

interpreter



Redefining Family: A Becoming Americans Story by Anne Schone

Anne is a museum educator in the Department of Interpretive Education and Support and is the chair of the Redefining Family Story Line Team.

Building on last year's Choosing Revolution kick off of the Becoming Americans theme, the family story line begins its programming in March. Telling a family story, like telling a Revolutionary story, is not a new idea at Colonial Williamsburg. Even the *Story of a Patriot* is as much a family story as a Revolutionary War story.

So just what will be new in 1997? The new programming is exciting, and many complexes are involved in making family their story. Traditional family sites are rethinking their focus. For example, interpretation at the Geddy House has been a family story for a long time. But this year's programming is new. Their interpretive team rethought interpretive concepts, considered which key ideas applied best at their site, explored how they could describe diversity in the family, created a new interpretive mode, and proposed an expanded program to support daily events. So the old Geddy story is a new family story.

What do we want visitors to learn about families in 1997? We hope to help them focus on understanding change. Visitors will be challenged to examine family issues such as the evolving roles of men, women, and children; to look for the family values that eighteenth-century people shared about religion, education, marriage, and race; and to examine other concerns that are relevant in visitors' lives today. They will find that not all eighteenth-century people agreed in their values and that the institution of family itself was undergoing a redefinition. Just like today, there was no typical family. Visitors may be surprised at what they learn about families in the eighteenth century. They will come away understanding that family was important to the colonists.

A wedding is an excellent example of this concept. It is an event that people today can relate to and feel they already understand. Love, courtship, wedding practices, expectations for happiness in marriage, the rituals spelled out in the ceremony, and the associated feasting are elements that have remained constant and become familiar over time. A careful examination of wedding practices, however, shows visitors



an eighteenth-century world that is very different from their own. Expectations for men and women two hundred years ago are foreign to current understanding. Practices like dowries no longer exist. Yet the visitor will find much to recognize. Romantic and sentimental courtships, and marriages based on love and mutual choice were becoming the norm for eighteenth-century couples.

What key ideas do we want visitors to learn during this family story year? We hope they will understand that the term *family* had a broad meaning to eighteenth-century people and included a large kin and nonkin group. We also hope they will learn that, beginning with the gentry and moving through society, this traditional meaning of family was undergoing change about the time the new nation began. Families began to look inward and become more private. The naturalized French citizen Crèvecoeur expressed it well when he called his home "the small sanctuary wherein my family resides" and spoke of the happiness of seeing his children grow and develop. Families were becoming more like the nuclear

families we know today. Husbands and wives saw themselves and each other differently in 1800 than their predecessors had in 1700. Children were becoming more central to the meaning of family, and childhood was seen as a distinct and special time. Rising affluence meant that there was more "stuff" for family members, including the children. From toys to teapots, families put meaning on the acquisition of and use of objects. Numerous books were available to help them use and care for their objects and even raise their children. People became comfortable in expressing their love and their grief in more open and eloquent ways.

Changes in family life become more understandable when considered in the light of the political, social, consumer, and reli-

gious revolutions also taking place in the eighteenth century. These revolutions altered the colonists' family lives. Visitors need to be reminded that the colonial period was not static; entirely new ideas about family had to develop from the early colonial experience. White and black immigrants came to Virginia without family, as single people, and had to redefine family structure. Seventeenth-century whites married late, had few surviving children, and saw marriages quickly broken by the death of a spouse. Slaves could not marry legally in either the seventeenth or the eighteenth century. Native Americans encountered life changes as they struggled with introduced diseases and displacement. The increasing dominance of the white economic system also altered traditional Native American family roles and ways of life.

Family life in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Chesapeake differed from that of colonial New England. There families immigrated in family groups, had fewer diseases to deal with, and lived longer. Although some New Englanders owned slaves, the region did not create an



economic system based on slavery, a system that was so critical to black and white family life in Virginia.

Eighteenth-century white families were quite different from their seventeenth-century counterparts. In Virginia, a typical white marriage in the third quarter of the eighteenth century lasted from twenty to twenty five years, had seven or eight surviving children from possibly ten births. One hundred fifty years after the founding of the colony at Jamestown, men and women were living longer; children often knew their grandparents, and sometimes, their great-grandparents. The economic system based on slavery was entrenched and had altered both black and white family development.

Black family life was much more fragile.

[William Byrd of Westover showed concern with his advancing age—28 March 1740 entry written on his 66th birthday]

God preserve my head and grant I may not lose my memory and sense.

Another Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1739–1741. Edited by Maude Woodfin. Dietz Press, Richmond: 1942.

At the center was the powerlessness of the enslaved to control their own destinies. Slave husbands could not protect their wives and children; the white patriarch made the ultimate family choices for the enslaved. Slave marriages were not sanctioned by the institution of law or custom. Slave children were kept with their mothers only during their dependent years. As black family life developed, the larger community of the extended black family retained great importance. Yet as the enslaved interacted with white families and cared for white children, they exerted a profound influence on whites. These are some of the key ideas about colonial family life.

How will we interpret these ideas, and where can we tell our story to have the greatest impact on our public? The “how” is that it is best told through the stories of diverse individuals and of the events and issues in their lives. The “where” includes everywhere in the Historic Area, but the focus is on certain key complexes and programs. For example, issues about education can be approached in a variety of ways: through apprenticeship at the Geddy House and Carpenter’s Yard; for women at the Geddy House, Wetherburn’s Tavern, and Fashion Trades; for slave children at the Brush-Everard House, and in a program featuring Mrs. Wager.

Family health is an Apothecary Shop story but also one to be told throughout town—at the Brush-Everard House and in special programs at the Powell House, among others. The Courthouse and the Play Booth Theater provide the drama of family life and spell out family issues in broad terms. Daily and Community Events further that drama. Rural Trades provides an important link with the lesser families, the tenants, and the emi-

grants and shows the family as an economic work unit. This is also a story that can be told at the Geddy House and Wetherburn’s Tavern. The Family Program developed in School and Group Services will place visitors in roles of Williamsburg family members as they explore issues and family stories. Each of the complexes is looking at how it can bring back to life those people from its sites and the stories those people can tell. The Randolph complex tells a family story as well as a story of revolution. As visitors investigate the lives of various families and learn of their concerns, joys, and sorrows, they will see the past both “as a foreign country” and as a familiar old friend.

