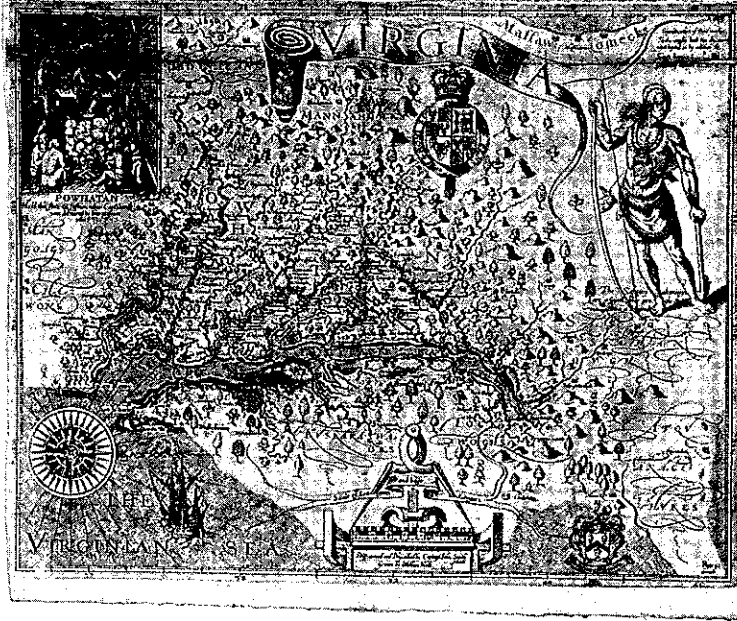


# Interpreter

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COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

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Map of Virginia, black and white line engraving on laid paper; Captain John Smith, cartographer; William Hole, engraver; England, 1624; originally published 1612. Funds donated by Mrs. Anna Glen B. Vietor, for purchase in memory of her husband, Alexander O. Vietor (The Acorn Foundation).

## Jamestown 1607—In Their Own Words

### The Fleet Fell from London

*On Saturday the twentieth of December in the year 1606, the fleet fell from London, and the fifth of January we anchored in the Downes; but the winds continued contrary for so long, that we were forced to stay there some time, where we suffered great storms, but by the skillfulness of the Captain we suffered no great loss or danger.*

—From Master George Percy, *Observations gathered out of a Discourse of the Plantation of the Southerne Colonie in Virginia by the English, 1606.*

### Of Fair Meadows and Goodly Tall Trees

*The six and twentieth of April, about four o'clock in the morning, we decried the Land of Virginia: the same day we entered into the Bay of Chesapeake directly, without any let or hindrance; there we landed and discovered a little way, but we could find nothing worth the speaking of, but fair meadows and goodly tall Trees, with such Fresh-waters running through the woods, as I was almost ravished at the first sight thereof.*

—George Percy

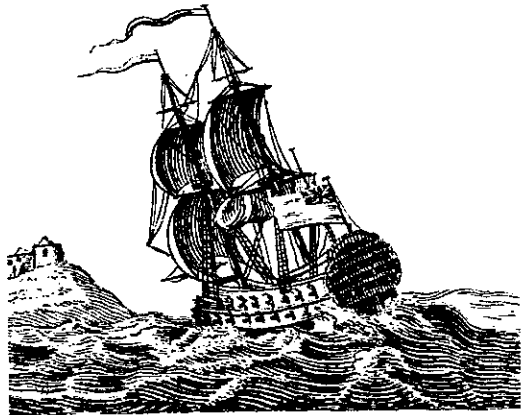
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## Roasting Oysters

*The seven and twentieth day [of April] we began to build up our Shallop: the Gentlemen and Soldiers marched eight miles up into the Land, we could not see a Savage [This usage reflects English attitudes and terminology of the period.] in all that march, we came to a place where they had made a great fire, and had been newly roasting Oysters: when they perceived our coming, they fled away to the Mountains, and left many of the Oysters in the fire: we ate some of the Oysters, which were very large and delicate in taste.*

—George Percy



## Our Ships . . . are Moored to the Trees in Six Fathom Water

*The thirteenth day [of May], we came to come to our seating place in Paspighas Country [The Paspahagh lived in the area of the Jamestown settlement and beyond and spoke a dialect of an Algonquian language], some eight miles from the point of Land, which I made mention before: where our ships do lie so near the shore that they are moored to the Trees in six fathom water.*

—George Percy

## We . . . named that Place Cape Henry

*The nine and twentieth day [of April] we set up a Cross at Chesapeake Bay, and named that place Cape Henry. Thirtieth day, we came with our ships to Cape Comfort; where we saw five Savages running on the shore. Presently the Captain caused the shallop to be manned, so rowing to the shore, the Captain called to them in sign of friendship, but they were at first very timersome, until they saw the Captain lay his hand on his heart: upon that they laid down their Bows and Arrows, and came very boldly to us, making signs to come ashore to their Town, which is called by the Savages Kecoughtan [in present day Hampton].*

—George Percy

## A Point of Land Called Archers Hope

*The twelfth day [of May] we went back to our ships, and discovered a point of Land, called Archers Hope [present College Creek in Williamsburg], which was sufficient with a little labor to defend ourselves against any Enemy. The soil was good and fruitful, with excellent good Timber. There are also great store of Vines in Bigness of a man's thigh, running up to the tops of the Trees in great abundance. We also did see many Squirrels, Conies [rabbits], Black Birds with crimson wings, and divers other Fouls and Birds of diverse and sundry colors of crimson, Watchet [light blue], Yellow, Greene, Murry, and of diverse other hues naturally without any art using.*

—George Percy

## The Fourteenth Day [of May 1607] We Landed

*The fourteenth day [of May] we landed all our men which were set to work about the fortification, and others some to watch and ward as it was convenient. The first night of our landing, about midnight, there came some Savages sailing close to our quarter: presently there was an alarm given; upon that the Savages ran away, and we not troubled any more by them that night. Not long after there came two Savage that seemed to be Commanders, bravely dressed, with Crowns of colored hair upon their heads, which came as Messengers from the Werowance of Paspighae; telling us that their Werowance was coming and would be merry with us with a fat Deer.*

—George Percy

## This River . . . is One of the Famous-est Rivers that ever was Found

[May 20] This River [the James] which we have discovered is one of the famous-est Rivers that ever was found by any Christian, it ebbs and flows a hundred and threescore miles where ships of great burthen may harbor in safety. Where-so-ever we landed upon this River we saw the goodliest Woods as Beech, Oke, Cedar, Cypress, Walnuts, Sassafras and Vines in great abundance, which hang in great clusters on many Trees, and other Trees unknown, and all the grounds bespred with many sweet and delicate flowers of diverse colors and kinds. There are also many fruits as Strawberries, Mulberries, Rasberries and Fruits unknown, there are many branches of this River, which run flowing through the Woods with great plenty of fish of all kinds, as for Sturgeon, all the World cannot be compared to it. In this Country I have seen many great and large Meadows, having excellent good pasture for any Cattle. There is also great store of Deer, both Red and Fallow. There are Bears, Foxes, Otters, Beavers, Muskrats, and wild beasts unknown.

—George Percy

## Naming it Kings River

This four and twentieth day [May] we set up a Cross at the head of this River, naming it Kings River, where we proclaimed James King of England to have the most right unto it. When we had finished and set up our Cross, we shipped our men and made for James Fort.

—George Percy

## They are Not to be Caught with Frying Pans!

[Summer 1608] Somewhere along the west side of the Bay before reaching the mouth of the Rappahannock, they saw an

abundance of fish [possibly menhaden] lying so thick with their heads above the water as for want of nets (our barge driving amongst them) we attempted to catch them with a frying pan, but we found it a bad instrument to catch fish with: Neither better fish, more plenty, nor more variety for small fish had any of us ever seen in any place so swimming in the water than in the Bay Chesapeack, but they are not to be caught with frying pans!

—From John Smith, *The General Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles*



Gardner and Barrow

## Bothy's Mould

Presenting the latest dirt (mould) from the gardener's hut (bothy).

## Tall Tales: A Cultural History of North American Trees (Part II)

by Wesley Greene

Wesley is a garden historian in the Landscape Department. You can often find him in costume in the Colonial Garden across the street from Bruton Parish Church.

In an earlier edition of the *Interpreter* (Summer 2006), we examined the timber trees of eastern North America and their uses as export products and in the trades. We also have a wealth of flowering trees native to Virginia that were admired by colonial plant collectors and are used to ornament Virginia gardens to this day.

One of the most notable flowering trees—the state flower of Virginia—is the dogwood, *Cornus florida*. The common name does not refer to the

canine but seems to be rooted in the Celtic word *dag* or *dagge*, the same root word for dagger and alludes to the very hard wood that was used for fashioning dagges, a pointed tool.

William Turner first applied the term to a member of the *Cornus* genus, in this case the European *Cornus mas*, or cornelian cherry, when he recorded in *The Name of Herbs* (1548) that “the butchers make prickles of it, some call it Gad-rise or dog tree.” This very hard, close-grained wood has been employed in many types of tools and measuring devices over the centuries.

The typical dogwood is white flowered but very occasionally a pink form occurs in nature. In 1737, Peter Collinson, a London woolen

merchant, wrote to John Custis in Williamsburg concerning a pink dogwood that Mark Catesby had found while staying in Williamsburg.

