

Questions & Answers

VOL. 4, No. 1

February 1983

During the 1982 in-service training, we asked you to submit to the Department of Interpretive Education the questions that Reginald Butler and Rex Ellis did not have time to answer in class. We asked Harold Gill in Research to help us find answers to these questions. He was not able to give a definite answer to many of the questions because they require research that has not yet been done. Often it is not possible to give authoritative responses to questions that deal with peoples' private lives in the eighteenth century. Routine events and procedures were seldom recorded. This problem is even more acute for eighteenth-century blacks than the population at large because documents in their own hands are practically non-existent. We hope to include in future issues current information on black life in Colonial Virginia.

1. After leaving Africa did blacks have difficulty continuing to believe in their many gods when their white masters in Virginia believed in just one god?

The assumptions that Africans believed in "many gods" may not be true. However, I certainly don't feel qualified to respond to this question. It will be referred to a scholar in the field.

2. Did many Virginia plantations become like "Tara" in the nineteenth century?

"Tara" represents a romanticized version of plantations. Virginia plantations were working plantations and did not require large numbers of slaves. Cotton is more labor intensive than tobacco.

3. Is there any evidence of a white man being hanged for the murder of a black man in Colonial Virginia?

There is evidence that a white man could be executed for murdering a black man. However, at this time I am unable to find the time to look through the records to cite a specific example.

4. If blacks were forbidden to marry, how did white slave owners encourage slaves to procreate outside of marriage and not violate their religious principles?

I'm not sure they were forbidden to marry, and even if they were, their procreation would not violate their master's religious principles for the same reasons that the master's insistence on liberty and freedom for himself did not extend to slaves.

5. When was the law passed that forbade blacks from owning firearms and their own property?

The act prohibiting blacks from owning firearms was passed in 1640. There was no prohibition of slaves owning personal property and free blacks could own real estate. Adam Waterford, a free black cooper, owned a lot and house in Williamsburg, for instance.

SUBJECT INDEX: BLACK LIFE IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA

6. Were slave baptisms, weddings and funerals held for blacks living in Williamsburg? Were they private affairs or did the slaves' master direct them?

Slave children were routinely baptized in the eighteenth century. In Williamsburg, for example, the baptisms of slaves are recorded in the Bruton Parish Church register. I have no information about weddings and funerals of slaves.

7. How much opportunity would a slave living in town have to rent out his services or have a small business such as raising chickens?

At this time, there is not information on this subject.

8. Did the College make an attempt to train their slaves in a trade and then give some their freedom?

At this time, there is not information on this subject.

9. From the incomplete evidence can it be estimated how frequently black families were able to live together?

Evidence is insufficient to make a judgement.

10. In Colonial Virginia were female blacks predominately the head of the family?

This question will be referred to a scholar specializing in black history.

11. How did a slave buy his freedom?

From 1681 to 1782, he could not buy his freedom.

12. When a black man was free, what laws allowed him to be a property owner and how could he protect his rights and property?

The same laws protected him that protected everyone else.

13. Under what conditions could a slave keep money received for his services?

This was probably at the discretion of his owner.

14. Were black wet nurses used often for the children of a slave owner? Were there many black midwives?

They were often used, apparently, for the children of their masters. I have found no references to black midwives; however, I would doubt that there were none.

15. How much information do we have about Lydia Broadnax, who was Mr. Wythe's cook for many years? Did she have a family of her own, and is it known where she lived?

George Wythe described Lydia Broadnax in his will as his "freed woman" indicating that she was his former slave. We do not know exactly when Wythe manumitted Lydia. She and two other of Wythe's former slaves, Michael Brown and Benjamin, lived with Wythe in his Richmond home on the southeast corner of Fifth and Grace streets on Shockoe Hill. There is no information about Lydia's background or family. There is no indication that she ever maintained a separate residence during her service to Wythe as cook and housekeeper.

16. Most references I have seen to slaves used no surnames; yet at least two of George Wythe's, Lydia Broadnax and Michael Brown, had surnames. What was the custom? Also, the name Broadnax was a plantation family name. Therefore, could Lydia Broadnax have been of mixed blood?

That a slave had a surname is not at all an indication that he or she was of "mixed blood." Since we do not know exactly when Lydia Broadnax and Michael Brown were freed by George Wythe, we cannot say for certain that they were known by two names while they were slaves. However, recent scholarship suggests that more slaves than are commonly supposed had surnames while still in bondage. Masters were frequently unaware that their slaves were using surnames, thus the infrequent references to slave surnames in inventories and other documents. Though slaves sometimes used the surname of their last owner, studies now show that frequently they indicated at manumission their use of the surname of their original owner or the surname of one of their parents who may have chosen the name from their original owner. Thus Lydia and Michael did not carry the "Wythe" name but rather appear to have taken names of owners previous to Wythe or perhaps from a parent. There is no evidence that Lydia was formerly owned by any line of the Broadnax family in Virginia, but it is certainly a possibility in light of new studies of slave names.

17. What were George Mason's and Robert Carter III's views on slavery?

"George Mason relied on the labor of a large number of slaves for the operation of a nearly self-sufficient tobacco plantation. He also publicly criticized the entire system of African slavery as he knew it in Virginia. The paradox was not without its own significance. Like many another Virginian of his generation, Mason's experience with slave labor made him hate slavery, but his heavy investment in slave property made it difficult for him to divest himself of a system that he despised. He helped end the slave trade with his nonimportation resolves and, later, by direct legislation." (Copeland and MacMaster, The Five George Masons . . ., p. 162.)

Robert Carter had extensive slaveholdings but in 1792, under the influence of Swedenborgianism, began a program whereby he gradually manumitted his nearly 500 slaves. His concern extended well beyond the legalities of manumission, for letters between 1793 and 1803 show he tried to help his former slaves.

18. Where was the first Baptist Church for blacks established in Williamsburg?

By 1818, and perhaps earlier, the First Baptist Church was meeting on Colonial Lot M on the west side of Nassau Street near its intersection with Francis Street. Black preachers Gowan Pamphlet and Moses began speaking to slaves and free blacks in the Williamsburg area about 1776. The first meetings were held in the open. By 1791 the church had moved into Williamsburg and was accepted by the Dover Association (Baptist). Church tradition has it that the owner of Lot M allowed the congregation to meet in his carriage house. Documentary evidence mentions the Baptist Meeting House on the lot by 1818. A brick church was built there in 1855; it was torn down in the mid-1950s.

19. When there was a runaway slave, did the county courts direct the sheriff or other county officials to search for him, or was it the individual master's responsibility to find him?

It was the master's responsibility to find runaway slaves unless the slave was outlawed. If he or she was outlawed, then a hue and cry was issued by the county courts to all sheriffs in order to apprehend the slave.

20. Were there legal sanctions against miscegenation? Did miscegenation occur often in Colonial Virginia?

The Virginia laws passed in 1705 (and continued by 1755 laws) contained specific penalties relating to sexual relations between the races. A free white woman or a white female servant having a bastard child by a Negro or mulatto had to pay the parish where the child was born £15 current money of Virginia, or, if unable to pay that sum, the mother could be sold by the parish for five years' service for the benefit of the parish. Churchwardens were to bind the child to be a servant until age 31. "And for a further prevention of that abominable mixture and spurious issue," free white men or women intermarrying with Negroes or mulattoes, whether bound or free, had to serve six months in prison without bail and pay £10 current money for use of the parish. Ministers were also fined if found to have performed such a marriage. Though mulattoes appear in the county records, we are unable to say at this time what percentage of the population was of mixed parentage. The York County Records up to 1780 contain no references to trials for interracial marriage.

Interpreters in the advanced sets have asked about the rationale behind the composition of the advanced sets. We will conclude this issue by explaining how we selected the components found in these sets.

Q. Some of the Advanced sets in the Core Curriculum program included two courses that really were appealing, but the third course seemed less interesting. Why were we restricted in making our choices?

A. The main reason that three courses were scheduled together in "sets" was to give each interpreter an opportunity to work full days. Scheduling individual courses for a completely elective system would mean coming to a two-hour course at one time, and waiting for a few hours or a day or so for other courses. The other alternative was to schedule each six-hour course for one day, including the assessment exercises. This seemed to us a fairly difficult arrangement for both the interpreter and the faculty member. So we decided to schedule three courses each day.

We combined each of the eight Advanced courses with every other course that was possible in this Rubik's Cube of scheduling. The results give each interpreter the best opportunity to choose at least two courses in which he or she is most interested, with the third course somehow related to the first two. This is not a pure elective system, but it does provide some selection and three full days' work for three round trips to CWF.

Note: The Preservation League of the College of William and Mary is holding its Second Annual Conference on March 17th. The subject of this year's conference is The National Register of Historic Places - Its Past, Today, and Its Future. Conference activities will be held on March 16th and 17th on the William and Mary Campus. Please look to your department bulletin boards for more information or consult a member of the Department of Interpretive Education.

Questions & Answers

VOL. 4, No. 2

April 1983

It's spring, and all men's thoughts turn to . . . taxes. The Research Department provided the following timely bit of reading, an essay on taxation in the eighteenth-century Virginia.

Colonial Virginians paid several different kinds of taxes, just as we do, but there were then no income taxes and only occasional taxes on real estate and some personal property.

The major tax assessments due from individuals were the parish, county, and colony levies. Each of these levies was computed by dividing the jurisdiction's total expenses by its number of tithables (white males over 16 years old and all blacks over 16). Because taxes were assessed by the poll (per person), the greatest burden of taxation fell on those who owned many slaves.

Parish levies were assessed by the vestrymen and paid for the construction and repair of churches, clergy's salaries, assistance to orphans and the indigent, and other welfare related expenses.

County taxes were determined by the justices of the county courts for building courthouses, constructing bridges, maintaining ferries, paying the expenses of burgesses and other public servants, and so forth.

The amount of taxes due the colony was determined by the General Assembly to pay all expenses approved by the House Committee on Claims. Their expenditures included salaries of a few public officials, repairs to the Capitol building, messengers' fees, cost of recovering runaways, and other disbursements.

Expenses of the City of Williamsburg were supposed to be covered by the toll on goods sold at the bi-weekly markets, a tax not unlike our sales taxes. When there was not sufficient income from this toll, the Common Hall went before the General Assembly for permission to tax Williamsburg residents. In 1764, for example, a sum was collected for each tithable in town to buy fire engines, dig wells and attach pumps, hire firemen and night watchmen, and repair streets and lanes in the city.

Tithe-takers (county officials) determined the number of tithables in each household. They posted their lists on the doors of the courthouse and church during the month of June for correction. These tithe lists were used for all the levies--parish, county, and colony. Each fall the county court and parish vestry sat to determine the amounts due from each tithable. Most levies were assessed in pounds of tobacco but could be paid in either tobacco or cash. (It was often advantageous to pay in cash, because the official price of tobacco was sometimes lower than its market value.)

Parish and county levies (along with the quitrents, discussed below) were collected once a year by the county sheriffs and undersheriffs, who received a percentage of the monies taken in for their trouble. The colony tax was collected less often, depending upon sessions and unusual expenses of the General Assembly. (Most of their budget was met by the duties on liquors and slaves.)

The amount due in taxes could vary greatly from year to year as the expenses of each jurisdiction fluctuated. For example, if the parish bought a glebe or built a church, parish levies for that year would be quite high. The next year, however, there might be only the expenses of maintaining needy parishioners and the clergy's salary to pay, and the parish levy would be small.

Property owners paid quitrents, which were, in a way, taxes. All land in the colony was subject to a yearly "rent" payable by the occupants. Quitrents amounted to a shilling for each fifty acres of land patented and occupied. This revenue paid salaries of the commissary, attorney-general, and other officials, but the vast majority went to the crown.

