

# interpreter

VOL. 17 NO. 1

SPRING 1996



## CHOOSING REVOLUTION



by Bill White

*Bill is the director of the Department of Trades/Presentations and Tours and is the chair of the Choosing Revolution Storyline Team.*

The Historic Area takes on a huge challenge for 1996. We will initiate for the public our new interpretive plan: *Becoming Americans: Our Struggle to Be Both Free and Equal*. The Williamsburg story's first focus will be through the lens of "Choosing Revolution." It's an exciting beginning for our interpretive theme. The coming of the American Revolution is a story Colonial Williamsburg has told for some time. This year is an opportunity to revitalize our view of the Revolution and what it meant to this community with some new and fresh perspectives. Some perspectives, I believe, our visitors will find incredibly exciting and engaging.

Choosing Revolution tells about the series of decisions, made by individuals, to express their sense of freedom, liberty, and popular sovereignty. These choices responded to events that began with the Seven Years' War and continued through the siege of Yorktown. It was after the Seven Years' War that the British ministry, backed by Parliament, sought active management of a widespread empire. Faced with this challenge, Virginia's political leaders protected their prerogative to write legislation for the Colony. These tensions heightened Virginia's perception of Ministerial and Parliamentary corruption. Virginians became convinced that imperial government compromised the integrity of Britain's unwritten constitution and that corruption threatened the natural rights of British subjects.

Younger, more aggressive Virginia leaders urged a forceful and direct protest against British policies. These protests required popular support. The increasingly diverse population became more politically active, responding to the idea that property ownership was their common economic interest. But it was not just the propertied who participated in the coming revolution. Whites of all social ranks, free blacks, slaves, and Native Americans considered both ideology and self interest as they chose, or did not choose, Revolution.

Our legacies from the Revolution include our written Constitution and cultural commitment to individual freedom. We also struggle with unresolved issues. The balance between individual liberty and the public good remains cloudy. Many see America characterized by pervasive racism, and we struggle with granting full rights to all groups within our society.

We will focus this program in six sites and programs in the Historic Area: the Palace, Randolph House, Capitol, Military Programs, the Raleigh Tavern, and the Printing Office. Of course, these six locations only represent

the tip of the iceberg. The story of the Revolution runs deeply through the community, and just about every location, program, interpretation, and initiative will make connections to the story line. In these six sites, though, our visitors can find a coherent introduction. In peeling off this first layer, visitors will discover new questions to investigate during this and subsequent visits to Colonial Williamsburg. We are confident that the story of the Revolution will pique their interest and challenge their understanding of the past. We want each and every visitor engaged with the Choosing Revolution story to become "life-long learners." These are the visitors who are deeply involved with history and committed to this museum.

Of course, locating the story in six Historic Area sites means we must find ways to work through some "teaching problems" with the American Revolution. One significant challenge is explaining the chronology. The revolution was not a quick event. Ten years separate the Stamp Act crisis from the Gunpowder

Incident. It is another ten years before Britain and her former colonies sign the Treaty of Paris. We must insure that our visitors understand the Revolution as a twenty-year history. Only then can they understand that for many Virginians it was a surprise. Many described themselves in 1765 as British patriots railing against what they believed an unjust tax. They did not necessarily believe that separation from Britain was the best way of resolving the conflict. Others found their conclusion—their decision to support a colonial rebellion—informed by a series of

smaller decisions they had made over ten years. What would have seemed radical at the time of the Stamp Act was now a logical conclusion.

Loyalism is another challenge. Too often our visitors see the loyalists as the "bad guys" or worse as the "dumb guys." Didn't the loyalists understand that America's experiment with democracy would be a huge success? We have forgotten how daunting armed rebellion against the world's greatest European power was. We have also forgotten that in the Stamp Act, Townshend and other protesters Virginians sought first to preserve British rights. Seeing themselves as independent Americans was a ten-year process. For many British subjects armed rebellion and independence were far too radical.

We also tend to think of the Revolution as a white male story. It does not take much investigation, however, to discover the stories of Williamsburg's female residents. They are evident as you read over the list of residents who signed the 1770 or 1774 Associations. Philip Vickers Fithian recorded his conversations

with Mrs. Carter, conversations in which she articulated opinions on the struggle between Virginians and her mother country. Clementina Rind expressed her position in her editing of the pages of the *Virginia Gazette*. And on leaving Virginia, a milliner, Catherine Rathell expressed concern that the Association infringed her "liberty of importation." African-Americans—enslaved and free—were engaged with these same issues. The Dunmore Proclamation and then late in the war Cornwallis' Army in Virginia provided havens for runaway slaves. For the first



The Alternative of Williamsburg, February 16, 1775.

with Mrs. Carter, conversations in which she articulated opinions on the struggle between Virginians and her mother country. Clementina Rind expressed her position in her editing of the pages of the *Virginia Gazette*. And on leaving Virginia, a milliner, Catherine Rathell expressed concern that the Association infringed her "liberty of importation." African-Americans—enslaved and free—were engaged with these same issues. The Dunmore Proclamation and then late in the war Cornwallis' Army in Virginia provided havens for runaway slaves. For the first

time there was a place to run that held out a promise of freedom. Still, many African-Americans fought for Continental or state armies. That choice to fight for the people who enslaved is an intriguing one. Then there is the institution of slavery that became more and more difficult to justify as Virginians designed a free and democratic society.

Religion is difficult to express in the Historic Area's physical sites. Historian Rhys Isaac, though, is very articulate about the ways religion affected the coming Revolution. Dissenting religions posed some of the first challenges to Virginia's established gentry. The Revolution was, after all, not just a protest against British imperialism. It was a retooling of the relationship between common Virginians and their leadership. Dissenting ministers and their congregations criticized the gentry for their pursuit of luxury. They charged that corruption of Virginia's leaders was just as severe and threatening as the corruption of Parliament and the British ministry. Only by adapting their position in the community and involving common people in the issues of the approaching Revolution were Virginia's leaders able to obtain support for countering British im-



John Wilkes, Esqr., May 1763, by William Hogarth.

perialism in Virginia. Each of these stories represents an individual or group of individuals in the community and the decisions and choices they made during the decades of the Revolution. Throughout the town visitors will encounter these "personal" stories.

At the Palace the story can focus on Governor Fauquier and the Stamp Act crisis. The story of Governor Dunmore also provides an excellent opportunity to focus on loyalists and loyalism. It was, after all, Dunmore who raised the King's standard in Norfolk and called for all true subjects of the King to rally and defend the King's realm. The Palace though is also an opportunity to focus on land. It is a topic we do not highlight well, but one that is extremely important to the issues of Revolution.

When George III issued his proclamation of 1763, he sought to ensure that the western boundaries of his American colonies were secure. The best way of protecting that frontier was by fostering good relationships with the native peoples who lived there. The Proclamation of 1763 prohibited white settlement past the Allegheny Mountains. But the issue was not that clear cut. Investors in the Ohio and Loyal companies had purchased rights from the Crown to speculate on Ohio lands. In addition, Virginia veterans of the Seven Years' War laid claim to Ohio land as their service bounty. Then there were the contested claims with Pennsylvania and other colonies. In the midst of all this confusion, squatters crossed the proclamation line setting up farms and communities. Native tribes demanded that the King's agents remove these settlers from their territory. The ministry demanded the support of Virginia's legislators, to no avail. The Virginia House of Burgesses (many of whom were investors in land companies) would not take any action to strengthen or enforce a proclamation line they wanted torn down.

At the Randolph house the Revolution affected the entire family. Brothers Peyton and John made different decisions as the Revolution arrived, decisions separating this well-established Virginia family. John removed himself, his wife, and daughters to Britain. His son Edmund, though, remained in Virginia with his uncle Peyton. Even within Peyton's family decisions for liberty and freedom were not expressed in the same way. Slaves Eve and Great Aggy sought liberty by running away while their master was elected

President of the Continental Congress.

At the Capitol interpreters can tell a dynamic story of the new emerging leadership in Virginia. Since the late seventeenth century the legislators had slowly assumed more and more control of Virginia affairs. They were a powerful body for the British ministry and the Royal Governor to contend with. As the British ministry attempted to exercise more control over Britain's colonies, the legislators worked to maintain dominance in provincial affairs. And Virginia's burgesses looked across the Atlantic and saw a corrupt government. They believed that British politicians had compromised the very foundation of the British Constitution. American colonies, they believed, still practiced the true tenets of that Constitution. In fact Americans, they believed, held the Constitution in trust. Americans protected the true constitution for all British. At some time in the future, Britains would realize that they had strayed and they would turn to America to relearn their true British liberties. But by the mid-1760s these burgesses too were under attack.

Speaker John Robinson was one lightning rod. On his death Virginia discovered that Robinson, also the colony's treasurer, had extended loans to his friends and supporters. The colony was more than one hundred thousand pounds in arrears. Then on the heels of this scandal Colonel John Chiswell, a prominent member of the gentry and a Williamsburg resident, murdered a merchant in a Prince Edward County tavern. When transported to Williamsburg for trial, members of the General Court—his friends—met in an informal session and granted him bail. The public outcry against these two events was tremendous. Virginia's gentry, it seemed, was also corrupt. This general concern focused Virginia's attention. By the fall of 1766 a new kind of activism appeared in Virginia constituents. That fall constituents gathered in county courthouses and instructed their representatives to vote in favor of separating the positions of speaker and treasurer. Virginians had decided that another individual would not wield the same kind of power that Robinson had wielded. This kind of activism continued to grow. In the spring of 1776, James City County constituents, meeting at Allen's Ordinary instructed their delegate to the Virginia Convention to vote for independence. In-

creasingly through the years of revolution, constituents directed the actions of their representatives and leaders.

Virginia was well primed for this kind of activism. Virginians participated in their local government, and were by-in-large active and engaged in the community. One way of participating was the local militia. When independent companies began forming in 1774, men throughout the county joined. They associated together in these military groups and pledged to protect their rights and liberties. It was a physical demonstration of patriotism. Patriots who did not join the company supported it by purchasing drums or colors or equipment. These companies gathered on a regular schedule to learn military discipline. They were democratic organizations who elected their officers and voted on the actions that the company would take. When the 1774 Association formed inspection committees in the towns and counties of the colony, the county volunteer companies placed themselves under the control of these committees of safety. The association now had an enforcement arm. It was at the head of the Hanover Independent Company that Patrick Henry marched on Williamsburg and demanded payment for the gunpowder that Dunmore had removed from the Magazine. As hostilities increased, the independent companies proved inadequate. Virginia then went about the business of raising a regular army.

The independent companies were not the only ways Virginians created new institutions. The Raleigh Tavern represents an amazing story of Virginians and their extralegal institutions. After being dissolved by Governor Botetourt, members of the House of Burgesses walked down Duke of Gloucester Street while the Governor watched from the Council chamber. At the Raleigh they met in the Apollo Room, and adopted the 1769 Association. This right of freely associating to express political concerns and even outrage is a key demonstration of America's understanding of its God given liberties. The printer communicated these notions across the colony. As Virginia's leaders expressed their opinions and concerns, the *Virginia Gazette* was the primary forum for these discussions.