Mr. Catesby Gives His Humble service and is under Great Concern for fear the race of that Curious peach colored Dogwood is lost without you have One in your Garden. He says most of them that He had transplanted from the mother tree in Mr. Jones garden was destroyed by Fire but he thinks one or two was saved & he brought and planted In your garden.

Custis replied in 1738:

as for the peach colored Dogwood Mr. Catesby mentions, I had two in my garden but they never bloomed, I sent them to you by Capt. Cant with some other trees; but it was his hard fare and ours to have the ship overset the voyage: and so lost all. I have enquired of all our woodsmen and offered a reward but could never see any myself nor could any of those people that often range the woods; they are all of the same opinion as I am that it is the common dogwood in decay which makes them look reddish.

This brings into question whether or not there is such a thing as a pink dogwood. The English were familiar with the hawthorn whose white blossoms take on a pinkish hue as they senesce and, indeed, our white dogwood often acquires a pinkish tinge as the flowers fade.

The pink form of the dogwood was not listed in Philip Miller's 1754 edition of *The Gardeners Dictionary*, the most authoritative horticultural work of the eighteenth century, but it was recognized in the 1768 edition: "There is a variety of this with a red involucre or cover to the flowers, which adds to the beauty of the plant; this was found wild in Virginia by Mr. Banister, and afterward by Mr. Catesby."

Mr. Catesby had, indeed, found a pink dogwood, but he was not the first. The Rev. John Banister botanized the flora of Virginia from 1678 until his death in 1692. He described the dogwood as, "Cornus flosculus plurimis albidis ex involucre tetrapetal rubro erumpentibus." This roughly translates as "a dogwood with whitish florets surrounded by four bracts with a reddish erupting color."

The petals that most people associate with the dogwood are actually bracts. The reddish color "erupting" from the bracts is actually a very good description in that the bases of the bracts are generally white, and the red color intensifies toward the outer end of the bracts.

The most admired of our native flowering trees was the southern magnolia, *Magnolia grandiflora*. This large evergreen with its platter-sized

white flowers is a wonder to our northern guests even today. Philip Miller wrote in *The Gardeners Dictionary* (1754):

the leaves of this tree . . . are of shining-green on their upper-side and of a Russet or Buff-colour on their Under-side: these leaves continue all the Year; so that this is one of the most beautiful evergreen Trees yet known. There was a great Number of young plants in England before the Year 1739; but a great Part of them were destroyed by that severe Winter; and since then, there have been few good Seeds sent to England; so that there are very few of these to be purchased at present; and almost every Person who is curious in Gardening is desirous to have some of these beautiful Trees in the Gardens, so the Demand for them of late has greatly increased their Value.

The smaller cousin of the southern magnolia is the sweet bay or swamp bay magnolia, *Magnolia virginiana*. Robert Beverly recorded in *The History and Present State of Virginia* (1705), "There is also found the fine Tulip-bearing Laurel-Tree, which has the pleasantest Smell in the World. . . . It delights much in Gravelly Branches of Chrystal Streams and perfumes the very Woods with its Odour." The flowers have a fresh, lemony fragrance.

The *Natural History* (circa 1730), incorrectly attributed to William Byrd II, recorded: "Fragrant tulip-bearing laurel tree. . . . Everyone has some of these trees in his gardens and around the house, for ornament and pleasure." The sweet bay magnolia is still one of the premier landscape trees in Virginia gardens.

The magnolia genus represents a sort of evolutionary half-step in plant taxonomy. Our most ancient trees (other than tree ferns) are classed as gymnosperms, or the naked seed family. This is represented primarily by the cone-bearing plants such as pine, spruce, hemlock, and fir. The angiosperms, or fleshy seed plants, such as the apple are later developments. The magnolia family produces a woody seed pod that holds fleshy seeds within its scales, seemingly an intermediate step.

At one time magnolias were found throughout the northern hemisphere but during the Pliocene epoch the ice sheets that covered much of the northern hemisphere drove all of those old magnolia forests into extinction with the exception of portions of the east coast of North America and the east coast of Asia, which were not covered by glaciers. Today, the only places in the world that magnolias are represented are in these two areas.

The redbud, *Cercis canadensis*, is one of the first signs of spring in the Virginia woods, flowering just before, and for a short time, with, the dogwood. This tree was first described by Spaniard Francisco Hernandez during a 1571–1575 voyage to America. John Brickell, who wrote the *Natural History of North Carolina* (1737), recorded, “The Red-bud tree, so called from its red Buds; it bears a beautiful purple Lark-heel Flower, and makes the most agreeable and best Salad of any Flowers I have ever met with.”

This culinary use of the flower seemed to be a very common practice in America and was noted by many authors, both here and in England. In *The Gardeners Dictionary* (1768), Philip Miller wrote, “the flowers of this sort are frequently put into salads by the inhabitants of America; and the French in Canada pickle the flowers. I have tried them myself and while they make an attractive presentation, they have no flavor at all that I can detect.”

You will occasionally hear the redbud referred to as the Judas tree reflecting the legend that this was the tree on which Judas Iscariot hanged himself. It is said that the tree was originally white and blushed pink in shame. A redbud native to the Middle East (*C. silaquastrum*) has flowers colored very much like our native species. To call our tree the Judas tree would, of course, involve a transatlantic blush. Actually, this name seems to come from the French *l'arbre de Judée* or tree of Judea. Miller applied the name to our tree as well, calling it the “Canada Arbor Judæ.” This was corrupted to give us Judas tree.

The fringe tree, *Chionanthus virginicus*, which blooms just after the dogwood, has been designated as the commemoration tree of the 400th anniversary of the settlement at Jamestown. Peter Collinson wrote to John Custis, in 1735, to request “Another Flowering shrub which grows with you which I very much Want Wee call it here the Fringe Tree for the Flowers are white and so Lacerated they seem like a Fringe or shreds of Holland or narrow scraps of white paper. I have seen it Flower In England but it is scarce Here.” It was one of the many flowering plants illustrated in Mark Catesby’s *Natural History of Carolina*.

The sourwood, *Oxydendrum arboretum*, is one of the most common understory plants on the coastal plain of Virginia, but it really comes into its glory in the mountains. In 1735, Peter Collinson wrote to John Custis to request “Mr. Catesby tell Mee there is a very pretty plant that He calls a sorrel Tree that Grows between Williamsburgh & York. Some seed wil be Acceptable.”

Philip Miller recorded in *The Gardeners Dictionary* (1754): “Sorrel Tree, the whole Plant has an Acid Taste; from whence it received the Name of Sorrel-tree. This Plant is propagated by Seeds, which must be obtained from America; for they are never perfected in this Country.” This was true for many North American trees grown in England. Because they seldom ripen seed, the English were dependent on American collectors to replenish their seed stocks.

The shadblow, *Amelanchier arborea*, was, curiously, overlooked by most plant collectors of the eighteenth century. It was fairly common throughout the coastal plain and produced masses of white flowers, making it somewhat conspicuous. John Clayton, whose collections were compiled and published as the *Flora Virginica* by Gronovius in Lieden, Holland (the last edition published in 1762), collected a specimen. He described it as “bearing bunches of white five leaved flowers exactly like those of the Hawthorne” and classed it as *Mespilus inermis*, which was the hawthorn genus before



“Little Black Bulfinch with Fringe Tree,”  
from Mark Catesby, *The Natural History of Carolina* (1771).

Linnaeus renamed it *Crataegus*. The plant received the name shadblow because it blooms, or blows, when shad run upstream to spawn.

The shadblow is occasionally known as the serviceberry, a name more properly applied to its cousin *Amelanchier laevis*. The alternate name is most likely borrowed from the *Sorbus* genera that have long been known as services in Europe. Both trees produce a red edible fruit. However, some claim the name stems from the fact that it blooms when the snow comes off the mountain passes—the time traveling preachers were able to conduct the first services of the year.

The catalpas, *Catalpa speciosa*, planted along Palace Green represent one of the first municipal street tree plantings in British North America. We know that on December 15, 1737, an invoice was prepared at the Palace stating “that there be paid to Mr. Philip Fench the Sum of Ten pounds for laying and planting the Avenue to the Governor’s House.” Unfortunately, it does not tell us what the planting was.

In 1779, during his residence at the Palace as the second governor of the state of Virginia, Jefferson recorded “The rows of trees 100 ft. apart, ranging with the inner fronts of offices.” He did not identify them. Finally, in 1782, French General de Lauberdier, while staying at the Wythe House, recorded in his diary, “The Governor of Virginia also had a very fine palace, built at the extremity of a handsome street planted with Catalpas.”

One of the rarer of our native flowering trees is the silverbell, *Halesia leptoptera*. Last spring, my wife was taking a group of gardeners on a walk along the Piankatank River identifying native plants. When she got home she told me that they had found a whole ravine of silverbell trees. I replied that this could not be possible. The silverbell is known in Virginia from only six counties; all of them clustered around Mt. Rogers, hundreds of miles away.

I then suggested a number of plants that she might actually have found. I have been married

long enough to know better than this. When she took me to the site the following weekend, we found approximately thirty silverbell trees right where she said they were!

What is most intriguing about this find is its possible connection to John Clayton. Clayton was the most sophisticated of the eighteenth-century American botanists, but he is nearly invisible in the historic record. We have only a handful of his correspondence. His entire life’s work was lost in the New Kent County Courthouse fire of 1787. We do not even know where he lived other than it was somewhere on the Piankatank River.

