

Clubbing on the Chesapeake: Constructing Identities through Association and Sociability among Chesapeake Bay Elites, 1710's-1770's

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Introduction

How did the British North American colonists view their own identity, or identities, before the American Revolution established the United States of America as its own separate nation? In short, who did the colonists think they were? Identity is a way in which people define themselves; who they are, what they are, what they do, how they think, and where their personal lives and loyalties fit into the world around them. For colonial historians this was for a long time the search for "American values and despite marked regional-even community-differences, a strong sense of group identity deriving from a set of similar experiences in the New World and manifest in a series of flattering self-images." Historian Jack Greene questioned this model, basically positing a different American identity in the 1760s-70s, in which he argues that the colonies, as late as the 1770's depended upon two social models of "good" and "evil" and "success" and "failure" upon which their values were modeled. Rather than re-examining the "successful" versus the "failure" model of American identity, I want to posit the idea that what we are searching for are expressions of group values.¹ During the eighteenth century, an extensive mercantile system created a British Atlantic world. Participation in the Atlantic World system creates problems for historians attempting to uncover the identities of colonists, as their previous location, new location, economic activity, and status all coalesce to form a colonial self, apparently suffering (or even embracing) multiple-identities. The half-century leading up to the Declaration of Independence in 1776 proves an interesting period to study as the colonies had by that time established their significant involvement in the Atlantic system and, more specifically, the British Empire, but changes in thinking and identification led to an all-out rejection of British sovereignty and Revolution. What caused this separation of identity? How did the

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¹Jack P. Greene, "Search for Identity: An Interpretation of the Meaning of Selected Patterns of Social Response in Eighteenth-Century America," *Journal of Social History* 3, no. 3 (April 1, 1969): 189-220, esp. 189-91.

British North American colonies see themselves in the empire, the Atlantic, and the world?

In an attempt to answer the question of proto-American identity, historians have examined factors that influenced colonial identity. Linda Colley argues that “the majority of American colonists at this time were of British descent” and “they dressed like Britons back home, purchased British manufactured goods and...were the same people as their brethren on the British mainland.”² The colonists’ national identity was clearly British based upon this argument, but their location and involvement in the Atlantic World set them apart from their fellow Britons. The long distance overseas set them apart geographically, but the underdevelopment of the Americas also worked to distance them culturally, as their lives played out on a rural and harsh stage.³ This setting influenced the way the colonies were perceived but it would not stop the colonists from attempting to build a world of British sociability and association, even if their socio-economic activities hindered them from being completely successful. Stephen Conway argues that “most of the colonists in British North America continued to see themselves as Britons...right until the eve of Independence” and that “the colonists embraced a new identity—that of Americans—only reluctantly and in response to the refusal of successive British governments after 1763 to recognize and accommodate their desire for what they saw as the full rights of Britons.”⁴ This argument, while sound in the fact that the colonists did indeed see themselves as Britons, suggests that separate identities did not arise until the political crisis that occurred shortly before the Revolution. Other historians have determined that a separate identity was already being created long before then. Joseph Morton argues that “the relative newness of the colony, the heterogeneous population, and the staple crop economy were all factors that worked against imitation,” which introduces the argument that even if they did identify with Britain, the colonists were ultimately hindered in doing so.⁵ By studying the colonial elite, historians gain a better understanding of the British characteristics and practices that were implemented within the colonies. Customs, material goods, philosophies, cultural institutions, and even club life was very similar to the British associational world, but difference inevitably arose, especially among

² Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 134.

³ Linda Colley, *Captive: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850* (New York: Anchor, 2004), 104.

⁴ Stephen Conway, “From Fellow Nationals to Foreigners: British Perceptions of the Americans, circa 1739-1783,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59, No. 1 (Jan., 2002): 65.

⁵ Joseph Morton, “Stephen Bordley of Colonial Annapolis,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 5 (1969): 1-14.

colonists in the Tidewater region, encompassing Eastern Virginia and Southern Maryland. Tidewater planters became wealthy through their cultivation of tobacco, which by this time had become one of the most popular and sought after commodities emerging from the New World; by the 1770's they annually exported 100 million pounds to England.⁶ Needless to say, this high demand for the lucrative crop had made the planters extremely wealthy and assisted in the creation of large tobacco growing plantations. These very planters with their strong economic and social ties to Britain came to dominate Virginia and Maryland.

In the eighteenth century, sociability amongst the British elite centered on the idea of "politeness," which with its related cluster of words such as "refinement," "manners," and "civility," became by the mid-eighteenth century demarcations of the moral standard for elites.⁷ Historians of politeness note how contemporaries placed value on material objects, space, and "social and political identities" used such language.⁸ And this was true for both London and Chesapeake elites. While both Virginia and Maryland gained wealth and status mainly through the tobacco trade, there were differences. First, the Virginia elite were landed planters, and they resided in plantations that created separation amongst their peers which limited social interaction. Secondly, due to its port status, Maryland's capital Annapolis stands out in contrast to Virginia's capital Williamsburg as a more cultured urban center. Thus, landed gentry with limited urban interaction dominated Virginia, while Maryland was dominated by a thriving urban metropolis and smaller landed elite. While colonial identity changed dramatically in the second half of the eighteenth century, in order to keep from being swamped by the narrative of events this article has made a somewhat arbitrary distinction between socio-cultural and political identity.⁹ It argues that between the years 1710 and 1776, the associational world of both Virginia and Maryland had incorporated British sociability into their cultural makeup, and by studying these two distinct locations historians can gain a better understanding of the factors that helped and hindered the colonists from creating a British identity. Using personal diaries, letters, newspapers, and club records, this study shows how the Virginia and Maryland elite attempted to re-create Britishness within

⁶ Douglas R. Egerton et al., *The Atlantic World: A History, 1400-1888* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2007), 229.

⁷ Lawrence E. Klein, "Liberty, Manners, and Politeness in Early Eighteenth-Century England," *The Historical Journal* 32, no. 3 (1989): 583.

⁸ Lawrence E. Klein, "Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century," *The Historical Journal* 45 No. 4 (Dec., 2002): 870

⁹ For the political narrative of the Imperial Crisis, this work relies on Brendan McColville, *The King's Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of Royal America, 1688-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

their own social interactions and in so doing ultimately created multiple identities. Michael Rozbic's contention that "against the popular backdrop, the high style of colonial gentry stands out all the more as a rather remarkable attempt of a social group to achieve improvement in this manner under frontier conditions," holds true for both Virginia and Maryland.¹⁰

British Sociability and the Colonial Experience in London

The associational world of the British elite had both rural and urban elements. In the early eighteenth century associational activity expanded as living standards improved among the upper and middling groups of society," and as social organizations and clubs became a part of British sociability in direct response to the Enlightenment.¹¹ Whether groups gathered to discuss politics, economics, or other highly specialized topics, group discussion and public awareness became a staple within the British associational world. Accelerating economic changes, improving physical communications between different regions and development of influential newspapers all served to further the growth of associational groups.¹² Amongst the landed British elite, activities such as horse-racing and cock-fights became a popular pastime. A 1729 British article, vividly described this budding world of association: "We are now in the midst of our recreations: The Gentry (who are very numerous) are entertain'd with horse-racing, plays, assemblies, cock-fighting, which is so eagerly pursu'd that both day and night time is hardly sufficient for their diversions."¹³ The British gentry were not all noble aristocrats, but also included "middling, and lesser gentry, roughly broken down along the lines first of baronets and knights, next esquires, then gentlemen."¹⁴ These cock-fighting, horse-racing gentlemen were not bounded solely by rural life, however. They were shipping agriculture produced around the world, and increasingly they were drawn by cultural, political, and legal activities to the London metropolis.

