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Women’s History Month

A time to celebrate our accomplishments and dedicate ourselves to achieve even more.

Whatnot

DAR Museum exhibition on American wedding traditions; Shove off with Lewis and Clark; Dates to Remember

Compiled by the American Spirit Staff

Spirited Adventures

Going Native

The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas, bursts with color from native plants

By Stacey Evers

Historic Homes

Madam Brett Homestead

From a stopover for Patriot generals to a summer retreat, this house has been a centerpiece of life for Beacon, N.Y.

By JeanMarie Andrews

Bookshelf

False Profits

Three recent works about American history prove the adage— you can’t judge a book by its cover

By Harvey King

Departments

Three-century old allee of boxwood at Birr Castle, Ireland

© Lynn Batdorf, The U.S. National Arboretum
From The President General

March is Women's History Month, a time set aside to celebrate the accomplishments of women. It is a time when we promote education about women’s travails, challenges and triumphs throughout history. The observance of women’s contributions to America originated in the late 1970s as a counter-emphasis to the typically male-dominated, standard history books. That era saw the advent of women’s studies in schools and universities and a reinvigorated women’s movement for full participation and recognition in society.

As students of history, DAR members have perhaps been better acquainted than many with the history of American women. We knew that the then-radical demands for greater participation in government, business and elsewhere had been expressed many times before.

Abigail Adams was one of the most outspoken, famously urging her husband to “Remember the ladies” in the framing of a new government. Society’s denial of educational opportunities for women was particularly galling, prompting her to remark, “It is really mortifying, sir, when a woman possessed of a common share of understanding considers the difference of education between the male and female sex, even in those families where education is attended to.”

Since its founding in 1890, DAR has urged better education not only for women, but for all citizens and also for those who come here seeking to become citizens. We have also been in the vanguard seeking the full participation (and recognition) of women in all aspects of our society.

Much has been accomplished, but much remains to be done. While we celebrate our achievements in March, let us rededicate ourselves to furthering the status of women everywhere. The article in this issue of American Spirit about Marsha Evans, CEO of the American Red Cross and DAR member, should inspire us in this resolve.

Other fascinating women in this issue include Catheryna Brett, who became legendary in 18th-century Dutchess County, N.Y., as a businesswoman, and two artists—Kimberley Hart and Jenny Humphreys—who are redefining traditional notions of art.

Also in this issue, we celebrate the return of spring with a visit to the gorgeous Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas, and with an article on the venerable and much-beloved boxwood. We also look back 200 years at how Meriwether Lewis and William Clark so effectively cared for the health of the men—and the woman—who made up the Corps of Discovery.

Finally, as this issue was nearing completion, we learned of a major new initiative sponsored in part by The History Channel and Preserve America, a White House initiative developed to preserve our national heritage. The program, called Save Our History, will empower citizens across the country to take an active role in historic preservation. To learn more about it, visit www.saveourhistory.com. It is a wonderful opportunity for DAR members to help mobilize their communities to find and save imperiled historic buildings, sites and landmarks.
“SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW: Inventing the American Wedding” opens April 16, 2004, and runs through September 4, 2004, at the DAR Museum. The exhibition will trace the American wedding from Colonial times to the present day. Featuring close to 20 wedding dresses from 1791 to 2001, plus grooms’ attire from three centuries, the exhibition traces the event’s evolution from a simple affair in the 18th century to the lavish, etiquette-laden event of today. 

The exhibition challenges popular notions regarding many of the traditions associated with weddings. For example, the three principal parts of the brides’ attire—the white dress, the veil and the bouquet—were united as bridal accoutrements only in the 19th century. “Something Old, Something New” follows the introduction of all these popular wedding traditions, as well as the increasing etiquette associated with them. For more information, visit www.dar.org.

DATESTOREMEMBER

March 4, 1917: Jeannette Rankin (R-Mont.) becomes first female member of Congress
March 5, 1770: The Boston Massacre
March 8: International Women’s Day
March 12, 1912: First troop meeting of The Girl Scouts of America, in Savannah, Ga.
March 16, 1802: Congress approves creation of the United States Military Academy at West Point
March 20, 1985: Libby Riddles becomes first woman to win the Iditarod
March 20, 1852: “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” published; first U.S. book to sell more than 1 million copies
March 31, 1776: Abigail Adams reminds her husband to “Remember the ladies…” in the Declaration of Independence
April 8, 1940: Margaret Chase Smith (R-Maine) is elected to Congress to fill a seat vacated by her husband’s death, and she later becomes the first woman to be elected to both houses of Congress
April 9, 1888: Florence Price born; first black female symphony composer
April 12, 1818: U.S. flag flies over the U.S. Capitol for the first time
April 15, 1783: Continental Congress ratifies preliminary articles of peace with Great Britain
April 19, 1775: Battles at Concord and Lexington
April 30, 1789: George Washington’s first inaugural address

(Sources include Library of Congress’ “American Memory” memory.loc.gov)
Lack of state funds closed historic Old New-Gate Prison and Copper Mine in East Granby, Conn., last year. But a new non-profit citizens’ group hopes to spring open the gates of America’s oldest prison and copper mine.

The state of Connecticut currently owns Old New-Gate, which was used as a prison by the Continental Congress. In 1972, the National Park Service placed Old New-Gate and one of its buildings, Viets Tavern, on the National Register of Historic Places as a National Historic Landmark. The preservation group, Old New-Gate Prison and Copper Mine, Inc., is seeking the transfer of ownership from the state legislature to re-open and manage the historic site.

The 501(c)(3) non-profit group is also trying to raise funds and solicit volunteers to help spread the word about the site. It has a Web site, www.OldNewGate.org, that details the plans. They hope the Connecticut legislature will take action on their request this spring.

Simsbury, Conn., citizens started the mining operation in 1706. A portion of the mine’s profits was used to support a town schoolmaster and to help establish Yale College. In 1773, the tunnels were turned into a prison for criminals and also for Tories, who spent most of their time planning escapes. In 1827, the prison was closed and the site became a tourist attraction. The State of Connecticut acquired Old New-Gate in 1968.

In the year before it closed, Old New-Gate attracted about 19,000 visitors from 27 countries and from nearly every state. More than 2,000 visitors were part of school groups. With its original buildings as well as a tavern, Sears & Roebuck house, homestead, barns, farm and scenic setting, the site appears much as it would have in its early days. It has hosted many special events, such as an authentic Colonial wedding and several concerts featuring period music.
Swept up in the abundance of boldly colorful wildflowers—richly red winecups, brilliant bluebonnets, festive orange-and-yellow Texas lantana, sunny Engelmann’s daisies—it would be easy to typecast the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas, as a candy store for the eyes.

But the organization’s 47 professionals and 550 volunteers won’t let you get away with that stereotype. They’re going to make sure you leave the center with substantial food for thought about native plants and why they belong in your yard.

When Mrs. Johnson and her close friend, actress Helen Hayes, founded the center in 1982, they wanted the gardens to demonstrate nature’s wisdom as well as its beauty. “Our center works for more than the lovely blossoms in our open spaces. We are concerned for all of North America’s native plants, from the smallest sprout to the tallest tree,” Mrs. Johnson wrote in a letter posted on the center’s website, www.wildflower.org.

The founders’ top priority was to teach people about the “environmental necessity, economic value and natural beauty of native plants,” according to Mrs. Johnson. The center’s 15 acres of gardens are intended to serve as ecological models for homeowners, who are encouraged at all turns to restore their private landscapes to a more natural state. The hope is that visitors will leave the grounds committed to introducing native plant gardening and environmentally friendly building techniques to their neighborhoods. Not surprisingly, popular words among the center’s staff and in the center’s literature are “respect” and “harmony,” as well as “partnership,” which is used...
to describe what humankind’s relationship to nature should be, rather than “dominator” or “conqueror.”

“My hope for what lies ahead in the field of landscape design—our own and that of the professionals—is not a revolution against the use of non-natives, but a resolution to educate ourselves about what has worked for Mother Nature through the ebb and flow of time, and to put that knowledge to work in the planned landscapes that are everywhere a part of our lives,” Mrs. Johnson wrote.

A native plant is one that grows somewhere without direct or indirect human introduction. “So, for example, a plant that was brought from Europe by your great-great-grandmother and has survived without care since its introduction would not be considered native to the United States,” says Wildflower Center Horticulturist and Educator Andrea DeLong-Amaya. While the origins of some species are unclear, researchers have been able to compare pollen in fossils to determine many of the plants that grew in a specific site thousands of years ago.

Nearly 5 percent of the United States’ 20,000 native plant species is on, or qualifies to be on, the federal government’s Endangered Species List, according to the St. Louis-based Center for Plant Conservation. These include several types of aster, two kinds of coneflowers and the Jacob’s ladder, as well as a lengthy inventory of cacti and grasses. If these flora eventually become extinct, not only is their unique beauty erased, but no one will ever know what they could have contributed as sources of food, fiber or medicine.

The reasons for planting natives are numerous. They tend to be more resistant to drought, diseases and pests, and usually don’t require soil amendments like compost and mulch. This saves gardeners time and money. Natives are in sync with local wildlife, providing them with food and shelter. They are also less likely to be invasive, displacing native ecosystems, altering the natural fire regime, and crowding out other plants until they are endangered.

According to a recent study, more than 300 species of introduced plants, such as kudzu, are taking over natural areas of the United States. Perhaps one of the most important reasons to plant natives is that they contribute to a local landscape’s distinct identity. Every city may have Starbucks, Crate & Barrel and Borders, but not all of them have Mexican hat and Texas mountain laurel.

So why have gardeners disregarded native plants? DeLong-Amaya suspects that it has something to do with the way humans tend to value what is unusual or rare. If her theory is correct, it’s not surprising that native plant gardening is on the rise now that a substantial number of the professional—is not a revolution against the use of non-natives, but a resolution to educate ourselves about what has worked for Mother Nature through the ebb and flow of time, and to put that knowledge to work in the planned landscapes that are everywhere a part of our lives,” Mrs. Johnson wrote.

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So why have gardeners disregarded native plants? DeLong-Amaya suspects that it has something to do with the way humans tend to value what is unusual or rare. If her theory is correct, it’s not surprising that native plant gardening is on the rise now that a substantial number of the flowers are endangered. She suspects, however, that water shortages are the leading motivator for gardeners who are switching from exotic to native plants. In the summer, municipal water use goes up astronomically. For instance, in Austin, water use goes up 50 percent in the summer months, DeLong-Amaya says.

About 80,000 people visit the center every year, about 70 percent of them in the spring, when the wildflower display is at its height. The tip of the peak is early to mid-April, but the center’s former Executive Director Robert Breunig (who took a new job elsewhere
shortly before this issue went to press) said he favors fall, which he calls “bloom” season. “The days are still warm, the nights cool, the air is especially clear and the wildflowers, though not as plentiful and showy as in the spring, are just as awe-inspiring.” Many visitors come to take advantage of the Brown Center for Environmental Education, which offers teacher training, lectures, workshops and children’s programs such as preschool story time and after-school hikes for older children. Adults can enjoy classes, half-day how-to seminars and week-long conferences covering botany, horticulture, plant conservation, land restoration and crafts.

