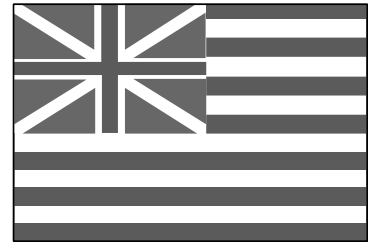




THE RAPPAHANNOCK GAZETTE



Newsletter of the Rappahannock Colonial Heritage Society, Inc.

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A Colonial Virginia Christmas

by Trip Wiggins

Christmas is come, hang the pot,
Let spits turn round, and ovens be hot;
Beef, pork, and poultry, now provide
To feast thy neighbors at this tide;
Then wash all down with good wine and beer,
And so with mirth conclude the Year.

(Virginia Almanac [Royale] 1765)

I recently attended a church choir/musical entitled “An Old-Fashioned Christmas.” It was a moving story of a traditional Christmas in the late 19th century that had none of today’s commercialism – it focused on the meaning of Christmas. That got me to thinking of just what an old-fashioned or traditional Christmas was for the folks of our era in the mid 18th century. As I soon discovered, different times in our past had vastly different customs with the celebration of the birth of Jesus.

Most of us “baby boomers” have our picture of a “traditional” Christmas burned into our heads by the advertising and movies we’ve seen. “Miracle on 34th Street,” “It’s a Wonderful Life,” “A Christmas Carol,” and my personal favorite, Jean Shepherd’s “A Christmas Story.” For a younger generation there are “The Santa Clause,” and “Home Alone.”

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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.



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THE PRESIDENT'S PEN



Hope your holidays were good. Yes, we've made it through another year and are already deep in planning for the 2005 schedule. It just gets better and better.

What was 2004 like? (I'll probably miss many – my apologies if I left out your favorite.) Well first and foremost, many more great school presentations. This year we really gelled and came up with some great ways to interact with the class and make it fun. And our events: Ferry Farm for the President's birthday (where we picked up a nice tent from our new friends Camp Flintlock). March Muster was in a cramped space, but it was a hit. Mr. Monroe's birthday, the Spring Tea, the great cookout (smokeout?) at the Piercy's, Port Royal 4th of July, MONTPELIER (wow!), Historic Port Royal Day, the Fall Tea, and THE BALL. Something we've longed for since we started meeting – and now it's reality, and how great it was! Stratford Hall Candlelight Tour (also a wow), wreath making, and our annual dinner – Cheers!

Coming up – more of the same and a few new twists, probably. No, I don't have a crystal ball, but we've now got to the stage where people are calling us and asking if can do...

When the paper calls you to get your list of events for the coming year you know you are a part of the community.

And how did we get here? Certainly not one person, and most certainly not me. It was "we" – the society as a whole. We have established a reputation as a group that can be relied on to do colonial interpretation correctly and make it fun for the modern-day spectators. To each and every one of you I say Thanks! Here's to a great 2004 and an even better 2005!

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 Tina Buchanan 898-2113. We rehearse at St. George's Episcopal Church, 905 Princess Anne St. at 7:30pm. Our next rehearsals are:

- February 11 & 25*
- March 11 & 25*
- April 8 & 22*
- May 13 & 27*

These dates are open to the public. Dates are subject to change, please call or check the newspaper. The demonstration team practices on the 3rd Friday monthly.

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.



RULES OF CIVILITY

Rule #9 - Spit not in the fire, nor stoop low before it. Neither put your hands into the flames to warm them, nor set your feet on the fire, especially if there be meat before it.

Rule #10 When you sit down, keep your feet firm on the ground and even, without putting one foot on the other or crossing them.



EVENTS OF INTEREST IN THE AREA

Feb. 19 - George Washington Birthnight Ball. Gadsbys Tavern. Set in the year 1798, the evening includes banquet,

dancing and celebration. 5:30-11pm, ball begins at 9pm

Feb 21 & 22 - George Washington's Birthday. George Washington Birthplace National Monument. Costumed interpreters will present plantation activities and farm chores throughout the day. Free admission.

Feb 27 - 18th Century Tea with Martha Washington. Gadsby's Tavern. Learn about 18th century tea customs as well as clothing and dancing of the period. 3-5pm

Mar. 1-Apr 26 - Plant Propagatin Workshop. Claude Moore Colonial Farm. Learn how to start your own plants from seeds, cuttings and division. Tuesdays, drop in betw. 4-8pm.

March 12 - 1805 Inaugural Banquet of Thomas Jefferson. Gadsby's Tavern. Step back 200 years to attend the second inaugural banquet of our nation's third President, Thomas Jefferson. 7pm

March 18&19 - Book Sale. Claude Moore Colonial Farm. Browse through our large selection donated to the Farm. 9am-1pm.

