Within the House of Bondage: Constructing and Negotiating the Plantation Landscape in the British Atlantic World, 1670-1820

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WITHIN THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE: CONSTRUCTING AND NEGOTIATING THE PLANTATION LANDSCAPE IN THE BRITISH ATLANTIC WORLD, 1670-1820

by

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Bachelor of Arts
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

History

College of Arts and Sciences

University of South Carolina

2017

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I cannot remember a time when I did not love history, but a love of history does not make one a historian. That process began when I was a freshman at William and Mary and chose to take an all-day Saturday class on the colonial Chesapeake. As we visited historic sites across the Tidewater, I began to think about history differently. No longer just the study of the past for me, history’s material remains were embedded in the modern landscape just waiting to be explored. Historic structures, archaeological sites, and historical artifacts had as much to say as the historical documents with which I had become familiar. Writing my thesis then gave me the first opportunity to ask many of the questions that I continued to interrogate and build upon at the University of South Carolina.

At the University of South Carolina, Woody Holton and Lydia Brandt stewarded both this project and my growth as a scholar during my time at the University of South Carolina. They have worked tirelessly to make me both a better scholar and a better person and for that I am eternally grateful. Others, earlier in my career as a historian, set me on this path. James P. Whittenburg, Carolyn Whittenburg, Carl Lounsbury, and Susan Kern first introduced me to the study of history, and specifically the study of architecture and material culture. I was taught by giants and I can only hope to someday live up to their examples as scholars, educators, and human beings.

I am grateful to Mark Smith and Matt Childs, who served on the committee for this dissertation, as well as many others. Mark Smith encouraged me to think more
creatively about my sources, to investigate the texture of the past, and introduced me to sensory history. Matt Childs pushed me beyond the boundaries of the British Atlantic into the Francophone and Iberian Atlantics. Allison Marsh has been a source of great advice and friendship throughout graduate school. Ann Johnson, who brought me to the University of South Carolina as Director of Graduate Studies, encouraged me to think beyond my already-porous disciplinary boundaries. This dissertation and my future work have benefited greatly from their influence.

David Brown and Thane Harpole both provided insight into the Virginia plantation landscape, especially at Fairfield Plantation, and facilitated my quadrennial interest in actually digging archaeological sites. Jamie May, Kenneth Kelly, Keith Stephenson, Karen Smith, George Wingard, Steve Smith, and Chester DePratter helped me expand my knowledge of the practice of archaeology. Archaeology, architectural history, material culture, and document-based historical research are all fields in which the greatest learning is gained from actually getting your hands dirty and without the opportunity to dig a historic site, I might never have been able to study the many long-gone buildings in this dissertation.

A number of grants and fellowships have supported my work over the last six years, while also helping me create an invaluable network of other scholars whose work has enriched my own. Summer funding from the University of South Carolina Department of History and the Walker Institute for International Studies allowed me to travel and research, as did an early SPARC grant from the University of South Carolina Graduate School. Several fellowships from the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America provided additional support for travel to archives while a short-term
fellowship at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation gave me the opportunity to use their archives and revisit many Virginia plantations. Perhaps the most formative fellowship experience was my six-month fellowship at the Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon, which gave me the opportunity to live at and explore Mount Vernon and its archives. There, I was able to work with their extraordinary staff, including Doug Bradburn, Mark Santangelo, Thomas Reinhart, Caroline Spurry, Steve Stuckey, Adam Erby, Stephen McCleod, Joe Stoltz, Sarah Myers, and Mary Jongema. Additionally, support from the Graduate School at the University of South Carolina and the Bilinski Foundation, allowed me to dedicate myself solely to writing during the last year.

In Barbados, I have a number of people to thank, especially the archivists at the Barbados National Archives and Harriet Pierce and Tamara Griffith of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society. Henry Fraser offered valuable insight into the island’s architectural history early on in this project and Mikala Hope-Franklyn helped me search Barbados for old buildings to document during my 2016 fieldwork. Additionally, a number of property owners and managers opened their homes for this study, including Massimo and Karen Franchi, Adrienne Norton, and Pauline Saunders.

I have been particularly blessed to have a cohort of historians who encouraged me throughout the process of research and writing. Kristina Poznan, Lindsay Chervinsky, Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, Kate McFadden, and Mark VanDriel have supported and challenged me, laughed and cried with me, drank too much and said too much with me, and only called me crazy once or twice. Their work has forced me to think more critically about my own and inspired me to be more ambitious. They have also tolerated a number
of frantic text messages and phone calls when it seemed certain the sky was falling and welcomed me into their homes on many occasions. I cannot thank them enough, as friends or as scholars. The Atlantic Reading Group at the University of South Carolina, especially Chaz Yingling, Neal Polhemus, Andrew Kettler, Carter Bruns, Antony Keane-Dawes, Lewis Eliot, Patrick O’Brien, and Don Polite, read early drafts of parts of the dissertation and provided critical feedback and camaraderie.

I want to conclude by thanking my family. My parents, John and Kathryn Holmes, have supported me in ways large and small and too numerous to mention without exceeding the length of my actual dissertation. They inspire me to be a better person daily. Evangeline Cain, Candy Cain, Patricia Lambert, and Allison Mullenax, have supported me and allowed me to hijack their vacations for trips to historic sites and I love them dearly. Carla Shakely and Kate Huggins encouraged me as I walked this path.

I am forever grateful to every person named – and many others I did not mention specifically – for all that they have taught me, the models they’ve provided, and the love they have given.
ABSTRACT

My dissertation is a comparative study of the plantation landscape in South Carolina, Barbados, and Virginia between 1670 and 1820 that explores how the built environment (landscape, architecture, and material culture) shaped interactions between enslaved people and free, white workers and slaveholders. Instead of simply the home of the planter class, the plantation house was more than a living space or a work space; it was a workshop for the creation of a distinctly American culture.

The vastly different houses built in each colony reflect the transformation of the built environment in the New World that began during the second half of the seventeenth century and lasted through the beginning of the nineteenth century. The way these buildings changed (or did not) altered the experiences of all those who occupied them in distinct ways. Historians attribute this transformation to the effect of the Georgian worldview, which introduced English design to the colonies and influenced everything from chamber pots to churches and is widely characterized as an academic, rather than vernacular, process that brought classical elements, balance, order, and symmetry to colonial design. However, in emphasizing the similarities between material culture in England’s North American colonies, historians’ focus on the Georgian worldview has limited their critical analyses of the material changes of the eighteenth century.

Colonists imported both ideas and objects from England, but these changed as soon as they made contact with the New World. These ideas and objects responded to the environment and the evolving demands of plantation slavery in ways that few historians
have explored. The plantation offers the ideal context for the study of the Georgian worldview’s American alterations because it was a landscape that never occurred in England and that could not have developed in the colonies without the immense wealth produced by slavery. But the built environment evolved differently in each of the three colonies. In Barbados, for example, the persistence of seventeenth century English architecture and the convergence of lush greenery around the plantation house allowed planters to isolate themselves from the brutality of slavery and to think of themselves as Englishmen transplanted, but not transformed. Virginia planters, in contrast, adapted their homes at the beginning of the eighteenth century as they learned to be slaveholders, incorporating the enslaved landscape into the white landscape and using architecture to reify the social structure. At the demographic, social, and climatic intersection of these Chesapeake and Caribbean experiences, South Carolinians adopted some of the same adaptations to slavery as Virginians (for instance, building hidden internal stairs), but pushed the landscape of slavery to the periphery like Barbadians. The built environment of the plantation thus became an important tool in the domestication and management of slavery, fundamentally redefining colonists’ ideas of themselves as English men and women.

Though planters in Virginia, South Carolina, and Barbados built houses based on English designs throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, slavery and the climate sometimes necessitated a reorganization of space, and even when the spaces themselves went unchanged, demanded a redefinition of how space was used. By reexamining space as it was planned and as it was used, I gain greater access to the manner in which the enslaved altered their world. I argue that the ways in which slavery
forced planters to change space and its uses pushed planters in Virginia and South Carolina (but not in Barbados) further from their imagined British identity toward one that was uniquely American.
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INTRODUCTION

This is a comparative study of the plantation landscape in South Carolina, Barbados, and Virginia between 1670 and 1820 that explores how the built environment (landscape, architecture, and material culture) shaped interactions between enslaved people and free, white workers and slaveholders. Instead of simply the home of the planter class, the plantation house was more than a living space or a work space; it was a workshop for the creation of a distinctly American culture.

The vastly different houses built in each colony reflected the transformation of the built environment in the New World that began during the second half of the seventeenth century and lasted through the beginning of the nineteenth century. The way these buildings changed (or did not) altered the experiences of all those who occupied them in distinct ways depending on their status and position within the household. Historians attribute this transformation to the effect of the Georgian worldview, which introduced English design to the colonies and influenced everything from chamber pots to churches and is widely characterized as an academic, rather than vernacular, process that brought classical elements, balance, order, and symmetry to colonial design. However, in emphasizing the similarities between material culture in England’s North American
colonies, historians’ focus on the Georgian worldview has limited their critical analyses of the material changes of the eighteenth century.¹

Colonists imported both ideas and objects from England, but these changed as soon as they made contact with the New World. These ideas and objects responded to the environment and the evolving demands of plantation slavery in ways that few historians have explored. The plantation offers the ideal context for the study of the Georgian worldview’s American alterations because it was a landscape that never occurred in England and that could not have developed in the colonies without the immense wealth produced by slavery. But the built environment evolved differently in each of the three colonies. In Barbados, for example, the persistence of seventeenth century English architecture and the convergence of lush greenery around the plantation house allowed planters to isolate themselves from the brutality of slavery and to think of themselves as Englishmen transplanted, but not transformed. Virginia planters, in contrast, adapted their homes at the beginning of the eighteenth century as they learned to be slaveholders, incorporating the enslaved landscape into the white landscape and using architecture to

reify the social structure. At the demographic, social, and climatic intersection of these Chesapeake and Caribbean experiences, South Carolinians slowly and selectively adopted some of the same adaptations to slavery as Virginians (for instance, the central passage-plan, while used in South Carolina, was never the dominant form for the plantation house), but pushed the landscape of slavery to the periphery like Barbadians. The built environment of the plantation thus became an important tool in the domestication and management of slavery, redefining colonists’ ideas of themselves as English men and women.

Though planters in Virginia, South Carolina, and Barbados built houses based on English designs throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, slavery and the climate sometimes necessitated a reorganization of space, and even when the spaces themselves went unchanged, demanded a redefinition of how space was used. By reexamining space as it was planned and as it was used, I gain greater access to the manner in which the enslaved altered their world. I argue that the ways in which slavery forced planters to change space and its uses pushed planters in Virginia and South Carolina (but not in Barbados) further from their imagined British identity toward one that was uniquely American.

**Historiography**

The Georgian worldview, first described by archaeologist James Deetz, was the material counterpart of the broader process of Anglicization introduced by historian John Murrin. According to these scholars and others, this process made colonists increasingly “English” over the course of the eighteenth century. Historians have since used

“Georgianization” and “Anglicization” to claim that North American much more closely resembled England in 1776 than it had a century earlier, and thus that the American Revolution was a truly radical cultural as well as political break with the British Empire.³ Disputing this view, I argue that Americans were ambivalent about these processes and that the way the environment, slavery, and circumstance forced them to change reveals the transformation of colonial identity preceding Revolution. By situating this work at the intersection of material studies (architectural history, archaeology, and material culture) and plantation studies (the history of slavery and of the plantation’s economic and social development), my goal has been to illustrate how the built environment shaped both the experience of slavery and relationships between the enslaved and slaveholders within the household.

In this dissertation, I have employed architecture as a framework for the discussion of social history, using archival sources, surviving plantation architecture, archaeological remains, and material culture to access the lived experience of the eighteenth century plantation. In topic and method, I have endeavored to counter the prevailing model in plantation studies that segregates the study of elite whites in the plantation house and enslaved African Americans in the fields and slave quarters. This separation has limited scholars’ ability to recognize the cross-cultural influence of shared spaces that took on multiple meanings based on an individual’s experience. Instead, I focus on the spaces to which historians have given the least consideration – stairways, hallways, dining rooms, kitchens and bedchambers – in which whites and blacks

³ John M. Murrin, “England and Colonial America,” Princeton Alumni Weekly Review, September 21, 1974; the most recent work to consider Anglicization is Galip-Diaz, Shankman, and Silverman, Anglicizing America: Empire, Revolution, Republic.
encountered one another on a daily basis. I marry spatial and social analyses to expose how the three regions in this study developed in distinct, but interrelated ways throughout the course of the eighteenth century and the manner in which plantation spaces shaped colonial identities within the plantation household.

At its core, the methodology used in this study reflects the work of the Chesapeake school of historians, archaeologists, and architectural historians over the past forty years as they embraced a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of the earliest-settled parts of Virginia and Maryland. *The Chesapeake House: Architectural Investigations by Colonial Williamsburg*, edited by Cary Carson and Carl R. Lounsbury, and Lorena Walsh’s *Motives of Honor, Pleasure, and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763* represent the most recent examples of the way social history and material culture (in this case, architecture and archaeology as well as specific object studies) have intertwined to produce more comprehensive histories of eighteenth century Virginia.⁴ At the same time, there has been a separation between the enslaved and the slaveholder even in these studies. John Michael Vlach’s *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*, a seminal work on the built environment of slavery, explicitly begins at the back door of the great house to examine the way architecture shaped the lives of the enslaved, ignoring the work spaces within the house,

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which were fraught because of the physical and psychological closeness they created between enslaved and enslaver.\(^5\)

In large part, this division stems from pure numbers: a much smaller number of enslaved persons worked within the house than on the whole of the plantation, but their lives were no less meaningful and their struggles to navigate slavery were distinct – and distinctly challenging – in comparison with those who worked in the field cultivating tobacco, rice, indigo, or sugar. However, it is nonetheless problematic as the household was the space in which individuals who were black, white, native, and mixed race, enslaved and enslaver, male and female, found themselves together; a degree of physical closeness that allowed each to develop ideas about and relationships (albeit unequal ones) with the other. At the core of my analysis are the embedded landscapes described by Dell Upton in “White and Black Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century Virginia,” though in adopting a comparative perspective the landscapes experienced by the enslaved and the planter in and around the Virginia plantation house becomes even more distinct when contrasted with the openness of the plantation house plan in Barbados and South Carolina and the relationship between the house and the slave quarter in those colonies.\(^6\)

Most studies, from Peter Wood’s *Black Majority* to Philip Morgan’s *Slave Counterpoint* to Rhys Isaac’s *Transformation of Virginia* take a moment to address enslaved domestic workers (as well as artisans and drivers whose work put them in proximity to the house), but none have given a deep consideration to how these individuals navigated slavery the way Thavolia Glymph and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese

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have for the antebellum period. At the same time, Glymph and Fox-Genovese have focused on women in the household, reifying the division between the private female sphere and the public male one. This division, while explicit in the antebellum period, was far less concrete during the early settlement and maturity of the plantation; while the plantation mistress may have had control within the household, that control extended only as far as the plantation master allowed it, demonstrated clearly in the battles – often over the labor and behavior of enslaved domestics – between William and Lucy Byrd at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Moreover, this gendered analysis focuses on gender from the perspective of the enslaver, as a division between the women’s sphere and man’s; in reality the household was a layered space where numerous enslaved women worked, but it was often under the direction of a male butler, and he himself sometimes answered to a white housekeeper.

South Carolina has had none of the interdisciplinary consideration that Virginia has, but anthropology, history, and architectural history have all contributed separately to deepening the study of the plantation. History and historical archaeology have both made meaningful contributions to the study of plantation slavery, but in this area, architectural historians’ contributions have been limited. In *Town House: Architectural and Material Life in the American City, 1780-1830* (2012), Bernard Herman looked at urban slavery in...

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Charleston and Louis Nelson’s *The Beauty of Holiness* examined ecclesiastical architecture.\(^8\) Shelley Smith’s dissertation, which has been published in part in *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* as “Architectural Design and Building Construction in the Provincial Setting: The Case of the South Carolina Plantation House” is the only study of the South Carolina plantation house, but she takes the approach used by the traditional architectural historians, focusing on stylistic influences and builders rather than the social history of the house, that is to say, the life that took place within the house.\(^9\) Instead, Samuel Stoney, who published his architectural history of South Carolina in 1938 around the same time Thomas T. Waterman was the leading authority on Virginia (and Barbadian) colonial architecture, remains the best source for information about historic buildings in South Carolina.\(^10\)

Anthropologists studying South Carolina, such as Charles Joyner and archaeologists Leland Ferguson and Stanley South, have had a much greater impact on studies of the material life of the enslaved, but their work postdates major studies of slavery in South Carolina like Peter Wood’s *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (1974) and Daniel Littlefield’s *Rice and*

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Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina (1981). More recent work on South Carolina by historian S. Max Edelson in Plantation Enterprise in Colonial South Carolina (2006) has focused on the development of the plantation instead of going inside the house.

In Barbados, in addition to a lack of engagement between different disciplines, the problem has been one of temporality. Historians, particularly Richard Dunn and Russell Menard, have given great consideration to the seventeenth century in Barbados and the introduction of sugar monoculture, and Barbados’s history with slavery and indentured servitude has been frequently included in studies of the Caribbean like Jennifer Shaw’s Everyday Life in the Early English Caribbean (2010). Even so, historians have largely ignored the island’s material past. Archaeological excavations conducted by Jerome Handler, Douglas Armstrong, Matthew Reilly, and Frederick Smith have produced some information about the lives of enslaved Africans, indentured servants, and their descendants, but these studies have not made their way into the historiography.

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The study of Barbados’s material past has been limited largely by the liminal space that extant structures and historic landscapes occupy in the modern landscape: many are either in too great of disrepair or have been entirely incorporated into newer structures, making them uninteresting to architectural historians, while their continued occupation of space above ground makes them a challenge for archaeologists. Further, the continued private ownership of many Barbadian plantations has been a challenge for scholars who would like to study them. Similar challenges abound in South Carolina, but to a lesser extent. While many plantations are privately held, a number are not, and descendants of slaveholders are coming to recognize that their houses represent far more than just the history of their own families. Additionally, while the decay of many historic structures in Barbados resulted from their purchase by corporations that had great interest in cultivating sugar but little interest in the antiquated buildings, the American Revolution and American Civil War led to the destruction of many of South Carolina’s historic buildings.

In 1945, Thomas T. Waterman, in many ways the father of Chesapeake architectural history, produced his own study of Barbadian architecture, concluding that while a small number of seventeenth century buildings persisted, the eighteenth century architecture of Barbados had been totally destroyed by time and a number of devastating hurricanes.\footnote{Thomas T. Waterman, “Some Early Buildings of Barbados,” \textit{The Art Bulletin} 27, no. 2 (1945): 146–49.} In recent years, architectural historians from Colonial Williamsburg conducted an intensive study of the George Washington House (which Washington

\textit{Whites’ of Barbados”} (Ph.D. diss, Syracuse University, 2014). Douglas Armstrong and Frederick Smith have both contributed data on more recent archaeological investigations to the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery (DAACS).
rented from Thomas Croftan during his visit in the 1750s) in conjunction with archaeological excavations by Frederick Smith and Anna Agbe-Davies as part of the house’s restoration.\textsuperscript{16} This study yielded a great amount of information about that site, but because most of the other historic sites on the island are still privately owned, including many of the small number that are open to tourists, similar scholarly studies to expand the sample have not been done. Instead, the most comprehensive works describing Barbadian architecture have been done by Henry Fraser, particularly \textit{Historic Houses of Barbados}, produced by the Barbados National Trust as a guide to the island’s buildings.\textsuperscript{17} Fraser’s knowledge of the island’s history and buildings is significant, but reflects many of the limitations of the documentary record, dealing primarily with buildings that are still standing or have previously been dated to the seventeenth century.

By drawing on the work of historians, architectural historians, archaeologists, and material culture scholars, it becomes possible to produce a fuller picture of the plantation landscape. Combining these resources provides more opportunities to seek out the voices that could not or did not leave records in the documentary sources, to better understand their lived experience and the way those experiences shaped the world around them. It also provides a means of accessing the parts of the past with which the historiography has yet to grapple, while making them more tangible for the modern reader.


\textsuperscript{17} Henry Fraser, \textit{Historic Houses of Barbados: A Collection of Drawings} (Bridgetown: Barbados National Trust, 1982).
Methodology

I have drawn on a variety of sources to answer questions about plantation life in the eighteenth century, including documentary records, extant and archaeological structures, and material culture. While I have sought to use these consistently, the availability of documents and extant structures from particular periods often led me to lean more heavily on one type of source or another. My goal was to reconstruct the material and social reality of the past in order to better understand how individuals moved through it, according to whether they were enslaved or free, black, white or mixed race, or male or female.

Rather than consider particular case studies, I drew on a number of different plantations in each region to gain a sense of the architectural trends in each colony, especially as they related to the form of the house. From a broad sample – approximately 1,200 plantations in Barbados throughout its history (a smaller number of those dating to the eighteenth century), and nearly 200 plantations documented by the National Register in each Virginia and South Carolina – I was able to identify periods and trends in building. I then situated those plantations with extant or documented structures and related documentary records within those periods, drawing on the information gleaned from each to gain a better sense of how space was organized within the house.

Drawing on the documentary record, including travelers’ accounts, journals, correspondence, bills of lading, probate inventories, and newspaper advertisements, I considered how people interacted within and related to these spaces. When possible, I tried to identify those enslaved persons who helped build plantation houses or supporting structures, or those who worked within the house. Most often, this information came from
probate inventories, where an individual’s job was sometimes listed alongside their value to the planter’s estate.

Fieldwork was an important part of the process of reconstructing these landscapes. In Virginia and South Carolina, where many structures are well documented by the National Register of Historic Places or the Historic American Building Survey, I at least tried to visit many of the plantations I discuss, though I was not always successful as many are privately owned. In Barbados, where very few historic buildings are documented all, fieldwork to identify and document eighteenth century structures was an integral part of this study.

Upon completing fieldwork or finding documentation of historic buildings, I then returned to the documentary record to find any references specific to those structures, with some success. When structures were no longer extant, I often relied on historic images, like Charles Fraser’s late eighteenth and early nineteenth century paintings of South Carolina plantations or the cartouche on the plat of Sandy Lane Plantation in Barbados that depicted the house, and probate inventories, whose descriptions of objects in particular spaces revealed both room size and function. Archaeological reports were also useful for considering structures that had long since disappeared. In a limited way, I tried to reconstruct virtual models of some of these plantation houses in order to gain a sense of their massing and spatial organization, particularly in relation to other structures.

By drawing on the methodologies of architectural history, archaeology, documentary history, and material culture, I was not only able to better contextualize the information I uncovered, but was able to produce a more complete narrative. When one
type of source ceased to provide answers, I could interrogate the others and often return
to the original source better equipped to understand the information that it did provide.

On Fieldwork

The process of doing fieldwork is not unlike analyzing a document and inevitably begins with some documentary research, either to identify a building to examine or a particular geographic area to explore. If searching for a particular structure, I begin by delving into written material to find out if it is still standing, who owns it (and as much of the chain of title as I can establish in advance), and any other information I need to find and get access to the structure. I will also seek out earlier descriptions or images of the building and surrounding landscape, but often the clues uncovered from actually studying the structure will aid me in finding these documents after I have documented the structure.

An integral part of the process is speaking to the property’s current owner or caretaker, which I generally try to do (unless the property is abandoned) at the beginning of my visit. Though often their historical information is unreliable (everyone wants their house to be older than it is, or connected to someone famous, or the site of some important event), they can provide invaluable information about more recent changes to the structure, especially renovations they or their immediate predecessor completed. Additionally, if the building is still occupied, they can provide information about what it is like to spend time in the building – what can be heard where, or how a house is cooled by breezes from a particular direction, or whether the crawl space retains moisture causing the floors to periodically require replacement, for example – that would be
inaccessible to someone spending just several hours in the building. And since many of
the houses I study do not come with the detailed documentation of a place like Mount
Vernon or Monticello, obtaining this information is important.

At minimum, documenting a previously-undocumented structure takes about
three hours. I begin by walking the perimeter, making notes about the exterior and the
structure’s massing to assess the building materials and preliminarily identify
construction phases. During this phase, I often draw the façade and the other elevations as
photographs may flatten architectural features. This also provides an opportunity to make
notes on the exterior on the drawing so that I can later recall the building’s massing and
its relationship to its surroundings. Bellevue Plantation House in St. Michael, Barbados,
highlights the need for both interior and exterior assessment of construction phases: the
outside of the house appeared to indicate that there were three parts of the building
constructed separately from one another, while the interior of the building indicated a
likely fourth phase, during which builders expanded the core of the structure. This
additional, but significant, phase of construction was obscured by the veranda that
wrapped around two thirds of the structure. During this initial assessment, I take a
number of photographs, trying to get shots that include an entire elevation (side) of the
building (or more than one side so that I can get a sense of how they connect) as well as
any nearby landscaping or surrounding structures.

After a preliminary assessment of the exterior, I then enter the building and begin
taking notes and photographs of the interior to determine the current floor plan. I
photograph the building as I go through it, taking additional photographs that indicate
how rooms connect, details to consider further, or details that might indicate architectural
changes. For example, at Bellevue, the ground floor walls were exposed, allowing me to see multiple phases of construction, while extremely thick interior supports dividing what is now the living room and a slight irregularity in the distance between and framing of the windows, provided support for my suspicion that the core of the house had been expanded. I photograph and annotate each room individually before retracing my steps (often multiple times) to reconsider previous details in light of my initial conclusions.

Nails, fittings, woodwork, plaster and brickwork, as well as cuts to floor moldings or to floors themselves, provide important information for dating a building and assessing changes to it. At this point, I revisit the exterior to reconsider the phases of construction with this new knowledge in mind.

If the attic, roof, basement, cellar, or crawl space is accessible, I will explore them for signs of architectural or material change. At Clifton Hall in St. Johns, Barbados, I was able to actually enter the crawl space and confirm the footprint of the house and the replacement of the floorboards, but not the joists that supported them. The presence of an older style of coral rubble construction in the foundations helped me to roughly date the structure, which has been restored by its current owners. As my documentation process is not invasive, I am limited to what I can see unless the owners are willing to permit (or have previously permitted) a more intensive investigation. As I surveyed Barbadian buildings, many fell into two categories: either fully restored or in a state of complete disrepair. Those that were in a state of disrepair, like Golden Ridge or The Hope, provided especially valuable information about different types of building materials and construction techniques.
After determining what I believe the plan to be and considering what I can of the building materials, I will draw an outline of the structure and go back through the building adding walls, windows, doors, and any other architectural features that need to be noted. I also annotate this drawing with notes about materials (especially when there are changes to materials) and notes about possible phases of construction and their order. If I have an assistant, I will add measurements to these drawings. If I do not have an assistant, as was often the case in Barbados, I use either a laser measure or an architectural rendering application (usually MagicPlan, designed for architects and interior designers) to establish rough measurements and a sense of scale (the size of one room compared to another and its relation to the whole, for example). I later enter these notes and drawings into SketchUp to produce a model or retain them as images.

Having completed my plan, any additional sketches of the exterior, my notes, and taken comprehensive photographs of the structure, I step outside of the building to synthesize all the disparate pieces of information I have gathered into a coherent narrative. Though at this point I often lack specific dates (especially for Barbadian buildings), I will usually have identified the core of the structure and the additional phases of construction. From here, I can compare this information to the chain of title and the documentary record to add detail to the basic narrative of the house’s construction.

The process described above will vary from place to place in small ways, usually based on the amount of previous documentation a building has or its accessibility. Few sites in Virginia or South Carolina required such documentation because of the work done by the Historic American Building Survey and the architectural historians of Colonial Williamsburg and other institutions. Nonetheless, when reassessing previously
documented structures, I used an abbreviated version of this process to consider the information that I already have in light of my own observations of the structure. If a building has been demolished or is completely inaccessible, I endeavored to recreate it and its plan using historic photographs, notes, and drawings.

**A Note on Mount Vernon and Monticello**

One common methodological and analytical problem I encountered throughout my research was the unevenness of the sources available. While there were, to some extent, comparable numbers of travelers’ accounts and published descriptions from each of the three colonies, there were often unequal numbers of documentary sources available to consider particular houses. For Virginia plantations in general, the documentary records related to extant and archaeological buildings was more robust than that related to buildings in either South Carolina or Barbados. And comparing the records available for houses in South Carolina and Barbados revealed that there were more documentary records related to extant structures in South Carolina than in Barbados, where documentary evidence was usually limited to piecemeal information about the chain of title.

As a result, this led to the prominence of sites like Mount Vernon and Monticello, especially in the last two chapters of the dissertation. Because of Washington’s and Jefferson’s prominence, any records related to their lives have been carefully collected and catalogued in a way that few others were. As a result, though I can only estimate the date of construction for a house like The Hope in Barbados, for example, I can date
master builder John Patterson’s work on the staircase at Mount Vernon to the fall of 1758.

The large documentary record related to these buildings is only part of the argument for their inclusion. Though extraordinary in many ways, as planters Washington and Jefferson were fairly typical, and though Jefferson was an innovative architect, he and his builders were limited by what their materials and tools could do. Mount Vernon is a particularly valuable resource because Washington inherited the core of the building and adapted it throughout his life, often following general architectural trends, and Monticello, though extremely innovative, incorporated features that were common in other plantation houses and helped spread ideas about architecture. By putting other houses built throughout the eighteenth century into conversation with Mount Vernon and Monticello, it became possible to use their documentary records to provide greater documentary context for the available architectural and archaeological evidence.18

Outline of Chapters

This work is divided into five chapters, which are roughly chronological, but do overlap temporally and thematically. Each chapter considers both the architectural and social changes occurring during the given period. Some houses appear in just one chapter, while others reappear throughout the dissertation, especially when planters altered them, or adapted them to a different type of use.

Chapter 1 considers the first phase of building in each colony and the way that planters used the great houses built on their plantations as a means of claiming or consolidating political power and social status. It examines how the early dispersal of planters throughout Tidewater Virginia allowed them to create factions in opposition to the royal government, and how the Carolina Proprietors took this into consideration when establishing their own land distribution policies. The Barbadian planters who settled Carolina in the 1670s, previously restricted only by their island’s geography and conscious of the value of arable land since it was in increasingly short supply by the 1670s, pushed against these restrictive policies and used their somewhat distant settlement from the government’s seat in Charles Town to unify their own political faction. In the midst of these political tensions, constructing large, permanent structures, was an integral part of the strategy planters used to establish their families’ social, economic, and political power. The wealth and labor that made this possible came from the labor of a growing enslaved population that was a source of anxiety for the planter class.

Chapter 2 explores how materials and climate shaped the form of the house in each colony. It gives particular attention to the way Barbadian planters and builders reconciled traditional ideas about the form of a house with the unusual materials they had available, as well as the way the tropical climate forced them to adapt. In Virginia, this adaptation produced the “Virginia house,” while the Barbadian “single house” became the dominant building form throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This chapter considers how planters and enslaved, indentured, and free craftsmen replaced the brick and stone fashionable in the construction of houses in England with new world
materials and how those materials, in turn, shaped the experience and construction of space. Finally, it considers how choices about building determined the spaces occupied by the enslaved within the plantation landscape.

Chapter 3 examines the first phase of architectural changes to the plantation house in Virginia and South Carolina. In Virginia, this change coalesced around the introduction of the central passage, while in both Virginia and South Carolina planters applied “Georgian” facades to houses whose forms did not change. The blending of Atlantic influences in South Carolina produced houses whose plans were considerably more open until the 1740s, reflecting the continued influence of the Barbadian “single house.” Finally, this chapter unpacks the political turmoil and economic stagnation in Barbados that led to a lack of new buildings and the persistence of an older built landscape.

Chapter 4 compares the newly built and newly remodeled buildings of Virginia and South Carolina during the middle of the eighteenth century, showing how planters in South Carolina and Virginia began increasing the spatial divisions between themselves and their domestic slaves, even as they came to rely on them more than ever. It gives special attention to George Washington’s transformation of Mount Vernon at the end of the 1750s. Drawing on data about household composition, this chapter considers how these specialized spaces reflected the specialized work of the enslaved within Virginia and South Carolina households. In Barbados, the continued importation of enslaved Africans, as well as the reproduction of enslaved Afro-Barbadians meant that despite few changes to the house or its organization, planters employed a large number of enslaved people to wait on them without clearly defined tasks.
Finally, Chapter 5 covers the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, arguing that the Barbadian built environment allowed the planter class to resist the American call to revolution before considering way the American Revolution slowed building for most Virginians and South Carolinians. Turning first to the period immediately after the war when new ideas about liberty occupied old spaces, the chapter concludes by showing how planters rebuilding in Virginia and South Carolina sought to either maintain relationships between the enslaved and the planters within the house or to add additional layers of architectural and material control. For different reasons, enslaved Barbadian’s experience of the plantation house began to change during the same period as planters rebuilt following a devastating hurricane and increasing profits from the sugar crop allowed many planters to return to England, leaving overseers and attorneys to manage their plantations.

The Necessity of Putting People in Houses

One of the first lessons archaeologists learn is that context is everything, a lesson that has permeated architectural history and traditional documentary history as well, but which is nonetheless often lacking. The material world shaped the daily life of the eighteenth century in ways both large and small, particularly within and around the plantation house, where the lives of the enslaved intersected with the lives of slaveholders. By recovering the evolution of these spaces, it is possible to gain a better understanding of the way planters saw their relationship with the enslaved, which played an important role in shaping their sense of themselves first as Englishmen and later, for some, as Americans. The lived experience of slavery also comes into clearer focus when
the spaces where enslaved domestics, whose work put them into close contact with those who kept them from freedom, worked to produce a stage on which the social, cultural, and political performances of eighteenth century society occurred.

For many white planters, the African-descended enslaved persons who worked within the house were the only persons of color they would have close contact with throughout their lives. Though they often recognized that there were politics they could not understand within enslaved communities, enslaved domestic workers, overseers, and the skilled artisans like carpenters and blacksmiths who worked near the great house were the ones who shaped planters’ ideas about people of color and the way they felt about slavery. In writing from the period, when planters or white travelers recorded enslaved persons whose names, descriptions, and words, they were far more likely to be those who worked in and around the house than any other. Thus, despite occupying a different space and facing a different set of challenges, to many whites, they represented all enslaved people: their strengths and weaknesses, their hopes, their hates, and their feelings about slavery. Recreating the landscape of the household provides a context to better understand the strategies they used to negotiate enslavement and to understand how the relationships between enslaved and enslaver changed over the course of the eighteenth century, thereby providing insight into what shaped planters’ ideas about slavery and how it fit into their understanding of the world.

In his essay “Domestic Architecture at the Clifts Plantation: The Social Context of Early Virginia Building,” archaeologist Fraser Neiman wrote “…no matter how long we spend trying to run down specific English precedents…we shall never get any closer to understanding why this element appeared in Virginia when it did. The answer to this
question lies on this side of the Atlantic. The elements to be found in Virginia houses were the product of the architectural needs of Virginians."19 This holds true for the built environment of South Carolina and Barbados as well. It is imperative that rather than treating the plantation house as simply the place where the white planter and his family lived, historians consider the layers of use within it: as a workspace and sometime living space for the enslaved, a stage for social production, and the material representation of economic and cultural activity and political status or ambition. This necessitates reinterpreting it as a vernacular space; by continuing to focus only on the white planter and his family or visitors within its walls, the myriad decisions about the environment, slavery, culture and society that shaped it are lost or minimized.

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CHAPTER 1
BUILDING POWER

By the time the first settlers arrived on the shores of what is now South Carolina and was then simply “Carolina,” Virginia and Barbados were old and their cash crops, tobacco and sugar, already turned profitable. Both Virginians and Barbadians were buying increasing numbers of enslaved Africans, having tried and failed to use white indentured labor successfully. Though Virginians would not commit to the slavery model until after Bacon’s Rebellion in the middle of the decade, for South Carolina slaves were an important component of establishing a successful plantation from the very beginning. Thus, it is unsurprising that South Carolina, the “colony of a colony” (but really the colony of two colonies), welcomed slaves to its shores with its first European settlers.

Economies in Virginia and Barbados steadily expanded after 1650, entering a “boom” period at the end of the seventeenth century. During this time, larger numbers of slaves were imported and the markers of class – especially massive houses – became increasingly important as the class structure solidified around a few powerful families. At the beginning of this period, especially for slaves who worked in houses, there was less differentiation between slaves and servants. Carolina followed a similar path, albeit slightly delayed, as Barbadian planters imported their slaves and their cultural constructs about slavery to Carolina, which, unlike Barbados, was still an unsettled frontier.
Newly settled Carolina quickly attracted every vagabond, landless gentleman, and perennial outlaw who could talk his way into a government office that its parent colonies and the burgeoning English Atlantic had to offer. Barbados’ sentimental and historiographical association with the colony stems largely from its early dependence on the new planters for subsistence. The planters of Barbados, discovering the profitability of sugar in the middle of the seventeenth century, promptly turned over the majority of the island’s arable land to sugar production, provoking a number of significant demographic changes. By 1666 the largest planters (also the largest slaveholders) had pushed out some 12,000 white smallholders, coming into possession of more than half of the island’s arable land by 1680.¹

In contrast to Barbadian planters’ active involvement in the planning and settlement of Carolina, Virginia was largely the model for what Anthony Ashley-Cooper, the Earl of Shaftesbury and the leader of Carolina’s Lords Proprietors, did not want to accomplish in South Carolina. Virginia, with its dispersed settlements and leading men descended from the admixture of landless minor gentry with the flotsam and jetsam of the

¹ Karl Watson, *The Civilised Island, Barbados: A Social History, 1750-1816* (Barbados: K. Watson, 1979). This number has been used by a number of different scholars, from Richard Dunn to Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy. Dunn wrote that this transition was well under way by 1650 and that, “These people were genuinely big planters, particularly in Barbados, where in 1680 nineteen colonists owned two hundred slaves apiece and eight-nine own one hundred slaves,” Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar & Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 46-47. While these numbers are not wrong, they lack a context. Of the more than three thousand heads of household listed by the 1680 census, the overwhelming majority owned less than fifty acres and far fewer than one hundred slaves. In St. Lucy’s Parish, for example, of the 438 individuals listed in the census, just three owned more than 100 slaves, and all of three of those men owned more than 300 acres of land. This is all to say that while many had been pushed out (or simply showed up, realized there was a lack of opportunity, and made haste for other colonies), Barbadian estates were not as large as these numbers implied, and there was a not-insubstantial class of small planters on the island.
Atlantic World, was the horrible warning against which Ashley-Cooper sought to defend with his design of the Grand Modell and the Fundamental Constitutions.

