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## Slavery in John Blair's Public and Personal Lives in 1751

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John Blair purchased a copy of *The Virginia Almanack, for the Year of Our Lord God 1751* from William Hunter in the fall of 1750. Blair used the 6" by 4" almanac as his diary in 1751. It is a document that provides details about daily events in the life of one of the leading families of Williamsburg and the colony. He included information about slavery in each of the three sections of his diary.<sup>1</sup> Blair's notations reveal that the institution of slavery was part of his private and public lives as a citizen of Williamsburg, a lawyer, and a member of the Virginia Council. This article focuses on Blair's comments in the diary on Williamsburg merchants' involvement in the overseas slave trade, interactions with household and James City County plantation slaves, and legal matters that involved enslaved laborers.



Blair first mentioned the overseas slave trade on March 3 when he noted "Sad news from coast of Africa; a ship burnt, &c., and great mortality amg the slaves of another."<sup>2</sup> Two months later, on May 16, Blair noted "Negroe Ship arrivd." He might have learned about the arrival of the ship, the *Tryal*, from the May 16 issue of the *Virginia Gazette*. Hunter's paper reported "Last Night arriv'd in York River the Tryal, Capt. Abraham Saunders, from Angola, with near 400 Slaves, consign'd to Messrs. [Philip] Rootes and [Humphrey] Hill. 'Tis said she has buried very few, and that they are all exceeding healthy."<sup>3</sup>

On July 26, Blair noted that "Capt. Tate arrivd last night, we hear, with near 300 slaves." John Tate was the master of a ship named *Williamsburg*, built in Bristol, England, in 1735. John King and Company owned the ship and the 295 Africans transported across the Atlantic on the vessel. John King consigned the Africans to Walter King, a Williamsburg merchant.<sup>4</sup> Blair knew all three men because they and their other mercantile partners—John Harmer and

John Lidderdale—imported slaves into Virginia for a dozen years, from 1739 to 1752. The councillor developed personal ties to Harmer and Walter King who, like Blair, held political offices in Williamsburg. Harmer was mayor of Williamsburg in 1738 and 1746, a churchwarden for Bruton Parish Church, and Burgess for Williamsburg from 1742 to 1747. Walter



*John Blair House*

King was one of Williamsburg's aldermen in 1746.

John Blair probably met Walter King soon after King arrived in Virginia from his native Bristol, England, in 1723. King was in partnership with several Bristol merchants, including John King (probably a kinsman), and he journeyed to Virginia to manage the iron works in Sittenbourn Parish, King George County. Walter King was a resident of Williamsburg by May 1735 when he and his partner, John Harmer (who arrived in Virginia from Bristol in 1733), purchased part of Lot 52 on Duke of Gloucester Street from Samuel Cobbs. Harmer and King also bought five lots at Queen Mary's Port in September 1736.

Harmer and King used their ties to other Bristol merchants to gain possession of Africans imported into Virginia. On June 1, 1739, the partners announced:

*THE Crosse-Galley, Capt. Joseph Pitman, Master, lately arriv'd from Africa, with a choice Cargo of Slaves. The Sale whereof will begin on Monday the 4th Instant, at West-Point. And assoon as discharg'd, will prepare to receive a Freight for Bristol. She is a Bristol built Vessel, not above Seven Years old, and shall be well fitted, to carry what Tobacco may be put on Board her. The Subscribers will ship upwards of 100 Hogsheds, and has already 50 more engag'd: And will be thankful to any Gentlemen for their kind Assistance. She shall sail with all possible Expedition, as Mr. King intends to go home in her. Harmer and King.*<sup>5</sup>

John King still owned the *Williamsburg* when it arrived in Yorktown from Guinea on July 28, 1740, with 230 Africans. Captain Jonathan Lambert consigned the slaves to John Harmer and Walter King who sold all but one of the Africans before the ship left the York River for Bristol on October 20 of that year.<sup>6</sup> Blair, a justice of the peace for York County between 1724 and 1745, might have witnessed the arrival of slave ships and the sale of Africans when he attended the monthly meeting of the county court in Yorktown.

The *Williamsburg* arrived again at Yorktown on June 13, 1743 carrying 300 Africans. Harmer and King sold half of the Africans at the waterfront. On June 24, Tate took the *Williamsburg* to the Upper James to sell the

remaining 150 Africans. In December of the same year, John Harmer's vessel, a schooner named *Sarah*, arrived in Yorktown from Barbados. The fate of the only two Africans on board is unknown. By 1745, Walter King owned the snow *Broomfield*, which arrived in Yorktown in August from Africa with a cargo of 187 Africans.<sup>7</sup>

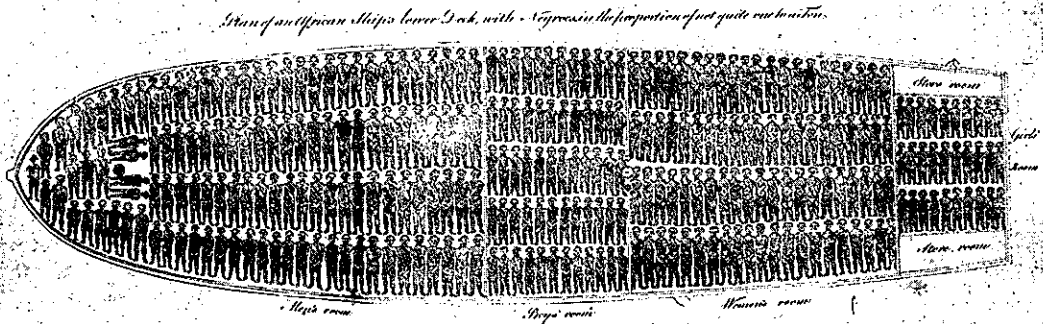
John Harmer and Walter King entered into a partnership with another Williamsburg merchant, John Lidderdale, in early 1746.<sup>8</sup> The three partners gained possession of the 250 Africans who arrived in Yorktown from Gambia on the ship *Gildart* on July 21, 1746. The owner, Richard Gildart, was a resident of Liverpool. Lidderdale, Harmer, and King announced a sale of these slaves in the July 31, 1746, issue of the *Virginia Gazette*:

*ARRIV'D from Gambia, the Ship Gildart, with 250 choice Gambia Slaves: The Sale whereof will begin at Hobs's Hole, on Rappahannock, on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, the 5th, 6th, and 7th Days of August; and at Bray's Church the Monday following; where the Sale will continue till it's completed.*

*The said Ship is a new Vessel, mounted with 20 Guns, navigated with 45 Men, and will take in Tobacco for Liverpool, at 14 Pounds per Ton. Such Gentlemen as are inclinable to ship, are desired to apply to John Lidderdale, Harmer & King.*<sup>9</sup>

It is likely that Walter King purchased one of the slaves who arrived in Virginia on the *Gildart*. On August 18, 1746, the York County Court decided that King's boy named Cornelius was eleven years old.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps Cornelius accompanied his master to the Upper James on September 24, 1746, when Captain John Tate sailed the *Williamsburg* into port. The vessel arrived from Guinea and carried 360 Africans.<sup>11</sup>

Harmer decided to return to Bristol in 1746 and announced his intention in the August *Virginia Gazette*. He and King advertised their dwelling house, outhouses, storehouses, and household furniture for sale in March 1746. In November 1746, Harmer conveyed his share of Lot 52 to Walter King. Harmer probably did not return to Bristol as soon as he had planned because he became the York County coroner in February 1747. Harmer most likely had left Williamsburg by the time of the late 1747-1748 smallpox epi-



"Plan of an African Ship's lower Deck"  
Ink on paper engraving  
Matthew Carey  
Philadelphia, 1797

demic, however.<sup>12</sup>

A number of Williamsburg's residents, including Blair, lost slaves during the epidemic. Perhaps Blair purchased one or more of the Africans sold by King and Harmer after he lost three children and a fellow to smallpox. It is possible that Blair's man Agar, baptized on June 3, 1754, was from Africa.

Captain Tate arrived again in the Upper James in the *Williamsburg* on September 13, 1749 with 335 Africans on board. Walter King sold the slaves for John King and Company.<sup>13</sup> In early August of the following year John Harmer's ship, the *Hope*, docked in the Upper James. On August 13, 1750, Walter King paid thirteen shillings to William Hunter for printing advertisements for "the Hopes Cargo."<sup>14</sup> King sold the 153 slaves who had arrived on the *Hope*.

The last slaves sold by King were the 295 Africans who arrived in the Upper James from Africa in late July 1751 on the *Williamsburg*. King paid Hunter thirteen shillings for "500 Advertisements [possibly handbills] for Tates Cargoe." On August 5, Blair noted that "King's Negroes sell well." The councillor might have been one of the purchasers; he owned a slave woman named Angola Jenny. Three days later, King's announcement of his intention to return to England appeared in the *Virginia Gazette*:

*AS the Subscriber intends to depart this Colony for England, in about 6 Weeks, he desires all Persons that have any Demands against him, to come immediately and receive them, and all Persons that are indebted to him, to Mr. John King of Bristol, or to Harmer and King, are required to discharge the same immediately, or their Affairs will be delivered into an Attorney's Hands, with orders to Prosecute without Delay.<sup>15</sup>*

King remained in Virginia to hear the

result of a case he initiated soon after Captain Tate and the *Williamsburg* arrived in the colony. It appears that King hoped to avoid paying duties on slaves imported into the colony on the *Williamsburg*.

On July 31, Blair noted "Mr. King's dutys refer'd to the law, but I believe will be thought due." The case interested Blair since he knew King and because the duties on Africans imported into the colony would help fund the reconstruction of the Capitol and renovations to the Governor's Palace. The diarist recorded a General Court decision in favor of the merchant on October 14: "Court sat all day (till near 5) on King's Cause" and "Mr Kings Cause was tryd won."<sup>16</sup> King paid his quitrents on land in Lunenburg County (later Henry County) in November and left Williamsburg on December 18. Ten days later, Blair noted "Mr King did not sail from York till the 26th in the Eveng. so probably did not get out to Sea til yesterday or to-day."<sup>17</sup> John King and Company's last cargo of Virginia-bound slaves entered the Upper James on the ship *Hampton* on July 29, 1752. John Robinson and Humphrey Hill announced the sale of 273 Africans in the July 30 issue of the *Virginia Gazette*.<sup>18</sup>

It is known that twenty-three ships brought enslaved Africans to Virginia in 1751:

March 19—Schooner Joseph arrived in Hampton from St. Christopher; 31 slaves

April 12—Sloop James Town arrived in Hampton from Barbados; 2 slaves

April 16—Sloop Relief arrived in Hampton from Barbados; 1 slave

- April 16—Schooner Providence arrived in Hampton from Barbados; 1 slave
- April 19—Brig Antigua Packet arrived in Hampton from Antigua; 2 slaves
- April 22—Ship Industry arrived in Hampton from Barbados; 18 slaves
- April 26—Sloop George arrived in Hampton from Montserrat; 1 slave
- May 7—Success arrived in South Potomac from Barbados; 16 slaves
- May 21—Ship Tryal arrived in York from Africa; 390 slaves
- May 21—Schooner Richard arrived in Hampton from Antigua; 4 slaves
- June 19—Sloop Diamond arrived in Hampton from St. Christopher; 13 slaves
- June 22—Ship Jubilee arrived in Hampton from Barbados; 10 slaves
- June 26—Schooner Frances arrived in Hampton from Barbados; 4 slaves
- June 26—Schooner Anne and Susanna arrived in Hampton from Barbados; 48 slaves
- July 5—Sloop Providence arrived in Hampton from Barbados; 3 slaves
- July 17—Snow Phoenix arrived in Hampton from Barbados; 3 slaves
- July 30—Hopewell arrived in South Potomac from Barbados; 36 slaves
- July 31—Ship Williamsburg arrived in Upper James from Africa; 295 slaves
- August 9—Sloop Norfolk arrived in Hampton from Antigua; 1 slave
- August 13—Ship Caesar arrived in Hampton from St. Christopher; 5 slaves
- September 14—Ship Penelope arrived in Upper James from Africa; 208 slaves
- October 11—Sloop Fanny arrived in York from Barbados; 1 slave
- December 9—Schooner St. George arrived in York from St. Christopher; 6 slaves

In his diary, Blair noted the arrival of only

two of these vessels—the *Tryal* and the *Williamsburg*. He might have made mention of the *Tryal* because its owner, Philip Protheroe, was a resident of Bristol.<sup>19</sup> Blair had personal connections to Bristol merchants and ship owners because they played an important role in the tobacco and slave trade in the York River District in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. However, Bristol merchants saw their share of the overseas slave trade decline by mid-century. A smaller number of slave ships docked in the York River District by 1750 because planters in the Piedmont wanted to buy enslaved laborers to work the fields on their plantations.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps Blair did not note the other twenty-one vessels that transported Africans to Virginia in 1751 because he did not have the personal ties to the ship owners and merchants that he had with John Harmer and Walter King.



Blair's diary contains notations about the work that several of his slaves performed in 1751. Clearly, the councillor depended upon his slaves to run errands for him. On January 23 he noted that he wrote to "J. B. p George." Three days later, Blair "had [a] letr p Geo. & gave 3 bitts." A slave named Ben delivered letters to a Mr. Blagrove, Lieutenant Terry, and Henry Gilbert on February 25. The diarist did not indicate if he tipped Ben as he had tipped George. He "dispatchd Boson" on April 9. Blair sent William Byrd III's slave boy on an errand in June and September of that year. The June 25 entry—"Mrs Randolph gave a fine accot of our Gardiner"—indicates that Blair's enslaved gardener did some work at the Randolph House.<sup>21</sup>

Blair's slaves tended the fields on his James City County plantation and kept him informed of problems that occurred there. In May he noted "Pompey complains that Lest[e]r sent ½ Bar. of Corn the 8th to his Quartr."<sup>22</sup> Thus, Pompey turned to his master to register his complaint about the overseer at the plantation. In late November 1751, an enslaved man named Dick informed Blair about a dispute concerning a missing canoe that belonged to the widow Watkins. Dick reported that Frederick Bryan's overseer said the widow Watkins sold the canoe to a resident of the Eastern Shore. Another Blair slave, Jupiter, found the canoe

a few days later.

