1984

Patrician culture, public ritual and political authority in Virginia, 1680-1740

Carter L. Hudgins

College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences

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PATRICIAN CULTURE, PUBLIC RITUAL AND POLITICAL AUTHORITY IN VIRGINIA, 1680-1740

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

PH.D. 1984

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PATRICIAN CULTURE, PUBLIC RITUAL AND
POLITICAL AUTHORITY IN VIRGINIA, 1680–1740

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Carter L. Hudgins
1984
APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Approved, April 1984

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I did this for Donna,  
whether she liked it or not  
and without whom it would have been done sooner,  
and for Carter and Cary,  
who often told me I should have been doing something else.
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PREFACE

There is deeply embedded in the historiography of early Virginia the notion that the material accoutrements of gentility appeared in the colony only after a cohesive social and political elite emerged in the first decades of the eighteenth century. According to this explanation, individual fortunes built on the profits planters extracted from tobacco and slaves coaxed the trappings of a distinctive patrician material culture to Virginia. This dissertation takes a somewhat different view of why the colony’s wealthier men left rambling, earth-hugging, tar-smeared, clapboard-covered wooden houses in the second quarter of the eighteenth century for symmetrical, classically-inspired dwellings and changed their notions about what was most appropriate to put inside them. The awesome brick mansions Virginia’s eighteenth century gentlemen constructed along the banks of the colony’s great rivers and their often sumptuous furnishings were not merely the result of the successful political rise of the great planters; they were, in large part, a cause of it.

This dissertation analyzes the transformation of Virginia’s houses and domestic furnishings between 1680 and 1740. The artifacts that comprised the material culture of late seventeenth and early
eighteenth century Virginia, from coaches and couches to plates and periwigs, are the object of the analysis that follows. This study, however, has a broader purpose than to demonstrate that the colony's "persons of distinction" transformed their lifestyle dramatically in the first decades of the eighteenth century while the day-to-day routines of Virginia's middling and poorer citizens changed less profoundly. Material things that men and women owned in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century Virginia are the center of this study because artifacts are a way to get at the culture of early Virginia.

For the purposes of this study, the culture of late seventeenth and early eighteenth century Virginia is broadly defined as the learned, patterned rules that colonists employed, consciously and unconsciously, to adapt to each other and life in the Tidewater. Historians have studied houses, most of which vanished long ago, and furnishings once strewn inside and around them to catch glimpses of how living standards in the Chesapeake changed. But these same artifacts, the fundamental props of the daily routines of Virginia's households, also provide access to the ideas that moved behind everyday life in the colony. Expensive suits, periwigs, and dress swords, for example, provide clues to the notions wealthy planters had about their social rank. Shared beds in small houses disclose something about notions of privacy. It is here, at the level of artifacts as a link between values and behavior, that this study concentrates.
By the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century there were clear signs that some Virginians had departed from the colony's common cultural tradition and organized their lives with a parallel, but distinct, set of ideas. This study is primarily concerned with the origins of this cultural fission—the divergence of planters who adopted new patrician ways from patterns of living their fathers and grandfathers had imposed on Virginia's landscape. In the last decade historian Rhys Isaac has described the Revolutionary struggle in Virginia as a clash between the colony's gentry—wine-drinking, horse-racing, bewigged and brocaded planters who lived in classically-inspired brick mansions—and humbler folk—families who lived in smaller traditional houses, eschewed the frivolities of drink and dance, and expressed disdain for men who professed to enjoy them—who guarded Virginia's version of English traditional culture. Isaac portrays the rise of political tensions between these cultural traditions during the last half of the eighteenth century, but by then both cultures were already well developed. This dissertation explores the origins of Virginia's cultural division and argues that the two cultures, patrician and traditional, animated political tensions throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. What follows is, then, an analysis of how and why Virginia's once homogenous traditional culture diverged into two distinct cultures, each of which had its own characteristic material patterns, and how this cultural fission affected the colony's political style.
Much of what is known about the variety and complexity of the material culture of early Virginia is the result of recent archaeological research. Excavation at Corotoman, Robert "King" Carter's Lancaster County home plantation on the northern shore of the Rappahannock River, was one of half a score of major projects in the 1970s that yielded intimate glimpses of the material surroundings of everyday life in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The fieldwork at Corotoman has ended. What was found buried there, however, posed questions about the social, cultural, and political implications of changes in material life in Lancaster and elsewhere in the colony. Having detailed archaeological information about life at Corotoman is an important reason why Robert Carter is one of the principal characters in this study. But that is not the only reason. From the 1690s until he died in 1732 Robert Carter held Virginia's most coveted public offices, from county justice of the peace to governor's councilor. That is not to say that Carter, as a planter and politician, was typical of his times. He was anything but that. No one in Lancaster County, and perhaps no one in Virginia, was as wealthy as he. Few men in the colony began life with as many advantages and privileges, and not many achieved as much. Yet Carter's experiences were not unique, and understanding him is useful for understanding his contemporaries.

Robert Carter's story is in many ways the story of the generation of planters who rose to political and social prominence in the last years of the seventeenth century and established an
oligarchy that ruled Virginia until the Revolution. These men played out their lives against a complex set of changes in the way they built their houses and furnished them. Robert Carter's career and his spending illuminates the world of Virginia's wealthy planters. Part of the elites's shared experience was their decision to embrace the trappings of the new patrician culture. Explaining why they did so and how they employed new artifacts to legitimize their political and social hegemony is the purpose of this study.

There is irony in the gentry's decision to embrace a new patrician culture. The great mansions Virginia's wealthy men built after 1730 are truly a remarkable architectural achievement. These houses and their furnishings have long been considered the best symbol of Virginia's so-called "Golden Age." The Tidewater's mansions are a fitting symbol for the success of the elite, but they are also symbolic of the decline of the economic and political fortunes of almost everybody else. While wealthy planters dribbled brick mansions through the Tidewater, they reaped fortunes with the labors of unfree black men and women, lifelong tenancy became a greater and greater likelihood for many of the colony's free whites, and the chances that men who arrived in the colony as indentured servants might rise to modest affluence dwindled.
NOTES

PREFACE


3. The excavations at Corotoman were sponsored by the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission's Research Center for Archaeology and funded by grants from the Department of Interior and the Foundation for Historic Christ Church, Irvington, Virginia. The notes pertaining to the excavations are held by the Research Center for Archaeology at Yorktown, Virginia. See Carter L. Hudgins, Alice Guerrant, et al, *Archaeology in the "King's" Realm: Excavations at Robert Carter's Corotoman, Lancaster County, Virginia* (Yorktown, Virginia, 1982).
I did not know it at the time, but this project began almost ten years ago. Dr. William M. Kelso, then Commissioner of the Virginia Research Center for Archaeology where I was a staff archaeologist, sent me in the summer of 1976 to excavate Richneck Plantation in Newport News, Virginia, dispatched me the following spring to Corotoman in Lancaster County on Virginia's Northern Neck, and then told me to explain what I had found buried at both sites. My interpretation of the meaning of ruined foundation walls and other, smaller things found in the ground at Richneck and Corotoman and what Virginians on other plantations tore down and threw away in the seventeenth and eighteenth century follows below. Many people, some in ways that they may not be aware, have contributed to my efforts to reveal something of the relationship between material things and the social, political, and economic events that shaped life in the early Chesapeake. Some of them I have thanked in the footnotes that mark the pages ahead. To others I would like to express my thanks in a more direct way.

At the Department of History of the College of William and Mary, Professor James P. Whittenburg was supportive and directed the dissertation through to completion. Professor John E. Selby of the
History Department, Professor Anne Yentsch of the Anthropology Department at William and Mary, and Kevin E. Kelly of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation provided well-deserved criticism as members of my dissertation committee. Although they were not officially active in this project, Professors Edward P. Crapol and James A. Axtell have, in ways both profound and pleasurable, shaped my historical vision.

I also am grateful to Jerome S. Handler, Raymond C. Bailey, A.G. Roeber, and Lois Green Carr for their criticism of early versions of sections of the dissertation when they were presented as papers at meetings of the Society for Historical Archaeology, the Southern Historical Association, and the American Historical Association.

I owe a special debt to my mentor in historical archaeology, Dr. William M. Kelso, now resident archaeologist of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation. He not only raised many of the questions addressed in this study, he also secured grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Foundation for Historic Christ Church, the Federal Highway Trust, and the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service of the Department of Interior that supported the archaeological studies that are a part of the evidence analyzed below.
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ABSTRACT

During the political squabbles in Virginia that alienated royal governors, burgesses, councilors, and freeholders from one another between 1680 and 1740, middling planters displayed a tendency to ignore the wisdom of their social and economic betters and sway the colony toward a new political style. When it suited their aspirations, governors, councilors, and burgesses plunged into the business of wooing the freeholders and thus encouraged the electoral ascendency of the colony's middling men, but at other times they viewed the changes in Virginia's political etiquette suspiciously and objected to what they interpreted as a dangerous trend toward too much popular participation in politics. Politically embattled gentlemen feared any decline in the deference they and their fathers had come to expect from their constituents, and they looked for ways to consolidate, legitimize, and sometimes regain their claims to deference and thus power.

In the seventeenth century the fiat of wealth was accepted as sufficient proof of political legitimacy, but in the context of the profound reordering of social relationships that accompanied the rise of black slavery in the Chesapeake, material things emerged as an important, even essential, prop to any claim to political or social leadership. Virginians and their English cousins had always used material things as a device by which they could measure, compare, and classify each other and gain some sense of whether another household's links to their own were fragile and unconnected or knit with the knot of collateral concern. Material possessions had long served as an essential measure of a man's political "worthiness," but in the 1720s the gentry feared that the traditional instruments of prestige—generous holdings in land, labor, and livestock—had lost much of their clout and that the distinctions between rich and poor had grown too thin. In the absence of any persuasive distinctions between the social origins of the colony's emerging native-born elite and the "middling sorts," and as blacks emerged by about 1720 as the colony's permanent poor, the gentry sought new ways to distinguish inferiors from superiors. New material possessions filled that need, and new distinctions in dress, housing, diet, and burial customs began to re-clarify the boundaries between the colony's humbler residents and its nascent elite. The effect of the distinctions between the new, elite culture and the older, traditional culture shared by everyone else was the legitimization of the gentry's claim to exercise political power over their fellows and the preservation of their social and political hegemony.
PATRICIAN CULTURE, PUBLIC RITUAL AND POLITICAL AUTHORITY IN VIRGINIA, 1680-1740
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY, AND THE MATERIAL LIFE OF
EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY VIRGINIA

By now, most students of the colonial Chesapeake are aware that platoons of historical archaeologists are busily dusting-off bits and pieces of things earlier generations in Virginia and Maryland tore down and threw away. Not since the 1930s has so much digging been done by so many. In the early 1970s archaeologists from three Williamsburg-based institutions and the St. Mary's City Commission in Maryland initiated a renewed search for buried things in the Chesapeake and, after a decade of intensive fieldwork, have excavated half a score of major sites and investigated several hundred more. Archaeologist Ivor Noel Hume's search for a "lost" seventeenth century settlement on the banks of the James River excited the readers of National Geographic and was the most widely known of the excavations. But Noel Hume was not alone. Other archaeologists pitched their tents and uncovered what had long been buried at plantation and town sites throughout the Chesapeake. Tons of artifacts, identified, catalogued, and stored in archaeological laboratories, attested to the archaeologist's industry and the vigor of the archaeological study of the region. Nowhere during the 1970s was the archaeology of colonial America more active.
Trowel and shovel research in the Tidewater counties that face the Chesapeake Bay and its broad tributaries shows no signs of waning. Historical study of the region also entered an "up" cycle in the 1970s, and it too shows no indications of slowing down. Neighbors for more than a decade, the Chesapeake’s historians and archaeologists have, curiously, had little to say to each other.

Each side has accused the other of being coy. But after all was said and done in the 1970s, often in vituperative meetings between young scholars in the two camps, dirt-bound researchers expressed deep disappointment that their discoveries, and they were many, had not been rapidly woven into the "new" history of the Chesapeake. They had been glad to borrow from the historians. Why had the historians not returned the compliment? The troubled silence that hung over the ill-defined boundary between the two crafts drifted in because the archaeologists seldom told their historical brethren which of the things they had discovered in the ground were important and which were not. In addition, the results of most excavations remained unpublished, and those that were published contained timid interpretations that seemed of little use to the historians.

This chapter briefly reviews the tenuous marriage of historical and archaeological research in the Chesapeake in the 1970s. It also discusses how the archaeological and historical study of material things can elicit a richer picture of life in early Virginia, and it presents the theoretical assumptions that undergird later chapters.
II

During the 1970s press releases regularly announced the discoveries in Virginia and Maryland of dozens of seventeenth and eighteenth century archaeological sites. Most often these reports routinely summarized research in progress, but occasionally a genuine hubbub accompanied the rare discovery of a unique artifact like a medieval close helmet or the skeleton of a man purportedly slain in the Indian massacre of 1622. All the noise made the historians wonder why so much fuss was raised about so little. Broken crockery, the historians said, clarified only minor details in otherwise well-known and thoroughly-studied events. Indeed, that seemed to be the view of some of the archaeologists themselves. One of the most active and respected of archaeologists working in the Chesapeake, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's Resident Archaeologist Ivor Noel Hume, even suggested that the enormous amounts of material evidence collected in the 1970s made archaeologists the curators of the trivia of Chesapeake history.

There was, however, a kinder view. Scholars with feet on both sides of the rift that separated historians and archaeologists began to make sense of all the digging and to weave what was found in the ground into the new social history of the Chesapeake. A long-awaited study of the vernacular architecture of the seventeenth-century Chesapeake by Cary Carson and others drew on information gathered by historians and archaeologists. This analysis of house-building in early Virginia and Maryland illuminated how English men and women adapted their traditional culture to the exigencies of life
in the colonies and indicated that information extracted from the ground revealed aspects of life past documents sometimes did not. The sin of noncooperation between archaeologists and historians was, it seemed, absolved.

Carson's interpretation of the Chesapeake's early vernacular architecture proved the benefits of marrying archaeological and historical research. The benefits of such interdisciplinary research, however, extended beyond the obvious addition of a new source of historical information. Material things, Carson argued, should be looked to as a source of questions about the past that might not arise from study of manuscript sources alone. Carson's statement repeated the argument, made by historian Marc Bloch half a century ago, that cultures manifest themselves in concrete forms which can be observed and analyzed like biological or physical phenomena. The objects that archaeologists unearth, the buildings architectural historians measure, and the household furnishings historians find listed in probate inventories were once the backdrop of everyday life. Men and women built houses and acquired other possessions as they manipulated their environment, and material things, whether found in the ground or encountered in documents, are proof not only of their work but are the best evidence we have of the ideas that guided them. Material possessions reveal the shared images, linguistic codes, expressive gestures, and social customs that allowed Virginians, as historians James Henretta has observed, "to interpret reality and to affect it." The material accoutrements of life in early Virginia changed only as the ideas the colonists held about them changed, and an analysis of
how patterns in everyday material life changed reveals the world view of early eighteenth century Virginia. 

III

Dramatic architectural changes transformed the landscape of Virginia in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. Classically-inspired brick dwellings, some built two stories and higher, replaced smaller wooden ones at the colony's largest plantations, and brick also supplanted wooden parish churches and county courthouses. By the time large, brick mansions jostled older wooden houses aside in the 1730s and assumed a tentative place in Virginia's countryside, colonists had waited nearly a century for them. Virginia's first boosters promised prospective investors and settlers that the colony's natural splendor and fertility would make them rich and allow everyone who settled there to live like gentlemen. Quick fortunes and good lives did not materialize, however, and to inveigle more men to go there the sponsoring Virginia Company of London pitched new promises and new admonishments. Clergymen with close Company connections preached public sermons, often to the already converted, from the Biblical text "Cast thy bread upon the water and it shall be returned to you" at London and Bristol as well as in Virginia to remind squeamish investors that a good thing might take time to come to fruition and that God rewarded men of patience. Some men signed on, but many more, warned about how fragile and temporary an Englishman's future was in the colony, stayed home. To enlist these stay-at-homes the Company distributed broadsides that begged investors to have
patience as they waited for Virginia's success. The broadsheets summarized the vision the Company had for the colony and asked:

Who knows not England once was like
a Wilderness and savage place,
Till government and use of men,
that wilderness did deface:

And so Virginia may in time,
be made like England now;
Where King loved peace and plenty both,
sits smiling on her brow.

Promotional tracts like "London's Lotterie" won a few new converts to the campaign to conquer "savage Virginia," but what the tracts did slowly, money accomplished faster. After tobacco culture demonstrated an astounding, if fickle, profitability, thousands of English men and women rushed to the colony. A fortunate few grew wealthy, and all of them struggled to make Virginia "like England." Year after year, the colonists planted, hoed, and cured, and by the third quarter of the seventeenth century Virginia was indeed very much "like England."

At first glance Virginia seemed strange and alien to new colonists and European visitors. Cultivated fields and brushy fallow plots covered the land in patterns the colonists etched against Virginia's vast forests according to a planting strategy they adopted to answer tobacco's tendency to sap soil fertility. The planters also engrossed larger farms and lived greater distances apart from each other than their cereal-growing counterparts did in old and New England. And many Virginians allowed their livestock to roam and forage in unfenced woods near their plantations, a practice that
appalled English husbandmen. But in most other things, Virginians successfully recreated the world they had left behind instead of creating a new one. Primeval forests hemmed young, raw fields and newly-built farmsteads against tidal rivers and creeks, yet the new houses, homelots, and day-to-day routines that revolved around them conformed to old, traditional English patterns of rural life. The colonists' houses, their household furnishings, their diet, and their dress echoed English patterns medieval in origin and imparted continuity to the way colonists in Virginia and Englishmen in their rural towns and villages lived.

For more than a century, most planters found the traditional pattern of living satisfying and sufficient, but in the second quarter of the eighteenth century the elite of the colony's first native-born generation began to pattern their plantation buildings and their lives after newer models. Metropolitan styles supplanted vernacular ways, and Virginia's gentlemen, who had never boasted that their fathers had successfully recreated the rural world of English yeomen, crowed that the colony, or at least some of it, was very much "like England." The eighteenth-century successors to Virginia's first boosters, bragged that Williamsburg, the colony's cultural and political hub, compared favorably to England's metropolitan centers and boasted that the gentlemen who lived and did business there "live in the same neat manner, dress after the same modes, and behave . . . exactly as the gentry do in London." By about 1740 there were ample signs that they were right. No longer were the colony's big men content to live in medieval-looking, timber houses.
Nearly all of them left traditional dwellings for Renaissance-inspired mansions after 1730. And the big planters did more than build stylish new houses. They began to "adorn their Apartments with rich furniture" and to arrange it not after the traditional fashion of rural dwellers from East Anglia or the West Country but in a newer, metropolitan style. The colony's public buildings—its churches, courthouses, and the official structures that anchored Williamsburg's axial, Baroque-style town plan—also assumed the London look. Even in parish and family cemeteries, classically-inspired marble acanthus leaves and cherubs appeared alongside, and then overwhelmed, older wooden markers and black, skull-topped slate tablets. It was clear that styles for the living and the dead had changed and that once wild and exotic Virginia was, in metropolitan as well as rural ways, much like its parent.

IV

Within a single generation, Virginia's gentlemen shed old notions about material sufficiency that had arrived in Virginia in 1607 and replaced them with the exoskeleton of a patrician material culture. Changes in architectural style and mortuary art revealed this shift most clearly, but a preference for individual dinner plates and drinking vessels in place of shared ones and a general fascination with so-called Georgian fashions underscored the trend. It has been suggested that these patrician artifacts indicated simply that some planters purchased more and more of the things they had always bought. There was, however, more to eighteenth century buying trends
in Virginia than that. The gentry's purchases brought to Virginia a new array of objects, some costly and some not, but all of them intended to perform social tasks not previously seen in the colony's households. Just as the arrival of new book titles disclosed changing literary, political, and theological tastes, the new artifacts signaled the emergence of new ways of thinking. All that is needed to reveal the meaning of Virginia's seventeenth and eighteenth century artifacts is an understanding of them as parts of a grammar of non-verbal communications.

Historians James Henretta, A.G. Roeber, and others have, by selectively adapting anthropological theory to the slices of early America they study, analyzed patterns in behavior as a "crucial . . . indicator" of past "values and aspirations." An analysis of the public celebration Governor Francis Nicholson sponsored to commemorate the coronation of Queen Anne demonstrates how the "implicit meaning" of public acts discloses a part of the grammar and strategy of non-verbal communications.

The news reached Virginia in early May 1702 that King William had died and a new sovereign ruled England and its dominions. Williamsburg's residents eagerly passed the report from house to house in their small town and then took the news rapidly into the colony's countryside. The news was also important enough to demand some public recognition beyond excited murmurs over backyard fences and fire-side discussions about how the change in monarchs might affect England and its empire. While some colonists raised impromptu toasts to William's memory and to Anne their new Queen, Francis Nicholson, Virginia's
royal governor, planned an appropriate public observance. Nicholson quickly ordered that formal announcements of William's death and Anne's coronation be read from every pulpit in the colony. He then dispatched instructions to militia units in the counties closest to Williamsburg to assemble under arms at his residence at daybreak on the morning of the 18th of May.11

Nicholson's observance began with a parade. Militiamen, 2000 of them, led the way from Nicholson's house along Duke of Gloucester Street to the lawn of the College of William and Mary. They stood there on the College lawn facing the recently completed brick building that housed the school's masters and their pupils while cavalry and dragoons filed off to both flanks and closed the two remaining sides of the quadrangle. Citizens of Williamsburg and the residents of some outlying plantations followed and filled newly built grandstands from which they watched the spectacle. A small delegation of the colony's vanishing Indian tribes, forty warriors and two of their queens, came last and stood on the fringes of the crowd.

Nicholson's ceremony commenced as soon as all participants stood in their places. The governor's constable, dressed in black mourning clothes, walked slowly to the middle of the militia's quadrangle with the colony's crape-covered scepter. More dark-clothed men carrying draped standards followed, and behind them and the accoutrements of royal authority rode Nicholson, somberly dressed in black and mounted on a white, crepe-bedecked horse. The governor stood with the constable in the middle of the militia-lined lawn, nodded, and the Secretary of the Colony announced to the assembly that
King William was dead. The infantry responded with a mourning salute by snapping their flintlocks bayonets down and, as musicians on the college building's three balconies played "very movingly and mournfully," marched and countermarched across the lawn. Precisely at noon the marching stopped. The infantry returned to their first positions, and the trumpeters, violinists, and oboists above them played a lively tune as the governor and his party returned again to the middle of the militia's square. The constable and his standard bearers marched to their positions with scepter and flags undraped, and Nicholson, still mounted but now dressed in a blue uniform trimmed with gold braid, followed. He signaled once again, and the Secretary, loudly, proclaimed that Anne, second daughter of the late King James, was Queen of England and commanded her subjects in Virginia to "render her obedience and dutiful homage." The crowd greeted the Secretary's second announcement with three cheers and then answered three cannon salutes with more shouts.

Anne was proclaimed twice more that day. The governor entertained "the most prominent people" with a private meal at his residence while the "ordinary folk" refreshed themselves with rum and brandy toasts on the college lawn. There was more marching in the afternoon and cannon salutes and fireworks that night. Only Nicholson seemed to worry when most of the fireworks sputtered ingloriously or burned in an impressively bright but unintended fire. But he and most of the observers in the grandstands were pleased with the pomp and ceremony he had orchestrated to celebrate their new queen. Only a few complained that some of the militiamen drank too
much and staggered about in the crowd as they were accustomed to doing at their county musters.  

Drunk or sober, the men and women who ate with the governor or who raised out-of-doors toasts proclaimed more than a new queen. They also celebrated and reaffirmed Virginia's social order. Nicholson's marching orders for the day imposed on the festivities rules, unstated and unseen, that guided day-to-day relationships among the colonists. Rich and poor, Indian and white, slave and free, Virginians of all sorts assembled on the college lawn that day. But like the musicians who stood on the balconies above them and sometimes played harmoniously together but more often as trumpeters or oboists en solo, the crowd stood in groups that betrayed sharp divisions among them. The militia infantry marched shoulder to shoulder to orders shouted by mounted worthies. Each time their ranks moved, or turned, or stopped, they dramatized the authority the fortunate exercised over those who were not. The men and women who watched them, the wealthy in the grandstands, the Indians on the edge of the crowd, and the plainer folk who stood in knots wherever they could find room, also observed the social, economic, and cultural differences that separated them one from another. Virginians of all sorts celebrated a new monarch, but they also celebrated the attitudes they held about folk both richer and poorer than themselves. When they had all seen where each of them stood, they reaffirmed with cheers the rules that put them there.  

The drumbeats and huzzas that echoed across the college yard at Williamsburg punctuated but one of the public dramas seventeenth
and eighteenth century Virginians used to communicate in non-verbal ways. Symbolic acts told Virginians precisely where they stood in society and reaffirmed what most of them perceived as the most desirable social configuration. Nicholson's parade did that and so did the seating arrangements local parish vestrymen plotted for their chapels. These and other rituals, honed and polished by decades of repetition and performed as regularly as the filling up of the colony's churches on Sunday mornings, symbolically broadcast the accepted norms of conduct. Virginians responded to them with an understanding ingrained by the rules of their culture that symbols and ritual acts shaped and channeled everyday relations.

An episode in the courtship of William Byrd provides an example. On his way to Williamsburg in the fall of 1720, Byrd interrupted his journey to visit his friend and political ally Phillip Ludwell. Byrd enjoyed the company he found at Green Spring and the opportunities he had there to court the unwed daughters of his older planter friends. The ladies, in turn, welcomed Byrd's attention; he was single and looking for a match, and the women at Green Spring hoped to help him find one. After dinner that night, and after Ludwell and his houseguests had gone to sleep, the ladies stole into Byrd's bed chamber and, while he slept, opened a Book of Common Prayer to the marriage litany, marked the place with a drawn sword, and pressed the book on the sleeping suitor's head. The book and sword talismen woke Byrd, and although he dreamed later that night about "my mistress Annie Carter," he remained a bachelor a while longer, affected only temporarily by the women's symbolic encouragement.
William Byrd understood the symbolism of the sword and prayer book because he and his contemporaries were fluent in the language of symbols. One of the best introductions to symbols and how Virginians read them lays in the secret notations William Byrd made about the spectres that floated in his sleep.

In the secret diaries that he kept for most of his adult life, William Byrd sometimes wrote down his dreams. Like other seventeenth and eighteenth century diary keepers who wrote down the visions that came to them while they slept, Byrd clearly thought his dreams allowed him to see into the future. Ship-bound from England to Virginia in 1720 Byrd dreamed "that my daughter appeared to me with one hand only." Byrd thought this apparition indicated that one of his daughters had died, and "because it was the left hand that was left" he concluded that "the youngest is alive and the other dead." That was the second time a vision of his daughter had awakened Byrd, and he prayed that neither of his shipboard visions was true.

Back home at Westover, Byrd gladly read letters from England that proved that both of his daughters were safe. Neither of them had died or would die very soon. Byrd nevertheless continued to look to his dreams for glimpses of the future. What he wrote about his nocturnal visions reveals something about the contours of his subconscious thought and something about eighteenth-century symbols and their meaning and how Virginia's planters read them. The ones Byrd wrote down were probably his most powerful or most vivid, anxiety-inspired dreams that expressed his deepest fears and best
hopes. Menacing or hopeful, those dreams had particular significance for Byrd. And each of them began with a symbol.

Dark visions unsettled William Byrd's sleep, and he was sometimes "melancholy from my dreams" the following day. On the last day of 1710 one of Byrd's slaves died, and the vision that woke the planter later that night was "a flaming sword in the sky" that disappeared before he could show it to anyone else. The omen appeared again, however, as "a shining cloud exactly in the shape of a dart" that pointed earthward "over my plantation." Both threatening portents seemed to validate his wife's dream in which an angel "in the shape of a big woman" told her that "time was altered and the seasons were changed and that several calamities would follow." These dreams, and one that followed eight years later in which Byrd saw "a bloody sword in the air that gave me abundance of concern," may have reflected the planter's chronic concerns about his financial future.

Most often Byrd dreamed about impending doom. That doom was death, and the death he dreamed about most often was his own. Byrd was no stranger to the experience of death. It came often among his friends and neighbors and the laborers on his plantation and made Byrd, like most Virginians, a frequent participant in funeral feasts and funeral processions. Byrd was not unfamiliar with death, but he feared his own and dreamed about it frequently. Byrd never wrote whether he glimpsed the cause of his death in his dreams; the apparitions that came in his sleep told him simply and unsettlingly that he had died or that the end of his life was near. The
announcements of death were never direct but always assumed the shape of one of the symbols eighteenth century Virginians had come to associate with the deaths of their friends and kin.

Byrd's Surry County neighbor Nathaniel Harrison died in November 1727. Harrison's servants carried the news of their master's death from house to house along the James River and delivered funeral invitations to family friends while cooks at Wakefield prepared a funeral feast for the planter's mourners. Other householders gathered the trinkets, such as gloves and rings, the family would give its closest friends as mementos of their mourning. And in the planter's bedchamber a carpenter applied finishing touches to the coffin the funeral party would escort to a small cemetery overlooking the James. The carpenter tapped brass tacks in neat rows around the edges of the coffin to fasten a knapped linen covering over it. More tacks and gold and silver embroidery already spelled the planter's name on the lid, and as a last touch the carpenter added the year of Harrison's death and the outline of a skull and crossed shank bones. The imagery of the coffin was clear. Skull and crossed shank bones evoked the tension between life and the imminence of death, a conflict coffin shapes and funeral biscuits brought to William Byrd's sleep.

Byrd dreamed about his death when the shapes he associated with funerals populated his thoughts. He interpreted visions of receiving "a paper of funeral biscuits" and seeing a mourning coach drive up the long, sandy lane that led to his house, turn into his garden and stop at his front door as sure signs of approaching death. So did the unannounced arrival of a coffin in the middle of
his house and the fantasy that he "caused a coffin to be made for me to bury myself in but I changed my mind." When he was a young man and when he was old, Byrd dreamed about his death. In April, 1741 he again "had bad dreams and thought I should die in a short time." This vision agreed with the vexing spectres that woke Byrd in the preceding years, but it was no more accurate. Having dreamed his death many times, the master of Westover lived three years longer.

The spectres of death that floated menacingly in Byrd's sleep also troubled other Virginians. Hearses, funeral biscuits, and coffins all signified imminent death to those who dreamed them, and eighteenth century Virginians looked to such symbols for indications of when and how they were to play out life's last act. They also looked to symbols for assistance in forecasting the outcome of more immediate events and the significance of their everyday encounters with their neighbors.

V

Material things were another medium in eighteenth century Virginia's system of symbolic communication. Houses, plates, and forks, when analyzed by the same methods that have revealed the "implicit meanings" of public dramas, disclose the values and belief systems of eighteenth century Virginia. William Byrd and his contemporaries purchased what they did because of the symbolic values they read in what they and their neighbors owned. They acquired material possessions in systematic, culturally meaningful ways so that they could, consciously and unconsciously, measure, compare, and
classify a neighbor's belongings with their own and gain a clear sense of whether the link between themselves and a neighbor were fragile and unconnected or tied with the knot of collateral concern.28

Houses were one of the objects seventeenth and eighteenth century Virginians scanned for indications of links to their neighbors or households they visited when they traveled. Whenever he was away from home, William Byrd kept a journal in which he recorded what he saw and whom he met along the way. One device he used in these journals to measure how far, geographically and culturally, he had wandered from the self-proclaimed civilities of Westover was his appraisal of the houses he passed.

On his ride in 1728 along the border between Virginia and North Carolina as one of the commissioners appointed to survey a new boundary line, Byrd applied his architectural rule to entire towns as quickly as he did to remote squatter's cabins. In Edenton, North Carolina's modest capital, Byrd estimated that there were "forty to fifty houses," but most of them were "small and built without expense." Much the same could be said about most of the houses in Byrd's home county, but there was, or so Byrd thought, one important distinction between North Carolina's dwellings and those his neighbors in Virginia built. Very few of Edenton's dwellings had brick chimneys. Builders in this small North Carolina town who had "ambition enough to aspire to a brick chimney" were, Byrd claimed, "counted as extravagant." Byrd interpreted the general absence of architectural cultivation in Edenton as an indication of the town's virtue. And although the inhabitants of the town lived untainted by
"hypocrisy or superstition," by the symbolic criterion of houses all of them lived several notches beneath the grandee from Westover.29

Byrd was not the first or last traveler to rate potential neighbors and friends by the houses they built. Through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, travelers who wished to convey some sense of what Virginia was like to readers at home often supplemented what they wrote about the colony's weather, wildlife, and wild men with descriptions of the houses they found there. When Captain John Smith reviewed Jamestown's first year he had only to comment that six months after the settlers' stepped ashore there were still "no houses to cover us" and suggest that the settlers "tents were rotten and our cabbins were worse than naught" to underscore just how faltering the colony's first months had been. From Smith's time on, observers of the colony used buildings as indicators of how prosperous, or how dismal, the colony was. When early critics denounced the colony, they emphasized their complaints with charges that Virginia's houses were still "wretched." One demoralized colonist wrote home that houses in Virginia were "generally the worst I ever saw, the meanest cottages in England being every way equal . . . the best in Virginia." Later still in the seventeenth century, commentators worried that as long as Virginia's houses "fell down again before they were finished" the colony would never attract a class of craftsmen essential to economic to diversification.30

Of course men often disagreed about what they saw. In their attempts to "unmask" Virginia, the colony's critics charged that Virginia's best houses were inferior to Ireland's worst dwellings.
Boosters and apologists countered by insisting that the dwellings Virginians constructed were sturdy and good, "built most for use and not for ornament." They boasted that "your ordinary houses in England are not so handsome" as those built in Virginia and, and they hoped that their comments concerning the style and substance of the colony's houses would be interpreted at home as evidence of the colony's success.\textsuperscript{31}

This architectural yardstick never wore out. William Beverly intended his assessment in 1705 that the colony's dwellings "are of late much improved, several Gentlemen of late having built themselves large Brick houses" as more than a description of Virginians at home. It was proof that the colony had, at last, achieved political stability, economic prosperity, and social maturity. That also was the intent of Hugh Jones's judgement that the gentry's houses were "handsome, commodious, and capacious" and that the dwellings of even the most modest planters were "neater than the farm houses are generally in England."\textsuperscript{32} If Beverly and Jones agreed that Virginia's newest houses were an indication that some of England's long-sought civility had taken root in the colony, other men did not. A young traveler who stayed several days in Yorktown in 1732 found about thirty houses there, but he judged less than a third of them "good houses" and noted that only four of them were constructed of brick. Four years later, however, a second visitor discovered "a great air of Opulence amongst the Inhabitants, who have many of them built themselves Houses, equal in Magnificence to many of the superb ones at St. James."\textsuperscript{33} The first visitor was perhaps the better observer,
certainly the less enthusiastic booster, but the intention of both travelers to support their observations with architectural images is clear.

No two travelers saw or indeed wanted to see the same messages in Virginia's houses. What observers did and did not profess to see in the colony's dwellings often obscured the reality of what houses in Virginia were like, but, more important, their comments illustrate the mental processes by which seventeenth and eighteenth century men and women evaluated material things. The symbolic language houses spoke was well understood and sometimes abused. The same was true of the array of objects the colonists stuffed inside their dwellings, but historians have sometimes failed to hear the messages houses and their furnishings contained and apply them to their attempts to understand ideas in the minds of Virginians long dead.

Patterns of house building and household furnishing that planters shared with all their neighbors or only with the very poorest or richest of their fellows reveals the intellectual similarities that bound neighbors together and the differences that kept them apart between 1680 and 1740. As will become apparent in the chapters that follow, there was, until the second quarter of the eighteenth century, a remarkable sameness in what Virginia's freeholders owned. In the late 1720s and 1730s, however, the colony's wealthiest planters began to share a preference for new fashions. The furnishings inside most Virginia dwellings remained unchanged. Why this was so can be
explained, in part, by wealth. It took money to indulge in the new patrician fashions in dress, architecture, and furniture. But economic ability to purchase does not by itself explain very much about either the timing of the material shift or the reasons behind it. What does are the efforts Virginia's rising aristocracy made to legitimize their claims to political and social authority.

If Virginia's early eighteenth century material changes reveal anything, it is that the gentry used artifacts to bring order to what they perceived to be inchoate and potentially dangerous social and political flux. During the political squabbles that jostled Virginia in the first three decades of the eighteenth century, the colony's rising creole elites found themselves caught between two constituencies. There were, on one hand, Virginia's royal governors and the English merchants who marketed their tobacco, men whose esteem the planters coveted. On the other hand, there were the colony's middling freeholders and "lower orders," men from whom the grandees expected deference. In the early eighteenth century, Virginia's big planters seldom received either one. To win both respect from England and deference at home, Virginia's gentlemen turned to the public display of new artifacts. The colonists had always used material things as a device by which they could measure, compare, and classify each other, and material things had long been a measure of a man's "worthiness." But in the 1720s the gentry feared that the differences between rich and poor had become thin, and they proceeded to re-establish, and later expanded, the cultural distance that separated them from their constituents in an unprecedented spate
of building and buying. New houses and new household furnishings also helped diminish both the real and perceived cultural distances that lay between Virginia's wealthiest planters and the Englishmen whose esteem they sought. The colony's early eighteenth century political contentions reveal why the big planters felt vulnerable and why they looked for ways to reinforce their positions in the colony's public affairs.
1. In Williamsburg, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation conducted excavations at several sites at Martin's Hundred in James City County; the Department of Anthropology at the College of William and Mary led research at Flowerdew Hundred in Prince George County; and the Virginia Research Center for Archaeology investigated a half-dozen sites at Kingsmill and the Governor's Land in James City County, the Clifts Plantation in Westmoreland County, Corotoman in Lancaster County, and other sites in York, Warwick, Surry, and Gloucester Counties. See Ivor Noel Hume, *Martin's Hundred* (New York, 1982) for a summary of the excavation of the seventeenth century sites at that plantation; for Flowerdew see Norman R. Barks, *The Stone House Foundation* (Williamsburg, 1976); for Kingsmill see William M. Kelso, *Historical Archaeology at Kingsmill: The 1972 Season* (Williamsburg, 1973) and similar reports for 1973, 1974, 1975; for the Governor's Land see Alain Outlaw, "Subberbs of James Cittie: Governor's Land Archaeological District Excavations: The 1976 Season* (forthcoming); for Corotoman see Carter L. Hudgins, *Archaeology in the "King's" Realm: Excavations at Robert Carter's Corotoman* (Yorktown, Virginia, 1982).

3. On the historical study of the Chesapeake see Thad W. Tate, "The Seventeenth Century Chesapeake and Its Modern Interpreters," in Thad W. Tate and David L. Ammerman, eds., The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century, Essays in Anglo-American Society and Politics (Chapel Hill, 1979), 3-50.


Historians have found the work of Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York, 1973), especially the essay "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture," and Victor Turner, Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors, Symbolic Action in Human Society (Ithaca, 1974), most appealing. Examples of the new anthropologically-oriented
history include A.G. Roeber, "Authority, Laws, and Custom: The Rituals of Court Day in Tidewater Virginia, 1720-1750," *William and Mary Quarterly*, third series, XXXVII (1980), 29-52; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York, 1971); Alan MacFarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, A Seventeenth Century Clergyman* (New York, 1977); and Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill, 1982). This study works the same theoretical veins, but it will also be grounded on the premise, taken from symbolic and structural anthropology, that artifacts, material things, are expressions of human reason, tangible manifestations of abstract and logical thought which are perhaps best understood as discrete bits of the grammar of symbolic communications. This is not, of course, a new assumption. Ethnologists have long employed it in their attempts to unravel the mental worlds of "primitive" cultures far removed from our own world by distance and the course of technical "progress." Folklorist Henry Glassie has applied this method to his analysis of the mind of the folk builders of middle Virginia. This study has benefitted from the thinking of Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings, Essays in Anthropology* (London, 1975), and *Purity and Danger, An Analysis of Pollution and Taboo* (London and New York, 1966), and Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods* (New York, 1979).


13. Colonel Robert Quarry to the Board of Trade, 15 October 1703, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies*, 1702-1703, 733.


15. Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., *The London Diary (1717-1721) and Other Writings* (New York, 1958), 1 November 1720, 469. The ladies persisted. They too traveled to Williamsburg to participate in the social events that enlivened the capital during its "publick times." While Byrd attended a dance one evening, they symbolically bedded him with one of their circle by placing a lock of hair under Byrd's sheets. *London Diary*, 476.

16. In addition to the *Secret Diary*, covering the years 1709-1711, and *The London Diary*, 1717-1721, a third portion of the diaries was published, Maude H. Woodfin, ed., *Another
Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1739-1741
(Richmond, 1942). Twenty-three of these dreams remembered appear in the surviving sections of Byrd's diaries. Byrd made brief notes about his dreams in the same laconic style he used to record changes in the weather, variations in his diet, and the routines of his days and nights. Byrd never engaged in any sort of sophisticated analysis of the content of his dreams. That, historians Alan MacFarlane has reminded us, may have been because the meaning of the visions were self-evident to the men and women who dreamed them. See Alan Macfarlane, The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, A Seventeenth Century Clergyman (New York, 1970), 183.

17. Wright, ed., London Diary, 7 January 1720, 360. The earlier dream occurred on the night of 29 December 1719, 357.

18. Byrd's dreams fall into three broad categories: 11 of them dealt with death—his own as well as that of friends and relatives; 9 foretold events in his financial future; and three were political. Modern scholars of dreams and their content are divided in opinion as to whether dreams are, in the Freudian sense, "symptoms of subconscious anxiety or sublimated desires" or more like a review of the mind's activities that sends some information into deeper and more permanent storage and discards other. See Macfarlane's discussion on dreams, Ralph Josselin, 183-187.


21. Wright, ed., London Diary, 27 September 1718, 178; see also 21 December 1719, 354, for another dream that found Byrd's "business in disorder."

22. For the frequency with which death came among Virginians see Darret B. and Anita H. Rutman, "'Now-Wives and Sons-in-Law': Parental Death in a Seventeenth-Century Virginia County," in Thad W. Tate and David L. Ammerman, eds., The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century, Essays in Anglo-American Society and Politics (Chapel Hill, 1979), 153-182; and Daniel Blake Smith, Inside the Great House, Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society (Ithaca and London, 1980), 260-265. Byrd's dread of his own death was manifested in 1710 when he exhumed his father. In the dead of winter he ordered "my father's grave opened to see him but he was so wasted there was not anything to be distinguished. I ate fish for dinner." Wright and Tinling, eds., Secret Diary, 21 January 1710, 153. Virginians were, of course, not alone in dreaming about death. Mrs. Billings, a neighbor of Ebenezer Parkman, dreamed in 1745 that "she saw a man bring the coffin of her youngest Child into the House; upon which she took
on: but presently there came in another Man with a large Coffin and said to her she had no need to take on for her child for here was a Coffin for her also for she would die next." Francis G. Walett, ed., The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782 (1974).

The onset of what Byrd considered old age, serious illness, and visits to dying friends triggered Byrd's dreams about his own imminent death.

23. The author, with archaeologists Fraser Neiman and Janet Long, observed and recorded Nathaniel Harrison's coffin in April, 1977 when his remains were moved by descendants from his original grave at Wakefield in Surry County to another Harrison family cemetery at Upper Brandon, Prince George County, Virginia. The coffin lid was conserved and analyzed by Ms. Alexandra Klingelhofer, then of the Department of Anthropology, College of William and Mary.


27. Wright, ed., *London Diary*, 3 December 1720, 482.

28. Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods* (New York, 1979), speak most directly to this point.

29. Wright, ed., *London Diary*, 567; see also 594 and 615-616 for Byrd's evaluation of other Carolina houses.


31. Among the boosters were Richard Rich, *To Such as to Virginia Come* (London, 1610); Ralph Hamor, *A True Relation of the Present State of Virginia* (Richmond, 1957), 19; John Hammond, *Leah and Rachell, or the Two Fruitful Sisters of Virginia and Maryland*, in Peter Force, ed., *Tracts and Other*
Papers Relating Principally to the Colonies in North America (Washington, D.C., 1836-1846), III, 18; Reverend Andrew Burnaby, Travels Through the Middle Settlements in North America in the Years 1759-1760 (Ithaca, 1968), 4; Richard Beale Davis, ed., William Fitzhugh and His Chesapeake World, 1676-1701 (Chapel Hill, 1963), 175. Boosters and critics of Virginia used houses as symbols of the success or failure of the colonial experiment and traded images of houses as proof of their position. For example, in 1625 a "Discourse of the London Company" answered a charge that colonists were "poorly housed" by presenting evidence that "the number of houses was proportionately increased and the manner of building much bettered," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, I (1893), 159.


