



See "Prepare for War" p. 2

AMERICANS *Becoming* TODAY

NO. 1 FOR COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

SOMERSET CASE: Does England = Freedom



See p. 3

SUMMER 1774

Newsline

- May 3, 1774
Governor's Council meets
- May 5-26, 1774
General Assembly meets
- May 13, 1774
Bostonians meeting at Faneuil Hall resolve to ban all British goods, call on other colonies for assistance
- May 17, 1774
General Gage lands in Boston as governor and commander in chief of the British army in America
- May 19, 1774
News of the Boston Port Act arrives in Virginia
- May 20, 1774
George III signs the Administration of Justice Act, allowing Massachusetts crown officials charged with a capital crime, while putting down a riot or tumult or collecting revenue, to have their trial moved to another colony or Great Britain
- May 23, 1774
Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, Francis Lightfoot Lee and others decide to introduce a resolution to declare a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer in response to the news of the Boston Port Act
- May 24, 1774
The House of Burgesses resolves to observe June 1, 1774, the day the Port of Boston will be closed, as a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer
- May 26, 1774
The House's resolution is printed, and Lord Dunmore dissolves the Assembly
- May 27, 1774
Eighty-nine members of the House of Burgesses meet at the Raleigh Tavern to form a "shadow government." They call for an end to the importation of tea and other East India Company goods except saltpeter and spices. They also call for delegates from each colony to meet yearly in a "general congress."
- May 27, 1774
Ball held at the Capitol in honor of Lady Dunmore's arrival
- May 29, 1774
May 13 letter from Boston Committee of Correspondence arrives proposing an end to all trade with Great Britain
- May 30, 1774
The 25 burgesses who remain in Williamsburg agree to summon a convention on August 1 to discuss trade restrictions
- June 1774
Meeting in private sessions as the Caveat Court, Governor's Council hears land disputes
- June 1774
Effigy of Lord North burned in Richmond County
- June 1774
Prince George County Resolves call for end to slave trade
- June 1774
Grand jury reports to James City County Court
- June 1, 1774
Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer at Bruton Parish Church

Continued on p. 2

"DOWN ON THEIR KNEES"



Actions taken in the capital city of Williamsburg in May, June and July 1774 continued to define the growing conflict between the colonies and Britain and accelerated the coming of the Revolution. The struggles over how Virginians would be governed played out in the Capitol, Raleigh Tavern and Bruton Parish Church.

A "day of fasting, humiliation and prayer" proclaimed by the House of Burgesses brought many Virginians into their parish churches, down on their knees and willing to take short rations on June 1, 1774. What do we know about the genesis of this idea?

The General Assembly was in session when news of the Boston Port Act reached Williamsburg sometime before May 19, 1774, the day Purdie and Dixon printed "An Epitome [summary] of the Boston Bill" in their *Virginia Gazette*. Several younger burgesses determined to fashion a response that would both arouse Virginians and show solidarity with Bostonians on the day the British aimed to close the port.

Discussion and planning doubtless began immediately, but a secret meeting on the evening of Monday, May 23, was key. At the Capitol in the empty Council Chamber, Patrick Henry, brothers Richard Henry and Francis Lightfoot Lee, Thomas Jefferson, probably George Mason (in town on private business) and two or three others met to discuss the alternatives.

The group had a reason for meeting in the Council Chamber: they wanted "the benefit of the library in that room." In search of "the revolutionary precedents & forms of the Puritans of that day," they "rummaged over" the works of John Rushworth, one of the Puritan writers of the English Civil War. First published in eight volumes in London between 1659 and 1701, Rushworth's *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State, Weighty Matters in Law, Remarkable Proceedings . . . Beginning*

the Sixteenth Year of King James, Anno 1618, and Ending . . . [with the Death of King Charles the First, 1648] Digested in Order of Time gave an account of the rise and progress of the civil war. Based on some of the material they found there, the group (according to Jefferson) "cooked up" the idea of calling for a day of general fasting and prayer.

The conferees persuaded Robert Carter Nicholas to introduce the resolution in the House of Burgesses, as his "grave & religious character was more in unison with the tone" of the resolution. Nicholas agreed. The next day, May 24, he proposed that June 1 be set aside as a "Day of Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer, devoutly to implore the divine Interposition for averting the heavy Calamity, which threatens Destruction to our civil rights." Nicholas recalled not long after that the vote was nearly unanimous: "not above one dissentient appearing amongst near an Hundred Members."

Governor Dunmore took issue with the burgesses' violation of his sole right to call fast days in the colony. On May 26 he summoned the legislators to the very room—the Council Chamber—where the idea had been hatched a couple of nights before. Gripping a printed broadside of the resolution, the governor dissolved the House of Burgesses, saying their action "was conceived in such terms as reflect highly upon his Majesty and the Parliament."

[Submitted by Linda Rowe]

WHAT'S ON PEOPLES' MINDS?

