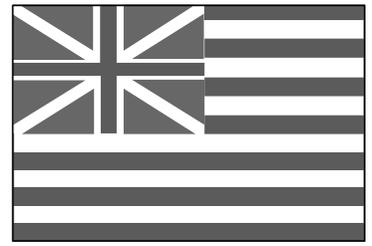




# THE RAPPAHANNOCK GAZETTE



---

*Newsletter of the Rappahannock Colonial Heritage Society, Inc.*

*Volume 7 Number 1*

*www.rchsinc.org*

*Winter/Spring 2004*

---



*Courtesy of George Washington's Fredericksburg Foundation*

## **Fielding Lewis - The Life of a Public Servant**

**(part 2)**

*by Trip Wiggins*

With the war, Fielding began to show his true colors. He and Mann Page began building and buying ships for the defense of the Rappahannock River.

Fielding, assisted by other local merchants, began gathering and warehousing all sorts of supplies needed by Virginia troops – from food and clothing to gunpowder. But his greatest war effort was just taking shape.

Fielding and Charles Dick were asked by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Virginia Convention in July 1775 to erect and run a manufactory of arms in the Fredericksburg area. The Convention authorized £2500 in startup costs. Fielding acquired land from Richard Brooke (the old Walker-Grant School property) and began construction while hiring craftsmen. Within 6 months the Gunnery was in operation primarily repairing damaged weapons and making new locks for those weapons that Gov. Dunmore had the locks removed when he left Williamsburg.

That fall Fielding also found time to move his family into the newly-completed mansion and to sell the old house on the corner of Princess Anne and Lewis Streets to Edward Carter.

Fredericksburg, as in the French & Indian War, was the primary staging area in Northern Virginia for troops and for storing/distributing all sorts of supplies. When a smallpox epidemic broke out in 1776, Fielding ordered all stored clothing burned to contain the disease. He was also authorized to contract the services of a doctor to provide medical care for the troops encamped in the area. He had to go no further than Caroline Street to secure the services of Dr. Hugh Mercer's partner, Dr. John Julian. Fielding worked closely with the Commissary agent, James Hunter Jr., to ensure the area was supplied with whatever the troops needed.

He remained the "go to" man in town for the Colony's government as evidenced by a letter from Edmund Pendleton in May 1776, "...forward to this city [Williamsburg] 4000 lbs. weight of powder, the whole of the ball, and half of the sheet lead imported by Capt. Callender... that the powder belonging to the United Colonies must remain in Fredericksburg under guard until

con't on page 4

*The purpose of the Rappahannock Colonial Heritage Society is to bring together persons interested in preserving & perpetuating the heritage and culture of the colonial era in & around the Rappahannock River Valley of Virginia; to conduct historical research of persons, places & events relating to the Rappahannock River Valley in Colonial times, and to organize activities related to the Colonial era in an effort to educate the public about the way of life of our forebears in this area.*



### **2004 RCHS OFFICERS**

- President:** Trip Wiggins  
tripwig@cox.net
- Vice-President:** Sandra Piercey  
pierceyunderthehill@yahoo.com
- Secretary:** Elizabeth Wimmer  
teacheremt@excite.com
- Treasurer:** Myra Wiggins  
myrawig@cox.net

### **THE PRESIDENT'S PEN**



It's 2004 already and we are already at the pace we ended 2003 on. As I write this, I have just returned from a wonderful event at "Pope's Creek" (or should I say, "Wakefield," the birthplace of George Washington). The National Park Service invited us to add some color to the birthday celebration. We had 18 RCHS members in attendance. Dancing, Singing, Reading from a scene in a play, Sewing, Gaming and having tea and gossip. Not bad for a Monday! They asked us about future events. Things are busier than ever.

While that event is now history, we will continue the flurry of activities with yet another Washington celebration at Ferry Farm, more school visits, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual "March Muster" at the Market Square in town. All hands are needed to pull this one off – but I know most all of you will be there!

Many events are planned for the coming months. Take this opportunity to get involved with some aspect of the society that appeals to you and get involved on a committee. (If, Heaven forbid, one of our committee chairs would find themselves sick or incapacitated, we'd have some problems; we need to be at least two-deep to maintain our schedule.) Consider getting involved with a committee: Events (Sandra Piercey), Dance (Elaine Sturgeon), Food/Cooking (Marjorie Steen), or Education (Catherine Bell). Trust me, there's plenty more to do on a committee than can be handled by one mortal.

If you were one of the few who missed our last dance class, we had over 40 in attendance! (We're averaging 25-30.) Good things just get better and better! Off to the George Washington Ball in Williamsburg!

Lastly, I'd like to share a comment I received at dance class last week when one of our newer members came up and told me this was much more than a historical society; it was a "family." I liked that analogy and I agree. So, thank you again, for being so involved and bringing the colonial heritage of our fair town to life.