And this is only the beginning of the program. As visitors continue their travels through the Historic Area they will uncover a rich world of history told in the personal

stories of Williamsburg's eighteenth-century residents. When they visit our museums they will find rich connections between the story of Choosing Revolution and our collections. In a series of special daily programs visitors will find new ways to engage their understanding of the American Revolution. When

they encounter one of our people of the past they will meet the stories of Williamsburg's residents face to face. It will be an exciting year as we grow and develop in our understanding of this eighteenth-century community of Williamsburg. ■

---

---

## THE MAKING OF MARTHA WASHINGTON

By Susan Berquist

*Susan is a character interpreter in the department of Trades/Presentations and Tours and, in addition to her portrayal of the young Martha Washington, has interpreted the character of Susannah Randolph, daughter of John (the Tory) and Ariana Randolph.*

It is a Friday night and you have decided to go to the movies. After pouring through the newspaper reviews, you decide to check out Hollywood's latest heroine flick showing at the Williamsburg Theater. Unfortunately, though it has received great reviews, it's still relatively "undiscovered." The heroine, a young woman of good (but not extravagant) upbringing, is well-educated and filled with common sense; the "nice-girl-next door" type. As it turns out, an older and wealthy neighbor falls in love with her and wants to marry her. The heroine's family is happy to think their daughter will never be in need. Unfortunately, the well-to-do, older neighbor's father disapproves of the match. And threatens to prevent a wedding. In fact, for twenty years, he has not found ANY young woman good enough for his son and certainly does not approve of this one. (Chalk it up to the father having suffered from a poor marriage himself.)

But the son is persistent, and tries to bring his father to reason. Stubbornness, however, runs in the family. To drive his point home, the father rewrites his will to exclude the son if he decides to go through with the marriage. Ah, but true love prevails. The father's friends convince him to forgive his son and accept the young lady into the family. (Actually,

they bribe the father by presenting expensive gifts to the other—illegitimate—son.) The father consents to meet the bride-to-be. She sincerely charms him, "due to a prudent speech made on her part." Fortunately for the young couple, the father gives his blessing and amends the will to include his now-pardoned son. Alas, the father dies before spring when the union is made. The couple appears happily married. They have four children, a beautiful, river-front house, servants, and all the finest amenities of life. But life is never perfect. During their seven years of marriage, they are plagued by an ongoing family lawsuit. The husband's illegitimate



Susan Berquist portrays a young Martha Washington.

brother dies, as well as the heroine's father, one of her sisters and her two oldest children. Three months after her second child passes away, the worst blow comes. Death suddenly claims her apparently healthy young husband. She is left with two small children and named the administrator of the entire family estate since her husband never wrote a will. There are nearly twenty thousand acres of land in seven different counties to maintain, all the business transactions to administer (including the aforementioned law suit), as well as her daily duties. Our courageous and strong-willed heroine picks up the pieces of her life, and manages as best as she is able. She has many friends to aid her and to provide sound advice, and she is not in debt. Indeed, her (and the children's) estate totals more than six million dollars! Her greatest sense of comfort comes from her faith in God. She tries her best to put her grief behind her, "determined to be cheerful and happy in whatever situation [she] may be in." For, as she says, "I have also learned from experience that the greater part of our happiness, or misery depends on our dispositions and not on our circumstances. We carry the seeds of the one or the other about with us in our minds wherever we go."

With such a fortune, many suitors come calling, but they all leave disappointed. Rumors run rampant. Many think she's passing up "good opportunities," while others are convinced she will not remarry for whatever reasons. She plans, however, to take her time in selecting a second husband. Despite her young age, she is a lady of common sense. Secretly, she desires to marry again. She wants her children to have someone to call "Papa," someone to provide security, and a proper father-figure for her son. And, because it's Hollywood, it happens in that idyllic, fairy tale manner. A neighbor, who often invites her to dinner parties at his home, decides to play the matchmaker. He invites a handsome, young, well-respected military officer to dinner. The unsuspecting hero scarcely cooperates. He says he's too busy. But the dignified neighbor entices the war-weary hero to join the festivities by promising to introduce him to a "charming, young widow." Our hero consents to drop by, intending to stay only an hour or so. A formal introduction is made, but the two are not strangers. They met years before at various grand affairs when the heroine was far too concerned

with her husband and children to pay much attention to the young officer. Nonetheless, they click immediately. The officer forgets his intention of a brief stay and does not leave until late the next morning. In the next few days, he calls upon the widow several times at her home and even meets her children. As he departs for war, he has her promise to marry him, and promises in turn to leave the life of a soldier after the next campaign. And so it comes to pass. Before he retires, however, he is elected to an honorable position in the government. Our hero and heroine marry, and after a short honeymoon, and attendance at a session of the government, the new family travels to the hero's small, but bucolic home. They settle down and look forward to leading a quiet life of retirement on the riverside, living happily ever-after.



All right, so this is not a current film. But there was a mini-series made about the hero. And many of the minor characters are very colorful and flamboyant in their own right. (Perhaps Hollywood should consider the idea.) But it is a true story. Our heroine, if you have not guessed already, is Martha Dandridge from just down the road in New Kent County. Daniel Parke Custis (of the same county) is the wealthy first husband, while Councillor John Custis of Williamsburg, and Colonel Chamberlayne, also of New Kent, are the notorious father-in-law and the matchmaking-neighbor, respectively. The dashing, young war hero is none other than Colonel George Washington, now of Fairfax County.

The rest (ie., the sequel), pardon the cliché, is history. Everyone knows what happens to the Washingtons. There is the war and then the Presidency, with a few years of quiet at Mount Vernon sandwiched in-between the hubbub. They hardly settle down to a peaceful retirement after their marriage. Though they remain in the public eye, they managed to somehow remain private and protected, which presents a problem for those of us who are students of history.

How can someone as prominent as Martha Washington remain such a mystery? Contemplate our first Lady, Martha Washington. The name conjures up an assortment of images: a short, plump woman, graying or fash-

ionably powdered white hair, a large frumpy mob cap framing a round face with hazel eyes that have seen many changes. We recognize her as "Lady Washington" and hail her as our first President's wife. And some of us even dare to call her Martha, as though she were a close friend and someone we knew well. Apparently, many of us have forgotten her real name, Martha Dandridge Custis Washington. We also neglect to note that she had a life before marrying George Washington. What?! How many of us have ever considered a YOUNG Martha Washington? After all, she was not born eligible for senior citizen discounts. Admittedly, before October of 1994, I was guilty of all these historical sins. If asked, I could not have told you her maiden name, where she grew up, or that she was the eldest of eight children. And, heaven forbid, the shock of discovering . . . . (Gasp). . . . she was married for seven years to someone besides George, and then widowed at the age of 25!

As I began to research this Miss Dandridge, my lack of knowledge daunted me. And yet, the more I learned about her, the more fascinated and intrigued I became with this strong, dynamic woman. Six months seemed too few to prepare for the 1995 Colonial Williamsburg program on "Martha Washington: The Woman Beside the Great Man." There were too many questions and too few answers.

A trip to Mount Vernon revealed that little information was available about the young Martha Washington. This confirmation, which I initially thought to be a nightmare, came as a blessing in disguise. Now it is an all too familiar scene to me: a guest enters, looking for Martha Washington. They expect to find a grandmotherly woman. To their surprise, a young, well-dressed woman reading, sewing or speaking with a British

accent greets them.

"Uhhhh, where can I find Mrs. Washington?" they query. "I am Mrs. Washington . . ."

But before I can continue, their eyes bulge and their jaw goes slack. They stammer, "But . . . , but . . . you're too young . . . and you're too thin . . . ." But they're hooked. The word "young" on the sign outside of my location finally registers. The young Martha Washington challenges the known and familiar images so much that an avenue is opened for learning. A minute or two after talking with young Mrs. Washington, guests seem to be put at ease and are convinced that I am who I say I am, or they are at least willing to suspend their beliefs and play the game. But my crusade has just begun.



Portrait of Martha Washington by Archibald Robertson, 1791-92.

What the visitor sees is only the tip of the iceberg. They are spared the frustrating twists and turns that are all too familiar to interpreters. Just as fortune followed Mrs. Washington, it now seems to follow my trail. Martha Washington is undeniably one of the best documented women of our period. Since she is a "brand name" personality, her familiarity draws people. The advantages end there.

Despite all the documentation that exists, there is so much that remains unknown, particularly concerning her youth. Research is ongoing. I am continually finding holes and inconsistencies in my own interpretation. The more I discover, the more I realize how little I know, and the more I wonder how far from the mark I am in my portrayal of Mrs. Washington. My list of unanswered questions only grows. "WHY, Mrs. Washington, did you have to burn all your correspondence with the Mr. when he died??!!!"

Apart from my own research, there are the countless myths to battle. Everyone seems to "know" something about the Washingtons,

regardless of its accuracy. Usually the comment concerns a well-known legend about Martha's other half. For the record, George's teeth were not wooden. They were hippopotamus ivory. Parson Weems fabricated the cherry tree story to illustrate George Washington's honesty. The Sally Fairfax "affair" is bogus and idle gossip at best. Washington was athletic, but he never threw a silver dollar across the Potomac (besides, what a waste of money). There are just as many misunderstandings concerning Martha. Contrary to popular belief, the Washingtons did not make a prenuptial agreement. Mrs. Washington's children, Jacky and Patcy Custis, never adopted Washington as a last name, even though Mr. Washington became their legal guardian in October 1761. Martha was nine months older (not younger) than George. She did live at White House, but not while she was married to the President (besides that "other" White House was not even built during Washington's term). White House was the name of her Pamunkey River plantation home where she lived with Mr. Custis. Mrs. Washington also was not a midget. She hovered at 5 feet and maybe one inch.

Fact and fiction do, however, play an important role in interpretation. Unfortunately, "I don't know" is not an acceptable answer to *some* difficult questions. These well-thought out queries most often come from the lips of children. Some of the best ones include "Do you miss your first husband?" or "Who do you like best, Mr. Custis or Mr. Washington?" "What's the name of your horse?" "What's the name of Mr. Washington's horse?" "Do you always call him Mister?" And my personal favorite, "Does George snore at night?"

My accountability is high. How many young Martha Washingtons are there? Admittedly, my most disconcerting visitor is a fifth grader



with a notebook, who says s/he is writing a report on Martha Washington. They are certain to ask the unanswerable. I can imagine the report now . . . "And Martha Washington at Colonial Williamsburg said . . ."

But then again, filling those undocumented gaps with reasonable information is part of the creative challenge behind character interpretation. For example, a *Virginia Gazette* article in the late 1740s reads "Found growing in Mr. Daniel Parke Custis's garden . . . was a Cucumber a yard long and 14 inches wide at its greatest Part." That is documented. I do not know for a fact that as a young girl Martha Washington read this, but it certainly is feasible. After all, the Dandrighes and Custises were living in the same county and might have seen one another while attending Saint Peter's Parish Church. Could she and her younger brothers have hoped to see that monstrosity of a vegetable? They certainly could have talked about it. As Martha, I use this incident as an entertaining anecdote, particularly with young visitors. Similarly, I do not know if it was a sunny, spring day when Colonel Chamberlayne invited Mrs. Custis and Colonel Washington to his home. Nor do I know if they sat beside the warm glow of a fire. But, I have to envision the story, if I want my visitors to do so as well. So some fiction and editorializing (when kept in reason) can be helpful.

