



The Diary of **William Byrd II** *of Virginia, 1709-1712*

Selections

William Byrd II ranks as the most well-known gentlemen-planter of pre-Revolutionary America, partly for his achievements and status, partly for his witty and irreverent *History of the Dividing Line* (on leading the surveying party that set Virginia-North Carolina border in 1728), and partly for his witty and irreverent “secret diary” of the years 1709-1712, written while he was in his late thirties. Written in a shorthand style developed in the 1670s, the diary was not “translated” and published until the 1940s. Byrd’s day-to-day entries seem formulaic at times — he records his meals, the weather, his studies, and whether he said his prayers and “danced my dance” (probably his daily calisthenic exercises). Yet in listing and commenting on the day’s events he reveals much about himself, his times, and the perspective of the landed gentry. In these selections he chronicles the birth of a son, arguments with his wife, a great financial loss from a ship sinking, the decisions to punish slaves (or not), medical treatment for his slaves, trips to Williamsburg to conduct personal and official business — and examining his own conduct and virtue. “Bless God for granting me so many years,” he writes on his 36th birthday. “I wish I had spent them better.”

APRIL 7, 1709 I rose before 6 o’clock and read two chapters in Hebrew and 250 verses in Homer’s *Odyssey* and made an end of it. I said my prayers devoutly. I ate milk for breakfast. I danced my dance.

The men began to work this day to dig for brick. I settled my accounts and read Italian. I reproached my wife with ordering the old beef to be kept and the fresh beef used first, contrary to good management, on which she was pleased to be very angry and this put me out of humor. I ate nothing but boiled beef for dinner. I went away presently after dinner to look after my people. When I returned I read more Italian and then my wife came and begged my pardon and we were friends again. I read in Dr. Lister again very late.

I said my prayers. I had good health, good thoughts, and bad humor, unlike a philosopher.

APRIL 26, 1709 I rose at 6 o’clock and read two books in Homer and two chapters in Hebrew.
I said my prayers and ate milk for breakfast

We went to the Council¹ where it was agreed to open the Indian trade. I did a great deal of business. The sheriffs were appointed this day. They passed several accounts. About 4 o’clock we went to dinner and I ate nothing but beef. Then I took a walk and came to Mr. Bland’s, from whence Mr. Will Randolph and I went to Colonel Bray’s, where we found abundance of ladies and gentlemen dancing. We did not dance but got some kisses among them. About 11 o’clock we returned home. I recommended myself to the divine protection.

I had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thanks be to God Almighty.

MAY 1, 1709 I rose at 6 o’clock and read in Lucian. I recommended myself to God in a short prayer.

National Humanities Center, 2009: nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds. *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712*, ed. Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1941). Permission pending. Footnotes in Wright & Tinling edition unless otherwise noted. Byrd wrote daily entries with few exceptions, therefore ellipses are not entered to note omission of entries. His rote recitation of morning and evening rituals is set in smaller print. Complete image credits at nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becomingamer/imagecredits.htm.

¹ Byrd served on the colonial advisory council to the king, and later he served as Virginia’s trade representative to England. [NHC note]

My wife was a little indisposed and out of humor. I ate bread and butter for breakfast. We went to church over the creek and Mr. Taylor preached a good sermon. As soon as we came into church it began to rain and continued to rain all day very much. However I was not wet. When we returned my wife was something better. I ate roast beef for dinner. After dinner we were forced to keep house because of the rain. I endeavored to learn all I could from Major Burwell who is a sensible man skilled in matters relating to tobacco. In the evening we talked about religion and my wife and her sister had a fierce dispute about the infallibility of the Bible.

I neglected to say my prayers. However, I had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thanks be to God Almighty.

MAY 6, 1709 I rose at 6 o'clock and Colonel Ludwell, Nat Harrison, Mr. Edwards and myself played at cricket, and I won a bit.² Then we played at whist and I won. About 10 o'clock we went to breakfast and I ate some boiled rice. Then Colonel Ludwell went to Jamestown court and then we played at [l-n-s-n-t]³ and I lost £4 [English pounds], most of which Nat Harrison won. In the afternoon Colonel Ludwell returned and brought us the bad news that Captain Morgan had lost his ship in Margate Roads by a storm as likewise had several others. My loss was very great in this ship where I had seven hogs-heads of skins and 60 hogsheads of heavy tobacco.⁴ The Lord gives and the Lord has taken away—blessed be the name of the Lord. In the evening Mr. Clayton⁵ and Mr. Robinson came and confirmed the same bad news. However I ate a good supper of mutton and asparagus. Then we went to dance away sorrow.

