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Vulgar and Genteel: "The Common People"

summarized by Mark Howell

In March, as the crocuses bloomed and the school groups descended, the Research Division of Colonial Williamsburg sponsored a symposium on the lives of "ordinary" people in the colonial Chesapeake region. Entitled "Common People and Their Material World: Free Men and Women in the Chesapeake, 1700-1830," the conference aimed to bring researchers together to assess the field's current understanding of this substantial portion of colonial society. As interpreters, we all know the visitor's fascination with this subject and the frustration of the lack of evidence to interpret it as fully as we are able to do with the gentry. This article will summarize the general conclusions reached by the presenters and panels (and audience) and the future of research into this aspect of early American life.

The symposium was divided into several sessions that dealt with living standards, rural and urban life, folkways, and rituals. Lorena Walsh opened the program with two points that carried throughout the day: that success and economic independence were more often appraised according to landholding instead of material possessions, and that there was a clear distinction between the rural and the urban middling sort. If you compare the two groups' quality and diversity of possessions, those living in town were more closely associated with the rural gentry. For example, archaeological evidence is showing that the social importance of eating among the urban middling sort compares more favorably with the rural gentry's code than with their rural counterparts'.

There are a few tangible conclusions that can be reliably reported. The variety of consumer goods did increase over the century. During the first fifty years many households could boast of little more than a pot, chest, and mattress. By mid-century items such as cutlery and tea wares were making their way into more and more inventories, and in the early republic the inventories of "ordinary" people included tables, bedsteads, pewter and ceramic plates, chairs, and, on occasion, a case piece.

The colonists' diet—and attendant mortality and height—was superior to their European counterparts' and to later generations'. Men, on average, stood five foot, six inches (a height Europeans would not reach until the late 1800s). The population in general suffered a decline in longevity and height from the post-Revolutionary era from which it did not completely recover until World War II. This is possibly because of European disease being spread by the high level of geographic mobility that characterized the nineteenth-century immigrant and the harder work obligations introduced by the Industrial Revolution.

As if the study of common people wasn't

hard enough, Emma Lou Powers, through her research on tenants [*interpreter*, November 1989], has been able to draw some general conclusions about propertyless women. They seem to have made up about 10 percent of the populations of Yorktown and Williamsburg and were very transient, the Hunter sisters and those who acted as landladies being exceptions to the rule. For example, Catherine Rathell, who traveled to the area from London in 1765, set up shop in Annapolis, Fredericksburg, and Williamsburg at one time or another. They found that their best chance for success lay in town, not in a rural setting. It will come as no surprise that most of their occupations were extensions of domestic duties—seamstresses, midwives, etc. Women also operated 15 percent of all taverns in Williamsburg of which we have knowledge.

Vanessa Patrick heralded Lorena's assertion that there was a marked contrast between what was considered ordinary in an urban and rural setting. Those who lived in town had more specialized and socially oriented "equipment" and better access to it than their country cousins. A particularly relevant point was that urban life-styles were not exported into the countryside, but rather those living in a rural setting made up their own life-style based on their own contact—through stores—with England.

Ann Smart Martin's study of Bedford County in central Virginia bears this out: the local stores were the rural family's link with England. Though many lived in little more than log houses (over 60 percent did not even own slaves) the stores were able to supply them with virtually any item they might need—textiles, clothing, and alcohol making up over 50 percent of the purchases at one store—or want. There seems to have been an anti-elitism in rural Virginia that influenced the ordinary man's spending patterns and choices. One could find case pieces in the most ramshackle of houses, for example, ignoring a balance of interior and exterior appearances. Rural folk had the same items available to them as those in an urban setting but they did not always know the convention of how to use them "properly."

Barbara Carson has noticed this same disparity in a more intangible sense. Both traveler Dr. Alexander Hamilton (an extract of his journal appears in the box adjoining this article) and Carter tutor Philip Fithian observed those of a middling level of society who knew the rules and procedures of proper etiquette yet were quite unable to duplicate the deportment of their "betters," thus pointing out even more graphically their station in life than if they had done nothing. They had the tools but not an understanding of how to use them.

This whole question of the interaction of people from different social levels is a particularly tricky one. Betty Leviner's study of tavern keeper Ann Pattison's daybook graphically shows that all levels of society frequented the establishment but leaves the question of how much they mingled together unanswered. So many questions such as this remain unanswered because of the researchers' inability to examine the specific personalities of the parties involved. There were many other questions raised, near and dear to us all, that were difficult to get a handle on:

- How did common people acquire the capital necessary to start a business? Credit? Relatives? We don't know.
- What constituted "respectability" to the middling sort?
- Did the middling sort attempt to emulate, or mimic, the elite as their ability to do so increased?

Put another way: Would those who enjoy bowling, an extremely popular sport among blue collar workers today, put aside their balls if they could suddenly afford the greens fees of that bastion of the white collar worker, golf? The answer is: it depends on the individual.

Our inability to draw conclusions to these and other questions is related to the increasingly sophisticated and complex world that colonial Virginians found themselves in. The acceleration of change that they underwent, the shift from a more communal sense of living to an increasingly individualistic one blurs our ability to read the historical record. Hence, you find the occasional artisan with more books in his home than some members of the "educated elite." The fluidity of and opportunity for movement between the various social levels hampers our ability to create a clean, neat definition of "genteel," "common," or "low."

As Kevin Kelly noted in his conclusion to the day, there are some consistent traits of the middling sort: they were involved in the political process, held political opinions, were

exposed to a general level of education, and most had a sufficiency in living conditions. But are they worthy of the name "common"? We consider today's middle class as representing the "common person" but, if the demographics are right, then shouldn't the poor and enslaved, those who made up the majority of Virginia's population, be considered the "common person"? Well, we ran out of time before we could get into that twist but it does bring up the age-old problem of giving concise, definitive answers to the visitor. Part of our job as professional interpreters of history will continue to be to interpret not only what we know but what we don't know *and why.*

The development of what came to be called the middle class and its still evolving attitudes toward fashion, freedom, and wealth make conclusions difficult at best. As research continues patterns of life-style and perspective may emerge. For now, the middling can only be described as vulgar and genteel, "of the better sort," and "rude, lazy drones."

Both video- and audiotapes were made of the conference and are available at the Foundation Library. The presenters who were mentioned in this article included Ann Smart Martin from the Winterthur Museum and Barbara Carson, who teaches at the College of William and Mary and George Washington University. All others mentioned represent the various disciplines that make up our Research Division.

