Common People and Their Material World

Free Men and Women in the Chesapeake, 1700–1830

Edited by
David Harvey and Gregory Brown

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Foreword

by Cary Carson

COMMON people? At *Colonial Williamsburg*?

"*Do pigs have wings?*" That will be the cynical reaction from some readers whose assumptions are confounded by the title of this book. "*Surely you jest?*" Can Rockefeller's restoration have strayed so far from the benefactor's patrician vision? Can the keepers of this authentic shrine to Virginia's patriot saints have allowed the distractions of social history to divert attention so carelessly from the founding fathers' legendary achievements?

The answer is a complicated yes and no. Colonial Williamsburg has always understood the distinction between adulation and education. On state occasions, such as the dedication of the restored Capitol in 1934, founder John D. Rockefeller, Jr., pronounced a benediction over "those great patriots whose voices once resounded in these halls" by quoting scripture: "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy."[1] But the "hallowed ground" he so revered was never reserved for demigods exclusively. Years later the same Rockefeller explained his unshakable determination to restore much more of the town than merely the Capitol, the Governor's Palace, the Raleigh Tavern, and other Stations of the Cross. He wanted to re-create the whole environment where men and women lived and worked in eighteenth-century Williamsburg. It was their collective contribution to "the ideals and culture of our country" that was, he believed, the real lesson of Williamsburg.[2]

To many of that era the word "culture" meant the high culture of pie-crust tables and upper-crust society. But not to all, and never to the exclusion of the anthropological connotation of the word as it is generally understood today and used throughout the following essays. The phrase "culture pattern" crops up in early correspondence about setting up a research department at Colonial Williamsburg. Harold R. Shurtleff, who served as the first director of that department while also going back to graduate school to study under Samuel Eliot Morison at Harvard University, explained what the term meant to him. Culture pattern was "the pattern of everyday life—economic, religious, social, domestic, mechanical, educational, cultural, etc.—whose sum total, translated into events, makes history." Not only should his new department undertake research to describe and understand the pattern of everyday life, but, he argued, "using it in [that] way … will most effectively stimulate public interest in the Res-

toration and further its educational purpose."[3]

So, no—our current interest in the lives of common people is not an unprecedented departure from traditions of scholarship and public interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg.

On the other hand, yes—the work represented by the essays in this volume takes a perspective on the history of common people that was unknown and unimaginable to our predecessors. To Rockefeller and his associates social history, and what we now call material culture, were principally of value in creating a realistic three-dimensional background against which visitors could perceive and appreciate the founding fathers more visibly and believably than they appeared in school books and classrooms. "The more the American public is given the means to visualize the life that went on here in Williamsburg," Shurtleff explained, "the greater will be the proportion of that public that will come to visit Williamsburg [and] that will be affected by it."[4]

The Reverend W.A.R. Goodwin, Rockefeller's inspiration and life-long accomplice in the restoration work, called such scene-setting Williamsburg's "theatrical appeal."[5] The pageant of his imagination produced vivid *tableaux vivants* from "olden days"—a cart driven by an old negro, a stagecoach with a coachman, footman, and driver, and a party of gentlemen, dressed in hunting clothes and surrounded by their dogs, lounging under a tree "as though discussing the chase." Such additions to the old-timey scene were not just ornamental. Goodwin suggested that the hunters might double as watchmen and the cart and stagecoach be "used when desired to drive tourists around." Those functions were secondary however. Repopulating the restored town with common people was primarily important to "help the imagination to create an atmosphere." Coachmen, carters, sportsmen, and other walk-on characters would, Goodwin believed, "appeal to many who will not understand the fine points of architecture." He hastened to reassure Rockefeller's professional staff that "they would scarcely divert students from more serious pursuits."[6]

Half a century passed before the history of everyday life—social history as we practice it today—came to be regarded as a serious pursuit in its own right. Or, so the standard historiographies tell us. Often forgotten nowadays is another, earlier generation of self-styled "new social historians" who flourished in the 1930s and 'forties.[7] Some we remember as labor historians. Others wrote about ordinary people who figure in the history of American immigration. Still others sought to tell "the story of Everyman as he labored, built, played, thought, and created."[8] That was the social history perspective adopted by Columbia University professor Dixon Ryan Fox and Harvard historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., editors of the famous

Macmillan History of American Life series, considered a defining work of social history in its time. Their approach was not the one we take today. For them social history resembled a broadly conceived cultural history. But it proceeded from an assumption that we too accept, a conviction that the telling of American history remains incomplete as long as the narrative is confined to a chronicle of conquest, revolution, and state-building.

Harold Shurtleff studied with Schlesinger as well as Morison. He used the newly re-organized research department to draw Colonial Williamsburg closer to the ideas and scholarship advanced by Schlesinger and other social-cultural historians of his day. He cautioned his associates at the foundation that the problem of writing history was one of avoiding "the misleading conceptions about a former period … brought about by looking … through the wrong spectacles." The culprits were romantic novelists and an earlier generation of historians "who"—nothing changes!—"were intent only on promoting the fame of the leaders, which is admirable enough in itself, but which leaves out about nine tenths of what an able historian to-day thinks is necessary to the proper conception of history or, even more important, the lessons of history!" Our job, he told them, is "to induce the public to discard such spectacles and to allow us to fit them with new spectacles through which the eighteenth century can be seen much more nearly as it really existed." Anything less would do Colonial Williamsburg a disservice. Hero worship was an opportunity lost, "since the Restoration is one of the few opportunities I know of in this country for trying mass education in history."[9]

The Allied crusade against Nazi Germany and the Cold War aftermath all but extinguished social history scholarship in academic circles. At Colonial Williamsburg too the totalitarian challenges to democratic institutions focused interpretation on American political history and on the development of principles fundamental to the preservation of a free society. The nine tenths of what able historians thought was necessary to proper history writing in Shurtleff's day shrank to the one tenth featured in Colonial Williamsburg's epic orientation film, "The Story of a Patriot." The career of John Fry, the film's patriot hero, eclipsed the anonymous small fry whom Goodwin had pictured in his lively imagination and Shurtleff had seen when he put on his new-age historical spectacles.

Global events and national anxieties set priorities at Colonial Williamsburg that cast common people and their material world into the shade for the next thirty-five years. The foundation pursued an admirable ambition "to play a more active and useful role in the world today" in the 1940s and 'fifties by sponsoring Democracy Workshops, entertaining visiting heads of state, and instilling in visitors that "strong democratic faith

which alone can win [the] struggle for survival" against fascists and communists.[10]

Understanding "the four freedoms" was our most important message to an entire generation of post-war visitors. The medium, on the other hand, remained faithful to Rockefeller's original ambition to restore and reconstruct Everyman's Williamsburg as fully, faithfully, and authentically as scholarship could make it. The mismatch between message and medium produced the schizophrenia that has split Colonial Williamsburg's personality ever since. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, George Wythe, Peyton Randolph, Patrick Henry, and George Mason became the superstars that confirmed the significance of a visit to Colonial Williamsburg in much the same way that lawmakers, statesmen, generals, and pamphleteers paraded through the American history books that academic historians wrote during the 'fifties and 'sixties. But visitors to Colonial Williamsburg also were shown into trade shops, kitchens, taverns, and a few houses that had belonged to townspeople who had taken no conspicuous part in the events that led to independence from Great Britain. Common people were still seen, but seldom heard.

Behind the scenes, a new beavering breed of historians and archaeologists was busy collecting and compiling information about men and women who had little claim to fame beyond the names they left in public documents or the broken artifacts they discarded into trash pits. Edward M. Riley, appointed director of research in 1954, launched "Operation Dragnet," a worldwide search for records pertaining to all aspects of Virginia history. His scouts brought back 2200 reels of microfilm to start a collection that has grown to 10,000 films and fiches today. Audrey and Ivor Noël Hume, two British-trained archaeologists who joined the staff in 1957, began systematic excavations of sites in and around Williamsburg. In the process they amassed a collection of artifacts that now numbers in the tens of millions. Little by little, this accumulation of research materials gave substance to Shurtleff's "pattern of everyday life." It still remained peripheral to Colonial Williamsburg's ultimate meaning, its message, but it became ever more central to the medium of that interpretation, to the art of setting authentic historical scenes and populating them with a cast of "extras" who brought those scenes to life and made them look believable.

A true intellectual union of medium and message awaited an about-face in American history-writing that came in the 1960s. The struggle for civil rights, the gender, ethnic, and sexual liberation movements, the Vietnam War, and a flood of immigrants into northern inner cities transformed the national agenda. Academic historians responded with something they called the "new social history." It enlarged their field of vision

from the one-tenth back toward the nine-tenths that better represented the social order as a whole. Their aim was never to resurrect the social-cultural history of their Progressive Era predecessors. They not only broadened the subject matter of history, more important, they focused their investigation of the past on issues that were thrust upon them by the tumultuous events of their own times. Just as their elders had been called upon to explain the wellsprings of democracy, social historians responded to people's sudden need to understand the background of the country's social conflicts, race relations, gender inequalities, and power struggles in which mostly white men of wealth, privilege, and European parentage wrote the rules of engagement.

A new thesis about the American past informed and energized the writing of political as well as social and economic history. Many historians took as the starting point for their work the view that forces of individualism and radical egalitarianism unleashed by the American Revolution had been vying at the heart of the county with equally powerful forces of order and containment for two hundred years. The national narrative, they said, should tell the story of that struggle. The protagonists were as numerous as all who inherited the promise that "all men are created equal" whether or not the promise had remained unfulfilled. More than ever before in American history, common people stepped out of the background to claim their place as collaborators in the business of making a nation. Two outdoor history museums in Massachusetts, Old Sturbridge Village and Plimoth Plantation, were among the first to fall in step.[11] Colonial Williamsburg followed in 1977. That was the year the foundation wrote and circulated its first ever educational master plan, "Teaching History at Colonial Williamsburg."[12] Declaring that "the quality of American life is more at issue now than the defense of our system of government," the authors acknowledged that a decade of social unrest was bringing many visitors to Colonial Williamsburg in search of historical perspectives that could help them understand and prepare for changes in themselves, their communities, and the country at large. Planners put themselves in the visitors' shoes: "Today's visitors look for evidence of community," they wrote. They want to know how early American families, households, neighborhoods, work units, officeholders, and churchgoers each went about their own business, how together they exercised the will of the community, and how they reconciled differences between them. "Even great public decisions, like the decision for independence, are understood now as an accommodation of different community interests."

Teaching History, rewritten and published in 1985, redefined the Williamsburg story.[13] It also set an agenda for the foundation's historians, archaeologists,

architectural historians, and curators. The essays collected in this volume accurately reflect the direction and variety of scholarship at Colonial Williamsburg that the master plan set in motion. Most of it is work in progress. Some is headed for publication by presses and journals that already serve the various academic disciplines from which the authors come. But museum educators often cannot wait for publications. They work under pressure to borrow repeatedly and frequently from unfinished scholarship to interpret history to the public. Colonial Williamsburg therefore is always looking for informal occasions where members of the research staff can bring their work to the notice of our own interpreters, educators from sister institutions, and outside scholars.

That was the purpose of the one-day conference where the papers collected in this volume were first presented. The meeting, held in the Wallace Gallery at Colonial Williamsburg, was David Harvey's brainchild. Officially he is a conservator at the foundation, but he has come to that position by a crooked road along which he had traveled as an archaeologist, a blacksmith, a filmmaker, and an eighteenth-century technology experimenter. Being an old friend to most of the essayists, he was the first to sense that their work in several different disciplines had reached a point where it would be instructive to compare it side by side. He organized the conference, recruited me and my associates in the research division to help plan the program, corralled the presenters, and afterwards he and Greg Brown pulled together these conference proceedings. Their colleagues are grateful to them both.

NOTES

[1] John D. Rockefeller, Jr. address to the Joint Assembly, 24 February 1934, *Journals of the House of Delegates and Senate of Virginia* (Richmond: Division of Purchase and Printing, 1934), pp. 14-17.

[2] "Approved Statement of the Purpose of Colonial Williamsburg," 5 July 1946 (Colonial Williamsburg Archives).

[3] Harold R. Shurtleff to Kenneth Chorley, letter, 28 May 1932 (Colonial Williamsburg Archives).

[4] *Ibid*.

[5] W.A.R. Goodwin to John D. Rockefeller, III, letter, 3 March 1934 (Colonial Williamsburg Archives).

[6] W.A.R. Goodwin to Colonel Arthur Woods, letter, 11 October 1930 (Colonial Williamsburg Archives).

[7] Cary Carson, "Front and Center: Local History Comes of Age," in *Local History, National Heritage. Reflections on the History of AASLH* (Nashville: American Association for State & Local History, 1991), pp. 67-108.

[8] Walter Muir Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies* (Boston: The Boston Athenaeum, 1962), p. 336.

[9] Harold R. Shurtleff to Bela Norton, letter, 20 March 1937 (Colonial Williamsburg Archives).

[10] John Goodbody, report of the Special Survey Committee, 15 December 1950 (Colonial Williamsburg Archives), p. I.

[11] Cary Carson, "Living Museums of Everyman's History," *Harvard Magazine*, 83, no. 6 (July-August 1981), pp. 22-32.

[12] Curriculum Committee [Cary Carson, Stephen Elliott, Harold Gill, Roy Graham, Brock Jobe, and Peter Sterling], Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, "Teaching History at Colonial Williamsburg, A Plan of Education," typescript, 1977 (Colonial Williamsburg Archives), p. 5.

[13] [Cary Carson, Kevin Kelly, and Dennis O'Toole], *Teaching History at Colonial Williamsburg* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1985).

Session I: Standards of Living

Moderator's Introduction

by Lorena S. Walsh

THE period 1700 to 1830, one of primary concern for Colonial Williamsburg, also neatly delineates a period of profound transformation in the lives of common people in the Chesapeake. Living standards changed markedly from the opening date of 1700, when most people lived in spartan material conditions that you and I might encounter today only in the most impoverished of third world countries. By 1830 many common people were living not too differently from situations our parents or grandparents might have observed, if not experienced, just before World War II. Clearly by 1830, economic and social modernization were indisputably underway in America.

But while recognizing the breadth and significance of this change, we must take into account how much did not change at all, how very slow the pace of change was, and the enormous effort required for a family to effect the most modest of material improvements in preindustrial times. In an era where fossil fuels, power-driven machinery, and large-scale business enterprises figured little, if at all, an individual's industry, skill, and enterprise, coupled with his or her connections with kin, friends, and patrons, profoundly influenced his or her level of material comfort and social standing.

Today assessments of comparative living standards take into account such factors as the productivity of workers and capital, employment levels, national monetary stability or instability, special problems associated with uncontrolled urban growth or urban decay, environmental degradation, death rates, levels of nutrition and sanitation, the quality of the work environment, access to decent housing, availability and distribution of consumer goods, levels of adult literacy, and the degree of personal freedom.[1] Many of these are issues were addressed in the 1992 presidential campaign and figured in the breakup of the former Soviet Union.

I will now discuss some of these issues as they relate to living standards in the Chesapeake between 1700 and 1830. While the panelists will deal with very specific cases, I would like to begin at the other end with very broad generalizations. We know that Chesapeake residents had access to rich natural resources, had high levels of employment (given a chronic labor shortage), achieved rising labor productivity, were favored with a relatively stable monetary system (except during wartime), and had

comparatively high levels of per capita income for the time. A new assessment of the American economy between 1790 and 1860, published by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), judges—"the American performance … one of the very best … to be recorded.… The aggregate economy was growing faster than any other large economy had ever grown before." Moreover, gains in income were widely shared among the free population and property was fairly evenly distributed, at least compared to Europe.[2]

An optimistic assessment indeed. However, the NBER study goes on to caution, while "growth improves the opportunity for the standard of living to rise, it does not necessarily bring a better economic life for all, and it destroys the bases for the well being of some economic actors."[3] Indeed, according to some measures of living standards, 1830 represents a high-water mark that ordinary people did not again reach until the end of the nineteenth century or even as late as World War II. Vigorous economic growth, as we will see, accompanied by rapid urbanization and increased geographic mobility, was not inconsistent with very limited improvements or even reversals in some aspects of well-being, especially nutritional status and health.

Let's consider some of the indicators of living standards in more detail.

First, consumer goods: In 1700 ordinary families in the Chesapeake often furnished their houses with little more than a mattress, a cooking pot, and a chest. Conventional necessities—to us—such as tables, chairs, bedsteads, sheets, coarse ceramics, and lighting devices were amenities that many did without and some probably did not want. From about 1750 middling families began to acquire more of these conveniences, as well as some new amenities such as cutlery and teawares. By 1770 poorer families were beginning to follow suit, although full sets of such basic furnishings were still uncommon among the lower orders.[4] General living standards then declined during the Revolution, and postwar economic recovery was slow. Inventory studies from 1790 to 1830 show a modest increase in the standard of living in older areas, including the Chesapeake, especially among landowning farmers and more propertied tenants. Most post-war households were equipped with at least one table, one wooden bedstead, several chairs, and some ceramic or pewter plates. Middling rural households were also more likely to boast a piece or two of case furniture, a timepiece, a looking glass, some ceramic table and teawares, and a few more kitchen conveniences, especially dutch ovens. The situation of urban poor, of small farmers without extra labor, and of landless rural residents is uncertain; there were clearly no major improvements.[5]

One interesting aspect of the distribution of consumer goods was a marked difference between the acquisition pat-

terns of countryfolk and of town dwellers. In Williamsburg, Yorktown, and Annapolis, for example, before the Revolution the poorest townsfolk of middling wealth had combinations of goods usually found only among the rural elite. Moreover, the sets of possessions of middling town families were much more like those of their richer neighbors than was the case in the countryside, suggesting a higher degree of social emulation in the towns. Townsfolk at all levels of wealth devoted a greater proportion of their moveable assets to consumer goods than did all classes of farmers. Town dwellers also chose to spend proportionately more on social equipment—elaborate dining ware, gaming tables, toilet articles, lighting devices, tea services, and a multitude of highly specialized chairs and tables. The greater opportunities for social intercourse that town life afforded encouraged a proliferation of supporting props that country living seldom required. A greater influence of Enlightenment ideas is suggested by townspeople's more frequent decisions to acquire books on secular subjects and to use clocks or watches to help regulate their daily routines. Urbanites were also more interested in the visual and decorative arts.[6]

Differences between town and country became ever more pronounced in the early republic. Upper middle-class town dwellers accumulated a burgeoning array of mahogany furnishings, sideboards, silver plate, decorative items, musical instruments, and elaborate dining and cooking equipment designed for entertainment and display. Lower middle-class urbanites, along with a lesser proportion of poor urban property holders followed suit, to the extent that resources permitted or aspirations supported. For example, Ann Smart Martin found that in 1815 in York County the poorest rate-payers in Williamsburg paid thirteen times the taxes on luxury goods as did rural taxpayers of equivalent assessed wealth. Two thirds of all Williamsburg taxpayers had at least one luxurious household furnishing (as defined by current law), but only a quarter of rural families were so assessed.[7] Scholars see these trends as an indication that townspeople of middling wealth were developing a distinctive life style and a sense of being a distinctive social class.[8] The first two papers will emphasize the special characteristics of town material life.

Second, housing stock: In contrast to an expansion in the quantities and types of consumer goods that ordinary families acquired, most people's housing remained exceedingly bad by present-day standards. In 1700 Chesapeake colonists' shelters were decidedly inferior to the houses that many had left behind in England,[9] and architectural historians have concluded that "the replacement of homestead housing was slow to start and then was attenuated and prolonged for more than a century until finally it was subsumed in the first truly nationwide rebuilding of the early nineteenth cen-

tury." Only between 1820 and 1850 would trend lines for New England and the Old South converge.[10]

Third, diet: From about 1750 to 1830 those of middling status generally improved the variety and quality of their diets, while the poor and the enslaved probably held their own. While cooking and food preservation technology remained basically unchanged, food supplies became somewhat less dependent on season as improved systems of harvesting and distribution and marginally improved preservation techniques afforded a greater range of foods across the calendar year. Surpluses of basic foods such as grains were abundant, and meat much more widely available than in Europe where chronic malnutrition was widespread.[11] The average heights that groups of adults reach are considered a sensitive measure for adequacy of nutrition. White American men born between 1720 and 1740 (you guessed it, we don't know anything about women) were on average 5'6", while those born in the 1750s averaged 5'6½" to 5'7". (American men today average 5'8".) Northern European men did not reach these heights until the end of the nineteenth century. Life expectancy for Chesapeake residents remained low compared to that of colonial New Englanders, who were exceptionally long-lived, but here too there were improvements across the eighteenth century, especially for those who moved further west away from the worst malarial areas.[12]

So what happened after 1830 when industrialization presumably made ever more and ever cheaper goods available to more families who were enjoying rising incomes? Why was 1830 a high point? The primary indicators that not all was rosy are demographic ones, since so far studies of the distribution of consumer goods and of diet tend to skip from the 1830s until the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Life expectancies for residents of the U.S. as a whole began to decline from about 1790 and continued to drop until the end of the nineteenth century, not again reaching the favorable levels of the late eighteenth century until about 1940. Here marginal improvements in the South were offset by worse declines in the North. Chronic sickness (morbidity) may also have become more prevalent. In addition, successive generations of American men became progressively shorter (even after factoring out irregular samples and short immigrants), reaching a low of 5'5" in the late 1800s. It was not until World War II that American soldiers were again as tall as the men who served in the Revolution.[13]

Exactly what happened is not fully understood. Among the causes being discussed are, first, increased incidence of disease as ever larger and more crowded cities became fertile breeding grounds for some old diseases and for a host of new germs that successive waves of immigrants brought with them. Public sanitation lagged woefully behind the

onslaught of disease and dirt. And with increased movement of people, diseases were more efficiently spread throughout the nation. Second, problems with the food distribution system including poor supplies to urban areas and a decline of systems of distribution depending on kinship may have occurred with the expansion of market-based activities leading to deteriorating diets for the free poor. Third, incomes may have become less equally distributed. And fourth, men and women may also have had to use up more energy working more intensely and for more hours without compensating increases in nutrition levels.[14]

Clearly improvements in the material life of ordinary people came at a slow pace, and were subject to reverses rather than a steady ascent. Let's leave the body for the moment, and move to mental worlds. Changes in the areas of literacy and of access to political participation were perhaps more pronounced than changes in material well-being. After the Revolution literacy rates rose in the Chesapeake, as more children got elementary schooling and private and public academies proliferated. Education increasingly became a vehicle by which men could rise above the station to which they had been born. And as ideas about women's roles in the family and in society changed, middle-class girls gained access to book learning. In the public sphere, our period moves from the highly structured and elitist political regime of Governor Francis Nicholson in Virginia in 1700, to the purported triumph of democracy and the common man symbolized by the inauguration of Andrew Jackson in 1829. Clearly ordinary white men gained much more leverage over those who ruled when they ceased to be subjects of a king and became citizens of the republic. In addition, by the early nineteenth century ordinary men and women increasingly tried to effect social and moral improvements through a host of voluntary civic and religious associations.

A final theme that runs through the entire period, one that includes both physical and moral well being, is the desire to achieve economic independence through property holding. Europeans moved to the Chesapeake in the seventeenth century in the hope of bettering their economic position not so much in terms of getting more creature comforts as in the hope of acquiring freehold land or, less commonly, establishing themselves in trade or as masters of a craft. Acquisition of a farm or workshop provided the best guarantee of family security, and property ownership freed men at least from control by employers or landlords. The Jeffersonian ideal of the sturdy yeoman farmer and independent artisan melded generations-old aspirations of Chesapeake residents with more recent ideas about the proper roles and attributes of free citizens. And the ideal embodied the aspirations of most free men in the early republic, even as continued eco-

nomic growth was beginning to undermine the bases of such independence. Wallace Gusler describes the means by which one craftsman carved out an independent competency in late eighteenth-century Williamsburg.

And as we all know, dependence and independence meant very different things for Chesapeake women. Women generally achieved economic security by being dependent on their fathers or guardians and then by becoming dependents of their husbands. Spinsters and widows frequently found that independent family status entailed economic misery. Lou Powers explores some of the ways economic dependence or independence affected the lives of selected Williamsburg women.

NOTES

[1] Lorena S. Walsh, "Questions and Sources for Exploring the Standard of Living," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 45 (1988): 116-123.

[2] Robert E. Gallman and John Joseph Wallis, "Introduction," in Robert E. Gallman and John Joseph Wallis, eds., *American Economic Growth and Standards of Living Before the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "The Standard of Living in the Colonial Chesapeake," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 45 (1988): 135-159; Carr and Walsh, "Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake," in Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert, eds, *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994).

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[7] Ann M. Smart, "The Urban/Rural Dichotomy of Status Consumption: Tidewater Virginia, 1815," M.A. thesis, College of William and Mary, 1986.

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[9] Lois Green Carr, "Emigration and the Standard of Living: The Seventeenth-Cen-

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[10] Cary Carson, Norman F. Barka, William M. Kelso, Garry Wheeler Stone, and Dell Upton, "Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies," *Winterthur Portfolio, a Journal of American Culture*, 16 (1981): 135-196.

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[12] Robert W. Fogel, et al, "Secular Changes in American and British Stature and Nutrition," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 14: 445-481; Robert William Fogel, "Nutrition and the Decline in Mortality since 1700: Some Preliminary Findings," in Stanley L. Engerman and Robert E. Gallman, eds., *Long-Term Factors in American Economic Growth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 439-527; and Richard H. Steckel, "Stature and Living Standards in the United States," in Gallman and Wallis, eds., *American Economic Growth and Standards of Living*.

[13] *Ibid*.

[14] Gallman and Wallis, "Introduction," in Gallman and Wallis, eds., *American Economic Growth and Standards of Living*.

Landladies and Woman Tenants in Williamsburg and Yorktown: 1700-1770

by Emma L. Powers

LANDLADIES and women tenants were a small but important segment of early Virginia townspeople. These women went it alone in what was very much a man's world. Both landladies and women tenants, most of whom were widows, engaged in business to a greater or lesser degree, and some of them succeeded in highly competitive fields. Nearly every woman tenant, as well as some landladies, put her career first and purposefully chose a town as the best spot for her business. For those two reasons, plus the fact that they were unmarried, these women led lives very different from their female contemporaries, most of whom lived in the country with their husbands and children and cleaned house, cooked, sewed, took care of babies, and helped around the farm in a hundred different ways all day every day of their lives. Unlike their rural sisters, landladies especially, but also women tenants, exercised considerable control over their lives.

Neither landladies nor women tenants are well documented—but then neither are their male counterparts. Colonial Virginia law didn't require leases to be recorded officially. Few were.[1] The best I can figure from piecing together a wide variety of sources is that women tenants and landladies made up about a tenth of the population of colonial Yorktown and Williamsburg.[2] During most of the eighteenth century only about half of urban heads of households, male or female, owned their homes.[3] The portion of women in this property-less group, again ten percent, probably reflects the number of single adult women, including widows, at any given time.