While the Fundamental Constitutions’ overall effect on Carolina fell short of the Proprietors’ intentions, it enshrined both the holding of slaves and Carolina’s social and political hierarchy in the colony’s founding. The document’s subtlest, but nonetheless significant, impact was on the distribution and settlement of the colony, a point that would become increasingly contentious as the Barbadians who settled the colony pushed for more and better land farther from Charleston.

In the years immediately prior to Carolina’s founding, Virginians and Barbadians began transitioning from the most impermanent of structures, wood framed, earthfast buildings, toward more substantial permanent ones. Ambitious Virginians seeking to establish themselves among the nascent colonial gentry, as opposed to the gentry imported from England during the colony’s early years, built in brick, while Barbados’ new sugar lords built their houses from coral hewn from the island itself. While early Carolinians lacked the capital and time to build similar structures, their earliest buildings were not as insubstantial as descriptions have implied. Though built for the frontier and often, at least partially, of impermanent materials like wood, the houses of Carolina’s leaders took important strides toward permanence while articulating their builders’ ambitions as clearly as Virginia and Barbados’s more mannered houses.

Though a second building boom would occur later in Virginia and South Carolina, spurred in part by the expansion of English colonists’ access to slaves, an earlier wave of large-scale construction in all three colonies can be tied to planters’ increased importation of slaves at the end of the seventeenth century and the amassing of
immense wealth in the hands of an increasingly defined elite. These two factors together led to the construction of a large number of seventeenth century homes in Virginia and Barbados, while they allowed Carolinians, whose settlement put them at a fifty year disadvantage, to build more impressive first-stage buildings than either Barbados or Virginia. The seventeenth century houses of Barbados would become even more significant as declining fortunes led planters there to invest more in planting than in housing until the mid to late eighteenth century.

Describing Barbados upon his arrival in 1647, Richard Ligon noted that planters had arranged their houses “one above another: like severall stories in a stately building,” taking advantage of the island’s geography in such a way that even the most inland plantations had a view of the sea. It was not simply the stunning vista that Ligon noted, however, as the “free prospect to the sea” brought with it “a reception of pure refreshing ayer, and breezes that come from thence.” From several leagues away, Ligon saw “the high, large, and lofty Trees, with their spreading Branches, and flourishing tops,” that made settlement of the island possible despite the scorching sun. Ligon’s map, published with his text, depicted this settlement and revealed that despite the appearance of being densely populated by the middle of the seventeenth century, a steep escarpment had largely halted settlement of the interior. Few planters attempted to settle the island’s interior plateau and those who did usually moved only as far inland as the rivers leading to the coast would allow. The island’s Atlantic (eastern) shoreline was similarly unsettled as the escarpment began very abruptly at the coast. In contrast, houses ran the length of

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the Caribbean (western) coast by the mid seventeenth century, appearing to be nestled against one another.

By the mid seventeenth century, Virginia’s planters had already begun dispersing from the urban center of Jamestown, establishing plantations along the James and York rivers to take greatest advantage of the available land for cultivating tobacco. For most of these planters, the construction of a manor house was not a priority and they focused their efforts on growing the profitable weed for export and producing stores for their own survival. The earliest buildings in Virginia took the form of the “Virginia house,” an earthfast, wood-framed structure that typically consisted of a single large room and one or two smaller rooms, with a loft above.4

The dispersed settlement of Virginia would be the example to which Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury and the leading proprietor of the new colony of Carolina, looked in his “Grand Modell.” Shaftesbury’s design for Carolina sought to establish a true aristocracy in the New World colonies, something he felt was missing in the settlement of Virginia and that he blamed –at least in part – on the settlement of planters far from the center at Jamestown. He attributed New England’s comparative success in establishing settlements to their organization around the town, writing to Barbadian governor of Carolina, Sir John Yeamans, in April of 1671 that “in order to the general good of the Plantation I must recommend to you as very necessary to our Government the Planting of People in Townes.”5 Shaftesbury placed the burden of

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directing this settlement on Yeamans, giving direction that while the inhabitants could choose the place of settlement, Yeamans should direct the distribution of land within the town so “those who are to come after may share in the conveniency of the Townes and have an equall Proportion of home Lots let them.” Yeamans was not the first governor to be given such instructions. In the initial orders given to William Sayle (and then passed along to Lord Shaftesbury’s agent and later governor, Joseph West) for the settlement of Port Royal, Shaftesbury provided similar directives.

It would ultimately be the Barbadian planters who challenged Shaftesbury’s plan. By the time of Carolina’s conception in the 1660s and its settlement in the 1670s, the great planters on Barbados had mastered the cultivation of sugar and the management of slaves, and had begun consolidating the island’s arable land, and those who immigrated to Carolina understood the importance of claiming large tracts of good land. Problematically, that land was not necessarily the closest to Charles Town or the lots that Shaftesbury had directed his agents to allot.

In much the same way that Virginia planters dispersed themselves first along the James and York Rivers and then further into the Tidewater, Carolina’s planters slowly pushed away from Charles Town, first down the Ashley and Cooper Rivers and then deeper into the Lowcountry. Like in Virginia, this dispersal led to a shift in the concentration of power. But whereas planters in Virginia established many small polities around their scattered plantations and rarely joined together for any cause beside profit, Carolina planters’ settlement away from Charles Town, particularly the Barbadian faction called “The Goose Creek Men” establishing plantations along the Back River, would

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7 Ibid, 121.
initiate nearly forty years of conflict between the proprietary authorities and the planters that would culminate in the Yamasee War, the division of North and South Carolina, and the citizens’ of Carolina petitioning to become a royal colony.

In Barbados, Richard Ford’s 1674 map of the island reveals that planters had finally moved beyond the escarpment to settle the island’s interior. Taking Ford’s map and the 1680 census together suggests that while a number of smallholders may have been pushed out, Barbados’ arable land had hardly been claimed by just a handful of great planters, as some historians have suggested.\textsuperscript{8} The vast majority of Barbadian planters owned fewer than fifty acres and in some parishes, like St. Lucy, just ten of the four hundred and thirty-eight landholders listed owned more than one hundred acres. Though many of the great planters owned large tracts of land in multiple parishes, at the end of the seventeenth century, there were still a large number of smallholders on the island.\textsuperscript{9}

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\textsuperscript{9}Census data from John Camden Hotten, \textit{The Original Lists of Persons of Quality; Emigrants; Religious Exiles; Political Rebels; Serving Men Sold for a Term of Years; Apprentices; Children Stolen; Maidens Pressed; and Others Who Went from Great Britain to the American Plantations, 1600-1700: With Their Ages and the Names of the Ships in Which They Embarked, and Other Interesting Particulars; from Mss. Preserved in the State Paper Department of Her Majesty’s Public Record Office, England} (London: Hotten, 1874), http://archive.org/details/originallistsofp00hottuoft; David L. Kent, \textit{Barbados and America} (Carol M Kent, 1980).
\end{flushright}
Richard Ligon was highly critical of the Barbadian planters’ houses. Arriving in Barbados, Ligon’s party found, after their initial assessment of the island, that rather than seeking new land on which to settle, a man of any means was far better off “to purchase a plantation there ready furnisht, and stockt … than to begin upon a place, where land is to be had for nothing, but a trivial Rent, and to indure all hardships, and a tedious expectation, of what profit or pleasure may arise, in many yeers patience.” After an interval, Colonel Modyford (who figured prominently both in Ligon’s and the island’s history) set upon this course of action, purchasing half of the plantation of Major William Hilliard. Hilliard, wishing to return to England, sold Modyford half interest in and the management of his plantation, which included

Figure 1.1 Richard Ford, A New Map of the Island of Barbados, 1682.
500 Acres of Land, with a faire dwelling house, an Ingenio plac't in a roome of 400 foot square; a boyling house, filling roome, Cisterns, and Still-house; with a Carding house, of 100 foot long, and 40 foot broad; with stables, Smiths forge, and rooms to lay provisions, of Corne, and Bonavist; Houses for Negroes and Indian slaves, with 96 Negroes, and three Indian women, with their Children; 28 Christians, 45 Cattle for worke, 8 Milch Cowes, a dosen Horses and Mares, 16 Assinigoes.  

This substantial enterprise reflects the scale of planting on Barbados – and Hilliard’s plantation, on which Ligon would live for some time, was not even among the greatest on the island.

Ligon acknowledged that prior to arriving in the island he had given some consideration as to the type of buildings he would find and expected that “for a Country, that was so much troubled with heat, as I have heard this was; & did expect to find thick walls, high roofes, and deep cellers.” Instead, he discovered the exact opposite: timber construction, low roofs, and no cellars. More importantly, the planters of Barbados went to some lengths to block the wind from their houses, despite its constant gusting from the east: “But they, clean contrary, closed up all their houses to the East, and opened all to the West; so that in the afternoones, when the Sun came to the West, those little low roofed rooms were like Stoves, or heated Ovens.”

Besides not taking advantage of the winds, Ligon noted that during storms, “for fear of letting in the water, would open the West ends of their houses so wide…and so let in the fire; not considering at all, that there was such a thing as shutters for windowes to keep out the rain that hurt them, and let in the winde to refresh them, and do them good at their pleasure.” Seeking out an explanation for these illogical behaviors, Ligon determined that it was the planter’s cheapness that prevented them from taking steps to

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11 Ibid, 68.
better equip their houses. Nonetheless, in the next section, he wrote of planters who, after discovering that their hangings will be spoiled by ants, cockroaches, and other vermin, imported gilt leather with which to decorate their accommodations despite Ligon’s admonishment that they should expect the same effect. Though Ligon attributed the planters’ behavior to stinginess, he presented an almost simultaneous example of frivolous expense that demonstrates how they were clinging to an English ideal of interior furnishing. His reproach, that such hangings were a waste, contrasted with his earlier criticisms of the home of the Portuguese governor on St. Jago, where Ligon first encountered tropical building, in which only the frying pans served for pictures.12

By the middle of the seventeenth century, Virginians were far more settled than Barbadians, having identified their cash crop, tobacco, in the 1620s. Barbadians had experimented with a number of different crops, including tobacco, cotton, and indigo, in an effort to establish a profitable export.13 At the time of Ligon’s visit during the late 1640s and 1650s, James Drax was only just beginning to have success with the planting of sugar. He was already one of the wealthiest planters, and historians have widely identified him as the source of sugar’s introduction.14 Ligon said that Drax, “lives like a Prince,” and used his table to illustrate the bounty of the island’s inland plantations.15

As Ligon makes no mention of Drax’s house, Drax Hall, so the date assigned to it by tradition and generally accepted by historians, 1650, may be slightly early, particularly

14 Ligon and Kupperman, A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados, vii-viii.
15 Ibid, 59, 64-65.
given Drax’s support for the island’s royalist faction, which was actively contesting the English Parliament’s attempts to control the Caribbean. However, Drax’s immense wealth and the time it would have taken to construct the building could equally give it an earlier date, since it is unlikely that Drax would have built such an elaborate mansion only to leave it for an English one by 1659 – unless he had some motive other than his personal accommodation. Drax Hall has an elaborate Jacobean plan, with a large entrance hall and a small chamber to the west, which one architectural historian suggested may have been carved out of the main entrance hall, and a second set of smaller, equally sized rooms including a stair hall to the north. The house’s distinctive angled gables and plaster-over-coral stone construction make it appear decidedly out of place amongst the island’s cane fields.

When Ligon encountered Drax, “whose beginning upon that Iland, was founded upon a stock not exceeding £300 sterling,” he had improved his circumstances so substantially that Ligon heard him say that he “would not look towards England, with a purpose to remaine there, the rest of his life, till he were able to purchase an estate, of tenne thousand pound land yearly; which he hop’d in few years to accomplish, with what he was then owner of; and all by this plant of Sugar.” Given Drax Hall’s construction at some point in the decade after this statement, the plantation was likely intended to have

some permanence, but Drax returned to England and acquired a series of estates nonetheless, leaving management of the plantation in his son’s hands.\textsuperscript{18}

Since Drax had returned to England by 1659, dying there in 1662, his construction of Drax Hall – one of the island’s most impressive buildings – in the decade earlier and his intention to return to England at the first opportunity speaks to motives besides comfortable habitation. Mostly likely, Drax, whose fortune and influence were well known, sought to express his family’s future aspirations by constructing the mansion.\textsuperscript{19} Many Virginians were doing exactly the same thing during the same period and throughout the end of the seventeenth century.

While Virginia’s settlers primarily constructed earthfast, wood-framed “Virginia houses,” during the second half of the seventeenth century, brick and stone construction became visibly associated with the colony’s elite.\textsuperscript{20} By this point, the wealthiest of Virginia’s colonists had begun producing Virginia-born heirs and their construction of brick and stone houses speaks to a desire to consolidate power and influence on their


\textsuperscript{19} Drax was perhaps one of the most successful planters when it came to securing his family’s legacy and Drax Hall remains in the possession of one of his descendants, even as many other of Barbados’s plantations have been sold to expats and corporations.

inheritors’ behalf.\textsuperscript{21} Even those who did not have children seemed conscious of the importance of establishing an impressive, permanent residence.

The dispersed settlement of Virginia planters and their brick houses meant that, particularly during the seventeenth century, power was still centrally located in the colonial government at Jamestown. When Virginia governor Sir William Berkeley built a massive brick plantation complex at Green Springs following his marriage to the widowed Francis Culpeper Stephens, it represented a consolidation of their personal wealth, but also expressed Berkeley’s political authority and his ties to the capital, located at the end of a road that connected it straight to the massive Jacobean manor that no longer stands. For this reason, Berkeley’s house, and the houses of his fellow colonial officials, became particular targets when Nathaniel Bacon raised his rebellion between 1675 and 1676. Their homes, as places of authority, became targets for the rebels. Only later, after the turn of the eighteenth century, would the planters themselves take advantage of the opportunity to consolidate power.

It was not until 1718, long after Carolina’s Barbadian planters had recognized this opportunity, that another Virginia governor, Alexander Spotswood, wrote to the Earl of Orkney complaining that, “Wherefore I take ye Power, Interest and Reputation of the King’s Governor in this Dominion to be now reduced to a desperate Gasp, & if the present Efforts of the Country cannot add new Vigour to the same, then the Haughtiness of a Carter, the Hypocrisy of a Blair, the Inveteracy of a Ludwell, ye Brutishness of a

\textsuperscript{21} David Brown, “Domestic Masonry Architecture in 17th-Century Virginia,” \textit{Northeast Historical Archaeology} 27, no. 1 (October 4, 2013), 85-120. Brown convincingly argues that colonists’ construction of brick houses in Virginia represented an effort to establish themselves as members of the colonial elite, to display their family’s economic success, and to create a legacy for future generations. He further shows that this was an effective strategy.
Smith, the Malice of a Byrd, the Conceitedness of a Grymes, and the Scurrility of a Corbin, with about a score of base disloyalists & ungrateful Creolians for their adherents must for the future Rule this Province." These planters, with massive landholdings far distant from the new colonial seat at Williamsburg, had begun to exercise as much control over the government’s affairs as the king’s own representative.

In Carolina, the contest between government and plantation began nearly forty years earlier during the colony’s founding. If the Fundamental Constitutions revealed Shaftesbury’s earliest dreams of an English hierarchy transplanted onto an ideologically-ordered colony, the economic goals of its settlers provided the counterweight. At Goose Creek, the distance (albeit an insignificant eight to fifteen miles today) from the locus of trade and government at Charles Town fostered a degree of autonomy exploited by the Goose Creek Men, Barbadian planters whose knowledge of the plantation system and the Atlantic world equipped them to exploit the resources of the colonial frontier. The loose configuration of plantations belonging to these men formed the core of an oppositional space beyond the confines of official power in Charles Towne and the development of that “settlement” and the individual plantations of the Goose Creek Men should be interpreted within this paradigm and given consideration as the active expression of careful thought on the part of their masters.

As several historians have noted, the opposition of the Goose Creek Men to the proprietors – despite their connections to the Proprietors – hinged on three points. First, they sought land beyond the boundaries of the proprietors’ plans for land distribution, which gave out the land closest to Charleston first. Second, the Goose Creek Men ignored

the policies and regulations regarding the trafficking of Indian slaves, eventually sparking the Yamasee War in 1715. Finally, the Barbadians asserted the primacy of the Anglican church and its institutions in opposition to the religious tolerance granted by the Fundamental Constitutions, resulting in tensions with Dissenter groups who had emigrated for that reason.\textsuperscript{23} Interestingly, the first two complaints were the same made by Nathaniel Bacon and his followers in Virginia in 1675 (a lack of good land and complaints about officials favoring good relationships with the natives over Englishmen), though the third was unique to South Carolina, where the early influx of French Huguenot, German, and Scots-Irish settlers gave the young colony an almost secular sensibility (at least insofar as the Proprietors’ desire to make money).

At the core of the Goose Creek faction was Maurice Mathews who, despite an extensive land grant on the Back River (known at various times as the Midway River, Medway River, and the Back River, but always the same place), did not establish a particular plantation. Mathews served for a time as the colony’s surveyor general until the Lord Proprietors removed him from office in 1685 for trafficking in Indian slaves. He was not alone in this: two other members of the council (both later governors) at the center of the Goose Creek faction, Arthur Middleton and James Moore, were known

Indian traders and it is the trade in Indians that most provoked the proprietors. This trade was arguably facilitated by the distance of their plantations from Charles Town. By accounts of the political endeavors of the Goose Creek Men, the core of the party formed around Mathews in 1671, but did little besides criticize the government and make recommendations to the proprietors that the office holders be replaced. When Sir John Yeamans arrived in the summer of that year with a party of nearly fifty new immigrants from Barbados, he assumed control of the faction. Nonetheless, Mathews appeared at the center of nearly every controversy – especially related to the Indian trade – joined later by James Moore. Moore, “the heating Moor” and “the next Jehu of the party,” later married Lady Margaret Yeaman’s daughter from her earlier marriage to Barbadian Benjamin Berringer, solidifying his connection to the Goose Creek Men, but Mathews’ continued involvement required no such proof. His detractors called Mathews “Mine Heer Mauritius” and “his Welsh Highness,” claiming that he was “hel itself for Malice, a Jesuit for Designe politick” and wrote that he was “Metchivell Hobs and Lucifer in a Huge Lump of Viperish mortality [with] a soul [as] big as a musketo.”

Though where Mathews laid his head was not documented (he regularly bought and sold land with little indication that he had built on it), his conception of place is a useful starting point for a discussion of the settlement at Goose Creek. While he described it in relation to Charles Towne, the first site encountered by anyone coming up the Ashley and Cooper Rivers, he attended more to the distance of that site from Charles Towne.

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24 Edgar, South Carolina, A History, 137.
26 Edgar, South Carolina, A History, 85; Sirmans, Colonial South Carolina, 41.
Towne and its relationship to the “Midway River,” writing that “Goosecreek which you have seen, and is about 15 miles from Town. It conveys planters into the Land about Ten miles, And from the head of it to Charlstoune the people are settled contiguously…The next branch of Couper river is called Midway river which runs up paralell with it about 8 miles, both the point between them both and the lower part of Midway is settled. The mouth of Midway from the mouth of Goosecreek is by water about five miles, by land about two miles.”

There was little to distinguish Goose Creek from any other part of Carolina at this point – it received clear, fresh water and was home to a great deal of game, a description he applied to several other waterways. What, then, made Goose Creek important enough to be mentioned alongside Charleston and the two major waterways leading inland?

The settlement at Goose Creek, a loose configuration of plantations belonging to planters from Barbados, was significant because of what it represented: the Goose Creek Men’s response to their various disagreements with the proprietors. Their first point of contention, the desire to seek land beyond the dictates of the proprietors’ plans for land distribution, was challenged by their establishment of plantations some distance from Charles Towne. Mathews wrote in 1680 that he expected the land above the Midway River to be settled very soon by “Inglish.” In 1671, however, when the Goose Creek faction was first taking shape, this was open land, alluring to the Barbadian planters who had come from an island where land was increasingly scarce. Their knowledge of how to exploit the resources of the territory for the greatest profit pushed them to circumvent the

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28 Ibid.
boundaries established by the Grand Modell and Shaftesbury’s plans for growth, grasping rich land to cultivate where they had plenty of room to expand.

Problematically, many of the plantations of the period have not survived. However, the extant and documented Goose Creek plantations – as well as the interconnectedness of the families who inhabited them – reveal the extent to which the Barbadian settlers consolidated their political authority outside of Charleston. Many of these plantations began as smaller, frame structures, but were expanded during the late 1690s and early 1700s into more substantial brick buildings. These structures also reveal the degree of cultural involvement between the Huguenot settlers in the Goose Creek area and the Barbadian Anglicans who dominated the landscape.

The plans of the early houses of South Carolina, Barbados, and Virginia are all strikingly similar in their simplicity. The vast majority, whether built of brick, wood, or coral stone, adhered to the hall-and-chamber plan of medieval architecture, with a single large room and a smaller, more private chamber. Even when these buildings were built on a larger scale, they often simply added more small rooms without incorporating passages between them, mimicking the great houses of the English countryside where massive bedsteads, enclosed in heavy tapestries, provided the privacy that connecting rooms could not.²⁹

Among the buildings that have survived – in one form or another – Yeaman's Hall played a central role in the Goose Creek Men’s narrative. Sir John Yeamans was a controversial figure, first aiding in the settlement of Cape Fear before abandoning it to return to Barbados, and then naming himself governor of the new Carolina settlement before abandoning the fleet when it reached Bermuda and naming William Sayle in his stead so that he could return to Barbados (again). He had a long, scandalous history in Barbados, where he had ingratiated himself with the island’s elite planters following his emigration to the colony in 1638. An early partnership with Colonel Benjamin Berringer fell apart quickly, but Yeamans later formed a different kind of partnership with Margaret Foster Berringer upon her husband’s death that shocked the island and led to widespread accusations of poison and conspiracy. Though the widow inherited the house she had built with her first husband, St. Nicholas Abbey, it was legally placed out of Yeamans’s reach.30

When he finally arrived in Carolina with his family, slaves, and a large number of new immigrants from Barbados, Yeamans was appointed a landgrave by the Proprietors. As the highest ranking member of the native nobility, Yeamans expected to be named governor upon his arrival, but instead found Governor Sayle’s successor, Joseph West, was unwilling to surrender his post without explicit instructions from the Proprietors. In an early exercise of spatial politics, “he retyred himselfe to his Countrey house” at Wappoo Creek, just about three miles from the original settlement, which his Barbadian slaves had fortified with a palisade. Within five days of West sending this report to the Proprietors, the Council minutes were referring to the prickly Yeamans as “Governor”

and two weeks later the Proprietors dispatched Yeamans’s official commission as governor. That same document directed him to find a new location for Charles Town and to ensure that the colonists settled nearby each other, lest they “expose themselves to the Inconvenience and Barbarisme of scattered Dwellings in unknown Countreyes,” like the settlers of Virginia and Maryland. During the intervening period, Yeamans sent an envoy to Virginia without West’s knowledge.  

A parallel can be found in Governor William Berkeley’s establishment at Green Spring. Begun soon after his arrival in Virginia in 1643, the elaborate building was finished by 1649 and the governor was conducting both public and private business from his estate, entertaining on a lavish scale. In 1652, following the English Civil War and Berkeley’s alignment with the Royalists, Berkeley resigned the governorship and spent the next eight years at Green Spring. After the 1676 rebellion, the renovated Green Spring hosted the king’s men sent to investigate the governor’s handling of the affair, who felt themselves deeply aggrieved when Berkeley’s wife, Lady Frances Culpeper Stephens Berkeley (later Ludwell), called the hangman to drive them to their ship and reportedly watched their departure from an upstairs window.  

The same year Yeamans died, 1674, his widow patented more than a thousand acres on Goose Creek and built a house that became known as “Old Goose Creek.” Nearby stood the houses of the other prominent Goose Creek Men: Boochawee Hall  

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owned by James Moore, The Oaks owned by Edward Middleton, and Yeshoe (now Otranto) owned by Arthur Middleton, among other plantations, all built between the mid-1670s and mid-1680s. By 1677, Lady Yeamans had returned to Barbados and the house was in the possession of James Moore, who had married her daughter, Margaret Berringer. Until Moore sold the house to Landgrave Thomas Smith II, it remained the symbolic seat of the Goose Creek Men. The short periods of occupation suggest that the initial building, like many others in Carolina, was of wood construction, though it may have incorporated brick or tabby.

The only extant building from this earliest period belonged to Stephen Bull, who never wavered in his support of the Proprietors despite a lengthy association with Maurice Mathews, whom he succeeded as the colony’s surveyor. That structure, a single-story tabby structure on the Ashley River, later became an outbuilding for a much more substantial plantation complex and has since been incorporated into a larger structure. The original building was no more than a single room deep and no more than two rooms wide, allowing those inside to see outside from everywhere in the house.33

As the only one of the earliest buildings to survive, Ashley Hall I (to be distinguished later from Ashley Hall II) provides important insight into the building mindset of the early colonists. Tabby was not an insubstantial building material as it was both long-lasting and required some investment to produce and mold, but it was cheap in a country where oysters (the essential component of tabby) were plentiful. Stephen Bull, who served as the Earl of Shaftesbury’s agent in the colony in addition to a number of

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official postings, occupied the land before he received an official patent in 1676 and lived in that house until at least 1704 when either he or his son built a new house. That such an important member of South Carolina society occupied such a modest dwelling (and one so modest despite being so close to Charles Town) for almost thirty years gives an indication of the nature of building on the frontier, which was substantially limited in comparison to more established settlements in Virginia and Barbados.

Nonetheless, these buildings have important similarities. The vast majority of Barbadian planters were not living in mansions like the ones at Drax Hall and St. Nicholas Abbey and more often occupied single story wooden dwellings described by Ligon as “rather like stoves, then houses; for the most of them, are made of timber, low rooft keeping out the wind, letting in the sun.” Even when building on a larger scale, these buildings created more substantial common spaces than the discrete, specialized spaces that became popular later on. Without passages and with single staircases (when there was more than a single floor) that extended from the basement to the garret, as at Drax Hall, St. Nicholas Abbey, and Colleton Plantation on Barbados, the household was far less divided. Architectural parallels can be found in the John Page House and Bacon’s Castle in Virginia, both of which exhibit the features of the Jacobean cross plan with porch and stair towers.

As these spaces were not simply shelter, but a spatial declaration of power, imitating a feudal household was a useful way to consolidate authority. On the original lists of settlers to Carolina, there were a number of individuals listed as servants who went on to own property and hold Council positions – rights that would have been denied

34 Ligon and Kupperman, A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados, 153.
to them if they were still indentured. In households where white indentured servants and
enslaved African Americans worked side by side, this would have the effect of
minimizing distinctions based on race and consolidating a sense of class unity. In
Virginia this unity would erode following Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676, and in South
Carolina and Barbados, the extreme, early demographic imbalance would make it more
difficult to establish in the first place, but nonetheless, the household would become the
nexus for the most recurrent interactions between members of different races and classes,
interactions that would become more complicated during the transition from the
seventeenth to the eighteenth century.

South Carolina planters who sought to establish their connections to the colonial
government built equally large and impressive structures closer to Charleston, but the
early consolidation of the Goose Creek men around their plantation holdings in that area
speaks to the potential for planters to use the built environment to challenge colonial
authority. The houses themselves, whether in Virginia, Barbados, or Carolina, played an
important role in establishing which individuals – and later their families – held power in
the colonies, allowing them to consolidate and demonstrate the wealth produced by
slavery. The construction of a house, particularly in Virginia and Barbados at the end of
the seventeenth century, was the construction of an economic, political, and social legacy.
For planters in the Carolinas during this early period, their “impermanent” structures
were often more long-lasting than those in Virginia and Barbados, resulting in a blending
of old and new in a more highly visible way, especially compared to houses built in
Virginia during the first part of the eighteenth century. These buildings served as a way to
establish political and social authority on what was essentially a frontier. When planters
in Virginia and South Carolina began experiencing greater economic prosperity through the expansion of their plantations and their enslaved labor forces during that time, they often tore down and replaced the earliest of their “permanent” structures in favor of newer houses that would play a central role in domesticating slavery in the North American colonies. For planters in Barbados, a subsequent decline during the same period would lead to architectural stagnation and a peculiar relationship to slavery that persisted through the end of the eighteenth century.
Despite the differences in climate between the New World and Europe, the houses the planters built imported traditional forms, but the planters were forced to identify new materials from which to construct those houses. A variety of forces, uniquely shaped by the Atlantic because of its climate and migration within it, affected the construction of early plantation houses in Virginia, South Carolina, and Barbados. This chapter explores how planters and enslaved, indentured, and free craftsmen replaced the brick and stone fashionable in the construction of houses in England with new world materials and how those materials, in turn, shaped the experience and construction of space. This chapter concludes by considering how the combination of new world material and old world form paralleled and impacted new world labor in old world spaces.

At the end of the seventeenth century, the Atlantic house typically consisted of just two rooms: one public and one private. In Barbados, this “single house” would be the dominant house form for the next century (though its use would become more complicated). The “Virginia house” version of this structure would persist alongside its more complicated descendent (the central passage house) for three decades before giving way completely to a double-pile central passage building. South Carolinians, as usual, found the middle way: dressing their houses up in elaborate facades while continuing to use the simplified plan for nearly half a century.
Wood, Brick, and Coral

The primary building materials varied from colony to colony during the last decades of the seventeenth century. In Barbados, widespread deforestation and a massive rebuilding effort following a slave rebellion in 1675 increased the number of structures built from coral and brick, while Virginians increasingly shifted from wood to brick. In South Carolina, still a frontier, buildings were overwhelmingly wood-framed, though the most ambitious planters, like Thomas Smith who constructed the first house at Medway in 1691, built of brick. Some coastal settlers mined Native American oyster middens for the shell needed to produce tabby, the concrete-like material that Stephen Bull used to construct the first modest dwelling at Ashley Hall. The materials available for construction in each colony dictated the types of buildings that planters, or more accurately their enslaved workers, could construct.

Availability was the primary force dictating the materials from which Barbadians, Virginians, and South Carolinians constructed their buildings. Writing in the 1640s, Richard Ligon described two types of stone on Barbados, one that was porous, ill-shaped, and found on the sides of hills that could be burned to produce lime for mortar and a second that had to be dug out from massive quarries. The second type of stone was so soft that you could “bore a hole into it” with a finger, making it easy to cut with two handed saws more commonly used for timber. Once quarried, masons shaped the blocks and left them to sit. The longer the stone was exposed to air, the harder it became. Ligon
noted that these blocks were cut to be the breadth of the wall being built, making it easy to “speedily fit it for our walls.”

Not all of the stone used in construction was this neatly quarried and all of the extant seventeenth-century buildings in Barbados have walls of small, irregular coral stones mortared together and plastered over to create the appearance of regularity. Descriptions of the quarrying of stone for the construction of Codrington College in the 1720s show that this process remained unchanged for at least the next seventy years and the few buildings built during the first third of the eighteenth century indicate the coexistence – and sometimes simultaneous use – of rubble construction and “sawn” brick. Christopher Codrington’s plantation house, an extant structure that predated the construction of the college and has been repurposed as the “Principal’s Lodge,” was constructed from rubble stone, likely during the last third of the seventeenth century.

Brick masonry was less common on the island, except within Bridgetown, and was most commonly used on windows and doorways, as at Alleynedale Hall. Codrington College, admittedly unusual because of the scale of its building, quickly ran through the initial shipment of 600,000 “well-burnt Bricks” and ordered an additional

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1 Ibid, 90-92.  
3 Though it has since been restored, the Principal’s Lodge has suffered several fires that have destroyed the interior woodwork. During one of those fires, the stucco on the exterior of the building was damaged and the photographs reveal the rubble stone construction.  
100,000 bricks in 1715.⁵ Ligon, describing the available materials in the mid-seventeenth century, noted that “Many essayes we made… for the making and burning of bricks, but never could attaine to the perfection of it.” Ligon attributed this to the clay itself, which “would alwaies crackle and break, when it felt the great heat of the fire in the Clampe.”⁶ The knowledge of how to make bricks from this substandard clay eluded the English on Barbados, but Ligon hints that they turned first to enslaved Africans for help solving the problem. He concluded that “those of Angola, being far off, and it may be, their Clay of different temper, cannot help us.” According to Ligon, the next obvious step was “to procure an Indian or two, to come from that Island, and give us direction, which would be of infinite use and advantage, to our buildings in Barbados.” Finally, an “ingenious Jew upon the Island, whose name was Solomon,” endeavored to find a solution, but failed when it came time to actually fire the bricks.⁷ The Caribbean, and particularly Barbados at that point in the mid-seventeenth century, brought all of these individuals –black, 

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⁶ Ligon and Kupperman, A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados, 2011, 91. Geologists writing about Barbados in the 1890s indicated that brickmaking had been done by a Mr. Brocklehurst in the Scotland district in the 19th century and that it had recently resumed on the Greenland estate. The majority of the bricks in evidence on the island today are stamped with the marks of Scottish brickmaking companies established in the 19th century and it seems likely that Barbados has relied on imported bricks throughout its history. Indeed, concrete cinderblocks are the most common construction material for modern buildings on the island. John Burchmore Harrison, Geological Map of Barbados, 1890.

⁷ Ligon and Kupperman, A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados, 91.
native, Jewish, and English – together to solve one of the first problems of new world settlement: turning unfamiliar materials into the familiar form of an English house.\(^8\)

Work by archaeologists has shown that rather than occupying impermanent wood-framed buildings, Virginia planters began building brick homes by the mid-seventeenth century, suggesting both the permanence of their habitation and their political and social ambitions within the colony.\(^9\) Those who were unable to build in brick, or who were unwilling to divert enslaved laborers from the work of planting, still built quickly from wood. In contrast, by the 1670s, Barbados had been overwhelmingly deforested, first for buildings that later burned, and then to fuel boiling houses (by the end of the seventeenth century, enslaved workers fueled these fires using the same cane trash with which they thatched their own roofs).\(^10\)

Even if the island’s clay had been adequate for producing brick of any quality or quantity, the labor and resources diverted to firing the kilns would have been considered wasteful.\(^11\) Christopher Codrington’s will provided “as much New England Timber as would repair all the buildings” for seven years, along with Antigua timber to supply the mills and carts.\(^12\) In 1725, the college was “covered” (i.e. had a roof), but required 1800

\(^8\) Shaw, *Everyday Life in the Early English Caribbean*.


\(^11\) Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*. See also Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*.

feet of “Carolina Cedar Plank” for the chapel’s pews and an additional 250 feet of “yellow deals” (yellow pine planks). More deals were needed for the lodgings, but the memorandum noted that it would be significantly cheaper to send them from England than to buy them on Barbados.13

Both the cedar plank and yellow deal would likely have originated in Carolina; though “deal” was a common term for a wood plank, “yellow deal” most likely indicated the yellow pine that grew across the American Southeast.14 The same memorandum that noted the need for cedar plank commented that the outer door of both the chapel and the hall would also be made of cedar, but that it would be procured from Barbados, as it would be difficult to “be got of a sufficient length from Carolina,” suggesting that either Carolina was primarily forested with younger-growth trees or that shipping the wood from Carolina would require cutting them to a more manageable length.15 Writing in 1682, Thomas Amy had written of Carolina, “It's cloathed with odoriferous and fragrant Woods…the lofty Pine, the sweet smelling Cedar and Cyprus Trees, of both which are composed goodly Boxes, Chests, Tables, Scriitores, and Cabinets.”16 Not only were these

14 Two species of English pine trees are also known as “yellow pine,” but were far less abundant than the various species of “yellow pine” in the Southeastern United States.
15 Leng, “A Sermon Preached before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts : At the Parish-Church of St. Mary-Le-Bow, on Friday, the 17th of February, 1726.” A Memorandum, dated September 17, 1725. Miscellaneous Unbound Docs (Library of Congress film), West Indies, XIII, 158-159.
16 Thomas Amy, “Carolina; or A Description of the Present State of That Country, and the Natural Excellencies Thereof,: Viz. the Healthfulness of the Air, Pleasantness of the
useful materials for construction in Carolina, but they were part of the export economy as well.

All three of these woods appeared in the construction of houses. Yellow pine would be the most common wood used in Virginia buildings as it was both durable and easy to work with, while cypress was commonly used for constructing houses in Carolina because of its resistance to both insects and rot. In the mid-seventeenth century, referring again to the need for brick on Barbados, Richard Ligon noted that the potential for wet rot was especially high in tropical climates, “for the air being moist, the stones often sweat, and by their moisture rot the timbers they touch, which to prevent we cover the end of our beams and girders with boards, pitched on both sides, but the walls being made of bricks, or but lined with brick, would be much the wholesomer; and besides keep our wainscot from rotting.” Ligon, like Thomas Amy, had his own catalog of trees, but whereas Amy only briefly touched on trees for use in building and was primarily focused on ornamental trees, Ligon’s attention was on the value of the trees as construction material. He wrote:

The Locust is a tree of such a growth, both for length and bigness, as may serve for beams in a very large room: I have seen many of them, whose straight bodies are above fifty foot high, the diameter of the stem or body, three foot and half. The timber of this tree is a hard close substance, heavy, but firm, and not apt to bend, somewhat hard for tools to cut; brittle, but lasting. Mastic, not altogether so large as he, but of a tougher

Place, Advantage and Usefulness of Those Rich Commodities There Plentifullly Abounding, Which Much Encrease and Flourish by the Industry of the Planters That Daily Enlarge That Colony. Published by T.A., Gent. Clerk on Board His Majesties Ship the Richmond, Which Was Sent out in the Year 1680. with Particular Instructions to Enquire into the State of That Country, by His Majesties Special Command, and Return’d This Present Year, 1682” (London: Printed for W.C. and to Be Sold by Mrs. Grover in Pelican Court in Little Britain, 1682).

substance, and not accounted so brittle. The *Bully-tree* wants something of the largeness of these, but in his other qualities goes beyond either; for, he is full out as lasting, and as strong, but not so heavy, nor so hard for tools to work. The *Redwood* and *prickled yellow wood*, good for posts or beams, and are lighter than the *Locust*; both are accounted very lasting, and good for building. The *Cedar* is, without control, the best of all; but by reason it works smooth, and looks beautiful, we use it most in Wainscot, Tables, and Stools. Other timber we have, as the *Iron-wood*, and another sort, which are excellent good to endure wet and dry; and of those we make Shingles, which being such a kind of wood, as will not warp nor rive, are the best coverings for a house that can be, full out as good as Tiles, and lie lighter upon Rafters.\(^\text{18}\)

Ligon expressed three concerns in his description. First, he described the type of building components for which each particular wood was best suited. Next, he attended to whether the wood was durable enough for the hot, wet, climate. And finally, he addressed the wood’s workability, embedding in the description references to whether a wood was “hard for tools to work” or “works smooth,” considerations that would have greatest significance for the carpenters, bricklayers, joiners, and others who would shape it into shelter.

