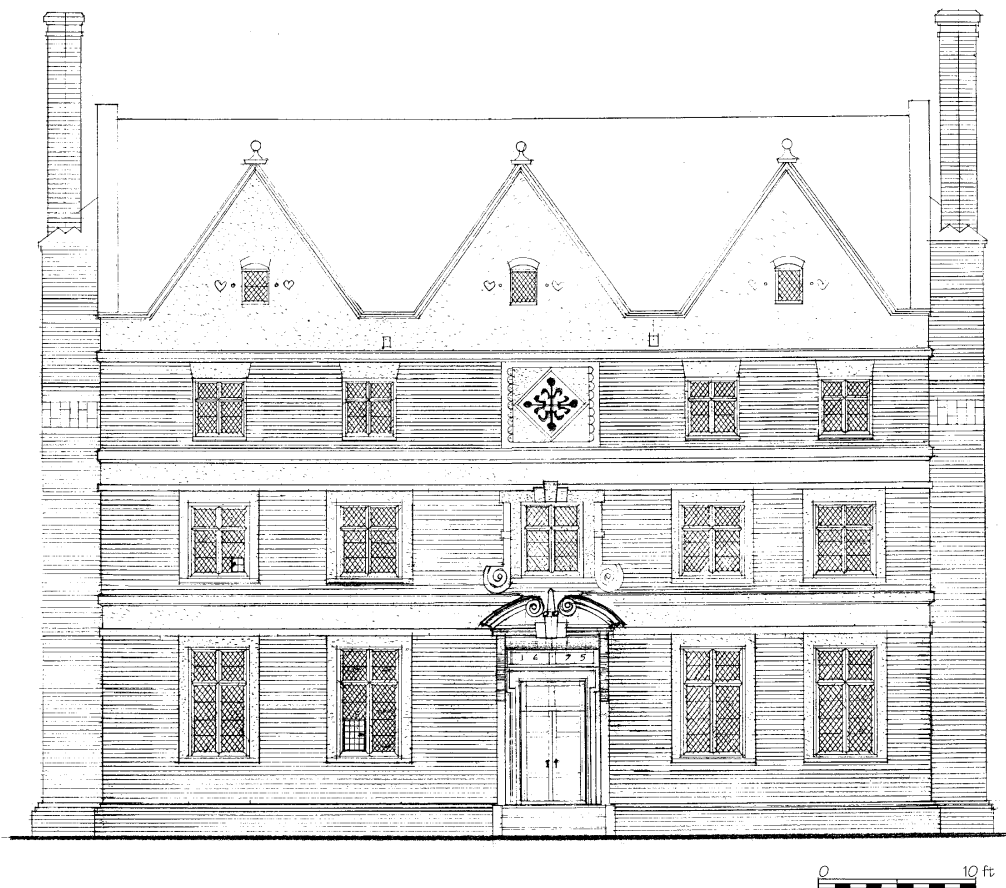


ARCHAEOLOGY AT ARLINGTON:

Excavations at the Ancestral Custis Plantation,
Northampton County, Virginia

Nicholas M. Lucchetti

with contributions by
Edward A. Chappell and
Beverly A. Straube



Virginia Company Foundation
and
The Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities

Graphics and maps by Jamie E. May
Design and production by Elliott Jordan

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Acknowledgements

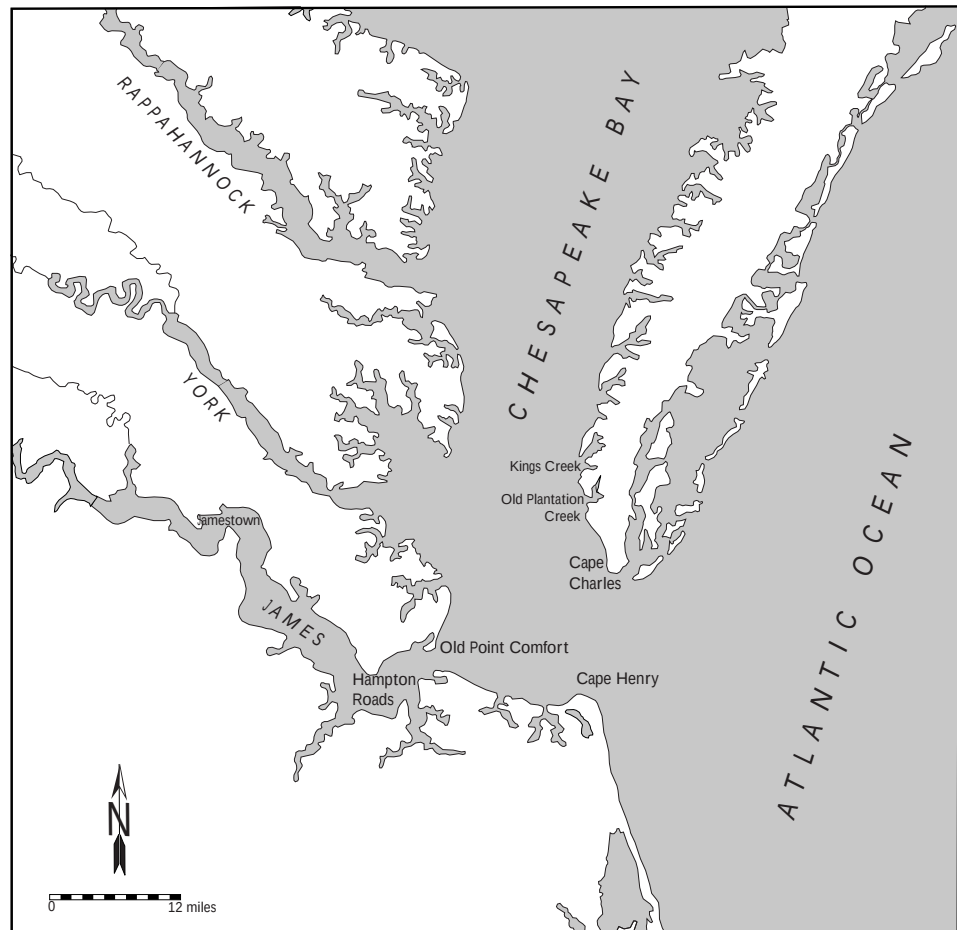
Renewed archaeological excavations at Arlington were conducted from May 15-June 7 1994 under the general guidance of then Virginia Company Foundation (VCF) president Dr. William Kelso, now Director of Archaeology for the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA), and VCF Trustee Dr. Cary Carson, Vice President for Research of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (CWF). The archaeological team consisted of Drs. Kelso and Carson, Dr. Fraser D. Neiman, Jamie May, Elliott Jordan, David K. Hazzard, Dane Magoon, Bradley Macdonald, William Moore, and Perry McSherry. Nicholas M. Lucchetti served as the Project Archaeologist and directed the excavations. A CWF architectural history team of Carson, Edward Chappell, Willie Graham, Dr. Carl Lounsbury, and Mark R. Wenger, recorded and interpreted the architectural remains uncovered during the 1988 and 1994 work at Arlington and collaborated in the development of an architectural interpretation. The artifacts were identified by former VCF and current APVA curator Beverly A. Straube. Retired CWF Director of Archaeology Ivor Noel Hume visited the site and made several important observations and CWF photographer Dave Doody donated a large collection of slides taken of the excavations to the APVA.

The VCF merged with the APVA in 1997 and this report was produced by the APVA. The illustrations were created by Jamie May, except for Figure 2 which was drawn by Natalie Larsen and Figures 25-27 which were composed by Cary Carson. Figures 7 and 8 are reworked from original distribution maps produced by field archaeologist John Bedell. Architectural details in Figure 12 were taken from a plan provided by CWF Department of Architectural History. Elliott Jordan handled the report design and production.

The author is indebted to Bly Straube and Bill Kelso for final editing. Much of the architectural information in this report is the result of numerous discussions with colleagues Cary Carson and Edward Chappell, however, any errors of fact or misinterpretations are the responsibility of the author.

Anyone interested in the history and archaeology of Arlington owes a very special thanks to Mrs. Jean Mihalyka and Mr. James B. Lynch, Jr. A long-time resident of the Eastern Shore of Virginia, Mrs. Mihalyka's energetic vigilance in protecting the Arlington site is the reason that it survives today. Mr. Lynch, a Custis descendant and scholar, contributed the funds that made the 1994 excavation, and all the exciting discoveries possible.

Figure 1. The lower Chesapeake and the Eastern Shore of Virginia.



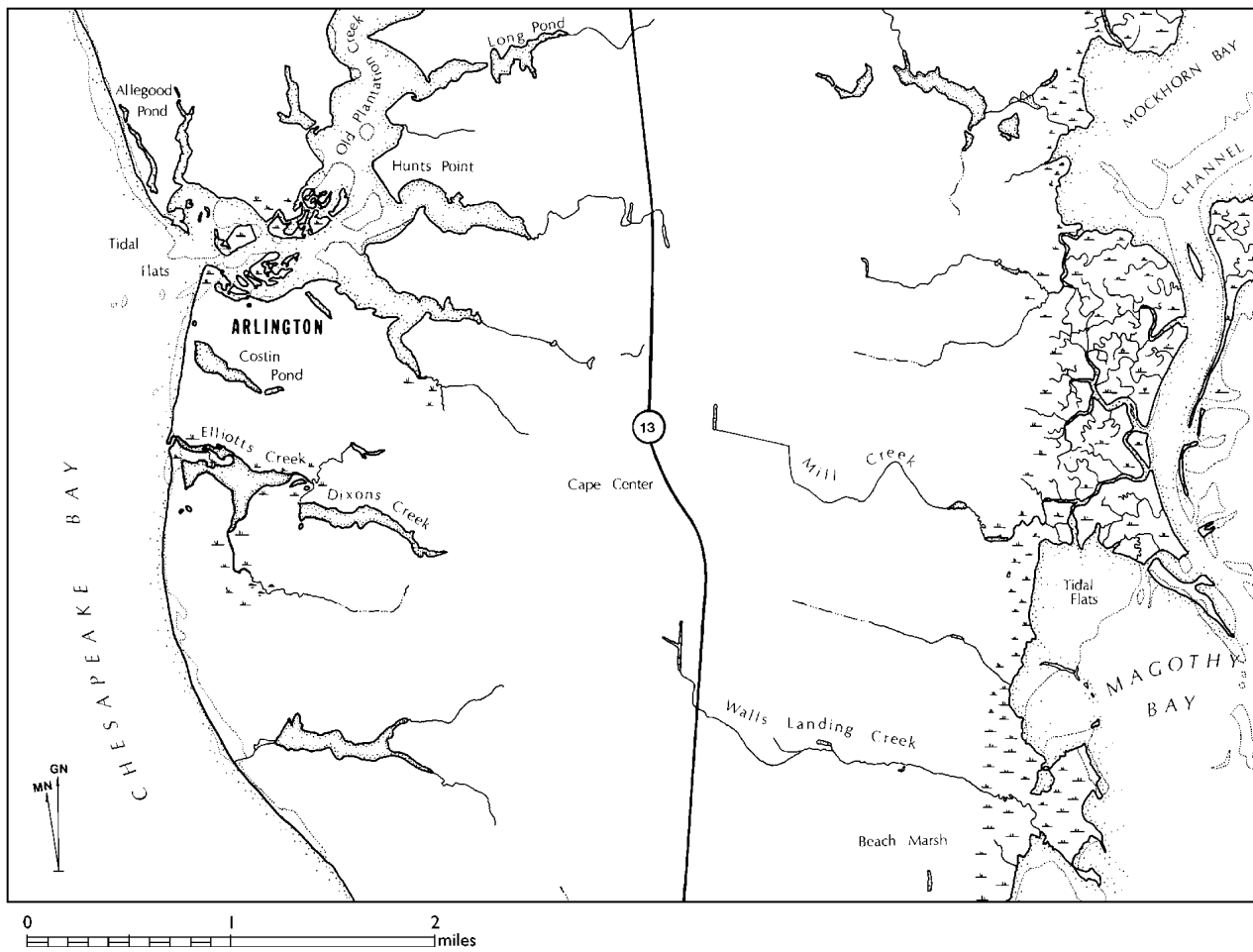


Figure 2. Old Plantation Creek environs and the location of Arlington.

Figure 3. Tombs of John Custis II and John Custis IV.



INTRODUCTION

The land along the south bank of Old Plantation Creek on Virginia's Eastern Shore is one of the most significant historic properties in the nation (Figure 1). After centuries of occupation by American Indians, in 1619 the Old Plantation Creek/King's Creek area became the site of Accomack Plantation, the first permanent English settlement on the Eastern Shore. Some 50 years later, John Custis II established a prosperous plantation whose core was the most magnificent mansion in the Chesapeake. The Custis plantation apparently was named in honor of a great benefactor of the family, Lord Arlington, or possibly after the English village of Arlington-Bibury that was home to the first generation of Custises (Figure 2) (Lynch 1993:173). It has been more than three and one-half centuries since Arlington dominated the landscape, yet it still lives on, giving its name to the land that lies at the soul of America, Arlington National Cemetery.

Arlington's path to national recognition began in 1759 when Martha Dandridge Custis, widow of John Custis IV's son Daniel, married a twenty-six year old army colonel named George Washington. En route to becoming the father of the country, Washington also became administrator of his wife's property on the Eastern Shore. Martha's great-granddaughter, Mary A. R. Custis, also married a young military officer and the Custis family estate passed to a second man who, like George Washington, would become an American icon. Ironically, some thirty years after his marriage to Mary Custis in 1831, Robert E. Lee would reluctantly command one of the armies striving to divide the nation won by his wife's legendary ancestor. Thus, the founding of the country and the war which almost tore it apart were linked through the Custis family.

Despite the destruction of Arlington over 250 years ago, the name of the ancestral Custis family plantation remains alive today in the American consciousness. George Washington Parke Custis, Martha's grandson who was adopted by the General and his wife, built a mansion on the Potomac River near Mount Vernon in the early nineteenth century which became the namesake of the first Custis home in Virginia. Today, Arlington House is owned by the National Park Service and its grounds became the national cemetery after the Civil War.

Arlington fell into disuse sometime in the early 18th century and all the ruins of the abandoned plantation eventually disappeared beneath the waves of grain fields. Until recently, the only visible remains related to Arlington were the table tombs of John Custis II and his grandson John Custis IV (Figure 3). The Custis Tombs site, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was acquired in the 1970's by the APVA. Who, soon thereafter, constructed the brick enclosure that now surrounds the tombstones.

In the spring of 1987, the Virginia Department of Historic Landmarks (VDHL) conducted a brief archaeological survey of the traditional Arlington site near the Custis Tombs. VDHL archaeologists David K. Hazzard and Keith T. Egloff discovered sections of a brick foundation for a large structure that lay hidden beneath the foot-thick layer of plow-zone created by hundreds of years of cultivation (VDHL 1988:28-32). The possibility that the brickwork was part of the Arlington foundation was greatly enhanced when the state archaeologists discovered a wine bottle seal with the initials "IC" (the capital J was represented by a crossed I in 17th-century orthography).

