

# Fresh Advices

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## Core Curriculum in Summary

This issue of *Fresh Advices* consists of summaries of last year's Core Curriculum courses. These précis were written by the faculty members and emphasize the courses' most important historical themes for use in the Historic Area.

We have two reasons for printing these précis: as review for interpreters who took these courses in 1983 and to help interpreters choose the courses that most interest them in 1984.

A short reading list follows each précis and is arranged in order of importance. Most of these are available through the library of the Department of Interpretive Education; others are in the Research Center.

## Basic Courses

### Virginia Society in Profile

Kevin Kelly began the course with a brief definition of terms, pointing out that a society is a group of people living together with a shared cultural awareness and that it is characterized by a recognizable organization or structure. He also talked about the many elements—wealth, family, occupation, and so forth—that peg one's position in society, adding that historians have been especially interested in how people improve their position. The first lecture ended with a "snapshot" of York County society at mid-eighteenth century as revealed in a typical court session; for example, the court displayed a political hierarchy, there was a wide range in wealth holding, most of the court cases concerned business, and only men were involved.

During the second lecture, Mr. Kelly looked closely at the key seventeenth-century precedents of eighteenth-century social order, arguing that before 1680 the high, constant influx of young men and the high death rate profoundly affected early Chesapeake society. Families were frequently broken apart, women gained in status, and the social order was highly fluid. This lecture ended with a discussion of the important demographic changes that occurred between 1680 and 1720 and their contribution to social order and stability. He noted as examples the decline in the number of white immigrants and the resulting shift to slaves as the main labor source. Life expectancies improved, which helped produce both a Virginia-born political leadership and a widening of the gap between the rich and the poor.

The third lecture pointed out that the key changes begun in the seventeenth century continued unabated well into the eighteenth century. Blacks were imported in massive numbers even as whites from the northern colonies filled the backcountry. Life expectancies continued to improve. White families grew larger, and despite sexual imbalance, blacks founded families and began to grow naturally by the 1750s. By the 1780s the continued movement toward a rigidly stratified society produced great differences in wealth, a large number of landless planters, lack of opportunity, and a retreat in the status of women.

The course ended with a look at the urban element of Virginia society as seen in Williamsburg. Mr. Kelly noted that 52 percent of the town's 1775 population was black, that whites were primarily adult and male, that approximately 40 percent of the household heads were artisans, that lawyers held over a third of the political offices, and that the truly well-to-do residents of Williamsburg were merchants.

The elements of society discussed in this course provide the context in which to place the objects and spaces interpreted in the Historic Area.

### Readings:

Richard Beeman, "Social Change and Cultural Conflict in Virginia: Lunenburg County, 1746 to

1774," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., XXXV (1978), pp. 455-476.  
Aubrey Land, "Economic Behavior in a Planting Society: The Eighteenth Century Chesapeake," *Journal of Southern History*, XXXIII (1967), pp. 469-485.  
Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill, 1982).

### **The Growth of Virginia's Preindustrial Economy**

This course, taught by Peter Bergstrom and John Hemphill, provided an overview of the economy of colonial Virginia by exploring the twin economic processes of development and diversification. The lectures introduced the seventeenth-century background and focused on major economic happenings of the eighteenth century.

The seventeenth century, down to about 1675, was a period of severe demographic crisis with life expectancies short, the likelihood of marriage and family life small, and economic security all too fleeting. In spite of the successful introduction of tobacco as an export crop by 1620, a continuing series of "booms" and "busts" alternately inflated and deflated the economy as the market for tobacco rose and fell in response to prosperity and depression in Europe. The irony of the seventeenth-century experience was that just as the quality of life began to improve in the last quarter of the century, the economic future seemed the darkest, as more and more tobacco flooded the already saturated English market and prices continued to fall.

Events early in the eighteenth century caused significant changes in Virginia. New tobacco markets in continental Europe brought new investments to Virginia. Black slavery increased with new demands for labor that surpassed the availability of white field hands. New lands were opened in the Piedmont and eventually in the Valley of Virginia.

