

interpreter

VOL. 7 No. 5

SEPTEMBER 1986

Henry Wetherburn Man About Town

Debbie Lundeen, supervisor of Wetherburn's Tavern and chairman of the Wetherburn's Tavern Implementation Committee, and Mary Jamerson, instructor, talk about the past and future of the tavern program.

How unfortunate it would be to move from one decade to the next and not have a progression of insight and new ideas. Part of our responsibility to future generations is to continue to uncover and develop new ideas and ways of thinking that will bring us closer to our beginnings as a people, as a nation. Often these changes come about from the spark of one individual with "just an idea." In the summer of 1982, Mike Kipps, assistant director of crafts programs, created just such a spark, and the Wetherburn's Tavern Planning Committee came into being. This evolved into the Wetherburn's Tavern Implementation Committee (WTIC).

After months of tossing around new ideas, which ranged from traffic patterns to livestock, the WTIC felt it was time to move ahead with visitor surveys of our existing program. Part of our success would depend on our ability to measure the present program against our new proposals. By fall 1985 the WTIC, armed with our evaluation analysis, was ready to implement a two-week-long tavern experiment.

Under the master plan of *Teaching History at Colonial Williamsburg*, Wetherburn's Tavern had already been designated for the theme, "Family and Community Life," so our interpretive goal evolved under these guidelines. This goal is to show, by focusing on Henry Wetherburn and his family and slaves, how

tavern business grew with the town and serviced the community. The interpretive objectives are:

1. To show how Wetherburn adapted to and took advantage of the growing community.
2. To indicate how tavern business affected Wetherburn's family and slaves.
3. To show how the tavern supplied services and information to the community.

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The Magazine Interpretive Plan

Bill White is director of the Company of Colonial Performers and head of the team charged with reinterpreting the Magazine and Guardhouse.

The Magazine and Guardhouse are the second most visited exhibition sites at Colonial Williamsburg. The first interpretations in the 1930s focused on the weapons collections housed there. During the 1970s the site focused on the Revolutionary War period and an interpretation of military arts and sciences. We have never attempted to focus on the building's connection to Williamsburg and Virginia outside the obvious generalities. Quite frankly, we just don't know very much about its eighteenth-century operation.

Interpreters have been framing some of the outstanding questions for some time now.

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Wetherburn, *continued*

4. To discuss travel and the tavern as a transportation center.

As the program unfolded, new research came to light. A closer study of Wetherburn's inventory led Ron Hurst and Betty Leviner of the department of collections to believe that the Middle Room, once interpreted as a private dining room, was more likely used by Wetherburn as a public dining space. Appraisements for the room's furniture were low, indicating modest pieces. The Great Room, added in 1751, had more elegant furnishings and was used for private functions such as lectures and dances. They also came to other interesting conclusions. The Porch Chamber, once assumed to be the small closet area at the top of the stairs, was the bed space located upstairs between the two front porches. The furniture listed in the Porch Chamber could not possibly fit into the small closet. It was decided that Mr. Page's Room was the room above the Great Room, and that the Chamber on the first floor was occupied by Wetherburn and his family. Since the shed section had not yet been added, Ron and Betty reasoned that the furniture listed for Mr. Page's Room was excessive for the smaller southeast room downstairs.

Betty Leviner spent hours coordinating the changes in furnishings inside the tavern, while Jay Gaynor, also of the department of collections, addressed the laundry area. All furniture in the first floor southeast room was removed and carpet, chairs, and a slide projector took its place. The tour began in this room with a ten-minute slide orientation.

When Carolyn Picard, department of historical interpretation, put together the tour mechanics for the experiment, we realized that each visitor would be spending sixty-plus minutes on the tavern site. Knowing the importance of quality over quantity, the WTIC revised the specific objectives to eliminate overlapping topics of interpretation. With research historian Pat Gibbs's guiding hand, we improved the content and cut the actual tour time to forty-five minutes.

