

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUILDING PATTERNS IN
TIDEWATER VIRGINIA, 1620-1670

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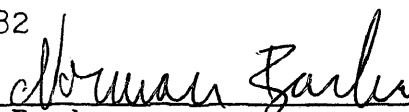
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ABSTRACT

During the first half of the seventeenth century the Virginia colony underwent many significant alterations in its social and economic character. These changes reflect in the settlements constructed during that period. Although the death rates remained high, the straving times of the colony's first ten years were over and the precentages were no longer phenomenal. The population steadily increased after the temporary regression caused by the Indian uprising of 1622. In 1624, the financially troubled Virginia Company of London declared bankruptcy and the crown assumed control of the colony. Because of the Indian uprising in 1622 and the continued Indian threat, a consolidation of settlements took place and outlying areas abandoned for the relative safety of larger, more populated ones. In an effort to drive the native inhabitants from the area colonists established a line of defense between the Rappahannock River and the Hampton Roads peninsula. Settlements such as Middle Plantation, the site of present day Williamsburg, resulted from this action. Legal statutes also helped determine the character of the Tidewater settlements. Law required all dwelling places to be enclosed and fortified and to be manned in sufficient numbers for their defense. Although tensions remained, the possibility of another Indian uprising originating in the Tidewater area no longer existed after their abortive attempts in 1644 to reestablish themselves within the colony. Expansion westward continued during this period and slowly removed the Tidewater area from the colonial frontier. A one crop agricultural system based on the cultivation of the staple crop, tobacco, developed as the European market for this product increased. Large estates owned and controlled by individual families became the model that most aspired to attain, although moderately few achieved.

In response to these changing conditions seventeenth century Virginians developed construction patterns that adapted to their needs. Houses became more elaborate but remained basically impermanent in nature. As the population increased the colonists made greater use of fences to denote ownership, and to protect crops and livestock. Conversely, fortifications grew less and less important in the settled areas and moved toward the frontier. In many ways colonists had achieved their dreams, the recreation of rural England as they had left it several decades ago.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUILDING PATTERNS IN
TIDEWATER VIRGINIA, 1620-1670

INTRODUCTION

During its first sixty years, the Virginia colony underwent significant alterations in its social and economic character. These changes were reflected in the structures built during that period. Although the number of deaths remained high, the starving times of the colony's first ten years had abated; the survival rate increased by a significant percentage. The population steadily rose after the temporary regressions caused by the Indian uprising in 1622. In 1624, the financially troubled Virginia Company of London declared bankruptcy and the crown reluctantly assumed control of the colony. Due to the uprising in 1622 and the continued Indian threat, a consolidation of settlements took place. Outlying areas were abandoned for the relative safety of larger, more populated ones. In an effort to drive the native inhabitants from the tidewater region, colonists established a line of defense between the Rappahannock River and the Hampton Roads peninsula. Settlements such as Middle Plantation, the site of present-day Williamsburg, developed as the result of this centralizing action.

Legal statutes also helped to determine the character of tidewater settlement. The law required all dwelling places to be enclosed and fortified, and to be manned in sufficient numbers for their defense. By enacting this

statute, officials hoped to reduce the chance of attacks upon small dispersed settlements.¹

Although tensions remained, the possibility of another uprising within the tidewater region decreased after the abortive attempt of the Indians in 1644 to re-establish themselves. The westward expansion of the colony continued and gradually removed the tidewater area from the colonial frontier. A one-crop economy based on the cultivation of the staple crop, tobacco, evolved as the European market for this product increased. Large estates, owned and controlled by individual families, became the model that most free colonists aspired to attain, although few achieved. By the 1660s an aristocracy of sorts had developed and class structures were becoming well defined. Bacon's Rebellion in 1676 marked a culmination of political and social tensions in the Virginia colony. It resulted in part from the growing anxiety between the faction supporting the governor, Sir William Berkeley, and those living on the western frontier led by Nathaniel Bacon.²

By the 1670s tidewater Virginia had grown into what its inhabitants considered a civilized country. Landed estates dotted the countryside, the church became an accus-

¹ William W. Hening, ed., Laws of Virginia, 1619-1660, Vol. I (Richmond: Samuel Pleasants, Jr., 1809), p. 127.

² For greater detail see Edmund Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom, Chapter 13, "The Losers," pp. 250-270.

tomed part of landscape, the government functioned regularly, and most significantly, the colonists now recognized themselves as something other than transplanted Englishmen: they were Virginians.³

As a part of the background for this series of developments, English settlers, and later Virginians, built structures to satisfy their changing needs. In their original usage, the buildings were English, probably East Anglian, forms recreated in a new environment. Slowly, under the pressures of alien landscapes and different needs, colonists adapted these structures to their new surroundings. In order to clarify this pattern of development, this examination of vernacular structures will recreate a series of images or "snap shots" of Virginia at approximately twenty year intervals, beginning in the 1620s and continuing through the 1670s.

The structures built by the colonists fell into three basic categories: houses, fences or pales, and palisades. The forms of all of these developed through time, gradually changing with the needs of the builders. At all times there were factors such as the environment and security leading toward adaptation and change, as well as continuity or consistency of form.

³
Wesley Frank Craven, White, Red, and Black, The Seventeenth-Century Virginian (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1971) pp. 25-26.

Information for this study will be drawn from a wide variety of sources. Virtually all existing primary materials from this period contain some reference to colonists and their settlements. Travel literature and narrative dialogues furnish excellent material concerning the early periods covered by this study. Examples of these materials come from the writings of John Smith, Ralph Hamor, William Strachey, and John Pory. Governor Berkeley's works dealing with the later decades are equally useful. The records of the Virginia Company of London, the Virginia Council, and the Virginia House of Burgesses also contain relevant information. William W. Hening's edition of the *The Laws of Virginia* contributes a valuable outline of the basic legal structure of the colony's settlements. The various county court records provide a comparably rich source of data. The Calendar of State Papers compiled by Great Britain's Public Record Office often gives confirmation of events in the colony. In addition, corroborating evidence supplied by recent archaeological work done at sites such as Kingsmill, Governor's Land, Flowerdew Hundred and others will be considered.

CHAPTER I

The majority of those arriving in the Virginia colony during the initial wave of colonization traced their origins to the southeastern section of England.¹ In addition to their material possessions they brought their cultural heritage which reflected their past experiences and helped shape their reactions to their new environment. This heritage not only governed their attitudes toward land use and possession in a colonial territory, but also the forms of the structures they built upon the land. People in unfamiliar surroundings tend to recreate shapes familiar to them in order to foster a sense of emotional security. The men arriving in Jamestown in 1607 and in the decade that followed built structures that copied as nearly as possible those of their home counties.

To comprehend the structures one must first understand something of the men doing the building. Those men most likely to attempt a colonial venture were from the middle ranks of the English social structure: husbandmen,

¹ Wesley Frank Craven, White, Red, and Black, The Seventeenth-Century Virginian (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1971) p. 29, describes the average Virginia colonist: male, young but not a child, most likely from the southeast of England, not religiously motivated, and political ambivalent. He was primarily an adventurer.

yeomen, small merchants, and the younger sons of the lesser gentry. An aristocrat might be willing to venture a monetary investment but not his person. At the other end of the social spectrum, the extremely poor could not pay their passage unless they indentured themselves, but unfortunately, they had few desirable skills.² Richard Eburne expressed in the pamphlet, "A Plaine Path-way to Plantations", the opinion he shared with many of his contemporaries that the yeoman would make the fittest recruit for the New World. He argued, "Not only would the colonies be aided thereby, but men of this class, 'that have in them some good knowledge and courage,' themselves stood to profit much by the opportunities they would have there."³ Those who made the Virginia voyage sought to make their fortunes and then return to England; they had no intention of making a permanent home in the colonies. These men were often motivated by promotional literature and the fantastic tales and actual riches of the Spanish experience in the New World.

In sixteenth-century England wealth, property, and social status were in a state of flux. Bondsmen, freed during the preceding centuries, benefitted economically and socially under the Tudors. These monarchs fostered the

2

Ibid, pp. 7-8.

3

Mildred Campbell, The English Yeoman, Under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942) p. 279. Although this study is relatively old it remains the basis for much current scholarship, for example in Craven and Morgan.

ambitions of an emerging middle class in order to limit the power and the wealth of the nobility. The new merchants, artisans, and manufacturers actively sought new markets for their goods and therefore encouraged colonization first in Ireland and later in the New World.

Two trends causing the economic displacement of persons from landed families also encouraged speculation in Virginia and the other English colonies. The English method of inheritance involved both entail and primogeniture.⁴ In families where landed estates constituted the wealth, this system often left younger sons of less prosperous families ill provided to meet the financial and social demands of their society. Enclosure also affected the status of lesser land holders. This policy ended the practice of open or common fields and led to amassing of large estates at the expense of small property owners. For the dispossessed, colonial opportunities provided viable alternatives to joining the growing ranks of the poor.

Although the government took no official role in the original colonization of Virginia, it actively encouraged interest in such ventures. Under Elizabeth I and James I the English experienced a stable political atmos-

4

Entail involves the limiting of the inheritance of the landed estate to a specified line of heirs as that it cannot be sold, bequeathed, or other wise alienated from the family. Primogeniture indicates that the principle of inheritance or right of succession passes to the first-born, specifically the eldest living son or his heirs.

phere for the first time in several centuries. The Crown wished to encourage trade and the development of a colonial empire to offset the growing power of the Spanish and the French. English monarchs were also quick to realize the value of land patents in exchange for favors or in payment of royal debts, a policy that corresponded well with a desire for a large trading network. The grant of fifty acres as a headright to any person transporting himself or another person to the colonies provided an irresistible lure in a society that gauged its wealth in land. The previous English experience with colonization also had a profound effect on Virginia settlers. English adventurers and the military, encouraged and often supported by the crown, had been active in both Ireland and Scotland during the sixteenth century.

Like the earlier English colonists to Scotland and to Ireland the people arriving in Virginia carried in their minds a set tradition or "grammar" concerning the construction of buildings.⁵ They were fortunate in deriving from the southeast for it was, according to Mildred Campbell, that region that displayed "perhaps the greatest variety in both style and materials."⁶ Unlike most other regions of

⁵ Henry Glassie, Folk Housing in Middle Virginia (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975), p. 13.

