

VOL. 2, NO. 3

JAN/FEB/MARCH 1994

MAY THE WORK I'VE DONE, SPEAK FOR ME

Michelle Carr Clawson



Well, I don't believe I've seen you folks 'round here before, so you all must be new. Well then, let me introduce myself. My name's Bettye Wallace. If any of you find yourself in need of a seamstress while you're in town, just let me know. I come in every other day to bring back clothes and pick up clothes that's in need of stitchin',

cleanin', or ironin'. My prices are fair—you can ask anybody in town. I do good work, too, even if I do say so myself. Ask 'round, and people will tell you, "nobody does a better job than Bettye Wallace." See this dress I'm wearin'? Made it myself. This here is the dress I've been workin' on for Mrs. Powell. See the handwork here? That's a special stitch taught to me by my grandmamma when I was a little girl. My grandmamma started doin' laundry and sewing after she was freed, and she passed her trade down to my mamma. Now that Mamma's gettin' on in years, she can't work as much, so now it's been handed down to me. And as soon as my little girl can hold a needle in her hand, I'll teach her the same way Mamma taught me.

I don't work for no master. See, I'm what you call a free black woman, and 'cause I'm free, I have to pay taxes and provide for my family. That's why I've got to work hard to keep what they call 'round here in town a "reputable business." My grandmamma had to work extra hard to earn a good

name. See, she wasn't always a free woman; she was a hard-workin' house slave for many years. Did everything under the sun for her master and his wife. When the master's wife died, she sort of took her place and was kind of a second wife to him in every way. Because of all she had been to him, he made sure that she was freed after he died and that her children were set free, too.

Bein' free makes things a little easier for me than it is for most black folks 'round here. Havin' a good trade is what keeps me ahead of the poor white folks. Somebody's always in need of new clothes or stitchin' up old ones, and there's nobody here that don't need their clothes washed when they come vistin'. There's a few folks 'round that don't like that I'm better off than they are. Both slaves and poor whites give me dirty looks and such. Lotta times they don't speak to me on the street or in the shops. They just walk right on past me. Not everybody does that, you understand, just a few here and there. Most of the slaves is proud to see me doin' well—it sort of give them hope.

Hope you enjoy your stay here in town. Remember now, you be in need of anything washed, ironed, or stitched while you're here, just let me know. I'll fix you up right quick.

Bettye Wallace, seamstress, is just one of the many people of the past who talks about their experience in trades throughout historic Colonial Williamsburg in the eighteenth century. Behind this page, we will attempt to explore the many facets of tradesmen and the hurdles they encountered. This issue is dedicated to **TRADESMEN**.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

Robert C. Watson

A HISTORICAL NOTE

While the majority of eighteenth century Blacks in Virginia were engaged in agricultural work, the record shows that there were hundreds of Blacks who engaged in non-agricultural pursuits. Arguably, free Blacks and slaves displayed the demonstrated their greatest talent and training in trades. Many free Blacks and slaves were employed as brick masons, carpenters, cabinet makers, coopers, tailors, seamstresses, spinners, and mechanics. These Black tradesmen could be found on plantations as well as in cities.

There were many factors which led to the use of Blacks in the trades, but far too many to be discussed in detail here. Nevertheless, the training of Blacks was not something that originated in the new world. One may safely assume that Black tradesmanship originated in Africa. According to one writer, "Black men were the first to fashion bone and ivory and to engage in iron, wood, and gold working, perhaps as early as 5000 years ago," (Schuyler, Craftsmen in the Bluegrass, *Crisis*, Volume XLVII, May 1940, pg. 158.)

Black tradesmen possessed skills that were sought after by plantation owners in the colonial period, see *Virginia Gazette* advertisements below:

Virginia Gazette — April 23, 1767

To be Sold, by virtue of deed of trust, at the Plantation whereon Captain William Simmons now lives, in Surry County, near Cabin Point, on Monday the 27th instant --

Eight likely Negroes, among whom are a blacksmith, a carpenter who can make good cart wheels, and a good sawer [sic]; also sundry stocks, viz horse, cattle, sheep &c...

Virginia Gazette (PD) — November 8, 1770

I have a likely young Negro Fellow, a blacksmith (with a set of tools) which I would sell on reasonable terms. He understands something of ship work, as he was a year at the business, and also coarse country work. The purchaser will have credit until the first of May next, on giving bond and security, or a merchant's assumpsit for the money, which must be paid at Williamsburg. Colin Campbell.



Virginia Gazette (PD) — November 7, 1771

Wanted, A Negro Blacksmith, that understands his Business. Ready cash will be given for such a One to any Person that will apply to Burnley & Braikenridge, in Hanover.

Virginia Gazette (PD) — April 23, 1772

Run away from the Subscriber, in Dinwiddie, on Tuesday the 14th Instant (April), a Negro named Bob, about twenty three years of Age, five Feet ten or eleven Inches high, by Trade a Blacksmith, very dark and visaged. Whoever apprehends the said Slave, and brings him to me, shall have Forty Shillings Reward, if he is taken in Virginia, and Three Pounds if taken in Carolina, besides what the Law allows. Robert Walker.

There were a number of skilled Black tradesmen that lived in Williamsburg and throughout Virginia in the eighteenth century. Harold Gill has done the most definitive work on Black tradesmen in Williamsburg. A partial list is provided:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Status</u>
Occupation Blacksmith Banks, James	1763	App
Occupation Wheelwright Gilbert, Thomas	1745	App
Occupation Cooper Jaram(s) , Harry	1777	Sl
Occupation Cooper Waterford, Adam	1768-1782	Mas

While most students of history will continue to focus on the two classes of Blacks in the eighteenth century, house slaves and field slaves, it is important that we keep in mind another class also labored — Black tradesmen.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Starobin, Robert. *Industrial Slavery*.
 Tate, Thad. *The Negro in 18th Century Williamsburg*.
 Wade, Richard. *Slavery in the Cities*.

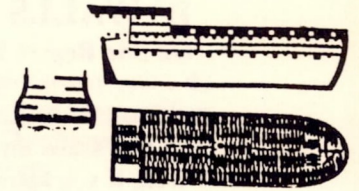
Suggestions, comments, questions, articles are welcomed.

Send to Franklin Street Annex, Room 106.

Editor Michelle Carr Clawson, (804) 220-7212

Department Director Robert C. Watson, (804) 220-7254

ECHOES FROM THE PAST . . .



Important Dates in Black History

February 1, 1960 Four students from North Carolina A & T College started Sit-in Movement at Greensboro, North Carolina, five-and-dime store. By February 10th, movement had spread to fifteen Southern cities in five states.