As world trade expanded, so too did public interaction and club activity, throughout the Anglo-American world. "In Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, as in Edinburgh and Glasgow, private clubs, where

¹⁰ Michael J. Rozbic, *The Complete Colonial Gentleman: Cultural Legitimacy in Plantation America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 8.

¹¹ Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 75.

¹² John Money, "Taverns, Coffeehouses, and Clubs: Local Politics and Popular Articulation in the Birmingham Area, in the Age of the American Revolution," *The Historical Journal* 14, no. 1 (March 1971): 15.

¹³ "Country News," *Universal Spectator* 35 (June 7, 1729), 416.

¹⁴ James M. Rosenheim, *The Emergence of Ruling Order: English Landed Society 1650-1750* (London and New York: Longman, 1998), 4.

pompous, often ridiculously elaborate ritual threw into bold relief the fervor of cultural uplift, were vital social institutions," a process which can also be seen in the club life of Annapolis.¹⁵ These growing provincial, cultural expansions can be directly tied to a rise in education as many club members were recruited from the professional middle and tradesman lower-middle classes.¹⁶ The elite had begun to include men who were not necessarily upper class, but also an increasingly educated middle class that drove the associational world to incorporate a wider array of intellectual association, particularly in urban centers such as Annapolis.

Wealthy Virginians and Marylanders also were heavily involved in the mercantile network that developed between Britain and her American colonies in the seventeenth century, and both were heavily invested in the trans-Atlantic tobacco trade. Virginian merchants in London represented planters in the colonies, and "they cooperated with Maryland merchants to form a Chesapeake lobby."¹⁷ In the years prior to American independence London was where wealthy Americans were most likely to meet.¹⁸ William Byrd of Westover, a wealthy Virginian planter, spent the years 1717-1719 in London as a Virginia representative, and his diary reveals the life of an elite colonist abroad. Virginians made good use of London's public spaces: "the "Virginia Walk" on the London Exchange, the Virginia Coffee House a few blocks away, and ultimately the Virginia Club on one of the upper stories of the coffeehouse."¹⁹ These centers of Virginian business acted as headquarters for the colony's London interests, as can be clearly discerned in Byrd's diary entry on April 8, 1718 in which he wrote that he "went to the Virginia Coffeehouse where I learned that my vessel came out with the Harrison that was arrived from hence."²⁰ These public spaces acted as the hub for news and business dealings of Virginian merchants, but the interactions and use of public houses were not limited to business interaction. Colonial representatives are often mentioned in the British press during this period, as one such article responds to one anonymous Virginian agent's attempts to better the

¹⁵ John Clive and Bernard Bailyn, "England's Cultural Provinces: Scotland and America," *The William And Mary Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (April 1954): 202.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹⁷ Alison G. Olson, "The Virginia Merchants Of London: A Study In Eighteenth-Century Interest-Group Politics," *The William And Mary Quarterly* Vol. 40, no. 3 (July 1983): 363.

¹⁸ Julie Flavell, *When London Was Capital of America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 21.

¹⁹ Olson, "The Virginia Merchants Of London," 367.

²⁰ Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinning, eds., *William Byrd of Virginia: The London Diary (1717-1721) and Other Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 104.

colonies trade position, noting, “if you are as well paid for that, as you are by the Virginians, you’ll make a fine Expedition of it.”²¹

The colonial presence in Britain, whether welcome or not, was constant throughout the pre-Revolutionary War era. Americans coming to Britain was “the result not only of practical concerns, but of a personal interest in and regard for the motherland,” including education for those who could afford it.²² Young colonial elites came to London to be educated and “to acquire refinement and advantageous contacts.” They did so because their parents placed a high priority on attaining “a gentleman’s education which measured up to metropolitan standards.”²³ This desire to be a polished gentleman through a British education reinforces the argument that the colonies were still holding on to their British identity into the 1770s. In fact, William Byrd himself was sent to London at the age of seven by his father, William Byrd I, and after a brief trip to Holland, was sent back to London to “continue his training in business” at the age of sixteen.²⁴

London was the center of the British world, and the center of sociability and club association. “Clubs and societies were primarily urban phenomena” and London was the main urban hub in the Atlantic world.²⁵ As club activity grew, so did “fashionable urbane entertainments such as assemblies, plays, sporting activities, and concerts.”²⁶ Byrd, while in London, attended the theater on a number of occasions, particularly the Drury Lane Theater. On February 4, 1719, Byrd wrote that he “went to a play of Tom Killigrew’s which had abundance of wit in it and was well liked by almost everybody,” and on several other occasions he expresses his acquaintances with actors, actresses, and other patrons.²⁷ Along with a rise in entertainment venues, London also experienced a growth in clubs, and one of the most powerful and elite clubs in London in the eighteenth century was the Royal Society. The club was made up of influential men, many of them claiming nobility and knighthoods, but there were other members of lesser status. While in London, Byrd regularly attended Royal Society events, which were held in a number of public spaces: for example, “Pontack’s” was a “fashionable French tavern” in which Byrd “dined

²¹ “Observations on the Case of the Planters of Virginia,” *London Magazine or Gentlemen’s Monthly Intelligencer*, 2 (April 1733): 190.

²² William L. Sachse, *The Colonial American in Britain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1956), 5.

²³ Julie M. Flavell, “The School for Modesty and Humility’: Colonial American Youth in London and their Parents, 1755-1775,” *The Historical Journal* 42, No. 2 (Jun., 1999): 377.

²⁴ Wright, Tingling, *William Byrd of Virginia*, 9

²⁵ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800*, 60.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁷ Byrd, *The London Diary*, 231.

with the members of the Royal Society,” while regular meetings of the Society were held at Crane Court off of Fleet Street.²⁸

Besides his Royal Society activities, William Byrd also made use of public space for his own social pursuits. Byrd records daily meetings with associates and friends in London public spaces. On October 9, 1718, Byrd “dined at the Beefsteak House in the Old Jewry,” and on a number of separate occasions Byrd dined at the King’s Head Tavern in Canterbury.²⁹ Taverns and Inns also had other uses. For instance, Byrd recalled a time when he went with his cousin Horsmanden “to discourse Sir George Cooke about his chambers in Lincoln’s Inn.”³⁰ On another occasion, Byrd recorded that he “went to dine with Old Mr. Perry and got his note for five hundred pounds to purchase chambers in Lincoln’s Inn.”³¹ Although it is unknown what exactly the chambers were used for, public space was important to men such as Byrd while attending business in London. Along with other coffeehouses and taverns, Byrd also records his dealings at seedier places. Byrd often refers to the Union Tavern throughout his memoirs, and a public house was used for soliciting prostitution as well as carrying out planned affairs. On one occasion, Byrd records “I picked up a woman in the street and lay with her at the Union Tavern.”³² On certain days Byrd made use of a number of public houses and opportunities for assignations. For instance, on July 30, 1718, Byrd wrote:

After dinner we sat and talked till 3 o’ clock and then I walked to Garraway’s Coffeehouse and then called upon Molly Cole and then went home where I stayed till six and then went to Mrs. B-r-t and stayed until 9 o’ clock and then went to the Union Tavern where I met Mrs. Wilkinson. We had a broiled chicken for supper and then I rogered her and walked home.³³

While this is typical of the young Byrd’s entries in his London diary, it also suggests that not all use of public space was geared towards creating an associational identity. Some identities, rich male philanderer for example, cross time and space. Nevertheless, Byrd’s time in London shows us at least two aspects of colonial elite identity to which we will return when examining their lives in Virginia and Maryland. First, their tie to Britain, at least to London, was not imagined, but based on at least one “Grand Tour” visit to London by

²⁸Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling Wright, eds., *William Byrd of Virginia: The London Diary (1717-1721) and Other Writings*, 1ST ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), Jan. 9, 1718, 63, Footnote 183.

²⁹ Byrd, *The London Diaries*, 182, 345.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Dec. 8, 1718, 204

³¹ *Ibid.*, Jul. 9 1719, 291

³² *Ibid.*, May 30, 1718, 128

³³ *Ibid.*, July 30, 1718, 142.

many of the richest mid-18th century Chesapeake colonists. Second, Byrd's London experience shows him with both an Atlantic identity (his position as a representative of Virginia's trade interests) and a British or at least cosmopolitan identity which can be seen through his interest in the monarch, King George I. For example, on November 17, 1718, Byrd went "to Court where Mr. Craggs presented me to the King as Agent of Virginia and I kissed the King's hand."³⁴ But it also shows his colonial identity not only through his introduction as "Agent of Virginia," but also through his dealings with the Virginian coffeehouses and centers of business. When Byrd and other colonists returned to North America they found that London's abundant associational activities, opportunities for sociability, and wide array of public spaces and entertainments were not easily transplanted, as Virginia's dispersed population and the truncated social hierarchy forced the colonial elite to interact on much different plane.

Constructing Identity in the Associational World of the Virginia Elite

William Byrd's London activities and associations differ notably from his Virginian ones. Although he kept a diary in both places, it is scarcely believable that it is the same man recording his daily practices and interactions. Byrd had many more social interactions in London than at his plantation Westover. For example, a typical day for Byrd in London included visiting "Will's Coffeehouse and from thence the play... [;] after the play I went to the Spanish Ambassador's where I stayed till about twelve."³⁵ A typical day at Westover was much more solitary; thus, Byrd (November, 1739) "rose and read only Greek because I answered Mr. Procter's letter. I prayed and had tea. I danced. I wrote English and walked among my people till dinner when I ate souse. After dinner put things in order and walked again."³⁶ Even though the Virginia gentry made the attempt to replicate British politeness and sociability at home, the relative isolation and the demands of overseeing tobacco plantations created a different type of associational world. While Virginians' sociability is harder to discern than those in a more urban setting, such as the port cities of Boston and Annapolis, elite Virginian planters' society did have a complexity which was at odds with the rural simplicity of their surroundings.

The Virginia planters were wealthy, so wealthy in fact that one would be hard pressed to find a more fitting example of rich distinct elite anywhere in the British colonies. Historian James Rosenheim notes

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 196.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, March 1718, 88.

³⁶ *Another Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover*, ed. Maude H. Woodfin and Marion Tinling (Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press, 1942): 112.

that British landed gentry held “significant roles in national politics, local communities, and county affairs,” and that during the seventeenth century power shifted from the nobility to the landed gentry (esquires and gentlemen) sharing power with the nobility.³⁷ Virginia’s elite, which emulated this larger group of non-titled landed gentry, also oversaw most political and governmental aspects of the colony. Virginia society began with land and tobacco. To be a Virginia planter was to be in a position of wealth and power, but that wealth and power translated into a much different world of association and sociability. Virginian colonial elites produced “a distinct subculture; that is to say, its life experience was markedly different from that of the rest of colonial society.”³⁸

Virginian historian Rhys Isaac explains that “a man’s (or, in the longer perspective, a lineage’s) eminence in the social landscape depended on the size of the group of dependents bound to work his land for him in the patriarchal mode; but the visibility of that social unit and the value of the land depended on their strategic location for the purposes of the money-oriented tobacco export trade.”³⁹ In essence, the more land and slaves you owned, the more tobacco you sold, and the higher up on the social ladder you climbed. The Virginia gentry possessed the most land, the most slaves, and produced the most tobacco, and in doing so had become a metaphoric fraternity that dominated Virginian society. Isaac conveys the image of a patriarchal society that centered on production, but he also holds the view that the upper crust of Virginian society had lavish tastes and desires.⁴⁰ Plantation houses became arenas to show off one’s possessions/status, and, in doing so, actually reinforced a British identity, at least “within a fifteen mile radius of their homes.”⁴¹

Understanding the simplicity of daily life, that is to say the relative isolation in which the gentry found themselves, will help clarify what sociability meant to the Virginians, and how separation from their peers affected Virginia planters’ social interactions. Rhys Isaac argues that “The ideal of the home as a center of private domesticity was not familiar to Anglo-Virginians in the mid-eighteenth century.” That is,

³⁷James M. Rosenheim, *The Emergence of Ruling Order: English Landed Society, 1650-1750* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998), 9.

³⁸ Michael Rozbick, *The Complete Colonial Gentleman: Cultural Legitimacy in Plantation America* (Charlottesville, VA: The University of Virginia Press, 1998), 31.

³⁹Rhys Isaac. *The Transformation of Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 22.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴¹ Emory G. Evans, *A “Topping People”: The Rise and Decline of Virginia’s Old Political Elite, 1680-1790* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 147.

they lived a public life, surround by “servants and guests.”⁴² Evans explains that these guests “brought social contact and news to these isolated areas...visitors would sometimes stay for several days, they would eat, drink, play cards, and other activities.”⁴³ The “public” homes of the Virginians were always open. William Byrd often refers to his house guests and dinner companions. For example, Byrd wrote on July 19, 1739 that “after church Colonel Eppes, Mr. Custis and Mrs. Duke dined with us...after dinner we talked and had coffee.”⁴⁴ But such home-bound society was an occasional punctuation to the more prosaic everyday rural isolation of the Virginian gentry. As Isaac also notes, “The social circle was most complete at celebrations of house and family rites of passage.”⁴⁵ Lavish dinners, balls, and other such entertainments punctuate the few records of the associational world of the landed class. Many large gatherings in a home or public festivals were followed by a ball or dance. In his diary, Byrd II notes a number of balls occurring in his vicinity. Of one particular ball, he writes “At night ventured to the ball at the capitol [Williamsburg] where I stayed until 10 and ate three jellies.”⁴⁶ After Christmas in December 1773, private tutor Philip Vickers Fithian, who was employed by Robert Carter III, describes the occasion for such a ball:

It is custom here that whenever any person or family move into a house, or repair a house they have been living in before, they make a ball and give a supper— So we because we have gotten Possession of the whole house, are in compliance with custom, to invite our neighbors, and dance, and be merry.⁴⁷

Balls illustrated the gentry’s social interaction, but they also show how they defined their individual identity within the social scene. The Virginia Gazette announced many social gatherings, including balls. For example “Mrs. Degraffendriet gives notice that she intends to have a ball at her house, on Tuesday the 2nd of November, and an assembly the next day.”⁴⁸ The opportunity to interact and show one’s nobility was very enticing to the Virginia elite, as they took pleasure in establishing themselves as refined members of society. Wit and satire, being so important to the growing sociability of Great Britain and her provinces, was also present in certain forms, in Virginia. Although no details of public theatres could be found for this particular study, plays and performance were not wholly lost on the Virginia elite. Robert Munford, a member of the House of Burgesses and veteran of the

⁴² Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 71.

