years earlier, Nicholson had laid out the new town of Annapolis, capital of the Maryland colony. At first glance, the two cities appear to have little if anything in common, but closer inspection reveals one important similarity.

In both places, Nicholson emphasized the importance of secular and religious institutions by fixing them in highly visible locations. Williamsburg's public buildings terminated or marked the intersection of major streets and vistas. Similarly, the church and statehouse in Annapolis occupied the two centers of the town's bipolar layout. Just as the function of public institutions ensured the orderly progress of society, so too did public buildings act as an organizing force in the arrangement of Annapolis and Williamsburg. In each of these cases, Nicholson sought to affirm the importance of religious and secular order through his manipulation of public architecture and space.

The underlying purpose of these endeavors is clear when we consider Nicholson's subsidy of church building throughout the colonies and the elaborate mace he donated to the House of Burgesses as "a token of power." Like the towns of Williamsburg and Annapolis, he created the churches with temporal ends in mind. Like the mace, they functioned as "tokens of power"—quiet displays of authority that fostered obedience and thereby served to uphold the rule of law.

Some of the town's public edifices carried more overt reminders of that might. By Jefferson's time, royal coats of arms were conspicuously displayed in the college chapel, at Bruton Parish church, before the Governor's Palace, in the courthouse, and above the governor's seat in the general court room of the Capitol. Together these icons affirmed royal dominion over the civil and ecclesiastical affairs of the colony.

By 1776, this imperial message was hopelessly outdated because Williamsburg and its public edifices had come to symbolize an old and corrupt order. For this reason as much as any other, Thomas Jefferson sought to abandon the town, entertaining visions of a new capital city, a new physical plant for governance expressive of the social and political order then taking shape. Not until he was elected governor in 1779 did Jefferson actually succeed in moving the seat of government to Richmond. But this first attempt had set the architectural agenda. While the Virginia Convention debated how to structure the state's new political institutions, Jefferson contemplated an ensemble of three public buildings housing three distinct branches of government—executive, legislative, and judicial. His designs for one of these, a legislative building, are now in the collections of the Huntington Library.

These drawings reveal that the lower house of the assembly and its attendant offices were to have occupied the lower floor of the building. The upper house and its clerk were to have shared the second floor with the conference room and with the committees of "Justice" and "Trade." More significant than this interior arrangement, though, was the proposed building's outward form. At either end of the edifice, Jefferson depicted a colonnade—the building was to have been a classical prostyle temple with porticos at both ends.

It now appears that Jefferson prepared his drawings sometime during January-March of 1776, just before traveling to Philadelphia where he would draft the Declaration of Independence. The likely conjunction of these labors underscores the larger meaning of Jefferson's new capital city and legislative complex. The designs for a new seat of government encapsulated the same millennial hope that suffused the ringing prose of the Declaration.

More than a decade would pass before Jefferson's building plans could be realized. In the meantime, Americans had embarked on a momentous new enterprise. Nature figured prominently in Jefferson's conception of this undertaking, for he was deeply immersed in Enlightenment ideas of nature as the ultimate source of truth, morality, and law. Here, in the pristine surroundings of the New World, he envisioned a new society, founded on precepts derived from nature. Nature was to be the source of American virtue; indeed, for Jefferson, nature was central to the concept of what it was to be an American. Charles Miller writes:

> Although he was typical of his time and place in using nature in his writings, Jefferson uses the word more often, more variously, and more seriously than do other Americans of his era . . . Jefferson's use of the word "nature" is not only extensive in itself but, in an important way, different from "nature" as used by Europeans of the Enlightenment . . . insofar as nature symbolized America in its entirety, nature was America for Jefferson. His interest in nature and his use of the word are therefore a form of nationalism. In Europe national sentiment was expressed through a common history, a royal family, a culture, or a literature. In America and for Jefferson it was expressed through, and as, nature.

