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*A Genealogy Genie*
Barb Griffith regularly travels from her Ohio home to the DAR Library in Washington, D.C., to help prospective members of the DAR find their patriots. There hasn’t yet been a case she couldn’t crack.

*BY LENA ANTHONY*

**National Treasure**
*The Way the Wind Blows*
Weathervanes, like this circa-1850 weathercock from the DAR Museum, served both practical and decorative purposes in early America.

*FROM THE DAR MUSEUM COLLECTION*

**Class Act**
*Up Close and Personal*
Primary sources and field trips to historical sites help Rosanne Lichatin’s students at West Morris Central High School in Chester, N.J., connect to history.

*BY MEGAN PACELLA*

**Bookshelf**
*Rough Crossings*
A fascinating new book examines slavery during the American Revolution—and why slaves were unlikely loyalists.

*BY BILL HUDGINS*

**Genealogy Sleuth**
*Finding Family Photos*
Even a simple Google search can turn up images of your ancestors. Discover other helpful ways to find family photos.

*BY MAUREEN TAYLOR*
American Spirit

From the President General

Locating lost family photographs used to be nearly impossible, but thanks to such resources as digital collections at libraries and historical societies, genealogy Web sites and online reunion projects, it’s easier than ever to find photographs of individuals on your family tree. Our cover story outlines new resources that can help you track down all types of images and connect with long-lost relatives. If you’re ready to capture your family history for future generations, take a look at this issue’s crafts department. We outline some smart, simple ways to compile a beautiful and archival-quality scrapbook.

American Spirit enjoys bringing its readers little-known historical accounts of early America, especially as they relate to women of the period. One of these stories concerns the development of the area around present-day Mobile, Ala., when it was part of French Louisiana. In 1704, around 20 young French girls—chosen based on good lineage, piety and a strong work ethic—came to Mobile on the Pélican as prospective brides of the colonists. The women endured a difficult journey before arriving at a harsh and decidedly unglamorous settlement, but they persevered to help the new country prosper.

When another ship, the Mayflower, set sail for America in September 1620, it carried three pregnant women among its 102 passengers. Only two of them would live through childbirth and only one of their babies would live to adulthood. While their stories could represent the brutal realities of giving birth in Colonial America, our feature also details the celebration inherent in such an occasion, as well as the chance it offered women to support each other and build a tightly knit community.

We explore George Washington’s entrepreneurial side with our visit to his rebuilt distillery, which was one of the largest distilling operations in the country at the time. Built in 1798 at Mount Vernon, the distillery was reconstructed in 2007 on the site of the original structure. Today’s site not only explains the 18th-century process of distilling, but also reveals much about life at the plantation.

We all know about Benjamin Franklin’s innovations in science, technology and politics, but did you know that the man who invented the library also brought the idea for the first magazine to America? Inspired by British periodicals that emphasized artful writing over the day-to-day reporting of newspapers, Franklin hoped to raise the quality of Colonial publications with this new journalistic import. Though his General Magazine didn’t last long, his experiment spurred a mass magazine industry that continues to thrive in America today.

Speaking of magazines, did you know that the magazine of the DAR, in one form or another, has been around since 1892? Thanks to all our loyal readers for their support. We love it when you tell others about our American Spirit!

Linda Gist Calvin
Barb Griffith has never seen a genealogy roadblock she couldn’t overcome. A courthouse that burned down? Ancestors who moved around a lot? “There’s always another avenue,” she says.

As Registrar for the Cuyahoga Portage Chapter, Akron, Ohio, since 1991—the year she joined—that’s the response she gives to prospective members as she helps them find their patriots.

Mrs. Griffith’s passion for genealogy developed because of a desire to learn more about her dad. “Being raised by my mother and step-father, I knew absolutely nothing about my father’s side of the family, so once I got out on my own, it was my mission,” she says. But computer databases and the Internet weren’t available to genealogists in the early 1980s, so she did it the old-fashioned way.

“I set out to every town, township and county where any of my family had ever been thought to live,” she says. “Once I found out about my father, I wanted to know about my grandparents and the generations before them.”

About the time she retired from a 30-year career in real estate, Mrs. Griffith was shopping for antique greeting cards when a stranger next to her struck up a conversation. “We started talking about the beautiful cards, which got us on the subject of genealogy,” she recalls. “When I mentioned that my great-great-great-grandfather fought in the Revolutionary War, she immediately said, ‘We need you in DAR.'”

Mrs. Griffith wanted to join the DAR to honor her own family lineage, but today, being a Daughter means much more to her. “In the beginning, I asked a lot of stupid questions because I was naïve,” she says. “I didn’t understand its reach. Now I do, and I want everyone who is eligible to be a part of it.”

She is serious about that pledge. Mrs. Griffith’s efforts have gained 100 new members for her chapter, earning her the 100 Member-for-Member Bar. And she has led hundreds of other members in Ohio and other states to the DAR as well.

“We can’t continue to be this wonderful organization without constantly adding new members,” she says. “They’re the lifeblood of the DAR.”

In addition to her recruitment efforts, Mrs. Griffith is passionate about helping prospective members. She takes them step-by-step through the process of proving their lineage. “I want this to be a fun experience, not something that gives them a migraine,” she says.

It doesn’t take long for Mrs. Griffith’s prospective members to find out that they’re in excellent hands. So many prospects don’t have the time to put in the effort, so Mrs. Griffith steps up to help. She visits the DAR Library in Washington, D.C., at least every other month and has traveled as far away as Utah to look for proof of lineage for prospective members.

There hasn’t yet been a case that she couldn’t crack. “No two applications are the same. I’ve had some finished in an hour. One I worked on for two-and-a-half years. Finally we were able to find that one missing link.”

Mrs. Griffith—who is the Ohio State Society Organizing Secretary and a certified Volunteer Field Genealogist—also teaches genealogical research workshops to other chapters and compiled a binder to assist Chapter Registrars.

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“I wanted each new member to have actual copies of all documentation submitted to NSDAR for her own records and to pass down to future generations,” she says.

In her free time, Mrs. Griffith enjoys traveling with her husband, a retired police detective. “He loves history and genealogy as much as I do,” she says, “which means he won’t mind when I sneak some research into a vacation.”

To nominate a Daughter for a future issue, e-mail a description to americanspirit@dar.org.
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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 the 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 12 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.
STANDING UPRIGHT ON ITS COPPER SPHERE, this rooster appears ready to crow. Made of lead, sheet iron and copper and still showing traces of its original gilding, the DAR Museum’s engaging circa-1850 weathercock represents metalcraft at its best. According to oral history, the weather vane—an object long synonymous with the American folk art movement—graced the top of St. John’s Methodist Church in Watertown, Mass., in the mid-19th century. The Joseph Coolidge Chapter gave it to the Museum in 1957.
{Letters to the Editor}

Spirited comments from our readers

Spirit in the Field
As deployed service members, we crave any kind of reading material. Your American Spirit magazine is one of many donated periodicals that my unit here has passed around until the pages have fallen out. Thanks for putting together a very professional product that is full of interesting historical essays and superb photos.

Lieutenant Colonel Steve Ziadie, USAF
Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan

EVERY FAMILY HAS A CHARACTER
I was so excited to see that my fifth-great-aunt Jemima Wilkinson was included in the story “Petticoats in the Pulpit” in the November/December 2007 issue. I have enjoyed researching my family history and was rewarded to find such a character! She is the older sister of my patriot, Stephen Wilkinson, who fought in the Battle of Rhode Island during the Revolution.

Thank you for providing such a variety of stories in this great magazine!

Dana Nelson Muret, Recording Secretary
Liberty Hall Chapter, Charlotte, N.C.

THE SKY’S THE LIMIT
The November/December 2007 issue was excellent. I particularly enjoyed “Today’s Daughters” about air-traffic controller Jacque Smith Burdette. One comment she made brought back many memories. She said, “I’d hear, ‘She got that job because she was a woman.’”

When I was promoted into management back in the 1970s, I heard the same comment. My response was, “Yes, you may be right that I got this promotion because I am a woman. I also know that I didn’t get the last two or three because I am a woman.” I finally won many people over when I was able to prove that I could do the job.

Please keep featuring women like Mrs. Burdette. She is an inspiration.

Toni B. Rodgers
Chief Tusquahoma Chapter, West Monroe, La.

BONDING OVER BAKER’S
I was pleasantly surprised to read Patricia Bates’ well-done article on Baker’s Chocolate in my wife’s January/February 2008 American Spirit. You never know whom you reach—in my case, you reached the last acting plant engineer for the Walter Baker Chocolate facility in Dorchester/Milton, Mass. I was first employed at Baker’s Chocolate in 1955 as an aspiring engineer (making $36 a week) via Northeastern University’s cooperative work program. Upon graduation, I accepted full-time employment at $100 a week in the engineering department. I came to know this facility very well, including much of its history. I remember some of the original overhead leather belt pulley system, which still drove equipment in Baker Mill, although no longer via Neponset River power.

The construction of the new multi-acre General Foods/Jell-O Division facility in Dover, Del., in the early 1960s required the orderly transfer of most of the chocolate processing equipment while maintaining operations—a huge undertaking in which I had a small part as the remaining engineer. Looking back, it was unfortunate that some equipment, which today would be considered “historic,” was destroyed because of necessary equipment or process modernizations.

Thanks for a job well done.

David W. Vancura
Topsham, Maine

MAD ABOUT MARSHMALLOWS
This is the most amazing magazine, and the only one of which I have ever read every single article. Each is better and more interesting than the last.

The January/February 2008 issue has the most intriguing picture of a cup of cocoa with a piece of cake. I know I am one of many readers who wonders about that delicious-looking cake. May we have the recipe, as I’d like to try it with the cocoa recipe that is printed in the article?

Phyllis McGrew
Emigrant Trail Chapter, Auburn, Calif.

Editor’s note: The delectable treat floating in the cup of hot chocolate on the cover of the issue is a homemade marshmallow. Although we don’t have the exact recipe for those shown in the photograph, you might try searching for one on a site like www.foodnetwork.com or www.allrecipes.com.

FORT SAN CARLOS HOLDS FIRM
As a resident of St. Louis, I was delighted with your article “Journey to Prosperity” in the January/February 2008 issue. However, as a member of the Fort San Carlos Chapter, I was disappointed in your small paragraph about the Revolutionary War’s Battle of Fort San Carlos.