February 2, 1870 Fifteenth Amendment ratified, guaranteeing suffrage to black adult males, including former slaves.

February 7, 1926 The first **Negro History Week** begins. Originated by Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, the Sunday kickoff celebration involves ministers, teachers, professionals, and business people in highlighting the "achievements of the Negro." The concept expanded in 1976 to an entire month.

February 11, 1990 Nelson Mandela is released from prison after being held for nearly twenty-seven years without trial by the South African government.

James "Buster" Douglas defeats Mike Tyson in Tokyo.

February 12, 1909 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) founded. Call for organizational meeting was issued on 100th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth by forty-seven whites and six blacks.

February 13-14, 1957

Southern Christian Leadership Conference organized at New Orleans meeting with Martin Luther King, Jr. as President.

February 15, 1992

At memorial services attended by over 1,600 in Memphis, Tennessee, author Alex Haley is eulogized by his wife, who says, "Thank you, Alex, you have helped us know who we truly are."

February 18, 1688

Quakers of Germantown, Pennsylvania, made the first formal protest against slavery in colonial America.

February 21, 1965

Malcolm X (39) assassinated in Audubon Ballroom at a rally of his organization. Three blacks were later convicted of the crime and sentenced to life imprisonment.

February 25, 1964

Muhammad Ali defeated Sonny Liston for world heavyweight boxing championship.

February 28, 1943

Porgy and Bess opened on Broadway with Anne Brown and Todd Duncan in starring roles.

AFRICAN PROVERB: (Ashanti)

"Fire and gunpowder do not sleep together."

IF WALLS COULD TALK

On-Site Report By Michelle Carr Clawson

Gosh, is it that time again?! I didn't even have time to make my rounds -- for juicy scoop that is. Well, if you know me, I ALWAYS have some good gossip hiding up my sleeve.

Now of course, you didn't hear it from me, but I heard celebrations are in order for **EMILY JAMES, ROBERT C. WATSON, ROSEMARIE BYRD, ROBERT M. WATSON, JR.,** and **TERRY HOUSTON.** Happy Birthday to you all!

And did you hear about . . . Lawd, my time has run out! Who invented clocks anyway? Oh, sorry about that Benjamin Banneker. Thank you for your invention! Boy, I really put my foot in my mouth. Now, I know it's time to go! I still didn't have time to tell you about **MARCEL RIDDICK.** **MARCEL** is a new mom! Welcome to the world **Sharisse Danielle!** Mom and baby are doing great! Shh, I hear someone whispering, I better go investigate. See ya next time!

THE BOOKSHELF

Black Pearls

By Eric V. Copage



Daily Meditations, Affirmations, and Inspirations for African-Americans

Here, at last, is a book of inspirational thoughts and practical advice for African-Americans. The 365 quotes that begin each day's entry range from African proverbs to wisdom from Malcolm X, Terry McMillan, Bo Jackson, Rosa Parks, Spike Lee, Marian Wright Edelman, Alice Walker, and Martin Luther King, Jr., among hundreds of other diverse and accomplished people of African descent. And each day's entry covers a new topic: Love, Anger, Pride, Dieting, Stress, Stereotypes, Power, and Success are

just a few! From the daily inspirations, author Eric V. Copage suggests meditations and specific actions that will help readers boost their spirits—and achieve their dreams. Read it daily, I do!

Eric V. Copage is author of *Kwanzaa: A Celebration of African-American Culture and Cooking*. He is an editor of *The New York Times Magazine* and a former columnist for *Essence*.

FEBRUARY 4 DISCOURAGEMENT

We must not become discouraged.

— BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

When injustice and bigotry are still facts of our lives—when they now are parts of our children's lives—how can we help but become discouraged? Certainly we have to admit that there are disappointments in life—more, no doubt, than we'd planned on. There are career frustrations, unfulfilling marriages, wayward children, financial insecurity, and disease. Life can seem one long struggle with only the promise of death at the end.

Why not accept our moments of discouragement as part of life? Accept them, but then sweep them out, because we cannot afford to have discouragement linger. We can, instead, use our times of discouragement to reflect on our challenges—and then make a battle plan.

On this day, I will remember a time I felt discouraged or defeated. And then I will visualize myself taking control of the situation and succeeding.

MARCH 12 CHANGE

Every small, positive change we can make in ourselves repays us in confidence in the future.

— ALICE WALKER

In our habit of "thinking big," we often neglect the smaller things we can do to add value to our lives or aid us in accomplishing our goals. It might be that we'd like to improve our eating habits. We can make a start by including fresh fruit at our meals and for snacks. A small thing, but it can give us incentive to make other changes.

Our small changes have a greater chance for success because we pinpoint manageable tasks. We are therefore less likely to be defeated by the enormity of our goals or the hectic pace of our lives. Meeting one small goal at a time gives us the confidence to set more goals and foresee a bright future as we do so.

On this day, I pledge to do at least one small thing toward improving my life.



WE'VE GOT A VISITOR

Felix Simmons, Sr.

Department of Historic Trades



DON'T GET WEARY

On January 15, 1994, I had the opportunity to travel to Alexandria, Va., to attend the opening reception of the exhibition "Don't Get Weary: African-Americans in 18th-Century Alexandria," which is on view at the Carlyle House Historic Park. I felt the show was excellent, and I would recommend that others here at the Foundation take the time to go and see it.

The exhibit focuses on the Carlyle House, an entire complex of buildings owned by John Carlyle, one of the largest slave owners in northern Virginia in the late 18th century. Enslaved African-Americans worked inside and outside the complex of buildings to keep Carlyle's family living in comfort and the business running. The exhibit takes a close look at the names seen listed on Carlyle's account ledgers, letters and account books, African-Americans who until now were only names without faces.

The exhibit explores what outsiders would have encountered in 1770 if we had visited the Carlyle House, slaves who toiled in the fields of Carlyle's three plantations, worked in his blacksmith shop, served as carpenters, masons and coopers, sailed his ships, hauled his goods and even erected the buildings.

There are mannequin displays equipped with voice boxes that effectively help the visitor place faces with the names on the ledger and understand the relationships that took place within the Carlyle household.

An introductory film shown at the beginning of the exhibition features several Foundation interpreters, including Rosemarie Byrd, Marcel Riddick, Robert Watson Jr., Willie Fitz, Christopher Wyckoff, Joe Jones, Willie Parker, George Pettengell, Regina Blizzard and me as well as archaeologists Bill Pittman and Ywone Edwards. The exhibit also displays many of Colonial Williamsburg's artifacts, ranging from fabrics to cowrie shells, barrel lids, tools and runaway advertisements.