Subsequently, the DiCanio Organization, which planned to develop the property, commissioned the James River Institute for Archaeology, Inc. (JRIA) to undertake an archaeological assessment of three contiguous lots that totaled about seven acres immediately west of the Custis Tombs and where the VDHL survey located the brick foundations. The ten-week assessment, conducted under the supervision of archaeologist John Bedell from June to August of 1988, found extensive subsurface remains in the survey area from the period c. 1620-1780 (Bedell and Lucchetti).

While researching his book on the Custis family, descendant James Lynch inquired whether there was a conjectural drawing of Arlington based on the archaeological evidence. No rendition existed, but the unexcavated cellars uncovered by the 1988 archaeological assessment likely contained a wealth of architectural information that would make such a drawing possible. Mr. Lynch then agreed to fund the VCF, a non-profit archaeological research organization, to conduct an intensive archaeological investigation of the cellars in 1994.



Figure 4. Detail of John Smith's Map of Virginia depicting the village of Accomack.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Accawmack Indians

The American Indians that inhabited the lower part of the Eastern Shore at the time of English exploration of the New World were the Accawmacks. John White, artist on the 1585-1586 expedition to Roanoke Island, depicted their village on his Map of Raleigh's Virginia (Hulton 1984:86) as did John Smith on his Map of Virginia (Figure 4). Smith represented the Accawmack village with the symbol for "Kings howses" and said that it had 80 men (Barbour 1986: I, 189, Rountree 1989:9). The most likely location for the village of Accawmack is somewhere between the town of Cape Charles and the south side of Old Plantation Creek. The Late Woodland period ossuaries excavated by VDHL archaeologists Hazzard and Egloff in the fields that surround the Arlington site indicate that this area very likely is the site of the Accawmack village (Hazzard 1987:31).

Virginia Company of London

The first Englishman known to reach the Virginia Eastern Shore was Captain Bartholomew Gilbert, son of the renown English mariner Sir Humphrey Gilbert. Sailing in 1603 under the authorization of his uncle Sir Walter Raleigh who still retained his patent to settle the New World, Gilbert's mission included searching for any survivors of the 1587 Roanoke Island colonists. Tragically, Gilbert and one sailor were killed soon after they landed on the bay side of the Eastern Shore (Turman 1964:1-2, Wise 1911:9-10). John Smith also explored and mapped the Eastern Shore in June of 1608, noting its abundance of fish and potential for salt making. The Eastern Shore later was visited by Captain Samuel Argall and Sir Thomas Dale in 1612 and by Argall in 1613; they also were impressed by its natural resources (Perry 1990:13). These observations eventually led to the first English settlement on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, when a Lt. Craddock and 20 men were sent to Smith's Island in 1614 to make salt from seawater and to catch fish (Hatch 1991:91). Two years later John Rolfe reported that 17 men were living at a place called "Dale's Gift" near Cape Charles (Rolfe 1971:10-11). Dale's Gift was a large tract of land that likely reached from Cape Charles to Old Plantation Creek and was granted to Governor Thomas Dale in 1614 by the Virginia Company of London, the organization chartered by the English govern-

ment to colonize Virginia (Ames 1940:4, Wise 1911:22). The Smith Island saltworks failed and were abandoned before 1620 (Kingsbury, III 1933:116).

In 1619, Ensign Thomas Savage, with some indentured servants, began a profitable trading relationship with the Accawmack Indians. Savage's success likely stemmed from his previous experience on the Eastern Shore serving as an interpreter, a skill he obtained while living with the Powhatans for several years, first on Argall's 1613 voyage and later in 1617 for a merchant (Whitelaw 1951:22, Turman 1964:5, Hatch 1957:92). He received some land from Debedeavon, the Accawmack chief or werowance, however, there is some question of whether he established himself on a neck of land between the Chesapeake Bay and Cherrystone Creek which is called Savage's Neck or on Old Plantation Creek as suggested by a later patent (Nugent I 1974:9). The following year, the Virginia Company of London established two official settlements on the Eastern Shore. The Company Land was located between Cherrystone Creek and King's Creek and was reserved by the Virginia Company of London to help pay for the costs of the administration and investment of the Virginia adventure. Governor Sir George Yeardley sent a group of tenants and indentured servants under Captain John Wilcox to work the Company Land, where they would split their profits of crops and livestock with the company (Turman 1964:6). There is a suggestion that some Company Land was along Old Plantation Creek as well, since land leases given to Captain Clement Dilke, Nicholas Hoskins, Robert Browne, and John Home disclose that they are for property on the south bank of Old Plantation Creek that formerly was the "late Companies land" (Nugent 1974:8,9,11,12).

The second settlement was the Secretary's Land, a 500-acre reserve created for the maintenance of the Secretary's office between Cherrystone Creek and King's Creek. Secretary John Pory sent 10 men there in 1620 and ten more again in 1621 (Hatch 1991:92, McCartney 1993:18, Wise 1911:31). It appears that there was a third settlement already established by 1620 when Lady Elizabeth Dale's plantation, possibly a derivative of "Dale's Gift," was referred to as the "Old Plantation." Although there is no existing record of this patent, it was recognized by James I (Whitelaw I 1968:22,25). When Lady Dale, as heir to her deceased husband Sir Tho-

mas Dale, received the title to Dale's Gift, the northern boundary was identified as being Old Plantation Creek (McCartney 1993:160).

The Eastern Shore settlements were first represented in the Assembly in 1623 with John Wilcox from the Company's Land and Henry Watkins from Lady Dale's Plantation (Whitelaw I 1968:23). In 1624, the Virginia Company of London was dissolved and the crown took control over the colonization of Virginia. A census taken in 1625 shows that the Eastern Shore settlers gathered in several distinct communities, one of those being Old Plantation Creek (Ames 1973:14). The population consisted of 44 men and 7 women in 19 households that contained 20 houses and 17 storehouses, while Capt. William Epes is credited with a fort (Jester and Hiden 1964:66-69). Analyses of land grants recorded not long after the 1625 Census indicate that the Plantation of Accawmack, an appellation given to the whole of the Eastern Shore settlements, ranged from the north side of Kings Creek south to Elliott's Creek.

Old Plantation Creek was being settled so quickly that in 1627 Jamestown officials resolved that *...divers planters at Accawmacke doe intend at the old plantation Creeke and at Magety-Bay on that shore to erect some new plantations & to seat themselves in such sort as may be both inconvenient and dangerous, upon full & large deliberation concerning the same, have resolved in noe sort to permit such their planting, but rather to keepe them, as much as may be, seated closely together, & rather more especially to indeavor [sic] the full planting of ye fforest than any other place* (Whitelaw I 1968:26).

This steady growth prompted the colonial government in 1633 to create "the Plantacon of Achawmacke" and appoint commissioners and one year later, when the Virginia colony was divided into eight shires, one was Accomack. By 1635, eight years after the government began to issue official land patents, the population had grown to 396 colonists. In 1642, the Shire of Accomack was renamed Northampton (Whitelaw I 1968:26-28). By 1649 approximately 1,000 colonists were living upon Virginia's Eastern Shore (Ames 1940:3-8).

William Burdett

The earliest reference to William Burdett is as one of Capt. William Epes servants in the Census of 1625 where he is listed as being 25 years old and

as having arrived in Virginia in 1615 (Jester and Hiden 1964:66-69). By 1633, Burdett had fulfilled the terms of his bond and subsequently acquired land along Old Plantation Creek where property became available to individuals due to the dissolution of the Virginia Company of London nine years earlier. Burdett married Roger Saunders' widow Frances in 1632, in the process obtaining Saunders' 300-acre patent, identified as "the Indian feild," which lay east of the mouth of Old Plantation Creek (Whitelaw 1968 I:137,139; Ames 1940:3-8). In 1639, William Burdett patented 500 acres along Old Plantation Creek and 300 acres more 2 years later. Burdett eventually became a planter of some standing since he was named to fill the offices of Burgess, county commissioner, and vestryman (Ames 1973:xiii). Burdett died in 1643, leaving a 500-acre estate to his wife Alicia and son Thomas.

John Custis II

In 1649, prominent Eastern Shore planter, Argoll Yeardley, son of the former governor Sir George Yeardley, married Ann Custis in Holland and brought her and her brother John Custis II back to Virginia (Whitelaw 1968:108). John Custis II was born in either 1628 or 1629 and arrived in Virginia in either 1649 or 1651 (Lynch 1992:158). As an immigrant, Custis could not own land until he was naturalized in 1658, although he could exchange and/or trade headrights. When he first came to Virginia, John II probably lived with his sister Ann and her husband Argoll Yeardley at their home on Old Town Neck on Mattawoman Creek.

John II married Elizabeth Eyer in 1652; then leased a parcel of land from Argoll Yeardley in 1653 (Lynch 1992:160). A year later, their only surviving son, John III, was born. Apparently Elizabeth Eyer Custis died not long after the birth of John III, and the 28-year-old John II took a major step toward expanding his wealth by marrying 40-year-old, thrice-widowed Alicia Travellor Burdett Walker in 1656 (Lynch 1992:160). In 1658, Thomas Burdett, son of William Burdett, sold John II 500 acres that included "...a house [built by his father] large enough to serve as an inn..." and on the the same day, John bought an additional 300 acres. Apparently John II was already living on the land as Burdett states that the 300 acres were "...now in possession of the said John Custis living and being on the east side of ye old Plantation Creeke..." (Lynch 1992:161).

Wealth and political office went hand-in-hand in 17th-century Virginia and John Custis II was no exception. John II became High Sheriff in 1659, an office he held three times. In 1663, he was appointed as a surveyor and by 1664, John II was a Captain in the Northampton County militia and again sheriff. He later was promoted to Colonel and Major General. John II served as coroner for Northampton County in 1673 and deputized his son in 1675. He was also a justice of the peace and a vestryman. He became a member of the Governor's Council—a select group of advisers drawn from the elite planters (Lynch 1992:163-165, 168-170).

Custis continued to expand his landholdings and business. In addition to the Arlington property, Custis acquired Mocton and Smith Islands for grazing livestock, and he owned land in England, Ireland, and Scotland (Lynch 1992:178). He engaged in commerce with a Boston merchant, trading tobacco, wheat, and oxbides. Sometime after 1676, Alicia Custis died and John II married Tabitha Scarborough Smart Browne in 1681 (Lynch 1992:177). She was the daughter of Col. Edmund Scarborough II, an Eastern Shore planter whose power and wealth made him equal, if not superior, to Custis.

John Custis II played a significant role in Bacon's Rebellion, the 1676 revolt against the government of Sir William Berkeley. Governor Berkeley was compelled to abandon the capital at Jamestown to Nathaniel Bacon's forces. However, Berkeley found refuge at Arlington and an ally in John Custis II. Giles Bland with 200 men and a small flotilla pursued Governor Berkeley to Arlington in September of 1676 and sent agents to negotiate with Berkeley. A surprise attack by the Governor's troops succeeded in capturing the rebel ships which Berkeley, in turn, used to regain control of the colony from the rebel forces. The capture of these ships gave Berkeley control of the inland waterways and access to the sea, which allowed him to cut the rebels off from any outside aid, as well as move quickly to conquer the scattered rebel strongholds before they could be reinforced. The clash at Arlington proved to be the decisive turning point of the rebellion and as a result John Custis II

...whose house was sir William Berkeley's continued Quarters, a person who at all tymes and Places boldly asserted and supported to his power the Governors honour and cause in his Majesties behalfe against the Rebels (Whitelaw 1968:109).
was made a Major General because of his assistance

(Turman 1964:78-79, Crowson 1981:121).

John Custis IV

Upon the death of John Custis II in 1696, Arlington devolved, not to his son John III who was already well-situated at nearby Wilsonia Neck, but to grandson John IV, who like his grandfather was destined to play a significant role in colonial politics. Eighteen years old at the time of his grandfather's death, John IV inherited 14 slaves as well as the Arlington plantation. Apparently, John IV served a 7 year apprenticeship for London merchants Perry & Lane followed by some academic training. John IV was appointed a justice of the peace by Governor Francis Nicholson in 1701, the earliest reference to him in the Northampton county records. That same year, his step-grandmother turned over the 550 acre Arlington plantation to him as directed in the will of John Custis II. John IV's landholdings grew, for he paid quit rents on 3,250 acres in 1704. Two years later, John IV was elected to the House of Burgesses and married nineteen-year-old Frances Parke, daughter of the Governor of the Leeward Islands (Crowson 1970:15-19, 1981:124-125, Whitelaw I 1968:107-117).

John IV spent much of his time at his in-laws Queens Creek plantation in York County. Indeed, Daniel Parke asked John IV to run the Queens Creek plantation after the death of his wife in 1708. John IV began construction of his Williamsburg house around 1714, and sometime between c. 1714-1721 he moved permanently to Williamsburg. Arlington ceased to be a working plantation in the early 1720's. Little historical research has been conducted on Arlington after the departure of John IV. There is an 1812 plat of the Arlington property that depicts a "dwelling house" east of the tombs and an "old chimney of the former Mansion House" to the southeast (Accomack County 1812).

Arlington

There are a few documents that contain tempting snippets of information about when Arlington was built and how it looked. William Byrd, the well-known aristocratic eighteenth-century Virginia planter, left the only surviving eyewitness description of Arlington in 1709 when he reported it as a "... great house within sight of the Bay and a really pleasant plantation" (Whitelaw 1968:114). Another account from the same year provides a tantalizingly brief portrait of the mansion. Upon the death of

Daniel Parke, former Governor of the Leeward Islands, a settlement of his estate made in 1709 included a reference to the holdings of John Custis IV at the time of his marriage to Parke's daughter Frances. The document states that on the Eastern Shore was

...Dwelling House built of brick at the Year 1676 of the Dimensions Of upwards of 30 foot (by) 60 foot three stories high besides garrets...with a handsome Garden and fine Orchard...Wch House was commonly called Arlington... (Emmett 1907).

Archaeology has shown that the building dimensions given in this description are not accurate.

The contemporary accounts of Bacon's Rebellion suggest that Arlington was built by 1676. There is some circumstantial evidence indicating that Arlington was built as early as 1670, which was the date that Augustine Herman compiled his "Map of Virginia and Maryland." Printed in 1673, it shows three major structures along the south bank of Old Plantation Creek (Figure 5). Also, Whitelaw or Lynch has suggested that John Custis II did not

accumulate sufficient land to accommodate an elaborate mansion house until c. 1665.

The wonderfully well-preserved Northampton County records remain a potential source of further information about Arlington. Although the records have been carefully examined by many researchers, they were not read with an eye toward finding Arlington details hidden in legal documents. For example, there is a deposition for a 1688 lawsuit that contains a very significant piece of information about the Arlington mansion. A witness stated that a young man delivered a note from her husband to Custis at his house whereupon the messenger then "...saucily Clapt himself downe in a chair with his hatt on his head in the said Coll Custis' dineinge Roome...", an action that greatly offended Custis (Lynch 1992:180). Since this is one of the earliest references to a dining room in colonial Virginia, this anecdote corroborates the archaeological findings of Arlington as the most architecturally sophisticated house of the time.



