

interpreter

VOL. 4 NO. 1

JANUARY 1983

The Birth of a Notion

As Mr. Birney's executive secretary, Fredericka ("Freddie") Dooley attends all meetings of the Program Planning and Review Committee. She describes its functions for us.

What happens when someone proposes a new interpretive idea such as the experimental tobacco program at Carter's Grove? Who studies it, and what process does it go through?

The Program Planning and Review Committee, appointed in 1978 by President Longworth, was created to receive program ideas and suggestions having to do with the educational role of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. This committee was formed, after the report of the Curriculum Committee was submitted, to address long-range planning issues. Members are responsible for making proposals and recommendations to the president, who in turn consults with the Operating Committee, the Historic Area Standards and Practices Committee, and other officers and staff members as appropriate.

Program Planning and Review Committee members come from many diverse areas of the Foundation which enables them to study—from a variety of perspectives—each program proposal presented to the committee. There are staff members from the Office of Archaeological Interpretation, the Foundation Architect's Office, Architectural Research, HAPO, Collections, Research, Programs and Exhibitions, the Information Resource Officer's Office, and Products. They meet once a week. Occasionally a subcommittee is appointed to complete further study of a proposal, bringing back their findings to the main committee body.

The recently named Educational Policy Committee is a standing subcommittee of the Planning Committee. It receives proposals for new educational and interpretive programs and reviews them in light of the Foundation's overall educational mission and policies. The

EPC also participates in formulating educational policy statements and conducts assessments of current programs.

Examples of programs that have come through the Program Planning and Review Committee (PPRC) in addition to the experimental tobacco crop at Carter's Grove, are first-person character interpretation and refurbishment of the Governor's Palace; the needlework demonstration at the Geddy complex; programs planned for the new DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Gallery and Public Hospital; proposal for a Museum of Historical Archaeology; plans for relocating the stocks and pillory; Core Curriculum training; stabilization of the Redwood Ordinary; Scholars' Weekend; James Anderson Forge complex; John Greenhow Store; Raleigh Tavern bakery sales area; and excavations on the Peyton Randolph property. The committee may discuss anything from manuals and training programs to specialized conferences needed to broaden our knowledge of particular topics of special interest such as the Black History and

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"Proper" Proper Names

Because spelling was far from standardized in the colonial period, it is sometimes possible to determine the eighteenth-century pronunciation of a surname by locating the "correct" spelling along with a phonetic spelling in the same document or in different documents that refer to the same person. An *Interpreter* article about Richard Taliaferro, builder of the George Wythe House, noted that we surmise from variant—presumably phonetic—spellings that his surname was pronounced "Tol-liver." Here are a few other well-known eighteenth-century Williamsburg names together with their "proper" pronunciations.

Ayscough—pronounced AS-kew (last syllable rhymes with "few"). Seventeenth- and

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Birth of a Notion, *continued*

Women's History conferences. Anything dealing with the educational aspect of the Foundation first comes through the PPRC and is studied carefully before being passed on to the president with the committee's recommendations.

Two topics that have consumed much of the committee's attention in the last couple of years have been the Governor's Palace and Carter's Grove. The Palace refurbishment process was closely monitored by the committee and will be complete once the outside chimney pipes are installed and the plinths under the stoves altered. The new interpretation there was also studied and is currently going through assessment.

Carter's Grove is yet another story. Discussions concerning the plantation and new programs began in August 1978. Indeed, it was the first topic on the agenda of the newly formed committee. The programs planned for Carter's Grove will continue to be discussed and phased in over the next few years. The first step in the long list of plans for the plantation was completion of the Country Road with an accompanying brochure. The next step is the entrance facility and parking lot. There are also plans for an overlook and an archaeological exhibit near the site devoted to explanation of the Wolstenholme Towne excavations as well as many other exciting prospects for educational programs at Carter's Grove in the near future.

Recently the members have been concentrating on proposed changes at the Geddy complex. In March 1981 the members were asked to consider returning one of the windows on the west side of the Geddy House to a door in an attempt to improve the visitor traffic flow and, in turn, the interpretation there. It is known that a door existed on that side in the eighteenth century. In November 1981 the first formal proposal was presented by members of the crafts department, led by Earl Soles and Gary Brumfield, to the PPRC. The proposal was to move the entire gunsmithing operation to the Geddy House, and to add watch- and clockmaking and repairing, engraving, fine gun finishing work, silver-smithing, and metalwork to represent all of the crafts that took place on the property during ownership by the Geddy family. Domestic aspects of social history would be interpreted by showing one room as a family living space and possibly another room as a journeyman's living and work space.

