● THE COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

interpreter

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Update on Peyton Randolph Outbuildings Project

Marley Brown III is the director of excavations and conservation. He describes recent finds on the Peyton Randolph site.

As part of the Foundation's overall effort to enrich its interpretation of eighteenth-century family life and household domestic activity within the Historic Area, a long-term excavation project is now being conducted on the back lot of the Peyton Randolph House. Its main purpose is to provide basic evidence of the outbuildings, pathways, and gardens associated with the Randolph family's tenure on the property from 1724 until 1783. This evidence, in combination with information provided by the Department of Architecture, will be used to develop building reconstruction and landscape plans for the lot. At the same time, the Peyton Randolph outbuildings' excavation serves as a demonstration exhibit within the Historic Area, and is explained to our visitors by specially trained interpretive personnel. The site is now open to the public seven days a week.

Although the period during which Peyton Randolph's household was in residence, about 1755 to 1775, is of greatest interest, the project seeks to characterize the changing configuration of the lot from 1714 to the present. When viewed from this perspective, patterns apparent in the organization and use of space on the Randolph lot may be compared to the spatial development of other properties within the Historic Area occupied by families whose economic means and social position were either markedly different from, or similar to, the Randolphs. In this way, it will be possible to measure the extent to which the architectural character of outbuildings, their arrangement within the yard, and principles employed in landscape design varied according to the occupation, wealth, and education of town residents during the eighteenth century.

Excavation of the Randolph yard has also revealed some substantial domestic refuse deposits from the period 1720 through 1765. We anticipate finding additional deposits associated with Peyton's household as work progresses. This evidence may prove valuable for the house refurnishing project now being undertaken by the Department of Collections. These materials may also figure in future comparative studies of economic differences between households in the capital based on the quantitative analyses of probate inventories and archaeological remains.

Recent field work, under the direction of staff archaeologists Linda Derry and Andrew Edwards, has been concentrated in the back lot near the present windmill. Structure A, the brick foundation uncovered near North England Street, was a wooden frame building, 16 by 20 feet with a wood floor and a corner hearth. It appears to have been built after 1720, probably by Sir John, and was removed between 1755 and 1765 by his son, Peyton Randolph. After the structure was removed, the open foundation remained and this area became a dump for household and architectural debris.

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The Merchant's Exchange Relocated

By the last decade of the colonial period, merchants and wealthy planters gathered near the Capitol to transact commercial and financial business quarterly during sessions of the General Court and the Court of Oyer and Terminer. In November 1765 Lieutenant Governor Francis Fauquier wrote of "that part of the Town which is call'd the Exchange tho' an open Street, where all money business is transacted."

Evidence locating the exchange is scanty

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Peyton Randolph, *continued*

Forty feet east of Structure A, another 16 by 20-foot building was built about 1770, possibly during Peyton Randolph's last years, and survived into the early nineteenth century. It was constructed with recycled brick and only the south wall, which faces the main house, was made of English bond. The three remaining walls were in random bond. Apparently, even prestigious town dwellers like the Randolphs skimped on the construction of back lot outbuildings. The nearby landscaping also contained recycled materials, brickbats, and plaster chunks. The foundation for an earlier 10 by 10-foot building remains under Structure C. Its size, the charcoal found in association with it, and the structure's distance from the main house suggest that it may have been a smokehouse. Footings for this building, known as Structure D, were also constructed of recycled bricks.

As an experiment, brick samples from this and other buildings have been sent to a laboratory at the University of Utah for thermoluminescence (TL) dating. Good results from this test would be very important since many eighteenth-century builders' trenches (the feature archaeologists use to determine the construction date of a structure) were destroyed by cross-trenching in the early days of excavation work done at Colonial Williamsburg. Thermoluminescence, a technique that has been used for some time, for dating ceramics, measures the amount of light given off by certain "trapped" electrons when the sample is burned. These electrons accumulate at a constant rate since the original firing of the brick and therefore may be used to measure time. The resulting date can be accurate to within 4 to 7 percent and will tell us approximately when the brick was made—not, of course, when Structure D was erected. The date will be useful in determining the earliest point in which Structure D *could* have been built. It is also a good experiment simply to find out whether or not this test is useful in eighteenth-century archaeology. A brick from the foundation of Structure A was also sent for TL dating. This date may be more informative as there is no evidence that the bricks from "A" were used in a previous structure.