Figure 5. Detail of Augustine Herrman's 1670 map of Virginia and Maryland. One of two buildings above the word "OLD" is thought to be Arlington.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Overview

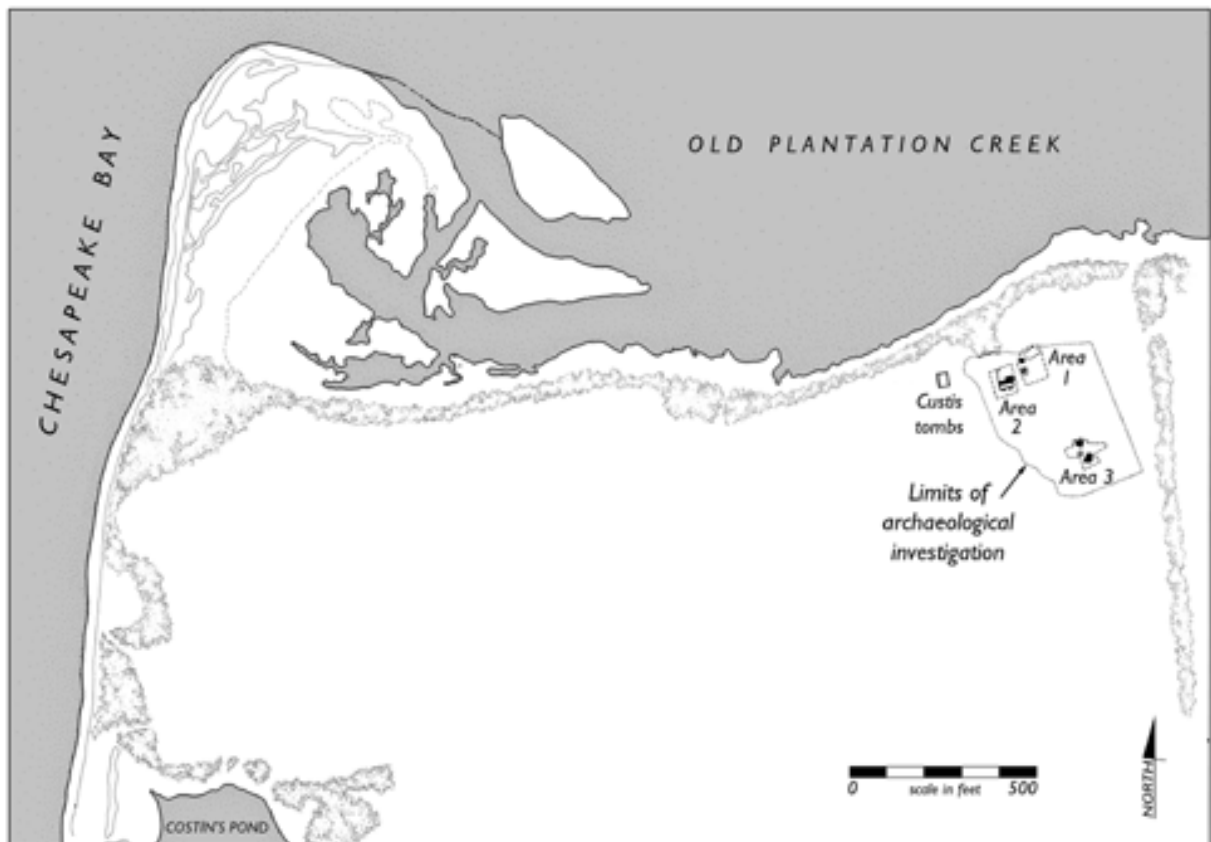
The first professional archaeological investigation at the Arlington site was conducted in 1987 by VDHL archaeologists David K. Hazzard and Keith T. Egloff. When the 380-acre farm was sold and rezoned for residential development in 1987, local officials and citizens became concerned that significant archaeological remains of the Custis plantation might be in jeopardy. They convinced the New York development company to allow VDHL archaeologists Hazzard and Egloff to conduct an exploratory survey of the grounds adjoining the Custis Tombs. Through detailed examination of the surface of the cultivated fields and insightful probing for buried brick foundations with a metal rod, Hazzard and Egloff detected subsurface remains that subsequently were examined by excavating several test pits. They found sections of 3-brick wide walls that later proved to be part of the foundation for the Arlington mansion. A brick-lined cellar entrance also was excavated and yielded a wine bottle seal with the initials "IC" (see Figure 26) and other artifacts suggesting that the building was abandoned during the early eighteenth century, about the time

that John Custis IV moved to Williamsburg.

Based on these impressive discoveries, the DiCanio Organization commissioned the JRIA to undertake an archaeological assessment of the seven-acre parcel, immediately east of the Custis Tombs where the VDHL team located the brick foundations. The ten-week assessment consisted of controlled surface collection and plowzone testing, some mechanical stripping, and testing of several features. The survey discovered archaeological features ranging from the first English settlement of the Eastern Shore in 1619 to probable tenant or slave quarter features dating to the second half of the eighteenth century.

The Virginia Company Foundation initiated another round of archaeological investigations at Arlington in 1994. The principal objective of the renewed work was a partial excavation of the cellars in order to obtain architectural information on the mansion. The 1994 field season included excavating seven 5' by 5' pits in the cellars and testing several features including the possible internal entrance at the northeast corner of the large cellar, a brick-lined well shaft, the scaffold posthole line, and suspected planting beds.

Figure 6. Arlington Site showing three areas of archaeological features.

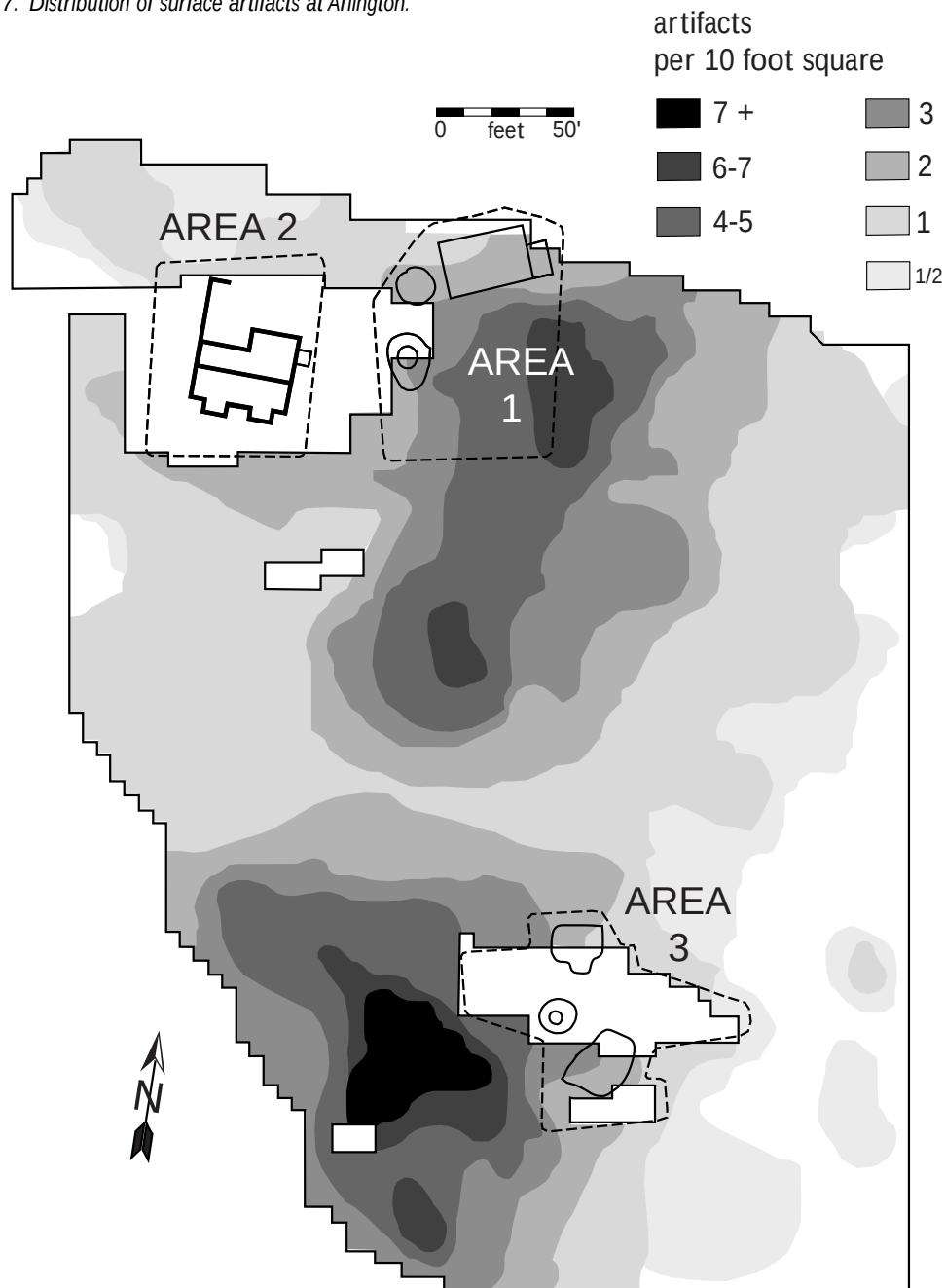


Controlled Surface Collection

The survey area for the 1988 controlled surface collection was an area of a cultivated field about 400' square. Except for the area over the brick foundations, the field first was plowed, disked and rain-washed. The survey area was then gridded into five-foot squares and all surface artifacts in each square were collected. The distribution of surface artifacts, combined with the information obtained by the VDHL testing, indicated that, in addition to the suspected Arlington mansion site, there were at least

two other areas that were likely to contain features. Three locations were designated for additional study: Area 1, Area 2, and Area 3 (Figure 6). Next, a five-foot square in every other ten-foot square, or a 12.5% sample of each area, was excavated and screened through 1/4" wire mesh and all the artifacts collected. Then, a Gradall removed the plow-zone from the three areas, which were then hand cleaned and mapped using the same grid that was established for the surface and plowzone collection.

Figure 7. Distribution of surface artifacts at Arlington.

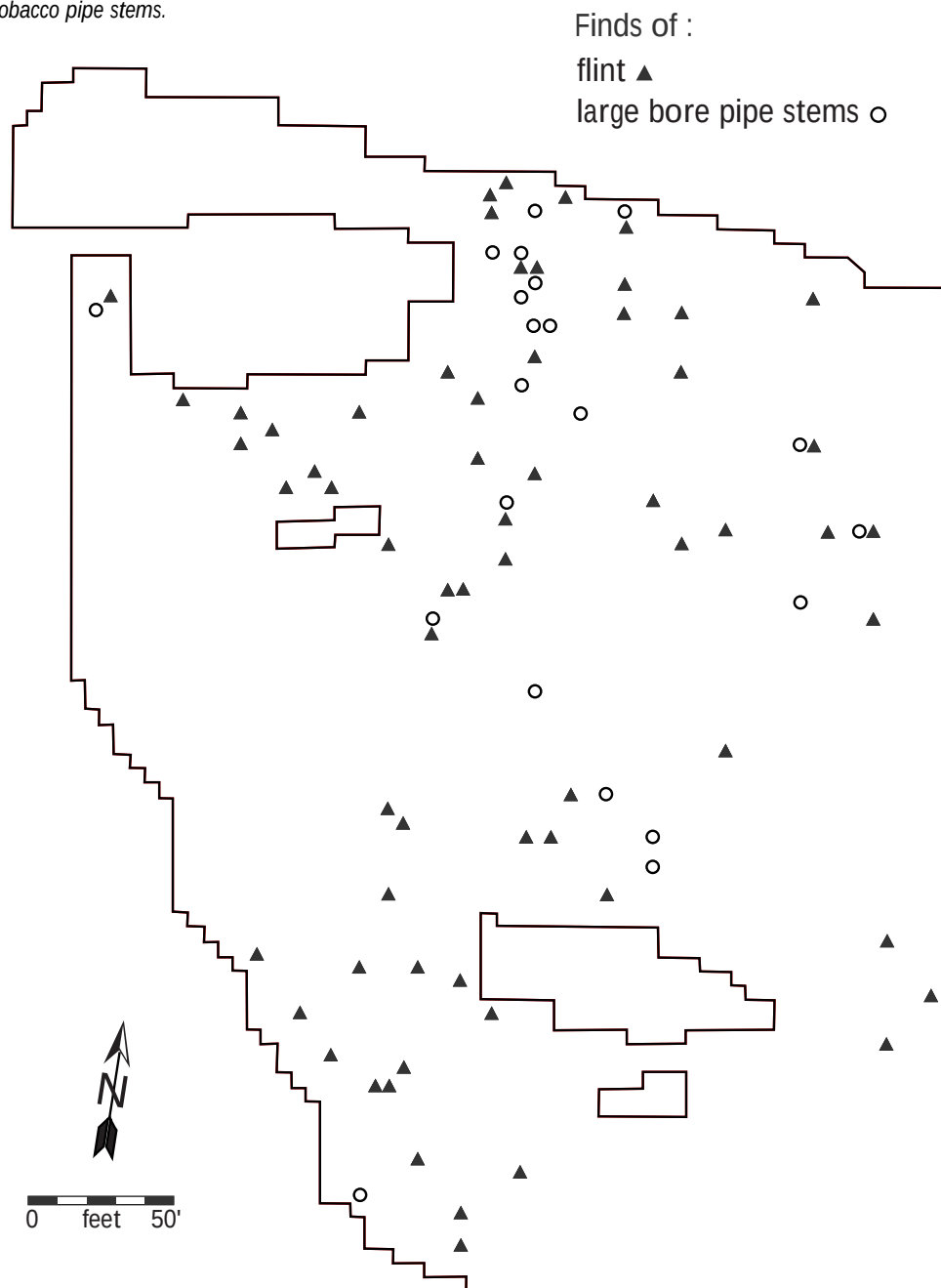


Over 1900 artifacts ranging in date from the first quarter of the 17th century to the first half of the 19th century were collected from the surface of the plowzone. A distribution map of the surface artifacts shows a relatively even spread of across the site with clusters near the archaeological structures (Figure 7). The long and narrow concentration in the north-center, corresponding to Area 1, may indicate that this refuse is part of an enclosed yard where service chores, such as processing foods, storage, cooking, etc., typically were carried out. Only the

eastern edge of the survey area had few or no surface artifacts.

A second surface artifact distribution map was composed plotting the location of white ball clay tobacco pipe stem fragments with 8/64" and 9/64" bore diameters and flint flakes as evidence of early 17th-century settlement. Nearly 50% of the flint and most of the pipe stems were in the vicinity of Area 1, suggesting that it may be the core of the Virginia Company of London settlement along Old Plantation Creek (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Distribution of surface flint and large bore English tobacco pipe stems.