We do, however, know that he was growing the silverbell or halesia. In 1764, Peter Collinson, nearing the end of his life, wrote a letter to Cadwallader Colden. He described looking out over his garden at Mill Hill and remembering the people he had corresponded with over the years by the plants they had sent him. “Those pretty Fringe Trees, Halesias and Stuartia all Great Beauties I must thank my Fr’d Mr. Clayton the Great Botanist of America.”

Just above the ravine in which the silverbell trees were found is an eighteenth-century foundation that has long been known as the old clerk’s office. John Clayton served as the clerk of Gloucester County from 1720 until his death in 1775. If it is indeed the clerk’s office, Clayton would have worked out of it for his entire career. (The clerk’s office that stands in Gloucester Court House was built in 1776.) It was not unusual for eighteenth-century clerks to build their offices next to their homes.

Could these silverbells be the last surviving remnant of Clayton’s garden? It is just one piece in the larger puzzle of where John Clayton built his house that we will examine in a future issue of the *Interpreter*.

If you would like to grow any of these trees at your home, they are all available at the Colonial Nursery.



## COOK'S CORNER

### A Trip to the Butcher

by Jim Gay

*Jim is a journeyman in historic foodways in the Department of Historic Trades.*

Cruise through the supermarket today to buy meat and you are quickly overwhelmed with decisions. These may involve the type of meat, quantity, quality, whether it is fresh or frozen, or even how it is packaged. Rarely, however, do we ever question whether the meat is safe. We assume that the state and federal food and health laws are scrupulously followed by the producer and the grocer. But what if there wasn't a government entity inspecting for unsafe food handling? What if *you* had to be the final meat inspector? Welcome to the eighteenth century.

In order to provide some perspective on the day-to-day trials of eighteenth-century city living, let's all take a trip to the butcher. Our guide will be Hannah Glasse, writer of the most popular cookbook from the period.

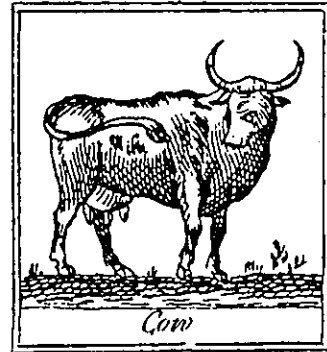
Be prepared to get messy. You will need a cloth to wipe your hands, a knife, and a basket to carry your purchases. It might also be a good idea not to smoke or chew tobacco during your marketing. You will need to be able to smell the meat before buying it.

Please realize that buying your food on a daily basis was very much a city thing. These directions would not have applied to a vast majority of Americans because most of them lived on farms. In general, city people ate more fresh meat than country people because of the presence of butchers. Farmers, on the other hand, did not slaughter a steer or pig every day. However, people raised on farms were frequently relocating to cities due to marriages or business. Perhaps that was a reason Mrs. Glasse included these instructions in her cookbook.

Today, we are going to buy beef, pork, mutton, poultry, and fish. However, a few general rules for

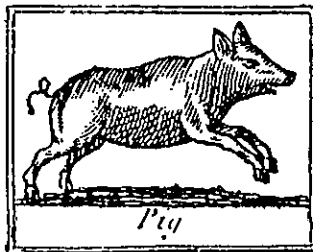
the carnivore might be in order. First, meat from younger animals is generally more tender than meat from older ones. Second, most meat is muscle. The more that muscle works in life, the more fibrous and less fatty it is. Third, the smoother and more flexible the meat is when pinched, the fresher it is. There are other factors as well, but we will let Mrs. Glasse explain them as we accompany her on her shopping.

Our first stop is at a beef carcass. Mrs. Glasse explains, "If it be true ox-beef it will have an open grain, and the fat, if young, of a crumbling, or oily smoothness, except it be the brisket and neck pieces,



with such others as are very fibrous. The colour of the lean should be of a pleasant carnation red, the fat . . . white than yellow, (which seldom proves good) and the suet of a fine white."

She also explains that "cow beef is a closer grain, the fat whiter, the bones less, and lean of a paler colour. If it be young, and tender, the dent you make with your finger by pressing it, will, in a little time, rise again." The beef from a bull, on the other hand, "is more dusky red, a closer grain, and firmer than either of the former; harder to be indented with your finger and rising again sooner. The fat is very gross and fibrous, and of a strong rank scent. If it be old it will be so very tough, that if you pinch it you will scarce make any impression in it."<sup>1</sup>



In the first half of the eighteenth century, beef and pork were equally priced. By the 1760s, beef became more expensive than pork, but still much less expensive than mutton. Six butchers can be identified through the York County records.<sup>2</sup> You paid for meat by the

pound and by how many times the butcher swung his ax. If you wanted a steak, you would buy a larger cut of meat called "a joint" then swing your own ax.

The Williamsburg market lacked regulation and was not as efficient as in other cities. "Timothy Telltruth" writing in the *Virginia Gazette* in July 1768, complained "meat . . . not fit to eat, and sometimes almost spoiled, may hang in our market for hours."<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps in response to the Williamsburg market conditions, many in town owned small farms to supplement the market. In 1764, Robert Carter Jr. wrote, "every family here have small Farms; which supply with Articles to be found in good Markets. . . . such a Custom must inevitably bar every attempt towards improving Markets." Bowen, Martin, and Walsh have concluded that "Without a good market, town residents had to come up with a way of provisioning their households; without demand from these customers, it was difficult to support a good market."<sup>4</sup>

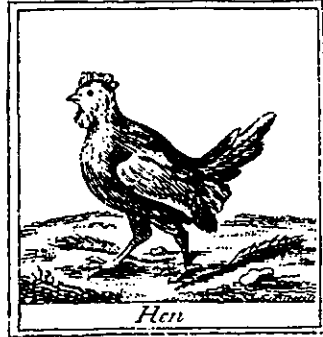
Following Mrs. Glasse to the pork, she again directs us to pinch the meat with our fingers. Also she suggests we use the smell test. "To know if it is fresh or stale, try the legs and hands at the bone, which comes out in the middle of the fleshy part, by putting in your finger, for as it first taints in those places, you may easily discover it by smelling to your finger; also the skin will be clammy and sweaty when stale, but smooth and cool when fresh."

In the twenty-first century, you would be arrested if you stuck your finger into the picnic ham at Farm Fresh. But the principle is a good one: smell it before you cook it. The "use by" date on the meat packages isn't always accurate. For country hams and bacon, Mrs. Glasse suggests taking a sharp knife and "running it into the middle of the ham, on the inside, under the bone, draw it out quickly and smell to it; if its flavour be fine and relishing, and the knife little daubed [smeared], the ham is sweet and good; but on the contrary, the knife be greatly daubed, has a rank smell . . . it is tainted."

The directions for mutton and lamb are roughly the same as for beef and pork. Mrs. Glasse has you pinching, sniffing, and sticking various joints and locations. "For the hindquarter, smell under the kidney [right!] and feel whether the knuckle be stiff or limber; for if you find a faint or ill scent in the former, or an unusual limberness in the latter, it is stale."<sup>5</sup>



While the rules for the hoofed or cloven footed animals seem fairly straight forward, Mrs. Glasse really takes us on a culinary adventure when she teaches us about poultry and fowl. There is a saying in the Palace Kitchen that goes something like, "If it has wings, we will cook it." Besides chicken, Mrs. Glasse provides us with marketing directions for no less than thirty-two different birds, including four types of ducks, three kinds of both turkeys and geese, two kinds of pheasants, along with a large variety of miscellaneous song birds. She also distinguishes between cocks and hens in several instances.



Her objective in the case of most birds on her list was to determine the age. Young birds are more tender than older ones. "If a cock be young, his spurs will be short and dubbed. . . . The pheasant hen, when young, has smooth legs. . . . The dove-house pigeons are red-legged when old."<sup>6</sup>

There is probably nothing that conjures up the idea of North America as a wilderness more than the various contemporary eyewitness accounts of giant flocks of wild birds. The clouds of geese and ducks along with passenger pigeons must have been a wonder of wonders. Although beef, veal, pork, and mutton represented the most meat consumed, archaeology shows that domestic and wild fowl represented approximately 1 to 2 percent of the biomass consumed in Williamsburg.<sup>7</sup>

Mrs. Glasse's directions on fish are classic to all fish purchased today or 250 years ago. "The newness or staleness [of fish] . . . is known by the colour of their gills, their being hard or easy to be opened, the standing out or the sinking of their eyes, their fins being stiff or limber, and by smelling their gills. Eels taken in running water are better than those taken in ponds."<sup>8</sup>

Although Mrs. Glasse wrote for a British audience, her cookbook was quite popular in Williamsburg. However, when it comes to oysters, Mrs. Glasse is silent. There is a myth that oysters should be avoided in those months that lack the

Although Mrs. Glasse wrote for a British audience, her cookbook was quite popular in Williamsburg. However, when it comes to oysters, Mrs. Glasse is silent. There is a myth that oysters should be avoided in those months that lack the



letter *r*, i.e., the summer months. Based on the William Sparrow cook's accounts at the Governor's Palace, this was apparently ignored. Oysters were purchased year-round and represented a significant addition to diet. The issue concerning any seafood would be keeping it fresh after it was out of the water. The numerous oystermen along the nearby waterways ensured that the supply was sustained . . . and fresh.