"Don't Get Weary" is an exhibit you won't want to miss. It is a premiere opportunity to see some of history's names without faces come to life. From a museum professional's point of view, it is a work of art. Exhibit runs through August 28, 1994.

Editor's note: For more information on the exhibit, call (703) 549-2997.

ORIGINS OF NEGRO CRAFTSMANSHIP IN COLONIAL AMERICA

Leonard Stavisky, *Journal of Negro History*, XXXII

American in the year 1783 was at peace. The war of independence had been fought, and the new republic had severed its last vestigial political ties with Great Britain. Although the final treaty had not yet been ratified, virtually normal intercourse between the states was again possible. Scores of European tourists, tempted by business and curiosity, journeyed to the western hemisphere, hoping to see as much as their time and finances would permit. From New York harbor, where he had resided during the British occupation, Dr. Johann D. Schoepf, a German physician, set out for the interior of the continent. Travelling southward, he observed with the scientific discernment the resources, industries, customs and people of each individual commonwealth. In his journal, after reaching South Carolina, Schoepf noted that the "gentlemen in the country have among their negroes as the Russian nobility among the serfs, the most necessary handicrafts-men, cobblers, tailors, carpenters, smiths, and the like whose work they command at the smallest possible price or for nothing almost. There is hardly any trade or craft which has not been learned and is not carried on by negroes. . ."

To understand the factors leading to the employment of Negroes as artisans in the year 1783, or in the present day as well, it is necessary to understand the historical background of the subject. Their training in the mechanic arts was not something originated in the American colonies. Negro craftsmanship, one may safely assume, had its inception somewhere on the continent of Africa. According to one writer, black men were the first to fashion bone and ivory, and to engage in iron, wood and gold working. Perhaps five thousand years ago Negroid peoples helped build the pyramids of Egypt, while cotton was woven in the Sudan as far back as the eleventh century. The Kukas, on Lack Tchad, and the sixteenth century inhabitants of Timbuctoo were well acquainted with weaving, tanning, and toolmaking. Modern ethnologists, studying "our contemporary ancestors," have also discovered evidences of primitive workmanship carried on in areas untouched by the white man's civilization. "It remains an indisputable fact," P. G. LePage asserts, "that the decorative character manifested in the handicrafts of the black races of Africa is of surpassing character . . . The native hand derives the maximum of expression from the few elements afforded by the soil."

Although during the earliest days of British settlement in America craftsmanship remained crudely developed, farsighted individuals soon recognized the vital role performed by ratifiers. Thomas Dudley, the second Governor of Massachusetts, urged further training in the crafts, considering that to be the most important education next to morals. Nevertheless, the development of an extensive system of home industries required a large supply of fairly dexterous workers, and in most provinces an acute shortage of skilled workers existed. Laborers

who did have some knowledge of the crafts were alert in exploiting this situation. The remuneration demanded by artisans gradually became so costly that even some rather prosperous men hesitated before employing new workmen. To the Lords of Trade Robert Livingston wrote in 1701 that the only barriers obstructing the production of naval stores in New York were the "want of people, and the high wages of the labourer." Conditions eventually reached the stage where entire communities advertised for certain tradesmen. Beginning with 1775 the shortage was further accelerated by the demands of military necessity, and remained critical for some time even after the Revolution. As late as 1792, Virginia still offered a five-year exemption from all taxes, except the duty on land, to any artisan or mechanic who would move to that state.

Probably the one factor which most contributed to the shortage of artisans was the vastness of territory in the New World. Fertile land was available at such reasonable rates that no one would long be content working for another. After having labored for several years at their individual trades, most workers could afford to purchase a small farm and retire to rural life. This gave the American independence and bargaining powers unsurpassed in any other region of the world. The colonial employer would either pay dearly or, without warning, lose his entire staff of ambitious employees. Master craftsmen vainly sought to import European laborers, but the consequences were often as disastrous. Actually there was no guarantee that the immigrant was really a skilled artisan. Instances of misrepresentation led to the passage of acts permitting the courts to halt the wages of individuals securing contracts under false pretenses.

Despite these obstacles it was still apparent that the services of artisans were needed. The only solution was to find a new source of industrial labor, and Negro slaves, who had long been used for agricultural purposes, seemed to provide the necessary solution. The use of slaves as mechanics would solve two prime difficulties—the costliness of labor, and the rapid turnover in manpower. As one economic historian insists, employers "could have gone to the moon, if necessary, for labor," and here, in their own backyards, was an unending supply.

The movement to train the Negro in the handicrafts did not have universal support in the American colonies. The white artisan, fearing slave competition, was naturally opposed to such a program. Among the planter class there were some who felt that craftsmanship did nothing more than replace the stock which it consumed, and therefore was less productive than agriculture. To this group it seemed unwise to use the available store of workers at any but the most profitable forms of employment. Many in the South also doubted the Negro's ability to engage in trades requiring a fair degree of skill. Perhaps typical of his section, Colonel George Mason believed that slavery discouraged the arts and manufactures, for it prevented the importation of white laborers "who really enrich and strengthen a country." Still others pointed to the actual costliness of slave labor. Purchasing the services of an indenture was often the more frugal method, since he was usually an artisan in his own right, and could begin working immediately, without the expense of a long period of instruction. In 1741, it was estimated that the initial cost of a Negro, about thirty pounds, would pay the passage fare, provide tools and other equipment, and defray the cost of maintaining a white laborer for an entire year.

Among other things, employers also considered the effects of

mechanical training on the Negro as a slave. Above all, they were interested in preserving the social order. Some realized all too well that a little learning could be a dangerous thing, for the modicum of education which the slave received while mastering the essentials of a craft might make him resentful of his status, and complicate further subjugation. Frequently, industrialization, and the contacts accruing from it, did cause a good deal of rebelliousness. The slave craftsman's access to tools, which might be used in fashioning weapons, made some masters hesitate before consenting to industrial training. A revolt uncovered on the eastern shore of Virginia disclosed the fact that a Negro blacksmith made use of his experience to shape three hundred spears for the intended insurrection. More than a few of the Negroes implicated in the New York "conspiracy" of 1741, which allegedly had as its objective the burning of the city and the murder of its inhabitants, were tradesmen. Many of the preliminary meetings were held at the homes of white artisans, whom the slaves undoubtedly met while at work.

