TEACHING HISTORY AT COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

Becoming Americans
Our Struggle to Be Both Free and Equal

A Plan of Thematic Interpretation

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
Williamsburg, Virginia

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Interpretation at

Colonial Williamsburg explores the history

behind critical challenges that currently divide

American society and the historic forces

that simultaneously unite it.

The Williamsburg story

—which we call "Becoming Americans"—

tells how diverse peoples, holding different and

sometimes conflicting personal ambitions, evolved into a society

that valued both liberty and equality. Americans cherish

these values as their birthright, even when their

promise remains unfulfilled.

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PREFACE

This special training edition of Colonial Williamsburg's newest educational plan is the fourth draft to circulate to staff members and outside readers since the first was issued in January 1994. Each subsequent draft has incorporated comments and suggestions from interpreters, teachers, historians, curators, officers and trustees—and now copy editors as well.

While the process of consultation and revision, stretching out over many months, may at times have seemed laborious and protracted, each draft has improved on the last. The storylines have grown stronger. The Becoming Americans theme has become more ingeniously woven into the historical narrative. Little by little, the entire plan has assumed the shape of interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg. It begins to look like a new suit of clothes after the third or fourth fitting.

By now it should. Rewriting *Teaching History at Colonial Williamsburg* has been a thoroughly collaborative undertaking from the start. Thirty work groups discussed the first draft and submitted comments to the authors. Interpreters and staff historians took part in a pilot program two summers ago to test experimental storylines at several exhibition buildings and trade shops in the Historic Area. The following spring more than sixty self-nominated interpreters, historians, and curators re-examined and completely rewrote the historical storylines that now are presented in this latest version of the plan. Never in Colonial Williamsburg's seventy-year history have so many educators throughout the foundation pooled their talents to create a comprehensive interpretive plan.

That work is now nearing completion. A version of this draft has been distributed to every member of the education divisions and to others as well. Work groups have been encouraged to study the storylines, discuss them with members of the teams that wrote them, and decide where in the Historic Area each storyline can be presented most effectively. Interpreters' latest thoughts have been used to revise the plan once more as *Teaching History at Colonial Williamsburg* finally goes to press.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I
THE BECOMING AMERICANS THEME

For many Americans Colonial Williamsburg needs no introduction. Millions have heard the oft-repeated story of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s restoration of Virginia's eighteenth-century capital. Millions more have strolled down its picturebook streets and admired its restored and reconstructed buildings standing behind neat picket fences. Visitors return again and again to sample its great collection of English and American decorative arts. They marvel at the handiwork of ingenious artisans who practice mysteries long thought forgotten. They discover their own roots in stories about ordinary people and everyday life skillfully told by knowledgeable interpreters. They take inspiration from the fact that George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, George Mason, and Patrick Henry debated fundamental concepts of American democracy in this provincial capital on the edge of England's empire. So indelibly is "America's Williamsburg" inked into the mythology of our national heritage that those of us whom the foundation employs as educators are often hard pressed to help visitors see beyond Williamsburg's picture postcard reputation and to appreciate the substantive historical issues that can make their encounter with the past deep and enduring.

Appearances are deceiving. Colonial Williamsburg is more than meets the eye Repeat visitors know to expect the unexpected. While many admired landmarks on this restored and reconstructed townscape endure from one generation to another, our historical interpretations are continuously revised and reinvented. No end of programs explore new ways to help visitors learn to think for themselves about meanings, ideas, and relationships, past and present. Our commitment to innovation, experimentation, and self-improvement runs deep. Periodically, the foundation's educators reexamine the museum's basic curriculum to correct past mistakes and prepare the institution to teach history better. The following revised, expanded, and completely rewritten edition of the Colonial Williamsburg educational plan is our latest attempt to surprise people's expectations, no matter how well they know us or how often they return.

Lesson Planning

To teach history effectively, program planners at Colonial Williamsburg know that we must successfully coordinate four elements in the learning process. They start with the visitors' personal interests and their concerns about contemporary life. Those shape—or sometimes misshape—their understanding of the past. Next are the historical themes and topics that we museum historians and interpreters carefully select to tell the Williamsburg story in ways that give visitors a perspective on themselves and on American society. A third element is the special teaching techniques that interpreters use to help visitors visualize and imagine a world that vanished two hundred years ago. Finally, there is the celebrated collection of original buildings and antique furnishings that people come to see—the restored and

repopulated eighteenth-century town that makes the history lessons seem real to the history learners. All four must work together before interpretation can speak loudly and clearly to the visiting public.

Every few years, inquiring citizens begin asking new questions about themselves, their society, and the world around them. A museum must adjust its plan of education accordingly. That time has come again.

The 1985 edition of *Teaching History* at Colonial Williamsburg challenged us to broaden our interpretation of the past to make room for many eighteenth-century inhabitants of this town whose lives and contributions had been insufficiently acknowledged in earlier tellings. That important work is well started, but remains far from finished. We stand committed to teaching a history of early Virginia that describes and celebrates the diverse backgrounds of Indians, slaves, and settlers. Yet, even these ideas about the country's multicultural background have continued to develop in step with the contemporary world that our visitors bring to their museum experience. Remarkable events, here and abroad, have started people thinking anew about the common life that citizens share with one another.

Americans who read books about history, watch it on television, and visit history museums are mindful as never before of their diverse origins, resilient ethnic and cultural traditions, and long history of unequal and contentious relations. At the same time, growing numbers of men and women are coming to realize that they also believe—or want to believe—that "We the People" represents a wholeness that is greater than the sum of the nation's many parts. In the search for a more coherent national narrative, including the part that Colonial Williamsburg can tell, we cannot minimize minority rights, smooth over the reality of social conflict in American history, or de-emphasize the country's extraordinary patchwork of unassimilated ethnic cultures and customs. Thanks to social historians, we know too much about ourselves to accept the oversimplified fiction implied by the motto *E pluribus unum*. Thanks, too, to recent work by political historians, we know that the principles of democratic republicanism, on which our system of government was founded, embody unreconciled and irreconcilable contradictions and tensions between the rights guaranteed to self-interested individuals and the common good promised to all who join together in a state of society.

Informed citizens openly acknowledge the differences that divide us and the inconsistencies in our governing philosophy. Consequently, now more than ever, history learners anxiously seek historical precedents to bolster their hope that greater social diversity need not end in the disintegration of American institutions. They look to the past for guidance at a time when ethnic and racial hatreds are tearing apart settled societies around the globe and poisoning living communities closer to home.

Visitors bring these feelings of uncertainty to their learning experience at Colonial Williamsburg. Their recognition and pride in the diversity of American society is now complicated by a growing concern that American culture is falling to pieces. Their anxiety is a state of mind to which museum historians and interpreters can respond. As teachers of popular history, we are important agents of change. We show thoughtful men and women how Americans have always been engaged in reinventing the nation and redefining the qualifications for citizenship.

The War for Independence from Great Britain and the adoption of a federal Constitution and Bill of Rights did not lay the great nation-making issues to rest once and for all. Far from it. The bonds they loosed and the contradictions they papered over led rapidly to a state of affairs that sounds astonishingly current to today's museum visitors. From the moment of its birth, the United States appeared ready to disintegrate into a thousand selfish interests. "The tender connection among men" that the Revolution was supposed to foster, one observer said, was "reduced to nothing by the infinite diversities of family, tribe, and nation." A foreign traveler to the newly independent country discovered, to his surprise and dismay, a "world . . . unfortunately composed . . . of discordant atoms, jumbled together by chance, and tossed by inconstancy in an immense vacuum." No less a founding father than John Adams, writing years later to another, Thomas Jefferson, bewailed the course of events that the two of them had set in motion: "Where is now, the progress of the human Mind? . . . When? Where? and How? is the present Chaos to be arranged into Order?" The forces of individualism and radical egalitarianism unleashed by the Revolution and the equally powerful forces of order and containment have been vying at the heart of America for 200 years. Long before that, they were gathering strength and direction throughout the entire period we interpret at Colonial Williamsburg.

History is never a handbook of ready-made answers to the critical choices that divide modern American society, however close the parallels may sometimes appear. Nevertheless, history learners can and should take encouragement from the knowledge that our traditions and values have deep roots, even the divisive ones. They need to know that our institutions have stood the test of time. Little by little, and often slowly and reluctantly,

those who control society's institutions have yielded to irresistible pressures to share the country's opportunities more widely and to include an ever broader segment of the population in the civic enterprise. The narrative of this continuing struggle to expand or to limit the universal citizenship promised by the Declaration of Independence is the dynamic plot running through the story that we have taken for our central theme and call "Becoming Americans."

That phrase appeared first in a Curriculum Committee report written in 1977. It reappeared eight years later in the earliest published edition of *Teaching History at Colonial Williamsburg*. Initially it was explained as a process of cultural transformation, as a story of two immigrant peoples—one African, the other European—who met in a land unfamiliar to both. Over the course of several generations, they developed distinctively different, yet distinctively American, white and black cultures.

We still believe that Becoming Americans is a story worth telling at Colonial Williamsburg. But how should it be brought up to date with recent scholarship? What have we learned from the experience of interpreters who have presented the theme for over a decade? Most of all, how should a new curriculum respond to the concerns and questions that visitors will bring to their museum learning experience to and beyond the end of the twentieth century?

The cast of African and European historical characters who feature in a Becoming Americans story set in eighteenth-century Virginia corresponded fifteen years ago to the two audiences we were most eager to engage in a dialogue about race relations—African Americans and whites. Since then, the national discourse on race and ethnicity has expanded

and grown more complex with the arrival of more than ten million immigrants since 1980, most of them from Asia and Central and South America. Native Americans' contributions to American history and identity deserve reappraisal and appreciation. Gender issues have added women's voices to the debate as well.

The task of revising the curriculum becomes harder still if we consider the astonishing and unexpected recent events around the world that have called renewed attention to America's immigrant experience and its experiment in secular democratic capitalism. These are some of the new issues and audiences to which our educational programs must respond by redefining what the Becoming Americans theme will mean to us and our visitors in the years ahead.

American History in Miniature

Long ago Colonial Williamsburg took upon itself a responsibility to teach the history of colonial Virginia as if it deserved to be the opening chapter to American history generally. Today we recognize that such presumption fails to do justice to the ancestry of Native American cultures as well as the earlier settlements by England's colonial rivals, Spain and France. Leaving such exaggerated claims aside, our new Becoming Americans curriculum aspires to an educational goal hardly less ambitious than its predecessor. Our outdoor classroom may only be the size of a small southern town, and the period of time we interpret covers less than a hundred years when Williamsburg was the seat of provincial government. Yet, these limitations need not restrict the intellectual dimensions of the ideas and issues that we use this restored capital city to present. The first edition of *Teaching History* encouraged interpreters to help visitors think about race and culture in the broadest terms imaginable. This

second edition expands the Becoming Americans theme in still other directions because questions of race and culture have since become complicated by problems of citizenship and nationhood.

How do we tell a Williamsburg-size story so it looks and sounds like a history of nation building? To put the question another way, how do we focus interpretation on the political and economic struggle to expand popular participation in civic culture without letting the separate stories of ordinary people—the social histories that many interpreters have learned to present so well—drift off to the edges of historical consciousness? Recent scholarship in American history is working on a solution to the second problem: how to make connections between people's private lives and their public culture. Interpreters' mastery of the art of social history storytelling suggests an answer to the first: how to tell a big story on the streets of a small town.

American historians—a little ahead of their audiences—have come to appreciate that the distinctive values and beliefs that give this nation its identity have been formed in a complex, never ending, give-and-take process of conflict and accommodation. At stake always have been the aspirations of ordinary people. The principles that dress up those aspirations came later. The matters most fundamentally at issue have been the most commonplace things in people's lives—their work, their wealth, their reputations, their family and friends, their health and creature comforts, the salvation of their souls, and all the other pressing realities of daily living. Problems arose when one person's or one group's hopes and fears conflicted with those of others. Shared values and accepted norms were only arrived at by confrontation, negotiation, and accommodation (or sometimes were settled swiftly by coercion) between individuals and

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groups who began with different and conflicting interests.

This ceaseless tug-of-war among self-interested parties is the central dynamic in our democracy. It has always been the aggressive force that challenged the status quo and undermined the prevailing balance of power. Because historians try to explain why things changed in the past to get us ready to understand and deal with changes still to come, history teachers and history learners pay close attention to conflicts and the manners of their resolution. Becoming Americans is a dynamic story in that narrative tradition. Its emphasis on conflict over harmony is not meant to imply that all was chaos and disorder in eighteenth-century America. The clash of interests deserves our special attention because those were the encounters that most profoundly reshaped American identities and American values.

Private lives, historians are rediscovering, are always lived in and through institutions larger than the family. Some are formal organizations—churches and law courts, for example. Many other institutions are merely patterns of expected actions enforced by social sanctions—folk customs, rules of etiquette, and "gentlemen's agreements." Public and private are not two autonomous spheres, as we often let ourselves believe. Social history and civic history are inextricably united. The Becoming Americans theme recognizes that in real life there are workaday connections between people's personal ambitions, the philosophies and rhetoric that they adopt to idealize and validate them, and the formal and informal institutions that they use to arbitrate contending values and enforce the will of those in authority. Interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg thus joins into one unified narrative the separate strands of social history, the history of ideas, and a dynamic account of Virginia's early

institutions. This last includes a fresh retelling of the political events that ended in the War of Independence from Great Britain and began the American Revolution, which transformed the new republic in so many radical and unexpected ways.

Our tours and interpretations at Colonial Williamsburg must find ways to present this larger story of the nation's past in a miniature version appropriate to the restored streetscapes and furnished buildings of the eighteenth-century town that serves as our classroom. The miniaturists are the museum's interpreters. They are accomplished in the art of teaching history by telling personal stories about men and women who lived and worked in Williamsburg. To help them select characters and storylines that illustrate the sweep of historical forces that we want visitors to understand, this new edition of the master plan provides a framework of ideas—an argument in outline—that explains point by point what the Becoming Americans theme means. It is broadly conceived, and deliberately so, because it must shape everything we say about the colonial capital of Virginia into the one comprehensible Williamsburg story that we hope every visitor will learn. It tells how diverse peoples, holding different and sometimes conflicting personal ambitions, evolved into a society that valued both liberty and equality. Subsequent generations of Americans have come to cherish these values as their birthright, even when their promise has remained unfulfilled. Thus, broadly speaking, we can say that interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg explores the history behind critical challenges that presently divide American society and the historic forces that simultaneously unite it.

A Framework for Explaining Change

The central theme running through all our educational programs at Colonial

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Williamsburg, the story we call Becoming Americans and subtitle "Our Struggle to be Both Free and Equal," takes a long view of the colonial period. Its main ideas can be set out one by one. They are given headings that readers will find useful when comparing the storylines presented later.

Diverse Peoples

- *Many different peoples met in North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—Europeans from numerous nations and regions, Africans from distant and often dissimilar societies, and Native Americans from many tribal backgrounds.*

Clashing Interests

- *The customs, values, and beliefs that they brought to their encounters with each other and with the environment bore some superficial similarities, but more often were marked by profound differences.*

- *The experience of immigration and resettlement accentuated differences between self-interested individuals and dissimilar ethnic and cultural groups.*

Shared Values

- *Whether their encounters were peaceful or confrontational, they gradually produced informal accommodations to a new set of beliefs and values that were already discernible by the middle of the eighteenth century.*

- *Among these shared assumptions, some have become fundamental rights that all Americans expect, however diverse their backgrounds and however differently they understand and apply the following ideals:*

  — *This country is a place where a person is free to improve his or her circumstances.*

  — *Every citizen is entitled to pursue a private vision of personal happiness.*

  — *Life and individual liberty are essential to that pursuit.*

  — *These expectations are tempered by one more—equality, which Americans understand to be every person's equal worth with rights to equal justice, equal opportunities, and equal access to the civic enterprise.*

  — *Everyone has a right and a duty to participate in the governing of society.*

- *These values gave meaning to people's personal lives first and foremost—to their family and social relationships, to their attitudes about gender, class, and race, to their work, to their ambitions for property and wealth, to their ideas and philosophies, and to their religious convictions.*

Formative Institutions

- *These personal values also formed the basic assumptions that created and shaped the economic, political, and cultural institutions that brought order and control to public interactions between different peoples.*

- *Because these values had many practical applications in mediating people's everyday social relations, they became defining qualities in an emerging American identity. Some later served to justify the war for national independence.*

Partial Freedoms

- *The Revolutionary debate gave voice to these principles, but events left their great promise unfulfilled for many. Continuing inequalities of wealth, patriarchal presumptions, and antidemocratic institutions obscured the radical social implications of the revolutionary philosophy and restricted its immediate blessings to a select and privileged few.*

- *Ideas and conditions that resisted the egalitarian impulse were also shaped by the cultural encounters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Racism, violence, environmental degradation, the exploitation of labor, and the depreciation of women formed a darker side to the American experience.*

Revolutionary Promise

- *Although these obstacles to the pursuit of happiness persist, the most positive and progressive American ideals have always exerted a powerful hold on the popular imagination. Despite their inherent contradictions and the conflicts they encourage between divergent visions of the good life, they have never ceased to raise expectations and inspire hope that more Americans may secure a meaningful voice in shaping their own lives.*

To prepare this interpretive framework for presentation at Colonial Williamsburg, the outline needs filling in with the people, places, and events of Virginia history. Interpreters and staff historians have already begun to make those additions by populating the storylines with local historical figures and grounding them in the places of exhibition that we show to visitors. Tailoring the story to Williamsburg will also give special prominence to those seminal events when the affairs of the colony and the town truly

became the affairs of a nation in the making—Patrick Henry's 1765 "Caesar-Brutus" speech, the Resolution for Independence, which led directly to the July 4th Declaration in Philadelphia, and the introduction of Thomas Jefferson's statute for Religious Freedom. These are episodes in the birth of the country that happened here and nowhere else. The next chapter offers practical advice to move the planning process forward in this direction.

The Framework Applied to Virginia History

Before turning to the history of Williamsburg exclusively, we offer readers who know their Virginia history the following proof that the narrative structure proposed here can give interpreters and teachers all the scope, drama, and color they need to describe the settlement of the Chesapeake region and the growth and development of England's largest and wealthiest mainland American colony. The headings correspond to those outlined on the preceding pages.

Diverse Peoples

The meeting of various people in the new world setting of Virginia was a dynamic process. It involved a changing cast of characters across time and space. The earliest English immigrants were a mixed bunch, despite their common national background. A few belonged to the ruling ranks of English rural and commercial society. The majority were farmers—yeomen or husbandmen—or laborers.

These colonists met native peoples in Virginia. Chesapeake Algonquians recognized many village cultures, all of which were organized around an understanding of social order, justice, and authority that varied profoundly from English notions. The contest between them and the invading Europeans grew increasingly unequal as the seventeenth century wore on. English immigrants enjoyed decisive advantages, including their superior numbers, greater firepower, immunity to the diseases they spread among the native peoples, and an unshakable belief in their own cultural superiority. As the seventeenth century wore on, Englishmen managed to confine their encounters with Indian peoples to reservations or to the frontiers of European settlement.

As the number of Indians declined, their presence on the landscape was taken by a growing number of enslaved Africans. Virginians forcibly imported Africans by the tens of thousands from many parts of West Africa. Significant numbers came from the West Indies as well. The trade of unfree African labor continued well into the eighteenth century.

Large numbers of working class people from English towns and cities migrated to Virginia in the eighteenth century. By mid-century other Europeans, principally Scots, Ulster Scots, and a variety of German-speaking peoples, began filling up the backcountry of Virginia. Unlike earlier colonists, these

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newcomers encountered a native-born (or Creole) population of whites and blacks that was already several generations old.

Clashing Interests

The variety of cultural groups in Virginia challenged old world beliefs and practices. Furthermore, the unfamiliar conditions they faced in their new home caused many newcomers to question their traditional beliefs, including, ultimately, the rules and assumptions that ordered society. The Virginia climate and terrain, for example, hastened the acceptance of slash and burn agriculture as English farmers learned how to become successful tobacco planters. This market-driven, capitalistic agriculture altered older attitudes about property ownership, economic advantage, social control, education, salvation, and even family.

Virginia society had become thoroughly biracial and to a lesser degree multi-ethnic by the Revolution. Some elements of old world institutions and values were still recognizable, but the nature of Virginia society had become profoundly different by the close of the colonial period. The crisis of the Revolution revealed the extent of those differences. Perceptive Virginians discovered that they were no longer Englishmen, Africans, Germans, and Scotsmen living abroad. They had become fully developed, indigenous, American-Virginian peoples.

Shared Values

The forging of this new social and political reality was not simple or easy. Different peoples held different convictions concerning the essential nature of a "right and proper" society. Given the disposition of Anglo Virginians to dominate other cultures and races, conflicts were easily provoked. Europeans often came to blows with Native Americans over the profoundly different meaning both gave to the idea of private property. Frequent recourse to violent confrontation linked the destiny of these two people, however one-sided.

Other values emerged from the less violent collisions between other immigrant groups. The English were determined to set society's standards and make its governing rules. Other ethnic Europeans went to considerable pains to preserve their separate cultural identities. African Americans struggled desperately to create their own hybrid culture in the face of slavery. In these very different ways all three groups valued self determination. That commitment ultimately found expression in the notion of individual freedom of choice.

Free whites shared other expectations for the good life in Virginia. Whether they had been pushed out of the Rhineland by poverty and persecution or enticed to pull up stakes in lowland Virginia by the lure of cheap land in the

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backcountry, free settlers hoped to capitalize on the colony's seemingly inexhaustible resources. The abundance of land encouraged the widespread belief that enterprise and hard work would bring economic sufficiency and a higher standard of living for one's self or one's children. The colony's resources were also tempting targets to monopolize and exploit. The selfish drive to control them added an aggressive energy to the pursuit of economic well-being.

The balance struck between individuals and groups with different interests contributed to people's sense of place and their feeling of belonging, albeit unequally. Virginia was still a face-to-face society in the eighteenth century. People knew each other by reputation and lineage, if not personally. These familiar and meaningful associations were strengthened by a system of patronage. The resulting network of binding ties created a powerful local identification and a loyalty to place, be that place a quarter, plantation, neighborhood, or town. This localism—a pride in the idea of place, if not the place itself—mitigated somewhat the ferocious individualism that often characterized the pursuit of personal well-being.

Formative Institutions

Contested values often gained gradual acceptance because the institutions where conflicting interests were resolved muted inherent contradictions. A kind of improvised pragmatism permitted this evolving society to function passably well. For example, rural neighborhoods became important informal institutional settings where new rules for local leadership took shape. Because the Virginia frontier was settled primarily by residents from older areas expanding into newer ones, most rural neighborhoods experienced high residential turnover. This rapid movement of the population did not diminish the role of neighborhoods in freeholders' lives, because political authority remained the jurisdiction of local officials, regardless of who they were. Traditional English concepts of inherited local leadership provided no continuity to Virginia's fluid communities. Instead, necessity required that economically successful planters, whatever their background, be granted authority over their neighbors.

Public institutions of church and state arbitrated conflicts in the more settled parts of the colony, often with unanticipated consequences. Virginians in the seventeenth century quickly established English-style county courts, for instance. Clearly, it was their hope that these age-old local institutions would afford their traditional protections to the interests of elite property owners. Unexpectedly, Virginia courts became equally accessible to men of lesser status who could afford to buy inexpensive land that would have been beyond their reach in England. It followed that local courts regulated an extraordinarily wide range of economic interests in Virginia. Courts thus helped channel and validate the disciplined pursuit of individual self-interest.

The church was another institution that played an important mediating role. Anglican clergymen comforted many of their white parishioners by preaching to slaves about the virtue of obedience. The Book of Common Prayer enjoined bondsmen to accept their masters' authority. On the other hand, new light Presbyterian and Baptist churches emphasized personal piety and public morality. They helped dissenters escape their subordinate role in the gentry-dominated culture.

The Virginia General Assembly developed into a highly valued institution where private interests and their public consequences were debated and legislated. After 1765, when many free Virginians began to perceive that British actions threatened the colonial legislature's existence, they deliberately cast the elected assembly in the role of protector and spokesman for the "people's" interests. This new role for the House of Burgesses as a broadly representative body elevated the idea of self government into one of the principles that defined what it meant to be an American.

Partial Freedoms

Stubborn tradition and persistent inequalities of wealth and privilege left the promise of the Revolution unrealized for many. Potentially, the concepts of liberty and equality applied to all. In practice, only property-holding white males enjoyed full citizenship. Privilege was deeply rooted. Local political systems were a major obstacle to more democratic participation in the civic enterprise. Local politics remained highly arbitrary. County commissioners were appointed, not elected. They exercised wide discretionary powers, from setting tax rates to naming minor public officials. Furthermore, the county commissioners, Anglican vestries, and urban hustings courts were self-perpetuating. These tenacious local oligarchies, coupled with the infrequent election of burgesses, excluded poor and middling Virginians from most opportunities to participate in governing their communities. Traditional notions of social hierarchy and deference, although increasingly coming under assault, remained entrenched. They blinded Virginians to the true meaning of equality. Racial prejudice reinforced and perpetuated these patriarchal habits of mind as long as planters and their poorer neighbors deemed them necessary to control the enslaved labor force.

Ironically, other obstacles to full achievement of liberty and equality were contained in the ideology of the Revolution itself. The racism buried in the revolutionary rhetoric of the Virginia constitution was one. The authors' language camouflaged the social and economic differences between rich and poor whites by giving them all a common racial heritage. The infusion of racial prejudice into the tenets of democratic republicanism became a hallmark of political philosophy in Virginia. It condemned African Americans to the status of perpetual outcasts.

The social realities experienced by all the mainland colonies were sufficiently similar so that most colonists could make a common cause of the issues they understood to be at stake in the struggle with Great Britain. A sense of destiny directed Virginians' attention to events beyond their borders. The Virginia Gazettes frequently reported British strikes against other colonies, and Virginia leaders were in regular correspondence with compatriots in Philadelphia, Boston, and other trouble spots. News of Great Britain's intimidation of the New York General Assembly and its punitive response to the Boston "tea party" spurred informed Virginians into action. This unity of purpose and the knowledge that people in Massachusetts, New York, and other colonies would stand shoulder to shoulder with them, emboldened rebels in Virginia when separation from Britain became their only choice. The colonies' ultimate victory validated the revolutionary ideals and thereby strengthened the definition of what it meant to be an American.

Revolutionary Promise

The most positive and progressive American ideals have always exerted a powerful hold on the imaginations of those to whom they were denied. The unenfranchised were very numerous at the end of the colonial period. Virginia's conservative interpretation of the revolutionary philosophy proved unfriendly to those seeking to extend the limits of eighteenth-century citizenship.

The ruling classes could not completely shut down the reform impulse. Some Virginians were already growing uncomfortable with slavery. More and more of them began to challenge it, however obliquely. For a brief period of time in the 1780s and 1790s they were able to ease restrictions on manumissions. The reformers' zeal eventually met a stronger force. White Virginians feared the growing numbers of free blacks. Their anxieties ran too deep for abolitionists to overcome. Faced with whites' determined opposition to their freedom, many African Americans took matters into their own hands and ran away to the free states in the North.

Extending the franchise to poorer whites involved another hard fought struggle, this one successful. Demands to give the vote to non-freeholders erupted almost from the moment the Constitution of 1776 was adopted. Notwithstanding, the powerful Jeffersonian idea that only independent yeoman farmers could resist the corrupting influence of special interests remained the keystone of agrarian republicanism in Virginia for decades. Its logic defeated all early efforts at electoral reform. Finally, in 1829 the vote was extended to male leaseholders and householders. Universal manhood suffrage was not accepted in the state until 1850. Women finally entered the voting booth in 1920 when a majority of other states ratified the Nineteenth Amendment.

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Here then are familiar facts woven into a narrative that brings the Becoming Americans story home to eighteenth-century Virginia.

Conclusion

The choice of a comprehensive organizing theme has implications for everything we do. It helps educational planners write coherent storylines, set priorities, and select sites and programs that make efficient use of our limited resources. It gives fundraisers a packaged program to present to donors. A theme helps individual interpreters choose what to say and show and what to leave out. It reminds them that they have a double duty to visitors to *describe* life in the past and to *explain* how and why it came to be that way.

A common theme also gives direction to research. It sets the agenda of questions to be asked and steers historians toward the appropriate sources and methods to answer them. Choosing sites to excavate, collections to acquire and exhibit, and field and documentary studies to conduct becomes an exciting collaboration when researchers follow the same scholarly compass.

Best of all, visitors are the ultimate beneficiaries of thematic interpretations. Not only are they treated to the richly visual setting of the restored town, but its significance—its meaning—is also made plain. The past becomes intelligible, and thereby it is made usable in the world that visitors know best—their own.

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INTERPRETING THE THEME

A theme represents a deliberate choice among many possible historical interpretations. It also influences the selection of interpretive techniques and the physical organization of the visitor's learning experience. The dynamics of our story about the pursuit of individual happiness, the inevitable conflicts that arose, and the forging of American values in the resolution of those conflicts will require some innovations in the way we present Colonial Williamsburg to the public.

A Townspeople's Story

Interpretation that combines social, intellectual, and institutional history into a unified narrative proceeds from the conviction that people's beliefs and actions have and always have had consequences. A story about human agency is most effectively told about real men and women. Interpreters have the task of putting modern visitors into the lives and into the stories of the Williamsburg townspeople who made the history we teach. That means finding ways to translate underlying historical forces, long-term trends, abstract ideas, developing technologies, changing fashions and styles, and other historical generalities into the real-life hopes and fears of the men, women, and children who populate our portrayal of this eighteenth-century town. Experience has taught us that museum visitors learn history best when they are invited to enter into the day-to-day circumstances of real people from the past.

Our chosen theme further implies that townspeople and travelers to eighteenth-century Williamsburg led interconnected lives. To them the capital city was much more than a cluster of public and private buildings organized into a pattern of streets and alleys. The town's physical layout gave shape to a complicated network of social relationships that people formed and reformed in the course of their daily lives. Modern day visitors frequently fail to understand that the town was once a working community. Its present administrative subdivision into separately ticketed exhibition buildings and trade shops has contributed to the impression that the Historic Area is the world's largest collection of side-by-side historic house museums and not a re-creation of living neighborhoods. Interpretation that introduces visitors to people they can meet or imagine is the first step toward recreating the personal links that formed the real connective tissue in the colonial community we invite visitors to compare with their own.

That comparison will be easier to make if we act on another implication of the Becoming Americans theme, an idea suggested by the subtitle, "Our Struggle to be Both Free and Equal." Communities in the eighteenth century were no more likely to be harmonious than they are today. Lives that tightly intertwined led frequently to disagreements and conflicts that only resort to the law, peer pressure, or raw force could resolve. The thesis running through our central theme argues that the community's values and beliefs were formed in a collision

of interests—sometimes personal ambitions, sometimes cultural differences—from which there often arose a mutually acceptable or temporarily tolerable solution. By exploring these conflicts and their resolution, we can show visitors the generating force in the nation-making process. Not all differences erupted into open conflict. Many were simply suffered by women, children, slaves, non-Christians, and men without property—all of whom found themselves permanently disadvantaged in a society that was dominated by a ruling class of wealthy, powerful, and privileged men. Acknowledging the fundamental inequality that underlay the eighteenth-century social order becomes the visitor's starting point in understanding the inherent imbalance of power between the haves and have-nots that drove the events that give the Becoming Americans story its dramatic energy.

Visitors will discover the social history background to our story in those many intimate places where the town's inhabitants lived out their lives. That background only starts the story. Our new narrative also requires that we portray the townspeople of Williamsburg in the public realm where their lives connected with others outside the family and the workplace and where disputes among them often became matters of public concern. In the previous edition of this plan, every place of exhibition was assigned to one of four categories—government, economy, family, or cultural life. Those subdivisions disappear with this revision. The new plan of interpretation makes a distinction only between private and public, that is, between the domestic and work places where visitors will make the acquaintance of individual men and women whose personal circumstances begin each storyline and the larger civic arena where the life of the community took place.

