● THE COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

interpreter

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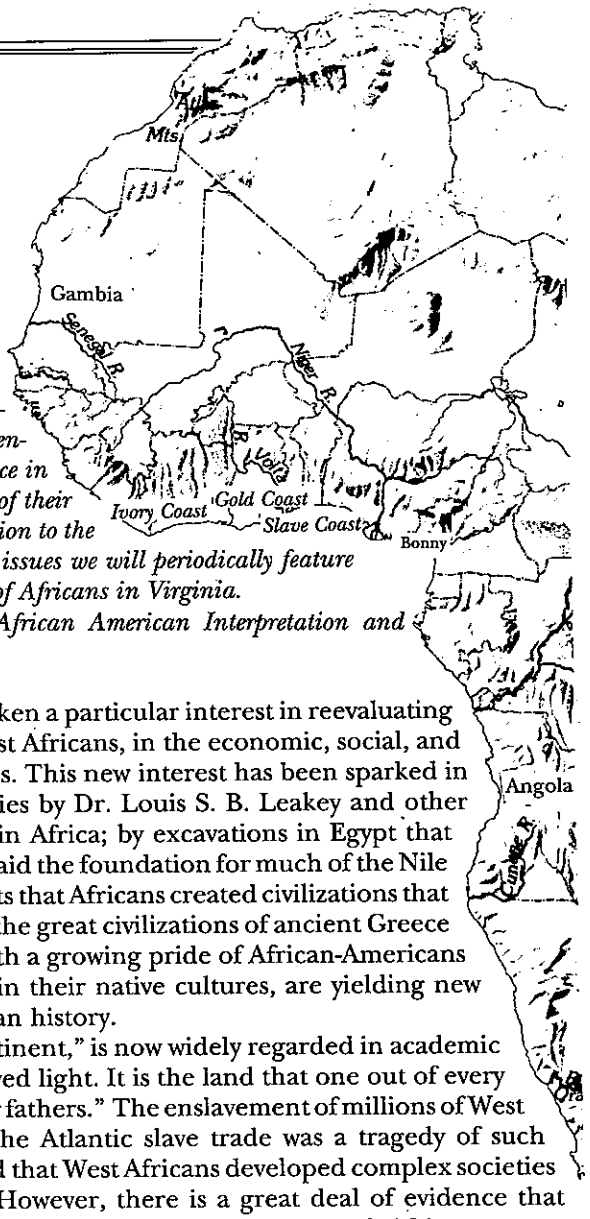
West Africa

by Robert Watson

What is Africa to me:
Copper sun and scarlet sea
Jungle star or jungle track,
Strong bronzed men, or regal black
Women from lions I sprang
When the birds of Eden sang?
Countee Cullen



Just as it is important that we understand Virginia in the context of the European Enlightenment, our understanding of the black experience in Virginia must be tempered by an appreciation of their native cultures. This article is a brief introduction to the vast scope of West African societies. In future issues we will periodically feature elements of these cultures that affect our story of Africans in Virginia.

Robert is director of the Department of African American Interpretation and Presentations.

In the last thirty years historians have taken a particular interest in reevaluating the importance of Africans, especially West Africans, in the economic, social, and political development of the United States. This new interest has been sparked in part by a series of revolutionary discoveries by Dr. Louis S. B. Leakey and other scholars who claim that man originated in Africa; by excavations in Egypt that demonstrate without doubt that Africans laid the foundation for much of the Nile Valley; and by the findings of archaeologists that Africans created civilizations that equaled and in some instances surpassed the great civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome. These discoveries, coupled with a growing pride of African-Americans (and indeed of many other Americans) in their native cultures, are yielding new perspectives on African history and human history.