⁶ Campbell, English Yeoman, p. 123. For additional information see the following: Beatrice Saunders, Age of Candlelight, The English Social Scene in the Seventeenth Century (Philadelphia: Dufour Editions, 1961), pp. 120-121,

England, the southeast still possessed a large number of wooded areas and these provided a preferred building material. Farmhouses and even small cottages "used oak timbers of tremendous weight and thickness." Elm and ash followed as second and third choices where oak was not available. Builders often used wood in combination with plaster made of native chalk or tile and brick from local clays. Little native stone could be found in the region and only the wealthy could afford to import it.⁷ The dwelling house of a prosperous yeomen might have glass in the windows and a sturdy chimney. The roofs of most structures were carefully⁸ thatched. The ample variety of building materials available in their native counties prepared the colonists to use the resources available to them in Virginia.

According to Elizabeth Burton, the "Houses for the most part...were built to the centuries' old pattern."⁹

126; Arthur Bryant, The England of Charles II (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1934), pp. 19,74; John Gloag and C. Thompson Walker, Home Life in History: Social Life and Manners in Britain (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1928), pp. 211-213; Christina Hole, English Home-Life, 1500-1800 (London: B.T. Batsford, LTD., 1947) pp. 1-12. Although many recent works exist concerning the growth of academic architecture in England few, if any, available to me dealt with its vernacular aspects.

⁷
Ibid., p. 224.

⁸
Maurice Ashley, Life in Stuart England (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1964), p. 42.

⁹
Elizabeth Burton, The Jacobeans at Home, (London: Martin Secker and Warburg Limited, 1962), p. 66.

The humble cottages of the laborers were "dry Walled 'slatt' roofed with little or noe tunnells to their chimneys."

They normally contained one room known as the houseroom or housepart with additions made to the sides called "outshuts."

These might include a buttery, a pantry or a bed chamber.

Commonly a loft under the eaves served as additional

sleeping quarters.¹⁰ Such structures were drafty and smoky for most dwellings were built of clay and branches with the only outlet for smoke being the door.¹¹ Other historians

confirm these descriptions calling such structures "flimsy huts" which rarely possessed a window or a door, and dwellings of "rudimentary construction - of branches, rushes, and turf, of palings and hurdles, of wattle, clay, and mud."¹²

The yeomen's dwelling was distinguished by its appearance of greater prosperity. These structures "were built chiefly for durability...following in the main the traditional lines of the small English house, a compact rectangular structure of one-and-a-half or two stories."¹³ In Essex, in one local variation, these buildings often

10

Ibid.

11

Wallace Notestein, The English People on the Eve of Colonization, 1602-1630 (New York: Harper and Row, 1954), p. 83.

12

Ashley, Life in Stuart England, pp. 32-33; Fiske Kimball, Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and of the Early Republic (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922) rep. by Dover Publications, Inc., 1966., pp. 3-4.

13

Campbell, English Yeoman, p. 229.

received a covering of wattling board.¹⁴ Although thatched roofs predominated, some had a covering of tile. All were steeply pitched for durability and good drainage in the rainy English climate.¹⁵ Room arrangements varied from two to ten bays or rooms including the outbuildings. Five to nine rooms normally constituted a dwelling. Innovations, such as fireplace grates and glass windows, much improved the yeomen's lot.¹⁶ The size of the structure was a function of the occupant's wealth. The small yeoman or the husbandman might have two major rooms and a small addition serving as a buttery or kitchen. The average yeoman considered himself fortunate to have a dwelling of a story-and-a-half in addition to his milkhouse, malthouse, and several other small, attached outbuildings. The well-to-do yeoman usually possessed a good, two-story home, half-timbered with brick or stone.¹⁷ In any such structure, the main or central room was referred to as the hall. This room served as the center of all activity; meals were prepared and served, guests received, and indoor chores conducted. The parlor ranked next in importance and was slightly removed from the focus of attention. It normally contained the "best bedd"

14

Notestein, The Eve of Colonization, p. 74.

15

Campbell, English Yeoman, p. 225.

16

Ibid., p. 230.

17

Notestein, The Eve of Colonization, pp. 73-74.

and acted as a quasi-living room.

With this considerable repertoire of housing types the Englishman had much to draw upon in his new situation. Placed in the alien surroundings of the New World without a formal architectural code to follow, Virginia colonists drew upon personal memories and experiences.

Similarly the Englishmen arriving in Virginia in 1607 had considerable experience with the use of fences. As in the construction of their houses, they utilized whatever materials were most available in a variety of forms: walls, pales, and hedgerows. The English landscape of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries lacked the formality of later periods. Pastures ran up to the houses and farmyard and kitchen gardens were often within eye-sight, if not adjacent to the house. A hedgerow might consist of nothing more than small trees planted at intervals and allowed to overgrow.¹⁹ A line of pales, or posts and planks, or a stone or brick wall might set off the garden plot or farmyard of a prosperous yeoman. Only the gentry possessed the means to keep the walled, formal gardens made popular by the Tudors. Ornamental fences or borderings remained quite popular in herb and flower gardens. Boards, tiles, small pebbles or stones, and the shank bones of

18

Campbell, English Yeoman, p. 234.

19

Ibid., p. 12.

sheep were described as the latest mode.

With the advent of enclosure, or the consolidation of farmlands, fences took on a new function. Rather than serving as protection for a small area such as a garden, or to keep animals from straying in or out of the area, the fence now proclaimed ownership of the land. For many small farmers who held land in common with several others, this meant that a large land-owner, "suddenly put up a fence, where no fence had been, as a token of possession."²¹ Such actions undoubtably caused ill feelings, although they increased the value of the land. Edwin F. Gay in "The Midland Revolt of 1607" cites several instances where people used fences to satisfy personal grudges or settle neighborhood quarrels. In such cases, the enclosures often fell victim to local vandalism. Gay relates one incident in which a Cheshire yeoman requested his servant, Katherine, to "goe and pull down yonder fence."²²

The English colonist going to Virginia also possessed a well-established tradition for the construction of fortifications. The English method of fort construction traced its roots to an Italian renaissance model conceived by Giorgio Martini and first utilized by Michele Sanmicheli

20

Burton, Jacobean at Home, p. 37.

21

Notestein, The Eve of Colonization, p. 73.

22

Campbell, English Yeoman, p. 86 fn.

early in the sixteenth century.²³ According to Horst de la Croix, a noted expert on late Renaissance siege defences, the replacement of the popular round bastion or tower with a structure consisting of three squares in a triangular formation, "became the most important and sensitive feature of the new system of fortification."²⁴ This allowed for the increased protection of the flanks through the elimination of blind spots. This model also called for the construction of a ditch with a banked wall rising from its interior edge. The use of ditches increased the difficulty of scaling the walls. The introduction of gunpower to the European military arsenal in the fifteenth century necessitated these changes.²⁵ Many-sided structures became popular, with the pentangle the most practical. Numerous sides facilitated structural security. For similar reasons architects rarely considered the needs of the inhabitants when placing gates. These often impeded the flow of traffic in both directions.²⁶ (See Fig. 1)

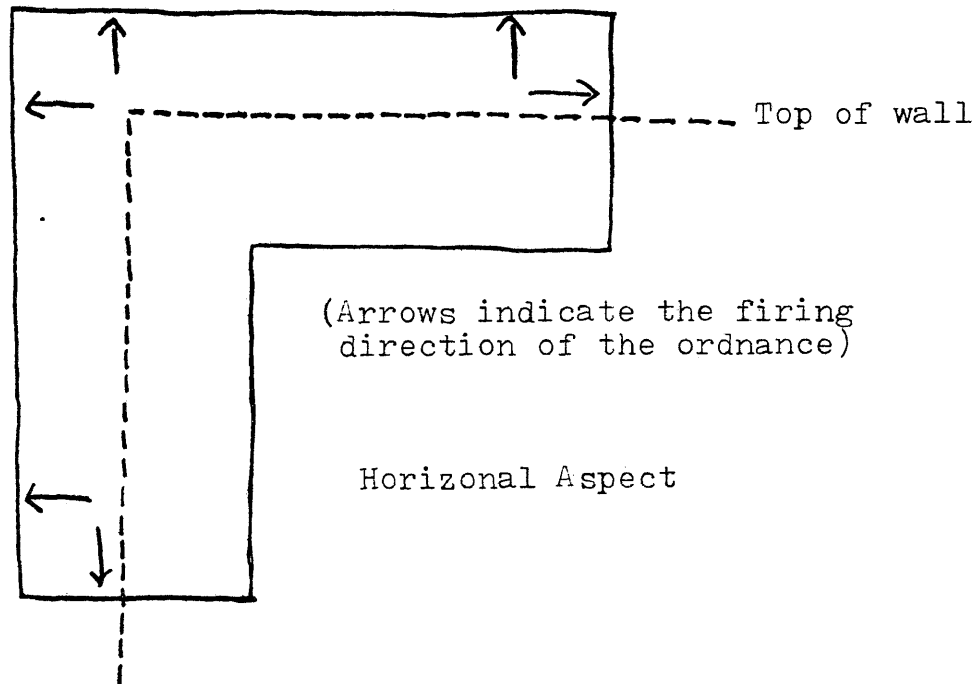
²³
Willard B. Robinson, American Fort, Architectural Form and Function (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977), p. 8.

²⁴
Horst de la Croix, Military Considerations in City Planning: Fortifications (New York: George Braziller, 1972), p. 44.