I had good health, good thoughts, and good humor notwithstanding my misfortune, thanks be to God Almighty.

MAY 18, 1709 I rose at 5 o'clock and read two chapters in Hebrew and some Greek in Josephus. I said my prayers and ate milk for breakfast. I danced my dance [did calisthenic exercises]. This was [a] fast day to pray to God to remove the fatal sickness with which this country has been of late afflicted. There was the most people at church I ever saw there. Mr. Harrison was in deep consultation with Colonel Hardiman and Mr. Anderson, I suppose about the clerk's place of Prince George. Isham Eppes and his wife and Robin Bolling's wife came home and dined with us. I ate nothing but bacon for dinner. In the evening they went away and I walked about the plantation.

I said my prayers and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor all day, thanks be to God Almighty.

MAY 23, 1709 I rose at 5 o'clock and read a chapter in Hebrew and some Greek in Josephus.
I said my prayers and ate milk for breakfast.

My horse died this morning. John Woodson came in the rain about paying me some money and left his papers at home; so he returned as wise as he came. My man Jack [slave] continued lame in his foot. I ate nothing for dinner but mutton boiled with turnips. In the afternoon we played at billiards. I read news till the evening and then I took a walk about the plantation. Moll was whipped for a hundred faults.

I said my prayers and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thanks be to God Almighty. I danced my dance.

JUNE 16, 1709 I rose at 5 o'clock and read a chapter in Hebrew and a little Greek.
I neglected my prayers and ate milk for breakfast.

Mr. Bland's boy brought me abundance of letters from Williamsburg, out of the men-of-war [military ships]. I spent all morning in reading them. My orders for being of the Council arrived among the rest.⁶ By these letters I learned that tobacco was good for nothing, that protested bills would ruin the country, that our trade with the Carolina Indians was adjusted in England, that my sister Braynes⁷ was in [prison

² A bit—one-eighth of a Spanish dollar.

³ Perhaps lansquenet, a card game of German origin.

⁴ Hogsheads were wooden barrels for transporting products. [NHC note]

⁵ John Clayton, later attorney general for Virginia.

⁶ Byrd was nominated to the Council on August 15, 1705, but was not sworn in until September 12, 1709.

⁷ Byrd's sister Susan married John Brayne and lived in England.

by the cruelty of C-r-k-y], that my salary was in a fair way of being increased, that the College was like to be rebuilt by the Queen's bounty, that there was a probability of a peace next winter. I ate mutton for dinner. While we were at dinner, Colonel Harrison, Mr. Commissary, and Mr. Wormeley⁸ came to see us, but would not eat with us. They likewise brought me some letters. Captain Wilcox⁹ dined with us. His people brought me a box of [. . .] from P-r-c-r. I walked about the plantation. Mr. Wormeley and I played at billiards and I won half a crown.

I said my prayers. All the company went away. I had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

AUGUST 27, 1709

I rose at 5 o'clock and read two chapters in Hebrew and some Greek in Josephus.

I said my prayers and ate milk for breakfast. I danced my dance.

I had like to have whipped my maid Anaka for her laziness but I forgave her. I read a little geometry. I denied my man G-r-l to go to a horse race because there was nothing but swearing and drinking there. I ate roast mutton for dinner. In the afternoon I played at piquet with my own wife and made her out of humor by cheating her. I read some Greek in Homer. Then I walked about the plantation. I lent John H-ch £7 [7 English pounds] in his distress.

I said my prayers and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thanks be to God Almighty.

SEPTEMBER 6, 1709

About one o'clock this morning my wife was happily delivered of a son,¹⁰ thanks be to God Almighty. I was awake in a blink and rose and my cousin Harrison met me on the stairs and told me it was a boy. We drank some French wine and went to bed again and rose at 7 o'clock. I read a chapter in Hebrew and then drank chocolate with the women for breakfast. I returned God humble thanks for so great a blessing and recommended my young son to His divine protection. My cousin Harrison and Mrs. Hamlin went away about 9 o'clock and I made my [satisfaction] to them for that kindness. I sent Peter away who brought me a summons to the Council. I read some geometry. The Doctor brought me two letters from England from Captain Stith. I ate roast mutton for dinner. In the afternoon I wrote a letter to England and took a walk about the plantation.