Jefferson regarded Americans as a chosen people. Their moral health and the success of their endeavor were closely linked in his mind to the newness and vitality of the land. Natural landscape—American landscape—came to represent notions of virtue and hopes for a return to the Golden Age of the ancient philosophers. Steeped in this mythical conception of the land, Jefferson eventually built his temple on a hill overlooking the falls of the James River, a scene previously described by the English traveler Andrew Burnaby:

> The falls are in length about six or seven miles; they consist of innumerable breaks of water, owing to the obstruction of the current by an infinite number of rocks, which are scattered over the bed of the river; and form a most picturesque and beautiful cascade . . . there are several little islands scattered carelessly about, very rocky, and covered with trees; and two or three villages in view at a small distance. Over all these you discover a prodigious extent of wilderness, and the river winding majestically along through the midst of it.

Burnaby expressed profound admiration for Virginia's rivers, especially the James, as being "of such noble and majestic appear-

ance, as cannot be exceeded, perhaps, in the whole known world." Before the greatest of these rivers, overlooking its most striking feature, was Jefferson's new capitol. From the portico of this Roman temple one looked out over the very scene Burnaby had described. Here then was the emblem of a new civilization, the centerpiece of that "heavenly city" dreamed of since the time of Plato.

Like the old capitol in Williamsburg, Jefferson's new building incorporated visual references to classical antiquity. But Jefferson invoked antiquity in a more coherent way than his predecessors. Where the old capitol was a grab bag of symbols drawn from modern as well as ancient sources—apse, portico, cupola, and arcade—the exterior of the new capitol presented a unified classical statement based on a single antique source.

The Virginia capitol was conceived as a temple of reason. Classical architecture was a highly codified system of ornaments and proportional relationships. The order of this system appealed to Jefferson's profoundly rational temperament. But, in retrospect, the temple is also a fitting emblem of the quasi-religious fervor and millennial optimism that propelled the leading thinkers of the Revolutionary Enlightenment.

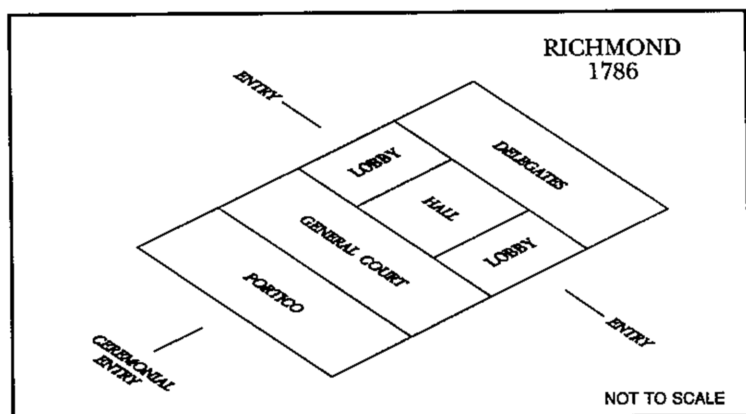
Jefferson's temple also drew satisfying parallels between the political institutions of the new order and the ancient models on which they were to be self-consciously patterned—Athenian democracy and the Roman republic. Significantly, the upper house of the new assembly was to be called the "senate," while the layout of the general court was to replicate, in toto, the plan of a Roman basilica, or hall of justice. The semicircular ends of Virginia courtrooms had long functioned as visual references to this classical model, patterned on the apsidal space where Roman magistrates sat to administer the law. In his earliest Paris designs, Jefferson seized on and elaborated this venerable association, reproducing not just the magistrate's bench, but an entire basilica for the general court's use. By way of this unabridged reference to Roman legal tradition, he sought to identify modern laws and institutions with their classical antecedents.

The political imagery of the ancient temple had a moral corollary in the rugged virtue of the Athenians and early Romans. Living simply and in close proximity to nature, Americans would rekindle the rustic virtues of the ancients. Among wealthy Virginians, this notion of unadorned goodness had become a highly charged idea. Embracing independence, they repudiated the luxury and excess that had plunged many of their caste into debt and dishonor. The architecture of antiquity, with its connotations of upright simplicity, struck a respondent chord with these men. Classical architecture represented a return to honor, a reclamation of lost virtue.