March 19 & 20 - Spring Cleaning. Claude Moore Colonial Farm. Help get the Farm ready for the new season. Fields & trails need to be cleared, fences rebuilt, and wood moved & stacked. Behind the scenes, there is greenhouse work, wood splitting, cleaning animal pens and even some indoor jobs. 9am-3pm.

April 1 - Farm ends winter hibernation & open to the public. Claude Moore Colonial Farm. The Farm is open Wed.-Sun from 10a-4:30p, Apr 1-Dec 11. Closed during inclement weather.

April 16 - Salting Fish. Claude Moore Colonial Farm. Help the farm family scale, gut and pack fish into jars. Learn about the important contributions the river makes to their lives. 1-4pm.

Apr 16-May 7 - Gardening Days at Mt. Vernon. Garden & landscape guided tours available daily at 11, 1 & 3. Guests are invited to enter Washington's historic "orangerie," or greenhouse, the only occasion this space is open to the public. Greenhouse exhibits include historical medicinal & culinary uses of herbs, flowers & plants.

April 16 - Public Opening of Gilmore Cabin & Farm. Montpelier. Learn about the transition from slavery to freedom for African-Americans in this country.

April 16 - An 18th Century Grand Ball. Gadsby's Tavern. This springtime ball will be presented in the style of the 1790's. Live music, dessert collation, cash bar and 'gaming.' 8-11pm.

April 19 - American Founding Lecture Series (Apr. 19, 26, May 3 & 10). Gadsby's Tavern. Dr. Peter Henriques, Historian & Professor Emeritus at George Mason University. "His First Testing Ground: George Washington and the French & Indian War".

April 21-24 - GNAR Spring Market Fair & Rifle Frolic. Camp represents that of a 1700's trade fair where neighbors, traders, hunters & Indians would gather to trade, buy & sell supplies. Open to Visitors Thursday-Saturday, 9am-5pm. Day visitors may visit any day the rendezvous is open IF you are in pre-1840 dress & gear.

April 22 & 23 - Spring Garage Sale. Claude Moore Colonial Farm. All sales proceeds benefit the Farm's educational programs. 9a-1p.

April 24 - Coaching Day - Stratford Hall. Enjoy the parade of coaches, music, dog races and more. Info call 804-493-8039 or email info@stratfordhall.org

April 26 - American Founding Lecture Series. Gadsby's Tavern. Dr. Peter Henriques, Historian & Professor Emeritus at George Mason University. "Another Sally Hemings Case? A New Look at the George Washington & West Ford Controversy".

Apr. 29 & 30 - 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. 9a-5p.

WEB SITES FOR LISTED EVENTS

George Washington Birthplace National Monument
www.nps.gov/gewa

Montpelier
www.montpelier.org

Stratford Hall
ww.stratfordhall.org

Claude Moore Colonial Farm
www.1771.org

Mount Vernon
www.mountvernon.org

Gadsby's Tavern
www.gadsbystavern.org

GNAR
www.gnarendezvous.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:

Feb. 13 - Fredericksburg Area Museum Mother Daughter Tea. 1-4pm.

Feb. 19 - George Washington Birthday Celebration. Ferry Farm. 10am-1pm. Colonial Children's Games

March 19 - March Muster 10am-4pm

April 30 Scottish Block Party & Colonial Children's Festival 11am-4pm

May 21 - Spring Tea 1-3pm

July 2 - Historic Port Royal Independence Day Celebration

September 10 - Fall Tea 1-3pm

October 8 - James Monroe Fall Ball.

October 29 & 30 - Historic Cemetery Tours

December 3 - Wreath Sale

December 3 & 10- Stratford Hall Candlelight Tours

But for we of the 18th century, none of these comes close to letting us know how Christmas was celebrated “in our time.” So I hope this short article helps fill in the gap.

This is not going to be a history of Christmas and its customs – numerous books have been published on that subject. I will focus on what our Virginia ancestors did to celebrate the Christmas holidays. If Christmas then was not the same as Christmas today, then what was it? It’s easiest to describe it in terms of what we see today. Some were seen then, most were not. Come, let’s meet Christmas way-past.

The Date. December 25th has been the accepted date of Christmas by most Christians (but certainly not all) for centuries. We celebrate the event on that day – the 25th. For colonial Virginians, the 25th of December was only the beginning of the Christmas holiday season. It went on to include the twelve days of Christmas culminating on Epiphany, Jan 6th, or 12th Night – the traditional date of the arrival of the Magi. Other events with the season included Dec 26th – St. Stephen’s Day, Dec 27th – St. John’s Day (a special day when the Masonic Lodge would hold their annual St. John’s Day dinner), Jan 1st – the Circumcision of Christ. In fact, the church ended the celebrations with the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary on Feb 2nd – 40 days after the birth of Jesus. Remember, that the word holiday comes from the church’s Holy day.

