

interpreter

The Lasser Collection: The Study of Currency Enhanced at Colonial Williamsburg

by Gail Greve

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On December 1994, Joseph Lasser of Scarsdale, New York, signed a deed of gift giving Colonial Williamsburg his collection of continental and colonial paper currency. It is one of the largest collections of this type held by an individual in the United States.

The materials within the collection represent a unique research tool for the Foundation. The collection presents us with an opportunity to study printing, economics, monetary systems, and a host of other topics. Collected to illustrate various aspects of pa-

per money and the processes relating to it, the Lasser Collection contains many unusual pieces. Among the materials are tobacco notes, long notes, cancelled notes, fiscal paper, and counterfeit detectors.

Some of the more interesting items in the collection are the long notes. The "Revere long notes" and the "James River Bank notes" are particularly interesting. As the name implies, long notes are pieces that are longer in size. They resemble a modern day check in shape. The "Revere notes" acquired the name because Paul Revere engraved the plates used to produce the currency. The James River Bank Notes are of interest because they were printed in Virginia and were signed by such notables as William Norvell, Robert Carter Nicholas, Peyton Randolph, John Blair, and Edmund Randolph.

The tobacco notes, also issued in Virginia, were used instead of presenting an actual crop of tobacco. The notes indicate and certify that a specific amount of tobacco had been inspected and had been stored in a



Joseph Lasser displays his currency collection for Colonial Williamsburg staff Bob Wilburn, John Caramia, Steve Elliott, Gail Greve, and Susan Berg.

government warehouse. The note could then be used to pay off debts as one had been able to with the actual tobacco crop. To pay someone with one of these notes, one would sign the note over to the person expecting payment.

Other items of note within the collection include a unique Florida note, the largest private holding of North Carolina notes, parchment coins from the series known as the "Rosa Americana Series," and bills from New York printed from plates engraved by Peter Zenger. The Foundation has also acquired a series of North Carolina proclamation notes still tied in their original bundle from Ms. Anne Picker, an acquaintance of Mr. Lasser. Finally, there are several pieces within the collection, all from North Carolina, that are well worn. In order to keep them useful and in circulation, they were sewn, pinned, or rebacked. All the repairs are evident, thus making them useful for illustrating what people of the eighteenth century did to keep their currency in circulation.

Another highlight of the collection is the vast number of signatures found on the currency. Men of means and stature were appointed to sign the currency being issued. This was done to protect against counterfeiting and to regulate the amount of currency issued. As many as six people might be authorized to sign a single bill. Among the signatories of the Virginia pieces were Robert Carter Nicholas, Peyton Randolph, John Blair, and John Dixon. Other notable signatures on bills within the collection are those of men who were involved as signers of the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution,

and the Declaration of Independence. The study of signatures was a major part of Mr. Lasser's interest in the pieces, and he has written several articles on the subject.

Other aspects of the collection that make it immensely important for study are the mottoes and images used by each colony or state. Graphics such as the 7 December 1775 issue engraved by Paul Revere showing a minuteman holding a sword with the words "In defence of American Liberty" and the "Rising Sun" issue are some of the more interesting. In addition, some of the reasons for issuing the pieces give a real insight into history. One example is the Virginia currency of 16 October 1780, issued to clothe the Army. Another is a 1769 note from Georgia issued in support of construction of a lighthouse on Tybee Island.

The Lasser Collection also affords a unique look into the various processes that went into the printing, use, and protection of currency. When you look at various pieces, you can see some truly remarkable graphics. The graphics were used, in many cases, to prevent counterfeiting. The designs were so intricate they were virtually impossible to duplicate. One of the most interesting processes used for this purpose was developed by Benjamin Franklin and is known as the "nature print." The sand and clay impres-



A sampling of currency from the Lasser Collection.

sion was made of a leaf that was incorporated into the plate used for the back of the currency note.

Other methods devised to protect currency included the use of signatures, insertion of odd symbols on the currency, and the indenting of bills. The process of indenting a bill involved cutting the note from a bound pad of notes at one end in a unique and uneven manner. When redeemed, the note would have to match the "stub" it had been cut away from in the pad. To further protect currency, each note was given a handwritten number when issued. The "stub" of an indented note also carried the same number as the actual bill. All these processes served to protect the issues. As a final method for deterring counterfeiting, bills known as counterfeit detectors, which were duplicates of currency run off on different colored paper, were posted in public buildings such as the Post Office so that the public might check

the bills in their possession against the detectors to be sure their money was authentic.

Further information can be gained through the study of the Lasser Collection. From a printing perspective, one can study the printing dynasties that were involved in the production of currency. In addition, the processes relating to the printing of the issues and the types of print and graphics used are also well illustrated in the collection. The evolution and change in currency is another area that is well documented. One can also use the collection to learn more about important figures of the time who signed the currency and who were involved in other aspects of the regulation of the notes. Finally, the material presents a unique opportunity for interpretation through exhibition and possible reproduction.

Below is a table describing the scope of the Lasser Collection along with some additional information regarding the collection.

