Old-Fashioned

Fourth of July Fests
Consider membership in the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR), a volunteer women’s service organization that honors and preserves the legacy of our Patriot ancestors. More than 200 years ago, American Patriots fought and sacrificed for the freedoms we enjoy today. As a member of DAR, you can continue this legacy by actively promoting patriotism, preserving American history and securing America’s future through better education for children.

**WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR MEMBERSHIP?**
Any woman 18 years or older, regardless of race, religion or ethnic background, who can prove lineal descent from a Patriot of the American Revolution is eligible for membership. DAR volunteers are willing to provide guidance and assistance with your first step into the world of genealogy.

**HOW IS PATRIOT DEFINED?**
DAR recognizes Patriots not only as soldiers, but as anyone who contributed to the cause of American freedom. To find out if your ancestor is recognized by the DAR as a Revolutionary Patriot, a request form is available online at www.dar.org by clicking on “Membership.”

**HOW MANY MEMBERS DOES THE NATIONAL SOCIETY HAVE?**
DAR has 165,000 members in nearly 3,000 chapters worldwide, including chapters in 11 foreign countries. Since its founding in 1890, DAR has admitted more than 800,000 members.

**HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?**
Go to www.dar.org and click on “Membership.” There you’ll find helpful instructions, advice on finding your lineage and a Prospective Member Information Request Form. Or call (202) 879–3224 for more information on joining the work of this vital, service-minded organization.
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From the President General

As the newly elected President General of DAR, the 116th Continental Congress gave me a renewed sense of dedication to the National Society’s guiding mission of historic preservation, education and patriotism. These are the objectives we seek to illuminate in every issue of American Spirit magazine, which was recently selected by the Society of National Association Publications for a General Excellence Award.

Patriotism abounds at the annual Fourth of July festivals in Decatur, Ala., and Bristol, R.I., which have a long tradition of honoring brave Americans who have sacrificed for their country. Our Views of America series takes a look at the history of this sacred day for Americans and how old-fashioned Fourth of July celebrations are bringing communities together.

America owes a debt of gratitude for its freedom to the Marquis de Lafayette, the brave friend of George Washington who helped cement the Patriots’ victory in the American Revolution. To mark the yearlong celebration of the Marquis’ 250th Birthday, our feature honors the ideals of the French hero and the creative ways that many organizations, including a DAR chapter in Lafayette, La., are keeping his memory alive.

Forward-thinking members of the Sarah Bradlee Fulton Chapter (now the Boston Tea Party Chapter, Boston, Mass.) worked toward sustaining an important part of their state’s past. They rallied together more than a century ago to preserve the Royall House and Slave Quarters in Medford, Mass., a National Historic Landmark built between 1732 and 1739 that shows the intertwined lives of Colonial Americans and their slaves.

The Historic National Road, the nation’s first federally funded interstate highway, opened the nation to the west. Today, the road is protected by six state National Road Associations, which enhance and promote the road’s 200 years of American history. We examine the genesis of this thoroughfare, and how it not only improved transportation and commerce, but also helped unite a nation.

American Spirit hits the road to visit Conner Prairie, a living history museum on the outskirts of Indianapolis. Its 1,400 acres feature interactive historic areas, including an 1836-era Prairietown, where dedicated interpreters help illustrate the daily life of early American communities by demonstrating everything from butter churning and farming to carpentry and pottery making.

We all want to learn as much as possible about the lives of our ancestors, and the Internet has become a tool to help many do just that. Read our article about online family trees to discover the advantages and drawbacks of using the Internet for genealogical research.

Whether your Fourth of July is full of old-fashioned thrills or new traditions, I hope it is a time of celebration for you and your loved ones.

Linda Gist Calvin
New! from The MIT Press

The New England Quarterly
Linda Smith Rhoads, Editor
Quarterly | March/June/September/December | 176 pp. per issue
Founded 1928 | ISSN: 0028-4666

For three-quarters of a century, The New England Quarterly has published the best that has been written on New England's cultural, political, and social history. Contributions range from before European colonization to the present, and cover any subject germane to New England's history—for example, the region's diverse literary and cultural heritage, its political philosophies, race relations, labor struggles, religious controversies, and the organization of family life. In addition to major essays, features include memoranda and edited documents, reconsiderations of traditional texts and interpretations, essay reviews, and book reviews.

Print and electronic versions of this journal are available from The MIT Press.

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Penchant for Preservation

In 1992, Dr. Anne Tyler Netick took early retirement from teaching Russian at the College of William and Mary. But it wasn’t so that she could get a jump-start on living the easy life. She needed to start directing her attention full-time to a project that had been on the back burner since the 1970s—restoring Woodbourne, the 1815 home near Charles City, Va., that her great-grandfather, President John Tyler, built for his first wife, Letitia Christian.

“It was really in deteriorating condition,” says Dr. Netick, who purchased the house from the Christian family, who had not lived there for more than 20 years. “But I believe that any old house of architectural or historic significance should be saved if possible.”

The good news was that the owners never tried to reinvent the house by repurposing or adding rooms. “When we bought it, it was very much the same structure that Tyler would have known,” she says. “A lot of the old moldings, woodwork, fireplaces—things that oftentimes are stolen from abandoned houses—were still there. Our job was to fill in the gaps and clean it up.”

The bad news was that restoring Woodbourne would require a new foundation, roof, siding, windows, doors and extensive inside repairs. Five outbuildings original to the house, including a kitchen and dairy, also needed repairs.

Dr. Netick and her husband, Dr. Joe Netick, a retired dermatologist, did much of the restoration work, while subcontractors handled the more complex jobs.


The major work was finished in 1995, but Dr. Netick admits that, as with all old houses, there’s always more work to do. She learned this growing up at Sherwood Forest, another home of President Tyler where he lived from 1842 until his death in 1862. The circa 1720 home, Dr. Netick says, was an enchanting place for a child to grow up, but it was often in need of small repairs. “The plaster would crack, the floors creaked and, in winter, water pipes were often frozen,” she recalls. “But the house was fun and had real personality.”

Dr. Netick graduated from Randolph-Macon Women’s College in Lynchburg, Va., with a degree in Latin and then moved to New York to study Russian at Columbia University. “In college I took a class in Russian literature, and I was intrigued, so I decided I wanted to learn Russian,” she explains. “I finished at Columbia during the space race, so there was a great demand for people who could speak the language.”

Dr. Netick taught a few years at the College of William and Mary before moving to Nashville, Tenn., to pursue her Ph.D at Vanderbilt University. Later, she returned to William and Mary to teach Russian language and literature until retiring 15 years ago.

With Woodbourne now serving as her weekend retreat and where she keeps the seven horses that she rides and trains, Dr. Netick has moved on to other endeavors, including working at local museums and joining the DAR as a member of the Commonwealth Chapter, Richmond, Va. “I’ve always known the DAR did a lot of good,” she says. “But the more I get involved, the more I realize what a positive impact this organization has on our communities.”

Dr. Netick also recently finished a two-year term as governor of the Jamestowne Society, an organization whose members are descendants of the Jamestown colonists. Under her leadership, four new companies (comparable to DAR chapters) were inaugurated, and the society purchased a new headquarters building in Richmond. Dr. Netick expects that the society will grow even bigger as a result of the 400th anniversary celebration of the settlement at Jamestown.

Although the celebration will come to an end this year, it’s a good bet Dr. Netick will soon find another piece of history to preserve.

To nominate a Daughter for a future issue, e-mail a description to americanspirit@dar.org

© JOE MAHONEY

{Today’s Daughters}

BY LENA BASHA

American Spirit • July/August 2007 5
Stamp of Honor
Each year, the United States Postal Service releases a number of special stamps to pay tribute to special events, organizations and historic figures. Now, 400 years after it was settled, Jamestown gets a stamp of its own. In honor of this year’s 400th anniversary celebration of the settlement, the USPS released a unique triangular stamp—mimicking the shape of the original James Fort—to commemorate the event.

Fourth of July
1. In what country were fireworks invented?
2. Which two presidents died on July 4, 1826?
3. Who was the only president born on the Fourth?
4. When did fireworks become a part of the Independence Day celebration?
5. How many places in the United States have “Liberty” in their name?

Answers on page 9.

Quick Quiz

A Quilter’s Trove

QUILTS ARE MORE THAN BLANKETS to wrap up in on a cold night or pretty wall hangings that decorate the living room. Originating simultaneously in China and Egypt, quilting became popular in America in the 19th century after settlers brought the hobby with them from Europe. To honor this tradition, the Alliance of American Quilts and Michigan State University (MSU) have compiled an online database of American quilts called the Quilt Index. (The DAR Museum has been working with MSU to add photos of the extensive NSDAR quilt collection to the Quilt Index.) With thousands of quilts spanning all time periods, styles and functions, the index preserves the history of American quilts and tells the stories behind their construction. Users can access the Web site and use the browse section to easily find pictures and information about quilts from all different time periods. Visit www.quiltindex.org to learn more.

The DAR Museum’s Full Blown Poppy, c. 1820, is one of the many quilts on view in the Quilt Index database.
Ready for Fireworks?

Celebrating the Fourth of July has been a tradition for as long as we can remember, but when did these traditions start? After testing your knowledge with our Quick Quiz on page 6, check out the Fourth of July Celebrations Database, created by James Heintze, author of the Fourth of July Encyclopedia, to get insight into the history of Independence Day in America. Heintze relates stories such as how businesses in Portsmouth, N.H., that remained open on July 4, 1777, refusing to partake in Independence Day merriment, suffered broken windows and property damage from patriotic residents.

If you’re looking for new ways to commemorate the Fourth, Heintze’s site also provides links to Independence Day celebrations all over America. Visit www.american.edu/heintze/fourth.htm for more.

Fruits of ‘Yankee Conservation’ Evident In DAR State Park

IN THE 1920S, Vermont State Society’s chapters were encouraged to plant trees as “an example of Yankee conservation and thrift,” a practice that led VSSDAR members to dream about establishing a DAR State Forest. The dream became a reality when the state conference of 1933 authorized the purchase of land in Addison County along the shores of Lake Champlain. The 160-acre property included an elegant Federal-style mansion built in 1796 by John Strong, a Patriot and prominent early Vermont citizen. The VSSDAR worked hard to establish a forest on this wild land, planting 11,450 trees before leasing a portion of the land to the state to use as a public park. In 1968, the Society leased the remaining 30 acres to the state, land that Vermont purchased in 1974. In 1980, the mansion was designated a National Historic Site.

Five generations of the Strong family lived in the mansion, considered one of Vermont’s most important 18th-century homes. From Memorial Day to Labor Day, DAR members conduct informational tours of the period rooms and tell visitors the story of the Strong family’s life and leadership in the northern wilderness. Rotating exhibits and special programs augment the tours, and primary-source documents are available for supervised use by researchers, teachers and history buffs. The land now serves as a 95-acre park with camping, a picnic pavilion, boating, fishing, sailing and swimming.

For more information, call (802) 759–2309.

– By Maureen Labenski, Green Mountain Chapter, Burlington, Vt.