A note about St. John’s Day. The members of the Masonic Lodge would process to the church for a special sermon (the minister was likely to be a fellow Mason) then attended a special Ball and supper with their wives. John Harrower, tutor at Belvidere plantation at New Post recorded in his journal, on Dec. 27, 1774, “St. John’s Day. This Day a Grand Lodge in Town, and the whole went to Church in their Clothing & heard Sermon.”

December 25th would not be a legal holiday in America for another century (1885). It was still considered a workday by most.

Decorations. Wreaths made with fresh and colorful fruits are striking and beautiful – but not something you would have probably seen hanging on people’s doors in colonial Fredericksburg or Williamsburg. Fruit was just too important (and imported pineapples too expensive) to hang on a door to rot! No, decorations were far simpler. The traditional “sticking of the church” with green boughs just before Christmas (still in fashion at St. George’s – and many other churches) and simple evergreen decorations in people’s homes were about as decorated as we got. Mistletoe (another evergreen) had been popular for centuries in Europe and England along with colorful berries and forced blossoms to complement a few candles (if you were wealthy enough to buy/make candles just for decorations).

Are there references of the time describing decorations? Precious few. We rely mainly on notes of travelers and a few surviving prints of the time. Hallmark ornaments and flashing lawn Santas, Frosty’s, and lights won’t be around for another two centuries.

The Tree. Sorry. Although Christmas Trees had been in use by some Germans for over a century, the first recorded instance of a Christmas tree in Virginia will be some 4 decades into the 19th century.

Christmas Cards. Another 19th-century invention. London first started producing these in the 1840s.

Gift Giving. If you take the time to look, you’ll see ads for gifts in Virginia and Boston newspapers of the time appearing in the fall editions. But the primary gift-giving day was Jan. 1st – New Year’s Day and not Christmas. There are few references to gift giving, and most of these are for masters giving their servants/apprentices/slaves small gifts (or perhaps a farthing, bit, or shilling). As to the master’s children receiving presents – it did happen but rarely and usually among the wealthiest families. It was from superiors to dependents – rarely the other way.

A Time for Children. Although schoolmasters closed the doors for a few days – usually till either Dec 29th or Jan 7th – it was not a holiday geared for children. A quick glance at journals of the time shows that the holiday was for adults to enjoy themselves. Philip Vickers Fithian, the tutor to the Robert Carter household at “Nomini Hall” in Westmoreland County, noted about the holiday’s events, “Nothing is now to be heard of in conversation but The Balls, the Fox-Hunts, the Fine Entertainments, and good fellowship which are to be exhibited by the approaching Christmas.” No, Christmas won’t be a holiday for children until the Dutch add their influence in the 19th century.

Santa Claus. The jolly elf has evolved (or morphed) more than any other symbol of Christmas. While St. Nicholas was a real person in the 4th century; linking a specific person to Dec. 25th won’t occur until the 19th century. Yes, in England we had Father Christmas, but, for whatever reason, he didn’t appear to emigrate to the colonies. No, Santa Claus would become a fixture (and a blend of St. Nicholas, Kris Kringle, Sinter Claes, and Father Christmas) only after “A Visit from St. Nicholas” was published in 1823.

Church. Yes, we went to church. The Anglican Book of Common Prayer had a Christmas service since it was first published in the 1500s, which itself harkened back to an earlier Roman Catholic prayer book. In Virginia, alas, few attended the Christmas services – we were already making Christmas more of a secular holiday than the truer Holy day.

Guns and Firecrackers. It was likely to be awakened on Christmas morning to the sounds of guns firing or fire crackers exploding. Such were the traditions of our forefathers!

School. As has been noted, schools were normally shut down for the holiday period. One custom practiced at many Virginia schools was for students to bar the doors to keep the schoolmasters out. This generally occurred on Dec. 18th and would last either until Dec. 29th (when Fithian re-opened his school) or after Twelfth Night – Jan. 6th. Fithian notes the practice in 1773. Remember, too, that school was not for the masses but for the privileged (and wealthy) few – the gentry. But that’s another article.

Wassail. Wass Hael – “Be in Health!” An old tradition in England was to go from house to house with a Wassail bowl full of an alcoholic punch. As you visited others and shared the bowl, the home you were in when the bowl ran dry was to refill it. Another version mandated the

household to keep the wassail bowl full from Christmas to Twelfth Night to entertain guests. This was mostly tied to New Year's Day and rarely described in Virginia. Perhaps since most plantations were miles apart the custom didn't develop here.

Food and Drink. The Christmas dinner was a focus of the celebration and the table would groan – as finances would allow. The Carter household ate “high on the hog” – but even Fithian remarked, “Our Dinner was no otherwise than common, yet as elegant a Christmas Dinner as I ever sat down to...” “While we supped Mr. Carter as he often does played on the Forte-Piano.”

What food was consumed? Coming in December, preserving fruits and vegetables for the season was a problem. Popular items included beef, goose, ham, and turkey; also fish, oysters, mincemeat pies and brandied peaches. The menu was long and varied.