Visits to New Kent County in the autumn of 1994 and 1995 continue to be a source of information and inspiration for envisioning Martha's youth and filling in those gaps. Mr. James Harris, a native of New Kent County whose father was a county doctor who studied the Washington, Custis, and Dandridge families and wrote *The Old New Kent County*, escorted me on my first visit. He provided me with a firm foundation for my research. We walked around the site of Chestnut Grove where on June 2, 1731, Martha Dandridge entered this world. The tour brought me to sites of White House (which I have revisited), Colonel Chamberlayne's home, Eltham (Martha's sister's home and the place where Jacky Custis died in 1781 after contracting camp fever during the battle of Yorktown) and St. Peter's Parish Church. Sadly, the original houses at Chestnut Grove, White House, and Eltham no longer stand, but the atmosphere is enough to transport me to those early years of Martha's life.

Perhaps I have not fully addressed the



choice of a young Martha Washington. Why have a character in 1760 while the rest of Williamsburg is on the road to revolution? The simplest reason is that after 1760, Martha Washington's association with Williamsburg dwindles. Though she remains in close correspondence with her family, she disliked traveling and all too often her duties as mistress of Mount Vernon prevented her from joining Mr. Washington for the General Assembly sessions.

Allow me to momentarily address this year's storyline "Choosing Revolution" as it relates to Mrs. Washington in 1760. She serves, I believe, to show change over time. We tend to forget that our founding mothers and fathers were initially loyal British subjects. One visible example of this change is visitors' knowledge that Mrs. Washington led the new nation's women in patriotic devotion by wearing only "American-made" clothes. The conscious change which she made during the Revolution means little until you see her wearing yards of luscious silks and brocades, the finest cloth money could buy. In 1760, a break from England is unimaginable. The Washingtons are recently wed. George has retired from military duties, and they expect life will proceed in a leisurely fashion. Visitors love knowing the outcome. They smugly warn me to expect major changes.

Colonial Williamsburg (and Mount Vernon) are not the only places people can meet Mrs. Washington or be reminded of her and her husband. In recent travels around the country, Mrs. Washington has emerged in the most bizarre places. I see her face on tea cups, saucers, and plates. She graces hotel and diner signs. But the face, though familiar to me, seems strange. There are too many wrinkles. My most recent gem of a find was in a Charlottesville bookstore. After purchasing a book of poetry, I stumbled upon this:

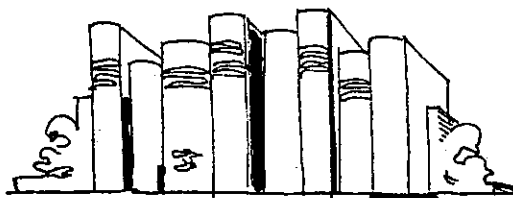
Watchman, What of the First  
First Lady?

*By Ogden Nash*

Everybody can tell you the date of George Washington's birth,  
But who knows the date on which Mrs. George Washington first appeared on earth?

Isn't there any justice  
For the former Mrs. Custis?  
It's a disgrace to every United State  
That we don't know more about our  
first president's only mate.  
We all know a lot of stories about the  
wife of King Arthur  
But you never hear any about Martha.  
And we have all read a lot of romantic  
tales about Catherine the Great,  
But nobody even writes them about  
Washington's mate.  
And we have all seen Katharine Cornell,  
or was it Helen Hayes or Ethel  
Barrymore,  
Impersonate Cleopatra, who wasn't even  
anybody's real wife but nothing more  
or less than a promiscuous un-Ameri-  
can parrymore.  
But has anybody done anything about  
the mistress of the nation's whitest  
house?  
No, and yet but for her the nation would  
be the child of a man without a spouse.

Well, Mr. Nash. We are trying. ■



## WHAT'S NEW IN THE FOUNDATION LIBRARY

Look for the following new books under the Choosing Revolution storyline:

Boder, Natalie S. *Abigail Adams: Witness to a Revolution*. Atheneum Books, 1995.

Call number E 322.1 A38 B63 1995

Clark, E. Harrison. *All Cloudless Glory: the Life of George Washington*. National Book Network, 1995.

Call number E 312 C56 1995

Draper, Theodore. *Struggle for Power: the American Revolution*. Time Books, 1996

Call number E 210 D73 1996

Greene, Jack P. *Understanding the American Revolution: Issues and Actors*. University Press of Virginia, 1995.

Call number E 208 G815 1995

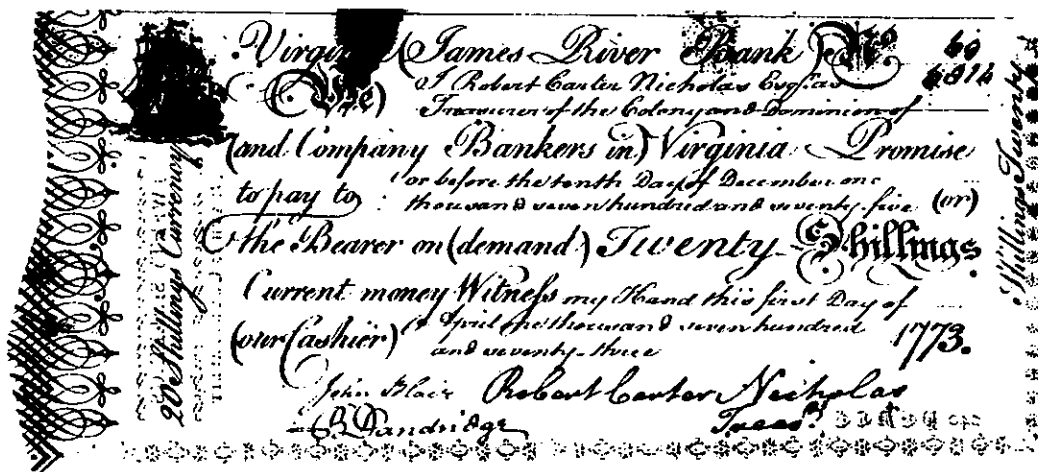
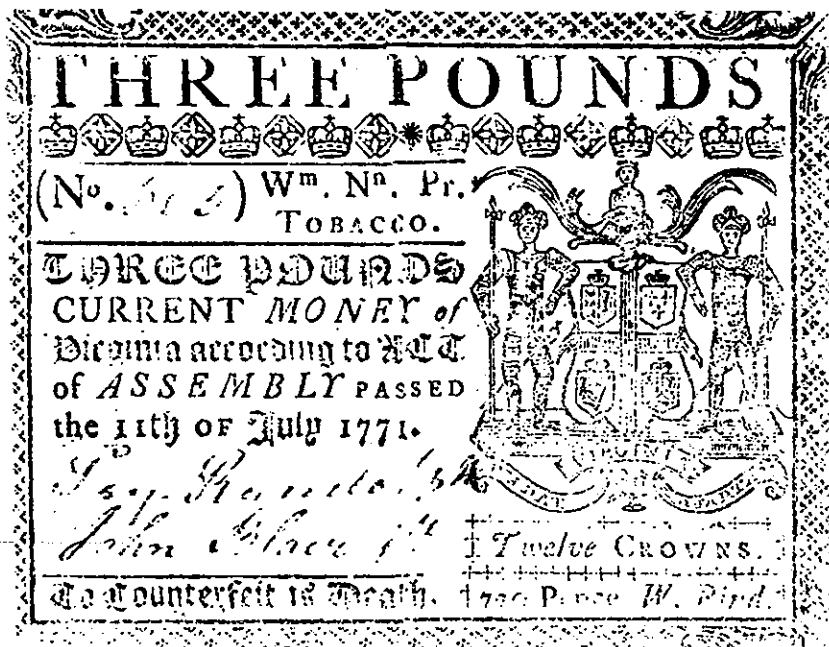
# REINTRODUCTION OF COLONIAL CURRENCY

by John A. Caramia, Jr.

*John is manager of economic and commercial studies in the department of Trades/Presentations and Tours and is chair of the Becoming Americans storyline team "Taking Possession."*

Beginning this June our visitors will be able to experience the eighteenth century by the use of colonial currency. The lead

article in the *Colonial Williamsburg News* of February 8, 1996 announced this new venture. Visitors will be able to exchange twentieth-century money for reproductions of two different Virginia treasury notes. As they use this currency to purchase goods throughout Colonial Williamsburg their interest in Virginia's colonial economy will be stimulated. This will offer many opportunities to discuss how business was conducted in Virginia and the purpose for and procedures used in the issuances of treasury notes. The use of these notes provides our guests another way they can be a part of the eighteenth century. The two treasury notes that



(Top) The 1771 three pound note is from the Colonial Williamsburg collection and is signed by Peyton Randolph and John Blair, Jr. It was printed by William Rind, Public Printer.

(Bottom) The 1773 20 shilling James River Bank Note is from the Lasser collection and was signed by Robert Carter Nicholas, John Blair, and B. Dandridge.



On the back of the James River Note is an illustration of two dancers, the Raleigh Tavern, and what could be purchased for that amount.

have been selected to be reproduced are a 1771 three pound note and a 1773 twenty shilling James River Bank Note. Both were in circulation in 1774.

In July 1771 the House of Burgesses passed *An Act for the relief of the suffers by the loss of tobacco damaged or burnt in several warehouses*. The law stated that treasury notes not to exceed £30,000 were to be issued so that the Assembly could reimburse planters who had lost tobacco in a number of inspection warehouses. Much of this damage was due to heavy rains caused by a hurricane. To back the issuance of these notes the following taxes were imposed: a duty of 5 percent on the sale of all imported slaves; a duty of three shillings on each tobacco hogshead exported; a tax on coaches, chariots, and other four-wheeled carriages except wagons; a smaller tax on chairs and two-wheeled chaises; a duty of twenty shillings for an ordinary license; and a duty on ordinary writs, subpoenas, summons, and caveats. All the notes were to be signed by Peyton Randolph and John Blair, the younger. James Hubard and Peter Pelham were appointed as overlookers of the press, whose job was to observe the printing of the notes, number them, and then deliver them to the signers. For this work they were paid £25. Once signed, the notes were delivered to the treasurer. All of the notes issued were redeemable on December 10, 1775, at which time they were to be burned and destroyed. A committee consisting of Peyton Randolph, Robert Carter Nicholas, Benjamin Waller, Lewis Burwell, and George Wythe was responsible for the burning of all treasury notes.

It was also illegal to paste paper on the back of any treasury notes. If the notes were accidentally torn, wetted, or defaced they were to be returned to the treasurer for replacement. As with previous currency acts, counterfeiting treasury notes was considered a felony without the benefit of clergy. Unlike several previous currency laws this act did not specify the denominations to be printed. (For a review of these currency laws see *"For the Protection of His majesty's Subjects" The Issuance of Virginia Treasury Notes, the interpreter*, August 1995)

In March 1773 the Assembly passed *An Act of the better securing the public credit of this colony*. Because the treasury notes from the last two issues (November 1769 and July 1771) had been widely counterfeited, the Assembly needed to recall the notes quickly and destroy them. Treasurer Robert Carter Nicholas was authorized to borrow up to £36, 834 at 5 percent interest. After one month if he could not borrow that amount, he could issue promissory notes up to the total. All of the notes were to be signed by the Treasurer, countersigned by Peyton Randolph and John Blair, and numbered by James Hubard and Peter Pelham. Blair was to be paid £20, and Hubard and Pelham each received £30. The notes used were the engraved James River Bank notes that Thomas Tabb had brought from Great Britain. The James River Bank was a proposed private bank that was never approved by the Crown. These engraved notes were much harder to counterfeit than the previously issued notes that used type from the local printing office.