Until next time,  
I remain your most humble and obedient servant,

Trip

### **RAPPAHANNOCK COLONIAL HERITAGE SOCIETY DANCERS**



We are looking for people who will be dedicated to coming to rehearsals, getting the proper attire together and be available when we have a commitment to do a demonstration. This will be a team striving to develop a level of expertise in this type of dance over time. For anyone who wants to be on the demo team, contact Elaine Sturgeon, coordinator 540-785-2168 or Tina Buchanan 898-2113. We rehearse at St. George's Episcopal Church, 905 Princess Anne St. Our next rehearsals are:

April 9 & 23  
May 14 & 28  
June 11 & 25

If you just want to learn the dance of the period, you are also most welcome to come and join us on the above mentioned Friday evenings.

### **TIME TO PAY YOUR 2004 DUES**

Please take just a moment to send in your dues for next year. Individual dues are \$10.00 and family dues are \$15. A family as defined in our bylaws "consist of two or more related persons, or members of the same household." We have a lot of fun activities coming up and don't want you to miss out on them! Due to liability concerns of the corporation, *your membership must be current* in order to participate in any events the group is asked to do. The address to mail to is PO Box 7823, Fredericksburg, VA 22404-7823.



## EVENTS OF INTEREST IN THE AREA

**1st Sunday of month Apr-Oct - Slave Life Tours. Gunston Hall Plantation.** Tour museum, outbuildings & slave quarters.

12, 1:30 & 3

**2nd Sun of month Apr-Oct. World of Women Tours. Gunston Hall Plantation.** Explore what it was like to be a woman-gentry, middling or enslaved. 12, 1:30 & 3

**3rd Sat of month Apr-Oct. Behind the scenes Farmyard Tours. Gunston Hall Plantation.** Learn about 18th century crops from the Farm Manager as you tour the pasture and farm yard. 12, 1:30 & 3

**4th Sat of month Apr-Oct. Hidden History Landscape Tours. Gunston Hall Plantation.** Below the surface of the ground lurk the remains of George Mason's plantation garden. But what exactly did it look like? 12, 1:30 & 3

**April 1 - Claude Moore Colonial Farm opens.** The Farm ends its winter hibernation and welcomes the public for the 2004 season. Open Wed-Sun 10am-4:30pm.

**April 15 - Spring Evening at Montpelier. Envisioning the Landscape of James & Dolly's Montpelier.**

**April 17 - Salting Fish. Claude Moore Colonial Farm.** Farm family cleans & salts down their yearly catch of herring. 1-4pm.

**April 17 - 18th century Grand Ball. Gadsby's Tavern.** Presented in the style of the 1790's. Live music, dessert collation, cash bar, and "gaming." 8-11pm.

**April 17-24. Historic Virginia Garden Week. Gunston Hall.** Learn about the fascinating discoveries that have been unearthed in Gunston Hall's formal gardens.

**April 22-25. Ft. Frederick Market Fair. Ft. Frederick MD.** Visit the park and witness the best 18th century artisans, craftsmen & sutlers amidst an historical 1730-1790 encampment. Th, F & Sat 9-5; Sun 9-3.

**April 23 & 24 - Spring Plant Sale. Claude Moore Colonial Farm.** Join us in the Farm's garden & greenhouses to choose plants for your yard. All sales proceeds benefit the Farm's educational programs.

**May 1 - Dairy Day. Claude Moore Colonial Farm.** Join the farm wife as she makes soft cheese and churns butter. 1-4pm.

**May 1-2 - The Washington Plantation. George Washington Birthplace National Monument.** Popes Creek Plantation will be filled with 18th century activities such as sheep shearing, fireplace cooking, spinning, and blacksmithing.

**May 8 - How It Fits. Stratford Hall Plantation.** Come join us from 11am-2:45pm for a presentation by Christine Malson Ruckman on 18th century period under and outer clothing. Following the presentation, High Tea will be served in the Council House.

**May 15-16. Plantation Community Weekend. Monticello.**

**May 15-16 - Spring 18th Century Market Fair. Claude Moore Colonial Farm.** Celebrate spring at the first Market Fair of the season. 11am-4:30pm

**June 6 - Butterfly release in Montpelier Garden.** Sponsored by Hospice of the Rappahanock. 3pm.

**June 19 - Westmoreland County's 350th Anniv. Pageant.** Westmoreland County concludes its 350th Anniversary celebration with a pageant that will unfold on the lawn in front of the Great House. Rain date June 20.

**July 3, 2004 - Liberty Ball. Gadsby's Tavern.** Patriotic celebration ball presented in the style of 1776. 8-11pm. warm-up at 7:30pm.

