• THE COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

interpreter

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Water, Water, Everywhere

Wallace (Rusty) Wilson is well qualified to portray Captain Stewart, an eighteenth-century ship's captain recently arrived in Williamsburg, because he brings years of merchant marine experience to the role. Here he describes various types of sailing vessels known to the colonists and augments his explanation with drawings as well as definitions for the "King's (Nautical) English."

The very discovery of the continent of North America was the result of exploration and the successful crossing of the Atlantic Ocean. The settlement and survival of the English colonists depended on the food, tools, seeds, and livestock brought across that ocean from Europe. And once on the new continent colonists found there were no easy overland routes for exploration, transportation, and communication. Waterways were to provide the arteries of colonial transporation and, with the Atlantic, the lifelines of survival. Bordered on the west by the mountainous unknown, divided in coastal regions by waters, the colonists had to turn to those waters and vessels that could be sailed, rowed, or poled, for transportation of bulky cargo. North-south trade in the colonies was best carried on coastal vessels, which still had to be capable of survival on the open seas. Such transportation was cheaper, faster, and generally more reliable than team and wagon on land. The same held true of waters reaching into the continent itself.

The types of vessels needed to accomplish effective use of the colonial waters and connect the colonists with their motherlands were, of course, of European origin. They gradually became more specialized: there were rafts, canoes, shallops, pinnaces, sloops, schooners, ships, and so forth. To simplify, assume that the purpose and use of these vessels was dependent on draft. Draft is basically the distance a vessel extends below the waterline or how much water it "draws." (For example, a vessel with a draft of, or that "draws" six feet will not be afloat when the tide ebbs and leaves only five feet of water in the creek.) And it is a fact that a vessel said to be "full and down" with tobacco will have a greater draft than one which is in ballast only. Nonetheless, a river sloop fully laden will probably have less draft than an oceangoing vessel lightly laden. These facts are important

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Carts and Carriages

Dan Stebbins, master wheelwright, draws on his research and expertise to answer questions interpreters ask about wheeled vehicles and to give us both common and more specialized definitions of terms related to them.

Travel and transportation are aspects of eighteenth-century life that an interpreter can easily relate to the visitor's experience. Then, by one way or another, people and parcels moved to and from Williamsburg; and so it is today. Guests from Philadelphia, for example, can immediately identify with Thomas Jefferson's trips from Williamsburg to Philadelphia to attend meetings of the Continental Congress. Those journeys can be described and discussed in terms of travel time, road and weather conditions, personal comfort, and, of course, the type of vehicle in which one traveled. While any one of these could be the subject of an article, the focus here is on the variety and number of wheeled conveyances and on the vehicle construction trades in Williamsburg.

In the half-century between 1730 and 1780, occupations dealing with the construction of vehicles were among the most prevalent in Williamsburg. Deeds, inventories, account books, and advertisements in the *Virginia Gazette* reveal much variety and a considerable degree of specialization in these vocations.

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Water Everywhere, *continued*
because, by the eighteenth century, the major types of vessels in the colonies were generally designed and constructed for specific waters —inland, coastal, and ocean—based on draft and cargo capacity.

Again to simplify, let us discuss one particular basic type of vessel prevalent in the colonies, the *sloop-rigged vessel.* Now the sloop is a handy vessel in any waters in any century. Of simple design and sail plan, it can be economically constructed and outfitted. Its fore-and-aft rigging allows it to be sailed by a small crew and easily handled and maneuvered either on the ocean or in light waters. Yet it can be of any reasonable size desired. There were basically two types of sloops during colonial times: small vessels called *coasters* averaging 20–40 tons and West Indian *traders* of 50 or more tons burden. Virginia's position on the Atlantic and the Chesapeake Bay and rivers attendant made both types of sloops popular. For example, a 1769 *Virginia Gazette* advertisement reads:

> *The Sloop Friendship,*
> Walter Gwyn Master,
> A New-Vessel, will go from Norfolk to Williamsburg every Thursday morning, and return on Sundays. Those who incline to make use of this packet may depend on good accommodation, as she was built entirely for the purpose, and has the largest and best cabin of any boat in the colony; the passage to be 5 s. Freight Goods will be taken in at a storehouse on Major Orange's Wharf, at any time, free of all charge; and they will be shipped on sailing days, with due care.
>
> The vessel now lying at Col. Burwell's ferry, will sail for Norfolk next Saturday morning.