"The easier acquisition of knowledge, the greater possibility of association, and the greater confidence and assurance that city life and mechanical and industrial pursuits developed," Aptheker contends, "were widely recognized as dangers associated with the growth of a large urban slave population."

On the other hand, the advocates of industrialization produced arguments equally convincing. Those favoring the use of Negroes in the trades pointed to the steady decline in agriculture. As early as 1722 tobacco had fallen in price, and by the end of the colonial period its potentialities became even more reduced. The work of artisans, even if it created only a product equal in value to that which it originally expended, as the planters asserted, still could not be regarded as unproductive. Since manufacturing was more conducive to subdivision and specialization, and since it could be conducted regardless of seasonal fluctuations, it afforded greater opportunities than agriculture for improvement. Alexander Hamilton, adopting a rather moderate view, considered it extremely probable that an exhaustive analysis of the subject would indicate no inherent superiority in the productivity of one form of industry over the other. "The propriety of the encouragements, which may, in any case be proposed to be given to either," he remarked, "ought to be determined upon considerations irrelative to any comparison of that nature."

Undeniably the strongest argument in favor of the use of slave craftsmen, aside from reasons of scarcity, centered about the relative stability of the labor force. Slavery was a lifetime status; the owner having once taught his Negro a trade did not have to consider the expiration of the term of indenture, and the natural inconvenience of hiring a new worker. Furthermore, the danger of having a servant make a successful escape from his period of bondage was considerably lessened. The black man, however, by virtue of his color, was always viewed with suspicion when seeking work as a freeman, and consequently was easier to trace. If only for reasons of permanency, slave artisans were to be preferred.

In selecting Negroes for industrial training, the slaveowner had to consider still other complex factors. The economy of the area, the amount of work, the number of Negroes available, and the profit involved, all were important to his decision. Masters were well aware that the value of a slave was directly influenced by his working ability, and that it was economically advantageous to instruct as many as possible in the crafts. At the slave market artisans invariably sold for twice as much as unskilled field hands. However, not every slave was subjectively qualified for such work. The intelligence, age, sex, health and disposition of the Negro played a vital role in the task of selection. Although U. B. Phillips contends that on the larger plantations "some of the weaker Negroes were often assigned to spinning, weaving, sewing, and like occupations in the line of domestic manufactures," in general young, healthy, alert male slaves, who had been "country born," were preferred.

Once having been selected for mechanical duties, the Negro was placed under the supervision of an experience craftsman. Owing to the permanency of slavery and its rigorous discipline, he eventually might develop a fair degree of skill. With such training the slave was capable of attending to most of the mechanical needs of the plantation, and often was hired out to assist the town carpenter or village blacksmith. Whatever disadvantages slavery may have held, under its system the Negro was taught many trades necessary for earning a living. Those trained as artisans gained manual skills which sometimes became the source of employment after manumission was attained.

It is interesting to note that while plantation artisans were relied upon to handle elementary tasks, owners frequently did not have confidence in the ability of slaves to perform operations of a more technical nature. Slaves were taught to be coopers, sawyers, carpenters and smiths, wrote the Reverend Hugh Jones in 1724, but for the most part they were "none of the aptest or nicest." Many masters, including William Byrd and Colonel Fitzhugh of Virginia, went to great expense to secure the services of foreign artisans, in spite of the availability of Negroes who had been trained for such purposes. Nevertheless, what Negro workers may have lacked in adroitness was compensated for by versatility. On the eve of the American Revolution virtually every trade known to colonial life was represented by slave laborers. Sometimes one mastered the elements of several industrial arts. A Virginia newspaper mentioned a slave who was an "extraordinary sawyer, a tolerable good carpenter and currier, pretends to make shoes and is a good sailor."

Even some women possessed skills far superior to those of the average domestic, excelling in cooking, washing and other forms of household work. Many were spinners and seamstresses; others made soap and starch and dyed clothing.

Slaves were not the only colored persons to work these trades. Free Negroes were also attracted to the handicrafts, and some were in a position to support themselves adequately. Apparently a few owned slaves themselves. More often, however, the free Negro's lot was an unhappy one. No longer shielded by the master's protective influence, many found it difficult to compete in an open labor market, and consequently lapsed into a state of semi-slavery. The most common of these intermediary statuses were servitude and apprenticeship. Ostensibly the master only had possession of the services of these individuals, but actually, as in slavery, he could buy, sell or transfer the servant almost at will. Thus, during the colonial period, three classes of Negroes—slaves, freeman, and servant—labored as tradesmen in America.

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

SITES AND BUILDINGS that interpret or exhibit the black experience.

Brush-Everard Site — Tours of this property and original house feature the lives of Thomas Everard, immigrant and public official, and his family. Learn more about the African-Americans who lived and worked on the property. Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays 10, 11 A.M., 1, 2, 3, and 4 P.M. beginning March 12, 1994.

Carter's Grove Slave Quarter — Interpreters will welcome you to the slave quarter, rebuilt on its original location, and direct you through buildings and outdoor spaces that reveal much about the lives of the Africans and African-Virginians whose labors supported the eighteenth-century plantation. Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. OPENS March 12, 1994.

SPECIAL EVENT

Winter Discovery Series

"Ain't I Your Equal?" — African-American Life and Struggle in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg.

Black and white is our American story. At Colonial Williamsburg, the telling is exciting as the tale. Our scholars, performers and craftsmen will introduce you to the people who helped build the foundations of American culture in this week-long visit into the African-American world of the eighteenth-century. February 1-5, 1994

SPECIAL TOURS

The Other Half — Half of the population in Williamsburg during the eighteenth century was black. This ninety-minute walking tour gives an in-depth look at the black experience from the arrival of the first blacks in Virginia in 1619 through the abolition of the slave trade by the English in 1807. Check *Visitor's Companion* for a current listing of times.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Black History Month - Oral History Community Night: February 19, 1994

"Lineage and Legacy: The Footstep Still Echoes," is the subject of Colonial Williamsburg's seventh-annual Oral History Community Night Program. The two panels will focus on 10-12 black families nationwide who have traced their ancestry back to the 19th-century. An exhibition on genealogy and a genealogical workshop will be held. The Williamsburg-James City County public school systems also will participate in an essay contest on genealogy. The program honors the 375th anniversary of the arrival of the first Africans at Jamestown. The program is free and open to the public. The programs will be held at 6 and 8 P.M. at the Williamsburg Lodge Auditorium.