Summer of 1774 Challenges

- Threatening Relations with Britain
- Men Going West to Fight the Indians
- Uncertain Future
- Economic Uncertainty
- Breakdown of the Court System
- Threat of the Committees of Safety

EYEWITNESS REPORT

Wednesday, June 1, 1774
Many Virginians observe a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer in accordance with a May 24, 1774, resolution of the House of Burgesses. June 1 was the day Parliament closed Boston Harbor until the city paid for the tea destroyed in the Boston Tea Party. Rind's *Virginia Gazette* reported, "Every inhabitant of this city, and numbers from the country, testified their gratitude, in the most expressive manner, by attending the worthy and patriotic SPEAKER at the courthouse, and proceeding from thence, with the utmost decency and decorum, to the church, where prayers were accordingly read, and a sermon suitable to the important occasion, was delivered by the Reverend Mr. Price, from the 103rd psalm, and 19th verse" ["The Lord hath prepared his seat in heaven: and his kingdom ruleth over all"]. George Washington, still in Williamsburg, was among those present. He noted in his diary, "Went to Church and fasted All Day."

HALT SLAVE TRADE!

June 1774
A General Meeting of the Freeholders and Inhabitants of Prince George's County, Virginia, the following Resolves were proposed and unanimously agreed to . . .
Resolved, That the African Trade is injurious to this Colony, obstructs the population of it by freemen, prevents manufacturers and other useful emigrants from Europe from settling amongst us, and occasions an annual increase of the balance of trade against this Colony . . .
June 1774: The Fairfax County Resolves [prepared by George Mason and George Washington] Call for an End to the Slave Trade RESOLVED that it is the Opinion of this Meeting, that during our present Difficulties and Distress, no Slaves ought to be imported into any of the British Colonies on this Continent; and we take this Opportunity of declaring our most earnest Wishes to see an entire Stop for ever put to such a wicked cruel and unnatural trade.

The Papers of George Mason, 1725-1792, ed. Robert A. Rutland, et al. (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 1: 207.

July 26, 1774
A meeting in Albemarle County adopts a resolution by Thomas Jefferson that went beyond others in Virginia in urging "an immediate stop to all imports from Great Britain" until the act blocking Boston Harbor and other objectionable acts were repealed. The resolution based its stand on natural right.

August 1-6, 1774
The first Virginia Convention meets in Williamsburg. It adopts an association based on the Fairfax resolves forbidding importation of British goods or slaves after November 1, 1774, and exportation to Great Britain after August 10, 1775. The Convention also elects Peyton Randolph, Richard Henry Lee, George Washington, Patrick Henry, Richard Bland, Benjamin Harrison and Edmund Pendleton to represent Virginia in Congress.

John Selby, *A Chronology of Virginia and the War of Independence, 1763-1783* (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1973).



VIRGINIA TODAY SNAPSHOT

"FAMILY VALUES" in COLONIAL VIRGINIA

FREE FAMILIES
[circa 60% of the population]

- A Legally Binding Commitment
- Family Unit Is Protected
- Husband Is Head of Household
- Children Are Legitimate



ENSLAVED FAMILIES
(circa 40% of the population)

- A Personal Commitment
- No Protection of the Family Unit
- Master Is Head of Household
- Children Are Enslaved



Note: It is estimated that approximately 5% of the black population was free in 1770.

NEWS

PREPARE FOR WAR,
HOPE FOR PEACE

When last we reported on the disturbances in the west betwixt and between white settlers and Native Americans, Lord Dunmore had been instructed by the burgesses that he must invoke the invasion law as the basis for defense against the Indians. Not happy with this direction from the legislators—for he preferred that the Assembly provide the means for recruiting and equipping a force to go west—the governor decided on another strategy. On July 10, his lordship set his sights westward from this capital city to raise volunteers from the militia in the western counties of Frederick, Berkeley and Dunmore. Prior to taking his leave, he sent Col. Andrew Lewis, Boteourt County, and his brother Col. Charles Lewis, Augusta County, both members of the House of Burgesses, posthaste to their homes to begin raising militia in their respective counties. Similar preparations are also occurring in Fincastle County. Our governor believes that the “shortest and most effectual way” to deal with the recalcitrant natives is to send a body of armed men directly into the Shawnee country, north of the Ohio.

By July 18, Dunmore arrived at Greenway Court (Frederick County), home of Lord Fairfax, and is using Greenway Court and the neighboring town of Winchester as bases for making preparations for future operations. These preparations could well last into late August. When fully assembled, forces from the aforementioned counties will converge at a point on the Ohio River to move against the Indian tribes deemed to be hostile. Lord Dunmore has concluded that it is “necessary to go in person to Ft. Dunmore (Pitt) to put matters under the best regulation . . . and give the enemies [the natives] a blow that would break the Confederacy and render their plans abortive.”

[Submitted by Nancy Milton and Phil Shultz]

FROST AND DROUGHT

WILLIAMSBURG, May 12.