I said my prayers and had good health and good thoughts, thanks be to God Almighty.

MARCH 28, 1710

I rose at 6 o'clock and read a chapter in Hebrew and some Greek in Anacreon.

I ate milk for breakfast and said my prayers. I danced my dance.

About 10 o'clock Major Harrison, Hal Harrison, James Burwell and Mr. Doyley came to play at cricket. Isham Randolph, Mr. Doyley, and I played with them three for a crown. We won one game, they won two. Then we played at billiards till dinner, before which Colonel Ludwell came on his way to Mr. Harrison's. They all dined with us and I ate boiled pork. Soon after dinner the company went away and I took a nap. Then we walked to Mr. Harrison's, whom we found better. We played a game at cricket again. I took leave about 8 and returned home where I found Jenny better. I caused her to be cupped¹¹ and then gave her [m-t-y] pills. This was my birthday, on which I am 36 years old, and I bless God for granting me so many years. I wish I had spent them better.

I neglected to say my prayers but had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

APRIL 18, 1710

I rose at 5 o'clock and read two chapters in Hebrew and some Greek in Homer.

I said my prayers and ate rice milk for breakfast.

Then I went to the capitol about 8 o'clock and settled my accounts till 9. Then I went to the President's where I found several of the Council and about 10 we went to the Council where among other things we

⁸ Probably Ralph Wormeley III, of Rosegill, sheriff of Middlesex in 1704.

⁹ Captain John Wilcox, a sea-captain of Rotherhill, England, who settled in Charles City County. (*William & Mary Quarterly* (I), XI, 59.)

¹⁰ The child, named Parke, after his maternal grandfather, died on July 3, 1710.

¹¹ Cupping was a traditional treatment in which heated glass cups were placed on a person's skin, creating a vacuum which pulls up the skin, the results of which were considered therapeutic. [NHC note]

directed the negroes to be arraigned for high treason.¹² We continued in Council till 4 o'clock and then went to court where we sat till 5. Then I went with my brother Custis to Dr. [Barret's] where my sister was, Mr. Dunn and his wife and Mrs. Chiswell. About 7 o'clock we went to supper and I ate roast mutton. About 9 o'clock I returned home and read a little Latin.

I neglected to say my prayers but had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

JULY 15, 1710

I rose at 5 o'clock and read two chapters in Hebrew and some Greek in Thucydides.

I said my prayers and ate milk and pears for breakfast.

About 7 o'clock the negro boy [*or* Betty] that ran away was brought home. My wife against my will caused little Jenny to be burned with a hot iron, for which I quarreled with her. It was so hot today that I did not intend to go to the launching of Colonel Hill's ship but about 9 o'clock the Colonel was so kind as to come and call us. My wife would not go at first but with much entreaty she at last consented. About 12 o'clock we went and found abundance of company at the ship and about one she was launched and went off very well, notwithstanding several had believe the contrary. When this was over we went to Mr. Platt's to dinner and I ate boiled beef. We stayed till about 5 o'clock and then returned home, where all was well. I found an express from above with a letter from Joe Wilkinson desiring to be discharged from my service when his year was out.

I neglected to say my prayers and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

AUGUST 12, 1710

I rose at 5 o'clock and read a chapter in Hebrew and some Greek in Lucian.

I said my prayers and ate boiled milk for breakfast. I danced my dance.

I had a quarrel with my wife about her servants who did little work. I wrote a long and smart letter to Mr. Perry, wherein I found several faults with his management of the tobacco I sent him and with mistakes he had committed in my affairs. My sloop brought some tobacco from Appomattox. Mr. Bland came over and dined with us on his way to Williamsburg. I ate roast shoat for dinner. In the afternoon Mr. Bland went away and I wrote more letters. I put some tobacco into the sloop for Captain Harvey. It rained and hindered our walk; however we walked a little in the garden.

I neglected to say my prayers but had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

AUGUST 22, 1710

I rose at 5 o'clock and read two chapters in Hebrew and some Greek in Lucian.

I said my prayers and ate boiled milk for breakfast.

