

MILLINERY AND MILLINERS IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA

1750 - 1780

---

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

Patricia Ann Hurdle

1970

APPROVAL SHEET

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

Master of Arts

*Patricia Ann Hurdle*

Author

Approved, May 3, 1971

*Ed M. Riley*

Edward M. Riley, Ph.D.

*Jane Carson*

Jane Carson, Ph.D.

*J. Selby*

John E. Selby, Ph.D.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to express her appreciation to Dr. Edward M. Riley, under whose direction this study was undertaken, for his very helpful guidance and encouragement throughout this project. The author is also indebted to Miss Jane Carson and Dr. John E. Selby for their careful reading and criticism of the manuscript. The staff of the Research Department of Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated also deserves the author's heart-felt appreciation for their valuable assistance and cheerful encouragement during preparation of this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	iii
ABSTRACT . . . . .	v
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	2
CHAPTER I. MILLINERS, HABERDASHERS, AND MARCHANDES DES MODES. . .	6
CHAPTER II. MILLINERY TRADE IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA . . . . .	14
CHAPTER III. MILLINERS OF WILLIAMSBURG. . . . .	29
CHAPTER IV. "AN ELEGANT ASSORTMENT OF GOODS" . . . . .	59
APPENDIX A . . . . .	71
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	72

## ABSTRACT

The millinery trade in colonial Virginia offers an example of a female occupation of European origin transferred to a colonial setting. This study examines the character of the colonial millinery trade as revealed by available sources from colonial Virginia. In discussing the activities of milliners in the colony and its capital Williamsburg, this study focuses upon the period 1750 to 1780, thus including the peak of the trade reached in the decade preceding the American Revolution. In the absence of manuscript sources originated by milliners, information has been obtained from milliners' advertisements in the Virginia Gazette, papers of London merchants especially John Norton & Sons, and widely scattered manuscript references.

This study begins by sketching the European background of the occupation and its probable origins in the activities of Milanese and Italian merchants. Long associated with the haberdashers, English milliners gained new prominence in the eighteenth century as they followed the example of the style-setting Parisian marchandes des modes and created the latest fashions for their customers. The millinery trade of eighteenth-century London provided the model from which colonial Virginia's millinery trade derived.

In colonial Virginia milliners encountered problems as a trade based on importing goods: their distance from England and the scarcity of currency complicated communications, procurement of goods, and accounting procedures. Available evidence indicates that although Virginia planters ordered millinery goods through London agents, they also patronized local milliners.

The social center of the colony, Williamsburg had several milliners whose shops served the fashion-conscious citizens. A detailed review of the activities of the Williamsburg milliners presents glimpses of the character and problems of the occupation as revealed by available information. Williamsburg planters advertised the largest and most sophisticated stocks of goods during the decades preceding the American Revolution. An inventory of the millinery wares advertised in the colonial capital during this period reveals a wider variety of goods than that offered by London milliners. Especially skilled in trimming gowns, mounting fans, and creating cloaks and bonnets, Williamsburg milliners sold fashionable accessories for ladies, gentlemen, and children. They were not primarily seamstresses, nor were they solely interested in hats and head-dresses. The imported fashionable accessories that would appeal to both the middle and upper classes comprised the Williamsburg milliners' "elegant assortment of goods."

MILLINERY AND MILLINERS IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA

1750 - 1780

## INTRODUCTION

During the second half of the eighteenth century new combinations of colors, fabrics, trimmings, and accessories created changing fashions in women's clothing while the cut and shape of feminine garments continued the forms of the first half of the century. Until classical styles heralding the Empire silhouette of the early nineteenth century appeared in the 1790s, eighteenth-century gowns were variations of three basic patterns. The open robe featured a bodice joined to a skirt open in front to display a petticoat. The closed robe featured a bodice joined to a skirt; however, the skirt did not display a petticoat. A separate bodice overlapping a skirt comprised the third basic pattern. Variations of these three patterns produced the fashionable gowns familiar to women of the eighteenth century. The well-known wrapping gowns were closed robes with overlapping fronts and lace tuckers. Among the popular open robes were mantuas, loose gowns with unboned bodices; sack gowns with Watteau, or box, pleats in the back; and the polonaise with an overskirt gathered into puffs at the back. The separate bodice of the third basic style appeared in three main forms: the figure-fitting casquin, or jacket; the petenlair, a loose, thigh-length jacket with a sack-back; and, the jacket of the riding habit, worn over a waistcoat and riding skirt.<sup>1</sup>

Although the basic styles of women's gowns changed little, frequent innovations in the details of dress created the successive modes of the late eighteenth century. For example, the bodice of an open robe often opened in front to allow the insertion of a stomacher, a triangular panel

---

1. Phillis Cunnington, Costume in Pictures (London, 1964), 90-94, 107-111.

decorated in the latest fashion. Flat bands of ruching, known as robings, covered the joining of the stomacher and bodice and added another decorative detail available in numerous modish forms. Each new fashion indicated a new combination of colors, fabrics, and trimmings, and imparted great importance to such decorative details of dress as stomachers and robings. Of equal concern to fashion-conscious women were the modish accessories that completed a costume--aprons, gloves, jewelry, handkerchiefs, and especially caps and hats. The role of trimmings, accessories, fabrics, and colors in defining current fashions was evident in the following description of "Dress for March" published in The Lady's Magazine, March 1774. Briefly describing one of the latest modes, correspondent Charlotte Stanley wrote:

Sacks, a beautiful new plain polish blue, or a kind of dark lay-lock sattin. Trimmings, large puffs down the sides, with chenille silver, or gold, or blond. Stomacher crossed with silver or gold cord. Fine laced ruffles. Sattin embroidered shoes with diamond roses. Small drop earrings. Turkey handkerchiefs.<sup>2</sup>

By the second half of the eighteenth century a great variety of fabrics in many colors were available to inspire the genius of fashion designers. Translated and circulated throughout Europe, Sir Isaac Newton's Opticks (1704) had initiated new studies of the nature of colors. Throughout the century scholar-scientists experimented with color mixtures and catalogued the many shades of colors. Gradually dyers incorporated such knowledge into their art and produced in addition to bright colors more subtle shades, such as puce, a brownish purple deriving its name from the French word for the similarly colored flea. Furthermore, in the

---

2. Charlotte Stanley, "Dress for March," The Lady's Magazine (London), March 1774, 125.

latter part of the eighteenth century a large selection of fabrics was available for the dyers' art. While hand looms in Flanders, Italy, France, and other European countries produced fine linens and silks, English textile industries were entering the Industrial Revolution. The relatively young cotton industry readily adopted the inventions of Arkwright, Hargreaves, and Crompton that improved the production of yarn. Less susceptible to change, the older, established woolen industry continued to weave fine woolen goods by traditional methods. English cottons and woolens, and European silks and linens provided a vast array of fabrics suitable for ladies' fashions. From colorful satins, calicoes, velvets, broadcloths, cambrics, and muslins designers created the latest modes.<sup>3</sup>

The trimmings that decorated clothing and the accessories that completed costumes were as important in defining late eighteenth-century fashions as were colors and fabrics. Encompassing all the details decorating a gown, trimmings assumed new forms with each successive mode. Braid, cording, ribbons, embroidered tapes, and intricate ruchings appeared in endless combinations that varied with each whim of fashion. In 1779 approximately one hundred and fifty different styles of trimmings were popular in Paris alone; each style had its name, for example, soupirs étouffés, stifled sighs, or regrets superflus, vain regrets.<sup>4</sup> Modish accessories such as fans, gloves, caps, and bonnets completed fashionable costumes of this period. During the second half of the eighteenth century, milliners were the "fashion artists" who supplied trimmings,

---

3. J. H. Plumb, England in the Eighteenth Century, 1714-1815 (Baltimore, Maryland, 1965), 78-79; and Francois Boucher, 20,000 Years of Fashion (New York, 1967), 291-293.

4. Max von Boehn, Modes and Manners (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, n.d.), trans. by Joan Joshua, IV, 173.

accessories, and skills in designing gowns in the mode of the moment.

While students of social history have noted the prominence of European milliners during this period, they have overlooked the activities of milliners in colonial America. The activities of these fashion experts offer glimpses of colonial society from the viewpoint of the women who served and partly determined its tastes and interests. Furthermore, the millinery business in America reveals the character of an occupation created to serve the European rage for "la mode" transferred to the less sophisticated society of colonial America. The colonial millinery trade is also worthy of study as one of the earliest occupations involving women in the economic life of the community. Available sources from the eighteenth century designate colonial Virginia an appropriate starting point for studies of millinery in colonial America. This study considers the character of the millinery trade in colonial Virginia from 1750 to 1780. The activities of milliners in Williamsburg, the colony's capital, supply details concerning colonial milliners. An examination of these milliners' wares reveals further information concerning the importance of milliners in colonial communities. However, to present clearly the character of the millinery trade in late colonial Virginia, this study begins with an examination of the European background of the occupation.

## CHAPTER I

### MILLINERS, HABERDASHERS, AND MARCHANDES DES MODES

A probable origin of millinery as an occupation is suggested by the etymology of the word "milliner." The Oxford English Dictionary states as the primary definition, "a native or inhabitant of Milan." In reference to the occupation the second definition, denoted as obsolete, is "a vendor of 'fancy' wares and other articles of apparel, such as were originally of Milan manufacture, e.g. 'Milan bonnets,' ribbons, gloves, cutlery."<sup>1</sup> In A Dictionary of the English Language Samuel Johnson derived "milliner" from "Milaner, an inhabitant of Milan," and defined the subject as "one who sells ribands and dresses for women."<sup>2</sup> Thus, the products of Milan seem to have been related closely to the activities of early milliners. The occupation's connection with Milanese products and items of a similar nature is evident in sixteenth-century references to a "mylloner" paid by the Privy Purse in the reign of Henry VIII for "certeyne cappes trymmed . . . withe botons of golde," "myllain bonettes," "a knif for the king."<sup>3</sup> In the middle of the sixteenth century "mileyners" were grouped with vitners, grocers, mercers, and haberdashers as "such as doe sell wares growinge beyond the seas."<sup>4</sup> Thus, in England the occupation may have developed from the sale of imported Milanese products, perhaps originally

---

1. Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford, 1938), VI, 449.

2. Samuel Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language, 3rd ed. (London, 1767), II, n.p.

3. Quoted in Oxford English Dictionary, VI, 449.

4. Ibid.

by Italian merchants, to the sale of similar fashion accessories.<sup>5</sup>

A second possible derivation of "milliner" emphasizes another aspect of the occupation. Minsheu's Ductor (1617) defined a milliner as "an Haberdasher of small wares . . . In London also called a Millenier, a Lat. mille, i.e. a thousand, as one having a thousand small wares to sell."<sup>6</sup> However, the accepted eighteenth-century derivation of "milliner" as indicated by the sources consulted seems to have been from Milan, the origin of much of the merchandise sold by early milliners.<sup>7</sup>

The history of milliners in Great Britain has been interwoven with that of haberdashers. As vendors of a variety of small wares pertaining to dress, haberdashers seem to have included milliners among their number.<sup>8</sup> According to William Maitland, the haberdashers' guild "antiently, was indifferently called Hurrers and Milliners; the latter from the Merchandizes they chiefly dealt in, which came from the City of Milan, in Italy." The haberdashers' guild, including milliners, was established by Letters Patent of Henry VI in 1407 "by the Style of The Fraternity of St. Catherine The Virgin of the Haberdashers of the City of London." Eighth in precedence of the Twelve Great Companies of London, the livery of the haberdashers' guild numbered 342 members in 1775 and was titled "the Fraternity of the Art or Mystery of Haberdashers in the City of London."<sup>9</sup>

---

5. Compare James Robinson Planché, A Cycopaedia of Costume or Dictionary of Dress (London, 1876), I, 362.

6. Quoted in Oxford English Dictionary, VI, 449.

7. Compare the quotation dated 1720 from Stow's Survey cited under "haberdasher," Oxford English Dictionary, V, 3.

8. Oxford English Dictionary, V, 3.

9. William Maitland, The History of London (London, 1775), V, 1234.

Milliners' importance in the Haberdashers Company was depicted in the guild's entry in a London procession of 1699; St. Katherine, the guild's patron saint was followed by "Commerce seated on a rich throne with milliners' shops serving as her footstool."<sup>10</sup> Thus, until the eighteenth century, milliners and haberdashers had been closely related. However, during the eighteenth century, millinery as a female occupation devoted to fashionable dress assumed a new character unlike that of haberdashery.

In eighteenth-century England mantua-makers practiced a trade similar to that of milliners, and their activities have often been confused with those of milliners. Mantua-makers were seamstresses and dressmakers who derived their name from "manteau," the French term originally describing a loose gown popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, association of "manteau" with Mantua, Italy, corrupted the term through general usage to "mantua-maker."<sup>11</sup> English mantua-makers made stylish gowns for their customers and were a part of the "fashion trade." As "fashion artists" milliners often trimmed gowns made by mantua-makers and selected appropriate hose, gloves, ribbons, and headdresses to create a modish costume. Close relationships between milliners and mantua-makers were not unusual. Williamsburg milliner Catherine Rathell shared her shop with a mantua-maker from London for several months; upon the milliner's death, the mantua-maker acquired a large portion of her estate.<sup>12</sup> In summary, mantua-makers were seamstresses

---

10. George Unwin, The Gilds and Companies of London (London, 1908), 291.

11. Oxford English Dictionary, VI, 141. Also, Planche, A Cycopaedia of Costume or Dictionary of Dress, I, 362.

12. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), October 10, 1771; and Loyalist Claim of Margaret (Brodie) Mathews, Public Records Office, Audit Office, Class 12, Piece 56, 363 (microfilm in Research Department, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated).

often associated with the milliners' activities as "fashion artists."

The importation of French fashions into England in the mid-eighteenth century gave new importance to the milliner's art. By the middle of the century marchandes des modes, or "fashion artists" were creating for fashionable Parisians les modes, "not only the changes in the style or cut of dress, but principally the trimmings and ornaments, also bonnets, hats, etc. which imparted to the costume its final touch of elegance."<sup>13</sup> Although the basic cut of clothing changed little in the eighteenth century, head-dresses, trimmings and accessories supplied by these "artists" created the style of the moment. Paris decreed fashion: "All the world lived a la francaise."<sup>14</sup> The marchandes or milliners of the Rue St. Honore gained international fame as they vied to create new styles for the French court. The creations of Rose Bertin for Marie Antoinette marked the peak of the milliners' prominence in Paris.<sup>15</sup> London milliners copied the latest Paris creations for their clients with all possible speed. Fashion dolls carefully dressed to the smallest details provided models for English and European milliners.<sup>16</sup> "The glance of all Europe was fixed on the famous dolls in the Rue de St. Honore, a doll in the latest fashion, in the latest adornment, and of the latest invention, a changing picture of the coquetry

---

13. A. Varron, "The Rise of the French Fashion Artist," CIBA Review, 25 (September, 1939), 880.

14. Edmond and Jules DeGoncourt, The Woman of the Eighteenth Century (New York, 1922), 225.

15. Varron, "The Rise of the French Fashion Artist," 882-883.

16. Georgiana Hill, A History of English Dress (New York, 1893), II, 78; and R. Turner Wilcox, Five Centuries of American Costume (New York, 1963), 126. Wilcox states that "fashion babies" came from England to America from 1750 until the Civil War. Compare Edward Warwick, Henry C. Pitz, Alexander Wyckoff, Early American Dress (New York, 1965), 172-173.

of the day. . . . Repeated and multiplied, this mannequin crossed mountain and sea, it went to England, to Germany, to Italy, and to Spain: from the Rue de St. Honore, it darted into the world and reached the inmost harem."<sup>17</sup> References to French milliners in contemporary English accounts suggest that a considerable number of marchandes des modes found London eager for their talents. A report from London printed in the Virginia Gazette in September 1773 stated that "on Monday last ten cooks, thirteen milliners, and nineteen peruquiers, were lately landed at Union stairs, from France; to the great emolument of this kingdom."<sup>18</sup>

The activities of London milliners of the mid-eighteenth century were described in 1747 by R. Campbell in a handbook for parents of prospective apprentices entitled The London Tradesman. Campbell stated that "the milliner is concerned in making and providing the Ladies with Linen of all sorts, fit for Wearing Apparel, from the Holland Smock to the Tippet and Commode; but as we are got into the Lady's Articles, which are so very numerous, the Reader is not to expect that we are to give an exact List of every thing belonging to them; let it suffice in general, that the Milliner furnishes them with Holland, Cambrick, Lawn, and Lace of all sorts, and makes these Materials into Smocks, Aprons, Tippetts, Handkerchiefs, Neckties, Ruffles, Mobs, Caps, Dressed-Heads, with as many Etceteras as would reach from Charing-Cross to the Royal Exchange." The enumeration of the milliner's wares continued, listing cloaks, lace, trimmings, gloves, ribbons, petticoats, hoops, riding habits, and costumes for masquerades; "in a word, they [milliners] furnish every thing to the Ladies, that can contribute to set off their Beauty, increase their Vanity, or render them

---

17. DeGoncourt, The Woman of the Eighteenth Century, 225-226.

18. Rind's Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), September 16, 1773.

ridiculous." To produce fashionable articles for her customers the milliner had to be "a neat Needle-Woman in all its Branches, and a perfect Connoisseur in Dress and Fashion." Eagerly following the designs of French milliners, the London milliners imported

"new Whims from Paris every Post, and put the Ladies Heads in as many different Shapes in one Month as there are different Appearances of the Moon in that Space. The most noted of them keep an Agent in Paris, who have nothing to do but to watch the Motions of the Fashions, and procure Intelligence of their Changes, which she signifies to her principals, with as much Zeal and Secrecy as an Ambassador or Plenipo would the important Discovery of some political Intrigue."<sup>19</sup>

However, Campbell cautioned parents against binding their daughters to this trade. Although he believed milliners to reap "vast Profits on every Article they deal in," Campbell reported that apprentices could earn only five or six shillings a week from which they must secure board and lodging. Twelve hours of work, from seven until seven o'clock, were required of apprentices. Furthermore, Campbell's main criticism was directed toward the moral tone of milliners' shops. Young men patronized millinery shops seeking opportunities to meet young girls. In Campbell's words,

The vast Resort of young Beaus and Rakes to Milliner's Shops, exposes young Creatures to many Temptations, and insensibly debauches their Morals before they are capable of Vice. A young Coxcomb no sooner is Master of an Estate, and a small Share of Brains, but he affects to deal with the most noted Milliner: If he chances to meet in her Shop any thing that has the Appearance of Youth, and the simple Behaviour of undesigning Innocence, he immediately accosts the young Sempstress with all the little Raillery he is Master of, talks loosely, and thinks himself most witty, when he has cracked some obscene Jest upon the young Creature. The Mistress, tho' honest, is obliged every Day to hear a Language, that by degrees undermines her Virtue, deprives her of that modest Delicacy of Thought, which is the constant Companion of uncorrupted Innocence, and makes Vice become familiar to the Ear, from whence there is but a small Transition to the grosser Gratification of the Appetite.