Modern people have considerable advantage when it comes to choosing which meats to eat. Twenty-first century transportation and food storage systems have virtually eliminated distance and seasons. At any typical upscale supermarket, you can find New Zealand lamb and Maine lobsters. We trust that the food purchased is safe because it has a clean appearance and has been wrapped in plastic. Additionally, there are printed safety directions and nutritional information. Once at home, we rely on



“use by” dates to determine whether something is still safe to eat. However, there are still aspects of human behavior that no government can affect. Although we would immediately reject food taken off the floor of a restaurant kitchen if it was offered to us, most people still practice a “five-second rule” at home. Mrs. Glasse would not be pleased.

<sup>1</sup> Hannah Glasse, *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* (1796; repr. Schenectady, N.Y.: United States Historical Service, 1994), 8.

<sup>2</sup> Joanne Bowen, Ann Smart Martin, and Lorena S. Walsh, *Provisioning Early American Towns: The Chesapeake—A Multidisciplinary Case Study* (Williamsburg, Va.: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1997), 164, 115.

<sup>3</sup> *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), July 7, 1768, p. 2, c. 2.

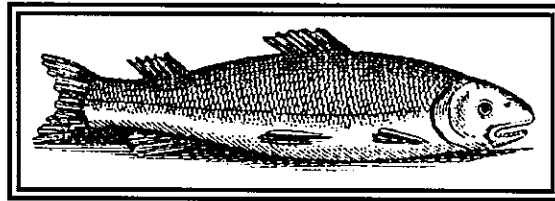
<sup>4</sup> Bowen, Martin, and Walsh, *Provisioning Early American Towns*, 82.

<sup>5</sup> Glasse, *The Art of Cookery*, 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Bowen, Martin, and Walsh, *Provisioning Early American Towns*, 193.

<sup>8</sup> Glasse, *The Art of Cookery*, 13.



## The World Turned Upside Down Yorktown: Britain's Loss of the Colonies

by Dan Lovelace

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As he stood at attention with his Virginia militia unit on the afternoon of October 19, 1781, seventeen-year-old Samuel Clark probably viewed the surrender of 7,500 British and Hessian troops to the 16,000-man Franco-American army at Yorktown as "the vengeance of The Lord." After all, Gen. Charles Lord Cornwallis's veteran army had spent the preceding six months laying waste to tidewater Virginia, and Clark had a sterling silver plate covering a hole in his skull—the result of a saber cut inflicted by Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton's loyalist cavalry during the Battle of Green Spring in early July—to prove it. Barely four months later, Tarleton's infamous British Legion was being disarmed in nearby Gloucester, and Clark could smell the smoke rising from bombarded Yorktown and the stench of 400 horses that had been slaughtered by the British along the beaches of the York River. Truly, young Clark must have thought, such a miraculous victory could only reflect the will of God.

Clark's superior officers knew that their victory had, in fact, depended upon the French fleet under Adm. François Joseph Paul, *comte de Grasse*, to prevent Lord Cornwallis's evacuation or reinforcement by the Royal Navy and the troops and heavy artillery of Gen. Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, *comte de Rochambeau*, to drive home the brief siege. Although the Americans had outwitted the British high command to achieve this rare tactical "checkmate," they also knew how lucky they had been. Had they been interviewed privately, George Washington and his senior commanders would probably have admitted that their Yorktown triumph was (as Wellington was later to describe his hairbreadth victory over Napoleon at Waterloo) "just about the nearest thing you ever saw." But why had Britain's experienced military leaders failed to prevent such a disaster, and how did British observers at the time view what turned out to be the most important single event in the American War of Independence?

As Cornwallis's dazed and dejected veterans marched out of the ruins of Yorktown, it was said that their band struck up a popular tune called "The World Turned Upside Down." This ironic title may have reflected the views of Cornwallis and his superior in New York, Gen. Sir Henry Clinton, to whom the Yorktown debacle must have seemed both embarrassing and inconceivable. To these veteran British commanders, such a disaster could only have been produced by an extraordinary streak of bad luck. In fact, misfortune was but one of many factors that ultimately produced the "miracle" of America's Yorktown victory.

From the outset, the British had viewed the "American Rebellion" as an international conflict to be played out within the broader context of England's global security concerns. Pursuing more limited objectives (independence and full national sovereignty) with limited resources, American leaders did not "internationalize" their struggle until 1778, when treaties of assistance were finally negotiated with France and Spain. By the autumn of 1781, both the British and American strategic contexts were defined by what had become a "world war" between Britain and its European enemies.

The foremost of these was France, which in addition to providing troops and materiel to the Americans, maintained (in the West Indies) the only naval fleet in the Western Hemisphere capable of successfully deterring or defeating major elements of the Royal Navy. Lacking such a naval force, the Continental Army had never been able to mount the coordinated "sea-land operations" routinely carried out by the British. By 1781, however, Washington had devised a plan to "borrow" the French West Indies squadron to beat the British at their own game.

In 1781, the 35,000 British troops in North America were on the defensive, with some 10,000 protecting Clinton's headquarters in New York City, about 6,000 garrisoning Charleston and Savannah, and the rest thinly dispersed from Florida to Canada. Only Cornwallis's 4,500-man army remained active as an expeditionary force, and it had become bogged down in Virginia.

Informed by his spies of the continuing weaknesses of the Continental Army, Clinton believed that a political settlement of the war was still possible, if he could prevent another

Saratoga-like military disaster. Such fears made him an easy mark for Washington's deception campaign threatening a sudden strike against New York, while in fact the allies were massing troops to march south to trap Cornwallis in Yorktown. Indeed, Washington's ploy was so successful that by mid-September, some newspapers in London were predicting that "a fatal battle would commence shortly in New York."

Cornwallis had invaded Virginia (essentially on his own initiative) in May 1781 in an effort to staunch the flow of men and materiel to "Rebel" forces in the Carolinas. While his regular troops and Tarleton's dragoons had captured war supplies and occupied Williamsburg, they had been unable to destroy the 1,500 troops under *marquis de Lafayette*, and General "Mad" Anthony Wayne who had been shadowing the Redcoats.

In July, Cornwallis was ordered by General Clinton to establish a coastal base in Virginia from which the Royal Navy could embark 2,000 of Cornwallis's men to help defend New York. Discovering that Portsmouth and Old Point Comfort were unsuitable, Cornwallis decided in early August to fortify Yorktown and Gloucester Point opposite each other on the deep-channeled York River.

Cornwallis moved his army to Yorktown and began to fortify the hamlet in case he needed to fend off Lafayette's small force before the arrival of a powerful Royal Navy squadron promised by General Clinton. Assuming that his garrison could count upon artillery support from British warships cruising the York, Cornwallis built relatively light defenses around Yorktown. Moreover, because he expected to be evacuated within a few weeks, he did not attempt to engage Lafayette's army in a preemptive battle.

What neither Clinton nor Cornwallis knew until it was too late was that by early September Washington and his French allies had begun to move some 12,000 troops south from their bases in New York and Rhode Island. Moreover, by early October the French West Indies Fleet under Admiral de Grasse had blockaded Chesapeake Bay and another French fleet had delivered an additional 3,000 French troops and a cargo of 60 pieces of heavy siege artillery to ports on the James River.

Once Washington's forces had fully arrived, they converged upon Yorktown and in late September began to conduct a classic European-style siege, forcing the British to retreat to a smaller defensive perimeter. On September 5, the British and French fleets met off the Virginia capes in a limited but highly destructive engagement that caused the Royal Navy's

squadron under Adm. Thomas Graves to return immediately to New York for repairs.

Four weeks later, the allied artillery batteries (ultimately some 100 guns) opened fire on the British lines, delivering an estimated 3,600 shells on the first day. One eyewitness recorded in his diary that "The whole peninsula trembles under the incessant thunderings of our infernal machines." The intense allied bombardment quickly silenced the guns within the British garrison, and for the next nine days its defenders lived a hellish existence. In addition, allied gunners used red-hot cannon balls to set fire to half a dozen British ships in the York River, including the 44-gun *Charon* and the 28-gun *Guadalupe*.

In his bunker within Yorktown's shrinking defensive perimeter, Cornwallis began to doubt that his troops could hold out long enough to be rescued by the troops and ships of a second relief mission Clinton had promised to send from New York. On October 15, Cornwallis sent a note to Clinton advising against any relief attempt. The following night, an attempted evacuation of troops by boat to Gloucester was foiled by a thunderstorm, and a gun-spiking sortie against two allied batteries proved futile.

Resigned to his fate, on the morning of October 17 Cornwallis ordered a drummer to beat a parley, and negotiations with Washington concerning the terms of surrender began. On the day following the surrender ceremony, Cornwallis sent a dispatch to Clinton summarizing the siege and concluding that "Under the circumstances, I thought it would have been wanton and inhuman to the last degree to sacrifice the lives of this small body of gallant soldiers. . . . I therefore proposed to capitulate."

Five days after the surrender ceremony, Clinton's relief expedition—36 ships and 7,000 men—which had set sail from New York two weeks later than planned due to Royal Navy repair requirements, arrived off the Virginia capes. Initially refusing to believe the testimony of escapees from Yorktown, a few days later the flotilla returned to New York after receiving false reports of a 45-ship allied naval force massing in Hampton Roads. Clearly, Royal Navy leaders were unwilling to risk a "Yorktown" of their own at this point in the campaign.

