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The Making of "Polished Patriots": The Education of Boys in Colonial Virginia

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THE MAKING OF "POLISHED PATRIOTS":
The Education of Boys in Colonial Virginia

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Jan Kirsten Gilliam
1988
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Approved, March 1988

James Axtell
James Whittenburg
Kevin Kelly
For my parents
For encouraging me to pursue my studies so far from home
and for their constant love and support.
And for Kari
Who took the time to read and critique this paper.
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ABSTRACT

In 1702 Robert Carter bemoaned the fact that Virginia suffered "under a very thick cloud of ignorance." He hoped that by educating the next generation the colony would "flourish under a set of better polished patriots." The gentry in Virginia relied on the education of their sons to create the leaders of their society. When one looks at the modern general texts on education as well as more specific ones, they concentrate on the education of the colonies to the North. When Virginia is mentioned, the text concentrates primarily on the tutorial system prevalent in the eighteenth century. Tutors were very important to the education of the sons of the Virginia gentry, but they were not the whole story. Other means of education were available not only for the gentry boys, but also for other Virginia children including the poor.

This paper looks at the kind of education available for boys in Virginia. The emphasis is on the upper portion of society because they left the most records and greatly influenced the development and availability of education in the colony. Schools and schoolmasters made education available to some poor and middle-class children as well as to the gentry boys. To separate themselves from the rest of society the gentry boys were educated beyond the level available to most. The gentlemen hired tutors or sent their sons to appropriate schools in Virginia or England. With these opportunities the boys learned subjects beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic. They learned languages, more complicated mathematics, and social skills appropriate to their status in the colony. Taught under this kind of curriculum the gentry boys became the "polished patriots" that their fathers desired.
THE MAKING OF "POLISHED PATRIOTS":
The Education of Boys in Colonial Virginia
INTRODUCTION

Just before the American Revolution the *Virginia Gazette* ran an essay discussing the lack of proper education available to the children of Virginia. Between the time when Englishmen began to settle the colony a century before and the appearance of the essay, the English had not neglected education as the essayist complained, but rather had considered it an important issue from the beginning.

The men who immigrated to the colony came from a society which was by the eighteenth century 45% literate. These men were familiar with the many ways in which Englishmen acquired their education. They themselves had probably been involved in at least one form of this system. In England a child could receive his education from a free school, an endowed school, a dame school, a clergyman, a roving schoolmaster, a family member, or a private tutor (if the child's parents were wealthy). These means of education were transferred to the colony by the English immigrants and as the society developed and grew the educational system took shape along these lines.

The first educational efforts began early in the seventeenth century with the assistance of the Reverend
Copeland, who encouraged the East India Company to contribute money to be used to establish either a church or a school in the new colony. It was decided that a school would be established. The London Company named the proposed school after its benefactors and planned that the East India School would be the preparatory school for the newly proposed college at Henrico. The company began immediately to plan for the school by choosing the person who would control and direct the proposed East India school as well as the site on which the school would be located. These preparations came to nothing due to the Indian attack on the English settlers in 1622.²

Despite the loss of the government free school, private schools and old field schools existed in the colony. Although these schools were supported by private citizens, the government also worked to ensure the quality of the schools. The teachers of these schools were often from England and were required to have a license granted by the bishop of London. Governor Francis Nicholson, wanting to ensure the quality of the teachers, insisted in the late seventeenth century that all teachers present themselves before the General Court at Jamestown with an accompanying testimony as to their professional skill and good character. When it was found that not all of the teachers could travel to Jamestown in the allotted time, the governor agreed to allow a few select men to grant the licenses in the various regions.³
The government not only oversaw the quality of the teachers, but it also encouraged the buildings of schools for these teachers. When the English government granted land to two lords in the 1680s, it instructed them to divide the land into counties and towns and to erect parishes and schools. A decade later an act governing the ports gave the money arising from duties on imports to defense, the clergy, and the encouragement of learning. The next school proposed by the government was the College of William and Mary, which was established at the end of the century. This school was more successful than those proposed earlier, and by the turn of the century it was providing education for Virginia boys.

While encouraging the schools, the government stated their reasons for wanting education provided for the youth of the colony. The earliest public statement in support of education accompanied the London Company's plan to establish their school. The "publique free school [was] for the education of children and grounding them in the principles of religion, civility of life and humane learning." The gentlemen of the company hoped this school would prepare children to be proper, civilized citizens. A 1642 law for the regulation of the poor officially stated that education would make the children better citizens of the colony. The Assembly declared that if the children were instructed in good and lawful trades they would "improve the honor and reputation of the country, and noe
lesse their owne good and theire parents comfort...." Training the poor in "honest and profitable" trades would also keep them from leading lives of idleness and sloth. Education was seen as a means of not only regulating the poor, but also making all children, poor or rich, good citizens of the colony. Poor children often only received the rudiments of learning, namely reading and writing. Other children might learn more than this, but no matter how much learning one received, education made one a better person and of value to society.

The concern for education expressed in the laws found support in the courts. The Virginia court stressed in most apprenticeship cases that an apprenticed child must be taught reading and writing as well as a trade. When a child did not receive the proper training, the court had the authority to punish those responsible for neglecting their duties. Often the court might choose to replace the neglectful master with a new master who promised to teach the child his trade and provide some basic schooling. The colony was not interested in supporting idle members, but rather wanted all colonists to contribute to society.

Despite the interest expressed by the courts and laws some men felt that conditions in Virginia would prevent the established schools from surviving. One London gentleman, Francis Makemie, wrote a treatise in 1705 to the governor and the gentlemen of Virginia about the necessity of promoting towns in their colony. He argued that people
living together in communities would make possible the establishment and support of schools. Since few such places existed in the colony no one area had enough scholars to support a schoolmaster. In order for the master to make a living he was continually moving about the colony which meant that the children did not have the opportunity to attend school on a regular basis. Some families lived in such remote areas that the children did not have a chance for even a slight encounter with a master. The college, too, could not survive long without a town to support it. In arguing the need for towns, Makemie showed the difficulty Virginians faced in getting a school education in a large, sparsely populated area. Virginia planter William Fitzhugh also realized the negative effect of a dispersed population. He wrote to a London friend complaining about the difficulty of educating his children in such a remote area as Stafford County.  

Despite these difficulties, some Virginians made use of the educational opportunities that did exist for their children. While the government took an interest in the education of the colony's children, individual gentlemen and other citizens made education possible. The wealthier gentlemen were in a better position than others to see their children educated. Many of these gentlemen were the men making the laws and endowing many of the schools. However, while they were concerned about education in general, they were specifically interested in their sons
being prepared to follow their footsteps as leaders in colonial government and society.
NOTES FOR INTRODUCTION


3 Ibid., 334-335.

4 William Waller Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia, 13 vols. (Richmond, 1819-23), 2:574, 3:66-67; Bruce, Social Life in Old Virginia, 396-399.


CHAPTER I
SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLMASTERS

By the eighteenth century, the colonists had been in Virginia for over fifty years and in that time had established methods for educating their children. The men most responsible for this were the wealthier gentlemen. The sons of the gentry received an education because their fathers had the resources to hire tutors or to send them away to school. Other children were not as fortunate, but they too might receive an education through the generosity of gentlemen who were willing to finance the establishment of local schools. Several schools were established throughout the late seventeenth century and on into the eighteenth century. Some of these schools catered to the needs of the gentry boys, but most provided only the basic rudiments of learning for children who would only spend a brief time in school. In order to understand why the gentry educated their boys with such care, one must first look at what education was available to other Virginia children.