There was not only bay and coastal trade, but Norfolk, which had become a principal port for the colony by the third quarter of the eighteenth century, was steadily increasing its trade with the West Indies. (It should be noted, however, that as the century had progressed, an alternative to the sloop was found in a two-masted rig, which allowed more, but smaller, sails. Thus it could be more easily managed by a small crew. This vessel was, of course, the schooner.)

While a West Indian sloop can fulfill its purpose on the open sea, it will not always be able to receive or discharge cargo in the shallow waters farther up the rivers of Virginia. Sailing an ocean vessel to the fall line is one thing, but it is another to bring a vessel of any draft up a shallow creek to Williamsburg. The location of the second capital was to be the death knell for its economic and transportation growth.

If Williamsburg was to receive any waterborne cargo, such cargo could not be delivered directly but had to be brought up one of two creeks to about a mile from the town. One, Queen's Creek, came from the York River, the other from the James. Sloops, schooners, and all manner of shallow draft craft could sail to either Queen Mary's Port at the end of Capitol Landing Road or to Queen Anne's Port, called College Landing, on College Creek. Draft and depth of water—how necessary these are for survival and growth when water is the primary means of trade and transportation. (Note: for this area of the colony, Yorktown was the major port for vessels from New York, Philadelphia, and other shipping centers.)

But if it could not be a port, Williamsburg still had its role to play in water transportation of the colony. The Virginia Assembly passed legislation controlling public transportation vessels on interior waterways, the ferries so necessary on rivers and streams. (As early as 1636, Adam Thoroughgood of Norfolk conducted one of the first ferry operations across the Elizabeth River to what is now Portsmouth.) In 1702 an act of the Assembly stipulated that all ferry operators were exempt from public and county levies, militia service, and so forth. If the ferryman desired to maintain an ordinary at the crossing, he was permitted to do so without fee for a license. In 1705 the county courts were authorized to make agreement with ferry operators to "set over" (transport) the militia on muster days. Public messengers crossed free, and ministers of the Anglican church were to be exempt from ferriage fees.

Ferries increased in number yearly as the century progressed. At nearly every session, the General Assembly enacted some laws for the regulation of ferries. Rates for ferry usage were fixed by county courts, and the fee was to be set not only by distance, but by objects carried. For example, the fee to cross the Southampton River at Hampton in 1705 was only a penny, but the fare was seven pence

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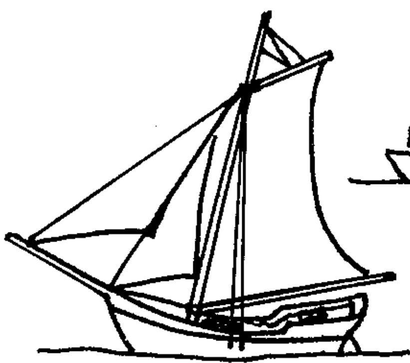
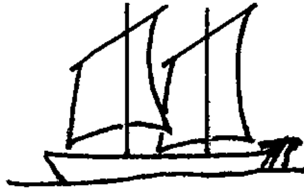
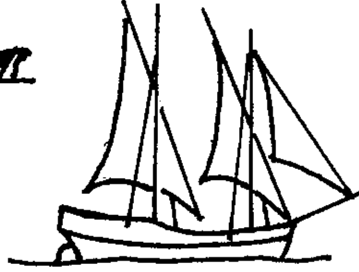


