

Interpreter

COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

VOL. 30, NO. 1

SPRING 2009

As the Dust Settles: An Update from the Department of Architectural and Archaeological Research

More than Memory: Representing an African American Neighborhood at the Ravenscroft Site

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Introduction

Since 2006, archaeologists from the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and students from College of William and Mary have been excavating the Ravenscroft site. The site bears the name of one of its eighteenth-century owners, Thomas Ravenscroft, and is located at the northwest corner of Nicholson and Botetourt streets in a section of the Historic Area now designated Block 28.¹ While excavations at this site have mainly concentrated on an eighteenth-century cellar previously uncovered in 1954 and 1998, the site material assemblages also represent a later African American neighborhood of the twentieth century. Research has focused on African Americans at the site during the eighteenth century,² but with the

abundance of artifacts from the twentieth century, scrutiny has turned towards this period of site occupation. This overview presents some of the preliminary findings uncovered in the ongoing historical studies that are integral to the archaeological investigations.

In the twentieth century, mainly in the first half, African Americans and their families lived and operated businesses on or adjacent to the archaeological site described above. The block boasted structures such as a large boarding house called the Crump Hotel, a barber shop, a pool room, and the Union Baptist Church. Other structures significant to life on the block included the James City County Training School (1924-1940) situated across from the site on Botetourt Street; and towards the north, the Mount Ararat Baptist Church (organized in 1882), in its same location as today at the corner of Botetourt and Franklin streets.³ The church moved from its location on Francis Street into this building in the early 1930s.⁴

By the 1930s, the re-birth of Williamsburg as the colonial capital of Virginia had started to erode the physical structure of the African American neighborhood, evident in changes on the Ravenscroft block. The Williamsburg Holding Corporation of the restoration acquired and demolished buildings in the area, and the occupants were moved to other parts of Williamsburg. The process of displacing individuals and demolishing structures continued during the 1950s and impacted not only African Americans but whites as well in various sections of the area that became Colonial Williamsburg.

The Historical Evidence

Inquiries into archival and historical data, including oral history accounts at repositories of the Foundation and the College, have re-

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This is an aerial view of the African American neighborhood in the late 1920s showing areas close to the Nicholson and Botetourt Streets intersection. The James City County Training School is very large building in the foreground; the two-story Crump hotel with its four chimneys is towards the west while the Union Baptist Church is across the street behind the school.

sulted in more information to help guide the Ravenscroft study and to better understand the African American community in Williamsburg during a period of upheaval and change caused, more or less, by the Restoration.⁵ Several documents, including land title and deed abstracts, interview transcripts and other recollections of Williamsburg residents, city and county directories, early twentieth-century maps, and photographs of buildings and street scenes are providing information about this section of an African American district that had featured a mixture of homes, social venues, and business places. The conversion of this block, now known as the Ravenscroft site, into a predominantly African American neighborhood appears to have either started or accelerated in the first quarter of the twentieth century when white land owners sold lots to Williamsburg residents with surnames like Crump, Epps, Harris, and Braxton.

Members of these African American families had lived or owned property on the nearby main street, "Gloucester Street," now returned to its eighteenth-century name as Duke of Gloucester Street. A *Directory and Handbook of the City of Williamsburg and the County of James City, Virginia*, published in 1898,⁶ shows residents Thomas Crump as a "barber" and Peter Epps as a "cook at the Inn" on this street. Samuel Harris is listed as a "wholesale merchant" in the *Directory* and was the owner of the prominent Harris' Cheap Store in the late nineteenth

century. Both Samuel Harris and his wife, Joanna B. Harris, owned land on the Ravenscroft block perhaps as early as the late nineteenth century.⁷ Before the Restoration, many African Americans were located on streets within and nearby the now Historic Area of Colonial Williamsburg. *The Directory of 1898* also lists members of this group as barbers, carpenters, cooks, clerks, drivers, farmers, fishermen, green grocers, laborers, merchants, painters, plasterers, porters, restaurant proprietors, shoemakers, teamsters, teachers, waiters, wheelwrights, and merchants.

Preliminary historical research has provided information about both public buildings and private residences related to the twentieth-century century occupation of the Ravenscroft block by African Americans. To date, more is known about four public buildings than about other structures, that once stood on the sides of the block delineated by Botetourt Street on the east and Nicholson Street on the south. The findings from historical research on the Crump Hotel, the Braxton property, a barber shop, a pool room, and the Union Baptist Church are presented below.

The Crump Hotel

The Crump Hotel is mainly associated with Harriet Crump and was likely constructed after 1905, when she and her husband Thomas Crump acquired land on the Nicholson Street

side of the block and made financial arrangements for its improvement.⁸ The hotel may have functioned as a place where African Americans could stay as long-time boarders rather than as short-term residents. In a 1984 interview conducted as part of an Oral History Project for the James City County Historical Commission, Preston Crump, the grandson of Harriet Crump, suggested that male relatives, including his grandmother's husband, E. Francis, may have shared the work of running this facility.⁹ Preston Crump was born in November 1910 and as a child, had lived on Nicholson Street. Based on Preston Crump's description, the hotel was a large two-story structure with eleven rooms and a front porch.

*[It] had two kitchens, kitchen on one side, kitchen, a dining room, and a living room on one side of the house. And on that same side was three bedrooms upstairs, over top of there. Then on the other side was a large dining room and a kitchen, and three bedrooms upstairs on that side. It was five downstairs and six up, so that made eleven rooms.*¹⁰

Harriet Crump died in April 1923 leaving the property to her relatives.¹¹ Her will, dated February 16, 1923, and probated on April 21, 1923, states:

*I give and bequeath to my dear daughter-in-law Roselia Crump my house and the lot upon which it stands, with all of my personal property, and at her death to be divided between my two grand children, Lillie M. Crump, Price, and George Crum[p] Jr. Again I bequeath to E. Francis my husband \$5.00 an expression of my love and respect. I further request that my lodge the Mount Ararat No. 155 of the Independent order of Good Samaritans & daughters of Samaria shall out of the funds allowed me, under the direction of my Executors bury me.*¹²

Harriet Crump was probably a member of Mount Ararat Baptist Church, based on similarity of the name of her benevolent society, Mount Ararat No. 155, and the church. At that time, the church was located on Francis Street in a building that may have also served as a school for African American children from 1883 to 1885.¹³ Mrs. Crump's connection to the church is further suggested from her will of 1923 in which she named Reverend L. W. Wales as her executor. According to the *Directory of 1898*, L. W. Wales, a "preacher" was living on Francis Street. This reference appears to be for Reverend L. Wales, Sr., who was born in 1860 and died in 1927. His son, L. W. Wales, Jr.

The Mount Ararat Baptist Church at the corner of Franklin and Botetourt streets is an African American landmark.



was appointed as one of the appraisers of Harriet Crump's personal estate. L. W. Wales, Jr. accepted leadership of Mt. Ararat Baptist Church after his father's death, he is also identified as a negotiator for the relocation of the Church to its Franklin Street location.¹⁴ An inscription on a corner stone of the Mount Ararat Baptist Church dates the structure to 1932.

Archival documents indicate that the hotel property was out of the Crump family's ownership for many years before Colonial Williamsburg acquired it on August 28, 1949.¹⁵ The Crump hotel building was demolished by July 1951.¹⁶

The Braxton Property

William Braxton owned property on the Ravenscroft block in the early twentieth century. On April 20, 1907, Eugene Potts conveyed land to him and the property is described as:

*Fronted 50 feet on the north side of Nicholson Street, running back between parallel lines and bounded as follows: South by Nicholson Street, west by property of the grantor [Eugene Potts], east by the property of Harriet Crump, and north by the property of Joanna B. Harris.*¹⁷

Mr. Braxton and Harriet Crump were neighbors, and the name Braxton is associated with the Crump family in other documents. William H. Braxton is listed as one of the witnesses to Harriet Crump's will of February 1923, and he was also named, along L.W. Wales, Jr., as an appraiser of her estate.¹⁸ In his interview, Preston Crump remembered a Mr. Braxton staying (apparently as a boarder) at the Crump residence before Braxton bought the house next door.¹⁹ Mr. Crump's recollections of Mr. Braxton relate to the time when he (Preston Crump) was a "small boy" in the years following 1910. If this Mr. Braxton was the same individual as William Braxton, he may have lived with the Crump family before he moved to a house on his property on the block.

On October 6, 1932, William Braxton, "unmarried, conveyed the . . . property" he had purchased from Eugene Potts to Temy Sparrow. The property passed into the hands of Clyde C. Hall by December 28, 1934. Clyde Hall and his wife, Beulah B. Hall, conveyed the property to Colonial Williamsburg Incorporated by a deed dated, January 23, 1950. At that time, G.T. Brooks and Charlotte S. Brooks, his wife, rescinded their interest in this property²⁰. A building on Block 28 called the Brooks-Hall property was demolished in December 1950.²¹

The Barber Shop and Pool Room Buildings

A barber shop and a pool room on the Botetourt Street side of the block are linked to Peter Epps and his wife Mollie Epps. On August 6, 1927, the Eppses purchased land in this vicinity.²² Recall that the *Directory* of 1898 listed Peter Epps, as a "cook at the Inn," on Gloucester Street. Extant buildings on Block 28 were probably converted to provide the appropriate settings for the barber shop and pool room. A 1921 fire insurance map of Williamsburg by the Sanborn Map Company depicts two unnamed structures in this location on Botetourt Street. Another Sanborn map in 1929 shows these buildings as a "Pool Room" and a "Barber," respectively. Supporting evidence for the re-use of one of these structures comes from a letter written in July 1933, on file at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's archive, which described the barber shop that was vacant at the time as a house that was once used for this purpose.²³

Both the pool room and the barber shop probably featured enormously in the social life of this African American neighborhood. Traditionally, barber shops and pool rooms were meeting places, primarily for males, where key topics on the public agenda were discussed, private information shared, and where customers relaxed and socialized. The Epps Family is also associated with the Crumps for, in his interview in 1984, Preston Crump related that Molly (Mollie) Epps was his aunt and that she had a restaurant on Gloucester Street. This would indicate that the Eppses' history of providing services to the community predates their businesses on the Ravenscroft block.

By March 1932, the Eppses had sold their land. The pool room was considered an "old building" by 1933, and it was demolished in 1934.²⁴ The barber shop may have suffered the same fate during the 1930s. Today, a large headstone in the Cedar Grove Cemetery in the City of Williamsburg commemorates the Epps Family of the Ravenscroft block (Peter Epps 1864–1939 and Mollie Epps 1868–1956).

The Union Baptist Church

The Union Baptist Church was located on the northwest side of Botetourt Street at the intersection with Franklin Street. A deed dated April 21, 1905, mentions a lot within this vicinity as "contracted to be sold to Union Baptist Church."²⁵ This suggests that the church was established at least on or prior to this date. The

building was probably constructed closer to the 1905 date rather than to the time when it was recorded on a 1921 fire insurance map of Williamsburg by the Sanborn Map Company.

While various African American structures were being removed from the block, activities continued at the Union Baptist Church. There are photographs of the church in the late 1950s; it was probably destroyed by the early 1960s. A Union Baptist Church congregation now meets in the community of Highland Park, near Colonial Williamsburg.