⁴³ Evans, *A “Topping People,”* 147.

⁴⁴ William Byrd, *Another Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover*, 175.

⁴⁵ Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 81.

⁴⁶ Byrd, *Another Secret Diary of Westover*, 107

⁴⁷ Fithian, 43.

⁴⁸ *The Virginia Gazette*, October 7, 1737, 4.

French and Indian War, wrote his own comedy entitled *The Candidates* in the 1760s, although it was not published or distributed until after his death in the 1798.⁴⁹ *The Candidates* takes a humorous look at a county election, and gives insight into the customs and practices of elections in Virginia, and the role of the important families, the “Worthy’s” of each county.⁵⁰ The play also shows public meetings in the form of a county barbeque where candidates attempt to charm their voters and outwit their competitors, while displaying public intoxication as a detriment to several of the play’s characters. Churches or churchyards were another place where Virginians regularly met. On a typical Sunday;

The elites would visit and converse at church. Before they would give and receive “letters of business.” They would all wait outside until service began and then “they entered as a body.” After a brief service, the gentlemen would again wait and then would exit “en masse.” Once outside they would spend nearly an hour walking around the church among the crowd. They would discuss dancing, feasts, cock fights, games, and other matters and then would invite people to their home for dinner.⁵¹

The Virginians used these opportunities to not only interact and socialize, but to display their elite status.

As it has been established that the main venue for sociability for the Virginia elite was the home, it is important to note the lack of public space available. As we saw in the London diaries of William Byrd, there were a plethora of coffeehouses, taverns, and dining places available to the London elite in which they conducted business as well as engaged in sociability. In Virginia, there was a severe lack of public space in which the elite could meet. The diary of William Byrd gives very few references to public space interaction. For example he mentions on May 1, 1740 that while in Williamsburg he “walked to the coffeehouse,”⁵² but there is little else to suggest such venues were available elsewhere. In the *Virginia Gazette*, there are a few references to taverns, for example, on February 27, 1752, it was advertised that “the Subscriber purposes to have a Ball at the Apollo in Williamsburg,”⁵³ and on October 5, 1769 it was reported that “our worthy representative, gave a genteel dinner at the Raleigh Tavern.”⁵⁴ While these accounts give evidence that public houses were indeed

⁴⁹ Jay B. Hubbell and Douglas Adair, “Robert Munford’s ‘The Candidates,’” *The William And Mary Quarterly* vol. 5, no. 2 (April 1948): 217-57.

⁵⁰ Hubbell and Adair, 223

⁵¹ Evans, *A “Topping People,”* 148.

⁵² William Byrd, *Another Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover*, 63.

⁵³ Alexander Finnie, *The Virginia Gazette*, Parks, Feb. 27, 1752.

⁵⁴ *The Virginia Gazette*, Parks, Oct. 5, 1769.

available, gentry diaries indicate such establishments were not a large part of elite planters' social lives.

Fithian gives a vivid and detailed account of the goings on between the upper crust of Virginia society. One entry declared that:

Now you may suppose how small quantity many must have when two or three hundred Landholders reside in each of these small Precincts; Hence we see Gentlemen, when they are not actually engaged in the publick service, on their farms, setting a laborious example for their domesticks, and on the other hand we see labourers at the Tables and in the parlours of their betters enjoying the advantage, and honor of their society and conversation.⁵⁵

This statement shows Virginian landholders interacting with their agricultural and domestic laborers on one hand, and entertaining their own class on the other. Class "domesticks" distinguished from "their betters" was replicated in the "small Precincts" of the plantation. Fithian also remarks that "any young Gentleman travelling through the colony...is presumd to be acquainted with Dancing, Boxing, playing the Fiddle, & Small-Sword, & cards."⁵⁶ These activities, as Fithian suggests, served as much as moments of sociability for Virginian gentry, and exploring "dancing, boxing..., & cards," reveals the competing identities of Virginian gentlemen. Historians have noted that Virginians contested and entertained in a variety of ways, from dancing and attending balls to violent and rigorous bouts of contest and gambling. One perfect example of this tendency was their love of horse-racing. One type of "Chesapeake region" racing "indicated the prevailing taste for strong self-assertion and aggressive contest."⁵⁷ This unique form of racing was called a Quarter Race: "At the start the two riders were accustomed to jockey for position, and when the starter's signal sent them hurtling at full gallop down the narrow track, each might be free (depending on agreed rules) to use whip, knee, or elbow to dismount his opponent or drive him off the track."⁵⁸ The Virginia Gazette, which otherwise tended to focus on London- or European-based news and advertisements, would promote horse races as well as give information about wagering procedures. From 1746 we learn that, in:

Hanover County...on Tuesday next (being St. Andrews Day) some merry-dispos'd Gentlemen of the said county, design to celebrate that festival, by setting up divers prizes to be contended for in the following manner, (to wit,) A neat Hunting-Saddle, with a fine broad cloth Housing, fring'd and

⁵⁵ Fithian, 161.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁵⁷ Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 99.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

flower'd, to be run for the Quarter by any number of horses and mares.⁵⁹

Evidence of races and gambling can also be found in William Byrd's diary: "About 10 I went to Court and sat till one and invited company to Wetherburn's and I ate roast venison. After dinner we had a race which I went not to but won 20 shillings."⁶⁰ Byrd's diaries also reference that families went to races.⁶¹ Historian T.H. Breen explains that "Gambling (such as Cock-fights and Horse-races) drew three key elements of Gentry life: competitiveness, individualism, and materialism," but in addition to individuality, gentry associated to identify themselves through sociability, whether British or inevitably Virginian. Breen is certainly correct to note that "The isolated population of Virginia planters created a sense of independence and self reliance."⁶² But such isolation was never absolute. When we compare Annapolis with rural Virginia we can see certain distinct forms of sociability among the otherwise urbane Virginian elite. Violent forms of entertainment were all too common amongst the gentry of Virginia, who valued competition while also defensively aware of their own honor and masculinity. Isaac explains that:

Self-assertive style, and values centering on manly powers pervaded the interaction of men as equals in this society. Everywhere, in play and in talk, amid conviviality would be emulation, rivalry, and boastful challenge, which not infrequently erupted into ugly violence among common planters, as affronted pride demanded satisfaction in bouts of boxing or wrestling.⁶³

Such forms of masculinity and honor dominated other avenues of entertainment and socialization as well. Men competed through boat races; Fithian describes one particular race:

at Hobbs Hole this day is a boat race on the River Rappahanock. Each boat is to have 7 oars: to row 2 miles out & 2 miles in round a Boat lying in anchor— The bett 50 pounds— and that in the evening there is a great ball to be given— I believe both the rowers & dancers, as well as ladies

⁵⁹ "Advertisements," *The Virginia Gazette*, Parks. Nov. 26, 1746.