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY:

1776 — The Pennsylvania Evening Post is the first newspaper to print the Declaration of Independence.
1778 — General George Washington gives his men a double allowance of rum and orders an Independence Day artillery salute.
1791 — The only Fourth of July address ever made by George Washington occurs in Lancaster, Pa.
1826 — The “Jubilee of Freedom” is held to mark the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence; in Newport, R.I., Major John Handy commemorates the event by reading the Declaration on the same exact spot he read it 50 years before.
1852 — Frederick Douglass gives his famous speech, “What to a Slave is the Fourth of July?” in Rochester, N.Y.
1876 — Multiple days of celebration honor the 100th anniversary of independence in America.
1893 — The Liberty Bell rings to honor the Fourth of July celebration at the World’s Fair in Chicago.
1902 — 200,000 people travel to Pittsburgh, Pa., to listen to President Roosevelt speak.
1918 — Philadelphia honors nearly 100,000 foreign-born Americans as they march in the “Parade of the Nations.”
1942 — Fireworks are cancelled almost everywhere in the country due to war blackouts, and Americans work to fulfill their duties as U.S. citizens during a time of war.
1960 — The 50-star American flag is waved for the first time after Hawaii becomes a state.
1976 — As a part of the Bicentennial celebration, churches all over America ring their bells at 2 p.m.—the same time the Declaration of Independence was signed 200 years before.
2006 — The first space shuttle launch on the Fourth takes place when the Discovery takes off from the Kennedy Space Center.
Houston Daughters Fight to Save City’s Cinematic Treasures

The DAR and American Spirit are stirring the spirit for preservation in Houston, Texas, where members of the Texas State Society and area chapters—including Alexander Love, Lady Washington, James Hardage Lane I, Tejas and Ann Poage—have joined forces with community groups in a grassroots fight to save two of the city’s Art Deco movie theaters from the wrecking ball.

For years, Houston’s River Oaks Theater and Alabama Theater/Bookstop, both built in 1939, have been emotional staples in the community, providing residents with a place to congregate and enjoy first-class entertainment. Now time is running out for the theaters, which are set to be demolished by the property owner, Weingarten Realty.

Our March/April 2007 cover story, “The Red Deal: Reviving Historic Movie Theaters,” which detailed how communities across the country are converting historic movie theaters back into cultural centers, hit home for Houston Daughters, including Jill Brooks, Vice Chairman of Historic Preservation for the Texas State Society’s American Heritage Committee.

While speaking before the city council this spring to support a proposed amendment to Houston’s historic preservation ordinance, Mrs. Brooks came armed with copies of American Spirit, DAR brochures and written statements on the membership’s commitment to preservation. Mayor Bill White and other council members welcomed the information, thanked the DAR for its continuing efforts in historic preservation and passed the amendment the following day.

Mrs. Brooks also represented the DAR before the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission, distributing American Spirit and urging the group to designate the theaters as city-protected landmarks. In a bold move, the commission voted to extend the status to each of the structures.

But the battle isn’t over yet. Houston’s city council and planning commission still must hold public hearings on whether to deem the structures historic landmarks—and even after designation, the city can only delay demolition to seek alternatives.

“Our publication has provided an important platform and voice for our Houston membership,” Mrs. Brooks says. “However, Weingarten’s recent application for a demolition permit indicates that these structures will soon be lost.”

In an effort to offer alternative solutions, such as adaptive reuse, copies of American Spirit were sent to Weingarten and Barnes & Noble, which leases the Alabama Theater but is set to move into the reconstructed shopping center soon.

“We believe it is our patriotic duty to educate corporate America about the necessity of preserving history for future generations,” Mrs. Brooks says. “Destroying icons such as these diminishes the historic American landscape and leaves our society and our children with a cultural abyss.”

Daughters who are interested in getting involved in the effort to save these historic theaters can let their voices be heard by signing the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance’s “Save Our Landmarks” online petition at www.ghpa.org.

Learn more about Houston’s historic theaters by visiting the Save Our Landmarks Web site at www.saveourlandmarks.org.
Research at Your Fingertips

Extensive research used to involve spending hours in a basement research room or poring over microfilm in the library. But that's all changing, thanks to new Web-based projects provided by organizations like Footnote.com and Chronicling America.

Footnote.com, in collaboration with the National Archives, is a subscription-based Web site for professional and amateur researchers that now hosts more than 4.5 million digitized holdings from the National Archives.

Growing each month, the digitized holdings available to the public through Footnote.com contain papers from the Continental Congress (1774-1789), copies of the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution and Revolutionary War documents, such as the Revolutionary War Service Records and the Revolutionary War Rolls.

An all-access membership on Footnote.com provides you with unlimited access to all images and the option of annotating, printing and saving them. You can also create a gallery of your favorite images, upload your own and create your own member page where you can share what you've learned with friends, family and other Footnote.com users. Organizers of the project say they hope the National Archives partnership will also assist in preserving original records.

Another treasure for online research, the National Digital Newspaper Program’s “Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers” project digitizes historically significant newspapers from all 50 states. A partnership between the National Endowment for Humanities and the Library of Congress, the NDNP gives ordinary citizens access to records of what people thought and experienced during significant historical periods. The process of taking microfilm to the Web is arduous, but “Chronicling America” has already released newspapers from California, Florida, Kentucky, New York, Utah, Virginia and the District of Columbia. The NDNP plans to have historic newspapers from all 50 states online within 20 years.

For more information, visit www.loc.gov/chroniclingamerica.

Last Fort Standing

George Washington ordered the construction of 69 forts to protect the Potomac Highlands during the French and Indian War—but only one remains. Fort Ashby, a war barracks preserved by the Fort Ashby Chapter, Fort Ashby, W.Va., is the only lingering piece of Washington’s orders. The fort lies in the Cacapon River Valley, which was used as a prime location to defend the Potomac Highlands when the French and Indian War battles escalated. The sole surviving fort is in good hands—the Fort Ashby Chapter was even awarded a historical preservation award by the DAR for its efforts to preserve the barracks. To plan your visit to Fort Ashby or to support the preservation of the barracks, contact the visitor’s center at (304) 856-2336.

FOURTH OF JULY

Answers to the quiz on page 6: 1. Fireworks were invented in China between 960 and 1279. 2. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died on the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. 3. Calvin Coolidge was born on July 4, 1872, in Plymouth, Vt. 4. In the mid-1800s, experts from Europe brought fireworks to America where they were soon used to celebrate the Fourth. 5. Thirty places in the United States have “Liberty” in their name, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, and the most populous is Liberty, Mo., with 26,232 residents.

QuickQuiz
{Letters to the Editor}

Spirited comments from our readers

CANDY LAND

I was delighted to read “Tapping for Maple’s Sweet Gold” in the March/April 2007 issue.

However, I missed seeing any mention of “sugaring off”—a fun time we had in New Hampshire when we’d bring in a big pan of snow, boil down the syrup a bit more and then drizzle it on the snow where it would congeal.

We’d pick up the confection with a fork and eat it with plain homemade doughnuts. It was delicious. Then we’d take some of the boiled-down syrup, put it in a small bowl and beat it with a spoon. Stirring or using a blender didn’t work. We’d beat it and beat it until it would (finally) turn white, and we’d have finely textured sugar candy.

They were simple pleasures.

Barbara Currier Kruse
Ketewamoke Chapter, Huntington, N.Y.

INTO THE WOODS

Growing up in Middletown, Conn., in the 1930s and 1940s, we enjoyed visiting Wadsworth Woods on the outskirts of town. Recently I learned that Middletown’s DAR Chapter was named for General James W. Wadsworth who served with the Continental Army in both the Boston and New York campaigns of the American Revolution and later was a delegate to the Continental Congress. At last I had a connection to those lovely woods!

The source of my enlightenment was the January/February 2006 issue of American Spirit. The ongoing “What’s in a Name” feature gives a few stories of how some of the nearly 3,000 chapters were named, and this is only one of many features of the magazine I enjoy. The magazine’s pictures are wonderful, it gives history lessons, and it shows us how our DAR sisters do things: their activities, their good works, their interests.

I urge all your readers to subscribe and enjoy American Spirit for very little money and effort—only $18 for a year subscription. And it helps our chapters with our national obligations.

Faith Compo
Chancellor Livingston Chapter, Rhinebeck, N.Y.

MOVING PICTURE MEMORIES

I particularly enjoyed the March/April 2007 issue’s article about the old Fox Theatre in Atlanta (“The Reel Deal”). I remember going to movies there as a child. The organ console rising up out of the floor with twinkling lights was very dramatic. My mama took my sister and me to see “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.” Before the movie we had lunch at Jacob’s drugstore next door; dessert was ice cream with animal crackers in the shape of the dwarfs. The last time I visited the theater was in June 1957 for my brother’s graduation from Georgia Tech. At that time the school’s graduation ceremonies were held at the theater.

Evelyn Campbell
Travellers Rest Chapter, Nashville, Tenn.

HERO OF THE MILL

As a Lukens descendant, I really enjoyed the “Iron Lady” article in the January/February 2007 issue. Charles Lukens was owner of the ironworks known as the Brandywine Mill, which later became the Lukens Steel Mill in Coatesville, Pa. Charles recognized early that steam boilers would be of tremendous economic importance. He remodeled his mill with this new technology and was the first to manufacture boilerplate iron.

Charles was also a physician and treated many of his employees. He frequently visited sick employees, kneeling by their bedside to pray for their recovery. In 1825, he died at 38. Rebecca Webb Pennock Lukens took over the business and successfully managed the mill until her death in 1854. After her death, the Lukens Steel Company was owned by Charles and Rebecca’s son-in-law, Dr. Charles Huston. It soon became the largest steel mill in the country.

Rebecca is my hero! I have shared her story with my DAR friends and thank American Spirit for doing this article.

Nancy Lovell
Cascade Chapter, Bellevue, Wash.

THE BLENNERHASSETTS IN MISSOURI

I enjoyed the article “A Frontier Eden in West Virginia” from the January/February 2007 issue of American Spirit about the home of the Blennerhassett. I have a little more information on Joseph, the youngest and only surviving son of Harman and Margaret Blennerhassett. He came to Lincoln County, Mo., northwest of St. Louis, and taught at Auburn Academy.

According to the History of Northeast Missouri, one of his pupils described him as being “accomplished as a linguist, a pen artist and a lawyer, and a bosom friend of the classics. Not only was he brilliant in a scholarly way, but his Irish wit revealed itself in everyday life.”

The Troy Free Press of July 20, 1888, tells of a Blennerhassett art exhibit. The story reports: “Among the really historic relics on exhibition are several displayed by Mrs. Blennerhassett, being the property of the once famous Blennerhassett of the Island. They are a pistol and case, spectacles, snuff box and match box.”

Although Joseph’s wife Abigail and two infant sons are buried in the Troy City Cemetery, there is no record of Joseph’s burial place.

Barbara Cheatham
Troy Chapter, Troy, Mo.
Thomas Sully painted at least 13 portraits of Fanny Kemble, an English actress who first appeared on the American stage in 1832. After marrying Pierce Butler of Philadelphia, she retired from the stage, returning in 1847 shortly before their divorce. The DAR Museum’s 1832 painting is one of Sully’s earliest of Kemble.

Born in Lincolnshire, England, in 1783, Sully and his family immigrated to Richmond, Va., in 1792. He became a professional painter at age 18, studying under Gilbert Stuart and Benjamin West before becoming a famous portrait artist in his own right. His subjects included John Quincy Adams, Marquis de Lafayette, Queen Victoria, Thomas Jefferson and other famous Americans of the time. He died in Philadelphia in 1872. His book, *Hints to Young Painters*, was published posthumously.
New books explore our nation’s roots and early heroes as well as stories of brave women dedicated to preserving freedom

**A Nation’s Beginning**

Charlottesville novelist Avery Chenoweth and photographer Robert Llewellyn, who has photographed the Albemarle, Va., countryside for 30 years, first paired their talents in the book *Empires of the Forest: Jamestown and the Making of America* (Rivanna Foundation, 2006), a collaborative effort that imaginatively re-creates the events of Jamestown in dreamlike photography and evocative prose.