Blair used his diary to keep track of the health of his slaves. Like Landon Carter and other Virginia planters, he attended to the medical needs of his slaves. On February 7 he noted "I blooded Charles," and "Lewis was thought to have the throat distemper" on December 18. However, he realized that he also needed to call on doctors to treat his enslaved laborers. Blair "Went wth Dr Gilmer to see Angola Jenny" on September 26.<sup>23</sup> The councillor noted the deaths of three slaves in 1751—Old Peter on January 28, Elias on October 23, and Peter who was killed in December. However, he did not enter the baptisms of three slaves—Chloe on March 4 and Mary and Norfolk on October 6—in his diary. Perhaps his wife, Mary Blair, kept track of the births and baptisms of the family's slaves in addition to managing the female slaves who performed the domestic work.

Blair recorded sixteen entries about a slave named Matt between February 15 and April 8. The number of notations about Matt and the nature of the information suggest that Blair was closer to this individual than to any other of his male slaves. Perhaps Matt was Blair's personal manservant.

The earliest references to Matt came on February 15 when Blair wrote "Matt run off this morning" and "Matt and Simon gone off together." The next day the councillor noted that Matt and Simon (a slave owned by Ann Shields) had hoped to disguise themselves in clothes made by Thomas Hornsby's slaves "of goods stolen from Mr. [Peyton] Randolph." This indicates that Matt and Simon planned their escape and had the cooperation of other Williamsburg slaves in their attempt to gain their freedom. Simon surrendered on February 18 and was put in prison. Blair decided to place an advertisement for Matt on February 21, the same day that he was captured and put in the York County gaol in Yorktown. The following day, February 22, the councillor noted that he stopped the announcement before it ran in the *Virginia Gazette* and that he "attended Matt's examination before Mr. Holt and made discoveries."

Blair discussed Matt's situation with Mrs. Frances Webb on February 26 and with Peyton Randolph, the colony's attorney gen-



eral, the next day. The widow Webb was the owner of a Christian slave woman named Betty, and it is likely that Blair knew Betty planned to testify in the March 7 oyer and terminer trial against Natt, a slave man owned by William Drummond of James City County. Perhaps Blair wanted to know if Betty had evidence against Matt as well.<sup>24</sup> Blair might have asked Randolph if he planned to serve as one of the seven justices at Matt's oyer and terminer trial. If so, Randolph, whose goods Matt was accused of stealing, would be one of the men who would decide the runaway's fate.

Blair sent his overseer, Mr. Lester, to see Matt on March 6.

The next day, Blair himself traveled to Yorktown to attend Matt's trial. On March 7, York County's oyer and terminer justices held three trials. First, they heard the evidence against Natt, a slave owned by William Drummond of James City County accused of stealing from Jane Vobe, and found him not guilty. Natt received thirty-nine lashes for diverse misdemeanors. Simon at his trial was found guilty of stealing from Jane Vobe. Matt was tried and found guilty of breaking into the dwelling house of Ann Shields and stealing five gallons of wine valued at twenty shillings and ten gallons of rum valued at twenty shillings.<sup>25</sup> The widow Shields testified against Matt, and the oyer and terminer justices also examined the confession that Matt gave to John Holt, one of the magistrates. The York County justices sentenced Matt and Simon to be hanged and valued each man at £55 for which Blair and Shields were to be compensated.

Ten days after the trial, Blair noted that Matt was sick. A week later he made the notation "Matt hardy" in his diary. The councillor traveled to Yorktown on March 29 to visit Matt. That day he wrote I "took my leave of Matt." Unfortunately, Blair did not detail the contents of a letter he reported that Mrs. Blair received from Matt on the last day of March. On April 8, Blair's entry—"Poor Matt & Simon suffd to-day in drink"—refers to their execution.<sup>26</sup>

Blair's diary contains an entry that points to a personal connection between John Custis and a free black boy named Jack. Blair noted on September 9, 1751: "abt 1 or 2 in the mornng. Col. Custis's Favourite Boy



Yorktown, Virginia; watercolor by Dwight Williams.

Jack died in abt 21 hours illness being taken ill a little before day the 18th wth a Pain in the back of his Neck for wch he was blood-ed.<sup>27</sup> It is likely that Custis was the father of Jack, the son of his slave, Alice. Custis asked his "worthy and esteemed friend John Blair Esquire" to help take care of Jack after his death:

*My will and desire is and I hereby strictly require that as soon as possible after my decease my executor build on the land I bought of James Morris Situate near the head of Queen's Creek in the county of York for the use of said John otherwise called Jack a handsome strong convenient dwelling house according to the dimensions I shall direct and a plan thereof drawn by my said friend John Blair Esquire and that it be completely furnished.<sup>28</sup>*

Custis died in late 1749, nearly two years before Jack, so Blair might have looked after Jack during that time in addition to drawing the plans for the house. The councillor's entry about Jack's death suggests that a doctor, perhaps George Gilmer, informed him about Jack's illness and the treatment that he received.

It is likely that Custis's boy Jack was not the only free black whom Blair knew. Several of the councillor's enslaved women had ties to free men of color who lived in the Williamsburg area. Seven of Blair's slave children had a surname that could be found in the free black community. The baptisms

of five of these enslaved boys and girls appear in the Bruton Parish Register:

*Anne Williams, a child, was baptized on November 6, 1748*

*Anthony Jasper was baptized on June 1, 175[2]*

*Ephraim Williams was baptized on March 7, 1753*

*John Milener, son of Rachel, was baptized on October 26, 1767*

*Jane Merriot Pow, daughter of Barbara, was baptized on July 24, 1768*

In addition, Isaac and Clara Bee, the children of one of Blair's slave women and John Bee (also known as John Insko and John Insko Bee), were part of the councillor's household.<sup>29</sup>

Blair's notations about the type of work that some of his slaves performed in 1751 suggest that Blair managed the labor of his enslaved men living in Williamsburg. Mary Blair supervised the work of the females in town who cooked and cleaned for the Blair family. Blair listened to rural slaves when they had a complaint or informed him about activities on his plantation. The diary entries also reveal that members of the gentry could have close connections to people of color: Blair to his slave man Matt and John Custis to "his boy" Jack. In addition, Blair might have noticed the abilities of free black Matthew Ashby (who was at least twenty-four years old in 1751). Eighteen years later, Ashby described the councillor as "my good friend John Blair esqr" when he wrote his will. Blair refused to serve as the executor of Ashby's will perhaps because of advancing age or for some other reason.<sup>30</sup>



Blair's entries about legal matters that involved slaves reflect his position as a lawyer and a slave owner. The councillor made notations about two slave trials that took place in June in York County and an oyer and terminer trial in James City County. He mentioned the James City County proceedings on October 1: "Speedy

justice in J[ames]. C[ity]. court, a felony comitd last nt, the felon tried, sentenced and executd this afternoon."<sup>31</sup> Blair might have recorded more details about the York County trials because they both involved Natt, the slave who had been found not guilty of a felony on March 7, the day the oyer and terminer justices decided that Blair's Matt was guilty.

A slave named Josiah also appeared before the justices. Blair had begun to follow the events that led up to Josiah's trial in May. On the ninth day of that month he recorded "Josa broke Jail last night." Almost a month later, on June 8, he wrote "Natt acquitted. Josa. taken and escaped again." The York County Court records contain the proceedings of the two trials. On June 8, 1751, the justices of the oyer and terminer court heard the case against Natt, a slave who belonged to William Drummond of James City County. Natt was accused of breaking into the warehouse of John Hyndman, a Williamsburg merchant, and stealing a variety of goods that included worsted stockings and six rugs. William Lowe, Juba, an enslaved woman of Ann Shields, and Betty, a slave who belonged to Frances Webb, provided testimony in the case against Natt. The oyer and terminer justices decided that Natt was not guilty of the felony and burglary.<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps the justices found Natt not guilty because they wanted him to testify in the trial against Josiah, who belonged to Dr. John Amson of Williamsburg. On May 6, Josiah was accused of breaking into Jane Vobe's house and stealing ten gallons of rum (valued at twenty shillings) and a box of candles (valued at twenty shillings). Thomas Penman and "Natt a Christian slave belonging to William Drummond" testified against Josiah. The justices found him guilty of taking and stealing goods, but not of burglary. Josiah pled benefit of clergy (whereby the condemned person was branded on the hand in lieu of execution) and the York County sheriff put him in the county jail after his trial on May 6. However, he broke out of jail the following night. Josiah avoided capture until June 8. Amson's slave man escaped a second time later the same day. Again, he was caught and tried a second time on June 20. Natt was one of four individuals who provided evidence against Josiah. The oyer and terminer justices found Josiah guilty, and he pled benefit of

clergy a second time. The court rejected his request since he had been granted benefit of clergy once before, and ordered him to be hanged the following day. Josiah was valued at £50.<sup>33</sup>

Blair attended the October session of the General Court. He commented in his diary on three cases that involved slaves and the interpretation of statutes that defined various aspects of the institution of slavery in Virginia. On October 12, Blair noted

*Tab's case seem'd hard to me, as also the case of Mr. Farish, who was adjudgd to restore slaves w[ith] their increase, for which he had paid the devises (of 4 out of 6 at least), as they came of age, and had their discharges, and it was impossible to divide them among 6, as there were but 2 or 3 slaves devised to them, but by reducing them to their value, and their share of that value had been pd to some of 'em 15 and 16 y[ear]s agoe.*

The councillor may not have reached a decision in this matter and used his diary to review the particulars of the case as a way to sort out his thoughts. Two days later he noted that his friend Walter King was successful in his effort to avoid paying duties on Africans imported into Virginia. On October 25, Blair commented on a second case that involved the distribution of slaves to a decedent's legatees:

*A. made his will in 1732, and left his lands and all his personl est[ate] . . . to his two nat[ur]al; that is, illegitimate]. daught[er]s with out particularly mention[ing] his 10 negroes, and in case of their deaths with[ou]t issue, to his heir at law. His bro[ther] (who was not call'd to contest) 15 y[ear]s after sued and recov[er]ed the negroes contrary to the plain mean[ing] of the will, I think.*

Blair believed that A's legatees did not gain possession of their father's slaves because he did not write a well-worded will. As a result, the daughters did not inherit enslaved laborers as he had intended.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps the councillor had this case in mind when he made specific provisions for the division of his enslaved laborers among his children when he drafted his own will in October 1771.<sup>35</sup>



A close examination of John Blair's 1751 diary indicates that the institution of slavery

played a large role in both his private and public lives. Blair encountered slaves in his Williamsburg household and managed the enslaved laborers who tended the fields on his plantation. He played a part in the reconstruction of the Capitol and the renovation of the Governor's Palace. Money for these projects came from duties on the Africans imported by Walter King, John Harmer, John Lidderdale and others. The councillor's notes also reveal that he had to work out details about cases that involved slavery. Blair, like other Virginians, continued to work to define slavery almost one hundred years after the General Assembly decided that the child of an enslaved mother was a slave for life.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> John Blair's Diary is at the Virginia Historical Society. A transcription of his diary can be found in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st ser., VII (1898-1899):133-153 and VIII (1899-1900):1-17.

Blair recorded information about the weather, events that took place in Williamsburg, colonial matters, and his family in three sections of the almanac. He wrote down details about court meetings, family and social activities, and the weather for each month on the page facing the lunar and stellar information for the twelve months of the year. Blair also made brief notes on the pages that detailed the phases of the moon and the movement of the stars. Finally, Blair provided additional details about some events and court cases on both sides of the fourteen blank leaves at the back of the almanac.

<sup>2</sup> *WMQ*, VIII:4.

<sup>3</sup> *WMQ*, VII:139; *Virginia Gazette*, 16 May 1751 and 13 June 1751; Walter Minchinton, Celia King, and Peter Waite, eds., *Virginia Slave Trade Statistics 1698-1775* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1984), pp. 144-145.

<sup>4</sup> *WMQ*, VIII:9; Minchinton, *et al.*, p. 147.

<sup>5</sup> *The Grosse Galley* carried 266 Africans to Virginia in 1739. *Virginia Gazette*, 1 June 1739; Minchinton, *et al.*, p. 101.

<sup>6</sup> Minchinton, *et al.*, pp. 106-107.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125, 127, 133.

<sup>8</sup> John Lidderdale, a native of Scotland who worked with Bristol merchants, had a store in Prince George County by October 1737. He moved his business to Williamsburg by February 1738/9. Lidderdale was a partner of merchant Alexander Spaulding by March 1740/1 as well as of Thomas Chamberlayne and Company of Bristol in 1746. He placed the following advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette* on July 31st of that year:

Arrived in York River,

THE SNOW *Two Brothers*, with upwards of 200 fine healthy Slaves; the Sale of which will begin at West-Point, on Monday the 4th of August; where Attendance will be given 'til completed.

The said Ship is not Two Years old, well

fitted and mann'd, and will take in Tobacco, for *Bristol*, at 14 l. per Ton. Such Gentlemen as are inclinable to ship to *Thomas Chamberlayne* and Company, from *York* or *James Rivers*, are requested to send their Orders on board, or to

John Lidderdale.

The *Two Brothers* arrived in Yorktown from Bonny on July 28, 1746 with 254 Africans. See *Virginia Gazette*, 31 July 1746; Minchinton, *et al.*, pp. 136-137. See also Minchinton, *et al.*, pp. 119, 121, 125, 127, 149, 157 for details about vessels that Lidderdale owned and the Africans imported into Virginia on these ships between 1742 and 1755.

<sup>9</sup> Minchinton, *et al.*, p. 137; *Virginia Gazette*, 31 July 1746.