Against this background of growth, problem areas of the Virginia economy were explored in greater detail: first, the nature of Virginia's system of credit finance, its origins in a cash-poor society, and its development into a commercial system based upon extensive credit and coin substitutes for nearly nonexistent British coinage; second, the recurrent problem of overproduction of trash tobacco, its stagnating effect on the world market, and its ultimate solution with the inspection system initiated in 1730; third, the alternatives to a tobacco economy in Virginia: crop diversification, commercial development of other colonial markets, and proto-industrialization.

The course concluded with a consideration of the major economic changes that occurred in Virginia during the three-quarters of a century preceeding the American Revolution. The most obvious was the growth of towns. This was followed by the vast increase in exports of all kinds, but particularly crops and products other than tobacco. What had been a totally rural, single-crop economy in 1700 was by 1775 a partly urbanized region with a number of small towns and commercial centers that aided in the marketing of many crops to places other than Britain. On the eve of the Revolution Virginia's economy was increasingly developed and diversified.

#### *Readings:*

Shomer Zwelling, "Why Historians Disagree," *The Interpreter* (November 1980), pp. 1-2.  
"What Did It Cost?," *The Interpreter* (July 1980), p. 1.  
Peter Bergstrom, "Lingo of the Colonial Economy," research query file, June 1, 1983.

### **Fine Things/Plain Things: Virginia's Material Culture**

Sumpter Priddy's two main objectives in presenting this course were to show how the households and life-styles of eastern Virginians changed during the course of the colonial period and to point up differences in life-styles among Virginia's social strata.

After a general introduction, the lectures took up the theme in more specific terms. The first discussed major changes in household artifacts at the highest cultural level (primarily English) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This discussion showed how people's changing expectations and interactions were shaped by and reflected in the things they used.

The second lecture focused on Virginia's material culture as it diverged from Anglo-European precedents and developed a character that clearly reflected its own society, culture, and economy.

In the final lecture Mr. Priddy described eastern Virginia's culture on the eve of the American Revolution and surveyed the lives and possessions of four very different householders: a wealthy planter, a middle-class urban artisan, a "middling" planter, and a slave. The comparison showed how these four differed in outlook and life-style as a result of the objects used daily and how their differences determined their choice of objects.

#### *Readings:*

Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill, 1982), pp. 30-46, 68-87, 118-127, 302-308.  
Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "Inventories and the Analysis of Wealth and Consumption

Patterns in St. Mary's County, Maryland, 1658-1777," *Historical Methods*, XIII, no. 2 (Spring 1980), pp. 81-104.

Cary Carson and Lorena S. Walsh, "The Material Life of the Early American Housewife," Conference on Women in Early American, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1981.

## Advanced Courses

### Afro-American History

This course was divided into three time periods, one for each session, and was team-taught by three members of the research department.

Lorena Walsh gave the first session on the black experience from 1619 to 1710. In the seventeenth century forced migration of enslaved Africans accompanied the settlement of plantation colonies throughout the New World. In the Chesapeake, slaves were initially only a small part of a labor force composed largely of white servants, but from the 1680s slavery quickly became the predominant labor system. These later arrivals usually came directly from Africa rather than from the West Indies as had the first slaves. With blacks comprising about a quarter of the region's population in 1700, they were somewhat less isolated from members of their own race than in earlier years, but had to cope with hardening racism and an increasingly repressive legal system.

Africans in the seventeenth-century Chesapeake started the process of becoming Afro-Americans by incorporating many elements of European culture such as language, names, and work routines in order to endure slavery. Residential isolation, high mortality, and an oversupply of men meant that some blacks were unable to maintain sustaining social contacts with other blacks and that many were unable to have any sort of family life. While slavery was the fate of most, in the 1660s and '70s some blacks gained freedom and established communities of free black families who tried tenaciously to protect their position while maintaining ties to other blacks.

The second session dealt with the period from 1710 to 1765. In it Reginald Butler emphasized the slave trade and its impact on Afro-American society and culture in the Chesapeake. The arrival of large numbers of Africans had enormous consequences on the demography and society of the entire region. Forty-five thousand Africans were transported to Virginia between 1700 and 1750 and, combined with natural growth, the population of Afro-Americans increased to 100,000. Most of these blacks were concentrated in the tidewater area, living on tobacco plantations in groups of twenty or less.