One of the most frequently asked ques-

tions by our visitors is how much is that worth in terms of today's money. While many have attempted to answer this question, we feel at this time that it is still impossible to state accurately the conversion rate between Virginia's eighteenth-century currency and its twentieth-century equivalent. A better approach is to compare what could be purchased in the eighteenth century for a particular amount of money. On the backs of each of the reproduction notes is a short statement which indicates what could be purchased for that amount of money.

On the back of the 1771 treasury note it states that "the face value of the note, three pounds, was equal to three week's wages for a journeyman miller." This is the salary Nathaniel Burwell paid his miller, James Vaughan. Other items that could be purchased for three pounds include: six barrels of corn, hominy, or meal; two cross cut saws; or a set of harness for a single riding chair. On the back of the 1773 James River Bank Note it states that "the face value, twenty

shillings (or one pound), equaled the price of a pair of silver shoe buckles, or two tickets to a ball at the Raleigh Tavern." Additional items that could be purchased for twenty shillings include: sixteen nights at a tavern for one person and his horse, six quarts of Madeira wine, a large Bible, five dozen oranges, one pair of woman's stays, a pair of money scales and a ledger, or a set of shoemaker's tools.

Before we introduce colonial currency to the public, training materials dealing with both the operational procedures of this project together with information on eighteenth-century currency and prices will be available for all staff. Individualized training sessions for specific work groups will also be available upon request. (Call John Caramia at extension 7493 to schedule this training.) Colonial currency offers all of us—visitors and employees—numerous opportunities to explore Virginia's eighteenth-century economy. ■

---

---

## WEATHER PERMITTING

By Laura Arnold

*Laura is an historical interpreter in the department of Historic Buildings.*

"Weather permitting"—two words that affect interpreters and visitors alike. For the most part, our concern involves the cancellation of programs, and the safety of guests and employees when severe weather is predicted. As we look ahead to another summer season, we wonder if there will be as many hurricanes as there were in 1995, do we face another summer of drought conditions? Electronic technology and meteorology provide us with some of the answers, but in the eighteenth century, weather simply happened, often with dire consequences. There were no hurricane warnings or watering devices to provide relief to parched land and animals. Spring floods caused devastation which doomed the coming season's crops. Virginia's agricultural economy was constantly threatened by the vagaries of weather. Primary documents, from personal diaries to the Virginia laws, provide the background that allows us to see how weather dominated

the lives of Virginians.

Thomas Jefferson, driven both by his fascination with meteorology and his responsibilities as a farmer, devoted a chapter to "Climate" in his *Notes On The State Of Virginia*. His observations, made from 1772 through 1777, were recorded in Williamsburg, but compared weather conditions here with those at Monticello. Jefferson's *Memo-randum Books* record the purchase of twenty thermometers, and from 1776 through the end of his long life, his daily routine included checking temperatures at dawn and in the late afternoon, the coldest and warmest times of the day. Jefferson also owned a barometer and hygrometer to create what he called his "indexes of climate," foreshadowing the concept that established weather patterns could assist farmers in the management of their crops. Entries in his *Farm Book* record his euphoria over fine weather and abundant harvests one year, and his distress over ruined crops when drought or floods descended like plagues upon his "little mountain" other years.

Jefferson's friend and classmate at William and Mary, John Page of Rosewell, shared his curiosity about natural science. Page's observations of eclipses of the sun reflect his special interest in astronomy. Both men used

their personal copies of the *Virginia Almanack* to record weather conditions. John Page's copies are particularly interesting to examine because he recorded actual conditions next to the often unreliable predictions printed in the almanac. Almanac predictions, while inaccurate by modern standards, nevertheless were a guide to what kind of weather to expect each month as well as giving suggestions about soil preparation and what to plant. Almanacs linked astronomy and meteorology by providing, "The Luna-

York Town." Lightning had taken the life of Benjamin Harrison IV in 1744, and the Reverend Andrew Burnaby, writing about his travels in Virginia in 1760, noted the use of lightning rods as protection against "melancholy consequences" caused by the "frequent and violent gusts with thunder and lightning." Carter Burwell's prayer book contains within the litany, this plea, "From lightning and tempests; from plague, pestilence and famine . . . Good Lord, deliver us." Special prayers for "Rain," "Fair Weather,"

T H E  
**VIRGINIA**  
**ALMANAC,**  
FOR THE  
Year of our LORD GOD 1757.

BEING THE FIRST AFTER  
BISSEXTILE, OR LEAP-YEAR.

WHEREIN ARE CONTAINED,

The LUNATIONS, CONJUNCTIONS, ECLIPSES; the SUN and MOON's Rising and Setting; the Rising Setting, and Southing of the HEAVENLY BODIES; WEATHER; COURT Days; a List of the ROYAL NAVY of GREAT-BRITAIN; ADMIRALS of the Royal Navy; Pay of the OFFICERS of the Royal Navy; Pay of His MAJESTY'S LAND FORCES; the GOVERNORS, &c. of the several *British* Colonies on the Continent of NORTH-AMERICA; a List of the COUNCIL, and HOUSE of BURGESSES of Virginia; COURTS DAYS in North-Carolina. Several Useful TABLES; Description of the ROADS thro' the CONTINENT, &c. &c.

CALCULATED ACCORDING TO ART;  
And referred to the HORIZON of 38 Degrees North Latitude, and a Meridian of Five Hours West from the City of London, siting Virginia, Maryland, North-Carolina, &c.

By THEOPHILUS WREG. *Philom.*

WILLIAMSBURG:  
Printed and Sold by WILLIAM HUNTER.

*Eclipses for the Year 1778.*

THE first is a very great eclipse of the sun visible here, on the 24th of June, in the morning. This eclipse will be total in some parts of West Florida, the Carolinas, and Virginia; and at Rosewell, as follows;

Beginning at	8h 33m	} apparent time.
Beginning of total darkness at	9 44	
End of total darkness	9 48	
End of the eclipse	11 7	

The second is a visible eclipse of the moon in the night following the 3d of December,

Beginning at	12h 15m	}
Middle at	12 24	
End	1 33	

Digits eclipsed 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> on the north side.

The third and last is of the sun, December 18th, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, invisible.

---

*Common Notes for the Year 1778.*

Golden Number	12	Epaet	1	
Dominical Letter	D	Cycle of the Sun	23	

---

**EXPLANATION of the Calendar**  
*Pages.*

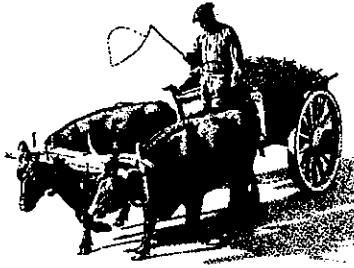
THE first column contains the days of the month, the second the days of the week; the third remarkable days, weather, aspects places, &c. the fourth the moon's place; the fifth the sun's rising; the sixth the sun's setting; and the seventh the moon's rising and setting.

tions, Conjunctions, Eclipses, the Sun and Moon's Rising, Setting, and Southing, of the Heavenly Bodies, true Places and Aspects of the Planets, Weather etc."

John Page's notes are a poignant look at the private life of a public man. On March 16, 1777, he noted, "frogs croaked," followed the next day by "Robin Redbreast sang." He also noted unusual weather phenomena such as the entry which described, "The Man struck with Lightning, who had the Figure of a Tree, strongly imprinted on his body, which was struck at the same Time with him in

"In Time of Dearth and Famine" are also provided with corresponding prayers of "Thanksgiving for Rain," "Fair Weather" and "Plenty."

Landon Carter, whose never-ending quarrels with the clergy appear throughout his diary, wrote of his dispute with Reverend Isaac Giberne when the clergyman refused to pray for rain at Carter's request. August of 1771 was a month without rain, and Carter complained, "Of all the months in the year, drowth in this month is the most destructful for corn, Pease and tobacco; and indeed for



sowing my wheat and Rye, for it hardly can come up." Without sufficient grain to store ahead for winter, Carter was concerned about providing food for his family and livestock. Drought conditions were ruinous to tobacco, and it is not surprising that prayers for rain, for relief for his cash crop, were of such importance to Landon Carter.

Two storms stand out in the primary documents: the hurricane of September 1769, and the "Great Fresh" of May 1771. Both editions of the *Virginia Gazette* carried stories about the hurricane. One editor claimed

*The damage it has done is inconceivable Vast numbers of houses are blown down, and mills carried away; trees of all sizes torn up by the roots, and cattle, hogs, etc. crushed by the fall; the corn laid level with the ground, and the tobacco ruined in many places, and much hurt in almost all. In short, such a dreadful scene of devastation presents itself in every part of the colony we have yet heard from as beggars all description. Add to this, the damage sustained by water, which it is impossible yet to form any idea of.*

One reader, in a letter to Mr. Rind, described how he was forced to bore holes in the floors of his house to let the flood waters into his cellars when the water became too deep in his rooms. The destruction of houses, trees and fences was insignificant compared to the loss of crops and the mills for grinding wheat and corn. Tobacco stored in warehouses was destroyed as well as that in the field, and the writer implored the Assembly, which was soon to meet, to provide relief to their "suffering people." Opposition to the Townshend Duties and Virginia's quarrels with Parliament were temporarily replaced by accounts of the hurricane. In November the Assembly voted the approval of "An Act to appoint Commissioners to state and settle the damages done by the late storm in several warehouses." Precedent for this intervention had been set in 1667, when the Assembly passed a law against the exportation of corn as a

result of crop destruction during the hurricane of August 1667.

Misery caused by spring "freshets" were recorded as early as 1685 when "A mighty flood came with great Violence downe the river & raised it upward of 20 foot above the common, & hath done mee & my neighbors much damage." Descriptions of the Great Fresh of 1771 leave little to the imagination. In a letter written in August, Richard Bland summarized the effect of the floods.

*Upon the 27th of May a most dreadful Inundation happened in James, Rappahannock and Roanoke Rivers occasioned by very heavy and incessant Rains upon the mountains for ten or twelve days, during which time we in the lower part of the country had a serene sky without the appearance of a cloud. The Rivers rose to the amazing Height of forty Feet perpendicular above the common Level of the Water. Impetuous Torrents rushed from the mountains with such astonishing Rapidity that nothing could withstand their mighty Force. Promiscuous Heaps of Houses, Trees, Men, Horses, Cattle, Sheep, Hogs, Merchandise, Corn, Tobacco & every other Thing that was unfortunately within the dreadful sweep were seen Floating upon the Waters, without a possibility of their being saved. The Finest Low Grounds were ruined, and many of the best Lands totally destroyed. Three Thousand hogsheads of Tobacco were lost from the Public Warehouses; and about the same number from the different Plantations upon the Rivers. The total damage to the Country is computed at two millions Sterling & I do not think it is exaggerated. This severe Stroke occasioned a meeting of the Assembly to provide for those sufferers who Tobacco was lost from the Public Warehouses, which, by our Law, must be made good.*

Reading the accounts of these two great storms provides a sense of *deja vu*, similar as they are to reports of the devastation caused in recent memory by hurricanes Hugo and Andrew. Extremes of weather, then as now, required government intervention to provide "relief to the sufferers."

