Archaeology of a Female Landowner c 1768-1832

Marie E. Blake

College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences

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ARCHAEOLOGY OF A FEMALE LANDOWNER

c. 1768–1832

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Anthropology
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Marie E. Blake

1994
APPROVAL SHEET

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

Master of Arts

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Approved, August 1994

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Marley R. Brown

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Virginia Kerns
DEDICATION

To Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe...I hope I have done her justice.
To my family members...who have always been supportive.
And to Art...I hope you are proud of me.
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Much of the excavation in the sample unit at Hewick that serves as the data base for this research was done by the
author, assisted by undergraduate students and volunteers at the site. All opinions, statements and any errors, therefore, are my own, and I bear full responsibility for them.
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ABSTRACT

This research was undertaken as an exercise in the practice of historical archaeology. Its main goal was to apply the methodologies of both historical and archaeological research.

Its subject was a woman named Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe, heiress to the long-established Robinson estate in Middlesex County, Virginia. Elizabeth lived from c. 1768-1832. She spent the last thirty years of her life as a widow and as a single female in control of a large plantation.

Specific interest was focused on how the topic of gender relations could be understood through the life of such a person. Primary historical documents relating mostly to business and land transactions provided data that demonstrated a degree of financial difficulty. Archaeological data obtained through excavation at Elizabeth’s estate, Hewick, provided evidence in the form of material culture, especially ceramics, from the household. Contrary to the documentary information, these objects indicated expenditures for goods of the highest caliber.

A synthesis of all available information led to a complex conclusion suggesting that female landownership and widowhood was a balance between both successful and failing attempts at plantation management on the one hand, and the social and legal discrimination against women who did not conform to standardized gender roles on the other.
ARCHAEOLOGY OF A FEMALE LANDOWNER
1768–1832
In his 1990 "Distinguished Lecture in Archeology: Constraint and Freedom--A New Synthesis for Archeological Explanation," Bruce Trigger calls for a new direction in archaeological research (Trigger 1991:551). He suggests that a combination of the best offerings of processual and post-processual approaches be applied in the efforts of today’s scholars. It is that concept that I intend to employ in the present study.

I would like to be very explicit about the type of theoretical constructs I use, as well as my methods and my goals. As Geoffrey Clark (1991:79) suggests, "a degree of introspection, a sense of humor, and a thick skin are required to make explicit the paradigmatic biases that underlie archaeological research designs." In my efforts, I have chosen to apply some "unorthodox" approaches which might be different from what some consider to be standard research in historical archaeology. However, these are conscious choices. In attempting a synthesis of many schools of thought that have come before me, I found myself obliged to alter typical methods in order to achieve a workable model for my research. But my choices are not random, and I will explain my reasoning. My expectations are to present a
convincing argument and my goal will be to present well-reasoned logic.

First, I would like to make a comment on my writing style itself. In scholarly work for many prominent academic journals, it is considered inappropriate to write in the first person, as I am doing now. Parker Potter eloquently dismisses this ban by pointing out that a "first person prohibition and the passive voice discriminate against various postprocessual archaeologies that stress self-reflection, and they unnecessarily [sic] disfigure archaeological discourse" (Potter 1991:9). Since it is exactly that sort of self-reflection that I would like to promote, my own work is an obvious place to start.

Second, as Potter observes:

the first person prohibition and the passive voice hide authorial agency and at the same time create an overly empowered, overly authoritative, almost omniscient voice, often for authors who would be more comfortable speaking only for themselves, their own experience, and their own theoretical perspective, not the discipline—or the world—at large. (Potter 1991:10)

As I come to the bulk of my research, my reader will learn that this study utilizes a feminist perspective. Issues like authoritarianism lie at the center of my concerns.

Briefly stated, this thesis is a gender study. I will be using the case example of Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe (c. 1768-1832). I will investigate her life as a female landowner through both documentary and archaeological data, each to be examined later in this discussion. The question I wish to ask is: How can we undertake a study of gender with
reference to the types of information utilized by historical archaeologists? More specifically, how can we apply questions of gender to sites with basically unstratified and undifferentiated deposits, such as garbage pits, which normally yield great amounts of information to the archaeologist?

In the course of my research, my answer developed in complex ways. The answer is not simple or straightforward. Instead, we are led to discussions of feminism, social relations between the two genders, the anthropological concept of rites of passage (Van Gennep 1909), the anthropological technique of life history (Langness and Frank 1981), and both processual and post-processual archaeology.

A. FEMINIST THEORY

Many theoretical paradigms used in scholarship are schools of thought that inform our work and our lives; a "paradigm is a 'worldview,' a statement about the way the world (or some portion of it) is perceived to be" (Clark 1991:80). They are active constructions in both the present and the past to which we apply them. It is imperative that we recognize our biases as such, be they feminism, structuralism, positivism, Marxism or any other format into which we classify thought.

In a broad perspective, feminism is a relatively new approach to viewing the world. Historically, we see the "rise of American feminism in the 1840's" (Norton et al,
1988:211) and the first efforts toward equality of the sexes. Feminism gained its full, modern form and political force in the 1960's with the recognition "that women can affect society, as well as be affected by it; that, in the end, a woman, as a man, has the power to choose, and to make her own heaven or hell" (Friedan 1963:10). Feminism had entered our social consciousness, and in time it would enter the thought and work of anthropologists as well.

Initially, feminism in all its varying forms (see Willis 1992), was used only to inform our modern conceptions of gender relations. Eventually, it moved from the active, sociological realm into historical and scholarly realms. There it served as a tool with which we could reexamine our own history and our understanding of ourselves.

I would assert that beyond the reality of actions, events and personalities in the past, we create our own history. I follow Hodder's assertion that:

...action in the world partly depends on concepts, and since concepts are learnt through experience in the world, in which one is brought up and lives, it is feasible that long-term continuities in cultural traditions exist, continually being renegotiated and transformed, but nevertheless generated from within. (Hodder 1986:10-11)

In other words, when we as a society institutionalize and normalize sexist or androcentric paradigms, they tend to recapitulate themselves. With feminism, we became aware of the cycle first in our own lives. Then, as we examined the products of academia, it became obvious that those same
systems were in place there as well, biasing our current view of our own past, which in turn guides us into our future.

David Lowenthal discusses at length many examples of such activity in his book *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985). As we glorify certain versions of the past, we change it and ourselves. This is true no matter if we are speaking of the roles of women or men in any period of history, or of a particular ethnic, religious or other socially defined group.

Historical annals are upgraded to comport with similar desires. Mid Victorians exaggerated ancient chivalry and elevated Arthurian legend into fact so as to re-enact the medieval past in their own self-image; nineteenth-century Americans rewrote Revolutionary history to imbue it with a salutary domestic and guerrilla colour. (Lowenthal 1985:342)

Our own society and scholarship represents the past of human activity as one reflecting our own status quo of gender relations. In the eighteenth century, “however equal women might be proclaimed to be in spiritual and intellectual terms, men were still the acknowledged authorities in social, political, and economic spheres. The doctrine of male dominance and female dependence was pervasive in both the North and the South” (Clinton 1982:137). That is an interpretation that we are culturally very invested in because we still practice it on a large scale. But what if another version of the past is more accurate, or even just more detailed? Simply by looking at an ignored group, like women, we gain a more broad understanding of the past.
But it is not such a simple task to “rectify” the past. Once again, we employ an interpretation. This is a cycle that academics will never escape. We can only hope to re-examine our evidence and offer what we feel is the most legitimate and representative portrait of the past as possible.

My goal in this study is to be self-reflexive, critical and interpretively aware. I would advise my reader to always bear this point in mind:

...the distinctive features of the past will necessarily be obscured insofar as it is unreflectively reconstructed in terms of conceptual categories drawn from the present especially where these concern basic and culture-specific relations among people, like economic and kin relations, that determine the organization of their lives. (Wylie 1985:138)

This can be an especially dangerous trap for historical archaeologists because we are closer in time to our subject matter, thus making it more immediate and seemingly more like the present. Though this is true to some extent, it can be very seductive to simply immerse ourselves in the "knowns" and "given truths" of history.

By the same token, just as historical archaeology’s proximity to the past makes it easily glorified, that closeness does make it more accessible. Very simply, we have more information with which to familiarize ourselves with the past. The archaeological record is younger and thus less subject to the ravages of time, and the historical record exists which serves as written chronicles of the activities of our subjects.
This brings us back to one of the points I made about the androcentric, or male-centered, view of history. In some respects, it is an acceptable way to view the past, but a limiting one. The history of the activities of "great men" is important and should not be abandoned. American history would not be the same without its biographies of George Washington, and so I do not advocate the abolition of specific interest works. But that still leaves at least a full half, if not more, of the world's population relatively unstudied and misunderstood. Studies of the lives of women and of the average citizen, regardless of gender, serve to fill out our understanding of our own past (Larkin 1988).

Though some of the common misconceptions, or mere ignorance, of women's roles desperately need to be corrected, some are valid statements of the lifeways of women in the recent historic past. For example, it is not a misrepresentation to characterize the lives of many women in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries as domestic. They performed necessary labor that was identified with their roles in life. However, it is the interpretation of that simple "fact" that varies widely, and in turn that interpretation influences a modern definition of domesticity and serves to structure the lives of mothers, wives and women in the world today.

Feminist historians in recent years have sought the meaning of domesticity and "woman's sphere" in successive interpretations, which—running the risk of oversimplifying—I can divide into three. The first to appear in historical writing tended to see women as victims, or
prisoners, of an ideology of domesticity that was imposed on them between 1820 and 1850 in order to serve men's view of social utility and order. The second, a refinement and revision, observed that women made use of the ideology of domesticity for their own purposes, to advance their educational opportunities, to gain influence and satisfaction, even to express hostility to men. The third, more literally a re-vision, viewed woman's sphere as the basis for a subculture among women that formed a source of strength and identity and afforded supportive sisterly relations; this view implied that the ideology's tenacity owed as much to women's motives as to the imposition of men's or "society's" wishes. (Cott 1977:177)

This observation illustrates two of my points: First, is that of the endless analysis of the historical (or other) data base, and second, the impact of that analysis on the view we have of its subject matter.

As a caution, I do think that it is possible to be too critical. At one extreme, it is easy to come to the conclusion that we can never know anything, and that we are so involved in the "system" which we critique that we can never escape it to gain an objective view.

A better approach is to acknowledge that anthropologists engage in a process of understanding. To make my point, I will cite the famous Mead/Freeman debate which still rages over the nature of Samoan culture. It has been said that Mead "captured a Samoan truth, as James Clifford called it...but not the Samoan truth. Derek Freeman, it appears, had access to another Samoan truth--again not the truth" (O'Mera 1989: 375). So perhaps if we never find the truth, it is still worthwhile to pursue a truth. I am personally
convinced that no one story is ever representative of all the possible perspectives and versions of "the truth."

Just as important, we can never forget that both we and our historical subjects are products of our own time. If we choose to value and act upon the beliefs of feminism, Marxism, structuralism, positivism, or any other "ism," then it cannot become a ruler with which we measure the value and morality of the past. Ideas were different in the past, and people operated with different sets of knowledge and understanding. To be specific to this study, it would not be fair for me to use the case example of a woman’s life in eighteenth-century Virginia, overlay feminist values of any sort, and come to the conclusion that any of those people acted well or badly according to my standards. Instead, I strive for an understanding of the differences and similarities. It is only obvious to state that the world of a plantation in the 1700’s was one that could be characterized as "sexist," but to what ends would that conclusion bring me? Is our society that much more equal, or have we only become more clever in disguising our biases?

Before I continue my discussion, I would like to specifically define some of the terms I will be using. The most important distinction I would like to make is between the words sex and gender. Quite simply, sex refers to the "biological given" and gender to the "culturally created." More complexly,

Women are a Sex. Women are a separate group due to their biological distinctiveness. The merit of
using the term is that it clearly defines women, not as a subgroup or a minority group, but as half of the whole. Men are the only other sex. Obviously, we are here not referring to sexual activity, but to a biological given.

**Gender** is the cultural definition of behavior defined as appropriate to the sexes in a given society at a given time. Gender is a set of cultural roles. It is a costume, a mask, a straitjacket in which men and women dance their unequal dance. (Lerner 1986:238)

Therefore, when I say that this is a gender study, I mean that I will be examining the roles assigned to the two sexes and how they interrelated with one another: “The opposites, as it were, constitute one another and are mutually indispensable” (Turner 1969:97). Though an emphasis will be placed on female gender roles and the life of Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe, we could not fully understand what that might mean without reference to her male counterparts and their gender roles.
CHAPTER II:
HISTORY, DOCUMENTS AND BACKGROUND

Traditionally, historians have maintained that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries constituted a golden age for the American woman. Then, it is argued, her legal, economic, and social status was far higher in America than in England; it was after the American Revolution that she lost ground in both the public and private spheres. (Speth and Hirsch 1983:5)

Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe was one of those women. She was a daughter, sister, wife and mother as were most of her contemporaries. Most women shared these same roles which were marked by cultural rites of passage. But more importantly, Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe was a landowner in control of a very large estate and was the last direct descendant of the Christopher Robinson family line in Middlesex County, Virginia, striving to maintain her wealth and prestige. In this role, she stepped beyond the experience of most women. By being a female landowner on such a large scale, Steptoe crossed into a liminal state (Van Gennep 1909:11), or a state between gender roles as then framed. Hers would not prove to be an easy position, as both legal discrimination and financial hardship eroded her standing. It can be examined by referring to Steptoe’s legal status (both in and out of wedlock), and the extent to which she did and did not maintain her economic and social status through her wealth. She is a case of both resistance and accommodation to the status quo, always carefully negotiating
the cultural waters as a woman in a man’s world. Steptoe’s transgression onto male gender roles and into that liminal state opens a window through which we can more clearly examine male and female social dynamics.

A. SOCIAL ROLES AND RITES OF PASSAGE

Every researcher who utilizes the information contained in primary documents is faced with a mass of unanalyzed data. We examine court records, personal letters, inventories and any other form of written records that might prove to be of assistance in understanding our subject. But beyond the raw facts, we must decide what it all means. We must have a tool with which to interpret, and a framework in which it all makes sense.

As I previously mentioned, I have found it useful to employ several different, but compatible, theoretical positions to organize the world of Elizabeth Steptoe. I have already discussed at length my approach to feminism, and how it is a driving force to this work. But other ideas have also served to inform my understanding of culture and its complexities.

The first of them is contained in the writing of Erving Goffman and his discussions of the “dramaturgical” approach.

The cultural and dramaturgical perspectives intersect most clearly in regard to the maintenance of moral standards. The cultural values of an establishment will determine in detail how the participants are to feel about many matters and at the same time establish a framework of appearances that must be maintained, whether or not there is feeling behind the appearances (Goffman 1959:241-242).
Basically, Goffman observes that culture is like a play or dramatic production. We all have roles that we act out and certain sorts of behaviors that are set for particular scenes or actors.

Referring back to the quotation, we see that the roles of "actors" (that is, members of society) are closely determined by cultural feelings about values and morals. They serve to define roles quite tightly and promote adherence to appearances, despite inclinations to the contrary. The values and morals of a group are the ideas about what is right and what is wrong, how men and women should or should not act.

Stated another way, Steptoe's role could be seen as structurally inferior or "marginal," yet represent what Henri Bergson would have called "open" as against "closed morality," the latter being essentially the normative system of bounded, structured, particularistic groups. Bergson speaks of how an in-group preserves its identity against members of out-groups, protects itself against threats to its way of life, and renews the will to maintain the norms on which the routine behavior necessary for its social life depends. (Turner 1969:111)

In the case of Steptoe, her culture had very definite ideas on moral matters. Female roles were separate from male roles, and people followed a proscribed line of behavior. Those who did not act out their part had to suffer the consequences. Steptoe, who played the role of landowner, put herself in the place of public censure (mostly covert) for being "out of character."
The other theoretical construct that has been central to my understanding of Steptoe and her relation to her community is the concept of rite of passage as developed by Arnold van Gennep. He defines these rites as "ceremonial patterns which accompany a passage from one situation to another or from one cosmic or social world to another" (van Gennep 1909:10). He further subdivides these into

rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation. Rites of separation are prominent in funeral ceremonies, rites of incorporation at marriages. Transition rites may play an important part, for instance, in pregnancy, betrothal, and initiation; or they may be reduced to a minimum in adoption, in the delivery of a second child, in remarriage, or in the passage from the second to the third age group. Thus, although a complete scheme of rites of passage theoretically includes preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation), in specific instances these three types are not always equally important or equally elaborated. (van Gennep 1909:11)

I would then argue that Steptoe placed herself in a liminal position, stuck in a rite of transition, never to be fully reincorporated in the cultural whole. Prolonged widowhood, such as Elizabeth's, was considered anomalous in Southern planter culture and would have placed her at a disadvantage.

As my reader reviews the evidence I will present, it will become obvious that Steptoe did not fully follow the norms of behavior that were expected of her. She was married and had children, but when widowed; she engaged in rites of separation, as do all members of a culture when her or his spouse dies. Quite often in eighteenth-
century Virginia, that would swiftly be followed by remarriage and a transfer of property to the new husband.

Virginia was on the way to becoming an economic matriarchy, or rather a widowarchy. The man who needed capital could get it most easily by marrying a widow. And she was likely to get it back again, with whatever return he had added to it, when he died. The next husband would have an even larger base to build on. (Morgan 1975:166)

But Steptoe resisted this time-honored trend, which I would argue was still alive and well in eighteenth-century Virginia. She remained a widow and directed the affairs of her own plantation herself. By doing so, she halted herself in a culturally liminal position. She never pursued the societal rites of incorporation which would have been remarriage. And she also filled the role a husband would have played by managing her own affairs.