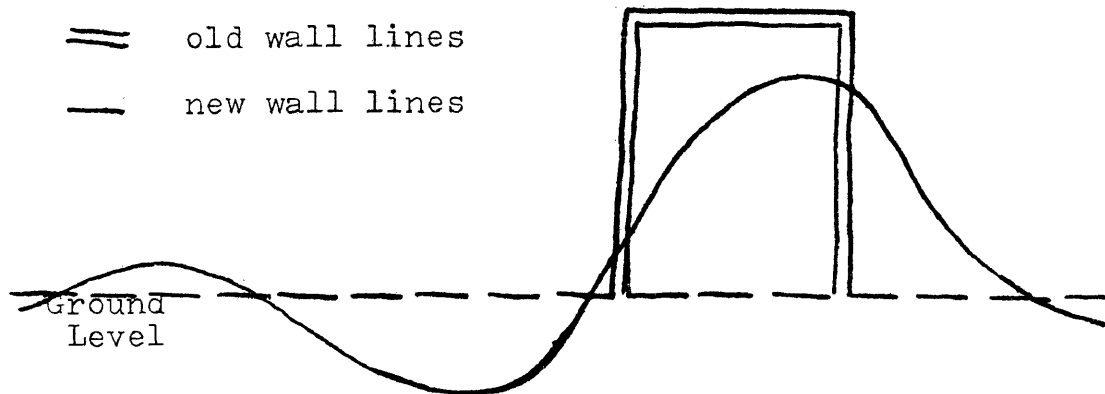
²⁵
De la Croix, Military Considerations, pp. 44-45.

²⁶
Ibid., pp. 49-52. Also see T. F. Reddaway, "The Capital," Life Under the Stuarts, ed., J. E. Morpurgo (London: Falcon Educational Books, 1950), p. 58.

Figure 1



Vertical Aspect showing changes in wall construction



Bulwark with three square construction

The English experience also included earlier, colonial experiments. In preparing the island of Bermuda against the possibility of a Spanish attack, Governor More fortified eight or nine separate locations in the manner described. At each of the sites, ordnance of some type were mounted.²⁷ More to the point was the background gained in Ireland and in Scotland during the previous century. The "Phillips Manuscript" reveals the type of fortified towns popular and widely used by English colonizers. The plan of Londonderry corresponds well with that of the Plymouth colony's original structure.²⁸ Certain Irish components can also be identified in the literature referring to the structure at Jamestown. In the discussions preceding an expedition to Virginia during the mid-1580s, plans for the construction of a fort were given careful consideration. The suggested sites included a marsh, an island, or a peninsula which could be easily defended. The plans called for a fort in the form of a pentangle, "with [five], large bulwarkd and the curtyns [sides or flanks] sumwhat slant, that the yearthe may lye the faster." Beyond the gates there was to be a large ditch with a palisade fifteen to twenty high.²⁹

27

John Smith, The General Historie of Virginia (London: I. D. and I. H. for Michael Sparkes, 1624), rep. by Readex Mircoprint, Inc., p. 213.

28

James Deetz, In Small Things Forgotten (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1977), p. 101.

29

"Preparations for the 1585 Virginia Voyage", William and Mary Quarterly VI, Third Series (April, 1943), 213.

Some years later, John Smith speaking of the abandoned structure at Roanoke, reported that his party found the houses dismantled, "and the place strongly inclosed with a high Palizado, very fortlike."³⁰ In such colonial experiments, the organizers received grants of hundreds or half-hundreds according to the number of soldiers and colonists they brought with them. "These lords were then to accept the responsibility for the fortifications and defense of their land." This scheme derived almost entirely from the "Roman method of colonization."³¹

Persons involved in the Virginia experiment went to the colony for a variety of reasons: some for adventure, others in search of outlets for their military talents, most to make their fortunes. Several factors determined the attitudes of the colonists. Very few, if any, went to Virginia during its earliest years planning to remain for the rest of their lives. The colony remained temporary in nature until the advent of the 1620s. The reorganization of the Virginia Company in 1619 established for the first time a policy of encouraging family settlement and a regular, in situ, colonial government. The men arriving in 1610, or even 1616, had only vague ideas about the nature of the Virginia economy or agriculture. No stable economic base had been

³⁰

Smith, General Historie, p. 15.

³¹

Nicholas P. Canny, The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established, 1565-76 (London: Barnes and Noble Books, 1976) p. 88.

developed. All of these forces conspired to make the settlements established during the first ten years tentative and temporary.

The earliest dwelling houses usually copied the simplest English design - the cottage. Because their occupants considered them temporary dwellings, the structures were often rude in construction. After a visit to Virginia, in 1624, a Captain Butler, reported, "Their houses are generally the worst that I ever saw" and matched the condition of only the meanest English cottage.³² Some commentators saw matters in a slightly more favorable light. A report entitled, "The Life of Virginia ...", printed in 1612, described houses as "decent" and "competant" with the first story of brick. This is suggestive of the half timber and half plaster, brick or stone construction then popular in England.³³ Thatched roofs remained a favorite with the colonists in the New World; they were practical and durable. In a narrative printed in 1610 William Barret described the thatched dwellings of Jamestown and contended that they were

32

Conway Robinson, ed., Abstract of the Proceedings of the Virginia Company of London, 1619-1624, Vol. II (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1885), pp. 171-172. Although his full name was not given in this context it appears likely that this Butler's first name was Nathaniel. (See John Smith's account) It is also true that Butler's account may have been biased against the colonists or the Virginia Company. However, all accounts from this period are skewed in one direction or another.

33

"The New Life of Virginia ...," rep. in Force, ed., American Colonial Tracts, Vol. I, no. 7 (Rochester, N.Y.: George P. Humphrey, 1897), pp. 8-9.

as "warm and defensible against winde and weather, as if they were tiled and slated."³⁴

English colonists were forced to adapt the English modes of fencing to their new environment. Ralph Hamor in 1614 reported the use of pales or fences between rivers to secure land for hogs and cattle. In particular, he cited the use of such a cross pale at Rochdale. This structure enclosed a twenty-mile circuit with houses scattered along its length.³⁵

Parallels undoubtedly existed between European and early New World fortifications. Descriptions of Jamestown reveal the attention given to English or European defense systems. In 1610 William Strachey said that the stockade at Jamestown was "about halfe an Acre ... on the North side of the River, ... cast almost into the form of a Triangle, and so Pallizadoes." He also stated that the outer structure was made of planks and strong posts planted four feet in the ground.³⁶ Similar descriptions establish the existence of bulwarks in the shape of "halfe moon[s]," each with four or

³⁴
"A True Declaration of the Estate of the Colonie in Virginia," prt. for William Barret, London, 1610, rep. in Force, p. 20.

³⁵
Charles E. Hatch, Jr., The First Seventeen Years, Virginia, 1606-1624 (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 1957), pp. 62-63.

³⁶
William Strachey, "The Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania," rep. in David B. Quinn ed., North American Discovery (New York: Harper and Row, Inc., 1971), pp. 311-312.

five artillery pieces aimed to prevent frontal and flank attacks.³⁷

As time passed all of these structures underwent modifications. Colonists would adapt them to the climate and to their new needs. These changes did not occur rapidly and were influenced by many factors, including social stratification, economic developments, and relations with the local Indians and foreign powers.

³⁷

Hatch, The First Seventeen Years, p. 4.

CHAPTER II

The use of basically English structural forms from 1607 through 1620 remained common practice. Any adaptation made by the colonists resulted from needs created by local conditions in Virginia. Colonists made little change in the physical environment of Virginia during the initial twelve or thirteen years of the colony's existence. In this period the forces for continuity of the English modes remained more powerful than those which encouraged modification. In addition to the environment, demographics, economics, and politics had some influence on the character of the structures. Because the colonists' English experience had prepared them for the rigors of the damp climate, if not the extremes in temperature found in Virginia, few, if any, changes in structural forms were made to accommodate to the climatic environment.

The most significant alterations involved fences or enclosures, which took on different functions in the Virginia countryside. In England, fences constructed of local materials such as wood, stone, or brick separated or enclosed gardens or farmyards. Fences often denoted ownership or acted as a border. In Virginia these structures usually served functional purposes (protection or ownership) rather than aesthetic (decorative) ones. They enclosed ground for

both gardens and livestock. Depredation by wild animals remained a nuisance and a serious hazard to a people often threatened by starvation. Fences also fulfilled a psychological need for the Virginia colonists. They separated man from his forested surroundings. Fences were a sign a civilization, a protection against the encroaching and sometimes hostile environment.

Enclosures for the confinement of livestock, a valuable commodity to all colonists, played an important role in the early years of the Virginia colony. Although animals were generally allowed to roam around the countryside, pales, like the one at Rochdale mentioned in Ralph Hamor's report, prevented valuable livestock from wandering off into the nearby forests. Archaeological and written¹ evidence reveals a multiplicity of these structures.

As early as 1609, a reorganization at Jamestown assigned small sections of land for private gardens in hopes of stimulating the production of foodstuffs. In 1614,

1

Charles E. Hatch, Jr., The First Seventeen Years, Virginia, 1606-1624 (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 1957), pp. 62-63; Norman Barka, "Flowerdew Hundred," Lecture presented at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va., Feb. 6, 1978. Although colonists did not enclose animals in the present day sense of a paddock or corral they did make some attempt to limit the number of hogs and cattle lost to the nearby forest. Also see Norman Barka, Cary Carson, William Kelso, et al., "Impermanent Housing in Seventeenth Century Virginia," Winterthur Collection, (Summer, 1982). This article deals with many of the same subjects and reaches the same general conclusions as my thesis, but was published too late for me to make use of in this study.

Governor Dale allotted individual garden plots for cultivation to independent farmers.² The Virginia Company also hoped to encourage the planters through good example. In 1623 Richard Stephens received a grant in James City with the instructions to enclose the ground about the house for gardening and planting, "so that others may be the more encouraged by his example."³

By the 1620s the newly-formed government passed statutes requiring the construction of fences about garden areas. A regulation of March, 1623/24, stated that every free man must fence in a quarter of an acre per head right before "Whitsuntide next" to make a garden for the planting of vines, herbs, foods and other foodstuffs. The cost was to be absorbed by the owner of the land. No individual, however, had to enclose more than one acre.⁴ A similar law required each planter to produce one spare bushel of corn for each person in his household. Furthermore, he was held responsible for the cultivation of six mulberry trees, silkflax and hemp plants, and at least ten

² Edmund Morgan, "The First American Boom, 1618 to 1630," William and Mary Quarterly XXVIII, Third Series (April, 1971), 82.

³ Conway Robinson, ed., Abstract of the Proceedings of the Virginia Company of London, 1619-1624 Vol. I (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1885), p. 21fn.