"Intended only for health and recreation," Dr. Alexander Hamilton embarked on a journey that took him from Maryland to Maine and back in 1744. Early on, while at Newcastle in Delaware, he recorded the following occurrence:

Att Curtis's I met company going to Philadelphia and was pleased att it, being myself an utter stranger to the roads. This company consisted of three men: Thomas Howard, Timothy Smith, and William Morison. I treated them with some lemmon punch and desired the favour of their company. They readily granted my request and stayed some time for me till I had eat breakfast. . . .

Morison . . . was a very rough spun, forward, clownish blade, much addicted to swearing, att the same time desirous to pass for a gentleman; notwithstanding which ambition, the conscientiousness of his naturall boorishness obliged him frequently to frame ill tim'd apologys for his misbehaviour, which he termed frankness and freeness. It was often, "Damn me, gentlemen, excuse me; I am a plain, honest fellow; all is right down plain dealing, by God." He was much affronted with the landlady att Curtis's who, seeing him in a greasy jacket and breeches and a dirty worsted cap, and withall a heavy, forward, clownish air and behaviour, I suppose took him for some ploughman or carman and so presented him with some scraps of cold veal for breakfast, he having declared that he could not drink "your damned washy tea." As soon as he saw his mess he swore, "Damn him, if it wa'n't out of respect to the gentleman in company," (meaning me) he would throw her cold scraps out at the window and break her table all to pieces should it cost him 100 pounds for dammages. Then taking off his worsted night cap, he pulled a linnen one out of his pocket and clapping it upon his head, "Now," says he, "I'm upon the borders of Pensylvania and must look like a gentleman; 'tother was good enough for Maryland, and damn my blood if ever I come into that rascally province again if I don't procure a leather jacket that I may be in a trim to box the saucy jacks there and not run the hazard of tearing my coat." This showed, by the bye, that he payed more regard to his coat than his person, a remarkable instance of modesty and self denyall.

He then made a transition to politicks and damnd the late Sir R[obert] W[alpole] for a rascall. We asked him his reasons for cursing Sr. R, but he would give us no other but this, that he was certainly informed by some very good gentlemen, who understood the thing right well, that the said Sr. R was a damnd rogue. And att the conclusion of each rodomontade, he told us that tho he seemed to be but a plain, homely fellow, yet he would have us know that he was able to afford better than many that went finer: he had good linnen in his bags, a pair of silver buckles, . . . two Holland shirts, and some neat night caps; and that his little woman att home drank tea twice a day; and he himself lived very well and expected to live better so soon as that old rogue B——t dyed and he could secure a title to his land.

Tobacco as Medicine

by John A. Lanzalotti

John is a practicing physician in the Williamsburg area and is a student of the history of medicine.

It seems surprising that tobacco was once used as a medicine in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in light of our twentieth-century surgeon general's warning that tobacco can be hazardous to our health. How did this happen?

Tobacco, the dried leaves of the *Nicotiana tabacum* plant, belonging to the potato family, was probably indigenous to tropical America. It was smoked by the natives at the time Columbus came to America and was introduced into Portugal and Spain in 1559, and from there into France and Italy. It was introduced into England directly from America.

The name *Nicotiana* derives from Jean Nicot, a French diplomat, who probably was influential in introducing the use of tobacco into France. *Tabacum*, or *Spanish tobaco*, refers to the American Indian name for the pipe or tube in which it was smoked.

In Europe the use of tobacco quickly became habitual and was at first opposed by both church and state as an enslaving addiction. That opposition ceased when Cardinal Richelieu in France and Charles I in England discovered its possibilities as a source of taxation.

How did tobacco come to be used as a medicine? Native Americans smoked it to appease divine forces or invite aid, but never as a personal indulgence. Indian women smoked it as a cure for the common cold. Tobacco was used by natives internally to expel worms and, in small doses, it was used as a diuretic. For stopped bowels, they injected tobacco smoke as an enema. For piles, a suppository was made of raw fat with a pinch of tobacco. Native Americans used tobacco topically to cure toothache, wounds, arthritis, rheumatism, and athlete's foot.

Nicot was the first European to recognize the medicinal properties of tobacco. Contemporaneous with this discovery in 1559 was the rebirth of therapeutics (the medical treatment of disease). The introduction of exotic drugs into Europe had a great practical and theoretical effect in the medical field by undermining the ancient traditions of the Galenists and the Hippocratists. These exotic drugs reinforced the Paracelsian idea of specifics, that is, that there exists a specific drug against each and every disease. The Europeans were overwhelmed by the knowledge native Americans possessed of these plants. This led to a critical revival of botany that was very important to the development of medicine during this period.

Because of this undercurrent in the development of medical science, the use of tobacco as a medicine became important. Eventually the partisans of the different schools of medicine (i.e., the Galenists, Hippocratists, etc.) adopted the use of these new specific medicines. This was brought about by the need at the end of the sixteenth century and beginning of the seventeenth century to find a compromise between traditional concepts and new evidence. As is usual in the history of medical science, there is a tendency to oscillate between the old and the new, taking a little from each to form a new principle. This led to the development of empirical method in therapeutics during the seventeenth century, a very tangible example of the coming Enlightenment.

Thomas Hariot, who was patronized by Sir Walter Raleigh, described the drugs found in America and praised the healthful qualities of tobacco. He claimed that tobacco purged the body of "gross humors," opened all pores and passages of humors in the body, and prevented the obstruction of these openings. Tobacco had become a panacea. Smokers said it was an antidote to all poisons, it expelled rheums (any watery or mucous discharge), sour humors, and obstructions of all kinds, it healed wounds, gout, ague (malaria, or any illness with intermittent chills), and it could neutralize the effects of drunkenness, weakness, and hunger.

During the seventeenth century another important tendency in medical science (and Enlightenment philosophy) was developed: therapeutic skepticism. This was brought about in part by the slow evolution of medical theories based on critical experience and animal experiments done in the method advocated by Francis Bacon and led to the exchange of information, which, in turn, led to medical progress.

By the early eighteenth century, tobacco was being used primarily as a sneezing drug to cure vertigo and faintness by clearing the

glands of the head of mucus and other fluid discharges and opening the finer passages, especially of the nervous system, by the shaking that occurs with a sneeze. Because of its perceived physical property of penetrating heat, tobacco was used topically as a drawer or ripener in rheumatism and gout. In 1732 William Byrd advocated the use of tobacco in treating contagion. Of course, Byrd was primarily a planter with tobacco to sell so it is not surprising that he was promoting its use in spite of the fact that by the beginning of the eighteenth century tobacco had lost favor with most medical practitioners. Its use as a narcotic in the sense of having sedative properties and as an emetic to cause vomiting was confined to the poor because of the cheapness of the drug. By 1726 it was known that a tolerance effect was associated with tobacco and the emetic effects were only evident during the early use of the drug, but not after repeated use.