In 1705 Robert Beverley, author of *The History and Present State of Virginia*, wrote that there existed large areas of land granted to the free schools for the education
of children in many parts of the colony. These schools were founded by gentlemen who left legacies in their will for this specific purpose and left the care of the schools to the court or vestry. Beverley stated that he never heard of any of these provisions for schools being misapplied. In other places where such legacies had not been left, the people had joined together and built schools for their children where they could learn "upon very easie Terms."¹

Two of the earliest legacies came from Benjamin Syms and Thomas Eaton. Benjamin Syms' will in 1635 left two hundred acres for the education and instruction of children of Elizabeth County. Along with the land he left eight cows whose first set of offspring would be sold and the money used to build the school house, while the profits from the sale of the next generation of cattle would support the education of a few poor children. A decade later the Virginia Assembly confirmed the will and set up the school. In 1753 the Syms school was still functioning and the government published an act which incorporated the trustees of the school so that they could better govern and maintain the school.²

Thomas Eaton also made provisions in his will for his land to be given to the residents of Elizabeth County for the building and maintenance of a school. As with the Syms' school, the Eaton's Charity School was incorporated over a century after its establishment. The 1759 act not
only incorporated the trustees, but also strictly defined the purpose of the school for the benefit of poor children, a fact not stated in the will of the benefactor. According to the act, several parents had abused the school by sending their children to the charity school when they could afford to pay. To stop this practice, the court ruled that no one could attend the school without the consent of the master, except those poor children whom the trustees declared were "proper objects of the pious founder's charity." 3 Neither of the two gentlemen had stated that the schools were to be exclusively for the poor of the parish. It was more likely that they were intended for the use of all the children in the county.

Eaton and Syms were not the only gentlemen to endow their parishes for education. In 1669 Henry King left one hundred acres to his Isle of Wight County parish towards the maintenance of a free school. Another man in Newport parish left land for a school if he died without heirs. In 1705 a resident of James City County left land that already had a school house on it plus an additional half acre and firewood for the use of the school. 4 While these gentlemen left land to the parishes, they did not specifically state who could attend the schools.

Other gentlemen were more specific about the requirements of their endowments. John Farneffold, the minister of St. Stephen's Parish, left one hundred acres for a free school where four or five poor children of the
parish would be taught free and given their room and board. Once the students could read from the Bible and write legibly, they were to be dismissed and others admitted. This minister also left livestock for the support of the school and detailed plans for the encouragement of a schoolmaster, including an offer of board, room, washing, a horse, and five hundred pounds of tobacco. If the school needed more money, the trustees could sell some of the minister’s estate. All of these gentlemen left not only land for a school but also livestock or money to sustain it. Many of the schools had a limit on the number of children they would accept at one time, and these children usually remained in the school only long enough to learn to read and write. This allowed for more children to be educated because the turnover of students would be more rapid than if they stayed for a long period of time learning a variety of subjects. Whether the school was for all local children or just poor children, these gentlemen attempted to provide limited, but perpetual, access to education for the Virginia children.

After Beverley wrote his summary of the state of Virginia, schools continued to be established by the legacies of Virginians. In 1731 John Yeates gave all his land in Virginia to the use of his two free schools in Nansemond County. Before his death he had built two schools, one on each side of the creek so that all the children in the area could reach a school. The
schoolmaster's fee came from the rents of tenants occupying other lands of his. Each school also received books which, when not being used by the children, were to be kept in a locked cabinet so that they would not be lost.

A decade later Mrs. Mary Whaley gave land to Bruton Parish on which already stood Mattey's Schoolhouse and a dwelling house for the schoolmaster. This school was to teach the neediest children in the parish reading, writing, and arithmetic. She also left money to support this school which had originally been established in honor of her only child. Another woman Elizabeth Smith left money to buy land in Smithfield and erect a school for the education of six poor orphan children. These children, like those educated at Mattey's school, were to be taught reading, writing and (if boys) arithmetic. After three years the boys were then bound out as apprentices in an honest calling. The master of this school, though paid for teaching the poor, could also instruct other children as he thought proper. Each of these schools was specifically founded for the parish in which they stood. Although many of the schools were for the poor only, other children in the parish could benefit from having the school in the area. The schoolmaster of the local school might be willing to take on extra pupils for a fee, and thus not only earn himself more money, but also educate some children who would otherwise not have this opportunity.

Some schools endowed by gentlemen did not succeed as
the patron might have hoped. In 1675 Henry Peasley left six hundred acres for the maintenance of a free school for the education of the children of both Abingdon and Ware parishes. In 1756 the government reviewed the situation and found that few children went to the school because it was inconveniently located. The government suggested that each of the wardens of the two parishes maintain their own free schools. The trustees were required to erect schools in convenient locations and appoint schoolmasters. As with the Eaton and Syms' schools, the government regulated the running of the school to ensure that the endowment was properly used.

Along with schools endowed by gentlemen, schools established by schoolmasters existed in colonial Virginia. Often these schoolmasters advertised in the newspaper to attract students. In 1752 John Walker advertised that he had recently arrived in Williamsburg from London. For ten years he had been educating children abroad and was now prepared to instruct young Virginia gentlemen in reading, writing, arithmetic, classical learning, geography, and history. He would improve his students' morals "in Proportion to their Progress in Learning" so that all parents would be satisfied with trusting their children to him. Patrick Thomas Duke had a free school where he intended to teach English, writing, and accounts. Since he did not know anyone in the area to recommend him, he advertised for gentlemen to employ him, promising to take
special care to please his new patrons. He was even willing to instruct the students in the gentleman's own house, while Duke's wife would teach the younger children of the families. In 1770 H. John Burges proposed to open a grammar school in a large and commodious house which was less than two miles from Smithfield "in a genteel neighbourhood where youth may be conveniently boarded." The following year Burges again advertised and by this time he had opened the school, but he did not have enough students to support an usher (assistant).  

Men who opened their own schools taught more than just the basics of reading and writing, the chief subjects of the endowed schools. Their schools were often established with the hope of attracting the gentlemen's sons without whom they could not support their endeavors. The schoolmasters also stressed the care they would take with the children's morals as well as their education. Mr. Burges, when he advertised the second time to gather more pupils, stressed that he would ensure that both the morals and the progress in learning of his students would be carefully attended to. In the advertisements the schoolmasters emphasized many of the same characteristics that the gentlemen would require of the tutors. All teachers had to be worthy of teaching young Virginians.

Other small schools run by a local master existed throughout Virginia. In 1759 Mr. Crisewell started teaching school with five students at a gentlemen's house.
Colonel and Mrs. James Gordon of Lancaster County sent their children to this instructor. In his diary the colonel noted that many times he and his wife visited the school. On Shrove Tuesdays they treated the students to pancakes and cider and the colonel convinced Crisewell to let the children play. By 1760 Crisewell had thirteen Latin scholars and four English students. Other gentlemen mentioned neighborhood schools to which they sent their sons; for example, until he was ten, Patrick Henry went to a local school. Three sons of William Nelson attended a school at Mr. Washington's place, while the fourth attended a Latin school in the town. In 1740 the Rev. James Marye opened a school in Fredericksburg which was attended by such students as George Washington and James Monroe. Another minister, the Rev. Jonathan Boucher, kept a boarding school in Hanover parish and had nearly thirty boys, most of whom were sons of the wealthier gentlemen of Virginia. All the students boarded with him and for two years he looked after them on his own without the help of an usher. These small schools were similar to the schools run by the tutors at the employers' homes and these smaller ones were usually attended by the boys of the wealthier families since very few other parents could afford to send their children to these schoolmasters.