ACCOUNTS from various Parts of the Country give a melancholy Description of the Injury done by the late Frost, which was the severest, at this Season of the Year, ever remembered. The forward Wheat is greatly injured every Where, and in some Places ruined; the same may be said of the Tobacco Plants. The Corn, which was generally come up is demolished in such a Manner that it is feared it will never shoot out again, but must all be replanted. The Fruit, of all Sorts, is destroyed Everywhere but upon the Rivers; Vines, of all kinds, are killed; and many of the Forest Trees have received such Injury that their Leaves are turned black and withering, so that there is but a bad Prospect of any Mast this Year.

Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon),
Thursday, May 12, 1774

Newsline

Continued from p. 1

June 4, 1774

George III's birthday

June 13, 1774

General Court meets for oyer and terminer session

June 15–17, 1774

Governor's Council meets; last time until 1775

June 22, 1774

Quebec Act passed by Parliament; extends Quebec's borders to Ohio River

June–July 1774

Delegate elections for Continental Congress; Peyton Randolph elected

July 10, 1774

Dunmore commands expedition against Shawnee in the upper Ohio

July 18, 1774

Fairfax County Resolves call for end to slave trade

July 26, 1774

Albemarle County Resolution to halt British imports passed

VIRGINIA'S SHADOW GOVERNMENT

When . . . Lord Dunmore dismissed the assembly for declaring a day of fast in support of Boston after that city's famous Tea Party the previous December . . . again members of the House of Burgesses thwarted the governor by adjourning to the Raleigh Tavern, where they formed another association against British imports and called for an annual meeting of colonial delegates in a “general congress . . . to deliberate on those general measures which the united interests of America may from time to time require.” This resolution was one of the earliest proposals for a Continental Congress. . . .

A few days after the meeting in the Raleigh Tavern, a circular letter arrived from Boston urging a halt to exports to Great Britain as well as imports. Twenty-five burgesses still in the vicinity summoned a convention to meet in Williamsburg on August 1, 1774, to consider the proposal. The call received enthusiastic response from the rest of the colony. In towns and about two-thirds of the counties

meetings of “Freeholders and other inhabitants” endorsed Boston's cause as Virginia's own and hailed, albeit with some differences in detail, the idea of restrictions on trade. Some meetings voted funds and supplies for the beleaguered northern city and, when the Council persuaded Dunmore to convene a new assembly in early August, held elections for it as well. Again the governor inadvertently handed his opponents an advantage by proroguing the new session before it met. Since local meetings had generally chosen the same representatives for both the convention and the assembly—most of whom, moreover, had been members of the previous legislature—the extralegal convention gained legitimacy.

A shadow government began to form to circumvent royal authority on one issue after another until the old regime became the shadow. The assembly had established a committee to correspond with other colonies in moments of crisis, especially between sessions, but otherwise the opposition in Virginia had needed little formal organization aside from the legislature itself until the call for a ban on British trade arrived. Virginia's port towns acted first, having received the circular letter about the same day as Williamsburg. Alexandria, Dumfries, Fredericksburg, Norfolk, and Portsmouth, followed by some of the county meetings, formed committees of correspondence to communicate “their sentiments on the present . . . Alarming situation of America” and “to take such steps for . . . the establishment of the rights of the colonies, as . . . shall appear most expedient and effectual,” as one committee explained. By the time the convention met, at least five counties—Dunmore, Fairfax, Frederick, Norfolk, and Stafford—had also given their committees the responsibility of enforcing a boycott as sentiment for once more adopting that strategy against the British grew.

John E. Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia, 1775–1783* (Williamsburg, Va.: Colonial Williamsburg, 1988), 8–10.

Benjamin Franklin reported from London that “the violent Destruction of the Tea seems to have united all Parties here against our Province, so that the Bill now brought into parliament for shutting up Boston as a Port till Satisfaction is made, meets with no Opposition.”

Franklin to Thomas Cushing, March 22, 1774, in Albert Smyth, ed., *Writings of Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 1906), 6: 223.



James City County Courthouse

DISORDER IN THE COURT

On April 12, 1774, the statute fixing fees for Virginia's court officers expired with serious implications for all courts in the colony. This expiration of the fee bill happened to coincide with a popular movement to close all courts of justice in the colony, in order to hinder the collection of debt owed to British creditors. Controversy arose when some local courts, as in James City County, followed the General Court's lead in adopting, as a temporary operating measure, the usual schedule of fees from the expired bill. In Rind's *Virginia Gazette*, “A Querist” in-

quired: “Now I ask by what authority these courts have established these ordinances? And whether they have not taken upon them the power of legislation?” Governor Dunmore inadvertently played into the hands of the popular politicians when he dissolved the Assembly on May 26 before it had a chance to enact a new fee bill. The ensuing confusion provided opportunity later for local Committees of Safety to fill the void and assume political control.

[Submitted by Bob Doares]



The Bostonians Paying the Excise Man

BUSINESS

To be let on CHARTER to any Part of Europe, or the West Indies,

THE Brigantine *Hamilton*, Burthen about 300 Hogsheads, a new Vessel now on the Stocks, and will be ready to take on Board by the first of June. For Terms, apply to me in Norfolk.

ROBERT GRAY, & Co.

Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon),
Thursday, May 19, 1774

Buying Respectability . . .

Just Imported from London, and sold by the Subscriber, at her Store opposite the Raleigh in Williamsburg, on reasonable Terms, for ready Money only.

A well chosen Assortment of the neatest Goods, consisting of fine Thread and Blond Lace, white Satin and Lustring, blue Satin and Sarcaent Petticoats, whit Do. For Weddings, Satin and Queen Silk Shoes, Muslim, Gause, Catgut, and Wire, worked Linen, Ribands, plain and ribbed Silk, Cotton and Thread Stockings, small Do. For Children, Patent Net Aprons equal in Beauty to Joining Lace, Silk Gloves and Mits, Rolls and Curls, Tambour Sword Knots, Boys Beaver and Hussar Caps, Ladies Riding Hats, Feathers, and Whips, Childrens Sashes and Stays, a large Quantity of Didsbury's Shoes, Sheenel, fine Chip and Cane Hats, Fans, Cloaks, Gauze Handkerchiefs, Purses, Bags and Puffs, Pearl for Work, Tureen, Punch, and Pap Ladles, Stone, Silver, Gilt, and Pinchbeck Buckles, both Shoe and Knee, Paste, Garnet, Gold and Black Stock Do. *Indian* Plate Salts, Do. Snuffers and Snuff Pans, Silver Tea Spoons, Tea Tongs, Salt Shovels, Do. Coral and Bells, Paste, Marcasite, Pearl, and Bed Necklaces and Earrings, Gold Wires, Silver bowed Scissors and Silver tipped Sheaths, Lancet Cases, Watch Chains and Keys, Combs, Pocket Books and Etwee Cases, Freemason and other Brooches, Paste Sprigs and Pins, Tooth Brushes, fine Irish Wafers, Sword Canes and Pen Knives, black Bags and Roses, black Pins, Stay Hooks, Thimbles, Silver Shoe Clasps, Fruit Knives, Dolls and other Toys with many other articles to numerous to insert.

C. RATHELL

N. B. At the same Place may be had an exceeding fine SILVER WATCH, capped and runs on Diamonds; also a beautiful GOLD WATCH, with Gold Hands, and an engraved Case.

Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon),
Thursday, May 12, 1774

Taking Possession . . .

THE Subscriber intending to settle over the *Mountains*, makes him offer his Land in *Amelia* for Sale. There are near 800 Acres (a little more than 100 thereof subject to a Widow's Dower) with a very good Dwelling-House, and all necessary Houses, lately repaired, an extraordinarily fine Apple and Peach Orchard of the best Kinds of Fruit, and Cherries of all Sorts. There are near 100 Acres of Low Ground very suitable for a Meadow, on which is great Abundance of fine Timber. The Purchaser may know the Terms by applying to *Joseph Eggleston* in *Amelia*, adjoining the Land, *Richard Eggleston* in *Cumberland*, or the Subscriber in *Frederick*.

WILLIAM EGGLESTON

Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon),
Thursday, May 12, 1774

To be SOLD

THE HOUSE and LOT in the back Street in *Williamsburg*, now in the Possession of *Robert Highland*. The terms may be known by applying to *James Shield* in *York* County, or to the Subscriber in *Charles City*.

JUDITH B. ARMISTEAD

Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon),
Thursday, May 12, 1774

STOLEN from the Palace, about four months ago, a BULL DOG of a dark brown color, with some White on his Neck and Breast, had an Iron Collar, and answers to the Name of *Glasgow*—A Reward of 20 s. will be given upon his being brought to the Post Office, *Williamsburg*.

Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon),
Thursday, May 12, 1774

FORUM



Letter from . . .

Margot Créviaux-Gevertz

A SUMMER SUMMARY

. . . begins with the Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer observed by the dissolved members of the House of Burgesses to protest British actions against the citizens of Boston. This occasion in turn further inflamed Virginians by increasing their support of Bostonians and their frustration with British authority.

Our summary continues with a thought about political manipulation. Perusing Virginians' responses to the slave trade in "Halt Slave Trade!" (p. 1), it is clear that putting the right "spin" on events when it suits our purposes was certainly not unknown to Virginians in 1774. Reacting to the perception that they were being "enslaved" by England, the colonists decried the "wicked cruel and unnatural trade" of slaves in Virginia as an evil imposed upon them by the British government. Since, in fact, the laws of slavery were created in Virginia by Virginians and approved by the king, weren't the colonists intentionally misrepresenting their role in establishing a slave economy? After all, who would understand the subtle and not so subtle mechanisms of slavery better than the slave owners? In addition to the political advantage of pointing a finger at Britain, was this also an attempt to deflect responsibility away from Virginians for exploiting a system that some recognized as morally wrong?

Shifting from politics to family life, there is information to draw on in this issue to help you paint a picture of family life in 1774. Depending upon your status of being free or enslaved, your family was protected and supported by the law or denied that protection and support. Using the information on the demographics of family life and death (p. 4) can help you engage children and their parents this summer. Focusing more on what we know about how Williamsburg's diverse families lived out their lives within the framework of the realities of life and death in 18th-century Virginia will enrich their experience.