Finally, those of you following the saga of the many name changes for the family story line will be pleased that we have, at last, settled on one of the earlier names—**Rede-fining Family**—as the final choice. Trying to find the best possible name has been a lesson in frustration. Although *family* is a simple word, it is a complex idea, and each of us places particular meaning on the word based on our own family experience. It is difficult to erase our modern perception of the term and to focus on understanding what family was to colonial Americans. Was the colonial family nurtured? transformed? renewed? The answer for each one of those terms is both “yes” and “no.” No title can perfectly define what family was. Most of the titles we considered for the story line reflect the idea of change, and change is the key element, but the redefined family tells us more than that. All colonial American families were altered by the impacts of other groups, the American experience, and changes throughout society. We feel “Redefining Family” most closely reflects that idea. ■

[“James Carter’s Account of His sufferings, Etc.” July 16, 1807—Caroline County, Virginia]

... My Sister Nelly was sold to one Johnson a merchant of Fredy it is true that Johnson is a Speculator but his Greatest Speculation is on human flesh he sold my sister Nelly where I have never heard of her sence.



What Is A Family?

By George ("Doc") Hassell

Doc is master of the Geddy Foundry and manager of the Geddy site in the Department of Historic Trades/Presentations and Tours and is a member of the Redefining Family Story Line Team.

In this issue's lead article, Anne Schone talks about how the difficulty finding a name for the family story line reflected the genuine complexity of the story itself. The name we finally ended up with, *Redefining Family*, may not be perfect in all respects, but it does seem to point us, visitors and interpreters alike, in the right direction. I include below a few not-quite-random observations on defining—and redefining—family. They are not offered as pronouncements, but thrown out as a way to get the conversation started.

I. One of the most difficult parts of developing an interpretive strategy for the *Redefining Family* story line is being able to step back and look at the family as something that needs defining, either now or in the eighteenth century. We all tend to assume that we know what a family is, and to assume that it has always been pretty much the same in its basic nature, at least until very recently.

II. We hear a lot of discussion these days about family issues: the preservation of family values, the breakdown of the traditional family, the role of family in society, and the role of government in the family. Implicit in most of these discussions is the question "What is a family?" and the companion question "What *should* it be?"

III. Sometimes our collective image of the traditional family reminds me a little of my own personal image of a traditional Christmas. I tend to think of it as a timeless model by which all Yule seasons should be judged until I look at it closer and realize it consists of a highly selective collection of memories of maybe two Christmases I experienced

roughly sometime between 1952 and 1956. Coincidentally, the traditional family seems to have flourished in almost the same time frame.

IV. The concept of family varies so much with time, place, culture, and class that it sometimes seems difficult even to identify what we want to examine. If we say we want to look at a Pamunkey Indian family of the seventeenth century, do we mean that we are studying what we call a family or what they called a family? Was there even a Pamunkey word that corresponded to family in the way we use it now? Are we talking about a man and a woman and their offspring? About everyone who lives in the same *Yi-Hakan*? About the extended kinship network that runs throughout the community? About the group of people responsible for the nurture and education of children? About the basic economic unit?

V. For any culture or time period, answering the question "What is a family?" seems to involve answering "Who is in it?" and "What does it do?"

VI. Although a precise definition is hard to pin down, there are several recurring concepts of family—family as a household with everyone living and working in the same place under the authority of a clearly recognized household head; family as nuclear unit of parents and children; family as an extended kin network; and family as a lineage, the unbroken line of dead ancestors, the living, and the unborn.

VII. All of these concepts can probably be found in the three parent cultures of colonial Virginia—Native American, West African, and European—but the emphasis seems different in each culture. European society put greater weight on the concept of an authority-based household and later the nuclear unit. Native-American and West African societies emphasized the extended kinship network. For European gentry, a focus on lineage was concerned with preservation of name and estate. For West Africans an emphasis on lineage was driven by the requirements of domestic religion and preservation of the bonds that held clans and people together.

VIII. Even in the same culture, different classes might put more or less value on a particular concept of family. For a gentleman, lineage might be foremost, but for a craftsman, the working household might be most important.

IX. The same individual might employ different definitions of family at different times. James Geddy might at one time think of his wife and children as his family, but at another time he might include his mother, brothers, sisters, nieces, and nephews. He might also speak of an apprentice, slave, or journeyman as part of his family.

X. George Wythe, classical scholar that he was, might even have used the word family on occasion to mean only the slaves or servants in his household—the original meaning of the Latin *familia*.

XI. Of all the concepts of family in eighteenth-century Virginia, the idea of family as household—structured by the requirements of labor and relations of authority and dependence—seems the most alien from a twentieth-century perspective. In the definition of family as household, ties of blood or affection are irrelevant.

XII. In the lives of many slaves, we see two opposing concepts of family that split the experience of family life. A slave belonged to two families, that of the white master, a family that was defined by power, and that of his or her own kin, real or fictive.

XIII. If a family is to be defined as a structure based on authority, it would be difficult for the dominant white society to recognize the existence of a slave family. It is striking how often slave kinship relations in the eighteenth century are acknowledged but how seldom a white person refers to a slave's family as being anything other than his master's family.

XIV. The traditional West African concepts of family that emphasized the importance of extended and fictive kinship ties ultimately provided the African-Virginian population with a strategy for rebuilding family structures that coped with the conditions of slavery.

XV. In trying to define the perimeter of family, it might sometimes be useful first to

consider one or more of the functions commonly performed by family as they apply to a particular individual. For instance, look at the function of the nurture and education of children as applied to Dennis, a slave boy owned by Robert Carter of Nomini Hall. Make a list of all the people who played a part in caring for and educating Dennis. If we assume these people stand in some sort of familial relation to him, what sort of structure emerges?

