

The Davenports: Examining Their Record From a "Family" Perspective

by Patricia Gibbs

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On November 24, 1738, the burgesses interrupted their work on colonial affairs to hear a complaint from the Committee of Privileges and Elections concerning a local youth whom the committee found guilty of breaching the privileges of the house. The Sergeant at Arms was ordered to take young Bedford Davenport into custody and bring him before the bar where he addressed the Speaker and acknowledged his "Folly and Indiscretion, in writing indecent Inscriptions on one of the Seats of the Burgesses . . ."

The burgesses, many of whom were fathers themselves, dismissed Bedford with a reprimand and a fine. Probably they expected that the young man's father would inflict corporal punishment along with a strong verbal rebuke. It is very likely that Joseph Davenport did so to impose his patriarchal authority on young Bedford whose prank undoubtedly embarrassed the town clerk. Circumstantial evidence suggests that Bedford was then an apprentice in the Secretary's office, a position that would have given him access to the Hall of the House of Burgesses where he left his mark on one of the benches.

Being of "moderate sufficiency" (the term Joseph Davenport's granddaughter Peggy used to describe her family's financial circumstances) did not prevent the town clerk's family from exerting considerable influence and leaving a firm imprint on eighteenth-century Williamsburg. This was as true for the women as for the men. Although none of the Davenport women married "up" into gentry families, they married successful merchants and prominent tradesmen. Most of the town's printers, for instance, were related through marriage to Davenport women or their cousins. Davenport men cornered many of the town's leading clerk positions, several practiced law, and one became an Anglican minister.

References to the family are uneven and spotty with more information in public records than in private papers. But, as the account quoted above shows, public records can reveal some very personal situations.

Joseph Davenport, His Wives, and Children

Providing more than an introduction to the members of Joseph Davenport's family is beyond the scope of this article. Although records about his parentage are lacking, Joseph Davenport is believed to have been born about 1690 and to have been a student at the College of William and Mary in 1702. Other Davenports were living in tidewater Virginia during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but it is not clear if they were Joseph's relatives.

About 1716 Joseph Davenport married Elizabeth [surname unknown] by whom he had Joseph, whose death is recorded in the Bruton Parish register in 1720. Presumably, Elizabeth was also the mother of Bedford (born by 1719) and Frances Anne. This daughter, who bore the surname Wright and was living in England in 1760, is mentioned in only one record—Joseph's will. Bedford Davenport was licensed to practice law in York County in 1742, but two years later he disappeared from local records.

Left a widower with two young children, it is not surprising that within a year or so after Elizabeth's death in 1727, Joseph remarried. His second wife Margaret [surname unknown] bore ten children in eight births: twins Elizabeth and Martha born March 5, 1729/30, Joseph born February 21, 1731/32, George born March 29, 1733, Matthew born October 24, 1734, Judith born in 1736, James (birth date unknown), twins John Shank and Peachy born about 1737, and Sarah (birth date unknown). Sometime after Margaret Davenport died in November 1751 and before Joseph wrote his will in 1760, he married again. The name of his third wife is unknown.

Joseph Davenport held several positions. Although the 1722 charter of Williamsburg refers to him as "Joseph Davenport, Gent: Town Clerk," other public records refer to him by the more middling title "Mr." From 1722 until 1760 he was town clerk, city surveyor, and clerk of the Hustings Court. Around 1736 he also served as deputy postmaster. By 1744 he was writing master at the College of William and Mary, a position he held until he resigned in 1760. Through the years he and his sons were often paid for work that drew upon their clerical skills. In 1737, for instance, he and Bedford were paid

by the Council for transcribing the "Report of the Commissioners for Settling the Boundaries and the Several papers Annexed thereto" that were sent to England.

In May 1731 the church wardens of Bruton Parish bound orphan Mary Packe to Joseph and Margaret Davenport for four years to teach Mary the business of mantuamaking. At first glance, this may seem to suggest that both husband and wife were mantuamakers but Margaret Davenport was the *real* mantuamaker. Because of her married status, however, her husband's name appeared with hers in the court record. Considering that the term of Mary Packe's indenture coincided with the period when Margaret was bearing children nearly every year, Mary probably got lots of experience in making clothes for babies and young children. Having an extra pair of hands to help around the house and assist with child care may well have influenced the Davenports to take an apprentice into their home. While raising her growing family, it is likely that Margaret had little time to sew for outsiders. In 1744, however, Commissary William Dawson paid the Davenports twelve shillings for making a silk coat for one of his daughters.

Lots 269 and 270 (site of the brickyard and extending across Botetourt Street) are the only Williamsburg property that Joseph Davenport is known to have owned. He bequeathed these lots to his son Matthew. When Joseph acquired the lots is unknown.

Joseph and Margaret's first children, twin sisters Elizabeth and Martha each married artisans. About 1758, Elizabeth married cabinetmaker (and later tavernkeeper) Anthony Hay, a widower whose first wife Elizabeth (née Penman, dead by 1758) bore him a daughter named Barbara (born 1752, death date unknown) and a son Thomas (born 1754, died 1774). Anthony (died 1770) and Elizabeth (died 1788) had seven children during their twelve-year marriage: Joseph (born 1758), George (born 1765), Anthony (born 1767), Charles, Patsy, Nancy, and Sarah.

At the time of Elizabeth's marriage to Anthony Hay he already owned Lots 263 and 264 (site of Hay's Cabinetmaking Shop). After Hay bought the Raleigh Tavern in 1767, he moved the family to his new business and rented out his former house and shop. Because Hay was heavily indebted when he died Elizabeth renounced the provisions he made



George Davenport House

for her in his will and claimed a widow's third instead. This calculated step—perhaps suggested by her relatives trained in the law—offered a more favorable settlement for her and her children and enabled Elizabeth to buy Lots 263 and 264 from Hay's executors. She owned the property until her death in 1787.

In February 1778 when she was forty-eight, Martha married printer Augustine Davis (died after 1818). There is no record of Martha's death but their marriage may have been short since Richmond newspapers mention the accidental drowning of young Augustine Davis, identified as the second son of the printer, in 1793, and the marriage of his daughter Maria in 1818. Where the Davises lived in Williamsburg from the time of their marriage until they moved to Richmond in the spring of 1780 is unknown.

Joseph, Jr., attended the College of William and Mary, went to England to be ordained as an Anglican clergyman in 1755, and became the minister for Charles Parish in lower York County in 1757. About 1760 he married Mary Hunter, daughter of merchant William Hunter and his wife Mary Ann of Elizabeth City County and stepsister of former Williamsburg printer William Hunter (died 1761). Joseph and Mary had three children: Mary (born by 1761), William (born 1763), and Elizabeth. Joseph, Jr., died in 1788 at age 56.

George became an attorney by 1757. He served as clerk of several committees of the House of Burgesses [Trade, Privileges and Elections, and Propositions], clerk of the Committee of Correspondence, and was cap-

tain of the Williamsburg militia. About 1758 he married Katherine (born by 1735, died 1771), daughter of Anne and Patrick Matthews, Yorktown butcher, constable, and jailer. George and Katherine had two children: Joseph Matthews (born 1758, died after 1779) and Anne (born 1760). By the mid-1760s George Davenport acquired property at the northeast corner of Francis and Waller Streets where his widow continued to live after his death in 1766.

Matthew was clearly well educated but whether he attended the College of William and Mary, apprenticed in the Secretary's Office, or was educated privately is not revealed in surviving records. After his father resigned from several posts, Matthew succeeded him as Town Clerk and Clerk of the Hustings Court (1762–1777) and as writing master at the College of William and Mary (1766–1772). In addition, Matthew served as Deputy Clerk of York County in 1773, Clerk of the Williamsburg Committee of Safety in 1775, and Clerk of the Visitors and Governors of the College (1769–1776). He repaired clocks and scientific instruments on the side, receiving £10 a year for cleaning and caring for the "College Apparatus," beginning in 1772. By 1762 Matthew married Frances (surname unknown) by whom he had two children: Margaret (died 1797) and James (alive in 1800). Matthew apparently lived with his father until Joseph's death when he received the family property by will. Matthew died in 1777, and his widow Frances occupied the property until she moved to Staunton when her daughter married John Coalter in 1795.

Judith married merchant John Greenhow

(born 1724, died 1787) about 1760. They had a son named Robert (born 1761, died 1840) and a daughter named Ann (born 1762). Judith, who died January 7, 1765, is the only member of the Davenport family known to have been buried in Bruton Parish Churchyard. During their marriage the Greenhows lived where Greenhow's House and Store have been reconstructed.

James, whose birth and death dates are unknown, was a student at the College of William and Mary in 1754. Little else is known about him except that his father bequeathed him £100. There are a number of references to persons by this name in eastern Virginia but none can be directly tied to Joseph Davenport's son.

Twins John Shank and Peachy were born about 1737. Little is known about John Shank except that he witnessed a deed in 1755 and is mentioned in his father's will. In 1767 Peachy purchased Lot 271 directly east of the Nicholson Street property owned by her brother Matthew and where she grew up. Five years later, when she married printer Alexander Purdie on December 31, 1772, William Rind's *Virginia Gazette* described Peachy as "a Lady amiable in her person, and of an accomplished understanding." Although Alexander Purdie and Peachy had no children, she became an instant step-



Alexander and Peachy Davenport Purdie (Dennis Watson and Cindy Gunther) attend a community event.

mother to James (age 6), Hugh (age 5), and Alexander (age 3 or 4) whose mother had died the previous spring. The Purdies lived where the Purdie House has been reconstructed adjoining the King's Arms Tavern. Sometime after Alexander Purdie died in 1779, Peachy married William Holt, a Williamsburg merchant, ship owner, and planter. Where Peachy lived after Purdie's death and before her remarriage is unknown since the couple sold her lot a year after their marriage. Several years after Holt's death in 1791, Peachy married E[lias?] Wills (died about 1798). Following the death of her third husband, Peachy moved to Richmond where she died in 1811.

The only thing known about Sarah, presumably the tenth and last child born to Joseph and Margaret Davenport, is that her name appears on the fly leaf of *Hugo Grotius de veritate Religionis Christianae* (Glasgow, 1745), a book that belonged to Joseph Davenport, Jr., in which he wrote the names and some birth dates for his parents and his siblings.

Although the records about the Davenport family are spotty, enough information survives to compare certain aspects of their lives with other early Virginians.

Courtship and Marriage

Letters to and from Margaret (called "Peggy") Davenport, daughter of Matthew and Frances Davenport, are the only examples of correspondence relating to young courtship members of the family that have come to light. Although Margaret's birth date is unknown she may have been about twenty when the letters were written in the early 1790s. She writes in a sprightly manner about balls, beaux, conversations in the churchyard, evening strolls, attending the theater, and weddings that is similar to letters written by young gentry women like Anne Blair twenty years earlier. Many of these accounts suggest that the young people were unchaperoned, which was not uncommon elsewhere in Virginia by the second half of the eighteenth century.