Virginia gentlemen took an interest in the development of schools and created quite a few. Early in the century a poll was taken on how many schools existed. Hugh Jones, an
English-born math professor at the college as well as the author of *The Present State of Virginia*, wrote in 1724 that most parishes had schools, or "little houses being built on purpose," for the teaching of English and writing. In that same year the bishop of London sent a questionnaire to the ministers of the parishes in Virginia. One of the questions asked was "Have you in your Parish any public school for the instruction of Youth? If you have, is it endowed? And who is the Master?" The answers to the questions are known for twenty-nine out of approximately forty-five parishes. Fourteen answered that they had no endowed schools and mentioned no private schools; eight parishes responded that they had no public schools, but did have several private schools. These schools taught children mainly to read and write and a few taught cyphering. In Bristol parish the children's fathers paid for the schools out of their own pockets. Some of the schools mentioned in the survey were set up when a convenient number of scholars could be found. Two private schools were listed in Westover parish which served about thirty-five students but were "very indifferently attended by the masters." Their students came from a parish of about 233 families. In Wilmington parish there were several private schools and "care is generally taken by parents that their children be taught to read." No public schools existed in Henrico parish, a situation which prompted the minister to write that he would welcome
charity from the bishop to promote public education. The minister of Newport parish responded that there were four schools servicing about four hundred families, but none of these was endowed. Elizabeth City parish had two public endowed schools (probably Eaton's and Sym's schools) and one good private school, all of which served three hundred families. Very few schools of any kind were listed in this survey, and in areas where there were schools, there were still too few to accommodate the number of families in the parish. The ministers might have overlooked some schools and they did not count tutors, but even so the number of schools was small. Also it must be remembered that at this time homes were often scattered over a large area, and travel, especially in winter, was difficult. However, both the parents and the ministers made a pretense at least of wanting the opportunity for education.

New Kent County was not listed in the surviving responses to this survey, but it had at least one school. Devereux Jarratt, a poor native of this county who eventually became a minister, described in his autobiography the kind of education he received. When he was about eight years old he entered the neighborhood English school after which he "continued to go to one teacher and other, as opportunity served, (though not without great interruptions) till I was 12 or 13." While attending these schools he learned to read in the Bible "(though indifferently)," to write (although poorly), and
to do some arithmetic. For about four years Jarratt received what education he could. After he began his career as a teacher, he realized how much his education had been confined to the basics. Jarratt's education was probably similar to what most of Virginia children could expect.

While the school building provided a place for the children to be taught, it was the schoolmaster who was vital to the educational process. The schoolmasters who tended these schools came from a variety of backgrounds. Hugh Jones did not want anyone to teach school except those who were nominated by the minister and vestry and licensed by the president of the College. Licensing was intended to prevent the spread of dissent in the colony, not by requiring that all teachers be ministers, but rather to ensure that all masters had the appropriate qualities for the job. A memorandum to the bishops in London written early in the century stated that if towns were to be established a schoolmaster should be maintained in every town and teach at least reading and writing. A small encouragement to the local parish clerk or reader might enable him to keep the kind of schools the Virginians wanted. Many of the masters like Boucher and Marye were also members of the clergy.

Other masters, however, were laymen. Some gentlemen advertised for the kind of schoolmaster they required. They did not list that they wanted a minister, but rather
stated the qualities required of any person applying for the job. Many of the teachers in fact were indentured servants and some even transported felons. Boucher, having taught in the colonies himself, later wrote about the low state of the teaching profession in Virginia. He observed that when ships arrived carrying redemptioners or convicts, the sale of these passengers included schoolmasters. In the Virginia Gazette of 1771 an advertisement announced the sale of "forty five CONVICT SERVANTS, and several indented Ones for four Years. All the Convicts as well as the indented Servants, are from the Country, and among them are many Tradesmen, namely,...a Jeweller, a Butcher, a Book-keeper, Schoolmasters, many Farmers, etc." Although schoolmasters were sold along with other servants skilled in various trades, the schoolmasters did not sell for as high a price as the others.  

Although these servants held the position of schoolmaster, the gentleman/employer treated them as servants which did not always appeal to the employee. Advertisements appeared in many of the papers which recounted the tales of schoolmasters who had run away. These ads placed by the gentlemen resembled the ads that appeared when a black slave field hand had run away. Robert McClenachan advertised in the Virginia Gazette, "Run away the 8th of July 1751, from the Subscriber, living at Augusta Court-House, a Scotch Servant Lad, named Alexander Fullerton, about 20 Years of Age, 5 feet 5 or 6 Inches
high, had with him several Sorts of Books, and was employ'd
some Time in keeping School, speaks very broad, and has a
Spot or Mole on one of his Cheeks. Likewise a Negroe
Fellow,...." The ad goes on to describe the black runaway
and the fact that the two had stolen a horse and guns.
"Whoever secures the said Servant or Negroe, so that I may
have them again shall have Five Pistoles Reward and
reasonable Charges,...." Schoolmasters thus ranged in
status from the learned minister to the indentured
servants.17

Virginians, since the founding of the colony, had
established ways to educate their children. While the
government set regulations regarding education and the
teachers, the gentlemen of the colony had taken steps to
provide the actual means to ensure that some children were
educated. Both gentlemen and ladies provided for schools
in specified areas, but the colony was so large that it was
difficult, if not impossible, to reach everyone. The
children who benefited from the generosity of the gentry
often learned the basics of reading, writing, and
arithmetic. These schools were not to make the children
scholars, but rather to give them some background that
would help them survive in Virginia and obtain an honest
calling. Jarratt's parents wanted their children to learn
only to read, write, and understand arithmetic, and be
raised in and honest calling in order that they could earn
their own living by their own hard work.18 For many
parents this was all they could hope for their children.
Gentlemen with enough wealth could, and did, plan for more. Some schoolmasters who had the proper skills, realized the gentry's need for an advanced education. These men were able to establish schools which catered to the gentry boys. Some gentlemen did not hire tutors, but relied on these schools to give their sons the kind of education which prepared them for their future.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER I


3 Tyler, "Free Schools," 73-74; Hening, Statutes at Large, 7:317-320.


7 Hening, Statutes at Large, 7:41.

8 Virginia Gazette November 17, 1752, (Rind) November 29, 1770, (Purdie & Dixon) December 13, 1770, (Purdie & Dixon) October 17, 1771.

9 Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon) October 17, 1771.


11 Guy Fred Wells, Parish Education in Colonial Virginia (New York: Teacher's College, Columbia University, 1923), 23-25.


17 *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon) November 21, 1771, July 18, 1751, April 11, 1755.

CHAPTER II
TUTORS

Although schools existed in several areas, there were not enough for everyone. Several provided for the education of a few poor children in the area, while others were open to any children who had the time and money to attend. In order to survive most children had to begin earning a living very early. If they had time for education it was only enough to learn a few basics that would help them later on. The gentry boys though had more time to spend on education. Wealth and free time separated the gentry from the rest of colonial society. A visible sign of these attributes was the educational superiority of their sons. The gentry boys could attend schools established by schoolmasters who could offer the additional education required of the gentry. Several gentlemen chose another option which was to hire a tutor to educate the children in their own homes.