Two of the center’s highlights are the Meditation Garden and Hill Country Stream, which are located in the middle of the gardens and feature several different Texas Hill Country habitat types. The Hill Country of Central Texas boasts a unique ecosystem resulting from the convergence of prairie, desert, coastal scrub and Eastern forest. “These overlapping flora have created a ‘hotspot’ of diversity,” says Mark Simmons, Wildflower Center Restoration Ecologist.

Another favorite among visitors is the Homeowner Inspiration Gardens, which demonstrate native plants in formal, naturalistic and transitional (a cross between formal and naturalistic) styles. Each garden is sized to match that of a typical suburban yard and includes drawings and plant lists for how to re-create the garden at home. The Display Gardens showcase 23 square beds arranged in rows to mirror the patterns of agricultural fields. Each collection has a focus, such as healing plants, hummingbird lures, and cacti and succulents. “Each bed tells a different story,” says DeLong-Amaya. One bed is dedicated to plants salvaged from the chalk prairie, a rapidly disappearing Texas geological zone named for its Austin Chalk limestone.

The Ann and O.J. Weber Butterfly Habitat Garden, opened in 2002, differs from other butterfly gardens in that it’s not an enclosed space that holds the butterflies captive, but is an actual outdoor habitat. About 300 different native plant species attract butterflies, dragonflies and other pollinators, showing homeowners what they can create in their own yards. Designed correctly, urban gardens can serve as “habitat islands” that will sustain butterflies, other wildlife and native plants, says DeLong-Amaya. These islands are good for humans, too. They offer opportunities for teaching children, can help relieve stress, and “are an important way for urbanites to maintain a positive relationship with nature,” she says.

Two main trail systems wind through savannas and mixed woodlands to tell the story of the Texas Hill Country ecosystem. The Savanna Meadow trail consists of two connecting, quarter-mile trails and a side trip to a cave where, thousands of years ago, the limestone of the Edwards Plateau eroded to create the cave. The Hill Country Trail includes the quarter-mile John Barr Trail Inner Loop, which in the spring bursts with bluebonnets, golden tickseed, rose mallow and bitterweed, and the three-quarter-mile Restoration Research Trail. While on this trail, visitors walk through the center’s landscape restoration research area, where researchers study how fire, grazing and other land management techniques affect the Hill Country ecosystem.

Before European colonization, wildfires frequently scorched Central Texas, altering the landscape. Simmons refers to these changes as a “moving mosaic of habitats,” from woodlands to prairies to
savannas. But over the last 150 years, fire suppression, drought and overgrazing have dramatically altered the composition and architecture of the region’s vegetation. The center’s Hill Country Research Program is examining the reintroduction of periodic fire and grazing, and so far has realized “profound effects” in the reduction of woody plants that fuel fires and an increase in grasses, wildflowers and overall diversity, Simmons says.

Landscape restoration is a major piece of the center’s mission. DeLong-Amaya acknowledges that change is natural and inevitable, but adds, “People are changing our surroundings so much and at such a fast rate that many other animals and plants cannot adapt to survive. Since so much of our landscape has been altered or degraded to the point of becoming ‘waste land’ or ‘old field,’ and the fact that people need more and more land to fulfill our [perceived] needs, whatever land that is not being developed for direct human use bears the incredible pressure to sustain life,” she says. “The problem we face here is the rate and degree of change that humans are responsible for.”

The center’s staff want people to come to know their ecological heritage as surely as they know their family one, says Senior Botanist Damon Waitt. They hope their visitors, either online or in person, will be inspired to become more familiar with their own local native plants and animals and their interrelationships, and to learn more about creating a self-sustaining ecosystem.

“Knowledge and understanding of one’s ecological heritage is the first step to becoming a better ecological citizen”—or a person who gives the time and resources to preserve, conserve and restore their ecological heritage, Waitt says. “They recognize that they are an integral part of the biological community and believe that the natural environment has value within itself, regardless of any value that humans may place on it.”

Although the center frequently emphasizes the environmental and economic benefits of planting wildflowers, DeLong-Amaya doesn’t want anyone to forget the cultural and emotional values, either. Pointing out the preponderance of floral themes in wallpaper and on clothing, she says, “People need nature and crave it.”

Mrs. Johnson’s Legacy

As First Lady, Lady Bird Johnson steered a national beautification campaign to plant flowers and install park benches in cities, and remove billboards from highways—an endeavor she saw as an essential piece of her husband’s Great Society vision. Mrs. Johnson’s legacy is abundantly evident in Washington every spring, when thousands of azaleas, tulips, dogwoods and daffodils bloom.

When Mrs. Johnson and Helen Hayes opened what was then called the National Wildflower Research Center on Mrs. Johnson’s 70th birthday in 1982, the center was located in a small house on an undeveloped plot east of Austin. Despite its modest facility, high-profile support ensured success. The center’s first donation came from publisher and horticultural philanthropist Enid A. Haupt, for which the largest Victorian greenhouse in the United States is named (the New York Botanical Garden’s Enid A. Haupt Conservatory).

The first full-term board president was Nash Castro, Director of the National Park Service’s National Capital Parks in Washington, D.C., during the Johnson administration and then-Executive Director of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission of New York and New Jersey. The first administrative director was Carlton Lees, eminent horticulturist and then-Vice President of the New York Botanical Garden.

In 1995, the center moved to its current site, then only 43 acres. Two other donations have expanded the center to its present acreage. Further testament of the center’s success is its membership. It has 13,000 members—70 percent of them in Texas, and the balance spread across the other 49 states. Last year, the center added another feather in its cap when it became the new home for National Wildflower Week, a celebration of wildflowers running May 2–8 this year.

Two years after the center’s opening, Mrs. Johnson received the Congressional Gold Medal for her dedication to the nation’s beautification. At the 2003 DAR Continental Congress, she received the DAR Medal of Honor for her outstanding work in furthering the preservation of America’s natural environments. Although she remains on the board of directors, Mrs. Johnson is no longer involved daily in the center. According to Communications Director Mischelle Amador, the former First Lady “still visits frequently and enjoys quiet time in the gardens.”

The Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave., is open Tuesday–Sunday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., except major holidays; from March 22–April 30, it is open every day. Admission is $7 for adults; $5.50 for people 60 and older, and students 13 years and older; $2 for children 5 to 12; free for center members and children under 5. (512) 292–4100 or www.wildflower.org.
THE MADAM BRETT HOMESTEAD

{ BEACON, N.Y., CIRCA 1709 }
LIKE MANY EARLY HOUSES SITUATED NEAR BATTLE LINES DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR, the Madam Brett Homestead in Beacon, N.Y., can claim that “George Washington visited here.” So did other officers, along with foot soldiers en route to camp who could also use it as a lookout post. In addition, the house served as a storehouse for military supplies and as a temporary residence for the State of New York’s Provincial Congress President. Those facts alone would have made it a natural choice for preservation by the Daughters of the American Revolution.
Bretts moved into their newly built home at Christmas of 1709. The prospect of creating a business of running the adjacent gristmill, located at the mouth of Fishkill Creek, was likely what drew the couple to settle some 60 miles north of the city. Family tradition holds that the city manor house that she had also inherited from her father and half of LaGrange. Although Rombout considered his patent (the first land patent granted in Dutchess County) to be a wilderness suitable only for fur trapping. Today, it includes the towns of Fishkill, East Fishkill, Wappingers, and half of LaGrange. Although Rombout farmed his land for trade in the city. In June 1718, Roger Brett was knocked overboard by the boom of his sloop and drowned in the Hudson River. Although a widow at age 31 with three young sons, Catheryna chose not to remarry, thereby retaining control of her property under the British common law. She managed the estate and transacted business in her own hand. Because she sold off a third of her 28,000 acres to raise cash, some scholars question whether Catheryna was a good businesswoman, according to Lorraine MacAulay, Regent of the Melzingah Chapter, who in the past 10 years, has done considerable research on the house and family.

“Other wealthy landowners along the Hudson used the British form of tenant farming and kept possession of the property,” MacAulay explains. “I like to think Catheryna already had the American ideal of ‘home ownership.’ During the Revolution many of those landowners who preferred tenant farming remained loyalist and lost their property to the American militia.” Madam Brett had the business savvy to retain the water rights to any property she sold, thereby preventing her neighbors from building competing mills.

Much of the land passed among family members. Catheryna sold 300 acres and the gristmill to a half-nephew in June 1743; a month later she purchased about 13 acres back from her son, Francis, to organize a produce cooperative in partnership with

A recent photograph by Melzingah Chapter member Barbara E. Miller shows the north side of the Brett homestead, which became the main entrance after ownership passed to the Teller family.
Drawing room where visiting generals met to relax during the American Revolution.
VISITOR INFORMATION: The home is open to the public from 1 to 4 p.m. the second Saturday of each month, April through December and by arrangement for private tours. For information: Madam Brett Homestead, 50 Van Nydeck Avenue, Beacon, N.Y., 12508–3326, (845) 831–6533, www.geocities.com/melzingah.
21 men. The Frankfort Storehouse, built adjacent to her mill, stored flour, wheat, beef, pork and salt for shipping. Although she held only one share of stock, as did her male counterparts, her sloop carried much of the produce to New York City markets. The storehouse operated until 1840.

Catheryna died sometime in early 1764 and willed the homestead, the storehouse, five farms and half the remaining estate to Francis, her only surviving son, and the other half to the heirs of her son, Robert. In 1763, Francis’ daughter, Hannah, married Major Henrick Schenck, one of the last family events Catheryna attended. Because of Schenck’s position as purchasing agent for the Commissary of the Provisional Congress during the Revolution, the house came to serve as an “officers’ club.” MacAulay describes it as “a home with women to assist and maintain the refinements appropriate for guests on the level of the generals,” who included George Washington and his foreign advisors, the Marquis de Lafayette and Baron Von Steuben. Stalls in the vast cellar stored guns, salt and other army supplies before being transferred to the militia’s headquarters in Fishkill. Soldiers traveling between camps often entered the house through the servants’ back stairs and slept in the “Long Room” with the children. The garret just beneath the roof served as a watchtower to scan Mount Beacon for signal fires lit to indicate movement by British war ships on the Hudson.

In 1800, Isaac Teller, a half-cousin who had married into the family a decade earlier, purchased 186 acres from his widowed mother-in-law, which included what he called the old farm and old farm mansion. He remodeled the house in Federal style, with wide moldings and plaster medallions on the ceiling, marble replacing Dutch tiles around the fireplace, and green wooden Venetian blinds on all the downstairs windows. He added a door knocker inscribed with “Mrs. Teller” to the Dutch door on the north of the house’s main entrance to the side along the town’s main street. In 1831, the wood shed on the front of the house was enclosed for a “retreat,” where Episcopal church services were held while St. Anna’s Church was being built on land donated by the family.

Like many rural homeowners in the early 19th century, the Tellers marketed the homestead as “Teller’s Villa” to serve as a summer refuge for New York City dwellers looking to escape the cholera epidemics that thrived on urban heat and sewage. Guest John Pintard, founder of the New York Historical Society, wrote about his stay in the summer of 1833 in letters to his daughter, Eliza Davidson. “The price is high,” he wrote, at $6 per week for an adult guest and $3 for maids and children, but despite the rates, there were 21 people staying at the house. The bill for his nine-week stay totaled $110.