As our deadline drew near, Mary Jamerson, department of interpretive education, planned a comprehensive two-day training program. New to this tavern training was the reexamination of the inventory and the rich new research by Pat Gibbs on Wetherburn's family and slaves. Names, ages, and assumed

daily activities were learned, and interpreters were encouraged to use this personal touch in their interpretations. Seventeen historical interpreters, four crafts interpreters, and five black programs interpreters from C.C.P. completed the training. Strong interdepartmental team spirit provided a positive ingredient for our success, and we opened our doors on October 23, 1985, with a whole new approach.

The family headed by Henry Wetherburn and his wife Anne became the focus of the tour. Mr. Wetherburn's stepson James Shields assisted with business affairs. The enormous task of day-to-day support in a tavern that was an active business establishment was provided by Wetherburn's cook Sylvia and his hostler and carter Caesar. While Mrs. Wetherburn and maid Clarissa coordinated many activities relating to the care of family and clientele, other slaves tended to the gardening, errands, and cleaning and found time for their own private lives as well. This was the scene that historical interpreters wanted to create in the minds of the visitors.

As the morning progressed, we were soon getting excellent feedback from our visitors. Conny Graft, programs manager, and her team of evaluators weren't missing a comment. In fact, we all beamed when two visitors said that they enjoyed it so much that this was their second trip through the tavern in one day.

Who could come out of the back door of the tavern and not notice the wonderful smells coming from the kitchen as Rosemary Brandau, manager of food programs, and her staff prepared Wetherburn's daily meals? This not only included food for family and traveler, but special orders for private events and hominy for the slave meals. Black domestic space was interpreted for the first time on the site by character interpreters under the supervision of Rex Ellis, department of black programs. Visitors saw where black families lived and began to understand the relationships between black and white members of the household and how they supported and depended upon each other.

As visitors traveled to the garden area, the idea of seasonality and availability of consumer goods came into focus. With the cooperation of Richard Nicoll, department of coach and livestock, horses and delivery carts became tools for the interpretation of trans-

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Magazine, continued

How were the hogsheds, boxes, and other storage containers carried to the second floor? We got them there by taking them apart and reassembling them, which hardly seems a logical solution for a warehouse. Who kept track of the gunpowder? We suppose that the keeper did, but there are few records to give us any clear indication. Why was this military warehouse built in the center of town? Usually these types of facilities were relegated to the outskirts. In 1775 a Public Store was developed in Williamsburg to handle the large volume of materials required for the army. What relationship did the Public Store have to the Magazine? There are several other buildings nearby shown on the Frenchman's map and indicated by the cross trenching excavations of the 1920s. Were these buildings related to the Magazine and its operation? Our problem is that we just don't know.

In the spring of 1985 we were challenged to begin the process of reinterpreting the site. An interpretive planning team consisting of John Hill, keeper of the Magazine, Jeff Geyer and Collie Harris, Magazine interpreters, Bill Weldon of the department of interpretive education, Kevin Kelly from research, Jay Gaynor from collections, and myself as team leader was named to begin the process.

Our charter document gave us quite a task. We were to construct an interpretation that demonstrated the importance of the Magazine to Williamsburg and Virginia from the period 1755 to 1780. A lot happened in that twenty-five years—the French and Indian War, a period of peacetime when the facility fell into disuse, the removal of the gunpowder by Lord Dunmore, gearing up to supply the Virginia Continental troops and militia, the construction of a second magazine on the outskirts of town, and the removal of the military stores from Williamsburg to Richmond in 1780.

As we began to examine the record, we realized that during all those years the Magazine always had the same primary function: no matter what the year or the social and political issues, no matter whether British regulars, militia, or Virginia Continentals were the army in the field, the Magazine provided military equipment for the defense of Virginia. The Magazine was a government building, a public building constructed, stocked, and maintained with public funds. The civilian guards hired during the French and Indian War, the keepers, armorers, and the military

detachments from the early Revolutionary War camps at Waller's Woods and the college all belonged to the Williamsburg community, functioning and interacting here.