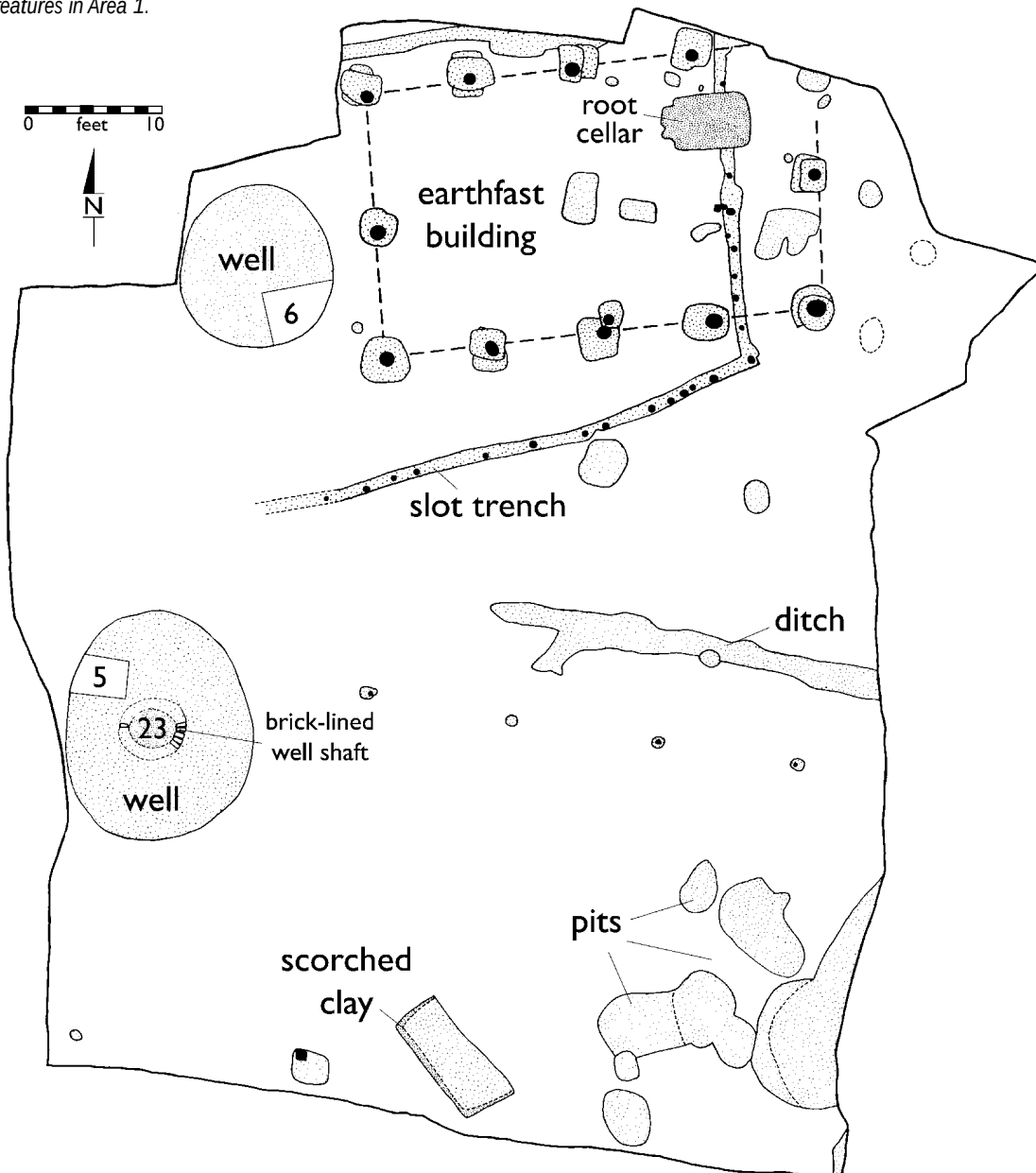
Virginia Company and Burdett Settlements

Area 1 contained a slot trench (Figure 9), a type of feature usually associated with puncheon fences or palisades that were typically used in the 17th century. Puncheon fences, commonly found on early 17th-century archaeological sites, were constructed by setting or driving split trees or small posts into a narrow or slot trench which was then backfilled. Slot trenches were used to build palisades for forts and fortifications at several 17th-century Virginia archaeological sites including: Jamestown (1607),

the Nicolas Martiau property in Yorktown (1630s), Middle Plantation palisade in James City County (1630s), Nansemond Fort in Suffolk (1630s), and the Clifts plantation in Westmoreland County (1667) (Kelso, Lucchetti, and Straube 1995) (Figure 10).

Area 1 also contained a hole-set earthfast (post-in-the-ground) building. The 20' by 32' structure was built in four 8' bay units with a 4' by 6' storage pit or root cellar in the northeast corner. There was no evidence of a heat source for the building; it almost certainly had a wood-and-clay chimney whose shallowly set footing had been plowed away. How-

Figure 9. Plan of archaeological features in Area 1.



ever, root cellars tended to be built in front of hearths, so it is possible that this building had an off-center gable fireplace as indicated by the location of the root cellar in the northeast corner. Seven of the postholes looked as though they were original, cut by replacement postholes, suggesting that the life of the building likely extended into the Custis period. The structure closely resembled the typical 17th-century Virginia house seen on many other sites in the Chesapeake.

The root cellar cut through the slot trench; therefore, the slot trench must predate the earthfast structure. Because the post building was not excavated, there is no available direct evidence, i.e. the artifacts from the postmolds and postholes, to date either its construction or its destruction. However, since the earthfast building is not aligned with the brick mansion foundation, it may be inferred that the earthfast building belongs to a pre-Arlington occupation. This, in turn, pushes the relative date of the slot trench back still further in the 17th century, likely to the time of the first English settlement along Old Plantation Creek by the Virginia Company of London.

One possible source of evidence for dating the presumed pre-Arlington structure is a roundish feature, believed to be a backfilled barrel-lined well, located just off the west end of the post building. The proximity of the building and conjectural well indicates that they were contemporary. A test hole (NH92/6) excavated in the feature in 1988 revealed that it had a straight, smooth side wall, a characteristic more suggestive of a well shaft than a refuse pit. Although only a sample of the uppermost layer was excavated, it produced a large quantity of artifacts including both English and locally-made tobacco pipe bowls and stems, lead shot, a brass upholstery tack, fish scales, plaster, and glass wine bottle fragments. Numerous datable ceramics were mixed in with this domestic refuse including sherds from a Rhenish stoneware mug, a Staffordshire combed slipware dish, a Staffordshire mottled-glazed coarseware mug, and a Buckley coarseware pan. These artifacts provided a terminus post quem, or earliest possible date of filling-in the hole, of c. 1680. Thus, it appears that the post building and its well, perhaps once lined with barrels, were active during the mid-17th century and therefore prior to the construction of Arlington.



Figure 10. Archaeological remains of slot trench palisade at 1630's fort in Yorktown.

Custis and Arlington

The Arlington foundation, discovered in Area 2, delineates the footprint of a singular dwelling in the 17th-century Chesapeake region (Figure 11). The three-brick-wide foundation measured approximately 54' north-south by 43 1/2' east-west (Figure 12). There were only one or two courses of brick left in the foundation and the bottommost was a rowlock course. At least three chimneys served Arlington, two along the south wall and one on the north. The positions of the two southern chimneys were marked by brick voids in the foundation, although the line of the foundation across each opening continued as a clay filled trench. The sides and the backs of the chimneys were completely robbed and manifested as rectangular trenches filled with loam and brick debris (Figure 13). The northwest chimney was represented only by a break in the foundation that was the same length as those of the southern chimneys. The complete destruction of the foundation in the northeast quadrant by plowing precludes determining whether there was a corresponding fourth chimney. The chimney footprints suggest that the first-floor fireplaces were 7' 6" wide and 3' deep.

Figure 11. Overhead photo of Arlington foundations and cellars.

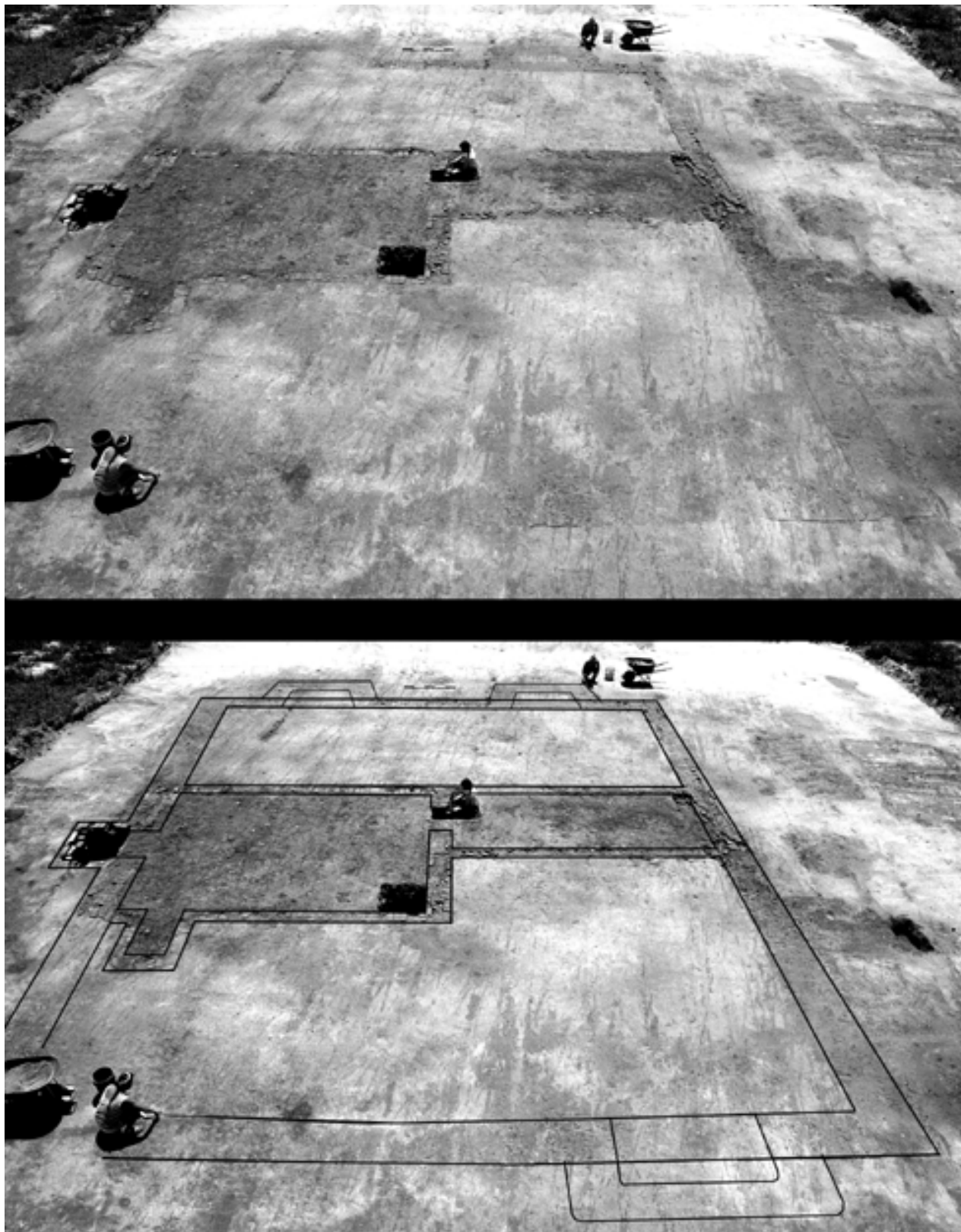


Figure 12. Plan of archaeological features in Area 2.

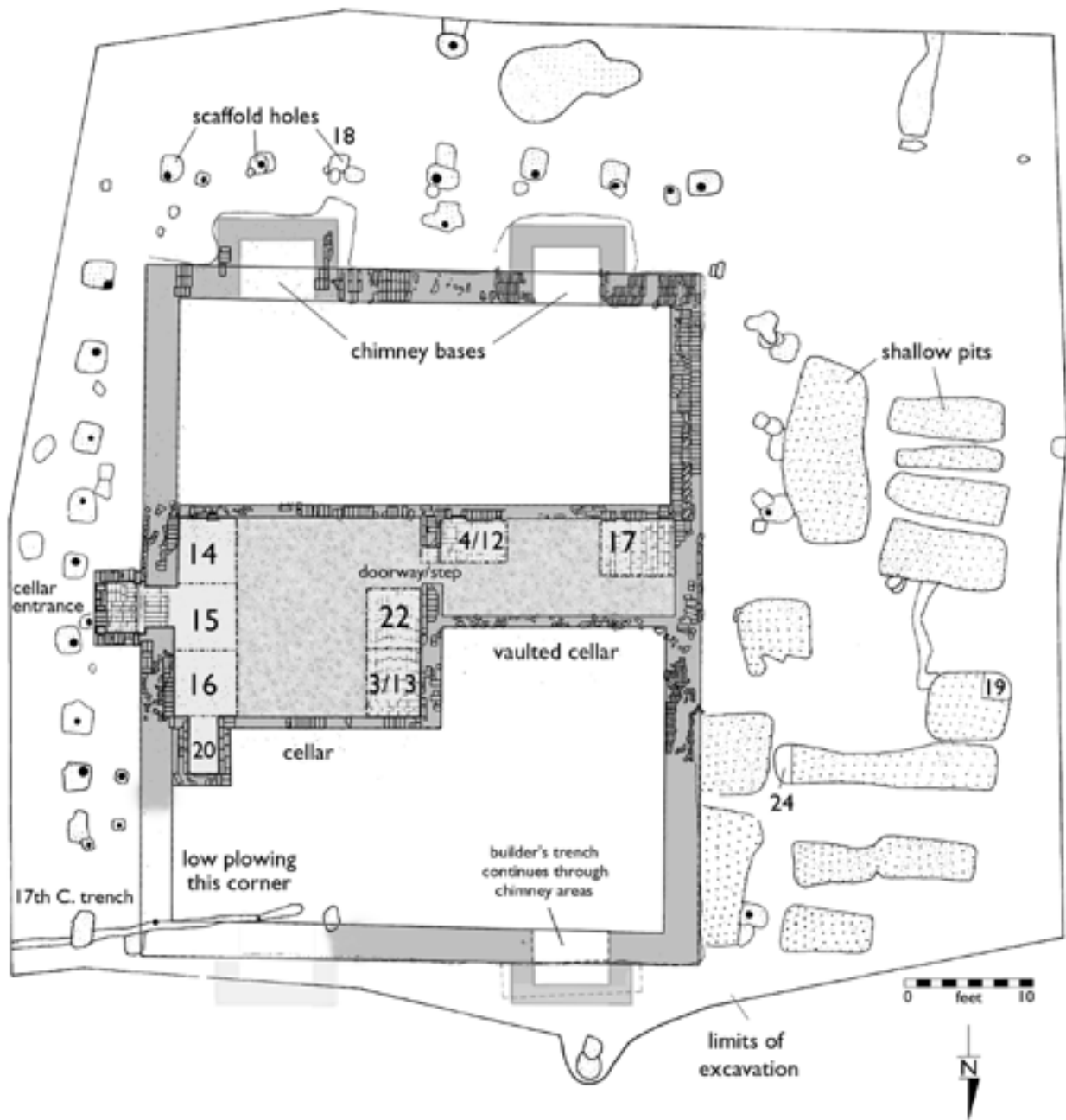
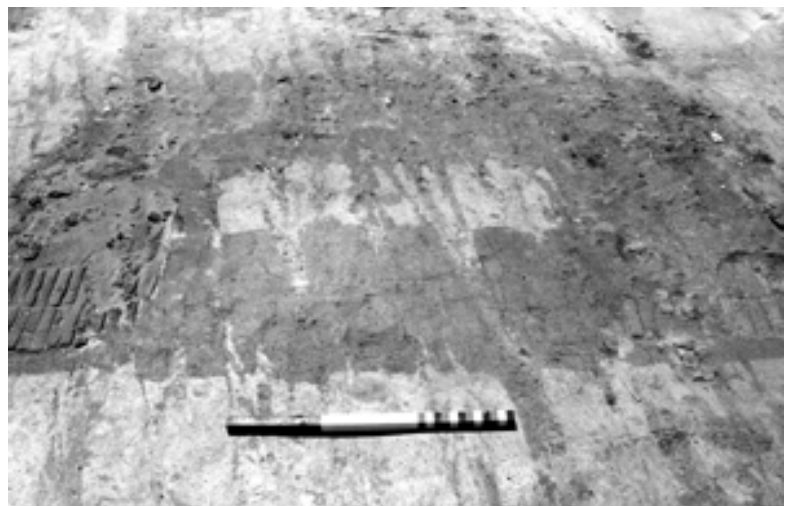


Figure 13. Detail of Arlington's southwest chimney base.