Pintard also described the growing village, noting that it offered a daily post, barbershop, circulating library and “fine roads.” Pintard chose Teller Villa as a summer residence because his son was a manager at one of the nearby cotton weaving mills, which boasted modern water-powered iron and brass machinery, the most advanced equipment in the country and owned by the Schenck family.

Seven generations of the Brett family owned and occupied the house until the 20th century. Its last resident, Cornelia Fulton Crary, used it mainly as a summer retreat, maintaining her winter home in New York City. She complained that she was unable to manage the house alone and “ever since World War II, there was a shortage of women willing to work as domestic help.” Cornelia, her brother, Robert Jr., who lived in New Hampshire, and the heirs of the next generation put the house up for sale.

The only taker was a grocery chain, which planned to buy the property for a new store, and offered to move the homestead to another site. The Melzingah Chapter, which received its formal charter at the homestead in 1896, stepped in to preserve the building on its original site. Through card parties, sales of baked goods and donations from the community, chapter members raised enough to purchase the house, with many family furnishings, on December 31, 1954.

Although each generation of occupants remodeled the home’s interior, its exterior reflects the homestead’s early history. The chapter has done primarily repair work, replacing the roof and gutters, plastering, stripping floors and wallpaper, repainting, shoring up the floor with columns in the basement, adding sun filters on windows and insulation in the attic, and burying cement walls around the perimeter of the house to slow water damage to the basement.

The homestead was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. Today, it reflects nearly 300 years of life in Dutchess County in 17 rooms furnished with family pieces and antiques.
FALSE PROFITS

Never judge a book by its cover. These days, that’s particularly true if you’re trying to determine the quality—or even the topic—of some recently published books on early American history targeting a general audience. To the welcome surprise of book publishers, authors and readers alike, this genre is considered hot, with recent blockbuster bestselling biographies of Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and other founding fathers, mothers (and even fish).

Yet such success appears to be bringing with it a wave of new books that are packaged and promoted in a manner confusing to potential readers.

(Inventing a Nation)

Perhaps the worst example of this trend is Gore Vidal’s *Inventing a Nation* (Yale University Press, 2003, $22), which in addition to being mis-packaged, is simply bad. It meanders confusingly through the author’s recollections of what he’s read about American history. At least, that’s what the reader is left to conclude: There is no source material and the author admits he does not know how many references to God there are in the Federalist Papers because he lost an old copy that had that information listed in its index.

*Inventing a Nation* provides scant insight into the invention of early America. Instead, it is an inventive pretext for the author’s predictable anti-Bush polemics. Vidal is so intent on using this thin volume for an anti-administration diatribe that he devotes two pages to the machinations of the French minister, Edmond Charles Genet. Vidal seems to have no apparent reason for this other than to quote a negative description written by John Adams of Genet to make an out-of-context jab at the current president. Other examples of such confusing, anachronistic polemics include rants against American-style democracy. ("NEGRO PRESIDENT")

With better writing and certainly more serious history, the new book by Pulitzer Prize-winning Jefferson historian Garry Wills is equally misleading in both its title and packaging. The marketing of his *"Negro President"* (Houghton Mifflin, 2003, $25) is intended to capitalize on the author’s best-selling success as a Thomas Jefferson biographer by packaging this book as something it clearly is not: A book about Thomas Jefferson.

The book gets its title from a constitutional compromise, unimaginable to modern Americans, that figured the population of a state in a fashion that, during a census, allocated “three-fifths” of a person for each member of the state’s slave population. (The author explains the ratio was based on an earlier federal tax levied against the states using the same fractional formula.) Despite its title and the portrait of Jefferson on its cover, the book provides few new insights into Jefferson nor, for that matter, the compromise.
Although its title is misleading, “Negro President” nevertheless is well-written and informative. It tells of a generally little-known period of American history, the years between the Revolutionary War and 1830. John Quincy Adams and Massachusetts Senator Timothy Pickering play a more significant role in this book than do Jefferson, Washington or John Adams. Indeed, Pickering, whom history in many ways has overlooked or dismissed, is the central focus of this book (which may explain why the more marketable Jefferson is on the cover).

While disappointing in providing any new understanding of Jefferson, Wills does provide an intriguing exploration of the Jefferson-led embargo of Haiti, and a New England secessionist movement instigated in the wake of the Louisiana Purchase. Slavery, as Wills convincingly displays, played the central role in nearly every major political decision during the nation’s early life, either overtly or as a background force.

(PORTRAIT OF A RESTLESS MIND)

Jefferson’s Demons: Portrait of a Restless Mind (Free Press, 2003, $25), by author and lawyer Michael Knox Beran, also falls short in providing profound or significant insights into psychological factors that may have influenced Jefferson’s life and actions.

Although the author does explore the melancholic condition that Jefferson called “ennui,” Beran comes up short in convincing the reader that such a condition played a pivotal role in Jefferson’s key actions or decisions. While Beran’s description of Jefferson’s condition would receive a modern diagnosis of clinical depression, the founding father’s self-prescribed treatment sounds equally contemporary—lots of physical exercise and meditative practices during long hikes.

Jefferson’s Demons may promise to be a psychological thriller, but it ends up being a travelogue re-telling of Jefferson’s extended travels abroad. While interesting and adeptly written, the book fails to deliver.

For those who have a passion for reading about the nation’s founders, the abundance of titles related to the subject should be celebrated. However, the proliferation of shabbily edited and falsely marketed books about American history means readers should beware of books bearing false covers.
Spring 1803. The dogwood was in full bloom and the fields were bright with new crops when Meriwether Lewis rode into Philadelphia. He had already been chosen as leader of the greatest American exploratory expedition yet conceived—to find a navigable water route from St. Louis to the West Coast. President Thomas Jefferson ordered him to consult with various scientists, including Dr. Benjamin Rush, and brush up his knowledge of navigation, astronomy, the preservation of plant and animal specimens, and medicine. He was only 29 years old.
The 10 rules of health care Lewis received from Rush were strangely unrelated to the magnitude and presumed challenges of the task before him. He was advised the men should always wear flannel next to the skin, fast and rest when feeling indisposed, and eat sparingly in “difficult and laborious enterprises.” There were no instructions on treating wounds or the indications for bleeding—one of Rush’s medical obsessions. However, he did supply a helpful list of essential instruments and drugs, including 50 dozen “Rush’s Thunderbolts,” a powerful laxative for the therapeutic cleansing of the bowel.

The basic theory of medical treatment in that era was that diseases were due either to an imbalance of forces within the body, or the presence of a bad “humor” to be removed. There were only a few ways to eliminate the evil humor—bleeding, vomiting, purging and cupping. The medications taken, therefore, fell into several broad categories (see box) representing the diseases and problems they were likely to encounter—laxatives, drugs for treating fevers and venereal disease, medications for pain, topical ointments for skin afflictions and wounds, “eye water,” and sets of surgical and dental instruments. No doctor accompanied the group, and the medicines and instruments were those that someone with limited medical knowledge could use safely and effectively. A modern expedition would take the latest antibiotics and other sophisticated medications, but the general categories would remain remarkably the same.

Lewis grew up accompanying his mother around the family plantation treating sick slaves and neighbors. From her, he learned a practical knowledge of herbal medicine. His later experience in the army...
taught him how to treat wounds and to establish basic camp sanitation. In those days, officers were often responsible for the health care of their men, because few units had a doctor. When Lewis became secretary to President Jefferson, he was exposed to the scientific attitudes of the Enlightenment, questioning and recording the world around him. He became a competent and acute observer of the natural world, which was a useful talent in treating disease, and also the basis for his remarkable, accurate descriptions of plants, birds and animals.

The men of the Corps of Discovery were specially chosen—young, healthy, unmarried and “capable of bearing bodily fatigue in a pretty considerable degree.” The subsequent trials of the expedition certainly proved that they could cope with discomfort of an unusual degree: heat, cold, mosquitoes, feet pierced by prickly cacti, rain, sun, snow, bone-chilling frost, bad food or too little food, cuts and lacerations, the sweat and toil of hauling heavy boats upstream against the current, and the back-breaking labor of an 18-mile portage of all their goods around the Great Falls of the Missouri. Yet, despite all this, Lewis was able to write that they proceeded on cheerfully. (On many occasions, Lewis was off exploring on his own, leaving William Clark to be in charge of the men. They may not always have been as cheerful as Lewis reported!)

The soldiers of the Corps of Discovery were specially chosen young men—healthy, unmarried and “capable of bearing bodily fatigue in a pretty considerable degree.”

Considering the length of the expedition (8,000 miles), its duration (from May 1804 until September 1806), and the rigor of the duties, there were extraordinarily few serious medical crises. The first came in August 1804 when Sergeant Charles Floyd became mortally ill with severe abdominal pain. The journals indicate he was treated, but do not say how. His vomiting and diarrhea were so severe that he could keep nothing on his stomach. He became progressively worse and died within 24 hours, saying that he was “going away” and asking Clark to write a letter for him. Many authors believe that he died from a ruptured appendix, but the course of his illness and his symptoms do not fit that diagnosis, and an overwhelming gastrointestinal infection is a more likely cause of his death.

During the winter of 1804–05, spent at the Mandan Fort near present-day Bismarck, N.D., the weather was extremely cold and many of the men suffered from frostbite, but none lost fingers or toes. They had built a reasonably comfortable fort and survived the winter, healthy and in good spirits. Some of the men, as planned, returned to St Louis carrying letters, reports and specimens back to the president.

In February 1805, Sacagawea, wife of Toussaint Charbonneau, an interpreter, gave birth to a healthy little boy, Baptiste. She was a young woman of extraordinary strength and endurance and carried the child all the way to the West Coast and back.

A few days before reaching the Great Falls of the Missouri, Sacagawea became ill, also with severe abdominal pain. Quite concerned about her, Clark purged and bled her, and shaded her from the sun. Fortunately, they had to stay in camp for a few days while Lewis went ahead scouting out the route.

When Lewis returned, he found Sacagawea very weak, with a rapid, irregular and thready pulse, and he worried that she might die. He did not bleed her again, but gave her water to drink from a nearby mineral spring. He may have been trying to purge her again, but, unknowingly, probably restored her fluid and electrolyte balance. She recovered within a few days, although she had a relapse from eating white prairie apples, despite strict instructions about diet.

Some people have conjectured that she had an attack of pelvic inflammatory disease secondary to gonorrhea. She had never had a similar problem before, and it never recurred during the remainder of the trip—a period of more than a year. Also, she subsequently gave birth to at least one other child, so it is very unlikely that this was the cause of her pain.

Lewis was very anxious about Sacagawea’s health for two reasons. First, he was concerned about her as a person. But he was also worried that if she died, they would be left without an interpreter to parley with the Shoshone Indians, whom they anticipated meeting within the next few weeks. Without an interpreter, they would have had difficulty obtaining the horses essential for carrying their supplies through the mountains. With Sacagawea’s recovery, all was well. Lewis, of course, had no way of knowing that when they did meet the Shoshones, that Sacagawea would recognize that their chief, Cameawhait, was her brother.

Physical examination, as we know and expect it nowadays, was never done, and even the patient’s temperature was never taken. (There was a thermometer in the equipment, but it was used for measuring the temperature of the air and water, not body temperature.) Accurate, retrospective diagnosis was, therefore, almost impossible for many of the illnesses described.

