



Christmas Programming

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AMERICANS *Becoming* TODAY

NO. 1 FOR COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG



Christmas Food

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The Christmas Season Newline

December 25: Christmas Day. The first day of the Christmas season (through January 5), and one of four times during the year when the Lord's Supper was celebrated at Bruton Parish Church and elsewhere in Virginia in the colonial period. Secular observance of the season included entertaining at home.

December 26: Feast of St. Stephen, first Christian martyr.

December 27: Feast of St. John the Evangelist

Minutes of the Williamsburg Lodge of Freemasons show that local masons celebrated this day annually in the 1770s with great ceremony. They processed as a group, wearing the insignia of their order, walking in the proper rank from the lodge to Bruton Parish Church for a sermon. Afterward, they hosted a dinner and ball to which the ladies of the town were invited.

January 1: England and her colonies adopted January 1 as the first day of the new year (instead of the traditional March 25) beginning in 1752. New Year's was not a time of celebration in the modern sense in colonial Virginia.

January 5: Twelfth Night. The *Oxford English Dictionary* identifies Twelfth night as Twelfth Day Eve, the evening before Twelfth Day (Epiphany, January 6). The word "night" in this usage suggests, "to spend the night in enjoyment or reveling." This is consistent with the tradition of making the eves of religious feasts the occasion for secular revelries.

January 6: The Epiphany/Twelfth Day. In the Christian year, the feast of the Epiphany commemorates the manifestation of the birth of Jesus to the eastern magi or wise men via a new star and their arrival at his birthplace bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

[Taken from Linda Rowe's Article in *The Interpreter*, Vol. 23, No. 1]

VIRGINIA SNAPSHOT TODAY

Christmas and New Years at Dorchester Heights: 1775 and 1776

"On December 24, a storm swept across the whole of the province. In the vicinity of Boston, temperatures dropped to the low twenties, and a foot of snow fell. On Christmas Day, a Monday, it was still bitterly cold, but clear, and the troops continued with their routine as on any day. . .

"This is the last day of the old enlisted soldiers' service," wrote a greatly distressed Nathanael Green to Congressman Samuel Ward the following day, December 31. "Nothing but confusion and disorder reign."

"We have suffered prodigiously for want of wood. Many regiments have been obliged to eat their provisions raw for want of firing to cook, and notwithstanding we have burned up all of the fences and cut down all the trees for a mile around the camp, our suffering has been inconceivable. . . We have never been so weak as we shall be tomorrow."

[Source, David McCullough, 1776, Simon & Schuster, 2005]

CHRISTMAS IN WARTIME



Washington Crossing the Delaware River, from Colonial Williamsburg's Folk Art Collection.

DECEMBER SNAPSOTS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMY

Winter holidays and the coming of a new year prompt us to personal reflection on the state of things, particularly in time of crisis. Just as the holidays pique the poignancy of wartime today, so too were events of the Revolution brought into sharper focus by the onset of winter. A look at each turn of the year during the war reveals how the morale of the troops and their commanders mirrored the triumphs and tragedies that came to them at year's end.

1775

As autumn comes to an end, the British are still ensconced in Boston, when Washington suddenly realizes that his army is about to disappear. The militiamen under his command have only agreed to serve until the end of the year. The Connecticut men intend to depart on December 10, citing the clause in their contracts promising they will be home for Christmas. The troops from New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts go home on January 1, leaving Washington with only 5,582 soldiers to man an eight-mile semicircle of forts and batteries outside Boston.

Washington's family joins him, encamped at Cambridge, in early December. They live in his headquarters at the handsome Vassal House. News that badly needed supplies have not arrived promises a grim Christmas for threadbare and half-starved soldiers, who are reduced to eating dogs. Martha attends church service on Christmas Day, calmly taking her place in a prominent pew and bowing politely to the other ladies, wishing them "the compliments of the season."

Meanwhile, American forces under generals Benedict Arnold and Richard Montgomery have occupied Montréal since November 13. On December 31, in a raging blizzard, they launch two surprise attacks

on Lower Town of Québec City. The initial penetrations seem successful, but Montgomery is killed and Arnold is wounded. British general Sir Guy Carlton then counterattacks, and Arnold is left clinging to his lines around the city all winter, with no hope for improvement of his situation.

1776

By December the British and Hessians force the Continental Army to abandon New Jersey and to cross the Delaware into Pennsylvania. With New Jersey in their control and Rhode Island successfully occupied, the British are confident that the Revolution has been crushed. To compound Washington's problems, the enlistments of most of the militias under his command expire at the end of the month. He decides to attack the Hessian-held town of Trenton just across the Delaware River.