Chenoweth and Llewellyn’s choice to use present-day photography in their book results in striking images that suggest both the ancient and recent pasts, including landscapes that evoke the Virginia of 400 years ago. Much like a movie, the artists chose a cast of characters—including descendants of the Powhatan nation—to play parts in the book and depict the dramatic relationships between the colonists and Indians and between marquee players like Chief Powhatan, John Smith, Pocahontas and John Rolfe.

However, Chenoweth and Llewellyn attempt to get behind the legendary status accorded to these famous historic figures and address some of the myths that have built around the Jamestown story. “They were people first, humane and inhuman, torn with conflict,” Chenoweth writes. “*Empires of the Forest* is our attempt to present them as living individuals in their moment, an endeavor to take the reader on a journey in time and empathy, to the edge of history where America began—and then back, with a new perspective on how American identity became what it is today.”

The artists’ approach to the story—grounded in history but with fictional elements—is a unique way to broaden our understanding of our forefathers’ fateful choices. “While we all have assumptions about what happened,” Chenoweth writes in his preface, “much of it cannot be known, and what follows in these pages are my assumptions along with fictional elisions. The sole intent is to be with them for a while. To imagine the lives of those who died 400 years ago is to reawaken an essential empathy for others.” Chenoweth and Llewellyn’s vivid storytelling in words and images succeeds in bringing alive the tragedies and triumphs of America’s first permanent English settlement like few straight histories could do.

—JAMIE ROBERTS

**THE DAR PAST AND PRESENT**

*American Treasure: The Enduring Spirit of the DAR* (Donning, 2007) tells the remarkable story of a world-renowned organization that has evolved and remained relevant with the times while staying steadfast to its 117-year-old mission.

To research the groundbreaking book, author Diana L. Bailey spent a year searching the DAR Archives, poring over hundreds of documents and conducting more than 40 interviews. The result is a full-to-the-brim treasure chest of the organization’s history told in a beautifully graphic and engaging way. Featuring more than 400 historic and contemporary photos and illustrations—some never before published—the 300-plus page coffee table book blends the rich history of the DAR with the present-day contributions of the organization, whose members once pitched in to assist immigrants at Ellis Island and who today send care packages to troops fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Even readers familiar with the National Society’s enviable collections will be amazed at the gems the book uncovers. A 1907 photo of Memorial Continental Hall, taken before its columns and portico were added, is contrasted with an image of world leaders meeting at the G-7 Conference held at DAR Headquarters in April 2005. Another cherished item is a copy of the DAR application from women’s rights pioneer Susan B. Anthony, who became a member of the Irondequoit Chapter, Rochester, N.Y., in 1898.

Even though the writer acknowledges that the contributions of all Daughters (850,000 since the organization was founded in 1890) can’t be contained in a single volume, the trailblazing members of the DAR are given a fitting tribute in this beautiful keepsake.

—JAMIE ROBERTS
Belles on the Battlefield

When Nazi troops invaded France in 1940, French-American Florence Conrad decided to borrow some wisdom from Saint Theresa: “Do immediately what needs to be done, and find the means later.” For Conrad, what needed to be done was to help alleviate the suffering of her home country—a task she set out to accomplish with courage and fortitude. Unlike her peers who were joining the military as nurses or cooks, she set her sights on organizing an all-female ambulance corps, dubbing it the Rocheambeau Group. In Women of Valor: The Rochambelles on the WW II Front (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), author Ellen Hampton brings to life the story of this original group of 15 women, named after the count who led French efforts to support America during the Revolutionary War. Conrad’s Rocheambeau Group ignored military resistance and set out for France to make history as the first female ambulance drivers to join an armored division of soldiers.

Hampton, a political journalist and DAR member who currently lives in Medan, France, offers an emotional look at the women of the Rocheambeau Group. With references to personal journals, letters, pictures and memoirs, the book gives readers access to the women’s backgrounds, telling the story of how they unified to fight for freedom.

Although most of the male generals in the Free French Army first doubted their ability on the battlefield, the women earned their place working under General Leclerc and the 2nd Armored Division, which affectionately began calling them “The Rochambelles.”

The Rochambelles shattered conventions and refused to back down to anyone—even gun-toting Nazi soldiers. Although many would consider the women of the Rocheambeau Group feminists, they were ordinary women who simply wanted to restore France to freedom. Hampton’s historical narrative will leave you amazed at the resolve of these young women who drove through sniper attacks and minefields to transport soldiers to safety—a feat that paved the way for future women in the military.

— MEGAN PACELLA

A Hero’s Welcome

Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825 (Lafayette Press, 2007) is the first unabridged translation of a journal kept during the Revolutionary War hero’s final trip to the United States. Translated by Boston lawyer Alan R. Hoffman, it offers a detailed description of the overwhelming welcome the “boy general”—by then in his late 60s—received. His face was imprinted on banners, fine china and women’s gloves. The smallest of towns wildly celebrated his arrival, and he felt compelled to visit all 24 states.

Written by Lafayette’s scribe and traveling companion, Auguste Levasseur, the journal also provides a snapshot of a nation not yet 50 and full of energy and optimism; proud of its successful revolution and growing rapidly. (For more on the Marquis de Lafayette and his 250th birthday celebration on September 6, please turn to page 30.)
Keeping It Real

History teacher brings relevance of the past to life for students
by Emily McMackin • photo by Rich Chapman

STEP INSIDE KENT BORGHOFF'S Advanced Placement U.S. history classes at John Hersey High School in Arlington Heights, Ill., and you won't see students snoozing through dry lectures laden with names, dates and places to memorize. Instead, you might hear them speculating about what Thomas Jefferson was thinking while writing the Declaration of Independence, or you might hear them bantering about how America would have turned out with a document other than the Constitution as the country's democratic blueprint.

History is a living, breathing subject that Borghoff encourages his students to explore. “Trying to cover more than 200 years of it in two semesters is a constant challenge,” Borghoff says, “but showing students how the past relates to their present keeps them focused on the big picture.

“I hope they know who Thomas Jefferson was when they leave my classroom and understand why he was an important player, but I also want them to be thinkers, writers and problem-solvers,” he says. “History is a great laboratory for that.”

Unlike some teachers, Borghoff doesn’t rely on interactive games or software programs to engage students; his approach is much more traditional.

“I let the history speak for itself,” says Borghoff, who supplements required texts with primary sources like letters, diaries and eyewitness accounts. “Hopefully, they learn to like it because they’re seeing it through someone’s eyes instead of a sterile textbook.”

Though the extra reading means more homework for students, it also gives them a behind-the-scenes glimpse of history through the lens of those who lived it. From Jefferson’s insights on the Declaration of Independence to George Washington’s qualms about the Articles of Confederation to Patrick Henry’s impassioned plea to the Virginia House of Burgesses, delving into the personal writings of the Founding Fathers allows students to experience the drama of the times.

“Reading the words of the founders is addictive because you can see the extent of their concern and passion for the country, and the risks they took to see it succeed,” Borghoff says. “We take it for granted today, but there are many episodes where, if things had gone differently, we would be telling a different story.”

Borghoff encourages students to investigate history from all viewpoints, steering clear of the historical “agendas” that he finds common in textbooks today. When studying the Boston Massacre, for instance, the class compares its depiction in Paul Revere’s famous engraving to British General Charles Cornwallis’ account. When discussing taxation without representation, they weigh its premise against ideals of British sovereignty.

Borghoff likes nothing more than to stir a lively debate.

“It teaches students so much about thinking, reasoning, weighing evidence, determining point of view and recognizing bias,” Borghoff says. “The more they practice that, the more they hone the skills necessary to be active citizens.

“Hopefully, there’s a mystery in their minds about where I’m coming from—and because they don’t know the right answer, it gives them the freedom to come up with their own conclusions,” he says.
Tree Growth: Phillip LaVoie, using Geni.com, and Gilad Japhet, using MyHeritage.com, have digitized and added these archival family photos to their online genealogy records, enlarging and enriching their family trees.
"They used to use the father’s first name and add ‘sen’ to create their last names," Estensen says. "A great-great-great-grandfather of mine was named Simon Estensen, and his son, my great-great-grandfather, took the last name Simonsen. We used the last name Simonsen until I discovered that my original name was Estensen, which I changed to this January after using MyHeritage.com. I have, of course, also changed my two sons’ last names accordingly."

While Estensen’s action may be a rare result of genealogical research, his use of the Internet as a tool for finding his family history isn’t. Genealogy sites have populated the Web since its early days, but they have often charged expensive fees and offered search tools that were time-consuming and difficult to work with, causing frustration for users. Newer genealogy sites are working to avoid those drawbacks and make family history easy and fun.

The new methods of researching genealogy are “quite different from the past,” says JoAnne Rockower of Geni.com, a recently launched site that encourages users to build their own family trees that eventually will merge into one giant family tree for the world. “[These sites] certainly attract people who may not have been attracted to genealogy before, thinking it was too dry. This is more fun [than traditional genealogy research].”

While there are still pros and cons to investigating ancestry online, the new generation of sites has already attracted thousands of newly minted genealogy buffs like Estensen, who may have never started searching had it not been for the Internet.

Experiencing the Benefits

“The Internet is as reliable as offline genealogy sources, which means it isn’t perfect,” says Gilad Japhet, CEO of MyHeritage Ltd., who designed MyHeritage.com’s high-powered genealogy search
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Above left: Gilad Japhet, founder of MyHeritage.com, digitized this 1931 photo of his relatives, the Braz family, who were early farmers of Petach Tikvah, Israel.

Above right: Japhet treasures this earliest known photo of the Patt family of Bialystok, Poland, circa 1905. The seated boy is Chaim, grandfather of Japhet.

Below: Gideon Japhet, father of Gilad, dressed up as a clown for the 1932 Purim holiday in Jerusalem’s Geula kindergarten.

engine. “But the Internet is much easier to access and use than most other genealogy resources. Much of the genealogy material available on the Internet was previously available offline in books, immigration records and microfilm. But it was far more difficult to find it and use it. One often had to visit libraries, hire researchers and conduct visits to far-off countries and archives to find and access the same information.”

Searching an Internet database typically takes just a few seconds and can cover multiple spelling variations, Japhet explains. That kind of search is much more difficult to achieve with offline resources, and sometimes impossible, as in the case of newspapers and books that have no index. “This enhanced accessibility does not always improve the reliability of the information,” he says, “but it certainly increases the chances of finding it.”

Online entrepreneurs like Japhet aren’t the only ones who believe the Internet brings value to a genealogical researcher. The ability to access certain resources online, such as the federal censuses, has revolutionized genealogical research, says Eric Grundset, director of the DAR Library.

“While use of printed indexes and microfilms is still sometimes necessary when problems occur with online indexes and searches, the vast majority of census information is now available at a computer,” he says. “Many other similar sources of information that researchers had to view in microform or in the original paper are also being made available by genealogical vendors, historical and genealogical societies, libraries and archives. It’s staggering how much material is being digitized, and all of this effort makes a huge amount of information available at a computer. These changes are very positive and beneficial to all researchers.”

Grundset and Japhet agree that the Internet does not replace traditional genealogy research, but “it has made it easier to research one’s roots to great depth in the comfort of one’s home, and in many cases, for free,” Japhet says. “This makes it a great starting point for genealogy.”

In addition to easy searching and official documents online, the Internet also offers user-generated content. Taking a page from the books of popular sites like MySpace and Wikipedia, some genealogy sites now offer the ability for users to upload family trees to be shared with and, in some cases, added to by others. For instance, Geni.com is completely collaborative, offering “genealogy mixed with social networking,” Geni.com’s Rockower says. Each user begins creating his or her own family tree, which can then connect to the family trees of other users. Each user relies on content generated by other users to expand their trees.