⁴ Hening, p. 126. The final provision of this statute limited the responsibility of the large land owner. The holders of hundreds and half-hundreds would have refused to enclose and cultivate large areas for food stuffs rather than tobacco.

vines in his garden.⁵

Colonists also used enclosures or pales to create a sense of security in the "wilderness." Both Governors Gates and Dale recognized the importance of such structures. Drawing on previous colonial experiences, they recommended the enclosure of larger areas to provide security for the inhabitants. They advised the fortification of a peninsula through the construction of a palisade between two rivers or streams. By doing so, private allotments could be simply enclosed - on one side by a fence and along the remaining circumference by water.⁶ In 1611, Governor Dale, having developed a distaste for the region around Jamestown, decided to move his headquarters upriver to Henrico, located on the north side of the James River, some miles below an Arrochetock village. He selected a site two miles inland and proposed to build a "strong Pale" two miles in length from river to river. In preparation he had wooden "pales, posts and railles to impale his proposed new towne," made at Jamestown.⁷ Across the James River and slightly to the west he ordered a twelve-mile circuit, called Coxen-dale, to be impaled in this manner to make a feed lot for his hogs. He

⁵ "Proceedings of the Virginia Assembly, 1619," Narratives of Early Virginia, 1606-1625, Lyon Gardiner Tyler, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), p. 264. (Further selections from this work will be identified as coming from Narratives.)

⁶ Morgan, "The First American Boom," 82.

⁷ Hatch, The First Seventeen Years, p. 50.

advised the Reverend Alexander Whitaker to do the same to enclose the church-lands, about one hundred acres, at Roche Hall.⁸ At Bermuda and at Rochdale Hundreds, settlers used pales of two and four miles, respectively, to secure the areas. Dwelling houses were built along their length for security purposes.⁹ It was also during this period that the proposals for a much extended pale between the James and York Rivers first received notice. However, records show, "Nothing came at this time of the proposal for running a pale from Martin's Hundred to Cheskacke."¹⁰ When colonists finally constructed such a pale they chose a site several miles to the west.

Another plausible function for these enclosures might have been for protection against human trespassers. Like English colonists elsewhere, those in Virginia desired such structures and abundantly documented this preference. Although they wanted "fortifications," they did not feel they were capable of undertaking the construction of them. In February 1619/20, the colonists requested the Virginia

⁸ Ibid., pp. 60-61. This citation again illustrates the use of pales or fences by the colonials for the enclosure of livestock.

⁹ John Smith, General Historie of Virginia (London: I. D. and J. H. for Michael Sparks, 1624), rep. by Readex Microprint, Inc., p. 111.

¹⁰ Hatch, The First Seventeen Years, p. 106. A pale running from the James River to the York River was not built until the middle of the 1620s. It was then known as the Middle Plantation Pale, and was constructed to clarify boundaries with the local Indians.

Company to construct some type of protection, being "very desirous to have engineers set unto them for the raising of fortifications," and the settlers, themselves, would willing bear the charge. Sir Thomas Smith, Sir Nathaniel Rich, and General Cecil undertook the task of finding qualified "engineers."¹¹ During the following month Cecil reported the existence of a Frenchman who met the desired qualifications and had agreed to travel to Virginia to construct two types of structure: the first "for the enduring of assaults and battery, which is not as he accounts there very needful," the second "of chusing and taking some place of advantage and there to make some palisadoes, which conceiveth the fittest" for the area and the situation of the colony.¹² Some time later, Rich despaired of contracting with the Frenchman and resolved to look elsewhere. The company deputy, Mr. John Ferrar, seems to have solved the problem for in May he referred to the "treaty with Mr. Englebert ... for the matter of strength by way of fortification."¹³

In addition to building new structures, the Virginia colonists were also called upon to repair or rebuild existing ones. They did so with traditional English methods. John Smith frequently spoke of the repairs at

¹¹ C. Robinson, Abstracts, Vol. I, p. 44.

¹² Ibid., pp. 46-47.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 51, 74, 86.

Jamestown. In one instance he mentioned the fort "newly and strongly impaled about it."¹⁴ The entire structure underwent renovation some time later and observers described it as being surrounded "with a Palizade of fourteen or fifteen foot each of as much as three or foure men could carry." It again followed the three-bulwark plan and had a total of twenty-four guns mounted on "convenient" platforms.¹⁵

For better protection, the colonists built a blockhouse on the neck of their island, Jamestown, at Blunt Point and stationed a garrison of men there for its defense.¹⁶ Two carpenters were sent from England and local help was recruited to do the work. The forty men assigned to the location were kept at the expense of the colony.¹⁷ This structure and the others that followed aimed at the control of the native population. As early as 1608, settlers built a small fort on the tidal creek across from Jamestown, which later became known as Rolfe House.¹⁸ A year later, preparing for a possible retreat from Jamestown, the settlers constructed another fort on a hill that was difficult to

¹⁴ Smith, General Historie, p. 112.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 85. The term blockhouse refers to a strongly built structure of fairly good size, and well supplied. The men stationed there did not necessarily live within the building.

¹⁷ C. Robinson, Abstracts, Vol. II, pp. 171-172.

¹⁸ Hatch, The First Seventee Years, p. 8.

19
assault openly.

By the time John Smith left Jamestown and returned to England, settlement expanded outward from its nucleus around Jamestown. One of the individuals left behind reported that

besides Jamestown that was strongly Pallizadoes, containing some fiftie or sixtie houses, he [Smith] left five or six other severall Forts and Plantations though they were not so sumptuous as our successors expected, they were better then they provided any for us.²⁰

In 1609, George Percy sent Captain John Radcliffe down river from Jamestown to build a fort at the site known as Point Comfort. Naming it after Lord de la Warr's "name and howse," he chose to call it "Algertown Foarte." To supplement this structure, de la Warr ordered the construction of two more forts to be known as Fort Henry and Fort Charles, and located on either side of the Southhampton River. Situated on a pleasant plain, both were "wholesome," healthy spots near fresh springs and wooded pastures. More important, they each commanded a large vista of the surrounding area. The forts served a dual purpose: defense against a possible Indian attack and a resting spot for travelers along the James River. Described in 1614 as stockades "without brick or stone," they sheltered fifty men

19

Ibid., p. 7.

20

Smith, General Historie, p. 93.

21
 between them. The results at Point Comfort were much less favorable. Although the colonists knew from practical experience that the land at the conjunction of the James and York Rivers was mostly swamp land, it appeared on English maps to be an ideal location. The question was to be debated through the late 1620s.²² Don Diego Molina, a shipwrecked Spaniard, described the structure there in 1613 as "a weak structure of boards ten hands high with twenty-five soldiers and four iron pieces." Trying to encourage his Spanish superiors to attack the colony, he contemptuously described most of the Virginia palisades as "boards and so weak that one kick would break them down, and once arriving at the ramparts those without would have the advantage over those within because its beams and loop holes are common to both parts." He believed that they were "fortifications without skill and made by unskilled men."²³

As with the other types of structures, few changes occurred in the architectural forms governing the construction of houses or dwelling places. For the most part, they

21
 Hatch, The First Seventeen Years, p. 95; Smith, General Historie, p. 108. Selections chosen by Hatch support the observations made by those accompanying Smith.

22
 "The Relation of the Lord De-La-Warr, 1611," Narratives, p. 212.

23
 "The Letter of Don Diego de Molina, 1613," Narratives, pp. 220-221, 223. De Molina was shipwrecked off the coast of Virginia and spent some time among the Virginia colonists awaiting the negotiations and the ship that would return him to Spanish territory.

remained simply constructed from whatever materials were at hand. Captain Butler, answering the queries of the Virginia Company, stated that well into the 1620s houses were "most built for use and not for ornament." For transportation the colonists still relied on rivers, creeks and streams rather than roads,²⁴ which indicates a continued preference for dwelling sites along the available waterways. Some improvements in materials were made. For example, Sir Thomas Smith reported that upon his arrival in 1617 he found houses made of seasoned timber rather than the green wood originally used.²⁵

Edmund Morgan comments upon this continuing tendency toward impermanence in colonial structures in his article, "The First American Boom: Virginia, 1618 to 1630." He contends that these dwellings could be seen as temporary habitations as late as 1626. Quoting from the Virginia Company Records, he supports this belief with the following statement:

Their houses stands scattered one from another, and are onlie made of wood, few or none of them being framed houses but punches [post] set into the Ground and covered with Boards so as a firebrand in sufficent to consume them all.²⁶

²⁴

C. Robinson, Abstracts, Vol. II, p. 178.

²⁵

"The Tragical Relations of the Virginia Assembly, 1624," Narratives, p. 242.

²⁶

Morgan, "The First American Boom," 180-181.

Archaeological findings from the tidewater area complement the documentary evidence. Ivor Noel Hume (in Historical Archaeology) contends that colonists utilized three basic forms in the construction of their dwelling places and other houses: those with continuous, underlying sills of stone or masonry; those with masonry or wooden piers supporting the overlying sills; and those that were "mere posts serving either as piles beneath the sills or as integral parts of the structures."²⁷ Most popular during the early seventeenth century were post and pier structures. Noel Hume believes that the sills of the houses rested upon the posts or piers. Piers usually consisted of shallow, but well-seated blocks. Posts commonly were set rather than driven into the ground and served a purpose similar to that of the pier.²⁸ (see Fig. 2)

At Flowerdew Hundred, located about thirty-five miles up the James River from Jamestown, there exist at least two excavated and documented structures from this period. A large stone foundation measuring forty-one feet by twenty-four feet constitutes the first of these structures. This structure in its original form was probably built during the 1620s and had a partition which created a small offset room measuring ten by twelve feet. In the main chamber

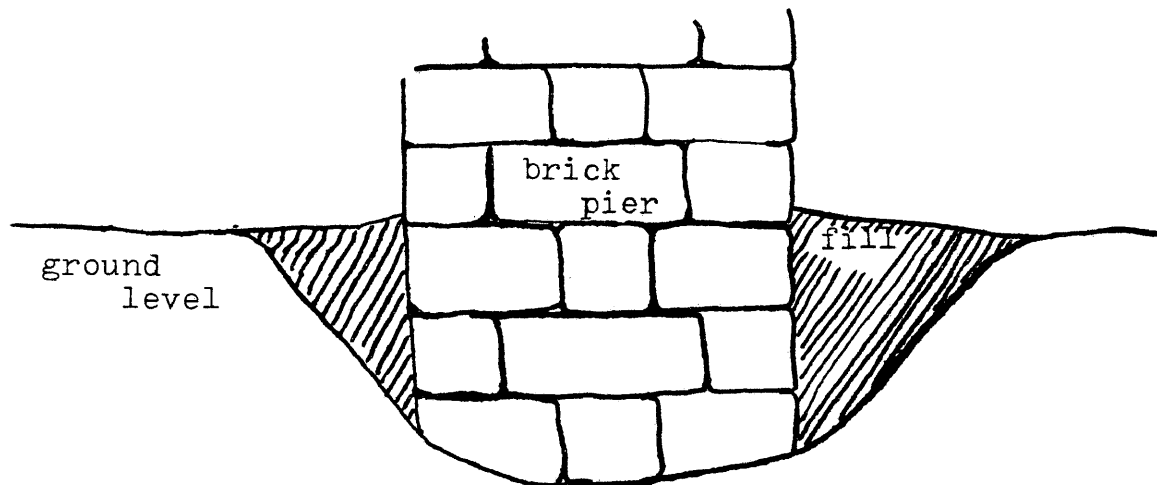
²⁷

Ivor Noel Hume, Historical Archaeology (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1975), p. 115.

