The South, however, had not lost all of its fight. Within weeks of the Democratic National Convention, many Southern Democrats, as promised, convened a States Rights' convention in Birmingham, nominating Strom Thurmond and Fielding Wright as "States Rights Democrats." Despite the unlikelihood of a "Dixiecrat" win, the southern Democrats banked their hopes on throwing the election into the House of Representatives, in which they presumed that they would have more leverage in selecting the next President.[43] One historian has argued, however, that even if the election had gone into the House, a Dewey or even a Truman victory was more likely than one for Thurmond.[44]

In the end, however, Truman's upset victory happened both despite and because of the three-way split in the Democratic party. The southern walkout in Philadelphia gave Truman new credibility with black voters and civil rights activists, and also freed him from nearly all obligation to please the South. Also, by the end of the campaign Wallace's candidacy had ceased to be a threat, owing largely to the taint of Communist support, which Wallace stubbornly refused to repudiate. Finally, the South, while not nearly as safe as Clifford had predicted, largely came through for Truman. Most Southern voters (and electors) as predicted, stuck with the national Democratic ticket, despite their objections to both Truman and civil rights, and Thurmond's candidacy succeeded only with the four states in which the Dixiecrats had managed to appropriate the Democratic party label--Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina.[45]

The 1948 Presidential election had undeniably brought the Civil Rights issue to the political forefront. By the same token, black voters were now recognized as a "legitimate" constituency, which neither major party could afford to ignore. Although the transformation of the Democratic Party was far from complete (the last Dixiecrat gasp would be heard in 1968, from George Wallace), the signs were already clear that from then on, the Democratic party would never again be automatically allied with the American South. As southern historian George B. Tindall expressed it, "the region had finally moved out of the old Civil War-Reconstruction configuration in politics."[46] So, for that matter, had the party.

43 Sitkoff, "Harry Truman," 605.
44 Abels, *Out of the Jaws of Victory*, 214-15.
45 Ross, *The Loneliest Campaign*, 247.
46 Tindall, *The Disruption of the Solid South*, 38-46.

Constructing Community: The Meaning of Fairs, Court Days, and Royal Celebrations in Eighteenth-Century Virginia

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Kristan Crawford was a co-winner of the History Department's Lavern M. Hamand Graduate Writing Award. She presented this paper at the Phi Alpha Theta Lower Illinois Regional Conference at Illinois State University, where she received an award for Outstanding Use of Primary Documents. This paper is a shortened version of the first chapter of her M.A. thesis on community, public ritual, and popular disturbances in eighteenth century Virginia.

Eighteenth-century Virginia was an early modern European society. Community overshadowed individual interests. Low literacy and farming contributed to the predominance of an oral culture, in which face-to-face encounters and ritualistic actions provided the basis of communal solidarity.[1] As in England, Virginia's social hierarchy required each inhabitant to express either deference or condescension to each man or woman encountered within the society.[2] Prior to the imperial crisis, Virginia's county communities, although stratified, remained cohesive. This paper argues that before 1765, despite some tensions, the populace interacted in ways which reinforced the communal will and created a unified society.

Some historians prefer to emphasize the individual over the community. Edmund S. Morgan discusses how the atomistic nature of frontier Virginia contributed to the central American paradox, namely, how slavery and freedom coexisted in colonial Virginia, "the one supporting the other." Other historians

1 Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 125.
2 David Hackett Fischer noted how deference, or the "culture of subordination," was the "psychological cement" of the hierarchical system. He also discussed condescension: "To condescend in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was to treat an inferior with kindness, decency and respect." David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 384, 385-7; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 63.

incorporate Darrett B. Rutman's "network analysis" approach, which argues that people associate in orderly groups: networks formed by landform, distance, technology, or social topography. These communities, or "small worlds," James R. Perry suggests, "provided cohesion" in colonial Virginia society.[3] But as Morgan's thesis seems to suggest that American exceptionality and, thus, the Revolution was inevitable, while the approach of Perry and Rutman would imply that the Revolution never happened, a third approach suggesting a change from a consensual society to one based on conflict (say, after 1765) would be in order.

This paper examines mainly the evidence for communal action and how it integrated a gentlemanly elite and an agrarian populace primarily before 1765. Three social activities particularly displayed communal solidarity: fairs and festivals, courthouse gatherings, and royal celebrations. These activities enabled the inhabitants of the county community to interact, and, despite seeming disorder, strengthen communal relationships.