---

19. All quotations in this paragraph are from R. Campbell, The London Tradesman (London, 1747), 206-208 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

While hastening to acquit most milliners of "the Crime of Connivance at the Ruin of their Apprentices," Campbell warned parents that more than half the "common women of the Town" once worked in millinery shops. He concluded that "whether then it is owing to the Milliners, or to the Nature of the Business, or to whatever Cause it is owing, the Facts are so clear, and the Misfortunes attending their Apprentices so manifest, that it ought to be the last Shift a young Creature is driven to." His final admonition to those girls who must serve milliners demanded that they avoid "private Hedge Milliners; those who pretend to deal only with a few select Customers, who scorn to keep open Shop, but live in some remote Corner." These women provided "Places of Assignation" and lived "by the Spoils of Virtue."<sup>20</sup>

In addition to their importance in defining fashion, milliners were sometimes regarded as women of "easy virtue" by London society. William Byrd's diary of his visit to London in 1718 and 1719 notes his acquaintance with Mrs. Molly Cole, a milliner.<sup>21</sup> Although the reputation of London milliners was not impeccable, immigrant French milliners were especially notorious. In 1772 the Virginia Gazette carried an account from London of a liaison between Sir Robert Murray Keith and an unusual French milliner, Madame P---lle. A Parisian, Madame P---lle came to England with an English gentleman with whom she lived for some time. She afterwards opened a millinery shop in the Haymarket which was widely known for herself and her pretty apprentices. "Endowed with Virtues that few French Women posses,

---

20. R. Campbell, The London Tradesman, 208-209, 336.

21. Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., William Byrd of Virginia; The London Diary (1717-1721) and Other Writings (New York, 1958), 135, 139, 142, 160, 162, 180-181, 183, 192-193, 195-200, 205, 224, 236, 242, 244.

Friendship and Gratitude," according to the Gazette account, Madame P---lle rejected the attentions of "Lord Vainlove" and "Lord H---." Lord H---'s reply reveals current attitudes toward French milliners: "Ha! Ha! Ha! (rejoined my Lord) Honour and Gratitude in the Mouth of a Milliner! and a French Milliner! Well, this is pleasant. And she is serious too!"<sup>22</sup> Unlike many London milliners, milliners in Virginia seem to have escaped notoriety and to have held comfortable positions in colonial society. The adaptation of the English millinery trade discussed above to the American environment shaped the character of milliners and the millinery trade in late colonial Virginia.

---

22. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, November 5, 1772.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MILLINERY TRADE IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA

By the second half of the eighteenth century Virginia's demand for British and European goods included a growing appreciation of fashionable dress. Virginians were in the habit of importing most of their clothing and much of their cloth from England. "Unlike northern and frontier housewives, the southern mistress in the settled counties did not generally spin and weave the clothing of her family. The southern planters had a staple agricultural product which, while it fluctuated in price, always had a direct market, and living on navigable streams or harbors, they conveniently exchanged their tobacco for English manufactured goods."<sup>1</sup> Domestic production of cloth on a large scale was generally limited to periods of depressed tobacco prices or of foreign wars which curtailed trade. Robert Beverley wrote of Virginians in 1705, "They have their Cloathing of all sorts from England, as Linnens, Woollen, Silk, Hats, and Leather. Yet Flax, and Hemp grow no where in the World, better than there; their Sheep yield a mighty Increase, and bear good Fleeces, but they shear them only to cool them."<sup>2</sup> With the growth of Virginia's population and staple-based economy, towns like Williamsburg and Fredericksburg acquired shops devoted to importing fashionable wearing apparel. Tailors, stay-makers, mantua-makers, and milliners endeavored to dress Virginians in the latest London fashions.

---

1. Julia C. Spruill, Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies (Chapel Hill, 1938), 74-75.

2. Robert Beverley, The History and Present State of Virginia, ed. by Louis B. Wright (Chapel Hill, 1947), 295.

Newspaper advertisements provide the chief source of information concerning activities of milliners in colonial Virginia. Notices of millinery for sale appeared frequently in the Virginia Gazette after 1750; advertisements increased significantly in length and number in the decade preceding the American Revolution. From 1750 to 1780 the Gazette contained the advertisements of three sisters, Elizabeth, Mary, and Anne Strachan, milliners in Richmond; of two milliners in Fredericksburg (one of whom moved to Williamsburg); and of three Petersburg milliners, Mary Hill, Elizabeth Mathias, and Ellis Williams. The capital of the colony, Williamsburg had nine milliners advertising in the Gazette. These milliners did not submit notices regularly but at intervals of several months. Williamsburg milliners generally publicized their goods most frequently in the spring and the fall when the town's population increased as the colony's citizens gathered to conduct business at "publick times." Usually a single advertisement ran for at least two weeks, thus appearing twice, although the milliners' advertisements ran longer.

Milliners' advertisements in the Virginia Gazette reveal much about the millinery trade in Virginia. The typical advertisement began with the declaration, "Just imported . . ." to emphasize the recent arrival of the goods. Next the notice specified the ship, her captain, and frequently the port of embarkation, London. Milliners then described their goods using phrases such as "a genteel assortment," "a very large and fashionable assortment," "a neat and genteel assortment," "a very elegant assortment," or "a fresh assortment of millinery."<sup>3</sup> The choice of adjectives emphasized the recency of the articles, a factor important to those persons desiring

---

3. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 10, 1776; May 16, 1771; October 17, 1771; October 24, 1771; November 22, 1770.

to dress in the latest styles. Colonial Virginians understood "genteel" items to be those suitable for persons of quality, "stylish, fashionably elegant or sumptuous" articles.<sup>4</sup> "Neat" denoted articles of dress that were elegant, trim, and smart in appearance.<sup>5</sup> These introductory phrases frequently included mention of shop locations. While in England distinctive signboards, such as "The Three Angels" and "Queen Charlotte's Head," designated millinery shops, advertisements and other sources do not mention signboards associated with Virginia millinery shops.<sup>6</sup> Following these general remarks, milliners listed their goods, but rarely quoted prices. Terms of sale were typically "at a low price, for ready money only."<sup>7</sup> In many instances milliners added personal notes to their customers below the conventional advertisement. In such notes Williamsburg milliners announced lotteries, the arrival of an associate, the availability of lodgings, and personal plans.<sup>8</sup>

Williamsburg milliners imported their goods from London merchants and milliners who procured laces, artificial flowers, gloves, and other items from artisans in Italy, France, Holland, India, and other nations. Virginia milliners could buy wholesale lots from London milliners like Lucy Randolph whose notice in the Virginia Gazette offered millinery goods in wholesale or retail quantities.<sup>9</sup> Millinery goods might also be ordered

---

4. Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford, 1938), IV, 114.

5. Ibid., VII, 57.

6. Sir Ambrose Heal, The Signboards of Old London Shops (London, 1947), 135-137. Similarly, trade cards used by English milliners have not been discovered in use by Virginia milliners; see Heal, London Tradesmen's Cards of the XVIII Century (London, 1925), plate LXVI.

7. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, November 12, 1767.

8. Ibid., November 12, 1767; October 1, 1767; April 13, 1766. Rind's Virginia Gazette, October 6, 1768.

9. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, June 14, 1770.

through London merchants who handled the tobacco sold by Virginia planters. In 1771 and 1772 Catherine Rathell, a milliner in Williamsburg, formerly of London, ordered millinery through John Norton, a London merchant active in Virginia's tobacco trade. Familiar with London tradesmen, Mrs. Rathell sent separate invoices to specific merchants and asked Norton to ship these orders to her: "I have ordered some Goods from Messrs. Flight & Co. and from one or two More, but all not to exceed £ 60, beg youll receive and Send them."<sup>10</sup> In addition, she directed Mr. Norton to purchase certain items from specific tradesmen: "I likewise want 3 Dozn. Sword Canes from Mr. Masden in fleet Street near Temple Bar, Such as I had from him at 7/ps." Catherine Rathell returned to England in 1769 "to purchase a cargo against the October Court"; upon her return to Williamsburg in October 1771, she advertised "a genteel assortment of Mercery, Millinery, Jewellery, &c. . . . of the newest Fashion, being chosen by herself, and purchased since July last, from the eminent Shops, and on the best Terms."<sup>12</sup> Of nine Williamsburg milliners only Mrs. Rathell traveled to England with the expressed purpose of buying millinery.<sup>13</sup>

A good reputation and acknowledged personal connections were essential in establishing a favorable credit status, a basic requirement for con-

---

10. Catherine Rathell to John Norton, Williamsburg, December 29, 1771. Norton Papers, Research Department, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (also Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Published in Frances N. Mason, John Norton & Sons: Merchants of London and Virginia (Richmond, 1937), 210-211.

11. Catherine Rathell to John Norton, Williamsburg, November 16, 1771. Norton Papers, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm); and Mason, John Norton & Sons, 206.

12. Rind's Virginia Gazette, April 15, 1769; and Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 24, 1771.

13. Jane Hunter, another Williamsburg milliner, returned to England in 1769 due to ill health; however, she returned to her Williamsburg shop. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, April 13, 1769.

ducting business in colonial Virginia. Proper introductions and endorsements of character helped to establish the newcomer's credit in the business community. John Morton Jordan, a London merchant, wrote a letter of introduction to Robert Carter commending the character of Catherine Rathell:

August 25, 1765

Sir,

Mrs Rathell the Bearer of this has been recommended to me, by some of my particular Friends, as a Person of very good Character & Family, but meeting with misfortune, is the reason of her coming to Virginia with a view of setting up a Milliners Shop at Williamsburg, for which I understand she is well qualified--I shall be much oblig'd to you for whatever Countenance or Civilities You may shew her--

I am  
Your obt Sert  
John Morton Jordan

To the Hon. Robert Carter  
Williamsburg<sup>14</sup>

In turn, endorsements of a shopkeeper's business practices in Williamsburg reinforced her credit status with London merchants. Roger Atkinson, a Petersburg merchant, wrote to his half-brother Benson Fearon, a London merchant, approving Catherine Rathell's millinery business:

. . . Mrs Catherine Rathell, a Relation of my Wife's has wrote to your house for some Goods--She is in ye Millenery way & deals only for ready Money--is very industrious & frugal, & proposes to pay ye Money to Mr Hannson for his Bills, as She recovers it. I doubt not but She will be punctual to her Proposals,-- wch I hope will be agreeable to you--.<sup>15</sup>

Requesting a particularly large quantity of goods from John Norton in 1772, Mrs. Rathell assured him of the soundness of her business practices: "perhaps Sir you May Scruple Sending so Much Goods to a person Who you know so

---

14. John Morton Jordan to Robert Carter, London, August 25, 1765. Carter Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

15. Rogert Atkinson to Benson Fearon, Virginia, March 1, 1773. Roger Atkinson Letterbook, 1769-1776, Alderman Library, University of Virginia (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

little off, but you may depend on My being very Exact in My payments, and for a further Satisfaction to your self, I refer you for Particulars to your friend Coll. Geo. Mercer in Hollis Street, Who is Not unacquainted with My Method of Dailing, and Who can Inform you I Sell for Nothing but redy Cash, so by giving no Credit, I Can at all times Either Command Goods or Cash."<sup>16</sup>

Although Williamsburg milliners depended upon extension of credit in purchasing their stock, they were reluctant to extend credit to their customers. The typical attitude toward terms of sale expressed by Williamsburg milliners was stated by one of the city's first milliners, Frances Webb (whose husband John Pearson Webb co-signed occasional advertisements): "As all these Goods are of the best Kind, and at the lowest Prices, we hope those who have favored us with their Custom will not take amiss our dealing for ready Money only."<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, when announcing intentions to go to England or to close their shops, milliners requested payment of customers' accounts. In 1757 Frances Webb discontinued "the Millinery Business" and requested her customers "to pay their respective Ballances" to her husband.<sup>18</sup> Leaving the country because of ill health, Jane Hunter expected her indebted customers to realize the necessity of settling accounts before her departure.<sup>19</sup> Five years later Jane Charlton, nee Jane Hunter, again sought payment of accounts in order to finance her return to England.<sup>20</sup>

16. Catherine Rathell to John Norton, Williamsburg, January 31, 1772. Norton Papers, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Published in Mason, John Norton & Sons, 217.

17. Hunter's Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), July 10, 1752.

18. Ibid., April 22, 1757.

19. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, April 13, 1769.

20. Pinkney's Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), November 4, 1774.

Such requests for settlement of debts reveal that not all customers purchased items "for ready money only,"

Transacting business over long distances with slow communications complicated the balancing of credit and accounts. An appended entry from the Virginia accounts ledger of an agent of both John Morton Jordan and Company, London, and Perkins, Buchanan and Brown, London, illustrates the rather complicated bookkeeping notations recording goods ordered by the Strachan sisters, milliners in Richmond.<sup>21</sup>

The colonial milliner's distance from English dealers created difficulties when imported goods were unsatisfactory. In 1768 Catherine Rathell returned an unsuitable cargo of goods and provoked the following comment from London merchant George Mercer in letter to his brother James Mercer:

I Send you a small bill against Mrs Rathal & Williamson's rect for £118.10 for goods sent her last year. She has been very negligent in that affair, but must abide by the consequences--She wrote me the goods were not saleable and that she had returned them--and tho I received that letter the 25<sup>th</sup> of April at Bristol, there is no money that I might not be suspected of joining in the imposition, if any was intended--for surely the goods ought to have arrived again & again since the 2<sup>d</sup> of January which is the date of her letter wherein she mentions returning them. . . . I should run no risque for the want of money, but for the goods I have not Shipped and the Money I have paid for Mrs Rathell.<sup>22</sup>

In 1772 Catherine Rathell reported to John Norton, "I safely Recd at diferent times the Goods you Sent me, but cannot Say your Treadspeople Send them Either as Good or as Cheap as I have had from London, but it may be my Own fault, not being more particular in my directions." The former

---

21. See Appendix A.

22. George Mercer to James Mercer, August 16, 1768. Mercer Papers Virginia Historical Society.

London milliner cited specifically the prices of "tupees" Norton had ordered for her from Lardner and Barratty:

I sent for wool packes at 2/6 or 3/ a piece these with Curls, and he sends me 2 Dozn. Tupees from 6/6 to 12/ a piece that would never Suffer me to sell them, even at first Cost, besides he made a Mistake in Charging them, he Charges me with 7 Tupees With 3 Curls at 12/ makes 4.4.0 where he sent but 3 with 3 Curls at 12/ which makes only 1.16.0. This mistake as well as high prices Obliges me to return to him by Capt Woodford in the Ship Royal Exchange . . . [lists tupees].<sup>23</sup>

The problems Mrs. Rathell created by returning unsuitable goods were deplored again in 1773 as London merchant John Norton wrote to his son, "I am glad you have rec'd Mrs Rathell's Debt with several others, her Correspondence is dangerous, & she plagues almost every one, she deal with by returning large quantities of Goods yearly which don't suit her to keep. . . ." <sup>24</sup>

The details of the business practices of Virginia milliners are obscured by the absence of extant account books and the scarcity of bills and correspondence revealing the milliners' daily activities. No ledgers or account books, nor any manuscript collections of Virginia milliners during the late eighteenth century are known to exist at present (1970). Therefore, it is difficult to determine precisely from available evidence the identity of the milliners' customers. Identification of the milliners' customers as largely the planters and the "better sort," or perhaps a combination of the "better sort" and the "lesser sort" would help to clarify the milliners' position in the economic life of the colony. As mentioned above, Virginia

---

23. Catherine Rathell to John Norton, Williamsburg, July 22, 1772. Norton Papers, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Published in Mason, John Norton & Sons, 257.