### WEB SITES FOR LISTED EVENTS

George Washington Birthplace National Monument  
[www.nps.gov/gewa](http://www.nps.gov/gewa)

Gunston Hall  
[www.gunstonhall.org](http://www.gunstonhall.org)

Gadsby's Tavern  
[www.gadsbystavern.org](http://www.gadsbystavern.org)

Montpelier  
[www.montpelier.org](http://www.montpelier.org)

Stratford Hall  
[www.stratfordhall.org](http://www.stratfordhall.org)

Claude Moore Colonial Farm  
[www.1771.org](http://www.1771.org)

Monticello  
[www.monticello.org](http://www.monticello.org)

### RCHS ACTIVITIES

In addition to the dancers the group has several other activities lined up in the near future. Come join us for some fun:

**April 24 - Scottish Block Party & Colonial Children's Festival**

**May 22 - Spring Tea**

**June 13 - Hearth Cooking**

**July 3 - Historic Port Royal Independence Day Celebration**

**July 18 - Summer Evening at Montpelier**

**September 18 - Fredericksburg Welsh Festival**

**September 25 - Colonial Port Royal Day**

**October 9 - James Monroe Ball hosted by RCHS**

**October 30 & 31 - Historic Cemetery Tours**

**November 13 - RCHS Annual Open House**

**December 6 - Annual Wreath Sale**

**December 11 & 12 - Stratford Hall Candlelight Tour**

## Fielding Lewis (con't)

Congress shall give direction about it, and that the vessel [Capt. Callender's ship] be retained for the use of the Colony and employed as a tender, or on a voyage similar to the late successful one."

Again that month the Assembly ordered 40 bolts of duck material to be delivered to Fielding "for the use of the public."

With the passage of the Declaration of Independence, Lewis was receiving correspondence from the President of Congress, John Hancock. He wrote in July 1776, "The article of lead is so essentially necessary for our army at this juncture, that the Council of Safety of this Colony have recommended to the inhabitants to spare the lead weights of their houses by which means they have been furnished with a considerable quantity, which has been run into a ball, and part of which is now on the way to the Jerseys." He continued that lead was still in short supply and was sending a wagon to Fredericksburg to collect all that Fielding could provide.

By now the Gunnery was in full operation; muskets could not be repaired in Williamsburg or elsewhere but were sent to Fredericksburg. They were also producing "carbines 2 ft 10 inches long" for the cavalry.

The army Commander in Chief, George Washington, knew he could count on his brother-in-law, and sent an order to the Army's Commissary, Col. Thomas Trumbull, to get wheat for the army from "Col. Fielding Lewis on the Rappahannock." (Lewis had retained his rank from his days with the local militia.)

1777 continued a busy year – bringing yet more work and more tragedy. Fielding's son, George, now an aide to his uncle in the field at Princeton, had his father's friend, Gen. Hugh Mercer, die in his arms – the result of battle injuries received some days before.

Virginia's Council of Safety also ordered Lewis to erect a magazine, which he put in the hands of Charles Washington to accomplish. (Two years later it was still unfinished.) The Council also contracted Fielding's oldest son, John, for gunpowder. John was now working with his father and Charles Dick at the Gunnery. Fielding was also appointed one of 4 commissioners (with Dick and James Mercer) who represented Virginia in talks between all of the colonies related to supplying the troops. More and more the colonies were becoming unified.

For his outstanding service to his Colony, Fielding was elected to the Governor's Privy Council – a select group of advisors, similar to that of the old Governor's Council. During the war they may have only been 'advisors,' but they had a strong influence on the Governor and the Assembly. Fielding thanked them but declined the appointment. He had too much to do in Fredericksburg to contribute to the war effort. He felt that was where he needed to remain.

The war continued, but was taking a toll on Fielding. His health began to fail and when the Assembly promised financial assistance for the Gunnery – and other local operations – but failed to deliver, Fielding, like many others, dipped into his personal savings "for the cause." Around him he saw officers resigning their commissions over petty differences and ego. He saw the cause of Liberty much more important than some personal losses incurred. Even worse, his skilled

craftsmen were being taken away for military service. The Gunnery was suffering severe problems.

He still found time for his personal business buying the schooner "Betsey" for his shipping operations between Fredericksburg and the West Indies.

In 1778 Fielding finally said "no" to a request from the Assembly. They had asked him to collect tobacco to pay for the war effort. His physical condition was such that he had to decline the offer and recommended fellow merchants Charles Yates, Daniel Payne and Benjamin Day, who ably filled in for the ailing Lewis.

Throughout 1779 and 1780 his health continued to spiral down – but not his spirit. Dick was running the Gunnery with son John Lewis. Again Fielding had to beg off on collecting war taxes and again Yates was called to service.

He was sick but still possessed the business- and civic-sense to organize the Fredericksburg Company – with fellow merchants – to purchase and outfit ships to organize trading expeditions with the West Indies and other ports to obtain needed supplies for the war effort. For their efforts, partners would receive 2 ½ % of the sales. The partners included Mann Page, James Hunter Jr., James Maury, Charles Washington, Robert Chew, James Somerville, Charles Yates and John Legg. He had the ability to recruit the best. Yes it was for profit, but it was also needed.

1781 would go down in American history as the year we decisively defeated the British at Yorktown. But locally, 1781 was a bad year. Bed ridden by serious illness and heavily in debt from his support to the Gunnery, Fielding resigned his position in running that organization, as did Dick. Dick was later coaxed back but his health was worsening, too.

The region was greatly concerned over the British invasion and it was believed that they would drive on Fredericksburg. Fielding, in his last letter to George Washington said, in April, "The enemy's still among us, yet there is not that spirit which prevailed at the beginning of the contest." He continued, "No person who lives on the banks of the Potomac can have any certainty of not being taken out of his bed before morning...Our distress is truly alarming."