EVENTS AROUND TOWN

Captain "Bill" Pinkney, first African-American to sail solo around the world, to speak at The Mariners Museum on March 24, 1994

Captain "Bill" Pinkney will tell the story of his courageous journey on Thursday, March 24 at 7:30 p.m. at The Mariners Museum. Pinkney's slide presentation will place his historic achievement in the context of the rich and little-known tradition of African-American mariners. In 1992, Pinkney completed his 22-month journey, having persevered through tropical storms, sixty-knot waves, and two knock-downs in his 47-foot cutter, *Commitment*. His voyage covered 32,000 nautical miles and included stops in Brazil, South Africa, Tasmania, Uruguay, and Bermuda. Admission to his presentation, which includes a reception following the presentation, is \$5 for general admission and free for museum members. Reservations are required and may be made by calling The Mariners Museum at (804) 596-2222. XXXXXXXXXX

EACH ONE, TEACH ONE



THE THINK TANK

1. Q: Phoebe Fraunces, the daughter of "Black Sam Fraunces," is credited for saving the life of which President?
2. Q: What president stated on many occasions, "Without the aid of the Negro, there might have been no United States," and stated it would be "impossible to win the war against the South without the Negro"?
3. Q: Who was the first African-American to appear on a United States coin?
4. Q: This European leader planned to solve the color problem in Haiti by making it legal for each man to take three wives: one White, one Mulatto, and one Black. Who was he?
5. Q: In 1856, a government ruling was handed down saying that Negroes were not human. What federal judicial branch handed down the decision?
6. Q: During the voyage to the Americas, what ceremony was held by the slave traders to avoid depression?
7. Q: What was Paul Cuffee's occupation?
8. Q: What New York newspaper first capitalized the N in Negro?

UNITED NEGRO COLLEGE FUND'S HISTORIC AFRICAN-AMERICAN COLLEGES

(Unscramble)

1. NIIUVAIRGNNOVTYSIERUNI
2. OCN NYHUJMITSTISHREVI
3. LLLGUEEOAOTOCO
4. ERIBWLMORCLORNEGSO
5. TEETEETUUTSSKIIGN
6. EGELLOCTTENNEB
7. TSRVNCRFRBLWIEOEUIEY
8. WAHSSINUVERYIT

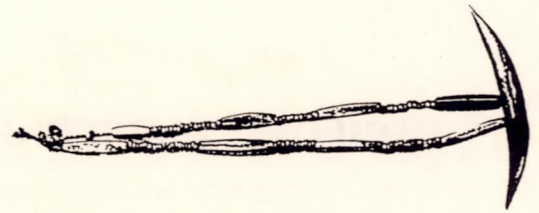
AFRICAN PROVERB: (Mauretania) "One must talk little, and listen much." ██████████

WE'VE GOT A VISITOR

Guest Writer

Michael Nicholls, Associate Professor of History
Utah State University, Logan

SKILLED BLACK VIRGINIANS AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



In December 1772, Walter Coles of Halifax County, deep in the Southside, sent Robin and Isaac, two slave blacksmiths he had hired the previous April, back to John Fox in Gloucester, a county bordering on the York River and the Chesapeake Bay. To serve as their permit for this unattended journey of approximately 150 miles, Coles endorsed on the back of his letter to their owner, "Let the two Negroes Robin and Isaac pass from this to Mr. John Fox's in Gloster." Such unsupervised travels were not unusual in colonial Virginia, for slaves frequently hauled goods and carried messages to distant locations. What is remarkable in this case, though, is the fact that Robin had earlier been a runaway. Described as "a very likely fellow, of a yellow complexion, about 6 feet high, 28 years old, by trade a blacksmith," Robin fled from Fox on March 3, 1766, intending, his owner believed, "to get on board a man of war, or some other vessel" and "to pass for a freeman." Robin was subsequently caught and hired out to Walter Coles and other individuals, like Thomas Branch of Chesterfield County who had to advertise for runaway Robin once more in February 1775. Captured again or returning on his own, Robin later either joined the British forces or was taken by them before they abandoned him in Williamsburg with the smallpox. He died a few days later. In September 1782, John Fox swore before the Gloucester country justices that Robin and five other slaves, including Marquis, a carpenter, and Gabriel, "an excellent weaver," were the losses he had sustained "by the enemy during the Ware in their Several Invasions."

John Fox was only one of a large number of Virginia slave owners who lost valuable slave craftsmen during the American Revolution. From Lord Dunmore's proclamation in November 1775 through the subsequent invasions by Mathew, Leslie, Arnold, Phillips, and Cornwallis, thousands of slaves left masters and mistresses for expected freedom with the British army and navy, while these same forces seized others as booty. Estimates of the total number of slaves who escaped to freedom or were forcibly taken vary widely.

For individual owners the losses could be extraordinary. Large numbers were lost to the British whenever their boats appeared in the Chesapeake. Many slave owners lost none. While the total numbers who made it to the British lines or were seized cannot be known, a significant number must have been skilled craftsmen whose departures and deaths created real losses for the Virginia economy and war effort.

By the time of the American Revolution, slave craftsmen pursued a wide range of trades and were recognized for the quality and importance of their work. Most of these were men, for slave women were not usually trained in skills other than those arising from domestic duties, field work, or spinning, weaving, and sewing.

The value of slave craftsmen was clearly documented in the price placed on them by appraisers of estates. Many commanded one and a half to double the worth of field hands, reflecting their value both to their owners and to the larger economy. Bernard Bailyn has recently noted the heavy proportion of skilled laborers in his analysis of British immigrants coming to Virginia in the years immediately preceding the Revolution, a likely indication of the local economy's demand for their skills. Taken together, both point to the importance of the skilled worker in the Chesapeake region and heighten the significance of the loss of skilled labor, free and coerced, during the Revolution.

In 1775, Virginia's colonial shipbuilding industry was centered in the Norfolk area. Lord Dunmore's military actions in the area and subsequent British invaders created ample opportunities for slaves to seek freedom. Not surprisingly ship carpenters, caulkers, and sailmakers, like Scipio, the twenty-year-old shipwright of Charles Thomas, Robin, the caulker who belonged to Joanna Tucker, and the unidentified twenty-four-year-old sailmaker claimed as lost by Jemimah Marnex, joined or were seized by British forces. Other ship carpenters were lost from King George and New Kent counties too.

Sailors, watermen, and pilots were even more numerous within the ranks of claimed slaves who escaped to the British forces. Most came from the Norfolk area, but claimants from King George, Gloucester, Northumberland, York, and even landlocked Cumberland counties lost these skilled slaves.

