

Interpreter

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The Sounds of Music . . . Or, the Franklin/Carter Connection

by Phil Shultz

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December 13, 1773

Mr [Robert] Carter is practicing this Evening on the Guittar. He begins with the Trumpet Minuet. He has a good Ear for Music; a vastly delicate Taste: and keeps good Instruments, he has here at Home [Nomini Hall in Westmoreland County, Virginia] a Harpsichord, Forte-Piano, Harmonica [Glass Armonica], Guittar, Violin, & German Flutes, & at Williamsburg, has a good Organ, he himself also is indefatigable in the Practice. (Philip Vickers Fithian, *Journal & Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion*, ed. Hunter Dickinson Farish [Williamsburg, Va.: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1957].)

Benjamin Franklin first heard a set of water-filled glasses played musically by Dr. E. Delaval, "a most ingenious member of our (British) royal society." Never, it seems, to be of idle mind, Ben Franklin, "charmed by the sweetness of its tones . . . wished to see the glasses disposed of in a more convenient form."

Franklin's new arrangement of glasses is seen in his illustration, showing "glasses blown as near as possible in the form of hemispheres . . . the largest nine inches in diameter and the smallest three inches . . . 37 glasses sufficient for three octaves with all the semitones. The glasses are to be provided with a case and a spindle (iron) on which they are to be fixed." The spindle is turned inside the case by means of a flywheel, "by the foot like a spinning wheel . . . every glass when fixed (on the spindle) shows about an inch of its

brim . . . and it is from this exposed part of each glass that the tone is drawn by laying a (wetted) finger upon one of them as the spindle and glasses turn round." This arrangement allowed a musician to play entire chords in relatively rapid sequence.

The good doctor accomplished this invention circa 1760 and called his musical instrument the *Armonica* from the Italian for *harmony*. Or, as he said, "in honour of your musical language, I have borrowed from it the name of this instrument, calling it the armonica." (All Benjamin Franklin quotes are taken from a letter written in July 1762 by Franklin to Giambatista Beccaria in Italy).

[This] Evening [Dec. 22, 1773] Mr Carter spent in playing on the harmonica [note the alternate spelling]; It is the first time I have heard the Instrument. The music is charming! He play'd, Water parted from the Sea.—The Notes are clear

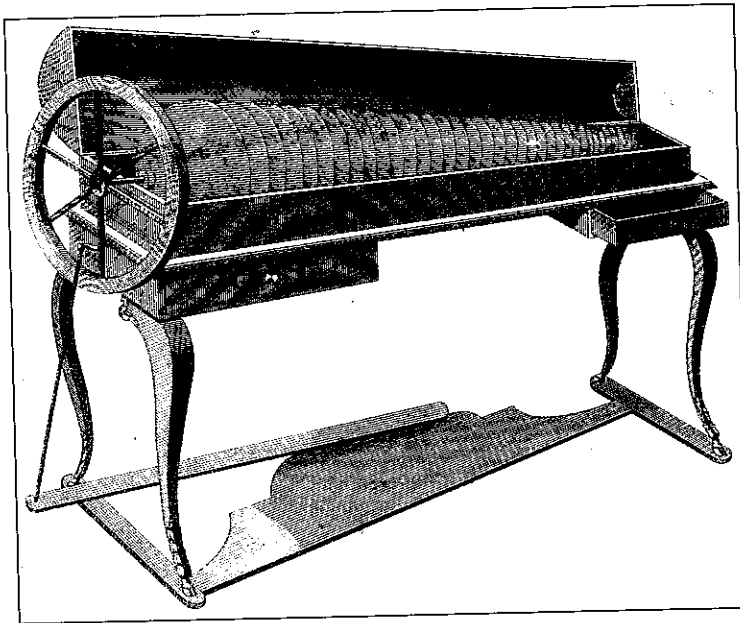
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and inexpressively Soft, they swell, and are inexpressively grand; & either because the sounds are new, and therefore please me, or it is the most captivating Instrument I have Ever heard. The sounds very much resemble the human voice, and in my opinion they far exceed even the swelling Organ (Fithian, *Journal*).

Mr. Peter Pelham, returning from New York after having heard Dr. Franklin play the Armonica, must have been both impressed with the instrument and persuasive with his description to Robert Carter. For it was on the strength of Pelham's glowing recommendation that Carter purchased one, even though he had never actually heard one played!

Note: Musician Dean Shostak performs on the glass armonica periodically at the Hennage Auditorium in the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum and the Kimball Theatre in Merchants Square. Check *This Week* for performance dates. It is an opportunity to capture the eighteenth-century wonder of hearing this magnificent instrument. Readers who want to know more about the glass armonica can reference Mary Miley Theobald, "Crystal Clear: Return of the Glass Armonica," *Colonial Williamsburg Journal* (Winter 1994-95).



DECEMBER, like the fag End of a bad Market, comes last of all, making a great Hole in that which was gotten in the other three Months; for towards the 25th we may expect to hear of a great Mortality among the Hogs, Sheep, Geese, Capons, Turkeys, &c., especially in Farmers Houses in the Country, who show so much Respect to those poor Sufferers that they set them up at the Table (after they are dead and roasted) among the best of their Guests, to make them merry at Christmas. Much good Liquor will likewise be consumed this Month, and (if the Weather prove cold) a Deal of Coals and Wood, not to mention the Depravation that will be made in the Pockets of losing Gamesters. The Weather being so cold, may induce some Men to fall into the Pit-fall of Matrimony, not considering what Fears, Jealousies, Dangers, Anxieties, and Troubles, attend on a married Life. War is sweet to them that know it not. They that never endured Hardship, nor came within Gunshot more than in Contemplation, think it an excellent Thing to be a Soldier, when they read of the Conquests of Alexander, the Triumphs of Caesar, the Trophies of Achilles, and the like. So whilst they spend their Time in Kissing, Toying, Fooling, and Dallying, they think themselves in Paradise, they have strange Chimeras of the Felicities of a wedded Life, and become in Love with their Yoke, long for their Fetters, and are mad till they have lost their Freedom and are utterly undone.

Virginia Almanack . . . 1774, ed. Purdie and Dixon

The Scottish Pistol in Colonial America

by Erik Goldstein

Erik is curator of mechanical arts and numismatics in the Department of Collections and Conservation.

The quintessential Scottish Highlander is a colorful image of martial ferocity combined with nationalistic splendor. In the history of military costume, few such icons have as long a tradition as the Scottish soldier. While Highland garb has consistently yielded to changing fashions over the past centuries, certain elements have remained. Since the eighteenth century, the belted plaid has evolved into today's kilt, but the tartan has remained the same, just as the bonnet, too, has remained, along with the legendary basket-hilted sword.

While pistols were known to have been in the Highlands as early as the beginning of the sixteenth century, the first hard evidence for manufacture in Scotland is in 1578. In the records of the Edinburgh Incorporation of Hammermen is a note that a William Blak paid a fee of 20 shillings for the registration of his apprenticeship to David Clerk, "dag-maker." Between the mid-sixteenth century and the end of the seventeenth, the term *dag* simply meant pistol.

Slightly post-dating this first documentary reference are the earliest pieces of physical evidence—three pistol barrels dated 1583, 1585, and 1589—all of which are now sadly detached from their original locks and stocks. These three orphaned barrels are beautifully made and embellished and suggest that, by the date they bear, the industry that had produced them had some degree of experience in its trade.

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Scottish gun-making trade was firmly established, and records show that significant quantities of pistols were being shipped to England. It seems entirely possible that at this time, the Scottish pistol-making trade was out-producing its English coun-



terpart, as far more Scottish pistols of this period survive than English ones.

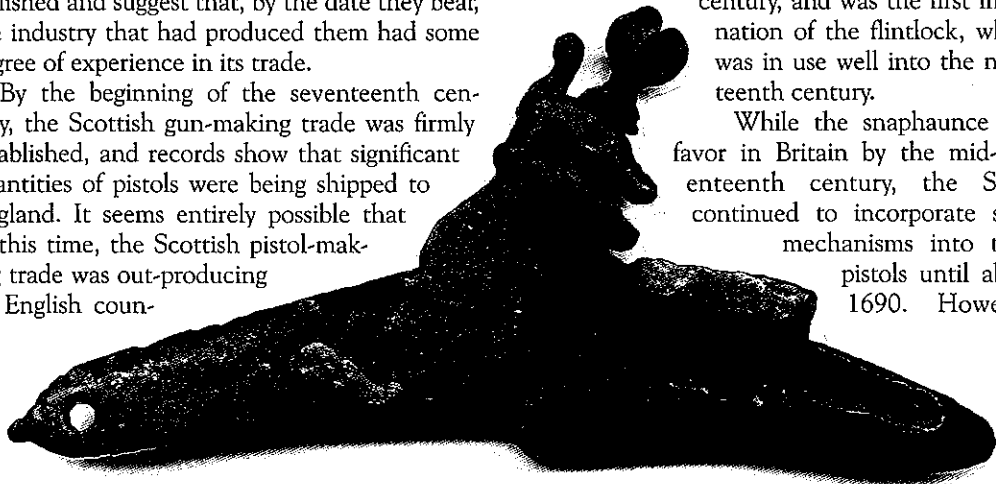
Perhaps this phenomenon can explain why Scottish pistols accompanied the first English settlers to arrive in Virginia. A detached pistol lock, distinctly Scottish in character, was excavated in the 1990s by Jamestown Rediscovery archaeologists from fill around the south palisade of James Fort, and it is concretely dateable to having been deposited between 1607 and 1610. Therefore, this little relic is one of the most important arms "documents" to come to light from colonial Virginia. Not only does it date from the absolute beginning

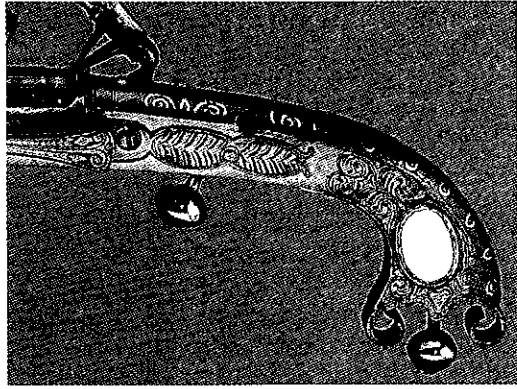
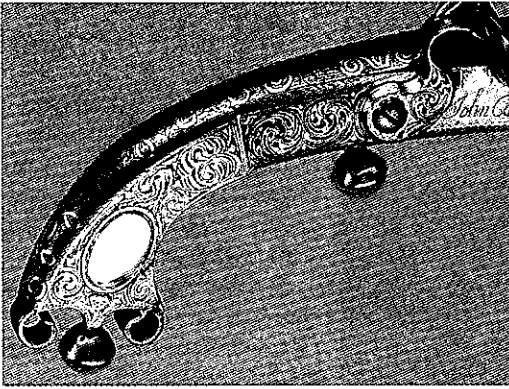
of our country, but it also tells us about the arms trade of the period and just how sophisticated those of the earliest colonists were.