XVI. The emergence of the more modern, affectionate family entailed a redefining of family in terms of both who was included in it and what it did. The supernumeraries, such as apprentices, slaves, indentured servants, and more distant kin, were gradually excluded; and the private functions of family were enhanced at the expense of public functions.

XVII. Changing the terms that define family can change the interior dynamics. The concept of romantic love first entered European culture in the Middle Ages as something possible only for the genteel and only outside of marriage. When it was democratized and domesticated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and came to be seen as an essential element in the choice of a marriage partner, a profound change in outlook and expected behavior occurred.

XVIII. The affectionate family seemed to develop in two stages in the eighteenth century. It was first defined in terms of negative values, a refuge by virtue of the absence of the strife and turmoil found in the outside world. Later, it came to be viewed as a source of the positive values of love, companionship, devotion, and emotional nurturing.

XIX. The modern family that historians see emerging in the eighteenth century, a family with a structure that is less authoritarian, more openly affectionate, egalitarian, and child-centered, is generally regarded as developing first in white, gentry families and



[Newly graduated from Princeton, this young Presbyterian came to Virginia in October 1773 and spent a year as tutor for the Robert Carter family at Nomini Hall]

[2 September 1774] Extreme hot to day—Yesterday a Negro Child about six years old sickened as to appearance with the Ague & Fever, & to Day about eleven in the morning it expired! It is remarkable that the Mother has now lost seven successively, none of which have arrived to be ten years old!

Journal & Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian 1773–1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion, Hunter Dickinson Farish, ed., Colonial Williamsburg Inc., Williamsburg, VA., 1957

subsequently becoming a model for other groups. But it might be worthwhile to consider the European settlers' shocked disapproval of the amount of freedom allowed to Native-American children, or to look at the black family as it existed in the slave community and ask ourselves: Is this a family essentially defined by considerations of authority, dependence, and economic value, or by bonds of genuine affection and emotional support?

XX. The study of the past probably can't give us a defining answer but can provide us with valuable new perspectives from which we and our visitors can consider the question "What is a family?"

One final observation:

XXI. The aphoristic style is the last refuge of the muddled thinker. For a clearer, more extensive, and more entertaining exposition of family matters, dip into the Redefining Family Resource Book. ■

Colonial Welfare

"Defend the Poor and Fatherless: Do Justice to the Afflicted and Needy"

(Ps. 82:3)

by David DeSimone

David is assistant manager of religious studies and programs in the Department of Historic Trades/Presentations and Tours.

Throughout the ages, the psalmist's declaration has challenged the actions and passions of civilized society. To tend the needy and the fatherless, and to care for the afflicted are commands that are central to the core of Christianity. As Christianity spread, the church became the vehicle through which charity was administered to the poor but the moral and civil obligation remained with every individual of the community. For eighteenth-century Virginians, taking care of the poor, widows, and orphans was not only a religious obligation but a parish community concern. "The poor" included indigent adults; among them widows with no means of support, and destitute orphans. (NOTE: Significant numbers of widows and orphans had substantial estates. Propertied orphans came under the jurisdiction of the county courts who required their guardians to make

periodic reports.)

The vestry records of eighteenth-century Virginia parishes contain ample evidence that concerted efforts were made to aid the destitute. Parish vestries were charged by law with the care of the needy. This charge included provisions for housing, clothing, medical treatment, and funeral expenses of the poor. To finance these services, funds came primarily from taxes levied by the parish. Individuals sometimes set aside money, by will or deed of gift for relief of the poor often specifying that the funds be administered by the parish vestry. Certain fines imposed by county courts for moral offences were turned over to the vestry to assist impoverished parishioners.

By the 1750s, the growing duty of poor relief challenged one parish to try an innovative experiment. In 1752 the Upper Parish of Nansemond County proposed to build an almshouse where the poor of the parish would be housed, supervised, put to work, and their children schooled. The house was completed in Suffolk on November 14, 1754, and the vestry ordered that "the churchwardens should at Christmas Next or Some Convenient time Soon After Convei[y] into the Said House All the Poor persons that now is or Hereafter Shall be Maintained at the Parrish Expence there Be Supported." The vestry hired a parishioner named Samuel Wallis to oversee the administration of the school. His instructions were "to teach eight poor Chil-

dren Which Is to be sent into the Said House by the Church Wardens to Read [w] Rite &c." For his efforts the vestry granted Wallis "annually the Sum of Twenty Pounds Current Money His Own Children Accomadated And Liberty To take in And School ten Children besides the Poors Accordin[g] as he Can Agree With there [sic] Parents."

The example taken by the Upper Parish of Nansemond seems to have had some effect on the passage of a general law authorizing the establishment of poorhouses or workhouses in parishes throughout the colony. The general law, however, was affected by a petition from the Reverend Thomas Dawson, the churchwardens and the vestry of Bruton Parish. The petition was directed to the May 1755 session of the Virginia Assembly and stated:

That the Charge of providing for the Poor of said Parish, hath much increased, which they conceive is owing to the great Number of idle Persons, that resort to the City of Williamsburg (situate in the said Parish) in publick Times, who lurk about the Town, and Parts adjacent, till they gain a Settlement, and then become a Charge to the Parish. That there is a House belonging to the Parish, at the Capitol Landing, which might easily be converted into a Workhouse, where the Poor might be more cheaply maintained, and usefully employed; provided the Officers of the said Parish had sufficient Power to compel them to live there; and praying, that An Act might pass to empower them to compel the Poor of their Parish, to dwell and work in the Said House, under such Regu-

lations and restrictions, as this House shall direct.