The expedition carried basic, essential staple foods, but attempts were made to conserve these supplies if food could be obtained locally. During the summers, the expedition passed through areas where game was common and easy to shoot. Hauling the boats upstream required phenomenal amounts of energy, as much as 5,000 to 9,000 calories a day. The hunters were busy every day shooting deer, elk and, later, buffalo that roamed the prairie in untold numbers. But while they were traversing the Bitterroot Mountains, the supply of food became desperately short, and they had to resort to killing a colt to stave off starvation.
(Clockwise from top left): An exhibit at The College of Physicians of Philadelphia, *Only One Man Died: Medical Adventures on the Lewis & Clark Trail*, includes a map of the Louisiana Territory; an Indian sweat lodge; a case for medical instruments; a military uniform typical of the era; one of Meriwether Lewis’ journals; a musket typical of the early 1800s; and Dr. Benjamin Rush’s medicine chest (Lewis and Clark carried a similar chest on their trek). The exhibit runs through February 2006. The museum is at 19 South 22nd St., Philadelphia, PA 19103; (215) 563–3737, www.colphyphil.org.
When the expedition finally emerged on the western side of the mountains and met the Nez Perce Indians, they received bread made from camas plants. Almost all of the men immediately became very sick, and Lewis could barely ride a docile horse. The usual explanation for this epidemic is that they picked up an intestinal infection. The men themselves ascribed the illness to the new diet, in which salmon and camas bread were the basic ingredients.

Dr. Elaine McIntosh, a nutritional expert, has made another suggestion. There are two types of camas plant, blue camas that is edible and safe, and white camas, known as “death camas.” When the flowers are in bloom, the plants are easily distinguished from each other. But the expedition arrived after the flowers had fallen off. The plants grow together and the bulbs, from which the bread is made, are indistinguishable. It is possible, therefore, that they accidentally received bread that included the roots of “death camas,” which would have made them sick, even in small quantities.

The men recovered slowly and were able to get down to the task of making new canoes to take them down to the Columbia. But they never enjoyed the dried salmon the Indians ate, and preferred meat, even if it was dog, which would be socially unacceptable today.

During the long winter of 1805–06 spent in Fort Clatsop on the Pacific Coast, there were only 12 days without rain and three days with sun. Infested with fleas and eating spoiled elk meat, the morale of the men deteriorated. All they could think of was the joy of returning home. The men suffered from colds and flu, and several of them contracted venereal disease. One man, William Bratton, developed incapacitating back pain that lasted for two months and was cured only by a steam bath shortly before the return climb through the mountains.

President Jefferson had given strict instructions to avoid fights with the Indians, if at all possible, and for the most part, they did. During the first summer they had an angry shouting match with the Teton Sioux, the most powerful tribe along the Missouri, but avoided fighting and bloodshed.

During the return journey, Lewis made a diversion up the Marias River. He and his three companions met a group of Piegan Blackfeet Indians. At first, all went well and the two groups shared a camp, but the next morning when the Indians attempted to steal rifles, a fight ensued in which two Indians were killed. Lewis and his men escaped unharmed after an epic ride of 120 miles in 24 hours. If the expedition had become involved in a major fight, there would have been many casualties on both sides. But the greatest damage would have been to the Corps, because the expedition almost certainly would have come to an end, perhaps catastrophically. (This fight is believed to be the start of antagonism between Americans and the Blackfeet, a tribe that had been trading amicably for many years with the British.)

The last major medical crisis of the expedition occurred when Lewis went hunting for elk with Pierre Cruzatte, one of the rivermen. Cruzatte was blind in one eye and had poor eyesight in the other. While searching for a wounded elk in thick willows, Pierre mistook Lewis (who was wearing buckskin clothing) for the elk, fired and hit his captain in the buttocks. Fortunately the wound, although painful, was not lethal. This was the only gunshot wound of the expedition. Lewis recovered completely by the time they reached St. Louis a few weeks later.

The Indians had developed cures for most illnesses. They made extensive use of herbs that were administered along with Shamanic rituals. One of the few occasions when Lewis used an Indian cure was to give Sacagawea the ground-up rings from a rattlesnake’s tail to accelerate her labor. The cure worked, but Lewis was skeptical of its true efficacy.
Sweat baths were the most effective Indian therapy and were used with great benefit. Bratton's back pain was cured after two exposures to the healing heat, and an Indian chief who had been paraplegic for three years was similarly cured. Bratton's cure has been explained by a release of muscle spasm due to a "slipped disc," but the cure of the paraplegic chief is more difficult to explain. Lewis made the perceptive observation that although the chief had been without the use of his legs for a long time, there was no apparent wasting of the muscles. Naturally, one of the conclusions has been that the chief was malingering, but we have no evidence of the state of his muscles before the disease started.

Throughout the expedition there were the usual injuries to be expected—cuts with an axe, dislocated shoulders, snakebites, plagues of mosquitoes and gnats, fevers and skin eruptions. During their first winter at the Mandan Fort, the charms of the local women were readily available, and many men contracted venereal disease that was treated with mercury. (Fur traders had introduced venereal disease to the Indians, and several of the soldiers probably were infected, as well.) Venereal disease was both a medical and a disciplinary problem. Before leaving Fort Clatsop on the West Coast, Lewis had to appeal to his now-well men to restrain themselves from giving into the siren enchantments of the local girls. He did not want to be encumbered on the return voyage with several men suffering from venereal disease. The men were tempted, but abstained.

Although the expedition made very little use of Indian medicine, the Indians had great faith in the medicine of the white men. Clark became the dispenser of medical care, and in return, the expedition received useful gifts of food and horses. Lewis wondered if he should tell the Indians that Clark was not a "real" doctor, but decided that the benefits they were receiving outweighed the mild deception.

How, people ask, could 31 men, one woman and a small child travel 8,000 miles in every type of weather, across plains and mountains, up and down rivers, through country occupied by potentially warlike Indians and return with the loss of only one man? The men—soldiers and frontiersmen—were used to a life of struggle, primitive conditions, poor food and constant danger. They were fortunate not to encounter tribes suffering from epidemic diseases, such as smallpox, that would have decimated them. They did not suffer from scurvy or malaria, and their injuries did not result in crippling disabilities. The Indians, far from being warlike, were mostly friendly and helpful. The discipline of the men—apart from a few breaks—was good, and their enthusiasm and esprit de corps were maintained to an extraordinary degree—a tribute to outstanding leadership.

Three years after the expedition ended, Lewis committed suicide. Clark had a distinguished career and died at age 68, and Patrick Gass, who succeeded Floyd as sergeant, lived to age 99, married late and had many children. There are two accounts of Sacagawea’s death, one that she died aged 24, another that she lived to be almost 100—but that is another story.

(Bruce C. Paton, M.D., is the author of Lewis and Clark: Doctors in the Wilderness, 2001, Fulcrum Publishing, $18.95.)

### PARTIAL LIST OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES ORDERED FROM GILLASPAY AND STRONG IN PHILADELPHIA

#### Medications for fevers:
- Peruvian bark—contained quinine for malaria
- Wintergreen

#### Laxatives:
- Glauber’s salts
- Calomel
- Jalap
- Dr Rush’s bilious pills (“Thunderbolts”)
- Magnesia
- Rhei—powdered root of rhubarb

#### Diuretics:
- Cream of tartar
- Saltpeter
- Capaiboe—a South American plant

#### Gastro-intestinal medications:
- Magnesia
- Wintergreen
- Assafoetic
- Colombo—for dyspepsia
- Tartar emetic
- Ipecacuan—to induce vomiting

#### Relief of Pain:
- Opium
- Laudanum
- Cloves—for toothache

#### Skin medications:
- Tragacanth
- Yellow basilicum
- Calamine
- Benzoin—antiseptic, for treating cuts
- Flower of sulfur—applied to the skin; also a laxative if taken internally
- Mercury ointment—for venereal disease
- Emplast—a mixture of lead carbonate and olive oil

#### Diaphoretics (to induce sweating):
- Saltpeter
- Capaiboe
- Ipecacuan

#### Eye water:
- Lead acetate
- White vitriol (zinc sulfate)

#### Other categories:
- Astringents
- Expectorants
- Flavoring for medications
- A small set of surgical instruments
- A set of dental instruments
As one of the oldest and best-loved ornamental plants in the world, boxwood are also one of the most misunderstood. The name of the plant itself generates misunderstandings. Boxwood seem singularly unsuited to making all but the smallest boxes; the name comes from the square shape of young stems on some species, according to the American Boxwood Society. And the word “boxwood” can be either singular or plural.

Speaking of plural, many homeowners and gardeners know of only two, three or maybe four types of boxwood. There are actually 97 known species of the genus *Buxus* and 217 registered cultivars, with possibly another 500 as yet unregistered, says Lynn Batdorf, Curator of the National Boxwood Collection at the U.S. National Arboretum for 27 years and International Cultivar Registration Authority for *Buxus* for 19 years.

Boxwood range in size and shape from petite, slowly spreading shrubs to columnar spires, and may have cream-edged leaves or blue or even red foliage. In early spring, boxwood flowers lend a light, sweet scent to gardens and almost glow against the dark leaves. The shrubs exude a distinctive aroma that beguiles its fans, although some people find it distasteful.

The wood itself is hard and denser than oak. “Boxwood has a specific gravity that averages 1.027 kg/cubic meter, which means it will sink if placed in water,” Batdorf says. Its hardness and density make boxwood relatively impervious to swelling or contracting as temperature and humidity levels change. That, in turn, made boxwood much sought after by makers of early measuring and navigational instruments such as sextants—its stability allowed for more consistent and accurate measurements.

Boxwood was also much beloved by woodworkers who could engrave intricate designs on its hard, dense surface to make items such as snuffboxes and religious artifacts. For the same reason, newspapers and magazines used blocks of boxwood for engraved illustrations. Large illustrations were divided into sections, like a very easy jigsaw puzzle. “During the Civil War, Harper’s Weekly used boxwood for engravings because they could produce very detailed illustrations,” he says. “When they were done with an illustration, they could grind off the surface and use the block over again.”

Today, the trunk and branches of most boxwood seem too slender to fashion anything larger than a snuffbox. But the Metropolitan Museum of Art owns an engraved, three-panel...
screen from King Tut’s tomb made of boxwood, with solid panels ranging from about 21 to 24 inches wide.

“The museum called me to find out if, as they suspected, it was made of boxwood. They couldn’t believe anything that big could be made of boxwood,” he says. “But if it’s your Pharaoh, nothing’s too good.” He believes the wood could have come from huge, ancient boxwood from a formerly vast forest of them in the Balkans.

Boxwood are largely tropical, with many species indigenous to the Caribbean. The eastern provinces of Cuba alone have 34 indigenous species. “Some of them don’t look anything like what we think of as boxwood,” Batdorf says. “The leaves resemble beech leaves but are bigger, and they don’t have the thick cuticle that gives English boxwood that glossy, tough look. To the untrained eye, they don’t look like boxwood.” Horticulturists fear these relatively pristine habitats may someday be threatened by local economic development.

Tropical species won’t grow in temperate regions. Fortunately, boxwood species are native to two other areas—the Far East, primarily Korea, Japan and China, and northern Africa up through the Caucasus and Balkans, where a 700-square-mile boxwood forest once stood. These areas have temperate zones similar to those in America and thus are the ultimate root of many boxwood we grow here.