Type	Number of Pieces	Inclusive Dates
Continental Currency	285	5/10/75 - 10/11/87
Connecticut	39	3/8/59 - 7/1/80
Connecticut Fiscal Paper	2	12/24/89 and ?
Delaware	11	2/28/46 - 5/1/77
Florida	1	177?
Georgia	46	1762 - 10/16/86
Louisiana	2	1/1/20 and 7/1/20
Maryland	43	1733 - 5/10/81
Maryland Fiscal Paper	2	10/14/79 and 5/11/81
Massachusetts	36	11/21/08 - 9/21/89
New Hampshire	22	12/25/34 - 4/29/80
New Jersey	48	7/2/46 - 1786
New York	83	4/4/48 - 4/25/81
North Carolina	147	4/4/48 - 4/25/81
Pennsylvania	82	8/10/39 - 8/6/89
Rhode Island	24	2/14/43 - 5/86
South Carolina	43	1767 - 10/9/93
Vermont	2	2/81 and 2/81
Virginia	56	6/8/57 - 5/7/81

Smallest denomination: Rhode Island 1785 - 1/36th of one dollar

Largest denomination: North Carolina 1781 - \$7,500

Earliest date: November 21, 1708

Latest date: October 9, 1793

Total number of pieces: 974

(all data are derived from the inventory supplied with the Lasser Collection)

All of the items are housed in the rare book room of the Foundation Library. The Library is open from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. Monday through Friday for research requiring assistance. Researchers are encouraged to call ahead so that the associate curator of special collections will be available to assist in the use of the collection. It is also suggested that researchers have a focus for their research prior to using the library. This will help facilitate their use of the material.

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“For the Protection of His Majesty’s Subjects” The Issuance of Virginia Treasury Notes

by John A. Caramia, Jr.

John is manager of economic and commercial studies in the department of Trades/Presentations and Tours and is chair of the Becoming Americans storyline team “Taking Possession.”

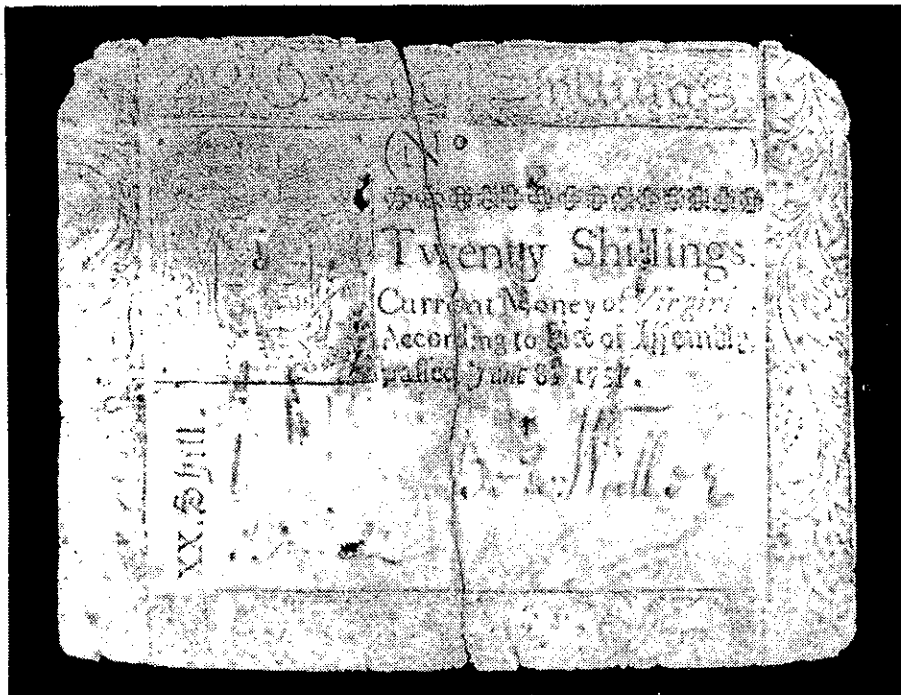
In the spring of 1755 Virginia was faced with an ever-increasing need to defend the frontier against the French. A year earlier, in July 1754, George Washington had been defeated at Fort Necessity. British forces under General Braddock, arriving in the spring of 1755, had begun their march to Fort Duquesne. Financial support was needed for Virginia’s war efforts. In May 1755, with the strong support of Governor Dinwiddie, the Assembly passed “An Act to explain an Act, entitled, An Act for raising the sum of twenty thousand pounds, for the protection of his majesty’s subjects, against the insults and encroachments of the French, and for other purposes therein mentioned.” With the passage of this act, Virginia became the

last colony to issue paper money.

As the first act authorizing the issuance of paper money, it set the format for all the other money bills that followed. It first stated the need and use for the money—the garrisoning of troops at Fort Cumberland and the recruitment and maintenance of three companies each consisting of fifty men and their officers. These companies were to be used “for the protection of the subjects in the frontier of this Colony.” Next, the bill outlined the taxes to be levied to raise the necessary funds. These included a poll tax of two shillings sixpence or thirty pounds of tobacco per tithable to be paid in April 1755 and 1756; an additional poll tax of two shillings per tithable Negro, mulatto, or Indian slave to be paid in April 1756; a land tax of one shilling threepence per one hundred acres to be paid in April 1756; and finally, a duty of 10 percent of the purchase price on all imported slaves for a period of three years.