John G-r-l was taken sick of a fever. About 9 o'clock Mrs. Harrison came to ask my advice concerning her overseer and those people who sold them drink. I offered my service to wait on her to her quarters which she accepted of. When we came there we saw the overseer and I threatened him severely so he promised never to neglect his business more. Then we went to C-t Ch-r-n¹³ and I threatened him likewise if he ever entertained any of Mrs. Harrison's people any more. He promised, very frightened, too, and then we returned home. I ate whole hominy for dinner. In the afternoon I settled some accounts and then read a little in Grotius. In the evening I had a severe quarrel with little Jenny and beat her too much for which I was sorry. I went into the river.

I said a short prayer and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thanks be to God Almighty.

SEPTEMBER 21, 1710

I rose at 6 o'clock and read nothing but got ready to receive the company.¹⁴ About 8 o'clock the Governor came down. I offered him some of my [fine water]. Then we had milk tea and bread and butter for breakfast. The Governor was pleased with everything and very complaisant. About 10 o'clock Captain Stith came and soon after him Colonel Hill, Mr. Anderson, and several others of the militia officers. The Governor was extremely courteous to them. About 12 o'clock Mr. Clayton went to Mrs. Harrison's and then orders were given to bring all the men into the pasture to

¹² Two leaders of an alleged slave conspiracy were tried and executed. [NHC note]

¹³ Possibly one of the Christian family of Charles City County.

¹⁴ Militia commanders, like Byrd, held regular inspections of their regiments. [NHC note]

muster. Just as we got on our horses it began to rain hard; however, this did not discourage the Governor but away we rode to the men. It rained half an hour and the Governor mustered them all the while and he presented me to the people to be their colonel and commander-in-chief. About 3 o'clock we returned to the house and as many of the officers as could sit at the table stayed to dine with the Governor, and the rest went to take part of the hogshead in the churchyard. We had a good dinner, well served, with which the Governor seemed to be well pleased. I ate venison for dinner. In the evening all the company went away and we took a walk and found a comic freak of a man that was drunk that hung on the pales. Then we went home and played at piquet and I won the pool. About 9 the Governor went to bed.

I had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty, but neglected to say my prayers.

SEPTEMBER 24, 1710

I rose at 6 o'clock and shaved myself and said a short prayer.

The Governor's horses got away but Colonel Hill sent men after them and got them again. We had chocolate for breakfast and about 10 o'clock rode home to my house, where we refreshed ourselves and then the Governor and I went to church in the coach and my wife was terribly out of humor because she could not go likewise. Mr. Anderson preached very well and pleased the Governor. After church I invited abundance of gentlemen home where we had a good dinner. My wife after much persuasion came to dinner with us. The company went away in the evening and the Governor and I took a walk on the river side. The Governor was very willing to favor the iron works. We sat up till 9 o'clock.

I neglected to say my prayers but had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

OCTOBER 9, 1710

I rose at 5 o'clock and got myself ready for my journey, and about 6 o'clock. [I] recommended my wife and my family to God's protection, and after my people had set me over the creek, I got on horseback about 7 and proceeded to Williamsburg where I arrived about 12. About one I went to wait on the Governor, where I found Colonel Digges and several other gentlemen. My wife sent a present of blue wing which were kindly accepted. I ate some roast beef for dinner. In the afternoon we drank a bottle of claret and then we took leave of the Governor and went to the coffeehouse where after we had settled some accounts of the naval officers we played at cards till 11 o'clock. Then I went to my lodgings but my man [slave] was gone to bed and I was shut out. However I called him and beat him for it.

I neglected to say my prayers but had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

OCTOBER 19, 1710

I rose at 6 o'clock and read a chapter in Hebrew and some Greek in Homer.

I said my prayers and ate boiled milk for breakfast.

I settled my accounts with several people. About 11 o'clock I went to court, it being the day appointed for trying the criminals. After we had stayed there about two hours we went into Council and then came down to court again, where we stayed till 4 o'clock and then adjourned. Then I went to dine at the Governor's, where I ate boiled beef for dinner. In the evening we played at cards and I lost 25 shillings. We played at basset.¹⁵ About 11 o'clock I returned to my lodgings. I recommended to the Governor to get some men from the men-of-war for Colonel Hill's ship.

I said my prayers and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

DECEMBER 31, 1710

I rose at 5 o'clock and read a chapter in Hebrew and four leaves in Lucian.

I said my prayers and ate boiled milk for breakfast.