Have a great summer season!



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"An elegant effigy of Lord North hanged & burnt"
—David Wardrobe, Westmoreland Co., June 1774

ENGLAND ACTS AND REACTS

Gordon S. Wood

The American Revolution: A History
(New York: Modern Library, 2002), 37–38.

In 1773, Parliament provided the occasion for a confrontation by granting the East India Company the exclusive privilege of selling tea in America. Although the North government intended this Tea Act only to be a means of saving the East India Company from bankruptcy, it set off the final series of explosions. For the act not only allowed colonial radicals to draw attention once again to the unconstitutionality of the existing taxes on tea, but it also permitted the company to grant monopolies for selling tea to favored colonial merchants—a provision that angered those American traders who were excluded. The Tea Act spread an alarm throughout the colonies. In several ports colonists stopped the ships from landing the company's tea. When tea ships in Boston were prevented from unloading their cargoes, Governor Thomas Hutchinson, whose merchant family had been given the right to sell tea, refused to allow the ships to leave without landing the tea. In response, on December 16, 1773, a group of patriots disguised as Indians dumped about £10,000 worth of tea into Boston Harbor. "This is the most magnificent movement of all," exulted John Adams, an ambitious young lawyer from Braintree, Massachusetts. "This destruction of the tea is so bold, so daring, so firm, intrepid, and inflexible, and it must have so important consequences, and so

lasting, that I can't but consider it an epocha in history."

Adams was right. To the British the Boston Tea Party was the ultimate outrage. Angry officials and many of the politically active people in Great Britain clamored for a punishment that would squarely confront America with the issue of Parliament's right to legislate for the colonies. "We are now to establish our authority," Lord North told the House of Commons, "or give it up entirely." In 1774, Parliament passed a succession of laws that came to be known as the Coercive Acts. The first of these closed the port of Boston until the destroyed tea was paid for. The second altered the Massachusetts charter and reorganized the government: Members of the Council, or upper house, were now to be appointed by the royal governor rather than elected by the legislature, town meetings were restricted, and the governor's power of appointing judges and sheriffs was strengthened. The third act allowed royal officials who had been charged with capital offenses to be tried in England or in another colony to avoid hostile juries. The fourth gave the governor power to take over private buildings for the quartering of troops instead of using barracks. At the same time, Thomas Gage, commander in chief of the British army in America, was made governor of the colony of Massachusetts.

These Coercive Acts were the last straw. They convinced Americans once and for all that Parliament had no more right to make laws for them than to tax them.

ACROSS

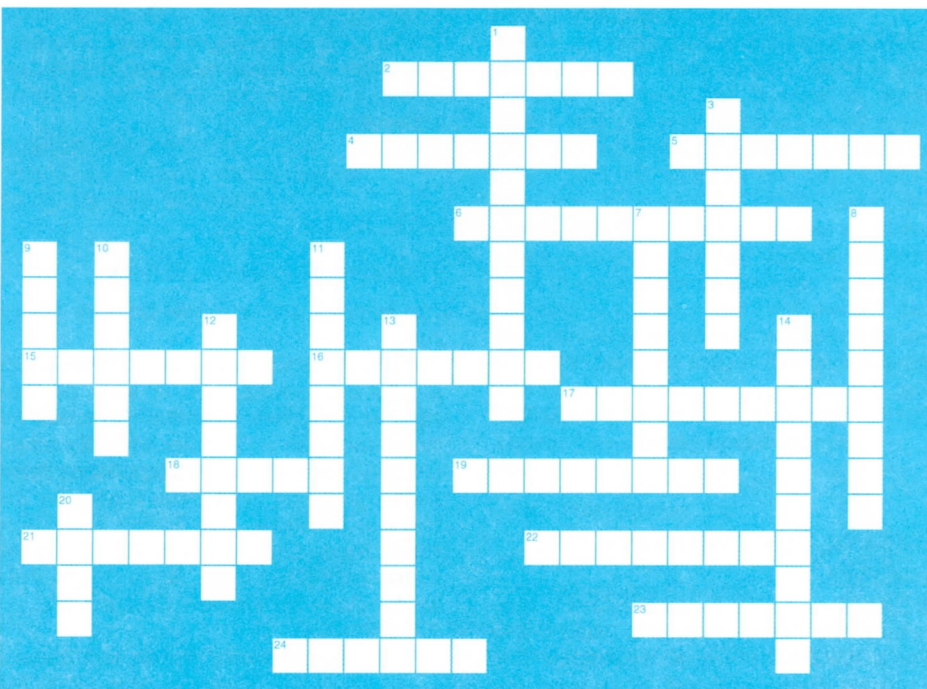
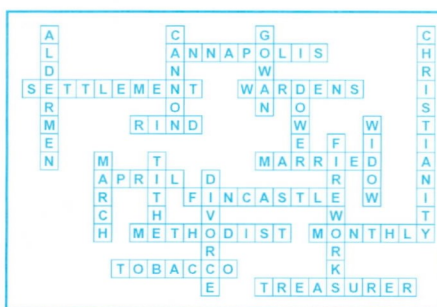
- 2 Site of extralegal Burgess meeting
- 4 Fighting force for Dunmore's expedition
- 5 This hall a Boston landmark
- 6 Virginia port town
- 15 Official leader of Williamsburg Day of Fasting
- 16 Stolen from Palace
- 17 One item exempted from nonimportation agreements
- 18 Colonel Andrew and Colonel Charles
- 19 Controversial legal case involving slave
- 21 Expedition organized against these
- 22 Reported tea party fallout from London
- 23 Dissolved the May Assembly
- 24 Good use for peaches