This private/public designation need not be rigidly or categorically applied. Many buildings and outside spaces throughout the town served both purposes in the colonial period. For example, the jail and the Governor's Palace doubled as public buildings and private residences. So did taverns and sometimes stores. Many dwellings reserved public entertaining rooms for company and chambers for members of the family and the household. Even such a thoroughly public building as the county courthouse was a place where the personal behavior of plaintiffs and defendants was openly described, examined, and made a matter of public record. By not assigning exhibition buildings and trade shops to any one fixed category, we give ourselves the flexibility to organize our interpretations of the town however best suits the stories we want to tell. There will be times when these private and public sites should be grouped into neighborhoods. Other times we will want to string them together to accommodate special tours. Occasionally, an entire storyline can be presented in both its public and private aspects inside the four walls of a single building or within the compass of a single outside space.

This revised curriculum gives us freedoms and responsibilities we lacked before. On one hand, our storytellers are now encouraged to treat the town as a comprehensible whole and take their pick of the full cast of characters from the period we interpret. On the other, such license comes with the obligation to create carefully crafted storylines that help visitors understand the history lesson that we believe are most worth learning.

Writing Storylines

Museum planners are not fortune tellers. They have no extraordinary powers to predict with certainty the challenges an institution will face in the future. A planning document such as this one can give general direction to an educational curriculum, propose an organizing theme, relate that theme to the institution's declared mission, and establish guidelines for its use in creating new programs. Beyond that, planners have to place their trust in those who will carry out the plan and apply its basic principles to needs and opportunities that cannot be foreseen.

If visitors to Colonial Williamsburg have come to expect the unexpected, our long-range plans must leave our imaginations free to create future interpretations that draw on new scholarship, test innovative methods of instruction, and respond to visitors' changing interests. We achieve that versatility by recognizing that all educators at Colonial Williamsburg share responsibility for deciding how best to present our chosen theme.

The preparation of this interpretive plan lays the groundwork. It reaffirms our commitment to explore the forces that have simultaneously divided and united the nation. It gives that historical narrative a name—"Becoming Americans"—and defines it as the story of our unending endeavor to resolve the paradox between personal liberty and the pursuit of individual happiness and the equally potent ideals of social justice and opportunity for all. The plan places that theme in a context of early American history and the history of colonial Virginia. It even ordains that its presentation shall acquaint visitors with the personal stories of the many different men and women who lived in eighteenth-century Williamsburg and shall show how their private lives were played out in the formal and informal public institutions that shaped the community's civic and social culture.

These directives take the planning process this far, but not to the next step. to the selection of storylines. That choice belongs to us all. The six storylines described in the following chapter were chosen after much discussion throughout the foundation. They have been refined and rewritten by teams of interpreters, historians, and curators. We should expect to repeat this task again during the years that this plan remains in force. Periodically inventing new narratives to help visitors understand the evolution of American society will renew our creativity and give full play to our inventiveness.

The transformation of Virginia society can be told many different ways. Visitors have too little time to hear them all. It is therefore up to us to agree on a number of scenarios that present the Becoming Americans theme in terms that connect critical issues of the eighteenth century to some that remain unresolved today. The dramatic tension between individual rights and the common good, between liberty and equality, can animate many topics that are appropriately interpreted at Williamsburg. Some figure in our programs already, including the paradox of slavery, the subordination of women, the rise of the modern family, the separation of church and state, the democratization of taste, the development of American law, and, of course, the rebellion and civil war against the tyranny of British misrule. The list of topics could be doubled or tripled. There is no dearth of histories we *might* teach.

Our challenge as educators is to present a selection of storylines that offers visitors a variety of interesting, entertaining, and instructive approaches to learning our central history lesson. The six storylines described in Chapter 3 will be phased into the interpretation of the Historic Area and Carter's Grove over the next four years. As long as each is conceived as a fresh retelling of the larger Becoming Americans story, our educational program will be enriched and the central message reinforced.

To achieve consistency and to insure that every storyline explores the development of basic American values, future program planners are encouraged to write treatments that follow the framework of ideas presented on pages 6-7. The main points in that outline can be rephrased as a set of six questions intended to help future storyline creators develop a narrative structure that supports the central Becoming Americans theme. The questions are grounded in the Williamsburg story, but they require answers that raise the larger issues that lie at the heart of our revised curriculum.

1. *Who are the protagonists in this storyline, and what values, customs, and assumptions did they bring to their experience in Williamsburg and Virginia? [DIVERSE PEOPLES]*

2. *How did people's different backgrounds, ideas, and aspirations provoke conflicts, and how were their customary values and practices challenged by the unfamiliar conditions they encountered in the colonies? [CLASHING INTERESTS]*

3. *What accommodations were reached that most parties were prepared or obliged to live with, and how may some of these*

have evolved into new values. however loosely shared? [SHARED VALUES]

4. *How were these concessions institutionalized? [FORMATIVE INSTITUTIONS]*

5. *How did those institutions privilege some and disadvantage others? [PARTIAL FREEDOMS]*

6. *In what respects did persistent injustices. inequalities, and unbalanced power relationships contain seeds of future unrest? [REVOLUTIONARY PROMISE]*

Readers are invited to examine the six storylines described in the next chapter. Each contains answers to these questions. Each interprets an important transformation in the lives of eighteenth-century Virginians and in the development of Virginia institutions: the expropriation of the western frontier, the growth of slavery, the spread of store-bought culture, the redefinition of family relationships, and the developing political and constitutional crisis with Great Britain, and the separation of church and state. While not everyone will agree that these are the six most noteworthy episodes in Virginia history, they were chosen very deliberately. We believe that they illustrate six representative issues, each of which brings historical perspective to values and attitudes that still provoke controversy in American society. They give proof that six very different historical subjects can be organized intellectually to contribute to a single coherent program of interpretation.

At best, storylines are schematic plans for museum interpretations. They must be refined and elaborated before they are ready for public consumption. That work started with the appointment of storyline implementation teams. They are now

identifying places of exhibition, tours, special events, and other venues where visitors will see and hear the storylines presented. Multiple storylines will cross-cross the Historic Area. Sometimes two or more may weave through the same exhibition building, trade shop, or other place of interpretation. Deploying storylines throughout the outdoor museum will ensure that visitors hear a coherent, engaging, and informative retelling of The Williamsburg Story from many different perspectives.

3
THE STORYLINES

Many books have been written on the subject of each of the following storylines. These treatments of only a few pages apiece can therefore only be sketches. They select from each topic those elements that will assist interpreters in presenting the "Becoming Americans" theme. Each essay also grounds the topic in the local history of eighteenth-century Williamsburg by making reference to specific events, places, and personalities associated with the town's past. These references are purely illustrative. Others could serve equally well. Interpreters may add or substitute their preferred examples as they become more familiar with the storylines and explore their potential for interpreting the town.

TAKING POSSESSION

Deals with the colonists' quest for land ownership and how their quest affected Native Americans, settlers from other nations, and the development of fundamental American values.

KEY POINTS

- **Background and Thesis**. *The availability of land fueled the immigration of Europeans to Virginia and the colony's westward expansion onto lands occupied by Native Americans.*

- **Cross-Cultural Interaction**. *Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans attempted to secure their own interests—which differed according to their cultural values—through trade, negotiation, and armed conflict. None emerged unscathed or unchanged*

- **Land Acquisition**. *The colonists' exploration, mapping, acquisition, and exploitation of land evolved from European cultural and legal precedents and consumed much of their time and resources.*

- **Williamsburg's Central Role**. *As the capital of a vast territory, Williamsburg was the center of shifting networks of political, economic, diplomatic, and*

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military relationships that linked colonial Virginians, European powers, Native American groups, and other colonies.

- *Because Williamsburg was a commercial, administrative, and communication hub, it was home to many institutions and activities—the passage of laws, the licensing of surveyors, the recording of transactions, and the negotiation and adjudication of disputes—that shaped Virginians' relationships to the land.*

- ***Legacy***. *In the process of taking possession of the land for themselves, colonial Virginians altered the environment and began to develop an exploitative land-use ideology.*

- *The emergence of a large free holding population fostered Americans' belief in freedom, equalitarianism, autonomy, and the ideal of the individual ownership of land—though after two centuries these rights and privileges have not fully been extended to Americans from all cultural, social, and economic backgrounds.*

I
NARRATIVE

Background and Thesis

Thomas Jefferson and his political allies idealized the yeoman farmer as a republican citizen and a stalwart defender of liberty. While Jefferson undoubtedly overstated the moral virtues of the average Virginia freeholder, he did not exaggerate the importance of land ownership to most freeborn Virginia men and their families. The story of "Taking Possession" tells how three interrelated forces—the attraction of private ownership of land for Virginians, native inhabitants' desire to retain control of their ancestral homes, and developing imperial policies—played out during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Competition for the possession of land and resources changed both Europeans and Indians and led to the

formation of a number of fundamental American values.

From the earliest years of English settlement, the promise of land ownership lured a steady stream of European immigrants to Virginia. That inducement increased in the opening years of the eighteenth century. The quest for new land to cultivate fueled the spread of colonial settlement from the Tidewater, first to the Piedmont and then into the Southside. Settlers from Pennsylvania moved into the Shenandoah Valley. Finally, Virginians pushed into the Ohio River Valley and Kentucky. During the seventeenth century, Virginians developed a means for land acquisition that they repeated again and again as they settled further westward. It

Captain John Smith's map, published in 1612, was based on his expeditions of the Chesapeake in 1607 and 1608. Europeans' limited knowledge of the new world centered on the coastline, while their knowledge of the interior was based on information provided by the Indians.

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with the development of a foothold, a fort or trading post, from which to begin the exploration and mapping of the new land and resources. As a first step in taking possession, they often abandoned Indian names in favor of familiar English ones. Next a system of acquisition developed that legalized land ownership both for individuals planning to farm and for land companies. The land was surveyed and divided into plots. Plat maps showing boundary lines brought order to the landscape. Land became a commodity that could then be sold to anyone who had the money to buy it. As colonists pushed westward, land in the settled areas continued to be worked for maximum profit at the expense of African labor. In the process, the environment and economy were forever altered for the economic benefit of the individual freeholders.

In their eagerness to claim the land, Virginians repeatedly came into contact, and frequently into conflict with, the native inhabitants who had an equally powerful desire to hold onto it. For the native peoples, the land and its traditional uses were at the center of their cultural identities. For colonists, land ownership was vital to their economic independence and the social advancement of their families. As settlement spread to new areas and these groups confronted each other on the land, their relationship usually passed through several stages. Initially, small numbers of colonists coexisted peacefully with their Indian neighbors. As exploration of the environment continued and knowledge of native groups increased, accommodations for trade evolved and expanded. Continuing settlement and growth of the European population required the negotiation of formalized rules of conduct and behavior to minimize conflicts. Often these efforts failed, hostilities developed, and

confrontations degenerated into armed conflict. Finally, sometimes after years of resistance, native inhabitants were placed in marginal areas (e.g., reservations were set up for Tidewater Indians in the 1660s) or they moved farther west onto lands beyond the control of European settlers.

The developing process for land acquisitions and the evolving relationships with the native populations were shaped by unfolding policies of both imperial and colonial governments. Beginning in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, European empires stated their rationales for colonization of the New World, legitimized their land claims based on exploration, the church, and conquest, and set goals for settling their new lands. Each European power (Spain, France, the Netherlands, England) provided varying degrees of support for these efforts and set up its own system of administrative control. As the commercial and strategic value of the colonies grew, European powers perceived a greater need to protect their interests, so changes occurred in the areas of law and bureaucracy. Imperial governments also had to cope with a number of conflicting interests—those of the mother country, the colonists, and the Indians. Boundary disputes between colonies and the resulting conflicting land claims had to be resolved. Finally, the rivalry between imperial powers over claims in the New World had to be settled. This usually necessitated the use of military force. After the British acquired French territory by conquest in 1763, the trans-Appalachian area was opened up to colonial settlement.

Virginia's colonial government based in Williamsburg acted to support both imperial policy and colonial interests in land acquisition and relationships with Indians. Although the governor was the crown's representative he

was also the advocate for the colony. He had to mediate among the various local interest groups as well as push his own agenda. Assisting in these multiple roles was the Council. The House of Burgesses and the courts legalized the system to protect public and private property, provided a way to work out differences, and oversaw public investment in economic development.

Cross-Cultural Interaction

When the first Englishmen stepped ashore in Virginia, they entered an intentionally managed landscape but, because it bore little resemblance to what they had left behind, they failed to recognize it. As farmers, Indians throughout Virginia centered life, in part, around their cleared fields; as hunters, they also ranged widely across their land in search of game. Indians jealously guarded the land they considered theirs, yet no one owned it. The land was thought to be alive spiritually. It could be used, but not possessed, by humans. The English settlers of Virginia were also an agrarian people for whom the land was just as important. Through husbandry the land would yield its fruits. Yet for the English, the land had an intrinsic value beyond what it produced. It was a commodity to be owned and exploited, and its accumulation conveyed wealth and status on its owner. Although most Africans who came to Virginia could not own land legally, like the Indians, they found English concepts of land ownership unfamiliar; they were accustomed to a different legal system and held land communally. Nevertheless, in a very real sense, Africans did take possession of the land. With the labor they invested by working it and by creating meaningful landmarks,

Africans reassembled a recognizable landscape as a stabilizing constant in their lives.

Much of the tension surrounding the relationship between the Indians and the English flowed from their different concepts of land ownership. Indians never internalized the European concept, and, where they were numerous enough to enforce the rules of their own culture, they simply refused to acknowledge it. Initially, the English colonists equated Indians and their nonproprietary views with squatters who occupied the land but had no real claim to it. Because the Indians did not farm as they did, the English saw mostly an empty land fairly begging to be "properly" cultivated. In time, Virginians and British officials sought formal Indian land cessions, yet they never abandoned their view that Indians occupied territory intended for English settlement.

The Powhatan Indians warily tolerated the presence of the first English who arrived in Virginia. Perhaps the Powhatan hoped to gain an advantage over their Indian neighbors through trade or military alliance with the European intruders. However, their unease grew as increasing numbers of colonists began to settle permanently in Virginia. Apprehension quickly turned to alarm when the English appropriated the cleared fields upon which the Indians' agriculture depended. Sporadic violence gave way to open warfare in the early 1620s when the Powhatans attempted to repel the invaders who threatened their way of life. Although they inflicted heavy casualties on the settlers, they were unable to drive them away. The Indians lost, but they were a resilient people who adjusted to the expansion of settlement by
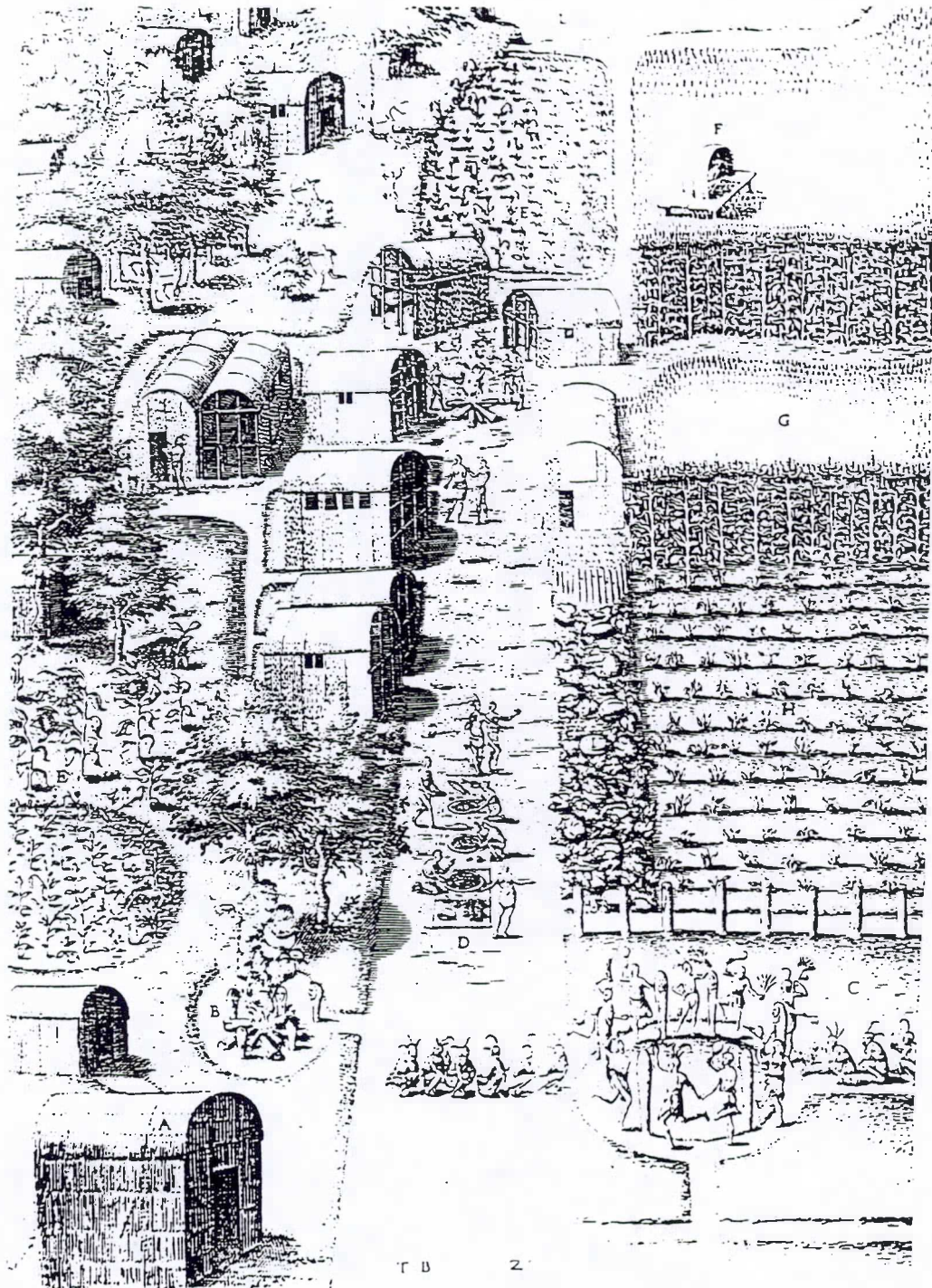
"The Town of Secota." This Theodore deBry engraving of an Indian village depicts their rich cultural life and means of substance—farming, hunting, and gathering. Their managed landscape was not always recognized by Europeans as the "proper way" to use the environment.

withdrawing to areas still free of colonists. There, with a bitter knowledge of English intentions, they reestablished their traditional way of life. This pattern—the expansion of colonists into Indian territory, followed by violent confrontation and the withdrawal of the Indians—was repeated several times throughout Virginia's colonial history.

Many intercultural encounters initially were peaceful. Trade was the central element of their often mutually beneficial relationships. Through their encounters, Indians and colonists constructed a "middle ground" of shared cultural meanings where they could communicate and work together, at least for a time. Many Indians and Europeans circulated in this middle ground, acting as mediators and go-betweens. They included the métis who became an interpreter, the Indian convert leading a prayer service, the European trader intent upon making a profit, the white captive adoptee who preferred Indian society to his own, and the black seeking a degree of freedom outside the effective reach of colonial authority. Yet even on this common ground few, if any, achieved complete understanding of the other's culture. Indians and colonists continued to view each other warily, and conflict frequently lurked just beneath the surface of apparent harmony. Often, conflicting claims to the land brought latent hostilities into the open. Unfortunately, violence was frequently the result. Leaders on both sides tried to diffuse and limit disturbances through formal treaties, but neither Englishmen nor Indians had much success in binding their people to such agreements for long. The extreme xenophobia each group felt toward the other, and especially the enmity frontier colonists displayed toward Indians, doomed most treaties to failure. In the end, Europeans turned to the military—provincial and British—to regulate colonial settlement and then to suppress Indian resistance.

Land Acquisition

As Indians slowly withdrew from the Tidewater or retreated onto the few reservations allotted them, the colonists gained possession of a vast territory east of the Blue Ridge free of native opposition. The richness and abundance of this land attracted the attention of acquisitive settlers, and the system of individual land acquisition established by colonial officials was well suited to fulfill the desires of the most aggressive land seeker. The Virginia land patent system in the seventeenth century was based on the headright, which rewarded the importation of labor to work the tobacco fields with grants of land. The use of treasury rights to claim land in the eighteenth century was even better suited for expansive land acquisition.

The method by which Virginia colonists took possession of the land once the Indians were forced to relinquish their claims to it was institutionalized in the "Charters, Laws and Custom of Virginia." The land grant process with its surveys, plats, and patents imposed a semblance of order on the scramble to find new, fresh land to cultivate. Once a title was conveyed, marked trees set forth the metes and bounds of the property for other colonists to respect. The regular processioning sponsored by Anglican parishes renewed the boundary marks and reconfirmed their location in the memory of the neighborhood. Boundary disputes were to be resolved first by an appeal to neighbors. If that failed, the parties could argue their case before the county court. The application of English common law, combined with circumstances peculiar to Virginia like the more equitable

distribution of land among heirs, highlighted the central importance of land and built formidable protections for the claims of Virginia landowners.

The resale of patented tracts made for an active market inland throughout the colonial period. Even in the long-settled Tidewater in the mid-eighteenth century, land trading never completely stopped. However, since planters could not continue to subdivide their land into ever smaller plots and still maintain a viable, profitable plantation, the availability of cheap land diminished over time. Consequently, land seekers turned their attention to the west and southwest. There speculators with vast tracts of land often clashed with land-hungry frontier settlers. Yet these confrontations failed to slow colonial expansion, and by the 1750s Virginians were again encountering powerful native groups who contested colonists' claims to the land. The seeming freedom with which land could be acquired created the expectation that most freeborn Virginians could own land. In fact, after a century and a half of experience, they had come to believe that land ownership was a right that could not be abridged.

As white Virginians moved westward, they took their slaves with them. Africans who could not participate in the promise of land ownership did make the land their own. Beneath the ordered landscape that freeholding Virginians created, African Virginians imposed a far different structure on the land. Paths through the woods and fields hidden from view, rather than roads to church and court, linked slave quarters and helped maintain economic and familial slave networks. Slaves saw deep ravines and inaccessible swamps—useless to land-seeking whites—as welcome refuges for those seeking escape. Woods preserved by

free planters for fuel and timber became, at night, the source of game that supplemented meager slave rations. Quiet glades and glens became social gathering spots. African Virginians invested the physical world with rich, often deeply spiritual, meanings.

At the end of seventeenth century, English officials grew alarmed at the rampant corruption in Virginia's land grant system. They instituted reforms to correct the worst of the abuses that had so benefited the colony's largest planters. Yet imperial neglect and the intransigence of Virginia's elite rendered reforms ineffectual. Except for occasional complaints about shortfalls in royal revenues, imperial administrators did not seriously reexamine Virginia's land policies until the mid-eighteenth century, and until the 1760s the system for acquiring land in Virginia clearly favored the wealthiest colonists. Their wealth enabled them to claim thousands of acres at a time, and since they also monopolized Virginia's high political offices, they were often in the best position to claim the choicest land.

In an effort to profit from their investments, speculators divided their holdings into smaller tracts that they willingly offered for sale to newly arriving settlers. Although the numbers of big-time speculators increased during the eighteenth century, many colonists of more modest means continued to claim smaller grants for western land. However, in the older, longer-settled region of the colony, landless tenants became a permanent feature of the social landscape. Most were poor whites and free blacks who could not afford to move to where land was still relatively cheap.

During much of the seventeenth century, England and France paid scant attention to the territorial aspirations of their migrating

nationals. Each nation maintained its sovereign claims to the New World, but focused its imperial concerns on colonial trade. As the colonies grew and expanded, the issue of imperial sovereignty over the New World, especially the trans-Appalachian west, came to the fore. When victory in the Seven Years' War resolved the issue in Great Britain's favor, the mother country had to balance Indian interests, the desires of provincial expansionists, and its own imperial goals as never before. British authorities now faced aggressive land companies poised to exploit millions of acres west of the Appalachians, defiant Indians opposed to their intrusion, and the high cost of maintaining peace on the frontier. In 1763, they banned settlement west of the Appalachians until formal boundaries between the Indians and the colonies could be negotiated. Even after a boundary line was agreed to, Virginians still were prohibited from taking up land in the ceded territory. Finally, in 1774, Great Britain ordered the implementation of a radical new land grant system to replace the system Virginia had employed since the early seventeenth century. These actions added to the large-scale speculators' grievances against the British ministry but did little to hold back the flood of small farmers lured west by the promise of "open" land.

Williamsburg's Central Role

Beginning with Jamestown, the capital of Virginia played a key role in the acquisition of land and in the relationships between Virginians and Native Americans. In the House of Burgesses and the Council, laws dealing with land acquisition, Indian trade, and internal defense were debated and passed. When the colony's capital was moved to newly created Williamsburg in 1700, English settlement had yet to penetrate the Piedmont. The hundreds of Indians still living in the Tidewater region had been forced into an uneasy truce with the colonists in the 1660s when they were required to take up residence on reservations the English set aside for them.

Although Virginians had barely begun to claim their portion of the New World by 1700, the colony's ancient charter encompassed a vast territory extending to the Ohio River valley and beyond. Within its far-flung borders lived large and powerful native groups undergoing stressful reorganization. In addition, the French in Canada acted to increase their influence south into the Ohio Country. As Virginians pushed westward into this contested area, Williamsburg, the colonial capital, became the nerve center in which policies were developed and implemented to ensure orderly expansion. Governmental officials in Williamsburg directed diplomatic initiatives toward the Saponi and Nottoway in the 1710s and 1720s, the Catawba and Cherokee in the 1750s and 1760s, the Delaware and Shawnee in the 1760s and 1770s, and, throughout the period, the Iroquois. In Williamsburg, the governor, as the crown's representative, attempted to balance his own and imperial goals toward western lands against the special provincial interests of the colony's powerful elite and yeomanry. Spotswood, Dinwiddie, Fauquier, Botetourt, and Dunmore all took active roles in westward expansion and treated with numerous Indian diplomatic missions to Williamsburg.

Traces of the old palisade could still be seen as it passed through eighteenth-century Williamsburg, reminding those who reflected upon it that Indians and Englishmen had very different understandings of what it meant to

"own" land. The palisade was built in the early seventeenth century to bar Indians from the area of English settlement because the Indians refused to acknowledge they were trespassing when they hunted on land "owned" by the English. The remnant of the palisade trench confirmed that for colonists, land was properly meant to be confined within boundaries. However, the Cherokee delegation that met with Lord Botetourt in August 1770, crossing the old palisade line on their way, had thoroughly learned the language of European property ownership. As they negotiated the location of a fixed boundary between Cherokee and English settlement, they assumed that any English found beyond the line would be "trespassing" on Indian land and could be forced to leave.

News of the frontier arrived often in the capital. Traders, interpreters, land speculators, and surveyors could be heard discussing various issues of importance to Virginia's expansionism. Christopher Gist, commissioned by Governor Dinwiddie to act as an agent for the Ohio Company to the Indian Treaty held at Logstown in 1752, explored much of the Ohio Country and visited Williamsburg to report on his travels. Burgesses for the western counties debated issues of expansionism with the more conservative members from the Tidewater counties. One such burgess, Thomas Walker from Albemarle County, was an explorer, a member of the Loyal Land Company, and a colonial agent who had numerous dealings with the Indians. County surveyors were licensed at the College of William and Mary. Many colonists claiming unpatented land had to go to the land office in Williamsburg to have their claim officially recorded. William Parks printed the Treaty of Lancaster in 1744; twelve years later, William Hunter published the treaty between a Virginia delegation

commissioned by Governor Dinwiddie and the Catawba and Cherokee.

Numerous Indians visited or even lived for awhile in Williamsburg during the eighteenth century. Indian delegations met with the governor, councillors, and other leading citizens at the Palace and Capitol. They held ceremonies on Market Square where individual Mattaponi and Pamunkey sold wild fowl and pottery on market days. Furthermore, beginning in the early eighteenth century, the College of William and Mary enrolled a steady number of Indian youngsters at the Brafferton School. Their teachers hoped to "enlighten" them about English ways so that they could return to their homes and help "civilize" their people. Few fulfilled the faculty's expectations, and many returned to their traditional ways once they went home. Some, like Catawba John Nettles, put their English schooling to good use and became successful interpreters and mediators between the Indians and the colonists. Nettles's William and Mary education helped the Catawba maintain their cultural autonomy in what for them was a hostile world. Similarly, John Montour, the son of métis interpreter Andrew Montour, followed in his father's footsteps after his years at the college.

When Lord Dunmore arrived in Virginia, he quickly allied himself with the colony's expansion-minded elite. With the advice of his Council, he sparred with Pennsylvania over control of the Monongahela River Valley, though his great ambition was to force a cession of the Kentucky territory from the Shawnee and other Ohio Country Indians. Through the spring and early summer of 1774, Dunmore eagerly awaited news from the frontier. A reported raid by Logan, an Ohio Iroquois, to revenge his family's murder

was just the pretense Dunmore needed to mount a massive invasion of the Ohio Country. Plans for the operation, which he personally would lead, so preoccupied his thoughts that he paid little attention to the pending First Virginia Convention. He had already left town when it met in Williamsburg in August.

Dunmore was not so distracted that he failed to attend the Council's June meetings where caveats received in the past year were reviewed. Caveats put a stop to the granting of a land patent until rival claims to the same tract could be heard. The caveat court held in Williamsburg was just a part of the elaborate land system that had developed by the 1770s to regulate and protect the rights of landowners.

Dunmore's war ended in victory. During the resulting treaty negotiations, Logan's address to Dunmore signaled his reluctant acceptance of defeat. When the governor and four young Shawnee hostages returned to Williamsburg in December, they were greeted with loud public acclaim. Dunmore was about to bolt from the city, moving the revolutionary crisis to a new stage, when the hostages returned to the Ohio Country in June 1775.

By the time Logan's speech was published in the *Virginia Gazette* in early 1775, it had already been circulating in Williamsburg for several weeks. It was a topic of conversation among gentlemen gathered at the city's taverns, and students were instructed to copy it as an exercise. Jefferson and many others who read the speech in Williamsburg admired its eloquence. Like Jefferson, some saw the speech as evidence of the Indians' nobility. But other voices were also heard. Graphic and sensational stories of Indian atrocities against western settlers circulated among city residents whenever frontier news reached the governor or was published in the newspapers. Nevertheless, Logan's speech touched a nerve. His tale of one Indian's efforts at accommodation, his angry reaction to betrayal by whites, and his ultimate loss of family, land, and spirit captured the essence of the encounter of Indians and colonists. Its continuing nineteenth-century popularity may have come from its appeal to those uneasy with the human cost of America's unceasing march westward.

Legacy

Although most colonial Virginians who owned land acquired it in routine ways—by patent, purchase, or inheritance—the memory of violent struggles to wrest control of the land from the Indians, coupled with reports of the bloody contest in the west in the 1760s and 1770s, transformed the actual settlement and expansion of the colony into an epic story on the eve of the American Revolution. For many Virginians earlier colonists, and by extension current ones, became heroic as they struggled against great odds to establish a society in a hostile and dangerous New World. That they succeeded in creating what many colonial Virginians described as a republic of freeholders only enhanced the significance and defining power of the story. An inevitable consequence of this interpretation was that it linked the continued success of the republican experiment to the continuing expansion of freehold settlements. While this "manifest destiny," as it developed in the nineteenth century, did celebrate democratic republicanism, it necessarily placed those—Indians, Spanish—who resisted its imperative in the role of outcasts who deserved to be swept aside.

The colonists' relentless pursuit of new lands to settle obviously worked to the disadvantage of the Indians who were forced to retreat. But it would be a mistake to see the Indians as merely the broken victims of the inevitable march of history. Until the French were forced to abandon their claim to Canada and the trans-Appalachian west in 1763, Indians, most notably the Iroquois, skillfully played the imperial powers off against each other to enhance the Native Americans' importance. Others, such as the Leni-Lenape (or Delaware) in the seventeenth century and the Cherokee in the eighteenth, masterfully exploited the rivalries between colonies to their own advantage. Even retreat was not always a prelude to a tribe's cultural collapse. The several small coastal Carolina tribes who regrouped in the Carolina uplands with the Catawba in the early eighteenth century, the scattered Shawnee who reassembled in the Ohio Country in the 1760s, and the Delaware who relocated there from eastern Pennsylvania all experienced a cultural resurgence in their new homes that made them vigorous opponents of colonial expansion.