Two major walkways were also found during the last field season. One ran along the north and east sides of Structure A and apparently led to the side door of the older section of the Randolph home built during the second decade of the eighteenth century. Another serviced Structure C and led to the back door of the newer section of the house. Because Structure A dates to the first half of the eighteenth century, and Structure C dates to the second half, this may indicate the entire layout of the backyard was restructured when the house was remodeled sometime shortly after Peyton inherited the property from his mother in the late 1750s.

Artifact collections from the first season's work have been inventoried using a detailed computer-based system developed by the Office of Excavation and Conservation. This system has made it possible to perform spatial and functional analyses of artifacts in a much more efficient manner than would have been possible with more traditional methods. We have completed an interim report describing the first phase of the work, and it will be available to interpretive staff in the very near future.

Merchants' Exchange, *continued*

and ambiguous. In the 1930s the area east of the Capitol was designated the exchange. Recent research indicates that the area west of the Capitol is a more likely location. The reasoning, accepted by the Program Planning and Review Committee, is as follows.

Fauquier's letter to the Board of Trade, noted above, describes an incident which occurred on October 30 outside the coffeehouse that overlooked the exchange. An article in Royle's *Virginia Gazette*, datelined October 31, also mentions the incident at the coffeehouse, but neither source locates the structure or identifies its keeper. For background on the incident involving stamp distributor George Mercer, see the 1962 *President's Report*, pp. 17-20, and Rutherfoord Goodwin, *A Brief and True Report Concerning Williamsburg in Virginia*, pp. 50–51 and 229–233.

Where do other references locate the coffeehouse—so called but offering tavern services—at this time? In June 1767 tavern keeper Richard Charlton advertised that he was operating the coffeehouse. Even though Charlton's location is unknown, it could have been the building immediately west of the Public Records Office (where the frame Armistead House stands), which was identified as a coffeehouse at various times between 1769 and 1777. No references to the building reconstructed as Christiana Campbell's Tavern identify it as a coffeehouse—either when Jane Vobe (ca. 1765–1771) or Christiana Campbell (1772–ca. 1780) operated it. Rather, it was called a tavern or simply "Mrs. Vobe's" or

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Merchants' Exchange, *continued*

"Mrs. Campbells."

Researchers have found a remarkable consistency in the way eighteenth-century residents and others oriented themselves and described Williamsburg locations: "up" or "above" was to the west and "down" or "below" was to the east. (Most interpreters are familiar with the note in James Geddy's 1772 advertisement that he hoped the reasonableness of his goods "will remove that Objection to his Shop's being too high up Town.") Considering this, when the newspaper account mentions Mercer "walking up streets as far as the Capitol in his way to the Governour's" and the crowd attending "him up as far as the Coffee House," it locates the place he came from as east of the Capitol and the coffeehouse as west of the Capitol.

The absence of references to Campbell's Tavern being called a coffeehouse, the fact that the building immediately west of the Public Records Office is occasionally called a coffeehouse from the late 1760s through the 1770s, and the logistics of Mercer's movements and those of the crowd convince me that in 1765 the coffeehouse was west of the Capitol. And since Fauquier states that the coffeehouse was "situated in that part of the Town which is call'd the Exchange," I feel that the evidence is sufficient to relocate the exchange west of the Capitol at the eastern end of Duke of Gloucester Street.

—Pat Gibbs

The Exchange

In the January 1981 *Fresh Advices*, Harold Gill of the research department reported on the values and limitations of estate inventories as sources of information. I want to emphasize the limitations Mr. Gill mentioned and to show examples of some of the pitfalls to avoid in interpreting estate inventories.

The principal value of inventories lies in helping us link the objects of the eighteenth century with the people who owned them. Organized studies of a large number of inventories from a particular time or region have produced important information about the distribution of goods and trends of ownership. Individual inventories can be combined with archaeological evidence, print sources, and eyewitness descriptions to provide the basis for furnishing a home or shop.

Nonetheless the value and accessibility of estate inventories may lead some historians to ignore their limitations. Some factors that restrict the usefulness of inventories are: (1) All estates were not inventoried; (2) All inventories are not equally accurate or detailed; (3) Some objects were deliberately excluded from even the most detailed inventories; (4) Objects are often described so cryptically that age, style, condition, or positive identification are impossible to determine.