⁶⁰ Byrd, *Another Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover*, 107.

⁶¹ Byrd, *Another Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover*, 64.

⁶² T.H Breen, "Horses and Gentlemen: The Cultural Significance of Gambling among the Gentry of Virginia," *The William And Mary Quarterly* 34, No. 2 (April 1977): 239-57.

⁶³ Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, Pg. 91

⁶³ Fithian, 151.

and gentlemen will perspire freely— Or in plain English they will soak in sweat!⁶⁴

When placed in an aristocratic context, this description raises a number of questions, the most important dealing with the comment that all involved would “soak in sweat.” This seemingly peculiar behavior for landed gentry, suggests that the Virginians were a new, separate form of landed “aristocracy” that was not afraid to get their hands dirty. It also establishes that the rural nature of the colony played a hand in deciding its identity, as the wealthy would engage in physically demanding practices for some of their entertainment. Boat races also gave another opportunity for gambling, as Fithian describes how “Captain Benson won the first race- Captain Purchase offered to bet ten dollars that with the same boat and same hands, only having liberty to put a small weight in the stern, he would beat Captain Benson- he was taken and came out best only by half the boats length.”⁶⁵ Any opportunity to outdo or surpass one another was welcomed by the Virginians, who had developed their own sense of glory and personal honor. Gambling amongst the Virginians was another important factor in determining Virginian identity, despite laws limiting gambling being enacted numerous times; the colony’s elites simply ignored them.⁶⁶ Bets were placed on horse-races, cock-fights, boat-races, boxing matches, fencing matches, and basically every other activity that would provide the opportunity to place a wager.

Gentry diaries and journals suggest that the Virginian social interactions represented more than just casual leisure. There was a constant pressure felt by all of the landed gentry to feel noble and establish themselves as aristocracy. Their land and material wealth set them at a level higher than almost any other colonial population, but they were unable to achieve their goal of recognition as British nobility, even though they were wealthy landowners. Evans explains that

Although ties with the mother country remained strong, a distinctly Virginian identity was emerging.... They continued to travel back and forth across the Atlantic with some regularity, but this contrast appears merely to have strengthened their view that they were valued only for their economic contribution to the emerging empire and would never attain the status of English gentry.... Even William Byrd II, who spent much of his life in England, felt this way.... In England with his Virginia-born wife in 1716, he wrote John

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Fithian, 154.

⁶⁶ Evans, *A “Topping People,”* 150.

Custis IV that “tho my person is here, my heart is in Virginia.”⁶⁷

Evans’s argument, that eighteenth-century Virginians developed a distinct identity, echoes what many historians have concluded in recent studies. Virginians wanted to be considered English aristocracy, but it is also clear that their location, practices, and the sheer nature of the colony itself would never allow such acceptance amongst the aristocracy of Europe. While Rochambeau and other European elites thought it “virtually inconceivable” that George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and other Virginians “could have legitimate claims to gentility,” on the colonial platform the Virginians stood head and shoulders above other British North American colonists.⁶⁸ They proved themselves to be different from their sister colonists, by their mass wealth, their lavish and refined lifestyles, their elitist fraternal bonds with other Virginia land owners and their significant influence over politics before and during the formation of the new republic. Virginia elites such as William Boyd II were connected to Britain, London in particular, in the sense that they not only had business interests, but had spent time or even received their education there in their youth. But in Virginia, the politeness and sociability that had begun to define the British elite did not wholly translate to the Virginia landscape, making it difficult for the elite to truly gain the Britishness they claim to embody. Virginians may have engaged in polite sociability with each other and also engaged in the same social activities such as horse-racing seen amongst the British elite. But the differences between the two elite world’s forces historians to question whether their identity can fall under one specific heading.

Like-Minded Men with Like-Minded Humor: Sociability in Annapolis

Trans-Atlantic activity required ports, and colonial ports grew in the mid-eighteenth century, as did associational activity in those ports. Annapolis was not only Maryland’s capital, but also its main port of trans-Atlantic trade. It was there that the Marylander elite met, conversed, and in a sense, created itself. Of course the colony’s population, economy, and political or governmental structure, as much as the trans-Atlantic exchange, helped shape Marylander’s social customs, cultural norms, and their associational world. Annapolis depended on the tobacco-based export economy that propelled the port city to prominence. If “economic growth in a colony is encouraged by rising metropolitan demand for a colonial staple,” Maryland, like its

⁶⁷ Evans, *A “Topping People,”* 121.

⁶⁸ Rozbick, *The Complete Colonial Gentleman*, 1, 77.

neighbor Virginia, grew because of Britain's demand for tobacco.⁶⁹ With the agrarian system booming and increasing number of merchants and tradesmen "directed their business of shipping tobacco to England," Maryland began to experience a large population boom in the late seventeenth century.⁷⁰ European immigrants began to settle in Maryland, largely because of better opportunities and higher "life expectancies, wage rates, job opportunities, access to land and credit, the costs of starting a farm or entering a trade, and the like."⁷¹ Although they remained part of the British Empire colonial elites did not necessarily fit into the British elite's molds for social differentiation. Using Scotland and the colonies as the basis for comparison, Clive and Bailyn argue that "whatever else may remain obscure about the social history of colonial America, it cannot be doubted that advance in letters and in the arts was involved with social ascent by groups who status in Europe would unquestionably be middling."⁷² Colonists "readily accepted, and indeed assiduously imitated, the cultural leadership of London in literature, drama, architecture, dress, social customs, and values."⁷³ However, unlike their Virginian neighbors who established class distinction mainly by family ties, a newcomer could become a member of the Maryland elite he or she "had the requisite attributes of gentility and could demonstrate gentility through wealth, status, and behavior."⁷⁴

Newspaper accounts and letterbooks illustrate the differences between Maryland and British gentility. In one particular address written by a Mr. Lewis, Maryland is described:

Here every planter opens wide his door; to entertain strangers,
and the poor; For them, he cheerful makes the downy bed; For
them, with food unbought his board spread; No arts of luxury
disguise his meals; Nor poignant sauce severe disease conceals;
Such hearty welcome does the treat command; As shows the

⁶⁹ Allan Kulikoff, "The Economic Growth of the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Colonies," *The Journal of Economic History* 39, no. 1 (March 1979): 275.

⁷⁰ Constance W. Werner, "Architectural Research in the Annapolis Dock Space," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 21, no. 3 (Oct. 1962): 140; Kulikoff, 275.

⁷¹ Russell R. Menard, "British Migration to the Chesapeake Colonies in the Seventeenth Century", in *Colonial Chesapeake Society*, ed. Lois Green Carr, Philip D. Morgan, Jean B. Russo (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 105.