Of course alcohol flowed freely at the dinners and parties. For the affluent – brandy, Madeira, wine, rum punches. For the middling and lower sorts, rum, ale, beer and cider. Even slaves and servants were freely given alcohol during the season. After all, as one put it, they were less likely to run off after imbibing. Don't forget the eggnog or egg grog as it was called on account of the rum it contained.

Carols. Maybe. Carols had been sung for over 200 years. Two popular, and highly prolific, composers of hymns/carols were Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley (brother of John Wesley). Their combined output numbered in the thousands but today they are chiefly remembered for two, respectively: “Joy to the World” and “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.” Were they sung? Perhaps but we have no definitive record. If they were, they weren't the songs you know today for each had today's well-known melodies composed midway through the 19th century.

There was Handel's “Messiah” which was first performed in April, 1742 in Dublin, Ireland. Most music scholars describe this as an Easter composition that gradually took over Christmas decades later. Then there is “Greensleeves.” It was probably composed in the 1500s but the lyrics we sing today “What Child is This...” were not added until the 19th century. So, while music was most-certainly a part of the holiday season, as to Christmas carols being sung – we just don't know.

Of local note, the Rector of St. George's, Rev. James Marye, Jr., penned his own Christmas hymn:
Assist me, Muse divine! To sing the Morn
On which the Savior of Mankind was born
But oh! What Numbers to the Theme can rise?
Unless kind Angels aid me from the skies?
Methinks I see the tuneful Host descend
And with officious Joy the Scene attend.
Hark! By their hymns directed on the Road,
The gladsome Shepherds find the nascent God!
And view the Infant conscious of his Birth,
Smiling bespeak Salvation to the Earth!

Twelfth Night. The culmination of the season was usually a Twelfth Night dinner and ball – again, normally restricted to those affluent enough to attend. There was a dinner and of course dancing, drinking and gaming.

One tradition was the Twelfth Night cake. Inside were baked two objects (beans, coins, chess pieces, etc.) The man who found an object in his slice was honored by given the privilege to host the next ball. The woman so lucky, would make the next cake!

Nicholas Cresswell, an English traveler to Alexandria in January, 1775, recorded in his journal concerning the Twelfth Nigh Ball:

“There was about 37 Ladys Dressed and Powdered to the like, some of them very handsom, and as much Vanity as is necessary. All of them fond of dancing. But I do not think they perform it with the greatest elleganse. Betwixt the County Dances they have what I call everlasting Jiggs.

“A Couple gets up, and begins to dance a Jig (to some Negro tune) others come and cuts them out, these dances always last as long as the Fiddler can play. This is social but I think it looks more like a Bacchanalian dance then one in a polite Assembly. Old Women, Young wives with young Children on their Laps, Widows, Maids, and Girls come promiscuously to these Assemblys which generally continue till morning. A Cold supper, Punch, Wine, Coffee, and Chocolate, But no Tea. This is a forbidden herb. The men chiefly Scotch and Irish. I went home about Two Oclock, but part of the Company stayd got Drunk and had a fight.”

Christmas celebrations elsewhere? There were many variations as to how the holiday was celebrated – or not celebrated - throughout the colonies. Elizabeth Drinker, a Philadelphia Quaker, describing Christmas customs in her city shortly after the revolution, said there were Quakers, who “make no more account of it than any other day,” those who were religious, and the rest who “spent it in riot and dissipation.” It was a holiday for Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Moravians. To most other denominations, it was just another day, as recorded by Fithian in his journal on Dec. 25, 1775 in western Virginia among the Scots Presbyterians, “Christmas Morning – Not a Gun is heard – Not a Shout – No company or Cabal assembled – To Day is like other Days every Way calm & temperate – people go about their daily Business with the same Readiness, & apply themselves to it with the same Industry.”

Lest you think that these were the “good old days,” read the following letter to the editor from the Virginia Gazette, Dec. 30, 1773:

“On the Decay of English CUSTOMS and MANNERS”
Sir,

I am an old Fellow, and confess that I like old Things. Among the chief of these, I hold old Fashions and Customs; and, among all the Refinements of the present Age, I do not think that in these [days] they have refined greatly for the better. This is Christmas Morning [1773]; and when I look around me, I think it promises but a dull Holiday. The Times, Sir, are changed. In such a Day as this, an English Kitchen used to be the Palace of Plenty, Jollity, and good Eating. Every thing was plain, but plenty. Here stood the large, plump, juicy Buttocks of English Roast Beef, there smiled the frothy tankards of English Beer; here smokes the solid sweet-tasted Mince Pies, and there the curling Fumes of Plumpudding perfumed the sky with delicious

Fragrance. Humour and Eating went Hand in Hand; the Men caroused, and the Women gave loose to gay but innocent Amusements.