Besides quitrents, indirect taxes included occasional duties on liquors, furs, and slaves. Export duties on tobacco, another indirect tax, were a major source of revenue. The costs of Virginia's central government--including the salary of the governor, payments to a few other full-time officials, and the maintenance of the Palace--were met by the export duty of two shillings on each hogshead of tobacco sent out of the colony. Only those who shipped tobacco out of the colony paid this tax. In addition to this impost, a Plantation Duty of a penny a pound was charged on tobacco sent to another English colony. After 1692, the proceeds from the Plantation Duty were directed to the support of the College of William and Mary.

Historians haven't yet reached a consensus, but some think that colony Virginians were lightly taxed, paying about 5 percent of their yearly worth in taxes, compared to up to 50 percent that we pay today.

And rumors to the contrary, in eighteenth-century Virginia there were no taxes on closets, two-story houses, hearths, large pieces of glass, or large looking glasses.

In planning future themes for Questions & Answers we are considering an issue where the interpreters share with us interesting stories or remarks made by our visitor. We're most interested in stories that place the visitor in a humorously ironic (rather than derogatory) light. For example: Two visitors overheard on the Jamestown/Surry ferry. "Have you been to that town called Williamsburg yet?" "No," responds the other; "Well its remarkable," said the first visitor. "The place looks like it's 200 years old." If you like this idea, please let us hear from you. Send your stories or remarks to Jane Strauss, Group Arrivals Building.

Erratum:

We wish to thank our readers for pointing out to us that Q.No. 4 in the February issue Vol. 4, No. 1 was not clear. The reference to their religious principles, referred not to the slaves, but to the owners religious principles.

Questions & Answers

This is a special issue of Questions and Answers that will help prepare you for the 1983 Summit of Industrialized Nations to be held in Colonial Williamsburg May 28 - 30, 1983.

The 1983 Summit of Industrialized Nations will address the challenges and problems that influence the economy of our modern world. To prepare yourselves as interpreters for the members of the world press we wish to give you a short bibliography and some reading material that will help you answer some of the questions that the members of the press may have on the Virginia Colonial economy.

In addition to the attached articles, you may wish to read the following.

What did it cost? The Interpreter, Vol. 1, No. 1

The Lingo of Virginia's Economy. Peter Bergstrom

The Economic Role of Williamsburg. James Soltow

Economic Behavior in a Planting Society: The Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake. Aubrey C. Land.

These articles appeared in the reading materials for the Basic Courses of the 1983's Core Curriculum. If you wish to read these articles they can be checked out from the training library in Norton-Cole House or if you have misplaced your copy of the Interpreter, Vol. 1, No. 1 please call Nancy Wooten, Ext. 2448, at the Norton-Cole House and she will give you a copy.

Interpreter

VOL. 1 NO. 1

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What Did It Cost?

Many's the interpreter who's been put on the spot when a visitor asked the modern equivalent of a colonial price. The conversion of money values from 1750 to 1980 is almost impossible; even the most highly qualified economic historians shy away from direct conversions. The best way for any of us to handle this question is to hint at the complexities involved and then compare prices of a few eighteenth-century goods.

Giving an up-to-date dollar amount equal to a colonial pound just isn't feasible. The dollar value of a pound sterling today varies greatly from what it was even twenty years ago. Consider the difference in buying power between a dollar now and a dollar only five years ago. We have a sense of the change, but which of us can assign a value?

Some of us vividly remember 1940. Here's an example from a family budget in those days: about a fourth of the family's income paid for its shelter (rent or mortgage plus utilities). Today as much as 35 or 40 percent of our considerably higher incomes is required to cover housing costs. This degree of change came about in only forty years, so imagine 240 years' difference!

Stop to contemplate how dramatically life has changed since the eighteenth century. One historian calls the colonial milieu "a wooden world": wood for building, wood fires for heating and cooking, wooden ships. The list goes on. All this seems light-years away from our steel, concrete, and aluminum structures, our electricity and atomic energy. Our value system, too, is very different from our colonial ancestors'. What we now consider necessities of life — electric stoves and refrigerators, central heating, gasoline-powered vehicles, and factory-made clothing — were unthinkable even a hundred years ago and certainly were so in the eighteenth century.

Converting colonial prices to modern money is, as your grade school teacher would probably put it, like comparing apples and oranges.

The problems are many, but there is a solution through comparison of prices in the same era. For example, in the 1740s and '50s, two dozen sheets of writing paper cost about the same as a pound of double refined sugar or dinner and a night's lodging at a Williamsburg tavern (one shilling sixpence), and only a few pence more than a quart of rum (one shilling threepence). Keep in mind that in Virginia during this period craftsmen like blacksmiths and carpenters earned seven shillings sixpence a day, for an annual income of about £100.

For prices relevant to your area, consult craft reports, house histories, and interpretive manuals. Harold Gill's essay, "Prices and Wages in 1750" (September 29, 1977), may also be useful. You'll find it among your in-service training materials from last winter. The essay puts prices in the context of earnings and cost of living and also includes retail prices of some widely available items.

The Interpreter

The Interpreter, a bimonthly publication of the Department of Interpretive Education, will include information of importance and interest to the entire community of interpreters at Colonial Williamsburg.

Our community is diverse. It consists of Craftspeople, Escorts, Hosts and Hostesses, the Company of Colonial Performers, Visitors' Aides, Desk Attendants, and others in Historic Area Services. Our staff is also large. We number 350 in the slower seasons and swell to over 500 during the summer months. This makes us the largest interpretive staff of any museum in the country.

Although we are diverse and large, *The Interpreter* will attempt to identify and underscore all we have in common. What are some of these similarities? The answers are obvious. Through our appearances, actions, and words, we work diligently to interpret the historical

(continued, p. 3)

The Lingo of Virginia's Colonial Economy

by
Peter V. Bergstrom
Research Department

The cryptic terminology of colonial merchants is as confusing to many interpreters as it is to our visitors. Much of the mystery can be cleared up, however, by starting with a simple outline of the Virginia economy--how the planters sold their crops and purchased the manufactured goods they desired from Europe--and by reference to a basic glossary of eighteenth-century economic terms.

Virginians who made their living by raising tobacco could either sell their produce to English merchants via a system of trade known as *consignment marketing*, or they could deal locally with a colonial merchant which was called *direct purchase marketing*. In the first case, the planter "consigned" his goods to an English merchant, who acted as his agent in arranging for the sale of the planter's tobacco in England, and the purchase and shipment back to Virginia of the goods that the planter ordered. The scene in The Patriot, in which John Fry and his family are unpacking goods from England, offers an example of this system. In consignment marketing there was no "middle-man" and the planter gained the greatest share of the profits, but he also bore the greatest share of the risk. He held title to his crop until it was actually sold in England, which meant that if the ship taking his tobacco to England sank, or was captured in a war or by pirates, it was the planter who suffered the loss. Likewise, if the price of tobacco fell suddenly in Europe, which it often did in years of large harvests, it was the planter who suffered.

In the second case, that of *direct purchase marketing*, the planter

sold his crop outright to a merchant in Virginia. The price he received would probably be lower than if he consigned it to England, but it would now be the merchant's worry to see the tobacco safely to England and to find a purchaser for it. A second advantage of *direct purchase marketing* was that while the planter's choice of manufactured goods was limited to what the merchant had in stock, he could actually see the goods and judge their quality before he made his choice. Moreover, by the 1750s, many merchants were present in Virginia which made competition among them brisk and the choice of goods very great.

Whichever system the planter used to sell his crops and acquire his goods, a number of additional elements were involved. English sterling coins could not legally be exported to the colonies, so coined money was continually in short supply in Virginia. The colonials surmounted this problem in a number of ways. First, they made extensive use of foreign coins-- primarily Spanish and Portuguese coins gained by trading to the West Indies-- whose values they periodically fixed by law. (See the Glossary for the values of some of these coins.) Second, after the establishment of the tobacco inspection system in 1730, they discovered that they could use *tobacco notes* as a kind of currency--although this never proved to be fully satisfactory since the value of the notes depended on the *price current* of tobacco and could vary between the time a person acquired the notes and chose to sell them to someone else. Third, after 1755, the government of Virginia periodically issued *paper currency* which was similar to modern paper money. Since this paper currency was not backed by any metallic reserve, however, but only by the colony's promise to redeem it from the collections of future taxes, *paper currency* was constantly subject to *devaluation* and/or *inflation*. The fourth and most common expedient the Virginians used instead of circulating

money was some form of credit.

In general, two kinds of credit were available to Virginians. For short term credit, planters went to their local merchants and were given *book credit* for the purchase of tools, cloth, etc. This was secured by the planter's promise to pay back the merchant at harvest time from the proceeds of his next crop. Typically, this meant that the planter would negotiate a price for his entire crop with the merchant (a *direct purchase* sale) while the plants were still growing in the fields. The merchant would then cancel the book debt and the remainder of the proceeds would be returned to the planter either in cash or as a future credit on the merchant's book. The shrewd planter would demand more cash and less credit, since he could then spend the cash where and as he chose. By contrast, the shrewd merchant would try to give more credit and less cash. Oftentimes, the merchant might even offer a higher price for the planter's tobacco if the planter was willing to take his earnings as a credit rather than in cash. Merchants also employed the practice of selling their goods in the colonies at an *advance* over their *prime cost* in England or Scotland. The size of this mark-up was supposed to represent the merchant's expenses for freight, insurance, overhead charges, and the like (as well as the current *exchange* between Virginia currency and sterling). The *advance* also included his profit margin, and considering that at least one Scottish merchant wrote home suggesting that an advance of seventy-five percent was common, and one hundred percent not at all unusual, the merchant's profits must have been substantial. Lest this should make the merchants appear entirely heartless and grasping, however, it should be pointed out that they were giving the planters a minimum of one year's credit without interest, and that they had no absolute guarantee that the planter would continue to sell his crops exclusively to them until the planter's debt was cleared. Bad debts

might account for as much as ten percent of the merchant's gross sales in any given year.

The second source of credit was through a commercial house in Britain. Any planter who used the consignment system to market his tobacco automatically employed British credit as well, for it was his agent who initially paid the freighting costs, the English duties on the tobacco, and the costs associated with marketing the crop in England. While all of these charges were ultimately deducted from the planter's profit, the English merchant had carried the planter's costs for a minimum of a year for a three percent commission on the gross sale price of the tobacco. The major user of British credit, however, was the colonial merchant, for without British support, he would have been unable to purchase goods in Britain for resale in America, as well as to extend his own credit to the planters while waiting to purchase their tobacco for resale in Britain.

British credits were transferred to the colonies and back by means of *bills of exchange*. These were negotiable instruments--rather like modern checks--by which a person with a sterling credit in Britain could transfer all or part of his credit to another person. The *drawer* of the bill, like the writer of a check, wrote an order to his creditor (usually a British mercantile firm that was acting like a bank) to pay the *payee* the amount stated in the bill. The payee could then take the bill to Britain, present it to the *drawee* (the mercantile firm) and collect his due. More commonly, however, the payee would endorse the bill over to another party--that is, sign it and give it to someone to whom he owed money. That person in turn could present it to the payee or endorse it once again. When the bill finally reached the hands of the payee, he would, if he indeed had on deposit the amount specified by the drawer, pay the debt. If there were no funds or credits

on deposit with the payee, the last holder of the bill, like the person with a bad check, was momentarily left in the lurch. When the payee in such cases *protested* the bill of exchange, it had to be taken back to the last endorser to be made good. He in turn had to complain to whomever he had received it from, and so on, until it was returned to the original drawer. The legal complications could become quite involved, and two rules of thumb developed:

- (1) "Don't accept a bill from someone whose credit you don't trust"; and
- (2) the obverse, "Never endorse anyone else's bills, notes, or bonds."

Since not every Virginian--planter or merchant--had sterling credit readily available to him in Britain, a system developed in which those who did have such credits available to them could sell them to those in Virginia who needed them. Naturally, the sellers of bills sought to gain a profit from their service. Several factors surrounded this money market which influenced the final cost of the sterling bills to their Virginia purchasers.