Hiring a tutor was one way to ensure that one's children were educated. This eliminated the need of a school in the area, and since the tutor often lived with the family, the parents could supervise the training. Some tutors were not employed, but instead were members of the
family. In 1698 William Ball in his will requested that his wife teach his youngest children until they were six and then have the older brothers continue the children's education. John George, a burgess for Isle of Wight County, desired in his will that his wife teach their grandchild to read and write. Colonel John Page, a member of the House of Burgesses and later governor of Virginia, recalled that he was taught to read and write by his grandmother, while Patrick Henry, after attending the local school, returned home to learn from his father, who ran a grammar school.¹

Education of children was left to the decision of the parents. When the Rev. Boucher reminisced about his time in the colonies, he felt that too little attention had been paid to the role parents played in education and that no substitutes were provided. He disliked the practice of having young children raised mostly by slaves. It was better, he felt, to be raised as he had been, that is, educated by his father until he was six. Boucher also thought that parents were the natural tutors of their children, but the colonists set little value by this. He even went so far as to say that parents were indifferent to who taught their children as long as it was not themselves. Their duty was over when they paid someone else to teach the children.² While stressing the importance of parent's involvement in education, Boucher came down a bit hard on the colonists' educational practices. But it must
be remembered that by the time he wrote these opinions, he had been driven out of the colonies because of his loyalist feelings. Several Virginians, in fact, did take an avid interest in their children's education. Reports in 1724 stated that care generally was taken by the parents to see that their children were taught at least to read. Philip Fithian, as tutor to the Carter family, was impressed by the care Colonel and Mrs. Robert Carter took with their children. He stated that they had "manner of instructing and dealing with children far superior, I may say it with confidence, to any I have ever seen, in any place, or in any family."^3

Despite Boucher's negative comments on the interest of the parents in their child's education, many gentlemen took great care in selecting the people who would instruct their children. Often the gentlemen advertised for tutors in the Virginia Gazette, while others wrote to friends in England, and in both cases the men listed first the type of character they required of the applicants. Many requested a "single" or "sober" person, while others desired that the applicant be diligent, discreet, modest, honest or of good morals or a combination of several of these attributes. William Beverley, a burgess, asked a business partner in England to find him a "modest, sober, discreet person."^4

The applicant who fulfilled these personal requirements also had to come well-recommended. One gentleman in 1771 advertised for a single man "properly
recommended, as well for his Abilities as his moral character." Landon Carter, a member of the House of Burgesses, requested that the applicant came "well recommended for his capacity and temper for undertaking such a tender concern." The gentlemen required proof of the tutors' abilities because these employees would be interacting with their children everyday.

The gentlemen were concerned not only about the tutors' good characters, but also about their capacity to teach the desired subjects. After detailing the tutors' personal attributes, the gentlemen listed the subjects the applicants must be "capable of teaching." The most frequently desired subjects were reading and writing. For some men these were the only subjects, but many added to this list arithmetic, cyphering or "the most common branches of the mathematicks." Although less common, some men added the need for an understanding of one or more foreign languages, most often French and Latin. Colonel Richard Corbin, a member of the Council, wanting all of these subjects taught, required a man "skilled in the languages, that writes a good hand, and is thoroughly acquainted with arithmetick and accounts." When one tutor advertised for a position, he gave his qualifications as being "capable of teaching English, arithmetick, mathematicks, Greek, Latin, and French," thus covering most of the possible subjects required by the gentlemen. When Robert Carter wrote for a tutor, he wanted all his children
to be taught Latin and Greek. In many cases the major emphasis was on teaching the rudiments of the English language, but most tutors could and did teach more than this.

The people who had the right character and knowledge came from diverse backgrounds. The person who answered Robert Carter's advertisement was a graduate of Princeton, and thus from a different colony. Jarratt noted another case where the tutor was from the college in New Jersey. A gentleman of Cumberland hired Alexander Martin, also from Princeton, to come to his house and instruct his son in many subjects including Latin. Other tutors were not from any of the colonies but from England. Gentlemen like William Beverley and Colonel Corbin wrote to associates in London to find a person qualified for the position. When John Carter wrote to his son about wanting a female tutor, he commented that he had written to an associate in London to find him the right woman because he knew that there were many people in that city who fit his needs and were unable to maintain themselves in London.9

Not all tutors came from England, some came from Scotland. John Harrower was an indentured servant from Scotland who arrived in the colonies and was immediately employed by Colonel William Dangerfield, a wealthy planter of Fredericksburg. Harrower had come to Virginia out of necessity. Impoverished, he had had to leave his wife and children in Scotland while he traveled to England and
eventually Virginia to find a job to support them. Because of his indentured status, he had to work for his employer for four years before he became a free man in Virginia. John Mason, reflecting on his childhood years at Gunston Hall, recalled that his father George Mason had employed private tutors one of whom came from Maryland while "both of the two last were especially engaged in that country [Scotland] to come to America (as was the practice in those times with families who had means)...." Philip Fithian, the Princeton graduate tutor, noted in his journal that the custom in Virginia had been to hire tutors from Scotland, though by the early 1770s Virginians were more willing to hire their own countrymen. Robert Carter preferred a tutor educated on the continent rather than Scotland because his pronunciation of the English language would be purer. Beverley also worried about hiring a Scottish tutor for his children because the accent, once learned never wore off. Most gentlemen, however, were not concerned about the nationality or class of the tutor as long as he fulfilled the requirements and did the job properly.

Another source of tutors was the Church. Several young men worked as tutors in private families until they were able to travel to England to be ordained. William Gooch, the governor of Virginia in the early 1700s, wrote to the bishop of London letters of recommendation about these aspiring ministers mentioning that the men had spent some time as tutors in private families. The tutor for
John Page was twenty years old and was working as a tutor because he could not enter the Church until he was twenty-four. Some tutors, on the other hand, were already ordained ministers. James Madison studied at home under the tutelage of the Rev. Thomas Martin who resided at the Madison home, but was the minister of the parish. Reverend William Douglas came from Scotland to Virginia as a tutor in the family of Colonel Monroe. In a will of 1716 Mrs. Elizabeth Churchill requested that the pastor of the parish instruct her son in her house. These men had the duties not only of their pupils but also the parish. The ministers fulfilled the requirements of a tutor because their ministerial training was similar to what the gentlemen wanted in a tutor.

The tutor was in charge of a number of children. Sometimes his students consisted only of the employer's children, while at other times the neighbor's children might also come under his tutelage. Often it was up to the employer to decide whether the tutor would teach children other than his own. Landon Carter, advertising for a tutor for his six grandsons, insisted that six boys would be enough for one man's care since the children were all beginners and a larger number of children would inconvenience his family. Since the tutor often lived with the family, any additional students affected family life. Philip Fithian, the tutor of Robert Carter's five girls and three boys, declined an offer to admit other students to
Colonel Thomas Nelson allowed his tutor John Hall to take on four or five students in addition to Nelson's own five boys. John Harrower taught additional students as well. When he was not engaged in teaching at Dangerfield's, he traveled to other people's homes in order to instruct their children. Dangerfield, encouraging Harrower to take on extra students, went to his friends to ask that they send their children to Harrower. A tutor hired by one family could benefit several of the families in the area since the tutor could be hired on an individual basis. This meant that the tutor often had several pupils of different ages and gender and sometimes even of differing classes.

The job of tutoring was usually a full-time occupation. The employer paid the initial fees of the tutor, and then any planter who wanted the tutor's services paid his own fee for each child. Landon Carter offered fifty pounds per year to a tutor, but he did not allow the tutor to earn more money by taking on other students. Along with this salary, Carter provided washing, mending, and meals as long as the tutor could "conform to the rules of a private family," and Carter had "nothing averse to an easy freedom, not carried into any excess." When a person answered Carter's advertisement, Carter paid him thirty pounds until he could prove he was the right person for the job. Jacob Hall received ten pounds for each of his
employer's five sons, and he could make further money by taking on a few more students. Hall also received his room, board, a servant, and the use of the library.  

Robert Carter proposed paying his children's tutor sixty pounds plus accommodations, undisturbed use of a room, use of the library, and a servant to wait on him. John Harrower, being an indentured servant, did not get paid for his services, but rather worked for Dangerfield for four years. During this time Harrower received his room, board, washing, and clothes, similar conditions as those offered a paid tutor. Harrower's extra students, of which he had ten to twelve, each paid five shillings a quarter. The parents of two of his pupils paid him six pounds per year in addition to two silk vests and two pairs of breeches. The father of a deaf-mute boy paid Harrower an additional five shillings per quarter because his son required more attention.  