Cellars

The Arlington mansion contained two adjoining cellars. Located in the eastern half of the building was a 22' long and 17' 6" wide cellar lined with a one and one-half brick-wide foundation. A 1988 test hole (NH92/3) in the northwest corner of the cellar produced little more than brick rubble, but it did show that the walls were plastered and the floor was paved with brick. Access from the outside was gained via a cellar entrance that was excavated in 1987 by Hazzard and Egloff in the east wall. There was a 2' 3" by 4' 6" (interior dimensions) projection off the northeast end of the cellar that clearly was part of the original construction. It, too, was plastered on the interior. Currently, its purpose is unknown, although it is thought to be an internal entrance.

A second narrower cellar, only 10' wide, joined the first near the center of the house. A 1988 test hole (NH92/4) revealed that the common wall contained a doorway, manifested by a slot left in the plaster by the decomposed door jamb, that led to a 1' step down into the western cellar. This too was plastered and had a brick-paved floor with a sump hole in the southeast corner (Figure 14). Further,

the foundation had sufficiently survived to preserve a springer brick course, indicating that it had a vaulted ceiling.

In 1994, two 5-foot squares were excavated within the vaulted cellar; one (NH92/12) in the southeast corner that was an expansion of the 1988 test hole NH92/4 and a second 5' square (NH92/17) in the southwest corner. The excavation of NH92/4 showed that the top 2' 9" of cellar fill consisted of three similar layers (NH92/17A-C) of loam, brick chunks and bats, mortar, and slate fragments. Below this was a 1' 1" thick layer (NH92/17D) with a much denser concentration of brick and mortar, clearly the brick rubble destruction layer, which in turn sealed a 4" ash and loam layer (NH92/17F) deposited on the brick-paved cellar floor (Figure 15).

The 1988 test hole (NH92/4) at the doorway between the cellars was expanded into a 5' square (NH92/12) in 1994. The 4' of fill consisted primarily of several layers of rubble with varying quantities of brick bats, the heaviest concentration occurring in the lowest rubble layer (NH92/12C) (Figure 16). The southeast corner of the vaulted cellar also had a 10" by 8" brick-lined sump hole that had a brick floor. The sump hole was filled with brown loam (NH92/4D).

Curiously, only the upper two (NH92/12A,B) of the four brick rubble layers yielded artifacts. Twelve ceramic sherds were recovered, including a piece of Yorktown coarseware and 2 sherds of colonoware. There were 77 fragments of wine-bottle glass, oyster and clam shells, egg shells, a crab claw, and part of a pig skull. Pieces of slate were mixed in with the brick rubble. The sump hole fill contained only a few pieces of wine bottle glass and a nail.

Very few artifacts were found in the fill in the vaulted cellar. The post-destruction layers had only 5 tobacco pipe stem fragments, 3 ceramic sherds, a small amount of case and wine-bottle glass, only 34 nails, and no architectural hardware. The destruction layer was equally sparse. The ash layer on the cellar floor contained pieces of eggshell and crab claw and a single, but highly significant, sherd of pottery: the rim fragment from a white saltglaze stoneware tea bowl. This artifact dates the dismantling of Arlington and consequent filling of the cellar to post-1720, a date that corresponds nicely with



Figure 14. Test unit NH92/12 showing passage through common wall of the two cellar including ghost of door jamb in plastered wall, brick paved floor, sump hole, and springer course for vaulted cellar.

Figure 15. Profile of east wall of NH92/17.

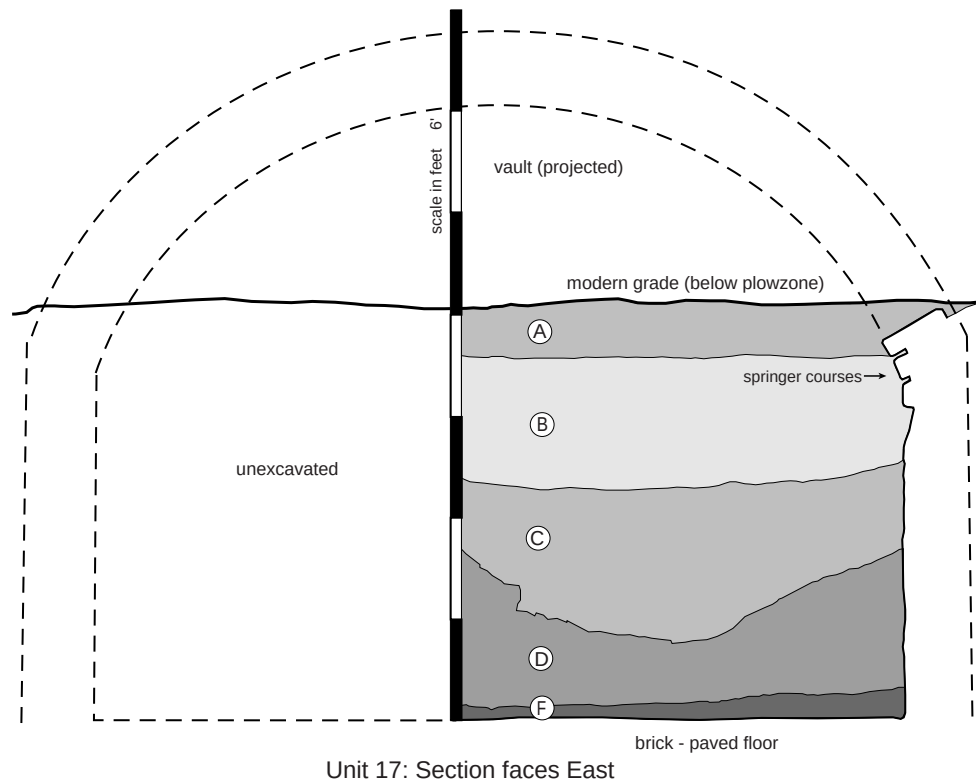
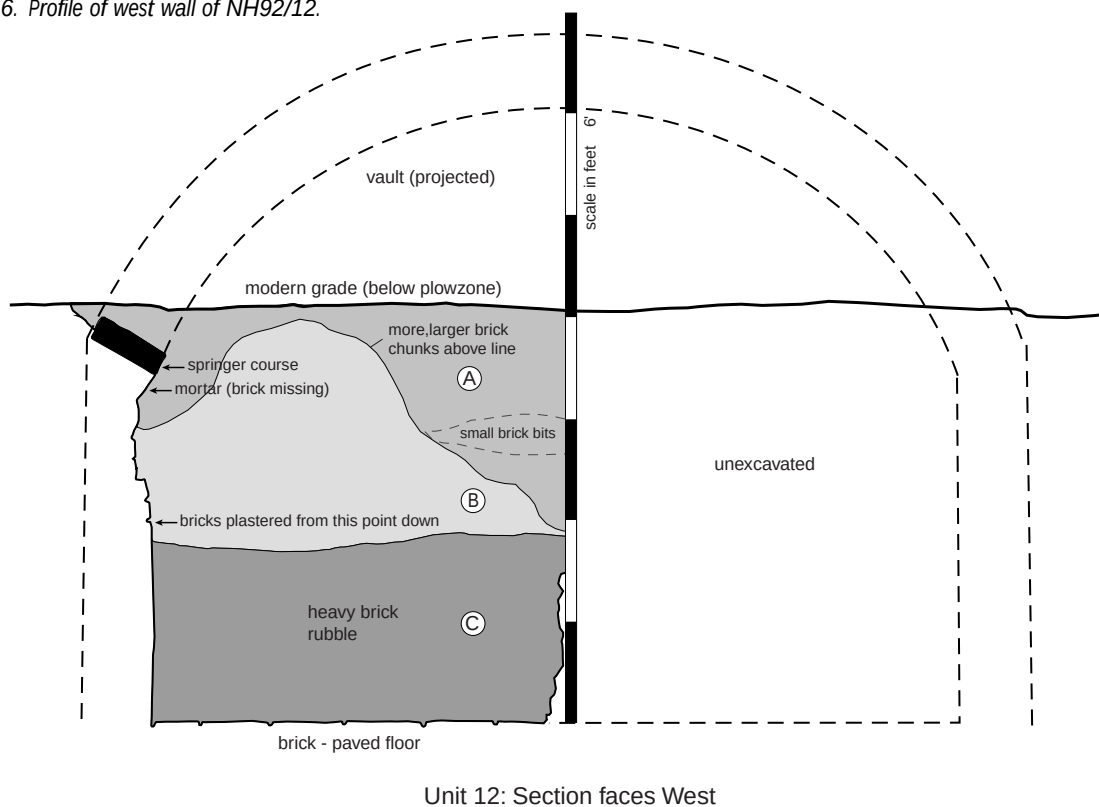


Figure 16. Profile of west wall of NH92/12.



the Westerwald stoneware jug and delftware plate previously recovered from the east side cellar entrance. The 1988 test hole in the northwest corner of the large cellar was expanded into a 5-foot square (NH92/13) and a second 5-foot square was excavated immediately south (NH92/22). The backfill in this part of the cellar consisted of three layers. Lying on the brick floor was a 2" thick deposit of silty dark brown loam (NH92/13C, 22E) with small pieces of brick and mortar, plaster, nails, bone, oyster and clam shells. There were only two sherds: North Devon coarseware and, more importantly, a Yorktown coarseware pan rim that provided a date of deposition for this layer of post-1720. This was sealed by a 1'9" thick layer (NH92/13B, 22B) composed of many whole bricks, brick bats, mortar, and plaster, all in a matrix of compact light brown sand. This deposit was covered by a 1'3" thick layer (NH92/13A, 22A) of brown sandy loam with a heavy concentration of brick bats and mortar. Apart from brick, mortar, plaster, and nails, the two upper rubble layers contained few artifacts: about 1.3 pounds (576g) of bone, 14 wine bottle glass fragments, 9 case bottle fragments, 4 ceramic sherds, and 1 English tobacco pipe stem fragment. The only architectural artifacts recovered were turned lead for windows and some molded plaster.

Three 5-foot squares (NH92/16,15, 14, north to south, respectively) were excavated along the east end of the large cellar. The rubble layers that filled this end of the large cellar were virtually the same as the strata in the northwest corner of this cellar and the vaulted cellar with one conspicuous difference. Within and below the rubble fill in these three squares, there were articulated sections of brick wall that had fallen into the cellar. A tumbled brick arch sitting on top of two feet of rubble was uncovered in the cellar entrance. The most remarkable piece was an intact section of brickwork with pebbledash outlining a recessed heart (Figures 17 & 18). Other architectural artifacts also were recovered from this end of the large cellar including: 2 iron pintles, black slate fragments, 4 pieces of turned lead, an iron nail with a lead washer, and an iron rod that may be part of a casement window.

The east cellar entrance was completely excavated during the 1987 investigations. The entrance had interior dimensions of 4' north to south and 2'6" east to west, measured to the outside of the foundation wall and was 2' deep below the surface of subsoil. It had a brick paved floor that gave way to a 10" wide and 9" deep slot at the point where the entrance abutted the foundation. The paving then continued at the same floor level for another 1'1"

Figure 17. Heart decorated masonry in situ on floor.



Figure 18. Detail of heart decorated masonry.

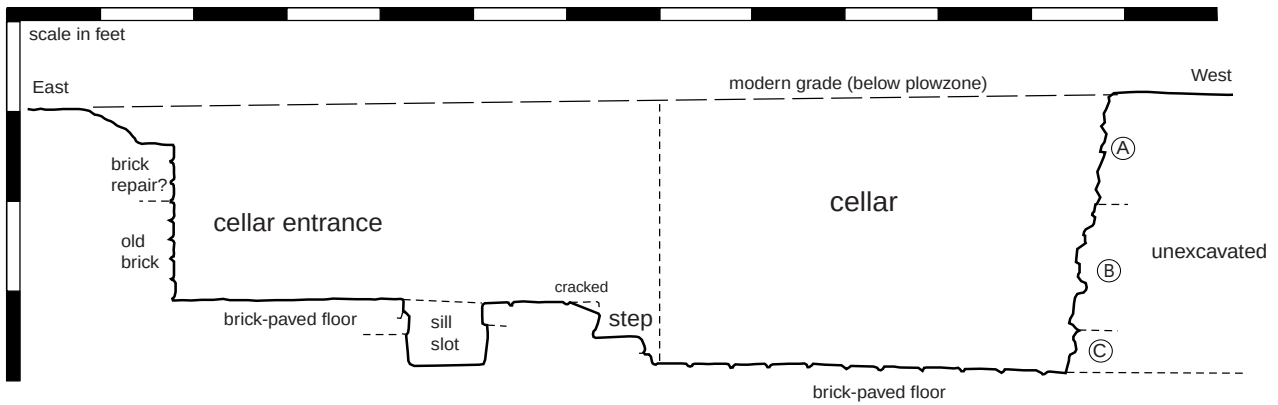


Figure 19. Contour profile through cellar entrance into large cellar.