Our chapter has been involved with the yearly commemoration of the battle since its inception. As a result of this battle, the British were unable to control the Mississippi River. Consequently, lead from Missouri was sent down the river and around to the Colonies to help our cause. It also kept this territory from becoming part of Canada and opened the opportunity for westward expansion by the United States.

Elizabeth G. Weinman
Fort San Carlos Chapter, St. Louis, Mo.

Please send letters to the editor to americanspirit@dar.org.
When students walk into Rosanne Lichatin’s American history class at West Morris Central High School in Chester, N.J., they can expect an up-close and personal look at the way American history affects their lives. For Lichatin, history is a living, breathing entity upon which she and her students can build their futures.

“You cannot make any decisions today without a framework to give you something to work with—and history provides us with that,” Lichatin says. “We have to understand our past in order to know how to make the future better—and it’s important to me for my students to get that.”

It is vital to Lichatin that her students explore how freedom has evolved throughout American history. By reading primary documents, such as letters between John and Abigail Adams, diary entries and early inaugural addresses; visiting historical sites; and submitting research projects to the New Jersey History Day competition, students at West Morris Central become American history experts by the time they graduate.

Lichatin’s teaching methods obviously garner students’ attention. When she and a colleague implemented a National History Club chapter at West Morris, they received an overwhelming response. Besides participating in field trips, historical lectures and patriotic celebrations, the club also takes on special projects, such as a yearly voter registration drive.

“We feel a great responsibility to introduce students to their obligations and rights as citizens,” Lichatin says. “Every year we target our seniors who are eligible to vote so they can get registered and start exercising their rights.”

Perhaps the most important aspect of the history club is its partnership with Frederick Douglass Academy in Harlem, N.Y. Students from both schools come together to tour museums and participate in lectures.

This April, Lichatin accompanied students from both schools on a “freedom ride” to retrace the steps of civil rights activists in the 1960s. The group traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with U.S. Representative and civil rights leader John Lewis and then on to Birmingham, Montgomery and Selma, Ala., to visit historic sites and meet others who fought for justice during this pivotal era.

“The trip was a tremendous academic experience for students—one they will never forget,” she says.

Lichatin’s hard work has been noticed: In 2005, the Gilder Lehrman Institute named her National History Teacher of the Year. Despite her success, Lichatin has found that the real reward in teaching goes beyond recognition. “It’s about my students doing history rather than reading about it in a textbook—it’s about them taking ownership,” she says. “And as a result, history is alive and well at West Morris Central High School.”

Peek inside America’s classrooms to discover ingenious ways of teaching American history.
Situated just miles from where the mouth of the Columbia River meets the Pacific Ocean, Astoria, Ore., is the perfect summer getaway for history buffs and nature lovers. The oldest settlement west of the Rocky Mountains, Astoria was established in 1811 when affluent New York financier John Jacob Astor sent fur traders on Lewis and Clark’s route to the Pacific Northwest. Astor’s traders set up their post at the site of present-day downtown Astoria—and a city was born.

Visit Fort Clatsop National Memorial, the site where Lewis and Clark and their expedition crew weathered freezing temperatures from December 7, 1805, to March 23, 1806. The memorial includes a reconstructed fort, picnic areas and trails, a visitor’s center and a museum. During summer months, the site also hosts living history demonstrations. Take a peek into the lives of 19th-century Astoria residents at the Flavel House Museum located in an historic 1885 Queen Anne style Victorian home. Or check out an original Civil War fort at Fort Stevens State Park, which includes a museum, camp sites, bike trails, boating, miles of beaches and more.

If you want to take a break from history, climb the Astoria Column’s 164 steps to catch a view of the town from the height of 125 feet or hop on one of the city’s many trails for a glimpse of Oregon’s natural beauty. For more information, visit www.oldoregon.com or contact the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce at (800) 875-6807.

A Western Retreat
The February 5, 2008, tornado outbreak that ripped through Tennessee and other Southern states killed more than 60 people and caused hundreds of millions of dollars in damages. One of the properties that suffered extensive damage by the super-cell tornados was a historic one: Wynnewood, the largest existing log structure in Tennessee. About half of the two-story historic stagecoach inn in Castalian Springs is now gone, much of the surviving structure has shifted several inches off its foundation, and more than 100 trees—many of them beautiful, large eastern red cedars—were destroyed.

In the days that followed, members of the Bledsoe’s Lick Historic Association (BLHA) helped to clear massive amounts of tree debris and heavy brush from the property and also helped recover historic artifacts. The preservation effort goes on as experts work to get the building stabilized. “As long as we don’t tear it down completely and rebuild from the ground up, we can maintain its status on the National Historic Registry,” says Ehrin Ehler, a BLHA board member.

Named after the region’s mineral springs and licks, the association oversees Wynnewood, which was built in 1828, and portions of the Castalian Springs Mound Site, a Native American town dating to 1250. The group also helps preserve the neighboring Bledsoe’s Fort Historical Park, which houses the archaeological location of Revolutionary soldier and frontiersman Issac Bledsoe’s 1780 fort.

Despite the setback, the inaugural Bledsoe’s Fort Colonial Fair is going forward as planned for May 3 and 4. “We put a lot of serious thought into it after the tornado tragedy,” says Ehler, who is helping to plan the event. “Our forefathers who built Wynnewood and settled in and around Bledsoe’s Lick had the same type of adversity. They had no other choice but to push forward.”

The juried event will concentrate on the period between 1750 and 1790 and will feature Colonial music and entertainment and merchants selling Colonial clothing, furniture, knives and other period-appropriate items. Visitors can also enjoy food and drink that would have been eaten during the time while observing Colonial longhunter and Eastern Woodland Indian camps, craftsmen demonstrations and shooting matches.

“We’ve gotten so much interest in this event, it just wouldn’t be right to cancel it,” says Ehler, who has been a historical re-enactor for more than 20 years. “The more people that we have attend from across the country can do nothing but help the preservation cause.”

For more information, visit www.bledsoesfair.com.

—Jamie Roberts

On This Day
In History
(Sources include Library of Congress’ “American Memory” http://memory.loc.gov)

May 4, 1626: Dutch colonist Peter Minuit arrives on the island of Manhattan, which he later purchases from resident Algonquin Indians for $24.

May 4, 1829: English scientist James Smithson dies, leaving an endowment to the United States for the Smithsonian Institution.

May 8, 1886: Dr. John S. Pemberton sells the first Coca-Cola at Jacob’s Pharmacy in Atlanta, Ga.

May 13, 1864: A Confederate prisoner is the first soldier buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

May 13, 1864: A Confederate prisoner is the first soldier buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

May 22, 1802: Martha Dandridge Custis Washington, America’s first first lady, dies of a fever.

May 28, 1851: Akron, Ohio, holds the Ohio Women’s Rights Convention, calling for equality of gender in Ohio.

June 3, 1880: Alexander Graham Bell transmits the first wireless telephone message on his new invention, the photophone.

June 7, 1769: Daniel Boone first steps foot in present-day Kentucky.

June 17, 1775: American troops inflict casualties on nearly half of the British troops in the Battle of Bunker Hill.

June 18, 1885: The Statue of Liberty arrives at its permanent home in New York Harbor.

June 27, 1829: English scientist James Smithson dies, leaving an endowment to the United States for the Smithsonian Institution.
Baubles for President

THESE DAYS, the rear bumper of a car is the most effective way to show support for your favorite presidential candidate. But before there were bumper stickers, there were matchbooks, sunglasses, umbrellas, ice-cream bars and even whiskey bottles. No one is more of an expert on such political paraphernalia than Jordan Wright.

Wright’s collection of campaign souvenirs, which he started amassing at age 10 during Robert Kennedy’s unsuccessful bid for the presidency, encompasses more than 1 million items, many of which will be on display in an exhibition scheduled to open in June at the Museum of the City of New York.

Wright’s collection is also the subject of his new book, Campaigning for President (Collins, 2008), which traces the history of campaigning in America through the knickknacks handed out by past presidents as well as by their hopeful but unsuccessful opponents.

Indian Youth Participate In Cultural Summer Camp

In the heart of Custer State Park in Custer, S.D., the faces of four famous American presidents, carved into Mount Rushmore, survey the land once inhabited by indigenous American Indians. At nearby Camp Bob Marshall, 67 Indian children play on the land that their ancestors once occupied at a camp session designed for Native American children by the Indian Youth of America Summer Camp program. Established in 1976, the program offers inter-tribal camp sessions for American Indian children ages 11 to 15 who come from more than 140 tribes.

The sessions, held in Arizona, Idaho, Oregon and South Dakota, help children foster educational, physical, cultural, personal and career growth.

Through the American Indians Committee, the DAR provides financial assistance to the IYA summer camp program and other programs for Native American youth. At Camp Bob Marshall, campers explore their native ancestry with traditional arts and crafts, swimming, canoeing, native games, traditional dancing and more.

One of the most popular cultural activities, hoop dancing, harkens back to an ancient healing dance performed by Rosebud Lakota (Sioux) elders to restore the balance in nature. The hoops exist as curved outlines in nature and represent men and women, and the need for a balance of both. Campers perform these dances in groups or as individuals, gaining insight into the culture of their predecessors.

For more information about the Indian Youth of America program, visit www.dar.org and click the “American Indian” tab under the “Scholarships” menu on the left.

Answers to the quiz on page 10:
1. Memorial Day originally honored Civil War soldiers. 2. Memorial Day became an official holiday in 1971. 3. Residents of Waterloo, N.Y., were the first to proclaim a day to honor deceased soldiers on May 5, 1866. 4. Memorial Day was originally known as “Decoration Day” because of the practice of decorating soldiers’ graves. 5. Francis Scott Key’s “The Star-Spangled Banner” became the national anthem in 1931.
Old Dover Days

To celebrate the history of our nation’s first state, each year the Kent County Tourism office welcomes visitors to the capital city of Delaware for the Dover Days festival.

This year’s 75th Old Dover Days celebration will be held May 2–4, kicking off on Friday, May 2 with a free “Arty Gras” party, that will feature live musicians, an artisan row and children’s activities. Saturday’s events will include a parade, flea market, crafts and artisan fair, food festival, traditional English maypole festival, free admission to museums and several other activities.