What is striking about the Davenport women is that those, for whom we know birth and marriage dates, married later than age 22, the average marriage age for most Virginia women. Judith was 24 when she married John Greenhow who was in his mid-30s. Elizabeth was about 28 when she mar-

ried widower Anthony Hay (age unknown). Peachy was about 35 when she married widower Alexander Purdie who was 43. Martha was 48 when she married Augustine Davis (age unknown). Elizabeth and Peachy both married widowers with young children. No portraits of these women survive. Were they, perhaps, amiable and accomplished but lacking in personal beauty? Were they less likely to attract husbands while young because Joseph was limited in the amount of money, slaves, or livestock he could offer as a marriage settlement? Or, were they, perhaps, more attractive marriage partners later in life because of the family's influence and community connections?

Those Davenport men whose marriage dates are known were generally between 25 and 30 at a time when most Virginia men married in their mid 20s. Joseph was probably in his mid 20s when he married Elizabeth by 1717. Joseph, Jr., was about 30 when he married Mary Hunter (age unknown). George was about 25 when he married Katherine Matthews who was in her early 20s. When Matthew, born in 1734, married Frances (surname and birth date unknown) is uncertain but it may have been as late as the early 1770s.

Later marriage ages limited both the length of their marriages and the number of children born to most Davenport couples. Joseph was the exception, having three children during his first marriage which lasted about ten years and ten children during his second approximately 22-year marriage. Joseph, Jr. and his wife only had three children during their more than 20-year marriage. George and Katherine had two children during their approximately 8-year marriage. Matthew and Frances also had two children. Elizabeth acquired one or possibly two stepchildren when she married at age 28, she bore seven children during the approximately twelve years she was married to Anthony Hay. It is not surprising that Martha, who married at age 48, did not have any children. Neither did Peachy, who married at about 35, but she assumed the responsibility of raising Alexander Purdie's three sons, who ranged in age from about 3 to age 6 at the time of their marriage which only lasted seven years. Judith bore two children during her approximately five-year marriage to John Greenhow.

It was not uncommon for Davenport fam-

ily members, especially the men, to remarry after the death of a spouse—typical behavior for colonial Virginians. Joseph had three wives but Joseph, Jr., George, and Matthew each had only one wife. Although Elizabeth did not remarry after Anthony Hay's death, he had been married previously. After Judith's death, John Greenhow married two more times. Peachy married three times: first to widower Alexander Purdie who had six children by his first wife, three of whom were alive when he married Peachy; second to merchant and James City planter William Holt who had at least four children by his previous wife, including a set of triplets born in 1775; and third to E[lias?] Wills about whom little is known. Clearly, few Davenport family members achieved the 20- to 30-year average length of marriages for Virginians at this time. But with their frequent remarriages they created multiple "blended" families of siblings and stepsiblings.

Birth and Infancy

While the record of births for Davenport family members is incomplete, it is possible to draw limited conclusions based on what information survives. The sample is too limited to draw conclusions about infant, or, for that matter, adult mortality because we don't have both birth and death dates for most of the family. But the experience of one spouse is worth mentioning. Matthew and Frances's daughter Margaret died as a result of childbirth. This was a severe blow to her husband John Coalter since his first wife, Margaret's friend Maria Rind, also died from the same cause. In both cases the babies died as well. Another missing factor about members of the Davenport family is the complete lack of references to any miscarriages or stillbirths, a grim fact of death for many families in early Virginia.

At a time when birth intervals averaged from 2 to 2½ years for free Virginians, the frequency of Margaret Davenport's eight pregnancies is unusual. Exact birth dates are only known for her first four children. Twins Elizabeth and Martha, born 5 March 1729/30, were followed less than two years later by Joseph, Jr., on 21 February 1731/32. His birth was followed thirteen months later by George's on 29 March 1733. Matthew was born about eighteen months later on 24 October 1734. Judith was born in 1736. Pre-

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Patrick Henry from a miniature by Thomas Sully.

Virginia's First "First Family"

by Mark Couvillon

Mark is a historical interpreter in the Department of Historic Buildings and has spent the last nineteen years researching Patrick Henry's life. He has written numerous articles on Henry, and is currently writing a biography on the personal life of the great orator.

On June 29, 1776, Patrick Henry was elected the first governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia by the fifth Virginia Convention. Before he could assume his duties, the forty-year-old Henry was taken ill with a "bilious fever" (malaria) and had to retire to Scotchtown, his home in Hanover County.

While Henry was home recuperating, work began to prepare the Governor's Palace for his arrival. Once the elegant home of the king's representative, the Palace had fallen into disarray after the flight of Lord Dunmore in June 1775 and was then being used as a military post. On July 24, 1776, Virginia's Privy Council (council of state) had ordered the commissioner of provisions to "remove himself and effects from the Palace" and "clean out and leave the houses in the same order in which he found them." The quartermaster was also ordered "to remove the Wagons, Horses, &c. from the Palace as soon

as possible." Since most of the Palace furniture had been removed or broken, the convention appropriated £1000 to purchase furniture for Henry's use. An inventory taken eighteen days after Henry's departure in 1779 lists a little more than four hundred standing household items in the building. Added to the few pieces Henry brought with him, these furnishings were certainly a far cry from the days of Lord Botetourt's administration.

By the middle of September Henry was well enough to assume his duties as governor. Traveling with him to Williamsburg were his sister Anne Christian, whose husband, William, was off fighting the Cherokees, and his sister Elizabeth, wife of Captain William Campbell (hero of King's Mountain). While at the Palace the two sisters took on the role of hostess for their brother. Henry's wife, Sarah Shelton Henry, granddaughter of printer William Parks, had died the previous year after a long illness.

Once things settled down, Henry brought some of his children to Williamsburg. The eldest was his married daughter, Martha, aged twenty-one. During her mother's illness she had taken charge of her father's household. Now at the Palace she resumed that role, caring not only for her siblings William and Anne, ages twelve and nine, but also her infant son, Patrick Henry Fontaine. Accompanying the children from Scotchtown was most likely Richard Dabney, their tutor. Missing were Henry's oldest son, John, who was serving with the Continental artillery, and the two younger children, Neddy and Betsey, ages five and seven, who were living with Henry's mother in Amherst County.

During Patrick Henry's second term as governor, he courted and married Dorothea Dandridge, the daughter of his wealthy Hanover neighbor and friend, Nathaniel West Dandridge. A lady of striking beauty and charm, Dorothea had attracted many suitors. Among those competing for her hand in marriage was a sailor by the name of John Paul Jones! Not wishing to create a fuss among the people over their wedding, Henry kept the announcement out of the newspapers. Slipping off quietly to Hanover County, the two were married on October 9, 1777.

Raised in a refined gentry home, Dolly made an excellent first lady. Besides her social skills, she brought to the marriage many important family connections. Her cousin Bartholomew Dandridge had been a

member of the Governor's Council and another cousin, William Aylett, was the deputy commissary general for the Commonwealth. Dorothea was also first cousin to Martha Washington. Through her father's side of the family, she was related to John West, president of the Virginia Council in 1635 and brother to Thomas West, Lord De La Warr. Dolly's mother, Dorothea Spotswood, was the daughter of Governor Alexander Spotswood, the first occupant of the Palace. Despite such attributes, Dorothea did not fall into a bed of roses upon her marriage. At age twenty-two, she found herself playing the role of wife, first lady, hostess, and stepmother to six children. Ten months after the wedding she gave birth to a daughter of her own. Named in honor of her grandmother, Dorothea Spotswood Henry was to be the last child born in the Palace but only the first of eleven for Dolly and Patrick.

Marriage seemed to revive Henry's spirits and soothe his grief over the loss of his first wife, but it did little to reverse his failing health. The pressures of being a wartime governor were tremendous. "From morning till night," Henry wrote Richard Henry Lee in 1777, "I have not a minute from business. . . . There are a thousand things to mind, to begin." A letter to Lee the following year saw little change: "I am really so harassed by the great load of Continental business that I am ready to sink under my burden—My strength will not surface." His strength did not suffice. During his three years as governor, Henry was absent from Williamsburg about one-sixth of the time due to illness and family concerns.

Life at the Palace was a happier time for the children. The bustle of town life was a pleasant change from the rural surroundings at Scotchtown. Yet at the Palace they still had plenty of acres on which to run wild. The children also had a loving environment. Adored by her husband, it wasn't long before Dolly felt welcome in the Henry family. Later correspondence shows a close bond being formed between Dolly and her stepchildren, particularly the girls. As a father Henry was far from the distant patriarchal

figure. He was said to be on "the most familiar footing" with his children, whom he treated as "companions and friends." His daughter Betsey recalled that while governor, he could be seen occasionally "riding horseback, at times carrying one of his children before and another behind." Where his position did not "require any show," she remarked, "He retained his simple tastes, often making his own fire." A deeply religious man, Henry "discourage[d] visiting and the receiving of visits, on the part of his family" on the Sabbath, preferring to spend the day in prayer and meditation.

While governor Patrick Henry strove to maintain a dignified air at the Palace. Some of Virginia's gentry believed he was going to make a mockery out of that once-exalted position and accused Henry of "being a coarse and common man, and utterly destitute of dignity." Determined "to show them that they were mistaken," he "assumed a Dignity of

Demeanor which commanded the Admiration of all." During his tenure as governor, Henry "seldom appeared in the streets of Williamsburg, and never without a scarlet cloak, black clothes, and a dressed wig." (This attire can be seen in Thomas Sully's portrait of Henry, which hangs in the Capitol.) We also find the governor purchasing china, a sugar bowl, carpet, and other items, including a harpsichord, for the Palace. The latter, bought shortly after his marriage, was probably more for the enter-

tainment of his new wife and children than for social occasions.

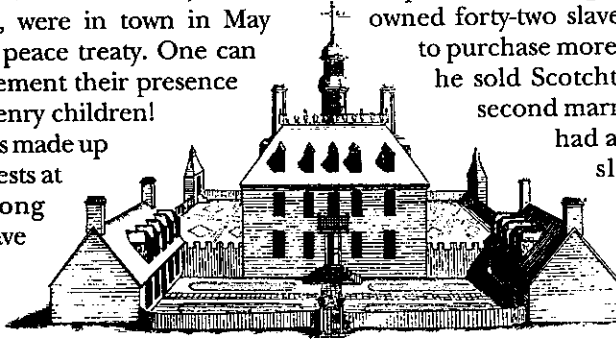
During his fourth and fifth terms as governor, the Henrys resided in Chesterfield County near the new capital city of Richmond, where they were known to have "lived as genteelly" and "entertained as much company" as any of the former royal governors. But during the bleak war years of Henry's first three terms, there was little cause for celebration. When asked to participate in an elaborate ceremony for Washington's birthday in 1779, Henry declined, for, as he wrote, he "could not think of rejoicing at a time when our country was engaged in war." This same attitude had kept him from having an elaborate public wed-



Dorothea Spotswood Dandridge, (Dolly's mother) attributed to Charles Bridges.

ding. As war governor he did receive a number of foreign officers and dignitaries at the Palace. Perhaps the most colorful of his guests were forty Cherokees, including Chiefs Little Carpenter and Oucanastota, who, having been defeated by Henry's brother-in-law, Colonel William Christian, were in town in May 1777 to finalize a peace treaty. One can imagine the excitement their presence created for the Henry children!