This lock, in all likelihood, came from a pistol with a completely metal stock, as opposed to one made of wood mounted with metal. During this earliest period, brass seems to have been the choice material to stock pistols in.

This is not to say wooden-stocked pistols weren't made, but they are very rare today, suggesting that the latter material suffered from a lack of popularity with Highland dagmakers. This early mechanism, now referred to as a "snaphaunce," appeared during the sixteenth century, and was the first incarnation of the flintlock, which was in use well into the nineteenth century.

While the snaphaunce lost favor in Britain by the mid-seventeenth century, the Scots continued to incorporate such mechanisms into their pistols until about 1690. However,





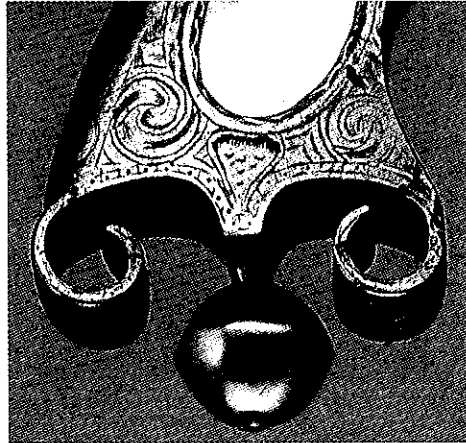
true flintlock mechanisms, distinguished by their integral steel and pan cover (now referred to as a “steel” or “frizzen”), debut on Scottish firearms some time in the third quarter of the seventeenth century.

Collectors and students of the Scottish pistol tend to classify these arms according to the style of the butt stock, and the progression goes something like this: first came the fishtail, which was overlapped and succeeded by the lemo, which in turn was overlapped and succeeded by the scroll or ram’s horn, followed by the heart, and finally the lobe and the kidney. Sounds like a tasty haggis recipe, eh?!

It is the scroll-butt, however, that persevered through the centuries as the steadfast component of the archetypical Scottish pistol. As is all too often the phenomenon with arms studies, the origins of the scroll-butt are somewhat obscure. Most commonly associated with makers working in Stirling and Doune, the birth of the form may be tied to the arrival of one Thomas Caddell who set up shop in the latter town in 1646.

Caddell is now acknowledged as the father of pistol making in Doune, having taken in numerous apprentices, including a John Campbell. Caddell’s descendants, alongside those of Campbell, dominated Doune’s output and transformed the town into the preeminent center of the Scottish pistol-making industry for the next 150 years. Slightly post-dating Caddell’s arrival in Doune is the earliest known scroll-butt, engraved with the date 1649 on the flash fence—the round shield-shaped guard attached to the outer edge of the pan.

Toward the last quarter of the seventeenth century, a true flintlock mechanism, incorpo-



rating an unusual safety catch below the cock and a squared pan, appeared in the Highlands. A relic lock of this sort was recovered from an early eighteenth-century house site in Hingham, Massachusetts, and suggests that Scottish pistols may have been as popular in New England as they were in the southern colonies.

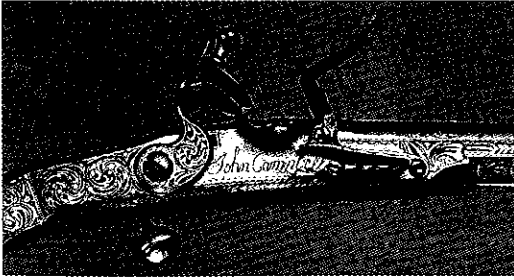
Until the inclusion of distinctly Scottish troops into the British army, all

Scottish pistols would have fallen into the category of “private purchase,” meaning that they were bought by individuals for personal use, as opposed to official purchase for troop use.

With the formation of the initial Highland regiments in the middle part of the eighteenth century came the first military incarnations of the Scottish pistol. Famed units such as Fraser’s Second Highland Battalion and the dreaded Royal Highland Regiment, more commonly known by its nickname “Black Watch,” were sent to North America during the French and Indian War with basic versions of the scroll-butt pistol.

The soldiers of the Black Watch are known to have been issued iron-stocked pistols by such makers as Isaac Bissel of Birmingham. While it may seem odd to have a Highland design manufactured in the British midlands, it isn’t surprising. Birmingham had long been a center for the production of munition-grade arms intended for the crown forces. While most privately purchased pistols of the scroll-butt form are covered with engraving, these martial pistols have a minimal amount and bear the initials “RHR,” for Royal Highland Regiment, chiseled into the barrel.

Early on the morning of April 19, 1775, an expedition of British troops left Boston to destroy

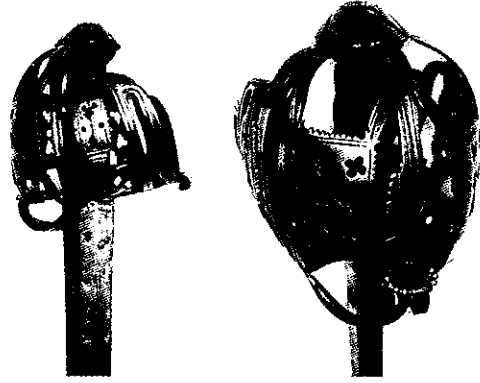


or confiscate some articles of war known to have been stored in the surrounding countryside. Second in command of these forces was fifty-two-year-old Maj. John Pitcairn of the British Marines. Although a Scot, Pitcairn wore the cocked hat, scarlet coat, and breeches the service dictated, but chose to display his heritage in his choice of side arm—secured in the holsters of his mount was a fine pair of scroll-butt pistols made by Thomas Murdoch of Doune.

The alarm caused by the action on Lexington Green spread like wildfire, and the responding minutemen forced the British to fight their way back to Boston. Pitcairn's horse suffered a number of wounds and finally threw him, somewhere near Fiske's Hill, and the major's fine pistols fell into American hands.

What happened to these pistols, might you ask? They fared far better than their unhorsed, red-coated owner. Pitcairn was mortally wounded two months later at the Battle of Bunker Hill and was interred in the crypt of Old North Church. Meanwhile, his scroll-butt pistols were presented to American general Israel Putnam, affectionately known as "Old Put." Putnam carried the pair throughout the American Revolution, and they are now proudly displayed in the Hancock-Clarke House in Lexington. Today these pistols are recognized as among the most important arms concretely linked with the beginning of the Revolutionary War.

Sir Joshua Reynolds executed his portrait of John Murray, fourth earl of Dunmore, in traditional Highland garb a few years before Murray's arrival in the colonies. Conspicuous against Lord Dunmore's Highland garb are his basket-hilted sword, dirk, sporran, and scroll-butt pistol, certainly one of a pair. Although it cannot be said for sure, these pistols may have been lost to the American rebels in the summer of 1775, when in the governor's own words a number of colonists entered the Governor's Palace and "broke open every lock of the doors



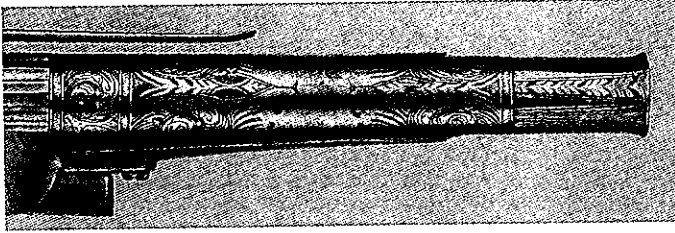
of all the rooms, Cabinets and private places, and carried off a considerable number of Arms of different Sorts, a large collection and valuable, my own property."

Now that we've firmly established the prominence of the Scottish pistol in early American history, let's take a close look at a pair recently acquired as a gift by Colonial Williamsburg. I'm especially excited about these pistols for a number of reasons, the most obvious of which is the fact that they are dead-ringers for those of Pitcairn and Dunmore.

The pair was made during the middle part of the eighteenth century by John Campbell, the last in a family of pistol makers who had been working in Doune for a century. They are classic, higher-end examples of the scroll-butt form. Although very capable of firing a deadly shot, Campbell clearly saw these pistols as a host with which to create an item of culturally distinctive male jewelry.