<sup>10</sup> Age adjustments were necessary (for tax purposes) when the age of a slave was unknown, as with recently imported Africans. The York County justices of the peace decided that John Lidderdale's enslaved girl Betty was ten years old in September 1746. Two months later, the magistrates ruled that Lidderdale's girls, Sally and Chloe, were both twelve years of age and that Peter was a boy of fourteen years. Perhaps Betty, Sally, and Chloe all arrived in Virginia on the *Gildart*.

<sup>11</sup> Minchinton, *et al.*, p. 139.

<sup>12</sup> To track the progress of the epidemic, local physician Dr. John DeSequeyra made a list of Williamsburg households. Harmer's name is not in the list, whereas Walter King's is.

<sup>13</sup> Minchinton, *et al.*, p. 141.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145; Hunter, *Virginia Gazette Day Book, 1750-1752*, (original at the Alderman Library, University of Virginia), 31 July 1750.

<sup>15</sup> Minchinton, *et al.*, p. 147; Hunter, *Virginia Gazette Day Book, 1750-1752*, 13 August 1751; *WMQ*, VIII:9; *WMQ*, VII:144; *Virginia Gazette*, 8 August 1751.

<sup>16</sup> *WMQ*, VIII:10, 13; *WMQ*, VII:147. On April 1 Blair noted "I laid a found[atio]n Brick at Capitol." At the end of August he "Finish'd the contract wth Taliaferro for the Govrs house." *WMQ*, VII:138, 145.

<sup>17</sup> *WMQ*, VII:149.

<sup>18</sup> Minchinton, *et al.*, p. 151; *Virginia Gazette*, 30 July 1752.

<sup>19</sup> Minchinton, *et al.*, pp. 145, 147. However, Blair neglected to mention that John King and Company also owned the *Caesar*, a vessel that entered Hampton thirteen days after their ship, the *Williamsburg*, docked in the Upper James. Walter King might have sold the 5 Africans from the *Caesar* along with the 295 Africans from the *Williamsburg*.

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Philip D. Morgan and Michael L. Nicholls, "Slaves in Piedmont Virginia, 1720-1790," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XLVI (1989): 211-51.

<sup>21</sup> *WMQ*, VII:135, 150.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150; *WMQ*, VIII:16; *WMQ*, VII:146.

<sup>24</sup> *WMQ*, VII: 136; *WMQ*, VIII:3, 4.

<sup>25</sup> It is interesting that the oyer and terminer justices did not try either Matt or Simon for the theft of Randolph's goods. Perhaps the magistrates decided to try the enslaved men on the charges for which the evidence was strongest.

<sup>26</sup> *WMQ*, VII:137, 150, 138.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.



<sup>28</sup> Will of John Custis, dated 14 November 1749 and recorded in James City County on 9 April 1750; Custis Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

<sup>29</sup> See the March 18, 1999, issue of "The Network" for details about free blacks in the Williamsburg area and the Enslaving Virginia Resource Book, pp. 605, 628-630, for biographical information on Isaac Bee and the Rawlinson Family.

<sup>30</sup> York County Wills and Inventories (22) 25-26, dated 25 November 1769 and recorded 15 April 1771.

<sup>31</sup> WMQ, VIII:12.

<sup>32</sup> WMQ, VII:139; WMQ, VIII:7; York County Judgments and Orders (1) 426-428, 8 June 1751.

<sup>33</sup> York County Judgments and Orders (1) 426-431, 20 June 1751.

<sup>34</sup> WMQ, VIII:13.

<sup>35</sup> York County Wills and Inventories (22) 44-46, dated 25 October 1771 and recorded 18 November 1771.

## "Little Spots allow'd them": Slave Garden Plots and Poultry Yards

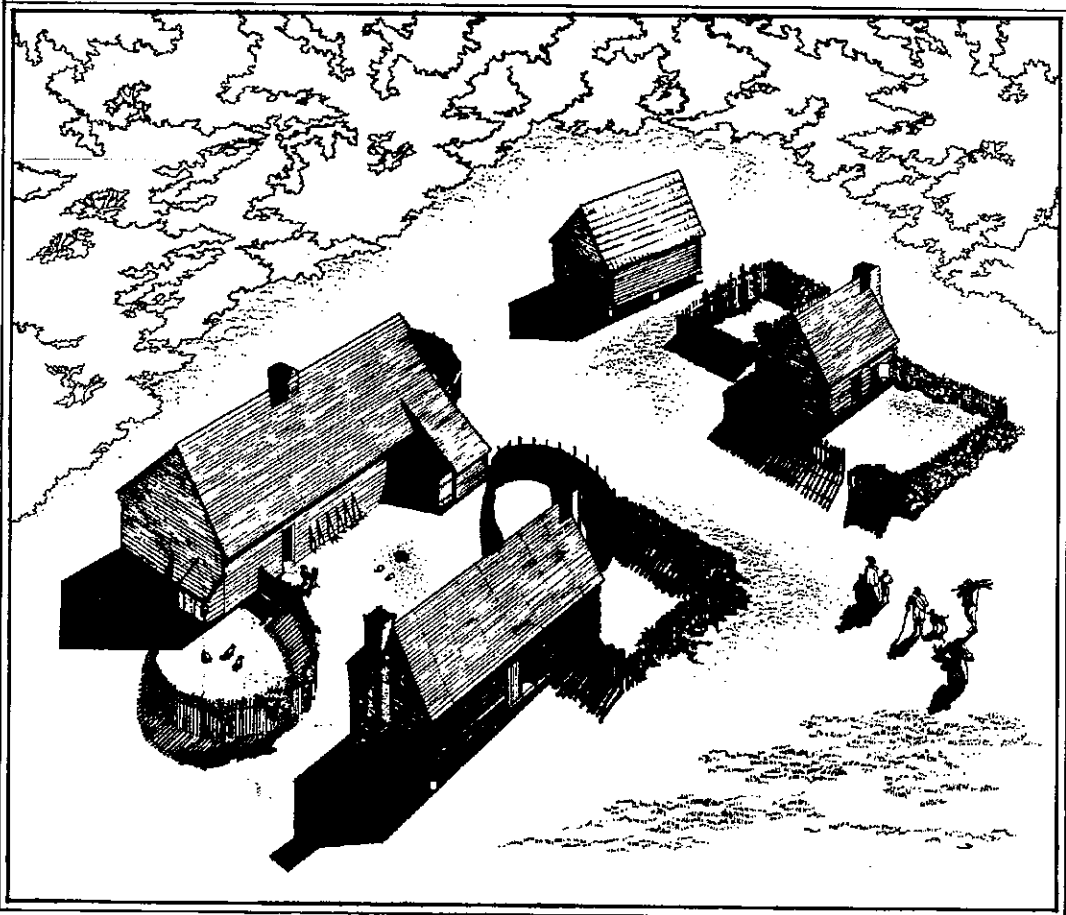
by Patricia A. Gibbs

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Observations of travelers, comments by planters, accounts showing purchases from slaves, a plat indicating a slave garden, and archaeological evidence inform us about the gardens and poultry yards that slaves maintained for their personal use in the eighteenth-century Chesapeake.

Masters usually allowed slaves living in rural areas to cultivate small garden plots and raise poultry. When a planter set out to establish a new quarter, he selected the location and had the area cleared, ordered his slave carpenters to build the dwellings and storage buildings, and supplied the necessary agricultural tools and minimal furnishings required to make the quarter

*Slave quarter at Carter's Grove, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Research and design by Edward A. Chappell, Willie Graham and Vanessa E. Patrick. Drawing by Jeff Bostetter.*



habitable. Further improvements to the quarter depended on the resourcefulness and labor of the residents to partition the quarter into work areas and to fence in garden plots and poultry yards.<sup>1</sup>

Using axes and other tools available at the quarter, slaves made fences from saplings, branches, and vines and from salvaged boards. In March 1774, Philip Fithian, tutor to the children of Robert Carter at Nomini Hall, visited a quarter and watched "the Negroes make a fence; they drive into the Ground Chesnut stakes about two feet apart in a straight Row, & then twist in the Boughs of Savin [red cedar] which grows in great plenty here."<sup>2</sup> Fences at the reconstructed quarter at Carter's Grove recreate a variety of fences built over a period of years. The circular fence of twisted boughs enclosing the garden next to the log double house is the type of fence Fithian described. The fence, made from scrap lumber woven and wedged between posts, required no nails. Other fences at the quarter made with pales and planks are held in place with reused nails. The locations of the curved fences enclosing one of the gardens and the poultry yard are based on archaeological evidence showing fragmentary post-hole patterns. Other fence locations are conjectural.<sup>3</sup>

Travelers described these gardens as small. Hugh Grove, who arrived in Virginia from England in the summer of 1732, noted that the slaves were allowed to plant "little Plats for potatoes or [?] Indian pease and Cinnells [pattypan squash]."<sup>4</sup> Traveling through the Chesapeake in the 1740s, Edward Kimber noted that slaves cultivate "the little Spots allowed them."<sup>5</sup> One Sunday morning in April 1774 Fithian observed slaves "digging up their small Lots of ground allow'd by their Master for Potatoes, peas &c; All such work for themselves they constantly do on Sundays, as they are otherwise employed on every other Day."<sup>6</sup> Englishman Isaac Weld who visited in the late 1790s, commented favorably on quarters in Virginia: "Adjoining their little habitations, the slaves commonly have small gardens and yards for poultry, which are all their own property . . . their gardens are generally found well stocked, and their flocks of poultry numerous."<sup>7</sup>

Slave families with healthy members, including an adult male to do the heavy work of cultivating the soil, could raise

enough produce to supplement their diet of master-provided rations and have surplus to sell to the master, to free persons who lived nearby, or at the town market if they lived near an urban center. On the other hand, slaves in poor health and women who lived alone with small children—those with the most need of the nutrients provided by garden produce—often had little time or energy on moonlit nights or on Sundays to plant and cultivate a productive garden. If they managed to grow a few vegetables, it is unlikely they had surplus to sell or trade.<sup>8</sup>

Documentary and archaeological evidence shows that slaves grew a variety of plants in these gardens. Vegetables included lima beans, pole beans, cabbages, collards, corn, cymlings (pattypan squash), onions, peanuts, black-eyed or other field peas, potatoes (sometimes specified as red or sweet), and potato pumpkins. Fruits included apples, cherries, peaches, watermelons, and muskmelons. Slaves also raised dipper gourds and hops. Most individual gardens produced only a limited number of vegetables and fruits. Potatoes, field peas, pole beans, cymlings, and collards were most commonly mentioned by travelers and planters.<sup>9</sup>

Most of these plants are easy to grow and produce high-yield crops. Seeds of many of these plants could be sowed every couple of weeks, allowing the gardens to be productive for the entire year. Some of these plants did not have to be harvested as soon as they ripened but could remain in the ground until needed or, as with potatoes, stored in pits under the slave dwellings. Field peas and beans could be eaten fresh or dried for use later in the year. Collards could be picked throughout the winter. None of these plants required specialized cooking equipment but could be boiled in a pot or, as with fresh corn or potatoes, roasted in the coals.

A remarkable record of purchases from slaves survives in household accounts kept by Martha Jefferson's granddaughter Anne Cary Randolph. Begun in 1805, when Anne was fourteen and learning the art of housewifery from her mother, the record continues for four years. During that period more than half of the adult slaves at Monticello sold garden produce to the plantation mistress. Although most of the produce purchased was similar to that grown by slaves in gardens elsewhere in Virginia, sales of

cucumbers, lettuce, salad greens, and sprouts represent vegetables generally grown only in the gardens of the middling sort and the gentry. Several slaves dominated the trade; only five of the seventy-one active traders had ten or more transactions. With forty-three transactions during the four-year time span, Wormeley, one of the gardeners at Monticello, was clearly the leading purveyor of produce to the kitchen.<sup>10</sup>

It is likely that the best-tended gardens were kept by elderly persons with few or no work assignments. Necessity, as well as a love for seeing plants grow, may well have encouraged retired slaves to garden since superannuated slaves only received half the allotment of rations issued to working adult slaves. Examples of elderly gardeners include Landon Carter's Jack Lubbar (praised for raising "patches of pease"), Councilor Robert Carter's Dadda Gumby (who offered Fithian "Eggs, Apples, Potatoes"), Francis Taylor's Old Peter and Old Joe, and Spencer Ball's Old Dick. Interviewed by Englishman John Davis at Ball's Prince William County plantation about 1800, Old Dick remarked: "There is few masters like the 'Squire.' He has allowed me to build a log-house, and take in a patch of land, where I raise corn and water Melions."<sup>11</sup>

By the second half of the eighteenth century both documentary and archaeological evidence supports the characterization of planter James Mercer that the "Negroes . . . are the general Chicken merchants" in the Chesapeake, raising and selling chickens and eggs as well as using them to supplement their diets. After George Washington's slaves complained when he made minor changes to their rations in 1793, including switching from dried corn in the kernel to ground cornmeal, he suspected their criticism "arose as much from the want of the husks to feed their fowls, as from any other cause."<sup>12</sup>

Many masters confined their own poultry raising to turkeys, ducks, and geese. A visitor to a Mount Vernon quarter in 1797 noted that "a small vegetable garden was situated close to the hut. Five or six hens, each with ten or fifteen

chickens, walked around there. That is the only pleasure allowed to Negroes: they are not permitted to keep either ducks or geese or pigs."<sup>13</sup>