Devereux Jarratt taught in several families throughout his five- or six-year career. At each new position he moved in with his employer's family. Jarratt's career brought him an increase in income as he became more experienced. His first and second jobs brought him nine and seven pounds respectively. When he was hired by a wealthy gentleman, a Mr. Cannon, he received fifteen pounds to teach his employer's son. A few years later Jarratt was employed and boarding with a gentleman, Mr. Thompson Swann, who paid Jarratt forty pounds a year to teach his children
and others. By this time Jarratt had been to a tutor himself so that he was not only more proficient in reading and writing but knew Latin as well.\textsuperscript{18} It was common for the tutor to receive his room and board at the home of his employer as well as a fee for teaching which he could use for his own purposes. He also had the benefits of living in the home of a wealthier person, which meant that in some cases he had the use of a library or the chance to associate with learned gentlemen.

Since the tutor lived with his employer's family, he could not avoid becoming involved in the family's activities. Harrower wrote to his wife that he ate his meals at the Colonel's table and at times went on outings with the family. One day he went fishing with the Colonel, the eldest boy, and another gentlemen, and later in the day the women and the other two boys joined them for lunch. Jarratt became involved with the social life of his employer, although on reflection Jarratt regretted having to spend time with Mr. Swann's company because they were constantly involved in cards, dancing and other trifling activities which drove him away from religious devotion. Fithian, like Harrower and Jarratt, associated with the family outside of his teaching duties. He often attended dinner parties with the Carter family. In a letter of advice to his successor, Fithian cautioned that it was proper to associate with gentlemen, especially his employer, but it was not good to be excessively familiar.
The tutor not only shared in the pleasant duties of the family, but also in the less popular chores. When one of the Carter boys misbehaved, the father sent Fithian a note that he was to discipline the boy immediately and severely.19

Employers were justified in asking for people of good character because these tutors played an important role in the upbringing of the children. Although the parents were nearby, the tutor was often responsible for the discipline of his pupils. The tutor was not just a teacher; he was a surrogate father as well as elder brother. When the boys in his charge wanted to go somewhere, it was often their tutor who accompanied them. When the boys did something wrong, the tutor disciplined them. Virginia gentlemen wanted to raise good citizens who were an honor to the family, so anyone who spent so much time with the boys had to be of good quality and suitable for the position.20

Although many of the children of the wealthiest Virginians were educated by tutors, other children traveled to England to receive an education. In about 1756 seven-year old David Meade was sent to England to be educated in a country boarding school and later at Harrow. The guardian of the sons of Colonel Spotswood sent his charges to be educated at Eton. In the 1760s Colonel John Baylor sent his twelve-year-old son to grammar school in England and his four daughters to a boarding school in England. Charles Carter stated in his will that he wanted
his two boys to remain in England "for the benefit of their education" until they reached the age of twenty-one years and nine months.21

Although several Virginians sent their children to England, some parents were not pleased with the education available there. In a will of June 1730 Robert Carter wrote that he wanted his son George to go to the College of William and Mary for two years and then to a university in England. A month later he changed his will concerning George's university education now believing that "I have seen such bad effects of it [an English university education] that I leave the care of him [George] to the disposal of his Brothers." He went on to suggest that George stay another year at the College and then begin to train as a secretary. William Nelson, a member of the House of Burgesses, wrote to a merchant in London in 1768 that he had no thought of sending his son to school in England because his son did not want to go and it was too expensive, "Especially as the Improvements of our youth are Seldom answerable to Such great Expences as they often incur." Instead he sent his boys to school at Mr. Washington's. In a similar way John Page's father sent John to the grammar school at the College of William and Mary instead of sending him to England as he had promised John's mother because of the poor record of Virginia boys educated in England. He felt that several Virginians had returned illiterate and corrupted, and he swore that no son
of his would ever get an education there. In his diary of 1770 Landon Carter reflected, "I believe every body begins to laugh at English education. The general importers of it now adays bring back only a stiff priggishness with as little good manners as possible...."\textsuperscript{22}

In his 1724 book on Virginia, Hugh Jones commented that Virginians did not feel that education was as important as gentlemen in England assumed it to be. The Virginians though might have sent their children to England more often if it had not been for fear of smallpox. William Byrd II in 1741 recognized the threat of the disease. In a letter to his nephew in England he wrote, "So many of our youngsters have dyed lately of the smallpox there, that his mother woud be in agonys to send him [William Byrd III age 13] very soon." Mrs. Byrd expressed her own fears of the disease four years later, "I thought again he [William Byrd III] would certainly get the small-pox, which is most terrible fatal to those who are born in America, and that I should be accessory to his death,..."\textsuperscript{23}

Even without the fear of smallpox Hugh Jones believed that an education in England did not prepare the Virginia boys properly for a life in the colony. Jones felt that the children could be educated as well in the colony as in England and without the expense or danger of the trip. Arthur Lee of England wrote to his brother in Virginia in 1770, "I have seen so much mischief and so little good
arise from sending children over here for education, that I cannot recommend it for yours." Although an English education was available to the Virginians, only the people who could afford the journey and had the desire to make the trip took the opportunity. Fortunately, an English education was not the only education available. Virginians could remain at home and learn what they needed to prosper in the colony.

The gentry had several opportunities available to educate their sons because they had the wealth and the means to allow their sons the time for learning. This luxury was not available to most Virginians. Many gentlemen found the tutors or schoolmasters sufficient to teach their sons the desired subjects. The tutors provided a vital service for the gentlemen in that they taught the children to be gentlemen to follow in their father's footsteps. Some Virginians felt that their sons could learn this lesson by studying in England. In whichever country the boys received their education, they learned subjects which set them apart from the rest of their society and confirmed them in their places as leaders.
NOTES TO CHAPTER II


5See Gazette issues in note 4 above.


8Beverley to Perry, July 8, 1741, WMQ, 145; Corbin to Hanbury, June 3, 1766, VMHB, 525-526; John Carter to John Carter, July 19, 1720 in Mary Stephenson, Child Life in Virginia Research report no. 45 (Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia), 19.

11 Farish, ed., Journal and Letters of Fithian, 39, 125; Beverley to Perry, July 8, 1741, WMQ, 145.


15 Jacob Hall, Jr. to Mrs. Hannah Nice, about 1775-6 in WMQ, 1st ser., 22 (January 1914):161; Riley, ed., Journal of Harrower, 42, 46, 47, 83, 72, 150, 154, 155, 156.

16 Virginia Gazette (Rind) March 12, 1772; Tyler, Lyon G., ed., "Extract from Diary of Colonel Landon Carter," WMQ, 1st ser., 13 (January 1905):161; Hall, Jr. to Nice, about 1775-6, WMQ, 158-159.

17 Farish, ed., Journal and Letters of Fithian, 8; Riley, ed., Journal of Harrower, 54-56, 72, 148. Harold Gill of Colonial Williamsburg found that journeymen in the mid-eighteenth century received an average yearly wage of about thirty pounds and master craftsmen received sixty to one hundred pounds a year. Clerks in stores received twenty five pounds a year plus their room, board, and washing. Tutors were valued enough by their employers that they made more money than an average worker. Harold B. Gill, Jr. "Prices and Wages in 1700, " essay written September 29, 1977, Colonial Williamsburg Library.