Indians remained powerful in the Ohio Country until after the American Revolution. With the end of the war, the United States could turn its attention to resolving lingering land disputes between Virginia and its neighbors and removing the Indians from the Ohio Territory. After the Ohio Indians were defeated at Fallen Timbers (1794), this vast land could be settled according to the provisions of the Northwest Ordinance (1787). That ordinance set the pattern of settlement for all western lands. While the cycle of conflict, broken treaties, warfare, and eventual removal continued throughout the nineteenth century, Native Americans remained culturally resilient. One of the legacies of the broken treaties has been a number of court cases in the late twentieth century to redress these grievances. Today, Indian tribes maintain a special relationship with the federal government to the frustration of state and local governments.

With the opening of the Ohio Country to American settlement, the issue of free trade down the Mississippi through New Orleans took on new importance and relations with Spain became a significant part of our foreign policy. Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase (1803) opened vast new lands for settlement. Later in the nineteenth century, wars with Mexico and Spain added additional territory to America. After the settlement of the continental United States in the nineteenth century, America struggled to maintain a special interest in the Philippines, Mexico, and other Latin American countries, and the Caribbean Islands in the twentieth century. As a result of this expansionism, the Philippines became an independent nation, Alaska and Hawaii joined the United States, and the debate over the admittance of Puerto Rico as the fifty-first state continues.

The ideal of a republic of freeholders and the conviction that it was America's "manifest destiny" to populate the entire continent fostered the belief that available land and resources were unlimited. Mythic frontier values of freedom, egalitarianism, autonomy, and the ideal of individual land ownership reinforced European ideals of individualism and became part of our American heritage. The dream of owning one's home is seen today as the entitlement of all Americans—a dream that for many is very difficult to reach. A final irony resulted from the linkage of freedom and land. Some Americans equated the right to own property of all types with the right to own slaves. In fact, slavery was

permitted south of the Ohio. Other Americans strongly disagreed with the concept of slavery and its continued expansion into new territories, and the question would not be settled until a bloody civil war was fought during the mid-nineteenth century.

2
"TAKING POSSESSION" AND THE BECOMING AMERICANS THEME

Diverse People

The protagonists of the "Taking Possession" story were the diverse native inhabitants of eastern North America, the several European states (principally England, France, and Spain) who asserted imperial sovereignty over the continent, and the settlers of European background and the Africans they forcibly brought to the colony who actually took up residence in colonial Virginia. An evolving cast of characters first featured Englishmen (and a few women), Powhatans, and Africans of West Indian backgrounds. Later, French Huguenots, Ulster Irish, Germans, Scots, and Africans would join with colonial-born Virginians, white and black, as they all encountered, Iroquois, Catawba, Delaware, Cherokee, Shawnee, and other tribes on the eve of independence.

Clashing Interests

Each group invested the land they occupied with meaning, which in turn shaped their behavior toward it. For the Indians, the land was to be used for the common good and its control guaranteed Indian cultural identity and autonomy. For the European settlers, the land was to be made productive and valuable and its ownership meant economic and social security. For African Virginians, the land was secretly given a reassuring presence that helped them rebuild their lives. For European powers, overseas colonies enhanced national prestige and added to a country's wealth. Different in fundamental ways, these various interests coexisted uneasily. White Virginians judged Indian use of the land as wasteful and unproductive. Indians condemned the whites' use of the land as selfish and destructive. African Virginians simply ignored those boundary markers their masters imposed on the land that did not conform to their mental landscape. European nations regularly challenged each others' claims to New World territory. These tensions often gave way to violence.

Shared Values

Although the huge land holdings amassed by rich and powerful Virginians forced many poorer colonists to resort to purchasing land from speculators, to patent less desirable land, or to remain tenants, the seemingly limitless land free for the taking in the New World instilled in nearly all free Virginians, white and black, the goal of becoming freeholders. Even the majority of African Virginians, who by necessity had to view the land only as the place where they lived and labored, understood that the land they occupied was a commodity to be bought and sold with little regard for their opinion. By the mid-eighteenth century, Indians were using the language of land ownership to defend

their claims to lands beyond the edge of Virginia settlement. Yet the Indians never internalized the concept of private land ownership as had the colonial settlers of European, and, to a lesser extent African, background. Their open disdain of this ideal effectively distanced Indians from whites. Furthermore Great Britain, where land ownership was equally a goal, failed to understand how the achievement of a freehold by a relatively large number of freemen in British terms worked to undermine colonialism.

Formative Institutions

The friction caused by the incessant quest for land was regulated in many formal and informal arenas. A wide variety of informal contacts, frequently centered around trade, brought Indians and European and African colonists together. Although such encounters often produced misunderstandings that heightened tensions, they also created a middle ground where conversations (if not accommodations) could occur. In addition, Indian leaders and English government officials engaged in formal negotiations to resolve disputes over trade and land and to set standards for behavior. The land claims of individual Virginians were also settled through formal and informal means. Land patents were recorded in the colony's land office, courts adjudicated challenges to land titles, and neighbors walked around each other's lands to reestablished their boundaries. Although in general the haves were favored over the have-nots, Virginia's formal and informal institutions did help to guard the sanctity of private property. Even Great Britain's centuries-long and finally victorious defense of its New World claims legitimized individual British colonists' pursuit of land. Unfortunately Great Britain's victory also planted the seeds of Virginia's eventual independence.

Partial Freedoms

Only hindsight allows the conquest of the Indians to seem inevitable. At the time, the final outcome was frequently in doubt. In fact, the Indians' fierce defense of their homelands caused white Virginians to cast their struggle with the Indians in heroic terms: "Their [Virginians'] own blood was spilt in acquiring lands for their settlement . . . For themselves they fought, for themselves they conquered, and for themselves alone they have right to hold" (Thomas Jefferson). The system developed for "holding" that land that held sway until the 1770s clearly benefited rich colonists. Their wealth enabled them to patent thousands of the choicest acres at a time. Furthermore, the legal system protected the landowner from the land seeker. Yet the system was hardly a closed one. From an Old World perspective, it was fairly open; thousands of Virginia freemen who might never have hoped to own land in England or Europe became freeholders in the colony. In the older, longer settled counties landless tenants—mostly poor whites and free blacks—did become a common fixture of society. Even there, however, the promise of an eventual freehold camouflaged the dismal prospects of the landless.

Revolutionary Promise

The abundance of land in the heart of the new nation served as a magnet to Europe's and Asia's poor. Lured by the promise of a better life, wave after wave of immigrants from such places as Ireland, Germany, Poland, Russia, Italy, China, and Japan arrived in the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many died in urban tenements or

work camps without realizing their dreams, but enough settled on farms or found productive work to keep the dream alive. As the tens of thousands of immigrants set about creating a new life for themselves, the reality of their accomplishments transformed the republic into a democracy. In their wake grew a hopefulness and optimism that seemed to confirm the nation's destiny as a land of freedom and opportunity. However, it should not be forgotten that it came at a high cost. Those Americans who failed to become sturdy, independent yeomen were often wrongly stigmatized as weak and morally inferior. The Indians and the Spanish who rightly protested their prior claims to North America's lands were viewed with contempt by many Americans. When these "outsiders" resisted the takeover of their homes, they were frequently brutally suppressed. On balance, however, the promise of self-reliance and self-sufficiency that came along with land ownership transcended these wrongs and, over time, extended to all Americans.

3
CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER STORYLINES

Enslaving Virginia

By providing a permanent labor force that could be denied the true value of their work, the system of slavery enabled many colonial Virginia slave owners to farm large tracts of land profitably. In turn, the generous land patents the Virginia grandees favored fueled westward expansion. Thus, while few blacks enjoyed the privilege of land ownership, they were inextricably tied to the quest for land well into the nineteenth century. The resulting encounters of African Virginians and Indians necessitated a complex balancing act in response to whites' heavy pressure on each group to view the other with suspicion and contempt.

Transforming Family

The general availability of land in Virginia made traditional English inheritance practices unnecessary. Oldest sons no longer stood to be principal heirs of the family land. Instead, most sons either shared in the landed inheritance or could strike out on their own with a realistic prospect of economic independence. In either case, the strength of the patriarch was weakened. Where slaves were linked to the land they worked, the relative stability of the slave community fostered the formation of families among African Americans. Indian families were also affected. The colonists' way west was eased by the devastating effects of European diseases and by the commerce that preceded settlement. Family networks decimated by disease and the demands of trade forced a redefinition of traditional roles in many Indian societies.

Buying Respectability

The Indian trade that secured for European markets such fashionable items as beaver skins for hats and deerskins for clothing inexorably linked the Indians to an emerging capitalistic market economy. The resulting dependence of Indians on European goods enriched colonial traders and endangered

traditional Indian culture. The wealth gained from such trade and other commercial ventures was often used to acquire land in large enough quantities to form the landed estates upon which the trappings of gentry gentility necessarily rested. In the South, the labor required to make the land profitable enough to support colonists' conspicuous consumption firmly fixed slavery as an essential aspect of the economy.

Choosing Revolution

The middling planters' relatively easy access to land linked their interests to those of the elite who dominated Virginia politics. When the gentry's powers were challenged by Great Britain after the 1760s, they successfully convinced the yeomanry that their rights too were challenged. Ironically, the revolutionaries' rhetoric about freedom and the sanctity of property produced in some of that special "species of property"—slaves—an equally strong desire for freedom. That desire moved many African Virginians to take up arms against their former masters. The American War for Independence forced all Indian groups in close contact with the colonists to choose which side they would support; neutrality was not an option. A few like the Catawba sided with the colonists but gained little credit for their decision. Others, such as the Iroquois, found themselves irrevocably split—most of the Oneida sided with the Americans while the majority of the remaining Iroquois supported the British. Ultimately, the controversy destroyed all that they had worked to

preserve since the early 1700s. By 1800, the few who remained in New York were confined to a handful of small reservations, and the League has remained divided between Canada and New York ever since.

Freeing Religion

Virginia's westward expansion depended, in part, on the colony's attraction to large numbers of new settlers. The settlers who flocked to the Virginia backcountry were an ethnically diverse group with religious beliefs at variance with the colony's Anglican establishment. These newcomers demanded respect for their beliefs. Their quest eventually moved beyond toleration to insistence on complete religious freedom. The greater emotional and spiritual stance of these diverse religions found a receptive audience among a great many African Virginians. As converts, they created a Christian faith that minimized earthly tribulations in favor of heavenly rewards. The Indians of the eighteenth century were also a religiously diverse people. Some, such as the Ottawa or the Caughnawaga Iroquois, were baptized by Jesuits and professed Catholic beliefs. Others, such as some Delaware, were newly converted by Moravian missionaries in the 1750s and 1760s. Most, however, continued to practice their own religious traditions. These beliefs, which incorporated a few elements learned from their European Christian neighbors, continued to provide Indians with spiritual strength and direction.

4
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ENSLAVING VIRGINIA

Accounts for the development and growth of a racially based slave system that profoundly affected the lives, fortunes, and values of blacks and whites.

KEY POINTS

- ***Thesis***. *Slavery was a defining characteristic of eighteenth-century Virginia society. This institution, along with the racial attitudes and class structure that developed alongside it and served to legitimate a slave system based on color of skin, permeated all aspects of life in eighteenth-century Virginia.*

- ***Slavery Takes Root and Grows***. *From the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, European demand for labor led to the forced inter-continental migration of 11.5 million Africans. Approximately 600,000 were brought into British North America. Although Virginia's slave laws were enacted piecemeal in the seventeenth century, they were no less effective in defining a system.*

- ***A Racially Fractured Society Emerges***. *As the numbers of Africans increased within the colony, the cultural, religious, and societal differences between them and Europeans became points of contention. Slavery created great divisions in Chesapeake society as attitudes about Africans became increasingly complex.*

- ***Racial Slavery Codified***. *In the 1660s, laws were enacted that were defining who was to be enslaved, which often coincided with determining who was African. Between 1680 and 1723, most laws were enacted to restrict movement of slaves, set punishments for legal infractions, and reinforce a slaveholder's rights to property.*

- ***Cracks in the System***. *Although Africans had little impact on altering formal institutions, they had greater impact in personal relationships with whites, on individual plantations, in workgroups, and in local exchange networks.*

- ***The Strained World Blacks and Whites Made and Shared***. *Throughout Virginia, blacks and whites were influencing each other's culture. This cultural sharing was not a process they focused on or pursued intentionally, but the product of their interaction is evident in all facets of life.*

I
NARRATIVE

Background and Thesis

Slavery was a defining characteristic of eighteenth-century Virginia society. This institution, along with the racial attitudes and class structure that developed alongside it and served to legitimate a slave system based on color of skin, permeated all aspects of life in eighteenth-century Virginia. Starting with the arrival of the first Africans in Jamestown in 1619, an initially unplanned system of hereditary bondage for blacks gradually developed. Over the course of one hundred fifty years, slavery became an entrenched institution in Virginia. Its dreadful hold on blacks and whites alike was legitimized by a series of restrictive laws and reinforced by the teachings of the community and family.

Slavery, the foundation of Virginia's agricultural system, was essential to its economic viability. Initially, planters bought slaves primarily to raise tobacco for export. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, wealthy Virginia farmers were using slave labor in a diversified agricultural regime. Enslaved African Americans also worked as skilled tradesmen in the countryside and in the capital city of Williamsburg. Many served as domestics in the households of wealthier white Virginians.

The constant interaction between black slaves and white masters (as well as between blacks and whites in general) created an interdependence that led to the development of a distinctive Virginia culture. That interdependence was as destructive as it was unequal. The horrors of slavery, whether physical or mental, were numerous. The system bestowed the marks of superiority on whites whether or not they were slaveholders. Economic reliance on slavery, fears about the consequences of emancipation, and unyielding racial prejudice and cultural bias all contributed to the continuation of slavery in an era of independence. The "Enslaving Virginia" story explains the effects of slavery and the influence of Africans on every aspect of Virginia society.

The term African Virginian is used to reflect more accurately the distinct differences between the slave experience in Virginia (and to a larger extent the Chesapeake) and that in the Carolinas or the northern colonies.

Slavery Takes Root and Grows

The notion that the establishment of slavery was an "unthinking decision" on the part of the English is an old one. However, it is inaccurate when considering their sense of cultural superiority and the practices of colonizers in other parts of the Americas. Although slave laws were enacted piecemeal in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, they were no less calculating. English settlers who came into Virginia were charged with two primary goals: to make the colony a financial success and to convert native peoples to Christianity. The English considered their actions, which may be judged arrogant and exploitative today, to be justified and righteous. They believed they made better use of the land and its resources than did their Native American neighbors. They also believed it was their duty as Christians to spread the gospel "throughout

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the world." In general, the English considered themselves a superior people who had the best possible form of government, social structure, and religion.

Other Europeans, including the Portuguese and Spanish who colonized parts of Central and South America in the century before the English gained a toehold in Virginia, and the Dutch and French who began colonial ventures at about the same time as the English, had similar economic ambitions and similar beliefs about their own cultural and religious superiority. In their drive for profits, those Europeans turned to raising semitropical staple crops—especially sugar and tobacco—for the international marketplace. They soon adopted a plantation mode of production based on the forced labor of Native American and, increasingly, African slaves. Between 1450 and 1600, the Europeans collaborated with North and West African rulers in establishing a regular trade. European products and New World staples changed hands for African gold, ivory, and human captives. Although northern European law had no provision for slavery, the Spanish and Portuguese colonial worlds provided a model. Slavery was firmly established in both law and practice, and the later-arriving Dutch, French, and English soon adopted many elements of the Spanish and Portuguese slave systems.

Shortly after the establishment of Jamestown, the Virginia Company exerted pressures on the settlers to distance themselves both physically and culturally from the Native Americans. This demand came after settlers had formed a comfortable alliance with the Algonquin peoples of the Virginia Chesapeake. The Algonquins assisted the settlers by providing food, land, and security from more hostile Native American groups. In return, the English made

valuable trading partners for the Algonquins. However, the growing interdependence of the Algonquins and the English began to crumble by the 1630s. The English settlers' insatiable desire to take possession of lands that the native inhabitants were unwilling to cede, attempts to carry out "missionary duties" to convert Native Americans to Christianity, and efforts to enslave the Algonquins often led to armed conflict. After 1622, the Virginia government adopted a policy of either forcing Native Americans beyond the bounds of white settlement or exterminating them. Continuing guerilla warfare between natives and settlers, coupled with the Virginians' practice of occasionally enslaving native captives taken in war, combined to encourage racial hatred among both groups. In the following decades, the enslavement of Africans placed Native American groups in the position either of aiding the English by helping to enforce slave laws, or of giving aid to blacks by assisting and harboring runaways.

Slavery (defined as one person owning another) was not unfamiliar to most Africans. Ancient African civilizations relied heavily on slave labor for a variety of tasks, as did many other societies throughout the course of human history. The Islamic world sanctioned slavery as a legitimate means for converting "pagans." From the seventeenth century onward, Arab and Muslim societies traded for slaves in northern and Subsaharan Africa. Those from Subsaharan Africa were used as domestics or in agricultural activities. Those from North Africa were generally used for military, administrative, and domestic service.

In West and Central Africa, slavery was also a fairly common, although marginal, part of kinship-based societies. Possessing persons was a source and symbol of wealth in societies where the community, rather than individuals, held all rights to land. In a given
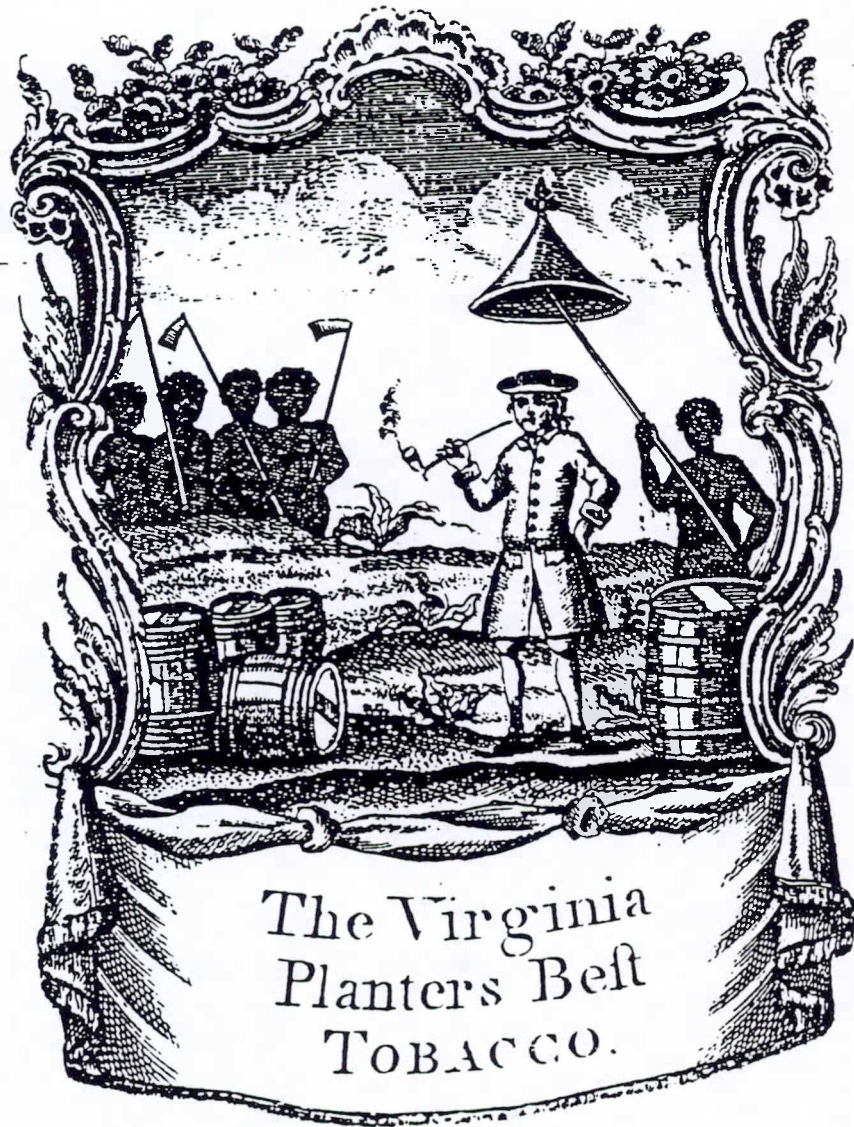
Label from a packet of Virginia tobacco

society, slaves might include war captives, criminals, debtors or their designates, and foreigners. Some slaves were purchased for the express purpose of lifelong servitude, while others could eventually earn freedom. Depending on the nature of local resources, economic systems, and local social and legal structures, slaves in West and Central Africa might be used in agriculture, mining, or transportation, or they might serve as soldiers, administrators, concubines, or religious sacrifices. Not unlike members of the European gentry, privileged Africans gained power, wealth, and status by controlling dependent persons—wives, children, kin, clients, subjects, and servants or slaves. African slavery was thus part of a continuum of social relationships. Since slavery already existed in several African societies, Europeans simply had to establish trading partnerships and alliances, by force, if necessary, to exploit that mechanism.

From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, the Europeans demand for even more African slaves to work New World staple crop plantations and mines led to the forced transatlantic migration of roughly eleven and one-half million Africans. (Some estimates place the number as high as forty to one hundred million to account for smuggling, poor records, and higher mortality rates.) The largest proportion, almost 75 percent of enslaved Africans, were taken to Central and South America by the Portuguese and Spanish. Approximately 600,000 Africans were brought into British North America between 1619 and 1775. For the most part, the English were interested in those Africans with skills that matched their needs. They tended to seek out farming peoples and those with metal and woodworking skills. In spite of inhumane transport and intensity of labor, these Africans, primarily from Ibo speaking groups, managed to survive far better than

their counterparts who were taken into other parts of the Americas. Their high rate of survival can be attributed to British North America's more favorable epidemiological environment (as contrasted to that of the Caribbean and Central and South America), their adaptability and resistance, and tobacco cultivation, which was less intensive than sugar production. These factors, among others, resulted in unusually high rates of natural increase, especially among Creole slaves. By 1770, Africans and their American-born descendants made up 40 percent of Virginia's population, and many counties had substantial black majorities.

Up to the 1680s, however, most bound workers in Virginia were white indentured servants, not African slaves. The two groups usually worked the fields, ate and socialized together, shared living quarters, and, in some cases, formed families together. During the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Virginia planters began purchasing an increasing number of African slaves in order to supplement and eventually to replace diminishing supplies of white servants to work in the tobacco fields. Africans and their descendants made up no more than 7 percent of the total population in Virginia and Maryland until about 1690. Most blacks, although far from all, were held as slaves. In the early years, their subsequent status as perpetually enslaved or eventually free often depended upon the circumstances in which they first arrived. Between the mid-1660s and the early eighteenth century, the Virginia legislature had guaranteed planters' rights to hold African men, women, and their descendants as slaves. Colonial laws increasingly equated slave status with black ancestry. The legal status of those of mixed race was determined by their mother's. These legal changes made slaves, who sold

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at a higher initial cost than servants, a more attractive investment.

Until the last quarter of the seventeenth century, men and women from a variety of West African areas arrived in the Chesapeake, mostly via the West Indies rather than directly from Africa. For some, the islands were a brief stopping place on the long forced journey from Africa. Others had lived in the islands for a long time or had been born there. These Africans (especially those who came from societies long involved in the transatlantic slave trade), and their West Indies-born children were familiar with the ways of the Europeans. They knew European languages, customs, and religions, and were experienced in European slave systems. In the Chesapeake, as elsewhere on the edges of the North American continent, many early black migrants used their wide experience and their skills at intercultural negotiation to ameliorate abuse and debasement by masters. They employed strategies of identifying with patrons or with mediating institutions such as churches in order to better their position and to establish a place for themselves in a still ill-defined social order. Attempts to alter the political and economic institutions proved difficult at best. Most successes were directly negotiated between an individual slave and his or her owner.

A Racially Fractured Society Emerges

Beginning in the 1680s, Chesapeake planters began to import large number of slaves directly from Africa. These Africans had to survive the terrible hardships of the Middle Passage, where two to three hundred men, women, and children were packed into crowded ships, the men chained together for much of the time, with perhaps 20 percent dying en route. From 1700 to 1740, slave traders brought about 54,000 blacks to Virginia and Maryland. The majority went to a few lower tidewater counties, including York and James City, which are adjacent to Williamsburg. Many of the later forced migrants came from the inland areas of Africa and included peoples who had little or no prior experience with transatlantic trade and cultures. Once they arrived, they found themselves enslaved in a strange land, with unfamiliar languages, landscape, peoples, climate, and disease. Olaudah Equiano, an African who wrote a narrative of his homeland, capture, and enslavement, described his first encounter with the European slave traders. He wrote, I "was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits. When I looked round the ship too, and saw a large furnace of copper boiling, and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted my fate . . . I asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and long hair."

To white Virginians, these Africans seemed strange, heathenish, and unruly. Slaveholders gave them new names and tried to enforce the use of them. Writing to his overseer in 1727, Robert "King" Carter gave specific instructions regarding renaming newly acquired slaves: "I name'd them here & by their names we can always know what sizes they are off & I am sure we repeated them so often to them that every one knew their name & would readily answer to them. . . (take) care that the negroes both men & women I sent . . . always go by ye names we gave them." Slaveholders also sought to prevent slaves from following traditional African cultural and religious practices. Most were put to work at repetitious and backbreaking agricultural labor. Slaveholders used the Africans' initial lack of English and resistance to enslavement

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as justifications for imposing harsher discipline and stringent work rules.

By the 1730s, white servants were a minority among bound laborers. They began to distance themselves from blacks and to demand privileges denied to slaves but deemed owed them because of their European ancestry. The legislature began to recognize their claims, thereby widening the gap between slave and non-slave.

The English began to find ways to rationalize their treatment of Native Americans and enslavement of Africans, often basing these rationalizations on biblical references. Divided by wealth, social class, and ethnic heritage, white colonists nonetheless found a common bond in their dominance over blacks. Slaveholders derived their social status from the numbers of slaves they owned or hired from other masters. Even poor whites, both free and indentured, were automatically elevated in status simply because of the color of their skin.

Slavery created great divisions in Chesapeake society. For Native Americans, the attempts by the English to force them to adopt the Christian religion, European agricultural systems and lifestyles, and very different divisions of labor between men and women were an affront to their belief systems and way of life. Their religious beliefs were strongly based on the idea of maintaining harmony and balance with the natural world and man's relationship to it. There were continuing conflicts over land use and trade. But the increasing numbers of Africans made the natives, position more difficult than before. The concept of enslaving seems to have been aberrant to Indians. However, in an effort to achieve peace with the English, some tribes tried to remain neutral on the issue,

while others found more subtle ways of expressing displeasure with the practice.

Virginia society became increasingly complex. Africans forced to live in bondage in a completely unfamiliar culture had very different life experiences than did children born in slavery in the colonies, and the two groups developed different strategies for survival. African-born slaves were more likely to try to maintain their own religions because so much of their cultural practices were tied to religious observance and ceremony. A Hausa proverb expresses the actions and sentiments clearly: "It is when one is in trouble that he remembers God." Although many Africans were brought to the Americas without possessions, they were not without memory and custom, for "the head of a man is a hiding place, a receptacle" (Chagga proverb). Creoles adopted elements of African and Anglo-American culture, thereby taking on a philosophy not dissimilar to the Hausa proverb, "When the drumbeat changes, the dance changes." Occasionally the differences in their respective experiences led to conflicts between members of the two groups. In February 1774, Tutor Philip Vickers Fithian noted: "This day two Negro Fellows the Gardner & cooper, wrangled; & at last fought; It happened hard for the Cooper, who is likely to lose one of his eyes by that Diabolical Custom of Gouging which is in common practice among those who fight here." Slavery also divided African Americans into different levels that included foremen, drivers, gang leaders, field hands, tradesmen, and house servants. Friction within the black community often came about not so much because of the work, but rather because of how whites regarded slaves in these positions. Communities of free men and women of African heritage complicated the picture, as did those of biracial parentage;

they blurred the lines drawn by a racially based slave system.

Racial Slavery Codified

Slavery—itself an institution—was shaped and defined by the formal processes of the government and the courts. The governor, his Council, and the House of Burgesses legislated the terms of slavery. Initially, the English extended laws regulating indentured servants and apprentices to slaves. But those laws soon proved inadequate because of harsher punishments or restrictions African laborers endured. From 1640 to 1662, customary law and some legislation clearly established the beginnings of Virginia's slave society, making servitude for life the common condition for all newly arrived Africans. Beginning in the 1660s, slaves' status was defined by statutory law which by legislation determined the status of a child by the condition of the mother. From 1670 onward, more laws were enacted that reinforced or more clearly defined earlier laws, tightened controls on movement of the black populace, and formalized punishments for infractions of the law. By the 1730s, more laws were passed to deal with the mounting fear that many whites had of slave uprisings. The law became increasingly restrictive over the course of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Its terms dictated a system of rigid social control: slaves were denied basic rights such as personal choice, legal marriage, and freedom of movement. Again, Fithian provides some insight, "The slaves in this colony are never married, their lords thinking them improper subjects for so valuable an Institution." Manumissions were extremely limited until after the Revolution, and severe punishments could be handed down to slaves who disobeyed the rules. Free blacks were also increasingly denied many of the rights accorded to free white men

such as owning guns, holding indentured servants, intermarrying with whites, testifying as witnesses in court against white men, or holding offices of any kind. At the same time, they were obliged to pay more in taxes than comparable white families.

The courts administered the law, further defining the terms of slavery. They applied a separate criminal code, used different trial procedures, and handed down harsher punishments to blacks accused of crimes. But the government and courts also provided a means of redress for some African Virginians, mediating disputes between master and slave and hearing petitions on a variety of issues. One-third of the petitions brought before the governor's Council between 1723 and 1775 were filed by slaves and free blacks. Matthew Ashby, a free black resident of Williamsburg, was one of the successful petitioners. He asked the Council for permission to manumit his wife, Ann, and their children, John and Mary, in November 1769. It is likely that Ashby joined a group of free blacks who petitioned the Burgesses to repeal the law that required them to pay tithes on their wives and daughters over the age of sixteen. The Burgesses granted their request in 1769. Fortunately, this group of free blacks had precedent for their tithe argument: in the 1640s, Anthony Johnson, believed to be in the first group of Africans to arrive in the colony in 1619, petitioned for the same consideration and won his case.

Being enslaved meant living always in agonizing uncertainty. The only effective restraint on an owner's total power over his or her human property was self-interest, and sometimes passion or greed overruled better instincts. Masters could arbitrarily revoke privileges and protection encoded in informal customs of plantation, workplace, or neighborhood. They could rape or maim their

slaves with relative impunity, and courts seldom punished even those who killed in a fit of passion or intoxication. At any time masters might break up slave families through gift, sale, or hiring out, or else force some to move to distant holdings far from their kin. And whenever a slave owner died or got into financial trouble, families were at risk of being parceled out among the owner's heirs and creditors with equally tragic results. These hazards separated slaves from bonded laborers.

Cracks in the System

Educational institutions and the established church reinforced societal norms. Anglican ministers reminded black and white Virginians of their respective roles, and enjoined slaves to accept their fate and obey their masters. The Bray School in Williamsburg taught the same message to young black children. Within the family, white children learned to become masters and mistresses by watching their parents. Slave children learned the rudiments of survival from their elders. Whatever the intended message, African Virginians adapted some elements of these institutions to their own interests. Nearly one thousand slaves (most, but not all, children) and a few free blacks were baptized at Bruton Parish Church between 1746 and 1768. Some hoped that accepting Christianity might help them to freedom; others may have sought special protection for their children. Williamsburg blacks who could read and write sometimes forged travel passes for other slaves and began to apply the egalitarian rhetoric of white revolutionaries to their own situations. However, one institution, the evangelical church, preached a different message. Evangelical Christians drew increasing numbers of slaves into their fold after about 1750 by offering hope of delivery from persecution. In addition, many of these evangelicals and their followers openly denounced slavery, and some took their beliefs a step further by working to abolish the system.