The immense economic impact of these storms causes them to stand out in primary sources. But a smaller storm along the York River in October 1781, had a greater impact on the political affairs of the newly-formed Commonwealth of Virginia. Lord Cornwallis, in a letter to Sir Henry Clinton, written the day after his surrender at Yorktown, described how the forces of nature brought defeat to the forces of the British army and navy.

After making my arrangements with utmost secrecy, the Light Infantry, greatest part of the Guards, and part of the twenty third regiment landed at Gloucester; but at this critical moment, the weather from being moderate and calm, changed to a most violent storm of wind and rain, and drove all the boats, some of which had troops on board, down the river. It was soon evident that the intended passage

was impracticable, and the absence of the boats rendered it equally impossible to bring back the troops that had passed.

We do not know if battle strategy in the eighteenth century contained the caveat, "weather permitting." We do know that the outcome of that 1781 storm now allows us to interpret history as it happened in Williamsburg (weather permitting). ■



## A CURIOSITY FOR GENTLEMEN AS WELL AS LADIES

By Ron Warren

*Ron is a visitor aide in the department of Trades/ Presentations and Tours.*

"That is an anachronism from the future," states a visitor while I stand on the streets of Colonial Williamsburg sheltering myself from the rain. If you are concerned about how to protect yourself and your clothes from the elements in the eighteenth century read on.

Dear Reader,

I have, since becoming an adult, considered myself a mature, sensible, practical person. When I become aware of some new discovery or invention I consider its use to me or benefits to all peoples. Recently I have begun to examine the merits of a device which may protect one from sun or rain. This device is much smaller than a house, more convenient than a coat or cape, and not as unmanageable as a callash. It can be very easily carried in case of need. It usually consists of a main central stick or handle to which are attached ribs. These ribs are in turn pushed out from a folded position and are supported by stays or stretchers attached to the ribs and to a sliding ring on the handle. This framework in turn is covered with cloth of some sort forming a protective canopy. The device to which I make reference is called a *parapluie* in

*France, an ombrella in Italy, and an umbrella or parasol here in England. I believe, dear reader, you will be interested in its origins and current styles, as well as its advantages and disadvantages.*

"There was a lot of apparent opposition to men carrying umbrellas. . . .men were also embarrassed by insinuations that using an umbrella was admitting that one could not afford a carriage."

*I fear the exact origin is lost in antiquity. For at least three thousand years this device has been used in some form as protection from sun and rain. Evidence indicates that it was used in China eleven centuries before the birth of Christ and the idea spread to Assyria, Persia, and India. In Ancient Egypt as well as in other eastern areas, it became an emblem of distinction and rank. Even today it is reported that among some peoples a person of distinction will be followed by a servant supporting an umbrella over that individual. Pictures on vases from Ancient Greece depict sunshades being used. Some of these pictures show the handle attached at the outer edge rather than the center of the framework thus better protecting the individual for whom it was carried. According to Roman scholar Pliny, similar protection was used in Rome. He describes it as a bamboo frame covered with palm leaves. Later frames*

were made of ivory and the handles were jeweled, and the canopy covering was gold embroidered cloth. It is reported that the Romans were the first to use them as protection from the rain. With the collapse of the Roman Empire it appears that, along with other wisdom of the ancients, this idea of protection from the elements was also lost. Perhaps it would be more correct to say misplaced or ignored. For, like the Phoenix, it reappeared in sixteenth-century Italy where these devices were referred to as "umbrellaes" because they were for protection from the sun. They are described as being made of a leather canopy supported by wooden hoops. By the seventeenth century the Italians had introduced the sunshade into France where it was called a "parasol." It was reported by Antoine Furetiere that the parasol was a "small portable accessory. . . .that is carried in the hand to protect the head from the heat of the sun. . . .It is also used as protection against the rain . . . ." The French did not seem to find it of much value until late in the seventeenth century.

The umbrella did not become well known in England until this [eighteenth] century, although early in the seventeenth century English poet, Michael Drayton, referred to it briefly in these lines:

*And like umbrellas, with their feathers  
shield you in all sorts of weathers.*

In 1710, Jonathan Swift mentions umbrellas thus:

*. . . the tuck'd up sempstress walks with  
hasty strides,  
while streams run down her oil'd umbrella's  
sides.*

And in 1719 Daniel Defoe found it necessary for his hero, Robinson Crusoe, to build an umbrella. Crusoe covers it with ". . . skins, the hair upwards, so that it cast off the rain. . . .and kept off the sun. . . .and when I had no need of it, could close it, and carry it under my arm." After Robinson Crusoe came out umbrellas were referred to as "Robinsons."

Now, dear reader, if thou hast persevered in tracing the umbrella through time and space, from China, through ancient Egypt, Greece, and the Roman Empire, to Italy, France, and finally, to our dear Mother Country, I intend to bestow on you a description of this device through to its present form.

Previous to our (eighteenth) century umbrellas have been ridiculously large and cumbersome. You might even have considered them ugly. Early frames were of reed, wood or whalebone,

and they were covered with linen, silk taffeta, oiled silk or waxed cotton cloth. The ribs could be over thirty inches long while the overall length was almost four feet. The whole device weighed three to four pounds. In our century attempts have been made to improve the umbrella by making it smaller and lighter. The framework is covered with silk or linen stuff in green, brown, yellow or blue.

The primary advantage has already been made known to you, dear reader, in that the umbrella can be used to shield one's self and one's clothing from the sun or rain. Our ladies have evidently recognized its value and are seen using parasols and paraphuies (umbrellas) regularly. Our gentlemen however, seem to fear ridicule from this device's use. They worry that being seen using an umbrella might suggest they are unable to afford a carriage, a lowering of social standing unlike the distinction recognized by ancient Egyptians as I previously mentioned, or its use is contrary to God's intent that rain should fall on one. These seem to be the disadvantages, at least from our gentlemen's points of view.

My study has convinced me of the umbrella's practicality. Ancients saw them as emblems of rank. The Romans favored their use. They have been reported to be popular in France, and our ladies use them. Why should our gentlemen stand aloof?

I leave you with a brief story that comes to mind. In an age gone by in a far country there was a gentleman whose misstep placed him in danger of falling into a muddy ditch. Another gentleman traveling the same path observed the first's predicament and casting aside all cultural impedimenta, he held out his hand to pull the gentleman to safety. However, at that time and place it was not thought proper for men to grasp each other by the hand. Rather than be seen holding the hand of his fellow man, our gentleman fell into the mud and damaged himself and his attire.

Sic Semper Follis

I.M. Practical



Such a letter as the one above might have appeared in a gazette somewhere in the colonies in the eighteenth century. There was a lot of apparent opposition to men carrying umbrellas. As you may note, most early literary passages referred to parasols



and parapluias as being used by the fairer sex. Indeed, umbrella is defined by Kersey's dictionary in 1706 as "commonly used by women to keep off the rain." Not only that, but men were also embarrassed by insinuations that using an umbrella was admitting that one could not afford a carriage. In the early eighteenth century a custom developed of keeping an umbrella in the hall of great houses and taverns for use in walking from the door to the carriage. Along this line a notice in the *Female Tattler*, December 12, 1709 "The young gentleman borrowing the umbrella belonging to Wills Coffee House is [reminded] that to be dry from head to foot on the like occasion he shall be welcome to the maid's patterns."

Beginning about 1670 men had depended on a surtout, "a long close-fitting overcoat like that worn by stage drivers," and "broad-brimmed hats" to protect them from the wet. Perhaps a picture sale at the Blue Coat Coffee House in 1687 best indicates the English attitude when under an entry titled

"Absurd Classifications," was listed "a fine parcel of Umbrellows with other curiositys."

However, an indication of changing attitudes may be represented by Jonathan Swift in 1696 when he wrote in *A Tale of a Tub*, "A large parchment. . . served [Jack] for a night-cap when he went to bed, and for an umbrella in rainy weather." This would seem to point out that some men were using umbrellas.

Although one clergyman is supposed to have seen the umbrella as "preventing heaven-sent rain from wetting a person—the rain which falls upon just and unjust alike," other clergymen evidently found the device useful. The Memoir of Ambrose Barnes mentions an umbrella for the "church's use." Another church warden's account from 1727 indicates that "church umbrellas" were purchased. A similar entry is found in a church warden's account of Burnley, Surrey for 1760 which states, "Paid for umbrella £2 10s 6d."

Because of the cost the one in 1760 may have been a very large umbrella especially designed for use in the church yard. Some ministers conducted grave site funeral services standing under umbrellas. One is described in William Hones's *Table Book* thus:

*With its wooden handle, fixed into a movable shaft, shod with an iron point at the bottom, and stuck into the ground. . . stood seven feet high, the awning. . . of green oiled canvas. . . stretched on ribs of cane. It opens to a diameter of five feet, and forms a decent and capacious covering for the minister. . .*

Writing from Paris in 1752 then Lieutenant-Colonel Wolfe comments that umbrellas were being used for protection from sun and rain and "wonders that a similar practice does not obtain in England." It was about this same time that Jonas Hanway, the

founder of the Marine Society and of the Magdalen Hospital, philanthropist, friend of chimney sweeps, and "sworn foe of tea," began carrying an umbrella daily. He is supposed to have carried it for thirty years. Some people thought he had invented it, and

many called an umbrella a "Hanway." Actually the name umbrella may have come from the Latin term *umbella* applied to blossoms located at the ends of spokes radiating from a central stem as do the ribs of an umbrella. There are also claims that the name originates from the Latin *umbra* meaning shade.

Other encounters indicate that the popularity of the umbrella was expanding as the eighteenth century progressed. John Jamieson, a surgeon from Glasgow, Scotland imported one from Paris in 1782/83, and introduced his home city to the umbrella. In Edinburgh, Dr. Spens is credited in 1779 with being the first to carry one. In 1758, a Dr. Shebbeare was prosecuted for seditious writing and stood in a pillory with a footman holding an umbrella over him to shelter him from the rain. Umbrellas had become



Large umbrellas may have been especially designed for use in the churchyard. Drawing by Lucy Smith, visitor aide.



Drawing by Lucy Smith, visitor aide.

so common in England by 1770 that many shops were selling them and, in Bristol in 1780, a red Italian umbrella appeared. In his *History of Edinburgh* Arnot states that, "by 1783 umbrellas are as common as shoes and stockings. . . ." The colors were usually plain greens and browns, black being a later preference.

"All right," you say, "but what about here in the colonies?" Well, it seems that the device did cross the Atlantic. We find the *Virginia Gazette* carrying advertisements for umbrellas. Margaret Hunter and Sarah Pitt, milliners, advertised umbrellas. Beverly Dickson and John Carter advertised "India umbrellas," and Carter also advertised "green silk umbrellas." Fithian mentions in his journal of 1777 having an umbrella for protection from the sun.

An item was printed in the *Virginia Gazette* in 1771 apparently in response to the criticism of male use of umbrellas.

