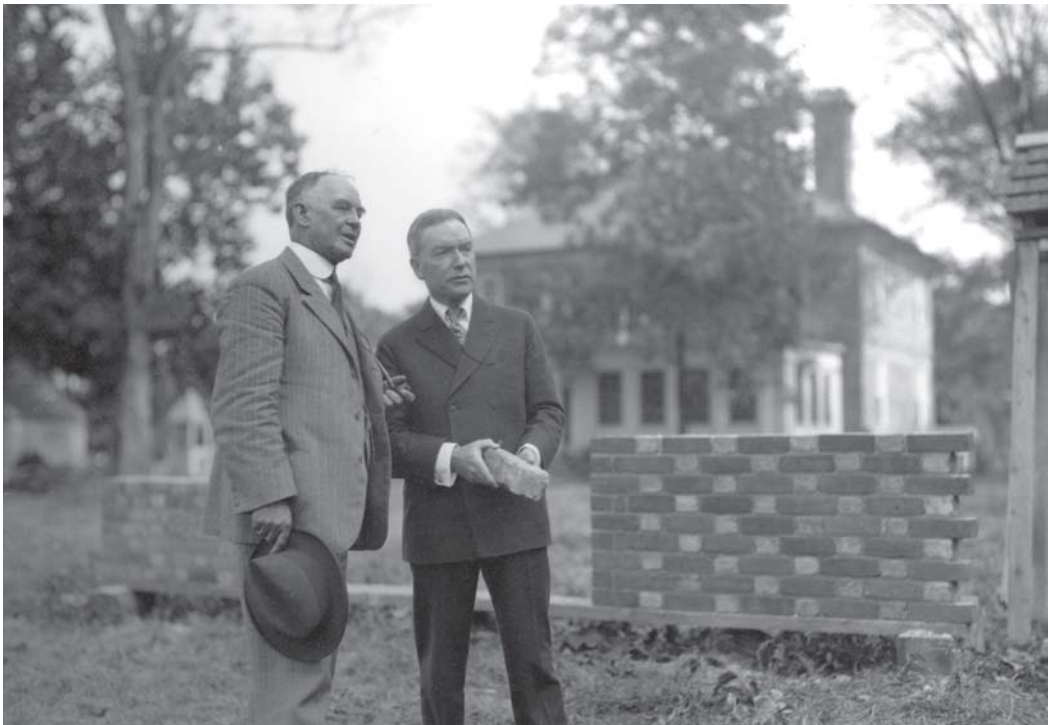


INTRODUCTION

The early architecture of Tidewater Virginia has held the attention of scholars, genealogists, and tourists for more than a century. Every year garden-club pilgrims and graduate students come to places like Westover to find contemporary decorating ideas or to discover the design sources for William Byrd III's mansion on the James River. A million visitors descend upon Williamsburg to learn about colonial America, gaze at priceless antiques, walk in beautiful gardens, or enjoy a golfing holiday in history land. Scores of historic houses, churches, and public buildings stand isolated deep in the rural countryside. Towers of commerce in Richmond and Norfolk surround others and many more are increasingly engulfed in suburbs whose dwellings mimic their colonial form and detailing.

In a rapidly changing landscape, early buildings serve as familiar markers, guideposts for travel, and help-meets to the historical memory of a land wedded to the Chesapeake Bay. They define the region and continue to shape the imaginations of contemporary residents. For some people, they conjure a simple agrarian past; for others, they represent freedom shrines of individuals and events that served as the nursery of our national identity; and yet for others they awaken a dark past that continues to stain public discourse. Few places in the nation can boast of such a glorious past associated with individuals such as Washington, Jefferson, and Henry, or places of critical importance such as Jamestown and Yorktown. Yet few regions have an historical legacy that has been so repudiated. Many may admire

William Byrd II's literary contributions to fashioning a self-conscious American identity, yet are repulsed by the inequalities and brutalities of a hierarchical gentry society of which he stood at the pinnacle and whose wealth was rooted in the staple production of tobacco by slave labor. The words in Jefferson's Declaration of Independence put the slave-owning, deference-demanding gentry of Byrd's world on the wrong side of the political philosophy that would be hallowed as the civic bible of the



Dr. W. A. R. Goodwin and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. behind the George Wythe House and the churchyard planning the restoration of Williamsburg. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation photograph.

new nation. A severe economic depression in the late eighteenth-century further undermined their ascendancy in Virginia society. The Civil War finished off any political force they still may have mustered.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, a new and popular image of Southern history arose. Survivors of the lost cause sought salvation in their early history, honoring the leaders and places of the Revolution and eventually the Civil War itself. Historical societies enshrined the southern landscape, marking and preserving houses, churches, and public buildings of ancient times. Southerners also felt compelled to redeem the earliest period of their colonial history before the glory of Jamestown's achievement was lost to Northern authors who wrote the story of the Pilgrims as the opening chapter in American history. By the early twentieth century, rich Northerners and a few proud Southern families grasped for the mythic qualities of the genteel society of colonial planters, whose apotheosis appeared in the grand brick plantation houses seated on large estates. They bought places such as Westover and Carter's Grove, restored them, and filled them with antiques, ghosts, and legends of chivalrous cavaliers and great patriots. Even today, these houses and sites still cast a spell over many who have more than a passing interest in Southern architecture. This image of a golden legacy is both a blessing and a foil, for it entreats with its richness, snares the weak and snobbish, and obscures a far more complex and ambiguous past.