First, there was the *rate of exchange* between *Virginia Current Money* and sterling money. From the 1630s, the Virginia Assembly had tried (with little success) to attract foreign coinage into the colony by artificially inflating its value above the official English exchange rate between sterling coins and foreign coins. Until 1727, foreign coins made of silver were worth about fifteen percent more in Virginia than they were valued in England. After 1727, foreign coinage of both silver and gold was valued at twenty-five percent above the English rate. Because foreign coins were the basic monetary unit in circulation in Virginia, all *current money* whether it was in coin, or after 1755 in *paper currency*, was related to sterling money by this exchange rate. When the rate held at £125 *Virginia current* equal to £100 sterling, the exchange was said to be at *par*.

In the course of daily events, however, a second factor impinged

upon the Virginia money market which decreed that the *exchange rate* rarely be at *par*, for those who had sterling credits to sell believed that they deserved a profit over and above the official *exchange rate*. Moreover, they perceived that some purchasers could give them better values in *Virginia current* money or in goods for their bills of exchange than others might. Hence, when the supply of sterling credits was greater than the demand for them in Virginia, the *exchange rate* might fall below *par*--though this happened only rarely. More likely, the demand for sterling credit would be greater than the seller's ability to provide bills, and the rate would rise above *par*.

GLOSSARY OF ECONOMIC TERMS

TERMS COMMON IN THE MARKET PLACE

Consignment marketing. A method of selling one's crops in which the planter dealt directly with his agent/merchant in England. The merchant advanced the money to cover the cost of the freight, the duties, and the actual sale of the crop in England, and then deducted these, plus a commission of $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 per cent from the gross amount of money generated by the sale. The merchant, therefore, took his commission not only on the sale price of the crop, but also on all the money he advanced to cover the planter's expenses. Since the planter kept title to his crop until it was finally sold in England, the loss that might be incurred from damage at sea or a drop in the market price was his and not the merchant's.

Direct purchase marketing. A method of selling one's crops in which the planter sold his produce directly to a merchant in Virginia. The price he would receive for his crop would be less, but he would then bear none of the risks or the headaches involved in getting his crop sold in England. The

planter also had the advantage of having his money immediately, rather than having to wait one, or perhaps two years to complete a sale as he might have to do with consignment marketing.

Book credit or book debt. The amount of credit or debt that the planter maintained upon the account books of his local merchant in Virginia. In a society which was chronically short of circulating coinage, the ability to command book credit, and even to transfer it from one customer to another was essential to the smooth functioning of everyday business.

Prime cost. The cost of goods to a Virginia merchant when he purchased them in England from his English supplier. In a sense this was similar to a wholesale price, except that many smaller Virginia merchants were forced to purchase their goods retail from other merchants in England, rather than actually securing them wholesale from the manufacturers.

Advance. The mark-up on the first cost which the Virginia merchant applied to his goods before reselling them in the colony. This ranged from fifty to one hundred percent or more of the prime cost. Also, it was not uncommon for a merchant to apply a different rate of advance upon the sales of his various customers, depending upon their credit status.

Price current. The day to day price for which a commodity could be bought or sold in the colony. This price usually represented the consensus view of the merchants as to what a commodity was worth at any given time. In Philadelphia and Boston these prices were published on a weekly basis in the newspapers. Virginia's merchants never reached that level of sophistication during the colonial period. But during the last twenty-five years before the Revolution (c. 1750-1775), many Virginia merchants--especially those in the Northern Neck region--accepted Philadelphia price currents as Virginia price currents as well.

MONEY TERMS

Specie. Any type of coined metallic money. The most common types in Virginia were Spanish silver reales (dollars), Spanish gold Pistoles, Portuguese gold Moeadas (Moidors), and Portuguese gold Dobras (Joes and Half-Joes). Few English sterling coins actually circulated in Virginia.

Coin values. English coins, in whose denominations Virginians figured their accounts (even though they rarely had English coins), were of the following values:

- 4 Farthings = 1 penny (pence abbreviated as "d")
- 12 Pence = 1 shilling (abbreviated as "s")
- 20 Shillings = 1 pound (abbreviated as "£")
- 21 Shillings = 1 guinea

Exchange. The rate at which a given amount of one coinage was said to be equal to a certain amount of another coinage. In Virginia as in England, the rate of exchange was based upon the weight in troy ounces of the silver or gold content of the foreign coins. Hence, to determine the value of foreign coins which were often defaced and mutilated from hard use, Virginians had to weigh them and multiply the number of ounces of gold or silver by the exchange rate. To encourage the retention of foreign coins within the colony, the Virginia Assembly increased the official English exchange rate by twenty-five percent.

Virginia Current Money. The money or units of measure in which Virginians kept their accounts. This was figured and stated in terms of pounds, shillings, and pence, but since actual exchange occurred in foreign coins or bills of exchange, Virginia current values had to be converted to sterling values by an exchange rate. Although this rate was officially set at twenty-five percent so that £125 Virginia Current Money equalled £100 sterling money, the

unofficial rate charged by those with sterling bills of exchange to sell could force the actual day to day rate well above par.

Par. The point at which the official rate of exchange equalled the actual rate charged by the sellers of sterling bills. From 1727 until the Revolution, par was £125 Virginia Current to £100 sterling.

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Drawee. The person or firm in Britain which holds the sterling credit on its books, and to whom the bill is addressed (the bank).

Payee. The person who will receive the credit in England (the person to whom the check was written).

Protest. The refusal of the *drawee* to pay the bill of exchange--presumably on the grounds of insufficient funds or credits on deposit to cover the face value of the bill.

Paper currency. As a war measure, beginning in 1755, Virginia issued a series of paper bills or notes which were to pass a legal tender for most (but not all) public and private debts. At first merchants accepted paper for sterling debts at the going rate of exchange, but soon discovered that they thereby lost money when the exchange continued to rise faster than they could use their notes to buy bills of exchange to send to Britain. In 1764 Parliament responded to the growing mercantile pressure with a law which forbid the colonies from making paper money legal tender for private sterling debts and protected the

merchants from having to accept such paper unless they willingly chose to do so. In spite of these strictures, a limited amount of paper money continued to be used in Virginia for both public and private transactions until the Revolution.

Tobacco notes. After the passage of tobacco inspection legislation in 1730, all good tobacco was to be lodged in public warehouses while it awaited shipment to England. The warehouse receipts, or notes, were allowed to pass as an impromptu currency in the sense that they could be transferred from one person to another, until their final holder redeemed them at the warehouse for the specific amount of tobacco specified on the face of the note. They were not successful as a currency since they had no intrinsic or fixed value. Rather they represented whatever that amount of tobacco might be worth at the price current on any given day. Hence, to accept a tobacco note was in a sense a bit of speculation because one hoped the value of tobacco would rise rather than fall between the time of acceptance and redemption or transfer of the note.

Inflation or devaluation. The two parallel economic processes by which the absolute value of a given amount of money loses purchasing power over a given period of time. Money is *devalued* either by official decree or unofficial practice when the same amount buys less. Prices are *inflated* when sellers insist upon charging more for the same item.

Questions & Answers

PAMPHLET FILE

Vol 4 No. 3

May 1983

This is a special issue of Questions and Answers that will help prepare you for the 1983 Summit of Industrialized Nations to be held in Colonial Williamsburg May 28 - 30, 1983.



The 1983 Summit of Industrialized Nations will address the challenges and problems that influence the economy of our modern world. To prepare yourselves as interpreters for the members of the world press we wish to give you a short bibliography and some reading material that will help you answer some of the questions that the members of the press may have on the Virginia Colonial economy.

In addition to the attached articles, you may wish to read the following.

What did it cost? The Interpreter, Vol. 1, No. 1

The Lingo of Virginia's Economy. Peter Bergstrom

The Economic Role of Williamsburg. James Soltow

Economic Behavior in a Planting Society: The Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake. Aubrey C. Land.

These articles appeared in the reading materials for the Basic Courses of the 1983's Core Curriculum. If you wish to read these articles they can be checked out from the training library in Norton-Cole House or if you have misplaced your copy of the Interpreter, Vol. 1, No. 1 please call Nancy Wooten, Ext. 2448, at the Norton-Cole House and she will give you a copy.

Interpreter

VOL. 1 NO. 1

JULY 1980

What Did It Cost?

Many's the interpreter who's been put on the spot when a visitor asked the modern equivalent of a colonial price. The conversion of money values from 1750 to 1980 is almost impossible; even the most highly qualified economic historians shy away from direct conversions. The best way for any of us to handle this question is to hint at the complexities involved and then compare prices of a few eighteenth-century goods.

Giving an up-to-date dollar amount equal to a colonial pound just isn't feasible. The dollar value of a pound sterling today varies greatly from what it was even twenty years ago. Consider the difference in buying power between a dollar now and a dollar only five years ago. We have a sense of the change, but which of us can assign a value?

Some of us vividly remember 1940. Here's an example from a family budget in those days: about a fourth of the family's income paid for its shelter (rent or mortgage plus utilities). Today as much as 35 or 40 percent of our considerably higher incomes is required to cover housing costs. This degree of change came about in only forty years, so imagine 240 years' difference!

Stop to contemplate how dramatically life has changed since the eighteenth century. One historian calls the colonial milieu "a wooden world": wood for building, wood fires for heating and cooking, wooden ships. The list goes on. All this seems light-years away from our steel, concrete, and aluminum structures, our electricity and atomic energy. Our value system, too, is very different from our colonial ancestors'. What we now consider necessities of life — electric stoves and refrigerators, central heating, gasoline-powered vehicles, and factory-made clothing — were unthinkable even a hundred years ago and certainly were so in the eighteenth century.

Converting colonial prices to modern money is, as your grade school teacher would probably put it, like comparing apples and oranges.

The problems are many, but there is a solution through comparison of prices in the same era. For example, in the 1740s and '50s, two dozen sheets of writing paper cost about the same as a pound of double refined sugar or dinner and a night's lodging at a Williamsburg tavern (one shilling sixpence), and only a few pence more than a quart of rum (one shilling threepence). Keep in mind that in Virginia during this period craftsmen like blacksmiths and carpenters earned seven shillings sixpence a day, for an annual income of about £100.

For prices relevant to your area, consult craft reports, house histories, and interpretive manuals. Harold Gill's essay, "Prices and Wages in 1750" (September 29, 1977), may also be useful. You'll find it among your in-service training materials from last winter. The essay puts prices in the context of earnings and cost of living and also includes retail prices of some widely available items.

The Interpreter

The Interpreter, a bimonthly publication of the Department of Interpretive Education, will include information of importance and interest to the entire community of interpreters at Colonial Williamsburg.

Our community is diverse. It consists of Craftspeople, Escorts, Hosts and Hostesses, the Company of Colonial Performers, Visitors' Aides, Desk Attendants, and others in Historic Area Services. Our staff is also large. We number 350 in the slower seasons and swell to over 500 during the summer months. This makes us the largest interpretive staff of any museum in the country.

Although we are diverse and large, *The Interpreter* will attempt to identify and underscore all we have in common. What are some of these similarities? The answers are obvious. Through our appearances, actions, and words, we work diligently to interpret the historical

(continued, p. 3)

The Lingo of Virginia's Colonial Economy

by
Peter V. Bergstrom
Research Department

The cryptic terminology of colonial merchants is as confusing to many interpreters as it is to our visitors. Much of the mystery can be cleared up, however, by starting with a simple outline of the Virginia economy--how the planters sold their crops and purchased the manufactured goods they desired from Europe--and by reference to a basic glossary of eighteenth-century economic terms.

Virginians who made their living by raising tobacco could either sell their produce to English merchants via a system of trade known as *consignment marketing*, or they could deal locally with a colonial merchant which was called *direct purchase marketing*. In the first case, the planter "consigned" his goods to an English merchant, who acted as his agent in arranging for the sale of the planter's tobacco in England, and the purchase and shipment back to Virginia of the goods that the planter ordered. The scene in The Patriot, in which John Fry and his family are unpacking goods from England, offers an example of this system. In consignment marketing there was no "middle-man" and the planter gained the greatest share of the profits, but he also bore the greatest share of the risk. He held title to his crop until it was actually sold in England, which meant that if the ship taking his tobacco to England sank, or was captured in a war or by pirates, it was the planter who suffered the loss. Likewise, if the price of tobacco fell suddenly in Europe, which it often did in years of large harvests, it was the planter who suffered.