CHAPTER II

"EVERYMAN'S PROPER HOUSE AND HOME"

Tobacco fields, corn fields, and garden plots sprawled across Virginia's Tidewater counties in patterns that seemed strange to late seventeenth century newcomers. Raw, recently-cleared fields that rippled away from unplowed stumpy fallow plots struck men who came from English counties where intensely grazed and cultivated lands surrounded compactly settled villages and towns as an inefficient and wasteful system. Newcomers learned quickly, however, that Virginia's special farming practices had evolved in the first half of the seventeenth century to meet the special demands of tobacco cultivation. They also quickly understood that the colony's widely separated dwellings reflected adjustments made earlier when their predecessors adapted English ways to life in Virginia.

Virginia's dwellings were framed and clad with wood in ways not often seen in old England. In other ways, however, Virginia houses were exactly like their English counterparts. Houses were one of the best indications that the men and women who lived in Virginia had successfully replicated England's traditional culture and that all of them, rich and poor, lived by its rules. Until the last decades of the seventeenth century, Virginians shared a unified tradition of house building. In the decades that followed Bacon's
Rebellion, however, some colonists changed how they planned their dwellings and partitioned the space inside them. The social ideas that undergirded this building change prompted the first cracks in the colony's initially cohesive culture and transformed house construction still further after 1720. Until then, life indoors was communal and public and organized around a consensus of what constituted a proper house.

Far up the Rappahannock from his Lancaster County home plantation, at the falls of the river where the Northern Neck's sandy soils blended into Piedmont clays, Robert Carter grew tobacco at a quarter he called "the Falls." He rarely went there. Carter left the supervision of the day-to-day routine at this and his other out-lying quarters to white overseers. Frequent reports from up-river arrived at Corotoman on board the planter's sloop when it returned home with hogsheads of tobacco and casks of corn and meat. Informed but never satisfied, Carter regularly sent advice, admonitions, and instructions to his overseer whenever his sloop shuttled laborers or supplies up to the quarter. Although Carter frequently communicated with his man at the Falls, the planter occasionally made the long horseback trip up the Northern Neck to inspect his lands and to see if the workings at the quarter squared with the reports he received from his overseer.

Carter ordinarily made the trip in spring or summer. He rode west on roads that meandered along the spine of the Northern Neck. The roads Carter followed were laid out and maintained by county
surveyors of highways according to the consensus of the freeholders of the district through which the roads passed. The patchwork road system that resulted efficiently led planters from their plantations to their neighbors' dwellings and to their courthouse, wharves, mills, and racetracks but made long journeys like Carter's tedious.¹

As the road Carter followed turned to skirt a field and turned again to resume its original path, Carter and his mount ambled through a landscape that differed little from parish to parish or county to county. He rode past small, hoed fields where young tobacco and corn plants grew around the stumps of recently cut trees. In other fields, grown "tired" in the planters' parlance and "resting" for some future use, small pine and oak and locust saplings struggled to overcome the clutch of vines and brambles. Often the roads entered forests that had not yet fallen to ax and hoe, and in which cows, pigs, and, occasionally, horses roamed and foraged. Carter occasionally had to dismount and open gates that marked the end of one man's land and the beginnings of another's, but except for these artificial divisions of fields and forests, he rode through countryside that shared a remarkable sameness. Virginia looked and smelled and felt the way it did because English men and women had successfully adapted Old World ways to the exigencies of life in the Chesapeake. In some small ways the structure of their everyday lives did differ from the routines their cousins in England followed. Northern Neck planters built their houses, barns, and fences and tended their fields and flocks according to cultural rules evolved to meet the special demands of life in Virginia. But rich or poor, the
rules that governed their lives and their material surroundings were essentially the same and had come to Virginia from England. Life in Virginia had been that way since the 1640s and would not be very different until the 1720s.

II

Houses accounted for much of the continuity Carter and other travelers observed in Virginia between 1680 and 1710. Most Virginia houses at the beginning of the eighteenth century were timber frames covered with riven clapboards, almost always lacked brick chimneys, almost always were one room in size, and almost always were a single story and a loft high. Many of these houses were not much bigger than the minimum required by law to "seat" or formally take possession of a plantation. To occupy a land claim, new planters built houses "after the usuall manner of building in this colony" that were ordinarily "in length 12 feet and in breadth 12 feet." Between Corotoman and the falls of the Rappahannock houses larger than one room were rare. So were dwellings constructed of brick. Everywhere a traveler looked, squat houses hugged the the landscape. Similar in profile, these houses looked all the more alike because their unpainted oak and chestnut clapboard skins acquired gray weathered patinas or brown streaks from the mixture of pitch and tar their owners applied as weatherproofing. European observers described these houses, the smallest and the best together, as "ugly."
Literate, letter-writing Europeans who traveled in Virginia from countries where proper houses were built of brick and stone assumed that Virginia's wooden houses were inferior to modest European dwellings and public structures. Some colonists shared that view. Hugh Jones noted in 1705 that the colony's glebes were inadequate because "the building . . . being timber soon decay." Both foreign and native assessments of Virginia's houses, however, were misleading. While the reactions of relatively wealthy, literate men dominated the transmission of descriptions of Virginia to Europe and always provided the most persuasive arguments for founding and expanding the colony, it was the skills and ideas of humbler men who made mercantile dreams a reality. Stone and brick were building materials of the well-off. But most men lived under wood, wattle, and thatch, and it was plain men who knew little of London and metropolitan styles who dribbled houses across Virginia's landscape. Virginia houses thus shared more than outward plainness. They did not stand on brick or stone foundations. Nor did their frames rise on stout timber ground sills. Instead, they rose on vertical wooden posts set into holes carefully dug in the ground according to an ancient English building tradition (see figure II-1).

Hole-set framing was not a building method devised in the scramble to meet the needs of life in Virginia. Rather, post-in-the-ground construction was a venerable building technology seven centuries or more old when it arrived in Virginia. Although houses constructed by these rules were expedient, they were not necessarily inferior to dwellings raised from other materials. While it was true
Figure II-1. Archaeological plan of the Clifts Plantation, Westmoreland County, Virginia. Pole-hole impressions outline this late seventeenth century dwelling. See Figure II-2 for an interpretation of this dwelling.
that John Smith and his contemporaries crowded a hodge-podge of leaky, temporary huts, tents, lean-tos, and one-man hovels along the James River shore in the colony's first year, these stop-gap shelters quickly disappeared and were replaced by more permanent post-in-the-ground dwellings. During the years of booming tobacco prices and soon after the Indian attempt in 1622 to expunge Europeans from Virginia, the colonists selected hole-set building from the available construction options. It was a technology that remained vibrant well into the eighteenth century.

Just one of many alternatives, hole-set framing prevailed as the best way to build in Virginia. It was the perfect building form in a new, raw society founded by men who preferred to build with wood. An apparently endless supply of oak, pine, and locust, all of it free, abounded in the colony's dense forests. More important, raising a house around a frame that sat in holes in the ground was cheaper and easier than crafting a full box frame complete with timber sills and putting the whole business on a brick or stone foundation. Hole-set building prevailed in Virginia because it worked better and was economically preferable to other alternatives. Archaeological excavations conducted recently in the Chesapeake, as well as in New England, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Georgia, have made it clear that individual builders employed a wide range of techniques in how they dug the holes that supported their houses and how they shaped the timbers. Hole-set technology was widely and consistently employed, and it was malleable enough to meet the needs of men who constructed large, relatively expensive houses and those
who built cheaper, smaller dwellings. This building tradition was adaptable, not inferior, and it was rapidly and widely embraced by a chronically labor-poor society.8

With free building materials available to anyone with an ax, house construction in seventeenth century Virginia might seem to have been an easy chore. Building even a simple house, however, was seldom easy and almost never quick. Bad weather and broken contracts interrupted the raising of many dwellings. In addition, the colony's most ambitious builders, men who preferred glazed windows over simple shutters and iron latches and hinges rather than their wooden equivalents, had also to contend with the slow and often unpredictable delivery system that brought nails and hardware from England. But by far the greatest hindrance to building in the colony was the shortage of workmen who could cut joints and transform rough lumber into acceptable dwellings. Many colonists relied, of course, on their own abilities with hammer and adz when they built, but men who aspired to housing better than the merely sufficient had to secure the labor of other men.

Followers of the building trades always seemed in short supply in Virginia. The shortage of skilled builders contributed to the apparent disparities that separated good or "faire" English houses from the dwellings the colonists built. From the middle of the seventeenth century, the colonists had "lime in abundance made for their houses, store of brick made," but they built very few brick houses because Virginia was "wanting workmen."9 The shortage of builders did not result from any opposition skilled English builders
had to emigrating. Carpenters and other tradesmen arrived and passed
their skills along to young apprentices, but most of them discovered
that they could make more money growing tobacco than they could by
following their crafts. Some carpenters and brickmasons did ply
their trades, but they often charged so much for their skills that
few planters could afford to hire them. Even wealthy men often
found the fees of men who wielded hammers and saws unbearable.
Stafford County planter William Fitzhugh complained bitterly that
building "an ordinary Virginia house" was too expensive for him if
free men did the work. He did not consider building a better house,
a "faire" or English-framed dwelling, even a remote possibility.
Labor costs were "so intolerably dear, and workmen so idle and
negligent" that he could not afford them. Fitzhugh built his house
"as cheap as I could with workmen, and as carefully and as deligently
took care that they followed their work." Even so, the construction
of the frame of his dwelling alone cost a third more "than a similar
house in London," a town even then not noted for its low cost of
living. Fitzhugh was not the only planter to feel the pinch of the
high cost of housing. He reported to a friend that "your brother
Joseph's building that shell of a house without chimneys or
partitions, and not one title of workmanship about it more than a
tobacco workhouse" plunged his merchant friend deeply into debt. The
shortage of builders persisted, and nearly twenty years later another
observer noted that "mechanics are generally scarce and expensive" in
Virginia.
The solution to the high cost of building was to avoid hiring local craftsmen. Fitzhugh advised a friend that if he wanted a house for himself or one for his children, "for whom it is supposed you would build a very good house," he should find servants skilled in carpentry and bricklaying in England and have them sent to Virginia. Acquiring English bond servants had two advantages. They built their master's houses, and, second, they could also be hired out to neighbors to earn extra income. That is what Fitzhugh decided to do in 1681 when he begged his English agent to send him a bricklayer and a carpenter, craftsmen that could save the planter "a great deal of money in my present building" and for whom he was "willing to advance something extraordinary for the procuration of them or either of them."

Fitzhugh's advice was still good in the next century, and many planters followed it. Some Virginia planters discovered, however, that men with the skills they needed most came to the colony only if wages were a part of the terms of their employment. London factor Micajah Perry recruited skilled craftsmen for Robert Carter, but the planter sent requests for men with building skills, the most sought-after artisans, to a wide circle of factors. In the autumn of 1723, Carter asked Perry to hire "a carpenter that is capable of framing a large building ... also a Brick layer." Prized English craftsmen were, however, not always cheap. To lure "a very good workman of a carpenter" to Lancaster in 1723, Carter offered the handsome salary of L20 per year, still a bargain compared to one.
estimate that carpenters already residing in Virginia could command L30 a year plus their board. 15

Hiring an English craftsman long distance was not always a bargain. Even when planters signed them, imported carpenters occasionally failed to live up to their advance notices. Micajah Perry sent Barnabus Burch to Corotoman in 1723. It is not clear whether Burch was the same carpenter Carter coaxed to Virginia that same year with the L20 offer, but what became clear was Burch's dissatisfaction with life at Corotoman. Very soon after he arrived at the plantation he joined the ranks of the servants who regularly ran away for a day or two and often longer. The work regimen at Corotoman tolerated some illicit holiday-taking, but Burch apparently took more than his share. To put a stop to his carpenter's absences, Carter began to supervise Burch more closely and soon discovered why Burch preferred to avoid his work. After a few weeks of his master's close attention, Burch "made his confession" that he was "totally ignorant of and unable to perform the trade and misteries of a house carpenter." Carter soon relieved Burch of his duties as a carpenter, and Lancaster's justices stripped him of his carpenter's salary. 16

It is not clear where at Corotoman Barnabus Burch worked when his building proved "good for nothing." What is clear is that Burch could not match the level of building competency Virginians had come to expect of their carpenters. When Burch arrived at Corotoman builders everywhere in Virginia, housewrights and jack-legs, raised their dwellings by bracing heavy wooden frames in large holes in the ground, and they had done so, consistently, for nearly a century. 17

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But if the first stage of house-raising was deciding where to dig the holes for the upright posts of the house frame, not all colonists dug their holes in precisely the same way or in the same patterns. Within the general consensus of building houses around hole-set posts, builders chose from a variety of plans before they began to lay out lumber, hoist the frame in position, and partition the architectural space the frame defined.¹⁸ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, most of Virginia's planters lived in houses that contained only a single room. Some of the better-off built bigger houses, and some men had little to say about where they lived. Modest and mean, Virginians built houses that responded in the late seventeenth century to changing social relationships in the colony.

The indentured servants who in the 1620s tilled the fields of the "Governor's Land," a large plantation near Jamestown reserved for the colony's highest official, spent their leisure and their nights "pigg'd altogether" in small, one-roomed houses. These James City County dwellings, and other like them in Kecoughtan and Charles City, were not only small, they were also cheap and frail. Their value was less than that of a pair of shoes in England and no more than one-half of what a modest English husbandman's house was worth. Indentured servants who spent their first years in Virginia in such houses complained about them, but when they were free, they too built houses that stood only "with continual repairs . . . building new where old failed."¹⁹ When tenants succeeded servants at the Governor's Land, the houses there improved only a little. Among planters starting out, poorer householders, and men who settled on
the fringes of the colony, the one-room house persisted into the eighteenth century. At the end of the seventeenth century most of Lancaster County's approximately 2500 inhabitants lived in one-room houses. No housing lists or tax lists similar to those extant for some Maryland counties survive for Lancaster, but of the inventories that do, only four percent refer to houses larger than a single room.

From the 1620s on, the colony's wealthiest men built their dwellings like their less fortunate neighbors, on "punches sett into the Ground and covered with Boardes." They made their houses two rooms or more, however, rather than one. "Worthy Captain Matthews," a boisterous member of the Governor's Council, built his "fine house" in Warwick County about 1640, twenty years before staid Thomas Pettus, another Councilor and dabbler in land speculation in the Northern Neck, built a house similar to "Matthews Manor" at "Utopia," his James City County plantation. Both men shared the hole-set building technology with former North Carolina governor William Drummound, an early favorite of Governor William Berkeley. Drummound, who built on a parcel of the Governor's Land near Jamestown, completed his house about 1660, the same year Thomas Pettus moved into his dwelling at Utopia and about the same time the unknown inhabitants of the "manner house" at the Clifts Plantation in Westmoreland County moved into their new residence.

From Westmoreland to Warwick, Virginia's wealthiest planters built houses that were structurally alike. They were also surprisingly modest. The houses Matthews, Pettus and Drummound built
were, top to bottom, but a single story and a loft high. End to end, the largest of them measured 52 feet. Most of the colony's more spacious dwellings ranged between 28 and 52 feet in length and between 18 and 20 feet in breadth. Compared to the household that spent their nights in 10 by 12 foot dwellings, these richer men were amply housed. Even so, not one of them could boast that he warmed himself on cold Virginia nights by the side of a brick chimney. The hearth at the Clifts illustrates how most planters vented their fires. That dwelling's hearth consisted of pieces of local ferrous sandstone laid directly on the dwelling's clay floor. Smoke from cooking fires built on this low platform then billowed upward into a wattle-and-daub canopy and drifted out through an opening in the roof. It was the same at Matthews Manor and Utopia. Most houses lacked stone or brick hearths, but all had similar "welsh" chimneys, hoods of mud or plaster smeared over a framework of interwoven twigs and saplings between a pair of joists and rafters. Later, when chimneys moved out to gable ends, house builders grafted the wattle-and-daub work to building exteriors. Chimneys crafted in this manner were widely built in the nineteenth century despite genteel opprobrium and statute attempts to ban them.

Virginians shared a common building technology and agreed how to build a hearth and chimney, but the way the wealthiest planters partitioned the living space inside dwellings larger than a single room was very different at the end of the seventeenth century from what it had been when Pettus, Matthews, and Drummound built their residences. Until the end of the third quarter of the seventeenth century...
century, a cross passage was idiomatic to nearly all of Virginia's larger dwellings (see Figure II-2). This most common of late medieval ground plans was, at the Clifts in Virginia and throughout England, the choice of men who built houses larger than a single room. Opposing doors located off center in the long sides of the dwelling framed a passage that split the dwelling into unequal sections. Doorways on either side of this corridor-like space led to separate rooms "above" and "below" the passage. The room "below" the passage was so labeled because of its position in the hierarchy of household chores. Smaller than its counterparts "above" the passage, this room was most often a service bay. When it was heated by a timber, or less often a brick, chimney, this room was the location of the household's heavy cooking and perhaps its brewing. More often this room was "cold," that is, it lacked a chimney, and the room served as a dairy or as storage space.

Two rooms lay above the passage. The hall, the dwelling's larger, principal all-purpose room and scene of eating, sleeping, cooking, and other in-door activities, backed up to the passage. In some houses, the hearth was built into the wall that partitioned the hall from the passage, but in other houses the hearth was incorporated into the partition that separated the hall from the dwelling's third room. This third room, insulated somewhat from the hall's communal activities and work routines in the service bay, was most often used by the master and his family as a more private retiring chamber.
Cross passage plan with heated lower room and chimney backing onto the passage and unheated chamber beyond. Modeled after "Site A" at Martin's Hundred, James City County, Virginia.

Cross passage plan with unheated service room and center chimney heating both hall and chamber. Reconstructed from the early phase of the Clift's Plantation, Westmoreland County, Virginia.

Lobby entrance plan.

The "Virginia House:" a hall-parlor dwelling with chimneys in both chambers.

Figure II-2. Seventeenth Century ground plans.
The most outstanding feature of these houses was the cross passage. Both a passage that tied the upper and lower ends of a house together and an entrance, the through passage faced two ways. It opened toward both front and rear yards of a plantation's homelots and gave visitors, who arrived at the front door that faced an approaching road, and household servants, who returned from their field and farmyard chores to the rear door, direct access to the hall, the heart and hub of the house. English medieval farmers who worked side by side in the fields with their laborers adopted the through passage plan widely. The through passage plan reflected the central role cooperative work played in English farming and allowed the shoulder to shoulder intimacy of shared labor out-of-doors to continue indoors at mealtime and into the evenings. The passage invited, in fact made inevitable, shared experiences of the most intimate kind between plantation masters and their "hands."

Virginia plantation occupants spent most of their time indoors in the hall. Outdoors, just beyond the doors to the passage, piles of ashes dumped from cooking fires inside grew deeper year by year. Within the growing ashy heap stems of tobacco pipes and crushed pipe bowls attested that the passage gathered the high and low to the hall where they smoked and talked after their evening meals. Even when the noisy chores of cooking and brewing were relegated to the lower end of the house, and house servants worked less frequently in the hall, the passage facilitated commerce between
the "upper" and "lower" ends of the houses more than it separated laborers from the plantation's master and his family.  

III

The desire for and approval of communal interaction between masters and their socially inferior laborers survived only as long as servants and their masters shared a common culture and common notions about the rules of work that bound them together. In Virginia that became less and less likely in the last decades of the seventeenth century. Cooperation and trust between plantation owners and their laborers dissipated as, first, there emerged a class of discontented and volatile wage-earning and landless men, and, second, Virginia's labor force shifted steadily from white indentured servants to enslaved Africans. With these two shifts in labor, particularly the transition from servants to slaves, the bonds of language, religion, and culture that had bound laborers and masters were supplanted by intimidation and coercion. As labor-owning planters came to share less and less with their laborers, the common access which cross passages provided to the heart of the household was no longer desirable. Houses with cross passages, once the most pervasive English house form in Virginia, became rare in the last decades of the seventeenth century. By 1710 Lancaster County's wealthiest planters avoided them. Houses like Captain Richard Tayloe's three-roomed residence with its communal hall, chamber, and kitchen vanished as the rich man's dwelling of choice. In its place, wealthy Virginians built new houses or remodeled old ones to make
contacts between servants and masters less frequent and more predictable.

Shortly before he died in 1710, Captain Alexander Swan added a lobby entrance, often called a porch, to his Lancaster County residence. Swan then owned 9 black men and 3 Indian slaves. Only 7 Lancaster planters owned more laborers. Houses like Captain Swan's generally had two rooms. Housewrights and "clapboard carpenters" framed many of these new dwellings around hole-set posts, but houses with the small 10 by 10 foot antechambers tucked inside against an axial chimney or appended to the exterior were new to the Chesapeake (see Figure II-2). Set near the middle of a dwelling's facade, lobbies provided insulation between the family members who still spent most of their in-door hours in the hall and the laborers and neighbors who lived outside it. Lobbies also permitted family members separate access to the more private chamber without first having to walk through the commotion of the hall.

Lobby-entrance houses enforced the physical and social distances that more and more of Virginia's affluent planters felt should separate masters and their men. As long as the hall continued to be a sleeping, eating, and gathering place, lobby-entrances satisfied those planters who wanted some separation from their employees. But when wealthier planters banished the noisome activities of cooking, brewing, and dairying from their halls to separate, unattached buildings, there was no longer an advantage to avoiding the hall on the way to the dwelling's more private chamber. A two-roomed house, built without a lobby entrance and with chimneys
out on the gable ends of the dwelling, made access to both rooms more convenient (see figure II-2). Planters who wanted to separate themselves from their laborers did so by building more than one dwelling.

Lancaster County's high sheriff, Major William Lister, insulated himself and his family from his laborers by ejecting them from his house to live and eat in unattached quarters in the plantation yard. When French traveler Durand de Dauphine visited Virginia in 1687, he noted that a planter, "according to his means," built "as many of such houses [two room dwellings] as he needs." Durand also observed that each of these dwellings housed a distinct part of the emerging plantation hierarchy. It was not uncommon, the Frenchman wrote, to find at a large plantation not only the planter's residence but "also a separate kitchen, a house for the Christian slaves, another for Negro slaves."32

Virginians of all social ranks adopted the two-room, end-chimney plan. In concert with other buildings, it provided the insulation some planters wanted from their laborers. Used alone, it invited the free entry that most Virginians still found desirable.

Virginia's "hall-parlor" or "hall-chamber" dwellings were not a sudden remodeling of older ground plans. They had for some time been a part of Virginia's building repertoire. By the third quarter of the seventeenth century they were houses so common in Virginia and distinct enough from English dwellings that the planters referred to them as "Virginia Houses." In 1647 and again in 1684 the colony's assembly instructed the justices in every county to construct new

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serviceable jails and to use the "forme of Virginia houses" as their model. The assembly's instructions were a kind of shorthand for a type of structure Virginians knew and built well. When colonists in the Chesapeake met and discussed a "Virginia house," they meant a one story frame dwelling with two rooms on the ground floor whose roof and walls were covered with unpainted, riven oak or chesnut clapboards. A common house type in England, the most salient difference between the two room "Virginia house" and its English cousin was the clapboard skin. English builders rarely covered a house entirely with clapboards, but Virginia's abundant sources of oak and chesnut allowed carpenters who worked there to use clapboards extensively. Whether Virginians constructed a post-in-the-ground structure or one with timber ground sills or a brick foundation, builders of "Virginia houses" covered them with lightly framed roofs whose uncomplicated and economical joinery was a distinguishing feature of carpentry in both Virginia and Maryland.

John Carter was among the Lancaster County planters who adopted the "Virginia house." About 1680, some years before his brother Robert returned to Virginia from a half dozen years at a grammar school in England, John built a two-room, timber-framed hall-chamber at Corotoman on a flat plain that overlooked the mouth of Carter's Creek and the Rappahannock River (see figure II-3). It was typical of the houses Durand de Dauphine observed during his travels in Virginia in 1687. Wealthier Virginians, like Carter, were "comfortable housed" in dwellings "built entirely of wood, the roofs being made of small boards of chesnut as are the walls." Durand
Figure II-3. The ruins of John Carter's dwelling at Corotoman, Lancaster County, Virginia in the 1930s. Riven clapboards clad both the roof and walls (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation).
saw gray unpainted houses everywhere in Virginia, but when he looked inside a few of them he discovered important differences between the dwellings of rich and middling planters.

John Carter's dwelling was better than most. A rich man, he plastered the interior of his walls with a "coating of mortar made from oyster shells" whereas the walls of his neighbors were lined with boards. He also walked on a wooden floor, not on dirt, and his house had a brick foundation and a brick chimney rather than one made of mud and studs. Aside from these improvements, however, John Carter's house adhered to the conventions of the most widely used late seventeenth and eighteenth century building form. The pervasiveness of houses like John Carter's puzzled Durand. He applied the term "ugly" as the most fitting description of their squat posture and drab color. There was no apparent explanation for their popularity, and Durand concluded that Virginians, "whatever their rank, and I know not why, build only two rooms with closets on the ground floor and two rooms in the attic above."\(^{37}\)

Why were the colonists so content with these modest abodes? It was clear to the French traveler that prosperous planters had banished cooking and most other heavy household chores to separate outbuildings. A hodge-podge of dairies, smokehouses, quarters, and sheds bunched around even modest planter's houses, and Durand remarked that "when you come to the home of a person of some means, you think you are entering a fairly large village." Durand's nose told him that while modest households that cooked in their hall smelled smokey and sometimes foul, the air inside houses with
detached kitchens was fresher, even "sweet." Durand was, however, apparently unaware that the migration of pots and pans to separate quarters made larger houses unnecessary. Nor did he discover that where cooking utensils went, servants and slaves followed.\(^{38}\)

It was, however, only at the end of the seventeenth century that the "Virginia House" became the most common house type in the colony. The Chesapeake's distinctive house form could support both open, communal households and families who preferred separation from their laborers. Wealthy men had found the communal qualities of the cross-passage plan unpalatable and the strict divisions afforded by the lobby entrance cumbersome and they adopted the hall-chamber house.

Accustomed to larger houses constructed of brick and stone, Durand misunderstood the dwellings built by his Virginia hosts. He was unaware that the sons and grandsons of middling English yeomen had built in Virginia houses that in size and construction were not unlike their counterparts in old England. These houses did not represent a decline in building competence but rather were a continuation of venerable styles and techniques.\(^{39}\) It is also clear that Durand and other observers who evaluated Virginia houses from a vantage outside the colony's culture were unaware of the social dynamics that prompted the colonists to select one particular house form from the existing bundle of possible choices.

Virginians were themselves more aware than Durand of what was possible and what was not and of the varieties of houses that had been built in the past and what might be built in the future.
They chafed under derisive references to their dwellings as crude "smokey seats." Indeed, many colonists thought a well-made "Virginia house" was an architectural step up. Reverend James Blair's 1699 "Proposal for Supplying the Country of Virginia with a Sufficient Number of much better Clergymen than have usually come into it," an attempt to explain why the colony had not attracted a more competent and godly clergy, contained that broadly shared notion. Conspicuous among the impediments to securing better-trained parish parsons was, Blair noted, the "scarcity of convenient places" for prospective clerics to live. Blair suggested that well-built frame houses on the colony's glebes would help coax a more pious clergy to Virginia, and he espoused the "Virginia House" as the ideal dwelling. Blair recommended that the "larger" glebe houses "have brick chimneys and glass windows with casements . . . walls within . . . plaistered . . . with two rooms and a large closet, besides cellars and garrets."

Virginia's parsons should, Blair argued, live just like the gentry in houses that had separate kitchens and "whatever other outhouses that should be judged necessary." 40

What James Blair ordered for Virginia's clergymen, John Carter built for himself beside the Rappahannock at Corotoman. Since parish vestries were slow to heed Blair's suggestions, Carter's house was, because of the brick foundations that underpinned it, one of the colony's best dwellings. By contrast, while the inhabitants of the Clifts huddled about their mud and stud hearth, Carter and his family warmed themselves by a brick hearth. While termites and Virginia's humid summers gnawed away at the posts of the Clifts, Utopia, and all
of the colony's hole-set houses, Carter's squared timber frame lay
above the damp, insulated from the threat of rot and the subsequent
need for repair. Yet despite all of its desirable traits, this
substantial dwelling was soon overshadowed by other architectural
images.

Robert Carter, John Carter's younger son, built his first
house at Corotoman about 1685. Made entirely of brick with three
rooms on the ground floor, this 24 by 52 foot house was held
together, in part, by nails and other pieces of architectural
hardware Robert had borrowed from his brother. Outwardly, Robert's
house seemed vastly superior to the timber dwellings his brother and
his neighbors lived in. In a land where the typical planter's house
"Tho' 'twas made of wood/Had many springs and Summers stood," a brick
house was an accomplishment many praised but few matched. Durand
witnessed Virginians making bricks but saw only a few houses "where
the walls were entirely made of them." There was, Durand thought, a
preferable sturdiness and permanence to brick construction, a
preference Hugh Jones shared and applied to his evaluation of
Maryland's capitol city in 1699. Annapolis had, under
architecturally deft and discriminating Governor Francis Nicholson,
emerged as a respectable urban place, but even there new brick
buildings made "a great show among a parsell of wooden houses."
Robert Carter's house had a similar impact on the landscape at
Corotoman where it sat among more than a dozen wooden plantation
buildings.
Robert Carter's brick house made more of a show than his brother's wooden residence, but it was a product of the same intellectual world. In 1705 Robert Beverly identified houses like Carter's as proof that Virginia's richest planters lived like the gentry in London. Beverly's booster view of the colony's brick houses applauded the exteriors of these houses clearly but clouded his view of the routines of everyday life within them. The "improved" residences were made of brick, not covered with tar-smeared "fether edge" poplar clapboards, and "all the Drudgeries of cooking, washing, dairies . . . are performed in offices detacht from the Dwelling houses which by this means are kept cool and sweet." But Beverly missed, as Durand had, the overriding social reasons why some planters detached their kitchens from their living quarters. When a planter moved his kitchen to a detached building out in his yard, he removed the smoke, noise, and odors of cooking from his hall. Household servants and slaves whose indoor work revolved around the cooking hearth thus spent less of their time in their master's living rooms. This change in day-to-day routine, the separation of the comings and goings of servants and slaves from the center of a planter's household routine, was soon perceived as the trait that distinguished genteel households from middlings ones.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Virginia's tobacco barons sometimes told each other that brick houses were preferable to timber ones. Yet very few of them built with brick, and those who did retained the old preference for one- or two-room plans. During the middle of the seventeenth century, Governor
William Berkeley, before his political troubles, had constructed a large multi-room mansion on his plantation at Greenspring near Jamestown in the hope that Virginia's rough and tumble grandees would emulate their governor and thus upgrade what he and other Englishmen perceived as a lamentable absence of dwellings that bespoke social stability or permanence. None of the planters, rich or poor, did so. Arthur Allen, a Surry County planter, did build a large, two-story brick house, now well-known as Bacon's Castle, in the 1660s, but his dwelling was a unique exception to Virginia's broadly accepted rules of building.

The question arises why no other Virginia planters emulated Allen and Governor Berkeley and built large houses similar to the vernacular dwellings prosperous landowners and provincial elites owned in old England. There were certainly other men in Virginia such as Arthur Allen's Surry County neighbor Thomas Swan, William Byrd I in Charles City County, and John Carter in Lancaster who were financially capable of building houses like Allen's. But none of them did. These men chose instead to invest their income in land, labor, and livestock. Immigrants like Byrd, Carter, and Swan shared the values middling Englishmen had about houses when they arrived in Virginia. Little in their day-to-day relationships, with each other or with colonists richer or poorer than themselves, suggested that larger houses were either necessary or preferable to smaller, communal, hall-centered dwellings. Virginia's wealthier planters had, however, begun to prize dwellings that channeled social interaction with laborers more precisely than the communal, come-one,
come-all hall-centered houses their fathers had built. That was why rich planters cooked in detached kitchens and put social baffles, lobby entrances, on their dwellings. That also was the architectural kinship that Robert Carter shared with his Lancaster neighbor Captain Alexander Swan and which both men shared with William Drummound in James City and Colonel Miles Cary in Warwick.

In 1710 household routines in Virginia revolved around the hearth. Who entered a planter's hall and who stayed outside had changed in the last decades of the seventeenth century as the colony's wealthier planters exiled some of their laborers from the intimate centers of their dwellings. Fewer men and women were welcome in the halls of the colony's wealthiest households, but inside nearly every dwellings life indoors revolved around the hearth. Most households ate and slept, entertained their guests, and spent most of their indoor hours there. The pull of the hall dominated household routines, and the assumption that the life of the household revolved around the cooperative, communal hall was shared by rich and poor. Every household's possessions reflected that shared notion about life indoors. Robert Beverley claimed that when Virginia's wealthier builders began to construct "commodius" brick houses they also began to "adorn their Apartments with rich furniture." That may have been true of the gentlemen and government officials who resided in Williamsburg at the beginning of the eighteenth century, but rural households remained modestly furnished. The furniture gap between rich and middling folk Beverly professed to see in Williamsburg had not yet emerged in the hinterland.
NOTES

CHAPTER TWO: EVERY MAN'S PROPER HOUSE AND HOME

1. For an interpretation of the evolution of a road system in a Maryland community see Carville V. Earle, The Evolution of a Tidewater Settlement System: All Hallow's Parish, Maryland, 1650-1783 (Chicago, 1975), 143-157.

2. John Hammond, Leah and Rachel or, the Two Fruitful Sisters of Virginia and Maryland, in Peter Force, ed., Tracts and Other Papers, III, 18. This composite of seventeenth century building is drawn, in part, from discussion generated by an attempt to draw a typology of Virginia's seventeenth century houses at the October 1977 meeting of the Jamestown Conference on Archaeology, Bacon's Castle, Surry County, Virginia and the manuscript reports and field notes of excavations which have focused on seventeenth century dwellings. Among them are; Norman R. Barka, The Stone House Foundation (Williamsburg, Virginia, 1976); William M. Kelso, An Interim Report on the Excavations at Kingsmill Plantation: The 1972 Season, and similar reports for the next three years (all Williamsburg, Virginia, 1972, 1973, 1974, and 1975); and Alain Outlaw, "Subberbs of James Cittie," Governor's Land.


3. W.W. Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large . . . of Virginia (Richmond, 1823), III, 313.


6. The archaeological rediscovery in the early 1970s of hole-set framing in house construction has provided insights into the seventeenth century colonial mind not available in the manuscript sources. What is known thus far is discussed in Carson, "Impermanent Architecture."
7. On the origins of hole-set framing, well-developed in the
tenth century, see J.T. Smith, "Timber Framed Buildings in
England, Its Development and Regional Differences,"
Archaeological Journal, CXXII (1965), 154; P.V. Addyman and
David Leigh, "Anglo-Saxon Houses at Charlton, Hampshire,"
Medieval Archaeology, XVI (1972), 7-9; and "The Anglo-Saxon
Villages at Charlton, Hampshire: Second Interim Report,"
Medieval Archaeology XVII (1973), 1-25; and Charles F.
Innocent, The Development of English Building Construction
(Cambridge, 1916), 64. Fiske Kimball, Domestic Architecture
of the American Colonies and of the Early Republic (New York,
1922) summarizes temporary housing in the first years of the
American colonies.

8. Although they have been most thoroughly studied in the
Chesapeake, post-built structures were erected in all of the
English colonies. See Carson, "Impermanent Architecture,"
for description examples in Pennsylvania and Delaware; James
Deetz, In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early
American Life (New York, 1977), 98-99, 102, for a discussion
of a post-built house in Plymouth, Massachusetts; and
Kristian Hvidt, ed., Von Reck's Voyage: Drawings and Journal
of Philip Georg Friedrich von Reck (Savannah, 1980), 75, 133,
for similar houses in eighteenth century Georgia.
Certain farming, building, or technical practices, while
relict or marginal at home, may be selected by members of a
migrating culture as the best solution to old problems in a
new context. See Milton Newton, "Cultural Preadaptation and
Many of Virginia's post-built dwellings stood for longer than
half a century; their persistence is evidence that they were
intended as relatively permanent, not temporary, shelters.

1649), published in The Virginia Historical Register, II
(1849).

10. For early difficulties the colony encountered in recruiting
carpenters and brickmasons to construct frontier forts and
new towns see Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large, I, 193; II,
173 and 220.

11. Davis, ed., William Fitzhugh and His Chesapeake World, 200,
202. Francis Louis Michel, "Report on a Journey from
Switzerland to Virginia, 1701, 1702," Virginia Magazine of
History and Biography, XXIV (1916), 287.

12. Davis, ed., William Fitzhugh and His Chesapeake World, 127,
202.


15. Virginia-trained craftsmen often worked cheaper than their English counterparts. For example, Robert Carter hired "Andrew Lathinghouse late servant to William Taylor of James City County Bricklayer" for L8. Lancaster County Order Book, V, 1702-1713, 206.


17. For a graceful discussion of the beginnings of hole-set housing in Virginia see Ivor Noel Hume, Martin's Hundred (New York, 1982), and Alain Outlaw, "Subberbs of James Cittie".

18. For a discussion of the various subcultures within the tradition of building a house around hole-set posts see Carson, "Impermanent Architecture."

20. For one-room houses on the eighteenth century frontier see Louis B. Wright, ed., *The Prose Works of William Byrd of Westover* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1966), 615-616. In 1784 an Englishman traveling between Petersburg, Virginia and North Carolina became ill and sought shelter at a small farm quarter. The house was a "miserable shell, a poor apology for a house, consisted but of one small room, which served for the accommodation of the overseer and six negroes: it was not lathed nor plastered, neither ceiled nor lofted above, and only very thin boards for its covering; ... it had not even a brick chimney, and, as is stood on blocks about a foot above the ground, the hogs lay constantly under the floor, which made it swarm with fleas." J.F.D. Smythe, *A Tour in the United State of America* (London, 1784), 75.

21. These inventories appear in the Lancaster County Loose Papers, Inventories, 1650-1705 and 1705-1721, and Lancaster County Wills, Deeds, etc., X, 1709-1727, all at the Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia.


These dimensions are abstracted from the archaeological reports listed in footnote 2 above. For other the dimension of other seventeenth century houses see Philip A. Bruce, *An Economic History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1896), I, 417 and 476; building contracts from Surry County Deeds, I, 18, 55, 89-90; and the Westmoreland County contract quoted in Warren M. Billings, ed., *The Old Dominion in the Seventeenth Century, A Documentary History of Virginia, 1606-1689* (Chapel Hill, 1975), 163.

Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom, The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York, 1975), 173 discusses the contract for a mid-seventeenth century Northampton County house with a "Welch" chimney. Wealthy Virginians were still trying to legislate the wooden flues out of existence in the middle of the next century. See H.R. McIlwaine, ed., *Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1761-1765*, 257; and *Legislative Journals fo the Council of Colonial Virginia* (Richmond, 1918), II, 798-801 and 974. In 1784 J.P.D. Smythe...
discovered that Virginia chimneys were still "more commonly of wood." Smythe, A Tour, 49.


30. Lancaster County Wills, Deeds, etc., X, 121.

31. The inventory of Richard Tayloe's house is in Lancaster County Loose Papers, Inventories, 1650-1705. For a discussion of lobby entrance dwellings see Carter Hudgins, *The Miles Cary Archaeological Project* (Williamsburg, 1976), a report of the excavation of the lobby entrance residence of Colonel Miles Cary of Warwick County and its architectural context. The best discussion of the meaning of the lobby entrance is Neiman, "Domestic Architecture at the Clifts."


38. Durand, *Huguenot Exile in America*, 120. The discussion of John Carter's house is based on an inventory of it compiled in 1732 after the death of his brother Robert and information derived from the excavation of its ruins in 1979. See "Field
Notes, Corotoman: The Spinning House," Virginia Research Center for Archaeology, Yorktown, Virginia.


41. The disparaging comments about wooden houses were Ebenezer Cook's: "The Sot Weed Factor," in Roy H. Pearce, Colonial American Writing (New York, 1969), 592. See also Durand, Huguenot Exile in America, 119-120; Hugh Jones to Dr. Benjamin Woodroof, The Royal Society of London, Guardbook I.1, 17 January 1699, typescript at Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

42. Robert Beverley, The History and Present State of Virginia (Chapel Hill, 1947), 289. See also Lancaster County Orders, IV, 1690-1702, 53-54.
43. Lancaster County Wills, Deeds, etc., X, 1709-1717, 121. For Cary's Warwick County dwelling see Hudgins, Miles Cary.

44. Beverley, Present State of Virginia, 289.
CHAPTER III
"SUNDRY THINGS, OLD AND NEW"

Young Francis Michel had been in Virginia only a few days in May 1701 when he left the port of Yorktown and traveled along well-used, sandy roads to the colony's capital at Williamsburg. Plants and trees unfamiliar to the Swiss traveler lined the way, thick brambles crowded the verges of the fields he passed, and houses built according to the custom of the colony squatted near small plots of corn and tobacco. Virginia's wild and domesticated flora and its small, wooden houses fascinated Michel, and he had not ridden very far before he stopped to see how the colony's houses "looked inside."

The tables, stools, beds and blankets that Michel saw in the houses he inspected between Yorktown and Williamsburg were different from those in his homeland. But he surmised that what the colonists owned revealed their character and were perhaps the best indications of the strengths and weaknesses of the country he was visiting. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, there was in York County when Michel rode through it, and in Lancaster County between 1680 and 1710, a broad, almost universal consensus about which material things were necessary for life in the colony and which were superfluous. Furnishings inside the York County houses Michel peeked into ranged
from spare to modest because Virginians agreed that owning a limited range of goods and furnishings supported their "comfortable and gentile living." Axes and guns, for example, were considered necessities, and all households owned at least one of each. The same was true for certain pieces of furniture and tableware. So consistent were the colonists's ideas about what they needed and what they did not, that there were few things the wealthiest men owned that even the poorest of their neighbors did not.

Probate inventories are the best available source for the study of patterns of household furnishing. How the residents of Lancaster County, the easternmost of the Northern Neck counties that faced the Rappahannock River, furnished their houses between 1680 and 1710 is a case study of the cultural assumptions that guided everyday life. Lancaster County's late seventeen and early eighteenth century inventories, each one a reflection of a lifetime of purchases, mirror the distribution of wealth in Lancaster, but they also reveal the outlines of the cultural patterns that bound neighbors together and the differences that kept them apart. For example, Lancaster's most prosperous planters owned fineries like wigs and watches that were clear markers of the raw economic distance that separated rich and poor men. Of greater concern to the analysis that follows, however, are broad patterns in the ownership of material things and how these patterns reflected shared and unshared attitudes as the seventeenth century ended and eighteenth century began.
II

Probate inventories are at one and the same time wonderful and troubling documents. An inventory's greatest virtue is its detail. From a householder's most prized possessions to objects that had little and sometimes no monetary value, probate commissions noted them all. Convened by order of the county court to compile an accurate inventory of chattel goods that belonged to a recently deceased county resident, probate commissions ordinarily consisted of three of the deceased's closest friends and neighbors. Most often the commissioners met at their dead neighbor's house two or three weeks after their appointment, moved from item to item and from room to room assessing the value of stools, bedsteads, earthenware crockery, clothing, and cooking utensils, and then made a list of all the chattel goods the householder owned when he or she died. The commission then submitted its list to the county justices who used it to guide final disbursements of their dead neighbor's estate.⁵

These inventories are powerfully evocative of Lancaster County's antique households, and for anyone who would understand everyday life in that or any other Virginia county during the colonial period they are perhaps the single best source. Probate inventories allow historians beguiling glimpses of households frozen for a moment, but there are a plethora of problems that accompany their historical use. Several scholars have discussed the problems that attend the use of probate inventories in historical research.⁶ Some Virginians, for example, preferred to board their pigs and sometimes their horses in the woods that adjoined their
plantations, a practice that left its mark on the inventories. Entries such as "to some pigs in the woods" and "to a horse running in the woods" are common and leave awkward gaps about the size and value of many planters's livestock holdings. Similar problems exist for crops and produce. Eggs, fruits, and garden vegetables were almost never noted, most likely because everybody had them and having too much of any perishable item was not an asset. Inventories made from late spring to early fall sometimes alluded to corn and tobacco crops "standing in the fields." Although both would soon become assets, the value of neither could then be calculated.

There are other problems. Not the least troublesome for historians is the fact that some probate commissioners were more precise in listing and appraising chattel goods than others. The notations "a iron pot, 33 1/3 pounds" and "a pot, very big" may both have referred to large iron cooking pots of approximately the same size and "a tailor's goose, some pins and needles" and "some sewing stuff" may also have meant the same thing. It remains, however, that the men who made these notes did not see the world in quite the same way. Men who counted and weighed things when they made their lists created documents that were qualitatively different from those compiled by men who scattered less precise references like "some old stuff," "a parcel of old things," and "an old trunk and what's in it" in their lists. The vagaries of individual skills of observation, classification, and recording are a nettlesome source of historical bias. Lancaster's inventories are often not as complete and detailed
as we would like, but they are the best glimpse we have of how Lancaster's men and women spent their wealth.