The concept of rites of passage was further elaborated in the work of Victor Turner. He points out that liminal persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. (Turner 1969:95)

This is exactly the kind of problem that Steptoe faced. She straddled gender roles by her actions and her failure to follow conventions. Thus there is a direct link between liminality and the previous discussion of status: "Liminality implies that the high could not be high unless the low existed" (Turner 1969:97). Though normally the liminal, or transitory, position is a necessary one for the
workings of society, it becomes anomalous when an individual remains in that state.

B. THE LIFE OF ELIZABETH ROBINSON STEPTOE

To situate ourselves historically, Steptoe lived from c. 1768 to 1832 (Richard Corbin Papers 1768-1785, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library [hereafter CWFL]; Middlesex County Court Records 1832 [hereafter MCCR]). Her life span straddled some very interesting developments in American history. As a child, she was raised in a colony of Great Britain. Not too long before her first marriage in 1782 (Nelson 1897:208), the colonies had become an independent nation and no longer dealt with England as the “mother country,” but instead as a foreign power. This would become an instrumental factor for Steptoe. By the end of her life, she lived in the South of fully developed plantations dependent upon slave labor, her own plantation being one of them. The Civil War would loom not too far ahead on the horizon, though she would not live to see it.

One caution that should be kept in mind throughout this study is that we are discussing the life and circumstances of a woman who lived in the ante-bellum South. Comparisons or contradictions about women’s status derived from Northern examples are more often than not invalid, most especially in the post-Revolutionary era. In that period the North and South had developed along separate cultural trajectories. The liberties, rights and situations that Northern women might have enjoyed were generally not shared by their
Southern sisters. Southern women were bound into the system of slavery in many complex ways that allowed little freedom within the patriarchal hierarchy (Clinton 1982). It was those vast differences between the people of the North and the South that would eventually lead to the Civil War, which serves as the most graphic reminder of their dissimilarity of worldviews.

Before we begin a detailed analysis, I would like to offer a short overview of Steptoe’s life and direct attention to the chronology offered in Table 1. Elizabeth was born into one of the most prominent families in Middlesex County. The Robinsons had been established there since Christopher Robinson arrived in Virginia in 1666. Through the generations of the Robinson family, the men proved themselves to be distinguished members of the community by their public service and married into equally prominent and respected families. Though firmly rooted in Virginia, the Robinsons retained ties to England, even after the American Revolution.

Elizabeth was one of six children and outlived all of her siblings. Though little specific information is known about her girlhood, some inferences can be made from the available data. In her earliest years, she lived with her family in a brick, two-story, hall-and-parlor house which was probably gutted by fire and eventually became the archaeological site discussed later in this study. Her brother, Christopher Robinson IV, built the manor house at Hewick in which she lived for the rest of her days.
Though there is no record of it, evidence would indicate that in her youth before marriage, Elizabeth went away to boarding or finishing school somewhere. As Clinton (1982:54) observes, “most planter sons and daughters eventually went to boarding school.” We may assume this to be true in Elizabeth’s case since we know she was literate and wrote with well-practiced penmanship. Commonly, “the routine of a plantation mistress afforded few leisure hours, but women made time in their busy schedules for literature because of the value they set on mental improvement” (Clinton 1982:172). Since Elizabeth’s probate inventory listed “a parcel old books” valued at “$5.25” (MCCR 1832), it seems safe to assume she spent some time reading.

At the advent of her father’s death in 1768 and her brother’s death in 1775, Elizabeth the heiress was given over to the care of guardians. In his will, her brother appointed Richard Corbin and Ralph Wormeley to the task. Both were men of the highest standing in the community. Corbin had frequent business dealings with Robinson, and Wormeley was Elizabeth’s maternal uncle.

In 1782, these guardians arranged what must have been an exceptionally socially suitable marriage for Elizabeth. They chose William Steptoe from Westmoreland County, a man of their same rank and status group. Major General Charles Lee described Steptoe in his will as:

...my excellent friend Wm. Steptoe, of Va., I would leave a gread [sic] deal, but as he is so rich, it would be no less than robbing my other friends who
are poor. I, therefore, entreat that he will accept of five guineas which I bequeath to him to purchase a ring of affection. (McGhan 1982:538)

And so, with William, Elizabeth began her married life. They lived as man and wife for twenty years and raised eight children. From the few extant records of the Hewick plantation under William's administration, it would seem that they did well and increased their holdings.

In 1802, William died and Elizabeth would never remarry. She persevered as a widowed plantation owner and ran her own affairs. Overall, she did a middling job of it. She was often in debt, and more than once she had to sell off land or household belongings to settle those debts. But considering the amount of legal and societal prejudices against a woman running her own business as a widow for thirty years, she did an amazing job just by sustaining her plantation as a viable entity.

As way of comparison, we can consider the example of Margaret Brent (c. 1601-c.1671) who owned land in the Northern Neck of Virginia. Though from an earlier time period than Elizabeth, she was a prominent woman in the early development of Maryland. What was more important, had she done nothing beyond coming to a wilderness as an independent householder (not a member of any man's establishment), able to stand alone, manage her affairs, and appear for herself in court, Margaret Brent would be an unusual woman. (James et al. 1971:237)
Equally, Elizabeth was an unusual woman for the degree of independence she exercised in such a highly structured and hierarchical culture as the plantation South.

In 1832, Elizabeth died having retained most of the Hewick lands. The manor house passed to her namesake, Elizabeth Steptoe Christian, and most of the lands went to her daughters through inheritances to their husbands. Most importantly, she left the legacy of a strong woman who took on a monumental task in the face of great odds.

There were many interesting turns in Elizabeth’s life that will come under closer scrutiny as this discussion progresses. I will examine each and explain what their bearing is on the matter at large. For Elizabeth, her important turning points occurred when she had to navigate culturally sensitive rites of passage.

Failure to fit one’s ritually prescribed status could result... in alienation for the individual... The rites of passage are linked to gender identity, because of the basic sexual division of labor... according to whether or not one is a bearer of children.... It is often easiest to see how a rule works by looking at an instance of its violation. (Langness and Frank 1981: 111)

In some senses, every individual in a society runs the risk of alienation. As people pass through life stages, how they act will be measured along a spectrum of expected behaviors. Variance too far from the norm can bring negative responses from the community. Small variations within more broad normative guidelines may warrant less extreme reactions. Generally speaking, this is the type of mediation that occurs
TABLE 1:  
CHRONOLOGY OF IMPORTANT DATES  
Pertaining to  
Elizabeth Steptoe Robinson  
and the Estate of Hewick

1666: Christopher Robinson I arrives in Virginia (ERS’s great grandfather).

1675: CRI selected as Clerk of Middlesex County.

1678: Original patent for land in Virginia of 300 acres granted to CRI.

1681: CRI lost the 300 acres to Robert Beverly due to lack of its development. Land was regained at Beverly’s death when CRI married Beverly’s widow.

c. 1678-1688: Sometime in this period, CRI acquired 959 acres known as Moss Side and added it to his Hewick holdings.


1688: Gawin Corbin deeded 550 acres called The Grange to CRI. Note: The property called The Grange stands as a particularly problematic piece of land to track through the various transactions over time and from person to person. It appears to have been sold off and regained numerous times by ERS, but without the documentation of those sales surviving. Thus, dates that are recorded in the primary documents have been provided here, though a complete explanation of what exactly occurred frankly eludes me.

1692: CRI designated as Secretary of the Foreign Plantations by the British crown.

1693: CRI died, passing Hewick land on to Christopher Robinson II.

1711: CRII appointed Naval Officer of the Rappahannock River.

1753 & 1755: Christopher Robinson III makes building improvements to Hewick land (before the manor house was built).
1768: Latest possible year of birth for Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe, being also the year that her father, Christopher Robinson III, died. All ages for ERS are figured from this date since an actual birth record has not been found. In all likelihood, ERS was born a few years earlier, perhaps as many as five, but no more than that.

In this year, CRIII willed his daughter five slaves and £800 to be paid at the time of her marriage, and Christopher Robinson IV inherited Hewick property.

1770-1772: Manor house at Hewick in Virginia was built under the supervision of CRIV, and financed by Corbin money. A partial account for expenses in these years totaled £240.18.6. ERS was aged two to four years during this period.

1774: ERS’s older sister Mary died. ERS was six years old.

1775: Christopher Robinson IV died at the age of twenty-one, leaving his sister ERS heiress to Hewick. She inherited 1700 acres and 114 slaves. Richard Corbin and Ralph Wormeley were appointed as ERS’s guardians. She was seven years old.

CRIV bonded himself to Corbin and Wormeley for the sum of £5,000. It is unclear what the money was intended for in this year of CRIV’s death, but it is possible the money was for further expenses related to the new manor house.

1776: Ancestral home of Hewick in Yorkshire, England sold for £16,000. ERS was eight years old.

1776-1781: American Revolutionary War, which transformed America from a colony to an independent nation, and thus the status of its citizenry as well. ERS was aged eight to thirteen years during this period.

1782: ERS married William Steptoe of Westmoreland County, Virginia. Marriage was arranged by her guardians, Richard Corbin and Ralph Wormeley (who was also her maternal uncle). Just previous to the marriage, WS was bonded to Corbin and Wormeley, indicating social ties between them. ERS was fourteen years old.

1783: £185.12 was paid to Corbin and Wormeley on behalf of ERS from CRIII’s estate, through Wakelin Welch and Sons, the family accountants in London. This payment could represent a portion of ERS’s dowry as promised in her father’s will. She was fifteen years old and had been married a year.
1784: Final judgment against ERS and WS’s claim on proceeds from the sale of the ancestral home of Hewick in England. An act of the British Parliament consolidated the property, which was sold to a Lord Grantley. ERS was sixteen years old and had been married for two years.

1787: Census of Virginia, in which William Steptoe appears taxable for 142 slaves.

Year that ERS wrote the "Memorandum" reproduced in this study, in which she ordered supplies for the plantation and the above mentioned slaves. It was five years into the marriage and she was nineteen years old.

1802: William Steptoe died. ERS was thirty-four years old. The union lasted twenty years and produced eight children. They were: Sarah Robinson Steptoe, who was named for ERS’s mother, Sarah (Wormeley) Robinson. Sarah Steptoe married Phillip Grymes, and after his death, she married William Burke; Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe, who married Dr. Richard Allen Christian; James R. Steptoe, who often acted as agent for his mother’s legal dealings; Rachel Steptoe, who lived as the spinster aunt in Sarah Robinson Steptoe Grymes Burke’s family, and was known as “Aunt Wavy”; George N. Steptoe, who at one point moved to North Carolina; Walter J. Steptoe; Martha G. Steptoe; and Mary B. Steptoe (named for ERS’s older sister), who was dead by 1823. Births of children occurred on an average of every 2.5 years during the marriage.

ERS bonded to Phillip Grymes, then the sheriff of Middlesex County, for £12,000.11.5 to buy slaves and property from Williams Steptoe’s estate. She was thirty-four years old.

1804: Account of Sales of the Estate of William Steptoe. ERS bought £1277.8.4 worth of various goods. She was thirty-six years old.

Deed to The Grange was transferred to Mr. Healy and Mr. Muse from Philip Grymes as collateral against the money ERS owed for her purchases from William Steptoe’s estate.

1810: ERS in debt to Needler Robinson. Deed to The Grange had been transferred to George Nicolson, Robinson’s trustee, for the debt. In addition, sundry other goods were auctioned and the proceeds went toward relieving the debt. ERS was forty-two years old.

1811: ERS alters roof of Hewick manor house. She was forty-three years old.
1812: ERS sold 800 acres, including The Grange, to her daughter Sarah and son-in-law Philip Grymes. ERS was forty-four years old. Secondary sources claim the events of 1810 and 1812 (in reference to land transactions of The Grange) occurred in the opposite order as stated here, and claim that the Grange reverted to ERS upon Philip Grymes’ death, thus explaining how ERS could sell The Grange twice. This chronology is based on primary documents which give the dates as stated here and offer no such explanation.

1818: ERS put up 200 acres of Hewick via her son James R. Steptoe, as collateral on a debt, but does not sell it. She was fifty years old.

1820: Hewick at this point consisted of 1,000 acres. ERS is fifty-two years old.

Needler Robinson was granted title free and clear to The Grange. ERS did not pay the debt she owed Robinson, but still disputed his ownership of The Grange. Courts found in favor of Robinson.

1821: A substantial amount of household goods were auctioned off to relieve a debt, but no land was included. ERS was fifty-three years old.

1826: ERS wins a line dispute case against estate of James Ross. Amount of land is unknown. ERS was fifty-eight years old.

1832: ERS died at the age of sixty-four, having spent thirty years of her life as a widow. Her estate at death was valued at $1,416.60 in belongings and 1,295 acres. This acreage at her death shows a loss of 405 acres of Hewick land during her lifetime.

Hewick land was divided up into the following portions: George N. Steptoe inherited a total of 256 1/2 acres; William Burke (Sarah Steptoe’s husband) inherited 411 1/3 acres (the Moss Side land); and Dr. Richard Allen Christian (Elizabeth Steptoe’s husband) inherited 372 1/12 acres. The total acreage passing to family was 1,039 11/12 acres, with the remaining 255 1/12 acres going to others.

1862: Dr. Richard Allen Christian died. His widow, Elizabeth Steptoe Christian, stayed on to live at Hewick until her own death.

1877: First laws allowing for property rights for married women in the state of Virginia.
in all cultures. In the case of Elizabeth Steptoe, we can examine just how this occurred by looking at her actions during various stages of life and the reactions of those in her community.

One of the main themes under scrutiny is status, which for Elizabeth combined legal, social and economic aspects all at once. "Status" is a complex concept, which should first be defined and discussed before being analyzed. Some of the most useful work on the topic is inspired by Max Weber, who went to great pains to differentiate between class and status:

...when he focuses upon problems of 'convention,' 'styles of life,’ of occupational attitudes, he prefers to speak of prestige or of 'status groups.' These latter problems, of course, point towards consumption, which to be sure, depends upon income derived from production or from property, but which goes beyond this sphere. By making this sharp distinction between class and status...Weber is able to refine the problems of stratification to an extent which thus far has not been surpassed. (Gerth and Mills 1946:69)

Based on my discussions thus far of Elizabeth Steptoe and her actions, we can see how status, by this definition, was an issue for her. "Conventions," "styles of life" and "occupational attitudes" are all concepts with which Steptoe was unconventional by taking up aspects of male gender roles.

By crossing gender lines, Steptoe also crossed status lines, which were bound up together. Society is "a structured, differentiated, and often hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions with many types of evaluation, separating men [and women!] in terms of 'more' or
'less'" (Turner 1969:96). In each case, women were deemed as holding lower status positions relative to men. As a landowner and plantation administrator, Steptoe dared to step up into a higher status group.

It could be said that Steptoe was engaging in a bit of active feminism, whether it was a conscious effort or not. In her struggles with the contemporary definitions of status, she provided a challenge to the lower status of women:

We can observe what Everett Hughes calls collective mobility, through which the occupants of a status attempt to alter the bundle of tasks performed by them so that no act will be required which is expressively inconsistent with the image of self that these incumbents are attempting to establish for themselves. (Goffman 1959:247)

What Steptoe was doing, in essence, was trying to change the way her work was viewed by society as a whole. It would have been just as easy for her to simply remarry and join the rank and file of other propertied women. By carrying out an activity deviating from traditional female gender roles, she served to slowly change that definition.

Women who engaged in work besides "housewifery" were not unheard of, but their status was rarely equal to that of the men:

During the seventeenth century and on into the eighteenth, many occupations considered today as professions were carried on by persons who had little education or special training. Even teachers, physicians, and surgeons often had few qualifications beyond disposition and inclination, and journalists, printers, nurses, and midwives learned only in the school of experience. As long as they required no formal education and no technical knowledge, these vocations were open to women as well as men. (Spruill 1972:255)
One can see how the definitions of women’s roles changed over time. As professions became specialized, women were excluded and it is only recently that women have regained any standing in the professional trades. Therefore, I would maintain that Steptoe represented an exception, not the rule. Most women kept to "female competence, cooking, cleaning, mending and caring for young and old" (Larkin 1988:34). Though Steptoe was a female landowner, she did raise a family and still listed all the above chores as her own. "The increasing demands of household and plantation management denied plantation mistresses the necessary time" (Clinton 1982:126) for much beyond their own prescribed duties. By May 24, 1787 (only five years into her marriage), we can see from the "memorandum," written in her own hand, that Elizabeth was deeply involved in running the plantation household, in this case ordering provisions (Figure 1; Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia).

Running a plantation household was not an easy task. "The majority of plantation mistresses keenly felt the necessity of their presence and the simultaneous burden of their responsibilities" (Clinton 1982:19). Though the duties bestowed upon most women in such situations were enormous, knowledge and familiarity with the agricultural aspects of the plantation were for the most part beyond their scope. As Clinton (1982:38) further observes, "males were prepared from childhood for the public sphere, females for the private household, so their sense of self-esteem and fulfillment was
localized in separate, gender-differentiated realms." Since sexual division of labor was the rule, planters rarely shared knowledge of how to conduct plantation business with their wives. Therefore, the plantation mistresses often suffered from "ignorance of aspects of plantation management" (Clinton 1982:71). It is hard to imagine how Steptoe managed without a planter husband to conduct those business affairs, and who would have known the details of that world. Assuming the work of both spheres would have been daunting. We can, however, theorize that Elizabeth was only able to make such an option viable by her extensive training in the household itself, which would have provided the necessary knowledge and experience to bridge the gap.