Old Dover Days will also offer ticketed events to give visitors a glimpse at Dover’s behind-the-scenes history. A House and Garden Tour of Colonial and Victorian homes will showcase vintage architecture, lush gardens and stately churches. A Grand Tea Party will take place on Dover’s historic “Green,” an expanse of grass in the center of town where Colonial Delaware delegates were the first to ratify the Constitution. Attendees can listen to lectures on gardening and house restoration or bid on one of 20 watering cans, hand-painted by talented Delaware artists. The cost is $15 per person for the House and Garden Tour or the Tea Party, or $25 to attend both. To order tickets or learn more about the Old Dover Days celebration, call (800) 233–5368 or visit www.visithdover.com.

Adirondack Heritage

To commemorate the 250th anniversary of the French and Indian War, historic sites in the Adirondack region of New York will hold an array of heritage events from June to September, with activities at Fort Ticonderoga topping the list.

Formerly known as Fort Carillon, Fort Ticonderoga was built by the French between 1755 and 1758 and was home to many crucial battles during the French and Indian War. This year, the fort celebrates 250 years since its construction with the opening of the newly restored king’s warehouse, which was blown up by the French in 1759. Other events include living history demonstrations, battle re-enactments, drum and fife playing, artisan demonstrations and more. For a complete list of activities, visit www.fort-ticonderoga.org or call (518) 585–2821.

Spend time...

WITH THE HISTORY OF EARLY TENNESSEE

EVENTS:

• Spring Encampment, last weekend in March
• Independence Encampment, July 4th
• Fall Encampment, first weekend in October
• Yuletide: a 1780s Christmas Celebration, first Saturday in December
• Winter Encampment, first weekend in December

Historic Mansker’s Station | 705 Caldwell Lane | Goodlettsville, TN 37072
615.859.FORT | www.manskersstation.org
The Kan Yuk sa Chapter, Jacksonville, Fla., gets its name from the title of Elizabeth Maxey Bogart’s book, *The Legends of Kan Yuk sa*, a collection of Seminole Indian folk tales passed down through Mrs. Bogart’s family from her grandparents, who were pioneer Florida settlers. Kan Yuk sa is the Seminole Indian term for Florida, meaning “point of land.” The Kan Yuk sa Chapter was founded in an area of Jacksonville in which Mrs. Bogart, who became a DAR member in 1898, worked for 80 years, distinguishing herself as a teacher and an elementary school principal.

The namesake of the Susannah Chandler Chapter, Locust Grove, Va., survived a harrowing encounter in the late spring of 1781 while her husband was away at war. When the British arrived at the Chandler home, they burned all the farm’s fences and robbed the house of almost every article inside. Warned of their approach, Susannah and her children, along with other neighboring women and children, hid in a nearby swamp among alder bushes. They stayed there several days and nights, and once the enemy had left the area they returned to their homes.

Members of the Tah-Gah-Jute Chapter in Danville, Pa., honor the youngest son of Chief Shickellamy, a deputy of the Iroquois Confederacy. Both father and son were firm friends of the European settlers in Pennsylvania. Tah Gah Jute, named James Logan by the English, is best known for his speech delivered to the governor of Virginia before the treaty meeting at Chillicothe, Va. The meeting was held to put an end to Lord Dunmore’s War, during which all of Tah Gah Jute’s family was massacred. President Thomas Jefferson made note of it in his history of Virginia, stating that it was the most eloquent speech ever given by a Native American. In 1780, Tah Gah Jute was murdered, possibly by a nephew, as he sat at a campfire in Ohio.

We can learn much about a quilt by viewing it. Simply looking at it, though, does not tell us the whole story. Listening to the maker does. Capturing the quilter’s words saves that story for generations to come.

Quilters’ S.O.S.—Save Our Stories (Q.S.O.S.) intends to preserve and share these stories. Designed to be simple, inexpensive and inclusive, this project of The Alliance for American Quilts strives to create a body of information about quiltmaking through recorded interviews accessible to anyone with an Internet connection. The nearly 700 interviews, conducted by more than 150 volunteers, include stories from quilters of every type, from hobbyists to professionals.

In addition to the interviews and photographs of quilts, the project’s Web site offers a manual and an electronic newsletter. Information is archived at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

Jean Van Brockel’s quilt placed first in the DAR American Heritage Committee’s 2007 fiber-arts quilt contest.

To learn more, contact Karen Musgrave, chair of Q.S.O.S., at qsos@quiltalliance.org or (630) 579–1024. DAR members can also contact Carolyn Kolzow, National Vice Chairman of the Quilt Oral History Project, at carolynk@teleport.com or (503) 644–0748.

— Courtesy of Karen Musgrave
Paradox of Freedom: Where Slavery Meets the American Revolution

Part of a worldwide war among European powers, the American Revolution was more than a struggle between a white Colonial power and white colonists—it was a struggle that involved and affected many races. But as historian Simon Schama demonstrates in *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution* (Ecco, 2006), the enslaved African-Americans in the 13 Colonies comprised a unique third party to the struggle over liberty and human rights. *Rough Crossings* takes a different look at the war, highlighting how it affected African-Americans, who accounted for 20 percent of the 2.5 million residents of America.

It chronicles the long, sad and frequently gripping saga of the African-American experience in the American Revolution and the war’s aftermath. The narrative travels from the steamy plantations of South Carolina, where revolution frequently turned into insurrection and civil war, to Nova Scotia’s chilly shores, to the salons of London, to the west coast of Africa where slave ships loaded their “live cargo.”

Schama became interested in this largely obscure saga when he ran across references to the evacuation of 3,000 free blacks living under British protection in New York in 1783. The victorious Americans, including a conscience-torn George Washington, demanded return of all “property and Negroes” taken by the Redcoats. As he delved deeper into original documents, Schama was astonished to find many detailed accounts of individual slaves—and the chance to tell the story from all three sides of the slave trade route became irresistible.

Schama recounts how American leaders early in the Revolution were divided over whether to mobilize and arm blacks to fight for the cause. There were a few regiments of free blacks, and American armies used slaves in some support roles. However, Southern leaders deeply feared arming blacks, free or slave, so this potential manpower pool was relatively untapped for military purposes.

The Revolution’s stirring calls for liberty and freedom carried the hollow undertone “except for slaves,” because the Patriots also did not have emancipation in mind. However, slaves were well aware that Great Britain was moving toward the abolition of slavery. Many had heard of a court decision in London declaring that a slave brought into England would be considered free once on British soil because “the air was too pure for slaves to breathe.”

British armies aggressively recruited slaves in 1775 and 1776—a tactic designed to drain labor from plantations, distract the rebels and raise the prospect of armed slave insurrection—all of this serving as a force-magnifier for British firepower.

As many as 100,000 slaves took advantage of the chaos of revolution and ran away from farms and plantations. Many made a break for the British lines, encouraged by Loyalist promises of freedom. “It was the royal, rather than the republican, road that seemed to offer a surer chance of liberty,” Schama writes.

Many ex-slaves served as pilots and guides. Others were organized into fighting units or served

“The royal road” took all three sides of the slave trade route to England, where many enslaved African-Americans sought sanctuary.
as teamsters and in other support and hard-labor roles. The promise of freedom lured slaves from the most prominent leaders of the American cause. Among the slaves who fled Mount Vernon was Henry Washington, who Schama says, “deserted General George for King George.”

The British armies were largely unprepared to deal with the thousands of blacks seeking shelter behind their lines. Disease, hunger and battle took their toll. Though their experience among the campaigning British Army was often callous and brutal, many of these unfortunates chose to be evacuated to other parts of British America or to England, rather than face possible return to their vengeful owners. Although now free, most endured deep poverty, exploitation and mistreatment.

Schama brackets his story with the fate of a former slave who had changed his name to “British Freedom” somewhere between living in America and settling in Nova Scotia. The inhospitable climate and soil of the island province was mirrored in the exploitation and deceptions of the now-free blacks, whom Schama credits later as some of the King’s most devoted subjects.

British Freedom, as well as Henry Washington and more than 1,500 others, would follow promises for a better life in Sierra Leone on Africa’s west coast. A visionary plan to create a settlement largely under black self-rule—where even the women could vote—foundered and then broke due to poor planning, human frailty and the rocks of the British Colonial administrative model. Despite their dreams and efforts, these most loyal subjects of His Majesty were reduced to toiling for the Colonial company.

While this sad story played out in the tropics, Parliament wrangled over the issue of abolishing slavery altogether. Having set her sights under Elizabeth I on a piece of the lucrative commerce in humans, Britain had long dominated the slave trade. Slavery was common throughout her North American colonies from the Caribbean to Nova Scotia. Moral outrage was growing, but many leaders feared relinquishing the profits to France—which, despite liberté, égalité et fraternité, eagerly conducted its own slave trade. —BILL HUDGINS

—BILL HUDGINS
For many of us, nothing is more relaxing than a long, luxurious bath. Unfortunately, because of safety concerns, many people, particularly older people, have to forego this simple pleasure. Sure, you can spend big bucks to remodel your bathroom to provide a bathtub you can use, but who wants to do that? Now there’s a better way, and it lets you use the bath that’s in your home today.

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By John Fleming
Finding Family Photos

ONLINE IMAGE DATABASES MAKE IT EASIER THAN EVER TO COME FACE-TO-FACE WITH ONE OF YOUR LONG-LOST RELATIVES

START YOUR SEARCH

By Maureen Taylor
GENEALOGIST MIDGE FRAZEL made one of these unexpected finds recently when she decided to try out a photo reunion Web site called DeadFred.com. Suddenly, she found herself peering into the eyes of one of her Civil War ancestors: Joseph A. Schofield. “I recognized him immediately because he looks just like my cousins,” she says. She hadn’t been aware that the photograph existed.

The brainchild of photo enthusiast Joe Bott, DeadFred.com is just one of the sites making it easier to find long-lost family photos. Started in 2001 after Bott decided the Web was the perfect vehicle for photo sharing, DeadFred attracts more than 5,000 individuals a week to its photo search. And the availability of digital photos is growing: The Library of Congress recently made many of its images accessible on Yahoo’s Flickr site (www.flickr.com), and historical societies across the country are also devoting resources toward digitizing their collections.

If you want to try your hand at finding “lost” family pictures, try the following locations. And as more images are added online, the better the odds you’ll be able to duplicate Frazel’s online success.