The building trades were also well represented. Joseph Mitchell of Nansemond County had a series of both brick and wooden buildings destroyed by the British. Not coincidentally Mitchell also claimed the lost of Brister, a brick molder in his mid-twenties, and Jack, a carpenter estimated to be thirty-seven years old. William Philips of York County lost his two bricklayers, Phill and Paul, while house carpenters disappeared from owners in Gloucester and Northumberland and a millwright made off from Norfolk. Numerous other carpenters and joiners from Amelia and Cumberland in the Piedmont to Nansemond, New Kent, and Northumberland in the Tidewater were claimed as losses to the British by their owners. Claiming to be free born, Thomas Plumb from Little York, or Yorktown, and William Smith from Tabb's

Creek (most likely near Hampton) were both free black carpenters evacuated with the British from New York in 1783.

Most numerous among woodworkers were the axmen, sawyers, and hewers of wood, many of whom combined these skills with other work.

Coopers were also well represented among the workers of wood who disappeared during the war. Some, such as Tobey, belonging to Thomas Smith of Gloucester, and the accomplished cooper of John Eustace, also worked as carpenters. The latter was seized or took the opportunity to escape when a party of about thirty men, black and white, left their barge and ransacked the Eustace plantation on the night of August 31, 1782, indicating that slave losses continued long after the surrender and evacuation at Yorktown. The party broke open the plantation houses; destroyed each door and lock in the house and on all trunks, boxes, and chests; beat, bruised, and wounded Eustace; and then left with five of his slave men from this Lancaster County site. Sam, another Gloucester County slave, worked as both a cooper and house carpenter. Far to the west, in Lunenburg County, James Beuford lost an unnamed cooper and shoemaker most likely when Colonel Banastre Tarleton made his raid into the area.

Claims in nine of the fifteen counties for which records exist included blacksmiths. Jerdone and Holt lost both a good smiter and a good forgerman from their Providence Forge operation in New Kent.

Slaves who created and shaped fabrics and leather also contributed important skills to the Virginia economy that were subsequently lost during the war. Spinning was a common activity employing slave women. Several spinners were claimed by their owners. Tailors and seamstresses were less frequently noted in the claims but the Norfolk area no longer had the skills of Adam, a tailor belonging to Aaron Milhado, nor could Ralph Wormeley, Jr., use Harry to fashion clothes at Rosegill in Middlesex. Shoemakers were more widely distributed among the claims both numerically and geographically, with Northumberland County alone losing five.

Slave cooks also disappeared from plantations and towns. The kitchen was largely the domain of women such as Nanny, the "excellent" cook of Colonel Francis Thornton of King George County; Winny, the "good" cook at the plantation of James Bentley in Gloucester County; and Grace, the cook of David Jameson in Yorktown. Their absence was immediately felt. In Williamsburg the British occupation disrupted life for the white residents, and the loss of slaves created great inconvenience for those used to the labor and skills of their slaves. One woman, Mrs. Cocke, lost her cook and according to St. George Tucker was "obliged to have recourse to her neighbors to dress her Dinner for." On board ship, however, cooks were men, including George Bishick, a free black who was seized by the sloop

Otter and who left New York with the British in 1783.

In both town and countryside, slave millers operated mills. Some were windmills like those belonging to Robert Tucker and his widow in Norfolk, but Squire, the miller belonging to Daniel Jones of Amelia County, most likely operated a water-powered gristmill. Slave bakers made bread and ship's biscuit from the flour produced by these mills.

Most claimants did not list the occupations or training of their slaves; the courts seemed inclined to accept their sworn testimony as to their value. Hence, a good number of slave craftsmen remain unidentified among the slaves lost or runaway during the war. One wonders, for example, about Fill, a fellow listed as being worth two hundred pounds, twice the value of any other man listed on Seth Pointer's claim submitted to the Norfolk County commissioners. Pointer was a carpenter and it is likely that Fill worked at his master's trade. Was Carpenter, John Widdon's highly valued slave, what his name implied?

Slave craftsmen often ran away, as any perusal of the *Virginia Gazette* will reveal. Some succeeded in passing themselves off as freemen for a time or even leaving the colony on a vessel bound for a distant port. Most, however, were probably caught and returned because their owners seemed to have a fair idea of where they were headed. The American Revolution temporarily changed much of this. Masters still knew where their runaways were headed—to the British in the case of a large number of slaves—but whereas escape was seldom successful in the colonial period, now the destination was more easily reached. Slave craftsmen readily found employment behind British lines, on British ships, and within British forces. Sadly, few lived to enjoy the freedom they acquired. Of those who followed Cornwallis to Yorktown, the bombardment and diseases such as smallpox and various camp fevers took incredible numbers. When Jefferson bitterly recalled his losses to Cornwallis, which included some thirty of his Cumberland slaves, he noted that twenty-seven of them had died. Had Cornwallis taken them to free them, Jefferson complained, "he would have done right, but it was to consign them to inevitable death from the small pox and putrid fever then raging in his camp." Jefferson seems not to have accepted the possibility that his slaves might have joined Cornwallis voluntarily. For many slaves, especially in Eastern Virginia, the war created choices and opened opportunities that, however great the risks, seemed preferable to the world that had been theirs. In human terms the death rate among slaves who made it to the British was staggering; in economic terms the loss of coerced labor from skilled craftsmen was significant and temporarily depressed the skill levels of the Virginia black population.

(Source: *Excerpts from Colonial Williamsburg Historic Trades, Volume II*)

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Meet People of the Past

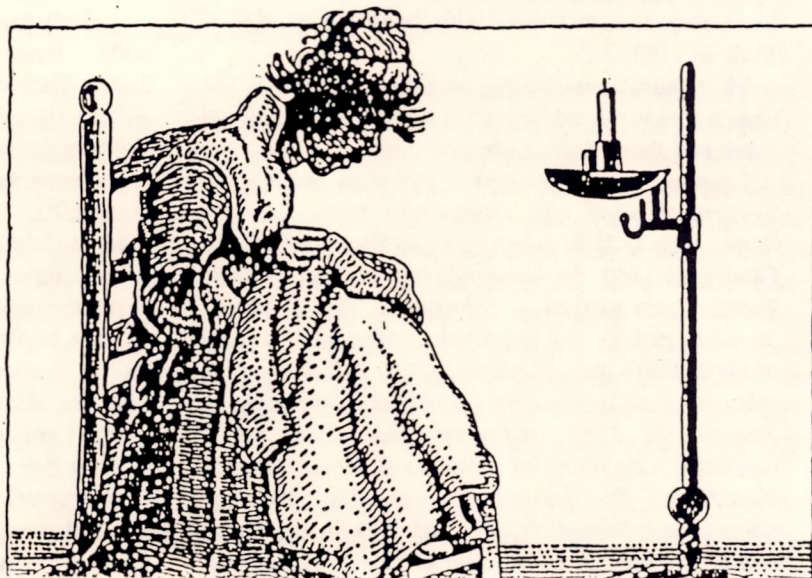


ADAM WATERFORD . . . A Cooper.