DOWN

- 1 Homes need plenty in summer
- 3 This county's resolves called for end to slave trade
- 7 Introduced Day of Fasting Resolution
- 8 Helped "cook up" Day of Fasting

- 9 Ruined early crops
- 10 This court hears land disputes
- 11 Burgesses called for this yearly
- 12 Western Virginia county
- 13 Attended Day of Fasting at Bruton
- 14 Merchant governor of Massachusetts
- 20 River forming southern border of Quebec

Answers to the last puzzle



SLAVERY

Augusta County, June 18, 1774
Run away . . . from the Subscriber, a Negro Man named BACCHUS, about 30 Years of Age, five Feet six or seven Inches high, strong and well made. . . He formerly belonged to Doctor George Pitt, of Williamsburg, and I imagine is gone there under Pretence of my sending him upon Business. . . he is a cunning, artful, sensible Fellow, and very capable of forging a Tale to impose on the Unwary. . . [he] has been used to waiting from his Infancy. . . He will probably endeavour to pass for a Freeman. . . and attempt to get on Board some Vessel bound for Great Britain, from the Knowledge he has of the late Determination of Somerset's Case.

Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon),
Thursday, June 30, 1774

THE FAMOUS SOMERSET CASE

More than two years before Bacchus left Augusta County, Lord Mansfield at the Court of King's Bench in London handed down a unanimous decision in favor of James Somerset, a slave brought to England from the colonies.



Born in Africa, James Somerset was brought to Virginia by a slaver in 1749. There Charles Steuart, a Scots merchant living in Norfolk, purchased him. Steuart afterwards moved to Boston as a high official in the customs service. In 1769 he went to England on business, taking Somerset with him as a personal servant. Steuart's correspondence indicates that Somerset served well and was trusted. Somerset moved about freely, often alone, through London streets and the English countryside, making deliveries and relaying messages. On October 1, 1771, he ran away, was recaptured and delivered to Capt. John Knowles of the ship *Ann and Mary*, who held him on board in irons. The ship was bound for Jamaica, where the captain was to sell Somerset on Steuart's behalf.

The Somerset case began when a writ of habeas corpus* was granted on November 28, 1772, to release Somerset from imprisonment. Like several other suits in England's high court, this one had been designed and stage managed, very much behind the scenes, by Granville Sharp, a philanthropist, scholar and founder of the English Society for the Abolition of Slavery. . . .

The case was much debated in Virginia—both in the press and face-to-face; for example, "the affair of yr. Damed Villian Somerseat came on the Carpet" during dinner at the Palace for members of the Council and other distinguished visitors. Steuart seemed to be resigned to losing Somerset and concluded "upon the whole, every body seems to think it will go in favour of the negro."

And indeed it did. Newsmongers immediately spread the word that the decision meant the end of slavery in England and threatened the continuance of the institution in the English colonies. According to eyewitnesses, the Lord Chief Justice had said only that black slaves, while in England, could not be forced to leave. Legal historians have studied this case carefully, and the most respected specialist in these matters William M. Wiecek summarizes the Court's decision this way: "Read strictly and technically, the holding of *Somerset* was limited to two points: a master could not seize a slave in England and detain him preparatory to sending him out of the realm to be sold, and habeas corpus was available to the slave to forestall such seizure, deportation, and sale."

We can never know exactly what Bacchus learned about the pros and cons of England (and the purity of its air) from Dr. Pitt, but he was in a position to learn quite a lot. Like James Somerset Bacchus was a body servant and waiting man. Personal servants by their very job descriptions were well placed to their masters' political views, to overhear conversations and plans, and to acquire valuable information of all sorts.

Continued on p. 4

LIFE

FARMING

Tobacco: Plant and replant, weed, manure, worm, top and sucker

Corn: Plow and hoe ground, plant and replant, weed with plows and hoes and cart last year's crop to town

Wheat: Cart last year's crop to ships or town, cut, bind and stack, sell straw in town, thresh for seed, tread and sow, plow and harrow in

Vegetables: Sow turnips, plant peas and potatoes, sow vegetables, weed peas and pumpkins

Livestock: June—Shear sheep, kill muttons for sale, wean calves, kill veal for sale, make butter

July—Kill beeves for sale to ships, kill mutton and veal for sale, wean calves, make butter

HOUSEKEEPING
GARDENING/FOOD
PRESERVATION

Housekeeping: Doors and windows kept open for most ventilation. Mosquito netting added to bedsteads for protection from insects. Gauze covers to protect looking glasses and expensive pictures. Carpets and window curtains removed and stored. Furniture often moved to passage to enjoy cross ventilation.