24. John Norton to John Hatley Norton, London, July 6, 1773. Norton Papers, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

planters sold their tobacco in England and imported many household articles, including clothing.<sup>25</sup> London merchants like John Norton and Sons received from planters lists of clothing and accessories to be purchased in London and sent to Virginia on ships returning for tobacco cargoes. The planters' lists frequently included items of millinery. For example, in 1768 Robert Carter Nicholas asked that John Norton send him muslin, gauze, handkerchiefs, bonnets, hose, mittens, gloves, shoes, lustring, and laces.<sup>26</sup> Also in 1768 George Wythe asked John Norton to include in his order, cambric, lawn, five pairs of shoes, and a satin cloak for "Mrs. Wythe."<sup>27</sup>

Although many planters bought millinery goods directly from England through orders to merchants such as John Norton, they were not always pleased with goods procured by these means. The following complaint from Ann Nicholas, wife of Robert Carter Nicholas, to John Norton in 1775 was probably a frequent reaction among Virginians.

I am sorry to be oblig'd to trouble You with complaints against any of Your Trades men, but I think it necessary, as 'tis impossible You can see what they put up for yr correspondents; if I was at Home I sh<sup>d</sup> look over the shop-Notes that I might mention them by name, but as it is, can only mention a few of the articles I think they have done me injustice in; in the first place I must take notice of a parcel of Fans wch I assure You I could have bought in a Milliner's shop in Wmsbg for a third of the price wch they cost, besides the difference between Ster. & Curr. Money, in short Sr that I may not take up too much of yr time on this subject I shall only mention that the Stays, Bonnets &c have been very ill

---

25. See above, Spruill, Woman's Life and Work, 74-175; and Beverley, The History and Present State of Virginia, 295.

26. Robert Carter Nicholas to John Norton, (Williamsburg, September 6, 1768). Norton Papers, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Published in Mason, John Norton & Sons, 72.

27. George Wythe to John Norton, Williamsburg, May 9, 1768. Norton Papers, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Published in Mason, John Norton & Sons, 50-51.

bought & very ungenteel.<sup>28</sup>

Many of the "better sort" selected millinery goods from colonial milliners' shops. Robert Carter Nicholas, treasurer of the colony and later a chancery court judge, is mentioned in accounts of several Williamsburg milliners. In 1769 he wrote to John Norton that "I have lately drawn on you for £100 Stg in favr of Miss Mary Davenport, wch you'll be pleased to honour."<sup>29</sup> As executor of Edward Ambler's estate, Robert Carter Nicholas paid Miss Sally Ambler's bill from Margaret Hunter, a Williamsburg milliner: "1777 Jany 10 to Cash paid Margt Hunter for S:A . . . . 3.8.6."<sup>30</sup> Robert Carter Nicholas's accounts for the Ambler estate also include payments to "Mrs. Charlton," perhaps Jane Hunter Charlton, a Williamsburg milliner, for Sally Ambler's purchases, and also payments to "Miss Broddie," probably referring to Margaret Brodie, the Mantua-Maker who shared a shop with Catherine Rathell.<sup>31</sup> The following portion of a letter from John Norton to Robert Carter Nicholas indicates that the treasurer of the colony also dealt with Mrs. Sarah Pitt, a Williamsburg milliner, on behalf of either the colony or himself:

Your draft on me for £260 dated 7<sup>th</sup> July [1770] in favr of Mrs Sarah Pitt has been presented to me and I have accepted the same, as your letter of advice is not come to hand I dont know what Accot to put it to, which shews

---

28. Ann Nicholas to John Norton, Yorktown, July 22, 1775. Norton Papers, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Sarah Nicholas, daughter of Ann and Robert Carter Nicholas married John Norton's son, John Hatley Norton.

29. Robert Carter Nicholas to John Norton, Williamsburg, January 12, 1769. Norton Papers, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

30. (Account, January 10, 1777) Robert Carter Nicholas Papers, 1757-1778, Alderman Library, University of Virginia (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

31. John Norton to Robert Carter Nicholas, London, August 25, 1770. Wilson Cary Nicholas Papers, 1765-1772, Alderman Library, University of Virginia (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

the usefulness of marking on each Bill for the future a P. or T. for private or Treasury as I mentioned in a former letter, if agreeable to you.<sup>32</sup>

These references indicate that Robert Carter Nicholas did have some dealings with several Williamsburg milliners.

George Washington's ledger books list payments to milliners during his trips to Williamsburg. On March 26, 1772, Washington paid Jane Hunter five shillings for mounting two fans.<sup>33</sup> In 1772 and 1774, Washington paid "Miss Davenports acct" against Miss Custis and in 1774 against Mrs. Washington; "Miss Davenport" may have been Mary Davenport, a Williamsburg milliner.<sup>34</sup>

Although quite scarce, further evidence of purchases by the "better sort" from Virginia milliners does exist. In 1750, Stratford County lawyer, John Mercer, purchased from Mrs. Frances Webb of Williamsburg the "Twelve Seasons" by Berford and "a head [dress] & ruffets [ruffles] & handkerchief."<sup>35</sup> In 1764 Mrs. Webb's account with a Miss Burwell was listed in the Burwell ledger.<sup>36</sup> The York County Guardians' Accounts for 1770 list seven shillings, sixpence paid to Mrs. Sarah Pitt for a breastflower by John Ferguson, guardian of Ann Timson.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, in 1770 William Armistead of Hesse wrote to John Hatley Norton concerning payment of his debt to

---

32. John Norton to Robert Carter Nicholas, London, August 25, 1770. Wilson Cary Nicholas Papers, 1765-1772, Alderman Library, University of Virginia (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

33. (Account, March 26, 1772) George Washington Ledger Book B. 1772-1793, Library of Congress (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

34. (Accounts, April 3, 1772; June 18, 1774) George Washington Ledger Book B, 1772-1793, Library of Congress (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

35. (Account, October, 1750) John Mercer Ledger I, 1741-1750, Bucks County Historical Society, Pennsylvania (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

36. (Account, October 26, 1764) Burwell Papers, Ledger 1764-1776, 1779-1786, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

37. (Account, August 20, 1770) Guardians' Accounts, York County Records (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Williamsburg milliner Jane Hunter: "I shall take it as a particular favour if you will let me know by the return of my servant if you have paid Miss Jane Hunter of Williamsburg the money I owe her, which you were kind enough to promise me you would do, . . . ." <sup>38</sup> Finally, five invoices for millinery goods purchased in 1793, 1795, 1796, and 1799 from Jane Charlton of Williamsburg by Mrs. St. George Tucker list the purchases of one of Williamsburg's leading ladies after the period discussed in this study. <sup>39</sup>

The scattered references cited above indicate that the "better sort" did patronize Williamsburg milliners, although the extent of their patronage cannot be clearly established from such evidence. Although no evidence concerning the buying habits of the middle and lower economic groups is available, one might expect that they too purchased goods from milliners. Craftsmen and their wives could have purchased less expensive items, such as thread, hose, ribbons, or gloves from milliners occasionally. While the "better sort" may have been the milliners' major customers with regard to quantity and value of sales, milliners undoubtedly sold portions of their goods to the "lesser sort."

Although as the colony's capital Williamsburg had several active milliners, Fredericksburg, Petersburg, and Richmond also provided customers for milliners. Catherine Rathell opened a shop in Fredericksburg upon her arrival in Virginia in 1766 but moved to Williamsburg less than two years later. <sup>40</sup> The following announcement in the Virginia Gazette,

---

38. William Armistead to John Hatley Norton, Hesse (Virginia), December 22, 1770. Fredericksburg District Court Papers, Spotswood vs. Campbell, File 312 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

39. (Invoices, May 7, 1793; July 11, 1795; March-April, 1796; August 5, 1796; July 12, 1799) St. George Tucker Collection, Accounts, Receipts and Bills, September 1, 1790-February 1, 1796 and February 2, 1796-1807, Earl G. Swem Library, College of William and Mary (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

40. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, April 18, 1766. Rind's Virginia Gazette, February 19, 1767; October 6, 1768.

September 12, 1771, provides the only information discovered concerning Rachel Russall, another milliner in Fredericksburg:

The Subscriber, lately settled in Fredericksburg, next door above Mrs. Julian's, where she intends following MANTUAMAKING and the MILLINERY business, will serve Ladies at the quickest Notice, and on the most reasonable Terms.

RACHEL RUSSALL.<sup>41</sup>

The activities of Petersburg milliners Ellis Williams and Elizabeth Mathias are similarly obscured by a lack of evidence. Although the two announcements appearing in the Virginia Gazette about their business dealings do not list millinery goods, nor specify the women as "milliners," the wording and terms used in the notices were those typically used in reference to millinery. On October 15, 1775, Ellis and Elizabeth announced to their customers their new location on Bolingbroke Street, "where they intend carrying on their Business to its usual Extent, in all its Branches, and in the genteelest and newest Manner, . . . ."<sup>42</sup> Perhaps, as established milliners they saw no need to state the character of their business when merely notifying customers of a change of address. The milliners' partnership was dissolved by January 22, 1776, "owing to a Difference between the Partners." However, this announcement included notice that "The Business will be carried on in all its Branches, at the same Place by Ellis Williams, who returns Thanks to all the Customers, and begs the Continuance of their Favours, as it has ever been her Study to please."<sup>43</sup>

Mary Hill also sold millinery goods in Petersburg, but there is little information concerning her activities. In January 1771, Mary Hill

---

41. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, September 12, 1771.

42. Dixon & Hunter's Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), October 21, 1775.

43. Ibid., February 3, 1776.

advertised in the Virginia Gazette millinery, silks, and jewelry imported from London for sale "at a Very low Advance, for ready money, or Merchants Notes." In addition to the usual millinery goods, Mary Hill offered "a neat Assortment of Country made GOLD and SILVER WORK."<sup>44</sup> In October 1772 she again advertised a variety of millinery goods and assured customers that she sold "many other fashionable Ornaments, that will appear better from ocular Demonstration than any other Thing I can suggest."<sup>45</sup> In 1784 a "Mrs. Mary Hill" of Petersburg required the legal services of George Tucker; however, this "Mary Hill" cannot be definitely identified as the Petersburg milliner.<sup>46</sup>

Richmond boasted three milliners during this period, Elizabeth, Mary, and Anne Strachan. The daughters of Dr. Peter Strachan, a Scottish immigrant, the Strachan sisters advertised a large assortment of genteel millinery goods in the Virginia Gazette in 1771 and 1772.<sup>47</sup> They ordered fashionable goods through the London merchants John Morton Jordan and Perkins, Buchanan, and Brown.<sup>48</sup> In March 1772 the sisters' business practices were praised

---

44. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, January 24, 1771.

45. Ibid., October 29, 1772.

46. (Account, April 23, 1784) St. George Tucker Account Book, 1783-1823, Henry E. Huntington Library (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). The parish register of Bristol Parish (Henrico, Prince George, Dinwiddie counties) records the birth of a Mary Hill to Edward and Frances Hill, September 15, 1728; perhaps this is the milliner Mary Hill; Churchill G. Chamberlayne, The Vestry Book and Register of Bristol Parish, Virginia, 1720-1789 (Richmond, 1898), 314.

47. Joyce H. Lindsay, comp., Marriages of Henrico County, Virginia, 1680-1808 (Henrico County, 1960), 45; "Old Virginia Editors," William and Mary Quarterly, 1st Ser., VII (1899), 201-202. Advertisements appear in Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 31, 1771; May 14, 1772; November 5, 1772s; and Rind's Virginia Gazette, November 19, 1772. A staunch Scotsman, Dr. Strachan refused to take the oath of government before the Henrico committee in 1777, Pinkney's Virginia Gazette, January 31, 1777.

48. See footnote 21 above.

In a letter from Richard Adams, a Richmond leader, to his brother Thomas Adams, a merchant in London, "the Miss Strachans apply themselves to work very close & have as much as they can do & have sold most of their goods to good advantage. I dont doubt but that they will do well."<sup>49</sup> In November 1772 Mary and Anne Strachan advertised the usual goods but without mention of Elizabeth Strachan.<sup>50</sup> Their last advertisement appeared November 19, 1772 in Rind's Virginia Gazette.<sup>51</sup>

Although the milliners mentioned above were actively carrying on the millinery trade in Fredericksburg, Petersburg, and Richmond, the milliners of Williamsburg created the most active center of millinery trade in the colony.

---

49. Richard Adams to Thomas Adams, Williamsburg, March 24, 1772. Adams Papers, Virginia Historical Society. Publishes in "Letter from Richard Adams to Thomas Adams." Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XX (1914), 390.

50. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, November 5, 1772s.

51. Rind's Virginia Gazette, November 19, 1772. Further information available indicates only that Ann Strachan married John Hull of Northumberland County, March 1, 1782; and that Mary Strachan married John Barrett of Hanover County. Lindsay, compiler, Marriages of Henrico County, 45; John W. Herndon, compiler, "A Genealogy of the Herndon Family," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XI (1903), 332-334; "Historical and Genealogical Notes and Queries," William and Mary Quarterly, 1st. Ser., VII (1899), 201-202.

## CHAPTER III

### MILLINERS OF WILLIAMSBURG

Characteristics of the millinery trade in Williamsburg can be most clearly defined by examining the activities of each of the nine milliners active in the city during the late colonial period. The first advertisement of millinery goods, although not labeled specifically as "millinery," appeared in the March 1737/38 issue of the Virginia Gazette which announced the death of the Queen Consort Carolina. Sarah Packe offered for sale accessories to be worn during public mourning for the royal demise: "Bombazeens, Crapes, and other Sorts of Mourning, for Ladies; also Hatbands, and Gloves, for Gentlemen: Sold by Sarah Packe in Williamsburg."<sup>1</sup> The widow of Richard Packe, a tavern-keeper, Mrs. Packe also kept lodgers.<sup>2</sup> John Mercer, a spirited lawyer from Stafford County and editor of Abridgement of Virginia Laws (Williamsburg, 1737), lodged at Mrs. Packe's during visits to the capital in 1737 and 1738.<sup>3</sup> In March 1746 Edmund Pendleton informed readers of the Virginia Gazette that he

---

1. Parks' Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), March 1, 1737/38.

2. "Old Virginia Editors," William and Mary Quarterly, 1st Series, VII (1899), 11 identifies Sarah Packe as the widow of Captain Graves Packe. This statement was probably based upon Mrs. Packe's having a son named Graves. However, the will of "Graves Packe, mariner of London" names his "godson Graves Packe," son of his brother Richard Packe. Will of Graves Packe, 1731, photostat in Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated. Also, Richard Packe apparently died prior to 1731 when his daughter was apprenticed to a mantua-maker by the vestry of Bruton Parish Church; York County Records, Orders and Wills, XVII (1729-1732), 167 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

3. Hunter's Virginia Gazette, June 17, 1737; July 14, 1738. John Mercer was guardian of his wife's nephew, George Mason; Maude H. Woodfin; and Marion Tinling, eds., Another Secret Diary of William Bryd of Westover, 1739-1741, (Richmond, 1942), 60.

was lodging with Mrs. Sarah Packe.<sup>4</sup>

Mrs. Packe sold goods other than millinery in her shop. An account with Sarah Packe from 1737 to 1742 included in the settlement of the estate of William Keith lists shoes, stocking, stays, a lady's hat with ribbons, in addition to candles, tea, and milk pans.<sup>5</sup> York County Court records indicate business dealings, perhaps partnership in a store, between Sarah Packe and William Parks, printer of the Virginia Gazette. The settlement of Parks's estate in 1754 recorded several judgments awarded Mrs. Packe after Parks's death in 1751.<sup>6</sup> Mrs. Packe apparently sold a variety of goods, including millinery, but did not specialize in fashionable trimmings and accessories.