In sharp contrast to the attention paid to their embellishment, the mechanisms are surprisingly archaic for their time. Each lock is made without supporting bridles and its horizontally acting sear, which protrudes through the lockplate to secure the cock, fell out of use elsewhere in Britain during the mid-seventeenth century. Behind the fluted breech, inlaid silver strap work winds its



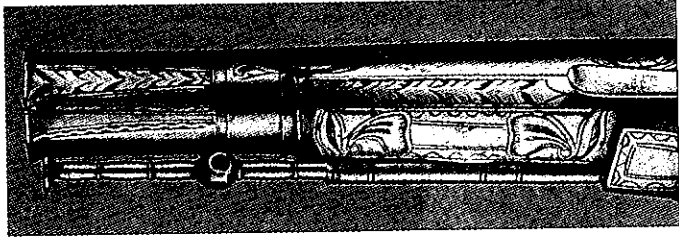


way down the back of the grip while crude but boldly executed engraving covers most of the available surfaces. Their maker's unencumbered signature appears ahead of the cock below the pan on the lockplates of both pistols.

Two of the features that define the Scottish pistol are present. Unlike their British counterparts, Scottish pistols, as a rule, are made without trigger guards and incorporate hollow ball-shaped triggers of silver engraved in this case with a four-petaled rose.

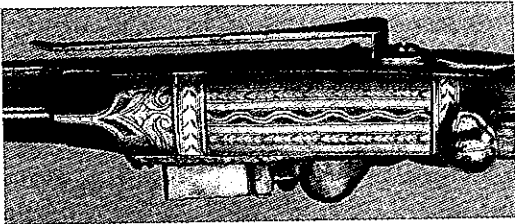
As an integral accessory to Highland dress, the pistol was to be worn "front & center" across the chest or waist. Therefore, a substantial hook was attached to the inboard side of the pistol to secure the weapon to the wearer's baldric or belt. Even the less-visible underside and inboard sides of the pistols were covered with engraving and silver inlay.

The barrels have fluted breeches separated from engraved round sections by "wedding rings" (as they are called in firearms circles), and flared

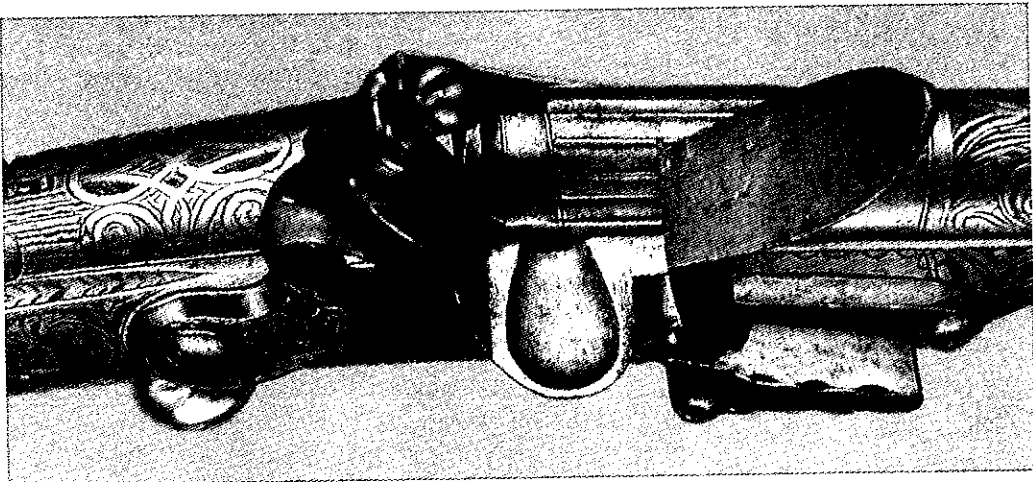


octagonal muzzles. Their iron ramrods, which seem somewhat impractical, resemble turned bodkins with button-heads and pierced spherical swells.

Threaded into the butt stock is a vent pick; its hollow silver finial en suite with the trigger is visible between the two scrolls. Also unique to Highland pistols of the era, this tiny little tool was meant for use in clearing the touchhole in order to ensure proper ignition. Further along the butt stock on both sides are oval silver escutcheons, which are often engraved with either the owner's name or crest—but in this case they are frustratingly vacant, leaving us to wonder just who originally carried these magnificent firearms.



(The John Campbell Scottish pistols, accession numbers G2003-155,1&2, have just been installed in the Masterworks Gallery at the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum, so please be sure to go by and have a look at them. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at either ext. 8956 or egoldstein@cwf.org.)



Catholics and the Vote in Colonial Virginia

by Linda Rowe

Linda is a historian in the Department of Historical Research and is assistant editor of this publication.

In 1699, 1705, 1762, and 1769, colonial Virginia law barred certain people from voting, even though they were freeholders (landowners), the basic qualification for the franchise. Among freeholders not allowed to vote was the "recusant convict" as noted in this section from the 1769 Act for regulating the election of Burgesses, for declaring their privileges and allowances, and for fixing the rights of electors:

[N]o feme sole or covert, infant under the age of twenty-one, recusant convict, or any person convicted in Great-Britain or Ireland, during the time for which he is transported, nor any free negro, mulatto, or Indian, although such persons be free holders, shall have a vote (Hening Statutes at Large, 8: 307).

During the colonial period, *recusant convict* and its alternates *popish recusant* and *popish recusant convict* were terms applied only to Catholics in Virginia (and English) law, but only to Roman Catholics who had been convicted in a court for refusing to attend the Anglican church. While it is accurate to say that this legislation has an anti-Catholic aspect, it is not accurate to say that Virginia law prohibited all Catholics who were freeholders from voting, as this excerpt from a study of voting practices in Virginia explains:

Few, if any, were excluded from voting in Virginia because of religious beliefs. The laws did not mention religion except for the exclusion of recusant convicts and the provision that Quakers could make an affirmation. Presbyterians voted . . . [and] Catholics who were not "recusants convict" were also legal voters. George Brent, gentleman and Roman Catholic from Prince William County, voted in 1740 and for all we know in every election thereafter. But in a disputed election in 1762, Brent's right to vote was challenged by the losing candidate, Henry Peyton, gentleman, on the ground that Brent was a Roman Catholic. Both the Committee on Elections and the House itself ruled that Brent had a good right to vote, for even though he was a Catholic he was not a "recusant Convict." This is the only

instance that we have found in which the right of a Catholic to vote was questioned. (Robert E. and B. Katherine Brown, *Virginia 1705-1786: Democracy or Aristocracy?* [East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1964], 131.)

Brent's vote for Henry Lee for the House of Burgesses was challenged on the basis that he was "a Roman Catholick," but the Committee of Privileges and Elections allowed Brent's vote to stand. It was a technicality. Brent had never been convicted of being a "Recusant" or "Roman Catholick," because apparently no one had ever brought the charge against him. Hence, although a lifelong Catholic from a prominent Catholic family, Brent was eligible to vote in Virginia because he had never been charged and convicted in a court for refusing to attend the Anglican church in the parish where he lived. It is worth noting that Virginia officials had found it to their advantage to tolerate earlier generations of the powerful Brent clan who had moved into Virginia from Maryland in 1650. Even harsh anti-Catholic laws in effect from 1641 to 1662 were not enforced against them.

For perspective in this matter, keep in mind that at the time of the Revolution, there were only about 200 or 300 Catholics among Virginia's total population of 450,000 (white and black) and among 189,000 Virginians of European extraction. A few, like the Brent family of Prince William County, Virginia, were large landholders and even officeholders, but most operated in the obscurity of everyday life. Even Richard Starke, author of the 1774 handbook for Virginia's county court justices, noted under the heading, "Recusants. Popish," that "As we have happily very few Papists in this Colony, there is no Occasion to be more particular under this Title, which perhaps might have been wholly omitted." (Richard Starke, *The Office and Authority of the Justice of the Peace* [Williamsburg, Va.: Purdie and Dixon, 1774], 294.) Historian Bruce Steiner (see readings at end of article) has suggested that a number of works on Catholics in Virginia have focused exclusively on anti-Catholic laws in force without examining the evidence for moderate attitude toward enforcement of those laws.

Let's step back for a moment. Why the Catholics at all? Christian Europe—including England—had been Roman Catholic until the Protestant Reformation, when a number of political and religious leaders withdrew themselves and their followers or subjects from the authority of the Roman Catholic Church and its pope. The Reformation in England came in stages, largely dependent upon the inclinations of the reign-

ing monarch, beginning with Henry VIII (reign 1509–47) who broke with the Roman Catholic Church in the 1530s to make himself, not the pope, head of the English church.

During the Reformation, European nations aligned themselves in Protestant and Catholic camps. In England, after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 ousted the Catholic James II in favor of William III and Mary II, Protestant (Church of England) succession to the throne of England was mandated. For our purposes, then, the conceptual opposite of "Protestant" is "Catholic." England regarded most Catholic nations as enemies, especially Catholic France with whom it was on a war footing until the close of the Seven Years' War (French and Indian War in the colonies) in 1763. Until that time and perhaps later, French Canadian Catholics and their Indian allies were always popping up as bogeymen whenever tensions between Great Britain and France worsened.

Virginia reflected the hysteria brought on in 1745 by Bonnie Prince Charlie's abortive invasion of England that ended any attempt to restore the Catholic Stuarts. In England and the colonies, loyal Englishmen looked for plotters, especially Catholics, everywhere. On April 24, 1746, William Gooch, lieutenant governor of Virginia, heard that priests from Maryland were coming to Fairfax County and were "endeavouring by crafty Insinuations, to seduce his Majesty's good subjects from their Fidelity and Loyalty to his Majesty, King George, and his Royal House."

He, therefore, ordered "all Magistrates, Sheriffs, Constables and other His Majesty's Liege People, within this colony, to be diligent in apprehending and bring to Justice the said Romish Priests, or any of them so that they may prosecuted according to law."