Although Virginia law required all estates to be inventoried by court-appointed agents called appraisers, some estates were either not inventoried or the inventories were not recorded. These missing inventories and the unknown reasons behind their absence introduce an element of error into even the most detailed statistical analysis. It could be that a large percentage of the missing inventories are of people in a particular age, income, or occupational group leaving that group underrepresented in the study. No matter how large the sample, a statistical study is not accurate unless the sample is selected at random from the group being studied.

Although the court selected appraisers from the community who were generally familiar with the tools and possessions of the deceased, the detail and accuracy of the inventories vary considerably. Some show great attention to detail and careful recording while others have mistakes varying from mathematical errors to the omission of entire rooms. It is fairly common to find inventories of tobacco planters that show no tools for working the fields. One inventory listed the goods in the bedroom "over the parlor" but did not otherwise mention the parlor. Whether omissions of this type were deliberate or accidental is hard to determine.

Even the most detailed inventories do not list everything present on the site. Because inventories were of the personal property of the deceased, they included only movable items such as furnishings, tools, livestock, and so on. Real property such as land, buildings, built-in furniture (bookcases, cupboards, and so forth), and stationary equipment (cider presses, forges, etc.) were excluded. This distinction between real property and personal property limits what researchers can learn from inventories. For example, a study to determine the number of beds in seventeenth-century homes could not use inventories as a source because in that period beds were often built in.

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Inventories, *continued*

Also excluded from the inventory was the personal property claimed by other members of the family. A widow could elect to claim her dower or one-third share of the estate before the inventory was taken. Individual objects having special value or usefulness to a younger person were sometimes given to children before the death of an elderly man. The absence of firearms from the inventories of men, who were required to own a gun for the militia, can be seen as an example of this. Some elderly people gave away much of their estate and even deeded over their land in exchange for maintenance in their old age.

The inventory of Lord Botetourt is one of the best we have and is therefore a good example of how hard it is to figure out exactly what is being described. "In the Hall and Passage below" we find "ten large globe lamps." It took considerable detective work and a fortuitous look at a trade card to decipher this entry. Other entries such as "five maps," or "20 prints," or "one old pine table" leave even more to the imagination. (The Botetourt inventory does not list values. Other inventories, called appraisements, include the values of individual items and the total value of personal property in the estate. The fact that an inventory is not appraised automatically tells us two things about the decedent: his estate was considered financially sound, and in his will he had requested that his estate not be appraised. Both conditions had to be met before the document could omit values.)

Another problem with using inventories to dictate furnishings occurs when the estate includes more than one site. Anthony Hay's inventory included the property found in his house and the Raleigh Tavern, and we cannot be sure of what was where.

When looking at an inventory it is best to think of it as a list of some, but probably not all, of the personal property of the deceased. More importantly it must be remembered that an inventory does not give a complete picture of a family's wealth, life-style, or furnishing plan. Inventories must be used in conjunction with other sources and common sense for their interpretation to be valid.

—Gary Brumfield

Tact

Many of you worked over the Summit weekend and remarked about how strange the Historic Area seemed without the usual visitors. By the end of the second day comments such as "I'm looking forward to crowds again" began to surface.

Perhaps one of the side effects of the summit is our realization of just how much we depend upon our guests. We are well aware of the financial aspects of their presence, but did you not also become aware of just how people-oriented our jobs and *we* are? Our crowds are once again with us, and now we see and hear the presence we missed that weekend in May.

For their comfort are you aware of:

- Delightful and shady gardens where weary guests may rest for a few minutes?
- The bus schedule and closest bus stop to your site?
- The nearest rest rooms and cold drink facilities in relation to your building or site?
- Those rest rooms with facilities for the care of infants and small children?
- Those rest rooms that provide facilities for the handicapped?
- Special events on any given day so that guests have an opportunity to enjoy a parade or special military review?

You undoubtedly can contribute other helpful suggestions to this list. Each of these by itself is a small gesture of thoughtfulness, but how greatly each can enhance our visitors' comfort!