Plantation mistresses often bought chickens and eggs from their own slaves or other slaves living nearby, presumably fattening the chickens for a period of time before having them killed, plucked, and readied for the spit or cookpot. Martha Jefferson's household accounts show that she frequently bought chickens and eggs (as well as the occasional duck) from Monticello slaves or from slaves belonging to her neighbors. Accounts kept by Martha's granddaughter Anne Cary Randolph indicate that between 1805 and 1808 she purchased chickens or eggs from all but three adult slaves at Monticello. Martha Blodget of Cawsons in Prince George County "bo't of Mrs Bland's Antony 6 fine chickens," but qualified her action by noting that she made "it a rule never to buy of a negro without leave of their owners." Old Dick boasted to his interviewer John Davis, "I keep chickens and ducks, turkeys and geese, and his lady [wife of Spencer Ball] always gives me the Alexander [Alexandria] market for my



stock."<sup>14</sup>

Evidence for slave garden plots and poultry yards in urban settings is slight, but it is possible that some Williamsburg residents, whose town lots were large enough to devote limited space to small slave gardens and/or poultry yards, extended this privilege to a few of their slaves. A surviving 1801 garden plan for Colonel Nicholas Rogers's property in Baltimore labels a space in one of the back corners of the plan "for servants vegetable patch or for other purposes." The single slave dwelling, the privy, and the hog pen back up to this space. An 1823 letter of Charles Carroll of Carrollton near Baltimore advised his overseer that his newly purchased slave "Clem a blacksmith must not have more priveleges than my other slaves or be better fed . . . he desires a huck patch [small garden for raising produce for sale]; these I grant . . . as many of my slaves have that privelege."<sup>15</sup> There probably was a pigpen behind merchant James Maxwell's townhouse in Norfolk during the 1770s. Granting an exception, Maxwell allowed his slave Old Sarah to raise a sow and pigs on his Norfolk lot.<sup>16</sup>

Time, the system of labor, and region determined the size of gardens and the kinds of fowl or animals that slaves raised for their own use in early America. The gang labor system practiced in the Chesapeake during the eighteenth century, which kept slaves at work in the master's fields from sunup to sundown every day except Sunday, restricted slaves living in this area to petty trade. Before 1692 some slaves in Virginia, whose owners allowed them to raise tobacco and corn and keep horses, hogs, and cattle on their provision grounds, were able to eventually purchase their freedom. That year the General Assembly ordered slave owners to confiscate "all horses, cattle and hoggs marked of any negro or other slaves marke, or by any slave kept." For the next 100-plus years, most masters also prohibited their slaves from raising, for their own use, the staple crops grown on their plantations. As Thomas Jefferson explained, "There is no other way of drawing a line between what is theirs and mine."<sup>17</sup>

The rice-based agriculture of Lowcountry eighteenth-century South Carolina and Georgia, based on the task system, meant that slaves there could raise crops and domestic animals on their provision grounds. These practices were common by

the late seventeenth century when slave-owners required slaves to raise their own provisions. During the eighteenth century as the rice economy took hold, masters issued rations but slaves continued to press their owners for "as much land as they could handle" and for more time to work their provision grounds. The task system allowed slaves to preserve part of the day for their own use. Thus, many able-bodied adult slaves could stop work for the master by early afternoon in order to work for themselves. Many Lowcountry slaves had both "gardens" adjoining their quarters and "fields" (provision grounds nearby consisting of five or six acres of ground).<sup>18</sup>

In part because the climate was warmer in the Lowcountry than in the Chesapeake but also because more slaves continued to be brought to South Carolina from Africa after the mid-eighteenth century, Lowcountry slaves grew more African varieties of plants in their gardens than did Chesapeake slaves. In the 1720s Mark Catesby noted the recent introduction of a new variety of yam into South Carolina, calling it "a welcome improvement among the Negroes," who were "delighted with all their African food, particularly this, which a great part of Africa subsists on." Slaves in the Lowcountry grew root crops like tania, African grains (including millet and sorghum), sesame (making soups and puddings and using its oil for salads), African peppers, and okra.<sup>19</sup>

Although the produce and fowl raised in the "Little Spots allow'd them" added nutrients and variety to the usual one-pot meals consumed by slaves in the eighteenth-century Chesapeake, this production represents only two of the ways slaves chose to augment their master-provided rations. Hunting, fishing, trapping, poaching, foraging, bartering, and gifting (slave to slave or master to slave), along with small quantities of purchased food and drink, offered additional food sources. Sales of garden produce, chickens, and eggs represented several of the ways slaves willing to work for themselves on their own time found to give some autonomy to their otherwise highly restricted lives and contribute to the slave economy of the early Chesapeake.

*Thanks to Vanessa Patrick and Barbara Sarudy, and, especially, to Lorena Walsh for sharing references on slave food and gardens. ☘*

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Lorena S. Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove: The History of a Virginia Slave Community* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 181.

<sup>2</sup> Hunter D. Farish, ed., *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion, 1773-1774* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), 74.

<sup>3</sup> Personal conversation with Edward Chappell, Director of Historical Architecture for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 14 July 1999.

<sup>4</sup> *Virginia Magazine of History* 85 (January 1977): 32. Modern spelling of "Cinnells" is "cymling".

<sup>5</sup> Kevin J. Haynes, ed., *Itinerant Observations in America: Edward Kimber* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), 114.

<sup>6</sup> Farish, *Fithian Journal*, 96.

<sup>7</sup> Isaac Weld, *Travels Through the States of North America* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1968), I, 148.

<sup>8</sup> Larry E. Hudson, Jr., "All That Cash": Work and Status in the Slave Quarters," in *Working Toward Freedom: Slave Society and Domestic Economy in the American South* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1994), 84.

<sup>9</sup> Farish, *Fithian Journal*, 96, 140, 151, 157, and 202; *Virginia Magazine* 85 (Jan. 1977): 32; *The Journal of Liet. William Feltman* (New York, 1969), 10; Diary of Col. Francis Taylor, April 5, 1794; May 9, 1795; April 25, May 20, and August 13, 1798, Virginia State Library; Jack P. Greene, ed., *The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1965), I, 567 and 574; John Davis, *Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America During 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, and 1802* (London, 1803), 388; Edwin M. Betts, ed., *Thomas Jefferson's Garden Book, 1767-1824* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1981), 154; Martha Jefferson's accounts copied by Thomas Jefferson in James A. Bear, Jr., and Lucia C. Stanton, eds., *Jefferson's Memorandum Books: Accounts, with Legal Records and Miscellany, 1767-1826* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), I, 299-301; household accounts at Monticello in hands of Martha Jefferson and Anne Cary Randolph in the back of a notebook labeled Record of Legal Cases, 1768-1769, in the Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Figure 4.2, "Rich Neck Slave Quarter, ca. 1740-1778: Charred Seed Remains from Root Cellar Contexts," Maria Franklin, "Out of Site, Out of Mind": The Archeology

of an Enslaved Virginian Household, c. 1740-1778" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1997), 181 and 187. This list includes the following vegetables and fruits that could have been raised in slave gardens at Rich Neck: beans, cowpeas, lima beans, squash, peanuts, and melon and cherry. Other items on this list include probable plantation crops (barley, wheat, and rye) and foraged foods (blackberry, black walnut, acorn and honey locust).

<sup>10</sup> Gerald W. Gawalt, "Jefferson's Slaves: Crop Accounts at Monticello, 1805-1808," *Journal of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society* (spring/fall 1994): 19-20.

<sup>11</sup> Greene, *Landon Carter Diary*, I, 567 and 574; Farish, *Fithian Journal*, 140; Francis Taylor, "Diary," entries for April 25, May 20, and August 13, 1798; Davis, *Travels*, 388.

<sup>12</sup> Franklin, "Out of Site," 185; Joanne Bowen, "Slavery at Mount Vernon: A Dietary Analysis," 3, paper presented to the Society for Historical Archaeology, Washington, D. C., January 4, 1995; James Mercer to Bataille Muse, April 3, 1779, Bataille Muse Papers, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University; John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington* (Washington, D. C.: United States Printing Office, 31, 1939), 475.

<sup>13</sup> "Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz's American Diary," *The Polish Review* 3 (Summer 1958): 102.

<sup>14</sup> Bear and Stanton, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, I, 299-301; Gawalt, "Crop Accounts at Monticello," 22-37; "Cawson, Virginia, in 1795-1796," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 3 (January 1946): 288; Davis, *Travels*, 388.

<sup>15</sup> Barbara W. Sarudy, *Gardens and Gardening in the Chesapeake, 1700-1805* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 55; Charles Carroll of Carrollton, letter of April 9, 1823, Sotheby's *Fine Printed and Manuscript Americana*, Sale #5700, Item #56, April 16, 1988.

<sup>16</sup> *Lower Norfolk County Virginia Antiquary*, 2, Part 3 (1898): 79.

<sup>17</sup> William W. Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large . . .*, III, pp. 101-102; Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 119. Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 360.

<sup>18</sup> Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 164-166; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 186-187.

<sup>19</sup> Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 141.

## 'Tis the Season!

by Emma L. Powers

*Lou is a historian in the Department of Historical Research.*

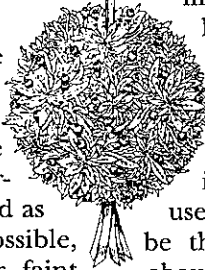
Some years ago it devolved on me to become this department's "expert" on Christmas in colonial Virginia. It's an assignment I take seriously and one that involves a surprising amount of my time. I've read as many books on the topic as possible, strained my eyesight poring over faint manuscript diaries and letters, searched out prints and paintings, and read histories of the holiday in other parts of the world. After nearly twenty years, I've reached a major conclusion: the history of Christmas is truly a very sticky ball of wax.

Understanding the modern holiday is difficult because we hold wildly different sets of expectations—and these are often unstated, even to ourselves. For many, the occasion is first and foremost a religious holiday, while some put more emphasis on gathering family and friends for seasonal feasting, togetherness, and catching up.

Still others see Christmas as a magical time for children, the chance to make their dreams come true. Certain people spurn it on religious, social, or financial grounds.

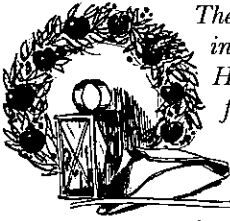
What most of us seem to have in common is a sense that Christmas is no longer what it used to be. Without real evidence, we maintain that in the past the holiday was more meaningful in every way, as well as more enjoyable and "authentic." The longing for Christmases past and "how it used to be" affects us all. Nostalgia may be the strongest single feeling we have about this season. No other holiday is so clouded with contradictory emotions. I've never heard anyone complain about a modern Thanksgiving, for example. A few old fogies, myself included, are beginning to think that Halloween is getting out of hand, but that's beside the point.

Nostalgia for bygone Christmas celebrations is not new in the late twentieth century. Eighteenth-century Englishmen also suffered from it. The anonymous author of *Round about our Coal-Fire*, published in London about 1740, bewailed the end of hospitality as traditionally offered in the English countryside.



*Published as the Act directs, by Bentley & Co., Jun 27 1792.*

CHRISTMAS IN THE COUNTRY.



The manner of celebrating this great Course of Holydays, is vastly different now to what it was in former Days: There was once upon a time Hospitality in the Land; and [a true] English Gentleman at the opening of the great Day, had all his Tenants and neighbours enter'd his Hall by Day-break, the strong Beer was broach'd, the Black-Jacks went plentifully about with Toast, Sugar, Nutmeg, and good Cheshire Cheese; the Rooms were embower'd with Holly, Ivy, Cyprus, Bays, Laurel and Mistletoe, and a bouncing Christmas Log in the Chimney, glowing like the Cheeks of a Country Milk-Maid . . . the great Festival was in former Times kept with so much Freedom and Openness of Heart, that every one in the Country where a Gentleman resided, possess'd at least a Day of Pleasure in the Christmas Holy days; the Tables were all spread from the first to the last, the Sirloins of Beef, the Minc'd-pyes, the Plumb-porridge, the Capons, Turkeys, Geese, and Plumb-puddings were all brought upon the Board, and every one who had sharp stomachs, and sharp Knives, eat heartily, and were welcome.

At about the same time, some Englishmen envied the Christmas traditions of Virginians, whom they saw as perpetuators of old-fashioned English customs. A *London Magazine* article in 1746 claimed that "All over the Colony, a universal Hospitality reigns . . . full Tables and open Doors, the kind salute, the generous Detention, speak somewhat like the old Roast-beef Ages of our Fore-fathers. . . . Strangers are sought after with Greediness, as they pass the country, to be invited."

Purdie and Dixon's *Virginia Gazette* on December 29, 1774, reprinted an Englishman's disdain for the new, stylish ways of observing Christmas.

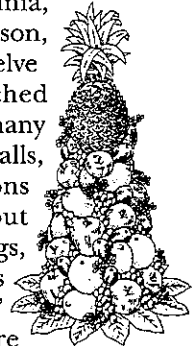
*I am an old Fellow, and confess that I like old Things. Among the chief of these, I hold old Fashions and Customs; and, among all the Refinements of the present Age, I do not think that in these [fashions and customs] they have refined greatly for the better. This is Christmas Morning; and . . . it promis-*

*es but a dull Holiday. The Times, Sir, are changed. On such a Day as this, an English Kitchen used to be the Palace of Plenty, Jollity, and good Eating. Every Thing was plain, but plenty. Here stood the large, plump, juicy Buttocks of English Roast Beef, and there smiled the frothy Tankards of English Beer; here smokes the solid sweet-tasted Mince Pies, and there the curling Fumes of plum-pudding perfumed the Sky with delicious Fragrance. Humour and Eating went Hand in Hand; the Men caroused, and the Women gave loose to gay but innocent Amusements.*

*Now mark the Picture of the present Time: Instead of that firm Roast Beef, that fragrant Pudding, our Tables groan with the Luxuries of France and India. Here a lean Fricassee rises in the Room of our majestick Ribs, and there a Scoundrel Syllabub occupies the Place of our well-beloved Home-brewed. The solid Meal gives Way to the slight Repast; and, forgetting that good Eating and good Porter are the two great Supporters of Magna Charta and the British Constitution, we open our Hearts and our Mouths to new Fashions in Cookery, which will one Day lead us into Ruin.*

*Alas! alas! that it should come to this! Our Nobles absolutely subsist upon Macaroni and Negus [a hot and spicy, wine-based beverage], and our very Aldermen have almost forgot the Use of Barons [of beef] and Custards. What will this World come to at last!*

For much of the eighteenth century, Christmas traditions in Virginia were indeed simple. No trees, no Santa, few gifts, no "stockings hung by the chimney with care." Many of our favorite customs came along later—most in the nineteenth century. In colonial Virginia, Christmas was an entire season, not a single day; the Twelve Days of Christmas stretched from December 25 to Epiphany on January 6. Dinners, balls, and other social occasions were arranged throughout the twelve days. Weddings, too, often took place at this time of year (the Jeffersons' and the Washingtons' are



just two examples). Twelfth Night parties, usually held on the evening of January 5, signaled the end of the season. New Year's Day was often noted in diaries of the period with sentiments like "Another Year is gone!" but New Year's Eve parties were not common. Twelfth Night gatherings seemed to have served much the same purpose as ours on December 31.