⁷² John Clive and Bernard Bailyn, "England's Cultural Provinces: Scotland and America" *The William And Mary Quarterly* 11, No. 2 (Apr. 1954): 202.

⁷³ John C. Morton, "Stephen Bordley of Colonial Annapolis," *Winterthur Portfolio* (1969): 1.

⁷⁴ Trevor G. Burnard, *Creole Gentlemen: The Maryland Elite, 1691-1776* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 127.

Donor to mankind a friend; That good Old-English hospitality,
 When ev'ry house to ev'ry guest was free; Whose flight from
 Britain's isle; her bards bemoan, Seems here with pleasure to
 have fix'd her throne.⁷⁵

Lewis emphasizes Maryland's rural nature, the colonists' simplicity, hospitality and relative unprivileged nature. He also emphasizes a trans-Atlantic "Old-English" hospitality that could be found within the province. Men from Annapolis also recorded their experiences in Great Britain, showing similarities as well as vast differences between the two societies. The letters of Joshua Johnson, a partner in the Annapolis firm Wallace, Davidson, and Johnson, describe the considerable shortcomings of his own experience while doing business in London. In a July, 1771, he wrote:

I am frightened at the expense attending one's living here...you have no idea of it. They may talk of 18d. per day but it is impossible, and to support the character I must, why, the washing of my clothes alone will come to 18 or 20 (pounds) per annum; then where is the first purchase, house, rent, meat, drink, etc.⁷⁶

Along with the financial differences, Johnson experienced cultural friction: "I am getting clothes made and shall have more of the appearance of a Londoner."⁷⁷ While Johnson wanted to emulate the metropolitan or cosmopolitan fashions, it proved impossible to do so fully.

As the importance and relevance of Annapolis grew, so did the rising demand for culture and sociability. Out of this demand came the creation of publics, which can be defined as:

a body of private individuals who form a public opinion; or who exercise reason and judge the humanistic, natural, social, and political world about them; or who share assumptions, values, or conclusions about the world; or those who connect emotionally or indulge communally in personally rewarding behavior; or who judge the taste, virtue, value, or education of other people.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Mr. Lewis, "A Description of Maryland, extracted from a poem, entitled, *Carmen Seculare*, addressed to Ld Baltimore, Proprietor of that Province, now there," *Gentleman's Magazine*, Apr. 1733, 209.

⁷⁶ Jacob J. Price, ed., *Joshua Johnson's Letterbook, 1771-1774* (London: London Record Society, 1979), 3.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁷⁸ Jessica Kross, "Mansions, Men, Women, and the Creation of Multiple Publics in Eighteenth-Century British North America," *Journal of Social History* 33, no. 2 (Winter, 1999): 386.

For Maryland, such a public can be seen through the Tuesday Club of Annapolis, a society started and recorded by Scottish immigrant Dr. Alexander Hamilton beginning in 1745. Hamilton's group met "either at some tavern or private house, to converse, or look at one another, smoke a pipe, drink a toast, be political or dull, lively or frolicksome, to philosophize or trifle, argue or debate, talk over religion, news, scandal or bawdy, or spend time in any other sort of clubbical amusement."⁷⁹ Such clubs increased throughout the British Empire during the mid-eighteenth century, propelled by the rising population of educated and professional men such as Hamilton.

The nature of clubs and societies was directly influenced by not only by the location, whether urban or rural, but also by the makeup of its populace and the economic strength of the area. Thus Annapolis and Williamsburg- both colonial capitals possessing the same number of inhabitants- differed in associational development because Annapolis, had a more developed urban economy with its administrative and residential functions bolstered by the city's role in Maryland's buoyant import and export trades.⁸⁰ As a British province Maryland had royal officials and governors residing in Annapolis who played a central role in the government, business, and "Britishness" of the colony.⁸¹ Maryland had long been dominated by Lord Baltimore, a title held by several generations of the Calvert family. The Calverts were proprietors, but they did not necessarily reside in the colonies, often sending Governors in their stead. One such Governor was Daniel Dulany, who after being sent to England for a period of five years, returned to Annapolis, where he was "received at his Landing by a number of Gentlemen, and saluted by the Town Guns, and from on board sundry ships in the River."⁸² The Britishness of the colonists in Maryland can be seen vividly through their government, as officials aided the implementation of British ideals. In fact, in 1764 Governor Horatio Sharpe was responsible for building one of the most "beautiful houses built in America during colonial times" just outside of Annapolis, which he called Whitehall.⁸³ Besides recreating England physically in the colonies, royal officials also added to the intellectual sociability of Annapolis. Tuesday Club members included the Annapolis' mayor and

⁷⁹ Dr. Alexander Hamilton, *The History of the Ancient and Honorable Tuesday Club, vol. 1*, ed. Robert Micklus (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 33.

⁸⁰ Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 392.

⁸¹ Clive and Bailyn, "England's Cultural Provinces," 207.

⁸² Aubrey C. Land, *Colonial Maryland, A History* (New York: KTO Press, 1981), 180.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 182.

the Governor's private secretary.⁸⁴ William Eddis wrote, upon his arrival in Annapolis in 1771, that the governor:

introduced me in the most obliging terms to several persons of the highest respectability in the provinces. He treated me with the utmost kindness and cordiality, assured me of his strongest disposition to advance my future prosperity, and gave me an unlimited invitation to his hospitable table.⁸⁵

While government officials played a part in configuring the politics and in Eddis's case, sociability, the non-governmental elite had their own way of practicing Britishness through sociability.

Elite members of the Annapolis population found ways to incorporate sociability within their own circles. The men of the Tuesday Club were professionals and tradesmen: doctors, lawyers, and military men, as well as members of the clergy (among other professions). The Club was made up of fifteen regular members with visiting honorary members gracing the occasional meeting. The club's records demonstrate how these men created "clubbical" publics. On October 25, 1748, there were ten recorded members being entertained in the home of the Club's President Charles Cole, and among the members were a doctor (Hamilton), a Reverend, and a ship Captain.⁸⁶ The rising culture of the Annapolis associational world can be directly related to the city's growing population of educated individuals, and the rise of education can be seen in the *Maryland Gazette*. In an advertisement published in the *Gazette*, the Kent County School stated its purpose was to teach "Greek and Latin tongues, writing, arithmetic, Merchants Accounts, surveying, Navigation, the use of the globes, by the most accurate pair in America."⁸⁷ The term "America" shows an inkling of a further identity, though we cannot push this too far, and at this point, it is more a sense of difference than an embracing identity. In any case, Marylanders were deploying a new terminology to help define themselves.

Some Maryland social activities were quite similar to those in Virginia. In September 1747, for example, the *Maryland Gazette* advertised two days of horse-racing, "on the Race Ground near Annapolis," including a race with a prize of fifty guineas and another for twenty pounds.⁸⁸ Both the racing and the gambling implied are similar to that in Virginia. Elite Virginians and Marylanders also participated

⁸⁴ Records of the Tuesday Club, ed. Elaine Breslaw (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), xxi.

⁸⁵ Eddis, 9.

⁸⁶ Breslaw, *Records of the Tuesday Club*, 82.

⁸⁷ "Advertisement," *The Maryland Gazette*, Maryland State Archives.