The few Catholics who settled in the Virginia colony occasionally found themselves at odds with Virginia authorities and confronted with anti-Catholic legislation—that is, anti-recusant convict legislation—although there is not much evidence that these laws were enforced or that Catholics were prosecuted in Virginia courts. It remains difficult to identify Catholics who may have lived in colonial Virginia, and the "obscurity of everyday life" for some Catholics in Virginia probably included attending the Anglican parish church according to law. The idea that devout Catholics were regularly turned away from the polling place or had their votes challenged cannot be substantiated.

(Thanks to Bob Doares for certain information based on his answers in a recent Interpreter Q&A on religion.)

Further Reading:

- Fogarty, Gerald P, S. J. *Commonwealth Catholicism: A History of the Catholic Church in Virginia*. The University of Notre Dame Press, 2001. 5–22.
- Steiner, Bruce E. "The Catholic Brethren of Colonial Virginia." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 70 (October 1962): 386–409.



Bothy's Mould

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

New World Vegetables

by Wesley Greene

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

Wherever man has traveled on earth, he has brought his food plants with him, so it is not surprising that some of the first imports to the Western Hemisphere by European explorers as well as the earliest exports from the Western Hemisphere were food crops. Once acquired, food plants are moved very quickly between population centers. Christopher Columbus is credited with introducing the cucumber to Haiti in 1494.

Twenty-one years later, explorer Hernando de Soto found the native people growing cucumbers in Florida, and just twenty years after that, in 1535, Jacques Cartier found the natives in the area of present-day Montreal growing "very great cucumbers!" Some historians speculate that cucumbers might have been introduced to the Northeast in pre-Columbian times by Basque fishermen who may have plied the waters off the coast of Maine.

Traveling in the other direction, the sweet potato left South America in the sixteenth century with the Portuguese who carried it around the Cape of Good Hope into India. Malay traders picked it up from there and carried it to the South Seas. By the time Capt. James Cook landed in New Zealand in 1769, the native Maoris had been growing sweet potatoes for nearly 200 years, maybe much longer.

There is some evidence to suggest that Polynesians landed in South America long before European explorers and brought the sweet potato home with them. A Maori legend records that the sweet potato first arrived on log rafts. As we will see, because of the early and wide dispersal of New World vegetables, there is much confusion in later years as to where they originated.

All of the major groups of vegetables native to the Americas—corn, beans, pumpkin, squash,

sweet potatoes, white potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, and peanuts—are indigenous to Central and South America. North America has contributed very little to the dinner table. We have a few nuts such as hickory, black walnut, and pecan; plus the blueberry, the cranberry, and the sunflower are native to North America.

Corn: This plant is more properly called maize or Indian corn. Corn has long been the generic name for any of the European grain crops. In Genesis 27:28 the Bible records "plenty of corn and wine." This was clearly not the corn we think of today.

Corn is among the most ancient and important of all food crops known to man. Its domestication is so ancient that no clear ancestor has ever been found for it. Small ears of corn, no larger than a pencil eraser, have been found at an archaeological site at Tehuacan, Mexico, that date to 5000 B.C.E.

The earliest varieties of corn in Mexico were popcorns, and it was from this variety that the flint corn was probably developed. Dent and sweet corn kernels have a central core of soft starch that shrinks as the kernels dry, giving the characteristic indentation at the end of the kernel. Dent corn stores carbohydrates in the form of starch, sweet corn in the form of sugar.

One of the first descriptions of corn in North America is found in Thomas Hariot's *A Brief and true report of the new found land of Virginia*. Hariot was on the 1585 expedition to Roanoke Island, North Carolina, and recorded: "Pagatowr, a kind of grain so called by the inhabitants; the same in the West Indies is called Mayze."

Robert Beverley, who wrote *The History and Present State of Virginia* in 1705, recorded the types of Indian corn found in Virginia as "some being blue, some red, some yellow, some white, and some streak'd." The "late ripe corn . . . they call Flint-Corn; the other has a larger Grain, and looks shrivell'd with a Dent on the back of the Grain . . . this they call She-Corn. This is esteem'd by the Planters, as the best for Increase, and is [used] universally by them for planting."

Corn became an important food source in the earliest years of settlement. William Byrd II recorded in his *Natural History of Virginia* (circa 1730): "Corn is very good in this land and is eaten by everyone, rich and poor . . . most of the inhabitants plant almost nothing but corn for their household needs, with which they are pleased and remain healthy besides."

As the eighteenth century progressed, corn got a reputation among the wealthier white population as a proper fare for the poorer sort. John Harrower recorded in his diary on August 28, 1775, that the plantation he lived on would

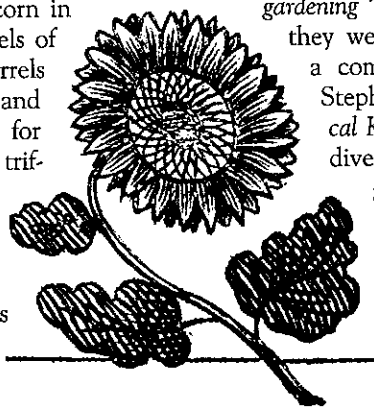
produce 800 to 900 barrels of corn in a year (a barrel holds five bushels of corn). Of this quantity 350 barrels was used for feeding the slaves and horses, the rest was sold. "As for what the White eats of it is but trifling for three Barrell of Corn is rather more than any one Man can use in a year let him ate no other bread." To this day many Europeans use corn only as animal fodder.

All of the eighteenth-century Virginia corn varieties would be classed as field corn today. The earliest reference to sweet corn came in Gen. John Sullivan's military expedition to western New York in 1779. Lt. Richard Bagnell found the Iroquois growing a sweet corn in the upper reaches of the Susquehanna River and brought it back to Plymouth, Massachusetts. It had a small ear of eight rows of white kernels and a red cob. The sweet corn, or sugar corn we know today, was not developed until after 1850.

Beans: Along with corn and squash, beans formed the "three sisters" of the Native Americans. The beans were allowed to climb the corn stalks, and squash and pumpkin vines carpeted the land beneath. This is a common agricultural system, particularly in the tropics, in which the ground is entirely covered with foliage. This system helps to control weeds, shades the soil to prevent excess evaporation, and prevents erosion. The Europeans, coming from a cooler climate, had developed an agricultural system of widely spaced rows that allowed the soil to warm quickly in the spring.

The bean is equally as ancient as corn. Archaeological sites in Peru have dated beans to 8000 B.C.E. and they had reached the southwestern United States by 5000 B.C.E. The bean is an excellent dietary companion to corn in that beans contain lysine, which is lacking in corn. Lysine helps the body digest protein. The name *bean* was applied to our New World plant because of its similarity to the Old World broad bean or fava bean. Hariot observed in 1588 that "called by us beans, because in greatness and partly in shape they are like to the beans in England saving they are flatter, of more divers colours, and some pied" (two or more colors in blotches).

While corn was not widely adopted in Europe, beans became an important kitchen garden plant by the end of the seventeenth century. John Parkinson wrote in *Paradisi in Sole paradisius terrestris* (1629) that beans were found "ofterner on rich mens tables" but by 1683 John Worlidge recorded in *Systema horti-culturae, or, The art of*



gardening "that within the memory of man they were a great rarity, although now a common delicate food." By 1727, Stephen Switzer wrote in *The Practical Kitchen Gardiner*: "there are more diversity of species, than of any other garden plants we have transmitted to us from foreign parts."

The French developed and popularized some of the earliest varieties of dwarf or bush beans and by the eighteenth century they had already picked up the general appellation of French bean. This resulted in confusion over the origin of the New World bean. As late as 1822 Henry Phillips recorded in his *History of Cultivated Plants* that it was known that the bean is not a native of France as was formerly believed but rather "we may conclude this excellent and wholesome vegetable is a native of the eastern extremity of Europe, or that part of Asia now belonging to the Turks."

All eighteenth-century bush bean varieties would be considered shell or dry beans today, the pods being too tough to snap. Snap beans were acquired from pole varieties, most notably, in Virginia, from the white Dutch runner bean, or what is known as the caseknife bean today. John Randolph, writing in Williamsburg, probably in the 1760s, recorded: "The Dutch sort are not so apt to be stringy, which the dwarf sort are." The first stringless varieties of dwarf beans were introduced early in the nineteenth century.

Pumpkin and Squash: Pumpkins and squash are members of the very large *Cucurbita* family, although only two species were known to the natives of eastern North America when the Europeans first landed. *Cucurbita pepo* is the most ancient of the squash species and its use has been dated to 8000 B.C.E. in southern Mexico. This group includes the pumpkin and what became known as the cymbling squash. *Cucurbita mixta*, most commonly represented by the cushaw squash, was grown by the Pueblo peoples as early as 5000 B.C.E. and was noted by Beverley in *The History and Present State of Virginia* (1705) as grown by the Indians.

What we call the pattypan or scalloped squash today was known as the cymbling squash in eighteenth-century Virginia and was far and away the most popular member of this group with the colonists. It was so named because of its similarity in shape to the English simnel cake, traditionally consumed for Lent.

The old yellow cymbling (spelled many different ways) was a trailing vine. The modern pattypan is an upright bush squash. This trans-

formation in growth habit may have occurred in the eighteenth century. Thomas Jefferson, in a 1801 letter to Philip Mazzei, differentiated between the cymbling and squash by growth habit, observing: "The seeds I sent you are of the Cymbling & Squash the latter grows with erect stems; the former trails on the ground altogether. The Squash is the best tasted. But if you will plant the cymbling and pumpkin near together, you will produce the perfect equivalent of the squash, and I am persuaded the squash was originally so produced."