Landladies seem to have been the most stable segment of the urban population. Undoubtedly, their property, advanced ages, and long-term local ties kept them from picking up and starting all over somewhere else. Women tenants, on the other hand, closely resembled early city folk in general. The kinds of work they did and the short length of time they stayed put seem very similar to those of men who rented. By and large, tenants were a here-today, gone-tomorrow group who tried first one town and then another. For many we have a single, fleeting reference.[4]

Catherine Rathell, milliner, epitomizes the transient urban breed. Fortunately her activities are better documented than most. Her story shows the importance of cities and towns in tenants' lives. Rathell arrived in Williamsburg in 1765 bearing a letter of recom-

mendation to Councillor Robert Carter from an English merchant. Soon thereafter the newspaper said she was "Lately arrived from London, [and] at present in Fredericksburg."[5] At the end of the 1760s she shuttled back and forth between shops in Annapolis and Williamsburg and took at least one trip home to England. In 1771 Rathell rented the Ayscough House in Capitol Square, a location for which she felt she had to apologize: "As it was impossible to get a House on the Main Street, [she hoped] … the little Distance will make no Difference to her Customers."[6] With the turn of the new year she tried to turn this less than desirable site into a business "plus" by staying open evenings while the General Assembly met.[7] The burgesses' custom wasn't great enough to justify staying in this out-of-the-way spot, however, because as soon as possible she took a shop across from the Raleigh Tavern. At the time, according to her ads, she lived in Petersburg and came to Williamsburg only during Court Days.[8] The rest of the year a resident manager kept shop for her. Rathell's life ended in tragedy. In 1775 she drowned in a shipwreck. Ironically, this happened within sight of Liverpool, her destination.

The importance of urban settings is obvious in this thumbnail sketch of Catherine Rathell. London, Annapolis, Fredericks-burg, Petersburg, Williamsburg—she tried them all. Rathell was quick to move, picking up in England and afterwards roaming from town to town and colony to colony, to ply a trade that was necessarily town-centered. Like many other tenants in Williamsburg and Yorktown, she came from urban roots. Town life may have been her preference, or it could have been the only way of life she knew.

Millinery and tavernkeeping were far and away the most potentially profitable careers for women in Virginia towns. While milliners (every one of whom I've heard was a woman, by the way) had to understand credit, accounting, and the larger commercial world, tavern keeping took no special skills or equipment. Any capable housewife with enough household goods could try it if she got a license. The most popular tavern keepers and milliners gained their customers' loyalty, stayed in business for decades, and some became property owners. Jane Vobe and Christiana Campbell ran such successful taverns that their establishments exist until this day. Their current prominence gives the impression that tavern keeping in Williamsburg was a woman's domain, but actually they were fairly unusual in that occupation; of those who rented taverns, women account for only about 15 percent.

Christiana Campbell, the daughter of local tavern keeper John Burdett, moved back to her hometown when she was widowed. In 1760 she rented the James Anderson House from merchant William Holt and she opened a tavern.[9] Eleven years later Campbell moved to Nathaniel

Walthoe's large house behind the Capitol, just vacated by Jane Vobe. Soon thereafter Campbell purchased the property with a legacy from her landlord's estate.

Jane Vobe opened a tavern somewhere in Williamsburg as early as the spring of 1752.[10] She stayed in business for the next thirty years and sometime before 1782 (the records are incomplete) bought the property she had rented. Campbell and Vobe were exceptionally successful. Not more than a fifth of tenants, male and female, owned property, rural or urban, at any point in their careers.[11]

Behind these outstanding successes, however, stand dozens of women tenants who tried the business world but faltered. Mary Smith ran a tavern near the church in Yorktown in the 1710s, and she was very much on her own. She had separated from her husband, a former Williamsburg tavern keeper, by 1715. In a couple of years she grew disenchanted with Yorktown's customers, mainly merchants and mariners, and left for Maryland.[12]

William Reynolds had absolutely nothing good to say about the woman who rented his house in Yorktown or about being a landlord. He thought his tenant negligent, and he found the whole ordeal an unprofitable nuisance. His tenant, Mrs. Robertson, skipped town as soon as Reynolds returned from England. "I have been used so ill by my late Tennant," he grumbled, "that it has almost determined me not to rent again[,] for the Rent in this Country is by no means adequate to the value of Buildings."[13]

Ann Neill's *Gazette* advertisements detail one woman's declining fortune. Formerly governess to the Lewis family in Gloucester County, Neill in late 1776 advertised that she would soon open a large, exclusive girls' school in Williamsburg.[14] Apparently that grand plan never materialized. The following summer she offered instruction in guitar, reading, and sewing. By the way, this ad is headed "Palace Street," where she probably lived in lodgings.[15] Teaching must have been not very lucrative in those revolutionary times, because only a few months afterward she opened a store opposite John Greenhow's. There she sold European goods on consignment.[16] This kind of business was a good choice in that it didn't require much of an investment. There's no telling how long the store stayed opened, but Neill was still in town a year and a half later when her final ad appeared. No mention of the store this time; she's selling her own special tooth powder.[17] Like many another tenant, Ann Neill tried several different ways to make a living, but the details of the living she and others actually made we'll never know.

Other women tenants worked as seamstresses, midwives, teachers, dancing mistresses, and one printed a local newspaper. Only the last, Clementina Rind, the printer, engaged in an "unfeminine" trade. All the rest (and most land-

ladies as well) did work that was an extension of housekeeping and other requisite female skills, their small and tentative first step outside the domestic sphere. These same kinds of work were typical of colonial women both early and late, rural and urban.

The most usual occupation of local landladies was lodging house keeper. Almost a third of them either ran commercial lodging houses or let a room now and again. Lodging houses are so ambiguous! Some must have been very elegant places where the fashionable keeper treated lodgers as honored guests rather than paying customers. Other lodgings sound like inner-city flop houses. The operative phrase must have been "You get what you pay for." A widow like Grissell Hay with a big empty house could rent out rooms to a few respectable businessmen or operate a large-scale lodging house accommodating a dozen or more. Some women provided meals but not rooms.

Lodging house keepers who were also tenants count as landladies not because they possessed and controlled property, but because they provided services in the form of a little food and shelter to an overwhelmingly male clientele. Mary Singleton is a prime example. In the 1770s she ran a boarding house at William Carter's Brick House, and in 1775 she sublet the corner room to wigmaker James Nichols. She also worked off part of her rent by feeding her landlord and his family.

I've frequently mentioned the preponderance of widows. Only Rebecca Bird was specifically described as a "spinster."[18] In 1760 Bird received a free lifetime lease to a house and lot on Duke of Gloucester Street adjoining John Blair's garden. James Tarpley had purchased the property that same day.[19] We know that Bird, although unmarried, had two sons.[20] Presumably Tarpley was the boys' father, and the lifetime lease his method of providing for his illegitimate family.

Lydia Cooper is the only woman of color I find among either of these groups of women. She and her family are described as "free mulattoes."[21] In 1770 she rented one of Thomas Hornsby's houses,[22] which probably lay on Francis Street near Hornsby's other lots. Lydia Cooper also shows up in the Governor's Palace kitchen accounts for the late 1760s. The first entries imply that she was working in the kitchen, but later references are more specific and indicate that she received the monthly wages of a person named Mann, presumably her slave.[23] Thereafter, unfortunately, she can't be traced. I believe Lydia Cooper had a tie to the Blue family (also known as the Richardsons), free blacks in the Charles Parish section of York County. Sad to say, but the leads are scanty and so far at least impossible to fit together seamlessly.

What were the material details of these town women's lives? Few documents address that question. For ex-

ample, no household inventories for these town women date from the period when they rented. A handful of original buildings once used as rental property give some clues to the way they were lived and worked in. But they varied enormously—from the Margaret Hunter Shop, say, to the Ludwell-Paradise House.

Except for store houses, tenements followed no distinct architectural type. They were flexible, multi-purposes spaces built to utterly conventional domestic plans and then put to whatever use the current occupant required, serving first one purpose and then another as occupants moved on or as their work, households, and fortunes changed. Subdividing houses in the very best spots for retail trade meant that some tenants sacrificed space for location. While some landladies and women tenants enjoyed sizeable, genteel surroundings, others were cramped into a single room of a crowded, multiple occupancy building.

Landladies and women tenants were a very mixed lot. As I've said, landladies tended to stick around, collecting their rents and living quietly. Those who rented truly ran the gamut. Some came into town to attempt a business scheme only to have it fail miserably, so that they soon left to try their luck in another place. Other women tenants by dint of hard work, management ability, well-placed connections, plenty of capital, or maybe sheer serendipity became the success stories of early Virginia towns. They stayed in business year after year, some sooner or later becoming land owners themselves.

NOTES

[1] Emma L. Powers, "Landlords, Tenants, and Rental Property in Williamsburg and Yorktown, 1730-1780," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1990, pp. 20-24.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 47.

[3] *Ibid*., pp. 4-5.

[4] *Ibid*., pp. 49-50.

[5] *Virginia Gazette*, ed. Purdie and Dixon, 18 April 1766.

[6] *Ibid*., 10 October 1771.

[7] *Ibid*., 30 January 1772.

[8] *Ibid*., 22 October 1772.

[9] Patricia A. Gibbs, "Taverns in Tidewater Virginia, 1700-1774," M. A. thesis, College of William and Mary, 1968, pp. 152-53.

[10] *Virginia Gazette*, 17 April 1752.

[11] Powers, "Landlords, Tenants, and Rental Property," pp. 50-52.

[12] York County, Virginia, Deeds and Bonds 3: 130-32; Orders and Wills 15: 338-39. All county records hereafter cited are from York County.

[13] William Reynolds to George Norton, 9 September 1771, and William Reynolds to John Norton, 19 August 1771, William Reynolds Letter Book, Library of Congress, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library microfilm M-44.

[14] *Virginia Gazette*, ed. Dixon, 20 December 1776.

[15] *Ibid*., 4 July 1777.

[16] *Ibid*., 14 November 1777 and 8 May 1778.

[17] *Ibid*., ed. Clarkson, 11 December 1779.

[18] Bruton Parish Register [Births], 18 February 1760.

[19] Deeds 6: 232.

[20] Bruton Parish Register [Births], 29 October 1758 and 8 November 1761.

[21] *Ibid*., 9 March 1768.

[22] Wills and Inventories 22: 74-76.

[23] Governor's Palace Kitchen Account ("An Account of Cash Paid by William Sparrow for his Excellency Lord Botetourt. By William Marshman"), Duke of Beaufort and Gloucestershire Records Office, Botetourt Manuscripts from Badminton, frames 297-329, entries dated 2 October 1769, 27 November 1769, 12 May 1770, 6 July 1770, and 15 August 1770; Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library microfilm M-1395.

Anthony Hay, A Williamsburg Tradesman

by Wallace B. Gusler

ANGLO-American tradesmen (artisans) in the eighteenth century were trained via apprenticeship to provide services to a highly stratified social and economic system. A tradesman in a given craft worked and trained his apprentices in the production of commodities that were regulated by his sales—consequently the conglomerate social and economic levels of his patrons controlled the sophistication of his shop's production. This symbiotic relationship between the patron's life style and the tradesman has its strongest manifestation in the luxury trades. As an example, a rural cabinetmaker's apprenticeship was geared to the needs of a completely different social-economic stratum from that of an urban cabinetmaker. The level of training, understanding of current style, knowledge of classical proportions and drawings, and knowledge of materials of the urban cabinetmaker make a strong contrast to the conservative perpetuation of old style, relatively simple production and limited knowledge of materials and methods seen in his rural counterpart.[1] The urban cabinetmaker understood the specialist trade structure—marrying production incorporating carvers, gilders, and turners to produce complex objects. The rural cabinetmaker usually did not have access to specialists or orders for the complex objects that required them. Between these extremes numerous levels of this symbiotic relationship of production and patronage existed.

At the beginning of their careers craftsmen were, by the nature of their environment, prepared to enter the socio-economic hierarchy at a level largely dependent upon their training. Experiences as journeymen could expand their capabilities in efficiency if they worked at the same level of their training or increase their potential to move up the craft ladder if they served and succeeded in a more advanced level than their training.[2]

Journeymen and apprentices often took advantage of their masters' patronage, sometimes attaining the patronage of important customers once they established their independent businesses. Beyond the advantages of the apprenticeship and working as journeymen, the craftsmen's skill as workmen and businessmen governed their ability to expand in wealth and social circumstances. Political contacts, wealthy patrons' support, and/or political or wealthy family backing often influenced the tradesmen's success.

Virginia craftsmen of the eighteenth century occupied the lowest level of society up to the middle class. In the age of

the rise of the middle class artisans played a large role, many succeeding in becoming merchants and land owners but few attained the rank of gentleman.

Anthony Hay's background—where he apprenticed and at what level—is unknown before he appears in Williamsburg in 1748.[3] However, important clues are found in the furniture attributed to him. The earlier examples show strong ties to the work of unknown cabinetmakers in the Williamsburg area of the 1720-30s, suggesting a local apprenticeship.[4] This continuation of Williamsburg tradition, however, could make its way to Hay's work via journeymen and local patron preferences.

Other evidence embodied in the furniture strongly suggests that Hay was trained or worked as a journeyman in an urban center. Desks and bookcases (see Fig. 2), clothes-presses, and chests are constructed using technology that was developed in London among the leading cabinetmakers such as William Vile, Thomas Chippendale, and others.[5] The strength of this technological evidence is evident when contrasted to the products of much larger colonial cities.

Within the thousands of examples of colonial case furniture produced in Newport, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston, South Carolina, only a few examples are known that are of the technological level of the Hay and associated Virginia production. All these eighteenth-century American schools of furniture making have at their core more provincial prototypes as the origin of their technology. The Williamsburg and, to some extent, Norfolk and Annapolis schools follow the highest level technology in their furniture production. Perhaps this technological advancement is not unexpected considering that the important patrons of these schools were affluent Chesapeake planters that were educated to be gentlemen via large family fortunes amassed in the seventeenth century.

Hay also employed at least two London-trained craftsmen that no doubt helped keep abreast of the latest styles and techniques—James Wilson, a carver, and Benjamin Bucktrout, a cabinetmaker.[6] While Wilson advertised his work independently from Hay's shop, Bucktrout appeared as a journeyman and eventually became master of the shop.

In addition to journeymen, Hay employed apprentices and at least one black cabinetmaker (a slave named Wiltshire).[7] Edmund Dickinson and George Donald were apprentices or journeymen in the Hay Shop.[8] Donald moved to Richmond and maintained a strong business in the 1760s. Dickinson appears to have been from the Norfolk area and his status—journeyman or apprentice—is unknown. He worked in the shop under Hay, Bucktrout, and William Kennedy's tenure as masters to become the master in 1771.[9]

Hay purchased Williamsburg property on Nicholson Street in 1756 and es-

tablished his shop as a separate building rather than being a part of his home.[10] This shop building and "Large timber yard" are testimony to a higher level of sophistication than the great majority of American urban cabinetmakers who practiced and lived in the same structures.[11]

Hay's business success is clearly shown in the economic and social gains he made. The patronage of this shop ranged from tradesmen in Williamsburg through the wealthy planters (see Fig. 3) to the royal governors. They commissioned furniture, their executors commissioned coffins and sometimes funeral attendance from this establishment. In the eighteenth century undertaking and cabinetmaking were more or less integral trades. The largest single charge known (£32:15:6) from the Hay Shop is not for a piece of furniture but that of Lieutenant Governor Fauquier's state coffin and funeral performed by Bucktrout and Kennedy.[12] Unfortunately the price of the Masonic Masters Chair (see Fig. 1) by Bucktrout is unknown; however, it appears to be the single most expensive American chair of the colonial period.

Hay's use of professional carvers has been mentioned; he advertised for apprentices and journeymen following a trend seen in Williamsburg cabinetmakers' use of the press. More advertisements seek help for their production rather than seeking customers. This approach is also seen in Eastern Virginia and is evidence of a strong market in which skilled workers are in demand.

This strong market proved fruitful for Anthony Hay and his successors. Hay purchased the Raleigh Tavern complete with furnishings and servants in 1767. This £4000 venture is strong testimony to the financial success of his cabinetmaking business.[13] While Hay left active participation in the trade he maintained ownership of the Shop, Timber yard, and his black cabinetmaker Wiltshire. Hay leased or rented the shop to Benjamin Bucktrout and turned his customers and incomplete orders over to Bucktrout via an advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette*.

> WILLIAMSBURG, Jan. 6, 1767
>
> THE Gentlemen who have bespoke WORK of the subscriber may depend upon having it made in the best manner by Mr. BENJAMIN BUCKTROUT, to whom he has given up his business.—I return the Gentlemen who have favoured me with this custom many thanks and am
>
> Their most humble servant,
> ANTHONY HAY.[14]

Hay's advertisement is very unusual and strong testimony to a large business—one making it necessary to use the newspaper as the means of notifying customers that had "bespoke work" of him, rather than personal communications. The large geographic distribution of his business undoubtedly accounting for this approach.

The Raleigh Tavern was the most el-

egant and prestigious in Virginia and the business potential would be quite enough incentive, however, Hay may have been influenced to make this change in his profession by a health consideration. Hay was suffering from cancer of the lip and face, an affliction that would be adversely affected by the sawdust-laden environment of a cabinet shop. Hay died of the illness in 1770 about two years after his leaving the Cabinet Shop.[15]

The principal assets Hay accumulated that enabled him to take the expensive Raleigh venture appear to have come from his cabinetmaking business. No hidden assets appeared in his estate settlement. Only a couple of references show Hay had ventures other than his shop. In 1755 he was in a partnership with Christopher Ford, a Williamsburg builder selling an assortment of joiners' and cabinetmakers' tools. The nature of this advertisement is similar to those of storekeepers listing numerous imported types available.[16] Hay also imported coal to Williamsburg, but this venture as with the tool sales is represented by a single reference, and therefore the extent of these businesses is impossible to determine.

Anthony Hay's economic success was paralleled by social success. He married Elizabeth Penman in 1750 or 1751. She was the daughter of a Williamsburg tanner and this marriage shows a typical pattern of tradesmen intermarriage seen in Virginia and other colonies.[17] After the death of Elizabeth (1754), Hay married Elizabeth Davenport, the daughter of Williamsburg's first town clerk, in 1758.[18] Two sons born of this union, Charles and George, became lawyers. They studied under Edmund Randolph; Charles was admitted to the bar in 1786 and served as Clerk of the House of Delegates in Richmond until his death in 1795. George Hay had a distinguished career as a delegate from Henrico County, Va. (1816-17) and in 1825 was appointed United States Judge for Eastern Virginia. He married Eliza Monroe, the daughter of President James Monroe, in 1808. Hay's most prominent national attention was as the United States attorney for Virginia and his appointment as the prosecutor of Aaron Burr by President Thomas Jefferson.[19] Undoubtedly Jefferson's acquaintance with the young Hay lawyers had its beginning with Jefferson's patronage of the cabinet shop.

Perhaps Anthony Hay began his career as a common man—we may never know what his assets and training were in the beginning, but it is evident that he established a strong business and joined the large number of Anglo-Americans in the rising middle classes. That Hay and his family enjoyed the amenities of the consumer revolution is apparent from the archaeological excavations of this home and shop.[20] Chinese export and English porcelain as well as a wide range of English ceramics and glass are testimony to a middle-class lifestyle. The ex-

cavated material combined with the documentation point to a tradesman with a successful career and upward mobility in the colonial capital. The continuous business contacts with the upper-class Virginians and his marriage all contributed to establishing a foundation for his sons to be educated in law and excel well beyond the usual limits of the children of a tradesman.

NOTES

[1] Numerous studies of American furniture have been done from South Carolina to New England that illustrate the differences in the sophistication of urban and rural products. In Virginia, *Furniture of Williamsburg and Eastern Virginia 1710-1790* illustrates the differences in the products of cities such as Williamsburg and Norfolk with those of more rural settings such as joiners' furniture of the Eastern Shore or the simpler forms produced in the Virginia piedmont. Likewise, numerous articles in the *Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts Journal* illustrate schools in the Virginia piedmont and Shenandoah Valley that show more naive understanding of design and structure by comparison with Williamsburg-Norfolk.

[2] Thomas Chippendale (1718-1779) is perhaps the best known. He probably apprenticed as a carpenter to his father Otley in Yorkshire. Evidence points to the probability of him working as a journeyman for Richard Wood of York before moving to London. See *The Life and Work of Thomas Chippendale*, by Christopher Gilbert (1978), pp. 1-5.

[3] York County, Virginia, Judgments and Orders I: 132, Sept. 19, 1748 (reference furnished by Harold B. Gill).

[4] Wallace B. Gusler, *Furniture of Williamsburg and Eastern Virginia, 1710-1790*, (Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 1979), pp. 68-69.

[5] Wallace B. Gusler, *The American Craftsman and the European Tradition, 1620-1820*, (Minneapolis: The Minneapolis Institute of Art, 1989), p. 44, footnote No. 9.

[6] Wallace B. Gusler, *Furniture of Williamsburg and Eastern Virginia, 1710-1790*, pp. 61-63.

[7] Wallace B. Gusler, *Furniture of Williamsburg and Eastern Virginia, 1710-1790*, p. 61.

[8] Alexander Craig Ledger, folio 99, "Dec. 24, 1753 stuffing George Donalds saddle" is listed as a charge under Anthony Hays' Account; Henrico County Minute Book 1755-1762, p. 439. Joseph Scott apprenticeship to George Donald of Richmond March 2, 1761; Alexander Craig Account Daybook 1761-1763 George Donald made numerous purchases of leather for chairs (references courtesy of H.B. Gill); Thomas Jefferson Notebook 1769.

[9] Norfolk County Marriages 1706-1792, p. 23, January 31, 1769; Norfolk County Marriages 1706-1792, p. 68, January 4, 1771 (references courtesy of H.B. Gill); Wallace B. Gusler, *Furniture of Williamsburg and Eastern Virginia, 1710-1790*, pp. 66-67.

[10] York County Records, Deed Book, No. 6, 1755-1763, p. 65.

[11] Wallace B. Gusler, *Furniture of Williamsburg and Eastern Virginia, 1710-1790*, p. 62.

[12] York County Virginia, Wills and Inventories XXII, p. 99-103.

[13] Wallace B. Gusler, *Furniture of Williamsburg and Eastern Virginia, 1710-1790*, p. 62.

[14] Wallace B. Gusler, *Furniture of Williamsburg and Eastern Virginia, 1710-1790*, p. 63.

[15] Wallace B. Gusler, *Furniture of Williamsburg and Eastern Virginia, 1710-1790*, p. 63.

[16] *Virginia Gazette*, ed. William Hunter, June 20, 1755, p. 3.

[17] Mills Brown, *Cabinetmaking in the Eighteenth Century*, (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Research Report, Foundation Library, B5263), p. 122.

[18] *Ibid*., pp. 122-3.

[19] Wallace B. Gusler, *The American Craftsman and the European Tradition, 1620-1820*, p. 53, footnote 25.

[20] Ivor Noël Hume, Report on Archaeological Excavations of 1950-1960, Volumes I, II, III (Colonial Williamsburg Department of Collections Library).

Figure 1. Masonic Masters Chair, Williamsburg, Benjamin Bucktrout, circa 1770.
Mahogany primary; black walnut secondary.
Height 65½", width 31¼", depth 29½".
The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (1983-317)

This chair was made (signed) by Benjamin Bucktrout, who came to the Anthony Hay Shop as a journeyman from London. The chair was probably made between 1767-1770 when Bucktrout was master of the shop. It is the most elaborate chair known from Colonial America.

Figure 2. Desk and Bookcase, Williamsburg, attributed to Anthony Hay Shop, circa 1760.
Walnut primary; yellow pine secondary.
Height 84", width 39½", depth 22¼".
The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (1950-349)

This finely made conservatively styled desk and bookcase was owned by Dr. John Minson Galt of Williamsburg and typifies the high-quality products made for the middle class.

Fig. 2. China Table, attributed to Anthony Hay Shop, circa 1765.
Mahogany primary.
Height 30 1/8", width 36 3/8", depth 23¼".
The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (1980-95)

This table descended in the Byrd-Lewis families and may have belonged to William Byrd III. The bird profile in the skirt quite likely references the Byrd arms, and it is important that a reference in Alexander Craig's account book establishes business between Anthony Hay and Col. Byrd in 1761. This table represents the highest level of artistic production that only the wealthiest Virginians commissioned.

Figure 4. Masonic Chair (probably Senior Wardens) from Williamsburg Masonic Lodge Six, attributed to Anthony Hay Shop, circa 1760.
Mahogany primary.
Height 52¼", width 29½", depth 26¼".

This extraordinary work of the carver's art may be second only to the signed Bucktrout example in American achievement in ceremonial chair production.

Session II: Rural and Urban Life

Moderator's Introduction

by Vanessa E. Patrick

ON April 16, 1787 at the John Street Theater in New York City, Royall Tyler's play *The Contrast* received its first performance. Tyler was a lawyer, who eventually served as chief-justice of the Vermont Supreme Court. He also wrote prolifically in nearly every literary genre, and his play is often cited as the first comedy with American characters and settings, written by an American, to be presented in an American theater by professional actors, specifically by the celebrated American Company.[1] This blizzard of national qualifiers also surrounds the dramatic content of *The Contrast*, including themes related to our discussions here today.

True to his title, Tyler compares an egalitarian America to a class-ridden Europe. He builds *The Contrast* with a number of dramatic situations that are instructive in their own right. Most of Tyler's characters are preoccupied with European manners and material things. But one, Colonel Henry Manly, the Revolutionary War hero, criticizes their blind allegiance to imported fashion and decries the effects of "pernicious foreign luxury" on the "honest American."[2] Tyler's dialogue confirms what recent scholarship has shown, that the material lives of these "honest Americans," these common people, were shaped by a powerful trans-Atlantic market economy. They were full-fledged members, especially in the colonial era, of what T.H. Breen has termed an "empire of goods."[3] Tyler's play also suggests that precisely where the "honest American" stood within that empire was very significant. A character called Jonathan leaves a hillside farm in eastern Massachusetts and accompanies Colonel Manly to New York City in order to "see the world and all that."[4] His collisions with all things urban supply much of the play's humor. Jonathan's misadventures also illustrate a venerable American truism: city life is profoundly different from life in the country. The validity of this belief for the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has begun to be tested in studies of the material possessions and consumer behavior typical of urbanites and their country cousins.

The two presentations in this session will provide us with our own contrast between the material lives of common people in the backcountry and in the colonial capital of Virginia. Certain key issues and recent research findings form a backdrop for any inquiry into Chesapeake consumerism and should be kept in mind as we listen to these case stud-

ies. First and foremost, in a region of limited urbanization, was material life in towns truly distinctive? Historians Lois Carr and Lorena Walsh have determined that urban residents in the colonial Chesapeake were more likely to own specialized and fashionable domestic furnishings than those living in rural areas.[5] What was it about town living that inspired such purchases? It is clear that greater social opportunities and related public displays of wealth encouraged the acquisition of things like tea services and framed prints. Access to greater numbers and types of people, community activities, and commercial establishments certainly influenced consumer choices as well. Perhaps the stress of living in comparatively densely populated areas, as Lorna Wetherill suggests for eighteenth-century English towns, also caused town dwellers to focus their attentions on personal comforts.[6] The consumer revolution of the mid-eighteenth century was not, of course, an exclusively urban phenomenon. A major factor affecting material life in both town and countryside was the presence of stores. What conditions led to their establishment and how were their terms of sale and credit arranged? Marketing networks and the growth of domestic manufacturing also exerted significant forces on consumer behavior.