The Visitor's companion is aptly titled because it can be an invaluable aid to our guests' experience. First and foremost: You must be aware of the information it contains so that you can answer visitors' questions. For instance, gardens open to the public are marked with a sign on the gate; most rest rooms provide at least shelf space for the care of infants and small children; rest rooms with facilities for the handicapped are specially marked on the map. Show your guests how to use this publication for themselves. They will appreciate the independence.

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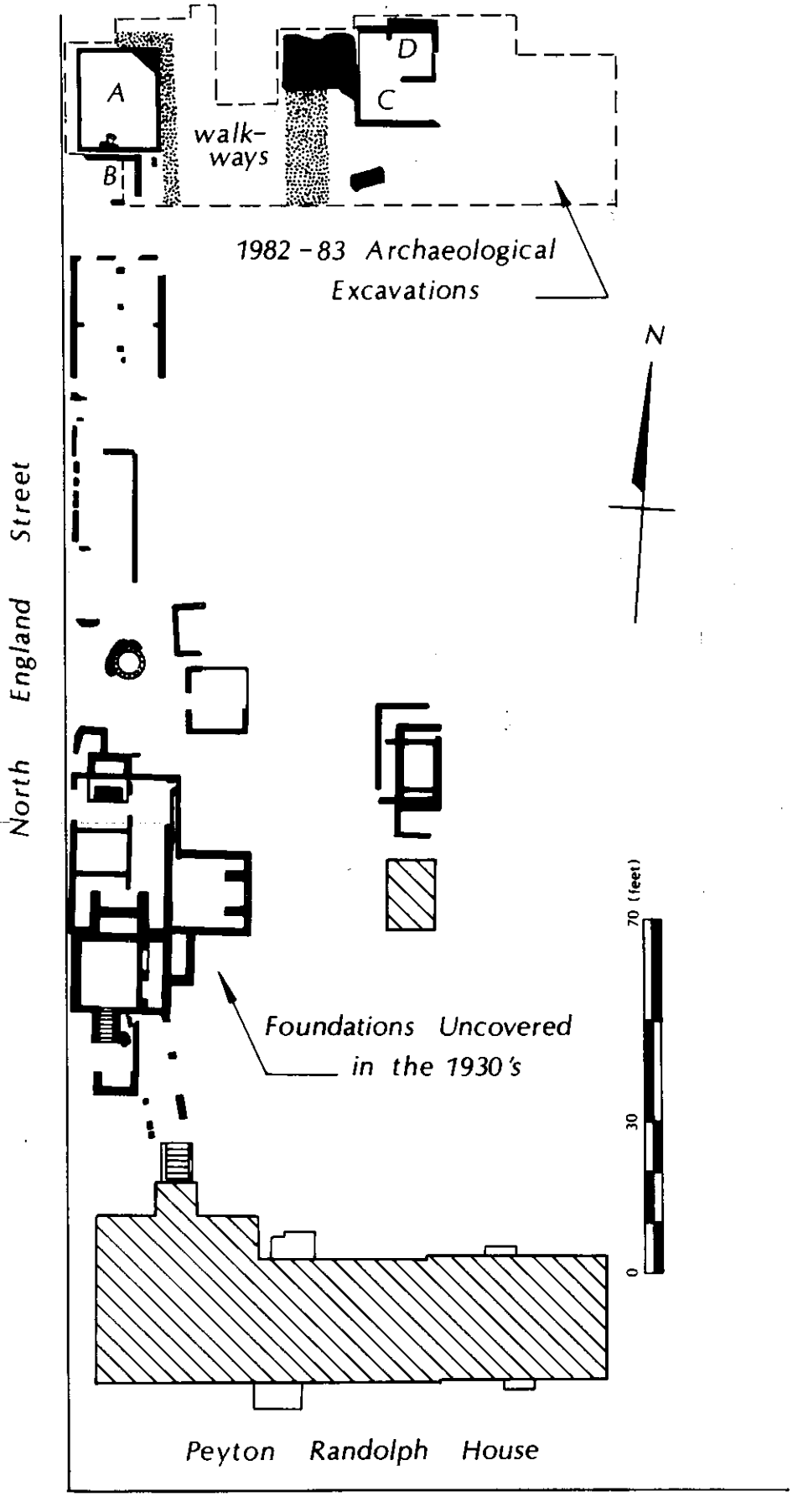
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