

interpreter

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Williamsburg at Mid-century: A Population Profile

Cathy Hellier, research assistant, has summarized for us part of a report on Williamsburg that she and teaching historian, Kevin Kelly, have recently completed using data from the York County Project.

From sometime in 1747 until well into 1748 Williamsburg suffered under a smallpox epidemic. An account of the epidemic, entitled "A true State of the small Pox Febr. 22d 1747/8" and generally supposed to have been compiled by Dr. John de Sequeyra, records the gravity of the situation: at least 754 persons in town had contracted the disease, of whom 53 or more died. This account, housed in the Library of Congress, provides valuable statistics of a colonial American smallpox epidemic, but as a tool for the study of the Williamsburg community during the middle of the eighteenth century, it is priceless. The document is, in effect, a census. It lists by name 85 heads of household together with the number of persons in each household who had recovered from, died of, or escaped ("not yet taken") the contagion, and the number then sick, giving us a total number of the persons in each household. The "smallpox list" not only reveals the number of the persons in each household, but also provides descriptions of those who had died of smallpox. These descriptions tell us that in addition to the household's spouse and dependent children, the compiler included as household members slaves, apprentices, and other persons not necessarily related to the head of household; therefore, we know that he was attempting to account for the entire population. Because the compiler described *only* those who had died, however, we cannot know how many of each sex, age group, and race were contained in each household. Even so, using the smallpox list and the data files of the York County Project, we can obtain new and significant information about the Williamsburg community in 1747/8.

The smallpox list indicates that 727 persons

in Williamsburg lived in private households (including Governor Gooch's) in 1747/8, while 41 lived at the college. The estimated total population for 12 unlisted Williamsburg households identified from the York County records, when added to the total number of persons appearing on the smallpox list, yields a population estimate of 885 for Williamsburg in 1747/8.

When combined with other data, this mid-
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1787: The Other Document

Julie Richter, a project assistant in the historical research department and a doctoral candidate in early American history, collaborated with us on this article.

If asked which documents contributed the most to the establishment and growth of the United States, most of us would probably name the Declaration of Independence and the U. S. Constitution. But many historians would add a third, the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Even as the Constitutional Convention deliberated in secret sessions in Philadelphia, the Congress under the Articles of Confederation, meeting in New York the same summer, produced this remarkable legislation. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 provided for a rapid and orderly expansion of the new nation across the continent: it opened up the Northwest Territory for settlement, established a coherent plan for settling and governing the area, provided guidelines for the admission of new states, and protected the civil liberties of settlers in the process.

In addition to a well-conceived system for expansion, the Confederation Congress dealt with questions of principle such as whether newer settlements would be equal or subservient to the thirteen original states. In other words, would western territories be colonies of the established eastern states? The 1787 ordinance assured settlers in the West that a process existed for changing the territories

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Williamsburg's Population, *continued*

century estimate allows us to examine the growth of Williamsburg's population. Though we have no evidence of birthplace for almost 70 percent of the 97 heads of household in 1747/8, the records do show that about 20 percent of them were born in the British Isles. The average length of time for which there is evidence of residence in Williamsburg for the 97 heads of household before 1747/8 was 7.4 years. Together, these facts indicate that there was a substantial influx of people into Williamsburg in the late 1730s and the 1740s, many of whom came from Great Britain. British immigrants who first appeared in Williamsburg during this period include James Craig, jeweler, and Thomas Hornsby, tailor and merchant. It is important to add, however, that nearly a third of the household heads, including Henry Wetherburn (tavern keeper), William Parks (printer), and Catherine Blaikley (midwife), had lived in Williamsburg for 10 years or more by 1747/8, and that about 10 percent had lived there for 20 years or more, including prominent merchants John Blair, Esq., and William Prentis. Therefore, in 1747/8 Williamsburg was composed of a stable core population as well as a substantial number of newcomers. Williamsburg's growth continued until the end of the colonial period; the census of 1775 showed Williamsburg's population at 1,880 in that year, more than double what it had been in 1747/8.