Up to this point, the law was a typical appropriation act containing a statement of needs and a listing of new taxes necessary to pay for them. But the act continued:

And whereas by reason of the great scarcity of gold and silver in this colony, the tax imposed by the said act, cannot be collected in time to answer the purposes thereby intended. Be it enacted . . . that it



A twenty shillings note from the Lasser Collection dated June 8, 1757 and signed by Benjamin Waller.

shall and may be lawful for John Robinson . . . to issue or emit . . . any number of Treasury notes. . . not to exceed the sum of twenty thousand pounds current money, which notes shall be prepared, printed, or engraved, and numbered, and signed in such form, and after such method as he the said John Robinson . . . shall judge most convenient for circulating in payment, and safe from counterfeits and forgeries.

The notes were to be taken out of circulation (redeemable by the Treasury) on June 30, 1756. To encourage their acceptance as legal tender for payment of all debts except quit rents and circulation, the notes were redeemable at a 5 percent interest per annum. It was a felony to forge or counterfeit treasury notes, and if convicted, a person was not allowed benefit of clergy. Finally, the security for the redemption of the note was the money to be collected by the taxes authorized in the act and the Treasurer was "to apply all such money . . . toward the redemp-

tion of such Treasury notes, and to no other purposes."

Writing in 1773, Robert Carter Nicholas stated the reasons for the introduction of treasury notes:

Money, the acknowledged Sinews of War was necessary, immediately necessary; Troops could not be levied and supported without it; of Gold and Silver, there was indeed some. . . in the Hands of Individuals, but the Publick could not command it. Did there not result from hence a Necessity, an Absolute Necessity of our having Recourse to a Paper Currency, as the only Resource from which we could draw Relief?

As the chart below demonstrates, between May 1755 and March 1773, the House of Burgesses passed sixteen bills authorizing the issuance of treasury notes. The vast majority of these were from 1755 to 1762 to cover the cost of defense during the French and Indian War.

Issuance of Treasury Notes (1755-1773)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Amount Authorized</u>	<u>Date Redeemable</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
May 1755	£20,000	June 30, 1756 (5%)	Defense
August 1755	£40,000	June 30, 1760 (5%)	Defense
March 1756	£25,000	June 30, 1760 (5%)	Defense
March 1756	£30,000	June 30, 1760 (5%)	Defense
March 1756	£10,000	December 15, 1757	Loss of tobacco in warehouse
April 1757	£80,000	March 1, 1765	Defense
	£99,966	---	Redeem interest-bearing bills
March 1758	£32,000	March 1, 1765	Defense
September 1758	£57,000	September 14, 1766	Defense
February 1759	£52,000	April 20, 1768	Defense
November 1759	£10,000	October 20, 1769	Defense/loss of tobacco
March 1760	£20,000	October 10, 1768	Defense
May 1760	£32,000	October 20, 1769	Defense
March 1762	£30,000	October 20, 1769	Defense
November 1769	£10,000	November 20, 1771	Support of government projects
July 1771	£30,000	December 10, 1775	Loss of tobacco in warehouse
March 1773	£36,834	December 10, 1775	Retire last two issuance due to counterfeiting

During this period, the Assembly authorized the issuance of £614,800 in treasury notes. Each of the acts passed after May 1755 was structured in the same way – the need for the money, the taxes to be raised and used as security for the redemption of the notes, the limit of the treasury notes to be issued, the date to be redeemed, and who was to oversee the printing and signing of the notes. Until Parliament passed the Currency Act of 1764, all treasury notes were considered legal tender. While all of these laws passed by the Assembly were fundamentally the same, there were some modifications in subsequent acts.

August 1755: According to this act, John Robinson, Peyton Randolph, and John Chiswell were to sign all of the notes issued and were to be paid £50 for their work. The Treasurer was to be paid 2 percent of the amount of notes issued. In addition to the taxes authorized to be used as security for the redemption of the notes, the Treasurer had to put security of £40,000.

March 1756: Three money bills were passed by the House during this month. The first two provided funds for the war effort and the third reimbursed those planters who lost their tobacco in the warehouses that burned at Bolling's Point, Coan, and Deep Creek. The signers for all the notes were Peyton Randolph, Robert Carter Nicholas, and John Robinson. To cover the notes issued for the lost tobacco, a duty of three shillings sixpence was imposed on every tobacco hogshead inspected between October 20, 1755, and 1757.

April 1757: This was the first time that the Assembly designated the number, denomination, and signers of all the notes to be issued. (See chart below)

The total amount of this issuance was £179,966; £80,000 was to be used for defense, and the rest (£99,966) was to be used to retire those notes still in circulation that were issued with interest. The reason for this was stated in the act:

And whereas the allowing Treasury notes to bear interest is found to be very burdensome to the country, and not to have answered the good purpose intended by former acts of Assembly, and it will be prejudicial to have notes of different values circulating at the same time: . . . the Treasurer. . . to retire all notes after December 1, 1757.

Also, for the first time a committee was appointed to overlook the printing of the notes, number the notes, and then deliver them to the appropriate signers. Once signed, they were to deliver the notes to the Treasurer. This committee consisted of John Palmer, William Waters, and George Davenport, who were to be paid £50 each for their work. All the signers were to be paid 20 shillings for each 1,000 notes signed and delivered while the Treasurer received 1 percent of the value of the notes issued. A second committee consisting of Peyton Randolph, Benjamin Waller, Robert Carter Nicholas, Dudley Diggs, and Philip Johnson was appointed to examine all the old notes being redeemed and have them burned in their presence. This committee was also to examine all such notes that were being issued as a result of this act.