⁸⁸ "Advertisement," *The Maryland Gazette*, Tuesday Sept. 1, 1747, MSA SC M 127, Maryland State Archives.

in balls. For example, the Annapolis Tuesday Club cancelled their weekly meeting for 19 January 1747, because there was to be a public ball that night celebrating the Prince of Wales' birthday.⁸⁹ This suggests that such elite sociability reinforced colonial "Britishness" and, of course, monarchism.

Exploring the rules and practices of the Tuesday Club can show the differences between rural gentry and urban elite sociability. Within mid-eighteenth century social clubs wit and conversation mattered. David Shields explains that "Communities of interest and fellow feeling were invoked by wit, for the most authentic *sensus communis* was that established by spontaneous shared laughter in response to a joke," and men such as Dr. Alexander Hamilton placed an emphasis on the importance of these attributes amongst the growing associational world.⁹⁰ While politeness encouraged sociability, wit "was the apposite and novel adjusting of language to thought, to form a memorable expression," and along with good humor and common characteristics, wit could form the basis of a social club.⁹¹ The Tuesday Club was meant to meet on a weekly basis in one of the members' houses, and such rules included that "the member appointed to serve as steward shall provide a gammon of bacon" and "no fresh liquor shall be made, prepared or produced after eleven o'clock at night."⁹² The social nature of the club and their status as gentlemen can be seen through another law, in which they decided that "immediately after supper, the ladies shall be toasted, before any other toasts or healths go around."⁹³ While many of the laws and rules of the club show the social and technical nature of the society, there are laws created to ensure civility, indicating that the club's actual discussions could on some occasions prove too heated and controversial:

If any subject of what nature soever be discussed, which levels at party matters, or the administration of the Government of this province, or be disagreeable to the Club, no answer shall be given thereto, but after such discourse is ended, the society shall laugh at the member offending, in order to divert the discourse.⁹⁴

The club took its meetings very seriously, and were unwilling to jeopardize the congeniality of their interactions. On November 10th, 1747, a mock trial was held indicting one member, William Thornton, on charges for trespasses against the club. He was accused of censoring a letter to the President, missing a meeting without conveying his

⁸⁹ Breslaw, *Records of the Tuesday Club*, 63.

⁹⁰ David Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letter in British America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 176.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁹² Breslaw, *Records of the Tuesday Club*, 36.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, Tuesday, June 4th 1745. 6.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8

pending absence to the proper members of the club, and “being intrusted with nine bottles of English beer presented by Robert Morris, an honorary member of this society, did unjustly, willfully, and pitifully, deprive the society the thereof.”⁹⁵ While such actions and jests had given the Tuesday Club a reputation of whimsy and humor, the club was more than a group of babbling drunks hell-bent on good humor. Satire worked to both screen without obfuscating important issues and of providing an outlet for aesthetic talents in a popular literary mode.⁹⁶ Behind all of the wit and satire was a desire to discuss and comment on the important goings on within their sphere. David Shields discusses the fact that social clubs such as the Tuesday Club took heavy fire from both public and religious institutions. To Shields, “social clubs constituted havens of play and free conversation in which the sorts of expressions most troublesome to church and state could be voiced, whether with seditious plainness or, more artfully, as travesty.”⁹⁷

Hamilton’s *History of the Ancient and Honorable Tuesday Club* reveals the mores of an entire social circle. It records who could and could not be included in club fellowship, what dangers of society threaten sociability, and what made the club important.⁹⁸ Such men that harbored anti-social behavior and were not gentle with the opposite sex had no place in the club world that Hamilton strove to create, and he also felt that “wranglers, disputers, contradictors, falsifiers, and skeptical doubters” should be excluded from club association.⁹⁹ As the club’s purpose was to “drink and be merry” Hamilton had no time and patience for those members of society that could not enjoy the company of others while stimulating their sense of good humor and merriment.¹⁰⁰ Another enemy of clubs, according to Hamilton, was “that violent propensity in human nature to dispute.”¹⁰¹ While engaging in debate and conversation was a must in the clubs, Hamilton believed that it was dangerous to have a number of men disagreeing with each other without any members of the society conceding his point. Evidence of such an intrusion can be found in the Tuesday Club’s records. On October 28, 1746 in the home of Hamilton, the club resolved “no disputes relating to the business of the Club shall be entered upon when any strangers are

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 60

⁹⁶ Elaine Breslaw, “Wit, Whimsy, and Politics: The Use of Satire by the Tuesday Club of Annapolis, 1744-1756,” *The William And Mary Quarterly* Vol. 32, No. 2 (April, 1975): 296.

⁹⁷ Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letter in British America*, 175.

⁹⁸ Hamilton, *The History of the Ancient and Honorable Tuesday Club*, 69.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 71

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 82

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 132

present.”¹⁰² While it is unclear exactly what caused this law to be passed, it does show how the discussions that the club engaged in needed to be regulated. More evidence of this fact arose on November 24, 1741 as the club decreed “henceforth from this day, there shall be no disputes whatsoever, or judicial trials carried on, or negotiated upon that night in which Mr. President Cole serves, or upon the Anniversary night of the club.”¹⁰³ Discussion and interaction needed to be regulated, as certain issues and topics would cause disorder amongst the club, and negate the purpose of the meetings.

The Tuesday Club did not meet in a purpose-built building like London gentlemen’s clubs from the early nineteenth century such as the Athenaeum. Instead, it assembled in various private residences. According to Eddis, by the 1770’s “The buildings in Annapolis were formerly of small dimensions and inelegant construction; but there are now several modern edifices which make a good appearance.”¹⁰⁴ Perhaps the rise of “modern” buildings allowed the increasing association and sociability. Jessica Kross suggests that during the mid-eighteenth century, colonial homes were being modeled after the British lower gentry, and “they [were] divided up hitherto undifferentiated space into separate rooms where specialized social interactions took place and where the public part of the house could be segregated from the private.”¹⁰⁵ This can be directly applied to Maryland as the buildings were becoming larger and more modern, and homes were becoming the center of club life, which can be seen through the Tuesday Club’s practice of meeting at each others homes. Apart from the home, social interaction occurred in such places as taverns and coffeehouses, which could be found throughout in the London diary of William Byrd II. While interaction in public spaces would not end, the Tuesday Club serves an example of organized, educated, elite men meeting in private dwellings as opposed to the now dwindling class distinctive taverns.

In the mid-eighteenth century, Annapolis became a cultural center, with public theatres, musical performances, etc. In 1752, The Beggars Opera opened in Annapolis. One advertisement for the opera, performed at the “New Theater in Upper Marlborough” stated the accompanied music would be performed by a “set of private gentlemen” and that the Tuesday Club offered “at least five string players, two flutists, a keyboard performer, and possibly a bassoonist.”¹⁰⁶ Along with musical performance, the Tuesday Club engaged in poetry contests, as in the winter of 1745-46, when a few members contested with two “Baltimore

¹⁰² Breslaw, *Records of the Tuesday Club*, 36

¹⁰³ Breslaw, *Records of the Tuesday Club*, 61

¹⁰⁴ Eddis, ed. Aubrey C. Land, 13.