Through 1982 the PPRC members have returned to the Geddy proposal as the requested alterations were made to the plan, and after dendrochronology (the science of dating events and variations in environment in former periods by comparative study of growth rings in trees and aged wood) was completed in the house to shed further light on its dating. The subject of the window removal and replacement with a door on the Palace Green side of the house was further studied and discussed. This particular proposal was debated during several meetings and was finally rejected in favor of better options recently presented by the Geddy Subcommittee. Mr. Chappell and Mr. Noël Hume were consulted for information concerning dating of the house and outbuildings. Mr. Schreiber's area was included in the discussions as the committee began to look at the relocation of the sales area in an effort to improve traffic flow and to develop an interpretation in harmony with the other proposed changes for the building. Representing all the crafts that James Geddy, Sr., and his three sons practiced means extending the interpretive period from 1730 to nearly 1780, when James Geddy, Jr., gave up his business in Williamsburg.

After all the discussions and debates on each proposal, it is either eventually sent to the president with the committee's recommendations for implementation (with dissenting members or opinions noted) or is rejected because of unfeasibility, inauthenticity, or because it is not in keeping with our educational thrust or the mission of the Foundation. From my angle, however, I can assure you that each suggestion, proposal, or program is thoroughly reviewed, studied, and discussed, no matter which department or individual has initiated it. The committee is truly a democratic machine in this respect as our forbears would have wished us to be.

Proper Names, *continued*

eighteenth-century phonetic spellings determine this pronunciation of the surname of Fauquier's cook (Anne) and gardener (Christopher). In 1683 the clerk of York County recorded a deposition of an "Edward Askew" signed by the deponent "Edward Ascough." In 1769 Botetourt's butler recorded a transaction with Christopher Ayscough: "To Mr.

Askew's Bill for Pease £2..5..0." Other spellings include "Ascew," "Ascue," "Askue," and "Asque," all pointing to the AS-kew pronunciation.

Chowning—pronounced CHEW-ning (first syllable rhymes with "few"). Family tradition and some documentary evidence suggest this pronunciation. There is one reference to Josiah Chowning as "Chewning" in an account book of Williamsburg builder Humphrey Harwood. The variants "Chowning" and "Chewning" appear frequently in other Virginia counties. A recent history of the Chowning/Chewning family states that members of the family today accept it as a virtual certainty that the name was always pronounced CHEW-ning and in most cases have adopted that spelling. Others who retain the "Chowning" spelling nevertheless insist on the CHEW-ning pronunciation.

Greenhow—pronounced GREEN-how (last syllable rhymes with "cow"). Lack of evidence for other pronunciations favors this version. In account books, county records, the *Virginia Gazette*, land tax records, and on his tombstone, John Greenhow's name is always spelled "Greenhow." The one exception discovered so far is a reference in the Botetourt accounts of transactions in Williamsburg to a "Mr. Greenough," which may refer to John Greenhow. Even if it does, the variety of pronunciations suggested by the "—ough" (does it rhyme with bough, though, enough, cough?) includes the "ow" sound and so may indicate the GREEN-how pronunciation.

Burwell—pronounced BURL (rhymes with "pearl"). Considerable documentary evidence together with family tradition supports this pronunciation. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century court records occasionally list a member of the Burwell family as "Burrell." A Revolutionary soldier recorded in his journal "halted within 7 miles of York & encamped at Col. Burrell's Mill." An 1863 discussion of John Henry's map of 1770 mentions place names "Burrell's Bay" and "Burrell's" though on the map itself these two locations bear the "Burwell" spelling. An 1899 list of "Some Virginia Names spelt one way and called another" notes "Burwell" as pronounced "Burrell."

Proper names are not the only words that received a phonetic treatment in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century documents. For instance, inventories give us interesting and sometimes amusing hints about the pronunciations of common nouns. You can almost hear

the inventory-takers as they move from room to room. Make what you will of the following examples: "curtains and vallins" [valance], "Muzlin Apraing" [apron], "1 Pewter Sasser" [saucer], "Chears" [chairs], "a Chersy Westcoat a Sharge frock . . . a pare of wosted Stockings" [jersey, serge, pair, worsted]. How about "1 old frine pan," "One Leather Chare," "one Chester draws," and "To Puter"?