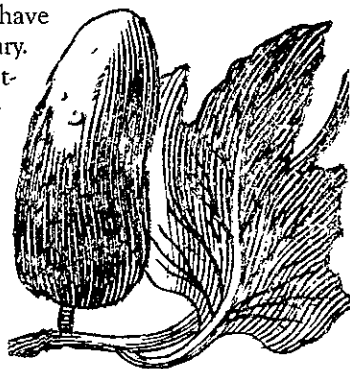
Pepper: When Columbus first sighted land, he was expecting to find a realm of exotic spices. While we know he did not find the country he was looking for, he did find a very important spice in the capsicum peppers, and indeed, they are so named because of their pungent properties, in some ways similar to the Indian pepper.

The various species of New World peppers are native to both Central and South America and were being used by South American Indians as early as 5000 B.C.E. and probably represent the first spice used by humans anywhere on the planet. On Columbus's second voyage to the New World in 1494, Dr. Diego Alvarez Chanca described the native use of the pepper, writing: "They use to season it, a vegetable called *agi* [Pepper], which they also employ to give a sharp taste to the fish and such birds as they can catch."

The pepper was probably introduced to northern Europe and England on several occasions through several routes, but it is interesting that the one route that can be documented takes a very circuitous path. The Portuguese took the pepper into the Near East and India where it quickly became a staple crop and from there moved to the Far East (can you imagine Thai cookery without pepper?).

The Ottoman Turks acquired the pepper during the siege of the Portuguese settlements at Ormuz, Persia (1513), or perhaps at Diu, India (1538). The Turks then carried the pepper with them into the Balkans and from there it made its way to Germany where it was first illustrated by the German herbalist Leonhart Fuchs in 1542. Fuchs called it the Indian or Calicut pepper.

The pepper was not used by the Native Americans and had already traveled throughout the known world before it reached North America. In 1622, the ship *Elizabeth* docked at Jamestown with a package of presents from the governor of Bermuda that included pepper seeds.



Because of the pepper's early and wide distribution, its place of origin was confused for many years. It was often listed as the Guinea pepper in eighteenth-century Virginia in the mistaken belief that it was a native of Africa. The pepper was, at best, of minor importance to colonial Virginians. John Randolph gave it only a single sentence in *A Treatise on Gardening*. Jefferson recorded planting cayenne pepper on the very first page of his Garden Book in 1767, and it is occasionally found in garden diaries of other Virginia gentlemen but remained a somewhat obscure crop throughout the eighteenth century. Some would say that the English have not learned to use the pepper to this very day.

Potato and Sweet Potato: Before 1750, when a Virginian talked about the potato, he was referring to the sweet potato. It is a native of South America but along with corn, beans, and squash had made its way to North America by the time the first colonists arrived. Curiously, the white potato went by the name of Virginia potato in England by the late sixteenth century even though it was not known in Virginia. The Reverend John Banister recorded in *Natural History* (1681): "We have potatoes, white and red (I mean those you call Spanish ones) as for the Virginia kind, I have not seen it in this country, nor can I hear any news of it, though it be common in your European Gardens."

The white potato was first discovered by a Spanish raiding party at the headwaters of the Rio Magdalena in Colombia in 1537 where they found stores of corn, beans, and what they originally called truffles. The English word *potato* is derived from the Indian word for sweet potato, *batata*.

The white potato was introduced to Ireland in the sixteenth century, and there are more legends about how it first arrived there than could possibly be covered in a paper of this size. At first it was of minor importance to the Irish but became a staple crop during the Irish rebellion in the middle of the seventeenth century partly because the English troops would steal or burn the wheat crop, but leave the potato crop with which they were not familiar, unharmed.

The white potato was first introduced to North America by Irish immigrants in 1719 at Londonderry, New Hampshire. From there it gradually spread south, generally under the name of Irish potato. Because of this designation it was generally considered to be an Irish

native by colonial Virginians. It quickly became a staple crop throughout North America and, by the nineteenth century, was often identified as a North American native. In 1809, Jefferson wrote a letter to a Mr. [Horatio Gates] Spafford to correct this bit of misinformation that Spafford had published in his *General Geography* and correctly identified the white potato as a native of South America.

Tomato: The tomato is a native of the coastal mountains of Peru but apparently was not used by the Incas. By unknown means it migrated to Central America where it was adopted and improved by the Mayans. The wild tomato is a two-celled fruit, and the Mayans, through selection, produced the multicelled fruit we know today.

From Central America it migrated to Mexico where it was adopted by the Aztecs, and it was there that the Spanish explorer Hernando Cortez first found the tomato in 1513. The Franciscan priest Bernardino Sahagún recorded in 1529 that the Aztecs combined "xitomatl" (tomatoes) with chilies and ground squash to make a sauce that sounds very much like the world's first salsa. The Spanish adopted the word *tomato* from the Aztec *tomatl*, which was actually their term for the husk tomato, a very different plant.

The tomato was first described in Europe by Pietro Andrea Matthioli in 1544 as the *mala aurea* or golden apple, suggesting that the first tomatoes brought back to Europe were yellow. The French called it the *pome d' amour* or love apple, and this was the term the English adopted. The name probably derives from the similarity of the fruit to the mandrake plant, another member of the *Solanaceae* family with a long history as an aphrodisiac.

While the tomato was used as a culinary plant by the southern Europeans from a very early date, northern Europeans regarded it with some suspicion. Parkinson wrote in *Paradisi in Sole* (1629) that southerners used it to "coole and quench the heate and thirst of the hot stomaches" but observed that it may be harmful to northern people.

In 1728, Richard Bradley recorded in *Dictionarium botanicum* that it "makes an agreeable Plant to look at, but the Fruit of most of them is dangerous." Historic folklore has long held that the English, and by association, colonial Virginians, did not eat tomatoes because they believed them to be poisonous. This is probably an exaggeration. That they believed the cold, wet properties of the tomato might be unhealthful is probably correct; that they believed them to be poisonous is an overstatement.

The tomato first came to North America as a culinary crop right here in Williamsburg with Dr. John de Sequeyra around 1745. It is interesting that de Sequeyra introduced the practice of eating tomatoes to America. John Hill, in his *Eden, or a complete body of gardening* published in England in 1757, recorded for the "Love Apple" that "anyone who has dined with the Portuguese Jews knows the value of this fruit." De Sequeyra was born of Portuguese Jewish ancestry in London in 1712.

By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the tomato started to appear in garden books and recipes. The earliest recipe seems to come from Harriot Pinckney Hory in South Carolina who included an entry titled "To keep Tomatoes for Winter Use" in a collection of recipes she copied for home use in 1770.

The tomato was originally used only as a sauce and does not seem to have been used as a ripe fruit. This may be a bit of culinary evolution that we see in our children today. They will put ketchup on anything. They adore pizza and spaghetti, but they pick the tomatoes out of their salad. We, as a society, may have undergone the same "seasoning" to the ripe fruit that we see children go through.

Peanut: The peanut is native to southern Bolivia and northwest Argentina and has been cultivated in Peru since at least 1500 B.C.E. By the time the Spanish arrived in the New World, the peanut was being grown throughout Mexico, Central, and South America.

The Portuguese brought the two-seeded peanut to Africa where it quickly became a staple crop. It was then brought from Africa with the slave trade to North America. The slang term *goober* is a corruption of the Congolese word *nguba*, and for many years the peanut was thought to be a native of Africa.

Until recently there was no evidence for the peanut, or groundnut, in Virginia before Jefferson's listing of "peendars" in 1794. Archaeology done at the Richneck slave quarters uncovered peanut shells dating to the early years of the eighteenth century, so they were likely found exclusively in slave gardens in pre-Revolutionary Virginia.

The peanut was not used to any extent by the white population until it was adopted by both Southern and Northern troops during the Civil War. Peanut butter was invented by Dr. John Kellogg (of cornflakes fame) in 1890 as a dietary supplement for his patients who had lost their teeth.



Q & A

Question: What is the earliest known reference to crape myrtles in Virginia? What is the future for these trees in the Historic Area as they die off or are destroyed by severe weather?

Answer: The crape myrtle, *Lagerstroemia indica*, is an Asian, medium-sized tree that catches the eye of our guest with its bright pink, crinkled, crape-like flowers and exfoliating bark. A favorite of Mr. Rockefeller's, it was planted throughout the Historic Area during the Restoration. Historic documents date the crape myrtle in Charleston, South Carolina, by 1780. Documentation also exists that references the ship *George Barclay* arriving in Philadelphia in April 1799 with seeds and plants for George Washington, including seed of *Lagerstroemia indica*. A few of the Williamsburg gentry may have had crape myrtles in their gardens by 1780; however, it is doubtful that it would have been grown throughout the Historic Area as seen today.

When a tree dies in a garden in the Historic Area, its replacement is decided by several factors, including the plant's appropriateness to the interpretation of a particular site. However, there are no restrictions on a plant's introduction date at Colonial Williamsburg's hotels and business properties. Therefore, our guests can enjoy modern cultivars of crape myrtles with a broad range of bloom color at these properties.

Question: What are the various types of mulberry trees in the Historic Area? Are any of them native to the New World, and are they all "yummy" in the eyes of silkworms?

Answer: The white mulberry tree and the paper mulberry tree are native to Asia and can be seen throughout the Historic Area. Ironically, the native red mulberry tree is not as abundant in the Historic Area today.

The white mulberry, *Morus alba*, has been cultivated for centuries for its leaves, which are

the main food source for the silkworm. In the mid-1600s, some of the Virginia gentry, including Gov. Edward Digges and Sir William Berkley, imported white mulberry trees for silkworm production. Although the silk industry never took off in Virginia, the tree itself did and has since naturalized in America.

Although the silkworms seemed to prefer white mulberry leaves, records dating to 1839 from a Philadelphia silk company comment that red mulberry, *Morus rubra*, made a silk "stronger and finer than that of France." Better known for its dark reddish-purple fruits that resemble blackberries, the red mulberry tree attracts a variety of songbirds and small animals. Even though birds can make quite a mess when eating the fruit, the red mulberry is less weedy and more discriminate of where it grows than the white mulberry.