For a nation in search of its cultural identity yet still uncertain of its own artistic traditions, classical architecture also offered a reassuring source of precedent and authority, "sanctioned," in Jefferson's words, by "the approbation of fifteen or sixteen centuries." In a letter to James Madison, Jefferson would later explain his views on the cultural importance of public building:

> You see I am an enthusiast on the subject of the arts. But it is an enthusiasm of which I am not ashamed, as its object is to improve the taste of my countrymen, to increase their reputation, to reconcile to them the respect of the world and procure them its praise.

Here Jefferson touches on the larger role of architecture in society—a purpose that emphasized outward form and symbolic meaning over the logistical details of interior arrangement. In keeping with this priority, the interior organization of Jefferson's capitol was less innovative than its classical



Floor plan of the Richmond Capitol in 1786.

exterior. To a considerable degree, its plan replicated that of the 1751 capitol.

As in Williamsburg, the general court and the lower house of the assembly were to occupy opposite ends of the ground floor, joined in the middle by a large square hall or "lobby." (A heroic sculpture of George Washington was to stand at the center of this space, just as the statue of Governor Botetourt stood in the center of the piazza in Williamsburg.) Together, these three spatial components replicated the H-shaped arrangement of the old building. The upper house of the assembly was to meet in a small room situated directly above the general court, while clerks and other functionaries occupied the other end of the upper floor, a further repetition of the earlier Williamsburg arrangement. When we consider this general distribution of major elements, the congruence of these two buildings is striking.

There were, of course, significant differences. In Richmond, Jefferson's central concourse rose through the upper floors of the building to create a domed space similar to those he had seen in the public buildings of Paris. Unlike the cupola which crowned the old capitol, Jefferson's dome was submerged within the volume of the building. In a further departure from the Williamsburg plan, the open areas to either side of the great central room were taken into the building, filling in the voids of the old H-shaped plan. The resulting interior spaces were to function as a lobby and stair hall.

Over the rectilinear volume of this new building, Jefferson draped his Roman temple. To preserve the purity of its classical form, the dome was not allowed to penetrate the outer plan of the roof. The double-story porch of the Williamsburg capitol became in Richmond a full-height temple portico with giant Ionic orders. The portico was now an integral part of the building's overall mass, not just an accretion to it.

For all its apparent novelty, the new capitol incorporated virtually the same elements as the old capitol, all arranged in a familiar way. But Jefferson boldly repackaged these elements in an effort to propound the idea of a new order and a new age of human fulfillment. More than any other of Jefferson's architectural projects, this building was a calculated expression of social, political, and moral values. Through a new capitol and a new capital city, Jefferson sought to share his aspirations for the future of America and that of mankind.

☆ INTERPRETER HOT LINE ☆

The Department of Interpretive Education and Support has activated a "Question and Answer" Hot Line that can be reached at extension **2171**. This service provides interpreters with a number they may call with any questions concerning historical information. Answers will be forwarded to the questioner as soon as possible. Questions and answers that might be of interest to most interpreters will be printed in upcoming issues of *the interpreter.* Copies of all incoming questions and answers will be available upon request by calling Nancy Milton at extension 7621.

TO ACCESS: When you have a question, dial extension **2171** from any in-house phone, wait for the recorded message, give your name and department, and ask your question. If calling from an outside line, dial 229-1000 and ask for extension **2171**.

Meet Ann Wager

by Antoinette Brennan

Toni is an interpreter in the department of Historic Buildings and is a member of the Becoming Americans storyline team "Redefining Family."

"Good day. Do allow me to introduce myself. I am Mrs. Ann Wager, mistress of the Bray School here in Williamsburg." And so, one fine August day last summer, I began to represent Mrs. Wager to our Williamsburg visitors.