Africa, long considered the "Dark Continent," is now widely regarded in academic circles as the place where man first received light. It is the land that one out of every ten Americans claims as the home of "their fathers." The enslavement of millions of West Africans over almost four centuries in the Atlantic slave trade was a tragedy of such magnitude that it is difficult to understand that West Africans developed complex societies prior to the coming of the Europeans. However, there is a great deal of evidence that Africans **were** builders of great societies. When the human drama opened, Africans were on the scene—producing, directing, and acting. Africans were known, accepted, and honored throughout the ancient world for their knowledge of medicine, law, government, science, and culture. The Greeks and Arabs were especially noted for giving praise and respect to the Africans. The Greek author Homer praised Memnon, King of Ethiopia, and Black Eurybates:

(continued, page 2)

> Of visage solemn, sad, but sable head, short, wooly curls, o'erfleeced his bending head, . . . Eurybates, in whose large soul alone, Ulysses viewed an image of his own.

Not only Homer but Pliny, Diodorus, Herodotus, and other classical writers repeatedly honored the Ethiopians. (Prior to the early 1500s Europeans referred to all Africans as Ethiopians, which is an arabic word meaning "burnt-face.")

Arab scholarship also speaks highly of Africans and their achievements. In the early sixteenth century the Arab scholar and traveler Abdunrahman Es-Sadi wrote the *Tarikh-es Sudan (History of the Sudan).* Es-Sadi's writings about the "Bilad es Sudan" (the Land of Black) not only provided insights about West Africans but gave impetus to the great modern scholars J. A. Rogers, W. E. B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, Yosef Ben Johannan, John Henrik Clarke, Chancellor Williams, Basil Davidson, and others to study the African past.

The West African past is of particular significance to Americans because the Africans who became slaves in the Americas were seized primarily in West Africa. Wolof Serer, Mandinke, Bambara, Hausa, Fudani, and Fante are but a few of the African cultures that were imported to the Americas and to the colony of Virginia. (See Table)

There were, and are, too many significant differences among the various West African people to put them all into a single category. Nonetheless, there were some basic values, common patterns, and other fundamental similarities that existed among them that will allow for a general description of West African societies before the Atlantic slave trade.

Common to West African societies was a belief in a High God or Supreme Creator of the world. The High God in traditional West African religion is the parent of the lesser gods, who are seen as mediators between man and God.

The core of West African society was the family, which was organized among many ethnic groups along matrilineal lines. Polygamy and monogamy were both widely practiced, social life was well organized, and the sick and infirm were cared for.

Most societies were organized around the age-grade set system. The age-grade set (which can be compared to the Western notion of peer groups) was determined by the period in which one was born. As one progressed through the various age-grades (which were generally broken into the following age groups: grade 1, age 1–12; grade 2, 13–18; grade 3, 19–28; grade 4, 29–39; and grade 5, age 40+), the individual was inculcated with his or her sex role and responsibility to the community.

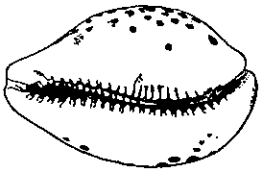
Agriculture was the basis of economic life in West Africa, although herding, fishing, and, in some cases, trade with northern and central African cultures were also important in their daily lives. West Africans had also established a monetary system based on the

ORIGIN OF SLAVES IMPORTED INTO VIRGINIA 1710-1769

ORIGIN	NUMBER OF SLAVES	
Direct from Africa		
"Africa"	20,567	
Gambia (including Senegal and Goree)	3,652	
"Guinea" (Gold Coast, Windward Coast)	6,777	
Calabar and Bonny	9,224	
Angola	3,860	
Madagascar	1,011	
	↳	45,091
Via West Indies		7,046
Via Other North American Ports		370
Total		**52,504**

Source: Joseph E. Holloway, ***Africanisms in American Culture***

cowrie shell that had been in use before European penetration in the late fifteenth century.



Cowrie shell

The West Africans, contrary to popular myths, had also developed political institutions before contact with Europeans. Political institutions ranged from a council of elders to village states and territorial empires, for example, the kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay. Anthropologist Melville J. Herskovitz states that "of the areas inhabited by non-literate people, Africa exhibits the greatest incidence of complex governmental structures. Not even the kingdoms of Peru and Mexico could materialize resources and concentrate power more effectively than could some of these African monarchies, which are more compared with Europe of the Middle Ages than referred to the common conception of the 'Primitives' states.'"