III

In rawest economic terms there was an enormous gulf between the richest and poorest Lancaster County planters who died between 1680 and 1710. After more than 15 years of hoeing and harvesting in Lancaster County, William Richardson left an estate valued at £12.78 when he died in 1703. Richardson's estate was meager, but it was not Lancaster County's smallest. Nine of Richardson's neighbors accumulated even smaller estates before they died. All were very modest fortunes compared to the £787.31 Major William Lister owned before close friends inventoried his estate in 1709. Richardson and Lister left estates typical of planters who, given the relative brevity of life in the Chesapeake, lived full lives; both men lived in Lancaster for more than a decade and a half. Richardson represents the poorer half of freeholders; Major Lister, the wealthiest 10 percent. Two other Lancaster planters who lived similarly long lives, William Abbey and Samuel Wright, represent men who occupied the middle of the county's social order. When they died their estates equaled the median of all estates inventoried between 1680 to 1710.

Between 1680 and 1710 Richardson, Lister, Abbey, Wright, and their neighbors invested 46 percent of their personal wealth in possessions that furnished their dwellings or helped them earn a living. Capital resources and consumer goods, from personal
habiliments to household furnishings, and capital goods, from craft tools to boats and ships, to stored and unsold crops, and new goods that could be resold (particularly fabric), comprise this category of possessions. Debts receivable, most often listed as tobacco notes or bills, also fall into this category. Lancaster planters invested roughly equal portions of their remaining probated wealth in livestock (28 percent) and labor (26 percent).

Distribution of individual wealth into these three probate categories reflects the state of Lancaster's late seventeenth century economy. Lancaster's population expanded modestly in the last decades of the century. Most of the county's additional population, however, seems to have consisted of single, young men. The number of families in the county, for example, increased by 14 percent during the century's last decade, but a concurrent increase of single tithables caused the mean number of tithes per household to decline slightly from 2.95 to 2.75. The increase in households and the accompanying decline in average household size suggest that Lancaster was growing under the impact of continued in-migration. Most of the new arrivals were young men who had just completed their indentures and were just beginning their own careers.

Men just starting out in the county appear to have invested most of their wealth in land and spent the remainder of their earnings on the equipment that was necessary to sustain themselves and their new farms. Even so, both recent arrivals and more settled planters owned the barest of essentials and assembled their
possessions according to a shared set of assumptions about what was necessary and what was not.

The material differences that separated planters, those at the top of Lancaster's planting heap from those near the bottom, and the wealthiest from men in the county's middling ranks, were apparent from the first glimpses passers-by caught of their plantations. Major William Lister was among the half-dozen men who left houses larger than a single room. Richardson, Abbey, and Wright all apparently lived in one-room dwellings. But house size, as the French traveler Durand noted, was an inaccurate guide to distinguishing planters of middling means from the poor and the truly well-off in a society where even the richest men built relatively small, two-room houses. William Fitzhugh's unpainted, clapboard-covered, two-room "Eagle's Nest" in Stafford County was adequate warning to Durand that he could not equate small houses with small fortunes.9

A better barometer of wealth was the size and composition of a man's work force. More than one-half (62 percent) of the men who died between 1680 and 1710 owned no labor but their own. Abbey, Richardson, and Wright were among the majority of planters who worked their fields alone or with the help of family members. The upper half of wealth holders, Lancaster's better-offs, were servant and slave owners, and before 1710 their investments in labor represented one-quarter of the county's total personal wealth.10 Most of the planters who owned other men's labor still chose to invest in white indentured servants alone (56 percent), while a smaller number owned
only slaves (19 percent) or both servants and slaves (25 percent). The return on these investments was high. Only one of the men who owned the labor of other men, a planter with a single servant, was among the bottom half of property holders. One-half of the men who owned both servants and slaves left estates valued over £200, but none of the planters who relied on servants alone, and only one of those whose work force was entirely slave, joined the exclusive richest 10 percent. Investing in labor, but particularly in a diverse labor force, was the best way to acquire more wealth in the late seventeenth century.

What had more wealth gotten Major Lister? And what had relatively little of it meant for William Richardson? Were the possessions of the high and the belongings of the low as starkly different as their respective labor forces? Scattered about in William Richardson's house were the "necessities" of life in early Virginia. A grubbing hoe, a pitchfork, some broken carpenter's planes, and an old gun were Richardson's only tools. An old chest was his only piece of furniture. Some of Richardson's neighbors owned no furniture at all when they died (16 percent), but those planters who invested in a single piece of furniture always chose a chest. Most households (81 percent) owned a chest; one-quarter owned two or more. Richardson may have stored his clothes—two jackets, one pair of cloth and one pair of leather breeches, and a "pare of coarse yarn stockings"—in this chest with the few unnamed pieces of pewter he owned. There was little else inside Richardson's house that was not attached to or in constant use at his hearth or would
not fit inside his chest. Two old pot hooks waited near Richardson's hearth, but he owned no pot to hang from them. Nearly every household in the county (72 percent) possessed a pot, a majority owned two or more, but what most of his neighbors cooked in pots Richardson prepared in a frying pan. He, like 61 percent of his fellows, owned a frying pan and cooked in that with the help of a spit, two flesh forks, and a skimmer. There was no skillet, kettle, or any pans at his hearth, but before 1710 those utensils were rare throughout the county.11

When the sun set in Lancaster, Richardson either leaned a little closer to his hearth or he went to sleep. Without lamps or other lighting devices, the interior of the planter's house was illuminated, if dimly, by his fire alone. Conversation and some household chores could continue, but on cold nights the warmest place in his house was his bed. Richardson's bed was the most expensive thing he owned, but it was not a thing many men would have been proud of. He lay at night on a small feather mattress "without any other thing" around it, covered, when it was cold, by coarse blankets, and propped by chaff-filled pillows. Virginians preferred feather stuffings in their beds, and against the day when the feathers they slept on refused to unlump, many of them kept extra mattresses and stored large bags of feathers. New, clean feathers were expensive, and poorer men lay on flock, scraps of wool or cotton, or settled on cattails and chaff. Feathers were better than flock which was considered better than chaff; but no matter what a planter stuffed
inside his bed to put between himself and his floor, it was the most expensive item in his house.  

Richardson did not own a bedstead, the head and foot boards and the cord latticework on which a mattress and blankets rested. Bedsteads were still uncommon, and Richardson and most of his contemporaries simply unrolled their mattresses, fluffed them up, and stretched out on the floor at bedtime.

Men higher on Lancaster's economic scale were better fed and better bedded than those at the bottom. Samuel Wright, who grew tobacco and worked in turns as his neighborhood's blacksmith, left an estate of £47, a sum slightly less than the county average.  Not poor but not affluent, men like Wright and his neighbor William Abbey, who died in 1709, shared a standard of living distinct from Richardson's by degree but seldom by kind. The most visible distinction that could be made between these men at the middle and the man at the bottom was their livestock. Abbey and Wright both owned small herds, but Richardson, who sold a mare and its colt soon before he died, did not own a single cow or sheep. Wright kept a herd that at ten head was large enough to surrender meat occasionally to his table. Abbey's herd was four cows larger, and his thirteen lambs and sheep provided a second domesticated source of meat. Abbey also owned a mare and filly that were "running in the woods" when the probate commission arrived to make its list.

Differences that began with out-of-doors comparisons continued indoors where smaller inanimate objects were quiet clues of modest success. A bewildering array of cooking utensils and tools
festooned Wright's hearth. He tended his fire with a pair of fire dogs, or andirons, a fire shovel and fire tongs. Some or all of four "old" pots that swung from hooks inside the hearth, pot racks, a pair of pot hooks, a skimmer, a frying pan, and a spit lined the hearth. Abbey owned the same array of utensils and also kept a pair of bellows, a large brass skillet in a frame, a ladle, a flesh fork, and a kettle. Both households served themselves on earthenware plates and shoveled down their meals with spoons. They washed down unseasoned, stewy repasts most often with water and milk from drinking vessels that passed from diner to diner. At Wright's, two small tankards, two pewter tumblers and two pewter drinking dishes made the rounds. Abbey owned no pewter and offered earthenware cups instead.

Furniture was scarce at both houses, and shared dining and seating arrangements reinforced the communal nature of drinking at mealtime. Abbey's family and guests sat down at a table on a forme, or bench, or on one of five chairs. Chairs and tables were the second and third most frequently owned pieces of furniture in Lancaster, but Wright owned only one chair. He also owned a forme, but not a table. Both Abbey and Wright also owned chests and boxes that could double as seats and storage pieces.

William Richardson's bedding was his most expensive possession, and the same was true for Abbey and Wright. Their beds occupied conspicuous portions of their halls. Abbey's bedstead supported a mattress stuffed with flock and feathers and straddled a trundle bedstead whose occupants slept on an even lumpier
chaff-stuffed mattress. There were no sheets on these beds or curtains around Abbey's bed, but blankets and heavier rugs provided warmth when needed. Wright slept more comfortably on feather-filled canvas tick mattresses, propped by pillows, covered by blankets and rugs, and separated from his feathers by a pair of sheets. Like Abbey and Wright, nearly one-half (44 percent) of the men in this sample slept off the ground in bedsteads.

Major William Lister, militia officer, sheriff, and justice of the peace, died in the same year as his neighbor William Abbey. The men who compiled Major Lister's inventory listed possessions worth slightly more than L787, a figure sixteen times greater than Abbey's estate and representative of life at the upper end of Lancaster's personal wealth scale. Major Lister's estate differed from households below it in how much he owned rather than in possessions that only wealthy men could afford. Nearly one-half of Lister's wealth consisted of the men and women who worked his fields. Only one, an English boy named William Hamlet, was white; the rest, two men, five women and five children, were black. Another four slaves worked at Lister's Popular Neck Quarter. Lister's cattle herd there was, at 37 head, larger than the herds of Abbey and Wright combined. More than a dozen hogs and 29 sheep also grazed at Popular Neck, and there were 34 more cows near Lister's dwelling. Major Lister also owned four horses and a colt, and when he rode to his quarter or to court, he sat on a "plush embroidered saddle with all its furniture" valued at L18 and was no doubt the most splendidly

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mounted planter in the county. By comparison, Abbey's saddle was more modest; it was valued at less than one pound.

A peek inside Lister's house illustrates further the phenomenon that rich men owned more of the same things less fortunate men had. Major Lister's hall was equipped for gathering, for sitting, and for entertaining. Twelve cane chairs with cushions, a cane couch, and another 18 less expensive cane chairs, three of them broken, surrounded a single oval table in what was no doubt an intricate jumble. One-half of Lancaster's late seventeenth century households owned tables and chairs, but Lister belonged to a smaller group of men who owned couches. There was also a chest in Lister's hall, filled with three pairs of sheets and four pillow cases that were part of the fittings for a great ponderous bedstead that loomed over the forest of chairs. The major's nocturnal retreat was hung with "new stript curtains and vallens," cloth fixtures that repelled winter drafts, provided a measure of privacy in the cluttered hall, and prevented "damp humours" from afflicting their slumbering owner. Pulled around the bedstead, mattress, blankets and quilts, curtains made beds loom larger in hearth-lit rooms.

A similarly well-appointed bedstead waited in the adjoining chamber. Calico curtains and valances draped this bedstead and its feather bed, bolster, blankets, and rug. Nearby, Lister's most prized smaller possessions lay on a small table and a small desk or nestled in his four trunks and chests. Trunks appeared less often (28 percent) than the nearly ubiquitous chests, and case pieces like Lister's desk were rarer still, listed on only 15 percent of the
estates. Also rare were the items stored inside them: 3 table
clothes, 10 napkins, and 3 towels. Stored away with these dining
niceties was an impressive collection of pewter: 31 plates, a
flagon, a quart drinking pot, a pie plate, 2 basins, a caudel cup and
a mustard cup. There was more, but the probate commission simply
weighed it, listed it as 37 pounds of "old stuff," gave it a value,
and skipped to the next item. Many in number, these pewter plates
and vessels were relatively modest in price. Lumped together, 27
plates cost about one and a half pounds (at 14 pence each). Arranged
on a shelf, so many plates could make an ostentatious display. Their
presence in Lister's house may have had more to do with his ability
to find a supplier than the depth of his pockets.

Hanging near and scattered about Lister's hearth were his
cooking tools. Like smaller households, Lister owned a frying pan;
he also used 2 skillets, one made of brass, the other of "bell
mettle." Roast pork, beef, or lamb hung from a spit; and although
there was a pot rack inside the hearth, the inventory listed no pots,
a conspicuous absence that might be explained by the size of Lister's
flocks and the resulting absence of the need to stretch meat sources
by cooking available meat in pottages and stews. A motley collection
of tubs and small pails with an upright stave for a handle called
piggins crowded the hearth, and an odd-sized assortment of cider
casks contained Virginia's favorite beverage.

Two final differences separated Lister from men who responded
to his commands at militia musters. There was, on one hand, the
matter of books. Abbey owned two Bibles and a pair of Common Prayer
Books, while Wright read his scriptures from a small "pocket" Bible and owned six other unnamed books. Lister, however, owned none. But Lancaster County's militia commander did own several suits of clothes, three sets of lacy neck clothes, sleeves, and ruffles, and military gear that said more publicly about his social authority and the raw economic distance that separated him from his humbler neighbors than a score of books. When Major Lister stood before Lancaster County's assembled militiamen, he wore a silver-hilted sword. Twice as expensive as the two blades William Abbey owned, Lister's magnificent and distinctive badge of his superior rank hung by his side from a wide leather belt. In comparison, Wright, who owned no change of clothes and no ruffles, came to county musters equipped with a gun, pistols, and breast plate, but he wore no sword.

IV

As the eighteenth century began in Virginia, Lancaster County's planters, if they cared to, could compare themselves to any of their neighbors by looking at what they owned. All of these men worked within the constraints of the colony's tobacco economy, and each of them measured his success, or lack of it, by what the profits wrung from tobacco harvests allowed him to purchase. Some planters had accomplished more than others and had become wealthy. Many of the men who had done well consistently invested their earnings in the tobacco planter's capital litany: land, labor, and livestock. Large holdings in land, labor, and livestock were the salient characteristic of the prospering planter, but other possessions that
lay scattered around inside the houses of rich and less fortunate men also defined the material distance that lay between affluence and sufficiency.

There was, for example, considerable economic distance between Major Lister's great curtained bedstead and the modest bedding militiaman Abbey spread out on his floor at night. The same was true of plates, modest objects that all but the very poorest of households owned. Rich planters often owned dozens, even "a parcel of pewter" ones, while poorer men might have only one battered earthenware plate. From horses and saddles to tables and chairs, plates and jugs, and guns and gimlets, richer men owned household furnishings that, while generally more expensive, were identical in form or function from the things humbler men purchased. Difference in what rich and poorer men owned existed in the relative value of possessions, but there was little if any difference in the cultural assumptions that had shaped how each accumulated his household furnishings. At mealtime, for example, Lister, Abbey, Wright, Richardson all dined from assortments of pewter, ceramic, or wood plates and passed shared drinking vessels around their tables. Between 1680 and 1710 a functional equivalency of possessions mirrored a network of shared assumptions and attitudes that bound Lancaster County's households together.¹⁵

There were, however, other strong similarities among men who were rich and those who hoped to be. The cultural assumptions the rich and poor shared and which imbued Lancaster with a remarkable cultural unity were reflected most clearly in the structure of
everyday life and its material accoutrements. First, Lancaster's planters spent the greatest part of their in-door hours in rooms they called halls. The principal room in all the county's dwellings, from the meanest to the best, the hall was the focus of the day-to-day lives of men and women of all ranks. From top to bottom, Lancaster's residents responded to the communal "pull" of their halls. Second, in all but the wealthiest of households, furniture reinforced the closeness and cooperation which architectural space began to impose. Planters most often shared benches, and eating was as communal as sitting since utensils and dining wares, particularly drinking vessels, were also shared. No Lancaster household yet owned a sufficient quantity of any type of drinking vessel to set one for each householder. Indeed, the shapes of the drinking vessels found most often inside these houses, jugs, cups, and tankards, were intended to be shared, passed from one drinker to the next as occasion and hospitality required. And when night came, they also shared their bedding.

There was of course a difference between the cider-drinking rich and the water-drinking poor. That difference, like most, was one of raw economic buying power. There was very little yet to suggest that choices in beverages, or in other furnishings, were made according to some emerging intellectual agenda that imposed new criteria on how men evaluated their needs and how they then spent their money. That change came to Lancaster in the late 1720s. It took up residence first in the houses of the county's big men, and as it did planters began to change the character of their houses and the
things they put inside them. Robert Carter, by this point the master of Corotoman, was among the planters who wrought stupifying changes in the colony's landscape. Carter and his mansion-building, garden-planting contemporaries followed new notions about what money should buy, and they adopted a set of new fashions in the midst of a protracted conflict between the colony's emerging creole elites, its freeholders, and its royal governors about the sources of political authority and how political legitimacy was determined.
NOTES
CHAPTER THREE: "SUNDRY THINGS, OLD AND NEW"


2. The quote is from Richard Beale Davis, ed., *William Fitzhugh and His Chesapeake World, 1676-1701* (Chapel Hill, 1963), 175.

3. In this regard Lancaster seems to have mirrored trends in Maryland. See Russell R. Menard, P.M.G. Harris, and Lois Green Carr, "Opportunity and Inequality: The Distribution of Wealth on the Lower Western Shore of Maryland, 1638-1705," *Maryland Historical Magazine* LXIX (1974), 169-184. The discussion that follows is intended to draw out the distinctions, or lack of them, that separated the rich from the not so rich.

4. The discussion that follows is meant to be a summary, or synchronic view of Lancaster County at about 1710 and is based on an aggregate analysis of probate inventories from the Lancaster County Loose Papers, Inventories, 1650-1705 and

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1705-1721 and Lancaster Wills, Deeds, etc., X, 1709-1727. A diachronic comparison of these inventories and those from the period 1711 to 1740 follows in Chapter VI.


7. Analysis of tithable lists revealed the duration of these planters in Lancaster, and they are used below to narrate the results of an aggregate analysis of a sample of 93 Lancaster probate inventories taken between 1680 and 1710. All the estates contained in this sample are those of freehold planters; indentured servants and wage laborers were not included. Only complete independent estates, defined as those that listed at least one tool, some bedding, and at least one cooking utensil, were included in the sample.
8. The inventories of Richardson, Abbey, Wright and Lister are in Lancaster County Loose Papers, Inventories, 1650-1705 and 1705-1721, and Lancaster County Wills, Deeds, etc., X, 1709-1727.


10. Planters who owned some laborers, either servants or slaves, invested, on average, 30 percent of their personal wealth in labor.

11. Skillets were present in 30 percent of these households, kettles in 36 percent, and warming pans, 9 percent.


13. The median estate value was 52.6 pounds; the mean, 89.91.

14. Captain Alexander Swan, Major Lister's equal in wealth, owned "sundry books" valued at L10; Abbey's four books, in comparison, cost less than one pound.

CHAPTER IV
PATRICIAN CULTURE, PLEBIAN POLITICS

Near the end of the seventeenth century, Reverend James Blair, Commissary of the Bishop of London, complained to the Board of Trade that Governor Edmund Andros "never did any considerable service to the King, nor the people" and charged that the governor's arbitrary and maladroit governance had "broke off" the "ancient Kindness, hospitality and good neighborhood of Virginia." Blair reported that "faction and animosity" had replaced unity and amity and lamented that the colonists "scarce now visit one another, pay common civility, and are as divided a people as is upon earth." The able but obstreperous Commissary had, of course, inspired much of the acrimony he attributed to Andros. But he and his allies blamed the deterioration of social and political amity in Virginia on the governor and not themselves and argued that the Board could again make the colony as "peaceable and quiet [a] country as ever was" by recalling Andros.¹

The Board of Trade, swayed by Blair's arguments, soon recalled Andros. The governor's departure and the arrival of his successor, Francis Nicholson, did little, however, to dispell the colony's political enmity. Virginia remained politically contentious and irascible for the next thirty years. Nicholson, like Andros,
quickly ran afoul of Blair and the great planters allied to him, and Nicholson's successor, Colonel Alexander Spotswood, tangled with Virginia's most prominent men in a dozen bitter quarrels. When William Gooch, the fourth governor to follow Andros, began his term, he exhorted the burgesses who met him in 1728 to recapture the "hospitality and good neighborhood" that had vanished during the Andros-Blair feud and to resolve lingering political dissention with "all that affection which tends to the enlarging, improving and securing a friendly intercourse and correspondance between man and man."^2

Gooch, on the whole, enjoyed friendlier relations with Virginia's planters than had his prickly and sometimes haughty predecessors. Even so, Blair's complaints and Gooch's peace proposals make it clear that early eighteenth century Virginia was politically contentious. From the 1690s to the 1730s, a bitter and protracted quarrel between the colony's royal governors and its rising native-born oligarchy generated the acrimony Virginia became famous for. Andros, Nicholson, and Spotswood were all eventually casualties in a feud over the boundaries of royal prerogative and whether "the governor or his council should be paramount in the public offices of Virginia."^3

By looking again at the political quarrels that alienated governors, councilors, burgesses, and freeholders from each other between 1692 and 1732, this chapter summarizes what was said and done politically to define the attitudes that governors held about councilors and burgesses, Englishmen about Virginia, and Virginians
about men and things English. This review of Virginia's early eighteenth century political squabbles is not intended to explain the colony's shifting political alignments. Rather, this brief look at politics focuses on how attitudes and ideas in Virginia about things and men English expressed antagonisms between England and Virginia and which eventually divided the colony's middling freeholders and its politically powerful planters, and why an elite culture diverged from the colony's traditional ways.

It has often been argued that eighteenth century Virginians built large mansions and followed English metropolitan customs to express their political power and authority, but no writer has demonstrated when Virginians made the connection between expansive material gestures and their political stature or even why the colony's biggest men thought it was necessary for them to indulge in new metropolitan styles. Two early eighteenth century political trends affected the material life of the colony's elite in the 1720s. The first was related to the recriminations governors exchanged with councilors and burgesses. Political struggles led, often unconsciously, to English accusations that Virginians, even the wealthiest grandees, were provincial, rude, and loutish. Such damning appraisals damaged the esteem the colonists thought they should enjoy in England and struggled mightily to regain.

A second political trend which affected the colony's material life was the rise of Virginia's freeholders as objects of the political affection of governors and burgesses. Prospective candidates for the colony's elective offices had, of course, long
been dependent on their freeholder constituents, but in the first
decades of the eighteenth century Virginia's freeholders began to
demand that they be courted with assurances from candidates that
their opinions would be included in the formulation of colonial law.
As a result of the freeholders's demands, there emerged a new
political style, a familiar face-to-face politics in which candidates
wooed prospective voters and cajoled them with cups of "bumbo."
Governors, councilors, and burgesses could not explain the
freeholders's new political clout. But they recognized the growing
power of the assembly and, when it suited their aspirations, they
attempted to manipulate it.

There were other indications of the freeholders' growing
political activity. Singly and in groups they threw rocks at their
social betters, gathered in sullen and sometimes angry crowds at
militia musters, and destroyed public tobacco warehouses that stood
as symbols of laws that offended them.

Confronted by a loss of esteem abroad and an apparent loss of
power at home, the elite, whatever their allegiances and whatever
their aspirations, looked for ways to defend themselves against
aspersions from above and political assaults from below, to stem any
further ebbing of their authority, to recapture the respect of
Englishmen, and to reassert their political legitimacy. Virginia's
elite's found a partial defense of their political authority and
prestige by manipulating the political rituals assertive freeholders
had turned upside down. The elite's second response, discussed in
the following chapter, was to reinforce the distance that lay between
themselves and the men they wanted to lead by embracing the artifacts of an elite material culture.

II

By the beginning of the eighteenth century there had emerged in Virginia a small knot of men who "by trade and industry" and inheritance had assembled "very compleat estates." Most of these men were Virginia-born sons of immigrants, most of them lived on the broad neck of land that lay between the York and Rappanannock Rivers in the colony's best tobacco growing region, and nearly all of them occupied high political office as burgesses or councilors. Immigrants had dominated Virginia politics during most of the seventeenth century, but when the last assembly of the century convened in the 1690s, sons of immigrants held most of the seats. A bare majority of these men, Miles Cary in Warwick County, Ralph Wormeley in Middlesex, and Lewis Burwell in Gloucester, for example, rose to positions of prominence in the decades that followed Bacon's Rebellion. Opportunities for entering the colony's inner circle of officeholders had dwindled in the last decades of the seventeenth century, and at the beginning of the eighteenth century a seat in the house of burgesses was an office held more and more frequently by affluent, Virginia-born men.

Wealthy, office-holding planters like Cary, Wormeley, and Burwell were the colony's most powerful political men, but their influence resounded across Virginia's Tidewater counties in other ways. Some, like Mann Page who lived on the York River in Gloucester
County and his father-in-law Robert Carter, had begun to act as agents for English slave merchants and were important suppliers of both laborers and monetary exchange. They also extended credit to their neighbors. Large planters like Page and Carter took "care to supply the poorer sort with goods and necessities and are sure to keep them always in their debt, and consequently dependent on them." Virginia's tobacco barons had parlayed their firm hold on the colony's economy into a controlling interest in the colony's politics.

A native-born political elite emerged in Virginia during the late seventeenth century while political prospects for most colonists dwindled. A relatively small group of men won the colony's elections and received places on the governor's Council. They also held most of the appointive offices that paid handsome salaries. Members of the governor's Council traditionally held the colony's most lucrative offices such as receiver general and auditor. In addition, they and the wealthiest burgesses filled other salaried offices such as customs collectors, escheator, and naval officers. Councilors and burgesses shared county level offices such as surveyor, escheator, and sheriff with the result that Virginia's salaried early eighteenth century bureaucracy was linked from top to bottom by men who held several local and provincial offices concurrently.

The public career of Colonel Miles Cary of Warwick County illustrates the tendency for relatively few men to hold most of the colony's appointive, salaried offices. Born about 1655, Miles Cary was the third son of Colonel Myles Cary, a member of the council.
and escheator for the colony. Cary, like other younger privileged sons, was educated in England, and, after his father's death, inherited a modest fortune, Richneck Plantation. Young Cary gained his first public office as a justice of the peace for Warwick County in 1680, a position he held at least until 1702 while he was concurrently sheriff for both Warwick and Gloucester Counties. Elected a burgess for Warwick in 1684, Cary was a member of what historian Jack P. Greene has labeled the first rank of the assembly in all but two of the sessions he attended. He was appointed surveyor general for the colony in 1692 and, five years later, became register for the Vice-Admiralty Court, a judicial body the Privy Council established to provide adjudication in cases of smuggling and piracy in its effort to enforce the Navigation Act of 1696. As register Cary was a magistrate in a court that operated outside the provincial court system. In 1699 Cary became naval officer for the York River district, a post both more lucrative and less troublesome than his seat on the Admiralty Court bench. As a naval officer Cary was required to perform additional services in the enforcement of the Navigation Acts, and he soon complained about his overlapping duties. Cary told the Governor's Council that it was not "suitable that one and the same person should be obliged to seize a ship and vessels for illegal traders and be a party in the trial of them." He then modestly requested that the Council relieve him of the office of register.

Cary left his Admiralty Court post, but he retained several salaried county and provincial positions. Each one of them brought
him additional prestige. As one of the spoils of local political
success, offices consistently conveyed prestige, but Cary and his
neighbors also pursued them for the material benefits they bestowed.
Planters, hard-pressed by a nagging and persistent decline in tobacco
prices, saw public offices as both status-enhancing and
income-producing as John Lomax indicated when he petitioned Governor
Spotswood in 1709 for the shrievalty of Essex County. Lomax
explained that he deserved the office since he "had never enjoyed
that or any other place of profit . . . tho he has borne his equal
share of the trouble of attending court." John Smith, also of Essex,
requested the same appointment the next year and pointed out that he
alone of the three men recommended by the county justices had never
held the shrievalty. When George Dabney sought Spotswood's "good
esteem" in 1713, he informed the governor that he had been a justice
in King William "ever since it was a county" but had not yet
"obtained the favor of . . . the sheriff's place."9

It is easy to understand why Virginians saw local salaried
positions as one of the spoils of officeholding. The shrievalties
that Lomax, Dabney, and Smith sought, for example, kept 10 percent of
all county and parish levies they collected, the same share of quit
rents, and 4 percent of all fees collected for other county officers.
Planters coveted provincial offices for the same reasons. When
Nathaniel Harrison died unexpectedly in 1727 there was a great flurry
of speculation about who would succeed him as receiver general and
draw the £400 salary that went with the post. In a land where very
few men could boast at the end of their working lives that their

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property was worth even L100, the receiver general's salary was an immense fortune worth striving for. 10

Salaried offices offered both status and additional income. They were both trappings of success and, for some men, a way to move ahead. Alexander Spotswood told the Lords of Trade early in his administration what was perceived to be true as early as the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Tobacco, Spotswood reported, had declined to such a "low ebb, that the planter who depends entirely upon it is not able to cloath his family." 11 Offices were the best way to get to the top of Virginia's planting heap and stay there.

Virginia's rising gentlemen pursued and welcomed public offices, but English royal officials deemed officeholding patterns in Virginia neither beneficial or particularly efficient. In the decades that followed Bacon's Rebellion, the crown, acting through its royal governors, attempted to restrain the colony's rising oligarchy of officeholders by restricting the number of offices a man could hold. From its vantage, the English crown perceived the small knot of rapacious men who held a near monopoly on the colony's offices as a potentially dangerous if still nascent "country" party. Given their instructions to restrain the gentry, royal governors from Andros to Gooch found the "native" party's predilection to serve its self interest as "very prejudicial to his majesty's interest and service." The councilors displayed a disconcerting inclination "to lessen the prerogative in all things," and they often voted "in the interest of the Assembly." Officeholding planters saw royal maneuvers to widen the circle of officeholders as a challenge to

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their political power and authority. Their political agenda thus began to diverge radically from official policies formulated in the mother country. The stakes of the political struggle that ensued were high. Control of the colony's government was in contention. So was the economic well-being of politically powerful planters. Or so the planters thought.

III

When the English parson Andrew Burnaby traveled through the American southern colonies in 1759 and 1760 he noted that the "public or political character" of Virginians corresponded precisely with their private manners. Burnaby later wrote that the colonists were "haughty and jealous of their liberties, impatient of restraint and can scarcely bear the thought of being controlled by any superior power." The parson told his countrymen about these attitudes to help them unravel the origins of revolutionary strife that pitted the American colonies against its parent England. By the 1760s and 1770s, however, Virginians had carried them for a long time. James Blair displayed them during his eventually successful attempt to rid the colony of Governor Edmund Andros and in the bickering that soon marred his relations with Governor Nicholson. Contemporaries surmised that Blair wanted Andros out because he had not led "that worthy gentleman by the nose as much as he pleases" and suspected that similar treatment waited in Virginia for Nicholson "if he should prove restiff." William Byrd, who defended Andros before the Board of Trade, predicted that if Nicholson was not as pliant as the
commissary hoped, Blair would "blacken him as much as he has done Sir Edmund Andros."  

Nicholson, like Andros, arrived in Virginia with a poorly developed sense of what was politically possible in the colony. Determined to prevent "the upsurge of Rebellion" from affecting Virginia as earlier it had Maryland and North Carolina, Nicholson soon quarreled with his councilors. He inspired a minor revolution in 1698 when he disqualified some of his councilors from holding other appointive offices. The Board of Trade, weary of how Andros had made excessive and arbitrary use of the powers entrusted to him, ordered the disqualifications. The disqualifications were designed to decrease the likelihood that a governor might intimidate his advisors by threatening them with removal from office or curry the allegiance of a court party through spoilsmanship. Aggrieved councilors concluded otherwise. Threatened in both prerogative and purse, the councilors complained that Nicholson had "no use for the council than to colour and countenance with their pretended advice all his rash and arbitrary proceedings" and sought redress through their English friends and allies. Similar tactics and complaints had won Andros' removal, but Nicholson responded to the councilors' challenge with blustery defenses of his actions and blunt professions that he would not tolerate any disobedience. Nicholson frightened the gentry by "his haughty, passionate way" and his bluff threat that if he were to "hang half of them . . . the rest would learn to obey his commands."
Resentment of Nicholson mounted among the councilors when the governor began to organize the militia around officers from the middling ranks whom he promoted over colonel-councilors. That resentment grew into a professed fear of arbitrary rule when the governor proposed a standing army, a move the councilors, now joined by some burgesses, interpreted as a direct threat not only to their power but to their liberties. \(^{16}\) Nicholson confirmed the gentry's worst fears when he refused to give up his plans for a "new-modelled army" and reportedly answered a challenge to his methods by saying "that he knew how to govern the county without assemblies; and that if they should deny him anything after he had obtained a standing army he would bring them to reason with halters about their necks."\(^{17}\)

Worried that Nicholson's bluster might contain some bite, the councilors and their circle began to petition for Nicholson's removal. They emphatically predicted that Nicholson, "by means of this standing army" and by distributing the colony's "places of Honor and Profit" to lesser men, intended to "alter the constitution of the government and to set up a military government" to subjugate the assembly. \(^{18}\)

As the complaints against Nicholson mounted, a pamphlet entitled *An Essay Upon the Government of the English Plantations on the Continent of America. An Anonymous Virginian's Proposal for Liberty under the British Crown* suggested that two species of incompetent governors threatened the rights of English colonists everywhere. By design, the "Anonymous Virginian" based both types on what the dissident councilors had defined as Nicholson's worst
faults. There were, on the one hand, "weak" governors who "through weakness or prejudice . . . contributed very much to raise factions . . . by . . . encouraging . . . one particular sort or sett of men." Governors "so feeble that they cannot protect themselves against the insolencies of the common people" inspired nothing but confusion in government, and the chaos they engendered was palpable in the rise of "mean men." Nicholson's great weakness was his appeal to the freeholders in his campaign to limit the tobacco barons. His critics also claimed Nicholson's willingness to seek an alliance with the small planters as an indication of his unworthiness.

The "Anonymous Virginian" also warned against "absolute" governors. These officials claimed more power than their office allowed, and they were "so absolute that it is almost impossible to buy any sort of restraint upon them."\(^{19}\) Attenuated a few years earlier to the dangers of untrammeled and arbitrary power, the members of the Board of Trade listened receptively to the complaints and accusations that flowed to them from Virginia. In 1705 Nicholson, accused of being both too strong and too weak, lost his job.

The councilors had won again. For a second time Blair and his circle of councilors had succeeded in removing a governor who had refused to allow them to rule the colony as they thought best and whom they had found threatening to their self interest. They had beaten back what they described as Nicholson's "indescret and irregular conduct," defended what they perceived to be their traditional rights, and celebrated by reassuring themselves that
Virginia had narrowly escaped political disaster. From England Nathaniel Blakiston agreed with councilor Philip Ludwell's assessment from the scene that "as far as a man can judge of things at a distance I am of your opinion that . . . if Nicholson had but reigned a few months longer he would have put all in a convulsion."  

The councilors had not, however, convinced the burgesses or most freeholders that they knew how to administer the colony any better than Nicholson. Indeed, one of the complaints they leveled against Nicholson, that their governor had inspired a factious political style in the colony, indicated that the freeholders had embarked on a separate political course.

IV

The freeholders began to coalesce as a potent political force while Nicholson stalked the gentry. After his first taste of Virginia's local politics, Nicholson reported to his superiors that there was in every county an "ignorant and factious mob who never have right notions of things." The governor supposed Virginia's county mobs consisted of "poor and idle people" who refused to defer to their social and economic betters. The mob, Nicholson charged, refused to defer to anyone who professed distaste for the small freeholders' "loose way." Unruly and apparently unpredictable, Nicholson believed the freeholders who made the mobs were "pleased in disorder and tumult which they fancy to be the necessary consequence of change." The county mobs threatened the colony's political harmony. Nicholson accordingly told his superiors that it was in the
best interest of the crown if "noe plebians be contenanced" by his office. He changed his mind during his second term.22

When Nicholson returned to Virginia the county mobs were even more active, and a new dynamic shaped the election of burgesses. Where once candidates had stood for election on the merits of their status as wealthy men, planters who would be burgesses and their allies now distributed presents of meat, liquor, and cash when they met the freeholders on election days. The presents and promises that accompanied elections had so disturbed the sitting burgesses that they passed a law "to prevent the undue election of Burgesses."

Virginia's new election law forbade candidates or any of their adherants to "make any present, gift, reward, or entertainment . . . to procure the vote or votes of such person or persons for his or their election to be a burgess or burgesses."23

Virginia's unsanctioned electoral etiquette was, and remained throughout the eighteenth century, too powerful and too popular for laws to contain. Wooing votes helped some men overcome county oligarchies. And active face-to-face campaigning added excitement to elections while the freeholders's role in them increased. In 1705 the justices of Elizabeth City County complained to Governor Nicholson that the "misbehaviour" of the Reverend James Wallace often disrupted the proceedings of their court. The parson's "scoffing and deriding carriage toward us" incensed Elizabeth City's justices, but they were more disturbed that Wallace's public attacks continued when the freeholders met to chose their burgesses. Wallace was "very zealous and busy" on election days and "went often backward and
forewards among the people to engage them to vote for his . . . kinsman." When the polling was done, he again "went to and fro thanking them for that service and kindness." Such glad-handing was still considered a transgression against formal election laws and accepted political etiquette in Elizabeth City, and the parson made his crime worse by brazenly declaring that "he should be parson when wee were not justices," a prediction the justices interpreted as an attempt to "Incense the people against us."24

The dynamics of wooing and treating were too powerful and too popular to contain, and the "tumult and confusion" of campaigning with treats the law of 1699 attempted to control became the dominant style in Virginia's political culture. William Byrd's campaigning in 1720 to win as assembly friendly to his views illustrates the mechanics of the new politics. Late in the summer as the day set aside by county sheriffs for the election of burgesses approached, Byrd campaigned among his neighbors. Byrd was not a candidate for office. As a councilor he already sat in the most coveted office in the colony, but he worked diligently in three counties for men he endorsed. Byrd first joined the "extravagant" campaigning that preceded the polling in Charles City, his home county. Byrd joined the campaigning by distributing watermelon and cider at the door of his church to "refresh the people" on the Sunday prior to elections and observed that a "great deal of persuading" continued until the freeholders had made their choice. Although one of the successful candidates was "courteous even to his adversary," the campaigning was acrimonious and tranquility returned to the courthouse only after the
voters and candidates reconciled their differences with drink.²⁵ Five days later Byrd helped Colonel John Randolph and his son Tom prevail in neighboring Henrico County because the father and son gathered "the great number of votes by their great industry." And a few weeks later in September Byrd was in Middlesex County where he went to church with Gawain Corbin to "talk to people about his election." Corbin won a burgess's seat on the following Tuesday.²⁶

In Charles City, Henrico, and Middlesex Byrd seems to have been as active in cajoling and persuading the freeholders in these elections as he had by treating the churchgoers, and Governor Spotswood heard about it all. When Byrd went to Williamsburg to attend the General Court later that year Spotswood greeted him so "gravely" that Byrd volunteered that he suspected someone had told the governor that he had "been busy at elections." He denied that he had, and admitted later that he felt absolved of the governor's "calumney."²⁷

The rising imperative that colonels and councilors be "busy at elections" pulled the colony's biggest men into active face-to-face meetings with the small planters. Such glad-handing indicated that the freeholders applied new tests of legitimacy to candidates who sought their votes. The "vulgar mob" still sent the wealthiest men in their counties to represent them in Williamsburg, but simple deference to social or economic superiority, it was claimed, explained the results of a relatively few elections. The results of the elections for 1715 in Warwick County illustrate the shifts in the dynamics of candidacy and voting. When the polls

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closed in Warwick, the freeholders had selected William Cole and Cole Diggs as their representatives. It was said that the two, who apparently campaigned as a package, had won the hearts and votes of their neighbors by promising that if elected they would serve without salary. Since the salaries of burgesses were paid by the annual levy, Cole and Diggs had offered their constituents a tax cut, and William Harwood, a former incumbent and unsuccessful candidate, called their scheme to reduce taxes a bribe and challenged their election. The burgesses who heard the electoral grievance from Warwick agreed with Harwood that Cole and Diggs had indeed broken the law forbidding gifts and called for a new election. The pair prevailed a second time, however, and later took their seats, "having made this time no ante-election promise."  

The quid pro quo for a seat in the assembly was often as palpable, if not as illegal, as Cole's and Diggs' original campaign pledge. In Warwick and elsewhere Alexander Spotswood discovered "a new and unaccountable humour which hath obtained in several Countys of excluding the Gentlemen from being Burgesses, and choosing only persons of mean figure and character." Spotswood made this political observation while the profound reorientation of power relationships between burgesses and councilors was transforming the colony's political etiquette. Successful candidates were those who "recommend themselves to the populace upon a received opinion among them, that he is the best Patriot that most violently opposes all Overtures for raising money." That popular conviction grew
stronger, and Spotswood dispaired that he would ever pry needed appropriations from the assembly.

The "mob" flexed its new muscles in the elections of 1712 and found "themselves able to carry whom they please." That was generally men "of their own class, who as their principal Recommendation have declared their resolution to raise no tax on the people, let the occasion be what it will." So great a number of successful candidates that year won their elections on platforms that promised to keep government spending level that the governor labeled them as "a set of People whom all the meaner sort of Planters cry up for honest, for Lovers and Patriots of their Country, and for Friends of the Poor." The "Mob" again returned an assembly in 1718 that was attuned to its interests, and Spotswood interpreted the election results as the work of a plebian party who won "by their Assiduity [sic] in debauching the minds of the weak, inconsiderate men."31

It was Spotswood's view that Virginia's requirements for suffrage were not sufficiently stringent. The governor observed that the colony's suffrage laws gave "everyone, tho but just out of the condition of a servant, and that can but purchase half an acre of land, an equal vote with the man of the best Estate in the County."32 Spotswood assumed voters selected men like themselves for the assembly. Thus devaluation of the quality of the electorate (Spotsood said that the "bulk of electors of assemblymen consists of the meaner sort of people") had led to a decline in the quality of the assemblymen. The result was a lower house composed of men who had sought office "for the lucre of the salary," who honored the
demands of their constituents to keep taxes low "for fear of not being chosen again," and who did nothing "that may be disrelished out of the House by the Common People."33

There were some men who refused to be "familiar" with the small planters at election time and who "despised making their court to the populace by such vile practices," but these better men were often defeated by "mobbish candidates." Spotswood tried repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, to achieve a government free of the influences of the county mobs and their candidates. In early 1718 a dissident faction in the House of Burgesses sponsored by some members of the council accused Spotswood of attempting to "subvert the Constitution" of the colony and destroy the "ancient rights and privileges" of the planters in a pamphlet that urged freeholders to "choose men of estates and families of moderations and dutiful to their superiors" in the next election. He was outdone, however, by a responding tract entitled "Advice to the Freeholders of the Several Countys in Virginia in their Choice of Representatives to Serve in the Approaching Assembly." Addressed to "Brother Electors," "Advice to Freeholders" urged the small farmers to return a house that was opposed to Spotswood's so-called "court" party and that would continue to thwart the attempts the governor had made to "oppress the people."34 The freeholders responded to the "Advice" offered them, and the councilors and their circle proved they were more adept at wooing the mob than Spotswood. Even so, the council had not regained the dominant position in the colony's political hierarchy.
V

In 1722 Alexander Spotswood became the third gubernatorial casualty in the power struggle that pitted royal governors and crown prerogative against Virginia's most prominent men. The colony's tobacco barons had bested three governors, but their victories had not come without cost. Political etiquette had certainly and profoundly changed. The house of burgesses, not the council, was emerging as the dominant force in politics. And both changes had been accompanied by challenges to other aspects of the gentry's leadership. Each of the governors that the gentry had deposed, from Nicholson to Spotswood, had questioned the gentry's cultural legitimacy. That challenge, coupled with encounters Virginians had with other arbiters of English culture, resulted in a deep sense of ambivalence among the gentry about their status as colonists. This sense of cultural ambivalence may be called creole anxiety and it played a central role in the enthusiasm wealthy Virginians expressed for things English and in the divergence of a patrician culture from the plebian.

When Spotswood "railed" about the incompetence of the mean and loutish burgesses who had won their seats in Virginia's lower house of assembly by pandering to the mob and plying their constituents with liquor, he also cast aspersion on wealthy men who thought of themselves as urbane and cultivated. The charges were not new. It was said in the late seventeenth century that Virginia's political and cultural leaders were then less well educated than their fathers. As a result the county courts had become more and
more deficient than "while the first stock of Virginia Gentlemen lasted who having had their education in England, were a great deal better accomplished in the law and knowledge of the world than their children . . . who have been born in Virginia." Complaints about the quality of county court records in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, slovenliness in the administration of the office of the deputy auditor, the "irregular and unintelligable" records kept by agents of the proprietors of the Northern Neck, and a lack of attention to reports from naval officers and parish clerks all supported the charge that the ability of the colonists to run their own affairs had declined.