Nevertheless, enslaved Africans succeeded in establishing families, extending kin connections, and forming networks with those at other plantations. These kinships and networks also included free blacks. The world blacks made for themselves helped to mitigate the isolation and debasement of the slave system. Africans and their Virginia-born descendants developed their own system of social relations in the quarters and a semiautonomous culture that borrowed from both African and English traditions. The practice of a distinctive culture that whites could not entirely control afforded them some small measure of power over their lives and encouraged slave solidarity. In addition, enslaved Africans were sometimes able to moderate their daily living conditions by manipulating their relationships with their masters.
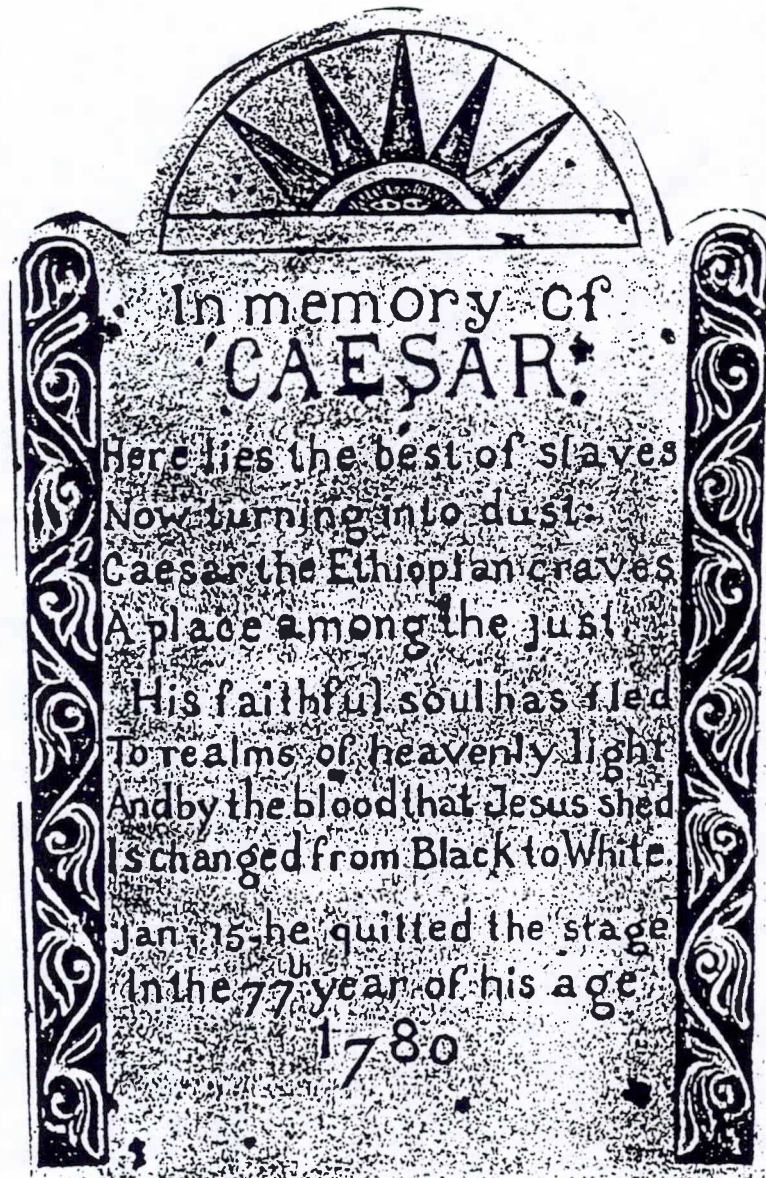
Africans and their descendants had little direct impact on altering the more formal institutions that either created or helped to reinforce slavery within colonial Virginia society. They did have a direct impact on altering the informal institutions that developed. For example, Africans introduced various culinary, agricultural, cultural, and behavioral practices that helped to form American culture. They were able to effect changes on individual plantations, work groups and local exchange networks. By the early eighteenth century, slaves and masters had reached a general understanding about the minimum amounts of food, clothing, and shelter that owners in a particular neighborhood were obliged to provide. In some cases, they were able to persuade owners to give them "reasonable"

requirements pertaining to hours of labor and output. Slaves resisted arbitrary, unfavorable changes in plantation customs with work slowdowns and sabotage, or by feigning sickness or running away. Artisans also invoked customary work routines and production requirements to counter masters' attempts to speed up work or to undercut their autonomy. By the 1770s, slaves and free blacks living in and around Williamsburg were also active and knowledgeable, if tightly circumscribed, participants in a local, increasingly cash-based trading economy. Although slaves could in theory own nothing, masters at first grudgingly allowed slaves the "right" to keep the profits of produce they raised in their limited free time. The slaves quickly transformed limited "privileges" into more widely shared rights. By the end of the Revolutionary War, masters were forced to accept their slaves' incongruent, independent participation in local trading networks as an accomplished fact.

In time, many masters recognized the benefits of allowing slaves "property." Thomas Jefferson referred to the practice as the "peculium," and although most did not use this term, the practice was widespread. Owners recognized that this practice solved the primary problem of slave labor: it was given involuntarily. Wills and inventories from Williamsburg and vicinity rarely if ever list items belonging to slaves. In fact, the glaring omission of slave clothing, utensils, and certain livestock—chickens and so forth—speaks volumes about the issue of slaves ownership of property. Writing to Thomas Mann Randolph in 1798, Jefferson advised, "I thank you for putting an end to the cultivation of tobacco as the peculium of the negroes . . . I have ever found it necessary to confine them to such articles as are not raised on the farm. There is no other way of drawing a line between what is theirs & mine."

The Strained World Blacks and Whites Made and Shared

By the mid-eighteenth century, Virginia's culture was undergoing very real, yet subtle, changes. While still displaying some semblances of its English and African roots, certain commonalities started to emerge within Virginia society. Throughout Virginia—in the management of the environment, medicinal practices, architecture, material culture, and the arts—blacks and whites were being influenced by each other's culture. African musicians—French horn players, singers, drummers—and others like Williamsburg's Fiddler Billy, played at balls and other entertainments of the white population. The presence of black musicians using European instruments influenced the way European music was performed. In turn, Europeans found African instruments to be curious and often pleasing to the ear. One traveler described in detail the use of the balafoo (similar to the modern xylophone) and banjar (original four-string banjo). The introduction of European instruments to Africans expanded their musical repertoire. European travelers noted the prevalence of "Negro jigs" at the dances they attended in Virginia. Archaeological excavations reveal expensive ceramics and other personal items in storage pits of slave quarters. Slaves in larger numbers began to espouse Christianity, especially during the Great Awakening. Although this cultural sharing was not a process that blacks or whites focused on or pursued intentionally, the product of their interaction is clearly evident. Most West Africans' religious beliefs were actually monotheistic in that they believed in one supreme being. However, they recognized the existence of lesser deities whose responsibilities included serving as an intermediary between man and God. De-

45

In memory of
CAESAR.

Here lies the best of slaves
Now turning into dust;
Caesar the Ethiopian craves
A place among the just.

His faithful soul has fled
To realms of heavenly light
And by the blood that Jesus shed
Is changed from Black to White.

Jan. 15 he quitted the stage
In the 77 year of his age
1780

This stone is one of several dozen slave markers to be found in New England. Many of the graves of slaves remained unmarked until after the Civil War. However, as this particular stone is carved in a style contemporary with its date, it may be assumed that the stone was erected at the time of death. The motif of the rising sun, indicating a renewal of life or resurrection, is a common one during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The bizarre final couplet was doubtless intended as a compliment.

North Attleboro, Massachusetts - 1780

ceased ancestors also provided guidance to daily life. Most important, Africans believed in spirit possession, in the notion that God or any of his designates could physically possess the human body. Since evangelicals encouraged a more personal relationship with God, they were less inclined to discourage slaves' "fits of joy." In time, this form of expression became a common practice among blacks and whites involved with these denominations.

The image of the slave-master relationship has been altered dramatically in recent years. Not only is there recognition of cultural influences, but closer examination reveals that slaves were able to exert some influence in day-to-day interactions. Master-slave relationships often contradicted law and presumed standards of behavior. For example, in 1778 Anne Drummond of Williamsburg discovered that her house had been robbed. She accused her slave Sam of the crime. As punishment, she sold him to a plantation in Albemarle County. Sam was the only son of the Drummonds' cook and laundress, who simply refused to work after her son was sold. For the next two years, the cook/laundress complained of a sore leg to avoid working for Mrs. Drummond, while taking on paid tasks for others in the neighborhood. Finally, Anne Drummond relented in 1780. Deciding she might have judged Sam wrongly, she attempted to reunite mother and son. Others were not as fortunate. After obtaining freedom in Philadelphia in 1807, James Carter of Caroline County wrote, "My mother has had 9 Children and altho She and Mrs Armistead has been brought up together from little Girls She has sufferd all my mothers Children to be picked from her my mothers Family has Served the Family of Mrs Armistead upwards of one Hundred and 30 years."

Ironically, blacks and whites often formed a kinship with one another. Throughout his diary, Landon Carter provides insight into this peculiar situation. His long and intimate relationships with different slaves about his property illustrate how attached he was to them, and how much he relied on them for a clear definition of himself. Carter considered himself the father to all on his property. He saw to their physical and medical needs and engaged in a variety of amusements with them, yet he could not understand why his "kindness" was not reciprocated with loyalty and honesty. His greatest companion appears to have been Nassau, who repeatedly ran away, cursed him, drank excessively, and even stole from him. Carter had Nassau soundly punished and threatened to sell him, but he always ended up forgiving every transgression. Sometimes masters actually sympathized with their slaves' plight. Henry St. George Tucker took a slave boy named Bob with him in 1787 to Winchester where he intended to practice law. The uprooted Bob became despondent beyond anything young Tucker had witnessed: "I enclose a short note from Bob to his mother. Poor little fellow! I was much affected at an incident last night. I was waked from a very sound sleep by a most piteous lamentation. I found it was Bob. "What's the matter Bob?" "I was dreaming about my mammy Sir!!!" cried he in a melancholy still distressed tone. "Gracious God!" thought I, "how ought not I feel, who regarded this child an insensible when compared to those of our complexion. In truth our thoughts had been straying the same way. How finely woven, how delicately sensible must be those bonds of natural affection which equally adorn the civilized and the savage. The American and African—nay the man and the brute! I declare I know not a situation in which I have been lately placed that touched me so nearly as that incident I have just related." Despite his

admission of feeling an emotional bond with Bob, Tucker continued to use terms like "savage" and "brute" when referring to blacks.

Perhaps the least discussed yet most enduring consequence of the interactions between blacks and whites is miscegenation. Intermixture and procreation between Africans and Europeans began almost from the first moments of contact in Africa and the Americas. The 1662 law that defined a child's status based on the status of the mother passed on lifelong servitude and established the position of children born of mixed parents. At the same time this law was enacted, another made it illegal for "any Christian to fornicate with a Negro man or woman" or they would have to pay double the fines. "Mulattoes," the term applied to children born of African and European parents, is found in practically every slave inventory, runaway ad, law regarding slaves, and most diaries. Unlike the Spaniards or Portuguese, the English did not differentiate between those who were one-half, one- quarter, or less black or white. "Mulatto" was used for any person of mixed parentage. A law enacted in 1705 reinforced this custom by stating that "the child of an indian and the child or grand child, or greatgrand child of a negro shall be taken to be a mulatto." It is clear that black women were not the only females who had mulatto children. Native American and Englishwomen also gave birth to children of mixed race. In fact, the legislature enacted essentially the same law four separate times in 1691, 1705, 1753, and 1765. It stipulated that "women servants or free Christian white women servants who have a bastard child by a negro or mulatto" must pay a fine, serve an indenture, and have the child bound out to the parish. Quite a few free blacks were born of Englishwomen and gained their free status from their mothers. Determining the numbers and types of mulatto births in Virginia is

difficult without further research. How parents and children were regarded within the diverse communities continues to be a topic of speculation.

Many interactions between blacks and whites were violent. Philip Fithian recounted a boastful overseer near Nomini Hall who described his remedy for slaves who were sullen, obstinant, or idle. Fithian wrote "Says he, Take a Negro, strip him, tie him fast to a post; take then a sharp Curry-Comb, & curry him severely til he is well scraped; & call a Boy with some dry hay, and make the Boy rub him down for several minutes, then salt him, & unlose him. He will attend to his Business." Such acts of violence were common against slaves, who occasionally retaliated. John Greenhow placed an ad in the *Virginia Gazette* on January 17, 1777: "Run away from the subscriber, in Williamsburg, the two following men, viz. Fox, about 40 years old, who is clad in cotton, and about ten days ago beat his overseer and went off. Emanuel, upwards of six feet high, about 26 years old, a strong able fellow, of a daring resolute temper, very subtle [illegible] John Greenhow." The two most common forms of physical retaliation appear to have been arson and poisoning. After James Hubbard's house was set on fire, two slaves were charged with the crime. Isaac, who belonged to Hubbard's wife, Catherine, received the death sentence. Hubbard's slave David was charged with "instigating and abetting." The court found David innocent, but jailed him as a "dangerous person." Courts seldom prosecuted masters for violence against or murder of slaves, especially if the act was the result of correction. The law required testimony from "one lawful and credible witness." Slaves, the most likely witnesses, could not testify against their masters or any other whites.

Conclusion

The unwillingness of whites to recognize the full and equal humanity of blacks led to a plethora of injustices and inhumanities. By the end of the eighteenth century, slavery was no longer an economic and "necessary evil." It had become a way of life and the way many whites defined themselves. The racism that sprang very quickly from the existence of slavery left seeds for future discord, injustices, and psychological and physical trauma. In spite of a variety of legislative decrees that reinforced the slavery system, whites grew increasingly fearful as the numbers of blacks increased. That fear fueled violence. The slave condition was imposed on Africans, and government guaranteed white Virginians the right to manage their human property. But reality belied those guarantees. It was found that a people held in slavery under duress, if not strictly controlled, would violently destroy the bonds of forced servitude and the individuals responsible for that enslavement. Fear of insurrection was perhaps the greatest fear of all. Jefferson wrote, "Deep rooted prejudices entertained by whites; ten thousand recollections by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; . . . will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race." But Jefferson also recognized that slavery could no longer be justified: "Indeed I tremble for my country, when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever: . . . The Almighty has no attribute which can side with us in such a contest." Jefferson was unable to resolve the issue in his private or public life. He found no answers that could adequately satisfy his conscience or finances. Like many of his era, he resolved to let the next generation find its own answers to the problems or race and slavery within American society.

4
"ENSLAVING VIRGINIA" AND THE BECOMING AMERICANS THEME

Diverse People

By the time the English settled Virginia, the practice of enslaving Africans and transporting them to the Americas had been going on for almost 150 years by the Portuguese and Spanish. Slavery took many forms in Africa and in different parts of the Western Hemisphere because of colonization. The institution that developed in British North America developed its own characteristics and practices.

Clashing Interests

The enslaving of Virginia's black population represents a central dynamic in the development of a distinctive Virginia culture. European notions of a structured society with the landed aristocracy on top and entrepreneurial and working classes below were given new definition by slavery. The lines between social groups were simplified by the slave system into free and unfree. Slavery reinforced Anglo Virginians' Eurocentric views of racial and ethnic superiority.

Shared Values

Inherent in the term accommodation is the idea of acceptance, but this was not the case. Since slaves had no access or redress through the legal system, accommodation took on an extremely personal dimension. Often any consideration given a slave was in direct conflict with statute law. Yet master and slave were willing to live with the contradictions so long as the concessions appealed to the slave's sense of family and marginal freedom, and to the master's sense of control and profitability.

Formative Institutions

It might be argued that mere presence of Africans in Virginia eventually led to changes in slave laws. Direct evidence is slight, however. There were a number of revisions of earlier slave codes in the period 1740 to 1770, but the most significant changes occurred after the Revolutionary War. Freeing one's slave became easier, yet punishments became more severe and inhumane.

Partial Freedoms

White Virginians held as their prerogative the ownership of other humans, which was justified on the grounds of racial superiority. Black Virginians were thrust into an environment not of their choosing or making. They tried to find any way possible to maintain family life and a modicum of freedom. Blacks and whites learned how to "play by the rules" even if the rules were contradictory.

Revolutionary Promise

The institution of slavery established an unresolvable, inherent contradiction in Virginia culture that transcended even racial justification. As Virginians imposed a slave system on an entire race of individuals, their actions inadvertently cast their relationship with Great Britain into one of master-slave. The failure of southern colonists to extend their Revolutionary rhetoric to slaves led to petitions and increasing numbers of runaways. Virginians allowed economic interests to cloud their moral judgment.

3
CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER STORYLINES

Just as the institution of slavery cut across every aspect of society in eighteenth-century Virginia, it runs through the interpretation of every Becoming Americans storyline at Colonial Williamsburg.

Taking Possession

The success of Virginia's tobacco economy fueled the desire for continued expansion and development of Virginia's natural resources.

The labor of African Virginians provided much of the manpower for spreading settlement. It was essential to the prosperity of slave owners. In return, slaves were usually allotted only the proportional product of their labor required for bare survival. Initially, the concept of private landowning was as incomprehensible to Africans, who came from societies with a tradition of corporate landholding, as it was to Native Americans. Free Africans and African Virginians quickly recognized the advantages

that private land rights afforded—enhanced social status, greater family security, and a measure of independence. But whites did not permit slaves to participate in these ventures. However, beneath the ordered landscape that freeholding Virginians created, African Virginians imposed a far different structure on the land.

Transforming Family

The presence of Africans profoundly affected the development of family life in Virginia. White households included slaves as members of their extended families. African Virginians developed their own nuclear and extended families within the slave system. Even when disrupted by sales or hiring out, the black family developed the kinship networks essential for strong family ties and bonds.

Buying Respectability

It is most important to recognize that in Virginia, slaves were a commodity, just like other goods. The wealth and status of white Virginians were defined in part by the number of humans they owned. Although slaves in theory could own no property, during the last half of the century, they began to participate in Virginia's consumer culture. Merchants willingly accepted cash that slaves earned from selling produce or by working in their limited free time in exchange for goods they wanted to buy.

Choosing Revolution

Property rights lay at the heart of the choice for revolution in Virginia, and slaves represented a portion of the property white Virginians fought to preserve. Interestingly, revolutionary leaders used terms like "liberty" and "slavery" to defend their property and political rights. In their minds, slavery meant loss of freedom under the tyrannical British government. To Virginia's 200,000 slaves, the words defined their condition in the most personal sense. Hundreds risked their lives to respond to Lord Dunmore's proclamation of November 1775, which offered freedom to the rebels' slaves and indentured servants who rallied to his side. Alternatively, some free blacks chose to enlist in the patriot army or navy. Most of the African Americans who labored actively for the patriot cause did so involuntarily, however. The Virginia government hired slaves to work as wagoners, miners, pilots, hospital attendants, and common laborers. Less often they were employed as soldiers substituting for free men. The government bought others outright. Although a few slaves gained freedom as a result of such service, most were returned to slavery after the war.

Freeing Religion

Africans came to Virginia with a variety of religious beliefs and practices. As the slave population increased, their various religions became creolized. By the mid-eighteenth century, only a few elements of their religions remained intact—particularly the idea of spirit possession. When evangelical Christians began to take blacks into their congregations, their services changed to reflect the inclusion of Africans. Furthermore, several of these denominations began to "ordain" black preachers. In doing so, they opened the door to differences in interpretations of the role of slaves.

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Storyline Team: Christy Matthews, Ywone Edwards, Carson Hudson, Martha Katz-Hyman, Ann Parker, Julie Richter, Marcel Riddick, Anne Willis, Lorena Walsh.

TRANSFORMING FAMILY

Explores changes taking place within black, white, and Native American families, including the contribution of external factors and the inter-relationships between family groups to the development of a new American family.

KEY POINTS

- **Thesis**. *During the eighteenth century, traditional family structures underwent a series of transformations that had a profound effect on the way parents and children and husbands and wives defined themselves in relation to one another and to society at large. Ultimately, these formed the pattern for the "modern American" family.*

- **The Seventeenth Century—Fragmentation**. *The adverse conditions of seventeenth-century Virginia, which made the formation of stable family structures difficult for European and African immigrants, began to ease by the end of the century; however, Native American family patterns continued to be altered by disease, displacement, and warfare.*

- **The White Family—Power**. *The European family was patterned after a patriarchal ideal with the father in a position of supreme authority over an extended family, but the reality of family structure often deviated from that ideal.*

- **The Native American Family—Displacement**. *European observers misunderstood traditional Native American work and family relations, and interaction with Europeans further altered the family structure to the detriment of family roles and survival.*

- **The Black Family—With Influence but Without Power**. *Enslaved Africans, torn from their homeland and denied the stability of legal marriage, created distinctively African-Virginian family structures that relied on African concepts of extended kinships.*

- **The Family Transformed**. *A more openly affectionate, child-centered family that reflected egalitarian republican sentiment and changing roles for men and women began to emerge in gentry and middling white families toward the end of the eighteenth century.*

- **Conclusion**. *This redefined American white family became accepted as part of the ideal of the new American nation; however, there continued to be lack*

of opportunity for some members of that white family, for poor whites, and for Native-American and African-American families.

I
NARRATIVE

Background and Thesis

Americans today often express concern over the changing American family, changes that they often perceive as a threat to the so-called "traditional family" and the enduring moral and cultural values it is presumed to embody. At Colonial Williamsburg we have an opportunity to shed the light of hindsight on this discussion by helping our visitors understand that the family, like other human institutions, is both an agent of change and product of ongoing historical forces.

There has never been just one type of family. African, Native American, and European peoples have each had their own traditional family structures, ceremonies, rites of passage, and taboos. Moreover, there have always been variations among individual families. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the structure of traditional families underwent transformations that had a profound effect on the way parents and children and husbands and wives perceived themselves one to another and in relation to the larger society. Native Americans and Africans, uprooted from their traditional homelands, cut off from their customary family practices, and subjected to the will of white Virginians, experienced fewer opportunities to establish customary family relations and often were obliged to adapt to new circumstances or face extinction.

By the end of the eighteenth century the white American family had begun developing a family structure that we now recognize as modern: one that was essentially nuclear, openly affectionate, child-centered, relatively egalitarian, and at the same time also individualistic. Such families appeared first among the gentry. Little by little they became a model for other groups and, eventually, the pattern for the modern American family, or, paradoxically, what we again often refer to as the "traditional" family.

Surviving the Seventeenth Century

European immigration to the Chesapeake irrevocably undermined the institution of the Native American family as disease, displacement, and intensified intertribal warfare disseminated native populations. Likewise, among transplanted African and European peoples, family development was arrested, or at least radically skewed, by the unhealthy conditions of the tidewater environment and the demographics of the early immigration. Endemic fevers and intestinal diseases killed young and old indiscriminately. Before 1640, a European immigrant to the Chesapeake had a fifty-fifty chance of dying in his first year. The vast majority of those newcomers were male indentured servants. In the early years, there were seven men for every woman. Long periods of indenture delayed marriage for many immigrants. A quarter of all children

died before their first birthday, and half of all marriages saw the death of one partner before the seventh anniversary. For African immigrants, the horrors of the Middle Passage and harsh working conditions in the New World made for an even grimmer story.

These circumstances populated the Virginia colony with many orphans, half-siblings, step-children, and foster parents. Because there were more men than women and because wives typically survived their husbands, white women enjoyed unusual opportunities to head households and accumulate property in their own names. One historian even speaks of a seventeenth-century "widow-archy."

The development of the African family was shaped by the increasing institutionalization of slavery as defined by Virginia law. A 1662 statute decreed that the status of a black child was automatically determined by the freedom or slavery of the mother. Subsequent laws restricted interracial marriage, mandated different treatment for mulatto children, and encouraged the harsh punishment of slaves. These decrees further defined the difference between black and white family life and further affirmed the power of the white master.

Conditions adverse to family formation began to improve for Virginia-born black and white settlers by the end of the seventeenth century. For instance, life expectancy rose and the numbers of men and women grew more equal. The Virginia-born white population began to replace itself. Marriages for whites took place earlier, lasted longer, and produced more surviving children. These more stable conditions allowed for a more normal course of family development.

The Function of the Family

Historically, the family was the basic political, religious, social, and economic unit in society, as much a public as a private institution. It educated the young, was the first level of government, and cared for the sick, the elderly, and the disabled. Any family that we choose to show here in Williamsburg was involved in one or all of these essential functions, but their specific ideas about families and their customs of family life varied with each cultural group—African, European, or Native American.

The Patriarchal Ideal

The traditional ideal of family structure that British immigrants brought to Virginia was a patriarchal system where the father figure held a position of supreme authority over his wife, children, and all other dependents living in the household. This concept of authority and dependency defined the family. All persons subject to the authority of the householder were considered members of the family—immediate family members, dependent kin, hired help, tenants, indentured servants, apprentices, and slaves.

For some wealthy Virginia planters, patriarchal authority served their dynastic aspirations of perpetuating the power and influence of the house or lineage. Most important was preserving the ownership of family lands intact. The custom of primogeniture (inheritance by the eldest son) and entail (legal proscription against the sale or grant of land outside the lineage) supported these dynastic ambitions. The ability of fathers to will land to their sons when they came of age or married reinforced the patriarch's authority. For daughters, on the other hand, inheritances and marriage gifts

usually took the form of slaves and livestock rather than grants of land.

These dynastic planter families developed extensive and interwoven kinship networks that protected family wealth and concentrated political power in family hands. The political structure of the colony was inextricably linked to the kinship structure of these leading families all the way from county offices to the Virginia Council. For example, the extended Blair family of Williamsburg provided leadership for the College, the Council, the Church, and the local courts and connected the Blairs to many other influential families both within the Williamsburg community and throughout the colony at large.

The families of small planters and the many artisans and shopkeepers of Williamsburg built a sense of family through work. Home and workplace were frequently housed under the same roof or occupied adjacent buildings. Here the patrimony bequeathed to children was often the craft or business skills that earned the family income. For people like the Geddys, the family was a production unit where roles were determined by age and sex and where apprentices, slaves, and journeymen were no less important to economic success than parents and children.

An individual could be a member of several families during his or her lifetime. One might grow up in one family, apprentice in another, work as a journeyman or maid servant in another, set up a business, get married and become head or mistress of one's own family, and in old age become a dependent in someone else's home. When young Daniel Hoye was apprenticed to Williamsburg artisan Benjamin Powell in the early 1750s, he left the home of the Warwick County family he had been born into, moved to Williamsburg, and

became part of the Powell family. After several years of service to Mr. Powell, he established himself as a wheelwright, married, and started his own family in the capital city.

The social, cultural, and business opportunities available in Williamsburg attracted large numbers of single young people. Apprentices, including orphan apprentices from England such as Thomas Everard and William Prentis, young single women such as Elizabeth Wythe's niece Mary Taliaferro and Betty Randolph's niece Elizabeth Harrison, and college students such as Thomas Jefferson and Nathaniel Burwell lived with Williamsburg families for varying lengths of time. Some of these young people married and remained in the Williamsburg area.

Whether as large as a family dynasty or as modest as a tradesman's household, the patriarchal system replicated the structure and reinforced the authority of the state. A father's role and responsibilities in the family mirrored in miniature the patriarchal relationship of a monarch to his people.

The Patriarchal Reality

Theory had it that patriarchal authority resided in a male head of the family. But reality did not always follow theory. The role of women often extended beyond their traditional domestic sphere, important as that was in its own right. Although society expected young white women to marry, several spinsters established prosperous businesses in Williamsburg, including English milliners Margaret and Jane Hunter. Jane later married wigmaker Edward Charlton and joined him in his business.

Ordinary tradesmen and small planters depended on the labor of their wives and children in the workshop or in the field. The severe illness or death of a husband or father often reversed traditional roles and created situations where the "patriarch" of the family was in fact a woman. Clementina Rind assisted her husband William Rind, public printer and editor of the *Virginia Gazette*. Later she assumed these duties singlehandedly during his illness and took over the printing business after his death, which included being appointed public printer. At the same time, she assumed full responsibility for rearing their five children until she died the following year.

While coping with the emotional stress of the loss of a husband, widows often had to contend with the financial challenges brought on by the loss of family income. On learning that her husband's estate was deeply in debt, Elizabeth Hay, widow of Raleigh Tavern owner and keeper Anthony Hay, renounced her legacy and claimed her widow's dower (the common rights of a widow to a life interest of one third of her husband's pre-debt property) that was a more advantageous settlement for herself and her children. Likewise, Anne Geddy became the guardian of her children and was solely responsible for their welfare and education. As femme sole executrix of her husband's estate, she was able to bring legal action and conduct business in her own right.

Young widows in colonial Virginia typically remarried quickly; older widows often remained single and exercised the power due to heads of households. Living in Williamsburg made it easier for a widow to remain single because nearby friends provided support and the bustling life of the town afforded economic opportunities.

Widows such as midwife Catherine Blaikley and tavern keepers Jane Vobe and Christiana Campbell became successful businesswomen. Widow Ann Wager decided to leave her position as private tutor at Carter's Grove to take employment as mistress of the Bray School in Williamsburg.

Women often turned to networks of family and friends during times of illness and family need. Teenager Frances Baylor Hill of Hillsborough Plantation stayed with her sister during the days before her sister's death following childbirth and then was one of the family members who stood for the christening of the baby. Living in Williamsburg made such interactions more convenient and immediate. The tolling of the church bell, for instance, informed the entire community of the death of one of its members.

Not all marriages were happy, but divorce was not an alternative in colonial Virginia. Couples with marital problems had only a few choices open to them—apply to the court for a separation (seldom requested), work it out, put up with it, or separate without a legal agreement.

The death of one or both parents was a common occurrence in the Chesapeake colonies. Virginia passed legislation that provided for the care and education of orphans as early as the 1640s. Orphans with assets received an education according to the level of income that their estates could sustain. When an orphan had no estate or one so small it could not subsidize "book education," churchwardens bound the child out to learn a trade. Guardians were required to account for the integrity of the orphan's estate. For the white population, the law and the church supported and protected both marriage and the family unity.

"How Indian Mothers Carry Their Children" from Helen Rountree, Powhatan Indians of Virginia, Fig. 21. Grihelin's engraving of women and a baby in a cradle board. The engraving is based on two paintings by John White. The figure on the left has been updated to show a woman in a late-seventeenth-century matchcoat and leggings of duffels, while the depiction of the cradle board is an original based on Robert Beverley's account. Courtesy of University of North Carolina Press.

First Families of Virginia

Native American family life was both different from and transformed by contact with European culture. British observers (mostly male) regarded gender roles and marital customs among the Indians as an abdication of men's proper paternal authority, and they viewed the lavishly affectionate and seemingly permissive treatment of Indian children as invitations to anarchy. Cultural blindness often misconstrued even similarities in the customs of the two peoples. Whites, for example, took the Indian's courtship practice of presenting a prospective bride's family with skins or other goods as evidence that brides were bought like commodities even though it was similarly commonplace for both European and African suitors to be required to demonstrate their ability to support a family.

Most of the native cultures were matrilineal, meaning that family membership and descent were traced through the mother's side. Often a son in an Algonquin family had a particularly strong relationship with a maternal uncle who took responsibility for much of his education. Married men had obligations to two households, to their wives and children on one hand and to their mothers' people on the other. Occasionally Native American women inherited positions as rulers. Though most men had only one wife, divorce seems to have been relatively easy and considerable sexual freedom was not inconsistent with the idea of marriage. Adultery resulted only when a liaison was not sanctioned by the spouse. Powhatan children were shown much affection by their relatives, and punishing children by beating them was not part of their culture before Europeans taught them otherwise.

Work was rigidly allocated by gender. Women bore responsibility for growing crops (though men helped clear the land), erecting houses, making household utensils, carrying burdens when the family moved, gathering firewood, and, of course, rearing children. Hunting, fishing, and waging war were the men's jobs that often took them away from home for long periods of time. Men also made and maintained most of the implements related to these occupations.

Europeans viewed this division of labor in the light of their own preconceptions. They regarded Powhatan men as lazy and idle, engaged only in the leisure activities of fishing or hunting while the women were exploited and condemned to a life of drudgery. In fact, the economic contributions of both sexes were roughly equal, and women's work may not have been regarded by the Indians themselves as demeaning or less important than that of the men until later.

Cultural misunderstandings between these peoples were seldom bridged by well-meant attempts at indoctrination such as were offered by instructors at the Indian School at the College of William and Mary. Indians showed little interest in availing themselves of that opportunity, and those who did attend soon returned to their native ways. Occasionally, successful students such as John Nettles and John Montour used their English education to aid their own people by becoming skilled interpreters. Generally speaking, Native Americans appear to have had little desire to acquire European culture, however much they valued some products of the white man's technology.