*You say farther, that they look effeminate; the ladies use them only. The ladies wear shoes; let the men therefore go barefooted. The ladies defend themselves by various means from Cold, Rain, Thunder, Fire etc. Let the men then abandon themselves to the rage of each of these Terrible Evils, and scorn to look effeminate by guarding against them. . . . are not their lives of equal. . . . importance to their families, and to Society, with the women's? If all these things are true, then I see no reason why the Gentlemen should not wear umbrellas as well as the ladies.*

Again, from Purdie's *Virginia Gazette* of October 16, 1778:

*A green umbrella was found on Friday the 2d*

*of October between Culpepper and Fredricksburg. The person who found it lodged it at Mr. William Smith's in Fredricksburg from whence the owner may obtain it on proving his property and paying the charge of this advertisement.*

Finally, records of York County estate inventories indicate that the following persons "owned one or more umbrellas:"

- 1719 Captain William Timson
- 1728 Richard King
- 1729 Henry Tyler
- 1734 Edward Tabb
- 1746 John Burdett
- 1766 Joseph Royle
- 1769 Dr. Peter Hay
- 1769 William Waters
- 1775 John Prentis
- 1779 John Camm

Thus we learn that the umbrella has a long history, probably starting in China, and spreading to the west. The French evidently had a lot to do with the development of a practical umbrella. Even though English women may have been the first to appreciate the umbrella's value in the rainy climate of their homeland, English men eventually braved the critics and adopted them. *Virginia Gazette* advertisements and York County inventories seem to prove that umbrellas were in Virginia almost from the founding of Williamsburg.

The next time you are using an umbrella, and visitors come up to you and comment, "That is a nineteenth-century anachronism," you will be prepared to interpret the story of the umbrella. ■

*Authentically styled umbrellas would certainly enhance Colonial Williamsburg's costume and interpretive programs and may, at some future date, be implemented. For the present, our position on the matter, as stated in the Standards of Appearance, is that "only plain black umbrellas are approved" because they are the least obtrusive. In the meantime, research will continue to be collected and potential vendors sought out to augment the accessories offerings.*

*Rick Hill, Manager  
Costume Design Center*

# HOME REMEDIES: PURVEYORS AND PRACTITIONERS

By Kris Dippre

*Kris is an interpreter in the Galt Apothecary Shop in the department of Historic Buildings.*



Home remedies were abundant in the eighteenth century and could have been a compilation of ideas passed down through generations of family members and neighbors. If the women of the household had the ability to read, or to read to one another, publications on the subject of home cures would have been found in the household. Various guides were written on this subject. Many of them were written by laymen and, in many cases, tended to distort what was being taught in the medical schools. The practice of medicine was already a great challenge for even the most skilled in the profession, let alone the unskilled, primarily due to the fact that the cause of disease was not known, and therefore, could only be theorized, leaving only the symptoms to be treated.

Relying on indigenous substances with the help of a home-remedy book proved to be

less expensive than a doctor's care, thus making these references not only necessary, but very attractive. Williamsburg doctors William Pasteur and John Galt charged five shillings for an office visit, whereas a self-help guide, sold in paperback form, could cost less than half that amount. *The Housekeepers Pocket Book, or Every one their own Physician or CHARITY made pleasant, By Relieving their own FAMILY, or poor neighboring People, by Cheap, easy, and safe REMEDIES* was written by London resident Sarah Harrison in 1755, and was offered for sale at two shillings, six pence. Harrison's book proves to be a good example of the medical self-help guides of the day, as it listed not only recipes for cooking and food preservation but also included ideas for de-bugging the household. An appendix of this publication was entirely devoted to self medication and even credited different individuals who had submitted their ideas. One contributor, and possibly co-author Mary Morris, wrote in the appendix:

*Physic has long been deemed an Art not to be acquired but by Men of Learning only; but the Exorbitance of their Fees, and the Extravagance of Apothecaries Bills, has made Family Receipts much Esteemed; more especially when they are well chosen, and adapted to the Cure designed, by Reason and Experience.*

A well-chosen remedy could have been obtained from one of these recipes for the Ague, or intermitting fever, by taking a large onion, roasting a whole nutmeg in it until both were soft, cutting the nutmeg into a quart of strong beer and then adding this entire mixture to a large glass of brandy.

Not to be outdone by the home-remedy market, *Virginia Gazette* advertisements are proof that many local doctors carried and sold the necessary equipment for the self-practitioner. It was not uncommon to see a doctor's advertisement including the sale of crucibles, and mortars and pestles.

John Wesley, the famous evangelist and founder of the Methodist church, opposed many of the methods recommended by physicians of his time. In his 1747 book, *Primitive Physic*, he prescribed a basic practice of using simple, less caustic ingredients. He also believed in "electrifying" many conditions including "old age" and "baldness." Even though some of his remedies may appear to the present day reader to be ludicrous or primitive, others had reputable value, such as advising against excessive bloodletting. He

not only recommended certain substances be taken into the body, but like many laymen and learned doctors of the time, an entire regimen of diet and exercise were also considered a necessity. He wrote "For an Ague, The patient ought therefore, between fits, to take as much exercise as he can bear, and to use a light diet, and, for common drink, lemonade is most proper." *Primitive Physic* was printed from 1747 until 1829, experiencing thirty-two English and seven American editions.

John Tennent, another layman, was living during this same period of the eighteenth century. He was probably one of the best known medical authors in Virginia, certainly in Williamsburg, and was not entirely unknown in England. He seems to have been known, however, not because of his expertise in caring for the sick, but because of the numbers of pamphlets and treatises he produced. Originally from Britain, he arrived in the Virginia Colony around 1725, settling in Spotsylvania County where he purchased quite a bit of property, and eventually married. According to the *Virginia Gazette* of 1736, Tennent offered one thousand acres for sale in Prince William County and three thousand acres in Spotsylvania in 1738.

After the year 1735, he seems to have devoted most of his time to "senega snake root" (*Polygala Seneca*) and its many healing virtues. Convinced that this one plant would be the medicinal answer to various maladies such as pleurisy, he wrote an *Essay on the Pleurisy* which William Parks published in the *Virginia Gazette* in 1736. Further newspaper entries would show that his essay had opened the doors to much debate. Tennent, being a frequent correspondent with gentlemen of importance in France, England, and here in Virginia, tried to strengthen his position on this miracle product by sending samples of his root to the likes of William Byrd and Governor Gooch hoping for their endorsements.

Around this same time, he sailed back to England in the attempt to personally persuade its medical world of the same virtues. He simultaneously sought to obtain certification for qualifications for a degree in Doctor of Physic from the University of Edinburgh. Even though he failed in both attempts, he sailed back to Virginia espousing these supposed accomplishments. He also, during this second stay in Virginia, tried to

convince the House of Burgesses to pay him £1000 for his snake root discovery. He ventured back to England with the excuse, "Not enjoying Health in America, and meeting with Ingratitude in the Colony where I resided I came over to settle in London in the Year 1739, October 12, and some misunderstanding having arose with the Physicians, a most valuable Medicine has been in a great Measure buried."

Tennent's career seems to have traveled some rocky roads, and records find him spending much of his time writing essays and broadsides proclaiming his victories and excusing his mistakes. The £1000 he had requested from Virginia's House of Burgesses was rewarded instead with £100, causing a rather dissatisfied Tennent to pursue his hopeful claim to fame with England's Parliament, only to be disappointed by them as well. His career seems to have been further tainted by increasing debts and a decreasing reputation. In his published work, *A Brief Account of the Case of John Tennent*, he explained his reasons for involving himself in a bigamy case, supposedly done to help his failing financial situation. Regardless of his reputation, his book of home remedies, *Everyman His Own Doctor, or the Poor Planter's Physician* was a widely sold item in the Williamsburg area. Benjamin Franklin even printed this book not only once in Philadelphia but three times, with good success. On page thirty two of this book, he wrote,

*An Ague returns either every other Day, every third, or every fourth Day; and the Way to know which of these any Person has is only to abide Two Fits. If it come every Day, it will be often accompanied with a Pain in the Head: In which Case, after the second Fit, you must bleed 8 Ounces. The next Day, purge with Indian Physick, and Two Days after that, repeat the same again. This must be followed, by taking, every morning and Evening, 20 Grains of the Powder of Sassafras-root, mixt with 10 Grains of Snake-root, in 2 Spoonfuls of the Decoction of Wormwood.*

What eventually happened to Tennent is difficult to say. Later reports would lead one to believe that he may have traveled to Jamaica, leaving England and Virginia altogether.

Finally, no article on eighteenth-century home care would be complete without the mention of Dr. William Buchan. He was a Scotsman, educated at the prestigious Uni-

versity of Edinburgh with the original intent of entering the ministry, but during his nine years of study he eventually turned his interests to medicine. He wrote the extremely popular book *Domestic Medicine* in 1769. From that year until 1871, Buchan's book appeared in at least one hundred and forty-two separate editions. Medical texts up until this time had been designed to allow the reader to master the latest theories for the purpose of further discussion and debate. Others were written solely as a practical, useable guide. William Buchan's book did both, describing the disease in more professional terms and then recommending a simpler regimen of diet, exercise and treatment. Buchan seemed to cater to a certain class of people, a class that fell somewhere in between the idle rich and the working poor. His major concern, regardless of class distinction, seemed to be with children. He was well known for his advice on rearing children from infancy through adolescence, and along with many other positions he held during his career, he was appointed medical officer to a branch of the Foundling Hospital at Ackworth, Yorkshire in 1759. He noted in his 1778 edition of *Domestic Medicine*,

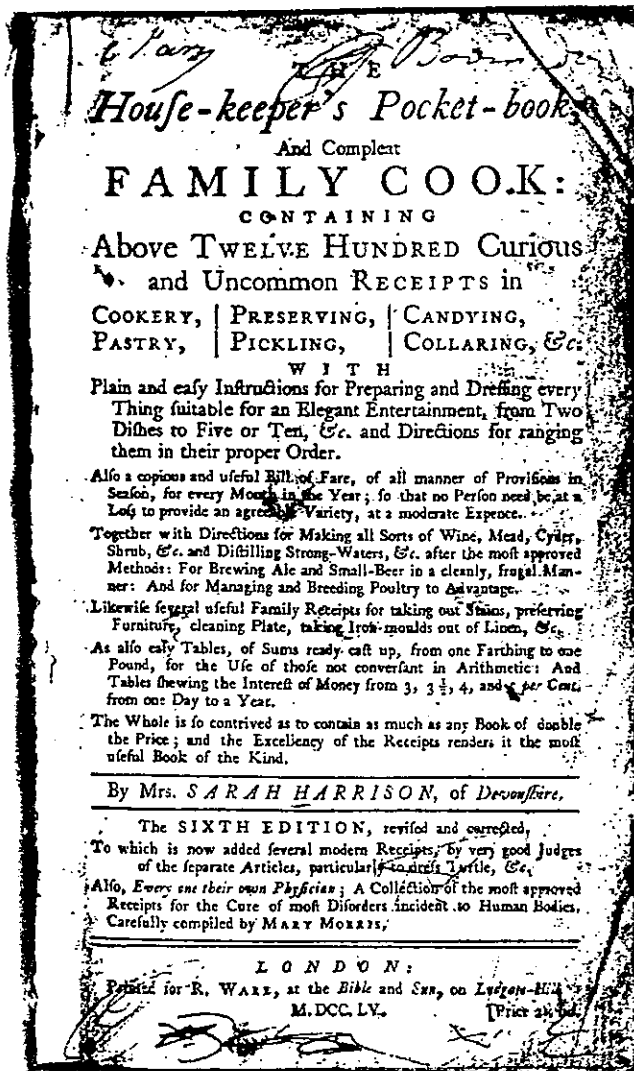
*I some time ago saw a very striking instance of the danger of substituting drying medicines in the place of cleanliness and wholesome food, in the Foundling-Hospital at Ackworth, where the*

*children were grievously afflicted with scabbed heads and other cutaneous disorders. I found upon enquiry, that very little attention was paid either to the propriety or soundness of their provisions, and that cleanliness was totally neglected; accordingly I advised, that they should have more wholesome food, and be kept thoroughly clean. This advise however was not*

*followed. I was too trouble-some to the servants, superintendents, &c. The business was to be done by medicine; which was accordingly attempted, but had near proved fatal to the whole house. Fevers and other internal disorders immediately appeared, and, at length, a putrid dysentery, which proved so infectious, that it carried off a great many of the children.*

Indeed, Buchan's writings exposed his very dedicated campaign to attend to children properly, by encouraging commonsense practices when administering treatment, whether it be medicinal or compassionate. He wrote,

*Miserable indeed is the lot of man in the state of infancy. He comes into the world more helpless than any other animal, and stands much longer in need of the protection and care of his parents, but, alas! This care is not always bestowed upon him; and when it is, he often suffers as much from improper management as he would have done from neglect. Hence the officious care of parents, nurses, and midwives, becomes one of the most fruitful sources of the*



This edition includes *Everyone their own physician*

disorders of infants.