“This [user-generated] content, most of which has never been available outside of the Internet, is excellent for finding relatives and other researchers with similar interests and collaborating with them,” Japhet says.

Understanding the Drawbacks

Unfortunately, some of the benefits of online genealogical research can also be causes for concern. For instance, the user-generated content that so many researchers rely on to build their family trees may include errors, and most sites don’t have systems in place to check all the posted information for accuracy.

“We don’t track the information; it’s a collaborative effort by the family members,” Rockower says. “When people input wrong information, there’s usually an aunt or someone who will say, ‘No, no, she was married to so and so.’ We don’t police the trees, but families police themselves.”

Japhet recommends using the Internet to find the sources of information most pertinent to one’s family research and then leaving the Internet for traditional research, such as “studying the appropriate books or requesting a photocopy of a Social Security Death Index certificate,” he says. “Genealogy is the
study of human history, and this history is riddled with errors and contradicting information that challenge the wits of any researcher. Sometimes, the process of putting material online adds more errors to the process, so obtaining the referenced genealogy material in its most original and raw form is strongly recommended.”

Aside from possible errors, “the biggest drawback to reliance on online research is that one does not get the interaction with real people that they would in a library or by attending a genealogical meeting,” the DAR Library’s Grundset says. “By not interacting with librarians, archivists or other genealogists face-to-face, many people are missing out on the advice, experience and camaraderie that these contacts can bring.”

Enjoying the Process

While researching family history online has its drawbacks, for many, the simplicity and rewards are worth the risks. In fact, the new tools have made genealogy accessible for many who may have never tried it otherwise.

“My aunt, who retired a few years ago, was initially intimidated by the Internet and by computers,” says Phillip LaVoe, a 31-year-old Geni.com user with 6,357 names on his Geni family tree. (About 146 of those names have “claimed” their spot on his family tree, joining the site to collaborate and enlarge the tree, says Rockower.) “However, my aunt is also our family photographer, and she had pictures of more than 120 of our cousins. Geni made it very easy and very graphical, and she learned to scan, edit and upload her pictures.”

For users like LaVoe and his aunt, reconnecting with living family members is more important than historical accuracy—and the Web offers an easy way to do that. “I have been able to use the Internet to find distant cousins, up to five times removed,” LaVoe says. “There are also famous genealogies on the Web, and I’ve connected to Lincoln, Taft, Emerson, Madonna, Matt Damon, Celine Dion and others.”

As for the reliability of his online research, LaVoe says he knows that some of it is not accurate. “You can be conservative and not accept something unless proven or be more liberal and accept something until it is proven wrong,” he says. “I tend to be more liberal in my genealogy research. When I retire, I will go back and collect the appropriate documentation to prove things.”

For now, LaVoe, along with millions of others, is content to watch his tree keep growing.

Nancy Mann Jackson profiled William Thornton, designer of the U.S. Capitol, for the May/June 2007 issue.
4th Fests
Since the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, the Fourth of July has been a sacred day to Americans—a time to celebrate our freedom as citizens and our independence as a nation. The first Fourth of July celebrations consisted of public readings of the Declaration, fancy dinners with commemorative speeches, illuminations, bell ringings, cannon salutes and even fireworks. Today’s festivities are more likely to feature concerts, carnivals, parades and pageants as well as fireworks, but some customs haven’t changed. “Much of the tradition inherent in the way we celebrate [the Fourth] today was evident almost from the beginning,” writes James Heintze, an American University librarian who has studied the evolving traditions of Independence Day. “Sound, spectacle and sentiment played an important role.” Philadelphia was the first city to celebrate the Fourth with “demonstration of joy and festivity,” Heintze writes. We visit two towns, Decatur, Ala., and Bristol, R.I., where this patriotism is as enduring as ever.

Painted with flags and other patriotic symbols—toss rings and pick up marbles with their toes in a pool-turned-fishpond to win prizes. In a tent manned by local VFW and American Legion posts, Beverly Maddox gives away handheld American flags to everyone who passes by; something she’s been doing for as long as she can remember.

“Noadays when the national anthem is played, you don’t see people taking their caps off or stopping to put their hands over their heart—but it’s not like that here,” Maddox says. “Decatur is more patriotic than most places.”

The town’s Spirit of America Festival, which draws a crowd of up to 50,000 every year, is one of the largest free Fourth of July celebrations in the Southeast, says Spirit of America Festival President Beverly Walker, but that isn’t what keeps so many locals coming back.

“People often forget there’s a price tag to be paid to live in this country,” Walker says. “We try to give everyone the chance to come out and express the patriotism they feel—to wave the flag and show that they’re thankful they live in the land of the free.”

Later in the day, children line the field for a ping-pong drop sponsored by the Alabama State Troopers, oohing and aahing as the helicopter hovers over the field and releases a stream of balls to the ground. It’s common to see military equipment on display during the festival or police officers, firefighters or uniformed officers chatting with kids in the crowd.

“The freedoms we have don’t come automatically—our armed forces do what is necessary to maintain them,” Walker says. “It’s good for the children to see that they are there to protect our country and keep us safe.”

Recognition of men and women who have served America is an integral part of the festival, which holds a VIP ceremony each year to honor military and community heroes, with honors bearing prestigious names like the “Audie Murphy Patriotism Award” and the “H.J. Heimlich Humanitarian Award.” Past recipients...
In Decatur, Ala., thousands of families gather for the annual Spirit of America Festival, which includes patriotic programs, a pageant, and the popular Children’s Spirit Parade, where more than 100 kids compete to make their bicycles, tricycles and wagons look the most patriotic.
include Olympic track star Jesse Owens, the Tuskegee Airmen, the Navajo Code Talkers and the New York police and firefighters who risked their lives during the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Hours before the ceremony, families arrive with their coolers and lawn chairs to stake out a spot near the stage.

“It’s important for our kids to know that the Fourth of July is about more than watching fireworks and eating ice cream,” says Glenda Turner, who brings her family to the festival every year.

Her son-in-law, Chris Hooie, agrees. “If I could have joined the military, I would have,” he says. “It’s up to us to honor those who sacrifice to keep us free.”

Even a sudden rainstorm can’t drive Rhea Metcalf and her four children away from their blanket and picnic dinner. Metcalf loves observing the mix of people who turn out to celebrate the event.

“Whatever your feelings about the war, you have to support what the Fourth of July stands for,” Metcalf says.

That sentiment is exactly what compelled a group of Decatur citizens to start the festival in 1967, a summer when anti-Vietnam War demonstrations had peaked, soldiers were being forgotten and the country’s patriotic spirit seemed to be waning.

The community gathered that first year to picnic, swim, play ball and honor veterans. Since then, the festival has grown to encompass other events, including concerts, a beauty pageant, a watermelon seed-spitting contest, sack and wheelbarrow races and a Children’s Spirit Parade, where more than 100 kids—some dressed like Uncle Sam or Betsy Ross—vie to make their tricycles, bicycles and wagons look the most patriotic.

As evening nears, the 151st Army Band takes the stage, striking up John Philip Sousa’s “The Stars and Stripes Forever.”

Adults clap and slap their knees to the beat, as a little girl twirls her red balloon to the music and a little boy does a high-stepped impromptu march.

“It’s so moving,” says Elaine Crowe, who watches from the audience. “I love the camaraderie. Even though you have to cope with the crowds and traffic afterwards, it’s worth it. It makes you proud to be an American.”

During the Pledge of Allegiance and “The Star-Spangled Banner,” a hush settles over the crowd as everyone stands, removing caps, putting down funnel cakes and placing their hands over their hearts. Cheers rise again as the color guard makes its way to the stage to start the VIP ceremony.

The first honoree, local juvenile court judge David Breland, accepts an award for his programs for at-risk youth and choking back tears as he pays homage to the award’s past recipients—men like Alabamian Mike Spann, one of the first U.S. casualties in Afghanistan, and World War II Medal of Honor winner Henry Erwin, who risked his life to toss a burning bomb out of his plane to save his crew.

Next, decorated Vietnam hero Captain William Hogan of Huntsville, Ala., picks up an award for his efforts to plan homecoming ceremonies for local soldiers returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan. Embarrassed by the attention, he keeps his speech brief, explaining that he does what he does “so our soldiers won’t be treated like we were when we came home from Vietnam.”

With that, Hogan asks all Vietnam veterans to stand so he can salute them, and before long, everyone is singing “God Bless America” and wiping away tears.

Kimberly Peters is one of them. This part always gives her chills, she says. Watching everyone come together to share their pride of being Americans. Celebrating the freedom to express what so many in the world long to have.

“You can almost feel the spirit of it all, especially when it gets dark and the fireworks start. You can feel it, even though you can’t see the people next to you. It becomes larger than life.” —KIMBERLY PETERS, SPIRIT OF AMERICA FESTIVALGOER

Patriotism is encouraged, and Americans who have served their community and their country are honored during the Spirit of America Festival in Decatur, Ala.

“Centuries of Celebration”

Bristol, R.I., population 22,000, you can sense that something big is about to happen as July gets closer. Out-of-state license plates start materializing around town. A 10-minute drive across town takes half an hour. Lawns get manicured, as flags and flowers appear in front of houses. A navy ship docks in the harbor. Houses and businesses downtown are decked out in red, white and blue decorations.
In Bristol, the Fourth of July is bigger than any other holiday of the year, including Thanksgiving and Christmas. Its Fourth of July celebration began in 1785, nine years after the Declaration of Independence was signed, and it continues to be the most popular event in town.

“By the morning of the Fourth, patriotism is at fever pitch,” says Nat Squatrito, general chairman of Bristol’s Fourth of July committee.

Bands come from across the country to march in Bristol’s annual parade, which runs two and a half miles long, lasts almost four hours and has more than 10 divisions, including active duty military, veterans, floats, clowns, baton twirlers and other performing groups.

The town swells up to 100,000 on the Fourth of July, with some visitors arriving weeks in advance to enjoy the festivities. The committee honors the person who travels the furthest with a flag flown at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.

More than 222 years ago, the celebration consisted of mostly patriotic exercises and oratories. Today’s festival kicks off three weeks before on Flag Day. Events leading up to the Fourth include a Miss Fourth of July and Little Miss Fourth of July Pageant, an orange crate derby, a Fourth of July ball, a drum and bugle corps competition, an old-fashioned game day with sack races and vintage baseball, a street carnival, fireworks on the harbor and 12 nights of free concerts.

Bristol is big on tradition, and that’s what has kept the festival, which is organized by 80 volunteers, alive and thriving through the centuries, Squatrito says.

“Bristol on the Fourth of July is like a big family reunion,” Squatrito says. “You grow up with it, and it becomes a part of you.”

Just like it did in 1785, the morning of the Fourth starts with patriotic exercises. Church bells ring on the town square at 6 a.m., and people in their red, white and blue arrive by sunrise to reserve their spot on the parade route.

Military troops get standing ovations as they march down the red, white and blue stripes painted in the middle of the road. Veterans receive a similar welcome as they drive through in cars.

“You see them drying tears from their eyes because they appreciate the spirit of it all so much,” Squatrito says. “We make sure to thank our veterans for the freedoms that we enjoy because without their service, we wouldn’t be celebrating the Fourth.”

People run out in the street to strut with Bristol’s Colonial band, incorporated in 1776, and the Mummers, a flamboyant Philadelphia string band. Afterwards, everyone goes home to barbecue and visit with family, but the patriotic spirit lasts long after the day is over.

“We live this throughout the entire year,” Squatrito says. “We consider ourselves one of the most patriotic towns in America.”