Family members made up the majority of guests at the Palace. Among those known to have visited were Dorothea's mother, her cousin Martha Washington, and Henry's brother William and son-in-law John Fontaine, both officers in the militia. During one of William's visits, Henry had a chance to pull a prank on his unsuspecting brother. Knowing that William didn't wear stockings with his boots, Henry ordered one of his slaves to replace the boots with a pair of slippers. Being in the company of



other guests, the major protested and even put up a gallant struggle, but to no avail. In a few minutes a pair of bare feet appeared, filling the whole room with laughter, much to William's mortification and embarrassment.

Upon his marriage to Dorothea, Henry owned forty-two slaves, and he continued to purchase more while in office. When he sold Scotchtown shortly after his second marriage, Henry may have had as many as seventy-five slaves, thirty-three horses, and seventy-nine head of cattle at the Palace before his departure in 1779.

After his third term, Henry and his family packed up their belongings and headed 220 miles west to their new home, Leatherwood, near present-day Martinsville. The new family "mansion" was a simple two-room brick structure with a basement on the ground level. It was a far cry from the Governor's Palace, yet perhaps more fitting for the "man of the people." ■

The Coins of Colonial America

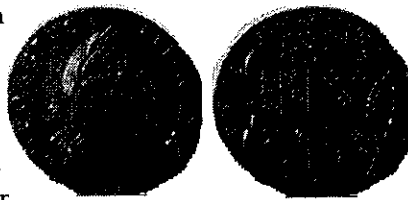
The opening exhibit at the new John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Library is entitled "The Coins of Colonial America: World Trade Coins of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries." It will provide viewers an opportunity to see a collection outstanding in both diversity and quality rarely on view outside numismatic and museum circles. The majority of the coins displayed were generously donated to the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Lasser of Scarsdale, N.Y., who also contributed a most exceptional colonial paper currency collection to the Foundation (see *the interpreter*, August 1995). Other coins in the exhibition were excavated over the last sixty years from sites around the Historic Area.

The exhibit highlights the use of coins in world trade and the impact of world trade on the types and uses of coins in Williamsburg. The first case examines the Latin American origins of much of the silver that was

minted into coins and used the world over. The second case looks at how competing European powers used not only their own coinage but relied on Spanish gold and silver pieces as the standard in international trade. The third case displays the coins most prevalent in colonial Virginia as seen in the pages of the *Virginia Almanack* and from excavated sites in Williamsburg. Finally, the exhibit concludes by showing Mr. Greenhow, a Williamsburg merchant, using the tools of the trade to count his money.

The exhibit will be on display for one year. It will be accompanied by a catalog written by Joe Lasser, Bill Pittman (Department of Archaeology), Gail Greve (Special Collections, Library), and John Caramia (Department of Historic Trades, Presentations and Tours). A lecture by Joe Lasser on the use of coinage in world trade is planned for fall 1997. If you have questions about the exhibit, please call Gail Greve (8521), Bill Pittman (7332), or John Caramia (7493). ■

Coins courtesy of the John D. Rockefeller Library, Colonial Williamsburg.



Virginia Halfpenny

James Geddy Revisited: Re-examining the Facts

by Patricia Gibbs

Shifting the interpretive focus to fold the Redefining Family story line into the Becoming Americans theme calls for asking new questions and taking a fresh look at known evidence. The Geddy House staff has emphasized the relationship between family and work for more than a decade. As they began to consider program ideas that focused more closely on family members—especially the children—it became important to determine their likely birth order and approximate birthdates.

The research produced a couple of surprises, including the likelihood that James Geddy, Jr., had one more wife than was known previously. When Kevin Kelly researched the Geddy family (in the mid-1980s), he also discovered a second wife. An examination of the tombstone for Elizabeth Geddy at Blandford Church in Dinwiddie County confirmed she was in her sixty-fifth year when she died on December 7, 1799. Elizabeth had been married to James Geddy for upwards of 17 [not 47] years. This led Kelly to assume that Geddy's wife Elizabeth died shortly after the couple moved from Williamsburg in 1777 and that he married another woman—named Elizabeth—in 1782.

My assumption that Geddy probably married in 1752, the year he reached his majority, or the next year is based on the likelihood that Anne (Nancy) Geddy was in her mid-teens when a young man published a love poem about her in the *Virginia Gazette* in December 1768. There is approximately an eleven-year gap between the birth of Anne and James III (born about 1764). This suggests that Anne's mother may not have been the mother of James Geddy, Jr.'s, other four children born between the mid-1760s and the early 1770s. While no evidence has come to light to identify Anne's mother, it is possible that she died sometime after Anne's birth and that several years later Geddy married Elizabeth, who is believed to have been the sister of engraver William Waddell. While not impossible, it is rather unlikely that a couple had an eleven-year gap between births followed by four additional births at approximately two-year intervals.

A closer look at James Geddy, Jr.'s immediate family and the slaves he owned called into question several statements in his biography in the Redefining Family Resource Book. Anne Willis (museum educator in the Department of Interpretive Education and Support) revised the biography and *the interpreter* staff agreed to include the updated information in this issue.



James Geddy House



Grandma Geddy (Ruth Henretty) greets twentieth-century Geddy family members on a recent visit to the house.

Revised Biography of James Geddy, Jr.

James Geddy, Jr., was probably born in 1731 either in Virginia or Scotland and died on May 12, 1807, in Petersburg, Va. Geddy was a husband, father, and master of slaves as well as a prosperous silversmith.

Geddy's parents were James and Anne Geddy. It is not known when James Geddy, Sr., migrated from Scotland. The earliest date when he can be located in Williamsburg is 1733. There were eight children in the family: sons William and David, who were older than James, Jr., and John, who was younger; and daughters Elizabeth, Anne, Mary, and Sarah. James Geddy, Sr., was a smith and founder in Williamsburg. He probably operated his shop on the Geddy property where the family was living by 1738.

James Geddy, Sr., died in August 1744, leaving his wife Anne (d. by 1787) a widow with eight young children. It is not known if young James received any formal education, but he had access to his father's small library and apparently enjoyed music.

James, Jr.'s, older brothers David and William advertised in 1751 that they would carry on the gunsmith, cutler, and founder trade in their shop "near the Church." James, Jr., who was just thirteen when his father died, and his younger brother, John, may have been apprenticed to Samuel Galt, who

practiced the trades of jewelry making, watch repairing, and silversmithing on the Geddy property in the 1750s. Young James reached his majority in 1752. There is no evidence that he owned a shop until 1760, when he bought Lot 161 from his mother.

Geddy probably married in 1752, but the name of his first wife is unknown, and their daughter Anne was born about 1753. Since the next child was not born until about 1764, it is unlikely that Anne's mother was also the mother of James Geddy, Jr.'s, other four children, James (III), Mary, William Waddill, and Elizabeth. Elizabeth, thought to be the sister of engraver William Waddill, probably was Geddy's second wife and the mother of his four children born between the mid-1760s and the early 1770s.¹

The first reference to slaves belonging to James Geddy, Jr., is the notation in the Bruton Parish Church register that Christopher, the son of Geddy's slave Grace, was baptized July 6, 1766. In the fall of 1768, Geddy purchased Nanny and her daughter Sukey from the estate of Governor Francis Fauquier for £51.05.00 at a twenty-five percent reduction of their appraised value of £65. (Fauquier made provisions in his will for his slaves to chose their next masters, granting their purchaser a twenty-five percent reduction of the slaves' market value.) Because Sukey

died shortly afterward, £10 was deducted from the purchase price.

In October 1770, Geddy advertised "a likely Negro Wench about eighteen years old, with a child, a boy" for sale. Although it has been assumed that this reference is to Grace and her son, Christopher, it is unlikely because Grace would have been only fourteen when Christopher was born in 1766.

In both 1774 and 1777, Geddy was listed as having nine tithables in Bruton Parish. Although his sons were probably too young to be tithable, the number included any apprentices, journeymen, and slaves living on his property.

The family lived on the Geddy property where James, Jr., William, and David operated their businesses until at least 1777. James Geddy, Jr., was active in the public life of Williamsburg before the Revolution, serving as a member of the Common Council (1767) and the Committee of Safety (1775).

By 1778 (before Richmond became the new capital) Geddy had sold his Williamsburg house and lot to Robert Jackson and moved his family to Dinwiddie County where they settled on a 400-acre tract of land. In 1782, the personal property tax list for Dinwiddie County included ten slaves over sixteen years of age, among them Nanny and Grace, and six slaves under sixteen. Geddy moved to Petersburg in 1783, where

he operated a silversmith shop until 1806. He also served as a vestryman, common councilman, and alderman there.

All of the Geddy children married. Anne married Mr. John Brown, a clerk in the Secretary's office (in 1772). They lived in Williamsburg until Brown became clerk of Mecklenburg County in 1775. In the mid-1780s, the Browns moved to Richmond. Mary married William Prentis, a printer and a prominent citizen of Petersburg, in 1789. James (III) married Euphron Armistead the same year. In 1796, William Waddill, a silversmith, married Elizabeth Prentis, who was probably related to but not the sister of William Prentis. Elizabeth married John Taliaferro by 1803. Mary, James (III), and Elizabeth all lived in Petersburg on property that was given to them by their father, James Geddy, Jr.

It is likely that Elizabeth (Waddill?) Geddy had died in Dinwiddie County by the early 1780s. James, Jr., apparently married another woman, also named Elizabeth, in 1782. Her tombstone describes her as "Mrs. Elizabeth Geddy who departed this life December the 7th 1799 in the 65th Year of her age . . . so worthy a Partner upwards of 17 years."² After the death of his probable third wife, James Geddy married Jane Bradley on July 10, 1804.³ Geddy died in Petersburg in 1807, having "attained the 76th year of his age."⁴ ■

ENDNOTES

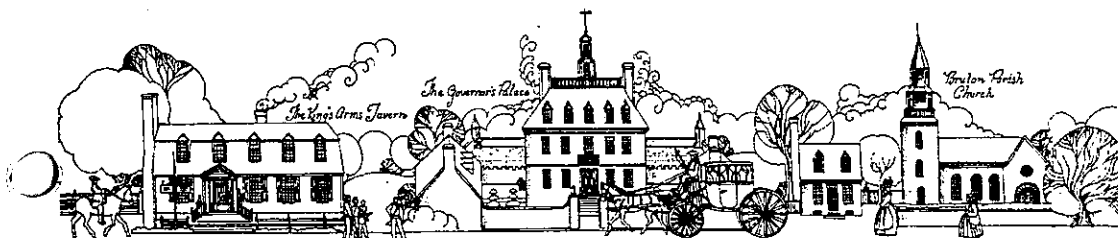
1. Anne's birthdate (ca. 1753) is based on the assumption that she was about fifteen when an admiring young man's poem about her was published in the *Virginia Gazette* in December 1768. James's assumed birthdate (ca. 1764) is based on the fact that he was at least twenty-one when he and his father voted at a Petersburg town meeting in 1786. Mary's birth (April 16, 1766) and the names of her parents were recorded in the Bruton Parish register. Assumed birthdates for William Waddell

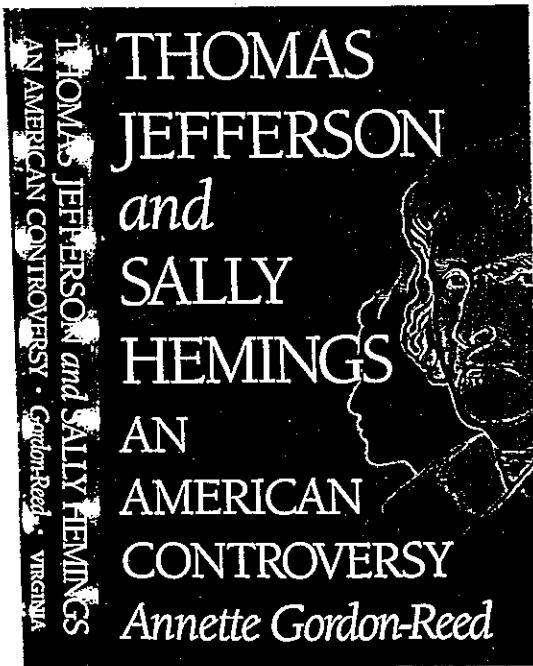
(ca. 1768) and Elizabeth (ca. 1770) are based on the fact that married white women often bore children about two years apart.

