

**Evaluation of the *Becoming Americans* Theme
and Choosing Revolution Story:
Responses to Visitor Interviews**

Prepared for Colonial Williamsburg

By
Randi Korn & Associates

November 1996

Table of Contents

List of Tables	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Executive Summary	iv
Introduction.....	1
Methodology	2
Analytic Framework	2
Principal Findings	4
Demographics	4
Sites Visited and Tours Taken by Interviewees.....	5
Overall Reactions to Colonial Williamsburg.....	7
Themes Heard throughout the Historic Area.....	9
The Revolution	9
Other Responses	11
How Long the Turmoil Lasted.....	11
Eighteenth-Century Concerns.....	13
Concerns about Choosing	14
Concerns Based on Economic Class.....	15
Concerns about the War.....	17
Other Concerns	18
Most Memorable People, Stories, and Sites	18
Randolph House and Associated Individuals	19
Mary Stith Shop	20
The Taverns	21
Other Memorable Characters.....	22
Other Memorable Sites	22
The Historic Area as a Living, Working Community.....	23
Feels Like a Living, Working Community	23
Does Not Feel Like a Living, Working Community	25

Visitors' Discussion of Ideas Presented in the Historic Area.....	26
What Life Was Like.....	26
Decisions People Faced	27
Quality of Interpreters.....	28
Miscellaneous Responses	28
Interpretive Techniques	29
First-Person Interpretation	29
Role-Playing	30
Interpreters' Knowledge	31
Interpreters' Speaking Ability	32
Asking Interpreters Questions	33
Suggestions for Improvement.....	34
Interpretation.....	34
Other Aspects of Colonial Williamsburg.....	35
Appendix A–Visitor Interview Guide.....	36

List of Tables

1. Demographic Characteristics	4
2. Number of Visits in the Last Three Years	4
3. Sites Visited and Tours Taken	6
4. How Long the Turmoil Lasted.....	12

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Evaluation projects are often complicated processes. They have many steps and pieces—all which must be done methodically and carefully. This year's study is the product of many people's hard work. I want to thank the many Colonial Williamsburg staff and volunteers who recruited visitors, interviewed African American visitors, and prepared materials and instructions that were given to all participating visitors. Clearly, they did a good job. Of all those visitors who were scheduled to be interviewed, only one did not show. Staff members' and volunteers' enthusiasm for the project was apparent to visitors and nearly all followed through with their agreement to be interviewed. Much work happened behind the scenes as well. All recruited visitors had to be reminded of their interview and graciously received when they arrived at the James Anderson House. Specifically, I would like to thank:

Joanne Bryant
Bertie Byrd
Caroline Dobranski
Conny Graft
Kelly Rae
Greg Russell
Robyn Scouse
Valeria Tabb
Renee White

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings from a formative evaluation of the *Becoming American* theme and the Choosing Revolution story. *Becoming Americans* tells how diverse peoples, holding different and sometimes conflicting personal ambitions, evolved into a society that valued both liberty and equality. *Becoming Americans* is the umbrella theme for several stories, one of which is Choosing Revolution. The Choosing Revolution story is about the changing community and the decisions people living in the colony made to shape their future. Choosing Revolution was presented at eight key sites and many secondary sites in the Historic Area at Colonial Williamsburg in the summer of 1996. This is the first year of a major reinterpretation project that will continue over the next four years.

The goals of this formative evaluation were to understand visitors' experiences in the context of the program's goals. The program goals for Choosing Revolution are that visitors will:

- understand the Revolution as an evolutionary process lasting 20 years
- realize the positive and negative consequences resulting from the decisions to side with the Crown or colony
- feel empathy with people who had to make a personal choice
- experience Colonial Williamsburg as a living, working community with diverse people
- be inspired to learn more about the Choosing Revolution issues and how they relate to their lives.

METHODOLOGY

The research design specified that eligible visitors be recruited in the Visitor Center. Visitors were eligible if they were 9 years of age or older and if they were going to tour the Historic Area for two or more days. Eligible visitors were asked to participate in the study, and if they agreed, they were given a map and asked to visit at least five sites or tours from the eight circled on their map where Choosing Revolution interpretations were taking place. Prospective participants were asked to agree to be interviewed about their visit at an appointed time several days later and, in return, were offered \$30. Only those who agreed to be interviewed were included in the sample.

An interview guide (see Appendix A) was used to encourage visitors to talk about their experiences and the ideas that interpreters discussed. The interview guide was intentionally open-ended to allow visitors the freedom to discuss what they felt was meaningful. All interviews were tape-recorded with participants' awareness and transcribed to facilitate analysis.

Visitors were recruited and interviewed during two weeks in August 1996. This sample of visitors included white and African American visitors. White visitors were interviewed by Randi

Korn & Associates, and African American visitors were interviewed by Colonial Williamsburg staff. A total of thirty-nine interviews were conducted. Thirty-five were conducted with white visitors, and four were conducted with African American visitors.

Findings are summarized below. The questions that visitors were asked appear in italics below each heading.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Thirty-nine visitor interviews constitute the sample. The female-male ratio was nearly equal (22 and 17, respectively), and all age groups are represented; however, few visitors fell into the 19–34 age group. Twelve interviewees were under 18 years of age, and nineteen were 35–54 years of age.
- Nearly all the interviewees were visiting Colonial Williamsburg for their first time in the last three years.

SITES VISITED AND TOURS TAKEN BY INTERVIEWEES

Let's begin by having you tell me which places in the Historic Area you visited during the last several days. Tell me all of the places you visited—not just those that we circled on your map.

- The Capitol and the Printer and Binder were the most visited sites (35 visits each), followed by the Governor's Palace (34 visits) and the Raleigh Tavern and Randolph House (29 visits each).

OVERALL REACTIONS TO COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

What are your overall reactions?

- Nearly all interviewees had positive things to say about their experience at Colonial Williamsburg. These positive remarks generally focused on interpreters and their ability to do first-person interpretation, their knowledge of the subject, and the manner in which they invite audience participation. Many of the interviewees who talked about the interactive quality of the programs mentioned the Military Encampment. Other programs mentioned favorably by interviewees include the Mary Stith Shop, the Capitol, and the Governor's Palace.
- A few interviewees were somewhat critical of their experience, although some of these interviewees interspersed positive comments among their negative comments. There were no strong trends among the negative remarks.

THEMES HEARD THROUGHOUT THE HISTORIC AREA

In thinking about all that you saw and heard in the last two days—the places you have visited and the programs by the interpreters that you heard—what themes or ideas, if any, did interpreters throughout the Historic Area talk about over the past two days?

- More than three-quarters of interviewees talked about the relationship between Virginians and the Crown and the tension in that relationship. Of those, many spoke with confidence about a range of factors and events that led to the Revolution, including the Stamp Act and the Boston Tea Party. A few of those interviewees focused their remarks either on the tax issue or on the time period. These few interviewees did not describe the intense impact of these issues on Virginians, nor did they specifically talk about Virginians' having to choose between the colony and the Crown.
- Less than one-quarter of interviewees did not talk about Choosing Revolution when asked to talk about themes that emerged throughout their visit.

HOW LONG THE TURMOIL LASTED

Do you have a sense of how long this turmoil lasted?

- More than one-third of interviewees thought that the turmoil leading up to the Revolution lasted somewhere between 5 and 10 years, and less than one-third believed the turmoil lasted between 10 and 20 years. Several thought it lasted more than 20 years, and only a few interviewees said they did not know.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CONCERNS

Imagine if you were one of those people living here in Williamsburg in the eighteenth century, what major concerns would you have?

- Almost half the interviewees said that they would be concerned about whether to side with England or to rebel. Most of these interviewees did not talk about the “choosing” issue exclusively, but they recognized other issues and events that were associated with the impending Revolution.
- Some interviewees—females in particular—discussed issues that they would be concerned for their husband and sons rather than the political content of the decision to choose the Crown or colony. Other interviewees focused immediately on their concern about having to make a decision. Yet other interviewees talked about how taxes, sanitation, providing for their family, and maintaining a business might weigh on their minds in addition to choosing between the colony and Crown.
- Some interviewees realized that their concerns would depend on their economic class. These interviewees described how they might survive day-to-day living. The concern of taxes appeared in these responses. Very few interviewees discussed the concerns of slaves.

- The war was of concern to all the children who were interviewed. In fact, children focused almost exclusively on the war. Two adults also mentioned their concern about the war, but their comments included other concerns, too.
- A few interviewees talked about other concerns, such as disease, sanitation, and basic survival.

MOST MEMORABLE PEOPLE, STORIES, AND SITES

Which person or story was most memorable? What made him/her/that story memorable?

- About one-third of interviewees talked about the Randolph House when recalling memorable people and stories. Most of these interviewees made specific reference to individuals who they had either heard about from interpreters or witnessed firsthand as character interpreters. The accomplishments of John Randolph, as a relatively unknown hero, and the impressive character of his brother Peyton struck several of these interviewees. A few female interviewees appreciated hearing about Mrs. Peyton Randolph, and a few interviewees met Mr. Hubbard in the Randolph House and enjoyed hearing his point of view about the tenuous situation in Boston.
- A few interviewees talked about the conversation between Ann Wager and Ann Nicholas, a character interpretation they witnessed at the Mary Stith Shop. This conversation appealed to male and female interviewees alike.
- A few interviewees mentioned the Tavern Keepers. In particular, the Keeper at Wetherburn's Tavern was discussed. These interviewees did not necessarily like how he treated his family, but they thought he was an interesting character.
- A few interviewees also talked about how members of the House of Burgesses continued their meetings at the Raleigh Tavern when they were no longer permitted to meet at the Capitol.
- Interviewees mentioned other individuals, but with much less frequency. A few interviewees said that they enjoyed hearing about the Governor, Patrick Henry, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson, and a few found their conversation with Martha Washington memorable.
- A few interviewees thought the Capitol and the Governor's Palace were memorable because of the quality of the interpreters there.

THE HISTORIC AREA AS A LIVING, WORKING COMMUNITY

Some guests have mentioned that the Historic Area does not seem like a real community or neighborhood where different kinds of people lived and interacted. What do you think about that?

- Almost two-thirds of interviewees said that they experienced the Historic Area as a living, working community, and just more than one-third did not.
- More than half of those who experienced the Historic Area as a real community provided specific examples of what made it feel like a community to them. In general, seeing a church and other landmarks that represent “community” as well as costumed interpreters working and interacting with each other contributed to visitors’ feeling that the Historic Area was a community.
- Several of those who experienced the Historic Area as a community, however, saw how others might not. These individuals realized the constraints in creating a truly realistic setting and felt that the Historic Area was as realistic as possible.
- Almost half of those who did not experience the Historic Area as a community thought it did not accurately represent lower-class residents of Williamsburg. They felt the buildings in the Historic Area represent only the wealthy and that there is no indication of where the middle- and lower-class residents of the town lived. Other interviewees wanted to see more costumed interpreters working in the town and interacting with the public. Additionally, some interviewees discussed the lack of black interpreters in the Historic Area.

VISITORS’ DISCUSSION OF IDEAS PRESENTED IN THE HISTORIC AREA

Did you or anyone in your group talk about some of the ideas that you heard in the Historic Area?