North America has no native boxwood. Treasured since ancient times, boxwood joined the early waves of migration to the New World. The first reference to boxwood in North America indicates they arrived in 1653 aboard a ship docking at Shelter Island, near Long Island, N.Y., Batdorf says.

For boxwood lovers, the collection at the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C., holds five acres of paradise, with some 550 plants representing nine species and 137 types, or taxa, of the plant. Batdorf has written three books and about 60 articles on the subject, and remains as passionate today about this ancient plant as when he first took charge. The collection was established in the 1960s with the arrival of Dr. Henry Skinner, former Director of the National Arboretum. Today, the world-famous plantings demonstrate the almost infinite possibilities of using low-maintenance perennials and evergreens in landscapes and gardens.

The collection includes not only plants on display but also cuttings of rare specimens from recent expeditions to Azerbaijan and Georgia that are being nurtured and studied. One of them, found in a valley in Georgia in the Balkans, sheds its bark like a birch tree. Batdorf says, “We found it in a very deep gorge, and are still unsure if the exfoliation is a genetic characteristic or a product of the climate,” he says.

Most of the arboretum’s collection could be considered rare, Batdorf adds, because many growers sell only a few types. The American Boxwood Society (www.boxwoodsociety.org) has a “Boxwood Buyers Guide,” which is a source book for locating 50 different types from more than 300 nurseries and suppliers in 40 different states and countries.

**Boxwood Myths and Tips:**

**No-maintenance:** Boxwood are low-maintenance plants. They do require some attention, such as occasional fertilizing or liming, “but only after you have invested in a soil test to tell you if you need to do anything, and if so, what and how much,” he says.

**Fertilizer and mulch:** Boxwood rarely need fertilizer or lime. Batdorf says he has fertilized the collection only three times in...
When America’s wealthy were building mansions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, magnates paid top dollar to buy and transport large, mature boxwood from rural areas for their gardens.
27 years and limed it four times—and each time only after thorough soil tests. Apply fertilizer only in the fall, never in the spring; lime can be applied at any time, ideally before rain. If you want to mulch, apply only an inch of hardwood mulch. More than that blocks out air and water to the shallow-rooted plants.

Trimming is bad, thinning is good: Well-maintained English or American boxwood should have leaves along the entire length of each branch. Unfortunately, many people trim just the exterior of their boxwood to achieve a particular shape. Eventually, as more branches and leaves develop at the cuts, the dense outer foliage forms a shell that blocks light, air and water to the interior of the plant, and the interior leaves die off.

Worse, when rain soaks the plant, the branches under the shell can take a long time to dry, creating perfect conditions for the fungal diseases *Macrophoma* and *Volutella*. These fungi can infest the plant’s vascular system and start killing off branches—they turn brown seemingly overnight.

Boxwood should be thinned in the late fall and early winter to allow air and light to reach into the plant. This means reaching into the plant and randomly pruning about 6 inches off branches until you can see into the plant. Use the clippings for wreaths, tablescapes and flower arrangements.

Boxwood as investments: When America’s wealthy were building mansions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, magnates paid top dollar to buy and transport large, mature boxwood from rural areas for their gardens. This created the notion that big boxwood were a kind of slowly appreciating retirement fund, says Batdorf. “That era is over. If you’re buying boxwood as an investment, you’ll be disappointed,” he says.

**OTHER BOXWOOD COLLECTIONS**

- **JC Raulston Arboretum**
  4301 Beryl Road · Raleigh, NC 27695–7609
  (919) 515–3132 · www.arb.ncsu.edu

- **The Ruth Palmer Blanke Boxwood Garden**
  Missouri Botanical Garden · 4344 Shaw Blvd.
  St. Louis, MO 63110 · (314) 577–5100 · www.mobot.org

- **State Arboretum of Virginia**
  Blandy Experimental Farm · 400 Blandy Farm Lane
  Boyce, VA 22620 · (540) 837–1758 · www.virginia.edu/blandy

- **Colonial Williamsburg**
  Williamsburg, VA 23187–1776
  (757) 229–1000 · www.colonialwilliamsburg.org

Books by Lynn Batdorf include *Boxwood Handbook: A Practical Guide to Knowing Boxwood*, which addresses the cultural needs of boxwood and lists 71 gardens in 20 states. Available for $18, including postage, from the American Boxwood Society, PO Box 85, Boyce, VA 22620.
Selecting Boxwood

In addition to the widely available English (*Buxus sempervirens* ‘Suffruticosa’), American (*Buxus sempervirens*), Korean (*Buxus sinica* var. *insularis*) and Japanese (*Buxus microphylla* var. *japonica*) boxwood, you might consider the following for your yard, especially if space is at a premium:

**> B. sempervirens ‘Dee Runk’ or B. sempervirens ‘Graham Blandy’** Each naturally grows tall, straight and narrow—about 18 inches wide and up to 16 feet tall. ‘Dee Runk’ tends to hold its shape better as it matures. Good choice for small spaces and spots where you desire a dramatic effect.

**> B. sempervirens ‘Elegantisima’** has dark-green foliage with creamy edges.

**> B. sempervirens ‘Vardar Valley’** has blue foliage.

**> Buxus microphylla ‘Compacta’** is a naturally small plant that is often used for bonsai.

Even young plants of ‘Dee Runk’ are naturally very narrow and exhibit a completely upright habit.

Rosmarinifolia, aptly named, the leaves of *Buxus sempervirens* look as though they are from a rosemary plant.

A boxwood carefully trained into a rooster topiary.
Today, despite Euros, yen, marks and pounds, the money that drives the world’s economic engines is American. Yet until relatively late in the 19th century, the money that jingled in merchants’ pockets and helped propel the growth of a burgeoning nation was largely a hodgepodge of foreign and privately minted coins. More than 80 years after the Declaration of Independence was signed, British coins—along with those of Spain and more than a dozen other nations—were still accepted as legal tender and used in daily commerce. Except for the flag, there is perhaps no national symbol more recognizable than a country’s money. Through the imagery upon it, money conveys what a people value, how they see themselves, and how they wish the world to see them. The story of our country’s coinage mirrors our maturation from a Colonial outpost to a nascent nation to a wealthy world power. It’s a story that reflects America’s “melting pot” heritage, its ingenuity and its spirit of independence.

STORY BY  Lee Gimpel

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG FOUNDATION
COLONIAL TRADE

Although the lure of gold helped spur European exploration of the New World, most adventurers found little to speak of in the Colonies that would become the United States of America. Lacking appropriate metals for coinage, early traders often conducted business by agreeing on a standard means of exchange that included such valuable items as furs, nails or bullets.

However, this began to change as trade increased between the Caribbean Islands and the young Colonies along the Eastern Seaboard. Colonial merchantmen that set sail with wheat and corn brought back payment not only in the form of goods like sugar, but also in much-desired gold and silver coins, according to Douglas Mudd, Collection Manager at the National Museum of American History’s National Numismatic Collection in Washington, D.C.

Most of these coins, notably the famed “pieces of eight” and doubloons, came from Spain and Spanish-controlled Mexico and Peru. Others came from Portugal, England, France and the Netherlands. They bore the visages of rulers who lived in distant lands—George II, Ferdinand VI, and Louis XIV, among others—and represented Old World dominance in this new land. But the origin mattered little to merchants who were more concerned with the inherent value of the metal itself.

“Coinage was based on the bullion value—it was the silver, it was the gold, or literally it was the copper, too—and it didn’t matter so much whose picture was on it,” says Lawrence J. Lee, the Director of the American Numismatic Association Money Museum in Colorado Springs.

This plethora of different coins meant that a Colonial merchant needed two crucial tools to do business: a scale to determine the bullion value of coins, and a chart comparing various national denominations. The Spanish coins that broke a dollar into eight “pieces” were so pervasive that, for many years, it was common to see prices quoted in Spanish fractions of 12.5 and 6.25 cents.

This is not to say that the chronically cash-strapped Colonies produced no native coinage. One of the most notable examples was the run of silver shillings produced by the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1652. Taking advantage of the confusion following Oliver Cromwell’s revolution in England, the Colony struck its own coins, encroaching on what was a sovereign privilege. When Charles II restored the monarchy, he insisted on ending this practice. The Colonists, however, had other ideas. To make it seem as if they were obeying England’s wishes, they continued minting and simply stamped new coins with a date of “1652” for another 30 years.

This pattern of the American Colonies trying to exert their independence through the symbolic act of producing their own currency recurred several times until the Revolution. Ironically, during the mid-1700s, the Colonies printed their own paper money to pay soldiers’ wages for the French and Indian Wars, fought on behalf of England. “Again, the crown put a stop to them making currency and irritated a number of the local Colonists, many of whom became the biggest agitators for breaking with the mother country,” says Donald H. Kagin, Ph.D., author of Private Gold Coins and Patterns of the United States.

CONFEDERATION AND REVOLUTION

Just as they had done to finance the French and Indian Wars, the Colonies issued money to pay for the Revolutionary War. Taking the form of both paper and coins, this Continental currency, like war bonds, derived its value from faith in a less-than-guaranteed eventual American victory. It was thus, as the saying went, “not worth a Continental.” According to Lee, one’s willingness to accept the near-worthless currency was regarded as an indicator of loyalty to the Revolutionary cause.

“As a result of our experience during the American Revolution, Americans came away with an aversion to paper money,” says Mudd. At the end of the war, he adds, it was not surprising that Americans reverted to their preference for coins. In 1783, the Continental Congress authorized the states to produce their own currencies, and a number began minting their own money, mostly of copper.

However, the addition of state coins merely added to the monetary melange, as all of the old foreign coins continued to...
circulate. Now instead of simply converting values from, say, Spanish to British or French coinage, merchants also had to deal with state currencies that looked different and were made in different denominations. In addition, independently minted coins further complicated the system.

Among these was the 1787 gold doubloon with the motto, *Unum e pluribus* (“one from many”) which was produced by Ephraim Brasher, a noted metalsmith, who was George Washington’s neighbor in New York. (In the 20th century, writer Raymond Chandler immortalized this coin in his detective novel, *The High Window*.)

The government moved to alleviate the confusion it had created in 1783 by unleashing this flood of state coppers and also to give a sense of monetary cohesion to the newly formed nation. In 1792, the government founded the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia and established official bimetallic (gold and silver) coinage. Yet, despite the continued issuance of state currencies and later a national currency that bore the “Liberty” and “United States of America” legends, there was still not enough money to meet the needs of a growing country. By around 1800, the federal mint had provided a mere average of about one coin per person, so it remained impossible to rescind the legal tender status of all the other coins still being widely used.

"With bullion coinage, because it’s valuable for its intrinsic content, these coins would circulate for many, many, many years," says Mudd. Indeed, owing to the long circulation life of gold and silver coins from the period, it is probable that some foreign coins merchants handled in the early 1700s were the same coins that Revolutionary delegates carried in 1776 and were still being accepted into the 1800s.

Efforts to get coins from the U.S. Mint into circulation were not helped by the fact that enterprising individuals, realizing that the metal in a coin was worth more than its face value, would melt down the coins and sell the precious bullion at a tidy profit, thereby reducing the number of new American coins. Another complication, Mudd notes, was that nearly 50 percent of the currency in circulation then was believed to be counterfeit.