Plantation size, the ratio of males to females in slave imports, the average distance between plantations, as well as the relative proportion of newly arrived Africans to Virginia-born blacks (called creoles) all had considerable effect on the patterns of kinship, amity, and social and religious organization. There was some degree of variation in the development and growth of Afro-Virginian society and culture depending on the specific configuration of these variables over time. Up until the second quarter of the eighteenth century, the most crucial influence on the possibilities of the development of Afro-American culture and society was the slave trade. In turn, the catalyst for the growing importance of African labor well into the eighteenth century was the focus on the production of tobacco for the world market.

The change from a reliance on fresh shipments of Africans to an almost exclusive employment of native black labor and the shift to grain farming and agricultural diversification marked the difference between the first half of the eighteenth century and the second.

The last session, taught by Philip Morgan, concerned the period from 1765 to 1800. He concentrated on the shifts in agriculture and their impact on the development of Afro-American communities. This lecture also explored a basic change in the lives of black families during these years. As the number of slaves increased, it was possible for black men and women to fulfill normal expectations for marriage and childrearing, and within a generation or two they established extensive kinship groups. During this period blacks were increasingly able to find work in non-agricultural employment as craftsmen, industrial laborers, seamen, and so forth.

Black Virginians drew upon cultural forms that were created from a fusion—by no means uniform—of African, English, and native American traditions. By the third quarter of the eighteenth century, a set of articulated Afro-American communities was firmly in place.

*Readings* for this course are not listed in order of importance. The first two are for Mrs. Walsh's session; the third and fourth for Mr. Butler's; and the last three for Mr. Morgan's.

Allan Kulikoff, "The Origins of Afro-American Society in Tidewater Maryland and Virginia, 1700 to 1790," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., XXXV (1978), pp. 226-259.

Russell Menard, "The Maryland Slave Population, 1658 to 1730: A Demographic Profile of

- Blacks in Four Counties," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., XXXII (1975), pp. 29–54.
- Russell Menard, "From Servants to Slaves: The Transformation of the Chesapeake Labor System," *Southern Studies*, XVI (1977), pp. 355–390.
- Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (New York, 1972), pp. 124–163.
- Robert McColley, *Slavery and Jeffersonian Virginia* (Urbana, Ill., 1964).
- Richard S. Dunn, "A Tale of Two Plantations: Slave Life at Mesopotamia in Jamaica and Mount Airy in Virginia, 1799 to 1828," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., XXXIV (1977), pp. 32–65.
- Ira Berlin, "Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on British Mainland North America," *American Historical Review*, LXXXV (1980), pp. 44–78.

### Agricultural History of Colonial Virginia

Eighteenth-century techniques of cultivating tobacco, corn, and wheat were Harold Gill's major emphasis in this course. He showed that agriculture was generally a profitable occupation despite its unpredictability (some good years, some bad). Marketing of agricultural products was also discussed.

#### Readings:

- H. B. Gill, "Wheat Culture in Colonial Virginia," *Agricultural History*, LII (1978), pp. 380–393.
- H. B. Gill, "Tobacco Culture in Colonial Virginia," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1972.
- H. B. Gill, "Cereal Grains in Colonial Virginia," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1974.

### Household Economy

This short course, taught by Pat Gibbs, surveyed white urban Virginia households in the second half of the eighteenth century and focused on these three points: (1) roles and responsibilities of husband, wife, children, and servants—including slaves and apprentices; (2) relationship between house, service yards, and outbuildings; and (3) links between households, the community, and the world beyond.

Miss Gibbs stated that households differed according to family size and makeup, family income, and the amount of labor available within the family.

Since the housewife was generally responsible for household affairs, her role as worker and supervisor was emphasized in discussing daily and occasional household activities. The course touched on the ways urban and rural households differed, especially in procurement of produce, supplies, equipment, and services. The affects of seasonality and unexpected interruptions to the daily routine were considered.

Because little documentation survives on this commonplace topic, the class employed historical imagination in several group activities—using different house types, sample menus, diary entries, and inventories of poor, middling, and wealthy urban householders—and spent one class period cooking simple foods.