CHAPTER III
THE MAKING OF GENTLEMEN

Educational opportunities existed in eighteenth-century Virginia for those able to take advantage of them. Some schools offered poor children a chance to be educated, while others existed for the benefit of the children in a specific area. Most children, even if able to attend school, studied for only a short time and then they had to enter a trade in order to make a living. This was not the case for the gentry children. The sons of the gentry in Virginia had more time to spend on education than the other colonial children. These extra years of study set the boys apart from the rest of the society. The burden of having to earn a living from an early age was lifted from these gentry boys and left them free to pursue their studies. The gentlemen replaced this burden with the burden of becoming leaders in the colonial society. By doing this the gentlemen made education a necessity for their sons. With their estates the gentlemen knew they would survive, but without education they would not be able to live in the kind of society they desired. The gentlemen, realizing the importance of education in maintaining their status, often expressed their thoughts on education to their sons and others.
The sons of gentlemen had the most opportunity to become involved in the planning and running of society. The extra years of learning these boys received not only taught them to read and write well, but also to become leaders of Virginia society. Since the boys' futures would be linked with that of the colony, their education needed to adapt to the special requirements of Virginia. Reverend James Maury, a Virginia tutor, observed in 1762 that the typical English curriculum had to be adjusted to the needs of Virginians. Very few students, he thought, remained in public or private school as long as their twentieth year, because Virginians tended to marry young, and thus had to care for their children and their estates earlier than did their counterparts in England. Not only did the Virginians spend less time in school, but they differed from the Europeans in their ideas, "their Way of Life, their Circumstances in Point of Fortune, the Customs & Manners & Humors of the Country."¹

Since so many aspects of colonial life were different from those in England, a distinct plan of education was required to suit the unique needs of the colony. A European education, according to Maury, "would no more fit us, than an Almanac, calculated for the Latitude of London, would that of Williamsburg." Robert Carter, the executor of Ralph Wormeley's estate, wrote about the Wormeley boys' education in England. He believed that since the boys' fortune would limit them to living in Virginia they needed
to gain insight into the workings of Virginia business. If the boys stayed too long in England, they would be dissatisfied with the drudgery of plantation life and would long for the pleasures they recalled in England. Carter had observed this dissatisfaction in other Virginians who had remained in England until manhood.2

When the English minister Jonathan Boucher arrived in Virginia in 1759, he commented that the nearest literary man was in England and that Virginians did not desire to go beyond the basic attainments of reading and writing. Since he intended to teach in the colony, Boucher felt he had to familiarize himself with the kind of knowledge that Virginians considered necessary. This meant he paid more attention to such areas as plantation business, trade, and the practice of medicine and law.3

Another Englishman, Hugh Jones, agreed that Virginians required a different education from that of the English. He felt that colonists educated in England were taught subjects that did not prepare them properly for life in Virginia. He found that Virginians had more interest in business than in the arts and sciences, and often became involved in the management of their affairs before a good foundation in learning could be obtained. Learning in the colony tended to be more superficial, especially since the boys wanted to learn only what was necessary and in the least amount of time. Realizing this, Jones wrote short treatises on such subjects as English grammar,
Christianity, mathematics, and especially arithmetic (including surveying and navigation) which could all be easily mastered if taught in the plain short method. Because of their desire to learn quickly, the Virginians preferred to gain the knowledge of various subjects by practical means such as conversing and doing business with learned gentlemen rather than by attending a formal school.  

Another book which, like Jones', appealed to the desire for quick instruction was the American Instructor: or Young Man's Best Companion by George Fisher. Sold in Williamsburg in mid-century, this book presented all the general subjects - spelling, reading, writing, and arithmetic - "in an easier way than any yet published." It also taught how to qualify any person for business without the aid of a master. The book covered several practical subjects and trades from carpentry to medicine, and it claimed to be better adapted to the American colonies than any other book. Any subject a planter might need, it proclaimed, was included between its covers.  

While many agreed that Virginians had special educational needs, gentlemen had different reasons for wanting their sons educated. Some gentlemen felt that the education of the young would benefit not only their children but also the country. In a Virginia Gazette article of 1776, the author declared that one way of doing this country a great and lasting service was to maintain
schools. The community benefited when its citizens were well educated. Two years before, the same paper had printed an essay on the necessity of education. The author claimed that Virginians should pay more attention to the education of the youth of the colony because education formed the minds of men. If Virginians cared about their country, families, and the happiness and success of the future generation, they would make sure that schools existed to educate children.  

These general sentiments were reflected in the more personal writings of upper-class Virginians. In 1702 Robert Carter was worried about the "very thick cloud of ignorance" which covered Virginia. He prayed that the next generation of Virginians would flourish "under a set of better polished patriots." By this he meant that the children would be well educated to take over as leaders of society. According to an English aunt of the sons of the Yorktown merchant Richard Ambler the boys' learning and good behavior would one day make them a credit to their country.  

George Washington wrote to a friend, William Ramsay, that if Ramsay's boy continued to do well in his studies, he would not only promote his own happiness, but also contribute to the future welfare of others. Reverend Maury insisted that if a boy did not have the proper education, particularly history, he would not be able to "acquit himself with any tolerable Measure of Honor & Dexterity in any of those public stations, which are
generally filled by Persons of his Rank." Without at least a general grounding in the constitution, laws, interests, and religion of the colony, the boy would be at a loss how to act when called by his country to distribute justice and bear "the mighty Business of Legislation." Maury was not just speaking hypothetically, he knew that these gentlemen's sons were the ones named to the highest positions of "Honor & Trust in this Country." The gentlemen also knew that their children would be the future leaders in the colony and they felt that education was the best way to prepare their sons for such roles.

Although some men wanted their sons educated for a future as leaders in society, others felt that vocational education would be useful. In his will of 1693 one planter in Princess Anne County desired that his children should learn to read English with ease and that the sons be taught arithmetic only "so far as would be needful for this country's affairs." Other gentlemen of Virginia noted in their wills how they wanted their sons taught. Thomas Lee, one of the wealthiest men in the colony, requested that the guardian of his sons not only educate them in religion and virtue, but also, if necessary, bind them to some trade or profession where they could learn to make an honest living. Other prominent Virginians, including such men as a planter and a member of the House of Burgesses, directed that their sons be educated to the extent the estate allowed until they were sixteen, and then bound out to a trade. Samuel
Matthews, a man of considerable estate in Richmond County, insisted in his will that his two eldest sons be apprenticed, one to the master of a ship and the other to a good house carpenter.\(^9\) While money allowed men to give their children any education they wanted, some men chose to ensure that their children would learn a trade which would enable them to make a living beyond what their estate provided. This protected the sons from being helpless if they lost their estate or if the estate alone did not produce enough money to support the family.

Education prepared boys not only for a trade but to cope with life in general. Reverend Boucher, tutor of Jack Custis, advised George Washington that education was the "preparation for the school of life" and that it was worthwhile to teach children to bear any misfortunes in life with fortitude. Reverend Maury suggested that when a tutor knew that a youth was to become a man of business, the boy should be taught subjects that would be useful to him as he approached the "active Scenes of Life."\(^10\)

No matter how interesting or entertaining other subjects were, if they were not useful they were not worth the time or effort it would take to teach them. Maury felt that most of the gentlemen's sons of the colony were students who would need some background in business and useful subjects. As soon as possible the boys should be instructed in the "most necessar[y] Branches of useful, practical Knowledge." Apprenticeship was also important
for any boy who would have to depend on income beyond that which he received from his estate. Such a student, once he reached fourteen or fifteen, should have been placed in the care of a person prominent in the business the boy desired to learn. This apprenticeship would allow him to gain insight into the working and "mysteries" of the trade, without which the boy could not be successful or acquire a good reputation. The sooner the boy learned the general knowledge necessary for gentlemen, the sooner he could begin the studies which would teach him his trade.  