There were, of course, some mixed families. Frontiersmen sometimes married Indian women. Indians occasionally

intermarried with blacks. But there is little evidence of conscious inclusion of Native American attitudes and practices in European or African family customs despite some coincidental similarities.

The negative impact of the European presence on Native American families was enormous. Disease and displacement led to high mortality and low birth rates. The proximity of white settlements disrupted the delicate system of land use on which the Indians depended. An influx of European trade goods displaced native craft technologies. The appetite of European markets for the hunter's furs and hides exaggerated the importance of the male role in Indian society and devalued that of the female. Indians responded to these disruptive influences in many different ways, from acceptance to adaptation to resistance and outright rejection. Ultimately, unremitting pressure from European newcomers meant that the less numerous and technologically disadvantaged peoples were pushed to the brink of extinction.

Yet they managed to survive, even though their indigenous cultural patterns were distorted or destroyed. In an effort to minimize European influences, the Pamunkey Indians prohibited women married to white men from living on tribal lands as long as their marriage lasted. Nonetheless, notions of patrilineal descent and other foreign customs crept in. A visitor to the Pamunkeys in 1759 found them living in traditional Yi Hakans but wearing English clothes. Thomas Jefferson wrote in his *Notes on Virginia* that "There remain of the Mattaponies three or four men only . . . They have lost their language and have reduced themselves to about fifty acres of Land . . . The Pamunkies are reduced to about 10 or 12 men . . . The older ones

among them preserved their language in a small degree, which are the last vestiges on earth as far as we know, of the Powhatan language." Today, the Mattaponi and Pamunkey Indians are two of the eight remaining tribes of Virginia.

Black Families

The history of the African-Virginian family is the story of a struggle to rebuild stable family institutions to fill the emotional, cultural, and spiritual void created when African people were torn from their homeland. The resulting hybrid family structures incorporated African, European, and distinctively African-Virginian elements.

Among the West African peoples from whom Virginia's slave population ultimately derived, the ties of kinship operated at every level of society and in almost every aspect of an individual's life. Each person identified himself or herself as a member of a people, a clan, a family, and a household. A people was the national grouping, unified by language and culture. The clan was the largest subdivision of a people, by definition a kinship grouping since every member of a clan traced descent from a common ancestor, either through the father's or the mother's line. The family included not just parents and children but also grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and other relatives. The household was the smallest unit of family. It was restricted to parents, children, and sometimes grandparents—what J. S. Mibiti has referred to as the "family at night." In West African families there was a tradition of wives being subordinate to their husbands. But authority was more dispersed than is was in patriarchal European families. Parental responsibilities, such as the care and education of children, were shared with a

broader kin group. Grandparents and other older kin passed on family and clan history and traditional lore. A modern West African saying, "It takes a village to raise a child," sums up this intertwining of family responsibilities.

West African kinship connections extended laterally in one dimension to bind an individual to nearly everyone in the locality and also vertically (or historically) to connect living men and women with departed ancestors and children yet unborn. Social behavior and familial obligations were determined by the nature of kinship links between individuals. Through the elaboration of kin ties, a person could have hundreds of "fathers," "mothers," "uncles," and "brothers." As a community was regarded as an organic whole bound by intricate ties of kinship, so the life of individuals within that community derived its deepest meaning from its unity with the communal existence. A person's physical, emotional, and spiritual growth throughout life was marked by rites of passage that signified a progressive integration into the corporate body of kin, both living and dead.

For Africans enslaved and transported to Virginia, this living web of kinship ties that gave order, meaning, and continuity to existence was swept away at a single blow. Slaves suffered a "social death," to use historian Orlando Patterson's phrase. The challenge facing transportees was to build kinship anew in an alien land. How much these new networks were of African origin, how much patterned on European models, how much improvised from scratch to fit the exigencies of the new land and the constraints of slavery are questions much debated by historians, and they will probably continue to be. Some, like E. Franklin Frazier, believed that there was little evidence that

African culture exerted any influence on the African-American family. "Probably never before in history," he wrote, "has a people been so completely stripped of its social heritage as the Negroes who were brought to America." Herbert Gutman makes a more plausible argument when he sets out a four-stage process of destruction and re-birth: the initial West-African kinship patterns; their eradication by slavery and replacement by non-kin relationships with symbolic (or fictive) functions; the emergence of a real African-American slave family and, at the same time, fictive kin networks; and finally, a transformation (or extension) of ideas about family and kin into a broader concept of allegiance to the black community as a whole. Whether derived from African tradition or developing from the Virginia experience, the extended kin network and the fictive kinship concept were vitally important to the black men and women, whether slave or free, in eighteenth-century Virginia.

Efforts by seventeenth-century African immigrants to form families were hindered initially by the same high rates of mortality and skewed sex ratios that Europeans experienced. Transported African women had an unusually low birth rate, owing possibly to the trauma of the Middle Passage and the harsh working conditions upon their arrival, possibly to traditionally longer nursing periods among Africans and accompanying sexual abstinence, or possibly to many women's unwillingness to bear children in servitude. Eventually the native-born population began to replace itself. By the second quarter of the eighteenth century, slaves were living longer and in greater numbers. Concentrations of blacks on some of the larger plantations gave them the opportunity to develop a more stable family

life and a certain degree of autonomy in their quarters.

Of course, for any slave, stability was only for here and now. The legal and religious institutions that supported marriage and families for the dominant white population were indifferent or hostile to the preservation of the black family. Slave marriages were not officially recognized by law or the established church, although masters sometimes encouraged slave marriages for their own convenience. Some masters attempted to keep slave families together but circumstances—bankruptcy or the master's death—could break them up at any time. When childless widow Betty Randolph died, her will mandated the dispersal of a large number of her slaves. In the second half of the century, slave couples who had frequently lived in the same area for several generations were frequently separated from one another or from their children by the relocation of white families or their younger sons to the Piedmont and the frontier beyond as well as by the movement of people into growing towns like Richmond, Norfolk, Petersburg, Fredericksburg, Alexandria and, until 1780, Williamsburg. Others were uprooted when surplus slaves were sold away from their families to new masters living further West and South or were hired out by their masters and worked far away for long periods of time.

Despite all these obstacles and uncertainties, black men and women continued to form unions, joining together in marriage ceremonies that often combined African and European traditions. Many husbands and wives were owned by different masters and lived apart. Sometimes they traveled long distances at night to visit one another. This "night-walking," a family institution born of necessity, employed a

network of foot trails that became physical landmarks of the family ties that bound together the black community. Numerous advertisements in *The Virginia Gazette* recording master's suspicions that their slaves had run away to join their families testify to the fact whites recognized the reality, if not the legality, of slave family relationships and had to deal with the determination of the runaways to preserve these connections at great personal risk.

One unalterable condition of life for any member of a slave family was a dependency on one or more white families. Enforced subservience created complexities of authority, obligation, and familial loyalty that must often have required a good bit of diplomacy, resourcefulness, and skill to negotiate safely. Both in towns like Williamsburg, with large populations of slave domestics but few separate quarters, and in the country where slaves often had more private living space, the influence of white and black families on one another must have been great. Children of both races played together until their serious education for adult roles began. Young teen-age slave girls provided much of the child-care in white gentry families. Reciprocal (if unequal) influences continued through life in work rhythms, living spaces, child-rearing practices, speech patterns, and religious sensibilities.

Sometimes the interconnection between black and white families was not simply a matter of dependency but also a connection by blood. Documentation from a variety of sources attests to the growing number of mulattoes in the eighteenth-century population. Laws forbade marriage between blacks and whites, but there had always been interracial unions. Some were voluntary, based on genuine affection and sometimes of

TRANSFORMING FAMILY

long duration. Just as often, the absolute authority of masters and the powerlessness of slaves led to incidents of rape and other forms of sexual exploitation. Black women had no protection or legal recourse from these indignities. Occasionally a mulatto child, especially if the mother and father were bound by an affectionate and long-term alliance, attained tacit acceptance or a position of favor in the white master's family. One thinks of John Custis's mulatto son, Jack, or members of the Hemings family at Monticello.

Not all African-Virginian families of the eighteenth century were enslaved. There were a handful of free blacks living in Williamsburg. Others resided in adjoining James City and York counties. Though they comprised only about three to four percent of the total population in eastern Virginia, some families included both slaves and free blacks. The laws did not apply equally to free blacks and whites. Free black women over sixteen years old remained tithable until 1769 while their white sisters were not. That law imposed a burden on free black families that whites escaped.

Williamsburg carter, Matthew Ashby, was the son of a white woman and a black man, a union that made him a free man ultimately. But, because his mother was an indentured servant at the time of Matthew's birth, she was required to serve an additional five years. Because his father was black, Matthew was indentured until he was thirty-one, not twenty-one. Matthew's freedom did not extend to his children because their mother—Matthew's wife—was a slave. In 1769 he purchased her and the children from their owner; shortly thereafter he petitioned the governor and Virginia Council for permission to manumit his

family. His petition was granted not long before his death in 1771.

The establishment of stable, emotionally and spiritually nurturing black families is a story of unremitting struggle against great odds. Slaves showed a tenacious determination to make something good out of the most unpromising circumstances. The successful formation of the African American family takes its rightful place in American history beside the other stories of heroism in the "struggle to be free and equal."

The Family Transformed

During the course of the eighteenth century, relationships within gentry families underwent a fundamental change that set new standards. They were gradually emulated throughout society. Historians sometimes call this phenomenon "the rise of the affectionate family." The new family ideals made hard work a virtue and upward mobility its just reward. The nuclear family became the incubator of the republican ethos. Visitors to Colonial Williamsburg should see in this late eighteenth-century family an early reflection of the individualistic child-centered world of today.

The Nurturing Family

Marriages in gentry families were more often made for love during the later half of the eighteenth century than the unions between power families they had been before. The importance accorded to romance was reflected in a growing body of literature concerned with the quest for the one perfect partner. Relations between family members became less formal and hierarchical and more openly emotional. The family turned inward. It ceased to be merely a microcosm

of the larger, hierarchical society, and its public functions were gradually subordinated to its private ones. The family was increasingly regarded as a refuge from the strife and competition of the outside world and a haven for nobler principles of love, self-sacrifice, and devotion to spouses and children.

The traditional authoritarian role played by parents gave way to affectionate bonds and the relation of husbands to wives became more companionable. Edmund Randolph acknowledged the influence his wife had over his beliefs and attitudes. St. George Tucker wrote unabashedly emotional poetry to his wife Frances during their courtship and marriage and memorialized her with tender sentiments after her death.

Fathers took a more active role in day-to-day childrearing. St. George Tucker gives us an excellent example. As a widower, his rules for governing the household showed his reliance on humor instead of physical punishment to mold the behavior of his children. He often referred to his children playfully as " vagabonds," "rogues," "sweet brats," and even "my little monkies."

Women became more active in the spiritual direction they gave their children and servants. Obituaries, especially of young women like Elizabeth Prentis and Frances Horrocks, emphasized the importance of faith and the value of women within a family. They also reflected a more open, unrestrained grieving process.

Childhood Assumes New Importance

Along with the new emphasis on emotional values came a basic change in the way children were perceived. Infants and young children became a focus of family life and their development a source of delight to adults. Parents began giving children pet names, distinctive clothing, juvenile books, playthings, and self-consciously educational experiences. A flood books on child-care and children's behavior tapped a growing interest in the art and science of child rearing. Adolescent children enjoyed more autonomy and exercised more choice in the selection of marriage partners and careers. Parents continued to believe in the importance of raising children to be upright, moral, independent members of society; only the form of educating children changed.

Families in the middle of the eighteenth century typically included six to eight children despite the fact that stillbirths and miscarriages were common for both black and white women. Fear for the health of both newborn child and mother was part of every childbirth experience. Often laying in was a time when female family and friends rallied in support.

Parents have mourned the loss of a child throughout history. The eighteenth century was no different. The form of grieving became more openly emotional in these years as an enhanced appreciation for the importance of the individual extended to the importance accorded to children. Landon Carter noted that his slave Winny was "greatly affected" with the loss of one of her children, as he was himself when, a few days later, his own daughter fell ill and died while he was away from home. The deaths of no less than four of Frances and Robert Carter's children must have brought great sadness to these residents of Palace Street in Williamsburg and may have been a factor in the family's decision to move back to Nomini Hall.

1800 Woodcut by Thomas Bewick and His School

The New American Family

The design of dwellings reflected changing social relationships in the family— passages allowed for more privacy, beds were relegated to upstairs or back rooms, and entertainment spaces brought people together for dining and dancing. The socially driven demand for new domestic activities led to the acquisition of the necessary "tools" to carry on those activities. New consumer goods, such as tea equipage, changed how family members—parents, children, and slaves—used the home. The larger proportion of black women to black men in Williamsburg suggests an ample domestic labor force. Household servants gave more time for social activities. Upward social mobility required appropriate social spaces and the proper accouterments. Some artisan families, like the Powells and Geddys, were able to marry socially accomplished daughters into the lower gentry.

A surplus of white men residing in the capital city may explain why some young women were successful in taking partners from higher social ranks. Living in Williamsburg had other benefits. Parents who could afford to school their children in music, dance, and deportment found ready access to instructors and tutors in the social arts. While living in town, the Robert Carter family took advantage of these opportunities to enrich their children's education. After they returned to Nomini Hall, it was necessary to employ a live-in tutor and engage the services of an itinerant music and dance master.

Marriages within the Williamsburg community mixed classes and occupations. The Blair family crossed several status lines. Blair daughters and granddaughters allied themselves with the families of local merchants, college faculty, and professionals through marriages to Armistead Burwell, Robert Andrews, and Dr. George Gilmer. The daughters of town clerk Joseph Davenport married cabinetmaker/tavern keeper Anthony Hay, Yorktown butcher Patrick Matthews, merchants John Greenhow and William Holt, and printers Alexander Purdie and Augustine Davis.

The new family sensibilities that gained acceptance by the end of the eighteenth century struck a sympathetic chord with the nation's republican sentiments. The breakdown in paternal authority paralleled the rejection of the patriarchal authority of the English monarch. The substitution of a more egalitarian social ideal in place of a hierarchial one was mirrored in the more equal and rational sharing of authority in the family. The self-image of successful middling families became more self-assured, less accepting of subordination, and more confident of their own middle class values.

War and the New Nation Force Further Change

Family life was altered in other ways as husbands left for war leaving behind wives who found themselves temporarily (or sometimes permanently) single parents. St. George Tucker's letters record the strain that separation imposed. The roles of wives expanded as they assumed duties usually performed by their absent husbands. Children, as always, had to adapt to changing family conditions. The post-war ideology of republicanism changed people's thinking about education. Girls received more of it, and mothers were expected to take primary responsibility for instructing children in the virtues necessary to a new republic.

There was also a loss of opportunity for some families in the new nation. Deprived of land, population, and important aspects of their traditional culture, Native Americans were repeatedly uprooted and often obliged to improvise family life. Slave families still lacked legal rights. Eve and her son George, who ran away from Betty Randolph on hearing about Dunmore's Proclamation, found small comfort for their act of courage and desperation. The opening of the frontier and the cotton lands farther south after the Revolution meant that separation of African-American families was often permanent, distant, and final.

Moving Towards Today's Family—An Epilogue

Historian Stephanie Grauman Wolf says, "More modest nuclear families, ones that gave each of the children a chance through education, love and a comfortable existence . . . were, in a way, the right kind of family structure for the new nation with its emphasis on individual attainment." Her statement refers to an archetype that was beginning to emerge among some white middling and gentry families toward the end of the period we interpret at Colonial Williamsburg. Over the next two hundred years, there would continue to be momentous changes in American society that profoundly affected families of all economic and ethnic groups. Westward expansion, new waves of immigration, the growth (and diminishing) of economic opportunity, eight wars, the abolition of slavery, the Victorian codification of behavior, the industrialization and urbanization of America, the civil rights struggle, the women's movement, the iconoclasm of the tumultuous 1960s, and changes occurring in society today have all helped shape families as we now know them and the idea of family as we think it should be. Yet, behind all the apparent differences, some characteristic features of the modern American family, and these not the least important, are a legacy of the eighteenth century.

2
"TRANSFORMING FAMILY" AND THE BECOMING AMERICANS THEME

Diverse Peoples

Native Americans, Africans, and British colonists held different cultural perceptions of the family. These understandings underwent profound alterations in response to the New World environment and in reaction to each of the other groups. The highly abnormal demographic conditions of the seventeenth century delayed and stunted the formation of families. Family life was further reshaped when whites imported Africans to labor on their plantations. New settlements by Europeans and their slaves pushed the Indians from their traditional homelands.

Clashing Interests

Most Europeans took Native American family customs to be outlandish and debased. As patriarchal slave masters, whites intervened profoundly and often peremptorily on the family experience of their bondsmen and imposed laws that relegated African

Virginians to the status of outsiders and inferiors.

Some members of the gentry resisted the changes that overtook many families by the third quarter of the eighteenth century. The friction between Landon Carter and his son and daughter-in-law can be interpreted as either a generational disagreement over family relations or as an expression of individual preferences. At all times variation among individuals about what a family should be added diversity to the society.

Shared Values

Africans, Native Americans, and Europeans all place high value on children, family relationships, and kinship networks. As African Virginians helped raise white children, lived and worked in close proximity to whites, and further interacted with the master's family, accommodation between the races, coping, and an unconscious exchange of values took place. The experience of living in Williamsburg could be a positive one for both a Sarah Trebell and her family's slave, Eady. Both black and white Williamsburg children had some opportunity for schooling. After the war, the adoption of a more egalitarian sharing of authority began to set a standard that was comprehended by all levels of society and is perceived as important even today.

Formative Institutions

White masters began to show more tacit acceptance of the importance of slave families, but neither law nor the church sanctioned slave marriages. Law enforced the moral teachings of the Anglican Church regarding acceptable social behavior and the treatment of dependents such as apprentices,

servants, and slaves. Education was regarded as the chief means to pass one society's values and rules to the next generation. The home was the unchallenged center for education, religious learning, and spiritual development.

Partial Freedoms

Gentry families enjoyed more freedom in their family relationships by the third quarter of the eighteenth century. These new attitudes had no effect on slave families, of course, nor were they felt in all white families, or even all members of upper class families. For example, although the woman's role in a family was recognized as important by both husband and wife, women's lives continued to be narrowly defined and they were seldom educated to their full potential. The black family experience continued to be fragile. The opportunity for education for most black children faded as the Bray School closed its doors at the death of Ann Wager; although masters, such as George Wythe, occasionally taught individual slaves to read. Few slave families responding to Dunmore's Proclamation achieved freedom. Native Americans families continued to be confined to reservations in the East or pushed beyond the margins of the frontier in the West.

Revolutionary Promise

Changes in white family values and experience heralded transformations even before the Revolution. Those families with skills, material goods, and the knowledge of the appropriate behaviors had increased opportunity for social mobility. Nevertheless, the limiting forces of racism and lack of opportunity for Native American and slave families to participate in the new republic remained to be an unfulfilled promise. A few

slaves, such as "Saul, the property of George Kelly Esquire," whose petition was brought before the 1792 Virginia Assembly, were granted freedom for service to the Revolutionary cause. Virginia law recognized that some marriages were not successful and limited divorce became available in Virginia, and in the rest of the nation. After the war, educating children for participation in the new republic helped give an optimism that became part of the expectations for the new nation. The transformed white American family became a cornerstone of American identity.

3
CONNECTIONS TO OTHER BECOMING AMERICANS STORYLINES

Taking Possession

Settling the land displaced Native American families and changed their economic and family patterns. Since land and labor were factors for the success of whites, the settlement of the land was important to their family life. Settlement of the frontier altered traditional white family government and younger sons could own land earlier in their lives. Settlement of the frontier also reformed family life for blacks because they were forced to leave family members behind when their masters moved. Because Western landowners had fewer slaves, family formation was difficult for those African Virginians.

Enslaving Virginia

Although Africans came to Virginia with concepts of family, slavery altered traditional patterns by not allowing legal marriage and separating families by gift or sale. The authority in the slave family ultimately rested with the white master and that redefined customary relationships. The close proximity of blacks to white masters in domestic service in a family required accommodation on the part of both of them.

Buying Respectability

As more families had more access to more goods, more domestic labor, and opportunities for lessons in deportment, music, and other genteel behaviors occurred, the interactions of the family changed. Lessons, particularly in urban Williamsburg, were available to many. The market economy recognized the importance of childhood and created books about child care along with a variety of toys, games, and books for children. Families accumulated more goods that had to be cared for by both mistress and domestic slave. Mistresses spent more time in supervising the household and, freed from the burden of physical labor, had more time for educating the family. These changes both improved family comfort and allowed for social mobility. Society accepted these goods as symbols and the outward behaviors associated with using them as indicators of status.

Choosing Revolution

The family was both the agent for and a product of the historical process. The lessening of paternalism in the larger society paralleled changes in family relationships.

The Revolutionary War gave wives new responsibilities in the absence of their husbands. War, then as always, required children to adapt and adjust. After the war, the new republic idealized aspects of family and educational opportunities for females increased.

Freeing Religion

White women were appreciated as models for piety, generators of family religious faith, and teachers of young Virginians. The church was responsible for the care of the dependent—the orphans and the destitute. Yet, both church and law only supported white families, apprentices, and widows.

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Storyline Team: Anne Schone, Antoinette Brennan, Patricia Gibbs, George Hassell, Kimberly Ivey, Rose McAphee, Noel Poirier, Diane Schwarz, Laura Treese, Margie Weiler.

BUYING RESPECTABILITY

Tells the story of the "consumer revolution," a transformation in people's standards and styles of living that revolutionized trade, commerce, technology, and ultimately, the way people lived at every level of society.

- *Background. During the Middle Ages, everyday domestic life among all classes (except the nobility) involved very little in the way of clothing, furniture, and food-related equipment, and a person's reputation was measured by the amount of land, labor, and livestock his neighbors knew he owned.*

- *Rising Demand. By the eighteenth century, for the first time in history, growing numbers of ordinary people in northern Europe and America began demanding and acquiring newly available consumer goods, using services, and engaging in social, recreational, and educational activities that went far beyond meeting or improving their basic physical comforts.*

- *Creating an Image. Seeking respectability within an increasingly mobile society, successful image makers in Virginia dressed in the latest London fashions and built houses suitable for entertaining. They furnished these houses with new specialized forms of furniture, took tea from fashionable tea wares, and learned the rules of polished behavior that reaffirmed their position within their social station and differentiated them from those of a lower rank.*

- *Selling Respectability. By mid-century local tradesmen and merchants offered an over increasing variety of consumer goods and services, supported by advances in British business practices and industrial technology.*

- *Democratization. Widespread possession of fashion-bearing, status-giving, store-bought culture, combined with etiquette book manners, contributed to a novel idea—equality—a belief in every person's equal worth and his right to pursue a better life.*

- *Clashing Interests. The consumer revolution was 1) rejected by some, 2) disadvantaged other, and 3) set in motion a tug-of-war between haves and have-nots, slave and free, men and women, country and city, and different religious groups that was played out in numerous circumstances.*

- *Coming of the Revolution. The widely shared democratic experience of consumption enabled Americans of differing backgrounds to express, with one voice, their anger with Parliament and their resolve to oppose its unjust laws.*

I
NARRATIVE

Background and Thesis

Enter the great hall of a medieval house in the English countryside. It is home to a well-to-do baron and his family, but the amenities for comfort seem few and far between. There is no chimney, so smoke from the massive central hearth lingers in the air before reaching the high rafters. Over the fire hang huge pots for boiling potages and stews, the typical meals. The vast, multi-purpose room is quite dark since there are few windows. Peering through the gloom, we see that the hall, though large, contains almost no furniture. Tapestries cover rough walls. On great occasions tables—merely unfinished boards laid on trestles—are set in place and covered with lavish linens. Backless benches seat the diners, and cupboards line the walls. Finely wrought silver and gold cups and platters (just for honored guests at the head table) are now stored away under lock and key, as such precious items are displayed only when visitors are present to admire them. Diners are expected to scoop up their stew from vast communal vessels with fingers and spear chunks of meat with the knife each carries in his belt. The master and mistress sleep upstairs in the chamber in an impressive bed decorated with lush and luxurious textiles that offer privacy and warmth. They own few articles of clothing, perhaps some jewelry, and certainly many weapons. Before the seventeenth century, being rich meant having more but not really being different from one's poorer neighbors. With the first flush of new wealth, successful Britons acquired more of the basics—usually bedding, perhaps even a bedstead, and additional cooking equipment

for a wider range of foods. The medieval person's reputation was a matter of common knowledge within the community, measured by the amount of land, labor, and livestock his neighbors knew he owned.

Generations later in colonial Virginia's small capital city, Peyton and Betty Randolph live in a handsome frame house with glazed sash windows. With their four rooms upstairs and four down, they have adequate and specialized spaces for entertaining family and a select group of associates. The Randolphs own all the right equipment to engage in a variety of genteel activities—witness their parlor with a dozen mahogany chairs, a looking glass, a card table, two tea tables, sets of china, and a fine Wilton carpet on the floor. Across the wide central passage in the newly constructed wing of the house is the dining room, designed for formal meals. Again, a carpet covers the floor. Two tables and twelve chairs, all made of imported mahogany, stand ready to be assembled in the middle of the room. From the bowfat comes a variety of specialized dinner ware—dozens of china plates, bowls, and mugs, wine glasses, beer glasses, punch glasses, water glasses, silver knives and forks, and coffee cups and saucers. Service is an important part of the Randolphs' dining practice, as specialized tools such as the side board table, soup tureen, sauce boats, tray, decanters, six japanned waiters, and the tea board attest.

The transformation in the way people lived from the Middle Ages to the period we interpret at Colonial Williamsburg is almost unimaginable to twentieth-century people.

What caused this drastic change in lifestyle and greatly improved standard of living? Many factors seem to have combined to bring new consumer goods into the lives of nearly everyone in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One certainty is that incomes were rising during this period so that more people had more money left after they had acquired the necessities of life. Historians are still struggling with the relationship between supply and demand, but it is clear that mechanization, the factory system, faster, cheaper transportation, and the Industrial Revolution were all preceded by something we now call the "consumer revolution." The term refers to a basic transformation in people's expectations. By the eighteenth century, for the first time in history, many people of lower than aristocratic rank began demanding goods and services that went far beyond meeting or improving their basic physical comforts.

Why this new demand? As society became more mobile, people could no longer rely on land, livestock, and great houses to communicate status. By the late seventeenth century, growing numbers of ordinary men and women began demanding the material goods that signaled respectability. These desires went well beyond intrinsic human needs for a warm place to sleep and food on the table. People now wanted portable, individualized, fashionable, status-bearing goods. Items such as embroidered waistcoats, card tables, sets of carved chairs, and services of china plates and silver forks bestowed on their new owners a rising standard of living; the objects also reflected the owner's personal style and worth.

As items that were once considered luxuries strictly for the ruling class began to trickle down to more common households in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, ownership of these items no longer elevated a man above his inferiors. This sent the elite rushing off to acquire new social symbols; the middling and poorer sorts—and occasionally even slaves—followed behind. As each group sought to stay ahead of the folks below them, the cycle of changing fashion turned faster and faster. The new frantic pace of change and the range of people caught up in it is what we call the consumer revolution.

This rapid new cycle of fashion meant that more and more middling people obtained objects of prestige and respectability. As a result, the wealthy were eager to adopt fads and fashions that set them apart. Their social innovations came with particular consumer goods and rules governing their use. Refined behaviors that marked one as genteel included accomplished dancing, games of skill, tea drinking, and fine dining. With the increasing social importance of these behaviors came the need for even more brand-new goods and services. The newest luxuries of the mid-eighteenth century, tea kitchens for example, were often symbols of those refined appearances and behaviors separating one rank of society from another. Gradually, as fashionable commodities became more plentiful and affordable, traditional regional folkways were forced to compete with the new standardized, internationally recognized, store-bought culture.

The debate continues about which came first, supply or demand; but it is clear that this unprecedented change in personal expectations could never have occurred without an ever-increasing availability of consumer goods. The Buying Respectability storyline explores the motivation behind the consumer revolution and the mechanisms that supplied the new demands.

Family Group by Charles Phillips - England ca. 1730, Colonial Williamsburg Collection 1936 - 190. The eighteenth-century consumer revolution dressed aspiring ladies and gentlemen and furnished their homes in the latest taste. It taught them fine manners, the art of conversation, and a variety of genteel pastimes that set them apart from their inferiors.

Creating One's Own Image

Although the consumer revolution was a European-wide phenomenon, Americans earned a reputation for their enthusiasm for material things. "Pride of wealth is as ostentatious in this country as ever the pride of birth has been elsewhere," an English traveler declared. Commentators on the American scene despaired that consumer extravagance had reached new extremes in the colonies. America, they said, was a catch basin that collected other nations' outcasts and distilled their bad habits.

Some historians now believe they know the reason why Americans were reputed to be highly materialistic. By comparison with England, American society was exceptionally mobile and fluid. It was nearly impossible for such a culturally diverse and uprooted people to establish and maintain a traditional repertory of status symbols based on ancient lineages and hereditary rights. As Britons' social status came to be defined in relation to commodities, the colonial experience accentuated people's need for affordable, portable, status-giving objects. Equipped with standardized consumer goods and a set of rules for using them, colonists could feel confident that their rank would be immediately recognizable no matter where they traveled or settled in polite society. Those who owned the right stuff without knowing how to use it properly proved themselves to be charlatans—"oafs" in the language of the day. The new material culture created a social divide between those who participated and those who did not. Traditionalists, the poorest sorts, and most slaves often continued to practice their customary folkways.

The eighteenth-century consumer revolution was everywhere on view in Williamsburg. It dressed aspiring ladies and gentlemen in London fashions purchased from Jane and Margaret Hunter's millinery shop or tailored by Severinus Durfey and laundered by Ann Ashby. It taught them good manners, the art of conversation, dinner and tea-table etiquette, and a variety of genteel pastimes. It furnished their homes, took them to playhouses, concerts, and scientific lectures. They paid the fees of dancing masters, teachers, lawyers, doctors, and other service providers. Women in the middling rank and above were especially affected by material and behavioral changes. Those who aspired to gentility, such as Annabelle Powell, found their household duties and obligations much more numerous and complex as they engaged in elaborate social activities and as their living standards improved. Educating children, especially daughters, and training household slaves in appropriate skills and deportment also became more demanding. These responsibilities fell largely within the mistress's sphere.

The consumer revolution literally rebuilt the town by replacing the earliest vernacular buildings with the "neat and plain" formal buildings that gave Williamsburg a facelift after the middle decades of the century. Henry Wetherburn exemplified this trend by adding a "great room" for the entertainment of large groups to his tavern at mid-century. While Williamsburg could never compete with the grandeur of large cities like Philadelphia and Charleston, contemporaries regarded Virginia's capital as a fashion center. It was a favorite watering hole for William Byrd II and other members of the homegrown gentry families known as "the river aristocracy." Thomas Jefferson remembered Williamsburg as "the finest school of manners and morals that ever existed in America."

New patterns of consumption were not confined to towns and townspeople, although urban places and people changed first and most quickly. While cities like Williamsburg set the standard for the fashion conscious in Virginia, some quite ordinary residents of the countryside demanded the same kinds of consumer goods that would mark their rising economic and social positions. English and Scottish merchants were quick to respond to their demands.

Selling Respectability—Retailing and Production

England established the colony of Virginia to exploit the region's natural resources, including its agricultural products. When John Rolfe introduced West Indian tobacco, the resulting profits literally transformed the colony's economy and enabled Virginians to purchase more consumer goods from England. Beginning in the 1660s the Navigation Acts strengthened this trade relationship by eliminating competition since the colonists could import goods only through British merchants.

The Tobacco Inspection Act of 1730 guaranteed the quality of tobacco and centralized its collection at inspection warehouses. It also encouraged the development of permanent retail businesses throughout the colony. Scottish merchants, in particular, were quick to establish networks of stores that purchased tobacco and sold imported consumer goods to a wider population. A small planter did not have to sell his tobacco when the annual fleet arrived. He could now use tobacco notes from the warehouses to establish credit and purchase goods at any time. The notes were readily transferable—passed along to pay a series of creditors—so that planters could bargain with several merchants at different locations. As a result, stores sprang up everywhere. Most major retail operations were financed by Scottish and English merchants. By mid-century complex distribution and credit systems had developed throughout tidewater, southside, and piedmont Virginia.