**Building the New World**

The buildings South Carolinians constructed during their earliest period of occupation were overwhelmingly wood-framed and many failed to persist, but the most powerful – or most ambitious – planters in Carolina, like those in Virginia, began building in brick before the end of the seventeenth century. Edward Hyrne, a new arrival from England in 1700, wrote the following year that he had rented “the best Brick-house in all the Country; built about 9 Years ago, and cost £700, 80 Foot long, 26 broad.

\(^{18}\) Ibid, 90-91.
Cellar'd throughout." This house had likely been built by Landgrave Thomas Smith II in 1691. When that building burned just four years later, Hyrne rebuilt, apparently with some haste (he did have a pregnant wife and several small children to shelter), but on a much smaller scale. Hyrne’s finances were failing and he could not spare his enslaved laborers.

The labor needed to produce, collect, or work with materials influenced their use. Even before the fire, Hyrne had written to his brother-in-law (who was the trustee of his wife’s inheritance) that “If I had a competent Number of Hands…I doubt not but cou'd raise the Money off the Plantation…there being One Swamp in it . . . that contains above £10,000 worth of Cypress-Timber; which is the best for building . . . but I can make little Advantage of it till I can compass a good Gang of Negroes.” Seventeenth century planters in Virginia felt a similar strain, but as the importation of enslaved workers began to increase during the last third of that century, so too did the number of masonry houses constructed. Among Hyrne’s laborers was “an Indian slave, almost a man,” whom

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20 An advertisement in The South Carolina Gazette, August 3, 1738, described the extant building, which Hyrne had constructed in 1705, as “having a good Brick-house 36 Feet in length, 26 in Breadth, Cellars and Kitchin under the House,” the estate also had “a well of good Water, a Barn and Outhouses.” Later records of Elizabeth Hyrne’s life show that in the 1725 she owned eight slaves of her own, who she then lent to her son to establish a plantation at Tugudo. Two years later, her son Burrell, described that plantation in some detail, noting that it had housing for 25 enslaved persons, cited in Pauline M. Loven, “Hyrne Family Letters, 1699-1757,” The South Carolina Historical Magazine 102, no. 1 (2001): 27–46.

21 Schmidt, “Hyrne Family Letters.”

22 For a discussion of the increased number of masonry structures constructed at the end of the seventeenth century, see Brown, “Domestic Masonry Architecture in 17th-Century Virginia.” For a discussion of the increased importation of enslaved people to Virginia
Thomas Smith described as a cattle keeper and deceased when Smith began proceedings to reclaim the property in 1706. At least two enslaved men of African descent died during Hyme’s occupation of the estate and a “maid” (though no other details appear in the record) took ill at the same time as Hyme’s wife, Elizabeth, and one of their children, but there was no mention of the number of enslaved people who worked the fields of the 800 acre estate.

The presence or absence of skilled labor needed for construction also affected the types of buildings that could be built as the immigration of carpenters, masons, and stonemasons was inconsistent. While there were masons and carpenters in all three colonies from the beginning, there were few with the ambition to design or build “high style” buildings so even the large houses of the colony were, in essence, simply scaled-up versions of vernacular structures. Richard Ligon noted in the mid-seventeenth century that “Carpenters, and Masons, were newly come upon the Island, and some of these very great Masters in their Art: and such as could draw a plot, and pursue the design they framed with great diligence, and beautify the tops of their Doors, Windows, and Chimney-pieces, very prettily.”

Despite Barbadian planters’ access to craftsmen who could produce masterful buildings, the few extant examples of woodwork from the seventeenth century show that though some of those craftsmen found employment, it was rare and likely confined to embellishments rather than drafting plans.

In the earliest advertisement of its kind in the South Carolina Gazette in February 1734, bricklayer Samuel Holmes noted that “he likewise if required draws Draughts of

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23 Ligon and Kupperman, A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados, 92.
Houses, and measures and values all sorts of Workmanship in Houses or Building,” suggesting that it was a departure from the norm for a builder to offer any kind of plan for a building.\textsuperscript{24} When Peter Chassereau ran an advertisement the following year describing himself as “newly come from London,” it said that he “draws Plans and elevations of all kind of Buildings whatsoever… perspective Views or prospects of Towns or Gentlemens Houses or Plantations, he calculates Estimates for Buildings or Repairs, inspects and measures Artificers Works, sets out ground for Gardens or Parks, in a grand and rural manner.” The advertisement only ran twice and Chassereau was so unsuccessful that by 1742 he was back in London marrying a thirty year-old spinster named Mary Ellis and producing surveys for York and Middlesex.\textsuperscript{25} Very few other architects or master builders advertised their services in South Carolina until the later 1760s.\textsuperscript{26}

Builders were apparently greatly troubled by their laborers, whether they were enslaved or free. In October of the same year that his first advertisement appeared, Samuel Holmes advertised for two runaway indentured Irishmen named Robert Dearsley and Thomas Cawood, who not only absconded, but destroyed their indentures, leading Holmes to send to London for copies of the originals.\textsuperscript{27} Five months later, he advertised for sale, “two white Servants as good Bricklayers and Plaisterers as is in this Town and

\textsuperscript{24} The \textit{South Carolina Gazette}, February 16, 1734. The \textit{South Carolina Gazette} began publication in 1732.


\textsuperscript{26} Beatrice Ravenel, \textit{Architects of Charleston}, (Columbia, S.C: University of South Carolina Press, 1992).

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{The South Carolina Gazette}, October 12, 1734.
Country,” with five years left on their indentures. He made no mention of their tendency to run away.  

More common were advertisements like that taken out by planter George Haddrell in the same issue of the *South Carolina Gazette* where Holmes sought his runaway apprentices, warning people not to hire his “Negro-Man” Primus, a bricklayer and plasterer formerly belonging to a Mrs. Mullins, without first contracting with Christopher Smith of Charlestown. Haddrell promised to prosecute anyone employing Primus without Smith’s consent. Subscribers advertised black bricklayers for sale as well: in 1732, a man named Tony was advertised by Hugh Hext, who told anyone wishing to hire the enslaved man to contact John Bee of Charleston and in 1733, John Simmon’s advertised “A Negro man to be Sold...named Peter, he's a Bricklayer, Plaisterer and White-washer.” While carpenters, black and white, appear frequently in the Charleston newspapers during the 1730s, none explicitly identified as “house carpenters,” appear in the *South Carolina Gazette* until 1741. Nearly every plantation had a group of skilled enslaved men – carpenters, coopers, blacksmiths, and sometimes masons – who were regularly employed in agricultural work, making barrels used to ship tobacco, indigo, or molasses, mending fences or outbuildings, or fixing carts or canoes (in 1732, William Pinckney advertised alongside “Negro carpenters” to be hired by the month a canoe that could “carry 10 or 12 barrils of Rice”).

In contrast to the advertisements for troublesome enslaved carpenters in *The South Carolina Gazette, The Virginia Gazette*, was full of advertisements for runaway indentured servants who were described as bricklayers or who were apprenticed to

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28 *The South Carolina Gazette*, February 22, 1735.
bricklayers. The earliest of these ran just a year after the paper’s first printing in 1737 and described a bricklayer named Thomas Davis, a twenty-four year old Welshman with dark hair and a pockmarked complexion. Davis was accompanied by an indentured blacksmith from Yorkshire named John Shaw.29 No advertisements for non-white bricklayers appeared in The Virginia Gazette until 1766 when three “likely Negroes” including “3 apprentices, who have about 3 years to serve, two of them bound to a ship carpenter, and the other to a bricklayer.”30 While this does not mean that there were no enslaved bricklayers on Virginia plantations, it does suggest that those with sufficient skill to be marketed as such were uncommon. In comparison, while there were similar numbers of enslaved black and mixed race bricklayers and carpenters being advertised in The South Carolina Gazette, The Virginia Gazette ran its first advertisement for a runaway, mixed race carpenter in 1738 and the number of advertisements steadily increased until immediately before the American Revolution.31 It is worth noting that the man described in that first advertisement, Will, “a dark Mulatto Fellow” about 42 years old, was a “Carpenter, Sawyer, Shoemaker, and Cooper” and took “a white Fustain Jacket, a loopping Ax, and a Fiddle.”32 Will’s extensive skillset suggests the many roles that skilled enslaved men had to fill on the plantation; equally, his decision to take his ax and fiddle suggest that he understood the necessity of possessing the tools of his trade in addition to the ability to use them.

29 The Virginia Gazette, June 17, 1737.
30 The Virginia Gazette, December 18, 1766.
31 A survey of issues of The Virginia Gazette, 1736-1780, via Accessible Archives (online database).
32 The Virginia Gazette, May 5, 1738.
The presence of skilled laborers was necessary to the running of a plantation, and their skills could be directed to the construction of houses as easily as the building of fences. One runaway advertisement from South Carolina suggests that even when labor could be redirected, skilled laborers, such as bricklayers, were not in abundance. It read:

RUN AWAY about a Month past, from the Plantation of Joseph Wragg Esq; at Goose-Creek, an old Negro Man named England. And a young slim Mustee Fellow, named Prosper (his Son) is about 19 Years of Age. About 10 Days ago went away from the said Plantation, another young Mustee Fellow, named Prince, about 22 Years of Age, (also Son of England) with an Iron round one Leg, he took with him out of the Stable, a large Bay natural pacing Stallion, branded on the Mounting Shoulder IW in one and no other Marks or any White about him. It is supposed they are together near Dorchester, or about the Plantation of Bethal Dewes to whom they did belong, the old Fellow England is well known, having worked at the Bricklayer’s Trade at several Plantations in this Province and his Sons with him.\(^{33}\)

England had clearly been apprenticing his sons, Prosper and Prince, as he worked on plantations around South Carolina. While England himself is identified as “negro,” his sons are both “mustee,” identifying them as the part Indian, suggesting that they were the product of a relationship between England and a native woman, most likely enslaved herself since her children were sold along with their father. England, Prosper, and Prince all appeared in the 1723 inventory of Bethel’s father, Robert Dews, and England and Prosper were explicitly named in his 1722 will. Robert Dews himself was reportedly a bricklayer, orphaned in Barbados when he was quite young and apprenticed, but it is unlikely he passed his trade directly to his sons since Bethel was just two years old and

\(^{33}\) *The South Carolina Gazette*, October 20, 1739.
his brother was just a year old when he died. Instead, he bequeathed the enslaved man he had trained as a bricklayer and his own small children.\textsuperscript{34}

The construction of larger houses could take a year or more, during which time agricultural work had to continue. For planters drawing on their own enslaved workforce, this divided focus could have negative consequences for their production of a profitable crop, though it simplified the necessary quartering of workers. Ligon’s description of the highly qualified masons and carpenters newly arrived in Barbados concluded by saying that “but not many of those, nor is it needful that there should be many, for though the Planters talk of building houses, and wish them up, yet when they weigh the want of those hands in their sugar work, that must be employed in their building, they fall back, and put on their considering caps.”\textsuperscript{35} In Virginia and South Carolina, the same consideration prompted many planters to build first from wood (or tabby in South Carolina), with the intention of replacing or expanding those buildings later.

\textsuperscript{34} “Will of Bethel Dewes, August 27, 1722,” and “Inventory of the Estate of Bethel Dewes, August 8, 1723.” Secretary of State, Recorded Instruments. Miscellaneous records (WPA transcripts) Vol. 58 (1722-1724) (original Interregnum series Vols. B and CL 1722-1726), S213004, 19-20 and 251-254. Family history says that Robert Dewes was bricklayer, apprenticed out by his sister and her husband, Alexander Skene, in Barbados before coming with him to Charleston, SC where he married Mary Baker (daughter of William Baker who built Archdale Hall, discussed in the next chapter, in 1710) in 1717. Dewes’s will suggests that he was a wealthy planter as well, being in possession of a significant amount of land, and the inventory of Bethel’s own estate from March 7, 1759, suggests that he was primarily engaged in ranching as he own 23 head of cattle, a number of horses, and about 35 pigs. Interestingly, included in Robert Dewes’s will and inventory is a “wench” named Florida, listed alongside England. Florida is also listed in Bethel’s will as “a very old Wench.” “Inventory of Bethel Dewes,” South Carolina Estate Inventories and Bills of Sale, 1732-1872, Inventories of Estates, 1736-1774, Vol. S (1756-1758), 175-177.

\textsuperscript{35} Ligon and Kupperman, \textit{A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados}, 92.
The Form of a House

The wood, brick, and coral used in the construction of plantation houses at the end of the seventeenth century had a variety of effects on the forms of houses that could be built. Early wood-framed buildings in Virginia and South Carolina provided little in the way of insulation, necessitating fireplaces in every habitable space. While Barbadians did not have to endure snow like Virginians or the comparatively mild chill of winter in South Carolina, planters there had to learn to build structures that could withstand the pounding wind and rain of hurricane season. Finding a solution to both the summer heat and winter cold (or hurricane season) required balancing material and form.

This process took time. When Ligon first arrived in Barbados expecting to find “thick walls, high roofs, and deep cellars,” and instead found timber houses, with low roofs, he questioned the planters about their rationale for building as they did, which he called their “strange preposterous manner of building,” and decided that it was grounded on the “weakest and silliest foundation that could be.” According to the planters he interrogated, “at the times of rain… the wind drove the rain in at their windows so fast, as the houses within were much annoyed with it; for having no glass to keep it out, they could seldom sit or lie dry; and so being constrained to keep out the air on that side, for fear of letting in the water, would open the West ends of their houses so wide, (as was beyond the proportion of windows to repair that want) and so let in the fire; not considering at all, that there was such a thing as shutters for windows, to keep out the rain that hurt them, and let in the wind to refresh them, and do them good at their pleasure.” He concluded however, that this was just an excuse, “at last I found the true reason, was their poverty and indigence, which wanted the means to make such conveniences; and so,
being compelled by that, had rather suffer painfully, and patiently abide this inconvenience, than sell or part with any of their goods, to prevent so great a mischief.”

To Ligon, the solution was obvious because the weather, while wretched, was predictable: the winds blew constantly from the east so there should be as many openings on that side of the house as possible. 36

The buildings that frustrated Ligon in the 1640s did not persist, however, but change came about slowly, but by the end of the century Barbadians learned to make use of large windows and large, high-ceiled rooms to make the best of the climate. Change is visible in the few extant seventeenth century plantation houses. James Drax built Drax Hall, the earliest of these on Barbados, in the 1650s of coral rubble on a plan that would not have been out of place in England during that period. The building’s small windows reflect the problems of those early buildings, restricting air flow in a way that the large windows of later buildings would not. St. Nicholas Abbey (ca. 1665), though built on the same plan (but with slightly different interior proportions) a decade later, has significantly larger windows, though they may have been enlarged in the 1740s during a renovation that will be discussed in Chapter 4. The Colleton plantation house, likely built during the last third of the seventeenth century (ca. 1670), has undergone many more changes than either Drax Hall or St. Nicholas Abbey.

A massive rebuilding appears to have taken place at the end of the seventeenth century, after one of only three major slave rebellions to occur on the island prior to the nineteenth century. Following the second rebellion, in 1675, Governor Jonathan Atkins reported that “there are three churches, 1,000 houses, and most of the mills to Leeward

36 Ibid, 89-90.
thrown down, 200 people killed, whole families being buried in the ruins of their houses.” Atkins suggested that the rebellion’s effect was made worse, or even precipitated by the destruction caused by a hurricane the previous August. By 1681, a new governor, Sir Richard Dutton, reported that “The original houses were all of timber, but as they decayed or were destroyed by time, fire, or hurricanes, they were rebuilt with stone or brick and covered with tiles, slate, or shingles, and built after the English fashion for commodiousness and decency as well as strength. They are now general all over the Island.”

Despite Dutton’s claim that they were built “after the English fashion,” the single and double houses that were “general all over the Island” bore little resemblance to their English antecedents, in either their material, which was usually coral rubble, or their form, which was far more open. Indeed, English buildings had become increasingly complex during the course of the seventeenth century as space itself came to be defined hierarchically. For Barbadian planters, the claim that their buildings were “built after the English fashion” reflected a broader social and cultural insistence that their Englishness had not been eroded by either the tropical climate or living in proximity to enslaved Africans.

Compared to Barbadian buildings, which became less complicated, planters in Virginia began making their houses more complicated during the first third of the eighteenth century. Unlike the Barbadians, who had to negotiate a tropical climate,

38 Sir Richard Dutton’s answers to the heads of enquiry respecting Barbados. CO 1/47, No. 7. Barbados: June 11, 1681.
unfamiliar materials, and the delays and restrictions of shipping materials to the island, planters in Virginia had timber readily available. Instead, the “Virginia house” was the product of compromise: it combined the ease of construction and low cost of slight framing (the kind of irregular framing used in mud-walled construction) with the sturdiness of the more complicated box framing by simplifying the necessary joinery. Architectural historians of the Chesapeake note that “This form of building became so ubiquitous by the 1640s that colonists coined ‘Virginia house’ to reflect the extensive refashioning of English carpentry practices into something now recognizable as distinct and belonging to the New World.” Architectural historians and archaeologists have established that while only 30 percent of buildings surveyed dating to the first half of the seventeenth century were regularly framed, by the second half of the seventeenth century 68 percent had regular framing.  

While the more regular framing that indicated “Virginia house” construction was rising, so too was masonry construction. Of buildings constructed in the Chesapeake during the last quarter of the seventeenth century, forty-nine were earthfast while twelve had masonry foundations and thirty-nine had masonry foundations and masonry walls. In the first two decades of the eighteenth century, earthfast buildings were in decline overall as thirty-eight were earthfast while twenty-four had masonry foundations and thirty-seven

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40 Willie Graham et al., “Adaptation and Innovation: Archaeological and Architectural Perspectives on the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake,” The William and Mary Quarterly 64, no. 3 (2007): 451–522. “Regular framing” refers to the regular spacing of the posts placed in the ground and was required for the more solid frame of the Virginia house. In contrast, buildings that used “slight framing” had posts that were irregularly spaced and therefore could not support the heavier frame.
had masonry foundations and masonry walls. This transition was even clearer when looking at only rural sites.⁴¹

In the long-run, the technological concessions that produced the Virginia house would be too restrictive, as it limited house width to twenty feet. As planters became more willing (and able) to invest in substantial dwelling houses by the final third of the seventeenth century, the Virginia house became sturdier, better roofed, and longer lasting, but no less limiting. The internal framing of the Virginia house was unable to support the roof needed to cover a house that was two rooms deep, so colonists adopted “English framing,” making “the new polite house …more durable and complex than its seventeenth-century Virginia house counterpart and represent[ing] a further inclination to discount investments in architecture.”⁴² Nonetheless, even as timber-framed houses became more sturdily built and masonry houses became more prevalent, the interior arrangement of those buildings took time to transition from the hall-and-chamber plan to one oriented around a central passage.

The result of these compromises was a structure whose European antecedents were aesthetically obvious, but which was nonetheless the unique product of the Atlantic World. In all three regions, builders learned the advantages and disadvantages of the available materials. For Barbadians, this required learning to work with coral stone and, after determining which of the hardwoods that populated the island could survive insects and rot, working around the vagaries of shipping building materials across the Atlantic. Planters and builders in Virginia, possibly because they were dealing with the climate that had the most in common with England, spent more time finding technological

⁴¹ Ibid, 458-470.
⁴² Ibid, 458-470.
demands for buildings that could be built quickly, simply, and cheaply. In South Carolina, the insect and rot-resistant qualities of particular timber were recognized both for their usefulness to the planters and their value on the export market. Nonetheless, like Virginians, most South Carolinians initially prioritized cost and ease of construction over permanence or costly signaling.

The Plantation on the Frontier

The “Virginia house” and its descendants and the Barbadian single house (and occasionally the double house) both accommodated the environment while asserting their Englishness, despite the presence of the enslaved. In contrast, the earliest buildings in Carolina, built during the same period when planters in Virginia were transitioning from the Virginian house to more impressive structures and Barbadian planters had resolved the problems with their early attempts at building, suggest that early South Carolina occupied a frontier until after the Yamasee War in the 1710s.

The situation of these buildings affected their construction, form, and use. Distance from the London metropole meant that especially during Carolina’s early days, it was impractical to import prestige materials from England, or even from other parts of North America, so colonists relied upon what they had on hand. In addition to building simple structures from local materials, early buildings reflected the priorities of the individuals who constructed them.

Stephen Bull was one of the few prominent men in South Carolina’s early history who managed to avoid conflict with the local Native Americans, the colony’s proprietors, and the Goose Creek Men (the Barbadian planters who dominated the colonial
government during the colonial period and who sparked many of the conflicts between the proprietors and the local Native Americans). He built his first house circa 1675 from tabby in proximity to the Native Americans with whom he was trading, despite prohibitions against such commerce. Tabby was first used in North America by the Spanish nearly a century before and had a number of advantages that would have made it appealing to someone like Stephen Bull. First, it could be made with local materials, though these materials were easiest to procure near the coast. Second, it did not require skilled labor either to manufacture or use in building. And finally, it was inexpensive. The only cost was the time and heavy labor involved in gathering and mixing the materials before pouring and shaping them. Tabby was also resistant to humidity, making it more durable than wood, and appealing to colonists who were still in the process of determining the useful qualities of local materials.43

Materials like tabby in South Carolina and coral rubble in Barbados became useful substitutes, but required adapting the visual language of architecture. For Stephen Bull during the earliest period of settlement, this was less of a priority as he occupied a position as a go-between within the British Atlantic, navigating his positions as the proprietor’s agent and Indian trader, while serving his own ambitions. Later in the eighteenth century, tabby buildings in South Carolina would even more explicitly conform to English building practices, while in mid-seventeenth century Barbados using coral rubble to produce copies of English houses at Drax Hall and St. Nicholas Abbey was a way to reinforce the planter’s belief that he remained unchanged by his

43 Lauren B. Sickels Taves et al., The Lost Art of Tabby Redefined: Preserving Oglethorpe’s Architectural Legacy (Southfield, MI: Architectural Conservation Pr, 1999).
circumstances. Planters in Barbados covered coral rubble with a composite that regularized their appearance. At William Middleton’s Crowfield Plantation in South Carolina, built at the end of the 1720s, the builder used a similar composite to create the appearance of quoins. In contrast, planters in Virginia, where the frontier had steadily moved to the piedmont and beyond, incorporated local sandstone or imported marble and other stone directly from England into some of the most significant plantation houses, including Shirley and Rosewell (discussed along with Crowfield in the next chapter).

Similarly, scale affected both form and function as the frontier was a world where inertia could mean death. Mulberry plantation, though constructed of brick and drawing explicitly on Georgian stylistic elements, was built in 1714 as tensions rose between Native communities and European colonists in advance of the Yamasee War, and included firing-slits and corner pavilions that made it easy to secure. These elements of fortification led nearby colonists to take shelter there during the conflict.

In Barbados, while attack by natives was unlikely, the enslaved represented a threat to which seventeenth century planters responded in the shape of their houses, “many of which are built in manner of Fortifications.” Ligon wrote that “If any tumult or disorder be in the Island, the next neighbor to it, discharges a Musket, which gives the Alarm to the whole Island; for, upon the report of that, the next shoots, and so the next, and next, till it go through the Island: Upon which warning, they make ready.”

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44 Crowfield Plantation, Historic American Building Survey photos, Library of Congress, 1933. Quoins are an architectural feature used to draw attention to the end of a wall or a corner and are sometimes made from a better quality material to provide additional support.
46 Ligon and Kupperman, A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados, 75.
practice of signaling continued into the nineteenth century when a series of signal towers were constructed: first to warn of rebellion and later to warn of fires and other catastrophes.\(^\text{47}\) The fortifications around the house were built with “Lines, Bulwarks, and Bastions to defend themselves, in case there should be any uproar or commotion in the Island, either by the Christian servants, or Negro slaves,” while cisterns that collected water from the houses’s gutters “serves them for drink whilst they are besieged; as also, to throw down upon the naked bodies of the Negroes, scalding hot; which is as good a defence against their underminings, as any other weapons.”\(^\text{48}\) While Ligon likely exaggerated these “fortifications,” which appear to have mainly been walls surrounding the plantation house and the industrial compound, they created a barrier between the plantation house and the fields around it.

Housing the Enslaved

The form of the house rarely took into consideration the work that occurred around it, but was nonetheless affected by that activity. During this early period, divisions between work spaces and domestic spaces were less clear, especially on plantations that did not have a large population of African-descendent enslaved men and women. Instead, these individuals occupied liminal spaces within the house and its outbuildings rather than purpose-built dwellings. As plantations, and particular slave populations, became larger toward the end of the seventeenth century, planters established quarters for the enslaved that were some distance from the main house.

\(^{47}\) Site visit (May 2016) and information at the Gun Hill Signal Station (ca. 1818-1819), managed by the Barbados National Trust.

\(^{48}\) Ligon and Kupperman, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados.*
At William Byrd II’s Westover (the precursor of the extant structure), evidence in his diary suggests that several of the enslaved people who worked in or around the main house lived within the house itself. Anaka, who often bore the brunt of William and Lucy Byrd’s dysfunctional marriage, was apparently sleeping in the same room as their young daughter despite the presence of a “Nurse,” who appears to have been white and free.49

And Jane, a maid, was near enough that when she went into labor on the morning of April 10, 1709, Byrd heard her begin to “cry out.” After noting her cries, Byrd “danced [his] dance,” and he then added that “Jane was brought to bed of a boy” before he left for Wakefield plantation at noon.50 While finding enslaved women sleeping in the house was not uncommon even later in the eighteenth century, Byrd’s home was not only occupied by enslaved women. Beginning on May 16, 1709, Byrd noted Jack’s series of illnesses. On June 5, 1709, after being laid up for nearly a month, Byrd wrote that Jack “began to come down stairs.”51 Old Ben also “began to come down stairs” after an extended illness during which he appeared in Byrd’s diary nearly every day as Byrd tried to bleed him or “give him a vomit,” the same treatments he imposed on his wife Lucy when she was will.52

In South Carolina, the nature of the early economy with its focus on cattle ranching and timbering land, meant that while Barbadian planters brought enslaved

49 William Byrd, *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover 1709-1712*, ed. Marion Tinling and Lewis B. Wright (Dietz Press, 1941), 84. Byrd wrote, “I beat Anaka for letting the child piss the bead.” On May 19, 1709 (p.37), he wrote “The nurse was in great haste to go and complain to Mr. Harrison that [I should call her whore] but was commanded not to go.” While she could have been enslaved, her belief that she had a right to complain of ill-treatment and leave the plantation indicate that she was likely a free woman. This cannot be established conclusively.

50 Ibid, 19.
51 Ibid, 43.
52 Ibid, 68.
Africans and their descendants with them and established slavery in South Carolina from its beginning, planters rarely owned the large numbers of enslaved people who would later be needed to successfully work the rice and indigo fields. As a result, wills and probate inventories prior to the 1720s and 1730s give little indication that any planter held a large number of enslaved persons, which suggests that, especially given that the colony was still, in many ways, a frontier settlement until after the Yamasee War, there was a lack of specialized tasks among household laborers and that a few individuals had a number of different responsibilities. A survey of the probate inventories from the period 1687-1726 reveals that the number of enslaved workers on any plantation was steadily growing, but that few who timbered their land or raised cattle had need of large numbers of slaves. Barnard Schenckingh’s November 1692 inventory of Dehoo Plantation included 160 head of cattle and just two slaves, Tony and Cassada. Schenckingh’s daughter and son-in-law occupied the plantation and may have owned additional domestic slaves, but Schenckingh had not seen the need despite his large herd of cattle.53

Over the next thirty years, the number of enslaved individuals (black, Native, and mixed race) increased, but by 1726, it appeared that most Carolinian slaveholders owned between 9-13 or 18-26 enslaved men and women.54 Apart from Philip Gendron, who owned 85 slaves, no inventory lists more than 33 enslaved persons during this period. One, Francis Turgis, noted “Seaven negroes belonging to ye field” in addition to “One negroe woman on Indian Woman 5 Children,” and later on “One negrow man by name

54 South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Secretary of State, Recorded Instruments. Miscellaneous records (WPA transcripts) Vol. 52-59, S213004.
Sackard good for naught.” Turgis’s inventory noted one hundred head of cattle, fifty-nine sheep, thirteen hogs, and eight horses, but made no reference to any stores of rice or other crops, suggesting that he had not begun transitioning to planting.55

It is unclear during this period how many planters constructed separate quarters for the enslaved who did domestic work, but because of the small number of enslaved workers on these plantations overall, at least compared with the period after South Carolina fully transitioned to planting, it seems likely that enslaved domestics either lived in the family’s home or in the quarters constructed for field laborers. The use of space on these early plantations reveals the absence of clear divisions between public and private, or domestic and work spaces.

Many of the early structures built by planters in Virginia and South Carolina, because of their simple forms, would find other uses over time. The first Ashley Hall, with its simple plan and rough tabby construction eventually became an outbuilding that flanked the house that replaced it.56 Recent excavations at Bacon’s Castle (built ca. 1665 in Surrey, VA) revealed the presence of a seventeenth century building with a massive hearth that likely served as housing during the construction of the great house before becoming a kitchen and root cellar.57 In Barbados, there is little extant evidence of slave quarters, though a small building behind the stables at Colleton Plantation was purportedly built to house the enslaved who worked in the house.

55 “Inventory of Francis Turgis, March 17, 1696,” South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Secretary of State, Recorded Instruments. Miscellaneous records (WPA transcripts) Vol. 53 (1692-1696) (original Proprietary series Vol. 1692-1700), S213004, 429-431.
56 Califf and Bull, “Ashley Hall Plantation.”
Conclusion

These buildings were the product of a variety of Atlantic forces. While they drew on English antecedents that were familiar to European colonists, their particular situation shaped their form in a variety of ways. In Virginia, these forces produced a building that combined two different types of framing techniques to respond to the planters’ need for a building that was both sturdy and long-lasting, but cheap and easy to build. For Barbadians, the tropical climate required finding ways to configure the house so that it would be as livable as possible, while learning how to work with unfamiliar building materials. South Carolinians had the advantage of both Virginians’ and Barbadians’ experiences, but the much larger population of enslaved Africans in that colony appears to have resulted in the much earlier transfer of skills to enslaved workers than in Virginia or Barbados, where the large number of indentured craftsmen provided the necessary skill and enslaved laborers followed direction, at least during this early period.

Within the structures produced by these Atlantic forces, the New World household was a space without clear boundaries, even if it was not as communal as the medieval household that it imitated. Even in Virginia, where the process of establishing boundaries began earliest, William Byrd II came home one day to find enslaved workers at work in his private chambers without his explicit direction. The Barbadian legislature was concerned enough about the way indentured servants and enslaved Africans worked together that it tried to force planters to use indentured servants as domestic servants and enslaved Africans and their descendants as field laborers. The planters disregarded this directive and the enslaved continued to occupy the great house as both living space and work space, even seeing it, on some occasions as a refuge, illustrated in 1692 when the
governor’s overseer came to him, beaten bloody, to lodge a complaint against one
Colonel Hallett, reporting that he “knocked down a negro who refused to give way to him
in the street (the slaves were very insolent just then) and pursued him till he took shelter
in Colonel Hallett's house.” The man had a sufficient expectation of protection from his
master against a free white man that he hid in the house. Once inside, the women of the
house “called him [the overseer] many scurrilous names and Colonel Hallett coming up
broke his head with his cane.”58 The legacy of this building type and the social
relationships it produced would continue to be negotiated as the house first change its
appearance and then its form, beginning the process through which planters and the
enslaved reshaped both the plantation house and slavery itself.

58 “Governor Kendall to Lords of Trade and Plantations, Barbados, Oct 18, 1693,” Item
632, Vol 14 (1693-1696), 185-186.
CHAPTER 3
THE FIRST GEORGIANS IN THE NEW WORLD

Stephen Bull’s seventeenth century plantation house had stood on the banks of the Ashley River for nearly three decades by the time he decided to improve it in 1704. The house, a tabby structure with a simple, two-room floor plan, served as a home for Bull, his wife (whose name has somehow never been recorded), and their four children. It had also been Bull’s base as he established himself as the deputy of not one, but two of the colony’s Proprietors; he was one of the few major political players in the colony’s early history who managed to negotiate the various factions and conflicts without becoming embroiled in any of them.

By the first decade of the eighteenth century, Bull’s modest tabby house was no longer sufficient, particularly for a man who had begun to see the potential of the next generation of his family. His eldest son, William, born in Carolina in 1683, may have been the driving force behind the house’s construction, since Stephen Bull died just two years later and William occupied the house until his own death in 1755. The new building was a substantial improvement on the original.\(^1\) Built of brick, it was two stories over a partially raised basement – the presence of exterior windows and access beneath the porch suggest that the basement was habitable – and three bays wide with a stair tower.\(^2\)

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1 Califf and Bull, “Ashley Hall Plantation.”
2 Later writers described the house as having an “extreme verticality,” likely due to the addition of a third floor. Henry DeSaussure Bull and Samuel Stoney both identified the
While the symmetrical brick exterior spoke to a new kind of building, its interior plan was that of the seventeenth century: on the first floor, a hall-and-chamber plan divided the space in two, with one room much larger than the other.\(^3\)

The hall-and-chamber plan was used in the majority of the houses of the period in both Virginia and South Carolina, even after the beginning of the eighteenth century. The hall served as the hub of the medieval and pre-modern house, bringing together the various members of the household regardless of race, class, or gender. What was significant, however, was that these comparatively open-plan houses were given a Georgian skin at the beginning of the eighteenth century, visually affiliating their owners with the English gentry to which they aspired, while maintaining the interior organization of the medieval household. Earlier in the seventeenth century, planters in Virginia and Barbados accomplished this by building in the Jacobean style common to the houses of the English gentry, but the hall-and-chamber plan had been a traditional feature of that type of building, suggesting a unity of function and design. Houses in South Carolina similarly employed the hall-and-chamber plan with a “Georgian” exterior after the turn of the eighteenth century, but they revealed a variety of Atlantic influences as well as Carolina’s transition from a provisioning colony for its neighbors to one of the wealthiest in North America. In Barbados during the same period, economic stagnation, political unrest, and competition with other sugar colonies resulted in diminished interest and addition as dating to the nineteenth century, apparently based on a series of watercolors by Henrietta Augusta Drayton from 1820 (presently located at the South Caroliniana Library). However, a depiction of the house by Charles Fraser (owned by the Gibbes Museum in Charleston, SC), from 1803, indicates that the third floor was probably added prior to the end of the eighteenth century.

\(^3\) Bull, “Ashley Hall Plantation.”
capital for construction just as Virginians and South Carolinians embarked on a new phase of building.

With fewer spatial barriers came fewer social barriers as individuals shared communal spaces, fostering a sense of household that incorporated those who worked in the house into the family structure. The household would become increasingly stratified in Virginia and South Carolina during the course of the eighteenth century. This openness was particularly appealing in Virginia and Barbados where the early reliance on indentured servants encouraged planters to model their households on the patriarchal structures they observed in England and elsewhere throughout Europe, where the lord (or gentry) had vassals to whom he (and they) considered himself to be obligated. Englishmen transplanted to the New World brought with them a social structure that, while stratified, contained layers of mutual obligation.

The “Georgian skins” on early eighteenth century buildings came in a variety of forms, from the most elaborate to ones that simply incorporated one or two classically-influenced elements, like dentil moldings or a superficial symmetry. Virginia houses were typically far more stylistically “Georgian” during the first decades of the eighteenth century than houses in either South Carolina or Barbados, but it was still a colony whose social hierarchy was in flux, whose early adoption of the central passage spoke to its transition from indentured labor to slavery. While the central passage began to appear in Virginia houses at the end of the seventeenth century, the hall-and-chamber plan, with its blurred public and private space, still prevailed, even in the most “Georgian” of houses.

Architectural historian Mark Wenger made a two-fold argument about the emergence of the central passage, a third room, in Virginia houses, suggesting that it was
at once a response to Virginia’s unpleasant summers and a means of establishing a social barrier within the household.\textsuperscript{4} While these two functions seem clear, Wenger suggested that the central passage appeared in Virginia houses during the first quarter of the eighteenth century. He argued that the introduction of the central passage and the dining room during this period had the effect of making “the old hall and chamber far less accessible than they previously had been. This change is thought to have represented a growing desire on the part of planters to distance themselves, in a ceremonial way, from persons outside their closely knit circle of family and social peers.”\textsuperscript{5} While Wenger’s assessment of the effect of these spaces was sound, the central passage appeared during the late seventeenth century in Virginia, partly as a consequence of other adaptations to the subtropical climate, and does not appear to have become normative in Virginia buildings until the middle of the eighteenth century. Instead, for a significant period of time, it coexisted with the hall-and-chamber plan as planters navigated the process of becoming slaveholders.