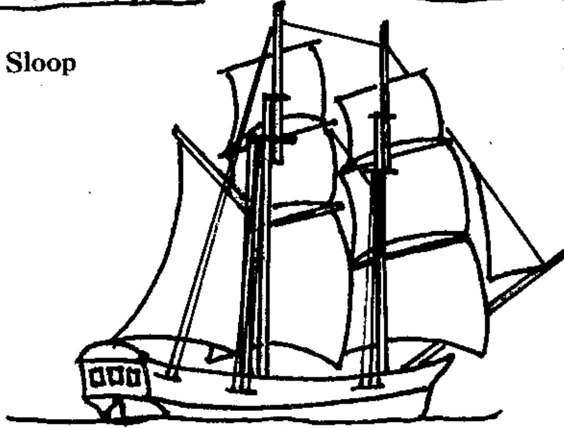
Sloop



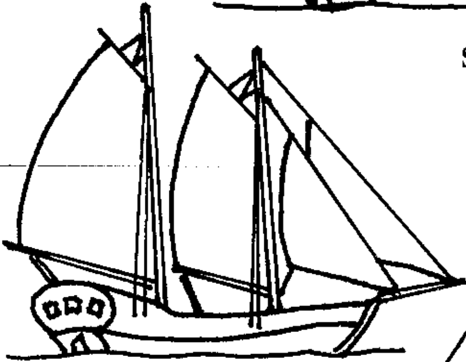
Shallop



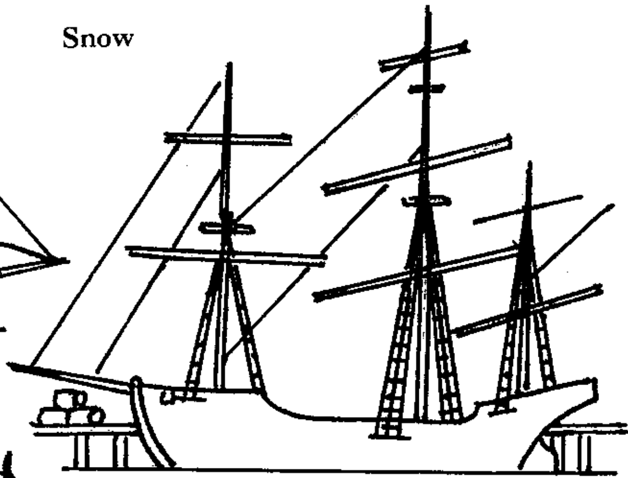
Pinnace



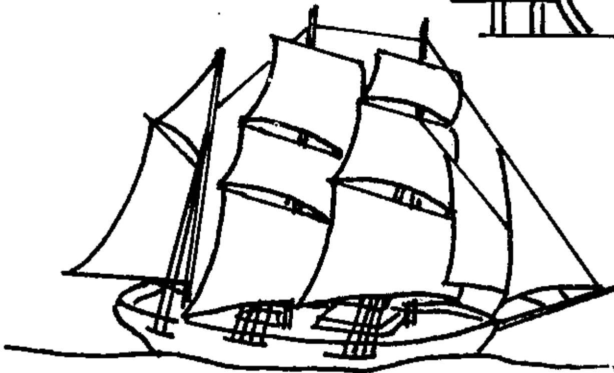
Snow



Schooner



Ship



Bark

(Reproduction of a drawing on the north window in the parlor of the Brush-Everard House)

Carts and Carriages, *continued*

Throughout this period 49 individuals appear as engaged in eight vehicle building and finishing professions. Ten individuals are cited as coachmakers, three as chariotmakers, four as riding chair and chaisemakers, six as wheelwrights, six as coach painters, carvers, or gilders, fifteen as blacksmiths, two as upholsterers, and three as saddle and harnessmakers. It is important to note that these people generally were owners or partners in these businesses. Since coachmaker Charles Taliaferro, wheelwright William Cosby, and riding chairmaker Peter Powell, among others, often advertised for journeyman and apprentice labor, the total work force engaged in vehicle building, maintenance, and repair must have been substantial.

Beyond identifying those who pursued these professions, the above-mentioned documents, particularly advertisements in the *Virginia Gazette,* provide the detailed information needed to interpret accurately their lives, their products and services,and the role of their trades in the community.

Specifically, close inspection of their many advertisements shows the availability of thirteen different types and styles of two- and four-wheeled vehicles, with chariots, coaches, and riding chairs predominating. The term *cart* was broadly used to describe many kinds of two-wheeled work vehicles. The same can be said for *wagon* unless reference is made to a stage wagon. The 1760 ad concerning the Hampton and Williamsburg stage, for example, identifies a specific type of public transporation vehicle. Altogether, then, at least sixteen various forms of wheeled conveyances were available for use in and around Williamsburg.