Virginia's colonial legislature repeatedly established Fair days in various counties and towns, including Fredericksburg, Richmond, Suffolk, Newcastle, and Alexandria.[4] The Fredericksburg Fair, held biannually from 1738, was perhaps the most successful fair during this period. In 1774, when the Scottish indentured servant, John Harrower, disembarked from his Atlantic voyage, he encountered there "a great number of Gentlemen and Ladies driving into Town it being an anuall Fair day."[5] The establishment of fairs shows the social desire for communal interaction and, because they were often held at county seats, also reinforced the "county community." As Harrower's mention of "a number of Genteel Company *as well as others*" during the May 1774 fair[6] suggests, all ranks interacted at the annual fairs.

The fairs' function was social more than economic. Festivals, some lasting

3 Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom; The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1975), 6; Darrett B. Rutman and Anita H. Rutman, *Small Worlds, Large Questions: Explorations in Early American Social History, 1660-1850* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 40-1; James R. Perry, *The Formation of a Society on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1615-1655* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 7.

4 William W. Hening, *The Statutes at Large; Being A Collection of all the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619* (Richmond, Va.) V, 82-3; *The Journals of the House of Burgesses*, 18 April 1747; ibid., 17 December 1748; ibid., 29 February 1752; hereafter cited as: *JHB*.

5 Hening, *Statutes*, V, 82-3; Edward Miles Riley, ed. *The Journal of John Harrower: An Indentured Servant in the Colony of Virginia, 1773-1776* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1963), 40. See also, *Virginia Gazette* (Parks) 16 May 1745; 5 September 1745; 20 March 1746; 4 June 1746; 25 April 1751; (Hunter) 30 April 1752; 9 May 1755.

for days, engaged all social ranks and provided an opportunity to escape planting drudgery. Although fairs provided the means to auction land, this proved inconsequential compared to other festivities.[7] For instance, the St. Andrews Day Festival had "Horse Races, and several other Diversions," and included prizes for the best wrestler and runner.[8] Harrower recounted how "Puppet shows, roape dancings &c" ended a week of horse racing in Fredericksburg.[9] In 1752, a "Company of Comedians from the new theatre in Williamsburg" intended to proceed to Fredericksburg, "to play during the Continuance of the June Fair."[10]

Williamsburg's atypical fair in December 1739 demonstrates a failed attempt at communal interaction. The *Virginia Gazette* advertised this fair: "for the Buying and Selling of Horses, Cattle, Hogs, Sheep, &c and all sorts of Goods, Wares and Merchandizes." Although this fair intended "to encourage trade and promote commerce," the *Gazette* later admitted that this "has not met with the desired Success." Even a bounty offered to the person who brought the most horses, sheep and hogs, failed to excite interest.[11] The *Gazette* claimed that there had not been enough "timely Notice of the Encouragement intended to be given to those who brought Horses, Cattle, Hogs, &c to the Fair," although the public received two weeks prior notice. The real reason for this fair's failure was that its expressed intent was business-related and not community-oriented. It lacked entertainments which allowed the community to gather and interact.[12]

Closely associated with these recreational social gatherings were festive activities at the county courthouse. The courthouse allowed for central communal gathering and social interaction.[13] This interaction enabled the community "to define social rank, mutual obligation, and shared values."[14] Courthouse gatherings demanded the acceptance of one's place in the social continuum and reinforced the social hierarchy, and, thus, unified the community.

6 Riley, ed., *John Harrower*, 45. (italics mine)
7 *Virginia Gazette*, (Parks) 16 May 1745.
8 Ibid., 30 September 1737.
9 Riley, ed., *John Harrower*, 65.
10 *Virginia Gazette*, (Hunter) 30 April 1752.
11 *Virginia Gazette*, (Parks) 23 November 1739; ibid., 30 November 1739.
12 Ibid., 7 December 1739.
13 Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1978), 70-71; A. G. Roeber, *Faithful Magistrates and Republican Lawyers: Creators of Virginia Legal Culture, 1680-1810* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 78-9.
14 Ibid., 74.

Typical advertisements of courthouse activities included the public sale of land, schooners, and tobacco.[15] In addition, horse races, sometimes with a "purse of 30 pistoles," cockfighting, and other sports occurred regularly.[16] A northern tutor described a five-mile horse race around Richmond Courthouse in his journal. He noted that "The Assembly was remarkably numerous; beyond my expectation and exceeding [sic] polite in general."[17] Perhaps racing crowds were more genteel and polite than others. But gaming competition did not disrupt the social order. The crossing, but not levelling, of social ranks helped unify the traditional society.