- More than two-thirds of interviewees said they talked about what they saw and heard in the Historic Area with others in their visiting group, and almost one-third said they did not talk about anything in particular.
- Several interviewees compared life in the eighteenth century to life in the twentieth century. Most of these discussions were about day-to-day things (e.g., food, sanitation, disease), and a few interviewees talked about the laws in colonial times.
- Several visitors talked about the difficult decision colonists faced—to remain loyal to the Crown or to rebel. A few interviewees talked about many things, among which was people’s having to choose between the Crown and colony.
- A few interviewees also talked about the quality of the interpreters they saw. In general, interviewees praised interpreters’ work.

- The remaining interviewees mentioned a range of other topics, but their descriptions suggest that topics were presented rather than actually discussed. Information was delivered, usually by a parent.

INTERPRETIVE TECHNIQUES

What do you think of how interpreters present the past? Can you talk about the different techniques that you saw that you thought were effective? What makes them effective?

- Without question, the two interpretive techniques interviewees found most effective were first-person interpretations and role-playing.
- Interviewees enjoyed watching interpreters who portrayed themselves as being in the eighteenth-century. In particular, they enjoyed seeing two or more interpreters engaged in eighteenth-century conversation. When the opportunity arose, some interviewees even enjoyed conversing with an interpreter who portrayed themselves as being in the eighteenth century. Most interviewees praised interpreters' ability to stay in the eighteenth century, even when visitors intentionally tried to disrupt them.
- Interviewees also enjoyed participatory interpretations such as the role-playing they experienced in the Capitol, Courthouse, and Military Encampment. Interviewees who were parents were pleased that children were invited to actively participate. Both adult and child interviewees liked being part of something that felt real.
- Interviewees praised interpreters' knowledge of their subjects and their ability to converse with visitors on a variety of topics. Some interviewees liked the combination of hearing an interpreter's presentation and listening to information conveyed during a question-and-answer period. Other interviewees liked that interpreters always knew the answers to their questions.
- Some visitors commented that they could not hear some of the interpreters. They attributed their difficulty in hearing to how loudly and clearly the interpreter spoke and, in some cases, to how quickly he or she spoke. A few interviewees said that they preferred interpreters or guides who interspersed their talks with various interpretive techniques rather than talking continuously without breaks. A few visitors praised the speaking ability of some of the interpreters.
- A few interviewees felt very comfortable asking questions of interpreters and liked that they could do so at any point during the presentation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

How can interpreters do a better job?

- While a few interviewees could not think of any concrete suggestions on how interpreters could do a better job, others were quite specific. A few interviewees did not like the large size of some of the groups. A few interviewees suggested having more interpreters interacting with visitors, a few suggested ways to improve the walking tours, and a few thought the Military Encampment program was too long.
- Some interviewees talked about other parts of Colonial Williamsburg that they would like to see improved. Two interviewees complained about the bus system, two interviewees thought the amenities were too expensive, and two interviewees want to see more benches in the Historic Area.

VISITORS' UNDERSTANDING OF BECOMING AMERICANS AND CHOOSING REVOLUTION

The *Becoming Americans* theme and the Choosing Revolution story are intertwined. Staff at Colonial Williamsburg assume that visitors who understand Choosing Revolution will naturally understand *Becoming Americans*. To some extent, this is true. Data from this 1996 study strongly suggest that many interviewees grasp Choosing Revolution concepts (they are listed in the beginning of this summary). For example, many realize the Revolution as an evolutionary process. While not all interviewees correctly stated how long the turmoil lasted, most knew that it was more than a few years. Many interviewees also talked objectively about the tension between the Crown and colony, and they understood the decision people faced. Almost half of interviewees could identify with eighteenth-century people's dilemma as they said they would be concerned about whether to side with England or to rebel. More than half of interviewees experienced Colonial Williamsburg as a living, working community; however, some interviewees, knowing that half of Williamsburg's population was African, mentioned that there should be more Africans in the town. Williamsburg's diversity is one of the key ideas of the *Becoming Americans* theme. So while interviewees know Williamsburg was populated with diverse people, they did not see a diverse population in the Historic Area.

Another idea of the *Becoming Americans* theme is how this society of diverse people evolved into a society that valued liberty and equality. This specific idea did not emerge in the data, per se, however, there are instances that suggests a cursory understanding of colonists' value of liberty and equality. Interviewees talked about not being able to fully grasp what it must have felt like to not to have the freedom for which colonists yearned because as twentieth-century Americans, they have always been free. Some interviewees also talked about how easy it was for them to vote "yes" in the Capitol while realizing this decision was considerably more difficult for colonists. In addition, a discussion about liberty and equality also emerged in a round-about way when a few interviewees'—male and female—talked about the inequality between men and women and between Africans and colonists. A few interviewees pointed out that the inequality among individuals living in Williamsburg conflicted with colonists' value of liberty and equality.

COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE 1994 STUDY AND THE 1996 STUDY

In 1994, a similar study was conducted with visitors to Colonial Williamsburg. Regarding research methodology, the only difference between the 1994 study and the 1996 study was the eligibility of visitors. In 1994, visitors were recruited the morning of their interview, and in 1996, visitors were recruited two days prior to their interview. Thus, 1996 visitors had more time to visit Colonial Williamsburg than did 1994 visitors. In both studies, visitors were asked to visit at least five of the eight sites and tours circled on the map. In both studies, visitors followed those directions.

In 1994, fifteen percent (6/38) of visitors in the interview sample did not talk about Choosing Revolution. In addition, these individuals were not able to hold meaningful conversations with interviewers because they answered so many of the questions by saying “I don’t know.” These interviewees either did not hear interpreters talk about Choosing Revolution issues or they were oblivious to them. In contrast, in 1996, ten percent (4/39) of visitors in the interview sample did not talk about Choosing Revolution. The data suggest that these individuals were focused on other aspects of Colonial Williamsburg (e.g., eighteenth-century life) and they did not encounter or were not cognizant of the Choosing Revolution story. This difference could be caused by the improved quality, clarity, breadth, and depth in which Choosing Revolution was presented by interpreters in 1996 compared to 1994, or it could be that the extra day and a half that visitors had in the Historic Area allowed them to have repeated contact with the Choosing Revolution story. Interviewees’ quotations from this 1996 study suggest that the Choosing Revolution story was continuously and clearly articulated across sites.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents findings from a formative evaluation of the *Becoming Americans* theme and the Choosing Revolution story. *Becoming Americans* tells how diverse peoples, holding different and sometimes conflicting personal ambitions, evolved into a society that valued both liberty and equality. *Becoming Americans* is the umbrella theme for several stories, one of which is Choosing Revolution. The Choosing Revolution story is about the changing community and the decisions people living in the colony made to shape their future. Choosing Revolution was presented at eight key sites and many secondary sites in the Historic Area at Colonial Williamsburg in the summer of 1996. This is the first year of a major reinterpretation project that will continue over the next four years.

Three data collection instruments were designed to assess visitors' and interpreters' experiences with Choosing Revolution, two of which were open-ended interview guides. One interview guide was used to collect the experiences of visitors onsite, and the other was used to collect the experiences of interpreters. The third instrument was a standardized, mail-back questionnaire that was mailed to visitors several weeks after they returned home from their visit to Colonial Williamsburg. This report presents findings generated from the visitor interviews. Subsequent reports will present findings from the other two instruments.

Open-ended interviews produce valuable data because visitors are invited to talk about their experiences from a very personal perspective. The purpose of conducting open-ended interviews is to encourage and motivate visitors to describe their experiences, express their opinions, and share with the interviewer the meaning they gleaned from the interpretive programs. The data generated from the visitor interviews are essentially the words visitors use to describe their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. They are rich in information. These data, along with the data generated from the other two instruments, will indicate whether the goals for the Choosing Revolution program have been met.

The program goals for Choosing Revolution are that visitors will:

- understand the Revolution as an evolutionary process lasting 20 years
- realize the positive and negative consequences resulting from the decision to side with the Crown or colony
- feel empathy with people who had to make a personal choice
- experience Colonial Williamsburg as a living, working community with diverse people
- be inspired to learn more about the Choosing Revolution issues and how they relate to their lives.

The goals of this formative evaluation were to understand visitors' experiences in the context of the program's goals.

METHODOLOGY

The research design specified that eligible visitors be recruited in the Visitor Center. Visitors were eligible if they were 9 years of age or older and if they were going to tour the Historic Area for two or more days. Eligible visitors were asked to participate in the study, and if they agreed, they were given a map and asked to visit at least five sites or tours from the eight circled on their map where Choosing Revolution interpretations were taking place. Prospective participants were asked to agree to be interviewed about their visit at an appointed time several days later and, in return, were offered \$30. Only those who agreed to be interviewed were included in the sample.

An interview guide (see Appendix A) was used to encourage visitors to talk about their experiences and the ideas that interpreters discussed. The interview guide was intentionally open-ended to allow visitors the freedom to discuss what they felt was meaningful. All interviews were tape-recorded with participants' awareness and transcribed to facilitate analysis.

Visitors were recruited and interviewed during two weeks in August 1996. This sample of visitors included white and African American visitors. White visitors were interviewed by Randi Korn & Associates, and African American visitors were interviewed by Colonial Williamsburg staff. A total of thirty-nine interviews were conducted. Thirty-five were conducted with white visitors, and four were conducted with African American visitors.¹

ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

The data were analyzed according to the Choosing Revolution program goals listed above and the questions that visitors were asked. Those goals and interview questions were used as the framework to present some of the findings. This framework comprises the following topics:

- Sites Visited and Tours Taken by Interviewees
- Overall Reactions to Colonial Williamsburg
- Themes Heard throughout the Historic Area
- How Long the Turmoil Lasted
- Eighteenth-Century Concerns
- Most Memorable People, Stories, and Sites
- The Historic Area as a Living, Working Community
- Visitors' Discussions of Ideas Presented in the Historic Area
- Interpretive Techniques
- Suggestions for Improvement

¹ The research design specified that thirty interviews be conducted with white visitors and ten interviews be conducted with African American visitors. However, Colonial Williamsburg staff had a great deal of difficulty recruiting African American visitors to participate in this study. According to recruiters, only a small percentage of visitors are African American, and those who were approached declined to participate in the study.

The data presented in this report are qualitative, meaning that results are descriptive, following from the conversational nature of the interviews. In analyzing qualitative data, the evaluator studies the responses for meaningful patterns. As patterns and trends emerge, similar responses are grouped together. Verbatim quotations (edited for clarity) are provided in this report to illustrate interviewees' thoughts and ideas as fully as possible. All findings within each section are presented in descending order, starting with the most frequently occurring findings.

PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHICS

Thirty-nine visitor interviews constitute the sample. The female-male ratio was nearly equal (22 and 7, respectively), and all age groups are represented; however, few visitors fell into the 19–34 age group. Twelve interviewees were under 18 years of age, and nineteen were 35–54 years of age. This information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.
Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	N
Gender	
Female	22
Male	17
Age	
Under 18	12
18–24	01
25–34	02
35–44	10
45–54	09
55+	05

Interviewees were also asked how many times they had visited Colonial Williamsburg in the last three years. Nearly all the interviewees were visiting Colonial Williamsburg for their first time in the last three years. See Table 2.