In retrospect, Yorktown's outcome was determined by weaknesses that had plagued the British army's post-1780 southern campaign for some time: caution and vacillation on the part of General Clinton in New York, independence bordering on insubordination on the part of Cornwallis in the field, the lack of a unified command to coordinate land and naval forces,

a dangerously slow command-and-control system (some messages took two weeks to travel between Virginia and New York), and Clinton's tendency to ignore unwelcome intelligence information.

By far the factor of greatest importance, however, was the mind-set of the two senior British army commanders. Complacent in their underestimation of their American opponents, and accustomed to the Royal Navy's supremacy in North American waters, both were psychologically unprepared to deal effectively with new, rapidly evolving military threats.

For Cornwallis and the senior British officers on his staff, Yorktown was just another battle in a long campaign—an unfortunate outcome of the fortunes of war. Few of them understood the political changes taking place at that time in London, where the press and the public were beginning to undermine the government coalition supporting a military solution to the rebellion in North America. As a result, when they boarded the ships that would take them back to New York and London they had no idea that they had just witnessed the beginning of the end of British rule in the thirteen American colonies. The surrender of the British garrison at Yorktown would lead to the creation

of a fully independent nation 174 years after the founding of the first permanent English settlement at nearby Jamestown Island in 1607.

News of the debacle at Yorktown reached London by November 25, to the dismay of Lords Frederick North and George Germain and the stubborn denial of George III. The War Government's fate was sealed by the opposition's victory in elections four months later. Although minor hostilities continued in isolated areas of North America during the next two years, by November 1783 the Treaty of Paris ending the war had been signed, and the last British troops and their Loyalist supporters had been evacuated from Savannah, Charleston, and New York.

The British people were at first reluctant to blame their military leaders in North America for the capitulation at Yorktown, but as the full ramifications of the defeat became apparent, the press and the public began to look for scapegoats. Some blamed the Royal Navy, mocking the old boast that "wherever an English soldier saw the sea he was sage."

Both Clinton and Cornwallis wrote books and articles defending their actions, and heated recriminations continued between the two men for two decades. Clinton seems to have lost this



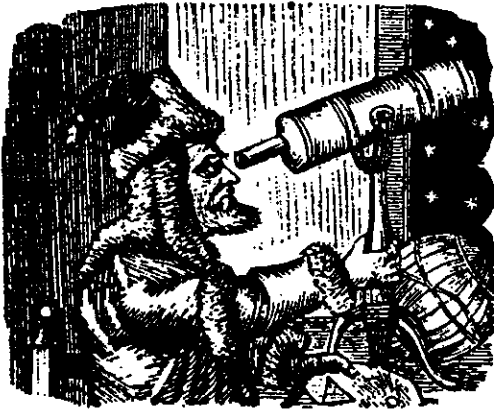
*The Hour of Humiliation—How Shall We Repass the Rubicon?* ink drawing, [1782?]. This drawing shows several British ministers with their heads bowed in shame over the loss of the colonies in America. Lord North can be seen in the background on the right, separating himself from the group. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-45516, LC-USZ62-84875.

battle for public support, and died in 1795 while serving as governor of Gibraltar. Cornwallis went on to serve as governor-general in both India (twice) and Ireland, dying in 1805.

The notorious Colonel Tarleton returned to a hero's welcome, served in Parliament and helped promote the new sport of cricket. He eventually fell out with Cornwallis over the Yorktown issue, but befriended the *marquis* de Lafayette and took up his cause in Parliament when his former enemy was destitute following the French Revolution.

Thirty years after their defeat at Yorktown, British military leaders would mount another series of large-scale sea-land operations against England's former colonists. During the War of

1812, Samuel Clark once again volunteered to fight the British, this time as a major in command of the Virginia militia. Although a British expeditionary force supported by the Royal Navy succeeded in burning Washington, D.C., in August 1814, a similar combined arms operation against New Orleans ended in disaster five months later, and the British again failed to achieve a strategic victory in the conflict. Perhaps they would have done well to heed the wisdom of one of Rochambeau's aides-de-camp, who in the wake of the Yorktown surrender observed that "No opinion was clearer than that, while the American people might well be conquered by well-disciplined European troops, the country of America was unconquerable."



## Q & A

**Question:** How long was the average school day for pupils in eighteenth-century Virginia? How many days a week did they receive instruction? (submitted by Bill Ludtke, *Oriental Interpreter* in the Department of Historic Site Interpretation)

**Answer:** While education for many young Virginians was not uniform or standardized, most well-to-do children receiving formal instruction in a classroom probably attended lessons six days a week. We have precise knowledge about the calendar and hours of instruction at the grammar, philosophy, divinity, and Indian (or Brafterton) schools at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg.

Their school year consisted of three terms. The Hilary term (named for St. Hilary) began the first Monday after Epiphany (January 6) and ended on the Saturday before Palm Sunday. The Easter term ran from Monday following the first Sunday after Easter until the eve of the Sunday before Whitsunday (the seventh Sunday or fiftieth day after Easter). The Trinity term began Monday after Trinity Sunday (one week after Whitsunday) and ended on December 16. (See Linda Rowe's "Sacred and Secular: The Calendar for 1774," *Interpreter* [Spring 2002].)

The school day for the boys at the grammar and Indian schools began early, with morning prayer at the college chapel followed by a light breakfast—this prior to their morning instruction from eight until eleven. Following their midday dinner, the pupils sat for afternoon lessons from two until five. They then sang evening prayer in the chapel and had a light supper. The boys were counted, blessed, and sent to bed in the third-story dormitory at the nine p.m. curfew bell.

Class was held six days a week, with Saturday devoted to study of catechism of the Church of England. It is unclear whether the older boys at the college followed exactly the same daily

routine as the boys in the grammar school. (See Mary R. M. Goodwin's *The College of William and Mary: A Brief Sketch of the Main Building of the College, and of the Rooms to be Restored to Their Eighteenth-Century Appearance* [1967].)

Philip Vickers Fithian served as tutor at Nomini Hall, the Virginia Northern Neck plantation of Robert Carter III. In his 1773–1774 diary, he described a schedule for the children he instructed in this private schoolhouse setting similar to that at the William and Mary grammar school.

*The children come in as soon as they rise and are Drest which is usually about seven—The Bell rings at eight for Breakfast—At nine it Rings for two purposes; for the Children to enter School, & for the Gardiners, Carpenters, & other workmen to come into Breakfast—At ten it Rings them to work. At twelve it rings for the School play hours—at two it rings for us to Dine, & the workmen—And the last bell is at three for School and for the workmen to go to Labour—I dismiss them by my watch at half after Five.*

Fithian kept this schedule, but for a few exceptions, five days a week, with half-day instruction in the catechism on Saturday mornings.

Another Carter—Maria of Sabine Hall—wrote to a cousin about her days with a tutor. She was awakened early and began her lessons as soon as she was dressed and before breakfast. After breakfast, she went back to school again. She was allowed perhaps an hour to herself before dinner in the afternoon. School continued then until twilight, leaving Maria only a small amount of time to herself before going to bed. She claimed this routine went on 365 days a year—no doubt something of an exaggeration! (Linda Rowe, *Department of Historical Research*)

**Question:** Did eighteenth-century Englishmen really call Frenchmen "frogs?"

**Answer:** Apparently not. Although the *Oxford English Dictionary* does define the slang *froggy* (also *froggie*) as a "term of contempt for a Frenchman, from their reputed habit of eating frogs," there is no documented use of it before 1872.

Certainly, the French practice of eating frog legs seemed strange to the English, as early as the eighteenth century. Robert Beverley, in his first edition of *The History and Present State of Virginia* (London, 1705), noted that he found a Virginia bull-frog "of so prodigious a magnitude, that when I extended its leggs, I found the distance between them to be seventeen inches and a half." He quipped, "I am confident, six Frenchmen might have made a comfortable meal of its

carcase." Beverley chose to remove this reference from his second (1722) English edition.

Despite remarks like Beverley's about frog eating, we still have no examples of the word *froggy* in early usage. Thus it is historically inappropriate for our interpretation of the eighteenth century.

Furthermore, the use of such terms of derision, even those that were in common use at the time—like calling Catholics "papists"—is by no means acceptable, guest-friendly practice for Colonial Williamsburg interpreters, who must be ever mindful of the sensibilities of our increasingly diverse and international audiences. (*Rose McAphee and Bob Doares, Department of Interpretive Training*)

**Question: What was the legal status of Jews in Britain and her colonies?**

**Answer:** This is not a simple question to answer, due to the varying degrees of religious toleration in Britain's colonies and the minuscule Jewish presence in most of them before the Revolution. These circumstances rendered somewhat fluid the practical application of existing English law concerning Jews.

There were only about 250 identifiable Jews in the Atlantic seaboard colonies at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Some colonies with more tolerant attitudes, like New York and especially Rhode Island (Newport), attracted Jewish families from the beginning. Although the Jewish presence in Virginia was negligible before the Revolution, other southern colonies with liberal charters, particularly Georgia (Savannah) and the Carolinas (Charleston, S. C.), had significant numbers of Jews among their early settlers. Even though Jews arrived with the *Mayflower*, Puritan New England ultimately proved less attractive for them than other colonies.

The following overview of the legal status of Jews under English law may help us understand the general context within which Jews who came to the American colonies found themselves.

Jews had been expelled from England under an Edict of Expulsion in 1290. This long banishment continued until commercial policy that led to the Navigation Act of October 1651 made Oliver Cromwell want to attract rich Jews from Amsterdam to London for the benefit of their important trade interests with the Spanish Main. Due to opposition by merchants and the clergy, Cromwell seemed to have managed only to grant informal permission for Jews to reside and trade in England beginning in 1656, but with restrictions on public worship and proselytizing.