(three half bricks) where it dropped down 5" to a 6" wide step, which in turn stepped down 4" to the paved floor of the cellar (Figure 19). The outside or east wall of the cellar entrance foundation had three slots with roughly equally spacing; the two side slots were 6" wide and the center slot was 4" wide (Figure 20). These presumably held timbers for framing the wooden steps in the cellar entrance. The slot in the cellar entrance floor likely contained a wooden sill for the doorway into the cellar. Several exceptional artifacts were recovered from the cellar entrance fill, including most of a Westerwald stoneware jug, an English delftware plate, and, most importantly, glass wine bottle seals bearing the initials "JC" for John Custis.

The rectangular projection (NH92/20) off the northeast corner of the large cellar, thought to be an internal entrance, had exterior measurements of 4'6" by 3'10" and a one brick wide foundation. It was filled with the same sequence of rubble layers as the rest of the east cellar: a top stratum (NH92/20A) of loosely packed brick bats and mortar in a matrix of tan sandy loam over a layer (NH92/20B) of densely packed rubble with much plaster mixed with brown sandy loam. Apart from nails, two of which had lead washers, and a small amount of bone, the only glass and ceramic artifacts recovered from these two layers were 2 pieces of wine bottle glass, 11 pieces of case bottle glass, 2 sherds of Staffordshire slipware, 2 bowl and 2 stem fragments from English tobacco pipes and 1 stem and 1 bowl from locally made tobacco pipes. These two layers also contained the greatest number of shells found in either cellar; 47 clam, 75 oyster, and 1 conch shell fragment. The adjoining 5-foot square (NH92/16) also had a large amount of shell.

The two rubble layers contained significant architectural evidence. There were many pieces of

molded plaster, painted plaster and mortar, and the NH92/20B layer had 11 pieces of pebbledash mortar. Also, two sections of intact fallen wall were uncovered (Figure 21). Each section was in English bond with thick mortar joints and was 1 ½ bricks wide. The exterior face of one section was preserved, revealing an elaborate exterior surface treatment discussed below.

Figure 20. Photo of excavated cellar entrance facing east, note 3 unexcavated slots behind archaeologist and sill slot in front.





Figure 21. Photo of intact section of wall in internal entrance.

Beneath the rubble fill was a layer (NH92/20C) of brown loam with no brick and little mortar or plaster. Wood fragments and grain indicated the presence of two incomplete timbers parallel to the cheeks of the projection. Approximately 3" wide, each timber was inset about 3"-4" from the cheek wall and each had several *in situ* nails. Archaeological excavation was suspended at this point.

Well

One of the most unusual features of the Arlington phase found in Area 1, was a backfilled well. The 16' by 14' circular soil stain, extraordinarily large for a well, contained a brick-lined oval shaft in the middle. The 3'6" by 2'7" lining was assembled using a mixture of reused rectangular bricks (Figure 22). The uppermost layer inside the well ring (NH92/5B) and the exterior of the feature (NH92/5C,D) was tested in 1988; and two more layers (NH92/23A,B) inside the well ring were excavated in 1994 to obtain information on when the well was abandoned and filled in.

A test hole excavated into the large pit, suspended at a depth of 4', showed that it had smooth vertical walls and that the fill in the large pit was clearly cut by an apparent construction trench for the well ring. This suggests two scenarios: either the well shaft was installed into an earlier backfilled feature such as an ice house or storage pit; or the well was built by digging out a large hole and then constructing the well ring inside the large hole which was then backfilled and sometime afterward the upper part of the well ring was repaired. This could explain why the top eight courses of the well ring are constructed with reused bricks.

The only datable artifact recovered from the fill around the well ring was a sherd of Buckley ware, indicating that the fill was deposited post-1680. Accordingly, this well seems to have been constructed about the same time that the earlier barrel-lined well was abandoned. In addition to chunks of sandstone and slate, the fill inside the well ring contained several ceramic types, including Frechen



Figure 22. Photo of brick-lined well.



Figure 23. Test cut into possible planting bed.

and Westerwald stonewares, Buckley ware, colonoware, and Yorktown coarseware which suggest the well was backfilled after 1720, about the same time the Arlington mansion was abandoned.

Possible Planting Beds

Outside the west wall of Arlington was a complex of mostly rectangular and some square pits or holes. Two of the possible planting beds were tested in 1988. The corner of a square pit (NH92/19) was excavated, revealing that the pit was only 7" deep below subsoil and was filled with a layer of sandy loam with brick bits and mortar (Figure 23). The brick and mortar were mixed throughout the loam and not just on the surface. The end of a rectangular pit (NH92/24) also was excavated, and produced the same results, a 7" deep pit filled with a single layer of loam mixed with brick chunks and mortar. The pits clearly cover or cut the scaffold postholes related to the mansion construction, consequently the pits were dug after the mansion was built. Although having the appearance of planting beds, the fill in these features seems inconsistent with horticultural activities. One explanation for the presence of brick and mortar in the conjectural planting beds is that when John Custis IV, one of 18th-century Virginia's foremost horticulturalists, moved to Williamsburg c. 1714 he had plants dug

out of his Arlington gardens for relocation to his new home (Martin 1991: 54-64). Subsequently, the emptied planting beds could then have been filled with debris from the destruction of Arlington.

Scaffold Postholes

There was a series of postholes surrounding the foundation that represent scaffold holes related to the construction of the building. Lines of scaffold holes were clearly present outside the east and south sides of the mansion. There are three apparent scaffold holes on the west side of the mansion, the rest of the scaffold holes on this side are obscured by previously described planting beds or pits. One scaffold hole was excavated during the 1994 project. The 5"- diameter postmold (NH92/18B) was contained in a posthole (NH92/18C) that was 1'10" square at the top and tapered to 1'3" square at the bottom. The 1'8" deep (below the surface of subsoil) posthole cut through an earlier feature (NH29/18D) that was only 8" deep. The shallow bowl-shaped section of the earlier feature suggested that it was not a posthole, but just a shallow depression. The depression did contain mortar and plaster fragments, indicating it dated to the time of the construction of Arlington, while the scaffold posthole had no tightly datable artifacts.

Eighteenth Century

The focus of life at Arlington for most of the 18th century was at Area 3 about 200' south of the mansion site. The surface survey and plowzone testing produced a large quantity of 18th-century artifacts and several major features dating to after the demise of the mansion were unearthed (Figure 24). Perhaps the most striking was an 11 and one-half foot in diameter soil stain which was tested (NH92/2) in 1988 and has all the characteristics of another

robbed well (Figure 25). A central column of dark brown loam filled with brick rubble and containing sherds of hand-painted pearlware almost certainly represents a well whose brick ring was salvaged and backfilled post-1795. Ten feet north of the well was a possible chimney base next to a cellar-like feature that measured 16' by 18'. Root cellars were commonly placed in front of fireplaces in the 18th century, especially in kitchens and slave quarters.

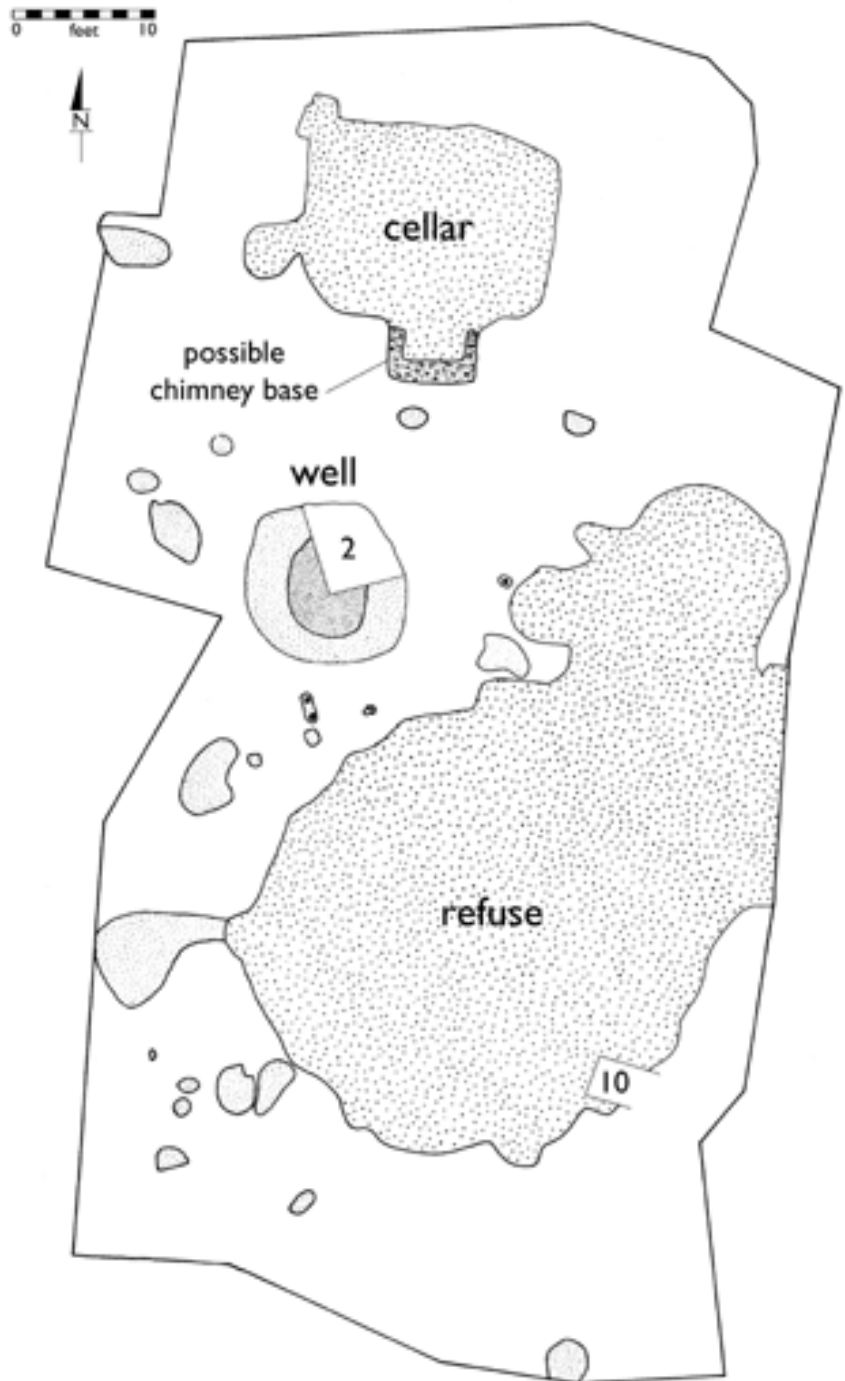


Figure 24. Plan of archaeological features in Area 3.

Arlington as Architecture

by Edward A. Chappell

Interpretation of Plan

Lesser gentry landowners began in c.1650s England to build houses with two tiers of rooms, one behind the other, integrated within a balanced rectangular shell, and their 18th-century successors made refined versions of these a standard for elite houses throughout the English-speaking world. The latter are now often called “Georgian houses”, though some were built before George I ascended the British throne in 1714, and a seemingly predictable exterior enclosed such diverse spatial and functional arrangements that applying a single characterization can be superficial.

Arlington predates the Virginia Governor’s Palace by more than twenty-five years and the next earliest formal double-pile houses in the Chesapeake by nearly half a century. This, along with the observation that cellar arrangements need not entirely reflect the plans of the upper floors, makes interpretation of Arlington’s interior configuration a speculative exercise. By casting a wider net, we can nevertheless draw some analogies and offer useful analysis. Which way the house originally faced, toward the bay (west) or the land approach (east), affected the room arrangements, and further excavation beyond the foundation may tip the scale toward one solution or another.

For now a bay-facing house appears most likely, with direct entry through a roughly centered doorway into the larger of two reception rooms that ran the full 54’ length of the front (Figure 25). One of the transverse (east-west) walls of the vaulted cellar would have supported a partition between these two principal first-floor spaces. We would not expect a central passage in so early an American house, given their general absence from 17th-century probate inventories, though the vault walls make it possible here, and employing only the north partition on the first floor would result in two rooms longer than they are deep, an arrangement seldom found in English houses of this status and date (Smith 1999a). In either case, the larger room would have been called the “hall”, the smaller one perhaps the “dining room,” a name which was used to describe one of the rooms in Arlington (Lynch 1992: 180). While a house of this plan and upwards of three stories could practically contain three entertaining rooms, the number is unparalleled in contemporary Chesapeake inventories. It is possible, then, that the term

“great parlour” was used here with an older connotation, that of a superior bedchamber or other private inner room rather than solely a reception space.

There is a relatively strong tradition among Chesapeake, Bermudan, and English houses of Arlington’s era to locate the stair in a separate rear space rather than in the hall, or best room. Bacon’s Castle (1665) in Surry County and John Page’s 1662 house at Middle Plantation illustrate one means, using a narrow rear stair projection, while the 1658 Priory at Brant Broughton, Lincolnshire and c.1700 Verdmont in Smith’s Parish, Bermuda, have a stair passage between two rear rooms (Barley 1961:219, Carson 1994:632-33). Bermuda maintained close commercial connections with Virginia late in the 17th century, and there are significant similarities as well as distinctions in the early elite houses of the two colonies. Cross-shaped Bermuda houses place a stair passage at the front of their rear wing. Accepting the walls of the larger (east) cellar as the supports for first-floor walls at Arlington would seem to place a generous stair passage at rear center, between two rooms that are slightly deeper but nonetheless smaller than the west rooms.

The minimally smaller northeast room seems to have had its own exterior doorway, with a shelter supported by two earthfast posts, and it may have been unheated, given the absence of evidence concerning a fourth chimney. Conversely, in the present absence of evidence for a separate kitchen, the northeast room could have been the cooking space for Arlington’s household, a function that obviously required a substantial fireplace, now lost (Smith 1999). The small 2’3” by 4’6” cellar extension below it could represent an internal stairway from kitchen to storage space. Kitchens were commonly placed in just such locations in British and New England double-pile houses, but race relations in slaveholding households made them virtually unknown in the Chesapeake, Carolina low country, and Caribbean colonies by the early 18th century.

The earthfast building northeast of the house may be earlier, given its different orientation, but artifact concentrations east and southeast of the main house suggest this was the service area during its heyday. Future excavation should help resolve the kitchen location at Arlington as well as date or otherwise explain the presence of what may be planting beds immediately west of the house. If these beds are contemporary with Custis occupation of

the site, they would seem to obstruct direct approach to a west doorway. But if they post-date the family's move to Williamsburg, declining property status may have made access to the formal front unimportant.