Courts created what has been called in English history "county communities." Monthly court meetings created an opportunity for private business and social exchanges, especially at nearby ordinaries, or taverns.[18] Lightning in Sussex County allowed a rare glimpse into the social setting of a court day, when, in the evening of a court day, it "struck near the end of the court house," and killed two horses and three hogs. Present were "upwards of an hundred people in and about the ordinary, within thirty yards of where the mischief was done." Ehren Horn, the man who owned the horses, "was indemnified upon the spot, by the generous contribution of the Gentlemen who attended the Court."[19] The gathering suggests a festive ending to the court day. Horn evidently had brought horses to sell during the day. The "Gentlemen" who donated reinforced their social position as well as the community itself by relieving a community member in distress.[20]

Burgess elections perhaps best displayed the dichotomous festive/solemn role of the county courthouse. These occasions particularly revealed the importance of face-to-face interaction. Burgess contenders had to prove their ability to serve their community by providing drink and entertainment, while the solemn ritual was central to an oral-based society.

Robert Munford's *The Candidates; or, The Humours of a Virginia Election*, written circa 1770, provides insight into the communal interaction that occurred during Burgess elections. This three act farcical play focuses on *Wou'dbe*, a gentleman seeking re-election. Three new candidates also seek

15 *Virginia Gazette* (Parks) 11 August 1738; ibid., 6 June 1745; ibid., 4 June 1746.
16 Ibid.
17 Hunter Dickinson Farish, *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., 1943), 32.
18 Sydnor, *American Revolutionaries*, 79.
19 *Virginia Gazette*, (Rind) 4 August 1768.
20 Isaac, *Transformation*, 90.

election because *Worthy*, a past Burgess along with *Wou'dbe*, refuses to run. The new contenders attempt to sway the freeholders' opinions. The Candidates is worth analyzing to test whether the playwright, himself a Burgess from 1765-1775, thought of pre-revolutionary Virginia elections as consensual or conflictual.[21]

Treating comprises a major theme of The Candidates. In one act, the county freeholders anxiously await at a race-field the four candidates' arrival. One freeholder, *Twist*, asks: "We are very dry here; Mr. Guzzle, where's your friend Sir John [Toddy], and Mr. Wou'dbe? they are to treat to-day, I hear." The freeholders become increasingly intoxicated. *Wou'dbe* later invites "most of the principal freeholders to breakfast with me, in their way to the court-house." Not surprisingly, alcohol makes an appearance at this morning event. *Mr. Julip*, a Justice, orders a servant to bring him "the spirit" because his chocolate drink needs "a little lacing to make it admirable."[22] Munford, at least, saw elections as constructing a jovial sort of order.

Did such a view of festive elections have a basis in reality? Community treating occurred regularly, despite a 1705 law which prohibited Burgess candidates from treating, promising money, or showing preference to any freeholder "in order to be elected... to serve in the General Assembly."[23] In Lunenburg County on 29 March 1756, the issue of treating emerged in a contested election. When Matthew Marrable complained of Thomas Nash's "undue Election and Return," county officials sought to determine whether Nash or "his Agents" gave "any Treats, or Entertainments, . . . to the Freeholders."[24] The lengthy case provides an interesting account of Virginia society.[25]

The election committee in 1756 focused on the issue of treating during the poll. At first, Mr. Nash, "at a race where many Freeholders were present," cautioned a fellow candidate, Mr. Embry, "not to spend any Thing, as the Writ was out, and [Nash] did not spend any Thing himself." Mr. Nash, when told by a freeholder that "he would call for some Punch," replied that "it should be at

21 Jay B Hubbell and Douglas Adair, "Robert Munford's The Candidates," *William and Mary Quarterly* V (April 1948): 217-18, 220-21. All references to his work are from this edition.
22 Munford, *The Candidates*, 241, 243, 252, 255.
23 Hening, *Statutes*, III, 243.
24 The governor signed election writs at least forty days prior to the proposed meeting of the General Assembly. The colony's secretary then sent the appropriate writ to each county sheriff, who in turn sent copies to the county minister. Each Sunday until the election, the minister publicized the upcoming event after his church service. Hening, *Statutes*, III, 236-7.
25 *JHB*, 29 March 1756, 344; 7 May 1767, 456-7.