Adam Waterford was a free black who made his living as a cooper in town. In 1770, for example, he received 1 for making a washtub, mending a bushel measure, making new bottoms for a bucket and a churn and hooping pails and tubs for Governor Botetourt. In 1774, he made a bucket for the public gaol.

We can be certain that Waterford was free because he owned and was taxed for one of the lots, No. 26, in Philip Johnson's new subdivision behind the Chiswell-Bucktrout House.

As a free black, Waterford would have been a rarity. He may have been free since birth, and he was probably apprenticed as a young man to the cooperage trade. Because coopering was much in demand in tidewater Virginia, Waterford was able to clear enough profit to buy a lot and build a small house—perhaps by the mid-1770's. Having acquired the lot and the house, Waterford's next goal would have been to buy the freedom of his wife, Rachel, a chambermaid-laundress at the Market Square Tavern. As such, she would have been the property of Gabriel Maupin. (Moreover, any children they had while Rachel remained a slave would have belonged to Maupin as well.) Waterford died in 1789.



EVE . . . A Seamstress.

A slave who worked as a seamstress and spinner in the household of Peyton Randolph, Eve could often be seen at her work—and overseeing the output of other slavewomen and girls—in the family clothmaking buildings that stood along North England Street.

Spinning was Eve's principle work. Her tasks—the amount of cotton or linen thread or wool yarn she and her crew were expected to spin each day—and her workday varied seasonally from 9 to about 14 hours, with the short workdays in midwinter and long ones in midsummer. Although spinning occupied most of her time, she did some sewing, particularly on garments to be worn by field hands. Less frequently she would knit stockings and caps.

Mrs. Randolph would then take Eve's thread and yarn to a local weaver who made coarse fabric (often a combination of linen and wool or cotton and wool). This cloth would become the clothing worn by the family's huge retinue of 108 slaves (including children). All told, the Randolphs had 27 slaves in town, 36 in James City County and 45 in Charlotte County.

Although her work was probably adequate, Eve proved vexing to Betty Randolph. For example, an annotated draft of an inventory taken on December 20, 1775 shows Eve as one of eight slaves "gone to the enemy." This refers to Lord Dunmore's proclamation of November 1775, which promised freedom to any servants or Negro slaves who joined his ranks or took up arms against the colonists. But by the summer of 1780, Eve and at least one other slave named Henry had returned.

Later, during the smallpox epidemic—widely attributed to the British occupation of Williamsburg in the summer of 1781—Eve and the rest of the slaves had apparently disappeared again. It may be surmised that the slaves were either infected with the disease or simply moved out of town to quarantine them from further outbreaks. In any case, this development left Mrs. Randolph without any in-town help for a time that summer.

Something about Eve clearly bothered Mrs. Randolph. Although she had formerly determined to bequeath Eve and George to her niece, Ann Coupland, she changed her mind in a codicil to her will dated July 20, 1782. "Eve's bad behavior laid me under the necessity of selling her," she said flatly, and ordered part of the money from the sale of Eve to be used to buy some other young girl for Miss Coupland.

A BRIEF HISTORY LESSON

What is an occupation?

An occupation is a regular activity performed in exchange for payment. (Source: *The American Heritage Dictionary*)

Were there different grades or levels of slave labor?

Yes, although by far the largest number were field hands directly employed in crop cultivation. It was this demand for labor on a large scale that accompanied the growth of the slave labor system. A much smaller proportion of slaves worked as house servants. Skilled and semi-skilled craftsmen formed a third group. Most carpentry and cooperage on plantations in time came to be performed by them. Slaves were also proficient as seamstresses, tanners, shoemakers, wheelwrights, spinners, and weavers. Slave artisans were instrumental in the commercial development of the southern colonies, especially in tanning.

What kinds of work did the slaves do in Williamsburg?

Domestic service occupied most of them. In families with few slaves only the cook's duties were specifically defined. The other Negroes were utility servants alternately employed in cleaning, washing, ironing, sewing, gardening, nursing and attending the children, and caring for the animals.

There were a number of slave craftsmen, the majority of whom were carpenters, followed by those working as shoemakers or blacksmiths. There were individual instances of other slaves employed as: barbers, butchers, cabinet makers, coopers, harnessmakers, tanners, and tailors. Sons of free Negro parents could be apprenticed on the same terms as white boys. The free Negro cooper Adam Waterford owned property in the city and listed the royal governor among his customers.

(Source: *The Negro in 18th-Century Williamsburg* by Thad Tate)

What is an apprentice?

An apprentice is a person who is learning a trade or occupation. (Source: *The American Heritage Dictionary*)

At what age were children apprenticed?

The ideal age might be considered fourteen so that a full seven-year apprenticeship could be served by age twenty-one, but this was seldom the actual practice. The shorter apprenticeships common in the colonies were achieved by starting somewhat later. Orphans were sometimes apprenticed quite young.

Were the lengths of apprenticeships different in different trades?

The York county records show as much difference within the same trade as from trade to trade. Differences that Europe's guild systems may have imposed were not found here because of the chronic labor shortage.

What laws governed apprenticeship in Virginia?

The basis of colonial laws of apprenticeship were the English 1562 Statue of Artificers and the 1601 Poor Law, which standardized customs long recognized and enforced by the guilds and local authorities.

The Virginia Poor Law of 1672 gave county courts the power to place all children, whose parents were unable to bring them up, as apprentices. Churchwardens were ordered to report children in this category.

The Orphan Act of 1705 empowered the Orphan's courts to bind out all orphans whose estates were too small to support them. It also gave the court the power to hear complaints of apprentices for ill use by their master or failure to teach his trade.

Was there a guild system in Virginia?

No. By the eighteenth century the guild system was weak in England, and it was not established in Virginia.

Did apprentices have to pay for their apprenticeships?

It was not uncommon for a master to charge an apprenticeship fee, and sometimes even orphans had to pay.

Were apprentices paid?

They were provided with room and board, and sometimes given a sum of money or set of tools at the end of their apprenticeship. Occasionally they were paid during the last few years of the term.

Were women apprenticed?

There are four females named in the 110 York county apprenticeships recorded from 1747 to 1789. Earlier York county records contain several others. Generally, these are for household work or textile trades (spinning, weaving, and knitting).