Emily McMackin is a contributing editor who regularly writes the Visions of America feature, including the May/June 2007 story on the Liberty Bell.
Passport to Prairie Town

by Gin Phillips

© LAYNE KENNEDY/CORBIS
The Golden Eagle Inn is the first stop, which works out well for travelers needing a welcome. The Zimmermans run the inn, where travelers can find a bed for the night for 12 1/2 cents and a hot meal for 25 cents. (That’s in silver, not unreliable paper money.) The rooms are Spartan, but the beds are clean and the wooden floors well-swept. And the smells coming from the kitchen drift out to the street, luring passersby.

Before we head inside, though, we head to the field behind the house, where children have lined up outside the Zimmermans’ to point at a massive ox. A black-haired young man—Richard Zimmerman, we later learn—climbs the fence and lands two-footed in the pasture, walking quickly up to the ox and leading it to the children.

Prairietown is a stop on the road at Conner Prairie, a living history museum on the outskirts of Indianapolis. The museum itself includes not only 1836 Prairietown but also 1886 Liberty Corner and a Lenape Indian Camp, all of which demonstrate daily life in those communities with the appropriate characters. Throughout the 1,400 acres, children and adults can try out the chores of a farmhand or a frontier wife like churning butter and making bread, or take classes in pottery, metalworking and flint knapping.

But Prairietown is more town than museum, more personality than academics. The characters in Prairietown, though they aren’t based on actual historical figures, seem like actual neighbors. When you stop to chat, they’re not working from a script or limited to talking points. It’s a regular conversation between friendly strangers—some of whom happen to be from 1836.

Room at the Inn
Take the Zimmermans, for instance.
My friend and I step onto the porch and peek into the open doorway of the inn’s kitchen, running right into a woman draped in a shawl, a piece of brown cake in her hand. With a mouthful of cake, she smiles and nods hello, and heads back down the porch steps.

The inn owner, Mrs. Zimmerman, bends over the open hearth as the fire crackles, browning the biscuits in the cast-iron skillet. Glasses perched on the tip of her nose, bonnet tied neatly around her neck, Mrs. Zimmerman isn’t breaking a sweat over the hot fire.

“Come in,” she calls. “I’m just finishing up.” She introduces herself and explains if we’ve just gotten into town, she’d be glad for us to stay at the inn.

Both doors in the room are open, along with the windows, and a cool breeze drifts through the fire-warmed kitchen. The back door opens onto an herb garden, flush with greenery; and a scarecrow with a decided potbelly. Over the fire, sausage gravy bubbles in a pot near the biscuits.

Mrs. Zimmerman asks us where we’re from, and if we’ve ever visited the town before.

“Are you married?” she asks next.
We shake our heads.
“Oh, Richard, did you hear that? They’re not married!” she shouts to her son, Richard, who has just come in from the field. He heads straight to the washbasin and lathers his hands thoroughly, glancing up mid-scrubbing.

“Do you cook?” Mrs. Zimmerman asks.
I say that I do, my friend says that she watches other people cook.

“You know, you really need to be able to cook to get a man,” she says. “My daughter, we’re working on her apple pie.
The crust still isn’t turning out like it should.”

Turning her face from the fire, she slides a knife along the edge of the pan and cuts the biscuits one by one onto a plate. “Richard is very talented,” she says. “And, of course, there are plenty of unmarried men around here.”

Richard shakes his head. “There’s a reason they’re not married. I’d stay away from them.”

Mrs. Zimmerman laughs into the fire, collects herself and manages a somewhat-stern look. “Now, Richard, that wasn’t very nice.”

Richard does not look sorry.

I lean closer to my friend. “She’s not really his mother, is she? They do act like they’re related.”

Mrs. Zimmerman pours scrambled eggs into the empty pan, still shiny with grease from the biscuits. Eggs, flecked with thyme and chives, fluff as she stirs them over the fire.

It smells delicious, and we tell her so.

“You’re welcome to it … only 25 cents. Do you have coin? Silver?”

Um, no.

“We only take silver.”

A little girl and her parents wander in and are welcomed warmly by Mrs. Zimmerman. They step up to the table, now spread with plates of biscuits and apple cake covered with white towels. Flies settle on the towels, the table and the windowsills. The smoke keeps them away from the fire itself.

“How come you have so many flies?” the girl asks.

“Well, when you live near your animals, you get flies,” Mrs. Zimmerman says. “But I don’t think flies do anything bad—they’re just an inconvenience. Don’t you think?”

The girl looks like she knows something isn’t quite right with the explanation, but she nods politely.

A man walks in, smiling under his hat, greeting everyone in an accent decidedly unlike the Zimmermans. It’s much more pronounced, with long slow vowels and dropped “g”s. Mrs. Zimmerman rolls her eyes behind his back; Richard shakes his head. Mrs. Zimmerman introduces Ezra Higby, who helps himself to a plate and scoops eggs on it, balancing them on his knife as he shovels in each mouthful.

Noticing us watching, he launches into an explanation of how the British have the ridiculous notion of eating with a fork, which he clearly sees as a sign of weak character.

“No wonder we’ve beat ‘em in two wars,” he says. “You’re sliding down a hill purty fast if you’re sticking a fork in your mouth.”

“Where is he from?” I whisper to Mrs. Zimmerman.

She laughs and calls to Mr. Higby. “They want to know about your accent.”

“My accident?”

“It’s unusual,” my friend says. “You ought to go talk to that Mrs. Perkins,” he says. “She’s staying down at the Hudsons—she’s from England. She’s got a real accident.”

“He’s fond of the bottle,” Mrs. Zimmerman whispers.

As we’re leaving, we say how much we wish we could stay at the inn, and that we’ve thoroughly enjoyed our visit.

“We like you, too,” calls Mrs. Zimmerman. “We’d like you better if you had coin.”

Visits With Townsfolk

We head down the road, stopping at the next house, where the man inside waves us in. Mr. Fenton, a weaver, has dried bunches of herbs and cayenne peppers hanging from the ceiling beams. “The cayenne makes tea that’s quite tasty,” he says.

The loom takes up most of one wall, and the whole room seems more workshop than home, but the weaver shares the house with his wife. Flax grows in the garden outside, along with pumpkins, and he explains that it takes 1/8 of an acre of flax to make one shirt.

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We head down the road, stopping at the next house, where the man inside waves us in. Mr. Fenton, a weaver, has dried bunches of herbs and cayenne peppers hanging from the ceiling beams. “The cayenne makes tea that’s quite tasty,” he says.

The loom takes up most of one wall, and the whole room seems more workshop than home, but the weaver shares the house with his wife. Flax grows in the garden outside, along with pumpkins, and he explains that it takes 1/8 of an acre of flax to make one shirt.

We continue, stopping at each house and receiving a warm welcome at every one. As the mid-day turns to afternoon, the chores change, with women no longer cooking but cleaning and later baking. Each house holds a different family, with a different story.

Prudence Perkins, it turns out, was the woman who we’d seen leaving the Zimmermans with apple cake in her hand. As soon as she speaks, we remember Ezra Higby’s comment about accents. (“Who told you I had an accent?” she asks. “Ezra? Ah, yes, he’s very fond of the bottle.”) A Quaker, she came over from England to teach former slaves in a school on the Kentucky border. An avid abolitionist, she’s spent years teaching the freed and runaway slaves because, as she says, “when people need help, we need to help them.”

Dr. Campbell’s daughter is home visiting from boarding school, and she speaks as she tidies up the kitchen. (His daughter explains that the doctor is also the land proprietor of Prairietown, which explains the finely furnished house. There’s no money in being a doctor; she assures us.) His office desk has a handwritten list of illnesses and cures: Charcoal for diarrhea, for instance. Across the street at the
carpenter’s house, the women in the house are finishing up the dishes and minding a pumpkin pie that’s cooking over the fire coals. Mr. McClure, the carpenter, is out back in his shop. He’s working on handcrafting chairs and demonstrates how the lathe cuts into the wood, honing precise curves and lines.

The schoolmaster is chatting with a group of visitors at the schoolhouse. He explains the 12- to 13-week school year, in which students attend class Monday through Saturday in December, January and February. They receive one day off during that time, and the schoolmaster asks for guesses as to what day that is. Most visitors guess Christmas, but he says that it isn’t really that popular of a holiday in their town. The answer? Washington’s Birthday.

Across the street, a woman slices piecrust with her daughter, hands on either side of the girl’s hands, shaping the crust. “It’s easier if you slide the knife toward you,” the mother says.

Whitaker’s Store has any number of interesting books, straw brooms and plates, bowls and cups made at the pottery shop a few doors down. Shelves of men’s and women’s shoes catch my attention, and the store owner walks over, nodding at my exposed toes.

It’s a reminder that if I were to stay any longer in Prairietown, as charming as it is, I would need a major sartorial overhaul.

“You probably need to get you a pair,” he says of the shoes. “Jesus wore sandals, but he didn’t have to deal with Indiana winters.”

Gin Phillips’ article on She-Merchants was featured in the May/June 2007 issue.

Wandering through Conner Prairie, you’ll see a wide range of exhibits and programs, some of which shift depending on the time of year. One permanent stop on the trail is the Lenape Indian Camp, the earliest historic area at the prairie. You’ll step back into frontier days, where you can explore an Indian camp wigwam, grind corn, help make a dugout canoe or talk to a fur trader at McKinnen’s Trading Post.

Or you can take advantage of seasonal interactive experiences like “Follow the North Star.” The program casts visitors in the roles of runaway slaves, never knowing where each turn of the path might lead. Under the cover of darkness with the North Star as your guide, you negotiate a mile of rough terrain on the quest for freedom and decide whom you can trust. A broad range of characters could mean the difference between safety and capture.

The indoor exhibits and outdoor historic areas are open April through October. Special programs are available from November through March, including “Follow the North Star” in November, a candlelight tour in December, hearthside suppers January through March and Victorian tea parties in February and March.

For more information, call (800) 966-1836 or visit www.connerprairie.org.
After very little time in Prairietown, you learn that Ezra Higby is "fond of the bottle." But whiskey's not the only thing flowing—outlandish stories, zigzagging explanations and clever turns of phrases tumble from the fiddle-player. Eddie Grogan, the man behind Ezra, describes him as "not one of our more sober and industrious citizens. When there's work to be done, he's hard to find. But if there's whiskey or dancing, he's there helping."

Grogan, who has worked at Conner Prairie for 23 years, also plays Dr. Campbell, the town's most prestigious citizen. He is, according to Grogan, "highfalutin, soft-spoken, well-bred—everything Ezri isn’t."

Ezra's character was already established before Grogan's arrival, but now he is Grogan's property. The interpreter's interests and skills intertwine nicely with Ezra's persona. With a degree in fine arts, Grogan has always been interested in traditional music. A longtime fondness for fiddle-playing, singing and storytelling finds a perfect outlet in Higby. And as Dr. Campbell, he takes advantage of the piano in the doctor's parlor.

"Somebody who knows what they're doing can see I'm quite a rank amateur, but I can play some nice period pieces—Scottish-Irish music that was all the rage at that time."

Grogan and other interpreters receive basic biographies of their characters, but creativity and improvisation fill in the gaps. The unexpected interactions, the bizarre questions—those moments come down to an interpreter's skill at weaving a believable, multi-dimensional character.

"You can't go flying off in any direction—it has to fit the historical circumstance, and it has to make sense," Grogan says. "I try to be careful that everything is plausible."

Conner Prairie trains staff and volunteers, but Grogan's research has been more of a long-term independent study. He's studied word usage in great detail by reading period literature. All of Ezra's colorful colloquialisms can be traced to historical references. Each song he plays on the fiddle can be documented. For a comical character, he has a lot of academic grounding.