In the second case, that of *direct purchase marketing*, the planter

sold his crop outright to a merchant in Virginia. The price he received would probably be lower than if he consigned it to England, but it would now be the merchant's worry to see the tobacco safely to England and to find a purchaser for it. A second advantage of *direct purchase marketing* was that while the planter's choice of manufactured goods was limited to what the merchant had in stock, he could actually see the goods and judge their quality before he made his choice. Moreover, by the 1750s, many merchants were present in Virginia which made competition among them brisk and the choice of goods very great.

Whichever system the planter used to sell his crops and acquire his goods, a number of additional elements were involved. English sterling coins could not legally be exported to the colonies, so coined money was continually in short supply in Virginia. The colonials surmounted this problem in a number of ways. First, they made extensive use of foreign coins-- primarily Spanish and Portuguese coins gained by trading to the West Indies-- whose values they periodically fixed by law. (See the Glossary for the values of some of these coins.) Second, after the establishment of the tobacco inspection system in 1730, they discovered that they could use *tobacco notes* as a kind of currency--although this never proved to be fully satisfactory since the value of the notes depended on the *price current* of tobacco and could vary between the time a person acquired the notes and chose to sell them to someone else. Third, after 1755, the government of Virginia periodically issued *paper currency* which was similar to modern paper money. Since this paper currency was not backed by any metallic reserve, however, but only by the colony's promise to redeem it from the collections of future taxes, *paper currency* was constantly subject to *devaluation* and/or *inflation*. The fourth and most common expedient the Virginians used instead of circulating

money was some form of credit.

In general, two kinds of credit were available to Virginians. For short term credit, planters went to their local merchants and were given *book credit* for the purchase of tools, cloth, etc. This was secured by the planter's promise to pay back the merchant at harvest time from the proceeds of his next crop. Typically, this meant that the planter would negotiate a price for his entire crop with the merchant (a *direct purchase* sale) while the plants were still growing in the fields. The merchant would then cancel the book debt and the remainder of the proceeds would be returned to the planter either in cash or as a future credit on the merchant's book. The shrewd planter would demand more cash and less credit, since he could then spend the cash where and as he chose. By contrast, the shrewd merchant would try to give more credit and less cash. Oftentimes, the merchant might even offer a higher price for the planter's tobacco if the planter was willing to take his earnings as a credit rather than in cash. Merchants also employed the practice of selling their goods in the colonies at an *advance* over their *prime cost* in England or Scotland. The size of this mark-up was supposed to represent the merchant's expenses for freight, insurance, overhead charges, and the like (as well as the current *exchange* between Virginia currency and sterling). The *advance* also included his profit margin, and considering that at least one Scottish merchant wrote home suggesting that an advance of seventy-five percent was common, and one hundred percent not at all unusual, the merchant's profits must have been substantial. Lest this should make the merchants appear entirely heartless and grasping, however, it should be pointed out that they were giving the planters a minimum of one year's credit without interest, and that they had no absolute guarantee that the planter would continue to sell his crops exclusively to them until the planter's debt was cleared. Bad debts

might account for as much as ten percent of the merchant's gross sales in any given year.

The second source of credit was through a commercial house in Britain. Any planter who used the consignment system to market his tobacco automatically employed British credit as well, for it was his agent who initially paid the freighting costs, the English duties on the tobacco, and the costs associated with marketing the crop in England. While all of these charges were ultimately deducted from the planter's profit, the English merchant had carried the planter's costs for a minimum of a year for a three percent commission on the gross sale price of the tobacco. The major user of British credit, however, was the colonial merchant, for without British support, he would have been unable to purchase goods in Britain for resale in America, as well as to extend his own credit to the planters while waiting to purchase their tobacco for resale in Britain.

British credits were transferred to the colonies and back by means of *bills of exchange*. These were negotiable instruments--rather like modern checks--by which a person with a sterling credit in Britain could transfer all or part of his credit to another person. The *drawer* of the bill, like the writer of a check, wrote an order to his creditor (usually a British mercantile firm that was acting like a bank) to pay the *payee* the amount stated in the bill. The payee could then take the bill to Britain, present it to the *drawee* (the mercantile firm) and collect his due. More commonly, however, the payee would endorse the bill over to another party--that is, sign it and give it to someone to whom he owed money. That person in turn could present it to the payee or endorse it once again. When the bill finally reached the hands of the payee, he would, if he indeed had on deposit the amount specified by the drawer, pay the debt. If there were no funds or credits

on deposit with the payee, the last holder of the bill, like the person with a bad check, was momentarily left in the lurch. When the payee in such cases *protested* the bill of exchange, it had to be taken back to the last endorser to be made good. He in turn had to complain to whomever he had received it from, and so on, until it was returned to the original drawer. The legal complications could become quite involved, and two rules of thumb developed: (1) "Don't accept a bill from someone whose credit you don't trust"; and (2) the obverse, "Never endorse anyone else's bills, notes, or bonds."

Since not every Virginian--planter or merchant--had sterling credit readily available to him in Britain, a system developed in which those who did have such credits available to them could sell them to those in Virginia who needed them. Naturally, the sellers of bills sought to gain a profit from their service. Several factors surrounded this money market which influenced the final cost of the sterling bills to their Virginia purchasers.

First, there was the *rate of exchange* between *Virginia Current Money* and sterling money. From the 1630s, the Virginia Assembly had tried (with little success) to attract foreign coinage into the colony by artificially inflating its value above the official English exchange rate between sterling coins and foreign coins. Until 1727, foreign coins made of silver were worth about fifteen percent more in Virginia than they were valued in England. After 1727, foreign coinage of both silver and gold was valued at twenty-five percent above the English rate. Because foreign coins were the basic monetary unit in circulation in Virginia, all *current money* whether it was in coin, or after 1755 in *paper currency*, was related to sterling money by this exchange rate. When the rate held at £125 *Virginia current* equal to £100 sterling, the exchange was said to be at *par*.

In the course of daily events, however, a second factor impinged

upon the Virginia money market which decreed that the *exchange rate* rarely be at *par*, for those who had sterling credits to sell believed that they deserved a profit over and above the official *exchange rate*. Moreover, they perceived that some purchasers could give them better values in *Virginia current* money or in goods for their bills of exchange than others might. Hence, when the supply of sterling credits was greater than the demand for them in Virginia, the *exchange rate* might fall below *par*--though this happened only rarely. More likely, the demand for sterling credit would be greater than the seller's ability to provide bills, and the rate would rise above *par*.

GLOSSARY OF ECONOMIC TERMS

TERMS COMMON IN THE MARKET PLACE

Consignment marketing. A method of selling one's crops in which the planter dealt directly with his agent/merchant in England. The merchant advanced the money to cover the cost of the freight, the duties, and the actual sale of the crop in England, and then deducted these, plus a commission of 2½ to 3 per cent from the gross amount of money generated by the sale. The merchant, therefore, took his commission not only on the sale price of the crop, but also on all the money he advanced to cover the planter's expenses. Since the planter kept title to his crop until it was finally sold in England, the loss that might be incurred from damage at sea or a drop in the market price was his and not the merchant's.

Direct purchase marketing. A method of selling one's crops in which the planter sold his produce directly to a merchant in Virginia. The price he would receive for his crop would be less, but he would then bear none of the risks or the headaches involved in getting his crop sold in England. The

planter also had the advantage of having his money immediately, rather than having to wait one, or perhaps two years to complete a sale as he might have to do with consignment marketing.

Book credit or book debt. The amount of credit or debt that the planter maintained upon the account books of his local merchant in Virginia. In a society which was chronically short of circulating coinage, the ability to command book credit, and even to transfer it from one customer to another was essential to the smooth functioning of everyday business.

Prime cost. The cost of goods to a Virginia merchant when he purchased them in England from his English supplier. In a sense this was similar to a wholesale price, except that many smaller Virginia merchants were forced to purchase their goods retail from other merchants in England, rather than actually securing them wholesale from the manufacturers.

Advance. The mark-up on the first cost which the Virginia merchant applied to his goods before reselling them in the colony. This ranged from fifty to one hundred percent or more of the prime cost. Also, it was not uncommon for a merchant to apply a different rate of advance upon the sales of his various customers, depending upon their credit status.

Price current. The day to day price for which a commodity could be bought or sold in the colony. This price usually represented the consensus view of the merchants as to what a commodity was worth at any given time. In Philadelphia and Boston these prices were published on a weekly basis in the newspapers. Virginia's merchants never reached that level of sophistication during the colonial period. But during the last twenty-five years before the Revolution (c. 1750-1775), many Virginia merchants--especially those in the Northern Neck region--accepted Philadelphia price currents as Virginia price currents as well.

MONEY TERMS

Specie. Any type of coined metallic money. The most common types in Virginia were Spanish silver reales (dollars), Spanish gold Pistoles, Portuguese gold Moeadas (Moidors), and Portuguese gold Dobras (Joes and Half-Joes). Few English sterling coins actually circulated in Virginia.

Coin values. English coins, in whose denominations Virginians figured their accounts (even though they rarely had English coins), were of the following values:

- 4 Farthings = 1 penny (pence abbreviated as "d")
- 12 Pence = 1 shilling (abbreviated as "s")
- 20 Shillings = 1 pound (abbreviated as "£")
- 21 Shillings = 1 guinea

Exchange. The rate at which a given amount of one coinage was said to be equal to a certain amount of another coinage. In Virginia as in England, the rate of exchange was based upon the weight in troy ounces of the silver or gold content of the foreign coins. Hence, to determine the value of foreign coins which were often defaced and mutilated from hard use, Virginians had to weigh them and multiply the number of ounces of gold or silver by the exchange rate. To encourage the retention of foreign coins within the colony, the Virginia Assembly increased the official English exchange rate by twenty-five percent.

Virginia Current Money. The money or units of measure in which Virginians kept their accounts. This was figured and stated in terms of pounds, shillings, and pence, but since actual exchange occurred in foreign coins or bills of exchange, Virginia current values had to be converted to sterling values by an exchange rate. Although this rate was officially set at twenty-five percent so that £125 Virginia Current Money equalled £100 sterling money, the

unofficial rate charged by those with sterling bills of exchange to sell could force the actual day to day rate well above par.

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Questions & Answers

VOL. 4, No. 4

May 1983

This special issue of Questions and Answers contains background information requested by interpreters who wish to know more about the eighteenth-century histories of the six countries attending the 1983 Summit.

Canada

France

Germany

Italy

Japan

United Kingdom

UNITED KINGDOM

In the eighteenth century England was an important commercial and manufacturing center. She exported woolen goods, silk, flax, lead, porcelain, tin, and glassware. A large part of her exports were goods from America and the East and West Indies that were re-exported to Europe in British (which included colonial) ships. These included tobacco, sugar, rice, pitch, tar, hardwoods, and East Indian textiles. England was also a military and naval power to be reckoned with in the eighteenth century.

English society of the period, though highly structured, was no longer feudal. When William, of Orange, and Mary accepted the English crown in 1689, a different monarchy was ushered in--one very much limited by the English Bill of Rights that protected the rights and privileges of English citizens (though it did not specifically protect the rights of the citizens in England's colonies).

Williamsburg's associations with England are obvious and plentiful: Virginia's governors, who resided in Williamsburg, were representatives of the English monarchs. Virginia's bicameral legislature is based upon the English system; legal codes were copied from the English. In the eighteenth century Virginia's tobacco and other goods were shipped to England in exchange for manufactured goods. Virginians were said to be as fashionable as Londoners in their homes and clothing. The professors at William and Mary in the colonial period were usually English. Often the Virginia gentry sent their sons to English universities, and Virginia ministers trained at William and Mary had to go to England to be ordained.

United Kingdom cont. (2):

Although it is common to equate England with Great Britain, the United Kingdom as we know it was actually composed of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Scotland was joined to the others by the Act of Union in 1707.