The assembly ordered that a bill addressing the needs of Bruton Parish and those of other parishes be directed to the appropriate committee for drafting. The 1755 session passed in due course "An Act for employing and better maintaining the Poor." The legislation authorized the vestry of every parish, or, for conditions of serious expense, the vestries of two or more conveniently located parishes, to provide land and a house or houses "for the lodging, maintaining, and employing of all such people as shall be upon the parish, or who shall desire relief from the vestry or churchwardens." Exceptions were made for those people physically incapable of labor because of sickness or advanced age. Furthermore, the act called for vestries to provide materials and equipment for the employment of the poor and to use the proceeds of their labor toward their support. The vestries were directed to use parish levies for the education of the poor children placed within the workhouse and to appoint overseers to manage the entire establishment. Finally, the law required that the churchwardens of every parish maintain a register of people receiving relief and, most interestingly, that persons on relief should wear a badge showing the name of the parish. One can only imagine the social and personal stigma placed on the people walking through Williamsburg wearing the parish badge, if indeed they were ever used.

One of the parish vestry's most important functions was to oversee and supervise the humane treatment of poor orphans and in-

The Good Samaritan.



digent widows. Vestrymen routinely ordered parishioners to house, feed, clothe, and teach destitute parish residents who were not assigned to workhouses. Parishioners received a stipend from the vestry when they took a person into their homes. The November 1757 report of the vestry of Stratton Major Parish offers a glimpse at a wide variety of parish decisions:

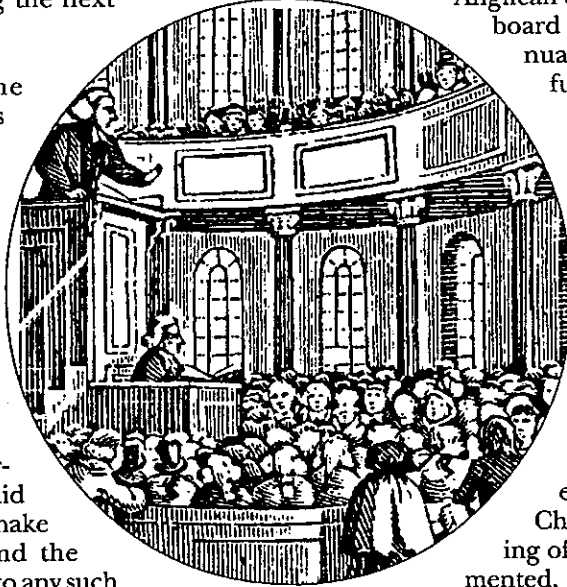
Ordered that Mary Hollinger keep Elizabeth Brown [orphan] the Ensuing Year & that she have 400 lb. Tobacco Levied for the same at laying the Next Levy. Ordered That the Collector Pay Mary Hollinger for her Acco[Account] for Shoes & Stockings for Elizabeth Brown; 5 shillings.

Ordered that Richard Eubank Keep John Green [orphan] the Ensuing Year & that he have 600lb. Tobacco Levied for the same at laying the next Levy.

Ordered that the Church wardens agree with some Person to take Sally Morrise Daughter of John Morrise decd. and on the Said Person's giving Bond & Security to keep the Said Sally Morrise off this Parish, its Ordered that the said Church wardens make Indentures & Bind the said Sally Morrise to any such person According to Law & hereby impowered to Allow them 1000lb. Tobacco to be Levied at Laying the next Parish Levy.

Ordered that Sarah Gramshill keep the Child of Christopher Grindley's which she now hath in Care the Ensuing year & that she have 550lb. Tobacco Levied for the same at Laying the next Parish Levy.

Without question, each of these cases must have had a different story. The record for this one vestry meeting dealt with at least twenty more situations involving poor orphans and illegitimate children as well as binding out older poor children to learn a trade. The amount of tobacco appropriated by the vestry for the upkeep of the orphans



may have been determined by the income of the parishioners who took them in. Adults who were ordered to board indigent orphans were often instructed to provide them a basic education. Several vestries attached requirements to this effect. In October 1724, the vestry of Petsworth Parish, Gloucester County ordered:

that all orphans [sic] Children bound out by the Parish hereafter that if they cannot Read at thirteen years old that then they Shall be Sett free from there then Said Master or Mistress or taken from them.

With the great expense placed on the parish community to provide funding for the upkeep of poor orphans, poor widows, and workhouses, Virginia law made no provision for the needs of poor widows and orphans of Anglican clergymen. Out of necessity and real fear, by mid-century

Anglican clergymen organized a board of trustees that met annually for the support of a fund for widows and orphans of deceased colleagues who had accumulated little or no estate. Clergymen came to Williamsburg to hold annual meetings and to petition the public for charitable donations. Collections were taken after special sermons were delivered at Bruton Parish Church. The 1771 meeting of the clergy is well documented. Advance notices of the

board meetings were published in the *Virginia Gazette*, and the public was made aware of the clergymen who were to deliver the sermons. On March 20, 1771, Rind's *Virginia Gazette* advertised:

The next meeting of the Treasurer, Trustees, and subscribers to the fund for the relief of the widows and orphans of clergymen, is to be held at the College, on Saturday, the 4th. of May. Trustees for the present year, the Rev. Messers. Henry Skyring, James Maury Fountaine, Arthur Hamilton, William Willie, Thomas Wilkinson, and Alexander White. Preachers, the Rev. Messers. Josiah Johnson, in the morning, and Samuel Henley, in the afternoon.

The meeting took place as scheduled on

May 4, 1771, and on Sunday afternoon, May 5, the Reverend Samuel Henley preached a sermon that one can imagine must have been delivered with brilliant homiletic skill and filled with great compassion. Henley, then a young bachelor of twenty six, had his sermon printed by William Rind two weeks after the event. In the first half of the sermon, Henley delivered an exhortation on the duties of Christian benevolence. His finest and most compassionate words were saved for the remainder of the sermon. At one point Henley pleaded before his audience:

And certainly, if there be any persons intituled to the prescription of the text [Henley's introductory text was from Hebrews 13:16], they are such Widows and Orphans of the Clergy in this Colony as are left in a destitute condition. For, to whom can knowledge, experience, and prudence—power, authority, influence—or fortune, be so much wanting, as to those, who are stripped of them all, by the loss of, a husband and a father? Among the bitterest imprecations, that ever were uttered, which are more bitter than these?—"Let his children become fatherless, and his wife a widow!—let his days be few, and let another take his office!"

