● THE COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

interpreter

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The Greenhow Store

We asked Mary Theobald, who coordinates Historic Area products, to tell us about the new Greenhow Store.

Eighteenth-century Williamsburg was a commercial town boasting many stores, shops, taverns, markets, and fairs where merchandise routinely changed hands. (See "King's English" for distinction between *store* and *shop*.) Though fewer of these business establishments exist today than flourished two centuries ago, their contribution to the visitor's overall Williamsburg experience has never been more significant.

Part of the educational mission of the Historic Area stores and shops is to represent the role that retailing played in the everyday lives of eighteenth-century Virginians; another aspect is to provide the public with a variety of authentic eighteenth-century products. To achieve these educational goals, an interpretive program with two basic areas of emphasis was initiated in the late 1970s: store interpretation and product interpretation.

Product interpretation dominates. What is a teetotum, how and why was it used? How was the mob cap worn, by whom, and when? What are Pontefract cakes and where did they get their name? These are just a few of the questions to which the sales/interpreters respond every day. Often a printed card accompanies the item to explain its historical significance. In this way the educational message is delivered twice, orally and in writing. Because many purchases are intended as gifts for people not present when the product's significance is explained, these cards carry our historical information one step further. The educational value of authentic merchandise must not be underrated. Long after the visit is over, the gift taken home stirs memories of Williamsburg and reinforces the learning that has taken place.

Store interpretation assumes a larger role at the smaller sales outlets. At McKenzie's Apothecary visitors receive general information about the colonial apothecary and the products and services he offered. At the Post Office guests learn about the printers who sold merchandise and operated a postal service from this shop.

In the fall the ninth Historic Area store will open its doors to the public and store interpretation will take a giant step forward. John Greenhow's establishment across from the Geddy House will be unique among the Historic Area general stores in its incorporation of an "exhibition store" within a working retail operation.

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T. A. C. T.

(Thoughtful Actions Can Talk)

Many interpreters have expressed an interest in continuing discussions begun during our 1982 in-service interpretive education session, "Diplomacy Under Pressure." Although our formal classes cannot continue throughout the year, with this issue of *The Interpreter* we are introducing a special column addressing this important topic. As you know, in our last issue we asked you to suggest titles for this new feature; your suggestions have been clever and varied. Each of your ideas underscored this column's objectives: 1) to relate difficult visitor-related situations in which we've found ourselves, situations absolutely requiring us to employ diplomacy under presure; 2) to share successes in solving such dilemmas; and 3) for the Department of Interpretive Education to suggest ways to handle encounters that have stumped us.

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While working his way through files at the Virginia State Library, a Foundation researcher came upon a series of sketches in John Hook's papers. Both the letters and sketches are negative photostats, and the location of the originals is unkown. The drawings were created in 1772 as a guide to building or remodeling Hook's store in Bedford County. Remodeling is more likely, as a carpenter's account at that time mentions moving the counting house and various kinds of repairs to Hook's property.

John Hook came to Virginia from Scotland as a very young man. After working as a bookkeeper in a couple of Virginia stores, he formed a partnership and established a wholesale store at Warwick in Chesterfield County and the retail store in Bedford.

Until recently the paucity of concrete information on store interiors prevented the Historic Area stores from claiming too close a resemblance to their eighteenth-century counterparts. Last year a field study by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation architects into eighteenth-and early nineteenth-century Virginia stores provided knowledge on shelving, counters, and other aspects of the interior arrangements of stores. Information from the field survey was substantiated and amplified by the eleventh-hour discovery of the only known drawings of an eighteenth-century Virginia store.

The Foundation incorporated part of the new discovery on the northwest wall of the Greenhow Store, creating the most authentic shelving in any Historic Area store. One of the sketches shows the arrangement and dimensions of a group of pigeonholes surrounded by shelves. Pigeonholes were evident in several colonial stores. William Allason's store in Falmouth, for instance, had an unspecified number of them, as did Thomas Jones's store in Williamsburg. The drawing of Hook's store also indicates ten drawers under the counter; the drawers are labeled for coffee, pepper, allspice, ginger, saltpeter, allum, brimstone, medicine, indigo, and cash. The counter extended across the entire width of the building—twenty feet.