Three of Virginia's royal governors were Scots: Spotswood, Dinwiddie, and Dunmore. Merchants in Williamsburg were mostly English, not Scottish, but in Virginia as a whole many merchants and factors were Scottish or worked for Scottish companies. There was a good proportion of Scots among the clergy and professors at the College of William and Mary. James McClurg, a native Virginian, received his medical training at Edinburgh University and became William and Mary's first professor of medicine.

Williamsburg's best known Irishman was coachmaker Elkanah Deane, who purchased four lots on the west side of Palace Street in 1772.

CANADA

Canada was settled by the French in the early seventeenth century. Colonists were largely fur traders who ranged over a vast territory as far as the Mississippi, or peasant farmers who settled along the St. Lawrence River. The administration of the country was framed in Versailles and the resident governor at Quebec had complete authority in carrying out the royal orders. The French-Canadian citizen exercised no political rights. French and English conflict for control of North America culminated in the French and Indian War (known in Europe as the Seven Years' War) ending in 1760. In the Treaty of Paris of 1763 France ceded all claims in Canada to Great Britain as the price for retaining the French West Indies.

The Treaty of Paris of 1763 put French-Canadians and English colonists on the same footing as English subjects, but the two groups were very different in origin, religion, and institution. This resulted in considerable antagonism between the English who settled in Canada after the Treaty and the French-Canadians. Some of the English would have abolished every French institution in Canada but the Quebec Act, though it required an oath of allegiance to the English crown, sanctioned the Roman Catholic Church, and English criminal law existed side-by-side with French civil law.

During the American Revolution the Continental Congress wished to gain control of Canada by force. However, the Americans were repulsed at all points. About 40,000 Loyalists from the American colonies emigrated to Canada during and after the Revolution to settle primarily in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

JAPAN

During the eighteenth century, Japan was ruled by a series of military rulers called Shoguns, of the Tokugawa family. Government and society were conservative, agrarian, and feudal in outlook and structure. Foreign influences, especially Christian missionary activities, were viewed as disruptive to the stability and order created by the newly centralized government. To limit these influences, Japan expelled the Portuguese and banned foreign books in 1639, and restricted Chinese and Dutch representatives and merchants to Nagasaki in 1641. Western mercantile interests saw the potentials for Japan's trade as insignificant compared with those of her larger neighbor, China, and did not seriously challenge these restrictions until the mid-nineteenth century.

While there were many restrictions on trade and contact, Japan's self-imposed isolation was never complete. The Dutch, who were willing to have trade without religion, continued to be a source of information about the West for Japan. In 1720, the ban on foreign books was relaxed, and for the rest of the eighteenth century there was a small but continuous Japanese interest in Western art, science, and military subjects. This limited trade and intellectual contact had little effect on Japanese society, but did provide a basis for the rapid changes which took place in Meiji Japan of the 1860s.

Japan during the second half of the eighteenth century was a stable, structured, and self-contained society, developing along its own lines with little outside influence, but it was not a stagnant hermit. Much of what the West knows today as traditional Japanese culture developed to a high form during this period, and the centralization

Japan cont. (2):

and reform of government gave the country a period of peace and economic stability that provided the base for Japan's rapid development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

FRANCE

France was unified much earlier than Germany or Italy, its monarchy having survived for several hundred years by the eighteenth century. Its hierarchical society was based on a feudal system of land tenure that encompassed the king, the aristocracy (nobles), commoners, and peasant farmers. Louis XV and Louis XVI were on the throne for most of the eighteenth century--Louis XVI ascended the throne on the same day the English Parliament passed the Boston Port Act in the spring of 1774.

Since the Middle Ages, France has been noted for a mixed economy combining agriculture, industry, and trade. Eighteenth-century French scientists and thinkers (including Rousseau and Voltaire) exerted great influence on European and American intellectual thought and development.

Beginning in the early seventeenth century, France had colonies in the New World--in Canada, the West Indies, and Louisiana. France and England fought each other several times in the eighteenth century. The Treaty of Paris of 1763 that ended the French and Indian War ceded to England all French claims to territory in Canada in exchange for France retaining an interest in the West Indies.

Virginia colonists followed French trends in fashion, manners, and dancing. French wines and brandies were imported and served at Virginia's best dinner tables and in Williamsburg's taverns. Refugee Huguenots settled in Virginia and Williamsburg itself attracted numerous Frenchmen including Jean Marot, Gabriel Maupin, Blovet Pasteur, Monsieur Lafong, and Peter de la Croix. The French language was taught at William and Mary beginning in 1779.

France cont. (2):

France under Louis XVI was allied with the Americans in the Revolutionary War. Many French troops were in Williamsburg especially before and after the Siege of Yorktown. Marquis de Lafayette, a general in the American army, was a favorite with Williamsburg residents and upon returning to the States in 1824, he visited a thankful Williamsburg, staying overnight in the Peyton Randolph House. Some of the ideas expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Virginia Declaration of Rights influenced several French revolutionaries and helped bring an end to the monarchy and feudal society of France in 1789.

GERMANY

A distinction must be made between "Germany" as a political entity and "Germany" as a geographic term. As a geographic term, "Germany" designated the center of the European continent for at least 2000 years. However, Germany has been a political entity only since 1871 when Chancellor Bismarck accomplished unification. Thus, Germany as we know it is the youngest of the European great powers while it is populated by one of the oldest peoples of Europe.

The early history of Germany is not one of a German state but of German tribes that eventually grew into numerous large and small independent principalities and small independent cities ruled by dukes, electors, and kings who owed their allegiance to the Holy Roman Emperor. (George I, the founder of the present Royal House of England, was Elector of Hanover, one of these principalities.) In the eighteenth century the importance of the Holy Roman Empire was declining rapidly. The unstable situation gave Frederick II ("the Great") of Prussia, another of the principalities, the opportunity to assume a position of strong leadership in a politically disunited Germany.

During the eighteenth century German music, literature, and philosophy reached great heights. J. S. Bach and G. F. Handel (who later emigrated to England) were the great figures of the late Baroque period in music. German literature and philosophy saw the likes of Lessing, Schiller, Göethe, and Kant at work.

German manufactured goods used in eighteenth-century Virginia, such as "oznaburg," a coarse linen fabric made in Osnabrück, and German flutes were shipped via England. The first German settlement in Virginia was at Germanna in what is now Orange County. The German

Germany cont. (2):

settlers were brought over to work in Governor Spotswood's iron mines and furnaces. About 1720, most of the original settlers removed to Germantown in what is now Fauquier County. A strong German element also settled in the Valley of Virginia. Beginning about 1720 a large number of Germans, many of whom were artisans, came into the valley via Philadelphia.

Hessians fought with the English in the American Revolution. The German language was taught at William and Mary beginning in 1779. Professor Minnegerode introduced a favorite German tradition, the Christmas tree, in Williamsburg in 1842.

It should be kept in mind that Germans who emigrated to America did not come from "Germany " because it did not yet exist as such. Rather, they came from the various independent states such as Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony, and others.

ITALY

The Italian nation is very old (the oldest in Europe after Greece) but as a modern state, very young, dating from only 1861.

What we today know as Italy was in the eighteenth century a collection of individual states including Sardinia, Savoy, the Duchy of Milan, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and others. These states remained divided and many were being fought over by the major powers of the time. They had no influence in British American affairs.

Reforms, similar to the ones taking place outside of Italy in the eighteenth century, transformed the internal policy of several Italian states. These changes were characterized by antifeudalism, anticlericalism, religious tolerance, and administrative and bureaucratic reform. Italian art centered in such places as Rome and Venice continued to exert strong influence on European art and Italian composers such as Vivaldi, Pergolese, and Scarlatti were at work in the eighteenth century.

There were very early Italian settlers in Virginia as evidenced by instructions to Sir Francis Wyatt, Virginia governor from 1621 to 1626: "Italians sent to set up a glass furnace" at Jamestown. Another Italian, Serafina Formicola, "publican," was in York County by 1775 and operated a tavern in Williamsburg and owned property here.

Phillip Mazzei came to Virginia in 1773 with some Italians to undertake an experiment in grape-growing and wine-making in Albemarle County near Monticello. He also grew grapes in Williamsburg on the college lands.

The Italian language was taught at William and Mary beginning in 1779 when Charles (Carlo) Bellini, a native of Florence, was

Italy cont. (2):

appointed the first professor of modern languages.

Thomas Jefferson visited northern Italy while he was in Europe as American minister to France. "Monticello," the name of his home in Charlottesville, is an Italian word meaning "little mountain."

Questions & Answers

VOL. 4, No. 5

June 1983

This issue responds to the questions submitted to the faculty during 1983's Core Curriculum training. Because many of the questions did not relate to the courses taught we will include them in future issues of Questions and Answers.

HOW SWEET IS YOUR TOOTH?

1. It has been tradition of interpreters at Colonial Williamsburg to speak of sugar as a scarce and expensive commodity; was this really the case during the eighteenth century?

This question, like most we have dealt with, is really a multiple question which must be answered in several parts. First, how scarce was sugar in Virginia during the eighteenth century? At any given time, in any given part of the colony, the supply of sugar available would have fluctuated greatly, but we can make some general statements about overall availability. In 1730, for example, roughly 250,000 pounds of sugar (mostly muscovado or coarse brown sugar) was imported into Virginia at the same time that about 75,000 gallons of molasses were imported. Given about 40,000 people (white and black, young and old) in the colony at this time, that works out to about 2 pounds of sugar and $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon of molasses per person. In 1772, about 780,000 pounds of sugar (slightly less than 95% of this was muscovado) and 220,000 gallons of molasses were imported. With a total population of about 500,000 people, this made for about $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of sugar and $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon of molasses per person.

If one argues that white people probably used more sugar than was given to black slaves, the actual per capita consumption for whites was probably somewhat higher than the gross numbers for either point in time would suggest. We know for example that Landon Carter was using brown sugar at rates which varied between one half and three quarters of a pound per day in the early 1770's. At the same time he implies (he's not very explicit unfortunately) that he's giving his slaves brown sugar at the rate of less than 20 pounds every three months, or about one quarter pound per day at the most. Obviously if Carter was using sugar at this high rate, some people must not have used much sugar at all.

The second fact to consider is the cost of sugar.. Again, referring to Landon Carter, in the late 1760's and early 1770's we discover he's paying an average of 5 pence per pound for brown sugar. Since he's buying it from Norfolk merchants and Rappahannock River Merchants at the same average, we can assume that the price was fairly uniform throughout the colony at that time. Since most of the sugar imported into Virginia both early and late in the eighteenth century came to the Lower James River -- the customs district including Norfolk -- it may be true that at least in times of shortage, sugar was cheaper in the Lower Tidewater than in the more remote parts of the colony.

SUBJECT: 1983'S CORE CURRICULUM TRAINING QUESTIONS

By way of comparison, we might also note, that in Philadelphia, for which a fine price series for sugar exists from 1720 to the Revolution, the cost of sugar ranged from a little over 3 pence per pound around 1730 to about 5½ pence per pound on the eve of the Revolution. A similar price series for Virginia is under study, but has not yet been completed. Nevertheless, given the evidence from Landon Carter, and a number of Virginia storekeepers, we can safely say, that Virginia prices appear to have followed a pattern similar to that of Philadelphia.

Finally, was sugar a scarce commodity, and a rare treat for the average Virginian? Probably not, but again, we must remember that particular conditions could vary widely with place and time. On the whole sugar and molasses were readily available at reasonable prices. Some people like Landon Carter obviously had no trouble satisfying their sweet teeth. Most likely there were others, particularly among the slave population, who found sugar to be indeed a rare treat.

WHEN IS A TON NOT A TUN?

2. If tobacco is measured as four hogsheads equals a ton of freight, why doesn't a hogshead weigh 500 pounds?

The answer to this apparently simple question is rather complex, and in good English fashion rather confusing. It stems from the complicated traditions of English shipping, commerce and metrology (the study of weights and measures). If you will bear with me, I will try to keep this as simple and short as possible.