¹⁰⁵ Kross, “Mansions, Men, Women, and the Creation of Multiple Publics in Eighteenth-Century British North America,” 385.

¹⁰⁶ Talley, 13.

Bards”: manuscript poems circulated to which others responded with “poetry, insults, and suggested remedies for the cure of bad poetry.”¹⁰⁷ The arts and performances were important to the members of the Tuesday Club, as writing songs and poems to commemorate and respond to certain events encompassed an interesting aspect of their interaction. This type of interaction is not found within the records of the Virginia planters, and the presence of theatres in Maryland give yet another example of contrasting forms of sociability.

The trans-Atlantic world of clubs and sociability was effected by a number of different factors; first being location and economic practices, the second being by the demographics of the population. The rise of tobacco farming cultivated economic and financial growth in both Maryland and Virginia, creating the opportunity for a more leisurely lifestyle that allows association; but the rise of urbanization and the diversity of economic growth in Annapolis sent them on a different course in the sense that more and more men and women were reaching “elite” status. The rise of the elite in the more urbanized port city allowed for more opportunities to interact, setting them apart from Virginia, whose lack of urban sociability centers and rural population only provided a small handful of social activities. The main contrast can be seen in the development of the Annapolis clubs while such an associational world was not a major part of sociability in Virginia.

Conclusion

Stephen Conway argues that “There was no smooth and uninterrupted transition in the way in which Britons in Britain looked on Americans; a jagged, broken and faltering movement—like a drunkard lurching forward and then tottering back—is a more appropriate image,” and this argument holds true when studying the roots of American identity.¹⁰⁸ As this article has shown, the Virginia and Maryland elite attempted, admirably, to re-create a world of association and sociability comparable to Great Britain but were hindered from fully doing so based upon their social composition. The rural Virginians engaged in similar activities found in Britain, including horse-racing and cock-fighting, and spent as much time entertaining each other in their grand Tidewater plantations. The Marylanders, while also engaged in races and the sort, created social clubs reminiscent of those found in Britain, and built large houses in which to meet and create sociability amongst their urban peers. However, their attempts at remaining wholly British floundered as they faced difficulties that made it impossible to socialize on the same level as the British elite. In a sense, the differences forced upon their sociability aided in the creation

¹⁰⁷ Talley, 72.

¹⁰⁸ Conway, “From Fellow Nationals to Foreigners,” 67.

of unique identities that incorporated their roots while adapting them to their physical locality. In Virginia, the mock-nobility created by the elite planter class established a wealthy upper-crust desperately wishing to appear and be accepted as British; however their rural location and backwoods/agrarian characteristics created a frontiersman nobility that could not hope to flourish or even appear in Great Britain proper. In Maryland, the wealthy elite established sociability in the form of clubs modeled after the societies from Britain, but their location in the Americas forced their association to transcend class and birth to incorporate a new form of elite that would be considered riff-raff in Europe. The historiography of identity in the colonies would certainly benefit from more club records as precise as those of the Tuesday Club, or from a wider array of personal and fearless journals like those written by William Byrd. However, by studying what is available, it can clearly be seen that the Chesapeake colonies had constructed a world with similarities to Great Britain with slight inconsistencies; horse-racing and gambling was incorporated in the colonies, but the Virginian version of the "Quarter Race" shows a factor of violence that set it apart. Annapolis residents created a society in which the elite could meet in the spirit of wit and association, but lacking the intricate physical spaces for such esteemed meetings, they met in each other's private domiciles. By honing in on one specific class, in a certain region, examining one aspect of daily life, the picture of identity becomes a little clearer as men discovered who they were and who they could not hope to be. Identity, however, can be traced in other ways, as other historians have concluded. Linda Colley argues that "Quite simply, we usually decide who we are by reference to who and what we are not," and using this method we can begin to see that the colonists, in a sense, were not sure who they were or what they were not.¹⁰⁹ One way this theory applies is to the experiences of the Loyalists on the eve of and after the revolution; as some colonials "abandoned their colonial homes because they decided they were more British than American" only to find themselves beginning to "compare America and the British Isles, invariably to the detriment of the latter."¹¹⁰ The colonists wanted desperately to cling to their British identity, but it would prove an impossible task. The colonists thought they were British, but it turned out they were not. The study of identity amongst the different regions that made up the British empire is difficult, because as Colley suggests, "In practice, men and women often had double, triple, or even quadruple loyalties... according to the circumstances, in a village, in a particular landscape, in

¹⁰⁹ Linda Colley, "Britishness and Otherness, an Argument," *The Journal of British Studies* 31, No.4 (October 1992): 309-329, 31.

¹¹⁰ Mary Beth Norton, "The Loyalist's Image of England: Ideal and Reality," *Albion* 3, No. 2 (Summer 1971): 62 and 67.

a region, and in one or even two countries. It was quite possible for an individual to see himself as being, at one and the same time, a citizen of Edinburgh, a Lowlander, a Scot, and a Briton.”¹¹¹ This same conclusion can easily be applied to the colonies, as there is ample evidence to support them identifying with Britain, the colonies as a whole, and their own personal location. The colonists saw themselves as British, not just because they were supposed to, but because they wanted to. There is ample evidence to argue that the Virginia and Maryland elite took a great deal of pride in their British sociability. But at the same time, they were “American” in the sense that they needed to look after their own interests. For instance, the diary of William Byrd in London shows the need for Virginia coffeehouses and lobbyists to make sure they were getting a fair shake by the exchange. These instances are important because it shows an intersecting example of multiple identities that is crucial to understanding this “Golden Age” of colonial sociability. Dissention amongst the colonial populous was seemingly unique to the thirteen North American colonies, considering that neither Canada nor West Indies colonies rebelled “despite the sensitivity of their elites on questions of Constitutional principle.”¹¹² Another factor to the rise of a separate identity in America was the way in which they were seen in Britain. By 1775, the British press had published a number of articles showing evidence of disapproval, and in some cases malice, towards the colonies. One article, pertaining to the practice of cock-fighting, states that:

Cock-fighting is a heathenish mode of diversion...and at this day ought certainly be left to those barbarous nations...the Chinese, the Persians...and the still more savage Americans; whose irrational and sanguinary practices ought in no case to be objects of imitation to polite and more civilized Europeans.¹¹³

Articles such as these show the growing criticism of North American colonists, and also gives evidence to the argument that American identity was given to them, notwithstanding their attempts to remain British. While activities such as horse-racing, cock-fighting, boating, and club life show the ways in which the colonists attempted to solidify their British identity doing so became an insurmountable task.

¹¹¹ Colley, “Britishness and Otherness,” 315.

¹¹² Jeremy Black, *The Politics of Britain 1688-1800* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), 43

¹¹³ Pegge, “Thoughts On Cockfighting,” *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, October 1775. <http://proxy.library.eiu.edu:2205/articles/displayItem.do?QueryType=articles&ResultsID=12F1E8D81E2F637B0&filterSequence=2&ItemNumber=1&journalID=e806>(accessed 3/22/11).

Whether it amounted to factors out of human control, a voluntary separation by the colonists, or a fabricated image forced upon the colonials by the inhabitants of the British Isles, the question of a separate American identity remains an elusive study.