The writing of the history of Africa and specifically West Africa is still in an embryonic stage. The documents left by the Greeks, the Arabs, the slave traders, and the West Africans themselves are scanty at best. One historian notes that

> in the investigation of significant historical developments it is often impossible to follow, with any conviction, the old logic of cause and effect. Events crowd upon circumstances, seemingly unrelated details coincide, individuals, unknown to each other and inspired, it would seem, by motives that are utterly disparate, set to work in the same direction, but in various parts of the world; accident plays its part, and then, suddenly, and almost fortuitously, the pieces fall into place and mankind has changed direction.

To reconstruct the West African past is a challenge and a mission and, as African history is transmitted to future generations, we must constantly remind them, and ourselves, that "those who are dead are never gone."

Hear more often things than beings,
The voice of the fire listening,
Hear the voice of the water
Hear in the wind
The bushes sobbing
It is the sigh of our Forebears.

Those who are dead are never gone:
They are there in the thickening shadow.
The dead are not under the Earth:
They are in the tree that rustles,
They are in the wood that groans,
They are in the water that sleeps,
They are in the hut, they are in the crowd,
The dead are not dead.

Those who are dead are never gone,
They are in the breast of the woman,
They are in the child who is wailing
and in the firebrand that flames.
The dead are not under the Earth:
They are in the fire that is dying,
They are in the grasses that weep,
They are in the whimpering rocks,
They are in the forest, they are in the house,
The dead are not dead.

Birago Diop

Take a Seat, But Not Just *Any* Seat

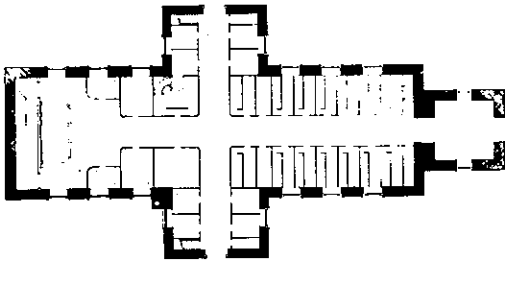
by Carl Lounsbury

Carl, a research historian in the Department of Architectural Research, last contributed to the interpreter *in the May 1991 issue with an article on the new Courthouse interpretation.*

As was the Anglican tradition in colonial Virginia, parishioners sat in specially assigned pews and benches in Bruton Parish Church. Rather than open, indiscriminate seating, people took their place in church according to their age, sex, race, and political and social status. Contemporaries believed that their world was an orderly hierarchial system created by God in which everything and everyone had a natural and proper place. Nowhere was rank made more visibly manifest or more clearly delineated than in the seating of the congregation.

Slavery was one of the fundamental barriers that separated the many worshippers at Bruton. However, the task of distinguishing where slaves sat in the church has been made all the more difficult if not impossible for two reasons. First, the records of the parish vestry disappeared in the 1850s when an antiquarian clergyman failed to return them to the church. Only the fragments of a vestry minute book from between the years 1674 to 1769 have survived. These fragments give us tantalizing glimpses of patterns of worship in Williamsburg during the colonial period but none pertain to issues concerning slaves. More detailed accounts concerning seating and perhaps drawings showing pew location and the names of their occupants have been lost.

Secondly, the interior of the church today does not reflect its earlier seating arrangement. When the building was renovated in the late 1930s, no attempt was made to accurately restore the pews, galleries, reredos, and other fittings to their eighteenth-century location and configuration. The renovation was carried out to suit the requirements of a modern congregation and was not intended to be a museum restoration. Modified slip pews of uniform height with seats facing the pulpit or altar conformed to modern patterns of Episcopal worship, not eighteenth-century Anglican ones. Archaeological and documentary evidence has shown, for example, that a long gallery stretched along the south wall of the building from the west gallery to the south wing. This was not reconstructed during the 1938-1939 renovation. It is important to keep this in mind when trying to re-create colonial seating patterns.