English measures from Mediaeval times have included the tun -- a measure of volume or capacity, and the ton -- a measure of weight. The tun, a large cask for holding liquids came in two varieties, one for ale and one for wine. Prior to 1707, their volumes were not standardized, and depended upon the size of the gallon. The range was between 33 and 41 cubic feet. A ton was a measure of weight that also came in a variety of sizes. The ton of 2,000 pounds which we know today is actually what the English would call a short ton made up of 20 hundredweights of 100 pounds each. This was the ton and the hundredweight or Cwt. that Virginians used in the tobacco trade. The more common English measure and the one used exclusively in England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was the English long ton, made up of 20 hundredweights each weighing 112 pounds. The long ton thus equals 2240 pounds.

The relationship between a tun and a ton is twofold. First, water, the handiest liquid for use in measuring, weighs just over 62 pounds per cubic foot, so 36 cubic feet of water weighs 2232 pounds, or approximately one long ton. A gallon of water, by the smallest wine measure weighs just over 8 pounds, while a gallon by the largest ale measure weighs just over 10 pounds. Thus, depending upon the size of the measure, a tun of water, or wine (which weighs only slightly more) ranged from about 2100 pounds in weight to 2500 pounds. Clearly then, a tun of water or wine could also be thought of as a ton in weight. The second relationship between the tun and the ton follows from the first. The mediaeval wine trade was the traditional basis from which English shipping and freighting practices were derived. Thus the tun, the standard unit of the wine trade, became the standard unit of freight and hence the determiner of freight rates. Although rates were always determined by volume -- not weight, everyone -- even some of the shippers it seems, tended to equate tun of capacity with ton of weight. Thus when lighter cargoes such as wool, or

later tobacco, were to be shipped, some additional definitions of "tunn" or "tone" -- the English interchanged the words as well as the concepts -- were needed. Volume became the key -- even though, as we have seen, volume of units were not standardized until 1707.

This brings us to tobacco and the standard of four hogsheads to the ton. In the case of capacity measures, four hogsheads of wine or ale makes a tun, not a ton. As we have seen, however, tun became corrupted to ton, and so long as the volume of the freight was no heavier than wine, the rate based upon the volume of "ton" satisfied everyone.

But what is the real relationship between the tobacco hogshead and the tun, and hence the "freight ton?" Before 1658, we do not know how big the common tobacco hogshead might have been, but we do know that at least as early as 1630, the standard unit of freight for Virginia tobacco was four hogsheads to the "tunn". We also know, that this was estimated by contemporaries to be known more than 1000 pounds of tobacco. Obviously, the shippers -- those receiving the freight charges -- must have been very pleased to earn a "tunn's" worth of freight for less than half of a ton's weight.

In 1658, the tobacco hogshead was fixed by the General Assembly, as a container whose diameter was 26 inches at the head and had a height of 43 inches. Contemporaries estimated this hogshead to contain from 350 to about 500 pounds of tobacco. Since that volume of about 13 cubic feet made the "tunn" of four hogsheads a little more than 52 cubic feet, it is clear, that even at that early date, Virginians had begun to manipulate the traditional "tunn of freight" -- 40 cubic feet -- to their own advantage. By 1700 the Virginia hogshead had increased to 30 inches in diameter at the head by 48 inches high -- a volume of just under 20 cubic feet. Still, they continued to pay their freight at four hogsheads to the freight ton. Although the size of the hogshead did not change again before the Revolution, its weight did. From an average of 500 pounds in 1700, it increased to an average of 1000 pounds by 1775. Still, the freight rate -- which did not increase significantly, except in time of war -- was based upon four hogsheads to the ton.

To summarize this long story, let me repeat, that once upon a time, in the English wine trade, a tun -- a measure of capacity -- which contained four hogsheads -- also a measure of capacity. When these tuns and hogsheads were filled with water or wine, they weighed very nearly an English long ton of 2240 pounds. In the tobacco trade, the standard of four hogsheads equals a freight ton, was in effect as early as 1630 and lasted until the Revolution. Neither the volume of the tobacco hogshead, nor its weight remained constant and equivalent to those used in the wine trade. The tobacco hogshead gained both in size and weight, even though one could always say that for freight "four hogsheads make a ton".

3. What were the number of ships that "didn't make it" in the 1750?

In some ways, this question is like asking "how many miles of the cave have not yet been explored?" because ships "lost at sea" or "never heard from again" are virtually impossible to trace. We do however, know something about the volume of shipping which did arrive safely, and from it extrapolate some "guesses" about those that did not. In the years around 1730, probably 200 to 250 ships arrived annually in Virginia from all ports of call. By 1772 this number had risen to 768. Five major hazards haunted the safe arrival of ships. First, among these were natural problems: leaks, sprung planks, broken mast etc. These were constant threats, although it

probably didn't cause the loss of more than one or two ships per year. Second, storms posed an unending terror for mariner's. Again, these were serious dangers, but didn't get too many ships -- except for occasional hurricanes which often sank numbers of ships at a time -- since sailors tried to avoid ocean crossings during the stormiest months of the year. Third and fourth were pirates and war. After 1720, ships bound from England to Virginia had little problem with pirates, but they were always a menace in the West Indies. Wars, which filled 41 of the 76 years before the American Revolution often caused major havoc upon the shipping trade, but again, this was a danger that could be avoided by the prudent master. Finally natural navigational hazards such as reefs, sand bars, and shoals sank a fair number of ships. Along with storms, these problems were really the most persistent and the most dangerous for sailors. Remember, it was not until after the Revolution that a lighthouse was built at Cape Henry.

To recap, how many vessels were lost? -- Probably no more than ten per year, but, you never knew when it might be your turn. Until the late nineteenth century, getting there was probably not half the fun.

4. How were towns organized in Virginia?

During the last quarter of the seventeenth century, many Virginians became interested in the development of towns as a means of improving the trade and industry of the colony. By a series of legislative acts in 1680, 1691, and 1705 collectively known as the "Town Acts" twenty towns were "created" in Tidewater Virginia. Before the towns were little more than surveyors creations on plats of lots, the acts of 1680 and 1691 were disallowed by the British government -- primarily because London and outport merchants feared colonial competition. Nevertheless, some lots were sold and some people began to settle at the future town sites. The Yorktown "purchasers of 1692" which were studied in the Core Curriculum course, Learning from the York County Project, are a prime example of these sorts of town developers.

The "survivor towns" (those that eventually grew into towns) of the "Town Act" towns include: Yorktown, Norfolk, West Point, Urbanna, and Hobbs Hole (modern Tappahannock).

5. What was the origin of Williamsburg?

Williamsburg was created by a special legislative act in 1699. Until 1722, it, like all the towns mentioned above, was "run" or "supervised" by a group of Trustees of Ffeoffees, individually named in the act that created the towns. In the case of Williamsburg, vacancies among the Trustees were to be filled by the governor's appointment. In the towns created by the "Town Acts", vacancies were filled by appointment of the surviving Trustees (much in the same manner as Parish Vestries supplied their vacancies).

6. What were chartered towns, and how were they different from other towns?

During the colonial period, only two Virginia towns received charters that were granted by the governor in the name of the King. Williamsburg received its charter in 1722, while Norfolk was so honored in 1736. The benefits of having a charter were several. First, the freeholders of each of the two towns had the right to elect their own member to the House of Burgesses. Second, these towns had limited self government through the

institutions of the Common Council and the Mayor's Court of Aldermen. The first group was elected by the freeholders of the town, and it in turn elected the second group. The Mayor's Court or Hustings Court, or Borough Court (all names were used at various times) had jurisdiction over "all cause personal and mixed" not exceeding £20 current money or 4,000 pounds of tobacco which arose within its jurisdiction. Third, the towns could hold twice weekly markets as well as semi-annual fairs and levy tolls and fees for the use of the market. The towns could not, however, raise money by taxation separately from the county levy, without the express permission of a special legislative act.

7. How did people acquire land in towns?

The original ownership of land within all towns was vested in the Trustees, and when the first lots were purchased, the grantors of the lands were the Trustees. The money raised by the sales of town lots was used to offset the cost of purchasing the town lands from the original owners and the costs of surveying the lots and laying out the streets, wharfs, and market places. In the case of Yorktown, and all other "Town Acts" towns, the land was first purchased by the county and then turned over to the Trustees. The proceeds from lot sales in Yorktown were then returned to York County. The land had cost the county 10,000 pounds of tobacco and lots were sold (as prescribed by law) for 180 pounds of tobacco each.

The initial purchasers of town lots were required to build houses upon them within a year or the lots would be forfeited to the Trustees, and could be re-sold to another buyer who would meet the building requirements. Once a lot had been built upon, and hence its title been permanently confirmed to the grantee or buyer, he was free to keep the land or sell it to whomever he chose for whatever price he and the new purchaser agreed upon.

In the case of Williamsburg, lots were also sold by the Trustees, and there was a time-limit for building and confirmation of title. The difference between Williamsburg and the "Town Act" towns was that Williamsburg had been funded by the legislature, and the proceeds from its lots was returned to the General Assembly.

8. How were the later eighteenth century towns organized?

Towns such as Fredericksburg (1728), Suffolk (1742), and Alexandria (1749), were all established by separate acts of the General Assembly. In general they were directed by Trustees who had the same powers and duties as those appointed under the "Town Acts." Since some of these later towns were in effect the "private creations" of particular investors, and their lands were not purchased by the counties or the colony, the returns from lots sales in these "private towns" went to those who had advanced the money in the first place.

9. How can I find out more about Virginia towns?

A short bibliography on Virginia towns and urban development is available from your master teachers or at the Research Center Library.

Answered by: Peter V. Bergstrom

10. I do not understand the relationship of small land holdings with town development?

Historical geographers argue that as towns develop the need of town dwellers for food, fodder, and wood work a change on the agricultural practices of nearby farmers. In their effort to take advantage of these new opportunities, many farmers turn to "truck farming" which can be accomplished on small tracts of land. Also, because of the value of such rural to urban trade, land near towns becomes valuable. This produces additional pressure to subdivide large tracts into smaller, high priced ones. It follows from this argument that farmers near towns are involved in a very different agricultural economy than those living in distant rural areas. One of the goals of the York County Project is to see if this change in fact happened around Williamsburg and Yorktown.

11. When a person visits Colonial Williamsburg today, are they seeing the way the upper 25% of The Colony lived?

Admittedly many of our exhibition buildings display the life style of well-to-do eighteenth century Virginians, but Colonial Williamsburg also shows the work of many artisans whose position in society was well below the elite. Moreover, urban life styles may have differed significantly from rural ones. For these reasons it is not possible to say precisely whether the top 10% or 25% or even 50% of society is shown here. Rather one should strive to include in an interpretation the experiences of those Virginians who are not so apparent in the exhibitions -- black slaves, poorer laborers, widowed women, etc.

12. Why did Jamestown settlers starve? Couldn't they have eaten fish?

In fact they did eat fish availing themselves with the great sturgeon runs of spring and summer. There are several explanations for why mortality was so high, especially during the infamous "starving time" of winter 1609/1610. Some historians blame it on the attitudes of the early settlers which saw manual labor, such as farming, as beneath them. Other historians detect in the first settlers a paralyzing apathy which kept them from helping themselves. Recently, Carville Earle has offered a more plausible explanation. He notes that the magnitudes of death during "starving times" is exaggerated. In fact he found that adequate food supplies were always available; rather it was disease, especially typhoid, dysentery, and salt poisoning from the contaminated estuarial water supply that caused the high death rate at early Jamestown.

Answered by: Kevin Kelly

13. Supposedly, today, we Americans charge \$600 per credit card we possess in a year's time -- even with today's outrageous interest rate! With the tobacco warehouse receipt and/or the Bills of Exchange, etc., was their credit usually over extended or were they better consumers and stayed within their credit limit?