Summary

The life histories of African Americans on the Ravenscroft block in the twentieth century are linked with each other and to structures that were located on the site and nearby areas. With the removal of homes, businesses, and social venues from the area, the remaining churches continued to draw members of the African American community and other groups to this part of the town for regular and special events. Two special events, the *Virginia Gazette* thought worthy to note, were the Union Baptist Church's connection with a census that was being conducted under the auspices of researchers from the College of William and Mary and a conference that was held at Mount Ararat Baptist Church. On March 16, 1948, a training meeting for the canvassers for a religious census of the African American churches of Williamsburg was held at the Union Baptist Church and another meeting was planned for March 22.²⁶

In November of the same year, the *Virginia Gazette* reported on the conference of a notable African American organization that convened at Mount Ararat Baptist Church. This meeting included public officials such as Williamsburg mayor, H.M. Stryker, superintendent of schools J. Rawls Byrd, and Dr. Joseph E. Barrett, Director of Mental Health and Hygiene for Virginia as participants. This was a three-day meeting of the "Negro Organization Society," a Virginia organization that was established in 1909 under the leadership of Robert R. Moton of Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) "in response to an earnest popular demand for closer attention to the needs of the race along lines of health and education, especially in the public schools and among the masses."²⁷ The Negro Organization Society often hosted African American educator and founder of Tuskegee Institute, Booker T. Washington, as a speaker at its annual meetings. With a theme of "Continuous Community Growth through Renewed and Cooperative Effort," the conference drew

"upwards of 2,000 delegates" and had "Historic Tours of Williamsburg and Jamestown" on its agenda.²⁸

The African American neighborhood that included the Ravenscroft site was not just a physical manifestation of structures but an intricate social network of people and social practices that extended beyond place and time. Thus, even when buildings were demolished and occupants relocated, the neighborhood as "part of a wider community" was still viable as more than memory. Archaeological and historical evidence are key elements connecting the African American community with Colonial Williamsburg.

¹ See <http://research.history.org/Ravenscroft/>; Kathryn Sikes and Meredith Poole, "Ravenscroft Revisited: Considering interpretive strategies in light of architectural features and documentary evidence." Paper presented at the Society for Historical Archaeology Meeting, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 2008.

² *Ibid.*; <http://research.history.org/ravenscroft/historyJenny.cfm>

³ Linda Rowe, "African Americans in Williamsburg, 1865-1945." In Robert P. Maccubbin, ed., *Williamsburg, Virginia: A City Before the State 1699-1999*. Williamsburg, Va.: The City of Williamsburg distributed by the University Press of Virginia, 2000, pp. 124, 128; L. W. Wales, *Brief Autobiographical Sketch of the Life and Labors of Rev. L. W. Wales, D.D. . . . Brief Historic Outline of Mt. Ararat Baptist Church, Williamsburg, Virginia, Sermons, Addresses, &c.* Williamsburg, Va.: n. p., 1910, p. 11.

⁴ Rex M. Ellis. "The African-American Community in Williamsburg, 1947-1998." In Maccubbin, ed., *Williamsburg, Virginia*, pp. 231-232; Rowe, "African Americans in Williamsburg, 1865-1945," p. 128.

⁵ These include the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Archives and Records Department (Colonial Williamsburg Archives); John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; and Special Collections, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary; and the Clerk's Office, Williamsburg-James City County Courthouse.

⁶ *A Directory and Handbook of the City of Williamsburg and the County of James City, Virginia*. Williamsburg, Va.: *Virginia Gazette*, [1898], pp. 28, 30.

⁷ Abstract of Title by Ashton Dovell for Williamsburg Holding Corporation, March 1932/April 21, 1932, [Block 28, Epps], Colonial Williamsburg Archives; Abstract of Title by C.V. Spratley, Jr., for Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., December 7, 1948 [Block 28. No. 1, Crump Hotel], Colonial Williamsburg Archives.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Interview of Preston Crump by Robinette Fitzsimons, October 20, 1984. James City County Oral History Collection, 1983-1986. Special Collections, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary, p. 18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 42.

¹¹ Will Book 3, City of Williamsburg, Va., Williamsburg-James City County Courthouse, p.83.

- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Wales, *Brief Autobiographical Sketch*; Rowe, "African Americans in Williamsburg, 1865-1945," p. 123.
- 14 Ellis, "The African-American Community in Williamsburg," pp. 231-232; Ed Belvin, *Growing Up in Williamsburg: From the Depression to Pearl Harbor*. Williamsburg, Va: The Virginia Gazette, Inc., 1981, pp. 94-95; Wales, *Brief Autobiographical Sketch*, p. 2.
- 15 Abstract of Title, Crump Hotel.
- 16 Letter, Monier Williams to A. E. Kendrew, July 12, 1951, Colonial Williamsburg Archives.
- 17 Abstract of Title by C. V. Spratley, Jr., for Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., January 26, 1950 [Block 28, No.2, Brooks-Hall], Colonial Williamsburg Archives.
- 18 Will Book 3, p. 83.
- 19 Preston Crump interview, pp. 41-42.
- 20 Abstract of Title, Brooks-Hall.
- 21 Letter, H. O. Bebe to A. E. Kendrew, December 13, 1950, Colonial Williamsburg Archives.
- 22 Abstract of Title, Epps.
- 23 Letter, Harvey Johnson to Williamsburg Holding Corp., July 6, 1933, Colonial Williamsburg Archives.
- 24 Letter, R. L. Rice to V. M. Geddy, Williamsburg, Va., September 12, 1933; letter, _____ Holland to _____ Brown, October 30, 1934, Colonial Williamsburg Archives.
- 25 Abstract of Title, Epps.
- 26 *The Virginia Gazette*, March 19, 1948, p. 24, cols. 2 and 3.
- 27 *The Southern Workman*, Vol. XL (August 1911): 455; August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964, p. 123.
- 28 *The Virginia Gazette*, November 12, 1948, p. 22, col. 4.



Coffee, Tea, Chocolate: Not Just For Breakfast

by Sharon Cotner

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By the eighteenth century, coffee, tea, and chocolate had become incorporated as part of the common aliment in Great Britain and the colonies. These three exotic plants were generally promoted as wholesome beverages; however, not everyone looked upon their regular consumption with favor. In 1722 an unknown author wrote “never was a better State of Health enjoyed, than by our ancestors, when the Toast and good Beer went round for Breakfast in a Morning, before ever Tea, Coffee, Chocolate or other new Inventions came in.”¹ Yet the more these stimulating liquids were indulged in, the more they were recommended for their beneficial qualities.

Coffee was viewed as the most medicinal of these substances. It was commonly prescribed for all “sleepy disorders” to raise the spirits, sharpen the wit, and rouse the dull. Because of its antihypnotic qualities, Dr. Richard Pearson employed coffee to “counteract and correct the narcotic effects of opium,”² and for the same reason it was taken after a debauch of strong liquors to ease nausea, weakness, and swooning fits. In addition, it was highly regarded as a treatment for headaches and migraines.

Coffee was recognized as an excellent diuretic, and mild cathartic; therefore drunk to relieve dropsy (fluid retention), decrease corpu-

lence, and promote the menses. It was also consumed to stimulate the appetite, assist digestion after a large meal, and relieve flatus. Dr. David Macbride prepared a decoction of raw coffee berries boiled in water to break apart and bring away urinary calculi (solid particles or stones in the urinary system). Landon Carter was familiar with Macbride’s work, and in July 1774 he ordered a similar treatment for a slave believed to be suffering from bladder stones. (There is no mention in Carter’s diary of the outcome.)

What has been said of coffee was also applied to tea. Accordingly, it was used to revive the spirits, remove sleepiness, aid digestion, cure headaches, relieve cold symptoms, and provoke urine. Tea was also supposed to prevent bladder stones and gravel. In *The Good and Bad Effects of Tea Consider’d*, Simon Mason noted “the Reason, why the Gout and Stone are unknown in China, is ascribed to the Use of this Plant.”³

There was a harmful side to these drinks, too. It was observed that coffee was safe for most constitutions but hurtful to those who were thin, lean, dry, and of a bilious (peevish) disposition. People suffering from bleeding piles and pregnant women were advised to avoid it. Over-indulgence in tea was linked to many children’s disorders especially hydrocephalus, tabes mesenterica (tuberculosis of the mesenteric glands),

and rickets, but in 1753 Dr. William Cullen wrote that the medical effects associated with this beverage “depend more on the quantity of warm fluid, than any particular qualities which it gains from the tea.”⁴ Numerous other side effects were attributed to consuming great quantities of these substances. In 1775 Dr. Thomas Withers reported that “Tea and coffee taken too freely can produce indigestion, acidity, heartburn, spasmodic pains of the alimentary canal, watchfulness, tremors, febleness, irritability, and dejection of spirits.”⁵

Esteemed more for its nutritional virtues, chocolate was described as strengthening, restorative, and fattening and given to preserve health, repair weak constitutions, and fortify wasted flesh. It was touted as the “Panacea of old Age,” and D. Quélus remarked in *The Natural History of Chocolate* (1730), “if one examines the Nature of Chocolate, a little with respect to the Constitution of aged Persons, it seems as though the one was made on purpose to remedy the Defects of the other.”⁶ It was also noted that chocolate was not good for overweight people and those who ate and drank too freely, slept too much, and rarely exercised.

Beyond chocolate’s nutritional value, some medicinal qualities were associated with it. Chocolate was professed to aid digestion and ease gripings of the bowels; however, in 1789, Dr. William Cullen cautioned that this substance was not always easily digested because of the high fat content and, the drink could lead to “inconveniences of digestion” if not prepared with the best chocolate.

The oily properties of chocolate made it a good emollient. Internally it was taken to ease urination when suffering from bladder stones and gravel, to relieve all disorders of the upper respiratory system including coughs, colds, and consumptions, and to strengthen the voice. Externally the oil or butter of cacao was applied warm for the relief of gouty and rheumatic pains and painful hemorrhoids. In 1743 Dr. Robert James reported, that “in America the Women use it for rendering the Skin smooth and even,”⁷ because it

relieved dry, rough skin, cutaneous eruptions, and itches.

Finally, chocolate was recognized for its ability to raise the spirits and therefore given in melancholic disorders. Perhaps, this is also what led to one of its most infamous uses as an aphrodisiac. Pierre Pomet wrote that consumption of chocolate would “stimulate to Venery causing Procreation and Conception [and] facilitate delivery.”⁸

From a modern standpoint we know that caffeine is one of the main active ingredients in coffee, tea, and chocolate. Caffeine is a diuretic and stimulant, and currently it is used to suppress tiredness and treat headaches, especially migraines. The antioxidant property of green tea is being investigated to treat and/or prevent a number of medical conditions including cancer, colitis, diabetes, and obesity. Last but not least, researchers have reported that the antioxidants and phenols in dark chocolate can thin blood and prevent clots, lower blood pressure and bad cholesterol, and out-perform codeine as a cough suppressant. So, the next time you have a headache, are feeling a bit rundown, or catch a cold, don’t be afraid of a good old fashioned eighteenth-century remedy.

¹ *Of the Use of Tobacco, Tea, Coffee, Chocolate, and Drams*, (London: printed by H. Parker, 1722), p. 10.

² Pearson, Richard, *A Practical Synopsis of the Materia Alimentaria, and Materia Medica*, vol. I (London: printed for r. Baldwin, and L. B. Seeley, 1797), p. 101.

³ Mason, Simon, *The Good and Bad Effects of Tea Consider’d*. (London: printed for M. Cooper, 1745), p. 16.

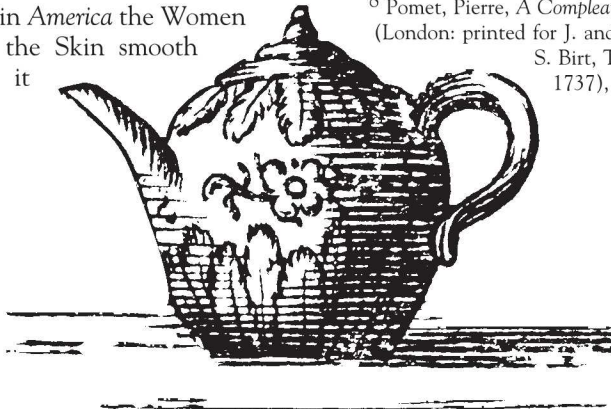
⁴ Lewis, William, *The New Dispensatory*. (London: printed for J. Nourse, 1753), p. 219.