The development of the central passage depended on another effect of the climate on the house, the creation of end chimneys instead of central ones. While houses built further north continued to make use of the central chimney into the eighteenth century and beyond, for Virginians and South Carolinians, by the end of the seventeenth century, end chimneys, which provided a distribution of heat toward the center of the house in colder months while creating space for the flow of air between them during the hot and humid summers, had replaced the central chimney. The end chimney also simplified the

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.
heating of multiple rooms, ensuring that heat was used only in occupied spaces. A lack of a hearth in many garret spaces further suggests this prioritization, as the servants and enslaved persons who occupied these spaces would have had to make due with residual heat from the rooms below. The clearest effect of the relocation of the chimneys to the gable ends was the creation of a more open interior space that elongated the house, which could be divided into increasingly stratified spaces and made room for a central passage.

Barbadians, able to eliminate the chimney within the plantation house altogether when a hearth was built in a separate kitchen house, had the opportunity to organize their single and double houses with a plan that flowed more explicitly from the most public to most private, following the schema of the series reception rooms that was common in English gentry houses of the period, though with some variation. At the same time, for those enslaved people working in the house, this meant that the house was much more open: in a house where each room connected to the next without a passage, any obstacle to the enslaved became an obstacle to their master as well. The central passage of the Virginia house, in contrast, allowed spaces to be accessed or closed off without necessarily restricting work, or the current of air, in other spaces.

Wenger’s argument that the central passage appeared during the first quarter of the eighteenth century would be less problematic if it did not obscure the fact that while the central passage became increasingly popular, it was hardly common during the first quarter of the eighteenth century, even in buildings built during the period. Houses built by elite Virginians often modified the seventeenth century hall-and-chamber plan or used a much wider version of what eventually became known as the central passage, finding a

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6 For a discussion of the form of the Barbadian single and double house, see the previous chapter.
middle ground between a central hall and a central passage, the first being far more about occupation and the second more about controlling movement.7

This slow adoption of the central passage indicated Virginians’ ambivalence about the purpose of this space and its function within the household. Just as John Coombs has illustrated that the conversion from servants to slaves was a much more gradual process than has previously been suggested by scholars attributing it to the aftermath of Bacon’s Rebellion, white Virginians’ accommodation of slavery within the built environment happened very gradually.8 For the most part, however, even as stylistic features of English Georgian architecture became common in Virginia plantation houses, their interiors continued to be arranged in a way that facilitated movement for the enslaved, rather than limiting it with an aim to control, as one space flowed into one another. The earlier adoption of the central passage in Virginia, demonstrated at Fairfield (ca. 1694; a central passage was likely added in the 1720s during Nathaniel Burwell’s renovations) and its coexistence with the hall-and-chamber plan through the 1730s reveals planters’ efforts to manage their slaves spatially as they negotiated the distinctions between black and white, slave and free. Barbadian planters, whose 1661 slave code informed that eventually produced in Virginia in 1705, had fully embraced the principle of racial slavery four decades before Virginians at the same time as they negotiated their identity as Englishmen in the New World. Thus race-based slavery – and the work done by the enslaved within the household – was embedded and accommodated

7 An example of one such wide central hall can be found at Mount Vernon in the portion of the house dating to Augustine Washington’s construction of the house in the 1730s.
8 Coombs, “The Phases of Conversion.”
within the Barbadian plantation house before architectural change provided a clearer means of segregating the household.

Beginning in the 1720s and continuing until the end of the 1730s, Virginia planters adopted Georgian style without wholly adopting Georgian plans. One of the best examples of this was Rosewell Plantation, begun by Mann Page I in 1725 and completed (with the assistance of a bequest from his father-in-law) after his death, by his son Mann Page II in 1737. Rosewell, which burned at the beginning of the twentieth century but persists as a ruin, was likely designed with the grand townhouses of London in mind, possibly by Mann Page I himself. Its exterior features some of the best brickwork in Virginia and the requisite embellishments for a fashionable townhouse, but its interior maintained a more open hall-and-chamber plan while situating its public spaces on the first floor, rather than the second floor like the English townhouses it emulated.

At Rosewell, a massive staircase that ascended to the second floor encircled the hall while a much narrower and far more modest stair occupied a separate stair hall directly opposite, linking all three floors and the house’s basement. The narrow, arched entrance to this smaller staircase would have obscured it from the view of visitors in the main hall or those who entered from the river-side entrance. At Shirley plantation on the James River, begun by John Carter when he married Elizabeth Hill in 1723 but not completed until 1738, the hall-and-chamber plan was once again sheathed in an elaborate Georgian shell. All the rooms on the first floor flowed into each other via connecting doors. Unlike Rosewell, Shirley had only a single staircase connecting all three stories.

Shirley’s staircase, like Rosewell’s, occupied the main hall and showcased intricate woodwork crafted by enslaved workers under the supervision of English
craftsmen. It was an engineering marvel, floating away from the wall and appearing to climb three stories without any support because of an ingenious internal system of iron straps. Its undercut soffit created the impression of movement, even when frozen. Unlike fixed staircases, whose only movement came from the creak of floorboards, Shirley’s stairs undulated so slightly it could be possible to have imagined it, but so regularly that one could not possible deny that it was happening. Every distinguished visitor, every family member, and every enslaved member of the household walked up and down these stairs multiple times each day. The lack of a back stair meant that every chamber pot from the upper floors traveled in the hands of enslaved chamber maid down that staircase and through the side door at the base of the stairs.

There are very few documentary records about Shirley relating to the period of its construction and initial use and those that do exist offer little beyond the cost and amount of materials, both of which are worthwhile avenues of inquiry, but that provide no insight into the household itself. For that, historians must turn to the buildings and their patterns. Frederic Edwin Church’s 1851 drawing of Shirley depicted what the original extended landscape around Shirley looked like and archaeology has confirmed his rendering. Instead of the two large, but somewhat distant buildings comprising the extant forecourt, the main house was flanked on either side by two massive buildings rising three stories, possibly taller than the main house itself. Archaeological excavation revealed that rather than being the seventeenth century house rumored to have been built on the property by Elizabeth Hill’s father, there were in fact two parallel flankers, each sixty feet long and twenty four feet wide with hall-passage-parlor plan. Building materials and stylistic elements from the excavation of the North and South Dependencies (as they have been
most commonly called) indicated that they were part of the same phase of construction as
the main house (ca. 1738), while Charles Carter (son of John Carter and Elizabeth Hill
Carter, 1732-1806, who occupied Shirley from 1771-1806) oversaw the construction of
the four extant forecourt buildings as well as the renovation of the main house.9

Archaeology revealed that both buildings had vaulted cellars (after the North
Dependency collapsed its vaulted cellar appears to have been repurposed as a root cellar).
The use of a hall-passage-parlor plan in the flankers indicates that John Carter’s choice
not to include a central passage in the main house was a deliberate one. While these
substantial buildings could have been used to house guests, the social purpose of the
central passage (to control access to the planter and the more private spaces of the
household) would have been voided and instead the central passage likely facilitated the
movement of air through the space while providing a central space for circulation of
people throughout the building.

The transition toward a cohesive “Georgian” architecture took a number of
different forms throughout Virginia, but until the end of the 1740s, there was no
consistent use of a central passage. At Tuckahoe plantation, the Randolph family used
one of the possible alternative arrangements. Thomas Randolph began building in 1714
and his eldest son, William (who married Mann Page’s daughter, Maria Judith Page),
inherited the house and expanded it into a four room mansion (two rooms on each story)
with a hall-passage-parlor plan in 1733. By 1740 he added a center hall and a South wing
that replicated the plan of the original house, creating an H-shape, though in orientation it

Century: A Historical, Architectural, and Archaeological Study,” The Virginia Magazine
differed significantly from the best example of an H-shaped house in Virginia at Stratford Hall.

Stratford Hall, home to the Lee family, replaced an older mansion, The Cliffs, whose simple plan facilitated the creation of a community amongst the servants, slaves, and family within the household, an interpretation supported by the archaeology. The earlier house, dating to 1670, underwent significant change in the 1690s before being replaced by the new mansion in the 1730s. Whereas the earlier house had originally had an open plan and a communal hall, the 1690s changes included the creation of a central passage and the addition of a porch to the front of the house, both of which emphasized the division between public and private space, even within the household itself. When Thomas Lee abandoned that building in the 1730s to construct his new home, he created a central space that was explicitly public and for entertaining and situated the rest of the house around it. The central hall at Stratford encompasses nearly a third of the first floor, while passages that open off of it lead to bedchambers and discreet staircases to the ground floor where enslaved servants did the work of the household.

Stratford, Shirley, Tuckahoe, and Rosewell, while certainly not universally representative of other early eighteenth century elite structures in the Chesapeake, nonetheless reflected the manner in which the desire for English design that communicated the planters’ active participation in the Atlantic world accommodated the strategies planters used to control their world. The distinction between public and private space meant that movement for visitors to the house became increasingly restricted, though the work of the enslaved within the house had to continue. To this end, rooms within the plantation house were still connected to one another despite the division of the
open spaces of the house into a number of smaller ones, demonstrating the importance – or perhaps the continued assumption – of an ease of movement for those who worked within the household.¹⁰

As the structure of the house was divided hierarchically, so were its inhabitants. While several elite homes had secondary staircases, they were all sufficiently open to allow access and visitors were not prohibited from using them by any impediment. Like secondary stairs in English great houses during the previous two centuries, they were less heavily embellished, but the master of the house would not be embarrassed if a guest were to use them. Backstairs became more common in Virginia and South Carolina as planters settled into their position as slaveholders, separating the work of the enslaved from the public spaces of the house as much as possible, and reinforcing the social distinctions at the same time, only to later cease building backstaird that could not be surveilled in the 1760s. One such example, to be discussed later, was Nomini Hall, built by Robert “King” Carter in the 1730s, which was designed and built with a central passage and a back stair that had access to every floor of the house.

In South Carolina, the half-step between English Georgian design and something distinctly colonial was even more common, as newly built houses blended open plans with the facades of English Georgian buildings, using symmetry, elaborate brickwork, quoining, etc. to create the impression of English gentility. This use of English Georgian stylistic elements and exterior symmetry began within the first decade of the eighteenth century and became increasingly precise.

¹⁰ Upton, “White and Black Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century Virginia.”
The second house at Ashley Hall was the first known example of this trend in South Carolina, but it certainly was not the last.¹¹ Mulberry Plantation, built between 1714 and 1725, used a variety of Georgian features to produce a structure that was at once an elegant plantation house that would not shame its owner before English visitors, and a fortification against both Native American and Spanish attacks. Thomas Broughton constructed the house over a cellar fort, indicated by firing slits in the basement walls, and the two-story house reflects a variety of influences. Laid in English bond, its gambrel roof was dormered and hipped in a manner not uncommon in Virginia buildings of the period, though the eaves flare in a Flemish style and the end walls use iron anchor ties, like those used by the Dutch. The single-room, one-story pavilions on each corner, which provided a defensive position in the event of conflict, had hipped roofs and bell-shaped turrets that may indicate a French Huguenot influence.¹² Broughton’s concern about defense at Mulberry meant that even its Georgian façade was barely more than a thin veneer, as its north elevation lacked any symmetry. The north entrance, which was likely the main entrance, led directly into a hall, beside which was a dining room. Unlike many later eighteenth century plantations, Mulberry did not have a separate kitchen building and instead housed its kitchen in the room directly behind the dining room.

This plan, with two unequal rooms in front, a separate stair hall in the center rear, and two small rooms on either side of that stair, would become the common house form for South Carolina planters building during the first four decades of the eighteenth century. This plan eventually became the Charleston “double house,” though that

¹¹ Because it burned in the mid-nineteenth century, Ashley Hall has largely been excluded from discussions of South Carolina’s early architecture.
structure was organized on a slightly different axis in order to better fit the narrow lots within the city.\textsuperscript{13} It allowed the house to maintain an exterior symmetry that mirrored English buildings while the interior accommodated the plantation household, with rooms that connected to one another. Archdale Hall near Charleston, Brick House Plantation on Edisto Island, Fairfield Plantation (also known as the Thomas Lynch House) near McClellanville, and Crowfield Plantation, also near Charleston, all used this plan.

Samuel Stoney, the first architectural historian of South Carolina, recognized the initial use and persistence of what was fundamentally the same plan with some variations, writing in 1938 that “Before the Revolution…and from the opening years of the eighteenth century almost to its ending, one plan was used over and over again with only a slight variation…we find it first at Mulberry, where, if you will imagine away the towers, you have the scheme that is repeated at Hanover, Brick House, Fenwick Hall, Crowfield, Limerick and Lewisfield; at Fairfield and Hampton in their first condition; and after the Revolution at Eutaw.”\textsuperscript{14} Like Thomas Waterman in Virginia, however, Stoney was uninterested in the way some of these buildings (notably Fairfield and Hampton) were transformed to match newly built structures in the middle of the eighteenth century and showed little interest in the actual use of the buildings.

William Baker built one of the earliest of these structures, Archdale, on the site of an earlier settlement by Richard Baker, who immigrated from Barbados with his wife, Elizabeth, and their five children in 1680. Archaeology revealed that Richard Baker built a small frame house with a brick courtyard on the site in 1682. William was Baker’s

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
second son and inherited the property after his father’s death in 1698 (his brother Edward was initially to inherit but must have died in the period between the making of the will and William’s inheritance) and constructed a more substantial brick house between 1710 and 1718. Though Archdale sustained significant damage in the 1886 earthquake, photographs from after that even reveal the interior of the house to maintain the hall-chamber plan in the front, with two small rooms on either side of the rear staircase.

Brick House Plantation, built around 1725 for Paul Hamilton, a wealthy rice planter, had a similar arrangement, though in the portion of the house that was demolished by the earthquake at Archdale Hall was a small spiral staircase that led from the first floor to the attic (the house lacked a basement or cellar). While Archdale and Brick House were both constructed of brick, Fairfield Plantation, with a similar plan, was wood framed above a brick cellar that would have provided workspace for enslaved black servants. Brick House differs from Archdale in one important way. Instead of its rooms being connected to one another, they were accessible only from the front hall or its connecting stair hall, a plan repeated at Exeter Plantation (ca. 1726), despite its H-shaped arrangement reminiscent of both Stratford Hall and Tuckahoe in Virginia, and, to some extent, Crowfield, built by 19-year-old William Middleton in 1729 on land his father gave him.

Eliza Lucas Pinckney, describing Crowfield Plantation in 1743, wrote that Middleton’s mansion, “stands a mile from, but in sight of the road, and makes a very handsome appearance; as you draw nearer new beauties discover themselves, first the fruitful Vine mantleing up the wall landing with delicious Clusters; next a spacious basin in the midst of a large green presents it self as you enter the gate that leads to the house
wch. is neatly finishd, the rooms well contrived, and Elegantly furnishd.” From this description, it seems clear that the processional landscape being adopted in Virginia was at least in evidence outside the house.\textsuperscript{15} Behind the house, a thousand-foot walk led through the garden, planted with flowers along the part of the path closest to the house, past a grove of young live oaks on one side and a “large square boleing green sunk a little below the level of the rest of the garden with a walk round composed of a double row of fine large flowering Laurel and Catulpas wch. form both shade and beauty.” Past more “mounts,” and a “Wilderness &c,” at the bottom of the garden was a large fish pond with a central island on which stood a “roman temple” that rose level with the dwelling house; beyond the gardens were the “smiling fields dressed in Vivid green.”\textsuperscript{16}

Like a jewel in the elaborate setting Pinckney described, Middleton’s house was typical of the trend articulated at Archdale Hall and Brick House Plantation, as well as elsewhere in South Carolina. Describing the building in a 1783 advertisement, William Middleton (probably the builder’s youngest son) described it as “My Capital Mansion on Goose Creek…with twelve good rooms…fire places in each, besides four in the basement with fireplaces.”\textsuperscript{17} One author has suggested that Middleton was counting the rooms in the adjacent structures in his total of twelve rooms, which is possible, while also suggesting that the building’s height is unclear.\textsuperscript{18} In extant ruins, the brick remains

\textsuperscript{15} Upton, “White and Black Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century Virginia.”
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{The South Carolina Gazette}, September 9, 1783.
\textsuperscript{18} Michael J. Heitzler, \textit{The Goose Creek Bridge: Gateway to Sacred Places} (AuthorHouse, 2012). Heitzler suggests in a footnote that there is documentary evidence that the house was a single story over a raised basement, which is contradicted by both
indicate that it was a two story building with a full basement and, based on the structure’s proportions and style, an attic. Its north and south elevations both used Flemish bond, using dark brown and dark blue stretchers alternating with dark blue glazed headers to give it a striking appearance, and using a more common English bond on the east and west elevations. On the south elevation, architectural remains revealed that the quoins, lintels, and string course were all stuccoed, and there is evidence of pilasters framing the entrance.

Figure 3.1 Crowfield, First Floor, Historic American Building Survey (HABS), Library of Congress

Crowfield is one of the best examples of the way planters sought to control the impression that their houses made on visitors to the plantation. Flanked by two

the architectural remains and the documentary record. Additionally, he posits the existence of brick wings between the house and outbuildings like those at Drayton Hall (the footnote for this makes no mention of Crowfield at all), which would have been unlikely given the thirty-nine years between the construction of Crowfield in 1729 and the completion of Drayton Hall in 1748 (the wings at Drayton have not been dated and the visual evidence of their existence is a watercolor done ca. 1765, so it is possible that they were a later addition).
outbuildings, the mansion’s façade (the south elevation), was more elaborate than the other elevations, constructed using a more decorative style of brick bond and stuccoed quoins, lintels, string course, and pilasters to emphasize the house’s size while giving the impression of rich materials. This effect would have been even more impressive from the road, from which Eliza Pinckney writes that she could see the house. The approach to the house would have taken visitors past service buildings and fields (notably, Samuel Stoney leaves the working portion of the plantation almost completely off of his conjectural plan), around the pond that Pinckney describes as “a spacious bason in the midst of a large green” before drawing up in front of the mansion, flanked by its outbuildings to seem even more massive. Rather than going around the house, visitors would have gone through it to reach the expansive gardens that included numerous built landscape features including an ornamental mound and a fish pond, which would have been built and maintained by enslaved gardeners, who Pinckney does not mention once in her rapturous description. The north side of the house featured the same elaborate brickwork and faux quoining, though any indication of whether Middleton repeated the decorative string course, pilasters, and lintels has long been lost to nature. When Samuel Carne listed the plantation for sale in 1775, he included forty enslaved men, women, and children, mentioning specifically “a Wheel Wright and jobbing Carpenter, a Cooper, a Gardiner, a Cook, handy Boys and Girls, as good as Hair dresser and Waiting Man as in the Province, and able Field Slaves.”

19 The South Carolina and American General Gazette, April 28, 1775.
of Crowfield possible and their experience will be the focus of the final part of this chapter.\textsuperscript{20}

Ashley Hall, Archdale Hall, Brick House, and Crowfield represent the first stage of planters’ use of Georgian design in South Carolina, which married the Jacobean plan with a simplified Georgian façade. The plan of these buildings, which emphasized and promoted the movement of enslaved individuals through the house, would persist in South Carolina until the end of the eighteenth century, with some adaptation. During the middle and end of the eighteenth century, however, planters began introducing new features to some of these buildings, and building entirely new buildings that expressed changes within their society and its relationship with slavery, as well as the reality of enslaved people within the household. Like Barbadians, South Carolina planters resisted changing their houses as long as possible, but like their neighbors in Virginia, they eventually began altering their homes to better control and conceal the enslaved. While planters in Carolina and Virginia sought to balance English fashion and the reality of households organized around a colonial social order and the labor of enslaved people at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Barbadian planters were in a period of economic stagnation precipitated, in part, by the mismanagement of royal governors.

\textsuperscript{20} William Middleton (the builder) decided to return to England and sold the plantation with all of its land, slaves, and furnishings to William Walter in 1754. Walter then left the plantation to his daughter Elizabeth Walter who married William Haggatt of London; the couple never lived there and it was during this period that its decline began. Haggatt inherited the property after his wife’s death and after his death his second wife quickly sold it to Samuel Carne. Carne then sold it to Rowlins Lowndes in 1776. Lowndes sent his family there for safety during the war and after the war he sold the plantation to William Middleton (the builder)’s youngest son, John Middleton. Chain of title from Michael J. Heitzler, \textit{Goose Creek, A Definitive History: Planters, Politicians and Patriots} (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2005).
While sugar production had increased at the beginning of the eighteenth century, increased competition with Jamaica meant that all of Barbadian planters’ efforts were focused on keeping up. During the fifteen years he spent in Barbados, Captain Thomas Walduck formed a very poor opinion of the Barbadians. He began a correspondence with London naturalist James Petiver in 1710, informing him of the island’s history and rich botanical offerings, as well as the character of the people who lived there. In one of the earlier letters, before dedicating an entire epistle to his opinion of the planters, he commented on the character of the West Indies settlers:

As for the West Indies or Sugar Plantations, I looke upon them (only Jamaica) to be declining & beyond ye power of human prudence to recover them to their pristine Condition, the Planters may make a Shift to live upon them; as the Christians do upon Candie & Cypress under the Turks or the Sicilians under the Spanish Government in Sicily labour for an uncertain inheritance, they can not be happy in their youthfull days nor Secure in their full Strength nor take comfort in their old age nor assure to their Children what they leave at their deaths, not but that her Majty indulgeth em sufficiently but by the Circumstances of their Estates and an unhappy temper amongst themselves –

Walduck concluded this brief, bleak description, “But indeed I of all mankind have the least value for ‘em. Especially this Island, for their Manners Customs & ways of living are all unaccountable, of wch some other time I will write particularly at present I want Charity to think well of them.”

Walduck’s assessment that the West Indies – excepting Jamaica – were in decline is borne out by data on sugar production, which shows that by 1712 sugar production in Barbados was at less than half of what it was at its peak in 1698. Compared to the other sugar islands, Barbados was insignificant. Walduck does not lay the burden entirely on

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poor production, though. He blamed Sir Bevil Granville, the late governor, for the island’s decline and instability. The effects of Granville’s tenure as governor fall into a hole in the historiography between Richard Dunn’s foundational study of the seventeenth century in *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* and Karl Watson’s *The Civilised Island Barbados: A Social History 1750-1816* and have thus received little attention. Though Dunn cites Walduck and extends his narrative through Granville’s disastrous governorship, his focus on the rise of the planter class leads him to obscure the decade of political and economic instability that led Barbadian society and culture to stagnate for nearly half a century.

Walduck began his correspondence with Petiver with an overview of the island’s history to the present day (1710), bemoaning the loss of the Barbadian founders’ “industry & integrity” that produced a burgeoning sugar economy despite being so distant from the metropolis. He claimed that this undoing had occurred within just a few years as the leading men of the island were “few years debauch’d and poysone’d by one late Governour Sr B.G. & imbibed such Machiavel principles that now the Quality is inherent and the Tincture not to be wash’d out.” As a result, “Now 1 3d of the Island lay unmanured, its buildings in ruines, the Country depopulated and whereof we were used to have 6 or 800 Sayle of vessels come to us in a year, now we have not 2 or 300 for these 5 years last past, the poor inhabitants have been starving and forced to be reliev’d by publick contribution.” Walduck was reporting four years after Granville’s short tenure (1703-1706) as the island’s governor, but small notes in the official records, easily overlooked without the context of Walduck’s later writing, suggested that all was not well. In July of 1705, the council at Kensington heard the complaints of several
Barbadian planters. Though Granville was “honourably acquitted,” he was recalled a year later and died during the journey home.

Walduck likely exaggerated the extent of Granville’s influence on Barbados’s decline. His letters reveal a definite dislike of appointed governors and a curiously democratic (in the eighteenth century sense of the word) sentiment; he included a lengthy indictment of Daniel Parke, the governor of Antigua whose death at the hands of an angry mob was fresh news in 1710. Though Daniel Parke’s misdeeds – embezzlement, abuse of office, and an affair with a prominent planter’s wife – were well documented (sometimes by Parke himself, who included his daughter produced by his affair with the adulterous gentrywoman in his will), Walduck was extraordinarily unsympathetic as he described the brutal murder. Nonetheless, the combined effect of mismanagement and Barbados’ diminishing importance in the sugar market had material consequences.

The single and double houses described by Ligon as the predominant form for Barbadian houses in the seventeenth century dotted the densely populated island. With land at a premium, the plantation complex rarely included expansive gardens or open spaces. Outbuildings were built as close to the house as possible, with the mill and boiling house that still cluster near the dwelling houses on St. Nicholas Abbey and Drax Hall suggest, and then the house and its auxiliaries were encircled by a wall, within which large trees were planted to provide both shade for the house and a visual buffer from the fields where Africans and their descendants labored to produce sugar cane. The proto-industrial landscape where that cane was processed into sugar was often an extension of this plantation complex, though at some small distance from the house.
For those who lived within the plantation house, the combined effect of the wall and the trees would have been to create a sense of isolation. For the planter, this was mitigated by touring the plantations operations and overseeing the sugar works, a process that was much more industrial than anything taking place on a tobacco or rice plantation, where he would be a witness to the hard labor and casual violence of plantation life. The processing of sugar, extensively described in the work of Sidney Mintz, Richard Dunn, Russell Menard, and others, was more hazardous by far than the production of tobacco, rice, or indigo. In one often described incident, an enslaved woman, shackled to another woman for punishment, caught her hand in the massive stone rollers as they pressed the stalks of cane to extract their sweet juice, which was then filtered and boiled in large cauldrons (nineteenth and twentieth century examples of these vats can be found on many extant plantations, where they’re used decoratively). Both she and her co-prisoner were then pulled through the rollers as others tried to save them.

The intense focus on sugar production and the transfer of estates away from their rightful heirs meant that there was little interest in maintaining the legacies established in the seventeenth century or diverting resources toward their expansion. In the portion of his correspondence describing Barbadian planters’ dwellings and manners, Walduck wrote, “their predecessours left them noble houses but this generation lets them run to ruin what part is standing looks like our Country cathedralls and as much neglected bare walls and unfurnished like an Empty Sepulchre.” Walduck’s comparison to an empty

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24 Edward Littleton, “The Groans of the Plantations, Or, a True Account of Their Grievous and Extreme Sufferings by the Heavy Impositions Upon Sugar: And Other Hardships Relating More Particularly to the Island of Barbados” (London: Printed by M. Clark, 1689).
sepulcher was likely based on a sensory impression of those spaces, whose high ceilings, thick coral stone walls, and numerous windows made them airy, but cavernous, especially without furnishings to fill them. The huge, open houses of the seventeenth century had descended to the next generation, but a number of circumstances conspired to prevent either their improvement or replacement.

First, the focus on producing sugar was paramount as Barbados struggled to compete with its neighbors. As Barbadian production began struggling at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Jamaican production had dramatically increased, and the result was the constant operation of the mills, which Barbadian planters petitioned to have operate seven days a week. Further exasperating the disinterest in maintaining the existing houses or building new ones was the way in which plantations descended to the next generation through the law. Walduck wrote in his extended description of the island that “the Governour & Lawyers fleece them every year to support their broken titles, for if an Executor or an Administrator gets into an estate here the Orphans are never the better for what their fathers left them (I speak of the present possessions) I do not know 20 Estates in ye whole Island that are in the hands of their lawful Descendants.”

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25 Walduck notes the planters’ petition to the governor “that the Windmills might go abt on Sundays,” which was hardly an imposition, as he had “heard the Parson of a Parish say he never Saw but 6 persons at Church unless it were at a funeral.” Thomas Walduck, “Letter from Thomas Walduck to James Petiver, November 12, 1710.” Sloane MSS 2302, British Library.

who were “now they are little better than beggars.”

A study of the wills and probates from later in the eighteenth century reveals the care with which planters chose their administrators, though even the most trustworthy could be corrupted.

Wills and marriage records reveal that it was far more likely for estates to pass from one owner to another through a succession of marriages, especially when women were designated as the executrix of their husband’s estate. Walduck, no fan of white Barbadian women, wrote:

If a man dies and leaves his wife Sole Executrix (She will maryy a Second Husband for they are given to the work of the flesh) I know 20 weomen that have had 5 or 6 husbands a piece One woman particularly The frist husband an Englishman the 2d a scotchman 3rd an Irishman. the 4th a Dutchman & the 5th An Englishman again, and She is alive now and much ado to keep herself a widdow The laws of England gives her 1/3 of her husbands Estate (Slaves are real Estates here) free from all Incumbrance. And She will make partition take all her dowry to her self the Debts and Charges must be paid for out of the Remainder that there will be nothing left for the Children, The Widdow marries again, and they are alaways so fond of their present husband that she will ruin all the Children she has by the former husbands to oblige him and if he happens to outlive the old trot he makes the Estate all his own tho: it be made up by the acquisition of 4 or 5 husbands before and they are gone to the Devil to pay the Purchase.

This practice was often made more contentious when the heirs were old enough to protest.

In one example, Edward Willey placed Porter’s Plantation in trust in his 1701 will for the use of his wife, Jane Willey, and his daughter, Elizabeth Willey, from his first marriage to a woman named Beulah. He included bequests for Beulah’s children from two previous marriages, as well as a bequest for Jane’s son from a previous marriage, Christopher Fowler. Jane subsequently remarried, first to the Hon. Dudley Woodbridge

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27 Ibid.
and then in 1719 to John Bennett. In 1721, John Boynton of St. Michael and his wife, Sarah Willey, the daughter of Edward Willey, took Jane Woodbridge (recently widowed and remarried) to court. Sarah claimed a quarter of her father’s estate and Jane paid her £1500, which she charged on Edward Willey’s plantation in St. James, composed of three separate tracts of land worked by 114 slaves. Later, Sarah’s sister Elizabeth, who had married Robert Warren, also brought suit against her mother, whose second and third husbands both claimed Edward Willey’s estate while married to Jane.²⁹

Despite the litigation, the family remained on good terms and when John Boynton, “being sick and weak,” wrote his will in 1722 before his death just two months later, he named his mother-in-law and stepfather-in-law among his executors and the guardians of his son and daughter. His stepbrother-in-law, Christopher Fowler, was among the witnesses, as was Sarah’s stepbrother-in-law, Henry Warren. Throughout all this time, Jane, who had been born in Bridgetown (St. Michael’s Town) in 1667, one of three daughters of a confectioner named Samuel Meade, who owned 9 enslaved Africans, held on to Porter’s Plantation. At the time of her death, caused by a fever, in 1733, she was living in St. James, likely on the plantation since the only other properties her family owned were in Bridgetown. Porter’s Plantation eventually descended to the heirs of Jane’s children with Dudley Woodbridge, who married into the Alleyne family.³⁰

²⁹ Many of the documents relating to the quarrel have been lost, but it was written about by John Poyer in his *History of Barbados*. John Poyer, *The History of Barbados: From the First Discovery of the Island, in the Year 1605, Till the Accession of Lord Seaforth, 1801* (J. Mawman, 1808).
The focus on sugar production and the transfer of estates away from their rightful heirs meant that there was little interest in maintaining the legacies established in the seventeenth century or diverting resources toward their expansion. White Barbadians would do little to improve their estates for their own benefit, and there is no evidence of any building during the first three decades of the eighteenth century, but planters made a great effort to appear prosperous when visitors arrived. Walduck wrote that “the first room shall be pretty well furnished when they know of any Stranger Coming if there is as much furniture in ye parish for they shall borrow of all their Neighbour’s Charis of one Spoones and forks of another,” suggesting that as owners came and went, properties were stripped of their furnishings and little was done to replace them. The veneer of prosperity was sufficient for planters whose focus had shifted to survival. Walduck concluded that “there is a Secret Curse followes all their labour, either the Stone cryeth out of the wall or a beam out of the buildings, their Estates are ill got and maintained by Charge and violence,” and considered it retribution for their lack of religion, their corruption, and how “unmercifull and cruell” they were “to their poor Slaves by whom they get their living.”

Barbados’s enslaved population, already over 46,000 by the end of the seventeenth century, continued to work in spaces that were exceedingly open, even in

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comparison to their counterparts in Virginia and South Carolina. Of the two buildings given a construction date within the first three decades of the eighteenth century, only one has a date supported by the documentary and archaeological record, Captain Edward Crofton’s house on the outskirts of Bridgetown, better known to modern historians of Barbados as the Bush Hill House or the George Washington House. Dated to about 1720 and likely built by William Cogan, this structure, despite numerous changes, still reveals a great deal about Barbadian houses of this early period. Originally T-shaped, it was a modest one-and-a-half story house, with a large central hall. The T-plan house is unlike other extant and documentary structures from the period, but conforms in important ways. With just three large rooms on the first floor, only one room did not have a doorway leading directly outside, and a detached, one story kitchen was built just north of the house overlooking a gully. The proximity to Bridgetown and the lack of agricultural tools among the archaeological artifacts suggests that large-scale agricultural production took place elsewhere, but a later map from the 1790s indicates that some farming was occurring on the property. In addition to the kitchen, which contained a dairy, the complex included a water mill dated to 1762 and a bath house may have been constructed around the same time. All of the buildings were in place by 1775 and a fence lined the gully, restricting both the view and access.

While the majority of Barbadian plantation houses from the eighteenth century appear to be rectangular, Cogan’s T-shaped house would have nonetheless functioned in much the same way. A first floor service room was likely located in the corner of the T

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34 Washington and his half-brother, Lawrence, rented Crofton’s house briefly in 1751.
nearest to the kitchen, while the long central block served as the public space that took up
the majority of the ground floor in most Barbadian plantation houses. Cogan then situated
the bedchambers on either side of the central block; according to architectural historians
who aided in the documentation and restoration of the building, “the two wing
rooms…had their doors from the central space pushed as far to the rear as possible. This
arrangement is often an indication that the rooms beyond the doors were intended as bed
chambers, or at the least, more private spaces than the central block.”35 Though closer to
a single house than a double house in style, William Cogan would have needed a
substantial amount of space. At the time of the 1715 census, his household included 18
people between the ages of 60 (his mother) and 10 days (likely a grandchild).

The lack of dwellings for the enslaved on any of the early maps suggest that they
slept in the half-story loft above the house (possibly along with some of the children), in
the bedchambers or hall, or in the kitchen. A pair of outbuildings likely date to the late-
eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries based on the recovered artifacts. Without an
extensive agricultural landscape, William Cogan would have seen little benefit to creating
a separate quarter for the enslaved people working in his house, and the lack of a separate
building during the first period of the house’s occupation indicates that despite the size of
Cogan’s family, he owned a relatively small number of enslaved people to wait on him in
his house.

Though Cogan’s house sits close to Bridgetown, it was still on the outskirts by
1751 when Washington visited, and it can thus be interpreted as a hybrid of rural and

35 Agbe-Davies, *The Architectural and Archaeological Analysis of Bush Hill, The
Garrison, St. Michael, Barbados / by Anna Agbe-Davies, [et Al.] ; Measured Drawings
by William L. Tilson ... [et Al.].

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urban living in eighteenth century Bridgetown. Without an agricultural or proto-industrial sugar landscape, it would have been decidedly different from its rural counterparts, but the space around the house suggests a degree of remove that would have been uncommon in the cramped seventeenth century city of Bridgetown.

At least two other extant houses may date to the first three decades of the eighteenth century: Lowlands Plantation in Christ Church, likely known as Hargraves Plantation in 1709, and The Hope Plantation in St. Lucy. Both of these buildings utilized a hybrid of coral rubble construction and sawn coral stone, the first being the common method of construction in the seventeenth century and the second becoming more frequently used during the course of the eighteenth century. Though it is possible that these buildings date to a later period, and likely that both were remodeled in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the combination of sawn and rubble stone suggests an early eighteenth century date.³⁶ This is further supported at The Hope, by evidence of hewn beams in the cellar and sockets for more modern ones that have been filled with concrete to support much smaller sawn beams. The basement at The Hope is of particular interest as the stone has been faced – shaped on one side to make it smooth, but still irregularly shaped – rather than sawn into regular blocks, suggesting that those stones began as rubble before being utilized in the construction of the house.

The first documentary reference to sawn, or ashlar, coral stone, was in 1715 in a report to the committee overseeing the construction of Codrington College. The College was the result of a bequest by Sir Christopher Codrington, who left his two plantations and the 300 enslaved men, women, and children associated with them to the Society for

³⁶ Site visits to The Hope Plantation in St. Lucy, Barbados (May 13, 2016) and what the author believes to have been Lowlands Plantation in Christ Church (June 11, 2016).
the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), as well as monies to establish a college on the island of Barbados. It still stands today and though it has suffered damage from several devastating hurricanes, it seems unlikely that it was ever totally destroyed, as other historians have suggested. With coral stone walls nearly six feet thick at their base, the college was the largest construction project on the island in the eighteenth century, even though the initial design drawn by Sir Christopher Lilly in 1714 was simplified due to a lack of funds. In 1715, Dudley Woodbridge (husband of Jane Meade Fowler Willey Woodbridge Bennett of Porter’s Plantation), reported that the hired English craftsmen were still “cheerfully” sawing stone.37

Skilled English craftsmen and enslaved black workers completed the construction in stages and the entire project was not complete until the 1740s. Though sugar production began to increase between 1718 and 1725, nearly returning to pre-1700 levels, Codrington appeared to be constantly running out of funds.38 This was in part because Codrington’s monetary bequest was insufficient for the Society’s grand plans for the college, but it was also the result of the poor performance of their sugar crop.39

The S.P.G. documents also include a rare description of the process by which stone was cut in the eighteenth century. “The stones…are…sawed out of a Hill just

38 Goddard, George Washington’s Visit to Barbados 1751.
39 Maud E. O’Neil, “Of the Buildings in Progress with which to House to the College; of supplies wanting and the great Charge of building; of the Society’s pleasure in the good work advancing in Barbados,” in Klingberg, Codrington Chronicle; an Experiment in Anglican Altruism on a Barbados Plantation, 1710-1834, 27-39.
before the Front, and are capable of being cut into what Moulding they please; and by being exposed to the Weather they grow extremely hard.” Additionally, Codrington’s bequest of “…as much New England Timber as would repair all the buildings” for seven years illustrates the extent to which the island had been deforested by the eighteenth century. The timber included in Codrington’s legacy was evidently insufficient as the Society had to “procure from the Admiralty Board to the present Commander of the Stationary Man of War for that Island, to Assist the Society’s Agents, when it can be done without Prejudice to his Majesty’s Service, in fetching of Timber from the Adjacent Islands with the Jurisdiction of the Government of Barbadoes,” in 1717. This and the importation of 700,000 “well-burnt Bricks” and “2 Tons of Iron Bars” reinforces the colony’s dependence on trade within the British empire, which is evident in the built environment throughout the eighteenth century.