September 1768: This act also listed the number, denomination, and signers of all the notes to be issued. In fact, this was done for the acts passed February 1759; March 1760; May 1760; and March 1762. The sign-

<u>Number</u>	<u>Denomination</u>	<u>Signers</u>
6,000	10 Pounds	Peyton Randolph and Robert Carter Nicholas
6,000	5 Pounds	Peyton Randolph and Robert Carter Nicholas
6,000	3 Pounds	Peyton Randolph and Robert Carter Nicholas
6,000	2 Pounds	Peyton Randolph and Robert Carter Nicholas
30,000	20 Shillings	Benjamin Waller and Philip Johnson
30,000	10 Shillings	Benjamin Waller and Philip Johnson
30,000	5 Shillings	John Randolph
30,000	2 Shillings 6 Pence	John Randolph
33,000	1 Shilling 3 Pence	Edmund Pendleton
33,000	1 Shilling	Edmund Pendleton

ers in September 1758 were the same as those designated in the April 1757 act. John Palmer and George Davenport were appointed overlookers of the press.

March 1760: George Davenport and Peter Pelham were appointed to overlook the press. A committee consisting of Peyton Randolph, Robert Carter Nicholas, Benjamin Waller, Lewis Burwell, and George Wythe was appointed to examine at least twice a year all notes redeemable on March 1, 1765, prepare a certificate of said bills for the Treasurer, and then "cause all such bills or notes to be burnt and destroyed."

May 1760: George Davenport, Peter Pelham, and James Hubard, Jr., were appointed overlookers of the press and were to be paid £30. The 10 percent duty on slaves imported into Virginia, which was enacted in April, 1757, was repealed. It had "been found very burthensome to the fair purchaser, a great disadvantage to the settlement and improvement of the lands in this colony, introductive of many frauds, and not to answer the end thereby intended, inasmuch as the same prevents the importation of slaves, and thereby lessens the fund arising from the duties upon slaves."

November 1769: This was the first act passed after the French and Indian War and titled "An Act for the better support of the contingent charge of government." Money was needed to cover the expenses of negotiating with the Cherokees for establishing a boundary line, importation of copper money from Great Britain, settlement of claims approved by the General Assembly, and reimbursement of tobacco destroyed in several warehouses. Up to this point, most of the taxes imposed by these currency laws were a combination of poll taxes, land taxes, and duties on tobacco hogsheads or imported slaves. This act imposed a duty of 5 percent on the sale of all imported slaves and a duty of one shilling sixpence on each tobacco hogshead exported. In addition, a tax was put on coaches, chariots, and other four-wheeled carriages except wagons. A smaller tax was placed on chairs and two-wheeled chaises. A duty of 20 shillings for an ordinary license was passed, as well as a duty on original writs, subpoenas, summons, and caveats. Also in November 1769, an act was passed which stated that anyone convicted of forgery, counterfeiting, altering, or erasing any note "shall suffer death as a felon, without

benefit of clergy."

July 1771: The money raised by this act was needed to reimburse a number of planters who lost their tobacco in several warehouses due to heavy rains caused by a hurricane a year earlier. The act also made it illegal to paste paper on the back of any treasury notes. If these notes were accidentally torn, welted, or defaced, they were to be returned to the Treasurer for replacement.

March 1773: The treasury notes from the last two issues (November 1769, and July 1771) had been largely counterfeited and the Assembly needed to recall the notes quickly and destroy them. Treasurer Robert Carter Nicholas was authorized to borrow up to £36,834 at 5 percent interest. After one month if he could not borrow that amount, he could issue promissory notes up to the total. All of the notes were to be signed by the Treasurer, countersigned by Peyton Randolph and John Blair, and numbered by James Hubard and Peter Pelham. The notes that were used were the engraved James River Bank notes that Thomas Tabb had brought from Great Britain. The James River Bank was a proposed private bank that was never approved by the Crown. These engraved notes were much harder to counterfeit than the previously issued notes that used type from the printing office. The Assembly passed a second act in March that made it a felony for anyone in Virginia to counterfeit paper money of the other British colonies.

This article attempts to describe the succession of laws passed by the House of Burgesses that authorized the issuance of paper currency to pay for major expenses faced by the government of Virginia. The colony was the last to issue paper money, and beginning in 1755 through 1773 authorized treasury notes sixteen times, mostly to cover French and Indian War expenses. All of the acts discussed in this article can be read in their entirety in *Statutes At Large*. Existing examples of many of these notes can be found in the Lasser Collection in the Foundation Library (see the accompanying article by Gail Greve). Between July 1775 and May 1781, the Virginia government authorized at least as many issuances of paper currency as it had before 1775. Of course, these were to pay for expenses derived from the Revolution. A forthcoming article will review those later acts. ¶

The colonial officials listed below served at various times between 1755 and 1773.

SIGNERS OF TREASURY NOTES

John Robinson

Speaker of the House of Burgesses and Treasurer.

Peyton Randolph

Attorney General; Speaker of the House of Burgesses; President of the First Continental Congress.

John Chiswell

Burgess representing Hanover County and later Williamsburg.

Robert Carter Nicholas

Lawyer; planter; burgess from York County and later James City County.

Benjamin Waller

Lawyer; King's Attorney for York County; land developer; burgess from James City County; clerk of General Court.

Philip Johnson

Burgess representing King and Queen County and later James City County; owner of the plantation later named Bassett Hall.