⁵ Withers, Thomas, *Observations on the Abuse of Medicine*. (London: printed for J. Johnson, 1775), p. 269.

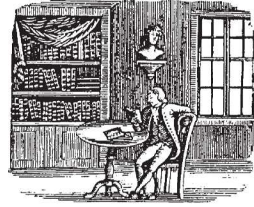
⁶ Quélus, D., *The Natural History of Chocolate*, 2nd ed. trans. by R. Brookes (London: printed for J. Roberts, 1730), p. 56.

⁷ James, Robert, *A Medicinal Dictionary*, vol. I (London: printed for T. Osborne, 1743), unpagged.

⁸ Pomet, Pierre, *A Compleat History of Druggs*, 3rd ed. (London: printed for J. and J. Bonswick, R. Wilkins, S. Birt, T. Ward and E. Wickstead, 1737), p. 131.



New at the Rock



New Items in the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library's Special Collections

Federal Era American Newspaper Collection
MS2008.5

Indenture between Norborne Berkeley, Baron de Botetourt, James Harris, and Joseph Newton (executors of the estate of Mary Phelps) and Robert Parry, May 13, 1766. Indenture for the lease of lands and property to Parry. The document is signed by Botetourt, Harris, and Newton, and their seals are affixed at the bottom. Attested on the verso: "Sealed and delivered by the within named Lord Botetourt, James Harris, and Joseph Newton being first duly Stamp'd in the presence of Geo. Jones, Henr. Edwards." MS2008.6

John Nicholas (1764-1819) letter, Falmouth, Virginia, March 2, 1802 to James Rees, Geneva, New York. In this letter, Nicholas (third son of Treasurer Robert Carter Nicholas) discusses his impending move to Geneva in New York. He mentions his concerns at the possibility of flooding at a mill site and the receipt of a survey executed by Capt. Baker. Nicholas expresses his wish to send his slaves to New York before his own departure, but the laws of that state prevent it. He also suggests to Rees that the law should be changed. MS2008.7

Hugh Ledlie letter, New York, to Samuel Gray, Windham, Conn., October 9, 1765. Hugh Ledlie, a shopkeeper in Hartford, Connecticut, and captain during the French and Indian War, was a prominent member of the Windham, Connecticut, Sons of Liberty during the Stamp Act crisis. Encouraged by the Virginia Stamp Act Resolves of May 30, 1756 and the Massachusetts call for an inter-colonial Congress, residents of Windham determined to resist the threat to their liberties. Ledlie was probably involved in the intimidation of Nathaniel Wales in Windham in the late summer of 1765 that convinced him to resign his post as stamp agent for the Windham region. On September 18, 1765, Connecticut stamp agent Jared Ingersoll was

approached by two groups totaling over 1,000 men. Faced with this strong showing of hostility, Ingersoll also resigned his post. Following this incident, the Connecticut legislature voted to send Eliphalet Dyer, William Samuel Johnson, and David Rowland to the Stamp Act Congress in New York. Dyer was a prominent resident of Windham who served in the General Assembly before being appointed to the Governor's Council. Ledlie writes of accompanying Dyer to the Stamp Act Congress. They arrived on October 2, five days before the Congress convened. Ledlie writes that these men will determine the fate of the British colonies in North America. He refers to November 1, the day the Stamp Act is to go into effect, as "that fattal Day which is Dreded by Every Socalled thinking man" and expresses his hope that "the present Congress will do something worthy Such a Sett of Smart Men as they appear to me to be." MS2008.8

Deed of James Lyon to John Eyre for sixteen slaves, 1809 November 21. James Lyon, a physician in Northampton County, Virginia, was married to Sarah Eyre, the sister of John Eyre. The deed between James Lyon and John Eyre is for the transfer of sixteen slaves to Eyre as security for seventeen hundred dollars Lyon received from Eyre. The deed stipulates that Lyon or his heirs have until November 21, 1811 (two years from the date of the deed) to repay the loan. The deed further stipulates that the slaves may be sold by Eyre if the money is not paid in time. The deed was proved at the court in Northampton County on December 9, 1811, following the death of Lyon in November of that year. The sixteen slaves are all named in the deed. MS2008.9

Levi Ezra Bartlett manuscript concerning the 12th Amendment to the United States Constitution concerning electors.(ratified June 15, 1804). Levi Bartlett was the son of Josiah Bartlett of New Hampshire, signer of the Declaration of Independence. MS2008.10

A Formulary of that part of the Solemnity which is performed in the Collegiate Church of St. Peter Westminster at the Coronation of her Majesty Queen Anne, 23 Apr. 1702. This manuscript was probably intended to serve as a rehearsal document for the coronation of Queen Anne. It was most likely intended for one of the dignitaries taking part in the ceremony. MS2008.11

Bond of Louisa Ross with the Common Council of Alexandria, Virginia, May 9, 1822. Bond of Louisa Ross and Davis Bowie, security, with the Common Council of Alexandria. The bond was required pursuant to an act of the council regarding slaves, free negroes, and mulattoes. This law required free negroes and mulattoes to post bond with good and sufficient security for fifty dollars to guarantee their "good, peaceable, and honest conduct, during their residence" in Alexandria. The bond was meant to guarantee the good behavior of Louisa Ross. MS2008.12

James Rush letter to John Mason, George Town, November 10, 1800. Writing one month after the execution of Gabriel [Prosser], Rush discusses the disturbances caused by the slave patrols in the wake of Gabriel's Rebellion. Rush notes that Governor Mason has called for militia patrols of the various quarters to look for any "improper assemblage of Blacks." The militia was to bring such blacks before a magistrate or the commanding officer. Rush feared this power would be abused. MS 2008.13

Two documents concerning the sale of slaves belonging to Dr. John R. Archer to satisfy a debt owed to the Farmers Bank of Virginia. The first document is a copy of the suit issued by the Superior Court of Law of Petersburg for the case of "The President, Directors, & Co. of the Farmers Bank of Va., against John R. Archer and Wm. B. Giles." The copy was made by the court's clerk, Harry Beverly Gaines, for Dr. Archer. William Branch Gaines endorsed the note of Archer and was also sued by the bank. The second item is a letter from George Jefferson, sheriff of Amelia County, concerning the sale of Dr. Archer's slaves and the handling of the money from the sale. MS 2008.14

George Yonge letter to his agent in America concerning his land grant in New York, May 5, 1784. George Yonge represented Honiton in Parliament from 1754 to 1794 and served as secretary of state for war at the time of the writing of this letter. The letter was written to his agent in America concerning his land grant in New

York near Lake Champlain. Yonge received the grant before the war, and he wants his agent to help him secure it and to aid in getting settlers for the land. Yonge informs his agent that the English are ready to trade with the Americans "as soon as your Government is a little settled." Yonge also states that there is confusion involved in trading with America: "We must likewise know, if possible, with what Powers, or authorities we are to treat or settle any commercial, or mercantile matters—whether with each particular State, or with Congress. Whether if there is to be a general Treaty with Congress of a commercial Nature, there is to be a Particular one with Each State as far as may consist with the General one." Yonge goes on to discuss the political situation in England. At the end of Yonge's letter is the draft of a letter from his agent to the one person currently settled on the New York grant. MS2008.15

Fourth of July orations of Nathaniel Paine Denny. The first oration is a defense of the Federalists, particularly John Adams and George Washington, against the attacks of James Thompson Callender. Denny attacks Callender and Jefferson in the oration. Denny criticizes Jefferson's administration and the South in general. He writes of the "painful task of viewing our situation under a different administration. The affairs of our country at present day are governed & directed by men of the South. . . . School houses in Virginia are as rare as Brothels in New England & places of public worship as unfrequented, as horse races in Massachusetts." The second oration looks at the divisiveness in American political culture and uses the French and English revolutions as examples of where America may be headed if things don't change. The final three pages of the manuscript include genealogical material on the Denny family. MS2008.16

An abstract of a cargo for the Windward Coast, Africa. Abstract listing the cargo of an unknown slave trader bound for the Windward Coast of Africa, modern Côte d'Ivoire. The trader was most likely from Liverpool as some of the cargo is from Manchester. The cargo consists chiefly of manufactured goods including cloth, beads, muskets, and spirits. Much of the cloth is Indian in origin: chiloes, brawles, nicneees, and bijudipauts. There are some raw materials including lead and iron listed in the cargo. The mention of cloth from Benin "if to be got" implies trading en route. The cargo was to be traded for 250 slaves. MS2008.17

Hartford Convention. The Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates, from the states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode-Island; the counties of Cheshire, and Grafton, in the state of New-Hampshire; and the county of Windham, in the state of Vermont convened at Hartford. The final report of the Hartford Convention, this report criticizes the administration of James Madison and proposes several constitutional amendments aimed at curtailing the political power of the South and protecting Northern commercial interests.

The Independent Gazetteer; or, the Chronicle of Freedom, November 8, 1783, Numb. 106. This issue contains George Washington's farewell address to the Continental Army.

The London Chronicle from Tuesday, April 3, to Thursday, April 5, 1770, Vol. XXVII, No. 2076. This issue contains an account of an attack upon an overseer at the plantation of Bowler Cocke.

The London Chronicle, from Saturday, July 16, to Tuesday, July 19, 1774 Vol. XXXVI, No. 2747. Contains: "Extract of a Letter from a Lady at Williamsburgh, in Virginia, to a Friend in London, dated June 1." Discusses the reaction to the closing of the Port of Boston. Mentions the day of fasting and prayer in Virginia, the dissolution of the House of Burgesses and the possibility of interrupting trade with England.

The Pennsylvania Evening Post, Tuesday, September 12, 1775, Num. 100. Contains a petition addressed "To the Hon. President, and the rest of the DELEGATES of the people of Virginia, now sitting in Convention, the petition of sundry merchants, and others, natives of Great Britain, and resident in this colony." The petition attempts to allay Virginians' fears of people born in Britain and living in Virginia. The petitioners assert their willingness to support the American cause short of taking up arms against the British. Following the petition are the resolutions of the Convention concerning it. The first resolution pronounces the petition reasonable and calls on the people of Virginia not to harass native born Britons who do not show themselves to be enemies. The second resolution calls for the petition and that it be printed in the *Virginia Gazette*. Signed in print by Robert Carter Nicholas and John Tazewell.

The Pennsylvania Gazette, April 17, 1740, Numb. 592. In an open letter to the inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas, George Whitefield (Church of England minister of the

Methodist persuasion) criticizes slave owners for their mistreatment of slaves within those colonies. Whitefield notes that slave masters tend to treat their animals better than their slaves. He writes "my blood has frequently almost run cold within me, to consider how many of your Slaves had neither convenient Food to eat or proper Raiment to put on, notwithstanding most of the Comforts you enjoy were solely owing to their indefatigable Labours." Whitefield believes the prayers of the slaves will be heard and "The blood of them spilt for these many Years in your respective Provinces, will ascend up to Heaven against you." Whitefield's main concern, however, is for the souls of the enslaved. He believes the slave owners purposely keep their slaves ignorant of Christianity, a crime far worse than the physical degradation the slaves are made to endure.

The Pennsylvania Packet, and Daily Advertiser, Wednesday, February 9, 1785, No. 1876. Contains an advertisement for a fire engine "On the newest construction . . ." by Mason & Gibbs. The advertisement includes an image of the fire engine.

John Taylor. *New Views of the Constitution of the United States*. Washington, D.C.: Way and Gideon, 1823. This is the last of Taylor's works on the Constitution. It discusses the Constitutional Convention and the Federalist papers. Taylor decried the tendency of the federal government to repeatedly assume powers not granted by the Constitution.

John Peter Zenger. *The Trial of John Peter Zenger, of New-York, Printer: Who Was Charged with Having Printed and Published a Libel, Against the Government and Acquited. With a Narrative of His Case*. London: John Almon, 1765. Account of the trial of Zenger, publisher of the *New York Weekly Journal*, who was tried for libel for remarks in his paper concerning the William Cosby, governor of New York.