Although in the mulberry family, the paper mulberry, *Broussonetia papyrifera*, is not a true mulberry and the leaves are of no interest to silkworms. Native to China, the tree is widely cultivated in Japan where the inner bark is used to make paper lanterns and umbrellas. Its introduction into America, along with the introduction of the crape myrtle, is associated with Andre Michaux. (See "Q & A," *Interpreter* [Spring 2003]: 36 for more on the mulberry.)

Question: What is with those "fists" on some of the Historic Area trees? What is that type of pruning called, why is it done, and is it eighteenth century?

Answer: The "fists" seen on some of the Historic Area trees are the result of a type of pruning called *pollarding*. Simply defined, pollarding is the annual removal of the previous year's growth.

When a tree is wounded, or in this case pruned, the tree will cover the wound with bark and new wood as a means of healing and protection from bacteria. (One could compare this process to how a scab forms on our skin.) This is a natural process called *callusing*. If pollarding is done repeatedly over several years, a swelled area of tissue or callusing forms that looks like a fist.

Pollarding will cause a tree to develop sprouts (shoots of leaves) down the tree below the cut. For this reason, pollarding has been used for centuries to provide firewood, building materials, and food for animals. Historically, farmers would cut the newly formed sprouts from the pollarded trees and feed them to their animals to strip the bark and foliage. The remaining wood would then be used for firewood or woven into fences.

Another form of pruning, known as *coppicing*, was done for similar reasons. Coppicing is the cutting back of an entire tree to the ground to

provide a fresh crop of wood to be cut again.

Whereas coppicing took up pasture area by producing thickets of new wood, pollarding increased grazing area because the new shoots were at least head height. At this higher level, new shoots were less likely to be damaged by grazing animals.

Large pollarded American sycamore trees can be seen behind Market Square Tavern and across the street from the Public Hospital. Pollarded chaste trees (*Vitex*) can be seen throughout the Historic Area including at the Colonial Garden and Nursery.

(Thanks to Laura Viancour, Landscape Department, for answering the above questions.)

Question: *Williamsburg was a planned city. How common was city planning at the time Williamsburg was created? (Submitted by an orientation interpreter)*

Answer: City planning, or the unified development of cities and their environs, has been around since ancient times, as revealed by archaeological excavations. The Greeks and Romans broadened emphasis on city planning, organizing religious and civic citadels so as to give a sense of balance. Streets were arranged in a grid pattern, and housing was integrated with cultural, commercial, and defense facilities.

Centuries later, the emulation of Greco-Roman classicism during the Renaissance revived city planning efforts along classical lines. In sharp contrast to the narrow, irregular streets of medieval settlements, Renaissance planning stressed wide, regular radial and circumferential streets that formed concentric circles around a central point with other streets radiating out from that point like spokes of a wheel.

Sir Christopher Wren's plan for rebuilding London after the Great Fire of 1666 was one example of this approach. Many European cities, such as Edinburgh, Scotland, contain an older, medieval town center with irregular warrens of streets side by side with a later "new town" planned and constructed in the eighteenth century and characterized by broad, regular street grids.

These themes of Renaissance planning were transplanted to the New World in British and Spanish colonial cities settled in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, among them Savannah, Georgia; Mexico City; Lima, Peru; and, of course, Williamsburg, Virginia, and Annapolis, Maryland. The Virginia and Maryland capitals were both designed by the governor they had in common, Francis Nicholson. (For an

in-depth treatment of town planning in colonial Virginia and Maryland, see John W. Reys, *Tidewater Towns: City Planning in Colonial Virginia and Maryland* [Charlottesville, Va., 1972]).

Perhaps the most notable post-Revolutionary example in America is the 1791 design of the District of Columbia by French-American engineer Pierre Charles L'Enfant. His plan featured a network of wide streets converging on major parks, malls, and other open spaces and on public structures such as the Capitol and the White House, ideas we can observe on a much smaller scale in Williamsburg itself. The ideas of public grandeur and radial, circumferential streets continued in the nineteenth century, exemplified in the plan for the reconstruction of Paris (1850-74) by French administrator Baron Georges Eugène Haussman.

(Adapted from Encarta Encyclopedia)

Question: *What was the life expectancy of people in eighteenth-century Virginia?*

Answer: In the years from 1750 to 1775, free Virginians who made it to the age of twenty-one lived, on average, into their early fifties. To be understood as a broad suggestion rather than a precise value, this figure was worked out several years ago by Anne Willis, training specialist in the Department of Interpretive Training, and Kevin Kelly and Lorena Walsh, historians in the Department of Historical Research. Developed from relatively small samples used in particular population studies for the colonial Chesapeake, it is subject to revision as more research is done. No comprehensive figures are available for enslaved Virginians.

Providing precise answers to questions about life expectancy and other traits is very difficult when the population in question lived in an era for which vital statistics, such as we modern Americans understand them, do not exist.

Question: *What kind of pets did Virginians keep in the eighteenth century?*

Answer: Colonial Virginians kept a wide variety of animals for service, pleasure, and companionship. The word *pet* does not come into general usage in the English language until the nineteenth century, yet the keeping of animals for companionship was widely accepted.

Among the less wealthy households dogs, cats, and other domestic animals performed valuable services but were still named and enjoyed. The eighteenth century foreshadowed a more widespread practice of pet keeping and the establishment of the humane movement of the nineteenth century.

Dogs mentioned in the *Virginia Gazette* include bulldogs, mastiffs, pointers, and Pomeranians. Students at the College of William and Mary brought their dogs in such large numbers that the college issued an order "forbidding Dogs to be kept at the College," first in 1752 and again in 1772.

John Locke, whose views on education were popular among enlightened Virginia parents, advised giving children "dogs, squirrels, birds or any such things as young girls use to be delighted with." Native birds such as cardinals and mockingbirds were kept and, when possible, taught to sing.

John Norton was given an order for "a very Small Organ for teaching Birds" on behalf of Lord Dunmore. Robert Worm-

ley Carter noted the death of his father's "old cat Coorytang" at almost seventeen years old. Wealthy Virginians kept herds of tame deer that sometimes were allowed to run in and out of the house, as was the case at Alexander Spotswood's home in Germanna.

(Thanks to Allison Harcourt, Coach and Livestock Department, for answering the above question. For a more in-depth look at pets in the eighteenth century see Allison's article "Mungril Dogs and Tame Deer," Interpreter [Fall 1996], 20-23. You may also call ext. 7621 or email Nancy Milton [nmilton@cwf.org] for a copy of this article)



(Q & A was compiled by Bob Doares, training specialist in the Department of Interpretive Training.)

WINTER

This being the last and worst Quarter of all the four, like a Dish of Chubs [fish] at the latter End of a Feast, brings up the Rear.

Now Hyems binds the Floods in Silver Chains,
And hoary Frost hath candied all the Plains.

Now Days are very short, and Nights premontiposterous long; consequently now is the properest Time for the tearing of Sheets and begetting of Bantlings, by Reason lazy Lubbers have an Opportunity to lie long in Bed, without the Disturbance either of Daylight or hot Sunshine.

This Quarter used to be welcome to poor People, when good House-keeping was in Fashion, because it always brings Christmas along with it; but now Pride, Gaming, and Whoring, have turned good House-keeping out of Doors.

Yet here and there some yet remain, that will
Uphold good Orders, and keep Christmas still.

*Virginia Almanack . . . 1774,
ed. Purdie and Dixon*

Topics of Conversation in December 1774

by Emma L. Powers

Lou is a historian in the Department of Historical Research.

The birth of a daughter to Lady Dunmore and the Governor on December 3, 1774, called for congratulations. The gentlewomen of the town looked forward to calling on her ladyship in the late stages of her lying in. They were doubly pleased to learn that the baby was to be named Virginia. Another subject much discussed among the gentry and would-be gentry centered on the upcoming wedding of James Cocke's daughter Patsy to Beverley Randolph of Chatsworth.

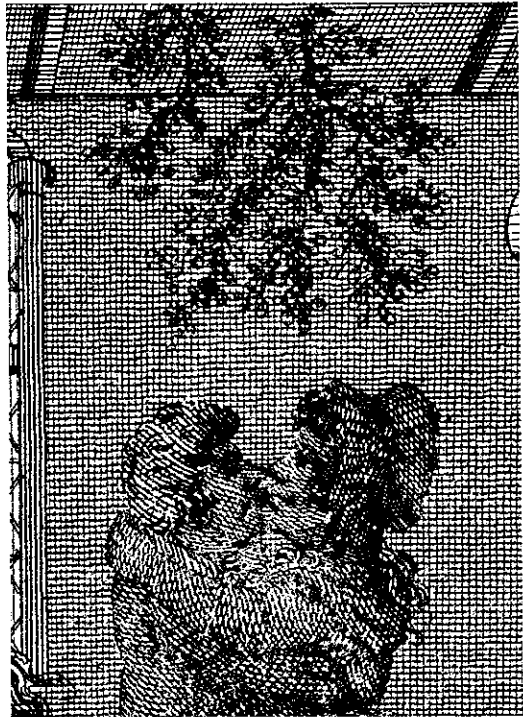
Nothing is now to be heard of in conversation, but the Balls, the Fox-hunts, the fine entertainments, and the good fellowship which are to be exhibited at the approaching Christmas.

This is how Philip Vickers Fithian characterized the gentry's excitement about the holiday in 1773 on the Northern Neck.

Here in Williamsburg in 1774 everyone looked forward to the Christmas season. Townspeople attended local social events, went to church on the twenty fifth, and savored the quiet domestic celebrations that marked the Christmas season. Slaves, Christian and non-Christian alike, also had reason to enjoy this time of year. Those owned by townspeople could expect a few days off work, and slaves hired to people in the city were allowed to travel to their home plantations until the first of the new year when, if rehired, they would return to Williamsburg.