He did have some good news to pass to George – that of the upcoming marriage of daughter Betty Lewis to Charles Carter. Washington's reply to this letter was written with more warmth than usual – perhaps he understood the seriousness of Fielding's illness.

Fielding's health went downhill fast and he knew it. He did take the family to the Baths at Berkeley Springs but even that did little for his health. The Fredericksburg Company was missing 3 ships and also heavily in debt. That fall he made out his will and visited his property in Frederick County. A codicil was added to his will in December, and then Fielding died. There is no official or family Bible record of his death. Within days of his death, Betty also lost her brother Samuel, also in Frederick County.

Where is Fielding buried? Legend says under the steps of St. George's. It's a legend only. As to his real final resting place we only need to turn to a letter written by son Robert to his widowed-sister Betty Carter in 1826. In the letter he urged Betty to return to the old Lewis land in Frederick County. "You would be in the neighborhood where the venerated remains of our dear dec'd Father lie."

With his death, Fredericksburg and Virginia lost a man who spent a lifetime in public service. Remember, too, that unlike today when Congress seems to always be giving itself a raise, public servants in Colonial Virginia served for no pay. Service was considered pay enough. Oh, that that spirit was alive today!

And what of Fielding's family?

A year and a half after Fielding's death, Betty wrote her brother, George, now in Philadelphia. She was obviously upset when she wrote, "I am at a loss to account for your long silence...my dear brother, was there not one half hour you could spare to write a few lines to an only sister who was laboring under such affliction.

"My poor dear Mr. Lewis, and my brother Sam both lay ill at the same time and it was the Lord's will to take them to himself, in three weeks, one after the other."

Betty lived many years at the mansion until she was overtaken by debt and ill health. She moved to Mill Brook in Culpeper County and died in March 1797 while visiting her daughter, Betty, at Western View where she lies today.

And the Children:

Of Catherine Washington Lewis:

- John b. 22 June 1747 married 5 times. Died in Kentucky.
- Frances b. 26 Nov 1748 d. 1760s/70s unmarried.
- Warner b. 27 Nov 1749 d. 5 Dec 1749

Of Betty Washington Lewis:

- Fielding Jr. b. 14 Feb 1751 married Ann Alexander and Elizabeth Dade. Extravagant spender. Sentenced to debtor's prison!
- Augustine b. 22 Jan 1752 d. 1756
- Warner b. 24 June 1755 d. 1756
- George b. 10 Mar 1757 Dismissed from service as aide by Washington. Married Catherine Dangerfield. Died at "Marmion" in 1821, buried at Willis Hill.
- Mary b. 22 Apr 1759 d. 1759
- Charles b. 3 Oct 1760 d. 1775
- Samuel b. 14 May 1763 d. 1775
- Betty b. 23 Feb 1765 married Charles Carter, lived at "Western View" then at "Audley" in Frederick Co where she died in 1830, buried at North Hill
- Lawrence b. 4 Apr 1767 married 1<sup>st</sup> Susannah Edmonton, 2<sup>nd</sup> Eleanor Parke Custis (Martha's g-daughter). He was an aide to Washington at "Mount Vernon." They later built "Woodlawn," where he died in 1839.
- Robert b. 25 Jun 1769 The anchor in the family. Married Judith Carter Browne. Was an aide to Washington. Returned to F'brg. Lived at "Pine Grove" (adjacent to Ferry Farm), operated town ferry, Mayor 1821-1829. Hosted LaFayette's visit in 1824. His daughter married Rev. McGuire of St. George's. Died 1829, buried in Masonic Cem.
- Howell b. 12 Dec 1771 married Ellen \_\_\_\_ d. 1822 (W. Va)

A fitting epitaph was written for Fielding some 33 years after his death by a visiting minister from Massachusetts, Timothy Alden, cousin to Fredericksburg's newspaper publisher Timothy Green. He sums up Fielding pretty well.

"He was a most zealous partisan in behalf of his country and took a warm and decided part in opposition to the tyrannical measures of Great Britain. He ever stood high in the affection of Gen. Washington and his fellow citizens..."

"In all disputes and difficulties among his neighbors, his counsel was eagerly sought, and he had the invaluable talent of restoring harmony and love where discord and hatred had disturbed the order and happiness of society. He was greatly esteemed and revered, and he was eminently entitled to the character of a peacemaker."

Twelve years ago I said, "Fielding who?" Now I can say, come and listen about the extraordinary life of my friend, Col. Fielding Lewis, Esquire.

Sources:

Duke, Jane Taylor. *Kenmore and the Lewises*. Kenmore Assn. 1975.

Felder, Paula S. *Fielding Lewis and the Washington Family*. American History Co. 1998.

Fithian, Philip Vickers. *Journal and Letters of*. Hunter D. Farish, ed. Univ. of Virginia. 1968.

Fitzgerald, Ruth Coder. *A Different Story*. Unicorn Press. 1979.

Sorley, Merrow Egerton. *Lewis of Warner Hall: History of a Family*. Genealogical Publishing Co. 1979.