Hoping to lessen the chronic money shortage, state-chartered banks began to issue paper money called “obsolete notes,” which circulated from just before the turn of the 19th century until the Civil War. Eventually, these notes were issued by any organization that had some capital—and there were thousands of them, including mines, railroads, and even orphanages.

This solution was problematic, though, because the sheer number of issuers made valuing one note against another very difficult (to the point that newspapers listed different local conversion rates like today’s international currencies). Moreover, the notes lost their value as one moved farther away from where they were issued.

By 1800, the Philadelphia Mint had produced an average of only one coin per person.
GOLD RUSHES AND PRIVATE MINTS

The ultimate solution to this chaos came from an unexpected, but long-sought source. In 1799, near Midland, N.C., about 20 miles from Charlotte, 12-year-old Conrad Reed lugged home a glittering 17-pound rock that had caught his eye. It served the family faithfully as a doorstop for three years before the boy's father, John Reed, a Hessian deserter turned farmer, discovered it was gold. The find—a harbinger of the extensive mining that would be undertaken throughout the Southeast until the Civil War—finally gave America the native gold that it had lacked.

For years, the gold was sent to the mint in Philadelphia, a trip that was not only long and wearisome, but also meant risking attacks by highwaymen. Seeing an opportunity, enterprising private minters began operations in Georgia and North Carolina in 1830 and 1831. These private mints offered a significant improvement for miners as the properly measured coins were far easier to use and transport than raw gold—not to mention that patronizing a local mint was preferable to journeying to Philadelphia. In 1838, the U.S. Mint followed the lead of the private minters and chartered its first three branches in Charlotte, N.C., New Orleans and Dahlonega, Ga.

A decade later, in 1848, the more famous California gold rush began. As had happened in the earlier Southern rush, the government hesitated to set up a local mint, fearing that the goldfields would dry up. The sudden availability of precious metal and the absence of a federal minting facility spawned nearly 40 private mints in the West, which functioned until the Civil War, capping what Kagin calls the “most romantic and interesting” era of American coinage.

California alone had about 30 private mints that augmented federal production at the San Francisco Mint, which finally opened in 1854. Mints also sprang up in Colorado and Oregon, and in the Mormon community of Utah. Many of these coins' motifs bear a strong resemblance to official U.S. coinage of the time—eagles, stars and busts of Lady Liberty. However, some bear their own unique imprints, including a stylized picture of Pike's Peak and the Mormons' clasped-hands symbol.

Steeped in All-American Western romance and legend, these private gold-rush coins represent a penultimate chapter in the nation's quest for a national currency. Supplied by the gold rush, the federal mint system steadily replaced the rough-and-tumble private mints with bureaucratic consistency. By the time of the Civil War, the mint system was able to handle the incoming supply of gold and silver from American mines, as well as the demand for money to meet the needs of the nation.

In 1864, seven years after removing the legal tender status of foreign coins, the government put an end to private mints, effectively ending centuries of jumbled coinage, and finally giving the United States the consistent currency that had eluded it for so long.

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1743 English Crown, struck at the Tower Mint in London, bearing the portrait of King George II.

1792 Half Dime, struck at the Philadelphia Mint as a trial coin from what is believed to be silver provided by George and Martha Washington.

1786 Vermont “State Copper,” depicting the Green Mountains and the “all-seeing-eye” within the blazing sun.

1652 Massachusetts “Pine Tree” Threepence, struck in Boston between 1674 and 1682.

Jenny Humphreys, “Indie’s Legacy,” 2001, Installation: embroidered dress, human hair, burlap bags, feed corn, 20 feet by 20 feet by 6 feet
TEXTILE ART, FABRIC WORK, SOFT SCULPTURE. IN TODAY’S ART WORLD THERE ARE MANY CATEGORIES FOR WHAT IN MUCH OF THE LAST CENTURY WOULD HAVE BEEN SIMPLY CALLED “WOMEN’S WORK.” AMONG THOSE WHO ARE CONTINUING TO REDEFINE THIS CATEGORY AS AN ART FORM ARE JENNY HUMPHREYS AND KIMBERLEY HART. THEIR WORK OFTEN INCORPORATES STRIKINGLY NON-TRADITIONAL MATERIALS AND RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ROLES AND CONCERNS OF WOMEN BOTH THEN AND NOW.

BY PAULETTE BEETE
Although some artists were already using fabrics, soft materials and various types of needlework in their work early in the 20th century—Meret Oppenheim’s 1936 fur-covered cup, for example—it wasn’t until the late 1960s that these materials began to appear in visual art more often. Originally, these new works, by artists such as Claes Oldenburg and Lee Bontecou, were termed soft sculpture, although they included elements of weaving and needlework in addition to three-dimensional forms. In its many forms, this “women’s work” has proved to be an enduring art form, as attested to by numerous exhibitions of the genre, including an exhibit in 2002 at New Hampshire’s Currier Museum of Art, “Uncommon Threads, New Twists on Textile Art,” which featured women artists all working in some way with traditional women’s crafts.

Featured among the artists in that show was 42-year-old Jenny Humphreys, a native Californian raised in Baltimore, Md., who now lives in Provincetown, Mass. Humphreys first arrived in Provincetown in 1993 for a seven-month fellowship at the Fine Arts Work Center, which each year provides living and studio space along with a small stipend for 20 visual artists and writers. Humphreys arrived at the work center as a formal abstract painter, having studied at Yale and later at Indiana University. After her residency, she started sewing as a way of continuing to do visual work on a limited income in a small space. “I thought to myself—I’ve got this much space,” she says. “I’ve got this much time. I’ve got this much money.”

As a child, she learned how to sew and knit from her mother and a babysitter, who in Humphreys’ words, was “a huge knitter.” Her parents were both artists, though her mother gave up painting to raise her children. Humphreys’ mother sewed a lot of her children’s clothes, but ultimately, the artist says, her mother did not consider craftwork an art form. “My mom was from the generation who fought really hard to not have to do these things. She doesn’t understand why I do them in my work.”

Humphreys was also influenced by her maternal grandmother, whose work and interest in history inspired her. Humphreys is descended from Puritan ministers, and one of her relatives was killed during the Salem witch trials. This Colonial heritage influences her work, which is an attempt to understand the lives of her female ancestors, who often left behind no record of themselves other than the dates of their births, deaths and marriages. Still, she doesn’t consider individual people as the mentors for her fabric work. “My work grew out of isolation, desolation, poverty and a bit of loss of faith in ‘Art.’”

She often incorporates text into her pieces. “Child Bride,” one work shown in the Currier exhibit, is a wedding dress embroidered with phrases such as “I cannot answer for your sins or redeem you.” Other works, such as a series of aprons, feature seemingly innocuous recipe directions—“Chop me, dice me, sear me.” The embroidered phrases provide a subtext of domestic violence that permeates much of her work.

Humphreys’ pieces are often a reaction to a particular circumstance in her life. “Indie’s Legacy,” an installation piece, was developed during a residency at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, which shares the grounds of Sweet Briar College. Humphreys arrived without a particular project in mind, and found herself spending many hours in the college library: There she discovered a trove of documents about the property’s past as a slave plantation, which was owned by the family of Indiana Fletcher, Sweet Briar’s founder. For this piece, she crafted a fabric bag for each of the family’s slaves, embroidered with the slave’s name and monetary value, and filled with a slave’s ration of corn. Centered on a wall behind the bags is a colorful, flower-sprigged party dress. Running in thin lines from the dress to each of the bags are braids of the artist’s hair, symbolizing her own family’s connection to slavery as slave owners. Juxtaposed with the inviting tactility of her materials, this kind of powerful social
commentary provides the tension that makes Humphreys’ work so compelling.

One of her most recent fabric pieces, “My America,” was constructed during a winter in Provincetown, in the wake of the September 11 attacks. “I was bereft not only because of the events in the world, but also because I had spent the summer homeless, living out of my truck. I didn’t have a place where I could make any art that made a mess, and I felt very strongly the urge for a familiar activity that would comfort me, and literally keep me warm.”

Working between shifts at a local restaurant, using circular needles and no pattern, Humphreys knitted an American flag that ultimately measured 6 feet wide and 22 feet long. Watching the planes fly into the towers had reminded her of flying carpets. “As I worked, I thought about how, as children, we spent many afternoons planning our escape, and loading the rag rug with everything we might have needed for the journey, including toilet paper, canned soda, raisins and our dog.”

Curiously, however, Humphreys claims she doesn’t enjoy needlecrafts, finding the actual process necessary to create her art tedious. However, she sees that very tediousness as indicative of how Colonial women had little time for anything beyond “women’s work,” and this perception lends a historical context to her work. “I think about Colonial life and how women’s lives were so limited.” Her work seems to call forth the hidden voice lying dormant in women’s work, and one wonders if frontier women might have, given the chance, embroidered the same phrases that show up on Humphreys’ quilts: “I am not free. I am not pretty. I am not smart.”

Despite what can be interpreted as feminist content in her work, Humphreys does not consider herself a feminist. “Although the materials vary, the themes [of my work] are generally personal,” she says, “expressing my feelings through a narrative either about my own past or my family’s history. I did not set out to make ‘feminist’ art, but because I am a woman and an artist, and I comment on that, that seems to be how my work often gets described.”

In the past 18 months, Humphreys has returned to painting and doesn’t know if she’ll continue with fabric work. She’s also acquired studio space—a long room with a view of Provincetown Bay, above the Provincetown Post Office. But she has not been able to let go of the fabric work completely; her first new paintings look like little quilts. The fabric work has also left its mark on her painting style in other ways. “All those things that were taboo—words, stories—things that now show up in my paintings, wouldn’t have happened if I hadn’t taken a break from painting and turned to fabric work.”

Coincidentally, during a second residency at the Fine Arts Work Center, Humphreys crossed paths with Kimberley Hart, another native of California also working with fabric and sewing. Like Humphreys, the 35-year-old Hart, who has exhibited in places as diverse as Provincetown, New York and Maine, was a painter but turned to sculpture during undergraduate work at the University of California–Davis.

She worked with traditional materials such as plaster, wood and steel. “I interned with a welder,” she recalls, “and jumped fences to retrieve most materials from train yards, rice mills and abandoned factories.”

Hart continued with these materials during her initial graduate work at the Rhode Island School of Design. However, during a residency at the Skowhegan School, she began to sew “I’d become disillusioned with my direction, so I began making little girl dresses out of housing insulation.” After nine weeks of being covered with fiberglass, she turned to fabric.

Early pieces were based on elements from dress patterns. “I was drawing cutting
lines, notches and darts. Then I discovered that the school had an old sewing machine, and I started fabricating three-dimensional forms from those drawings, specifically notches.” Those notches turned into beanbags, which with an assortment of other three-dimensional sewn objects, Hart turned into installations.

Gradually, she abandoned the machine in favor of sewing by hand, while also learning how to knit and crochet. In addition, she began researching samplers, quilting, the Industrial Revolution and 20th-century homemaking. For Hart, creating soft sculpture and textile art isn’t much different from her early sculptural work. “Sewing is like welding — taking flat pieces, cutting them and attaching them to make a three-dimensional form.”