Floor plan of Bruton Parish Church as now restored

From what does survive, it is clear that segregation was an integral part of Bruton Parish Church's seating policy. Perhaps one of the most striking differences between modern and colonial worship services was the tradition of segregating men and women. In 1716 the vestry ordered that men "sitt on the North side of the Church, and the Women on the left [south]." However, it is not clear how long this pattern lasted at Bruton. By the time of the Revolution, the practice had disappeared in most other Anglican churches in the colony.

The importance of status and rank is evident in the assignment of pews to men of authority. Space was provided near the chancel for the commissary of the church. Because Bruton had also become the church of the provincial government, a special pew was established for the governor and members of the Council. Pews in the wings appear to have been reserved for members of the House of Burgesses. Eventually, vestrymen, and perhaps city and county officials, may also have had pews set aside for their use.

In addition to these special pews on the floor of the church, other private and special pews were allowed by the vestry in the course of the century. The gallery that was constructed in the west end of the church was given over solely for the use of students from the College of William and Mary. The vestry allowed them to construct a lock on the door at the entrance into the gallery to prevent others from taking their seats. Another gallery (one that has not been reconstructed) for the use of the parish boys was built in the 1720s on the south side of the church ex-

tending from the west gallery to the edge of the third window near the cross wings.

Documentary evidence suggests that the vestry granted leave to an individual in the 1720s to construct a gallery in the south wing for his private use, which probably accommodated two or three other families as well. Such private hanging pews and galleries could be found in many Anglican churches in Virginia as members of the gentry sought to segregate themselves from their fellow worshippers. Dell Upton has speculated that some slaves may have sat with their masters on back benches in these private galleries. He has observed that in the north gallery of Abingdon Church in Gloucester County, the main pews are "separated by a narrow alley with short benches that probably accommodated slaves of the pewholders."

It has been suggested that the gallery in the north wing of Bruton Church may have been reserved for slaves. While this is plausible, there is no documentary evidence to substantiate this assumption. A nineteenth-century illustration of the church shows an enclosed outside stair winding its way upward along the east and north walls until it reaches the gallery in the north wing. Whether this was a separate entrance for slaves or yet another private pew for the members of the gentry remains unknown.

Unfortunately, scholars still know very little about patterns of church attendance among slaves in colonial America. Some have argued that few attended formal services while others have pointed to evidence to suggest that slaves composed a fair proportion of church adherents in some congregations. This confusion about church attendance stems in part from the difficulty many white Virginians had in reconciling slavery to Christian principles. Some owners hesitated in having their slaves instructed in Christian doctrine while others freely allowed them to attend church services. When one slaveholder worried about the effect an evangelical preacher had on his slaves, he directed his overseer as an antidote to:

> encourage them all to go every Sunday to their Parish church, by giving those, who are the most constant attendants at church, a larger allowance of food or an additional shirt, more than the rest, whereby you will Make it their interest to do their Duty.

James Blair noted in 1729 that

> the negroes themselves in our neighbourhood are very desirous to become Christians; and in order to it come and give an Account of the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed and ten Commandments, and so are baptized and frequent the church.

The ambivalence that most in southern society had toward spreading Christian principles to its growing slave population can be seen in the seating provided blacks in churches outside of Williamsburg. Although the evidence is inconclusive as to the pervasiveness of slave attendance at Anglican services, those that were known to do so were customarily relegated to the back benches of galleries, seated in outer rooms and towers, placed in aisles on benches, confined to standing at doors, or were forced to remain outside. In Charleston, South Carolina, poor whites convinced the vestry of St. Michael's Church to evict blacks who had owned benches at the back of the church so that they could obtain seats of their own. The dispossessed blacks were obliged to sit in the back of galleries and in the ground-floor area beneath the belfry outside the main body of the church. Whether out of heartfelt interest or under duress, slaves packed the gallery in the Lower Church of Lunenburg Parish in Richmond County, Virginia, one Sunday in 1773 to hear the minister rail against the "dangerous tenets of those Sectaires the Anabaptists."