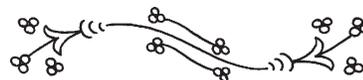
Be at War with your Vices, at Peace  
with your Neighbours, and let every  
New-Year find you a better Man.

-Benjamin Franklin



## RULES OF CIVILITY

Rule #8 - At play and at fire, it is good manners  
to give a place to the last comer; and affect not  
to speak louder than ordinary.



## SUGAR'S ADVENTURES

Written by John Hardia as  
dictated by Sugar the Parrott

### Sugar and the Trip Down River

Today my master and I are sailing a ship down river. The day started by filling large hogsheads with tobacco and then loading the hogsheads onto the ship. The hogsheads are like barrels but much bigger. The tobacco smells sweet and kind of tangy. Sometimes my master talks about tobacco as being colonial money. I don't understand that because money doesn't look at all like tobacco and has no smell at all. But maybe it's because sometimes my master gives things to someone and then we get tobacco in return.

The ship is moving very fast. Sometimes it takes a week to travel down river, but I think this time we might make the trip in one day. The wind is blowing so hard it is making my feathers stand on end.

I can see a large ship! Are we there already? Yes! This ship is at least three times as big as ours. I guess it might be too big to fit in the river where we live. We tie up next to the big ship and my master and I climb onto the big ship and go inside. We sit with a man and we give the man papers and the man gives us papers. I wanted some papers too but my master won't give me any. After a while we go outside and we watch while the hogsheads are moved from our ship to the big ship and many things are moved from the big ship to our ship. Some of them are bales of cloth and some are barrels of different size and some are metal things that I don't know.

My master walked up to another man and that man had a bird just as pretty as me. While my master and that man talked that other bird and I talked. I have seen many other birds but until now I have never seen a bird as pretty as me. I wish that bird could come with me but she stayed with the other man when we left. I guess I understand. I could not leave my master. The ship is sailing upriver now full of things. I guess my master will be able to use those things.

From my master.



### LETTERS FROM FRIENDS

17 December 1773

My Dear Friend Mary,

I hope this letter finds you well. There have been many affected by the winter pernpneumoncies here in Spottsylvania and I understand that Dr. Mercer has been quite hectic with the bleedings and the blisterings. It did not stop a party of us from traveling to Stratford hall for a Ball which you know I will avail myself of every opportunity to Dance and as you know "nothing is now to be heard of in conversation, but the Balls, the Fox Hunts, the fine entertainments, and the good fellowship, which are to be exhibited at the approaching Christmas." You would know all that were in our party except for Mrs. Kitty Taylor a new Friend from King George county. She is of a sweet nature and sews with the most exquisite stitching as one could see by her Dress. Our party started very early in the morning the Friday last being a long journey. The ride was blissfully uneventful – the "coach and six" being comfortable and in good repair. We made a short stop at Pope's Creek Plantation at Mr. Washington's home. There were a group of laydes and gentleman in fine voice serenading the house. We did arrive late at Stratford and I will not bore you with the minutia of our sleeping arrangements other than to say we were three abed and quite thankful for that. The next morning we arose refreshed and ready for the day.



LETTERS FROM FRIENDS (cont)

The Lees were not at home but were expected at any time. Mrs. Moore their Housekeeper being a fine woman of industry and diligence saw to our comforts as well as preparing the House for the evening Ball. We amused ourselves throughout the day with games of Whist and songs. Brother



also read to us parts of "Cato" by Mr. Addison - Mr. Lee having a fine library to chose from. As evening fell Mrs. Moore would trust no one else to light the chandelier in the Hall where the dance was held. The Ball began at about five of the Clock. Since Mr. and Mrs. Lee had still not yet arrived Master Firzefferie decided to dispense with the Minuet so we started with the Country-dances and he had picked some lively ones. The Widow Evans had a beautiful new silk robe a la

francaise which looked lovely. I

believe she had inherited the dress from a neighbor that she had being a woman of Christian nature had cared for in her later years. The woman had been rather large so she had an abundance of fabric to refashion to her style. We did meet a lovely family, which was



amusing since they had recently moved to Spottsylvania but we had to travel to Stratford Hall to make their acquaintance. Mr. Daniel Bland the father is a lawyer and had provided assistance to Mr. Lee. Mrs. Bland is quite accomplished and her daughter Laura has the same lovely 'visage' as her mother. I am sure they will find a good match for her among the Men of Virginia. The eldest is son Paul who dances a dream. One can tell he was most studious to his

Dance Lessons and of this I am sure as well that there will be many good Families trying to make a match with he. Mrs. Sprigmore and her charming daughter were in attendance. Alexandra has grown so you would scarce recognize her. I believe she has reached her "majority" so they shall soon be making a match for her as well. Mrs. Sprigmore has not too long arrived from England so we were anxious to see her Gown and hear the latest of the Fashions. A collation of Cakes, Pastries, and Jellies was served halfway through the evening and there was a Rum Punch as well. You know my love for Sweets



so I did indulge myself though I was unable to partake of Edna Mae's coconut cake as it is known throughout Westmoreland county for its quality and it was the first to

disappear from the Table. Mrs. McGonagle availed herself unashamedly of the last piece and pronounced it quite delicious! We Danced well into the Night and would have continued but the Musicians had 'fathomed' the Punch Bowl too often and were not able to continue. The sleeping was the same as the previous night and after arising we started on our journey home which turned out to be the same going as it was coming. It was such a blessing to be among Friends and Family as we look forward to our Savior's birth. I know that Mother joins me in wishing you and your Father good Health and Joy in the upcoming new year.