2. Tombstone at Blandford Church, Dinwiddie Co.

3. Petersburg Hustings Court, Deed Book 3, pp. 180-181 and 202; Petersburg Marriage Register, p. 445.

4. *Petersburg Intelligencer*, May 15, 1807.





Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy

by Annette Gordon-Reed

A Book Review by Kevin P. Kelly

Kevin is a historian in the Department of Historical Research.

Annette Gordon-Reed has not written a typical history. She neither narrates a love story between Jefferson and Hemings nor explores the topic of eighteenth-century sexuality and race. Rather, she examines how Jefferson scholars—especially those who vigorously deny the possibility of a sexual relationship between Tom and Sally—reached their conclusions. An attorney, the author is keenly aware that how evidence is presented can foreclose a case and make a wished-for outcome a foregone conclusion. Historians are not to do this, of course, but Gordon-Reed convincingly demonstrates that in their rush to defend Jefferson's honor, Dumas Malone, Virginius Dabney, John C. Miller, and Douglass Adair, among others, routinely overlooked, downplayed, and even distorted

evidence that supported the possibility that Jefferson was the father of Sally Hemings' children. Gordon-Reed's intent is to establish the creditability of this evidence, especially that given by Madison Hemings, and she does.

Madison Hemings's memoir was published in the *Pike County (Ohio) Republican* in 1873. Until then, the story that Jefferson was the father of Sally Hemings's children rested primarily on James Callender's published allegation in 1802. Madison's new and more direct statement that he was Jefferson's son was little noted until it was rediscovered in the 1950s. Except for Fawn Brodie, most Jefferson scholars dismissed his testimony. But they did so for reasons that had little to do with the merits of what Madison said. They rejected his story because Madison Hemings was a pawn in the hands of the partisan republican who interviewed him (Dumas Malone), he pathetically wished for fame or notoriety (John C. Miller and Andrew Burstein), or he was too ignorant to have known all he claimed to have known (Virginius Dabney and Willard S. Randall). Even if a historian believed Madison was sincere, it was only because he naively believed his mother's "fictitious story" and "lies" (Douglass Adair). As Gordon-Reed clearly demonstrates, Madison Hemings was a victim of the scholars' racial prejudices; black men, after all, were either weak-willed, feeble-minded, or devious. Consequently, nothing they said could be trusted.

It was this racist, ad hominem attack in place of a close reading of the evidence that inspired Gordon-Reed to reopen the investigation of Thomas Jefferson's and Sally Hemings's relationship. First, she shows there is support for the validity of Madison Hemings's evidence. For example, it was well known in the Chillicothe, Ohio, of the 1840s, where both Madison and his brother Eston were living, that Thomas Jefferson was probably Eston's father. Therefore, Madison's claim did not result from the instigation of his interviewer. The use of the French word for pregnancy in Hemings's narrative, rather than being proof that the memoir could not be the product of an illiterate black man, may well have been a word he was taught by his mother, who was accused of getting a "French education" while living in Paris. Furthermore, many, if not most, events reported

continued on page 17

Probably James was the next child, if the order listed on the fly leaf of one of James, Jr.'s books is accurate, but James's birth date is unknown. Twins John Shank and Peachy were born about 1737 but that date is only approximate. The date of Joseph and Margaret's last child, named Sarah, is also unknown. Considering the frequency of her pregnancies, it is remarkable that Margaret lived until 1751.

While George and Katherine Davenport are known to have had only two children during their approximately eight-year marriage, the spacing of them is average: Joseph Matthews (born November 1758) and Anne (born in 1760) were born about two years apart. Judith and John Greenhow's children were born closer together than was typical. Robert and Ann were born about a year apart.

Although lactation tended to delay conception it was not a foolproof means of birth control. At this period white women generally breastfed their children for about a year. Since Margaret Davenport and Judith Greenhow bore children only about a year apart, it is possible that they employed wet nurses, an uncommon practice for women in eighteenth-century Virginia unless their health required it. While feeding vessels were known, their use was both uncommon and risky since the principles of sterilization were unknown.

Naming Patterns

The Davenports followed naming patterns that were similar to ones used by other Virginians of their day. Children were often named for their parents or grandparents. The name Joseph, for instance, is repeated in at least three generations. If a child who bore one name died young, it was not uncommon to give their name to the next child of the same sex. Combining the mother's maiden name with a name common in the father's family also occurred. For example, George and Katherine (née Matthews) named their son Joseph Matthews Davenport. We have no way of knowing why they chose unusual names like Peachy and John Shank.

Education

The Davenports, both male and female, were especially well educated for middling Virginians of their day. As far as can be de-

termined, all members of the family were literate. Some, including Joseph Davenport and his sons, Joseph, Jr., and James, attended the College of William and Mary. It is likely that others, including Bedford, Matthew, and possibly George served as clerk apprentices in the Secretary's Office. As was customary at the time, the girls were educated at home.



One of Joseph Davenport's granddaughters received an unusual legacy when her uncle, *Virginia Gazette* printer William Hunter (died 1761) left all his books and pamphlets to his young niece Mary, the daughter of Joseph and Mary Davenport. Although the Davenports did not own large numbers of slaves, several—including Joseph's widow, George, and Matthew—sent young slave children to the Bray School.

Religion

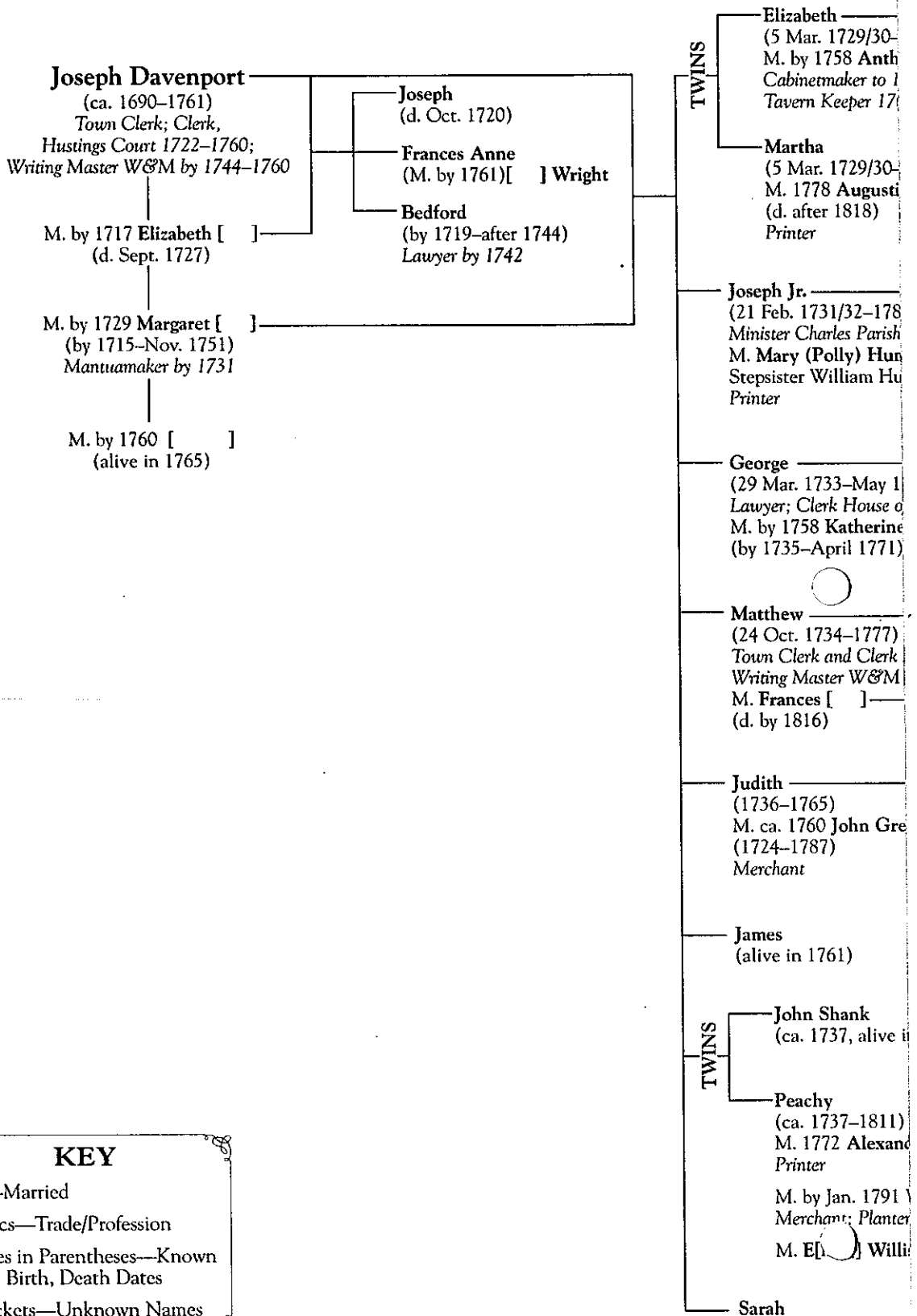
The public positions held by Joseph, Bedford, George, and Matthew Davenport required them to be practicing Anglicans. Joseph, Jr., served as minister of Charles Parish from 1757 until his death in 1788. Joseph, George, Matthew, and Martha had slaves baptized at Bruton Parish Church. Although a practicing Anglican, George Davenport allowed "Protestant Dissenters of the Presbyterian denomination" to make use of a building on his lot for occasional worship when a licensed Presbyterian minister came to Williamsburg.