Two Anglican churches offer firm evidence of the marginal position of slaves. St. Andrew's Church in St. Mary's County, Maryland, was erected in 1767 with twin towers constructed slightly in front of the main west facade. An exterior door in the north tower leads directly up a winding stair to the back of a double-tiered gallery in the west end of the church. This upper part of the gallery is segregated from the lower part by a wainscot partition. Entrance to the lower gallery was gained by entering the church and climbing the stair of the other tower. It seems likely that this carefully devised circulation path was intended to keep slaves from entering directly into the body of the church or mingling with white worshippers in the two-tiered west gallery. In the town of Portsmouth, the segregation of the races was explicitly demonstrated in Trinity Church. In the 1790s a French traveler observed that just inside the west door, "on both sides, are two

(continued, page 10)

The King's English

Greetings and Farewells

Two points about eighteenth-century English and English-American society are important to keep in mind when considering any type of public behavior in those societies. First of all, they were stratified societies and the ways in which people interacted with one another reflected their relative social positions. Not only how something was said, but when it was said, were reflective of the social positions of the speakers. For example, it was not proper for someone of a lower social rank to offer a greeting to a person of higher rank without having been first addressed by that person. Nor was it proper for the social inferior to end the conversation. Secondly, there was some fluidity between the strata. Money was not enough to lift a person to a higher level, however. Deportment was important as well. Deportment included dress, bodily carriage, and using the polite forms of conversation. During the course of the eighteenth century, the middling sorts were increasingly able to afford the trappings of gentility, and they were eager to acquire the accomplishments as well. By the later eighteenth century, therefore, many had acquired the rudiments of polite conversation.

Good morning, good day, good evening, and other similar greetings were used widely by polite society in the eighteenth century. **A good day to you, Sir** or **A good morning to you, Robin** (or any nickname) were used informally by the gentry and were more likely than the abbreviated forms above to be used by the middling sort and lower in addressing the gentry as well as each other.

How do you do? was a common greeting in genteel society during the eighteenth century. It survives in the now-casual "How ya doin'?" **How do you do?** was often followed by either an inquiry after the other person's family, or by an expression of pleasure at seeing the other person. Sometimes an inquiry after the family of the person addressed was used alone as a greeting:

How do you do, Mr. Harrison? I'm right heartily glad to see you.

How does your father, old fellow? [gentleman to gentleman]

How do you do? How does all at home?

Your servant, or variations like **Your humble servant** and **Your most obedient servant,** were also polite greetings among the gentry and middling sorts. This greeting originated as a form of gracious condescension. It would have been redundant, and therefore impertinent, for a white person of low status, a servant, or a slave to address his superior in this fashion. A member of the gentry and a prosperous middle-class person, however, might each have used this expression to address the other:

Sir, I am your most obedient servant. I am heartily glad to see you.

[First gentleman]: **Sir, your humble servant. I'm very glad to see you.**

[Second gentleman]: **Sir, I am yours. How does your family?**

In a conversation between social equals or near equals, politeness required the second party to affirm that he/she was the servant of the first party.

All of the above greetings were commonly used by gentlemen. Ladies used **How do you do?** and inquiries about family, particularly female members of the other person's family. Ladies appear to have been more likely to have used **I am glad to see you**, rather than **right heartily glad** or **heartily glad**. They also appear to have used the **Your servant** type of greeting with less frequency than gentlemen did. Of course, **Good day** was an acceptable greeting for both ladies and gentlemen.