[the freeholder's] own Expense" because Nash was a candidate. The freeholder expected a customary drink and Mr. Nash probably refused only because a fellow candidate was present.[26] Further, a bar keeper at the ordinary, "was applied to for Liquor by the Voters." The bar keeper charged liquor delivered during the poll "to the Candidate in whose Name it was demanded." After the poll closed, he tried to collect. "Mr. Nash asked him by whose Orders it was delivered, for if it was not by his Orders, he would not pay for it." The reply was that he "depended on his [Nash's] Honor: Upon which Mr. Nash paid for what was charged to him." Mr. Marrable, however, refused to pay for more than a small quantity of rum to give to some people "who were preparing a Barbacue," even though his bar account was among the largest. Nash's vindication came when the Committee of Privileges and Elections announced that Mr. Nash had not consented to treating.[27] Nash had respected the law, but provided for his community and upheld a code of honor, nevertheless.

As Bertram Wyatt-Brown points out, treating was not simple bribery. It was "rather the demand of male constituents that the office-seeker thereby prove his manhood, indifference to heavy financial loss, and claim to the respect of those accepting his bounty."[28] It also acted as a way for community members to accept publicly their social rank. If the worthy candidate expected selection, the populace expected treating from the community's better-sort. Hence, *Woul'be* states in *The Candidates*, "...it surely is the duty of every man who has abilities to serve his country, to take up the burden, and bear it with patience." But he also asks, "Must I again be subject to the humours of a fickle crowd?"[29] The famous diarist Landon Carter claimed that he lost his re-election because he did not "familiarize" himself "among the people."[30] He neglected his expected and anticipated duties. Election day combined festival with respect toward the local authorities. Polling ritual reinforced the community's social order which in turn, reinforced social stability.

26 Ibid.; Sydnor, 57.
27 *JHB*, 7 May 1757, p. 456-7.
28 Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 337.
29 Munford, *The Candidates*, 252, 231.
30 Jack P Greene, *The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1965), I:7.

The election usually began mid-morning. From the court house doorway, the county sheriff announced the opening of the poll, and the voters then entered to cast their vote(s).[31] Behind a bench sat the sheriff, the appointed election clerks with record books, and the candidates. When the freeholder voted, he took an oath in front of the bench, which verified his status as a county freeholder (a requirement which after 1736 meant he owned either one hundred acres of unimproved land or twenty-five acres with a house). The sheriff then asked how he voted, and the clerk appointed to the appropriate candidate recorded his response. The candidate then rose and thanked the freeholder. This continued until the sheriff determined that all available freeholders voted. In *The Candidates* the sheriff states, "Gentlemen freeholders, come into court, and give your votes, or the polling will be closed." Finally, the tallied returns proclaimed the winner. The sheriff "returned the burgesses," with a public announcement and a written form sent to Williamsburg.[32] The day ended at the ordinary, perhaps after a speech like *Worthy's* in *The Candidates*: "Gentlemen, I'm much obliged to you for the signal proof you have given me to-day of your regard. You may depend upon it, that I shall endeavour faithfully to discharge the trust you have reposed in me."[33]

Of course, all this drink, honor, and inequality did not produce a completely pacific society. Disorderly "riots" or "tumults" plagued some Burgess elections. For example, as soon as the poll opened at noon in the 1742 Orange County election, several men "throng'd into the Court-house in a riotous Manner, and made such a Disturbance, that the Sheriff and Candidates were obliged to go out of the Court-house, 'til the house was clear'd." Polling resumed, after the sheriff "in order to let the Voters pass in and out quietly," appointed an under-sheriff and another man "with drawn Swords across the [courthouse] Doors." However, a John Rucker believed his honor threatened, and "threw the Under-Sheriff and another Person headlong out of the Doors; . . . and seized the Under-Sheriff's

31 General elections, in which each freeholder cast two votes, occurred when the governor dissolved the assembly and called for new elections. By-elections, in which each freeholder cast only one vote, occurred to replace "burgesses whose service had been terminated by death, resignation, or disqualification." John G. Kolp, "The Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Pre-Revolutionary Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly* XLIX (October 1992): 655.
32 Hening, *Statutes*, IV, 475-8; Sydnor, *American Revolutionaries*, 27-8; Griffith, *Virginia House of Burgesses*, 60-2; Richard L. Morton, *Colonial Virginia*, vol II, *Westward Expansion and Prelude to Revolution, 1710-1763* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1960), 718-20; Munford, *The Candidates*, 257.
33 Ibid.