Spotswood, for example, discovered that the office responsible for collecting land taxes and transmitting them to England kept slovenly and inefficient books. The necessary first step needed to reform the land office was to put its books in order, and the governor directed deputy auditor Philip Ludwell and receiver general William Byrd, Ludwell's relative by marriage, to reorganize their bookkeeping. Ludwell staunchly resisted Spotswood's instructions and was rewarded by a suspension, a temporary act Ludwell's superior Auditor General William Blathwayt made permanent in 1716. Aggrieved and angry, Ludwell wrote Blathwayt to complain about the damage done to his prestige by his suspension, to defend his reputation, and to warn the auditor general of the damage he thought Spotswood could do to the integrity of government in the colony. Ludwell whined that he would have "compyed [sic] with your advice as far as you should have thought fit had I continued in the
office for I assure you there is noe disobedience in my temper where I ought to obey." Spotswood thought differently. He also disagreed that there was a hidden agenda in suspending Ludwell from office, but the planter read in his removal a plan by Spotswood to fetter the council for "if the Governor can gain this point it must never be expected that any officer or any of the council hereafter will oppose a governor in anything." Blathwayt was not persuaded that Spotswood's orders were sinister, supported the governor, and removed Ludwell.

Governor Nicholson flattered the colony at the opening of the 1699 assembly by expressing his pleasure that the lower house contained "soe many natives of your own country capable of serving their country." Secretly, however, he expressed reservations about the competency of the burgesses since they represented a constituency "few of which have read much or been abroad in the world" but most of whom were capable of considerable "knavery." Governor Spotswood later expressed similar misgivings when he dissolved an assembly that had bitterly opposed him in 1715. He dismissed the burgesses with an indignant speech which he concluded by saying "I cannot but attribute these miscarriages to the people's mistaken choice of a set of representatives, whom heaven has not generally endowed with the ordinary qualifications requisite to legislators; for I observe that the grand ruling party in your house has not furnished chairmen for two . . . committees who can spell English or write common sence [sic]."
By a governor's standards, capable men were not plentiful in the colony. When Spotswood nominated Nathaniel Harrison of Surry County to the Council he sent a recommendation to England which noted that Harrison was a "person of loyal and honest principles, of good sense [sic] and of plentiful estates, which are qualifications not to be neglected in a country where such do not often concur in one person." And in 1730 when William Gooch was drawing up the tobacco inspection law he objected to a suggested provision, later made law, that burgesses not also be inspectors since there were perhaps too few men of talent to fill the inspectorates "if men of capacity and integrity must be shut out either of the one or the other." English opinions agreed with the reports that came from the colony. Robert Beverley reported with great anguish in 1704 that the most pervasive opinion Englishmen held about the men who sat in Virginia's lower house was that they were "a pack of rude, unthinking, wilful, obstinate people." The rising elite that had emerged late in the seventeenth century made it to the top by hard work and luck and had parlayed their economic power into "unchecked sway over the common planters." They enjoyed their positions, and they also wanted desperately to dispose of the stigmatic notions that they were brutish, dull, and rude. Englishmen by habit defined all colonists as inferior since it was generally assumed that emigration was a sure sign of some serious failing. Only men and women of humble social status, who could not compete with their fellows, or who lacked some quality necessary for success in England would ever find it necessary to leave home. Even
though some of the men who went to Virginia prospered and grew fabulously wealthy, they and their sons labored under the English assumption that residence in Virginia defined them as suspect and inferior. It is doubtful that many men came to Virginia seeking ignominy, and the more prosperous among them developed an "extraordinary ambition to be thought well of" in England.  

The ambition to be well thought of by relatives and friends at home was one reason the late seventeenth century elite sent their sons to English schools. Younger Carters, Wormeleys, Lees, Carys, Burwells, and Harrisons sailed off to England, sent by English-born fathers who agreed with Robert Carter's later assessment that "the continuance of careful education will render them accomplished men qualified to preserve the character of their father and fit for the service of their country."  

Robert Carter was only six when John his father died in 1669. His half-brother John became his half sibling's guardian, but he left most of Robert's keeping to other hands. Sometime after 1670 John honored his father's instructions that Robert receive a classical education "during his minority" from a "man or youth bought for him that hath been brought up in the Latin school" who would "not only teach him . . . but also . . . preserve him from harm and from doing evil." The old colonel was so determined that his younger son be well-taught and well-behaved that he had stipulated that "as soon as one is free or dead, my will is that he have another bought."  

There were, however, few such teachers in Virginia. Robert thus traveled to England where he studied at "old Mr. Bailey's" grammar
school until about 1685. Robert Carter was one of a generation of Virginia boys whose families sent them to England to acquire educations they had defined as essential to the efficient and profitable management of burgeoning farms.47

The notions young Virginians encountered about learning and its uses shaped their attitudes as profoundly as the days some of them, William Byrd II, Robert Carter and John Custis, for example, spent as apprentices in London counting houses.48 Byrd's generation accomplished most of what their fathers hoped, and when they in turn sent their sons to English schools they repeated the axioms their fathers had spoken about education. There were, they said, certain fundamental skills—in writing, mathematics, Latin and Greek—that should be mastered whether a man was a "blockhead or a man of parts." Both kinds of men had to master the basic skills whether they liked learning or not.49 There were, however, other reasons why some fathers professed that their son's "improvement in learning and manners is one of the greatest blessings I can meet with in this world" and why they admonished their sons to "make the best use of the time you have to stay in England."50

When young Lewis Burwell Jr. of Gloucester County sailed away from Virginia to begin his schooling he was told that there was a "great design of his father in sending him for an English education."51 Lewis and other scholars like Robert Carter's son Charles sometimes forgot about their father's wishes and "told fine stories . . . that you will make a brave fellow by the time is out . . . allotted for your stay in England." Most often young
Virginians at school in England fell short of their "mighty promises." As guardian of one of the boys and father of the other Robert Carter followed reports from and about both students closely. Most were not flattering, and he warned both students that if they did not "improve your time suitable to the charge I am at upon you" he would bring them home. "According to your behavior," Carter warned another son, "you must expect to be treated."

The purpose of the "large expenses" fathers paid out for their sons' learning was to make each of them "a scholar and a gentleman." Scholarship, in turn, provided a proving ground to determine which area of employment best suited the inclinations of the sons of Virginia's wealthy planters. Carter reminded William Dawkins, a English merchant who supervised the schooling of some young Virginians, that "the greatest part of their work is to do after they have left school." Tobacco-planting fathers in Virginia thus defined the most valuable learning as the kind that would "stick by them and be useful to them in their riper years."

Learning equipped eldest sons to manage plantations, and learning prepared younger sons to secure lucrative careers in government. Education was then nothing less than preparation for the "future state of life," but it also made gentlemen of boys. That was a school's second and perhaps greatest task. It was "not fine cloaths nor a gay outsight, but learning and knowledge and wisdom and virtue" that made a "valuable man." Years in an English school allowed young Virginians to "keep Gentlemen's Company" and to acquire by association traits highly-valued in Virginia. Robert Carter
thought those traits included responsible deportment, the ability to converse intelligibly with men from all ranks of society, competency in letter-writing, book-keeping, and the classical languages, and the ability to act well in any company. Scholarship was important, but so too were lessons learned about deportment and dress since "to have a finical inside and not a suitable covering for the outside will make but a schymity [sic] gentleman."\textsuperscript{57}

Virginia's privileged sons dutifully learned their lessons and new trends in metropolitan culture, but even their learning failed to satisfy the ambitions for high esteem in England they inherited from their fathers. Virginia-born men and women discovered that economic success did not automatically win the connections or the receptions they desired. They discovered instead that England greeted them with the coded label creole. A creole was, first, anyone who was colony-born, but the term also came to connote the flaws provincials shared.

When plantation-born sons came home to Virginia, some of them were more learned and others more worldly than their fathers. All of them who had sampled English life hated being pulled away from it and suffered acutely the accusations that their birthplaces and their distance from the center of the culture they had learned made them inferior. Virginia was, Robert Carter complained, a "melancholy corner of the world," cut off from England and connected tenuously by slow ships and the letters the planters received from English relatives and friends.\textsuperscript{58} When he received letters from England, William Byrd "wore out the paper" and begged that his correspondents
send him, "a poor hermit," more news. Byrd perhaps more than any of his contemporaries hated being an exile in his homeland and wrote his friends that "the next pleasure to being in the fine world is from time to time to receive an elegant account of it." Byrd and Carter liked to describe themselves as only temporarily "absent" from England, but they sometimes capitulated to remorse and likened their isolated, provincial lives to living among the dead.

Life in the "Barren Wilderness" separated from England's "polite pleasures" led to further English presumptions about colonial culture that carried over into politics. As Virginia's elite "Anchorites" rose in power, so did their reputations in England as wilful and spiteful men. English friends had listened attentively to complaints about Andros and Nicholson and had helped the dissident councilors remove the governors, but it seemed to some of the grandees that their stock had declined so much in England that they found it more and more difficult to be heard. It was English merchants who lobbed intensely against Spotswood's "Act . . . for the better Improving the Staple of Tobacco" and ignored the testimony of the governor and the planters that the act was in the colony's best interest. It was merchants again who persuaded Parliament to pass a law that required the planters to ship their leaves to England still attached to their stalks, not stripped and more efficiently packed in hogsheads. English merchants had cooperated in the campaigns to secure the recall of governors Andros, Nicholson, and Spotswood, but they now seemed allies of dubious value.
Virginia's big planters were, of course, caught in an unenviable dependent relationship with their English factors. They had to rely on the merchants to market their crops and trusted them with their investments and English purchases. The merchants were their clients, but the Virginians realized that they needed the merchants more than the merchants needed them, and their requests for respect and prompt and efficient service went most often to England in obsequious letters. William Byrd began one sycophantic letter to Sir Charles Wager with a request that Sir Charles forgive him "for presuming to abtrude my creolian notions in affairs so high above my humble sphere." Byrd and his tobacco-planting peers chaffed under their roles as inferior men, and they sometimes expressed their great distaste for their dependent economic status and English merchants. Byrd's own anti-merchant sentiments were summarized in his accusation that "the merchants of England take care that none of us grow very rich." English factors often reassured their clients in Virginia that they were treated fairly, but Byrd was sure that the merchants cheated "the plantations without remedy." Robert Carter rarely sent cross words to Micajah Perry, but he sometimes berated William Dawkins. Shortly before he died in 1732 Carter scolded Dawkins with the complaint that "sending . . . tobacco for London is in a manner giving away . . . capital. When your turn is served you regard us no further."62

Criticized in England as rude, loutish, and uncivilized Virginia's big men began to look for ways to demonstrate their worthiness and cultural equality with the men who denied it. Robert
Carter's preparations for the celebration of King George I's birthday in 1727 illustrates their efforts and introduces a subject that will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter. Cramped by intestinal gas and hobbled by gout Carter was then Virginia's acting governor until William Gooch arrived to fill the post left vacant by Colonel Hugh Drysdale's death the previous summer. Limited by his illness, Carter relied on his sons to make many of the birthday preparations and reminded them often that he had resolved to "have the birthday kept with as much show as it was by Colonel Drysdale." Illuminations, flag-hoistings, and cannon salutes were expected and therefore "necessary requisites for the birth night." Carter ordered that these aspects of the celebration be performed with "as much solemnity" as they had under Drysdale. Carter also instructed his sons to pour punch and other drink for the birth night crowd as liberally as Drysdale had the previous year. Carter boasted that his salary was as large as Drysdale's and that he had "as little reason to be sparing of it." "Whatever sorts of drink Colonel Drysdale had," Carter instructed his sons, "I would have the same" and, he added, "in all respects keep pace with him."63

IV

There were several reasons why Robert Carter spent so lavishly to "keep pace with" a dead governor. His first and most obvious intention was to demonstrate that a Virginian could sponsor a birthnight celebration that, pomp for pomp and treat for treat, matched the observances given yearly by the crown's official
representatives. Success in matching Drysdale would be proof that the colonists were capable of liberal, fashionable entertainment and were not the crude, cider-swilling dullards Englishmen presumed them to be. Wealthy Virginians had long regretted the physical distance that separated them from England, and they now strove to prove that physical and cultural distances were not the same. Matching Drysdale's birthnight celebration was one way of proving that although Virginia might be physically distant from England, it was not very far in terms of fashions, styles, and behavior. That was, in part, the goal of Hugh Jones's optimistic and misleading appraisal

Present State of Virginia. Jones had insisted boastfully early in the century that Virginia's wealthy colonists dressed, ate, talked, rode, and built their houses exactly like their English counterparts.64

There was, however, a second reason why Virginia gentlemen were concerned about keeping pace with English royal officials, and it evolved in the era of familiar politics. When Alexander Spotswood complained about the suffrage provisions in Virginia that gave the very poorest freeholder a vote equal to that of his richest neighbor, he did so because he was not comfortable in a political system that encouraged "the ordinary sort of planters" to vote in such numbers that they, and not their social and economic betters, determined who won and who lost. Spotswood was also dismayed that candidates directed their political speeches too eagerly to the small planters. The mighty planters never lost their grip on the colony's local
politics, but the attitudes of the small planter came to count for more than they had before.

Virginia's big planters greeted the freeholders' increased political activity with trepidation. Some of the grandees had already expressed misgivings about allowing men less wealthy than they to sit as justices of new courts of oyer and terminer. Appointed to try capital cases, the oyer and terminer courts provided, the councilors contended, an opportunity for a "passionate and resenting" governor to weaken the Council. Council members argued strenuously that without their participation, the courts of oyer and terminer would devolve into courts at which justices with "inferior... fortunes" would pass judgement on their betters. As the councilors saw it, to put the "lives and liberties of Virginians under less security than their estates" would be a travesty of justice. Only one councilor, "mean sycophant Colonel Heartless" Francis Jenings, sat on what William Byrd haughtily described as the "linsey woolsey commission."65

Virginia's most powerful men tried unsuccessfully to stall the loss of places on the oyer and terminer bench. Their defeat came as they failed to persuade Englishmen that they alone should constitute the courts, and the prospect that they might have to seek justice from men less wealthy and privileged than they grieved them. So had the realization that they had to court election day mobs actively. Now the small planters challenged the gentry's political leadership still again by questioning the validity of the social distance that still separated humble freeholders from elite planters.
There was seldom a neat fit between current political status and social origins. Even so, middling men had tended to defer to the leadership of richer men. But in the context of increasing political familiarity "the ordinary sort of planters that have land of their own, though not much," had begun to "look upon themselves to be as good as the best of them." Virginia's voting freeholders presumed that equality between themselves and the grandees after they discovered "from whence these mighty dons derive their originals . . . and that he or his ancestors were their equals if not superiors." 66

It was thus while Englishmen declined to recognize the colonial gentry as their equals that the small planters demurred to assent to the elite's notions of their superiority. The big planters had not climbed as high in English eyes as they wanted, and they were loathe to slide back down to the level the small planters had reserved for them. The best way to avoid that was to strive to be more, not less, like the English.

Straining to be more English, however, sometimes led the gentlemen who occupied seats in the assembly to stray from the political agenda their humbler constituents supported. When the burgesses enacted laws that strengthened their connections to England, the smaller freeholders moved to sever them by action that occurred both within the formal boundaries of the colony's government and outside it. Freeholders greeted two such acts, the Tobacco Inspection Acts of 1713 and 1731, with both legal and extra-legal opposition. The inspection acts, by creating a system of forty inspectors who would certify good tobacco and burn leaves that did
not meet standards, would, its supporters argued, boost tobacco prices that had then fallen "to an intollerable lowness." The plan made good sense to the burgesses whose links to the international market were stronger than their ties to the small planters they represented. Burgesses who supported Governor Spotswood's tobacco inspection system promptly lost their seats when the freeholders gathered at county polling places. But before they turned their representatives out, some planters registered their opposition to the law by supporting grievances they sent to the burgesses. Twenty-three of twenty-five counties filed grievances that complained about the anticipated negative effects of the law. Seventeen grievances requested that the law be repealed.

Formal legal procedures took time, and while they waited some planters expressed their opposition to the inspection law by destroying the apparatuses created by it. Singlely and in groups they refused to submit their crops for inspection and marketed their tobacco covertly, intimidated inspectors, and burned the warehouses that sheltered inspectors and inspected leaves. Leo Tarent, sheriff of Essex County, told the assembly that in his county "the people's inclinations are so great against the Tobacco Law that they have not met me to pay their dues." Most Essex planters had decided to "run away with their tobacco to buyers," and most of it that year was sold outside the inspection system. Their counterparts in other counties also subverted the system by ignoring it. Other freeholders, condemned by the burgesses as "wicked, malitious, and evil disposed
persons," voted their complaints against the sitting assembly with torches and burned local tobacco inspection warehouses. 68

Popular opposition to the tobacco inspection law hindered its implementation, but in the end it was the lobbying of English merchants that finally killed it. 69 Virginia opponents of the law were pleased, but drooping tobacco prices encouraged old supporters of the scheme to control the quantity and quality of the colony's export staple to revive the inspection system in 1730. After first considering and then dropping an ill-advised plan to boost tobacco prices by limiting the number of plants each fieldhand could tend, Gooch re-introduced the system of inspectors and warehouses. The intent of this second inspection law was the same as the earlier measure; by exporting only those leaves that met the standards of quality insured by inspection, Virginia would raise the reputation, and thus the price, of their ailing staple. Speculation about the long-term benefits of controlling the quality of tobacco again made sense to most large planters who shipped hogsheads of the crop to England and whose wharves might become inspection stations. But planters who marketed smaller crops grown in inferior fields far away from existing or proposed warehouses feared that their tobacco might fail inspection—if they managed to transport it that far without first ruining their leaves with dust and dirt. These small men paid their taxes and their debts in small bundles of leaves and bartered relatively small bags of it for hoes and cloth and cows. They could not see the benefit of a law that would reduce the number of leaves they had to spend and at the same time increase their labors.
This time English merchants did not move to block the tobacco inspection law. Many of Virginia's middling planters, however, had not changed their minds about the tobacco inspection system, and they opposed Gooch's scheme with the same violent tactics they had used against Spotswood seventeen years earlier. For a second time torches and the fires of burning inspection warehouses lit the night skies in the Northern Neck where "Villains" reduced four warehouses in Lancaster and Northumberland to ashes. In Prince William County 50 of "the meaner sort of People" gathered with their guns to destroy the remaining warehouses on the Northern Neck and were thwarted only by Gooch's use of militia forces.

Groups of middling planters used the threat of violence to intimidate individual tobacco inspectors. In Lancaster County, for example, the "unruly elements," convinced that the inspectors favored a few local magnates and rejected good tobacco if small planters submitted it, continued what Robert Carter called their "strange opposition" to the inspection system. Rumors spread among the planters that this law would be repealed like its predecessor, but while they waited "the most turbulent among the planters" led their neighbors in more riots. Boisterous mobs had put some inspectors on holiday almost twenty years earlier, and Lancaster's freeholders now tried the tactic of intimidation on one of the inspectors for their county. Assembled at the county courthouse for a militia muster, a crowd of planters surrounded inspector Joseph Carter who had apparently demonstrated his disdain for his humbler neighbors when he "spightfully burnt James Pollard's Tobacco . . . threatened to split
Peter Rivers head, and offered to turn him out of doors." The crowd shouted accusations that Carter conducted his office in a "very partial and unjust" manner and demanded to be told why "we dare not carry our tobacco to him." Carter, whose "implacable temper" had won him few allies and no visible supporters that day, escaped the mob with the help of the county sheriff.  

The actions of the crowd of armed men who surrounded Joseph Carter and threatened to split his head and the letters his friends wrote to defend him with assurances that he executed his office with impartiality and justice summarize the political divisions that had jostled Virginia from the 1690s to the 1730s and the social tensions that divided the colonists. There was, on one side, the mob, small planters who lived in one-room, clapboard-covered houses on plantations generally located farther away from the county's roads and rivers than their wealthier neighbors. Before the inspection law they had sold their tobacco through the grandees, used their flats to transport their leaves to warehouses located near the piers the big men built, and had often spent some of their profits, or extended their credit, in the stores the grandees operated. Isolated physically and dependent economically, the small men lived in a world that turned inward, toward their fields and their families, and which had few connections with the counties or countries that lay beyond Lancaster. The accouterments of their everyday lives reflected their local concerns. Their possessions, communal beds and furniture, shared utensils and foods, responded to rhythms already ancient when their parents wove them into new Virginia fields and houses.
The world of "implacable" Joseph Carter was oriented to an entirely different axis. He and his defenders were familiar with, indeed were the products of, the local world which the men who harried him occupied. But Joseph Carter had connections also to a wider world, a world in which market forces a thousand miles from Lancaster were more powerful than the force of local barter, a world in which the styles of London were more beguiling than the tug of tradition. Carter's office as an inspector allied him to a circle that rippled from Lancaster to Williamsburg and then out to England while the offices the small men held reinforced local ties. Forks and sets of plates rather than spoons and trenchers, English jackets and breeches rather than "country made" shirts and socks, Madeira rather than cider marked the boundaries of his culture.

The two cultures, the small planters' and Joseph Carter's, intersected on court days and at militia musters, at church and wherever the citizens of Lancaster gathered as a community. The men and women of Lancaster had in the past found much to disagree about. Routes of county roads, locations of fences, debt suits, dispositions of estates, and accusations of slander had all provided focus for contention, but all their bickering emanated from local disputes and, when resolved, subsided into the sense of "good Neighborhood" the law and local tradition sought to maintain. In the wake of the new politics, however, other issues prompted them to assemble and inspired their shouts. The price of tobacco, not the price of a glass of cider at the local tavern, the ultimate powers of governors and councilors, not the authority of local justices, were among the
Issues that came to play important roles in determining why and how the county's small planters voted.

Two cultures, the old, local, hearth-centered culture and the newer, international, market-oriented elite culture, were competing for the allegiance of Lancaster's voters. The small planters' reservations about the latter were seldom recorded, but they were certainly registered in warehouse fires and election day mobs. The small freeholders who came to occupy a pivotal position in Virginia's eighteenth century politics forced the House of Burgesses to assume legislative positions that can perhaps best be understood as the traditional culture's opposition to the new. The burgesses regularly stymied governors Nicholson and Spotswood when they sought legislation that, while justifiable from an imperial point of view, offered little or nothing for wigless men in one-roomed houses. For example, men immersed in local economies saw little to be gained from tobacco inspection acts but more work and less profit. English-educated men who were attuned to wider markets and who were acutely aware of their inferior position in it saw the logic of inspection acts and chose to greet their humbler neighbors' opposition as sure signs of their loutishness. The small men, however, could not be ignored, and caught between their desire to lead and control local politics and their compelling desire to achieve respect abroad, Virginia's big men looked for material ways to achieve political and cultural legitimacy for themselves.
NOTES

CHAPTER FOUR: PATRICIAN CULTURE, PLEBIAN POLITICS


3. Nestled as they were between the high political drama that accompanied Bacon's Rebellion in the Seventeenth Century and the momentous events that led a century later toward revolution against England, the squabbles that pitted royal governors against provincial assemblymen and councilors between 1692 and the middle of the 1730s seem tamer and somehow less important. Historians of eighteenth century Virginia have emphasized that the quarrels that led to the recalls of Andros, Nicholson, and Spotswood played a profound role in shaping the responsibilities and prerogatives of the


5. In the last decades of the seventeenth century, fewer and fewer men met the criteria for admission to the colony's highest circle of political power. No servant who arrived in
Virginia after 1640 served as a burgess between 1660 and 1706; only 9 of 42 burgesses at the end of the seventeenth century were immigrants. No burgess during those years was the son of a former servant. Wealthy men, however, were not automatically admitted, but wealth was requisite. See Jack P. Greene, "Foundations of Political Power in the Virginia House of Burgesses, 1720-1776," *William and Mary Quarterly*, third series, XVI (1959), 485-506; Martin Herbert Quitt, "Virginia House of Burgesses 1660-1706: The Social, Educational, and Economic Bases of Political Power," Ph.D. Dissertation, Washington University, 1970.

6. Quitt, "Virginia House of Burgesses," 9-12, 274. Between 1677 and 1706, 60 per cent of the burgesses arrived after 1660 or later or were descended from men who had themselves arrived after 1660.


17. Francis Nicholson to the Board of Trade, 2 December 1701, C.O. 5/1312, no. 19.


California, 1945], 36-37. For a response to the charges see "Answer of John Thrale in behalf of Francis Nicholson," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, VII (1900), 278-282.


21. If there was a strategy that could eliminate the rancor that had driven a wedge between his predecessors and his officers, Edward Nott hoped he could find it and told the burgesses who gathered at Williamsburg on October 23, 1705 that the time had come in Virginia for "all feuds and animositys, heats and divisions from this time be layed aside." Nott quickly won respect for "his great moderation and exactness in doing justice to all persons" and seemed capable of healing the rifts that had opened between governors and councilors, councilors and burgesses, but the governor died less than a year after he assumed his post. The colony mourned and waited for four years until a new governor arrived, and when he did "feuds, animositys, heats and divisions" again dominated politics. McIlwaine, ed., *Journal of the House of Burgesses*, 1702-1712, 129-131.

23. The new election law was inspired by a grievance from Accomack County, McIlwaine, ed., Journal of the House of Burgesses, 1696-1702, 150; Hening, Statutes at Large, III, 173-175.

24. Elizabeth City County Justices to Francis Nicholson, 1705, Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, VIII (1901), 276-278.


30. Spotswood Letters, I, 140.


38. Philip Ludwell to William Blathwayt, 4 June 1716; Ludwell to Alexander Spotswood, 2 July 1716; Ludwell to Blathwayt, 3 July 1716, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.


42. Palmer, Calendar of State Papers, I, 200.


46. *William and Mary Quarterly*, first series, VIII (1900), 18–19. The period of young Robert Carter's absence from Corotoman can be deduced from his absence in the records of the Lancaster County Court from 14 December 1670 to 10 February 1685 when he witnessed a deposition given to the court by his brother.


Perceval wanted for his own. Perceval wrote William Byrd that his "chief aim is to rear up my son in such a manner that he may one day be more useful in his country than his father ever was." At the age of nineteen Perceval's son, by applying what his father described as a "distinguishing head and quick apprehension," spoke Greek, Latin, and French well, had accomplished geometry, had read Locke, Puffendorf, Chillingworth, Grotius, and Tacitus, and had become an accomplished dancer and painter. The young man was not expert but comfortable with fencing, riding, and other "country sport." Marion Tinling, ed., The Correspondance of the Three William Byrds of Westover, 1684-1776 (Charlottesville, 1977), 420.


58. Robert Carter to Thomas Corbin, William and Mary Quarterly, first series, XVII (1909), 255.

59. William Byrd to John Boyle, 12 February 1728.

60. William Byrd to Jane Pratt Taylor, 28 July 1728, Marion Tinling, ed., The Correspondance of the Three William Byrds
of Westover, Virginia, 1684-1776 (Charlottesville, 1977), 384. See also Richard Beale Davis, Literature and Society in Early Virginia, 1608-1840 (Baton Rouge, 1973), 118.


65. McIlwaine, ed., Journal of the House of Burgesses, 1702-1712, 240; Spotswood Letters, II, 25-26, 222. The Board of Trade supported Spotswood in this conflict and agreed that he should have the authority to appoint any justices "he shall
see fit." H.R. McIlwaine, ed., Executive Journals of the Council of Virginia, 1705-1721 (Richmond, 1928), 431.

William Byrd to Philip Ludwell, 24 September 1717, Ludwell Papers, 55, microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg.


In 1732 the assembly under Governor William Gooch passed a second and more effective tobacco act to take the place of the repealed 1713 law. The new inspectors soon busied themselves in elections in precisely the way Spotswood's opponents assumed he had planned to abuse the earlier act. The burgesses charged that some of the inspectors had "used the power of their offices" to influence elections even to the point of advancing their own candidacies. The inspectors had, in fact, become a "hindrance to the freedom of voting" in the colony, and to prevent further abuses of power the assembly forbade inspectors, who were appointed by the governor, to become burgesses or to "meddle or concern" themselves with any election or to "ask any freeholder who he will vote for."

Thomas Jones to My Dearest Wife, 17 September 1736, Jones Family Papers, microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg. Middlesex Justices to Francis Nicholson, 1736, Virginia Magazine of
History and Biography, VIII (1900), 132; McIlwaine, ed.,
Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1727-1740, 279; Hening,
Statutes at Large, 478-482; Shrock, "Prerogative," 162.

68. McIlwaine, ed., Journals of the House of Burgesses,
1712-1726, 124, 129, 130-133, 140-141, 142-143, 145; Palmer,
Calendar of State Papers, I, 181.


70. William Gooch to the Board of Trade, 30 March 1732, C.O.
5/1323. See also Rainbolt, "Case of the Poor Planters," 317.
For a discussion of the Virginia tobacco inspection act of
1730 and a similar Maryland law enacted in 1747 see Paul G.E.
Clemens, The Atlantic Economy and Colonial Maryland's Eastern

71. William Gooch to the Board of Trade, 30 March 1732, quoted in
John M. Hemphill, Jr., "Virginia and the English Commercial
Systems, 1689-1733. Studies in the Development and
Fluctuations of a Colonial Economy under Imperial Control," Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton, 1964, 169; McIlwaine, ed.,
Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia,

CHAPTER V
MONEY AND MANNERS

The destination of the Weymouth merchantman Portland was still not in sight when its captain William Russell fired cannon shots to signal his waiting client at Corotoman of his vessel's approach. As Stingray Point passed to port, the reports of Portland's guns rolled up river, the vessel left Chesapeake Bay, entered the calmer Rappahannock and leaned into the first of many short, tedious tacks necessary to cover the last fifteen miles to anchorage in the mouth of Carter's Creek. This last leg of the passage from England to Virginia was always deceptive. It could, if tides and currents ran against a broad-beamed merchantman or if the wind danced around the compass, take half a week or more to reach Corotoman. Happily, the end of the Portland's voyage went smoothly, and Russell, after he had safely anchored his vessel, supervised what had become an annual rite, off-loading finished English goods and the tools and supplies planters like Robert Carter needed to sustain their plantations and taking on a tobacco freight for his return to England.¹

The exchange of English products for Virginia tobacco was slightly more than a century old when Captain Russell dropped anchor at Corotoman in May 1721. Freight rates that year were higher than
the planters liked to pay, and tobacco prices lower than they thought they should get, but the routine of the regular, predictable spring arrival of the tobacco fleet and its departure in late summer was, and would remain until later in the century, Virginia's economic lifeline. Year after year ship captains unloaded cargoes that included the servants that made some Virginians richer, accepted leafy cargoes, and carried orders back to England. If the preferences the colonists expressed for wines or books or clothing changed, these captains were the first Englishmen to know. When the Portland left England for Virginia part of her cargo suggested that the preferences of at least one planter had changed.

Portland's Virginia-bound freight included a load of paving stones Robert Carter had ordered from merchant Edward Tucker and which he intended to lay in the basement of the incomplete brick carcass of the 40 by 90 foot mansion that nestled in an awesome hole his laborers had cut into the yard behind his older brother's wooden two room residence. This shipment of pavers, however, never reached Virginia. Portland had encountered heavy weather during its Atlantic crossing, and violent seas had threatened to roll the merchantman over. Russell and his crew, faced with the choice of sinking or lightening the ship's load, had quickly agreed that Carter's stones were expendable and had heaved them overboard.

It took money, large amounts of it, and some good fortune to undertake building with the materials and on the scale Robert Carter contemplated at Corotoman. Dozens of planters planned similar projects for their own plantations in the second quarter of the
eighteenth century. Students of colonial Virginia have long recognized that the construction of large Renaissance-inspired mansions in the Tidewater coincided with the rise of a socially-unified, wealthy planter elite. The transformation between 1680 and 1720 of factious, socially insecure immigrants into a ruling oligarchy has received much careful study, but the ideas that accompanied the building idioms adopted by the elite, like most aspects of so-called Georgian culture, are less well understood. The same is true of the connection between money, or the accumulation of wealth, and the construction of mansions like Robert Carter's and the furnishings planters stuffed inside them.

The relationship between money and manners in early eighteenth century Virginia is summarized well in the career of Robert Carter of Corotoman. Carter was one of a generation of planters who rose to positions of political and social prestige in the last decades of the seventeenth century. Like other men whose public offices as customs collectors, naval officers, councilors, and vestrymen overlapped and earned fortunes that allowed them to build houses in new architectural styles, Carter's building at Corotoman reflected the intellectual and economic forces that shaped ideas in Virginia about material things. The reasons men like Carter became wealthy are well known. What is not so clear is the role money played, and did not play, in the transformation of Virginia's early eighteenth century landscape. This chapter considers the economic conditions that accompanied the colony's political contentions. In doing so it confronts older presumptions
about why planters built and spent as they did and how money affected colonial manners. Since the 1930s, when the matter first received serious consideration, students of the Tidewater's great mansions and the spending that followed their construction have interpreted sudden changes in architectural fashion as expressions of increased consumerism made possible by the profits planters extracted from tobacco and slaves. The notion that eighteenth century planters were somehow wealthier and that they spent more freely than their fathers on a wider range of commodities and consumables has had wide following. It is undeniably true that a planter had to have money, or at least credit, to participate in bricks and mortar fads. But purchasing power alone does not explain why Virginia's eighteenth century planters began to think about altering the material world they had inherited from their parents. Nor does it reveal the changes in the contours of thought that accompanied their decisions.

II

In the eighteenth century tobacco was money. For that reason the world view of all Virginians was firmly rooted in the fields they tended. Robert Carter, lord of colonial Virginia's largest plantation complex, was a practitioner of the "mysteries of a planter," the same planting craft his brother and his father had pursued before him. Like his kinsmen and most of his neighbors, Carter saw the world from a farmer's vantage. Carter's view of Virginia and the colony's connections with the wider world was not
quite the same as that of his neighbors, and money had made all the
difference. As an extraordinarily wealthy man, Carter's concerns
transcended his tobacco fields. He was interested in fashions,
literature, and architecture, avocations that, like much of the
political prominence he enjoyed, were made possible by a fortune
built by his father's brute labors and his older brother's wise
management of the family's lands.8

John Carter, progenitor of the Carter clan in Virginia,
migrated in the 1630s from London to the colony and made his first
home in Nansemond County. There Carter's career was typical of men
who arrived in Virginia with some capital and connections in England
and who survived the Tidewater's killing environment long enough to
transform at least a part of their visions of prosperity into
reality.9 He carved a modest plantation from Nansemond's forests
and quickly became one of that county's leading men, assuming first
the title of "colonel" and soon thereafter becoming his neighbors'
representative to the House of Burgesses. Local prominence, however,
was not enough to tie Carter permanently to the relatively poor
soils of Virginia's Southside, and by 1640 he had begun to seek
economic opportunities beyond those offered by his farm in
Nansemond.10

In the 1640s men who, like Carter, had prospered after
moving to Virginia searched for additional sources of wealth.
Larger, more fertile plantations with fields that could grow more
and better tobacco seemed the key, and as older, smaller fields
tired from supporting crop after crop of the leaf, the planters who

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could looked for the lands that would make them and their sons richer. Thomas Pettus, a James City County planter who arrived in the colony about the same time as Carter, was but one of the wealthier immigrants who found better lands on the broad neck that lay between the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers. John Carter joined Pettus in the speculative Northern Neck land rush in 1642 and acquired a tract on the northern shore of the Rappahannock from Daniel Gookin. This plantation soon became known as Corotoman. Thomas Pettus never moved to the Northern Neck, preferring instead to remain at Littletown, his James City County plantation, and sold his northern lands at a tidy profit. Thomas Pettus never moved to the Northern Neck, preferring instead to remain at Littletown, his James City County plantation, and sold his northern lands at a tidy profit. Carter, however, added three hundred acres to his initial land purchase and in 1653 moved his family and his planting to Lancaster County. The move to Lancaster did not disappoint Carter. Corotoman, which soon expanded to 6,000 acres, became the county's and one of Virginia's largest plantations, and Carter duplicated in Lancaster his early Nansemond County political successes. He was one of Lancaster's first justices of the peace; his new home county later made him one of their burgesses, a position he held when he was appointed to the Governor's Council, the colony's highest and most prestigious political body. The distance from immigrant to councilor was considerable, and few other colonists accumulated more to pass down to their sons.

Robert Carter was only six when his well-to-do father died in 1669. Robert's half brother, also named John, inherited Corotoman and the bulk of the old colonel's fortune, and Robert was
soon on his way to London and the English schooling his father had bequeathed him (Figure V-1). When Robert Carter, Miles Cary, William Byrd, Arthur Spicer, and other sons of prosperous planters left Virginia as boys for English grammar schools, they entered an educational system that had broadened its scholastic content. England's grammar schools and universities had begun to train more and more sons of noblemen and upwardly mobile merchants for careers outside the clergy and the universities, the traditional areas of employment for learned men, and curriculums had changed to meet the new demands. In the new curriculum, knowledge and appreciation of the arts, including architecture, became an important part of the training of liberally-educated gentlemen. Young Virginians whose families had money enough to send them to England thus absorbed and took home knowledge of current architectural styles.

By the time young Robert Carter arrived in London there existed an extensive literature that celebrated formal, classically-inspired building and explained why young gentlemen should know it. Some of the books were intended for professional builders and that small, expanding circle of men who called themselves architects. Others were aimed at pretentious young men who would be gentlemen. Each book put the patterns of current and popular styles of building within the reach of more and more gentlemen and provided a great stimulus to the emergence of a knowledge of architecture as a fashionable intellectual accomplishment. Sir Henry Wotten's *The Elements of Architecture* was, for example, less an introduction to how to build a house than an admonition that a proper gentleman
Figure V-1: Portrait of young Robert Carter.
should be well-informed about the practical decisions that faced builders of fashionable houses. Wotten's Preface crowed that he had "no neede to celebrate the subject which I deliver . . . for architecture can want not commendation where there are noble men, or noble minds." 16

When school boys sat to learn the correct bearing of gentlemen, their teachers and their books also conveyed Wotten's message. Henry Peacham's *The Complete Gentleman* and other popular guides to proper behavior contained glowing descriptions of Europe's most stylish buildings and stressed knowledge of architecture as an important part how to build a house than an admonition that a proper gentleman should be well-informed about what every gentleman should know. 17 James Cleland's "conduct book" offered the often traded advice that "the principles of architecture which I think necessary also for a gentleman to be known; not to work as a master mason, but that he may be able in looking at any building . . . [and] tell what is frontispiece, typane, cornices, pedestals, frieze . . . what is tuscan, doric, corinthian, and composite order." 18 English gentlemen made architectural knowledge as indispensable a part of their accouterments as fine clothing.

III

If some Virginians met new ideas about building and dress as students, others encountered or pursued them as merchants or colonial agents whose business required them to visit or reside in London. William Byrd, who resided in England's great metropolis
first as a schoolboy and later as agent for Virginia, was such a man. Byrd liked London. Indeed, he liked it well enough that when his father dispatched him to the Netherlands to learn Dutch business practices before he returned to Virginia, he complained so bitterly about being away from the City the elder Byrd relented and substituted the London merchantile firm of Perry and Lane for the Dutch. When Byrd was first in London as a student to acquire skills that would make him a better and richer tobacco planter and later when he campaigned there to gain trade advantages for tobacco, he spent much of his leisure and some of his working hours visiting the houses and gardens England's great men maintained. In the space of a year and a half, from May 1718 to October 1719, Byrd made notations in his diary that he had visited 17 of England's largest, most splendid, and most talked-about manor houses. These dwellings ranged from the residence of Lieutenant General of the First Foot Guards Henry Withers, which Byrd described as "very pretty" with furniture that his companions that day "very well fancied," to the royal apartments at Hampton Court, to the massive pile Sir John Vanbrugh designed and built for the Duke of Marlborough at Blenheim. Most houses Byrd visited he deemed simply "very pretty." There were only a few he "did not like." But no matter what Byrd's judgement, he practiced the gentleman's art of evaluating a house according to the knowledge schoolboys gained and adults coveted.

When Virginia boys went home after attending English schools, they returned with prevailing metropolitan ideas about style deeply

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impressed upon their minds. Their fathers' money had made their first encounters with these ideas possible, and that money also bought the books that followed the boys home. But these boys-about-to-be-men did not have to rely entirely on their books to refresh their memories about how gentlemen behaved or how they should build a house. The ideas the Virginia alumni of English schools carried home also arrived in the colony in the heads of the colony's royal officials, and old boys stayed in touch with current styles when the careers they built on tobacco propelled them into the colony's highest political and social circles.

Royal governors Francis Nicholson and Alexander Spotswood were "carriers" of what emerged as a distinct material culture as surely as were English-trained young men. These two governors and the retinue of officials and military officers who served them not only had profound influences on the political and economic affairs of the colony, they consciously, and sometimes unconsciously, acted also as "models of fashion" and "arbiters of taste." It was Governor Nicholson, already a patron of architecture in England, who laid out the geometric Baroque town plan of the colony's new capital at Williamsburg. And it was Nicholson who guided the planning and construction of the capitol building and the remodeling of the fire-damaged College of William and Mary, the large brick structures which anchored the ends of the town's principal axial street. None of the projects, however, prevented Nicholson from running afoul of the colony's political strongmen, and when he left the colony much of the building program remained unfinished.
Alexander Spotswood came to Williamsburg in 1714 to fill the governor's chair, and he too threw himself vigorously into the business of crafting a stylish Baroque town plan out of meandering country paths. Spotswood assessed what Nicholson had accomplished and what remained to be done in a wry note that the capital altogether lacked "the diversions of London." He wrote his brother that "the life I lead here is neither in a crowd of company nor in a throng of Business, but rather after a quiet country manner." He would, therefore, have to amuse himself by "planting orchards and gardens, and with finishing a large House which is designed for the reception of . . Governors." Spotswood applied finishing touches to projects Nicholson initiated by supervising the completion of the capital and directing the rebuilding of the College building after it was again extensively damaged by fire. But it was in his supervision of the "Governor's House," the colony's first Renaissance-inspired dwelling, that Spotswood made his clearest mark on the notions Virginians had architectural style.

Some colonists grumbled about what they perceived as the extravagant cost of the "Governor's Palace," but none of them considered it mawkish or inappropriate. As unexpectedly expensive as it was, Virginians praised it and publicized Spotswood's "skill in architecture and the lying out of Grounds." They watched the "governor's great house" closely, and the colony's wealthy men often gathered at the building site when they came to Williamsburg for meetings of the General Court, Council, or Assembly. William Byrd toured the unfinished residence with an admiring group of burgesses.
who had asked the Governor how he intended to complete the structure and to whom Spotswood "showed them all the conveniences he proposed." Story by story Virginians watched the governor's house grow, informed graciously by its future occupant about the intricacies of its plan and the inspirations of its design.

IV

Robert Carter was one of the former school boys-turned-planter who frequently checked the progress of the "governor's great house." It was while Spotswood built that Carter began to contemplate building a manor house of his own. But when he made a decision to build, Carter, like all wealthy Virginians who pretended to be stylish, encountered several obstacles. One was the nagging and persistent doubt that Virginians could afford to pay for the things they had learned to admire. A second and related concern arose when the planters spent despite their misgivings about their ability to pay. The temptation to buy clothes or to build houses in the most current style was, some planters thought, a test of their moral virtue, and many of them expressed the fear that Virginia would soon succumb to a fatal love of luxury.

Soon after he arrived in Virginia, Alexander Spotswood reported to curious relatives at home that "the life I am likely to lead here is a perfect retir'd country life." The colony was by no means as interesting a place as London, but it provided most of what Spotswood thought he needed to spend his time there in proper style. The planters, who lived "disperst up and down at the Plantations,"
grew "all food necessary for humane life (nay and luxury too)" and purchased "their Raiment by the returns which their tobacco makes in Great Britain." Spotwood's quick summary of the economic cycle that tied colonial Virginia to England implicitly extolled the profits that the exchange of tobacco could bring, but it said nothing about the limitations of the colony's monocultural agrarian economy.