Throughout this period Virginians gained experience and formed ideas concerning the construction of a military defense. The French and Indian War was a practical training ground for Virginians. Supporting Braddock and the two Virginia regiments provided the knowledge Virginians would require to supply the army of the Revolution. Political issues of taxation and quartering of troops helped frame Virginia's attitudes toward a standing army and its potential threat to their freedoms and liberties. At the same time, they saw firsthand the ineffectiveness of the militia system and realized that a standing army was a necessity.

We decided that we could best deal with these various issues by making the interpretation seasonal. During each quarter of the year, we will focus on a different segment of the Magazine's history. During the winter we will concentrate on the French and Indian War. With light visitation, we will be able to conduct tours using the Guardhouse as an introductory location, then proceeding to the Armorer's Room and the second floor of the Magazine.

Beginning in mid-March with the start of spring visitation, we will focus on the early Revolutionary War period. It was during this time that Virginia began to assemble its Continental troops. They were camped around the city. The Magazine and Public Stores were responsible for equipping them. This season also coincides with the Prelude to Independence and our celebration of Virginia's Resolution for Independence in May 1776. It is a time of year when we need to be flexible in our traffic patterns. We plan to conduct tours or use an open pattern depending on visitation levels. During most of this period a marquee (tent) will be pitched in the yard allowing us to assemble groups for outside interpretations during heavy visitation.

After the Fourth of July the interpretive focus will shift to the late Revolution. Emphasizing this period (from about 1778 to 1780) allows us to speak about the hardships imposed on Virginians by the lengthy conflict and the increasing difficulties in supplying the state's military needs. The complex will be run in an open pattern, inviting visitors to see the Magazine and Guardhouse and take part in the military demonstrations in the yard.

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Wetherburn, *continued*

portation and care of tavern animals.

Following the experiment, each interpreter was formally interviewed by John Caramia, department of interpretive education. No one knows better than the interpreter who actually conducted the tour just how the interpretation worked and what perceptions were out there. The free exchange of techniques and ideas was wonderful, and the confidence and non-threatening feeling that came from conducting an experiment was invaluable. Surveys from visitors and interpreters' comments aided the WTIC in making decisions about the design and logistics of our new program.

Phase 1 of the new interpretive program will be implemented in October 1986. Training for the program, patterned after the experiment training, took place during the months of August and September. All historical interpreters received sixteen hours of instruction and practice.

The tour will begin in the Bull Head Room, where the historical interpreter will focus on Henry Wetherburn as an example of a successful tavern keeper in Williamsburg, the kind of tavern he operated, and daily operations of the tavern. The fact that both family members and slaves had to work together to make the business successful will be emphasized. The group will then go into the Chamber, where they will become acquainted with the Wetherburn family.

From the Chamber, the interpreter will lead the group to the room over the Bull Head Room and then to the room over the Great Room, now identified as Mr. Page's Room. In these rooms visitors will learn about the variety of accommodations—both public and private—lodging for customers and slaves, attitudes toward privacy, and special services available at the tavern.

Downstairs again in the Middle Room, visitors will be introduced to a public dining room where a mixed clientele of local and traveling customers ate, drank, smoked, gambled, caroused, and discussed politics, business, news, and gossip.

From the Middle Room the group will go into the Great Room. Here the interpreter will focus on how Wetherburn took advantage of the growth of the city by constructing this addition: how this private room was truly a

multipurpose one in which special events such as dances, special dinners, and lectures were held during Publick Times.

Visitors will then be led into the service yard where they will be introduced to character interpreters who will address black private life in the kitchen and laundry area and provide a summary for the tour experience.