After the early eighteenth century, tobacco had lost its popularity as a medicine except for its use as snuff, although it was still listed in various pharmacy books throughout the period. Dr. Cullen of Edinburgh still classified the action of tobacco as a narcotic because of its sedative effects as well as its ability to induce death. He also described a strong stimulant effect of the drug, especially in the stomach and intestines, and mentioned that smoking was used in the past as a means of guarding people against contagion. He denied that this is a special property of tobacco; rather, it was due to the narcotic or sedative effect that reduces fear which Cullen believed to "excite the power of contagion," since he was not aware that contagion was the result of infection by microorganisms. Cullen also described the use of tobacco enemas in constipation, ileus (paralyzed bowels), and other afflictions. Cullen used tobacco externally to treat ulcers, but he mentioned the possibility of it being absorbed and causing fatal poisoning.

In 1828 Wilhelm Posselt and Karl Ludwig Reiman, two German chemists, isolated nicotine from tobacco and identified it as the active principle. Today tobacco has no therapeutic importance but considerable scientific and toxicological interest. In the central nervous system small initial doses cause stimulation followed by depression and paralysis, especially in the respiratory process. The most important effects are on the circulatory and gastrointestinal systems. Limited tolerance to the acute toxic effects is soon acquired, after which nicotine acts as a central nervous system sedative.

Free nicotine, which can be fatal, is very alkaline and caustic and can be absorbed externally through wounds and internally by enemas. This caustic property of nicotine was probably what was interpreted as a penetrating heat by the people of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when they used it to clean wounds.

In retrospect, many of the effects that were early on recognized as medicinal were in actuality cases of acute nicotine poisoning.

Nicotiana Tabacum.

Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire

edited by Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.)

reviewed by Kevin P. Kelly

Two general approaches dominate the study of early American history. The first views the colonies from the colonies' perspective. These studies usually look at how local factors shaped colonial development and tend to put a premium on the distinctive character of New World settlements. The second approach, however, sees the colonies as an extension of British history. These studies have focused on the institutional and economic connections that linked the Old and New World together. The essays in *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* fall into this latter school. But the editors are at pains to point out that these essays break new ground because they look more at the cultural and social interplay between England and the people under her sway than at economic and institutional ties. The editors also note that the several authors consider anew the meaning of the frontier as a place where people confronted the social and cultural imperatives of people living in England.

Four of the essays examine some of the regions that comprised England's first empire. Nicholas Canny looks at Ireland. England and Ireland had a long joint history that complicated England's efforts to bring the smaller island within her sphere of influence in the seventeenth century. The major problem was the complex composition of the Irish population. Native Irish Catholics, old English Catholics, English Protestants, and Scottish Presbyterians all called Ireland home. This constant, sometimes violent, contest between these groups, Canny concludes, prompted England's heavy-handed countertactics, and in the end convinced her that Ireland would remain a poor, marginal country.

Eric Richards focuses on Scotland after the 1707 Act of Union. England and Scotland too had a long history together, which, according to Richards, explains why the lowland Scots willingly embraced their new provincial status. Richards suggests that by giving up their status as a separate nation and taking advantage of new trade and intellectual opportunities, the Scots actually sharpened their separate national identity. Only the isolated highlanders remained unaffected.

On the other hand, Michael Craton finds that the British West Indies moved haltingly, if at all, toward cultural autonomy in the eighteenth century. The dictates of trade tightly linked the islands to England and lured many planters back to the mother country. As a result, Craton concludes, West Indians preferred to hide their colonial status and emphasized instead their English heritage.

Finally, J. M. Bumsted explores England's efforts to secure her dominance over Canada. As was the case in Ireland, there was not one Canada, not even one French Canada or English Canada. The French in the Maritime Provinces differed culturally from the French of the St. Lawrence River Valley, and the interests of the earlier English settlers clashed with those of the late arriving loyalists. Because of the disunity, Bumsted observes that British Canada was the least developed and defined area of England's eighteenth-century overseas empire.

Four other essays look at how well different people affected by England's imperialism retained a distinctive culture. A. G. Roeber notes that for the Dutch and German settlers the retention of their language was the key to their separate cultural identity, and in this effort the Germans were more successful than the Dutch. This was due in part because the Germans were able to isolate themselves while the Dutch became heavily involved in British commerce.

According to Maldwyn Jones, the Scotch-Irish, on the other hand, gained an identity in British North America that they did not have in Ulster. Their commitment to Presbyterianism and their back country settlements reinforced their cultural identity throughout the eighteenth century.

For African-Americans the critical element affecting their New World experience was whether they lived in a slave owning society as opposed to a slave society. As Philip Morgan notes, slaves could be owned in all British colonies, but in some slavery was more an integral part of the social and economic fab-

ric. In slave owning societies, African-Americans enjoyed some freedoms, but ironically, Morgan finds that it was in slave societies that African-Americans' influence on language, music, and diet was the greatest.

James Merrell also finds that location was important for native Americans because the farther Indians lived from whites, the more completely *they* set the rules governing cultural interaction. As Indians became closer "neighbors" their day-to-day interaction with whites in the areas of language, trade, and law forced them to accommodate to English ways. Merrell concludes that although reduced in numbers and strength, Indians on the English side of the frontier in the eighteenth century never completely disappeared, nor did they completely surrender their cultural identity.

The final essay asks the question, did the mainland colonies have an impact on England in the eighteenth century? Jacob Price's answer is that for overseas merchants in London and the bigger outposts, and for the wholesale traders who dealt with them, North American colonies were of significant importance. But few of England's statesmen and politicians—those who set policy—were directly or even indirectly interested in America. As a result, America's English friends could influence imperial policies toward the colonies only if their goals coincided with the interests of larger, more powerful groups. Price concludes that this is why overseas merchants succeeded in 1766 with the repeal of the Stamp Act but petitioned in vain for conciliation in 1775.