Armed with this information, the curators, architects, and historians set to work on the Greenhow Store. They re-created a "counting room" in the back of the store to be furnished with antiques and reproductions. A desk will be open and equipped with money scales, sealing wax, quill pens, a pipe, and other accessories for a busy merchant. The bookcase will hold period publications on bookkeeping and merchants' guides, as well as facsimile account books and ledgers. A strong box will protect Mr. Greenhow's money and valuables. A few prints and maps will decorate the walls. The Greenhow team limited the intrusions of the necessary twentieth-century merchandising requirements: the cash registers will be quiet and shielded from public view, and the specially designed lighting fixtures will be inconspicuous.

Another feature of the John Greenhow Store will be its accessibility to physically handicapped visitors. Because the entrances to Historic Area stores and shops are several steps above sidewalk level, it is difficult for guests in wheelchairs to enter them. One plan under consideration for Greenhow is a lightweight ramp, concealed in a pile of barrels and shipping crates near the front door, which the sales/interpreters could quickly pull up to the entrance. No steps or barriers should impede the movements of our handicapped guests, once inside. The lighting levels will be sufficient for the sight-impaired, while the lower counters will allow those confined to wheelchairs to see the merchandise.

In addition to the usual sales/interpreters, the Greenhow Store will be staffed by John Greenhow himself. Five actors will rotate in the role of Mr. Greenhow, discussing the difficulties of managing a large general store and of acquiring only "the best" merchandise for the customers. Weather permitting, Mr. Greenhow may take to the street to oversee the delivery of a wagon load of goods or to entice passersby with descriptions of his wares. Whenever feasible, interaction between Mr. Greenhow and "his employees and apprentices" in the store will add another dimension to the interpretation.

The products sold in the Greenhow Store will mirror as much as possible the items

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Occurrences

People were, well, *different* in the eighteenth century. And one could scarcely find a more *peculiar*—or hilarious—group of eighteenth-century Englishmen and women than those who comprise the cast of characters of *The Male Coquette, or, 1757.* The great Mr. David Garrick wrote this comedy, a faithful adaptation of which now graces the boards at the Lodge Auditorium. Harvey Credle and his talented troupe of actors have produced this delightful evening, which it would be your great ill fortune to miss. Dates are Saturday, March 6, 20, and 27, and April 17.

Divisional in-service training may be over, but there are still opportunities to learn before the onset of summertime and its attendant busy days. The Research Department's lecture series continues with Shomer Zwelling talking on "Robert Carter: The Seasons of a Man's Life" on Thursday, April 15. This presentation will take place at Botetourt Theatre, Swem Library, the College of William and Mary, at 8:00 P.M. It is certain to be very much worth your while.

"An Evening of Military Life" makes its 1982 debut on St. Patrick's Day, Wednesday, March 17, at 7:00 P.M. This is the third year for this lively program of historical instruction and dramatization. The thirty-sixth Garden Symposium opens Sunday, March 28, and concludes on March 31.

April brings its usual bounty of showers, flowers, and visitors. Easter, which falls on April 11 this year, will be celebrated at Colonial Williamsburg with the traditional Easter militia review at 8:30 A.M. and a dinner-play at the Lodge at 7:00 P.M. on Saturday, and a Palace Garden Party from 2:00 to 3:30 P.M. and Capitol Concerts at 8:00 P.M. and 9:00 P.M. Easter Sunday. Friday, April 16, marks the premier of a new evening program titled "An Assembly at the Capitol." It is a gathering of visitors to the town for music, dance, and diversions at the Capitol. It's another production of Mr. John Moon and the talented people in the Company of Colonial Performers. Williamsburg Garden Tours begin on Saturday, April 24, continuing through Sunday, May 2. Garden Week in Williamsburg, with its tour of selected area homes, falls on Tuesday, April 27.