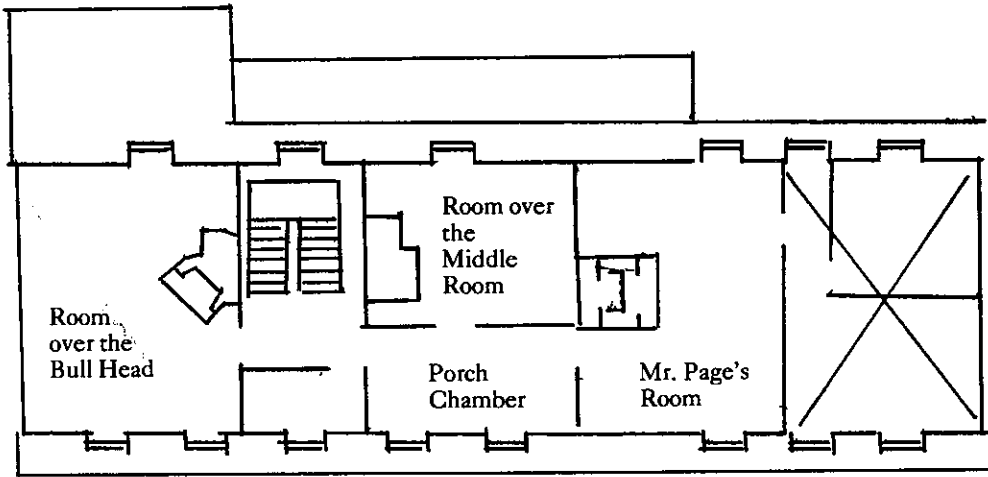
The implementation of the new tour is only a small part of the anticipated changes on the property. Phases to follow in the future include:

- Adaptation of the present stable building, presently used as a garage, into a working stable with horses and appropriate equipment. The stable is an integral part of the picture of eighteenth-century tavern life and will provide us with a tavern complete with all dependencies.
- Renovation of the kitchen, a project necessary to conduct cooking demonstrations on a permanent basis. This will include reworking the chimney and the addition of reproduction cooking utensils.
- The establishment of a permanent orientation center to house the slide orientation being planned for future use.
- Further research on the tenements known to have been on the property.

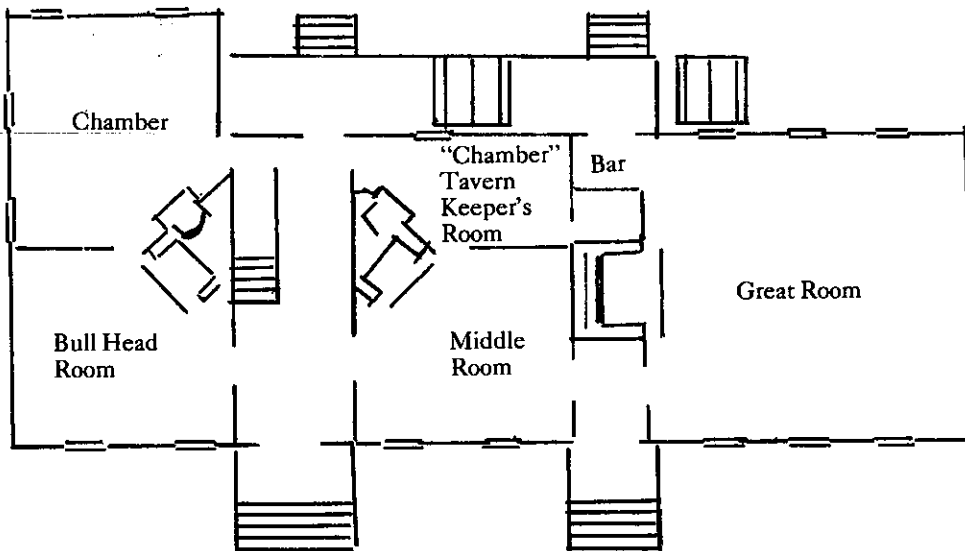
Research will accompany each progressive phase of the program and will provide increased understanding of family and community life as it pertains to the site.