The sizes of the households recorded on the smallpox list varied widely, but most were small. The largest households in town were those of John Blair, Esq., merchant and councillor (54 persons), James Wray, a prosperous carpenter/joiner (35 persons), and Lieutenant Governor Sir William Gooch (32 persons). In all, however, only 5 households (6 percent) consisted of 21 or more persons. The majority, 42 (51 percent) of the listed households, contained no more than 5 persons; 16 (19 percent) had between 6 and 10 persons; and 20 (24 percent) contained between 11 and 20. The average household size of those listed on the smallpox list was 8.6 persons.

All heads of household for whom race could be determined were white. Although heads of household were not racially identified on the smallpox list, for all but 5, the York County Project files contain evidence that they were white. We lack evidence concerning the race of the remaining 5.

Most of the household heads in 1747/8 were married men or widowers. Seventy-three (75

percent) household heads were male, 16 (17 percent) were female, and 8 (8 percent), listed by surname only and lacking further identifying evidence, are of unknown sex. Approximately 59 percent of the household heads were married in 1747/8 or had been married previously, while only 1 percent clearly had never been married. The marital status of the rest is unclear. Of the 16 women, at least 12 were widows, including Sarah Pegram, whose husband, William, a bricklayer, had died during the epidemic.

While evidence of age is lacking for most of the female heads of household, the evidence of age for the males indicates that they were mature men in their prime productive years. Nearly 66 percent of the male household heads were between the ages of 25 and 39. About 12 percent were ages 20 to 24, while about 16 percent were 40 to 59 years of age. Only 6 percent were age 60 or older.

The heads of household in Williamsburg in 1747/8 provided the necessary range of services to the community. Nine (9 percent) of the 97 were professionals (doctors, lawyers, and clergy); 10 (10 percent) were tavern keepers; 14 (14 percent) were merchants; 14 (14 percent) had miscellaneous occupations; and 28 (29 percent) were artisans, by far the largest group. For the rest (23 percent), there is no evidence of occupation. Of the artisans, 18 percent were engaged in clothing or textile trades; 14 percent were in the construction trades; 14 percent were woodworkers (such as cabinetmakers); 14 percent produced leather goods; and 7 percent were blacksmiths. In addition, 11 percent engaged in the "luxury" trades (goldsmith, jeweler, etc.), while 21 percent held service occupations (gardener, barber, etc.).

In sum, though "estimates" and "averages" may not describe the life of a particular individual, they do help to paint a picture of the community so that we can put the individual in the context in that community. Williamsburg at the middle of the eighteenth century was a growing urban center. During the 1730s and 40s, its established local population had absorbed a large number of outsiders, many of them from Great Britain. At mid-century most of its heads of household were married men or widowers in their twenties and thirties who provided the capital with a wide variety of goods and services, which in turn made the town more attractive to visitors and would-be residents. Williamsburg continued its vigorous growth after mid-century, more than doubling its population by the beginning of the Revolution.

Evaluating Interpretive Programs

As part of her responsibilities as assistant director of interpretive planning, Conny Graft has studied audience research and has headed several evaluation studies of new programs. She explains the purpose of such studies and something of the process.

Over the course of the past ten years several evaluation studies of interpretive programs have been done at the Governor's Palace, Wetherburn's Tavern, Carter's Grove mansion, and the Magazine. Visitor surveys have also been conducted of the Stage Wagon Ride, the Wheat Harvest, Herbal Traditions weekend, and several other special programs. The studies that were the most useful taught us not only about the effectiveness of a particular interpretive program, but, more importantly, they taught us about the process of evaluation study itself. The purpose of this article is to share with you the why, what, when, and how of planning evaluation studies of interpretive programs in an outdoor history museum.

Why should we do evaluation studies?

During my first week here at Colonial Williamsburg I remember Bill Trampusch's suggesting that I keep a diary of my impressions of the Historic Area because, as he said, "You will never see this site as a newcomer again!" Many times while walking or biking through the Historic Area or while listening to an interpreter, I have tried to step back and look and listen to the program as a first-time visitor—but it is so difficult. We need to do evaluation studies so that we can discover how our visitors are seeing and hearing what we're doing and saying.

We need to know what our visitors think, learn, and feel about our interpretive programs so that we can learn what the impact of our program is, what needs to be changed or dropped, and what needs to be added or expanded. This is especially important during times of budget restraints. Many times decisions on how to change programs are based on our own individual assumptions about what our visitors think, feel, and learn. A thorough evaluation study can provide us with a more consistent, systematic, and objective look at how well we're doing. Also, as we become more concerned with the quality of our programs, we need to know—once we've made changes—whether we have in fact improved the quality of our interpretations.

Evaluation studies force us to state the program objectives in more specific terms. If you

don't know what you expect the audience to think, learn, and feel about the presentation before it's given, how do you know if it succeeded or failed after it happens? It is not enough to say that you will interpret the role of a certain individual and his effect on the community. What exactly was the role of the individual and *how* and *when* did it affect the community? Which community did he/she affect? Williamsburg, tidewater Virginia, the Chesapeake, the world? Until you can be specific about what you will teach and what visitors will learn, it's impossible to find out whether it occurred and whether the visitor understood the message.

What does an evaluation of an interpretive program involve?

Just as historical research of a subject may require data from the historian, curator, archaeologist, and architectural historian, a thorough evaluation requires input from visitors, interpreters, and other museum staff. The impact of the program upon all three groups must be investigated and analyzed before any recommendations are developed.

An evaluation study conducted at Wetherburn's Tavern in 1985 provides us with an example of how data collected from all three groups assisted the planners in designing the new interpretation. During an experiment at Wetherburn's Tavern, we wanted to compare the effect of a first-person interpretation of Wetherburn's slaves with results obtained using third-person interpretation of the same subject. After the experiment began, members of the planning team took several tours of the site to make sure the interpretations were meeting their objectives. Then visitor surveys, visitor observations, and interviews with interpreters were conducted. Other Colonial Williamsburg Foundation staff were invited to look at both programs and tell the planners what they thought. At the end of the experiment the data were collected and analyzed.

The planning team was excited about the first-person interpretation because of the programmatic variety it brought to the site. Other museum staff were also excited about the first-person interpretations. Historical interpreters stated they preferred having members of the black programs staff give first-person interpretations of Wetherburn's slaves because of the positive response and questions they provoked from visitors. When visitor responses to the first-person interpretations were compared with responses to the third-person interpretations, a dramatic difference was discovered. Visitors talked about slavery with more sophistication and depth after they

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Evaluating Programs, *continued*

encountered a first-person interpretation of the subject than after the third-person interpretation. Once the responses from all three groups were reviewed, the planning team felt confident about deciding to use first-person interpretation of Wetherburn's slaves.

When should evaluation studies be conducted and when is the best time to do an evaluation?

Not every interpretive program needs an extensive evaluation study. If the audience is fairly small, if the number of interpreters involved in the program is small, and if the impact of the program is readily identifiable, less formal reviews can be just as useful. Having the supervisor of the program observe the program several times, listen to the interpretations, and then listen and watch the audience can be very helpful. I would still recommend some form of objective review by other museum staff who are not so closely tied to the program. Their review must be carefully directed. They must know specifically what they should be hearing, seeing, and understanding before they are asked to assist. It is also sometimes fruitful to listen in on visitors as they leave a site. Are they talking about something they've just heard or seen? Do they sound pleased or bored? Has their curiosity or interest about a certain topic been aroused?

The best time to plan an evaluation is while the program is being planned. Unfortunately, most of us think of evaluation as the very last step in implementing a program, something to be done after the program has already begun and all the pieces are in place. Evaluations conducted in this manner almost always end up on someone's shelf collecting dust. Why? Generally, so much time and sweat has gone into the project that whatever recommendations for change come as a result of a study, few staff have enough interest, energy, or money to make any changes, even though the changes may be vital to the success of the project. As soon as the objectives of the program have been clearly stated, the evaluation should be planned: what should be evaluated, what methods of evaluation will work, and who will be responsible for collecting and tabulating the results, analyzing the data, and writing the report? Formative evaluation (evaluation that takes place during the development of the program) can be a natural and valuable part of developing an effective interpretive program.

A good example of a useful formative evaluation occurred with the Stage Wagon interpretive program. In March 1986, Richard Nicoll, Anne Schone, and Allison McCaig experimented with giving visitors a thirty-minute

ride and interpretation on the stage wagon focusing on travel and transportation in eighteenth-century Williamsburg. The purpose of the experiment was to see how the program worked and to seek answers to several logistical and content-focused questions. Visitor surveys were conducted when the ride was over. At the end of the first day Richard, Anne, Allison, and I came together to review the surveys. We quickly discovered we had a problem. Visitors had been telling us on the survey that travel conditions in the city were terrible, much worse than in rural areas. Unfortunately, this was the opposite of what we had intended them to learn. Anne, Richard, and Allison were at first surprised, but during a "brainstorming" session, they developed several ideas for clarifying the message. On the second day, we conducted visitor surveys and learned that they understood that travel conditions were better in the city than in the country. This and other results from the formative evaluation helped us not only make changes in the program, but it also became part of the training material given to historical interpreters who were trained for the program in July 1986.

How should an evaluation study be conducted?

Unfortunately, there is no one answer to this question. The decisions on how to measure the impact of a program are directly tied to the stated objectives of each individual program. As each interpretive program has its own specific goals and interpretive techniques, so too each evaluation study requires different types of measurements. After having reviewed evaluation studies at several sites in the Historic Area, I find that there are two hypotheses I can make concerning "how to": (1) it is helpful to test the new interpretation with visitors during an experimental period before the final interpretive plan is written, and (2) the order of the different measurements (such as visitor surveys, peer review, internal review, and interpreter interviews) is important. I recommend that an internal review be conducted first. Once the purpose of the study and specific questions to be answered have been identified and the experiment has begun, the planners must spend time observing the interpretations to make sure that the program is doing what is intended. If weakness or problems are found, they must be rectified and observations repeated before further evaluations are conducted. Next, I recommend interviewing interpreters and visitor aides, if they are involved, and collecting their feedback on how things

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Northwest Ordinance, *continued*

into full-fledged states of the Union with the same status as the original thirteen. As John Selby noted in the August 1987 issue of *Questions & Answers*, if Great Britain had devised a way to do something similar for her American colonies, there might not have been a Revolution. And the slavery issue was dealt with in a decisive way: it was forbidden in the Northwest.

Although the writing and passing of this legislation in 1787 took only a week, many of its provisions had been the subject of discussions in the Confederation Congress for several years, and some had even been included in two earlier ordinances designed to regulate the Northwest Territory. This was the land north and west of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi claimed by Virginia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York. These states all eventually relinquished their claims (based, they said, on their ancient charters) to the United States to be used for the common good.

Administration of these newly acquired lands posed a complex set of problems related to division and sale of the lands as well as immediate and long-range provisions for governing settlers. Thomas Jefferson was chairman of the Congressional committee charged with submitting a plan to govern the western territory. The plan (in Jefferson's handwriting) was revised by the Confederation Congress before becoming the Ordinance of 1784, legislation that called for full statehood when a state's population equaled that of the smallest state of the original thirteen. The clause eliminating slavery in the Northwest after 1800 was struck down, as were Jefferson's fanciful suggestions for naming the proposed ten new states (Metropotamia, Pelisipia, Assenisipia, and so forth).

This general plan for government required more detailed legislation for managing the physical property, so the Land Ordinance of 1785 was passed. It provided for a grid system that divided the territory into townships 36 miles square. The townships were further subdivided into 36 one-mile square lots and sold for \$1.00 an acre (or \$640 per lot). Income from the sixteenth lot in each township was reserved for public education—another innovative and farsighted provision for the times.

As some of the land was surveyed and sales to speculators were imminent, the Confederation Congress reconsidered the Ordinance of 1784 and replaced it with a three-stage admission plan for statehood. Jefferson's committee had favored early statehood for ten states to be

carved from the territory, but the final version, the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 (passed while he was ambassador to France), slowed down the process somewhat. The new law called for a governor, a secretary, and three judges for the entire territory at first. As soon as there were 5,000 free adult males in the territory, an assembly could be elected to serve with a five-man council selected by the Congress from a group nominated by the assembly. The territory was to be divided into three to five states, and the final stage, full statehood, could be achieved with voting representation in Congress as soon as any one of the states' population grew to 60,000. Thus Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin were all admitted to the Union as states by 1848, and the precedent was established for future territorial expansion.

Significant features of the new ordinance were the prohibition of slavery, guarantees of religious freedom, trial by jury under the common law, and freedom from cruel and unusual punishments. Article III stipulates that "schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."

We celebrate the bicentennial of two great documents this year. As we remember the woes of the Congress under the Articles of Confederation, we can applaud its two stunning achievements: winning the war that ensured the birth of our nation and writing the plan that structured its growth.

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Evaluating Programs, *continued*

are going. Thirdly, it is always helpful to invite other staff from Colonial Williamsburg and/or other museums to review the program. Then the impact on the visitor must be measured. There is a multitude of techniques that can be used to study this last group. Naturalistic observations (an observer follows the visitor and unobtrusively records his comments and behaviors), surveys, and interviews are just a few available methods. Again, the purpose of the study will help determine the most appropriate technique. All of the techniques require thoughtful planning and advice from experts in the field of audience research.

Now that I have covered the why, what, when, and how of evaluation studies, I would like to add a bit of my own personal plug for the direction of future studies. It has been my experience that we have become fairly good at stating our interpretive objectives. We have a feel for what we expect visitors to learn as they leave each individual site or program. The

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Evaluating Programs, *continued*

ten-year plan, "Becoming Americans," tells us what we expect visitors to learn about the entire city. But what about the impact on visitors' behavior? How does their visit to a particular site, program, and the entire museum affect their lives? Do they read about some aspect of eighteenth-century life after their visit? Do they visit and/or support more historic sites or museums as a result of their experience here? These are more difficult questions to pursue but are, I believe, more interesting questions to investigate. As you plan your interpretations and programs, see if you can write some behavioral objectives. Send me your ideas. It will be interesting to see how much agreement exists among ourselves, especially because there are so many of us, about what the larger impact of this experience upon our audience should be. I look forward to hearing from you!

Our Young Visitors

As the first of a series of articles on interpretation for children, we have asked Kay Cunningham, early childhood education coordinator for The Children's Museum in Indianapolis, Indiana, to describe characteristics of young children that have implications for interpreters working with family groups.

Children between the ages of two and seven are not miniature adults. They have their own distinct ways of determining reality and of viewing the world. First, very simply, they are physically smaller than adults. They cannot see everything an adult can see. What they can see, they often view from below rather than from above, as would an adult. Stoop down right now and look around. Do you see what the world looks like from three feet above ground rather than five or six feet? Children are also looking at the world from a different perspective than an adult because they have had fewer experiences and because their development pattern has only just begun.

Each year of a child's life provides him or her with many additional experiences and propels the child a few more steps through the stages of development. There are many traits typical of the two-to-seven age group, but these qualities vary depending on the child's age, personality, and range of experience. The characteristics listed below should be used only as a framework to build a program that takes into account the individual needs of each child.

Children between the ages of two and seven:

- are curious about the world around them.
- ask many questions.
- need to touch, look, listen, smell, and taste to learn about the concrete world.
- are very "me" oriented or self-centered. They need to relate their experiences to themselves in one-on-one situations; waiting turns or watching others is very hard for them at this stage.
- have short *group* attention spans but long attention spans if the activity involves them both physically and mentally, is of high interest, and is a match developmentally.
- need one-on-one experiences with an adult.
- are intuitive thinkers rather than logical thinkers.
- are developing language skills. Through this stage children tend to use the literal meaning of most words and will not understand all words they hear or even many words they say.
- have difficulty reversing any process, such as putting many parts together to make a whole.
- have a limited sense of time and space. They do not yet have the ability to place themselves in a particular time or place in relation to all time and all space. For example, telling children before leaving on a trip that Grandma's house is one hundred miles away and it will take two hours to get there will not relieve their need to ask "Are we almost there yet?" only ten miles down the road!

In summary, two- to seven-year-olds are short, "me" oriented bundles of energy with short *group* attention spans. They have developing, but limited, language abilities and limited concepts of time and space. They must work in the concrete world of here and now for learning to occur. They need to touch and talk and do, sometimes many, many times for understanding to take place. But most important, they are curious, eager to learn, open to the wonders of the world, and great fun to work with!

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