After his return to the throne in 1660, Charles II, who had been aided by several royal-

ist Jews, resisted attempts to revoke Cromwell's concession and granted Jews royal protection in 1664. In 1667, they were allowed to swear on the Old Testament in court cases, and, in 1697, Jews were admitted as brokers on the Royal Exchange. In 1698, the Act for Suppressing Blasphemy made legal the practice of Judaism in England. There were some 400 Jews in the country at the time.

Despite the influx of useful capital they brought with them, legally Jews remained aliens in Britain throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was not until 1723 that a special act of Parliament permitted them to hold land on condition of their taking oath when registering their title; they were also allowed to omit customary words "upon the faith of a Christian." An act passed in 1740 allowed Jews who had resided in the colonies for more than seven years to be naturalized, though a similar measure failed to pass in the Irish Parliament.

The year 1753 saw the enactment and repeal of the Jewish Nationalization Bill, which would have given foreign-born Jews in England the ability to acquire the privileges of native-born English Jews. Full legal emancipation of Jews in England did not take place until the 1858 change in the Christian oath required of all members of Parliament, which allowed Jewish Baron Lionel de Rothschild to take his seat in the House of Commons after an eleven-year debate over the oath. *Note: There will be information about the legal status of Jews in Virginia county courts in the summer issue of the Interpreter.*

**Question: How often did Williamsburg hold public market days?**

**Answer:** Williamsburg's charter of 1722 allowed for two markets weekly and two fairs yearly; Norfolk's, three markets weekly and two fairs. An act of Assembly in 1757 gave Williamsburg and Norfolk officials the power to "appoint such days for holding a market in the said city [Williamsburg] and borough [Norfolk] in every week as they shall think proper."

In spite of this law, I can find no good evidence that Williamsburg increased the number of markets per week from the original two. However, the law likely was passed in response to a request from Williamsburg and Norfolk officials in turn responding to a need for more frequent markets in their communities. Interestingly, I've found references to only two markets a week in Baltimore as late as 1770 and two a week for Philadelphia, as well. (*Linda Rowe*)

*Q & A was compiled by Bob Doares, training specialist in the Department of Interpretive Training.*

## “Neglected Legalities”: Smuggling in Eighteenth-Century Virginia

by Pete Wrike

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He is the author of numerous books and articles.*

In a recent article on Virginia’s maritime economy, “Old John” Goodrich and his sons were cited as shipowners and masters who “neglected . . . legalities” (*Interpreter* [Summer/Fall 2005]: 13). Again, the question is, who knew and at what level did they know about these “neglected legalities”?

In 1775, the Virginia colony’s treasurer, Robert Carter Nicholas, at the request of the Virginia Convention, gave a particularly difficult and dangerous mission to Robert Newton Jr. of Norfolk. The mission required the importation of gunpowder into the colony to arm the rebels/patriots. Newton, a prominent merchant, former ship’s master, member of the House of Burgesses, and member of the Norfolk committee of safety selected “old John” Goodrich. At least two of “Old John’s” sons had successfully apprenticed as mariners under both Robert Newton Sr. and Robert Newton Jr.

Goodrich’s son William successfully acquired and, at great risk, cleverly carried into Virginia more than 4,000 pounds of gunpowder—two wagonloads. William also left Virginia colony notes of exchange with merchant Isaac Van Dam in the Dutch colony of St. Eustatius to procure more gunpowder. Talents (in smuggling) used to increase profits in peacetime were selectively turned to the infant commonwealth’s needs in wartime.

Any work on illegal trades or practices generally relies on anecdotal or incidental evidence. However, hard evidence of smuggling in the thirteen colonies is available for the years 1771–

1775. Admiralty court condemnation and sales of seized vessels and condemned cargoes that violated the British Acts of Navigation resulted in revenues to the crown. The revenues for Virginia and the other colonies survived and are shown in Figure 1.

These figures (from Audit Office 1/843/1134, PRO; and *The Royal Navy in America* by Neil Stout) represent the crown’s portion, which was fixed by statute, of auctioned vessel and cargo proceeds. Virginia’s portion was 43 percent of the total for all thirteen colonies. (Virginia’s portion was 40 percent of all seizures in the thirteen colonies, Canada, and the Bahamas.)

This chart raises three questions. First, was smuggling in Virginia as widespread as the chart suggests? The best evidence for this comes from British customs officer William Williams. In 1770 and 1771, he visited Virginia’s six naval districts as well as others in New England, the mid-Atlantic colonies, and Maryland. His observations reference the probability of illegal trade, its extent, and suggested remedies.

Figure 2 shows Tidewater Virginia and the boundaries and chief port of each naval district. These naval districts existed by 1698. The governor appointed a naval officer (title—not uniformed or ranked) to administer each district. The officer appointed persons to measure, inspect, weigh, gauge, and record inward and outward vessels and cargoes in their district. The naval officer received and shared (with his appointees) revenues received from duties and fees on inward and outward vessels and cargoes. Historian Peter Bergstrom’s research report in the Rockefeller Library “Plums for the Picking: Virginia Naval Officers and the English Patronage System” describes the process well.

Customs Officer Williams’s meticulous reports for each district (published in the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 81 [July 1973]: 280–318) generally draw the same conclusions as his Rappahannock River report.

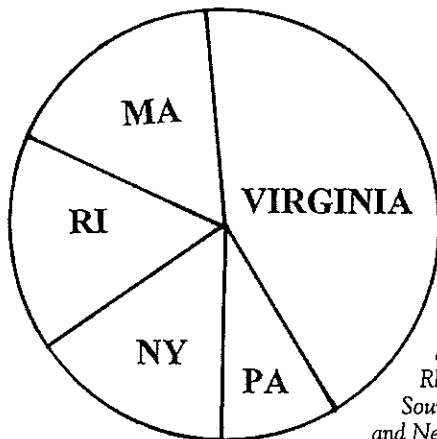


Figure 1. Percentage by colony of the crown’s portion of auctioned vessels and cargo: Virginia (43%), Massachusetts (17%), Rhode Island (16%), New York (15%), Pennsylvania (9%).  
Source: Public Record Office, Audit Office 1/843/1134; and Neil Stout, *The Royal Navy in America*.



The Collector and controller are men of great honor, and good abilities, and are very attentive to their duty, and exact in the business of the office. But it is here as in other rivers in the Chesapeake bay. The service is greatly exposed to the imposition of the smugglers, not being sufficiently guarded against. And was there no other reason to be offered for proving the clandestine trade, which is carried on here, than that of the small amount of duties collected, I think it would sufficiently prove that much the greater of the dutiable goods consumed here are smuggled in.

As an example, he observed,

Seven ships, and two snows entered from Bordeaux and other parts in France in ballast [no cargo]. At the same time French wines were to be purchased at almost every store upon the river. . . . There are many . . . ships that return from Scotland by way of Holland, which fully accounts for the large quantity of teas, foreign linens, etc. which every store is full of. And as it is seldom or ever any tea appears upon the docket [manifests] of those ships it cannot be doubted but that great quantities of goods are smuggled into this port from Holland. And the small quantities of sugar, molasses, wine, etc., entered [on port books] must also prove that much of the greatest part of these articles are smuggled likewise.

Williams recommended sailing vessels to patrol the river, monitor the other major ports along the river, and concluded, "The collector's boat is . . . the best I have seen . . . for going on board vessels coming to anchor near the office, but not sufficient for the purpose of preventing frauds in different parts of the river."

On the Potomac district, Williams stated, "The situation and circumstances of the River Potomac are much the same with that of the Rappahannock with this difference only, that Potomac is much wider and runs higher into the country."

He noted that numerous foreign, colonial, and British vessels arrive "almost wholly" or "principally in ballast."

\* \* \*

Before continuing, the phrase "in ballast" (no cargo) should be explained. The popular view of a smuggler has small rowing boats going ashore from a larger vessel offshore. The rowboats contain valuable items and the clandestine activity is routinely done at night. A well-known smuggling method, described by John Hancock's captains, had Dutch tea sealed in oilskin pouches and hidden in marked molasses barrels.

A quasi-legal smuggling method, again used primarily in New England, was known as compounding. This process involved collusion by both customs officials and shipmasters to significantly discount duties required on certain commodities.

In the Chesapeake, with its extensive unpatrolled waterfront, masters of vessels had no need for concealment or collusion. They typically used a convenient landing during daylight hours to offload all or the greater portion of their cargo. Then they proceeded to the nearest port and declared the cargo lost at sea.