Now Mark the Picture of the present Time: Instead of that firm Roast Beef, that fragrant Pudding, our Tables groan with the luxuries of France and India. Here a lean Fricassee rises in the Room of our majestick Ribs, and there a Scoundrel Syllabus occupies the Place of our well-beloved Home-brewed. The solid Meal gives Way to the slight Repast; and, forgetting that good Eating and good Porter are the two great Supporters of the Magna Charta and the British Constitution, we open our Hearts and our Mouths to new Fashions in Cookery, which will one Day lead us to Ruin.

Alas! alas! That it should come to this! Our Nobles absolutely subsist on Macaroni and Negus, and our very Aldermen have almost forgot the use of Barons and Custards. What will this World come to at last!

Let us be no longer surprised that we are no longer what we have been. Let us no longer be astonished that our broad Shoulders, our brawny Arms, our firm round Legs, exist no more; that our Bones are marrowless, and our Nerves without Strength. We live upon Pap, and our Drink is Tea and Capillaire...

AN OLD FELLOW"

Yes, regardless of the age, there was always older "good old days."

This Month much Meat will be roasted in rich Mens Kitchens, the Cooks sweating in making of minced Pies and other Christmas cheer, and whole Rivers of Punch, Toddy, Wine, Beer, and Cider consumed with drinking. Cards and Dice will be greatly used, to drive away the tediousness of the long cold Nights; and much Money will be lost at Whist Cribbage and All Fours.

Virginia Almanac, Dec. 1772

So, Christmas in colonial Virginia really boiled down to Church and partying – not necessarily in that order. (My how some things never change.) Merry Christmas.

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Facts we should know – Levy & Tithe

In today's parlance when someone talks about *tithing* to the church we normally construe that to mean they are giving 10% of their income to their church. In the 1700s it took on a slightly different meaning.

Each year the County and the Parish (the local church) worked up their budget for the upcoming year. The budget for the county was similar to what it is today – to pay for services within the county. Within the church, it paid for upkeep on the building & grounds, the minister's salary (mandated by the King's law at 16,000 lbs of tobacco per year), care for the poor and insane, etc. As we were a colony of England, the church was, of course, the Church of England. Whether or not YOU considered yourself a member was of little importance. The fact that you lived in Virginia made you a member of THE Church.

The budget was the responsibility of the Vestry. This was composed (normally) of 12 men in the church who were appointed by the vestry. (As one moved away or died, the remainder would choose a successor.) You held this office for LIFE. (That would change after the revolution to 3 years – just as today, and the election would evolve to an election of the church membership and not just vestry members. Democracy came to the church when it came to the colonies.)

Anyway, when the vestry worked out the budget (*levy*) they distributed it evenly among the *tithables* of the church. Yes, all were considered equal here. A *tithable* was a white male over the age of 16 and all blacks or indentured servants 16 and over. The *levy* was divided by the number of *tithables* in the parish to come up with the amount each person had to pay. Of course there was equality built into the equation. A farmer with just his wife and son were considered as 2 tithables. Col. Fielding Lewis, his large family, many slaves and indentured servants, had a much heavier payment to make each year. For a typical year in the 1770s, the *levy* per *tithable* was about 20 lbs of tobacco. Yes, all levies were paid in tobacco.

Washington meets war vets:

The Virginia Gazette

Thursday, June 21, 1770. Number 996. Page 2,
Column 3

WILLIAMSBURG, June 21, 1770.

THE officers of the first troops who engaged in the service of this colony (before the battle of the Meadows, in the year 1754) or their representatives, are requested to meet at Fredericksburg on the first day of August next, in order to consider of some matters relative to their grant of land. A meeting at this time may be essential to their interests, and therefore it is hoped that they will not fail to attend accordingly.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Billiards

Our game this time is Billiards. This game has changed much over the ages and there is still quite a bit unknown as to just how it was played in the late 18th century. It is probably French as ‘bille’ is the French word for ball. It has been around since at least the 1400s.

Looking at the green table it is quite easy to believe it is a modification to an earlier outdoor game brought indoors so it could be played anytime – rain or shine. It was an adaptation of a form of croquet or perhaps Bowls. Like its modern cousin pool, billiards is played on an oblong table of green cloth with a raised railing. The railings were often filled with cloth to make a crude “cushion.” There were 6 pockets (or “hazards”), one in each corner and one in the middle of the long sides. Here the similarities end. “Our” game of billiards is played with 2 ivory balls and each of two players has a stick with a curved end. Looking at many pictures of the sticks throughout history, they can be described in three general terms: something akin to a small hockey stick, something like a shuffle board stick, or something like a croupier’s stick.

The player held the stick between thumb and forefinger and struck the ball with the flat side of the curved end. Over the years the stick evolved from the style of that described above to that of the “queue” (meaning “tail” in French), which was Anglicized to cue. If the ball is close to the rail, you may use either the flat end or the other end to strike your ball.