As chairman of the WTIC, Debbie would like to acknowledge the support of our team members and the backing of other departments that ensured a successful program. Particular thanks go to Dennis O'Toole, divisional vice president, and Mary Ann Brendel, director of historical interpretation, for it was their support from the very beginning that made this program possible.

Wetherburn's Tavern never stood alone as a separate entity. Virtually everything that went on there touched, directly or indirectly, the lives of each member of this community. The committee invites all interpreters to visit the site when the new program is in place and to think what the new Wetherburn's Tavern approach to community connections has to offer interpretations at other sites.



Second Floor Plan



First Floor Plan

Wetherburn's Tavern

Plan showing the room names resulting from the reexamination of Henry Wetherburn's inventory

The Exchange

Bill Tramposch writes of some of his impressions from New Zealand.

Dear Friends,

We are missing Williamsburg, but not the summer, which seems to have you in its humid clutches. It's winter here now, but a few birds are still making their way north(?) for the winter. As you may know, I'm here for six months on a Fulbright Scholarship. We live in Auckland, and my host is the Art Galleries and Museums Association of New Zealand. While here, I am leading a series of workshops and seminars on interpretation as well as writing a report on the Museum Studies Diploma Program, which they offer to those in the field.

My Kiwi colleagues are certainly hearing enough about open air museums and specifically Colonial Williamsburg. It's difficult for many of them to imagine a place as big and as heavily staffed. Their largest museum, the Auckland Institute and Memorial Museum, has 100 staff members. In fact, one evening I was introduced as coming from an institution that has a larger annual budget than the city in which I was speaking, a city which is not small by New Zealand standards. By the way, there are only 3.2 million people here in the country, which is approximately the size of England with 51 million! There are, on the other hand, at least 40 million sheep here (I haven't counted them lately).

We have been able to travel extensively throughout the country, which is separated by the Cook Strait (a three-hour ferry journey through one of the most treacherous bodies of water on earth). The North Island is more populated, but once on the South Island, we had the sense of being in a large outdoor history museum of sorts. There were vintage cars, little traffic (occasionally stopped by shepherds and flocks), and even doctors who make house calls! Perhaps because life seems less up-to-date here, New Zealanders lack any large-scale outdoor museums. In many ways they haven't left the past, and—if this is not a good explanation—their history is simply not that old: settlement in any sincere sense didn't take place here until the 1840s. This is European or "Pakeha" history, as the Maoris ("the people of the land" who came here thousands of years ago and now make up about 11 percent of the population) call it.

There are about 400 museums and art galleries here (they distinguish between the two). Among them there is—as you'd expect—a great deal of variation in size and quality. I've told you about their largest museum—some of the smaller ones are not staffed at all. In fact there's one up north that has a sign on the door saying: "If you wish to enter, please ask anyone in town for a key. We will gladly show you around. But if you wish to go through alone, feel free to dust."

Before closing, I want to tell you about a very moving experience I had. Yesterday the first shipment of Maori artifacts returned from their twenty-month United States tour called *Te Maori*. Perhaps you saw it. When the plane taxied up to the gate, it was welcomed by twenty or so elder Maoris standing on the tarmac. They chanted the "karakia" and the "karanga"—rituals of welcome—under the wing of a 747. To the Maoris artifacts are alive and contain the spirit of their ancestors. Consequently, they must always be "warmed" by the presence of other Maoris. Their chants were barely audible under the large plane, but the ceremony was very moving for anyone who believes that objects can help to link us to our pasts. Speaking of links, it's interesting that the jumbo jet was named *Takitimu*, which was the name of the first Maori canoe thousands of years ago.

I look forward to seeing you all again in November.