Visitors will be interested to learn about these events. Let them know about them. And there may be some events you have yet to see. Now is your chance!

T.A.C.T., *continued*

George Collins's sessions afforded us practice in resolving certain difficult incidents by employing some time-tested principles of personal interaction. Although these principles remain constant, there is no end to the variety of tight situations in which an interpreter might find himself/herself. So, "adaptability" soon becomes the emblem of a successful interpreter.

Many of you have already submitted descriptions of incidents you would like addressed here, and we encourage you to continue sending them. Our teaching interpreters review them and begin discussing possible solutions. Then the rest of us in the Department of Interpretive Education share our thoughts on the matter. By the time it makes its rounds in our department, your situation has had the benefit of about seventy to eighty years of combined interpretive experience. At times we may want to refer the really complex ones to the Foundation-wide Hospitality and Courtesy Committee chaired by Steve Elliott. We all hope our responses will assist you when assistance is really needed.

Well, I've kept you in suspense long enough. You must be wondering who won our "Name-The-New-Column Contest." (The envelope, please.) Our winner, Anne Potts, a hostess in the Department of Exhibition Buildings, has won a $20.00 gift certificate to be used at the Information Center Bookstore. I envy Anne this award. There are many attractive books there. By the way, I too had what I thought to be an appealing title for this column. I wanted it to be called "The Sticky Wicket." Members of my staff, however, told me that I simply didn't qualify for the "Name-The-New-Column Contest." They needn't have told me, though. From the start I knew it wasn't cricket. Congratulations, Anne.

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that John Greenhow advertised in the *Virginia Gazette* in the 1760s. "Large, rich and noble China bowls" will sit on the shelves, "Pontefract cakes" will make mouths water, "fish hooks" will tempt the "compleat angler," "window glass," "nails," and other "materials for buildings" will interest the home renovator, while "working canvas and worsted shades," "silver thimbles of all sizes," and "ribands, thread, and silk" should appeal to the needleworker. Many new products are being developed exclusively for Greenhow, though some overlap with products in other stores is necessary.

Just how much product overlap should exist was a problem encountered early in the planning stages. The desire to infuse each of the three general stores with its own character and appearance was strong, but it ran counter to the historical evidence that all eighteenth-century general stores imported and inventoried essentially the same items. For example, to offer candles at Prentis Store while omitting them from Tarpley's and Greenhow would mislead the public to suppose that specialization was the rule.

The merchandising approach that was adopted distributes products between the stores not *by* categories but *within* categories. Take candles as an example once again. Nearly all general stores in the eighteenth century inventoried candles of some sort, and all three general stores in the Historic Area today will offer some candles. But only one will carry all of the available bayberry and beeswax, dipped and molded candles in all sizes.

A similar situation in eighteenth-century stores may have resulted from the uncertainties of transatlantic shipping. No one store could keep a stock of all items at all times. Where general stores *did* differ was often in merchandise availability. The storekeeper who had just received a shipment from London presumably had a wider fresher selection of merchandise from which to choose, whereas a competitor whose delivery was not expected for several weeks might run a bit low on some goods.

Unless you are one of the actors or sales/interpreters slated to work at the new John Greenhow Store, you probably wonder how all of this could affect your daily interpretations. What might craftspeople, escorts, hosts and hostesses, and visitor aides say about stores in general and Greenhow in particular?

We suggest that you avoid extremes. The stores are not "souvenir shops," nor do they precisely portray eighteenth-century stores. Only an exhibition store where no sales are transacted could aspire to this latter description. The Historic Area stores and shops are active places of business, representing the commercial aspects of the period, where visitors can learn about eighteenth-century lifestyles and purchasing habits through the products that were, and are, available.