These documents also show a variety of costs for vehicles new, used, or for hire, and for repair and labor. A "plain coach" purchased from the Palace Street establishment of Elkanah Deane cost £165; the same vehicle, "richly painted and finished," £200. A riding chair, with steel springs and iron axletree, brought £45. Purchased separately, a set of coach wheels sold for £13; a pair of riding chair wheels cost £6. Rather than total cost of a riding chair, prices of components were itemized in Deane's 1774 advertisement. He would pay workmen "for every chairbody . . . four pounds, for every chair carriage 18 shillings, for every pair of wheels 22 shillings." Charles Taliaferro charged St. George Tucker 12 shillings to mend his chariot, while Joshua Kendall charged Lord Botetourt's estate 3 shillings sixpence to scrape his chaise. Often available at local taverns, a cart for hire cost approximately 3 shillings ninepence a day. A new cart or wagon varied in price but in general ranged from £2 to £5 and from £6 to £10 respectively.

Another important fact to consider when discussing the various forms of local conveyance is that vehicles differ according to their use. While a difference between utility and leisure may seem quite obvious, closer inspection of the impact of such a distinction can provide valuable insight into the Williamsburg world of travel and transportation. In 1754 this distinction was manifested in the form of a tax that originated to raise funds for the protection of settlers on the western frontier. Based on the number of wheels, a tax was levied only on vehicles such as coaches, phaetons, and chariots (four-wheeled). Continuing throughout the century, with increased rates during the Revolution, the tax was not laid upon carts and wagons.

Records for James City County for 1768 and 1769 indicate the number, type, and owners of vehicles in the area. In 1768 twelve four-wheeled vehicles, seven chariots, five coaches, and sixty two-wheeled vehicles appeared. In 1769 ten four-wheeled vehicles—seven chariots and three coaches—and sixty-one two-wheeled vehicles were taxed. Robert Carter Nicholas paid for a coach, a chariot, and a chair; Benjamin Waller, a chariot and a chair; and John Randolph, one coach and a chariot.

Determining the number of carts and wagons in the vicinity is difficult at best. Undoubtedly they were far more numerous than coaches. Inventories show that both were quite common and that they appear under the ownership of a broad spectrum of Williamsburg residents. For example, the inventory of the estate of James Shields, tavern keeper, includes a wagon and a cart. Peyton Randolph owned two carts and a tumbril (the body of the cart tilts and dumps its contents). Carpenter Matthew Tuell, merchant Henry Hacker, and Charles Stagg, actor and dancing teacher, each owned a cart.

Williamsburg emerges, then, as the site and source of a great deal of activity in the realm of travel and transportation. Produced, purchased, and put to use by all segments of society, wheeled vehicles played an important role in the community.

Museums for a New Century

A book review by Charles R. Longsworth

Museums for a New Century, a Report of the Commission on Museums for a New Century, published by the American Association of Museums, is the first comprehensive examination of the role of museums in our culture, the condition of our museums, their problems and opportunities, needs and future prospects. The one precedent is the AAM-sponsored report *America's Museums: The Belmont Report*, done in response to the federal government's request that museums outline their financial needs.

Museums for a New Century is significant for its representation of a new level of self-consciousness and of self-confidence by the museum community. The broad range of the report and its generally useful conclusions and recommendations also reveal a newfound maturity in museum management's capacity to analyze problems, lay out objectives, and devise strategies for acting effectively. It is the latter—the sense of action and urgency that suffuses the report—that makes it more than another wish list for a set of platitudes or bromides.

A major theme of the report is cooperation and collaboration and the potential educational and financial benefits to museums and their public. Most museums, indeed most not-for-profit organizations, put independence ahead of most other values—even to their institutional detriment—so the constant reminders of the benefits of sharing with each other, and with schools, colleges, government, and business, are worth heeding.

Museums for a New Century is divided into seven chapters, beginning with a literate and stimulating essay on "The Growing Museum Movement," a paean to the importance of museums. This is the sort of thing often written about schools and colleges, but strangely enough almost lacking in the literature about museums as cultural and educational institutions.

The conceptual tone of the report is set in the opening lines, "The act of contributing to the richness of the collective human spirit is what museums are all about," a definition, in my view, that tells us in museum work why what we do is important. And to reinforce that statement, the report goes, on, "The collective human experience now more than ever needs the enrichment museums can offer."