Not a great deal is known about Ann Wager. Her parentage and time and place of birth remain a mystery, while information dealing with her husband and children is sketchy at best.

What we are sure of is that she was employed at Carter's Grove as a tutor to Carter Burwell's four daughters between 1748 and 1754. Afterward she taught young white people in town. In 1760 Mrs. Wager was hired to be the mistress of the newly formed Bray School in Williamsburg. In this position she was expected to teach the African American children of the city the Anglican catechism. The Bray schools (there were a total of five in the colonies) were the result of a philanthropic endeavor directed at spreading Christianity among Africans in the New World.

Toni Brennan as Ann Wager.

Teaching the catechism, however, involved instruction for the young pupils in reading, writing, and spelling, as well as some ciphering for the boys and needlework for the girls. This sounds like an ambitious assignment for one woman with upwards of thirty pupils of varying ages.

Ann Wager represents an independent woman who played a unique role in eighteenth-century Williamsburg society, interacting with both blacks and whites, supporting herself as a widow, and performing an unofficial role for the church. In this respect she is an interesting choice as a character to be portrayed.

Research obviously plays an important role in providing one with background. The more facts that can be compiled, the more believable the portrayal of the eighteenth-century person will be. Unfortunately, the trail often turns cold and the hard facts that can be documented must then be supplemented by assumed "facts." Any assumptions made about a person of the past must be based on general information of the time period. Linda Rowe, of the Historical Research Department, was extremely helpful in developing the character of Ann Wager. For example, since Wager's origins were unknown, some kind of background had to be adopted. Ms. Rowe suggested that Ann's father might have been a minister. This assumed "fact" gave some concreteness to the character and provided a convenient and logical explanation as to how she came to be educated—her father taught her! What better explanation could there be? Ann was not of the gentry and yet she might have had the gentility that a minister's daughter's upbringing could have afforded her.

The chief source of documentation on the Bray School is a book entitled *Religious Philanthropy and Colonial Society* edited by John C. VanHorne. This book contains the correspondence of the associates of Dr. Bray during the period that the schools were in existence. These letters offer much insight into Mrs. Wager's world—what was expected of

her and how she was evaluated. There also exist a few references to Mrs. Wager in various York County records when she was involved in settling her husband's estate.

Another valuable tool in creating and presenting a character is the costume. A great deal of credit goes to the staff at our Costume Design Center who outfitted Mrs. Wager in a way that would reflect her working class station. Again, assumptions had to be made, but it seemed logical that she would wear plain, serviceable clothes, that would befit a widow of limited means and a hardworking schoolteacher. We do have documentary evidence from Carter Burwell's account book that Ann Wager purchased stays on October 10, 1752, for £2. A few "props" such as a *Book of Common Prayer,* some slates, facsimiles of eighteenth-century children's books, a bit of stitchery, and the image was complete.

The themes of family and religion play a significant part in my portrayal of Ann Wager. A woman's role in the education and spiritual development of her family are two of the ideas that I frequently address in my dialogue with visitors. I try to show them how women were beginning to experience more opportunity for choice in their lives. Women took more responsibility in setting educational standards for their children and were the "primary guardians" of their family's religious life.

Mrs. Wager will probably always be a shadowy figure. Yet it is possible to put the pieces of the puzzle together slowly and develop an identity for her. With the cooperation of so many people at Colonial Williamsburg, it has been a worthwhile effort.

"With your permission, I will now take my leave to plan my lessons for tomorrow. I bid you, good day."