Coping with the Death of a Spouse

When left with young children, several men in the family—including Joseph Davenport after the death of his first wife Elizabeth and John Greenhow after the death of Judith—remarried. Joseph's daughters Eliza-

FAMILY OF JOSEPH DAVENPORT

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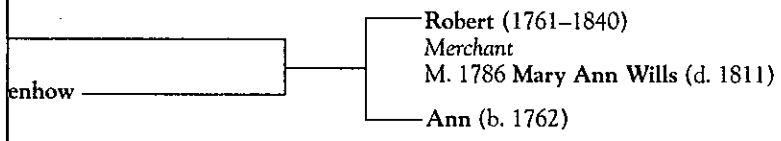
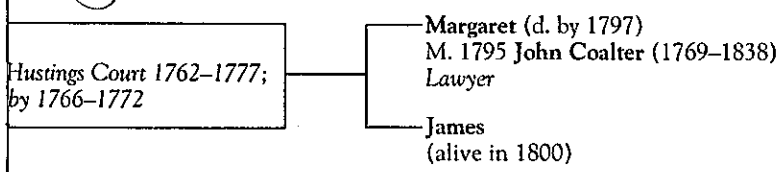
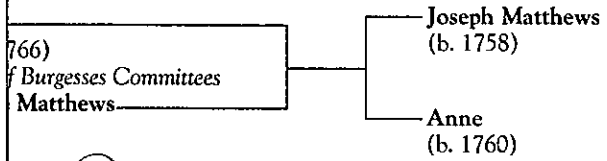
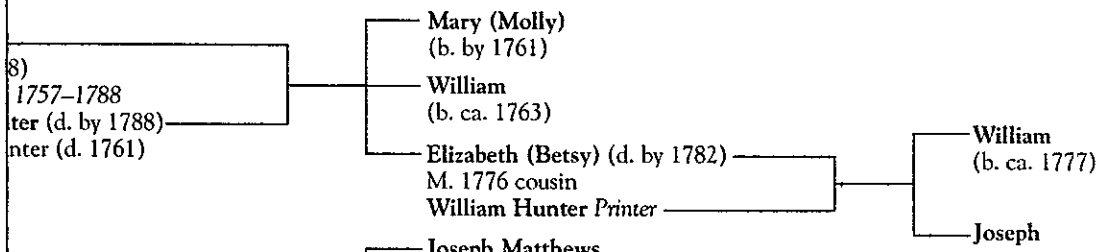
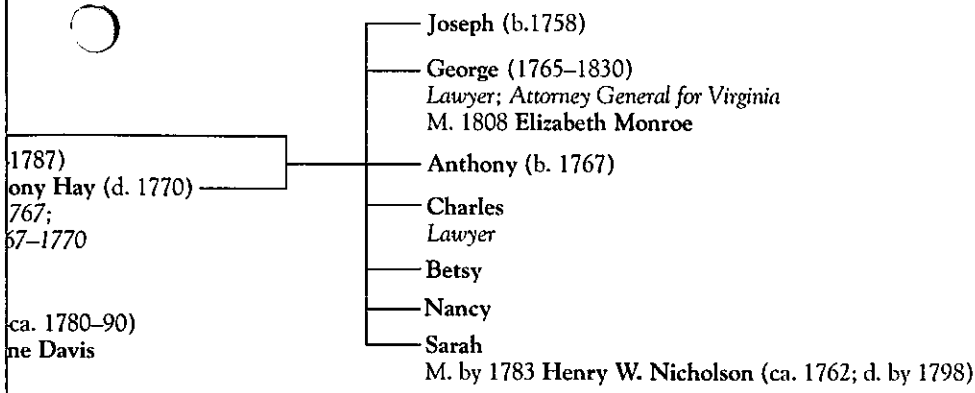
KEY

M—Married

Italics—Trade/Profession

Dates in Parentheses—Known
Birth, Death Dates

Brackets—Unknown Names



h 1761)

er Purdie (by 1743-1779)

William Holt (by 1737-1791)

(d. ca. 1798)

beth and Peachy both married widowers whose wives had died less than a year earlier. Peachy also married two more times but we do not know how soon these remarriages occurred. Widows Katherine and Frances turned to ways similar to ones practiced by other Virginia women of their day. Katherine took in boarders for several years until poor health, first of her mother and later of herself, prevented her following that avenue to make ends meet.

Matthew's widow Frances operated a boarding school in the family's dwelling from the mid 1780s into the 1790s. In 1784 and 1785 Humphrey Harwood paid Mrs. Davenport for "1 Years Schooling," presumably for his daughter. St. George Tucker sent his daughter Frances Bland to be educated by Mrs. Davenport after the Tucker family's tutor, John Coalter, moved to Staunton and set up his law practice in 1790. Dr. John Galt made professional visits to a "Miss Randolph" at Mrs. Davenports in 1791 and to "Miss McKensie" and "Miss King" in 1794. Whether Frances Davenport's school had a formal name or whether she tutored and boarded young ladies on an informal basis is unknown.

Did the Davenport's Fit the Mold of the "New American Family"?

Unfortunately, too few personal papers survive to answer that question with confidence. The Davenports clearly valued education but whether they began to raise their children in a more nurturing way after about 1750 is unknown. One remarkable document, Margaret Davenport Coalter's May 10, 1795, letter to her husband of about three months, gives ample evidence that this young woman frankly expressed her thoughts in ways that appear atypical for young women of her day, most of whom were raised to

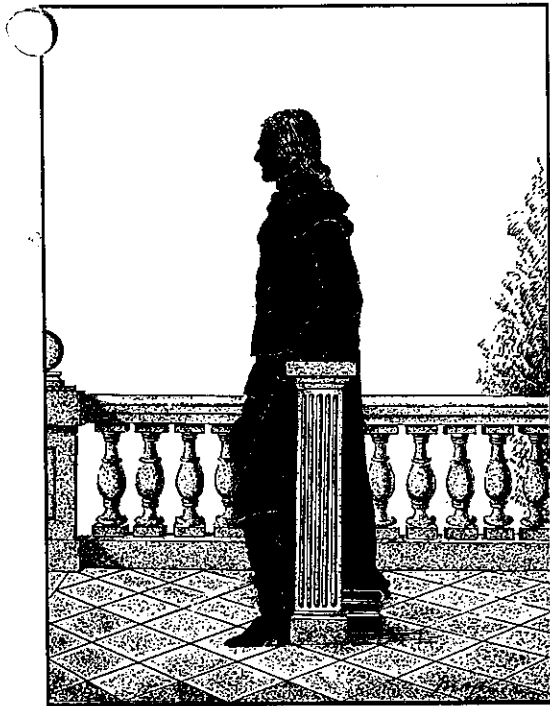
honor and obey their husbands.

You know what to expect from *me*, as you have seen my character of a good wife.—Suppose I tell you now, what *I*, in *my* turn, expect, and how you may best please me and make me happy.—Thus then I begin—Let me ever have the sweet consciousness of knowing myself the best beloved of your heart—I do not always require a *lover's* attention—that wou'd be impossible, but let it never appear by your conduct that I am indifferent to you. That I may never suspect a diminution of your affection, the following things are necessary—You must never, when I say or do anything you do not entirely approve, brood over it in silent dissatisfaction, but always tell me candidly of it . . . And now for some other articles which regard not to *your affection* for me, but point more generally to your conduct as a husband. When I wish to consult with you on any matter I think of importance, or ever put a serious question to you, if you should not be in a humour to give me yr. attention, *tell* me immediately, and I will defer it until some other time, but never answer carelessly as if what I asked was a matter of no consequence. Give me a *decisive* reply if in yr. power, if not, "tell me the reason why."

. . . In trifles, *be* trifling, to trifle agreeably is sometimes very pleasing, but in everything of moment be ardent, firm and decisive. *All* this I think you now are, continue but so, and I shall love you almost *too* much. I shall be the happiest of human being's and daily thank the Gracious power that preserved me for you. . .

[Margaret Davenport Coalter to John Coalter, May 10, 1795 (written about three months after their marriage). Brown, Coalter, Tucker Papers. Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary] ■





THOMAS JEFFERSON

by Madison can be corroborated. (Unfortunately, one corroborator, Israel Jefferson, had been a slave of Thomas Jefferson.) The errors Madison made were more in the details than in the substance of what he recalled. For example, while all four of Sally's children obtained their freedom, only two, not four, as Madison said, were freed in Jefferson's will. Gordon-Reed does not argue the truth of Madison's claim, but she does say that despite minor inconsistencies, his evidence is credible and warrants being taken seriously.

Gordon-Reed considers another principal player in the story of Tom and Sally, James Callender, to see how he has fared at the hands of Jefferson's defenders. Callender, who first published the rumor, is an easy target for those who believe Jefferson was incapable of miscegenation. They point out that Callender, a newspaper publisher given to character assassination, had reason to slander Jefferson. Jefferson had turned a deaf ear to his request to be appointed the postmaster of Richmond, Virginia. Many historians insist he invented the "dusky Sally" story out of revenge. Instead, Gordon-Reed suggests Callender may have published the rumor when he heard it because, as a racist, he was outraged that Jefferson consorted with a black woman.

A purported error historians have used to dismiss Callender's account was his claim that the first child of the Jefferson-Hemings liaison, "President Tom," was born between 1790 and 1792. Jefferson defenders are quick to point out that neither "Tom's" birth nor his death is recorded in Jefferson's *Farm Book*. Gordon-Reed counters that the Tom who is mentioned as being ill in a letter Martha Jefferson Randolph wrote to Jefferson in 1797 could have been the son Callender named. Tom's illness is mentioned in the same sentence where Martha reported the death of Harriet, Sally's first daughter. Gordon-Reed also notes that although only two of Sally's children were still alive in 1802, the five children Callender said she bore was correct if the number includes the two known to have died young, as well as "Tom," who Madison Hemings said also died young. Gordon-Reed concludes Callender's report of the rumor does not make it true, but, vile though he was, neither does his report necessarily make it false.

The author also shows how historians set on defending Jefferson at all costs willingly read more into the evidence than it can support. For example, both Dumas Malone and John C. Miller state Jefferson "categorically" denied he was the father of Sally Hemings's children in a 1805 letter to Attorney General Levi Lincoln. A copy went to Robert Smith, Secretary of the Navy. Rumors of Jefferson's several indecent advances toward John Walker's wife circulated in New England earlier that year, as did reports of other reputed scandals, including his "affair" with Sally Hemings. In the spring of 1805, John Walker demanded that Jefferson exonerate his wife of all blame or he would seek satisfaction on a field of honor. Jefferson's letter was prompted, in part, by Walker's request and to avoid a duel. Neither Jefferson's letter to Lincoln nor the copy to Smith has been found, however. Only a cover letter to the lost letter survives. In it, Jefferson admitted he was guilty of "one of the charges"—that when he was single, he committed an improper advance to Mrs. Walker. Jefferson added, "It is the only one founded in truth among all their allegations against me." Gordon-Reed points out that nowhere in the cover letter does Jefferson say that one of the "allegations" was his rumored affair with Sally Hemings. She suggests the "allegations" may have been that

on numerous occasions Jefferson made unwanted advances to Mrs. Walker. After all, the letter was written to restore her reputation and honor. She correctly concludes that in the absence of the actual letters to Lincoln and Smith, no historian can know with certainty that Jefferson "categorically" denied the Sally Hemings allegation.