Table 2.
Number of Visits in the Last Three Years

Visits	N
One visit	33
Two visits	04
Three visits	02

Of the thirty-nine interviewees, nearly all held meaningful conversations with the interviewer—that is, nearly all conversations included content that was connected in some way to the Choosing Revolution story. While these interviewees may not have produced “the right answer,” within each conversation there is content that suggests that they gleaned something from their experience relevant to the Choosing Revolution story. However, four of the interviewees (about 10 percent), when responding to questions, did not discuss issues connected to the Choosing Revolution story. Instead, they talked about conditions associated with life in the eighteenth century (e.g., sanitation, disease, life without modern conveniences). These interviewees had difficulty seeing beyond these somewhat simplistic ideas and did not notice, or were not exposed to, any Choosing Revolution ideas.

For the most part, the findings presented focus only on remarks from the thirty-five interviewees whose responses include content relevant to Choosing Revolution. There are a few exceptions, however. All interviewees’ remarks were included in analysis of two of the framework topics: Sites Visited and Tours Taken by Interviewees, and Interpretive Techniques.

SITES VISITED AND TOURS TAKEN BY INTERVIEWEES

As an opening question, interviewees were asked to list all of the sites they visited. As noted earlier, interviewees were given a map of Colonial Williamsburg with the eight Choosing Revolution sites and tours circled, and they were asked to visit at least five of the eight sites.

Interviewees visited an average of ten sites while visiting Colonial Williamsburg. Table 3 lists all sites that were visited by interviewees in descending order, starting with the most-visited site. The seven Choosing Revolution sites are marked with an asterisk. There also was a Choosing Revolution Tour (Road to Independence), which is also marked with an asterisk. The Capitol and the Printer and Binder were the most-visited sites (35 visits each), followed by the Governor’s Palace (34 visits) and the Raleigh Tavern and Randolph House (29 visits each).

Table 3.
Sites Visited and Tours Taken by Interviewees

Sites and Tours	N
*Capitol	35
*Printer and Binder	35
*Governor's Palace	34
*Raleigh Tavern	29
*Randolph House	29
*Military Encampment	25
*Mary Stith Shop	21
Courthouse	20
Apothecary	16
Blacksmith	13
Wigmaker	12
Silversmith	11
Carpenter's Yard	10
Jail	10
Magazine	10
Post Office	10
*Road to Independence Tour	09
Wythe House	07
Bruton Parish Church	06
Geddy House	06
Millinery Shop	06
Shoemaker	06
Bassett Hall	04
Cooper	04
Gunshop	04
Guard House	03
Orientation Tour	03
Powell House	03
Brickyard	02
The Other Half Tour	02
Windmill	02
Women of Williamsburg Tour	02
Robert Carter House	01
Harness and Saddle Maker	01

OVERALL REACTIONS TO COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

After interviewees had mentioned all the sites they visited and tours they took, they were asked to talk about their overall reaction. This question was used as an “icebreaker” to get the conversation going.

Nearly all interviewees had positive things to say about their experience at Colonial Williamsburg. These positive remarks generally focused on interpreters and their ability to do first-person interpretation, their knowledge of the subject, and the manner in which they invite audience participation, as reflected in the first three quotations. Many of the interviewees who talked about the interactive quality of the programs mentioned the Military Encampment, as reflected in the fourth quotation. Other programs mentioned favorably by interviewees include the Mary Stith Shop, the Capitol, and the Governor’s Palace.

I liked it. I like history. I think the people here are very well versed and they know their stuff. And they’re very nice. I liked the Randolph House—just the way the people tell the stories. Then you get to meet the people in costume, and they take on the role of the different characters in their talking, just like they would have in the eighteenth century. And taking those roles seriously. I just had a discussion with a man in the Randolph House about taxation. I thought he was a Loyalist. I liked that. We also liked the Courthouse. They did the reenactment of the different trials, and it was very nice. He got the crowd involved. And they also did an reenactment at the Capitol. I preferred the one at the Courthouse though, but the Capitol was nice, too.

It’s very impressive. It’s a really wonderful way to immerse yourself in the history as you’re learning about it. We were really impressed with the people who are actually in character. They are really just wonderful. They don’t break stride at all. You can tell that they have to know so much to be able to converse as that person. But the people that have led the tours too, they just seemed very knowledgeable and very ready to answer any questions and to elaborate on things.

Yeah, I thought everything was pretty nice. I mean, I liked it all. . . . People coming, listening to everything, being able to interact with everything, and to hear them talk and have a feeling of what it may have been back then, when all this was going on. I thought it was nice.

The Military Encampment, me and my cousin participated—with the stick thing [the guns], and it was really cool. (What else?) The printing shop, the guy who was the printer told us step-by-step what to do. I read a book last year for school, and descriptions [of the printing process] were kind of hazy, and that made it real clear. It was just great. I saw the Capitol. The Capitol, I think, was my favorite. . . . The guy who gave the tour did not make it boring at all. He went from place to place, got us interacting with the jury. One moment we were in another room with the House of Burgesses, it was just really cool. And we just kept on moving so it never got boring. It was very, very interesting.

A few interviewees were somewhat critical of their experience, although some of these interviewees interspersed positive comments among their negative comments. While there were no strong trends among the negative remarks, a few interviewees talked about an interpreter at a particular site, as reflected in the first quotation, and one interviewee talked about the quality of the first-person interpreters, as reflected in the second quotation. This visitor was more knowledgeable than most as she was a professional interpreter at a Canadian historic site. Other negative comments were about the lack of child-centered activities and the commercial aspect of Colonial Williamsburg.

We thought everything was good. The only one that we really were a little bored at was the Capitol. That was the first one we saw, and it was probably because of the person who was giving the tour. She wasn't really loud enough that you could hear her, and that took away from it, I guess.

The biggest strength they have is the fact that their guides are so well informed. Without question, even the people who are taking tickets at the gate are very, very well informed about the eighteenth century, in general, and about Williamsburg [in particular]. . . . I would say that the biggest negative, from my perspective, since I play first person as well, is, I don't think all of them are supposed to be first person, but I would say that they need to be. . . . People just need to be that eighteenth-century person all the time. I know that's hard to do. (Are you talking about those who lead tours?) Everybody. Certainly the people that do persons from the past are pretty good, but it seems almost as though as soon as they are finished their performance, they're back to being twentieth-century people. . . . As soon as you're finished with the tour, the spiel that they did, the performance, then they have to be tour guides. So it is hard to be that first person. But I would say that that would be the one thing that I would project. Try not to fall off.

I, as a parent, would like to see more for children. More child friendly, without making it into Disneyworld. I mean, I'm not asking for some entertainment, because I explained to my son, "You know you're here to see this wonderful thing, [but] you have to do a little bit of work." He loved the maze [in the Governor's Palace]. I can remember liking that. I think, especially with the number of families that are here, there could be more children-centered [activities and tours].

Pretty nice, actually. You know the shop area is somewhat commercial, but that's to be expected. It's been very pleasant, and we've learned some things. (When you say a little bit commercial, what do you mean by that?) Well, a lot of the shops that you go into, they're there for one reason and that's to sell things, and that's understandable. But, you know, in an eighteenth-century environment I suppose if you were really authentic about it, you wouldn't be selling some of the things you sell. Well, it's unlikely that they would be selling pre-made goods. There are cookies and stuff. I don't [think] it's something that would be happening in that period. I could be wrong. It's not a period that I'm that much into. There's this, although done tastefully, commercial flavor to it. And I would expect that, otherwise you won't make money and continue the programs. It's tasteful, but yet it's there.

THEMES HEARD THROUGHOUT THE HISTORIC AREA

Interviewees were asked to talk about themes or ideas that they heard about as they moved from site to site. The Choosing Revolution story focuses on the growing tension between the colony and the Crown, and the decisions Virginians faced—whether to choose loyalty to the Crown or rebellion—as the Revolution approached.

The pending Revolution was discussed by more than three-quarters of interviewees. As one might expect, interviewees' remarks show a range in depth of understanding about this important issue due, in part, to its complexity and the many events and ideas were connected to it. Less than one-quarter of interviewees did not talk about the Choosing Revolution story when responding to this question about themes. Rather, they talked about other aspects of Colonial Williamsburg that they experienced.

The Revolution

More than three-quarters of interviewees talked about the relationship between Virginians and England and the growing tension in that relationship. Of those, many spoke with confidence about a range of factors and events that led to the Revolution, including the Stamp Act and the Boston Tea Party. These interviewees understood that people's lives in the colonies were at stake economically, and they grasped the concept that people had to make a decision about their future. Many of these interviewees also realized that making a decision was not easy and that many Americans today have no idea what it must have been like for people in colonial times. The first three quotations show the depth with which these interviewees understood the ideas contained within the Choosing Revolution story.

The main themes to think about were, I guess, moving away from England, the passion, and what that would have felt like to be able to leave a country that you were really a part of. You know, we've grown up as Americans and were not really attached to that—it doesn't bother us at all—but you can imagine back then how it would have felt. I never thought about it before. Of course, I want to be free. But again, giving up the goods and stuff and putting your money where your mouth is, I guess, in that sense, are you really willing to do without all this stuff? That was pretty interesting. And it's good for the kids to see that, understand what they went through.

Independence, especially at the Capitol. They explained it so even young kids could get an idea about what's going on. (Can you be more specific?) Well, the reasons for independence, why they called for it. And it showed in plain English for kids how the government acted—who did what and why, also the tax on the goods and why. It's hard for me to pick out because I already know a lot of this stuff. (Are there things that reinforce the idea?) I think it was the tavern where the lady spoke about the decisions the citizens had to make at the time. And I can understand that—which way they were going to go. All of a sudden they had to make up their minds. And the conflict choices. Like she said, "We have the advantage of knowing how it turned out," [whereas] they had no idea. So I think maybe that might have woke people up, too. It's not a snap decision. I liked that. If they chose the wrong side—but even if they didn't—how it was going to

affect their daily lives according to where their place was. And I think in modern times we're a little bit more homogenized in where our place was. You can't tell by looking at us where we came from, where we belong, or who we are. In those days, they knew on sight who you were, so you had to think carefully.

This is my fourth time here, and I'd say this has been my richest visit so far. Made richer, I think, by the unified interpreters' theme. Clearly it highlighted, on several levels, the kinds of decisions that went into the choice for independence. I think one presentation that targeted it most nicely together was the walking tour, Road to Independence. The fellow who did that did a very nice job because he managed in an hour to weave together the various strains that went into the choice for independence—from individual people stories to social strains, the intellectual strains, and the religious strains. So that provided me with the conceptual umbrella for everything else. What I found wonderful was the fact that each interpretive experience that I had hit the same people in the same themes, but from a different angle. . . . There was also repeated emphasis on the different social strata in Colonial Williamsburg. I can remember them with times I heard about gentry and middling sort and divisions within the middling sort, and the slaves. And how one's social position influenced how one perceived the question of independence or not independence.

A few of the interviewees who spoke of the impending Revolution did not have the depth of knowledge or feeling that is exemplified by the three quotations above. These interviewees mentioned the Revolution and the path to Revolution but focused their remarks either on the tax issue or on the time period. They did not describe the intense impact of these issues on Virginians, nor did they specifically talk about Virginians' having to choose between the colony and the Crown. Nevertheless, they realized a rebellion was emerging and that Virginians were focused on the Revolution.

I can't really remember them. (Did any issues come up more than once?) You mean at different places? (Yes.) I can't really remember anything. (Just thinking about the different places that you went to, the specific sites, like the Capitol, the things that they talked about there, or some of the things they talked about at the Military Encampment.) Right. Where they had the guides or whatever, they told you the history about the building and things, and . . . they talked about things that would have been going on. . . . They went on about the taxes, and when we went to the tavern, they were talking about whether or not they should [rebel], when they were thinking about the Revolution.