Philip Vickers Fithian's diary for 1773 and 1774 gives us an unusually detailed look at Virginians' holiday practices. For example, on Christmas Eve and again on Christmas morning, Fithian noted that guns were fired—presumably as a means of sending greetings to faraway plantations. They also seem to have functioned as a release of the high spirits brought on by the season. Fithian wrote that the household slaves at Nomini Hall solicited gifts (about which, more below).

Among Anglicans in Virginia, Christmas, the Feast of the Nativity, was a major religious holiday, second only to Easter; therefore, attendance at service on that day was expected. It was one of the three or four times in the year that Eucharist was celebrated. In rural parishes short on clergy, church services may not have been possible on December 25 itself, so folks in the countryside observed the holiday on the Sunday closest to that date. In 1773, for example, Christmas fell on a Saturday; Frances Carter, her children, and their tutor, Philip Fithian, did not attend church that day but went instead on Sunday the 26th. Several years later, a young London merchant, Robert Hunter, Jr., visited a relative in Tappahannock over the holidays. On the morning of December 25, 1785, a Sunday, he wrote in his diary, "I lament more and more every Sunday that we have no public place of worship to go to. There is a church to be sure, about three miles off, but unfortunately there happens to be no preacher. Being Christmas Day you miss it more than common, as [being] so universal a day of worship in all parts of the civilized world."

Unfortunately, there is little evidence about how denominations other than Anglicans celebrated. Fithian spent the Christmas of 1775 in western Virginia as a Presbyterian "missionary" to the Scots-Irish

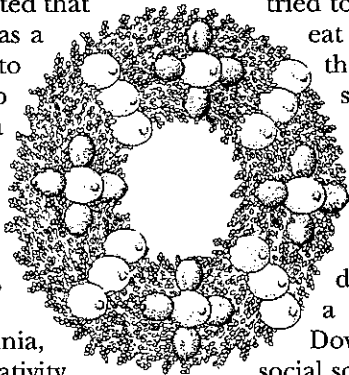
settlers there. That holiday was very different from previous ones at Nomini Hall. He wrote, "Not a Gun heard—Not a Shout—No company or Cabal assembled—To Day is like other Days every Way calm & temperate—People go about their daily Business." In December 1776, Nicholas Cresswell was stranded in Frederick County, Virginia, where he found that "Christmas Day, but very little observed in this country, except it is amongst the Dutch."

After church on Christmas Day, dinner was the next order of business. Most people tried to get more and better things to eat and drink for the holiday. For the gentry, of course, this presented no problem at all. Fithian described his meal at Nomini Hall on Christmas Day 1773 as "Our Dinner was no otherwise than common [that is, it was just like their dinner everyday], yet as elegant a Christmas Dinner as I ever sat Down to." Those lower down the social scale, of course, had few choices of food and drink. Preparing and serving these meals, whether elaborate or simple, required work, so housewives, slaves, and servants probably worked as hard or harder on the holiday than at other times. Especially when guests were included, their duties must have been much more onerous. (Later in this article I will return to the subject of slaves' observance of Christmas.)

## Decorations

The Grand Illumination of the Historic Area is an adaptation of an eighteenth-century practice, but it was not a Christmas custom. On occasions such as the monarch's birthday or arrival of a new governor, the town was "illuminated" with fireworks and candles in the cupolas of public buildings and in the windows of gentlemen's houses. This has been adapted as a way of marking the Foundation's opening of the Christmas season.

Our present-day decorations, too, are adaptations: they are rather more splendid than any that townspeople put up in the eighteenth century. So far, I have found absolutely no descriptions of Christmas decorations in colonial America. That being the case, we must rely on English precedents, both verbal and pictorial. Here is a chronological selection of quotations that





gives information about both materials and methods of "decking the halls" in England.

The custom of decorating churches has been traced to the Old Testament lesson appointed for the Anglican service on Christmas Eve. The thirteenth verse of Isaiah, chapter 60 reads "the glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary."

Thomas Tusser's *Five Hundred Pointes of Good Husbandrie*, published in several editions between 1573 and 1580, includes a Christmas section and clearly indicates that even at this early period homes too were donned with greens. His verse commands the housewife, "Get Iuye and hull [ivy and holly] woman deck up thyne house."



By the late sixteenth century there is evidence of outdoor decorations. George Wither, an English poet, wrote in 1588:

*So, now is come our joyful'st feast;  
Let every man be jolly;  
Each room with ivy leaves is drest,  
And every post with holly.*

John Stowe in his *Survey of London*, 1598, included homes, churches, and outdoor decorations in his description of holiday greens. He cites a source from 1444 saying it was the custom at "the Feast of Christmas, every man's house, as also the parish Churches" to be "decked with holme [holly], ivy, bayes, and whatsoever the season of the year afforded to be green. The Conduits and Standards in the streets were, likewise, garnished."

We have very little information about changes in Christmas customs in England during the Interregnum. Parliament abolished the observance of Christmas and other holy days on June 3, 1647. Parish officers of St. Margaret's, Westminster, London, were fined for adorning the church with rosemary and other greens that Christmas of 1647. But it is not clear how strictly and widely the law was enforced. Did ordinary people obey this law and give up their own private practices? Virginians were probably not affected by this change and so continued their earlier traditions. Likewise, it is impossible to say that the restoration of the

monarchy in 1660 brought back each and every former holiday practice in England. *Poor Robin's Almanack* in 1695 linked decking the halls with the monarchy:

*With holly and ivy  
So green and so gay;  
We deck up our houses  
As fresh as the day,  
With bays and rosemary,  
And laurel compleat,  
And every one now  
Is a king in conceit.*

Robert Herrick, a seventeenth-century English poet, often wrote about rustic rites and superstitions. One of his verses lists the greens appropriate for the holidays. These, it was believed, had to be removed by Candlemas, February 2.

*Down with the rosemary, and so  
down with the baies and mistletoe,  
Down with the holly ivie, all  
Wherewith you drest the Christmas hall.*

John Gay's *Trivia*, written in 1716, indicates that by the early eighteenth century Christmas greenery was already an item of commerce. Holiday foliage was gathered and taken for sale in London. Notice the specific plants included in his lines:

*When rosemary and bays, the Poet's  
crown,  
Are bawl'd, in frequent cries, through  
all the town,  
Then judge the festival of Christmas  
near,  
Christmas, the joyous period of the year.  
Now with bright holly all your temples  
strow,  
With laurel green, and sacred mistletoe.*

John Brand's *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain*, first published in 1777, includes the following rhyme, specifying not only the kinds of foliage to use, but where to place the decorations and even the types of containers to hold the greens in eighteenth-century English homes:

*From every hedge is pluck'd by eager  
hands  
The holy [holly] branch with prickly  
leaves replete  
And fraught with berries of a crimson  
hue;  
Which, torn asunder from its parent  
trunk,  
Is straight way taken to the neighboring  
towns,*

*Where windows, mantels, candlesticks,  
and shelves,  
Quarts, pints, decanters, pipkins,  
basons, jugs,  
And other articles of household ware,  
The verdant garb confess.*

At the end of the century, a country parson's diary tells us that holly was still used to decorate windows. The Reverend James Woodforde wrote on Christmas Eve, 1796, "We were obliged to have Hulver-branches [holly] without berries to dress up our Windows &c. against Christmas, the Weather having been so several all this Month, that the poor Birds have entirely already stript the Bushes." Four years later, he noted "This being Christmas Even we dressed up our Windows with Hulver Branches as usual."

A handful of English prints show very simple arrangements of greens. In a fairly crude print called "Christmas Gambols," holly has been put in decorative vases on the mantel shelf. Two or three more show sprigs of holly or other greens arranged flat against windowpanes. (For the record, I have no idea how these were attached. Is it possible that the glass was so loosely set in the dividers that stems could be worked between the two? There is no reference to any kind of adhesive.) Nearly always, a large cluster of mistletoe shows up. It is usually in the center of the main public room. Mistletoe, associated with kissing, brought mischief and even chaos. There is licentious behavior well beyond an innocent kiss on the cheek. Both property and propriety are destroyed. More than one print points to an overindulgence in punch or other strong drink as well.

### **Christmas Trees**

The earliest description of a Christmas tree I have found thus far dates from 1605. The observer wrote that in Strasbourg, France, "they set up fir-trees in the parlours . . . and hang thereon roses cut out of many-coloured paper, apples, wafers, gold foil, sweets, &c." A German immigrant to London, the Princess Lieven, continued the Christmas tree tradition in her new home. In December 1729 (although some sources say it was 1726), one of her visitors described the scene: "Three trees, in great pots, were put upon a long table covered with pink linen. Each tree was illuminated with three circular tiers of colored wax can-

dles—blue, green, red, and white. Before each tree was displayed a quantity of toys, gloves . . . and various [other] articles—presents made to the owner of the tree. It was very pretty."

The princess's trees did not immediately convert the English to the German tradition, although the decorations were not unknown. A London diarist in 1789 recorded "This Christmas Mr. Papendiek proposed an illuminated tree, according to the German fashion." The poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge visited Germany during the winter of 1825–26. One of his letters described a German Christmas tree as "a great yew-bough is fastened on the table at a little distance from the wall, a multitude of little tapers are fixed in the bough, but not so as to burn it till they are nearly consumed, and colored paper, etc., hangs and flutters from the twigs."

To most English people the Christmas tree was still a foreign thing well into the nineteenth century. And so it remained until the Victorian period when the German-born Prince Consort had a tree trimmed for his family at Windsor Castle. An 1848 print showing Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, and the princes and princesses royal with their decorated Christmas tree brought the custom into wide use in English homes. American magazines soon ran this print too, and the German tree soon became a holiday custom in this country.

There were other and earlier ways in which the Christmas tree came to America—not through Prince Albert alone. European settlers certainly brought the custom with them when they immigrated. Without a doubt, German settlers in Pennsylvania and the Valley of Virginia had Christmas trees long before the mid-nineteenth-century one at Windsor Castle.

Sometime between 1810 and 1817, Germantown, Pennsylvania, artist John Lewis Krimmel sketched a family group gathered around their small tabletop Christmas tree, trimmed with what appear to be cookies or fancy cakes. Beneath it is an arrangement of toy animals inside a picket fence. The Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum owns this drawing of Krimmel's Christmas tree. (There is a story going around that Hessian troops had a Christmas tree during the Revolution. I have not yet located primary source material verifying the tale.)

Although it was not the first Christmas



*St. George Tucker House.*

tree in America or even in Virginia, the 1842 tree at the St. George Tucker House is the earliest Virginia tree of which we have a description, and it was certainly the very first Christmas tree in Williamsburg. The description was made in 1928, eighty-six years after the fact, by a 95-year-old eyewitness. Martha Vandergrift, age 9, was visiting her cousins in 1842 when Dr. Charles Minnigerode decorated a "German tree" for Nathaniel Beverley Tucker's family.

### **Gift-giving**

The giving of Christmas gifts has proliferated in this century and grown far beyond anything colonial Virginians took part in. Coins, small toys, and educational books were typical holiday presents—and these were just as likely to be given at New Year's as at Christmas. In the eighteenth century, gifts were not exchanged but bestowed by a superior upon an inferior—parents to children or masters to slaves, servants, or apprentices. The local newspaper in December 1738, for example, advertised a new book, *The Church Catechism Explain'd*, as "very proper for a New-Year's Gift to Children." Robert Wormeley Carter of Richmond County "gave 12/6 [12 shillings sixpence] to my five children & 10/ [10 shillings] to Mrs. Carter" on December 25,

1769. In 1770, Yorktown resident Martha Goosley sent two Christmas turkeys to John Norton and his family in London. St. George Tucker's relatives in Bermuda sent him "a pair of silk Stockings for a Christmas Box" on January 4, 1773. Palace kitchen accounts show that two shillings sixpence were sent as a "Christmas box to the millar's servt." on January 23, 1770. House slaves at Nomini Hall expected tips from Fithian on Christmas morning 1773. His expenditure totaled "five Bits" when he had given something to one who served him. Fithian could not pay up completely until the middle of the next month.

These small gifts of money were sometimes called Christmas boxes, but there is no evidence that ceramic boxes for collecting tips were used here as in England. Such receptacles were by definition temporary, both by their seasonal function and because they had to be broken to get at their contents. Archaeologists have yet to identify Christmas boxes among artifacts retrieved from Virginia sites. Nor was the collection of such tips an event that took place on a specified day. As you can see by Fithian's tipping and by the payment to the miller's helper by the governor's kitchen staff, tips were either paid or promised on the holiday itself, but all the coins might not actually

change hands for several weeks. So far, I have found no record of a Christmas box actually dated December 26, which is the traditional Boxing Day celebrated in England and Canada. I suspect that, like so many other holiday customs, Boxing Day became a settled practice with its own set date in the nineteenth century.

### **Holiday Customs among African Americans**

As usual, our sources are biased toward the gentry and upper middling sort. There is no information about how poor whites and free people of color celebrated Christmas in early Virginia. For some of them, the religious aspects of the holiday probably prevailed. With limited incomes, of course, material manifestations of the season—gifts, special meals, decorations, and so on—were simply not possible.