On the table were two objects, a “port” and a “King.” The port was like a croquet wicket that would sit on the table and large enough for a ball to go through it. The King was a piece (normally a small wooden cone) that stood on the table. One of these was placed at each end (about a foot from the rail). Your object was to knock your ball through the port and to touch (but not knock over) the King. You could also score points by sending your opponent’s ball against the King or into a hazard. You could block the “port” so your opponent couldn’t knock his ball through. You could also lightly tap the edge of the port with your ball to make it turn slightly (without tipping it over) and thus make it harder for your opponent to drive his ball through the port.

The Play:

Each strikes, or rather “pushes” his ball and he who ends up closest to the King goes first.

Players try to push their ball through the port (in the direction opposite the King), then back through, and “touch” the King (without knocking it over). Each time this is accomplished, a point is scored. Play usually continued until someone amassed 3 or 5 points – as agreed to by the players before the game begins.

Points by hazards. If you strike your ball and it strikes your opponent’s ball, which in turn knocks over the King – you earn a point. This is known as “kinging.” If, while doing so,

your ball ends in a hazard or flies off the table, you LOSE one point. If you knock over the port or the king, you lose a point. You can also lose points for etiquette. You must have one foot on the floor or you lose. If your hand is on the table or you drag your sleeve on the table – lose a point. If you strike your ball twice on a shot – lose one.

Sometime in the mid to late 18th century, the port and king slowly went away and the game eventually evolved to today’s Billiards or in England, Snooker.

What about the Fredericksburg-area connection? Phillip Fithian only mentions Billiards once in his journal and that is at a tavern on one of his travels – so Mr. Robert Carter probably did not own a table. John Harrower fails to mention billiards at all. William Byrd of Westover certainly did have a table as early as about 1700. Closer to home, a tavern in Port Royal with a “Billiard’s Room” was offered for sale in 1751. Perhaps the *Fox Tavern*? Mr. William Black, in April 1746, ran an ad in the Virginia Gazette announcing that he was looking for a buyer of the *Race Horse Tavern* (also known as the *Long Ordinary*) in Fredericksburg. It was furnished with a fine “English Billiard Table.” The *Long/Race Horse* was located on Caroline Street directly behind the Court House. Mr. Charles Colson did, in fact, purchase it and sold the same (including the table in question) in 1751. In September 1745, John Doncastle also ran an ad to sell his Tavern in Fredericksburg also with a fine “London Billiard Table.” Perhaps Black bought his table? His was located farther down Caroline St.

Not to be outdone, George Weedon, once he took over the old Gordon Tavern and renamed it Weedon’s Tavern, purchased a billiard table as was evidenced by his sale notice in 1775 as he prepared to go off to war. The great racehorse fan and delegate to the Continental Congress (1779), William Fitzhugh of Chatham, enjoyed playing billiards at Weedon’s – as did many others in our fair town.

So grab a stick and enjoy this most genteel game!



2005 DUES

Please take just a moment to send in your dues for next year. Individual dues are \$10.00 and family dues are \$15. We have a lot of fun activities coming up this year 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.

Patients of Dr. Hugh Mercer (1770-1775)

(From the Hugh Mercer Expense Book, on microfilm at MWC library.)

There are a few names missing, but this is about 90+% of his ledger. Some info corroborated with the following sources:

Crozier, William "Spotsylvania Co. Records 1720-1800"

Felder, Paula "Fielding Lewis & the Washington Family"

Riley, Edward (ed.) "The Journal of John Harrower"

In order to learn a little more about the people we would meet in our everyday life in Fredericksburg in the early 1770s we offer a glimpse of Dr. Mercer's ledgers. As he was one of only a few doctors in town, he had a large number of patients whose names are readily apparent to many. Lucky for us most businesses kept the person's name, residence, and occupation in their books. This is my first look at the citizens of our fair town. Later I will expand this by looking at the deed records and other ledger books as they come available. For now, here's a brief glimpse at your neighbors.

First	Last	Occupation	Notes
James	Allan	Joyner	Fbg
Thomas	Allan	Sp...man	Fbg
John	Allason	Merchant	Falmouth
John	Atkinson	Barber/Periwig Mkr	Fbg
John	Baggott		Fbg
John	Baker		Fbg
Dr Wm	Bankhead	Physician?	?
	Banks	Sadler	Fbg
Lawrence	Battaile		Nr Fbg
Mrs.	Battaley	widow of John	Fbg
Col. John	Baylor		of Caroline Co.
Alexander	Blair	Merchant	Fbg
David	Blair	Merchant	Fbg
Thomas	Blanton	Carpenter	Fbg
	Blythe	Breeches Maker	Fbg
David	Briggs	Merchant	Falmouth
Richard	Brooke		Nr Fbg
Bennett	Brown	Merchant	Fbg
James	Brown	Silversmith	Fbg
	Buchanan	Merchant	Falmouth
Mordacai	Buckner		Fbg
Edward	Carter		Fbg
John	Champe		
Michael	Clark	Mason	Fbg
Thomas	Colson		
	Cunningham	Merchant	Falmouth
Col. Wm	Daingerfield		of Belvedere
John	Dalton	Taylor	Fbg
Charles	Dick		Fbg
Roger	Dixon		Fbg
John	Dixon		Williamsburg
Moses	Doolittle	Hatter	Fbg
James	Duncanson	Merchant	
William	Ellis		
Col. Wm	Fitzhugh		
Col. Henry	Fitzhugh, Sr		
Felix	Gilbert	Merchant	
James	Glassell	Merchant	Fbg
James	Goff	Schoolmaster	
	Gordon		husb. of Midwife
	Hackley	Tavernkeeper	
	Hamilton	Silversmith	