Were blacks apprenticed?

Yes, both free blacks and slaves were apprenticed. In the case of a slave, the legal contract was between the slave owner and the craftsman. The building trades and plantation support crafts relied heavily on skilled black labor.

What kind of work did an apprentice do?

In order to learn a trade, the apprentice eventually had to do all the various skilled work of the craft, but he might have spent a lot of time working as a semi-skilled laborer in the first years of his apprenticeships. Very little is known about this subject.

Where did he sleep?

Some contracts allowed the apprentice to live at his own home, while others required the master to provide room and board, in which case the apprentice lived in the master's house, although exact sleeping arrangements are not known.

What is a journey man?

A journeyman is one who has completed an apprenticeship and works for wages. The term comes from the French for "day man," not from traveling.

Where can I find out more about apprenticeship?

Ray Townsend's report, "Apprenticeship in Colonial Virginia," and follow-up work in Charles Bodie The London Tradesman, a book valuable for an understanding of English traditions in apprenticeships.

(Source: *Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter*, July 1981)

EMPLOYEES' CORNER

Behind The Scenes

FIELD SCHOOL IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the College of William and Mary will offer a special field school in African-American archaeology on the site of Rich Neck slave quarter. This duplex quarter, probably abandoned upon the death of Philip Ludwell in 1767, was home to many of the twenty-one slaves listed in his inventory. In addition to excavating this quarter, students will be introduced to the general subject of slave archaeology and African-American life through field trips, lecture and participation in the programs of Colonial Williamsburg's Department of African-American Interpretation and Presentations.

Two five-week sessions are planned, from May 31st to July 1st, and from July 5th to August 5th. Students may enroll for six credit hours at three different levels, introductory undergraduate, advance undergraduate, and graduate. Scholarships for minority participants will be available. For more information, please contact Ms. Ywone Edwards, Coordinator of African-American Archaeology, Department of Archaeological Research, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 804 220-7330.

AFRICAN PROVERB: (Kenya) "Thunder is not yet rain."

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES:

EACH ONE, TEACH ONE

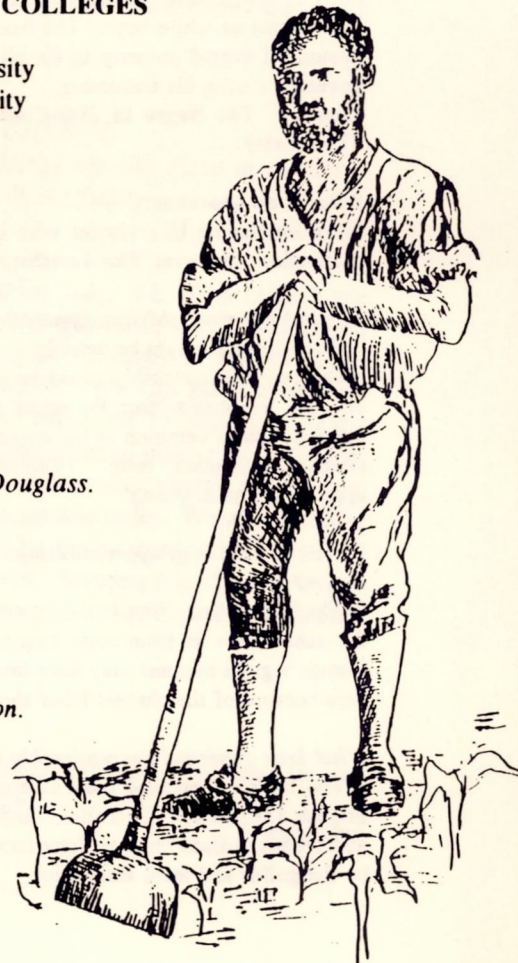
1. George Washington
2. Abraham Lincoln
3. Booker T. Washington
4. Napoleon
5. U. S. Supreme Court
6. The Dance of the Slaves
7. Shipbuilder (1790)
8. The New York Times

UNCF'S HISTORIC AFRICAN-AMERICAN COLLEGES

1. Virginia Union University
2. John C. Smith University
3. Tougaloo College
4. Morris Brown College
5. Tuskegee Institute
6. Bennett College
7. Wilberforce University
8. Shaw University

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baldwin, James. *One Day When I Was Lost.*
Blassingame, John. *The Slave Community.*
Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.*
DuBois, W. E. B. *Souls of Black Folk.*
Haley, Alex. *Autobiography of Malcolm X.*
Harris, Joseph. *Africans and the History.*
Jacobs, H. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.*
Lee, Spike. *By Any Means Necessary.*
Morrison, Toni. *Song of Solomon.*
Quarles, Benjamin. *The Negro in the American Revolution.*
Shuey, Audrey M. *The Testing of Negro Intelligence.*
Thompson, Robert Farris. *Face of the Gods.*
Washington, Booker T. *Up from Slavery.*
Wells, Ida B. *Crusade for Justice.*



MAY THE WORK I'VE DONE, SPEAK FOR ME

I
I WONDER
I WONDER WHEN
I WONDER WHEN I
I WONDER WHEN I WILL
I WONDER WHEN I WILL BE
I WONDER WHEN I WILL BE FREE
I WONDER WHEN I WILL BE FREE, And the Master can let me be?
I WONDER WHEN I WILL BE FREE
I WONDER WHEN I WILL BE
I WONDER WHEN I WILL
I WONDER WHEN I
I WONDER WHEN
I WONDER
I

By Michelle Carr Clawson

ON MYNE OWN TYME

The Department of African-American Interpretation and Presentations offers the following programs at various times. All programs are meant to provide unique glimpses into the lives of eighteenth-century African Americans.

Black History Month - Oral History Community

Night: February 19, 1994

"Lineage and Legacy: The Footstep Still Echoes," is the subject of Colonial Williamsburg's seventh-annual Oral History Community Night Program. The two panels will focus on 10-12 black families nationwide who have traced their ancestry back to the 19th-century. An exhibition on genealogy and a genealogical workshop will be held. The program honors the 375th anniversary of the arrival of the first Africans at Jamestown. The program is free and open to the public. The programs will be held at 6 and 8 P.M. at the Williamsburg Lodge Auditorium.



For further information about programs and cost, please telephone 1-800-HISTORY.

AFRICAN PROVERB: (Ivory Coast) "It takes two to make a quarrel."

*The
Colonial Williamsburg
Foundation*

African-American Interpretation and Presentations
P. O. Box 1776
Williamsburg, Virginia 23187-1776

SUSAN BERG
BSO