As ever I remain, your humble Servant,  
Christina Buchanan  
Rollingwood House



## The Colonial Herb Garden

by Heidi Hubbell

*“No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, and no culture comparable to that of the garden.”*

*-Thomas Jefferson to Charles Wilson Peale, 1811*

Much has been written about colonial herb gardens and the herbs grown in them, but what is less well known are the vegetable, fruit and ornamental plants grown on plantations, homesteads and city plots and the people who collected and exchanged them.

The 18<sup>th</sup> c. was an inquisitive and acquisitive one for gardeners on both sides of the Atlantic. Gardeners were very keen to the discovery of new places and plants. There was great trade in plants between the New and Old World. The gardens of the 17<sup>th</sup> c sustained the body while the gardens of the 18<sup>th</sup> c expanded to include the senses. American plants were of particular interest to gardeners, plant collectors, nurserymen and aristocrats alike in England and France. Even the lowly common Golden Rod (*Solidago*) was in great demand in England as an ornamental border plant and was claimed to bring wealth to the gardener.

Plant exchange was a forgone principle among settlers. Many brought into their gardens native plants and fruits along with European varieties that came with them or were sent for from Europe. Many of these native plants were adopted from Native American tribes who traded with settlers early in the 17th century. So much was there an interest in the plants of the New World that in England a club was formed called the “Temple Coffee House Botany Club” to finance traveling naturalists.

There were so many new plants and animals being brought back to Europe from Asia, Africa, and the Americas that it resulted in a confused agglomeration of records, specimens, identifications, illustrations and arguments among botanists. Species naming practices varied. Many biologists gave the species they described long, unwieldy Latin names, which could be altered at will; a scientist comparing two descriptions of species might not be able to tell which organisms were being referred to. For instance, the common wild briar rose was referred to by different botanists as *Rosa sylvestris inodora seu canina* and as *Rosa sylvestris alba cum rubore, folio glabro*. There needed to be a workable naming system. In 1735 in the Netherlands a young Swede named Carl Linnaeus (1707 – 1778) developed a new revolutionary system to name, rank, and classifying organisms and published the first edition of his classification of living things, *Systema Naturae*. The *Systema Naturae* grew from a slim pamphlet to a multivolume work, as his concepts were modified and as more and more plant and animal specimens were sent to him from every corner of the globe. His system for naming, ranking, and classifying organisms is still in wide use today (with many changes). Before Linnaeus, after experimenting with various alternatives, Linnaeus simplified naming immensely by designating one Latin name to indicate the genus, and one as a “shorthand” name for the species. The two names make up the **binomial** (“two names”) species name. For instance, in his two-volume work *Species*

*Plantarum (The Species of Plants)*, Linnaeus renamed the briar rose *Rosa canina*. This binomial system rapidly became the standard system for naming species. Zoological and most botanical taxonomic priority begin with Linnaeus: the oldest plant names accepted as valid today are those published in *Species Plantarum*, in 1753, while the oldest animal names are those in the tenth edition of *Systema Naturae* (1758), the first edition to use the binomial system consistently throughout. Although Linnaeus was not the first to use binomials, he was the first to use them consistently, and for this reason, Latin names that naturalists used before Linnaeus are not usually considered valid under the rules of nomenclature. (<http://www.ucmp.berkeley.edu>, December 4, 2003). This system now allowed amateur plant collectors to correspond easier with other collectors and experts using a common language to describe the plants in their collections.

One such collector, who corresponded with Linnaeus, was Jane Colden (1724 – 1766) who lived in the wilds of up state New York. She classified over 300 wild flowers found around here property. She is considered one of our first woman botanist and her manuscripts are now located today in the British Museum of Natural History.

Many collectors on both sides of the Atlantic started long, sociable exchanges of plants, seeds, bulbs and information. Often they became life long friendships an ocean away, such as that which started between John Custis of Williamsburg and Peter Collinson a Quaker merchant (haberdasher) in London who also corresponded with Linnaeus as well. Peter Collinson’s passion for gardening grew into an industrious interchange of grand proportion. He created a community of Charleston doctors, lady gardeners, wilderness explores, aristocratic Londoners, Quaker philanthropists, Virginia plantation owners and Pennsylvania visionaries. Through these exchanges, he was able to grow in his own garden with success, a great many American plants that he gave to friends and nurserymen. His love of gardening joined remote gardeners and collectors and made them into dear friends through their collected correspondences and exchanges.

I have included in my correspondence to all of you, a portion of John Randolph’s 1752 *Treatise on Gardening by a Citizen of Virginia*.

### January

Prepare hot-beds for Cucumbers:  
as little as can be done this month in a garden:

I would advise the preparing of your dung:  
and carry it to your beds, that it may be ready  
to spread on in February.