Sword with both his Hands." Even within this tumult, however, order was reinforced. The displaced under-sheriff "was rescued by the By-standers," which suggests that the community did not sanction Rucker's behavior. Rucker's actions only temporarily disrupted the election process. Towards evening, the other guard left his post, "and immediately the People throng'd into the Court-house in a drunken riotous Manner, one of them jumping upon the Clerk's Table, and dancing among the Papers, so that the sheriff was unable to clear the Bar, or the Clerk's to take the Poll." The Committee of Privileges and Elections determined that "John Rucker did, before and during the Time of the Election, give several large Bowls of Punch amongst the People, crying out for those Persons who intended to vote for Mr. Slaughter, to come and drink of his Punch." Furthermore, Rucker stood at the courthouse doors and prevented the supporters of another candidate from entering. Later, Rucker "confessed he had won several Pistoles, upon Mr. Slaughter's being elected the first Burgess."[34]

Such "riotously and unlawfully" conducted elections illustrates that the community was capable of violence. However, the carnival atmosphere that surrounded elections provided popular festive recreations, evident by the people who "throng'd" into the courthouse.

Ties to the royal throne also served as a unifying force within Virginia society. The *Virginia Gazette* regularly mentioned the celebrations of King George II's birthday. The 30 October 1739 celebration at Williamsburg, for example, began with inhabitants displaying the flag at the Capital. At noon, the cannons at the Governor's house "were thrice discharged," and in the evening, "the Governor's House, the College, Several Gentlemen's, and other Houses, were beautifully illuminated." The evening ended with a ball at the Governor's house, and with "great Demonstrations of Joy, Suitable to the happy occasion, and agreeable to the distinguished Loyalty of this colony in general, to His Majesty, and His Illustrious Family." Other birthday celebrations included the King's ships and forts firing their cannon.[35] No popular disturbances correspond with these public rituals before 1765.

Even more evident of a consensual community was the colonial procession celebrating the defeat of the Jacobite forces in Scotland in 1745.[36] The Norfolk

34 *JHB*, 4 June 1742, 50-1.
35 Ibid., 27 October 1738.
36 William W. Willcox and Walter L. Arnstein, *The Age of Aristocracy, 1688 to 1830* (Lexington: D. C. Heath and Co., 1988), 119-20.

celebration consisted of a full-sized effigy of the Pretender in Highland dress and a procession which contained three drummers, a piper, three violins and six men wearing inscribed sashes and carrying long rods. A man dressed as a nurse carried a warming-pan complete with a child "peeping out of it." Six men followed the cart holding the effigy, and finally, "A vast Crowd of People of the Town and Country" marched behind the procession. The procession ended at one o'clock in the town center, the courthouse, in front of an erected gibbet. Liquor poured freely during the afternoon's festivities and royal toasts and twenty-one gun salutes filled the air. The evening saw the "Town beautifully illuminated." The day culminated when a "large Bonfire was kindled round the Gibbet and . . . the Effigie dropt into the Flames." This act elicited "loud Huzza's, and Acclamations of Joy . . ." A ball capped the day's celebration.[37]

This ritualistic celebration involved the populace as well as the elite. Both expressed allegiance to the Hanoverian succession. The procession drew on popular culture. It closely resembled the shaming ritual of the *charivari*, replete with "rough music" and cross-dressing.[38] The warming-pan symbolized the belief that an infant boy had been smuggled into the Queen's bedchamber in 1688.[39] Thus, James III's son, the rebel Stuart Pretender, Bonnie Prince Charlie, (represented in the Norfolk procession wearing Scottish clothes) was a bastard's son. The cross-dressing male "nurse" symbolized a world turned upside down.

Other celebrations of the defeat of the rebels in Scotland in 1745 were organized in Hanover County, Williamsburg, Norfolk, Suffolk, and other places. "The Gentlemen of Hanover County" raised money for "Publick Entertainment" and provided (liquored?) punch to the populace. A bonfire and window illuminations ended the evening, and "all was conducted with Decency and good Order."[40] Like elections, treating, and court day festivities, these expressions of "joy and loyalty," might have been engineered by the elite. But they were public and enabled the populace to gather in common cause.

37 *Virginia Gazette*, 24 July 1746.
38 David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 100-101.
39 Rachel J. Weil, "The Politics of Legitimacy: Women and the Warming-Pan Scandal," in *The Revolution of 1688-1689, Changing Perspectives*, ed. Lois G. Schwoerer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 65-67.
40 *Virginia Gazette*, 21 August 1746.

Before the imperial crisis began in 1765, traditional Virginia society interacted in ways which reinforced the communal will. Although tensions existed, each individual subordinated his or her personal interests to the collective good. The social hierarchy that characterized this society proved essential because it provided communal order. Other historians have emphasized that when the imperial crisis interrupted that hierarchy, social disorder intensified and popular disturbances increased. But, as the writing of *The Candidates* suggests, consensus and community remained an important part of white, male popular culture in Virginia, perhaps through the Revolution itself.