Gordon-Reed finds the double standard applied to evidence that supports their position one of the most troubling aspects of how some historians have misused evidence. Nearly all those who have studied this issue agree that the father of Sally Hemings's children was white. Further, they accept the fact that these children bore a remarkable resemblance to Thomas Jefferson. If Jefferson was not the father, then someone closely related to him must have been. The only candidates are Peter Carr (b. 1770) or Samuel Carr (b. 1771), who were the sons of Jefferson's sister Martha, the wife of Dabney Carr. But their names entered the historical record as hearsay. In 1858, Ellen Wayles Coolidge (b. 1796) wrote her husband about a conversation she had

with her brother, Thomas Jefferson Randolph (b. 1792) about "dusky Sally's" children at Monticello. Randolph told his sister he had overheard Peter Carr laughingly say that "the old gentleman had to bear the blame of his and Sam's misdeeds." In 1868, Henry S. Randall, an early biographer of Jefferson, wrote of his conversation with Thomas Jefferson Randolph about the Sally Hemings story. After telling Randall why some might think the story true (one of Sally Hemings's sons resembled Jefferson so closely that he could be mistaken for him), Randolph recalled how after reading a slanderous account of the rumored affair, he confronted Peter Carr and forced him to confess tearfully, "arnt you [Sam] and I a couple of _____ pretty fellows to bring this disgrace on poor old uncle. . . ." Randolph's account was partially corroborated by the published memoir of Edmund Bacon, a former overseer at Monticello. He related that "she [Harriet] was not his [Jefferson's] daughter;

she was "_____'"s daughter. I know that. I have seen him come out of her mother room many a morning . . ." The deleted name was presumably that of a Carr.

Douglass Adair believed T. J. Randolph's account to be completely trustworthy because it was strongly supported by Bacon. Unlike Sally Hemings, who Adair believed lied about conceiving a child in Paris, he thought Randolph had made no such misstatements. However, Gordon-Reed points to several problems in Randolph's statement that should have called it into question were it being judged by the standard Adair and others used in assessing Madison Hemings's memoir. First, it is unclear which of the Carr brothers was Sally's lover. Ellen Coolidge stated it was the "general impression" that Samuel Carr was the father of all of Sally

Hemings's children. Yet Henry Randall said T. J. Randolph told him that Sally Hemings was Peter Carr's mistress. Furthermore, Randolph gave two different accounts of how he found out about the Carrs' involvement with Sally. Gordon-Reed also points out that

❦

If anything can demonstrate that the issue of race in this country is not necessarily about biology or genetics, but is more a social and cultural construction, the story of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings does. So who is black? Who is white? The answer seems to depend on who we want—or need—them to be.

❦

Edmund Bacon could not have had direct knowledge of who Harriet Hemings's father was because she was conceived six years before Bacon became Monticello's overseer. Finally, Randall reports Randolph told him that during the period when Sally's children were born (the 1790s and the early 1800s) he was in charge of distributing supplies to the slaves at Monticello and saw nothing that led him to suspect any special familiarity between Jefferson and Sally Hemings. If Randall's memory of this conversation was accurate, then, as Gordon-Reed points out, Randolph was guilty of twisting the truth because he was a child when most of Sally's children were born. Randolph did not become Jefferson's steward until 1814, six years after Sally's last child was born. Lesser mistakes and problems in Madison Hemings's statement were used to discredit it and him thoroughly.

Although T. J. Randolph denied that Sally Hemings and her children received special

treatment, Gordon-Reed presents evidence that they did. For example, after the birth of one of Sally's children, Jefferson had a young girl move into Sally's quarter to help care for the infant; the Hemings children lived with their mother longer before being put to work than others at Monticello; and none of Sally's sons endured the hard work of the nailery as slave boys at Monticello usually did. Finally, and most importantly for Gordon-Reed, all Sally's children were freed or allowed to go free shortly after they turned twenty one; Beverley simply walked away and was not pursued; Harriet, the only female slave Jefferson ever freed, was given money and assistance when she left; and Madison and Eston were freed in a codicil to Jefferson's last will. This was true of no other slave mother at Monticello. Whether or not Jefferson promised Sally Hemings he would free her children when they came of age, as Madison reported, that is what he did.

Gordon-Reed notes that she did not intend to prove that Jefferson was the father of Sally Hemings's children because the surviving documentary evidence is inadequate. However, much of her book is devoted to presenting alternate scenarios that explore why Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings could have loved each other and had children together. Jefferson did promise his dying wife, Martha, that he would not remarry, although he did so to reassure Martha that her children would not have to suffer under a stepmother. Did such a promise include a pledge of life-long celibacy, Gordon-Reed asks? She also asks why is it impossible to believe a healthy man in his forties might be physically attracted to a beautiful young woman, especially if the young Sally, who was Martha Jefferson's half-sister, reminded Jefferson of his wife? She also speculates that Sally may have been a willing partner because she expected such attention. After all, Sally's mother, Elizabeth Hemings, was her father's mistress. Having pursued the ways in which it is possible to believe Thomas and Sally could have loved each other, it is not surprising that, despite her best efforts to remain neutral, Gordon-Reed believes she has presented strong circumstantial, perhaps even presumptive, evidence that Thomas Jefferson was the father of Sally Hemings's children.

For Gordon-Reed, the special treatment of Sally Hemings's children, especially that they were freed when of age, is part of this

strong evidence, which is strengthened when the circumstances surrounding the births of her children is considered. The key fact is that Jefferson was at Monticello nine months before the birth of all of Sally Hemings's children. This is also true of an unnamed child born in early December 1799 that very likely was Sally's. Furthermore, four of her children were conceived very shortly after Jefferson arrived home. Finally, Gordon-Reed finds it telling that Sally Hemings conceived her children only when Jefferson was at Monticello and never gave birth to a child conceived when he was away. Although she admits Jefferson's presence at the time of the children's conception is not conclusive proof he was their father, it is proof that Jefferson had the opportunity to be. She asks a telling question; If Peter Carr, who had easy access to Monticello even when Jefferson was away for months at a time, was Sally Hemings's passionate lover, why did she never give birth to a child conceived during Jefferson's absence? Until Peter or Samuel Carr is shown to have had an equal opportunity to have fathered Sally's children, it is hard to explain away Jefferson's presence at their conception as mere coincidence.

Gordon-Reed's interpretation has its faults. She approaches the issue as a lawyer, and her book reads like a well-written legal brief. She builds her case carefully using reasonable inferences, logic, and counter-arguments and objections to buttress possible weaknesses. Unfortunately, this approach lacks a forceful narrative flow, and because she chose to examine each of the principal individuals involved separately, evidence explored in early chapters is frequently reintroduced in later ones. The reader can avoid the repetition by skipping forward to chapter six, "Summary of the Evidence," but he or she would miss a fascinating dissection of the flawed methods of some of the best-known Jefferson scholars. Even if one would like to defend them as a product of their pre-civil rights era, that hardly excuses some of the ways they characterized the Hemingses. Their words are embarrassing today. Gordon-Reed may read more malice into their work than was intended, but she is correct that on this issue far too many historians set out to "prove" what they wanted to be true.

Gordon-Reed occasionally falls into the same traps. Shortly after Madison's interview was published in March 1873, a rival newspa-

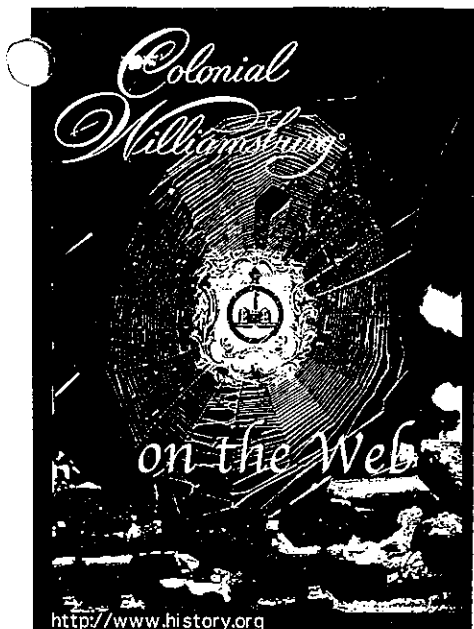
per editor, John A. Jones of the *Waverly Watchman*, labeled the story about Madison's father as false in overtly racist terms. Malone and Dabney used Jones's editorial to show that the veracity of Hemings's memoir was questioned from the start. Gordon-Reed criticizes Malone and Dabney for accepting Jones's statement without exploring his history of racial prejudice, which might have tainted his remarks. She then dismisses Jones as someone who "knew nothing of Madison Hemings" and "apparently did not try to learn anything." But she, too, failed to probe deeply enough. Jones may not have known Madison, but it is possible that he could have. By 1873, Madison Hemings and his family had lived only six or seven miles northwest of Waverly for several years, and Madison said he had even worked there. This is a minor point, but when one sets out to question the methods of other historians closely, such lapses become fair game for criticism.

Gordon-Reed's modern sensibilities may have betrayed her in one other respect. She rightly bristles at Garry Wills's brutal charge that Sally Hemings was an "obliging prostitute," a crude, unsupported characterization. Yet, time and again, she speaks of the possible relationship between Tom and Sally as a thirty-eight-year-long love affair. She points out that while lust may initiate a sexual relationship, it can not sustain it, nor can mere convenience. She seems to believe the possibility that Tom and Sally had at least six children between 1790 and 1808 had to be the result of a deep, mutually felt commitment between them. In other words, Gordon-Reed wants Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings to have had a relationship that conforms to the late twentieth-century ideal of how a man and woman should love each other. This is a presentist position that may not apply to the eighteenth century. Although the ideal of patriarchy was waning as the eighteenth century ended, Jefferson was the product of an earlier generation. If there was a sexual relationship between him and Sally, Jefferson's feelings for her may have been wrapped up in his understanding of his identity as a patriarch, especially when he was at home at Monticello where he was the unquestioned master. If Jefferson was sexually intimate with her, he may have viewed it as a comforting confirmation, even empowerment, of his identity as a man. On her part, Sally Hemings may have completely internalized the eight-

teenth-century expectation that as a woman she was to be a helpmate and consort to man, and she may have found the fulfillment of that role in her relationship with Jefferson. Sex between them need not have been forced or soulless, but something to be expected and accepted. Of course, my reading of a possible sexual relationship between the two may not accurately capture what was at the heart of it, but I do believe it is closer to eighteenth-century reality than to the modern concept of romantic love between equals.

Gordon-Reed concludes that the historians who have tried to prove the impossibility of what was clearly possible have done their readers a disservice. To maintain their tenuous position, Jefferson's defenders have relied on stereotypes to discredit contrary evidence. As a result, they have perpetuated a distorted view of black people and the history of the South. Even worse, they painted Madison Hemings as the blackest of black men, one who would spread a vile and despicable lie about Thomas Jefferson. For Gordon-Reed, Madison Hemings is a metaphor for what it means to be black in America.