Similarities and distinctions between urban and rural material life in the colonial Chesapeake may be explored by considering a specific type of commodity. The enhanced desire for both personal comfort and tangible displays of wealth and taste that characterized Great Britain and her trans-Atlantic colonies by the second third of the eighteenth century was often pursued in domestic architecture.[7] Admittedly, a building is a very different kind of consumer item than a more portable set of dinnerware or bed linen or even a gaming table. European travelers were often puzzled by the incongruities between American buildings and what they found inside them: "The exterior … presented a picture of poverty, it was falling into ruins. Old hats and old clothes took the place of window panes … but we were agreeably surprised to find in that place of debilitated appearance, well brought up and elegantly dressed young ladies. We were served tea in beautiful china cups in a parlour the floor of which was full of holes, and where daylight came in through cracks in the walls."[8] Architectural ventures required a far greater outlay of capital and entailed further complexities in obtaining land on which to build, materials to be assembled into a structure, and people to carry out the work. It is not really surprising that eighteenth-century residents of the Chesapeake chose moveable goods, even those considered luxuries, over the seemingly more essential commodity of shelter. In spite of the difficulties involved in reading Chesapeake architecture as an expression of socio-economic status or aspiration, investigations of building activ-

ity and various aspects of the building process can help to test suspected contrasts between country and town.

Many Chesapeake towns, like Williamsburg and Annapolis, experienced significant increases in population, wealth, and activity during the first half of the eighteenth century. Domestic building was certainly a functional response to housing needs, but were other factors involved? Were buildings included among the fashionable consumer goods first acquired by town dwellers? Recent dendrochronological dating and new analysis of earlier urban development at Jamestown suggest that they were.[9] If so, how, if at all, did town houses differ from buildings in the countryside? Whether in town or country, most Chesapeake dwelling houses, with their flimsy and transitory frame or log construction and one-room plans, made a poor showing when contrasted with the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg or even the nearby, comparatively modest frame house of the gunsmith John Brush. A more equitable comparison might be made between William Byrd III's Williamsburg townhouse, one of the most elegant in the capital, and his larger and more sophisticated principle residence, Westover in Charles City County. Who introduced new architectural styles and practices—client, craftsman, or both? How did the more formal choices blend with the vernacular traditions that had developed in the Chesapeake over the preceding century? Answers to such questions must acknowledge distinctive architectural trends in both urban and rural areas and then relate them to consumer behavior in general and the ultimate emergence of a truly American material culture.

A number of additional issues associated with material life in town and country center on the identity of the consumer. In an earlier study, Ann Smart Martin pursued the concept of "the common man" in personal property tax records.[10] In 1815 Williamsburg, unlike adjacent, rural York County, members of different economic groups followed surprisingly similar material lifestyles, indicating that the town contained a relatively homogeneous community. Another important issue concerns the occupations pursued by urban and rural residents, which may have influenced their material lives far more than did geography. The ultimate questions of who bought what and for what reasons suggest that material goods sometimes meant different things to different people. In *The Contrast*, Jonathan misinterprets the appearance of a servant he meets and exclaims: "by the living jingo, you look so topping, I took you for one of the agents to Congress."[11] Fine clothes conveyed one message in town, and quite another in the country.

Jonathan is the quintessential New England rustic, one of the regional character types that frequented the newspapers, books, prints, and theaters of the early national period. These characters

were both generic and actual, rural and urban: from the western frontier hunter to the Pawtucket cotton spinner Sam Patch, the Evel Knievel of the Jacksonian era. The Yankee rustic had a close relation in the Yankee trickster, who makes a typical appearance as the title character in Alphonso Wetmore's 1821 play *The Pedlar*. His opening dialogue illustrates a final, significant issue that any study of urban and rural consumer behavior must consider. Nutmeg the Peddlar introduces himself as "A travelling merchant, sir—all the way over the mountains from the town of New Haven, with a cart load of very useful, very desirable and very pretty notions: such as, tin cups and nutmegs, candlesticks and onion seed, wooden clocks, flax seed and lanterns, Japanned coffee pots, and tea sarcers [*sic*], together with a variety of cordage and other dry goods."[12] If goods flowed from town to countryside, did consumer habits follow the same path? In other words, did rural residents consciously imitate the material preferences they saw in urban areas?

Lorena Walsh and Lois Carr's extensive work with probate inventories indicates that colonial Chesapeake towns did not export their life styles to the hinterland.[13] Spending patterns that did not conform to rural needs, like the town dweller's fondness for socially-oriented goods contributed to their limited influence, as did the late development and small size of the region's urban places. The more likely source of cultural influence on both county and town, at least during the colonial era, was England. Rural residents maintained their own independent communication with England either through the direct exchange of staple crops for consumer goods via factors, or, especially by the 1740s, through country stores and their associated routes of supply.

As rural residents tempered their material acquisitions according to their particular needs, so too Americans in general seem often to have acted selectively when presented with imported fashions, contrary to Colonel Manly's observation in *The Contrast*. A striking example is supplied by Cooke's Folly, an aptly named Philadelphia building completed in 1794 for an English-born goldsmith, jeweler, and real-estate investor named Joseph Cooke.[14] Modelled on a well-established London building type, it was designed to contain ground floor retail shops and coffeehouses, public rooms, and lodgings in the stories above. Cooke failed to let any space in the building, nor could he sell or dispose of it by lottery, and it was subsequently demolished. In arguably the most culturally sophisticated place in a United States still in many ways profoundly influenced by Great Britain, an elegant, English solution to housing urban activities was totally rejected, presumably because it bore no recognizable relation to American life.

Though direct modelling of rural consumer behavior on urban patterns was minimal if not nonexistent in the

Chesapeake, other connections between the two areas were firmly cast. In their case studies, Ann Smart Martin and Marley Brown and Joanne Bowen explore the nature of these connections, as well as the differences in rural and urban material life, and search for Royall Tyler's "honest American" in country stores and town markets.

NOTES

[1] Royall Tyler, *The Contrast—A Comedy in Five Acts* (New York: AMS Press, 1970; original Philadelphia: 1790), pp. xxiv - xxviii; George O. Seilhamer, *History of the American Theatre During the Revolution and After* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), p. 234; Weldon B. Durham, *American Theatre Companies, 1749-1887* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1985), p. 14.

[2] Tyler, p. 79 (Act III, Scene 2); 115 (Act V, Scene 2).

[3] T.H. Breen, "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776," *Journal of British Studies* 25 (October 1986): 467-499.

[4] Tyler, p. 54 (Act II, Scene 2).

[5] Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "The Standard of Living in the Colonial Chesapeake," *William and Mary Quarterly* 45, 3d ser. (January 1988): 139; Lorena S. Walsh, "Urban Amenities and Rural Sufficiency: Living Standards and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1643-1777," *Journal of Economic History* 43, no. 1 (March 1983): 112-117.

[6] Lorna Wetherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 81-83.

[7] See, for example, Peter Borsay, "Culture, Status, and the English Urban Landscape," *History* 67 (February 1982): 1-12 and Cary Carson, "The Consumer Revolution in Eighteenth-Century British North America: Why Demand?," in Cary Carson and Ronald Hoffman, eds., *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994).

[8] Ferdinand Marie Bayard, *Travels of a Frenchman in Maryland and Virginia: with a Description of Philadelphia and Baltimore, in 1791*, ed. Ben C. McCary (Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers, 1950), p. 35.

[9] Cary Carson, Katie Bragdon, Edward Chappell, Willie Graham, and Jeff Bostetter, "The Growth and Development of Late Seventeenth-Century Jamestown" (Paper presented at the Council of Virginia Archaeologists symposium, Williamsburg, Virginia, May 1991).

[10] Ann Morgan Smart, "The Urban/Rural Dichotomy of Status Consumption: Tidewater Virginia, 1815" (Master's thesis, The College of William and Mary in Virginia, 1986).

[11] Tyler, p. 55 (Act II, Scene 2).

[12] Quoted in Richard M. Dorson, *American Folklore* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 48.

[13] Carr and Walsh, pp. 139-140; Walsh, pp. 113; 116-117.

[14] Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class—Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 23.

Common People and the Local Store:
Consumerism in the Rural Virginia Backcountry

by Ann Smart Martin

GEORGIANA Spencer was the daughter of English nobility. On October 9, 1774, she headed to Derby for a ball dressed in a "demi-saison silk," very like one she "had brought from abroad and wore at Bath, pink trimm'd with gause and green ribbons." She found her uncle drunk and the musicians so in disarray that she and her dance partner had to wait ten minutes in the middle of the room before "they could wake the musick to play a minuet, and when they did play all of them play'd different parts." If the music was not up to proper elite standards, neither were her fellow revelers. Elections were in the offing, so no one was refused at the door. Suddenly, we see a "ballroom quite full of the daughters and wives of all the voters, in check'd aprons, etc." If only the elite could dance the minuet, all could join in the rollicking country dances.[1]

In the same year, but far across the Atlantic, another scene unfolds. Colonial governor Lord Dunmore and his wife had come to Norfolk, Virginia and the local folk had turned out in style. A parade was followed by a ball, although the townsfolk had to invite the best local nabob in the person of Colonel Moseley to "come to town in his famous wig and shining buckles" to dance the minuet, a feat which terrified the local mayor. The British officers were all there and the prettiest local girls. Colonel Moseley set off with the governor's wife in "her great, fine, hoop-petticoat." The crowd marvelled at how well "she could handle her hoop—now this way, now that—everybody was delighted." Soon all joined in the reels, and "here our Norfolk lads and lasses turned in with all their hearts and heads." One local girl had her head quite turned by the gallant young Cockney marine officer in red flannel coat. Spurning her local beau, she took to "reading novels and got a new hoop petticoat to make her a Lady and she began to study what she would say when she came to stand before the King."[2]

One final scene remains. Its timing is far less certain, blurred from cumulative childhood memories. The place is western Virginia in the early nineteenth century, in a county called Bedford. Recalling his youth, a minister described a place where fighting was prevalent, strong drink was universal, and dancing was "not a common, but an occasional and holiday exercise." He added that dancing "was rarely practiced without special preparation; and then its devotees aimed to indemnify themselves for its infrequency by excessive indulgence."

The result was that they danced until they were too weary to continue.[3]

That the Georgiana Spencers and Lady Dunmores knew how to dress and dance was not, of course, new to the eighteenth century. What was new, however, was that so many in checked aprons—in England and the colonies—knew so much about the latest fashion, had access to those articles, and could afford, in many small ways, to keep up. That the daughters of farmers were interested in fashion has immense social and economic dimensions; it suggests that a new group of consumers was beginning to be released from the sway of tradition, where change is shunned and parochialism flourishes. Some modern historians suggest that it was just this attempt to mimic the fashions of the wealthiest that led to a greatly heightened consumption and a new consumer society.[4]

One result of that greater interest and ability of the middling ranks was that the rich put up ever higher barriers of education, manners, expense, and leisure to separate gentry from common folk. The tilt of the head, the turn of a phrase, the grasp of a glass—all united to create a gentry language that knit together the elite and excluded the commoner. At the same time, courtly behavior and metropolitan culture continued to stress a sensitivity to "civilized" manners, and elites were less willing to share food or drink with those below.[5]

But a paradox remains. Along with increasing social polarization may also have come heightened access by more common people to the material world of elites. First, by the second half of the eighteenth century, both rich and poor were increasingly bound by greater information about change in London. Second, more of the middling ranks, particularly in Virginia, had far greater access to manufactured goods than ever before through a burgeoning retail trade. Finally, there were simply a greater number of people to bulge the middle of the social pyramid. As this group grew more numerous and important, their condition was celebrated by Daniel Defoe as a "happy middle ground … not exposed to the miseries and hardships of the mechanic part … not embarassed with the pride, luxury, ambition, and envy of the upper part."[6]

This intellectual transformation—the mantle of moral superiority slowly moving from the elite to the middling ranks—indicates just how far old notions of the social order had come under challenge. As P.J. Corfield has shown, the term "class" itself glided into the English language in the eighteenth century, first coexisting with old ideas and terminology about superior and inferior rank and order, and then diverging from them into something approximating "upper, middling, and lower" classes by the 1750s and 1760s. This movement from the old bipartite gentry/people, us/them, rich/poor, high/low to the tripartite form indicates the strength of that middling tier and the fundamental reorganization of

the social order that ensued.

But that tripartite division—so slow to emerge—would rather quickly be reworked to upper, middling, and *laboring* or *working* classes in the half century to follow.[7] Again, the choice of terminology is important; by converting the bottom realm into laborers or working classes, not only are notions of power injected into such a conceptualization, but the middling class became further distinguished. Changing language thus places a heightened divider between the middle and the bottom by implying change in kind, not just degree, while retaining the newfound fluidity between the middle and the top.

Who were these "middling ranks" and what were their distinguishing characteristics? First, they were not a class expressed in any political consciousness. Except for those in London, they were not yet independent from the paternalism of the elite, and remained remarkably deferential in political matters.[8] Nor were they a uniform group in terms of occupation, ranging from near-elite professionals to minor rural gentry to self-employed artisans. Moreover, even within their ranks they were separated by gradations of prestige and differing religious and political identities. A final important difference was their form of income, an important distinction between elites, tradesmen or independent farmers.

Their most distinguishing characteristic may thus be the very multiplicity of niches and forms within that broad middle tier. Perhaps we could simply say that this group were the descendants of the rough distinction of "Citizens, Burgesses, and Yeoman" used by Thomas Smith in the 1560s.[9] But one scholar suggests that they could be defined by a basic income of about £40 in England, although that number could jump to £1000 for the lesser gentry.[10] Another distinction from the elite world was that most were not able to engage solely in the life of leisure. As tradesmen, farmers, or professionals, each, in varying degrees, contributed an income of his own making. Even the wealthiest of this group were more closely tied to their business or farms through the necessity of close management. This group often used their wives as proxies for conspicuous leisure, working hard so that their spouses might maintain status for them.

This disparate group began to be coalesced by an emerging middle class culture, a process that accelerated at the end of the century and may have been completed by about 1830.[11] The middling ranks were thus bound by what they were not—neither rich nor poor—but also what they were coming to be. A sense of respectability—how one should act, what one should know, and how one should dress became slowly apparent. In New England, one estimate of the "necessary expenses in a Family of but Middling Figure and no more than eight persons" came to £265, and included an all-purpose maid, sociability, and a number

of furnishings.[12] The middling ranks thus began to be part of larger metropolitan culture that valued manners, leisure, education, and sociability.

This picture is sketched from a number of sources, most often describing urban places in England where the eighteenth-century popularity of town living helped lead to a "far more acute urban culture and consciousness, sharply defined from that of rural society."[13] In the colonies, however, creating and maintaining this polite, metropolitan culture was more difficult. While nearly a third of the English population resided in cities of 2500 or more in 1800, only about 7 percent fit that definition in the United States. Thus, being part of that cultural ideal was less a case of residing in large urban areas as maintaining elite culture in whatever one's setting. Part of this problem was ameliorated by creating polite societies in the small urban places of the South, like Williamsburg, where social seasons and urban cultural institutions developed to bring together town dwellers and wealthy rural gentry scattered around the countryside. So, too, in Williamsburg they followed the fashion, again measured in terms of London life for "they live in the same neat Manner, dress after the same Modes, and behave themselves exactly as the Gentry in London."[14] Even tiny Hobbe's Hole, no more than a village with several shops and stores, could host a ball at the home of a wealthy merchant.[15] Through these islands of civilization, the great Virginia gentry were able to maintain a sense of belonging to metropolitan life amidst what they saw as the coarse manners and habits of the common man.

But the wealthy rural gentry actively worked to maintain civilization in isolated areas in other ways. First, they developed and maintained intense ties to England through correspondence. William Byrd described how the arrival of ships brought letters from friends which were torn open "as eagerly as a greedy heir tears open a rich father's will." They also created their own circumscribed social world of polite company by visiting and dining. Finally, they placed an extraordinary high premium on education, classical learning, and cultivated manners.[16]

But were those rural men and women just below the great Virginia planters participating in new patterns of consumerism and metropolitan life styles? Were they trying to imitate local gentry? Country sons and daughters were not disenfranchised from a broad cultural paradigm that valued change, newness, manners, and fashion. They only participated, however, in certain concrete ways that could be adapted to their own life style, set of tasks, and economic means.

One of the best ways to study life style choices of the middling sort is through store account books, probably the most underutilized source for the study of common people. Wealthy planters most often bought their goods from

agents in England, using their local stores more for convenience or spur-of-the-moment purchases. The majority of the less affluent Virginians, however, obtained their textiles from local merchants, who extended credit for the purchase of manufactured and processed goods against the promise for future agricultural commodities. This business drew particularly upon smaller planters who could not afford the risks of consignment, and who sold their crops and were granted credit by local agents, often of Scottish or British firms, to purchase goods in a local store. These middling planters were thought by some to be the preferred customers; the supervisor for one of the colony's largest merchant chains advised one storekeeper that "people who have only one or two hogsheads [of tobacco] to dispose of and who want all goods" are the "best customers a store can have."[17] To gain customers, a merchant had to offer ever higher prices for tobacco and an ever improving selection of attractive, affordable goods.

Store records provide a glimpse of a vast number of middling and lower rung individuals. For instance, of the customers who visited John Hook's store in the rural backcountry in the fall of 1771, over 60 percent did not own slaves.[18] Even if they did not own property that was taxed, or if their estate was small or unencumbered enough to escape probate, men and women still had to buy the necessaries of life. These are the kind of people that usually defy modern study. One out of eight men could not be found in any official document, such as wills, inventories, deeds, and tax lists, in Bedford or surrounding counties. High geographic mobility and wartime dislocation may account for part of this problem, but it is clear that women and slaves are not the only common people missing from our documentary view.

Most of John Hook's customers lived in Bedford County in the backcountry of Virginia, so called because it lay "back" or to the west of the heads of river navigation. White settlers had begun to push into the country there in the 1740s, although settlement was held back until Indian threats could be solved. Yet early Bedford County residents had vision and optimism for the new county seat they laid out seven years after the county was formed in 1754 and named it New London. Located some 150 miles from the fall line of the James River, the small town was a natural conduit for moving agricultural commodities eastward through a major turnpike (see Figs. 1 and 2).

Yet the majority of the rural population seemed little concerned with polite behaviors of elite hegemony found in eastern society. A local resident remembered fighting as the "prevalent vice in the community" in his early nineteenth-century childhood there, beginning as "furious quarreling," leading to "revolting profanity, [and] ending in a regular game of fisticuffs."[19] It was here, too, that our earlier view of dancing on the fron-

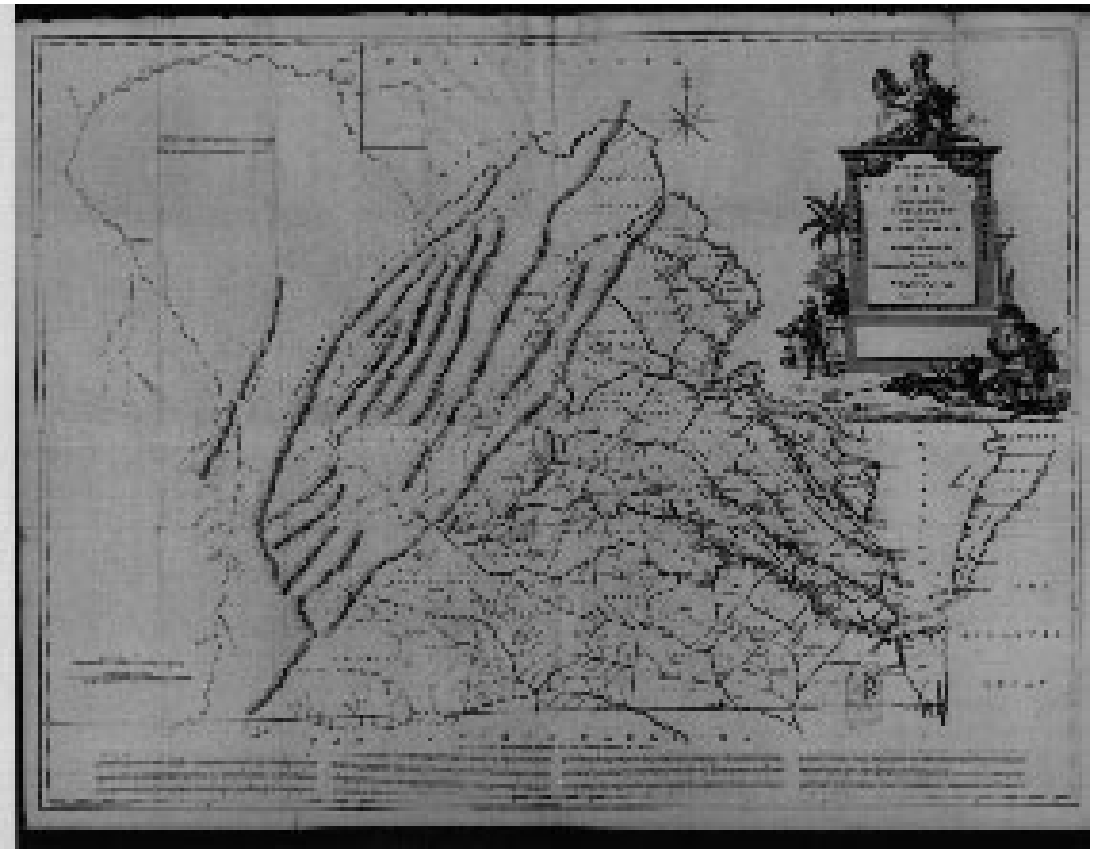

Figure 1. John Henry map of Virginia, 1770.

tier took place. Other evidence accumulates for a rural world that may have had remarkably different values than urban Virginia places. First, a tax list for a nearby rural county suggests that many may have lived in log houses, and even those with enough capital to acquire slaves did not always build structures to house them separately from their own families.[20] Second, a comparison of the kinds of furniture and household furnishings we associate with new, more civilized behaviors shows that in some ways these rural folk of the backcountry could hardly compete with their more eastern or urban cousins in Virginia or Maryland. The lack of tables and chairs, for example, meant guests and family could not be properly seated. In the same way, teawares were so infrequent in their inventories to suggest almost a conscious rejection of tea. But in other ways, households in this area were beginning to adopt behaviors once found only among

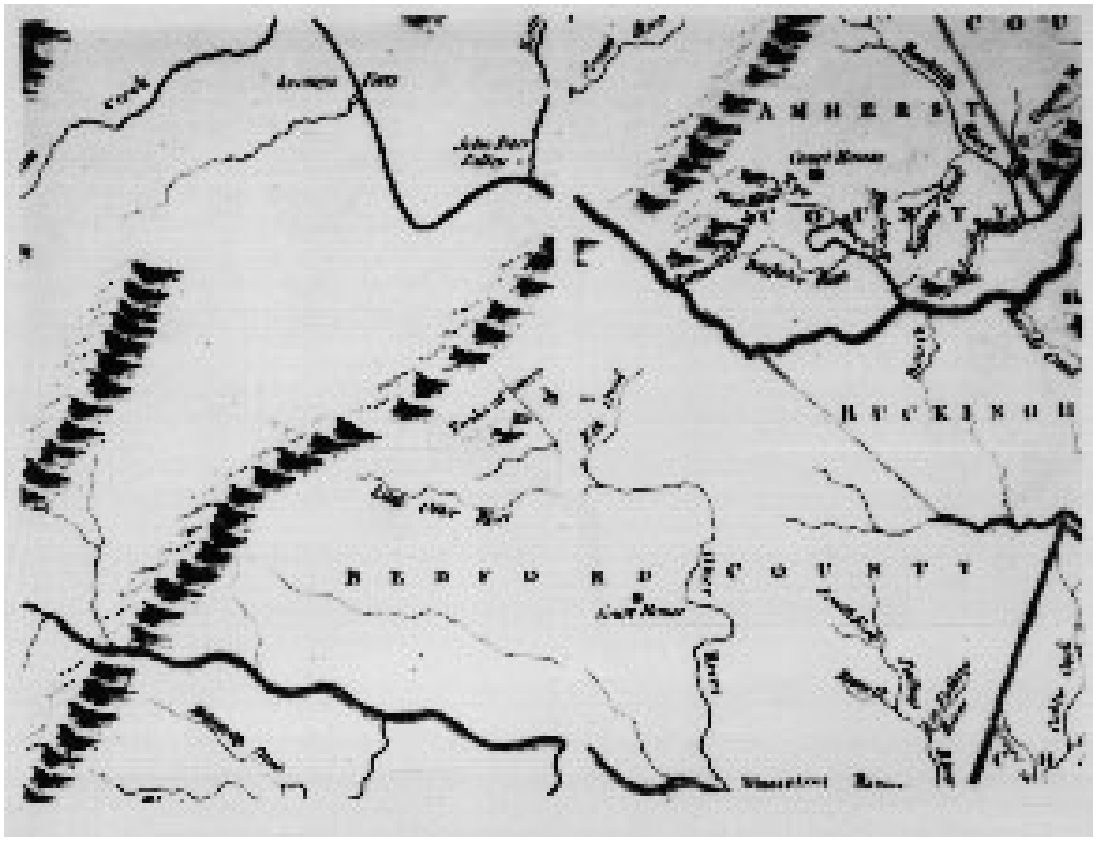

Figure 2. Detail from Henry map, Bedford County.

the elite. For instance, the patterns of ownership of knives and forks were not dissimilar to those in the east—rural or urban.[21]

More information can be gathered from the records of John Hook's store. A shipment in January 1772 from Whitehaven for over £1000 of goods can provide a good example of the wide variety of textiles and clothing accessories stocked by Hook.[22] This invoice lists all the goods shipped in that vessel and their wholesale cost. To that price would be added exchange cost and profit, usually 100 to 200 percent. Based on this document it is clear that any customer coming to New London just after the new shipment had arrived had plenty of choices to make. Textiles and clothing can serve as an example. Twenty-five grades of linen were there—over a thousand yards—priced from 10*d* to 3/6 per yard. Inexpensive fabrics included white and brown sheeting and hempen rolls,

and checks of linen, cotton, and superfine cotton. Hook's supplier even specified half-inch crimson furniture check.