During the night of December 25, Washington leads his troops across the ice-swollen river about nine miles north of Trenton, in the midst of raging winds, snow, sleet, and rain. To add to the difficulties, a significant number of Washington's men have no shoes. The next morning they attack to the south, taking the Hessian garrison by surprise and overrunning the town. After fierce fighting, and the loss of their commander, Rall, the Hessians surrender.

The violent weather prevents a further strike towards Princeton. The army retraces its steps across the Delaware, taking their prisoners with them. Success has made the army confident enough to cross the river again on December 30 and win a second battle at Trenton on January 2. They push on to a victory at Princeton on January 3. This news pulls the Revolution out of despair by galvanizing civilian support, shocking the British, and convincing potential allies that the Continental Army is a force to be reckoned with.

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CHALLENGES FOR AMERICANS THE NEW YEARS 1774 TO 1783

Native Americans:

- Will our people survive?
- Can we trust the Europeans?
- What do the Americans want from us?

European Americans

- Will we win the war?
- What will the war cost us?
- What freedoms will we secure?

African Americans

- What freedom will there be for me and my family?
- Should I run to the British?
- What will happen to my loved ones?

WINTER CELEBRATIONS

Winter provides a special opportunity to draw connections between 18th and 20th century Virginia and the 21st-century lives of our guests. Modern holiday traditions grew out of diverse celebrations, religious observances, and cultural practices, many of which were familiar to Europeans, Native Americans, and African Americans in the 18th century. Although the colonists would not have decorated an indoor tree or left cookies for Santa Claus, most 18th-century Virginians would have had cause for celebration sometime during the season. The following offers some highlights of the historical and present-day observances that generally occur during December.

While, for most Christians, December evokes thoughts of the birth of Christ and the traditions associated with it, non-Christians worldwide hold various celebrations and rituals in and around the month of December. Most are associated with the winter solstice. The term *solstice* is derived from the Latin words *sol*, which means sun, and *sistere*, which means "to stand still." At winter solstice the nighttime hours are longer than the daylight hours. It is the opposite of summer solstice.

By the fourth century, Roman emperor Constantine had accepted Christianity. In an attempt to unify his subjects, he combined many of the pagan and Christian traditions of Jesus into one that would be acceptable to all. Constantine also declared Sunday as the official day of rest. (Until then ancient Christians observed the Jewish Sabbath on Saturday.) About this time the date of the observance was identified as December 25.

Other holy days, rituals, or celebrations for non-Christians observed in December include the following:

Native Americans: Many Native American Indian tribes recognize both summer and winter solstices. Pueblo Indian tribes had many rites observed on or near solstices. The Hopi tribe held a ceremony called Soyal, which recognized the reemergence of the sun. The many ancient stone structures located throughout the country were created by Native Americans to detect the solstices and equinoxes.

Islam—Ramadan is the holiest month of the year for Muslims. Its date is calculated by the arrival of the first crescent moon that signals the ninth lunar month of the Muslim calendar. This observation honors the time when Allah revealed the Qura'n to Mohammed. It has fallen in December, but may occur as early as October.

Judaism—Hanukkah (also known as the Festival of Lights, Feast of Dedication, or Chanukkah) recognizes the war fought by the Maccabees in pursuit of religious freedom. When the king of Syria conquered Judea in the second century B.C.E., he disallowed worship in the Temple and stole the sacred lamp, the menorah, from the altar. When the Maccabees retook Jerusalem three years later, they found sufficient oil to light the menorah for only 24 hours, but the flame lasted a miraculous eight days.

[Submitted by Rose McAphee]

CHRISTMAS

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1777

Since the fall of Philadelphia to Sir William Howe in September, Washington's army has done little to slow British progress south through the middle states. After a vain attack on the British at Germantown in October, the Americans retreat to Valley Forge for the winter. The great American victory over British General Burgoyne's 5,000 soldiers at Saratoga does little to encourage Washington's dispirited and poorly supplied army, whose enemy is entrenched comfortably in nearby Philadelphia.

There is no assurance that Congress will ever adequately support the American forces. On December 23, Washington sends a desperate plea for provisions to Congress, now lodged at York, Pennsylvania. Martha Washington spends the winter at Valley Forge by her husband's side, doing what she can to aid the sick and dying. On January 6, Epiphany, (also the Washingtons' nineteenth wedding anniversary), the general has his officers kill and bury their horses because of the difficulty of providing fodder for them.

1778

In December, Sir Henry Clinton besieges Savannah. The city's fall on December 29 gives the British a foothold in Georgia.