Credit, then and now, was partly a matter of need, partly a matter of availability of credit (less in hard times, more in flush times), and (naturally) partly a matter of the creditworthiness, real or presumed, of the borrower. It is, therefore, necessary to know what the individual wanted credit for, whether the economy (before the 1760s chiefly the tobacco trade) was prosperous or depressed, and who were the prospective debtors and creditors. Overall, Virginia planters came to owe a good deal of money to

one another and to British merchants, but it would be almost impossible to judge whether they carried a proportionately heavier or lighter load of debts, as also whether they tended to be better managers of their assets than people in the present time.

14. For visual interpretation: How many hogsheads might an average farmer's labor for one year produce? Would the crops harvest reflect only his labor or the labor of other members of the family, one or more slaves?

It is difficult to say how many hogsheads of tobacco an "average" planter might make, but the small planter was usually considered to be one who made from 2 to 6 or 8 hogsheads. Counting on an average production of one hogshead or a little more per worker, that would reflect the labor of his family and his servants or slaves, if he had any. Of course, such a planter would also raise or grow almost all of his family's food.

15. What is a letter book? Who kept them and why?

A letter book, as I know it, is a copybook of letters sent, usually kept by a clerk for a merchant, planter, or public official, but certainly applicable to any copybook of letters sent. In that sense it is the predecessor of 19th C. letterpress copies, of carbon copies retained, or of xerox copies today. Like present-day carbon or xerox copies, such as the one I have made of your question and my answer, they serve to record for later review or verification, what one has written a correspondent. As they are less ephemeral in bulk and nature than their more recent substitutes and successors, so because of their rag paper and hand bindings they have more often survived than some files of loose letters received. They have great value for the historian of business, material culture, social, and political history as well as of economic history, for which they provide not only sources of essential evidence but also quotations of contemporary comments. Examples would be the remarkable long series of letter books of Robert "King" Carter that survive for most of the years from 1720 to 1732; the delightful letter book of 1717 to 1742 kept by that miserly curmudgeon John Custis of Williamsburg; and for a public official, the letter book of the Virginia Agent in London, James Abercromby, which Dr. George Reese is editing for the Virginia Historical Society from the execrable, almost illegible original now in the Archives Division of the Virginia State Library.

16. What is the origin of the term Hogshead?

As far as Messrs. Bergstrom and Hemphill have been able to determine, no one seems to know the answer to that question. The most knowledgeable American scholar in this field, Professor John McCusker of the University of Maryland, could not himself answer the question but agreed to submit a note of inquiry on the subject to the British Mariner's Mirror (a magazine of nautical history) and to the corresponding American learned journal, The American Neptune. John has promised the undersigned a sight shortly of his inquiry. We can only promise to continue to pursue an answer.

Answered by: John Hemphill

17. Broccoli was included on your list of eighteenth-century vegetables. Could you give a reference? I've had several guests question broccoli as an eighteenth-century plant.

Broccoli was grown in the Williamsburg area by the late 1750s. Seeds advertised for sale in the Virginia Gazette by Palace gardener Christopher Ayscough in 1759 included "colliflower broccoli" and "purple broccoli" as well as two kinds of cauliflower and seven kinds of cabbage. In his Treatise on Gardening, written about 1765, Williamsburg resident John Randolph discusses the cultivation of broccoli. The fact that he includes directions for cooking broccoli--"When you cut the flowers or heads, cut to about five or six inches of the stem, and before they are boiled, strip off the skin, and after having washed them, boil them in a clean cloth and serve them up with butter, as cauliflowers are"--suggests the plant was recently introduced.

On the other hand, the related vegetable, Brussel sprouts, apparently was not introduced into eastern Virginia until the 1790s. Brussel sprouts are listed on a 1793 broadside advertising seeds available from Richmond seedsman Minton Collins.

18. Would a lower middling eighteenth-century family have industries inside the home that would bring in money or sell excess vegetables? Would the housewife, besides doing her own work, take in washing or cook foods for sale?

Certainly. As you suggest, taking in washing and selling prepared foods are likely possibilities. Housewives, their daughters, and other poor-to-lower-middling women might also spin (using a distaff and spindle if they lacked a spinning wheel); knit caps, gloves, or stockings; mend or sew garments; or sell fruits and vegetables and excess milk or butter (if they had a cow) at the Wednesday and Saturday markets, to regular customers, or from door to door. Single male town residents and travelers occasionally recorded payments to women (black and white) for washing, mending, spinning, and sewing.

Answered by: Patricia Gibbs

19. Did a planter have any way of insuring his crop once it had left his property?

Once it was shipped, the planter could insure his tobacco while at sea. When it was in the inspection warehouse, the Colonial Government assumed responsibility for it.

Answered by: Harold Gill

20. Were there any Black overseers, or free Black overseers in the colony?

Yes, Landon Carter, for instance, had a black overseer on one of his quarters.

Answered by: Phillip Morgan

21. When did they begin growing peanuts in the area? Did it, the crop, start in the nineteenth century? Peanuts are such a part of the economy in the Tidewater area so I would like to know when it all began.

Peanuts were cultivated on a small scale in Virginia in the late eighteenth century. Thomas Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia (1782) includes "ground nuts (Arachis)" among the state's crops. At Monticello in 1794 he grew 65 hills of "peendars."

Johann David Schoepf visited here in 1783 and '84. His Travels in the confederation describes peanuts at great length and says that "the blacks raise 'Been-nuts (Arachis hypogaea).'"

A Virginia Cavalcade article claims that Matthew Harris of Sussex County was probably the first farmer to raise peanuts specifically for commercial purposes around 1842 ("Virginia Bunch," by Robert L. Scribner, Virginia Cavalcade, vol. 8, no. 1 (1958), pp. 16- [25]).

It was not until after the Civil War that peanuts became big business-- in Virginia or anywhere else. The market received a gigantic boost at the very end of the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth when George Washington Carver developed about 300 synthetic products that could be produced from peanuts.

22. How far into the eighteenth century was the long german s in use?

The long 's' remained in general Use until about the Year 1800."
August Klapper, The Printer in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg
(CWF, 1955)

23. Was there a specific reason for wrapping the sugar loaves in blue paper?

Sugar loaves were individually wrapped in blue paper and then packed in hogsheads. We don't know of a specific reason for the use of blue paper.

Answered from the files by: Lou Powers

Questions & Answers

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What was Carter Burwell's original plan for the creation of Carter's Grove? In this issue we will examine the development of Carter's Grove as a plantation and as a seat of power by Carter Burwell and his son Nathaniel Burwell. Harold Gill of the Research Department has furnished the answers to the following questions.

1. How was Carter's Grove acquired by Carter Burwell in 1737?

Sometime between 1716 and 1721, Robert "King" Carter purchased 1003 acres of land "upon Merchant's Hundred" in James City County. Carter reserved the profits from the estate for his daughter Elizabeth and her husband Nathaniel Burwell of Fairfield, Gloucester County, for their lives "and afterwards," as he put it, "to go to the benefit of one of Mr. Burwell's sons," Carter Burwell. A few months before he died, Robert Carter purchased an additional 397 acres "upon Merchants Hundred" contiguous to the first tract.

Robert Carter died in 1732 when Carter Burwell was 16 years old. From that time, at least, Carter Burwell knew of his inheritance which also included property in Yorktown and York County from his own father, Nathaniel Burwell, who was "possessed of a great Estate Real and Personal." When Carter Burwell reached the age of 21 in 1737--^{his} mother had died three years earlier--he came into possession of a large and scattered estate including lands in York, James City, Frederick, and Prince William Counties. In the York and James City County properties there were six separate tracts, all of which had been developed for at least a century, so Burwell was not faced with frontier conditions. Fouaces, Mill, and Black Swamp quarters were all near Carter's Grove, and Neck-of-land near Jamestown. Burwell had a choice of places to establish his home if he intended to reside on the Lower Peninsula. (There were habitable structures on the tract at Carter's Grove from the time Robert Carter acquired it, because it was a tobacco producing plantation and it must have had an overseer's house and slave quarters, besides the usual outbuildings and possibly another house.)

2. What sort of a man was Carter Burwell?

We know very little about Carter Burwell's private life and thoughts. He left almost no correspondence and no diary. Charles Hansford, the York County blacksmith and poet, left the only known description of Burwell, written in the early 1750s:

Had it been Carter Burwell's part or station
In arms to serve his king, defend a nation;
Had it been Burwell's lot in camp or field
The ranks to marshal, or a truncheon wield,

An army to command, or town to win--
This suited to his genius would have been.
I think his piercing eye, his gallant mien,
Doth very much resemble Prince Eugene.
Had war been his employment, doubtless he
A most accomplish'd general would be;
Or, were he to conduct a colony
To settle in some distant country,
His vigilance and foresight would be sure
The place to plant, and all his men secure.

That Burwell was a man of estate and good character is suggested by the fact that Governor Dinwiddie recommended him to the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations as a proper person to appoint to the council. His appointment did not materialize, but fortunately, Burwell did leave a mark in the official records and an account book that allows us a glimpse of his activities and suggests possible motives for his actions. In 1737 when he reached his majority, Burwell married Lucy Grymes, and within a few years he must have decided to make his home at Carter's Grove.

3. What exactly did Carter Burwell inherit at Carter's Grove and what were the restrictions on that inheritance?

By the provisions of Robert Carter's will and the deed from John Carter, the Carter's Grove estate with the slaves was held by Carter Burwell in tail male. That is, he did not own it in fee simple; he could not transfer any of the slaves to other tracts, and he was required always to maintain at least the original number of bequeathed slaves on the property. If Burwell envisioned the development of Carter's Grove as a non-producing tobacco plantation, as the evidence suggests, it was important for him to be able to reduce the labor force there. Tobacco was a labor intensive crop--it required almost constant attention and a sizable labor force. Because Burwell clearly did not intend to continue to cultivate tobacco there, it was important for him to be able to reduce the number of slaves at Carter's Grove.

In order to do that he had to dock, or break, the entail. The act docking the entail was passed on April 28, 1749, only ten days after Burwell petitioned the Assembly for it. The governor signed the bill on May 11, 1749, and after a difficult and expensive process the king in Privy Council approved the act on December 20, 1750.

4. What was the effect of his docking the entail on the future development of Carter's Grove?

Once Burwell had succeeded in docking the entail, he could move slaves away from the plantation and begin to pursue his grand design for Carter's Grove. By reducing the labor force, he changed the agricultural objective of the plantation. He did not convert it to a grain and livestock producing farm in

order to exploit the Williamsburg market or to take advantage of the wheat trade, which had not yet become a profitable export commodity at the time he began the process. It is significant that he continued to produce tobacco at all of his other estates or quarters in York and James City Counties. If the Williamsburg market was his goal, then it would have been more logical to use Fouaces Quarter for the "truck farm," because it was only about one and a half or two miles from town, whereas Carter's Grove was eight miles away.

The indications are that during the occupation of Carter Burwell and his son Nathaniel at Carter's Grove very little land was under cultivation--possibly no more than fifty or sixty acres. In 1780, for instance, Nathaniel Burwell had only eight acres in wheat. The vast majority of the estate was pasture for livestock and for providing hay and fodder, while the ravines were most likely left in forest. (During the Revolution a vast amount of firewood was sold from the estate.)

It is clear that instead of operating a profit producing tobacco plantation, Carter Burwell and his son, Nathaniel, created and maintained a house and park of great beauty and style at Carter's Grove near Williamsburg where it could be seen and enjoyed by many prominent Virginians. Raising tobacco with its unsightly fields, sheds, and slave quarters would have compromised the desired sense of harmony and order on the plantation. In 1775, Nathaniel Burwell figured the net profits at the various quarters, and Carter's Grove was the least profitable--yielding only £28 profit. Fouaces Quarter was the most profitable at over £400.

5. How did Carter Burwell plan and construct the house and gardens at Carter's Grove?

As soon as Burwell received word in 1751, that he had succeeded in docking the entail, he arranged to reduce the labor force and changed the agricultural objective of the plantation and the construction of the mansion began. As early as 1743 Burwell paid Robert West for laying nearly 24,000 bricks and for "rubed work."