Gordon-Reed subtitles her book "An American Controversy." It is that, but it could also be labeled "An American Obsession." The key issue is race. What truly disturbs some now, is, if the story Callender and Hemings told is true, then Thomas Jefferson, a white man, had sex with, perhaps even loved, Sally Hemings, a black woman. The charge that the Jefferson defenders most wish to refute is that Thomas Jefferson engaged in miscegenation. Interracial relationships still have the power to disturb us, and the story of Sally Hemings captures our attention for that reason. But there is an irony in all this. Gordon-Reed suggests an alternate explanation for why Jefferson may have freed Sally Hemings's children even if he was not their father. He may have done so because they were not black but white, which by Virginia law they were. Only one of their eight great-grandparents was black. If anything can demonstrate that the issue of race in this country is not necessarily about biology or genetics, but is more a social and cultural construction, the story of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings does. So who is black? Who is white? The answer seems to depend on who we want—or need—them to be. ■



<http://www.history.org> Colonial Williamsburg on the World Wide Web

by Lauren Suber

Laurie is the webmaster for Colonial Williamsburg.

As late as March 1996 if you'd asked me, "Laurie, would you like to be a webmaster?" I would have responded, "What's a webmaster?" Then it happened. I was checking the Foundation's job postings for a friend when I saw the webmaster position. As I read, I became enthralled, unable to imagine a better way to share the Williamsburg experience with a worldwide audience—immediately and without paper! But I wondered if I possessed the necessary computer skills to keep up with the ever-changing Internet technology. I spent that weekend learning html (the language, or computer code used to make web pages: Hypertext Mark-up Language) and I was hooked. The rest, as they say, is history—or in this case, "www.history.org."

The challenge, I realized, would lie in gathering subject matter for the site from our vast stock of intellectual property, while making the material easily navigable and appealing. Fortunately, the web site was already off to an excellent start, thanks to a

number of outside contractors and staff from many departments who built the site during the winter of 1995–1996 and launched it on February 19, 1996. Designed to bring history alive to off-site visitors and to attract new audiences to Colonial Williamsburg, the site sustained more than a quarter of a million user sessions and approximately 4.5 million "hits"¹ in its first year of operation. As a growing, changing, borderless entity that effectively bridges the eighteenth and twenty-first centuries, the site holds limitless opportunities for Colonial Williamsburg. I've been much encouraged, if a bit overwhelmed, by the positive responses to the site from visitors and fellow employees.² It's a great compliment to us all that our web site visitors' only complaints stem from wanting more.

If you've never visited the site, perhaps this description will convince you to log in, but since the site is nonlinear, with no beginning, middle, or end, it's difficult to describe in an article. Although the site has a *home page*, which is the official gateway to the site, a significant portion of users enter through alternate pages.³ Users move from one part of the site to the other through *hot*⁴ text links and graphics that make the visitors active participants in the learning process. The user chooses the information he/she wants when he/she wants it. The current site, which would use more than seven hundred pages⁵ if printed on paper, has five distinct areas of interest:

Visit Colonial Williamsburg: Information that allows our customers to plan their visits—directions to Williamsburg and information about admissions tickets, lodging, package plans, restaurants, shopping, and resort activities. This part of the web site also describes the sites to see when visiting Colonial Williamsburg—the historic buildings, trades and tradespeople, character interpreters, museums, and gardens. It encourages viewers to call 1-800-HISTORY on each page. Many web site visitors come to these pages first.

Historical Almanack: Highlights of the people, places, and events of eighteenth-century Virginia. "Meet the People" introduces viewers to thirty-eight people who lived in colonial Williamsburg, many of whom continue to populate the Historic Area in the form of character interpreters. It includes the famous founding fathers and mothers, colonial children, African-Americans, and the Geddy and Randolph families. "See the

Places" introduces thirty-five historic buildings and features three historic maps. "Experience Colonial Life" discusses the African-American experience, family life, colonial food, gardening, the justice system, manners, military life, politics, religion, tools, and eighteenth-century trades. Each month the Historic Almanack features a special aspect of life in the colonial era with suggested thematic links.⁶ It also includes a colonial date line that places the events of the second half of the eighteenth century in historical context. The "Additional Resources" section includes a historical glossary, several articles from the *Colonial Williamsburg Journal*, a bibliography for researchers, and information on the Williamsburg Institute.

Education Resources: This section informs parents and teachers about the educational resources available at Colonial Williamsburg—electronic field trips, the Summer Teacher Institute, teacher-tested lesson plans, and school study visits. The most active part of "Education Resources" is devoted to the Internet portions of Colonial Williamsburg's Electronic Field Trips. Each field trip includes an E-mail forum for students to discuss issues with each other and with Colonial Williamsburg's interpreters, a teacher's guide with historical background, lesson plans, facsimiles of original prints and documents, and several participatory activities to reinforce the field trip's history lessons.

What's New: Here viewers access one of the most viewed pages on the site: the calendar of events at Colonial Williamsburg. The section also provides information from current press releases and highlights new features on the Internet site. One of the more successful of these features was a link that

said, "Don't Click Here." Viewers who disobeyed the instructions were sent to Rule 1 of George Washington's *Rules of Civility*, which cautioned the reader against idle curiosity. Viewers responded to this humorous approach with enthusiastic E-mails to the webmaster, some in eighteenth-century-style verbiage.

About Colonial Williamsburg: This section provides insight into the history of the Foundation and restoration, allows potential employees to download an employment application (this file is the most often downloaded file on the site), and allows viewers to contact the webmaster.

As good as the first year has been, there's much more to do. Several areas of the Foundation are not represented on the site, and others need improvement. For example (if you'll excuse the pun) there's a gaping hole on the site where information on archaeology at Colonial Williamsburg should be. We need more engaging material on our museums and fun stuff for kids. I'm working this spring with colleagues in Products, Marketing, Customer Care, and Information Technology to make reservations and product purchases available to web site visitors.

A brochure designed to help Colonial Williamsburg staff plan their departments' subject matter for the web site is almost ready for distribution; it will include practical instructions for preparing information for easy translation to webspeak—look for it in your mailboxes this spring. If you haven't ventured onto the Internet yet, drop by my office sometime for a tour. I promise it won't hurt a bit. Remember, in one short year, I've progressed from Internet novice to full-fledged webmaster, whose motto has become, "When in doubt, push the button!"



A costumed Laurie Suber (with Bill Barker as Thomas Jefferson) makes the transition to the latest technology.

ENDNOTES

1. A *hit* represents a request for a single file from the web site. A *user session* represents all of the requests from a computer that visits the web site. A user session is considered terminated when a user has not been active for at least thirty minutes. Since a page on the site may be constructed of several digital files of text and graphics, the number of hits does not accurately reflect consumer usage; user sessions give a better estimate, but still do not reveal how many individuals access the site. (E.g., one person accessing the site three times in one day with a thirty-minute break between each session is reported as three user sessions; forty people using one public library computer may be counted as one user.)

2. One web site visitor wrote: "I just wanted to let you know this is the second time we've visited the Williamsburg WWW page. What great things you have given us! ALMOST as good as a visit." Teachers write frequently to the webmaster. One wrote in November '96: "I just read [about CW's site] in the Fall 1996 Colonial Williamsburg Teacher Newsletter. I signed on to the WWW site and felt like a kid at Christmas. Needless to say, I spent half an hour reading your web page. Thank you for all the information and inspiration to teach a Williamsburg Christmas to my students in Oklahoma."

3. No, the webmaster is not clairvoyant! Statistical software analyzes the site's log files, or *footprints* left by computers that have visited it, giving us information about activity at various times of day, on different days of the week, the kinds of browsers and platforms used, country of origin, most requested pages, total user sessions, total hits, etc.

4. A *hot link* is an area of a web page instructed by computer code to open a specified file when the user's cursor is positioned over the link and clicked.

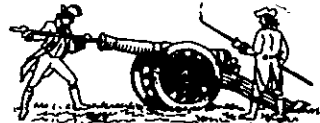
5. For the "techies" in the audience, as of April 17, 1997, the site consists of 714 files totaling 6946.4 KB, with 363 HTML files and 349 image files. The site is hosted on Microsoft SQL and Octopus servers for Widows NT at Apex-it, Inc., in Blacksburg, Virginia. The webmaster's favorite tools are Netscape 3.0 for browsing, HotdogPro for text editing, Adobe Photoshop for image prep, Site-sweeper for site diagnostics, and Webtrends for statistical analysis.

6. For example, during February 1997, featured links focused on African-Americans in honor of Black History Month. March featured family links; April highlights focused on religion for Religious History Month. ■

Choosing Revolution 1997

In 1996 we built a strong interpretive program around the Choosing Revolution story line. In 1997 we will strengthen it. The six primary sites will keep up their work. Choosing Revolution continues to be the focus of the Capitol tours. The Raleigh Tavern will focus on the associations, and the Printing Office will continue to emphasize the documents and printers of the 1760s and 1770s. Military programs plans another strong year of programming at the Magazine and the Encampment. The Palace focuses on Governor Dunmore, Virginia's last royal governor. At the Peyton Randolph House the Redefining Family story line team is further developing the story of family tensions on the eve of the Revolution. In addition, community events and daily occurrences will continue emphasizing the coming Revolution.

The Choosing Revolution story line is well represented in programs and sites this year. Still there are several areas where we



must make significant progress. We did not do the best job representing the roles of African-Americans, loyalists, or women in last year's program. We will make some progress in these areas in 1997. Harvey Bakari has completed and distributed *The African-American Legacy*, a source for information on African-Americans and the Revolution. Keep your eyes peeled for similar references on Virginia loyalists and women. The story of revolution is a challenging one. In 1997 I hope we can broaden our depth of understanding and interpretation to enrich further the story for our visitors. It is a story of people from every walk of life and the choices they made during two remarkable decades that saw the creation of this nation.

Bill White, Chair
Choosing Revolution Story Line Team

COOK'S CORNER

by Laura Arnold

Laura is a historical interpreter in the Department of Historic Buildings. Cook's Corner is a new feature in this publication. Our thanks go to members of the Historic Foodways Team, Dennis Cotner, Wendy Howell, Frank Clark, Andrew McKnight, and Laura Treese, who assisted in the preparation of this article, and to Pat Gibbs, historian in the Department of Historical Research, for coming up with the idea and the name.



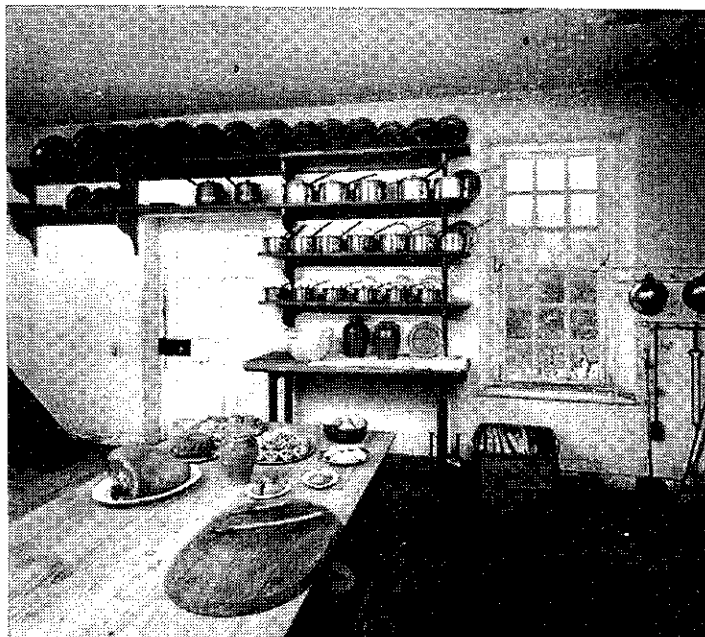
To Colonial Williamsburg interpreters the words "Summer Cooler" mean special programs offered in the air-conditioned comfort of the Hennage Auditorium. To our visitors "Summer Cooler" means a cold drink, a beverage chilled by modern refrigeration or one poured into a tall glass filled with ice. Thirsty visitors ask questions about what thirsty colonials drank, and COOK'S CORNER will attempt to answer some of these queries.