In 1745 a tragedy affecting Mrs. Packe was reported in the Maryland Gazette and Pennsylvania Gazette, in addition to the Virginia Gazette.<sup>7</sup> On Wednesday, March 27, 1745, a small schooner bound up the Chesapeake Bay sank in a wind storm near the mouth of the Rappahanock River, drowning all aboard. Among the passengers was "Mr. Graves Packe, son of Mrs. Sarah Packe, of Williamsburg, a very hopeful Youth, of about 18 Years of Age." To aid in identifying the unrecovered body, the Gazette report

---

4. Hunter's Virginia Gazette, March 27, 1746. See also Mary A. Stephenson, "Pitt-Dixon House (Block 18, Colonial Lot 47)," Research Report, 1960, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated.

5. York County Records, Land Causes, 1746-1769, 32-22 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

6. The court records do not state clearly the nature of the business relationship; see York County Records, Deeds, V (1741-54), 374-375 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm); and Wills and Inventories, XX (1745-1759), 323-325 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm); and Judgments and Orders, I (1746-1752), 192, 197. Partnership in a store is suggested by Stephenson, "Pitt-Dixon House," 18-19.

7. Maryland Gazette (Annapolis), May 10, 1745 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm); and Pennsylvania Gazette (Philadelphia), May 9, 1745, photostat, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated; and Parks's Virginia Gazette, April 18, 1745.

described the young man as "a thin slender Youth; had on a Scarlet Great Coat, a new Green cloth Wastecoat, with white Metal Buttons, a new Pair of Leather Breeches, a new Pair of Boots; had a Silver Watch in his Pocket, the Maker's Name Bradford, of London, with a Silver Seal hanging to it; and a Mourning Ring on one of his Fingers."<sup>8</sup> No discovery of the body was reported.

By March 13, 1755, Sarah Packe had married William Green, a Williamsburg merchant.<sup>9</sup> The widow Packe had made an agreement concerning the disposition of her property with Dr. George Pitt to whom she was indebted prior to her marriage. Evidently after her marriage to Green a dispute arose between Dr. Pitt and her husband; each man informed the public in the pages of the Virginia Gazette that he controlled the property.<sup>10</sup> Dr. Pitt may have been married to the widow Packe's daughter or niece.<sup>11</sup> In 1757 an inventory of the estate of Sarah Green was ordered and debts to Dr. George Pitt were listed in the account.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps to meet these debts, Dr. Pitt offered Mrs. Green's house and lot for sale at auction; he obtained the house for his own use.<sup>13</sup>

In 1745 Frances Webb advertised millinery goods for sale in the Virginia Gazette.

8. Parks' Virginia Gazette, April 18, 1745.

9. York County Records, Deeds, VF (1755-1763), 31 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

10. Hunter's Virginia Gazette, March 28, 1755; April 11, 1755.

11. See following discussion of Sarah Garland Pitt.

12. York County Records, Wills and Inventories, XX (1745-1759), 512-513 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

13. Hunter's Virginia Gazette, April 22, 1757. This lot later became the location of Mrs. Sarah Pitt's millinery shop.

Just imported in the Ship Restoration, Capt. John Wilcox from London.

A Quantity of Lace, Cambricks, Holland Calicoes, Chintz's, printed Linnens, Kenting, Velvet Caps and Hoods, Women's Gloves Silk Shoes, Glass Rings, and other Milinary Goods, which are to be sold by the Subscriber at her House in Palace Street, Williamsburg. Also all Sorts of Roger's Earthenware, as cheap as at York.

Frances Webb.<sup>14</sup>

The next year she advertised a different stock of millinery including fashionable "Gause Handkerchiefs, Velvet Hoods, laced and plain, Mantelets and Cloaks, . . . Silk Stockings, Fans and Fan-mounts, Children's quilted Caps, and other Milinary Goods."<sup>15</sup> In 1752 her husband John Pearson Webb added his name to an advertisement presenting a larger assortment of even more attractive millinery items. including silks, damasks, taffetas, and satins, hoops, stays, hats, and shoes of Moroccan leather.<sup>16</sup> Although lists of her stock suggest that customers' demands were becoming more sophisticated, Frances Webb closed her millinery business except for mounting fans and retired to the country, perhaps for reasons of health:

The Subscriber having left off the Millinery Business, and removed into the Country, desires all Persons indebted to her to pay their respective Ballances to John Pearson Webb, and those who have any Demands against her are desired to apply to the said Webb for Payment, in Williamsburg. Fans will be Mounted as usual; and Orders left with the said John Webb will be forwarded to

Frances Webb.<sup>17</sup>

Unlike later milliners, Frances Webb conducted business "at her house in Palace Street," in a residence rather than in a shop (which often included

---

14. Parks' Virginia Gazette, June 20, 1745.

15. Ibid., March 27, 1746.

16. Hunter's Virginia Gazette, July 10, 1752.

17. Ibid., April 22, 1757.

living quarters).<sup>18</sup>

Four new milliners frequently advertised millinery goods for sale in the Virginia Gazette's columns during the 1760s--Jane Hunter, her sister Margaret, Catherine Rathell, and Sarah Pitt. In October 1766 Jane Hunter advertised an assortment of millinery more elegant than any previously advertised for sale in the colonial capital. Her stock included "egrets and fillets, breast flowers, turbans and tippetts, . . . French and glazed kid and lamb gloves and mittens, . . . calash bonnets, &c."<sup>19</sup> A true milliner dealing in fashionable accessories, Jane noted below the list of goods, "FANS mounted, and all sorts of MILLINERY made up in the newest fashion."<sup>20</sup>

A year later Jane announced the arrival of her sister from London:

The subscriber having a sister just arrived from London, who understands the millinery business, she hopes to carry it on to the satisfaction of those who shall favour them with their commands. They have imported all the materials for making hats and bonnets, in the newest taste; where Ladies may be supplied on the shortest notice by

Their humble servants,  
M. & J. Hunter<sup>21</sup>

The sisters continued their business together until May 1769 when ill health required Jane's return to England; Margaret operated the shop in Jane's absence.<sup>22</sup> Jane returned to Williamsburg before December 22, 1770, and shortly thereafter married Edward Charlton, Williamsburg barber and wigmaker.<sup>23</sup> In 1771 after Jane's marriage the sisters operated separate

---

18. Parks' Virginia Gazette, June 20, 1745.

19. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 10, 1766.

20. Ibid.

21. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 1, 1767.

22. Ibid., April 13, 1769.

23. William Armistead to John Hatley Norton, Hesse (Virginia), December 22, 1770. Fredericksburg District Court Papers, Spotswood vs. Campbell, File 312 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

shops.<sup>24</sup>

In April 1766 the first advertisement of "Catherine Rathall, Milliner, Lately arrived from London, at present in Fredericksburg, Virginia," announced the arrival of an experienced London milliner.<sup>25</sup> In her first advertisement Mrs. Rathell quoted the prices of many items, a practice which disappeared in later notices. She added the following comment below the list of her fashionable wares:

As the said CATHERINE RATHELL is but lately come into this country, and her continuance here very uncertain, she sells for ready money only, and at a very low advance; and as she is contented to make a reasonable profit, she assures those who shall favour her with their commands that the fall of the exchange shall be to their benefit. And she flatters herself her goods, and prices, will give general satisfaction; for as they were chosen by herself, and bought with ready money from the best hands, they are both good and reasonable.<sup>26</sup>

Ten months later Mrs. Rathell notified Fredericksburg customers of her intention to move temporarily to Williamsburg for the spring court, for "the present Scarcity of Cash induces her to attend a few Days at Williamsburg during the sitting of the next Assembly, from whence it will be more convenient for many Ladies and Gentlemen to furnish themselves than from this Town."<sup>27</sup> By July 15, 1767, she had resumed business in Fredericksburg.<sup>28</sup> Evidently Mrs. Rathell returned to Williamsburg the next spring, having found perhaps the spring court a profitable venture.

---

24. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, May 2, 1771; October 24, 1771.

25. Ibid., April 18, 1766. See Chapter II above for introductory letter for Mrs. Rathell by John Morton Jordan to Robert Carter, London, August 25, 1765. Carter Papers, Virginia Historical Society. "Rathell" sometimes appeared "Rathall," but the first spelling is predominant.

26. Ibid.

27. Rind's Virginia Gazette, February 19, 1767.

28. Ibid., July 23, 1767.

Theatrical productions by traveling groups highlighted social activities during the sessions of the Assembly. Tickets to plays such as The Constant Couple, The Miller of Mansfield, and The Beggar's Opera were sold by Mrs. Rathell in her Williamsburg shop, for Virginians interested in the milliner's fashionable wares attended these social events.<sup>29</sup> While in Williamsburg Mrs. Rathell also sold tickets for a lottery planned by James Hamilton of Fredericksburg.<sup>30</sup>

Catherine Rathell operated a shop in Williamsburg until the summer of 1769 when she announced her intention "to go home after the June Court to purchase a cargo against the October Court."<sup>31</sup> However, Mrs. Rathell evidently did not go directly to England, for the Maryland Gazette of September 7, 1769 contained this notice:

CATHERINE RATHELL, MILLINER, From LONDON has open'd Shop [in Annapolis] at the House of Mr. Wm. Whetcroft, Jeweller, in West-Street near the Town Gate, and has the following Goods to dispose of at a low Advance, for ready Money only, viz. . . .<sup>32</sup>

The ample assortment of millinery goods listed in this advertisement suggests that the necessity of reducing her stock in hand may have required Mrs. Rathell to delay her departure and seek customers in another town. Catherine Rathell returned to Williamsburg and opened a shop "where Mr. Ayscough lately lived, opposite to the south side of the Capitol" in October 1771. A subscription to this notice stated: "As it was impossible to get a House on the main Street, the Subscriber hopes the little Distance will

---

29. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, May 12, 1768; May 26, 1768.

30. Rind's Virginia Gazette, May 19, 1768.

31. Ibid., April 13, 1769.

32. Maryland Gazette, September 7, 1769 (Colonial Williamsburg micro-film); this notice appeared through November 2, 1769.

make no difference to her former Customers."<sup>33</sup>

A fourth milliner active in Williamsburg in the 1760s was Sarah Pitt, wife of Dr. George Pitt, the apothecary at the Sign of the Rhinocerus. Prior to her marriage to Dr. Pitt, Mrs. Pitt was the widow of John Garland of Hanover County.<sup>34</sup> After their marriage, Dr. Pitt became guardian of her two children, Elizabeth and John Packe Garland.<sup>35</sup> In 1767 Dr. Pitt represented the interests of his wards when the vestry of St. Paul's Parish in Hanover County ordered the processioning of the lands of John Garland's orphans in the presence of owners of the adjoining property, George Pitt, and H. Dixon.<sup>36</sup>

George and Sarah Pitt had four sons and one daughter. Their son Richard Floyd Pitt filed a loyalist claim from his cell in Fleet Prison in 1787 in which he stated his family background. Dr. Pitt was born in St. Swithin's Parish in Worcester, June 11, 1724, and was "bred a Surgeon." Immigrating to Virginia in 1744, he married Sarah Garland, "native of America," December 16, 1753. In 1755 the royal government appointed Dr. Pitt "Master or Keeper of the Magazine in Williamsburg." As "Muster Master General," he had the honor of proclaiming the return of peace in

---

33. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 10, 1771.

34. Loyalist Claim of Richard Floyd Pitt (1787), Public Record Office, Audit Office, Class 13, Piece 32, Folder P; also Virginia Colonial Records Project, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

35. York County Records, Deeds, VI (1755-1763), 215-219 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

36. "H. Dixon" was probably Haldenby Dixon, a Williamsburg lawyer who later was executor of John Packe Garland's will; see York County Records, Wills and Inventories, XXI (1760-1771), 530 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). See Churchill G. Chamberlayne, ed., The Vestry Book of St. Paul's Parish, Hanover County, Virginia, 1706-1786 (Richmond, 1940), 465. Also, note map in this book, "A New and Accurate Map of Virginia" (1770) by John Henry showing "Garlands" located on the Pamunkey River near Hanover Courthouse.

1763. Emphasizing the loyalty of his father, Richard Pitt noted that in October 1768 his father was selected by Governor Botetourt "as the proper Person to bring over his Dispatches at the Critical Period. And upon his arrival in England he had several Audiences with the late Earl of Chatham, which afforded him an opportunity of laying before Government his finding out the Secret of making Salt-petre in Virginia, which was to have been rewarded by His Majesty's Royal Letters Patent; but the unhappy Disputes that afterwards happened, prevented the same being put in Execution, tho' certain Buildings had been erected for preparing the same at a very considerable Expence." Richard Pitt reported that Dr. Pitt left Virginia in 1775 due to the political situation and died in England the next year.<sup>37</sup>

Available evidence suggests a close relationship between Sarah Packe and Sarah Garland Pitt, a relationship perhaps of mother and daughter, or aunt and niece. Sarah Garland Pitt's son by her first marriage, John Packe Garland, may have received his middle name from his mother's maiden name or from his mother's family. As the daughter or niece of Sarah Packe, Sarah Pitt would probably have been considered a "native of America," in her son's words.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, from 1752 to 1754 Alexander Craig recorded a joint account for "Mrs Sarah Garland & Mrs Packe"; his index referred to his account as "Garland, Widow."<sup>39</sup> Craig listed an account in Dr.

---

37. Loyalist Claim of Richard Floyd Pitt (1787), Public Record Office, Audit Office, Class 13, Piece 32, Folder P; also Virginia Colonial Records Project, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

38. Ibid.

39. Alexander Craig Account Book, 1749-1756, 1761-1763, index and p.116. Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Pitt's name in 1754 and 1755.<sup>40</sup> After Sarah Packe's marriage to William Green in 1755, her new husband requested that people indebted to his wife pay him rather than George Pitt, indicating that Dr. Pitt has previously been involved in Sarah Packe's business affairs.<sup>41</sup> Upon Sarah Packe Green's death in 1757, the inventory of her estate noted a debt to George Pitt of an unspecified amount.<sup>42</sup> Dr. Pitt advertised a public auction of the house and lot that belonged to the late Mrs. Green, "wherein Mr. Green, Merchant, now lives."<sup>43</sup> Although the records are not clear on this point, Dr. Pitt evidently retained the property, for he and Sarah Pitt lived in the house and she operated her millinery shop on Duke of Gloucester Street, next to the Printing Office. Perhaps Dr. Pitt acquired the property in settlement of the debts owed him by his wife's mother or aunt.

In addition to advertising millinery for sale during the 1760s, Sarah Pitt conducted lotteries featuring millinery as prizes. Upon concluding a successful lottery on November 23, 1767, she immediately planned another and notified her customers in the Virginia Gazette of December 3, 1767:

Williamsburg, Nov. 26, 1767

The subscriber being encouraged by many adventurers concerned in her Lottery drawn Monday last, proposes another on the following scheme:

1 prize to consist of a very likely young Negro wench, named Doll, 16 years old, who has been brought up to all kinds of house business, is a sempstress, and can be recommended for her honesty; with her male child, named Jonathan, now 11 months old,

E.84

---

40. Alexander Craig Account Book, 1749-1756, 1761-1763, index and p.116. Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm)

41. Hunter's Virginia Gazette, March 28, 1755.

42. York County Records, Wills and Inventories, XX (1745-1759), 512-513 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

43. Hunter's Virginia Gazette, April 22, 1757.

1	To consist of sortable goods,		
2	do.	at £. 10	20
4	do.	5	20
8	do.	3	20
21	do.	2	24
<u>60</u>	do.	1-10	<u>90</u>
97	Prizes.		£.300

203 Planks.

300 Tickets, at 20 . each,

The first drawn blank to receive in goods value

The last drawn blank, do.

The goods above mentioned are specified in the Gazettes of the 12th and 19th instants (typical advertisements).

When the tickets are disposed of, the drawing will be immediately after; the time and place of which will be published in this Gazette, under the inspection of proper persons.

The money to be paid on the delivery of the tickets (or before the drawing) which are to be had of the subscriber, next door to the Post Office.

Sarah Pitt.

N.B. There are near 100 tickets already engaged.<sup>44</sup>

Immediate repetition and rapid ticket sales attest the popularity of Mrs. Pitt's lotteries. Sarah Pitt provides the only instance recorded in available records of a milliner conducting a lottery herself and offering millinery as prizes.

In the fall of 1768 and the spring of 1769, Sarah Pitt advertised large selections of very fashionable articles, "black hair plumes, white and coloured feathers, silver thimbles, a great assortment of paste pins, silver egrets, snail trimmings, powder boxes and puffs, umbrellas, and many other items too tedious to mention."<sup>45</sup> During October and December 1769, Mrs. Pitt announced the arrival of two shipments of millinery,

---

44. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, December 3, 1767.

45. Rind's Virginia Gazette, October 27, 1768; Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, May 18, 1769.

probably secured by Dr. Pitt who had been in England.<sup>46</sup> An unidentified assistant, "just arrived from London, who understands the millinery business, which she hopes to carry on, mounting fans, and making cardinals and bonnets," joined Sarah Pitt in December 1769 and was mentioned in her advertisements until the following spring.<sup>47</sup> Mrs. Pitt's advertisements demonstrate a thriving interest in her stylish merchandise in the colonial capital.