Image Search Engines

All the major Web search engines have image search capabilities, but Google’s Image Search is probably one of the best-known. Enter your ancestor’s name into the search box using quotation marks and see what turns up. You might be surprised to find a family history Web page on your ancestors. This practice works best with unusual names, but try refining the search by adding a place of residence.

Another way to search Google is through its fully searchable digital library at Google Books (www.books.google.com). Search to see if your ancestor’s name and picture show up in a downloadable full-view book. If it’s a book that you can’t preview, ask your public library to order the volume on inter-library loan.

Genealogy Sites

Ancestry.com and Footnote.com, two familiar sites for genealogists, have searchable image databases. On Footnote, individuals can add their family pictures to story pages. On the genealogy site MyFamily.com, millions of people have created Web sites combining photos and family information. Locate these sites by searching the Ancestry site under its “family trees” tab. WeRelate.org is a relative newcomer to the genealogy field, but its collaborative Web site setup (also called a “wiki”) allows you to search content, comment on the genealogical information and add captions and notes to photos.

Another way to locate images is to network with cousins using online message boards. Use sites such as Rootsweb.com to find a board related to your ancestral place of residence or surname. Post a specific query about ancestors you’re seeking.

At each junction of your family tree, photographs and other visual representations of ancestors are either handed down or discarded. Even before photography began in 1839, individuals captured their visages in paintings, sculptures, engravings and silhouettes. Before you claim that your ancestors weren’t interested in photos or were too poor to afford photography, you might try a little digging: You never know where images might turn up.
including their full name, date of birth, towns of residence and anything else you might know about them. Locate more specific message boards by searching Cyndislist.com under its “Queries and Message Boards” tab.

Library and Historical Society Web Sites

James Wray already had two images of his great-grandmother when he spotted another possible image of her on a Montgomery County, Tenn., historical society Web site. The picture was unidentified and uploaded by someone who is now deceased, but he had a feeling it was his relative and sought me out to confirm. By comparing this photo to the other two he owned, I was able to verify that she was the same woman and the photo was taken in the 1870s. These three images create a priceless photographic timeline of his great-grandmother at three different points in her life—as a child, a young woman and in middle age.

A growing number of historical societies and public libraries have searchable Web sites, so it’s worth checking to see if any of their image collections are online. While the Library of Congress has its own online database of prints and photographs, its American Memory site (memory.loc.gov) features digital materials from the library and institutions across the United States. Search the entire American Memory site at once or narrow it to a specific exhibit. Each site lets you preview the images.

Even the smallest organizations are working to share their collections online. If you don’t find a searchable image database, you can contact the organization via e-mail or letter to request that they search their in-house materials. Bear in mind that many of these repositories are understaffed, so you may need to contact a researcher in the area who regularly uses the library in which you’re interested. Or consult the membership directory of the Association of Professional Genealogists (www.apgen.org) to hire someone in that area.

Orphan Photo Sites

Have you ever seen an identified picture in an antique shop and wondered how someone could have discarded it? You’re not alone. Concerned with the number of identified photos being abandoned, Joe Bott of DeadFred created a site that allows the public to upload unnamed pictures for identification purposes or post identified images hoping to reconnect with the people to whom they belong.

While DeadFred is the oldest and largest of the reunion sites, others like AncientFaces.com also contain images found and uploaded by individuals who want to reconnect them with their relatives. On Cyndislist.com you’ll see links to reunion pages for pictures, documents and artifacts. While Bott’s policy is to give images he’s found to anyone who can prove a relationship, like Frazel, other sites sell their items. Find links to photographic databases on Genealogist Megan Smolenyak’s Honoring Our Ancestors site (www.honoringourancestors.com/orphanphotos.html).

Reunion Projects

The lucky few don’t even have to search for pictures: The discoveries drop in their laps, thanks to dedicated photo researchers like Joe Manning of Massachusetts. He spends his time trying to track down the descendants of individuals who appeared in photographer Lewis Hine’s images of childhood labor from the early 20th century. Manning has had remarkable success facilitating more than 100 reunions. Grateful descendants weren’t even aware their ancestor posed for an image. You can read about his Mornings on Maple Street project online at www.morningsonmaplestreet.com/lewishine.html.

Searching for pictures takes time and patience, but you could find yourself like Frazel or Wray did, eye to eye with one of your long-dead relatives. In an instant, you’re connected with a past you thought was lost forever.

Maureen Taylor is the Photo Detective. Her work with family pictures was recently profiled in The Wall Street Journal.
SCRAPBOOKING MADE SIMPLE

By Megan Pacella
Known to early Americans as commonplace books, the practice of preserving memories with scrapbooks became a phenomenon long before craft stores began devoting entire aisles to the hobby.

**THE CRAZE** can be traced to 1826 when John Poole published *Manuscript Gleanings and Literary Support*, a book that suggested ways to preserve sentimental tokens, poetry and personal writings. This new enthusiasm for preservation led to the advent of commonplace books, which early Americans used to display mementos and decorated with feathers, cuts of paper, dried plants and flowers, poems and other graphics.

The look of scrapbooks has changed over the past two centuries, but their ability to evocatively capture family history has remained constant.
What you need

More than 180 years later, scrapbooking is still an immensely popular way to preserve memories and keepsakes—but you don’t need all of the latest products or handicraft supplies to showcase your family history on a scrapbook page. Here are the essentials:

- Scrapbook album
- Acid-free, archival glue
- Photo corners
- Scissors
- Patterned ribbon
- Colorful fabric swatches
- Accents like buttons, letter stickers, cutouts, etc.
- Colored pens or markers
- Colored or patterned paper
- Keepsakes, such as family photos, ticket stubs, programs, newspaper clippings, old postcards, etc.

**TIP:** When shopping for scrapbooking supplies, look for acid-free, archival products that won’t tarnish your photos and mementos over time.

Five Hints for Making Your Memories Last

1. Choose a color scheme for your scrapbook page. For best results, pick a few colors and paper patterns that complement your photographs. Get creative: Use a postcard from your grandparents’ vacation or colorful cutouts as accents. Don’t limit yourself to solid colors—patterns of dots and shapes and textures can be fun, too.
2. Prepare your favorite photos for the page. If the ones you want to use are irreplaceable, use a high-quality copier to create replicas for your scrapbook. Store the originals in a fireproof box in a safe area.
3. Place your photos on the page with memorabilia, such as newspaper clippings or ticket stubs, to highlight the personality of your subjects. Be sure to leave enough space for captions and don’t try to squeeze too many objects on your page; experiment with arrangements until you find one you like the best. Use photo corners to anchor photos in place. Never use glue on photos.
4. Personalize your page by adding a touch of your own handwriting. Select a pretty piece of paper and write a short description of the photos featured on the page, identifying the people and what’s taking place, whether it’s a fishing outing with your dad or a favorite summertime ritual with your siblings. Using archival-quality adhesive, glue the caption in the space you provided.
5. Let your page dry overnight and then slide it into an acid-free, archival scrapbook to preserve your favorite family memories for years to come.
The best thing about traveling is going home.

- Charles Dudley Warner
ANNOUNCING

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AS 1
Childbirth in Colonial America

*WHEN THE MAYFLOWER SET SAIL* for America in September 1620, it carried three pregnant women among its 102 passengers. Elizabeth Hopkins and Susanna White were both in their seventh month of pregnancy, and Mary Allerton was in her second or third month. Only two of them would live through childbirth, and only one of the babies would reach adulthood. While their stories could represent the harsh realities of giving birth in Colonial America, historians say there is much more to the story than hardship and mortality. In fact, for Colonial women, childbirth was an occasion of great celebration and communion with other women, and it “testified to the mysterious power of womankind,” writes Harvard history professor Laurel Thatcher Ulrich in *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650–1750* (Vintage, 1991).

By Nancy Mann Jackson
As for the three expectant Mayflower passengers, one can only imagine their discomfort at sea. Because six of the nine weeks on board the ship were in storm or squall, passengers spent most of their time below deck, “everybody wet and cold and huddled together in the unlit, poorly ventilated interior that could not help but have reeked with sweat, vomit and bilge, while the little ship pitched and wallowed in a malignant sea,” writes Nancy Caldwell Sorel in *Ever Since Eve: Personal Reflections on Childbirth* (Oxford University Press, 1985). “It was awful for everyone: how then must it have been for Mary, no doubt combining seasickness with morning sickness, and for Elizabeth and Susanna, additionally plagued by the discomforts of advanced pregnancy and fears for what was to come.”

Elizabeth gave birth while at sea to a boy, whom she appropriately named Oceanus. While she probably lacked privacy giving birth on board the *Mayflower*, “the only thing Elizabeth would assuredly not have lacked was feminine aid and comfort,” Sorel writes. “There would have been plenty of that, including a young midwife, Bridget Lee Fuller, known to have been on board and to have continued her practice in Plymouth until her death 45 years later.”

That “feminine comfort” was a hallmark of labor and childbirth in early America, historians say. It would certainly have been a source of strength not only for Elizabeth, but also for Susanna when she delivered her son Peregrine, which means pilgrim, a few weeks later in Cape Cod Bay, and for Mary, who died in childbirth while delivering a stillborn infant the following spring. Although Oceanus Hopkins died during the Pilgrims’ first devastating winter, Peregrine White lived to be at least 80 years old.

While the mortality rate for the three *Mayflower* mothers and their babies was quite high, historians say that maternal mortality rates in Colonial America were much lower than is commonly believed. In fact, Ulrich says high maternal mortality is one of the most widely held misconceptions about childbirth in early America. “Rates varied tremendously and had more to do with nutrition, general health of the mother and density of population than time period,” she says.
‘Hard and Dangerous Travail’

WHILE FEWER MOTHERS than we might suspect succumbed to death in childbirth, all endured pain and suffering. “‘Natural’ birth in the premodern world was presumed to be both painful and dangerous—as God intended,” Ulrich writes in Good Wives. “Pious women like [poet] Anne Bradstreet wrote spiritual testaments as they faced childbirth, just as men of the same class and time signed wills before embarking on a long sea journey or military expedition.”