"The grand Arcanum of management can be stated in three simple rules: Let every thing be done at a proper time, keep every thing in its proper place, and put every thing to its proper use."

Mary Randolph of Virginia

"Better to be deprived of food for three days, than tea for one." - *Chinese Proverb*

A wise Man will desire no more, than what he may get justly, use soberly, distribute cheerfully, and leave contentedly."

*from Poor Richards
Almanack*

Patients of Dr. Hugh Mercer (1770-1775)-con't

Mrs.	Heath	widow of Dr. Heath	Fbg	Mrs. Mary	Washington		Fbg
Isaac	Heslop	Merchant	Fbg	George	Weedon		Fbg
Samuel	Hildrop	Carpenter	Fbg	John	Welch	Baker	Fbg
	Hill	Ship's Carpenter	Fbg	Jacob	Whitler	Tavernkeeper	Fbg
	Holmes	Sadler	Fbg				lots 35-36
Hugh	Houston	Blacksmith/Sadler	Fbg	Lewis	Willis		
James	Hunter, Jr			Andrew	Wodrow	Merchant	Falmouth
James	Hunter, Sr			Capt. Wm	Woodford		Nr Fbg
	Jarvis	Schoolmaster	Fbg	Alexander	Wright	Merchant	Fbg
Joseph	Jones		of Churchill Jones	Charles	Yates	Merchant	Fbg
Joseph	Jones	(lawyer)	Fbg & KG Co	Jacob	Young		Fbg
John	Julian	Physician	Fbg				
Peter	Kenyon	Merchant	Fbg				
David	Kerr	Merchant	Fbg				
William	Knox	Merchant	Fbg				
John	Lawson	Mason	Fbg				
	Lawson	Merchant	Falmouth				
Fielding	Lewis	Merchant	Fbg				
John	Lewis		of Vauxhall				
John?	McCally	Undertaker	Fbg				
Neil	McCoul	Merchant	Fbg				
Lockland	Macintosh	Merchant	Fbg				
James	Maury	Merchant	Fbg				
James	Mercer	Lawyer					
John	Miller	Merchant	Fbg				
Thomas	Miller	Joyner	Fbg				
Joseph	Minor						
Thomas	Minor		Spotsylvania				
Henry	Mitchell	Merchant					
John	Mitchell	Merchant	Fbg				
	Montgomery	Merchant	Fbg				
James	Newton	Taylor	Fbg				
Mann	Page, Sr		Nr Fbg				
William	Porter	Merchant	Fbg				
William	Reid	Merchant	Fbg				
	Richmond						
James	Robb	Merchant	Fbg				
	Robinson	Merchant	Falmouth				
	Seldon		of Stafford Co.				
William	Smith	Merchant	Fbg				
	Smith	Shoemaker	Fbg				
John	Spotswood						
Mrs.	Stewart	widow					
John	Stith		Fbg				
Bob	Taliaferro						
Col. John	Taliaferro						
Francis	Taliaferro	Gentleman	Nr Fbg				
Rv. Mr.	Thompson	Minister	Culpeper				
George	Thornton						
Thomas	Throckmorton						
	Tomlinson						
	Tott	Carpenter	Nr Fbg				
	Vass	Undertaker	Fbg				
Robert	Walker	Cabinet Maker	Fbg				
Thomas	Walker	Watchmaker	Fbg				
William	Walker	Chairmaker	Stafford				
	Ward	Merchant	Fbg				
Charles	Washington		Fbg				

By the way, prices for Dr. Mercer's typical services are listed:
Visit in town 5/0; out of town 10/0 (shilling/pence)

Vomit 1/3
Bleeding 2/6
Purge 1/6
Most pills (the box) 5/0
Draw a tooth 2/6
Blister 2/6
Decoctions 2/6
Anderson's Pills 2/6
Phyal Drops 5/0
Crabs Eyes 1/6
Anadine Drops 5/0
Warm Purge 1/0
Bark 5/0
Emetic 1/8
Eyewater 5/0
Rhubarb Purge 2/0
Mercury Ointment 3/9
Wine Vomit 2/6
Castor Oil 2/6
Hartshorn 1/0
Jallop 2/6
Calomel 2/6
Purging Salts 1/6
Bateman's Drops 2/6
Mixture for the Teeth 5/0
James' Powder 2/6

The Virginia Gazette

December 24, 1767. Number 85. Page 4,

Column 1

On Tuesday the 29th of December will be performed, in the Town-house of Fredericksburg,
A Concert
FOR the ENTERTAINMENT of all LADIES and GENTLEMEN who will favour the subscriber with the company.
After the CONCERT a BALL, the expence of which will be defrayed by the subscriber, till the Ladies depart.
Tickets at 7/6.
JOHNSCHNEYDER.