From 1770 until the outbreak of the Revolutionary War in 1775, trade in millinery goods reached its peak in Williamsburg. Two more milliners joined the four established milliners; advertisements were longer and stock more elegant. Mary Dickinson advertised a fashionable assortment of millinery "at Mr. William Holt's store" in April 1770.<sup>48</sup> In November she was selling elegant appurtenances of fashion such as "paste sprigs, marcasite and pearl birds, marcasite and pearl half moons, very large French paste sprigs, do. star pins and fancy do. onion and thistle sprigs in close work, do. in the form of leaves, real garnet do., marcasite, &c." Evidently Mary Dickinson had found an adjustment of her prices for such items necessary, for a subscript to this notice informed her customers of lower prices:

N.B. She returns those Gentlemen and Ladies who have honoured her with their custom her most cordial thanks; and as the above will be sold on lower terms than the

---

46. Rind's Virginia Gazette, October 26, 1769; Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, December 14, 1769; and Loyalist Claim of Richard Floyd Pitt (1787), Public Record Office, Audit Office, Class 13, Piece 32, Folder P, also Virginia Colonial Records Project, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm)

47. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, December 14, 1769; April 19, 1770s.

48. Ibid., April 19, 1770s.

former, she hopes it will be an inducement for a continu-  
ance of their favours, which will be gratefully acknow-  
ledged by

Their very humble Servant  
M.D.49

This "very humble" milliner had at this time moved to a store "next door  
to the Post Office," a convenient location.<sup>50</sup>

Continuing in the favor of her customers, Mary Dickinson advertised  
in the Virginia Gazette until May 1774. Least settled of the Williams-  
burg milliners, she moved to a shop "next Door to Mr. James Geddy's  
shop, near the Church" in October 1771, and to a fourth location, "the  
store above the Coffeehouse, near the Capitol," in April 1772.<sup>51</sup> Her  
stock was large and quite elegant with many items attractive to the "better  
sort"; "Shagreen, Tortoiseshell, and Ivory Memorandum Books, Norway Doe  
skin gloves for men, Italian and Silver Stomachers and Knots."<sup>52</sup> Mary  
Dickinson's advertisements regularly included a large quantity of jewelry  
and perhaps reflected the taste of the milliner or of her customers. The  
many elegant articles in her stock must have sold at higher prices, for  
Mary Dickinson once again assured her customers of her reasonable prices:

N.B. She expects another cargo by the June Court, and  
returns her Thanks to those Gentlemen and Ladies who  
have favoured her with their Custom; they may be assured  
the Goods are excessively well bought, nicely chosen,  
and will be sold very cheap, which she flatters herself  
will preserve a Continuance of their Favours.<sup>53</sup>

Miss Dickinson repeated her thanks and reassurances in October 1773 with

---

49. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, November 22, 1770.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., October 17, 1771; April 30, 1772.

52. Ibid., October 17, 1771; April 30, 1772; May 7, 1772.

53. Ibid., May 7, 1772.

an accompanying notice of "a small Assortment of Cloths, and proper Trimmings, which I would sell wholesale on Low Terms, for Cash or short Credit."<sup>54</sup>

Mary Dickinson's last advertisement of millinery goods appeared May 26, 1774 and listed the usual wide selection of imported articles. The footnote thanked her customers and indicated continuance of her business.

N.B. She returns those gentlemen and ladies, who have favoured her with their custom, most cordial thanks; particularly her good friends in the country; and as it shall ever be her study to give satisfaction, they may rely on their orders being attended to with the strictest care, by their much obliged, and very humble servant,

M.D.<sup>55</sup>

The reference to her "good friends in the country" perhaps indicates the patronage of local planters. Although no further advertisements appeared, the Gazette contained a notice of the theft from her store of a red Morocco instrument case containing more than two hundred pounds in paper currency in April 1776. The same notice offered two young Negroes for sale.<sup>56</sup> These notices indicate that Mary Dickinson was operating her store in the spring of 1776.

The Maryland Gazette carried advertisements for millinery goods for sale in Annapolis by a Mary Dickinson in September 1771, and in September 1772.<sup>57</sup> Mary Dickinson was advertising in Williamsburg in October 1771, and in November 1772. Since millinery advertisements followed a general at this time, and the millinery goods listed are not identical, one Mary

---

54. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 14, 1773.

55. Clemintina Rind's Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), May 26, 1774.

56. Pinkney's Virginia Gazette, April 12, 1776.

57. Maryland Gazette, September 26, 1771; September 24, 1772. (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Dickinson cannot be clearly identified as having a store in Williamsburg and in Annapolis. At least two women of this name lived in Williamsburg during this period.<sup>58</sup> Also, the difficulty of transporting stock and the brief intervals between changes of location suggest that perhaps there were two milliners of this name.

The eighth Williamsburg milliner of this period, an enigmatic figure, was Mary Davenport. On November 12, 1772, she advertised a variety of goods for sale in a good business location, "near the Capitol, Williamsburg," perhaps a shop owned by Elizabeth Carlos on Waller Street (Lot 20).<sup>59</sup> Her stock included fine fabrics, trimmings, satin petticoats, fans, satin shoes, silk stockings, gloves, and other fashionable articles common in the millinery advertisements of the day. A typical advertisement, it is the only notice in the Virginia Gazette of Mary Davenport's millinery activities.

However, the papers of John Norton and his son mention Miss Mary Davenport of Williamsburg several times. On January 12, 1769, Robert Carter Nicholas informed John Norton that "I have lately drawn on you for £100 Stg in favr of Miss Mary Davenport, wch you'll be pleased to honour."<sup>60</sup> In May of the same year John Norton wrote his son John Hatley Norton that he had shipped goods for Miss Mary Davenport along with others bound for

---

58. A "Mary Dickinson" appears with two different sets of parents in the York County Records, Wills and Inventories, XXIII (1783-1811), 90 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm), and in William A. R. Goodwin, The Record of Bruton Parish Church, ed. by Mary F. Goodwin (Richmond, 1941), 147.

59. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, November 12, 1772. Compare Mary A. Stephenson, "Elizabeth Carlos House (Waller Street, Lot 20)," Research Report, 1953, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated.

60. Robert Carter Nicholas to John Norton, Williamsburg, January 12, 1769. Norton Papers, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Virginia.<sup>61</sup> Mary Davenport of Williamsburg appeared on John Norton & Sons' list of foreign debtors on July 31, 1770 with a debt of 104 pounds, 4 shillings and 4 pence, and on the list of July 1773 with a debt of 153 pounds, 3 pence.<sup>62</sup> Mary Davenport continued to purchase goods through John Norton & Sons, for in July 1771, John Norton wrote Robert Carter Nicholas that "inclos'd you have a Shopnote for a pr of Stays order'd by Mrs Nicholas pack'd with Mrs Mary Davenports goods & ship'd in the June."<sup>63</sup>

Mary Davenport probably continued to sell millinery goods after 1772, although the extent of her shopkeeping is difficult to determine from available evidence. George Washington's ledger books record charges by a Miss Davenport incurred during trips to Williamsburg in 1772 and 1774:

1772 April 3	By Miss Davenports acct agst	<u>Do</u> (Miss Custis)	
			. . . . . 2.15.3
1774 June 18	By Miss Davenports act agst	<u>Mrs</u> Washington	
			. . . . . 1. 3.3
	By Ditto	agst	
		<u>Mr</u> Custis	. . . . . 1.15.3 <sup>64</sup>

In 1778, Anne Blair, daughter of John Blair, mentioned a Miss Davenport in discussing clothing in two letters to Frances Randolph, the widow of John Randolph of Roanoke who married that year St. George Tucker:

---

61. John Norton to John Hatley Norton, London, May 27, 1769. Norton Papers, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

62. List of Foreign Debts to John Norton & Sons, July 31, 1770 and July 30, 1773. Norton Papers, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Also listed in "Virginia Debtors of John Norton & Sons, Merchants, 1770 and 1773," Virginia Genealogist, XII (April-June, 1968), 79.

63. John Norton to Robert Carter Nicholas, London, July 18, 1771. Wilson Cary Nicholas Papers, Alderman Library, University of Virginia (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

64. (Accounts, April 3, 1772; June 18, 1774) George Washington Ledger Book B, 1772-1793. Library of Congress (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Miss Davenports Business will be compleated by Saturday next--Tho' she fears 'twill not be in her power to reserve as much of the Sattin as will make a pr of Shoes. . . .<sup>65</sup>

Miss Davenports Business has been finish'd long since, and will I hope please every way--shod you disapprove the whim forepart--shall be vastly sorry, because there the fault would be mine, as you desir'd a stomacher (wch shewed you meant to have Robin's) however, 'tis so tastey! and you so tastey! that Hope again revives. Not an Inch of Sattin left, am glad to hear you snugg'd a pr of Shoes before it came down.<sup>66</sup>

This correspondence suggests that Mary Davenport was still an active milliner in 1778 and was creating a modish gown with a "whim forepart" instead of a stomacher. Confusing evidence referring to more than one Mary Davenport, Mrs. Davenport, and Miss Davenport has hindered conclusive identification of this milliner. However, her advertisement in the Virginia Gazette and references cited above suggest an active milliner aware of current fashions who was probably well-known to the townspeople.

From 1770 to 1775 the millinery business reached its peak in Williamsburg. In 1770 Sarah Pitt (and an assistant), Mary Dickinson, and Margaret Hunter advertised fashionable accessories for sale in their shops. In 1771 Catherine Rathell returned from England and opened a shop "where Mr. Ayscough lately lived, opposite to the south side of the Capitol."<sup>67</sup> Also at this time, Jane Charlton, formerly Jane Hunter, resumed the millinery business at her own shop featuring "a genteel assortment of Millinery, Silks, and Jewellery."<sup>68</sup>

---

65. Laura (Ann Blair) to Stella (Mrs. Frances Bland Randolph), (Williamsburg, 1778). Tucker-Coleman Collection, Papers, May 1778-1779, Earl G. Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

66. A. Blair to Stella (Mrs. Frances Bland Randolph), Williamsburg, August 14, 1778. Tucker-Coleman Collection, Papers, May 1778-1779. Earl G. Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

67. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 10, 1771.

68. Ibid., October 24, 1771.

Margaret Brodie, a mantua-maker, arrived in Williamsburg from London in October 1771 and offered her services at Mrs. Rathell's shop. The following notice presenting her talents and qualifications to the public illustrates a conventional form of eighteenth-century "public relations":

M. Brodie

Just arrived from London

Makes and trims, in the newest Taste, Sacks and Coats, Gowns and Petticoats, all Sorts of Ladies Brunswick and Jesuit Dresses, Sultana Robes, Robedecores, &c. She served her Time, and was Successour to the original Makers, at their Warehouse in Pall Mall; her Partner still continues to carry on the Business in London, by whose Assistance, and that of the Queen's Mantuamaker, she is every three Months to be supplied with the Fashions. This, added to great Diligence and a strong Desire to please, she hopes will be a sufficient Recommendation to the Ladies to favour her with their Commands, which she will most thankfully acknowledge, by showing punctual Observance to their Time and Orders. Ladies whom it may not suit to come to Town may be fitted by sending her a Pattern. She lodges till a more convenient House can be got, at Mrs. Rathell's Store, where Mr. Ayscough formerly lived, on the south side of the Capitol, Williamsburg.<sup>69</sup>

A seamstress able to create gowns in the latest styles, Margaret Brodie probably found her talents complemented by Mrs. Rathell's skill in trimming costumes, mounting fans, and creating headdresses.

The success of the millinery business in Williamsburg in 1772 is evident in Catherine Rathell's advertisements and in her letters to John Norton & Sons, London merchants. On January 30, 1772, Mrs. Rathell announced receipt of "a parcel of neat Goods" on commission from London and stated that "as disposing of them in my Store will interfere with my Time and Business, I purpose selling them every Evening, during the Sitting of the Assembly, till all are sold."<sup>70</sup> The handsome fabrics and

---

69. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 24, 1771.

70. Ibid., January 30, 1772.

stylish accessories in the "parcel" were listed in addition to her regular stock and indicated a prospering enterprise. Indeed, a footnote expressed "her most gracious Acknowledgments for the Extraordinary Encouragement she has hitherto met with."<sup>71</sup>

In November 1771 Mrs. Rathell ordered goods for the spring season from John Norton. Anxious that the order arrive as soon as possible, she requested speed in dispatching her order: "and Must beg you'll be so Obliging as to Send & Hurry them, as our Assembly meets in March, therefore must request of all things on Earth, you will by the very first Ship that Sails out of London Send me those Goods, or I shall at that time totaly Loose the Seal [sale] of them, & have them on hands for 12 Months longer, . . . but my greatest distress is for fear I should not have them in March, but this I must depend on you for a quick dispatch, or it will be a very great loss to me."<sup>72</sup> The next month Catherine Rathell sent a sizable invoice to John Norton with the following request: "You will Sir Oblige me very much by sending me the Contents of the Inclosed Invoice by the Very first Oppertunity As I am quite Out of every Sort of Article I have now Wrote for."<sup>73</sup>

Mrs. Rathell's efforts to maintain her stock included attempts to secure shoes from Dublin merchants. Unfortunately the Royal Navy thwarted her plans. Writing to John Norton on January 17, 1772, she declared, "I this Moment was Informed of a great Disappointment I have met with in

---

71. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, January 30, 1772.

72. Catherine Rathell to John Norton, Williamsburg, November 16, 1771. Norton Papers, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Published in Mason, John Norton & Sons, 206.

73. Catherine Rathell to John Norton, Williamsburg, December 29, 1771. Norton Papers, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Published in Mason, John Norton & Sons, 214.

regard to fifty Pounds Worth of Shoes. I Expected from Dublin--Which of all things distresses me Much, I have now Wrote to a friend in London to request he would Send to you to forward with all the speed in your Power . . . [lists shoes]." Anxious to receive these shoes, she suggested that the merchant send her a portion of the order rather than wait to assemble the whole shipment. Victim of the scarcity of currency in the colonies, the milliner stated, "I would Send you Some Cash now, but a Bill Cannot be got, but you may Sir depend on My being very Exact in My payments to your son, Mr. Norton of York, who is very well."<sup>74</sup> Mrs. Rathell ordered "6 Dozn of Didsburys or Carpues best and Neatest Shoes" among other items. An invoice with the Norton Papers from John Didsbury, Pallmall, June 24, 1771, includes six dozen men's shoes packed in a "Hair Trunk, matted & corded" and designated for "C.R."<sup>75</sup>

On January 31, 1772, Mrs. Rathell wrote another letter to Mr. Norton clarifying her request of January 17. In this message she specified the style of shoe that her gentlemen customers preferred: "I must observe that the gentlemen Now Call frequently for Shoes with long hind Quarters, and that Buckle low on the foot, so beg youll give orders to Send me some of them, if not the most part, as I suppose by the time the [sic] Arrive, there will be no other Called for." Attributing her "present Necessity" for shoes to the failure of plans to secure them from Dublin, she observed that the Dublin scheme had failed because "No Ships would venture to bring

---

74. Catherine Rathell to John Norton, Williamsburg, January 17, 1772. Norton Papers, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Published in Mason, John Norton & Sons, 214.

75. Invoice of John Didsbury to John Norton, London, June 24, 1772. Norton Papers, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

them in, as our men of War are so Strict."<sup>76</sup>

Enclosing another long invoice for goods, Catherine Rathell entrusted the selection of the articles to Mrs. John Norton. Proud of her reputation, Mrs. Rathell informed Mrs. Norton that "the very great Character I have had from Many of My Acquaintance of Mrs. Nortons great Carefullness in buying and Sending the Neatest and Cheapest goods in, thats sent to Virginia, Makes me so Very desirous of getting goods from your House; as you Must know I peique myself much on haveg [sic] the very best & most fashionable goods in Williamsburg, I left London my self but last July with a very large Cargo."<sup>77</sup> To maintain her stock of modish items and to sustain her reputation, Mrs. Rathell relied upon merchants and friends in London; occasionally illegal trade may have supplied items urgently needed.