Robert Beverley was one colonist who did consider the problems inherent to that system. Virginia's single-minded pursuit of tobacco had, Beverly noted early in the eighteenth century, prevented its economy from diversifying, and while he was not the first to make this observation, he was strident in his advocacy of breaking free of Virginia's dependence on Britain for finished goods of all sorts. Imports from England had discouraged the emergence of an indigenous crafts industry, and Beverley complained that his neighbors' persistent loyalty to mail orders was a tribute to their "laziness." Virginians deserved to be called slothful, Beverley argued, because they obtained "all their wooden ware . . . their cabinets, chairs, tables, stools, chests, boxes . . . even so much as their bowls and their birchen brooms" from England. The same was true of cloth. Although the colonists raised enough sheep to support a woolens industry, Beverley charged that the planters sheared their sheep "only to cool them." Exasperated by his contemporaries's economic short-sightedness, Beverley dabbled at raising sheep and sat at his house on "stools made of wood" rather than fall more deeply into the trading cycle he detested. But while
he perched on Virginia-made stools, his neighbors continued to shop by mail. No matter what their needs, Virginians secured them from merchants in old England. When the colony's biggest tobacco producer, Robert Carter, decided in his middle age to become "a great smoker," he packed his pipe with leaves he ordered from England.28

The trade between England and Virginia provided Robert Carter with necessary tools, furnishings, and amenities. It was the "custom of the country" for English merchants, later Scots factors, "to supply the planters with goods now and . . . be paid next crop."29 Next year's crop was seldom worth enough to pay the previous year's obligation, and borrowing planters had to encumber debt on top of debt. The "best remedy" for planters caught in the bind of an English merchant's credit was "not to get into their debts," but most Virginians did not, or could not, follow that advice.30 Instead, many planters borrowed more, and some, like Robert Carter, began to consider the consequences of living within a dependent economy.

When Captain Russell told Robert Carter in 1721 that the paving stones he had ordered for his mansion lay on the bottom of the Atlantic, that bit of bad news followed a long string of discouraging economic reports. Indeed, few men had said anything good about the tobacco market since early in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. During the seventeenth century Chesapeake planters had failed to reduce the cost of producing tobacco. Many of them had significantly increased their operating costs by
investing heavily in more expensive slave labor. Profit margins declined as expenses climbed, and profits slumped even further when English demand for Virginia leaves also fell. For some planters the solution to drooping profits was to produce more and more of their crop. They succeeded in growing more, but merchant vessels bound for England soon carried more of the leaf than the market would bear. Overproduction pushed the market still lower, and so did the shipment of inferior tobacco. When, for example, factor Peter Hall reported to merchant Richard Norris in 1702 that the Chesapeake fleet was back home he put some distance between himself and the prediction that the market might rebound. Hall pointed out that the new shipment contained "abundance of bad tobacco, and [I] think Rappahannock the worst." 31

Sustained high production costs and attempts to compensate for falling profits by producing more tobacco in the face of flagging demand encouraged the market to stagnate and then slip into a depression that plagued Virginia planters from 1689 to the 1730s. 32 The signs of distress in the Chesapeake tobacco economy were evident before 1673 when the downward slide of tobacco prices prompted Governor William Berkeley and his Council to petition King Charles II with the complaint that English merchants "give our inhabitants soe very little for their labour as it will not cloath them and their families." 33 Half a century later Alexander Spotswood repeated Berkeley's complaint in a report to the Lords of Trade that market prices were at such a "low ebb, that the planter who depends entirely upon it is not able to cloath his family." 34

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Berkeley and Spotswood and their planting constituents continued this lament as market forces caused them to suffer protracted uncertainties in income. Market conditions, already bad when Berkeley left Virginia, grew worse after 1689 when England and France went to war, a status that, except for a brief hiatus between 1697 and 1701, was endemic until 1713. Robert Carter convinced himself that the second conflict, Queen Anne's War, might boost tobacco prices and wrote Thomas Corbin that perhaps "these troubled waters will afford us a good price for our tobacco." They did not. The wars stifled and then ruined the tobacco re-export trade to the European continent, the greatest money-making component of the market. Recession and then depression settled on the Chesapeake while prices for Virginia and Maryland tobacco remained below a penny a pound between 1689 and 1713. Higher freight rates, at L15 more than double the peacetime rate, insurance rates inflated upward by the uncertainties of war, and generally slower shipping made bad matters worse.

Profits climbed during the brief inter-war period, but men accustomed to bad news from England responded cautiously. "Tobacco hath held its head for several years together," Robert Carter wrote in the summer of 1702, "but he that measures his expenses by his seven last years getting in Virginia may seven years hence probably have little to spend." Ralph Wormely's two sons returned to Middlesex County, Virginia from English schools in 1710 and gave their guardian Robert Carter an "account of the sales of some their tobacco." Carter responded by observing cynically that "such prices
will hardly cloath with silken suits." For 20 years the economic report from England was much the same—"The price of tobacco here continues still very low"—and the forecasts that "but indifferent crops [will be] made this year" projected hard times further into the future.

With the end of Queen Anne's War the Atlantic economy recovered modestly, but the tobacco trade still remained anemic during the 1720s. The "very low ebb that the trade is come to" continued, and there was no quick reversal of "the unhappy circumstances" the low price of tobacco and war had produced. At the beginning of the decade Robert Carter complained to London merchant Micajah Perry that his ledgers reflected "the poorest accounts for stemmed tobacco that we have seen this 10 years." Carter and other planters who had anticipated that prosperity would rapidly follow the news of peace thus found the continued "lowness of the sales . . . very surprizing," and they grimly resolved that while "miserable times" continued, they would have to feed themselves "with hopes of better times" since they could "never bring Buckle and thong together at these rates."

In England, however, the demand for Virginia tobacco did not match planter expectations and the market continued to sag. Captain John King reported in 1722 that imports of the leaf from Virginia to Bristol had dwindled from 8,940 hogsheads in 1718 to 7,364 in 1721 and predicted the trade might fall to 6,000 or so hogsheads that year. To be sure, some planters heard good news and some had none when they discovered that the demand for tobacco had not declined.
everywhere. Thomas Jones, a Williamsburg merchant and Northumberland County landowner, wrote from England in 1724 of selling 43 hogsheads of tobacco to one buyer, a sale he was sure would make "a noise" since it was "the first that hath been sold at this place ever since the year 1715," but other planters were not satisfied by spotty good news. Robert Carter sold tobacco during the 1720s, but he summarized it as a bleak decade. Looking back in 1730 Carter counted his profits and his losses and concluded that "I can too truely say I grow poorer and poorer every year I live." The economic trend that underlay the mixed news John King and Thomas Jones reported and that Robert Carter complained so much about was a fluctuating market that stumbled in the 1720s before it yielded level returns from 1730 until 1745 when prices increased significantly.  

Few months passed in the first three decades of the eighteenth century when Robert Carter did not bombard his English factors with his "melancholy story" and complaints about the "dark aspect" of the tobacco trade. Claiming hard times may have been a device Carter employed to motivate his correspondents to attend his business with greater vigor or to earn sympathy. He reminded the firm of Haswell and Brooks in 1727 that "you are too well acquainted with Virginia not to know that we cannot live and maintain our familys at these prices." To merchant John Buridge he pleaded, "these are dismal times for us poor planters, that we should not be able to maintain our familys by our labour." Planting and "the making of tobacco" were, after all, the planter's "only trade, and
we have no other way to employ our people." "Miserable is our condition," Carter concluded, "if we can't live by our labour." Carter consistently maintained that his greatest concern was the "family I have to provide for," and when he reflected that successive bad years had "almost broke our backs" and that his "expenses and losses did pritty largely exceed my income" he began to despair that he would pass anything of value to his sons and daughters. What use was an extensive tobacco plantation, even the best, if tobacco had no value? The planter concluded painfully that he hoped to "make a shift to rub through during my time," but the next generation would have to "take care of themselves." One year before he died, Carter conveyed his increasingly pessimistic view of tobacco culture to young Lewis Burwell. He urged the young man to forgo two more years of study and to return to Virginia before his expenses in England reduced his legacy any further. Without the income from his father's estate, the old planter advised, Lewis would be dependent "upon the produce of your crops, which . . . will do very little in these dead times."

Lewis Burwell decided to ignore his guardian's advice, but dwindling profits convinced Carter that he should "retrench my outgoing." "All I can say," he had earlier advised his son John who was also attending an English school, "is we must haul in our horns and live as we can afford." Pressed by "hard times" and an urgent need for cash after a large purchase of slaves in 1723, Carter concluded that it might soon become "impossible to maintain the children with tolerable decency" and described the orders he sent to
England that summer as "the smallest that ever we writ and a very bare one it will be." Soon before he died Carter confessed that he could not "afford to indulge . . . in generous liquors" because of his tobacco's "poor sales." He took some comfort in the claim that despite some spending cuts he had not had to "bereave my family of the necessary calls of humanity and decency."52

V

Robert Carter earned less and lived more modestly than he thought he should. Few planters prospered as much as they liked in the "dismal" years of down-turning tobacco prices. Declining tobacco prices meant that the spectre of wearing threadbare or out-moded clothes perhaps haunted some newly fashion-conscious colonists. Declining incomes also made the fees, dues, and other perquisites the larger planters derived from their government offices neccessary supplements to their incomes. Salaries from offices made the business of being a planter less of a risk. Nicholas Spencer, collector of customs for the lower Potomac, early understood the importance of positions and perquisites when he commented "the profitt of sallery is not soe much as the many advantages it gives mee otherways" when he sought to have his office granted in perpetuity to him and his heirs.53 Caught in the economic downturn, the ambitious planter hoped to gain admission to the small circle of the government's highest offices and the status-saving benefits that flowed from them. When Robert Carter commented that "these hard times will drive us into all the ways of husbandry we are capable
of" he had more in mind than converting some of his tobacco fields to wheat cultivation.\textsuperscript{54}

The money-making schemes Robert Carter practiced were many and varied. Some of his monies came from his "persistent regard for the perquisites" of his position as agent for the Fairfaxes, the hereditary proprietors of the entire Northern Neck. For two terms, from 1702 to 1711 and from 1722 until his death in 1732, Carter held this post collecting the annual quitrents landholders on the Neck paid the proprietors for the use of their lands. Carter received a cut of these fees for his troubles; he also used the post to extend the limits of his own estate and to dabble in land speculation. Before the end of his second term as proprietary agent, Carter had granted himself and his family more than 110,000 acres. Additional cash rang into Corotoman's coffers from the fees Carter collected as Naval Officer for the Rappahannock River District, from the generous salary Lancaster County paid him for operating a ferry across the Corotoman River between his plantation and the county seat at Queenstown, and from the remunerative benefits that were his while he held the offices of Secretary of State, Auditor-General, and Treasurer for Virginia.\textsuperscript{55}

A large part of Robert Carter's fortune, and his ability to remain relatively free from debt while his neighbors extended and re-extended their credit lines, came from these offices. They and tobacco, in spite of its reputedly tepid early eighteenth century performance as a money-maker, boosted Carter to wealth few men equaled.

In the last years of his life, Landon Carter, Robert's youngest son, was often troubled by painful attacks of intestinal
gas. Gripping cramps sometimes kept him awake, and on one June evening when he could not sleep, he sought diversion from his aches by writing in his diary. Landon remembered similar evenings many years before when his father suffered from the same complaint. The elder Carter "always got up even in winter and read, warm wrapped up" and often woke his youngest son "at all such times to divert him." That was a bitter-sweet memory for Landon. On those nights forty years earlier he had shared his father's pain, but now in his own distress he made a note that he had been a better friend to his father than his children now were to him.56

As an old man Landon Carter often thought about his youth. The memory of his father was prominent in those reflections, surfacing more and more often as he reviewed his own career as a planter. Troubled by laborers who seemed never to work as hard as he thought they should, Landon recalled that his father had cultivated his extensive fields "with hoes only." The old colonel had worked his plantations without benefit of plows and had not used carts to assist with harvesting and marketing his crops, but "no man ever sold more." Landon ruefully admitted that he had not bested his father's record, contrary to the expectations of both men, and concluded one of his nocturnal comparisons of son to father with a plaintive question, "Who exceeded him?"57 Most eighteenth century Virginians agreed with Landon that very few men did. Lord of Virginia's largest plantation, Robert Carter's reputation as one of the colony's "greatest freeholders" spread from the dusty streets of Williamsburg to London's counting houses. By the time of his death
in 1732 Carter measured his land holdings in the hundreds of thousands of acres, owned a labor force of over seven hundred enslaved Africans, and counted a balance in the Bank of England that was, as his obituary in the Gentleman's Magazine hinted, the envy of men on both sides of the Atlantic.58

The gentlemen who eulogized Robert Carter remembered their friend's signal accomplishments. They recalled that he was Speaker of the House of Burgesses, a member and for six years president of the Governor's Council, and an acting governor, and they recited the long list of other titles the Colonel had held at one time or another. Carter would have gladly heard it all, because the titles that graced his death notices indicated how other men, both high and low, perceived him. But while he was alive, Robert Carter preferred to call himself as a planter. That was not because he thought his positions in the colony's government unimportant; they clearly mattered. It was just that the planter's craft and the diligent attention he directed toward it were simply more so. For half a century Carter timed his days and the year-in, year-out routine of his adulthood to the rhythms of the planting cycle. Planting tobacco was Carter's link between past and present, between him and his father, and it was the foundation upon which he built the futures of his sons.

Both past and future seemed threatened in the slow market years that opened the eighteenth century. Carter had, according to his father's wishes, sat at "old Mr. Bailey's" grammar school, and he had sent his sons to England after him to become "scholars and
gentlemen." Robert and then his sons returned to Virginia with skills that stood by them well in managing their tobacco empire and in following successful careers in government and politics. Both the parent and his progeny also came home with well-defined notions about how proper gentlemen should live. Those ideas often clashed with how Carter and his contemporaries perceived the reality of the tobacco economy and their moral sense of what was sufficient and what was superfluous for the everyday life of the wealthy. Robert Carter, William Byrd, and Robert Beverley, among others, expressed deep-seated fears that "prodigal" spending and credit-supported lifestyles posed a serious threat to Virginia's moral order, yet each of these men was soon guilty of the corruption they warned against. Carter, for example, spent the last years of his life building and furnishing what was, briefly, Virginia's largest and grandest manor house. The planters' moral dilemma was played out between about 1720 to 1740 in an intellectual struggle between the new material order Virginians learned as school boys and the older one their fathers lived. Robert Carter defined the latter as more virtuous but the former as more desirable, and by about 1725 he and the colony's other big men had, with reservations, embraced it.
NOTES
CHAPTER V: "MONEY AND MANNERS"


3. The "Fine, Large" mansion that Robert Carter built at Corotoman during the 1720s will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV. Paving stones to replace those lost at sea arrived while the mansion was still under construction and were laid as a floor in the basement.


had begun." Davis, Intellectual Life, 1121; Waterman, Mansions, proposed that a lack of "appropriate designs" and a scarcity of technical assistance stymied the architectural good intentions of seventeenth century builders. Alan Gowasn, Images on American Living (Philadelphia, 1964), 116-117. Wright, Cultural Life, 3. See also Louis B. Wright, The First Gentlemen of Virginia, 46: Rich planters had "definite notions of what they would do with wealth . . . they would become . . . as much as possible like the country gentry of England." For a discussion of a view that agrees with Wright and one that may not see Lawrence Stone, "Original Sins," New York Review of Books, XXVIII, no. 1 (1981), 34-35, a review, in part, of T.H. Breen's Puritans and Adventurers in which Stone writes that Breen does not appear to accept the notion that Virginia's eighteenth century gentlemen "were merely aping the English gentry and behaving in the way many men are likely to do who have too much money and too little work."

8. The following narrative relies heavily on Louis B. Wright's portrait of the Carter family in The First Gentlemen of Virginia, particularly 235-239. See also Wright's biographical sketch of Robert Carter in his introduction to Letters of Robert Carter, 1720-1727.
9. The classic portrait of Virginia's seventeenth century rough and tumble elite is Bernard Bailyn, "Politics and Social Structure in Virginia." Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom, by drawing on earlier studies of mortality in the Chesapeake, particularly Lorena S. Walsh and Russell R. Menard, "Death in the Chesapeake: Two Life Tables for Men in Early Colonial Maryland," Maryland Historical Magazine, XXIX (1974), 211-227, suggested that early Virginia was a demographic disaster zone. Virginia's high mortality rate, Morgan argued, tended not only to create wider opportunities for men like John Carter who survived, but prevented the colony from developing the stable kinds of social institutions its sister colonies in New England had from their first years. On Chesapeake mortality rates see also Daniel Blake Smith, "Mortality and Family in the Colonial Chesapeake," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, VIII (1978), 403-427.


14. See for example, Andrew Boorde, *The boke for to lerne a man to be wyse in buynling of his house* (London, 1540). Boorde also devoted the first five chapters of his *Compendius Regiment, of a dietary of Health* (1542) to the principles of building. John Shute, *The First and Chief Grounds of Architecture used in all the Ancient and Famous Monuments* (London, 1563), coined the term symmetry and was the first Englishman to name the classical orders. Many of the English books were reprints or translations of older continental publications such as Robert Peake's 1611 edition of Sebastian Serlio's influential treatise on architecture, *The First Book of Architecture, made by Sebastian Serly*. In 1633 Gedfrey Richards translated the first book of Andrea Palladio's *Quattro libri dell'architettura*, the touchstone of the new style.
15. John Evelyn, A Parallel of the Ancient Architecture with the Modern; Evelyn's essay Account of Architects and Architecture and his translations of Roland Freat, Parallele de l'architecture antique avec la Moderne (1664) was long a favorite (re-issued in 1680, a new edition was published in 1707, a second appeared in 1724, and a third edition was printed in 1733. To this last edition Sir Isaac Wotten's Elements of Architecture was added.) Also influential was Sir Balthazar Gerbier, A Brief Discourse Concerning the Three Chief Principles of Magnificent Building, viz., Solidarity, Conveniency, and Ornament (1662), a book serialized and abbreviated as Counsel and Advice to all Builders (1663) and issued the next year as The First and Second Part of Counsel and Advice.


19. At the end of his apprenticeship Byrd remained in London to attend the Middle Temple in 1692 and was admitted to the bar in 1695. Wright, London Diary, 8-9.

20. Wright, ed., London Diary, 126, 130, 155; see also 148, 153, 154, 166, 175, 253, 259, 267, 268, 327.


25. For one colonist's remarks about the cost of the Governor's house see William Byrd to the Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, 24 March 1719, in Tinling, ed., The Correspondance of the Three William Byrds, 231. For Spotswood's justification for the expenditures see Spotswood to the Lords of Trade, 11 February 1713, R.A. Brock, ed., The Official Letters of Alexander Spotswood, Lieutenant Governor of the Colony of Virginia, 1710-1722 (Richmond, 1885), II, 12.

26. William Byrd often checked the progress of the "Governor's Great house." See Wright, ed., Secret Diary, 30 January 1712, 477 and 259, 429, 481, 482. When Byrd was in Williamsburg in the Fall of 1720 he stayed with Henry Cary, the builder of the just-completed capital building and the governor's residence; Wright, ed., London Diary, 462.


had visited Beverley he noted that the planter "lives well, but has nothing in or about his house but just what is necessary, . . . and instead of cane chairs he hath stools made of wood." Robert Carter to Alderman Perry, 13 November 1729, "Robert Carter Letterbook, 1728–1730," Virginia Historical Society.


38. Hemphill, "Virginia and the English Commercial System," 5-6, 27.

39. During the inter-war boomlet, Virginia's population grew from 20,500 in 1698 to 25,000 in 1702 (+22 per cent) and tobacco exports expanded from 28,500 to 39,000 hogsheads (up 36 per cent) during the same period. Hemphill, "Virginia and the English Commercial System," 24. Robert Carter to Mr. Thomas Lee, 15 July 1702, *William and Mary Quarterly*, first series, XVII (1909), 256.

41. Edmund Jennings to the Earl of Sunderland, 24 June 1708, in Palmer, ed., *Calendar of State Papers*, 124. Continued "hard times" prompted Robert Carter to present a "Representation of the State of the Colony in relation to the tobacco trade" to Governor Spotswood on 11 September 1713 to which Spotswood responded that he "was pleased to answer that as he was very sensible to the unhappy circumstances of the country occasioned by the low price of their tobacco, and was a witness of the truth of divers of the matters of fact set forth in their Representation" he was pleased to forward the planters' "Representation" to the Lords of Trade. H.R. McIlwaine, ed., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia, 1721-1739* (Richmond, 1930), 351.

42. McIlwaine, ed., *Executive Journals*, 351.

44. Journals of the House of Commons, XX, 1722-1727, 104; Thomas Jones to My Dear Son Jones, 26 October 1724, Jones Family Papers, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Microfilm; Robert Carter to William Dawkins, 16 April 1730, "Robert Carter Letterbook, 1728-1731," Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

45. Clemens, Atlantic Economy, 111, posits a 1.8 per cent annual growth rate for the Chesapeake tobacco economy during the late 1720s and 1730s. Egnal, "Economic Development," 210-211.


53. Quoted in Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom, 204.

55. Wright, ed., Robert Carter Letters, xii; Louis Morton, Robert Carter of Nomini Hall, A Tobacco Planter of the Eighteenth Century (Williamsburg, Virginia, 1941), 82.


58. John Oldmixin, The British Empire in America (1741), 392; Gentleman's Magazine, II (1732), 1082. The Magazine reported Carter's estate at "about 300,000 acres of land, about 1,000 Negroes, and L10,000 in money." More reliable figures are found in Carter's will and the probate inventory of his estate. See Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, VI (1898), 145–152, 260–268, 365–370.
CHAPTER VI

EXACTLY AS THE GENTRY DO IN ENGLAND

As the seventeenth century ended and the eighteenth century began, Virginia's countryside was a melange of fields and forests tucked between the fingers of the Chesapeake Bay's tributaries, widely separated farmsteads, and meandering roads that tied the colony's tobacco-planting inhabitants to their fields and to their neighbors. Drab, tar-smeared wooden houses dotted the landscape where fields and pastures cut swathes in the forests, and they and the farm buildings that huddled near them were the best evidence that the decline of white indentured labor and the subsequent increase of black, unfree workers had inspired the inhabitants of Virginia to reorder their social system. Houses that once were open to all comers now contained architectural devices that separated black from white and free from slave, but there were very few overt signs that another period of significant changes in the material accoutrements to life in the colony was about to begin. In the thirty years that followed 1710, Virginia's wealthiest builders began to embrace architectural modes dramatically different from those they and their neighbors had earlier defined as sufficient. Within the space of a single generation, brick replaced wood as the preferred construction medium, houses of two full stories were
perceived as better than those with one, and there was inside the new dwellings an increasing emphasis on privacy.

These new definitions concerning the scale and composition of Virginia's largest dwellings signaled that more than superficial modifications to the exteriors of houses was at work. Virginia's most ambitious builders learned in the first decades of the eighteenth century to be "good mechanics in building" and became "capable of directing their servants and slaves" in more and more elaborate construction projects. While they built, they and less pretentious consumers began to express new preferences in everything they purchased. While not all colonists shared all preferences equally with their neighbors, shifts in buying were significant enough to suggest that an important reorientation of the ideas Virginians had about the structure of their everyday lives had occurred. The residents of Lancaster County and their counterparts in Virginia's other Tidewater counties obtained more and more of what might be called the amenities of eighteenth century life, but the spending habits of a few were so markedly different from their neighbors and from the trends of the late seventeenth and first decade of the eighteenth centuries that they may be said to have become participants in a new and distinct elite material culture.

During the seventeenth century Virginians had lived and worked according to the rules of one unified, if sometimes varied, culture that is most often referred to as "Traditional." Between 1700 and 1740 Virginia came to have three cultures. One was that of the Africans who arrived by the thousands to work in the colony's
tobacco fields. The other two belonged to the colony's white inhabitants and were, first, the sustained traditional culture and, second, the elite culture that diverged from the older English ways. Contrasts between wood and brick, pewter and Chinese porcelain, chocolate and cider marked the boundaries between two cultures which are best introduced through the material things that gave them and the ideas that undergirded their form and substance.

II

It was near dusk on the afternoon of September 14, 1722 when Dr. Joseph Mann led his horse through a gate in the fence that marked the boundary between Corotoman's home farm and its outlying home quarters. Inside the gate cedar trees lined both sides of the farm lane that led to Robert Carter's residence and conveyed visitors past fields and orchards, past a smithy and a brickyard, past the hodge-podge of old and new buildings that sheltered the plantation's resident craftsmen toward the center of the plantation, a forecourt that framed the eastern facade of Robert Carter's newly shingled mansion. Dr. Mann had come to Corotoman to answer Carter's summons to cut the toes off one of "Madagascar Jack's" feet. Jack was a slave who had "lain out, hid and lurched [sic] in swamps and woods and other obscure places" in both Virginia and far off Maryland, and his master had vowed to keep him on his plantation by applying the harshest penalty for running away the colony's penal code allowed a master to impose on a slave. Earlier ritual punishments like public scoldings and whippings had proved
insufficient to stem Jack's desire to be away from Corotoman, and Robert Carter now hobbled his slave in a way that branding could not. 4

Dr. Mann arrived at Corotoman too late in the day to perform the surgery Carter had ordered but not so late that he could not admire the massive brick mansion that loomed above him. The building that Mann faced was, by the standards of English builders, rather plain, but it was, by Virginia standards, awesome. The largest building outside Williamsburg and the largest private dwelling in Virginia, Corotoman was obviously very different from the houses that Dr. Mann visited in the course of his normal rounds. Robert Carter's mansion had few equals in North America. It towered two and a half stories above the fertile fields of Corotoman's home farms, dwarfing the older buildings huddled nearby that Carter, his brother before him, and his father before that had built. The weight of the mansion's tens of thousands of bricks spread over a 90 by 40 foot area on immense three foot thick foundations that enclosed more than eight times the floor space of its largest seventeenth century predecessor. And its Renaissance-inspired facade was very unlike the exteriors of the brown tar-streaked houses Carter had lived in as a boy and in which his neighbors still lived.

Dozens of panes of glass set in orderly vertically aligned ranks glinted in the evening light, flashing clues that this house was not like its older and smaller neighbors. In the 1720s glass was still used sparingly and was set primarily in small casement
windows wherever they were most needed. Even in the colony's
grandest seventeenth century mansions such as Green Spring, a large
brick dwelling begun by Governor William Berkeley and enhanced by
Philip Ludwell, functional considerations of lighting an interior
room or closet or a garret or staircase assumed precedence, and the
result was that windows appeared here and there without apparent
order (See Figure VI-1). At Corotoman, however, a building plan
that stressed logic and symmetry dictated regular, predictable
window placement. Made of brick, Carter's mansion at Corotoman was
a different color from its cousins, but the contrast wood brown made
to brick red was related to another obvious distinction between the
old and the new at the plantation. The mortar that bonded the
bricks in neat orderly rows was scored horizontally and vertically
in a way that emphasized the orderliness of the building and the
regularity of its form. There was little that was as precise in a
house covered with clapboards whose wavery, "feather" edges made the
walls of a house appear to undulate, an effect enhanced by the
practice of butting the clapboards together in four foot wide bands
that appeared to wrap around a house (See Figure II-3). Large,
brick, and stylish, Robert Carter's mansion gave some credance to
Hugh Jones's boast that Virginia's leading men lived "exactly as the
gentry do" in England.6

There was more. A short flight of flared granite steps led
up to a small unsheltered stoop at the center of the mansion's
eastern or landward facade. Bricks carefully rubbed to expose the
deeper reds ordinarily hidden beneath their crusty surfaces composed
Figure VI-1. Late eighteenth century watercolor of Green Spring by architect and builder Benjamin Henry Latrobe (Maryland Historical Society).
ornamental pilasters and a simple pediment around a large door. 7
Three windows, each capped by a simple rubbed brick flat jack arch, lay on either side of this central doorway and above a simple beveled course of bricks, called a water table, that visually separated the first floor from the basement below. Above the windows, a belt course marked the boundary between the first and second floors and lifted the seven windows of the second floor above the windows and door that corresponded to them on the floor below. A steeply pitched hipped roof and massive chimney stacks piled the mansion still higher and capped a classically-inspired, symmetrically correct house that a visitor "could not look at but with respect."8

Robert Carter's symmetrically-composed brick mansion in Lancaster County was one of the first of dozens of large Renaissance-inspired houses Virginia's wealthiest planters built in the first half of the eighteenth century to replace older, smaller and more modest dwellings. In James City County James Bray and his new bride Mourning Glenn Pettus built about 1720 a brick mansion that overlooked the river across formal forecourts and gardens. While Bray built his new mansion, he moved Mourning Glenn's possessions out of her father-in-law's house and then allowed the asymmetrical, rambling wooden dwelling Colonel Thomas Pettus had called home to collapse. Within about twenty years Bray's mansion was flanked by even grander mansions on two adjacent plantations: Carter's Grove, the home of Carter Burwell, Robert Carter's son-in-law, and Kingsmill, residence of Lewis Burwell, Carter's guardian. At the
northern end of the colony in Westmoreland County, Thomas Lee assessed the smoldering ruins of his house in 1729 and began to prepare the site for what he would soon call Stratford Hall. Bray and Lee were not alone. Robert Carter constructed Corotoman at the beginning of a building boom that transformed the colony's cultural landscape and which left in its wake a generation of pretentious dwellings that were, and are, a remarkable architectural achievement.

Of all the things that Virginia's big men said and did in the first half of the eighteenth century, few things are more symbolic of their time than their mansions. These houses, awesome in size when compared to the scale of the dwellings most colonists called home, were clearly emblematic of the extraordinary wealth some men had accumulated by the luck of inheritance and their own hard work. They are an appropriate symbol of the rise of Virginia's consolidated elite, but the mansions and all that went inside them were also symbolic of other changes and other accomplishments. In their time they represented more than the coalescing of individual fortunes, and labeling their construction as merely the actions of rich Virginians aping rich Englishmen does not explain very much.

This is not to say that the economic messages brick and mortar proclaimed should be minimized but to argue that what the mansions reflected about the intellectual contours of eighteenth century thought should not be overlooked. The mansions, if they tell us anything, say a great deal about changing patterns of thought. They speak eloquently about English architectural styles
and taste and how ideas about what modish Englishmen thought stylish and enviable came to Virginia. As artifacts of elite thought, Virginia's eighteenth century mansions can be studied to the same effect as the analysis of the contents of colonial bookshelves or interpretations of sermons. There were, however, other intellectual currents, more local than the ideas about symmetry, that affected the gentry's changing architectural preferences. Virginia's great houses symbolized a fracturing of what until about 1720 had been a unified popular culture. Seventeenth century Virginia was characterized by remarkable cultural harmony, but this accord in material life collapsed in the 1720s and 30s, a victim of the invasion of Virginia by two foreign cultures, one African and one English. While not unknown earlier, both were only dimly perceived and neither had threatened the culture middling Englishmen brought to the colony at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Virginia's cultural landscape grew more complex in the first four decades of the eighteenth century as the colony's once homogeneous culture became tripartite.

III

The division of the material life of eighteenth century Virginia into what may be called African, Georgian and Traditional cultures occurred when the first two diverged from the third. Both African and Georgian thought created distinct patterns of object use that left indelible patterns on the colony's landscape, but most Virginians continued to live in the eighteenth century as their
parents and predecessors had lived in the seventeenth. Traditional English culture, the mental rules that middling Englishmen acknowledged in their day-to-day living, had arrived in Virginia at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Despite the unique exigencies of life in the Chesapeake, the colonists had replicated it so well that the routines of rural English culture still dominated the lives of most eighteenth century colonists. Much of what Virginians built and bought in the eighteenth century, and how they ordered their material surroundings, conformed to older notions about what was sufficient and what was superfluous to daily life and attested to the vitality of English traditional culture.

Perhaps the best indications of the continued vitality of the older English folkways were the dwellings that sheltered most Virginia households. From long-settled Tidewater counties to raw farmsteads on the edges of the colony in new Piedmont counties or in the Southside, small one and two-roomed houses prevailed. It was in them that the great majority of Virginia's "pale and yellow" farmers slept and ate. William Byrd found the poor farmers who lived along the boundary between Virginia and North Carolina who were "devoured by mosquitoes all the summer and have agues every spring and fall which corrupt all the juices of their bodies." All of them had a "cadaverous complexion," and they lived in one room or hall plan houses that were "covered with pine or cypress shingles 3 feet long and one broad." This venerable house form, perfected in the seventeenth century, possessed sufficient utility to remain preferred above most alternatives well into the nineteenth century.
William Byrd, whose frame of reference was a brick house, derided these small, timber dwellings because they allowed "a very free passage of air through every part." Byrd made it clear in his secret history of his ride along the Virginia-North Carolina border and in his cynical "Journey to the Land of Eden" that he preferred sleeping out-of-doors to spending a night inside one of these small houses.

Byrd also preferred his tent to the houses the notables of the Southside built. When he visited Captain Henry Embry, who in 1746 would be elected one of Lunenburg County's first burgesses, Byrd declared the captain's "housekeeping better than the house" which consisted of "one dirty room." The grandee from Westover was also appalled that at nightfall it was his host's custom to sleep with his family and guests in that one room "all pigged lovingly together." Byrd had no choice that night but to join the huddle, for hall plan houses imposed on their inhabitants and their guests a forced sociability in eating, sleeping, and everything that happened in between. Virginia's hall houses, such as a surviving example in Northampton County now called Pear Valley, were relatively small and typically measured 16 by 20 feet. Massive brick or timber chimneys dominated one gable end of these structures and the corresponding hearths filled one interior wall. Life inside these houses in England and in Virginia revolved around the hearth, and its rhythms dictated the rhythms of the household. Because there was seldom more than a single entrance to these dwellings, hall plan houses were the most open of Virginia's house types.
William Byrd did not react well to the forced sociability of the single-roomed houses he visited in Virginia or to the call to a communal bed, particularly one shared with "peevish, dirty children." Most Virginians, however, still did. One room usually met the needs of most families, and a house any larger was a curiosity. When Byrd visited Henry Morris, the supervisor of his plantations that lay below the James River, he found his manager living in a "modest structure" of two rooms. Morris lived well, but the sleeping accommodations at his house were just as intimate as those at Captain Embry's. What felt small and crowded to Byrd, however, seemed large and expansive to the men and women who lived near Morris for they admired his house "as much as if it had been the grand Vizier's tent in the Turkish army." Relatively small houses rarely larger than a single room in which the activities of cooking and eating, working and sleeping comingled were the rule in Virginia's Southside. The same was still true in the older Tidewater counties. In Lancaster County, for example, relatively few houses whose contents were inventoried between 1710 and 1740 were described as larger than a single room. Most dwellings in Lancaster were like the house a surveyor drew on a plat of John Clapham's estate on an inlet of the Corotoman River: wood, one story and a loft high, and one room.

It was clear that Byrd did not share his notions about comfort, about privacy, and about what was proper in the way of sleeping arrangements with his Southside hosts or with Clapham. That was because during the seventeenth century a hierarchy in
building had evolved in Virginia as the colonists used what they knew of traditional English ways to make accommodations to the changes in labor relations already noted. William Byrd had made the architectural adjustments to the increased dependence on unfree labor and so had many of Lancaster County's wealthier planters. A sample of room by room inventories made between 1711 and 1740 demonstrates that the building forms the colonists had established in the seventeenth century survived into the first half of the eighteenth. In Lancaster the lobby entrance plan was the house form still most preferred by men whose dwellings were larger than a single room (See Table VI-1). A lesser number of men died owning hall-chamber houses that did not incorporate the social baffle of either an entry or porch.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Rooms</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N of Inventories = 26.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Only one planter, a gentleman whose L90 estate was the smallest of this wealthy groups, still resided in a three-celled house when he died. These Lancaster planters had opted for the greater privacy offered by the division between the still-communal hall and a separate and somewhat private chamber. Those planters who had
incorporated lobby entrances or porches in their dwelling had added an additional measure of insulation (See Table VI-2).

**TABLE VI-2**

| Percentage of House Types, Lancaster County, Virginia, Room-By-Room Inventories, 1680-1740 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Hall Plan                      | Lobby Entrance                  | Hall-Chamber                    | Three-Celled Plan               |
| 25.00%                         | 41.67%                          | 25.00%                          | 8.33%                           |

N of Inventories = 26.

Virginians continued to incorporate social baffles into their houses, but by the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century central passages had begun to replace recessed lobbies and enclosed porches. In 1724 Hugh Jones described the typical house in Williamsburg as a timber frame "cased with feather-edge plank, painted with white lead and oil, covered with shingles ... tarred ... with a passage generally through the middle of the house for an air draught in summer."\(^{18}\) By 1732 the hall and chamber with central passage plan had apparently replaced the "Virginia House" with its hall-chamber plan, for it was pervasive enough by then that travelers perceived it as typical and wrote about it as proof that throughout Virginia "the manner of building is much alike." These successors to the "Virginia House" typically had "a broad stair case with a passage thro the house in the middle ... one room on a side and the windows opposite each other."\(^{19}\) Virginians and their letter-writing guests noted that these central passages were sometimes
called the "summer Hall" and that they encouraged air circulation during the summer months. Houses with central passages were acclaimed as cooler, "especially if there be windowes enough to draw the air," but they also worked the same way their presumably warmer predecessors had by placing an entry chamber, a kind of social barrier, between the householders, their laborers and their guests. Houses with central passages were then a variation of the lobby entrance plan that wealthier Virginians had found most desirable in the last decades of the seventeenth century, not an innovation. Two rooms, a hall and a chamber, still remained at the heart of most of the colony's larger houses, and that was a reflection of the strong continued preference both rich and poor Virginians expressed for traditional house forms.

Still, the interiors of these houses were less cluttered, and some colonists claimed less dirty, than their smaller cousins since nearly all of them were augmented by separate kitchens (See Table VI-3). This architectural arrangement, "the kitchen apart from the dwelling house," imposed a division of labor in households some Virginians found desirable when the chores of cooking and eating brought blacks who did not then share very much culturally with their English masters to the family circle. Some Virginians, like William Byrd, thus described households in which the cooking still occurred in the hall as "dirty." Byrd's notions about filth and clutter were predicated on his own experience that dependent buildings separated cooking and eating and thus masters from servants. Indeed, Byrd's distinctions between "clean" and "dirty"
households were precisely how Virginians distinguished the houses of gentlemen from the residences of middling folk. In Byrd's mind there existed a hierarchy of buildings that dictated certain rules about the function of hearths. Low in the hierarchy were the one room hall plan houses that most Virginians called home. Above them were hall-chamber dwellings, houses that Hugh Jones called "handsome, commodious, and capacious". If the hearths in these dwellings were utilized strictly to provide heat and light, they belonged to the first rank of the colony's houses. If, however, their hearths contained cooking fires, Byrd and others defined them as "little houses" and assigned them a middle rank because the work they performed was not assisted by ancillary buildings such as kitchens and dairies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROOM</th>
<th>Value of Estate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under L250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parlor</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining Room</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inward Room</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outward Room</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loft (&quot;upstairs&quot;)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porch or Entry</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closet</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyder House</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Room</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N of Inventories = 26
Byrd thus judged the number of buildings a man owned, and not simply the size of any single building, to be the best indication of a household's rank. It was in this sense that he applied the term "little" to an estate that lacked a detached kitchen. Late in the seventeenth century the French traveler Durand de Dauphine had discovered that the equation needed to compute the size of a Virginia house dictated that buildings such as kitchens and dairies, not just the one used primarily as living space, be included. That old rule was still largely true during the first half of the eighteenth century. At that time, after all, William Byrd's Westover was a collection of small buildings assembled along the banks of the James River and used according to the rules that Durand had observed in 1686. When a winter storm piled snow around Byrd's house in January 1712 he ordered his slaves to clear paths to the separate structures that, lumped together, formed his "house." Paths in the snow soon connected a dwelling, kitchen, library, and office. These trails actually symbolized the seventeenth century preference for more buildings rather than larger houses to meet the need for sheltered space. That traditional aspect of building in Virginia remained the norm for planters of all ranks until the 1730s.

IV

In all but relatively few Lancaster households the hall and the hall-chamber house forms Virginians favored encouraged a hearth-centered way of life. The pull and vitality of that pattern of
living continued also in the possessions householders arrayed around their hearths. In important ways households preserved the patterns of object use and followed the old dictates of what was necessary and what was not that had emerged in Virginia during the seventeenth century. There were important differences between what men owned in the 1730s and what their parents had defined as essential for life in the colony, but for the most part Virginians preserved in the first half of the eighteenth century what had become standard in the seventeenth. Households inventoried between 1711 and 1740 provide information useful to test the apparent conservatism of consumer trends in the eighteenth century. Lancaster's inventories are also the best proof that a distinct elite material culture was emerging and would be shared by only a handful of the county's wealthiest men. Most of Lancaster's households lived in the 1720s and 1730s as their predecessors had lived 50 years earlier.

To suggest that most of Lancaster's planters held on to a traditional pattern of living by no means implies that the county had become a cultural backwater when its most rapid economic and social growth slowed in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. After faltering in the 1680s and 90s, Lancaster's population expanded modestly in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. The county's rate of growth quickened in the 1720s as the county's mortality rate declined and its parish clerks filed annual reports in which births and baptisms outnumbered deaths and burials, a welcome change from just decades earlier when death was a more frequent visitor to plantation beds than birth. Lancaster's
population also grew as its planters imported more and more Africans to satisfy their labor needs. 22

The average number of tithes per household declined from 2.95 in 1687 to 2.75 at the end of the seventeenth century but climbed significantly to 3.75 by 1720 (See Table VI-4). A concurrent decline in the number of single tithe households, revealed by an analysis of the county's tithable lists, paralleled the move toward larger households. Slightly more than one-half of the county's households

TABLE VI-4

TITHABLES IN LANCASTER COUNTY, VIRGINIA, 1680-1740

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Per Cent</th>
<th>N Tithes</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-20</th>
<th>20+ Household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1687</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>2.39%</td>
<td>.95%</td>
<td>3.35%</td>
<td>.95%</td>
<td>.00%</td>
<td>2.38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>89</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1696</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>1.67%</td>
<td>5.43%</td>
<td>1.26%</td>
<td>.84%</td>
<td>.84%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>126</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1713</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>4.01%</td>
<td>4.69%</td>
<td>2.67%</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
<td>1.34%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>122</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1720</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>2.65%</td>
<td>.97%</td>
<td>.97%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>112</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

paid for only a single tithable in 1696, but twenty years later less than 4 of every 10 households were included in this category. There was an absolute increase in the number of households of all sizes, except those that contained more than 20 tithables, but most of the population increase was not attributable to a rise in one, two, or three tithable households but to those that contained 5 or more. Larger households (those which that paid the county's annual levy
for 5 or more polls) doubled between 1687 and 1720. It was those households that invested most heavily in black laborers and pushed the county's population upward dramatically in the 1720s (See Figure VI-2).

The significance of the emergence of black slaves in Lancaster as the most important vector of population increase is supported further by the average investments Lancaster planters made in labor between 1680 and 1740 (See Table VI-5). While the average value of slaves per household more than tripled during the period, investments in indentured labor declined by 75 per cent. Even when investments in slaves and indentured servants are combined, there was a significant increase (156 per cent) in the value of the county's labor force. By 1731-1740 one-half of the county's probated wealth consisted of bound and chattel laborers, an increase of 26 per cent (See Table VI-5). Investments in livestock and movable property of all sorts fell in contrast to the rise of labor's share of Lancaster's probated wealth. Planters had diverted proportionately less capital was being diverted into expanding herds of cattle and household furnishings. Labor's domination of planter budgets meant that the spareness that characterized Lancaster households in the seventeenth century was also the hallmark of the interiors of most dwellings in the eighteenth.

V

On one of William Byrd's journeys to inspect his plantations in a part of Virginia below the James River he once described as
Figure VI-2: Lancaster County, Virginia Tithables, 1680-1750
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Investment</th>
<th>1680-1710</th>
<th>1711-1720</th>
<th>1721-1730</th>
<th>1731-1740</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>26.14%</td>
<td>33.54%</td>
<td>39.46%</td>
<td>50.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>24.53%</td>
<td>22.04%</td>
<td>18.45%</td>
<td>19.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moveable Property</td>
<td>49.32%</td>
<td>44.40%</td>
<td>42.08%</td>
<td>41.54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N of Estates 76 83 31 61
"quite out of Christendom," Byrd discovered that most of the houses he visited there contained "hardly anything . . . but children that wallowed about like so many pigs."^24 Byrd did not suffer being away from the comforts of Westover very well and rated child-rearing techniques and house-keeping in the Southside well below the standards of his own household. He nevertheless captured the spare and modest habits of furnishing that Virginians carried into the eighteenth century. Changes in the customary patterns of buying brought new artifacts into the interiors of all but the very poorest of Lancaster households between 1711 and 1740, but in most ways the rhythms of life and what the colonists defined as the necessary material accouterments of their living remained unchanged.