If utilitarian fabrics formed the core of Hook's stock, the bright hues of fashion were also there—sky blue, purple, pea green, and yellow drab durants, and purple and china blue chintzes of several kinds. Pink, blue, black, and green alamodes also could have been pulled from the shelf, along with a myriad of buttons and sewing notions. But there was more. A woman in the backcountry could buy her stays and other means of fashionable bondage of the figure. She could leave with fantails or hats of beaver, black satin, or colored silk. She could have old-fashioned or new-fashioned satin bonnets; velvet bonnets or velvet hoods. Around her neck she could clasp two-rowed large wax necklaces or three-rowed small wax necklaces. Two dozen fans were there for her to peruse as were over a dozen scarlet cloaks, ranging from 8 to 12 shillings each. She might splurge on a satin or silk cloak, at over £1 each wholesale. If she were really wealthy, she might choose one of the two "super fine hunting ladys [saddles] green cloth with gold embroadered sprigs and neat polished archd mount bits and furniture" for only seven pounds.

Her husband faced as many choices. He could choose one of two broadcloth suits with all the trimmings at a wholesale cost of over five pounds, although it probably would have set back its purchaser £11 Virginia currency.[23] He too had a wide range of choice of hats, stockings, shoes, and buckles of yellow, pinchbeck, or steel. He could thumb through the *Spectator* or *Johnson's Dictionary* or handle backgammon boards, china teacups, and feather plumes. Nor was John Hook alone in this fine assortment of goods. A customer at nearby James Callaway's store could go home with a cream colored teapot, the new novel *Tom Jones*, or Allan Ramsay's *Tea-table Miscellany*, a book of popular songs.[24] Good businessmen stock what sells. Callaway and Hook knew that they had to be ready for whatever anyone might want or risk losing their business to another merchant.

Almost four hundred different customers visited Hook's store from September to December 1771, a period of expanded mercantile credit and busy trade.[25] They came to Hook's store for a wide variety of items, and their 3000 purchases help us examine consumerism in a broad cross-section of local society. As a caution, this research in Hook's daybooks is ongoing and hence results are tentative.

First, about 35 percent of all money spent went to the purchase of textiles, with another 10 percent spent on clothing items such as hats and shoes, and 3 percent for sewing. Thus, nearly half of all their purchases were related to clothing, as compared to about 3 percent of their consumer wealth recorded in probates. Another 20 percent of their purchases were related to food and drink—

everything from a bartered chicken to the pot to cook it in, salt to spice it with, and the dish to serve it up, and a lot of rum to wash it down. As much money (Table 1) was spent on alcohol at Hook's store as on clothing items!

Such large categories once again mask the variety of niceties—even luxuries—for sale that fit our picture of a society interested in more elite consumer behaviors. Rural Virginia consumers—even near the frontier— could choose spices or sweeteners to make more flavorful food and drink; exotic hot beverages like tea, coffee, chocolate for status and caffeine stimulation; and finally, a whole range of items related to a new emphasis on the proper serving of carefully prepared and abundant food and drink.

So the colonists who came to these stores purchased the many common necessities of daily life. They came for salt for flavor and preservation or hoes for weeding tobacco. But we shouldn't conjure up a picture of a nineteenth-century rural store with only shelves of feed and seed. For when these rural Virginians stepped into the dim light of the store, a world of color, fashion, and knowledge was also there: ruffles, ribbons, white kid gloves, and looking glasses to admire one's self. A material culture approach teaches us that these things carried powerful information. The penetration of a distribution network of consumer goods throughout rural Virginia after mid-century thus has immense implications.

Table 1.
Expenditures at John Hook's Store, September-December 1771.

Category	*Pct.*
Textile	35.1
Clothing	10.5
Alcohol	11.0
Grocery	6.6
Saddlary	5.7
Hunt/Fish	3.2
Foodways	4.0
Sewing	3.0
Building	1.5
Literacy	0.2
Miscellaneous	15.0

More people than ever before had the ability to see and touch and experience these objects. And it was the rise of the retail trade that placed an emporium in towns or villages or crossroads, that gave people continual fresh information about material things, and put a man behind the counter to convince them to buy.

But did the less affluent differ from the rich in the kinds of things they purchased? To discern larger patterns of preference, customers were first clustered into economic groups based on their ownership of slaves, then the percentages spent on any one consumer item out of all the purchases of the group were examined. One trend was immediately apparent: while 15 percent of the poorest group's purchases was spent on alcohol, that number dropped to 4 per-

cent, 2 percent and less than 1 percent as one moves up the wealth ladder.[26] Thus, alcohol made up a far greater proportion of the purchases of the poorest part of the population than the richest. On the other hand, the more wealthy were more likely to spend on newly popular grocery items, especially sugar, but also spices and tea. As expected, more or less, the greater the number of slaves one owned (representing wealth) the greater the proportion spent on tea out of all their purchases. But the proportion of money spent on tea was greater for the bottom group that owned no slaves than the lower middling rung that owned between one and five slaves. Drinking tea—evidence of which is nearly absent in Bedford County probate inventories—was beginning to make inroads in Bedford society, but not necessarily in a trickle-down fashion. Put another way, small numbers of people in different parts of Bedford County society began drinking tea but probably without expensive teawares so common in the east and not in an order that suggests a consistent marker of wealth and position! On the other hand, the vast quantities of alcohol purchased by the poorer sorts demonstrate how very common rum must have been as an escape from a gruelling workaday world.

The customers at John Hook's store did slowly begin to accept new behaviors and values. By choosing knives and forks, they made the first step in the revision of eating behaviors, adopting new cultural standards that touching food with the hands was inappropriate.[27] Through the choice of tea, *some* Bedford residents linked themselves to a broader cultural enjoyment of a new beverage, but many had little interest compared to their urban counterparts.

Only slowly would the proper accoutrements of sociability and leisure make their way into the workaday world of the agricultural economy. Only those behaviors that could fit into the sunup to sundown routine of the middling agricultural world were accepted. Rural society *was* different in many ways, and it seems that difference would grow more marked as time went by. Indeed, analysis of an 1815 personal property tax list graphically demonstrates how luxuries such as mahogany dining tables or sideboards or cut glass and silver tablewares were overwhelmingly an urban phenomenon in Virginia. Only the very top rung of rural society could match their urban peers in many avenues of sociability. It was in the world of the common man that urban and rural distinctions were most marked—the middling ranks of even a small urban place like Williamsburg were enjoying a material prosperity and sociable life style that simply was not matched in the surrounding countryside.[28]

Contemporary travelers occasionally found the rural world puzzling because they had so much difficulty reading wealth when good desks and china teacups were found in small houses in poor

repair. Ferdinand Bayard described one such household as a "mixture of wealth and poverty, of studied elegance and negligence."[29] Buying knives and forks or teacups to put in a house with holes in the walls may seem incongruous to us, considering the discomfort caused by those chinks in the cold winter months. A similar disjunction is found in one final example. In 1786, a group of men gathered in the countryside near Bedford County to play whist, a popular card game. Suddenly, this pleasant sociable scene is shattered. The words of a witness in the lawsuit tell it all. "There seems to be a fals Deal, that Mr. Wilson got a Kandle to Count the tricks, that upon Sarching, Wilson found a Card between Mr. Ingland's feet."[30] A fight erupts and the ensuing melee spreads to another guest who started hitting Wilson's wife and son. The cautionary tale is this. Common rural people may have known how to lay the tricks, but, more often than not, they did not know the rules of the game (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. Print, "Christmas in the Country."

NOTES

[1] Georgiana Spencer to Lady Spencer, October 9, 1774 in *Georgiana: Extracts from the Correspondence of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, ed. the Earl of Bessborough (London: John Murray, 1955).

[2] *Lower Norfolk Antiquary* V (1906), pp. 33-35 note.

[3] William Eldridge Hatcher, *The Life of J.B. Jeter* (Baltimore: H.M. Wharton, 1887), pp. 23-25.

[4] The literature of the consumer revolution seems to grow exponentially and is scattered through the works of social and economic historians and material culture specialists. The standard source is Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982). Scholars are currently arguing, however, about the cause, scope, and timing of this transformation. Only the most recent works will be included here. For England, see Lorna Wetherill, *Consumer Behavior and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London: Routledge and Paul, 1988). On this side of the water, see Grant McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988). Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (London: Basil Blackwell 1987). For the colonies, see Cary Carson, "The Consumer Revolution in Colonial America: Why Demand?" in *Of Consuming Interest: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Cary Carson and Ronald Hoffman (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994). One of the most critical evaluations of McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb's work is found in Ben Fine and Ellen Leopold, "Consumerism and the Industrial Revolution," *Social History* 15 (May 1990): 151-179. A recent call for more precise measures of consumer changes is found in Carole Shammas, "Explaining Past Changes in Consumption and Consumer Behavior," *Historical Methods*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Spring 1989): 61-67. Carole Shammas has written one of the few works comparing England and America in *The Pre-industrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

A specific view of changes in the Chesapeake standard of living can be seen in the works of Lois Carr and Lorena Walsh, abbreviated in "Forum: Toward a History of the Standard of Living in Colonial America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d series, Vol. 45 (January 1988): 116-170.

[5] The most elegant summary of notions of gentility is Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992). For the Chesapeake, see Richard D. Brown, "William Byrd II and the Challenge of Rusticity among the Tidewater Gentry," *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 42-64. For specific detail on the complexities of elite deportment, see Alicia M. Annas, "The Elegant Art of Movement," in *An Elegant Art: Fashion and Fantasy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Edward Maeder (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1983), p. 40. A large body of literature has grown around the idea of polarization into popular and elite

culture; the major source remains Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800* (New York: New York University Press, 1978).

[6] Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), p. 2.

[7] P.J. Corfield, "Class by Name and Number in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *History*, 72, no. 234 (February 1987): 38-61.

[8] E.P. Thompson, "Eighteenth-century English society: Class Struggle without Class?" *Social History*, vol. 3, no 2 (May 1978): 142-143.

[9] Quoted in Peter Laslett, "A One-Class Society," in *History and Class: Essential Readings in Theory and Interpretation*, ed. R.S.Neale (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 204.

[10] Wetherill, *Consumer Behavior and Material Culture in Britain*, pp. 99-102.

[11] See, for instance, R.S. Neale, "Class and Class Consciousness in Early Nineteenth Century England: Three Classes or Five," in *History and Class: Essential Readings in Theory and Interpretation*, ed. R.S. Neale (London: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 163.

[12] Quoted in Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life in America, 1625-1742* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 413.

[13] Peter Borsay, "The English Urban Renaissance: The Development of Provincial Urban Culture, c. 1680-1760" *Social History* II, no. 5 (1977): 581-603.

[14] Hugh Jones, *The Present State of Virginia*, Vol. 2, ed. Richard L. Morton (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956), p. 771.

[15] Hunter Dickinson Farish, ed. *Journal and Letters of Phillip Vickers Fithian: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion, 1773-1774*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968) p. 154

[16] An excellent study of maintaining this ideal is Richard D. Brown, "William Byrd II and the Challenge of Rusticity Among the Tidewater Gentry," in *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[17] James Robinson to Mr. Bennet Price, October 7, 1767. Letter published in *A Scottish Firm in Virginia, 1767-1777*, edit. by T. M. Devine (London: Clark Constable, Ltd. 1982), p. 2.

[18] Slave ownership was determined by examining tax lists and probate inventories from Bedford and later surrounding counties. Customers were drawn from John Hook's daybook of his New London store from September to December 1771.

John Hook may be one of the best documented—and least known—merchants in eighteenth-century Virginia. His extant papers include 7,289 items and 103 account volumes at Special Collections, Duke University. Most, however, relate to a later period than that studied here. Scratch copies of letter books and other miscellaneous items are found in the John Hook Papers, Business Records Collection, Virginia State Library. *Parts* of these collections are on microfilm at Colonial Williamsburg. An additional eighteenth-century ledger is on loan to me from Dr. Warren Moorman, to whom I am greatly in debt.

Only two studies of Hook have been completed. See Willard Pierson, Jr. "John Hook: A Merchant of Colonial Virginia," History Honors thesis, Duke University, 1962, and Warren Moorman, "John Hook: New London Merchant," *Journal of the*

Roanoke Valley Historical Society vol. 11, (1980): 40-54.

Additional information and explanation can be found in Ann Smart Martin, "Buying into the World of Goods: Eighteenth-Century Consumerism and the Retail Trade from London to the Virginia Frontier," Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, College of William and Mary, 1993.

[19] Hatcher, *The Life of J.B. Jeter*, p. 24. A peddler visited the area in 1809 and his expectations were disappointed to find a "very poor Court, no fighting or Gouging, very few Drunken people." Richard R. Beeman, edit. "Trade and Travel in Post-Revolutionary Virginia: A Diary of an Itinerant Peddlar, 1807-1808," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 84, no.2 (April 1976): 174-188.

[20] "A List of Whit People & Buildings in the Bounds of Capt. Rubles Company," Henry County Courthouse, Martinsville, Virginia. Cited and discussed in John S. and Emily J. Salmon, *Franklin County, Virginia, 1786-1986: A Bicentennial History* (Rocky Mount: Franklin County Bicentennial Commission, 1993). My thanks to John Salmon for graciously sharing his manuscript and to Anne Carter Lee for a manuscript copy of this tax list and other original research materials from Franklin County.

[21] For more detail of the probate evidence, see Ann Smart Martin, "Frontier Boys and Country Cousins: A Context for Choice in Backcountry Consumerism," in *Historical Archaeology and the Study of American Culture*, edited by Bernard Herman and Lu Ann De Cunzo (Winterthur, Delaware: Winterthur Museum, 1995).

[22] Invoice of Goods shipped by Walter Chambre on the Milham for Norfolk and James River, Virginia by order of Eilbeck, Ross, and Company, John Hook Papers, Special Collections Department, Duke University.

[23] Edward Dixon, a merchant in Caroline County, in eastern Virginia also imported two suits in 1769(?), although he kept one for himself. These had only slight variations from the ones stocked by John Hook. Dixon Ledger B, 1768-1771. Cited in Harold B. Gill, "The Retail Business in Colonial Virginia," manuscript on file, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Charles Yates also ordered "Good Cloth of grave colours to make four suits Cloaths with compleat trimmings—they are to be of diff. Patterns." Unlike most merchants, Yates also ordered other fabrics by their planned uses. Thus, linen for four shirts, cambrick and muslin for ruffles, and "light summer wear for Suits with trimmings; not gaudy and the patterns to differ" were included in his order. Invoice of goods to be bought by Captain James Ward for Account of Charles Yates and Daniel Payne, August 23, 1780, microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

[24] Invoice of goods, Fall 1772, by Messrs. Dobson, Daltera & Walker Merchants in Liverpool to Messrs. Trent & Callaway, Bedford, James River, Virginia. Callaway vs. Dobson, U.S. Circuit Court, Virginia District, 1811. Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia.

[25] Daybook, September 21, 1771 to April 1772, John Hook papers, Special Collections Department, Duke University, Durham, N.C. Purchases of goods totalled £429 although credits for payments and cash loans represented financial activity of over £1000. The late 1760s and early

1770s was a time of expanded credit from British merchants, a boomtime that would soon end with the credit crisis of 1772 and the later political and economic dislocation of the American Revolution.

[26] Neither can this pattern be explained by changing *quantities* of alcohol purchased. There was no appreciable difference in the volume purchased (pints, quarts or gallons) at any one time by any group.

[27] See, for example, Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners*, vol 1, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. by Edmund Jephart, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

[28] Ann Morgan Smart, "The Urban/Rural Dichotomy of Status Consumption: Tidewater, Virginia, 1815," M.A. thesis, Program in American Studies, College of William and Mary, 1986.

[29] Ferdinand Bayard, *Travels of a Frenchman in Maryland and Virginia with a Description of Philadelphia and Baltimore in 1791*, trans. and ed. Ben C. McCary (Ann Arbor, Mich: Edward Brothers, 1950), p. 35.

[30] Franklin County Suit Papers, August 1789, Edward Willson Vs. John England. Quoted in Salmon and Salmon, *Franklin County, Virginia, 1786-1986: A Bicentennial History*, p. 220.

An Archaeological Perspective on the Material Life of Williamsburg's Artisan Community

by Marley R. Brown III and Joanne Bowen

WILLIAMSBURG, as Virginia's capital, was by the middle of the eighteenth century, a town resided in by His Majesty's representative, the governor, many members of the landed gentry who kept townhouses apart from their rural family seats as a convenience during times when the House of Burgesses was in session, and local power elite including representatives of the county and city government as well as the Bruton Parish vestry. In addition, there were many professionals such as lawyers and doctors, and artisans and craftsmen of many sorts running the gamut from the highly skilled to the unskilled. From the perspective of what has been excavated in the Historic Area, it appears that this latter group—artisans, craftsmen, and tradesmen—will have to serve as our closest archaeological approximation of the kinds of people being examined in this conference—the ordinary or common segment of the Chesapeake population.

In recent years, the foundation's Department of Archaeological Research has recovered a reasonably substantial sample of domestic material from two of Williamsburg's many eighteenth-century craftsmen, John Brush and John Draper.[1] Brush made his living as one of Williamsburg's early gunsmiths. He left an estate valued at ninety pounds when he died in 1727, comprised mostly of the tools of his trade.[2] His inventory contained no reference to fine earthenware. Yet, in his privy, discovered and excavated in 1988, were pieces of highly fashionable delftware tea bowls and a cup for drinking chocolate or coffee. Soil samples from Brush's privy also revealed a range of dietary pollen, including corn, broccoli, parsley, and most notably, capers, that survived digestion by household members (Fig. 1). The prevalence of an imported condiment, capers, as well as of broccoli (part of the mustard family) and other vegetables and herbs such as bean, corn, sage, and parsley, all speak to a varied diet and perhaps some sophistication in terms of cuisine.

What, we may wonder, was a craftsman of very modest means doing partaking of tea and coffee and partaking of hard-to-grow vegetables and imported spices? After all, the very careful analysis of surviving probate inventories for Brush's Williamsburg peers indicate that Brush's contemporaries were little involved in tea-drinking and fine dining and did not even keep up with those of similar wealth when investing in household furnishings. The only comprehen-

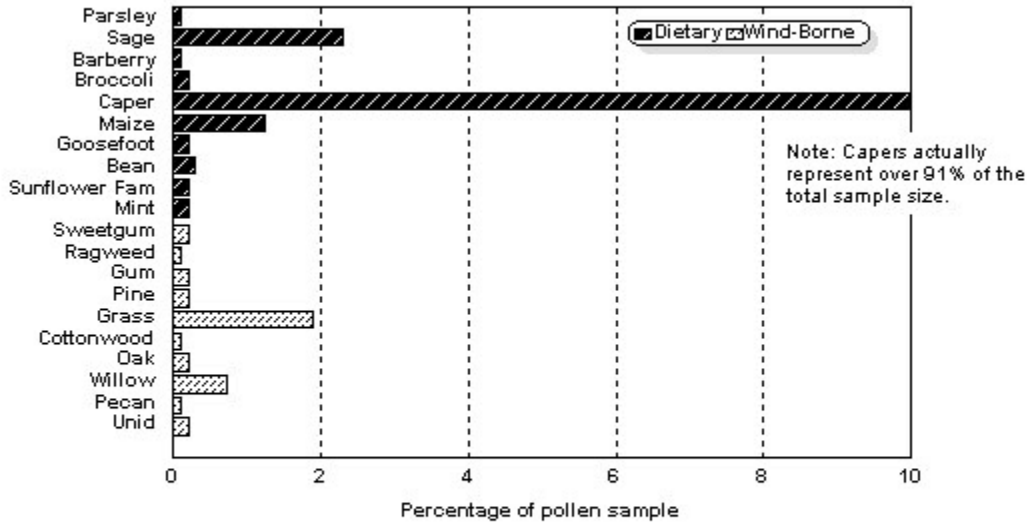

Figure 1. Relative pollen percentages from the Brush-Everard site. Note that capers are overwhelmingly dominant, representing over 91% of the sample, but that there is a variety of other species. From Karl Reinhard, "Analysis of Latrine Soils from the Brush-Everard Site, Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia."

sive survey of ceramics on Chesapeake sites during this period indicates that teawares show up at only a few sites, and they are all associated with colonial governors or other gentry households.[3]

This archaeological discovery at the Brush-Everard site, when viewed against both conventional wisdom and the statistics derived from probate inventories and Chesapeake archaeological sites, provides us a classic example of the kind of ambiguity that often results from archaeological research. This ambiguity is created by differences between what documents lead us to believe and what archaeology actually shows to be the case. It prompts new, more focussed questions for further investigation, both through archaeological excavation and the study of documents. How should we interpret Brush's possession of vessel forms associated with exotic beverages, such as tea, coffee, and chocolate, introduced in the late seventeenth century and thought to be exclusively associated with the elite during the early part of the eighteenth century? Although the dietary evidence cannot be directly connected to Brush, it is suggestive of a rich and varied diet. Were these commonplace attributes of the material lives of ordinary craftsmen and others of modest means (our common people) during the first quarter of the eighteenth century? Does Brush's case bear witness to the cosmopolitan character of Williams-

burg, as contrasted to more rural communities of the period, or should it be viewed as an anomaly?

One affirmative response to this last question has been the observation that inasmuch as Brush may originally have come to Williamsburg in the service of Governor Spotswood, some time around 1710, his standard of living may have much to do with the latter's patronage. If this is so, archaeological and, we might add, architectural evidence of Brush's reasonably high standard of living, may not be relevant for many of his peers, who did not enjoy the patronage of the governor. Our own view is that the historical evidence for the character of this specific relationship between Spotswood and Brush is not terribly compelling. We would also be more comfortable with a less particularistic interpretation of the interesting ambiguity provided by our archaeological discoveries in the Brush privy. Still, this case does draw attention to the importance of social networks to the question of the material lives of Williamsburg's ordinary citizens, a point that we will pursuing further in this discussion.

Interestingly, the same kind of social connection that has been proposed for Brush is much more firmly supported in the case of the other craftsmen, whose material life has been at least partially revealed by archaeological study. Farrier and blacksmith John Draper came to Williamsburg in 1768 in the service of Lord Botetourt. Although he soon left the Governor's service to establish his own business on rented property (what is now Shields Tavern), Botetourt's accounts show that he used Draper's services extensively. But Draper could also take advantage of the war, and he did so, though not on the scale of his competitor on the next block, James Anderson. Perhaps as a result of a growing income during the war years, Draper was able to muster the capital to purchase several lots of his own, where by 1784 Harwood's account book suggests he had a large forge and shop operation. Towards the end of his tenure on his rental property, Draper filled in an abandoned well with both the by-products of his forges and the domestic waste of his household, including a good sample of animal bones and artifacts.

As was the case with John Brush's privy, the contents of Draper's well provide evidence of a reasonably high standard of living during the period when he was just getting established. His situation, however, may be more a function of business acumen and war-time opportunity than a client-patron relationship with a royal governor. Draper's well contained a range of artifactual evidence that testified to his relative prosperity.[4] His ceramic assemblage, for example, included fragments of eleven punch bowls, a tureen, and a fluted porcelain serving dish—all indicative of formal dining. It is Draper's tea and table wares—notably his matching Chinese porcelain saucers, painted in overglaze and exhibit-

ing a trace of gilding, and creamware tea cups and dinner plates—that are especially striking in this regard.

Although these materials reflect Draper's acquisition of wares fashionable in the 1770s, to be used in fine dining and tea-drinking, other archaeological findings from around the corner, behind Dr. Philip Barraud's house, help put Draper's holdings in perspective. A trash pit disturbed by utility trenching during the renovation of the house a few years ago yielded a large part of one of Barraud's dinner services.[5] Barraud was a physician who relocated his practice to Williamsburg from Norfolk about the time Draper moved to his new site on the other side of the Capitol. We can use these two assemblages to draw a contrast between the life style of the up-and-coming craftsman and that of the established professional (Fig. 2).

Draper appeared to prefer porcelain for his tea service, creamware for his dinner service; Barraud had a large set of blue and white porcelain. Sometime late in the 1780s, he discarded his porcelain in favor of an altogether new set of dinner service. From these assemblages we can reconstruct two views of the dinner service used by Williamsburg residents late in the century, Draper employing creamware, Barraud porcelain. This pattern fits nicely with the evidence being accumulated by Ann Smart Martin in her work.[6] Martin has spent several years analyzing the contents of store accounts from late eighteenth-century Virginia in order to document various facets of consumer behavior during this period. As she shows us, porcelain continued to be the most expensive dinner service avail-

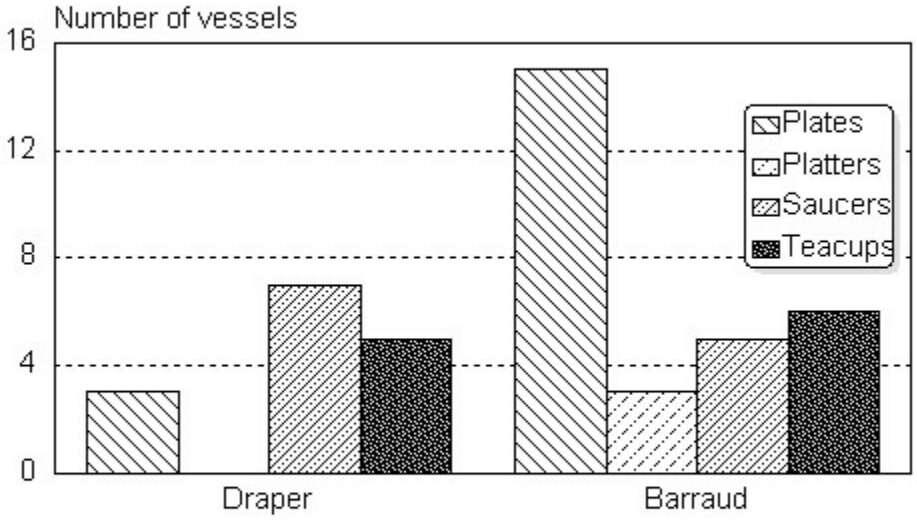

Figure 2. Comparison of Chinese porcelain in the John Draper and Philip Barraud assemblages based on minimum vessel counts. Note the large number of porcelain tablewares in the Barraud assemblage.

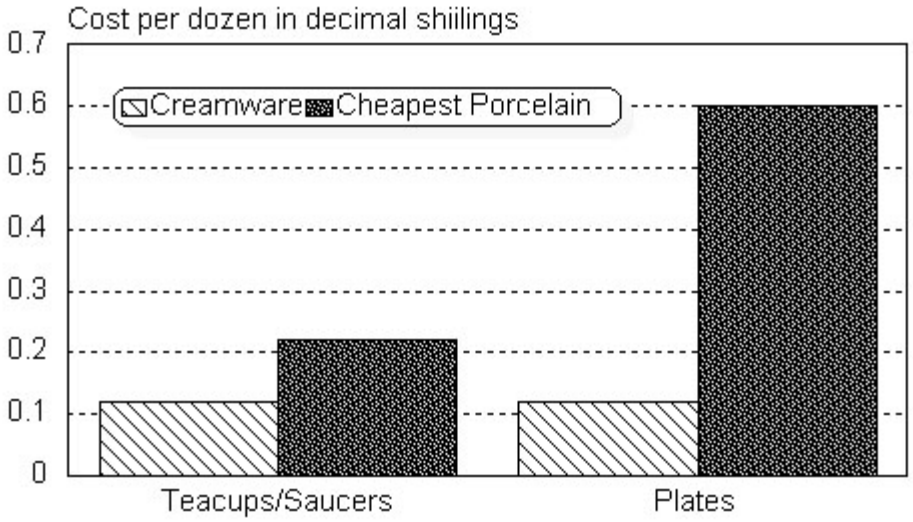

Figure 3. The price of "stepping up": realative retail costs of creamware and porcelain in Virginia, 1772. Courtesy of Ann Smart Martin.

able during this period, and it was not commonly found in stores (Fig. 3). The price of "stepping up," as she calls it, was not insubstantial, and it is perhaps the major factor in the difference to be seen in the ceramic assemblages from the Draper and Barraud sites.