In one of Bradstreet’s most famous poems, “Before the Birth of One of Her Children,” the poet discusses the possibility of her impending death in childbirth. According to Bradstreet family records, Dorothy Gookin, Bradstreet’s granddaughter, experienced “exceeding hard and Dangerous Travail” with at least 10 of her 12 children. With her ninth child, Gookin’s husband wrote that she “fell in Travail and was under very Dangerous Circumstances But it pleased God [in] his Great Mercy to Spare her,” Ulrich records.

Elizabeth Hopkins gave birth while at sea to a boy, whom she appropriately named Oceanus. While she probably lacked privacy giving birth on board the Mayflower, “the only thing Elizabeth would assuredly not have lacked was feminine aid and comfort.”
Without anesthesia, Colonial women had little relief from their labor. Most families kept medicinal and culinary herbs on hand; women would have used some of these herbs to relieve discomfort. And “a strong-minded woman might take a stiff drink,” although it was generally considered inappropriate for women to drink alcohol, says Amanda Carson Banks, author of *Birth Chairs, Midwives, and Medicine* (University Press of Mississippi, 1999).

Colonial leaders found hard, painful labor without relief to be the perfect occasion to question unwed mothers about the identity of their child’s father. Because the law defined sexual intimacy between unmarried persons as a crime, courts often relied on testimony taken from mothers during delivery to establish the father’s identity. By the late 18th century, courts rarely punished men or women who parented children out of wedlock, but the practice of taking testimony during travail remained in order for mothers to file paternity suits.

“At first glance, questioning a woman in labor seems a form of harassment,” Ulrich writes in *A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785–1812* (Vintage, 1991). “In practice, it was a formality allowing the woman, her relatives, or in some cases the selectmen of her town to claim child support. The man she accused … would be judged the ‘reputed father’ of her child and required to pay for its support. The assumption was that a woman asked to testify at the height of travail would not lie.”

**A Community of Women**

**ALTHOUGH PAIN AND SUFFERING** were inevitable, early American women in labor were usually attended by a midwife and a group of female friends and neighbors, creating a community of women who not only offered emotional support, but also served as a barrier to the pain. “Recent studies of the psychology of birth have shown the significance of emotional support during labor,” Ulrich writes in *Good Wives*. “An informed and empathetic coach is an effective analgesic in helping a woman surmount fear and pain. In delivery there was physical as well as emotional intimacy among the women. A mother might give birth held in another woman’s lap or leaning against her attendants as she squatted on the … ‘midwife’s stool.’ In cases of extreme difficulty a draught of another mother’s milk was considered a sure remedy.”

While the presence of other women may have helped ease the pain of labor, it also created an atmosphere of
celebration. Laboring women were responsible for preparing refreshments for their attendants, and foods like “groaning cake,” a cinnamon-flavored cake, were expressly reserved for such labor parties.

“Giving birth was a joyous community experience,” Banks says. “It wasn’t just the woman and the midwife, but all the women in the family, neighbors and friends. They would bring food and visit, so a laboring woman was distracted with her community of women. In the olden days, women had an active role in their deliveries and an active role in the deliveries of the community.”

Attending a Birth

AS HAD BEEN THE CASE for hundreds of years before in numerous other countries, the midwife was a fixture at the birth of a child in Colonial America. And in the hands of a midwife rather than a male doctor, women’s birth experiences were very different from those in future centuries.

Unless there were complications, most women delivered their babies in an upright position, Banks says, as the pain of upright labor is much less severe than that of lying down. Often, women would sit on a birth chair, which had a seat with a horseshoe-shaped opening through which the midwife could catch the baby, or a birth stool, which had a very narrow seat. The birth chairs or stools allowed them to sit rather than support themselves in a squatting position.

In many communities, the midwife carried her birth chair or stool from house to house, but “not everyone had a birth chair,” Banks says. “[In that case, a woman] might sit on the edge of a regular chair or on the lap of a birth attendant.”

In the mid-1800s when doctors began “infiltrating” the realm of obstetrics, largely by creating mistrust for midwives, the birth chair eventually died out and laboring while lying down became commonplace, Banks says. “Midwives saw themselves as performing a service for their patients, and they didn’t mind squatting down to catch the baby,” she says. “Doctors wanted to stand upright and have the birth canal right there at hip level.”

As childbirth was overtaken by the medical profession (a change that actually resulted in increased fatalities, according to Ulrich), women gradually lost control of this most feminine and mysterious event—although they did gain the choice to receive anesthesia.

But after almost 200 years, increasing numbers of women are regaining some of the ceremony and mystique that accompanied childbirth in early America. “Lots of people today have recaptured the social experience of birth with friends and relatives attending the birth,” Ulrich says. “In the Colonial period, fathers weren’t there but friends, sisters and grandmothers were. I know many grandmothers who now attend deliveries along with the babies’ fathers. Birthing centers try to replicate home settings; that is a striking contrast to the medicalized childbirth experience of the 20th century.”

For Colonial women, bearing many children was “a source of pride and power,” Ulrich says. And while each birth was considered dangerous and frightening, they faced each one together, in the comfort of their own homes, armed with food and friends.

Nancy Mann Jackson’s November/December 2007 feature detailed how to write a family narrative for future generations.

Make Your Own Groaning Cake

Ami McKay, author of The Birth House (Knopf Canada, 2006), a novel about midwives, says the tradition of baking groaning cakes at the birth of a child is an ancient one. She offers the following recipe for groaning cake at her Web site, www.thebirthhouse.com.

2 1/2 cups flour 1/4 cup molasses
3 eggs 1/2 tsp. ground cloves
2 tsp. baking powder 1 1/3 cups sugar
1/2 cup oil 1/2 tsp. ground cloves
1 tsp. baking soda 1 1/2 cups apple (grated, no skin)
1/2 cup orange juice 1 tsp. almond extract
2 tsp. cinnamon

Sift dry ingredients together. Add apple. Beat eggs. Add oil, orange juice, molasses and sugar. Add to dry ingredients. Mix well. Add almond extract. Bake at 350 degrees F for 35 to 40 minutes. Makes two 9 X 5 loaves or about 18 muffins. Add raisins, dates, dried fruits or nuts if desired.

American Spirit • May/June 2008
In 1704, French settlers in present-day Mobile, Ala., waited for a supply ship bringing what they wanted and needed most: brides.
Mobile arose from ambitious beginnings. The French explorer Robert Cavelier La Salle discovered the mouth of the Mississippi River in 1682. La Salle secured the river entrance—which allowed passengers and merchandise to travel all the way to Canada from the Gulf of Mexico—and the surrounding area for France, naming the region La Louisiane for Louis XIV. By the turn of the century, another explorer, Pierre Le Moyne d’Iberville, succeeded in selecting a location for a post of French occupation. After much exploring, he opted to establish the main fort at present-day Mobile, leaving the colony under the leadership of his brother, Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville.

So in 1702, the first Frenchmen raised a white flag with gold lilies and named Alabama’s first settlement of white men La Mobile after the Mobilian Indians.

But there was a problem: A colony couldn’t grow without wives and mothers.
The founders and funders of Mobile wanted the men working in the colony to settle permanently—which meant raising families—but the leadership didn't want ties to native women. (Until 1704, fewer than a handful of Caucasian babies had been born in Mobile.) Iberville had begun pressing France for potential wives as early as 1702. The Canadians who formed the bulk of manpower for the settlement were a particular concern: They had worked hard to build up the colony, but weren't well-suited to settling down in the community.

“...the Canadians had been used to roaming, going back and forth all along the Mississippi up to Canada,” says Anne Dalton, a Mobile-based author and character interpreter who specializes in Mobile history.

In order to aid in much-needed community building, Iberville and his brother pushed the idea of a wife-finding mission in Paris.

The Women

It wasn’t an easy thing to find women from solid families and respectable backgrounds who wanted to sail across an ocean and marry men they’d never set eyes on. Iberville originally hoped for 100 women, but he had to settle on a few more than 20.

The list of qualifications was very specific. The governor wanted respectable women. Pickett’s History of Alabama (published in 1851) mentions their “spotless chastity,” plus the added virtues of being “pious and industrious.” So the bishop of Quebec, who was corralled into managing the project, couldn’t merely find 100 willing young ladies—he needed to find ladies of impeccable morals and background. He decided to focus on local orphanages and convents in Paris and began screening girls in summer 1703. His choices fit the criteria, respectable in every sense and quite young, with the majority ranging from 14 to 18. Working in conjunction with Catholic nuns, three of the girls, including Marie-Françoise de Boisrenaud, functioned as mentors and guardians to the younger girls.

By the beginning of October it seemed as if the arrangements were nearly made, and the ladies may have hoped to be across the Atlantic by the end of the year, suggests Jay Higginbotham in Old Mobile (Museum of the City of Mobile, 1977).

The Departure

The journey turned out to be much more complicated than they hoped. Delays were followed by more delays. The second week of October, the convoy left Paris for a 300-mile trek to the small port of Rochefort. But the ship needed to transport them hadn’t been selected, much less prepared. While they waited in a local orphanage, the ladies began hearing stories of a wild, uninhabitable Mobile. These stories focused on hardship and danger—wild animals and Indian attacks and abject poverty—not the ideas of adventure and romance for which the girls had been hoping. Some of the tales were probably true; others probably took substantial dramatic license. Regardless, the girls became unsettled and nervous about the path they had chosen. Some began requesting a return trip to Paris.

The girls’ chaperones realized they could be facing a mutiny and took several steps to quell it. The girls were confined to the orphanage so they would be more immune to gossip, according to Higginbotham. And to further calm their spirits, they received periodic gifts and a small allowance per day. They were also promised private quarters on their ship, which had been intended but never announced.

The weeks and months ticked by. A January departure date was set, but by the beginning of February, the ships still sat in port. Two girls returned to Paris, and two replacements—plus a midwife—joined the caravan. Instead of a retinue of ships to bring needed supplies, now the trip would involve only one vessel, the Pélican. The ship departed Rochefort in early April, stopped at another town to load even more merchandise and, finally, turned to the open sea on April 19.

The Journey

If the girls hoped for a relaxing journey after a fretful beginning, they were disappointed. The ship was crowded both with people and cargo. The girls weren’t used to the motion of the sea and suffered accordingly. They did not lack for companionship, but their cadre of military men didn’t quite live up to expectations.

“The girls were excited when they heard there would be soldiers on the ships,” says Dalton, “but most of the soldiers were only 14 or 15.”