One of the main reasons for educating gentry boys was to prepare them for their future position as colonial gentlemen. Most boys would live lives similar to those of their parents, and thus they had to be prepared through education to assume the roles of men who would reflect well on their families rather than disgrace them. Colonel Nathaniel Burwell complained to his brother that their young stepbrother Lewis could not read as he should nor write well nor knew anything about arithmetic. This substantial lack of knowledge made Lewis incapable of managing his own affairs as well as making him "unfit for any Gentlemen's conversation, and therefore a scandalous person and a Shame to his Relations, not having one single qualification to recommend him." If Lewis would learn some of these subjects, Nathaniel agreed to employ him at his house and teach him to run a plantation until Lewis came of age to manage his own estate.
Education not only prepared a boy to manage his own plantation, but also it allowed the boy to retain his position in the upper class. Richard Ambler wrote to his sons that they should realize how lucky they were that their parents could afford to give them an education. Richard himself had not had such benefits and was barely able to afford their education because he was not wealthy himself, although he had married into a wealthy family. If the boys used this opportunity well, their education would "preserve...[them]...in the same Class and Rank among mankind" and would "set...[them]...above the common level and drudgery of Life." Richard was often aware of his handicap (his lack of learning), especially when he found himself in the company of educated gentlemen and could not participate in their conversations as he would have liked. A learned man had a better chance of being accepted among the Virginia gentlemen if he could carry on an intelligent conversation.

Without education, boys would make a poor showing in society. Reverend Maury insisted that some literature should be learned by Virginians because lack of it would inevitably make them "ridiculous & awkward Figure[s] in Life." The basics of their education had to be learned in childhood or youth, or not at all. He felt that history in particular would serve to benefit the individual in private conversations. Philip Fithian, the tutor of Robert Carter's children, agreed that some knowledge was necessary
to make the boys proper gentlemen. When writing his successor, he stated that a tutor had always to be aware of his duty to his students. Although the students had to learn the necessary subjects, it was not good to make them study too much without a break because they might rebel. On the other hand, the tutor could not be too lenient and let the boys wander too far from the improving influences of study. If the boys abandoned their studies, they would eventually show their ignorance, exposing themselves and their tutor to ridicule. Without the discipline of schooling, the boys might even go so far as to commit crimes, which would not only injure themselves, but also scandalize the family. George Washington, like Fithian, believed that education was necessary to keep boys from uneducational diversions. He felt that his stepson Jack, through education, would be prepared for "more useful purposes than horse racer." Education provided a means to keep the boys within the limits of proper behavior as well as to prepare them for a future life among other educated men.

While education in general was considered necessary to the formation of a gentleman's character, certain subjects were deemed particularly useful to a boy's upbringing. Reverend Maury felt that the "useful & necessary Studies" consisted of "English Grammar, reading, writing, arithmetic, History, Geography, Chronology, the more practical Parts of the Mathematics, Rhetoric, Eloquence &
other Species of polite & useful Learning;...an Acquaintance with, & taste for some of the most instructive, entertaining & finished Productions of Genius in his own Language." The best time to learn all these topics was while the boy was under the care of a tutor, since afterwards the boy, having entered business, would have no time to learn.\textsuperscript{15}

George Washington, too, had a specific idea of the subjects necessary for a boy. In a letter to the Reverend Boucher, Washington noted what he thought his stepson Jack should learn. Although Jack knew Latin well, he was not as familiar as he should have been with several classical authors. Jack lacked Greek and French, knew almost nothing of arithmetic, and was totally ignorant of mathematics, at least that which related to surveying. As for surveying, Washington felt that "nothing can be more essentially necessary to any person possessed of a large landed estate, the bounds of some part or other of which is always in controversy." Washington had put his own advice into practice early in his life. When he was just seventeen, Washington already knew enough to be commissioned by the College of William and Mary as surveyor for the Culpeper area. Much of Washington's early years in fact were spent in surveying some part or other of the colony.\textsuperscript{16}

Washington further advised Boucher on Jack's curriculum. He wrote that not only were the languages necessary for anyone who would mingle in a learned group,
but also the principles of philosophy, both moral and natural, were desirable for a gentleman. When Richard Ambler wrote his boys, he stressed that he did not want to limit them in their education and that they should learn whatever suited their likes and intellect. Despite this liberal stand, the father insisted that the boys include in their curriculum Latin, French, writing, and accounts because these topics would be useful to their future, especially if their future was in trade. Ambler, Washington, and Maury reflected their society's desire that the boys learn a variety of useful subjects.

Other accomplishments besides the purely academic were thought desirable for gentlemen's sons. Fithian told his successor that Virginia society assumed that all gentlemen were well acquainted with such arts as dancing, boxing, playing the fiddle, small swords, and cards. Charles Carter, besides requiring that his two sons learn the languages, math, and philosophy, insisted that the boys be accomplished in fencing and dancing. These subjects could be learned while the boys were at school. Hugh Jones planned that the president and master of the College of William and Mary would appoint teachers to instruct students in music, dancing, and fencing. In the early 1770s notices appeared in the Virginia Gazette which advertised schools and tutors to teach young gentlemen to play various musical instruments, such as the violin, French horn, and flute.
Dancing, another important accomplishment, was often taught by a dancing master who traveled throughout the colony so that many families could utilize his services. Reverend Boucher, knowing that he could not teach Jack all the amenities required of a gentleman's son, recommended to Washington that the boy be enrolled in Mr. Newman's 'floating' dancing school, sessions of which were held in private homes. Reverend Maury felt that while studies were "necessary for the worthy Discharge of the Duties of his Station," it was also necessary to indulge in "social pleasures & innocent Amusements" because it would "unbend and humanize the Mind, & without which no Study can be successfully prosecuted." The life of a gentleman consisted not only of running a plantation and engaging in learned conversation, but in being able to function well at parties and among friends.

While gentlemen considered such social accomplishments to be important to the formation of their sons, these attainments could also have a bad effect on the boys. George Washington found that over vacation, Jack had turned to such diversions as horses, guns, and fashion. If Boucher did not make Jack attend closely to his studies, Washington feared that Jack would be unprepared for the future. Landon Carter noted in his diary the days when the dancing master, Mr. Christian, was in the area and the days when he departed. Carter felt that while the young people might be upset at Mr. Christian's departure, it was for the
best since the boys in school would fare better; "every three weeks is certainly too much time to loose two days a time." 21 Richard Ambler, like Washington, worried about the time the boys spent away from their studies. He wrote to his sons that too much time away from learning would relax and unbend their minds. If the boys got too relaxed and adapted to leisure, they would lose interest in school and learning and instead prefer pleasures and diversions which would leave them unprepared for daily life. While at school the boys' chief concern was to learn. 22 Their academic studies could be broken up with social accomplishments, but too much pleasure and too little study would make the boys unprepared for their future as leaders in Virginia.

Becoming well educated in many subjects was important to the formation of a gentleman, but there was another aspect of learning which some eighteenth-century parents also felt was important. George Washington wrote Boucher, "not that I think his becoming a mere scholar is a desirable education for a gentleman, but I conceive a knowledge of books is the basis upon which other knowledge is to be built, and that it is men and things more than books he is to be acquainted with by traveling." As long as the youth had a strong academic background, traveling would be an important addition to formal learning. When Boucher suggested a trip for Jack, Washington felt that it would help to polish the boy's manners and increase his
knowledge. Although not averse to the plan, Washington would not let Jack go without further information about the travel plans. While Jack did not go abroad, Ned, Richard Ambler's son, was able to travel through England after he finished school there. Richard Ambler advised his eldest son on how to make the most of this travel experience. He instructed him to notice anything that was remarkable, to travel with company who would help him make "prudent observations," and not to let husbandry be beneath his concern when he talked to skillful farmers. Traveling would give the boys firsthand experience of other subjects which they could not learn from books.