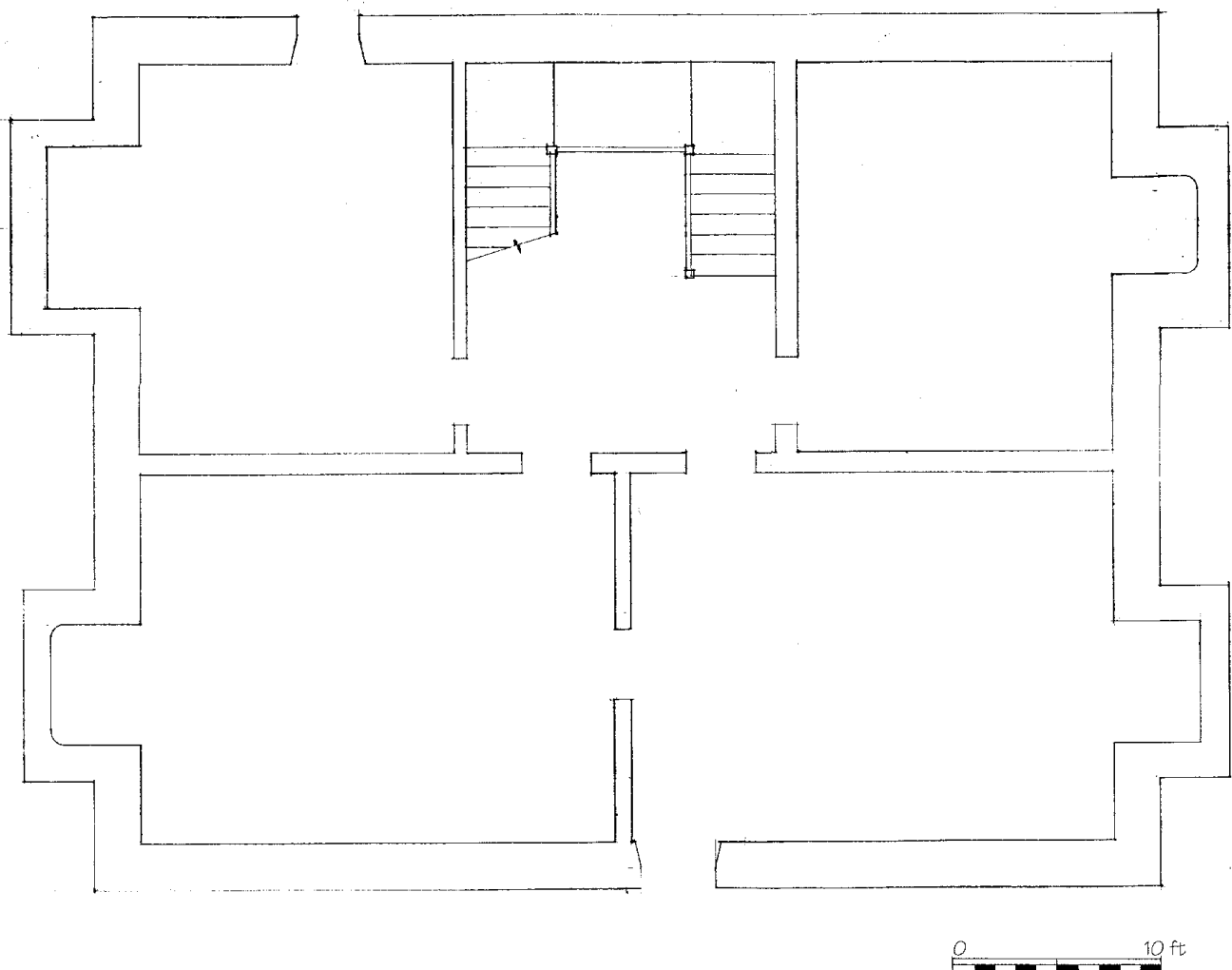
Placement of the external cellar entrance near the center of the east wall reinforces the impression that this was a secondary elevation, whatever the location of the kitchen. Making the east wall the front would require either external steps of considerable complexity in order to climb up over the cellar entrance and gracefully enter the ground floor, or an off-center doorway.

If one is willing to accept a land approach and leap the cellar entrance, remembering that the second house at Green Spring had front steps sufficient to do so, the east central space could be interpreted as an unheated entrance hall. It might resemble that framed by two rooms in William Berkeley's 1640s house at Green Spring, here perhaps a parlour and dining room. The larger hall

and a second parlour could then take positions on the west side. Though this interpretation makes planting beds on the west less worrisome, it seems less internally logical and ignores the more compelling artifact evidence for an eastern service yard.

While more modest in extent than the full cellars below Georgian houses in the Chesapeake, the two rooms dug into the clay at Arlington contribute to the house's exceptional quality for its date. The larger east cellar room directly accessible from the rear bulkhead, had plastered walls suggesting active use and the likely presence of windows. While the small cellar extension below the northeast room could have housed an internal stair, its walls were plastered, without indication of steps, and it is more likely the space served some specialized storage or production function like a buttery. A somewhat similar projection was included in a brick-lined cellar below a pre-1727 rear addition to Sotterley in St. Mary's County, Maryland. Arlington's east cel-

Figure 25. Conjectural reconstruction of Arlington ground floor plan based on existing foundations uncovered by archaeological excavation



lar also led to an inner storage room covered with a brick barrel vault. Such vaults were intended to provide a stable environment for food and drink, buffered from extreme changes in temperature and humidity. This is the earliest known vaulted cellar in Virginia, followed by several at the Governor's Palace and larger ones at the more costly subsequent houses, like Rosewell, Shirley (in ancillary buildings), Mt. Airy, and the Robert Carter House in Williamsburg (below a connecting wing).

Elevation, Finish, and Roof

The 1709 description of Arlington as "three stories high besides garrets" can be interpreted as a cellar and two floors below the roof or a more remarkable three full stories and a cellar. Intact outer foundations at grade are the length of three bricks in width, while pieces of masonry with finished exterior and interior faces are of two thicknesses: a brick and a half, and one brick respectively, possibly indicating they are from the second and third floors.

Masonry fragments found in the cellar are informative about both exterior and interior finish, and they clearly indicate the outside appearance was exotic by the more staid standards of the 18th century. The house was constructed of English-bond brickwork with thick (1") and relatively rough joints of yellow mortar made with relatively little lime. Masons took a cosmetic approach to the brickwork, smearing a white mortar with higher lime content over the recessed joints and then applying red iron oxide and red ochre pigments to color the finish mortar (Welsh 1994). While the mortar was still wet, the masons used sharp metal striking tools to cut 3/8" stripes through the surface, creating straight faux joints by exposing the white mortar like the irised figures on sgraffito ware.

Masons elaborated the walls with roughcast: mortar troweled over parts of the brickwork described above, embedded with small quartz pebbles projecting 3/8"-1/2" beyond flat mortared surfaces, all of which was subsequently whitewashed. The

roughcast was used to create patterns. A 3' by 2' block of masonry from beside an upper window or doorway was completely roughcast, around a recessed heart. Smaller fragments have thin roughcast strips from the outlines of larger, unidentified patterns.

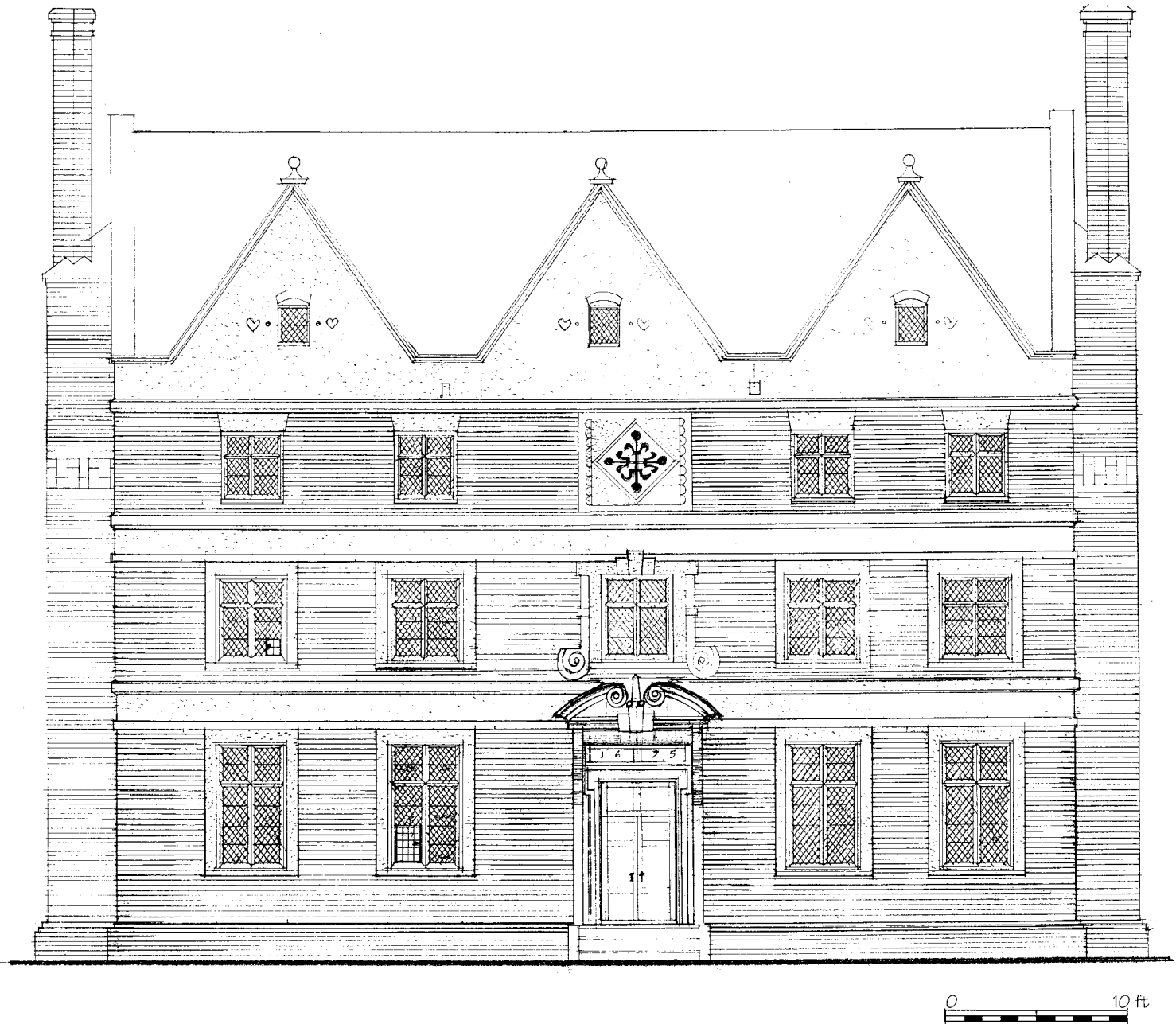
The heart-decorated block of masonry served as part of a surround, rustication, or an impost block beside an opening, not as a lintel or sill like surviving roughcast above and below the upper windows at Bacon's Castle. In short, the walls were punctuated with pebble-surfaced areas outlining decorative patterns, whitewashed to contrast with the faux-jointed red brickwork.

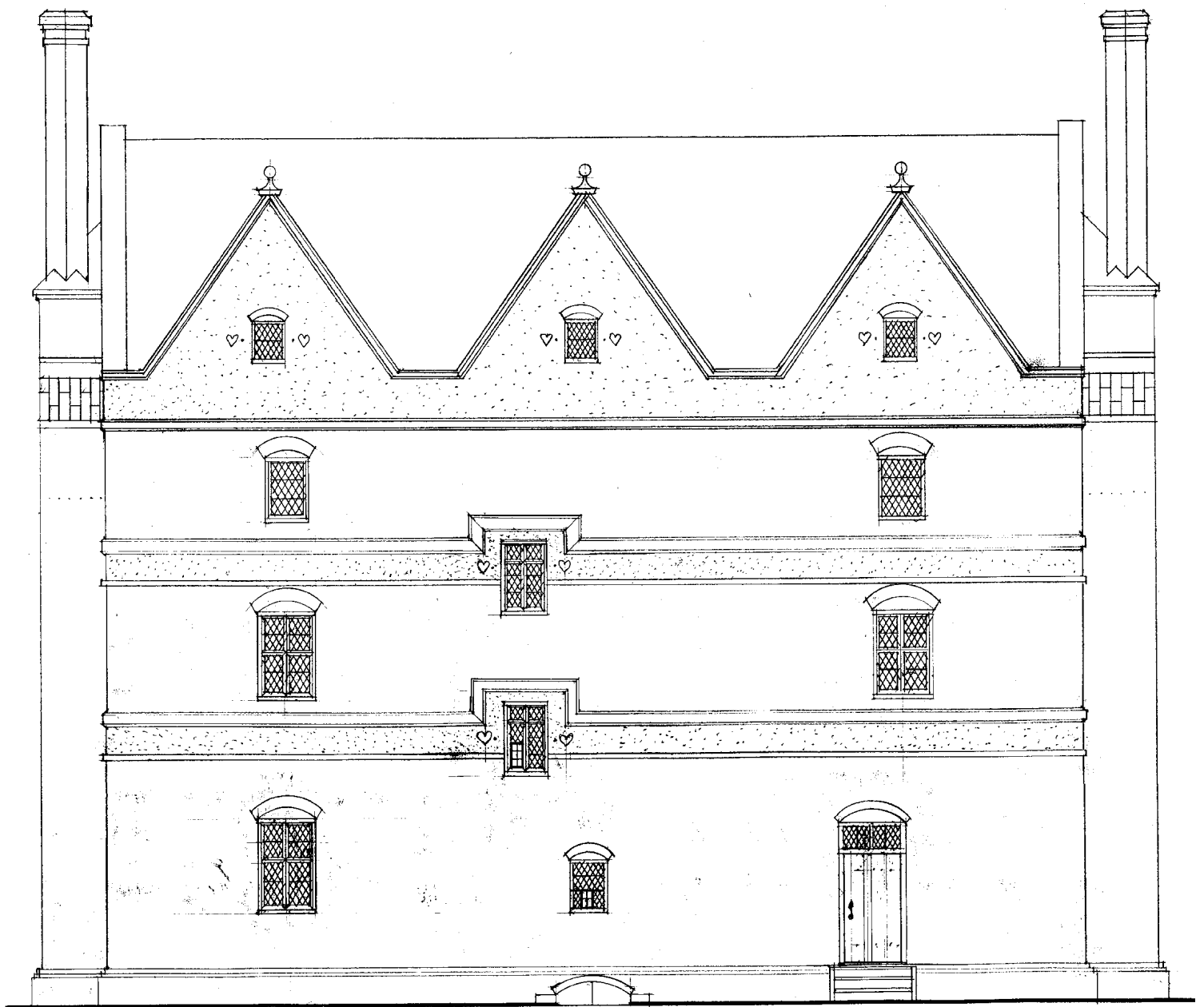
Inside, the faces of the walls were covered with both whitewashed and unpainted white plaster, and small fragments suggest that areas of masonry and lathing were plastered between exposed framing members inside. Splayed window jambs adjoining the heart-impressed masonry were sheathed, while other fragments indicate that some jambs were plastered behind the window or door frames.