"A lot of things we're doing in the United States are customs that had been common in England 100 years before," Grogan says. "For instance, the British were referring to 'autumn' when Americans were saying 'fall.' The way we think of the British pronouncing the 'a' as 'ah' in France was really an affectation they adopted in the 1700s. In Shakespeare's day, they were saying the short 'a,' like Americans would continue to do."

He attributes the allure of Prairietown more to personal connection than history alone. "We have gotten away from the idea that when you visit a certain area, you're given this information," he says. "If a visitor is interested in the butter churn, let's show the visitor how butter is made. If you're interested in something else, we'll talk about that. Follow the visitor's interest, that's our goal. It's a symbiotic relationship—their curiosity feeds your own enthusiasm for the job."

"The characters who work around you become almost like a family," Cummings says. "You just play off one another."

Some days she might have all three of her "sons" working with her, and on other days her "daughter" might be helping her in the kitchen. (Her "husband" died after an unfortunate raccoon bite.)

"We work really hard at trying to make people feel at home," she says. "We've found that people were staying longer at the inn than other places, and one thought is that it's because we treat them like family."

The Zimmermans, though not based on specific historical characters, represent a composite group of Americans with specific family histories. With Mrs. Zimmerman's German heritage, Cummings cooks in the German style, with historically accurate recipes. Compared to Grogan's immersion in the period's literature and music, Cummings' focus is food. She knows what a German-American family in 1836 would eat, why they would eat it and, most importantly, how to cook it.

Along with knowing the basics—names and ages of family members and family origins—interpreters need to know how their particular characters fit into the broader historical picture.

"In the German movement to America, most of them came in the middle 1700s looking for religious freedom," Cummings says. "You have to be able to talk about that, but then other subjects come off the top of the head, just from knowing your character."

She fields plenty of off-the-wall questions, which require a thoughtful response.

"No two days are the same," she says. "A lot of women ask personal questions about childbirth or privacy, especially when we tell them my son and daughter-in-law are newlyweds but sleep with three other men in the room. The questions children come up with never cease to amaze me. They'll ask, 'Do you really live here? Do you really eat this food?'"
Reviving the Memory of Our Marquis

America Celebrates the 250th Birthday of the Marquis de Lafayette
On April 20, 1777, 19-year-old Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roche Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, set sail from a Spanish port near the French border, leaving behind his doting wife, pregnant with their second child, and abandoning the privileged aristocratic life he led in France. On a ship he purchased himself, he was on his way to America to help defend the Patriot cause.

His decision went against his family’s and his country’s wishes, but it turned out to be a fortuitous one for the Patriots. Lafayette played a key role in securing America’s independence from England and won the hearts of Americans, who would lovingly refer to the Frenchman as “our marquis” long after he returned home. But while some worry that the marquis has faded from modern America’s consciousness, his admirers hope to revive Lafayette’s memory with events surrounding his 250th birthday on September 6. The international celebration planned for the occasion is already focusing the spotlight on one of the most revered heroes of the American Revolution.

Lifelong Friends

Within two months of arriving in America, Lafayette, newly commissioned as a major general, came face-to-face with his new commander in chief, General George Washington, at a dinner. As a member of the Masonic order, Washington “believed that Freemasonry provided him with true brothers in all parts of the world,” writes Harlow Giles Unger in Lafayette (John Wiley and Sons, 2002). So when he found out that Lafayette was also a Freemason, he “drew brother Lafayette aside to express his good will toward the boy ...” Washington complimented him for his zeal and sacrifice in coming to America.”

Despite their different backgrounds, the two became fast friends. And on September 11, 1777, when word reached Washington that British General Cornwallis was trampling Patriot troops at nearby Brandywine Creek, Lafayette was by his side. In what would be the young major general’s first battle, Washington sent Lafayette to help take control of the situation. But when Lafayette arrived, the “blistering fire and inexorable British advance sent the American soldiers fleeing in panic. Lafayette tried to halt their retreat,” Unger describes. “He reared his horse into the air, wheeled to the right, to the left, galloping back and forth to block the fleeing troops. Finally, he jumped off and grabbed at men’s shoulders and arms, ordering them to turn about, stand and fight—a major general in full uniform; a madman refusing to face defeat.”

Lafayette left the Battle of Brandywine Creek, a decisive British victory, wounded in the leg but not deterred. “Brandywine also gave Washington a new appreciation for his young charge, who, he realized, was like himself in so many ways,” Unger writes, noting that Washington probably saw in Lafayette the same fervor and determination with which he had fought 22 years earlier during the French and Indian War.
“Of all the Founding Fathers—the heroes and leaders of the Revolutionary War—only Lafayette commanded the unanimous acclaim and veneration of Americans. For only he came with no links to any state or region; he belonged to the entire nation; and only he, among all who pledged their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor, sought no economic or political gain.”

HARLOW GILES UNGER IN LAFAYETTE

Collectors treasure items with Lafayette’s imprint, including this French red leather wallet used by Lafayette during the American Revolution. At the turn of the 20th century, the U.S. Mint issued a Lafayette silver dollar.

Washington made sure that the major general received the best care for his wounded leg. While on the mend, Lafayette described his new friendship in a letter to his wife, Adrienne. “This estimable man, whom I at first admired for his talents and qualities and whom I have come to venerate as I know him better, has become my intimate friend,” he wrote on October 1, 1777.

Despite his inexperience, Lafayette proved his military savvy the following year, using Indian war tactics that he learned from his soldiers to ward off the British at Barren Hill, Pa., and fighting courageously at the Battle of Monmouth, which led to the British evacuation of Philadelphia and New Jersey.

Meanwhile, his feats were the talk of the town in Paris, and by then, the French government had come to terms with Lafayette’s decision to help fight for the Patriots. After almost two years in America, Lafayette returned to France to spend time with his family. (During this period his wife, Adrienne, gave birth to a son, whom the couple called George Washington Lafayette.) He also spent time petitioning the French government to increase its involvement in America’s quest for independence. In addition to helping mount a European campaign against the English, which proved unsuccessful, Lafayette petitioned Versailles for more ships, arms, troops and supplies to be sent to his overseas friends. His pleas paid off for the Americans, and preparations began to send 6,000 men, clothing and 15,000 muskets overseas, led by Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau.

Eager to give Washington the good news, Lafayette sailed for America in advance of their deployment. But when Lafayette arrived in 1780, Patriot spirits were low. After a hard winter, the Continental army was perishing, and defeat seemed imminent. According to Unger, “Lafayette’s arrival brought the first ray of
hope to the gloom that had enveloped America for months ... He was a unifying presence whose aura enveloped and bound them in common cause:"

A year after pledging Rochambeau's help, the French commissioned François Joseph Paul, marquis de Grasse Tilly, comte de Grasse, whose fleet of 26 ships was stationed in the West Indies, to sail toward America to help fortify the coast.

All of Lafayette's efforts came full circle in the fall of 1781 at the Siege of Yorktown, where Cornwallis faced defeat on all sides: by Lafayette from the west, Washington and Rochambeau from the north and de Grasse's fleet on the Chesapeake Bay.

**BECOMING ‘OUR MARQUIS’**

With America's independence effectively clinched, Lafayette returned to France in 1782, where he was awarded the Cross of Saint-Louis, one of France's greatest honors. His daughter, whom he named Virginie after the American state, was also born that year. While he had just finished fighting for America's independence, France's battle for freedom had only just begun. But though Lafayette turned his attention to the French Revolution, even spending five years in prison, he did not forget America—nor did America forget him. In 1784, during Lafayette's first of two post-Revolutionary War tours of America, the Philadelphia Legislature named Fayette County in southwest Pennsylvania after the marquis, and the city of New York declared him a citizen. In 1803, President Jefferson wrote to Lafayette, offering him the governorship of the Louisiana Territory, but he declined, not wanting to abandon his own country, which needed him more than ever. He returned to America again in 1824 as "the nation's guest," to celebrate the 50th anniversary of America declaring her independence from England.

When Lafayette arrived, Unger describes a true military hero's welcome: "A group of veterans in patched up, ill-fitting old uniforms stood as straight as their crooked old limbs allowed. As he passed before them, each snapped out his name and company, and the battle where he had served with the marquis. It was all too much for the old man, and he burst into tears."

While the tour was only supposed to take Lafayette through the 13 original states, it expanded quickly, taking him to every state in the union. During the 13-month tour, Lafayette made a pilgrimage to Mount Vernon to visit the tomb of Washington, whom he had last seen in 1784. He was honored in every city he visited, from Boston to New Orleans to St. Louis. "Americans were enjoying, as never before, the fruits of freedom that Lafayette and the other Founding Fathers had won for them," Unger says.

Though he returned to France eventually—to the disappointment of his American friends—his affection for his adopted country never waned. When Lafayette died in 1824, he was buried at Phipps cemetery in Paris next to his wife, under dirt that traveled across the Atlantic Ocean from Bunker Hill.

**REBUILDING AWARENESS**

American reverence of Lafayette did not end at his funeral. Americans continued to commemorate the anniversary of his death and celebrated his birthday as Lafayette Day. He was also revered on other holidays, as Anne Loveland explains in *Emblem of Liberty* (LSU Press, 1971), including Washington's Birthday, the anniversaries of the battles of Brandywine and Yorktown and the Fourth of July. In 1957, for the marquis' 200th birthday, the U.S. Post Office issued a commemorative stamp. In addition, hundreds of U.S. cities, counties and schools have been named for Lafayette.

But awareness of the hero has diminished in recent years, says Philippe Gustin, international manager for the city of Lafayette, La., which is hosting the majority of events celebrating Lafayette's birth. "We did a local survey and were shocked to see that not too many young people knew much about Lafayette. Even though he is one of the most respected personalities in the country, not enough people know about the special relationship he had with Washington that eventually led to the victory at Yorktown."

Gustin says he hopes this year's celebration will help educate Americans, especially young people, about Lafayette.
Our goal is for every child here to know about the marquis before the end of the year,” he says. Educational events including poster and costume contests and quiz bowls have already helped achieve that goal.

Recognizing the importance of educating today’s youth about such an important Revolutionary leader, DAR members of the local Galvez Chapter, Lafayette, La., donated money to be awarded at a social studies fair at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. The chapter also co-sponsored a dinner that featured a lecture by Count Gonzague de Saint Bris, who is considered the authoritative Lafayette biographer. For its 48th annual George Washington Ball, the chapter had the marquis, portrayed by an actor, address the audience. Lafayette was also honored at the Louisiana State Society conference in April.

“Lafayette and his democratic ideals fit so beautifully with the DAR, so we have tried to incorporate the Marquis de Lafayette into as many DAR projects this year as possible,” says Virginia Stuller, member of the Galvez Chapter and co-chair of the city’s Marquis de Lafayette Commemoration Committee.

Organizers of the celebration also hope many of this year’s events will help bridge the recent widening gap between America and France caused by differing politics. “For hundreds of years the United States and France have enjoyed a wonderful relationship, and we need to remember how important those ties are,” Mrs. Stuller says. “We hope this celebration will encourage Americans to re-evaluate the wonderful friendship and kinship we’ve had and continue to cherish it.”

Contributing Editor Lena Basha’s story on Ellis Island was featured in the November/December 2006 issue.

Wear Your Affection for the Marquis de Lafayette

A commemorative lapel pin has been designed to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birthday of the Marquis de Lafayette. The design is based on the official celebration insignia which was created by students at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

The ornate lapel pin, which can also be worn as a pendant, is available in 14K gold, sterling silver and gold plated. Proceeds from the sale of the pin are being used to support the exhibits, concerts, lectures, performances and educational programs to be held throughout the 2007 celebration.

For more information, visit www.marquisdelafayette2007.com.