Soon, though, troubles deeper than seasickness and boredom began to develop. The first stop for the Pélican,
as with most ships making the journey to European colonies, was the island of Hispaniola. The girls’ enthusiasm for making port didn’t last long—their chaperones wouldn’t let them off the ship. So they spent two weeks docked while the men enjoyed the island.

Havana turned out to be more pleasant (although ultimately much more costly). On this stopover, thanks to a welcoming local religious order, the girls enjoyed great revelry and hospitality. However, a change in climate was noticeable immediately: “The cool, salty, ocean breezes were replaced by a dank, stuffy atmosphere,” Higginbotham writes. “The narrow streets, no more than 12 feet in width, appeared to steam in the high humidity.”

Still, for travelers cooped up for weeks, the humidity and clouds of mosquitoes seemed little more than an annoyance. On July 14, the ship set sail with the passengers rested and upbeat. The weather remained calm, and the final port-of-call (before disembarking onto smaller ships) lay just a week away.

Once the ship set sail, two soldiers and one of the girls became sick with fever. As the fever intensified, so did the fear. From a rushed overnight stop at Pensacola for water, the ship sailed to Massacre Island (now Dauphin Island). By the time it reached the island, the soldiers had started dying en masse, many with a yellowish tinge to their skin. The stop at Massacre Island took on a desperate feel as the passengers and crew waited for small sailing ships to carry the new arrivals upriver to La Mobile. On July 28, 1704, the boats set sail, and on August 1 the exhausted young women arrived at the fort.

The Destination

While the girls were being recruited in Paris, food had grown scarce in the settlement as colonists waited for the next supply ship. Other than small game the men shot, nearly everything they needed came by ship, so when those were delayed, starvation crept closer.

By 1704, the colonists were involved in an ongoing battle with native tribes. A group of Alabama Indians had attacked a party of Canadians from the colony, and those killings led to series of attacks and counterattacks. The original settlers had tried to carve out homes and a town from bare dirt and woods, and efforts had been rough at best.

But the colonists had made progress by the time the girls landed. In the 1704 census, there were “180 men capable of bearing arms, 27 French families with three little girls and seven boys and 11 young Indian slaves,” writes Peter Hamilton in his 1897 book Colonial Mobile.

The first families had landed in 1702, and houses had been a top priority, even more so now that single ladies were arriving. “The single men took building houses very seriously,” Dalton says. “They knew the women would expect them.”

The Landing

The only historical document describing the arrival of the women is a disappointingly brief mention by a carpenter who had traveled with Iberville. “The ship, named Le Pélican,” writes André Pénicaud in Fleur de Lys and Calumet, his narrative about the founding of French Louisiana, “was under the command of M. du Coudray. He had brought [a number of] girls from France. These were the first ones that came to Louisiana. They were quite well-behaved, and so they had no trouble finding husbands.”

Men crowded around the landing site, anxious for a glimpse of the women,
but the reality likely didn’t measure up to the fantasy. “The girls were obviously in a debilitated condition,” Higginbotham writes, “their drawn, feverous cheeks barely able to form even the faintest of smiles.”

Along with the “virtuous maidens,” Hamilton says, the ship brought “livestock, food and merchandise ... missionar-ies, artisans, 75 soldiers.” Bienville’s letters note his disappointment in the ages and health of those soldiers, though any manpower was welcome. More than a dozen soldiers had died on the way from Havana. Several more died in Mobile, and one girl died shortly after arrival.

The women’s health was a great cause for concern, but by August, the colonists believed the plague of yellow fever had run its course. The young women moved in with families in town and into houses left empty by traveling hunters. Bienville didn’t want them to get too comfortable since they should be hoping for immediate marriage, and, in Higginbotham’s words, “the most attractive thing about most of the Canadians was that each had a private home (however modest) to offer to a homeless girl.”

The healthy men were eager to mingle with the girls, and courting began quickly. The 21 girls looking to marry had pieced together information about prospective husbands from various secondhand accounts. Marie-Francoise de Boisrenaud, who was looked upon as a sort of governess to the younger girls, assumed responsibility for making sure they were well-married. Anne Dalton, who regularly performs as the character Boisrenaud for events, explains that while most of the young women were illiterate, Boisrenaud was well-educated. She read over the girls’ contracts and told them what their agreements involved.

Of the roughly 60 single men in town, around 25 were strong prospects based on their ability to support a family, rank or position, and temperament, according to Higginbotham. The French girls felt superior to the Canadian men, but marriage was required for survival in this new, harsh settlement—and life in Paris convents had not been a glamorous existence.

A (Somewhat) Happy Ending

By the second week in August, more than half the girls had entered into marriage contracts. The officially betrothed couples lived in separate residences, but the middle of August saw a ceremony nearly every day in the settlement’s chapel.

“These were the first marriages which were solemnized in old Mobile or indeed upon any part of the soil of Alabama by Christian marital rites,” author Albert James Pickett notes.

By August 17, only eight girls—excluding Boisrenaud—remained single. The most eligible bachelors hadn’t chosen brides yet, so the still-single girls tended to be the more ambitious ones. But the latter half of August brought the return of yellow fever as local mosquitoes picked up the disease from Pelican passengers. Ceremonies were postponed and the majority of the settlement had succumbed to the illness. Within 60 days, Bienville lost 50 percent of his high-ranking command. Two of the girls had died only days after marriage.

“Life on the rue du Seminare was in early September indeed chaotic,” Higginbotham says of the fast-spreading sickness. “The house of the seminary priests became a veritable hospital. Even chickens suffered a high mortality rate during August and September.”
By autumn the mosquitoes had disappeared, and so had yellow fever. Boisrenaud remained single, and the unmarried Marie Grissot decided to volunteer as a midwife. As the women settled into married life, the daily tasks were as foreign as the landscape. They had cornmeal, not wheat, for cooking and none of the typical meats.

One popular story says the women balked at eating corn and cornbread, and that the resulting so-called “Petticoat Insurrection” wreaked havoc with the governor’s patience. The story could be more elaboration than truth. Regardless, life at the settlement resumed, with more women—and soon enough, more babies. The Pélican had not only brought women, but a future for the city.

Gin Phillips explored the Kansas pueblo of El Cuartelejo for the January/February 2008 issue.

By Any Other Name

The Pelican Girls are also called Cassette Girls, which encompasses a broader group of women. In theory, the French king provided the girls with a small trunk—a cassette—to carry their belongings. More shiploads of prospective brides arrived throughout the next decades, with the next boatload to Mobile landing in 1728. Most of the Cassette Girls traveled directly to New Orleans, though. No one knows whether the young women landing at Mobile had such a trunk.

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Ben Franklin’s Revolutionary Idea

By Emily McMackin
Photo by Ben Stewart
pioneer in politics, science and the arts, Benjamin Franklin is known for the many innovations he brought to American life and culture, including the lightning rod, the stove, the fire department and the public library. Yet his vision extended even further than most Americans realize. In fact, Franklin is responsible for the magazine you are reading right now. No, he didn’t invent journalism or found the DAR, but he did bring the idea for the first magazine to America.

Franklin’s concept of a magazine was very different from the kind you hold in your hands today. A composite of selected works from newspapers, pamphlets and British periodicals, it contained little original reporting and writing. Its pages were filled with essays, poetry, political commentary and historical and governmental records—none of which could be described as “light reading.” Those who like to peruse magazines for the stunning images inside would be disappointed—Franklin’s magazine contained only one illustration.

But what inspired Franklin and other 18th-century editors who followed his lead to create magazines is the same motivation behind today’s launches: the desire to entertain, inform and offer a work of lasting value.

Encouraged by the success of the British periodical, which emphasized elegant writing, amusement and instruction over the day-to-day reporting of events in newspapers, Franklin saw a need for a similar medium in America. While his own newspaper, the Pennsylvania Gazette, was more entertaining than most, he believed that artful writing should have its own forum. As his alter ego Poor Richard once said, “If you would not be forgotten as soon as you are dead and rotten, either write things worth reading or do things worth writing.”

Of course, Franklin must have anticipated that a magazine would be profitable, or this shrewd entrepreneur wouldn’t have attempted it. British periodicals such as the Gentlemen’s Magazine and the London Magazine were popular imports from England that circulated among the Colonial upper class. If these magazines could find an audience, “it was reasonable to suppose that there were enough of the same cultured, educated men now in America, many of them once like English residents themselves, who would welcome a magazine like those London successes,” write John Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman in The Magazine in America: 1741–1990 (Oxford University Press, 1991).

But profit was only a minor reason early American magazines were launched. Though Franklin and other Colonial magazine publishers modeled their publications closely after British predecessors, they never intended to create a product that was uniquely American. Instead, they were “motivated by a rising patriotism, an urge to show the English, who openly sneered at nearly everything American, that the Colonies were worthy of respect,” Tebbel and Zuckerman note.

Ambassador of Culture
Franklin was the classic example of the American success story. Born of modest beginnings as the son of a candle maker, he worked his way into the upper echelon of society through his enterprise and dogged pursuit of knowledge. As a young apprentice, he spent every penny he earned on books and reading material that covered subjects from marine navigation to Socrates.

Early on, he developed an appreciation for good prose. After first reading the Spectator, a British publication that critiqued philosophy, politics and literature, Franklin found the writing so impressive that he tried to imitate it. He honed his skills by outlining the articles in the pamphlets and setting them aside for a few days before trying to rewrite them from memory.

“I sometimes had the pleasure of fancying that, in certain particulars of small import, I had been lucky enough to improve the method of language, and this encouraged me to think I might possibly in time come to be a tolerable
English writer, of which I was extremely [sic] ambitious," he wrote in his *Autobiography*.

Franklin understood the power of written expression and wanted to expose others to it as well. As a young businessman, he organized his friends into a club of mutual improvement called the Junto, which encouraged members to share and discuss original essays and position papers on topics ranging from morals to politics to science. Reading material in the Colonies was sparse, so members pooled their imported books and periodicals to loan to each other. From this came the idea for the library. The phenomenon quickly caught on among colonists, proving to Franklin that Americans craved quality writing just as much as he did. In his *Autobiography*, he writes:

"Reading became fashionable; and our people, having no publick [sic] amusements to divert their attention from study, became better acquainted with books, and in a few years, were observed by strangers to be better instructed and more intelligent than people of the same rank generally are in other countries."