Henley's reversal of the seventh and eighth verses of Psalm 109 was almost certainly used for dramatic effect. In his defense of the annual plea for funds, Henley declared:

Should it be inquired, upon what pretence, we ask your contributions for a purpose like the present; the reasons are many. To the Clergy, the objects of this charity first fly for assistance, and were the stipends of the Clergy, adequate to their office, no other resource would be wanted. The defect in their revenue leaves the more to the public, and it is in this way, they seek compensation Against disasters of this kind, the Law hath made no provision.

On May 9, 1771, Rind's *Virginia Gazette* reported the results of the benefit:



The Treasurer, Trustees, and Subscribers to the Fund for the Relief of the Widows and Orphans of Clergymen, met on the 4th Instant...and made Collections at the Church on the Day following, from whence they derive the Sum of sixty one Pounds nine Shillings, which they cannot reflect upon without a deep sense of the Obligation they are under to the bountiful Contribution. The Sum ordered before the Meeting broke up, on the 6th, to be distributed among six Widows, and several Orphans, is sixty Pounds fifteen Shillings.

Although sixty-odd pounds may not have given a full year's support to all needy widows and orphans of clergymen, it provided temporary relief for some. Clergymen in Virginia struggled to raise a family on a salary of 16,000 pounds of tobacco a year. In the eighteenth century 16,000 pounds of tobacco frequently sold at 2 pence per pound. Depending on the current market price of tobacco in a given year, a clergyman might receive a salary that could be valued at as little as £67 or as much as £133 per year. Therefore, many clergymen supplemented their income by growing crops on parish glebe lands. Unlike the Reverend James Blair or the Reverend William Willie, not all Anglican clergymen enjoyed the luxury of accumulating a large estate through marriage into a gentry family, or through wise investments. Thus, these special benefits became increasingly important throughout the colony.

After the American Revolution and the disestablishment of the Anglican Church, Virginians of all denominations carried on the religious and moral duty of helping the disadvantaged. No longer supported by parish levies, the care of widows, orphans, and the poor became a public function. This social responsibility presented a new and different challenge to late eighteenth-century Virginians, one that called for voluntary offerings, community planning, and the faith and support of every family within a parish boundary. ■

Suggested Readings on Family

Brown, Kathleen M. *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Brown's book "focuses on two related issues: the role of gender in the creation of racial slavery and the intensification of patriarchal forms in gentry families, colonial culture, and the legal apparatus" of early Virginia. This volume includes a number of references to early Williamsburg and York County residents.



Fithian, Philip V. *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion, 1773-1774*. Edited by Hunter Dickinson Farish. Williamsburg, Va.: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1957.

Firsthand observations of members of a wealthy gentry family by a young Presbyterian from New Jersey who spent a year as tutor for the children of Robert Carter of Nomini Hall.



Kulikoff, Allan. *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1986.

Kulikoff "analyzes economic and demographic change between 1680 and 1750 and describes how men and women—white and black—forged new social relations in the light of that experience." He also shows how the white ruling class exerted its power over blacks and yeoman whites after 1750. Chapters on "The Origins of Domestic Patriarchy among White Families" and "Beginnings of the Afro-American Family" address story line issues.



Smith, Daniel Blake. *Inside the Great House: Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society*. Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980.

Smith explores the "personal values, beliefs, and emotions given expression in the daily life of the family" in gentry households and shows how planter family life changed during the second half of the eighteenth century.



Stevenson, Brenda E. *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Stevenson's study "centers on Virginians who lived during the decades between the American Revolution and Civil War. It describes many of the familial and communal ideals, relations, and experiences of the white elite, their slaves, free blacks, and, to a lesser extent, yeoman farmers and other middling and poorer folk in the Upper South."



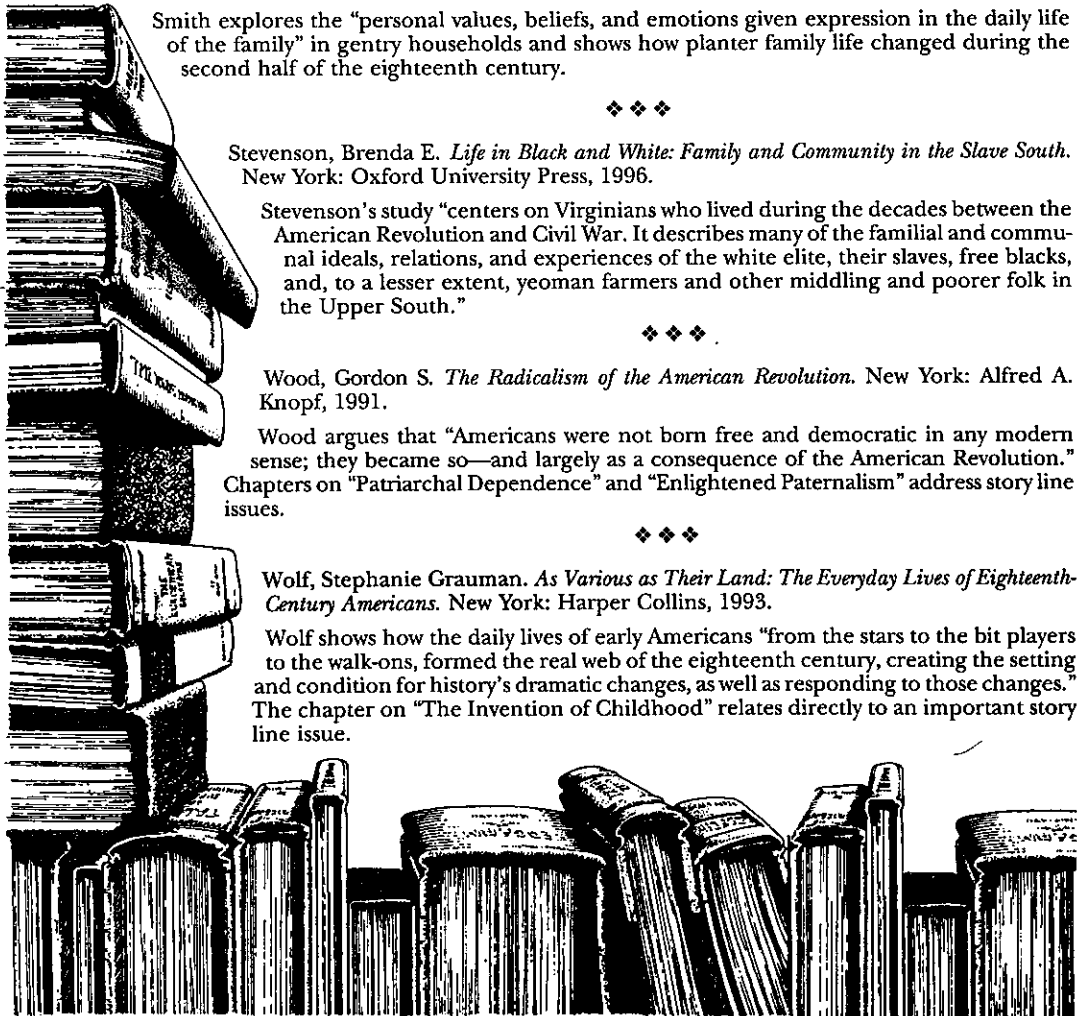
Wood, Gordon S. *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991.