John Randolph

Lawyer; Attorney General; loyalist.

Edmund Pendleton

Lawyer; burgess from Caroline County; President of the Committee of Safety.

George Braxton

Burgess from King and Queen County.

John Blair, Jr.

Son of President of the Council John Blair Sr.; lawyer; burgess for the College of William and Mary; clerk of Virginia Council; U. S. Supreme Court Justice.

COMMITTEE TO EXAMINE OLD BILLS

Peyton Randolph

Benjamin Waller

Robert Carter Nicholas

Dudley Diggs

Burgess representing York County.

Philip Johnson

Lewis Burwell

Burgess and planter from Kingsmill Plantation in James City County.

George Wythe

Lawyer; scholar; burgess

OVERLOOKERS OF THE PRESS

John Palmer

Lawyer; bursar (treasurer) of the College of William and Mary.

William Waters

Planter and burgess from Northhampton Co.; justice of the peace and sheriff for York County.

George Davenport

Lawyer; clerk of the Committees of Trade, Privileges and Elections, and Propositions and Grievances; Captain of the Williamsburg Militia.

Peter Pellam

Keeper of the Public Gaol; organist at Bruton Parish Church; clerk to Governors Fauquier and Botetourt.

James Hubard

Lawyer; proctor in Vice-Admiralty Court; loyalist.

Our best wishes go with Mary Masengale as she departs Colonial Williamsburg for marriage and a new life in Roanoke, Virginia. Mary has been the typesetter for this publication for many years, and the editor, assistant editor, and editorial board wish to thank her for her expertise, professionalism, patience, and good humor in guiding *the interpreter* and some admitted novices through the complex maze of typesetting. Thank you, Mary! We'll miss you!

*And I, in turn, will miss all of you! Mary?**

Meet Samuel Henley

by B. J. Pryor

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From 1770 to 1775, Samuel Henley was Professor of Moral Philosophy at the College of William and Mary in Virginia. He was also acting rector of Bruton Parish Church for one year.

When I first began to research the life and times of Samuel Henley, as a preparation to impersonating him, I discovered that I enjoyed a number of advantages over some of my colleagues. Henley was a person important enough to be included in the *British Dictionary of National Biography*. Four works survive today that Henley wrote while he was in Williamsburg, two pamphlets and two sermons. He exchanged epistolatory blows with various opponents in the *Virginia Gazette*. He



B. J. Pryor as the Rev. Samuel Henley.



An engraved portrait "said to be of Dr. Henley" from the papers of Judge Miller Chamberlain (author of a sketch of Henley's life). Reprinted by courtesy of the Trustees of the Boston Public Library.

exchanged letters with Thomas Jefferson after the Revolution and with Bishop James Madison, a former student. And so I was able to learn some things about his opinions, vocabulary, and personality that simply cannot be learned about William Lane, James Hubard, Jane Vobe, or Robert Greenhow.

These documents reveal Henley to have been an intelligent and complex young man. Henley was recruited for the college by a Dr. Burton, who came to Cambridge on behalf of his old friend Lord Botetourt. Botetourt had requested that Burton "ransack the universities" in search of potential faculty for William and Mary. Henley had many friends among the progressive and liberal members of the faculty at Cambridge. With their support, twenty-six-year-old Henley presented himself before the Bishop of London, was ordained a priest in the Church of England, and was dispatched with the Bishop's blessing to instruct the youth of Virginia in rhetoric, logic, ethics, and literature.

Dawson Turner, the English botanist and antiquarian, later described Henley in the following terms: "In person [he] was short and rather stout: his physiognomy, like his deportment, was peculiarly agreeable." In

Williamsburg, he won the friendship of men such as George Wythe, Peyton Randolph, and Thomas Jefferson. He was highly respected and admired by students such as St. George Tucker and James Madison, later president of the College and first Episcopal bishop of Virginia. Among his other students were Edmund Randolph, James Monroe, and Thomas Jefferson's younger brother, Randolph Jefferson.

He seemed always to have an opinion and rarely an entirely conventional one. In 1771, the House of Burgesses awarded him and his colleague the Reverend Thomas Gwatkin a vote of thanks for helping to defeat a scheme of the Reverends John Camm and James Horrocks to have an American bishop appointed against the wishes of the people of Virginia, who were mostly satisfied to have their bishop in London. Later, he delivered an address at the college chapel on the anniversary of the college foundation and suggested therein that reforms were needed in the college curriculum. (After the Revolution, when Jefferson wrote Henley about the reorganization of the college under his former student Bishop Madison, Henley was not reluctant to claim his share of the credit. "The alterations made in the College at Williamsburg I much approve, and am happy to hear of its flourishing state. It is with pleasure I reflect, notwithstanding the inconveniences I have experienced from my connection with it, that I was the first person who endeavored to place the mode of education in it upon its proper basis.")

Henley's sermons reveal him to have been a man of liberal and enlightened views. He preached a Christianity that was rational and ethical, and against religion that was dogmatic and intolerant.

"However desirous we may be of a general conformity in religious opinions, yet to make nonconformity criminal, would in any legislature be highly impious."

"Our best affections are liable to perversion if not preserved under the influence of reason."

"Neither the orthodoxy of our faith, nor the ceremonies of our worship, but our endeavors to promote the happiness of mankind will be the rules to determine our future condition."