Such sexual division of labor was a basic given, especially in rural settings. For example, "during the eighteenth century in America...just as the female parent was expected to nurse, feed, clothe, and minister to the health of her young, so was she entrusted with their secular and spiritual instruction" (Clinton 1982:126). In one discussion of eighteenth-century agrarian life, the observation is made that in...

...our modes of living, of our different home manufactures, of the different resources which an industrious family must find within itself, you'll be better able to judge what a useful acquisition a good wife is to an American farmer, and how small is his chance of prosperity if he draws a blank in that lottery! (de Crèvecœur 1782:299).

The same would be true of the families of Middlesex county. Even with the larger landowners in the area, as the Robinsons
FIGURE 1
“Memorandum” written by Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe.
(Source: Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia).

28th May 1787

Memorandum

The Carter will be directed to take out:

- 1 Barrel of Flour
- 1 Barrel of Molasses
- 1 box of Tobacco
- 1 box of Potatoes
- 1 box of Sulphur
- 1 box of Coffee
- 1 box of Tea
- 1 box of Spices
- 1 box of Sugar

And all of above 5 gallons each 50 of Turpentine

In all 803 gallons

Signed:

[Signature]
were at their peak of prosperity, they were still middling gentry who garnered their living from the bounty of their plantations.

C. THE FEMALE LANDOWNER

Historical circumstances would have it that Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe was the only remaining direct heir to the Robinson estate, which had been in Urbanna since 1678 (MCCR Deed Book). When her sickly older brother, Christopher Robinson IV, died in 1775 without heirs, he left "one thousand and seven hundred acres of land, be the same more or less, situate lying and being in the county of Middlesex, & also of one hundred & fourteen slaves" to his sister (MCCR, Deed Book 13, 1812 Indenture:196-199; Figure 2). This was quite a large inheritance, and it would have to be managed.

How it was managed proved to be interesting. When Christopher Robinson IV died, his sister was seven years old.¹ Richard Corbin of King and Queen County and Ralph Wormeley of Middlesex County were appointed as executors of the estate, and as guardians for Elizabeth. By 1782, a deal was struck. A man named William Steptoe of Westmoreland County was bound to Corbin and Wormeley in June 19, 1782 "in the sum of five thousand pounds" (MCCR, Deed Book 13: 196-199). But exactly a month before, on May 19, 1782, William Steptoe and Elizabeth Robinson had been wed (Robins 1897:208).

Therefore, through

¹No birth records of any sort have been recovered for Elizabeth Robinson to date. Ages given are estimates only, and are based on an approximate birth date of 1768.
FIGURE 2
Map of Middlesex county and location of Hewick.
(Source: Gray, Ryland and Simmons 1978:end paper).
this marriage the estate of Hewick passed from one set of men to another, with future opportunities of financial dealings between the two.

If the documents are examined closely, we note that the marriage was arranged by Corbin and Wormeley "as joint Guardians of Elizabeth Robinson an infant under the age of twenty one years the only Surviving daughter & heiress of Christopher Robinson (Ibid.)": that is, Christopher Robinson III, who had died in 1768 (McGhan 1984:232). Elizabeth was a minor of fourteen years of age, a marriageable age for this era and in the South. Marriages at this age were not uncommon at all: "The median age for southern women (taken from a sample of planters born from 1765 to 1815) was twenty" (Clinton 1982: 60), and many were married much earlier than that. Arranged marriages were not uncommon either: "Marriages must be solemnized...on proof of the consent of the parent of guardian" (Jefferson 1787:134). For ultimately, marriage "was a woman's reason for existence, and that since the end of her creation was to continue the species and be a helpmate to man, the chief ambition of every woman should be to get a husband" (Spruill 1972:136). And in the case of a minor, it would be her guardian's duty to see her properly married and her land under supervision of a man.

It is important to note, therefore, the timing of Elizabeth and William's marriage and William's bond. Actually, a more nearly accurate description of this
arrangement is as a business deal. Corbin and Wormeley "delivered unto the above bound William Steptoe Esq. by virtue of his marriage with Elizabeth, Heiress and devisee of all the Estate and Effects of the said Christopher Robinson, the aforesaid Estate and Effects of the said Decedent" (Corbin Papers, CWFL). Steptoe was bonded, but at the same time, he married into a large estate.

Business arrangements of this sort, engineered and carried out through the institutions of society such as marriage, were, in fact, quite common. Perhaps in our modern perception, we would consider this to be a conflict of interest. But to the people of eighteenth-century Virginia, it was the prevailing mode of operation. For example, Darrett and Anita Rutman discuss life in Middlesex County of our period and slightly earlier (1650-1750) in their book *A Place in Time*. They set for us a scenario of court day:

Coming toward Robinson’s from the other direction, justices Robert Beverley and his step son-in-law Francis Bridge would certainly have ridden together. Bridge and his wife were living at Beverley’s. Traveling the lower precinct paths to strike the main road, they might have been joined by Walter Whitaker, the sheriff of the county; John Mann, undersheriff; and George Wooley, whose business at court this day involved the estate of John Hilson, of which Wooley was both executor and principal legatee. At the Lower Chapel, they might have met Christopher Wormeley himself, both plaintiff and justice, whose plantation lay directly north along the Green Glade. (Rutman and Rutman 1984:88)

Obviously, these people had a far different conception of how to order their affairs. It was most common to deal with
relatives (either by blood or marriage), neighbors, or other long-standing business partners. The guiding rule seemed to be to protect one's own interests first and foremost.

So in the case of Elizabeth, the acreage and slaves were willed to her, but were kept in trust by Corbin and Wormeley and now passed to William Steptoe. All along, the property was really hers, but at no time was she actually allowed any say in its management. It is in this way that Elizabeth initially met with marriage as an incorporating rite of passage. On this level, her marriage was conducted in a normal manner.

This was also Elizabeth's first fleeting encounter with land ownership. In this circumstance, her marriage was used as a conduit to channel a woman away from the rights and responsibilities of men. Most

...women of the planter class realized that their intellectual development would most likely wane with marriage, decline with housekeeping, dwindle at motherhood, and at no time result in any measure of social recognition. Women accepted this pattern as a fact of life rather than a product of culture. (Clinton 1982:138)

But Steptoe was a woman whose chance at autonomy would come again, and she would seize the opportunity, which most women would never even consider. Though sole landownership would be a challenge, it would also be an opportunity to grow beyond the typical boundaries of female experience.

In the course of Elizabeth's life, her status as landowner would be a curious one. In a strict legal sense, she owned nothing in and of herself while married to William
Steptoe. The first property rights for married women in Virginia ("Senate bill No. 39, securing to married women, on conditions, all property acquired by them before or after marriage") were not passed until March 6, 1877 (Smith 1877:3), long after Elizabeth’s death. In the “indenture of marriage settlement,” Elizabeth’s land was supposed to be for “the joint use & behest of the said William Steptoe & Elizabeth his wife, for & during the term of their joint lives” (MCCR, Deed Book 13). However, this was never a reality of their marriage. Up to this point, Elizabeth had passed from guardianship to marriage, from one socially powerless situation to the next.

Within her marriage to William Steptoe, Elizabeth’s position as direct heiress to her family name was not to be easily forgotten. She normally had not been allowed to exercise that power. But William Steptoe would not let the opportunity to acquire more wealth through Elizabeth pass. The will of Christopher Robinson III, Elizabeth’s father, states:

It is my will and desire if my Estate in Yorkshire in England should be sold by virtue of a Power of Attorney which I have sent home for that Purpose the money arising by such a sale to be laid out by my Executors herein afternamed [Corbin and Wormeley] in Land & Negroes proportionally, Then I give and bequest these land and negroes to my son Christopher Robinson and the Heirs male of his Body lawfully begotten for ever, and failing of such Heirs to go and decend in the same manner the said Estate in Yorkshire would have done before. (Corbin Papers, CWFL:July 16, 1768)

To his daughter “Betty” he directly willed five slaves and their increase, and eight hundred pounds sterling to be paid
as she came of age or was married (Ibid.). It would seem that Elizabeth’s future was provided for.

However, the year after Christopher Robinson IV’s death, the Robinson familial estate of Hewick in England was actually sold for 16,000 pounds. After marrying Elizabeth, William Steptoe attempted to get her share of the profits from “Mr. Robinson’s Estate.” Many factors would work together to ensure that would not happen. On the 26th of July, 1784, the London agents Wakelin Welch and Son came to the decision that “we cannot see how Mr. Steptoe can avail himself of any part of the Copyhold as the above Act has set it aside” (Corbin Papers, CWFL). In this instance, Steptoe was willing to acknowledge Elizabeth’s rights to property. In effect, though, any proceeds would have reverted to his ownership by virtue of marriage had it gone through.

The courts would not relinquish this property to a woman, and it was eventually sold to a Lord Grantley in England, as reported by the Robinson family accounting firm of Wakelin Welch and Sons (Corbin Papers, CWFL). The phrase in the will citing “Heirs male of his Body lawfully begotten for ever” was a legal entail (Keim 1968) which made it impossible in the eyes of the court to let the property pass to Elizabeth, and they stood on that point of legality (Richmond Chancery Court, MCCR). All mitigating circumstances were ignored.

By 1784, Elizabeth was the only direct surviving heir of Christopher Robinson III. His wife Sarah was dead.
Christopher Robinson IV was dead, and the other daughter, Mary, had died in 1774. Christopher IV had only lived to 21 years of age, and had been sick for eleven of them. He had never married and never had children. Elizabeth was next in line. All of this was ignored, due to the male entail which served as a legal safeguard to ensure the practice of primogeniture (Keim 1968). A woman was not to receive these proceeds.

On a larger cultural scale, we can see male and female gender roles in action. For people of such high social status, men were to be landowners and women were to be married and raise families for their husbands. A situation such as Elizabeth’s brings her too close to “men’s affairs.” I would not argue that she was the victim of blatant prejudice, in the sense that harm was meant against her on the basis of her sex. But instead, we are seeing a culture’s ideas through its actions. The “men in the South were groomed from birth to assume this posture [of the patriarch], just as women were trained to dependent and submissive roles” (Clinton 1982:56).

In reference to her British inheritance, timing also seems to have been a crucial element in how the circumstances of Elizabeth’s life sorted themselves out. In all the primary documentary information recovered relating to Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe and her world, one major event is strangely missing. Of all the important episodes that
Elizabeth experienced, the one most widely shared by the community as a whole was the American Revolutionary War. It was an event that would have rent the normal, everyday functions of society. It was an occurrence that literally changed the world, and yet it is almost never mentioned in the primary documents connected to Elizabeth.

It does appear in the secondary documents, but mostly due to hindsight. We know it happened, so it is included. For the most part, the secondary sources for this topic (specifically those on the Robinson family and the estate of Hewick) are fraught with problems for the researcher:

"Archaeological investigations have provided information that has complemented the historical records, but they have also changed some of the long-held ideas about the house [Hewick] and the history of the Robinson family" (Reinhart 1992:1). When comparing secondary works to primary documents and the archaeological record, it becomes readily evident that information contained in most of the local secondary sources is informed more by what was "popularly believed" (Loth 1986:274) than by solid, rigorous primary research. Despite that, the question still remains as to why the Revolutionary War was not mentioned.

From 1776 to 1781, a war raged across the colonies, with much activity taking place in Virginia and the Chesapeake, which served as a primary waterway for troops of both sides (Tuchman 1988). Even if soldiers never camped on the lawn at Hewick, it is impossible to believe that the whole affair
went by without impact. With reference to Elizabeth's inheritance, some reading between the lines seems to be required. If we look at the episode of William Steptoe claiming Elizabeth's property rights in England, the dates become quite telling. The estate was sold in 1776, the year of the Declaration of Independence, and the claim was denied in 1784, only three years after Britain's loss of her one-time colony as a result of the American Revolutionary War. Despite continued business dealings between the Robinson estate and London businessmen, desire to keep the wealth at home could have been just as motivating as anything else. Perhaps simple ill sentiment swung opinion away from granting the proceeds of an English estate to ex-colonials and obvious rebels. In the wider scope of research, pursuit of this question could be very profitable and informative. However, its bearing on gender relations in the life of a female plantation owner seems more peripheral than central in this study. Hopefully, primary documents will come to light at some point addressing how the people of Urbanna responded to the Revolution. But for now, our attentions and efforts are best focused on questions more specific to gender.

With all things said and done, Elizabeth would face other challenges besides the war, as her bonds of matrimony did not last a lifetime. Her husband William Steptoe died in 1802, and after twenty years of marriage (MCCR, Deed Book 12:January 25, 1804), Elizabeth would face a rite of separation: widowhood. It was Elizabeth's extended
widowhood that served to separate her from society and norms of behavior. As Van Gennep (1909:144) stated, “it is remarkable, furthermore, that the bond which can be so easily broken through divorce is hardly affected by death.” It was not simply the fact that William Steptoe died that served to set Elizabeth apart as a widow. On the contrary, she would have maintained her familial relations with her in-laws even after her husband’s death. It was Elizabeth’s choice of permanent widowhood that was distinctive. Just as the event of her original marriage was a rite of incorporation, the transition from married woman to widow was an equally important rite of passage. Elizabeth would be faced, for the first time at the age of thirty-four, with the position of true, outright ownership of property.

But how did the Steptoes fare financially as man and wife? The success or failure during those years dictated what Elizabeth would be left with as a widow. William married into quite a bit of money and brought wealth with him as well. In 1787, five years into the union, we are able to see how they were progressing. The census for that year reports William Steptoe being liable for personal property taxes on 59 blacks aged sixteen and over and 83 blacks aged sixteen and under making 142 slaves altogether. In addition, 22 “horses, mares, colts and mules” and 73 “cattle” are listed (Schreiner-Yantis and Love 1987:1248). This is an increase over the 114 slaves Elizabeth inherited from her brother. Of the slaves willed to
Elizabeth by both her father and brother, she did not retain title to all of them. As part of the indenture of marriage settlement, "seventy Slaves were chosen by the said Richard Corbin & Ralph Wormeley from among one hundred fourteen Slaves, of whom the said William Steptoe is now possessed by virtue of his Intermarriage with the said Elizabeth" (MCCR, Deed Book 13). Other than that, we have no other clues as to their marital financial success.

Married life was good for William since he was able to enjoy the advantages of both his own wealth and that which he gained simply by saying "I do." In the end, marriage was less advantageous for Elizabeth. She gained none of the material wealth from her union that William was able to claim, and when widowed, she barely retained what had been hers to begin with.

The next time we have access to this issue is when William died in 1802. At that time, his estate was sold and the only portion Elizabeth received of it was that which she purchased. No mention is made of the land in the account, but it apparently did pass to her, as she was in possession of it as a widow.

This brings up a question of how the laws of inheritance were carried out in Elizabeth's case. As Speth (1983:13) notes, "Legal codes by their very nature are proscriptive rather than descriptive." We know both what the law was, and what actually happened to Elizabeth upon William's death.
Somewhere between the two, we have to come to an understanding of how they related.

"In both England and Virginia, a woman’s legal status, her civil obligations and privileges were to a large extent determined by her marital status" (Speth 1983:7-8), thus the importance of marriage. Since Elizabeth’s coming of age, she was a married woman. Hence, Elizabeth as "the married woman, or feme covert, lost complete and total control over her personal property. Her livestock, jewels, furniture, even the clothes on her back belonged to her husband" (Speth 1983:8). Therefore, while married to William, Elizabeth had little autonomy and no legal right to anything her father or brother had willed her. As a result of her marriage, all her property became her husband’s.

But recognizing the extremely precarious position women were placed in at marriage, there were some forms of legal protection.

Other statutory Virginia laws establishing minimal protection for wives dealt primarily with the rights of widows; again these laws, in broad terms, followed English precedents. For centuries the most important legal and economic right an English wife possessed was her dower. (Speth 1983:9-10)

More commonly, this was referred to as “a widow’s ‘third’--the ‘use,’ or income, of a third of the land during her lifetime” (Rutman and Rutman 1984:76).

The account of the sale of William’s estate, however, says nothing about how the land was to be divided or who received it at his death. William’s will has been a vitally important document that I have not had the advantage of
finding during research. We have only the evidence of Elizabeth’s possession of Hewick lands in their entirety to show us in practice how land ownership was handled in this case. Her purchases from William’s estate also tell us what she was not granted ownership of in his will. As far as the land was concerned,

If a widow had a jointure (which excluded a part of the estate as belonging to her before any inventory was taken), she was in a particularly advantageous position. Whether she had a jointure or not, she was not responsible for her husband’s debts beyond the value of his estate. (Morgan 1975:166)

Perhaps Elizabeth was lucky enough to have a jointure on her land, which would be defined as the holding of an estate by two or more persons in joint-tenancy (Oxford English Dictionary 1971:598-599). That would be one possible way she managed to hang on to the land.

Another possibility is that it was how her “thirds” worked out for her: “In 1705 and 1748 [the Virginia Burgesses] elaborated further on the dower principle, ensuring a wife the minimum economic requirements for her subsistence” (Speth 1983:10). Elizabeth was willed none of William’s other property with which she might have maintained herself. Perhaps a judgment of the time determined that it would be best for her to keep all the land as her rightful “third.”

Elizabeth ended up buying sundry articles from William’s estate: household items, furniture, ten slaves, farm equipment, livestock, horses, bulk foodstuffs and bulk commodity items such as cotton and tobacco (MCCR, Deed Book
12). She even ended up buying "Milley & Child Mary (Ibid.), the same "little Milly" (Corbin Papers, CWFL) her father had willed her. She seemed to buy a little of everything she would need to provide for herself. Many of these same sorts of items were sold off to other people including valuable items such as slaves and livestock. It is from these proceeds that William’s estate debts were settled.

The obligations tied to gender roles were not one-sided. Men also made efforts in the name of doing the right thing. Elizabeth’s brother Christopher Robinson IV is a good example. To this day, there stands a striking two-story brick house on the Hewick plantation in Urbanna. The house has long been the focus of interest, but not much has been known from the documents on its origins. Only estimates of age based on its architecture and archaeology were possible. One document has changed all of that.

"The New House at Hewick" (Corbin Papers CWFL:September 15, 1770-January 10, 1772; Figure 3) was an account kept by Richard Corbin of the partial expenses incurred during building. Dates run from September 15, 1770 to January 10, 1772. This means that the house was constructed under the auspices of none other than Christopher Robinson IV, Elizabeth’s sickly older brother, when he himself was legally a minor. Judging from the structure itself (Gray, Ryland and Simmons 1978:2-3) and from the items listed in the account, the house was built as an attempt at current eighteenth-century style. Hewick is important because it is
"distinguished for its handsome Flemish-bond brickwork, the house further illuminates the changing concepts of housing needs and fashions among well-to-do planters in 18th- and 19th-century Tidewater Virginia" (Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff 1978:5). "Fashionable" is definitely a good word for the appearance that the house was intended to have. The account lists such items as "36,400 bricks [total], fir plank, shashes, slate, cobbles, window glass, painters colours from London, trees and fruit trees, and flooring bricks" (Corbin Papers, CWFL), plus all the labor, other expenses and supplies.

Elizabeth Steptoe saw a need to make changes to Hewick so that it would better fit her needs and be more fashionable.

A letter written by Elizabeth Steptoe from Hewick on May 25, 1811, states in part: "...Pray present my Affectionate love to your good Father, and tell him, Mr. Muse employed a Man to make the Bricks for me the week he left us, and they have this day finished them all to burning, and he has employed an excellent Brick layer to run up the Wall and they are to begin on Monday week, so that I expect in a very few weeks to have the Roof on my poor old House..." This is most likely when the Dutch roof was changed and Hewick gained the appearance we know today. (Gray, Ryland and Simmons 1978:2)

Elizabeth seemed to have been equally concerned with appearances presented both outside and inside her house. It should be noted, however, that upon examination of the additions built onto Hewick by Elizabeth, they do not meet the same high standards of construction that the original house had obviously met. It is possible that this is a
FIGURE 3
Account of "The New House at Hewick".
(Source: Corbin Papers, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library.)
reflection of the economic hardships Elizabeth would encounter as a widowed female plantation owner.

But why did Christopher Robinson originally build this house? He had to borrow all the money on account with Richard Corbin to make this project possible. In the year of his death, Christopher Robinson IV bonded himself to Corbin and Wormeley for "the sum of Five thousand Pounds" (Corbin Papers, CWFL: July 27, 1775). Looking through the primary documents, one can see that it was not unusual for people to borrow money from their betters; in this case, however, the timing seems curious. There is no evidence in the documents that would indicate the need to build a new house. The remains of a brick hall and parlor house (Figure 4) exist in what is now the backyard of the standing house. However, judging from the archaeological remains (to be discussed later), the house exhibits a burned layer representative of a fire. It would seem that the fire did not totally destroy the house since few burned artifacts have been recovered, but instead that the fire only gutted the brick infrastructure. If this hypothesis is true, then that building could have been re-outfitted at a much lower cost. Instead, Christopher Robinson IV decided to completely rebuild in a grand manner.

Two possible explanations present themselves for such events. First, this might have been an attempt on Christopher IV’s part to fulfill his role as male head of household. At the time of construction, he was responsible
FIGURE 4
"Common Houses of Middlesex," of which site 44MX28 would have been "Among the Best."
(Source: Rutman and Rutman 1984).

Common Houses of Middlesex

THE POORE SORT

Weatherboarded walls & roofing

Foundation Pier Construction

Corner post

Floor boards

Cypress or cerid block

Ground lever

ONE STEP UP

Brick chimney

& fireplace, raised board floor, stairs, shingled roof, casement window

AMONG THE BEST

Hall

Inner room

Porch

Kitchen house

Chazaug
for his widowed mother and two younger sisters. This new house could have been a gesture on his part to provide for his female kin with something tangible.

As the Rutmans (1984:114) observed, “The passage of time brought...at least in Middlesex, no diminution of a fearsome mortality rate” and people often attempted to provide for their dependents in the inevitable event of death. Christopher IV had been ill for a long time, and the future of his family’s welfare could have very well been at the heart of his interests.

A second and closely related hypothesis, is that he wanted to “make his mark” socially. This house stands as the only remaining testament to the life of Christopher Robinson IV. He had no wife or family, and was not even able to carry on his family name. In his brief life overshadowed by sickness, he was not able to pursue the career of planter as did the three previous generations of male Robinsons. Most men...had tobacco to sell and communal tasks to perform as jurors, assessors, surveyors of highways, and the like. They could, and did, gather in public houses, attend court and militia musters and the races. (Rutman and Rutman 1984:105)

It did not seem that Christopher IV was able to partake in the usual activities of able-bodied men. He had full knowledge of these facts, as did the rest of the community. Very possibly, this house embodies Christopher IV’s claim to his position in society. Once again, through actions taken, we can see ideas about what it was to be a male in the
eighteenth century, and what it was to live at the highest level of the social hierarchy.

By 1802 Elizabeth was a widow with a house and lands, eight children, some slaves and basic means to maintain herself. She would have been 34 years of age when widowed. Despite starting out her life under the control of a patriarchal system of land tenure, she would never remarry and would spend the rest of her life in control of her own affairs.

For purposes of private law, a single woman, or *feme sole*, had the same legal privileges as a man. A single, adult woman could enter into contracts, sue her debtors, and dispose of her personal and real property by either will or deed. (Speth 1983:8)

Widowed women, however, in practice in the South (which is strikingly different from the North) did not have the pleasure of such equality.

Elizabeth died at the age of 64, having spent approximately thirty years as a matriarch and attempting to exercise her rights. She did sell parts of her land and she did enter into contracts, but legally only through her son James Steptoe. It would seem she had mixed success with her endeavors. As mentioned earlier, written laws describe what is supposed to happen, and not necessarily what actually does happen. This period as a *feme sole* would end up being a substantial portion of Elizabeth’s adult life, actually longer than she was married.

By May 31, 1810 her land ownership was challenged both legally and economically. The
documents tell us that this situation happened because Elizabeth deemed it necessary to borrow money to purchase items from her late husband’s estate so she could maintain herself. Borrowing that money placed her in debt. We know that

...in consideration of the sum of fourteen hundred & sixty Dollars & fifty one cents, which the said Elizabeth is justly indebted to the sd Needler Robinson by bond bearing the same date with these presents & honestly desires to secure & pay to him, and for & in the further consideration of the sum of one Dollar like money to the said Elizabeth in hand paid by the said George D. Nicolson. (MCCR, Deed Book 13)

The documents do not tell us why she would have needed to borrow the money for her purchases. It would not be unreasonable to expect a woman of her station to be in possession of enough funds herself.

Several explanations are possible. First, “women for the most part had but their pots, animals, and children to tend” (Rutman and Rutman 1984:105), and were skilled and trained in just that. They were not schooled in the knowledge required to be successful plantation businesswomen. Perhaps Elizabeth found handling the affairs of a large plantation difficult by virtue of her cultural gender training alone. “In 1794 Erasmus Darwin, in his guide to female education, deplored the fact that although men were trained to their profession from an early age, most women began their ‘important office with a profound ignorance’” (Clinton 1982:19). Women barely had the practical training they would need for their numerous duties in the household.
Therefore, we have no basis to assume they would know anything about the everyday mechanics of plantation agriculture.

Once again, we must remember there was a profound difference between the household and the plantation. But in her years as a wife at Hewick, Elizabeth must have learned enough about that other world (just as most women learned housekeeping—through trial and error) to operate within it as a widow. For despite her successes or failures, she was in charge and she maintained that position for thirty years.

Another possible explanation for the above mentioned debt is that she could have accumulated expenses beyond her means. This could be due to any number of personal or familial needs, such as a marriage, sickness, a death or the demands of the plantation. Yet again, it might have been due to ecological factors, such as harsh weather or bad crops. Perhaps there was an economic slump. We must bear in mind, as Clinton (1982:76-77) points out, that

Bereaved widows might find their grief compounded by financial pressures. Planters kept their economic affairs in notorious disorder. Many slaveowners were cash-poor, their capital tied up in land and slaves. Upon a planter’s death, his wife might be besieged by claims of unpaid debts, and was frequently unable to determine exactly what wealth her husband’s estate afforded. Sheltered from the “dirty” financial side of plantation operation, widows found themselves ill-prepared to cope with financial problems.

No matter what the reasons for her debts, the proceeds from her land could not sustain her. Elizabeth would have to rely on the land itself to settle this account.
In order to satisfy this debt, she was obliged to sell some of her land. Part of her property was a “tract or parcel of Land lying in the County of Middlesex called & known by the name of the Grange containing by estimation five hundred & thirty acres more or less” (MCCR, Deed Book 13). Also auctioned off were fourteen slaves, “fourty head of Cattle, one hundred head of sheep, a Charriot & two Horses, & five Mules, with the Encrease of the said Negro women” (Ibid.). Elizabeth ended up selling the property for sheer need of the money. This was a common occurrence for Elizabeth when her economic standing was shaky. She would sell off land, her only real asset, for the money to sustain her social status and standard of living. Though we have records of several large land sales by Elizabeth, the amount of land she owned upon her death would indicate that sometime during her life, land was regained and we have lost record of those transactions. These sales ultimately might not have been as detrimental to her overall land holdings as we might suspect.

At this juncture, we learn a lesson about Elizabeth’s world and its gender relations. It is a subtle point, but an important one nonetheless. She was a feme sole and an owner of property needing to settle her debts. How did this get accomplished? Selling the Grange and her other possessions would have been her only option to generate funds. In general, “most widows did not fare so well, unless they remarried” (Clinton 1982:78). Whereas most Southern widows
solved their financial woes through such a remarriage, Elizabeth opted for widowhood and the decisions that would have necessitated.

In their time, Elizabeth’s brother, father and husband had been indentured and bonded for large sums of money, and yet they had never found it necessary to sell any of the Robinson lands. Ultimately, land ownership was a male endeavor, where the men made the rules and played the game hard. In this case, it seems Elizabeth was out-maneuvered by those more knowledgeable of business. This serves as an example of how laws of ownership were interpreted and carried out, and not necessarily how they were strictly written.

The same challenge arose again to Elizabeth in 1812 as a woman with property. Her autonomy as a woman within the legal and economic system can be seen as questioned over and over during the course of her lifetime. She formulated a method of coping so that she could maintain herself and her social standing. The next instance came when she once again sold her land for income.

In consideration of the love & affection which she bears to her daughter Sarah Robinson Grymes; & in further consideration of the sum of nine thousand dollars to be paid to the said Elizabeth Steptoe by the said Philip Grymes, in three equal annual Instalments, the first to be discharged by the immediate discharge of such Debts due from the said Elizabeth to other persons as she shall direct to be paid to the amount of the first instalment.

(MCCR, Deed Book 13)

As with her last sale of land, Elizabeth was in debt and needed the money to pay off her creditors. She sold a “tract of parcel of land, situate lying & being in the County of
Middlesex a foresaid, commonly called the Grange plantation estimated of the [original] one thousand seven hundred acres" (Ibid.).

Elizabeth got the money she needed through this sale, but also accomplished other important goals in the process. It was important that she decided to sell the land to her daughter and son-in-law. This would give them a land base upon which they could build their own family fortunes. Therefore, familial social status would be maintained. This time, Elizabeth was able to keep the land within the family, as opposed to it going to others in the community.

These times of crisis are illustrative of gender roles, in this case, that of the female parent providing for her offspring.

A very real problem associated with the death of parents in this society...[was] the children were often heirs and heiresses of property and personalty large and small, and those to whose charge the minors fell—widows and guardians—had control of inheritances until the children came of age or, in the case of a girl, married. (Rutman and Rutman 1984:116)

This sounds like a situation very similar to that of Elizabeth. Unfortunately, when dealing with the cold legal and court records that make up a majority of the extant primary documents, we learn very little of the emotions of the involved parties. Was it traumatic for Elizabeth to be

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2 "The Grange plantation" seems to be used at this time to denote a separate part of the original 1700 acre inheritance, and appears to be the same piece of land sold previously. Today, "Hewick" and "the Grange" denote different tracts of land.
married off? It might have equally been an expected experience. We might never know. But we do know that she did not remarry upon being widowed. Perhaps that was an effort to safeguard her property against being lost to a husband in marriage, and in turn lost to her own children. As its outright owner, she was able to distribute it as she saw fit. She was able to ensure that her land went to the children of her body when she died, and in this case, in her own lifetime.

One could argue that such a conclusion is mere speculation on my part. All we have to judge from is what actually happened to Elizabeth’s land. Therefore, I submit the following two pieces of evidence. First, Christopher Robinson III “married Sarah Wormeley and their daughter married William Steptoe. She, Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe, inherited Hewick and in turn passed it on to her daughter, Elizabeth Steptoe” (Gray, Ryland and Simmons 1978:4).

Second, “Between 1678 and 1688 Christopher Robinson [I] added this patent of 959 acres to Hewick...until 1832 and the division of Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe’s estate, when 422 acres were inherited by her daughter, Sarah Robinson Steptoe Grymes Burke” (Ibid.:199). By remaining a widow, Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe was able to dictate the succession of ownership of Hewick land. In all three of the cases discussed (two above and one previously), the land went to her birth children, and even more notably, all were daughters. Considering the usual mixed make-up of most
families in this era, with step-parents, step-children, half brothers and sisters, extended family and guardianships, direct descent along a female line would be considered unusual (Rutman and Rutman 1984:113). Elizabeth also carried on a tradition of female landownership by passing almost all of her real estate on to her female offspring, Elizabeth and Sarah.

It has sometimes proven difficult to track the exact activities of Elizabeth in her career as a landowner. The primary documents do not provide a full picture. Some are amazing treasure troves, such as the account of the house at Hewick. At the same time, other vital documents are absent. Such is the birth record for Elizabeth or other means to establish a date of birth. Sometimes historical data is vague. The same problems occur with title to the land at Hewick. It would seem that not all records of transactions have survived.

But from the evidence we have, there seemed to be a struggle tied with an attempt to sustain a level of wealth, and thus, status. As previously mentioned, Elizabeth was the last direct descendant of the Christopher Robinson family in Middlesex, when tracing relationships in a patrilineal manner. Her great-grandfather, Christopher Robinson, and succeeding generations including her brother, Christopher Robinson IV, were prominent men with large holdings of land. Those holdings varied in size as the family fortunes fluctuated across the generations. With Elizabeth, the
fluctuations were great, and it has proven difficult to account for all business dealings that would have resulted in the amount of land she possessed at death.

Still, a pattern is recognizable. Elizabeth’s most trying problem in life was maintenance of land ownership. She was seemingly not prepared for the task, as it was one of a man’s world, not a woman’s. Motherhood was the defining characteristic of women, whereas land ownership was the defining characteristic of upperclass men (Spruill 1972:139; Clinton 1982:60). This was an experience that her gender socialization did not prepare her for. She was stranded in a liminal state, between the two strict definitions of man and woman, and between what society considered the separated state of widowhood and the integrated state of marriage. Due to those very circumstances, it also turned out to be the only method Elizabeth had at her disposal to maintain the proper lifestyle of an upperclass woman. The land as income would allow her to seek her own path. It was a contradiction, but one that opens up to the modern researcher the world of men and women and the challenges that lay in their paths.

Elizabeth’s inheritance, though large, quickly fell prey to various ravages: economic, social and legal. It became a tool which provided income and standing in the community and yet was not effectively protected by the common practice of law. However, all of Elizabeth’s deals were not bad ones and by the time of her death she had retained 1,295 acres, a good
deal of her original property. We have observed how she commonly indentured her land in exchange for money. The problems came when she could not repay those debts. Sometimes, however, this technique of financing did work for her.

In 1818, Elizabeth put up

...part of the Hewick plantation...supposed to contain two hundred acres. More or less. The said conveyances having been made to the said James B. Steptoe in order that a proper title might be by him conveyed to George Healy in trust for Wm Mann Esq. to secure the payment of a sum of money loaned by the said Mann to Mrs. Eliza. Steptoe. (MCCR, Deed of release: August 7, 1818)

This is the same sort of situation discussed earlier. Except this time, her creditor “doth grant, remise, release and quit claim, unto the said Elizabeth Steptoe” (Ibid.). In this pattern of use of land as collateral against debt, sometimes things worked out as Elizabeth had planned.

By 1832, Elizabeth herself was dead. By using documents we have followed her from birth, through the course of her life, and down to the end. How did Elizabeth finally fare? Despite the difficult times, she died with quite a respectable estate. Her possessions were valued at $1,416.60, including household and personal goods, livestock and some bulk foodstuffs (MCCR: September 4, 1832). As for the land which was such a central focus, “the Estate of Elizabeth Steptoe called Hewick” came to “1295 Acres” (MCCR, Plat Book 2). There are no mentions, however, of any of the slaves, and their exact fate is unknown, beside the obvious passing to a new master.
Elizabeth’s life was as one of the elite, with vast tracts of land, crews of slave laborers, a well-built brick house and stylish personal belongings. At this level, her trials as a landowner might seem trivial compared to the lives of the poor or the slaves of her world.

Southern women’s history should force us to think seriously about the relation between the experiences that unite women as members of a gender and those that divide them as members of specific communities, classes, and races. It should, in other words, challenge us to recognize class and race as central, rather than incidental, to women’s identities and behavior—to their sense of themselves as women. (Fox-Genovese 1988:39)

The analysis I have offered should only be considered in the context of an upper-class, Southern, white woman of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. We should also bear in mind that she lived in a very small, rural community. Instead of limiting our understanding of that world, those categories help us better understand relationships. They can be used as a comparative tool to then think about the lives of other women or other people who do not fall into those classifications. To go beyond the specific, Elizabeth’s life gives us a unique opportunity to look at the historic relations of men and women at a very basic level.

The distinct cultural differences between men and women become quite clear. Each had particular gender roles and cultural rites of passage linked to them. At the level of the elite planters, manhood was defined by land ownership and womanhood was defined by motherhood. Elizabeth Robinson
Steptoe shows us those differences by being in a situation where she was a typical woman in most respects, experiencing marriage, motherhood, familial deaths and widowhood. The exception was her more unusual role as landowner. Here she ventured into a man’s role, laying bare the differences between the two. A careful examination of these gender roles and rites of passage in one woman’s life history give a much fuller understanding of the cultural world of the late eighteenth-, early nineteenth-century South.

Overall, Elizabeth had complex personal and familial affairs, which is a point we should remember about every human subject of historical inquiry. As opposed to the cool, reserved, and even superior attitude that some scholars affect, I would instead advocate that we remember the basic humanity of our subjects. Complete detachment produces pronouncements such as the following by the Rutmans:

For our part we began--and ended--our visit simply as ethnologists might leave home for a visit to a Brazilian jungle tribe or as ethologists might set out to visit (observe) a troop of hamadryas baboons in eastern Ethiopia. The people of Middlesex, although we came to like some of them and to dislike, even distrust others, were not and still are not important to us in any other way than the tribesmen are important to the ethnologists and the baboons to the ethologists (Rutman and Rutman 1984:19-20).

Not only do the Rutmans demonstrate complete ignorance of the aims of anthropological study, but they also reduce their subjects to the level of amoebae in a scientist’s petrie dish. As scholars and academics, if we do not care about those groups of people whom we study, then what is the point
of our pursuit? What can we learn without an understanding of them? How ethical or responsible is it to completely disclaim the effect our work may have on either the reading public, or on an understanding people have of the past? These are questions we all must ask ourselves in our work.
CHAPTER III:
THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Fundamentally, both historians and archaeologists engage in a pursuit of the past. Their data base is different, but they both seek an understanding of history.

The respondents to our questions have not, therefore, been people but documents (for the most part) and artifacts—a gravestone, a miscolored patch of dirt that an archaeologist assures us is the remnant of a house foundation. The surrogate nature of our respondents clearly sets limits to the answers we report. They are neither as full nor as definitive as we would like. (Rutman and Rutman 1984:30)

This quotation brings to light two points I would like to address. The first is that though we may question our sources closely, no matter what their nature, we will never be able to gain a complete and seamless understanding of the past. Every form of information has its strong and weak points, its biases and imperfections.

This can be said both of the documents employed by historians, and the sites excavated by archaeologists. To use our current topic as an example, we must realize that:

First, this subjective evidence reveals only part of the story, for it disproportionately favors the literate and introspective over the illiterate and circumspect, favors white women over black women, favors slaveholding women over yeoman and poor white women. Second, the value of any subjective evidence depends upon the questions put to it—depends heavily upon our assumptions about the nature of the society to which southern women belonged. (Fox-Genovese 1988:37)
And yet with its problems, primary documents are a record of a time written within that culture’s mind set. Archaeological evidence also has its own pitfalls and pluses. The archaeological database consists of sites, features, material culture and cultural landscape. We investigate the archaeological database, and “the phrase archaeological record is certainly one of those favorites in archaeological language, but it is not without its problems” (Patrik 1985:28). Patrik goes on to discuss the different possible meanings that we as archaeologists have assigned to the metaphor of a “record.” They are:

1. The archaeological record is a kind of preexisting receptacle for material deposits.
2. Material deposits, collectively, comprise the archaeological record.
3. Material remains, collectively or singly, comprise the archaeological record.
4. Archaeological samples, collectively, comprise the archaeological record.
5. Archaeological reports constitute archaeological records (Patrik 1985:29-30).

My point is that one’s interpretations will depend heavily on which of the above models is being employed.

Not all archaeologists use the same models, or even the same techniques, therefore results vary.

For more than a century, however, what is essentially a strict empiricist view (“the facts speak for themselves”) has been thoroughly discredited. There is no such thing as an “objective observer” who can apprehend the qualities of the natural world directly and thus “discover” facts latent in nature. Meaning comes from humans and is not an intrinsic feature of an external reality. In a philosophical sense, data have no existence apart from the conceptual frameworks that define them (Clark 1991:81).
Interpretation is unavoidable and, therefore, explicitness of one’s paradigm is necessary to maintain an intellectual honesty.

For my second point, if we refer back to the Rutman’s quotation where they mention “a miscolored patch of dirt that an archaeologist assures us is the remnant of a house foundation,” we realize that a scholar’s troubles do not end with the eccentricities of their own data base. In the case of studying historic America, we are presented with a unique abundance of data. There are the primary documents and the archaeological record. To know one and not the other is indeed limiting. Though one person cannot know everything, the Rutmans and every historian like them have to take an archaeologist’s word. They are obviously not equipped to make their own judgments. By the same token, every archaeologist who is not familiar with the techniques of historiography is subject to some other historian’s interpretation of the past, usually through a secondary source.

We seek the past even though it is elusive. And in our quest, in this case of eighteenth-century America, we are best equipped by practicing historical archaeology. The archaeology supplements the history and the history supplements the archaeology. They serve as “checks” on one another, and thus we are able to limit some of the problems of each discipline, as discussed above.
As I have stated throughout this study, I am most interested in gender relations and employing that concept as a device to understand the past. I have demonstrated how useful it can be using historical documents and how we can gain an emic, or insider’s, understanding of otherwise sterile legal documents. But how does one apply a search for gender with archaeological evidence? Is it possible? Many have answered “yes” to that question, and I would like to review some of that work.

Perhaps the most prominent and useful (but not the only) publication to date on the application of gender in archaeology is Engendering Archaeology: Women in Prehistory (1991), edited by Joan Gero and Margaret Conkey. Many of the contributors address their research in new ways, thus creating possible models and innovative approaches to standard material.

An important first step is taken by Ruth Tringham in her article “Households with Faces.” Very candidly, she discusses her struggles to apply feminism to European prehistory:

I realized, as I prepared myself for the original conference, that what I was attempting to do would be classed as a “remedial” feminist archaeology. That is, that my theoretical and methodological framework based on the concept of material culture as a passive reflection of society’s behavior, would remain unchanged. I was merely going to “add women and stir.” (Tringham 1991:95)

Instead of this sort of “remedial” approach, feminist archaeologists assume an active role for women, as well as men, and their impact on the culture they live in.
Just as earlier in this study I stressed the importance of remembering our subject's humanity, Tringham also points out,

that until, as an archaeologist, you can learn to give your imagined societies faces, you cannot envisage gender. Or in somebody else's terms (Conkey's?) you cannot engender prehistory. And until you can engender prehistory, you cannot think of your prehistoric constructions as really human entities with a social, political, ideological, and economic life. (Tringham 1991:94)

This is just as true in historical archaeology as it is in prehistoric archaeology.

An excellent example of putting this theory into practice comes from the same volume with Janet Spector's article "What this Awl Means: Toward a Feminist Archaeology." She writes:

The initial feminist critique exposed androcentrism, argued for the importance of including women both as researchers and as subjects of study, and demonstrated the significance of gender as an analytical category. More recent feminist criticism addresses issues of difference and diversity among women (e.g. by race, class, age) and cautions against universalistic notions of generic "women" and the privileging of experiences and perspectives of white, western women. (Spector 1991:389)

Spector's aim was for more inclusive research. She went about it in two ways. First, she included the direct involvement and input of the indigenous Wahpeton people in her study of the Great Lakes region. Second, she engendered her work by giving a "face" to an otherwise anonymous artifact.

"As a way to engage differently with the material," she writes, "I turned my attention to a small antler awl handle
we'd found at Little Rapids in 1980." With a bit of research, Spector discovered "how much this one tool might have meant in the context of nineteenth-century Dakotas culture." She learned that "awls were also important material symbols of women's skills and values." So that "very soon after learning all of this [she] abandoned the task analysis and wrote the narrative" which she included at the end of her article. The "narrative is not meant to stand alone as an interpretation of life at Little Rapids."

Instead,

The point of presenting the narrative here is to provide a concrete example of a new way of writing archaeology. It conveys a very different sense of the Little Rapids community and the nineteenth-century historical context than is possible employing more conventional ways of writing. (Spector 1991:357,359)

This innovative approach gives new life to archaeological research and is much more inclusive, without losing any of the rigor or explanatory power of standardized theories.

Finally, one of the best-known scholars in feminist archaeology is Margaret W. Conkey. Her particular area of expertise is Paleolithic France, but she has developed feminist theory much more generally and framed her arguments in a way that is useful to archaeologists in any subdiscipline.

Archaeology and prehistory, in a sense, have always been gendered--gendered 'androcentric.' This practice derives from many sources: from a lack of explicit social theory so that scholars implicitly [sic] employ present-ist notions about gender; from the differential use of language in discussing the activities and behaviors of males and females in past societies; from
the particular way in which systems theory has been used in archaeology of the past decades; and from not having developed the questions or the methods with which to inquire into gender, although other equally "elusive" social phenomena, such as status, seem to have received great theoretical and methodological attention. (Conkey with Williams 1991:3-4)

Conkey’s foremost contribution to scholarship in feminist archaeology has been to fundamentally question all notions of gender we have ever taken for granted. In addition, Conkey is a tireless writer, researcher, editor of feminist collaborations, organizer of conferences and mentor to students at all levels.

Conkey always serves to remind us that,

...we know men and women were in the past and, for most of the prehistory of Homo sapiens sapiens, we know gender was "at work," which is much more than we can say for such phenomena as "resource stress," "population pressure," or even "cultural systems" that are much more abstract, yet heretofore taken as more "real" and more determining. (Conkey 1990:12)

Gender studies can help us understand the basic relationships in society, those between men and women, and from those, also understand other relationships like class, status or race. Our assumptions need to be questioned at every level, and in every academic pursuit.

A. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FROM HEWICK

By this point in the study, my reader must feel very familiar with Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe and her plantation at Hewick. But the documents tell only one side of the story. They tell us of Elizabeth’s legal problems, her
battle to maintain autonomy and her struggle to remain in the high status group occupied by her family for generations.

The archaeology, however, provides other kinds of information about Elizabeth’s life. Through archaeology, we gain an understanding of material life and the actual objects that surrounded her and populated her world. By material culture, I mean not only the artifacts, the objects themselves, but also the built environment of the house, for example, and relations between spaces. All are active forms of communication and can demonstrate a culture’s worldview.

Perhaps the most important and subtle aspects of the control afforded by historical archaeology are those factors that would be forever lost to the prehistorian but can be seen to have a strong effect on the nature of cultural change as reflected by the archaeological data. Such aspects of a past people as the way in which they perceived their environment, the world view that underlay the organization of their physical universe, and the way ideology shaped their lives, are as difficult to discover in prehistory as they are important. But in working in the context of historical material culture, the relationship between material culture and cognition begins to come into focus. (Deetz 1977:23)

People, no matter what time period or physical location, do not surround themselves randomly with objects. There are motivations behind which items they choose as personal possessions. Those reasons can be economic, symbolic or functional. I would argue that our job as archaeologists is to try to understand what those reasons are.

Material culture gives us an unique way to gain an emic understanding of social communication.

The emergence and development of historical archaeology has enhanced these material culture
studies by being able, on the one hand, to use historic documentation to provide more sustained links to the past, while on the other hand, to show how the material world is not a mere reflection of the world as portrayed in texts but is, rather, a crucial and often independent—if not even contradictory—line of evidence (Conkey 1992:iii).

I would like to argue that point exactly. In the case of Hewick, as I will show, the material culture data would seem to be completely at odds with the information contained in the primary documents. However, this fact does not negate either set of facts. Instead, they come together in an interpretation that is a complex compromise, much like life.

Though the following had become a standard definition of historical archaeology, I would argue that it is now outdated, biased and narrow sighted.

The professional historical archaeologist has realized from the beginning his need of the historian, but the historian has been slow to reciprocate. His attitude has been that all he needs to know is to be found in his documents and that if it is not there, it is irreparably lost. He is only now beginning to realize his mistake and to see that excavation properly undertaken can fill in details missing from the written record and may even correct previous interpretations of it (Noël Hume 1978:206-207).

The archaeology is not a corrective to the historical record, nor does one discipline exist to serve the other. To borrow a concept from the Marxists, archaeology and history work in a dialectic. They each contribute material, but the end result is something different. We should understand the relationship as having a tension in which we continually reassess our knowledge with reference to both sources of input.
B. THE SITE AT HEWICK

Archaeological excavations at the present-day site of Hewick, now on a 68-acre tract, have been conducted and supervised since 1989 by Dr. Theodore R. Reinhart of the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. As a graduate student of Dr. Reinhart’s, I was able to participate in the work now in progress.

As discussed earlier in this study, Hewick was a plantation of varying size from the original 300 acres patented in 1678 by Christopher Robinson I (Nugent 1977:185), to its present form today. Throughout the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, the land was utilized in various manners, mostly agricultural in nature. This leaves great potential for research on any number of the 17 historical sites that were identified by Reinhart by means of archaeological survey "that included both shovel testing using a 25-foot interval in the unplowed area immediately around the house and a systematic surface search in the plowed fields making up the remaining estate (Reinhart 1992:4). Our current efforts have been concentrated on one of those sites.

But before one can understand the significance and relevance of the site under exploration, one must understand the standing house of Hewick itself.

...accounts of Hewick describe it as located amid beautiful trees, with a lane leading to the house
lined by sixty Lombardy poplars on each side and with beautiful lawns bordered by the popular boxwood. It was a village unto itself with blacksmith, carpenter, cobbler, and butcher shops to take care of the plantation’s needs. The slave quarters were near the river where there were docks for loading shipments of tobacco to England and receiving manufactured goods. It had its gardens and orchards, family burying ground, and spring and springhouse. The kitchen, located some distance from the “great house,” had a fireplace so wide that almost the entire trunk of an ordinary tree could be put across its andirons and so deep that there were several compartments with iron doors built in the brick walls at either side used as warming ovens. (Gray, Ryland and Simmons 1978:1)

Though the grandeur of the original Hewick complex as it existed under the auspices of the Christopher Robinsons and Elizabeth Steptoe is gone, the house still stands (Figure 5). But it is not the house itself that actually concerns us. Instead we should focus our attention on its primary occupant, Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe. While living in the large manor at Hewick, Elizabeth had in her backyard an open cellar hole from a previous dwelling house, which we can infer was her home before Hewick was completed. It is into this pit that domestic refuse of all sorts was thrown from Elizabeth’s household. This garbage dump became our primary focus of interest and excavation as a representative of household material culture.

Out of this particular site, it is the fill that most concerns us for this study. The standing house at Hewick offers limited information for us about Elizabeth, and only in the architecture itself. The site of the house cellar in the back yard, as a feature per se, also holds little data, because Elizabeth would have lived there only as a child.
FIGURE 5
The manor house at Hewick.
(Source: Gray, Ryland and Simmons 1978).
Presently, the structure behind Hewick house (44MX28) is under investigation. A large area was cleared of its plowzone layer by hand to define its foundations and limits. Remains of a brick foundation, numerous postmolds, several piers, a fireplace and a possible entry or porch have been uncovered (Reinhart 1993:8; Figure 6).

Though an interesting and useful site in and of itself, the artifacts that make up the trash fill serve to give us the data we need on Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe.

Originally thought to be a kitchen due to the large amount of domestic refuse, 44MX28 has yielded a huge amount of material. Out of this mass of information, one excavation unit (44MX28/60S1) was chosen to serve as a sample. Two factors are of the most archaeological importance for this site. They are the context and the artifacts.

The context is secondary in nature: that is, the artifacts were not left in their primary use area. However, that does not mean that the stratigraphy does not give us important information. The depositional history is held in the layers of soils and refuse. Their relationship to one another tells us how the site itself was created and subsequently disturbed.

The stratigraphy in 44MX28/60S1 is particularly complex. Profile drawings are provided in Appendix 3 for reference. Based on this data, the site forms and my own experience excavating in the unit, I will offer my interpretation of the depositional sequence.

Unit 44MX28/60S1 cannot be understood in a vacuum. Instead, we have to draw in knowledge from the rest of the
FIGURE 6
Location of manor house at Hewick and site 44MX28, previously believed to be a kitchen.
(Source: Reinhart 1990).
excavation to understand the overall site formation. I will approach the site as the archaeologist actually does in the field. We start at the top, and work our way down from the youngest to the oldest deposits. Therefore, we are dealing with a “reverse chronology.”

The intact site itself was covered by a disturbed plow zone which was removed first. Level 2 was the first layer we encountered after the plowzone. In the sample unit, it averaged 1.04 feet in thickness, and across the entire site it consisted of dark fill with predominantly oyster shells, green bottle glass and ceramics (usually pearlware). From this point in the excavation on, the southeast corner of the unit consistently seems to have been intruded, marked by concentrations of artifacts and much more loosely packed fill that tended to sink.

Level 2 represents the later period of Elizabeth’s occupation and household refuse disposal patterns. All along, the empty cellar hole directly behind the house would have served as an ideal receptacle for domestic garbage of all sorts.

Shortly after 1750, this practice [of broadcast scatter garbage disposal] changed. In its place, people dug square pits, often as deep as seven feet, which received the refuse produced by their households. Such pits are very common sites of this time, and some may have served some other purpose originally: as privies or for storage (Deetz 1977:126).

Or, as in this case, it served previously as the cellar to a house. The hole was convenient for the garbage, and the garbage was convenient to fill the hole.
Continuing on to Level 3, the distinction between the two layers was the appearance of copious amounts of brick in the fill, and the decrease of oyster shell. Some characteristics remain constant from Level 2 to 3. First, the artifactual material occurred in dense amounts and included bottle and window glass, saltglaze stonewares (white, brown and Westerwald), nails and metal, pipe stems, tin-glazed ceramics, trailed slipware, porcelain, colono ware, mammal and fish bone, and shell. Judging from the types of ceramic wares present, this would be an earlier deposit.

The second consistency between the levels is the prevailing appearance of intrusion. The soil matrix was a mixed affair of different colors and consistencies, with lenses of material such as clayey dirt. I would argue that most of the disturbances present throughout this unit are results of natural processes. As an open garbage pit, the contents and layers of deposits would have constantly been subject to displacement. Many of the lenses seem to have been washed in and deposited by water action. Virginia was (and is) subject to frequent and plentiful rains. Unit 44MX28/60S1 is at the exact southeastern corner of the cellar and must have received storm run-off when it was an open pit. During excavation, for example, rain water flooded the unit often, bringing with it alarming amounts of silt.

Further evidence of natural disturbance was seen in Feature 5, especially its Level 3. Once again, this
intrusion occurred in the southeastern corner of the unit. Once excavated, it appeared that the portion labeled Level 3 represented either a tree root stain or a rodent burrow. Either way, such action would have served to displace the artifacts within the fill and to distort the original stratigraphic sequence. It also brings up the possibility of animal action, at all levels of the deposit.

My theory of refuse disposal patterns and of the consistent churning of the artifactual material was confirmed when cross-mends from the unit were examined. For example, seventeen separate Buckley sherds cross-mended together to form most of the rim (7 sherds) and some of the body (10 sherds) of a milk pan. All sherds were from Level 2, as is the case with several cross-mends, thus leading me to conclude that the foot-thick deposit occurred over a shorter period of time and represented more discrete disposal events. We must also bear in mind that "by the 1770s we note the presence of full sets of dishes, often more than one set per household. In the 1780s complete services of porcelain, creamware, and stoneware appear in some inventories" (Deetz 1977). In other words, there was more to throw out, and very often, it was thrown out.

However, within the same collection, the evidence of disturbance between these dumping episodes appears in the cross-mends as well. Sherds MX28/60S1/5-4, 5-26 (both from Level 5) and 9-15 (from Level 9) all fit together to form a small section of rim and body of a lead glazed, earthenware
a broken vessel to be thrown away at once, this leads us to the conclusion that Levels 5 and 9 are related somehow. Either Levels 5 through 9 were deposited at roughly the same time, or their contents were mixed together. Actually, both might have occurred. I have already argued my case for disturbance, and will now further discuss issues of timing.

The chronology of the artifacts and where they occur in the sample argue for a very rough "oldest to youngest" progression, as we should expect. But, at Level 5, we uncovered a new line of evidence. At this point, we discovered a large robbers' trench, full of dark soil and artifactual material, and its counterpart, the cellar fill, mostly destruction/construction fill of brick rubble and plaster.

So then, 44MX28/60S1 actually represents two different activities. First, the rubble in the cellar most probably comes from the time of the house's destruction, with possible bits from construction of Hewick. The most probable cause for the house's abandonment seems to have been fire. A burned layer was encountered at the base of the fill (Level 10). It does not seem to be a large enough layer, in my opinion, to account for complete destruction by fire of a house the size of the one in question. Very few burned artifacts were found. I suspect there was just enough fire damage to give Christopher Robinson IV enough excuse to build Hewick. The house might have been gutted by fire or the chimney might have caught on fire. One other hint at a
possible reason for disuse of the house was section of a pushed-over wall in the western portion of the cellar. Were there structural defects? Was there a catastrophic act of nature? Or did the wall collapse after the house was already vacant? Evidence leads to several possible explanations, and my other theories for the reasons behind building Hewick were presented earlier.

The second activity was represented by the robbers’ trench. Based on the amount of brick rubble in the fill, and extant sections of cellar wall, built to two and a half bricks thick, I would argue this to have been a brick structure built in the floor plan diagrammed by the Rutmans (refer again to Figure 4). Large amounts of brick would have been a valuable commodity, and were commonly “robbed out” to be recycled into new structures. It is possible that bricks from this house served as part of the original superstructure of Hewick. In fact, large pieces of shaped bog iron (a naturally occurring iron concretion) were found in the excavation, and Hewick has a foundation laid in bog iron. The connection seems strong.

The result of robbing bricks is a robber’s trench. It would have been rapidly filled with domestic garbage, since at the depth of Level 5, the rest of the cellar is full of destruction debris. From Level 5 to Level 10, which rested on the original cellar floor, the deposit was a consistent split between robber’s trench and rubble fill.
Within the rich deposit of the robber's trench, all artifacts recovered were deposited as refuse at the end of their use life. But even though we are not able to infer information from primary associations, we can still glean important facts from the artifacts themselves.

The shape, size and material...owes something to ideas its creator learned from his fellows. Later, when...passed from use into a trash heap, it carried with it imprinted intelligence, to be read by the archaeologist hundreds of years later. The same is true of all of man's creations--from the smallest to the largest--inherently carry information about the lifeways of their makers. (Deetz 1971:3)

I would say that this statement holds true for both individual artifacts and assemblages as whole entities. In this case, stratigraphy is secondary in concern to the importance of the collection as a representation of household material culture.

With a specific focus on ceramics, "drawing upon ceramic histories of manufacturers and pattern names, the artifacts themselves provided the dating information and not their specific archaeological context" (Hunter 1987:55). The artifacts also guided my interpretation of the stratigraphic deposition sequence. Crossmends across levels and changes in ware types indicated general episodes of dumping that were otherwise not clearly obvious.

Therefore, our other major factor for interpretation is the artifacts. As mentioned, 44MX28 yielded large numbers of artifacts from every class of material imaginable on a historic site. All of them hold potential for analysis, but
one class of objects is particularly diagnostic: ceramics. The sample excavation unit, 44MX28/60S1, at 5 by 5 feet and approximately 5 feet deep, alone yielded 801 ceramic sherds. We note that “it is evident that ceramics—this fragile yet durable material—constitutes valuable cultural evidence that will find increasing use in the study of the American experience” (Lanmon 1973:viii). Much is known from documentary sources and years of research about the many forms of ceramics. It is upon this base that I will build my argument about ceramic use at Hewick.

Just as with copious amounts of documentary data, an archaeologist must decide just how she or he will go about analyzing the artifactual material. With a collection such as the one from Hewick, many possibilities are open. The real dilemma, however, is to choose an approach which is appropriate and answers the question posed to it. Too often, archaeologists spend inordinate amounts of time and effort on detailed analysis that gains them no ground toward understanding. I am not saying that there is no room in archaeology for substantive research (such as Miller 1988, 1991) but it does have its limitations.

Though archaeologists deal most often with ceramic sherds, “household ceramics were purchased and used as vessels, thus obligating the archaeologist to conceptualize the archaeological remains as such” (Hunter 1987:35). Therefore, the methodology I pursued was to cross-mend as much of the ceramics as possible from the sample unit. This
### TABLE 2: MINIMUM VESSEL COUNT
Unit 44MX28/60S1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Bowls</th>
<th>Plates</th>
<th>Cups</th>
<th>Chamber Pots</th>
<th>Tea Pot</th>
<th>Platter</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pearlware</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creamware</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chinese Export Porcelain</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tin-Glazed</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Utilitarian Earthenware</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whiteware</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aboriginal</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stoneware</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MINIMUM VESSEL COUNT TOTAL:** 132
# TABLE 3:
**SPECIFIC WARE AND VESSEL TYPES**
Based on Minimum Vessel Count
Unit 44MX28/60S1

**Pearlware, 1780-1830**
1 Soup Bowl
11 Shell Edge Plates, Green
1 Handpainted Pitcher, Blue and White Chinoiserie
1 Annular Ware Pitcher, Polychrome Marbled Body
4 Handpainted Tea Cups, Blue and White Chinoiserie
1 Handpainted Hollow Form, Blue and White
1 Annular Ware Mug, Engine Turned Lip, Cobalt Speckled Body
1 Annular Ware Mug, Engine Turned, Blue and White

**Creamware, 1740-1775**
1 Clouded (Whieldon) Ware Plate, Barley Marley
1 Supper Plate
2 Supper Plate, Royal Marley
1 Table Plate
1 Table Plate, Feather Edge Marley
3 Chamber Pots
1 Shallow Bowl, 30s size
1 Bowl, 12s size
1 Bowl, 12s size, Engine Turned
1 Bowl, 12s size, Dipped Ware
1 Bowl, 6s size
1 Bowl, 6s size, Beaded Rim Design
1 Bowl, Royal Marley
1 Tea Pot
1 Agateware Tea Pot
1 Tea Cup, London Size
1 Tea Cup, London Size, Handpainted Overglaze, Polychrome
1 Dish, Royal Marley

**Chinese Export Porcelain, 1700-present**
1 Tea Cup, Handpainted Overglaze
2 Bowls, Handpainted Underglaze
15 Tea Cups or Bowls

**Utilitarian Earthenware, 1680-1780**
1 Red Earthenware Chamber Pot, Black Lead Glaze
1 Undetermined Red Earthenware Hollow Form, Black Lead Glaze
1 Undetermined Hollow Form, Lead Glaze
1 Trailed Slipware Bowl
1 Small Bowl, Buff/Pink Body, Lead Glaze
1 Bowl, Speckled Lead Glaze
1 Bowl, Dark Lead Glaze
2 North Devon Gravel Tempered Ware Milk Pans
2 Red Earthenware Milk Pans, Lead Glaze
2 Buckley Ware Milk Pans
1 Undetermined Earthenware, Buff Body, Lead Glaze
1 Combed and Dotted Slipware, Cup
1 Cup, Lead Glazed

**Stoneware, 1550-1790**
4 White Saltglaze Plates, Dot, Diaper & Basket Marley
1 White Saltglaze Chamber Pot
3 White Saltglaze Mugs
1 Gray Saltglaze Stoneware Storage Jar
4 Gray Saltglaze Mineral Water Bottles
1 Gray Saltglaze Mug
1 Westerwald Chamber Pot, Cobalt Decoration
1 Westerwald Mug, Cobalt Decoration
1 Westerwald Jug, Cobalt and Manganese Decoration
2 Large Brown Saltglaze Storage Jars
2 Bellermine-like Vessels
1 Brown Stoneware Chamber Pot
1 Brown Stoneware Mug
1 Brown Stoneware Bottle
1 Scratch Blue Tea Pot, with Medallion
1 Scratch Blue Mug, Cordoned Lip
1 Scratch Blue Cup
1 Black Basalt Tea Pot
1 Small Black Saltglaze Bottle
1 Nottingham Mug
1 Rosso Antico Tea Pot
1 Höhr-type Mug

**Tin-Glazed Earthenware, 1570-1770**
1 Undetermined, Handpainted Polychrome
1 Undetermined, Sponged Purple Decoration
1 Shallow Bowl, Handpainted Blue
1 Bowl
8 Undetermined Hollow Forms, Handpainted Blue
1 White Tin-Glazed Hollow Form
1 Apothecary Jar
1 Chamber Pot

**Whiteware, 1846-1871**
2 Table Plates
1 Flow Blue Table Plate
1 Bowl
2 Cups

**Aboriginal**
2 Cooking Pots
1 Hollow Form

gave me a better idea of what vessel shapes were represented in addition to what wares were present. After that, I compiled a list of minimum number of vessels (Tables 2 and 3). From that I could examine relative proportions of any particular ware or vessel form present, bearing in mind always that archaeological samples are never complete ones. First of all,

Excavated collections usually represent an accumulation of what was broken or discarded. For table ware there are differential breakage rates and potential for discard to be taken into consideration. For example, tin cups or silver mugs will outlast ceramic or glass mugs, and even when they are beyond use, the silver would not be discarded. Different ceramic forms also have differential breakage rates. Cups, for example, are more subject to breaking than saucers because of the amount of handling they receive and their repeated exposure to abrupt temperature changes as they are filled and refilled with hot and cold beverages. (Miller 1988:182)

Not only do we have to consider this kind of bias introduced in an assemblage through processes of deposition, but we must also consider that the ceramics presented here are only a sample from a larger assemblage. The findings, therefore, are suggestive, but not definitive.

I find much utility in an overall understanding of the data. It is, after all, an assemblage. Therefore, I have attempted to gather together several particularistic forms of data in order to better understand the whole. Instead of being exclusively concerned with individual items that existed in Elizabeth's ceramic collection, we can look for
purchases of things like matched dinnerware, tea sets and other items expected from someone of her status.

As a matter of intellectual honesty, I would say the most important aspect of this collection is not in any interesting anomaly that it possesses, but in the fact that it varies very little from what we might expect from any other ceramic assemblage from a gentry household. It does reflect the household’s economic status through expensive, special-use items, such as a Black Basalt tea pot, but in general, it is consistent with what we might expect from an eighteenth-century ceramic assemblage (Noël Hume 1969; see Appendix 2 for specimens of the various ware and vessel types from Hewick discussed here). Similar to Hunter’s (1987:66) work, this “ceramic assemblage has provided an important example of how household ceramics can be approached from an archaeological perspective,” especially when combined with documentary information.

With reference to the information contained in Tables 2 and 3, and Appendix 2, we can gain a better understanding of the ceramic assemblage from 44MX28/60S1. Inspection of the data will support my claim that Elizabeth’s household ceramics were very much what we would expect from a planter household.

Table 2 lists the minimum vessel count for the sample unit. I have included all ceramics that were present, even though some wares would have most probably come from occupations before Elizabeth (re: aboriginal pottery) or
after Elizabeth (re: whiteware). Nevertheless, nothing was excluded in an effort toward a diachronic approach, that is, to address change over time, and to account for curation of older ceramic forms by the household.

The most pertinent commentary can be addressed to the minimum amount of possible vessels.

It is possible to tie sherd counts to activities in only the crudest possible way. It also is difficult to do this readily for minimum vessel counts if the vessel analysis does not link the data to discrete, mutually exclusive activity sets (Yentsch 1991).

Therefore, I have also compiled Table 3, based on the minimum vessel count, which lists specific ware and vessel types. Using all available information, I identified each vessel in its most specific sense: form, function, ware and decoration. This data serves to give us a fuller understanding of how the ceramic assemblage might have functioned as an integral part of the household.

Referring again to Tables 2 and 3, we can see that both creamware and pearlware were equally represented, primarily as dinner and tea wares, thus reflecting the general trends in ceramic popularity, and their vast availability (Noël Hume 1972).

Stoneware occupied a fair percentage of total vessels, to a lesser extent with items like white salt-glazed stoneware plates which were waning in popularity by the 1770s (Noël Hume 1969). The remaining stonewares fell into one of two categories. The first were utilitarian wares such as brown stoneware mugs, Westerwald chamber pots and gray
stoneware storage jars. The other category focused primarily around tea wares with Black Basalt, Rosso Antico and Scratch Blue tea pots or cups. Fine stonewares such as these were particularly well suited to use for tea and its accompanying hot water. As Miller (1988:173) comments, "table, tea, and toilet ware assemblages from the nineteenth century consist almost entirely of creamware, pearlware, whiteware, stone china, and porcelain along with some fairly rare types such as basalt and lustre-glazed redware." Elizabeth's teas of these wares represented a higher class of tea equipment. The same can be said of the Chinese export porcelain present in the assemblage.

We must remember, however, that a household does not survive on tea and formal dinners alone. Another important part of any set of ceramics were the utilitarian earthenwares. Most of the forms listed would have been for kitchen and dairy use. As I have stressed throughout, a plantation such as Hewick would have been a lot of work for the mistress and household slaves alike, and would have required the feeding of many mouths. Most of the small bowls were for cooking or food preparation, as were the various other hollow forms. Milk pans were essential for the processing of milk and its many food by-products (Yentsch 1991), and they were well represented in Elizabeth's kitchen.

As a final note on this ceramic assemblage, the vital importance and presence of chamber pots, no matter what their ware, goes without saying.
In an effort to further understand all the information available from this ceramic assemblage, I applied George L. Miller’s (1988) ceramic index system to the applicable items listed in Table 3. The results give better comparative data due to the numerical nature of the method. I was only able to apply the index to plates, tea cups and bowls made of creamware, pearlware or whiteware. When considering this data, we should bear in mind that a majority of the assemblage had to be excluded due to the type of ware or vessel form.

I chose to examine the years 1796 and 1814. Normally, unless an occupation represents a long period of time, only one year’s worth of values are calculated. But in this case, we are concerned with household consumption patterns before and after the death of William Steptoe; that is, before and during Elizabeth’s control of the plantation. Both dates fall within Elizabeth’s life span, with 1796 being the fourteenth year of her marriage, and when she was twenty-eight years old. 1814 was after William’s death, when Elizabeth had been widowed for twelve years and was forty-six years old. Since we have no evidence when exactly certain items or sets were purchased, either date is a viable possibility.

Tables 4 through 8 present the results of applying CC index values to this collection. Table 4 deals with both 1796 and 1814 because the values for plates did not change during that time. Table 5 displays cup values for 1796, and
### TABLE 4:
**CC INDEX VALUE FOR PLATES**
1796 and 1814

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>CC index value</th>
<th>No. times</th>
<th>recovered</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>= 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edged</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>= 6.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8 plates</td>
<td>9.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.65=1.20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 5:
**CC INDEX VALUE FOR CUPS**
1796

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>CC index value</th>
<th>No. times</th>
<th>recovered</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CC, HD*</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>= 1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painted, HD</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>= 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 cups</td>
<td>14.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14.86=2.47</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = with handle

### TABLE 6:
**CC INDEX VALUE FOR CUPS**
1814

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>CC index value</th>
<th>No. times</th>
<th>recovered</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CC, HD*</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>= 1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painted, HD</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>= 10.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White glazed</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>= 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8 cups</td>
<td>16.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.52=2.06</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = with handle
TABLE 7:
CC INDEX VALUE FOR BOWLS
1814

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>CC index value</th>
<th>times</th>
<th>No. recovered</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painted</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White glazed</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dipped</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9 bowls</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average value</td>
<td>11=1.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 8:
CC INDEX VALUE FOR 10-INCH SHELL EDGE PLATES
1796 and 1814

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>CC index value</th>
<th>times</th>
<th>No. recovered</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shell edge</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11 plates</td>
<td>14.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average value</td>
<td>14.63=1.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 displays them for 1814, as there had been a change in these values over the eighteen-year period in question. Table 7 demonstrates bowl values for 1814. Finally, Table 8 is exclusively for shell edged plates in both 1796 and 1814, since the values remained constant.

Overall, we can come to the conclusion based on these figures that the ceramics in question cost an average of 1.65 times the cost of plain CC ware, which would have been the cheapest. As one more note about the nature of archaeological bias, it is common sense that "everyday dishes have twenty times the chance of winding up as part of the archaeological sample" (Miller 1988:182), and thus slanting the results, especially since the index does not include comparisons with many of the other wares represented in this assemblage.

Timing is the last crucial factor. As previously mentioned, values were calculated for two different years. Due to the increasing availability and decrease in demand of certain ceramic types over time, prices were lowered by manufacturers and thus value in the index for that item would be less over time. Therefore, the 1796 index values (from when William was alive) are higher than the 1814 index values (from when Elizabeth was solely in charge). I believe these value differences give a false impression of economics when comparing heads of household, and are due to time factors exclusively.
There is one item that seems to be glaringly absent from Elizabeth’s household ceramics that we might expect to find in a planter assemblage: transfer printed wares. According to Miller (1988), transfer printed wares were of the most value and were manufactured in full tea and dinner services. We would expect to see it since “by the 1790s underglazed transfer printing was becoming a common way of decorating ceramics” (Miller 1988:174). However, none of that is evident here. Why?

Perhaps this is the one anomaly that we can point to as being indicative of Elizabeth’s shortcomings as a female in charge of a plantation. I consider that as one of many possible and plausible explanations for the complete absence of transfer printed wares.

But it is not a conclusion we can arrive at without first examining all the known evidence. First, “in the 1790s, transfer printed vessels were three to five times more expensive than undecorated CC vessels,” but “as transfer printed wares became cheaper compared to CC wares, their consumption greatly increased. This is particularly observable on sites dating after the War of 1812” (Miller 1988:174). Both trends fall within Elizabeth’s life span, but it seemed she did not purchase transfer printed wares in any quantity no matter what the price.

Both the documents and the artifactual evidence tell us that Elizabeth did invest in expensive, high-status ceramics, most notably porcelain, of which several full sets (for both
dining and tea) are mentioned in the primary records. Porcelain was always a more valuable ware type than transfer prints.

There are several other possible explanations for this unusual pattern. Middlesex county, though populated with people of wealthy estates, and having access to a major waterway at the Rappahannock, still tended to be more rural in nature and less current on the latest styles. During Elizabeth’s lifetime, places like Williamsburg and Norfolk were more central locales. There could have been a "time lag" in the adoption of transfer printed wares as popular, or even a supply problem, despite any level of popularity. Still, the British ceramics industry was prevalent in a worldwide scope, and these would seem to be less likely possibilities.

Perhaps Elizabeth personally did not care for transfer printed wares. We cannot discount the individual. She could have been exercising her rights as a consumer and "voting" with her dollar. But once again, I have argued that Elizabeth supplied her household with the best that could be found in gentry homes. She probably did own transfer printed wares. I suspect that we have just dug up the wrong trash pile, and that other deposits hold the information we seek.

As has been done previously in this study, documents can serve as a good balance to archaeological data. Miller (1988:182) suggests,

Probate inventories, on the other hand, represent accumulations of what has survived
and been saved rather than what was broken and discarded. Therefore, if CC index values are averaged for plates, cups, and bowls from probate inventories, the higher ratio of 'best' dishes would provide a higher average value than the archaeological assemblage.

I fully agree, and I happen to be lucky enough to have the probate inventory from Elizabeth's estate. However, none of the entries for ceramics can be utilized in the index.

Therefore, in order to be able to present this information to compare to the above tables, I have extracted the ceramic entries from the inventory and listed them (Table 9).

The ceramic items in the probate offer a slightly different picture from that offered by the archaeological assemblage and the CC value index. The only items that are listed by ware are "china," presumably Chinese export porcelain, or possibly British porcelain, and "stone" items, probably stoneware.

The entries vary everywhere from "1 Set tea china," which "functioned more in a role of status display than plates or bowls" (Miller 1988:180), to "Stone Milk pans," which would have been a necessary item in any household, rich or poor. The probate inventory more closely mirrors the ceramics recovered archaeologically, and the same analysis can be applied to it.

My overall emphasis is that the ceramics from 44MX28/60S1 imply a very typical assemblage for the time, place and social station of the subjects in question.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Set tea china</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 large china bowle</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 large china mugs</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pitcher</td>
<td>$.37 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Small bowls</td>
<td>$.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Small mugs</td>
<td>$.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Salts</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 water jug</td>
<td>$.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Stone pots</td>
<td>$1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tea pot</td>
<td>$.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Stone Milk pans</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parcel beer jugs</td>
<td>$2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Stone pots</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 jugs</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Coffee pot</td>
<td>$.12 1/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reference: Middlesex County Court Records.
Just as a family does more than just have teas and formal dinners, which forces us to consider more utilitarian ceramic forms, households consist of more than just ceramics. Ceramics can be highly diagnostic for our understanding of the past, but other items should not be forgotten.

We can get a better idea of the range of possessions Elizabeth would have had in her house by looking at her probate inventory or the vast amount of non-ceramic artifacts recovered archaeologically. Both indicate a high-status household. But one document is particularly intriguing with reference to household furnishings and a projection of status.

In 1821, Elizabeth was in debt to Henry Muse. This is the one recorded incident where a land sale was not used as a solution to the problem. Instead, a large lot of household possessions was to be auctioned to cover the amount owed. It is worthwhile to examine the lengthy list of items:

Eighteen Windsor chairs, one set Dining Tables, one side board, one sett of Dining China & knives & forks, two pair of plated candlesticks & two shades of Glass, one dozen Silver Table Spoons, one dozen Silver Tea spoons, one soup Ladle, one Toddy Ladle, two Butter ladles, one Tea board, two large Waitess, two plate fruit Baskets, one Tea caddy containing two tea canisters, one silver sugar Dish, one set Tea china, one silver cream pot, Tea table, carpet and Irons, shovel, Tongs, Fender, four Beds & furniture, one mahogany Bed Stead with two sets of curtains, one Dressing Table & chair, Glasses, one walnut press, Farming utensils, Kitchen furniture, one carriage with a set of Harness, two Mules & stock of Hogs & Sheep. (MCCR 1821)

Though it is true Elizabeth was obliged to sell this property in order to pay her creditors, it is nevertheless impressive
that she could muster a list of belongings of this high
caliber with which to do it. These are not the belongings of
a destitute woman. She may have had her trials, but she
definitely maintained the material culture of an upper-class
planter household.

C. Gender at Hewick

Getting back to my original question, I was concerned
with the issue of gender. I wanted to determine what we can
understand about a topic such as gender from studying an
archaeological deposit like the one described. Therefore,
“our goal is to discover the range in sex roles and in sexual
symbolism in different societies and periods, to find out
what meaning they had and how they functioned to maintain the
social order or to promote its change” (Scott 1986:1054).
How can we learn such things from archaeology? How can it
apply to this collection?

Gender can be examined at such a site if we are careful
and critical of our data. First, “it is...argued that the
relationship between women’s status and material culture can
be further explored for use in studies of...complex
societies” (Mrozowski 1988:184). We have been concerned all
along with Elizabeth Steptoe Robinson’s role as a female
landowner and how she fared as such in a patriarchal society.
The link between social status and material culture as an
expression of social status is an obvious place to look for
information. Ceramics are an excellent index of status
conformity.
Thus, "Hodder suggests that this conformity in women's material culture is the result 'not only of the male demand for submission, but also of the general sympathy and mutual support among women'" (Ibid.:188). The sample of ceramics that would have been Elizabeth's varies in no significant way from any other woman's household. In this sense, we would never guess from the archaeological evidence alone that anything was different about Hewick. We would have no indication that Elizabeth was a female landowner. But, the archaeology does provide evidence that we used to help interpret the documentary records. The reason that this is a particularly difficult issue to examine in this context is that women usually made the purchasing choices for the household, especially when it came to ceramics: "Matrons managed the household budget, dealt with local merchants, and handled all internal matters of finance" (Clinton 1982:21). Elizabeth's duties beyond the normal ones of the household are masked in the archaeological record.

Looking at it in another way, what does this seeming "normality" tell us about our documentary information? At this point, we are struck by the bias of both documentary and archaeological sources. The primary written resources show us a harsh side of Elizabeth's life: orphaned, married and dispossessed of her land, widowed and then occasionally overwhelmed with the chores of landownership.

We see none of that in the archaeology. Instead, we have an assemblage complete with every type of ware and form
that we would expect to see from a well-to-do plantation household. Mrozowski asks a pertinent question for a case such as ours by wondering "whether ceramics in trash pits are viewed as a direct reflection of ideology rather than as material expressions of changes in household structure and modes of production" (Mrozowski 1988:188). I would argue that the data presented here, without a doubt, would prove the former assertion over the latter. From the documents we know there was a "change in household structure and mode of production" when William died and Elizabeth took over as landowner.

By never remarrying, a whole new set of responsibilities would have shifted to Elizabeth in addition to her usual ones.

The planter's wife was in charge not merely of the mansion but of the entire spectrum of domestic operations throughout the estate, from food and clothing to the physical and spiritual care of both her white family and her husband's slaves. The borders of her domain might extend from the mansion's locked pantry to the slave-quarter hospital and the slaughtering pen for the hogs. Very little escaped the attention of the white mistress, and most plantation problems were brought to her unless, being crop-related, they fell within the sphere of the overseer (Clinton 1982:18).

Even though we do not know of an overseer from the records, it is not unreasonable to assume that Elizabeth had one at Hewick. Still, without a male head of household, the overseer would have answered to Elizabeth. No other close male kin appeared in the records in roles of responsibility. That responsibility seemed to have been hers. However, as Clinton (1982:78) observes:
While she [the planter's widow] might be fully capable of running the farming of the plantation, she could not publicly execute plantation affairs without a man's assistance; no woman could transact business without a male surrogate for court and legal proceedings. Fathers, brothers, or sons who were of age could help, but the southern planter's widow suffered an unenviable plight.

Therefore, we do see James R. Steptoe, Elizabeth's son, as that male surrogate in the documents. Ownership of land was often transferred to him from Elizabeth so that she could legally pass the deed onto a third party to satisfy debt against her estate.

Despite this major change in Elizabeth's household, it is undetectable in the archaeological remains. The absence of "fashionable" transfer printed wares could be a possible indicator, due to less time and effort available to dedicate to more "frivolous" concerns, or an adequate income with which to afford them. I am sure there are other possibilities as well. But since Elizabeth did purchase fashionable table and tea wares otherwise, we can therefore infer that she valued them as items to possess.

The over-riding emphasis for Elizabeth was on the cultural worldview pervasive at the time. By concerning ourselves with vessel forms, it is evident that items like teapots, "teacups, saucers, sugar bowls, and milk jugs [which] are considered 'tea ceremony' vessels" (Clements 1993:57) are present, as well as dinner plates, bowls, "covered tureens, gravy boats, and condiment dishes [which] represent 'dinner service'"(Ibid.). The concern here was not
with functionality of the vessels, but with their display value and ability to communicate a level of status.

As noted in my discussion of the house at Hewick, this family, as all other upper-class planters, was concerned with appearances. Hewick stood as a representation of the Robinson family, their status and standing in society. Its importance was central: "The mansion, therefore, was merely the showpiece of the plantation. Because it was the most visible symbol of the slaveowner's wealth and status, it was usually as grand and lavish a monument as the planter could afford" (Clinton 1982:18). The interior furnishings of such an eighteenth-century mansion would be just as important.

"Paying visits" was of vital social importance to maintain community bonds (Rutman and Rutman 1984:101; Clinton 1982:19). Reciprocity was expected:

Thus going to drink tea with each other implies several very agreeable ideas: that of riding sometimes five or six miles; that of chatting much and hearing the news of the county; and that of eating heartily. Considering that our women are never idle but have something to do from one year's end to another, where is the husband that would refuse his wife the pleasure of treating her friends as she has been treated herself? (deCrèvecoeur 1782:299)

In order to engage in the "tea ritual," a woman would have to own all the necessary equipment, none of which was lacking in Elizabeth's household. Among "the varied selection of drinking vessels, such as demitasse coffee cups, tea bowls, tea cups, and chocolate cups, testify to the symbolic importance of beverage consumption as a social occasion" (Clements 1993:60). We can see from the archaeological
sample that Elizabeth participated in this common cultural activity, and that she was not ignorant of the latest trends in ceramic styles.

But "visits" were more than just that. They were occasions where the hostess could "social climb" or strive to maintain an already high social ranking. Clements offers a pithy discussion of women’s roles in society, using the example of a military garrison:

The most important duty of military wives was the negotiation of social status. Within the institutionalized round of garrison entertainment, and its associated display of material culture, lay the seeds for military promotion. The significance of military wives was not contained in their ability to provide supplementary garrison labor, but rested on the manipulation of a symbolic environment. In this role women at the garrison should be seen not as passive, military "helpmeets," but assertive agents of social change. This role connotes an immeasurable amount of power because it underpins control of the iconography inherent within material culture. Following military regulations, and behaving in accordance with sanctioned and reinforced "ladylike" standards, women responded by using their gendered roles to negotiate and qualify social status within the confines of military marriage and a military environment. Thus did "ladies" become the social standard bearers of the early military through which the commissioned ranks of the army qualified their approbation as "officers and gentlemen." (Clements 1992:61)

Though this is a specialized example, the argument Clements makes can be generalized to a situation such as Elizabeth’s. Southern genteel society had just as many implicit rules of behavior as the military had explicit ones. A woman, either married or a widowed head of household like Elizabeth, would have used her role as a "lady" and the accompanying material
accompanying material culture, to manipulate the community’s impression of her and her family.

Elizabeth had four generations worth of reputation to protect. The Robinson landholdings served to legitimate their position in society since “the test of a gentleman in seventeenth-century Virginia was what the test of a gentleman is likely to be in any rough young society--the possession of a sufficient property” (Cash 1941:7). Eighteenth-century Virginia, as part of a newly formed country, was little different. Property, both in land and the trappings of an “aristocracy” (Ibid.), placed one within the hierarchy. Within the home, “the type of ceramics chosen by...wives demonstrates financial commitment to expensive and fashionable dining equipment” (Ibid.:59). Such a display would have been particularly vital in the face of failing finances. An easy way to conceal private economic struggle is with a public display of success.

With all of these complex issues factored into the equation, we can begin to see how gender works at different levels of inquiry. At the large, conceptual level of landowning, gender becomes blurred because of the conformity required of women in the eighteenth century. Even when the definition of “female” was challenged, the outward behaviors changed little:

We must ask more often how things happen in order to find out why they happened; in anthropologist Michelle Rosaldo’s formulation, we must pursue not universal, general causality but meaningful explanation: “It now appears to me that woman’s place in human social life is not in any direct
sense a product of the things she does, but of the
meaning her activities acquire through concrete
social interaction (Scott 1986:1067).

This reality would be a tool for Elizabeth. While exploring
new vistas as a female running a plantation, she could still
enjoy the security offered by the community by accommodating
some norms and conceding to what was otherwise expected of
her.
CHAPTER IV.
CONCLUSION

The study of Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe, her life and her role as a female landowner during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in rural Virginia has led me to two major conclusions, one specific and one general.

The first applies to Elizabeth herself and her particular situation. In many senses, Elizabeth led a typical life for a plantation mistress: “Like all married women, she was subject to the demands of her husband on her time and energies. Like all mothers, she performed long and arduous tasks connected with child care” (Clinton 1982:20). Elizabeth was born of a prominent family, was wed, was married for twenty years, bore eight children and in the course of that existence, tended to her duties as a wife and mother as was expected of her. She fulfilled her proscribed gender role and passed through the normal cultural rites of passage.

But upon the death of her husband, Elizabeth opted to take her life in a different direction. She remained widowed, thus becoming a female head of household and landowner. As few women of her time did, Elizabeth claimed her right as a feme sole to the land inherited from her brother as the last of the Robinson line.
By not remarrying and by taking up this new position of authority, Elizabeth set two processes into motion. She stepped out of her gender role, which was limited to the household, and into the realm of men and plantation agriculture. She was also never fully reintegrated into her community by remarrying. This placed her in a liminal state in reference to the normal categories of her culture.

She wavers between two worlds. It is this situation which I have designated a transition, and one of the purposes...is to demonstrate that this symbolic...area of transition may be found in more or less pronounced form in all the ceremonies which accompany the passage from one social...position to another (van Gennep 1909:18).

This liminal state affected Elizabeth's status, one which she worked very hard to maintain. Since she played an anomalous role, she often had difficulty, but nevertheless, she was able to maintain appearances and her independence.

The other conclusion I have drawn from this study is general in nature. The precise relationship between the disciplines of archaeology and history have been debated since the inception of historical archaeology.

The purposes of the archaeology of 17th century Virginia was no longer simply to provide facts that documents could not. Archaeology was no longer, as was once suggested, a "handmaiden" to history. It emerged in the 1970s as an analytical tool that could not only recover what, as far as the documentary record was concerned, was unknown or unknowable, it could delineate and explain the cultural processes that had shaped early Virginia (Hudgins 1993:173).

In the course of this study, I have come to understand the dialectical nature of historical archaeology. History contributes one type of knowledge, archaeology another type
and the result is a unique synthesis, more nearly complete than either one separately.

When put into practice, historical archaeology can be a very sharp tool with which we can cut to the heart of central cultural issues such as gender. With my example, we could have never come to a complete understanding of Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe as a female landowner by only examining one type of data alone. The biases were too great. In the documents we see her struggling, but the material culture showed us how she manipulated meaning in her world to sustain a position of status.

A focus on gender led us to this conclusion. Though I would argue that to examine gender in a case such as this with historical data alone or with archaeological data alone provides a less full understanding, the combination of the two, in their dialectic, brings us to levels of knowledge about gender relations that were previously unknown.
APPENDIX 1:

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory--Nomination Form
for Hewick
as Archaeological District
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property __________________________________________________________________________________________________
   historic name Hewick Plantation ____________________________________________________________
   other names/site number 44MX24; 44MX25; 44MX26; 44MX27; 44MX28; 44MX30; 44MX31
   (see continuation sheet 1)

2. Location _________________________________________________________________________________________________
   street & number VA State Hwy. 602 & VA State Hwy. 615 X not for publication
   city or town Urbanna N/A
   state Virginia code VA county Middlesex code 119 zip code 23175

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

   As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this □ nomination □ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property □ meets □ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant □ nationally □ statewide □ locally. (□ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

   Signature of certifying official/title __________________________ Date __________________________
   State of Federal agency and bureau __________________________

   In my opinion, the property □ meets □ does not meet the National Register criteria. (□ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

   Signature of certifying official/title __________________________ Date __________________________
   State of Federal agency and bureau __________________________

4. National Park Service Certification

   □ hereby certify that the property is: □ entered in the National Register.
   □ determined eligible for the National Register.
   □ removed from the National Register.
   □ other, (explain) __________________________

   Signature of the Keeper __________________________ Date of Action __________________________

   (see continuation sheet 2)
### Hewick Plantation Archaeological District

**Name of Property:** Hewick Plantation  
**County and State:** Middlesex County, VA  

### 5. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership of Property</th>
<th>Category of Property</th>
<th>Number of Resources within Property</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ private</td>
<td>□ building(s)</td>
<td>□ contributing □ noncontributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ public-local</td>
<td>□ site</td>
<td>15 buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ public-State</td>
<td>□ structure</td>
<td>0 sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ public-Federal</td>
<td>□ object</td>
<td>0 objects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| □ private             | □ district           | 15 Total                             |
| □ public-local        | □ site               |                                    |
| □ public-State        | □ structure          |                                    |
| □ public-Federal      | □ object             |                                    |

### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**  
- FUNRARY: cemetery
- DOMESTIC: single dwelling
- DOMESTIC: secondary structure
- INDUSTRY: waterworks

**Current Functions**  
- AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: agricultural field
- LANDSCAPE: unoccupied land
- FUNERARY: cemetery
- LANDSCAPE: forest

### 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**  
N/A

**Materials**  
- foundation N/A
- walls N/A
- roof N/A
- other N/A

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**SUMMARY DESCRIPTION**

Hewick Plantation Archaeological District is located northwest of the city of Urbanna in Middlesex County, Virginia. The property is bounded to the north by Robinson Creek, a tributary of the Rappahannock River. The district represents the central portion of a 17th-19th century plantation. The most prominent feature is the dwelling house, built in 1770, which stands at the end of a tree-lined lane. This structure is already listed in the National Register. The district is comprised of 15 contributing archaeological sites, an ice dam, the remains of an ice house and two cemeteries. All locales (see continuation sheet 1)
8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is: N/A

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance
1678-1866

Significant Dates
1678
1770
1865

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
Anglo-American
African-American

Architect/Builder
N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more conclusion sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more conclusion sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- X preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- X previously listed in the National Register
- X previously determined eligible by the National Register
- X designated a National Historic Landmark
- X recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
- X recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
- X Other State agency
- X Federal agency
- X Local government
- X University
- X Other

Name of repository:
College of William and Mary
Hewick Plantation

Name of Property

Middlesex County, VA

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 70 acres

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. Zone 1 1 8 | 3 6 0 0 0 0 0 0 4 1 6 7 1 4 0
   Easting Northing

2. Zone 1 1 8 | 3 5 9 9 8 0 0 4 1 6 7 1 8 0
   Easting Northing

3. Zone 1 1 8 | 3 5 9 9 6 0 0 4 1 6 7 2 0 0
   Easting Northing

4. Zone 1 1 8 | 3 5 9 9 1 0 0 4 1 6 7 2 0 0
   Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marie E. Blake
organization College of William and Mary date April 30, 1993
street & number Anthropology Department telephone (804) 221-1112
city or town Williamsburg state VA zip code 23185

Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property’s location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner
(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name

street & number telephone

city or town state zip code

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 1.7 Page 1 Hewick Plantation, Middlesex County, VA

Other Names/Site Number:
44MX32; 44MX33; 44MX34; 44MX35; HE3; HE4; HE5; HE6; HE7.

Section 7 are associated with the plantation complex. Of the sites, there are two ca. 18th house locations, a 17th century earth-fast structure, a row of six probable slave dwellings and other associated outbuildings. These sites are accompanied by a marked Anglo cemetery and an unmarked probable slave cemetery.

BACKGROUND

Much local folklore surrounds the plantation at Hewick. Research by qualified individuals has been sparse and local versions of history abound, most of which are factually erroneous. Hewick derives its local fame from its long occupation by one prominent family, dating back to the first settlement efforts by colonials. Christopher Robinson I (1645-1693) patented the land in 1678, thus establishing one of the most important family lines in Virginia. Hewick went to Christopher Robinson II (1681-1727), then to Christopher Robinson III (d. 1768), on to Christopher Robinson IV (1738-1784) and then to his sister, Elizabeth Robinson Steptoe. The land remained in Robinson hands until Steptoe's death in 1832 when it was willed to her son-in-law, Richard A. Christian. By 1875, the land was sold completely out of the family with the death of Elizabeth Steptoe Christian. In 1926, a relative of the Christians, P.W. Duer, bought the land back. In 1988, Hewick was purchased by Ed and Helen Battleson, descendants of John Robinson, Christopher Robinson I's brother.

The Battleson's, being very interested in the history of Hewick, invited Dr. Ted Reinhart of the College of William and Mary to conduct research on the property. Christopher Robinson I had been one of the first trustees of the College, and the Battlesons wished to retain that link.

Following extensive historical and documentary research, Dr. Reinhart and his students conducted an archaeological survey of the property. Much of the present day property is used for agricultural fields. These fields were surveyed
after plowing and rain. A series of shovel tests were also
dug at 25-foot intervals throughout the grounds. The results
will be discussed in the following section on a site by site
basis.

44MX24

This site, corresponding to #1 on Map 1, is a large oval
stain in the agricultural field west of the entrance lane.
It is extremely obvious, even when seen from the road.
Artifacts are abundant on the surface and include oyster
shell, ceramics, pipe stems, brick fragments, green bottle
glass, nails and animal bone. Ceramics indicate a mean date
of 1771. Judging from the large size, relation to other
smaller sites and types of artifacts, it is hypothesized that
this was a large dwelling. Unfortunately, this field is
currently in agricultural production and gets plowed on a
regular basis. The plow zone is being continually disturbed,
but there is reason to believe that the lower strata of the
deposit remains undisturbed.

44MX25, 44MX30, 44MX32, 44MX33, 44MX34 and 44MX35

These sites correspond to #2, #8, #12, #13, #14 and #15
respectively on Map 1. These six sites each consist of soil
stains and concentrations of surface artifacts of the same
variety as listed above. The range of mean ceramic dates for
these sites is 1743-1784. All of these sites are in a row
and removed from the larger structure at 44MX24. Most
probably, they represent a series of slave quarters that were
all once along a road. The exact relationship between these
sites and the other structure is unclear at this point.
These sites are in the same agricultural field that undergoes
regular plowing.

44MX26

This site corresponds to #10 on Map 1. It lies in the
field east of the house. Survey suggests this location is an
earth-fast structure with good integrity to the deposit.
Pipe stem dating produces a date of 1676, and since the land
was patented in 1678, this is the probable first structure
built at Hewick and occupied by Christopher Robinson I’s
household. As is true of most arable land in Virginia, this
plot has been repeatedly plowed. But, upon discovery of this site, the field was taken out of cultivation and is now simply lawn. The landowners plan to preserve this site.

44MX27

This site corresponds to #11 on Map 1. It is located in the same field as 44MX26 and is probably associated with it. Pipe stems for this site give a date of 1696. These two structures represent the 17th century component of occupation at Hewick Plantation. It is possible that this site was an outbuilding for the earth-fast house. Since the field has been taken out of agricultural production, both the sites and their context are being preserved.

44MX28

This site is labeled HEkitchen on Map 2. It lies directly in the backyard of the standing house and was originally believed to be the remains of a detached kitchen. On-going archaeological research is being conducted at this locality, and much has been learned about both this structure and the development of the plantation at large.

Excavation has consisted to date of removal of the plow zone by hand and a delineation of the size of the building. Presently stripped down to subsoil, a test unit was dug in order to determine the nature of the structure. It revealed a house basement with walls 2 1/2 bricks thick. The southwest corner of the wall is intact, runs the full length of the west wall, turns for the northwest corner and is then robbed out, as is the rest of the brick. The initial test unit was dug to the depth of the original cellar floor. The eastern limit of the house was determined by the discovery of a robber's trench. The basement is filled with both stratified destruction/construction debris and domestic fill. Massive amounts of artifacts have been recovered from this fill, even though most of it remains unexcavated.

Based on this research, we know that this house was the dwelling occupied right before the standing house was constructed. An inventory of Christopher Robinson II dated 1727 names the rooms of this house. Combining this information, we can deduce a hall and parlor house, brick, with two stories, a possible porch and addition. A unique feature of this house is that its foundations were laid in
shaped bog iron, a naturally occurring iron concretion. The foundations of the standing structure are also made in bog iron. Those structural elements were probably robbed out of the old house for use in the new house.

44MX31

This site corresponds with #9 on Map 1. This site is in the same field as 44MX26 and 44MX27. As with all other sites, it has surface artifacts, of which the ceramics point to a date of ca. 1845. As a 19th century site, it is most likely associated with Richard Allen Christian who owned Hewick at that time. This represents the plantation at the height of slavery and right before the trials of the Civil War.

HE3, HE4, HE5, and HE6

These locations correspond to #3, #4, #5 and #6, respectively, on Map 1. They are all located in the same large agricultural field as 44MX24 and offer more sparse surface artifacts. Artifacts present indicate 19th or even 20th century associations. These most likely represent outbuildings or activity areas associated with plantation operations during those time periods. They are also currently being impacted by farming activities.

HE7

HE7 is identified as #7 on Map 1. It is located in the forest behind the Hewick property. Historically, this was part of the original plantation which ranged in size over time from 4,000 acres to 1,400 acres to the present 70 acres. It is now owned by another party who has not yet been approached for permission to research on that property. The site is the depression of a very large ice house. Associated with it, directly down the slope into the creek is an ice dam, which has now been cut through by water action. Only an unsystematic walking survey has been conducted in this area. It appears to have a lot of archaeological promise. The vicinity also has a large patch of English ivy which would suggest a habitation site of some kind.

Associated with these features in this section of forest is what appears to be an unmarked slave cemetery. Local
folklore makes that claim, which seems to be a feasible one. The site consists of several long, low mounds, typical of the kind used in traditional African-American burial practices. It is thickly covered with periwinkle, also common at cemetery sites. If this is a cemetery, it is a cultural resource of the utmost importance. Since it was impossible to conduct systematic or ground penetrating surveys, more information is not available at this time. A rough date estimation would be 18th century.

Cemetery

The marked, Anglo cemetery can be seen on Map 1 labeled “Cem”. It is north of the Hewick house and is legally not part of the property, but has traditionally been treated as part by the local government. The graves in this family plot are almost all of people who lived at Hewick. Most of the markers are of late 19th, early 20th century dates, but some are as recent as a few years old. Notable markers include one, slightly separated from the rest, of a slave nanny; and another 18th century slab marker that was brought to Hewick for lack of real knowledge of where it belongs. Obviously, as a cemetery, this site has protection under law. It still functions as an important component to the cycle of life and death experienced by generations of residents at Hewick plantation.

Section 8

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Generally, colonial Virginia was shaped by the development of plantation agriculture and the use of slave labor. Seventeenth century settlement in the area was pursued in order to make large amounts of money on cash crops such as tobacco. British colonists came to this new world and brought their culture and traditions with them. But as they stayed, they developed a new worldview and established a planter aristocracy and helped determine the course of the growth of Southern planter society in a wider context.

Though this is a popular topic for historical research, relatively little has been done with historical archaeology. That is especially true of Virginia’s Upper Tidewater. Middlesex county and the archaeological district at Hewick Plantation offers a unique research opportunity. Middlesex
possesses all of its public documents dating back into the 17th century. Also, there are fewer than thirty state recognized archaeological sites in the whole county, not to mention the lack of actual archaeological excavations. The potential for gaining knowledge is great.

The district itself offers a look at the development of plantations over time. 1678 marks the patenting of the land, and thus the beginning of the plantation endeavor. Sites span across the whole period up to, and even beyond the year 1865. For Southern plantations run on the backs of slave labor, that year marks an end to the Civil War and their economic enterprise. Another important date for Hewick is 1770, the beginning of construction of the beautiful, standing Georgian house. That would have been the ultimate expression of success among the planter elite.

Not only is the entire rise and fall of plantations potentially documented in the archaeology, but the different ethnic groups are also represented. Hewick has the "big house" of the white planter as well as the slave dwellings, cemetery, etc. that represent African-Americans. This context could offer answers to many questions on ethnic and/or race relations on colonial America.

Integrity of the sites is generally high, with most of them only experiencing the typical plow damage. All but one remain completely unexcavated, and some are even in a protected environment. Together, they provide an unparalleled plantation context of dwellings and associated structures.

**SECTION 9**

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National Park Service

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10. 18/359730/4167370
11. 18/359740/4167080
12. 18/359820/4167030
13. 18/359860/4166920
14. 18/359580/4166930

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The acreage comprising Hewick is bounded by a line beginning at a point 900’ W of State Route 615 and 1700’ N of State Route 602; then extending 800’ SE to State Route 615; then extending approximately 1600’s along W side of said route; then extending 900’ NW on the N side of State Route 602; then extending 1500’ NE to point of origin.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This boundary includes all archaeological sites to be included within district, and all are parts of the original Hewick plantation. This arrangement preserves the historic integrity of the district. Though Hewick was a much larger plantation at one time, boundaries do not go any further because modern landowners, farms and other developments have eliminated the cohesive integrity of those other possible sites to the central core.
Map of Hewick ca. 1935 when owned by the Duers.
(from Middlesex County Deed Book 93: 6).
APPENDIX 2:

Specific Ceramic Ware and Vessel Types

Photographic examples of wares and vessel types recovered from Sample Unit 44MX28/60S1
A. Chinese export porcelain.

B. Tin-glazed earthenwares ("delft").
A. Trailed slipware, shallow bowl.

B. Combed and dotted slipware cup.
A. Buckley milk pan.

B. North Devon gravel-tempered ware, milk pan.
A. Red earthenware with lead glaze, milk pan.

B. Red earthenware with lead glaze.
A. Red earthenware with brown, speckled lead glaze.

B. Brown stoneware, storage jar.
A. White saltglaze stoneware, plate marleys.

B. Höhr-type stoneware.
A. Westerwald stoneware.

B. Scratch Blue stoneware, tea pot.
A. Nottingham stoneware.

B. Black Basalt stoneware, tea pot.
A. Rosso Antico stoneware, tea pot.

B. Creamware, plate marley.
A. Creamware bowl, Royal marley.

B. Creamware bowl, Royal marley.
A. Creamware bowl, rolled rim.

B. Creamware bowl, rolled rim.
A. Creamware, probably chamber pot.

B. Creamware, handpainted polychrome overglaze.
A. Clouded (Whieldon) Ware, Barley marley.

B. Agate ware.
A. Pearlware, green shell edge plates.

B. Marbled ware, pitcher.
A. Pearlware, engine turned.

B. Pearlware.
A. Whiteware, Flow Blue.
APPENDIX 3:

Site Drawings

Profile drawings for Sample Unit 44MX28/60S1
FIGURE 1
SOILS KEY:
Descriptions and Munsell Colors

1. Dark yellowish brown (Hue 10YR 3/4). Sandy fill with oyster shells, brick fragments, and other artifacts.

2. Dark yellowish brown (Hue 10YR 4/6). Sandy fill with shell fragments and brick crumbs.

3. Brown (Hue 10YR 5/3) to grayish brown ashy fill with brick fragments and other artifacts.


FIGURE 2:
STRATIGRAPHY OF 44MX28/60SI

Northeast Corner

Northwest Corner

Southwest Corner

0 1 ft.
Scale 1:10
6/30/94
MB
FIGURE 3:
STRATIGRAPHY OF 44MX28/60S1
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