### February

Sow Asparagus, make your beds and  
fork up the old ones, sow Leaf Cabbages:  
latter end of month transplant Cauliflowers,  
sow Carrots, and transplant for seed: Prick out  
Endive for seed, sow Lettuce, Melons in hot-beds,  
sow Parsnips, take up the old roots and  
prick out of seed, sow Peas and prick them  
into your hot-beds, sow Radishes twice, plant Strawberries,  
plant out Turneps for seed,  
spade deep and make it fine, plant Beans

## The Colonial Herb Garden (con't)

### March

Slip your Artichokes, if fit, plant Kidney Beans, Cabbages, Celery, Parsley, Cucumbres, Currants, Chamomile, Celandine, Nasturtium, Featherfew, Fennel, Ivy, Horse Radish, Hyssop, Lavender, Lettuce, Radishes twice,  
Marjoram, Marsh Mallow, Mint,  
Melons, Millet, Mugwort, Onions, and for see Peas  
Twice, Potatoes, Raspberry, Rosemary, Rue, Spinach, Tansy, Thyme, Turneps.  
You may begin to mow your grss walks, and continue so to do every morning,  
and roll the; turf this month; plant Box.

*American Gardens in the Eighteenth Century*, by Ann Leighton,  
Published Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston 1976

## The Royal Game of Goose

If you've ever played ANY board game (Monopoly, Life, Parchesi, Chutes & Ladders, etc.) you have this game to thank as it was the ORIGINAL board game. A simple game in which you roll the dice, move, and try to get to the last space first.

This is an ancient game. While most sources point to the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century and the Medici family in Italy, some think it is even older. We do know that by the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, Francesco DeMedici of Florence gave the game as a gift to King Philip II of Spain. By the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century it was in England and the rest is gaming history.

**Equipment Needed:** the game board, some markers, and a pair of dice.

### Play:

It is a simple game for two or more players. Each player rolls the dice. High score is the first player, etc. The first player rolls the dice and moves his/her marker that number of spaces from the beginning space (space immediately before space number 1). If the marker ends on a space with a symbol, the player is rewarded or punished, as depicted in the symbol. Play continues with all players.

If the player lands on an occupied space, the occupant moves back to the space where the player began his move. (If wagering is involved, both players add one coin to the pot.) If the space was a penalty requiring the occupant to lose one or more rolls, that is passed onto the player who just landed there; the original occupant (who was bumped back) no longer has the penalty.

### Winning:

Play continues until a player reaches # 63 on an exact roll. They win the game and collect the "pot."

Colonial Williamsburg (and other places) sell a Game of Goose game board with the following imprinted on it: It is a facsimile of the game sold in London in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. (Note: a "stake" is a coin in the pot.)

*The Rules to be observed in this Game are as followeth*

*As many as please may play with a paire of Dyce and every one staking throws to see shall begin.*

*Hee that throws a 6 & 3 at the first must go to the number 26 and if he throws a 5 & 4 then to the number 53 for every such advantage shall add a stake to the rest.*

*Hee that throws a Goose must double his chance forward from his last place. [Note: move again the same number of spaces.]*

*Hee that lands on 6 must pay a stake for his passage over the Bridge and go to the number 12.*

*He that lands on 19 where the Alehouse is must pay a stake and drink till everyone has thrown.*

*Hee that lands on 26 the Dyce may take a second roll.*

*Hee that lands on 31 where the Well is must pay a stake and stay there till everyone play twice unless some other lands the same by which he is delivered.*

*Hee that lands on 42 where the Maize is payes one and returns back to number 29.*

*Hee that goeth to 52 where the Prison is must pay one and returns back to number 18.*

*Hee that goeth to 58 where death is must pay one and begin again.*

*Hee that is overtaken by another must return to his place that overtook him and both must pay.*

*Hee that overthroweth the number 63 must turn back and count his throws from the beginning.*

*Hee that throweth the just number 63 wineth the Goose.*

Why all the drinking and wagering in a kid's board game? Because it WASN'T a kid's board game for a LONG time. It was a Tavern game for the men (it always says He) to play, drink, and gamble. Today we look at it as a kid's game, and so it is – Now.

Was it played in Colonial Fredericksburg? Of course! Fredericksburg court records indicate that brothers John and Robert Spotswood were playing a game in 1755 in which Robert won 10/9 (10 shillings 9 pence). Additionally Robert W. Carter's diary shows that he lost ten years later to Mann Page, a staggering 11/17/6 (11 Pounds 17 shillings 6 pence) – pretty high stakes!

Pick up a copy and enjoy it again with your family and friends.

### Sources:

Nelson, Walter. "The Merry Gamester."

Carson, Jane. "Colonial Virginians at Play"

The Royall and Most Pleasant Game of the Goose (game board)

## Education Committee Highlights

1/7/04

Al, Sandra, Wayne, Catherine, Sharon, Myra and I went to Garrisonville ES to tell five fourth grade classes about life in the colonies, about the trip from the old country to the colonies, and about the Townsend Act (a stamp tax).