It is not difficult to understand the friend-

ship between this man and Thomas Jefferson. These views were not universally popular, however, and Henley made enemies as well as friends. Many thought such opinions scarcely appropriate to a priest of the Church of England. Letters were written to the *Virginia Gazette* complaining that no minister truly loyal to the church would have acted against having a bishop appointed to the colony. Robert Carter Nicholas, treasurer of Virginia and powerful vestryman at Bruton Parish, came to have grave doubts about Henley's orthodoxy. Some suspected him of being secretly no better than a deist, an accusation which, if proven, would have cost Henley his position. Had Henley always been "peculiarly agreeable," as Turner described him, these facts might not amount to much, but Samuel Henley most certainly was not without a trace of arrogance or vanity. When criticized in the *Gazette*, he responded by attacking his accusers in the press, accusing them of stupidity, ignorance, and bigotry. These epistolary duels went on at such length that the readership of the *Gazette* grew weary of them. Henley and Joseph Kidd got into a public argument in which Kidd accused Henley of being a deist, and Henley forced a written apology from Kidd by threatening to prosecute him for slander.

Twice the rectorship of Bruton Parish was opened, and twice Henley was denied the post, though important vestrymen supported him and he was the most logical candidate. Robert Carter Nicholas seems to have been chiefly responsible for Henley's disappointment, and in 1774 Henley published a seventy-page pamphlet, "A Candid Refutation of the Heresy Imputed by Robert Carter Nicholas, Esquire, to Reverend Samuel Henley."

Whether because of these controversies or (more probably) because of the widening rift between Virginia and England, Henley determined to return home. In April 1775, the month of the Powder Magazine incident in Williamsburg and of the battles of Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts, Henley advertised in the *Gazette* his intention of leaving the colony. He took ship for England in May, traveling light. He left behind his books and furniture, which he never retrieved.

Henley's career was long and distinguished after his return to England. He served many years as an instructor at Harrow. He married

and raised a family. He died in 1815, at the age of seventy, the Reverend Doctor Samuel Henley, F. R. A. S., Rector of Rendlesham Parish in Sussex, and President of the College of the East India Company.

And yet, for all that I have been able to learn about Henley from the various sources accessible to me in Williamsburg, there was still a great deal that I did not know about this man it was to be my job to impersonate. In some ways, I was at a definite disadvantage compared to my colleagues who portray people Virginia born, such as William Lane, James Hubbard, Jane Vobe, Robert Greenhow, John Randolph, and George Wythe. Few records exist in America concerning his family or upbringing, his education, or his life before he arrived here in 1770. There is even some dispute as to whether he was a bachelor or widower when he married Susan Figgins in 1780. It is even possible he married while he was in Virginia.

A man is not only his opinions and ideas, but also his life and experiences. To impersonate Henley, I have to be able to talk not only about his opinions and career, but also about his family, his childhood and youth, his education. Concerning these, I found this: "Samuel Henley was the son of Samuel Henley of Abbots Kerswell in Devonshire. He was born November 23, 1744, and he was educated at the well esteemed Dissenting academy of Caleb Ashworth at Daventry." Though Pdraig O'Brien's book *Warrington Academy* has given me some hints about the nature of the education Henley received at his academy, and I have found a few hints here and there about his life as part-time preacher and part-time student at Cambridge after he left the academy in 1766, his early life was practically a blank. General books about Devon were of some help. From Ralph Whitlock's *The Folklore of Devon*, I learned of many local customs of which Henley, as a boy, must at least have heard. I discovered that the chief products of the "South Hams" of Devon, wherein is located Henley's home town, were beef and apple cider. But what about the personal details? What was his mother's name? Did he have any siblings? What sort of people were his family and in what sort of town, in what sort of house, did they live? Was his father a farmer, a merchant, a tradesman, a gentleman? What sort of country was he raised in? And what links did he maintain with his family and the county

of his birth? Did he, while he was in Virginia, consider himself a Devonian, or had he shaken the dust of Devon from his feet long before?

So, I invented. I gave the senior Henley orchards, and made the Henleys cider makers. As Henley's name is the same as his father's, I called him the oldest of five children, making his family neither unusually large or small. For balance, I gave him two younger brothers and two younger sisters. As Abbots Kerswell lies between Plymouth and Exeter, I spoke vaguely of journeys to those two places. Still, I felt frustrated speaking with so little authority of the places I was supposed to have lived for most of my life.

Then, in September 1992, I made the trip to see for myself Abbots Kerswell, Exeter, and Devon. Abbots Kerswell is today a small "bedroom community" of steep, twisting, narrow lanes lined with stone walls and modern bungalows, crowded together into a shallow valley. Open fields with grazing cattle still lie beyond, but the village in Henley's time was no doubt much smaller. The old houses of this region are built of stone, though often covered with white stucco. There were without doubt stone houses three, four, and five hundred years old in the village in Henley's day. The only eating place in the town is the Crown Farm Inn, built in the eighteenth century, which Henley must have known. It is the largest of the old houses in Abbots Kerswell. It stands next to the parish church, and with it no doubt formed the center of the village. St. Mary the Virgin is an ancient church largely rebuilt in the fifteenth century, looking today much as it did on December 28, 1744, when Samuel Henley was baptized there. It has the buttressed stone walls and square flat-topped tower of nearly every old church I saw in Devon.