#### Readings:

- Jane Carson, "Plantation Housekeeping in Colonial Virginia," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1974, pp. 1–54.
- Pat Gibbs, "A Weekday in the Life of a Notable Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg Housewife," research query file, January 31, 1982.
- A. G. Roeber, ed., "A New England Woman's Perspective on Norfolk, Virginia, 1801–1802: Excerpts from the Diary of Ruth Henshaw Bascom," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, LXXXVIII (1978), pp. 277–325.

### Learning from the York County Project

Kevin Kelly and Peter Bergstrom introduced their course with a question: Why did Williamsburg and Yorktown develop *where* they did *when* they did? The instructors then asked the class to join them in the pursuit of the answer.

They first turned to the key features of Virginia's society and economy that preceded urbanization and explored how for most of the seventeenth century the demands of tobacco culture scattered Virginians across the land, chained planters to English merchants, and introduced social disorder in the form of new immigrants. Not until after 1680, when these conditions began to change, did urban growth stand much of a chance. The first day's discussion ended with a close look at regional differences within Virginia at the end of the seventeenth century, concluding that the lower Tidewater—York County area was a special place. Of particular note were the volume of trade on the York River, the small holdings of local landowners, and the efficient agricultural system practiced there.

The second lecture continued the look at urban preconditions inside York County. Kelly and Bergstrom showed how the emigration of younger sons forestalled population growth, which in turn eased demographic pressures and worked to the benefit of those who remained. They cited as examples that across the county small tracts of land were the rule and that land was distributed equally among freeholders. They also noted that many York County planters had been both willing and able to invest heavily in slave labor by 1700 and that involvement in commercial credit and debt networks was nearly universal among planters. Finally, they stated that some planters in York County, especially in the upland area near Middle Plantation, had taken some significant steps toward diversification. The discussion ended with the observation that while none of these conditions makes urbanization inevitable, neither did they prohibit it.

The final lecture concerned the early history of the two towns and what it told about successful urbanization. First Kelly and Bergstrom looked at who lived in town and noted that, although lots in Yorktown were quickly sold out to well established county planters, the true urban pioneers came only after the Naval Office was moved there in 1698. Few of these individuals were from the countryside of York County—most were shopkeepers and artisans—and nearly all were committed town dwellers. The instructors noted that while certain specifics about the background of Williamsburg settlers differed from Yorktown's, the same general pattern existed. They explored next what it was the town did, noting that Yorktown's taverns provided the biggest clue to the town's success. Designed for the care and feeding of sailors and shippers, the taverns point out the essential service function of both early Yorktown and Williamsburg to which can be added their roles as credit centers. In conclusion, Kelly and Bergstrom shared their feeling that, although the jury is still out, the existing evidence suggests that towns developed where they did when they did because of a fortuitous combination of active external factors such as a stable social order and an efficient agricultural system.

#### *Readings:*

Joseph A. Ernst and H. Roy Merrens "Camden's turrets pierce the skies!": The Urban Process in the Southern Colonies During the Eighteenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., XXX (1973), pp. 549-574.

Ronald Hoffman and Carville V. Earle, "Staple Crops and Urban Development in the Eighteenth-century South," *Perspectives in American History*, X (1976), pp. 7-78.

John W. Reps, *Tidewater Towns: City Planning in Colonial Virginia and Maryland* (Williamsburg, 1972).

#### **Period Clothing**

Linda Baumgarten's main objective in presenting this course was to explore the variety and meaning of clothing and clothing textiles during the eighteenth century, particularly in the colony of Virginia. Students began by learning the period terms used for typical items of apparel from Ms. Baumgarten's "A Glossary of Clothing Terms" in the Interpreter's Handbook. At the same time, the stylistic characteristics of each item of apparel were studied. An examination of the fabrics used for eighteenth-century clothing brought about discussion of how these fabrics were produced and how their qualities affected the cut and "feel" of the garment when worn. Through slides and examination of surviving antique garments, students explored the different styles worn during the century with particular emphasis on how high-style fashion was adapted for everyday and working situations.

#### *Readings:*

Anne Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth-century England* (New York, 1979).

Nancy Bradfield, *Historical Costume of England*, rev. ed. (London, 1970).