What possessions Lancaster planters left behind them when they died was, of course, dependent on how much money they had to dispose of while they were alive. There were indications that some planters had more money in the eighteenth than they had in the seventeenth century. The median value of estates probated between 1711 and 1740 changed little, remaining slightly above 50 pounds. However, the mean value of the county's probated estates, a measure responsive to any increase in the number of very large estates, increased by one-third between 1680/1710 and 1731-1740 (See Table VI-6). Total probated wealth rose modestly from £6452.5 to £7353.36, and the relationship of the mean to the median suggests that most of Lancaster's increased wealth belonged to the county's largest estates and that inequalities in the distribution of wealth were increasing in Virginia just as they were in neighboring Maryland.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1680-1710</th>
<th>1711-1720</th>
<th>1721-1730</th>
<th>1731-1740</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estate Mean</td>
<td>L89.9</td>
<td>L115.25</td>
<td>L101.38</td>
<td>L120.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estate Median</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>52.21</td>
<td>64.22</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>37.31</td>
<td>63.04</td>
<td>37.16</td>
<td>66.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Estates</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Estate values are expressed here and elsewhere in pounds sterling. Probated possessions valued in pounds of tobacco were converted to pounds sterling using prices compiled in Russell R. Menard, "Farm Prices of Maryland Tobacco, 1659-1710," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, LXVIII (1973), 80-85.
That Lancaster's wealthiest men had gained a still greater share of the county's wealth is also indicated by the expansion of the number of estates whose values exceeded L200 (See Table VI-7). Further, the number of men whose personal fortunes topped L400 doubled while most other wealth categories changed little. Only the number of estates worth less than L30 grew as rapidly as the expansion of the circle of the wealthy. The expansion of the wealthiest and poorest wealth groups in Lancaster meant that the economic disparity between rich and poor was growing wider year by year. When shifts in investments and purchases gained momentum in the 1720s and 30s, the contrast between rich and poor was vivid because of increasing economic inequality in Lancaster County.

What had Lancaster's planters done with their additional wealth? The mean value of several categories of capital property begin to reveal the direction of the choices Lancaster men made. In general they spent far more on slave labor and much less on bound labor than they had before 1710. That shift explains much not only about the county's increased wealth but why the average investment in labor increased more than twofold (See Table VI-8). The initial investment in capital needed to acquire slaves was significantly higher than that necessary to acquire the labors of a white indentured servant. The importance of African slaves as a source of future income and as investment is further clarified by comparisons between the mean value of Lancaster's labor force and other personal property assets (See Table VI-9). As slave labor emerged as the best way to get wealth, slaves became a larger and larger share of
**TABLE VI-7**

PERCENTAGE OF ESTATES BY WEALTH LEVELS,
LANCASTER COUNTY, VIRGINIA, 1680-1740

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value of Estates</th>
<th>1680-1710</th>
<th>1711-1720</th>
<th>1721-1730</th>
<th>1731-1740</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L0 - L15</td>
<td>15.78%</td>
<td>12.04%</td>
<td>16.12%</td>
<td>8.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 30</td>
<td>13.15</td>
<td>21.68</td>
<td>16.12</td>
<td>21.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 52</td>
<td>21.05</td>
<td>18.07</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>16.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 - 79</td>
<td>18.42</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>14.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 - 106</td>
<td>6.57</td>
<td>9.63</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>6.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107 - 210</td>
<td>17.10</td>
<td>18.07</td>
<td>16.12</td>
<td>16.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211 - 399</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>7.22</td>
<td>9.67</td>
<td>8.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400+</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>7.22</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>8.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.96</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.95</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.95</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.96</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| N of Estates    | 76 | 83  | 31  | 61  |

Total N of Estates = 251.
### TABLE VI-8
MEAN VALUES OF LIVESTOCK AND LABOR,
LANCASTER COUNTY, VIRGINIA, 1680-1740

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Investment</th>
<th>1680-1710</th>
<th>1711-1720</th>
<th>1721-1730</th>
<th>1731-1740</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>16.97</td>
<td>16.77</td>
<td>11.79</td>
<td>13.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swine</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Livestock</strong></td>
<td><strong>25.46</strong></td>
<td><strong>28.88</strong></td>
<td><strong>20.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>23.97</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servants</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaves</td>
<td>17.51</td>
<td>37.06</td>
<td>35.22</td>
<td>54.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Labor</strong></td>
<td><strong>21.90</strong></td>
<td><strong>38.66</strong></td>
<td><strong>38.75</strong></td>
<td><strong>56.15</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| N of Estates       | 76        | 83        | 31        | 61        |
planter's total capital assets. Planters who made the switch from indentured to slave field hands made investments that boosted the value of their inventories, but the capital they channeled into labor was often diverted from some other area of investment.

Increased investments were thus mirrored by a slight decline in the value of livestock. A downward slide in the average value of cattle and horses was sufficient to offset a doubling in the probated value of pigs and a less vigorous increase in the county's herds of sheep. The decline in the average value of cattle and horses came in part because more and more householders in Lancaster owned at least one head of each type of animal (See Table IV-10). This trend toward a more nearly universal distribution of livestock among Lancaster households suggests that the county's less affluent planters, men who could not meet the high initial costs of acquiring a slave, invested some of their disposable income in livestock. Lancaster's poorer families were thus better off than their seventeenth century counterparts who had owned no livestock.

Lancaster planters, now that their county was more than half a century old and more settled, also embraced a new attitude toward stock animals. Robert Carter, for one, minimized the value of livestock in the county and their importance in the computing of estate values. In 1723 Micajah Perry sought Robert Carter's advice and assistance in distributing the property of a deceased Lancaster planter to heirs then living in England. Carter warned Perry not to overestimate the value of the estate's livestock or be misled by the numbers of animals. Virginians, Carter wrote Perry, esteemed hogs
### TABLE VI-9

**MEAN VALUES OF PERSONAL PROPERTY ASSETS**  
**LANCASTER COUNTY, VIRGINIA, 1680-1740**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Investment</th>
<th>1680-1710</th>
<th>1711-1720</th>
<th>1721-1730</th>
<th>1731-1740</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crops</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9.05</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>25.46</td>
<td>28.88</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>23.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Labor</td>
<td>21.90</td>
<td>38.66</td>
<td>38.75</td>
<td>56.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Property</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>88.14</td>
<td>33.24</td>
<td>79.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money Assets</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other Moveable Property</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27.65</td>
<td>28.84</td>
<td>26.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| N of Estates | 76 | 83 | 31 | 61 |

**Note:** *Crops* = the value of tobacco, wheat, corn, wool, beans, and cotton. *Capital Property* = the combined value of crops, labor, livestock, boats, and tools. *Money Assets* were computed by combining all debts receivable, cash on hand, and tobacco bills or bills of lading, if any were enumerated.
### TABLE VI-10

HOUSEHOLDS WITH ONE OR MORE OF SELECTED CONSUMER ITEMS, LANCASTER COUNTY, VIRGINIA, 1680-1740

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Possession</th>
<th>Percentage of Estates Containing Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1680-1710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaves</td>
<td>16.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servants</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pots</td>
<td>72.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frying Pans</td>
<td>61.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flesh Fork</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kettles</td>
<td>36.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skillets</td>
<td>30.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pans</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dripping Pans</td>
<td>20.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warming Pans</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chests</td>
<td>80.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>48.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>51.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed Stead</td>
<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trunk</td>
<td>27.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest of Drawers</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cubboard</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stool</td>
<td>8.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couch</td>
<td>24.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jug</td>
<td>----------</td>
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<td>Pictures</td>
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N of Estates 76 83 31 61

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"little better than vermine, and tis not common to put them into the inventory of our estates." Even mature swine had little value—20 to 25 shillings—and were "fitt for killing" only if fattened with a bushel of corn before slaughter. The increased value of hogs in Lancaster's estate inventories indicate that most of Robert Carter's neighbors did not share his sentiments about pigs, but many of them may have seconded his appraisal of the qualities of most of the horses they raised. Horses in Virginia, Carter wrote, were "of very small value." Ignoring the rising significance of expensive, swift-footed thoroughbreds among the gentry, Carter claimed that horses were so numerous that they "swarm upon us and are degenerated into such runts that you may buy them as they run almost for nothing." At 20 shillings a head a Virginia horse was equaled in value by the pigs that rooted about by the thousands in the colony's forests.

What implications did the rise of labor to the top of Lancaster County's spending hierarchy have for trends in household furnishings? And what did the increasing inequality in the distribution of wealth have for the harmony between the belongings of rich and poor that had existed in the seventeenth century? The inventories of six men who died in the 1730s, who had lived in the county for a decade or more, and whose luck and labors had earned them places in different wealth groups summarize the the material trends of the early eighteenth century. Captain Henry Fleet Jr., justice of the peace, vestryman, county sheriff, militia officer and member of the county's second generation elite, was one of
Lancaster's wealthiest men when he died in 1736. John Pines, in contrast, was among the least wealthy of the county's freeholders. His success as a planter was so uneven that he had supplemented his income and supported his family by cleaning the county courthouse. When he died shortly after Captain Fleet, his entire estate totaled 12 pounds and 19 shillings. Men whose fortunes fell in between Fleet and Pines, like Henry Stonham who died in 1738 and whose estate matched the median estate value for the 1730s and Charles Hammond whose estate at L105 was twice Stonham's, were typical of middling planters, modestly affluent but not wealthy.

When John Pines died in May of 1736, his estate was not the smallest recorded that year, but it was near the bottom of Lancaster County's economic heap. Pines, whose principal income was the fee he earned for cleaning the county courthouse and supplying it with water and candles on court days, owned no cows, no sheep, and no pigs and was one of the dwindling minority who did not own at least one stock animal. He did own a horse, but valued at 5 shillings it must have made the "runts" Robert Carter complained about look noble. The yards around Pines's dwelling were thus sparsely populated, but the inside of his house was not so empty. A square and an oval table could be pulled into the middle of his house to be used for cooking or eating or sewing when needed, and 5 chairs provided more comfortable seating than humble seventeenth century households had offered their members and guests. Sitting had replaced squatting and leaning at John Pines just as it had in most of the county's inventoried households by 1740. The total number of
chair-owning and table-owning households increased by 30 percent between 1680 and 1740, and chairs and tables assumed positions as the second and third most frequently owned piece of furniture. Only chests, and Pines owned a cedar one, were more commonly owned. Pines's furniture also included a cupboard. Despite these obvious improvements, the pieces he owned were still worth less than the mean for furniture listed in inventories between 1680 and 1740 (See Table IV-10). If Pines ate and read and worked at a table, he still slept on the floor on bedding that was valued 50 per cent under the mean for all households inventoried in the 1730s. The interior of his house was very much like "the poor planter's house" Governor Alexander Spotswood visited in 1716 that had "no beds . . . so the Governor lay upon the ground and had his bear skin under him." Spotswood's traveling companion slept on a large table. 27

Pines and his family arrayed their furniture around a hearth hung with the essential cooking tools of the day, an iron pot, a frying pan, a spit, and a pair of fire tongs. An unnamed assortment of pewter vessels, 6 wooden plates, "a parsel of earthenware," and an old bowl held the household's meals, and a large cutting knife and some old knives moved their fare from plate to palate. The shoveling style of eating at Pines' house was typical, perhaps even more refined, than the dining manners that prevailed at other modest households. In 1744 Dr. Alexander Hamilton, a Scottish physician who practiced in Maryland's capital at Annapolis, shared a meal of "a homely dish of fish without any kind of sause" with a ferry keeper. Hamilton later wrote that the ferryman and his family "had
no cloth upon the table, and their mess was in a dirty, deep, wooden
dish which they evacuated with their hands cramming down skins,
scales and all." It was also the ferryman's habit to use "neither
knife, fork, spoon, plate, or napkin because," Hamilton surmised,
"they had none to use." 28 Here and elsewhere the cooking pot
remained at the top of the hierarchy of cooking utensils. Pines
also owned a spinning wheel and an ax, and his four books were the
only possessions not directly involved in the major household
activities of cooking, sleeping, or storage. The ownership of books
did not make Pines unusual. Almost 75 per cent of the county's
planters owned at least one book.

Pines was not alone at the bottom of Lancaster's economic
heap. Luke Stott left an estate 7 pounds larger. Most of his
estate, however, consisted of livestock: 7 cows, 1 pig, 4 sheep and
2 horses. Stott kept more animal company than Pines, held 1 pound
in cash when he died, and consequently had made more modest
investments in household furnishing than Pines. A pot, a chest, a
trunk, and a bedstead were his largest possessions, and he too owned
more than one book, a Bible and a common prayer book.

If the largest option that confronted Lancaster's least
affluent planters was whether to have more livestock or more
comfortable furniture, a similar alternative faced Henry Stonham and
Robert Pritchett. When these two men died in the mid 1730s both left
estates that were respectively at and just above the median. One
half of the probated estates in the 1730s were worth less than
theirs, and both Stonham and Pritchett had used their additional

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wealth in ways that reflected a longer list of options for men with more money to spend. Stonham spent much like Luke Stott. He chose to assemble a modest herd of livestock and, like Pines, purchased furniture that was slightly more expensive and more comfortable than average (See Table IV-11). Stonham also had fourteen head of cattle, a "parcel" of hogs that were roaming in the woods when the probate commission arrived, and two horses grazing near his house.

Stonham had invested proportionately less in his livestock than Stott and used the remainder to acquire furnishings for his hearth and home. At the top of his list was his bedding, still every household's single most valuable piece of furniture. Stonham jammed four beds and bedsteads into his house, and each of them cost more than the total value of the bedding at Stott's or Pines's. Stonham also owned 3 chests, 2 oval tables, 6 chairs, a stool, a safe, and a couch. Used for reclining, couches declined in popularity after 1700, but more and more planters acquired case furniture like Stonham's safe. It could be used for storage or as a backdrop for a collection of pewter plates. Stonham owned 42 pounds of new and used pewter but how much of this was for serving and how much was for other uses is unclear. Also stored away were 19 1/2 shillings worth of ceramic vessels, twice the county average, 2 drinking glasses, and a single stoneware jug. Finally, Stonham and his family could boast owning a "set of knives and forks," rare utensils in the lower half of estates. Most planters in that wealth category still ate with fingers or spoons.
TABLE VI-11
MEANS OF SELECTED PERSONAL PROPERTY CATEGORIES,
LANCASTER COUNTY, VIRGINIA, 1680-1740

A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Furnishing</th>
<th>Mean Value in Pounds Sterling</th>
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<tr>
<td>Utensils</td>
<td>2.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
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</table>

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B

Per Cent Change in Selected Personal Property Categories, 1680-1740

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<th>Per Cent Change, 1680-1740</th>
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<td>Utensils</td>
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<td>Tools</td>
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The tendency to buy a few more items of slightly better quality but identical in function to the tools and utensils poorer men like Pines and Stott owned influenced Sarah Stonham's cooking. With shovel and fire tongs she tended a hearth in which a brass kettle and a large iron cooking pot hung near a spit. Sarah Stonham also cooked with a frying pan. A collection of tubs, trays, casks, and bottles and an assortment of ladles and skimmers, and a flesh fork, cutting knife, and sifter boosted the value of her cooking utensils well above average.

In terms of personal property, Stonham was precisely at the middle of Lancaster's economic scale. He had, however, inclined his buying toward furnishings for his dwelling and himself so that his furniture, his riding gear, and his wearing apparel were well above the county average. Stonham owned what most other freeholders owned: a modest herd of cows, a few pieces of furniture, and some clothes. There was very little to indicate that he lived or worked any differently from his neighbors. He owned a "parcel" of books, but so did most planters. Knives and forks and a candlestick and lantern were the only possessions that set Stonham apart from many of his neighbors. Forks had replaced fingers at his dwelling, and when it grew dark he had more than the last flickers of the day's fire or a sputtering piece of lightwood to illuminate his way.

Over a career that closely paralleled Henry Stonham's, Robert Pritchett accumulated an estate that was almost identical in value. Pritchett's livestock was appraised at slightly more than £13 and was as modest. He owned 5 cows, 12 sheep, a single horse, and
at least three pigs. He may have owned more, but that was all the probate commission saw. Stonham and Pritchet agreed on the relative importance of livestock, but from there the opinions the two men held on what was most important in the way of material possessions diverged. What Stonham had spent on furniture, clothing, and utensils, Pritchet sank into slaves and servants. He owned 2 slaves, a woman named Jane and a small boy named James who may have been Jane's son. A small orphan boy named Thomas also worked for Pritchet. Lumped together, the three were worth L21 or less than a single field hand.

The remainder of Pritchet's property consisted of his household furnishings and some corn, beans, cotton and wool. The pattern was familiar. Beds and bedding, but no bedstead, topped the list of furnishings and were followed by a motley assortment of furniture. A "great" chest, a box, a table, 4 stools, a great chair, and a looking glass were pushed against the walls of his house. Such an assortment of stools surrounding a great chair was more typical of the seventeenth than the eighteenth century, and the same was true of Pritchet's pewter. He owned 36 spoons, 2 dishes, 2 cups, and a tankard. These eating utensils were suited for traditional fare--spoons for shared stews, cups and a tankard for shared drinks, and 2 wooden plates. Pritchet did own 2 knives and forks for food prepared in a pot, kettle, frying pan or on a spit which were standard in most households. Like Stonham, Pritchet also owned a sword, some spare clothing, and some books, but so did nearly every freeholder in Lancaster. Pritchet was different from
Stonham only in the fact that for both men the most compelling purchase decision they faced was between a higher quality of furnishings or labor. Pritchet had chosen the latter.

To be sure, there were vivid distinctions between what men at the low end of Lancaster's economic scale and what more affluent planters owned. Charles Hammond was nearly ten times wealthier than Joseph Pines when he died in 1735, and his greater material wealth translated into clear differences in how he and his less fortunate neighbor lived. Pines changed his clothes, used a napkin, ate meat, held a fork, and drank cider less often than Hammond. His diet was less varied, his sitting and sleeping less comfortable, and his nights darker than his wealthier neighbor. Hammond, whose table was covered by a carpet and whose chairs were covered with leather, owned a few of the eighteenth century's amenities. Even so, and despite the monetary gap that separated Hammond and Pines, there were strong cultural and intellectual links between the two planters. Corn, beef, and pork were the staples of both households. A hearth remained the focal point in both dwellings. The rituals of tending the fire, of cooking, and of banking coals at the end of the day rhythmically ordered the getting up, going out, and coming in of both households. The spell of the hearth and the heat and light it dispensed to both households illuminated shared tasks and activities from the passing of a tankard and cups to the communal use of bedding in halls where one function blended into the next and made the house a center of shared action. There was much about the two
households that was alike and little in the way of household routine to distinguish the two.

There were, however, a few men in Lancaster during the first decades of the century who had begun to live differently and who had begun to purchase what they and their neighbors called "trumpery." These men slowly shared less and less with any but the richest of their contemporaries and more and more with Virginia's other elite planters and the colony's royal officials. Captain Henry Fleet left an estate valued at more than L595 to his heirs when he died in 1736. He was not the richest planter in the county, but it was clear enough that he was wealthy. Livestock and laborers accounted for most of the raw economic distance that separated Captain Fleet from Joseph Pines. Fleet's 66 cattle, 87 hogs, 31 sheep and 5 horses were worth more than the total value of 75 percent of the county's estates. His 23 slaves were worth more than the total value of all but five of the estates probated in Lancaster in the 1730s. Livestock and laborers were a traditional measure of wealth, but Fleet owned other items that suggested that his wealth meant more than simply owning more of the same things his poorer neighbors had.

Some of Fleet's fortune consisted of his clothing and other personal accouterments. His best suit of clothes was a scarlet coat and breeches trimmed with silver and was like a suit his neighbor Robert Carter wore or those William Hooper, a Williamsburg tailor, made or arranged to have made in London from "scarlet duffils with suitable trimmings . . . of gold, silver, or plain" (See Figure VI-4).
Figure VI-3: Robert "King" Carter of Corotoman bewigged and dressed in scarlet.
By the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century Henry Fleet, Robert Carter and their counterparts in the other counties of the Tidewater had spent enough on clothing that they were said to dress "exactly as the gentry do in London." Indeed the colony's "persons of distinction" avoided provincial tailors and preferred to purchase their apparel long distance so that they would be "as much in the mode as art and cost can make them." Fleet, who owned three suits, several hats, three wigs, silver shoe buckles, and several winter coats when he died, also wore a gold laced hat atop a wig and a silver-hilted sword on court days or when he performed his duties as county sheriff.

By 1740 swords appeared in 25 per cent of Lancaster inventories, but swords like Fleet's, weapons trimmed with precious metals and meant for dress instead of combat, were essentially badges of office for the county's elite (See Table VI-10). On muster days Fleet's sword played an important role. In the absence of uniforms and other insignia of rank, Fleet's sword that set him apart from the middling and "lower orders" and served him as a symbol of his rank and authority.

Swords and scarlet coats were in some ways one and inseparable. One of Robert Carter's factors assumed that swords and scarlet coats were linked as badges of the gentry and once reminded Carter that it was time to refit with a new blade. Carter responded to the factor's sales pitch saying that he already had "several good swords by me." One of those was a small, elaborate, double-edged weapon whose brass hilt and quillon block were decorated with molded...
garlands and figures that represented the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Dress weapons like this one hung from belts worn around the shoulder or waist, but Carter had never had one that he thought was "fit to wear." Besworded but unbelted, Carter thus instructed his eager English factor to send a new belt. Carter disliked the stylish silk belts English gentlemen preferred and grumbled that those fashionable belts did but "little service." He had, however, "seen Buff belts very soft and pliant and yet very strong" and "tann belts both genteel and strong." Carter solved the dilemma this choice posed by instructing the factor to "send . . . one of each."^ Bewigged and hatted, dress swords at their sides and lace at their cuffs, Lancaster's wealthiest men were colorful specks among an otherwise drab populace. Robert Carter dressed himself and his family well, but his definition of fashion and style indicates that there were limits to what he thought was necessary to maintain his satorial dignity. Because by 1729 he had grown "much smaller in bulk than I was," Carter ordered a "fashionable suit of broad cloth clothes for the winter" and two pair of matching stockings all tailored in a "grave colour, lined with shaloon." Sober clothes were best for Virginia, Carter argued later, because "things that are not so dear seems much better to fit the circumstances of our country," and he often scolded agents who sent apparel he thought too frivolous. "Genteelness and cheapness" were, he said, "the rule in my children's equipment." That was a difficult combination to acquire, and Carter was often disappointed in how English factors

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filled his orders for "cheap but stylish" clothes. In 1731 he asked James Bradley to be "careful in buying" that year's clothing order and stressed his point by reviewing the history of a cloak Bradley had sent to Virginia some years earlier. "It lies by me still," Carter wrote, "and hath never seen the light" because it was "fitter for an Alderman of London than a planter of Virginia."34

Carter insisted that he preferred "plainess and value my clothes more for their use than their finery," but made sure that his clothes could not be mistaken as an humbler man's. In 1729 he ordered "a handsome morning gown and a pair of leg boots or spatterdashes with large broad buckles and handsome spurs" that contrasted sharply with the boots he ordered for one of his overseers. Carter held well-defined opinions about what men and women of each rank should wear and in a letter to merchant Thomas Evans he described the duties and living of one of his overseers so that Evan could judge for himself "what . . . will be proper for him not too dear and yet decent and substantial that . . . will best fit his circumstances." The overseer was "a middling liver" and accordingly his master requested a hat "without lace" and half jack boots.35

Lancaster County's estate inventories provide a rough guide to the clothing its citizens wore, but more precise descriptions of what Virginians wore appeared regularly in notices the Virginia Gazette published that sought assistance for the return of runaway servants and slaves. These ads announced who the runaways were, whom they had run from, what they looked like, and what they wore or
had stolen when they departed. Most of the white indentured servants who fled dressed well for their flights. Thomas Rennolds, for example, wore a canvas waistcoat and breeches, brown duroy coat lined with blue shalloon, and one of the two wigs he had stolen from Anne Smith when he fled from Middlesex County in 1736. Rennolds and other runaway joiners, carpenters, brickmasons, and tailors perhaps hoped to pose as traveling gentlemen for most of them walked away from their masters well dressed. Robert Croson, a tailor with a "pale complexion and sharp nose and a down look," left his Williamsburg master wearing a pair of brown breeches with green puffs, a pair of brown stockings, a white shirt, and a blue and white striped waistcoat. Charles Murfry, whose scarred right chin and arms "on which may be seen . . . the date of the year and a crucifix set in with gun powder" betrayed his claim to gentility, carried a white and a blue coat, a waistcoat, breeches, 2 wigs, and "other sorts of necessary apparel."

As a group, indentured servants who ran away in Virginia in the late 1730s were better dressed than most Lancaster County planters. And they were better dressed than the slaves who shared a determination to leave their masters. The distinctions between what servants and slaves wore is clear in the clothing Thomas Field and Will had on when they ran away. Field left his Gloucester County master William Rand wearing "white cloaths, a light colored wig and has ruffles at the bosom and sleeves of his shirt," while Will, a "lusty, well-built" slave fled in a coarse oznabrig shirt, a pair of "crocus breeches," a manx-colored waistcoat, and a worsted cap.
If clothing allowed Virginians to distinguish rich and poor from the ranks in between, how rich men sat and ate provided similar clues. Captain Fleet stored his stylish clothes in a chest and a pair of trunks. In addition to these almost universally-owned pieces of furniture, his house contained 3 tables and a desk, one of the few in the county, a card table and 2 looking glasses. Like most men Fleet owned at least one chair, but the number and variety in his house put him in a unique category. There were altogether 26—18 leather, 4 flag covered, and 4 cane chairs with cushions. The best indication of how Fleet used his numerous chairs is provided by other possessions he shared with only his wealthiest neighbors. Stored away in his house were 30 gallons of brandy and 350 gallons of cider. A brass spigot provided access to imported and home-brewed beer, and a copper still, valued at L15, could provide stronger drink. Stirred together in punches or alone, these beverages were served from punch bowls and consumed from pewter and ceramic jugs or drinking pots.

The consumption of alcoholic beverages was, of course, not new in Lancaster nor was it restrained to any one economic group. Beer-brewing, cider-pressing, and distilling were time-honored practices in the colony, but Fleet's supply of brandy calls attention to the fact that he and his wealthy counterparts began to imbibe beverages in quantities and varieties most men could not. The new eighteenth century tastes included English claret, Madeira, Burgundy, Champagne, Southam cider, Bristol water, and Dorchester Ale. Fleet's neighbor, Robert Carter, may have been Virginia's
leading imbiber. Every year English merchant ships delivered hundreds of gallons of English wines and ales to Corotoman. Some of the wine Carter drank, and some he sampled only occasionally. When he suffered attacks of gout, he did not drink at all. He always maintained large stores of wine, however, "for the entertainment of my friends" and for his sons. Carter's wines and those his neighbors served were one of the "considerable marks of opulence" travelers wrote about after their hosts treated them to "excellent wines, good brandies, and rum . . . and English porter." Carter insisted on economy in clothing, but he spared no expense to provide himself and his household with the finest wines. When he ordered his supply of Madeira for 1728, Carter told his supplier that he was "willing to go to the highest price that I may have . . . the most celebrated of their Wines."

There were a few men like Robert Carter who owned and consumed a wider variety of beverages than Fleet, but very few could cook or serve a meal as lavishly. Fleet owned humble spoons, but he also had 10 sets of knives and forks, vinegar cruets, and an array of utensils that matched the best equipped household in the county. Fleet's kitchen wares were worth more than the entire Pines estate and more than 5 times the county average.

Distinctions of dress, in table settings, in seating, and quality of drink, set Henry Fleet apart from his neighbors. The distinction was not one merely of owning a few more pieces of pewter or a few more plates or cups. What distinguished his household and its routine from others in Lancaster was how those objects worked.
While most of the men and women who lived in Lancaster ate with their fingers or with spoons, Fleet and a few other households used knives and forks. While most householders and even the wealthiest seventeenth century planter had taken their "cups as they came round like the rest of the company," Fleet had begun to shun shared drinking vessels. The beverages that filled his punch bowl were not passed from one drinker to another but poured into cups or jugs that each guest or householder could temporarily call his own.

In the 1720s shared drinking vessels, expressions of the communal nature of life in the planter's hall, were banned from the chambers and parlors of the rich. In their place a few men began to use sets—sets of tea bowls, sets of wine glasses, sets of drinking jugs and tankards, sets of capuchines for chocolate. The arrival in Virginia of sets, what may be called a collection of any item in sufficient numbers to seat or serve all the members of a household with individual pieces so that private use rather than shared use is the object of setting a table or furnishing a room, was as important a marker of Georgian fashion as classically-inspired houses. The ceramics Thomas Jones purchased in 1735 from John Hielwood and Company was typical of households moving toward the new style. In his order for 104 pieces of ceramic tablewares Jones sent instructions for "12 plano wine glasses," "12 white stone handled cups," "12 china cups and land blue white," and "18 delft plates." At his table Jones set each place alike and each diner had his or her own plate, cup, bowl and glass, an arrangement as rational,
balanced, and symmetrical as the measured facade of Robert Carter's mansion.  

Robert Carter's house was furnished with ceramics like those Thomas Jones ordered from London. There were at least 71 objects of a wide range of types and functions in his house when it was destroyed in 1729. Many of the ceramic objects performed utilitarian tasks such as food storage, cooking, and dairying, but most others found uses in drinking and dining. Many of the porringers, plates, and bowls were delftware, the most common type of fine ceramic ware at the beginning of the eighteenth century, but most of the drinking vessels were blue and gray Rhenish stoneware, English brown Burslem or Staffordshire stoneware, or a variety of white stoneware that was still quite new in 1729 and rarely seen in the colony. With few exceptions all of the stoneware pieces were drinking jugs or tankards. Delicate, matched capuchine cups used for chocolate, a coffee pot, and a small pitcher possibly used to hold cream completed Carter's collection of fine stoneware. Like very few other men Carter owned a few pieces of imported Chinese porcelain. Two sets of tea bowls, one with a plain rim and the other with scalloped edges, and a set of plates were all decorated with red and gold designs painted over deep blue and red floral rim designs.  

The hierarchy of ceramic ownership that existed in Lancaster County by the beginning of the eighteenth century in which men with no ceramic objects were at the bottom, men with "parcels" occupied the middle ranks, and a very few wealthy planters who owned complete
sets sat on top was in some ways shaped by the foods the men and women of Lancaster ate. Diet, like furniture and dress, was a matter of wealth and culture, another aspect of Virginia's material world that planters read closely for clues of status and class. The menus that Robert Carter established for himself and his laborers reflected his thoughts about what was necessary and good in food for three distinct groups of colonists. His slaves enjoyed the least varied fare. Day in and day out corn as hominy or boiled as a gruel-like porridge was the mainstay of their diet. Carter also insisted that his overseers feed his slaves beans so that his "people may live as comfortable as they can," and both corn and beans were seasoned with salt and hog fat. Meat appeared infrequently on the plates at Carter's slave quarters. Carter's overseers distributed beef or pork, "a pound of meat a man, one day if not two days in a week," when the gangs were engaged in heavy work. Otherwise Carter instructed his overseers to "let the people have some hogs flesh... that they may have a bit now and then and the fat to grease their homony." Other planters were not as generous with their meat rations. William Byrd distributed the chitterlings of slaughtered hogs to his servants and slaves, and Joseph Ball of Stratford Hall issued instructions that his "Working Negroes" receive the "fat back, Necks, and other Coarse pieces" of the hogs he butchered and salted down. Ball also instructed his overseer that "when you kill Calves... you must leave the Negroes the Head and Pluck."
Carter ordered his overseer to serve corn and beans seasoned with salted pork to his slaves until "their belly's full," but overseers at other plantations estimated that a fixed amount of grain, ordinarily about a peck per week per hand, was sufficient to keep their laborers healthy and content. Black men and women who found themselves working under such overseers supplemented the bland diet their masters provided with produce they grew in "little platts" they tended on Sundays or at night." The small gardens that flourished in the quarters provided "potatoes or Indian pease and chimnnels" which were added to stews. 46

Carter's slaves were, however, not alone in facing menus of baked, boiled, poached, or fried corn. In 1731 Carter and a small group of investors began an experiment in copper mining above the falls of the Rappahannock River and sent a gang of white indentured miners up the river to begin the work. Benjamin Grayson and Nicholas Nichols followed the miners up the Rappahannock to supervise the experimental mine. Grayson and Nicholas soon reported that their men complained bitterly about the food served them. When their rations did not improve soon afterward, these indentured laborers had refused to pick up their shovels. The miners' strike puzzled Carter. He had, he reminded Grayson and Nicholas, supplied the miners with food that was better than what he gave his slaves and that was in fact better than what most freehold planters ate. The miners had apparently ignored the corn and beans that accompanied them up river and had quickly devoured the deer meat that was to be their "fresh provisions." Now they had only "plenty
of milk." But, Carter told Grayson, "if they had nothing else to live upon, good milk and homony and milk and mush might very well content them in these summer months." Virginians customarily suspended butchering during the summer because meat not eaten immediately spoiled. The summer months were meatless months, and Carter huffed "how many hundred families in Virginia, better men than ever these fellows will be, and work a great deal harder, have no meat at this time of year?" Milk, mush, and hominy was, according to Carter, "what the greatest part of the country live upon at this time of the year."47

Gentlemen, however, did not eat mush and hominy. A palate that balked at endless meals of corn, no matter how cleverly the grain was prepared, was a cultivated palate, and Carter wrote Grayson and Nicholas he thought it "admirable" his supervisors were not "well contented" with the diet they shared with their miners. Dull palates belonged to dull minds or drudges, and most Virginia gentlemen strove mightily to eat meals fitting their status and pretensions. Eighteenth century observers agreed that most of the Virginia elite consumed 5 courses at their main evening meal. "Pig meat and greens" was generally the first, followed by a dish of "tame fowl" and then a pudding. A course of wild game meat, venison, birds, or fish, came fourth, and beef, mutton, veal, or lamb completed the meal. English beer, port, Madeira, claret, or cider that the planters drank "by pailfuls" washed it all down.48

Both William Byrd and Robert Carter worried that what they ate determined how they felt, and they were right. They could not
guess, however, that distinctive mealtime customs affected body tissues while they delighted elite palates. Wealthy planters poured wines and cordials from lead glass bottles and ate meals from pewter plates with pewter spoons, forks, and knives which also contained significant amounts of lead. When they dined and toasted each other, wealthy colonists thus ingested enough of the poisonous metal in a lifetime of sumptuous and fashionable eating to cause debilitating health problems. Slaves and indentured servants who ate less stylishly with wooden, iron, and ceramic utensils, on the other hand, ingested far less of the potentially fatal metal. There was thus a hidden danger in being different and culturally distinct from middling planters and unfree laborers.

The meals that Robert Carter and William Byrd prepared for their guests were as elaborate and extensive as the ones William Hugh Grove described in 1732. Their personal diets, however, were often less varied. Both Byrd and Carter were convinced that a meal made exclusively of one type of food was kinder to their stomachs and their bowels than more elaborate ones that mixed several kinds of meats with several kinds of drink. In his "gray-haired years" Carter often ate a "porringer of gruel with currants," and Byrd often dined on milk and dried beef. Both planters were men of strict habits in their eating. Both ate light morning meals, often only a dish or two of chocolate, and they rarely ate heavily. They did drink heartily--tea, coffee, and chocolate when spirits were not appropriate. Carter's activities on one day in 1723 illustrate his eating and drinking habits. Carter woke up on August 27, 1723 still...
so troubled by his gout that he could not stand or walk. It had been, and would be, some weeks before Carter could don his "gouty slippers" and make his own way around his house. On this morning his servants lifted him from his bed and lowered him into a chair, and then the great planter "was carried into the parlor" of his mansion at Corotoman for his morning coffee and milk. Breakfast over, Carter was "brot back to my own room" where he spent the rest of the morning. Later in the day Carter summoned his servants once again, and they carried him a second time across the hall to the parlor where he ate his evening meal and remained drinking tea, coffee, and milk until he retired at ten o'clock.50

If Byrd and Carter were picky eaters, what they ate was nevertheless clear evidence of their claims that they were "civili­lized" men. When evangelical parson Devereux Jarrett reviewed his life, he remembered foods, drinks, and seasonings as perhaps the most important eighteenth century distinction that existed between "gentle folks ... beings of a superior order" and ordinary planters. Poor and middling planters knew that one of the primary differences between the rich and themselves was that the rich drank tea, coffee, and chocolate, but they did not. Robert Carter may have eaten gruel, but he seasoned it with currants and washed it down with imported drinks. Tea, coffee, chocolate, and spices were the "luxuries" that as much as any objects owned or coveted in the eighteenth century reflected the "ideas of the differences between gentle and simple" that separated rich and poor and Virginia's traditional culture from the rising Georgian.51
Most of the friends and clients who visited Robert Carter at Corotoman, who came to press complaints or seek advice from the "King" as he alternately fulfilled his responsibilities as a vestryman for Christ Parish, militia commander for the Northern Neck, and agent for the Proprietors of the Northern Neck, came to Corotoman as Dr. Joseph Mann had along the plantation's cedar-lined lane. Other visitors, ship captains who announced their arrival in the Rappahannock to the river's Naval Officer, county sheriffs who submitted quit rent rolls and muster lists, overseers from distant upriver quarters who reported the progress of their plantings and received new instructions, arrived at the plantation on sloops and barges and pressed their business in the shadow of a house whose river front facade was calculated to impress. An undivided, stone-paved, arcaded piazza ran the length of Corotoman's river front facade. Three pavilllons, one at the facade's center and one at each end of the piazza animated the facade much like the pavillions Sir Christopher Wren incorporated into the design of a late seventeenth century country house and those on the courtyard facade of the College of William and Mary (See Figures VI-4, 5, and 6).

While Robert Carter's Corotoman and Wren's country house shared a central pavilion flanked by smaller end pavillions, the similarities between the two houses ended there. Breaks in the facade of Wren's building were, according to architectural grammars of the day, tied logically to interior room divisions. Each pavilion corresponded to a room which lay behind it. This
Figure IV-4: The ruins of Robert Carter's mansion at Corotoman near the end of its excavation in 1978. The mansion's southern, or river-front facade, is the long wall line on the right. The northern, or land front, is at the left.
Figure IV-5: The English model. Sir Christopher Wren's sketch for a large country house in which the massing of pavilions is much like the river front facade at Corotoman.
Figure IV-6: One of Virginia's seats of power, the so-called Wren Building at the College of William and Mary served as the colony's capital early in the eighteenth century. Its central pavilion is identical to Corotoman's.
architectural convention was not observed at Corotoman where the pavilions animated a facade but revealed nothing about the interior of the house. Robert Carter's mansion suffers in other stylistic comparisons with Wren's design. The latter's central pavilion was more robust, and thus, according to the accepted cannon of proportions, was more correct. Robert Carter did not build as he did at Corotoman not because he was clumsy or awkward in aping an English style about which his knowledge was, at best, imperfect. It was true that Carter supervised the construction of Corotoman without the assistance of English architectural pattern books like James Gibbs' Book of Architecture, a guide prepared for "such Gentlemen as might be concerned in Building, especially in the remote parts of the country, where little or no assistance for designs can be procurred." But there were already several copies of Andreo Palladio's Four Books of Architecture, the touchstone of the new building style, in Lancaster. And Carter had inherited a copy of a Dutch compendium of Sebastian Serlio, Vincent Scamozzi, Vignola, and Sir Henry Wotten's architectural treatises. Carter was conversant enough in the design and construction of buildings in the classical mode that early in the eighteenth century Lancaster's justices instructed him to supervise the construction a new county courthouse. Lancaster's justices later expanded their original contract with Carter and approved his suggestion that the new courthouse have a modillioned cornice and exterior pilasters. Carter was familiar with Andreo Palladio's dictum that the beauty of a building resulted "from the form and correspondance of the whole,
with respect to the several parts, of the part with regard to each other, and again to the whole; that the structure may appear an entire and complete body wherein each member agrees with the other." Even so, Corotoman assumed the shape it did because provincial considerations and preferences influenced its construction just as surely as Carter's memory of English formal building.

The arcaded loggia, the architectural convention Robert Carter chose for the more public face of his new mansion, the southern facade facing the Rapphannock River and the comings and goings of his neighbors, clients, and English merchantmen, was not new to Virginia. Nor would it disappear very soon. The arcaded loggia had been, and would remain, a standard part of the colony's repertoire of public building forms, but it was one that Carter apparently also found appropriate for his new mansion. Just as Carter's multiple roles in government overlapped with his role as a planter, so the function and hence the appearance of his house mixed the conventions of public buildings with those of a private residence. By the time Carter watched masons lay the last tier of bricks at Corotoman, other masons had incorporated arcaded piazzas into the courtyard or west facade of the College of William and Mary, one-time seat of the colony's government, joined the upper and lower houses at the colony's new capital building with an arcaded hyphen, and made it the standard face on county courthouses.

There were then ample models, both in Virginia and in England, for the building that rose at Corotoman. The similarities between
Carter's mansion and the College of William and Mary are most striking. The "College Building" was somewhat larger, 20 feet longer, but in most other ways—the spacing of windows and the pavilions, for example—the two structures were very nearly identical. Carter, as a regent for the College, knew that institution well and may have learned from it and its patron Alexander Spotswood some of the architectural details that he later included in his own building at Corotoman.

The fact that there were architectural models in Virginia like Spotswood's official residence and the College for Carter to follow does not, however, account for why he selected the style he did. Neither does the argument that Carter and wealthy planters like him built grandiose houses simply because large houses broadcast messages about wealth and authority better than small ones. Land and livestock did the same thing and everyone who rode or walked or sailed past mile after mile of Carter-owned farms knew something about the "King's" wealth. There must have been other reasons why Robert Carter built the way he did.

By about 1720, pedimented doorways and other classically-inspired building elements were synonymous with provincial law and royal authority. Carter's arcaded piazza made the claim that Corotoman was a seat of government where the force law resided. The arcaded portico, the public symbol of the authority and power of both local and provincial government and the laws and traditions that governed everyday relations, was a tangible link between Carter and the sources political power in the colony. Symbolically, a walk to
the front of Corotoman was like approaching the capital at Williamsburg or a county courthouse.

Pediments and pilasters also proclaimed that their builder was a man of some learning, a gentleman. They proclaimed that their owner was linked firmly to English imperial society and its polite culture. Classical building idioms stated that the man who lived behind them was wealthy and cultivated, and suggested that he was powerful, a man to be respected.

In the system of symbols the Virginians lived by, the arcaded piazza undergirded Carter's position of authority, but it was also a response to changes in the colony's social structure that had begun in the late seventeenth century. In the face-to-face world of the plantation community, the piazza, like the lobby entrance houses that had begun to disappear from the building repertoire of the elite, was an architectural barrier that maintained proper social distances between planter and public, a master and his men, superior from inferior. Men and women who came to Corotoman did not stride directly into the mansion's living spaces, but arrived first in the open, public piazza where they might be bidden to enter the deeper, more intimate recesses of the house or to complete their business and leave. Even beyond the piazza, visitors invited inside found themselves not in the sanctuary of Carter's parlor but in an unheated, marble-paved, pilastered central passage. The passage was the most ornately decorated room in Carter's mansion, but it like seventeenth century porches and lobbies was a kind of social no-man's land where strangers might be sorted still further. Corotoman's
passage differed from its predecessors in its calculated ability to intimidate the folk who met Carter there. Virginians had begun to take architectural precautions like this when their labor forces changed from white to black. They remained necessary, wealthy gentlemen thought, to insure order in the everyday encounters they had with their slaves, and with "the ordinary sorts of people." Were this not so, as William Byrd discovered one Sunday afternoon when his widowed neighbor Mrs. Benjamin Harrison feigned a fainting spell as a middling freeholder strolled into the parlor at Westover, Virginia's social hierarchy tottered. 57

The stone and brick work of Robert Carter's mansion indicated that his house was part of a new architectural fashion, but, more important, it had the power to reinforce his political and social position in Lancaster and to channel day-to-day relations with his neighbors and clients. Behind imposing facades, however, older notions about how rooms should be used survived beneath newer visions of living arrangements. Corotoman was only a single room deep, just as its seventeenth century predecessors were, and its plan was relatively simple. There were on the first floor on either side of a large, unheated axial passage, two heated chambers behind which were set deep closets. The mansion's axial central room, paved with black and white marble tiles laid in geometric designs and decorated with classically-inspired applied pilasters and cornices, provided access to the piazza and served as a formal stair hall and passage. Visitors admitted beyond the passage entered Carter's parlor.
Applied pilasters and a heavy cornice in the parlor echoed the images of the hall. A massive, marble mantle surrounded the hearth at the gable end of the room, and colorful blue, hand-painted delft tiles hid the bricks on the interior of the hearth. In contrast, the larger room that lay on the opposite side of the hall was plainly furnished. This room was Robert Carter's bedchamber, and its walls were unadorned, no carved marble decorated its hearth, and the delft tiles that lined its fireplace were almost all white. While a brass hearth fender caught stray sparks in the parlor, there was no fender in the bedchamber and the hearth tools there, unlike their counterparts in the parlor, were made of iron.