Questions & Answers

Some Important Facts about Africa
by Robert C. Watson

This Q and A is the result of questions compiled several years ago by AAIP interpreter Rosemarie MacAphee-Byrd during an Advanced Interpretive Education course on West Africa. The course, taught by researcher Robert C. Watson, of the department of Historical Research, helped interpreters understand the significance of West African history and culture, and how this influenced the newly emerging American culture in the eighteenth century. Robert, an expert on West Africa, has made numerous trips to the African continent and brings his expertise to these inquiries. (See the November 1991 issue of the interpreter *for Robert's article on West Africa.)*

1. What is the significance of Olduvai Gorge and where is it located?

In the late 1950s, L. S. B. Leakey, a Kenya-born archaeologist, and anthropologist and his wife, Mary, discovered the skull and remains of the oldest creatures who qualify as men in Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania. Olduvai Gorge looks like a smaller version of the Grand Canyon. Leakey identified these creatures as "animals who make tools" and named them Zinjanthropus—the man of Zinj. This discovery helped to solidify the long-held theory that Africa is the "cradle of civilization and the mother of all of us."

2. What is/was the significance of family in Africa?

The family was the core of West African society in the eighteenth century. Anthropologists call the African family an extended family because it includes parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, sisters, brothers, departed relatives, and the unborn.

3. What is a kinship structure and what is its importance?

The kinship structure is extremely complex to an outsider. Kinship is achieved through blood and betrothal (engagement and marriage). Kinship controls social relationships, and governs marital customs and relations: it determines the behavior between individuals. Kinship in traditional West African societies means that each individual is a brother or sister, father or mother, grandfather or grandmother or cousin. For example, when two strangers meet in a village, they feel each other out to discover whether or not they are related. If they are not related, they develop a set of accepted behaviors set down by society. Kinship is extended to cover not only humans, but animals, plants, and inorganic objects through a "totemic" system. (Totemic is a system of revered symbols adopted by a family clan; for example, the elephant clan or totem. Like many Native American totems, Africans have long revered family emblems or totems).

4. What is libation and how was it used?

Libation means to make offerings to the departed as tokens of fellowship, hospitality, and respect. The liquid includes water, milk, tea, beer, or wine. Libation and food are also given as symbols of family continuity and contact.

5. What was the significance of the broom in eighteenth-century West Africa?

Brooms are held in high regard in West Africa. West African villages are kept clean, especially the communal courtyard spaces. In every traditional household a broom is used to sweep the ground clean so that "evil spirits" cannot attach themselves to the human feet and be brought into the home. The practice of going into the woods or into the savanna to collect materials to make brooms is a West African tradition still in practice among African Americans in the southern United States.

6. What were the major reasons for the rise and decline of the great West African empires (Mali, Songhay, Ghana)?

The three great and powerful kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay, emerged in the seventh century A.D. and declined near the end of the seventeenth century. The kingdoms were located in the Western Sudan or Bilad ES Sudan (Land of the Blacks). The economic, political, and social life of all three revolved around agriculture, manufacturing, and international trade or bartering.

There has been much discussion about the decline and demise of the Sudan's civilizations. Scholar and historian W. E. B. Dubois attributes the collapse to the impact of Islam and Christianity. Others cite the difficulties of trying to defend militarily such large areas in the open savanna. Some scholars point to the internal problems and conflicts that were evident in these kingdoms. Others claim that the kingdoms fell because of the influence of the transatlantic and trans-Saharian slave trade.

7. What type of currency was used in eighteenth-century West Africa?

West Africa had well developed and well defined systems of currencies. By the eighteenth century, West Africa had in place a system of weights and measures that replaced the earlier practice of "dumb bartering." Shells, gold dust, blocks of salt, various weights of iron and copper bars, and various lengths of cotton cloths were recognized and used as mediums of exchange.

A hand colored etching of a female figure, ca. 1675, from the Colonial Williamsburg collection.

A hand colored etching of a male figure, ca. 1675, from the Colonial Williamsburg collection.

8. What types and kinds of items were traded for slaves in eighteenth-century West Africa?

In exchange for men and women to be enslaved and African "captives of war" already enslaved in West Africa, transatlantic slave traders provided African chiefs and their middlemen with firearms, alcoholic spirits, and metalwares (farming tools and other implements). Arabs who engaged in the trans-Saharian slave trade with West Africa exchanged cattle, horses, salt, cowrie shells, trinkets, and beads for slaves.