Tench Coxe. *An Enquiry into the Principles on Which a Commercial System for the United States of America Should Be Founded; To Which Are Added Some Political Observations Connected with the Subject*. Philadelphia: Robert Aitken, 1787. Paper read at the first meeting of the Philadelphia Society for Political Inquiries, convened at the home of Benjamin Franklin, May 11, 1787. Coxe advocates the growth of manufactures to create a more balanced economy while taking care not to alarm the agrarian majority. This paper anticipates Hamilton's Report on Manufactures that Coxe drafted.

Daniel Webster. *A Discourse in Commemoration of the Lives and Services of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, Delivered in Faneuil Hall, Boston, August 2, 1826*. Boston: Cummings, Hilliard & Co., 1826. This address on the deaths of Adams and Jefferson was delivered on the fiftieth anniversary of the August 2, 1776 signing of the official Declaration by members of the Continental Congress. Both Adams and Jefferson had died on July 4, 1826, fifty years to the day after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

Mercure de France, Novembre, 1787. A French gazette and literary magazine, this issue contains the text of the proposed United States Constitution.

Mercure de France, Septembre, 1789. Contains the text of Madison's speech to Congress of June 8 submitting twelve amendments to the Constitution, the first ten of which will become the Bill of Rights in 1791.

Journal of the United States in Congress Assembled: Containing the Proceedings from the Sixth Day of November, 1786, to the Fifth Day of November, 1787. New York, 1787. The journal of Congress containing the text of the proposed Constitution, Washington's transmittal letter to Congress of the same, and the Northwest Ordinance.

Thomas's Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode-Island, New-Hampshire & Vermont Almanack . . . 1788. Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1787. This edition of Thomas's almanac contains the "Proceedings of the Federal Convention," consisting of the full text of the proposed Constitution and George Washington's letter of transmittal to Congress.

Thomas's Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode-Island, Newhampshire & Vermont Almanack . . . 1797. Worcester : Isaiah Thomas, 1796. This edition contains Washington's Farewell Address to the citizens of the United States.

Thomas Hutchins. *A Topographical Description of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and North Carolina, Comprehending the Rivers Ohio, Kenhawa, Sioto, Cherokee, Wabash, Illinois, Mississippi . . .* London: J. Almon, 1778. One of the most valuable sources on the West by the most accomplished geographer in America at the time. Hutchins descriptions of America west of the Alleghenies were the best available at the time of the Revolution. This work includes two small maps showing a stretch of the Mississippi and the falls of the Ohio.

An Abstract of Several Cases Relating to the Trade to Africa. London, 1714. This pamphlet argues against the restoration of the monopoly of the Royal African Company. The author notes that since the trade was opened, the number of slaves exported to the America's has increased and the demand for British manufactures has increased. The author states that it is dangerous to place the trade in the hands of one company since any setback to that company would be a great blow to the British economy.

Royal African Company. *The Case of the Royal African-Company and of the Plantations*. London, 1714. In this pamphlet, the Royal African Company makes the case for restoring its monopoly of the trade in African slaves. The company notes that the trade was developed at their company expense and that since the loss of its monopoly, the price of slaves has risen. This price increase, it notes, has been detrimental to the colonies and to British manufactures.

John Stevens. *Examen Du Gouvernement d'Angleterre, Compare Aux Constitutions Des Etats-Unis . . .* Paris: Froulle, 1789. This is the French translation of Stevens' Observations on Government. It was popular with French reformers who favored an American-style democracy for France.

Jonathan Carver. *Travels through the Interior Parts of North America, in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768*. London: Charles Dilly, 1781. Carver's account of his travels in the interior of America. Carver traveled farther west than any Englishman before the Revolution and his account was a valuable source for later explorers, including Lewis and Clark. The work is the first to use the word "Oregon" in print and contains several illustrations including colored maps, images of Native Americans and their implements, and the tobacco plant.

State of the British and French Colonies in North America with Respect to Number of Peoples, Forces, Forts, Indians, Trade and Other Advantages. London: A. Millar, 1755. This work presents information on the situation of the French and British colonies in North America drawn largely from the work of Archibald Kennedy, Cadwallader Colden, and Franklin's Observations upon the Increase of Mankind. The author discusses the designs of the French upon those parts of North America the English believe to be their territory such as the Ohio Valley. The author comments on Washington's mission to

Ohio and blames both the British administration and the Americans for the current situation with regard to the French.

Alexander Scott Withers. *Chronicles of Border Warfare, or, a History of the Settlement by the Whites, of North-Western Virginia: and of the Indian Wars and Massacres, in that Section of the State; with Reflections, Anecdotes, & C.* Clarksburg, Va.: Joseph Israel, 1831. A compilation of accounts of encounters between settlers and Native Americans in the Ohio country.

William Douglass. *A Summary, Historical and Political, of the First Planting, Progressive Improvements, and Present State of the British Settlements in North-America.* London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1760. Douglass was the first resident of America to undertake a history of all the British North American colonies. While the work was praised by various contemporaries of Douglass for bringing together more facts on the American colonies than any other publication, Wright Howes (in his *U. S. Iana (1650-1950: A Selective Bibliography in which Are Described 11,620 Uncommon and Significant Books Relating to the Continental Portion of the United States.* New York: Bowker, 1962) referred to it as "A vast reservoir of untrustworthy information."

Samuel Kercheval. *A History of the Valley of Virginia.* Woodstock, Va., 1850. The second edition of Kercheval's account of the settlement of the Ohio Valley and the western parts of Virginia and Pennsylvania. The work is based upon the author's interviews with the inhabitants and the work of other authors especially Philip Doddridge, a distinguished figure of western Virginia.

Thomas Jefferson. *Reports of Cases Determined in the General Court of Virginia. From 1730, to 1740; and from 1768 to 1772.* Charlottesville, Va.: F. Carr and Co., 1829. A collection of Virginia court cases that Jefferson organized for publication from the records of the General Court. Includes Jefferson's essay: "Whether Christianity is a part of the Common Law?"

Expose des Motifs de la Conduite du Roi, Relativement a l'Angleterre. Paris, 1779. This is the official first edition of France's justification for taking up arms against the British during the American Revolution.

Cadwallader Colden. *The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada: Which Are Dependent on the Province of New-York in America, and Are the Barrier between the English and French in That Part of the World.* London: Thomas Osborne, 1747.

Jackson Jonathan. *Thoughts upon the Political Situation of the United States of America: In Which That of Massachusetts Is More Particularly Considered; with Some Observations on the Constitution for a Federal Government, Addressed to the People of the Union.* Worcester, 1788.

France. *An Historical Memorial of the Negotiation of France and England, From the 26th of March, 1761, to the 20th of September of the Same Year, with the Vouchers.* London: Becket, 1761. The first English language edition of these state papers relating to the Treaty of Paris that ended the French and Indian War. These papers were originally issued by the French government to demonstrate England's fault in peace negotiations.

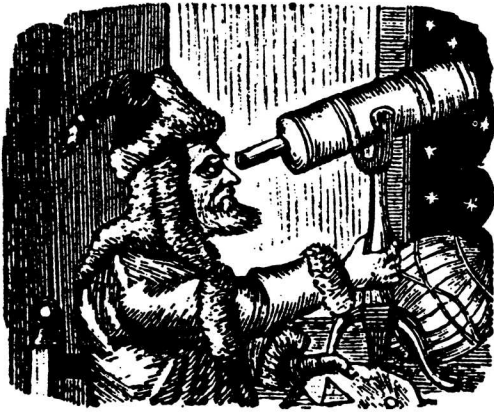
Preliminary Articles of Peace, between His Britannick Majesty, the Most Christian King, and the Catholick King: Signed at Fontainebleau, the 3d Day of November, 1762. London: Thomas Harrison, 1762.

Stamp Act Congress. *Authentic Account of the Proceedings of the Congress Held at New-York, in MDCCLXV, on the Subject of the American Stamp Act.* London: J. Almon, 1767. First English edition which followed the publication of the first edition issued in Annapolis, Maryland.

Thomas Dring. *Recollections of the Jersey Prison-Ship.* Providence, RI: Greene, 1829.

Londina Illustrata. Graphic and Historic Memorials of Monasteries, Churches, Chapels, Schools, Charitable Foundations, Palaces, Halls, Courts . . . London, 1825. This book contains interior views, exterior views, and surrounding neighborhoods and streets of these institutions. It is arranged in sections for each type of structure.

(Submitted by Douglas Mayo, head, special collections, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library)



Q & A

Question: *Does Colonial Williamsburg, through its Historic Trades program, preserve certain trades that don't exist in the eighteenth-century manner anywhere else? (submitted by a participant in an Introduction to Interpretive Education class)*

Answer: The question is a good one that cannot be answered so simply. For a few trades, the answer is probably yes. For others, a proper answer requires reflection on Colonial Williamsburg's approach to preserving eighteenth-century work, how that work differs from similar efforts elsewhere, and the overall environment in which our tradesmen ply their skills at this particular museum.

Colonial Williamsburg has the largest and most diverse museum historic trades program in the world, exceeding in size and scope any other public or private program dedicated specifically to eighteenth-century, non-mechanized practice and production. We are one of the few museum trades programs that employ full-time, specialized traditional artisans, who master and practice their trades rather than demonstrate basic operations as an interpretive activity. While individuals elsewhere may rival or exceed our Historic Trades staff in knowledge and skills, overall mastery of traditional hand skills at Colonial Williamsburg is unequalled. Likewise, while other individuals or institutions research eighteenth-century trades and technology, we are, collectively, the most focused and informed. As America's longest-running historic trades program, we draw on our experience in organization and administration, technical know-how, training, and research for just about everything we do.

Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Trades have established and maintained our leadership role through dedication to high standards in rediscovering and preserving traditional trades.

We strive to make the best possible replicas of American and English eighteenth-century products. This entails careful study of original objects, their materials and production processes, and a commitment to be faithful to them. Access to Colonial Williamsburg's collections and curators enhances these studies. Consultation with archaeologists, conservators, and historians can help determine the impact of social, cultural, and economic influences on forms and fabrication. When it comes to certain trades, like wigs, period tools, some textiles, and wheels, we seem to be among the very few institutions, businesses, and hobbyists who strive and succeed in this endeavor.

Even in cases where we are not the only ones accurately replicating period products, we are notable in our dedication to discovering and implementing eighteenth-century technology with few modern shortcuts (we do take a few on a case-by-case basis), using appropriate tools and materials, as well as understanding and applying the mechanics of period technology and the mind-set of period artisans. We are able to achieve this level of authenticity through our in-house tool-making capabilities, our ability to obtain proper materials, the availability of historical and curatorial information about artisans and products, and—most importantly—financial backing.

Indeed, Colonial Williamsburg's financial support allows us to practice trades with period technology when doing so in a commercial setting would otherwise not be viable. The result is that only a handful of other museum programs and hobbyists pursue these trades with a comparable dedication to authenticity of method and product. Even in these cases—especially regarding hobbyists—the historical accuracy of our setting and work environment usually sets us apart. Even though we do not work in a “pure” eighteenth-century environment, it is much more intentionally controlled for period accuracy than most other “traditional” shops. While the Historic Area is not a perfect re-creation, the overall verisimilitude of the environment also fosters a spirit of experimentation among our trades staff, as exemplified by the development of programs to make chocolate and beer or to fabricate a cannon and a fire engine.

There are many traditional gunsmiths, but only we make guns using eighteenth-century technology exclusively. We have the only coopers making tight work in the traditional manner. Colonial Williamsburg supports some of the few silversmiths, cabinetmakers, blacksmiths, brick makers, carpenters, basket makers, founders, cooks, mantua makers, tailors, harness makers, and shoemakers dedicated to making wares totally by hand—not in the modern sense of

“not in a factory,” but, literally, using only hand and foot power, hand tools, and simple, historically appropriate machines.

While schools exist that train hobbyists and modern craftspeople and some museums train their staff in a few historic trades, Colonial Williamsburg operates one of the best historical trades training programs in the western world. Each apprenticeship is governed by a curriculum developed for the specific trade, and overall our standards are, if not the highest, among the highest anywhere. Many of us are informed, passionate, and stubborn purists!

The size and diversity of our trades program sets us apart in another important respect. We are the only organization that can approach replicating eighteenth-century production systems. The interactions among our tradesmen in a single trade shop or among shops when collaborating on a big project, as well as the components we make or purchase, replicate closely those of the period. Thus we can build a house from the ground up and furnish it and its occupants much as it was done in colonial Virginia.

Formerly noted for our size, scope, and focus on the eighteenth century, Colonial Williamsburg's trades program in recent years has increased in significance as a preserver of traditional hand work in any form. Before World War II, many trades, though dominated or assisted by machines, still employed hand work and traditional skills, and during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, many museums operated trades programs. Over the last several decades, however, production pressure has eliminated most traditional skills in modern manufacturing. Likewise, most museum trades programs have shrunk or ceased altogether in response to economic pressures. This also means that we are one of the few places left—in some cases the only place—where museums and collectors can acquire accurate reproductions of eighteenth-century (and sometimes even seventeenth- or nineteenth-century) items.

It is evident that these attributes of our Historic Trades program embody Colonial Williamsburg's mission to preserve and present life of the eighteenth century. Whether unique in every respect or not, our trades programs do their palpable part in fulfilling the wish of so many guests who say they want to feel they have gone “back in time.” (Jay Gaynor, Director of Historic Trades, and Bob Doares, Interpretive Training)

Question: Please correct me if I'm wrong: Some years are written 1726/27, not because of the uncertainty of the year but because of the change in the calendar. One of the people

I work with said they were told that marriages were listed that way because one of the years was for the wedding and the other for the marriage license. Can you set us straight, please?
(submitted by Carolyn Wilson)

Answer: You are right, it has to do with the calendar, but there were two aspects of the calendar in the colonial period that contribute to confusion over dating of documents and events before 1752, neither of which has to do with weddings or marriage licenses. As any historian, researcher, or family historian can testify, documents of all kinds (wills, deeds, private letters, inventories, newspapers, account books, and, yes, marriage dates) can carry the Old Style/New Style double year notation. A notable example in Williamsburg is the gravestone of John Page at Bruton Parish Church that shows Page's date of death as January 23, 1691/2.

Old Style/New Style dates in Britain and her colonies. The calendar in England for much of the colonial period was complicated on one level by an anomaly that had developed in medieval England, whereby English clergy began dating the new year from March 25--the Feast of the Annunciation or “Lady Day,” as the English styled it. An extremely important feast day in the Christian year, Lady Day commemorated the Angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary (the “Lady” of Lady Day) of the coming birth of Jesus. Thus, January 1 through March 24 were still part of the previous year in England but part of the new year in most of the rest of western Europe.

To help alleviate the confusion for these three months, clerks and other government officials, newspaper editors and ordinary letter writers sometimes used both Old Style (English) and New Style (continental) years separated by a “forward slash” or other punctuation (for example, February 18, 1711/2 or February 18, 1711-12). As of March 25, the year designation became the same in England as it was in the rest of Europe through December 31. Thus, March 24, 1711/1712 in England was followed by March 25, 1712 (not 1713). “Slashed” dates showing Old Style and New Style years applied only to the days January 1—March 24, not to the rest of the year. Please note that not everyone in Great Britain and her colonies used the Old Style/New Style convention, with the result that considerable confusion surrounds the dating of certain historical documents created before 1752 when Parliament adopted the Gregorian calendar and changed New Year's Day to January 1 (see below).

Gregorian Calendar. On a second and broader level, calendar confusion in the colonial period stems from British refusal to adopt the Gregorian

calendar along with most of the rest of western Europe in 1582. Still in use today (with additional fine-tuning), the Gregorian calendar improved upon the Julian calendar developed by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. Based upon more precise astronomical observations by Jesuit priest/astronomer Christopher Clavius and German astronomer Johannes Kepler, Pope Gregory XIII (pope from 1572 to 1585) established new rules governing leap years to better account for the exact length of a solar year (365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, 46 seconds) and decreed that October 5, 1582, be designated October 15, 1582, to correct for the accumulated 10-day error by 1582 in the Julian calendar.

Although the technical superiority of the Gregorian calendar was obvious, it was impossible in 1582 for Protestant England under Elizabeth to accept a calendar devised by the pope and adopted under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church. Britain clung to the Julian calendar for another 170 years with the result that after 1582, days of the month in England were numbered ten days behind the continent. Although a separate (but related) issue from Old Style/New Style dating discussed above that had to do with March 25 being New Year's Day in Great Britain, the ten-day difference could cause its own trouble with dates near the end of December. For example, December 29, 1718, in England was something like January 8, 1719, on the continent. (It is not clear that this discrepancy was often noted in documents.)

(Linda Rowe, *Department of Training and Historical Research*)

Question: *Was a marriage license required in eighteenth-century Virginia? What was the Reading of the Banns I've heard about?*

Answer: Before being wed in colonial times, the prospective bride and groom needed to either have the banns read (a public announcement in church of the intention to marry) on three consecutive Sundays or obtain a marriage license from the county court clerk. In both cases the parties to the marriage came away with a piece of paper (signed by the parish minister in the case of the banns or court clerk for the license). The public reading of the banns before the church community and a marriage license from the court had the same purpose: To certify that there was no reason that the couple in question could not be legally married.

A 1748 Act of Assembly, *An Act concerning Marriages*, declared (as had a similar act of 1705) that publishing the banns on three successive Sundays or obtaining a marriage license from

FAIRFAX county, August 1, 1777.

I DO hereby certify, that my son *Philip Grimes* has deserted my house, and now is going about in an idle manner; and the cause for his leaving me is on account that I am against and will not give my consent that he should intermarry with a certain *Bathsheba Hollis* (alias *Jackson*) who is a melater, and do forewarn all ministers to publish or marry the said *Philip Grimes* to any person whatever, while under age, as he is but 20 years old the 24^h day of December next. ¶ PHILIP GRIMES.

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PHILIP GRIMES.

The elder Philip Grimes is exercising his prerogative to withhold his permission for his underage son to marry and reminds ministers that intermarriage between the races was forbidden in Virginia law.

the county court clerk had equal legal standing in Virginia. According to this act, marriage licenses were issued by the clerk of court and signed by the senior justice of the county (or the second justice in his absence). The clerk posted his bond with security that there was no impediment to the marriage. If either party was under the age of 21, then the father or guardian of that party gave his consent in person to the clerk or sent a written, witnessed statement to that effect to the court clerk. In the case of banns, the marriage could go forward if no objection to it was raised after three public statements in the parish church of intention to marry. Discovery of impediments to the marriage such as age, one or both parties already married, or permission of parent or guardian withheld if either party was underage relied upon the information networks of the day: family and community.

(Linda Rowe, *Department of Training and Historical Research*)

‘ . . . Of the Greatest Advantage’: A Brief History of Eyeglasses through the Eighteenth Century

by Susan Pryor

Susan was formerly employed at the Pasteur & Galt Apothecary Shop.

In our modern world filled with visual stimuli, it is hard to imagine a world where distinct and focused vision was not always possible. Such a need was first felt by scholars who spent their time reading, writing and copying manuscripts in monasteries and libraries. Before the invention of the printing press in 1440, this work was done by hand and by candlelight. The advent of printing stimulated the growth of education and with it the need to preserve and enhance vision.

There is no specific date assigned to the invention of reading glasses, but rather a range of some twenty years between the 1260s and 1280s, with most historians in the western world settling on ca. 1287; glasses were already recorded in use in China by 1200. Credit cannot be given to a specific inventor, though English monk, Roger Bacon, perhaps influenced by the eleventh-century writings of Arab scholar Al-hazen, was instrumental in their development by suggesting the use of lenses to assist in reading. In his *Opus Majus*, written in 1268, Bacon stated:

If anyone examines letters or minute objects through the medium of a crystal or glass . . . , if it be shaped like the lesser segment of a sphere, with all of the convex side toward the eye, he will see the letters far better and they will seem larger to him. . . . For this reason such an instrument is useful to all persons and to those with weak eyes, for they can see any letter, however small, if magnified enough.¹

At first lenses were moved along the page before evolving into handheld single (called a spectacle in England) or double lenses set into metal frames at an equal distance apart as the eyes; or the two framed lenses were connected by a rigid bridge and balanced on the nose, keeping the lenses close to the eye.

In the early years of their existence, eyeglasses were exclusively for the scholar but soon became a sign of wealth and importance. This exclusivity, however, kept their popularity with the masses rather flat until after the printing press stimulated the desire for and ability to acquire an education, increasing the demand for the mass production of affordable glasses and extending their benefit to anyone with the need or desire for corrected vision. Simultaneously, spectacle-makers guilds appeared in Europe.

Despite the increasing popularity and affordability of glasses, the medical profession typically scoffed at their use. Guy de Chauliac, a professor of medicine at Montpellier in Paris, thought to be the first medical writer to reference eyeglasses, noted in his *Chirurgia Magna* in 1363, “. . . And if things do not avail, recourse must be had to spectacles of glass or beryl!”² Even as late as 1583, celebrated oculist Dr. Georg Bartisch of Dresden, advised against their use: “It is better and more useful that one leaves spectacles alone. For naturally one sees and recognizes something better when he has nothing in front of his eyes than when he has something there. It is much better that one should preserve his two eyes than that he should have four.”³

It was the use of colored lenses that stimulated any medical interest at all, however minimal. As early as the sixteenth century in China, tea-colored lenses were used to cool the face from the heat of conjunctivitis. But, and let me state this clearly, there is NO reference to the use of blue lenses in the identification of or treatment for syphilis.

The age of the user generally determined specific lens needs. Spanish optician Daca de Valdés created the first numbering system for lens selection in 1623. But as late as 1789 it was the customer not a medical professional who was largely responsible for choosing the right glasses for his needs which surely led to occasional mistakes in lens choice:

Though, in the choice of spectacles, every one must finally determine for himself, which are the glasses through which he obtains the most distinct vision. . . . By trying many spectacles the eye is fatigued, as the pupil varies in size with every different glass, and the eye endeavours to accommodate itself to every change that is produced. Hence the purchaser often fixes upon a pair of spectacles, not the best adapted to his sight, but those which seem to relieve him most, while his eyes are in a forced and unnatural state; and consequently, when he gets home, and they are returned to their natural state, what he has chosen, fatiguing and injurious to his natural sight.⁴

Initially, only longsighted (farsighted) people could have their vision corrected with glasses. These first lenses were convex and ground from

beryl or quartz. Glass lenses came later. Those made from Venetian glass were considered superior. In the early sixteenth century, concave lenses were introduced for the shortsighted (near-sighted) person. The frames were made from brass, iron, nickel, silver and even bone or horn. The regular use of eyeglasses could be tedious as they constantly had to be put onto or taken off the nose and the hand-held lenses raised or lowered. Toward the middle of the sixteenth century, leather or horn frames fastened around the head with leather straps. By the 1580s, glasses frames with cords attached could be looped around the ears. The problem was finally solved in the early decades of the eighteenth century (perhaps as early as 1702) with the invention of rigid side arms called temples that attached to the frames and pressed against the side of the head to hold them on. Again, no credit is given to a specific inventor, though London optician Edward Scarlett is thought to have perfected and promoted them in the late 1720s. In 1752, James Ayscough advertised his own modification, double-hinged temple pieces. By the end of the century shortened temple pieces that ended in front of the ears and accommodated wigs and elaborate hairstyles were available.

Nevertheless, eyeglasses were never universally the last word in fashion (except in Spain where they were all the rage). George Washington reportedly once asked pardon for using them: "Gentlemen, you will permit me to put on my spectacles for, as you see, I have not only grown gray, but almost blind in the service of my country."⁵

Probably the most famous modification made to existing eyeglasses was the introduction of the split or bifocal lens. In a 1784 letter to Philadelphia optician George Whately, Benjamin Franklin wrote of his frustration at needing two separate pairs of glasses to improve his sight, describing how he solved his dilemma and ultimately created bifocals:

I imagine that it will be found pretty generally true that the same convexity of glass, through which a man sees clearest and best at the distance proper for reading is not the best for greater distances. I therefore had formerly two pairs of spectacles, which I shifted occasionally as in travelling I sometimes read, and often wanted to regard the prospects. Finding this change troublesome and not always sufficiently ready, I had the glasses cut and half of each kind associated in the same circle.

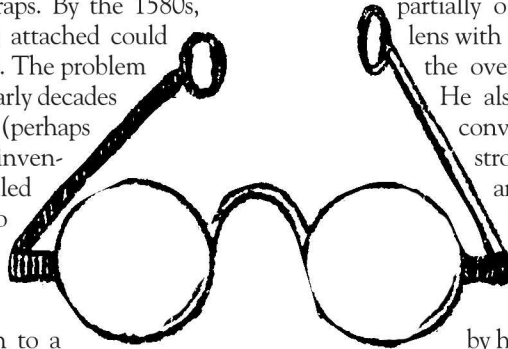
*By this means, as I wear my own spectacles constantly, I have only to move my eyes up or down, as I want, to see distinctly far or near, the proper glass always being ready.*⁶

Dr. Franklin's accomplishment notwithstanding, the idea of the split-lens was suggested as early as 1716, and the earliest recorded experiments occurred in London in 1760, possibly by Franklin, himself.

In 1756 English optician Benjamin Martin designed an earlier variation on reading glasses that partially obscured the aperture of the lens with a wide ring of horn to restrict the overload of light into the eye. He also tilted the lens inward to converge the axes of the eye more strongly onto the object in sight and often tinted them violet. He called these new glasses Martin's Margins.

Unfortunately, Martin was considered rather radical by his peers, one of whom wrote a scathing rebuttal (anonymously, of course) to his 1756 *Essay on Visual Glasses* in which he introduced his Margins. He further challenged conventional wisdom regarding the therapeutic use of colored lenses, long celebrated by popular culture, in restoring weak or tired eyes and shading the eyes from the sun. They did not enter the historical record, however, until Jarius Aucott advocated the use of green glass in 1561. In December 1666, Samuel Pepys was advised to use green spectacles, remarking in his diary, "I do truly find that I have overwrought my eyes so that now they are become weak and apt to be tired, and all the excess of light makes them sore. . . ."⁷ Green lenses were indeed thought to be the most favorable, but Martin declared that idea to be a "vulgar Error", and, basing his claim on the force of refracted light passing through each color argued that ". . . blue and indigo Colours are preferable to [the eyes]; and so the yellow, orange and red are in order the worst Colours of Light."⁸ In eighteenth-century Europe lenses were available in a kaleidoscope of colors and shades including ". . . yellow-green, meadow-green, sea green, light blue, deep blue, yellow, violet, wine-colored and pink."⁹

Williamsburg merchant John Greenhow advertised numerous types of corrective and protective eyewear for sale in several issues of the *Virginia Gazette* throughout the 1760s and 1770s, including this detailed ad from April 1771: "Green, blue and purple spectacles, for preserving weak Eyes, visual Spectacles, of a new Construction made by Martin, the celebrated Optician, concave Spectacles and Hand Glasses for near-sighted People, convex Spectacles and Glasses of all sorts."¹⁰ Reading



glasses, Martin's Margins, temple spectacles with double and single joints and green preservers were also sold at the *Virginia Gazette* printing office, and at the Golden Ball James Craig offered "visual Spectacles fit for all ages."¹¹

As technology has evolved in modern time, so have eyeglass styles and designs as well as advancements in eye examinations. Bifocals became trifocals and then progressives. Clear lenses darkened automatically according to current available light level. Contact lenses eliminated frames altogether offering both vision correction and even a temporary change in eye color.

They say that the eyes are the windows of the soul, animating the face and reflecting personality, and so their care was always paramount with problem-free sight both a desire and a necessity. Benjamin Martin summed it up this way: "For as the Sight is the most noble and extensive of all our Senses, as we make the most frequent and constant Use of our Eyes in all the Actions and Concerns of human Life, surely that which relieves the Eyes when decayed and supplies their Defects rendering them useful when almost useless must needs of all others be esteemed of the greatest Advantage."¹²

¹ Richard Corson, *Fashions in Eyeglasses* (PA: Dufour Editions, 1967), 19.

² *Ibid.*, 27.

³ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴ George Adams, *An Essay on Vision . . . intended for the Service of those whose Eyes are Weak or Impaired . . .* (London: for the author by R. Hindmarsh, 1789), 96-97.

⁵ Corson, 73-74.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

⁸ Benjamin Martin, *An Essay on Visual Glasses, (vulgarly called Spectacles) . . .* (London: printed for the author, 1756), 22.

⁹ J. William Rosenthal, MD, *Spectacles and Other Visual Aids* (San Francisco: Norman Publishing, 1996), 271.

¹⁰ *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon), April 11, 1771. See also the following John Greenhow advertisements in *Virginia Gazette*: September 19, 1766, June 4, 1767, December 3, 1767, September 29, 1768, December 12, 1771.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, April 7, 1768.

¹² Martin, 4.



Bothy's Mould

Presenting the latest dirt (mould)
from the gardener's hut (bothy).

Dung

by Wesley Greene

Wesley is a garden historian in the Landscape Department. You can often find him in costume working in the Colonial Garden across the street from Bruton Parish Church.

The earliest centers of agriculture were developed near rivers. Mesopotamia, meaning "land between the rivers," was located between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers that provided not only irrigation but nutrients in the form of alluvial deposits from annual flooding. As civilization expanded away from the river basins, the first efforts at maintaining or supplementing soil fertility began to appear.

Some of the earliest attempts to improve soils mirrored the natural alluvial process in which different soils, most notably marl soils, were used as manures. These are limestone soils that not only provide minerals, particularly calcium and magnesium, but also condition soils by promoting soil

aggregates, the property that gives what we would call a good tilth to the soil. At about the same time it was recognized that land which supported herds of animals improved in fertility and different dungs or animal manures came into use.

Pliny writes in *Natural History* (circa 72 CE): There are several varieties of dung, and its actual employment dates . . . as far back as Homer. The invention of this procedure is traditionally ascribed to King Augeas in Greece, and its introduction in Italy to Hercules, though Italy has immortalized Stercutus son of Faunus on account of this invention.

Homer's *Odyssey*, written sometime between 900 and 700 BCE, mentions dung piles and the manuring of vineyards. Theophrastus (371-287 BCE), successor to Aristotle and considered the father of botany, recommended manuring some soils at different rates depending on soil structure and also suggested including stable bedding as

a compost. Xenophon, the Greek philosopher/soldier from circa 400 BCE recognized that any kind of vegetation can be turned into manure, much like the compost gardeners make today from yard and kitchen scraps.

Manure's physical contribution to the soil has long been readily apparent to the gardener. Its chemical contribution to the soil and the physiological process of plant nutrition and growth was not fully understood until the twentieth century. Writers from the time of Pliny until the eighteenth century attributed the benefits of manure as a host to the "spirits" naturally found within the soil, air and water. Pliny referred to this miraculous property of the earth in the first century CE when he writes: "It is the prayer of trees and crops in common that snow may lie a long time. The reason is not only because snow shuts in and imprisons the earth's breath when it is disappearing by evaporation, and drives it back into the roots of the vegetation to make strength." The "earth's breath" is the aroma we are all familiar with after a rain shower or as Pliny describes: "The earth then sends out that divine breath of hers, of quite incomparable sweetness, which she has conceived from the sun."

In 1727 John Laurence called this property: "*The Nitre or Spirit of the Air*, which flies about here and there as the Wind directs it, where-ever it finds a kind Matter fit to receive it, there it abides till the Dews and Rains wash it in."¹ John Hill calls it the "Principle of Vegetation" in 1753 and records that it is: "Lodg'd in the Earth itself, and in the Aire and Rains."²

The belief that the principle of vegetation was lodged in the earth was the primary explanation for the benefits of tilling, or breaking the soil into smaller particles. Hill gives this advice to the gardener:

*He plows it deep and well, and after some Months he repeats that Labour: thus the Mould is broken, the Air, Sun, Rains and Dews, Nature's own Manure, are admitted freely; the clods are calcin'd by the Sun and Wind, mellow'd by the Dews, and dissolved by Rains. The Spade is the Gardener's Plow, and it is a better Instrument.*³

Most writers assumed that plants imbibed small portions of the soil, a further reason for breaking it finely and it was this belief that produced the horse drawn cultivator, invented by Jethro Tull (1674–1741). Tull believed that pulverizing the soil provided the "proper pabulum" or nourishment, to the plants. Pulverizing, or tilling the soil is a very good way of stimulating plant growth because, we now know, it aids in the release of chemical nutrients bound to the soil particles.

It was also necessary to let animal manure rot so that calcination might occur as explained by Laurence:

*Dung till Calcination, or perfect Rottemness, will afford little or no Salt... And therefore if they do not imbibe the Nitre or Spirit of the Air, I do not see how or which way they can be useful, in the Improvement of Land.*⁴

The earth's nitre was often described as a salt. J. R. Glauber (1604–1668), a German chemist, theorized that saltpeter was the "principle of vegetation." He was able to collect saltpeter from the soil under the pens of animals which he postulated came from the plants the animals ate. He then applied saltpeter to plants and demonstrated a marked increase in growth. Saltpeter, or potassium nitrate, is a potent fertilizer which explains the rapid growth Glauber observed. Laurence also observed that the salt concentrated from composted manure was a vital ingredient in plant nutrition and helped explain the virtue of animal manures:

*Although the Use of Dung towards Vegetation is not perhaps thoroughly understood; yet that what does most apparently seem to vegetate Plants is some Salt, I suppose is generally agreed . . . And he [John Eveyln] believes that were Nitre or Salt-Peter to be obtained in Plenty, we should need but little other Composts, to meliorate our Ground.*⁵

This observation foreshadows the development of modern synthetic fertilizers.

While most gardeners believed that the earth was primarily responsible for plant growth, others believed water was the most important ingredient. Francis Bacon (1561–1624) theorized that water was the principal nourishment for plants but also believed that each plant drew from the soil, and eventually exhausted, unique properties that explained why growing the same plant continuously on the same plot of ground impoverished the soil for that particular plant and hence, the benefit of crop rotation that had been long recognized.

Jan Baptiste van Helmont (1577–1644), a Flemish physician and chemist, proposed a "Theory of Elements" that rejected the ancient four elements of earth, air, fire, and water that had been the explanation of all earthly substances since the time of Aristotle. He recognized only two, air and water. Air he viewed as a matrix of gases (van Helmont claimed, perhaps truthfully, to have invented the word "gas" from the Greek chaos) but did not understand the chemistry of individual gases, how they interacted or how they impacted plant or animal life. All other elements, he proposed, were simply modified forms of water.

To demonstrate this he measured 200 pounds of soil into a clay pot and planted a willow shoot

weighing exactly 5 pounds into it. After five years he extracted a willow tree weighing 169 lbs., 3 oz., but could only account for a loss of 2 ounces from the soil, easily within the range of experimental error, which he attributed it to, and thus declared that water was the sole plant nutrient.

While none of these theories is correct, they all are accurate observations of plant responses to environmental elements and all represent advances in scientific methodology. In some cases, such as Pliny's connection of the "earth's breath" and the sun, these theories are remarkably astute as we now recognize that all life processes on earth originate with the energy of the sun.

The first scientist to propose that plants received their nourishment from both the air and water was the English physiologist, Stephen Hales (1671–1761). He demonstrated that plants transpire water through their leaves and that this respiration corresponds with water uptake by the roots. He also speculated that: "plants very probably draw through their leaves some part of their nourishment from the air."⁶ Hales, however, did not understand the elements of the atmosphere responsible for plant growth and it was only after Priestley's discovery of oxygen in 1774 that the chemical basis for life started to be formulated.

For those who have forgotten their plant physiology it is now understood that well over 90 percent of a plants dry weight is composed of carbon, hydrogen and oxygen. These elements are obtained from soil water (H₂O) and atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂). Through photosynthesis these elements are rearranged to form carbohydrates (CH₂O) and oxygen (O₂) which makes life for the rest of us animals possible.

The twenty-first-century gardener considers synthetic fertilizers to be a temporary form of providing soil fertility, while composts are considered a more lasting fertilizer. It is interesting that the eighteenth-century gardener considered manure compost as a temporary form of fertilizer, while adding other soils to the land was considered a "permanent manure." An entry in the 1776 *Farmers Magazine*, published in London, records:

Those manures which I call temporary do not change the nature of the soil, but fertilize it only, and thereby enable it to produce a course of crops; after which the land is left nearly in the same condition as it was before the manure. . . . Clay, marle, and chalk, essentially change the nature of the soil.

A number of different clays are used according to the type of ground being manured. Richard Bradley writes in 1727: "When I speak here of clays for manure, I would rather chuse the yellow, red, or white clay, than the blue clay." He also recognizes several marls: "The next manure for light

lands is marle, which is of various kinds, viz. the grey marle, blue marle, yellow marl, red marle."⁷ The primary purpose of marl, as we understand it today, is in altering soil pH. Marl works the same way that agriculture lime works to raise soil pH and thereby increasing soil nutrient availability. Pliny credits northern Europeans with this discovery: "There is another method, discovered by the provinces of Britain and those of Gaul, the method of feeding the earth by means of itself, and the kind of soil called marl."⁸

The individual benefits and uses of animal manures, or dung, are also ranked by all authors from Pliny's time to the present. Pliny records:

Marcus Varro gives the first rank to thrushes; droppings from aviaries. Columella puts manure from doves first, and next manure from the poultry-yard, condemning the droppings of water birds entirely. The rest of the authorities advocate the residue of human banquets as one of the best manures, and some place even higher the residue of men's drink. Next to this kind of manure the dung of swine is highly commended, Columella alone condemning it. Next comes the dung of goats, after that sheeps' dung, then cow-dung and last of all that of beasts of burden.

There are extensive recommendations for the uses of different dungs in eighteenth-century English garden works. Philip Miller writes in 1768: "Dungs are designed to repair the decays of exhausted or worn-out lands, and to cure the defects of land . . . some dungs are hot and light, as that of sheep, horses, pigeons, &c. others again are fat and cooling, as that of oxen, cows, hogs, &c."⁹ He recommends hot dungs for heavy soils and cooling dungs for light soils.

Samuel Cooke gives similar advice in 1780: *Horse-dung best suits cold soils, and cow-dung the loose burning ones; sheep-dung suits most soil. . . . Hogs-dung was formerly rejected from the notion of it producing weeds, but it is now found to be perhaps the richest and fattest of any we have . . . a little of it suffices. Fowls and pigeons, living principally upon grain, dung makes a very warm manure but cannot well be obtained in large quantities.*¹⁰

In urban centers and in the market gardens that grew up around them, horse dung is, by far, the most common. Abercrombie writes in 1789: "But as horse stable dung is easily obtained, almost every where, and many have it abundantly from their own horse stables; and, besides, when it has effected its office from hot-beds, and becomes rotten, it becomes most excellent manure for the Kitchen Garden."¹¹ As early as 1716 stable manure was a marketable product to the market gardeners around London as John Worlidge explains:

*Horse-Dung is the most common of any Dung whatsoever, by reason that Horses are most kept in Stables, and their Soil preserved, yielding a considerable price in most places; the higher the Horses are fed, the better is the Dung by far.*¹²

Most authors account for the differences in the various dungs by what and how the animal eats. Laurence tells us in 1727: "Now a great deal of Difference from Dung may arise by reason of the manner of Chewing. Those Beast that chew finest, and void it in smallest Quantities, leave the most Superficies, whereby most Nitre may be attracted."¹³ All authors also cite the importance of composting it first. Bradley writes: "By experience I find that no kind of dung ought to be used till it is like earth it self."¹⁴

There are some hazards in the use of manure that are recognized by a number of authors. John Laurence gives a number of reasons for the deleterious effects of dung in 1716, most significant is that dung: "mightily fills the Place with many noxious Weeds."¹⁵ This is particularly true for fresh horse dung which will introduce many weed seeds to the garden.

Dunging and trenching the garden is a winter job. John Abercrombie writes in 1789:

*DUNG for manure, wheel on at all opportunities of dry frosty weather . . . let the dung be digged in regularly, one spade deep, and generally dig or trench the ground up in rough ridges in order that it may mellow and improve more effectually.*¹⁶

Dung can also be applied as a manure tea as we hear from Bradley:

*I have observed that dungs, such as that of sheep, deer, pigeon, and hens, have been good helps to land when they have lain a long time in pits of water, and then the water taken out, and put in tubs, which being wheeled on the land, and those lands sprinkled with the impregnated water.*¹⁷

Most authors record human dung as one of the richest. Bradley writes:

Human ordure is much used in Italy, and the South parts of France, for their vines, and orange, and citron-trees, and is sold there at a very dear rate; it fertilizes land extremely. That which has lain for four years is considered the best and the composters prefer that which they bring from places where the most flesh is eaten.

In twelfth-century Moorish Spain, Ibn al-Awwam writes that laborers should be encouraged to urinate in the compost pits.¹⁸

The plowing in of cover crops to provide a green manure has been practiced for thousands of years but is viewed as a wasteful process by a writer to the *Farmers Magazine* in 1776:

MRSYLVAN, Some time ago as I was travelling the great western road, I could not help taking notice of a farmer ploughing in a fine luxuriant crop of clover by way of manuring his land. . . . I must confess that I was rather astonished at it, for I thought that this outlandish, wasteful, slovenly piece of husbandry had long since been abolished . . . certainly sheep might have been folded upon it, and then the farmer would have reaped a double benefit. I am, &c. VIATOR.

To this the editor replies in agreement:

The Flemings were undoubtable the first who ploughed in living crops to manure . . . however cogent their reason might be, we cannot help joining issue with Viator in thinking, that in the present improved state of agriculture this practice is a shrewd sign of inattention and bigotry.

Composted vegetable material is mentioned by many authors as a type of manure but is generally considered the poorest of the manures. Philip Miller writes in 1768: "There are some who have directed the use of torrent leaves of vegetables, as an excellent ingredient in most composts; but from many years experience, I can affirm, they are of little use, and contain the least quantity of vegetable pasture."¹⁹

Composts of manure, soil, ash, and various other substances are frequently recommended, particularly for container plants as related by Miller in 1768: "The great use of composts is for such plants as are preserved in pots or tubs." Hill gives us this elaborate formula for raising Hyacinths:

Throw upon an open expos'd Spot of Ground one Load of common Mould: add to it a Load of dry Mud from the Bottom of standing Water, and three quarters of a Load of Willow Earth: mix this together, and then add to them half a Load of Sea-Sand, taken wet from the Shore; and half a load of rotted Cow-Dung: stir up all these together, sprinkle a little Water over the Surface, and lay them up in a Heap. Break this Heap once in four Days, and in a Fortnight's Time it will be fit for Use.

In the American colonies the practice of dunging agricultural fields was not nearly as common as it was in England, mostly because the abundance of land encouraged a sort of "slash and burn" agriculture in which new land was continually opened up as older fields became less productive. In a 1793 letter to George Washington on the economy of farming Thomas Jefferson observes: "Manure does not enter into this, because we can buy an acre of new land cheaper than we can manure an old acre." However, in the longer settled areas of Tidewater Virginia, soil fertility was an important part of maintaining a plantation. In 1757 Landon Carter records the benefit of dung:

“having now experienced the great advantage . . . to my Lands as well as profitable to my self by making good reasonable Crops of tobacco, wheat, and Oats when I could hardly make corn before, I intend to put my Cowyards into order.” He then details plans for constructing moveable pens for his cattle to manage the dung.

In 1758 Carter recorded gathering—from all of his farms—828 loads of dung. His carts had the capacity of 40 bushels each, which would equal 33,120 total bushels. This, in turn, is equal to 41,069 cubic feet of manure or enough manure to cover a football field, goal line to goal line, a little better than ten inches deep. Certainly a lot of dung but when we consider the hundreds of acres he is farming it is a small amount to maintain fertility.

Even Jefferson, regardless of what he might tell Mr. Washington, was very aware of the benefits of manuring fields. Just a few days after he had advised Washington that manuring lands was not economic Jefferson wrote a letter to Dr. George Logan (July 1, 1793) asking: “If sheep, instead of cattle should be made the principal object, what number of sheep was equivalent to a given number of cattle old & young, for making Manure?” Dr. Logan had determined that 150 head of cattle would manure 60 acres per year.

Because of the scale of American agriculture and the smaller population centers there was never an abundance of dung in the colonies when compared to European cities and agricultural centers. George Washington writes to William Pierce on November 24, 1793: “As my farms stand much in need of manure, and it is difficult to raise a sufficiency of it on them; and the Land besides requires something to loosen and ameliorate it, I mean to go largely . . . upon Buck Wheat as a Green manure.” Green manures, considered inferior in England, were likely more common in the colonies for this reason. Jefferson also employs buckwheat as a cover crop and advises Thomas Mann Randolph on July 28, 1793 to follow the wheat crop with: “A green dressing of buckwheat, and, in the succeeding winter put on what dung you have.”

For the kitchen gardener the availability of dung in adequate quantities was much easier to obtain, particularly in urban centers such as Williamsburg. John Randolph recommends laying the dung on in January: “I would advise the preparing of your dung, and carrying it to your beds, that it may be ready to spread on in February.”²⁰ Across town, Joseph Prentis gets off to an earlier start: “Such of the Garden as may be vacant should be well manured in October and also well spaded that it may have the advantage of fallow from the sun, snow, and air of the winter season.”²¹

In the next century market gardens, fueled with urban manure, sprang up around all the large

American cities. Perhaps the best known and most accomplished nineteenth-century market gardener was a New Jersey gardener named Peter Henderson whose market garden was located across the sound from New York City, which provided his principal market and source for manure. He records using between 75 and 100 tons of manure per acre, per year; all coming off of the streets of New York.²² Barges would carry cabbages from New Jersey and return with manure from New York. New Jersey officials cannot say for certain where the name “Garden State” originated but it could very well have been from the extensive market gardens that grew up on the Jersey shore in the nineteenth century.

By the twentieth century, one of the marketing claims from Ford Motor Company was that the new automobiles were friendly to the environment because cars did not leave manure behind! A single horse will generate about 20 pounds of dung per day. The best estimate of the horse population in New York City after the Civil War is between 100 and 200,000. A calculation using the lower estimate yields about 2 million lbs of dung per day. It was such an important disposal problem that the “dirt carters” who removed the manure were licensed beginning in 1818. One hundred years later Mr. Ford found the cure in his environmentally responsible automobile.

Once again mankind had solved one problem, and created the next.