Peter F. Copeland, *Working Dress in Colonial and Revolutionary America* (Westport, Conn., 1977).

#### **Understanding Williamsburg Buildings**

Edward Chappell divided this course into two segments, one relatively simple and definable and the other potentially complex and open-ended. The initial step was to become familiar with some of the known components of eighteenth-century Chesapeake buildings, ranging from masonry and millwork details to the joining of rooms in various plans and the combination of buildings into domestic or civic groups. These components were discussed as a series of options available to builders rather than an entirely predictable system for how things were done.

In the second segment, the class proceeded to examine the choices that were made and to explore the reasons for their selection. For example, details that demonstrate awareness of stylistic innovations and access to capital are expressed unevenly within a single building project, demonstrating different degrees of social importance for various rooms in a house or buildings in a

complex.

Other questions arose, such as the apparent concentration of substantial eighteenth-century buildings in Williamsburg. While gentry houses that equaled or surpassed the scale and expense of Williamsburg buildings were built in the Chesapeake countryside, it is known that the majority of Virginians and Marylanders occupied houses that were significantly inferior to most of those that survive in Williamsburg. As with the appearance of fashionable motifs in specific rooms, a series of related reasons were found, including particular economic constituents of the town and developments within the resulting social system. To people the answers with specific cases, the class looked at a sample of known home builders and occupants, like James Geddy, Jr., Jane Hunter, and Edward Charlton. Mr. Chappell and the students critically reviewed connections between types of houses and the status of their occupants, while realizing that a very sizable proportion of the population is less clearly represented by standing buildings and documents. Ultimately, they found that using buildings as tools for understanding social systems is more valuable and interesting than appreciating them only for their attractive details.

*Readings:*

Paul E. Buchanan, "The Eighteenth-century Frame Houses of Tidewater Virginia," in Charles E. Paterson, ed., *Building Early America: A Contribution toward the History of a Great Industry* (Radnor, Pa., 1976).

Edward Chappell, "Williamsburg Architecture as Social Space," *Fresh Advice* (November 1981); p. 1.

Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven, 1978).

### Williamsburg's Public Buildings

In the study of the major public buildings in town (Capitol, Courthouse of 1770, main building of the College, Governor's Palace, and Bruton Parish Church) Mark R. Wenger emphasized four themes. (1) *Symbolism*—These public buildings functioned as an integrated group of highly visible symbols. (2) *Permanence and order*—In a colony of dispersed settlements, impermanent building, and no real cities these large brick edifices provided an image of permanence and order. (3) *Authority*—As individual architectural settings, the public buildings in the colonial capital mirrored, and thereby strengthened, authority and the hierarchical order of society. (4) *Interpretation*—Mr. Wenger discussed ways interpreters can communicate these ideas to visitors at various locations in the Historic Area.

*Readings:*

Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790* (Chapel Hill, 1982), pp. 58–65, 88–98.

A. G. Roeber, "Authority, Law and Custom: The Rituals of Court Day in Tidewater Virginia, 1720 to 1750," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., XXXVII (1980), pp. 29–38.

Marcus Whiffen, *Public Buildings of Williamsburg* (Williamsburg, 1958), pp. 6–15.

### Women in Chesapeake Society

This course, taught by Gail Terry, sought to provide interpreters with a broad overview of the place of women in Maryland and Virginia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The class began by examining economic and demographic changes in the region during the colonial period. Against this backdrop of social and economic change, Ms. Terry discussed changes in women's position and roles in the family, including family formation among Africans and Afro-Americans. The course briefly surveyed women's work, noting especially the similar tasks women performed at home (without pay) and for wages. Finally, it included a summary of what constituted law in seventeenth-century England and colonial Virginia, followed by a discussion of married women's property rights under common law (including dower), feme-sole trader status, and premarital contracts.

*Readings:*

Shomer Zwelling, "Why Historians Disagree," *The Interpreter* (November 1980), pp. 1–2.

Lorena S. Walsh, "The Experience and Status of Women in the Chesapeake, 1750–1775," *Women's History Packet*, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, forthcoming.

Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "The Planter's Wife: The Experience of White Women in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., XXXIV (1977), pp. 542–571.