This network of stores in colonial Virginia was an extension of the growing availability of consumer goods in England. Technological innovations, spun off from the seventeenth-century Scientific Revolution, helped to supply a worldwide market, as did a more efficient organization of labor and new marketing practices. The industrial revolution of eighteenth-century England began in the textile industry and spread to the ceramic and metal industries. The textile industry used mechanization and waterpower to increase production, especially of cotton yarns. Discoveries in ceramic technology led to higher quality and more desirable wares. Innovations in mining included the use of Newcomen's pump to drain deep mines, thus opening new supplies of coal. This cheap, plentiful fuel increased productivity in several industries, including iron smelting and ceramics.

While technological developments resulted in direct improvements to specific industries, most products continued to be made using traditional workbench tools and technologies. Yet many industries in England were transformed in other ways during the eighteenth century. Capitalists boosted both quantity and quality through improved organization. Masters reorganized small shops so that tradesmen produced goods collaboratively. In some cases, production became more specialized, each individual artisan working on only one piece out of many or performing only one operation in a longer sequence from start to finish. Masters coordinated this production, supplied raw
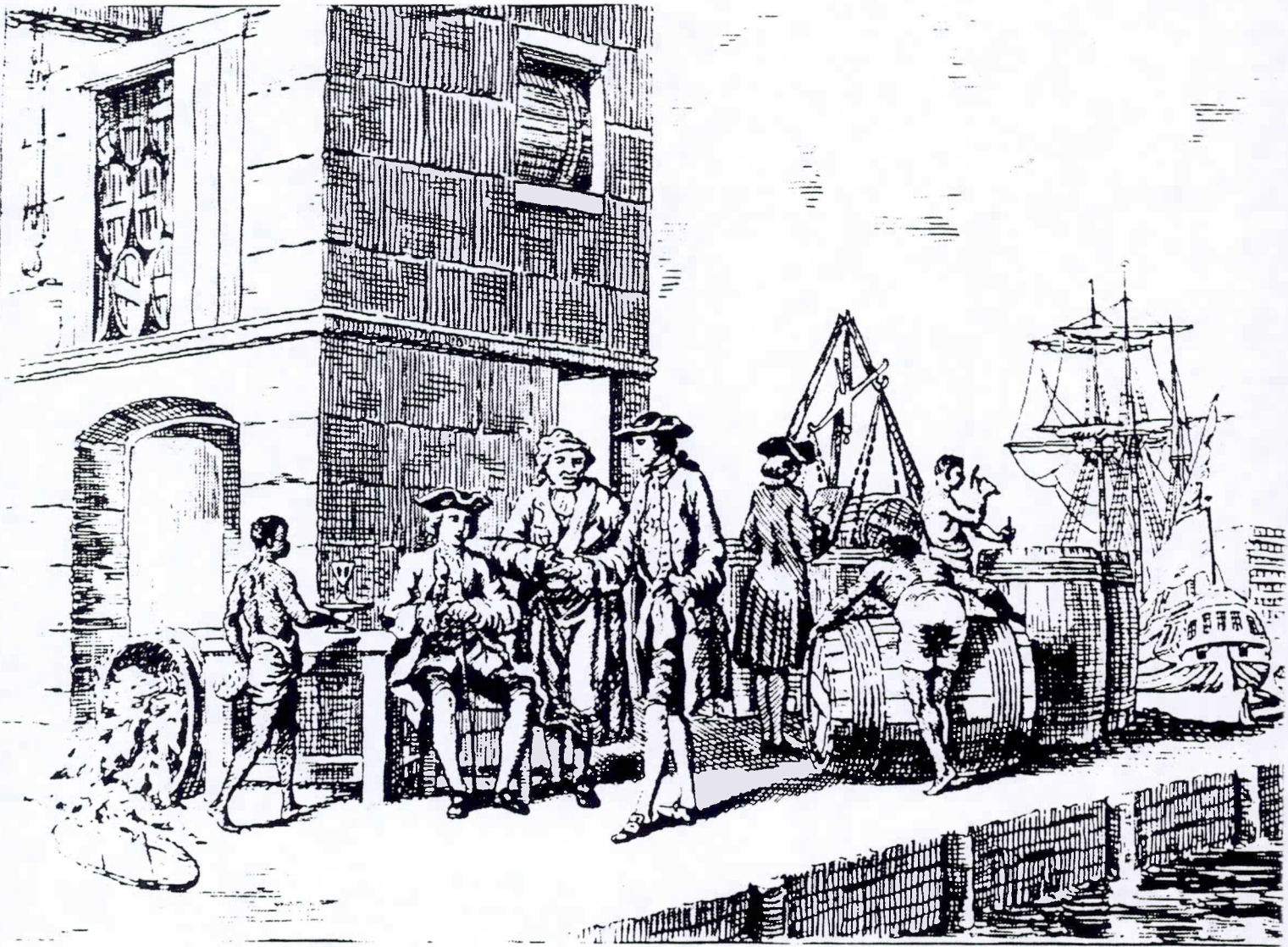
Fry-Jefferson map, 1751. Slaves load tobacco for shipment to England. The resulting profits enabled Virginians to purchase more consumer goods from Scottish and English merchants.

materials, set quotas, and enforced standards. Then they collected the finished goods and oversaw wholesale marketing.

Whether technical or economic, production innovations were practical only because markets had grown large enough to sustain them. Markets in England expanded throughout the century as demand for attractive, inexpensive manufactured goods and newfangled foodstuffs spread throughout the kingdom and beyond. Canals and improved roads were built to carry finished goods to every corner on the realm. Advances of all kinds made English manufactures notable for their high quality, wide variety, and good prices. Overseas markets also grew enormously. North America became a major consumer of English goods by the time of the Revolution.

Competition was stiff. Producers either responded to or led consumer tastes for the fashionable. Merchants began to advertise in newspapers and magazines; some issued trade cards and illustrated catalogs. In the absence of a banking system in Virginia, local storekeepers like William Prentis and John Greenhow found advantage in extending credit as merchant-planters had done earlier in the century. To attract and keep their clientele, merchants redesigned their stores to better display their wares and to carry a wide assortment of merchandise to suit various tastes and pocketbooks. This expanded variety of ready-made goods was available to anyone who could pay the price, and merchants had to offer the same polite service to each and every customer, regardless of rank. Storekeepers just starting out in Virginia were routinely advised to behave "in the same manner to every person altho of different stations in life." Pricing became more competitive and fashionable

goods came within the reach of many more consumers.

Perhaps because the gentry regularly gathered in Williamsburg, more tradespeople here than in most Virginia towns manufactured fashion and luxury goods. Newcomers to the capital had often been trained in London or in provincial British cities. Style-conscious patrons from planter George Washington to saddler Alexander Craig supported local cabinetmakers, upholsterers, carvers, carpenters, masons, jewelers, watch and clock makers, engravers, milliners, glovers, hatters, mantua makers, staymakers, and other manufacturers of stylish goods. To broaden their appeal, some entrepreneurial craftsmen engaged in several related trades at one time. Benjamin Bucktrout, for example, made furniture, repaired spinets and harpsichords, and hung wallpaper. Another cabinetmaker silvered glass for mirrors in addition to more typical furniture construction work. To keep up with new skills and to offer more variety, tradesmen sometimes associated themselves with people in related crafts. Coachmakers employed gilders, wheelwrights, and blacksmiths. At times carvers worked with cabinetmakers, and engravers worked with silversmiths. Such relationships expanded the range of styles and products that any one shop could offer. Lawyers, doctors, music teachers, artists, and other service people also settled in the Virginia capital. Many who purchased these luxury services reckoned themselves ladies and gentlemen, but other customers such as James Geddy and Anthony Hay belonged to the prosperous middling sort. Local shops and warerooms displayed the latest fashions, and the tradesmen themselves were purveyors of new styles. Obliged to dress and behave much like their clientele, smart business people educated their customers in new trends. Retailers' influence in matters of

taste, however, was always limited by what their customers would accept at the moment.

While Williamsburg was an influential center of fashion in Virginia, it spawned regional preferences that some found conservative. Most frame houses, for example, were painted a single color, typically white or Spanish brown. Local furniture makers generally worked in the "neat and plain" style rather than richly ornamenting their pieces. Eastern Virginia tea tables, however, frequently display lavish carving. Although international standards of fashion prevailed, there was still room for a modicum of local preference and individual expression.

Democratization

The consumer market was open to virtually every person with money in his or her pocket. Participation in the country's consumer culture was one of several powerful forces that plowed the ground for democracy. Store-bought culture and etiquette-book manners fostered a notion that took another generation or two to blossom. That was the idea of equality, the belief in every person's equal worth and his or her right to pursue a better life. Recently some historians have begun to see the consumer impulse as one of the earliest and most potent alternatives to traditional ideas about a God-given social order and about the deference that most men and all women owed to their natural superiors. The full fruits of that birthright are still not enjoyed by all citizens even today and were certainly unimagined by most in the period we interpret at Colonial Williamsburg. Notwithstanding, the idea first took root in the common pleasures and everyday purchases that more and more townspeople in Williamsburg came to enjoy after about 1730.

Widespread possession of fashion-bearing, status-giving artifacts gave a nation of newcomers unusually easy access to the American social and political systems. Those who moved to Virginia and other colonies by choice viewed their new home as the "land of opportunity." Africans, of course, came by force, not by choice. America was more advantageous than most parts of northern Europe because more land was available and the social order not yet as sharply delineated. A shortage of skilled labor in the colonies meant better wages for those with training and experience. The second half of the eighteenth century brought rising incomes to the middling sort involved in agriculture, as well as to skilled workers in such urban places as Virginia's capital. Owning land or sufficient personal property gave planters and tradesmen a stake in society, as well as what was then considered the *privilege* of voting.

As stylish living spread to the middling sort, the newborn popular press flooded the market with prints, plays, novels, broadsides, and books on self-improvement. The public's appetite for the "freshest Advices, Foreign and Domestick" created a mass market for information and a brand-new retail market all its own. Never had so many been so eager to pay good money for such a variety of useful information. Nor had so many ever been so eager to sell it at such affordable prices. In Williamsburg both the reading of polite literature and the transfer of practical information were facilitated by sale at the Printing Office of imported and locally produced books and the weekly *Virginia Gazette*. Expanding avenues of communication brought about a new phenomenon—widespread discourse on topics ranging from fashion to politics. While printed materials described subjects from the arrival of a shipment of store goods or the

play premiering at the theater down the block to the latest actions of Parliament, easy access to printed materials at low prices greatly enlarged the number of those in the know. With more people becoming better informed about the issues of the day, power relationships in families, communities, and politics began to change.

As the consumer impulse trickled down the social ladder, nearly everyone picked up materialistic values. Modern standards of measuring individual worth gradually replaced traditional ones. In practice these values manifested themselves differently from place to place and among people of different ranks, thereby giving rise to regional differences and social variations. While those with leaner pocketbooks could still acquire the accouterments of gentility through the purchase of second-hand goods, their access to the approved etiquette varied by their location—especially whether they lived in towns or in the countryside—and the time they devoted to polishing their manners.

Meanwhile the wealthiest and most ambitious felt compelled to find newer, more refined ways to differentiate themselves from the clamoring horde. They still emphasized classical grammar school education for sons and more rudimentary literary and musical training for daughters. Leisure time enabled the gentry to pursue intellectual interests in literature, natural science, and other subjects that distinguished them from the working classes. By doing so, the gentry aspired to the true refinement of both their inner and outward selves.

Clashing Interests

The pursuit of happiness—and what else motivates materialists?—has seldom proceeded without a clash of interests. Those

who clamor to share America's bounty more widely have always been opposed by forces of selfishness and exclusivity. One person's happiness usually has come out of someone else's pocket or someone else's hide. The Buying Respectability storyline is full of adversaries, starting with the haves and have-nots. Enslaved Virginians' labor financed the consumer revolution. They worked in the tobacco fields, built and tended the great houses, and practiced skilled trades. Slaves were simultaneously symbols, commodities, and means in the drive for status and respectability.

Conservative folkways still flourished in eighteenth-century Virginia, especially in the countryside. German immigrants in the Valley of Virginia, for example, were slower to accept rules of etiquette that smacked of English superiority. Some Ulster Scots, Baptists, Quakers, poor farmers, certain free blacks, and other plain people were either not interested or outright scornful of newfangled upstarts whom they increasingly identified as town-dwellers or planters too big for their britches.

Traditionalists were not alone in their concern that keeping up with the Joneses would subvert both the moral and the social order. Preachers, playwrights, and politicians decried the "frenzy of fashion." Debates about the spread of luxury appeared in the pages of the *Virginia Gazette*. The topic was disputed in Williamsburg taverns. Clergy of the established church condemned excessive luxury from the pulpit at Bruton Parish Church, while Baptist preachers warned their congregations about self-indulgence and castigated the gentry for their spendthrift ways. The growing demand for consumer goods heated up competition among storekeepers. It raised the stakes in the old game of one-upmanship. Wives insisted on

a voice in decisions about the purchase of household goods and clothing rather than meekly accepting their husbands' choices.

Historians can only speculate how the spread of genteel culture set up rivalries and divisions in the local slave community and created a double identity for black cooks, musicians, coachmen, and body servants who waited on fashion-conscious masters and mistresses, but who were inevitably also part of the culture of the quarter. Thomas Everard purchased Old John and Bristol from the estate of Governor Fauquier. Everard issued them neat suits of livery trimmed with gold braid and brass buttons. Accomplished in the services required in this household, the slave men spent much of their time in genteel surroundings. What effect did this access to English fashion and refinement have on their relationships with Everard's other slaves? What tensions developed? Other slaves acquired new fashionable items of their own. A traveler describing a Mount Vernon slave quarter recorded with surprise, "in the midst of poverty some cups and a teapot."

Did slaves coming from West African cultures use those objects in the same ways as Anglo Virginians? African cultures valued function over form. Did consumer goods have the same meaning for enslaved Virginians as for free? Inventories of free blacks show that some used their resources to buy standard consumer goods. Matthew Ashby, for example, owned a tea board and silver watch.

In the decade leading up to the Revolution, Parliament politicized commodities imported by the colonies, creating new consumer pressures. Some colonists expressed their commitment to the Patriot cause by denying themselves foreign goods and supporting the ban on English imports. Others redirected their business to particular local tradesmen. Speaker Peyton Randolph purchased Irish linen, curtained his bedstead with Virginia cloth, and drank legal coffee instead of boycotted tea. Peer pressure had its effect as well. John Greenhow, for instance, explained in an advertisement that the tea he sold had been imported before the Nonimportation Association. Rival storekeeper John Prentis apologized in the *Gazette* for violating the nonimportation agreement by ordering the tea that protesters dumped in the York River. Those who attended the "homespun ball" at the Capitol proudly gave up brocade and laces in the American cause.

The tug-of-war that the consumer revolution set in motion between classes, races, genders, New Light and Old Light Christians, and country and city was played out virtually everywhere. Formal institutions were relatively weak and informal ones relatively strong in spreading genteel culture in Virginia. The traffic in consumer goods and services reinvented everything from retail stores to professional dancing lessons and theater. The practice of the genteel arts strongly influenced social institutions as well, including marriage, business dealings, friendships, private entertaining and public entertainments, the practice of religion, education, pastimes, travel, and much more. New protocols governed each. Every activity proceeded according to new rules and requirements. Each was inconceivable without a kit of accepted apparel and designated pieces of equipment. All required specialized social spaces. Buildings with new parlors, dining rooms, or assembly rooms appeared with increasing frequency on the streets of colonial towns, including Williamsburg, starting in the middle decades of the eighteenth century.

Coming of the Revolution

The development of the consumer society influenced the American Revolution in a number of ways. Recently some historians have argued that the consumer revolution even gave shape and voice to Americans' growing conflict with the British. Many colonists came to believe that their "insatiable itch for merchandizing" and their folly and extravagance in imitating foreign fashions had created the conditions that set up the constitutional conflict with Parliament over issues of taxation. True or not, people's widely shared experience as consumers of British manufactured goods did give credence to stories of untold American wealth spread by travelers and army officers returning to Britain from the French and Indian War. Conflicts over the Stamp Act and the Townshend duties helped many Americans throughout the thirteen colonies recognize the experience they shared as consumers of British goods and common victims of the higher taxes. The nonimportation movements of 1765, 1768-69, and 1774-76 proved that consumers in the colonies could exert economic pressure on Great Britain to force change. Communal sacrifices during the boycotts brought together farmers and artisans, merchants and planters, northerners and southerners, and old money and new.

Historians contend that the widely shared democratic experience of consumption enabled these unlikely confederates to communicate with one voice their anger at Parliament and their resolve to oppose its unjust laws. The mobilization of strangers in a revolutionary cause eroded the stubborn localism of an earlier time and gave rise to a heightened awareness of a truly national identity. Patrick Henry put into words what many colonists were thinking when he declared, "I am no longer a Virginian, I am an American."

Conclusion

The influx of European people to and through the American colonies that fueled the consumer revolution increased in both speed and volume during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Industrial Revolution, abundant western lands, improved transcontinental transportation, and extreme geographical mobility all conspired to create untold opportunities for industrious, risk-taking individuals. Fired by a new republican optimism, Americans came to believe that everyone had an equal claim to material wealth. This dream united a nation of immigrants into a democracy of fellow consumers. As poor folks struck it rich and some wealthy families lost their fortunes, the notion of a classless society assumed the dimensions of an American myth. In reality, however, materialistic values attached to social status in the United States helped sharpen class differences by making them more visible, tangible, and inescapable. In this country more than any other, an upper class of purveyors and possessors learned to manipulate and control the economically disadvantaged in new and powerful ways.

Today advertising in *GQ*, on QVC, and in Neiman-Marcus catalogs attests to the continuation of materialism, conspicuous consumption, and the desire to own more, better, best. But the American dream is threatened as average family incomes decline and the disparity between the rich and the middle class grows wider every day. Today the opportunities seem fewer and far between. Some new frontiers are just visible on the horizon, but technology lags behind. Competition is fierce as we compete in an increasingly larger—but simultaneously

smaller—global economy. We are forced to ask how our consumer impulses will fit in our new, complex, more populous, and ever- shrinking world. What transformation in our economy and lifestyles will come next? Will objects of desire unite or divide us?

2
"BUYING RESPECTABILITY" AND THE BECOMING AMERICANS THEME

Diverse Peoples

Large numbers of ordinary Americans—men and women, native-born and immigrants, free and enslaved— participated to some degree in the international consumer culture by the middle of the eighteenth century. For the first time in Western history, consumption of luxuries and amenities was not confined to the aristocracy. The middle ranks of society acquired many trappings of gentility. Townspeople quickly adopted the new goods and etiquette of respectability. Williamsburg was a magnet for fortune seekers and others on the make. The leisured upper classes had time, resources, and opportunities to achieve the genuine refinements of mind and character that had always distinguished true ladies and gentlemen. Others merely copied the fashions and aped the manners of their betters in their scramble to climb higher on the social ladder. Still others further down the social scale, including some slaves, made no claim to gentility itself but found such means as they could to indulge in some of its amenities—a cup of tea, a bit of ribbon, a pair of gloves, and maybe a table fork instead of fingers. What these items meant to and how they were used by people of African descent is still under investigation.

Once introduced to European manufactured goods through trade, Native Americans demanded a steady supply of some goods, pushed to open trade routes, and changed their hunting practices to provide Europe with fashionable skins. Eventually market forces altered gender roles in Indian society by giving new importance to men's work and devaluing women's.

Clashing Interests

The new values communicated through store-bought goods sharpened the differences between the haves and have-nots and often came into conflict with traditional ideas and practices. Plain people either scorned or ignored the newfangled upstarts. The unquenchable appetite for materials goods, according to society's self-appointed guardians, subverted the moral and social order. Clergymen, playwrights, and politicians decried the "frenzy of fashion." By the 1760s the constitutional conflict with Parliament over taxation on goods that had long since become necessities grew into a classic conflict between tax resisters and those commonwealth men who argued that the high cost of defending the British Empire in America from its French and Indian enemies should be borne by those who enjoyed its protection.

Shared Values

By the Revolution most Americans aspired to a piece of this new store-bought affluence and met little resistance beyond the

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nagging of preachers and the spoofing of playwrights. Folkways, in some respects opposed to the new gentility, blended with it to create hybrid American forms of polite behavior. These compromises gave substance to the popular notion that every free white citizen enjoyed a rough-and-ready equality. The gathering conflict with Great Britain over the Stamp Act and the Townshend duties helped Americans throughout the thirteen colonies recognize their shared experience as common consumers of British goods and common victims of the higher taxes Parliament attached to some of those goods. Nonimportation movements in the 1760s and 70s brought together farmers and craftsmen, merchants and planters, northerners and southerners, and old money and new. This democratic experience enabled the colonists to communicate with one voice their anger at Parliament and their resolve to oppose its unjust laws. The nonimportation crisis helped consumers see themselves as a larger collective, which they called "the Public."

Formative Institutions

Political institutions in the capital city of Williamsburg and the social activities they fostered set the example and reinforced the habits of gentility. Ballrooms, assembly rooms, parlors, and dining rooms were institutions no less than courthouses and churches. One's appearance and behavior during Publick Times influenced marriage prospects, political viability, and economic standing. The town was also rich in less formal institutions including schools, playhouses, dancing and music lessons that taught the rules of gentility and rehearsed their practice.

Partial Freedoms

Knowing the rules and owning the right stuff required leisure, education, and resources. The wealthy enjoyed those privileges disproportionately to the poor. Materialistic values attached to social status in the new United States sharpened class differences by making them visible, tangible, and inescapable.

Revolutionary Promise

The domination of the haves over the have-nots is not the end of the story. Inexpensive consumer goods, the things they could do, and the harmless human pleasures they provided became for many the fullest expression of their liberal Jeffersonian right to the pursuit of happiness. Easy access to consumer goods and genteel services has been, on balance historically, a tremendous liberating force in American society. Plentiful and affordable creature comforts have oiled the wheels of democracy far more than political philosophies. In the process, this enduring American dream has been a potent catalyst dissolving people's traditional loyalties to clans, races, social status, religions, and homelands.

3
CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER STORYLINES

Taking Possession

Manufactured goods followed the moving frontier in pack trains, peddlers' wagons, and later canal boats. They became a ready currency of social communication among communities of strangers. Trade goods also played an enormously important part in Europeans' relations with Indians, and they refashioned Native American material cultures in complex and unexpected ways. Native Americans were beset by market forces driven by the European need for skins. Supplying that demand drastically altered Indian cultural traditions by devaluing women's work in comparison to men's. Here in Williamsburg, Native Americans sold their colonoware to Governor Botetourt at the Palace and to other patrons. The Brafferton at the College was established with the explicit intent of "civilizing" native boys.

Enslaving Virginia

The extravagance indulged in by a few and the comfortable sufficiency enjoyed by many more white Virginians were made possible by the labor of Virginia's enslaved population. Their work enhanced and sometimes even created masters' stylish settings. Slaves in livery and the talents and training of highly acculturated slaves reflected favorably on their owners' reputations. Not to put too fine a line on it, chattel slaves were themselves as much consumer goods as a tea service. To complicate the story even more, slaves sometimes participated in consumer culture, either by choice or at the direction of their masters. More background is needed on African material culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to amplify our understanding of African American material culture practices. Archaeologists have identified artifacts from slave sites in Virginia. They include surprisingly fashionable items such a teacups and buttons, but their meanings are not yet fully explained.

Transforming Family

Gentility refashioned family life and redefined relationships between husbands and wives. As children had more and more refinements to learn, their parents could see the utility in general education, not to mention dancing, music, and etiquette. Family rituals such as baptisms, marriages, and funerals became public spectacles and generated their own specialized clothing, gifts, food, and behaviors.

Choosing Revolution

Many of the thematic links between the Buying Respectability and Choosing Revolution storylines are described in the section above headed "Coming of the Revolution." The long-standing troubled relationship between American debtors and English creditors had been severed with the Declaration of Independence. The war was not the last chapter of the larger story. Almost as soon as hostilities ceased, English merchants and manufacturers rushed to reopen the American market. The new nation inspired new product lines bearing American symbols such as George Washington and American eagles. These goods were often designed and made in England specifically for export to the United States.

Freeing Religion

The sin of pride and its affront to Christian humility were defining issues in the religious life of America. As mentioned in the section above subtitled "Clashing Interests," the pursuit of materialism flew in the face of both the traditional notion of propriety and a newly awakened dedication to austerity and self-sacrifice.

4
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Storyline Team: Pam Pettengell, Liza Gusler, Mack Headley, Rick Hill, Mark Howell, Bill Pittman, Lou Powers, Susan Shaeff, Paul Scott.

CHOOSING REVOLUTION

Traces the development of the new nation by exploring the complex decisions every Virginian faced: continued loyalty to the crown or separation.

KEY POINTS

- ***Background***. *The primary focus of this story in choice. It is not just the single choice for or against armed rebellion. This story describes a series of choices, made by individuals, to express their sense of freedom, liberty, and popular sovereignty. The approaching revolution was not one choice, but a series of individual decisions over a fifteen- to twenty-year span. During these years Virginians reacted to issues arising from the Seven Years War, the Stamp Act, internal crises like the Robinson Affair in 1766, the Townsend Duties, the Associations of 1769, 1770, and 1774, Virginia Conventions, Continental Congresses, mobilizing and supporting an army in the field, and a host of other issues and events.*

- ***The Contenders***. *The British ministry, backed by Parliament, sought active management of a widespread empire in the wake of the Seven Years War. Virginia's political leaders, gathered in the General Assembly, determined to protect their prerogative to draft legislation for the colony.*

- ***The British Constitution***. *Under the British constitutional settlement of 1688, supreme authority rested with Parliament, where royalty, nobility, and the commons were all represented. Liberty was the power to act freely within laws enacted fairly by a balance of three interests.*

- *By the beginning of the 1760s, many Americans and British perceived that ministerial corruption and the buying of Parliamentary elections breached the integrity of the commons and resulted in unfairly enacted laws, which in turn threatened the natural rights of subjects (including personal security, personal liberty, and private property).*

- ***Virginia Politics***. *The younger, more aggressive leadership urged a forceful and direct protest against British policies, but this was possible only with the support of the yeomanry. Increasingly diverse in ethnicity and religion, the yeomanry responded to the gentry leadership's appeal to property ownership as a common economic interest between the two groups and became increasingly politically active.*

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- **Choosing Sides**. *Whites of all social ranks, free blacks, slaves, and Native Americans considered both ideology and self-interest as they chose, or did not choose, Revolution.*

- **The Story Continues**. *The war years transformed the political rhetoric of protest into the political principles that guided nation building, including conflicting imperatives to honor individual liberty and uphold the public good.*

- *The Virginia elite's efforts to bond with the yeomanry produced far-reaching consequences. Their promotion of property ownership as nearly a sacred right ultimately protected the practice of slavery. Some sought common ground with the yeomanry by portraying African Americans as inferior to whites and as a potentially explosive element in society. These attitudes continue to reverberate in contemporary society.*

- *Our written constitution is a legacy of the Revolution. By means of the form of government it established, we continue to interpret the balance between individual liberty and public good, for each issue as it arises. Through these channels of government, we continue to extend full rights to groups within our society who have not had them before, as we redefine the reality of our liberty, freedom, and equality.*

I
NARRATIVE

Background and Thesis

Visitors are generally acquainted with the "Choosing Revolution" story from classes and textbooks on American history. At Colonial Williamsburg they can discover how the onset of events leading to the outbreak of the War of Independence appeared to the eyes of Virginians, great and small, black and white, men and women, patriots and loyalists. The action of the story can be simply described: to show how many free colonial Virginians came to believe that separation from Great Britain was preferable to remaining a colony. Yet it is not a simple story. When Richard Bland and other political leaders began expressing concern about imperial policies in the early 1760s, none could yet imagine a separate nation. Nor did they regard themselves as revolutionaries. But as the debate wore on, ideas derived from the British constitutional settlement of 1688 evolved into a revolutionary, American political philosophy based on freedom, liberty, and popular sovereignty.

First and foremost, this is a story of choice, but not a single, obvious, straightforward choice for or against armed rebellion. The gathering crisis with Great Britain presented individuals with a series of choices. Individuals made choices that

expressed their own ideas of freedom, liberty, and popular sovereignty, and were reflective of their different circumstances. The choice led some to take up arms and others to take alternate paths. Loyalists believed many of the same principles that patriots espoused, but fulfilled them by giving their allegiance to the Crown. Slaves who escaped to the British Army also expressed a yearning for freedom. But they were rebelling against Virginia masters, not against royal authority. The choices that so dramatically separated loyalists and patriots have long intrigued historians and captured the popular imagination. In reality many colonists sat out the war, never committing themselves to one political principle or another. Equivocation was their strategy for surviving the turmoil of the times from day to day.

So many complicated choices, none clearly right or wrong, require from visitors a sophisticated understanding of the times, the people, and the events. The approaching revolution involved a series of crises and decisions over a period of fifteen to twenty years. A decade separated the Stamp Act Crisis of 1765 from the 1775 Gunpowder Incident. Six years of war led finally to the Battle of Yorktown in 1781. Over this period Virginians reacted to issues arising from the Seven Years War, the Stamp Act, the Robinson Affair in 1766, the Townshend Duties, the Associations of 1769, 1770 and 1774, Virginia Conventions, Continental Congresses, mobilization of an army, and taxation to support it in the field. Three royal governors and two elected governors of the commonwealth served Virginia during these troubled years.

The Contenders

Two contending groups figured prominently in these events. The British ministry, backed by Parliament, sought active management of the vast empire that Britain acquired after the Seven Years War. The ministers were one group. Their policies often came into conflict with the other. Powerful political leaders in Virginia, gathered in the General Assembly, were determined to protect their prerogative to write legislation for the colony. Leadership in the colony was generally united on the basic issues at stake after 1765. It divided over the best course to follow. The younger, more aggressive leaders, including Patrick Henry, advocated a forceful and direct protest. Their conservative, "responsible" elders, headed by Peyton Randolph, counseled moderation. Henry and his supporters were scorned as the "popular" faction, because they sought to make common cause with the yeomanry. The hot heads argued that the British assault on the gentry's legislative autonomy endangered the interests of the middling sorts as well.