Hart was exposed to needlework at an early age by her mother, who today makes a living sewing sails for sailboats. But, easily bored by the craft projects her mother gave her, she preferred to ride her skateboard and climb trees. She sees her current work as a direct reaction to her childhood tomboyishness. “Being a tomboy as a child, I didn’t understand the allure of horses, Barbies or playing house,” she says. “Instead I harbored aspirations of becoming an astronaut or a racecar driver, and reveled in a world populated by G.I. Joes and Hot Wheels. I climbed trees in the dresses my mom made for me, and I thought my ballet lessons were synonymous with football practice.” Her newfound interest in traditional girlhood has led her to integrate into her materials what she calls “everything crafty and kitschy.”

Recently she has been incorporating these materials into two-dimensional collages, which she considers “worksheets” for the childhood-specific stories that inform her larger installation pieces, such as “Crown,” a sprawling, one-and-a-half story set of deer antlers made from crochet and paillettes, which previously lived on one of the giant walls of her in-home studio and was recently exhibited at the Bronx River Art Center.

She declares “Daffy Patch,” a riotous, multicolored, gardenlike installation of 22 elements made from an assortment of fabric, knitting, crochet, sequins, beads, pantyhose, guitar string, pipe cleaners and other materials, as one of her favorite work to date. It was, in her words, “an important transitional piece, which was also, luckily, quite successful.” She sees “Daffy Patch” as the piece in which she was finally able to shrug off other’s expectations of what her work should be.

As is the case with Humphreys, Hart’s work provokes questions regarding the issue of feminism, though she believes that her art was more feminist when she worked with traditional sculptural materials and actively took on projects that traditionally had been men’s work. “I think my work now has more to do with identity and its construction than with feminism. It has more to do with the wealth of possibilities I was brought up with and how to find myself in it, than with issues of adult femininity,” Hart says.

Unlike Humphreys, Hart enjoys the various processes she employs to make her art. “If it wasn’t time consuming, I’d figure out how to make it that way,” she says. The time required for her pieces allows her to immerse herself more fully into each art object. She initially starts with an idea, and the work slowly develops into what it wants to be. “I discover what each piece needs to be through the process of making it.” 🌿
Save Our History will be allied with the White House’s own Preserve America initiative that was created in March 2003 by executive order of President George Bush. Preserve America made it a federal policy to provide leadership in preserving America’s heritage. It has already helped The History Channel create a teachers’ manual with lesson plans and volunteer activities to involve students in preserving sites in their communities. “We have distributed over 220,000 idea books nationwide to teachers, which will ultimately affect 10 million students,” said Davids.

Begun in 1998, Save Our History is a philanthropic effort designed to foster history education and historic preservation; its primary sponsor is Bank of America. Through televised, online and printed materials, Save Our History provides supplemental resources for the teaching of history and also encourages communities to take steps to preserve both local and national historic treasures.

“We looked at Mrs. Bush’s Preserve America, and said, this is sort of what we are doing,” said Davids. “If we could get Preserve America to work with Save Our History, it would be an effort that would mobilize both students and communities across the country to preserve our national and local heritage.

“As we know,” Davids added, “looking back is just one aspect of history. It’s important to teach our children about the past, but equally vital to empower them to learn from history and preserve it going forward.

“Unless history lives in the present, it has no future,” he said. “This is what Save Our History is all about. We are working with Preserve America on an effort that has a strong call-to-action to mobilize Americans to take a personal role in helping to save local historic treasures.”

The 2005 federal budget includes a proposal for $10 million in grants to assist communities in preserving their heritage, Mrs. Bush said at the event. She also honored eight communities with Preserve America awards for their dedication in protecting the heritage of their home-towns. Preserve America has also teamed with The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History to honor outstanding history teachers across the nation.

Save Our History has created awards to honor local communities and classrooms that demonstrate outstanding commitments to history education and preservation. “If the projects we are launching today ignite the right sparks,” said Davids, “who knows, someday a 10-year-old might look up from dinner and say, in a surprised voice, ‘Hey, history is cool.’ And that child might begin a life-long love affair with this most valuable of subjects and help save a piece of this country’s history. And that child might go on to become a great teacher or a great leader.”
NOT MANY CAREERS INVOLVE serving in the Navy for three decades, helping the White House stage state dinners, heading up the nation’s top service and community clubs for girls, and then leading an organization that is nothing less than the global face of disaster relief.

But, then, very few Americans can claim the level of energy and innovation possessed by Marsha J. Evans, who was named President and CEO of the American Red Cross on August 5, 2002. This was, of course, after the Red Cross drew criticism when news reports revealed in 2001 that some of the money collected to benefit the victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks that year would be set aside for other uses. Soon after, the agency announced all those funds would aid victims and their families.

The controversy ignited a call for new leadership, and Evans was tapped for the role. Having taken charge, she oversees a 123-year-old institution with much to do: In 2002, whether it was fires, tornadoes, hurricanes or floods, the Red Cross reached out to victims of more than 70,000 disasters. It trained nearly 12 million people in lifesaving skills.

BY DENNIS MCCAFFERTY
such as first aid. It oversaw 7.2 million blood donations from 4 million volunteer donors—nearly half the nation’s blood supply.

Evans’ career has been defined by remarkable breadth and depth. From 1993 to 1995, she led the U.S. Navy Recruiting Command, with more than 6,000 employees in 1,200 locations, overseeing the recruitment of an estimated 70,000 officers and enlisted personnel annually. In 1992, she served as chief of staff at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. She retired in 1998 as a rear admiral—one of the few women to reach this rank.

Evans was hardly the retiring type, however. In January 1998, she assumed the top staff position at Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., where, under her leadership, the group created or expanded cutting-edge programs to enhance its young members’ experiences in science, technology, sports, money management and community service.

At a time when many charities reported a dramatic decline in volunteer ranks, the Girl Scouts increased its numbers to nearly 1 million adults—the highest in its history—with significant increases in young members. Evans charged the organization to reach out to communities and previously uncharted societal pockets. No project area was considered too rough; no rural community considered too remote. Even moms in prison became Girl Scout leaders under Evans’ leadership.

Today, that same drive and vision fuels the Red Cross, an organization that has now shed the September 11 controversy to reestablish itself as the relief effort that the world turns to in times of trouble. Among the challenges discussed in an exclusive, in-depth interview with American Spirit magazine, Evans underscored the need to recruit young people to serve the often grueling volunteer cause.

Evans has received many national awards throughout her career. In 2003, she was named a Woman of Distinction by Birmingham-Southern College, adding her name to a roster of distinguished past recipients, such as former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. A 1979–80 White House Fellow, Evans also received the prestigious John W. Gardner Legacy of Leadership Award in 2002 from the White House Fellows Association. She is also a member of the DAR.

She lives in Alexandria, Va., with her husband, Jerry Evans, a retired Navy jet pilot. When she’s not at work, you can often find her...
enjoying books on business management, or on a golf course. As for the latter, she took up the game only in the past year. Here are her thoughts about a variety of topics more serious and close to the heart, such as career influences, the motivation of volunteers and the nation’s precious need for blood donations.

Q: How did you decide to join the Navy?

I actually ended up there as a result of an accidental career choice, in some sense. I planned on being a university professor. Then, as a senior in college, I saw a picture of a woman officer in a newspaper. Before, I had never thought of doing anything but going to graduate school. The picture made me suddenly reflect. I made somewhat of a whimsical decision: I’d see what it was like to serve in the Navy for two years, and then go on to grad school.

Well, I never left until three decades later. Early on, I was ready to leave to go study Asian politics. But the Navy career gave me a great opportunity to go to Japan. Eventually, the Navy gave me the opportunity to earn a master’s degree in international security at Tufts University’s Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

I really enjoyed the Navy life. In 1973, I served as a social aide in the White House, during the last year of the Nixon administration. I then became a senior Navy aide in the first year of the Ford administration. I took part in state dinners and treaty signings, and other very official events. It was all very exciting stuff.

Q: How does that kind of experience help define who you are, to this day?

You become a valued member of a team, while having all kinds of adventures along the way. You’re given a lot of responsibility early and often. Sometimes, you have to take it on as an individual; other times, as part of a group. I thrive in that environment, and still do.

Q: Under your leadership, the Girl Scouts increased their volunteer numbers dramatically, bucking a national trend of declines. How did you accomplish this?

I believed that every single girl in the United States who wanted to be a Girl Scout should have the opportunity to become one. As a result, we increased recruitment and expanded locations everywhere, whether in an affluent community or a housing project. This increased our number of volunteers, as we brought in more parents to help out.

The parents have as powerful an experience as their daughters do. In the poorer communities, we’d see how timid the parents could be at first. Then they’d get interested in what this scouting thing was about. Then, you’d see their leadership abilities come out. It was wonderful to see.

We also took Girl Scouts deeper into the rural areas. If there were no community centers in these places, we went into the schools there, so the families could take part in it both before and after classes. In other words, we used our imagination and got results.

Q: How do the realities of modern-day living make this especially challenging?

The truth is that we aren’t getting more free time in our lives. If anything, it’s only getting more frenetic. People have more work demands, more involvement demands. We have to convince them that the Red Cross is one of the most compelling places to spend their time. We have to adapt with the times. We need to reach out to the new generation of volunteers.

Q: It must be especially difficult to connect with the MTV youth.

Yes, but what’s terrific is that we have great Red Cross youth programs. We
have peer-to-peer education. We have HIV prevention that young people are eager to take part in. We have young people raising funds to eradicate measles in Africa. They’re learning [to give] first aid and CPR.

And we continue to find new ways to reach this generation. We’re moving forward in adapting our materials in other languages. The Red Cross needs to be involved in a globally diverse pool of volunteers. This results in so many wonderful experiences that I’ve encountered. In San Francisco, young people who are Chinese are the main participants in a translation program we have for the Asian community there. It’s a huge population there, and young people are doing all the translation when it comes to informing them about the Red Cross resources there.

Q: How did you confront the controversy after September 11?

One advantage was that the Red Cross was already among the most trusted institutions in the country. We have had a phenomenal track record throughout our 123-year history. In the wake of September 11, we looked at the processes and procedures very carefully and went direct to the public, saying: We went to the public, saying: We need to constantly deliver the message that all of this is part of the nation’s preparedness in times of emergency. People need to answer the call.

Q: The recent Hurricane Isabel disaster brought to light the financial problems within the Red Cross. Why is this happening, and how can you address this challenge?

Prior to Hurricane Isabel, the American Red Cross announced its Disaster Relief Fund was empty. This fund enables the Red Cross to provide immediate emergency assistance to the victims of everything from multi-unit apartment fires to severe storms, to damaging floodwaters. Since July 2002, the Red Cross has spent $114.3 million responding to disasters, yet only received $39.5 million. In the aftermath of Hurricane Isabel, the Red Cross [responded] to meet the immediate needs of disaster victims providing food, clothing, shelter, medication replacement and mental health counseling. How did the Disaster Relief Fund get to this point? Simply put, we’ve spent more to assist people during disasters this year than what we have received in funding. The Red Cross is the conduit through which individuals channel their compassion. People can make a financial donation to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund by logging onto www.redcross.org, or calling 800-HELP-NOW.

Q: What other leaders do you admire?