Washington's army is in winter camp at Middlebrook, New Jersey, where the general makes his headquarters at the spacious Wallace House. The weather is mild compared to the previous winter at Valley Forge, and the men are relatively healthy and well supplied. Washington goes to meet his family, who arrive in Philadelphia in mid-December. The Washingtons spend Christmastide there and do not return to Middlebrook until February.

1779

Washington is exasperated with the lack of financial support from the nearly bankrupt Congress. Sir Henry Clinton withdraws his garrison from Newport, Rhode Island, and leaves New York for Charleston on December 26 with 8,700 of his best troops, confident that the 10,000 men left behind under German command can cope with the weakened American forces.

The dispirited American army begins the coldest winter of the war encamped at Morristown, New Jersey, where the men eat "every kind of horse food but hay," as Washington reports to a Congressman. One captain writes: "Many a good lad has nothing to cover him from his hips to his toes save his blanket." Quartermaster General Nathanael Greene looks out his window at the snowbound army and exclaims: "Poor fellows . . . more than half naked and two-thirds starved. A country overflowing with plenty are now suffering an army employed for the defence of everything that is dear and valuable to perish for want of food."

1780

On December 2 Nathanael Greene replaces Horatio Gates as commander of the southern army. Arriving at Charlotte,



North Carolina, he finds "but the shadow of an army in the midst of distress." Daringly, he assumes the offensive and splits his army by sending Daniel Morgan, on December 21, to threaten Cornwallis's westernmost outposts. Morgan's army will defeat Col. Banastre Tarleton's forces at Cowpens on January 17.

In the north, the difficulty of buying food for the army caused by the total collapse of Continental currency forces Washington to distribute his army all over New Jersey and New York. He maintains his own headquarters at Windsor, New York. On New Year's Day, drunken, exasperated Pennsylvania troops camped at Morristown, New Jersey, mutiny and kill two captains who try to stop them. Major General Anthony Wayne persuades them not to march to Philadelphia to settle accounts with Congress. Wayne negotiates with Congress to meet the mutineers' demands for back pay, better provisions, furloughs, and discharges.

1781

Despite the October 19 surrender of Cornwallis to the Americans and French at Yorktown, Virginia, the war is not officially over. The British are still in the south and in possession of New York. Washington is summoned from Yorktown by his family on November 5 to Burwell Bassett's (Martha's brother-in-law) in Eltham, Virginia, where his stepson Jacky dies of a fever contracted during the Yorktown campaign.

Three weeks later, on November 28, George and Martha arrive in a tumultuous Philadelphia. The couple stays at the home of Benjamin Chew and enjoys Christmas Day with close friends Robert and Mary Morris. The general spends the winter months exhorting Congress to maintain its exertions for liberty and to settle the army's claims for pay.

1782

The confusing war in the western territories continues. George Rogers Clark, hero of the Illinois campaign against Vincennes, finds himself in the field again at the end of 1782. He pushes into Ohio to destroy Chilli-cothe and Shawnee towns, in order to close the curtain on British-American hostilities in the west.

Since March, General Washington has had his headquarters at Newburgh, New York, where his army is encamped. Martha joins him there in November. Meanwhile the Paris negotiation of a peace treaty drags on. The British sign Articles of Peace on November 30 and evacuate Charleston, South Carolina, on December 14.

1783

The Treaty of Paris having been signed between the United States and Britain in September, British troops leave New York on November 25 as Washington presides over the American army's entrance into the city. He takes leave of his closest officers in an emotional ceremony at Fraunces Tavern on December 4. On December 23 he appears before Congress in the Maryland state senate chamber to resign his commission in the army. He thanks "The Supreme Power of the Union" and the "patronage of Heaven" for the support he has received.

Washington leaves Annapolis on Christmas Eve and joins Martha at Mount Vernon by nightfall. The house swiftly fills with family and friends. A young girl from Fredricksburg who stays the night writes:

I must tell you what a charming day I spent at Mount Vernon with Mama and Sally. The General and Madame came home on Christmas Eve, and such a racket the servants made, for they were glad of their coming.

[Submitted by Bob Doares]

CHRISTMAS IN THE HISTORIC AREA COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG'S 2006 HOLIDAY SEASON



Revolutionary City™ Programming continues until December 24, 2006

Kid's Holiday Weekends: December 9–10, 16–17, and 30–31.

- On three weekends in December, the Historic Area and Museums of Colonial Williamsburg welcome children and their families for a fabulous journey back in time. Sites throughout the area will be devoted to sharing fun, food, and festive entertainments of the holiday season with children of all ages, but especially for those from ages six to twelve. Children can meet with people of the past, try their skills at writing, help with meal preparation, sing songs of the season, and a lot of other cool Yule stuff.