—Bill

Magazine, continued

On October 1, we will step back in time to 1770 and discuss the Magazine during peacetime. Equipment left over from the French and Indian War was stored in the building, largely ignored, as Virginia slipped into a period of laxity in its military preparedness. As in the spring, we will be flexible with our traffic patterns, conducting tours but running the complex open when visitation is heavy.

The common themes throughout the year will be Virginia's experience in formation of ideas concerning the military, the Magazine as a functioning warehouse, and its relationship to Williamsburg and the colony and Common-

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Magazine, *continued*

wealth of Virginia. We have been able to make some modifications to the collections. Barriers in the Armorer's Room have been taken down to give more interpretive space and a better environment for our visitors. On the second floor empty shelves and spaces have been filled with containers and stored objects, giving the feel and appearance of a warehouse.

We hope, however, that this is only the beginning. Our proposals also include a request for extensive research to be conducted on the Magazine, its collections, and its use during the period. No archaeological survey has been conducted in the area since the original cross trenching. We hope that there is still information in the ground that will help us to understand how these buildings were used. We hope to understand more about the people connected with the Magazine as well as the systems of supply and logistics that were designed for Virginia's military forces. We also need to understand how items were stored and how the building was laid out architecturally to accommodate their storage. It is an extremely large project that will require funding. Good research investigation should help us continually to expand our interpretation and help our visitors to understand fully the importance of this exhibition site.

Selections From the Journal of Peter Woodmaster, Burgess

("Discovered" and edited by Fred Rauscher. With apologies to William Byrd, Philip Fithian, Landon Carter, and the CWF research staff.)

1765

March 8. The weather is cool, wind from the northeast. Today completed surveying of Gray's Creek lands; they appear sufficiently cleared for planting. Received congratulations from Mr. Westover on my election as burgess, he suggested that while in Williamsburg I visit the Royal Governor's Palace and see the maze.

April 16. Called to Williamsburg for session of General Assembly.

May 2. The weather warm, wind from south. Began journey to Williamsburg today at

4 A.M. Reached Tappohanock by nightfall. At tavern there, found food, drink, and lodging for me and my slave, and fodder and stable for my horse, but no pasture.

May 4. Weather warm, raining lightly, wind from southeast. Arrived in Williamsburg late, due to bad signs on road. Signs kept directing me to a field apparently outside of town, where I was supposed to leave my horse and ride the stage wagon in. Ignored this local custom, and rode in to stay at Hay's tavern. Since I was delayed, all were asleep when I went to bed, so I woke everyone up to introduce myself, as I had read in my customs book. Nearly killed by sleepy, angry gentlemen.

May 5. Weather warm, wind from northeast. Awoke refreshed. To acquaint myself with the town, I took a short walk up main street toward the college. Near the church, I was accosted by a merchant named Robert Greenhow, who began bragging about his store and asking me what part of the colony I hailed from. Apparently he has enough time free from work to simply wander the streets.

May 6. Weather hot, wind from west. Was welcomed at the Capitol today, Introduced as replacement burgess, received warm round of applause, as is customary in that building. Met mssrs Randolph, Randolph, Wythe, Robinson, Pendleton, and many others, some of whom were under the mistaken impression that I was a Mr. Fry. Later met a Mr. Henry Patrick, I believe, who described himself as a fiery young orator ready to fight. This proved true, as later that day a bill was introduced to clear rocks from Wilson's Creek, and Patrick spoke for fifty minutes, invoking Vergil, Shakespeare, Locke, and Solon. His speech was finally ended when Speaker Robinson rattled the doorhandle. The bill passed, 124-1.

May 10. Weather hot, rainy, wind calm. Large dinner gathering at Mr. Wythe's, who pointed out his new air pump to anyone who wandered near his teaching room. Very noisy, but all the talk was about the Stamp Act. Many burgesses think we ought to oppose it openly. Others favor it, especially those who engage in philately. Also, Mr. Henry revealed the correct order of his names.