We know more about slaves' treatment at this time of year because of letters, diaries, and other documents written by the masters, mainly gentry planters. A February 1726/7 law that established patrols to guard against invasions and insurrections mentions that slaves usually congregated in some numbers at the three main yearly festivals. As part of the rationale for the patrols, the legislators called to mind the "great danger [that] may happen to the inhabitants of this dominion, from the unlawful concourse of negroes, during the Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide holidays, wherein they are usually exempted from labour."

Lorena Walsh's research on plantation management in the colonial Chesapeake shows that slaves were allowed three to five days' holiday at Christmastime. In 1786, for example, George Washington noted on December 29, "The hollidays being over, and the People [slaves] all at work, I rid to the Ferry, Dogue run, and Muddy hole Plantations." A Christmas respite must have been allowed to field hands more readily than to domestics; house servants had more work than usual when guests were in the house for extended visits or if the master and mistress expected special meals and entertained during the holidays.

Traditionally, slave owners allowed their workers to have alcohol during the Christmas break. Some masters actually made gifts of rum and other spirits to their bondsmen. This was a very manipulative move and not offered strictly for the slaves' benefit and enjoyment. Frederick Douglass and others explained that slave owners actually encouraged drunkenness at Christmas and a few other occasions to keep slaves from running away. Some individuals, it was said, drank so much that they could not enjoy their temporary freedom. Holiday imbibing troubled certain slave owners. James Gordon, an "Old Side" Presbyterian in Lancaster County, Virginia, recorded in his diary on Christmas Day 1759: "Some of our negroes got drunk, that has given me some uneasiness."

Naturally, what a master could give, he could also take away. On the last day of 1774, Colonel Landon Carter congratulated himself for his wisdom in suppressing the slaves' celebration at Sabine Hall that year. "I can't but fancy that I have been quite happy in not letting my People keep any part of Christmas." Carter thought his strictness had averted a slave revolt.

### **Christmas Greetings**

Commercially printed Christmas cards first became available in 1843, but for many, many years previously people had written their holiday salutes to family and friends in letters. Even business communications sent toward the end of the year might include wishes for a happy Christmas and healthy New Year. The Christmas card's antecedents may be Christmas Pieces from the eighteenth century and up to 1840. These "Pieces" were large sheets of good quality writing paper with engraved borders. In the center of the pages schoolboys copied out, in their best possible penmanship, some seasonal tribute to their parents. The pupil's words were not the point; these were not compositions but displays of fine writing dutifully learned from the writing master. Thus far, I know only of English examples, but American pieces may yet come to light. Colonial



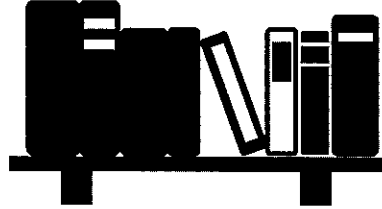
printers could easily have created them, and they certainly would have wanted to get in on this market.

### Modern Christmas

Like Christmas trees and Christmas cards, most of our favorite Christmas customs date from the nineteenth century. The writers Charles Dickens, Washington Irving, and Clement Clarke Moore freely interpreted

customs from other times and parts of the world—or created them out of the whole cloth. The nineteenth-century political cartoonist Thomas Nast drew a Santa Claus that any modern child would recognize and love. Eighteenth-century Christmases were certainly different from today's version, but most of us would feel right at home at a Victorian-era celebration. ❧

## BOOK REVIEWS

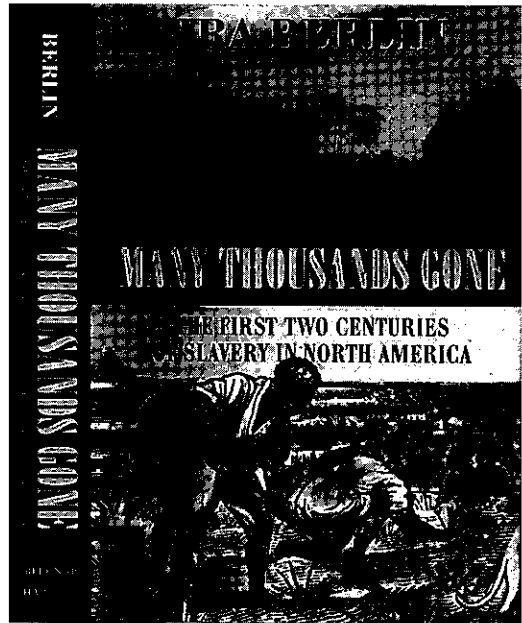


## Berlin's Two Concepts Of Slavery

Joyce E. Chaplin

Ira Berlin. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998. 512 pp. Figures, maps, tables, appendixes, notes, and index. \$29.95.

Thirty years ago, ambitious, doorstopper books on slavery concentrated on the antebellum era; today, they tend to focus on the colonial period. Ira Berlin's *Many Thousands Gone* joins Hugh Thomas's *The Slave Trade* (1997), Robin Blackburn's, *The Making of New World Slavery* (1997), and Philip D. Morgan's *Slave Counterpoint* (1998) in a recent spate of books about early slavery. These monographs take up the work pioneered by Winthrop Jordan and David Brion Davis to see how slavery and prejudice toward blacks were embedded in western European and then American culture. The shift away from the nineteenth century is evidence of the maturation of the field, in which origins of the peculiar institution and its global dimensions are of greater interest because they are still less understood than the forms of slavery which were dismantled during and after the Civil War. But this shift toward the early-modern period probably also represents a different generation's



examination of slavery. During the era of the civil rights movement, comprehension of the racism that had survived the Civil War seemed to support an ideal of the radical transformation of American society toward racial equality. Now, because that transformation has not entirely been achieved, scholars are looking more carefully at the early history of slavery, in order to understand why racial inequality may be so persistent.

Berlin opens his book by addressing this concern: "Of late, it has become fashionable to declare that race is a social con-

struction." The problem, Berlin points out, is that this scholarly contention "has won few practical battles. Few people believe it; fewer act on it. The new understanding of race has changed behavior little if at all" (p. 1). Why have the scales not fallen from our eyes? To trace the tenacity of racism, Berlin's examination of slavery's genesis necessarily also has to explain the emergence of racism. He therefore traces two patterns: how slavery came to be equivalent with enslavement of Africans, and how freedom did not guarantee racial equality. Berlin's goal is to demonstrate that, in early North America, slavery was a pervasive and little questioned institution whose increasingly close association with concepts of race made it difficult to root out its legacy. Slaves (and free blacks) lived everywhere, from northern cities to Louisiana plantations. In contrast, criticism of slavery was scattered, amorphous, and took too many different forms to build toward any effective assault on the institution. Further, because slavery became so closely identified with African ancestry race was significant not only as a way to justify the heritability of slavery, but also in the persistence of its legacy long past phases of emancipation that began in the north and then would—slowly and with violence—continue into the antebellum era.

To make these points, Berlin crafts a deft synthesis of the many regional studies that have slowly been changing our understanding of slavery. The model for such works has been Edmund Morgan's *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (1975), which used analysis of one colony's history of slavery to argue for the institution's ironic presence in American history. Berlin adopts the central viewpoint of such studies, which emphasize that the "peculiar institution" of the antebellum era was indeed peculiar to that era. Berlin observes that "at the beginning of the nineteenth century when this book concludes, the vast majority of black people, slave and free, did not reside in the blackbelt, grow cotton, or subscribe to Christianity" (p. 14). Slavery had a history, one that "can be best appreciated in terms of generations of captivity" that changed over time. There is no shortage of scholarly works since Morgan's that have shown how this was the case; the number of monographs and essays on the topic has exploded over the past two decades. But these are works that take on

one region (or compare two of them) and focus on a particular period of time. No one before Berlin has made sense of these works altogether, as a unified field of inquiry. There is originality in Berlin's synthesis, as historical events and cultural tendencies take on new and fresh meanings. Further, his distillation of the burgeoning field is highly valuable. It is a brilliant summary for general readers and newcomers to the field; it will be a standard work for graduate students preparing for exams, and many a burdened faculty member who needs a quick overview in order to prepare lectures will dog-ear its pages.

The book includes all parts of eastern North America between Mexico and Canada, from the early seventeenth century through the American Revolution. This large area is broken into the regions familiar to colonialists: the Chesapeake, the North (New England and the mid-Atlantic colonies), the Lowcountry (South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida), and the Lower Mississippi Valley. This range of places permits comparison between slavery in Spanish, British, and French colonies, as well as in a spectrum of climates that encouraged quite different economies. Berlin looks at each region through three large periods that he designates as generations: the charter generations, plantation generations, and revolutionary generations. These were not chronologically distinct units of time; rather, they represented different stages in the history of slavery which may have had different timing in a given region. Regional variation and progression from charter to revolutionary generations give a sense of the different characters of life, work, and freedom in different places.

The notion of generations is particularly insightful. Members of the charter generations were people who generally had adapted to Europeans under conditions less coercive than outright slavery; they knew several languages, had syncretic religious beliefs, and deployed hybrid identities. Berlin discusses some of these people at length, such as the irrepressible Francisco Menendez, a freed slave who was a military supporter of Spanish St. Augustine, and initial leader of the nearby free black town Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose (pp. 74–75). The plantation generations had considerably less autonomy. Instead, their lives were grim evidence of the convergence

between slavery and definitions of race; influxes of African captives generally paralleled increasingly harsh treatment of slaves, as whites subjugated all other goals to that of profitability. The revolutionary generations fought against this trend, helping to win freedom for blacks in the north, destabilizing slavery in plantation regions, and maintaining some autonomy and dignity for free blacks.

In order to make sense of these quite different generations and the varying regions they inhabited, Berlin distinguishes between forms of slavery the "two concepts" to which this review's title refers. These are not, however, categories he created, but are ones that scholars of new-world slavery have adopted from historians of the classical world (such as Moses Finley), a distinction drawn between societies with slaves and slave societies. This categorization was itself adopted from Karl Polanyi's distinction between societies with markets and market societies, and indicates that the mere presence of some (or even many) slaves was insufficient to create a society in which economic activity was dependent on slave labor, and social hierarchy based on racial categorization. In slave societies, "slavery stood at the center of economic production, and the master-slave relationship provided the model for all social relations" (p. 8). Berlin is careful, however, to deflate several myths about what dependence on slavery meant and where it existed. He points out that the northern colonies did become slave societies because certain areas within them (especially commercial centers) had a significant percentage of slaves among their workers. (Up to 30 percent of New York City's population was enslaved.) Nor were slave societies more brutal to slaves and more racist in their assumptions than were societies with slaves; regions that had less reliance on slavery than plantation areas were not predictably kinder to slaves. Finally, it was not the case that certain cultural elements (Catholicism versus Protestantism, English heritage versus Iberian heritage) automatically led to gentler treatment of slaves.

Berlin demonstrates that there is little to be gained by searching for a region in which slavery was "moderate" and racism muted. If conditions for people of African ancestry improved, it was usually due to their own efforts because they found few white allies in their struggle. Slavery was a new world insti-

tution, not one exclusive to plantation regions; thus racism became an American problem. Northern regions, urban settings—all the places supposedly inimical to slavery and racism were never anything of the sort. Berlin presents devastating examples of similarities between north and south. He points out that death rates for enslaved Africans were, at times, as high in the north as in the south, and that whites' disdain for people of African descent was often the same in all regions (pp. 186–87). Only independence brought improvement of blacks' lives, as measured by longevity and population growth (p. 249); as a predictor of long life and healthy children, the kindness of whites paled in comparison to the paramount benefit of freedom from whites.

Berlin further notes that the era of revolution took an only faltering step toward the erasure of slavery and racism. Certainly, political radicalism, black challenges to white authority, and the disruptions of war made it possible for slaves to offer more effective resistance and for free blacks to insist on their rights. But revolution provided no accelerating motor of change. In the north, slavery was brought to an end; elsewhere, revolutionary events had less consequence. Planters in the lower south who lost thousands of slaves during the war quickly expanded the Atlantic slave trade in order to replace workers. The revolution did almost nothing to hasten the growth of liberty in the Mississippi valley. And the slave rebellion in St. Domingue that created the republic of Haiti had the unintended consequence of shoring up slavery and sugar production on the continent, as whites who fled the revolution carried their prejudices and expertise to the United States.

Because of the staggering effort at synthesis that this book makes, it may be small-minded to point out what it does not do. But its omissions indicate that the field's original object of inquiry—antebellum slavery—continues to exercise a distorting influence on analysis of early slavery. By focusing on North America, and on enslavement of Africans, Berlin gives a rather skewed view of new world slavery. To look at North America alone is to participate in the myth of American exceptionalism, however modified and updated. Regarding North America as if it existed on its own does not recover or contribute to an understanding of the global context of slavery. Most signif-

icantly, it does not allow us to see what enslaved Africans were up against. It was not just that North America eventually created slave societies, but that these replicated other slave societies throughout the hemisphere, which perpetuated the demand for African captives that encouraged expansion of the slave trade. This transatlantic culture of slave-trading and slave-owning was what made criticism of slavery and the ability of black people to maneuver their way toward freedom so long in the making. Berlin takes only twelve pages to discuss the origins of Atlantic slavery and the spread of slave societies from Brazil and the Caribbean outward. He then moves into North America, where slavery and racism thereafter seem to develop as if there were no continuing, hemispheric context. This was not the way either whites or blacks in the Americas would have seen things—if anything, African captives (whether part of the charter generations or not) would have continued to have a cross-cultural, transatlantic perspective on their fate that is tremendously important for understanding their resistance.

Nor does the book give, despite its title, a complete analysis of slavery in North America. Berlin only in passing mentions enslavement of Native Americans. This omission means that his book's analysis of the slow but steady equation of slavery with Africans is incomplete. It is very likely that, during the seventeenth century, a colonist in New England, upon hearing the word "slave," would have thought of an Indian captive; during the early eighteenth century colonists in Carolina or Louisiana would have associated slavery with Indians as well as Africans. Indeed, as Berlin observes, slaves identified as Africans sometimes had Indian ancestry as well, which he takes as evidence of the noose closing around Africans. But closer attention to what enslavement of Indians represented would have explained more about slavery in North America, especially the experience of those different peoples who shared enslaved status.