One major source of those resources was Carolina, which split into North and South Carolina during the 1720s. South Carolina’s architecture and material culture during the first thirty years of the eighteenth century reflected its transition from a provisioning colony whose primary products were cattle and timber, to a plantation economy that would be among the wealthiest in the British Atlantic – and certainly the wealthiest in North America. During this period, older structures whose owners were uninterested in taking the time to demolish and rebuild or remodel, were adapted through the purchase of new material culture.

When Thomas Drayton arrived to South Carolina from Barbados aboard the ship Mary in 1679 evidence suggests that he initially turned his attention to cattle ranching. A census of the island of Barbados that year recorded that Drayton owned 12 acres, seven slaves, and the indenture of one white servant, in addition to one hired, white servant, demonstrating that even if he did not bring those people with him (and there is no evidence that he did), he would have had the necessary capital to undertake the creation of a plantation. Additionally, he married a woman named Ann, likely the daughter of his neighbor Stephen Fox, whose property he subsequently inherited. Though the first Drayton house no longer survives, evidence in the inventory of Thomas Drayton’s estate at the time of his death in 1724 suggests that it was undergoing a material transformation through objects instead of architecture.

44 Hotten, The Original Lists of Persons of Quality; Emigrants; Religious Exiles; Political Rebels; Serving Men Sold for a Term of Years; Apprentices; Children Stolen; Maidens Pressed; and Others Who Went from Great Britain to the American Plantations, 1600-1700.

45 The original Drayton plantation house was on the site of the modern Magnolia Plantation on the Ashley River. The modern “Drayton Hall Plantation” was built and
First in the inventory was a list of Thomas Drayton’s liquid assets, which was somewhat unusual given the degree to which many planters operated on credit. “Cash left in the house at his decease” amounted to £20, in addition to £5000 from livestock sales and £200 from the “returns of a Negro ship’d off.” At the time, £20 was more than a year’s income for most laborers in England. The majority of the inventory was a list of the names of the enslaved and an accounting of livestock. Drayton’s property included 112 horses, 26 oxen, 3,726 cattle (of varying types), Seboy, Robin, Peter, and January (all cattle hunters), as well as two Indian slaves named August and Phyllis (plus her three children), and 17 children born to enslaved mothers between the time of Drayton’s death and the taking of the inventory, among others.46 His will divided the 93 enslaved men, women, and children Drayton owned, along with his land, livestock, household goods, and cash, between his widow and three children.47

The material possessions listed in the inventory depict a household in transition from a frontier cattle ranch to the more genteel accommodation of a rice planter.48 The house was large; five sets of fireplace tongs suggest five separate heated spaces. Two sets of tongs were iron and three were brass, suggesting that two of those were work spaces or private spaces, while the other three were more genteel and on display. A one-and-a-half or two-story structure over a raised basement (known as an “English basement”),

occupied by Thomas and Ann Drayton’s younger son, John Drayton, and it is discussed at length in the following chapter.

47 “Will of Thomas Drayton, June 12, 1724.”
48 Houses were infrequently valued separately in inventories in Barbados and South Carolina, more often being combined with the acreage and other buildings.
possibly the location of the work spaces, would have been typical, and an English tutor, writing of his time with the Draytons in the 1790s, described their home as “a venerable mansion.” The raised basement would have been necessary because digging into the soil on the banks of the Ashley River would have quickly produced water.

The Drayton mansion had a kind of frontier luxury. While some of the furnishings are described with adjectives like “old,” “coarse,” or “broken,” and a saddle and several guns are included with the household goods, there were also a number of items identified as new or being of higher value wood, fabric, or metal. Interestingly, the assessors described four of the five beds as “old,” suggesting that the residents were not discarding furnishings that were still serviceable in favor of better ones, and the inventory included just two sets of curtains perhaps for the best room and bedchamber, which would have been on the first floor.

When South Carolina planters had the resources and the necessity to expand, they did, as evidenced by Benjamin Simon’s Middleburg Plantation. Completed initially in 1699, this wooden building was one room deep and two rooms wide on each floor. Between the house’s completion and the time of his death in 1717, however, Simon’s family had expanded significantly, necessitating the addition of one room on each floor. When his four year old son inherited the house, it ceased to be the family’s primary residence, but Benjamin Simon’s decision to expand suggests that he believed the family would stay there. And rather than demolishing the house and building a more fashionable one, he simply extended what was essentially the single house that had originated in Barbados.

49 John Davis, Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America: During 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, and 1802 (Sold by T. Ostell, 1803).
The Atlantic influences on the plantation house can be seen most clearly in the plantation houses built in South Carolina during the first decades of the eighteenth century. While Virginians looked exclusively to England (or at least to building trends refracted through the lens of the English gentry), South Carolina’s early commercial motivations and tacit religious toleration had attracted a more diverse population, including large numbers of French Huguenot settlers, whose building practices influenced construction techniques, as in the framing of the first phase of construction at Hampton Plantation in the 1730s. The early Barbadian settlement also continued to influence the way plantation houses were constructed in South Carolina. Moreover, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Carolinians felt the pressure of imperial conflict in a way that Virginians had not since earlier in the seventeenth century. While Barbadian planters responded to the sense that they were potentially in the middle of an international conflict by fortifying their island – both against outside incursion and internal rebellion – Carolinians responded by fortifying their houses.

The blending of Atlantic influences in South Carolina produced houses whose plans were considerably more open until the 1740s. Within these houses, one or two enslaved individuals would have been responsible for a variety of tasks within the household. When George Smith, the son of Landgrave Thomas Smith and brother of Landgrave Thomas Smith Jr. died in 1732 without a will, his property was inventoried and divided amongst his three daughters. Described later in an advertisement as “a large two-story Mansion House, with a Barn, and other out-buildings, all of Brick,” the room-by-room inventory of this dwelling, “Ashley River Plantation Mansion House,” reveals the house had three rooms on the first floor (a hall, a “Great Parlour,” and a “Little
Parlour”) and four rooms upstairs. The hall was clearly a public space and receiving room, with three cedar tables, a small deal (pine) table, and a dozen leather chairs and a couch. The leather chairs would have been able to withstand more use than ones that had been upholstered with fabric, and Smith also displayed five “Old Mapps,” a case with nine two gallon bottles, and a spy glass.

The great parlor was slightly more private and would have required additional work on the part of the enslaved people who worked within the house to maintain, as it was here that the Smith family’s china and silver was on display, along with the tea table, and cane chairs. The only furnishings in the little parlor were a broken mahogany table and corner cupboard, suggesting that it had either already been picked over by the heirs, or was some kind of service space. A separate kitchen house near the mansion included everything the enslaved workers on the plantation would have needed to cook and clean for the master’s household, from tubs and basins to do laundry, to candle molds and candlestick holders so that Smith’s family and visitors would not be restricted to daylight hours. The most interesting object in the house was upstairs, however.

Though three of the rooms housed just one bedstead apiece, the “Right hand Chamber above stairs East side” had three bedsteads of varying quality, and brass bell, which, based on the order of the inventory, appeared to be sitting on a mahogany table beneath a looking glass. Though the broken furniture in the room suggests that it was not a space being displayed to visitors, the brass bell would have allowed the room’s occupants – possibly George Smith’s three daughters – to easily summon an enslaved

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50 The South Carolina Gazette, 22 December 1758, and “Inventory of George Smith Esq.,” February 21, 1734, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Records Of The Secretary Of State, Recorded Instruments, Miscellaneous Records (Main Series), Inventories Of Estates Volume, S213003.
person to the room. Of the fifty four enslaved men, women, and children on the
plantation, none are clearly designated as “house servants,” though several women are
given values greater than those of men whose occupations (cooper, sawyer, carpenter) are
listed and all but two of the eleven women are valued more highly than any enslaved man
without a described occupation.

This lack of description is common in the probate records of South Carolina
during this period. When selling the house in 1758, Smith’s son-in-law wrote that “About
a Mile and a "Half from the House there is a good Overseer's House, a Barn 55 by 20,
with a shed, all of brick: The other out Houses, such as Negro-Houses, Kitchen &c. are of
Wood, but lately built.”51 It seems unlikely that another quarter built closer to the house
would go unmentioned, so the enslaved men and women who worked in the house itself
probably lived under the eye of an overseer unless they spent the night in the main house
or its outbuildings. Given the presence of the brass bell on the upstairs table, there was a
clear expectation that if one of the white men or women in the house wanted the attention
of one of the enslaved people who worked for them, that person would be able to hear the
bell. This suggests that someone, though the records from the period were silent about
who, would have been sleeping in or near the house on a regular basis.

Other houses from the period with the open plan drew more explicitly on their
Atlantic origins for their designs, but with much the same result. Yeamans Hall
plantation, built by Landgrave Thomas Smith II (George Smith’s brother) to replace “Old
Goose Creek” built by Sir John Yeamans and Lady Margaret Berringer Yeamans, was
clearly built in the tradition of the Barbadian planters, though Smith was not one of them.

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51 The South Carolina Gazette, 22 December 1758.
With two stories and an attic above a raised basement, the brick house with its quoined façade was long and narrow. This narrowness reflected the lessons learned by Barbadians about how to cope with heat and humidity. Smith’s other brick house, Medway, was even more Atlantic, shaped by both English and Dutch influences, as well as the environment.

Jan Van Arrsens’s, a Dutch Huguenot planter who had led a group of Dutch settlers to the Carolinas in 1686, built Medway on the Back River soon thereafter. Tradition had attributed the core of the house to Van Arrsens, but an architectural analysis of the structure revealed the seal of Edward Hyrne affixed to the structural supports at the house’s core. Hyrne was a merchant from Norfolk, England, who arrived in Carolina in 1700. After his wife, Elizabeth, arrived in early 1702, they purchased the Van Arrsens house.

Edward wrote in January 1702 that the estate included “2550 acres of land where of 200 clear’d and most fenc’d in tho wants repairing; 150 Head of Cattle, 4 horses, an Indian Slave, almost a Man, a few Hogs, some Householder stuff, and the best Brick-house in all the Country; built about 9 Years ago, and cost £700, 80 Foot long, 26 broad. Cellar’d throughout.” The best brick house in all the country, however, was not nearly as commodious as Elizabeth’s Lincolnshire home, and she wrote to relatives hoping that they would supply her with the material things necessary to make her family comfortable. She asked for “brass pots, pewter plates, pewter chamberpots, basins,

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52 The only extant record of Yeamans Hall is an 1862 drawing by Robert Sneden, a Union engineer and draughtsman during the American Civil War.
53 The house had passed to Landgrave Thomas Smith II at the time of his father’s death as his father had inherited it after the death of his second wife, Sabrina, who had been married to the childless Jan Van Arrsens.
54 Edward Hyrne, Charles Town, to Burrell Massingberd, Jan. 19, 1701/02, Massingberd Mundy Deposit, Lincoln, M 21/7. Cited in Schmidt, “Hyrne Family Letters.”
porringers, trenchers, raisins and currants for plum pudding…brown and white sugar
candy, "some of Jer Landys best Cheeses”…thread, holland and muslin cloth, periwigs,
English plants, seeds, books, tools,” and various other things. Her letters also reveal a
concern with her social position in the colony, for they were “‘accounted as good as the
best,’ but they lacked the silver and plate to prove it.”

The English merchant, his wife, and four children lived in Jan Van Arrsen’s house
until it burned in 1704, in the midst of a variety of calamities that show just how
precarious survival was for South Carolinians, even after the first phase of settlement. In
a letter to her relatives that year, Elizabeth wrote:

…the 20 of the same instant [June] we lost a Negro Man by the bite of a
rattlesnake which was a very great lose to us being just in the height of weeding . .
. [torn] rice. On the 25 of August I lost my Dear little son which went very near to
me. In September we lost our Cattle hunter. But the greatest of all our losses
(except my dear Harry) was on the 12 day on Janwery last on which we was burn
. . . [torn] out of all our house taking fire I know not how in the night and burning
so firecly that we had much to do to save the life of poor burry and two beds just
to lye on which was the cheif of what we saved we also had all our rice and corn
and all sorts of our provehons burnt. Cloes and every thing nothing escaped the
fire so that if it had not bin for some good peaple we must have perished. My dear
child was forced to be taken naked out of bed bei
ng left without close enough to
keep him from the cold. And now I am big with Child expecting to ly inn the
beginning of next June so that you may easely imaging our messarable
condission. But blessed be God we have mett with some kind friends in this pla
or elce we had not bin for you ever to have heard more of us. For it is impossible
for you to think how sad a thing it is to be burnt out of all in a nights time.

Architectural evidence suggests that Hyrne was responsible for rebuilding the core of the
house, which was built on the same plan as George Smith’s “Ashley River Plantation
Mansion House,” with two smaller chambers to one side and a large hall taking up the
rest of the first floor. The stepped gables suggest that either the exterior walls were not

55 Ibid.
56 Elizabeth Hyrne, Charleston Town, to Burrell Massingbred, Feb. 8, 1702/03, March
30, 1703, and March 13, 1703/04, M.M.D., M 21/14, 21/15, 21/17.
completely destroyed (their presence has been responsible for the family story that Van Arrsens constructed the house), or they were rebuilt almost precisely as they had been before the fire. Regardless, there is no evidence that the Hyrnes altered the footprint of the house.57

Edward Hyrne, after more financial difficulty, left Carolina in 1706 in the hopes of persuading family members to provide the necessary funds to keep his plantation solvent, and it seems likely that the house was rebuilt before he left. Elizabeth and the children returned to England in 1709 and the house passed once again to Landgrave Thomas Smith II when Hyrne failed to pay the mortgage in 1711. Though Smith appears to have occupied his brick house at Yeaman’s Hall throughout his life, the house at Medway was occupied throughout the eighteenth century, sold, leased, and expanded, but the house’s two-story core speaks to both the intersection of various nationalities in Carolina, as well as the struggles of planters who attempted to establish themselves during the first third of the eighteenth century. Interestingly, the house’s passage to the Smith family through intermarriage with Sabrina de Vignon Van Arrsen mirrored the way property was frequently transferred in Carolina, as well as in seventeenth century Virginia, where historians have written about the “widowocracy” that came about as women accumulated property and money through marriage and remarriage.58 Additionally, Elizabeth Hyrne’s apparent disregard for Edward’s older children, Mary, Edward, and Peggy, who were probably the product of a previous marriage, was reminiscent of the way Walduck described white Barbadian women disinheriting children.

from earlier marriages. Indeed, the fact that Jane Meade Fowler Willey Woodbridge Bennet’s husbands included her children (and their children) from previous marriages in their wills suggests that Barbadians were more comfortable with blended families that were the natural result of living in such an unhealthy climate.

The stepped gable at Medway was the only clear association between the 1704 house and its Dutch builder, and similar stylistic nods to Dutch or French architecture can be found at Mulberry Plantation. At Mulberry, however, the continued fear of invasion, by either the Spanish or Native Americans, was clear in the near fortification of the building, which, despite being an elegant mansion, was clearly built with conflict in mind as evidenced by the retention of firing slits from the cellar fort on which it had been constructed. Extant structures on Barbados show no similar defensive features. They proved useful during the Yemassee War in 1715 when colonists from the surrounding plantations took refuge within its walls.59

The English influence was the most strongly felt in Virginia and South Carolina during this period, where William Bull and Thomas Drayton dressed their houses in English facades and fine objects to transition them from frontier buildings to proper manor houses. In Virginia, though the introduction of the central passage during this period communicated the planters’ efforts to navigate the domestication of slavery within their houses, planters like Nathaniel Burwell, Thomas Randolph, Mann Page, and John Carter drew explicitly on English designs for the exteriors of their homes, even as they retained the internal arrangement that was most useful for a building whose purpose was first the production of a crop through forced labor by enslaved African and African-

59 Dillon, “Mulberry Plantation.”
descended men and women, and second, the production of an image of Englishness in the New World.
CHAPTER 4
DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE, DOMESTIC SLAVERY

On September 1, 1758, George William Fairfax wrote to his good friend George Washington to ask where he wanted to put the upstairs staircase at Mount Vernon, which Washington was in the midst of renovating. He could not direct the builder, he wrote, “with regard to the Garrett Stairs,” because he was “at a loss unless I know whether you intend that for Lodging Appartments for Servts.” The placement of the stairs was important enough to warrant at least three letters (two from George William Fairfax and one from Washington’s builder, John Patterson) to Washington and several in response that have not been found. Fairfax could not, despite being among Washington’s closest friends, be certain of where the servants (whose race he does not specify) were supposed to sleep.

Beginning in the 1740s and continuing through the 1750s, planters in Virginia and South Carolina began making important changes to the way the plantation house operated within the plantation landscape. These changes represented a renegotiation of both the planters’ sense of their own Englishness and their relationship with the enslaved. In Barbados, a few planters made superficial changes to the house that did little to change

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the way they actually lived – or interacted with the enslaved – but reinforced their own sense of their connection to England.

The newly built structures of the mid eighteenth century revealed the way each colony reacted to being a slave society. During the mid-eighteenth century, Virginians embraced the central passage and the back stair as a means of segregating slaves within the household. South Carolinians, more consciously adopting the increasingly specialized plans of English Georgian architecture embedded services spaces into structure of the house, but hid them - dependent on slavery, but unwilling to acknowledge how it separated them from the British. Barbadians slowly began building again, but continued to rely on open floorplans even as they imported Georgian embellishments, perpetuating the dissonance between the experience of slavery inside and outside of the household.

While some planters built new houses during this period, others remodeled older houses inherited from the previous generation. Transforming older houses appealed to many, especially those rising through the ranks of colonial society like Daniel Huger in South Carolina and George Washington in Virginia. Regardless of whether they built new or adapted an older building, however, the decisions made about how to organize space illuminated both the way planters during this period thought they should relate to their enslaved domestic workers, as well as relationships with white workers on the plantation and their family and visitors, and the reality of those experiences.

The enslaved – and ideas about slavery – played a central role in shaping the plantation great house during this period. The changing organization of the plantation landscape affected their everyday lives and interactions within and around the plantation house. During this period, planters in South Carolina and Virginia began increasing the
spatial divisions between themselves and their domestic slaves, even as they came to rely on them more than ever. In Barbados, the continued importation of enslaved Africans, as well as the reproduction of enslaved Afro-Barbadians meant that despite few changes to the house or its organization, planters employed a large number of enslaved people to wait on them without clearly defined tasks.

**Keeping Up: Building New in the Mid-Eighteenth Century**

The newly built houses of the mid-eighteenth century in Virginia adhered to the superficial elements of English Georgian design more rigorously than the houses built in that colony in the 1720s and 1730s had, but also developed a commitment to that design internally as well. In Virginia, planters organized the house’s internal symmetry around the central passage, which created barriers to movement for white visitors, thereby reinforcing the social divisions within white society. At the same time, the central passage also complicated the movement of the enslaved throughout the household.²

Architectural historian Barbara Mooney has defined five plans that appeared in Virginia architecture during the eighteenth century: (Type 1) Vestigial Hall, (Type 2) Center Transverse Passage, (Type 3) Divided Passage, (Type 4) Double-Pile Saloon, and (Type 5) Single-Pile Saloon. Her work focused on a sample of twenty-five “prodigy houses,” which she defined according to their immense scale and size relative to the more common houses built by Virginians, their use of brick and glass, their symmetry, and their use of the classical orders. She notes that some elites did build their mansions from wood (or a combination of wood and brick), but “they could never communicate the

² Upton, “White and Black Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century Virginia.”
same level of expense as entire brick buildings, nor signal the owner’s ability and willingness to divert prodigious amounts of money to secure materials and pay for the required levels of expertise.” While this is true, the plan of the eighteenth century plantation house, whether built of wood or brick, became increasingly standardized in the middle of the eighteenth century.

That plan – a double pile structure with a central passage – was perhaps seen to its best advantage at Westover (1748), Wilton (1751), Hillsborough (undated, mid-18th century), or Gunston Hall (1752), though both Carter’s Grove (1750) and Cleve (1746), despite having what Mooney calls a “divided passage,” and Sabine Hall (1738), which incorporated a separate stair hall that left the passage clear, approximated that plan as well. Nomini Hall, built in 1729 also utilized the central passage, but was among the very few plantation houses built before 1760 to have a separate back stair that was clearly for domestic workers to use. At Nomini, this staircase was alongside the main staircase taking up space in one of the larger first floor rooms. Backstairs also appeared at Berkeley (1726), Wilton (1751), Gunston Hall (1752), and (though it has since been removed) Sabine Hall (1738). The emergence of the five-part Palladian plan (first appearing in Virginia at Mount Airy in 1760) meant that smaller staircases began appearing in the connected wings of the building, requiring individuals to go out of their way to reach the second floor if they wanted to avoid the main staircase.

There was little consistency during this period in the way rooms were connected to one another, but very few of the houses built by Virginia planters had rooms that all connected to one another and the most public rooms, located at the front of the house,

were the ones most likely to lack doorways to other rooms and instead required visitors to enter and exit by way of the same door to the central passage. This limited movement between rooms, making it easier to surveil the enslaved as they worked and harder for the enslaved to effectively avoid interactions with the slaveholders. Gunston Hall (1752) is one of the few in which it was possible to move unimpeded through every room on the first floor, aided in part by the creation of a small service hall inserted soon after the building’s initial construction, between the first floor bedchamber and the small back parlor. In her discussion of female space in the eighteenth century prodigy house, Barbara Mooney suggests that this alteration facilitated Ann Eilbeck Mason’s physical and emotional closeness with her son John, who would have slept on the second floor attended by an enslaved nurse.4

There are few extant plantation houses in South Carolina that can be dated to the middle of the eighteenth century, but those that have survived speak eloquently of the way the planter class used architecture to express their consolidation of wealth and power. Elias Ball first built a wood framed house at Comingtee Plantation in 1738 and later added a single-pile, two story (with an attic and habitable basement) brick structure.5 Photographic evidence of the house, which was still standing in the 1940s when it was photographed by the Historic American Building Survey (HABS), and photos of the house’s ruins indicate that it was built of English bond and before it was stuccoed and scored to give the impression of stone construction. Since the date on the brick addition is unknown (though likely dates to Ball’s occupation in the mid-eighteenth century),

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4 Ibid, 231-234. Ann Eilbeck Mason was George Mason’s wife.
Comingtee’s main value is in its expression of the continued openness of many of South Carolina plantation houses.

Houses like Comingtee were increasingly part of a network of buildings between which the planter’s family traveled. While later travelers would note that elites in Carolina spent up to six months in Charleston, a visitor to the city in the 1760s noted that planters typically spent three months during the fall in their town houses. He wrote, “Almost every family of Note have a Town residence, to which they repair on publick occasions, and generally for the three Sickly months in the fall, it being a certainty, that the Town of Charles Town, is at present the most healt[h]y spot in the Province.” Not only were sicknesses less frequent, he added that they were also less violent. As a result, the quality and comfort of their plantation home was more important than it would be later in the eighteenth century.

Though South Carolina plantation houses built during the middle of the eighteenth century are notable for their openness, which promoted the flow of air into spaces that could quickly become overwarm in the hot climate, there is some evidence that planters were conscious of the way the enslaved moved through their homes. Hopsewee Plantation near Georgetown, SC is similar to Fairfield Plantation, built almost a decade earlier, except for the insertion of a narrow passage between the front rooms of

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the first floor, leading to a larger stair hall at the rear. The two rooms on the west side of the house are connected by a door while the two rooms on the east side can only be accessed from the passage. The narrow passage bears little resemblance to the central passage that had become common in Virginia houses by the middle of eighteenth century as it is just wider than the width of the front entrance and there is barely space for two people to comfortably pass side by side. The rear portion of the house, with a door to the back porch, the stair hall, and a door to the basement, would have been the main space where white family members and visitors encountered enslaved domestic workers as they moved from the separate kitchen to the dining room at the front of the house. Anyone cleaning the east rooms, a parlor and study, would be easy to oversee and have no means of escape since they would have only one way out of that room.

The most significant plantation house built during this period was also the one least like the others, but it revealed both the ambitions of the planter class and its relationship with the enslaved better than any other as it incorporated strategies to hide and facilitate their work. Further, by drawing on English design, it visually and materially

7 Hopsewee was built by Thomas Lynch in the 1740s and sold to Robert Hume in 1762. Hume then left the house to his son Alexander Hume in his 1766 will. Site visit and tour of Hopsewee Plantation, November 12, 2016.
8 Charles W. Snell, “Hopsewee (Thomas Lynch, Jr., Birthplace) / Hopsewee-on-the-Santee,” Nomination and Inventory (McClellanville, SC: National Register of Historic Places, June 4, 1971). While the Hopsewee tour and National Register Nomination indicate that the house was built at one time by Thomas Lynch, and the interior woodwork appears consistent, the arrangement of windows suggests that there may have been some modifications (the windows in the front portion of the house are perfectly symmetrical, while the ones at the rear are not. Additionally, the wall dividing the front section of the house from the rear section comes very close to the windows in the front rooms. This, combined with the small proportions of the front rooms, leads the author to believe that the house was altered close to the time of its initial construction, taking it from a single-pile building with a hall-chamber plan, to a double-pile structure with a divided central passage.
demonstrated its owner’s English connections. Drayton Hall, built by John Drayton in 1748 (long dated to 1738-1742, dendrochronology has indicated that the roof was framed in 1748), sat on the Ashley River just across from Charleston. A two-story double-pile house built over a raised basement, Drayton Hall was the most luxurious of the Ashley River plantation houses. While some have asserted that it was more of a gentleman’s country house than a plantation house, it nonetheless sat at the core of a massive plantation, included fields that were worked by enslaved laborers, and work within the house was performed by enslaved domestic workers. Its plan also bridged the plantation house and the town house.

The raised basement provided ample space for the domestic work of the plantation – cooking, sewing, cleaning, and laundry – but the house also had two two-story flanker buildings that were described as a “kitchen” and “laundry,” suggesting that those activities had been moved away from the house itself. The most important feature of the interior of the building are the inclusion of a small spiral staircase that leads from the basement to the second floor and small passages between the rooms on first floor. While the staircases and passages gave the enslaved nearly complete, almost invisible access to the house, each of these spaces had a door with a lock on it that could prevent the enslaved from entering. The house’s staircase, which takes up an entire room, would likely not have been used by the enslaved. Instead, a door beneath the stair led from the basement to the first floor, while the interior staircase leading from the basement to the second floor. These spaces fulfilled the original purpose of the backstairs, which had not appeared in plantation architecture until (at earliest) the 1720s and then very rarely until after the 1770s, by allowing the planter to hide the enslaved at work as they disposed of
chamber pots, carried buckets of water for bathing or cleaning the house, brought food from the kitchen to the dinner table, and went about the numerous tasks necessary to keep a house of Drayton Hall’s size.⁹

The effort to control the visual experience of the plantation extended beyond the house to its surroundings. The recent discovery of an early watercolor (dated 1765) and subsequent archaeological excavations revealed that a colonnaded screen connected the flankers to the main house.¹⁰ This screen further emphasized Drayton Hall’s classical architecture by using columns that mirrored those used in the two-story portico and, based on the drawing, hid the route the enslaved would take from the side or rear of the flanker to the door to the basement. Rather than a walkway, which would provide some cover, but would draw attention the work of the enslaved, the use of a screen served to control what the Drayton’s visitors saw while they moved through the formal landscape.¹¹

Archaeological excavations in 2003 and 2005 also finally revealed the location of Drayton Hall’s eighteenth-century slave quarters, located where the modern road leading to the house curves away from it. In the eighteenth century, this road would continue directly to the house. As a result, the quarters would have been close enough to the house for the convenience of the Drayton family, but far enough away not to interrupt the carefully organized landscape around the house. Since the enslaved would have

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¹¹ Upton, “White and Black Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century Virginia.”
cultivated separate plots of land to supplement their meager diets, this also served to create physical and visual distance between the house and the quarter.

Figure 4.1 Golden Ridge Plantation, St. George, Barbados. Photo by author, June 18, 2014.

In Barbados, planters made little effort to hide the work of the enslaved around the house as the interior spaces of the house remained mostly undivided until the end of the eighteenth century and no secondary staircases appeared until the nineteenth century. No structures can conclusively be dated to this period, unfortunately, but three structures are likely candidates: The Belle in St. Michael, Golden Ridge in St. George, and The Hope in St. Lucy. All three exhibit evidence of later alterations, but their core structures, built with coral rubble or faced coral rubble stone (shaped on one side and left

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12 The author conducted fieldwork in Barbados in May 2014 and May-June 2016 and documented all three of these sites with photography, drawings/plans, and notes.
rough on the ones that were unseen) have a similar plan to that of the George Washington
House but were likely not built earlier according to the documentary record.¹³

All three adapted the two-room single house plan, though The Hope, while
divided into two rooms by later additions in the nineteenth century, may have had just
one large room (nearly 20’ wide and 50’ long) on each floor. Later alterations moved the
staircases in all three buildings, but there is no evidence that they originally had separate
stair halls or that there was space for more than one stair. Compared to houses in Virginia
and South Carolina, these buildings were extremely open and nothing other than their

¹³ George Washington visited Gedney Clarke at The Belle in 1751 and the plantation had
only recently come into the possession of Gedney Clarke suggesting it was not Clarke,
but either Samuel Barwick or his son William Barkwick, who acquired the property
sometime after 1721 (the previous owner’s name appeared on the 1721 Mayo Map). The
Hope in St. Lucy was owned by the Greaves family throughout the eighteenth century
before being sold to a number of absentee owners and corporate entities in the nineteenth
century. The gravestone of Joshua Greaves, who died in 1742, has been moved to rest
next to the house. While it is unlikely that Greaves himself built the house (or is buried
there, as churchyard burials have been the norm throughout Barbados’s history), it seems
probable that it was one of his eighteenth century descendants who did. Golden Ridge
appears to have been owned by the Butcher family from sometime before 1721 (when it
appeared on the Mayo Map as “Butcher”) and was bequeathed by Francis Butcher to his
nephew in 1771. Butcher’s long occupation of the property suggests that he was the
likely builder. Tradition has often dated the house to the period between the Great
Hurricane of 1780 and the hurricane of 1831, but the alterations to the house (including
the obviously later addition of a parapet, which did not begin appearing in Barbadian
architecture until after those hurricanes) and the use of both coral rubble and sawn coral
stone indicate an earlier date. Additionally, all three buildings, though heavily renovated,
have evidence of large hewn beams: in the crawl space foundation at The Belle, the
basement of The Hope (where the original holes had to be filled with concrete to
accommodate the smaller joists used when the floor was replaced), and in the sockets
where the original first and second story floor joists of Golden Ridge have been removed.
Chain-of-title information drawn from the Queree-Hughes Plantation Notebooks,
Department of Archives, Barbados. The George Washington House is a useful metric
because it is one of the few houses on Barbados with a rich document trail and can be
dated with confidence to the 1720s.
exterior symmetry suggested a participation in the ideals of English Georgian design during the mid-eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{14}

Despite this, these spaces were luxuriously furnished. The 1757 inventory of the estate of William Barwick at Green’s Castle (Pine Plantation) referenced a mahogany bed. Barwick owned The Belle before selling it to Gedney Clarke in the 1750s and the house was most likely built during his ownership as he owned it (and occupied it) for the longest period of time prior to Clarke’s ownership.\textsuperscript{15} Robert Poole, visiting in the 1740s, noted that Barbadians – or rather, their enslaved servants – hung beds with mosquito nets, which were “generally made of Gauze, and falls down in the Manner of Curtains, closely inclosing the Bed all round.”\textsuperscript{16} In houses with such few internal divisions, furniture played a more important role, defining spaces when architectural clues were absent.

Describing the enslaved black Barbadians who did most of the work on the island, “few white People being employed about any Sort of laborious work,” Poole wrote that they “make very different Appearances, some are quite naked, others nearly so, some are half cloathed, others fully so, tho the Number of these latter is but small.” Their lack of clothing reflected both the planters disinterest in expense for clothing the enslaved and the heat of the tropical climate. The planters themselves were “dressed in very thin, light, airy Habits, with thin caps on their heads instead of wigs,” and in his description of the houses he saw (mainly in Bridgetown, though he did travel through the countryside and

\textsuperscript{14} Site visits, May 2014 and May-June 2016.
\textsuperscript{15} Queree-Hughes Plantation Notebooks, Department of Archives, Barbados; "Mahogany Tree [furniture].” The Barbados Museum & Historical Society; Neville Connell, “18th Century Furniture and Its Background in Barbados” 26, no. 4 (August 1959): 162–90.
\textsuperscript{16} Robert Poole, \textit{The Beneficent Bee, Or, Traveller’s Companion: Containing Each Day’s Observation in a Voyage from London to Gibraltar, Barbadoes, Antigua ...} (London: Printed by E. Duncomb, 1753), 215.
noted how easy this kind of travel was), he wrote that “there is so little Need of Fire in this warm climate that there are but few Chimnies to be seen…except in the kitchen.”

Despite these open spaces and the apparent lack of a need for specialized tasks within the household, Barbadian planters had such a large number of enslaved workers at their disposal that the documentary record suggests that there were a large number associated with the household. This appears most clearly in accounts of white Barbadians’ cruelty to their domestic workers. Though cruelty toward the enslaved did not only happen within the household, the space of the house created both motive (however capricious) and opportunity for violence. In Poole’s account of his time in Barbados he recorded an incident in which the mistress of the house he was visiting served tea only to discover that the milk was spoiled. “She immediately took it in her Head that her Negroes had poisoned it. Five or six of them being present, they were all strictly examined, and all absolutely denied they knew that any Thing [sic] was done to the Milk.” After sending for “Jumper” (the whipper) to “examine them by Scourging,” no sooner had he arrived “with his long Whip, which carries Terror with it, and at every Stroke tares off the Surface of the Skin, but one of the poor Wretches was tied, in order to receive the severe Discipline.” At this point, Poole determined he could not stay silent any longer and took the woman aside to ask that he be allowed to test the milk for poison, which he did by forcing a rabbit to drink it, thus demonstrating that the milk had soured because of the heat and sparing the enslaved from their mistress’s wrath (as far as Poole

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17 Ibid, 208-305.
was aware, since they could have been punished later for allowing her to serve sour milk).  

Poole also reported another story he was told by a “Gentleman” to whom he told the tale of the spoiled milk. The man told him about visiting a house “where the Key of the Door being missed, the Negro was enquired of about it, who pleading Ignorance, he was immediately ordered to be whip’d, to make him confess the Truth.” Like Poole, the man intervened, saying that he had “a little before seen the Negro of the House go out, thought that possibly he might, by Mistake, have taken the Key with him, and therefore desired that his Return might be waited for before this poor Negro suffered.” Indulging their guest (there is no mention of the gender of the individual running the house), they waited and “upon his Return, he brought the Key with him, having taken it out by Mistake.”

In each of the instances Poole described, the slaveholder cared less about determining who had actually committed the perceived offense than they did about the act of punishing itself. The woman who was convinced her milk had been poisoned was prepared to interrogate all of those who were present, and because of the nature of Barbadian slavery, there were at least five enslaved men and women near enough to be affected by her suspicion. The second event Poole related reinforces the greater potential to be punished for something slight: the man who walked off with the key had clearly made a mistake, and an easy one at that without malicious intent, but his error became more noticeable because of his work in the household and was potentially more egregious.

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18 Ibid, 299.
19 Ibid.
because the loss of the key stoked the white members’ of the household fear. In both cases, it was fear, rather than an actual offense, that provoked the punishment.

It is also worth noting that when it came to physical punishment, the Barbadian planters sent for someone else, “the Jumper.” Poole wrote that the enslaved of Barbados “have no Fear but what is extremely slavish; nor no Instructor, but the Whip and the Scourge, which…is often executed upon them in a very severe Manner.” Planters used this punishment so often – and so often avoided doing it themselves – that an industry grew up around it on the island.

For this Purpose are particular Persons called upon, who undertake that Office for a certain Stipend a Year, some Houses give him Twenty Shillings, others more, and some less. These are generally called by the Name of Jumpers, for what Reason I know not, except the poor Wretches, who are often made to jump and skip about by the Stroke of their Whips, should first give them that Name. As soon as it is determined to punish a Negro, one of these Persons is sent for, and with a long, strong Scourge, that leaves deep Impressions at every Stroke, they are scourged, having their Thumbs or Hands first tied together, and sometimes tied to an appointed Place. And this Scourging is so frequently used here, that hardly a Day passes but the Noise thereof is sounding in one’s Ears, and which, to me, is indeed one of the most disagreeable Things I have yet met with here.

This practice does not appear at all in Virginia during the eighteenth century, but by the 1790s, John Davis noted that the white women of South Carolina, and especially those in Charleston, “send both their men-slaves and women-slaves, for the most venial trespass, to a hellish mansion, called the Sugar-house” where “a man employs inferior agents to scourge the poor negroes: a shilling for a dozen lashes is the charge.” Though much of the discipline on the plantation fell to the overseer, those who worked within the household occupied a space in which the slaveholder who did not want to do the violence

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20 Ibid, 298-299.  
21 Ibid, 221.  
22 Ibid.  
23 Davis, *Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America*, 90.
himself or herself (as William Byrd II and Lucy Parke Byrd routinely did in Virginia in the 1710s), had to bring in a professional to avoid undermining their authority within the household.  

Catching Up: Remodeling the Plantation Landscape

Building a new house appealed to many elite planters, but others chose to remodel existing buildings for a variety of reasons. Three examples – Mount Vernon in Virginia, Hampton Plantation in South Carolina, and St. Nicholas Abbey in Barbados – illustrate the motivation for choosing to adapt an older structure, the challenges posed by trying to change an existing house, the conditions that influenced the planters’ choices, and the effects of those choices on the enslaved men and women who worked within the household. While considering newly built houses is useful, the alteration of older structures can more clearly identify which features the planters were rejecting and the choices they made about how their buildings would look and work.