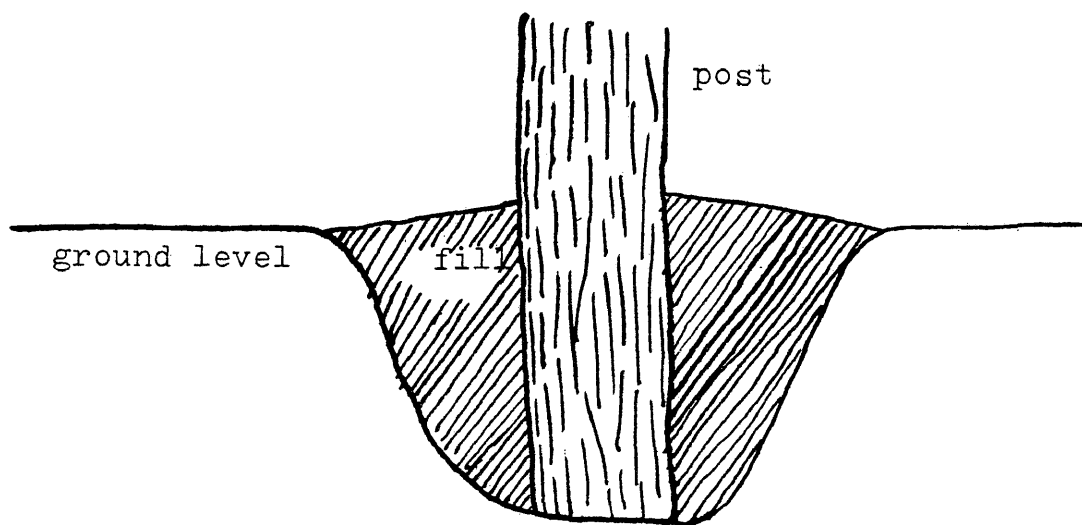
²⁸

Ibid., pp. 133-135.

Figure 2



Pier Hole



Post Hole

Side view of pier and post hole placement

existed a horseshoe shaped fireplace. Additions and out-buildings were later added to the main structure. The foundation, of imported Bristol stone, had regular gaps, which suggests the possibility of a type of cruck construction.²⁹ This dwelling "suggests a more permanent, above-ordinary structure; either the home of a person of high social status, or a building of different function."³⁰ An enclosed area measuring 236 feet by approximately 100 feet, adjacent to the river, constitutes the second group of structures. A wooden palisade surrounded an area probably used as a warehouse complex. It contained examples of both puncheon and hole-set or post construction. The former structure measured forty-two feet by sixteen feet and probably had a sill which rested on puncheons approximately seven to eight inches wide. This building contained a brick and cobblestone hearth and on its eastern end abutted what appears to be a loading platform. A post structure of similar dimensions located slightly to the west, utilized posts set into the ground at eight-to-ten-foot intervals. Evidence indicates that both structures were of wattle and daub construction. Although this area was fenced, it seems doubtful that the purpose of the structure enclosing it was primarily

29

Deetz, In Small Things, pp. 102-103.

30

Barka lecture. The material presented in this lecture corresponds well with the information given in "What Price History's Treasure?" Southside Historical Sites, Inc. (Williamsburg, Va.: College of William and Mary, 1975), p. 11.

for physical protection. It appears rather to have been an enclosed storage area intended for surplus or commercial storage.³¹

Colonists also continued to use a variety of materials in their houses. John Smith organized work parties at Jamestown to mow and bind thatch to be used in the traditional English manner as roofing material.³² John Woodleafe, a carpenter, stated that "specific orders were given him relative to building houses." Woodleafe's instructions directed him to construct structures "covered with boardes," with some of them "framed" buildings.³³ At Jamestown Smith reported the existence of two rows of house of framed timber, some of them having two stories and a garret. Smith also acknowledged the presence of similar structures at Henrico. These took the form of three rows of well-framed houses to be used for dwelling and for storage. A church with a foundation "for better of Brick," also stood there.³⁴ Because natural stone deposits did not exist in the tidewater region, the Virginia colonists relied on other materials. A Captain Nuse, while attempting to defend himself and those under his protection from threatening Indians, called his people together for mutual defense. On the "industry of the captain"

³¹

Ibid.

³²

Smith, General Historie, p. 45.

³³

Hatch, The First Seventeen Years, p. 45.

³⁴

Smith, General Historie, pp. 111-112.

they built of the strongest material locally available two houses "fair mantled With Brick."³⁵

The promotional literature used to draw prospective colonists to Virginia presented a somewhat skewed vision of living conditions. One company tract promised an easy life in a "handsome house of foure roomes or more ... and twelve Acres of ground, adjoining."³⁶ Reality, however, did not always coincide with the company's promises. Conditions often deteriorated to what some considered unbearable levels. When Sir Thomas Smith arrived at Jamestown in 1617, he found only five or six houses, all in poor repair, the court of guards built by Sir Thomas Dale ready to fall, and the bridge in pieces. The inhabitants, focusing on the one profitable aspect of their existence, had planted tobacco in the streets. The palisade had deteriorated to the point where it was "not sufficient to keepe out Hogs."³⁷ He also found that the palisades surrounding the six colonial towns, James-City, Henrico, Charles Hundred, Westover, Shirley Hundred, and Kecoughtan were "Very few and contemptible," and for defense against the natives, not against foreign threats.³⁸ Governor Francis Yeardley found matters only

35

Ibid., p. 154.

36

Virginia Bernhard, "Poverty and the Social Order in Seventeenth Century Virginia," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography LXXXV (April, 1977), 142-143.

37

Smith, General Historie, p. 123.

38

"The Tragical Relations," Narratives, p. 424.

slightly improved two years later. He claimed that only four hundred English persons then resided in Virginia and that many were nearly destitute. He cited eight plantations that were poorly housed and ill fortified.³⁹ His secretary, John Pory, however, contended that Virginia had much of great value and needed only some English strength and initiative to extract it. Others refused to join in its praises and found conditions rueful. A contemporary account stated,

only those houses that Sir Thomas Gates built in the time of his government, with one wherein the Governor allways dwelt, and a church, built whooly at the charge of the inhabitants of the citye, of timber, being fifty foot in length and twenty foot in breath,

remained at Yeardly's arrival. The situation at Henrico was little better. The ancient planters claimed that only "three old houses, a poor ruinate church, with some Few⁴⁰ poore buildings in the Islands" stood there.

Whatever the conditions of these houses, one fact remains certain: they retained their English form. Houses continued to be built along the lines of the traditional hall and parlor structure. According to Wallace Notestein, "In Virginia, as soon as the settlers had cleared bits of the wood and built houses, they set up plantations modeled on the

³⁹
"The Discourse of the Old Company, 1625,"
Narratives, p. 433.

⁴⁰
William S. Powell, John Pory, 1578-1636 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), pp. 83-84.

manors they had known in England."⁴¹ The same assertion can be made for the construction of fencing and fortifications. As much as their environment allowed, the Virginia colonists constructed their dwellings, pales, and forts with English models in mind.

⁴¹Notestein, The Eve of Colonization, p. 45.

CHAPTER III

During the next twenty years several factors continued to influence the retention of English styles in housing, fortification, and fencing. Of primary importance was the continuing flow of persons into the colony from England. Because of the extremely high death rate, a large percentage of the population had to be replaced each year. In addition to headrights granted for each person transported to the colony, provisions made by the Virginia Company, and later the Crown, granted each apprentice at the end of his term fifty acres of land, provisions, a house, a cow, and seed corn.¹ Colonists continued to request their representatives in England to send shipwrights and carpenters to the colonies in order to construct houses "ready framed ... and afforded at reasonable rates." This action, if carried out, certainly led to the perpetuation of English modes.²

Although the constant influx of English during the 1620s and 1630s reinforced the generally accepted East Anglian building techniques, minimal changes in the

¹ Conway Robinson, ed., Abstract of the Proceedings of the Virginia Company of London, 1619-1625, Vol. I, (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1885), pp. 40-43.

² Ibid., p. 159.

construction of houses, fortifications, and fences did occur. The continued threat of attack from both European foes and hostile natives significantly affected English settlement. The Indian uprising in 1622 led to the abandonment of several sparsely populated outlying settlements. Political upheaval occurred during the mid-1620s with the bankruptcy of the Virginia Company and the reluctant assumption of control by the Crown. In spite of the high mortality rates, the population slowly began to grow.³ The increasing arrival of English women and the introduction of English family structure also brought a new element into Virginia society. Finally, the growing tendency toward social stratification caused a differentiation of style and of function. Subtle changes occurred in response to all of these phenomena, and structures of all kinds gradually became more permanent and more specialized in nature.

By 1640, a pattern of land usage had taken form in tidewater Virginia. More people and livestock now inhabited the colony. Housing was more plentiful and more substantial. Settlers established new plantations and continually pushed the line of settlement westward.⁴ By 1634, the colony was

³
Wesley Frank Craven, White, Red and Black, The Seventeenth Century Virginian (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1971), pp. 13-15. The author makes a creditable attempt at unraveling the confusion surrounding Virginia immigration patterns. For the statistics, refer to Craven's notes.