Throughout 1772 large quantities of millinery goods were advertised by Catherine Rathell, Sarah Pitt, Mary Dickinson, Jane Charlton, Margaret Hunter, and on one occasion by Mary Davenport. Advertising an elegant assortment of accessories, Mary Dickinson again assured the public that the prices of her wares were reasonable.<sup>78</sup> During the summer Alexander Purdie, printer of the Virginia Gazette, offered "a choice and well assorted Cargo of Millinery and other Goods, lately imported from London" for sale "at little more than Cost," or the whole cargo on credit terms.<sup>79</sup> The shipment seems to have been procured by Mr. John Ferguson then left

---

76. Catherine Rathell to John Norton, Williamsburg, January 31, 1772. Norton Papers, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

77. Ibid.

78. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, May 7, 177.

to the disposal of Mr. Purdie by unspecified circumstances.<sup>80</sup> Articles offered for sale by Williamsburg milliners in 1772 were generally even more sophisticated than those of earlier years; figured satins, fine laces, and "Satin Hussars and Ostrich Feathers for Children" complemented the more familiar ribbons, lawns, and muslins.<sup>81</sup>

Extending her business to a nearby town, in the fall of 1772 Catherine Rathell proposed "if a House can be got, to reside at Petersburg from the End of the Court until April" where new customers might purchase accessories for dress and gracious living, such as "Silk Gloves and Mits" and "Silver Fruite Knives and Thimbles."<sup>82</sup> During Mrs. Rathell's planned residence in Petersburg, Roger Atkinson, a merchant of that town, wrote to his half-brother, Captain Benson Fearon of London, concerning "Mrs Catherine Rathell, a Relation of my Wife's."<sup>83</sup> Endorsing Mrs. Rathell's request for goods from Captain Fearon, the Petersburg merchant described the milliner's business practices in these words: "She is in the Millenary way & deals only for ready Money--is very industrious & frugal, & proposes to pay the Money to Mr Hannson for his Bills, as She recovers it. I doubt not but

---

80. On the basis of Virginia Gazette notices cited in note 79, Mary A. Stephenson, "Purdie's Dwelling," Research Report, 1958, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated, 9-10 suggests that Purdie's wife who died prior to December, 1772 was a milliner and that Purdie was disposing of her stock; however, the advertisement of July 9, 1772 names John Ferguson as the vendor.

81. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 15, 1772.

82. Ibid., October 22, 1772.

83. Roger Atkinson to Benson Fearon, Virginia, March 1, 1773. Roger Atkinson Letter Book, 1769-1776, Alderman Library, University of Virginia (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). The relationship between Catherine Rathell and Anne Pleasants Atkinson, daughter of John Pleasants and wife of Roger Atkinson is not defined by available evidence; see letters and notes in A. J. Morrison, ed., "Letters of Roger Atkinson, 1769-1776," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XV (1907-1908), 345-359.

She will be punctual to her Proposals,--wch I hope will be agreeable to you--."84 Available sources do not comment on Mrs. Rathell's success in obtaining and selling millinery goods in Petersburg; by October 1773 she had returned to her shop in Williamsburg.85

On November 12, 1772, entries in Williamsburg's newspapers announced the death of Mrs. Sarah Pitt. Purdie and Dixon stated that "Last Monday died Mrs. Sarah Pitt, Spouse to Doctor George Pitt of this City; who bore a tedious illness with much Christian Patience and Resignation, and was a Lady of very amiable Character."86 William Rind's obituary for the milliner read, in part:

Last Monday morning died in the 47th year of her age, Mrs. SARAH PITT, whose many virtues through every varied scene of private life did honour to the principles she professed. Taught, by early experience, that afflictions and disappointments were the lot of humanity, her constant study was to rise superior to them by a humble acquiescence to the dispensations of Providence. Her bosom "tremblingly alive" to every tender sentiment of connubial and maternal affection, she discharged the duties of the wife and mother in such a distinguished manner as must make her memory revered, and her loss forever regretted, by each of those relations.87

Dr. George Pitt remained in Williamsburg until his British loyalties required his return to England as struggles for colonial independence began. Dr. Pitt died in England in 1776.88

---

84. Roger Atkinson to Benson Fearon, Virginia, March 1, 1773. Roger Atkinson Letter Book, 1769-1776, Alderman Library (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Published in Morrison, "Letters of Roger Atkinson," 345.

85. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 21, 1773.

86. Ibid., November 12, 1772.

87. Rind's Virginia Gazette, November 12, 1772.

88. C. Rind's Virginia Gazette, September 15, 1774; and Loyalist Claim of Richard Floyd Pitt (1787), Public Record Office, Audit Office, Class 13, Piece 32, Folder P (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).



In 1773 Margaret Hunter, Jane Charlton, Mary Dickinson, and Catherine Rathell continued to advertise a large variety of millinery. During this year, the names of ships and captains importing the goods disappeared from the introductory phrases of the advertisements. In 1772 seven of eleven notices had omitted designation of specific ships and captains; none were mentioned in 1773. The phrase, "Just imported, in the latest vessels" was sometimes substituted.<sup>89</sup> Whether adopted as a shortening of the conventional form for convenience or as a result of difficulties in importation, evidence is inconclusive. Throughout 1773 and 1774 Williamsburg milliners maintained ample stocks of fashionable and elegant millinery goods.

In November 1774 a trend appeared in the activities of several milliners. Jane and Edward Charlton announced their intention to go to England. Contemplating a permanent tenure in England, Edward sought to sell his house which was conveniently located "in the most public part of the city."<sup>90</sup> Jane Charlton hoped to dispose of her stock and to collect delinquent accounts before the planned departure in the spring:

A Genteel Assortment of Millinery, Laces, Dresden Suits, Silks, Jewellery, and sundry other articles, all in the newest fashion. As I find it necessary to go for England in the spring it is hoped those ladies and gentlemen who have favoured me with their orders, and have not discharged them will be kind enough to make payment as early as possible, that I may be enabled to put my designs in execution; which will greatly add to the many obligations already conferred on their humble servant,

Jane Charlton<sup>91</sup>

---

89. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 15, 1772; October 14, 1773; see October 27, 1774 for one exception; compare May 12, 1774.

90. Pinkney's Virginia Gazette, November 4, 1774.

91. Ibid.

In March 1775 Jane's sister, Margaret Hunter, also announced her intention to go to England that spring. Requesting settlement of accounts, she stated that failure to receive these payments would prevent her departure and would be "not only a great Disappointment, but a Disadvantage to me in my Business."<sup>92</sup> By April 22, Catherine Rathell had decided to leave Virginia. Her announcement of this decision suggests the influence of economic pressures that restricted importation of goods:

As I purpose going to England as soon as I dispose of my Goods (till Liberty of Importation is allowed) I am under the Necessity of not parting with a single Shilling's Worth without Cash; and I request, as a Favour, that all who are indebted to me will pay off their Accounts this Meeting, and all Persons having demands against me are desired to call immediately for their Money.<sup>93</sup>

Governor Dunmore's removal of gunpowder from the city's magazine a few days before had heightened tension in Williamsburg and probably reinforced Mrs. Rathell's decision to return to London.

The economic turbulence of the Revolutionary War curtailed the millinery trade in Williamsburg. Mary Dickinson's millinery advertisements stopped abruptly in May 1774, although she was still operating a shop of some type in April 1776 when the Virginia Gazette carried a notice of the theft of a red Morocco leather instrument case containing £200 from her shop.<sup>94</sup>

Catherine Rathell departed for England prior to mid-October 1775, leaving the disposal of her stock and collection of her accounts to Margaret Brodie, the mantua-maker who had worked at the milliner's shop

---

92. Dixon & Hunter's Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), March 4, 1775.

93. Ibid., April 22, 1775.

94. Rind's Virginia Gazette, May 6, 1774; Pinkney's Virginia Gazette, April 12, 1776.

after her arrival from London in October 1771.<sup>95</sup> Included in Mrs. Rathell's property which Margaret Brodie sold at "public vendue" were typical shop furnishings, "a large Bow Window, with Bars and Shutters, some Show Glasses, and Glass Cases."<sup>96</sup> Miss Brodie also announced her intention to return to England; however, in 1776 she married William Peter Mathews, an English merchant, and moved to Hampton, Virginia.<sup>97</sup> Catherine Rathell never arrived in England: her ship, the Peggy sank in sight of Liverpool and only the captain and part of the crew were saved.<sup>98</sup> In 1786 Margaret Brodie Mathews, having returned to Great Britain, filed a Loyalist petition for the loss of property during the Revolutionary War. A widow with two children, she declared that when she married Mr. Mathews "she had upwds of £2000 Sterling of her own Great part of which was left to her by a Lady with whom she had a Concern in a Store before her Marriage."<sup>99</sup> Further information concerning Mrs. Mathews' association with Catherine Rathell was provided by Colonel John Hamilton, a witness supporting the petition, who stated that he remembers Mrs. Mathews "sevl years before the War when she was a Miss Brodie in a Shop of a Mrs Wrathall a Milliner in Williamsburg whose Store was always well furnished with goods in the Millinary Silk & Jewellery way--and it was generally reported on Mrs Wrathalls being drowned which was in 1775 that all these fell to

---

95. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 24, 1771

96. Dixon & Hunter's Virginia Gazette, October 14, 1775.

97. Pinkney's Virginia Gazette, November 24, 1775; and Loyalist Claim of Margaret (Brodie) Mathews, Public Records Office, Audit Office, Class 12, Piece 56 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

98. Dixon & Hunter's Virginia Gazette, February 17, 1776.

99. Loyalist Claim of Margaret (Brodie) Mathews, Public Records Office, Audit Office, Class 12, Piece 56 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Miss Brodie and that she then acquired a handsome propy."<sup>100</sup>

Edward and Jane Charlton did not realize their plans to leave Williamsburg. Nevertheless, Jane no longer advertised as a milliner. In 1770 Edward restated his intention to leave Virginia and to sell his household furniture, livestock, and books.<sup>101</sup> However, Edward remained in Williamsburg. He advertised cloth and dry goods for sale in 1785, and acted as administrator of his sister-in-law's estate in 1787.<sup>102</sup> After Edward's death in 1792, Jane continued to reside in Williamsburg.<sup>103</sup> Although she no longer advertised large assortments of millinery goods in the newspapers, she continued to sell hats, ribbons, fans, and other millinery articles until her death in 1802.<sup>104</sup> Her will included cash bequests totaling £250 in addition to substantial personal property. The will stipulated that two mulatto children be freed from servitude at the age of eighteen and given a blanket and small sums of money.<sup>105</sup>

Although Margaret Hunter had announced intentions of going to England

---

100. Loyalist Claim of Margaret (Brodie) Mathews, Public Records Office, Audit Office, Class 12, Piece 56 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

101. Dixon & Nicholson's Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), August 28, 1779.

102. Dixon & Holt's Virginia Gazette and Independent Chronicle (Richmond), March 26, 1785; and Nicholson's Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser (Richmond), October 11, 1787.

103. Ledger C of Humphrey Harwood, Williamsburg brickmaker and builder, converts "Work for Edw. Charlton" to "Work for Mrs. Charlton" in November, 1792; see Ledger C (1784-1796), 14, 73. Humphrey Harwood Ledgers, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). The York County Tax List of 1792 lists "Edw. Charlton's estate"; see York County Tax List of 1792, York County Clerk's Office, File B-100; transcript in Research Department, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated.

104. See Jane Charlton's bills to Mrs. Tucker dated May 7, 1793; July 11, 1695; April 12, 1796; August 5, 1796; July 12, 1799 in Tucker-Coleman collection, Accounts, Receipts, Bills, September 1, 1790-1809, Earl G. Swem Library, College of William and Mary (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

105. Will of Jane Charlton (drawn April 21, 1801), Robinson Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

in March 1775, she was still operating a shop in Williamsburg in February 1780.<sup>106</sup> She no longer advertised the fashionable articles of the pre-war years, but rather "an elegant assortment of the most beautiful calico and shintz patterns, black and white gauze, and a small quantity of the best soap." In a nostalgic tone she added, "I still carry on the millinery business, and would willingly take goods on commission, at a moderate advance."<sup>107</sup> Evidently the shop provided an adequate income, for upon Margaret Hunter's death in September 1787, her estate included a brick house on Duke of Gloucester Street and eight Negro slaves.<sup>108</sup> Margaret Hunter was associated with Williamsburg for twenty years, and was an active milliner for approximately thirteen years, from 1767 to at least 1780.

Available sources indicate that the eight women discussed above were active milliners in Virginia's colonial capital. As additional issues of the Virginia Gazette are made available to researchers, further information about the town's milliners will appear. Royle's Virginia Gazette for March 16, 1764, recently discovered, contains a millinery advertisement for Joanna Mackenzie. Although brief, the wording of the notice is typical of milliners' advertisements in Williamsburg:

Lately imported, and to be sold by the Subscriber  
in Williamsburg,  
A COMPLETE assortment of MILLINERY, such as suits of lace,  
gauze, blond and minionet lace, thread and blond trolley  
catgur, thread gimp and flos, white garland egrets, breast  
flowers, fans, gloves, ribands, necklaces, silk hats and  
cloaks, white sergedusoy, &c.

JOANNA MACKENZIE.

N.B. FANS mounted in the neatest manner.<sup>109</sup>

---

106. Dixon & Nicholson's Virginia Gazette, February 5, 1780.

107. Ibid.

108. Nicholson's Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, October 4, 1787 and October 11, 1787; and York County Records, Deeds, VII (1763-1769), 171 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

109. Royle's Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), March 16, 1764.

Prior to the discovery of her advertisement in this issue of the Virginia Gazette, evidence concerning Joanna Mackenzie's millinery activities was inconclusive. The wife of Dr. Kenneth Mackenzie, a Williamsburg surgeon and apothecary, Joanna Mackenzie had to support a son and a daughter after her husband's death in 1755.<sup>110</sup> In 1760 Joanna Mackenzie was listed in the estate of John Spotswood as recipient of eight pounds, three shillings and four pence, but the services rendered were not specified.<sup>111</sup> The York County records include Mrs. Mackenzie's will, dated 1766 and proved in 1767. In her will, Mrs. Mackenzie declared, ". . . and all my ribbon and capwire and the other things belonging to my milena[r]y [w]hich things above excepted I do give & bequeath to my daughter Anne."<sup>112</sup> Before discovery of her millinery advertisement, Mrs. Mackenzie's reference to "my milena[r]y" was unclear. Evidently, she left to her daughter the stock from her millinery shop rather than merely a parcel of personal accessories. Thus, recently available evidence indicates that Joanna Mackenzie was an active Williamsburg milliner, although the extent of her participation in the millinery trade is still unclear.

Sources consulted in this study of Williamsburg milliners also mention Elizabeth Carlos in connection with millinery goods.<sup>113</sup> No millinery

---

110. Nancy Chappelle, ed., Bruton and Middleton Parishes, James City County, Virginia--Parish Register, 1662-1797 (Washington, D.C., 1966), 1,3,4,39; and York County Records, Wills and Inventories, XX (1745-1759), 352-354 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

111. Account of Estate of John Spotswood, Spotswood vs. Campbell, File 312, Fredericksburg District Court Papers (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

112. Will of Joanna Mackenzie, York County Records, Wills and Inventories, XXI (1760-1771), 294 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

113. Mary A. Stephenson in "Elizabeth Carlos House (Waller Street, Lot 20)," Research Report, 1953, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated, suggests that Elizabeth Carlos rented her house to Mary Dickinson, a milliner, in 1773. Miss Carlos purchased the lot in 1772 from Benjamin and Martha Waller; see York County Records, Deeds, VIII (1769-1777), 200-203 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

advertisements bearing her name have yet been discovered. However, St. George Tucker's accounts and receipts for 1764 to 1779 include a bill for millinery goods bought by Mrs. Fitzhugh from Elizabeth Carlos in 1777.<sup>114</sup> The bill lists charges for bombazeen and crepe, and for making two gowns, a coat and an apron from these fabrics. Gloves, hats, ribbons, and hose are also included in the bill. The charges for making the gowns, apron and cloak suggest that Elizabeth Carlos may have been a seamstress who also sold accessories. No further mention of millinery activities by Elizabeth Carlos appears in available sources. Millinery goods were not mentioned when St. George Tucker settled her estate in 1803.<sup>115</sup>

Nine or perhaps ten women were active milliners in Williamsburg in the late eighteenth century. Their shops provided for the colonists a most "elegant assortment of goods."

---

114. Invoice of Eliza(beth) Carlos to Mrs. Fitzhugh, 1777, St. George Tucker Accounts and Receipts, 1764-1779, Earl G. Swem Library, College of William and Mary. Mrs. Fitzhugh may have been the wife of William Fitzhugh, burgess from King George County in 1777, who had a daughter Elizabeth mentioned as "miss poly" in the bill; see Stephenson, "Elizabeth Carlos House," 3, n.2.