**Planning the First Magazine**

By the time he was 34, Franklin had already made a name for himself in publishing. His newspaper, the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, was widely read throughout the Colonies, and his *Poor Richard’s Almanack*, which included everything from calendars and medical advice to poetry and proverbs, was also popular. Not only had Franklin won the right to do most of the government printing in the province, he had also attained the position of postmaster of Philadelphia and clerk of Pennsylvania’s General Assembly. It was only natural to assume that his next venture—launching the first magazine in the Colonies—would also be successful.

With a booming printing and bookselling business to run and civic commitments to keep, Franklin knew he needed help, so he turned editing duties over to John Webbe, an attorney and frequent *Gazette* contributor. In those days, copyright laws existed in Britain, but didn’t necessarily apply in the Colonies. The chief duty of a magazine editor was to “borrow” articles from other publications and create an array of selected pieces to appeal to readers.

Looking for someone “handy with scissors and paste to do the work of selection,” Franklin told Webbe that editing should take no more than three to four hours a week, writes Lyon Richardson in *A History of Early American Magazines, 1741–1789* (Nelson and Sons, 1931). But Webbe, who was used to writing “heavy, prosy articles” for the *Gazette*, had other ideas.

"Webbe must have been imagining a magazine carefully edited and well-supplied with articles and rewritten material by the editor, for he soon discovered that ‘every Moment of my Time would be necessarily engrossed in the Execution of the Undertaking,’” Richardson writes.

Franklin drew up a contract, agreeing to pay Webbe 25 percent of receipts from the first 2,000 copies sold, and 50 percent thereafter to “dispose the Materials, make Abstracts and write what shall be necessary for promoting the Thing, &c,” with “B.F. to be at all Expense” for the printing and paper.
“Franklin justified his major share in the receipt of the income on the grounds of expense and possession of ‘small letter’ type, which was necessary for the work and which no other printer in the colony possessed; he was, moreover, established in the peculiarly advantageous position of the postmaster,” Richardson writes.

Satisfied for the moment, Webbe signed the contract, but became disgruntled with the terms. In a bid for better pay and more editorial control, he spilled the details of Franklin’s plan to Andrew Bradford, publisher of the rival newspaper American Mercury. Still fuming over losing his position as postmaster and his monopoly on government printing to Franklin a few years earlier, Bradford saw a chance for vindication.

Publishing Wars

Franklin was shocked to see a half-page prospectus in the October 30, 1740, issue of the Mercury announcing Bradford’s intention to publish a magazine of his own, and even more baffled to read that Webbe had been named editor. Bradford presented the laboriously titled American Magazine, or a Monthly View of the Political State of British Columbia as an original idea, stating that “Success and Approbation which the Magazines, published in Great Britain, have met with for many Years past Encouraged us to Attempt a Work of the like Nature in America.”

This pushed Franklin to reveal his own intention to publish a magazine much earlier than he had planned in a prospectus in the Gazette a few days later. He addressed Webbe’s deception, noting his magazine “would not have been published quite so soon, were it not that a person, to whom the Scheme was communicated in Confidence, has thought it fit to advertise it in the last Mercury, without our participation: and probably, with a View, by Starting before us, to discourage us from prosecuting our first Design, and reap the Advantage of it wholly to himself.”

Webbe countered the allegation in an angry response titled “The Detection,” which ran so long it continued through three issues of the Mercury. Though he acknowledged an agreement with Franklin, Webbe also claimed that the proposal “never obliged me to the writing of one [magazine] for him to print, nor restrained me from the printing of it at any other Press.”

Disliking newspaper quarrels, Franklin resisted reply until Webbe accused him of abusing his power as postmaster and refusing to deliver the Mercury to subscribers. Franklin countered, explaining that he’d been ordered to withhold postal service from Bradford because of his failure to submit financial reports during his term as postmaster.

Bradford initially advertised that the American Magazine would appear in March, until Franklin offered his for January. The month passed without either magazine appearing; then, on February 5, 1741, each paper announced that its owner’s magazine would be published the following week. In the end, Franklin’s General Magazine, and Historical Chronicle, For all the British Plantations in America, appeared on February 16—three days after Bradford’s launch. Most likely Franklin did most of the editorial work on the 76-page magazine himself, Richardson notes.

The competition between the two publishers didn’t stop there. When Bradford initially set the price for his magazine at 12 shillings, Franklin cut his from 15 shillings to ninepence and promised to “desire no Subscriptions … which Method, we suppose, will be most agreeable to our Readers, as they will be at the liberty to buy only what they like.” The price wars continued, with Bradford dropping his price to eightpence, and Franklin eventually lowering his to sixpence.

No doubt Franklin still seethed that Bradford stole his idea. In the February 26, 1741, issue of the Gazette, he took one last dig at his rival. “In language which may have been intended as the dialectical speech of an inebriated Irishman,” Richardson writes, Franklin scoffed at the phrasing of the American Magazine’s first advertisement and mocked its subscription price and plan to use original rather than selected pieces.

Making a Mark

Though Franklin’s General Magazine more closely resembled British periodicals than the American Magazine, it contained

Franklin understood the power of written expression and wanted to expose others to it as well.
much more variety than its competitor, which mostly printed law extracts, political commentary, and economic and governmental reports. Franklin did allot considerable space—about one-third of the magazine—to debates in Parliament and the state government as well as proclamations and addresses of governors, but he also offered plenty of other departments.

“Pieces of Poetry” contained eight to 10 pages of light verse, drawn from American newspapers and British books and magazines. “Historical Chronicle” covered rates of exchange, current prices and local events, such as marriages, births, deaths and promotions. “Essays from American Newspapers” included clippings of American and English poetical epistles and satires taken from Colonial newspapers. Often written in heroic couplet, these featured “war, religion and the virtue of prominent men” as leading themes, Richardson writes. Franklin even reserved a section for excerpts of books and pamphlets published in the Colonies—usually sermon reprints and dry dissertations.

Three prominent subjects running through the six issues of the General Magazine included debate over the use of paper currency in the Colonies, a discussion of the Reverend George Whitefield, a controversial figure in the religious awakening, and the war with Spain, which Colonists feared would affect shipping in the East and rouse Indian hostilities in the West.

Despite Franklin’s strong opinions on all of these subjects, he refrained from expressing any emphatic opinions on any of the three, opting to present both sides of each issue in the form of essays, letters and reports. And in yet another example of objective journalism, Franklin was careful to represent all sections of the country, including news from New England and the South, as well as the middle Colonies.

Franklin’s publication lacked the visual punch of today’s magazines. General Magazine contained few advertisements, and the only illustration—a woodcut of the coronet of the Prince of Wales, adorned by three large plumes and the motto *Ich Dien*—filled the cover page.

**A Lasting Contribution**

Despite their promising and contentious beginnings, neither the General Magazine nor the American Magazine lasted beyond a year. Bradford abandoned his magazine without explanation after three issues. Franklin discontinued his after six.

Though the precise reason why these first magazines failed is unknown, their publishers had several obstacles to overcome, historians point out.

In 1741, the population of Colonies barely exceeded 1 million and was scattered more than 1,200 miles northeast to southwest, delaying distribution. In most regions, roads were bad, and the mail system was primitive. It took a stagecoach, which typically carried the magazines, eight to 10 days just to travel from New York to Boston.

Presses, type, paper and ink had to be imported from England, making manufacturing difficult. After the first issue of the General Magazine was published, Pennsylvania Gazette newspaper ads for the next five issues show Franklin’s difficulties printing the magazine; the March and June issues, for example, were not published until the 30th of the following months.

“Both of these ambitious printers were taking a large risk, setting the tone for all subsequent magazine publishing,” Tebbel and Zuckerman write. “There was no pressing need for a new medium in America, and the waiting audience was difficult to measure.”

Neither men seemed heartbroken when their venture failed to catch on.

“Franklin himself did not esteem it of much importance, we may be sure, for he did not so much as mention it in his Autobiography,” Richardson writes.

Nonetheless, Franklin created a niche that plenty of other publishers were eager to fill in the decades following, and his infamous competition with Bradford spawned a mass magazine industry that continues to thrive in America today.

Emily McMackin explored Hyde Hall for the September/October 2007 issue.
WASHINGTON’S WHISKEY

Our first president was once our leading distiller

BY BILL HUDGINS

Daughters of the American Revolution
Through centuries of history, the phrase from Henry Lee’s eulogy of George Washington has lived on: “First in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen.” Washington also led the way toward large-scale whiskey making in America with a distillery built at Mount Vernon in 1798. Historians believe this was one of the largest whiskey distilleries in America at that time.

A full-scale reconstructed distillery opened at Mount Vernon in 2007 on the site of the original structure. The site has yielded a treasure trove of artifacts and information about life at the plantation and its gristmill, cooperage and distilling operations.

The distillery was part of Washington’s effort to diversify his operations and create nonfarming revenue streams. By moving away from labor-intensive activities, Washington also hoped to clear the path to freeing the more than 300 slaves who worked on his widespread lands.

There is, of course, a certain irony in Washington’s turning to whiskey making to augment his income. The 1794 Whiskey Rebellion broke out when the federal government attempted to impose an excise tax on whiskey. Western settlers had few good routes to eastern markets for their perishable grain, and they had found that whiskey was easier to transport and more valuable than the raw grain. Many felt disenfranchised from the eastern power centers and protested that the excise tax was grossly unfair—in effect, they felt it was taxation without representation.

President Washington personally led an army to quell the unrest, which was never much of a real revolt, and the tax remained in effect until 1803, when it was repealed. While it was in effect, though, and until his death in 1799, Washington duly paid his excise taxes.

Washington’s deep connection to Mount Vernon is nearly legendary. In the midst of fighting battles and begging for soldiers’ pay and provisions from Congress, he found the energy—and the optimism for the Revolution’s outcome—to give detailed directions for the plantation’s operation. It must have been a kind of mental and spiritual R&R—a break from the enormous stress and uncertainty of war.

Revisiting Mount Vernon

In the past few years, the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association has worked hard to reinvigorate the visitor experience. The group had become concerned that Americans didn’t know much about their first president—his complex, multifaceted personality was becoming as two-dimensional as a dollar bill. As so many other historical sites have done, the ladies broadened and deepened efforts to interpret the lives of all of the Mount Vernon inhabitants.