Most gentlemen wanted their boys to learn a variety of academic and social subjects. One subject in particular which gentlemen often required of the tutors was the classical languages. The Latin and Greek classics had a long tradition in English schools, and the colonists continued this tradition in their education. These two languages often appeared in the curricula of upper class boys. George Washington wrote to the Reverend Boucher that Jack, although he had a firm grounding in Latin because he had been at it so long already, had not progressed as far in classical learning as he ought. Washington wanted Boucher to concentrate on these subjects. Robert Carter, in a letter to a friend in England regarding his boys' education there under Mr. Low, commented that Mr. Low was teaching the boys Latin by a nontraditional method.
wanted Low to revert to his old way of teaching the
language and make sure the boys were proficient in Lily's
Grammar, the standard Latin text. If Low would not comply
with this request, Carter would remove the boys from Low's
care and place them at Eton with the Burwell children. An
uncle of the Ambler boys wrote to his nephews that he
wanted them to oversee the education of his son who had
recently arrived in England to join the Amblers at their
school. The boys should make sure that their cousin
studied what they thought fit, but the uncle felt strongly
that a "foundation must be laid in the Classiks or he will
make a poor figure in anything." 25

These gentlemen and many others felt that Latin was an
inherent part of a boy's education, but in 1762 the
Reverend Maury made a case against such a necessity for
Virginia boys. Although born in Dublin, Maury came to
Virginia while still an infant. After graduating from the
College of William and Mary in about 1738, serving as an
usher of its grammar school, and being ordained in London,
Maury settled in Fredericksville Parish, Louisa County.
Here he was not only in charge of the parish, but also he
administered and taught at a small boarding school which
was attended by such future learned Virginians as Thomas
Jefferson, the young James Maury, Dabney Carr, and James
Madison (the first bishop of Virginia and a president of
the College of William and Mary). In 1762 Maury wrote a
lengthy discourse on education in response to a treatise he
had read which had been written by his close friend, the Reverend Boucher, who had defended the dominate tradition of classical learning.  

Having been raised and educated in England, Boucher was well trained in the classics. After being ordained, he came to Virginia in order to teach. In his early years of teaching he thought that the languages were the only "avenues to knowledge." Gradually, after gaining experience in American schools, he began to doubt the value of a classical education for all, believing rather that languages were only a partial approach to knowledge. Although his views changed slowly to agree with Maury's, he did not forgo teaching classics, especially since gentlemen such as Washington wanted their boys to learn them. After reading Maury's essay on education, Boucher urged him to publish it because he believed it would be "of infinite service in a country like this." Maury agreed, but only if Boucher would edit it, which he did.  

Maury's dissertation on education revealed his ideas on the kind of education appropriate to his fellow Virginians. While many gentlemen continued to desire a grounding in Latin and Greek for their boys, Maury argued that Virginians were unique and did not need to spend their time on such learning. To Maury it was important to consider first what kind of education would be appropriate to boys who would eventually control competent fortunes which they would maintain by various means other than a
learned profession. Maury agreed that Greek and Latin were necessary for those boys who chose a career in religion, medicine, or law. He could not recall, however, any sons of wealthy Virginia parents who had been brought up in any of these three professions since the profits earned in a practice were not equal to the expense of the education needed.28

Since the management of their estates required much attention to improve and preserve them, the boys had no time to spend practicing languages. If the gentlemen had not time for the languages after they finished school, why learn them in school? Instead of wasting time on a subject that would not be useful to them, they could better use the time to study subjects that would be used frequently in their daily activities. Greek and Latin might be suitable, and even necessary, for men in other parts of the world who lived in exalted spheres or for those who did not have to worry about business, but Virginians were not among this select group. A long-held reason to support the study of the languages was that knowledge of the languages was necessary for those interested in pursuing careers in the sciences. But Maury noted that English was now capable of expressing ideas just as competently as Latin and Greek. Knowledge was no longer found only in the dead languages.29

Although Maury may have had little use for the classical languages, the Virginia boys sent to England
certainly acquired a classical education. Those remaining in Virginia also learned the classics under the care of tutors or Latin masters. The Virginians felt themselves to be Englishmen and wanted their boys to be educated as such. Both Fithian and Harrower as well as other tutors listed the languages as part of their curricula. In a Virginia Gazette advertisement a few years after the publication of Maury's discourse, a shopkeeper listed the several schoolbooks that had just arrived and were now for sale. Among the books listed were many classical language grammars as well as the books written in Greek and Latin. Maury's ideas, however, showed that differences existed in the lives of the colonists which he felt required a different emphasis in education in order to cope with this new life. Although Maury was sincere about his plans for education, even he did not give up teaching the classics. His pupil Thomas Jefferson called Maury "a correct classical scholar" and Jefferson proved this by becoming an excellent Latin scholar. While Virginia boys learned many useful subjects, Latin and Greek remained part of the curriculum which made the boys proper gentlemen.

The Virginia gentlemen took great care to see that their children were properly educated for a life in the colony. These men had established themselves in Virginia as leaders of the society and they wanted the same for their sons. They felt that education was one way of
ensuring that their sons held their position in the upper class of society.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER III


4 Jones, Present State of Virginia, 80, 82.

5 Virginia Gazette September 19, 1751.

6 Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon) November 22, 1776, May 12, 1774.


9 Bruce, Social Life in Old Virginia, 305; Stanard, Colonial Virginia, 276.


12 Colonel Nathaniel Burwell to Brother, June 13, 1713 in WMQ, 1st ser., 7 (July 1898): 43-44.


29. Ibid., 40, 43-44, 59-60.


CONCLUSION

From the beginning of the colonial period in Virginia, education was considered important to the development of the colony. The government, the church, and the colonists worked to establish methods of education which would benefit their children. They passed laws, built schools, and hired schoolmasters, all in an attempt to see that as many children as possible received an education at least in reading and writing. Once learned, these skills would help them to make an honest living in Virginia.

Virginia gentlemen played an important role in the educational efforts of the colony. Many men upon their deaths granted land to the various parishes or counties so that schools could be erected for the benefit of some of the local children. They left specific instructions as to the building of the schools, the salaries of the schoolmasters, and the number of students to be taught. These endowments allowed at least some children to receive an education which otherwise would not have been available to them.

The main concern of the gentlemen, however, was the education of their own sons. They wanted their sons to receive an education which would make them fit for a life of public service and gentle society. Very few colonists
other than those among the gentry class could afford an education beyond the basics. The average colonist had neither the time nor the money to allow his son to spend years learning a variety of subjects. Gentlemen had both of these requirements, and thus by the very nature of their sons' educations they set themselves apart from the rest of society. With the knowledge acquired from these years of study, the boys were prepared to carry on business with fellow Virginians as well as men in England. They could participate actively in government and acquit themselves well among their peers. J. F. D. Smythe wrote in 1773 that the men in the upper level of Virginia society "are here more respectable and numerous than any other province in America. These, in general, have had a liberal education, possess enlightened understandings and a thorough knowledge of the world that furnishes them with an ease and freedom of manners and conversation highly to their advantage in exterior,..."^1

While gentlemen's sons had the best chance to receive an education, they were not the only ones to do so. In the seventeenth century just over half of the Virginians were literate. By the eighteenth century about two-thirds of the male population was literate. This figure remained constant throughout the remainder of the colonial period. Although literacy was concentrated among the wealthier men in Virginia, many other colonists could claim to be literate to the extent that they could write their names
and possibly read. The educational system established in Virginia was successful in that the rate of literacy for the colony was the same as that for the American colonies as a whole. A colony which could raise such prominent citizens as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and James Madison had educational methods capable of producing "polished patriots."
NOTES FOR CONCLUSION

1 Tyler, Lyon G., "Education in Colonial Virginia. Part VI. Comparative Results," 7 (October 1898):69 fn. 2.

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VMHB  Virginia Magazine of History and Biography

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