My daughter was very sick all night and vomited a great deal but was a little better this morning. All my sick people were better, thank God, and I had another girl come down sick from the [slave] quarters. I danced my dance. Then I read a sermon in Dr. Tillotson and after that walked in the garden till dinner. I ate roast venison. In the afternoon I looked over my sick people and then took a walk about the plantation. The weather was very warm still. My wife walked with me and when she came back she was very indisposed and went to bed. In the evening I read another sermon in Dr. Tillotson. About 8 o'clock the wind came to northwest and it began to be cold.

¹⁵ "An obsolete game at cards, resembling faro, first played at Venice." —*New English Dictionary*.

I said my prayers and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

JANUARY 2, 1711

I rose at 5 o'clock and read a chapter in Hebrew and nothing in Greek because of the company that was here. I said my prayers and ate boiled milk for breakfast.

I had six sick negroes come down from the quarters. About 9 o'clock my company went away. My wife was a little better and so was my child, thank God, but C-l-y was extremely ill and so was A-g-y. I tended them as much as I could but God Is pleased to afflict me with his judgment for my sins. His holy will be done. I ate some wild turkey. The wind was northeast and it was cold. In the afternoon I read a little English but could not be easy because poor C-l-y was so very ill. I took a melancholy walk. In the evening about 6 o'clock C-l-y died and all the people was grieved at it. I read a little English and gave the necessary orders about the sick people who were 12 in number.

I said my prayers and had good health, good thoughts and good humor, thank God Almighty.

JANUARY 5, 1711

I rose about 3 o'clock and read two chapters in Hebrew and some Greek in Lucian. I said my prayers and ate boiled milk for breakfast.

I danced my dance. My sick people seemed to be all mending except Jenny and A-g-y, God grant them their recovery, if it be his holy will. The child seemed a little [. . .] and so was my wife, who would not dine with us. I ate fish for dinner. I played at billiards in the afternoon with my cousin [Guy]¹⁶ who belongs to the man-of-war and came to see me this morning by the leave of his captain. Then I returned to look after my people. Then my cousin and I took a walk about the plantation but it rained before we came back. The wind was a northeast and threatened bad weather. A-g-y voided three worms, which gave her some ease but did not remove the pain in her side. Upon this, I gave to all the sick people the wormseed because I believed their sickness proceeded from worms in some measure.

I said my prayers and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

JANUARY 9, 1711

I rose about 5 and read a chapter in Hebrew and eight leave in Lucian. I said my prayers and ate boiled milk for breakfast.

My people continued sick and one woman very sick, but A-g-y was better, thank God. I tended them diligently and went to the quarters to see the negroes there and gave the necessary orders about them. The child was very sick again. I set my closet in order till dinner. I ate roast beef. In the afternoon Mr. [Guy] and I played at billiards. I visited my people again and had one woman extremely sick. In the evening Joe Wilkinson's [wife] came to beg for her husband but I would not speak to her for fear of being persuaded by her tears which women have always ready at command. At night I read some news and drank a bottle of cider.

I said my prayers and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

JANUARY 14, 1711

I rose about 5 o'clock and read two chapters in Hebrew and three chapters in the Greek Testament.

Then I wrote a letter to Mr. G-r-l to send by Dick to whose care I committed 18 new negroes to be carried up to the Falls. They went away about 8 o'clock. I said my prayers and ate boiled milk for breakfast. All my sick people grew better, thank God, only one girl was extremely ill. About 10 o'clock Tom Osborne came down to settle our bargain. He stayed till about 12 o'clock and then returned home but had something to eat first. I danced my dance and took a walk before dinner. I ate boiled beef. In the afternoon we took a walk with the child who was a little better but very fretful. I read a sermon of Dr. Tillotson, and in the evening took a walk. At night we had another negro girl dead; God's will be done. We drank a bottle of punch.

I said my prayers and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

JANUARY 31, 1711

I rose at 5 o'clock and read two chapters in Hebrew and some Greek in Lucian.

¹⁶ Mary Byrd, sister of William Bird I, married a Mr. Guy in England. This may have been one of the family. (*Virginia Magazine*, XXVI, 127.)

I said my prayers and ate boiled milk for breakfast.

My wife quarreled with me about not sending for Mrs. Dunn when it rained to [lend her John]. She threatened to kill herself but had more discretion. I danced my dance and then read some English about [love]. It rained again all the morning. I ate some roast shoat for dinner. In the afternoon Nurse was taken sick of a [purging]. I took a walk to see the boatwright at work. My wife came into good humor again and we resolved to live for the future in love and peace. At night I ate some battered eggs with her and drank some cider. I said my prayers and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty. The wind was still northeast as it was when the moon was at full and since that a good deal of rain has fallen. The boy whose thigh was swollen got worse.