One of the most recent initiatives has been called Washington the Entrepreneur. This project examines how, starting in the 1760s, Washington began to move away from the planter’s usual reliance on growing tobacco, which seriously depleted the soil and forced planters to acquire ever more land.

In place of tobacco, Washington began planting grain crops such as corn, rye and barley. He also expanded or added a number of diverse activities, such as installing a gristmill for grinding his and others’ grain to sell as flour and adding blacksmithing, fishing for herring and shad, and barrel making. These endeavors supported plantation life and also served as profit centers, since Washington could sell or trade the excess production for other goods and services, according to “A Pretty
Considerable Distillery: Excavating George Washington’s Whiskey Distillery” by Eleanor Breen, assistant archaeologist, and Esther White, director of archaeology at Mount Vernon.

Washington also eagerly embraced new techniques and technologies that promised to make the plantation more efficient and self-sufficient as well as less vulnerable to the uncertainties of farming and agricultural markets.

Back at Mount Vernon in early 1798, Washington reviewed his estate’s operations and financial performance, writes Dennis Pogue, Mount Vernon’s associate director for preservation, in “Shad, Wheat and Rye (Whiskey): George Washington, Entrepreneur.”

It was the first time in years that he’d had time to do this, and he found that, overall, he was doing pretty well.

However, managing his far-ranging operation was a lot of work, and Washington was tired. He was 66 years old and had spent most of the past four decades engaged in building up the estate, in addition to warfare, revolution and nation building.

Just as we would begin to think about scaling back at that age, Washington wanted to restructure his estate to maximize revenue while reducing the daily demands on his time and energy.

For most of his life, Washington, like many planters, avidly bought land. Many of his holdings lay in the western frontier. He had spent much time there and always kept an eye out for promising tracts.

Even before there was revolution in the air, Washington knew the restless immigrants and children of immigrants would push west from the “crowded” Eastern seaboard, regardless of laws prohibiting such migration. When they did, he planned to be there to greet them with good land at reasonable prices.

Unfortunately for him, the American West was huge and filled with promising land virtually free for the taking. When Washington tried to sell off his holdings, he discovered it was very much a buyer’s market, Pogue notes.

Besides frontier lands, Washington owned and leased a number of other properties. Debt was an unpleasant fact of life for Washington to let him build a separate, large-scale distillery. He promised the operation would make a tidy profit and yield other benefits to the plantation. Washington agreed.

Work began in October 1797 on a 75-by-30-foot stone structure with a partial second story. Mount Vernon’s researchers think the upper level was used for storage and living quarters for John Anderson (son of James), who served as the on-site manager of the distillery. There was a second room there to accommodate Anderson’s assistant; several men served in that role, but the one who was in the position most often was a local man named Peter Bingle, Pogue says.

Mount Vernon records show that, when completed, Washington’s distillery had five stills capable of producing a combined 616 gallons of liquor per run.

In 1797, they produced a whopping 11,000 gallons in 1799.

... the new distillery ...
process hasn’t changed much. Besides the equipment, you need grain, water and heat.

The first step was called malting: The distiller saturated barley with water, which forced it to sprout. At a certain point, the sprouted barley was spread in a thin layer on a sheet of metal and heated to stop germination.

Once the barley dried, the malt, rye and corn were ground at the gristmill, then poured into vats called mash tubs and mixed with water to turn their starch into sugar. Washington’s distillery had 50 oak mash tubs that could hold 120 gallons each. Plantation records indicate that Anderson’s whiskey recipe comprised 60 percent rye, 35 percent corn and 5 percent malted barley.

The distiller then added yeast and let the mixture ferment in the tubs for several days. The fermented mash was then transferred to the stills, which were built over furnaces, and heated. When the mash reached 160 degrees, the alcohol evaporated and escaped as a gas through a coiled copper pipe called the worm tube. The worm tube sat in a vat of cold flowing water that cooled the gas back to liquid in a container.

The distillery was built downslope from the millrace—water was diverted from the race to the distillery, piped in overhead, pushed through cooling vats and out drains built under the floor. As the operation grew, it diverted so much water from the millstream that a well was dug to pump water to the distillery.

Unlike today’s whiskey makers, Washington and his contemporaries did not gently age their product in wooden casks. Their liquor was clear, not amber. Distilling the whiskey several times increased the alcohol level, helped remove impurities and improved the taste and smoothness.

This process also made the liquor more expensive. Records show that individual customers paid about 50 to 60 cents per gallon for “common” rye whiskey, which had been distilled twice, and almost $1 per gallon for whiskey that had been distilled up to four times. Besides whiskey, Anderson also produced fruit-flavored brandies—wines that had been distilled—as well as distilled cider vinegar.
Reaping the Profits

Washington had picked an auspicious time to build a distillery, according to archaeologists Breen and White. Up to the 1790s, rum was the American drink of choice. Starting in the 1790s, tastes began to shift to whiskey, prompting a boom in distilling. Stills had long been common—the 1810 federal census recorded some 3,600 stills in Virginia alone—but they were typically small operations intended to satisfy the owner’s thirst, plus some excess for trade or sale.

Americans tended to drink far more in that era than later, so ready access to alcohol was considered a necessity. Whiskey production and alcohol consumption continued to grow in the early third of the 19th century, then peaked and fell as temperance movements swept the land, according to White.

According to records, 12 merchants in nearby Alexandria, Va., bought about 45 percent of Washington’s production to resell in their own shops. A number of neighbors also bought Washington’s whiskey. In 1797, the two small stills in the cooperage netted an 83-pound profit. The larger operation earned 334 pounds in 1798 and roughly 600 pounds ($1,850 in today’s currency) profit in 1799.

The $1,850 profit that Washington made in 1799 would place the distillery behind only the profits from his cash crops (at about $3,500—using results from 1797) as the most profitable enterprise on the plantation, Pogue says. These figures are 18th-century amounts. Pogue notes that British pounds continued to circulate widely at this time, and until 1799, Washington calculated his accounts in pounds sterling. In that year, he changed to dollars. (For an approximate idea of what the value would be today, visit www.measuringworth.com.)

However, the value of the distillery went beyond casks of whiskey.

Then as now, the cooked mash was valuable livestock feed. A series of troughs carried the cooked liquid mash, called slop, from the distillery to wooden cooling tubs. It could be fed from there into some 220 feet of feeding troughs in nearby cattle and hog sheds. In 1799, there were 150 pigs and 30 cows happily feeding near the distillery. The contented cows were highly regarded for their excellent meat, creating yet another revenue source for Mount Vernon.

Like most successful businessmen, Washington experienced growing pains with his venture—the last thing he wanted while he was trying to simplify his life. The distillery consumed more grain than Mount Vernon could supply, so he had to buy grain from other growers.

This wasn’t as bad as it seemed. Much of the commerce of the day was in the form of barter, so Washington often paid for corn and rye with whiskey, or accepted grain, barrels, foodstuffs and other products and services as payment for the liquor.

The purchases made in 1799 by one of his neighbors, Sarah McCarty Chichester, were typical. She purchased 7,000 herrings, 32 gallons of whiskey and one barrel of flour, with a combined value of $32.78. In exchange, she traded 603 barrels of corn and 243 bushels of wheat, valued at $785.38. (Again, these are 18th-century amounts.) The difference was credited to her account.

Reconstructing the Distillery

When Washington died in 1799, his will bequeathed the distillery and gristmill to his nephew, Lawrence, and step-granddaughter, Nellie Custis Lewis. James Anderson left Mount Vernon in 1804, and the distillery operation apparently went into decline. The building burned in 1814.

The commonwealth of Virginia ultimately acquired the land and turned it into a park. During the 1990s, Historic Mount Vernon agreed to assume control of the property, coordinate restoration of the mill and upgrade the park infrastructure. Mount Vernon’s Archaeology Department conducted a systematic survey of the 6 ½-acre park in 1997 and, in 1999, started a seven-year excavation at the site of the distillery. The organization decided to reconstruct the building, and the project was largely sponsored by the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States.

Not surprisingly, Mount Vernon drew some heat over linking the name of Washington with whiskey as well as over the source of funding. This wasn’t the first time that the opposing forces of tippling and temperance had squared off over the Mount Vernon distilling operation. Shortly after the commonwealth acquired the land in 1932, there were some discussions about rebuilding the facility, reports Esther White in “Distilling the Future: Reconstructing Washington’s Distillery.” Word leaked to the press, provoking a Texas editorial writer to declare that the claim that Washington made whiskey was “another infamous lie sent over the country by an element who would drag George Washington’s name in the mire.”

There was less vehemence 70 years later, but it required some creative public relations to divert the media’s initial snickering into more in-depth and straightforward articles about the project and its place in Mount Vernon’s history. How the site dealt successfully with the delicate subject of alcohol is outlined in a paper called “Tourists, Schoolchildren and Liquor Lobbyists: The Various Publics of the Mount Vernon Distillery Site” by researcher Kim Christensen.

For those interested in the reconstruction process, visit Mount Vernon’s Web site (www.mountvernon.org), which features a number of papers written by the archaeologists, historians and architects who worked on the project. Without photos or drawings to guide them, these experts had to use “CSI”-like skills to deduce its probable appearance and many other details. This article was largely drawn from these papers.

The reconstructed distillery opened in April 2007 and operates daily, although most days it’s a demonstration process, not actual whiskey making. It’s the only distillery in the country—and possibly the world—to authentically demonstrate the 18th-century process of distilling. Whiskey is made occasionally, though in small quantities, and is sold at Mount Vernon or used for special occasions.

Bill Hudgins explored the genesis of our calendar for the March/April 2008 issue.
1. At 2,250 square feet, Washington’s distillery was the country’s largest whiskey distillery during the 18th century. The average distillery measured about 800 square feet.

2. The archaeological excavation at Mount Vernon uncovered the stone foundation of the distillery, the location for the five stills and boiler, numerous drains, and evidence for a wall separating the storeroom and office.

3. Washington’s mill was located on Dogue Run, adjoining his Dogue Run Farm, approximately three miles west of the mansion.

4. In 1799, Washington’s distillery produced almost 11,000 gallons of whiskey valued at $7,500 (about $120,000 today). The average Virginia distillery produced about 650 gallons of whiskey per year valued at approximately $460.
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