Further, Berlin's deployment of the concept of paternalism (pp. 2–4) seems out of step with the spirit of the work, an unfortunate gesture toward old definitions of antebellum slavery. Paternalism is a concept whose revival (from the early-twentieth-century work of U. B. Phillips) dates from the post-civil rights era of examinations of ante-

bellum slavery. Specifically, it emerged in Eugene Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (1974), where it appeared as an explanation of the complex relations that existed between slaveholders and slaves, and has been hotly debated, if not decried, ever since. Paternalism indeed seems to carry residual respect for the ways in which slaveholders mythologized their mastery. It is telling that recent studies of the antebellum South have been both more affected by analysis of gender relations and less likely still to use the term paternalism; the personae of the Southern master who took seriously his responsibilities to his slaves (and his helpmeet, the racially blameless plantation mistress) have been dismissed from the stage. Comparable scholarship on the colonial period is still emerging, and analyses of gender have not done as much to critique the construct of paternalism. Moreover, Berlin's emphasis elsewhere on the fact that blacks always had to exert themselves to get better conditions, freedom, or respect makes slaveholders' decisions to negotiate with slaves seem beside the point. Berlin might have made a better point by identifying the few, atypical whites who were genuine critics of slavery and sympathetic to blacks.

In this regard, the omission of Canada from the study is particularly frustrating. It defies nature itself by slicing territory off the continent supposedly under study—the introductory map of "Mainland North America" (p.16) ends at the present-day border between the United States and Canada, in the same manner that Renaissance maps indicated the ends of the known earth. This makes no sense and begs rather than answers the question of how North America did manage to get rid of slavery. New France and British Canada were the products of the same European cultures that settled Louisiana and the English-speaking colonies. Yet Canada remained subject to British imperial control. It therefore became the part of North America that, even more than the antebellum north, presented a real haven for fugitive slaves and a true center of criticism of slavery. *Many Thousands Gone* has only four references to Canada, none of them amounting to substantive analysis, though there is a literature on blacks and slavery in Canada that could have been included. Stopping at the border was not in the spirit of Berlin's project and prevents his book



from crafting a distinctive view about slavery on the continent, a truly African-American history rather than an Afro-U.S.A. history. It also ducks the issue of how law and the state (meaning Great Britain) were able decisively to end slavery after the American Revolution, in contrast to what happened in the United States. The Canadian example would have supported Berlin's conclusions. The deep roots slavery had put down in the Americas made it impossible for blacks' resistance and whites' (grudging) skepticism about the institution to reform let alone abolish slavery. The state had to act, too. But even if Berlin does not make this point, he has brilliantly demonstrated its corollary: that blacks in the United States followed the North Star in order to escape the dishearteningly racist culture that prevailed on the rest of the continent. ☛

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## Before Cotton and Other Than Sugar: How Tobacco and Rice Shaped the World of Eighteenth-Century Slaves in British North America

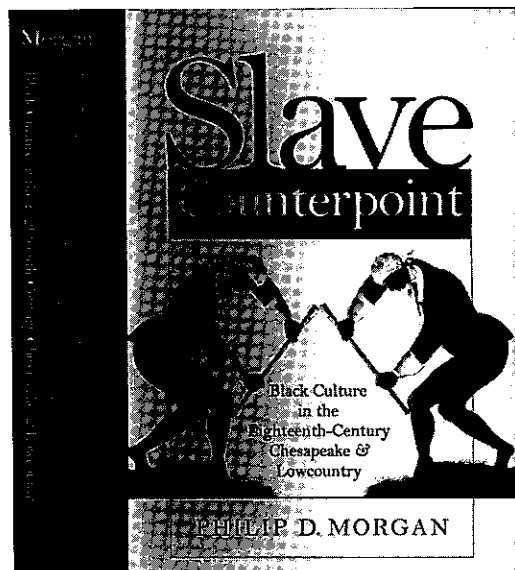
Paul G. E. Clemens

Philip D. Morgan. *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1998. xxiv + 703 pp. Illustrations, notes, maps, tables, graphs, and index. \$49.95 (cloth); \$21.95 (paper).

About halfway through Philip D. Morgan's lengthy, comparative study of slavery in the eighteenth-century Lowcountry

and Chesapeake, the author recounts David George's testimony of the violence inflicted on his family as slaves in Surry County Virginia: "After he [George's brother] had received 500 lashes or more [for running away], they washed his back with salt water, and whipped it in, as well as rubbed it with a rag, and then directly sent him to work in pulling off the suckers of tobacco" (p. 386). Several pages later, drawing on the work of Thomas Buckley, Morgan narrates the history of Thomas Wright, a Bedford County Virginia planter and of a "very black" woman, Sylvia, who was Wright's slave and with whom he lived "openly as man and wife."<sup>1</sup> Thomas and Sylvia had a mulatto child, Robert, who would eventually be freed and inherit the family estate. Thomas would also free Sylvia, as well as the children she had had with someone else. Robert would marry a white woman, in a union which, while illegal, was accepted by the community. It is one of the many virtues of *Slave Counterpoint* that such juxtapositioned snapshots continuously and purposefully destabilize Morgan's generalizations about slavery in the colonial South. These generalizations are the most carefully and firmly established we have to date about the eighteenth-century history of the "peculiar institution."

Three arguments provide the thematic unity for *Slave Counterpoint*. The first is that over the course of the eighteenth century black cultures in the Chesapeake (primarily Virginia) and Lowcountry (primarily coastal South Carolina) diverged from each other



because the ecologies of the two regions supported distinctive staple economies, tobacco and rice. Tied to this is a second argument: that both the Chesapeake and the Lowcountry were unique "places in time," distinguishable from the youthful frontier settlements of the seventeenth century, from antebellum Southern slavery, and from other slave regimes of the eighteenth century. Finally, Morgan argues that for most slaves material welfare and communal autonomy were inversely related, a contrast that helps distinguish slave culture in the Chesapeake (relatively better material conditions) from that in the Lowcountry (relatively greater autonomy vis-a-vis white society). None of this, perhaps, is too surprising, and the strength of Morgan's study does not lie in an arresting new interpretation of early American slavery. Rather, what distinguishes this work is massive research, judicious reconsideration of conflicting hypotheses, the imaginative formulation of categories of analysis, and lucid writing. He builds creatively on earlier scholarship, much of it his own, previously presented in important articles, as well as on that of Eugene Genovese, Peter Wood, and Sidney Mintz and Richard Price.<sup>2</sup> Working without the aid of the narratives of freed and fugitive slaves (the only substantial exception being Charles Ball's 1837 account of the late eighteenth century) which have done so much to enrich the literature on antebellum slavery, Morgan turns instead to evangelical church records, runaway advertisements, probate and court records, and plantation accounts. The result is social history at its best.

Rice and tobacco: "the shaping power of each staple," Morgan argues, "was . . . formidable" (p. 147). Rice proved most profitable when grown on large plantations by coerced workers forced to labor in the deadly disease environment of the Lowcountry. From these simple economic facts followed enormous human consequences. To expand production, planters bought as many African slaves, preferably young males, as they could. The Lowcountry slave population thus remained predominantly African until the 1780s, and many slave men remained single. The creation of large-scale plantations (800-900 acres, with more than 20 slaves, was the norm) pushed free white smallholders out of the Lowcountry and created, as Peter Wood has so aptly noted of

the Carolinas, a black majority. Because rice did not significantly exhaust the soil, and its cultivation required the water resources available only in the Lowcountry, planters and their slaves seldom moved. Slaves could thus build communities extending across generations, and as blacks so outnumbered whites and worked in rice fields where whites seldom ventured, they lived much of the time apart from their masters and free of direct white supervision. Slave culture thus remained both more African and more distinctively black than in the Chesapeake. On most plantations, slaves worked to complete specific tasks, directed by other blacks; the tasks completed, they had time to hunt, fish, or grow food crops (including rice) for themselves—an arrangement profitable for the planters which gave slaves greater autonomy but probably a less ample diet than in the Chesapeake.

The cultivation of tobacco on Chesapeake plantations was an altogether different matter. Tobacco was not a crop necessarily associated with slavery, but because of the length of the growing season, slaves could be kept profitably employed at tending it (though much less profitably than at rice cultivation). Plantations were considerably smaller than those of the Lowcountry, and by the eighteenth century, most Virginia planters grew a more diversified mix of crops than their Carolina counterparts. Fieldwork was tedious rather than grueling: "rice was a roller coaster, tobacco a slow-moving train" (p. 203); it required considerably more care on the part of the workers; and usually was supervised by whites (who often worked alongside their slaves). Unlike in the Lowcountry, a large population of non-slaveowning whites made their living from the staple crop. The growth of the white population as well as soil exhaustion pushed settlement and tobacco cultivation into the Piedmont, while rice cultivation was contained along the Carolina and Georgia coast.

In the Chesapeake as in the Lowcountry, Morgan's concern is with the human consequences of economics: African slaves were initially bought one at a time or in small lots and lived in close proximity with whites. African kinship ties and cultural roots were thus more difficult to maintain than in the Lowcountry Estate sales and the geographic mobility of white planters broke up slave families more frequently, and the smaller

scale of plantations meant that most slaves married slaves on other estates. In the healthier environment of the Chesapeake (and with fewer new slaves imported from Africa), second-generation creoles became a majority far earlier than in the Lowcountry, and acculturation occurred more fully and more quickly. The more diversified agriculture provided a better diet for slaves, but the impermanence of many smaller farms meant that slave housing was often less substantial than in the Lowcountry. The existence of a large class of non-slaveholding whites helped create a more refined civic culture which, Morgan argues, probably lessened the incidence of sadistic brutality toward blacks.

This contrast between black cultures in rice and tobacco economies is initially established in Part I of *Slave Counterpoint: "Two Plantation Worlds."* Here Morgan carefully cements in place the environmental, economic, and demographic facts that will help frame subsequent discussions of encounters between whites and blacks and of black life under slavery. While pursuing the contrasts between Virginia and Carolina, he also notes the commonalities. In both societies, fieldwork (and much housework) was drudgery, even when its successful accomplishment brought self-esteem. In both societies, women were more likely than men to be fieldworkers, and those women who "escaped" the fields were more likely than men to be assigned equally laborious work, such as washing, in the plantation house. In both societies, slaves possessed few material goods, dressed poorly, did not eat as well as whites, and were often expected to fashion their own shelter. Yet finding what was common to most slaves is often a very elusive quest. How does one reconcile the evidence, extracted from newspaper advertisements describing runaway slaves, that slaves decorated coarse linen clothing with brightly colored additions, with the observations that many slaves wore virtually nothing at all?

Morgan opens Part II ("Encounters between Whites and Blacks") of *Slave Counterpoint* with a discussion of the relationship between slaveowners and their slaves; in doing so, he enters the tangled historiographic debate over "paternalism." Master-slave relations, he argues, changed over the eighteenth century from an "austere patriarchalism" to a "mellow paternal-

ism" (pp. 259, 295–96), even as planters imposed on their slaves a "deprivation of freedom so extreme as to be qualitatively different than other forms of unfreedom" (p. 261). Alongside a "matter-of-fact" attitude toward the infliction of violent punishment on slaves, slavery could "encompass within it warm and caring human relationships" (p. 269). Morgan is especially good at analyzing the language planters used to describe slaves; he notes that whereas eighteenth-century planters often wrote about their slaves as if they were perpetual children, their seventeenth-century counterparts had expected slaves to be rebellious, disgruntled, and dangerous. But it is difficult for the reader, based on Morgan's evidence, to determine the role of violence in maintaining slavery; to establish when and if violence was caused by the frustration of paternalist assumptions; and to judge whether white men, who wrote about paternalism when describing some aspects of their lives, acted from these same motives when they brutalized slaves. Yet where other historians have seen paternalism as the central relationship defining the lives of slave and slaveowner, for Morgan it is only one aspect, however crucial, of black culture and of black lives that were often lived separate from those of their white owners.

Having deftly characterized the economic transactions and social activities—from sex to religion, from violence to "higgling" in the Charleston marketplace—that brought whites and blacks together, Morgan turns in Part III to "The Black World." Chapter 8, devoted to "encounters" in African American societies, is striking in its originality, and for this reader at least, the high point of the book. Rather than talk about black society as a whole, Morgan explores "five key social relationships": those among Africans, between Creoles and Africans, among Creoles, between Creoles and Indians, and between slaves and free blacks. Particularly striking is Morgan's evidence that most free blacks lived lives only a step away from reenslavement; that whites were not always successful in playing off Creole slaves against Indians; and that, for many Africans, enslavement shrouded their lives in a "rift of incomprehension" (p. 463). This chapter reinforces my sense that colonial slavery might best be understood as a series of negotiations between particular groups in a particular social structure, not

all of which can be captured under any one rubric such as "paternalism."

Morgan's discussion of "Family Life," buttressed by exhaustive demographic research, builds on work done by Herbert Gutman and Allan Kulikoff.<sup>3</sup> He demonstrates that two-parent households predominated in Carolina, and that single-parent households, with the second parent living on another plantation, were the norm in the Chesapeake, while in both regions, over time a growing percentage of all slaves lived in families. He is also able to establish the crucial importance of extended kinship connections among African American slaves, and he speculates about the casual relationship, if any, between West African and African American kinship practices. The most striking aspect of the chapter is Morgan's argument that slave men held the "upper hand" in slave marriages. Husbands were usually older than their wives, traveled more often and farther away from the plantation, and were more likely to do skilled work and teach these skills to their sons. Mothers seldom gave their name to their daughters; fathers often gave their name to sons. If we assume that asking who held the upper hand between husbands and wives is the appropriate question to pose about the family life of slaves (and there is some evidence that slaves looked at the situation this way), what this section lacks is a fuller discussion of the relationship of race and gender, a discussion which would draw from the rich literature that uses gender analysis to ask new questions about early American life.