For students of colonial Virginia, each of these essays is well worth reading, especially those by Morgan, Merrell, and Roeber. The authors have shifted the focus of the so-called "imperial school" away from institutions. They reveal that cultural interactions varied widely from region to region and from people to people, yet taken together they do point to some common strands running through the first British empire. England's attempt to exercise power is clearly one feature common to the colonial experience; it is mirrored by the attempt of the English to secure a dominance over their non-English neighbors. Further, the authors reveal how language was pivotal to the struggle. Those who resisted the use of English retained more of their cultural identity, but at the price of continued assaults. Yet even as the non-English speakers gave in, they modified the dominant language with new words and new dialects so as to deny the English a complete victory. This view of language as a weapon adds a new twist to the usual picture of England's overseas expansion.

Williamsburg and the Civil War

by Wallace Clement

Wally is an interpreter at Carter's Grove and his article is excerpted from a larger essay. To put the events that occurred in Williamsburg in perspective, important events and battles are scattered in the margin close to the time they transpired.

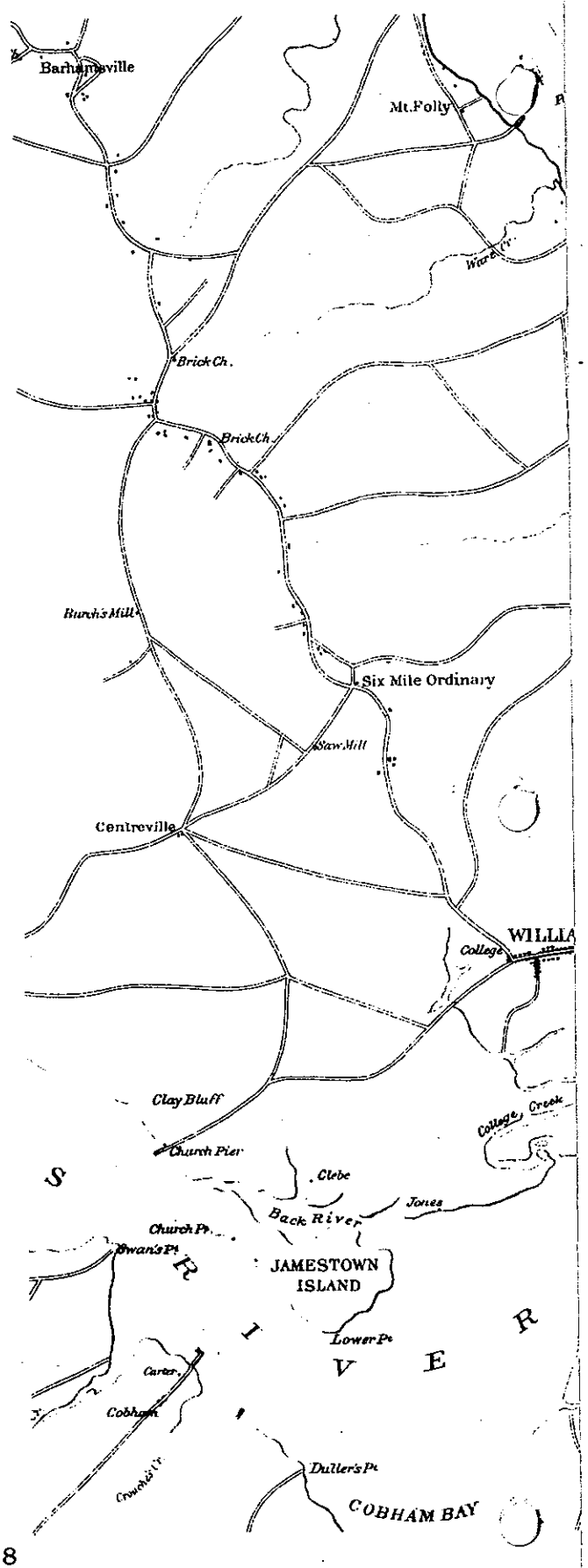
When the Confederacy was formed in the spring of 1861, Williamsburg was a small, provincial college town and county seat with a population of fifteen hundred. The Battle of Williamsburg the next year marked a turning point in the life of the town, and it is convenient to describe this life in terms of periods before, during, and after the battle.

Before the Battle

When the Confederacy was formed, states had only their own militia to provide military service. With hostilities imminent the Southern states were allocated quotas to form a provisional army. Before a single northern volunteer had enlisted the South had 30,000 men under arms. Defense of the coast was paramount. In late April Norfolk and its naval yard was seized by 11,500 Confederate militia under General Benjamin Huger. As the build-up continued the Army of the Peninsula, a force of 13,000, was formed under General John B. Magruder, headquartered at the Vest House (now called the Palmer House) in Williamsburg. Mr. W. W. Vest was a very successful businessman and a staunch southern patriot. He left for Richmond as the war continued, returning later to reoccupy his home.

Williamsburg was doing its part in the war effort. The college suspended operations in 1861 and its students and faculty became militiamen. Benjamin S. Ewell, the well-respected college president and a West Point graduate, was one of the first to go. He was given the rank of colonel with the immediate assignment of raising a local force. The main college building was used as a barracks and later as a hospital immediately after the battle.

A picture of Williamsburg emerges from the letters of Union officers who were assigned here throughout the war. General Philip Kearny wrote to his wife from the President's House on May 7, 1862: "My friend