There are not many eighteenth-century headstones in the churchyard, and none older, but several interested me, like this one: "Here lieth the body of Thomas Henley, Jun. who died the 4th day of December 1762, aged 61." It appears few people other than the Henleys could afford headstones in this village in those days. I did not, however, find one for Henley's father. Inside the church are a very few memorial tablets, but there is no doubt as to which is most prominent: "In Loving Memory of Grace Henley who departed this life March 23rd, 1880 . . . also of William Codner Henley, husband of the same, who entered into rest Oct. 5th, 1884, in his

65th year." Thus William Henley was born in 1819, just four years after the death of his cousin (?) Samuel.

I asked the vicar about the tablet, and whether any Henleys still lived in the village. He said no, they had all moved away some time ago, but "the Henleys were the most important family in the village sixty years ago. They owned the cider works, which was about the only industry here." Well! Of course, I have no proof the Henleys owed their eighteenth-century livelihood to cider, but at least I have no evidence to the contrary either!

The country round about Abbots Kerswell is rolling, rich, and red. From the earliest times it has been known for a prosperous middling sort of farmer. There are relatively few great manor houses or vast feudal estates. Devon was known for its devotion to the Crown and not to any great local families. Not far distant from Abbots Kerswell is Newton Abbot. As the name suggests; it is of more recent foundation than Henley's village, but had become a thriving market town, with its own printer, in

Henley's day. Henley's father was a dissenter, as had been some of his family for at least a century. Each Sunday, Henley traveled with his family to Newton Abbot to attend worship at Salem Chapel, founded in 1690 by a Puritan minister named William Yeo, who had been rector of the Newton Abbot church in Cromwell's day and whose stern portrait still decorates the Chapel's modern successor. On the day the Reverend John Cox baptized him in his own parish church at Abbots Kerswell, Henley was carried up to Newton Abbot to be baptized again at Salem Chapel.

Some five miles distant is Ashburton, another market town and the location of the nearest Latin grammar school that I have been able to identify. As I do not know at

what age Henley was sent to Caleb Ashworth and the Doddridge Academy at Daventry in Northamptonshire, I have decided to have Henley receive a part of his education at Ashburton.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that Samuel Henley did, in his youth, travel as far as Ashburton. And it is at least possible that he also visited more important if somewhat more distant places such as Plymouth, Torquay, and Exeter, and perhaps even the wilds of Dartmoor that rise north-west of Abbots Kerswell.

Dartmoor is today a National Park and the frequent resort of tourists, but in 1750 the moor was a vast and roadless upland, inhabited chiefly by herds of ponies and sheep pastured there by their owners in the surrounding country. In the several coombs, or valleys, little hardscrabble villages provided a living for a few. Through a good part of the year Dartmoor is cold and wet. A large part of the land consists of granite outcroppings called tors or mucky blanket bogs. In September,

however, the moor was neither particularly cold nor wet, and the afternoon ride I took across the moor was perhaps the best part of my stay in Devon. Splashing through the little rivulets of water that abound in Dartmoor, one rides up and down slopes so steep that a novice horseman worries that he will slide, over head or over tail, right off the animal. Standing on the tor called Buckland Beacon (it once held a signal beacon), I could see the English channel, ten or fifteen miles away, and in the middle distance, just make out Newton Abbot, and, nestled in a shallow valley nearby, Abbots Kerswell. If Henley ever made an excursion into the moor, this was the place he would have come.

I visited other tors, and several of the



Henley's Devon

moor villages, most notable those called Buckland-in-the-Moor and Widecombe-in-the-Moor. The tors provide wide views of the surrounding countryside. Most eighteenth-century people considered the moor as simply poor, barren, and depressing country. But Samuel Henley might have seen it differently. While living at Cambridge he corresponded with William Gilpin, a noted writer on the "picturesque," with an aesthetic appreciation of landscape. Gilpin took a trip through Devon in 1775 and later wrote an account of the scenery. Even he, however, did not bother to traverse the moor.

Another aspect of Dartmoor that might have engaged the interest of a future Fellow of the Royal Antiquarian Society is the abundance of prehistoric ruins on the moor. Standing stones—alone, in rows, and in circles—abound in the moor. There are the remains of ancient villages. I visited Grimspound, a huge collection of stone "hut circles" surrounded by a stone wall that in Henley's day was still two or three feet high. The enclosure was essentially a corral for cattle three thousand years ago.

To the southwest of Abbots Kerswell, fifteen miles distant, lies Plymouth, with the adjoining suburbs, already the largest town in Devon. It is chiefly a seaport and formally England's greatest naval base. It was a city with few gentry and few churches, but many merchants and many taverns. Its huge harbor could accommodate the entire British fleet, and did, on occasion. For all that, Plymouth had some glorious associations. During the reign of Elizabeth, Plymouth and Devon provided the queen her greatest sea captains. As a child, Samuel Henley must have heard the names and learned of the exploits of men such as Walter Raleigh and Francis Drake.

There is no way of knowing whether Samuel Henley ever visited Exeter, fifteen miles to the northeast of Abbots Kerswell, but it is probable that he did. When Henley left home for the Academy at Daventry, he almost certainly passed through the city, and it is not unlikely that he made other visits there as well. This is, in fact, the only true city Henley might have known as a boy.