As this comparative example of ceramic holdings in light of store records reveals, there was a difference between what even increasingly prosperous craftsmen could afford relative to those farther up the economic ladder. John Draper's well also contained other evidence of what might possibly be an incipient difference between Williamsburg's common sort and those of higher standing. In addition to the 3000 artifacts, which included 185 different ceramic vessels, Draper's household threw over 5000 animal bones into the well. One thousand of these were identifiable, and thanks to Greg Brown's excellent study of these remains, it is possible to speculate about other emerging difference between people like Draper and their economic and social betters in late eighteenth-century Williamsburg—access to food and other provisions. We base this speculation on the following observation by Greg Brown, in his analysis of the role of the market in a craftsman's life:

> … the market was undoubtedly a major factor in the daily lives of a craftsman such as Draper. On market days—probably daily except for Sunday—Draper's wife or perhaps one of the slaves would go out to make the family's purchases.…

> One could bypass the market entirely by raising one's own stock or purchasing directly from a local planter, but it is unlikely that a craftsman would have found either option appealing. Draper probably had enough room to keep a dairy cow and a few chickens, but hardly enough to keep beef cows, pigs, and sheep … he probably had few social or familial connections with planters in the countryside.[7]

Recently, Joanne Bowen, in a paper entitled "Feeding Urban Communities in the Chesapeake," took up this conclusion and broadened it in to an open-ended question that we would like to further explore.[8] The question can be put as follows: Did John Draper and his fellow craftsmen, along with other common people of the town, depend primarily on the market for meat? If so, is this market dependency in contrast to other segments of the Williamsburg population, especially the elite, and to rural households, who could take advantage of direct access to the primary producers, an access for town-dwellers that was mediated by a long-standing and complex web of social relations.

Thanks to the persistent work of Henry Miller, Joanne Bowen, Greg Brown and others, enough faunal evidence from Chesapeake sites has been assembled to characterize many aspects of the provisioning system as it operated in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[9] Now we are beginning to get a better understanding of the second half of the eighteenth century, although the number of analyzed assemblages dating to this period and later is still awfully small. What is clear, though, is the fact that unlike New England, there is no pronounced shift to commercial animal husbandry in the Chesapeake—a development that zooarchaeologists can identify by what they call kill-off patterns, a demographic profile of animals and the ages at which they were slaughtered. This comparison of kill-off patterns for cattle, contrasting a circa 1760 deposit from Newport, R.I. with mid- eighteenth-century examples from Williamsburg, clearly shows the difference—especially the great importance of dairy production and its by-product veal in New England (Fig. 4).

Bowen has suggested there is some evidence that sheep were raised for the urban market in the Chesapeake. At the Firehouse site in Williamsburg, which we salvaged in the early 1980s during the creation of Berret's Restaurant (some of us remember when it was a gas station), we recovered a large amount of what appears to be butchering waste deposited sometime between 1740 and 1760. Here, the kill-off patterns for sheep/goat (we lump them together because their bones are very often hard to distinguish, although we know most are sheep), is suggestive of the production of young sheep to be marketed as lamb (Fig. 5). Zooarchaeologists tell us that when urban demand for lamb outstrips the demand for mutton or wool, farmers raise

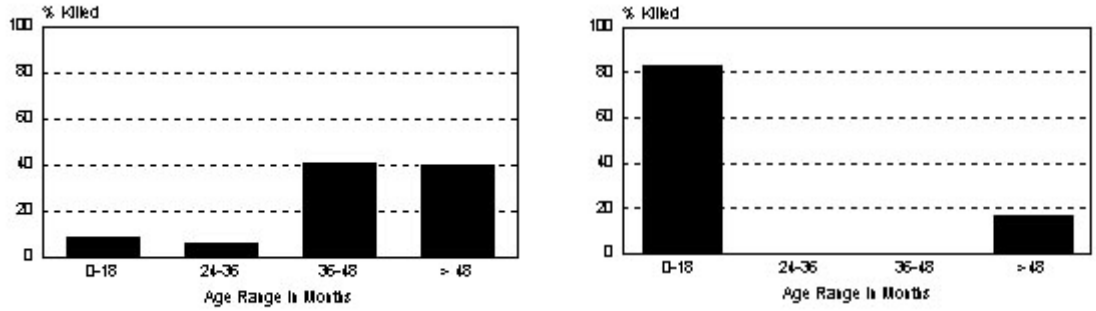

Figure 4. Comparison of kill-off patterns for cattle. Left, John Draper site, circa 1775, Williamsburg (N=50); right, Carr House, circa 1800, Newport, Rhode Island (N=36).

sheep specifically for sale as lamb.[11]

When we turn to another of the analytic techniques of the zooarchaeologist—compiling bone element distributions to determine what cuts of meat were present in a given faunal assemblage, the status of the Firehouse deposit as butchering waste can be seen to be even more pronounced (Fig. 6). The very large proportion of sheep heads appears to be the result of the on-site or near-site disposal of butchering waste by one Benjamin Hansen, a butcher who lived adjacent to the Firehouse site in the middle of the eighteenth century. While there is much evidence to suggest the heads of calves and pigs were considered to be a genuine delicacy in the eighteenth century, documentary sources indicate that sheep heads were less desirable and were thought of as waste.

The combination of the kill-off pattern and bone element distribution for sheep/goat remains from the Firehouse provides tentative support for two interrelated conclusions—first that sheep

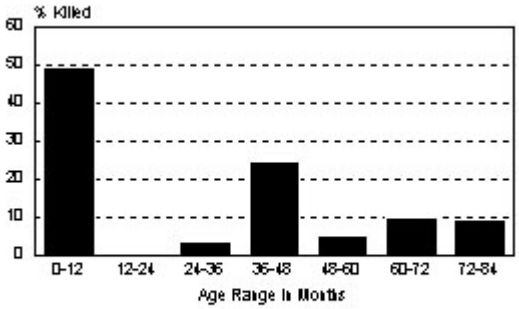

Figure 5. Kill-off pattern for sheep/goats from the Firehouse site, Williamsburg (N=61).

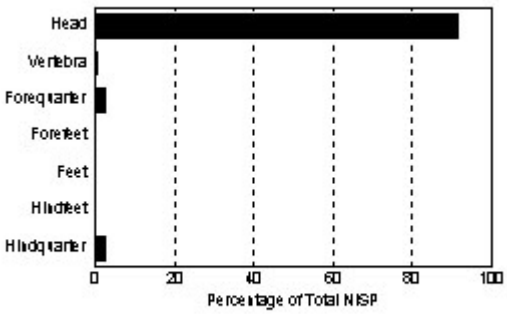

Figure 6. Relative frequencies of anatomical parts for sheep/goats, Firehouse site (N=819).

were beginning to show the impact of a specialized husbandry strategy, and that butchers were beginning to affect the availability of different animal parts within Williamsburg. How can this evidence help to address the above question about access to food and market dependency as these characteristics varied with economic and social position? A return to the Draper assemblage and the frequency of anatomical parts represented by sheep/goats (Fig. 7) indicates that his household may have indeed been dependent on the local market, if we assume that heads were not widely available in this context, but were being discarded as waste by local butchers. By contrast if we look to a similar kind of fill deposit recovered from the Brush-Everard House, and associated with Thomas Everard, like Barraud a professional, as well as former mayor of Williamsburg, we can see that the bone element distribution for sheep/goats is quite different (Fig. 8).

In fact, when compared to a frequency of anatomical parts analysis of sheep recovered from the site of a well-to-do rural plantation owner, Richard Randolph, at Curles Neck Plantation near Richmond (Fig. 9), it can be seen that they are very nearly identical. One explanation for the difference between Draper, Everard, and Randolph, offered by Bowen in her recent paper, is the fact that Williamsburg residents like Everard who had substantial economic means had the same or nearly the same access

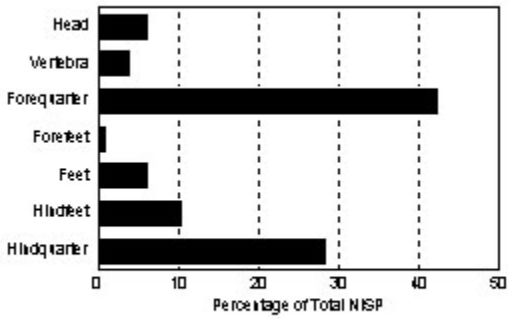

Figure 7. Relative frequencies of anatomical parts for sheep/goats, John Draper well (N=94).

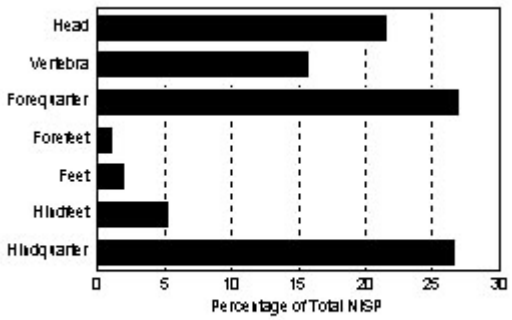

Figure 8. Relative frequencies of anatomical parts for sheep/goats, Thomas Everard site (N=240).

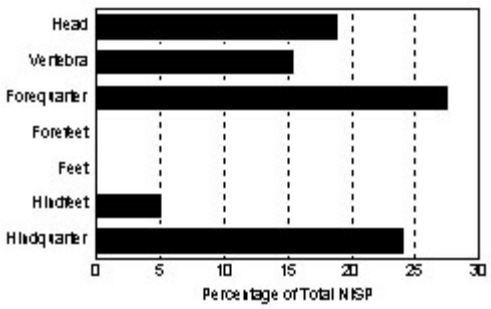

Figure 9. Relative frequencies of anatomical parts for sheep/goats, Curles Neck Plantation (N=58).

to the full range of meat products that was enjoyed by rural planters. Access was gained either through direct ownership of plantations or through their close social connections with such primary producers through kinship or friendship.

These latter faunal data relating to market dependence on the part of craftsmen are admittedly very tentative, but we believe they are, like the artifactual and dietary evidence from John Brush's privy, thought provoking and suggestive of directions for further research in both the archaeological and primary historical records. In contrast to Ann Smart Martin's evidence of convergence in the acquisition of artifacts, we are suggesting that in the last half of the eighteenth century, it may be possible to increasingly recognize divergence among the wealthy and not-so-wealthy town dwellers in their access to food, at least meat products. The foundation's major NEH-funded study of the provisioning of Chesapeake towns will help to clarify this provocative evidence from faunal assemblages presented here. We hope that we have also drawn proper attention to the importance of the social fabric that connected the elite or gentry with their more common contemporaries and the primary role that social relations, not simply economic means, played in shaping the material lives of the latter group.

NOTES

[1] "Archaeological Investigations at the Brush-Everard Site, Williamsburg, Virginia," by Patricia M. Samford (Ms., Colonial Williamsburg Dept. of Archaeological Research, in press); "Archaeological Investigations of the Shields Tavern Site," by Gregory J. Brown, Thomas F. Higgins III, David F. Muraca, S. Kathleen Pepper, and Roni H. Polk (Ms., Colonial Williamsburg Dept. of Archaeological Research, 1990).

[2] *York County Records, Deeds, Orders and Wills* 16:438.

[3] Anne Yentsch, "Minimum Vessel Lists as Evidence of Change in Folk and Courtly Traditions of Food Use, *Historical Archaeology* 24(3):24-53; Anne Yentsch, "Chesapeake Artefacts and Their Cultural Context: Pottery and the Good Domain," *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 25:25-72.

[4] "Archaeological Investigations of the Shields Tavern Site," by Gregory J. Brown, Thomas F. Higgins III, David F. Muraca, S. Kathleen Pepper, and Roni H. Polk (Ms., Colonial Williamsburg Dept. of Archaeological Research, 1990).

[5] Lucretia Gordon, "Dr. Barraud Trash Pit" (Ms., Colonial Williamsburg Dept. of Archaeological Research, 1988).

[6] Ann Smart Martin, "'Dish It Up and Send It to the Table': Foodways at the Local Store," paper presented at the Jamestown

Conference on Foodways, Charlottesville, 1987; Ann Smart Martin, "'To Supply the Real and Imagined Necessities': The Retail Trade in Table and Teawares, Virginia and Maryland, 1750-1810," report submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities, 1988.

[7] Gregory J. Brown, "The Faunal Remains from the John Draper Well: An Investigation in Historic-Period Zooarchaeology," M.A. Thesis, Department of Anthropology, San Francisco State University, 1988.

[8] Joanne Bowen, "Feeding Urban Communities in the Chesapeake," paper presented at the Society for Historical Archaeology meetings in Kingston, Jamaica, 1992.

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[10] Sebastian Payne, "Kill-Off Patterns in Sheep and Goats: The Mandibles from Asvan Kale," in *Anatolian Studies* 23(1973):281-303; J. Mark Maltby, *Faunal Studies on Urban Sites: The Animal Bones from Exeter, 1971-1975* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield University Department of Prehistory and Archaeology, 1979); Melinda Zeder, *Feeding Cities: Specialized Animal Economy in the Ancient Near East* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991).

Session III: Folkways and Formalities

Moderator's Introduction

by Barbara G. Carson

TRADITIONALLY, at least since the nineteenth century, Americans have celebrated ordinary people, the middle class. We admire those who work hard and rise above their origins. Curiously, quick perusal of nearly every contemporary newspaper reveals our inability to agree on a definition, or aside from income level, even to identify a few essential characteristics of the middle class. Pundits seem reluctant to label people as "common" or "ordinary." And as individuals, we who rank neither at the top nor the bottom of our society, seem unsure of our own identity and often fail to support our best collective interests.

Given the confusion over modern definitions, there should be little surprise that the effort to examine ordinary people of the past poses some particular problems. This conference challenges us to figure out how much of that past we might come to know and how best to think about and organize our research and interpretive efforts.

Thomas Anburey, a British soldier in Virginia in 1779, observed the population, black and white, divided the white portion into three classes, and attempted to identify their characteristics. He wrote that "gentlemen of the best families and fortunes … have had liberal educations, possess a thorough knowledge of the world, with great ease and freedom in their manners and conversation." White people at the bottom were said to

> possess that impertinent curiousity, so very disagreeable and troublesome to strangers, … Their amusements are the same with those of the middling sort, with the addition of boxing matches, in which they display such barbarity, as fully marks their innate ferocious disposition.

However, they tempered their undesirable behavior by being "generous, kind, and hospitable." In between the two extremes Anburey found a "second class" comprising "nearly half the [white] inhabitants" who were "such a strange mixture of characters, and of such various descriptions of occupations … that it is difficult to ascertain their exact criteria and leading feature." Like those in the lowest rank, they, too, were

> hospitable, generous, and friendly; but for want of a proper knowledge of the world, and a good education, as well as from their continual intercourse with their slaves, over whom they are accustioned to tyrannize, with all their good qualities, they are rude, ferocious, and haughty, much attached to gaming and dissipation, particularly horse-racing and cock-

> fighting; in short, they form a most unaccountable combination of qualities and principles directly opposite and contradictory, … many possessing elegant accomplishments and savage brutality, and notwithstanding all this inconsistency of character, numbers are valuable members of the community, and very few deficient in intellectual faculties.[1]

Recently and less colorfully, two history museums have defined the "ordinary" person of the eighteenth century as someone below the elite but with enough properties to support a standard of living above the minimum requirements of subsistence.[2] The criteria eliminate a large percentage of the total population, approximately half of whom were enslaved African Americans and at least another 10 percent who were transients or poor laborers. Even "ordinary" people were more fortunate than most because they could make some choices about their own lives. They had the possibility of owning land and commanding someone else's labor. In good years discretionary income gave them the opportunity to pay for a little education or purchase consumer goods. Based principally on rank in a hierarchy of ownership of land, slaves, and personal property, this economic definition points to standards of living and to differences among elites, the poor, and those in-between. Obviously, when read chronologically, the data from tax and probate records show changes over time and, when sorted geographically, reveal differences between rural and urban patterns.

The agenda here is to identify common people by looking at their possessions, their behavior, and the impressions they made on others who judged their goods and manners. Can we separate "folkways" from "formalities"? Can we today learn who was "folk" and who was something else? How might standards for polite and vulgar behavior have changed from 1700 to 1830? Did attitudes and judgments shift to reflect new practices?

William Kelso looks at archaeological evidence from sites whose occupants can be identified as elites, as modest but free tenants or artisans, and as slaves. From the seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century he associates distinctive features of dwellings and equipment for food consumption and other activities with each group. In the end he suggests that even the richness of data dug from the ground tells little about how people used their homes and furnishings. He can see that the consumer revolution put greater numbers of ordinary people into houses with more rooms and furnished them with more goods, but he can not determine whether they changed their behavior accordingly. In their new parlors did they adopt genteel ways with recently purchased tea cups?

Betty Leviner's work with a unique Williamsburg document, a day book that widow and tavernkeeper Anne Pattison kept from 1744 to 1749, further empha-

sizes the difficulty of moving from knowledge of possessions to understanding their use. She knows that Mrs. Pattison served meals to all sorts of people from gentlemen to slaves. The differentiated spaces of her tavern and the range of wares she owned indicate the possibility of nuancing service according to social class. However, Mrs. Pattison doesn't tell where she and her customers drew the lines that separated elites from middling from common. How did Mrs. Pattison judge her neighbors or the strangers who came through the tavern door? What can we learn of her vision of herself and her own awareness of life's limitations or aspirations? Although questions like these produce answers largely in the speculative realm, they are worth asking because they encourage close reading of the limited direct evidence we do have and may stimulate new approaches to our uses of historical objects.

Two of the best known primary sources from the early Chesapeake help focus the search for the identity of common people on behavior and the judgments rendered by others. The first comes from the 1744 travel journal of Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton, who wanted company on the road to Philadelphia, offered lemon punch to three travelers going his way. The morning refreshment induced them to delay their departure and wait for him to eat his breakfast. Without this reciprocal gesture of one favor offered in return for another, the men might not have deferred to the gentleman's wishes.

Hamilton called them "men" not "gentlemen," and although he recorded full names for all, he omitted "mister" as a courtesy of address.[3] In brief sketches of their speech, clothing, and body language Hamilton turned names into individuals. Timothy Smith looked like a Quaker, but his speech, although slow and solemn, did not include "thee's and thou's." Thomas Howard, who spoke bluntly and awkwardly, "bestowed much panegyrick upon his own behavior and conduct." From this comment a modern reader infers that Hamilton's formal manners made Howard conscious of his own folkways.

The main character in this little tavern drama was William Morison. That morning the landlady had assessed his dress, "a greasy jacket and breeches and a dirty worsted cap," and behavior, "heavy, forward, clownish." She acted accordingly and gave him a ploughman's breakfast, scraps of cold veal. Hamilton did more than judge Morison's behavior. Analyzing it, he latched onto the clear contradiction between Morison's aspiration to be treated better and the reality of his "rough spun, forward" manners and "natural boorishness." To inspire higher regard in his companions Morison talked about his financial worth and his ownership of better clothing and tea things. His bragging was not successful because his speech and behavior belied these pretensions to

gentility. His second strategy was to try to turn vulgarity into virtue by apologizing for his misbehavior and labeling it frank, free, plain, homely, and honest.

Hamilton had no illusions about Morison; he pegged him as low life. In the hierarchical world of 1744 dress, speech, and body language worked against Morison. When he was away from home, they meant strangers would perceive and treat him like a common man. Hamilton, a physician, seems to have viewed Morison clinically, as an interesting specimen whose features he wished to dissect and whose development he wished to observe. He may have sensed that Morison was not content with the social position to which presumably he had been born. Did Hamilton see the ranks of society as defined by birth and maintained by inherited wealth and distinctive behavior? As an educated professional, did he scorn efforts of others to improve themselves? Did he consider the possibility that one could learn to be a gentleman? If so, what did he think aspiring persons needed in terms of wealth, material possessions, and social know-how? I do not think Hamilton was poking fun at Morison's aspirations. Just possibly he viewed him as a new form of common man.

Philip Fithian, tutor to the Carter children at Nomini Hall, wrote the second of the two well-known descriptions of behavior thirty years later in 1774. One July afternoon a tobacco inspector dined with the family. Fithian called him "mister" but forgot to add his surname. The tutor decided that the inspector liked his liquor better than the toasts because "in Hast, & with fear" he "drank like an Ox." The sketch may be accurate, but the judgment seems harsh, especially coming from one who was well aware that his own social skills were newly acquired. In February of that same year Fithian had expressed relief that happily he had "the ceremonies at Table … at last all by heart."[4]

As historians we will probably never know what the others around that July dinner table thought of the tobacco inspector and his drinking behavior. Nor will we know whether they carefully charted Fithian's progress as he learned to give a good performance at dinner. We do know that the Carters invited the boorish tobacco inspector to dine with them—at least once. Maybe he never came again. Maybe other considerations—his position as inspector, for instance—were more important than his lack of experience and poor performance over toasts.

This discussion of common people, their property, and manners began with a statement about modern American confusion over the characteristics of class. The problem has existed for over two hundred years and is not likely to be solved. The languages of human social behavior and of objects are easy to understand if social, economic, and political hierarchies are clearly marked. However, in the eighteenth century

Americans came to value individual freedom, political equality, social mobility, and the dignity of labor. These important ideas bolstered consensus in a democratic republic and came into conflict with traditional notions that distinguished people in a social hierarchy. Those values that emphasized equality took shape at precisely the time when industrialization made possible a consumer revolution. If one had sufficient income, purchasing goods was a simple matter compared to the lengthy process of developing skills to use them. The highly visible display of materialism came to overshadow more subtle signs of knowledge and genteel behavior. Together the concept of political equality and the culture of consumption scrambled meanings in the languages of things and manners.

Various studies of colonial Chesapeake society argue that social groups defined by office holding, wealth, and material possessions remained fixed from generation to generation. People inherited status and conformed rigidly and consistently to timely patterns of group identity. Other studies assert that after the Revolution, members of the gentry lost their traditional positions. Members of the old elite may have remained on top of a social ladder, but newcomers effectively challenged their economic and political control.[5]

Thomas Anburey thought that before the Revolution the "levelling principal was not so prevalent in Virginia, as in the other provinces" thereafter it "gained great ground." He described the behavior of "three country peasants" who came to Tuckahoe on the James River north of Richmond to arrange to have some flour ground at the mill. They

> entered the room where the Colonel and his company were sitting, took themselves chairs, drew near the fire, and began spitting, pulling off their country boots all over mud, and then opened their business.

After they left, someone commented on the "great liberties they took." Colonel Randolph replied that "the spirit of independency was converted into equality, and every one who bore arms, esteemed himself upon a footing with his neighbour." He summed up the matter "No doubt, each of these men conceives himself, in every respect, my equal."[6] They may have keenly felt a sense of self-worth, but it alone could not immediately transform these rustics into gentlemen.

If architecture, furnishings, clothing, and polite manners emphasized distinctions and were tools with which the traditional elite reinforced their position, to what extent did people overlook differences between genteel and vulgar possessions and behavior so they could live and work together? Did new economic and political leaders acquire the same kinds of goods and learn to behave like the old elite or did they in some ways change the signifiers of their new status? What aspects of the design and use of

houses, costume, and other material possessions functioned in society to connect people? What standards of behavior were widely observed? Correspondingly, what aspects of these same categories of property and performance established barriers and identified smaller groups within the larger population?[7]

In 1808 Margaret Bayard Smith, who lived in Washington, D.C. and whose husband was the editor of *The National Intelligencer*, entertained two senators to tea. She did not judge their performance with tea drinking, but she did write to her sister about their astonishment at hearing piano music. "I believe it was the first time they had seen or heard such a thing." They examined the keyboard and the "internal machinery" and seemed to suppose that the "sweet melody was drawn by chance or random from this strange thing." Their curiosity and lack of comprehension fascinated Mrs. Smith who admonished her sister not to think these good men fools,"far from it, they are sensible men and useful citizens, but they have lived in the backwoods, that's all."[8] Although the social order may have been uncertain how to respond to such untutored individuals, the American political order had to make room for them.

People were eager to learn. Books teaching formal manners and promoting social skills proliferated at the end of the eighteenth century and reached avalanche proportions by the 1830s. Authors tried to give precise instructions about what to do in social situations, but few made extravagant claims for the probability of their readers' success. "Although these remarks will not be sufficient in themselves to make you a gentleman, yet they will enable you to avoid any glaring impropriety, and do much to render you easy and confident in society."[9]

The earl of Chesterfield, who wrote the most influential book about behavior to appear in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, wrote that manners are

> personal, local, and temporal; they are modes which vary, and owe their existence to accidents, whim, and humor; all the sense and reason in the world would never point them out, nothing but experience, observation, and what is called knowledge of the world, can possibly teach them.… Good sense bids one to be civil and endeavor to please; though nothing but experience and observation can teach one the means, properly adapted to time, place, and persons.[10]

In our modern effort to understand changes in behavior of common people in the Chesapeake, Chesterfield's caution needs careful consideration. We must not collapse the diverse behavior of three or four generations, several socio-economic groups, and people from urban and rural places into an unchanging time frame, an undifferentiated region, or a homogenous cultural agenda. We need to look

for nuances. This is not a prescription for avoiding generalities, simply an appeal for watchfulness.

The unlikely topic of table forks offers us a glimpse into the ways that issues of social class, political position, the distribution of objects, and formal behavior were caught up together to create class confusion in the early nineteenth century. In March 1820 Louisa Catherine Adams, daughter-in-law of one president and wife of a man who would become another, recorded in her diary that a prominent Virginia politician, John Randolph (of Roanoke) had attended a dinner party where his place was set with "a four pronged silver fork." Mr. Randolph declared that he knew a citizen who said he would never "vote for a man as President of the United States who makes use of such forks."[11]

In this brief account an unidentified voter has turned a domestic or social tool into a criteria for making a political judgment. How are we to understand Randolph's statement? In 1820 were table forks made entirely of silver, from tine to handle, seen as more than an economic luxury? By commenting on forks were people also commenting on behavior? Were there recognizable differences in table manners that we might label as "folkways" or "formalities"? What did silver forks have to do with decisions about who was fit to be President?

Forks, their materials and shapes and the ways they were used, attracted attention in the decades between roughly 1800 and 1870.[12] Forks are ideal for distinguishing formal ways from folkways. First, their absence or presence implies a specific kind of behavior. Either one eats with one's fingers or with a utensil. Spoons and knives did not allow one to eat an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century meal and keep one's hands clean. Forks made that refinement possible. Second, mealtime behavior differed according to the shape of the fork one used. People held and used straight, two-tined wire forks and the gently curving, three- or four-tined, all-silver forks differently. Since the straight ones speared food but could not lift it, people carried food to their mouths with knives. A young lady of Washington's prominent Van Ness family was observed eating "very much melted ice-cream with a great steel knife!"[13] Curving forks may not have worked as well as knives for eating ice cream, but their shape was well-suited to lifting motions. Knives no longer had to lift as well as cut.

Forks, which show up in archaeological sites and in historical records like inventories and store accounts, can serve as proxies for changing behavior. The lifting motion which today most of us use is possible only with a fork with a curving profile. These utensils were generally made entirely of silver and were costly. They were rare in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and only began their gradual increase in popularity in the United States in the beginning of the nineteenth century. At this time the

graceful lifting motion so dependent upon their shape was an elite or formal and practiced behavior.

The presence or absence of table forks and the choice of two different types created two great social divides and three categories of behavior. In the eighteenth century finger and spoon eaters were still numerous. Those who put both straight two-tined forks and knives directly into their mouths were growing toward the majority. A tiny percentage of the population cut with their knives and ate with curved forks. By the 1820s economic prosperity and higher production levels put forks into most people's hands, but they were the two-tined types that made nearly everyone a knife eater. All-silver forks were still rare and much noticed by guests at fancy dinner parties. They denoted a particular form of behavior and status which some Americans, like John Randolph's unnamed voter, considered inappropriate for those who held high office in a democratic republic. By the 1870s electro-plating and new methods of shaping the tines of iron forks gave the curving shape wider distribution. Many people were able to give up the practice of putting knives into their mouths. And silver forks lost their political significance.

By the time of Jackson's presidency and certainly by 1840, folkways were powerful enough to be the accepted route to political, if not social success. William Henry Harrison ran a winning campaign with hard cider and log cabin badges, songs, and parade floats. The images were meant to signify his origins among and sympathies with common people. One hundred years earlier, when William Morison spoke up before Alexander Hamilton and claimed that vulgar behavior was frank, free, and honest, neither the gentleman nor the common man could have envisioned these changes. In the American experience distinctions between folkways and formalities and attitudes toward the polite and the vulgar are frequently complex and contradictory. Although all too often our citizenry does not live up to our supposedly cherished ideals, as one observer phrased the situation,"in a land of universal equality, the line of admission must often lie so close to that of exclusion, that to split the difference may require fine tools."[14]

NOTES

[1] *Travels Through the Interior Parts of America: In a Series of Letters by an Officer* [Thomas Anburey]. London 1789, Vol. II, pp. 371-375.

[2] The National Colonial Farm of the Accokeek Foundation, Accokeek, MD, National Endowment for the Humanities

Planning Grant, 1989-90, GM-23992. Yorktown Victory Center, Yorktown, VA, Various research reports for Farmstead project, 1990-93.

[3] Carl Bridenbaugh, ed., *Gentleman's Progress: The Itineratium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1948), pp. 13-15.

[4] Hunter Dickinson Farish, ed., *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion, 1773-1774* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1957), pp. 138 and 67.

[5] Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1982); Jan Lewis, *The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Dell Upton, *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1986).

[6] *Travels Through the Interior Parts of America*, Vol. II, p. 370.

[7] Dell Upton,"Form and User: Style, Mode, Fashion, and the Artifact," in Gerald L. Picius, ed., *Living in a Material World: Canadian and American Approaches to Material Culture* (St. John's Newfoundland: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1991), pp 156-169. See also Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992).

[8] Margaret Bayard Smith, *The First Forty Years of Washington Society, Portrayed by the Family Letters of Mrs Samuel Harrison Smith*, ed. Galliard Hunt (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1906), pp. 52-53.

[9] [Charles William Day], *Etiquette: Or, A Guide to the Uses of Society with a Glance at Bad Habits . . . by Count Alfred D'Orsay* (New York: Wilson & Co., 1843), p. 52.

[10] Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield, *Lord Chesterfield's Letters to His Son*, vol. 2 (London: M. Walter Dunne, 1901), pp. 119-120.

[11] Louisa Catherine Adams, Diary, March 30, 1820, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

[12] Barbara G. Carson, *Ambitious Appetites: Dining Behavior and Patterns of Consumption in Federal Washington* (Washington, D.C.: The American Institute of Architects Press, 1990), pp. 59-73; John F. Kasson, *Rudeness & Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), pp. 182-214.

[13] Margaret Hall, *The Aristocratic Journey: Being the Outspoken Letters of Mrs. Basil Hall Written during a Fourteen Months' Sojourn in America, 1827-1828*, ed. Una Pope-Hennessy (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1931), p. 182.

[14] Basil Hall, *Travels in North America in the Years 1827-28* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Carey, 1829), Vol. III, pp. 13-14.

Archaeology of Chesapeake Common Folks:
Artifacts of Definition and Change Among the Rich and Poor at Kingsmill and Monticello, 1650-1810

by William M. Kelso

THE title of this article needs some explanation. First, for the purposes of this study, in the seventeenth century the greater Chesapeake Region extends from the immediate Bay shoreline west to the fall line of the major rivers. In the eighteenth century, I extend the Chesapeake region to a western boundary at the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. I justify that expansion because I think the Tidewater plantation-based society was transplanted practically verbatim to the West. That is not saying that there were not extreme differences in the economic profiles of each region. Rather it is saying that in the eighteenth century the material culture of people at each level of the social and economic scale was likely more similar to than it was different from the shore of the Bay to the Blue Ridge headwaters of the rivers that fed it. Second, this study is going to attempt to describe what has been a very neglected subject, the archaeological remnants of the life style of poor free people. And third, this study is also about the archaeology of enslaved African Americans as well as the archaeology of the very rich. It is, I think, only through comparison of all levels of early American society that we can begin to create, with any precision, the yardstick with which we can measure quality and change of the life style of common people, the purpose of this conference. To do this, I will draw on data from Tidewater sites of the seventeenth and eighteenth century at an area near Williamsburg known as Kingsmill and to sites of my greater Chesapeake region at Jefferson's home, Monticello, near Charlottesville.

Prior to the commercial development of the 3600-acre area known as Kingsmill by the Anheuser-Busch Corporation, seven major plantation sites ranging in date from 1619 to about 1800 were excavated in the 1970s under my overall direction assisted by field directors David Hazzard, Nicholas Luccketti, Alain Outlaw, Fraser Neiman and Beverly Straub.[1] Two of those sites are particularly relevant to the earliest century of this study. During the second half of the seventeenth century, a leaseholder or tenant, presumably then a free poor person, lived on a section rather ironically known as Utopia. At the same time and nearby, Colonel Thomas Pettus, one of the twelve councilors of Governor Berkeley, was developing his 1200-acre

Littletown tobacco plantation. These two sites then present evidence of the very rich and probably the very poor.

While historical records say next to nothing about the Utopians, no family names or size of the population for example, the archaeological evidence that survived subsequent plowing was extensive. Soil stains left from the installation and decay of the major timber framing supports of earthfast building construction and the in-filling of a brick-lined basement revealed, after excavation, the floor plan of a modestly-sized two-room house (Fig. 1). While the Utopians had the means to add the brick-lined basement after the original construction, still the relatively smaller sized postholes at either end of the building suggest that only wooden chimney hoods, and not ground based masonry chimneys served their fires.

A considerable number of artifacts were recovered from the cellar occupation soil layers, from what appears to have been post house-fire levels and the periodic in-filling of a nearby eroded well shaft. While records failed to establish the precise dates of occupation, stylistically the artifacts suggested a chronology between 1660, the date of a bottle, and 1710, the date of tobacco pipe fragments found in the cellar and well fill. Quantitative analysis of the entire ceramic assemblage, however, recovered from the sub-plowzone features as well as from much of the plowzone, indicated a tighter chronology. Use of Stanley South's bracketing technique, that is by determining the dates when most of the pottery types of known manufacture date could have been in circulation at the same time, suggested only a thirty-year occupation span for the Utopian household, 1670-1700.[2] The collection also strongly suggested that the site was hardly a "Utopia" at all, as misshapen kiln seconds of Virginia made lead-glazed folk pottery from the Challis Pottery four miles upstream were well in evidence along with open-fire cured red coarseware thought to be of either American Indian or African American manufacture (Fig. 2). Utopia also only included, besides the folk pottery, the small insubstantial house and a well, a smaller yet single outbuilding, and a roughly fenced garden.

Compare Utopia to the Littletown site where the Councilor Thomas Pettus (while also building in earthfast manner) clearly had a good deal more on the landscape, at least three outbuildings enclosing a farmyard behind an ever-expanding rambling house that eventually could be considered of manorial proportions, over three times the space of the Utopia house. Two and possibly three massive chimney footings were found within the house floor plan, significantly all built of brick. Brick too lined the cellar, but Pettus also installed a brick-lined dairy room with tile floor and nearby a brick-lined well.

The quality of the artifacts from Pettus, in stark contrast to Utopia include

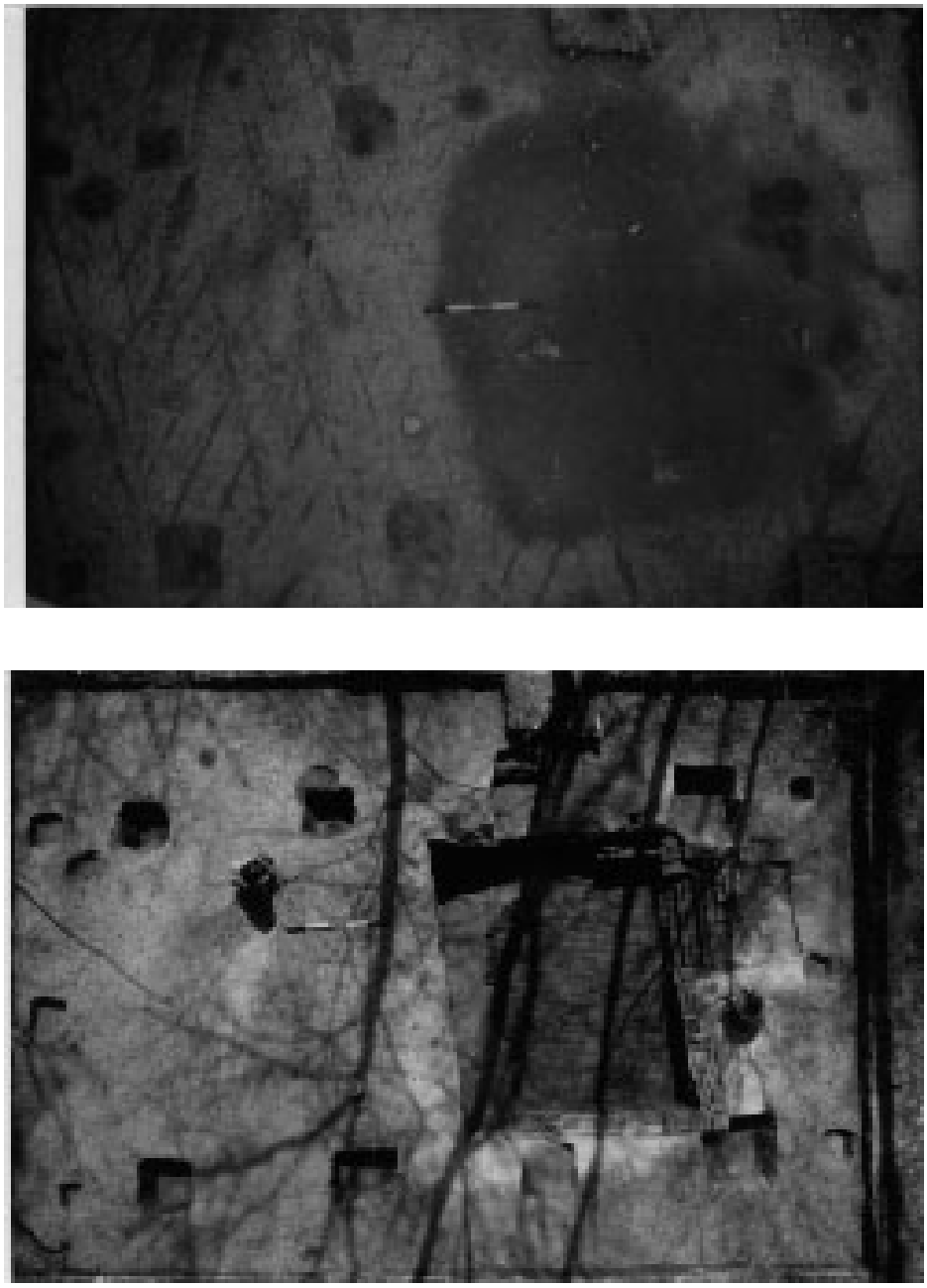

Figure 1. Overhead view of the Utopia house site at Kingsmill before (top) and after (bottom) excavation showing major structural postholes for the earthfast construction of the main house, end chimney hoods and the partially robbed brick-lined basement.

Figure 2. All pottery recovered during excavations of Utopia homelot, delftware (foreground) to colonoware (background).

enameled mirror handle, initialed wine bottle seal, book clasp, decorative brass stirrup, leaded casement windows, and silver coins like the earliest circulating coin yet found in Virginia, a Spanish ½ Reale minted in the period 1474-1504.

But what did rich for Pettus and poor for the Utopians mean in more measurable terms? Beverly Straub, Merry Outlaw, and I think ceramics from the two sites give a clue.[3] Of course, it would be silly to suggest that ceramics were the most important of the "things" poor or rich people had. But in quantity, ceramics, as usual, make up the bulk of the types of objects found on the sites, their place and date of manufacture is knowable and perhaps they are representative of other things of unknown date and origin or those things that don't survive in the ground. In any event, of course Pettus the councilor had much more of everything than Utopia folks but longer occupation by more people could account for that. However, a study of the relative percentages of the total number of vessels of different ceramic types ranked by estimated value is a totally different story: Pettus is far ahead in refined ceramics and has the only Chinese porcelain while

the Utopians clearly rely on the local folk varieties (coarseware and colonoware) (Fig. 3). Based on the supposition that poorer people usually ate stew that required relatively more bowls than plates (or a greater percentage of hollowware to flatware), another comparison of the two sites shows a marked difference between Pettus and Utopia, indeed more bowls than plates at Utopia and the opposite at Pettus (Fig. 4).

The relatively different life styles of the Pettuses and the Utopians is reflected in a number of other artifacts besides ceramics. One outstanding example from the study of the faunal remains seems to be especially indicative of rich and poor. The food bones show a distinct difference in the management of domestic animals.[4] For instance, they show that Pettus consistently had his hogs butchered when they were between the ages of 22-42 months, which must be saying that stock were kept in pens where record could be made of their ages. In contrast to that the Utopian specimens showed no particular pattern in slaughtering ages. It seems the Utopians must have let their hogs wander freely in the woods where they would kill whatever age animal wandered past at butchering time. Lack of the means to monitor and perhaps to fence and feed the animals at Utopia seems to be indicated.

The archaeological differences between the quality of life at Kingsmill between the eighteenth-century rich and poor seems equally as clear as it is in the earlier sites. The disparity is more architectural, however, and by the 1700s there is an established new poor class to share the lower rungs of the scale—slaves.

The land at Kingsmill in the 1700s was controlled by a succession of relatively wealthy native-born individuals including three generations of Lewis Burwells and two generations of Brays. Both families, the Burwells on the western half of the property and the Brays on the east, sculpted the Kingsmill landscape into Georgian architectural formality by mid-century. Their pretentious houses dominated that landscape. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, James Bray built a double-pile story-and-a-half brick house with flanking outbuildings and gardens on a commanding ridge overlooking the James River just east of the then-leveled Pettus house. By 1750 Lewis Burwell II seems to have built a slightly scaled-down copy of the Governor's Palace and grounds a mile to the east of the Bray house. Only foundations remained of these two mansions archaeologically, but the footings together with related architectural artifacts and the landscape designs left little doubt that the organic earthfast farmhouses of seventeenth-century Kingsmill owners were not to suit the means and life styles of the eighteenth-century native sons.

While seventeenth-century earthfast construction was not for the eighteenth-century elite, it did carry over into the next century as one of a variety of con-

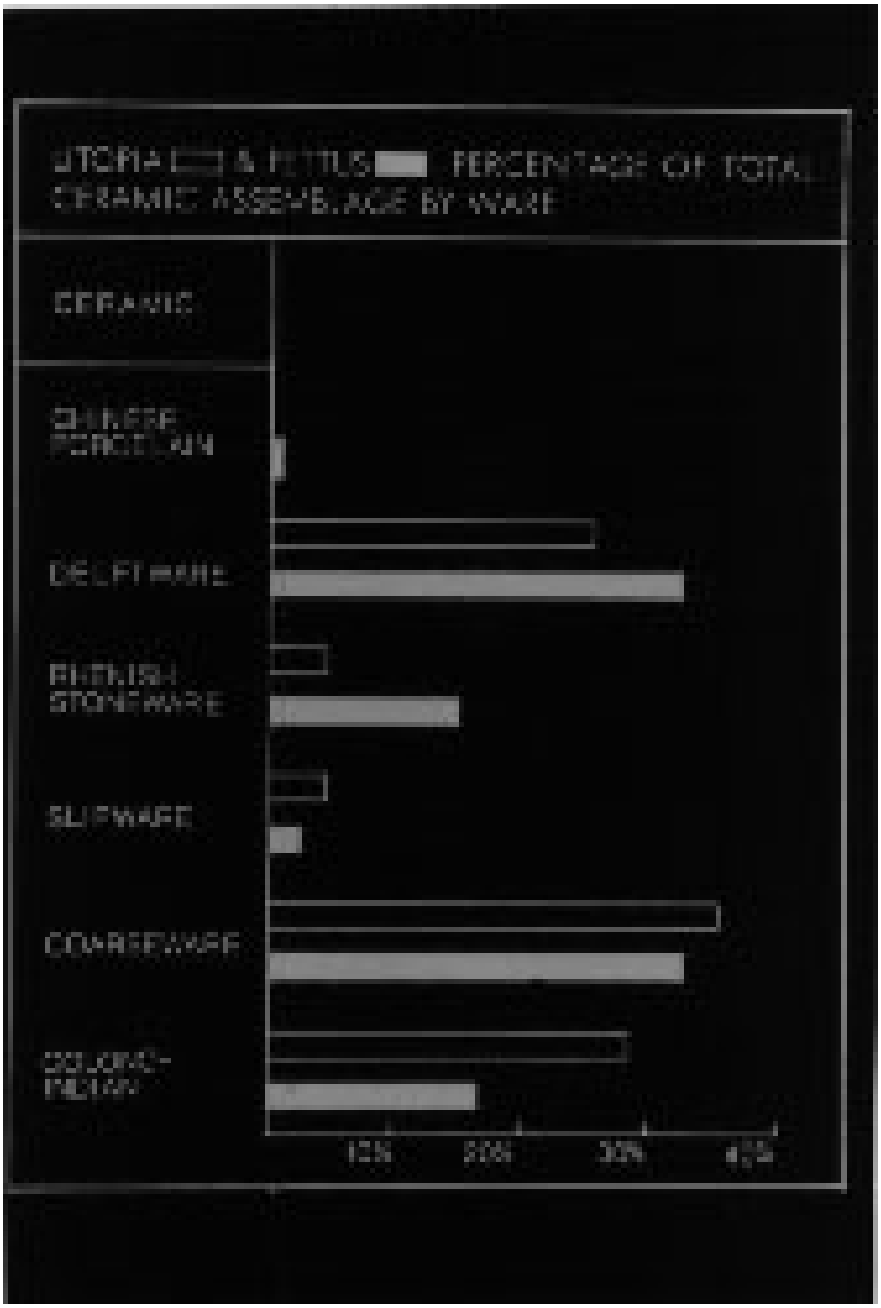

Figure 3. Comparison of minimum number of ceramic vessels by type from Utopia and Pettus sites, Kingsmill.

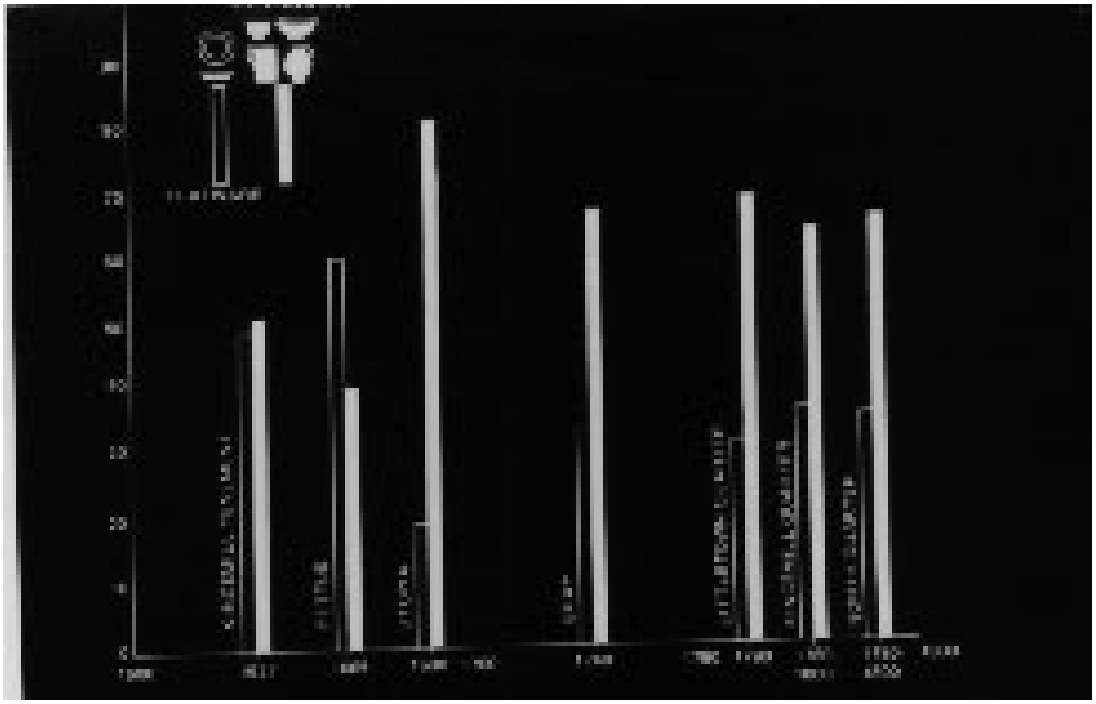

Figure 4. Comparison of flatware to hollowware from Pettus, Utopia, and other Kingsmill sites.

struction techniques used to build slave quarters. At what must have been a fieldhands' quarter on the Bray Plantation, excavations revealed small vernacular earthfast house footprints, earthfast buildings with small unlined root cellars and such insubstantial fireplaces that evidence of them failed to penetrate the subsoil. Apparently these buildings had wooden chimneys or fireplace hoods as well (Fig. 5).

A much larger slave settlement west of the Burwell plantation revealed a great number of unlined root cellars surrounded by the robbed brick foundations of a sizable core building eventually expanded by about one-third more floor space. A concentration of burned clay divided by the ghost of an H-shaped chimney foundation indicated that this quarter had a substantial double central fireplace heating the original core section of the building (see Fig. 5).

Another site, either a slave quarter or even possibly the settlement of free people on the north side of the Kingsmill property revealed slight hints of the masonry foundation of a small two-room dwelling. These structural remains included two root cellars located in each of two rooms divided by a masonry wall (see Fig. 5).

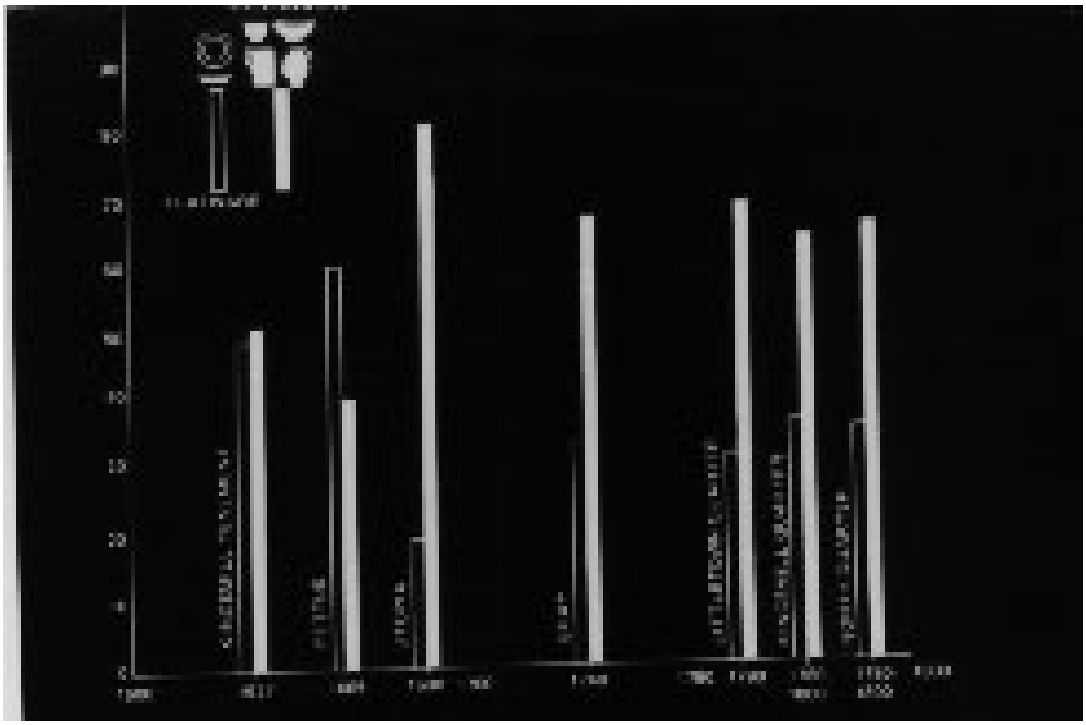

Figure 5. Slave settlements at Kingsmill.

Each of these sites produced considerable artifact assemblages suggesting certain patterns in the life style of slaves. An unusual quantity and variation in quality of buttons was common to all three sites. According to oral tradition among ex-slaves, women often made heavy quilts from clothes discarded by the master's family, the cutting and sewing done at night in front of the hearth in the quarters. It follows that the fabrication of quilts from the old shirts and coats might result in the ultimate discard near the hearth of a great number and variety of buttons rendered useless by the new use for the cloth. It would have been convenient to throw the rejected buttons into the cellars or by the same token many could have filtered down into the cellars through cracks between the floor boards. Of course, slaves also made most of their own clothes, and the buttons may mark that activity as well.

Another pattern in the slave quarter assemblages was the presence of refined ceramics including Chinese porcelain. Yet like the people at seventeenth-century Utopia, the North Quarter site and the other slave sites to a certain extent used locally made, perhaps African inspired, colono-ware. Still British pottery and particularly teaware was found in

abundance on all the sites. It is interesting that it appears that everyone, including slaves, had free access to English ceramics and especially teaware. Fig. 4 shows how the predominance of certain ceramic forms changed between centuries, serving and teawares taking over for the coarser storage vessels through time. Obviously late eighteenth-century English industrialization and the paternalism of slavery brought some consumer goods to practically everyone. Among the teaware, enough of polychrome handpainted English Staffordshire pearlware was found to suggest that towards the end of the eighteenth century, that pottery type and style may have become a folk element in the lexicon of poor people (see below).

How much these eighteenth-century Kingsmill patterns of life on the bottom apply to the Greater Chesapeake, and whether or not the leveling effects of the American Revolution show up archaeologically, can be tested by the last twelve years of research at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello.[5] Even though the famous and unique Jefferson house design can hardly be taken as typical, there is nonetheless a profound change in the buildings of the elite in the post-Revolutionary years. Obviously at least one house design of an important governmental official had come a long way from the timber farmhouse types of a Thomas Pettus. But Jefferson himself told us in no uncertain terms what most Virginians called home:

> The private buildings [in Virginia] are very rarely constructed of stone or brick, much the greater proportion being of scantling and boards, plastered with lime. It is impossible to devise things more ugly, uncomfortable and happily more perishable. There are two or three plans, on one of which, according to its size, most of the houses in the state are built.…[6]

The "common plan" was almost certainly the "Virginia house": the story-and-a-half one-room-deep frame dwellings with end chimneys so commonly associated with "colonial" style today. And Jefferson knew the "Virginia house" well. Excavations at his birthplace Shadwell indicates that some variation of the "Virginia house" was the first building Jefferson may have known.

Jefferson went on to say that "the poorest people build huts of logs, laid horizontally in pens"[7] and it is to the sites of these at Monticello that we can turn for comparison. Maps and other records pinpoint where the white Monticello blacksmith William Stewart and briefly the carpenter Elisha Watkins and their families lived from 1801-1810, located some 1000 feet down the mountain from the Monticello house.[8] Excavations there revealed a rather puzzling foundation (Fig. 6). The house had been built on a steep hillside so that the forces of erosion seem to have damaged what little of the stone footing had not been removed when the building was pulled down. Nonetheless, what was left sug-

Figure 6. Overhead view of William Stewart site at Monticello showing surviving section of stone foundation wall, end corner chimney foundations, wood-lined cellar (center left) and brick paving (upper center).

gested that the house was expanded from an 18-foot-square original unit to at least 18 by 36 feet with stone and brick chimneys at each end. The original section had a wood-lined cellar near the hearth. Since the foundation stood on such sloping ground, it is certain that the building had a raised wooden floor. Brick paving laid along the north wall in the middle of the north foundation was also found, possibly the base to a stove. While the building's exact appearance is problematic, it is probable that this is something more than a larger version of Jefferson's log huts of the poorest people.

In contrast to Stewart, Jefferson's domestic and artisan enslaved laborers lived in a variety of quarters ranging in scale from rooms in the basement of the house, to stone and brick rooms in the south terrace, to either stone outbuildings or "log huts" along an approach road known as Mulberry Row. But for more than one half of the Jefferson Monticello era (1769-1826), a good number of the slaves lived on Mulberry Row, most of which was investigated archaeologically in the 1980s. The site of one of the wooden quarters labeled "o" on an insurance map of 1796 was particularly informative (Fig. 7). Jefferson described the building in some detail as "a servants house 20½ x 12' of wood with a wooden chimney and earth floor…"[9] The digging defined the three foundation walls that survived, marked by roughly aligned stones. Near the edge of the road at what must have been the northwest corner of the building, irregular brick paving contemporary with the house also survived.

Figure 7. Overhead view of slave quarter "o," Monticello, showing brick (left) and stone (right) lined root cellars, stone foundation, and brick paving (lower right).

Excavations inside the line of footing stones uncovered a backfilled stone-lined cellar as well as a small rectangular brick "box" (small root cellar) centered on the interior of the eastern end of the foundation. A concentration of charcoal in the soil and a scatter of stones just outside the eastern foundation wall line suggested that the "wooden chimney" mentioned in the insurance description once stood there. Beyond that, to the northeast another concentration of stone and artifacts defined a trash dumping area, and another concentration of the same material indicated a dump to the northwest of the stone footing.

Immediately over the architectural remains a rich deposit of organic soil had built up, in some cases as deep as three feet, at first within the confines of the building foundation and in the cellar. Later in time, the same soil accumulated over the stone foundation itself, across the yard to the east and west and then to the south, apparently against Jefferson's garden fences. Handpainted English pearlware, a ceramic type that flooded the American market soon after the end of the American Revolution, was the latest datable artifact in the deposit. However, English creamware was the predominant pottery found, which suggests

that occupation may have begun in the 1770s. The total lack of transfer-printed pearlware from the occupation zone strongly suggests that occupation ceased about 1810 as well.

Although Jefferson merely describes building "o" as made "of wood" it is almost certain the house was a well-built log cabin. In 1809 Jefferson directed his overseer Edmund Bacon to move ex-cook Peter Hemmings out of the cook's room in the house dependencies into "… any one of the log-houses vacant on Mulberry Row…"[10] During that same year Margaret Bayard Smith commented on the quality of the slave quarters she passed on Mulberry Row:

> we passed the outhouses of the slaves and workmen. They are all much better than I have seen on any other plantation, but to an eye unaccustomed to such sights they appear poor and their cabins form a most unpleasant contrast with the palace that rises so near them.[11]

Other architectural details are suggested solely by the archaeology. Certain artifacts recovered from the occupation levels tended to concentrate in isolated areas in and around the foundation; using a computer-enhancing program known as *Surfer*, a series of relief maps of the relative numbers of artifacts were made with the data from building "o." The study showed a build-up of discarded nails at each end of the foundation, one density appearing where the charcoal concentration and the "brick" root cellar were found. This probably marks the site of the "wooden chimney" described in 1796. Why charcoal and nails would wind up in a concentration trailing away from the site of a wooden chimney is made clear by photos and descriptions of houses of this type recorded in the early twentieth century. Ex-slave interviews and several late nineteenth-century photos show that these chimneys were so easily destroyed by fire that they were often built to lean away from the house partially supported by wooden poles or "props." When the stack eventually caught fire, removal of the props and a push would throw the flaming stack away from and thus saving the cabin from fire. A series of these fires would produce a concentration of nails where the chimneys fell.[12]

The remains of the five and possibly six other Jefferson period slave houses, three identified on Jefferson's insurance map as buildings "r," "s," and "t," were also the focus of the Monticello excavations (Fig. 8). The insurance plat of 1796 describes buildings "r," "s," and "t" in such detail that it is clear that they represent the smallest and probably crudest of the lot: "r which as well as s and t are servants houses of wood with wooden chimnies, & earth floors 12. by 14. feet each." Archaeologically the sites of the buildings were in varied states of preservation: quarter "r" completely graded away, "s" the most intact, and "t" virtually gone with only the bottommost fill of a small root cellar surviving. None-

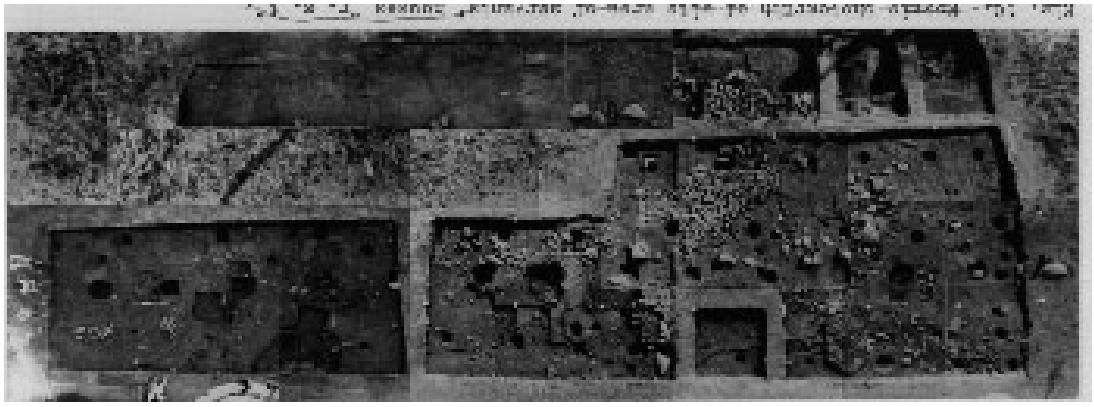

Figure 8. Composite view of the sites of slave cabins "r," "s," and "t," and a later cabin supported by brick piers along Mulberry Row during excavation at Monticello over two seasons.

theless, since the insurance plat indicates that the three buildings were identical, what remained of building "s" can probably serve to show what the plans were for the other two, namely one-room structures with an exterior timber and clay chimney centered on the south wall and with a subterranean root cellar inside near the hearth. Like the evidence for building "o", it is almost certain that "r," "s," and "t" were made of log. In 1792, Jefferson instructed his overseer Clarkson to build according to a design of Thomas Mann Randolph: "five log houses … at the places I have marked out of chestnut logs, hewed on two sides and split with the saw and dovetailed … to be covered and lofted with slabs from Mr. Hendersons."[12]

So the Monticello excavations provide a look at the houses of free and slave laborers. While the Mulberry Row and Stewart's houses were built of log, their similarity ends there. The Stewarts had over three times more floor space than the largest of the Mulberry Row cabins. Moreover Stewart had the more fire resistant stone and brick chimneys and warmer, drier and more sanitary raised wooden flooring.

But it would be unfair to let this research suggest that "log huts" were Jefferson's ultimate solution to slave housing. Shortly before he retired from the presidency in 1808, he directed workmen to begin construction of a "stone house" opposite the mansion's south pavilion.[13] Excavations revealed details of the stone structure which included a massive stone fireplace footing. The number of domestic artifacts recovered within the structure and in the surrounding yard suggested that it was used as a dwelling, probably for slaves. And there is considerable certainty about the above-ground appearance of the stone house in that Jefferson directed that it have a pyramidal roof and the ruin sug-

gested that it had had a central door on the Mulberry Row side. The near-central fireplace suggests that the structure had only the one room, and the hipped roof indicates that it did not have enough space in the loft for additional living space. Yet the presence of a ledge along the inner wall indicates the building had a raised wooden floor. It is also possible the house had a root cellar but excavations were not done in the most likely area for it because in 1839 the mother of the post-Jefferson owner of Monticello, Uriah P. Levy, was buried there within what had become a stone ruin. It is clear from the details of this stone house, in any case, that slave living conditions were improved during Jefferson's later years.

The Mulberry Row slave house root cellars and yards were littered with things stored, hidden, or otherwise discarded or lost—artifacts in such numbers that I think it is safe to say that Monticello has the most extensive documented collection of slave material culture yet assembled. Like the colonoware pottery of Kingsmill, there were some few things along Mulberry Row distinctly African. A cowry shell, horn ring, and pierced coins found along Mulberry Row could all well reflect African tradition (Fig. 9). The rest of the thousands of artifacts were distinctly Anglo-American.

Fragments of at least 289 ceramic vessels were recovered at building "o" from the fill in of the largest cellar, the earth floor of the house, and in the surrounding yard for a considerable distance east and west. The collection includes 30 different forms and 36 different types, all primarily tableware and predominantly either English creamware or pearlware or Chinese export porcelain. The collection also includes 15 matching underglazed blue Chinese export porcelain plates. From this it would seem logical to conclude that slaves along Mulberry Row had a share of some of the

Figure 9. Collection of Mulberry Row artifacts that may reflect African tradition among the Monticello slaves, including cowry shell (upper left), horn ring (upper right), and coin pendants.

best ceramics available. On the other hand, one could reasonably question whether or not what is found on the sites of the servants' houses so close to the mansion actually got there as mansion trash, merely thrown away in the yards of the quarters, having nothing whatsoever to do with the life styles of slaves.

But exactly where on the cabin site the vessels were found helps sort mansion from cabin. For example, some fragments of yard vessels were found imbedded in the dirt floor levels of the cabins. From that one could be reasonably sure that the dirt floor vessels were used and broken by slaves in that house and the rest of the shattered pieces thrown out into the yard. Fig. 10 shows two overhead views of all the ceramics found at building "o." Fig. 10a shows the ceramics laid out according to whether they were found in the house floor (therefore placed inside the rectangle) or in the surrounding yard. Fig. 10b shows the same ceramics but this time laid out according to whether or not yard fragments mend onto or otherwise match fragments found in the cabin dirt floor. From this it is clear what and how much of the yard material seems to have been used and broken within the cabin and presumably how much of the collection may have actually been trash from the mansion.

In fact, most of the ceramics from the yard are similar to the floor fragments in building "o" and therefore it is indeed safe to conclude that some rather high quality ceramic items were used by enslaved Americans living in building "o." Of course, it would be logical to characterize these objects as "hand-me-downs" from the house, either outdated, damaged, or stolen from the house. It is also possible that these objects were actually bought by or for the slaves exclusively for the quarters. That too can be tested by archaeological evidence.

Recent excavations completely around the foundations of the house as part of a roof and drain restoration project recovered a fair sample of ceramics that most likely were used in the house and most likely by the Jefferson family. Most of the house foundation artifacts were found in an area directly adjacent to Jefferson's bedroom and study thrown into a deep unfinished stone drain. The ceramics found in the fill suggest back-filling of the drain slowly over the period ca. 1780-1815, and artifacts along the southeast foundation were likely thrown there after 1794, the date when the house expansion in that direction began.

The foundation artifacts consisted of relatively small fragments of ceramics and glass or building materials such as broken bricks and nails. The extremely fragmentary nature of the ceramics and glass seems to indicate that they could have wound up along the foundations as the end product of general housekeeping, that is, these deposits were accumulations of floor sweepings thrown along the footings from the nearest door or

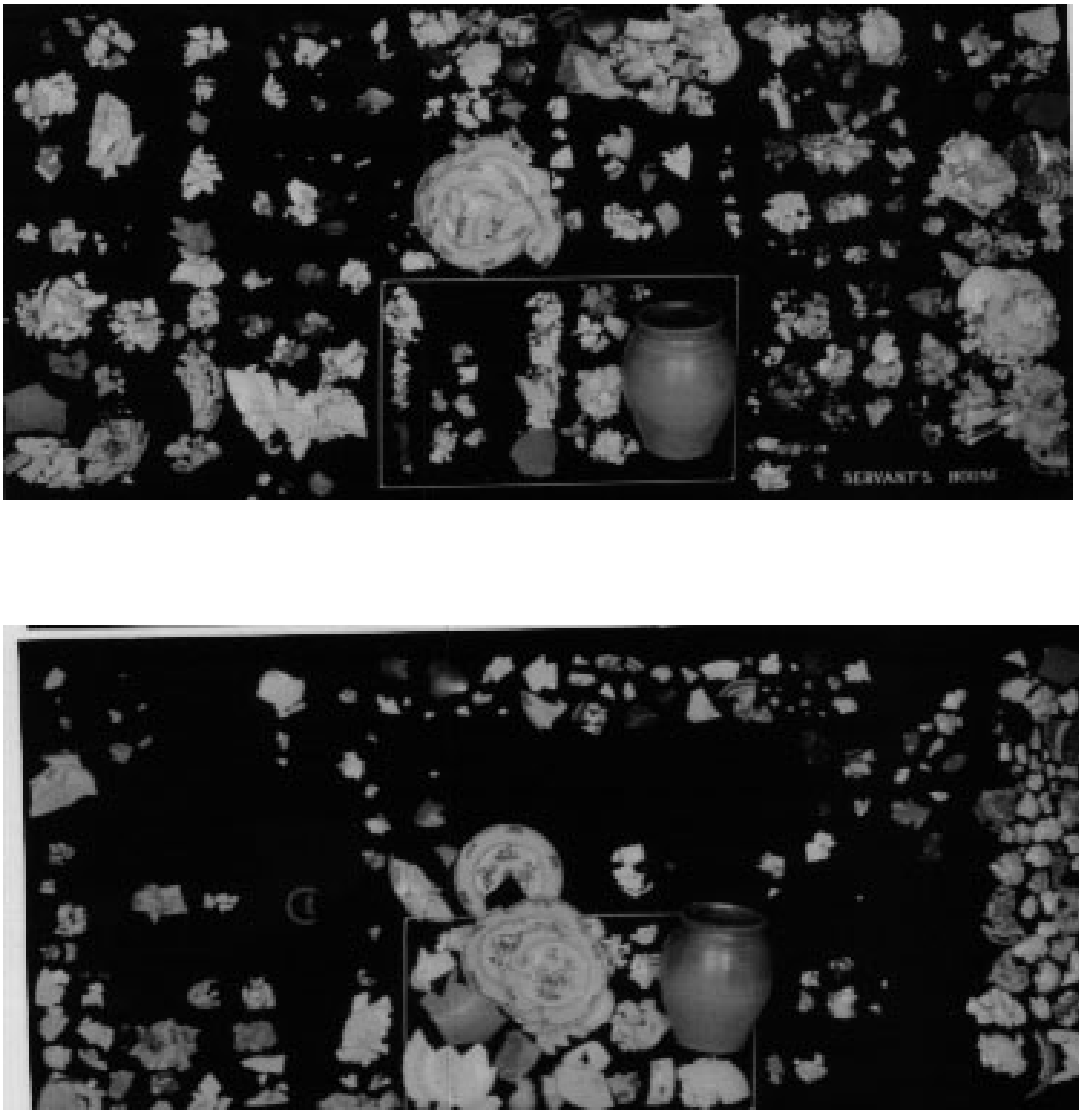

Figure 10. (a) Ceramics recovered from occupation layers at the site of building "o," Mulberry Row, Monticello, shown where they were found relative to or within the house foundation (rectangle). (b) Ceramics recovered from occupation layers at the site of building "o," Mulberry Row, Monticello, showing the high percentage of the ceramics found in the yard that crossmend or otherwise match fragments found within the house foundation (rectangle).

open window. As one might imagine, the ceramics from around the foundations consisted of some fine quality porcelain in specialized forms such as a delft bottle, a large pitcher, and a porcelain punch bowl. Yet fragments of Chinese porcelain of lesser quality including the blue and white plate so commonly found on slave quarters along Mulberry Row was also found there.

At any rate, comparison of vessels found only in deposits from the mansion with the Mulberry Row vessels from the cabin and yard identify hand-me-downs if they match the mansion collection and were found in the floor level. Other vessels may have been purchased for or by slaves if they show up in the cabin floor and do not match mansion fragments. And finally, certain vessels were mansion discards in the cabin yards if they match the mansion but not the cabin floor sherds. In fact, after the comparisons were made, practically all the refined tablewares from the house foundations matched those from cabin "o" indicating that slaves were furnished with or furnished themselves from the house stores. The very few vessel types that did not match from house to quarter were primarily coarse earthenware and utilitarian stoneware as one might imagine.

Like the Kingsmill quarters, however, handpainted English polychrome pearlware was found in great numbers along Mulberry Row. While it did appear along the house foundations to some extent, it was found in conspicuous numbers and variety in fill associated with the Stewart foundations. This again may suggest that polychrome pearlware had indeed become the folk pottery of the lower classes. The Stewarts also used fashionable matched sets of transfer-printed creamware and some of the same Chinese porcelain found around the house perhaps showing that, like slaves, free white laborers also got hand-me-downs or "borrowed" from the house.

But perhaps more telling are the artifacts that reflect home activities other than eating. Along Mulberry Row and at Stewart's there are a number of craft-related artifacts. Besides tailoring on Mulberry Row there was button making and at Stewart's and building "o," blacksmithing. People in the house, on the other hand, spent their leisure time quite differently, symbolic of which were parts to a microscope and the mouthpiece to a musical instrument found along the house foundations.

So what has archaeology contributed to an understanding of the lives of the common people of the Chesapeake during the colonial and early National periods? Certainly there is clear evidence that folk housing, while evolving from earthfast to box frame or log construction, remains "folk housing" with slaves occasionally but not always getting the shorter end of the stick. Size or plan does not seem to be the key. Rather it is the quality of the building materials that indicates wealth and status, with totally wooden houses with dirt floors and

wooden chimneys at the extreme lower end of the scale. On the other hand, ironically the log construction of the poor people, according to Jefferson himself, provided living space that was "warmer in winter and cooler in summer than the more expensive construction of scantling and board."[14] But it remains true that the rich, or at least the very rich, clearly evolve from larger folk style wooden buildings to more commodious and formal designed structures, with Thomas Jefferson's Monticello on the highest rung of the social and economic ladder.

Smaller artifacts seem to reflect greater change through time as the poor abandon folk objects, at least pottery, for the ever more plentiful and affordable Staffordshire products. Also some of the artifacts underscore the fact that poorer people invested leisure time producing the necessities of life and wealthier folks could afford to spend their off hours in more recreational pursuits. The archaeological evidence gives insight into exactly what some of those necessities and recreational pursuits were.

More precise definition of rich and poor based on their archaeological objects is certainly much more cloudy after the Revolution than it seems to be in the seventeenth century. The post-Revolutionary period would be clearer, it seems, if historical archaeologists studying the common folks could become more precise in determining the provenance and relative quality of things. But perhaps more important yet is to develop the ability to recognize clues that reveal how common folks may have used certain objects in ways unique to their social and economic position and for purposes that may not be so self-evident. To improve our ability to do this, we must look more to the research of documentary historians and folklorists.

NOTES

[1] All of the data from Kingsmill excavations are described in detail in: William M. Kelso, *Kingsmill Plantations, 1619-1800*, Academic Press, Inc., San Francisco, 1984.

[2] Stanley South, *Method and Theory in Historical Archaeology*, Academic Press, New York, 1977, p. 219.

[3] Merry Abbitt Outlaw, Beverly Straub and Alain C. Outlaw. "Rich Man, Poor Man: Status Definition in Two Seventeenth Century Ceramic Assemblages from Kingsmill", Mss, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, 1976.

[4] Henry M. Miller, "Pettus and Utopia: A Comparison of the Faunal Remains from Two Seventeenth Century Virginia Households", Mss, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, 1979.

[5] The Monticello data presented hereafter is further documented in William M. Kelso, *Archaeology at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, 1979-1992*, Thomas Jefferson

Memorial Foundation, Charlottesville, 1993 (forthcoming).

[6] Thomas Jeffererson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781), University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1954, p. 152.

[7] Thomas Jeffererson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781), University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1954, p. 152.

[8] Barbara Heath. "Archaeological Excavations at the William Stewart House Site at Monticello, 1989-1990." Mss, Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, Inc. Charlottesville, 1992.

[9] Fiske Kimball, *Thomas Jefferson, Architect*, Da Capo Press, New York, 1968, p. 136.

[10] Fiske Kimball, *Thomas Jefferson, Architect*, Da Capo Press, New York, 1968, p. 136.

[11] Margaret Bayard Smith, *The First Forty Years of Washington Society*, C. Scribner and Sons, New York, 1906, p. 68.

[12] Thomas Jefferson, "Memorandum for Mr. Clarkson," September 23, 1792, University of Virginia. In Fiske Kimball, *Thomas Jefferson, Architect*, Da Capo Press, New York, 1968, p. 136.

[13] Thomas Jefferson to Edmund Bacon, October 17, 1808. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Patrons and Rituals in an Eighteenth-Century Tavern

by Betty Leviner

IN the March 20, 1755, edition of the *Maryland Gazette* there appeared an obituary, dateline Williamsburg, February 21, for a resident of Virginia's capital: "Early last Wednesday Morning Mrs. Anne Pattison, of this City, was burnt to Death in a most miserable Manner; it is supposed she was much in Liquor, and the Fire catching hold of her Clothes, she had not the Power to extinguish it. The Coroner's Inquest brought in their Verdict, ACCIDENTAL DEATH!"[1] Now, fire as a cause of women's deaths two centuries ago was not unusual; some authorities cite it as second only to childbirth as a factor in women's mortality rates during the period. What is out of the ordinary is Mrs. Pattison's supposed state of consciousness at the time of her death. Was drunkenness a habit with her? Did she have ready access to a supply of liquor? Was there no one in her family or dwelling to watch over her? While answers to all these personal questions will not be possible, this paper will attempt to examine what we do know about Anne Pattison and to put that information into a social and economic context for the second quarter of the eighteenth century here in Williamsburg.

First of all, who was Anne Pattison? She appears to have been the sister of John Coke, a goldsmith, who emigrated from Derbyshire, England, to Williamsburg in 1724 when he was about twenty years old. An item in the York County Records suggests that she was newly married in 1738 to Thomas Pattison who refers to "my now wife."[2] Four years later Pattison refers to Anne as his "said wife." This was apparently a second marriage for Pattison since his will goes on to state that after Anne's death his property is to go to his son Thomas Pattison "of the Kingdom of Great Britain who was born about four miles from the city of Durham...."[3] This was probably a child by a first marriage since he and Anne had been married only about four years when the will was made. So, this would appear to be Thomas's second marriage and probably Anne's first.

We cannot say for certain how long Thomas had been in Virginia, but he may have immigrated to the colony in early middle age, given the evidence of a previous marriage. Thomas does appear to have been operating a tavern at the time of his death in 1742, but the location is unknown.

At the time of Thomas's death his personal property included, among other things, a large number of linens, dining and drinking implements, and

beds and bedsteads, all indicative of his tavern-keeping trade and all of which descended to Anne. While we do not have a birth date for her, she may have been close in age to John Coke. This would put her in her late thirties at the time of her husband's death. There were apparently no children of this marriage since only the one son is mentioned in Thomas's will. Thus, in 1742, Anne would have found herself a middle-aged widow with no children of her own and with only one local relative. She still had her living to earn. How best to go about it? The obvious answer would be to continue operating the tavern that she more than likely had played a large part in helping run during her husband's life.

This was certainly the case with other townswomen who found themselves in similar circumstances. Mrs. Christiana Campbell and Mrs. Jane Vobe ran two of the finer taverns in town later in the century, while Mrs. Grissell Hay took in lodgers. The first two women were widows of tavernkeepers, and Mrs. Hay was the widow of a doctor. As historian Pat Gibbs has demonstrated, running a tavern or lodging house was just a few steps beyond running a household.[4] Both occupations required similar skills in household management and economy. One tavern-keeping husband even advertised that his wife "very well understands the COOKERY part.…"[5] A widow could continue in a familiar environment at the same time she was earning a living for herself and, if necessary, for her children. Anne Pattison would have had the added benefit of a prime business location for her establishment. Situated just west of the Capitol, this area was described by one property owner as "the most convenient Spot in this city for Trade."[6]

As for the sort of accommodations a visitor could expect at Pattison's, we know from her late husband's inventory that the establishment was a well-furnished one. Fashionable beverages, from tea to coffee to punch to chocolate, were available as were special dinners served on china plates and eaten with ivory-handled knives and forks. Backgammon or cards could be played while sitting on fashionable black-walnut or leather chairs. On the walls were looking glasses and framed prints, and on the windows were curtains to protect the clientele's privacy. Well-outfitted beds were available in the lodging rooms, ones comparable in value to beds in Henry Wetherburn's establishment.[7] Thus, Mrs. Pattison's well-heeled patrons would have had no cause for complaint about the quality of her accommodations. More than likely her less-than- well-heeled customers felt the same way since we know she had a high level of repeat business.

Apparently known as "Mrs. Pattison's," given a 1746 newspaper[8] as well as a January 15, 1752 reference in John Blair's diary,[9] this is one tavern in town that we can know in a way we know no other Williamsburg tavern. This is due

to the miraculous survival of Anne Pattison's day book for her operations from January 1744 to April 1749. Placed for safekeeping at the Virginia Historical Society in 1990, this book is the only known day-to-day account for a Williamsburg tavern-keeper. Kept by several individuals as the different hands reveal, the ledger provides us with an unparalleled opportunity to examine and analyze the activities, clients, and rhythms of an urban establishment at mid-century.

The account book apparently descended in the Waller family. Later, some of the Waller children, especially Robert H., enjoyed using the volume for writing exercises. Despite its subsequent "ornamentation," the book is a Rosetta stone of sorts for its confirmation and documentation of what, in the past, we have only suspected and surmised.

First of all, what sort of clientele did Mrs. Pattison entertain in her tavern? Her patrons ranged from the cream of colonial Virginia society—Digges, Harrison, Burwell—to tradesmen of the middling sort—Geddy, Anderson, Harwood—to African-Americans—"Negroes," "your man," "your boy." Thus, a cross-section of Williamsburg's and, to a less extent, eastern Virginia's populace could be found frequenting her house of entertainment. These people not only patronized her tavern; they used Mrs. Pattison as a sort of grocer, as well as a provider of services. Mrs. Geddy bought a gallon and a half of wine on August 9, 1744 (page 17), for her husband's funeral; Mary Carter is listed not infrequently as purchasing a variety of spirits from Mrs. Pattison. Still others, including her competitor Henry Wetherburn, availed themselves of chaise hire. Colonel Carter Burwell hired both horses and chaise to carry a tailor to his house[10] while "The New Staimaker" on May 15, 1748 (page 159) also hired Mrs. Pattison's conveyance.

As for the tavern's insides, Mrs. Pattison's furnishings, as identified by her late husband's inventory, could accommodate the range of clientele enumerated above. The household was equipped to provide the appropriate fare for her variety of customers: pewter plates (Fig. 1) for her less important, less demanding dinners and diners but china plates (Fig. 2) for her more affluent patrons who would have been able to afford special culinary fare that deserved presentation on more fashionable tablewares; bedsteads with curtains for rooms rented out privately but cheaper, low-post beds in the rooms she was required by law to offer the public at 7½ pence per night (Fig. 3).

Just as the lodging rooms varied in their level of furnishings so did Mrs. Pattison's public rooms. The 1742 inventory indicates there were three "entertaining" rooms—rooms fitted out with a varying range of quality in their tables, chairs, fireplace equipment, etc. One of these rooms, no doubt, served as the Public Dining Room, comparable to the

Figure 1. Plate, pewter, by John Shorey II, London, 1705-1720, CWF 1977-221. While this is a fairly ornate example of a pewter plate of the period, it would have been less fashionable by the 1740s and possibly relegated to lesser service.

Figure 2. Plate, hard-paste porcelain, China (export market), c. 1740, CWF G1988-495. Given the inventory reference to china plates, we can assume that Thomas and Anne Pattison kept their furnishings up to date and catered to consumer-conscious patrons.

Figure 3. Over the Bullhead, Wetherburn's Tavern. Here we see the sort of bedding and bedstead that would have been available to a lodger with no extra money for amenities such as a bedstead with curtains.

Middle Room at Wetherburn's (Fig. 4) and the Public Room at the Raleigh. Here people off the street could wander in at dinnertime and be served a meal whose price was guaranteed at 1 shilling by statute. The social range of this room must have varied with gentry occasionally rubbing shoulders during the ritual of dining with the ordinary patrons, such as tradesmen, tenants, or individuals lodging or boarding with Mrs. Pattison.[11] The meals served in this public dining room were the "diets" regulated by law. We know from her ledger book that she also served "diets" to African-Americans. What we don't know is where they ate their meals; we can only make an educated guess. Probably they ate in the kitchen or some other outbuilding or, if the weather were nice, even outside.

As for more special and private meals, Mrs. Pattison also offered appropriate accommodation for her clients. As noted above, she had everyday tablewares as well as more fashionable dining accoutrements. The spaces used for these more private occasions would have kept pace with the meal by offering a better grade of chairs, tables, looking glasses, prints, and window curtains. As you might guess, these rooms would have been occupied by those who could afford to rent them, but others would have been present as well. Mrs. Pattison's slaves were an essential element in every aspect of running the tavern, both

Figure 4. Middle Room, Wetherburn's Tavern. This room illustrates the common dining room for a tavern. The prints on the walls have been varnished rather than covered with glass, and the chairs are "old-fashioned" as is the table.

inside and outside. They would have been involved in preparing the food in the kitchen as well as helping with its proper service. Nearly every aspect of food service and preparation would have found them in evidence in some area of the tavern—from preparing and cooking the food in the yard and outbuildings to serving it in the tavern. Accompanying the food or in addition to it would have been the fashionable beverages their mistress provided her clientele.

Besides Mrs. Pattison's slaves, her patrons' slaves would have been part of the scene at her establishment. The ledger has numerous references to the servants that accompanied their masters to the tavern. For example, she charged George Wythe 7½ pence for "yr Man['s] Supper" on January 9, 1748/9 (page 171). As noted above, we do not know where slaves would have taken their meals. Still another mystery is where they would have slept. While Mrs. Pattison or one of her staff was apparently meticulous about recording every morsel of food eaten, every sip of beverage drunk, and every club of gentlemen who rented one of her rooms (Fig. 5), she does not charge for sleeping space for servants who are obviously eating their meals at her tavern. Thus, we have another question that cannot be answered at present: where did these slaves sleep? Did they sleep in the tavern itself or in one of the outbuildings? Since stabling is charged for horses,

Figure 5. "A Smoking Club," engraving by W. Dickinson from an original by H. Bunbury, published May 1, 1792, CWF 1941-107. These individuals have rented out a room in a tavern to enjoy a pipe, a glass of wine, and each others' company.

did these body servants sleep elsewhere in town, possibly with relatives? We just don't know at present.

One function of new evidence that we sometimes forget is that, while it provides us with fresh information, it forces us at the same time to ask new questions or questions with a slightly different slant. I think Anne Pattison's account book is no exception to this rule. A few of the questions have already been raised, but there are others. How do you explain the different hands in her ledger book? Did she enter her own notations at times with bar keepers maintaining the book at others? We know that this was the case at another local tavern.[12] What sort of bookkeeping system did she maintain? In addition to her day book, she also refers to her "Small Day Book" on December 31, 1745 (page 83). There may also have been a club book. Thus, glimpses into the world of eighteenth-century accounting can be gleaned from Mrs. Pattison's records which will in turn lead to other inquiries.

Larger questions arise as well. How much did the common sort rub shoulders with the better sort at her establishment (Fig. 6)? How much of her trade was local; how much from out of town? Did some of her patrons eat their meals,

Figure 6. "Dr Syntax present at a Coffee-house quarrel at Bath," published April 1, 1820 by R. Ackermann, from a drawing by Thomas Rowlandson. While Mrs. Pattison probably did not endure shoulder-rubbing to this extent, a mixture of classes with too much to drink might result in a fray of this sort.

stall their horses, and drink their tea, chocolate, or whatever with her while staying elsewhere in town?[13] How did Mrs. Pattison sort out all these types and conditions? How many of her patrons were among the estimated 40 percent "of the propertied Chesapeake population [that] had less than £50 of movable wealth"?[14] Did she rely on her personal knowledge of the region's residents when they walked into her tavern? Or, if unknown, did she rely on her personal judgment that may have coincided with Peter Collinson's advice to a friend about to visit Virginia: "These Virginians are a very gentle, well dressed people—and look, perhaps, more at a man's outside than his inside."[15]

What, indeed, was the status of Mrs. Pattison herself? We know from her obituary that she drank, or at least was believed to indulge. She had ready access to liquor and took advantage of that fact. Did this affect her standing in the community? Was she, as Fithian described his fellow New Jerseyites, a member of "the middling or lower Class, [who] are accounted the strenth & Honour of the Colony"? Would we have seen her "at the Tables & in the Parlours of … [her] Betters enjoying the advantage, & honour of their society and Conversation"?[16]

Just as we have trouble identifying

the common sort in general so do we struggle with classifying certain individuals. Were women tavernkeepers a class that lived on the edge of subsistence or were they the Horatia Algers of their day? Were they financially secure women who had made a conscious decision to pursue tavernkeeping?[17] While the profession probably included individuals who ran the gamut of these extremes, we cannot speak with authority since this is a field still in need of examination and analysis.

But what have I told you today about the common people of the Chesapeake? Very little. I have mentioned upper, middling, and slave classes with only a nod or two in the direction of the free poor. What have I told you about their material world? Well, here I have done a bit better. We think they used or were accustomed to similar types of furniture, ceramics, and possibly metal forms as those their betters owned, although these forms were of less quality and quantity. Also, the way in which they used these forms as well as the way they dressed and carried themselves revealed their station in life.

Just as with the discoveries we have made with black material culture over the last decade, discoveries about the common sort will need the same type of investigation. As Bill Kelso has stated, he has sometimes been unsure if he has been digging a slave quarter site or a poor planter's site. The houses that architectural historians now believe housed prosperous planters are a far cry from the Tidewater mansions of Virginia's Golden Age (Fig. 7). If these modest dwellings are considered prosperous, perhaps the reconstructed Carter's Grove Slave Quarters were a reality for the free who were also poor. What I see is a need to refine and redefine our questions toward the common culture as we did towards African-American culture. I am convinced the answers are out there, and in some of the sources we have known about for years.

For instance, our old standby P. V. Fithian describes the actions of a tobacco inspector at a dining table when drinking the company's health:

> He is rather Dull, & seems unacquainted with company for when he would, at Table, drink our Health, he held the Glass of Porter fast with both his Hands, and then gave an insignificant nod to each one at the Table, in Hast, & with fear, & then drank like an Ox … I thought that during the Course of the Toasts, he was better pleased with the Liquor than with the manner in which he was at this Time obliged to use it.…"[18]

Other known sources might prove to be as revealing about the lower strata of colonial society.

In preparing this paper today, there are people I want to thank. First of all, in the Collections Division, there are my colleagues who are among the most giving and generous coworkers anyone could wish to have. Secondly, my appreciation to other Colonial Williamsburg

Figure 7. Rochester House, Westmoreland County, Virginia, mid-eighteenth century. This modest, frame house contains a cellar, one room on the first floor, and one room in the upper half-story. Modest as it may seem, architectural historians now believe that this would have been the home of a successful planter of about 1750.

staff members, especially Cary Carson, David Harvey, Lou Powers, and Mark R. Wenger. And, lastly, from the academic arena, a thank you to Barbara Carson. They have all helped me and others grope towards an understanding of the "common sort." The questions and issues raised here this afternoon are not easily answered or resolved, but at least we have made a good start at deciding what we need to ask. And with the help of our various disciplines—from curators to architectural historians to archaeologists to academic historians along with all our other professional colleagues—the answers should not be long in coming.

NOTES

[1] A copy of the February 21, 1755, *Virginia Gazette* does not survive. Apparently the March 20 edition of the *Maryland Gazette* picked up the Virginia paper's notice.

[2] See York County Records, Wills and Inventories, Book 19, p. 169, for Thomas Pattison's reference to "my now wife."

[3] York County Records, Wills and Inventories, Book 19, p. 169.

[4] See Patricia A. Gibbs, "Taverns in Tidewater Virginia, 1700-1774," M.A. thesis, College of William and Mary, 1968, pp. 44-45.

[5] Christopher Ayscough advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette*, ed. by Purdie and Dixon, October 6, 1768, page 2, column 3.

[6] See Emma L. Powers, *Landlords, Tenants, and Rental Property in Williamsburg and Yorktown, 1730-1780* (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Research Report, 1990), p. 53.

[7] York County Records, Wills and Inventories, Book 21, pp. 36-43.

[8] See *Virginia Gazette*, May 15, 1746, page 4, column 6.

[9] My thanks to Lou Powers for calling this to my attention.

[10] See April 14, 1748 (page 152).

[11] Mrs. Pattison's ledger book reveals that she did take in boarders, such as college students (for example, "Mr Miles Cary this Day Entered his Son to Board," June 12, 1745 (page 57) and apprentices (i.e., "Mr. Benja. Wallers Prentis Thom Carter … Did Leve of Boarding at Mrs Pattisons," April 13, 1748 (page 152). Dr. Johnson in his dictionary defines boarder as "A tabler; one that eats with another at a settled rate."

[12] See *Virginia Gazette*, ed. by Purdie and Dixon, August 29, 1766, page 2, column 3: "WANTED: A YOUNG man qualified to act as BAR-KEEPER, that can write a tolerable hand, and understand something of accounts. Such a one will meet with good encouragement from JAMES SOUTHALL."

[13] For example, on April 22, 1745 (p. 54), she charges Mr. Woody Jones for wine, dinner, horse feeding, and "Your Boy one Dyet," but there is no mention of lodging.

[14] See Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "The Standard of Living in the Colonial Chesapeake," in *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. XLV, No. 1 (January 1988), p. 140.

[15] As quoted in Graham Hood, *The Governor's Palace in Williamsburg: A Cultural Study* (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1991), p. 220. My thanks to Linda Baumgarten and Jan Gilliam for assisting my feeble memory and tracking down this quote.

[16] See Philip Vickers Fithian, *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian*, ed. by Hunter Dickinson Farish (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, third printing, 1983), p. 160.

[17] Once again, my thanks to Lou Powers for raising these questions during one of our conversations.

[18] Fithian, *Journal and Letters*, p. 138.

Was There an American Common Man? The Case in Colonial Virginia

by Kevin P. Kelly

WAS there an American—or even a Virginia—Common Man? The answer is obvious—yes! With that I should be able to sit down and let you get on with the final panel discussion. But nothing is ever that simple. Cary has asked that I speak for at least twenty minutes, so I guess I must provide more than a one-word answer to the question. As I have pondered the task of answering such a seemingly straightforward question, the fact that the answer seemed so obvious troubled me. I am not sure I have completely resolved the problem that puzzled me, but I think I have pinpointed its source which I wish to share with you this afternoon.

Eighteenth-century contemporaries certainly seemed to believe that there were people living in colonial Virginia—and England for that matter—who could be considered common. Drawing upon those eighteenth-century observations and from the work of historians such as yourselves, it is possible to give shape to what I will call the traditional view of the common folk of eighteenth-century Virginia. First, everyone agreed on what the common man was not; they were not gentlemen.

It will be useful to review what characterized a gentleman in the eighteenth century because it sharply reveals what was thought to set the better sort apart from the rest of society and it will remind us that these traits were presumably possessed only by an extremely small minority of Virginia's population.

A gentleman was expected to be educated not just beyond basic literacy but rather he was to receive a "liberal" education grounded in Greek and Latin classics. And the knowledge gained was to be used in both private and public conversation. From tutors to the College of William and Mary to studies in England, the sons of the Virginia gentry were exposed to the best in eighteenth-century formal schooling.

A gentleman was of good family background. Certainly one's immediate forefathers should be of a gentle status. Ideally one was born into the elite. No wonder family Bibles noting births and deaths, even full genealogies, were regularly kept and updated by Virginia's best families.

A gentleman was to be wealthy enough to bear the cost of living the genteel life without visible strain. One can almost sense the pathos running through the advertisements William Byrd III placed announcing the lotteries he was forced to hold to pay off his debts. In-

debtedness not only threatened financial independence, it mocked a planter's claim to be a member of the gentry. In Byrd's case, suicide may have been preferable.

A gentleman was expected to command. It was both his right and his duty. It was this expectation that motivated Robert Munford's "Squire Worthy" to stand again for election when it seemed likely that the wrong men might win.

But most importantly, a gentleman was to be free from the necessity to work, especially if that work involved physical or manual labor. In theory this freedom was the keystone of the gentle life. John Randolph, testifying in support of his nephew John Randolph Grymes's loyalist claim, implied as much when wrote "that at the Commencement of the Revolution, he … lived Affluently as a private gentleman without following any Trade or Profession."[1] The ideal, however was rarely ever fully realized by even the wealthiest of Virginia planters. A quick reading of Councillor Robert Carter's accounts reveal he was an active hands-on manager of his widespread enterprises, storing iron bars from his Maryland mine in his kitchen to arranging the reshipment of tons of ships' biscuits.

The acceptance of work—if it was not truly drudgery—as not inappropriate for a Virginia gentleman might be called the American "fudge factor," for without it colonial Virginia would have had few true gentlemen. Indeed, as it was the great planters, the First Families of Virginia, the genteel professionals (physicians, attorneys, and the clergy), and the import/export merchants were a pale reflection of the eighteenth-century English country gentry. Nevertheless, the boundary between the better sort and everyone else in Virginia's eighteenth-century society was understood by those on both sides of the line.

If the gentry clearly stood above the line, not everyone below it according to the traditional viewpoint would be labelled the "common folk." As one reads comments about the "lessor sort," it is clear that those who figure most in these observations were thought active partners in the successful working of a hierarchial social order. They had a role to play and they did so willingly. Furthermore they were capable of granting deference to their social betters because they were not completely helpless in the face of the power exercised by the gentry. In this they were thought to share with their betters a claim of "independancy." The eighteenth-century Virginia commoner is familiar to us as Thomas Jefferson's yeoman, to which can be added his urban counterpart, the shopkeeper and the artisan. In other words, eighteenth-century observers—and many historians follow their lead—elevated the "middling sort" to the position of "common man."

They, of course, expected to work by necessity. But, unlike the work of the gentry which diminished them, the work of

the middling classes was valuable and rewarding—a positive good—because, as Jefferson implies, it was honest work upon the land that added value to society. The middling sort was that part of the population that, as Gregory King noted at the end of the seventeenth century in the case of England, increased rather than decreased the national income.

The middling sort encompassed a broad range of people with essentially similar experiences. By the middle of the eighteenth century in Virginia, they were literate, if not literary. They could reckon accounts, understand the contents of the deeds they signed, and many even owned a small parcel of books. The middling sort were politically active. It was from their ranks that the "foot soldiers" of the political institutions—petit and grand jurors, constables, etc.—were drawn. They held political opinions as well. Although belittled by playwright Robert Munford, their concerns naturally focused on issues close to home, such as the placement of highways, ferries, and court houses and, as the middling sort have even to this day, on taxes. Furthermore, by 1770, to the dismay of Munford, they expected their political leaders to take those concerns seriously. Most of the middling classes earned a "decent sufficiency" at the very least by their labor. Yet increasing numbers of them were being bitten by the bug of consumerism and their material possessions began to include such genteel items as tea wares and specialized furnishings.

But the key feature that linked the middling sort together was their actual (or potential) control of some means of production. In late eighteenth-century Virginia that meant first land, then labor. Land was widely available in colonial Virginia, so much so that it quickly became a commodity to be bought and sold. Even a most cursory reading of any county's deed books demonstrates that the middling planters were fully engaged in the land market as early as the mid-seventeenth century. Even the rising price of land in the older settled areas of Virginia after 1750 did not close off trading in land. The urban artisan, of course, was not so economically dependent on owning land. Access to tools and the skills to use them might prove good enough to gain entrance into the middle classes. Yet ownership of a lot and shop ensured one's place there. It was from these property-owning Williamsburg and Yorktown artisans that York County justices of the peace chose individuals to join with rural freeholders in political offices that confirmed their middling status.

As historians have examined the colonial social order, they have singled out for special comment its fluid character and attributed that fact to special, if not unique, American conditions. As a truly hierarchial society—even in Virginia where the gentry gained a solid foothold of respectability—America lacked the upper levels of aristocracy that charac-

terized England. American society, in Gordon Wood's word, was truncated. Furthermore, the barrier between the better and the middle sort was low and not a major obstacle to movement across it. This mobility was helped along because the way to wealth in the profoundly agriculturally-based colonial economy was essentially the same for large, middling, and small planters. As many historians have long noted, it was in colonial America, where so many had access to land, that the underpinnings of privilege, upon which a hierarchial society rested, were severely undermined.[2]

Although I have oversimplified the case, this I believe to be the usual view of the American common man that seems so obvious an answer to the question, "was there an American common man?" Yet this definition seems almost too pat—too smug—to be really convincing. I suspect I knew this to be so because if fails a crucial test. If the question was rephrased to ask, What was the most common—typical, representative—experience in colonial America, and which colonial Americans experienced it?, then the answer would not be the middling sort, who in colonial Virginia were in the minority. No, I suggest the title of the common folk of colonial America and most certainly of colonial Virginia could just as appropriately be accorded to the men and women who were poor whites and, regardless of the subtitle of this conference, slaves.

Of course the poor were not completely ignored by eighteenth-century commentators who usually heaped more scorn than praise upon them. The poor had none of the socially redeeming features that the elite occasionally acknowledged that the middling sort possessed. The poor were thought vulgar and crude, and because they made no positive contribution to civil society, most eighteenth-century commentators simply dismissed them.

Many historians too have not taken the poor seriously. There is nothing sinister about this. The poor are extremely hard to track. They existed virtually beyond historical note in the eighteenth century. Yet evidence of their existence does surface now and again. For example, consider the 20 percent single tithable households listed on the James City County sheriff's 1768 tax rolls, many of whom were noted as insolvent. Or consider the poor orphans who were bound out by the York County court because their parents could not adequately care for them. They are often overlooked because it is also probably true that in colonial Virginia the white poor did not comprise a sizable portion of the population. But that, I believe, is because the true extent of poverty in colonial Virginia is hidden behind the veil of race. For, if you add in slaves who were surely not rich, the poor, white and black, especially in the tidewater counties, do constitute the majority.

If we can discount race and legal status for a moment, it is clear that poor

whites and slaves experienced a good deal in common. They were the true manual laborers of the eighteenth century, and further it was labor that was forced. Slaves worked under the threat of punishment, and whites for survival. While in theory the poor white unlike the slave controlled his own labor, in fact it gained him little. And to the degree he was forced to seek employment from others, his circumstances differed little from that of the slave.

Both the slave and the poor white were politically powerless and thus always politically and legally at risk. If poor whites ever shared in the franchise—and election polls reveal that they rarely did—it was at the sufferance of the local elite who could equally withdraw the privilege. Slaves were caught in the strange twists of colonial Virginia law. For example, as property slaves could not own property, yet in an inversion of eighteenth-century understanding of torts, property—slaves—could be punished, even executed, for stealing property.

Both slaves and poor whites lived on the margin. Their housing provided only minimal comfort. These houses were almost always cramped, draughty, and damp. While neither slave or poor white faced starvation in the eighteenth century, their diet was little more than adequate to maintain a basic level of health and well-being. And despite the presence of exotic items in their possession—second-rate export Chinese porcelain in the case of some slaves, or tea cups and wine glasses in the case of some poor whites—it is hard to imagine this group of Virginians as heavy contributors to the galloping consumerism said to be sweeping across colonial Virginia and America.

It may well be that these poor Virginians did not share the cultural values that informed the behavior of the better and middling sort. Rev. Woodmason's biased and exaggerated description of the poor Carolina backwoodsman hints at the fact that the poor did have a different understanding of morality, sex, marriage, and family than the genteel. African Americans and poorer Anglo-Virginians may have thought they inhabited an environment much more meaning-filled and alive, where dreams and portents still had power to affect human behavior, than the nature envisioned and articulated by the well-to-do student of the enlightenment.

Finally, we cannot discount race and the legal status of slaves, although racism may have bolstered the poor white's self-esteem, it undercut the value of manual labor, the one truly valuable thing that they possessed. And slavery institutionalized poverty and insured its existence regardless of any economic changes that could or would mitigate against it.

If I am correct, then the characteristics of Virginia's eighteenth-century common man—poor, marginal, and exploited—differ significantly from those

put forth by the traditional view of the colonial common man. And, of course, I am correct! But I was also correct earlier, because both groups did exist in the eighteenth century. The middling sort with their access to land were reshaping the nature of the hierarchial society, while at the same time, the poor where becoming a permanent part of that same new society. This then brings me back to the problem that troubled me at the very start, and that is, why do we ask such a question? Why do we care to categorize some groups of colonial Virginians as the "common folk"? And what kind of answer are we willing to accept when we pose it?

I think we seek categories—classifications—because as historians we seek to understand more than just the descriptive characteristics of the middling sort, the poor, and the slaves. We use categories such as the common man because we believe it will enhance our analysis of the past and provide us with a more powerfully plotted story about early America. And depending on where we set the template to encompass our chosen "common sort," we will end up with very different stories.

The use of the traditional view that equates the common people with the middling sort fits the prevailing American myth well. This myth is essentially a sociopolitical one that sees the course of American history as the retreat of hierarchy and privilege in the face of advancing equality and democracy. The focus on the colonial middling classes with their access to property, their desire to share in the good life embodied in the gentry's material goods, and their eager embrace of their goal to earn money, make them the worthy forefathers of middle-class America in the nineteenth century. This continuity between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is also important because it suggests there is something distinctively American about this whole development. Unlike Europeans, this story goes, Americans, energized by middle-class values, are not limited in their vision of the possible. They are truly a people of plenty, a people of progress.

Needless to say, acceptance of the idea that the commoners of early America were really poor whites and slaves promotes a very different American myth. In the first place, because these common folk were politically disenfranchised, this new myth exposes the limited nature of the political and ideological radicalism that is usually thought to characterize American history. While at first glance this idea that the typical colonial Virginian, both white and black, was impoverished stresses the continuity between the old world and the new, it is also a very American story because it integrates the slaves' experience into the historical mainstream. It demonstrates just how unique to America this racially mixed laboring class was. Further this new myth shifts the focus away from the triumph of the middle class and

back onto the emergence of the "working class." By positing that slaves laboring in a commercial agricultural system differ little from wage-earning factory workers, this version of the American story pushes the roots of American labor exploitation back into the eighteenth century. Further it acknowledges the persistence of great social and economic inequalities in American history.

I do not at this time propose to state which of these myths contains a greater measure of truth—although I do have an idea—rather I will let each of you decide. I will, however, conclude with a caution and an invitation. If you set out to answer such a loaded question as Was there an American common man?, you can not hope to avoid an ideological answer. Since you cannot escape that fact, embrace it.

NOTES

[1] Claim of John Randolph Grymes, 1 November 1783, A.O./13/30, folder G, Public Record Office.

[2] For example, see Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992); Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1985).