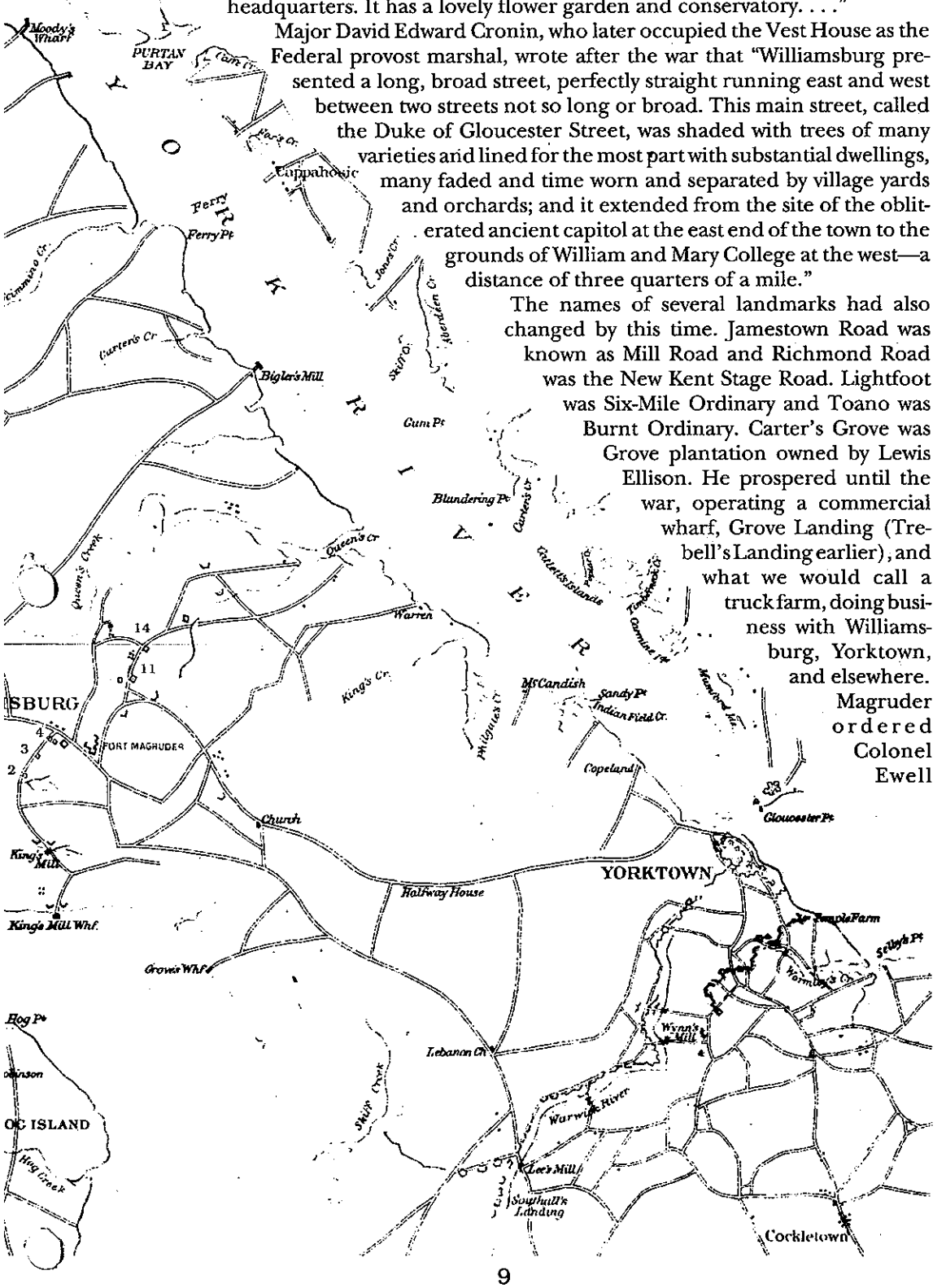


Captain Wilson and Bernard are buried in a Sweet Spot in the old 'Grave Yard' [Cedar Grove] of Williamsburg. A lovely Sweet college town of charming villas and old mansions."

General McClellan wrote to his wife from the Vest House on May 6, 1862: "This is a beautiful little town; several very old homes and churches, pretty gardens. I have possession of a very fine house which Joe Johnston occupied as his headquarters. It has a lovely flower garden and conservatory. . . ."

Major David Edward Cronin, who later occupied the Vest House as the Federal provost marshal, wrote after the war that "Williamsburg presented a long, broad street, perfectly straight running east and west between two streets not so long or broad. This main street, called the Duke of Gloucester Street, was shaded with trees of many varieties and lined for the most part with substantial dwellings, many faded and time worn and separated by village yards and orchards; and it extended from the site of the obliterated ancient capitol at the east end of the town to the grounds of William and Mary College at the west—a distance of three quarters of a mile."

The names of several landmarks had also changed by this time. Jamestown Road was known as Mill Road and Richmond Road was the New Kent Stage Road. Lightfoot was Six-Mile Ordinary and Toano was Burnt Ordinary. Carter's Grove was Grove plantation owned by Lewis Ellison. He prospered until the war, operating a commercial wharf, Grove Landing (Trebell's Landing earlier), and what we would call a truck farm, doing business with Williamsburg, Yorktown, and elsewhere. Magruder ordered Colonel Ewell



to fortify the Williamsburg area on June 20. Magruder was charged with constructing three defense lines which he toiled over for about a year, into spring of 1862. The strategy was to delay any Union advance that might be made up the peninsula from Fort Monroe, which had remained in Union hands since the outbreak of hostilities. With its solid granite walls, 400 guns, and 3,000-man garrison, the fort was perhaps the strongest coastal artillery post in the country.

In the Williamsburg area fortifications that would make up the third line of defense were built at Fort Magruder, Jamestown Island, and at King's Mill and Grove landings.

On June 9 Union General B. F. Butler, commander of Fort Monroe, led troops up the peninsula to expand Union holdings. The Battle of Big Bethel occurred on June 10, the first battle of the war. His force of 2,200 were defeated by a 1,400-man Confederate force and he was forced to pull back. The Union threat remained, however, and Magruder was concerned about his own force disposition. He ordered the evacuation and burning of Hampton in a perhaps unnecessary example of "scorched earth" policy. Work on the lines and force build-up continued, so that by Christmas Magruder had almost 17,000 men under his command.

First Battle of Bull Run. Union army routed.

Early in 1862, almost seven months after taking command of the Army of the Potomac and after many exchanges with the President and his cabinet, General George B. McClellan had finally developed his plan for the capture of Richmond. It would not be a direct approach, favored by the President, but an amphibious approach down the bay to Fort Monroe and then up the peninsula by land and the York River. The James River and Hampton Roads were somewhat neutralized by the *Merrimack,* with its ten guns and four-inch armor, still positioned at Norfolk after its inconclusive battle with the armored *Monitor.* The *Merrimack* had been damaged by the March 9 engagement but was still a considerable threat to river shipping.

Battle of the *Monitor* and the *Merrimack.*

On March 17, 1862, the first of a 389-vessel flotilla embarked from Alexandria for Fort Monroe. When the move was completed McClellan had at his command 121,500 soldiers, over 14,000 animals, 1,200 wagons, and 44 artillery batteries.

Little overall Union reconnaissance was made to uncover enemy strength, positions, or the nature of the terrain. The plan was to attack Yorktown on the right and penetrate on the left with units headed for Williamsburg, enveloping to Half-way House to cut off Confederate forces retreating from Yorktown.