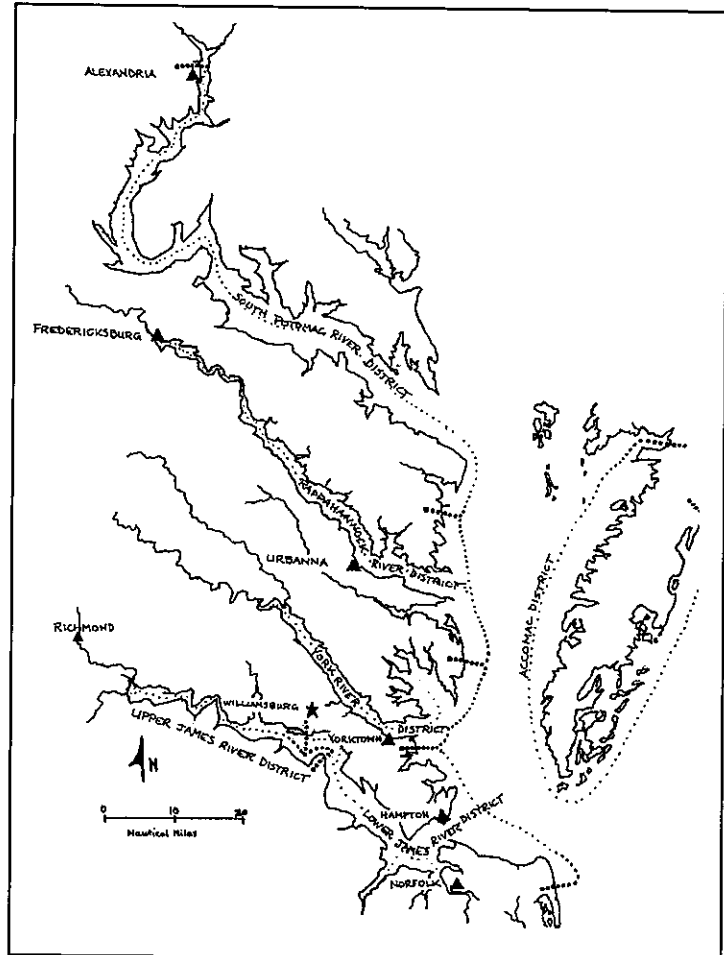


Figure 2. Colonial Virginia Naval Districts.

Storms, hurricanes, and other natural events and circumstances sometimes required a master to jettison all or a portion of his cargo for the safety of the ship and crew. By the 1750s, this practice was so common and frequent that masters were required to swear an oath that described the "loss" before the port officials and a civil authority such as a mayor, alderman, or justice. Rather than create a story—and perjure themselves—many masters simply stated that on their return trip to Virginia they carried no cargo and arrived only "in ballast." As can be seen from Williams's comments, the practice continued unabated in the 1770s.

\* \* \*

Williams's 1771 comments on the York River District reveal how evident smuggling was. "York River runs up into the country near 100 miles, and is navigable about 50 miles, so that ships anchor in every part of it, it being a perfect good and safe harbor for the whole way up. There are opportunities for smuggling which cannot be interrupted but only by a water guard."

Williams described the five smaller rivers also in the York district and observed, "In all those rivers are many harbors, bays, and creeks for vessels of almost any burthen, and landing places almost at every door where they land goods imported, and deliver goods for exportation."

Williams's observations on the Upper James River are relevant to our interpretation. He recommended relocation of the collector's office from Williamsburg to Bermuda Hundred, just below Richmond. Williams observed, "the inconvenience . . . now put upon 9/10 of the merchants living at and above the Hundred in going to the [customs] house at Williamsburg (near 55 miles). . . . The trade of this district . . . carried on without any check from the custom house on account of its distance from the place where the trade centers."

Also, he noted, "at present the officers [at Williamsburg] being four miles from the river can be no check upon illicit trade." Additionally, "the land carriage to Williamsburg from Burwells ferry (the nearest part of it of James River) is near four miles. On the other side of the city there is a water carriage from York river within 3/4 of a mile of Williamsburg . . . at least 7/8 of the goods imported for Williamsburg are brought by way of York river, and the residue in small craft from Norfolk."

Williams recommended that the customs house for the Lower District of the James River be moved from Hampton to Norfolk. By the 1770s, this district led the others in number of vessels and volume of goods. Hampton's shallow

waters prohibited most marine traffic, and Norfolk carried the bulk of trade.

The vessels' masters recorded their documents at Hampton but loaded and unloaded at Norfolk. Williams wrote that masters recorded "such part of their cargoes as they think proper; all of which were usually landed without the least control or inspection of any officer. . . . They load in the same manner without any kind of check."

The port of Accomack drew little comment from Williams. In regard to exports, he observed a shortfall of duties on tobacco hogsheads exported (approximately 17,000 hogsheads less of a total of 80,000 annually). He stated "about 5,000 may be privately conveyed to the different parts of the colonies to avoid payment of the enumerated duty under the denomination of casks of bread, flour, corn, beans, etc. The remaining 12,000 hogsheads may be secretly landed in Great Britain."

The second question—based on Figure 1's chart numbers—addresses enforcement. Did Virginia more zealously pursue, capture, and prosecute smugglers than other colonies? And what other factors might account for Virginia's higher proportions of seizures and revenues?

Lt. Henry Colins, R.N., not only pursued, captured, and attended the prosecution of seized goods and vessels but actively sought informants (intelligence) to effect those captures. From his arrival in the Chesapeake as commander (titled "Captain") of H.M.S. schooner *Magdalen* in 1771, until his departure in 1775, Lieutenant Colins zealously did his duty to enforce the crown's Acts of Navigation. As a naval arm of the customs service, Colins and the *Magdalen* "showed the flag" everywhere possible and often.

In 1770, Virginia posted no revenues from seizures and condemnations. In 1771, £919 went to the crown; in 1772, £667; in 1773, £560; and in 1774, £57. Virginia's 1771 amount was the highest recorded for any western Atlantic British colony in any year between 1768 and 1774 (Canada, Bahamas, Bermuda, Boston, Rhode Island, New York, Philadelphia, and South Carolina).

The diminishing amounts between 1771 and 1774 represent three other factors. One was the new royal governor of Virginia, John Murray, earl of Dunmore, who took office in 1771. He actively encouraged Royal Navy vessels to visit Virginia's waters and do their duty. In 1773, the rear admiral commanding the North American squadron, John Montague, assigned H.M.S. *Fowey*, 20 guns, to take the Virginia station.

Montague wrote the admiralty in 1773, "it would amaze their lordships to see the great

Quantity of Holland goods that is run annually into Virginia, Philadelphia and New York, and I am informed they do not pay sixpence Duty for Tea in the course of the Year, yet every Shop is full of it, and the same of other East India Goods."

In addition to the *Fowey*, H.M.S. *Boston*, *Glasgow*, *Lizard*, *Tartar*, *Sultana*, *Hussar*, *Mercury*, *Arethusa*, and others visited the Chesapeake between 1772 and 1774. (The logs of these vessels and their abstracts are in the Virginia Colonial Records Project.) Seizures and condemnations by those vessels, often adjudicated in the admiralty courts in other colonies, diminished Colins's share. His own seizures, of necessity, were condemned in Virginia's admiralty court.

Another factor was the increasing awareness by Virginia's maritime community of customs enforcement and the resulting efforts to evade detection and capture. Those efforts further reduced available targets and opportunities for the navy.

A factor that must be considered, particularly after 1773, was the combination of a rising colonial dissatisfaction with the government and its enforcement elements as well as the rise of committees of safety. This combination would further diminish those willing to turn informant—either out of resentment or fear.

I have cited Colins and Dunmore as principal elements in the vigorous enforcement of customs laws in Virginia. Often as interpreters and historians we don't know or recognize the interrelatedness of historical networks or personal connections. Lord Dunmore's brother William was a senior Royal Navy captain as was Dunmore's brother-in-law Keith Stewart. Both knew Admiral Montague.

While in New York, Dunmore had actively solicited Montague for a new commander for the Virginia station. Colins and the *Magdalen* were the result.

Capt. Andrew S. Hammond, H.M.S. *Arethusa*, 32 guns, visited Virginia in 1772 and 1773. He and Dunmore became good friends. In 1773, Lord Dunmore requested a 20,000-acre land warrant for Hammond in Virginia's western lands. In 1775 and 1776, as captain of H.M.S. *Roebuck*, 44 guns, Hammond commanded Dunmore's "floating town."

In 1773 and 1774, Admiral Montague, as North American squadron commander, promoted his sons James and George to fill vacancies as captains of H.M.S. *Kingfisher* and *Fowey* respectively. (See the *Commissioned Sea Officers of the Royal Navy 1660–1815*, ed. David Syrett.) Capt. George Montague then took the *Fowey* to Virginia and served Dunmore's interests. Dunmore returned to Great Britain aboard the *Fowey* in December 1776.

The third question asks if Virginians and others knew of smuggling and at what level? In December 1761, the chief justice of Pennsylvania, William Allen, wrote to William Nelson, a member of Virginia's governor's council and later an acting governor. Allen's son had 50 quarter casks of Malaga wine from the Mediterranean to sell. Allen wrote,

*I take the freedom to request you . . . to sell [them] for the most they will yield. . . . I have shipped them in a shallop belonging to . . . a relation of my deceased wife's, his master has signed bill of lading . . . to deliver the wine to you. As the vessel is a small coaster and has other things to deliver . . . [in Maryland] she has not cleared out from our Custom-House it not being usual for these small coasters. I hope, therefore, you will prevent any Trouble to the master from our mutual friend, Mr. Ambler or any other person. (The Burd Papers, Extracts from Chief Justice William Allen's Letter Book, ed. Lewis Burd Walker [1897], 48.)*

"Mr. Ambler" was Richard Ambler, collector [of customs] for the Port of York [town]. His son Jacquelin succeeded him by 1771. William Williams stated, "the collector and controller [of Yorktown] are men of exceeding good character, both as to their public and private sections, and are very exact in the business of the office." I suspect Richard Ambler was as "exact" as his son. Chief Justice Allen's Malaga wine does not appear in the Yorktown entries in 1761 or 1762.