He certainly encouraged the idea of cleanliness during a period of time when being clean was not just associated with being polite but was now starting to be associated with contagion. "If dirty people cannot be removed as a common nuisance, they ought to at least be avoided as infectious."

He recommended for a fever

*If the patient only lies in bed, bathes his feet and legs in warm water, and drinks freely of water-gruel, or any other weak, diluting liquor, he will seldom fail to perspire freely. The warmth of the bed, and the diluting drink will relax the universal spasm, which generally affects the solids at the beginning of the fever; it will open the pores and promote the perspiration, by means of which the fever may be often carried off. But*

*instead of this, the common practice is to heap clothes on the patient, and to give him things of a hot nature, as spirits, spiceries &c, which fire his blood, increase the spasms, and render the disease more dangerous.*

In conclusion, one can easily see that a remedy or theory for just one given symptom could be as numerous and as diverse as the very authors who wrote the books. The popularity of a text was not always determined by an individual author's trained ability to write down sound advice, but was many times sought after because of the inexpensive price of the book itself. Whether we consider any of these remedies sound advice or not, they truly aided in providing a basis for a more standardized system of health care and individual health awareness today. ■



## AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY-GARDENING EXPERIENCE

Ah, spring! when a young man's or woman's fancy turns to . . . gardens! This spring Colonial Williamsburg visitors are invited to participate in a gardening program at the Peter Scott site across from Bruton Parish Church. On April 17 Wesley Green and Terry Yemm of the department of Landscape and Facilities Services began interpreting in costume the history of eighteenth-century gardening. The colonial nursery operates seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. through the first of November.

Most of the plants in the garden are the usual historic varieties including vegetables, mixed perennials, woody shrubs, and a few annuals. A fruit and herb garden will be developed next door in the present peach orchard. The well on the site is now operational and visitors are invited to get a hands-on experience by helping water the plants as well as hoeing and weeding the garden in the eighteenth-century manner. At the entrance to the site personnel from Historic Area stores have set up a sales area where visitors may purchase plants, seeds, flower pots, bell jars, and other colonial garden supplies.

Stop by the colonial nursery at the Peter Scott site and learn what it was like to be a professional gardener two hundred years ago.

*"Those bricky towers, where now the studious lawyers have their bowers"*

## The Inns of Court and the Virginia Connection

By Mike Haas

*Mike is an attorney-at-law and an historic interpreter in the department of Historic Buildings.*

In 1739 Peyton Randolph sailed to England to enter the Middle Temple, one of the four Inns of Court, to begin the study that would lead to his call to the bar. He was following in the footsteps of his father, Sir John Randolph, who had studied at Gray's Inn before being called to the bar in 1717. Peyton's brother John would study at Middle Temple and become a member of the bar in 1748. During their long public service careers, both Peyton and his brother held the position of Attorney General of Virginia, while their father served in the same position in an interim capacity. They joined numerous other colonial Virginians who became lawyers by studying at these legal training schools. What were the Inns of Court in the eighteenth century and what was life like for the men who studied there? Was there an advantage to studying in England instead of clerking with a Virginia lawyer?

In 1615 Sir George Buc called the Inns of Court "the third universitie of England" after Oxford and Cambridge, although as an institution, the Inns were unincorporated, had no charter of foundation, and lacked a central structure or constitution. The Inns began as associations of lawyers living together in hostels where they taught their craft to students and evolved into some of the foremost learning institutions in medieval England. While their fourteenth-century origins remain obscure, the four primary Inns which exist today, Inner Temple, Middle Temple, Gray's Inn, and Lincoln's Inn, had acquired their principal characteristics by the early fifteenth century. There were also lesser inns that fluctuated in size and number, some becoming known as the Inns of Chancery because they were founded by chancery clerks and others called Serjeant's Inns because of their connection with the legal officers called serjeants of law. By the end of the fifteenth century, the Inns con-

tained just over one thousand members, making them almost the size of Cambridge University. Sir Edward Coke called them in 1602 "the most famous university for profession of law only, or of any human science, that is in the world, and advanceth itself above all others." Sir John Fortesque, governor of Lincoln's Inn in the time of Henry VI, described them as comprising a "studium publicum" more suitable for the study of common law than any university, by virtue of their proximity to the king's courts.

Like the colleges of both the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, each of the Inns consisted of a great hall, where meals were eaten in collegial or common style, a chapel, a library, and the chambers that gave lodging to lawyers and legal students. Also like the colleges, the Inns were built in the shape of tranquil quadrangles with gardens, high walls, and gates that were closed at night to keep out non-members. The buildings which became Inner Temple and Middle Temple were initially built in the 1100's by the Knights Templar, the fraternal protectors of the Holy Land during the Crusades, as their quarters. When the Knights were suppressed in 1312, lawyers moved into the apartments around the Templars' hall and round church and soon purchased the buildings. Ancient records indicate Inner Temple was the original inn, with Middle Temple added to alleviate overcrowding. Gray's Inn and Lincoln's Inn were added later and are a short distance from the Temple area. There was also an Outer Temple, situated immediately outside the boundary of the City of London, but it was not occupied by the lawyers.

Through the years, the Inns became teaching institutions using a system of readings or lectures on statute law and practice trials called moots that taught the common or case-made law. Lecturers, using Latin or law French, read statutes clause by clause, beginning with Magna Carta and extending through more recent laws of felony murder, theft, and the passing on of property. The students and lecturer discussed the common law in use before the statutes, the effect of the legislation, and made distinctions between existing laws. Moots consisted of very complex legal problems written in law French with as many as thirty issues and sub-issues, ending with "*Ceux que droit?*" (Who is right?) The moots often imitated real cases heard at the Westminster Hall courts and were usu-

ally conducted after dinner. They contained the complexity of modern law school final exam questions and kept the students arguing for an entire academic term. In addition, the students attended actual trials at Westminster Hall, seated in a wooden gallery to the side of the court. Court records show that the judges would sometimes speak directly to the students, explaining their actions.

Within each inn, a series of levels developed into which the students moved as they gained knowledge and experience. In the early years, the beginning students were called inner barristers, with barrister meaning a person called to the bar or railing separating the students from the more learned members. Those who did well in three to five years of study were called to the "utter" or outer bar as an utter barrister and could do the arguing at the moots and in the law courts. While most beginning students would strive to become utter barristers or advocates trained to a high level of expertise, some desired only to become court or local government officials and left the Inns after one

year. Others returned to their homes to become country gentlemen who never directly practiced law. After ten years or more, the utter barristers were eligible to rise to the highest level of member, the benchers. These men sat on the benches or high tables at the moots and gave the lectures to both the inner and utter barristers. The benchers also governed the Inn, with one of their number elected as senior official or treasurer. Students who excelled and remained at the inns moved to higher levels through the actual

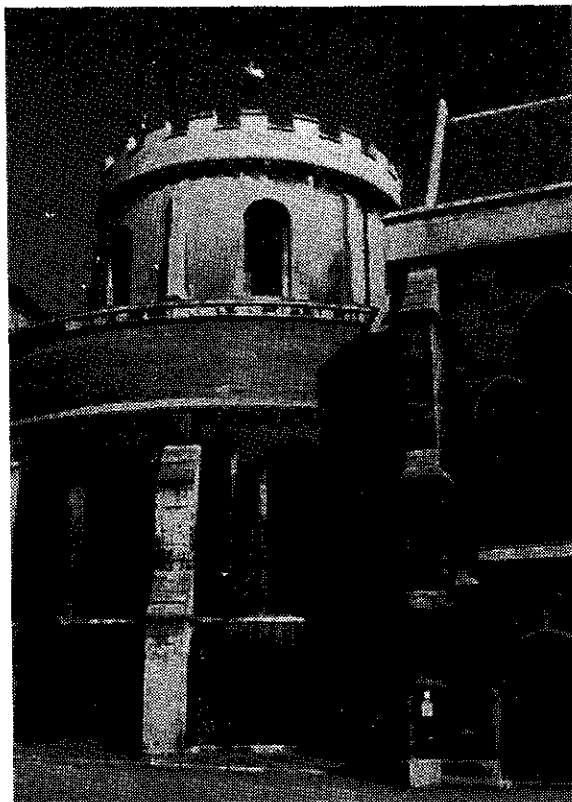
performance of appropriate exercises. In later years the term barrister came to mean a person who, through study and examination, earned a barrister's degree and thereby became a practicing member of the bar.

In addition to the lectures and moots, the students were required to eat a certain number of meals at their inn each term. For over five hundred years, the evening meals have held a unique place in the pageantry of the law with every stage of dining regulated by historic custom. In the tradition of the university colleges, the benchers sat at the high table on a raised dais, with the utter barristers

sitting next, and the students or inner barristers sitting at the far end of the room. In medieval times the bread was brought to the Temple by boat from Charing Cross and upon its arrival the "pannier" or breadporter would sound an ox-horn to summon the members to the meal. The tradition has continued since, with a silver-mounted ox-horn sounded before dinner. The benchers then entered in procession, with their porter carrying the mace of the inn, much like the practice of a guild or livery company. The chaplain of

fered prayer from the Elizabethan prayer book of 1581 and a series of toasts to the sovereign, the lord high chancellor and "this ancient and honourable society" commenced. After the meal, the members were permitted to drink port and use tobacco or snuff while they discussed real or imaginary points of order until the business or entertainment began.

While Virginians readily connect the Randolphs to the Inns of Court, there were many others who were either born in the



Temple Church has served both Middle Temple and Inner Temple since the 1300s.



Old Dominion or had Virginia connections before becoming members of an inn. Middle Temple was the most popular inn with Virginians, possibly because it offered shorter residency requirements for colonial students who could demonstrate that they had previously studied at a college or with a lawyer. It was also the largest inn. A few of the most prominent Middle Templars included Sir Walter Raleigh, Richard Hakluyt, George Sandys, and George Percy. All of these men were born in England, joined the Inn in the sixteenth century and were involved with Virginia settlement. Other Middle Temple

members were Governor Sir William Berkeley, George Mason's brother Thomson, John Blair, Jr., William Byrd II, William Byrd III, and Judge Cyrus Griffin, the last president of the Continental Congress. Both the first president of the Continental Congress, Peyton Randolph, and the last were Virginia Middle Templars.