For genteel character interpreters, a particularly useful greeting in meeting visitors is **I have not the honor to know you, Sir/Madam. I am _____.** It is an authentic way to

introduce yourself, as a member of the gentry or middle class, to a stranger of a similar status. An interpreter portraying a character of a lower station than the person he is addressing may say **Pray, Sir/Madam, if I may be so bold, I am _____. . . .**

The most common form of genteel farewell seems to have been of the **your servant** variety and appears to have been used by the middling sorts and above. Again, the second party returned the civility:

[1st party]: **. . . and so, your servant, Sir.**

[2nd party]: **Sir, I am yours.**

or

Your servant, Sir.

or

Yours, Sir.

Your servant could be expanded to **Your humble servant, Your obedient servant,** or (if you wanted to be really obsequious) **Your most obedient and humble servant.**

A signal for departure used mainly by gentlemen with their social equals was **By your leave,** sometimes varied to **With your permission:**

[1st Gentleman]: **. . . by your leave, Sir.**

[2nd Gentleman]: **Your servant, Sir.**

The gentry and higher social ranks also employed French phrases at times in conversation, and **Adieu** was used as a sort of breezy farewell among friends or family.

Acceptable to all genders and stations were variations on **Good day:**

[1st party]: **I wish you a good evening, Sir/Madam.**

or (less formal)

Good evening to you, Sir/Madam/Friend.

or (informal)

Good night to you, Robin.

[2nd party]: **The like to you, Sir/Madam/Friend.**

or (still again!)

Your servant.

For those of you who find the phrase irritating, it may be a comfort to know that **Have a nice day** did not originate in the 1970s; it has its roots in the civil **Good day to you** of earlier centuries.

No doubt you noticed a variety of idiomatic differences between modern and eighteenth-century language in the above discussion that was graciously supplied by Cathy Hellier. The use of adjectives, suffixes, etc., while not germane to this issue's King's English topic, will be covered in later issues. If there is an aspect of eighteenth-century vocabulary and language that piques your curiosity, then please contact the garrulous editor and he'll see if it can't be addressed.

Monticello: A Visitor's Perspective

by Judith Milteer

Judith is a lead interpreter in the Department of Presentations and Tours.

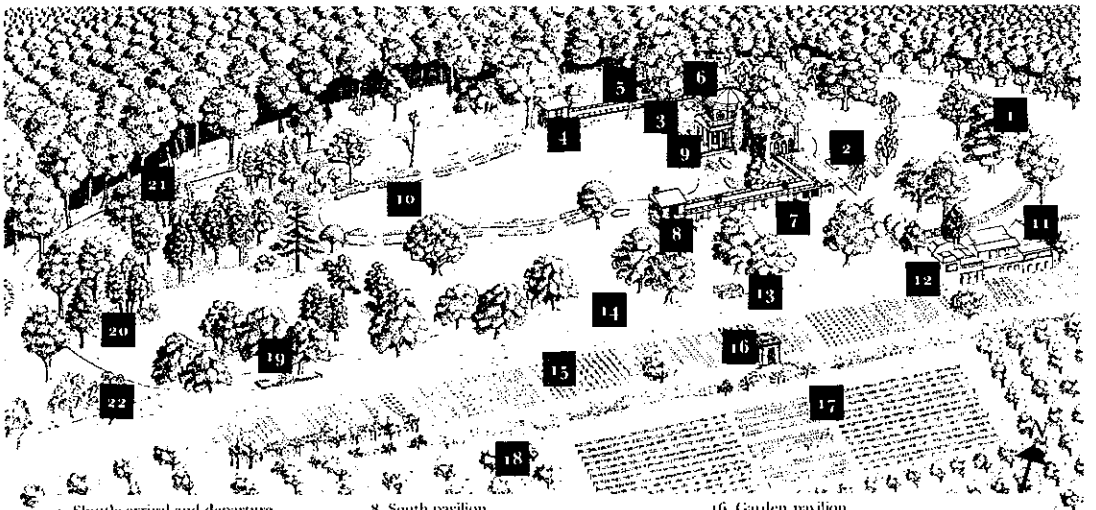
Revered primarily as the self-designed residence of Thomas Jefferson, Monticello can also be appreciated for its majestic setting and classical architecture. The house, begun in 1770, and adjoining gardens sit atop the 867-foot "Little Mountain" and reign with undisputed authority. Monticello is located on five thousand acres in Virginia's Piedmont region near Charlottesville and is a true gem among those sites designated as National Historic Landmarks.