1 John Laurence, *A New System of Agriculture*, 1727.

2 John Hill, *Eden: or, A Compleat Body of Gardening*, 1753.

3 Ibid.

4 Laurence, *A New System of Agriculture*, 1727.

5 Ibid.

6 Stephen Hales, *Vegetable Staticks*, 1727.

7 Richard Bradley, *A Complete Body of Husbandry*, 1727.

8 Pliny, *Natural History*, ca. 70 CE (Rackham translation).

9 Philip Miller, *The Gardeners Dictionary*, 1768.

10 Samuel Cooke *The Compleat English Gardener*, 1780.

11 John Laurence, *The Gentleman's Recreation*, 1716.

12 John Worlidge, *A Compleat System of Husbandry*, 1716.

13 Laurence, *A New System of Agriculture*, 1727.

14 Bradley, *A Complete Body of Husbandry*, 1727.

15 Laurence, *The Gentleman's Recreation*, 1716.

16 John Abercrombie, *The Universal Gardener's Calendar*, 1789.

17 Bradley, *A Complete Body of Husbandry*, 1727.

18 Susan Campbell, *Charleston Kidding*, 1996.

19 Miller, *The Gardeners Dictionary*, 1768.

20 John Randolph, *A Treatise on Gardening*, 1793.

21 Joseph Prentis, *The Monthly Kalendar & Garden Book*, 1775–1779.

22 Peter Henderson, *Gardening for Profit*, 1867.



COOK'S CORNER

Some More Fun Things to Do With Your Food

by Jim Gay

Jim is a journeyman in Historic Foodways in the Department of Historic Trades.

A few issues ago, I presented some translated eighteenth-century recipes that were fun to prepare and even better to eat. The following recipes are a continuation on that theme with some new elements thrown in. In a paper written two decades ago, historian Karen Hess wrote,

The story of cookery is in the recipes. . . . A culinary historian reads recipes much as a musicologist reads music. It is not essential to be a virtuoso performer, but it takes years of drudgery, as well as a bit of flair, to be able to grasp the structure of a work, to understand its characterizing aspects, simply by reading the directions, whether the work be culinary or musical.¹

But what happens if the directions don't work; when the recipe leads to failure? The cook, then as now, has to be willing to experiment to be successful and read between the lines when necessary.

Eighteenth-century recipes were written for people who already knew how to cook. They are more a description of the process and the result than a detailed step-by-step procedure. On the other hand, modern recipes tend to be little scientific experiments complete with precise measurements, cooking times, and temperatures, along with color pictures of the result. But would the same recipe prepared by a cook in Texas taste exactly the same as one from a cook in Virginia? Probably not. Hess wrote,

Now, even highly trained chefs, schooled in the same tradition, and each following the same recipe, are going to produce dishes that vary one from the other, be it by

so little. Each pair of hands, each nose, each palate, is going to react just a bit differently. The Chinese call it 'wok presence.'²

The following are some eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century recipes that are missing some key procedure in order to work. The solutions provided are my own. Perhaps yours might work better. Let's see.

Eggs in Croquets³

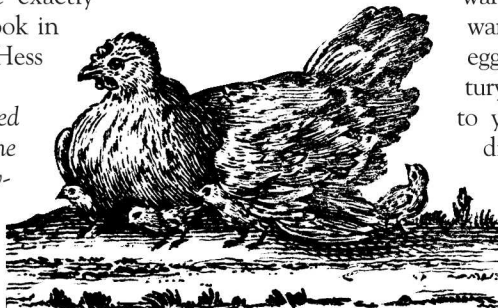
Boil eighteen eggs, separate the yolks and whites and cut them in dice, pour over them a sauce a-la-crème [recipe follows], add a little grated bread, mix all well together, and let it get cold: put in some salt and pepper, make them into cakes, cover them well on both sides with grated bread, let them stand an hour, and fry them a nice brown; dry them a little before the fire, and dish them while quite hot.

Sauce a-la crème⁴

Put a quarter of a pound of butter with a large table spoonful of flour rubbed well into it, in a sauce pan, add some chopped parsley, a little onion, salt, pepper, nutmeg and a gill of cream; stir it over a fire until it begins to boil.

One of the first things that you have to consider with this recipe is the number of eggs. Just how many little cakes do you want to make? Do you really want to use a dozen and a half eggs? In the eighteenth-century century, eggs didn't come to you in uniform sizes. They didn't have Grade A Jumbos.

Big chickens lay big eggs, little chicken lay little ones. So let's just work with ten eggs, all medium size.



Next, we boil the eggs. Having said that, it's amazing how many people believe eggs have to boil continuously for fifteen minutes. Usually, this method overcooks them. It's better to treat eggs like, ah . . . eggs. Simply put them in a pan with *cold* water covering them. Bring the eggs to a boil, and then set them aside off the heat for fifteen minutes. Keep the pan covered. Don't worry; they still cook even off the heat. Then, stop the cooking by putting them in cold water. Using this method, your yolks will be perfectly yellow. If the yolks have a greenish tint on the outside, they are overcooked.

The direction to separate the yolks and whites and then dice them is an unnecessary step. Simply peel the eggs and mince the yolks and whites together. Make your mince very small and uniform.

The binder for this recipe is the sauce *a-la-crème*. This sauce is actually from another recipe in which you bake sliced boiled eggs mixed with the sauce . . . sort of like a baked egg salad. The thing that can throw you off is misinterpreting the amount of flour required. Just how much flour is a "large table spoonful?" Remember, standard measures like cups, teaspoons, and tablespoons hadn't been invented yet. Actually, for a recipe like this, it's better to think of weight rather than volume. The required amount of flour for this recipe is about equal to the amount of butter by weight. For this recipe, one-quarter pound of butter and one-quarter pound of flour are about right.

The sauce also calls for onion. Here it's up to the cook to decide whether green onions or white onions are better. Since you are also adding chopped parsley (and parsley is green), my preference is for two or three green onions finely minced. But the amount of minced parsley, onion, and grated bread in the sauce is strictly up to you. I suggest a handful of each. And don't forget the salt and pepper. A liberal sprinkling of each is critical to this dish. Eggs, cream, and bread taste pretty bland by themselves, so the seasonings are really important here. Nutmeg is the other spice called for. As usual, freshly grated nutmeg is much more powerful than the store bought pre-ground stuff. For this recipe, a small amount equivalent to half a nutmeg ($\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon) is about right. Lastly, the amount of cream called for is a *gill*. When this recipe was written, *gill* was understood to mean 4 ounces by volume.⁵

When the sauce is done, add the minced eggs and let the whole mass cool to the touch. Make up little patties about three inches across and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick. Put them into a flat pan full of grated bread crumbs and coat them on both

sides. Apply a little pressure on the patties to get the bread crumbs to stick. Make sure that they are uniformly coated with crumbs on both sides. Whether you choose to make your own bread crumbs or buy them in a store is up to you. In Historic Foodways, we bake bread constantly, and the vast majority of it goes into making bread crumbs for puddings, coatings, and stuffings. I prefer to use fresh bread for crumbs.

The real key to this recipe is to let the patties get *cold* before you fry them. At home, I would refrigerate them for an hour. They will hold together better if they go cold into the frying pan. Whether you use butter or lard is up to you. A neutral flavored heart friendly vegetable oil won't give you the flavor that butter will. The trick to frying them is to be *gentle*. There isn't much holding them together so cook them on one side and carefully flip them once. They are very fragile when hot. Use a spatula larger than the individual egg croquette or it will break apart when it's time to take it out of the pan. The reward in all of this is the eating. They are delicious!

Although we will follow the recipe for the sake of historical accuracy, sometimes there just isn't enough information to be successful. Sometimes, the recipe has added steps that are meaningless. Then, we have to look behind the written word or look for another recipe from another author to provide a better picture. Sometimes, we have to extrapolate from one recipe and apply it to another. Such is the case for the following:

Cabbage, with Onions⁶

Boil them separately, and mix them in the proportions you like; add butter, pepper, and salt, and either stew them or fry them in a cake.

This recipe is almost Zen-like in its brevity. It has the potential for making a hash-like cabbage and onion mixture maybe to be served with corned beef, or a stewed veggie mixture fried into "cakes" or patties like potato pancakes. Only five ingredients are mentioned—two in the title, and three more in the text. Boiling, stewing, and frying are the cooking methods mentioned. But, please consider the information that is missing. There is no discussion of the type of cabbage or onion, quantities of butter, salt and pepper. If you fry them, how do you bind the wet ingredients together without causing a mess or a fire? All of this is open to the cook's interpretation. Here are some suggestions:

As far as quantities of cabbage and onion, I recommend one medium size green cabbage and about an equal quantity (by volume) of white or yellow onion. You could use a purple onion or

even a modern sweet onion (like a Vidalia) if you choose. Mary Randolph even leaves it up to you to adjust the recipe to your preference.

Although the recipe doesn't address it, it's best to cut the cabbage and onions into ½ inch strips so that the veggies mix together. Boil the veggies until tender using just enough water to cover them. Whether you boil them separately (as directed by the recipe) or not really makes no difference. What you do next depends on how you intend to serve them.

How much butter and other seasonings will depend on the total amount of veggies you have and your own personal preference. A piece of butter the "size of a hen's egg" or up to 4 ounces could fill the bill. After you drain them, return the veggies to the pan, add the butter, salt and pepper. Cover the pan and let the butter melt for a few minutes. Then stir everything together and serve.

This recipe is pretty simple and straight forward if you ignore the phrase "or fry them in a cake." If you choose to make cabbage cakes, then several more steps are required. Our solution in *Historic Foodways* is to fry them in a pancake-like batter. Although you boil the cabbage and onion as before, you need the batter to hold the cakes together. This means that the veggies have to be as dry as possible in order for the batter to adhere. Drain the cooked veggies in a colander and add salt to help sweat out more of the water. Press them with a weight like the bottom of a fry pan to extract as much liquid as possible. Let them drain for about thirty minutes. Then make a batter to use as a binder. Two eggs, a pint of milk or cream, and enough flour stirred together works well. In order to adhere to the recipe, add melted butter along with salt and pepper before you add

the flour. Mix the veggies into the batter and combine them well. Melt either butter or lard in a frying pan to fill it about ¼ inch. Using about ½ cup of the mixture per cake, cook the cakes until brown on both sides.

Are all eighteenth-century recipes as cryptic as these? No. But we continually add to our knowledge base with experimentation and repetition. Hess writes, "The story of cookery is in the recipes, if we but had them all. This is the most serious limitation in our work. The cookery of entire civilizations has perished without written trace, and the *cookery of the poor has ever been ill-recorded*. Even when we have records . . . so much was never recorded . . . and so much has been lost, that our understanding of the cuisine is bound to be slightly skewed, not only by reason of the gaps but by the idiosyncratic aspects of our sources. Still we must work with what we have, filling in the gaps as best we can, drawing on the work of ancillary disciplines to supplement and illuminate our own scanty findings."⁷

1 Hess, Karen, "Changing Patterns in Tideland Virginia Cookery: The Early Days to the Nineteenth Century" (paper presented at the Colonial Williamsburg Foodways Research Planning Conference, Williamsburg, Va., April 21–25, 1987), p. 1.

2. Hess, p. 9.

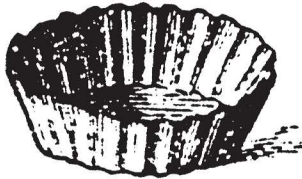
3 Randolph, Mary, *Virginia House-Wife*, a facsimile of the first edition, 1824, along with additional material from the editions of 1825 and 1828 with historical Notes and Commentaries by Karen Hess (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1984), p. 101.

4 Randolph, p. 105.

5 Randolph, p. 298.

6 Randolph, p. 136.

7 Hess, p. 2.





*Publication of
this issue of the Interpreter
was made possible
by a gift from
James H. and Sherry P. Hubbard
of Severna Park, Maryland*



Editor's Notes

Name correction to page 1 of the Winter 2008/2009 issue of the *Interpreter* noting coffee-house benefactors Forrest and Deborah Mars.

The Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter is published three times a year by the Research and Historical Interpretation Division.

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