Honoring the Marquis in 2007

The 250th anniversary celebration, which kicked off in 2006, features more than 70 events commemorating various aspects of Lafayette’s life and his contributions to the cause of liberty. Mark your calendar for some of these special programs taking place throughout 2007:

JULY 1: Vermilionville, La., Heritage and Folklife Park presents an American Independence Day celebration with historical characters and a “Freedom Fête.” 11 a.m.–2 p.m.; (337) 233–4077.

JULY 28–29: La Belle Journée Festival in Langeac, France: featuring historical re-enactments, music, costumes and town life in Langeac, near Chavaniac, France, the marquis’ birthplace; (337) 291–5474.

AUGUST 31: “Lafayette in Two Worlds” lecture by renowned historian and Lafayette scholar Lloyd Kramer, professor and chair, History Department, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; (337) 482–5414.

SEPTEMBER 6: Marquis de Lafayette Birthday Party: Gala event at the Lafayette (La.) Natural History Museum honoring the opening of the exhibition; (337) 291–5444.


SEPTEMBER 7: Commemorative concert presented by the Acadiana Symphony Orchestra in honor of the Marquis de Lafayette, conducted by Maestro Mariusz Smolij, Heymann Center, 8 p.m. Admission fee; (337) 232–4277.

SEPTEMBER 10–20: “In the Footsteps of the Marquis de Lafayette,” a commemorative trip from the United States to France. The itinerary will follow important historical sites in the life of the Marquis; (337) 291–5474.

OCTOBER 5–NOVEMBER 24: Opening of the “Lafayette: Hero of Two Worlds Quilt Exhibit” at the Acadiana Center for the Arts, highlighting quilts from the United States, France, Belgium, Canada, Hungary, the United Kingdom and Senegal; (337) 658–3414.

NOVEMBER 3–4: La Belle Journée Festival in downtown Lafayette with historic re-enactments, including the marquis’ arrival in Louisiana, music and an Old World market; 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. (337) 291–5474.


For a complete listing of events, visit www.marquisdelafayette2007.com and click on “Calendar.”
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America’s Main Street
The Historic National Road

Daughters of the American Revolution
The West.” With its connotations of grandeur, mystery and adventure, that phrase roused Americans’ curiosity and awakened their ambition in the early years of the United States. With the largely ineffectual restrictions on westward expansion under the Articles of Confederation gone, Americans looked past the mountains toward new cheap land and limitless possibilities.

By Bill Hudgins
How to get there was the problem. Without dependable, two-way transportation, the West was not nearly as attractive or valuable. Nor could it or its people be as tied to the new nation along the Atlantic coast as they should be. The new nation needed to secure Western political ties and boundaries, and without adequate transportation past the mountains, it faced constant challenges from other powers.

For instance, the 1794 Whiskey Rebellion was sparked by settlers who felt cut off from both Eastern markets and governments. Their dissatisfaction was felt in other frontier areas, and it was abetted by British, French and Spanish intrigues.

Efforts were made to fix the transportation crisis by creating water routes. After he left the presidency, George Washington was deeply involved in a plan to link the Potomac River to Western lands by a system of canals. The plan ultimately failed—the chosen route was impractical—but the Erie Canal, begun on July 4, 1817, succeeded as the premier Western water route.

But water transportation proved problematic. Long winters froze canals, rivers and lakes and waylaid untimely travelers. Canals were clearly not the best option: They were expensive to dig, limited in location, easily damaged and adversely affected by weather conditions. Although they ran on a schedule, any number of factors could delay them.

Not that roads were a panacea. There were more places to drive a road westward than there were navigable rivers, but road builders faced some of the same challenges as canal diggers—dense forests, boggy swamps, gorges and canyons laced with whitewater, mountains and unfavorable weather. Add water to dirt roads, and...
the resulting mud could stop a wagon or stymie foot traffic. The
ruts worn by heavy iron-bound wood wheels made each succeed-
ing traveler's journey that much more jolting and uncomfortable.

Still, as important as waterways like the Erie Canal were in
moving settlers inland and permitting an inexpensive two-way
flow of commerce, the footloose American or eager immigrant
had to wait for a boat to traverse them. With a road, you could
just set out your foot upon it and go—perhaps the most
American of all dreams.

Mapping out a National Road

The idea of a major East-West road had long been dis-
cussed, starting decades before the American
Revolution. The country's growth made it plain that
better transportation had to come.

America wasn't a trackless wilderness when Europeans began
settling. There were game trails and paths long used by Native
Americans, but North America had no roads (at least as
Europeans thought of them) for two simple reasons: no horses
and no wheels. Footpaths sufficed for their needs.

The coming of the horse and the wheel changed everything.
Horses could travel across the country but not wagons. For peo-
ple accustomed to roads, finding the shortest route with the best
footing and fewest hills became imperative, and that meant
building roads.

Lewis and Clark's stunningly successful expedition to the
Pacific and back made Western expansion a top priority. Settlers
and explorers had already set out across the Mississippi before
the Corps of Discovery returned, and the federal government
recognized it must foster this burgeoning phenomenon.

Doing so stirred up the old debate over federal versus state
powers. Was it constitutional for the federal government to
build a road? It certainly could not have happened under the
Articles of Confederation, but the Constitution was interpreted
to permit it.

In 1806, Congress approved legislation for a "National
Road" to run from Cumberland, Md., to the Ohio River, with
the provision that it run as direct as possible while passing
through the capitals of each state it crossed. Funds for the proj-
et came from proceeds on federal land sales.

A road already ran from Baltimore to Cumberland, and
there were plans to make the Potomac River navigable to

This page, top to bottom: During Pennsylvania's National Pike Festival in
May, wagon trains move down the Historic National Road as they might have
during the early 18th century. ■ A frontage road paved in the original brick
runs through fields in Clark County, Ill. ■ The best-known and most
magnificent National Road stone bridge in Maryland is the Casselman River
Bridge, built on a tributary of the Youghiogheny River in 1813. Composed of
one large, high arch and massive supporting sidewalls, it was the longest
span of any stone bridge in the nation at the time of its construction.
Cumberland, making it an ideal spot to start the National Road—which soon earned the nickname, The Cumberland Road, according to Timothy Crumrin, historian at Conner Prairie, a living history museum (www.connerprairie.org). Construction on the first stretch began in 1811. By 1818, the route ran 113 miles to Wheeling, W.Va.

Crumrin writes that the specifications for the road included “slopes no steeper than 5 percent of the horizon, a 66-foot, cleared right of way, and a roadway 20 feet wide and covered with stone, earth, or gravel, or a combination of some or all of them.” He adds: “How closely these specifications were met depended upon the locality and officials involved.”

Unlike today when the government exercises the power of eminent domain, the federal government did not take the land, but essentially asked landowners to donate theirs for free—and many did. They saw the advantages that a road could bring and exchanged a fairly narrow sliver of property for that future convenience and advantage.

Breaking Rocks in the Hot Sun

In some ways, road building hasn’t changed much over the centuries. The roadway must be prepared first before the actual layers of the road are constructed. Like the tip of an iceberg, a road’s surface is only a small fraction of its total composition.

It is difficult to imagine the magnitude of the task that lay in front of the road crews, armed with only hand tools, animal power to supplement their own muscles and gunpowder for excavation. This wasn’t a winding wagon trail, following old game or Indian paths through passable gaps and shallow fords. The crews cut through hills, filled low spots, cleared timber, drained swamps and diverted or spanned rivers and streams to prepare the roadbed.

At the time construction began, a road surface might be nothing more than dirt (or mud); corduroy, composed of logs laid side by side across the path; plank; or stone, which could quickly become part mud in a rainy season. The technique of macadamization was developed not long after construction began, and macadam became the preferred surface.

Named for Scottish engineer John Macadam, the process involved laying three layers of stone on the prepared roadbed. The bottom layer of stones about 7 inches wide was a foot or more deep, while the middle layer consisted of 7 or so inches of stones about 3 inches wide. The top layer of small gravel was compacted and graded, allowing for drainage into ditches dug alongside the way.

The result was far sturdier and less subject to mud, washouts and other problems inherent to dirt and wooden surfaces. It was also more expensive and labor-intensive, especially since mechanical rock crushers were decades in the future; it took sheer muscle power to turn big rocks into smaller ones.

Muscle power was abundant. Locals were hired on to road crews for brief stints as the roads passed farms and communities. Even more important, however, was the never-ending stream of immigrants, especially the Irish, who took these jobs to pay for their trip to America and finance their journey toward some personal El Dorado. Much the same happened in New York state during the construction of the Erie Canal. Indeed, immigrant muscle, sweat and blood helped drive many of our early major transportation systems, from roads and canals to railroads.

Not surprisingly, the National Road begat villages and towns to supply the workers, as well as the travelers and settlers following in their wake. Frank X. Buscra, on his Route 40 enthusiast’s Web site (www.route40.net), describes a scene reminiscent of the exodus from Egypt in Cecil B. DeMille’s “The Ten Commandments”: “The wagons were so numerous that the leaders of one team had their noses in the trough at the end of the next wagon ahead … Besides the coaches and wagons, there were gentlemen travelling singly in the saddle, with all their luggage stuffed into their saddlebags. There were enormous droves...
of sheep and herds of cattle, which raised the dust like a cloud along their path.”

The traffic astonished locals and travelers alike, writes Crumrin in his 1994 article “Road Through the Wilderness: The Making of the National Road.” One Hoosier took note of the phenomena as it appeared in the 1840s: “From morning till night, there was a constant rumble of wheels ... when the rush was greatest, there was never a minute that wagons were not in site [sic], and as a rule, one company of wagons was closely followed by another.” During many periods, traffic was so constant a traveler noted that “the wagons were so closely strung together they resembled a train upon its tracks.”

The road sped up mail service and delivered on its promise to facilitate the movement of freight and people. It seemed the whole country was on the move—Teamsters in Conestoga wagons piled with freight, farmers herding flocks to market, immigrants in wagons, on horseback or afoot, travelers out for adventure, con men and sharpers preying on the hopeful and unwary.

As road construction continued, the federal government began to turn some control of the highway over to the states. State governments were allowed to erect tollgates to collect revenue off of the stream of travelers, while the federal government remained responsible for upkeep and repairs, notes Rickie Longfellow in “Back in Time: The National Road” (www.fhwa.dot.gov).

By the late 1830s, the National Road stretched almost 800 miles from Maryland to Vandalia, Ill., and had reached the literal end of its road. Federal funding dried up, and sectionalism and slavery pushed the project off the political stage. Once called “The Main Street of America,” the National Road remained in use, but the coming of the railroad soon eclipsed its utility.

The National Road eventually became part of U.S. Route 40, once a major transcontinental highway. Autos and trucks replaced coaches, saddle horses and wagons as a new generation of Americans fled West looking for a better life. Route 40 diminished with the coming of the interstate highways—it is paralleled by Interstates 70 and 68. This once major artery is now more of a laid-back byway, used by locals and luring travelers who want to see something of small-town, rural America at less than 70 mph.

Although it never reached its original planned terminus at the Mississippi River, the National Road fulfilled its creators’ dreams of providing a route for national commerce, settlement and unity. It established a precedent for the federal government to undertake multi-state public works to promote commerce and the general welfare. The road was a bold vision brought into reality by a new nation fired with enthusiasm and oblivious of the difficulty. The Old World had nothing that could match the National Road for distance or daring. On a fundamental level, the road reflected our national character, and something of its romance remains an inherent part of many Americans today.