Gardening and Food Preservation: Make wine, sugar-preserve fruits, dry fruits in oven because of humidity; pick and dry beans, carrots, onions, melons, artichokes, etc.

In hot weather, because raw meat spoils rapidly and must be cooked and eaten up quickly, only smaller cuts are served in summertime unless the whole animal will be eaten in a day or two.

[Robert Leath]

BUILDING TRADES

Brickmaking: Making and burning brick; problem with wet weather during drying of green bricks; in rural areas bricks made in late summer.

Bricklaying: Good months to work; bricks needed be kept moist when laying.

Mortar Manufacture: Must keep mortar wetter to prevent drying out.

Plastering: Need to keep surfaces wet during dry season.

Carpentry and Joinery: If working by day, longer hours; 15 hours sun, 13 hours work

[Carl Lounsbury]

Somerset Case *Continued from p. 3*

This is an important trait Bacchus and Somerset had in common.

From the beginning, myths grew up around the Somerset case; as usual, the myths proved more vivid and longer lasting than the truth. News of supposed emancipation spread from wishful thinking Anglo-Africans and English abolitionists to ill-informed printing offices in the provincial towns, as well as up and down the Eastern Seaboard. Enslaved people both in England and the Virginia backcountry heard and believed what they heard; they believed so strongly that they acted on the information and risked their lives by daring to escape. Somerset misconstrued was a giant fiction. Its repercussions in Virginia and elsewhere were greater than its legal reality.

*habeas corpus (Latin: "You have the body")—Prisoners often seek release by filing a petition for a writ of habeas corpus. A writ of habeas corpus is a judicial mandate to a prison official ordering that an inmate be brought to the court so the court can determine whether or not that person is imprisoned lawfully or should be released from custody. A habeas corpus petition is a petition filed with a court by a person who objects to his own or another's detention or imprisonment.

BLACK AND WHITE FAMILY LIFE

Many of our guests this late spring and summer will be families, and this demographic information may be helpful as you interpret the nature of family life in Williamsburg in 1774.

Family Life for Colonial Virginians, 1750-75

	FREE VIRGINIANS	ENSLAVED VIRGINIANS	REMARKS
STATUS OF MARRIAGE	Legal marriages Society protected and reinforced all legal marriages. There was no divorce possible in Virginia.	No legal marriages Masters could separate husbands and wives and children from parents at will. There was no protection or support for family life.	A legally recognized marriage was necessary for children to be considered legitimate and able to inherit property.
*AVERAGE AGE AT MARRIAGE	Males: Mid-20s Females: Early 20s (around age 22) Age at marriage was often determined by the ability to support a household.	Males: About age 30 Females usually had their first child in their late teens and at that time established their own homes within the quarter. The father of an enslaved woman's first child was not usually the father of her subsequent children.	
*AVERAGE SIZE OF FAMILIES	Average of 6-8 children born alive out of about 10 pregnancies (including miscarriages and stillbirths)	Average of 6-7 children born (number of pregnancies unknown)	This average is for a woman married to one man throughout her reproductive years. Widowhood could affect the family size, as could the early death of a woman (before age 45).
MORTALITY OF CHILDREN	½ to ¾ of children who lived through infancy lived to 21 years.**	50% mortality rate for enslaved children up to age 15	
BIRTH PATTERNS	Birth interval averaged 2-2½ years.	Births averaged every 2½ years.	Miscarriage and infant death could shorten intervals between births. Also, some African-American women had intervals of 3 years or longer because of longer nursing periods and/or loss of a sexual partner.
STATUS OF CHILDREN	Children of a legal marriage were considered legitimate and could inherit property.	Children of enslaved mothers inherited their mothers' slave status and were not considered legitimate.	Children born of a free white woman and an enslaved father were bound out for 30 years by law.
DURATION OF MARRIAGE	Marriage could be broken only by death. Marriages lasted 20-30 years on the average.	Masters had the legal authority to separate husbands and wives, although some recognized family relationships.	In actuality some spouses abandoned their marriage partners.
CHILD REARING	Two-parent households were the norm. Children often knew their grandparents.	Enslaved women often raised their young children alone. On large plantations, ½-¾ of enslaved children lived in two-parent households, whereas ¼ of enslaved children lived in two-parent households on small plantations.	
*AVERAGE AGE OF DEATH	Virginians who lived to age 21 lived on the average into their early 50s.	No comprehensive figures are available.	Given the nature of statistical measure, a wide range of actual experiences (early death and old age) are included.

*These statistics are *average*, both mean and median. *Individual* experiences varied widely. That fact does not invalidate the average, but the average does not make the individual variant unreal, either.