Neither George Washington’s inheritance of Mount Vernon nor his mid-century transformation of the estate was inevitable. At the beginning of the 1750s, his brother Lawrence owned the plantation and, though not in good health, had every expectation of passing his property on to his daughter, Sarah, and her heirs. The documentary record even suggests that George had begun making plans for his own future away from the Potomac, purchasing land he had surveyed himself in October 1750 in what is now Jefferson County, WV. When Lawrence died in 1752, his daughter inherited the

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plantation and upon her death in 1754 Lawrence’s wife Anne Fairfax (who had married George Lee soon after Washington’s death) inherited Mount Vernon. George leased the plantation until Anne’s death in 1761 when he inherited it according to the original terms of his brother’s will.

Though he began occupying the plantation earlier, Washington’s renovation of the modest house built in 1735 did not begin in earnest until 1758. He met Martha Dandridge Custis in March of that year and, though his letters do not address the motivation for his renovation, it seems clear that he anticipated that he would be marrying and starting his own family. This earliest phase of Mount Vernon’s transformation took place over the course of the summer and fall of 1758. Washington’s correspondence with his master builder, John Patterson, and his close friend, George William Fairfax, provide a great amount of detail about the extensive changes at Mount Vernon. Washington added a second story to house (requiring removing and re-framing the roof), added closets to the sides of the house, and reorganized the rooms on both floors.

24 Apr. 2017. <http://justjefferson.com/washingtons/>. George Washington and his brothers acquired land in Jefferson County, West Virginia and developed several tracts of land as plantations, including Washington’s Bullskin Plantation, which was managed by overseer Christopher Hardwick in the 1760s. Washington accumulated the land through five separate land grants between October 20, 1750 and March of 1752, totaling 2314 acres. The first of these grants appears in Washington’s papers, while the remainder appear in the Frederick County Deed Book and Northern Neck Grant Books.


The original house had a central passage occupied by a narrow, simple stair. A large hall took up the south end of the house, while the north end had two rooms (the one on the land-side was larger than that on the river-side). Recent architectural examination has indicated that there was a door connecting those two rooms and a door to the closet from the front room. A study of the framing in the Nelly Custis Room on the second floor has also suggested that the flat monitor roofs that have often been depicted without confirmation from the documentary record were a reality. These changes made Mount Vernon, originally a fairly modest building, more closely conform to what was increasingly the ideal form for the Virginia plantation house, articulating Washington’s ambitions.

Many of the changes to the plantation house form in Virginia during the middle of the eighteenth century were instigated by the planters’ need for social distance between himself, his visitors, and his enslaved and indentured servants. Emphasizing the central passage was part of this process. Though Washington did not change the size of the central passage, he added one important feature: a grand staircase. John Patterson moved


30 Wenger, “The Central Passage in Virginia.”
the original staircase to the second floor, cut it to make a sharp dog-leg turn, and turned it into the stair to the attic where Washington seems to have planned to house those enslaved and indentured domestic workers who worked within the house. In its place, Patterson constructed an impressive stair with two quarter-turns that took up the width of the hall as it ascended to the second floor.\textsuperscript{31} By turning the central passage into an explicitly formal space, Washington and his builder made it a receiving area that did not necessitate inviting visitors into the traditional hall.

One other internal change revealed a more intimate dimension to the creation of space within the household. On Lawrence Washington’s 1753 inventory, a room appears that seems to have disappeared during Washington’s 1758 renovation. Based on an analysis of the inventory, this unlabeled room was likely accessible only from inside the “Red Room,” the best room in the house, most likely located on the second floor.\textsuperscript{32} The room’s location and the quality of its furnishings – “One Bedsted, silk plaid Curtains, Vallaines 1 Bed, bowlster 2 pillows, 1 pr Sheets, 2 Blankets, 1 Rug, 1 stamp’d Counterpain & Two pillow Cases, 1 small Portmanteau trunk” – indicate that it was probably occupied by Anne Fairfax Washington’s maid when she lived in the house with Lawrence.\textsuperscript{33}

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Steven C. Mallory and Stefanie Casey, “Mount Vernon Mansions Staircases: History, Condition Assessment, Preservation Strategy,” (Mount Vernon Ladies Association Research Department, March 2009).
\item \textsuperscript{32} Inventory of Lawrence Washington, 1753, Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of Mount Vernon. The author identified the possibility of this room’s existence in spring 2016 and confirmed the interpretation of the space through discussions with Thomas A. Reinart and Assistant Curator Adam Erby at Mount Vernon.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Inventory of Lawrence Washington, 1753, Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of Mount Vernon. Anne was the daughter of William Fairfax, cousin and land agent for Lord Fairfax in Virginia. Her early life was tainted by scandal and she appears
\end{itemize}
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By removing this space, Washington made an important statement about how he intended to relate to the enslaved domestic servants who worked within the house. Though Washington’s response to the letter from George William Fairfax at the beginning of the chapter has not survived, Fairfax’s understanding of how a mansion like Mount Vernon would work was clear. The upper floor would need to be accessible from the landing if it was to be “Lodging Appartments for Servts.” Otherwise, Patterson could put the stair in store room next to it, which was – implicit in Fairfax’s letter – off limits at least part of the time. Fairfax even acknowledged that it would be preferable to hide the stair, but that “If the Little Stairs (which will be directly opposite to you when you land from the other) will be an Eye-sore you may find a door which will make it uniform.” Significantly, in his next letter on the subject, Fairfax noted that “I am glad you approve of our Plan for the Garret Stairs being diffident of our own in many cases.”

to have been much abused by her stepmother and husband. Even so, as Fairfax’s eldest daughter, she brought the Washington family social advantage and material wealth so it would not be unlikely for her to have had her own maid. Her fraught relationship with both her husband and her stepmother is clear in Peter R. Henriques, “Major Lawrence Washington versus the Reverend Charles Green: A Case Study of the Squire and the Parson,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 100, no. 2 (1992): 233–64.


Washington’s knowledge of Fairfax’s home, Belvoir, would have served as a point of reference and in his decision about the staircase, he appears to have deviated from what was familiar.

Creating distance between the planter and the enslaved would have seemed more important to Washington at the end of the 1750s for several reasons. When Martha Dandridge Custis Washington arrived at Mount Vernon, she brought with her a number of enslaved African-American domestic workers who worked in and around the house, though she left a larger number of her household slaves at the home she had previously shared with Daniel Custis. Unlike the Barbadian household Robert Poole observed in the 1740s, Washington’s military manner would demand that everyone employed within the household had a clear task. The need for distance would also be reinforced by his own experience of different approaches to slavery.

Before Lawrence’s death, he and George traveled to Barbados in 1751, where George spent four months on the island before returning to Virginia. Descriptions of slavery and the enslaved are conspicuously absent from Washington’s diary of his time


there, but he embedded a critique of the relationship between the enslaved and their enslavers in his observation of white Baradians, noting that “The Ladys Generally are very agreeable but by ill custom…affect the Negro Style.” 38 He did not elaborate, but Robert Poole also had a comment on the white women of Barbados, noting that “The Females are generally well behaved, many of them genteel, agreeably handsome, of good Sense, and inclined to Housewifry. Though some, for want of proper Care in their Education, run too much into the Negro Brogue in their Language.” 39 Neither man commented on the way the white men of Barbados spoke, suggesting that only – or mainly – women had adopted the accent of the enslaved, which suggests that their regular interaction within the space of the household had an effect that was not replicated in the masculine labor of the field or boiling house. It is also worth noting that Poole described these women as being inclined to housewifery (though this could have extended simply to overseeing work rather than doing it) when later visitors in the 1780s would charge that the dependence of white Baradians – especially white women – on the enslaved had made them lazy and infantile, incapable of even simple tasks.

Barbadian planters who chose to adapt their houses during this period do not appear to have made substantive changes to the plans of their houses, instead importing superficial embellishments that visually associated their buildings with English architecture without actually changing the way they related to the enslaved workers.

39 Poole, The Beneficent Bee, Or, Traveller’s Companion: Containing Each Day’s Observation in a Voyage from London to Gibraltar, Barbadoes, Antigua ..., 288.
within and around the great house. This process can be seen clearly at St. Nicholas Abbey, the great house built by Nicholas Berringer about 1665.

By 1748, the house was in possession of John Gay Alleyne and his wife, Christian Dottin Alleyne. Alleyne, born to a prominent planter family on the island at Cabbage Tree Hall in St. James in 1724, married Christian in 1746 when she turned eighteen and came into her inheritance, which had been managed by her guardians since her father’s death in 1735. Joseph Dottin had been a wealthy planter, owning Black Rock Plantation in St. Michael and Jordans (later Husbands) Plantation in St. Michael and St. James. He had acquired St. Nicholas Abbey and its ancient house in the late 1720s when lagging sugar prices caused its value to drop. Dottin had four daughters and one son to whom he left his property in his will, but when the eleven year old boy died a year after his father’s death, Dottin’s daughters inherited the plantations. A decade later, Christian married John Gay Alleyne and they took possession of St. Nicholas Abbey.  

Alleyne made three notable changes to the house: adding a triple arcaded portico at the entrance, replacing casement windows with sash windows, and removing an earlier staircase from the stair hall at the rear of the house and replacing it with a more fashionable Chippendale staircase. Family history has dated these changes to the time of Alleyne and Dottin’s marriage, but it seems likely that they occurred several years later. The Chippendale style, though it appeared in the 1740s, was not popular until the 1750s and the staircase at St. Nicholas, featuring a different pattern on each flight, was

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especially elaborate.\textsuperscript{42} Alleyne installed a grandfather clock built by James Thwaite of London in 1759 on the first landing, raising the possibility that he made the alterations to the house during the 1750s instead of at the beginning of his marriage.\textsuperscript{43}

The changes Alleyne made were superficial and did not affect the house’s plan, but did speak explicitly to the way Alleyne and other planters envisioned their association with England. Sash windows had been in use since the seventeenth century, but became common in North America in the 1730s and 1740s.\textsuperscript{44} In Barbados, these windows would make it possible to better control the flow of air into the house, though if anything, they would actually be less efficient than the original casement windows since it would be impossible to open the sash window entirely. However, architectural historian Thomas Waterman also suggested that when Alleyne replaced the casement windows with sash windows, the openings were significantly enlarged, disrupting the proportions of the exterior while allowing more light and air into the house.\textsuperscript{45} The triple arcaded portico reflected trends in English Georgian design, formalizing the Barbadian use of outside space and adding greater regularity to the building’s façade. Confusing the design of the house further, the Chippendale style of the staircase had become popular largely as an


\textsuperscript{43} The date for the clock comes from "The Great House," \textit{St. Nicholas Abbey}. 24 Apr. 2017. <http://www.stnicholasabbey.com/The-Plantation/The-Great-House/>. Descriptions of the furnishing of the house also come from the tour materials received in May 2014, but the interpretation of these changes being later as a result are my own.

\textsuperscript{44} Carl R. Lounsbury, ed., \textit{An Illustrated Glossary of Early Southern Architecture and Landscape}, 1St Edition edition (Charlottesville, Va: University of Virginia Press, 1999), 316.

\textsuperscript{45} Waterman, “Some Early Buildings of Barbados.”
counter to the Palladian style that was popular in most English Georgian buildings. Alleyne’s use of both Georgian and Chippendale design to update the Jacobean architecture of St. Nicholas Abbey revealed the distance between the Barbadian idea of Englishness and its reality.

In the 1750s, the plantation was the focus of a dispute over whether Joseph Dottin had improperly acquired the plantation from its previous owner, George Nicholas, who was deeply in debt to the complainants, Oliver and William Kennedy. Among the numerous depositions – the court called twenty-one witnesses as well as taking numerous statements from the parties involved – was a description of the plantation as having

…a dwelling house with a kitchin adjoining one Windmill in good repair and an old part of another a Boyling house a curing house a rum house Corn Loft and Distil house all under one roof an Overseers room a servants room a Horse stable a stock house and a little house and none other to the Best of his remembrance and Belief One hundred and sixteen Negroe Slaves and two Mulatto Slaves Eight horses fifty nine head of Cattle Sixty sheep fourteen hoggs and some few Ducks Turkeys and fowls on the said Estate.

The various descriptions of the plantation described an enslaved population ranging from ninety to one hundred and thirty slaves, but only the one above mentioned two mixed race individuals among the community there. An extant structure between the house and the sugar works is generally identified as the overseer’s house and the above description

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46 Barnwell, “Partly After the Chinese Manner: ‘Chinese’ Staircases in North-West Wales.”
suggests that it was here that the enslaved domestics lived as well. Though there was a small distance between the agricultural work of the plantation and the household, the two spaces were much closer than in Virginia and South Carolina, where the household itself was being reshaped to create an even greater gulf.

At Hampton Plantation in South Carolina, that process was just beginning. There is some debate about who built the first house on the plantation and when it was built, with architectural historians, archaeologists, and family tradition going back and forth. Some have suggested that Noe Serre, the son of a Huguenot immigrant to the Santee region of South Carolina, built the house in the early 1730s, but this seems unlikely since Serre does not appear to have ever owned the property on which the house stands, though he owned a great deal of the neighboring land. Others attributed its construction to Daniel Horry Sr. after he purchased the land from his brother-in-law, Anthony Bonneau, in 1744, or possibly even earlier in the 1730s when he was establishing himself. Still others had argued that Daniel Horry Jr. built the house in the 1750s as a young man seeking to build up his own separate holdings.\(^{48}\) Regardless, the original house was fairly simple: a one-and-a-half story frame building 40 feet long and 34 feet wide on a raised brick foundation with four rooms on the first floor organized around a central passage and two rooms upstairs.\(^{49}\)

Daniel Horry Jr. inherited the plantation from his father in 1762. Though his mother, Sarah, did not long survive his father, Daniel Horry Sr.’s will left her “The use of


any one Room in my now Dwelling house on my Plantation where I Live, and also of the
undernamed Slaves, Esther, Rachael, Jack, Bella and Little Prince (being in number five,
males and Females) and of an House, with the Lot of Land in George Town Winyaw.” She
was also to receive one bed and “complete furniture.”

Daniel Horry Jr. had married Judith Serre three years earlier, their marriage announced on the front page of *The South Carolina Gazette* on December 15, 1759, “Last Sunday Evening, Mr. Daniel Harry, jun. was married to Miss Judith Serre, an agreeable young Lady, with a Fortune of upwards of £5000 Sterling.” After Judith Serre Horry died in 1765, Daniel married Harriott Pinckney, joining one of South Carolina’s most prominent families. This time, the announcement appeared on the second page of *The South Carolina Gazette* in a list of four couples and mentioned only that she was the daughter of the deceased Charles Pinckney, Esq.

Most historians have dated the changes at Hampton Plantation to after Daniel’s 1768 marriage to Harriott Pinckney, but it is possible that the changes at Hampton occurred earlier in the 1760s, facilitated by Judith Serre’s fortune. Regardless of whether it occurred during the early or late 1760s, the expansion resulted in a massive house that was internally complicated because it essentially retained the original house within the walls of the later one. Architectural analysis of the building showed that the changes were made all at once: adding two rooms over the south side to complete the

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51 *The South Carolina Gazette*, December 15, 1759.
52 *The South Carolina Gazette*, February 23, 1768.
second floor (this resulted in the floor of the those rooms being two inches lower because they appear to have been built atop smaller timbers meant as rafters rather than floor joists), an east wing containing a two-story ballroom, and a west wing that added two rooms to the first floor.\textsuperscript{54}

The house’s staircase was an expression of the house’s confusing internal arrangements. It appears that at one point it began in the south central portion of the house and was a fairly narrow stair to the second story that gave access to the two original rooms above the southern portion of the house. When two rooms were added above the northern part of the first floor, the staircase was apparently moved and rebuilt in the rear portion of the hall. To accommodate the changes to the house, it was necessary to add a second landing and staircase to give access to the northern portion of the second story.\textsuperscript{55} This change created an uneven staircase that did not clearly indicate where it led. Moving the stairs to the small, unimpressive rear hall made it clear that the upper floors were private space in a way that the divide between upstairs and downstairs did not. This stair was also directly in front of the river-side door and had a small service space off to one side, suggesting that this would have been the nexus for the activity of enslaved workers within the house as they carried food into the house from the separate kitchen or chamber pots and cleaning supplies from the upper rooms.

The changes to the house at Hampton Plantation spanned a period during which the work of the household was transforming in Virginia and South Carolina, with larger numbers of slaves working in and around the house in specific roles. In an advertisement in \textit{The South Carolina Gazette} in the 1740s, a subscriber offered for sale, “a strong, well

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
made, sensible, young Negro Fellow, this Country born, speaks good English, and is pretty well known by the Name of Guy. He was formerly employ'd in keeping and hunting Cattle, and Plantation Work, but of late Years has been used to all Manner of House Work, which he is very capable of performing, and likewise understands very well the taking Care of Horses.”  

Guy’s responsibilities revealed him to be extremely useful, particularly for a planter who preferred not to divert a large number of enslaved persons to housework. By 1755, Charles Woodmason noted that the expense of purchasing a plantation in South Carolina included £1000 for “a dwelling house, barn, stable, overseer’s house, negro huts, etc.,” £1000 for “two valuable negroes, (a cooper and a carpenter),” £6500 for “26 other negroes, (two thirds men, and one third women),” £400 for “2 ordinary old negroes, to look after the poultry, kine, hogs,” and “a waiting boy £200 a house wench £300,” as well as £250 for “the overseer’s wages, and allowance for rum, etc.”  

From Woodmason’s description, it seems that the earlier practice of maintaining a minimal household in which few slaves had specialized tasks had persisted into the middle of the eighteenth century. Though this was likely different for elite planters, evidence suggests that the 1760s were nonetheless a period when the plantation household began to expand.

In Virginia, when Martha Washington moved from the home she shared with her first husband, Daniel Custis, at White House Plantation to Mount Vernon, she brought a large number of enslaved men and women known as the dower slaves – representing the

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56 The South Carolina Gazette, February 27, 1744.
third of Custis’s property to which she was entitled throughout her life – including some of those who had worked within her household. A list of “Artisans and Household Slaves” in the Custis estate began with a list of eight carpenters, three shirtmakers, and one tanner before describing the “Servants in & abt the House,” in greater detail, noting not only their ages, but also their specific occupations. Breechy, age twenty-four, was a waiter, while Mulatto Jack, age forty-one, was a “jobber” or handyman. Ten-year old Julius waited on Jacky Custis (Washington’s five year old stepson) and nineteen year old Moll waited on both Jacky and his three year old sister Patsy. Washington also listed another girl, twelve year old Rose, as Patsy’s maid, suggesting that each child had their own nurse at White House while Moll supervised. Doll, age thirty-eight, cooked and twenty-three year old Beck worked as a scullion. Mima (age thirty-six) was an ironer, thirty-nine year old Jenny was a washer, twenty-five year old Phillis was a spinner, and twenty-one year old Betty was a seamstress. Twenty-seven year old Martha Washington also had her own maid, fifteen-year old Sally. Washington marked fewer than half of these – Breechy, Mulatto Jack, Doll, Beck, Jenny, Sally, and Betty – with a “W” denoting them as part of Martha’s dower.58

At least two of these individuals were mixed race – Jack and Betty – and Martha Washington took both of them to Mount Vernon. In Virginia during the eighteenth century, Philip Morgan and Michael Nicholls have estimated that 6% of the enslaved population was mixed race, and these individuals made up a disproportionate number of

the enslaved within the Mount Vernon household, consistently ranging between 20-25% from 1760-1774.\textsuperscript{59} Daniel Littlefield has shown that Englishmen involved in the slave trade’s ideas about the predisposition of different African ethnicities to different types of work extended to those within the house, where Ibo, Congo, and Angola were initially preferred before traders decided that Sudanese slaves (Fon, Yoruba, and Mina) made better “house servants.”\textsuperscript{60} This attribution changed again, but the consistent variable seems to have been that the groups in question were perceived to be “bad slaves”: weak, but attractive, and potentially dangerous and therefore needing even greater supervision.

Robert Poole wrote that Barbadians in the 1740s considered “The Popo Negroes...good Servants,” as they did not have “the Character of destroying themselves” but made offered no insight about the number of mixed race enslaved people on Barbados.\textsuperscript{61} Littlefield’s analysis of runaway ads in South Carolina suggests that there was a preference for “country born” slaves for household work.”\textsuperscript{62} His later analysis of the sex of runaway slaves also included a breakdown according to whether they were black or mixed race, which indicated that about 11% of South Carolina runaways were mixed

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\textsuperscript{60} Daniel C. Littlefield, \textit{Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina} (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1991), 11-16.
\textsuperscript{61} Poole, \textit{The Beneficent Bee, Or, Traveller’s Companion: Containing Each Day’s Observation in a Voyage from London to Gibraltar, Barbadoes, Antigua ...}, 297.
\textsuperscript{62} Littlefield, \textit{Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina}, 136-137.
}
Advertisements for runaway “house wenches” in *The South Carolina Gazette* were overwhelmingly for black women, but there were many more mixed race slaves in that population, especially slaves of “mustee” or mixed African and Native American descent.

At Mount Vernon, Martha’s household was initially reduced to nine, including at least two mixed race individuals: Breechy, Jack, Nat, Schomberg, Doll, Jenny, Betty, Phillis, and Moll. Washington’s own man-servant, Jonathan Alton, appears to have initially been given charge of the household, as Washington wrote to him on April 5, 1759 to alert him to the newlywed couple’s imminent arrival. Washington directed:

> You must have the House very well cleand, & were you to make Fires in the Rooms below it, wd Air them—You must get two of the best Bedsteads put up—one in the Hall Room, and the other in the little dining Room that use to be, & have Beds made on them against we come—you must also get out the Chairs and Tables, & have them very well rubd & Cleand—the Stair case ought also to be polishd in order to make it look well.

> Enquire abt in the Neighbourhood, & get some Egg’s and Chickens, and prepare in the best manner you can for our coming: you need not however take out any more of the Furniture than the Beds Tables & Chairs in Order that they may be well rubd & cleand.  

Implicit in Washington’s directions was the work of the enslaved household. While he had some of his own enslaved people, as a bachelor his household was fairly spartan. Over the next decade, the Mount Vernon household would continue to expand, reaching its largest size with sixteen different enslaved workers in 1769 before fluctuating between twelve and sixteen until the end of the lists of tithables in 1774.

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63 Ibid, 144.
During the 1760s, advertisements for housekeepers – both from individuals seeking to hire housekeepers and women seeking employment as housekeepers – began appearing with increased regularity in newspapers in both Virginia and South Carolina, continuing to rise in number through the 1770s. Most often these advertisements were somewhat vague, like that in The South Carolina and American General Gazette in 1767 that sought “An industrious housekeeper, chiefly to wait on young ladies, and look after negroes.” It further noted, as many others did, that “a character will be required,” suggesting that advertisers sought women who had professional experience in the position.

In Virginia, housekeepers were a common feature of elite households throughout the eighteenth century, but appear to have often been older, unmarried or widowed female relatives during the first half of the century. At Mount Vernon in the 1760s, in contrast, Washington employed at least three different women in the position of housekeeper: Sarah Harle, who occupied the position from September 1765-May 1767, Rachael McKeaver (McIver), who held the position from November 1767-June 1768, and Mary Wilson, who arrived in December 1768 and left in June of 1769. Despite being

65 The South Carolina and American General Gazette, July 24, 1767.
66 Mrs. Dunn was abandoned by her husband in 1710 and joined the household of William Byrd II, helping Lucy Parke Byrd around the house. Byrd, The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover 1709-1712, 83.
well-paid, the rate of attrition for Washington’s housekeepers was comparable to that of his overseers.⁶⁹ Just as he appeared to find his enslaved managers more reliable than the white ones, noting that “Davy at Muddy hole carries on his business as well as the white Overseers, and with more quietness than any of them,”⁷⁰ there were fewer white housekeepers employed at Mount Vernon after he purchased Frank Lee, a mixed race young man who joined the household in 1771, first as a waiter before becoming Mount Vernon’s butler.⁷¹ Though there are no explicit descriptions of housekeepers in Barbados during this period, Robert Poole’s description of the incident involving the enslaved man

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⁷⁰ “From George Washington to William Pearce, 18 December 1793,” Founders Online, National Archives, last modified March 30, 2017, http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-14-02-0356-0001. [Original source: The Papers of George Washington, Presidential Series, vol. 14, 1 September–31 December 1793, ed. David R. Hoth. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008, 558–564.] Davy not only earned Washington’s praise, which was uncommon, but held the position of overseer for about thirty years, unlike the white overseers, few of whom remained in Washington’s employment for more than two years. Only after the American Revolution, when Washington employed two different women to manage his household as he campaigned, does it appear that the Washingtons again began employing white women as housekeepers. Washington still clearly preferred his enslaved domestic workers, which will be addressed in the next chapter.

who accidentally walked off with the key to the house indicates that Barbadians relied upon the enslaved to hold the position of housekeeper or butler.\textsuperscript{72}

Whether building new or remodeling an older structure, white planters in Virginia, South Carolina, and Barbados expressed the desire to create greater distance between themselves and the enslaved. Plantation houses during this period became more internally complex, creating additional work for the enslaved men and women who worked within the household. Few planters made work within the household easier; while the central passage slowed the progression of white visitors through the house, it also made it more difficult for the enslaved to do their work without being visible, especially when planters chose not to create connecting doors between rooms. As space within the house became increasingly specialized, so too did the work within the household, and the increased number of enslaved workers within the household prompted planters like George Washington to repurpose spaces within the house that would earlier have been living spaces for enslaved domestic workers. In Barbados, where the plan of the house remained static and extremely open despite a much larger enslaved population, the number of enslaved individuals within the household meant that, for the enslaved, it was more difficult to avoid the wrath of the slaveholder and much easier to be caught up in the net of suspicion.

During the middle of the eighteenth century, the plantation house began to change, and with it, began changing work within the household. Changes to the house articulated the planter’s ambitions, their ideas about how they should live – and how they should live with the enslaved – and, especially in Barbados, their sense of their own

\textsuperscript{72} Poole, \textit{The Beneficent Bee, Or, Traveller’s Companion: Containing Each Day’s Observation in a Voyage from London to Gibraltar, Barbadoes, Antigua ...}, 299.
Englishness. The transformation and expansion of the plantation household that began between 1740 and 1760 would make an even greater impact on the enslaved as the American Revolution became imminent and after its conclusion, creating opportunities for them to express their dissatisfaction with the Revolution’s failure to live up to its promises of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
Barbadian treasurers had the unfortunate habit of embezzling from the government. When Gedney Clarke was caught in the 1750s, he lost the office and was made collector of customs instead, a position he held – and abused – for nearly thirty years. When treasurer John Adams, born to a well-established Barbadian planter family, was caught embezzling public funds in 1760, he lost his position as Gedney Clarke had, but the provost marshal also put a lien on the property his father, Samuel Adams, had put up as a surety: the family’s plantation in Christ Church, Lowlands.¹

The Adams family had owned Lowlands since before 1674 when it appeared on the Ford map of Barbados, which accompanied the 1680 census of the island, listing John Adam (the great-grandfather of the treasurer) with 192 acres, three white servants, and sixty-four black slaves.² Though the plantation does not appear on modern maps, a decaying building in the same location has what is clearly a seventeenth or early eighteenth century foundation. Despite evidence of later alteration, the core of the house consisted of a single large room on the first floor, approximately 20 feet deep and 50 feet

² Hotten, The Original Lists of Persons of Quality; Emigrants; Religious Exiles; Political Rebels; Serving Men Sold for a Term of Years; Apprentices; Children Stolen; Maidens Pressed; and Others Who Went from Great Britain to the American Plantations, 1600-1700, 473.
long. Upon discovering that the provost marshal intended to confiscate his father’s plantation, Adams returned to the plantation, armed his slaves, and refused to surrender his plantation.

Adams’s response and the aftermath of his decision provide insight into the way Barbadian planters understood their relationship with the enslaved laborers who lived and worked on their plantations, both those who worked in the house and those who worked in the field. While slaves in Virginia and South Carolina carried guns to hunt, their possession of weapons was a source of anxiety for some planters. Though some historians have asserted that Barbadian planters felt the same anxiety, Adams’s actions suggest otherwise, indicating that he was both confident in the broader security of the island, which was encircled by fortifications in the eighteenth century, and that he felt certain that not only would his enslaved workers not turn on him, but that they would fight on his behalf.

While planters in Virginia and South Carolina began transforming their houses between 1740-1770, with consequences for both the composition and work of the household, Barbadian houses like Lowlands remained static through the 1780s, producing a society and landscape that was resistant to discussions of independence. This chapter begins by exploring the anti-revolutionary landscape of Barbados and the way the Barbadian built environment resisted change, even when the American colonists sought

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3 Fieldwork conducted June 11, 2016.
4 Schomburgk, The History of Barbados: A Topographical Map of the Island of Barbados, Based Upon Mayo’s Original Survey in 1721, and Corrected to the Year 1846, 330-331.
support for their dissatisfaction with Great Britain, as well as the effect of that landscape on its inhabitants. While planters from South Carolina had a close relationship with England prior to the American Revolution, their knowledge of the metropole would have emphasized the disjuncture between their own priorities as slaveholders and those of the parent country. Thus, when Dunmore issued his proclamation inviting the enslaved to join the British against their masters, it was a threat against the very fabric of the slave society of the American South. Had something similar happened in Barbados, evidence suggests that the Barbadian planters would have believed that their slaves would more likely take up arms beside them than against them.

In Virginia and South Carolina during the 1770s and first part of the 1780s, most building stopped because of the war, though not for lack of trying. Those who had the resources to build – as George Washington did at Mount Vernon – continued to so, while others’ advertisements for skilled laborers to build or work in their houses appear to have gone unanswered. After the war ended, planters in Virginia and South Carolina returned to houses that had made them uniquely, separately American, by reinforcing their reliance on slavery, but which continued to tether elites’ social status to English and European design. At the same time, enslaved men and women had absorbed the ideas of the Revolution and began to express their discontent with the continuation of the old order.

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For Barbadian planters, despite the destruction of the Great Hurricane of 1780, rebuilding projects largely recreated the older houses, but tweaked them to be even more resistant to the potential devastation of another hurricane. In contrast, beginning in the mid-1780s, planters in Virginia and South Carolina accelerated the changes that had begun in the mid-eighteenth century. As the rhetoric of the Revolution became problematic for slaveholders in their own homes and planters saw the enslaved begin to push against the social organization of the plantation, they turned to backstairs, bell systems, and dumbwaiters to create even greater distance between themselves and the enslaved, whose quarters began moving further from the plantation house. Politics also began shaping decisions about the materials used in construction: some planters in South Carolina, where wealthy Lowcountry planters had been initially resistant to the revolution, expressed their patriotism by building fashionable new houses entirely from tabby, essentially the homespun of building materials.

The Anti-Revolutionary Landscape

In 1760, not only was John Adams’s response to the provost marshal placing a lien on his house revealing, but the way his neighbors reacted was indicative of the planters’ sense of security. The House of Assembly stripped him of his office, fined, and imprisoned him, and when he was unanimously reelected by the freeholders of Christ Church, the very men whose own holdings would have been put at risk if the slaves he had armed had chosen to rebel, they expelled him again. 8 This time, they also passed an

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act preventing him from being elected to the assembly or from holding any civil or military office. Adams and his allies appealed to the King and the Board of Trade, which rescinded the act of the Barbadian government and allowed him to again hold military and civil positions by 1763.⁹

This event – a “remarkable case” in nineteenth-century historian Robert Schomburgk’s history of Barbados that nonetheless warranted just a single paragraph – revealed, in a small way, the way the Barbadian built environment resisted change, even as the North American colonies of the British Atlantic became unsettled. Barbadian planters had not dramatically changed the built environment since the end of the eighteenth century. Even when they built new houses, they commonly adhered to the plan of the single house, using its narrowness and openness to combat the oppressive heat of the tropical climate. When they had money, they improved the appearance of these buildings, or imported new furniture, but they also held on to old furniture – or older language to describe furniture – much longer than was fashionable.

During this period, Barbados was a densely populated island with a small white population made up largely of merchants and planters and their families. A small number of the poor white descendants of the indentured servants brought to the island in the seventeenth century also made the island their home.¹⁰ By 1768, the island’s population

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⁹ “Barbados, West Indies: representation of Board of Trade and committee report on repealing an act of Nov 1762 to render John Adams incapable of exercising any civil or military office in the island, July 11-17, 1764,” PC 1/59/5/2. The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO).

¹⁰ While nearly every scholar writing on Barbados or the Caribbean has addressed the poor white population, the most recent and useful work is Reilly, “At the Margins of the Plantation: Alternative Modernities and an Archaeology of the ‘Poor Whites’ of Barbados”; Shaw, Everyday Life in the Early English Caribbean.
was 19.5% white and 80.5% enslaved (or 16,139 whites and 66,827 slaves, though this number does not appear to include the free black population). Unlike their counterparts in South Carolina, Barbadian planters did not always maintain separate townhouses. While some may have for the sake of convenience, the island’s size meant that most plantations were not far removed from town. When Joseph Senhouse received news of Gedney Clarke’s death at 11 AM at the Grove plantation in St. Philip; he was on the road by 4 PM and arrived in Bridgetown a little after sunset.

Just six years after Adams armed his enslaved workers against the provost marshal, Sir John Gay Alleyne, whose renovation of St. Nicholas Abbey articulated both his impression of what it meant to be English and his aversion to changing the workings of daily life, spoke about why Barbados would not join the North American colonies in their protest of the Stamp Act. His defense was one of three pamphlets published by Barbadians after John Dickinson, one of the earliest voices of the American Revolution, took them to task in his “Address to the Committee of Correspondence in Barbados, Philadelphia.” Dickinson accused the Barbadians of being reduced “to the miserable dilemma of making a choice between two of the meanest characters – of those who would be slaves from inclination, tho they pretend to love liberty – and of those who are dutiful from fear, tho they pretend to love submission.”

In his response, Alleyne initially asserted that Barbados’s circumstances made the kind of rebellion the North Americans engaged far more dangerous. “North America, then, in struggling for the liberties she demanded, might possibly have arrived at a State

of Independence, but could not, in the Nature of Things, have been reduced to that of Slavery: But this Colony, whose best Hope could only rest on our changing one State of Dependance for another, in violently struggling for a greater Share of Liberty than we possessed, might have found ourselves but the more closely riveted in our Chains.”

His material concerns became apparent several pages later when he turned his attention to the economic consequences of such action, describing the increased difficulty of purchasing slaves with the empire against them.

For Alleyne, being deprived of the opportunity to increase his wealth was a threat too great to bear. He wrote that “Deprived of the Means of enjoying our Possessions, we should have become intent only upon those of living by them, and to that End, we should have resolved for the Future to raise only Half the Quantity of that valuable Article we had been accustomed to do, from our several Plantations, and, in order to live within ourselves, as independently of our Mother Country as was possible, we should have planted up the vacant Land in Provisions, or left it in Pasture for our Cattle, for the Maintenance of our Families. In short, we should have raised from our Plantations no more Sugar than would have been sufficient to pay our Debts, and buy us a little Cloathing; and a very little in this hot Country would have sufficed, as well as, under the Habits of Life which our new System must have introduced, the cheapest and plainest only would have been purchased.”

With Barbados just emerging from more than three decades of stagnation, Barbadian planters saw even greater wealth on the horizon and were unwilling to turn back.

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13 John Gay Alleyne, A Letter to the North American, on Occasion of His Address to the Committee of Correspondence in Barbados (Barbados: George Esmand and Company, 1766), 11.
14 Ibid, 32-35.
Dickinson’s attempt to shame Barbadian planters by repeatedly describing them as “slaves” backfired. In accusing the Barbadian planter class of willingly being slaves, Dickinson forced the Barbadian planters to defend not only their status as “Gentlemen, and the Descendants of Britons,” but to justify their position. The act of articulating and defending themselves against Dickinson’s denunciation seems to have reinforced Barbadian planters’ determination to stay out of the conflict. Historian Jack P. Greene concluded his own analysis of the exchange between Dickinson and the Barbadian planters by writing that “Although Alleyne hinted darkly at ‘other Considerations…arising out of Circumstances of Distress and Hazard from within’ that tempered Barbadian opposition to the Stamp Act, none of these writes made an explicit connection between the moderate character of that opposition and the Barbadians’ longstanding fears of servile revolt.”15 Like other historians who have written of Barbadian planters’ fear of revolt on the eve of the American Revolution, Greene offers this conclusion without evidence. In the way they lived, Barbadian planters gave no indication that they anticipated rebellion.

William Senhouse, appointed Surveyor General of Customs in 1770, purchased the Grove plantation in St. Philips parish on July 25, 1774 for £18,500. It came with 219 acres, 109 slaves, and dwelling house that Senhouse described as “very indifferent Mr. Wood having never made it a place of residence.”16 It seems that Senhouse purchased the estate from his father-in-law, Samson Wood, whose success as a planter meant that he owned numerous plantations throughout the island, making his own home at Harmony

15 Greene, Exclusionary Empire: English Liberty Overseas, 1600-1900, 67-69.
When Senhouse married Wood’s daughter, Elizabeth, in 1772, Samson gave him 10 acres of the plantation in St. Philip to give him voting rights on the island while the couple occupied a series of rented houses in Bridgetown. Purchasing the Grove allowed him to consolidate that property with his new plantation.

Senhouse had good reasons for purchasing the property after having occupied houses in Bridgetown for the first three years of his residence on the island: he and his wife liked the plantation and anticipated expanding their family, they wanted a place outside of town to improve their health, and it offered the chance to consolidate Elizabeth Wood Senhouse’s dowry and inheritance. Unfortunately, he wrote that “The particular time too of the purchase was the most unlucky that cou’d be. In that very year commenc’d, and has almost ever since continued a succession of the worst Crops ever known in the Island of Barbados.”

His assessment is supported by data from historian Robert Goddard, who tracked Barbadian sugar production, which increased slightly in the 1760s after several decades of stagnation and decline before falling sharply again in the 1770s.