The British Constitution

Virginians had revered the British constitution as the protector of their British liberties. It was not a written document, but the constituted (meaning "existing") system of government defined by law and custom. Moral rights, reason, and justice were considered the animating principles behind its laws and institutions. Promoting the public good was its ultimate goal. Ideally, the British constitution held the three orders of society in balance: royalty, nobility, and commons. Royalty represented monarchy, which unchecked could degenerate into tyranny. The nobility represented aristocracy, which always threatened to become an oligarchy.
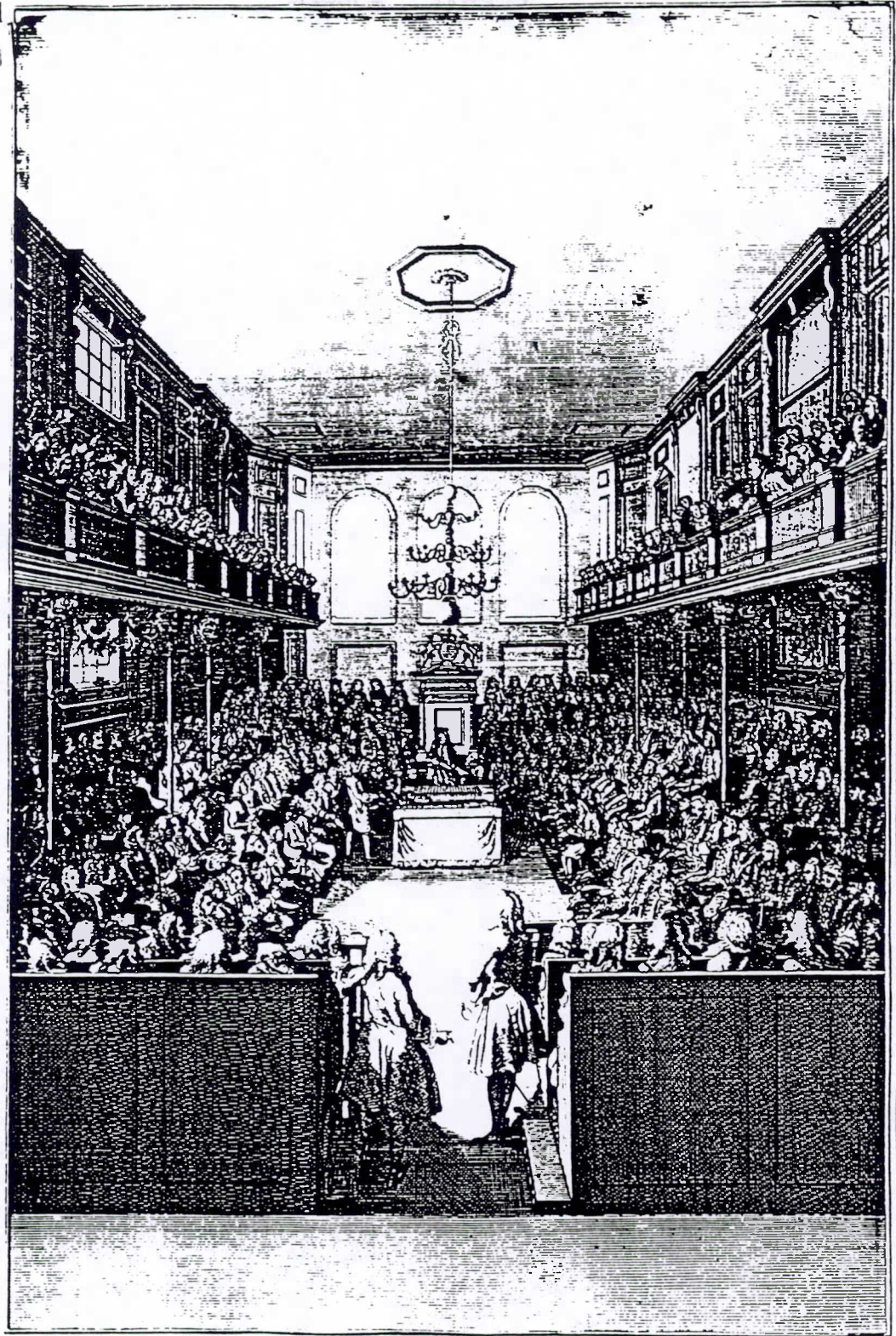
"A View of the House of Commons" print (1932-109).

The commons represented democracy, which, left unrestrained, tended toward mob rule. As long as each order protected its proper sphere against encroachment by the other two, the rights of all were assured. The constitutional settlement of 1688 invested supreme authority (or sovereignty) in Parliament. There all three orders were represented. Liberty, accordingly, was the power to act freely within a system of laws enacted fairly by a balance of the three interests.

Beginning in the 1760s Americans (as well as a few British and European observers) expressed the opinion that the colonies preserved British liberties better than the Mother Country herself. They warned that ministerial corruption and the buying of Parliamentary elections had compromised the integrity of the commons and resulted in unfairly enacted laws, a threat to liberty. In this atmosphere of political uncertainty, Americans feared that their natural rights, including personal security, personal liberty, and private property, were endangered by the shift in government policy following the Seven Years War.

Little by little Americans began to question whether the constitution was strong enough to safeguard British liberties when reason and justice, the guiding principles essential to it, were overcome by corruption. Moreover, Americans began to doubt the protection afforded by an unwritten constitution, one easily altered by circumstances. The ideal constitution, some argued, should be a written document that defined the form of government and determined how the authority of government should be shared among its branches. They conceived, for example, that the legislature should derive its power from the constitution, not the other way around as

in British practice. The ideal constitution would not *grant* rights, but would *guarantee* the natural rights men possessed by reason of their humanness. Thus, new American political principles took shape partly in the contest of wills between the leadership in Virginia and British officials. They were also refined in the debate between those same leaders in the colony and their own constituents.

Virginia Politics

Since the late seventeenth century Virginia's political leaders had maintained their control of society by persuading middling planters that they all shared a common set of values grounded on social deference, familial patriarchy, marketplace patronage, and slavery. That alliance began to unravel in the 1760s as the yeomanry became more ethnically and religiously diverse. Gentlemen adjusted their appeal to the yeomanry accordingly. They began to celebrate property ownership as the link that bound gentry and freeholder interests together. They warned that, if Virginians lost control of their property (symbolized by the threat of taxation imposed by Parliament), they were little better than slaves. It was a threat that no white, property-owning Virginian could misunderstand. Their firm identification of themselves as "not slaves" perpetuated the social chasm between whites and blacks.

This appeal to a shared economic interest and the political discourse that followed from it revealed that the political system in Virginia had diverged from the British model in significant respects. New economic and social opportunities in Virginia, unencumbered by the restraints of an inherited hierarchy, encouraged ambitious individuals to advance their own self-interests regardless of

background. Furthermore, free Virginians had greater access to land than did their British counterparts. As a result, the franchise was more widely held in the colony. The frequently repeated gentry claim that elected assembly in Virginia represented the "peoples' interests" rang true, especially in contrast to a corrupt, interest-ridden (and their own former) Parliament. Williamsburg voters self-consciously elevated their own election behavior above British practice in July 1774 by instructing their representative to forego the ancient expedient of "treating" the voters, lest it taint the forthcoming election by implying that the suffrage of a free people could be bought for a few cups of bumbo. Portraying Virginia as a freehold republic bestowed an unassailable virtue on the idea of separation from the mother country for the gentry and yeomanry alike. When Virginians codified their newly forged principles in the "Declaration of Rights," the idea of independence became an act of moral rectitude.

To imagine a nation independent from Great Britain, Virginians first had to believe themselves capable of self-government. The systems of local and provincial governance that had been evolving in colonial Virginia strengthened the conviction that they were ready. Gentry control of local institutions, especially the county court and the vestry, led to strength in provincial affairs. By the mid-eighteenth century the House of Burgesses had consolidated its power at the expense of the royal governor.

Even as the political leadership concentrated power in its own hands, grassroots politics was shifting toward a more popular style. Virginia's newspapers helped create a public political forum shared by literate yeomen and gentry. Circulated and discussed at taverns, stores, and other informal meeting places, they linked together a widely separated readership and fostered a new informed citizenry. The House of Burgesses, at the center of events between 1765 and 1776, came to stand for the ideal of self-government for all free Virginians. The importance of the assembly as the "peoples' forum" was demonstrated in 1775 and 1776 when yeomen voters, flexing their new civic muscle, instructed their elected burgesses how to vote as the imperial crisis worsened. On 24 April 1776, the James City County freeholders, meeting at Allen's Ordinary outside Williamsburg, declared that the time had come for the colonies to sever their connection with Great Britain. They ordered their representatives to the Fifth Convention, William Norvell and Robert Carter Nicholas, to exert their "utmost" abilities to see that it happened.

Virginia was a highly stratified society on the eve of Revolution, yet social advancement was still possible because of the availability of land. Restrictions on settlement of the frontier following the Seven Years War had struck at the heart of Virginians' hopes for economic and social advancement. In fact, land ownership was broadly enough shared that yeomen embraced the leadership's conception of Virginia as a freehold republic. As small planters experienced growing difficulties securing land during the war years, shortages only enhanced their aspirations to become land and property owners that much more. Virginians reaffirmed their belief in the primacy of landownership in the Declaration of Rights, which proclaimed that all men were entitled to the "enjoyment of Life and liberty with the means of acquiring and possessing property."

But all men and women were not thought to be equally free. Virginia lived uneasily with the paradox of celebrating freedom while condoning slavery. Political rhetoric defending personal freedom was belied by the reality of 200,000 enslaved blacks who were denied the most basic liberties. The same rhetoric that defended private property, and thereby gave official sanction to racism, prevented colonists who were troubled by the contradiction between principle and practice from making any effective response. Fear also blocked reform. Virginians feared slaves insurrections; they also feared the social chaos, economic disruption, and loss of property should slavery end. Governor Dunmore played on these fears when he summoned Virginia slaves to join the British cause against the rebel slave masters. In the end, the paradox of slavery was simply acknowledged and removed from political discourse.

Choosing Sides

Going to war against Great Britain was a bold—some said suicidal—act. That decision stands as a defining moment in the "Becoming Americans" story just as it came as a moment of truth for every man, woman, and child—slave or free—in Virginia. Once war was declared, individuals made responsible, expedient, considered choices as they took the measure of their political loyalties—or declined to do so, preferring to hedge their bets. Some Virginians, including John Randolph and George Pitt, believed that war with the Mother Country was such a reckless, misguided course of action that they exiled themselves to England rather than participate. Other loyalists chose to remain in Virginia, where they suffered hardship and persecution for their devotion to Great Britain.

Still others gladly embraced the idea of independence. James Innes, usher at the College, became captain of the Williamsburg company of volunteers. Edward Digges of Williamsburg left the College before he was sixteen to join the soldiery. Some people reluctantly joined ranks with the more fervent patriots.

A significant number chose to defer a decision until the military success of one side or another seemed assured or until local pressure made further indecision untenable. A few, like Williamsburg printer William Hunter and lawyer James Hubbard, switched sides.

In most cases, dependent family members followed the choice of the head of the household (whether man or woman) and shared in the consequences willy-nilly. Occasionally sons or slaves made opposite choices. Edmund Randolph, for example, did not share his father's loyalty to the king's cause and remained in Virginia. Slaves from several Williamsburg households, including Betty Randolph's, the Cockes', and the McClurgs', defected to the British army in 1781.

Economics as well as ideology figured in the choice for or against revolution. Merchants dependent on commerce with Great Britain, for example, stood to lose by a declaration of war. Milliner Catherine Rathell closed her business and boarded a ship for Great Britain. By contrast, trades that produced the materiel of war stood to prosper from the conflict. James Anderson, blacksmith, and Peter Powell, wheelwright, were Williamsburg tradesmen who expanded their operations to supply the American army. The dependent family members of those absent during the conflict had to assume additional, and often unfamiliar, responsibilities for the management of

THE ALTERNATIVE OF WILLIAMS-BURG.

Plate IV

Print "Alternative to Williamsburg" (1960-131).

businesses, farms, and plantations. Increased home manufacture of goods such as textiles affected the duties of women and slaves.

Native American groups also chose sides during the war, basing their decisions on the outcome they believed would serve the group's interest best. Many hoped that the upheaval between the whites would enable them to regain some ground. In 1775 Dunmore tried unsuccessfully to combine Native Americans with British forces to cut Virginia off from the northern colonies further inflaming anti-British sentiments in the colony. To the northward, British Major Henry Hamilton allied with Indians to harass the frontier. Ultimately the captured Hamilton was brought to the public gaol in Williamsburg.

British forces and Americans committed atrocities against the other's Indian allies, sometimes causing the allies to changes sides. The Cherokee supported by the British, attacked the southern frontier, but, when their towns were ravaged by the Americans, the Cherokee sued for peace. After a preliminary treaty had been negotiated with that nation, forty Cherokee men and women came to Williamsburg in 1777 on a goodwill visit.

George Rogers Clark with relatively few troops kept the British and Indians sufficiently occupied, so that American armies in the east were not needed in the west. Neither British nor Americans won decisive victory in the west, and the Native Americans obtained no permanent advantage from their participation. The Cherokee, in fact, were forced to negotiate away even more land.

Conclusion

Every Virginian knew that, if the patriots prevailed, thirteen separate colonies would form a new, independent nation. Victory would turn rebellion into revolution. The war years transformed the political rhetoric of protest into the political philosophy that later guided nation-building. It left unresolved the irreconcilable tension between individual liberty and the public good, the twin promises of freedom and equality. What emerged in Virginia was a society dedicated to widespread property ownership among free whites. Their relatively easy access to land gave rise to the fundamental American belief that, despite great disparities in wealth and reputation, this was "the best poor man's country" where hard work and enterprise could produce a "decent competence."

The balance between individual liberty and the public good remains unresolved in American society. It never can be. Each generation gives the edge to one or the other as new issues arise, usually through legislation or judicial review. Each reinterpretation reopens the ancient contest, as the current debates about both freedom of religion and freedom of expression illustrate. Invariably these issues push roots deep into the soil of Revolutionary ideals. The issue of use of private property versus environmental protection traces its origins to Revolutionary ideas about the inviolability of private property in the land of opportunity on the one hand and the greater good of all on the other.

The efforts of Virginia gentlemen to make common cause with the yeomanry produced far-reaching consequences. Their promotion of property ownership almost as a sacred right ultimately protected the practice of slavery. Belief in the sanctity of property

posed an unsolvable dilemma for many revolutionary Virginians. They knew that slavery was wrong, but they also believed that legislation to free slaves without just compensation to the slaves' owners, would be tantamount to confiscation and, therefore, equally wrong. Other Virginians, whose self-interest embraced slave ownership, defended slavery as compatible with democratic republican ideals. They cited the example of ancient Rome. They noted that any group of people who could be bent to the will of another were unworthy of citizenship in a republic. This definition included the poor and dependent. And who was poorer or more dependent than a slave? They concluded that the preservation of the republic ultimately protected the poor and dependent. This line of reasoning forestalled any serious abolition movement in Virginia, and it later became a keystone in Virginians' definition of republicanism. Furthermore, to cement their alliance with the yeomanry, some wealthy landowners deliberately preyed on the fears and prejudices that most whites harbored about African Americans. This racist view of African Americans as inferior to whites and as a potentially explosive element in society kept them disenfranchised well into the twentieth century. It continues to reverberate in contemporary society.

A country founded on an armed rebellion finds itself in a quandary. Its government is obliged to legitimize its origins, while discouraging and suppressing later imitators who would raise the banner of civil war. From the Whiskey Rebellion through the Civil War to modern "militia groups," some dissenters in American society have used the American Revolution to justify violent rebellion against the federal government.

Yet most change in our society has been channeled through the institutions of government that our written constitution established after the Revolutionary War. Even so, social change has often been slow in coming. The franchise or equal treatment under the law have been extended to women, racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, and children only in the twentieth century. Some groups still seek freedom from discrimination. As Americans we struggle ceaselessly to redefine the reality of liberty, freedom, and equality.

2
"CHOOSING REVOLUTION" AND THE BECOMING AMERICANS THEME

Diverse Peoples

The most obvious protagonists of the "Choosing Revolution" storyline were the British ministers, backed by Parliament, and Virginia's political leaders. Faced with the need to manage a widespread empire after the Seven Years War, British bureaucrats became convinced that the central government must have ultimate authority over imperial affairs even in the colonies. At issue for Virginians was their continued "right" to legislate (and tax) on matters concerning Virginia. Two groups emerged in the Virginia leadership—an older, more conservative clique of powerful planters and a younger "popular" group of burgesses who felt that the colony should mount a forceful protest against

British importunities. For that purpose, the leadership needed the backing of the middling sort. The yeomanry was not as homogeneous in the 1760s and 'seventies as it once had been. Backcountry German and Ulster Scots settlers, as well as growing numbers of religious dissenters, shared few of the values of the Virginia gentry.

Clashing Interests

The interests of the Virginia yeomanry and the gentlemen freeholders were often in conflict. Planters flooding into southside Virginia faced different economic needs than tidewater planters. Germans and Ulster Scots settling the backcountry brought different ethnic values with them. Growing numbers of religious dissenters in the 1760s and 1770s openly condemned the dissipation and extravagance of gentry culture. The slaves' desire for personal freedom and white people's perception of slaves as chattel property produced unresolvable conflicts of interest.

Shared Values

The colony's most powerful gentlemen emphasized property ownership as the fundamental link between themselves and yeomanry, enabling them to make common cause against British policies that assailed property rights and diminished opportunities to acquire land. Land was a symbol of social and economic advancement for all whites. Emphasis on property further solidified the institution of slavery, as did the shared racial prejudice of most white Virginians.

Formative Institutions

The hint that their interests mattered politically encouraged yeomen to participate

actively in the public political forum. Newspapers allowed them to share their views in a common, broadly based, political discourse. Extralegal county-wide meetings of freeholders presented immediate opportunities for yeoman participation and influence. The House of Burgesses became increasingly significant as a body of the people's representatives.

Partial Freedoms

White property holders who espoused the Revolutionary cause enjoyed the lion's share of privileges in Virginia. They were the voters and office holders. As the alternatives narrowed down to a war for independence in 1775 and 1776, and during the ensuing conflict many Virginians became increasingly intolerant of dissenting political viewpoints and sought to forge a consensus by the raw exercise of the majority's power. Those who could not bring themselves to accept the patriots' position suffered accordingly. Some were forced into silence. Others were exiled and their property confiscated. Still other losers were those Virginians who were defined by political theorists of the day as undeserving of participation in civic society. Women, free African Americans, and poor, propertyless white men were judged too dependent and too deficient in good sense to make the morally responsible decisions necessary to exercise the full rights of citizenship. Slaves who did not attain freedom by escape remained enmeshed in a system that treated them as property.

Revolutionary Promise

George Mason's draft alteration to the Virginia Declaration of Rights to the effect that all men are free and entitled to rights only "when they enter into a state of society"

embodied the exclusionary principle that disenfranchised women and African Americans until the twentieth century. The promises of freedom and equality have remained elusive for some subcultures in American society.

3
CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER STORYLINES

Taking Possession

Imperial prohibitions against settlement west of the Alleghenies were little heeded by colonial Virginians who staked their fortunes and futures on western lands. The larger franchise was a reflection of widespread land ownership in the colony. Individual choices for or against revolution were powerfully influenced by the promise and reality of owning land. Westward expansion also brought conflict with Native Americans.

Enslaving Virginia

Critics on both sides of the Atlantic, including Englishman Samuel Johnson, were quick to point out the hypocrisy of white Virginians who insisted on their own liberty while denying it to slaves. The advent of revolution nevertheless presented them with alternatives. Some chose loyalty to England as a path to freedom; others fought for the American cause.

Transforming Family

The centuries-old image of the father as patriarch was gradually superseded during the eighteenth century by a new ideal that stressed liberality governed by affection. This important shift in family relationships carried a political message as well insofar as it undercut one prop supporting monarchical authority. As political protest turned to war, women and children often acted as heads of households, running farms and businesses in the absence of fathers and husbands. The revolution also divided families and disrupted family life. Choices split siblings and generations. Sometimes lesser family members were forced to accede to the patriarch's preferences. Other times members willfully severed familial ties. Sons made choices independent of and different from their fathers. Slaves who ran away from their white masters often left behind their own kin.

Buying Respectability

Virginia's protest leaders shrewdly calculated the importance of the consumer market when they planned the boycotts of British goods. High demand for manufactured and imported consumer goods was a consequence of an expanding middle-class market for commodities once thought appropriate only for the gentry class. Americans in every colony shared the consumer experience. Taxes on imported goods gave colonists reason to regard themselves all as victims of British tyranny. Consumer goods became potent political symbols. Non-importation associations emphasized local production bringing forward changes in the household economy, including production of cloth by women.

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Freeing Religion

Religious dissenters after mid-century resented laws that required state support for the Anglican church. Their grievances opened a dialogue that eventually led to disestablishment. Evangelicals who decried the immorality of the social elite in Virginia rehearsed a revolutionary rhetoric that contrasted English corruption with American virtue. The evangelicals influenced politicians. A new political style developed that celebrated common people gathered together in popular assemblies.

4
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Storyline Team: Bill White, Harvie Bakari, Carol Dozier, Jan Gilliam, Tom Hay, Cathy Hellier, Russ Lawson, Nancy Milton, Ken Schwarz.

MAJOR SITES

PALACE
Chronology (Fauquier to Jefferson)
Royal governance vs. Commonwealth
Loyalists
Land and Native Americans

CAPITOL
Chronology
Emerging leaders
Monarchy vs. democracy
Transforming colony to state
Provincial vs. imperial
Breakdown of old gentry system
   (Robinson party)

RALEIGH
Chronology
Extra legal government
Protest
Economic warfare
Focal point for the community

RANDOLPH
Chronology
Inter-colonial connections
The revolution as civil war
Slave choices
Women's choices
Breakdown of old gentry system
Living in Williamsburg during war

MILITARY PROGRAM
Chronology
Focal point for the community
Extra legal government and organizations
The war
Committee of Safety
African-American choices
Loyalism

PRINTER
Chronology
Communication
Rival papers
Loyalism
Ideals of the revolution

SUPPORTING SITES AND CONNECTIONS

GAOL
Loyalists
Hamilton
African-Americans
Deserters

MILLINERY
Associations

COURTHOUSE
Local government
Extra-legal government
Independent companies
Association
Focal point for the
    community

GEDDY
Committee of safety
Coming of the revolution

FIFE AND DRUM
Military

PALACE

CAPITOL

RANDOLPH

PRINTER

RALEIGH

**MILITARY
PROGRAMS**

ANDERSON
Military Armorer
Associations
Economic boycotts
Capt. Artificers
Committee of Safety

POWELL
Committee of Safety
Local government
Local Protest

WYTHE
Community member
Inter-colonial affairs
Ideals of the revolution

COACH & LIVESTOCK
Animals
Economic boycotts
Supply the army

FREEING RELIGION

Discusses the colonists' religious lives and the social and political changes that led away from the established church to the free practice of diverse religious beliefs.

KEY POINTS

- *Pervasive Presence*. *Religion was a pervasive presence in eighteenth-century Virginia.*

- *State Church*. *Established by law, the Church of England was the predominant religious institution in the Virginia colony.*

- *Separation of Church and State*. *As Virginians responded to the appeal of evangelical faith and the tolerant rationalism of the Enlightenment, they grew away from the idea of a single authoritarian church protected by the state and toward the concept of religion disentangled from government.*

- *Cradle of Liberty*. *The personal appeal of evangelical faith together with the ideals of the Enlightenment helped create an atmosphere in which democratic ideals could develop.*

- *Equal Before God*. *African Americans' adaptation of evangelical Christianity's egalitarian message of equality before God and the promise of salvation provided African Americans with a significant tool for coping with slavery.*

- *Unwilling Subjects*. *Native American reluctance to convert to Christianity and adopt other English customs helped persuade land-hungry colonists and British officials that encroachment on Indian lands and the near-extermination of native populations was justified.*

I
NARRATIVE

Background and Thesis

When colonists knelt in prayer on the shores of Virginia in 1607, the Protestant Church of England they brought with them was not yet seventy-five years old. Henry VIII's break with Rome in the 1530s made English Catholics answerable to their monarch, not the Pope, but the Protestant Reformation in the English church was a

prolonged, some would say conservative, process. Devotional practice and liturgy under Henry retained a rich medieval Catholic framework. During Edward VI's few years on the throne, the church underwent more overtly Protestant reform including worship services conducted in English, the Mass downplayed and divested of some of its mystery, and churches stripped of images. Mary Tudor forced the church back into the Catholic fold with considerable support from the laity before genuine Anglicanism emerged under Elizabeth I (1553-1603). The queen and her bishops took a "middle way" (*via media*) to accommodate a wide spectrum of Protestant opinion from high church Anglicans favoring ritualistic worship to low church Calvinistic reformers willing to accept bishops and other holdovers from medieval Catholicism. Intractable Catholics faithful to the Pope in Rome, as well as extreme Protestants (separating Puritans) dismayed that the "Elizabethan settlement" retained practices they believed were contrary to scripture, remained outside the Anglican church.

In the seventeenth century, the Catholic or Protestant religion of rulers in most Christian countries usually dictated the religion of their subjects. State churches were believed to contribute to the strength of the state, and the state in turn maintained orthodoxy. Governments protected state churches by suppressing or limiting dissent, and "established" churches collected public taxes to meet their operating expenses. In England, Anglican bishops (with royal approval) eventually agreed on thirty-nine articles of faith "for avoiding of Diversities of Opinion, and for the stablishing [sic] of Consent touching True Religion." The deliberately ambiguous language in these articles allowed for considerable variation in personal beliefs.

But Protestants generally depended less on church tradition for religious authority and more on the Bible for God's truth. Dissent from Anglicanism was inevitable as reformers interpreted scripture for themselves. Parliament permitted dissenters to assemble legally for worship provided they followed the rules in the Act of Toleration of 1689. This legislation also significantly curtailed dissenters' civil capacities.

Scattered settlement in the first century of colonization and the absence of a church hierarchy headed by a bishop forced changes in the established Church of England in Virginia. By the early eighteenth century, authority in the Virginia church had come to rest heavily on lay gentry vestrymen. Colonists accepted the privilege of broad religious toleration up to the middle of the eighteenth century. Thereafter, they struggled to expand or limit free exercise of religion during the relatively non-violent, if contentious, period of growth among evangelical denominations. Ten years after the outbreak of the Revolution, Virginians emerged at the vanguard of American constitutional change when they disentangled the ties that had bound the church to the state for nearly fifteen hundred years in Christendom. In the process they freed themselves either to worship under whatever religious roof they chose or never to darken a church door.

World Views at Odds

The three principal protagonists who would interact in Virginia each operated within pre-scientific belief systems that included supreme beings, a variety of lesser benevolent entities or angels, troublesome spirits and devils, explanations of good and evil, and stories about creation and the

afterlife. Whatever underlying similarities we may perceive today in these world views, Indians and Africans in the colonial period saw their traditional religions come under intense pressure from the dominant Anglo-Virginian culture.

The Virginia experiment promised commercial gain to be sure. To the monarch, Virginia Company investors, and colonists there was also noble purpose in the opportunity to fulfill the biblical injunction "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" by converting Indians in the colony to the Christian god who once had taken human form to preach salvation from sin. In early Stuart England, Christianity and civilization were nearly synonymous, reflected in English social order where human beings occupied niches of increasing importance and responsibility in an ascending hierarchy from the lowliest servant or slave to the monarch. Colonists were confident their god intended for them to impose an "orderly government," not just the Christian religion, on the non-Christian peoples they encountered.

The objects of Anglo-Virginian conversion efforts were the fifteen or twenty thousand Algonquian-speaking native inhabitants (Powhatans) of the Tsenacomoco coastal plain. The Powhatans were polytheistic, and their priests interceded with several deities to bring rain and cure disease. Powhatans were mindful of the remote Ahone, a beneficent god, but the most important deity in their pantheon was the guardian Okeus who, if not properly appeased, visited sickness, crop failure, or other catastrophe on offending parties. Traditional beliefs bound tribal members to each other and the natural world in an ethos that English pioneers and Virginia-born colonists could not fathom or take seriously. Indian agent and historian Robert Beverley and a party of his companions rifled a Powhatan temple toward the end of the seventeenth century without recognizing that their investigation was an act of desecration. Native Americans in turn spurned the monotheistic religion of the invaders.

Most West Africans transported to Virginia had been brought up with complex belief systems distinguished by a close relationship between the natural world and the supernatural, the secular and the sacred. West Africans considered God to be omniscient and omnipotent. Their knowledge and worship of God was expressed in songs, names, myths, religious ceremonies, prayers, and proverbs such as "No one shows a child the Supreme Being." Worshipers were most attentive to an array of ancillary divinities, personages, and intermediaries associated with the forces of nature such as Oya in the Yoruba country who was goddess of the Niger River and wife of Shango the thunder god, and Olokun who owned the sea in Yoruba, Bini, and Ibo. Most societies revered one or two divinities; the Yoruba recognized more than seventeen hundred whom they called Orisa. Chief amongst these was Ogun, the god of iron and steel, and Orunmila who understood "every language spoken on earth." These sky, earth, water, and forest spirits were closely attentive to the concerns of humans, but supreme or creator gods such as Onyame, Mawu, and Olorun had a more remote relationship to daily life. Eshu, a trickster god in Dahomey and Nigeria, could bring evil on a house, but daily propitiation garnered Eshu's protection and favor. (The dual nature of Eshu was more complex than the purely evil Satan of Judeo-Christian tradition.) The Ashanti had many divinities

known as the Abosom created by God to guard and protect men.

Sparse settlement and an established church in its infancy in early seventeenth-century Virginia may have allowed Africans to practice their traditional religions in secrecy for some years. Many white Virginians remained ambivalent about "Christianizing" slaves. They would later justify slavery partly on the grounds that transportation to the colony was of great benefit to Africans because, as whites saw it, slaves in the New World came into contact with Christianity. Many slaves rejected Christian conversion, but it is also true that traditional African religious systems did not survive slavery intact.

Challenges to personal and institutional religion came not only from the clash of Native American, African, and Christian religious traditions, but also from the far-reaching effects of two important movements of the period: the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening. The one, built upon expanding scientific and philosophical horizons, led educated people by the early eighteenth century to revere science as the conqueror of superstition and ignorance and, inevitably, to question accepted Christian truths based on biblical revelation. The other, a series of religious revivals, emphasized immediate personal understanding of religious truth through the joyful acceptance of a gospel of repentance and redemption open to people from all walks of life.

Anglican Virginia

By the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the wide embrace of the established church was evident. The General Assembly created new parishes and set ministers'

salaries. New Anglican churches dotted the landscape. Church architecture included raised pulpits, communion tables accessible to the congregation, monarchical arms, and ranked seating, all of which reflected Protestant reforms and reinforced the social hierarchy. In 1684 when Middle Plantation was still a frontier of sorts, the parish of Bruton erected its main church in the settlement. That church made Middle Plantation attractive to James Blair and Governor Francis Nicholson as the site for the college they hoped to found in the early 1690s. A few years later, Bruton Parish Church and the College of William and Mary figured importantly in the decision to move the capital to Middle Plantation in 1699.

By that time, ministers, including an influential group of Scots in Anglican orders, served forty of fifty Anglican parishes. One of them, James Blair, presided for fifty-four years over the church in Virginia as commissary, the Bishop of London's resident representative in the colony. Blair founded the College of William and Mary including a divinity school to train prospective clergymen from Virginia. Though his power was limited, Blair's combined positions of commissary, president of the College, rector of Bruton Parish Church, and member of the governor's Council lent considerable prestige to the established church.

Nearly a third of the clergy were Virginia-born by the late 1750s, and there was even a small surplus of clergy in the colony. Recent research indicates that most Anglican ministers in Virginia were of good character and took their duties seriously. They performed marriages, baptized infants and adults, taught the young, counseled the troubled, comforted the sick and bereaved, and buried the dead. After mid-century the

reputation of Anglican parsons suffered serious discredit. Dissenters regularly admonished them for their worldliness and a lack of spirituality. Historians, too, frequently belittle the established clergy based on the misdeeds of a few corrupt parish priests.

Office holding at all levels required affiliation with the Church of England. Overlapping jurisdictions of government and church concentrated political power in the hands of a relatively small group of leading men in Virginia. The elite enhanced their power in Virginia society by consolidating their control of colonial, county, and parish offices. Likewise, they, not an ecclesiastical hierarchy, imparted authority and standing to the established church.

Anglican parish ministers and vestries had responsibility not only for the spiritual welfare of their constituents, but the parish itself was a subdivision of the county for the administration of civilian government. Churchwardens (two members of the vestry) brought possible breaches of moral laws to the attention of county grand juries. Vestries taxed parishioners for the maintenance of indigent persons in the colony, and they bound out orphans with no other means of support to learn a trade. Likewise, justices of the peace on county court benches exercised an amalgam of administrative, judicial, and ecclesiastical powers. The latter included oversight of orphans' estates and imposition of fines or other punishments for bastardy, adultery, and absence from Anglican church services.

Spirituality and Community

Churchgoing had both spiritual and communal significance for Anglo Virginians. Recent studies show that Anglican ministers frequently preached to full congregations on Sunday mornings. Since gentry folk accounted for only a fraction of the population, small planters, merchants, artisans, and their families outnumbered the well-to-do in church. In all likelihood, wealthy and middling Virginians shared a belief that religious sentiment ought to be nurtured within the framework of an organized church. Every person in eighteenth-century Virginia (except formally declared dissenters) were members of the Church of England. As such, they were constrained by law to attend their parish churches at least once a month.

Most Anglicans went to church regularly not just to satisfy a legal obligation (the courts enforced church attendance only sporadically). They attended church services because religion was still the way most people explained the joys and sorrows of everyday life. To be sure, colonial Anglicans eschewed outward displays of emotion or religious "enthusiasm." But they found confession, repentance, forgiveness, comfort, and unity in the familiar prayers and responses laid out in the prayer book. Take for example: "Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against they holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us."