Burwell began in earnest during 1751 to collect the other necessary building materials for the Grove mansion, spending over £250 for shingles, plank, shells, and bricks. By the end of 1751 several craftsmen such as Minitree and Wheatly were at work. Richard Baylis, the English joiner who Burwell perhaps contracted personally, appeared on the scene during 1752, probably beginning his work in August. Before the house was finished in 1755, Burwell spent a great deal of money--approximately £1266 by our calculation. Roughly one-fourth of the cost was in materials. Not counting whatever slave labor was utilized, Burwell paid eleven skilled and unskilled laborers nearly £800 between 1751 and 1755. Remarkably, Burwell managed to complete the mansion without falling into debt.

The house Burwell built at Carter's Grove turned out to be, according to at least one architectural historian, the best built house in Virginia in terms

of quality of construction. Both the interior and exterior were of the finest workmanship. The structure was expensive and if the siting of the house is considered in light of the thinking at the time on such subjects, Burwell's plan becomes clearer.

The house at Carter's Grove was then placed to take advantage of the greatest possible vista down the river--a vista that ended then on the horizon of water but which is now blocked by the trees at the riverside and by the mothball fleet. The vista from the landside of the building was probably nearly as extensive. The grounds of an eighteenth century estate were to be the natural extension of the mansion. As contemporary writers on landscape architecture make clear, nature was expected to "yield Satisfaction to the Eye of the Beholder and Entertain the Sight every Moment." A "Noble View such as the Sea or Distant blue Hills" (not tobacco fields) would give satisfaction and pleasure.

6. What evidence is there that Carter's Grove was created to be a showplace?

There are four main pieces of evidence--all circumstantial--that support the conclusion that Carter's Grove was designed to be a show-place:

- (1) Burwell docked the entail on Carter's Grove in order to reduce the labor force and to eliminate all that goes with maintaining a large labor force at the site. A large labor force was not needed if tobacco were not cultivated.
- (2) Burwell continued to grow tobacco at his other nearby quarters, and tobacco was his single most valuable crop. All of the quarters sold surplus commodities in Williamsburg.
- (3) Burwell spent over \$1200 to construct an exceptionally fine residence and he was as careful about the landscape as he was about the building.
- (4) The accounts of Nathaniel Burwell show that Carter's Grove produced enough to cover the expenses of maintaining it, but it yielded little profit. The overseer at Carter's Grove, John Ross, was paid a salary rather than shares, because there was very little produced to share.

* * * * *

Errata: In the June 1983 issue of Questions and Answers there were a couple of corrections to be made which are as follows:

The correct answer to Question 6, What were chartered towns, and how were they different from other towns?, should read: During the colonial period, only two Virginia towns received charters that were granted by the governor in the name of the King. Williamsburg received its charter in 1722, while Norfolk was so honored in 1736. The benefits of having a charter were several.

First, the freeholders of each of the two towns had the right to elect their own member to the House of Burgesses. Second, these towns had limited self government through the institutions of the Common Council and the Mayor's Court of Aldermen. The first group--the Common Council--were chosen by the sitting councilmen, aldermen, and mayor from among the freeholders of the town. Vacancies among the aldermen were filled by the same process, except that the choice had to be made from among the sitting councilmen. The mayor was also chosen by this process, except that his election was an annual event and he had to be chosen from among the aldermen. The Mayor's Court or Hustings Court, or Borough Court (all names were used at various times) had jurisdiction over "all cause personal and mixed" not exceeding f20 current money or 4,000 pounds of tobacco which arose within its jurisdiction. Third, the towns could hold twice weekly markets as well as semi-annual fairs and levy tolls and fees for the use of the market. The towns could not, however, raise money by taxation separately from the county levy, without the express permission of a special legislative act.

The third paragraph of Question 7, How did people acquire land in towns?, should read:

In the case of Williamsburg, lots were also sold by the Trustees, and there was a time-limit, which was 2 years, for building and confirmation of title. The difference between Williamsburg and the "Town Act" towns was that Williamsburg had been funded by the legislature, and the proceeds from its lots was returned to the General Assembly.

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For your Information:

Sign language course being offered by William and Mary's Special Programs office.

September 28, 1983 - 8 weeks. Wednesday Evening (7:30 - 9:30)

Cost - \$55.00

Location: VARC Campus - 12070 Jefferson Ave., Newport News, Va.

Telephone: 877-9231, Ext. 60

Students may apply for Educational Reimbursement by completing form #965. These forms may be obtained from your immediate supervisor.

Questions & Answers

Vol 4, No. 7

October 1983

The answers to these questions about the College of William and Mary, Hogarth prints and eighteenth century clothing have been provided by the Research Department and the Department of Collections. Perhaps these answers will stimulate more questions and some independent research. If you should have any questions pertaining to eighteenth century Williamsburg, please send them to Jane Strauss.

1. What was the status of the College of William and Mary during the Revolutionary War?

During the Revolution the College of William and Mary had few students. In the words of the college president James Madison, the place was a "desart" where formerly it had "flourished." College-age boys left school to join the forces while some of the faculty who remained loyal to the crown returned to England. The college officially closed in June 1781 and did not resume classes until October 1782.

2. Was the College of William and Mary under the jurisdiction of the Episcopal church following the disestablishment of the church in Virginia?

The College of William and Mary became a private school after the disestablishment of the Anglican church in Virginia. There were still strong ties between the college and the Episcopal church primarily because of the members of the Episcopal clergy on the faculty. In 1780 James Madison, president of the college and the Episcopal bishop of Virginia, wrote "it is now thought that Establishments in favor of any particular Sect are incompatible with the Freedom of a Republic." Thomas Jefferson reorganized the college at about the same time that he was pursuing the principle of religious freedom for the State of Virginia. William and Mary became a private school in 1784. From 1776 until the disestablishment of the church in 1784, the college had no official affiliation with either church or state, but was looked after by the general assembly. The college remained a private institution until 1906 when it became a state-supported school for training teachers during Lyon G. Tyler's presidency.

3. What happened to the College of William and Mary during the Civil War?

The Civil War was a devastating period for the college. The college was closed from May 1861 until the fall of 1865 as the academic buildings were in ruins, the enrollment scant, and the faculty dispersed.

4. Why are so many eighteenth prints, such as those by Hogarth, so very rich in details depicting action and attitudes?

Renaissance and post-renaissance art depends a good deal on realism or verisimiltude. Part of the attraction or catchiness or convincing quality of Hogarth's art is its realism, its recognizability, its ability to persuade

SUBJECT: WILLIAM AND MARY COLLEGE, HOGARTH PRINTS AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURY CLOTHING

the viewer that this is a situation which is real and which could happen to him/her.

"There, but for the grace of God, go I . . ." on the other hand
"There, with the grace of God, and my humility, go I . . .", etc.

its timeliness, its cogency, depends on its being convincing - which meant it must be real and recognizable and not too abstract.

5. How many dresses would a woman like Mrs. Burwell of Carter's Grove have had?

Not enough eighteenth century inventories enumerate clothing to give a statistically-valid answer to the question of how many gowns were owned by Virginia women. We can only quote from several inventories which do list clothing, keeping in mind that these women may or may not have been typical, and that some clothing may have been given away during their lifetimes, before the inventory was taken. The 1745 inventory of Elizabeth Phillips (York County Records, Vol. 20:1, p.12) lists 5 gowns, along with one pair of stays, 3 shifts, a hoop and other items such as petticoats, a cloak, an apron, etc. The total value of her estate is listed at £ 18.29.9. Agnes Hilliard's 1746 inventory lists 4 gowns (York County Records, Vol. 20:1, p.61; total value £ 11.0.0 ½.) The 1778 inventory of Mary Colley includes 10 gowns, a wrapper, 1 pair of stays, and 9 linen shifts, along with other items of clothing (York County Records, Vol. 22:2, p.299; total value £ 381.12.0).

Reminder of Colonial Fair Days - October 22 and 23.

Public Times and Fairs and Military Encampment--Handmade goods sold from booths and wagons, peddlars hawking their wares, entertainments, diversions and contests for visitors in this re-creation of a colonial fair. There will be a military encampment of costumed Revolutionary War Soldiers.

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Questions & Answers

Vol. 4, No. 8

December 1983

Visitor's questions and comments help us to see ourselves and this museum more clearly. For your amusement and edification this issue of Questions and Answers is a collection of visitor's conversations about the Historic Area.

A Williamsburg Diary, being a collection of curious conversations overheard by various museum professionals who call said town their home.

A visitor approached an attendant at the Information Center. Curiously, the visitor asked, "Where can I see some of that delicious mustard?" Confused, the attendant called upon her supervisor for help. Although the attendant had worked at Colonial Williamsburg for many years, she had never heard of such a delicacy being offered. The supervisor asked, "Now, how can I help?" "Delicious mustard," repeated the visitor, "Where can I find some of it" . . . a long pause followed. Suddenly, the supervisor, who must have had an appetite for word games, replied, "Oh, the militia muster! That's on Market Square at 5:00." The problem was thus resolved.

I'm always interested to overhear visitors talking about these programs. One evening I sat with my wife in a restaurant, when across from us a man and a woman began to discuss the "guides" here. The woman obviously knew one of our interpreters very well (the man was perhaps visiting for the weekend). "Linda is a guide," she said to him. "Is that right?" he responded, "she must be awfully smart . . . she must know quite a bit about history." Well, she sure does. But, they (the guides) get trained." "They do?" he remarked. "Yes, and they get paid for it too. They get paid to read." [sic] "They do?" he said, registering a bit more interest. "Yes, they get paid to read and are expected to know history all the way back to Robert E. Lee."

The transition from the twentieth century to the eighteenth century is not easy for modern man. The following remarks reflect how difficult it is to separate the plastic world from what is real. For example:

As we become more skillful in controlling our environment, especially during the summer and winter months, it should come as no surprise to hear a visitor often viewing the model of the Historic Area at the Information Center, ask if the Historic Area was also under glass.

Upon viewing the Fife and Drum Corps, one admiring visitor commented that the group and music were well synchronized, but that the loud speakers couldn't be found.

SUBJECT: VISITOR'S CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE HISTORIC AREA

Even the livestock is in question when the shepherd is asked, if the sheep are real.

Or when the hostess at Chownings Tavern invited a guest to sit in the garden, he inquired, "is it air conditioned?"

Historic characters and events are often confused at our museum as well as other historic sites. For instance, Jamestown has been described as the place where the Nina, the Pinta and the Santa Fe landed.

A visitor noted that the Capitol was the most important building, because it was there that Patrick Henry and George Washington signed the Declaration of Independence.

Interpreters enjoy exchanging stories about visitors' reaction to their tours. As her tour of the Capitol ended, one building interpreter was approached by an elderly gentleman who said, "you're a dead ringer for my sister. She's 81."

Some of the most charming remarks are made by the children who visit Colonial Williamsburg. These are a few examples.

One day as a group interpreter stood in front of the Capitol with a school group, she asked the children if the building looked familiar. One young observer responded by saying, "yes, it looks like the rest areas on the interstate."

The same interpreter walked the group down the Duke of Gloucester Street. As they passed the King's Arms Tavern, one of the little girls said "I thought it was the Queen's Legs Tavern."

On another occasion a school group, after spending a day in the Historic Area, assembled behind the Powell-Waller house to summarize the days activities. The interpreter asked the group to tell her what they had learned during their visit. One youngster responded by saying. "I learned not to push."

At the Palace a little girl was asked by the butler to check the list in the cider vault. He offered her 6 pence to perform this task. The little girl responded by saying she had \$4.00 which was a better deal than he had to offer.

Another little girl volunteered to present the petition to the Governor at the Palace. When the moment arrived she stepped up to the footman and said, "I have a proposition for you."

Conversation Elsewhere:

Greenfield Village, Michigan - In part, an impressive collection of the imported homes and workplaces of famous Americans: the Wright' brothers shop, Thomas Edison's Menlo Park laboratory, Ford's homestead. Mother says to her family, "Imagine, so many famous Americans coming from the same town!"

M E R R Y C H R I S T M A S