Such sizable houses in late 17th-century England were often covered with multiple roofs in favor of a single large roof. When rebuilt after the 1705 fire, the College of William and Mary's three-story rear space was covered with parallel roofs set at right angle to the long walls, and M or multi-peaked roofs were hidden inside hipped outer slopes on the 1716 Williamsburg house built by William Robertson (present Peyton Randolph House) and the Palace Green house later owned by Robert Carter. Traditions of using multiple roofs to cover rectangular houses lasted longer in the British Caribbean and Bermuda.

There is no direct evidence for the nature of Arlington's roof, but the need to cover 43½', an unusually great depth for a Virginia structure in the 1670s, probably led the builders to use perhaps three parallel hipped or gable roofs, covered with wood or slate.

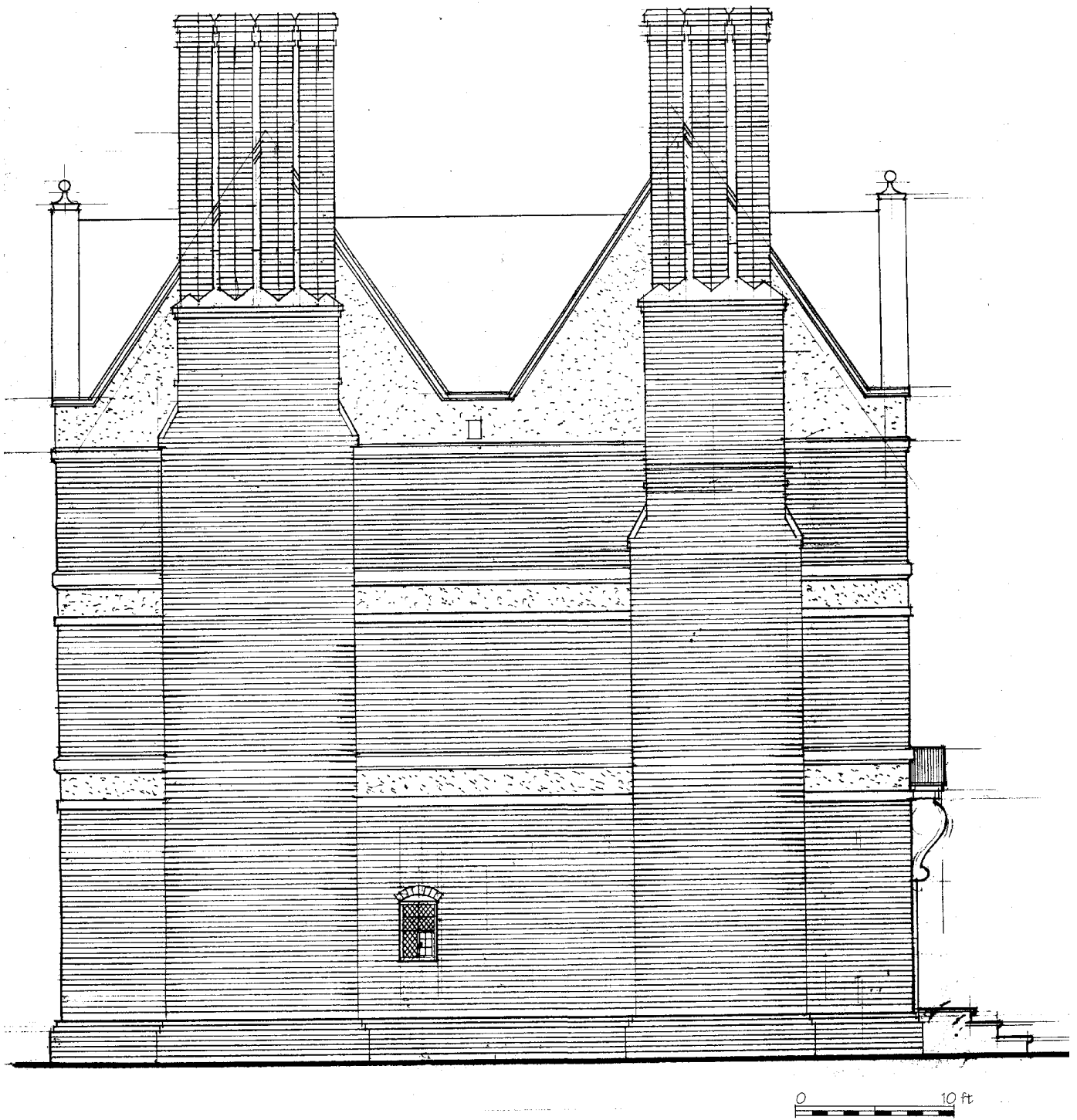
Figure 26. Conjectural reconstruction of front or west and rear (opposite) elevations of Arlington.





0 10 ft

Figure 27. Conjectural reconstruction of North end of Arlington.



SELECTED ARTIFACTS

by Beverly A. Straube

The Arlington cellars contained a disappointingly small number of artifacts; clearly it had never been used as a refuse pit. Apart from brick, mortar, plaster, turned lead, and nails, the only other architectural related artifacts recovered during the excavation were 3 iron pintles, an iron bar that might be part of a casement window, and ½" thick fragments of dark grey/black slate, possibly from paving or steps (Figure 27).

The few domestic artifacts recovered from Arlington are indicative of the high status of the Custis family who could invest in costly and fashionable objects to mediate their everyday lives. Interestingly, mixed in with the more expensive ceramics were several sherds of cheap utilitarian colonoware.

Wine Bottle with Custis seal

A nearly complete glass English wine bottle with an impressed seal on the shoulder has been recreated from pieces found in the cellars (Figure 28). Bottles marked with a seal identifying the owner by name, initials, or family crest were first made in the mid-17th century. These specially marked bottles were popular status symbols among wealthy Virginia planters and merchants in the colonial period. This is graphically represented by the collection of 17th-century wine bottle seals from Jamestown. Of the 104 seals archaeologically recovered, 34 different types are represented (Hudson 1961:80).

The form of the Arlington bottle, which has a short fat tapering neck over a rounded body, was

produced c. 1670-1690. The 6" high bottle has a large flat string rim encircling the neck .25" below the lip. The incomplete seal consists of a ligatured "I" and "C" with a star at the top and a diamond to the left side, marking the bottle for John Custis



Figure 29. Reconstructed wine bottle with John Custis seal.

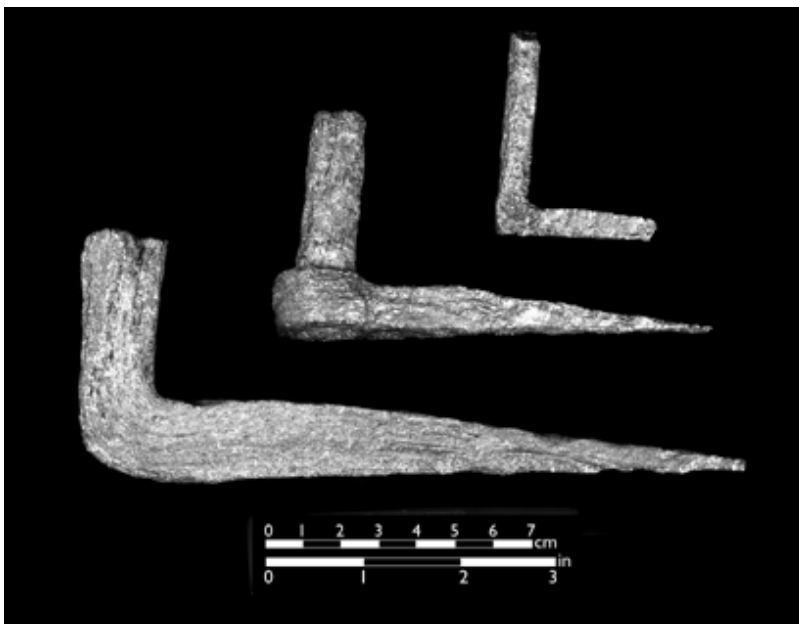


Figure 28. Pintles from Arlington cellars.

II. Three other John Custis seals, one bearing the date 1713, have been found during excavations in Williamsburg, and obviously belong to John Custis IV.

Rhenish Stoneware Jug

A tankard from the Westerwald region of Germany was found in the cellar entrance. All manner of Westerwald ceramics were imported into Virginia in great quantity from the earliest years of English settlement through the Revolutionary War, including household, tavern, and sanitary items.

The *birnbauchkrug*, or literally “pear-bellied jug,” is incomplete, but probably was about 8” high (Figure 29). The 3’ wide rim diameter of the vessel suggests that it was made for drinking beverages rather than for serving. The sprig-molded floral decoration, linked by curving plant stems and contrasted against a blue background, characterizes decoration in the fourth quarter of the 17th century.

English Delftware Plate

A small tin-glazed earthenware plate measuring 6” in diameter was recovered during the excavations at Arlington (Figure 30). Delftware was produced in England from the late 16th-century through the 18th century. In the beginning it was most often painted with a blue palette over a white background, emulating Chinese porcelain which was very costly and highly desirable among 17th-century English consumers. In the 1680s, and only for a short time, the fashion was to tint the white background to a pale duck egg blue in an attempt to look more like porcelain (Archer and Morgan 1977:46). The Arlington plate reflects this coloring of the glaze.

Double blue lines encircle the top of the everted rim. The center motif consists of a biconic jug holding a geometric spray of flowers. Designs incorporating flowers were most popular c. 1670-1710, with the vase usually omitted during the later part of that period (Garner and Archer 1972:9). The hand-painted decoration is also indicative of a date in the 1680’s.



Figure 30. Westerwald jug from Arlington.

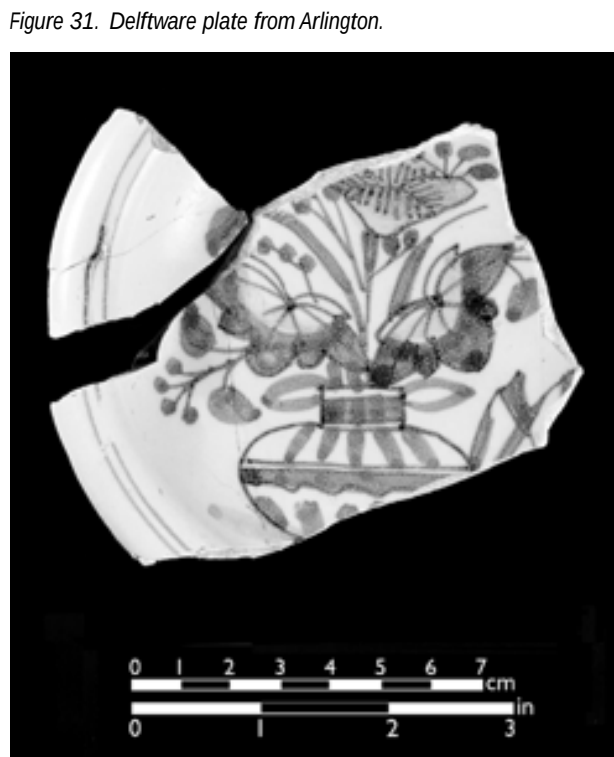


Figure 31. Delftware plate from Arlington.

SUMMARY

The 17th century was a time when nearly all Virginians lived in houses made of wood. Planters of every stripe, from small landholders to colonial aristocrats built wooden homes, though the more affluent frequently added architectural refinements such as brick chimneys and glazed windows. The most common 17th-century house consisted of one or two rooms, the hall and chamber, with an end chimney and rived clapboards covering the roof and sides. Indeed, this type of house was so common that it was known as a Virginia house (Carson et al 1981), and the Burdett period earthfast structure at Arlington is a perfect example of this.

Large brick mansions were not entirely unknown in 17th century Virginia, but they were not prevalent, and those that were in existence paled in comparison to John Custis II's Arlington. The only surviving dwelling in Virginia from that century, Bacon's Castle in Surry County, dates to about 1665 and was built around a core block that measured 45' by 26' (Andrews 1984:45). A similar but smaller brick house with porch and stair towers that was built by Miles Cary II also in the 1660's has been excavated along the Warwick River in the former Elizabeth City County (Hudgins 1976). Green Spring, constructed in 1642 for Governor Sir William Berkeley in James City County, known through archaeological excavations and a 1796 painting by Benjamin Latrobe, was the most substantial of the 17th-century brick houses, although its original configuration has not yet been sorted out (Caywood 1955). Despite being grand houses compared to their contemporaries, Bacon's Castle and the Miles Cary house were simple hall-chamber dwellings, while the architecture of Green Spring was reminiscent of earlier Medieval buildings.

In contrast, Arlington was neither old fashioned nor contemporary; it was ahead of its time, at least in the Chesapeake. Arlington's double pile plan is more 18th than 17th century, while its footprint is almost identical to that of the Governor's Palace. And if the 1709 description is to be believed, Arlington stood a full three stories. The archaeological excavations have provided additional architectural details including evidence of wall construction, treatment, and ornamentation.

The archaeological excavations in the Arlington mansion cellars proved to be extremely profitable and at the same time disheartening. The chances

of recovering information on the appearance and appointments were limited because Arlington did not have a full cellar to capture sections of fallen walls or floors. Unfortunately, the excavations disclosed that the vaulted cellar and at least the western 5' of the large cellar were filled entirely with brick bats and other rubble. There were few whole bricks, no pieces of articulated wall, and little hardware; all signs indicative of extensive salvaging activities that thwarted the preservation of useful architectural information apart from scattered fragments of plaster ornaments. The uppermost loam and rubble represents the post-destruction filling of the cellar holes and a second, lower thick layer of nearly solid brick rubble is almost certainly the result of dismantling of the walls. In contrast, all three 5' squares along the east side of the large cellar contained sections of wall fall which, in some cases, clearly continued into the unexcavated middle section of the large cellar.

There was only slight accumulation of occupation deposits on the floors and no suggestion that the mansion had been destroyed by fire. Artifacts recovered from the fill in the cellar entrance included part of a Westerwald stoneware jug and a delftware plate, while Yorktown coarseware was found throughout the cellars, all suggesting the approximate demise of Arlington to sometime after 1720.

The Custis Tombs were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1968 before the discovery of any archaeological remains of Arlington. The significance section of the nomination states that "The land's historic associations make it one of the most significant unexcavated sites in Virginia." In addition to the unparalleled historical associations with Custis, Washington, and Lee, the Arlington site contains the archaeological remains representative of the entire evolution of English settlement of Virginia. This begins with the fortified frontier settlement of the first English colony on the Eastern Shore in the early 17th century, moves to the successful first tobacco farm and then great plantation, and finally ends with a 18th-century tenant farm or slave quarter. Beyond that, the Arlington site includes the most extraordinary seventeenth-century house known to have been built in Virginia and incorporates perhaps more concentrated history than any other comparable piece of land.

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