The question, which results from the evidence of widespread smuggling, relatively vigorous enforcement, and knowledge of the practice at all levels, is why was there little outcry from Virginians? I suggest that despite enforcement the practice of smuggling in colonial Virginia suffered little.

## BRUTON HEIGHTS UPDATE: New at the Rock



### New Items in the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library's Special Collections

Nine architectural drawings by A. Lawrence Kocher depicting Mount Pleasant, Hope Lodge, Joseph Priestley House, Pennsylvania church spires, and several buildings in the modernist International Style, circa 1920s.

Broadside: "Taxation of America" (Samuel St. John, New Canaan, Conn., or Peter St. John, Norwalk, Conn., circa 1776). A patriotic work in verse relating "Britain's faded glory" and comparing Washington to Alexander the Great.

Letter: W. Beatty, Petersburg, Va., to his father Col. William Beatty, Frederick Co., Md., November 6, 1780, concerning military efforts in Virginia and hopes to capture Cornwallis.

*Virginia Gazette* (Williamsburg: Dixon & Hunter, August 28, 1778) including news of French support for the American cause in the form of a letter of Louis XVI to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia.

Nicholson, Peter. *Architectural Dictionary* (London: J. Barfield, 1819), 2 vols. These volumes contain 123 illustrations, together with explanations of the terms used by architects, builders, and workmen in the trades of carpentry, joinery, masonry, and bricklaying.

Juvenalia: Campbell, Helen Jones. *Thomas Jefferson: the Builder; Chanco: Indian Hero of Colonial Jamestown; George Washington: Father of his Country* (Williamsburg: R. M. Usry, 1952-1954). These booklets form part of a series of "American sketches for the very young" and include illustrations suitable for coloring, together with abbreviated texts.

Dumesnil, M. J. B. Gardin. *Latin Synonyms* (London: G. & W. B. Whittaker, 1819). This work includes nearly 7,000 words, with examples of their usage by classical Roman writers. The volume includes the armorial bookplate of John Randolph of Roanoke.

*Duty of a Freeman*, n.p., n.d. This anonymous, late-eighteenth-century piece, signed "Anglo-Saxon," outlines the mistakes of the English parliament in frustrating Americans with unjust taxes and, thus, losing the seemingly inexhaustible store of resources belonging to that continent, which was once a faithful contributor to English hegemony and power.

Gardiner, Robert. *Instructor Clericalis: Being a Collection of Choice and Useful Precedents for Pleadings* (London: J. Nutt, 1713). This standard manual for court pleadings under English law contains autograph signatures of Peyton Randolph and James Burwell.

*New Instructions for the Clarinet* (London: Mayhew & Co., n.d.). This booklet includes rules for musical students, together with a selection of songs, airs, minuets, marches, and duets.

Norwood, Henry. *Voyage to Virginia* (London: Henry Lintot & John Osburn, circa 1746). This scarce item was written by a cousin of Gov. William Berkeley to describe his travels to and in Virginia immediately after the beheading of Charles I. Norwood served as treasurer of Virginia from 1661 to 1673. The printed leaves are pages 145-170 of a larger book, probably the third edition of *Churchill's Voyages*.

Rogers, John. *Divine Goodness Displayed, in the American Revolution* (New York: Samuel Loudon, 1784). Taking its text from Psalms 126: 3, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad," this sermon was preached in New York, December 11, 1783, on the date appointed by the Continental Congress as a day of thanksgiving throughout the new United States.

Pitt, William. *Speech of Mr. Pitt*. [London: 1766]. This pamphlet contains the Whig statesman's celebrated speech before parliament advocating repeal of the Stamp Act. The use of dashes in certain words and names throughout the work may have been done to avoid charges of treason.

Submitted by George Yetter, associate curator for the architectural drawings and research collection, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library.

## New Titles in the Janice McCoy Memorial Collection for Youth

Blumberg, Rhoda. *York's Adventures with Lewis and Clark*. New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2004. Relates the adventures of York, a slave and "body servant" to William Clark, who journeyed west with the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804–1806.

Carlson, Laurie M. *Colonial Kids: An Activity Guide to Life in the New World*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press Inc., 1997. Gives instructions for preparing foods, making clothes, and creating other items used by European settlers in America, thereby providing a description of the daily life of these colonists.

Chorao, Kay. *D Is for Drums: A Colonial Williamsburg ABC*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2004.

Garwood, Val. *The World of the Pirate*. New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1997. Relates the history of sea robbers who plundered ships' cargoes in ancient times, who flourished in the New World during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and who remain active today, mainly in the South China Seas.

Gourley, Catherine. *Welcome to Felicity's World, 1774*. Middleton, Wis.: Pleasant Company Publications, 1999. Provides an in-depth look at daily life and historical events in the American colonies during the Revolutionary War, including home life, work, medicine, and play.

Lincoln, Margaret. *The Pirate's Handbook*. New York: Cobblehill Books, 1995. Illustrations provide details about clothing, weapons, food, and ships.

Metz, Elizabeth. *I Was a Teenager in the American Revolution*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006. Drawing on firsthand accounts, twenty-one young patriots and two Tories tell their stories.

Musgrove, Margaret. *The Spider Weaver: A Legend of Kente Cloth*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 2001. Illustrations by Julia Cairns complement this African legend.

Sakurai, Gail. *The Thirteen Colonies*. New York: Children's Press, 2000. Describes the history of the thirteen original English colonies in America, including their early exploration, settlement, and regional differences.

Schanzer, Rosalyn. *George vs. George: The American Revolution as Seen from Both Sides*. Washington, D.C.: The National Geographic Society, 2004. Explores how the characters and lives of King George III of England and George Washington affected the progress and outcome of the American Revolution.

Stein, R. Conrad. *The Boston Tea Party*. New York: Children's Press, 1996. Describes the events preceding, during, and following this noted event, which helped precipitate the American Revolutionary War.

Tripp, Valerie. *Felicity's New Sister*. Middleton, Wis.: Pleasant Company Publications, 1999. Although she is tired of the responsibility of being the oldest sister, Felicity realizes how much her family means to her when a carriage accident puts her pregnant mother in danger. Includes a section on babies in the late 1700s.

Weiner, Roberta, and James R. Arnold. *Connecticut: The History of Connecticut Colony, 1633–1776*. Chicago: Raintree, 2005. Describes Connecticut in 1633, the economy, New England battles, and the road to independence.

———. *Delaware: The History of Delaware Colony, 1638–1776*. Chicago: Raintree, 2005. A detailed look at the formation of the colony of Delaware, its government, and its overall history, plus a prologue on world events in 1638 and an epilogue on Delaware today.

———. *Georgia: The History of Georgia Colony, 1732–1776*. Chicago: Raintree, 2005. Describes Georgia in 1733, the beginnings of Savannah, expansion of the colony, and its role in the American Revolution.

———. *Maryland: The History of Maryland Colony, 1634–1776*. Chicago: Raintree, 2005. Describes the Lords Baltimore, Maryland in 1634, growth of the colony, its role in the French and Indian War, and events leading to rebellion.

———. *Massachusetts: The History of Massachusetts Colony, 1620–1776*. Chicago: Raintree, 2005. Describes Plymouth Colony, Massachusetts in 1620, Massachusetts Bay Colony, its role in the French and Indian War, the matter of taxes that led from boycott to battlefield.

———. *New Hampshire: The History of New Hampshire Colony, 1623–1776*. Chicago: Raintree, 2005. Describes New Hampshire in 1623, the importance of lakes and fishing in growth of the colony, and its role in the American Revolution.

———. *New Jersey: The History of New Jersey Colony, 1664–1776*. Chicago: Raintree, 2005. Describes English governance, New Jersey in 1664, Revolution, and statehood.

———. *New York: The History of New York Colony, 1624–1776*. Chicago: Raintree, 2005. Describes the Dutch West Indian Company, New York in 1624, the Dutch in America and the coming of the English, and colony's role in the Revolution.

———. *North Carolina: The History of North Carolina Colony, 1655–1776*. Chicago: Raintree, 2005. Describes the lost colony, North Carolina in 1590, return of the English, growth of the colony, and regulators and revolutionaries.

———. *Pennsylvania: The History of Pennsylvania Colony, 1681–1776*. Chicago: Raintree, 2005. Describes Penn's Woods in 1681, growth of the colony, battles for the west, and the colony's role as cradle of liberty.

———. *Rhode Island: The History of Rhode Island Colony, 1636–1776*. Chicago: Raintree, 2005. Examines the early colonization of Rhode Island and discusses the struggles the colonists endured, their government, daily lives, and more.

———. *South Carolina: The History of South Carolina Colony, 1670–1776*. Chicago: Raintree, 2005. Describes the settlement of the Carolina low country by the English, the growth of the colony, and its role in the American Revolution.

———. *Virginia: The History of Virginia Colony, 1607–1776*. Chicago: Raintree, 2005. A detailed look at the formation of the colony of Virginia, its government, its overall history, plus a prologue on world events in 1607.

Wood, Marion. *The World of Native Americans*. New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1997. An illustrated survey of the history and customs of the native North Americans who were members of hundreds of different tribes with varying lifestyles over the centuries.

Yolen, Jane. *The Ballad of the Pirate Queens*. Orlando, Fla.: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1995. Two women who sailed with "Calico Jack" Rackham and his pirates in the early 1700s do their best to defend their ship while the men on board are busy drinking.



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