Senhouse did not make any structural changes to the house, but in February 1778 his brother Joseph (a frequent visitor at the Grove), noted that “For the three last days,

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some People have been employ’d Painting and Papering the Hall, Parlour & Porch.”

This coincided with the imminent expiration of William’s lease on his house in Bridgetown and his decision to give it up, suggesting that painting and wallpapering the house was part of the process of preparing the house for more permanent occupation. Information about the house’s plan and its situation in the plantation landscape comes from several unfortunate incidents noted in William Senhouse’s autobiography.

First, the family’s “tutoress,” Miss Farewell, was struck by lightning. It first hit the mill before streaking inside the house, breaking windows in the process, before hitting Miss Farewell in the chest “but without doing her any material injury.” This incident confirms what is implied by probate inventories from the last quarter of the eighteenth century and a few rare images: the Barbadian plantation landscape was one in which buildings were closely grouped together. This landscape was markedly industrial in comparison to the landscapes of Virginia and South Carolina because the production of sugar required more than simply harvesting, drying, and shipping. Nearly every plantation description from Barbados in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth century included a mill, a boiling house, a curing (or barbecuing house), and a still house, all of which stood in close proximity to the plantation house.

The Barbadian plantation landscape at the end of the eighteenth century was markedly different from the plantation landscapes of Virginia and South Carolina. Dr. George Pinckard, appointed physician to British forces in the West Indies in 1795 and

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visiting Barbados in 1796, wrote that “a degree of nakedness was perceptible from the want of wood, of which there is not a sufficiency to give a general richness to the landscape, although about the great Backra-houses there are several fine groves of the coco-nut and the majestic mountain-cabbage trees.” Apart from the lush vegetation that marked out the domestic spaces of the plantation, the occasional fruit grove (also often situated in proximity to the houses), and aloes and plantains cultivated for sustenance, Barbados was an island of open fields cleared to plant cotton, pigeon peas, Guinea corn, and, most importantly, sugar.

The domestic landscapes of Virginia and South Carolina were distinct in their organization of space, generally clearing the space around the house and – depending upon the planter’s prosperity and inclinations – planting extensive gardens. While the clearing of land in Barbados began early, it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the island had been essentially deforested to make room for sugar cane. Barbados, just 166.4 square miles, had begun to run out of room by the end of the seventeenth century and by the end of the eighteenth century had determined to make use of as much of its land as possible. Modern South Carolina measures 32,020 square miles and modern Virginia measures some 42,775 square miles. Prior to the American Revolution, eighteenth century Virginia still claimed to reach to the other side of the continent, a prospect for expansion that fundamentally shaped Virginians’ ideas about the possibility of migration and expansion.

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23 George Pinckard, *Notes on the West Indies,: Including Observations Relative to the Creoles and Slaves of the Western Colonies, and the Indians of South America; Interspersed with Remarks Upon the Seasoning Or Yellow Fever of Hot Climates*, vol. 1 (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy...and L.B. Seeley, 1816), 137.
The landscape surrounding the plantation house in late eighteenth century Virginia and South Carolina was one that was orderly and regimented – and in many ways formulaic. The gardens occupied the space behind the house, an avenue of trees led to the house, the kitchen and laundry (or office if the planter pleased) provided the forecourt for the land-front entrance. These were orderly landscapes for an orderly people. And most importantly, they were also impressively visual from wherever you stood – a landscape that embodied rationality and its privileging of the sense of sight.

The organization of the domestic landscape on Barbadian plantations at the end of the eighteenth century was entirely different, enclosing the house and cutting it off from the surrounding fields. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Sir Hans Sloane described the “fortifications” that surrounded the houses of Barbadian planters. At the end of the eighteenth century, these fortifications consisted of low walls and high trees, but within them, the planters existed in their own world. This is confirmed by the rare images of actual plantations and extant evidence of surrounding walls, as well as stylized representations of Barbadian plantations from sale advertisements in *The Barbados Mercury* during the 1780s.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the elites of Barbados and the West Indies were roundly mocked by London papers. Their speech was whiny and slurring, their dress sloppy, their skin tanned, and their manner childishly dependent. They had adapted

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24 Hans Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica, with the Natural History of the Herbs and Trees, Four-Footed Beast, Fishes, Birds, Insects, Reptiles, &c. on the Last of Those Islands: To Which Is Prefix’d an Introduction, Wherein Is an Account of the Inhabitants, Air, Waters, Diseases, Trade, &c. of That Place, with Some Relations Concerning the Neighbouring Continent, and Islands of America: Illustrated with the Figures of the Things Describ’d, Which Have Not Been Heretofore Engraved: In Large Copper-Plates As Big As the Life* (London: Printed by B.M. for the author, 1707).
too much to the islands and had lost their essential Englishness along with the pallor of their skin. The Barbadians themselves would have disagreed with this characterization and did so, persisting in describing their island as “a little England,” despite all the evidence that supported the newspapers’ accusations.

This disconnect from reality was in part the product of the plantation landscape, which simultaneously isolated the Barbadian planter class from the daily work of slavery and their fellow planters, creating a degree of dependence upon the slaves – often of mixed race – who worked within the plantation household. For the planter, this would be somewhat mitigated by touring the plantations operations and overseeing the sugar works, a process that was much more industrial than anything taking place on a tobacco or rice plantation, where he would be a witness to the hard labor and casual violence of plantation life.

While the house itself brought individuals into close and regular contact, the landscape around the house reminded the enslaved that the planters would retaliate quickly to anything that smelled of rebellion. Joseph Senhouse, 1778 riding from the Grove to another plantation for dinner, encountered

the Head of a Negroe stuck upon a Pole close to the Road side, upon the estate of Mr. Eastman called four square Plantation. This Negroe Man when living, it is reported, made a practice of running away & absenting himself from his Master, for which reason as soon as he died, his head was fixed there in terrorem in hopes of deterring others from being guilty of the like crime. It seems the above is considered by the Negroes as one of the most severe punishments that can be inflicted upon them for as they are fully persuaded that they will return to Guinea after their decease, they imagine they would cut but a sorry figure to appear there without a Head. There are three other horrid spectacles of the like nature at this time on the above Plantation, having all been guilty of the same offence.25

Senhouse frames this incident in terms of crime and guilt, without considering the circumstances that may have driven the man to run. In the small number of extant copies of the *Barbados Mercury*, most of which date to the 1780s, a very small number of runaway advertisements illustrates how uncommon the practice was, though it did occur. Senhouse noted that even when macabre displays like that at Four Square did not deter the enslaved from running away and runaways were recaptured, the punishments were so severe that a death of their own seemed to be a better choice. At Brankers plantation, soon after he saw the severed head at Four Square, “a Negro Man…being threaten’d with a severe punishment for absenting himself from the Plantation, threw himself head long into a Copper full of boiling Cane liquor & was instantly scalded to death.” He noted that this was not uncommon, as “Several instances of the like shocking nature has been known in this Island among those unhappy people and several years ago, I have been credibly informed that a whole Cargo of Negroes sold here by Mr. Val. Jones had made a resolution rather to die than be compelled to work, which through different modes of suicide, they every one performed.”

Recent work by Terry Snyder has correctly challenged traditional narrative of suicide as a simple act of resistance and reframed it as response to the despair of enslaved individuals who considered the options exponentially worse.

Those enslaved persons who occupied positions that seemed privileged in some way were not only under closer scrutiny by slaveholders and other whites, but also potentially faced the distrust and ire of others within their own community. During the

26 Ibid.
evening of December 15, 1777, Senhouse wrote that the house of the enslaved gardener, Tom Elliot, caught fire and, “This little Cot being built of the Cane tops & such dry combustible materials, it was in 3 or 4 Minutes reduced to Ashes; however, except scorching some young Trees within reach of the Flames, it did no other damage.” The fire did not appear to have been intended to hurt Tom, who was away from home when it happened, but was “supposed to have been willfully set on fire by some malicious Person envious of his agreeable situation in ye Garden.” Just two days later another fire, this time destroying the house of Causa, “an old Negroe Woman & Cuckoo boiler,” and all her “Household furniture &etc.,” though this time at least Senhouse believed it had happened by accident. He also noted that “On the instant it was discovered, the Bell was run to alarm the neighbourhood & the Negroes of the adjoining Plantations as well as those of this Estate (as is customary on such occasions) immediately repaired in crowds to the spot to give their assistance. Notwithstanding this Hut was surrounded by several others not more than 30 feet asunder, the Flames did no other mischief.” Though Senhouse believed this fire to have been an accident and the appearance of enslaved people from all around would seem to suggest that they were sympathetic, both incidences reveal the amount of mobility that enslaved Barbadians had, at least within hearing distance of the plantation.28 The proximity of plantations to one another meant that whereas a bell being rung on a Virginia plantation might reach only those on the quarter closest to the plantation house, the ringing of a bell on a Barbadian plantation

might reach all of the surrounding plantations. The ringing of the bell could serve as the defining feature for a geographic area, determining how far afield someone could go before they were likely to be punished.

Back in the main house at the Grove, after Miss Farewell was struck by lightning, the next in the series of unfortunate events to happen was a fire that broke out in the buttery. William Senhouse wrote that “Our house at the Grove narrowly escap'd being burnt in June - It was perceived by Cain Morris, the Negro who watch'd the yard in the night. He perceived the Smoke issuing from the Buttery windows and alarm'd the family, just as the fire had caught hold of the upper Flooring, and in time barely to get the better of it.” It appears to have been common practice for Barbadian planters to rely on older enslaved men as watchmen, putting their lives in the hands of men like Cain Morris. Though Senhouse would later describe the buttery as occupying “the shed part of the house” which appears to have been between the house and the kitchen building, it had an upper floor, suggesting that Samuel Wood or another occupant had expanded the house from its single-house form. Unlike the fires that destroyed Causa and Tom Elliot’s houses, no one speculated that this fire was arson.

Planters lived close to, but separately from, the enslaved, so Cain Morris’s watch would not have taken him far from home. After the Great Hurricane of 1780, which I will discuss later in this chapter, William Senhouse took the opportunity to move the quarters

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where his enslaved workers lived further from his own house, a location that put them close to both their enslaver and the mill and the boiling house where much of the work of the plantation took place. He wrote that in 1784 he moved the settlement where the enslaved lived further from the plantation house: “But the ground immediately surrounding it being, as usual in this Isld, appropriated for the use of the Negroes, their houses, &c &c forming altogether a nuisance not at all to be tolerably born, there were this year, i.e. in the Months of May and June, removed to a better situation where there were disposed in regular streets, every house in the centre of a piece of ground 20 yds. square. to be cultivated by themselves for their own purposes.”

Though Senhouse revealed that the enslaved lived close to the plantation house, his characterization of their settlement as “a nuisance” and the appearance of the enslaved in the buttery as they sought shelter from the storm indicates that this settlement was nonetheless a separate space; one that William Senhouse and his family did not occupy.

George Pinckard, visiting Barbados in the 1790s, noted that during his visit to Spendlove Plantation in St. George he begged his host’s permission to visit the “negro-yard.” Pinckard’s host “remarked to us that the negroes were tenacious of their home, and disliked to have their huts exposed to the prying eye of strangers.” With that warning, Pinckard and his fellow guests, “promising not to be too minute but to regulate our curiosity with all becoming decorum, paying due regard to the feelings and prejudices of the sable inhabitants,” set off to visit the settlement. He described it thus:

The negro-yard, viewed from a short distance, forms an object of highly interesting and picturesque scenery: it comprises all the little huts,

inter mixed with, and more or less concealed by the variety of shrubs and fruit-trees, which kindly lend their shade; likewise the many small patches of garden-ground around them, and the different species of stock, some appearing in pens, some tied by the leg, or the neck, and some running at large: if it be evening, you have also the crowd of negroes, male and female, as they chance to be at rest, or moving in busy occupation, some passing from hut to hut; some dancing to their favorite music, some sitting at the door with the pipe in their mouths, and others smoking their loved cigar under the broad leaf of the plantain.

The picture is also farther enlivened by the groups of black children; some running and skipping about, some seated, playing before the doors, in Nature's ebon dress, and some, unable to walk, attempting little excursions upon their hands and feet. Perhaps within so small a space, few scenes could offer so much to interest, or to aid the pencil of a painter.32

Though the nature of Barbadian settlements, which concentrated building around the mill and sought to use as little land as possible so that every spot of ground that could be planted with cane was, meant that the enslaved lived close to their enslavers, they appear to have had a high degree of autonomy within their own quarters.

The quarter was not the only part of the plantation Senhouse sought to transform. Having moved the enslaved from their traditional homes, he wrote that “the ground from which they were removed was now disposed into regular walks, along which were planted Mahogany trees, Cabbages and Cocoanut trees, and along two other of the walks Bamboos, which being as they grew large enough, bent over head tied together, soon formed an impenetrable and most agreeable shade of about 200 yds. when taken all together.” He noted that it was “the first of the kind ever seen in Barbados and has since

32 Pinckard, Notes on the West Indies,: Including Observations Relative to the Creoles and Slaves of the Western Colonies, and the Indians of South America; Interspersed with Remarks Upon the Seasoning Or Yellow Fever of Hot Climates, 197-200.
been greatly admired.”33 Senhouse’s effort to plant the trees in a more regular manner was as in keeping with the fashion of the period as it was uncommon on the island.

At the beginning of 1780, before the hurricane and its aftermath, but after the fire in the buttery, Senhouse’s young son, Samson, “began the new year by falling out of the Office Window in the first floor, but providentially without any other material injury than being exceedingly frightened.”34 Implicit in this description are several important clues about the way Barbadian planters organized space within the house. The office’s location on the first floor suggests that like their counterparts in Barbados and South Carolina, Barbadians situated their public rooms on the first floor. This is further supported by the location of the dining room at Drax Hall and St. Nicholas Abbey, though the single-house’s large hall more commonly served a variety of purposes, including dining.

Senhouse’s description also indicated that the plantation office was in the house itself, rather than in a separate building as in Virginia.

The incident provides clues about access. During the Hurricane of 1780, Senhouse wrote that the two female servants, Peggy Berry and Isella Everson, charged with caring for the youngest children ran from the house with their charges to take shelter elsewhere, fearing that the house would collapse on top of them. Being in possession of a distinct surname was not uncommon among the enslaved of Barbados, especially as they formed families and found ways to cope with separation resulting from sale or the division of planters’ property, so it is difficult to say whether the women were black or

white. The cook at the Grove Plantation, Cuffy Turton, also possessed a surname, and probate inventories from the period show that these names came from both slaveholders and plantation names, indicating that they were a means of maintaining kinship despite being sold or otherwise separated. Since the two women were not accorded the honorific “Miss” like the tutoress, if they were white, they were likely of a lower class. Neither surname appears in the description of the plantation’s enslaved population a generation later, but that is also not conclusive. Regardless, little Samson likely had his own nurse who should have been supervising him when he fell from the window.

While many plantation houses would later replace first floor windows with doors to verandas, the continued appearance of windows (often with window seats) in buildings that likely date to the eighteenth century suggests a different relationship to exterior space. Furnishings commonly found outside like green painted chairs, descriptions of porches in inventories, and images depicting roofs projecting from the first floor, like that in the background of an engraving from 1816, or the two-story porch in a 1797 depiction of Sandy Lane Plantation indicate that planters made use of the space around the house, but not in the expansive way that would become common in the nineteenth century. Planters felt the need for furniture that could withstand the heat, humidity, and bugs of the tropical island not only in these outdoor spaces, but inside as well, where mahogany
chairs, tables, chests, etc. appeared frequently in wills and inventories.

Figure 5.1 Inset from Map of Sandy Lane Plantation, Barbados, 23 May 1797, Barbados Museum and Historical Society

Importation of goods from London increased beginning in the 1760s after five decades of stagnation and decline.\(^{35}\) Despite this explosion of trade, the furniture planters imported was simple, and an extant pair of English Chippendale chairs from Barbados with only the barest embellishment reflect this trend. The lack of timber on the island restricted what local furniture makers could produce, but imported timber from England and the North American colonies ensured that they had some material to work with, even if it was limited. Since mahogany was not introduced until the middle of the eighteenth century and the first advertisements for unworked imported mahogany did not appear until 1784, the mahogany furniture that filled Barbadian plantation houses was definitely imported to the island.\(^{36}\) Nonetheless, though Barbadian planters imported new objects

\(^{35}\) Neville Connell, long time curator of the Barbados Museum, drew on figures compiled by E.T. Joy to illustrate this trade, but simplified it to the period between 1700-1770 and the period post-1780. Connell, “18th Century Furniture and Its Background in Barbados.”

\(^{36}\) The date of mahogany’s introduction has been a subject of some debate. Neville Connell and others place it in 1763, while historian Jennifer Anderson has suggested the late 1750s based on the size of trees on the island in 1798. Connell’s previously cited article on eighteenth century furniture includes the early advertisements. Ibid.; Jennifer L.
during the 1760s, an analysis of probate inventories from the last third of the eighteenth century suggests that they continued to use these objects for decades after they were fashionable.\(^{37}\)

Probate inventories and a number of advertisements from the *Barbados Mercury* during the 1780s confirm the organization of the single house form and its use, most commonly depicting a single house with few divisions between rooms, simple but well-made and well-used furnishings, and a degree of spatial access that was otherwise uncommon in the slaveholding colonies of the British Atlantic. While many of these decisions were made as a means of accommodating the tropical climate, they had the effect of facilitating close relationships between slaveholders and the enslaved who worked in and around the house, which, combined with the swift and brutal treatment of rebellious slaves, served to create a society in which planters feared the economic consequences of independence far more than any internal rebellion.

**The New Room at Mount Vernon**

Most building in Virginia and South Carolina came to a halt in 1776 with the beginning of the North American rebellion against Great Britain. Not only did the conflict itself impede building, as the war disrupted the trade necessary for construction

\(^{37}\) Special thanks to Adam Erby, assistant curator at George Washington’s Mount Vernon, who observed that the words being used to describe furnishings in a set of probate inventories from the Barbados Department of Archives dating from 1780-1800 were at least ten years out of date, indicating that either they were retaining older furnishings or continuing to use older language to describe new furniture. As the known sample of extant furniture from 18\(^{th}\) century Barbados is miniscule, this is as far as the analysis has gone at this point.
and the destruction of property disincentivized construction, but the individuals who
labored to build houses and work in them found their skills directed to other tasks.
Advertisements in *The South Carolina Gazette* and *The Virginia Gazette* (both of which
ceased publication in their original form after 1780) show that while planters still sought
skilled workers after 1776 – both for building and for work within the house – the
number of individuals seeking employment had declined.

Between 1770 and the end of 1775, more than 1700 advertisements in *The South
Carolina Gazette* and its supplements included some reference to carpentry – seeking to
buy, sell, or hire enslaved carpenters, or to sell tools related to the trade. In 1776, not a
single advertisement for any kind of carpentry appeared in the newspaper or its
supplement, and between 1776 and the end of 1779, only 131 advertisements sought to
buy, sell, or hire enslaved carpenters, or to sell tools related to the trade. Many of those
advertisements also included carpenters being sold as part of larger lots of enslaved
persons along with entire plantations, suggesting that while their skills still increased
their value, they were not being bought or sold to work on specific projects.

One clue to the labor drought in the Lowcountry was the series of advertisements
beginning in May 1777. It advertised that “The COMMISSIONERS of the NAVY are in
want of a Number of Negro Ship Carpenters or Caulkers. Any Persons having such to
hire by the Year, are desired to apply to EDWARD BLAKE, First Commissioner.” 38 The
vast majority of enslaved carpenters advertised from this point forward were “jobbing
carpenters,” rather than “house carpenters” whose skills could be redirected to ship
construction. In Virginia, advertisements to buy, sell, or hire enslaved carpenters, or to

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38 *The South Carolina Gazette*, May 5, 1777.
sell tools related to the trade declined by more than half, from 587 advertisements between the beginning of 1770 and the end of 1775 to 271 advertisements between the beginning of 1776 and the end of 1779.

One significant exception during this period was George Washington’s new expansion of the mansion house at Mount Vernon. Washington began construction of a South Wing to the house, containing his and Martha’s bedroom, a first floor study, and a butler’s pantry, in 1774. Though the majority of this construction took place before the beginning of the war, it was not completed until the end of 1775. Washington initially oversaw the work, beginning a letter to Bryan Fairfax on July 4, 1774 by writing that “I shall be obliged to answer in a more concise manner, than I could wish, as I am very much engaged in raising one of the additions to my house, which I think (perhaps it is fancy) goes on better whilst I am present, than in my absence from the workmen.”39 The note appeared in a series of letters between Washington and Fairfax from July and August that year, debating at length the right of the British King to tax the North American colonists and the justice of what came to be known as the Intolerable Acts.

This personal note in the midst of an impassioned debate speaks to the climate in which Washington had chosen to build the new wing of the house. Though the earliest construction focused on the South Wing, which included a bedroom for George and Martha Washington and Washington’s first floor library, as well as a butler’s pantry, during the same period indentured workmen completed the more elaborate plasterwork in

the dining room located in the central block of the house. There are no documentary records (or archaeological ones due to the subsequent construction), but construction would have first necessitated the demolition of the closet located on the south side of the house.

The impetus for this construction can be found in the documentary record. In expanding their domestic quarters, Washington had upset the balance of the house’s façade, making it clear that he had planned the subsequent addition of the North Wing from the outset. Since Washington’s greatest accomplishment as a planter, relative to other Virginia planters at the time, was that Mount Vernon remained solvent throughout his ownership, such an expensive and apparently unnecessary project had to have had a compelling reason. To undertake this in the midst of rising tensions between Great Britain and the North American colonies made little sense unless we consider the context. The 1773 departure of Washington’s great friend, George William Fairfax, and his wife Sally Cary Fairfax, made the Washingtons the most important family in the area, and within months of their departure, Martha Washington’s surviving daughter, Martha (Patsy) Custis, died, leaving her portion of the Custis inheritance to be divided between her mother and brother. Martha’s share, more than £8000, went into Washington’s coffers and, after paying off his debts, left plenty for Washington’s projects.40 As he had before Lawrence Washington’s death in 1751 when he worked as Lord Fairfax’s surveyor, Washington would take full advantage of the opportunity presented, giving his ambitions material form even as he moved more cautiously to lay social and political groundwork for his advancement.

By the end of July, just six weeks after Patsy’s premature death, historian Richard Dalzell notes that Washington had written to his factor in London, adding an addendum to the family’s usual order. Under the pretext of ordering more seeds for his garden, he “recollected...some other articles” that he wanted: one hundred panes of the “best” window glass, trowels for bricklayers and plasterers, and various carpenters’ tools including tools and instruments to produce ornate interior woodwork.41 In the same list, he ordered a “Genteel Mourng Sword—with Belt Swivels &ca,” presumably to complement the “Suit of Second Mourning” ordered in his first missive, suggesting that even as he drew up plans to use Martha’s inheritance to expand the house, Patsy was not far from his mind.42 Additional orders over the course of the following fall and spring show Washington stockpiling construction materials.

The rising tensions with Great Britain meant that while he was able to oversee the initial phase of construction, he soon had to leave Mount Vernon and entrusted the project to his cousin and estate manager, Lund Washington, who had managed the plantation since 1765.43 Lund’s anxieties about the project ranged from his obvious desire to keep George and Martha happy, writing in October 1775 that “Mrs. Washington seems

41 Ibid, 67.
desirous that what ever is to be done to it may be at once that she may get into it this
Winter,” to his fear that the British would try to burn the house.44 He wrote in February
1776, suggesting that “I think if you cou’d be of opinion that your Buildings woud not be
destroyed this Summer it woud be Best to have the Other Addition to the End of your
House Raised, the Chimney pulld down and put up again that being the most troublesom
part of the Worck.”45 Lund was also the one who had to deal with runaway indentured
servants, including a joiner, a bricklayer, and a painter, at least one of whom he believed
had joined Lord Dunmore.46

Nevertheless, Washington and his manager persisted and the South Wing was
finished by late 1775. Significantly, while the new South Wing increased the
Washington’s own privacy and personal control of their domestic space, it made the lives
of the enslaved workers in the household more difficult. By this time, the rooms of the
core of the building were all accessible from the central hall at the top of the stairs,
without connecting doors between them. Though this meant that the house maids – Sall,
and probably Jenny (who was almost past service in 1786, but still listed among the

44 “To George Washington from Lund Washington, 15 October 1775,” Founders
Online, National Archives, last modified March 30, 2017,
http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-02-02-0164. [Original
source: The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 2, 16
September 1775–31 December 1775, ed. Philander D. Chase. Charlottesville: University
45 “To George Washington from Lund Washington, 22 February 1776,” Founders
Online, National Archives, last modified March 30, 2017,
source: The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 3, 1 January
1776–31 March 1776, ed. Philander D. Chase. Charlottesville: University Press of
Virginia, 1988, pp. 354–355.]
46 Mesick-Cohen-Waite, “Mount Vernon: Historic Structure Report, Volume 1” (Albany,
1993), 19-44.
household as she had been since Martha’s arrival)\(^{47}\) – could not move invisibly through these spaces, exiting the room by the connecting door when they heard footsteps approach, it also meant that their work on the second floor would revolve around a central space. Since the third floor appears to have been primarily storage space during this period, the majority of the work – changing linens, disposing of chamber pots, carrying water, scrubbing floors, dusting, waxing, and polishing – would have taken place on the first and second floors, which, in the new configuration, were largely public spaces. To finish cleaning the Washington’s private domestic space would necessitate climbing to the third floor and using a small stair to go back down to the second floor. Alternately, the house maid tasked with cleaning the Washington’s bedroom could go through the bed chamber adjacent to the dining room to the rear stair, or enter the small stair hall directly from the west entrance. Washington’s study provided additional access as it was between the butler’s pantry and the stair hall.

Compared to the central block of the house, the South Wing more closely resembled houses built in Virginia and South Carolina after the 1780s than before the 1780s. Built with explicit service spaces within the house and rooms that connected to one another, it facilitated the movement of the enslaved through the space in a way that the older part of the house did not. The size and composition of the household at Mount Vernon had stabilized during the 1760s and by 1774 it included fifteen enslaved people, six of whom were men. While Barbadians relied on both enslaved butlers and

housekeepers, Washington employed a number of different white women as his housekeeper and the enslaved men on whom he most relied held important posts in his household.

Breechy, born about 1735, came to Mount Vernon with Martha Washington from White House Plantation in New Kent County where he had served as a waiter. At Mount Vernon, he married an enslaved woman named Ruth, who was ten years his senior (according to Washington’s list in 1799, which also estimated his birth year as 1739) and lived and worked at Muddy Hole Farm until 1763 when Washington moved her to River Farm. In 1771, Frank Lee began appearing on the list of household slaves and his name regularly appeared alongside Breechy’s in orders for suits of livery in Lund Washington’s ledger. Washington still described him as a waiter in 1785, and it seems likely that he was promoted to butler sometime that year, since Breechy’s name began appearing on lists of laborers at River Farm, where he lived with his wife until at least 1799.48

Besides Breechy and Frank Lee, in 1774 the household included William Lee, Giles, Herculas, Joe, Nell, Doll, Jenny, Betty, Moll, Sall, Alice, Sarah, and Alce. Breechy was the last of Martha Washington’s male dower slaves in the household when he moved to River Farm in 1785. While dower slaves still dominated the household, they were exclusively women, creating a division within the household. In many ways, Washington’s architectural changes in the 1770s initiated the transition from a household

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that centered on Martha Washington to one in which George Washington would be the primary decision maker.

One small incident of architecture is especially revealing. In addition to the changes to the house itself, in the 1770s, Washington began making changes to the landscape around the plantation house. He added a number of additional outbuildings, attempting to create a symmetrical forecourt along the advance to the house. Among these buildings was what Martha Washington and Lund Washington believed to be a laundry.\textsuperscript{49} Throughout the fall of 1775, Lund’s uncertainty was clear in his letters to Washington, as he referred to the structure as the “wash House or Servts House.”\textsuperscript{50} In December, it became clear that they had incorrectly interpreted Washington’s instructions and that Martha Washington had used her knowledge of the usual organization of the plantation landscape to make a decision in her husband’s absence. Realizing the error, Lund wrote on December 3 that he would “alter the Servts Hall—If it is not Intended for a Wash House one of the Chimneys is rather larger than it shou'd be, it was done by Mrs. Washingtons Derection, but as they have the same outward appearance I know of no inconvenience that will arise from it.”\textsuperscript{51} Three weeks later, the miscommunication finally

\textsuperscript{49} Dalzell and Dalzell, \textit{George Washington’s Mount Vernon: At Home in Revolutionary America}, 106.


brought to light, he wrote again, this time seeking more explicit instructions about how “the House—now Buildg opposite the Store House, is to be divided into partitions—in one of your Letters you say it is intended for the Sick—if so I woud make Three Rooms in it—½ the House or more in the part next the Chimney The Remainder divided into Two Rooms each of which will have a Window in it—The Door in the gable End to be of no Use, but Still to be there, that it may in its outward appearance look like the Store.”

Lund still seemed unclear about the purpose of the structure, but now understood that it would be residential in nature.

Like the changes that separated the Washington’s private domestic space from the core of the house, this change to the traditional organization of the landscape was done in service of making the house better suited to entertaining. Rather than a hospital, the building – the Servants Hall – provided housing for visitors’ slaves and servants. Later, after Lund left Washington’s employ, it also housed the professional plantation managers that Washington hired.

By 1776, Washington apparently decided that his project was safe enough to continue, and after completing the South Wing, he began constructing the New Room in the North Wing, an elaborate dining room that took up the width of the house. Yet another part of Washington’s plan that made Mount Vernon a public house instead of a private home, this portion of the structure was framed – including the tripartite Venetian

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window that became its centerpiece – but remained incomplete until after 1784. Though he was able to continue the work at Mount Vernon until 1779, directing construction activities through correspondence with Lund Washington, Washington eventually had to pause his building plans, not resuming work on the house until 1784. For Washington, the continued building at Mount Vernon during the war – and the protection of the house from the Revolution’s ravages – was a political tool.

New Ideas in Old Spaces

The decades after the Revolution were a significant period in American architecture, as European neoclassicism took on greater symbolic meaning for the fledgling republic, but initially planters returned to the same spaces they had occupied before the war began – spaces that were incompatible with the rhetoric of democracy. In Virginia and South Carolina during the decades prior to the American Revolution, the household became increasingly complex, as did the space it occupied. In Virginia, rooms had increasingly been separated from one another and the central passage, while limiting white visitors by custom, also restricted the movement of the enslaved as doors could be locked and spaces cut off from circulation. In 1759, Washington had ordered “1 dozn Common locks—for Inside Doors” accounting for every interior door on the first and second floors.53 Four years later, in 1763, he ordered six “cheap Iron (varnished) Locks for Chamber Doors—6 Inches by 3½” as well as a “large Iron Do for Street door 9 Inches

by 5½.” This time he noted that the locks for chamber doors were “to have different Keys” suggesting that the house was becoming easier to secure and likely more difficult to maneuver through.\textsuperscript{54} Not only were the doors locked, but so were the things within them, as there are numerous references in the documentary record to locked trunks.

If there was a housekeeper, she was most likely in possession of the keys. Otherwise, the slaveholder or his wife kept track of the keys. Writing in the 1790s after some clover seed went missing from the store house at Mansion House farm, Washington wrote to Howell Lewis to request that “Mrs. Fanny Washington will let no body go to the key Box but herself, you, or Milly.” Other letters suggest that the keys for the outlying farms were most commonly left in the possession of their overseer, but on this occasion “it is impossible to answer for the damage I shall sustain if opportunities are given to others to get at Keyes, & keep them until their purposes are answered, & then return them unsuspected to their places. The Lock of the Key chest should also be examined—and never be out of her own room at Night.”\textsuperscript{55} Other references to the “Key chest” or box, as well as a collection of keys kept in Washington’s writing desk (which was also locked, but whose key was kept in the desk), appear in correspondence during this period.


In South Carolina, houses built prior to the war were still commonly built without a central passage and to lock every door with a different key – especially when the lack of a central passage meant this could impede movement through the house – made little sense. Nonetheless, some spaces were specifically designed for security. Writing in 1777, Thomas Pinckney noted that he expected “a severe Lecture from my Mother and from you my Dear Harriott for carrying away with me the Closet Key which I hereby return you.” He requested “the Favor of you to give vent to your Anger in the Epistolary Way, I can better bear it at a Distance, as I shall then only hear the growling of the Thunder without any danger from the Lightning,” suggesting that walking off with the key was more than a simple inconvenience. Correspondence between the Pinckneys from the last quarter of the eighteenth century more commonly referred to keys to trunks than to keys to rooms, indicating that South Carolinians, who persisted in using the hall-chamber plan without a central passage in most plantation houses through the end of the eighteenth century, were less concerned about the internal security of their houses.

At Mount Vernon, however, the missing clover seed that had made Washington worry over the security of the plantation, reflecting a tension between the enslaved and their continued enslavement that manifested in his correspondence with his managers. In the 1790s, a younger generation of enslaved workers began taking on prominent roles within the plantation household, and unlike William and Frank Lee, who Washington trusted implicitly, they were far more likely to challenge his authority – or the plantation managers – directly. Several incidents make this tension clear.

One of the earliest incidents occurred while Washington was away in Philadelphia serving as President. In January 1793, his estate manager, Anthony Whitting, reported

Charlotte I Guess will be reported Sick this week I Gave her a Whiping on Saturday & I find She dont intend to work in order I suppose to be even with Me When I was Culling out the River hogs she sent by Muddy hole David requesting I would Give her a Spear rib as She Long’d for it this I knew to be false and thought it to be a piece of impudence in her which She has a Great Share of I did not send it but on Saturday I sent one to each of the Women at the Qu[arte]r of Course She had one with the rest but She I fancy watch’d me home & as soon as I got in the house brings the Spear rib & thro’s down at the Door (affronted I suppose at my not sending it on Thursday) told me indeed She wanted none of my Meat & was in Short very impudent I took a hickory Switch which I rode with & Gave her a very Good Whiping She certainly could come for nothing else, On Monday Morning Mrs Ehlers informed me She had sent her work but Charlotte had sent it back I went to the Qur & Gave a little more but I believe She has not done any thing yet under a pretence of her finger receiving a blow & was Swelld She threatens me very much with informing Lady Washington when She comes home & says She has not been whipd for 14 Years past, but I fully expect I shall have to Give her some More of it before She will behave herself for I am determined to lower her Spirit or Skin her Back.\textsuperscript{57}

Washington enumerated Charlotte, a seamstress, as part of the household staff and when he died six years later, she was among those at his bedside, but his response to Whitting was uncharacteristic. Previously, he had discouraged physical punishment of the enslaved, but he wrote back quickly that “Your treatment of Charlotte was very proper—and if she, or any other—of the Servants will not do their duty by fair means—or are impertinent, correction (as the only alternative) must be administered.”\textsuperscript{58} Charlotte’s own


\textsuperscript{58} “From George Washington to Anthony Whitting, 20 January 1793,” Founders Online, National Archives, last modified March 30, 2017,
threat to inform Martha Washington speaks to her recognition of the capital that she had access to by her position within the household. And while it did not save her from Anthony Whitting in 1793, her influence is recognizable in Washington’s description of after his dismissal by the end of that year, when he wrote to his new manager William Pearce of his predecessor, “who, it is said, drank freely—kept bad company at my house and in Alexandria—and was a very debauched person.”

Whereas it seems that Charlotte had successfully used her influence on Martha Washington, the relationship between the plantation mistress and the enslaved men and women in the household could be much more abusive. In South Carolina, one visitor wrote

…the legislative and executive powers of the house belong to the mistress, the master has little or nothing to do with the administration; he is a monument of uxoriousness and passive endurance. The negroes are not without the discernment to perceive this; and when the husband resolves to flog them, they often throw themselves at the feet of the wife, and supplicate her mediation. But the ladies of Carolina, and particularly those of Charleston, have little tenderness for their slaves; on the contrary, they send both their men-slaves and women-slaves, for the most venial trespass, to a hellish mansion, called the Sugar-house: here a man employs inferior agents to scourge the poor negroes: a shilling for a dozen lashes is the charge: the man, or woman, is stripped naked to the waist; a redoubtable whip at every lash flays the back of the culprit, who, agonized at every pore, rends the air with his cries.


60 Davis, Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America, 89-91.
A similar practice of outsourcing this violence appeared in Barbados and was discussed in Chapter 4. The cruelty was especially apparent in another observation by the same traveler, who wrote that “It is not unusual to hear an elegant lady say, ‘Richard always grieves when Quasheebaw is whipped, because she suckled him!’”61 While relationships with their slaveholders could be used by the enslaved, there was no guarantee of protection and far greater opportunity for discipline.

Washington, though not the greatest champion of emancipation among the founding fathers, nonetheless became reflective about slavery during the 1790s.62 As early as 1778, he’d told Lund Washington that “for to be plain I wish to get quit of Negroes,” but he hoped, at that point, to trade slaves for land rather than free them without compensation.63

Three years later, Ona Judge, who, like Charlotte, often worked under Martha Washington’s direct supervision, ran away from the President’s household in Philadelphia upon learning that she was intended as a gift to Martha’s granddaughter, whose short temper and capriciousness Ona feared.64 But Ona was not the only one to run away and the others who ran from Mount Vernon in the 1790s were far more likely to be enslaved persons in positions within the household, or other positions of trust on the

61 Ibid, 86.
plantation, than they were to be field laborers. Hercules, Washington’s cook in
Philadelphia and at Mount Vernon who was also often employed in the manual labor
related to the house’s maintenance, ran away on February 21, 1797.65 Caesar, one of
Washington’s few enslaved overseers, ran away in 1798, but eventually returned.66
Christopher Sheels, Washington’s valet after William Lee could no longer work, made a
plan to run away with his wife but dropped the note he forged and Washington prevented
him from making his escape.67 These incidents and others prompted Washington to
observe in 1798 that “when I perceive but too clearly, that Negros are growing more &
more insolent & difficult to govern.”68

Washington responded to the increasing tension within the enslaved population by
hiring a more professional class of overseers than he had previously employed, noting
that “I am more inclined to incur the expence of an Overseer than to hazard the

65 “From George Washington to George Lewis, 13 November 1797,” Founders
Online, National Archives, last modified March 30, 2017,
pp. 469–470.]
66 Columbian Mirror and Alexandria Gazette, 14 April 1798.
67 “From George Washington to Roger West, 19 September 1799,” Founders
Online, National Archives, last modified March 30, 2017,
pp. 310–311.]
68 “From George Washington to Alexander Spotswood, 14 September 1798,” Founders
Online, National Archives, last modified March 30, 2017,
pp. 612–615.]
management, & peace of the place to a Negro.”69 He was not the only one. In 1800, Thomas Jefferson hired one of the most brutal overseers in the documentary record of Virginia, Gabriel Lilly. Jefferson hired Lilly in 1800, likely replacing longtime overseer Great George, who had died the previous November. Like Mount Vernon, Monticello was a collection of quarters, and beginning in the 1780s, Jefferson employed more than twenty overseers to manage his different properties. Unlike Washington, whose overseers’ bad behavior seemed primarily the excessive consumption of the products of his stills, Jefferson employed several overseers with reputations for cruelty even by the standards of the day.