Councillor and acting governor Lewis Burwell and his son Lewis, Robert Carter of Nomini Hall, Thomas Nelson, Jr., and St. George Tucker were all members of Inner Temple. Lincoln's Inn members included

Nicholas Spencer, secretary of the colony and president of the Council, and Doctor Arthur Lee. In addition to Sir John Randolph, Gray's Inn members included Captain Gabriel Archer, Governor Sir Francis Wyatt, Edward Digges of Belfield on the York River, Nathaniel Bacon, and George Washington's uncle, Joseph Ball.

Among the 230 American-born members from various colonies who joined the Inns of Court between 1685 and 1815, at least 73 members had strong Virginia connections

including six of the sixteen attorneys general and fifteen members of the Council. A number of these men attended a college or university in the British Isles before joining an inn, with sixteen attending a Cambridge University college, ten matriculating at Oxford, two graduating from the University of Edinburgh and one each attending the University of Aberdeen and Trinity College in Dublin. Some, including Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Francis Drake, seem to have become members of an inn for social benefit or to enhance their education rather than to prepare for a career in the law courts.



Interior of Temple Church.

By mid-eighteenth century, total costs for a year of study at one of the Inns of Court was estimated to exceed £200, three times the expense of a year at Cambridge. Why then would Virginians who wished to practice law travel to London instead of clerking for a Virginia lawyer? To those who could afford it, a few years in London was looked upon as money well spent to round out an education and to help guarantee a successful legal career, although numerous successful lawyers did not study in England.

Barristers from the

Inns were permitted to practice in the General Court immediately upon return to Virginia without gaining experience in the county courts and were usually considered attorney general material.

Some, however, returned home with an attitude of superiority other Virginians found unbearable. When Robert Carter of Nomini Hall returned from his carefree years at Inner Temple, some family members were sorely disappointed in him; his cousin John Page called him "inconceivably illiterate, and also

corrupted and vicious." Carter never practiced law but served on the Council as well as the Virginia Committee of Correspondence. William Byrd II also spent most of his time in London's worldly society, attending theater and visiting taverns generally in the company of ladies of doubtful character. While there, Byrd was under the supervision of Sir Robert Southwell, Secretary of State for Ireland, who ensured Byrd was introduced to leading jurists, physicians, politicians, and dramatists. Byrd dabbled in science and was elected to the Royal Society while becoming a capable lawyer who would serve on the Council for 37 years. In later life he wrote to fellow Middle Temple student Chief Justice Benjamin Lynde of Massachusetts saying that he would like to visit Salem "to see what alteration forty years have wrought in you since we used to intrigue together in the Temple. But matrimony has atoned sufficiently for such backslidings. . . ."

After 1750 a marked change occurred in the education offered at the Inns as each became more a professional organization or club and less a teaching collegiate institution. While the Inns continued to set standards and control admission to the legal profession, formal education was de-emphasized and soon was reduced to hollow ritual devoid of real intellectual training or accomplishment. In his eighteenth-century *Discourse on the Study of Law*, Roger North stated that the Inns were "societies, which have the outward show or pretense of collegiate institutions, yet in reality, nothing of that sort is now to be found in them." He also indicated that men became members of the bar just by showing up at various exercises rather than having to perform in a satisfactory manner. Instead of having to attend the moots, dinners, and lectures, students could pay modest fines and skip such formalities. In addition, Middle Temple permitted colonial students to become members in absentia with payment of £38.6..2. As war with England loomed in the 1770's, the emerging political problems combined with the distance to England, the expense of crossing the Atlantic, and lack of solid legal scholarship at the inns made clerking with Virginia attorneys the method of choice for most young law students here. St. George Tucker's father was advised by the attorney general of Bermuda to have his son educated in Virginia and to enter Middle Temple in absentia since he

would not receive legal training in London that would be of any use to him. At the same time in England, Sir William Blackstone was suggesting that the universities at Oxford and Cambridge were the places to teach law to future attorneys. The Inns of Court began permitting Oxford and Cambridge graduates to become barristers after only three years of study rather than the customary five.

For those Virginians who did travel to England, attendance at an inn directly introduced them to the unique and rich pageantry of English law, a history which reached back over five hundred years before the visits of Peyton and John Randolph. Those who visit Middle Temple today come away with a feeling of what life was like for the Randolphs. The great hall, the Inn's most important building, appears today nearly identical to that in which the Randolphs ate. Elizabeth I attended its opening in 1576 and frequently joined the Middle Templars for meals. Its glorious double hammerbeam oak roof, with joists 44 feet long each made from a single oak tree estimated to be over 800 years old, survived the Great Fire of 1666 as well as the German bombs of World War II. Near the dais where the twentieth-century benchers eat is a serving table called "the cupboard" said to have been made from a hatchcover from Sir Francis Drake's ship *Golden Hind*. A lamp destroyed during the World War II bombing was reputed to have hung from the ship's poop deck.

The hall served as the dining room, classroom, and entertainment center of the Inn in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Shakespeare himself is thought to have been in the cast of *Twelfth Night* performed there in 1601. Each Christmas brought a time to "dine, dance and dice with women" in the hall, with a Lord of Misrule to king it over everyone and everything.

Middle Temple and Inner Temple have shared Temple Church since the 1300's. This round church, built by the Knights Templar to resemble the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, has changed little since its consecration in 1185 except for the addition of a large choir in 1240. The tombs of the Templar Knights dating from the thirteenth century still feature in the architecture. Some of the Middle Temple quadrangles were built by Sir Christopher Wren, and their Georgian symmetry accompanied by shady trees and fountains has scarcely changed

through the centuries. The Lamb and Flag arms of Middle Temple were used as a badge by the Knights Templar as early as 1241. These buildings and symbols were very familiar to the Virginia Middle Temple students.

The ancient structures and the traditions of the Inns must have made a considerable impact on the Virginians, few of whom had ever seen a large city before arriving in London. In addition to their Inns of Court experiences, the Virginians undoubtedly visited Westminster Hall, saw political greats like William Pitt in Parliament, observed cases at the King's Bench, Common Pleas, and High Court of Chancery, and rubbed shoulders with famous literati such as Samuel Johnson. They visited Westminster Abbey and attended the theater, seeing actors like David Garrick. A few years in London expanded their provincial horizons and made them feel more like citizens of the world. They were steeped

in the ceremony of the law even as they indulged in refined social interactions.

While education at the Inns of Court was not a requirement for success in the eighteenth century, these ancient schools provided wealthy Virginians an important training ground in English law and social advancement. Even though the social and cultural contributions of the Inns to English life are important, their greatest significance derives from shaping common law by exploring the refinements of doctrine in advance of its application in court and by training a small cadre of advocates to a high level of expertise. The law nurtured at the Inns not only governed Virginia but would spread over one third of the globe. At the Inns, Virginia students learned to do as Tranio suggests in *The Taming of the Shrew*, "Do as adversaries do in law, strive mightily, but eat and drink as friends." ■

---

---

## SOUL OF A SHARECROPPER

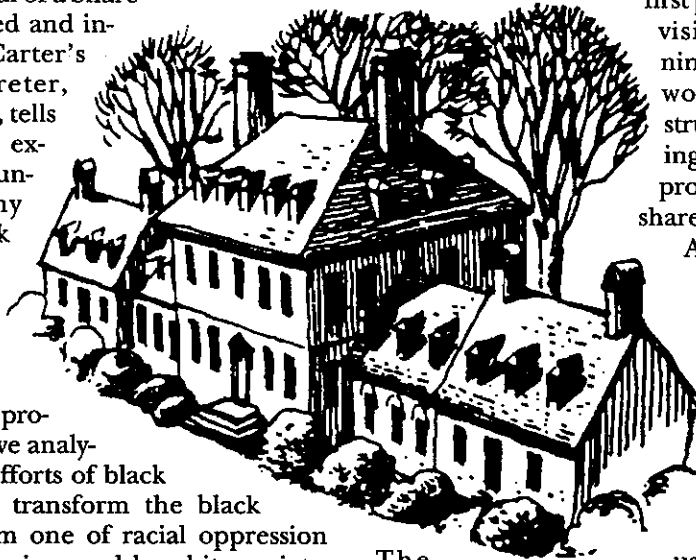
Every Tuesday during the months of May and June Carter's Grove will present an experimental program that will help bring to life a part of that "forgotten" century—the nineteenth. "Soul of a Sharecropper," created and interpreted by Carter's Grove interpreter, Sandra Johnson, tells the story of the experiences encountered by many newly freed black women after the Civil War. In her proposal Johnson states that her "interpretation will provide a perspective analysis of how the efforts of black women helped transform the black community from one of racial oppression and degradation imposed by white society, to a free society with first class citizenship. These were women who worked, fought, prayed, taught, and nurtured a race held hostage in much of the "Old South" by white prejudice and discrimination. At the same time, black women sustained and strengthened

the church as a community institution while shaping it into an institution of social and spiritual uplift."

Johnson will begin her presentation in first person, bringing visitors into the nineteenth-century world of Reconstruction, and sharing with them the problems within the sharecropper system.

At the conclusion of her first person interpretation, Johnson will give a summary of her monologue in third person and answer visitors' questions.

The use of the Carter's Grove site is appropriate since it was occupied by white and free black tenants beginning in the early 1800s. The program will also provide an important link between the eighteenth-century slave quarters and the colonial revival mansion. ■



## Editor's Notes



### Hot Line Reminder

In the May 1995 issue of *the interpreter* the department of Interpretive Education and Support announced the activation of a "Questions and Answers" Hot Line. This is to remind everyone that this service is *still* available. It provides interpreters with a number (ex. 2171) that they may call with any question concerning historical information. Answers will be forwarded to the questioner as soon as possible. Questions and answers that might be of interest to most interpretive staff will be printed in upcoming issues of *the interpreter*. Copies of all incoming questions and answers will be available upon request by calling the editor, Nancy Milton (ex. 7621) or the assistant editor, Mary Jamerson (ex. 7620).

**TO ACCESS THE HOT LINE:** When you have a question, dial extension 2171 from any in-house phone; wait for the recorded message; give your name and department; and ask your question. If calling from an outside line, dial 229-1000 and ask for extension 2171.

### Footnotes

Because of space limitations we are unable to include most footnotes and bibliographies with articles appearing in *the interpreter*. Anyone who would like these references for a particular article, feel free to contact the editor or assistant editor.

### Thank yous

In addition to our usual expert editorial reviewers our thanks go to Linda Baumgarten in Collections, Rick Hill in the Costume Design Center, and Linda Rowe in Historical Research for reviewing certain articles in this issue; to one of our artists-in-residence, Lucy Smith, visitor aide, for supplying several of the drawings for our umbrella article; to Sarah Thumm, interpreter in Historic Buildings, for volunteering her time to help with this publication.—*N.M.*



---

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

*Editor:* Nancy Milton

*Assistant Editor:* Mary Jamerson

*Copy Editor:* Donna Sheppard

*Editorial Board:* Steve Elliott, Conny Graft,  
and Emma L. Powers,

*Planning Board:* Laura Arnold, John Caramia,  
David DeSimone, Ron Warren

*Production:* Bertie Byrd and Deanne Bailey

© 1996 by The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation  
ISSN 0883-2749

---