Well, it was mostly the early Revolution. I think that most of the stuff that they talked about was centered around 1774 to 1776. Most of that. It was mostly early Revolution, so that was the basic theme I got. (Any ideas that came across? Any kind of viewpoints that came across to you?) I think most of the guys tried to keep it a strictly factual point of view. Trying to toss in their opinion to make it sound like this was how it was: "I know what I'm talking about." That's what it sounded like to me. They might have, but it sounded like they're coming out with real facts.

Other Responses

Less than one-quarter of interviewees did not talk about Choosing Revolution when asked to talk about themes that emerged throughout their visit. A few interviewees did not see any theme in particular (as shown in the first quotation), and others simply experienced other parts of Colonial Williamsburg, such as slavery (as shown in the second quotation) or the kinds of people who constituted the Williamsburg community (as shown in the third quotation).

I don't know, but basically each individual place had its own theme and it was spelled out pretty good. I think what really makes each individual tour is the guide. The guide really either can make it or break it. And the guide at the Raleigh Tavern had a lot of enthusiasm. I believe her name was Sara. I even remember her name. She had a lot of enthusiasm, and I think that really makes the tour. The print shop was interesting, the hands-on show of the printing, binding, and everything, but the guide has a lot to do with it. (But were there any sorts of things that people talked about that you would say were thematic and that maybe you heard more than once across the sites?) Not necessarily.

I guess about slavery and how hard it was. (Any other themes that you kept hearing about? Or ideas that were mentioned more than once?) No, not that I can recall.

I guess if there was a central theme, I think it was that these were very good people. (When you say "these," you mean who?) The leading citizens, the people who owned these larger houses, the people who were in charge of government were honorable people. I think I'm probably reading a lot [into it]. I think the interpreters have been very factual. Maybe I bring some interpretation of my own into what I'm hearing, so I wouldn't say that the interpreters have been putting any particular slant on things. Maybe I'm bringing my own feelings and perception of history into how I interpret what I'm hearing. (There's nothing wrong with that. Did you notice any other themes or ideas?) Not that come to mind.

HOW LONG THE TURMOIL LASTED

One of the communication goals for the Choosing Revolution story is that visitors will understand that the Revolution was not a single event but an evolutionary process lasting 20 years. Thus, to determine if this idea was conveyed to visitors, interviewees were asked, "As a guest in Colonial Williamsburg, you witnessed a slice of eighteenth-century history. The story of the American Revolution is part of that history. Do you have a sense of how long that turmoil lasted?"

Table 4 summarizes interviewees' responses quantitatively. More than one-third of interviewees thought that the turmoil leading up to the Revolution lasted somewhere between 5 and 10 years, and less than one-third believed the turmoil lasted between 10 and 20 years. Several thought it lasted more than 20 years, and only a few interviewees said they did not know.

Table 4.
How Long the Turmoil Lasted

Time in Years	N
Less than 5 years	03
5–10 years	13
10–20 years	09
More than 20 years	04
Don't know	06

With the exception of some interviewees who either did not know or misjudged how long the turmoil lasted, interviewees realized that many events paved the way to the American Revolution and that, collectively, these events took place over a period longer than just a few years. Interviewees' qualitative remarks are worth presenting because they show how interviewees processed the information given to them during their visit.

Many interviewees, when responding to the question, reviewed what they gleaned from their visit as if they were reciting a history lesson. Their descriptions show how they pieced together and organized all their new information. In some cases, interviewees integrated the information they had heard at Colonial Williamsburg with information they already knew. Additionally, even when interviewees could not give an exact number of years, they realized that the American Revolution was not a single event. These quotations illustrate interviewees' thought processes.

The turmoil itself lasted just after the Seven Year's War, French and Indian War, that's when it really [started], because the British fought the French on the frontier with the Indians. So I think the turmoil lasted probably 10 years prior to, probably 1765. [It was] 1775 when a lot of the taxes, I mean, over and over we heard the Stamp Act, and that was repealed, and then they went into the other taxation that the Queen put on goods, and then on import goods, and the colonies' reactions to those, and the tea and not doing without certain things so that they weren't paying the duty. And the Revolution started sometime [in] 1775, I believe, the beginning of May, or something. A lot of it had to do with the gunpowder, the Magazine, that was mentioned three or four times. The fact that it [the gunpowder] was stolen away in the night and then finally Patrick Henry came down with a troop of about 150 men, and the governor finally paid for it, and then several weeks or months later he took that as an open revolt against the Crown. He fled with his family to his British warship and then declared that they were in open rebellion. That started Virginia's step into the war. And of course they talked about how after the House of Burgesses was done away with, they went down to the Raleigh Tavern where they held a meeting, made some declarations, and started sending some letters off to other colonies trying to get them to not buy British [goods].

I think it was made fairly clear that things began to bubble following the French and Indian War. So, early 1760s. Safe to say that I remember this from my education, but the sequence of acts—Stamp Act and the repealed Townsend Acts and the response to the Townsend Acts, and the Tea Party. So, yes, I had a sense that things began to bubble early to mid-1760s and came to a head in mid-1770s. So I had a sense of about a decade. And that was done nicely on that Road to Independence tour. That fellow did a very nice job of gradually building the story as the decade went on.

I wasn't paying attention to that. I was sort of caught up in it, but I know from history books [that] it lasted for a pretty long time—almost 4 or 5 years. That's pretty long. . . . (What about, not how long the war lasted, but all that stuff, all the turmoil that people felt?) Oh well, that was a long time before. I guess it was a long time. I wasn't really paying attention to that aspect of it. (What's a long time to you?) Well, if you figured it started a little bit before the Stamp Act, which was before the war started. So, I mean, even after that, there were years and years of turmoil. You had to set everything up. So 15 to 20 years, at least. And that's a pretty long time.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CONCERNS

Since the Choosing Revolution story focuses on the dilemma Virginians faced when having to choose between colony and Crown, Colonial Williamsburg staff wants visitors to realize how difficult living in this time period was and to feel empathy for colonial Virginians. Interviewees were asked to imagine being a Virginian living in Williamsburg in the eighteenth century and to talk about any major concerns they might have.

These data were particularly difficult to analyze because most interviewees talked about multiple concerns. In addition, gender was a factor. Since the question asked interviewees to imagine being themselves in eighteenth-century Williamsburg, some female interviewees may have responded within the framework of eighteenth-century life, recognizing that women did not have the power and rights that men did and so may not have had the same concerns. It is difficult to know if interviewees maintained a twentieth-century way of thinking while imagining being in the eighteenth century or if they became an eighteenth-century person, adopting the constraints that went along with that time period.

Almost half the interviewees mentioned that they would be concerned about whether to side with the Crown or to rebel. Other ideas emerged along with the issue of having to choose, such as having to pay high taxes, living with poor sanitation, and supporting the family. Some interviewees, when describing their concerns, addressed slavery and the range of economic classes living in Williamsburg. A few interviewees—children in particular—were concerned about the impending Revolution and having to go to war.

Concerns about Choosing

Almost half of interviewees said they would be concerned about whether to side with England or to rebel. Most of these interviewees did not talk about the “choosing” issue exclusively, but they recognized other issues and events that were associated with the impending Revolution. As noted in the first two quotations, some interviewees—particularly females—expressed concern for their husbands and sons and talked about issues the men in their family would face, rather than the political content of the decision to choose the Crown or colony. In response to this, several female interviewees were asked probing questions to encourage them to think beyond their gender, as shown in the second quotation. Other interviewees focused immediately on their concern about having to make a decision (as reflected in the third quotation). Other quotations show how taxes, sanitation, providing for their family, and maintaining a business also weighed on people’s minds in addition to choosing between the colony and Crown.

I would have two or three major concerns. My concern would be for this whole concept of independence. What was going to happen? I would be mainly concerned about my husband. What was going to happen to him? Depending on his political views, it doesn’t matter whatever political views he had. I would be concerned. I have a son who would definitely be choosing revolution, I’m sure, and so I would be concerned. My husband would probably be a Loyalist. . . . But, I would be worried about the concept there. I would certainly be worried about the uncertainty of what was going to happen to my children with the world being turned upside down.

Being taxed so heavily. The high cost of goods. If I was living here, I would have been a wife and mother. So I would have been concerned about the kids and their schooling. (Right. Anything else?) I don’t know. If I lived here, I don’t know that I would have thought much beyond the local community. Now we think in a much broader way. (What if you were a man of your stature now in the eighteenth century, what do you think?) Well, you would have been very challenged on whether to stay with the mother country England, this whole idea of revolution. I think it would have been very scary, and [I would have been] very confused. (Confused? In what way?) Whether to stay with England because that was the whole idea coming over here. I don’t think they would have ever come to start a colony if they thought they would become independent of them. That was not their intention. I think the people that came here thought that this was like an extension of England. They dealt in English goods. Everything. They maintained English mannerisms as much as they could. And then this idea of independence to come along, and to cut yourself off from your lifeline and yet to feel the need to get away from that—from being under their stronghold and everything—it would be confusing. Which way do you turn? Which is better? What is better for my family? For the next generation? What is going to work? I wouldn’t have wanted to have been in their shoes making that decision.

Just the fact that would you really want to pull away from England and be independent. Put everything on the line for it. And I guess some of the, what would you call them, the people who sold goods and stuff, that they wanted to be Loyalists and stay, and if they lose, they’re in a lot of trouble. Or if they want to be on the Patriot side and if they lose,

they're in a lot of trouble. So it's just what you see in this whirlwind of running around for three days. I mean, you leave here as a historian if you weren't one before. You certainly pick up a few of the concepts.

Well, if I was a businessman and at that time, with the tax, and they were basically boycotting items, I wouldn't know if I'd stay here or move back to England, because of the business. At the Randolph House, I believe, the family actually was split. Half went back, half stayed, and they never saw each other again. . . . At the Raleigh Tavern, I don't remember the owner's name, but his family lived in a section that was the open porch, which was had eight children jammed into a very small area. You know, living quarters weren't good for most people, unless you were rich. So it wasn't really a nice time to live. (Let's say you were wealthy. What would be some of the things that you would be struggling with?) Well, it would be the same thing as far as not knowing whether to support the Crown, or go along and say, "Well I am going, too, we're going to break away." Because of the finances, you can take a chance and stay here or go back to England and have some security. You could lose everything or maybe prosper in the end.

Concerns Based on Economic Class

Some interviewees realized that their concerns would depend on their economic class. These interviewees described how they might survive day-to-day living. Note that the first quotation is primarily about survival, but it also includes remarks about having to choose between England and the colony. Concern about taxes appeared in these responses as it did in responses related to concerns about Choosing Revolution (see the third quotation). Very few interviewees discussed concerns slaves faced, as reflected in the second and last quotations.