Wood argues that "Americans were not born free and democratic in any modern sense; they became so—and largely as a consequence of the American Revolution." Chapters on "Patriarchal Dependence" and "Enlightened Paternalism" address story line issues.



Wolf, Stephanie Grauman. *As Various as Their Land: The Everyday Lives of Eighteenth-Century Americans*. New York: Harper Collins, 1993.

Wolf shows how the daily lives of early Americans "from the stars to the bit players to the walk-ons, formed the real web of the eighteenth century, creating the setting and condition for history's dramatic changes, as well as responding to those changes." The chapter on "The Invention of Childhood" relates directly to an important story line issue.



You are cordially invited to attend
the

Dedication Services

of

Bruton Heights School

Williamsburg, Virginia

Sunday, May 25, 1944

Gymnasium 3 p. m.

Ravils Byrd

Superintendent of Schools

Please present this card at the door.

Bruton Heights: A New Chapter For A Historic School

by Linda Rowe

Linda is a historian in the Department of Historical Research.

In its twenty-five years (1940-1966) as an all-black school serving Williamsburg, James City County, and parts of York County, Bruton Heights School educated a generation of African-American children from the first through the twelfth grades. The school was then, and remains today, a source of pride for African-Americans in the Williamsburg area. Former students, faculty, and staff tell of outstanding teachers and supportive parents who emphasized academic achievement and strong personal values; of enthusiastic students, odds-beating sports teams, traditional proms, and parades; and of vital community outreach that included a theater for black moviegoers and a U.S.O. for black soldiers and sailors during World War II.

The rich and poignant history of Bruton Heights School in the era before Civil Rights is the focus of a permanent exhibit in the lobby of the refurbished school. Conceived as a salute to this historic institution and the achievements of its students and teachers, the exhibit follows the school from planning and construction in the late 1930s to the

reception of its first students in the fall of 1940. The exhibit concludes with the class of 1966, the last to graduate from the all-black Bruton Heights School. Members of the black community with ties to Bruton Heights as well as the earlier James City County Training School have donated a spectacular array of treasured artifacts for the exhibit—textbooks, report cards, diplomas, a clarinet, an oil painting from art class, a prom dress, class rings, the homecoming queen's cloak, sports letters, the coach's blazer, and an article made in shop class. Wonderful photographs (from private individuals and the Durant collection in the Foundation Library) and class pictures are prominently featured in the exhibit.

The exhibit establishes historical context for Bruton Heights School and, in the process, suggests links to the Historic Area and the Becoming Americans interpretive theme. The panel "African-American Education before the Civil War" and accompanying materials remind exhibit visitors that for nearly all enslaved African-Americans in eighteenth-century Virginia, formal education was out of reach. Even so, some slaves learned to read and write. For several hundred young slaves and a few free black youngsters in Williamsburg, the Bray School, sponsored by an English philanthropy, provided basic instruction in reading and Anglican catechism. A small number of slave owners around Williamsburg sometimes had a favored slave child privately tutored or, like George Wythe, did it themselves. The few apprenticed slaves and free blacks we know of at least were eligible for instruction in basic reading and writing by law as part of their contracts with tradesmen. For a variety of reasons, many whites came to feel that slave literacy undermined the slavery system. For one thing, runaway slaves who could read and write found it easier to pass themselves off as free.

"African-American Education Following the Civil War" explains that the African-Americans who found refuge behind Union lines after Federal troops occupied tidewater Virginia in 1862 identified education as an immediate priority. "They want it and they have a desire to get it," testified Alexander Dunlop, a black man from Williamsburg, before the Freedmen's Commission in 1866. A new idea for Virginia, education at public expense, was guaranteed for both black and white children by the state constitution of 1869.