9. Describe ancestral worship and its importance in West Africa in the eighteenth century.

Ancestral worship was made known to western scholars through the works of the anthropologist Herbert Spencer in his book, *Principles of Sociology*. Spencer argued that certain peoples associated the spirits of the dead with certain objects in order to keep on good terms with the spirits of deceased ancestors by making offerings and libation. In fact, what is known is that in pre-, post-, and neo-colonial West Africa ancestral worship was practiced, but African religiosity is so complex that it would be a mistake to interpret this practice as simply worshiping the ancestors.

10. What is animism and how was it practiced in eighteenth-century West Africa?

Animism is derived from the Latin *anima* which means breath, breath of life, a belief that everything has a spirit. In the eighteenth century, West Africans believed that organic objects (trees) and inorganic objects (rocks) had a spirit. The practice of polytheism evolved among West Africans as it did with people elsewhere: there is a supreme God who rules over all of the other departmental or lesser gods and spirits.

11. What was the role and purpose of art in West African society?

Eighteenth-century West African art, like religion, was functional: it was an expression of life. Artistic and aesthetic expression were the collective experiences in which all of the people participated. The different faces of beauty embodied in the cubistic masks, terracotta pieces, gold figurines, three-dimensional objects, and naturalistic representations of the human body have been called by Lerone Bennett, Jr., "One of the great flights of the human spirit." In short, eighteenth-century West African art was art for life's sake, not art for art's sake.

12. What role did music and dance play in West African society in the eighteenth century?

In eighteenth-century West Africa, music and dance were everyday activities. J. H. Kwabena Nketia in his book, *The Music of Africa,* states, "Through music, an African people expresses its inner life and its determination to remain alive even under conditions of extreme hardship and suffering." In the words of another observer, the African "is born, named, initiated into manhood (or womanhood), warriored, armed, housed, betrothed, wedded, and buried to music." Thus, music and dance in eighteenth-century West Africa pervaded the social life and were significant for sustaining and continuing community life.

13. In what ways did West African art influence European artists?

West African art influenced a number of European artists, especially Picasso. In 1907,

he altered the faces of his canvas, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon,* to resemble African masks. Picasso's acceptance of cubism and abstract geometric art forms generated interest among other European artists about the importance of art centers in Benin and Ife.

14. What were the main differences between slavery in Africa and slavery in the Americas?

There were many differences between slavery in Africa and slavery in the Americas. Slavery in Africa or antiquity had little or nothing to do with race. Slavery in Africa was "justified primarily by the rules of war." Later, the Christians and Moslems captured and enslaved one another for religious reasons and economic interests.

Slavery in West Africa was not based on economics; in fact, it was more of a social institution. It was the opening up of the New World and the establishment of plantation agricultural systems (tobacco, rice, sugar, coffee, and cotton) that led to the need for labor, but it was the failed experiments with Indian labor, and white and black indentured servants that encouraged the initiation of a transatlantic slave trade.

15. What are barracoons/factories and how were they used?

Barracoons, factories, castles, or forts numbering over 2,500 dotted the West African coastline from Senegal to Angola, a distance of more than 3,400 miles. These structures were originally erected by different European nations as refreshment stations or rest stops to provide a place of relief for sailors in the quest to circumnavigate the continent of Africa. After the European explorations and settlements in the Americas, these "temporary" buildings were then converted to holding stations to house African women and men for the transatlantic slave trade.

16. Which African societies were not involved in the transatlantic slave trade and what major impact did this non-involvement have on those societies?

During the zenith of the transatlantic slave trade from West Africa in the eighteenth century , the big business of trading in human cargo became the major economic activity for most if not <u>all</u> African groups. The trade extended for more than 500 miles into the interior and along the West African coast for more than 3,400 miles. Names such as the Grain Coast, Windward Coast, Gold Coast, Ivory Coast, and Slave Coast all mean the area of slave trading.