I really got into my character (a middle-aged indentured servant who became cook at Weedons Tavern on Caroline Street in Fredericksburg). In fact, I got so emotional telling one of the classes about the dreadful conditions that hundreds of emigrants endured for nine weeks of crossing the ocean that I started to cry (most convincing!) and Catherine took over. She gave me another chance and then another chance afterwards. I was careful the next two times to avoid the subject of how the children died and were tossed overboard. After such a horrid voyage, however, I more than appreciated working at the tavern, even though I was basically a slave, bonded to Mr. Weedon for five years. It wasn't hard for me to get into character. In reality, I had lived eight years in a drafty old farmhouse with essentially no heat. I even had to haul water several hundred yards for three months. And the house was dreadfully hot or cold. I remember having to shower in a bathroom that was only 45 degrees. Even this very morning I showered in a bathroom of 41 degrees until I could heat it up with the portable heater.

Interestingly, I surprised and delighted my fellow Colonists with my performance. Apparently, folks new to this sort of thing just sit in the background and observe before they find the courage to get up and take part. I have never had trouble with play-acting. And, like I said, my character is not far from my true self. Even when I told the kids that I was hoping I would be given a little land and a cow upon completion of my indentureship, I started spouting off the benefits of having a cow. (One of the boys wanted to know why [in the world] would I want a cow.) I've never even had a cow, but somehow I have some knowledge of the usefulness of cows.

Wayne told us about life on a flat bottomed schooner which he used to move goods up and down the rivers to and from the ocean ports. He brought a small model of a boat similar to the one he would have worked on as a second mate. He is very knowledgeable and I hope to learn more about my trade of cooking at an open hearth from him. He also had a tiny, very, very old math book which a student would use from his very earliest studies through university. Wayne passed his boat and book around to a fascinated group of students.

When Al entered a classroom, he would give his hat to one boy and his cane to another to wear and hold respectively during the entire presentation. He also passed around some of his coins. Al and Sandra argued about the new marriage tax. Everyone agreed the tax was unfair, but Sandra said that it should not keep Al and her from marrying...Al could afford to pay the tax and they would not be able to marry in a proper church without paying the tax. Al said that he would not pay the tax on principle and that he and Sandra could "jump the broomstick" to be married. She refused the broomstick and he countered that they could bide their time, as times were achanging', as evidenced by the unrest in

Boston. She said she was not getting any younger. The question was put to the kids...should Al pay the tax and they get married in a church or should they wait? The kids were torn. They wanted to say "no" to taxation without representation, as they'd been taught, but the dilemma presented by Al and Sandra showed them that the issue was not so simple. Wayne, Sharon, and I voted that Al should pay and they should get married.

Catherine contrasted her trip from Scotland with my trip as a poor emigrant. She also was the MC at which she is superb. Sharon (Mrs. Weedon) spoke to one class but she is still a bit shy. Not so her daughter, Anna Weedon, a fourth grader, who had worn her Colonial dress, which she happily demonstrated to the classes. She also took us from class to class, showing up precisely at the appointed hour and acting as our guide and timekeeper. She was marvelous. Myra said very little. She is still trying to form her character. She grows herbs for Dr. Mercer in Fredericksburg.

While the fourth grades were having lunch, we went to a fifth grade to teach some dancing. Once the kids got over their natural social shyness (and a couple of the girls were immediately ready to dance all day), they really had a good time.

When our "job" was over, we went to lunch at Applebee's. I feel a lovely sense of satisfaction. We will do our next presentation on January 21. But on January 14 we will meet at the Toll House to plan a "reverse strip" demonstration for a school in February.

**As I have run way behind in this issue, I am making it a double issue and am making plans for the next one. Deadline for submissions to the May-June issue**

**of the newsletter is April 8, 2004.** The meeting is on the 6th, however, we will not be able to be at that meeting. You may email me as you think of something or see something that would be good to add.

myrawig@cox.net

The RCHS Gazette is published quarterly in Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. All members receive a copy. Membership is \$10.00 per year for individuals, \$15.00 per year for families. **RCHS does not maintain an office.** All correspondence should be addressed to RCHS, PO Box 7823, Fredericksburg, VA 22404-7823. *Items for the newsletter should be addressed to the Editor c/o RCHS or emailed to [myrawig@cox.net](mailto:myrawig@cox.net).* Copyright 2003 RCHS. The content of the RCHS Gazette is the property of RCHS, its members and contributors. RCHS is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Donations to the Society are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.



**Rappahannock Colonial Heritage Society, Inc.**  
**PO. Box 7823**  
**Fredericksburg, VA 22404-7823**

**Rappahannock Colonial Heritage Society, Inc.**

Meets 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday, 7:30pm at Faulkner Hall, St. George's Church, 905 Princess Anne St., Fredericksburg, VA  
Please join us!

**Upcoming Meeting Dates:**

Apr 5  
May 4  
June 7  
July 6  
August 3

**English Country Dance Lessons (Colonial Dancing):**

St. George's Church, 905 Princess Anne St., Fredericksburg, VA (downstairs in Family Room)  
Bring the family for some old fashioned fun!

April 9 & 23  
May 7 & 21  
June 11 & 18  
July 9 & 23