On April 4 the attack began and got mired down along the Warwick line for two days. Mud, poor maps, and unexpected enemy resistance caused the halt. Rather than push through against a greatly outnumbered enemy, McClellan went into a siege operation, a natural instinct for an engineer, I suppose. He was given erroneous information about 50,000 Confederate reinforcements under General Joseph Johnston who did not actually arrive until nine days later. McClellan's troops outnumbered the enemy by about three to one until April 14. During this period we must credit Magruder with an excellent deception plan—marching, countermarching, firing roving guns, and installing dummy positions—successfully delaying the Union force for almost a month.

By May 1 Union siege guns were in position and the first rounds were finally fired, causing the Confederates to withdraw. McClellan declared a victory, but in effect his delay allowed Lee to build up Richmond's defenses and organize and train new units being called to service.

The Battle of Williamsburg

Johnston evacuated the Warwick line in pouring rain the night of May 3. Not anticipating a battle, he headed for Richmond on the Stage Road. Fort Magruder was not occupied at this time.

Early on May 4 Union cavalry was ordered to "harass the enemy's rear and try to cut off such of his forces as had taken the Lee's Mill and Williamsburg roads." Johnston, now alerted to the pursuit, sent troops backtracking to man the fort and redoubts.

The action evolved with no coordinated plan on the part of the Federals. McClellan, true to form, was supervising the administrative loading of troops at Yorktown and no central command post was established to coordinate the action. At 11:00 A.M. in the morning A. P. Hill's Brigade charged out of redoubts 2, 3, and 4, and the battle was on. The Union troops held, then were forced back, but two hours later the situation stabi-

lized. Meanwhile, Union soldiers were sent to the right flank where redoubts 11, 12, 13, and 14 were found unoccupied. They moved into redoubts 11 and 14 and opened up fire on the Confederate left flank. The rebels marched to the sound of the guns and hard fighting ensued. The 24th Virginia made a frontal assault with heavy casualties against stiff opposition to force the Federals back, and, in doing so, made quite a name for itself. The line stabilized, however, and the Confederates withdrew from the field that evening. Both sides again claimed victory, although McClellan had lost 2,228 men to the Confederates' 1,560.

After the Battle—Marital Law

The battle was a surprise to everyone, especially the inhabitants of Williamsburg. The Confederate withdrawal had not been anticipated; Cronin remembered "little groups of curious, rather than anxious, citizens with umbrellas who had come a short way out of town to see the smoke, to hear the roar and smell the gun powder of the battle more distinctly. . . . [There was] no notion of a retreat." And now, very quickly, the town was occupied in assisting with the care of the dead and wounded. Some of the inhabitants had fled with the soldiers, taking what they could. McClellan, who made his headquarters at the Vest House, announced a policy that strictly prohibited molestation of the inhabitants of the town, although some looting did occur. Safeguards (house guards) were placed where needed or requested.

The town became a hospital, with homes, churches, the college, the courthouse, the magazine, and the asylum all put to use. Dr. R. M. Garrett (for whom the Coke-Garrett House is partly named) worked tirelessly to treat casualties on both sides who were carried into his house or deposited on his lawn. Many of the dead are buried at Cedar Grove Cemetery.

After the battle, the people kept to themselves, silently watching the troops march by, peeping from behind drawn curtains and closed doors. No troops were quartered in the town except for the Vest House, which became the provost marshal's headquarters. So began a three-year occupation under martial law. For the most part the town was made up of women, children, old men, slaves, invalids, and asylum inmates. The women were a force to be reckoned with. For example, Cynthia Beverley Tucker Coleman wrote to a Mr. Grisby in March 1862 about the possibility of the ladies of Williamsburg raising a fund for the construction of a gunboat for the Confederacy.

Williamsburg became an advance Union post with a thin line of outposts west of the town. The town itself had about twenty soldiers as a police force. The main line of defense against a Confederate threat to the lower peninsula was Fort Magruder, now oriented toward the west. Yorktown was the headquarters for all lower peninsular forces, and Fort Monroe became district headquarters for all forces on the Peninsula and in Norfolk. Telegraph communication was established from Fort Magruder to Yorktown to Fort Monroe and thence to the War Department in Washington, D. C. Fort Monroe was also the press link with northern newspapers at the capital. Much of the traffic dealt with news and intelligence from northern agents in Richmond, Williamsburg being a collection center. But the town was also a Confederate collection center for intelligence from a great underground network of informers, scouts, and spies established formally and informally throughout the peninsula.

Meanwhile, Wise's Legion—named for its commander, a former governor of Virginia—began to see service as a major Confederate guerrilla force on the peninsula. Headquartered at the Diascund Bridge (Lanexa), Wise launched raids and attacks on Union posts and had a system of observation posts to keep the area under surveillance. Barhamsville, Six-Mile Ordinary, and Burnt Ordinary were also rebel hot spots.

On September 9, 1862, shortly after McClellan had withdrawn from the peninsula (the Seven Days' Battle that followed the Battle of Williamsburg had failed to take Richmond), Wise attacked through Williamsburg and set up a line opposite Fort Magruder. He held the position for a day and then withdrew with prisoners, Colonel David Campbell, the provost marshal, being among them. In retaliation, the college was burned by Federal troops who claimed that it was being used as an observation and sniper post.

Emancipation Proclamation issued.

Major Christopher Kleinz succeeded Campbell as provost marshal. He was intent on isolating the town from activity beyond its

borders and in suppressing dissent from within. In fact, in February 1863 services at Bruton Parish Church were suspended when the rector gave a rather inflammatory sermon. Fort Magruder was attacked again in March and many supplies were taken, but the last straw was when Wise attacked in April and rode off with a great store of provisions, including some stored at the asylum. A very strong letter was sent under truce from General Dix, district commander at Fort Monroe, to Wise informing him of actions to be taken if harassment continued. The ultimatum was that houses would be razed, asylum patients would be sent to Richmond, and civilians who actively participated would be executed.

The letter had an impact. The townspeople changed their outward attitude and demeanor and began to cooperate with the officers and men of the garrison—still obtaining information for The Cause, however. Incidents at the picket line diminished while spy activity picked up.

Battle of Chancellorsville. Stonewall Jackson is killed.

By now Colonel Robert West was in command of Fort Magruder and was also the provost marshal. West was a rather enlightened commander, instituting "Line Day" in which produce from local farmers was brought to the picket line on the Mill and Stage roads for barter with the citizenry.

Battle of Gettysburg.