Well, I guess the main thing was if you were one of the gentry, [you'd be concerned with] keeping your business affairs in order and being able to preserve your fortunes. If you were one of the middle class or the tradespeople, they would rely on getting proper training to the apprentices, getting up the skills. I believe one gentleman there was saying that if you were a tradesman, you were essentially going to be a tradesman. By marriage, you might come up the social ladder, but more than likely it's not going to happen. I believe that some of the gentry were divided between the Tories who favored the King and the colonists who would have started to say, "Well, we're going to break off." They had to make a decision. And they [the interpreters] talked about this guy whose house was taken over by the British, and he told the colonial troops to fire on the house, and they blew it up. He lost everything for the cause of the colonies. I can understand the sacrifices those people had to make. I mean, because the British were noted for being pretty brutal. And you just say, "Oh, boy, which way do I go here? Do I play footsie with these guys, or do I say, 'This is it?'" And a lot of them had the courage to say, "We've had it baby, that's it." I could picture myself actually. They were really able to do it, and I said, "Maybe I can." I realized how lucky I am to be alive today, rather than back in those days.

Well, I suppose it would depend on my station. I would assume I would have lived in Maine. It's the eighteenth century. You have babies, you have your own gardens, you

cook your own food, the whole thing. I can sort of identify a little with the survival. . . . And then with the embargo or whatever they called that, when they didn't have the English goods, then they really had to go without. And I can imagine, you know, everything was brought in from elsewhere. I'm sure they made a few things here, but still. (So when you say "depending on your station." Can you talk about that?) If they were slaves, they had to do their work. But at least they knew what was going on from day to day, what was expected of them, and what they were going to do. [They] probably felt secure. (You don't think they had any major concerns?) Oh, I'm sure they wished they had it better. But even they knew that it could be worse elsewhere. It was organized here, well run. Not everywhere in the world was. The lady in the Tavern that said they were given a chance to join the English army and how hardly anyone did. That doesn't surprise me, I don't [think there were] many people wanting to join the army. But also even those who had money, they had the responsibility of taking care of everyone else, and their decisions were going to affect everybody else. I'm sure that made plenty of them nervous.

It seemed like there was really a difference between the gentry and more the common people, and then there was the middle class. I got the impression that there were more people in the middle class—the shopkeepers and the merchants. If I put myself in any one's [shoes], it would be the ones that I think would be more stressed. They would be the shopkeepers and the merchants. Their concerns would be more economic. The taxes would really affect them a lot and their day-to-day living. I got the impression that they were the people who really would be outraged by the taxes because they had the prosperity that they actually had to pay some taxes. I think the people on the lower end of the economic scale wouldn't have been as directly affected that much by the taxes. (Is there anything else that you can think of that you would have maybe been thinking about or burdened by?) Probably just making a living then, a part of day-to-day life. It seemed like there would not have been a whole lot of time for entertainment, enjoyment, and when I did get a chance, I probably would have taken it and really enjoyed it because you'd be working the long days and weeks to just make your living. I can see how you'd hate to share it with the government.

As a black American, how am I going to get home on time? If I don't get home on time, will I find my ears pinned to the pillory? How do I fit into this into this picture? What does it mean to me as an individual? These people are fighting for something and, you know, what does it mean? (How does it affect you?) I mean, if they're talking about freedom, how does affect me? Should I get excited about it because they're talking about their own freedom? I probably would be mixed about it because I'd say, "Well, as long as they're bringing the word up, maybe somewhere down the line there's hope for all of us." Well, probably being educated now, I can think about it. I don't know what I'd be thinking about back then. (You don't know?) I'm pretty sure, especially after the discussions on the Other Half tour and [knowing] how black people did get together and gather because it wasn't like they were working as individuals—they did have their gatherings—and so there had to be some kind of discussion. I would imagine that that there was some kind of perception of what it means to me. You know, this word "freedom," what are they fighting for? What does it mean to me? If they're fighting for

their own freedom, does it mean that they can conceptualize that freedom also including me? And, just from the discussions, I get the idea that they were mixed up. We're talking about freedom for us, what about these people, slaves? There was a whole lot of ambivalence over how they felt about it. I'm sure that some of that, well [if] I was serving coffee or somebody else was serving coffee, [it] would have filtered down to me, you know, Sarah was serving coffee and she heard this over the table, and Sarah's no fool.

Concerns about the War

The war was of concern to all the children who were interviewed. In fact, children focused almost exclusively on the war, as reflected in the first and second quotations below. Two adults also mentioned their concern about the war, but their comments included other concerns, too.

How the war started. (What do you think a boy your age would be thinking about or struggling with?) About being shot just as a drummer [in the corps]. (So you would assume you would participate in the war?) Yeah. (Without a doubt you would be in the war?) Yeah. (Would there be anything else that you would be thinking about? Any other things that might concern you?) No.

Probably whether my brothers or my father would have to go off to war, and if they would come back. How it might affect my life severely, like, what expenses and stuff. Basically like what's going to happen in the future because it's like a big black hole that you're walking into. You don't know what's going to happen.

I couldn't relate to the concerns of large landholders because I'm not a large landholder, so my empathy with them was more intellectual. I ran into Mr. Purdy at the printing shop. . . . He had come over [from England] and did not relish the idea of returning, but he was concerned how the outcome might affect his livelihood, might affect his family. Those kind of concerns I could immediately relate with. I was talking with my wife about it. We didn't pass through any period that had the kind of social turmoil that is so clearly being depicted here. The closest we've come was the '60s, when we were both teenagers, and my wife correctly pointed out that there wasn't as much at stake in the '60s for us as there was here. . . . But if I were in a situation where there was that life-and-death kind of thing, it was the scale of the middling folk here that most spoke to me. So it would be the concerns of what's this going to mean to my way of life, my business. Will I have a job when this is all over? The concern of whether I'd have to serve [in] the military. It's interesting, that didn't pop into my head until just now. That was not highlighted much. What seemed to be highlighted in the interpretations was fortunes that could be won or lost, how one's family would fare. Division of families was a constant known. Particularly touching to me was the two women speaking at the Mary Stith house. Both had sons who had chosen to join the Virginia Independent Company. That spoke to me. For some reason the fact that I might be fighting and get shot didn't come through to me, and the interpretations didn't highlight it. So I didn't think of it until just now. So probably my major concerns would be regarding livelihood, the social turmoil, loss of order, loss of a settled, stable view. Those would be my concerns.

Other Concerns

A few interviewees talked about other concerns, such as disease, sanitation, and basic survival. One interviewee thought his safety would be in danger, as reflected in the last quotation.

Personal sanitation would be horrendous. And as a woman [with] not many choices in life, the labor that they had to go through, the hard work, and the drudgery. (Anything else that you might be thinking about?) Well, I guess politically, I don't know where I would be involved politically. I mean, the problems that were going on with England. I think it sounded like it was a day-to-day survival for a lot of these people. I mean, at the Powell House, upper middling they called them, they were wealthier than most, but they had to import everything and things were hard to come by, and it was a lot of work. I guess that's it.

Probably how the people lived back then and what they did for a living. (If you were living in this time period that they're interpreting, what would you would be struggling with?) Like if you were rich or poor, you'd have to either help somebody else with their work or you can go to school, if you were rich. [I would be] trying to help them [my parents] out back and try to help them out around the house and out in the garden and stuff.

If I were one of those people, one [concern] would be security and protection. I noticed that they all had a lot of guns and things around because of protection. I assume because there were so much rioting and conflicts between the Indians and the conflicts between the blacks and whites and that kind of thing. So security would have been one of the concerns and also one of the concerns would be . . . day-to-day living, diseases because of the outdoor toilets and that kind of thing. So protection from diseases might have been another concern.

MOST MEMORABLE PEOPLE, STORIES, AND SITES

Visitors to Colonial Williamsburg hear stories about and sometimes meet interpreters role-playing people from the past. Interviewees were asked to recall the story or person that was most memorable to them and to explain why. Although interviewees remembered many people and stories, they did not always connect the right name to the site or story. The Randolph House and the individuals and stories associated with that site were mentioned most often by interviewees. Other sites and associated historic people and stories were mentioned by interviewees, including interpretations that took place at the Mary Stith Shop and stories associated with the Raleigh Tavern. Fewer interviewees talked about other memorable characters, such as Patrick Henry and Martha Washington, and a few interviewees mentioned other memorable sites, such as the Governor's Place, the Capitol, and the Apothecary.

Randolph House and Associated Individuals

About one-third of interviewees talked about the Randolph House when recalling memorable people and stories. Most of these interviewees made specific reference to individuals they had either heard about from interpreters or witnessed firsthand as character interpreters. For example, the accomplishments of John Randolph, as a relatively unknown hero, and the impressive character of his brother Peyton struck several of these interviewees, as reflected in the first and second quotations. A few female interviewees appreciated hearing about Mrs. Peyton Randolph, as reflected in the third quotation. A few interviewees met Mr. Hubbard in the Randolph House and enjoyed hearing his point of view about the situation in Boston, as reflected in the last quotation.

We stopped at the Randolph House. He [John Randolph] missed the history books. He died in the Second Continental Congress. And just the fact that he, having never really hearing of the man, may have been President of the United States as opposed to George Washington. It's interesting how people miss history by one reason or another. (What made Mr. Randolph memorable for you?) Once seeing the original house—it was built in 1715—and he was a lawyer. Just hearing the story of who he was and the fact that I missed [him] in all my studies of history, not really realizing that he was Speaker of the House of Burgesses in the ten years prior to the Revolution. Just the power that he had, and, of course, he had to be the middleman between both sides of the upper House of Burgesses and listen to both sides—between the Loyalists and the colonists. I just found it interesting.

The Randolph House. I can't remember his first name. (There's Peyton and John.) Yeah, Peyton Randolph. (What makes him so memorable to you?) He worked his whole lifetime to make a better life for everybody when he could [have] easily just concentrated on the power, money, and wealth for himself. . . . Also the fact that he treated his slaves well when he could have treated them poorly. I don't like slavery, but back then there was slavery. So, I admired him for that. I admire him because he didn't take advantage of the power that he had.

Mrs.—the Peyton Randolph's wife. She had no children, but she had to mediate the men of her family—one a fiery rebel, one a moderate, and the other a Loyalist. She didn't want her family to fall apart. But it would really help her in the end. Save him and they couldn't get back together again. (And what made her so memorable do you think?) Just the fact that she seemed to have a voice in her family. She seemed to have a role. Some women didn't have—nothing but childbearers, staying in the background.

For me it was Mr. Hubbard. He popped out of nowhere in the Randolph building. He was an inconsequential guy who was talking about when he came back from England and . . . came back here to the colonies, and he was commenting on what was happening in Boston. The Tea Party had just happened, and they were talking about closing Boston Harbor and how that was going to affect Virginia. And he was scratching his head, saying how these were separate colonies. Nobody ever cared what anybody else in the colonies did, and all of a sudden it was like something that was happening in Boston

seems to be hitting home for us here in Virginia. He was just trying to figure out what was going on. And I really liked the guy the way he just popped out of nowhere and really seemed to make some really good points.

Mary Stith Shop

A few interviewees talked about the conversation between Ann Wager and Ann Nicholas, a first-person interpretation they witnessed at the Mary Stith Shop. This conversation appealed to male and female interviewees alike. These interviewees appreciated hearing two women talk about some of the most difficult issues of their time while realizing that their place in society was a barrier to their effecting change (see the two quotations below).

We just went to the Mary Stith Shop, where they did a little play. It was about an old woman who ran the school for blacks, and Mrs. Nicholas came over, and they were talking about the school at first. There was a lot of tension there. And then she got into it. Her son George is going into the Revolutionary army. And then the woman said her son-in-law was going into it, too, and they had to decide what to do about it. They decided just to let it run its course because they couldn't do anything else about it. (Why did they feel they couldn't do anything else about it?) Because, I guess, at that time period, they were women, they really didn't have that much of a say. They figured that the government was up to the men. Whatever they decided would be the best.