**In their study of Middlesex County, from a possible estimate of 1,727 male births, the Rutmans determined that there could have been a male infant mortality rate as high as 38 percent. These figures are extremely difficult to estimate. As the Rutmans argue, "Data on age at death for those dying under age 15 are so weak as to be virtually unusable. Infants undoubtedly appeared and disappeared, their life spans measured in days without impressing either their birth or death on the records from which we draw" (45).

Source: Kevin Kelly, Lorena Walsh and Anne Willis



Enslaving Virginia . . .

HANOVER Town, May 6, 1774
RUN away from the Subscriber, in *March*, last, a likely *Virginia* born Wench BETTY, about 22 Years of Age, stout and well set, wears Silver Earrings set with white Stone, and carried with her several Suits of Clothes. She was formerly the Property of Mr. *James Mitchell*, deceased, at *York*, and has been used to attend in a Public House from her Infancy. She has been seen at several Places on *James River*, but last at Captain *William Acrill's*, in *Charles City*, where I am informed she has several Relations. Any Person that will secure the said Slave, so that I get her again, shall have THREE POUNDS Reward. HARDIN BURNLEY
Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon), Thursday, May 12, 1774

Taking Possession . . .

FOR SALE
A TRACT of LAND in *Amelia County*, containing 500 Acres, about four Miles below the COURTHOUSE. It is remarkable fine Land for Grain, and will bring good To-

bacco. The Plantation is in good Order for Cropping, sufficient to work six or eight Hands, with all necessary Houses. Any person inclinable to purchase may depend on having a Bargain, and know the Terms by applying to

William Marshall
Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon), Thursday, May 19, 1774]

Buying Respectability . . .

Just imported, and to be sold for ready Money only,

A NEAT Assortment of PAPER HANGINGS for Rooms Stakingcases, & forty percent cheaper than they have ever been sold in this Place. Also a Quantity of ready made SACKING Bottoms of different Sizes, Brass nails, Upholsters Tacks, Brass Casters for Tables and Bedsteads, Bed Screws of the best Kind, Brass Caps to cover the Heads of Ditto, small Brass Rings, Brass Hooks, Pulleys for Draw Up Window Curtains, etc.

JOSEPH KIDD
Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon), Thursday, May 19, 1774]

WEATHER

May 1774

4th Very cold. Yesterday noon we had several showers, hasty and cold, and in the night it rained and so it did this morning so much to stop my hoes; and my overseer assures me it had been snowing. (Landon Carter)

5th I said yesterday there would be a frost. . . . the ice was hard enough for a dog to walk on it; hard down 6 inches deep and icicles 5 or 6 out of the ground. All the fruit killed. Apples, peaches, everything and abundance trees even black jacks turnt quite black with frost. (Carter)

14th Again misting in the morning with showers in the afternoon accompanied in some places with violent hail. (George Washington)

25th A shew of rain yesterday noon made me cut off all my hills for planting should it rain. No rain yet but a sprinkle of about 10 minutes, very fine to lay the dust, yet, as it is in May and ever cool, so my hills were cut off last night. I set into planting about 12 o'clock. (Carter)

June 1774

4th The day cool and agreeable. . . . The ground is very dry, the frost of the fourth of May has been much more severe and fatal here than in the northern colonies. The peaches here, except on farms lying near the Potowmack are wholly destroy'd, . . . And I am told that in Louden & other upper counties . . . wheat & rie are cut off, so interly that the owners mow it down for fodder! (Philip Fithian)

11th It is alarming to observe how hard & dusty the country is, towards evening some clouds arose & looked promising in the West, but they bring no rain—No rain has fell here since the 24th of May, & then but a scant shower, & most of the time since windy. (Fithian)

27th I am afraid this mist is nothing more than a most injurious dry weather sign in which the earth is giving up what little moisture it can supposed to have after a drowth of 34 days now running. (Carter)

July 1774

14th After school with Ben I rode out the day is warm, & the ground grows to be very dry—I was not a little surprised to see corn out in tassel—but the tobacco looks dismal, it is all poor, much of it dead with the drowth. (Fithian)

17th The air this morning serene & cool. . . . The afternoon extremely hot I could not leave my room til the sun had hid his flaming place behind the earth. . . . the whole family seem to be out Black, White, Male, Female, all enjoying the cool evening. (Fithian)

29th O! it is very hot—The wind itself seems to be heated. . . . At seven I rode out to the corn-field, the sun was almost down & was hid behind a large white thick cloud where it thunders—the corn is roll'd up with the heat & Drowth! . . . While we were drinking coffee the lightning, as it began to grow dark, began to stream, it was at some distance, but was incessant, bright & awful. (Fithian)

To be SOLD, on Friday the 27th Instant (May) before the Raleigh Tavern,

Eight Hundred Acres of very valuable LAND lying in Kingston Parish, Gloucester County, near *New Point Comfort*, which is well timbered with Pine and White Oak. Upon it there is a dwelling-house with two Brick Chimnies, all convenient Houses, one Peach, and three Apple Orchards.—At the same Time will be sold thirty likely *Virginia* born SLAVES.

GEORGE W. PLUMMER
Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon), Thursday, May 5, 1774