Like Washington, Jefferson expressed distaste for physical punishment and often counseled leniency for slaves brought before him, but that does not seem to have prevented him from hiring men who were well known for their violence against the slaves in their charge. William Page left Jefferson’s employ after four years to work as an overseer at neighboring Pantops, where planter John Wayles Eppes found he could not hire slaves in the neighborhood because of “the terror of Page’s name.” William McGehee, who oversaw the Tufton farm for two years, was described as “tyrannical” and carried a gun out of fear that he would be attacked by the slaves.70 But neither of these men compared to Gabriel Lilly, who Jefferson employed for five years, writing upon


Lilly’s request for a raise that “Certainly I can never get a man who fulfills my purposes better than he does.”

Gabriel Lilly was born in Amherst, Virginia in 1773 to a landowning family that had been in Virginia since the beginning of settlement, the middle child of at least seven children. He married Judith Perry in 1796. Though no records exist of her having been previously married, Jefferson wrote to Thomas Mann Randolph in 1805 referring to Lilly having the aid of “his wifes son who lives with him,” making it unlikely to have been either of the Lilly’s own sons with Perry, born in 1798 and 1803, making them just seven and two in 1805. It was the white workers at Monticello who noted Lilly’s ill treatment of Jefferson’s slaves, describing various instances of whippings and the creation of fear among Monticello’s slaves by selling one young man further South in the dead of night. The best documented event was his whipping Critta Hemmings’s son James three time in a single day because he was too ill to raise his head for work.

In addition to hiring more brutal managers and overseers, Washington and other planters who did not build new houses (and some who did), began employing other material strategies to create distance between themselves and the enslaved and to control their movement within and around the plantation house. The best example of this was the introduction of bell systems, which first appeared for sale in 1749, but began appearing more often in Virginia houses after the American Revolution. In 1784 and 1785, Washington purchased a total of ten bells, seven of which went to Mount Vernon.

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72 The section above on Jefferson’s overseers at Mount Vernon comes from Holmes, “Contextualizing the 18th Century Overseer: The Overseer’s House, the Plantation Office, and the Management of the Virginia Plantation.”
Though their exact placement remains unclear, Benjamin Latrobe’s depiction of the house in 1797 shows a bell pull by the door at the north end of the piazza, while a painting an a glass plate from 1858 show three bells on the exterior of the south end of the piazza. These various images suggest that the bells were not installed within the house, but outside of it, intended to communicate the needs of the household with those outside of it, most likely those slaves who were part of the household whose work took them outside of the house and into its flanking buildings or the grounds around the mansion. Investigations of the mansion’s fabric during later restoration projects revealed that there were bells in at least two of the upstairs bedrooms and the small dining room on the first floor. In each case, a bell pull located beside the fireplace provided the means for ringing the bell.

Whereas the Barbadian plantation was a landscape resistant to the advance of revolution, in Virginia and South Carolina the plantation became a means to resist the potential radicalism of the American Revolution’s wake. Planters in Virginia, where the damage from British occupation appeared to have been less pronounced, were much more likely to be occupying the same spaces after the war leading them to find both social and material strategies to create greater distance between themselves and the enslaved such as employing a professional class of overseers and bell systems. In South Carolina, the British burned or otherwise damaged a large number of plantation houses, allowing planters to rebuild and giving them the opportunity to reorganize the plantation house in a way that helped them avoid the uncomfortable reality of slavery.

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Rebuilding

Among the prominent houses the British burned in South Carolina was Mepkin Plantation, home to Henry Laurens. Laurens had purchased Mepkin in 1762 and, with the advent of the Revolution, began divesting himself of his other enterprises to focus on planting. Following the war, Mepkin was in “deplorable stile” and when Laurens finally returned to the plantation in 1785, he occupied the overseer’s house while the main house was rebuilt. Laurens documented his rebuilding through his correspondence and at least two watercolors depict the house soon thereafter. Mepkin was part of a broader rebuilding in South Carolina, and, to a lesser extent, in Virginia after the war, and many planters who did not need to completely rebuild chose to alter their houses. In both Virginia and South Carolina, the use of neoclassical design elements visually expressed the planters’ commitment to their new republic. Though it was fashionable in Europe, its increased adoption by planters – especially those influenced by Thomas Jefferson’s interpretation of Palladian design – was more significant for its use on plantations where the stark contrast between Revolutionary rhetoric and Americans’ continued ownership of slaves was clearest. At the same time, planters choices in the design of new buildings in South Carolina communicated the way Carolinians were crafting a regional identity, at once declaring their enthusiastic support of the republic to whose cause they had initially been unwilling to commit while adapting elements of neoclassical design in a way that had more in common visually and materially with Caribbean architecture. As planters in

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Virginia and South Carolina responded to political and social change, planters in Barbados sought to recover from a devastating hurricane. While they continued to build on the same basic plan of the single (or double) house as they had after other such destructive events, they began rethinking how their houses related to the tropical environment.

Few houses more clearly reveal the changing ideas about architecture in Virginia than Monticello. Unlike Washington, who continued adapting an older structure, when Jefferson returned from France in the 1790s, he tore down most of the first house he built and began to build anew. Much has been written about Monticello and its stylistic contribution to Virginia architecture, but the most significant feature of its redesign was in the way Jefferson utilized architecture to hide the work of enslaved individuals within the household.

The initial phase of construction, begun in 1769 and ending in 1783 with Jefferson’s departure for France, produced a landscape that was comparable with other plantations from that period, but in rebuilding the house and its surrounding landscape between 1796 and 1809, Jefferson developed his own solution to the efforts being made by other planters to create distance between themselves and the enslaved who worked within their household, using a number of material strategies to move the enslaved and

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76 This section is indebted to Dell Upton's, “An American Icon.” It relies on Upton’s interpretation of Monticello and the information from Upton’s work that has since been incorporated into the tours of Monticello, as well as tours of Mulberry Row and the surrounding landscape.
77 Ibid.
their work out of sight while simultaneously making it easier for them to move throughout the house and its outbuildings.78

He accomplished this primarily by constructing underground spaces that connected the house to the work spaces of Mulberry Row, where the enslaved men and women who worked in the house lived alongside the plantation’s craftsmen. Historians have picked over the close relationship between Jefferson and the Hemmings family, and especially his sexual relationship with Sally Hemmings, relationships facilitated by these spaces.79 At Monticello, Jefferson, like Washington, also used material strategies that worked with architectural space to create distance between himself and the people on whom he depended, particularly in the dining room, where he would be most likely to be discussing subjects that he wanted to keep away from the enslaved.80 Here, enslaved workers could send bottles of wine up from the underground cellar for Jefferson’s butler, Burwell Colbert, to serve, while a revolving door in the adjacent pantry made it possible for them to dine in the French style, serving themselves from wheeled carts. First, however, the food was carried up the narrow staircase that connected the underground service spaces to the rest of the house.

While Jefferson’s fascination with technology and all things French likely influenced his use of these objects, it seems equally likely that he sought to use them to create at least one space within the house that could be made totally private since every other room flowed smoothly into one another; even when he used passages, they were

78 Ibid.
80 Upton, “An American Icon.”
short and easily circumvented. The rest of Monticello was built to facilitate work, often
with little consideration for anyone’s (other than Jefferson’s) comfort. The narrow
staircase connecting the underground – and Mulberry Row – to the main house led from
basement to attic and was one of a pair, whose steepness and narrowness defied all the
Palladian principles that Jefferson drew on for the design of the public areas of his house.
In his early drawings, Jefferson designed stairs that would have been incredibly difficult
to ascend even if one was not burdened with chamber pots, trays of food, or baskets of
clothing or linens to launder, as they were not only too narrow to allow people to pass
one another, but also changed height (rise) at irregular intervals. However, when James
Dinsmore set to work building the staircases in 1804, he regularized the stairs so that the
extant staircases, while still narrow, can be used without stubbing a toe on every other
step.

Sound as well as sight shaped Jefferson’s choices in designing and decorating
Monticello. He used floor cloths for the main room on the first floor, protecting it from
the mud inevitably carried in on visitors’ boots, but he wrote in 1805 that he preferred
“India matting for the passage above stairs.” These mats, woven of grass or reeds,
would more effectively muffle the sound of footsteps above stairs and being out of sight,
required less expense than purchasing carpets. In Jefferson’s choices, which reverberated
through Virginia plantation design, historians can see the way slavery, once put on

81 Holmes, “The Staircase.”
display as yet another kind of consumption, had been pushed out of sight and hearing by many planters. Nonetheless, Virginia planters still prized the gracious style of living the labor of the enslaved provided even as they sought ways to obscure the activity that produced it. In South Carolina, however, the use of the enslaved as part of a hospitable tableau persisted in a way that more closely resembled Barbados, even as planters began making tentative changes to the plantation house and its surrounding landscape.

Henry Laurens wrote in a February 1785 description of the plantation that “The British had battered my dwelling house in the course of their cannonade, but left a house capable of Repair, the Americans have torn down & carried off all the Sashes, doors, Windows, Chimney Bricks, wainscoting & even cut up great part of the Flooring, and left the house totally irreparable.”\(^84\) In a subsequent letter, he wrote that “faithless White Servants who were taught to believe I should never return & therefore acted as if they were entitled to a share in the general plunder” had perpetrated the bulk of the destruction.\(^85\)

It took more than a year for Laurens to begin rebuilding and he wrote in April 1786 that “the New House just mentioned is building in the Country, chiefly by my own Workmen with Materials taken from the Spot,”\(^86\) and he ordered a variety of goods from London the following month, particularly the materials to frame sash windows along with a number of different locks, and paints for both the interior and exterior. The locks for

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chambers as well as closets, 2 “Street folding Door Locks,” and locks for “offices below,”
provide insight into the way Laurens was becoming more concerned with
security, since in Charleston, earlier correspondence indicated that as Thomas Pinckney’s
letter to his sister in 1777 suggested, only the closet doors – closets for storage rather than
occupation in this instance – had locks on them.88

Even so, the house Laurens built at Mepkin followed the plan that most South
Carolina houses had used since the 1730s. By 1787, Laurens’s workmen had completed
the new house and he wrote in first in June that “the House is 46 feet square, 50 feet
perpendicular from the surface of the earth to the top of the Ridge board.”89 In his July
order of “elegant new invented paper hangings,” he described the interior of the house
having four rooms to each of two floors, with a passage above stairs and a stair hall ten
feet wide between the two chambers in the rear. The front of the house had the traditional
hall-chamber plan, with the main room absorbing the additional ten feet of width that
would have made up the passage in a central-passage plan house.90

87 “To Bridgen & Waller from Henry Laurens, May 19, 1786,” and “To William Bell
from Henry Laurens, February 7, 1785,” in David R. Chesnutt, and James Taylor, The
Papers of Henry Laurens: Vol. 16 (Columbia, S.C: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 2003),
653-658.
88 Thomas Pinckney, (1750-1828) to Harriott Pinckney Horry, 31 July 1777, in The
89 “To William Bell from Henry Laurens, June 21, 1787,” and “To William Bell from
Henry Laurens, February 7, 1785,” in David R. Chesnutt, and James Taylor, The Papers
of Henry Laurens: Vol. 16 (Columbia, S.C: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 2003), 713-
714.
90 “To James Woodmason from Henry Laurens, July 13, 1787,” and “To William Bell
from Henry Laurens, February 7, 1785,” in David R. Chesnutt, and James Taylor, The
Papers of Henry Laurens: Vol. 16 (Columbia, S.C: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 2003),
726-728.
Laurens’s decision to rebuild Mepkin on more or less the same plan as before the war was a choice made by other planters as well, even when their houses were in far greater disrepair. At John Pringle’s estate, known as Greenville before the war, then Susan’s Place for Pingle’s wife, and later as Runnymeade, a visitor in the 1790s noted that “this plantation is likewise without a house, that of the former occupier having been consumed by fire; on the foundation of this building, which remains unhurt, the new mansion is to be erected, which will be finished this summer.” Charles Fraser’s 1800 watercolor of Pringle’s plantation depicts a whitewashed, square two story house over a raised basement with a symmetrical façade and a porch that appears to extend the first floor of the house by a single bay on either side.

Figure 5.2 Charles Fraser, "Another View of Mepkin," May 1803 The Carolina Art Association Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston, South Carolina.

Fraser’s series of watercolors depicting the houses of some of South Carolina’s elite planters from his tour of the Lowcountry from 1795-1805 reveal the typical arrangement of the landscape around the house as well as the way planters in Carolina

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began crafting a regional identity through their architecture. Nearly every house had a raised basement and most rose two-stories above that. Every house also had some kind of porch, ranging from the large ones on both the front and rear of Edward Rutledge’s Richmond Plantation (likely built by his father-in-law Col. John Harleston after he purchased the plantation in 1769) to the curving double staircase that led to the front entrance at Mepkin, which Fraser painted in 1805. The extant house at Lewisfield Plantation (ca. 1774) bears a close resemblance to Fraser’s watercolors and, though the rear is configured more like that of Fairfield with two single story rooms flanking a stair tower, the plan of the front of the house resembles Henry Lauren’s design of Mepkin.

Unlike eighteenth century Virginia plantations, only one of the many landscapes Fraser painted in South Carolina depicted flankers – Robert Gibbes’ plantation, Peaceful Retreat, on St. Johns Island, likely built by his father long before his death in the 1760s. Writing of Middleton Place, built in 1741 and expanded in 1755, a traveler in the 1790s noted that “The out-buildings, such as kitchen, wash-house, and offices, are very capacious. The ensemble of these buildings calls to recollection the ancient English country-seats,” but such formal landscapes like that appear to have existed only when created by previous generations. More often, a few outbuildings stood nearby the house, but in no regular configuration, leaving an open expanse in front of the house. Every painting showed a fence of some kind, often painted white, that began on either side of

92 “Historical Notes,” The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine 14, no. 3 (1913): 171–74.
94 Charles W. Snell, “Middleton Place,” Nomination and Inventory (National Register of Historic Places, June 14, 1971); La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, Travels Though the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada, in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797; with an Authentic Account of Lower Canada, 589-593.
the house and encircled this yard, creating a visual and spatial division between the workspaces nearby and the front of the house; at Peaceful Retreat, the whitewashed fence clearly acts as a screen the same way the colonnade at Drayton Hall did, connecting the two flanking buildings to the main house and blocking the view of the agricultural landscape from the river.

Within these landscapes, the process that began in the 1760s continued as the household in South Carolina and Virginia continued to become more complex, though the difference between how planters used their household slaves differed significantly. A tutor named John Davis who lived with the Drayton family of what is now called Magnolia Plantation recounted traveling with the family between their homes: the townhouse in Charleston, the summer residence on Sullivan’s Island, the “venerable mansion” on the Ashley River, and the log-house house at Ocean Plantation in Coosohatchie. Though each place appeared to have some enslaved individuals who worked within the house only on occasion, a number of enslaved laborers appear to have moved from place to place with the family.

Being in the household of an elite family gave Davis the opportunity to see the work behind the display that many enslaved house workers represented. He wrote that “In the opulent families, there is always a negro placed on the look-out, to announce the coming of any visitant; and the moment a carriage, or horseman, is descried, each negro changes his every day garb for a magnificent suit of livery.” The porch was an implicit part of this tableau, providing a vantage point from which to see oncoming visitors at a greater distance, while conveniently locating the lookout near the door so that, “in a few moments a ragged fellow is metamorphosed into a spruce footman,” a process made
simpler by the fact that “the negroes wear no shirts.” The consequences of failing to present the house and planter in the best light could be dire, for Davis concluded this observation by noting, “And woe to them should they neglect it; for their master would think himself disgraced, and Sambo and Cuffy incur a severe flogging.”

The appearance of enslaved individuals when they were in and around the plantation house reflected the rigidity of the social structure within the household. In Virginia, liveries were common for enslaved persons – especially men – who worked within the household, while in South Carolina, Davis’s description seems to suggest that they were more situational to the particular work at a given moment. In Barbados, however, while not unknown, the lack of livery (or any dress at all) proved startling to some visitors. One visitor in the 1790s noted during a dinner in Barbados “a most filthy custom of the negroes,” who he had previously observed were given only the slightest of clothing if any at all, “of taking a plate from the side-board, before it is wanted, and standing with it under the arm, ready to give it the moment a change is required.” Though this gives the impression that he was impressed by the service he continued, writing that “On account of this dirty habit, we are obliged to attend with eagle watchfulness to avoid receiving as a clean one, a plate which a slave has been holding for some time closely pressed to, certainly, not the sweetest part of his naked skin.”

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95 Davis, Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America, 89-91.  
The prospect of a plate covered in sweat was revolting, but it was compounded by another offense to author’s senses. He wrote, “The attendants at the dinner table are very numerous. In addition to those of the family, almost every gentleman has his own slave; and, thus, it often happens that the room is quite crowded with sable domestics, whose surfaces emit an odour not less savory than the richest dishes of the board.” This posed an olfactory challenge to the author, who concluded by asking “How long it may be before our olfactories become reconciled to this high-seasoning of a West India feast I cannot conjecture but, at present, we find it extremely offensive.” 97 While slaves in Barbados, even in the formal setting of a dining room, appear to have been barely clothed and always unshod, in South Carolina, Henry Laurens noted that he gave some men “two or three pair a Year.” 98 For slaves working in Virginia and South Carolina plantation houses, appearances were important, even if they were hastily put together.

Advertisements in the South Carolina Gazette in the 1770s revealed the variety of different types of labor needed to make a household work: advertisements for washer women and seamstresses were common, but skilled gardeners, coachmen, lady’s maids, and valets began appearing as well. In Barbados, sale advertisements for plantations give a sense of who Barbadian planters believed were integral to a proper household: a butler, a cook, and a washer woman. 99 Probate inventories further reflect the way the Barbadian household became smaller during the 1780s and 1790s. At Haggatt Hall, the men

97 Ibid. Curiously, in the 1816 edition of Pinckard’s narrative, this episode is heavily edited to remove the description of the enslaved pressing the plates against their bodies.
98 “To William Bell from Henry Laurens, November 29, 1787,” and “To William Bell from Henry Laurens, February 7, 1785,” in David R. Chesnutt, and James Taylor, The Papers of Henry Laurens: Vol. 16 (Columbia, S.C: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 2003), 744-746
99 The Barbados Mercury [and] the Barbados Gazette, 1782-1789 (Bridgetown, Barbados, WI: Barbados Museum and Barbados Public Library).
inventorying David Parris’s estate in 1796 noted a number of skilled laborers whose work likely focused on the area around the house, but the household included the butler Dicky, the groom Devonshire, washer woman Molly Bamfield, “Mulattoes, in the House” Margaret and Nell, and the cook, Violet. Parris, one of the largest landowners on the island owned another estate that was inventoried, Carrington’s and Pashfield, where there was a groom, cook, two women “attendants in the house” including one mixed race woman, and four young boys: Dick and Quaco, both were “attendants in the house,” while Quaw was “with the Groom” and Charles was “with the Cook,” presumably learning those roles to take on in the future. Others followed this model as well. At Turner’s Hall, Sir William Fitzherbert had a cook, a seamstress, and two women who worked in the house, as well as “Tom Dunco Mulatto...Key Keeper.”

Though these households were smaller than that at Mount Vernon, they reflect a similar divide in gender and race, with half the household (or more) usually being female, though the male butler retained authority. In South Carolina and Virginia, this was complicated by the increasingly common presence of white female housekeepers; though housekeepers appeared in narrative accounts of Barbados, George Pinckard and John Augustine Waller, both describe the position as one designed to facilitate sexual relationships between masters and enslaved black women that were, according to

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100 “Inventory of David Parris at Haggatt Hall, 1796,” Barbados Department of Archives.  
101 “Inventory of David Parris at Carrington’s and Pashfield, 1796,” Barbados Department of Archives.  
102 “Inventory of Sir William Fitzherbert, 1794,” Barbados Department of Archives.
Pinckard at least and confirmed by legacies to enslaved women and children in wills at the end of the eighteenth century, endorsed by Barbadian society.\textsuperscript{103}

The destruction caused by the Great Hurricane of 1780, while widespread, led to rebuilding on the same plan, thereby replicating earlier social and spatial arrangements, but with several modifications intended to better equip buildings to withstand the forceful winds. William Senhouse, writing of the hurricane’s destruction, made several “observations I think are worth recording, in case of similar events in future.” At the Grove, the house’s “four lofty gabels” had all collapsed onto the upper floors, which could not bear the weight and fell inward. Though he noted that the hurricane had ruined many other houses, he was surprised, in particular, by the number that sustained only minor damage. Some houses “had been preserv’d, merely by all the windows having been open – for then the wind, passing easily thro’ did no other damage – But when the wind ward windows were forc’d open and all the others shut, the wind finding no passage, the Roof is carried away in an instant & the House in all liklyhood destroy’d.”\textsuperscript{104}

He does not clarify whether the commonly used jalousies – slatted wooden shutters – played a similar role in ameliorating the wind’s effects.

\textsuperscript{103} John Augustine Waller and R. Stennett, \textit{A Voyage in the West Indies: Containing Various Observations Made During a Residence in Barbadoes, and Several of the Leeward Islands; with Some Notices and Illustrations Relative to the City of Paramarabo, in Surinam. with Engravings} (London: Printed for Sir Richard Phillips, and Co., Bride Court, Bridge Street, 1820); a discussion of these relationships, particularly the relationship between Joshua Speed and his housekeeper Ana Statia, can be found in Daniel A. Livesay, “Children of Uncertain Fortune: Mixed-Race Migration from the West Indies to Britain, 1750-1820” (Ph.D. diss, University of Michigan, 2010).

As Barbadians began to rebuild, Senhouse wrote that they eschewed gables, possibly accounting for the large number of mansard roofs on extent structures.\(^\text{105}\) He chose not to use them at the Grove, but took his efforts to hurricane-proof the walls of the house a step further, writing, “not only this but the wind ward room was built (ie the Eastern end) of a circular form – adding no less to the strength than, at the same time to the beauty of the Building.”\(^\text{106}\) While Senhouse did relocate the slave quarter at the Grove, it appears that few planters gave any consideration to the way the hurricane’s destructive force impacted the buildings that housed the enslaved. George Pinckard described the architecture of their houses in the 1790s “as rude as it is simple. A roof of plantain leaves, with a few rough boards, nailed to the coarse pillars which support it, forms the whole building. The leeward-side is commonly left in part open, and the roof projects to some distance over the door-way, forming a defence against both the sun and the rain.” His description was similar to Robert Poole’s from the 1740s and the engravings published in John Augustine Waller’s 1816 account are strikingly similar. The similarity was extended by Pinckard’s note that despite “the great heat experienced by Europeans, the negroes feel the evenings chilly, and we frequently see them crowding round the bit of fire which they make for cooking their supper. This is commonly in the

\(^{105}\) Samuel Hyde’s account of the next major hurricane in 1831 described these roofs, which hung over the walls, being torn off by the winds. Between Senhouse’s account and those from 1831, it seems likely that the parapets that became a distinctive part of Barbadian architecture dated to after this period since the ones appearing on early additions seem – from examination of extant structures at Colleton Plantation and Gold Ridge Plantation in May-June 2014 – to have been later additions. Samuel Hyde, *Account of the Fatal Hurricane, by Which Barbados Suffered in August 1831: To Which Is Prefixed a Succinct Narrative of the Convulsions of the Elements, Which at Several Times Have Visited and Injured the West Indian Islands* (Bridgetown, 1831).

open air near to the door of the hut; but they sometimes place it upon the middle of the
dirt floor within the building,” as the Waller engraving depicts the open side of the
house, the overhanging roof, and the interior fire.107

Despite these considerations, Senhouse appeared to have little incentive to change
the plan of the house, which, despite its ultimate failure under the hurricane’s winds,
protected his family and their slaves. In South Carolina, too, planters at the end of the
eighteenth century noted the way they had to take the climate into consideration, but
rarely changed the plan of the house further than they had already. Henry Laurens, adding
the finishing touches to Mepkin, wrote that “The Chimney Backs you sent are calculated
for Climates where long & very large fires are necessary, In this Country a back of 15, or
16. Inches wide & 20. to 24 Inches high is sufficient, however since these are come, they
shall be used, the only Evil is the difference of Expence which will be compensated by
the grandeur of appearance.”108 While he chose to use the overlarge fire backs, knowing
that they would make an impressive display, Laurens inadvertently illustrated the two
driving forces for planters in all three regions during this period: the environment and the
conspicuous display of wealth. These factors affected the enslaved in small in large ways
by creating work for them to do within the house, shaping the way they moved through

107 Pinckard, Notes on the West Indies: Written During the Expedition Under the
Command of the Late General Sir Ralph Abercromby: Including Observations on the
Island of Barbadoes, and the Settlements Captured by the British Troops, Upon the Coast
of Guiana; Likewise Remarks Relating to the Creoles and Slaves of the Western Colonies,
and the Indians of South America: With Occasional Hints, Regarding the Seasoning, or
Yellow Fever of Hot Climates (1806), 114-115.
108 “To William Bell from Henry Laurens, November 29, 1787,” and “To William Bell
from Henry Laurens, February 7, 1785,” in David R. Chesnutt, and James Taylor, The
Papers of Henry Laurens: Vol. 16 (Columbia, S.C: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 2003),
744-746.
the house to go about their work, and the way their behavior was controlled and surveilled.

Conclusion

The period immediately prior to the Revolution and the decades after it reveal more clearly than any other point, the way plantation architecture shaped relationships between the enslaved and those who kept them in bondage. It was also the period when the distinctions between Barbados, Virginia, and South Carolina were most evident. Virginia planters increasingly used architecture to conceal and direct the movement of the enslaved through the landscape. Though South Carolinians began doing this, their houses still remained much more open, though the enslaved did not have nearly as much freedom of movement in and around the house as enslaved laborers on Barbadian plantations did. While some Barbadian planters like William Senhouse took the opportunity presented by the hurricane of 1780 to move the enslaved settlement further from his house, travel narratives suggest that most enslaved persons still lived in close proximity to their enslavers. At the same time, they had a comparatively significant amount of control when it came to constructing their houses and settlements and operated with greater autonomy within these spaces than enslaved persons in North America, especially in Virginia where planters began hiring larger numbers of more professional overseers to maintain order and oversee production.

The houses built (or rebuilt) in all three colonies during the last quarter of the eighteenth century laid the groundwork for yet another transformation of slavery and its lived experience during the beginning of the nineteenth century. In Virginia, plantation
architecture would come to illustrate the rising tensions over slavery, while South Carolinians increasingly resisted changing the way the house worked, even as they used architecture to visually affiliate themselves with classical periods and at the same time drew on the history of ancient Greece and Rome to support their own belief in slavery’s correctness. During the decades after the beginning of the nineteenth century, Barbadians would learn that social practice and the built environment had worked in tandem to create spaces that resisted both ideological revolution and slave rebellions when the first major uprising in more than a century wreaked more destruction on the island than the hurricane of 1780 and set them on the path to emancipation.
CONCLUSION

Q. Does a negro prefer working in the house or in the field?
A. In the house no doubt.

- John Brathwaite, Agent of Barbados, addressing the Privy Council. February 21, 1788

In 1788, the Privy Council brought the agent of Barbados, John Brathwaite, to testify before them over several days in February and March, describing the treatment, work, and condition of the enslaved men and women who worked in Barbados. Their primary objective, made clear by the last phase of testimony about how Barbadian sugar production compared to that of other colonial enterprises, was to determine whether slavery – or at least slavery as it had been practiced up to that point in Barbados – was the most effective means of producing wealth for the empire. Brathwaite was part of a growing number of Barbadian planters who had accumulated sufficient wealth to relocate to England, leaving their plantations under the management of overseers and attorneys.

Because he was a planter, Brathwaite seemed to be the person who could offer an accurate representation of the conditions in Barbados, and all evidence suggests that he did so to the best of his abilities. Near the beginning of his testimony he asserted that he was “convinced that freedom at present would not alter the condition of the negroes in Barbados for the better.” He believed that “until they are brought to have artificial want and become what every well disposed man would wish them to be, they would not, were they left to themselves [to] work for pay, but be idle and vicious.” As it was, he saw “no medium between compelling them to labor and leaving them exposed to all the evils that
spring from idleness.” Nonetheless, despite the violent treatment he went on to describe later in his testimony, he believed that “in their present state, everything out to be done which the master can afford and it would be proper for the slave to receive.”

The spaces planters and the enslaved occupied shaped their sense of how they related to one another, their ideas about slavery’s role in eighteenth century society, and the way they understood their own identity within the context of the British empire. The first chapter argued that the construction of permanent and impressive houses played an integral role in establishing particular planters’ political and social authority during the seventeenth century. These houses, built using funds generated by the labor of enslaved Africans as well as their own labor and sweat, became important signifiers as Virginia and Barbados transitioned from their initial settlement phase to permanent colonies with a profitable monoculture.

More permanent settlements and more permanent buildings at the beginning of the eighteenth century coincided with an increased importation of enslaved Africans and the establishment of natural increase of the enslaved population at the beginning of the eighteenth century in Virginia. Carolina, newly settled in the first chapter, launched itself from being a supply colony into rice production, and as Virginia and Barbados had with the establishment of tobacco and sugar monoculture, they consolidated this wealth in impressive, permanent houses. Barbados, in the meantime, had lost its own momentum and as its economy stagnated and political tension ran high, few Barbadians built new houses and those who had retained them from previous generations did just what they

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could to maintain them. Social upheaval and widespread mismanagement meant that the possibility of establishing a legacy for the next generation became increasingly unlikely. Instead of building that legacy, most planters did what they could to hang on to what they had.

The second and third chapter sit in the midst of these tensions, considering the way planters’ choices were shaped by the climate, by the availability and accessibility of materials and labor, by their own determination to retain a sense of their Englishness, and by the need to learn how to manage enslaved labor within their houses. In Virginia and South Carolina (separated from North Carolina in 1729), planters retained the earlier, more open hall-chamber plan even though the exterior of their houses proclaimed an adherence to popular Georgian design, marked by classical stylistic elements and rigid symmetry. In Virginia, planters slowly began adopting the central passage to create more spatial and social divisions within the house, while South Carolinians continued to be influenced by the Barbadian single house, which usually divided the ground floor into one large room and one small room, like the hall-chamber plan.

Chapter four moved from this period in which little changed within the house itself, into the 1740s when the construction of large new houses by the planter class in Virginia and South Carolina (and even, occasionally in Barbados) revealed the solidification of architectural types, as well as the way the labor of enslaved domestic workers changed in response. Barbadians, even when they built new, continued to build variations on the single house, and the labor of the enslaved within these houses changed very little. South Carolinians, finally beginning to increase the interior divisions of the house, and Virginians, who had committed to the double pile, central passage plan and its
variations, both increased the number of enslaved individuals working within the house, as well as the specialization of their tasks.

In South Carolina, this was especially clear in a comparison of advertisements from *The South Carolina Gazette*. In the 1730s and 1740s, advertisements appeared that made it clear that the enslaved individuals who worked in the house had not always done so and were expected to do a wider variety of labor. In 1744, Peter Tailser advertised Guy, “formerly employ'd in keeping and hunting Cattle, and Plantation Work, but of late Years has been used to all Manner of House Work, which he is very capable of performing, and likewise understands very well the taking Care of Horses,” while in 1739 Thomas Gates advertised a young enslaved woman who was “fit either for the Field or House, being used to both, can milk very well, wash and iron, dress Victuals, and do any thing that is necessary to be done in a House.”² By the 1770s, advertisements appeared both seeking and advertising “waiting boys,” and one 1771 described a woman’s qualifications noting that she “has been used to wait upon a lady...an excellent seamstress, remarkable for washing and getting up small linen.”³

By this point, though planters in Virginia and South Carolina had tried to recreate the labor organization of the British household (often relying on white housekeepers to oversee the enslaved staff, while the enslaved butler or housekeeper was the authority in Barbadian households), their architectural choices and decisions about work within the

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² *The South Carolina Gazette*, February 27, 1744. *The South Carolina Gazette*, February 1, 1739.
house reveal the increasing distance between their imagined British identity and their lived experience as slaveholders.

Throughout all of this, the Barbadian built environment changed little, and despite the fact that they lived far differently from the British peers they considered their social equals, the persistence of the seventeenth century and the lack of change to the social organization of the household, convinced them that they were still as British as anyone in London. The planters themselves, though maintaining order amongst the enslaved through extreme violence and manipulation, convinced themselves that they were feudal masters to the enslaved, who they could not imagine actually turning against them.

In the aftermath of the American Revolution, planters in Virginia and South Carolina returned to a largely unchanged built and social environment that was incompatible with the rhetoric of liberty. Virginians especially noted the increased intractability of their enslaved workers, and responded by creating greater spatial and social distance between themselves and the enslaved. Bells, dumb waiters, and eventually, dedicated service spaces and stairs, would become tools for controlling the movement of the enslaved.

In Barbados, sugar production dramatically increased beginning in the 1780s, more and more planters followed Brathwaite to London leaving their plantations under the management of overseers and attorneys whose goal was to produce profit for the planter at all cost. By 1816, Barbadian planters would learn the cost of upsetting the social order without changing the built environment to accommodate that change. Led by a ranger from Bayley’s plantation in St. Philip, Bussa’s Rebellion began on April 14, 1816, wreaking destruction across the island. Hilary McD Beckles work has shown that
this was in part because planters, many now living off the profits of their plantations in England as absentees, had become deaf and blind to rising dissatisfaction amongst their enslaved laborers. On the evening the rebellion began, one planter wrote that he “did sleep with my chamber door open, and if I had possessed ten thousand pounds in my house, I should not have had any more precaution, so well convinced I was of their [slaves’] attachment.”

Bussa’s Rebellion, though quickly put down, forced planters to acknowledge that what had worked no longer did and the British government began taking steps toward emancipation.

In Virginia, changes to the plantation landscape in the 1790s (for which the groundwork had been laid between 1740 and 1760) pushed the work of the enslaved out of sight and continued into the nineteenth century, culminating in houses like Berry Hill, where the management of the house was entirely dependent on slaves whose work was hidden in a network of dedicated service spaces. In South Carolina, the persistence of older house forms did not last long into the nineteenth century, but in the way the planters went back and forth on particular features – never committing to back staircases or central passages, for example – it becomes clear that they were considering how best to serve the multiple purposes of the plantation house as a home, a work space, and part of the complicated machinery of eighteenth century social organization. These changes, begun in the eighteenth century, began the process of transforming the institution of slavery once again, at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

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The slave society that developed in all three colonies during the course of the eighteenth century was extraordinarily oppressive. While Virginian and South Carolinian planters continuously created greater distance between themselves and the enslaved, both architecturally and increasingly through the employment of other whites as housekeepers and overseers who acted as a social buffer, Barbadian planters kept the enslaved close, so that they could better observe their every move and fortify the sense of codependence. Signs of favor to enslaved domestic laborers like better housing, better food, and better clothes, reinforced this dependence, while the proximity between the slaveholder and the enslaved meant that violence was just one wrong step away.

Nonetheless, slaves in all three places pushed back, and enslaved laborers who worked in houses and the craftsmen who worked near them, were far more likely to run away. Enslaved domestic workers, like George Washington’s seamstress, Charlotte, used their closeness to their masters or mistresses to gain advantages for themselves or to take revenge on those who harmed them, as Charlotte did when she turned Martha Washington against Anthony Whiting, the plantation manager who brutally beat her. When Charlotte’s son, a light-skinned, blue-eyed sixteen year old known to her as Billy though Washington changed his name to Marcus, ran away from Mount Vernon after being made a waiter in the house, he likely used his knowledge of the Washingtons’ affairs to aid in his escape. The public was warned by the advertisement that it was “very probable he may attempt to pass for one of those negroes that did belong to the late Gen. Washington, and whom Mrs. Washington intends in the fall of this year to liberate.” But since Billy’s mother was part of Martha Washington’s dowry, he belonged to the Custis
estate and was destined to be sent to one of her grandchildren upon Washington’s death.\textsuperscript{6} Not everyone who ran away or pushed against their bondage was successful, but those who worked in the household often found themselves in the position to do so if they were smart, careful, and persistent.

In Barbados, Bussa’s Rebellion was a wakeup call for the both the British government and the Barbadian planter class. A census of the enslaved of Barbados was taken thereafter on several occasions so that when slavery’s end arrived, the government would compensate the planters. An “apprenticeship period” served as a delay, ostensibly helping enslaved Barbadians adjust to freedom, but it quickly ended, and during the nineteenth century the Barbadian built landscape finally began to change.\textsuperscript{7}

Periods of transition occurred on Virginia and South Carolina plantations throughout the eighteenth century, as planters struggled to reconcile their imagined British identity with their lived experience as slaveholders. And as slaveholders negotiated this position, they used architectural change to control the movement of the enslaved. The plantation house, in its familiar form in Virginia and South Carolina, may have been the social stage the planters occupied, but it was also designed to shape the experience of the enslaved, and they sometimes used it to negotiate their own position within that world.

\textsuperscript{6} Philadelphia Gazette, September 22, 1800.
\textsuperscript{7} Beckles, \textit{Black Rebellion in Barbados: The Struggle Against Slavery: 1627-1838}. 
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