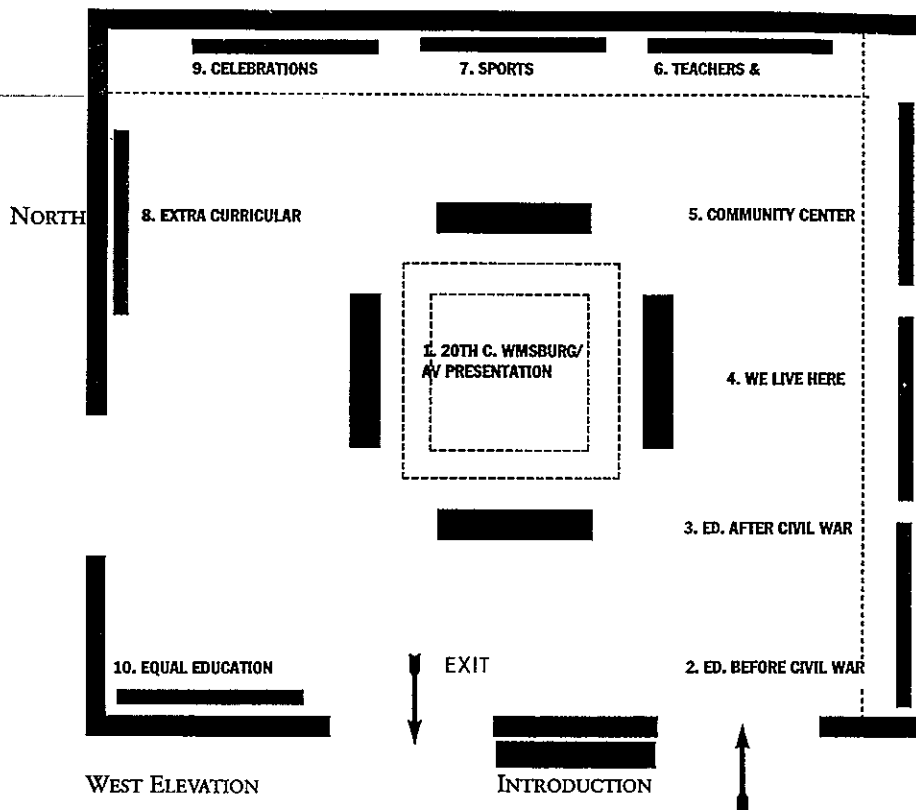
Public schools for both races opened in Williamsburg in 1871. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, African-Americans in Williamsburg knew firsthand the bias in favor of white students. Under the separate but equal policy that prevailed until the 1960s in Williamsburg, curricula that emphasized vocational training and meager allocations for buildings and supplies were the norm for African-Americans. To ease inequalities that shortchanged students at the black School No. 2 on Francis Street (completed in 1885) and the James City County Training School on Nicholson Street (1924-1940), African-American parents and teachers often dug deep into their own pockets to pay for educational materials and building maintenance not funded by the local school board.

The rest of the exhibit focuses on Bruton Heights School. When it became clear that Rockefeller investment in Williamsburg's colonial past would likely breathe new life into the local economy, black citizens in the area cited "the contributions colored people have made to Virginia's historical progress and prestige" in a letter to the school board and claimed a right to improved educational opportunity. Long-standing Rockefeller interest in African-American education helped make

a new black school a reality. Fifty thousand dollars pledged by Abby Aldrich Rockefeller jump-started the project. Together, the Rockefellers, the Federal Public Works Administration, the city of Williamsburg, and Colonial Williamsburg provided more than \$245,000 for Bruton Heights School. When completed the school encompassed three buildings: the main school plant flanked by two freestanding structures, one for industrial arts, and the other for home economics.

The struggle for equal educational opportunities for African-American children was the ever-present backdrop for Bruton Heights School's many accomplishments. Eventually, parents and teachers anticipated with hope and fear the first tentative steps toward desegregation of local public schools in the 1965-1966 school year, another milestone along the road to achieving educational parity between black and white public school students. Within a year, Bruton Heights School had become an integrated middle school (grades 4, 5, and 6). The school board closed Bruton Heights for good in the late 1980s. Marked for demolition, the school got a reprieve when the local African-American community waged a campaign to save it.

A new chapter in the history of this proud



Floor plan for Bruton Heights exhibit scheduled to open in April.

symbol of black achievement before integration was made possible through generous gifts from several sources to Colonial Williamsburg, the present owner of the site. Today the Bruton Heights School Educational Center includes the refurbished main school building, which now houses the various Colonial Williamsburg research departments (archaeological, architectural, and historical) and is home to the Audiovisual Department which relocated from the basement of the Goodwin Building to new quarters in an area that includes what was once the school gymnasium. The departments of Architecture and Engineering and Purchasing are also in the school. In addition, the school auditorium and several classrooms will be available for training, other Colonial Williamsburg programs, and the community at large.

The other buildings on the campus are the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Library and the DeWitt Wallace Collections and Conservation Building. A fourth building completes the complex. Furnished to resemble a private residence, the Bruton Heights School Home Economics Cottage was where African-American students of both sexes learned to cook, sew, plan meals, and care for a home. Plans for the Bruton Heights School Educational Center call for the cottage to be temporary living quarters for visiting scholars using the research facilities at Colonial Williamsburg.

This 30.6-acre site also encompasses the original site of John Page's 1662 house which was uncovered by archaeologists in 1995. Page was a prominent resident of Middle Plantation, the settlement that became Williamsburg in 1699. ■

Understanding Student Groups

by Stacey L. Omo

Stacey is a historical interpreter in the Department of School and Group Services.

On-a-daily basis, historical interpreters are asked to greet visitors and discuss various aspects of Colonial Williamsburg and the eighteenth century. During these discussions, we are oftentimes confronted with a number of interpretive "challenges" which can also help us develop new tools and techniques to communicate with the visitor. Of course, not all visitors are alike. School-age groups present us with completely different challenges than do adults. In the following article, these challenges will be discussed and suggestions for managing challenging school groups will be offered to help all historic interpreters in meeting the needs of student visitors.

Most interpreters have faced twenty pairs of eyes staring at them expectantly. First impressions are crucial and we must quickly grab the group's attention or it is lost. Therefore, it is helpful when we can recognize the needs of student groups and meet those needs.

In most instances, an interpreter is not



Peggy Pickett and Stacey Omo (author) board bus with school group headed for the Historic Area.

Photo by Sue Smith

familiar with students in a school group, and so may not be aware of any sensory, learning, or behavioral disorders. We can use the following information as a tool to recognize and understand common disorders that students may have. Those with sensory impairments may have visual and/or hearing difficulties. When we encounter visually challenged students, we can take time to explain items in descriptive language. Similarly, in-



Cassandra Maimone (Junior Interpreter) gives cooking lesson.