Carter's spartanly decorated bedchamber was also sparsely furnished. A bedstead and its bedding, a chest, and a writing table pushed against the walls were the largest pieces of furniture. Iron hooks nailed to the walls provided a place to hang clothes, but most of the planter's clothing and personal belongings were folded and stored away in the adjoining closet. His swords, belts, guns, pistols, other military equipment also hung there until needed. So too did a small harp. Carter also stored bottles of the wines he preferred in this closet. Carter's chamber was office, retiring room, storage area, and sleeping chamber. His children and his housekeeper slept in chambers located on the floors above him, and all used the downstairs parlor as the center of the house.

Classically-inspired elements adorned the walls of the parlor, but this room functioned much like the halls of older and smaller nearby dwellings. Carter and his family ate all their meals
there, dishes of chocolate in the morning, porringers of broth and minced chicken with wine in the evening, and wine or sage tea before they retired for the night. When weather prevented them from going outdoors, Carter and his progeny "ambled into the parlour" and passed the day reading or writing letters to friends and merchants. When gout crippled him, Carter was "forct to my crutch" but still managed to "hobble over into the parlor" or he had his servants carry him so that he could read or play cards, fortify himself with strong beer, and share the conviviality of his mansion's common space. The ancient pull of the hall survived beneath the stylish brick and stone mansion at Corotoman which was for Carter what his old house had been: "the theater of his Hospitality, the seat of Self-Fruition, the Comfortablest part of his owne life, the noblest of his Sonnes Inheritance . . . an epitome of the whole world." The architectural elements Robert Carter incorporated into the facades and interiors walls of his mansion at Corotoman in the 1720s made his dwelling vividly different from nearly all the houses in Lancaster County. But how different was the routine of his household from his neighbors'? A hall was still the main room of all but a few of the county's dwellings, still the center of the planters' family life as it was for their plantations. In most households neighbors and visitors alike were bidden into this room to be greeted, to be entertained amid the clatter and commotion of cooking and brewing, to share the household's meals, and, when the time came, to sleep there. Seventeenth and eighteenth century
inventories listed at least one bed in the hall, often half a dozen, all folded up and stored out of the way during the day and spread out and plumped up for nightly use. There may not have been a bed for every visitor, or for that matter every householder, but the space within the hall, and all that went with it, was shared by all.

By the 1730s most inventories listed no bedding of any kind in the halls of Lancaster County's richest men. Their halls now contained more chairs, a table or two, and sometimes a decorative item such as a picture and a large looking glass. The hall of Richard Ball's house contained only a clothes press filled with clothing, wigs, barber's tools, and a hunting horn. In Westmoreland County the inventory of George Eskridge indicated that his hall contained nothing but an escritoire, 2 tables, 18 chairs, 6 mezzo-tint pictures, portraits of Eskridge and his wife, and "sundry glasses on the mantle piece." Robert Carter's contained a few pieces of ceramic ware and the stair to his upper floor but nothing more. The migration of furniture and utensils from the hall to other rooms or to other buildings meant that less and less was happening to fewer and fewer in the halls of the county's richest men. Chairs and tables for sitting and waiting replaced ladles, skimmers, flesh forks, frying pans and pots when the clang-banging chores of cooking moved to kitchens out in the yards. Beds disappeared to upstairs rooms when Lancaster planters began to outfit their halls not for long sojourning but as a semi-public reception space where the household might greet its guests and visitors without violating the privacy of the chambers where they slept. In his treatise
Of Building, Englishman Roger North insisted that the central chambers of larger houses "need not have a chimney, because it is for passage, short attendance or diversion." Robert Carter's central hall was thus part of a trend; he simply formalized the function Isaac Ware, the author of an English edition of Palladio's *Four Books of Architecture* recommended for the central passage of a gentleman's house. For "great men," Ware advised, "the houses are required with loggias and spacious halls adorned, that in such places those may be amused with pleasure who shall wait for the master to salute or ask him some favor."60

By 1740 being rich did mean being different. Being rich in Lancaster County had always meant having more, but the difference meant having a few more pieces of furniture or pewter, or eating meat more often, or having a change of clothes, or sleeping off the floor in a bedstead. Being rich now included the erection of architectural barriers between the family and the members of the plantation community as well as the wider county community. Being rich meant living in houses that provided more private space and at the same time rooms that had more specialized uses. Eating was now separated from cooking, sleeping from eating, meeting from extended greeting. And being rich meant drinking tea from cups specially designated for that purpose and used individually instead of communally in the company of other gentlemen. Wealth had brought new routines and new customs to the households of very rich men that they did not share with most of their neighbors. The large fortunes Virginia's early eighteenth century elite enjoyed begins to explain why they adopted
some of the ways of the English gentry, but other currents in the
dynamics of Virginia's evolving society, its politics, and in the
relationship of the colony to its parent had also played a role in
persuading these men to leave the cultural routines their fathers had
brought to the colony for new stylish behavior. Building bigger
houses and stuffing them full of distinct objects intended for meals
and social gatherings not shared by middling and poorer planters was
one way to retain the honored social and political positions their
fathers had gained and which they hoped to pass along to their sons.
NOTES

"Exactly as the Gentry Do in London"


2. The focus of the present study is the divergence of two cultural strains among the white colonists in early eighteenth century Virginia. A more detailed examination of the affinities and differences that existed between the culture of the predominantly English white colonists and black slaves is pending.

3. On the divergence of the culture of elites in early modern Europe from the traditional popular culture there see Peter Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe (New York, 1978). In his discussion of the "folk" and "Georgian" traditions in the culture of early America James Deetz, In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life (Garden City, New Jersey, 1977), 39-40, relies on Alan Gowans' earlier analysis of the transition some colonists made from the first culture to the second. Gowans wrote "more than a change of style or detail is involved here: it
is a change in basic tradition. Like folk building earlier, these structures [Georgian buildings] grow out of a way of life, a new and different concept of the relationship between man and nature. Gone is the medieval acceptance of nature taking its course, along with the unworked materials, exposed construction, and additive construction that expressed it. This design is informed by very different convictions: that the world has a basic immutable order; that men by the powers of reason can discover what that order is; and that, by discovering it, they can control environment as they will."


5. Architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe's watercolor sketch of Green Spring Mansion late in the eighteenth century was reprinted in the Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXV (1957), facing page 3.


7. This descriptive summary of the northern facade of Robert Carter's mansion is based on information recovered during the excavation of his mansion in 1977 to 1979 conducted by the

8. This was Fanny Price's remark as she approached Sotherton, one of the re-made country houses admired by the characters of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (New York, 1964), 62.


10. See Henry Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*, 188, who suggests that "Saying that a building is an expression of some fashion may indicate a relationship between the designs of different localities, but it explains nothing. What needs explaining is why that particular fashion was accepted."

11. See Chapter III above.

Marion Tinling, eds., *The London Diary (1717-1721) and Other Writings* (New York, 1958), 548-558, 566.

13. Wright and Tinling, eds., *The London Diary*, 615-616; see also 594. Wright, ed., *Prose Works of William Byrd*, 385. Small houses like the ones William Byrd loathed to sleep in remained an indelible part Virginia's landscape. An Englishman traveling through Virginia in 1784 described the houses he saw as "almost all of wood, covered with the same; the roof with shingles, the sides and ends with thin boards and not always lathed and plastered within; only the better sort are finished in that manner and painted on the outside. The chimneys are sometimes of brick, but more commonly of wood, coated on the inside with clay. The windows of the best sort have glass in them; the rest have none, and only wooden shutters." When this traveler became ill while he made his way from Petersburg, Virginia to the Carolinas, he sought shelter in "a miserable shell, a poor apology for a house" where an overseer and 6 slaves lived in a one-roomed dwelling that had neither glass windows or brick chimney. J.F.D. Smythe, *A Tour in the United States of America* (London, 1784), 49 and 75.

14. Middling and poorer colonists in the colony's urban places clung to mud and stud chimneys well into the eighteenth century: W.W. Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*,
IV, 465, and V, 209. For a discussion of Pear Valley see Bernard L. Herman and David G. Orr, "Pear Valley Et Al.: An Excursion into the Analysis of Southern Vernacular Architecture," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* XXXIX (1975), 307-327. For both houses see Survey Notes, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, Richmond, Virginia. Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, 368, argues that the construction of small houses was attributable to the colonists' lack of identity with Virginia and their persistent desire to return to England.


17. For a discussion of the lobby entrance house Colonel Miles Cary built in the fourth quarter of the seventeenth century at his Richneck Plantation in Warwick County see Carter Hudgins, *The Miles Cary Archaeological Project*. For another lobby entrance constructed at about the same time in Westmoreland County see Fraser D. Neiman, "Social Change at the Clifts Plantation: The Archaeology of Shifting Labor Relations," paper read to the Society for Historical Archaeology, 1979.


20. Jones, Present State, 74. For a contemporary comment that fires in the halls of wealthier Virginians were seasonal nuisances see Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1711 (Richmond, 1941), 585.

21. Wright and Tinling, eds., Secret Diary, 472. It should be noted that some European travelers continued to describe Virginia houses as crude copies of English forms. There was, for example, "nothing considerable" to see in Williamsburg in 1736, and although Hampton contained about 100 houses in 1716, there were "very few of any note." William and Mary Quarterly, first series, XV (1907), 223; Alexander ed., The Journal of John Fontaine, 110.

22. See, for example, George Blaney's report for Mulberry Island Parish in Warwick County, William P. Palmer, ed., Calendar of Virginia State Papers, 1652-1781 (Richmond, 1875), 176. The population of Virginia as a whole expanded as the birth rate for white and black colonists increased and as black slaves poured into the colony. In 1714, there were approximately 32,000 tithables; just 12 years later there
were 45,000, a gain of 44 per cent. Lancaster County's population growth was not quite so dramatic. Between 1714 and 1726, the number of tithables in Lancaster increased from 1,019 to 1,413, or at a rate of 39 per cent. During the first half of the eighteenth century the county's population jumped from 926 tithables to 1,538, but most of this growth occurred in the 1720s (the rate of expansion in that decade was 31 per cent). Lancaster's tithable population actually declined in the 1730s (-4 per cent), a loss not recovered until the middle of the next decade. Tithable figures for Lancaster County extracted from Lancaster County Order Books III, IV, V; a summary of Virginia's tithable population in 1715 was reprinted in Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, *The Planters of Colonial Virginia* (Princeton, 1922), 151; see also John M. Hemphill, "Virginia and the English Commercial System, 1689-1733. Studies in the Development and Fluctuations of a Colonial Economy under Imperial Control," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 1964), 50-51; Alexander Spotswood to the Lords of Trade, 16 February 1715, in R.A. Brock, ed., *The Official Correspondance of Alexander Spotswood*, 140.

23. The rapid expansion of the black population of the Chesapeake has been discussed by Russell R. Menard, "The Maryland Slave Population, 1658 to 1730: A Demographic Profile of Blacks in Four Counties," *William and Mary Quarterly*, third series,

24. Wright, ed., Prose Works, 381.


27. Alexander, *The Journal of John Fontaine*, 49. When J.F.D. Smythe spent a night on a quarter south of Petersburg his host owned "no book, no convenience, no furniture . . . unless you call by that name a miserable chaff bed, somewhat raised from the floor . . . which alternately served him for his chair, his table, and his couch." *A Tour in . . . America*, 75.


29. Robert Carter was one of the planters who died in the 1730s and who was wealthier than Fleet. Carter's inventory has not been included in the sample under study. His mansion and most of what was in it burned in 1729; and while his estate was inventoried after his death in 1732, that list, though lengthy, is only a partial guide to what the planter owned. The discussion of Carter's possessions below is based on the objects recovered during the archaeological investigation of his mansion.


37. *Virginia Gazette*, Parks, ed., 14 October 1737, 4; 20 May 1737, 4; *American Weekly Mercury*, no. 641, 13 April 1732. See also in the *Virginia Gazette*, 17 December 1736, 4; 4 March 1737, 4; and 11 March 1737, 4.


40. "Observations in Several Voyages and Travels in America in the Year 1736," William and Mary Quarterly, first series, XV (1907), 215.


42. Samuel Clyde McCulloch, "James Blair's Plan of 1699 to Reform the Clergy of Virginia," William and Mary Quarterly, third series, IV (1947), 83.

43. Thomas Jones To Micajah Perry, 3 December 1735. The former's letters of English merchants provide indications that some of his Virginia customers had begun to request sets of tea wares a decade earlier. See "Invoice of Goods from John Fleetwood and Company," Mr. John Falconar to Thomas Jones, 15 August 1726, Jones Family Papers, microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.
44. This brief summary of the ceramic wares Robert Carter lost in the fire that destroyed his mansion is condensed from Hudgins, *Archaeology in the "King's" Realm*, 187-214.


46. Stiverson and Butler, eds., "Virginia in 1732," 32. For a later estimate of the amount of grain one planter thought was required to sustain a field hand see "A List of mills in the neighborhood of a place where the court of Westmoreland County have empowered Mr. Thomas Edwards to build a mill," 1771, Carter-Keith Papers, files 2-3, Virginia Historical Society.

47. Robert Carter to Benjamin Grayson, 3 July 1731; Robert Carter to Nicholas Nicholas, 13 July 1731, Robert "King" Carter *Letterbook, 1728-1731*, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.
48. Robert Carter to Grayson, 3 July 1731; Stiverson and Butler, eds., "Virginia in 1732," 29.


51. Devereux Jarrett, The Life of Devereux Jarrett (Richmond, 1806), 13-15. Less than 5 per cent of the inventories taken in Lancaster County between 1720 and 1740 listed tea sets, tea bowls, tea cups, or tea. Neither tea or chocolate had yet become "the best and newest of tastes" as far as most of the county's planters were concerned. Drinking chocolate, coffee, and tea was one of the English ways William Byrd, Robert Carter, and their contemporaries first learned while students in England. Initially taken for their alleged medicinal properties, coffee and chocolate soon became popular in London's male-centered taverns and later had wide usage as a social drink still consumed primarily by males.
Tea drinking as a family-centered social activity would not supplant chocolate and coffee for several decades although some Virginians were already buying a variety of teas. See the account of George Coforore, 15 September 1724, for "finest Green tea, fine Mohea tea," coffee and refined sugar, Jones Family Papers, microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

In addition to specialized ceramic wares and condiments, tea, coffee, and chocolate drinking required a wide array of other special utensils. See Robert Carter's order for a dozen silver spoons that were to have his initials engraved on them, Robert Carter to Williams Dawkins, 12 September 1728, Robert "King" Carter "Letterbook, 1728-1731," Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

52. Sir Christopher Wren's sketches and plans have been collected and published: The Wren Society, 20 volumes (London, 1924–1943). For English mansions whose facades were massed like Corotoman's see Colin Campbell's catalogue of grand houses, Vitruvius Britannicus (London, 1717), Belton in Loncolnshire and Shobden Court in Hertfordshire (Volume 2, plates 33, 59 and 60) are two examples of central portico pavilions flanked by end pavilions. See also William Kent, The Designs of Inigo Jones (London, 1727), volume 2, plate 13, for other suggestions that Carter had seen, and liked, or discussed plans and elevations like them with someone who knew
them well. For other large provincial dwellings that bear close resemblance to Corotoman and the Wren building at the College of William and Mary see "A Prospect of Codrington College," from William Mayo's *A New and Exact Map of the Island of Barbadoes in America According to An Actual and Accurate Survey* (London, 1722). I am indebted to Conrad M. Goodwin for bringing this map to my attention.


In addition to Gibbs, the first and perhaps most influential of the design books, Nicholas du Bois published a new English translation of Andrea Palladio in 1715 which in turn inspired an explosion of manual and style books. William Salmon's *Palladio Londinensis* (London, 1734, second edition, 1738) was, like Colin Campbell's earlier volumes, a collection of English houses influenced by the designs and ideas espoused by the Italian architect. Because it contained no illustrations for specific plans or elevations, Francis Price's *British Carpenter* (1733) was not as useful to provincial builders as was Gibbs; more applicable to the needs of colonial builders was Isaac Ware, *Designs of Inigo*


55. For a more detailed discussion of the arcaded piazza in Virginia and its precedents see Hudgins, *Archaeology in the "King's" Realm*, 105-114. Loggia couthouses were built in at least 10 Virginia counties between 1715 and 1766 James City (1715), King William (1725), Northampton (1730), York (1733) Hanover (1735), Charles City (1736), Richmond (1749), Isle of Wight (1750), Gloucester (1766), and King and Queen (precise date unknown), Notes of file Architectural Research, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

57. Wright and Tinline, eds., *Secret Diary*, 323.

58. The discussion of the furnishings of Robert Carter's house relies almost entirely on information recovered during the excavation of his mansion. During the fire that destroyed the house, the household furnishings, or pieces of them, fell into the basement of the collapsing mansion where they lay until retrieved by archaeologists in 1977 and 1978. Careful plotting of these artifacts during the excavation and computer generated maps allowed the project's archaeologists to "refurnish" the mansion. Screws, latches, and drawer...
pulls became chests again and buttons, clasps, and pins, garments. Robert "King" Carter "Diary, 1722-1728," 1 January 1728, 22 November 1722, and 27 August 1723. For another gentleman's use of his closet see Wright and Tinling, eds., Secret Diary, 284, 375.


CHAPTER VII
HONOR AND SHAME

After months of hesitation that puzzled many of his contemporaries, William Byrd heeded the advice of his friends and accepted an appointment to the Governor's Council of Virginia in 1708. Convinced that it was a gentleman's obligation to participate in all levels of government in return for the privileges that were his by birth, Byrd took his seat within the circle of the colony's most powerful men. Byrd was mindful of the economic advantages that flowed to the politically powerful. But he was also aware that because of Virginia's recurrent social and political acrimony, obligation flowed in many directions and often made the advantages of office illusory. When he took his council seat, Byrd confided to his diary that he hoped he could distinguish himself with "honor and good conscience."²

The collision of resurgent royal power with increasingly assertive councilors and the growing political importance of the assembly in the first decades of the eighteenth century divided political obligations and sometimes clouded the advantages of office. The wrangles between royal governors, councilors, and burgesses, in short, made honor and conscience difficult to uphold. The claims that each laid on Byrd's allegiance were defined by statute or by the
intricate and competing bonds of tradition, marriage, and noblesse oblige. As political bickering continued during the first four decades of the eighteenth century, the probability was great that by responding to the demands of one, a councilor like Byrd had an even chance of offending the others. Prestige and high status were the benefits of a place on the council, but Byrd's puzzling ambivalence about claiming his council seat reveals his misgivings about putting his honor at risk. Byrd had not been a councilor very long before he opposed an appropriation requested by Governor Spotswood. Spotswood sought the money to bolster the colony's frontier defenses, but the burgesses adamantly opposed the measure on the grounds that its passage would bring higher taxes. Byrd acquiesced to the assembly's opinion and later explained that he "was against it though I was ready to oblige the governor in anything in which my honor was not concerned."³

What was honor in eighteenth century Virginia? Was it a set of ethical and moral principles that pervaded the behavior of men of integrity? Was it a code of courtly speech and manners? Or did the principles of honor encompass more than that? In early eighteenth century Virginia honor was the mental currency of a process by which men and women delineated persons of unequal status and wealth from themselves and which they used to formulate and interpret the images they cast in the minds of other men. The dynamics of honor did nothing less than rank Virginians hierarchically from high to low between the poles of high esteem and shame. The ranking process of honor was certainly not unique to the Virginia of William Byrd and
Robert Carter. Hoary and loaded with meaning, the concept of honor had migrated to Virginia in the seventeenth century, but how it and its opposite, shame, were defined had changed during the course of the seventeenth century as succeeding generations of colonists adapted it to their provincial circumstances. Indeed, the definition of honor changed while William Byrd worried that he might lose his. During the political contentions that alienated governors, councilors, and burgesses from each other, new definitions of honor emerged as some embattled planters sought to retain their positions of privilege and others sought to take them away. It was in the context of the gentry's struggle to avoid shame that the role of material things assumed far greater importance than they had during the seventeenth century.4

II

Eighteenth century Virginians distributed honor—what is sometimes also called prestige—as a reward to the men who secured the colony's most valued positions. Honor was thus not distributed evenly. Like wealth, some colonists had more than others. In eighteenth century Virginia honor was roughly equivalent to high political status, but it was also much more than that. Honor was a combination of high social and political status, the prestige that accompanied officeholding, and the regard or esteem colonists enjoyed in the minds of their neighbors. Understood in the coarsest political sense, planters who rose to high office possessed honor. The hierarchy of honor ascended from local offices. At the bottom was a
place on the local vestry that might be followed by appointment to
the county bench and a commission as an officer in the county
militia. Ultimately, the most honored men were elected to the house
of burgesses, and the most honored of this relatively small circle of
men were appointed to positions as councilors, naval officers, or
other lucrative posts. Each level was incrementally harder to
achieve. The higher the office, the harder it was to obtain and
consequently the greater the honor it bestowed on its holder. Honor
was thus closely associated with and rated by political power.

Honor was also the esteem men enjoyed in the minds of their
neighbors and friends. Esteem, a companion to high status, was public
reputation or the regard with which a planter was held by his
neighbors in his home county and elsewhere in the wider English world.
Alexander Spotswood, for example, had come to Virginia in search of
esteem as much as for money. Spotswood was convinced his future
depended on acquiring both, and he urged himself and his brother, the
last remaining males of their line, to "endeavor with noble
emulation, to render it once more conspicuous." Esteem or
reputation was the basic currency of honor. Since it could be earned
and lost, the quality of honor included the behavior necessary to
acquire and then sustain it.

Assumptions about honor undergirded Virginia's legal code.
The law assumed that men strove to win and retain the esteem of their
neighbors, and many of the sanctions the law provided were calculated
to focus public opprobrium on suspected wrong-doers and reduce the
public esteem of convicted malefactors. Virginia's county justices
reduced reputations by dispensing shame. Offenders endured an extended, tripartite shaming ritual. They were first shamed on the county's most public stage, its courthouse, when the county clerk read their names from lists which grand juries presented the court in May and November. These announcements of suspected wrongdoing rippled out into the county as sheriffs and undersheriffs posted lists that advertised the business of the court on the doors of the county's parish churches and chapels. Additional shame accrued during public trials before the county's justices. And there was a third, and final, shaming for those men and women the justices deemed guilty.

The Lancaster County trial of William Norris offers an example of how justices dispensed shame. On December 13, 1722 Norris, Rawleigh Chinn, a perpetual rowdy, and two of their servants had passed the day drinking together. Thoroughly drunk by afternoon, the foursome had decided to pay Justice William Ball a social visit. Ball had found Norris and his friends too "riotous" to entertain and had asked them to leave his house. So had Constable John Callahan. Norris and his intoxicated friends agreed to find more receptive company but did not leave before Norris told Callahan and Ball they were pompous and self-serving fops, remarks Ball and Callahan related to the court as slander that did "contemn the King's authority in a most scurilous and abuseful manner." One month after he insulted Ball, Norris walked to the bar of Lancaster's courthouse, dropped to his knees, and begged Captain James Ball, one of the sitting justices, to absolve him of the crime of slander. The price of
absolution for Norris and Chinn was a L5 fine. Servants John Heale and Edward Jones, whom the justices evidently assumed were less susceptible to shame, received lashes at the county whipping post. 6

Lancaster's justices and their counterparts throughout Virginia assumed that the threat of having to perform public penance, no matter what its form, was a powerful deterrent to crimes of all sorts, from Sabbath-breaking to murder. County justices dispensed this tonic liberally on court day. Slanderers, adulterers, and Sabbath-breakers begged forgiveness at the bench; thieves and mothers of bastard children were stripped to the waist and flogged. And other miscreants spent time tied in public view to the pillory. 7

Planters also used public shaming to punish intramural offenders. William Byrd's neighbor Nathaniel Harrison did "justice upon two of his people for selling his corn" by punishing them openly in the yard of his parish church. Byrd himself disciplined his laborers publicly and used the threat of public punishment to discourage deviation from the routines he had established for his plantation. Angered by the inattentiveness of one of his servants, Byrd reproved the man for being drunk and "threatened to have him to be publically corrected in case he ever served me so again." Virginia's great men also used this threat to enforce the rules of accepted decorum at their meetings. When William Randolph and Colonel Hill "behaved . . . rudely" at a Council meeting, Byrd scolded them and suggested that "they ought to be put into the stocks" for their intemperate speeches. 8

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Publicly dispensed shame lowered a man or woman's reputation, and only the award of esteem could restore it. Esteem, like status, was a rated currency. The higher a planter's status, the more valuable, and the more often sought, was his esteem. That was because in Virginia's hierarchical society its citizens traditionally deferred to and paid respect to individuals higher on the status scale than themselves. During the roiling seventeenth-century rapid economic advancement often blurred traditional distinctions between high and low, but there was general agreement that "there should be degrees and Diversities amongst the Sons of men in acknowledging of a superiority from Inferiors to Superiors." By the beginning of the eighteenth century opportunities for quick social and economic advancement had declined as Virginia's older Tidewater counties assumed more of the social tone of old England. While the gentry class was consolidated through marriage, political office, and wealth, a permanent class of landless men emerged. So did a class of permanently poor and unfree black laborers. These groups added complexity to the colony's social mix and exchanges of esteem. The public esteem of the rich and powerful was actively courted, but "superior" men demanded esteem from their "inferiors." Exchanges of praise or compliments, cultural emulation, political deference, requests for advice or financial assistance, and other social bonding such as godparenting punctuated public transactions of esteem.

Virginia's wealthiest men most often measured their honor by what English merchants and royal officials said about them or how they responded to them. William Byrd valued the esteem of Governor
Alexander Spotswood above most men he knew despite the political distance that often separated the two. Byrd noted the governor's reactions to him carefully as a way of gauging how much or how little of Spotswood's esteem he enjoyed. When Spotswood announced that he would personally review the Charles City and New Kent County militia companies in September 1710, Byrd spent three frantic days supervising preparations for the governor's visit. He directed cleaning and polishing in his house, and mowing and trimming in his yards and fields. Byrd ordered his hands to move a large wood pile that might disrupt the marching and drilling he planned to impress Spotswood. But while he tossed and turned in bed that night thinking about the wood pile's new location, he decided to move it again. He borrowed fine utensils and serving pieces from his neighbors to use during the governor's stay at Westover, and loaded pistols with powder and fired the charges into his tethered steed's ears "to teach my horse to stand fire."  

The militia drills Byrd directed across his freshly mown fields and the hospitality he extended "pleased" his guest. Spotswood acknowledged his approval of what he had seen by leading the freeholders of New Kent and Charles City in shouting huzzahs for their commander.  

That was not the last time Byrd sought or interpreted Spotswood's gestures as an award of honor. At an official dance Spotswood gave in 1711, the governor "opened the ball with a French dance" with Byrd's wife, a choice that the planter interpreted as an honor that made him "rather proud." Byrd read the same message in the actions of any royal official who was "exceedingly
courteous" to him or who greeted him more warmly than any of his counterparts. When Spotswood and the colony's big men reconciled their differences in 1720, Byrd was gratified that "the governor gave me a kiss more than other people" in the hand-shaking and greetings that signaled the beginnings of a truce between the governor and his councilors.13

Byrd's diary notes about the praise he received from Spotswood begin to reveal the importance Virginians attached to the esteem of English officials. Letters that passed between planters and their English merchants indicate that the esteem of those Englishmen was also highly valued. In 1724 Thomas Jones wrote an anguished letter that explored the ties of esteem between him and English merchant Edward Pratt. Pratt reassured Jones that he had "not been wanting in your good Character to Mr. John Falconar both in your principle and substance." The merchant also told his Virginia client that he had "taken pains" to convince Falconar "to the contrary of what Robert Cary reports which is listened to here by every man that knows you."14 Falconar's opinions weighed heavily in England and in Virginia. No less a planter than Robert Carter trod lightly when he wrote the merchant. In 1727 Carter closed a fawning letter he wrote to Falconar to patch up a long-distance theological dispute with an acknowledgment that planters dependent upon and judged inferior to merchants like Falconar could not demand their esteem. "Do but sell my tobacco well," Carter wrote, "buy my goods well and use me with franck generosity, and I do not care how plain a stile you treat me."15
There were, however, English merchants that Carter judged to be his inferiors, and when they declined to defer to him Carter responded with waspish rebukes. In 1721 he sharply asked whether William Dawkins had forgotten his prudence and manners when he addressed Carter in a letter with language that was "hardly fit for your footman, if you use one." Carter reminded the Englishman that he was "your master's equal and all along have lived in as good rank and fashion as he did, even when you were something like Grave's cabin boy." Carter huffed that he was "old enough to be your father, not to mention any more reason that justly give me title to your deference," and closed his reprimand in a style he did not dare use with Falconar. "I will," he wrote, "be treated with respect by those that do my business."16

There was good reason for a Virginia planter to respond nervously to the sneer of an English merchant. Not only did planters value the esteem of those English businessmen, they knew that what was said in England about them and their tobacco could damage their reputations (that is, their honor and their credit) just as surely as the gossip that circulated among their neighbors. Like all Virginians who planted tobacco, Robert Carter's world view was firmly rooted in the fields of his home farm. He had a farmer's links with the rhythms of the planting year and expectations for good harvests. He thought of himself most often as a farmer and saw the world across tobacco fields in the same way his poorer neighbors did. His farmer's expectations were theirs. Growing tobacco and selling it well were important to Robert Carter because his perception of
himself and the stature he enjoyed in the eyes of other men was
determined by how well his plants grew. It is in the context of the
tobacco market and what planters said and thought about the products
of their neighbors' fields and how they responded to the complaints
and compliments of tobacco merchants that the exchange of esteem is
most properly analyzed.

The planting year began at Corotoman as it did on all
Tidewater plantations with the urgent labors that prepared fields for
planting. First turnings of tobacco fields and the sowing of oats
began in late February, sooner if Carter noted sure signs of the new
year's beginning. New foliage on fruit trees was welcome and
acknowledged by opening mansion windows that had been shut since the
previous December. But blossoms were fickle omens, and Carter held
his plowing orders until the cows, mares, and sheep on his home farm
had delivered their young. He noted the birth of each calf, foal,
and lamb and observed each young animal carefully until its survival
was apparent.

If most of the new-born livestock survived and if there were
many of them, Carter interpreted the fertility of his flocks and
herds as a prediction of similar success for his crops. He then
issued orders to prepare his fields. Fieldhands first broke the
ground for planting and began the tedious, back-breaking process of
nursing small, fragile tobacco plants and then transplanting them
from their seedbeds to waiting fields. Carter searched for other
omens of good luck during the transplanting since all of the labors
of spring could end in misfortune. There were seemingly an infinite
number of disasters that could destroy the tiny plants, and the planter's profits. But in most years, if there was enough rain, if too many insects did not come, and if the sun did not shine too fiercely, then Carter could brag in late spring that his "tobacco seems to rise" and boast with understandable pride in the summer that there was an "abundance of plants at every place."¹⁷

Like most planters, Carter was never satisfied with the number of plants that his gangs harvested at the end of the growing season. He always thought that the weather was too hot and dry or too wet and cool. In 1702 he wrote Thomas Corbin that a spell of violent rains had "damaged our low land cropps and has us soe into weeds wee don't know when wee shall get clean of them."¹⁸ Heavy rains again "broake and spoyled all the tobacco that was growing" in 1722, and the plants that did survive were judged "good for nothing." One planter described them as thin, moldy, and rotten.¹⁹ Whatever the weather, Carter found comfort in the thought that God afflicted all Virginia equally. He also liked to think that in spite of the small disasters that befell him, his plantations produced more tobacco than any other. "Thank God," he once wrote, "I can boast of as high prices and as much sold as any of them." Had he not beaten his competitors, Carter reasoned, he would "have lived at a very little purpose." The odds were, of course, stacked in favor of his succeeding. Carter knew that none of his planting friends could "boast of better lands or better materials to work with."²⁰

Carter not only had better land, he had more of it than any of his competitors. By 1720, Robert Carter's tobacco empire
stretched from the wild, western fringes of Virginia where his western-most fields lay nestled in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains along the Rappahannock River into Lancaster County. In all, Carter's fields were spread through a dozen Virginia counties and were organized into a system of independent plantations, each of which had its own network of quarters. Ten or more slaves—black men, women and their children who often lived in family groups—shared patches cut out of the forest with enough cattle, sheep, and hogs to provide bits of meat for the winter months and a surplus that was shipped down river to Corotoman. At a few quarters one or two horses grazed in the woods near a motley assortment of cabins and the more substantial dwelling of a white overseer, often himself a newly-arrived immigrant, who directed the work at the quarter. The overseer's house contained enough skillets, hoes, and axes, to meet the day-to-day needs of the quarter but little else.

The task of managing this tobacco kingdom was enormous. Carter seems to have done it well, but the job of instructing the overseers and superintendents of his plantations and quarters absorbed most of his time. It is clear why that was so: he owned 45 quarters when he died and hard work was the only thing that could coax them to produce big harvests and profits. Good harvests were a compelling reason for hard work, but there were others. Each of them touched Carter's sense of honor. First, Carter's diligent attention to his fields would bring generous legacies for each of the sons who would propel his honor and reputation into another generation. Hard work also produced the bumper harvests that would win a
neighbor's esteem. Third, Carter's work ethic compelled a planter to improve the material things that God had given him. "We are," he once wrote, "but stewards of God's building: the more he lends us the larger he expects from us, and happy they that make a right use of their Master's talents." By Carter's reckoning a failure to surpass his previous year's harvest was a sin. While there is no doubt that simple greed or the pleasure that comes from simple aggrandizement motivated some of Carter's constant attention to making yearly additions to his fields and work gangs, his drive to succeed also came from a deeply-rooted need to measure up to a godly standard as well as those calculated by his neighbors.

Strict order was essential to Carter's complex plantation system if the big harvests that God expected were to be achieved. Central to the operation of this tobacco empire was the almost constant scramble to secure and care for the vast army of laborers who tended the tobacco plants at its scattered quarters. Year after year the fields around Corotoman expanded, and year after year Carter purchased more and more slaves to work his new cropland. Slavers arrived more frequently in the Rappahannock in the 1720s than the three preceding decades when the trade in slaves centered on the York River. More slave traders came directly into the Rappahannock, but few arrived when Carter needed their cargo most or sold them at prices Carter liked. Some of the slavers sailed in at the end of the summer, too late for the African men and women they carried to help with the harvest and too late for them to adjust to Virginia's climate before they experienced one of its winters. Even so, when
"Negroes have bin poured in upon us . . . in abundance" Carter purchased many, often dozens, "seasoned" them at one of the farms near Corotoman, and finally sent them to up-river quarters.  

Slave owners preferred the cooler fall months at the end of the threatening "seasoning" period to transport new slaves to their Virginia homes and move older slaves to new quarters nearer new, more fertile fields. In 1729, for example, Carter informed Robert Jones, one of his up-river supervisors, "my new hands are well in their seasoning except one. I must wait with patience till they recover their strength before I can send them." Jones was impatient for additional help with that year's harvest, but Carter gave the order for the new hands to begin the 40 mile journey up-river only after the danger of summer fevers and malarial aches had passed. When the days grew shorter and cooler, Carter's sloop sailed "out for the Falls carrying 12 new negroes with her, 8 men, 4 women & also the girl Rose, all well clothed and bedded." The sloop returned and was kept busy shuttling the residents of quarters where the soils had lost their fertility to new fields. That same year Carter sent a large group of slaves to a new quarter at Rippon Hall, "Tom . . . and Jenny his wife; Lambo; judy his wife and two children; Nick Reeds Joe, his wife Hannah and three children; the 4 Negroes that come from Cooks, Punch, Peter, and the two women; also the 2 children; Charles the joyner; the 2 boys Jeremy and Stephen, also a white hand named John Tharp."  

Carter's concern for the well-being of these slaves, and the handful of white men that worked with them, followed his sloops up the
Rappahannock. He often worried about their health, and when fall turned to winter, the season when the death rate among his hands soared, he sent instructions to his overseers that he hoped would minimize the presence of death at his quarters. Carter was convinced that "if we can but find a way to keep the people warm with warm hous's, warm bedding and warm cloaths . . . we should have fewer mortalities." To guard his slaves against the winter cold, Carter ordered his overseers to build "good cabbins." These houses were to "bee lofted over" to provide additional insulation and warmth as well as storage space for the winter's grain supply. As a further precaution against the chill of the winter ground, Carter also ordered that beds in the new cabins "lye a foot and a halfe from the ground." Carter repeated his admonition to "be Kind to the Negroes" many times to his overseers. Even so, every winter death whittled away at his gangs. Most years the deaths came one at a time to the quarters, but in 1727, a "grievous mortality . . . swept away abundance" of Carter's field hands. Seventy black men and women died that winter in an epidemic, perhaps influenza, that ended only after warmer weather greened the hardwood forests that surrounded the quarters.

The death of these slaves perplexed Carter. Like his good friend William Byrd, Carter tended to look at the deaths of his slaves as divine punishment. Byrd was convinced that "these poor people suffer for my sins" and begged God to forgive his "offenses and restore them to their health," if that was consistent with God's
Carter also saw divine wrath in the deaths of his laborers. He knew that part of the punishment for each dead slave was the renewed need to haggle for new hands with the slave traders when they arrived in the spring or summer. While he counted the dead in the winter months and waited for spring, he fretted about how he would pay for new laborers, worried about his credit, and pondered how the death of experienced hands and the deployment of new, inexperienced workers would affect the quality of his crop. In the planting culture of Virginia, slaves and bumper crops were inseparable. The outcome of most crops depended on the care of black labor, but there was a crucial distinction between the demise of a slave and the failure of a crop. A dead slave was an investment lost, a problem endemic to plantation management and finance. A failed crop, however, could do more damage; it could ruin Carter's reputation as a planter. Among men who all followed the same trade and who used the image of their crops to rate each other, this was a loss that no planter, not even Carter, could afford.

Whenever planters gathered, tobacco was the topic of nearly every conversation. As the basis of the colony's economy, and tobacco was the prevailing medium of exchange in specie-poor Virginia. The ups and downs of the tobacco market effected everyone, rich and poor, and there was little in the colony, from paying taxes to buying a horse, that was not shaped directly by the prices Virginia leaves brought in England. When planters met at court, whether inside the courthouse or in less formal discussions under the shade of trees outside, at racetracks, and at church, the talk turned
to tobacco. Irish Huguenot John Fontaine observed on a Sunday in May 1715 that when the Reverend John Span "had made an end" to his sermon "every one of the men pulled out their pipes and smoked a pipe of tobacco." As the pall of smoke grew thicker over the planters, their conversations turned to that year's crop, bugs, and rain, and how the market affected each man's crop. While the talk went around, each planter rated his neighbors on the basis of the leaves produced on his plantation.

The most dreaded critics of Virginia's tobacco, however, lived not in the Tidewater but in England. What a planter said about another man's tobacco could damage his neighbor's pride and reputation. But if an English merchant impugned the quality of a planter's leaves, that could do far greater damage. First, the demand for a planter's leaves might lag, and that could threaten economic ruin. Worse, the planter's reputation among the men who were his best contacts with metropolitan England might decline. Letters from the merchants to other clients could damage the planter's reputation among the men whose approval was requisite for selection to local or provincial office.

English merchants criticized Robert Carter's crops on more than one occasion. London men and occasionally the outport merchants who marketed Carter's crops complained that his tobacco smelled rotten, arrived soggy and moldy, or was generally inferior to shipments they received from other planters. To those merchants whose opinions he valued, and whose esteem he coveted most, Carter apologized that his "tobacco was not so agreeable as you could wish."
Such an apology was almost always followed by a vow to "endeavor to be nicer than ever I have been" in the cultivation and shipment of his leaves. Carter recognized that his welfare depended on the good will of the men who sold his tobacco and that he had no choice but to defer to their judgements, but in a prickly letter in 1723 he assured his factors that he did his best to produce a quality crop. He once promised William Dawkins that "I take as vigilant care to prevent these things [poor or spoiled leaves] as any man." Carter's boast that he was "as much master of the planting trade as anyone you know" was his guarantee that if good tobacco could be grown in Virginia, he would grow it. Micajah and Richard Perry, William Dawkins, and other merchants continued to serve Robert Carter, but that did not save their Virginia client's pride from wounds four years later. In 1727 John Falconar told Carter that he had found that year's tobacco "pleasing" but then insulted the planter by remarking that it was "no common sight to see such good tobacco" packed in hogsheads from Corotoman. Carter answered Falconar's complaints with the long blustery, yet indirect, litany of reasons why he could not possibly produce inferior crops. He reminded the merchant of the fertility of his lands, the superiority of his equipment, and the diligence of his hands. Carter admitted that now and again some of his "remote overseers" might not always do their best, but he hoped the merchant would not "taint the reputation of my whole concern" because a little bad tobacco had found its way into his shipment. "Every considerable man's" crop contained some trash, Carter grumbled, and "no man of my
circumstances in the country takes more care in handling his tobacco than I do." Besides, Carter sniffed, "I am old enough to know the trade." He was then 64.

Other planters contended with similar complaints and tendered similar excuses. In 1726 John Cosby, told that his tobacco that year was "extreme badd," assured an English merchant that he had not packed his crop "with malice." He excused himself by telling his correspondent that it was impossible to keep every "bad leaf or bundle" out of his hogsheads. Cosby admitted that spoiled tobacco was "not to be admired," but he insisted it was a lamentable, yet natural and predictable, aspect of the planter's craft. There would be some bad tobacco in every crop, Cosby suggested, because the "deceitful villains" who supervised his field hands knew "as little of cropping or to anything in tobacco mostly as they did when they came first out of their own country." Cosby closed his excuse by noting that he had grown more tobacco nine years earlier, "none found faulty," but agreed that he should supervise his overseers and slaves more carefully.

John and Charles Carter, younger sons of Robert, employed similar defenses while they managed their deceased brother Robert's estate. Every year John and Charles loaded 60 to 100 hogsheads of tobacco for shipment to England as partial payment of their dead brother's debts. In 1735 Edward Athawes responded to their request for shipping invoices and a statement of their account with him with lists of complaints about their tobacco. John and Charles responded that they had made their tobacco in an "unfavorable season." Cold
weather and the "neglect" of their overseers, not they, had ruined that year's crop, and they said that they would heed Athawes' suggestion to "mend" their management. The tobacco they sent to London in the next years, however, was "rotten and spoiled," thin from a lack of attention given to it while the plants stood in the fields, and "flabby and some of it stinks" because of a lack of proper curing, packing, and prizing. Despite Athawes's warnings, the Carters' tobacco continued to arrive in England not packed well. It often appeared to have been "rolled in the wet" or stored in water on board ship. More excuses followed, but Athawes held John and Charles responsible. As a result, the reputation of the sons of Robert Carter declined with Athawes. 36

Wounding criticism from a merchant was one of the unpredictable jabs in the world of tobacco that could batter a planter's psyche. Assaults to Virginia's biggest planters, real and imagined, came from sources near and far, but the worst worrisome blows to the image each man held of himself as a planter came from England. Indeed, the day-to-day workings of most large plantations seemed directed toward the English audience whose opinions carried weight in the trans-Atlantic exchange. Maintaining a discipline of labor at Corotoman and the up-river quarters was thus inspired as much by the desire to please English factors as it was by any locally-inspired need to control slave work gangs. Every planter preferred to be known as an efficient manager, and each of them supervised their laborers on the assumption that how well a man's hirelings worked played a central role in the calculation of his honor.
Life in Corotoman's quarters seldom pleased Carter's sense of order. He worried about how the routines there reflected on him and whether the routines there might be interpreted as a challenge to his authority. Carter's efforts to enforce the plantation's rules of discipline often focused on mundane aspects of everyday life. For example, he once quarreled with some of the women on his home farm about how they swept the paths that connected their cabins. Carter responded more severely to other challenges. Men, both black and white, who inveigled each other to steal a plantation goose or a bottle of wine, or bobbed about in the middle of the Rappahannock drunk in skiffs or punts taken from Carter's docks, or stealthily removed pistols from their master's bedchamber and hid them in a pile of leaves so that they could admire them at their leisure, were cursed, scolded, and assigned more onerous work and supervised more closely. So were the servants and slaves who slipped away from their cabins to "revel and drink in a very disorderly manner under the pretense of a feast" or who drank with transient sailors. 37

Workers who took extended illicit holidays faced scolding, whipping and perhaps an appearance in court where the county justices sometimes heaped additional weeks and months to unexpired terms of servitude. Men who regularly challenged his authority by running away were punished more severely. Carter ordered their toes cut off. In 1727 Carter reminded his overseer Robert Camp that he had "cured many a Negro of running away by this means" while he discussed the fate of Madagascar Jack, a slave who had continued to challenge Carter despite losing his toes five years earlier. 38 Bambarra Harry,
Dinah, Will, Baily, and Ballazore shared Jack's mutilation, but none of them dropped their resistance to slavery. Neither did Sawney, a slave whom Carter brought before the bench in Westmoreland County. The Queen's attorney could not convince Westmoreland's justices that Sawney had committed any crime, and the court ordered his release. Carter, however, objected that someone had to pay for the time and expense he had invested in his mistaken pursuit of the slave, and he persuaded the justices to allow him to cut off one of Sawney's big toes.