115. Account for Estate of Eliza(beth) Carlos, St. George Tucker Account Book, 1783-1823. Henry E. Huntington Library (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

## CHAPTER IV

### "AN ELEGANT ASSORTMENT OF GOODS"

The millinery business in Williamsburg encompassed a wide variety of merchandise. Colonial milliners imported their wares, many of Italian, French, and Dutch manufacture, from England through English milliners or importers of such goods. Because they frequently imported goods, Williamsburg milliners often provided their customers with a wider variety of goods than did London milliners who specialized in articles of fashionable dress. The advertisement of Lucy Randolph, a London milliner, which appeared in the Virginia Gazette in 1770, reveals the concentration on stylish dress typical of London milliners:

LUCY RANDOLPH

of London, at the Three Angels, No. 9,  
Long Walk, Cloysters,

UNDERSTANDING that her friends in Virginia being unacquainted with the business transacted by her, takes this method to inform them that she makes and sells all sorts of MILLINERY, viz. Brussels, Mecklin, and minionet laces; blonds and black lace, gauze and catguts; plain black love handkerchiefs; fine threads and tapes, Dutch and French; Manchester tapes and threads, cotton, thread and tapes; silk purses, gloves, mits, and ferrets; stay, silk, lace, cotton, thread, and ferret laces; bobbins, pins, and needles; head and breast flowers, Italian and French; skeleton and bunch wire; muffs and tippetts, feather and fur; leather gloves, mits, and silk pocket books; Gentlemens bags and roses; childrens shoes, stockings, bone and packthread stays; boys silk and satin caps; ostrich and cock feathers; Ladies and boys satin and beaver hats with do. hair rolls, tates, curls, and silk rolls; ribands, riband and flower stomachers and knots; shenneals, garlands, and gown trimmings; quilted and puckered girls caps, white and black; coloured and black fans, velvet and silk collars, beaded or plain; Gentlemens stocks and stock tapes; childbed linen, baskets, cushions, and lines; wax beads, French and English, India and wax pearl; horn and tortoiseshell combs, plain or set; set necklaces and earrings, fancy paste pins, &c. flannels and dimities of all sorts, dimity and calico bed gowns; modes, satins, persians, saranets of all widths, figured and plain; mantuas 3-4 and

half fine; scarlet cloths and dussils, in cardinals, or by the yard; satin and silk cardinals, cloaks, hats, and bonnets; satin, silk, and stuff quilts, of all prices; with all kinds of childrens ready made clothes, whole-sale and retail, on the lowest terms.<sup>1</sup>

Colonial milliners imported a greater variety of goods as an inventory of articles advertised by Williamsburg milliners demonstrates.<sup>2</sup>

Fine fabrics composed a large portion of the colonial milliner's stock. Calicoes, chintz, dimity, and popular muslins were representatives of the cotton textiles introduced to Europe through trade with India. Linen weaves originating in France, Holland, Ireland, Prussia, and Russia were known to Virginians in the forms of cambric, lawn, gulix, holland, Irish, and Russian linens. In addition to the cottons and linens which served many purposes, elegant silk fabrics were available for formal occasions. For her ball gown the Williamsburg belle chose from taffeta, satin, sarcenet, persian, paduasoy, alamode, lustring, and damask, lustrous silks whose names reflected their exotic origins. The milliner's shelves also held English gauze and bombazine, crepe, net, and catgut (a background fabric for embroidery). More utilitarian woolen fabrics were not often mentioned in milliners' advertisements; these materials were available at local dry goods stores. Even with the exclusion of woolen, Williamsburg milliners provided an ample selection of materials for the needles of

---

1. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, June 7, 1770. Mrs. Lucy Randolph is identified as "a Relation" in Mann Page's letter to John Norton, Virginia, February 22, 1770, Mason, John Norton & Sons, 124. Also, Mrs. Lucy Randolph is called "a near Relation of Mrs Armistead" in a letter of William Armistead to John Norton, Gloucester, Virginia, July 3, 1769. Fredericksburg District Court Papers, File 73 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

2. Millinery goods discussed below appeared in advertisements of the Virginia Gazette cited previously. Items will not be footnoted except when noted specifically.

colonial seamstresses.<sup>3</sup>

The second major category of merchandise, articles of female apparel, was the focus of the milliner's business. Plain and decorated stomachers, lace fronts, ruffs and ruffles enhanced the bodices of modish gowns. Although stay-making comprised a separate occupation, the Virginia milliner often imported English-made stays. Children began wearing stays at an early age in order to guide the body's development. Catherine Rathell once advertised "thin Bone and Packthread Stays for Children of three Months and upwards,"<sup>4</sup> Aprons of flowered lawn, patent net, silk and other fabrics were worn for attractiveness and for protection of skirts. In 1771 Mrs. Rathell assured her customers that black silk aprons were "much wore in London."<sup>5</sup> Milliners advertised several styles of capes and cloaks in accord with the latest fashions of the period; mantelets, cardinals, and tippetts each enjoyed fashionable prominence. Made of satin as well as coarser fabrics, these capes and cloaks often had matching bonnets.

In the realm of female fashions, milliners in Virginia, as well as in England, were most concerned with stylish headdress. English milliners trimmed hats and bonnets to match cloaks and gowns, a practice continued by Williamsburg milliners.<sup>6</sup> Velvets, silks, satins, and laces decorated caps and hoods for formal occasions. Caps were also a part of daily attire and many styles were popular; puffed caps, laced caps, laced and flowered

---

3. Authorities for identification of milliners' goods are Mary B. Picken, The Fashion Dictionary (New York, 1957) and Edward Warwick, et al., Early American Dress (New York, 1965).

4. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 10, 1771.

5. Ibid.

6. For examples see Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, April 19, 1770s; October 24, 1771.

caps, Italian caps, fly caps, crimped caps, and many others. Many of these caps featured lappets, decorative strips of material or lace hanging at the sides or back of the cap. Ladies' hats of chip, cane, hair, and black and white beaver were advertised in the Virginia Gazette. Ladies' riding hats sold by Williamsburg milliners were often of black fur, sometimes trimmed with plumes and feathers. Hoods of various materials, commonly of patent net, protected both the curls and the hats of the wearers. Several milliners advertised the calash, a recent invention introduced to England by the Duchess of Bedford. Modeled after the collapsible top of a light carriage (calèche), the calash was a hood composed of hoops arranged in an accordion-like manner allowing the hood to be extended forward over the headdress or folded back.<sup>7</sup> In addition to hats and bonnets, milliners imported toupees, drop curls, ear curls, and rolls of false hair for use in creating elaborate headdresses. Although French creations set the style, Virginia ladies probably did not attempt the exaggerated "heads" that were the rage in Paris, for had they done so the inevitable satire and criticism would have accompanied the amazing fashions. Ivory, tortoise-shell, and horn combs, both plain and decorated, were sold for use in anchoring headdresses. Multi-colored plumes, ostrich feathers, and French and Italian egrets added a "crowning glory" to the formal headdresses of the colonial ladies.

In addition to creating headdresses, the Williamsburg milliners mounted fans. Local milliners imported frames, or fan-mounts, and made fans from material coordinated with that of a costume.<sup>8</sup> Eighteenth-century

---

7. Picken, Fashion Dictionary, 176; and Warwick, et al., Early American Dress, 191.

8. For examples of fan-mounting see Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 10, 1766; April 19, 1770; October 24, 1771.

Virginia belles were familiar with the graceful poses of the "language of the fan." Formal occasions required a fan to complete one's costume, while weddings and periods of mourning required special fans in white, and black and lavender materials. Williamsburg milliners also advertised imported fans in these and many colors, as well as ornate fan-mounts for custom-made fans.

As fashion experts, milliners provided stylish trimmings for ladies' and gentlemen's clothes. "Breast flowers," artificial flowers made in France and Italy, were dramatic additions to gowns. Remarking upon those in her stock, Catherine Rathell described the flowers as "equal in beauty to any ever imported, and so near resembles nature, that the nicest eye can hardly distinguish the difference."<sup>9</sup> Colorful ribbons of many types--jubilee ribbons, velvet, silver and gold ribbons, mourning ribbons, figured and plain ribbons--provided important details in eighteenth-century fashions. European laces for ruffles and edgings included such fine varieties as blonde, "mininonet," Brussels, Mechlin, and Flanders lace. "Garlands, French, and snail trimmings," decorative appliques, allowed colonial women to create individualized versions of popular styles.<sup>10</sup> Williamsburg's milliners stocked as assortment of fashionable trimmings suitable for gowns made from the silks and satins they sold.

While the milliners made cloaks with matching hats and mounted fans, they also provided fabrics, trimmings, and sewing aids colonial women would need to make their own gowns and other clothing. Among the several types of thread sold by the milliners were silk and cotton threads,

---

9. Rind's Virginia Gazette, October 6, 1768.

10. Rind's Virginia Gazette, October 6, 1768; and Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, May 18, 1769.

embroidery silk, marking thread, and woolen thread for crewel embroidery. Milliners also sold silver and ivory thimbles, scissors with cases, and pins and needles in assorted sizes.

Jewelry, another category of fashionable ladies' apparel, displayed the widest variety of examples in the milliner's stock. Although some gold and silver pieces appeared in these advertisements, most of the jewelry sold by milliners was less expensive than that sold by a jeweler and was intended to complement current fashions. While jewelers used gold, silver, and precious stones in their jewelry, the "costume jewelry" sold by milliners consisted mainly of less expensive metals and materials. For example, an alloy of copper and zinc named for its inventor, a London, watchmaker, pinchbeck was commonly used to imitate gold in buckles and pins.<sup>11</sup> A semi-precious stone, the dark red garnet was extremely popular in all forms of jewelry. Another popular stone was marcasite, an iron pyrite mined in Cornwall and in Germany. Gold, silver, and white marcasites were widely used in less expensive jewelry.<sup>12</sup> A composition of lead-glass, paste imitated the brilliance of diamonds in brooches and buckles.<sup>13</sup> Sparkling quartz crystals known as Bristol stone, and mocha, a chalcedony resembling moss-agate, were also among the stones most frequently advertised.<sup>14</sup>

These stones and metals appeared in many forms of jewelry. Buckles for men and women's shoes, for men's knee-breeches and stocks were made

---

11. Webster's International Dictionary, 2nd ed. (Springfield, Massachusetts, 1954), 1865.

12. Johnson's Dictionary, II, n.p.; and Oxford English Dictionary, VI, 154.

13. Webster's International Dictionary, 1788.

14. Ibid., 338; and Oxford English Dictionary, VI, 563.

of silver and pinchbeck and sometimes set with paste for formal wear. Paste pins and combs delighted fashionable women. Bead necklaces with matching earrings were quite stylish; these necklaces featured a wide variety of materials such as jet, agate, mocha, French wax beads and imitation pearls. The milliner's jewelry selection also included rings set with glass, paste, garnets, and marcasites. Fancy buttons and sleeve buttons featured imitation pearls, paste, garnets, Bristol stone, mocha, and other stones. Hair pins and ornaments, locketts, and stay hooks were among the other items of jewelry sold by Williamsburg milliners. However, the most fanciful and elegant of such items were pins of various shapes set with colorful stones. "Marcasite crosses and hearts set in silver, half moon pearl and marcasite fancy pins" and "marcasite and pearl birds" tempted the milliner's customers.<sup>15</sup> Especially stylish in the late eighteenth century were "sprigs," pins depicting stems and imaginative foliage. Sprigs appeared in many styles: "onion and thistle sprigs in close work," paste sprigs, garnet and marcasite sprigs.<sup>16</sup> Finally milliners advertised multi-colored bugle beads with which women could decorate their gowns. In summary, Williamsburg milliners advertised fashionable and relatively inexpensive "costume jewelry" which undoubtedly appealed to female customers.

Another category of goods imported by Williamsburg milliners was footwear for men, women, and children. As mentioned above, Mrs. Rathell's difficulties in obtaining a shipment of shoes and her concern for the

---

15. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, April 19, 1770s; November 22, 1770.

16. Ibid., November 22, 1770. Sprigs set with precious stones are illustrated in John Haywood, "Eighteenth-Century Jewelry," Antiques, April, 1955, 312-315.

style of shoes requested by gentlemen suggest that English shoes were quite popular in Virginia. Advertisements mentioned shoes by John Didsburg, a London tradesman, most frequently, with occasional references to Gresham's shoes. Adult shoe sizes showed little variation, and for imported shoes, style, rather than a comfortable fit, was probably the important factor. Sizes in children's shoes, on the other hand, corresponded to age levels: "red, blue and black Pumps for Children from one to ten years old."<sup>17</sup> Cloth shoes worn by women and children were made of satin, silk, embroidered fabric, or callimanco, a popular woolen material from Flanders.<sup>18</sup> Leather shoes for men, women, and children were available in black leather while red, green, and blue Morocco pumps were advertised for women girls. In addition to shoes, Mrs. Rathell sold "Ivory Blacking Cakes, for Shoes, in universal Repute."<sup>19</sup>

Williamsburg milliners could also supply their customers with stockings and gloves. Ladies and gentlemen could purchase colored silk hose for formal occasions and thread or cotton stockings for daily wear. Silk gloves and mits in many colors including white, purple, and black for wedding and mourning periods were suitable for girls and ladies. Advertisements listed leather gloves to meet the tastes of any customer: French kid, lamb skin, doe skin, buckskin, and glazed kid gloves.

As the items mentioned above have indicated, Williamsburg milliners sold some articles of gentlemen's apparel. In addition to shoes, stockings, gloves, and buckles, the colonial gentlemen could buy silk bags for their bag-wigs or beaver hats with gold hatbands. A gentleman's wife could

---

17. Rind's Virginia Gazette, February 19, 1767.

18. Oxford English Dictionary, II, 23.

19. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 10, 1771.

purchase lace and ruffles for her husband's shirts or silk breeches patterns ready for cutting and assembling. Evidently attuned to gentlemen's tastes, Catherine Rathell sold walking sticks, a variety of riding whips, and sword canes.<sup>20</sup> She also advertised Freemason's sashes and brooches for sale to members of Virginia Masonic lodges.<sup>21</sup> Finally each Williamsburg milliner offered plain and fancy handkerchiefs, from plain pocket handkerchiefs to lawn, gauze and silk handkerchiefs, for the inspection of gentlemen.

The fashion-conscious lady or gentleman of Williamsburg was undoubtedly aware of the milliner's stock of small cases, pocketbooks, and étuis. Fashions of the late eighteenth century indicated a pocketbook for men and women alike. Pocketbooks advertised by the town's milliners were quite elegantly made of red Moroccó leather and mounted in silver with locks and "instruments," nail files, corkscrews, toothpicks, and other useful small tools. Fashionable citizens also owned one or more étuis, often spelled "etwees," which were small gold or silver cases containing instruments for numerous purposes. Some étuis were traveling shaving kits complete with razors. Others contained sewing kits, pencils, tweezers, or perhaps ivory toothpicks.

In addition to fashionable apparel and accessories for stylish dress, Williamsburg milliners imported many articles associated with the fashionable style of living. To adorn the ceremony of tea drinking, fine teas, silver teaspoons and sugar tongs, porcelain and Queensware tea-cups,

---

20. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 10, 1771; and Mason, John Norton & Sons, 206.

21. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 21, 1773; May 5, 1774. The Williamsburg Lodge of Masons purchased several items from Catherine Rathell; see "Williamsburg Lodge of Masons," William and Mary Quarterly, 1st Ser., I (1892-1893), 10-13.

coffee-cups, and saucers, and japanned waiters (lacquered tea trays) were among the milliner's imported wares. Silver nutmeg graters and snuff-boxes bespoke the fashionable elegance of the Virginia gentlemen. Engraved smelling bottles, decanter corks with labels, and gilt leather for doors were modish accouterments appealing to a sophisticated leisure class existing in Virginia in the late eighteenth century.<sup>22</sup>

The milliners of Williamsburg also listed in their advertisements as assortment of "toys." These were usually gold and silver trinkets set with stones which delighted ladies of fashion. An example of such a trinket was "coral and bells," a rattle-like object decorated with tiny silver bells and coral, a stone believed to ward off evil spirits.<sup>23</sup> Advertisements did not describe these trinkets for adults individually but typically stated "a curious collection of toys."<sup>24</sup> Milliners also sold dressed and undressed dolls, and assorted small trinkets, toys for children in the modern sense. In addition to children's hats, gloves, and shoes which were in reality diminutive versions of adult clothing, milliners imported "puddings" designed especially for small children. A thickly padded cap frequently of quilted satin, a "pudding" protected a child's head should he fall while learning to walk. The nickname "puddin' head" has derived from the eighteenth-century child's pudding.

Williamsburg milliners did not advertise cosmetics. Presumably local apothecaries stocked popular beauty aids. Among the few items of this type listed in milliners' advertisements were violet powder in boxes

---

22. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 22, 1772.

23. Examples of toys and coral and bells are displayed in the cases of the Millinery Shop, Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia.

24. Parks' Virginia Gazette, March 27, 1746.

with puffs, wash balls, and "Pugh's famous Eye Water for weak or sore eyes."<sup>25</sup> Catherine Rathell advertised toothbrushes and "Hemet (Dentist to his Majesty) his Essence of Pearl, and Pearl Dentrifice, for preserving and cleaning both Teeth and Gums."<sup>26</sup>

Among the miscellaneous imported items were stationery goods, writing paper, tortoiseshell and ivory-backed memorandum books and blank ledgers. Catherine Rathell included in her stock fiddle strings, and "new Musick, both Dance and Songs" for the harpsichord, flute, and violin.<sup>27</sup> Umbrellas first appeared in Sarah Pitt's advertisement in 1769 but thereafter were rarely mentioned.<sup>28</sup> In 1773 another unique item appeared in the notice of Margaret Hunter, "models of Lord Botetourt," Governor of Virginia until his death in 1770.<sup>29</sup> The stock of Williamsburg milliners encompassed a wide range of imported goods, from satins to stationery.

