

The Living History CLASSROOM

A PUBLICATION OF TRYON PALACE Fall 2013

'Tis the Season To Be Jolly ... and Festive

'Tis the Season to be Festive

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What does “festive” mean?

According to the dictionary, “festive” and “festivity” come from *festum*, the Latin word for “feast.” Festivity itself is defined as “the celebration of something in a joyful and exuberant way.” Undeniably, a joyful occasion, especially a holiday, goes hand-in-hand with food and fun. Halloween is all about running around in costumes and getting as much candy as you can. Without roast turkey, dressing with gravy, and cranberries, could you really have Thanksgiving? Christmas, Hanukah, Passover, and Easter are all religious holidays, but they are also festive holidays. When people sing, “Deck the halls with boughs of holly,” they are recalling how Northern Europeans celebrated Christmas for centuries by bringing in evergreens—holly, pine, cedar, ivy, and boxwoods—to decorate their homes. You can’t get more festive than that, especially if you throw in a giant Yule log in the fireplace to burn for twelve whole days.

Festivity includes other things besides food. Singing is festive. Dancing is festive. Even loud noises can be festive!

In this issue, we offer you some interesting *and* festive topics. You’ll learn that fireworks have been a source of fun since colonial times. You will also discover that turkeys aren’t actually from Turkey, and how we think they got their name. Did you ever wonder how soldiers during the Civil War celebrated holidays? You can read all about it in this issue. As time passes, holidays can change in all sorts of ways—new holidays, like Kwanzaa, can be created out of earlier rituals and celebrations, including a 19th-century African American Christmastide celebration called Jonkonnu. We have a story about Jonkonnu in this issue. On the other hand, holidays like Twelfth Night have been forgotten in the United States, outside of places like New Orleans and Hispanic-settled areas; when you read about some of Twelfth Night’s customs, you may want to revive it right away! Finally, with food being such an important part of festivity, changes behind how food was served and eaten in the 19th century are pretty fascinating, too; we discuss that in our second installment of “From Fingers to Forks.” Finally, in true festive spirit, we have a gingerbread recipe you can make for any holiday you like. However you celebrate, make it festive!

Jonkonnu: A Slave's Christmas

New Bern, North Carolina: December 26, 1836

"Henry!"

Henry blinked his eyes slowly. It was too early and it was too, too cold to leave the floor. He struggled to get his little brother, Burton, to share some of their thin blanket.

"Henry!"

It was time to get up for sure. No one liked it when Momma got mad. Still ... it was *so* nice to lie down and not have to work ...

"HENRY! Don't make me come up there!"

Henry hurriedly dressed, then slid down the ladder from the loft where he and his two brothers slept. He heard Burton roll around, probably pulling the blanket away from their baby brother Nelson, which meant Nelson would start screaming at any second from the cold. Henry looked around their little home—just one room and the loft above. "Where's Papa? Is he already at the store?"

Henry and his family were slaves. They were owned by Sacker Dubberly, a white man who had a horse tack shop in New Bern. Henry's father worked in the back of the shop, making things from leather. Henry was already learning how to work with leather—Papa was

teaching him. Momma helped Mrs. Dubberly at home.

"Papa's gone to get ready. I need you to help me with your brothers."

"But don't you have to help Mrs. Dubberly?"

Momma put her hands on her hips. "*Henry*. Have you forgotten that Jonkonnu is today?"

Henry's eyes widened. How could he have forgotten? Jonkonnu! One of the few days of the year when his family didn't have to work! Yesterday was Christmas for the Dubberlys, and everyone had attended church. It had seemed like a very long day, and an even longer service. Today, though, was going to be special. Exciting, even! His mind raced, thinking of the dancing, the singing, and the penny candy he'd hopefully be lucky enough to catch.

Henry scrambled up the ladder and shook both Nelson and Burton hard until they woke up. Soon, all three boys were downstairs, eating corn meal mush for breakfast.

"Momma," said Burton, "When did Jonkonnu start? Did they have it when you were little?"

Momma stopped short for a second, then answered, "Jonkonnu's been around as long

A Note to Teachers

In each issue of *The Living History Classroom*, teachers will find articles, short stories, puzzles, and activities planned to help students explore North Carolina history and culture while utilizing observational and critical thinking, research, and discussion skills. This issue has been designed with the 4th-grade classroom in mind but may also assist parents at home or teachers of other grade levels. Listed below is a guide to show how each article and activity can align with the current 4th-grade North Carolina Standard Course of Study. To help you prepare, we also included the new standards that went into effect for the 2013-2014 school year. The exact goals met will vary based on how you choose to use the issue (e.g., group study, Internet research, writing essays).

Jonkonnu

CCSS 2012 ELA-Literacy – 4.1, 4.2, 4.3; Literacy-R.L. 4.2
NC ES 2012, 4th Grade Social Studies 4.C.1.1.

Blasts from the Past

CCSS 2012 ELA-Literacy. RI.4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4
NC ES 2012, 4th Grade Social Studies, 4.C.1.1.

Fingers to Forks, II

CCSS 2012 ELA-Literacy. RI.4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4
NC ES 2012, 4th Grade Social Studies 4.G.1.4, 4.E.1.1.

Turkeys

CCSS 2012 ELA-Literacy. RI.4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4
NC ES 2012, 4th Grade Social Studies 4.G.1.2

Civil War Holidays

CCSS 2012 ELA-Literacy. RI.4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4
NC ES 2012, 4th Grade Social Studies 4.H.1.3, 4.H.1.4

Twelve Days of Christmas

CCSS 2012 ELA-Literacy. RI.4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4
NC ES 2012, 4th Grade Social Studies 4.C.1.1.

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as I can remember. I never thought about it, to tell you the truth. How come you want to know?"

Burton wriggled a little. "I don't know, Momma, I just wondered—"

"Momma, where *is* Papa" said Henry, "if he doesn't have to be at the shop?"

"Why, he's—you didn't know?" No sooner had Momma spoken, but there was a shout outside the house and in walked Papa, dressed as fine as he could be.

"Papa, *you're* the Fancy Man this year!" yelled Henry and Burton joyfully.

"I sure am! Judy, are you and the boys ready?" Papa asked, brushing his gloves and adjusting his stove pipe hat. Henry could see Papa was very excited—but how could he not be? Playing the Fancy Man at Jonkonnu was a great honor.

"We sure are, Sam. *Aren't* we, boys?" Momma gave them all the "Look," but she smiled so they knew she wasn't really being stern.

"Then what are we waiting for?" Papa said, turning to the street. "Let's go!"

Papa headed out, his dress shoes squeaking. Momma followed after him, bouncing little Nelson on her hip. Nelson squalled a second later when Momma started shouting, "Jonkonnu! Jonkonnu is coming!" And as Momma shouted, other slaves, their friends and neighbors, ran from their houses and joined them, shouting with her. The procession grew, they heard drums, and then two men dressed in rags appeared.

Burton frowned, "Henry," he said, "those men look scary. Who are they?"

"They're the rag men. Momma said the rags represent friends and family who've died. When the rag men dance, those dead folks are dancing with the rest of us."

Momma had told Burton about the rag men

last year, too, but he'd only been five. Henry didn't expect him to remember.

But Papa was such a good "Fancy Man" that Henry kept forgetting he was also just Papa. He truly seemed born for the role with his strong, musical voice, plus he looked so distinguished in his elegant suit and hat. Papa led the singing, and had the growing crowd singing in no time at all. As they worked their way through the streets, Henry saw smiling faces peeping from windows and doorways; some even stood on their porches or steps and waved. Everyone seemed to enjoy the day—free or slaves, white or black.



The crowd stopped in front of Mr. Robert Hay's house. Henry saw Mr. Hay's two sons at the front window. He'd never spoken to them, but he knew their names were William and Robert because he'd helped Papa deliver harnesses to Hay's carriage shop. The front door opened and old Mr. Hay—older than Moses in the Bible—peered out, then carefully stepped onto his porch. The rest of the Hays crowded in the door and out the parlor windows.

Tryon Palace holds a special Jonkonnu celebration during Candlelight.

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Blasts from the Past: Gunpowder

When you close your eyes and think about the Fourth of July, some of your first thoughts might be of the bright colors and loud booms of fireworks: combustible rockets, sparklers, and firecrackers generated by gunpowder. Gunpowder, an explosive combination of potassium nitrate, charcoal, and sulfur, was invented over 2,000 years ago in Asia. What is it about loud sounds and bright lights that makes people so happy? For holiday merrymaking, the Chinese were packing gunpowder into tiny bamboo tubes for fireworks as early as 1200 AD, in addition to crafting wooden rockets (also packed with gunpowder) to repel their enemies. 13th-century Italian merchant and explorer Marco Polo—credited with bringing the noodles we now call “spaghetti” from the Far East—is also said to have brought gunpowder, in both festive and fighting forms, from China to Europe.

Americans have enjoyed these bright lights and booming sounds since early colonial times. We know that in this colony Governor Tryon had fireworks at the end of a ball celebrating the opening of his Palace in New Bern in 1770, and fireworks were lit annually in North Carolina and other colonies to celebrate the

Courtesy of the Library of Congress.



Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

King’s birthday. But independence from Britain made for greater displays of gunpowder’s effects. When New Bern’s citizens found out that fighting had stopped and America had won the Revolutionary War, they fired off cannons and guns and had a big party, complete with a pig-picking. In later years, New Bern’s Fourth of July and military celebrations included artillery salutes and fireworks. Among these brilliant explosives were sky rockets; multi-firing fireworks like the Caduceus that created a rising, swirling effect; and tamer fireworks like “crackers” and “marrons.” But not all official events involving fireworks or artillery went as planned. For example, on July 4, 1786, the Carteret County Courthouse in nearby Beaufort burned down when an artillery shell, shot off in celebration, headed in the wrong direction.

Presidents were more formally honored with guns and cannons. Both George Washington and James Monroe visited New Bern during their presidential terms, and were greeted with cheers and the sounds of rifles. When former

presidents Thomas Jefferson and John Adams died on the same day—July 4, 1826—New Bern, like many other towns, decided to honor these founding fathers by firing guns in a ceremonial salute for each year of their lives. As Thomas Jefferson was eighty-three and John Adams was ninety-four, the artillery salutes fortunately were scheduled a few days apart; otherwise townspeople's ears would have been ringing for days from 177 consecutive rounds!

Even festive occasions like the Fourth of July didn't always have fireworks, since fireworks were expensive and had to be imported. More people had guns and would fire them in the air during celebrations. In fact, Christmas in the South was typically celebrated by the firing of guns—often first thing in the morning! Sometimes, people couldn't wait until Christmas morn to start firing shots; on occasion, people remembered that shooting, setting off firecrackers, and general noisy merrymaking started at midnight on Christmas Eve! Even today, many people in North Carolina's rural communities fire rifles at midnight on New Year's Eve. Gunpowder was also used to mark other special occasions. New Bern usually announced when parades and circuses came to town with gun fire or cannons.

Today, guns and cannons are not used as much for celebrations as they used to be. But we still enjoy fireworks as much as our ancestors did! (Just remember that anything with gunpowder in it is dangerous, and be sure you are with a responsible adult whenever you're planning to enjoy fireworks or other festive blasts.)



Jonkonnu: A Slave's Christmas

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Papa, who had been jingling a few coins in a metal cup, stepped right up to the front porch.

Burton gasped and grabbed Henry's arm. "Papa's not supposed to do that! Servants have to go to the back of the house! Is he going to get in trouble?"

Henry grinned and answered, "Watch."

Papa jangled the cup as he went up the steps, singing.

"Old Mister Hay, now don't you know,"

The crowd sang back, *"Hello, somebody! Hello!"*

Papa smiled mischievously and sang, with almost a wink in his eye, *"He came from Scotland a long...loooonnng... time ago..."*

The crowd roared with laughter and answered, *"Hello, somebody! Hello!"*

The old carriage maker chuckled, shook his head, and dug into his pocket, pulling out a few coins and dropping them into the cup. Mr. Hay then shook Papa's hand, saying, "God bless you, Sam." Papa bowed to Mrs. Hay and then led the crowd away to the Dixons' house.

Burton tugged Henry's arm. "How come Papa didn't get in trouble?" Henry laughed, "Because it's Jonkonnu, silly! The world's turned on its head when Jonkonnu comes to town. Now, don't get too excited. Everything's back to normal tomorrow."

Burton bit his lip. "Henry, do you think there'll ever be a day when we can go to front doors and shake hands with people like Mr. Hay—and not get in trouble?"

Before Henry could answer, an old woman who was dancing beside them shook her head. "We can pray that happens one day, son. We can pray. For now, though, at least we've got Jonkonnu!"

NOTE: This account of Jonkonnu is fictional, although Henry, Judy, Burton, and Sam, along with Sacker Dubberly, were real people. There is evidence that Jonkonnu was celebrated in eastern North Carolina, although there is no present record of it having taken place in New Bern. We do know that Sam, his wife Judy, and their children escaped from New Bern in 1837, seeking freedom.

From Fingers to Forks



Sideboard with 19th-century tea service owned in the Robert Hay family. Tryon Palace Collection.

In our Spring 2013 installment of “From Fingers to Forks,” we looked at how the ways that people eat have changed over time. In early America, people went from eating mostly with their fingers in the early years of European settlement to using forks, spoons, and knives by the time of the Revolutionary War. We also talked about how **communal** dishes of pewter, leather, and wood were replaced over time by individual **place settings**, as new technologies made pottery and glassware cheaper and more widely available.

Dining Room, Tryon Palace.
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Photo by Winfield Ross



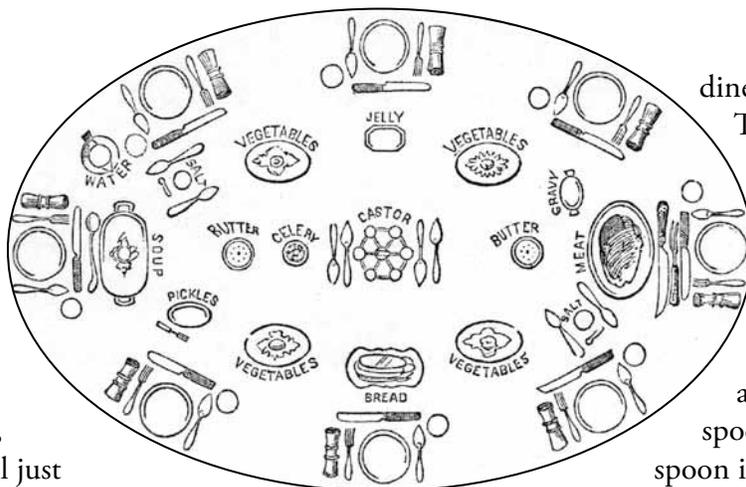
Here in Part Two: as **WHAT** Americans used for eating changed, so did **WHERE** they ate.

In the early 1700s, no American homes had rooms set aside **just** for dining. But as Americans could increasingly afford more and better plates, glasses, and utensils, these belongings had to be stored—and displayed—somewhere. After all, part of the buying spree was to keep up with your friends and neighbors by showing off your new dishes, forks, spoons, and teacups! So, as equipment used for dining increased, furniture like **sideboards** and **buffets** emerged to hold and display all of these items.

With the rise of dining-related furnishings, grander houses began to be designed with dining rooms. Two examples of how impressive these dining rooms could be can be found in Tryon Palace (or the “Government House”), built around 1770, and the 1780s New Bern home of wealthy merchant John Wright Stanly. Along with all kinds of china and glass, the Stanly House was furnished with at least a dozen mahogany dining chairs, a sideboard, and two dining tables, while Governor Tryon owned more than **two** dozen dining chairs!

Most North Carolinians, however, didn’t have a room just for dining until the mid-1800s—till then, people ate in any convenient

room, often the family parlor. But middle class citizens still bought elegant furniture and dishes for dining. New Bern craftsman Robert Hay, for example, didn't have a dining room in his home in 1816, but he owned a sideboard, mahogany table, "crochery" (or china) imported from England, and even "glassware." Not until just before the Civil War did rooms designated just for dining become truly common in American homes.



Godey's Lady's Book, 1859 place setting diagram.

diners completely bewildered.

This trend towards **specialized** equipment, which called for a particular fork, knife, or plate for almost every different kind of food, peaked in the second half of the 19th century. If you think setting a table with a fork, a knife, a spoon, a salad fork, *and* a dessert spoon is a lot of work, it's nothing compared to some of the table settings typical of the later 19th century, when there could be as many as 24 different pieces of silver at each place setting!

Meanwhile, the kinds of utensils and vessels people used for eating and drinking continued to multiply, creating a dining situation that would have had 17th- and 18th-century



18th-century buffet or china cabinet, Roanoke River Valley, NC. Tryon Palace Collection.

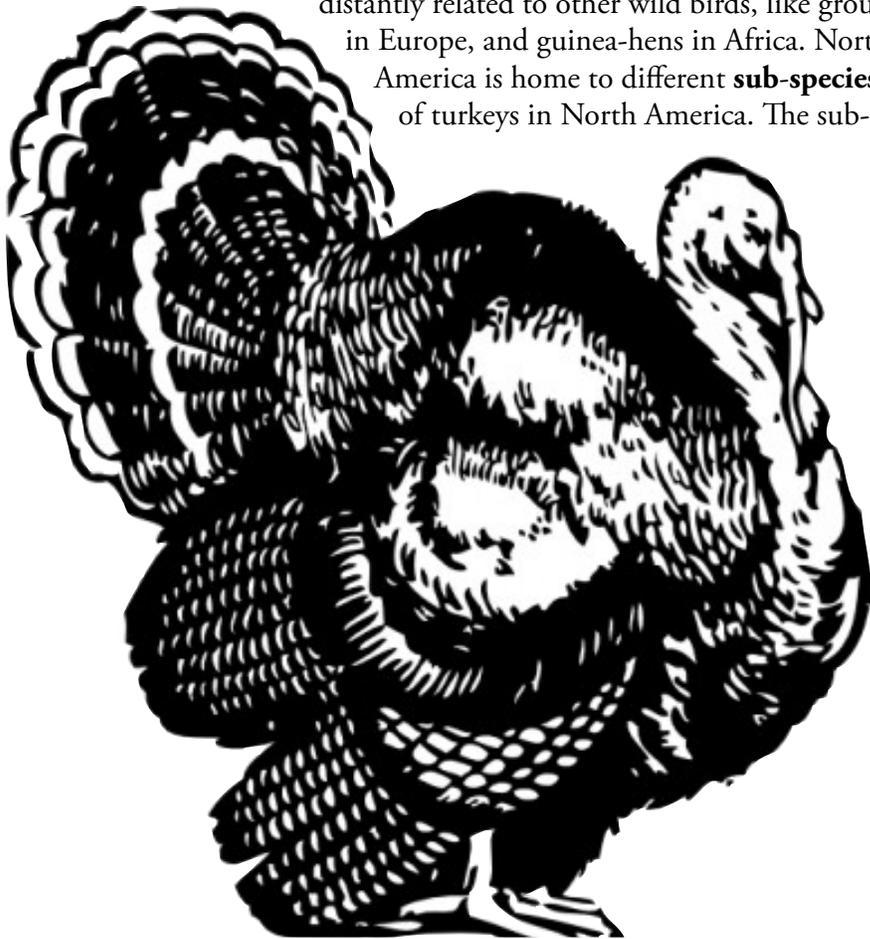
This push toward more specialized silverware, dishes, and glassware had its roots in the rise of factories in the mid-19th century, where new methods of **mass-producing** objects were perfected, aided by thousands of **assembly line** workers. Glass-pressing machines, whose products mimicked the look of hand-cut crystal, put affordable glassware on the tables of many Americans, while **electroplating**—the discovery of how to cover or "plate" inexpensive metals with a thin silver coating by using a low electric current—allowed many modest households to own gleaming silverware for the first time in history. Furthermore, steamships and railroads made the transportation of goods faster and cheaper than had sailing ships and horse-drawn wagons. As a result, industry thrived and a prosperous middle class emerged, ushering in a dramatic change in how Americans ate. As the United States became one of the wealthiest nations in the world, America's natural abundance was symbolized and celebrated in a vast new array of household goods embraced by her growing population.

Some people at polite society's upper end, however, did not like that "common" people could now own and use practically the same goods as those of more established wealth and breeding, even if the common folks' goods were mass-produced instead of being made by craftsmen. One way these "old money" types maintained the boundary between themselves and the up-and-coming was to make the dining ritual ever more elaborate and specialized, with new rules of behavior, and new and complicated forms of silverware and china that took more knowledge to use: special forks for oysters, fish, strawberries, cold meat, olives,

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The Festive Turkey, Our Native Bird

What would Thanksgiving be without turkeys? The two go hand-in-hand, especially because Thanksgiving is a uniquely American holiday, and turkeys themselves are uniquely American birds. Turkeys are native to North America and their ancestors were happily gobble-gobbling and roaming the countryside as far back as 5 million years ago! They are distantly related to other wild birds, like grouses in Europe, and guinea-hens in Africa. North America is home to different **sub-species** of turkeys in North America. The sub-



species we recognize as our own wild turkey—chestnut-tipped feathers, massive bulk, and red **wattled** head—can be found in the eastern United States to just west of the Mississippi River.

Native Americans in Mexico realized centuries before 1492 that the funny-looking birds waddling around their villages were tasty treats; over time, they not only tamed these wild fowl but also dedicated two religious holidays in their honor. Given that male turkeys, or “toms,” can weigh 20 pounds or more, this clearly made for some happy celebrating! When Christopher Columbus and other Spanish explorers showed

up in Mexico, they quickly took notice of this “peacock with great hanging chins,” called *huexolotl* by the **Aztecs**; by 1502, shiploads of “ugly peacocks” were headed from Mexico to Spain and other European cities.

Routes throughout Europe being what they were, turkeys were called different names in different countries, probably depending upon from where the fowls were shipped. The French terms for turkey, “dinde” and “dindon,” are said to come from *coq d’Inde*—an earlier French name for turkeys; whether the French meant the country of India or the West Indies is not clear. In England, the term “turkey-cock,” then eventually “turkey,” was assigned to the new bird from America. One reason for this may be due to its resemblance to guinea-hens, also called “turkey-cocks” in the 1400s due to their being brought to Europe from Africa by way of Turkey and other Middle Eastern port cities.

The turkey became much valued in Europe as a feasting bird, and gave the goose a run for its money as the most popular bird to eat during the Christmas holidays. People also bred them, especially in the East Anglia region of England, where so many of the Pilgrims lived before moving to Holland, then America, to freely practice their religious beliefs. In fact, it is likely that live turkeys were among the *Mayflower’s* cargo.

So, in a twist of fate, descendants of the turkeys shipped away from Mexico by the Spanish explorers returned to America nearly 120 years later, when the Pilgrims landed in Massachusetts. Unfortunately, it’s not clear that the domesticated turkeys survived the voyage or the first year of settlement. But the Pilgrims discovered plenty of wild turkeys in Massachusetts’ woodlands, and they quickly became a part of the local diet.

At the turn of the 18th century, wild turkeys remained abundant in America, especially in North Carolina’s forests. New Bern’s explorer and naturalist John Lawson described “great flocks of these in Carolina,” some flocks well over 500 birds. Although he never actually saw

the 60-pound turkey described by other settlers, Lawson did offer that “I have seen half a Turkey feed eight hungry Men two Meals.”

After the Revolution, Benjamin Franklin made a humorous argument for the turkey becoming the United States’ mascot, versus the bald eagle:

in Truth the Turky is in comparison a much more respectable bird, and withal a true original native of America.... He is, (though a little vain and silly, it is true, but not the worse emblem for that,) a Bird of Courage, and would not hesitate to attack a grenadier of the British Guards, who should presume to invade his Farm Yard with a red Coat on.

Since the 18th century, turkeys have become a bird not just eaten at Thanksgiving or Christmas. Nowadays, they can be had year-round, thanks to the large turkey farming industry. At the turn of the 20th-century, due to their habitat being taken by farms and towns, plus over-hunting, wild turkeys were in danger of becoming extinct. Happily, turkeys have made a comeback, thanks to conservation measures taken in the 1950s and 1960s. Maybe someday, when you’re traveling on back country

Native Americans in Mexico realized centuries before 1492 that the funny-looking birds waddling around their villages were tasty treats; over time, they not only tamed these wild fowl but also dedicated two religious holidays in their honor.

roads, you’ll see a big “Tom Turkey” and his flock flying across a road, roosting in trees, or wandering through the woods, if you haven’t already!

Vocabulary

Aztecs: A civilization in Central Mexico of Native Americans, or Amerindians, that reached its peak in the late 15th century, at the time that Spain was exploring the North and South American continents.

Sub-species: a variation of the same species, usually due to geographic isolation. For example, there are different sub-species of wild turkeys in Florida and in Mexico.

Wattle: This refers to the fleshy, wrinkled, bright red or pink fold of skin hanging from certain fowls’ necks or throats, seen with turkeys and chickens.

From Fingers to Forks

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ice cream, and lettuce (then a newly popular food), as well as spoons for oranges, knives for ice cream, and tongs for asparagus. As a result, fancy dining in the Victorian era became extremely formal and intimidating.

Today we would find all of that formality very old-fashioned. We use our hands to eat all kinds of things—sandwiches, pizza, French fries, tacos—and we’ve adopted other cultures’ utensils, like chopsticks, to eat certain foods. On the other hand, we may be more like our Victorian ancestors than we imagine. Think back to those English colonists at Roanoke Island. Can you imagine eating chili with your bare hands instead of in a bowl ... and sharing your plate and cup with your sister or brother??

Vocabulary

Communal: shared; used by a group.

Place Settings: The plate and accompanying silverware, napkin, and glasses for each person at a table.

Sideboard: a flat-topped piece of furniture with cupboards and drawers, placed along a wall and used for storing dishes, glasses, and table linen.

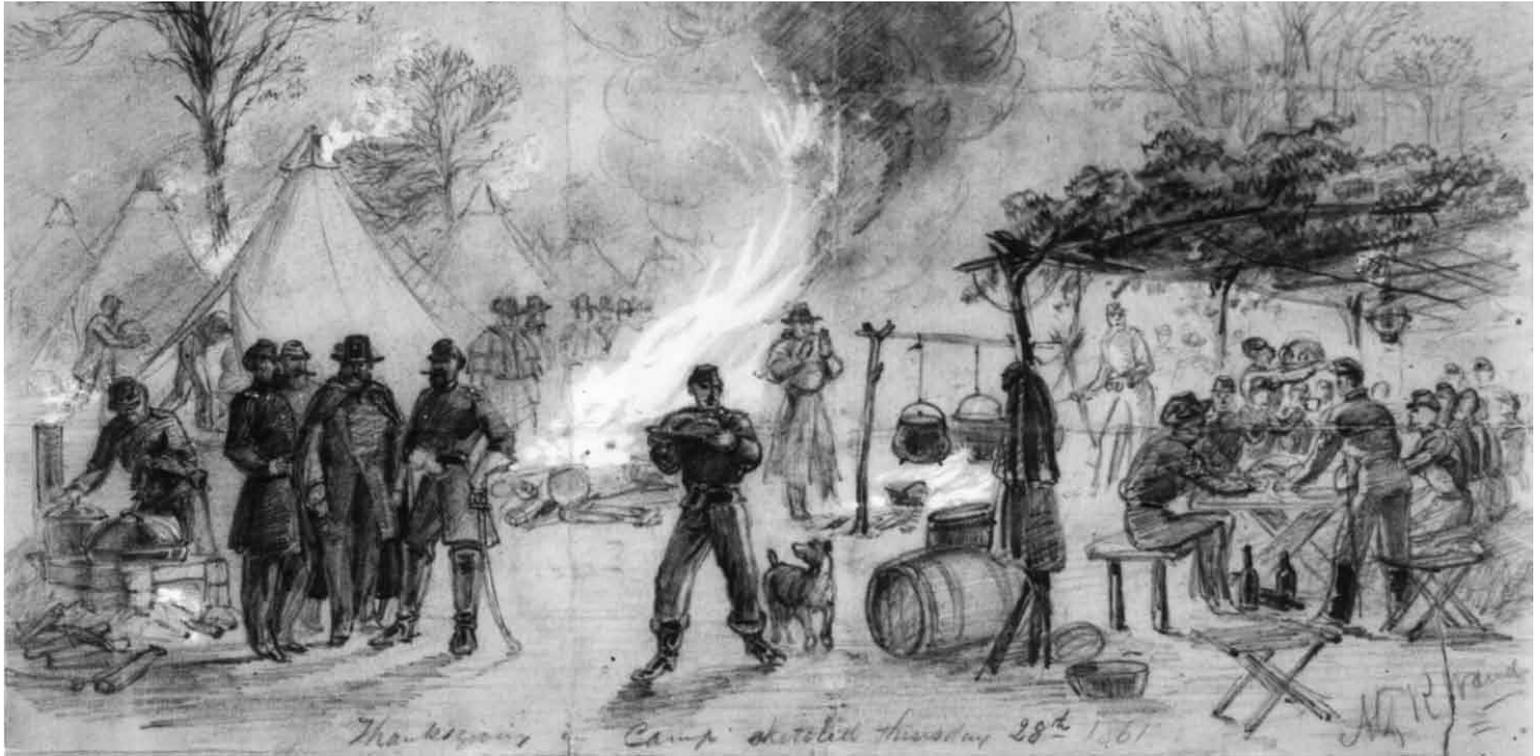
Buffet: a piece of furniture to hold dishes and table linens; sometimes called “bowfat” in early America.

Specialized: Designed to have a specific or special function.

Mass production: the manufacture of goods in large quantities by automated processes

Assembly line: A system of multiple workers, where each worker has a specific task for completing an unfinished object.

Electroplating: The process of covering or “plating” inexpensive metals with a thin silver coating by using a low electric current.



"Thanksgiving in camp sketched Thursday 28th 1861," Alfred R. Waud. *Courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

"We had no Christmas": Civil War Holidays

During the Civil War, Union soldiers invaded Elizabeth City, New Bern, and Beaufort, North Carolina, to occupy this state's coastal ports. These temporary "guests" came from as far away as New Hampshire and even Iowa. North Carolina was no home for them, especially during wartime: for most soldiers, tents, cots, army bread, and marching drills took the place of comfortable homes, cozy beds, familiar foods, and favorite pastimes.

Union soldiers were not the only people who felt out of sorts. Both **native** troops and civilians also felt wartime's hardships and the loss of "home," even when in their home state. Confederate soldiers, some from eastern North Carolina regiments, were constantly on the move. Some North Carolinians stayed in these towns during the war, but others moved inland. Lavinia Cole Roberts had lived all her life in New Bern, but escaped when the city fell into Union hands. Afterwards, Mrs. Roberts refused to call New Bern "home" since the people she had known and places that had been safe and familiar, all the things that make a place feel like home, had changed so much.

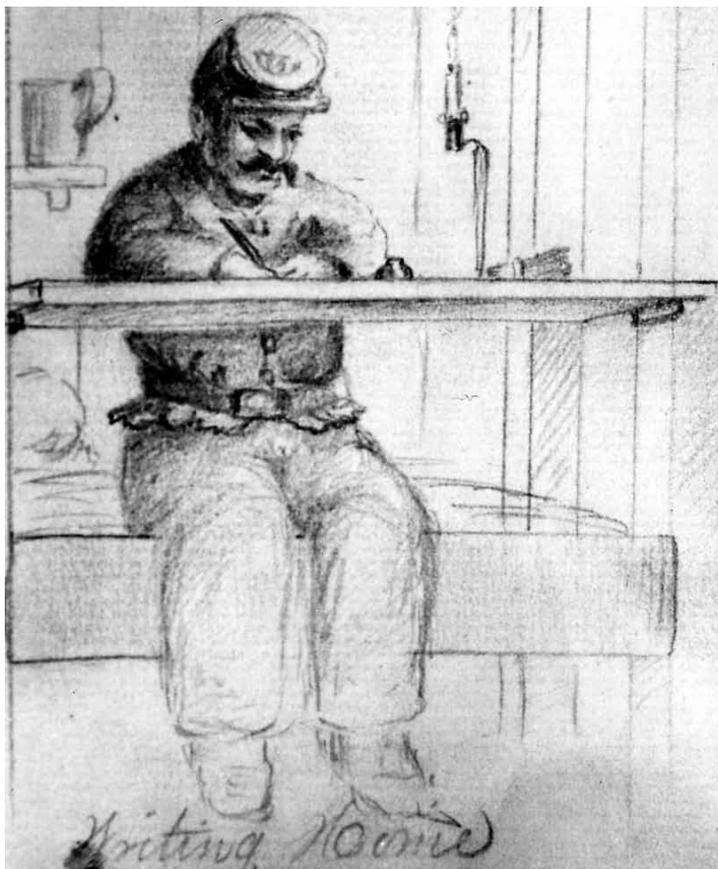
In this light, holidays for both Confederate and Union soldiers were often lonely and frustrating.

Customs and treats, the things that make a holiday a "holiday," were not always possible. They missed traditions like Fourth of July picnics, or reading stories about St. Nicholas on Christmas Eve, not to mention dreaming of scrumptious family recipes made only for special occasions. Even gift-giving was difficult to maintain. One man with the 5th Massachusetts Volunteer Militia wrote that it seemed as though every soldier received a Christmas box from his mother, with everything spoiled during the mailing except walnuts and cake. He further described Christmas Day as uneventful and boring! Similarly, John Hedrick, a U.S. Treasury Department official stationed in Beaufort, made only one tiny mention of the holiday. In a letter to his brother, otherwise full of discussion about politics, Hedrick wrote simply, "I think to-day has been a very nice Christmas."

Confederates posted in eastern North Carolina told a similar tale. Writing to his father from Camp Long in Northampton County, William C. Hadley focused on his immediate circumstances with, "Christmas has been a dull week with us on account of sickness, suffering and death in the camp." In 1862, another Confederate soldier wrote, "We had no Christmas." Captain

William Burgwyn spent a depressing Christmas in 1864 as a prisoner of war. He received a double ration of bread in honor of the holiday but, though thankful for being alive and well, admitted that his Christmas was nothing in comparison to the previous year “decking the house” with his family.

Fortunately, not all soldiers were quite so glum during holidays. In spite of being so far away from home, many Union and Confederate soldiers tried to celebrate special occasions. Some observed the holidays in small ways, like writing a letter home or, when possible, taking time to do something relaxing. Others tried to recreate normal features of their former holidays. For example, Private Henry Clapp, who was stationed with the 44th Massachusetts Volunteer Militia in New Bern, determined with his militia regiment to have as traditional a Thanksgiving as possible. Clapp helped purchase 25 turkeys for the feast, and he and his comrades also dined on oyster soup, vegetables, sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, and apples and raisins. Besides this grand Thanksgiving



“Writing Home,” pencil sketch by Fred W. Smith, New Bern, NC, c. 1862-1863. Tryon Palace Collection.

Lavinia Cole Roberts: A Confederate Christmas in 1864

Although Warren County, NC, was far from her New Bern home, Mrs. Roberts made sure that the holiday season was as cheerful as possible for all:

On Christmas Eve the children, white and black, brought evergreens and berries from the woods to decorate the parlor, making it a bower of fragrance and beauty. I had been so fortunate as to obtain tallow enough to fill a set of tallow moulds. So, for my Christmas illumination I had twelve elegant [dipped candles], an improvement on a lightwood torch. I found twelve empty bottles to serve as candlesticks. These I had among the evergreens. The stockings were hung “by the chimney with care,” and Santa came! Verily and truly he had come, for the children had covered the hearth with sand, and there on the sand were traces of his sleigh and the prints of the reindeers’ feet.

dinner, complete with holly decorations, the men had toasts and speeches before and after the feast.

Private Clapp celebrated Christmas in similar style. On Christmas Eve, he heard a reading of Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*, and the following morning, “adorned” himself with his “gayest apparel”—that is, his best suit of clothes. His company’s Christmas dinner was roast duck, chickens, a turkey, potatoes, squash, cabbage, onions, beets, cranberry sauce, apple-sauce, and plum pudding. The following day, Clapp received a “Christmas box” from his family, which “arrived together with a vast number of others for the regiment and company.” Included in the box were a pair of gloves; stockings; paper, pens, and ink; and home-baked goodies like preserved figs and pickles. Many extended family members contributed additional gifts and letters to his box.

Soldiers also celebrated the Fourth of July. John Hedrick describes sailing from Beaufort to Shackleford Beach for an Independence Day gathering with over 400 African-American picnickers. “[T]hey seemed to enjoy themselves very well,” Hedrick wrote of the crowd. “They had singing, speaking, promenading and cheering for the Union cause and officers, and groaning for the Confederates.” Another soldier, Henry Thompson of the Connecticut 15th Infantry, described the holiday in camp. “I had for breakfast, **salt horse**, & for dinner clear boiled ham without anything else.” Dissatisfied with his dinner, Thompson ventured into New Bern for a better treat, “a pie, a glass of soda water, & a plate of ice cream.”

These soldiers attempted to recreate traditions and festivities from their pre-war lives, but war’s very nature prohibited a completely satisfactory experience. Many observed the holidays, but admitted that it just wasn’t the same. Private Henry Bowen, a Confederate Navy officer from Washington

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On the Twelfth Day of Christmas

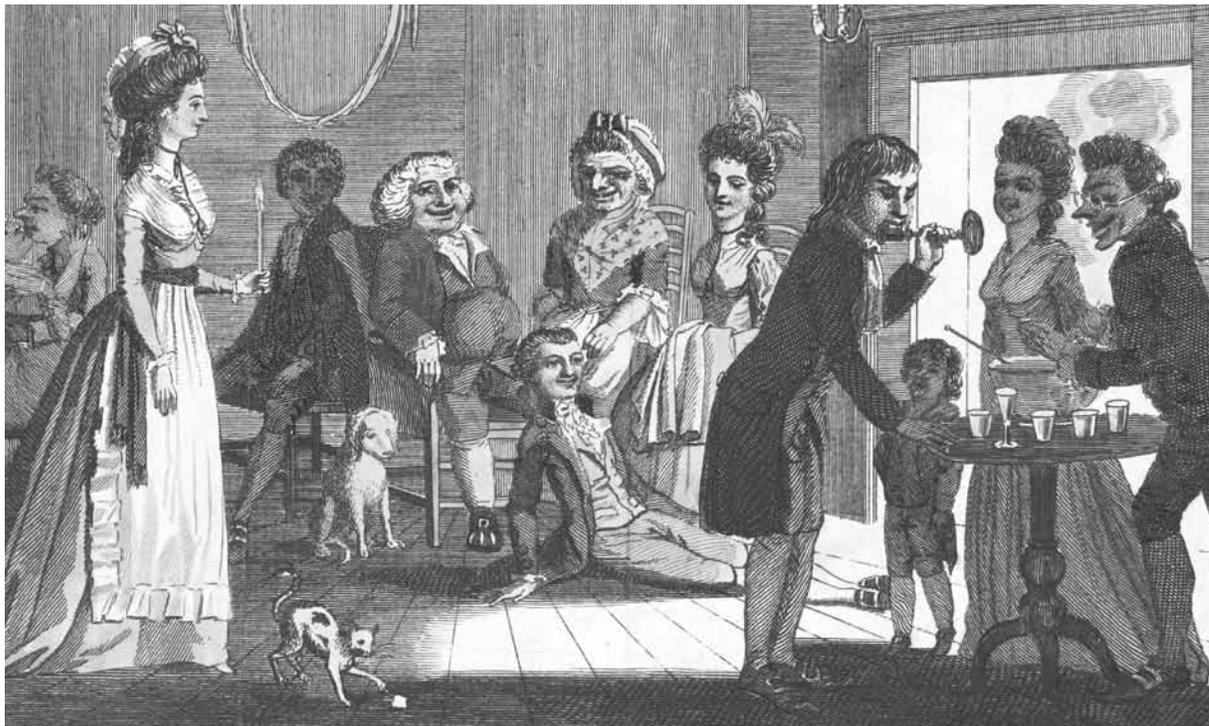
“On the twelfth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...”

Have you ever heard this Christmas carol and wondered how somebody could be lucky enough to have twelve whole days of Christmas, when the rest of us only get one day? Back in the 18th century, Christmas officially began on the evening of December 24th with the next day being the first full day of the season. But the season didn't stop there; it continued for eleven more days! In Christianity, December 25th is the day Jesus' birth is commemorated,

One superstition that your parents or grandparents might remember was the belief that sheets and pillowcases shouldn't be washed between Christmas Day and “Old Christmas,” or there would be bad luck in the family!

and January 6th (sometimes called “Old Christmas”) marks **Epiphany**, the day the gift-bearing Three Wise Men finally arrived for their colorful visit. This final day of the Twelve Days of Christmas combines the religious celebration of Epiphany, and the festive evening of “Twelfth Night.”

“Christmas Gambols,”
handcolored engraving,
London, 1785. Tryon
Palace Collection.



Many changes have occurred over the past 300 years in how these traditionally lively Twelve Days of Christmas are celebrated, or if they are celebrated at all. For instance, December 25th wasn't always the gift-filled bonanza many know today; in the 18th and early 19th centuries, most people spent much of Christmas Day in church. Early Americans exchanged few, if any, gifts.

The day after Christmas is known as Boxing Day. When first hearing the name, many might think this has something to do with the sport, but it actually began as a day for charity. On

Boxing Day, if you could afford to do so, you “boxed” old clothing, blankets, and similar items to give to the poor.

This was often the day that masters would give their servants small presents, a little money, or new clothes for the year. The clothes might be hand-me-downs from the family, and were usually not a whole wardrobe, but maybe one

outfit to be worn in cold weather and another for warmer weather. Such presents were often referred to as a “Christmas Box” even if they didn't come in a box. Servants especially enjoyed Boxing Day because they often had the day off from work or at least had fewer chores. Boxing Day is still celebrated in England and in

parts of the Caribbean, but is now much more fun for everyone.

New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, and Twelfth Night were three other holidays within the Twelve Days of Christmas. While most of the holidays (remember, this is a **contraction** of “holy” and “days”) were spent in church or in giving to others, New Year's and Twelfth Night were all about dancing, games, visiting friends,

and fun in general. New Year’s was a recent addition to the twelve days, since for centuries England had followed the Julian calendar, which celebrated the New Year on March 25. But in 1752, when Great Britain officially adopted the Gregorian calendar, January 1 was within the twelve days between Christmas Eve and Epiphany.

Twelfth Night, the last big celebration of **Yuletide**, was often the biggest party event of the twelve-day season. While we often take down our Christmas decorations right after New Year’s Day, tradition held that it was bad luck to take down decorations before Twelfth Night. One superstition that your parents or grandparents might remember was the belief that sheets and pillowcases shouldn’t be washed between Christmas Day and “Old Christmas,” or there would be bad luck in the family!

The biggest tradition of a Twelfth Night party was the Twelfth Night cake, followed by crowning a king and queen for the evening. Typically, the Twelfth Night cake, usually a large fruitcake with a hard sugary icing, was baked with a bean and a pea inside of it. According to tradition, the man who received the slice of cake with the bean in it became “king” and could command obedience from his fellow revelers until midnight. He would also have to host the next year’s party. If a woman received the pea in her slice of cake, she was “queen” for the evening and would make the cake the following year. Other traditions were also observed—for instance, if a woman found the bean, she was able to choose the king. This tradition continues in parts of Louisiana and the Gulf Coast with the “King Cake.”

Other Twelfth Night traditions included games like Forfeits, an early version of “Truth or Dare.” Guests had to do silly tasks like answer a riddle, recite poetry, sing a funny song, or kiss another party guest. Some believe that the Christmas carol “The Twelve Days of Christmas” started off as a forfeit where a party guest had to remember exactly how many lords were leaping and drummers drumming as other guests called out new lines for them to remember!



Twelfth Night Cake.



Old Christmas is celebrated on the Outer Banks with ‘Old Buck’ and drummers, like this female drummer in Rodanthe. *Image courtesy of the Outer Banks History Center.*

So when the December holidays begin—when you hear the “Twelve Days of Christmas” on TV, while you Christmas shop,

or maybe even while singing it with friends and family—remember these old traditions. You can even bring some of them back! Recite poetry with your family on a cold winter’s night, choose a king and queen at Christmas dinner, leave your decorations up until after Twelfth Night, or box up your old clothes and donate them to charity on Boxing Day. Whatever your tradition, have a wonderful holiday season!

Vocabulary

Epiphany: The Christian celebration of the three wise men (“Magi”)’s discovery of Jesus.

Contraction: A shortened form of a word, or group of words, ranging from “it’s” instead of “it is,” to “holidays” for “holy days.”

Yuletide: A name for the twelve days of Christmas with ancient roots. “Yule” was a Northern European term for midwinter

festivals celebrated in the centuries before Christianity. Many features from the earlier Yule are found in our current holidays, from greenery and Christmas trees, to “Yule logs.”

Featured Programs

SEPTEMBER

Saturday, September 28,
9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Fall Family Day

Regular Admission

Families of all ages can enjoy interactive crafts and activities. Different ticket options available for tours of the North Carolina History Center, the Governor's Palace, and our historic homes as well. Bring your picnic lunch and spend time immersed in the past. Activities are designed for school-age children; some activities have a minimum age requirement. No advance registration needed.

Saturday, September 28,
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Tryon Palace Teacher's Day

Free admission to teachers and discounted admission for immediate family members

Explore history at Tryon Palace by being engaged in innovative and interactive programming that opens the past for children and adults to discover and learn. Teachers and their families are welcome to be a part of history by attending Teacher's Day and taking this opportunity to explore the museums, learn more about our educational programs, and discover how our site can help you link Common Core State Standards to your classroom. Complimentary One Day Pass includes access to the Governor's Palace, the North Carolina History Center, gardens, and our historic homes. Bring your picnic lunch and spend time immersed in the past. Activities are designed for school-age children; some activities have a minimum age requirement. No advance registration needed. For questions regarding Teacher's Day, please contact Matthew Arthur, Acting Director of Educational Services, at matthew.arthur@ncdcr.gov, or 252-639-3587.

OCTOBER

Wednesday, October 9,
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Tryon's Tales for Tots: School Days North Carolina History Center, Education Classroom

\$6 per child with one accompanying adult free; additional adults \$6. Included with regular admission; Ages 3-5, with parental accompaniment.

You're never too young for history! Pre-schoolers and parents will visit the New Bern Academy and learn what it was like to go to school in 19th

century New Bern. Tots will be able to decorate their own slates that they can take home. *Space is limited to 20 children. To reserve your child's spot, please call (252) 639-3500. Extra openings will be filled the day of the event on a first come, first served basis. This program is designed for individual families. If you are a preschool teacher interested in bringing a group for a program, please contact our Group Services Coordinator at (252) 639-3524 for more information.*

Friday, October 11 and
Saturday, October 12

MUM'S the Word!

Gardens open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday. FREE Garden Admission, Interior tours require the purchase of a ticket.

During Mumfest Weekend, visitors to Tryon Palace will enjoy the beauty of thousands of chrysanthemums in the Palace gardens. Free informal garden tours will be given each day. Tryon Palace's Fall Heritage Plant sale will be held during this time, as well. Contact: 252-639-3500 or www.tryonpalace.org.

NOVEMBER

Monday, November 11,
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Defending New Bern: 300 Years of Stewardship

Free admission for all active duty and military veterans with the presentation of their military ID, with discounted admission for immediate family members.

A special salute to the military men and women who have defended eastern North Carolina for over three centuries!

Wednesday, November 13,
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Tryon's Tales for Tots: A Civil War Thanksgiving North Carolina History Center, Education Classroom

\$6 per child with one accompanying adult free; additional adults \$6. Included with regular admission. Ages 3-5, with parental accompaniment.

You're never too young for history! Pre-schoolers and parents will learn about Thanksgiving in Union-occupied New Bern during the Civil War by visiting the Hay House and helping to make a recipe on its 19th-century wood stove.

Space is limited to 20 children. To reserve your

child's spot, please call (252) 639-3500. Extra openings will be filled the day of the event on a first come, first served basis. This program is designed for individual families. If you are a preschool teacher interested in bringing a group for a program, please contact our Groups Services Coordinator at (252) 639-3524 for more information.

Saturday, November 16 –
Sunday, November 17

Civil War Weekend: James City and the participation of Colored Troops in New Bern.

Contact www.tryonpalace.org. in November for updated information.

Thursday, November 21, 7:00 p.m.

"High on the Hog: A Culinary Journey from Africa to America"

**Guest Speaker: Jessica Harris
North Carolina History Center,
Cullman Performance Hall**

Free Admission

Acclaimed cookbook author Jessica B. Harris has spent much of her life researching the food and foodways of the African Diaspora. Presented by the Tryon Palace African American Lecture Series, *High on the Hog*, the culmination of years of work, is a most engaging history of African American cuisine. Harris takes the reader on a harrowing journey from Africa across the Atlantic to America, chronicling the trials that the people and the food have undergone along the way. From chitlins and ham hocks to fried chicken and vegan soul food, Harris celebrates the delicious and restorative foods of the African American experience. Although the story of African cuisine in America begins with slavery, *High on the Hog* ultimately chronicles a thrilling history of triumph and survival, filling an important gap in our culinary history.

Special devices are also available for guests with hearing difficulties, and should be requested at least 48 hours in advance of the performance. For additional information about the 2013 African American Lecture Series call Sharon C. Bryant at 252-639-3592.

This event continues the yearlong theme at Tryon Palace of *Fresh from the Past: Food and Culture in Eastern North Carolina*. From Southern fare to tea time, we encourage you to browse our calendar for other related events.

Thursday, November 28

Tryon Palace is closed in honor of Thanksgiving.

Friday, November 29 - Sunday,
December 1, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00
p.m., Friday - Saturday and
1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Sunday

Festive Holiday Kick-Off Weekend

Join us as we kick off the holiday season on Thanksgiving weekend. Christmas decorations are up in the North Carolina History Center, Governor's Palace, and in our three historic houses. Special performances, craft activities, and holiday tours officially launch us into the Christmas season. Check back later at www.tryonpalace.org for specific performance and activity information.

DECEMBER

Tuesday, December 10

Fresh from the Past: Movie Night Chocolat

Tryon Palace Waystation

Showing: 7:00pm, Seating 6:30pm

Tickets: Free Admission, donations recommended

When a single mother and her six-year-old daughter move to rural France and open a chocolate shop - with Sunday hours - across the street from the local church, they are met with some skepticism. But as soon as they coax the townspeople into enjoying their delicious products, they are warmly welcomed.

Seating for this film is first-come, first-served.

This event continues the yearlong theme at Tryon Palace of *Fresh from the Past: Food and Culture in Eastern North Carolina*.

Wednesday, December 11,
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Tryon's Tales for Tots: The Twelve Days of Christmas

North Carolina History Center, Education Classroom

\$6 per child with one accompanying adult free; additional adults \$6. Included with regular admission. Ages 3-5, with parental accompaniment.

You're never too young for history! Pre-schoolers and parents will visit the John W. Stanly house and learn how the Stanly family celebrated Christmas. Pre-schoolers will play a popular game of the season and decorate miniature edible Twelfth Night cakes.

Space is limited to 20 children. To reserve your child's spot, please call (252) 639-3500. Extra openings will be filled the day of the event on a first come, first served basis. This program is designed for individual families. If you are a preschool teacher interested in bringing a group for a program, please contact our Groups Services Coordinator at (252) 639-3524 for more information.

Saturday, December 14, 5:00 p.m. -
9:00 p.m. (first Candlelight of 2013)

Saturday, December 21, 5:00 p.m. -
9:00 p.m. (second and final Candlelight
of 2013)

Christmas Candlelight: Seasons of Delight: A Candlelight Masquerade

Tickets will be sold for specific tour time slots and are good for evening activities, only.

Experience a full year of enchantment in a single

night with "Seasons of Delight: A Candlelight Masquerade." Held on the Saturdays of Dec. 14 and 21, this 18th-century candlelit celebration will surprise Tryon Palace visitors with a new perspective on holidays past and present. Be carried away with costumed performers, magicians, daring feats of skill and agility, dancing and a rare glimpse of the Governor's Palace by candlelight.

This year it is the eve of Revolution, and the world is topsy-turvy as the Governor's Palace is transformed for the holidays into a vivid tableau of the four seasons. Governor Josiah Martin welcomes guests to a grand masquerade ball, where winter follows summer, autumn yields to spring, and Jack Frost might dance the minuet with the Queen of the Harvest under a snowy sky. Join the music, dancing, and revelry on a candlelit tour through the Palace and the Kitchen Office. Entertainment continues all across the historic site and gardens with acrobatics, agility and magic inspired by the 18th century, as well as the traditional Jonkonnu celebration of music and dancing just outside the Palace gates.

As always, our Candlelight celebration comes to a spectacular end each night with black powder fireworks on the South Lawn. This rare combination of waterfront views, the historic Governor's Palace and the illumination of fireworks is truly one of the most beautiful and exciting holiday events in all of Eastern North Carolina.

Tuesday, December 24 -
Thursday, December 26

Tryon Palace is closed in honor of the Christmas Holidays.

Civil War Holidays

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County, N.C., wrote to his family, "[W]ith me it would be Christmas if I was at home," encouraging them to "eat my part of the good things" since he would not be there to indulge. Charles C. Mosher of the 85th New York Infantry wrote in his journal: "Merry Christmas. On picket, Washington road, **outpost**. We ordered our dinner early. It came down to us at noon. . . .roast pig, chicken, turkey, goose, sweet potato pie, fruit cake...a big dinner... There was firing on the line

last night." Other holidays were equally wistful. In 1864, John Hedrick wrote, "Yesterday was Thanksgiving Day but I did not get any Turkey." One man with the 5th Massachusetts noted that "April 1st brought the usual amount of All Fools' pranks," but tempered the fun and games by adding that "the sound of cannonading towards the north indicated the siege in progress at Washington (N.C.)."

At such times, thoughts drifted toward home. One man summed up the experience for many: "So far as records go, the first day of the New Year was

not an exciting one in Newbern.... though every man wished his comrades a Happy New Year," he concluded, they all silently wished "that they might be at home for the opening of the next year."

Vocabulary

Native: The place where a person was born, or where a particular thing came into being.

Salt Horse: salted meat or fish, usually a reference to corned beef.

Outpost: a military station set apart from a town or fort to repel enemy soldiers.

Gingerbread Cookies

In colonial times, Americans preferred loaf gingerbread while the English preferred gingerbread cookies. Because there was no baking soda in the 1700s as we know it today, these cookies are lighter than what an 18th-century cookie lover would expect!

People were also very fond of lemon zest in their gingerbread, as can be seen in many 18th-century recipes. For those who don't want to slice fingertips using a zester, try lemon extract instead

Makes 5 dozen cookies

- 1 cup white sugar
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 cup butter, melted
- 1/2 cup evaporated milk
- 1 cup unsulfured molasses
- 3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3/4 teaspoon lemon extract
- 4 cups unbleached all-purpose flour



1. Preheat oven to 375F degrees. Lightly grease cookie sheets.
2. In a large bowl, stir together the sugar, ginger, nutmeg, cinnamon, salt, and baking soda. Mix in the melted butter, evaporated milk, molasses, vanilla, and lemon extracts. Stir in the flour, 1 cup at a time, mixing well after each addition. The dough should be stiff enough to handle without sticking to fingers. If necessary, increase flour by up to 1/2 cup to prevent sticking.
3. When the dough is smooth, roll it out to 1/4 inch thick on a floured surface, and, using cookie cutters, cut into cookies. Place cookies on the prepared cookie sheets.
4. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes in the preheated oven. The cookies are done when the top springs back when touched. Remove from cookie sheets to cool on wire racks.

Additional Reading

Here are suggestions for additional readings and resources that can be used to complement this *Living History Classroom's* articles and activities.

Lucy London Anderson. *North Carolina Women of the Confederacy*. Fayetteville, NC: United Daughters of the Confederacy, 1926. Reprinted by Winoca Press, Wilmington, NC 2006. This compilation of stories about life during the Civil War includes Lavinia Cole Roberts' reminiscence of Christmas Day 1864, partially reprinted in this issue.

Diana Karter Applebaum. *Thanksgiving: An American Holiday, An American History*. New York: Facts on File Publications, 1984. ISBN 0871969742.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology (Cornell University). "All About Birds: The Wild Turkey." http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/wild_turkey/lifehistory

Andrew G. Gardner. "A Much More Respectable Bird... a Bird of Courage': A Short History of the Turkey." *Colonial Williamsburg Journal*, Autumn 2006. <http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/holiday06/turkeys.cfm>

Jack Larkin. *The Reshaping of Everyday Life, 1790-1840*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988. ISBN 0060159057

Tina Lee. *Manners To Grow On*. New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1955

Amy Little sugar and Ian Schoenherr. *Jonkonnu*. New York: Philomel Books, 1997. ISBN 978-0399228315. This book is based upon a real story, and tells the event from a young African American's viewpoint. One of America's most famous 19th-century painters, Winslow Homer, was in Virginia after the Civil War, where he painted *Dressing for the Carnival*, a Jonkonnu-

related depiction that is now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Stephen Nissenbaum. *The Battle for Christmas*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997. A fascinating book that describes how this holiday changed in the 18th and 19th-centuries.

Lucille Recht Penner. *The Thanksgiving Book*. New York: Hastings House, 1986. ISBN 0803872283

Irene Smalls. *Irene Jennie and the Christmas Masquerade: The Johnkankus*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1996. ISBN: 0316798789.

Susan Williams, *Savory Suppers and Fashionable Feasts: Dining in Victorian America* New York: Pantheon Books, 1985. ISBN 03944545710