The two women in conversation touched me. They were in the last interpretation I ran into, and the woman's angle spoke to me. Their instability was amplified by the fact that they had limited voice. I mean it was Mrs. Nicholas, her son George had decided to join the Virginia Independent Company. She was speaking with, I can't remember her name, it might be Mrs. Hayes [it was Wagner], who ran the school for slaves. And her son-in-law had chosen the Virginia Independent Company. And clearly the interacting between the two of them highlighted the fact that they had a place in society that prohibited them from having an impact on their sons' decision. So on top of the general turmoil within society, it was amplified by the fact that they had limited voice within that society. So that struck me.

The Taverns

A few interviewees mentioned the Tavern Keeper at the Raleigh Tavern. However, judging from the first quotation, this interviewee was actually describing the Tavern Keeper at Wetherburn's Tavern. The interviewees who mentioned this particular Tavern Keeper did not necessarily like how he treated his family, but they thought he was an interesting character, as reflected in the first and second quotations. A few interviewees also talked about how members of the House of Burgesses continued their meetings at the Raleigh Tavern when they were no longer permitted to meet at the Capitol. The intensity and drama of this story impressed one man in particular, as reflected in the fourth quotation. (This story was mentioned by another interviewee, too, while describing his experience at the Capitol.)

The Tavern Keeper was very interesting because he was so businesslike . . . his family only had one little room to live in. I guess he kind of had to do it to make money, but then again, it was weird because he handled this money, but his family had nothing because he had to spend it all. I thought that was interesting. I don't know his name, but they said he had ten children or something, and their room was as small as the back porch.

The Raleigh Tavern. As far as the guides relating to the family, because I do have a family, and how the Tavern Keeper was more interested in having room for guests and for whomever to make money as opposed to his family. They [the family members] basically worked with the slaves and were more or less slaves. That was interesting and sad. . . . If you were a child, you didn't have any rights really, and you were brought into this world to work and to make money for the father and mother, I guess. Well women, too. Women were second-class citizens, probably more than second-class citizens. And, well, if you were a slave, that says it all, you were a slave.

I really enjoyed the lady at the Raleigh Tavern. She was just outstanding. And I enjoyed hearing how once they disbanded at the Capitol, they just all moved right over there to the Raleigh Tavern and continued with their meetings. And I liked the way she presented it. She was very good. (Oh, so she told that story?) Yes. She told that—well, a lot of them did in various ways—but, see, she told it in the first person . . . like she was back then, because she said, “we,” but that was just her manner. She had such a friendly manner and was so nice. She was very knowledgeable. She gave us plenty of time to ask questions. She said, “Interrupt me because if you don't you won't get a word in!” She was just very, very nice.

I guess the story was, all these names, well, this group of people disbanded and had to find another place to meet. (House of Burgesses?) Yeah. I thought that was pretty neat. And you had to find another place to meet. Which reminds me of a lot of the politics that accompanies this stuff. . . . Because of the politics of it, they'll find a way to meet. They'll still get their points across. They'll still share ideas because I think that's just the American way. We might fight wars that are unpopular and stuff. (So what made that so memorable for you?) I don't know. Maybe as a Vietnam vet, all the garbage that went on, and you thought you were doing the right thing, and you find out you're not doing the

right thing. I think that sticks with you for life. You don't want your son to go through that. So you kind of make sure that it's open. As far as I'm concerned, you make sure that we're communicating with the people. . . . And that's the frustration that so many of us have. So when you look back at this, where it started, I think it's just interesting to see that all starting. And so much turmoil. And as time goes on, I think, the longer you live, the more you see that. Everything's changing but nothing's changing.

Other Memorable Characters

Other individuals were mentioned by interviewees, but with much less frequency. A few interviewees mentioned that they enjoyed hearing about the Governor, Patrick Henry, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson (see the first and second quotations), and a few found their conversation with Martha Washington memorable.

I thought that the Governor—the second to the last one of Williamsburg, I think he only did it for two years, I don't remember his name—but I thought he was really interesting because he was really well liked by the colonists. And most of the time you just hear about the ones that were hated. And so, I thought, they said it might be neat to think about . . . if he'd been there at the time of the Revolution.

Patrick Henry comes to mind. And Washington, of course, and Jefferson. (Let's just take Patrick Henry for a moment. What makes him memorable for you?) Well, the woman quoted him at the Capitol, his famous words when they were talking about how they wanted to be represented at the Continental Congress in Philadelphia and the House of Burgesses, and what was going to happen to it. His speech there, and that he was an eloquent writer and speaker. She reminded me of that.

And yesterday at the Wythe House, we saw Martha Washington. And it's just interesting. I've been to other places like this . . . it's like they're thinking at the time as twentieth-century people, and they're trying to act like eighteenth-century people, and it's almost like they're acting. [Here], they're thinking like eighteenth-century people as they play the part. And it just brings . . . realism that makes it more interesting, more remarkable.

Other Memorable Sites

A few interviewees thought the Capitol and the Governor's Palace were memorable because of the quality of the interpreters there.

Probably the . . . lady in the Capitol, now, I'm sure she told us her name, and I don't think she was being anyone in particular. . . . But she was very good. (Do you know what made her memorable for you?) Partly was the way she spoke. I mean she was easy to hear and she also had a lot of, well, I said to my friend that she seemed to be a future thespian. Just believable in the way she was speaking that she would have been there.

We had a really good experience at the Governor's Palace. I liked where you walk in and it's so impressive to see the guns in the entryway. And the interpreter, the person who was leading the tours, I thought was really excellent. The Palace, I guess, in general, I've gotten the idea that the tour leader has so much to do with the quality of each experience. The guy that was leading the tour in the Palace seemed really good and really on top of things and did a good job of answering questions, so I really liked that Governor's Palace quite a bit.

THE HISTORIC AREA AS A LIVING, WORKING COMMUNITY

To gauge whether visitors experienced the Historic Area as a community where diverse people lived and worked, interviewees were asked to react to a comment about the Historic Area not seeming like a real community or neighborhood where different kinds of people lived and interacted. This strategy was used to encourage people to talk about their own experiences and to make them feel comfortable about expressing a range of opinions—positive and negative. All interviewees were also asked to suggest what Colonial Williamsburg could do for those visitors who did not see the Historic Area as a community.

Almost two-thirds of interviewees said that they experienced the Historic Area as a living, working community, and just more than one-third did not. Within each response category, there are nuances that deserve explanation.

Feels Like a Living, Working Community

More than half of those who experienced the Historic Area as a real community provided specific examples of what made it feel like a community to them. In general, seeing a church and other landmarks that represent “community,” such as taverns, shops, and the Capitol, contributed to visitors' feeling that the Historic Area was community, (as shown in the first quotation). The most important feature for visitors, however, was seeing costumed interpreters working and interacting with each other. For example, seeing townspeople interacting in the Mary Stith Shop provided visitors with a rich, convincing experience, as reflected in the second quotation. Several of those who experienced the Historic Area as a community, however, saw how others might not. These individuals realized the constraints in creating a truly realistic setting and felt that the Historic Area was as realistic as possible, as shown in the third and fourth quotations. Finally, several of those who experienced the Historic Area as a community provided suggestions as to how it should change so it feels more like a community. Suggestions, for the most part, focused on peopling the town with interpreters, as reflected in the last quotation. Some interviewees mentioned that seeing so many tourists on the street was distracting.

I feel like it does. . . . It's laid out like a community, and you were able to see the different parts of the community—the church, places where the government was, and the taverns. So I felt like I could definitely see how it can be a community here. (Are there any other things besides the layout of the town that make it feel like it's a community to you?) It's small. Everything's right there together, so it's not hard to see how everything

would be related. And then when you do take a tour, the same things kept coming up over and over again. Tours and then different walks that we took—it was easy to see how everything flowed together. So you'd really have to get involved in things, you know, instead of just kind of walking around.

It seems like a community to me. . . . When we went to the Mary Stith house, there was a blacksmith walking in, and a lawyer, too. . . . And there was a lawyer talking about life during that time. That was the best, when they had the characters talking about things and what it was like. In the Raleigh Tavern they had the two different conversations, two different debates going on . . . that was very good. They were acting it out, and that was interesting. They had two brothers in the tavern over there, and they had them acting out a debate with someone else, and it was interesting. I thought that was the most appealing part of it.

I mean, you have to be realistic about it. I don't know what they expect. . . . I think it's very realistic. . . . This to me says, "Yeah, this is as close as you can get." . . . I mean any more realistic than that, I don't want them shooting muskets at me! The real buildings, and just the way that everybody I met was very friendly, very helpful. I wouldn't have found this [place] if it wasn't for two people dressed in a gowns. . . . I thought it definitely was like a community. I guess that depends on what they mean. Do they expect to come here and [be] whisked into the past totally? Well, then if you want to do that, they'll have to be put in tents for a couple of weeks and get the real feel of it. Because you just can't see the field, you got to feel it. So, I don't know. I mean they're entitled to [their opinion]. I just think it's as much a community as I want.

The historic area is very realistic. (What makes it so?) Well, the people who are in town. They're even trying to effect an accent. That would be realistic. The acting that they do, they don't pretty it too much. I notice everything isn't pristine. It isn't perfect, it isn't like you would drop in here. I think some of the houses could look a little worse if you wanted it to be more realistic. But then I guess people wouldn't react too well to that. I think it's as realistic as it can be given that you want tourists to come.

I think it would be nice if there were more costumed people. I could understand the limitations on that, but if there would be more people who were wandering around, like the Mr. Hubbard. . . . That could help put it in a period. You see so many people [visitors] with shorts and T-shirts . . . it's hard to keep things placed in time, I guess. And I can see how that criticism would be made, but I think it's unrealistic to expect there to be enough people of the period to counteract that effect. I know it would be nice to be more placed in the time, but I think it's probably an impossibility. (Did you feel like this was a living community?) Yeah, I did. I think a lot of that would come from just going into the Shoemaker, and how good an interaction [you have] with the Shoemaker.

Does Not Feel Like a Living, Working Community

Almost half of those who did not experience the Historic Area as a community thought it did not accurately represent lower-class residents of Williamsburg. They felt the buildings in the Historic Area represent only the wealthy and that there is no indication of where middle- and lower-class residents of the town lived, as reflected in the first and second quotations. Other interviewees wanted to see more costumed interpreters working in the town and interacting with the public, as reflected in the third quotation. Additionally, some interviewees discussed the lack of black interpreters in the Historic Area (see the fourth quotation). As evidenced by the last two quotations, a few interviewees did not expect Colonial Williamsburg to be completely realistic, as they understood the constraints of presenting eighteenth-century life in the twentieth century.

What we see left standing are the most outstanding of the buildings, and these buildings [were] probably built by wealth. [They] were built to stand a long time. We have the gaps in this area . . . there were other people, and I'm sure they must have lived somewhere around here. I won't say working class, but, you know, people of lesser means. These people were the hoi polloi, they were the elite, and so their buildings and structures could withstand the test of time more than a wooden shack or something that was built on a poor foundation, or no foundation.

There's a lot of shops, costumes, and interpreters everywhere, but it might seem more realistic if you had people out doing things. Walking around the town and talking to each other rather than just sitting there in the door and telling you when you can go in the shop because [then] you'd get to see more of a normal life.