⁴
"The Discourse of the Old Company, 1625" Narratives of Early Virginia, 1606-1625, Lyon Gardiner Tyler, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), pp. 434-435.

organized into eight counties and served by at least ten different parishes.⁵

Tobacco in the various stages of its production governed many of the colonists' needs. The value of a bale of tobacco set the standard for the rate of currency in exchange.⁶ In fact, this staple usually replaced hard cash in most colonial transactions. People used tobacco to settle debts, to pay fines, and to purchase property and chattel goods. All workable land and available labor went toward the cultivation of this crop, sometimes at the expense of less profitable food stuffs. In order to prepare this valuable commodity for transport and sale, special houses were built for curing and storage.

In addition to tobacco, other forces were at work in the colonies. A division of labor gradually took place. For example, colonists in 1640 no longer had to send to England for a competent carpenter, or ironmonger, or doctor. Artisans now resided within the colony, although they continued to receive their training in England. Social stratification continued with the growth of a group of poor or

⁵ Virginia Bernhard, "Poverty and the Social Order in Seventeenth Century Virginia," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography LXXXV (April, 1977), 146-147.

⁶ Beverley Fleet, ed., "York County Court Orders," Virginia Colonial Abstracts XXIV (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1961), p. 41. Further citations from this collection will be identified as Fleet.

indigent persons.⁷ This was a significant change in the composition of colonial society and served to re-emphasize traditional English social structure. Rather than making Virginia less like England in character, social stratification made colony and mother country more alike. English standards of gentility remained the goal of prosperous colonists.

Colonists remained concerned about the threat of internal and external violence during this period. The great interest in defense generated by the Indian uprising in 1622 created tensions that remained through the middle of the seventeenth century. Reactions to this event occurred even in England. Captain Butler, reporting to the Virginia Council in London on the state of the colony's fortifications, claimed that he found little of value in the entire colony. Of the three pieces of ordnance at James City and the one piece at Flowerdew Hundred, none remained in serviceable order or was sufficient for defense. Butler also stated that the ruins of Henrico and Charles City were left to the "salvages."⁸ In rebuttal, sworn statements by recent travelers to Virginia contended that while there were no true forts, a considerable number of palisades existed, "where of almost every plantation hath one," and "divers of them the trenches." Travelers continued their descriptions, listing

⁷ Bernhard, "Poverty and the Social Order," 145.

⁸ C. Robinson, Abstracts, Vol. II, p. 172.

the serviceable ordnance at the following locations: four guns at James City, six at Flowerdew Hundred, three at Kecoughtan (later Elizabeth City), three at Newport News, seven at Henrico, two at Charles City. In addition to these heavier pieces there existed "murderers and fowlers at divers places."⁹

The reaction in the colony was even more pronounced. The minutes from the General Council state, "various large palisaded settlements held their own, as did several private planters." The survivors quickly retired to those areas: Shirley Hundred, Flowerdew Hundred, Jamestown, the plantations opposite Kecoughtan (Elizabeth City), and Southampton Hundred.¹⁰ After the uprising most colonists decided to withdraw from "all petty plantations" and to consolidate into five or six larger ones.¹¹ This forced many small farmers into servitude for they were obliged "to forsake their houses [which were very faire scattered] and to joyne themselves to some great mans plantation."¹² During the

⁹
Ibid., p. 178. Murderers and fowlers are smaller pieces of weaponry; those that might be used for hunting or personal defense. These terms can be generically used to denote portable arms.

¹⁰
 "Minutes of the Council and General Court, 1622-1624," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography XIX (April, 1911), 115.

¹¹
 John Smith, The General Historie of Virginia (London: I.D. and I.H. for Michael Sparkes, 1624), rep. by Readex Microprint, Inc., p. 150.

¹²
 Edmund Morgan, "The First American Boom, 1618 to 1630." William and Mary Quarterly XXVIII, Third Series (April, 1971), 186fn.

following years the Council allowed settlers to return to their individual plantations only when they went in numbers sufficient for defense (usually judged to be ten men).¹³ In March 1623/24, the Council passed legislation requiring "that every dwelling place shall be pallizaded for defense against the Indians."¹⁴

Both individuals and the government took action for the further protection of the colony. A Captain Nuse called together his widely scattered neighbors and "with all speed entrenched himself" and mounted three pieces of ordnance. Within fourteen days they considered themselves strong enough to withstand an attack.¹⁵ Having taken four Indians hostage, Captain "Madyson" also built a "house within a fort and provisioned it against attack."¹⁶ At Elizabeth City, beyond the Hampton River, the census of 1625 revealed the presence of twenty-four palisades in addition to its eight or nine houses and twenty stores.¹⁷ The Virginia Council enacted another measure in hopes of preventing

¹³ William W. Hening, Laws of Virginia 1619-1660, Vol. I (Richmond: Samuel Pleasants, Jr., 1809), p. 127.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Smith, General Historie, p. 154.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 156.

¹⁷ Charles E. Hatch, The First Seventeen Years, Virginia 1606-1627 (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 1957), p. 93. The census referred to by Hatch is the muster called by government officials after the failure of the Virginia Company.

another Indian uprising. The settlements at Henrico and Charles Hundred devastated by the "massacre" were to be fully restored.¹⁸ An observer some years later claimed that the locations of Henrico and Fort Charles were among the best in the colony for the placement of fortification. Situated on high ground or a cliff, they were surrounded by clear land. For defense both had "trench and Palizado" with "great timber blockhouses."¹⁹

During the late 1620s and early 1630s a new idea took hold of colonists. In an attempt to drive the remaining native population out of the tidewater area, settlers proposed a line of fortification, or pale, running north and south from the Northern Neck to the Hampton Roads peninsula. In February, 1623/24, a statute appears for the seating of Middle Plantation between Queen's Creek on the Charles River and Archer's Hope Creek on the James. Its lands were to extend from that point to the Chesapeake Bay. One out of every forty tithable males was to be sent there under the command of Doctor John Pott. To encourage settlement, any man arriving before May of that year would receive fifty acres of land, free and inheritable.²⁰ The court records of York County reveal that as late as the mid-1640s the colonists continued to maintain this structure. A suit brought by

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C. Robinson, Abstracts, Vol. II, p. 193.

19

Hatch, First Seventeen Years, pp. 64-65.

20

Hening, Laws of Virginia, p. 208.

Captain Robert Higginson contended that "divers men" living in the lower end of York peninsula "were deliquent in sending up a man to the Middle Plantation in the general work of setting up a pale." The captain, in order to complete the necessary work, "was forst to put a man in his Rome." The court found for the plaintiff, Higginson, and those individuals who were negligent in their duty received notice to pay to him thirty-five pounds of tobacco per pale constructed by his hired man.²¹

In addition to the fear of another Indian rebellion, a concern arose about the defense of the colony against the possible attacks of European enemies, especially the Spanish. It appears, however, that this worry plagued officials in England more than colonists in Virginia. Accordingly, both the government and the settlers took measures for their protection. In the colony, a Captain Croshaw with five men retired to a convenient place and with the aid of some friendly Indians fortified himself against "aliens."²² A Captain Each received orders to construct another fort at Blunt Point. Although it was never completed, it was intended to serve as defense against Spanish assaults.²³ Likewise in April 1623, the governor ordered by proclamation a

²¹

Fleet, "York County Court Orders," XXV, p. 26.

²²

Smith, General Historie, p. 154. Friendly Indians were those who had signed treaties with the English and continued to reside within the area of English occupation.

²³

"Minutes of the Virginia Council," pp. 117-118.

fort constructed at Warrascoyack, "to defend ... against the invasion of any fortune enemy." The census of 1625 reveals, however, that this command was never carried out for it records only two houses, a store, and two palisades at the location.²⁴ During the mid-1620s the Virginia Council in London authorized "for the better securing of the plantations" the construction of "a fort in some convenient place ... to keep out foreign invasion till better preparation

could be made."²⁵ Problems concerning the construction of this fort at Point Comfort continued to plague the council. As late as October 1629 the matter remained in question. Legal statutes reveal a discussion of circumstances surrounding the construction of a fort for the good of the colony at that location. Difficulties included the source of the money, the men, and the material required for such a structure.²⁶ In March of the following year, the investigating committee appointed Captain Samuel Mathewes to view the place and to decide what manner of fort to build. The assembly asserted that it would be willing to ratify the committee's final decision.²⁷ The continuous failure of

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Hatch, First Seventeen Years, p. 88.

²⁵

C. Robinson, Abstracts, Vol. II, p. 193.

²⁶

Hening, Laws of Virginia, p. 143.

²⁷

Ibid., p. 150. The colonists in Virginia realized the problems of constructing and maintaining a fort at Point Comfort, a low-lying, swampy region. Despite continued reports from the colony stating this fact, those in London insisted that a fort be built there.

colonists to construct and maintain this fort was indicative of the growing differences between the Virginia colony and the mother country. In the colony the possibility and the danger of an Indian attack appeared more imminent than an invasion by the more distant Spanish. As a result, colonists tended to place greater emphasis on the fortification of their western frontier rather than their eastern shores.

Pressures similar to those affecting the various types of fortification influenced the types of housing construction used in Virginia. Owing to factors such as the growing and changing composition of the population and the continued development of intensive agriculture, the diversification of style and of function occurred at an increasing rate. A description offered by Captain Matthews to prospective colonists illustrates this change. On a single property, he stated, a wide variety of structures existed: a fine house, keeps for yearly crops of hemp and flax, a weaver's, a tan house, a shoe maker's, quarters for forty negro servants and a good dairy.