Education Committee

The Educational group within RCHS also tries to impart what knowledge we manage to learn in an ongoing educational program. Drawing on the groups' knowledge and the requirement of the SOL's for Virginia Public Schools we put together programs that can be tailor made for each grade. For the 2003-2004 school year we visited eight schools and taught a total of 41 classes.

Within our group we interpret such persons as, a factor that is betrothed to a widow who has recently opened a millinery shop. We also have Dr. Mercer's and his herbalist (who is helping the ladies to find tasty herbs to substitute for the black tea, which is currently being taxed so highly that we are refusing to purchase it). Very often Colonel Weedon and his wife Kitty come with us and since they own Weedon's Tavern in town we can find out the very latest news and gossip. A seaman Mr. McTavish, from the good ship "Betty" which often ties up at Fredericksburg, is a frequent visitor to the schools. Along with indentured servants and various and sundry other players we try to bring our special talents to bear in any given situation.

There nothing quite so satisfying as the look on a child's face when they see a group of period appropriately dressed people walk into their room. Quite often the teacher has covered all that is necessary for the SOL's and we simply have fun with the children and teach them a dance of our day.

Tailor Ad

The Virginia Gazette

**Thursday, April 27, 1769. Number 155.
Page 3, Column 1**

FREDERICKSBURG, March 14, 1769.

THE subscriber takes this opportunity of informing the public, that he carries on the Taylor's trade in Fredericksburg, next door to Mr. Benjamin Johnston's, (known by the name of Long Ordinary) in all its various branches; viz. making Gentlemen's dress and undress suits, Hussar cloaks, roccoloes, half and full circles, Ladies riding suits, &c. all which shall be done in the newest and best fashion; and as he has had recourse to some of the best shops in Europe, and long experience in that vocation, both at home and in North-America, he hopes for encouragement, as he intends to make it his chief study to merit the approbation of such Gentlemen as are pleased to favour him with their custom; who may depend on having their commands strictly obeyed with the greatest care and dispatch, by their most humble servant,

JAMES FULTON.

The Virginia Gazette

July 26, 1770. Number 220. Page 4, Column 1

WILLIAM WADDELL, Stay-maker,

HAS just opened shop in the town of Fredericksburg, opposite to Mr. William Reed's store, and as he has just imported from London a complete assortment of every thing necessary in that branch of business, he flatters himself that he shall be happy enough to give satisfaction to all Ladies who shall favour him with their commands, being determined to serve them on the easiest terms, and in the neatest manner.



NEWSLETTER GUIDELINES

In order to produce a good newsletter, accurate and in a timely manner, please try to use these guidelines.

1. Our time period and location is 18th century Virginia with our area of concentration being Fredericksburg and the Rappahannock River Valley. The Rappahannock River Valley covers from the ford of the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers down to the Chesapeake Bay. Our particular interests lie in the areas of Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania, Stafford, King George, and Caroline counties.
2. Any member may, and is encouraged to, submit articles(s) for publication. The newsletter is distributed to and read by people with varying degrees of expertise. Some of us are not as well versed on Colonial life and times as others, so in order to be as accurate as possible, please check your facts prior to submitting an article.
3. Sources/references must be given for factual information. This enables the reader to go to the original source for more information, gives credit to the source, and also lets the editor of the newsletter off the hook if the information is challenged. This includes information from the internet. If you write to someone for permission to reprint and receive it, I would appreciate a copy for my files.
4. Opinions of the writer must be clearly identified as such.
5. The newsletter is published quarterly in Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. You may mail to the PO Box, or email me at myrawig@cox.net.
6. The editor has the final say on content, format and deadlines. I try to keep the newsletter to no more than 12 pages for postage. If I receive several articles and we also have a good bit of news to go into the newsletter, it may be necessary for me to edit, publish as a two part article or use it in the following issue.
7. If you have an idea for an article but don't have the time, resources, etc. to write it yourself, we have someone who is willing to do the research and write the article. So please let me know if you have a particular interest.

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.

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

Rappahannock Colonial Heritage Society, Inc.

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

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

March 1
April 5
May 3
June 7
July 5

English Country Dance Lessons (Colonial Dancing):

St. George's Church, 905 Princess Anne St., Fredericksburg, VA 7:30pm (downstairs in Family Room)
Bring the family for some old fashioned fun!

February 11 & 25
March 11 & 25
April 8 & 22
May 13 & 27