Morgan concludes his study by arguing that while slave cultures in the Chesapeake and Lowcountry were distinctly shaped by the differing ecological and economic characteristics of the regions, these African American cultures shared a "grammar of culture." With this assertion, he begins a thoughtful probe of the contentious literature on the "African carryover" in the African American cultures of the American colonial South. Morgan positions himself midway between the contention that enslavement destroyed African cultures in the Americas and the claim that African culture systems shaped the culture of New World slaves.

He advances two arguments to secure the middle ground. First, he notes that African cultures were quite adaptable, and thus their transformation in the Americas was to

be expected. This point is illustrated particularly well by Morgan's discussion of the way the "lesser spirits," those most directly concerned in African religions with human actions, took on greater import in the New World, increasingly becoming associated with doing harm rather than with benevolence. Second, he acknowledges that many of the most visible signs of culture were lost (for example, the vocabulary of African languages), but at a structural level, much was retained (in the case of languages, grammar and phonology). Retention of the "grammar of culture" made African American cultures distinctive, regardless of how "African" they seemed. Such a position is, of course, surely impossible to prove conclusively, and as Morgan himself acknowledges, much that may have been African may also be explained as a practical response by slaves to the environment of the Lowcountry or the Chesapeake.

Morgan's discussion leaves one convinced that however African eighteenth-century Chesapeake and Lowcountry black cultures were, such cultures were decidedly not Christian, and not, therefore, extensions of white culture. Anglicans seldom proselytized among the slaves, and evangelical Protestants, whose inroads into African American life in late-eighteenth-century Virginia has been studied to exhaustion, simply did not reach most blacks. In correcting the overemphasis of other historians on the impact of evangelical Protestantism on eighteenth-century African Americans, Morgan has made the study of early slave culture more difficult (for the evangelical sources are among the best available), while highlighting how the early nineteenth century (when evangelicals had significantly greater success) differed from the eighteenth century.

*Slave Counterpoint* is the finest, most comprehensive work we have in the field of early American slavery. It adds significance to the work of Peter Wood, Allan Kulikoff, Mechal Sobel, and others by providing a comparative and interpretative context in which to evaluate their conclusions, and for this reason, it will and should be read by most early Americanists and by those interested in the history of slavery. But in this era of ever-increasing specialization, are other historians likely to purchase, let alone read, a 700-page book outside their field? Perhaps not, but I think there is a compelling reason

to consult Morgan's study. Much of what we today write finds its way to the public in lectures to undergraduates. In two major ways *Slave Counterpoint* changes the model we use to teach American history. Despite the now-classic studies of Peter Wood (*Black Majority*) and Richard Dunn (*Sugar and Slaves*), the British settlement of early American is still presented in survey courses primarily as a contrast between New England and the Chesapeake. The explicit comparisons Morgan presents between the Chesapeake and the Lowcountry make it very difficult to write off the Lower South or, for that matter, the British Caribbean. One would hope that Morgan's work will lead scholars on to such studies as Peter Coclanis's *The Shadow of a Dream: Economic Life and Death in the South Carolina Low Country, 1670-1920* (1989) and Joyce Chaplin's *An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation & Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815* (1993).

In the almost four hundred years that Euro-Americans maintained slaveholding regimes in the Americas, most African Americans experienced slavery as either sugar or cotton workers. By focusing on societies in which black labor produced rice and tobacco, Morgan greatly complicates the story of the colonial past, even at the

level of generalization we customarily associate with survey teaching. As we rework our notions of the past to recognize the diversity of the American experience, Morgan's study allows us to see the eighteenth century as something more than a precursor to the nineteenth. ♡

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1. Morgan, p. 403, from Thomas E. Buckley, S.J., "Unfixing Race: Class, Power, and Identity in an Interracial Family," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, CII (1994): 345-50.

2. Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (1974); Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (1974); Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *An Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past: A Caribbean Perspective* (1976).

3. Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (1976); Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (1986).

Clemens, Paul G. E.. Before Cotton and Other than Sugar: How Tobacco and Rice Shaped the World of Eighteenth-Century Slaves in British North America. *Reviews in American History*. 27 (1999): pp. 1-7. © 1999. The Johns Hopkins University Press



## COOK'S CORNER

by Laura Arnold

*Laura is a member of the interpreter planning board and is a volunteer for this publication.*

As part of Williamsburg's three hundredth anniversary celebrations, an exhibit at the Swem Library of the College of William and Mary chronicles the city during the nineteenth century. This is the century in which the once vibrant capital city supposedly "went to sleep." True, power and pomp moved with the business of government to Richmond, but because of the college, the county courts, and the mental

hospital, Williamsburg was wide awake during the quieter second century of its existence.

When the nineteenth century began, St. George Tucker was establishing his reputation as a lawyer, teacher, and political servant from his house on Market Square. As the century ended, one of his descendants, Cynthia Beverley Tucker Coleman along with her friend Mary Jeffery Galt, formed the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (A.P.V.A.), the organization devoted to preserving Virginia's his-

tory. The Magazine across Market Square from the Tucker house was a constant reminder to these women of Williamsburg's place in the history of the nation as well as Virginia. The story of the Tucker-Coleman women is unusual because of their community activism, and their personal papers (now part of the Special Collections at the Swem Library) give a glimpse of family life and female roles as Williamsburg reverted to a typical small southern town.

Among the Tucker-Coleman papers is a cookbook whose faded, fragile pages and handwritten recipes reveal more than how to make a particular dish. This manuscript cookbook of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter, born in 1805, probably first belonged to her mother, Frances Bland Tucker Coalter. Whoever copied the recipes noted who had given her the recipe: Mrs. Randolph, Miss Bowdoin, Mrs. Peachy, Mrs. Skipwith, Mrs. Madison, names that give the cookbook a touch of social history as well. Recipes for sweets and breads predominate, but there are also instructions for making candles, soap, medicines, soup, and some meat dishes. Examining the cookbook makes us want to ask these women how often they entertained each other in their homes and what brought them together. Was it social occasions driven by neighborly friendship or the position of their husbands or fathers in the hierarchy of the town? Did the inclusion of costly ingredients in many of the recipes (citrus fruits, coconut, French brandy) indicate that these were recipes saved and used for special events? Unfortunately, there are no specific answers to these questions, and we can only wonder if Cynthia Coleman and Mary Galt persuaded their friends to support the formation of the A.P.V.A. by serving them one of the following recipes, taken from Frances Bland Tucker Coalter's book.

#### LEMON PUDDING OR CHEESECAKE

Weigh 8 oz. Of Sugar & 6 oz. Of Butter. Pare the yellow rind of 3 large lemons as thin as possible put them in a mortar with 2 spoonfuls of broken biscuit (or 3 if you wish them less rich) and a little of the sugar and beat them very fine—set your butter before the fire to melt—beat light the yolks of 10 eggs and after mixing with them the other ingredients put in the butter with the juice of 3 lemons—Lay a paste in your dish or patty pans and partially fill them and bake.

("Paste" refers to a pastry made with butter or lard.)

#### CAKES FOR TEA (MRS. PEACHY)

To each pint of flour put 2 oz. Butter & the yolk of 1 egg—Work them well together and then put in cold water to make a stiff paste—Break a pint into 12 or 14 parts, roll each with the hand into a ball; and then with a rolling pin roll out each to the size of a dessert plate—Bake quickly on a hoe or gridle & dip them in melted butter—6 oz. of butter will be necessary for a pint—The more quickly these (and all such things are done) the better they are.

#### COCANUT PUDDING

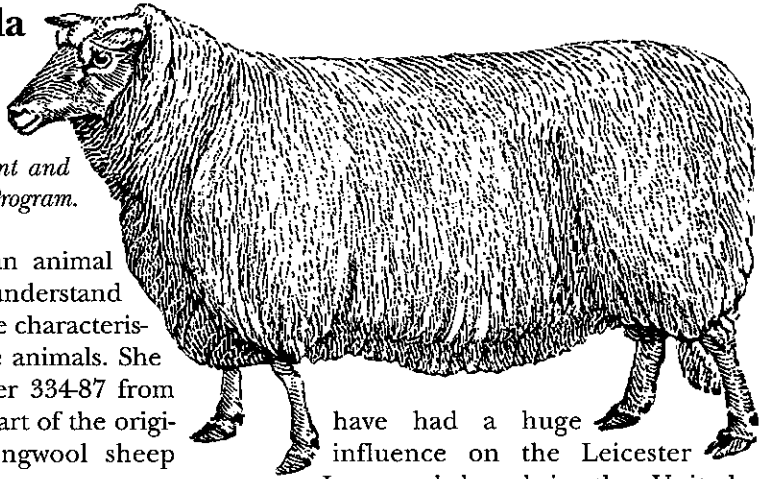
Grate one large or two small nuts overnight (as it is tedious to grate) one pound of loaf sugar sifted fine, ten yolks of eggs and three whites, beat them very light, add one table spoonful of butter creamed. Mix your nut in just before it is put in the oven. Bake it in a paste.



# Requiem for Sheila

by Elaine Shirley

*Elaine is an interpreter in the Coach and Livestock Department and is in charge of the Rare Breeds Program.*



Every once in a while an animal comes along who seems to understand you, who exhibits human-like characteristics. Sheila was one of those animals. She came to us with the number 334-87 from halfway around the world, part of the original flock of Leicester Longwool sheep brought from Tasmania almost ten years ago. As we started the job of naming our sheep (who came from flocks so large they have more than 350 lambs a year), we came up with a lot of "cute" names including Irresistible Ewe or Irreplaceable Ewe. I felt that one ewe ought to be named Sheila, the common nickname for females in Australia. She was anything but common! Sheila proved to be irresistible, a very friendly sheep, always following us around. She became an ambassador, making several trips to the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival and the Virginia State Fair, and we used her in countless situations when we needed a quiet, friendly sheep.

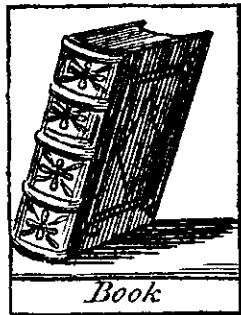
Sheila have had a huge influence on the Leicester Longwool breed in the United States. Her sons include Pollux, Domino, Ed, and Clancy, all of whom produced numerous offspring themselves.

Sheila died in April 1999 due to complications from lambing and probably kidney failure. She will be sorely missed by the shepherds who have cared for her. There are still three females surviving from the original flock, one in Maryland, one in New York, and one in Virginia. Sheila was the last original ewe still here at Colonial Williamsburg. Although we will miss her, we can always look at almost any Leicester Longwool pedigree and see Meltonvale 334-87's influence. A huge Thank You goes to Sheila for helping to make the Leicester Longwool a success in Colonial Williamsburg's Rare Breeds Program. ♡

Over the years here in the "colonies," Sheila produced 16 lambs, including six sets of twins and a set of triplets. Her offspring

## Books for Children on Slavery

Janice McCoy  
Memorial  
Collection  
Rockefeller  
Library



Adams, Russell L.  
*Great Negroes, Past and Present*

Anderson, Joan  
*Williamsburg Household*

Bial, Raymond  
*The Strength of These Arms: Life in the Slave Quarters*

Collier, Christopher  
*The Paradox of Jamestown: 1585-1700*  
and James Lincoln Collier  
*Who is Carrie?*

Conley, Kevin  
*Benjamin Banneker*

Dobler, Lavinia G.  
*Pioneers and Patriots: The Lives of Six Negroes of the Revolutionary Era*

Emert, Phyllis Raybin  
*Colonial Triangular Trade: An Economy Based on Human Misery*

Green, Richard L.  
*Salute to Historic Black Abolitionists*

Hakim, Joy  
*Liberty for All? War, Terrible War*

Haskins, James  
*Bound for America: The Forced Migrations of Africans to the New World*

Pickford, Susan Bassler  
*Antonio's La Amistad*

Piggins, Carol Ann  
*A Multicultural Portrait of the Civil War*

Porter, Connie Rose  
*Meet Addy: An American Girl*

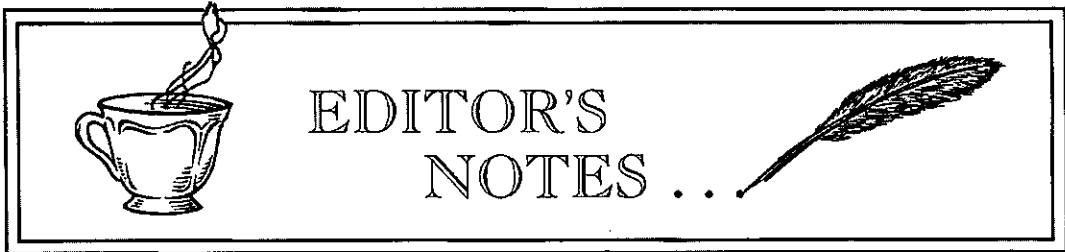
Richmond, Merle A.  
*Phillis Wheatley*

Russell, Sharman Apt  
*Frederick Douglass*

Shackelford, Jane Dabney  
*Child's Story of the Negro*

Sisson, Mary Barr  
*The Gathering Storm: From the Framing of the Constitution to Walker's Appeal*

Taifa, Nkechi  
*Shining Legacy: A Treasury of "Storypoems And Tales For The Young So Black Heroes Forever Will Be Sung"*



We owe a great deal of thanks to our volunteer, Laura Arnold, for her help in packing, unpacking, and organizing all of the past issues of the *interpreter* during my recent office move. Thanks, too, to Laura and her husband Bob for distributing the copies of

the *interpreter* to Colonial Williamsburg staff throughout the Foundation, and for readying the copies for our mail-out audience. We are very fortunate to have such a great volunteer!