Anglican ministers focused on moral instruction for Christian living in their sermons, thereby providing parishioners a standard against which to measure their personal behavior. William Byrd II wrote in his diaries of his remorse over repeated sins of the flesh.
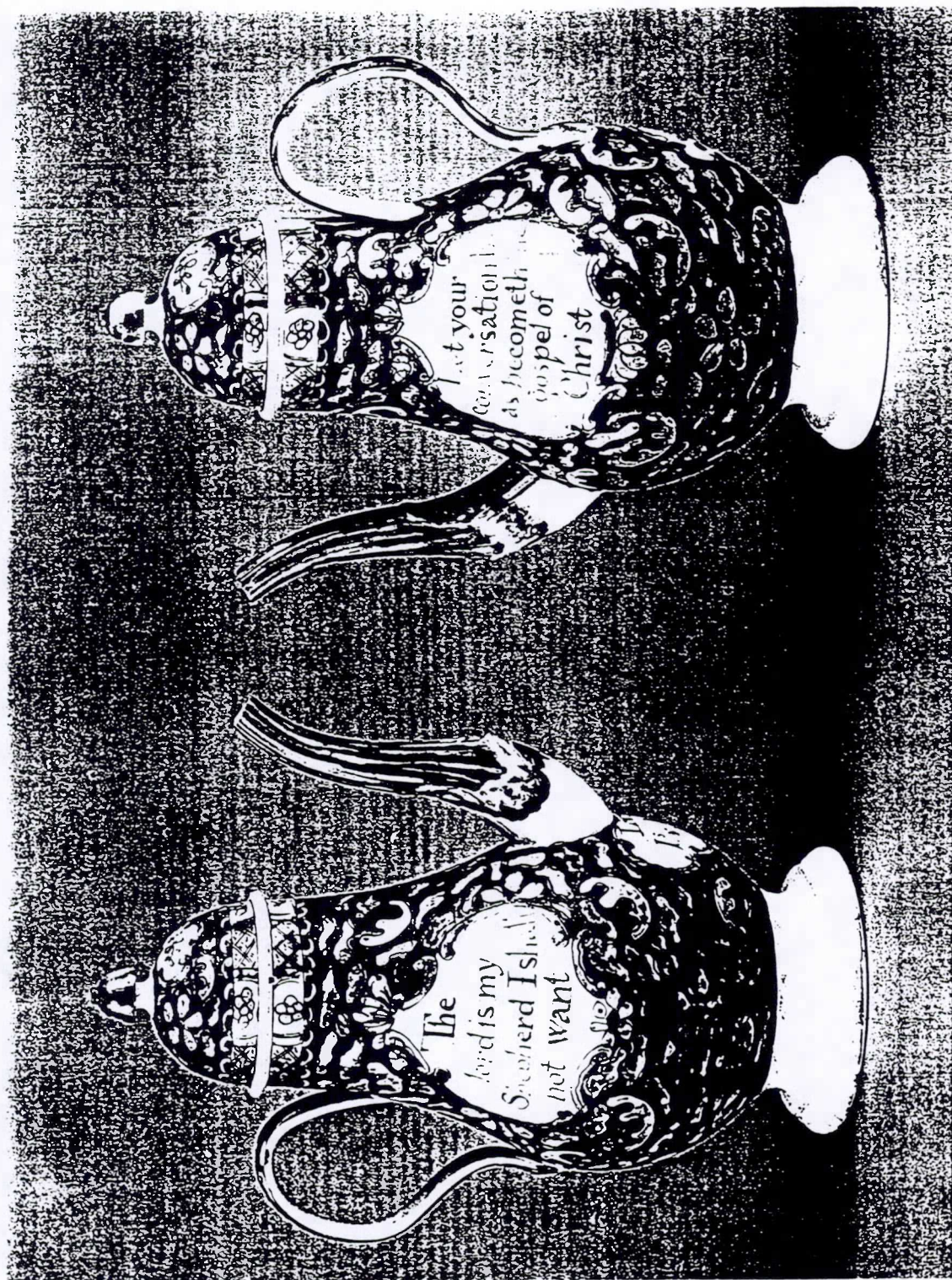
The pervasiveness of religion in eighteenth-century life inspired the motifs used in the design of some household furnishings. Inscriptions on this pot encouraged the hostess, as she poured coffee, to "keep her conversation as becometh the lord" and her company to remember the comforting words of the twenty-third psalm.

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Gentlemen, it seems, ascribed to Christian ideals but did not feel bound by them.

Church attendance had social significance as well. Before and after services on Sundays, parishioners mingled with their neighbors to exchange news of family and friends and to make business and political contacts. Small planters, merchants, and craftsmen probably came to expect a certain civility and recognition from their "betters" in these churchyard exchanges. Well-to-do families arrived and departed in coaches, humbler sorts in more practical wagons and carts or on horseback or on foot. Women and common planters were already in their seats when the gentlemen of the parish entered as a body. Seating patterns in Virginia Anglican churches "exhibited the community to itself in ranked order." This would have been especially evident in Williamsburg where there was an elaborate governor's box in full view of the congregation.

Public worship and private religious practice had conflicting meanings for people up and down the social scale. For instance, Sundays in the eighteenth century could find masters and their slaves at cross-purposes. Whether or not they wanted to attend Sunday worship, it was on their masters' orders that slaves went to the parish church or stayed away. Moreover, white Virginians usually invited friends and family home to dine after services, and slaves bore a large part of the work load on those occasions—work that took up precious free time slaves used for visiting their own families and friends, holding their own religious meetings, and supplementing their rations by raising chickens, growing vegetables, or trapping and fishing. The religious lives of poor white parishioners and free blacks within the Anglican system remain obscure. During services, they appear to have occupied benches at the rear or in balconies of parish churches. Favored house slaves probably sat with their masters in family pews or boxes; others undoubtedly sat or stood in spaces on the periphery of the congregation.

Reflection on the minister's words, at least among the gentry, often took place within the family circle or in private meditations, as John Blair of Williamsburg recorded in his diary. Books in the gentlemen's libraries included Bibles, prayer books, and a variety of religious works such as volumes of sermons, Bible commentaries, concordances, and devotional works. The most popular—Bibles, prayer books, and *The Whole Duty of Man*—could also be found in non-gentry homes. Scriptural prints adorned the walls in many dwellings throughout the colony.

Women in the Established Church

Among the Virginia gentry, men ran their parish churches, preached to congregations, displayed a Christian duty to their fellows, and likely read prayers at home. Gentry women had no official duties, but were expected to live the Christian ideal. Women in well-to-do households took a significant role in their children's religious education by the middle of the eighteenth century. They exerted a strong influence on religious practice in their families. Betsy Randolph, Margaret Hornsby, and Anne Nicholas of Williamsburg and Lucy Nelson of Yorktown saw to it that their families observed Sabbath laws, attended weekly church services and communion, and read the Bible. Difficult to document though it is, a similar role, one reduced by demands of work and diminished literacy, can be supposed for women further down the economic scale. Many women relied on religious faith for strength as they endured the risks and pain of

Some masters wanted their slaves to attend parish churches and to be baptized. These lines from the Bruton Parish Register record baptisms for adult and infant slaves from the year 1767.

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childbirth and faced the deaths of children, husbands, and friends. The Anglican church in Virginia lacked official positions for women, but Ann Wager, mistress of a charity school for black children in Williamsburg (1760-74), came close.

The Church of England and Slavery

Shared religious values among white and black Virginians developed slowly. Just what the spiritual lives of Africans in the colony was like, especially in the early seventeenth century, remains elusive. Whether freemen or bound laborers in those early years, Africans undoubtedly held on to individual African religious practices as long as the could. They also got a smattering of Christian teachings as they adapted to life in Virginia. The son of two blacks who arrived in 1619 was baptized Anglican at Jamestown in 1624. (His parents may have been Catholic.) William, son of "Negro Prosta," was baptized in York County in 1655. York County Court justices warned Edmond Chisman of Charles Parish in 1655 to keep his wife and several of his slaves away from "unlawful assemblies" of Quakers. It is difficult to draw conclusions from such isolated incidents, but slaves were familiar enough with English ways before 1700 to suppose that Christian baptism would set them free. The General Assembly to closed that loophole in 1667. Neither Anglicans nor dissenters in Virginia (until the Baptists and Methodists of the 1760s and '70s) challenged the institution of slavery itself. Many slaves rejected Christianity altogether.

At the urging of the Bishop of London in the 1720s, a number of priests in Virginia, including James Blair in Williamsburg, catechized slaves in their parishes. Nearby ministers William LeNeve of James City Parish and Francis Fontaine of Yorkhampton Parish (including Yorktown) as well as Anglicans Jonathan Boucher of Caroline County and William Willie of Sussex County personally ministered to slaves. Blair reported that sincere Christian belief distinguished a number of slaves who attended his church in Williamsburg. One may have been James Westover who was baptized at Bruton Church as a "grown person." Numerous local slave owners in Williamsburg such as James Geddy, Robert Carter Nicholas, Christiana Campbell, and Peyton Randolph saw to it that children of their slaves were baptized and sometimes enrolled in the Bray School. Free black Matthew Ashby's children numbered among Mrs. Wager's students.

Anglican clergymen cooperated with slave owners by counseling slaves to accept their subservience and to obey their masters. The Bray School in Williamsburg undoubtedly echoed this message, but the schooling given to black children may have had unintended consequences. Mrs. Wager taught her students rules of behavior, correct enunciation, and, most important, reading—all tools slaves could use to advantage in a society that offered them little formal protection.

One Tree, Many Branches

English national identity was defined in large part by Protestantism. Widespread suspicion of papists in England, engendered by years of conflict with Catholic France and Spain, translated into hostility to those few Catholics who settled in Virginia and the somewhat larger number in Maryland. In contrast, colonial officials generally tolerated manageable numbers of law-abiding Protestant dissenters. Even Puritans lived

peaceably in the Nansemond County area until 1649 when three hundred of them fled the colony under pressure from Governor William Berkeley who was eager to demonstrate his loyalty to king and church at the approach of civil war in England. By 1700 there were at least twenty Quaker groups residing in Virginia despite laws designed to keep them out and official harassment when they failed to attend militia musters. Huguenots arrived in Virginia in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries having first fled France for England when Louis XIV canceled the rights of French Protestants in 1685 (Edict of Nantes). Calvinist in theology, they found enough Calvinism in the Thirty-Nine Articles to join the Anglican establishment. Virginians of Huguenot descent included the Marots and Pasteurs of Williamsburg.

An influx of Scots and Ulster Scots brought Presbyterianism to the Valley of Virginia in the 1730s and '40s. Traditional Presbyterians even filled vacancies on Anglican parish vestries in some of western Virginia counties. Virginia officials accommodated smaller numbers of Moravians and other German sectaries on the frontier where Regular Baptists had been settling since the 1750s. Even the colony's capital city harbored a few non-Anglican Protestants in its very bosom. In 1765 a group of men gained permission from the York County Court to use a house in Williamsburg for services "according to the Practice of Protestant Dissenters of the Presbyterian denomination."

Their growing numbers notwithstanding, dissenters labored under serious legal, financial, and social restrictions. The law required them to pay the same taxes that Anglicans paid to fund ministers' salaries, construction and upkeep of Anglican churches, and poor relief. Dissenters had to dig deeper to pay their own ministers' salaries and maintain their separate meeting houses. Holding public office was generally denied to dissenters although the House of Burgesses suffered a few Presbyterians from frontier counties to join its ranks. Anglican agents were belligerent and sometimes violent when they broke up evangelical meetings in the 1770s. The sight of Baptist ministers preaching from their jail cells in Orange County galvanized James Madison's inclination toward religious toleration into full-blown sympathy for disestablishment.

Jewish immigrants gained a foothold in Rhode Island, New York, South Carolina, and Georgia in the colonial period, but Jews did not settle in Virginia in any numbers until after the Revolution. Of Portuguese Jewish descent, London-born physician John DeSequeyra immigrated to Virginia in the 1740s and lived in Williamsburg for about fifty years. Whether Dr. DeSequeyra was willing or able to practice his faith and honor his Jewish traditions is unknown. DeSequeyra was a respected local physician, and in the 1770s he was appointed the first attending physician at the Public Hospital.

Enlightenment Thought

The movement known as the Enlightenment derived its name, according to Emanuel Kant, from the campaign in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to shine light into the recesses of the human mind benighted by superstition and ignorance. A series of scientific revelations begun during the Renaissance fostered ideas of progress and methods of reasoning that offered the first serious alternative to medieval certainties upheld by religious and civil

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authorities in the Christianized West. From Copernicus's theory that the earth and planets revolved around the sun to the universal laws of gravitation put forward by Isaac Newton in *Principia* (1687), revelations of the Scientific Revolution promised to liberate human beings from the fear and anxiety evoked by the unknown. Farsighted seventeenth-century philosophers such as Francis Bacon championed the modern scientific method of careful and replicable investigations and logical thinking over theological synthesis and philosophical speculation. The laws of science seemed so irrefutable and so different from the older view of nature that by the 1690s, as one historian has put it, the "new, reforming mentality inspired a cultural war with orthodox Christianity that began in Western Europe and continued right up to the French Revolution."

That being said, it is well to remember that the effects of this tug-of-war were not as predictable as it might first appear. Newton himself believed that the laws by which the forces of nature operated were proof of the "greater glory of God." Moreover, the Enlightenment in England and America was not so much opposed to religion as in partnership with it. Liberal clergymen in England and educated Protestant thinkers in the colonies came to see God's purpose in the ordered Newtonian universe—they could have their Bible along with their science. Other thinkers and writers caught up in the Enlightenment, particularly on the Continent, used Newton's discoveries to dispense with God altogether, but in educated British and American circles, the "Protestant version of science" prevailed over the atheistic Enlightenment until more recent times.

The Anglican church in Virginia revered reason in the service of religion, but for many among the educated colonial elite, organized religion had corrupted the simple message of Christianity and remained too wedded to acceptance by faith and revelation of religious truths that were contrary to reason. An early manifestation of this attitude may be found in the case of Sir John Randolph of Williamsburg. His will, probated in 1737, noted that "I have been reproached by many people especially the clergy in the article of religion" and have been called "names very familiar to blind zealots such as deist heretic and schismatic." As explained in the will, Sir John's religious beliefs appear similar to those of a number of members of the Revolutionary generation. Thomas Jefferson, for instance, expressed admiration for the moral system of Jesus (once described by Jefferson as the most "sublime ever preached to man"), but he doubted the divinity of Christ, distrusted organized religion and its clergy, and spoke of a remote creator who had set an ordered universe in motion. This new "rational" religion had very little in common with versions of Christianity wedded to miracles and prophesy.

Personal God

By the 1750s and '60s evangelical Presbyterians and Separate Baptists had made inroads in Virginia preaching a message that began with the natural depravity of men and women, salvation by God's grace alone, and direct access to God for all baptized believers. Their emotionally charged preaching style, exhorting listeners to righteousness, stood in marked contrast to the thoughtful sermons calmly presented in Anglican churches. (Patrick Henry later attributed his oratorical style in part to the influence of "new light" Presbyterian, Samuel Davies.) Virginia planters who controlled the

established church were suspicious of dissent and revival "enthusiasm."

James Blair invited English Methodist George Whitefield to preach from the Bruton pulpit in 1739. His warmly personal version of Christianity was well received. In the 1740s Samuel Davies, a "new side" Presbyterian, willingly came to Williamsburg on several occasions to secure the license to preach required by the General Court. But as evangelical denominations grew, dissenters less willingly complied with these regulations. Baptists flouted licensing laws, endured fines and imprisonment from county officials, and endured physical assault by agents of the established church. Nor did "awakened" Christians show customary deference when they censured high-born Anglicans for excessive drinking, gambling, and fancy dressing. Moreover, evangelicals (particularly Baptists) deemed each congregation its own authority, in itself a challenge to conventional notions of hierarchy in the colony. More alarming still, "New Lights" drew converts from all classes—even slaves. Virginia authorities were slow to recognize that punishment served only to strengthen dissenters' faith and resistance.

Leading families in Virginia were not untouched by the new religious "enthusiasm." Henry family unity was threatened when young Patrick's mother held fast to her evangelical Presbyterian faith. Councillor Robert Carter broke with the Anglican church in 1776 under the influence of the rationalism of the age, just the beginning of a spiritual journey that would include conversion to the Baptist faith and later to the Church of the New Jerusalem and the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

"New Light" Christians and Slavery

In the 1740s "new light" Presbyterian Samuel Davies ministered to black and white congregants in Hanover County. By the 1760s and 1770s Baptist and Methodist ministers not only preached to mixed congregations, they called on their white converts to manumit their slaves. In the Williamsburg area blacks and whites probably gathered together in the 1780s to hear outdoor sermons by itinerant preachers—Baptist Joseph Mead and Methodists Joseph Pilmore and Francis Asbury. A few slaves and free blacks answered the call to preach. Local blacks may have responded to "new light" Christianity in secrecy, perhaps with help from runaway slaves such as James Williams, James Traveller, Jack, Tom, and Harry all of whom were described as preachers or hymn singers. All hid in and around Williamsburg between 1775 and 1785.

Local Williamsburg slave preachers Moses and later Gowan Pamphlet met secretly with fellow slaves and free blacks at least as early as 1781. Eventually allying itself with the Baptist denomination under Pamphlet's leadership, the group formed the earliest Baptist church in America organized by and for blacks. Pamphlet began his church for slaves and free blacks, but he recognized the benefits in respectability and protection that his congregation would gain if he cemented strong ties with white Baptists. He succeeded when the white regional Dover Baptist Association accepted Pamphlet's congregation as a member church in the 1790s.

sustained for long, Henry and others supported "general assessment" which would have made all Christian churches eligible for state funds.

Jefferson's bill contained the ringing phrase, "Almighty God hath created the mind free." By acknowledging God as the source of human reason, Jefferson deftly combined religious and rationalist ideals. Both dissenters and "enlightened" thinkers could champion this symbol in the struggle to disentangle religion from government in Virginia. James Madison, chief advocate for Jefferson's bill while its author was ambassador to France, voiced his own and dissenters' misgivings about "general assessment" when he wrote that if a state can legally establish Christianity today, it can legitimately establish "any particular sect of Christians" tomorrow. The unlikely partnership between "new light" Christians and the Jefferson/Madison cohort gained passage of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom in 1786. Other states with religious establishments gradually followed suit, with Massachusetts the last when it disestablished the Congregational Church in 1833.

Hollow Ring

The institution of slavery in Virginia provides the most glaring blemish on the accomplishments of both the Revolution and the Virginia statute for religious freedom. If passage of Jefferson's bill in 1786 ensured freedom of religion with guarantees of special privilege to none, it did so for only the white citizens of the new state. Intercultural bonds forged between white and black Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists in the decades before the American Revolution began unraveling by the turn of the century. Calls for evangelicals to free their slaves died out as

these formerly ragtag denominations gained respectability and entered the mainstream where slavery was entrenched.

Whites had long regarded slavery and religion as a potentially dangerous combination. The mid to late century revivals and awakenings only increased their anxiety. White Virginians were sure that black preachers, including Gowan Pamphlet of Williamsburg, were fomenters of rebellion. That suspicion appeared to be justified in 1831 when Baptist preacher Nat Turner spearheaded a revolt that took a number of lives, black and white. In the aftermath, the black Baptist meeting house in Williamsburg closed for the better part of a year. Stricter laws soon curtailed independent African-American religious activities in Virginia. Black Christians separated themselves from formerly mixed congregations after the Civil War.

Native Americans saw little to recommend Christianity in the customs of the English. Couple this with the language barrier, the strangeness of each others' lifestyles, and the dryness of Anglican catechism, and it not surprising that Anglican missionary efforts largely failed. An Indian school at Fort Christanna was well received by both Indian parents and the boys and girls they sent to be "Christianized," but it remained open for only two or three years. The Indian school at the College of William and Mary pursued the unrealistic goal of indoctrinating Indian boys sufficiently in English ways so that they could become missionaries to their people. None of the boys responded as hoped, and most felt their time at William and Mary cost them valuable training in their native customs. As Native American populations dwindled and priests and traditional religions lost their power after prolonged contact with whites,

remnants of several tribes withdrew to the Carolina uplands and the Ohio Country in the 1760s. There they revived their traditional cultures, including renewal of native spiritual systems. Those who remained behind in the east gradually succumbed to Christianity, especially its evangelical strains.

Conclusion

Organized religion responded to people's changing circumstances in America. The frontier was the Promised Land to countless groups and individuals from all over the world as well as to many who struck out from the older settled areas of the colonies themselves. Methodist, Baptist, and Disciples of Christ churches sprouted up throughout the American wilderness in the wake of camp meetings, week-long revivals, and circuit riding itinerant preachers. Perhaps owing to the very freedom of worship once feared by supporters of established religion, an extraordinarily large proportion of Americans today profess a belief in God and regularly attend a church, synagogue, or other formal worship service despite the ever growing secularization of American culture in other respects.

Churches proved to be even more influential in the new republic than they had been before the Revolution precisely because they became (and still are) independent of government. As one historian has put it "as the Republic became democratized, it became evangelized," for religion was the still the way most ordinary people made sense of their lives and the world around them. Public leaders soon learned that the common people's devotion to evangelical Christianity carried enormous political weight. In 1802 Baptists forced the sale of Episcopal (Anglican) glebe lands bought with public tax monies before 1777. Likewise, when Jefferson ran for office, his enemies turned away many voters by calling his eccentric religious views atheism.

Traditionalists among the post-war gentry came to view Christianity as the only force that could rescue the new nation from the social disorder that enveloped the early republic. Others were disappointed that the freedom to choose one's religious affiliation, coupled with repeated waves of revivalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, did not necessarily draw people together. Instead it spawned denominationalism and the non-violent but schismatic tendencies that remain characteristic of American religious life today.

2
"FREEING RELIGION" AND THE BECOMING AMERICANS THEME

Diverse Peoples

The protagonists in this storyline brought their own religious values, customs, and assumptions to their experience in Virginia and Williamsburg. Powhatan Indians on the eve of English colonization believed in a distant, kindly creator god and a pantheon of lesser gods associated with the natural world who expected to be worshiped and who visited disease, crop failure, or other catastrophe on people who offended them.

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Priests possessed both curative and magical powers derived from their secret communications with the various deities. English colonists re-established the state-supported Church of England in Virginia and made it the custodian of spirituality, morality, charity, and education as it was at home. In fact, Protestant dissent carried social and political liabilities in the hierarchical Virginia society. Black peoples brought with them a variety of African religious systems distinguished by a close relationship between the natural world and the supernatural, the secular and the sacred.

Clash Interests

People's different backgrounds, ideas, and aspirations soon came into conflict in the colony. Although English settlement in Virginia was a commercial enterprise first and foremost, it also embraced missionary goals. Most Virginia Indians resisted Christian conversion by Anglican colonists hostile or indifferent to their traditional beliefs and practices. Traditional African forms of worship did not survive unchanged under the slave system in Virginia, but slaves did not embrace Christianity in any numbers until the religious revivals of the 1750s and '60s. Virginia tolerated most Protestant dissenters from the Church of England until about 1750 when the onset of the Great Awakening amplified differences among Protestants in the colony. By that time, political leaders influenced by the Enlightenment had begun to question the efficacy of an established church.

Shared Values

Most of the parties in this storyline were prepared to accept certain concessions to the diverse religious views in Virginia. Shared religious values between Anglicans and Protestant dissenters encouraged toleration and cooperation before 1750. Biblical language and imagery permeated both oral and written cultures for all ranks and religions. The established church did not challenge slavery, and small numbers of black people in Virginia professed Christianity under Anglican auspices. Shared religious perceptions among blacks and whites were more evident in evangelical denominations after 1750. Most Indians resisted Christian conversion; they shared few religious values with white Virginians. To varying degrees, superstition and folk beliefs were a part of everyday life for Indians, blacks, and whites in the colony.

Formative Institutions

Virginians worked out compromises among the protagonists in this storyline through formal and informal institutions. By 1700 the Anglican establishment in Virginia was well-intrenched with a commissary at its head and nearly sufficient clergy. The real power of the church rested in the hands of local gentry vestrymen. Parish officials brought charges of moral offense and non-attendance at church to the county courts for resolution. Church vestries taxed parishioners for support of the poor and disabled. The "non-institutional" role of women in religion in Anglican Virginia centered in the home. Anglicans met with limited success in bringing Christianity to Indians throughout the colonial period. Young Indians educated at William and Mary soon returned to their traditional tribal life and religion. Slavery brought about a "spiritual holocaust" for black people in Virginia that was only partially counteracted by Anglican missionary efforts and adapted evangelical Christianity.

Partial Freedoms

The institutions nurtured by a state-supported church in Virginia privileged some and disadvantaged others. Overlapping church and government institutions concentrated political power in the hands of the gentry. In turn they imparted authority to the church. People from the upper and middle ranks of white society shared similar cultural values, fostered by church attendance and socializing in the churchyard after services. Poor people got assistance from the church but little else. Many Anglican parishioners took great personal solace from their belief in God and felt a keen sense of Christian duty toward their fellow men. Toleration of religious diversity did not initially equate with freedom of religion. Dissent closed public office to its adherents but did not absolve them from paying public taxes to support the established church. The church in Virginia sometimes ameliorated conditions within the institution of slavery, but it also lent biblical authority to the subservient status of slaves. Church attendance by slaves and servants depended upon their masters' will. The Anglican church did not countenance rituals or beliefs of Native Americans.

Revolutionary Promise

Persistent injustices, inequalities, and unbalanced power relationships contained seeds of future religious discord in Virginia. Isolated incidents of religious persecution before 1700 gave way to relatively peaceful co-existence among religious groups in the years before about 1750. Thereafter, the struggle to gain religious freedom went hand in hand with political events that transformed Virginia from colony to state. After the Revolution, tax support for the Episcopal Church, or alternatively for all Christian denominations, had significant support in Virginia. Dissenters and Enlightenment thinkers joined forces to free Virginians to worship as they chose, but religious freedom had a hollow ring for slaves, and contact with outside cultures eventually undermined Native American belief systems.

3
CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER STORYLINES

Taking Possession

As colonists took up land in Virginia, Anglican parishes regularly processioned the bounds to confirm title to land. Anglican parishes owned farms or plantations known as glebe lands. Ministers were free to work these lands themselves for profit or rent them out to increase their ministerial salaries set by law. After disestablishment, there was a clamor to have these lands, purchased with tax monies in the colonial period, removed from Episcopal church ownership and sold to benefit the public.

Enslaving Virginia

The Anglican church in Virginia tolerated slavery, and a missionary organization especially concerned for slaves focused only on saving their souls and improving their treatment. Some masters feared that the

spiritually liberating effect of Christianity would foster rebelliousness in their bondsmen. Although individual ministers and slave owners introduced slaves to the Anglican catechism, they often stressed humility and obedience as the most desirable Christian values. Ministers (with permission from broad cross-section of local masters) baptized nearly one thousand slaves at Bruton Parish Church. Mrs. Wager, tutor at the Bray School for black children in Williamsburg, doubtless shared the same goals and assumptions, but she also taught slaves to read—a skill that could be used to advantage by slaves eager to circumvent controls that white society forced on them. Baptists and other "new light" evangelical denominations at first encouraged their followers to free their slaves.

Transforming Family

Belief in a supreme being patterned family relationships in the eighteenth century, and religious values formed the foundation of family values. Women were an important influence on religious practice in families from catechizing children to observing Sabbath laws. Anne Nicholas and Ann Wager were women of different ranks in Williamsburg who fulfilled the ideal of Anglican womanhood. The home was the center of religious activities with weddings and funerals often conducted there instead of in church. Patriarchal family structure underwent some change in evangelical families. It was a woman, Mary Cooper, who first brought Quakerism to Virginia. She left husband and children behind to spread an alternative truth in this Anglican stronghold. Later in the century, it was often the woman in a family who responded to the religious revivals generated by evangelical Christians.

Buying Respectability

The advancing consumer culture was discernable in Anglican churches in eighteenth-century Virginia. A new church for Bruton Parish completed in 1715 came into being in part because burgesses and the governor and his Council wanted to worship in an appropriately appointed state church. Plans for the church included a fine box for the governor and later a steeple and organ. Private pews and burial inside the church, or beneath elaborate stones in the churchyard, bestowed prestige on those who could afford them. Mrs. Anne Nicholas's piety did not stop her from ordering an expensive prayer book from England for her personal use. Clergymen (including Anglicans), playwrights, and lawmakers had long warned that the spread of luxury in England would spawn "dangerous insubordination in society" as merchants and tradesmen, even society's dregs, sought to buy their way up the social ladder. Newspapers and pulpits in America rang with similar admonitions. During and after the mid-century religious revivals in the colonies, Baptists and other "new light" Christians in Virginia denounced the extravagant lifestyle of the well-to-do, especially their devotion to fancy dress and games of chance, arguing that such self-serving habits reflected a shallow faith.

Choosing Revolution

The struggle by evangelical Christians for religious freedom in Virginia provided some of the preconditions for the political revolution of 1776. The patriot cause was both praised and damned from the pulpit. Many Anglican ministers supported American independence, but others such as Samuel Henley of Williamsburg, returned to England at the approach of hostilities. Political reformers

such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison could not effect complete disestablishment until 1786, a battle in which the support of Baptists and other evangelical Christians was crucial. Some members of the revolutionary generation in Virginia preferred an alternative to complete separation of church and state, a "general assessment," whereby all Christian churches were eligible for tax support.

2
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Storyline Team: John Turner, Larry Earl, Linda Hamric, Mary Jamerson, B. J. Pryor, Linda Rowe, Heather Slining, Laurie Suber, Bill Weldon, Terry Yemm

APPENDIX: WILLIAMSBURG RESTORED

In addition to the storylines that drive the Becoming Americans theme, there is another topic that deserves attention. It has fascinated visitors for over sixty years, namely, the ongoing work of restoration and the never ending research that continually revises our understanding and interpretation of the eighteenth century. Visitors frequently ask how the town looked before John D. Rockefeller, Jr., began the restoration. Half a century later they are surprised to find that our historians, archaeologists, curators, and architectural historians are still searching for answers to historical problems that remain unsolved. "You haven't finished studying the town?" they often inquire. We know, of course, that there is no end to historical research. Each generation draws its own perspective on the past and states anew the questions it thinks are most important.

The process of discovery holds tremendous interest for many visitors. Their eagerness to glimpse behind the scenes and their eagerness to learn how scholars rediscover secrets of the eighteenth century give our teachers an excellent opportunity to demonstrate that history is a creative endeavor. Many visitors are surprised to learn that studying history is not cut-and-dried or that historical facts don't speak for themselves. Giving visitors a chance to watch us work will, we believe, help many of them understand that history writing has its own history. The current rendition—the way we have chosen to explain the origins of American society—is "better" history only in the sense that it addresses concerns that contemporary Americans feel most acutely.

The history of the restoration also makes clear that Colonial Williamsburg is a museum of a museum. Our historians and preservationists frequently remind us that restored Williamsburg—its buildings, its "interior decoration," and its gardens—have exerted a potent influence on the look of twentieth-century America. As the century draws to a close, there is growing appreciation for Colonial Williamsburg's leading role in the Colonial Revival movement. Already some policy decisions have been made that have resulted in identifying and preserving of the most significant features of restored and reconstructed Williamsburg. Williamsburg's role as a powerful tastemaker in modern America is an element of the preservation story that deserves wider telling.

The history of the restoration has been told before, mainly by our architects, archaeologists, and, to a certain extent, tradespeople. Craft demonstrations, Bassett Hall with its exhibits on the Rockefeller family, and numerous publications have described how specialists on our staff re-create the appearance of times past. These people are skillful scene-setters. We know—but visitors need to know too—that interpreters help fill in those re-created scenes with the historical figures, activities, and ideas that provide the comprehensive interpretation of the past that visitors encounter in the Historic Area. We will therefore be looking for means and occasions to interpret more actively the popular story of the restoration of Williamsburg, including glimpses at the many ways we practice history to bring an eighteenth-century town and a busy community back to life.

Becoming Americans
Our Struggle to Be Both Free and Equal

1996 - Choosing Revolution
1997 - Transforming Family
1998 - Enslaving Virginia and Freeing Religion
1999 - Buying Respectability and Taking Possession