African slaves and English servants ran away and stayed away from their work for weeks and sometimes months, but Carter's white overseers often posed more serious threats to the efficient operation of his plantation than the man or woman who occasionally "layed out" or stole some wine. In 1729, for example, slaves at several of the quarters complained bitterly about the care they received from Dr. Joseph Belfield, a physician Carter retained to treat his sick. After he investigated his slaves' complaints, Carter angrily rebuked Belfield for "stuffing my people with poysonous drugs . . . and giveing them unwarrantable portions . . . without any authority from your Physick books which you pretend to be very well versed in." Belfield, who often neglected to visit Carter's quarters at all, was apparently fond of drinking for "many days together." He was soon dismissed.

Belfield was not the only threat to the health of Carter's slaves. Other white men also hampered the efficiency of his field hands. Some of Carter's overseers neglected to carry out their
employer's instructions or were overly zealous in working their gangs. Carter harshly reprimanded Robert Jones for the "carelessness and cruelty of the overseers in turning the people out in hard and bitter weather." He ordered another overseer named Johnson to "be kind to all the negroes, especially to the new ones and this do every time you go, especially that they lye warm." Clothing and supplies sent to the quarters were sometimes lost or not distributed at all. In their isolation, overseers apparently found it tempting to follow a living of their own design and ignored the routines Carter calculated would enhance both his honor and fill his pocketbook. One of his overseers "never worked himself." Alice, a slave, did all the household chores for this overseer's wife. Another woman, Nel, did all the wash for the white couple and their six children. Other slaves drew water every morning, kept the overseer's fires lit and fueled, and tended his corn, cotton, and pea patches. These slaves also cut and sawed timber that the overseer then made into bedsteads and "abundance of stools" which he sold to his neighbors. Incredibly, he also exchanged some of these stools with his slaves for chickens. Sent to investigate the quarter, one visitor found evidence of a successful furniture business, 23 head of cattle and some horses, as well as signs of a booming trade in stools, "abundance of poultry."

Carter did what he could to reform his stool-making manager, but in fact his "remote overseers" often failed to produce large crops and made tobacco that disappointed English noses. When that happened, everything in Carter's world tottered. When the factors frowned, profits and honor declined. During one bad year Carter
groaned that he would have to "conclude I have lived at a very little purpose if I cannot get as much for my tobacco as other men." Within the world of tobacco and the symbolic images of crops and harvest that imbued meaning to everyday relations, the spectre of being bested by a neighbor was the worst fate of all. When Edward Pratt's "miscellaneous stuff" brought a higher price than Corotoman leaves in 1720, Carter bristled because he had not kept pace with Pratt and admitted "that vexes me egregiously." That was because the image a planter projected among his neighbors was in large part determined by the reputation of his crops, and that hinged on how well a planter managed his plantation.

III

While Robert Carter and William Byrd sought the esteem of their governors and English merchants, humbler Virginians similarly sought the regard of men they judged to be their superiors. Virginia's big men, however, refused to distribute their esteem very widely. When rich and middling planters traded tales, they often characterized Robert Carter in the vocabulary of honor and shame. These stories suggest that both friends and foes gnawed on Carter's reputation as a way of humbling him and raising their own esteem. Powerful men responded to the stories by propping their reputations with material things. Virginia eighteenth century funeral customs illustrate how, even in death, powerful men attempted to retain their reputations and their honor through material displays.
Men who sought and failed to gain Robert Carter's esteem regarded Carter as an excessively prideful man, a trait for which he was "in contempt . . . sometimes called 'King' Carter . . . even to his face." Other stories portrayed the "King" as mean, insolent, and miserly. Governor Francis Nicholson, for example, heard the tale of Robert Carter and the "Scotch Boy" told in a "very scoffing and slighting manner" in the Williamsburg house of Benjamin Harrison, one of the governor's councilors. Tellers of the tale recounted how Carter and a lad had agreed to a barter exchange, wine for woolen cloth, but that when the boy returned to his ship he discovered the wine Carter had bottled was not as good as the wine he had sampled in the planter's house. Some Virginians perhaps relished this part of the story as confirmation of the methods they suspected Carter had used to build his empire. For others, the end of the story was equally instructive. Sure that he had been cheated, the "Scotch Boy" rowed ashore to demand an explanation for the switch. Carter responded not with an answer but with a blustery demand that the boy tell him if he knew whose honor he was attacking. The boy's reply, "Ayes, bad man, I ken thee better than thou kens thyself," his assurance that he knew Carter's faults better than the planter himself did, was heard with agreeing nods.

Governor Nicholson's mental portrait of Carter described the Colonel as a man "fam'd for his covetousness and cowardice," a friend to those who would "flatter, cajole, and as it were adore him." Other men, however, he used "with all the haughtiness and insolence possible." Another well-circulated tale which reported that "the
justices of the Peace of the county wait two or three hours before they can speak to him seemed to confirm the gentry's fireside characterizations of their neighbor and his frequent demands for respect. So did other reports that church in Christ Parish did not begin until all in the congregation were seated to watch Carter and all his family troop in to take their seats in the most conspicuous pews.  

Carter's political adversaries almost certainly exaggerated their accounts of his haughtiness and pride. Their willingness to do so, however, reflects resentment spawned by a system of esteem in which its currency was expected to flow up but only trickled down. Carter's sense of honor dictated that he demand and be accorded frequent awards of respect. "King" Carter was, in short, intolerant of those who would not respect his rank or wealth, or defer to him in his old age.

Haughty pridefulness prevailed as Carter's best known trait until he died on August 4, 1732, 69 years old, infirm, nearly blind, and confined to bed for weeks at a time by crippling attacks of gout. His allies wasted no time coming to his defense by extolling his virtues and his honor. Little more than a month after the "King's" death, the Philadelphia American Weekly Mercury published an elegy, probably written by William and Mary professor William Dawkins, to honor Robert Carter. In Dawkin's elegy two shepherds began a dialogue by announcing "Great Carter's Dead" and then solemnly analyzed the
planter's virtue's:

His smiles proceeded from his human thoughts
His frowns not bent on Persons, but on faults.
His just acquests his well-poised soul maintain'd
Above all Fraud, nor by ambition stain'd.
His generous Heart with malice could not swell,
And knew no Pride but that of doing well.

No doubt some Virginians wondered if the man the shepherds praised was the same Robert Carter they had known. Among them were middling freeholders, Carter's neighbors, and laborers whose deference he had demanded. Men who challenged Carter while he was alive had quickly discovered that few of them were any match for his bluster. Carter angrily rebuked anyone who doubted his authority. In 1721 Hawe, a miner at Carter's Rappahannock copper mining experiment, had taken issue with Carter's refusal to recognize him and his fellows as anything but "diggers in the mine." Carter responded to the miner's "curses" by instructing his supervisor to go again to Hawe and "let him know We are his masters by giving him a sound drubbing for his impudence." Rebellious slaves experienced even harsher retribution.

Expression of "impudent" ideas about the "King's" honor were thwarted even after the planter was dead. While powerful, literate men mourned the passing of their honored friend in elegies and obituaries that circulated from Virginia to Maryland, Pennsylvania, and even England, the planter's heirs staged a funeral and erected a monument to their father so impressive that they seemingly had the power to overwhelm any doubts the living had about the importance of the man the funeral trappings honored.
Funerals in Virginia were traditionally loud, boisterous affairs where gunners fired salutes to the deceased, and relatives, particularly wealthy widows, spread sumptuous funeral feasts before their guests and honored closest friends with mementos of mourning. Friends from near at hand and from a distance came to pay their respects to the dead, share the sorrow of the living, and celebrate the ties of kinship, community, and class that bound them all together. What these guests saw at funeral celebrations was a combination of the requests men and women made in their wills and the eager efforts of sons to reflect well on their family's prestige.

The notion that funeral celebrations should reflect the "rank and quality" of the dead often encouraged the living to engage in what one York County parson called "debauched drinking." Gallons of cider and wine and brandy punches eased the hours of mourning that preceded burial services. Funeral drinking was what inspired the Reverend Edmund Watts to request that no drinks that might lead to "the dishonor of God and his True Religion" be served at his own funeral. Few Virginians, however, matched Watts' piety, and generous libations accompanied most burials. When William Byrd went to Benjamin Harrison's funeral in 1710 he and the "abundance of company of all sorts" that attended drank wine and ate cake from ten that morning until prayers and the burial service began at 2:00. At the funeral service of his own infant son Parke later that same year, Byrd served "burnt claret" and cake from ten in the morning
Guests at elaborate funerals drank mulled or "burnt" wine, but more modest celebrations served cider. In Lancaster County, Captain Ralph Langley's mourners drank 6 gallons of strong cider. The folk who attended Mrs. Mary Harwood's funeral consumed 7 gallons of cider, two quarts of rum, and a bottle of mclasses mixed together as punch. The drinks at Mrs. Harwood's funeral cost her estate 8 shillings and 6 pence. Humble John Fines' heirs spent more than twice that on 11 gallons of brandy and cider punch.

The liberality with which funeral hosts entertained their guests revealed the images living relatives wished to project of the dead. So did funeral orations. William Byrd called the sermon which followed the food at Benjamin Harrison's funeral an "Extravagent Panegyric." In it the local parson called Harrison "this great man" so often that Byrd could not resist setting the record straight. Later that day Byrd wrote in his diary that the funeral eulogy "not only covered his faults but gave him virtues which he never possessed as well as magnified those which he had."

While a funeral oration might not change the opinion men like Byrd held of some of their neighbors, all comers nevertheless looked closely at the trappings that attended the burial of their friends for clues of the esteem the deceased had commanded and which his heirs might inherit. Funerals were, in a sense, public dramas staged and attended not only to pay last respects to dead
acquaintances but to communicate through the grammar of symbols. The funeral service and the eating and drinking that attended it and the material monuments that marked the event were offered and read by folk attempting to make sense of their everyday relations. One sign of a man's stature, the first one that William Byrd and Robert Carter looked for, was the size of the funeral party. If "abundance of People" came to honor the deceased, that was one indication of the esteem a colonist had held while he or she were alive. While Byrd took attendance and sampled the funeral meal, he also counted another sign of the "quality" of the funeral guests, the number of coaches that arrived. He was also impressed by funeral salutes, particularly cannon that fired every 30 seconds before Benjamin Harrison's interment.

Byrd and his contemporaries also paid close attention to the elaborateness of the funeral ceremonies. Four days after Robert Carter had rowed across the Rappahannock to visit Ralph Wormeley and had been surprised to find him "dead and laid out," he recrossed the river to attend his friend's funeral. After cakes and wine, the parish priest led the funeral procession and a hearse drawn by 4 coach horses each led by a slave dressed in mourning clothes, from Wormeley's mansion to the parish cemetery. Pall bearers dressed in mourning hat bands, scarves, and gloves rode on each side of the funeral coach. Friends and relatives followed. There was a hierarchy in the line of march at elaborate funerals. The parson led the way, followed by the coffin and its pall bearers, the most honored guests at the funeral. These men participated in a
reciprocal aspect of the funeral drama. They were honored by the
special identification accorded by their positions at the head of
the procession and their mourning attire. At the same time the
honor of the deceased was reflected by the status of the men who
bore him to his grave. 60

The cost and quality of the coffins also varied with the
"rank and quality" of the deceased. For example, Mary Harwood's
coffin and her burial shift cost 8 shillings and 6 pence, about half
what John Pines's heirs paid for his shirt and shroud. When
Christopher Kirk's wife Hannah died in 1727, he spent 14 shillings,
roughly the county average, for her burial. By comparison, the
heirs of Benjamin Harrison, Jr. paid nearly three times that for his
coffin in 1745. The preferred wood for coffins in Lancaster and
elsewhere was walnut, and the most elaborate of them were covered
with linen, felt, or velvet. 61

Costly food and coffins had characterized the funerals of
Virginia's wealthiest men and women since the beginning of the
seventeenth century. As a matter of tradition widows and sons of
the elite ordinarily erected monuments to mark their graves. By the
early eighteenth century most of the colony's most prominent
families maintained family cemeteries "where whole families lye
interred together, in a spot generally handsomely enclosed planted
with evergreens and graves kept decently." 62 Small, widely
scattered family cemeteries fit Virginia's dispersed plantations,
and they had assumed the character of the plantations they served by
the third quarter of the seventeenth century. Located near orchards
or gardens, better fenced, and better tended, the cemeteries of the colony's wealthier families were visibly superior to those kept by poorer planters. It must be pointed out that investments in funerals, coffins, cemeteries, and gravestones were economically unproductive. Even so, the wealthy spent more and more on them, and in the 1720s their funeral spending escalated as they changed their preferences in grave markers.

Throughout the seventeenth century the graves of Virginia's big men were most often marked by flat, polished marble or slate slabs roughly equivalent to the size of the grave shaft they covered. Some of these slabs sat above the ground on low brick bases or marble panels that mimicked the form of ancient sarcophagi. These side panels seldom contained any inscriptions; the epitaphs of the deceased always appeared on the horizontal slab. Family coats of arms most often headed the epitaphs, but "trophies of death" like skulls and shank bones were almost as popular. Clearly more expensive than the wooden markers of the poor, these marble and slate monuments crowded together in the most sought-after sections of parish church yards. The same classical influences that transformed the houses of the elite in the 1720s also shaped the notions the living had about what was proper to mark the dead. Slowly during the 1720s and more frequently in the decades that followed, Virginians declined to order death's heads and shank bones for their monuments, and chose muses, cherubs, garlands, and swags. The trend in Virginia reflected trends in England and in European
design books, and once a few colonists erected a few monuments decorated with the new motifs, their neighbors soon followed suit. The rush to keep pace in gravemarkers transformed the face of Virginia cemeteries. Funeral spending for markers, for food, coffins, and mourning attire, indicated that Virginia widows and sons had chosen to ignore the advice of the popular conduct book, *Advice to a Son* "not to use any expensive funeral Ceremony, by which, mourners, like Crowes, devour the living, under the pretense of honoring a dead carcass." The father whose advice this popular book conveyed also said that he could not "apprehend a tombstone to add so great a weight of glory to the dead" and viewed funeral expenses only as "charge and trouble to the living." Virginians refused to listen to this admonition from *Advice to a Son*. They staged elaborate, lavish funerals and embraced new styles in gravestones. All those things might not help them grow more or better tobacco, but planters spent with the conviction that their prestige and honor depended on it.

IV

The demand for other Georgian fashions, from funerals to clothing and houses, was all a part of an escalation in the campaign to gain and retain honor, for increasingly, Virginians had come to see material things as symbols of a man's position within society. What Peter Collinson told English botanist John Bartram to pack for a trip to Virginia reflected his awareness of the growing importance of material things. Collinson knew that Bartram would spend most of
his time in Virginia with his sleeves rolled up, tramping about in
the colony's forests and marshes as he studied its native plant
life. But Collinson also knew that when he and Bartram were not
outdoors, they would be meeting and eating with Virginia's leading
men. Many of them would share the botanist's interests, but all of
them judged their fellows and their guests by a set of material
symbols that Collinson suspected his English friend might not know.
Collinson warned Bartram "these Virginians are a very gentle and
well-dressed people and look perhaps more on a man's outside than
his inside."

When Bartram arrived in Virginia he found Collinson's sartor-
ial reports to be quite true. Englishman John Oldmixon wrote that
the colonists, at least the wealthiest of them, dressed stylishly
and "as much in the mode as art and cost can make them." The
inventories of Lancaster County's big men make it clear that
stylish, expensive clothing had become an indispensable part of a
gentleman's possessions by the 1720s. So do portraits the planters
hung of themselves and their family members in their parlors and
passages or gave to friends and relatives as tokens of esteem.
There was no mistaking Colonel Miles Cary for a poor man in the
somber portrait he had made in England in the last years of the
seventeenth century. Cary's portrait includes only the Colonel's
dour likeness and the collar and shoulder of a leather jacket and a
shirt, both open at the collar, and nothing more. Eighteenth
century painters, in comparison, included more than likenesses in
their portraits. Limners who painted Robert Carter, be-wigged and
dressed in gold or silver-trimmed suits, paid as much attention to his costume as his face. These painters surrounded Carter with props of honor and power. A sword, symbol of military rank and gentle status, hung by Carter's side; he also wore gloves, another symbol of gentle status. In this portrait and in others of wealthy planters, classical plinths or urns stood near the subject as further proof of their refinement and learning. Women posed differently too. Velvet and satin billowed around them in stylized layers, and they held bunches of cut flowers or, like Wilhelmina Byrd, their needlework, both diversions of the better-off and props more appropriate for rich men's wives than a dead fish or an iron skillet.

By 1720 popular conduct books like Advice to a Son had told several generations of young men that fine clothes were their most important possession. Virginians were as determined as their English cousins to follow Francis Osbourne's dictum to wear their clothing neatly, "exceeding rather than coming short of others of like fortune." Young gentlemen should "spare all other ways rather than prove defective in this," Osbourne wrote, since their future success would hinge upon the images of worth dress provided. At balls and other social events in Virginia the planters watched each other carefully to score their wardrobes. At a ball Governor Spotswood gave to celebrate the Queen's birthday in 1711, William Byrd noted that the apparently invulnerable James Blair "had the worst clothes of anybody there." In 1723 Robert Carter responded to his son John's apprehensions about the reports Thomas Randolph...
had spread in England about him and his clothes. Carter counseled his son to remain calm and act prudently and then assured him that "as far as his wearing finer linen or finer clothes than you, he never appeared in any such here that I have seen."  

The planters John Bartram met in Virginia, however, had not limited their spending to stylish frock coats and satin dresses. Results of planter spending were at times more obvious, like the new brick mansions that had sprouted here and there in the Tidewater, and sometimes more subtle. William Byrd, for example, renovated his house so thoroughly that he "scarcely knew the place again because of the alteration."  

The new elite fashions extended to smaller objects and mannerisms that became no less important than building or aspiring to build a brick mansion. When William Gooch arrived in Virginia the colony's ladies and their gentlemen were accomplished in the intricate postures and gestures of formal dance. "Not an ill dancer in my government," Gooch wrote his brother in a letter in which he affirmed the notion that Virginia's wealthy folk seemed "perfectly well bred."  

Carriages plied Williamsburg's streets, and carriage owners like Governor Spotswood, James Blair, and others sent their coaches out to transport their friends and allies from their lodgings to official meetings and social events. Passengers welcomed rides as proof of the esteem they held with the men whose prestigious vehicles allowed them to ride on rainy days above the muddied pedestrian throng.
These same carriage-owning men treated each other during Williamsburg's "publick times" to bowls of drink English gentlemen preferred, rum-laced wine punches and dishes of tea, coffee, and chocolate. And they collected books so that they could keep pace with their neighbors as much as for the information the books contained. Robert Carter, for example, instructed his book seller Ralph Smith in 1721 to add both the *Evening Post* and the *Quarterly Register* to the news packets sent to him from London. Carter expressed his need for news after he discovered that his son-in-law Mann Page received the papers. Carter deemed it unwise to fall behind him. Carter was still catching up ten years later when he ordered *The Independent Whig*, *The Spirit of the Ecclesiasticks*, "the late Earl of Shaftsbury's letters to the late Lord Molesworth concerning the love of ones country," and the writings of Chillingworth. Carter professed that he did not like "these freethinkers" but would read them so that no political conversation could elude him.

By 1720, material things had long been the primary device by which Virginia planters measured, compared, and classified each other and accorded or withheld their esteem. During the seventeenth century land, labor, and livestock were the dominant currencies of honor. By the first decades of the eighteenth century, however, other prestige symbols assumed the place signs of raw economic power formerly occupied. As the eighteenth century progressed, evidence of connections with England eclipsed economic dominance in some
small local community as the best way to retain honor and reputation. Evidence of a genteel education was one of the coveted links. Education, particularly an English one, was indispensable for aspiring young men throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century because, as Jane Swann noted in 1756, Virginians knew "how essential a liberal education is to that Sex and the Indifferent figure they make in the world without it." Unschooled men were indifferent men because they lacked one of the preferred links with the wider English world and its culture. Any man who could not manage his own affairs or who could not participate actively in a "Gentleman's Conversation" was thus thought a "scandalous person and a shame to his relations." Subscribing to the right books and newspapers, corresponding with esteemed English merchants, dressing well, and, when the time came, dying in style all were nothing more than the publicly discernable signs of a man's connections to the wider world.

But Virginia's style-conscious early eighteenth century elites were not indiscriminate consumers. Some of them who could afford to indulge in brick and mortar fads built big, modish houses and filled them with objects such as porcelain tea sets not previously seen in the colony. The elite did not, however, follow every whim of English fashion. They purchased only what Robert Carter called the "necessary calls of humanity and decency." English merchant Philip Jerdone, for example, discovered that an expensive variety of green carpet did not sell well in Virginia despite its popularity in London. Merchants found buyers for
their wares only when members of the gentry class enlarged their
definition of the "necessary calls of humanity and decency," or when
gentlemen decided they needed particular utensils or beverages to
keep pace, retain their links with other elites, and preserve their
honor.

Unlike income invested in land, livestock, and labor, the
money that planters poured into mansions and other prestige
possessions was economically unproductive. Houses paid no interest.
Nor did they offer much assistance in the management of the day-in,
day-out routine of a large plantation. But by the 1720s wealthy
Virginians liked and wanted stylish houses and the things that went
inside them, and many of them went into debt to acquire them. One
of the reasons they did so was to preserve their honor and project
it into following generations. Andreo Palladio, Renaissance author
of Ten Books of Architecture, the touchstone of the new English and
American building style, proposed that great men "should endeavor to
leave a reputation . . . not only for our wisdom but our power too."
It was for that reason, Palladio continued, that powerful men should
"erect great structures, that our posterity may suppose us to have
been great persons." More than wealth was required to gain a
reputation and pass it to the next generation. When John Baylor, a
"great Negro seller" and burgess from King and Queen County, died in
1720, Robert Carter remarked that Baylor had "made a mighty noise
while living. I wish for the sake of his remain, at the winding up
of his sheet, the cry did not exceed the wool." Carter assumed
that money alone could not save a man from ignominy or project his
memory very far into the future. Mansions and their furnishings, investments whose present dividends included honor and high esteem, could not prove a man's worthiness beyond his time. Carter and his contemporaries had discovered that to win the esteem of governors, English merchants, each other, and the freeholders, it was necessary to live in a style that proclaimed they had connections with the wider world, its fashions, and its intellectual currents. Virginia's early eighteenth century elite lived and spent as if nothing less than their honor and privileged positions depended on it.  

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CHAPTER VI: HONOR AND SHAME

1. The weight of noblesse oblige and public service is a subtle theme in Louis B. Wright, *The First Gentlemen of Virginia: The Intellectual Qualities of the Early Colonial Ruling Class* (Charlottesville, 1970). Reference was made above to the economic benefits of public officeholding and to the bald opportunism of customs collector Nicholas Spencer who remarked of public office that "the profitt of sallery is not soe much as the advantages it gives mee otherways."

2. Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1711* (Richmond, 1941), 82.


4. See William J. Goode, *The Celebration of Heroes: Prestige as a Social Control System* (Berkeley and London, 1978). Several recent studies of the culture of the Chesapeake's eighteenth century gentry have proposed explanatory devices for the gentry's effusive public style and assertiveness in politics. T.H. Breen borrowed the anthropological concept...
of "deep play" from, among others, Clifford Geertz, and employed it in his explication of the role of competition among the gentry [Breen, "Horses and Gentlemen: The Cultural Significance of Gambling Among the Gentry of Virginia," William and Mary Quarterly, third series, XXXIV (1977), 239-257]. This chapter explores Rhys Isaac's suggestion that "the gentry style [is] . . . understood in relation to the concept of Honor—the proving of prowess" and that the "essence of social exchanges was overt self-assertion" [Isaac, "Evangelical Revolt: The Nature of the Baptists' Challenge to the Traditional Order in Virginia, 1765 to 1775," William and Mary Quarterly, third series, XXXI (1974), 348]. This chapter generally agrees with that assertion and relates it to the material accoutrements of eighteenth century life. This chapter also argues, following Michael Greenberg, that a full understanding of any eighteenth century Virginian's sense of honor, or his angst, can be reached only if the individual, indeed the entire culture, is analyzed not only in the local context of evangelicals and elites but within the dynamics of the Atlantic market. See Michael Greenberg, "William Byrd II and the World of the Market," Southern Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of the South, XVI (1977), 429-466. For more on the cultural significance of the divisions between evangelicals and elites, or what I have called the elite and traditional cultures of eighteenth century


6. Lancaster County Orders VII, 20. See also Wright and Tinling, eds., *Secret Diary*, 582 and 560 for similar acts of penance in Williamsburg. William Byrd was among the onlookers at a James City court session at which Simon Jeffrey, the county's surveyor, "was obliged to ask his pardon on his knees before his accusers" for using the governor's name fraudulently.


30. Wright and Tinling, ed., Secret Diary, 109


35. John Cosby to [ ? ], 1726, Jones Family Papers, microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

36. The correspondence between Edward Athawes and John and Charles Carter from 1735 to 1738 has been published in the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, XXIII (1915), 162-171.


39. For the legal basis of dismemberment see Hening, Statutes at Large, III, 460-461. For the specific cases cited above, see Lancaster County Order Book V, 1702-1713, 185; Order Book VII, 1721-1729, 183; Robert "King" Carter "Diary," 12-14 September 1722.

40. Westmoreland County Orders, 1705-1721, 354.

41. Robert Carter to Dr. Joseph Belfield, 30 June 1729, Robert "King" Carter "Letterbook, 1728-1731," Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

42. See the letters cited in footnote number 28 above and Robert Carter to Robert Camp, 10 October 1727, Robert "King" Carter "Letterbook, 1727-1728," Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

44. Robert Carter to John Burridge, 26 June 1729; and Carter to William Dawkins, 16 April 1730, Robert "King" Carter "Letterbook, 1728–1731," Alderman Library, University of Virginia.


47. Francis Nicholson to the Lords of Trade, n.d., in Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, VIII (1900), 55.


49. Nicholson to the Lords of Trade, n.d., Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, VIII (1900), 56.

50. "A Poem Sacret to the Memory of the Honorable Robert Carter, Esq; Late President of His Majesty's Council of the Colony of Virginia; who departed this life on Friday the 4th of August, 1732 in the 69th year of his age," American Weekly Mercury, 14 September 1732 (Philadelphia), microfilm, University of Missouri, Columbia.

52. See the discussion on dismemberment above.


54. Wright and Tinling, eds., *Secret Diary*, 188.

55. *William and Mary Quarterly*, first series, XIX (1899), 198.

56. Lancaster County Loose Papers, Inventories, 1735-1746.

57. Wright and Tinling, eds., *Secret Diary*, 165.

58. Wright and Tinling, eds., *Secret Diary*, 165


61. Lancaster County Loose Papers, Inventories, 1722-1734; *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, I (1892), 212; VIII (1900), 329.

63. See Alan Gowans, King Carter's Church, being a study in depth of Christ Church, Lancaster County, Virginia (University of Victoria Maltwood Museum Studies in Architectural History, number two, 1969).

64. See, for example, the plans for tombs in James Gibbs, Book of Architecture (London, 1728), 118, 125-127, 136.


66. Quoted in Francis W. Hirst, ed., Life and Letters of Thomas Jefferson (New York, 1924), 12. Compare this to Hugh Jones' portrait of Virginians as men who were "more inclinable to read men by business and conversation than to dive into books and are for the most part only desirous of learning what is absolutely necessary, in the shortest and best method." Present State of Virginia, 81.


68. For a brief overview of portraits of early eighteenth century Virginians see James Thomas Flexner, History of...
American Painting, Volume One: The Colonial Period, First

Colonel Miles Cary's portrait is privately and now in Lynchburg, Virginia. The portraits of Robert Carter referred to above are now in the possession of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia; Carter Harrison, Sabine Hall, Richmond County, Virginia; and Hill Carter, Shirley, Charles City County, Virginia.

69. Louis B. Wright, ed., Advice to a Son, 50.

70. Advice to a Son, 21.

71. Wright and Tinling, eds., Secret Diary, 347.


William Byrd's feelings about his clothes and his honor extended to the men who served him. In 1718 Byrd hired a footman and purchased an appropriate costume for him and subsequently had to reprimand his man, first for not wearing

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his hat and later for coming to work without Byrd's uniform.

73. Wright and Tinling, eds., Secret Diary, 539; and London Diary, 490.

74. William Gooch to his brother, 23 December 1727, Gooch Letters, microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg.


76. Jane Swan to Thomas Jones, 8 March 1756, Jones Family Papers, microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg.


79. For a compelling discussion of the role of material things as a prestige system in a twentieth century culture that has influenced the argument presented in this chapter see J.K. Campbell, *Honor, Family, and Patronage, A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Community* (London, 1964).


CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSION: "NOW NOTHING ARE SO COMMON"

In 1691 Robert Carter inherited the vast and scattered plantations his father and brother had purchased throughout the Tidewater. He followed their planting and political footsteps and advanced toward becoming "the richest man in Virginia" by astutely pursuing the perquisites of public office and assiduously attending the crops that grew in his extensive fields. When he died forty-one years later, Carter's sons inherited their father's vast wealth, and they, like their father and grandfather before them, manipulated the old formula of tobacco, slaves, and perquisites. As it began a third generation in Virginia, the Carter clan, and the colony generally, pursued the economic course planters had established during the middle decades of the seventeenth century. But much in Virginia had changed during the years that Robert Carter worked to ensure that the advantages he had inherited would prop the adult years of his own offspring.

Physical testimony to change was everywhere. Conspicuous was the dramatic increase in the number of black, unfree laborers who worked in the fields of both small and large plantations and who assumed after 1680 the role English servants had formerly filled. The arrival of a non-European, largely non-Christian labor force
profundely affected labor relations and the day-to-day rhythms of plantation life. While white Virginians adjusted to the "foreign" culture of their new African slaves, labor relations based on old English assumptions about masters and men lost much of their force. Virginia's black and unfree men and women were not only unfamiliar with the unwritten rules of social discourse and interaction in the colony, and they emerged as a permanently poor, politically disenfranchised, and economically dependent class. The sinking social status of slaves, however, thrust the colony's landless and poor white planters, men and women who lived on the social and political periphery of the colony, and poorer freeholders closer to the mainstream of colonial life and politics. No longer the bottom rung of Virginia's social ladder, the colony's humbler men and women began to separate themselves from the slaves and sought closer affinity with whites of all ranks.

Indenture agreements of female servants in Lancaster reflect the attempt of that county's newly promoted inhabitants to be free of the stigma of engaging in "black work." Female servants commonly agreed to indentures that specified they would not work in the soil or "do any manner of slavish work," that is, "work in the ground at the hoe nor further in the tending of a garden to help plant."²

On large plantations the arrival of black slaves promoted white servants from field work to other tasks. The prospect of an amalgamated white class, however, did not comfort the elite, and during the first three decades of the eighteenth century, while the colony's freeholders grew more and more skeptical of the gentry's
political leadership and while Englishmen declined to award the colonists the respect they thought they deserved, elites began to fear that the differences between rich and poor had grown thin and had lost their former definition. Legislative acts, slave codes and sanctions against an emerging "familiar" style in politics, for example, were symptomatic of how anxious, at the very least how ambivalent, the colony's emerging native-born elite felt at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Convinced that the old rules that had defined relationships between inferiors and superiors had been lost, Virginia's big men relied with increasing frequency on their physical possessions to bring order to communications with their laborers and neighbors. Their houses acquired more social baffles, they rode wherever they could, they wore expensive, stylish clothes with wigs and swords, and they saluted each other with dishes of tea, chocolate, and Madeira. Even when they met the middling and poorer planters to discuss politics and plot against royal governors, the elite did so in carefully staged ceremonies where rank and honor were observed and material things clarified distinctions between high and low. When William Byrd treated the militiamen of Charles City County as elections approached, his men gulped inebriating rum punch from tankards they passed from man to man in the yard of Westover Church while he and his fellow officers dined less raucously at Byrd's table with forks and plates and drank Madeira wine from matched glasses.\(^3\) At this muster and other public events where the complexity of Virginia's early eighteenth century society was most
apparent, Byrd and other great planters asserted themselves by putting physical and cultural distance between rum-drinking militiamen and wine-drinking officers. All things were not for all men. Segregation of black laborers from white planters, of rich from poor, and of elites from their constituents provided a way to structure everyday encounters, and material things reinforced what physical separation had initially achieved.

II

In the first decades of the eighteenth century, Virginians began to diverge in opinion about what constituted "the necessary calls of humanity and decency." Most of them continued to live and work within the bounds of traditional culture that had arrived in the colony at the beginning of the seventeenth century. But Virginia's patricians adopted a distinctive lifestyle that included large, classically-inspired houses, elaborate tablewares, and elite beverages. Lancaster County probate inventories reveal that there emerged in the first decades of the eighteenth century a consensus among the county's most powerful men that these "luxuries" had become a necessary accoutrement to their social and political positions.

There were, however, two views of the "luxuries" planter spending brought to Virginia in the 1720s and 1730s. Some men saw the results of the spending as certain indications of the colony's social and cultural success. What, Hugh Jones noted somewhat prematurely at the beginning of the century, was better proof of
Virginia's rise to prominence as one of England's richest colonies than a class of men who "behave exactly like the gentry do in London." There were, on the other hand, men, and Robert Beverley was among them, who saw danger in frivolous spending, particularly when it came during a time of economic uncertainty. Temporarily away from the spending but close to the source of new fashions, William Byrd, as was his daily custom in London, met friends at Will's Coffeehouse. Tobacco prices and war-time politics dominated the conversation there in 1719, but on at least one day Byrd and his cronies "talked about the bad consequences of Luxury." The topic was then popular and discussed in contemporary popular literature. After his island exile, for example, Robinson Crusoe remembered that his father had warned him to avoid the "distemper and uneasiness either of body or mind" that prudent, cautious Englishmen assumed accompanied "luxury and extravagances." For Byrd, the danger that lurked in frivolous new amenities was the tendency they had to undermine the social order he wanted to preserve. Byrd had witnessed some London "shopkeepers" abandon their former "frugality" and acquire the material fineries the English elite, and their American planter cousins, cherished. While he watched modest merchants maintain their wives in "splendour," Byrd decided that luxury was "bad enough among people of quality," but he persuaded himself that it was even more regrettable among "men who stand behind counters." The master of Westover disapproved of pretensions, and although he himself was a pretentious man he could attribute his
social ambitions to some noble motive but chose to ascribe the aspirations of less well-born men to crasser goals. The trend in Virginia for men and women to "wear the best cloaths according to their station; nay, sometimes too good for their circumstances" troubled Byrd and his contemporaries because dressing habits tended to negate the symbolic power of clothes to rank men and women by what they wore. The pressure to dress well even inspired men to commit blasphemous acts. Robert Alworthy of Westmoreland County stole the embroidered pulpit cloth at Washington Parish and had it furtively made into a pair of breeches. Byrd and his contemporaries were happiest when the rules of dress were upheld, when the distinctions between high-born and low were clear, when the poor flocked around him and his peers "to stare at us with as much curiosity as if we had lately landed from Bantan or Moracco." Among the very poor or at the wild fringes of the colony where gentlemen were seldom seen, Byrd was greeted with the proper amazement and awe. In the Tidewater counties, however, where the same books that had nurtured Byrd's tastes and preferences had wide audiences, he sometimes faded into the sartorial landscape where powerful men and those who would be so followed the advice to wear fashionable clothes, "exceeding rather than coming short of others of like Fortune." 

While some Virginians feared that the spread of amenities in dress threatened their dominant positions in the colony, other men saw a still more fearsome message, the loss of their moral virtue, in stylish houses and modish clothes. Warnings about the declension of
the colony's virtue came from parish pulpits. James Blair, the colony's leading cleric and president of Virginia's Council, chided church-goers at Bruton Parish in Williamsburg for their inability to resist the "temptations of pleasure" and their addiction to "all manner of Gratifications of their Luxury, stately houses, furniture, and equipage" and the "plentiful tales, mirths, musik, and Drinking" that attended them. Seventeenth century prelates had preached that "miserable and damnable is the estate of those that being enriched with great livings and revenues, do spend their days in eating and drinking." Robert Carter agreed. He admonished Captain Thomas Hooker that ill health and "crazy old age" was the "fate of the Intemperate lazy man . . . that spends his youth in Luxury."12

But it was Carter and his punch-drinking friends who were Blair's concern, not drunken sea captains. One of Blair's great fears was that if Virginia's gentlemen built new mansions with rooms intended primarily for socializing, where card games followed dinner and bottomless bowls of punch propelled raucous rather than purposeful conversation, the planters would, as Captain Hooker already had, lose their moral virtue. Fondness for the "better things of Life" and purposeless luxuries also obscured and even threatened to dissolve the true relationship between God and man. When Thomas Jones wrote his wife in 1730 to console her after the tragic death of a young and particularly expensive and much bragged-about horse, he lamented their loss but quickly scolded his spouse for her self-pity. "It is," he wrote, "my opinion we ought not to have any immoderate concern for anything that happens to us in
Jones shared that sentiment with three men who met on April 23, 1714 to take an inventory of the possessions of Lancaster County planter William Rogers. These three planters accompanied Rogers to his grave, and now, as they counted their dead friend's belongings, they thought about life and the nearness of death and the role material things played in both. When they made the last entry on their list one of them wrote:

Be not too Proud nor bold your house tow
bye butt always have before your eyes that yo are
Born to dye. In time of health make no delay
But to god almighty praye
In times hath fear god & pray forsake
have no delay.

Preaching like James Blair's was not lost on Robert Carter. Carter knew that extravagant spending was harmful to his pocketbook, and he worried that it might be fatal to his virtue. Late in 1720 William Dawkins purchased an expensive pair of earrings for one of Carter's daughters with some of the profits from that year's crop. A Mrs. Heath, an avowed arbiter of style and fashion in London's higher social circles, had personally recommended the baubles, but once they arrived in Virginia and had emerged from their packings Carter dashed off a furious letter to his agent. Carter angrily denounced the factor as compulsive and the lady as a "muckworm." Dawkins' own "waspish" retort earned him a second testy dispatch from Carter in which the planter responded that the thought "it not injury to say they were muchworms—that is, too much lovers of this world." There was a sure danger in being too fond of earthly
luxuries, and Carter wished that both he and Dawkins "were more mortified to it than we are." Carter reminded the merchant that "white and yellow earth . . . are but of short duration and will quite vanish away when a winding sheet comes to be our portion."

Carter concluded his letter with an apology to Mrs. Heath and professed that the "ornaments of the Lady's mind, her humility, prudence, affability, piety, and charity" were the things he treasured most about her, not the "fine trappings of her person."

It would be, Carter suggested, the lady's "virtue's and graces [that] will keep her company into the other world," not her wardrobe. 15

When Robert Carter returned Mrs. Heath's earrings, he did not, of course, reject all English fashions. Matched sets of stylish salt glazed stoneware capuchine cups and Chinese porcelain teawares were a part of the daily routine in Corotoman's parlor, and new set of chairs received Carter's guests. What Carter objected not to new styles, but to extravagance. That sin could ruin an older man's fortune or a young man's inheritance, and the man who suffered that fate was without virtue and might lose his honor.

When Ralph Wormeley's two sons prepared to return to Virginia from their English schools, Carter requested that they "be equipt suitable to their Condition and Circumstances, not too gaudy or rich, yet genteel and in such a manner as I think they may fairly be maintained in without Detriment to their Estates." Carter's notions about what was sufficiency and extravagance, however, did not coincide with the boys' or their English masters'. When the boys
stopped at Corotoman on their way up the Rappahannock to their estate at Rosegill, Carter did not approve what he saw. Their clothing was "a great deal too extravagant." If, however, the Wormeleys' clothing pleased them and their circle, their guardian promised to "have little say." But he did "wish their incomes may keep their goings out, else twill prove imprudent prodigality in the end."  

Under the shadow of the new marble-floored, brick mansion at Corotoman, for a time Virginia's grandest house, Robert Carter smugly dispensed the advice that virtuous men consumed only what they required, and not more. Carter also admonished himself and his neighbors that personal building and buying should not deprive local churches of a man's "talents." Long before his death Carter bequeathed money to finance the construction of a new church for Christ Parish in Lancaster County. But that too did not prove Carter's virtue was intact. Carter thought he heard a justification for his spending in a sermon the Reverend Mr. Bell preached to humble Lancaster County's competitive gentlemen. During the sermon Carter thought he heard "several plain Innuendos" directed toward him about envy and pridefulness, the cause of a well-known quarrel between the planter and one of his neighbors. But Carter thought he also heard, and jotted into notes he took that Sunday of his parish parson's message, a justification for acquiring the things that were then emerging as the new and necessary material symbols of the gentry. Bell's sermon suggested, Carter wrote, that it was permissible "to pursue the vigorous man with emulation."
vigorous men Carter knew, certainly those he thought most worthy of emulation, were English merchants and royal officials like Alexander Spotswood and the much admired Edward Nott. Simple envy of these or any other men was without virtue. To be like them, to emulate them, was a different matter, and Carter wrote later that afternoon that emulating worthy men was a good tactic to win the "favor of a governor."¹⁷

Robert Carter, his powerful friends, and, later, their sons were remarkably successful in emulating the style of the Englishmen they most admired. In the 1720s Virginia's wealthiest planters replaced traditional dwellings with classically-inspired mansions similar to those England's county elites built. Virginia's tobacco barons and slightly less wealthy planters also acquired the "luxuries" of eighteenth century life. Tea wares and tea tables, desks and other large pieces of case furniture, exotic beverages and wines, and other faddish things arrived from England and soon distinguished the way Virginia's patricians lived from households which still ordered the routines of their days and nights according to older, traditional English ways. Patrician purchasing continued; indeed, it increased in tempo. When factor John Wayles reviewed consumer trends in Virginia during the middle decades of the eighteenth century, he commented that "in 1740 I don't remember to have seen such a thing as a turkey carpett in the country except a small thing in a bed chamber." By the 1760s, however, Wayles noted that "now nothing are so common as turkey or Wilton carpetts, the
whole Furniture of the roomes elegant and every appearance of opulence." Wayles underestimated the buying patterns of his clients in Virginia, but he was aware that they were keenly attuned to English fashions.

This study suggests that material things provide another way to understand change in Virginia between 1680 and 1740. Material change in Virginia was both extraordinary and mundane, but each aspect was intimately tied to attempts colonists made to use the power of material things to bring order to everyday relations. First, Virginia's new early eighteenth century patrician culture reinforced the emerging consciousness the colony's rising creole elites had as a group. Owning a stylish house and the paraphernalia that went inside it was a way to demonstrate shared interests with and claim membership in the colony's elite. The gentry's stylish possessions also provided a way to gain cherished adulation or "be well thought of" when they met Englishmen in Virginia or in London. Second, patrician artifacts undergirded the gentry's claim to political and social leadership. As the colony's labor force changed from white indentured servants to African slaves, the cultural ties that had once defined relations between masters and men and between rich and poor lost some of their persuasiveness. Old distinctions were feared to have become thin by the early eighteenth century, but new brick houses and their stylish furnishings helped make them clear again.

Virginia's early eighteenth century political turmoil compounded the social confusion inherent in shifting labor
relations, and the trappings of the patrician material culture allowed the gentry to reassert their leadership during a time when the absence of any clear social distinction between the elites and the "middling sorts" threatened to turn politics upside down. During the 1720 and 30s distinctions in dress, housing, and diet defined the contours of two cultures, one for the elite, the other for everybody else. This distinction evolved during protracted social and political contentions and resulted in the legitimization of the gentry's claim to exercise power over their fellows and the preservation of the gentry's social and political hegemony.
NOTES
CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION

1. Francis Hume to Mr. Ninian Hume, 15 April 1717, *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, XXXVIII (1930), 106; Instructions to Mr. Benjamin Young from Robert McKeroll, James King, and George Forbes, 14 October 1701, Lancaster County Deeds IX, 1701-1715, 14-16.

2. Lancaster County Deeds, VIII, 1687-1700, 26, 274; Lancaster County Order Book VI, 1713-1721, 304.


Old sermon topics appropriate for the 1720s remained a standard until the 1760s. In 1746 William Stith preached a "general Declamation against the vice and corruption of the Age" in Williamsburg to the members of the House of Burgesses, an audience of Virginia's biggest men and biggest spenders. The Reverend James Reid echoed Stith's theme two decades later in King William County. Both clerics had learned from Blair a deep fear of the adverse effects of wealth and luxury, and Reid preached that "the sunshine of affluence" won "many more reptile than ethereal friends" and led inevitably to "moral degeneration." William Stith, A Sermon Preached Before the General Assembly at Williamsburg, 2 March 1746 (Williamsburg, 1746), 31-34. James Reid, "The


13. Thomas Jones to his wife, 12 September 1736, Jones Family Papers, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation microfilm.


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V. ARCHAEOLOGICAL PAPERS AND REPORTS


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