The main political topic of conversation in many, if not most, Williamsburg families in December 1774, was the Continental Association, which went into effect on the first of the month. Few members of the household remained untouched by its provisions. Tradesmen had to assess how the prohibition on British imports would affect their livelihoods. Merchants in particular needed to calculate how the loss of profits on any shipments of goods received in the next two months could be offset. Artisans inventoried their stock to see if they had supplies enough to last the length of the nonimportation agreement.

On the other hand, some artisans, such as the tanner William Pierson, anticipated increased demand for their products. Housewives explored their larders to see if they had a lasting supply



of imported foodstuffs. A shortage of salt could be especially critical. Even the youngsters of the families wondered if innocent socializing, such as dancing, ran afoul of the Association's provision against extravagance.

The voters of Williamsburg also had to decide whom to elect to the city's Committee of Inspection and Observation on December 23. One issue under discussion was whether to broaden membership on the committee beyond the usual political leaders of the city. Neighboring James City County voters had done that when they elected twenty-eight citizens to their committee on November 25. Either at the urging of the traditional leaders or because of their conservative bent, the town's freeholders voted only two novices onto the committee.

Even before the election, those who saw themselves as future committeemen held conversations about how the committee was to be organized. The committee's duties were considerable: the Association's provisions had to be enforced, prices set on essential items like salt, and home manufacture encouraged.

Yet even as they readied themselves for the worst, many of Williamsburg's white residents were hopeful that word would come that Great Britain had backed down. When news that the British ministry prohibited the export of gunpowder to the colonies reached Williamsburg in late December, those hopes were dashed. The Williamsburg committee had its work cut out for it.



COOK'S CORNER

What's a Wassail? Lambs-wool? Beer Bowls?

by Frank Clark

Frank is a journeyman and supervisor in Historic Foodways in the Department of Historic Trades.

Here we come a-wassailing
Among the leaves so green,
Here we come a-wand'ring
So fair to be seen.

Love and joy come to you,
And to you your wassail, too,
And God bless you, and send you
A Happy New Year,
And God send you a Happy New Year.

(Traditional)

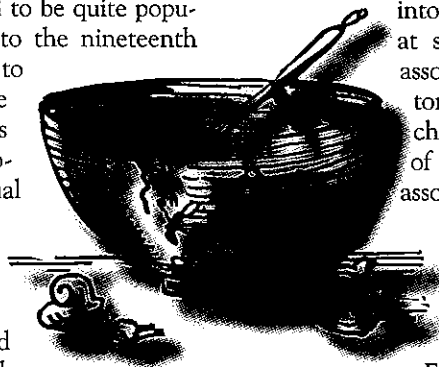
Every year during the holiday season thousands of us sing a carol about wassail, yet few know what it is and probably none of us have actually had it. Wassail is one of the hundreds of beer-based punches drunk by our English ancestors.

These concoctions seemed to be quite popular from medieval times up to the nineteenth century and were referred to collectively as *beer bowls*. The term *wassail* refers to activities associated with the consumption of a wassail bowl, the actual beverage. The origins of this custom come from Saxon mythology.

The best description of this heritage that I have found was written by John Bickerdyke in his book *The Curiosities of Ale & Beer*, published in 1889. Bickerdyke relates the following story: "Rowena, the daughter of Hengist, on being presented to Vortigern at a feast which her father had prepared for him, kneeled before him and offered him a bowl with the words *Loured king woes hoel* that is 'lord king your health.' This apparently became a popular greeting in Saxon times when two people met—one would say *Wacht heil* and the other would respond *drink heil*. The words eventually changed from being a

greeting to denote feasting in general and in the phrase *wassail bowl* to note the particular spiced ale with which the bowl was filled."

Bickerdyke later gives a description of how the beverage was prepared: "The chief ingredients were, without a doubt, strong ale, sugar, spices and roasted apples." He then gives us a particular recipe from Oxford: "A silver bowl given to the college in 1732 is partially filled with this admirable composition and passed round the festive board. Into the bowl is first placed a half a pound of Lisbon sugar, on which is poured one pint of warm beer; a little nutmeg and ginger are then grated over the mixture, and four glasses of sherry and five pints of beer are added to it. Three or four slices of thin toast are then added to the mixture and the wassail bowl is ready." He then goes on to say that in other places roasted crab apples—which burst open to look like lamb's wool—replace the toast.¹



Now that we know what goes into the wassail bowl, let's look at some of the British customs associated with it. The Saxon custom of drinking wassail at feasts changed after the introduction of Christianity. Soon it became associated with the Christmas season. The tradition developed that the wassail bowl should be consumed on Christmas, New Year's Eve, or Twelfth Night.

Frederick Hackwood, an early twentieth-century historian of drinking customs, gives us this account of the evolution of wassailing: "The ancient custom was for the wassail bowl, filled with spiced ale, to be carried about by young women on New Year's Eve, who went from door to door singing a few couplets of homely verses composed for the purpose, and presenting the liquor to the inhabitants of the houses where they called, expecting a small gratuity in return for a proffered drink of their slabby stuff."² The tradition of carrying the was-

sail bowl from house to house continued to the end of the seventeenth century.

Wishing health to crops and animals was also grouped under the name of wassailing. In the villages of Devonshire, England, for example, on the eve of the Epiphany the farmer and his workmen went into the orchard with a pitcher of cider to toast one of the best bearing trees.³

The *Oxford English Dictionary* shows that the word fell into disuse during the eighteenth century, only to reappear in the nineteenth century as nostalgia for traditions from bygone eras restyled Christmas customs. After describing the large stock of wines and ale at Fairfax House in York, England, in the eighteenth century, food historian Peter Brown noted: "Whether Lord Fairfax had a Wassail bowl at his Christmas table during the 18th century is open for debate."⁴ Today, most of us find the concept of warm ale with spices and sugar a tippler's nightmare, preferring mulled wine instead.

Mention of wassail in colonial Virginia is rare and then only in literary references harking back to earlier times, but an incredibly large number of beer-based punches were very popular with our colonial forefathers. This tradition makes more sense when you realize that during medieval times ale was made without hops and was already rather sweet.

A beer punch that was quite popular during this period was flip. Bickerdyke provides a common recipe for flip: "Place in a saucepan one quart of strong ale together with lump of sugar which have well rubbed over the rind of a lemon, and a small piece of cinnamon. Take the mixture off the fire when boiling and add one glass of cold ale. Have ready in a jug the yolks of six eggs well beaten up with powder sugar and grated nutmeg. Pour the hot ale from the saucepan on to the eggs, stirring them while doing so. Have another jug at hand and pour the mixture from one vessel to the other until a white froth appears." At this point you would put a poker that was heated red hot in the fire into the mug of ale and it would foam over the top.

Despite the addition of raw eggs to beer, these drinks might taste good if done properly. That cannot be said about recipes of some of the more bizarre beer punches I have found. The winners for all-time most disgusting beer bowls are egg ale and cock ale. To make egg ale combine twelve eggs, the gravy of eight pounds of beef, a pound of raisins, oranges, and spice in a linen sack. Suspend the sack in twelve gallons of ale for three weeks and then add two quarts of sack wine. Last, bottle it up.

Now if just reading this doesn't make you sick, then perhaps you would like some cock

ale. A version of it—capon ale—appears in the manuscript books of recipes, which date back to Elizabethan and Jacobean times, passed down to Martha Washington (then Martha Dandridge) in 1749, the year she married Daniel Parke Custis: "Take an old capon with yellow legs, pluck him, and crush his bone but keep the skin whole. Then take an ounce of caraway seeds and an ounce of anise seeds and two ounces of harts horn and one handful of rosemary tops and a lemon peel. Sow all of these into the belly of the capon and put him into two gallons of strong ale when it is working, let it stand two or three days and then drink it." Fanciful though it is, just for a moment, picture our first First Lady crushing a chicken on the back porch at Mt. Vernon for this mixture! I forgot to mention that both cock ale and egg ale were recommended as highly nutritious and healthful beverages for the sick. Personally, I think if you weren't sick when you drank these beverages, you would be afterwards!

¹ John Bickerdyke, *The Curiosities of Ale & Beer: An Entertaining History* (1889; reprint, London: Spring Books, 1965), 234; Peter Brears, *Traditional Food in Yorkshire* (Edinburgh: J. Donald Publishers, 1987), 181.

² Frederick William Hackwood, *Inns, Ales, and Drinking Customs of Old England* (London: Bracken Books, 1985), 142.

³ *Gentleman's Magazine* (1791), in Robert Chambers, *The Book of Days* (London: W. & R. Chambers, 1869).

⁴ Peter Brown, *The Keeping of Christmas: England's Festive Tradition, 1760-1840* (York, Eng.: York Civic Trust, 1992), 29-30.

A Very Rich Twelfth Cake

Put into seven pounds of fine flour, two pounds and a half of fresh butter, and seven pounds of nicely pricked and cleansed currants; with two large nutmegs, half an ounce of mace, a quarter of an ounce of cloves, and a pound of loaf sugar, all finely beaten and grated; sixteen eggs, leaving out four whites; and a pint and a half of the best yeast. Warm as much cream as will wet this mass, and pour mountain [Malaga] wine to make it as thick as batter; beat, grossly, a pound of almonds, mountain and orange-flower water, and put in a pound and a half of candied orange, lemon, and citron peel. Mix the whole well together; and put the cake into a hoop with paste under it, to save the bottom while it is baking.

Family Receipt-Book, London, circa 1811, cited in Louise Conway Belden, *The Festive Tradition. Table Decoration and Desserts in America, 1650-1900* (Winterthur, 1983).