—Linda Rowe

The King's English

Last spring Peter Martin wrote on eighteenth-century Virginia gardeners and the concept that garden design ideally reflected changing notions of taste and beauty as well as ideas about man's relationship to the landscape. The following definitions of popular garden features of the period further illustrate his point:

Clairvoyée—this opening in a wall or fence of a garden, finished with some sort of iron grillwork according to the French taste, was a means of allowing prospects of adjacent scenery from within walled formal gardens of the seventeenth century. It was quite artificial, but it was a step towards the ha-ha and suggests a desire to see what is beyond the walls.

Ha-ha—a French innovation, these ditches or sunken fences led to the development of the more naturalized landscape garden in England. The ha-ha functioned as a fence preventing livestock from straying into gardens. Because it could not be seen from the house or garden, it did not interrupt the view or "prospect" outward to fields and meadows; it visually unified the gardens with the surrounding countryside.

Vale—a shallow valley or declivity in the landscape that offered pictorial beauty. The word has pastoral associations. Pope wrote of the enlightened gardener who "scoops in circling theatres the Vale."

Weir—a dam or some other sort of obstacle in a stream whereby garden designers could create a canal (as in our Palace garden), a pond, lake, or cascade. Water effects became more important than ever before to the eighteenth-century English landscape garden.

Tact

Recently I was with two employees who were discussing work situations within hearing of guests. Their complaints ranged from how many successive days one had worked to the large number of guests in town. Unfortunately the general impression for the guests was: I'm tired, and why don't these people go home?

Signed,

Embarrassed

Change the subject as quickly and gracefully as possible. Any of us knows what is wrong with this situation. Problems do exist and might need to be discussed, but in front of guests? Never! If our guests don't come, we don't work—the situation is just that simple.

For many of us, employment is seasonal, and we are so informed from the date of employment. Therefore, we must adapt our individual schedules to this feast or famine lifestyle.

"Shop talk" and personal conversations between interpreters within earshot of visitors are unattractive and reflect a real lack of concern for others. For our guests—and for ourselves—it pays to keep our remarks positive and appropriate while we're on the job.

Occurrences

The winter months provide us with some excellent opportunities for enjoying different programs. The latest eighteenth-century play, *The Sham Doctor*, opened on December 16. It will be playing on January 29 at 8:30 P.M. and will be offered again during two Colonial Weekends, February 19 and March 5 at 9:15 P.M. All performances are at the Lodge Auditorium.

Washington's Birthday celebrations begin on February 18 with a Retreat program by the Fifes and Drums at 4:30 P.M. On Monday, February 21, at 4:30 P.M., "General Washington" will return to Market Square to accept honors from the troops in celebration of his birthday.

A special tour, "Washington in Williamsburg," will be offered for our visitors from February 19 through February 26.

Keep your copy of the *Visitor's Companion*.

handy to check the details of these events for your families and friends and, of course, our visitors.

"The Origins of American Style: The Period of Settlement" is the theme of this year's Antiques Forum, which begins Sunday, January 30.

Old Dominion University is sponsoring a Faculty Development Institute entitled "Making Women Visible in the Teaching of History" on March 25–26. It begins Friday, March 25, at 1:00 P.M. with registration and talks by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Lois Banner. Both speakers are professors of history and authors who have done much to help promote the study of women in history. Registration fees for local registrants are \$40 and include dinner Friday night, luncheon on Saturday, and a copy of a book published by the Organization of American Historians. For more information contact ODU faculty members Dorothy Johnson at 440-3949 or Nancy Bazin at 440-3823.

Washington Was Here?

Kevin Kelly recently came across this anecdote in his reading:

"I was at York with my friend Mr. Bushrod Washington. We went to see the cave commonly called Lord Cornwallis's cave. It is an apartment dug into the friable shell rock of the Cliff, consisting of a Room 16 feet square, and an adjoining Chamber 10 feet square. Lord Cornwallis never inhabited it. . . .

"Mr. Washington assuming an air of ignorance, asked our conductor, a white boy of about 16, when that cave had been dug? 'During the war,' said the boy. 'And pray,' said Mr. Washington, 'didn't a General or somebody of the kind live in it?' 'Oh yes,' replied he, 'it was General Washington, or some such Man!' Of such materials is traditionary history made up."

Benjamin Henry Latrobe

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

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