To reach Exeter in those days required the better part of a day's ride along narrow and winding roads usually thick with the red mud of Devon. Devon's roads were infamous. Were it not for the rolling nature of the ground, the traveler would have little to dis-

tract him. The roads were enclosed with thick hedgerows on both sides, effectively blocking the view on either hand and making such journeys tedious. Only from the top of a rise could the traveler hope to see anything of the surrounding countryside, the green fields and meadows, cattle grazing, white thatched houses, and orchards. The traveler's first view of the city was a welcome and an excellent one.

From the top of the last hill, one looks down on the valley of the River Exe, and the city of Exeter rises on the far bank. Exeter in the 1750s and 1760s was still very much a medieval city. In geographical extent it was not bigger than Williamsburg, but its crowded and often ancient houses, three and four stories high, crammed into narrow cobbled streets, housed five or ten times the population of the Virginia capital. The city was then only beginning to expand beyond its ancient red stone walls, built in Roman times.

Thus Henley's first view of Exeter was of a walled medieval city, enclosed in red stone walls, dominated in the far corner by an ancient castle and in the middle by the twin towers of the cathedral church. The houses were of red stone or half-timbered construction. The main streets were laid out in a regular fashion, but there was an abundance of narrow and overhung alleys and lanes.

Riding down from the hill, Henley passed through the neighborhood named after Saint Thomas, and its ancient church. Looking upriver he watched the waters of the Exe being used in processing the cloth that was still important to the county, though not as much as it once had been. Downriver he could see ships arriving at the custom house or departing from the quay.

He rode through the streets of the city, admiring the size and bustle, then walked in some amazement through the cavernous interior of the cathedral. Perhaps he paid a visit to the Guild Hall on High Street with its elaborately carved portico, where elections were held, the city government met, and the local courts sat.

From a letter written in 1761 by another visitor: "Tis a London in miniature, a vast deal of good company of both sexes, especially officers. . . . A very fine country all around and the most pretty walks by the river on both sides. . . . We have 24 churches and the Bishop, Dean, Archdeacon, Canons, and the clergy in general look wonderful sleek here. . . . There is a great number of

them for 'tis remarkable that all the gentlemen here are black coats or red coats."

Exeter was, and is, a bustling town, and could be a rowdy one. One Sunday in August 1762, John Wesley attempted to bring his message to the city. He preached in the morning on the green just outside the city walls to a quiet congregation and then attended the divine service in the cathedral, which was performed "with great seriousness and decency." At five o'clock in the afternoon he returned to the green to preach again, and found a great many people gathered. But "a lewd, profane, drunken vagabond had so stirred up many of the baser sort that there was a good deal of uproar and confusion."

Exeter is still the "county seat" of Devon, and has several fine libraries, one devoted entirely to local studies. Many of the local parish registers and records survive. With the help of Marc Lasok, who was my host while I was in Devon, I was able to learn a few things about Samuel Henley. I had given his father apple orchards and had found at Abbots Kerswell that I might very well have guessed right. About his family, the odds seemed longer. I guessed that Henley was the oldest child, and had given him four siblings, two brothers and two sisters. The original parish records revealed that he was in fact . . . the oldest of five children, with two younger brothers and two sisters. In March 1770, when Samuel Henley arrived in Virginia at age twenty-six, they were: William Henley twenty-one, Elizabeth Henley nineteen, John Henley sixteen, and Mary Henley fourteen. At that time Henley's father was fifty years old, the fifth of seven children, two of whom died as infants. Henley's mother was Elizabeth Venning. The same records reveal Henley's unusual double baptism. The earliest Henley who appears in the parish records is Luke Henley, who married Agnes Erven in 1614, and there are many, many Henleys listed, so that Samuel Henley was not wanting for cousins in and around Abbots Kerswell.

I still know precious little about Henley's family and youth, but compared to what I knew before, there is all the difference in the world. Now I can speak with some authority concerning the house, the village, and the county in which he was born. I can describe in some detail the only real city he could have known in his youth. I can speak of his parents and brothers and sisters by name and age. I know he was of a numerous,

long-established, and locally prominent family, though probably not wealthy.

One thing troubles me from time to time. I like to portray Henley as nostalgic for home, but did he think of Devon as home? What if he left Devon young and did not remember it; or what if, having risen in the world, received a gentleman's education, and resided at Cambridge, he had, in effect, never looked back? I cannot *prove* even that Henley lived in Devon one day after his baptism, or ever visited the county after he was grown.

Just off Fore Street in Exeter is the City Arcade, a covered alleyway lined with little shops. In one I picked up a facsimile of a 1785 book. It is a revised and expanded edition of a description of Devon written in the early seventeenth century by one Tristan Risdon. *A REVIEW of Part of RISDON'S SURVEY OF DEVON; Containing the General Description of that County; with Corrections, Annotations, and Additions.* William Chapple first proposed the work in 1772 and collected subscriptions. The editor's bad health, and later, death, delayed the publication. At the head of the work are printed the names of all those who had not withdrawn their subscriptions but had waited those thirteen years to receive their copies. There are well over five hundred names listed. Most are residents of Devon. Some are prominent men, such as Sir Joshua Reynolds, President of the Royal Society. But there are listed only three men who reside outside of Britain. They are Sylvester O'Halloran of Limerick "in the kingdom of Ireland," Mr. Philip Stowey of Madras, and the only man in the American colonies who cared enough about the County of Devon to want such a book: Rev. Samuel Henley of Virginia." ¶

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