Williamsburg remained the closest Union outpost to Richmond until May 1864 when the Army of the James, under General Butler, went up river and disembarked at Bermuda Hundred. The move was a part of Grant's grand strategy to take Richmond, with Butler encircling to the south and east, Grant driving down the center, and a Union force coming in from the Shenandoah Valley.

Battle of New Market. V.M.I. cadets take part.

Williamsburg had a new provost marshal when Captain David Cronin succeeded Colonel West on July 20, 1864. He developed a keen interest in the town and its history. Cronin decried the wreck made of the Wythe mansion, where he discovered some rare documents of Washington and Jefferson in its debris. A guard was placed on the old house.

Conditions for the townspeople were grim for the duration of the war. Federal forces supplemented meager town stocks with issues of rations and medical supplies, but nothing was plentiful. Author Virginius Dabney paid tribute to the women who maintained the home front and kept things going in those dark days:

> "The women of Virginia and the South made a contribution which is not fully appreciated. With their menfolk absent in the army, they were left at home to look after the children, often with extremely meager incomes and inadequate food and clothing. Under great emotional strain, constantly dreading the news from their loved ones at the front, they . . . carried on. Some worked full or part time. . . . Many were active in hospitals. For most women it was a sufficiently difficult task to keep their families together. . . ."

Cronin revisited Williamsburg in 1901 and finished his account with these lines:

> "During the last decade, however, besides the innovations of a railway station and a commodious inn, many other local improvements have been added, indicating the revival of a progressive spirit. The college buildings of the time-honored William and Mary have been fully restored. The Vest Mansion appears comfortably modern and is invitingly peaceful and well preserved. An air of venerable prestige—the glory of past dominion, still in picturesque evidence—pervades the entire town; and this feature always will render it attractive and inspiring to lovers of American history."

The college was burned by Union soldiers in retaliation against Confederate raids. This perhaps fanciful drawing is by the city's last provost marshal, Major Edward Cronin.

A Diversity of Faces

by John Turner and Al Saguto

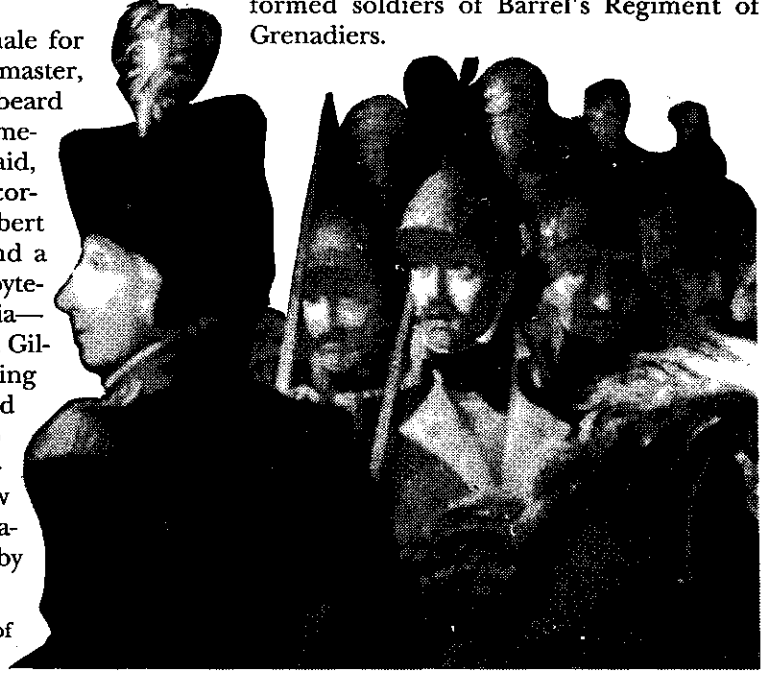
John is manager of religious studies and programs in the Department of Interpretive Development. In the coming months, as part of "Vision 95," the costume committee and HAPO's various program managers will be tackling the important issue of appropriate appearance in the Historic Area. In the meantime, the clean-shaven editor suggests that you consider this article for its interpretive potential about a small portion of the colony's population: the unshaven man.

Facial hair has been a part of the fashion cycle for men throughout history. Century by century, facial hair has been in fashion more often than not. Even though being clean-shaven was in vogue in Britain and in the more populated regions of British North America during much of the eighteenth century, it was not in many European countries or in French or Spanish controlled areas of North America. A variety of evidence—prints, paintings, diaries, journals, and newspapers—suggests that even in Britain and Virginia the wearing of beards and/or mustaches was not unknown. This, of course, is what one would expect. On any question of appearance there are always holdovers, differences of opinion, and eccentricities. At all levels of society men wore beards and mustaches for a variety of reasons.

Religion was the rationale for some. Benjamin Franklin's master, Samuel Keimer, "wore his beard at full length, because somewhere in the Mosaic law it said, 'thou shalt never mar the corners of thy beard.'" Robert Eastburn, a blacksmith and a deacon in the First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia—identified by the Reverend Gilbert Tennent in 1758 as being "of such an established good character, that he needs no recommendation of others"—also let his beard grow full-length for religious reasons. Only when captured by Indians did Eastburn agree to being shaven: "He [Eastburn's Indian captor] insisted that I must be shaven—I had at that time a long beard, which the Indians hate. . . ."

Representatives of the Jewish community often appear bearded in prints such as *The Political Cartoon for the Year 1775*. In Virginia there were Jewish communities in both Richmond and Norfolk by the third quarter of the eighteenth century and, though most were probably assimilated into more traditional modes of fashion, it is possible that some of the men kept their beards (Dr. John de Sequeyra, Williamsburg's only known Jew, did not). German Pietist groups had begun to settle in the Valley of Virginia by the mid-eighteenth century and conducted business in and with the colonial capital. These groups would have been another source of bearded men seen from time to time in Williamsburg.

Military service provided the incentive for some to be bearded or mustachioed. Soldiers wearing beards or mustaches were thought to look more mature and formidable to opponents and regulations in several European armies specified that men with facial hair be placed in front of clean-shaven regulars as they approached the enemy. In the British army soldiers in certain positions were encouraged to wear facial hair, one example being the frontier sergeant. David Morier's painting of the *Battle of Culloden* (1746-1747) shows not only bearded highlanders but also a bearded sergeant among the properly uniformed soldiers of Barrel's Regiment of Grenadiers.



Members of Pulaski's Legion of Dragoons sported mustaches.