In spite of these changing circumstances, colonists still relied on traditional English methods of construction. The actual size of the houses and the materials used in them varied little from the previous decades. From the various county records, general descriptions can be obtained. The lease agreement of Richard Bernard (Barnard) refers to a

rather large dwelling house, forty feet in length and
 eighteen feet wide.²⁹ In a deposition taken in February
 1637/38 in Accomack County, Edward Stockdell stated that
 "the house which is nowe Samuell Mollis ... was twenty five
 foote longe sixteene foote wide with one particon on
 chymneth on Buttery." James Barnaby offered an enlarged
 description of this property in his deposition, declaring
 that when a Mr. Hawkins came to occupy the property the
 house was "tennteable and there was one hundred foote of
 thatched housing Besides."³⁰ John Congdon "of back creek"
 selling twenty-five acres of land to Edward Perswall
 mentioned "two boarded houses belonging to the said Twenty
 five Acres of Land the one house of Thirty foote longe and
 the other of Twenty foote longe."³¹

Colonists also continued to build primarily im-
 permanent structures during the 1640s. Virginians still
 quickly abandoned dwellings and "Virginia houses continued to
 be for the most part small and unsubstantial."³² The most
 valuable parts of the dwellings remained those things which
 had to be imported or made by a skilled laborer: glass,
 nails, locks, and sawn boards. Contracts often mentioned

29

Fleet, "York County Court Orders," XXV, p. 71.

30

Fleet, "Accawmacke County Court Orders," XXXII,
 pp. 19-20.

31

Fleet, "York County Court Orders," XXIV, pp.
 24-25.

32

Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom
 (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1975), pp. 173-174.

these items. York County records reveal that Captain John Chrisman received 250 pounds of tobacco in 1647 "for lockes keyes and nayles for the prision" he built during the preceding year.³³ Further illustrating the value of such goods is a note from the will of Robert Edmunds, which states, "I give the John Thomkine 2 thousand of six penny nayles which Thomas Wyat doth owe unto me of his making."³⁴ Houses constructed of boards rather than of some other material were specifically described as such.

Archaeological evidence supports arguments for the temporary nature of such structures. Located on the Governor's Council lands in Littleton, Virginia, the Colonel Pettus house was a substantial building house that followed an organic growth pattern. The house had been expanded to accommodate the needs of the occupants. It was a post structure with both storage and garbage pits in association to it dating from this period. A similar structure excavated in Norge dates to 1641, according to local records. At Utopia, there exist the remains of a house structure, a post enclosure, and adjacent to the house a well. The house included a small cellar with a brick lining. Excavations revealed clay daubing possibly from the chimney. Dated by artifact associations and pipe stem chronology, this structure existed contemporaneously with the

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Fleet, "York County Court Orders," XXV, p. 62.

³⁴

Fleet, "Accawmacke County Court Orders," XVIII, p. 41.

Pettus structure.³⁵ William Kelso states that the Virginia economy probably kept these structures versatile and temporary in construction. The demands of a continuing labor shortage and cash-crop production placed limits on both the number of structures built as well as their substantive nature.³⁶ He also concurs with Deetz's sentiments concerning the continuing reliance of colonial settlers upon English vernacular techniques and architectural forms.³⁷

Houses did function in a wider variety of purposes in the 1640s. For example, in a suit brought by Edward Wyate, the administrator of the estate of John Clark, against Captain Robert Higginson, both dwelling and tobacco houses received notice. The court of York County found for the plaintiff and Wyate was "to enjoy 50 pole breath of land ... sittuate on the middle plantacon pales for ever." Higginson continued "to ingage the house he nowe lives with a 'majety' of a tobacco house till the tenth day of December next." Any houses built or repaired by Higginson on the property were to go to Wyate as payment.³⁸ Some houses

³⁵ William Kelso, "Seventeenth Century Salvage Sites," Lecture presented at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va., Feb. 8, 1978.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ James Deetz, In Small Things Forgotten (Garden City: Anchor Press, 1977), p. 102. Deetz believes that few deviations from English material culture occurred in the New World until after the 1660s. The changes that happened then were limited to local diversification rather than a major break with English traditional methods.

³⁸ Fleet, "York County Court Orders," XXIV, p. 82.

served two or more purposes during the period of their existence. In a difference settled in August 1648 between Thomas Beale and Jon Clarkson, Beale received the use "of one boarded house late the dwelling of said Clarkson to cure his crop of tob in."³⁹

Houses also served a wider range of official public functions in the colony during the period. In addition to churches and public warehouses, the county courts authorized the construction of various other structures. Richard Watkins of York County received a commission in the mid-1640s to build "a sufficient house of office to the prison."⁴⁰ In June 1635 Mr. William Cotton, minister of James City, presented an order to build "a parsonage house upon the Glybe land" to be referred to as a vestry (parish house). The following September at a vestry meeting the church warden received power of contract for "nayles" and the following structure:

That said house shalbe forty foot long and eighteene foot-wyde and nyne foot to the well plated and that ther shalbe a chimney at each end of the house, and upon each side of the chimneys a roome, the one for a study, the other for a buttery alsoe a pertiton neere the midst of the house with an entry and two doures the one to goe into the kitchen the other into the chamber.⁴¹

Finally, colonists in Virginia continued to make

³⁹

Ibid., XXVI, p. 15.

⁴⁰

Ibid., XXI, p. 12.

⁴¹

Fleet, "Acchawmacke County Court Orders," XVIII pp. 40-44.

use of fences for a variety of purposes: to enclose livestock, denote property lines, and secure a specific area. A series of acts beginning in February 1631/32 commanded. "everyman shall enclose his ground with sufficient fences upon their owne perill."⁴² Similar statutes passed in September of the same year⁴³ and in March 1642/43 reiterated these sentiments. The 1642/43 law also required negligent owners to pay for their own losses and those of their neighbors should their livestock inflict damages. If the negligent party caused the death of another's cattle, he had to pay the owner double the value.⁴⁴ Three years later in October 1646, the statute once again appeared and included a description of what constituted "sufficient" fencing: "That fence shall bee adjudged sufficient which is foure feet and a halfe in height substantiall close downe to the bottom."⁴⁵ With each appearance in the law book, the fencing statutes were further defined, indicating some problem in their application. This continual repassage also implies that the laws were in use and the subject of some concern. A case brought before the York County court on October 25, 1647, applied these statutes. George Lights sued Christopher Denny for the loss of one sow that Denny admitted to catching in his

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Hening, Laws of Virginia, p. 176.

⁴³

Ibid., p. 199.

⁴⁴

Ibid., pp. 244-245.

⁴⁵

Ibid., p. 332.

corn field and staking by the leg. An act of assembly ordered Denny to pay Lights two sows, each being two years of age, because "it appeareth by oath that the fence of said Denny was althogether insufficient."⁴⁶ Fences frequently served as protectors of property and crops. In September 1648 Joseph Croshaw deeded to Richard Croshaw one hundred acres of land. The transfer of ownership depended upon the development of the land and referred "to building a fence to secure 'poplier Necke,' and to protect the newly planted fields." 47

Colonists also used fences to clarify boundaries and ownership rights during the period. This became increasingly important as population pressures increased and most of the desirable land was claimed. A fence or pale denoting property lines facilitated legal claims and the transfer of land. For example, the will of John Jackson, probated on October 22, 1640, deeded "To wife Ann all cleared ground within the fence."⁴⁸

The changes in structural forms that occurred between the 1620s and the 1640s moved in one direction, toward diversification. The colonists' building techniques and their choices of materials remained similar to those of

46

Fleet, "York County Court Orders," XXV, p. 54.

47

Ibid., XXVI, p. 19.

48

Ibid., XXIV, p. 23.

contemporary Englishmen. Settlers, for the most part, refused (or at least resisted) the adoption of the construction patterns of their Native American neighbors.⁴⁹ The differences that developed during this period were related to function rather than technique or design. This variety made the Virginia colony more like England, rather than something new and different. For the colonist, being civilized meant being English.

⁴⁹

Deetz, In Small Things, p. 102.

CHAPTER IV

It was only during the next several decades that Virginians made the first significant breaks with their past. This happened for a variety of reasons. During the next twenty years the population continued to grow and in some areas became relatively dense, and emerging social divisions continued to gain strength. For the first time, a significant portion of the population viewed Virginia as their permanent home. In fact, the first generation of native-born Virginians reached maturity. The one-crop economy based on the cultivation of tobacco became dominant. Threats from foreign (European) powers diminished. After the bloody, but futile Indian uprising of 1644 violence from that quarter no longer constituted a major threat east of Henrico. Settlers continued to preserve English ideas and only slowly stamped them with their own mark.

By 1660, tidewater Virginia had changed considerably from its original occupation by the English. Within the central core of the tidewater region, life for some now contained many of the amenities of English gentility. Stephen Charlton, for example, arrived on the Eastern Shore from Northampton, England, shortly after the 1622 uprising. Beginning in October 1638 with five hundred acres "due him for 'severall Indentures,'" he amassed during the next

twenty years some two thousand acres of land located on Naswattocks Creek. In his will dated 1654, he left to his wife, or in case of her demise to his daughter, his home plantation along the creek. In addition to the land, his estate consisted of a substantial dwelling place, a mill, several outhouses, an orchard and several gardens.¹ Although this estate was in no way indicative of the wealth of the entire population of the colony, it was representative of most of those who met with moderate success in Virginia.

Social competition between land owners, much like that between the lower gentry in England, became common. Jenkin Price, a visitor to Virginia in the 1650s, claimed that each of his successive hosts attempted to overawe him a little more than the previous one. He spoke about this tendency especially in connection with Stephen Charlton, who outfitted Price with a new change of clothing and impressed him with his "very well order'd kitchen." Price also commented at some length on the population distribution in the colony. Starting his travels in Northampton County, he found people scarce and no church yet established. As he crossed Chesapeake Bay and moved toward his final destination, "Esquire Yardly's plantation," he realized that he had "Not yet arrived to the heart of the country ... " As he advanced the plantations grew thicker and the settled

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Susan Stitt, "The Will of Stephen Charlton and Hungars Parish Glebe," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography LXXVII (July, 1969), 259-260.

areas closer together.² Henry Norwood made similar observations concerning his visit to a Mr. Ludlow's York River plantation in 1650. He, too, cites the planters' attempts to outdo one another and comments particularly on his visit to Captain Wormley's estate located a furlong distant. There, he and Ludlow found Wormley entertaining a group from London that included Sir Thomas Lundsford, Sir Henry Chicheley, Sir Philip Honywood, and Colonel Hammond. The round of visitations continued and the entourage removed to Governor Berkeley's plantation at Greensprings.³

This tendency toward increased hospitality occurred in conjunction with a new wave of migration from England. The turmoil created by the usurpation of the Stuarts during the 1640s led many royalist supporters to seek their fortunes in the New World. This influx of newly arrived English gentry often came into direct competition with the Virginian pseudo-aristocracy of ancient planters. This rivalry became evident at many levels throughout Virginian society - politically, economically, and socially. The same human impulses that encouraged competition of hospitality and residential grandeur among planters edged Virginians toward the more serious political conflicts which

²
Henry Norwood, "A Voyage to Virginia," rep. in Virginia Reader, Francis Coleman Rosenburger, ed. (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1948), pp. 168-170.