Interestingly enough, three people who are closely associated with the places where I’ve worked: Juliette Gordon Low, the founder of the Girl Scouts; Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross; and General George C. Marshall, who led the Red Cross after World War II. I discovered Barton was a DAR member after I joined the Red Cross. Both she and Gordon Low had a vision and stuck to it. If you look at both organizations, they started out as a woman with a dream. Today, generations later, you see the legacy that both organizations built over time, while still remaining true to the original founders’ visions.

As for Marshall, he took over the Red Cross in a similar situation as mine. He was remarkable in this respect.

Q: How did you become involved with DAR?

It’s an organization that is very important to my dear aunt, Barbara McGlone. She’s been a member for years and years. About 25 years ago, she took me to one of the DAR citizen recognition lunches at her chapter [Nelly Custis Chapter, Mount Vernon, Va.] It was so wonderful to see so many women together, talking about the importance of getting involved. I was so impressed with what the women had to offer about Revolutionary War history and Colonial era history.

About 15 years ago, I recognized the importance of continuing the tradition. I realized that no one else in our extended family had joined the DAR. So I decided to join. My aunt was very helpful in providing me access to all of her records, as related to her involvement. The rest is history. I became a Daughter. I made sure that I joined the Nelly Custis Chapter of the DAR, too. I was living in California and New York in those early years, while serving in the Navy. But I wanted to belong to the Nelly Custis chapter to honor my aunt’s devotion. I’m still a member of that chapter.

Q: What’s impressed you most about the DAR?

How much the organization supports the value of patriotism. I continue to be inspired by the young people, too, the young women who are recognized every year for contributions to their communities. It gives me a sense of optimism, hope and enthusiasm.
The Revolution On Campus

BY GEOFFREY D. WITHAM

Harvard Hall, Harvard University
Photo courtesy of the Office of Communications

The College of William and Mary
Photo courtesy of the Office of University Publications

Nassau Hall, Princeton University
Photo courtesy of Princeton University Archives, Mudd Library
One future president left college to join the Continental Army. Another cheered while Loyalist merchants were symbolically executed. A young Federalist publicly rebutted his Tory college president, and a budding philosopher was expelled from school for shattering crockery. Campus protests have a way of bringing out the worst, and the best, in America’s students.
The Seeds of Dissent

Colonial colleges—nine in total by the outbreak of war in 1775—were quite different from the campuses of today. The largest enrollments barely topped 100, and even the oldest college campus, Harvard, consisted of only five buildings. The young men—only men—who attended these schools usually came from elite families to live in tiny quarters and study classical languages and philosophy.

Much has changed in the university population, but perhaps not so much in the university mindset. Harvard professor Seymour Martin Lipset notes that throughout history, collegians have reacted against the absolutism of their childhood lessons. They use political involvement to compensate for insecurities that arise from feeling “in between” the stability of family and the success of a career. Students constitute a unique subpopulation, simultaneously suggestible and influential.

The Revolutionary college generation is a prime example. Like other generations of college students, the Revolutionary generation took popular support for freedom and shaped it into something more radical. However, the Revolutionary generation didn’t merely march and protest on behalf of their cause, but fought for and helped to secure it as well.

Some early protests were not as high-minded or effective as later actions. For more than 200 years, from its inception in 1636 through the mid-1800s, Harvard students were most incensed by the spoiled beef and sour beer served in the dining halls. Students staged numerous demonstrations and even riots for their dietary rights, including an 1818 attack on the kitchen’s earthenware pots that resulted in the expulsion of a young Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Yale students showed similar dietary concern in their early responses to increasing British restrictions. In 1764, to protest the recent British Sugar Act, a group of Elis publicly pledged “not to Drink any foreign spiritous Liquors any more.” This sacrifice did not prevent the rebellious intoxication of another group of Yale students, who in 1769 toasted the contributions of John Wilkes, an English supporter of Colonial independence, with 45 glasses of various “spirituous” beverages. This demonstration succeeded only in earning the ire of nearby residents.

The Symbolic Protest: Clothing and Commencement

Student dissent became more focused as British rule became more oppressive. The Stamp Act of 1765 seemed particularly unfair to students, as their diplomas would now require a tax stamp. The 2-pound fee seemed outrageous at a time when an entire year’s tuition cost only about 5 pounds. In response, students at Yale and the College of New Jersey made a point of wearing “Homespun Cloaths” rather than imported suits and gowns. Likewise, after the 1767 Townshend Act established a tax on numerous imported goods, students enforced boycotts of any products that would incur the new tax.

After the repeal of the Townshend Act in 1770, New York merchants sent a letter to their counterparts in Philadelphia, advising that stores now stock imported items. Students at the College of New Jersey intercepted this letter and had it ceremonially burned in front of Nassau Hall by a hangman they had hired especially for the occasion. The warning was clear: Any seemingly Tory merchant should expect reprisal. James Madison, the future president, bragged of the affair in a letter to his father. Fire was a popular tool of intimidation in Princeton. In January 1774, students staged their very own “Tea Party,” gathering around a bonfire to burn the college’s entire supply of tea, along with an effigy of Thomas Hutchinson, the arch-Tory governor of Massachusetts.

With all of their flair and pomp, commencement activities also became a preferred staging ground for protests. As early as...
1765, the College of New Jersey set aside the traditional literary graduation topics in favor of orations regarding patriotism, liberty, frugality and industry. During the first commencement at the College of Rhode Island (now Brown University) in 1769, two of the seven graduates debated, “Whether British America can under Present circumstances, consistent with Good Policy, affect to Become an Independent State.” The young man arguing the affirmative received a rousing ovation. Students weren’t alone in exploiting graduation ceremonies to register their displeasure with British rule: The College of Rhode Island’s president applauded that debate while dressed in an American-made suit.

Engaging the Enemy

There was a price to be paid for loyalty to the British authorities. In 1774, pro-Tory Harvard students dared to bring East India Company tea to the dining hall, where their cups and pots were promptly smashed. At Yale in 1775, a group of Whig students had armed themselves with clubs in anticipation of a street fight with a gang of Tory locals before the administration intervened at the last minute to prevent violence. Students with clubs—and guns—also took action at the College of William and Mary in Virginia, whose faculty consisted predominantly of Loyalist Anglican clergymen. Groups of armed men held their fire, but nevertheless did intimidate Tory faculty so successfully that two professors fled to England, fearing for their lives.

Harvard students were equally intolerant of Tory faculty. In April 1775, as his battalion passed through Cambridge on its way to assist the main British force, Lord Percy stopped to inquire about the best route to Lexington. Interestingly, not a single Harvard student nor Cambridge local knew how to get there, but a Harvard tutor named Isaac Smith stepped forward to point the way. Smith justified his assistance by saying that he couldn’t possibly tell a lie. Harvard militiamen made certain that he would never again have the opportunity to tell a lie in Cambridge; Smith fled to England.
The Revolution on Campus

The outbreak of war led to dramatic unrest at King's College (now Columbia University). The faculty at the time was primarily composed of Tory sympathizers, and their president, Dr. Myles Cooper, was rather outspoken regarding the British cause. Cooper was the co-author of a pamphlet with the catchy title, A Friendly Address to all reasonable Americans, on the subject of our Political Confusions, in which the necessary consequences of violently opposing the King's troops, and of a general Non-Importation are fairly stated. (The title suggests that Thomas Paine's Common Sense was revolutionary in style as well as content.)

Cooper was greatly vexed in 1774 when a young agitator by the name of Alexander Hamilton enrolled at King's. The future Secretary of the Treasury became an influential thinker in New York City, authoring several patriotic pamphlets and delivering numerous soapbox speeches. On the night of May 10, 1775, he was with a group of students who destroyed British guns on the Battery, but the mob became enraged at the death of one of their compatriots, and in an agitated state, rushed to their Tory president's home. Hamilton urged restraint, arguing with the crowd that any force taken against a private citizen was an affront to their beloved cause of liberty. Although Hamilton could not stop the mob altogether, he was successful in delaying them long enough so that Cooper could escape.

Cooper wandered the streets that night in his bedclothes, taking shelter only as the sun came up before using the following night's cover of darkness to board a ship to England. One year later, Cooper composed a poem about the night he was pursued by students with "a thirst for human gore." He concluded with a plea to heaven: "O may they cast their arms away;/To Thee and George submission pay, Repent, and be forgiven."

Battles and Occupations

No such submission to George III would ever be paid, of course. In fact, for years college men had been organizing militias on campus in anticipation of war—at the College of Rhode Island and the College of New Jersey in 1774, and at Yale in 1775. By far, the largest militia resided at Harvard College, where a small group first formed in 1769 swelled to 61 members within two years. But no amount of preparation could adequately prepare students for the nine years of war that followed those first shots on Lexington Green.

Even the college buildings—large, well-built structures that converted easily to barracks or hospitals—were burdened. Armies occupied seven of the nine Colonial colleges during the war, and five of them were seized by different armies at different times. British, American and French troops crowded in and often—accidentally or maliciously—destroyed equipment, books and other contents of entire floors of buildings. At Harvard, with much of the early fighting so close by, classes were cancelled on May 1, 1775. More than 1,600 militia troops were quartered in four of the college's five buildings. A half-ton of lead from the roof of the fifth building, Harvard Hall, was melted down for bullets. Princeton's Nassau Hall saw the twin indignities of being used first as a stable by the British and then being fired upon by the Americans.

Yet the proximity of battle did not dissuade students from their cause. Indeed, it seemed to have the opposite effect of inspiring them to take arms. All nine Colonial colleges either shut down or temporarily cut back on operations during the American Revolution. Some interruption was the direct result of military danger, but the downsizing at most schools chiefly resulted from the smaller pool of students. There was no system of mass conscription, and tradition dictated that college men be given blanket exemption from military service. Still, despite the liberal exemption policies, more than a quarter of college students left school to serve their fledgling nation. For example, though the fighting was hundreds of miles away, many William and Mary students joined the Continental Army in 1775. One of them was future President James Monroe. Some campuses were hit harder than others: In 1780, only 18 students enrolled at the College of New Jersey. In 1784, after the conclusion of hostilities, that number rose to 68.

First the British Empire... Now the World Bank?

So, why do we hear so little about campus agitators during the American Revolution? Author Willis Rudy speculates that even though our patriot protesters occupied campus buildings—not for sit-ins but for weapons storage—they don’t appear radical enough after some of the excesses of the Vietnam era. Rudy disagrees with this common conception, but notes that, rather than attack a local draft officer, Revolutionary freedom fighters attacked the British Empire. Rather than separate themselves into a small, elite group, they joined forces with local compatriots from all social classes. Rather than kidnap and brainwash a publishing heiress, they shot and killed soldiers in the world’s most powerful army. Their enemy was too obvious, their movement was too popular and the threat of violence they posed to their neighbors was not random enough to appear “radical.”

Yet, these “non-radicals” helped to influence Colonial demands, win the war and rewrite the rules of government. Critics of contemporary protests can take heart that these historical changes developed over several years. If the vandalism of a Starbucks seems a waste of student energies, it’s worth remembering that even luminaries such as Madison and Emerson were involved in some less-than-savory affairs on campus.

Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Rush and Princeton’s Dr. John Witherspoon, all signers of the Declaration of Independence, were dedicated both to individual liberties and educational excellence because they knew the two were complementary. As with the rights to free expression and a free press, when students exercise their right to assemble, it can be a messy affair—especially when the assemblers drink 45 toasts to their hero.

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