Photo by Sue Smith

interpreters should notice if a signing interpreter has accompanied a hearing impaired student. When possible, we should place ourselves in a position facing the signer and the student because the student may read lips. In addition to these conditions, interpreters may encounter students with learning and behavioral disorders that include a wide range of problems. Students may have difficulty listening, thinking, or answering questions. Many interpreters are familiar with the terms attention deficit disorder (ADD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Students have difficulty sitting still, waiting their turn during games or group discussions, and staying on a task. Some students who suffer from ADD may exhibit behavioral disorders as well.

Interpreters talking to students with learning and behavioral disorders should keep questions and tasks simple so students do not become frustrated. In situations such as these, assigning easily completed tasks provide fun and engaging experiences while also giving the students a sense of accomplishment.

To understand challenging student groups more fully, historical interpreters throughout Colonial Williamsburg were asked to define "challenging school group" and to offer suggestions for managing them. Overwhelmingly, interpreters commented that one of the greatest challenges was lack of interest in the interpretation.

Students not paying attention to the interpretation is a sign of disinterest. Perhaps

the students are talking or laughing, or perhaps they are bored. Interpreters receive little or no response to the questions they ask. Many groups are on a tight schedule, so disinterest may be the result of the group's lack of rest. When groups drive to Williamsburg in the morning, students are required to be up very early. Interpreters can do little to prevent these problems, but recognition of them can help the interpretation.

The lack of a focus for the group may also be a factor. Interpreters described student groups without a focus as disorganized and felt more time was needed to gain the students' attention. Groups sometimes entered sites with only a few minutes to spend on the interpretation. This made it more difficult for the interpreter to obtain the attention of the group. Once it was obtained, the interpretive time was almost up.

When an interpreter works with a group for three to five hours, he or she can connect with the students and provide some focus. This will result in in-depth discussions. Many interpreters in the Historic Area commented that when a focus was evident among a student group, it was helpful in engaging the students' attention and developing their interests on different levels.

One final challenge for interpreters working with school groups is the domination of discussions by parents or teachers. Although it is not a major problem, parents and teachers who take over discussions can diminish the experience for students who may feel that interpreters do not want them to participate. When parents and teachers engage in conversations, students may begin to talk among themselves and engage in other disruptive behavior. The most difficult part is that misinformation may be provided. It is imperative that the interpreter maintain the self-esteem of parents, teachers, and students by correcting misinformation tactfully.

Parents and teachers can enhance the experience for students by breaking the ice. The adults may pose questions that encourage students to ask their own questions, or they may begin a conversation that leads to a discussion of a topic that interests the students.

How does an interpreter gain the interest of a challenging student group? What are some strategies for managing them?

The "stuff" in the Historic Area is a great interpretive tool and can be used to encourage students to ask questions about such

objects as carriages, invalid chairs, and billiard tables. These questions will tell the interpreter what they are interested in seeing. In these cases, the students will lead the discussion in the direction of most interest to them.

Another technique to draw student response is to give them a statement to ponder. When asked how to spark the interest of a school group, an interpreter at the milliner shop said she likes to surprise the students. Sometimes she tells them that young ladies did not do their own shopping, which leads to a discussion of who shopped and what they purchased. An interpreter can pose a problem and ask students for solutions. For example, an interpreter at the apothecary shop suggested that a student be a patient. The interpreter describes the symptoms and asks the students how to treat the illness. We can also show an object and have students try to identify it and its use, and then connect it to a person who would have been using that object in the eighteenth century.

The hands-on approach also gets attention. This technique provides an excellent

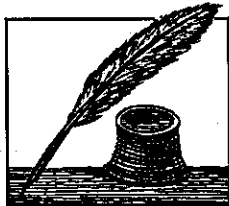
way to approach the group. The interpreter poses a problem and asks the students to offer solutions. The students try their suggestions to see which actually work. An interpreter at the carpenter's yard tried this method when he had to move a thousand-pound log onto blocks. He posed the problem, asked for suggestions, and invited students to try their ideas so the log could be moved. The group's creative suggestions surprised the interpreter, and the students left the site feeling they had made a difference. Other Historic Area interpreters suggested that helping visitors feel they had made a contribution was an excellent way to ensure their experience was memorable.

The best interpretations are the ones that involve visitors. Interpreters in the Historic Area are a good source for additional suggestions and information. Remember that historical interpreters are here to ensure "that the future may learn from the past," but interpreters can also learn from each other to enhance interpretations and the visitor experience. ■

FAMILY

For additional information on families see the following articles from *the interpreter*:

- "Aging in the Colonial Chesapeake" by Anne Willis in the August 1991 issue.
- "Home Remedies: Purveyors and Practitioners" by Kris Dippre in the Spring 1996 issue.
- "Revolutionary Opportunities for African-Americans" by Michael L. Nicholls in the Fall 1996 issue.
- "The White Loyalists of Williamsburg" by Kevin Kelly in the Summer 1996 issue.
- "Questions and Answers on Housewifery" compiled by Pat Gibbs, Anne Schone, and Marilyn Wetton in the November 1993 issue.



Editor's Notes

In 1993 the University of Virginia gave the College a bronze statue of Jefferson in honor of the three hundredth anniversary of the founding of William and Mary. The statue is located west of Washington Hall near the Sunken Gardens.

FAREWELL

The editorial staff of *the interpreter* bids a fond farewell to Katherine Ford, Multilith supervisor, who retired in February. Thank you, Katherine, for your patience and expertise in helping us with the production of this publication. We wish you a happy retirement!

THANK YOU

To Pat Gibbs, Historical Research, for annotating the suggested family bibliography included in this issue.

HISTORIC HUNT QUESTIONS (AND ANSWERS) FROM THE JEFFERSON PASSPORT

(Part of the "Jefferson's Virginia" Travel Package which includes nine Virginia sites associated with our third President)

When the vote for Virginia's independence was taken at the Capitol Building in Williamsburg on May 15, 1776, did Jefferson vote for independence?

When Virginians voted for independence on May 15, Thomas Jefferson was in Philadelphia attending the Second Continental Congress.

Who gave the life-size statue of Thomas Jefferson to the College of William and Mary?

The Colonial Williamsburg interpreter is a quarterly publication of the Department of Interpretive Education and Support.

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