May 15. Weather warm, wind southeast. Supposed to attend a ball at the Capitol tonight, but upon arrival, was told it required a separate ticket. Nothing else to do in town, as all buildings, shops, etc., close at 5pm.

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Woodmaster Journal, continued

May 17. Weather cool, wind blustery from all directions. Walked about the market on Market Square today. Most of the vendors had food, but some had small hats for boys and girls and tin whistles. Bought a cookie.

May 19. Weather warm, wind hard to south. Dinner at Mr. Powell's, food is badly burned. Powell blames occurrence on one of his slaves. Strangely, only Mr. and Mrs. Powell appear, the daughters and apprentices are gone. They say they are working or attending dancing lessons, but rumor around town says the daughters and apprentices have set up shop elsewhere, while poor Powell and his wife delude themselves.

May 20. Weather warm, rainy, wind to south. Banquet at the Governor's. Guests comment on the lack of line to get in, which apparently is unusual. Gardens are pretty, but the Ballroom needs painting. Again, the talk is of the Stamp Act. This time, Mr. Henry announces his opposition, by making his "tax and tax and spend and spend" argument. I can see many burgesses leaning toward his views, and find myself lured to them, but blame it on the Arrack punch.

May 21. Weather warm, wind to southeast. Am introduced to a Mr. Jefferson by Mr. Wythe. Wythe sees great things in store for Jefferson. Jefferson returns the compliment by comparing Wythe's house to a pile of bricks. Wythe apparently had a childhood desire to become a brickmaker, but his frail frame forced him into the law profession, which he secretly detests. He is known to greet visitors to his house by saying, "Welcome to my kiln."

May 25. Weather hot, wind calm. Attended church this morning at Bruton. Warned against dissenting creeds. Later, at the tavern, someone tried to sell me a flower, but I immediately recognized the dissenter, and refused. Sat in passage all day long to avoid the heat.

May 26. Weather very hot, wind to south. Washington, Randolph, Wythe, and others came to Hay's for dinner in the Apollo room. Rumors abound that Henry is planning a big move, but Mr. Rind failed to show up at Henry's press conference, so all is still deep in mystery. Later lost three games of billiards to Washington until Byrd shows me how to use the cue sticks properly, instead of like cricket bats, as I had been.

May 28. Weather very hot, wind calm. In the morning, more rumors fly about Henry.

Some say he will try to filibuster by reading one of Wythe's lengthy legal opinions, or "Everyman his own Doctor." Others believe he wants to move the capitol from Williamsburg back to James Town. The wildest rumors have him demanding that trees and cobblestones be put on the main street. Dinner at Randolph's, who shows me the wallpaper they stole from an English Manor house to put in their upstairs parlor.

May 29. Weather very hot and steamy, wind calm. Burgesses are up in arms over Henry's proposed "stamp act resolves." The rumors could not come close to Henry's plans. He is claiming equal status for the colonies alongside Parliament, among other things. Some of the twenty or so resolves which Henry decided not to introduce called for an extension of the legal bounds of Europe to the Mississippi river, declaration that only the House of Burgesses has the right to authorize the use of glazed headers, and a plan to require workers in the Capitol and Palace to wear clothes that were going out of fashion two-hundred years ago. Debate on the five resolves he did introduce to set for tomorrow. Many of the burgesses are so excited, they cannot sleep, so many of us went to a lecture by Mr. Wythe on air pressure, and that did the trick.

May 30. Weather very hot, thunderstorms all day. Henry, in debate in the House of Burgesses, likens himself to Brutus and Cromwell, then gets riled up when Robinson calls him a traitor. "If this be treason, make the most of it," he says, a meaningless phrase which nonetheless endears him to many. In the furious debate, I am persuaded to Henry's point of view. The vote soon follows, and most of the resolves pass. I hear Randolph declare "I would have given 500 guineas for a single vote!" I answer "why didn't you say so in the first place!" but it is too late. We have become Americans.

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

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ISSN 0883-2749