Other chapters of importance in the document include "Stewards of a Common Wealth," with its stress on collections and conservations, and "A New Imperative for Learning," an eloquent statement of the educational role played and yet to be fully realized by America's museums.

Less successful are chapters on fund-raising, public relations, and finances, all of which seem to suffer from a dichotomous caution about being subjected to the standards of business management or by being judged on financial grounds. It is ironic, hence, that the foreword by Hamish Maxwell, Chairman of Philip Morris, a sponsor of the commission, focuses on museums as attractions to "tourist dollars," stimulants to "urban revival," and a way to help "communities attract, hold, and stimulate business talents."

Anyone associated with Colonial Williamsburg will enjoy and be inspired by *Museums for a New Century*. It is reassuring that much of what is recommended by a fine convention of museum professionals is already practiced here. Nevertheless, the document challenges each of us to consider how we might do better, or how we might benefit from ideas yet to be considered at Colonial Williamsburg.

Water Everywhere, *continued*

halfpenny for a man or fifteen pence for man and horse to cross from Yorktown to Tindall's Point (Gloucester). (A ferry was in operation at this location until 1952.) Perhaps only those with both need and money could cross from Yorktown, Hampton, or Norfolk to Northampton County or the Eastern Shore after 1743, since the rate was twenty shillings for a man, and, for a horse and man, fifteen shillings each.

Water, water, everywhere, and it must still be crossed to reach or depart from Williamsburg today. True, to cross the Atlantic or travel north or south is much simpler. But consider—what happens if the George P. Coleman Bridge has a mechanical failure, if the Jamestown ferry does not run, or if the Hampton Tunnel is blocked? Water, water, everywhere.

King's (Nautical) English

Bark, barque—a sailing vessel having three or more masts, square-rigged, and the after mast fore-and-aft rigged.

Draft, draught—the depth of water a ship draws (displaces), which, of course, varies with the state of her loading.

Ferry—a vessel designed for the transportation of persons or goods from one place to another on a regular schedule.

Fore-and-aft rigged—a method of setting the sails from a vertical mast or stay (a large line used to support a mast) so that the sail plan lies on the longitudinal axis of the vessel.

Pinnace—a light sailing vessel of the seventeenth to eighteenth century, decked, with one or two masts; a general purpose vessel for cargo or as a tender; also used for exploration.

Rig—the arrangement of a sailing vessel's masts and sails by which her type is determined.

Schooner—a vessel with two or more masts fore-and-aft rigged. Schooners were used in America by 1700 or shortly thereafter.

Shallop—a nondescript small boat used by early colonists for carrying, fishing, oystering, and exploring.

Ship—a sailing vessel having three or more masts, square-rigged.

Sloop—a craft with a single mast and fore-and-aft rig. (Now very popular as a pleasure boat.)

Snow (rhymes with "how")—a sea-going vessel having two masts square-rigged and an additional mast abaft (behind) the main mast, which carried a driver (another sail).

Square-rigged—a method of setting the sails from a horizontal yard at right angles to the vertical mast.

Yard—a spar crossing a mast horizontally from which a square sail is set.

King's (Overland) English

The words *coach* and *carriage* were commonly used interchangeably in the eighteenth century to describe any wheeled vehicle used for conveying persons, as opposed to transporting goods. Nevertheless, the two words also had the more specialized meanings defined below:

Carriage—"the lower systems, [to] which the body containing the passenger is fixed or suspended, and to which the [two or four] wheels are place." This definition is from William Felton's *A Treatise on Carriages*, London, 1796.

Chariot—a style of body that is enclosed with a single seat for two or three passengers facing forward. It is essentially a half coach suspended on a four-wheeled carriage. The front of the chariot has glass in the top portion and a paneled lower portion.

Coach—one of many body styles. A coach is enclosed with two seats facing each other and is generally proportioned to accommodate families. (Note that *phaeton* and *chariot* are also distinct body styles suspended on four-wheeled carriages.)

Phaeton—a four-wheeled vehicle with an open body of light construction with one or two seats facing forward; usually drawn by a pair of horses that were owner-driven.

Riding chair—a light, two-wheeled vehicle, generally open, drawn by one horse; with seating for one or two passengers.

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