FEBRUARY 5, 1711

I rose about 8 o'clock and found my cold still worse.
I said my prayers and ate milk and potatoes for breakfast.

My wife and I quarreled about her pulling her brows. She threatened she would not go to Williamsburg if she might not pull them; I refused, however, and got the better of her, and maintained my authority. About 10 o'clock we went over the river and got to Colonel Duke's about 11. There I ate some toast and canary. Then we proceeded to Queen's Creek, where we found all well, thank God. We ate roast goose for supper. The women prepared to go to the Governor's the next day and my brother and I talked of old stories. My cold grew exceedingly bad so that I thought I should be sick. My sister gave me some sage tea and leaves of [s-m-n-k] which made me mad all night so that I could not sleep but was much disordered by it.

I neglected to say my prayers in form but had good thoughts,
good humor, and indifferent health, thank God Almighty.

FEBRUARY 27, 1711

I rose at 6 o'clock and read two chapters in Hebrew and some Greek in Lucian.
I said my prayers and ate boiled milk for breakfast.

I danced my dance and then went to the brick house to see my people pile the planks and found them all idle for which I threatened them soundly but did not whip them. The weather was cold and the wind at northeast. I wrote a letter to England. Then I read some English till 12 o'clock when Mr. Dunn and his wife came. I ate boiled beef for dinner. In the afternoon Mr. Dunn and I played at billiards. Then we took a long walk about the plantation and looked over all my business. In the evening my wife and little Jenny had a great quarrel in which my wife got the worst but at last by the help of the family Jenny was overcome and soundly whipped. At night I ate some bread and cheese.

I said my prayers but had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

MARCH 4, 1711

I rose at 8 o'clock and read two chapters in Hebrew and some Greek in Lucian.
I said my prayers and ate boiled milk for breakfast.

I danced my dance. My [wife] continued still disordered in her back and belly. However she went to church with Mrs. Dunn in the coach and I walked there. Mr. Anderson gave us a good sermon. After church nobody came home with us. Little Peter came from above and brought news another negro died, which makes 17 this winter; God's will be done. Several others are sick. The Lord have mercy on them, and spare them if it be His will. I ate boiled beef for dinner. In the afternoon Mrs. Dunn went away and I was at the trouble to send John home with her, who did not come back till 8 o'clock. He had a great cold still. In the evening I took a walk about the plantation. In the evening I read a little English.

I said my prayers and had good health, good thoughts, and indifferent humor, thank God Almighty.

MARCH 26, 1711

I rose at 6 o'clock and read nothing. I neglected to say my prayers and ate boiled milk for breakfast and at 9 o'clock I took some milk tea with the company.

Several Indians came here yesterday to complain that the Nottoway Indians and several northern Indians had conferred together to cut them off. I told the Governor of it and he sent an order to the Nottoways to forbid them and ordered Colonel Harrison to cause some of the northern Indians to come to him to declare their business. About 10 o'clock several gentlemen came to wait on the Governor, who stayed to dinner,

and among the rest Captain Wilcox, who told me Captain John Stith was very bad. We had a handsome dinner; I ate a partridge. About 5 the gentlemen went away and the Governor, the Doctor, and I took a walk. At night the Doctor was sent for to Captain Stith's and went about 8 o'clock at night. We drank several things. My sister and Mrs. Dunn came this afternoon.

I neglected to say my prayers but had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

OCTOBER 21, 1711

I rose at 6 o'clock and we began to pack up our baggage in order to return.

We drank chocolate with the Governor and about 10 o'clock we took leave of the Nottoway town and Indian boys went away with us that were designed for College. The Governor made three proposals to the Tuscaroras: that they would join with the English to cut off those Indians that had killed the people of Carolina, that they should have 40 shillings for every head they brought in of those guilty Indians and be paid the price of a slave for all they brought in alive, and that they should send one of the chief men's sons out of every town to the College. I waited on the Governor about ten miles and then took leave of him and he went to Mr. Cargill's and I with Colonel Hill, Mr. Platt and John Hardiman went to Colonel Harrison's where we got about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. About 4 we dined and I ate some boiled beef. My man's horse was lame for which he was let blood. At night I asked a negro girl to kiss me, and when I went to bed I was very cold because I pulled off my clothes after lying in them so long.