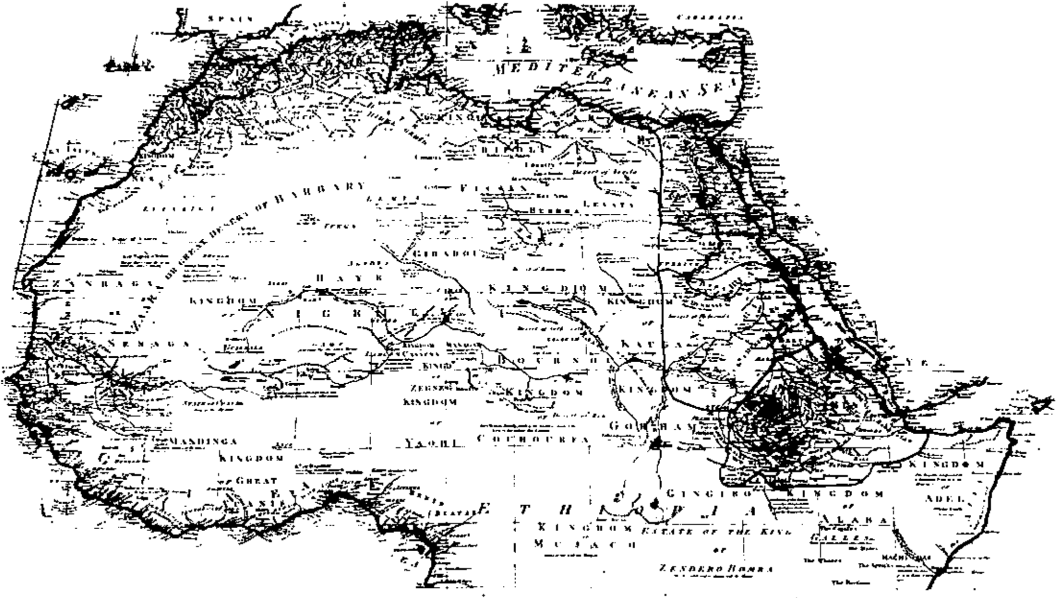
17. What were the major ports of entry for slaves coming to the North American colonies?

The major ports of entry for African slaves in the North American colonies in the eighteenth century were Boston, Massachusetts, Providence, Rhode Island, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Baltimore, Maryland, Norfolk, Virginia, Wilmington, North Carolina, Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia.

18. In what major ways did West African culture influence American culture?

Africanisms (elements of African beliefs and practices) were transplanted, transformed, and preserved by Africans in the African Diaspora. (Diaspora refers to the

"Africa," a hand colored etched and line engraving, ca. 1740–50, from the Colonial Williamsburg collection.



dispersion or removal of a group of people to areas outside of their native territory). They are common in our society today and their origins can be traced to West Africa. The evidence is seen in naming patterns, religious practices, music, language, foodways, dress, and art. For Africans colors sybolize moods and behaviors. African words such as banjo, goober, hipcat, and wow are found in contempory American speech.

This "Africa" map is a line engraving with outline color, ca. 1772, in the Colonial Williamsburg collection.

19. Where is Timbuktu and what is its significance in African culture? What is its importance to world civilization?

Africa has always produced great thinkers and intellectuals. Classical writers such as Homer, Herodotus, Pliny, Siculus, Diodorus, and others repeatedly praised the Africans. Therefore, it is not surprising that the traveler and scholar Leo Africanus recognized the University of Sankore in Timbuktu as a place of learning in the sixteenth century. Students came from throughout the Western Sudan to learn law, surgery, and calculus at the university. They were also taught dancing, fencing, poetic recitations, gymnastics, and how to play chess. The university was coed and was known throughout West Africa as a place of enlightenment until the early years of the seventeenth century.

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