It seems artificial to me, but I don't see of any way around that. . . . I mean I see people walking around. They seem to be assuming their person, even when they're walking around, so I don't have an argument with that. I don't think it seems like a community, but I don't expect it to seem like a community. . . . I think it would be better to have more than one interpreter in each place, to have interaction between them.

It seems a little sterile. . . . You would have to have, there's what, 2,000 people here? Well you need 2,000 people here, half black, half white, walking around in period costume. Of course you couldn't afford it. But there's enough buggies going around, and everybody's dressed in costume, but mainly what you see is a bunch of tourists walking around, so what does it look like? A bunch of tourists walking around. So that changes things. It looks more modern day than possibly really it was then. You would have muddy streets, but how popular a place would it be if you had mud in the streets? It looks a little sterile. I would like to see more period costumes maybe, people moving around and in colonial dress.

VISITORS' DISCUSSIONS OF IDEAS PRESENTED IN THE HISTORIC AREA

The reason interviews were conducted after visitors had toured the Historic Area for at least two days is because staff wanted to see the kinds of ideas or issues that lingered on visitors' minds enough to compel discussion with other members of their visiting group. Being motivated enough to discuss ideas is related to one of the Choosing Revolution program goals: to be inspired to learn more about Choosing Revolution issues and how they relate to visitors' lives. Thus interviewees were asked if they or anyone in their group discussed any of the ideas they heard in the Historic Area.

More than two-thirds of interviewees said they talked about what they saw and heard, and almost one-third said they did not talk about anything in particular. Among those who had discussions, three distinct categories emerged: "What Life Was Like," "Decisions People Faced," and "Quality of Interpreters." However, there were not very many discussions in each category. Most of the topics that visitors discussed were unique—that is, they occurred only once in the data. They are presented under "Miscellaneous Responses."

What Life Was Like

Several interviewees compared life in the eighteenth century to life in the twentieth century. Most of these discussions were about day-to-day things (e.g., food, sanitation, disease), and a few interviewees talked about the laws in colonial times.

I'm a history teacher, so I do nothing but discuss history with my daughter! I mean, all the time. Well, she's very interested . . . how you can die rapidly in Jamestown, but this place, to her, was a real safe place. She couldn't understand about epidemic diseases and what caused typhoid. . . . Why didn't people know? Why didn't they understand? . . . That kind of thing. And I told her that . . . the twentieth-century person would be appalled. And of course you don't have that.

We went to the Capitol and we participated in a trial, and I was the person who was on trial. We talked about how unfair it was that a woman would have to be represented by her husband and the husband would have to pay the fines. We saw the trial at the Courthouse, too. Same thing. A lot of it was like they were doing politics. The only reason this one person got convicted for anything was because they were trying to be loyal to the King and what happened in Boston wouldn't happen. . . . So we basically talked about that. . . . We went to Chowning's Tavern one night, and we talked about the different types of food because I got the sampler and it had different types of food. [We talked about] the different types of food, how cold it probably would have been, who'd have been in the tavern, and the different musicians walking around. And just how hard it would have been to run a tavern.

Decisions People Faced

Several visitors talked about the difficult decision colonists faced—to remain loyal to the Crown or to rebel. A few interviewees mentioned people’s having to make a decision among comments about other ideas or experiences. Note that the first quotation includes many remarks about life in the eighteenth century, but among them is the recognition of the decisions people had to make. A few other interviewees provided more depth in their response, as reflected in the last two quotations. Note that the third quotation includes remarks that could also be presented in the category “Quality of Interpreters.”

Oh, yeah, we all discussed what they said and the various things. I think the girls enjoyed the military thing. We really got a kick out of that yesterday. We all did. Of course, my husband was in the Navy so is used to that kind of stuff, but the girls were culture shocked! We were talking about that today, about how when he had us doing the guns, we didn’t do too well. . . . A year of six people living in a tent! (What other kinds of things did you all talk about?) We talked about the decisions they had to make back then, to leave, to fight, we talked about all the guns. The guns in the Governor’s Palace, and the girls thought the beds were very tiny, They said, “Gee, those beds are tiny. How did two people sleep on them?” They couldn’t get over how you rented one side of the bed. You didn’t get the whole bed, and if you couldn’t get part of the bed, then you rented the floor. You know, things like that. . . . We just really discussed everything they said as we came out.

The one big thing was how difficult the choice was to break away from England. I don’t think I appreciated that as much before I came here—how really tough a choice that was to leave the security of England and go off on your own. And joining up with these other colonies that you really didn’t care about, and [that] you had very little in common with other than none of you liked England and you were all under English rule before. And we discussed somewhat that, that whole topic. I think that was the main thing that came through.

It would happen in two ways. Either immediately after leaving a given experience, conversation would take place at a couple of levels. We could talk about how good it was, how good the performances were. . . . I can’t remember at what point, but leaving one experience, my wife and I both experienced the lack of the slave experience. And we both said, “Gee, the slaves aren’t present.” . . . And about forty minutes ago, my wife said what would have been hardest for her is not knowing the outcome. So the risk element involved and how that would impact our family. . . . So, yes, it spurred discussion on our walks back home to our bed-and-breakfast.

Quality of Interpreters

A few interviewees also talked about the quality of the interpreters they saw. In general, interviewees praised interpreters' work.

The realism of the actors makes you feel like you're back in the eighteenth century and they're there with you. . . . I went to some other place, I forget where, and most of the actors were very stiff and formal. But this place, they act like real people. They don't act, they're not being actors, they're being real people who are just trying to be somebody else. And they have the jokes. Like Thomas Jefferson kept going on about us being poor, out of work because we come through in our underclothes. And they don't make it boring. Keeps your attention and you keep listening. . . . This is interesting. It's fun and it's something that you want to watch.

Miscellaneous Responses

The remaining interviewees mentioned a range of other topics, but their descriptions suggest that topics were presented rather than actually discussed. Information was delivered, usually by a parent. The first quotation illustrates how parents explained some of the interpretations to their children. Other interviewees talked about the governors, the Governor's Palace, and slaves.

Well, my husband and I talked more than the kids. We did a lot of educating to them [about] what it was like. You know, the period of time, what that entailed, the government and England versus United States, and what took place. So it was a lot of educating to them, explaining different things. . . . We talked about it on the grounds, not when we went home. We talked about how people were divided. We just explained to them in a very neutral sense what was going on, but not where we would have stood. But we did a lot of, "Imagine what it would be like" to them. You know, "Imagine living there." And they asked questions about that. "Would it be hot? Did they have air conditioning?" "Did they have pools?" "Where did they go to the bathroom?"

We talked about the Revolution and the Boston Tea Party and how the governors acted and [about] the Commonwealth governors . . . The sixth governor—I can't remember his name—he was a popular governor because he would invite people off the streets, give them money, throw balls for the people. And the next governor didn't invite people off the street, and they didn't like him. They liked the other governor. He wasn't a very popular governor.

Well, we talked about things in the Governor's Palace. It was very impressive. The swords and the guns, and my husband was explaining to my son, because my son missed that part . . . that that's supposed to be a sign of power.

I don't recall any particular conversations. I'm trying to think. One of the things that we wondered about, in fact my wife wondered about . . . people were asking where were the slave quarters. And going through the Governor's mansion, we went into the cellars and they had different rooms where they had the provisions, and a guy says, "Oh, that's

where they must have kept the slaves, they got bars on the doors.” I know we had some discussion about that.

INTERPRETIVE TECHNIQUES

Interviewees were asked to talk about the various interpretive techniques they witnessed during their visit and to indicate which one they thought was the most effective. Several patterns emerged from the data. Without question, the two interpretive techniques interviewees found most effective were first-person interpretations and role-playing. There were many positive remarks about these two techniques. Interviewees also talked about interpreters’ knowledge of their subjects and their speaking ability. Finally, some interviewees also talked about how it felt to ask interpreters questions.

First-Person Interpretation

Interviewees enjoyed watching interpreters who portrayed themselves as being in the eighteenth-century. In particular, they enjoyed seeing two or more interpreters engaged in eighteenth-century conversation, as reflected in the first and second quotation. They enjoyed the authenticity of their experience and felt as though they were in the eighteenth century. When the opportunity arose, some interviewees even enjoyed conversing with an interpreter who portrayed themselves as being in the eighteenth century, as reflected in the third quotation. One interviewee described what it felt like to observe first-person interpreters: “It’s making history effective or bringing history to you. Instead of just trying to create facts in your mind by reading it or reciting it, [they] put it into your mind by doing something that will catch your attention. You’ll have to think about it and use your mind. Your attention will grow and [you] just keep on learning.” Most interviewees praised interpreters’ ability to maintain their character, even when visitors intentionally tried to disrupt them (as shown in the fourth quotation).

I thought it was very real how they presented it, especially in the shops, like the Tailor and the Wigmaker. We were just coming, and they would act like you actually lived in the eighteenth century and they were talking to you about wigs. The Wigmakers talked to you about if you wanted a full head of hair, and you could ask questions about what the most popular hair color was. The Tailor, they would be talking with the woman tailor, whoever she was. (The Milliner?) The Milliner. Yes. They would like just talk among themselves like they were really eighteenth-century people.

I think they did a good job. The most effective and compelling [techniques] to me were the ones that actually acted out life at that time. For example, in the Raleigh Tavern we went into two different rooms where there were two gentlemen in each room having a debate about what was going on at the time. That was effective. They were each taking their own point and acting. It was like a little play, and that was effective. . . . It was interesting. It was fun to think of what it would be like to be back then, and it was a little less dry. More interesting.

The one at the Capitol was very animated, I guess that would be the word. We were in court, and she was being empathetic to who was there on both sides, and she would move forward when she was talking about them so they couldn't hear—obviously they could. But just those kinds of things. And I told you about the lady in the Randolph House. And I think the only other place that we were was in the Randolph House. There was somebody downstairs talking, too. . . . I think that's good. I don't know enough politically to engage in a conversation with someone about that time, but I enjoy listening to it, and he was basically referring to children and women and talking about things that would have been related to them then. I did meet a gentleman on the street who had someone turn around and take a picture and he asked me who I was. So I told him what my first name was, and he said, "Do you not have a surname?" "Yes, I do," and it was a little bit of a personal conversation. "Where's your husband?" "Well, I don't have a husband." And he said it wasn't safe to travel alone. It was almost like talking to someone with Alzheimer's, it was like you were there and they were here. But it was fun. . . . I'm trying to think, in the Palace . . . she spoke well, but it was basically relaying information. It was fine. It was informative. I wouldn't say that there was any part of it was not informative or not pleasant. But that other lady was just a little more animated at the Capitol.

The gentleman I saw at the print shop was very much in the first person. [I] couldn't shake him at all. No matter what argument you gave him, he came back with the same thing. And that type of impression is very effective because you have to put yourself in his place. It's not like someone just telling a story. If you don't know anything about that period, you're in trouble. Because people want to learn something from him. So I found out he's very effective.

Role-Playing

Interviewees equally enjoyed participatory interpretations, such as the role-playing they experienced in the Capitol, Courthouse, and Military Encampment. Interviewees who were parents were pleased that children were invited to actively participate, as reflected in the first quotation. Both adult and child interviewees liked being part of something that felt real, as reflected in the second and third quotations. Role-playing provided some interviewees with enough information and hands-on experience to imagine life in the military in the eighteenth century (see the fourth quotation).