Kid's Holiday Weekends 2006

A Warm Way to Start the Day
Palace Stable Yard Sat. 9–9:15 a.m.
Magazine Yard Sun. 9–9:15 a.m.

From Hog to Ham
Peyton Randolph Yard Sat., Dec 9
10 a.m.–4 p.m.

Dancing at Hannah's Wedding
During Tours of the Benjamin Powell House

Learn About Colonial Williamsburg's Rare Breed Animals
Benjamin Powell Property Sat. and Sun.
(except December 9th) 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

Recruiting for the Army
Magazine Sat. 10:30 a.m., 11 a.m., and Sun. 11:30 a.m., and noon

Theater for the Young
Raleigh Tavern's Apollo Room Sat.
10 and 10:30 a.m.

A Fine Time for All
Raleigh Tavern Sat. 11 a.m.–noon
Sun. 9:30 a.m.–noon

Fifes and Drums March
Duke of Gloucester St. Sat. 1 p.m.

Writing 18th-Century Letters
Wythe House Sat. and Sun. 1–5 p.m.

"Holiday Keepsakes"
Dewitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum
December 16, 17, 30, and 31 2:30–4 p.m.

PLACES TO GO

Apothecary Shop: Prepare for the winter!
Governor's Palace: Christmas with the Governor's Family
Sat. and Sun. 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

INTERPRETATION

Palace Kitchen: Preparing Holiday Feasts for the Governor (except December 9.)

Geddy House and Foundry: Family Holiday Traditions

Margaret Hunter Millinery Shop:
Sat. Making up the latest gowns
Sun. Discover the latest Gentlemen's suits and Ladies' riding habits.

Haste to the Wedding at the Benjamin Powell House

Randolph House and Kitchen: "A Christmas Box" December 16 and 30

Join in work done by enslaved children and earn your own "Christmas Box".

A Kid's Holiday Memories Day Package

A Kid's Holiday Memories Tour: Same dates as above

- This exclusive daytime package includes a visit with a colonial character, making holiday decorations, a visit with tradespeople, and various colonial games with a trained costumed guide. (Children must be accompanied by an adult. A valid Colonial Williamsburg admission ticket is required to purchase tour tickets.)

The Comet Comes to Williamsburg: December 15, 2006

- Virginia Gazette:* "Williamsburg, Friday, December 21, 1739: On Sunday morning last, the Rev. Mr. Whitefield preached at our Church, on the words, What think ye of Christ? There was a numerous congregation, and 'tis thought there would have been many more, if timely notice had been given of his preaching." Experience a reenactment of famous 18th-century evangelist George Whitefield's appearance at Bruton Parish church on Sunday, December 16, 1739. A minister of the Church of England, and colleague of John and Charles Wesley, Whitefield was an important figure in the Great Awakening, a series of revivals that swept through Britain and North America in the first half of the 18th century. 2–2:30 p.m.

Masonic Procession/Recession and Open House: December 27, 2006

- Members of the 1774 Williamsburg Masonic Lodge, current members of the lodge, and participating guests who are masons return to the masonic Lodge for a reception and open house offered by members of Williamsburg Lodge No. 6 to all interested guests. At the lodge, a lodge historian will present a brief overview of the history of Lodge No. 6 and answer related questions.

Evening Programs:

- Please advise guests to reserve early. If they do not get the program they want they should continue to check back throughout the day. Popular programs are often sold out well in advance. Programs that are sold out are not listed in the weekly guide.



BRIDE CAKE

Take one pound of flour well dried, one pound of fresh butter, one-half pound of granulated sugar, a pinch of mace and nutmeg, eight eggs, wash one pound of currants, pick them well, and dry them before the fire, blanch one-quarter pound of sweet almonds, and cut them lengthways very thin, one quarter pound of citron, one-quarter pound of candied orange, the same of candied lemon, one-fourth cup of brandy; first work the butter with your hand to a cream, then beat in your sugar a quarter of an hour, beat the whites of your eggs to a very strong froth, mix them with your sugar and butter, beat your yolks half an hour at least, and mix them with your cake, then put in your flour, mace and nutmeg, keep beating it well till your oven is ready, put in your brandy, and beat your currants and almonds lightly in, rub a bundt pan well with butter, put in your cake, and lay your sweet meats in three lays, with cake betwixt every lay. Bake at 350 degrees for at least an hour.

[The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy, Hannah Glasse, 1745]



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