Contributing Editor Bill Hudgins traced the history of the Erie Canal for the September/October 2006 issue.
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Parallel Lives

Massachusetts' Royall House and Slave Quarters show the intertwined lives of colonial Americans and their slaves

By Sharon McDonnell • Photography by Bob DiNatale
The walls of a grayish-blue clapboard and brick Georgian mansion just a few blocks from Tufts University in Medford, Mass., could talk, they would tell about two different yet parallel universes. The story of the Royall House and Slave Quarters, a National Historic Landmark built between 1732 and 1739, is a tale of one of Colonial New England’s wealthiest families—slave traders who owned a Caribbean sugar cane plantation and Loyalists who fled their home on the eve of the American Revolution never to return.

But it’s also the story of enslaved Africans who inhabited what scholars believe to be the only freestanding slave quarters remaining in the northern United States. One former inhabitant, Belinda, beseeched the Massachusetts legislature for a yearly pension after the Royall family left and won in an extraordinary case that is regarded as one of the first to award reparations for slavery. Descendants of another slave, Fortune (Forten) Howard, include a doctor who was the first African-American to graduate from Harvard Medical School in 1876.

The stories of Belinda and the Howard family are central to the new mission of the Royall House Association, a nonprofit that DAR members of the Sarah Bradlee Fulton Chapter (now the Boston Tea Party Chapter, Boston, Mass.) helped form more than a century ago to buy the house. The association, whose members include descendants of both the Royalls and the Howards, works to interpret the forgotten history of the slaves who lived and toiled for the Royalls as well as revisit the history of the Royall family against the backdrop of the American Revolution.

“The Colonial period was an era of ‘interdependence’ rather than independence,” says Thomas Lincoln, executive director of the association. “To characterize that war as just a fight for independence from Britain is to simplify the complex relationships and dependencies of society in the late 18th century.” A permanent exhibit on New England slavery in the Slave Quarters illustrates this concept of interdependence.

FROM MAINE TO AN ANTIGUAN PLANTATION

Isaac Royall Sr., for whom the Royall House was built, was born, humbly enough, as the son of a carpenter in North Yarmouth, Maine, in 1672. His grandfather, William Royall (“Ryall” or “Riall” in some documents), was an indentured servant in the Massachusetts Bay Company who emigrated to Salem, Mass., from England in 1629, and later received a land grant in Maine’s Casco Bay area. But after Indian attacks on the colonists, Isaac Royall and his parents moved to Dorchester, Mass. He became a merchant mariner as a teenager and, at 28, established a sugar-cane plantation on the island of Antigua in the British West Indies.

By the mid-18th century, Antigua was the top sugar-producing colony in the British Leeward Islands, where more than 150

The Royalls lived in luxury because of the family’s numerous business dealings, including slave trading and farming. Opposite page, clockwise: The winter kitchen in the main house served a large household of Royalls and enslaved Africans. It now contains a large collection of period implements and furnishings. An ornate canopy bed with red damask is featured in the “Marble” bedroom.
windmills processed cane cultivated on large plantations by African slaves. Antigua was a major hub in the “Triangular Trade,” where slaves were often traded for molasses, which was then shipped to the United States and distilled into rum in Medford and other cities. In an endless cycle, rum, guns and ammunition were taken to Africa and traded for slaves.

After almost 40 years in Antigua, Royall returned to New England as a wealthy planter and slave trader, bringing 27 slaves back with him and his family. Upon his return, he purchased Ten Hills Farm, a 504-acre estate in Medford on the Mystic River from John Usher, a New Hampshire lieutenant governor. The property included a farmhouse built in 1637 for Governor John Winthrop of the Massachusetts Bay Company. Usher had expanded the farmhouse and lived in it until 1726. Six years later in 1732, Royall’s brother, Jacob, began building a three-and-a-half-story, nine-room Georgian mansion that incorporated the 17th-century farmhouse. A brick slave quarters with an out kitchen and large hearth was constructed just a few feet away in 1732, with the remaining two-thirds of the clapboard structure added around 1748.

A Loyalist Sympathizer

After Isaac Royall Sr. died in 1739, his 20-year-old son, Isaac Jr., inherited the house and the farm with its apple orchards, cattle, sheep and timber. The family lived in luxury, owning mahogany, walnut and leather furnishings, china, glasses, Oriental carpets and artwork. The single most valuable object besides the house and land was a crimson silk damask bed with matching featherbed bolster, blankets, pillows and an easy chair. The furniture ensemble was worth 200 pounds (about seven times the average yearly wage at the time), according to the detailed 1739 probate inventory, which valued the entire estate at 40,000 pounds.

Isaac Jr. continued in the slave trade, collected rents from the family’s Antigua plantation, farmed the estate, invested in real estate and held several public offices. He and his wife, Elizabeth McIntosh, also entertained a great deal. One fateful day in 1775, however, he went to Boston on “the very day the Battle [of Lexington-Concord] happened, after which it was impossible to get out of town,” he later wrote. A Loyalist sympathizer with substantial trade interests, Royall never intended to abandon his New England estate; he wanted only to return to Antigua for a while. He made it to Nova Scotia and then to England, but never returned to Massachusetts.

“I went to Halifax expecting ... to meet ... a vessel bound to the West Indies. All my things were packed with that intention,” he wrote. Royall and daughters Mary and Elizabeth stayed in Nova Scotia for a year and then moved to England, where he died of smallpox in 1781.

After the Massachusetts legislature confiscated the Royall estate, General John Stark made it his headquarters in the early days of the Revolution. About 1,300 to 1,400 troops occupied the property, burning most of the Royalls’ grand furniture for firewood. General George Washington visited at least once, and his aide, Colonel Cary, lived in the house from 1782 to 1784.

Belinda’s Story

In 1783, the year slavery was abolished in Massachusetts, Belinda, a 70-year-old African slave who had served the Royall family for 50 years, begged the state legislature for money to support herself and her disabled daughter. In her petition, she recalled her childhood in eastern Ghana near the Volta River before she was captured at age 12: “Seventy years have rolled away, since she on the banks of the Rio de Valta received her existence—the mountains covered with spicy forests, the valleys loaded with the richest fruits, spontaneously produced ... would have yielded her the most compleat felicity, had not her mind received early impressions of the cruelty of men, whose faces were like the moon.”

A copy of Belinda’s petition and award of 15 pounds, or 12 shillings per year, signed by John Hancock and Samuel Adams, president of the General Court, is part of the exhibit in the Slave Quarters.
Remembering the horrors of her ship voyage, Belinda described “three hundred Africans in chains, suffering the most excruciating torments; and some of them rejoicing, that the pangs of death came like a balm to their wounds.” And she noted the irony that “convulsed for the preservation of the freedom which the Almighty Father intended for all the human Race, the present war was Commenced,” prompting Isaac Royall Jr. to abandon his estate. Belinda argued that “she, by the Laws of the Land, is denied the employment of one morsel of that immense wealth, apart whereof hath been accumulated by her own industry, and the whole augmented by her servitude.”

Scholars think Belinda’s petition, which appealed to the “body of men, formed for the extirpation of vassalage, for the reward of Virtue, and the just return of honest industry,” may have been written by either Prince Hall, a free black who became an abolitionist, his son, Primus Hall, or Phillis Wheatley. Regarded as the first African-American poet published in the United States, Wheatley was also a slave, transported on a ship named the Phillis, which was owned by another Medford slave trader, Thomas Fitch.

A copy of Belinda’s petition and award of 15 pounds, or 12 shillings per year, signed by John Hancock and Samuel Adams, president of the General Court, is part of the exhibit in the Slave Quarters. It’s one of many emotionally wrenching documents, including the 1745 Medford law noting that slaves found away from their masters after 9 p.m. would be returned and whipped “not exceeding 10 stripes.”

The Preservation Campaign

A large part of the Royall estate was given to Harvard University to help found Harvard Law School in 1817. The school’s Isaac Royall Chair commemorates the donation.

Jacob Tidd, a prosperous Medford rum distiller, and his wife, Ruth, bought the Royall estate in 1810 as a summer retreat. Their granddaughter, Sarah Tidd Russell, married abolitionist minister Samuel May Jr., one of William Lloyd Garrison’s colleagues.

After Ruth Tidd’s death in 1861, the Royall House fell into serious disrepair. The former Sarah Bradlee Fulton Chapter decided to preserve it in 1898, helping create the Royall House Association, which bought it for $10,000 in 1908. Restorations since have been funded by capital campaigns, along with a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Today, the house stands on only one acre, along with a fragment of an octagonal white summer house, whose cupola was once topped by a statue of Mercury and an ornamental fence crowned by two pineapples—symbols of hospitality.

Mementos From the Past

The house is filled with furnishings authentic to the Colonial period, most of which are original period pieces, although not owned by the Royalls. An ornate canopy bed with beautiful red damask (a reproduction) is featured in the “Marble” bedroom, which got its name from the faux-marble painted columns flanking the fireplace. But there are also some original furnishings donated by the Royall family. The house contains two bedrooms restored with the help of the DAR. One,
which once housed two “Negro beds” and was restored by the Boston Tea Party Chapter, fittingly contains a tea chest stenciled with flowers from the Boston Tea Party. It is one of the house’s rarest objects.

Another bedroom restored by the Sarah Bradlee Fulton Chapter displays a collection of papier-mâché antique dolls that belonged to the Tidds. Another bedroom, nicknamed the “Star” chamber because of stars cut into the shutters to filter in sunlight, features a rare English needlepoint card table and a William and Mary mirror, circa 1689–1702.

A reproduction portrait painted by Robert Feke of Isaac Royall Jr. in a red jacket and powdered wig with his baby daughter, wife and her sister, hangs in a hallway. (The original is at the Harvard Law School Library.) His two daughters, clad in blue satin and off-white dresses with frilly sleeves, appear in a portrait in one of the two drawing rooms. A miniature of Royall by Copley is also on display.

Just a few feet from the mansion, the Slave Quarters, a matched building of grayish-blue clapboard and brick, features a large out kitchen, a small historical and genealogical archive of the Royall, Tidd and Howard families, as well as an exhibit on slavery in Colonial America and at the Royall Estate. The meeting room is the site of periodic public programs on Colonial history and Northern slavery.

A Boston University-sponsored archaeological dig at Royall House in 2000 brought the parallel worlds on the grounds to life. More than 5,000 objects from the Royalls’ era were found in disarray, from shards of Chinese ceramics and liquor bottles with the Royall crest to gaming pieces used by slaves. The association is working to mount an exhibit of some of the artifacts later in 2007.

“The Royalls and their slaves led vastly different lives, occupying the very highest and the very lowest strata of the social spectrum, and yet they were inextricably linked, partners in the same dance,” wrote Alexka Chan, a scholar and the site’s archaeologist, who wrote about the excavation in her doctoral dissertation, “The Slaves of Colonial New England.” In August, the University of Tennessee Press will publish Dr. Chan’s book on the Royall House archaeological dig.

Sharon McDonnell’s story on the Prison Ship Martyrs’ Memorial was featured in the March/April 2007 issue of American Spirit.

Clockwise from far left: The Royalls had one case clock. Today the house features several clocks, including this period exemplar in the West Parlor. The Royall House retains a fragment of an octagonal white summer house and an ornamental fence crowned by pineapples. The dining room has been furnished largely according to information in the 1739 probate inventory of Isaac Royall Sr.
Innovative Communication Technology

“My friends laughed when I said I’d gotten an email from my grandson… until I passed it around!”

By Marlene Martin

If you’re like me, you love to keep in touch with family and friends. For years, I’ve waited at the window for the postman to arrive, looking forward to a letter from my daughter miles away or a picture of my grandson playing ball. A few years back, I noticed that people don’t write as much as they used to. These days, people send email instead of letters. And the Information Superhighway didn’t stop at my house! I knew I didn’t want a computer, but I felt like I was missing out. Then, a good friend told me about the HP Printing Mailbox with Presto Service.

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