The Capitol, the kids loved the Capitol, too, just because they got into the court scene. Anything where they can interact and be part of it [is good]. And they always did stress, "Put yourself back into the frame of mind of this century." I think the Military Encampment did the best job of trying to [do this] because they did the military style.

I liked the Capitol. The lady got someone to play roles, you know, and they also did that in the Governor's building and I thought that was very good that they got people to participate. Nobody volunteered. All of these people must have been in the army, nobody volunteered! So she had to draft people. But I think everybody enjoyed having someone from the crowd play the governor and then someone played Patrick Henry over

at the Courthouse, and I think people enjoyed that because each of them got a round of applause as they did their part. So that was a neat way of doing it.

It was real. I mean, like the way they acted and everything. (What was effective about the way they presented the past to you? Were there certain things that worked for you?) Yeah, I liked the Military Encampment, the way they made you feel that you were a part of everything that was going on. . . . I got in and did stuff that they did, and they actually talked to you and made you do things and do stuff with them. At the Capitol they went through and told you what everything was about. It's not like you're a part of it. They're telling you about other people. When you were in the Encampment you were part of what was going on. (Do you prefer that sort of style?) Yes. Everything, I thought, was okay. I mean, I think I learned more here than I really have in school or anything else.

At the Military Encampment, they tried to portray, I'm sure, what life was like in the military back in those days. And that would have been kind of rough. Imagine in the cold weather and rainy days and all that kind of stuff. No comforts whatsoever, and no bathing facilities. The medical thing. Pure horror. I can visualize what it must have been like for the wounded in those days. Those musket balls, great big things like this! Hit you and you're a mangled mess. Terrible.

Interpreters' Knowledge

Interviewees praised interpreters' knowledge of their subjects and their ability to converse with visitors on a variety of topics. One interviewee had obviously visited other historic sites and realized that Colonial Williamsburg interpreters must study hard to be as well versed as they are (see the first quotation). The second quotation shows how delighted interviewees were to find costumed staff in the grocery store who had expert knowledge on a very particular subject. Some interviewees liked hearing an interpreter's presentation and listening to the information conveyed during a question-and-answer period. This combination, they felt, made for a very informative program (see the third quotation). Other interviewees liked that interpreters always knew the answers to their questions (see the fourth quotation).

Well, I really liked the fact that their depth of knowledge is great. [Judging] from other places I've been, that's one of the problems. People know their spiel and just that. These people are very, very well versed. And obviously Colonial Williamsburg has done a great deal of work with their people to give them more than just one thing. I'm sure it required that they read, and most the people who work here probably are that kind of person anyway. So that comes through.

I think they did a very good job. They're very knowledgeable—even the people in grocery stores [on site]. I'm a diabetic, and I mentioned that I'd be in bad shape with nothing to drink without sugar. And we entered into a discussion, and one woman said, "Well, I guess you wouldn't live this long." No, I wouldn't have. I would have died within about two years of being diagnosed because there was no insulin. But she knew about the consumption. I teach Victorian America, and I teach European history. I don't necessarily teach this particular course, but I always bring forth to my kids the alcohol

consumption. They didn't have water to drink for one thing, and she acknowledged all that. She knew what the alcohol consumption was, and she wasn't even a guide. She was just somebody who's taking money. So I thought she was well prepared.

They all really gave us lots of information . . . to grasp onto. . . . They just gave us facts and . . . each of the things related to each other. It was lots of information in all the places that I went to. You really didn't feel like, "Oh I didn't hear enough on that," because everyone asks questions, and I think that, [with] all that information, there's really not that many question [you could ask] because they dealt with everything. They knew it. Right on the button.

They're very knowledgeable. Most of them seem to have a feel for it. I enjoy sometimes just talking to the girls or the men in the building and asking them little questions like, "Was that pink? Do you think that color was the original color?" and having them tell me how it was. They're very knowledgeable. I enjoy that.

Interpreters' Speaking Ability

Some visitors commented that they could not hear some of the interpreters. They attributed their difficulty in hearing to how loudly and clearly the interpreter spoke and, in some cases, to how quickly he or she spoke. A few interviewees said that they preferred interpreters or guides who interspersed their talks with various interpretive techniques rather than talking continuously without breaks. The first and second quotations describe these difficulties. A few visitors praised the speaking ability of some of the interpreters, as shown in the third quotation.

Going through the Capitol, the gal . . . enunciated everything. She was very paced and [used the] same tone of voice so that . . . what really came through was the information. And you could hear her even in the echo of the house. This morning in the Governor's Palace and the Randolph House, it was a little difficult to hear what she was saying because of the echo, but also some of the words just seemed to roll too fast. It was just more difficult for me to hear what she was saying. Now, I don't think it was the setting because all the rooms, it was the same. So it was more the way that she presented the speech. The best was a really slow, well-spoken speech pattern that was just enunciated and wasn't rushed.

A couple of times, listening to the interpreters on the tour, we couldn't hear them. That was frustrating, and a couple of them just went on and on. Now, we were just at the Governor's Palace and the man that led us through was excellent. You could hear him well. He was very loud and very animated and telling little personal stories. I think that helped. And then we were at a couple of other places where they talked on and on. . . . A couple times we were a little too far away, and a couple of times they just didn't speak up. Even my husband said, "Well, maybe they already did it ten times today and their voices are going out." Well, a couple times when we were on the tour, we were outside and the guy went under a tree. We were real thankful for that because of the shade, but [it was] extremely hard to hear him. And then a couple places we went, they talked maybe straight for 15–20 minutes, talking and not interrupting. Then, when we went on

the Civil War tour, that was nice because they talked a little and then [we] went and saw somebody like the Confederate soldier. You walked around and talked. When you went to most of the homes or businesses or something, you could hear them.

There was a woman in the Capitol, and she was just telling us what was going on. She was dressed in costume. And she did a very good job. A young boy was brought up on felony charges and she had kids act that out. And that was good. But she herself was compelling. She had a good speaking voice and was articulate and had good eye contact [with the public].

Asking Interpreters Questions

A few interviewees felt very comfortable asking questions of interpreters and liked that they could do so at any point during the presentation (see the first and second quotations). One interviewee, however, felt that one of the interpreters did not invite questions from visitors because he was not comfortable doing so (see the third quotation).

I guess I felt like I could ask questions. That's important to me. I like to ask questions. Everybody feels that way, I think. So I think it's important to get that feeling—that it's okay to ask a question. And there were a lot of children, and they asked questions—intelligent ones, too.

It seems like most of the guides interacted with the group as much as possible and I thought that was good. Any questions you might have, they would answer for you, and that was good instead of just going, "No questions till the end." It was good the way it was.

We didn't get a chance to talk with him afterwards. He got up and made a speech. That was what he was suppose to do. He was speaking to the people at the Governor's Palace, and it was very much a speech, and he did an excellent job. But we really didn't get a chance to interact with him afterwards. . . . He talked to [other] people afterwards. . . . It's not that they avoid questions and answers, because I'm sure after a while . . . they hear the same ones. And it's not like they have to stay on a certain script. It's just that, I think, that overall they feel comfortable with what they're used to.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

All interviewees were asked how interpreters can do a better job. While some interviewees had no trouble thinking of things that would improve their interpretive experience in the Historic Area, a few could find no fault with their experience at Colonial Williamsburg. Questions that ask people to think of suggestions also usually provide incentive for them to talk about other aspects of their visit that they think need improving. Some interviewees, therefore, made suggestions or voiced complaints about parts of Colonial Williamsburg that fall outside the interpretation arena.

Interpretation

While a few interviewees could not think of any concrete suggestions on how interpreters could do a better job, others were quite specific. Four basic patterns emerged, although the incidence in each pattern was quite small. A few interviewees did not like the large size of some of the groups, particularly in the Mary Stith Shop and the Governor's Palace, as shown in the first and second quotations. A few interviewees suggested having more interpreters interacting with visitors (reflected in the third quotation), and a few interviewees suggested ways to improve the walking tours (reflected in the fourth quotation). Finally, a few visitors thought the Military Encampment program was too long (reflected in the last quotation).

I didn't know what to expect in the Mary Stith Shop. . . . I think it could take a smaller group. I think that dance group, in good weather, could be outside or even in a larger hall. We were awfully crammed. They could only take maybe thirty-five [people] at the most, and there were eight dancing at a time. It really took up the room. I think it is interesting. I think probably more people are interested in that than I would be, but [it's] awfully crammed quarters.

I think that the Governor's Palace was a little crowded for the tour itself. We may have missed some stuff or it didn't seem like you get to ask as many questions when we were in the room. The group was just so big, we couldn't fit, and towards the end . . . it didn't seem like we could ask questions about the wallpaper or something, we were just getting pushed through.

I think there could be more of them. More characters. See, I'm looking at it from two different views—my kids' and my view. I was fine to have an interpreter just talk about what it was like then, but the characters were more appealing to my kids. . . . So I guess, [have] more of them.

I guess my and my friends' major complaint or problem about that [the walking tours] is [that we were] standing too long. They call it a walking tour, and I realize you do some walking, but our suggestion would be that the tour guides just walk backwards and just keep moving rather than standing. Even if you stood for five minutes. But to stand for fifteen minutes, it really gets uncomfortable, and that's when it's hard to listen. I think those the guides know the area well enough that they could walk backwards, and again, it doesn't have to be fast. . . . The first lady we had for the Women of Williamsburg, she did

not speak loud enough, and at the end of her sentences she would trail off. [She was saying] a personal comment, which was fine if you could hear her. . . . Another thing . . . the number of the groups that meet under the big tree [by] the Randolph House. Now, when a second and third group comes up under the tree, which is fine because it's a big enough tree, but I think the guides should face outward. If he pulls into the circle and faces where we were . . . sitting, and then another group pulls in, and [then] another one, then I could hear this person and this person, plus my person. Not that they were loud enough to be distracting, but [they were] not loud enough to hear. So maybe if the guide at least faces out. They could all still get in the shade. But [it would be better] if he faced away from the other groups.

I think on your general programming, you need to be more specific. I did not envision the forty-five minutes, for example, that was involved in the Military Encampment. . . . It was a little bit [much], the arms instruction was a little too much carried out. We had sticks to act as guns, and it went on and on. I think it was unnecessary. It went on a little bit too long. We had to wait, [too]. They took sixty-five [people] at a time, but we got there and the first group went in, then we had to wait twenty minutes, and then we went in. It may well be in your program to give an idea to the people. . . . It could be shorter.

Other Aspects of Colonial Williamsburg

Some interviewees talked about other parts of Colonial Williamsburg that they would like to see improved. Two interviewees complained about the bus system, two interviewees thought the amenities were too expensive, and two interviewees want to see more benches in the Historic Area.

We had to park yesterday in the red parking lot, and it is a long way over to the Visitors Center and the bus stop. They don't have a bus that stops at the red parking lot, and I really think they should have one somewhere over there that stops a little bit closer. But other than that we had a good time. We really did.

The one thing that I think they need to do better is make the things in their stores and their food a little bit more reasonable. My husband and I, it's just the two of us, and we can afford it. When you have to pay \$3.50 for a hamburger that is just a hamburger, and then you have to pay another \$1.75 for root beer and another \$.75 for a few little potato chips for lunch, I think that's a little ridiculous.

You need benches! More benches. Especially in this hot weather.

Appendices removed for proprietary purposes.