

# On Gloucester Street

Although the time is now 20 days past Christmas, and the holiday trees and decorations have been put away, a special evening still lingers in my mind. On a clear, moonlit night on Friday, December 17, standing on Duke of Gloucester Street in Williamsburg, Virginia, Lola and I were privileged to have a colonial Christmas spiritual experience.

We had gone to the King's Arms Tavern for dinner. It offers an outstanding menu, and one of its specialties is peanut soup, which you must try if you go. The employees of this dining establishment all dress in the costumes of the 18th Century colonies, and the fare is authentic. We were seated on the second floor, next to a window with a view of the street below.

The dinner was almost finished when the sound of the Fifes and Drums Corps drifted into earshot. As we peered out the window, flaming torches preceding the band caught our attention, and then the red-and-white uniforms of its members, with three-cornered hats, came into view. Several hundred people lined the street, or marched behind the band. It was quite a sight.

We hurriedly concluded our meal and rushed downstairs, out onto the street, to see what would follow. The band played for a few minutes where it stood, then paraded down the street to another location, in front of Wetherburn's Tavern, where it gave a 30-minute concert.

All the shops and buildings along Duke of Gloucester Street were adorned in Christmas finery. These mostly white-frame buildings all had a single candle in each window, with greenery and an array of natural items to creatively form wreaths for the doors or above the windows. One wreath, for example, included peppers and oyster shells amidst the evergreen boughs. As the Fife and Drum Corps appeared, runners lit torches on poles for blocks along the street.

The blend of the sounds of fifes and drums is very distinctive, and it stirred a patriotic fervor within. The band played some music from colonial times, patriotic tunes and included some Christmas carols. In my mind's eye, I could picture a similar scene on this street in the 1700s, with the Fifes and Drums delighting a crowd of onlookers gathered at street-side with flickering flames from the torches reflecting on their faces. All too soon, the concert was over, and the members of the Fifes and Drums mixed and mingled with spectators before returning to their homes.

Nay, the night was not over. Gathered on the steps of Wetherburn's Tavern was a group of ladies known as Sweet Adelines. The harmony of their trained

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voices echoed down Duke of Gloucester Street through the chill night air. They sang Christmas carols, and on two different occasions, led the crowd of hundreds in a sing-a-long, and it sounded as if everyone joined in. I will never forget singing "Silent Night" and "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" in the cradle of American liberty.

As we sang about the newborn King, I recalled that the people who fled England to come to the New World did so because of religious persecution, and their desire to have the freedom to worship the God they served and adored. Their love of Christ drove them here, and the expression of their faith would find form in testimony and singing along the streets of the Williamsburg of their day.

And so, for a brief period of time -- standing where they stood -- I felt a strong spiritual connection to the colonists who established Williamsburg. It was all possible, of course, because of our common bond, our faith in Jesus Christ.

--Beecher Hunter