Water would appear to be the obvious answer, but the quality of drinking water in the tidewater area varied with the season and the specific locale. Well water was far from pure, and although spring water was most desirable for drinking purposes, it was

not readily available to everyone. Virginians disguised the poor quality of their drinking water by using it to brew tea, coffee, chocolate, or herbs and by diluting it with a variety of alcoholic beverages. Even children drank weakened versions of cider and beer. Milk was not often consumed by children under the age of twelve. Instead it generally was used for cooking and for producing a cash product such as butter or cheese. As a beverage, milk and cream appeared on the eighteenth-century tables of the wealthy as syllabub, citrus-flavored cream, or milk punch.

A person's place in society determined whether he could afford expensive imported wines, beers, and distilled liquors. Tavern price lists are the best indication of the variety of drinks available and the differences in cost between domestic and imported beverages.

Punch, a popular drink, was a mixture of



The Palace Kitchen is a good indicator of seasonality.

AT A COURT OF HUSTINGS held for the City of Williamsburg on Monday the 4th Day of March, 1750:

THE RATES of Liquors, Diet, &c. as settled by the Court in March last are continued for one Year till March Court next.

Viz:	£	S	D
For each Diet	1	-	-
Lodging for each Person	-	-	7-12
Stable Room & Fodder for each Horse per Night	-	-	7-1/2
Stable Room & Fodder for each Horse 14 Hours	-	-	11-1/4
Each Gallon of Corn or Oats	-	-	6
Wine of Virginia produce per Quart	5	-	-
French Brandy per Quart	4	-	-
Sherry & Canary Wine per Quart	4	-	4-1/2
Red & White Lisbon & Claret per Quart	3	-	1-1/2
Madeira Wine per Quart	3	-	-
Fyall Wine per Quart	1	-	3
French Brandy Punch & Flip per Quart	1	-	3
Rum & Virginia Brandy per Quart	2	-	-
Rum Punch & Flip per Quart	-	-	7-1/2
Ditto—made with White Sugar	-	-	9
Virginia middling Beer per Quart	-	-	3-3/4
Virginia Cyder per Quart	-	-	3-3/4
London & Bristol Beer in Bottles per Quart	-	-	3
Welsh Ale per bottle	1	-	3
A Quart of Arrack in Punch	10	-	-
English Cyder per Quart Bottle	1	-	-
Virginia fine white Apple Cyder per Bottle	-	-	6
Virginia brewed Ale per Quart	-	-	7-1/2

It is further order that the several and respective Ordinary Keepers within this City do sell and take according to the Rates above set, and that they do not resume to ask or demand more of any person whatsoever on Penalty of paying what the Law in the Czeze requires.

Teste
Joseph Davenport, clerk

five ingredients: spirits, water, sliced citrus (lemons, limes, or oranges), sugar, and spices. A receipt has not survived for Henry Wetherburn's famous arrack punch, but since arrack was 151-proof liquor distilled from the sap of coconut palms, it must have had a potent influence on those who consumed it. Shrub glasses are available in our stores, and visitors often ask, "What is a shrub?" A receipt for shrub from E. Smith's cookbook of 1742 shows it to be a form of punch, another potent concoction whose expensive ingredients made it a special drink:

Take two Quarts of Brandy, and put it in a large Bottle, and put into it the Juice of five lemons and Peels of two, half a Nutmeg, stop it up, and let it stand three Days, and add to it three Pints of White-wine, a Pound and a half of Sugar; mix it, and strain it twice thro' a Flannel, and bottle it up; 'tis a pretty Wine and a Cordial.

Another frequently asked question is

"What is a small beer?" Unlike *strong beer* or *strong ale*, which referred to imported beer made with wheat and hops in the fermenting process, small beer referred to locally produced beer based on molasses and hops. Small beer was weaker than imported beers and did not keep well, but it was inexpensive and easy to produce. That home production of small beer was widespread is documented in the papers of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Landon Carter. Our visitors can see the brewing process re-created at the Governor's Palace. The Tucker family cookbook is the source for a receipt for small beer for those readers who want to try microbrewing on their own:

10 gallons water—2 doublehandsful hops—3 do [ditto] wheat bran—7 pints molasses—Let the hops & bran boil before you put in the molasses—then let them boil till the whole appears curdled—Strain into a vat [a large tub]—Cover all night with a Blanket in summer and

in winter with warmer covering. Next morning put in a pint of yeast—after standing 24 hours in the vat pour it into the cask and let it remain in the cask 24 Hours and then bottle it—In a week it will be fit for use. The Beer must be very well corked or it will fly and break the bottles.

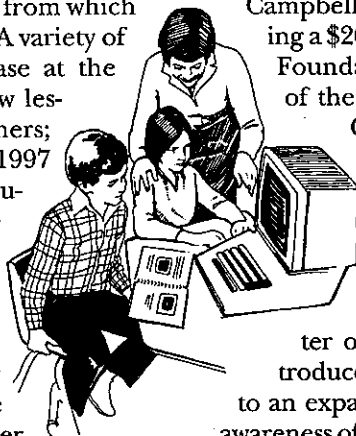
Brewing beer and cider required sizable pots and storage containers, items noticeably absent from surviving records of slave possessions. Finding the answer to the question "What were slaves drinking?" requires the examination of a variety of original sources. Unlike slave food rations, which are well documented, evidence of beverage rations or consumption is limited. Slaves could not legally obtain "spiritous liquor," yet we know from sources in the *Virginia Gazette* that Williamsburg merchants Daniel Fisher, John Holt, and John Greenhow were accused of selling liquor to slaves. In his diary William Byrd claimed that Governor Spotswood bribed his servants to remain sober for a special event at the Palace by promising to allow them to get drunk the next day. Archaeological evidence from slave quarters at both Mount Vernon and

Monticello includes drinking vessels and teapots. These artifacts along with evidence of small beer and cider production at both sites, suggests that Washington's and Jefferson's slaves were drinking the same beverages as the poor or the middling sort. Who needed to quench his thirst more than a slave who had worked in a tobacco field on a summer day?

That question brings us back to the beginning, to the desire for a cold drink on a hot day. Our visitors are surprised to learn that ice was available on a limited basis to a select few such as the royal governor, who had an ice mount on the Palace grounds in which to store the precious ice. Governor Fauquier wrote to his brother about taking advantage of a July 1758 hailstorm to chill wine and freeze cream. (Receipts for ice cream appear in several eighteenth-century cookbooks.) The use of ice to prepare food or add to beverages was a development waiting to happen. As much as our thirsty visitors enjoy stepping back into the past, they probably would not exchange their "summer coolers" for any of the unchilled beverages served at Mr. Wetherburn's Tavern, including his arrack punch. ■

Educational Resource Center

The Educational Resource Center, located in the Visitor Center, opened March 15, 1997. It was established in response to requests from teachers, home-school parents, and visitors for a centralized location from which to obtain teaching materials. A variety of items is available for purchase at the Center. Among them are new lesson plans developed by teachers; videos, including the 1996–1997 Electronic Field Trip series; audiotapes; teacher resource books; children's literature and fiction; and reproduction artifacts and documents. In addition the Products Division is developing a catalog of the materials. Visitors to the Educational Resource Center will be able to connect to the Internet through our on-line provider and explore Colonial Williamsburg's web site and other sites that enhance the teaching of history. When they return home, visitors can contact the Re-



source Center by E-mail.

The funding for the Center was made possible through the efforts of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation trustee Colin Campbell, who was instrumental in securing a \$268,000 grant from the Culpepper Foundation, established under the will of the late Charles E. Culpepper. Mr. Culpepper was an early pioneer in the bottling and marketing of Coca-Cola. The funding will go toward construction, technology, material development, and staffing.

The Educational Resource Center offers another opportunity to introduce teachers, parents, and students to an expanding knowledge of the past, an awareness of eighteenth-century Virginia, and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's role in preserving and portraying it.

If you are interested in contacting the Center, please call (757) 220-7497 or E-mail at edresource@cwf.org ■

NEWS FROM THE CURATORS

by Jan Gilliam

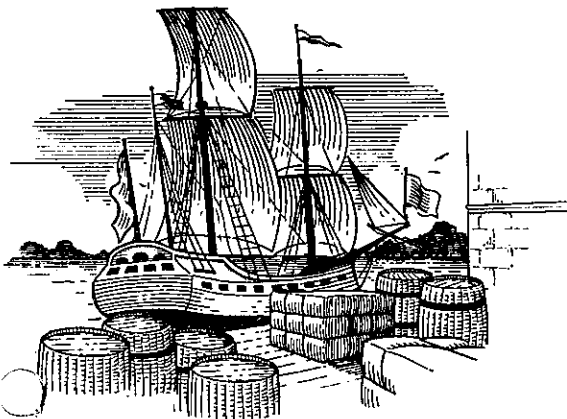
*Jan is assistant curator for exhibits
in the Department of Collections and Museums.*



On May 18 an exciting new exhibit entitled "Flying Free: Twentieth-Century Self-Taught Art from the Collection of Ellin and Baron Gordon" opened at the Folk Art Center. The Gordons have been collecting self-taught art since the 1980s. During the past decade they have amassed an impressive holding of hundreds of objects that illustrate some of the most exciting developments in the art world today. This display at AARFAC will be the first devoted exclusively to their collection. Many of the pieces were produced by American artists still practicing today. Other works were created by now-deceased twentieth-century artists who have been increasingly recognized for their contributions to the field.

Twentieth-century self-taught art is imaginatively stimulating and visually appealing. Its currency and boldness evoke an exciting sense of discovery in viewers. And there will be much to discover in these works, that will include paintings and sculptures, some made from conventional materials and others pieced together by the creative use of materials not always thought of in art terms. The exhibit will run through October 26. Throughout the summer there will be related programs including weekend family art workshops.

The Wallace Gallery has a new name and will now officially be called the DeWitt Wallace Gallery. In preparation for the long-awaited, upcoming exhibit on southern furniture, the Virginia Furniture exhibit closed at the beginning of April, and the main furniture galleries closed in May. These galleries will remain closed until November, when the new exhibit premieres. Also in November two other important exhibits will open; one features Virginia needlework and the other the original works of Mark Catesby, on loan from England. Look for information about these exhibits in future issues. ■



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Summer