Following the First World War, the sanctification of great men and sacralization of historic sites reached a national audience as Monticello, Gunston Hall, Stratford, Kenmore, and other buildings associated with the great and good of early Virginia were preserved and opened to the public. Seventy-five years ago, John D. Rockefeller initiated one of the largest restoration projects ever attempted in the country with the transformation of the backwater city of Williamsburg into an American icon. After this, the material culture of the region became inextricably imprinted upon the public imagination with the growing national interest in American colonial history. From the 1920s through the 1940s, Fiske Kimball, Thomas Waterman, and others charted the history of Virginia's colonial architecture, placing it in a national context. These studies defined its architectural development in relation to its growing fidelity to eighteenth-century English and European academic sources and models. Much of what has been written about early Virginia since that time continues to follow the same intellectual course where the origins of a particular form or a stylistic detail is traced back

to published sources, individual architects, or particular buildings.

For the past quarter century, Tidewater Virginia has been one of the most intensively studied regions in early American architecture. Hundreds of sites have been investigated and recorded. Although much of the research has originated in the fieldwork undertaken by the staff of the Architectural Research Department at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, they have been joined by a host of scholars who have sought new insights from standing structures and returned to documentary sources with new sets of questions. Informed by the work of social historians, curators, and archaeologists who have been extremely active in excavating scores of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sites across the Chesapeake, several new perspectives have emerged of the region's architectural development during its first two centuries of settlement. They overturn or modify many traditional textbook views about building practices, plan types, and design sources.

This VAF guidebook incorporates much of this new scholarship and offers a fresh interpretation of a number of familiar icons. What should be apparent in reading the following descriptions is our interest in the way in which buildings can be seen to embody many of the assumptions and aspirations of the colonial society that constructed them—both the self-conscious intentions of the builders as well as the unwritten rules that shaped them. Understanding the plan provides insight into the manner in which colonial Virginia society functioned in public and private spaces. Virginians decorated what they considered the most important spaces with the most elaborate fittings and furnishings. Decorative details were not applied in a haphazard manner but carefully considered in a hierarchy of ornamentation. It may be interesting to know that George Washington cribbed one of his mantel designs from Abraham Swan's *British Architect*, but from our perspective it is far more informative to understand why Washington used this academic source in his dining room. What does this tell us about the significance of dining in the late colonial period or about Washington's cultural ambitions through the use of such objects? This is architectural research as social history and breaks with the kind of traditional scholarship associated with Kimball and Waterman that has been so grounded in formal analysis. This perspective requires very careful analysis of a building's fabric—a focus on the details in order to sort out its chronological history. As many of the following guidebook entries reveal, few if any buildings survive unaltered from the colonial period. Good fieldwork invites better scholar-

ship, but does not automatically guarantee it. It is simply a necessary first step.

The organizers of this year's conference have spent more than twenty years together and have learned much from one another as well as many other colleagues. After all this time together, we can appreciate each other's peculiar skills and have long since abandoned any sense of embarrassment when we offer up the most ludicrous interpretation of a building. Much of the work that went into this guidebook has been the product of long-term research. Some of the material was pulled together from other tours given in the past while new sites have been added to create a full complement of building types for each of the tours. In doing this most recent work, we have been aided by a number of individuals who volunteered their time and expertise. We are thankful to Camille Wells, a former member of this department and long time friend, for her entries on several sites in the Northern Neck. Jim and Marilyn Melchor, our favorite volunteers over the past dozen years, helped organize the Norfolk tour. John Larson, David Bergstone, Susan Kern, Clifton Ellis, Gina Haney, Amy Speckart, Bobby Kerr, Gary Stanton, and Carter Hudgins provided much needed help in recording a number of buildings. Thanks also goes to Louis Nelson who organized a bevy of students from the University of Virginia to help with fieldwork including Roysin Billert, Amanda Davis, Kathleen Durham, Lindsey Gertz, Karen Robins, and Richard Sidebottom. Billie Graham produced a number of drawings for the guidebook and provided much needed instruction to his father on the arcane methods of scanning images and working software layout programs. In working to pull this conference together we would also like to thank Betty Leviner, Susan Kern, and Janet Murray. We are indebted to Cary Carson who has been a strong advocate for the type of work that we do at Colonial Williamsburg. He has inspired many of us to think more clearly about the relationship between architecture and colonial society, providing in almost equal measure insightful and wacky ideas about buildings.

Gary Stanton, Carter Hudgins, and students and alumni of the Historic Preservation Department at Mary Washington College took on the responsibility of organizing the registration for the conference for which we are very grateful. They also have helped with many of the logistical matters that arise when running such an undertaking. In addition, we are indebted to the help Gary and Billie Graham gave us on the layout of the conference guidebook.

Over the years, we have been particularly rewarded by the unfailing hospitality shown to us by the many

homeowners, landlords, tenants, county officials, and church wardens we have called on to allow us to visit their buildings. We appreciate their willingness to let us crawl through unholy places and dark corners and they have been tolerant of us rewriting the history of their families and homes. Finally, thanks to all of those owners who have allowed us to descend upon them for the VAF conference with 300 of the most noted architectural historians in the country. At least that is what we told them.

Welcome to Williamsburg.

Carl Lounsbury
February 15, 2002

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Reconstructed interior of the Williamsburg Courthouse. Photograph by Willie Graham, 1991.

DRAWING CONVENTIONS

Where construction periods are distinguished in plans, the following conventions have been used:

	PERIOD I
	PERIOD II
	PERIOD III
	PERIOD IV
	PERIOD V