American combatants also seem to have taken to facial hair on occasion. An eighteenth-century German engraving of two American soldiers show both in full beard. In 1775 a *Virginia Gazette* article noted that the local tories tried to pass for "friendlies" among the local inhabitants of Virginia by wearing a buckstail in their hats (an early symbol for rebellion in Virginia), but they could be easily distinguished, as the true patriots wore "Whegey [*sic*] beards." One of many period paintings of General Washington and his soldiers depicts uniformed dragoons all wearing mustaches.

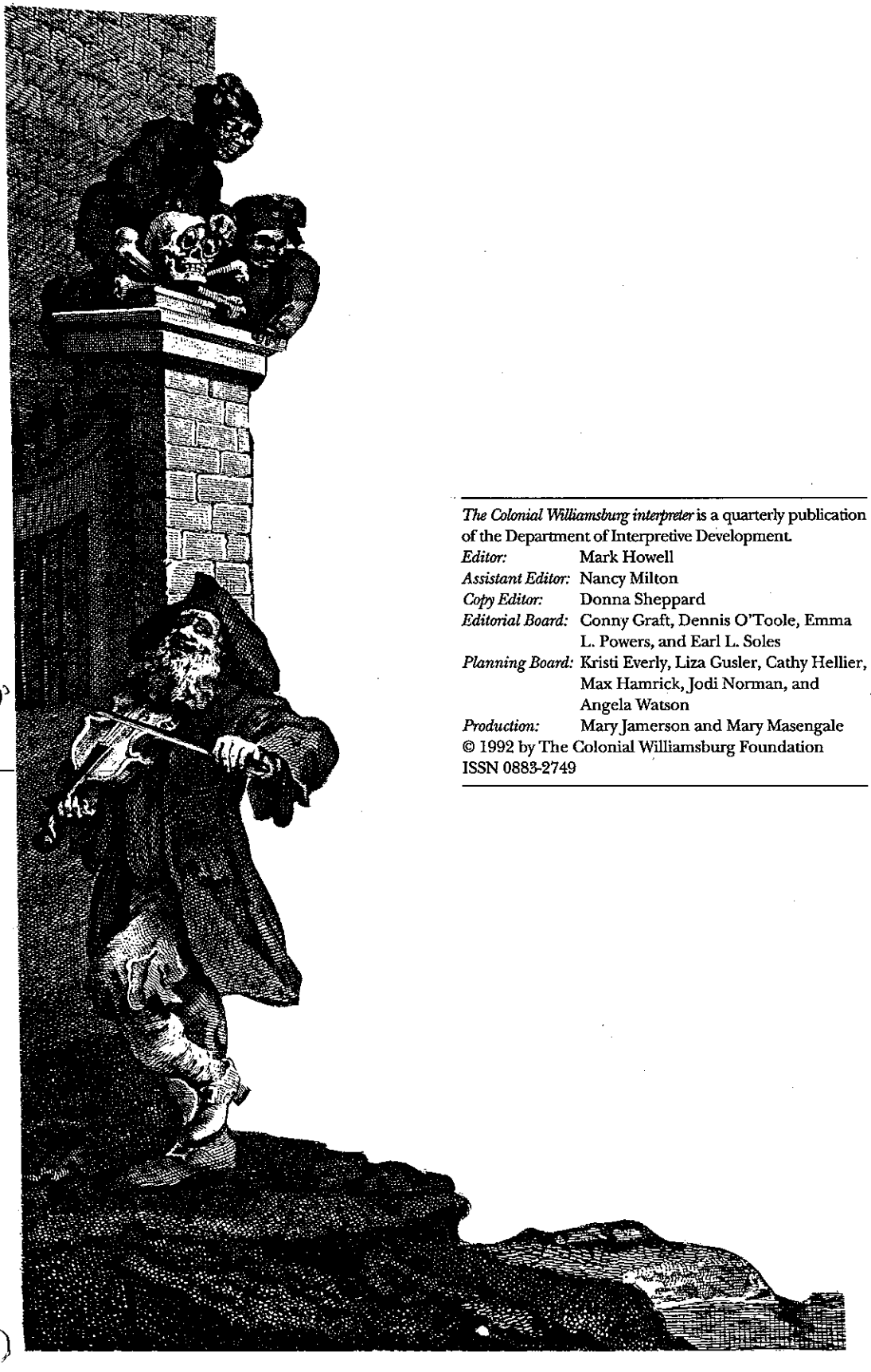
Religious and military reasons aside, there are other examples of beards throughout the social scale in the eighteenth century. Robert Grant of Lurg, a Scottish gentleman, appears in a portrait, circa 1760, with a full, white, flowing beard down to his chest. An English tavern scene, circa 1740, by Joseph van Aken and now at the Muscarelle Museum of Art prominently displays a man dressed as a gentleman, seated with a pipe, wearing a full beard. *A Group of Virtuosi,* painted in 1735, depicts the fashionable and wealthy Sir Matthew Robinson with well-known artists in English society, including the artist's bearded self-portrait. *A Nobleman's Levee,* by Marcellus Layoon, circa 1730, shows gentlemen from all over the world in an Englishman's parlor. Four of the eighteen gentlemen shown are wearing facial hair.

At the other end of the social spectrum there are numerous examples as well. Johann Zoffany's *Beggars on the Road to Stanmore,* circa 1770, shows an Englishman with a full white beard. The very familiar *Old Plantation* painting—now at AARFAC and dating to 1790-1795—of slaves enjoying the entertainments of music and dancing includes four bearded men out of the seven depicted.

Runaway ads in the *Virginia Gazette* also provide us with information about men with beards. An indentured wheelwright, runaway from his master, had "sandy hair and beard," and an indentured saddler was described as having a "remarkable black beard."

Prints are also a good source of evidence of beards being worn in English society. William Hogarth's engravings show bearded gentlemen and bearded beggars and are also a source of bearded depictions of the middling sort. *Chairing the Members, The Enraged Musician,* and *A Medley* all show bearded examples of the middling sort. Street musicians especially turn up repeatedly wearing facial hair.

Small town though it was, Williamsburg was still the commercial, political, and social center for a vast region. Human traffic came not only from North America but from all over the Western world. People that passed through Williamsburg, whether to conduct their business and leave, ply their trade here, or to settle in the surrounding area, presented a kaleidoscope of appearances to the local scene. Most were fashionable, attentive to the latest trends from London—some were not. The sea of faces that flowed through eighteenth-century Williamsburg was diverse and colorful. Though not a common feature on our urban landscape, the occasional appearance of facial hair in Williamsburg probably did occur and serves as an example of the many subtle complexities that made up Virginia's colonial society.



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