Museum staff members recommend approximately a full day to see the attractions: a thirty-minute guided tour of the house; a guided tour of the garden and grounds (forty minutes); self-guided tours of the extensive acreage of vegetable, fruit and flower gardens, the graveyard, and Mulberry Row; and the Visitor's Center, with its exhibition area and orientation film, "The Eye of Thomas Jefferson," shown twice daily at 11 A.M. and 2 P.M.

Visitors park out of sight of Monticello and begin their visit at a facility with all the usual amenities: state-wide travel brochures, rest rooms, drink machines, water fountain, and a ticket desk. (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation employees are admitted without charge with a picture I.D.) Operating at five-minute intervals, a shuttle bus offers a half-mile ride to the house by taking a spiral route to the summit that reveals an increasingly elevated view of the landscape below.

Our guide of the house was Molly Gaston who combined biographical data, social history, and decorative arts information into a well-organized tour. She maintained a well-controlled and cheerful presence throughout the first-floor nine-room tour, despite the interference of a very verbose toddler.

A newly acquired masterpiece, a rare 1762 Kirckman harpsichord, located in the parlor, displays a feature unique to the scrutinizing eyes of a Colonial Williamsburg interpreter, a foot pedal at the base of a front leg. This musical instrument is particularly meaningful, as it is similar to one Jefferson purchased for his daughters, Martha and Maria. A skillful musician himself and one who



1. Shuttle arrival and departure
2. East front
3. North terrace walk
4. North pavilion
5. North dependencies (stables, ice house, carriage bays)
6. All weather passageway
7. South dependencies (servants' rooms, smoke house, kitchen) and restrooms
8. South pavilion
9. West front and oval flower beds
10. Roundabout walk and flower border
11. Gift shop and restrooms
12. Stone workmen's house, now used as offices
13. Levy gravesite
14. Mulberry Row, site of plantation shops and workmen's dwellings
15. Vegetable, or kitchen, garden
16. Garden pavilion
17. Vineyards, berry squares, and submural beds (under restoration)
18. Orchard
19. Ruins of joinery
20. First roundabout
21. Grove
22. Walk to graveyard, shuttle station, and lower parking area

derived great pleasure from music, he advised daughter Martha in a 1790 letter, "Do not neglect your music. It will be a companion which will sweeten many hours of life to you."

Exiting from the house places one on the north terrace, which is the roof for the dependency building located beneath, and in visible distance of the launching site for the garden and grounds tour. This tour is given at thirty-minute intervals from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. (except noon and 12:30). A five-year veteran guide, Jack Huegel, displayed admirable command of his subject and obvious devotion in describing two of Jefferson's great passions, the influence and origins of garden styles and identification of plant life. At the conclusion of the tour, which was on an oppressively hot day, he remained to answer questions and eagerly engaged several of us in further conversation.

Lined with mulberry trees, the plantation's one thousand-foot-long road, Mulberry Row, served structures that housed various plantation industries, domestic outbuildings, and slave dwellings. It also functioned as a link with the plantation and its domestic activities. Only three partial structures of the original seventeen remain. A carefully researched and illustrated brochure, "Mulberry Row," contains biographical information on Jefferson's slaves, particularly Issac Jefferson, John Hemings, and the Hemings sisters. This brochure has an abundance of data to assist the visitor in understanding the life of the scene.

Issac Jefferson, a blacksmith, was a slave at Monticello for much of his life, eventually becoming a free man shortly before his death around 1850.