The preceding inventory of milliners' wares allows several conclusions concerning the character of the millinery business in Williamsburg. The large quantity of elegant, elaborate articles, such as satin shoes, gold buttons, or silver nutmeg graters, suggests patronage of the "better sort." However, craftsmen's wives and persons of the "middling sort" could purchase thread, ribbon, needles, and pins at the millinery shops. Craftsmen, as well as gentlemen, might buy gloves, stockings, and fancy pins for their wives, though less frequently than the than the wealthier gentlemen.

---

25. Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 21, 1773.

26. Ibid., October 10, 1771.

27. Ibid., January 30, 1772; April 30, 1772.

28. Ibid., May 18, 1769; April 19, 1773.

29. Ibid., October 14, 1773.

As mentioned above, Virginia milliners stocked a wider variety of goods than their London counterparts. Although Williamsburg milliners imported many small articles associated with stylish London life, their advertisements reveal a definite emphasis on fashionable apparel. Advertisements typically listed fabrics, apparel, and dress accessories first and toys, tea accessories, and other miscellaneous items last.

This inventory of millinery wares does not reveal any limitation, or indeed any concentration, of the milliners' activities to sales of hats or creation of headdresses. Ribbons, laces, and trimmings for ladies gowns equal in number and emphasis references to hats and headdresses. In their advertisements the milliners described their services as creating bonnet and cloak ensembles and mounting fans, as well as trimming gowns. Williamsburg's milliners appear to have been interested in all aspects of fashionable ladies' apparel rather than concentrating upon hats.

In addition to women's clothing, milliners sold shoes, stockings, and gloves in children's sizes. Gentlemen also could purchase modish accessories from the milliners. However, for gentlemen and children as well as for ladies, the milliners provided mainly fashionable accessories, not ready-made clothing like that of modern clothing stores. Except for ladies' cloaks, milliners left the making of apparel to seamstresses.

The Williamsburg milliners' "elegant assortment of goods" reveals much about the character of the millinery trade in late colonial Virginia.

APPENDIX A

Dr Miss Strachan's of Virga their Acct Curr with John Morton Jordan & Co of London

1771					
July 10	To Goods pr the Betsey . . . . .	£330.	5.6		
	. . . . Crowell Hatch . . . . .			3.	8.5
Augt 9	To do pr the Chatham frigate,				
	J: Anderson . . . . .	12.11.8			
		<u>£342.17.2</u>			
				339.	8.9
				<u>£342.17.2</u>	

Dr Miss Strachan's of Virga in Acct Curr with Perkins, Buchanan, & Brown of Londn

1772 Augt 10	To Goods pr the Industry				
	Jas Lowes . . . . .	215.	5.		
15	To Balance of Acct with John				
	Morton Jordan & Co . . . . .	339.	8.9		
1773 Ap: 12	To William Tudman pr Probt				
	& Act of Honor on			40.0.0	
	J: Page Junr. Bill on				
	Hunts . . . . .			100.0.0	
	To do pr Probt on Barnes				
	& Cos bill on Hanburg			30.0.0	
		<u>5.0</u>			
		£555.	6.3		
				170.	0.0
				50.	0.0
				<u>280.</u>	6.9
				274.	19.6
				<u>£555.</u>	6.3

Errors Excepted  
 London 31st Mar 1774  
 John Hardy  
 Thos Hose  
 Harry Darby Assignees  
 John Perkins  
 Isaac Clarke

From Virginia Accounts of John Morton Jordan and Company, London, 1769-1774, and of Perkins, Buchanan and Brown, London, 1771-1774, p. 27. Earl G. Swem Library, College of William and Mary. Cargoes mentioned in these accounts appeared in the milliners' advertisements in Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette, October 31, 1771, and November 5, 1772s.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### I. Sources Cited in the Text

#### A. Primary Sources

##### 1. Manuscript Sources

Adams Papers. Virginia Historical Society. Richard Adams to Thomas Adams, Williamsburg, March 24, 1772.

Atkinson, Roger, Account Book, 1762-1803, and Letter Book, 1769-1776. Alderman Library, University of Virginia (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Burwell Papers, Ledger, 1736-1746, 1773-1779; and Ledger 1764-1776, 1779-1786. Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Carter Papers. Virginia Historical Society. John Morton Jordan to Robert Carter, London, August 15, 1765.

Craig, Alexander, Account Book, 1749-1756, 1761-1763 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Fredericksburg District Court Papers, Circuit Court of City of Fredericksburg, File 73; and Spotswood v. Campbell, File 312.

Harwood, Humphrey, Account Books, Ledger B. 1776-1791; Ledger C, 1784-1796; Ledger D, 1793-1794. Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Mercer Papers. Virginia Historical Society. George Mercer to James Mercer, August 16, 1768.

Mercer, John, Ledger, 1741-1750. Bucks County Historical Society, Bucks County, Pennsylvania (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Nicholas, Robert Carter, Papers, 1751-1778. Alderman Library, University of Virginia (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Nicholas, Wilson Cary, Papers, 1765-1772. Alderman Library, University of Virginia (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Norton, John and Sons, Papers 1750-1902. Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Packe, Graves, Will of, 1731. Photostat at Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated.

Public Record Office, Audit Office Records. Loyalist Claim of Margaret Mathews (1786), Class 12, Piece 56, 363; reported in Virginia Colonial Records Project (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm); also transcribed for New York Public Library in 1899, volume 59, 544 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Loyalist Claim of Richard Floyd Pitt, Class 13, Piece 32, reported in Virginia Colonial Records Project (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Robinson Papers. Virginia Historical Society. Will of Jane Charlton (1801).

Tucker, St. George, Account Book, 1783-1823. Henry E. Huntington Library (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Tucker-Coleman Collection, Papers, May 1778-1779; St. George Tucker Accounts and Receipts, 1764-1779; St. George Tucker Accounts, Receipts, and Bills, 1 September 1790-1 February 1796; St. George Tucker Accounts, Receipts, and Bills, 2 February 1796-1809. Earl G. Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

Virginia Account Book of John Morton Jordan and Company, 1769-1774, and Perkins, Buchanan & Brown, 1771-1774. Earl G. Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

Washington, George, Ledger Book A, 1750-1772; Ledger Book B, 1772-1793. Library of Congress (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

York County Records.

Deeds, V (1741-1754), 374-375 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Deeds, VI (1755-1763), 215-219 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Deeds, VII (1763-1769), 171 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Deeds, VIII (1769-1777), 200-203 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Guardians' Accounts, 1736-1780 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Judgments and Orders, I (1746-1752), 192-197 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Orders, Wills, XVII (1729-1732), 167 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Tax List, 1792, York County Clerk's Office, File B-100. Wills and Inventories, XX (1745-1759), 323-325, 512-513 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Wills and Inventories, XXI (1760-1771), 294, 530 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Wills and Inventories, XXII (1771-1783), 161 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm). Wills and Inventories, XXIII (1783-1811), 90 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

## A. Primary Sources (continued)

## 2. Newspapers and Periodicals

The Lady's Magazine (London), March, 1774.

The Maryland Gazette (Annapolis), May 10, 1745; September 7, 1769; November 2, 1769; September 26, 1771; September 24, 1771 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

The Pennsylvania Gazette (Philadelphia), May 9, 1745 (Photostatic copy at Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated).

The Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), 1736-1780 (Photostatic copies at Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated).

The Virginia Gazette, Or The Independent Chronicle (Richmond), March 26, 1785 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

The Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser (Richmond), October 4, and October 11, 1787 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

## 3. Published Sources

Beverley, Robert, The History and Present State of Virginia. Louis B. Wright, editor. Chapel Hill, 1947.

(Byrd, William) Another Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1739-1741. Maude H. Woodfin, editor. Marion Tinling, translator. Richmond, 1942.

(Byrd, William) William Byrd of Virginia: The London Diary (1717-1721) and Other Writings. Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, editors. New York, 1958.

Campbell, R., The London Tradesman. Being a Compendious View of All the Trades, Professions, Arts, both Liberal and Mechanic, now practised in the Cities of London and Westminster. Calculated for the Information of Parents, and Instruction of Youth in their Choice of Business. London, 1747 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Chamberlayne, Churchill G., The Vestry Book and Register of Bristol Parish, Virginia, 1720-1789. Richmond, 1898.

\_\_\_\_\_, editor, The Vestry Book of St. Paul's Parish, Hanover County, Virginia, 1706-1786. Richmond, 1940.

Chappelear, Nancy, editor, Bruton and Middleton Parishes, James City County, Virginia--Parish Register, 1662-1797. Washington, D.C., 1966.

## A. Primary Sources (continued)

## 3. Published Sources (continued)

Goodwin, William A. R., The Record of Bruton Parish Church.  
Mary F. Goodwin, editor. Richmond, 1941.

Johnson, Samuel, A Dictionary of the English Language, 3rd  
edition. London, 1767.

"Letter from Richard Adams to Thomas Adams," Virginia Maga-  
zine of History and Biography, XX (1914), 390.

Lindsay, Joyce H., compiler, Marriages of Henrico County,  
Virginia, 1680-1808. Henrico County, 1960.

Maitland, William, The History of London, from its Foundation  
to the Present Time. 2 volumes. London, 1775.

Mason, Frances Norton, editor, John Norton & Sons: Merchants  
of London and Virginia, Being the Papers from their  
Counting House for the Years 1750 to 1795. Richmond, 1937.

Moore, J. Staunton, editor, History of Henrico Parish and Old  
St. John's Church, Richmond, Virginia, 1611-1904.  
Richmond, 1904.

Morrison, A. J., editor, "Letters of Roger Atkinson, 1769-1776,"  
Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XV (1907-1908),  
345-359.

"Virginia Debtors of John Norton & Sons, Merchants, 1770 and  
1773," Virginia Genealogist, XII (April-June, 1968), 76-82.

"Williamsburg Lodge of Masons," William and Mary Quarterly,  
1st. Ser., I (1892-1893), 10-13.

## B. Secondary Works

Boucher, François, 20,000 Years of Fashion: The History of  
Costume and Personal Adornment. New York, 1967.

Cunnington, Phillis, Costume in Pictures. London, 1964.

DeGoncourt, Edmond and Jules, The Woman of the Eighteenth  
Century. Jaques LeClerqu and Ralph Roeder, translators.  
New York, 1927.

Haywood, John, "Eighteenth-Century Jewelry," Antiques, LXVII  
(April, 1955), 312-315.

Heal, Ambrose, London Tradesmen's Cards of the XVIII Century:  
An Account of Their Origin and Use. London, 1925.

## I. Sources Cited in the Text (continued)

## B. Secondary Works (continued)

- Heal, Ambrose, The Signboards of Old London Shops. London, 1947.
- Herndon, John W., compiler, "A Geneology of the Herndon Family," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XI (1903), 333-334.
- Hill, Georgiana, A History of English Dress. 2 volumes. New York, 1893.
- Meadows, Cecil A., Trade Signs and Their Origins. London, 1957.
- Oxford English Dictionary. 12 volumes. Oxford, 1933.
- Picken, Mary Brooks, The Fashion Dictionary: Fabric, Sewing, and Dress as Expressed in the Language of Fashion. New York, 1957.
- Planché, James Robinson, A Cycopaedia of Costume or Dictionary of Dress. 2 volumes. London, 1876.
- Plumb, J. H., England in the Eighteenth Century (1714-1815). Baltimore, Maryland, 1950.
- Pooley, Ernest, The Guilds of the City of London. London, 1947.
- Spruill, Julia Cherry, Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies. Chapel Hill, 1938.
- Stephenson, Mary A., "Charlton House (Block 9, Colonial Lot 22)." Research Report, 1959. Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated.
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Elizabeth Carlos House (Waller Street, Colonial Lot 20)." Research Report, 1953. Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated.
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Pitt-Dixon House (Block 18, Colonial Lot 47)." Research Report, 1960. Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated.
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Purdie's Dwelling (Block 9, Colonial Lot 24)." Research Report, 1958. Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated.
- Tyler, Lyon G., editor, "Historical and Genealogical Notes and Queries," William and Mary Quarterly, 1st Series, VII (1899), 201-202.
- Tyler, Lyon G., editor, "Old Virginia Editors," William and Mary Quarterly, 1st Series, VII (1899), 11.
- Unwin, George, The Gilds and Companies of London. London, 1908.
- Varron, A., "Paris Fashion Artists of the Eighteenth Century." CIBA Review, 25 (September, 1939).

## I. Sources Cited in the Text (continued)

## B. Secondary Works (continued)

vonBoehm, Max, Modes and Manners. Joan Joshua, translator. 4 volumes. Philadelphia, 1932-1936.

Warwick, Edward, Henry C. Pitz, and Alexander Wyckoff, Early American Dress: The Colonial and Revolutionary Periods. New York, 1965.

Webster's International Dictionary. 2nd edition. Springfield, Massachusetts, 1954.

Wilcox, R. Turner, Five Centuries of American Costume. New York, 1963.

## II. Sources Consulted in Preparing the Text

## A. Primary Sources

Atkinson, Roger, Account Book, 1762-1803. Alderman Library, University of Virginia (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Boddie, John B., compiler, Births, 1720-1792, From the Bristol Parish Register of Henrico, Prince George and Dinwiddie Counties. Mountain View, California, n.d.

Kent's Directory. 38th edition. London, 1770 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

"List of Taxable Articles Taken by Robert Nicolson 1783 Under the Revenue Act," William and Mary Quarterly, 1st Series, XXIII (1915), 135-136.

The London Register of Merchants and Traders: For the Year 1775. London, 1775 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

The New Complete Guide to all Persons who have any Trade or Concern with the City of London, and Parts Adjacent. 14th edition. London, 1774 (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

Moxon, Joseph, Mechanick Exercises. London, 1703.

Stow, John, The Survey of London. London, 1633.

Tucker-Coleman Collection, Papers, 1775-April, 1778; Papers, 1664-1774; Papers, 1791-1793; Papers, July, 1789-1790; Papers, Undated. Earl G. Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

Forbes, John, Account Book of Mantua and Millinery Business, Boston, November 16, 1771-September, 1772. Massachusetts Historical Society (Colonial Williamsburg microfilm).

## II. Sources Consulted in Preparing the Text (continued)

### B. Secondary Works

- Brooke, Iris, Dress and Undress: The Restoration and Eighteenth Century. London, 1958.
- Cunnington, Cecil Willett and Phillis, Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century. London, 1957.
- Davenport, Millia, The Book of Costume. 2 volumes. New York, 1948.
- Dexter, Elizabeth Anthony, Colonial Women of Affairs. 2nd edition. Boston, 1931.
- Giafferri, Marquis Paul Louis, Millinery in the Fashion History of the World, from 5300 B.C. to the Present Era. New York, 1927.
- Gibbs, Patricia, "Taverns in Tidewater Virginia, 1700-1774." Master's Thesis, College of William and Mary, 1968.
- Kidd, George Eldridge, Early Freemasonry in Williamsburg, Virginia. Richmond, 1957.
- Laver, James and Iris Brooke, English Costume of the Eighteenth Century. London, 1945.
- Lewis, Ethel, The Romance of Textiles: The Story of Design in Weaving. New York, 1937.
- Marshall, Dorothy, English People in the Eighteenth Century. London, 1956.
- Meadows, Cecil A., Trade Signs and Their Origins. London, 1957.
- Phillips, Hugh, Mid-Georgian London: A Topographical and Social Survey of Central and Western London about 1750. London, 1964.
- Racinet, M. A., Le Costume Historique. Tome V. Paris, 1888.
- St. George, Eleanor, Dolls of Three Centuries. New York, 1951.
- Schaun, George and Virginia, Words and Phrases of Early America. Annapolis, Maryland, 1963.
- Soltow, James H., The Economic Role of Williamsburg (Williamsburg Research Studies, Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated). Charlottesville, Virginia, 1965.
- Stanard, Mary Newton, Colonial Virginia: Its People and Customs. Philadelphia, 1947.

II. Sources Consulted in Preparing the Text (continued)

B. Secondary Works (continued)

Turberville, A. S., English Men and Manners in the Eighteenth Century. New York, 1957.

Tyler, Lyon G., Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography. Volume I. New York, 1915.

Wilcox, R. Turner, The Mode in Hats and Headdresses. New York, 1952.

## VITA

Patricia Ann Hurdle

The author was born in Newport News, Virginia, October 9, 1946. She graduated from Fayetteville Senior High School, Fayetteville, North Carolina, June 1964. In June 1968 she received her bachelor of art degree magna cum laude from Duke University.

In September 1968 the author entered the graduate school of the College of William and Mary and undertook studies leading to a master of arts degree with concentration in early American history. While a graduate student at the College of William and Mary, she held an Apprenticeship in the Interpretation of Historic Sites jointly sponsored by the Institute of Early American History and Culture and Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated.