

Persons of Stature and the Passing Parade: Egalitarian Dilemmas at Monticello and Colonial Williamsburg

Eric Gable and Richard Handler

It is well known that American citizens are immune to self-reflection when it comes to social class, just as American scholars shy away from analytic reflection on it. On the other hand, Americans love to talk about “identity,” and are seemingly expert in parsing its dimensions—national, regional, racial, ethnic, generational, religious, sexual. Indeed, features of social location and personhood that sociologists once routinely associated with class, such as “lifestyle” (or consumption patterns), educational attainments, and occupation, are more likely to be understood by contemporary Americans as markers of personal identity than as consequences of social forces. Identity is the central concept of American natives’ social theory because it pictures personhood as a function of individual choice. The social cohesion that identity generates is understood to be natural and automatic (of the “birds of a feather” variety) and, hence, apolitical. On the other hand, to talk too persistently of social class elicits accusations of unpatriotic politics, of fomenting “class warfare” and jeopardizing a unified national identity.

The new critical literature on American history museums reflects this pattern of native social thought. The last two decades have seen an enormous burst of scholarship on museums of all types, in all parts of the world. This trend has brought together scholars from many disciplines and countries, both in universities and in museums, to re-examine the museum as a central institution of modern society. Museums, as institutions, became newly visible precisely at the moment when “the politics of culture” became an important issue in the

humanities and social sciences (Whisnant 1983; Handler 1988; Williams 1991), and when “identity” came to rival “culture” as the central term for discussing what was at stake in those politics (Gleason 1983; Handler 1994). It was as if, some time in the middle of the 1980s, a light bulb went on in people’s heads: “Eureka,” they said, “museums represent culture! They collect and preserve artifacts that objectify collective identities. No wonder they are contested terrains, contact zones. If we want to study the politics of cultural identity, where better to do it than in the museum?”¹

As the new critical literature on museums developed, two strands emerged. In the dominant strand, people studied the content of museum representations in relation to struggles (both inside and outside the museum) over identity. At issue was *whose* culture (or identity, or history) was portrayed (or marginalized), in what terms, and under whose control. In the second strand (which, though influential, was taken up by far fewer people), scholars focused less on representation than on presentation. They asked how museums, as authoritative social institutions, presented the cultural materials they controlled to shape the ideology and behavior of their audiences. Work in this vein did not ignore the cultural content of museum displays, but it was not interested in the celebration of identity as such. Rather, its overriding theoretical concern was hegemony in a class hierarchy: how did elites use institutions like museums to cultivate citizens who would behave in ways that reaffirmed the social status quo?²

Taking its cue from the second strand of museum studies, the present essay examines

“egalitarian dilemmas” that public visitation presents to two prominent American history museums. Although Colonial Williamsburg [hereafter CW] and Monticello differ in many respects, both institutions dichotomously categorize visitors as elites and masses, VIPs and ordinary Americans, “persons of stature” and “the passing parade.” These museums conceive their educational and patriotic mission in lofty and altruistic terms. It is their responsibility, as they see it, to tell the American story (at least that part of it which their material culture embodies), as fully and accurately as they can. That story at once belongs to the public and is necessary for them to know, to complete their education in American citizenship. Yet, despite this kind of ideological deference to the public, when we examine these museums as social arenas, we find deep anxieties about social hierarchy on the part of all participants in the museum encounter. Whatever the explicit representational content of these museums, other stories (hidden scripts, we might say) are enacted everyday in the interactions between museum personnel and visitors and, backstage, between administrators and the employees they supervise.

Thus, it is only by working in the second strand of the new critical literature on museums, and pushing it in some new directions, that we can proceed. To confine the discussion to the representational contents of exhibits, as most museum scholarship does, would be to limit ourselves to those topics about which the natives (museum insiders, visitors, scholars, and critics alike) can self-consciously reflect. Indeed, the critical literature on museums has reached a point, we think, where insiders and outsiders speak the same language. Everyone knows how to argue about cultural representations, and although the terrain of such representations may be contested, everyone agrees to the same rules of engagement. In contrast, museum observers tend to ignore the cultural meanings that structure, we think, the social encounters that occur in the museum. Studies of visitors’ “museum experience” focus either on representational content (“what did you learn?”) or on consumer satisfaction (“would you visit again?”). Even those studies in the second strand of scholarship that focus on hegemony and, sometimes, resistance, tend to approach the museum with a global model that leaves little room for ethnographic attention to the lived experience of museum workers and visitors. But it is precisely in

those lived experiences that we will find the “egalitarian dilemmas” that challenge not only museum administrators, but also theorists of a too-well-oiled hegemonic machine.

Both CW and Monticello were founded as museums in the mid-1920s. We focus here on the life of those museums in the second half of the twentieth century, a period we have studied through frequent visits, formal fieldwork, interviews, archival records and, recently, website analysis.³ Our comparison of the two institutions has revealed certain dilemmas of egalitarianism that we might not have noticed had we confined our attention to one museum. But we cannot pretend to be exhaustive in this comparative analysis. As prominent American history museums, CW and Monticello share certain features; yet, since one is a restored town and the other a single historic house, they also differ significantly. These similarities and differences are not our main concern. Nor will we attempt to update systematically what these museums have done since we stopped studying them, or develop a coherent historical narrative of institutional developments during the past 50 years. Indeed, while “house histories” of these institutions tend to focus on changing historical representations, especially on how they have become more inclusive and less elitist in the stories they tell about the past, we are more interested in what we came to see as an enduring cultural pattern: the natives’ ambivalences about persons of stature and the passing parade, a cluster of meanings they enact in their routine interactions but overlook when they talk about what they think the museum exhibits.

Persons of Stature and the Passing Parade at Monticello

Monticello embodies egalitarian ambivalence. It is a shrine to the man who wished to be remembered as “Author of the Declaration of American Independence/of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom/and Father of the University of Virginia,” as Jefferson’s tombstone, located on the Monticello property, proclaims. But standing before Jefferson’s home, as the historian Merrill Peterson notes, leads one to ask: “Where was Jefferson’s equalitarianism, his love of the people, his ‘democratic simplicity’ at Monticello? . . . Monticello was, above everything else, the poetic statement of a spiritual nobleman” (1960:388).

In 1926, Monticello became a museum run by the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation [TJMF]. The current website states sparsely that the Foundation's mission is "preservation and education," but over the years mission statements have also included the perpetuation of Jefferson's memory and the principles for which he contended. Those principles were, during the 1920s, kept vague because Jefferson was still considered a controversial, if not radical, figure in American politics. According to Peterson, "the general tendency was to feature Monticello . . . , the relics of [Jefferson's] domestic life and aesthetic vision rather than the political philosophy" (1960:384–88). In practice, this has meant using the material culture of Monticello to illustrate what the foundation called, during the late 1980s, "Jefferson the Man." The Foundation sees itself as constantly needing to bring out subtle facets of Jefferson's personality that are obscured in public images which overemphasize his plebian or patrician qualities. For example, such museum pieces as the great clock and the polygraph machine give rise to a recurring image of Jefferson as an inventor, an ancestral Thomas Edison or Henry Ford. The Foundation objects to this image of Jefferson as a "tinkerer," a "builder of gadgets." To counter it, and thereby restore the complexity of "Jefferson the Man," the museum stresses other aspects of Jefferson: his interest in fine wines, or his fascination with the aesthetics of landscape gardening.⁴ Thus there are many images of Jefferson suggested at Monticello. Institutional politics, personal preferences, and the attitudes of visitors all influence how Jefferson will be interpreted at any moment. Nonetheless, there is a tendency for "Jefferson the Man" to tilt toward an elitism which is, as we shall see, implicit in the museum's dealings with the public.

Monticello is a private museum that depends heavily on ticket and gift shop sales for operating expenses. A past curator liked to call the visiting crowds—who number over half a million people annually—the "lifeblood" of the museum. Yet the Foundation views this mass of visitors with ambivalence sometimes bordering on abhorrence. In part this is because the Foundation does not like to be dependent on a mass that can be fickle in their interests and patronage. Will tourists continue to flock to Monticello year in, year out? This is a question that constantly worries the Foundation. In part, too,

the Foundation suffers constant disappointment at the hands of the mass. Monticello is an educational institution commemorating Jefferson's philosophy, which was infused with an optimistic faith in the intelligence of the American people. Yet, as one Monticello tour guide put it, "people come to Monticello to look, not learn."

The curator's annual reports reveal with stark clarity the Foundation's generally low opinion of the mass of visitors. The reports detail new acquisitions and describe ongoing research, but they also discuss attendance. In 1961, for example, we read, "the hordes of visitors, so unnecessary and onerous during Jefferson's residence . . . [have] become the lifeblood of Monticello's modern day operation" (TJMF 1961:10). Moreover, the reports use Jefferson as their authority for their negative opinion of the visiting public: Jefferson, we are told in the 1959 report, would "decry the fact that more than two hundred thousand persons passed through his bedroom last year" (TJMF 1959:5).

While the reports denigrate the mass, they celebrate the elite in equally evocative language, again invoking Jefferson's authority. In the 1980 report, we are told, "as long as Monticello remains open to the public it will continue to attract those persons whose positions and accomplishments lift them above the passing parade" (TJMF 1980:5). It is a visit from these people that Jefferson would "without a doubt . . . applaud" (TJMF 1959:5). They include "such persons as President Theodor Heuss of the Federal Republic of Germany, his excellency Robert Schumann, the French Ambassador . . . and members of the Grolier club . . . [all of whom] would have been as much to his liking as the Marquis de Chastelleux, George Ticknor . . . and other 18th- and 19th-century visitors" (TJMF 1959:6). These "persons of stature," as they are sometimes called in in-house memoranda, are invited to sign "our guest book after crossing the threshold into Mr. Jefferson's entrance hall" (TJMF 1981:6). Starting in 1960, some of them would be invited to share with the Board of Directors a dinner commemorating Jefferson on his birthday. These dinners were reported as "the highlight of the year's activities" in 1960 and 1961 (TJMF 1961:8, 1962:7). As usual, the reports linked the guests directly to Jefferson: "the ladies," we are told, "lent delightfully subtle touches to the success of the evening, no doubt as did Mesdames Madison, Bayard Smith, Thornton and

others when they too were guests at Monticello." The meal itself was meant to be authentic, a "Jefferson inspired meal" reported in sumptuous detail: "the several courses of Filet d'Ancois Cresson, Consumme, Roti d'Agneau, and Crème Brulee with Amontillado, Chateau Lafitte 1953 and Porto were served to twenty one diners." In the year that 21 diners ate at Jefferson's table, 244,546 of the lifeblood were guided through the house (TJMF 1961:8, 9). Many, no doubt, stopped to look at the smokehouse, where hanging Virginia hams gave off an odor of authenticity. The hams were later removed—they were "tacky," one guide explained. But the Jeffersonian dinners continue.

The curator's reports, then, make a sharp distinction between the decried but necessary mass, the passing parade, and the applauded few, the persons of stature. If to the public Jefferson might be a populist who ate ham, to the curator he was a patrician drinking Chateau Lafitte in the company of the select. But like a good patrician, the curator was also proud of treating the hordes of visitors with proper courtesy. This mass was always "guided through the house . . . with as much graciousness as we imagine Jefferson and his family once displayed" (TJMF 1960:10).

Though only a select few can be invited to the anniversary dinners, most persons of stature receive a special tour of the "upper floors" of Monticello. In contrast, ordinary visitors are confined to the ground floor. Yet management believes that every visitor wants to feel like an individual, and not to be reminded that they are part of a mass, undistinguished and indistinguishable. Thus care is taken to conceal from the passing parade the fact that several times a day persons of stature will get special access to the house. They are brought in from the side, so that the visitors patiently waiting in line to enter through the front will not see these privileged guests whose special tour will include the upper floors.

The two upper floors of Monticello include nine bedrooms and the "dome" or "sky" room, that feature of the house which, more than any other, is taken as a mark of Jefferson's architectural genius. It is also the feature visitors choose most often to photograph (from outside the house). The Foundation began giving special tours of the upper floors early on. And it has always restricted common visitors to the ground floor, even in the days when they were left

to wander through the house as they pleased. Nevertheless, the dome and, especially, "seeing" inside the dome are enduring enticements for visitors to Monticello. Visitors constantly ask guides why they cannot see the upper floors. One in-house survey from the late 1980s found that an overwhelming majority of visitors mentioned seeing the upper floors as the one thing that would most improve the tour of Monticello.

There are several reasons why the upper floors are not open to the public. One never discussed openly but apparent to some Monticello staff is that it would be impossible to move masses of visitors up the narrow stairs and through the small rooms with any degree of speed and graciousness. Not only is Monticello crowded, many of its guests are old, infirm, slow on their feet, or even in wheelchairs. As one guide observed, "many of those people have trouble coming up the walkway. They'd never make it up and down those stairs." Yet the Foundation hides this reasoning, and makes excuses in advance to curious visitors bent on seeing the upper floors. As stated on the 2005 website: "Firecodes prevent visitors from touring the second and third floors of the house, including the Dome Room." On tours, the guides point out that the stairs are narrow—"only twenty-four inches wide"—and reiterate that "fire regulations" forbid tours of the upper floors. Moreover, both guides and visitors seem to accept this excuse. Yet the guides know that groups of persons of stature visit the upper floors routinely. Indeed, when confronted with this fact, the guides touch on the unspoken reason. As one guide put it, "even if fire regulations permitted it we still couldn't have the crowds of visitors going up and down those staircases. It just would take too much time." Visitors, apparently, are more gullible. In the survey that elicited their desire to see the upper floors, several suggested that the Foundation "ask that an exception in the fire codes be made" or "erect fire escapes."

Another overt restriction on visitors concerns photography. In its "guidelines" for visitors, the website explains that while taking pictures and making videos of the "grounds" are permitted, "no photography of any kind is allowed inside the house." At the beginning of tours, guides repeat this rule. The guides do not give an explanation for this unless asked, and none is given on the website. But visitors question the rule so frequently that an in-house

guidebook instructs employees to explain that photography is not permitted “because of the need to consider security, the conservation of artwork and fabrics, and the other visitors on the tour” (TJMF 1987:2). What is not mentioned is that photography is not permitted, at least in part, because it would “slow down” or “block” the flow of visitors through the house. Yet, unlike the case of the upper floors, visitors in large numbers do not buy the official explanation. Typically, visitors offer cynical counter-suggestions: “I bet the gift shop will sell a lot of postcards.”

We can only speculate as to why visitors accept the official explanation concerning fire codes, yet reject that concerning the prohibition on photography. But first, notice that the rationality of the institutional prohibitions is not at issue in our analysis; undoubtedly, there are safety and conservation issues of relevance. What is interesting about these sorts of visitor responses is precisely the irrelevance of the museum’s practical worries to visitors’ sensibilities. Thus, for example, perhaps the public’s varying responses to such rules has to do with visitors’ own egalitarian anxieties. If it were true that the upper floors were denied them because the Foundation considered them to be part of the common mass and not worth a special tour, then in confronting this perception visitors would have to reflect, perhaps unpleasantly, on their place in society. If, on the other hand, it were true that the Foundation banned photography to maintain its monopoly on images of the interior, then by discovering this truth visitors would be putting themselves into the category of “insider” by being “in on the secret.”

Secret knowledge is an important topic for many visitors to Monticello. They often talk as if the upper floors were themselves secret and recall childhood visits during which the “secret staircases” were pointed out to them. In contrast, the guides believe it is their duty to counter such “misconceptions.” We suggest that discussing secrets allows both visitors and guides to place themselves in a hierarchical scheme in which high status stems from one’s closeness to the inner circle of the aristocratic Monticello. Secret knowledge allows visitors to enter into the elite world of Monticello, while the denial of such information in favor of what we call “just-the-facts” history (Gable and Handler 1994; Gable, Handler and Lawson 1992; Handler and Gable 1997)

allows guides to put themselves in the inner circle while excluding the mass of visitors. There are many “myths” or “legends,” as historians term them, which persist in the public mind despite the Foundation’s best efforts to replace them with “facts.” The most pernicious of all myths, as the Foundation saw it until quite recently, is that Jefferson had a slave mistress named Sally Hemings. The story of their illicit affair gets tied up with the various “hidden” passages that, to hear some visitors tell it, honeycomb the house and grounds. Visitors ask guides to show them the “secret room” just above Jefferson’s bed where Sally Hemings remained hidden, waiting to answer his call. Others ask to see the air tunnels thought to lead not only to the privies, but to secret rendezvous locations.

In the past, guides found visitors’ curiosity about Sally Hemings disgusting. Before DNA evidence forced the Foundation to acknowledge the “high probability” (as the website puts it) that Jefferson was the father of Hemings’ children, the guides found visitors’ belief in the Hemings story to be the single most potent proof of how beneath them the visitors really were.⁵ One of the guides, joking about the Foundation’s perennial fears of declining visitation, noted, “if they make the TV movie of Sally Hemings, we’ll have cars lined up to get in all the way to Charlottesville.” (To our knowledge, the 1995 film, *Jefferson in Paris*, did not produce this effect; for further analysis of Monticello’s recent treatment of the Hemings story, see Gable 2005). Another guide described a typical demand on the part of visitors for insider status based on secret knowledge:

After one tour a woman came up to me and *demand*ed to know why we didn’t mention anything about the secret passageway to Michie’s Tavern. I would like just once to wink or to give some sign . . . to pretend just once that the secret does exist, that the Foundation is part of some vast and secret conspiracy to keep the truth from the people [but] because of some flash of communion with this particular visitor, I’m going to lift the veil and reveal it all.

As this guide sees it, visitors in pursuit of secret passageways and slave mistresses are by turns defiant or conspiratorial, but in either case they are making a special claim to insider status. And it is possible that many are doing just that. But informal interviewing with visitors suggests that some are also using their visit to Monticello to construct or

reconfirm another egalitarian tale, which we might call *The Great Man and His Fall*. In this story, Jefferson is to be knocked off his pedestal because his privileged position depended on birth rather than merit. In addition to Sally Hemings, key motifs of *The Great Man and His Fall* are embodied in comments such as: “he came from money but died in debt” and “if I had slaves I could do a lot too.” Guides counter such remarks with just-the-facts history. For example, they account for Jefferson’s debts by reference to such factors as “agricultural depression” and “incompetent overseers.” Doubtless, such answers never quite satisfy the public, but they leave the inquisitive visitor at a distinct disadvantage. How can they argue with “the facts”?

Monticello guides are as ambivalent about persons of stature as they are about the passing parade. The Foundation has no clear criteria as to who qualifies as a person of stature. Many people with no connection to Monticello receive special tours simply by claiming VIP status. Some guides quip that persons of stature are people who have the nerve to ask in advance for a special tour. Fund-raising plans in the late 1980s envisioned the creation of a special category of visitors to be known as “Friends” of the museum. Friends were to be given exclusive tours, gift shop discounts, and access to “members only” events such as banquets on the lawn. When the museum conducted market research in 1988 to learn how many of their visitors might be tapped as Friends, the guides had to administer the survey to the public. The results showed visitors to be possessed of higher incomes and educational attainments than the guides had imagined. But rather than place themselves lower than the passing parade on the status hierarchy, many guides argued that the surveys were inaccurate.

The guides, then, look down on the public yet are suspicious of those who claim elite status. Referring to a detail that almost all use in their tours—that Jefferson was “six feet two and a half, a tall man”—they joke that visitors “have to be over six feet two to get a tour of the upper floors.”⁶ The guides are also resentful of their treatment at the hands of VIPs. As one guide put it, “I hate giving them a tour. They hang back in the room and they don’t even look at you when you talk.”

Yet, however critical they may be of particular persons of stature, most guides do not question the validity of the category. Indeed, they take full

advantage of a privilege extended to them, allowing their “immediate family” to tour the upstairs. They do this in spite of their knowledge of the inconvenience caused by a special tour, which slows down the normal flow of visitors through the house and can require guides to stay late or arrive at work early. Nonetheless, guides believe true persons of stature deserve special tours, though they know there is little one can do to verify claims to elite status. Thus one guide recounted the following incident:

They sometimes call us the day before to arrange a tour . . . I was eating my lunch and didn’t want to be bothered. Someone—they didn’t announce themselves—explained they needed to arrange a special tour for an “important celebrity” who didn’t want to *be exposed* to the public and would be at Monticello tomorrow. I told them, “you’ll have to talk to the head guide, I can’t do anything for you.” I made it all sound *mundane*. They told me they “didn’t have time and needed to arrange things now.”

Despite her wish to appear uninterested, the guide was curious to learn the celebrity’s identity:

It turned out be Mary Tyler Moore and not some schmo like Dom Deluise [who also received VIP treatment around the time of this interview]. She is one of my favorites so I almost said, “well, no problem, you come tomorrow and say that you have an appointment with [her name].”

In sum, the guides accept the notion of the person of stature but recognize that not everyone who lays claim to that status deserves it. It is the dream of the guides that genuine persons of stature will recognize them as unique individuals. This desire, coupled with the fact that this epiphany rarely occurs, makes the subjective experience of their encounter with VIPs a disappointment. But Monticello’s management actively courts persons of stature, both because they are deemed worthy company for Jefferson, and because it is thought that fund-raising requires it.

Common and Uncommon Men at Colonial Williamsburg

CW considers itself to be the preeminent history museum in the United States, and many people working at museums like Monticello would agree, however grudgingly. CW recreates the public spaces and life of an entire town, unlike Monticello, which is

confined to the domestic and private. Again unlike Monticello, it commemorates not one man, but a community, even “colonial society” itself. Its cast of characters includes notables—Jefferson, Washington, Patrick Henry—and commoners—craftworkers, farmers, housewives, and slaves. CW is unlike Monticello in one further respect: throughout much of its existence it depended on one patron, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Until his death in 1960, Rockefeller was the great man of CW, almost as Jefferson is at Monticello. As Kenneth Chorley, president of CW from 1935 to 1958, put it, “Colonial Williamsburg today memorializes not only the uncommon men of the eighteenth century who helped create the great Age of the Common Man but also Mr. Rockefeller, himself a most uncommon man” (CW 1957:17).

Rockefeller committed himself to the restoration of Williamsburg in 1926. He had been persuaded that the place offered a unique opportunity to recreate a colonial town by a local visionary, the Reverend W.A.R. Goodwin. Sensitive to the presence of the ghosts of the American Revolution in Williamsburg, Goodwin wanted to turn the town into a national shrine. The story of his collaboration with Rockefeller has taken on legendary dimensions in official histories (Fosdick 1956:272–301; Kopper 1986:139–93), but despite the many tellings of the tale, it is difficult to find a satisfactory account of what motivated Rockefeller to undertake the project. Philip Kopper notes that Rockefeller’s life was dedicated to philanthropy, and that at the time he took on Williamsburg, interest in the arts, in museums, and in historic preservation was “on the rise,” with Rockefeller’s wife “in the vanguard of the cognoscenti” (Kopper 1986:155; for a more critical assessment of the early years of the restoration, see Foster 1993).

Kopper (1986:173) also suggests that Goodwin and Rockefeller had little idea of how their project would develop. Absorbed with architectural details, they gave almost no thought to the restoration as a pedagogical tool. CW attracted visitors from the start, however, and by the mid-1930s, administrators began considering ways to lodge and feed them, and to guide them over the site. Early visitors were mainly upper-class travelers interested in antiques and colonial architecture. During World War II, Rockefeller brought 100,000 servicemen to the museum, which was used to deliver a patriotic message that became even more emphatic during the Cold War. CW documents of the 1950s define the

museum’s message as the democratic “faith,” one grounded in “the integrity of the individual” and in “the endless struggle for freedom, liberty, justice, and representative government” (CW 1951:12, 30).

Michael Wallace has depicted CW’s ideology before the 1980s as reactionary, pointing out that the museum emphasized such values as individualism and freedom to the exclusion of “equally plausible revolutionary legacies like ‘equality’ or . . . ‘anticolonialism’” (1986a:152). But even within this reactionary perspective, CW was haunted by the dilemmas of egalitarianism. Unlike Monticello, but typical of Rockefeller philanthropic endeavors, CW had been set up as a modern corporation, run by bureaucratically organized teams of experts. After World War II, the museum professionalized its interpretive programs in response to its increasing popularity as a tourist attraction. It now faced the public, and its own employees, as a large corporation, bent on using public relations techniques to handle the masses efficiently and graciously. But it also prided itself on the VIPs who visited. Indeed, during the Eisenhower presidency it became, as Wallace notes, “a semiofficial auxiliary of the state, . . . serv[ing] as the customary arrival point for heads of state on their way to Washington” (1986a:153; Kopper 1986:217).

It can fairly be said that CW’s official publications, its annual reports and in-house newspaper (the *Colonial Williamsburg News*), are obsessed with the dichotomy of masses and VIPs, common and uncommon men. The 1953 report opens with the following typical meditation:

Six hundred thousand people visited Williamsburg last year. They came from all over the world, from all stations of life. They came by air, by train, by automobile, by boat and even by motorcycle. Some came in limousines, others with camping gear bundled on the roofs of the automobiles. Some spoke little or no English.

The President of the United States, the House of Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church, the Crown Prince of Japan, the King and Queen of Greece, ambassadors, generals, senators—these came.

But also the less celebrated came . . . [CW 1953:11]

In this rhetoric, masses and VIPs alternate in rapid succession, and the masses are conceived as widely as possible to include those not fortunate enough to

belong to the Anglo-American tradition. In the same report, a photo essay pictures visiting dignitaries, named in accompanying captions. This contrasts with the photo essay of the previous year's report, showing anonymous faces in the crowds. And month after month, in pages of the *News*, the same juxtaposition of elites and masses dominates the museum's presentation of itself. To take but one example, in the *News* of 22 December 1976, an article paraphrases an Ann Landers column on "the customer" to celebrate "The Visitor" as "the life-blood of the . . . restoration." On the following page, a photo essay entitled "Visitors" shows Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford, and Nelson Rockefeller.

CW's attention to the visiting public combines readily with its faith in democracy. Since at CW the democratic faith is understood to be universally valid, the museum can dedicate itself in good conscience to delivering its message "in a manner understandable to all" (1953:19). CW rhetoric stresses that the museum "exists . . . for all people," and that everyone should "have" the CW "experience." President Eisenhower, for example, is quoted to this effect: "I wish sincerely that every single man, woman and child that has the proud privilege of calling himself an American . . . could walk through this building [the House of Burgesses]" (CW 1953:12). Similarly, the *News* (January 1958) approvingly quoted a visitor who wrote that CW's orientation film "should be seen by every school child and thinking person in our country." Nor is there any doubt as to the reason for a visit to CW: "Through personal contact with the beginnings of American self-government, all who come have an opportunity to rededicate themselves to the principles of human freedom and individual integrity" (CW 1956:11–12). This rhetoric continues unchanged into the twenty-first century (e.g., Campbell 2005:7).

Almost by definition, "personal contact" is difficult to deliver to a mass public. Rockefeller had always been ambivalent about mass visitation, and once "suggested closing the doors lest wear and tear destroy painstakingly restored buildings" (Kopper 1986:208). As attendance figures increased during the 1950s, President Chorley saw this egalitarian dilemma as one of CW's greatest challenges: "it is possible for the number of visitors to be so great that the illusion of communion with another century is endangered by the very numbers of those who come here. Can we have a perfect restoration if its

popularity increases?" (CW 1957:21). Even in the mid-1970s, when fuel shortages led to decreasing tourism, a worried CW president nonetheless noted that constantly increasing attendance was undesirable: "huge crowds wear out our buildings, walks and gardens, press our interpretive efforts to an expeditious minimum, and tempt us all to deal with visitors as *things* to be processed rather than individuals" (*News* January 23, 1978).

To avoid treating individuals as things, or, perhaps, to prevent visitors from recognizing such treatment, CW has pursued two strategies. First, the museum constantly experiments with crowd- and traffic-control techniques, ticketing schemes, and the use of costumed "interpreters" to guide visitors in orderly groups and patterns. For example, as crowds grew during the 1950s, CW tried various plans to achieve "more equal distribution of visitors between the various exhibition buildings," a goal summarized in a phrase with ironic egalitarian overtones: "the leveling of visitation" (*News* November 1958). In the *News* one finds repeated stories of the teamwork required to handle crowds, and repeated praise for employees' success in doing so. Thus, after a particularly busy Easter season, Chorley congratulated CW personnel in these terms: "I have never seen crowds of people handled as efficiently and as smoothly" (*News* April 1952).

The second strategy for delivering a personalized experience to the mass public is constant attention to friendliness. Again, CW publications harp on this theme. Early tour guides, called "hostesses," had been asked to treat visitors as though they were guests in their own homes. Such admonishments drew initially on an aristocratic ethos of graciousness, but this has been eclipsed by an emphasis on treating visitors as individuals, even friends. In brief, colonial-aristocratic pretensions have been dropped in favor of a corporate image of efficiency and friendly service. Since the 1950s, management's insistence on friendliness has been justified in terms of economic self-interest: it creates the "good will" that "makes visitors wish to return," which leads to the "continued growth of Williamsburg as a major travel attraction" (*News* March 1959). The repetition of such rhetoric suggests resistance to routinized friendliness on the part of at least some employees, an antagonism we found in our fieldwork to be a fundamental feature of "front-line" guide work (Handler and Gable 1997:170–207).

Routinized friendliness occasionally transcends itself in egalitarian ceremonies that make VIPs of plebians. Thus the millionth person to view CW's orientation film was singled out of the audience and honored by museum executives:

Mrs. Trapnell was quite overwhelmed at being a milestone in the history of the film. "Imagine being the millionth anything," she laughed Prior to the showing of the film, Vice President John Goodbody spoke briefly to the audience . . . informing them that the millionth viewer was somewhere among them. In honor of the occasion, he treated them to a special look "backstage" All were then invited to attend a small ceremony after the film was shown.

CW President Carlisle H. Humelsine greeted Mrs. Trapnell after the movie, and presented her with a corsage, an engraved pewter tray . . . , a special pass to the exhibition buildings, and an assortment of CW publications. [*News* November 1958]

This ceremony brilliantly ritualizes the values of mass society. Our base-ten number system, "counting itself" (Whorf 1956:140), bestows, at random and with no apparent favoritism, a unique identity upon a face in the crowd. The randomness of this creation of an identity is emphasized in the structure of the ceremony, which singles out, first, an audience among audiences, and then an individual among that audience. The audience is granted celebrity status en masse by being taken "backstage"—the virtual equivalent of the tour of the upper floors at Monticello. But the special audience is quickly returned to the status of anonymous mass by the selection of Mrs. Trapnell. To be "the millionth anything," to borrow her felicitous phrase, allays egalitarian anxieties, for one's distinction carries none of the particularity of privilege. The millionth anything is at once distinguished and anonymous.⁷

In addition to the random creation of VIPs, CW uses other rhetorical ploys to mask the facelessness of its crowds. The naturalistic rhetoric of family is routinely used to exhort both visitors and employees to consider themselves members of the "Williamsburg family," and the museum a "home" that "belongs" to them all. The rhetoric of nationalism is also used to displace egalitarian dilemmas by equating or merging all Americans with the great ancestors who once peopled Williamsburg. Thus the *News* quoted at length from a letter written by a

teenager to her father, a military officer serving in Viet Nam:

I kept thinking that right where I was standing/walking men like Washington, Henry, and Jefferson had been and, Dad, it made me feel so humble and proud at the same time I felt humble and small because . . . they were so great, I really felt insignificant, but I felt proud and important because I am an American And I thought, wouldn't it be awful to lose everything Washington and millions of other Americans had fought to gain? [April 30, 1969]

The writer, though "insignificant," becomes "important" because, as an American national, she becomes one with the founding fathers. Her fear of losing what others gained for her draws on the rhetoric of possession that characterizes nationalist ideology: all the members of the nation own, together and without distinction of status or wealth, the national heritage (Handler 1988). CW draws on the same rhetoric when it claims that the museum belongs to the American people.

A final technique to resolve egalitarian dilemmas can be found in CW's treatment of history. In the early 1950s, the museum began to focus on the history of ordinary citizens, and it did so to appeal to the masses of ordinary citizens who were becoming the lifeblood of the museum:

[The Craft Shop] program is part of a broad experiment to reveal 18th-century Williamsburg in the light of human personalities—to make modern day visitors truly feel the companionship and presence of the people who proclaimed the rights of man in words and deeds no American should ever forget. In this light, that society may be seen as not only the gifted, the articulate, the famous, but as men and women who lived useful daily lives

The Governor's Palace impresses the modern visitor with its royal elegance . . . but there is an intimacy in the [crafts] shops . . . which unfailingly appeals to the average American visitor and stimulates his understanding.

In the Apothecary Shop, for instance, where a yellowing ledger reveals an unpaid bill of seven shillings owed by Patrick Henry, the Revolutionary orator is recreated . . . in warmly human terms. [CW 1954:10]

Here it is assumed that ordinary visitors will be put off by the VIPs of the past, who must, therefore, be

humanized. It is also assumed that ordinary visitors want ordinary history, and years before “the rise of the new social history,” CW repeatedly justified its experiments in that domain by reference to the need to make the masses feel comfortable and at home.

Turning now to the museum’s treatment of living VIPs, we find the same concern to humanize them. This is a constant theme in CW’s portrayal of its great patron, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Indeed, to appear “ordinary” was a Rockefeller preoccupation (Fosdick 1956:82–96). Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller took to living in Williamsburg two months a year, because, as one of their sons explained, there “they could be just like everybody else” (Kopper 1986:213). And stories abound, both in the museum and in the town, of Rockefeller the good neighbor. Visitors, too, responded to the Rockefeller presence, but they tended to humanize him as their host, thereby drawing on the imagery of family and home to dissipate egalitarian tensions. Thus the *News* quoted several visitors who wrote to thank the patron, “for it is just as though we are guests of Mr. Rockefeller’s” (May–June 1958).

Other VIPs, less easily imagined as neighbors and family, must nonetheless be portrayed in human terms. For example, a *News* retrospective chose the following incident as the most newsworthy event of President Truman’s 1948 visit to CW:

Maid Robbie Gough was in the President’s room with instructions to hand the President the room key and leave. As she did the President asked her name and then asked her if she would like his autograph. After she had recovered enough to say yes, he brought out a dollar bill, autographed it and handed it to her. [June 1953]

The incident epitomizes the egalitarian dilemma, for hierarchy is both dissolved and maintained. By exchanging personal names with an anonymous and lowly employee, Truman creates the populist image that good public relations require. Yet the greater “weight” of Truman’s name is established by its reproduction as a concrete fetish, a signature. But again, by placing that signature on a dollar bill, the greatest common denominator of all America, Truman stresses equality over hierarchy—though the bill itself pictures George Washington, a person of stature.

Interaction with VIPs both humanizes them and raises the status of ordinary citizens and employees, who enjoy “rubbing shoulders with interesting people” (*News* June 18, 1970). This suggests that

VIPs must be allowed to *remain* VIPs in addition to appearing as ordinary people. Like Monticello, CW keeps an “exclusive book, reserved for the autographs of the great and near great,” though ordinary people sign guest books at the museum’s many restaurants and hotels (*News* July 1959). Furthermore, as Kopper notes, the “tradition of the state visit” has been developed to a high art at CW, where elaborate protocol celebrates persons of stature, with attention to minute gradations of rank, even as management lauds the “CW family” for its “teamwork” in bringing off such performances (*News* November 16, 1963). In passing, we should note that some visitors would rather not be treated as VIPs (cf. Goffman 1963:71–72). Thus Eleanor Roosevelt tried to tour CW unnoticed, but was met midway during her visit by CW officials who had gotten wind of her presence (*News* February 1959).

The visits of VIPs bestow prestige on the museum and on the employees who serve them. As at Monticello, museum staff relish personal contacts with important people, and the *News* abounds with tales of such meetings. Articles commemorating lengthy service to the museum often mention interactions with VIPs, particularly in the case of employees in subaltern positions. For example, when a custodian retired after 26 years of service, the *News* noted, “During her years at the Raleigh [Tavern], Lula met the Queen Mother of England, Prince Albert of Belgium, the Prime Minister of Cambodia and many other famous people” (November 8, 1966). Perhaps the ultimate resolution of the egalitarian dilemma comes when contacts with visiting VIPs lead to return visits, with persons of stature hosting CW employees. Thus Hubert Humphrey’s “escort” at CW was invited to the 1965 presidential inauguration, a fact deemed worthy of a headline in the *News*, which quoted the lucky employee’s description of her visit with the future Vice President: “We had a leisurely lunch . . . and just sat and talked like ‘home folks’” (January 12, 1965). Even more impressive was a CW president’s visit to British royalty:

Kenneth Chorley and Mr. Winthrop Rockefeller were dinner guests of the Queen Mother in her home, Clarence House. On arriving, they were surprised and honored to find that it was an intimate family gathering attended by Queen Elizabeth and Princess Margaret. [*News* January 1956]

To interact on familial terms with royalty is to achieve the highest status imaginable, yet “an intimate family gathering” is one in which all are equals, and questions of status irrelevant. This displaces egalitarian dilemmas, as does “the royal treatment” that CW tries to extend to all visitors.

Egalitarian Dilemmas in American Culture

We began this essay by observing that both Monticello and CW dichotomously categorize visitors as elites and masses, persons of stature and the passing parade. As we have seen, this dichotomy permeates the “public relations” of both museums. Both have chosen to depend financially on mass visitation, and worry that one day the masses will cease visiting. But both also worry that too many visitors will destroy the historical properties they have worked so hard to preserve. Both pride themselves on attracting distinguished visitors, both accord such visitors VIP treatment, and management and employees at both museums take pride in associating “personally” with them. But both museums also work to avoid the appearance of catering to VIPs, either by pretending that all visitors receive VIP treatment, as at CW, or by hiding VIP tours from the mass, as at Monticello.

An anthropological interpretation of these observations must be grounded in an understanding of egalitarian culture. After all, neither utilitarian reasoning nor unreasoning circumstances force CW and Monticello to dichotomize visitors as elites and masses. It could be argued (and demonstrated through interviews or surveys) that elites expect to be treated as such, and that they would be less likely to give generously to an institution that did not meet their expectations in this matter. Likewise, it could be argued or demonstrated that most Americans who visit museums would rather not be reminded of their individual insignificance, or of the fact that there are others among them about whom the institution cares more than about them. That Americans feel this way and that museums build into their routines these expectations is a cultural fact, to be understood in cultural terms. We can develop such an understanding by explicating our notion of egalitarian dilemmas, anxieties, and ambivalences, phrases that we have used repeatedly but without further definition in the present essay.

No work has captured the dilemmas of egalitarian culture better than Alexis de Tocqueville’s

Democracy in America. Tocqueville’s great work is a sustained comparison between what he termed democratic and aristocratic societies. His comparative perspective made it possible for Tocqueville to see modern egalitarianism as a value system rather than a rational social state to which human progress inevitably led (Dumont 1983:112). Thus Tocqueville wrote with a sense of what we would today call the arbitrariness of the cultural values he analyzed—values that are difficult for us moderns to dissect, so thoroughly are we accustomed to think in terms of them. Like many later observers of American culture, Tocqueville noted that hierarchical social differences, such as those of the European *ancient regime*, became intolerable to those among whom egalitarian and individualistic cultural values have come to prevail:

Do not ask what singular charm the men of democratic ages find in being equal, or what special reasons they may have for clinging so tenaciously to equality rather than to the other advantages that society holds out to them . . . They will endure poverty, servitude, barbarism, but they will not endure aristocracy. [1955: 100–103]

Tocqueville further observed that social differences, which could not fail to exist in a mobile and prosperous society, were ceaselessly rendered invisible in democratic culture:

When equality is an old and acknowledged fact, the public mind . . . assigns certain general limits to the value of man, above or below which no man can long remain placed. It is in vain that wealth and poverty, authority and obedience, accidentally interpose great distances between two men; public opinion . . . draws them to a common level and creates a species of imaginary equality between them, in spite of the real inequality of their conditions. [1955:192]

This passage speaks to a characteristic feature of the American cultural landscape that has long fascinated social analysts: the masking of even the most glaring socioeconomic inequalities by egalitarian belief. When Tocqueville speaks of “a species of imaginary equality” that renders “real inequality” invisible, he defines the particular version of false consciousness that has repeatedly challenged Marxist analysts of American society (Hartz 1955: 228–55). Tocqueville’s adjective, “imaginary,” suggests anthropological culture theory: the word

suggests not the “unreal,” but a socially generated vision of reality—in this case, of a social reality composed of equal individuals. Moreover, Tocqueville notes a peculiar interpretive mechanism that egalitarian ideology fosters: though social life inevitably generates distance and difference among the citizens of democracies, egalitarian discourse continually projects a vision of homogeneity and equality.

If egalitarianism led to the masking of hierarchical social relationships, it also led to the conformity and anonymity of mass society. Tocqueville pointed out that though democracy rendered each citizen the equal of every other, it also made all indistinguishable and impotent, “faces in the crowd”:

When the inhabitant of a democratic country compares himself individually with all those about him, he feels with pride that he is the equal of any one of them; but when he comes to survey the totality of his fellows and to place himself in contrast with so huge a body, he is instantly overwhelmed by the sense of his own insignificance. [1955:11]

Tocqueville’s observations have often been borrowed or reinvented by later analysts of American society, but it is their combination in one comparative, anthropological vision that is seldom understood (Handler 2005:22–48). And it is precisely their combination that allows them to speak eloquently to the egalitarian dilemmas we have explored at Monticello and CW. The obsession with equality and the desire to mask inequality is prominent at CW, where VIPs must be humanized, the Patrick Henrys recreated “in warmly human terms.” But the opposite also occurs, when the reality of a faceless mass public must be denied by the claim that each member of the mass is an individual and will be treated as such. Monticello, though less concerned to treat the public as individuals, nonetheless tries to hide from its public the distinction it draws between elites and masses, for it will not do to tell visitors that the upper floors are open to VIPs but not to them.

More puzzling is why both museums court persons of stature and, more generally, why egalitarian American culture so fetishizes those to whom we refer as “the stars.” Here again, Tocqueville’s observations on the relationship between individualism and anonymity are suggestive. A central paradox of American culture is that it celebrates individuality yet engenders conformity. Modern consumer culture “works” by mass producing authenticity and

individuality and selling them to persons forever seeking them, and forever falling short of attaining them. “The stars,” from this perspective, are those who have attained individuality by rising above the mass (though ironically, they exist only by the grace of a conformist public opinion). Thus to associate with persons of stature provides vicarious authentication for those who have otherwise failed to distinguish themselves (cf. Trilling 1971:97–100). Notice that from this analytical perspective, it makes little difference how people define VIPs, or in which domains (politics, entertainment, “high society,” and so on) they expect to find them. The structural relationship between individualism and anonymity requires, we might say, the existence of a VIP category to oppose that of the unmarked, ordinary individual.

This leads us to comment on an important difference in the way Monticello and CW approach the public. Though both museums process the masses efficiently, CW also markets an ethos of friendliness that has been absent from Monticello until recently. We would relate that difference to two culturally significant distinctions, that between private and public spaces, and that between an absent “founding father,” Jefferson at Monticello, and a present benefactor, Rockefeller at CW.

To enshrine a domestic space, such as Monticello, in order to preserve it as part of a national heritage creates a cultural contradiction: the secular mass public must be invited to enter what is culturally defined as a private (and sacred) space. The people who founded and went on to administer Monticello saw themselves as performing a public service, and wanted public visitation. As custodians of a sacred interior, however, they saw, and continue to see, visitors as an invading, almost polluting, presence. Moreover, Monticello staff feel themselves to have a privileged relationship to “Jefferson the Man,” whom they wish at once to display to, and protect from, a public that is constantly falling below the expectations staff have of it. Monticello staff are connected to the ultimate VIP, as it were, and this raises their status above that of the masses whom they must entertain courteously, to be sure, but not on a footing of equality.

In contrast to Monticello, CW is a public space (the museum does not own the streets of Williamsburg, Virginia), and it was constructed by corporately organized philanthropy with a mission to serve a wide public. Moreover, CW focuses on no

single founding father, and CW staff have no privileged relationship to such a figure. Even if we take John D. Rockefeller, Jr. as the great man of CW, he was a person of stature who stayed out of the limelight, and did not permit museum staff to use their connection to him openly to raise themselves above the visiting public. Jefferson can no longer control the use of his name, but Rockefeller took elaborate precautions to control the use of his.

We can comment further on the different approaches to the public taken at Monticello and CW by looking at the social origins of each museum's founders and staff. As Wallace has suggested, Rockefeller's CW represents a relatively new class of the "superwealthy" who "sought partly to celebrate their newly won preeminence and partly to construct a retrospective lineage for themselves by buying their way into the American past" (1986b:170). As we have noted, CW was from the start run as a public corporation. Attuned to the emerging mass consumer society, its goal quickly became the creation of an "experience" for the national public. CW "hostesses" were at first drawn from the ranks of the local elite, and the pages of the *News* suggest that an aristocratic ethos prevailed among CW hostesses until well into the 1970s. Nonetheless, management was not committed to such an ethos. Indeed, one retired CW official who had been instrumental in the professionalization of the museum's interpretive programs during the 1950s explained in an interview that he and his staff worked hard to combat the aristocratic pretensions of the hostesses. As he put it, "it's not a good idea to look down at people."

It is tempting, but ultimately misleading, to attribute the apparently aristocratic ethos of Monticello to a fading class of Southern patricians. Wallace has described such patricians as an important force in the historic preservation movement, spurred on by their perception that "their inherited political and cultural authority [was] ebbing away to plutocrats above and immigrants below" (1986b:168). Such people have played a role at Monticello, where many guides have been members of the local Daughters of the American Revolution. And until 1980, the guides, or "hostesses," as they were then called, were assisted by uniformed Black "housemen," who "greeted" visitors at the threshold and let them into the house, whereupon the hostesses took charge. Yet many guides count themselves as "liberals," and liberal museum professionals

have also been an important force at Monticello. Moreover, the museum, with its connection to Jeffersonian ideals, has never been dominated by conservative or reactionary political ideologies. Though more research on the social origins of museum personnel is necessary, it is worth noting that many visitors like to think of staff as members of an impoverished gentry, and that staff enjoy entertaining that illusion even though their social backgrounds may be other than "genteel."

In the lifestyles of such visitors, and with the politically liberal guides and professionals who, despite their politics, savor the aesthetic of an aristocratic tradition, we might find one solution to the egalitarian dilemmas Monticello creates by distinguishing persons of stature from the passing parade. Monticello offers a stage upon which to act out the distinction between an elitism of taste and an egalitarian political ideology (cf. Gable and Handler 2005). Monticello appears to open its doors to everyone, but invites to dinner only those who can prove by their merits that they deserve to sit at Jefferson's table. On the surface, CW does everything in its power to blur the distinction between VIPs and ordinary visitors. Yet it is true as well that while the Rockefellers reserved the right to live among the people as commoners, they did not abandon the privileges that allowed them to sup familiarly with queens.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the many people at Colonial Williamsburg and Monticello with whom, over the years, we have carried on conversations and debates about those two museums and about the creation of public history in general. We are also grateful to Jason Jackson and the two anonymous *Museum Anthropology* readers who provided us with helpful criticisms as we revised this paper for publication.

Notes

1. The term "contested terrain" has become ubiquitous in the museum studies literature; as far as we know, the term was first used in Edwards (1979). We take the term "contact zone" from James Clifford (1997:188–219), who borrowed it from Pratt (1992).
2. Many of the edited volumes in which the new museum scholarship appeared contain work in both of the "strands" we identify (for example, Benson et al. 1986; Blatti 1987). Of the two seminal volumes edited by Ivan Karp

and his associates, the first fits more easily into the first strand (Karp and Lavine 1991), the second (Karp, Kraemer, and Lavine 1992) into the second. Examples of primarily textual readings of museum representations can be found in Sherman and Rogoff (1994). In different ways, the works of Bourdieu and Darbel (1966), Duncan and Wallach (1978), Ames (1986), Bennett (1995), and Jacknis (2002) are crucial to the second strand; for a critique of too-mechanistic models of hegemony, see Penny (2002). For a recent assessment of the current state of museum studies, see Marstine (2005).

3. We have spent more time exploring CW than Monticello, although the impetus for this essay came from a paper early in our research when we compared what we had learned from initial encounters at the two institutions. Gable worked at Monticello as a "Visitor Services Specialist" from March 1988 to November 1988. Handler conducted preliminary fieldwork at CW in the summer of 1989. We originally planned a comparative study of the two museums, but were denied permission to work at Monticello (CW gave us permission to work there and facilitated our research). With funding from the Spencer Foundation, we carried out two years of fieldwork at CW in 1990 and 1991, assisted by Anna Lawson, who wrote her doctoral dissertation on Black history at CW (Lawson 1995). With further funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, we wrote a monograph about the production of history at CW (Handler and Gable 1997). Although we have not conducted systematic fieldwork at either museum since the early 1990s, we continue to visit occasionally, to send our students to both sites, and to discuss the issues raised by our work with the many museum administrators and workers, at both institutions, with whom we have maintained contact.
4. The phrase "Jefferson the Man" seems to have disappeared from Foundation rhetoric, but as of the end of 2005, it continued aptly to describe Monticello's presentation of him. The website, for example, presented Jefferson in terms of these categories: agriculture and gardening, architecture and design, books and letters, food and cooking, and science, exploration, and travel.
5. It is a paradoxical fact of the "facts" of the way paternity is defined as a legal concept, coupled with ongoing criticisms (by, for example, some of the White descendants of Jefferson) of the Foundation's recognition of the DNA research, that the evidence is always presented with this judicious qualification. By contrast, the Foundation does not feel the need to qualify Jefferson's relationship to his White daughters, even though there is inevitably a "low probability" that they are bastards and not his children at all in a biological sense. His White offspring are merely his "daughters."
6. Under the heading "Physical Descriptions of Thomas Jefferson," the Monticello website gives 19 descriptions of Jefferson by contemporaries; only three fail to mention that he was "tall" (www.monticello.org/reports/people/descriptions.html, accessed most recently on March 26, 2006).
7. We say "with no apparent favoritism" because, as we learned through interviews, these events (they recur routinely) are stage-managed: it is not possible to know exactly who the millionth person is, but in-house statistics can indicate the day at which that number will be reached. Managers then pick the type of person they want

for publicity purposes: in the 1950s and 1960s, this was an attractive woman from out-of-state. For a similar event at Monticello, see the 2004 press release "Monticello passes 25 million mark in all-time attendance" (www.monticello.org/pressroom/showArticle.php?id=63, accessed most recently on February 24, 2006).

References Cited

- Ames, Michael
1986 *Museums, the Public and Anthropology*. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press.
- Bennett, Tony
1995 *The Birth of the Museum*. London: Routledge.
- Benson, Susan Porter, Stephen Brier and Roy Rosenzweig, eds.
1986 *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Blatti, Jo, ed.
1987 *Past Meets Present: Essays about Historic Interpretation and Public Audiences*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre and Alain Darbel, with Dominique Schnapper
1990 [1966] *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public*. Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman, trans. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Campbell, Colin
2005 *Now More Than Ever*. Colonial Williamsburg 27(5):7.
- Clifford, James
1997 *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- CW [Colonial Williamsburg Foundation]
1951–1957 *President's Report*. Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.
1952–1978 *Colonial Williamsburg News*. Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.
- Dumont, Louis
1983 *Essai sur l'individualisme*. Paris: Seuil.
- Duncan, Carol and Alan Wallach
1978 *The Museum of Modern Art as Late Capitalist Ritual: An Iconographic Analysis*. *Marxist Perspective* 1:28–51.
- Edwards, Richard
1979 *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Basic Books.
- Fosdick, Raymond
1956 *John D. Rockefeller, Jr.: A Portrait*. New York: Harper.
- Foster, Andrea
1993 "They're Turning the Town All Upside Down": The Community Identity of Williamsburg, Virginia before and after the Reconstruction. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of American Studies, George Washington University.
- Gable, Eric
2005 *How We Study History Museums: or Cultural Studies at Monticello*. In *New Museum Theory: An*

- Introduction. Janet Marstine, ed. Pp. 109–26. London: Blackwell.
- Gable, Eric and Richard Handler
 1994 The Authority of Documents at Some American History Museums. *Journal of American History* 81(1): 119–36.
 2005 Horatio Alger and the Tourist's Quest for Authenticity, or, Optimism, Pessimism, and Middle-Class American Personhood. *Anthropology and Humanism* 30(2):124–32.
- Gable, Eric, Richard Handler and Anna Lawson
 1992 On the Uses of Relativism: Fact, Conjecture, and Black and White Histories at Colonial Williamsburg. *American Ethnologist* 19(4):791–805.
- Gleason, Philip
 1983 Identifying Identity: A Semantic History. *Journal of American History* 69(4):910–31.
- Goffman, Erving
 1963 *Stigma*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Handler, Richard
 1988 *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
 1994 Is "Identity" a Useful Cross-Cultural Concept? *In Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*. John R. Gillis, ed. Pp. 29–40. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
 2005 *Critics Against Culture: Anthropological Observers of Mass Society*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Handler, Richard and Eric Gable
 1997 *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Hartz, Louis
 1955 *The Liberal Tradition in America*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.
- Jacknis, Ira
 2002 *The Storage Box of Tradition: Kwakiutl Art, Anthropologists, and Museums, 1881–1981*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Karp, Ivan, Christine Kraemer and Steven Lavine, eds.
 1992 *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Karp, Ivan and Steven Lavine, eds.
 1991 *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Displays*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Kopper, Philip
 1986 *Colonial Williamsburg*. New York: Abrams.
- Lawson, Anna
 1995 "The Other Half": Making African-American History at Colonial Williamsburg. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Virginia.
- Marstine, Janet, ed.
 2005 *New Museum Theory: An Introduction*. London: Blackwell.
- Penny, H. Glenn
 2002 *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Peterson, Merrill
 1960 *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pratt, Mary Louise
 1992 *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge.
- Sherman, Daniel and Irit Rogoff, eds.
 1999 *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- TJMF [Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation]
 1959–62, 1980–81 Curator's Report. Charlottesville, VA: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation.
 1987 *Monticello: Facts and Figures*. Charlottesville, VA: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation.
- Tocqueville, Alexis de
 1955 [1840] *Democracy in America*, vol. 2. Henry Reeve, trans. New York: Vintage.
- Trilling, Lionel
 1971 *Sincerity and Authenticity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wallace, Michael
 1986a *Visiting the Past: History Museums in the United States*. *In Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*. Susan Benson, ed. Pp. 137–61. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
 1986b *Reflections on the History of Historic Preservation*. *In Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*. Susan Benson, ed. Pp. 165–99. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Whorf, Benjamin Lee
 1956 *Language, Thought, and Reality*. John B. Carroll, ed. Cambridge, MA: M. I. T. Press.
- Whisnant, David
 1983 *All That Is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Williams, Brett, ed.
 1991 *The Politics of Culture*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Eric Gable is an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Mary Washington. In addition to his work in museum studies, he has written extensively on the contemporary experiences of the Manjaco people of Guinea-Bissau, West Africa.

Richard Handler is a professor of anthropology at the University of Virginia and is the editor of the University of Wisconsin's Press' History of Anthropology series. His most recent book is Critics Against Culture: Anthropological Observers of Mass Society (University of Wisconsin Press, 2005).