Following restoration of the house and grounds, Monticello was opened to the public in 1923, predating Colonial Williamsburg by several years. Extensive restoration of the roof and the building's ornate architectural features is currently taking place in preparation for the 250th anniversary of Jefferson's birth in 1993.

On-site services include a gift shop offering basic refreshments, books, stationery, and a broad selection of tasteful souvenirs. Benches on the grounds aid the visitor looking for a few minutes' rest. Illustrated brochures of the house are also available, with room-by-room descriptions, floor plans, and a comprehensive map. Other pamphlets give information on Monticello's vegetable, fruit, and flower gardens including plant identification (with both botanical and common names), historical data, and book references. The recent publication "Mulberry Row" gives an expanded version of the lives of the Monticello slave population with suggested book titles for further information.

On the bus trip back to the parking area, flowering plants from Jefferson's carefully conceived garden plans dot the hillside where a nursery allows for the purchase of a variety of plant life. The Plant Shop offers native plants, flower seeds, and a broad collection of books describing the history of American gardens.

"Saturdays in the Garden, 1991" conducted from March through October is a creation of Monticello's garden and grounds staff and offers guests, mostly local, a wide variety of lectures and workshops on such tempting subjects as "Precious Refreshment," Virginia Cider Making, and Apple Tasting, a session offering samples of fifty apple varieties for participants to sample and enjoy.

Monticello's Education Department earns high marks for creative graphics in their educational posters and brochures and program planning for students in grades 2-12. Additionally, they provide supplemental classroom resource packets as well as on-site enrichment sessions of the house and adjoining grounds.

Monticello is a living tribute to a man whose contributions, both public and private, continue to serve contemporary society in a profound and meaningful way. Today's Monticello is pure Jefferson.

Seating, *continued*

benches painted black. These are for blacks, who are not allowed to mix with the whites."

In contrast to their apparent marginal role in the established Anglican church, slaves and freemen alike became integral and often influential members of Baptist, Methodist, and New Light Presbyterian churches in many parts of Virginia from the period of the Great Awakening through the end of the eighteenth century. In search of a more emotional avenue to personal salvation and expressive spirituality, members of integrated congregations frequently upset the status quo as black and white not only prayed together but subjected themselves to communal discipline. Ideally, as Mechal Sobel has observed, "all poor white and black members" of these congregations were "brothers and sisters in Christ" in a "consensus-run community of equals." After establishing temporary places of worship in groves, barns, and houses, many dissenting congregations built meetinghouses in which blacks and whites–some slaves, others masters–sat together on benches in communal worship. However, brotherly love and racial harmony suffered many strains. Before the spellbinding itinerant preacher George Whitefield could speak to an overflowing integrated congregation at the Presbyterian meetinghouse in Lancaster County, the blacks were obliged to leave the building and stand outside to make room for whites. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, more and more of these congregations began to split along racial lines, dissolving the tenuous religious links that once bound some whites and blacks in a novel social order that defied customary practices.

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Lou's Labors Lost

Since this publication's inception, Lou Powers, research associate in the Department of Historical Research, has served as its assistant editor with uncompromising ability and dedication. Unfortunately for us, she is stepping down from this august position to take over editorial responsibility for the *Research Review.* We here at the *interpreter* wish her the very best with this important publication.

On the plus side of things, I am pleased to announce that Nancy Milton, the *interpreter's* final proofer, will take over the responsibilities of assistant editor. Lou will remain on with us on the editorial board but we will miss this champion of the active voice and vanquisher of evil split infinitives in the trenches of the editorial process.

finis coronat opus, Lou

Books About Early America

Every few years the Institute of Early American History and Culture publishes a bibliography on books pertaining to early American history. Its listings are arranged topically, are very easily referenced, and are prefaced with short, single paragraph introductions.

The latest version is entitled *Books about Early America, 2001 Titles,* and was compiled by David Ammerman and Philip Morgan. So, if you are interested in reading up on a specific aspect of colonial history and are unsure where to start, then leaf through this handy reference guide. It will save you a lot of aggravation and time.