I neglected to say my prayers but had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

NOVEMBER 22, 1711

I rose about 7 o'clock and read a chapter in Hebrew and some Greek in Homer.

I said my prayers and ate boiled milk for breakfast.

Mr. Bland came to see me and told me he would go about the dividing of old Colonel Parke's land as we desired. About 11 I went to the capitol where I found the Governor, who had letters from the Governor of North Carolina which gave a terrible account of the state of Carolina. He had also a letter from the Baron by which he had a relation of his being taken with Mr. Lawson by the Indians and of Mr. Lawson's murder.¹⁷ The House of Burgesses brought their address of thanks to which the Governor answered them that he would thank them when he saw them act with as little self interest as he had done. About 3 o'clock we went to dinner and I ate some roast goose. Then I took a walk to the Governor's new house with Frank W-1-s and then returned to the coffeehouse where I lost 12 pounds 10 shillings and about 10 o'clock returned home very much out of humor to think myself such a fool.

I said my prayers and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

It was very hot till about 9 o'clock in the evening and then it grew cold.

DECEMBER 3, 1711

I rose about 7 o'clock and read nothing in Hebrew and a chapter in the Testament.

I said my prayers and had boiled milk for breakfast

It threatened to snow. Then I went to see L-s-n and found him very ill still and had not rested all night. About 9 o'clock Mr. G-r-l went away and then Mr. Mumford and I took a walk about the plantation and when we returned we found Colonel Hill who came in just before dinner. I ate roast venison for dinner. The Colonel stayed with me till late in the afternoon and then went over the river and so did Mr. Mumford. In the evening it began to snow and snowed almost all night. I wrote a contract with my overseer and then I went to see L-s-n and found him with a pain in his side. I gave him some laudanum and committed him to God Almighty. Then I said a short prayer and recommended my sick man to heaven.

I had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

MARCH 3, 1712

I rose about 7 o'clock and read a chapter in Hebrew and some Greek in Lucian.

I said my prayers and ate some boiled milk for breakfast.

My daughter was better this morning, thank God. I beat Billy Wilkins for telling a lie. I settled some accounts and read some Latin and then read some news till dinner and then ate some roast beef for dinner.

¹⁷ John Lawson, Surveyor General of North Carolina, and Baron Christophe von Graffenried, founder of New Born, North Carolina, were captured by the Tuscaroras in 1711 during the Tuscarora War. Graffenried was released but Lawson was killed. [NHC note]

In the afternoon I read more news and then more Latin. I danced my dance and in the evening took a walk about the plantation and my wife with me. In the evening Tom returned from Williamsburg with letters from several persons containing some public [s-s] concerning the Duke of Marlborough being removed from all his places of honor and profit and that it was talked that he was also put into the Tower.

I read nothing but said my prayers and had good health, good thoughts and good humor, thank God Almighty.

MAY 10, 1712

I rose about 6 o'clock and found it extremely cold. I read two chapters in Hebrew and some Greek in Lucian. I said my prayers and ate boiled milk for breakfast.

I danced my dance. It rained a cold rain, the wind northeast. However my people went to plant tobacco again and planted about 26,000 this day. I settled several accounts and then read news till dinner and then I ate some stewed lamb. In the afternoon put several things in order and settled more accounts and read some Dutch till the evening and then I took a walk about the plantation and went to M-n-s orchard and there got some cherries and brought them home to my wife. I gave all the people a dram after planting in the rain. At night we ate some bread and butter and drank some Lisbon wine.

I said my prayers shortly and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.

AUGUST 28, 1712

I rose about 5 o'clock and read a chapter in Hebrew and some Greek in Herodian. I said my prayers and ate nothing for breakfast, to settle my stomach after feasting abroad.

I danced my dance. The weather was cloudy and warm. My wife was indisposed for want of sleep, having been disturbed by mosquitoes, which we have more of this year than ever I knew. I read some law till dinner and then I ate some hogs' haslet. In the afternoon I went to the granary to see the people work and then returned and read some Latin till the evening and then I took a walk about the plantation and saw my people making cider. My wife was indisposed very much at night which made me go to bed soon. I said my prayers and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty. In the night my wife was disturbed with mosquitoes and could not sleep herself nor would she let me sleep.