When asked for film, calendars, modern books, or other twentieth-century items, you might direct visitors to the nearest gift shop (Inn, Lodge, Motor House), the Information Center, or Merchants' Square. Explain *why* modern products are not available inside the Historic Area. When asked for a place to buy a snack, suggest the Raleigh Tavern Bakery for baked goods and cider, or Tarpley's and Greenhow for candy, dried fruit, and fresh fruit in season. If asked whether all the stores carry the same items, perhaps you could say that, while in the eighteenth century Greenhow, Prentis, and Tarpley stores offered much the same sort of products, today each has different areas of emphasis so that every store is worth a visit. When escorting a group by a store, encourage the visitors to return after the tour (no ticket required) to examine the vast array of interesting products and discover what was available to the eighteenth-century Virginian. After Greenhow opens in the fall, urge guests to visit this unique store—talk with John Greenhow and his employees about the store and its products, see the exhibition counting room, and learn more about this important aspect of eighteenth-century life.

Have You Heard

What a good issue the January 1982 *William and Mary Quarterly* is? All of the articles deal with the theme "The Family in Early America." Check your departmental library or the Greenhow Office for a copy to borrow.

To begin our new column, members of the Department of Interpretive Education have chosen the following situation. (Note that, as always, the person who submits the incident will remain anonymous because it's the incident and *not* the individual that's clearly being addressed here.)

What if a visitor should pose this question, "Half the buildings here seem to be closed, and I've paid full price for a ticket. Why?" Perhaps you've experienced this many times already. There obviously are many positive directions in which your answer may go. Remember always the importance of maintaining the visitor's self-esteem, of listening empathetically to the complaint, and of assisting the visitor in planning around the given situation.

There are obviously financial reasons why fewer buildings are open in the winter. We suggest that you assure the visitor that there is plenty to see on any single day and point out that his ticket is valid for more than one day. And while the alternating schedule means some buildings will be closed every day, at least one of each type of building is always open—either Wetherburn's or the Raleigh, for example, is open each day. Those buildings that were closed today may well be open tomorrow or when the visitor returns. You may even have time to assist the visitor in the planning of his day.

Too, our winter visitors benefit greatly from interpreters who can be more "open" to interpret in the directions of the visitors' interests. On these days of low attendance, our visitors also can more freely imagine how life was in Williamsburg: fewer visitors, fewer distractions, and fewer lines all afford each visitor a more personal encounter with eighteenth-century life. This is an intimacy that the Foundation has always tried to preserve; the closing of the Duke of Gloucester Street to traffic and the intentional separation of the Information Center facilities are but two examples of this commitment to free the Historic Area from "alien and inharmonious surroundings."

In short, the winter schedule and the flexibility of the ticket structure combine to offer the full range of exhibitions to our visitors, along with the many other golden opportunities of the season!

—Bill Tramposch

The King's English

Brimstone—formerly the common vernacular name for sulphur, which was used in gunpowder, fireworks, metal-working procedures, as a medicine, cloth whitener, and a wood preservative.

Counting room—an office in which the store's bookkeeper kept the records of the business.

Gallipot—a small glazed earthen pot, especially one used by apothecaries for ointments and medicines.

Poll comb—a comb for the hair of the head.

Pontefract cakes—licorice candy, not too sweet, from Pontefract, England.

Shop—a retail establishment characterized by its specialization in one particular area; often a part of a craft operation, such as a millinery shop or blacksmith's shop; example: McKenzie's Apothecary Shop.

Store—an Americanism indicating a retail establishment characterized by a wide assortment of merchandise typically including cloth, tools, food, household articles; examples: Tarpley's, Prentis, and Greenhow. A store in England usually meant a warehouse.

Teetotum—a top with numbered sides used in games especially produced for children and "polite company" to replace dice, which were too closely associated with gambling.

The Interpreter is a bimonthly publication of the Department of Interpretive Education.
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