BRUTON HEIGHTS UPDATE: New at the Rock



Becoming Americans Story Lines: New Titles in the Rockefeller Library

(The titles are listed alphabetically rather than by story line because some fit more than one category.)

Berlin, Ira. *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003. [E441.B47 2003]

Based on the premise that "slaves' history was made not only by what was done to them but also by what they did for themselves," the author tells the story of how slaves refused to surrender their humanity. The slave-master dynamic could and did shift to adapt to political, economic, and household changes, sometimes to the slave's benefit. Berlin interprets statistics, primary documents, and published scholarship to explore these possibilities.

Carlisle, Nancy. *Cherished Possessions: A New England Legacy*. Boston: Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, 2003. [NK810.C37 2003 Oversize]

This beautifully illustrated book explores the personal and cultural meaning of objects prized by their owners and their descendants. One family prized two biscuits and a corncob that was purportedly brought from England in the 1630s; another, a five-foot trompe l'oeil figure of a servant girl painted in the eighteenth century. Ceramics, silver, furniture, jewelry, and textiles are all featured in this attractive and informative exhibit catalog.

Clagett, Martin R. "William Small, 1734-1775: Teacher, Mentor, Scientist." Ph.D. diss., Virginia Commonwealth University, 2003. [LD6051.W518S53 2003]

Clagett explores Small's education in Scotland, his experiences with and influence on the College of William and Mary, and his scientific

life in England. While in Virginia, Small's relationships with Thomas Jefferson, Robert Carter, and John Page influenced their political, scientific, and moral thought for the rest of their lives.

Heat-Moon, William Least. *Columbus in the Americas*. Hoboken, N. J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2002. [E118.H43 2002]

Christopher Columbus, a product of the medieval world, was the unexpected agent to open a new world. In this small book, the author critically describes Columbus's voyages to the Caribbean with the intention of replacing popular myth with solid history of the good and evil done consciously and unconsciously by Columbus.

Juster, Susan. *Doomsayers: Anglo-American Prophecy in the Age of Revolution*. Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. [BR520.J87 2003]

The revivals of the Great Awakening in the middle of the eighteenth century opened the way for creative thinking about man and God in America during the years 1765-1815. Prophets arose; they dreamed dreams, saw visions, and heard the voices of angels and demons and were impelled to interpret and publish them to the world.

Plamondon, Martin, II. *Lewis and Clark Trail Maps: A Cartographic Reconstruction*, 2 vols. to date (3 projected). Pullman, Wash.: Washington State University Press, 2000-. [G1422.L4P5 2000 Oversize]

For nearly two centuries, William Clark's invaluable survey data remained untapped in the expedition's annals. Martin Plamondon has accomplished the cartographic reconstruction that Clark expected by using the daily measurements and notes, the maps and sketches, and other pertinent information in the journals. In addition to presenting key geographical and historic features, Plamondon's maps compare the modern beds of streams to their courses at the time of the exploration.

Stabile, Susan M. *Memory's Daughters: The Material Culture of Remembrance in Eighteenth-Century America*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004. [F158.44.S73 2004]

The author introduces five women from the Delaware Valley who kept manuscript commonplace books between 1760 and 1840. In these books, they copied and preserved meaningful texts and wrote thoughtfully about their feelings inspired by the familiar—a portrait, a garden, a desk.

Van Ruymbeke, Bertrand, and Randy J. Sparks, eds. *Memory and Identity: The Huguenots in France and the Atlantic Diaspora*. Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2003. [BX9454.3.M46 2003]

The exodus of nearly 200,000 Protestants from France made an impact first on Europe and later on America, where the Huguenots were readily accepted in the British colonies. They married into British and Dutch families; joined Anglican, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches; and soon became leading merchants, landowners, and local government officials.

Weaver, John C. *The Great Land Rush and the Making of the Modern World, 1650–1900*. Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003. [JV105.W42 2003]

Weaver describes the European conquest and reshaping of the world according to European standards of religion, law, political organization, land use, and knack for warfare. Their rationalizations of "improvement" and "advancement" for these new lands masked a voracious appetite for property.

Webb, Willard J., and Anne C. Webb. *The Glebe Houses of Colonial Virginia*. Bowie, Md.: Heritage Books, 2003. [BX5917.V8W43 2003]

The Webbs describe the glebe system, which attracted Church of England clergy to and supported them in colonial parishes. They examine surviving glebe houses in Virginia, thus providing a glimpse into the home life of colonial Anglican ministers.

Submitted by Juleigh Muirhead Clark, public services librarian, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library.

Christmas being gone, a good New Year
I wish to all my Readers dear;
Both Health and Wealth, good Meat,
strong Beer,
And all Things else the Heart to cheer.
Virginia Almanack . . . 1774,
ed. Purdie and Dixon

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

Benezet, Anthony. *Observations on the Inslaving, Importing, and Purchasing of Negroes*. 2nd ed. Germantown, Pa.: Christopher Sower, 1760.

The author was born a Huguenot in France and became an educator/reformer in Pennsylvania, having close affiliations with the abolitionist cause. The work is a concise history of slavery from ancient times through the trade in the American colonies. Biblical injunctions against the practice are cited, together with extracts from an epistle published by Quakers in London in 1758. (Bound with Fenelon volume)

[Fénelon, François de Salignac de La Mothe-]. *The Uncertainty of a Death-Bed Repentance*. Germantown, Pa.: Christopher Sower, 1760.

This work, thought to be by the celebrated French prelate and writer Fénelon, recounts the life and last moments of the fictional "Penitens . . . a busy notable tradesman, and very prosperous in his dealings, but died in the thirty-fifth year of his age." The moral given is that lives should be led without vanity or self-seeking motives and dedicated to beneficence and good works.

Loyall Family Ledgers, 1810–84.

These two items associated with the Loyall family of Louisa and Hanover Counties include numerous references to the Shelton and Dandridge families. The earlier account covers the years 1810–70 and appears to have begun existence as a mathematical exercise book. It also contains records of the estate of John Loyall, who died circa 1822. The larger volume covers the years 1830–84 and was originally a ledger kept by blacksmith Thomas Loyall. Intervening blank spaces in both books have been filled in with records of receipts, work, and business agreements later in the century.

O'Neal, David L. *The Albert H. Small Collection* (Boston: no publisher, 1996).

This is a catalog of Small's extensive assemblage of materials concerning the Declaration of Independence, its signers, and its history. It includes reference to William J. Stone's printing on parchment of the Declaration in 1823 at the order of John Quincy Adams, then secretary of state. The Rockefeller Library Special Collections section contains an original copy of this facsimile.

Newspaper: *Virginia Gazette* (Hunter), April 25, 1755.

This newspaper includes a memorial or request from American merchants involved with whale fishing and asks for continuance of Parliament's bounty awarded to encourage the industry.

Newspaper: *Virginia Gazette* (Hunter), July 17, 1755.

This issue contains detailed reports, reprinted from the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, concerning developments in the French and Indian War, together with foreign and domestic developments.

Letter: Jonathan Riddell, merchant in Norfolk, Virginia, to Francis Newton and William Gordon, wine merchants in Madeira, January 15, 1765.

This correspondence concerns various commodities from the American colonies being shipped to Caribbean islands. Concerning wine, the letter mentions that "Principal People of the Collony [sic]" had stopped drinking due to the expense of the new tariffs. Also included are prices paid for wheat, corn, pork, and beef in Virginia.

Letter: Greg, Cunningham & Co., provisioning agents in New York, to Messrs. Newton and Gordon, wine merchants in Madeira, December 18, 1774.

This letter offers insight into the difficulties of conducting business during the early days of the Revolutionary War. It discusses importation of goods into the colonies and reflects the prominent social position of many merchants at the time.

Submitted by George Yetter, associate curator for the architectural drawings and research collections, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library.

London, December 25 [1771] . . .

His Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland is to keep Christmas at Windsor Lodge, in the old English solid Way; being determined to keep open Table for the Country People, for three Days, covered with Surloins of roast Beef, Plum Puddings, and minced Pies, the rich and ancient Food of Englishmen.

His Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland bids fair for being the greatest Patriot that ever was in England.

Virginia Gazette, ed. Purdie and Dixon, 19 March 1772

"Alexandria, Va., January 7. Last night I went to the Ball . . . a large rich cake is provided and cut into small pieces and handed round to the company who at the same time draw a ticket out of a Hat with something merry wrote on it. He that draws the King has the Honor of treating the company with a Ball the next year, which generally costs him six or seven pounds. The lady that draws the Queen has the trouble of making the cake. Here was about 37 ladies dressed and powdered to the life, some of them very handsome and as much vanity as is necessary. All of them fond of dancing, but I do not think they perform it with the greatest elegance. Betwixt the country dances they have what I call everlasting jigs. A couple gets up and begins to dance a jig (to some Negro tune) others comes and cuts them out, and these dances always last as long as the Fiddler can play. This is sociable, but I think it looks more like a Bacchanalian dance than one in a polite assembly. Old Women, Young wives with young children in the lap, widows, maids and girls come promiscuously to these assemblies which generally continue till morning. A cold supper, Punch, Wines, Coffee and Chocolate, but no Tea. This is a forbidden herb. The Men chiefly Scotch and Irish. I went home about two o'clock, but part of the company stayed, got drunk and had a fight."

Journal of Nicholas Cresswell, 1774-77

Evergreen-Decking at Christmas

From every hedge is pluck'd by eager hands
The holy branch with prickly leaves replete
And fraught with berries of a crimson hue;
Which, torn asunder from its parent trunk,
Is straight way taken to the neighboring
towns,
Where windows, mantels, candlesticks,
and shelves,
Quarts, pints, decanters, pipkins, basons,
jugs,
And other article of household ware,
The verdant garb confess.

John Brand, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain* (London: Bohn, 3rd ed., 1849; first ed., 1777), 519.





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