³
Ibid., pp. 170-171.

culminated in Bacon's Rebellion in 1676.⁴

By the mid-1650s the plentiful land for which Virginia was noted became increasingly difficult to secure. The 1632 ordinance providing fifty acres of land to anyone venturing his person remained in force, but the most desirable parcels had long been secured by earlier arrivals. New arrivals had two options open to them: they might rent land in the tidewater area owned by an established family or they might move to the frontier.⁵ Many counties found it necessary to pass measures to encourage the actual development of the land held by the ancient planters. For example, in 1660 Accomack County passed statutes requiring each patent owner to "seat the land" to build a house upon the property and to clear fields and plant crops. The law also provided for an annual quitrent of two shillings per one hundred acres to be charged to the patent holders. The county, however, failed to collect this on a regular basis until the closing decades of the seventeenth century.⁶

⁴
Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1975), p. 255; Wesley Frank Craven, White, Red and Black, The Seventeenth Century Virginian (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1971), pp. 25-26. The wave of migration starting in the 1640s and prompted the English Civil War and the founding of the Protectorate continued through the late 1670s. Those leaving England before 1660 tended to be Royalists fleeing the new Parliamentary government. Following the Restoration of Charles II those deserting the mother country were mostly Parliamentarians.

⁵
Ibid., pp. 220-221.

⁶
Ibid.

This expansion of the settled areas of the colony created the need for a change in the colony's marketing and trade regulations. In March 1655/56 the General Assembly repealed the October 1649 act requiring that only centralized market places be used by the colonists.⁷ According to the March, 1657/58 act for the "encouragement of Market Places" it was enacted:

that if any countie or particular person shall settle any place whether the merchants shall willing come for the sale or bring of goods such men shall bee lookt vpon as benefactors to the publique.⁸

In compliance with this measure, the Charles City County Court "ordered and appointed that the m'kott of this county be held and at Westov'r and ffloriday hundred which is conceived to be the most convenient places relateing to the act in most business."⁹

The same forces and desires that created the need for the new market places or led to political turmoil also manifested themselves in the architectural forms within the colony. Housing in the long established regions became more permanent in nature. John Hammond, a visitor from England,

⁷ William W. Hening, ed., Laws of Virginia 1619-1660, Vol. I (Richmond: Samuel Pleasants, Jr., 1809) p. 137. Colonists passed laws such as these in an attempt to centralize trade and encourage town settlement.

⁸ Ibid., p. 476.

⁹ Beverly Fleet, ed., "Charles City County Court Orders," Virginia Colonial Abstracts, X (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1961), p. 3.

spoke of the usual housing of the established colonist in the essay entitled, "Leah and Rachel, or the Two Fruitful Sisters Virginia and Maryland." He stated that most of the housing consisted of one story excluding the loft, was build of wood, and met the standards kept by most Englishmen in the home country. Hammond describes these structures as having large rooms with walls that were "daubed and whitelimed, glazed and flowered." It appears that the colonists plastered and painted the interiors of their homes, and when possible followed the traditional English mode of printed borders. If windows could not be obtained "good comely shutters" were used.¹⁰ The will of Argoll Yearly dated 1655 described one such structure in great detail. This structure, located on Mattawaman Creek, replaced an early building which had burned in 1651. Yearly, a successful planter, held over 5700 acres of land, 3700 of which he had inherited from his father. In additional to his living quarters the property contained a "milke house" and tobacco houses. The dwelling house consisted of three major roomes - the parlor, the hall, and the chamber - with two smaller chambers built off the parlor.¹¹ The floor plan of this

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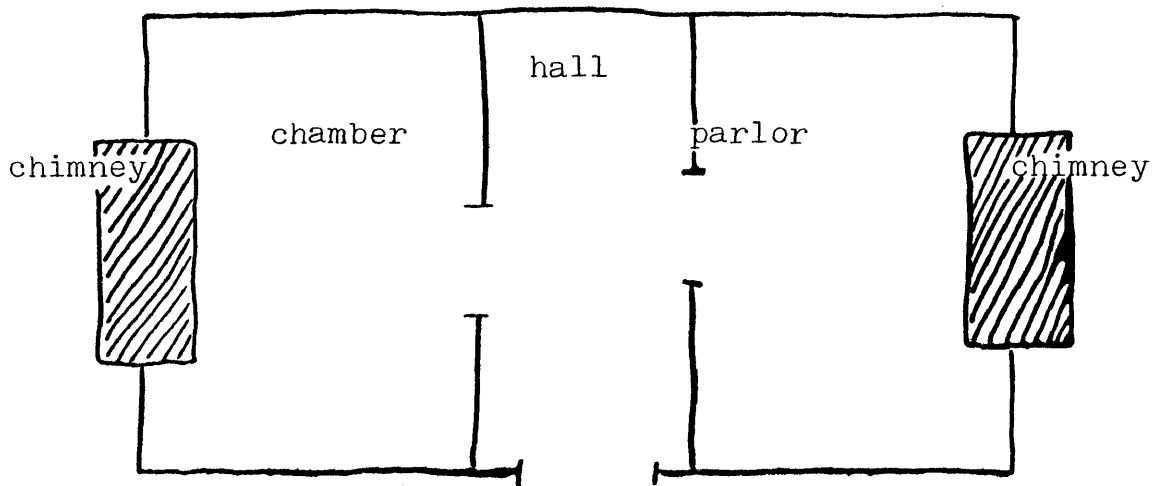
John Hammond, "Leah and Rachel, or the Two Fruitful Sisters Virginia and Maryland, 1656," rep. in Force, p. 18. The statements made in this piece are confirmed by Fiske Kimball, Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and of the Early Republic (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922, rep. by Dover Publications, Inc., 1966) p. 27.

11

"Inventory of the Estate of Argoll Yearly of N'hampton Co., Va. in 1655," Nora Miller Turman and Mark C. Lewis, eds., Virginia Magazine of History and Biography LXX (Oct., 1962), 44.

house typified the organizational plan that ultimately
 dominated vernacular architecture in Virginia.¹² (see Fig. 3)

Figure 3



Standard Virginia House Plan

 12

See Deetz, Kimball, and Noel Hume on Virginia house plans. All three contend that evolutionary Virginia model consisted of a central hall with rooms on either side, often with a chimney at each end.

It seems that additions similar to Yearly's side chamber were relatively common. Agreements such as that between Captain Llewellyn and Thomas Nothway appear frequently in the county court records. Nothway contracted with Llewellyn for the construction of "One roome four lengths of board to be joyned to a house wch was then standing," as well as a free-standing building to be used as a store house. Nothway desired this structure to be of the same approximate size and located "a distance from the howse." Nothway agreed to pay Llewellyn 3000 to 3600 pounds of tobacco during the next seven years providing Llewellyn completed his labors within one year.¹³ It appears that Llewellyn failed to meet his portion of the agreement. A notice appearing about a year later in the Charles City County records states that Anthony Wyatt and John Epes had examined the structures and found them "no according to agreement and is value at 400 pound tobo."¹⁴ Another account cited the construction of two small chambers, "'one to be used as ye minister's study and the other as a buttery,'" on the rectory of Accomac Church built in 1633.¹⁵

Brick-making, which began fairly early in the colonial period, became increasingly important by the 1660s.

¹³ Fleet, "Charles City County Court Orders," X, p. 132.

¹⁴ Ibid., XI, p. 147.

¹⁵ Mary Newton Stanard, Colonial Virginia: Its People and Customs (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1917), rep. by Singing Tree Press (Detroit, 1970), p. 62.

Although some bricks were imported from England, most were of colonial manufacture.¹⁶ It appears that a substantial number of "brick houses, including one tenement-like row which were doubtless stores or warehouses," dating from this period once existed along a three-quarter mile stretch of river front at Jamestown. Destroyed by fire during Nathaniel Bacon's rebellion in 1676 and consequently abandoned, the foundations of these structures provide valuable archaeological information. Most of the brick foundations unearthed were approximately forty by twenty feet and showed deep cellars.¹⁷ (see Fig. 4) A contemporary dwelling located near Hampton, and dismantled in 1907, had a wall and a chimney constructed of a "fine glazed kind" of brick. Another such structure, "an example of the better class of brick house," called "Malvern Hill" was located a few miles below Richmond.¹⁸

By the latter half of the seventeenth century a variety of housing existed in Virginia that previously did not. Frame houses of wood or brick varied in size from the one-story, two-room cottage to large "manors" or "great houses." The most common type, consisted of a story and a

¹⁶

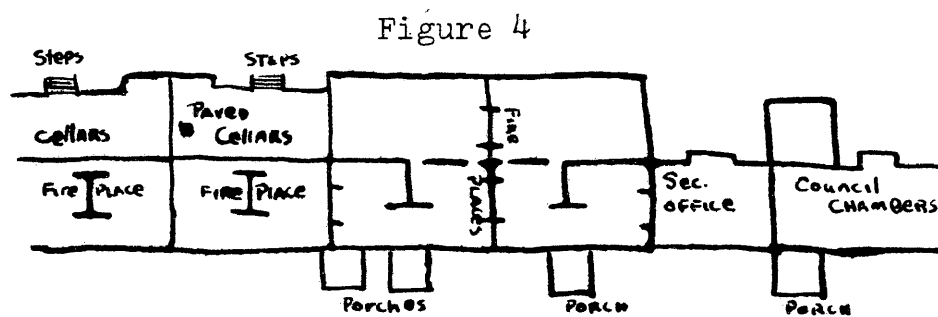
See Ivor Noel Hume, Historical Archaeology (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1975), pp. 122-124. and Kimball, pp. 35-42, on the use of brick in the colonies.

¹⁷

Stanard, Colonial Virginia, pp. 60-61; Kimball, Domestic Architecture, p. 37.

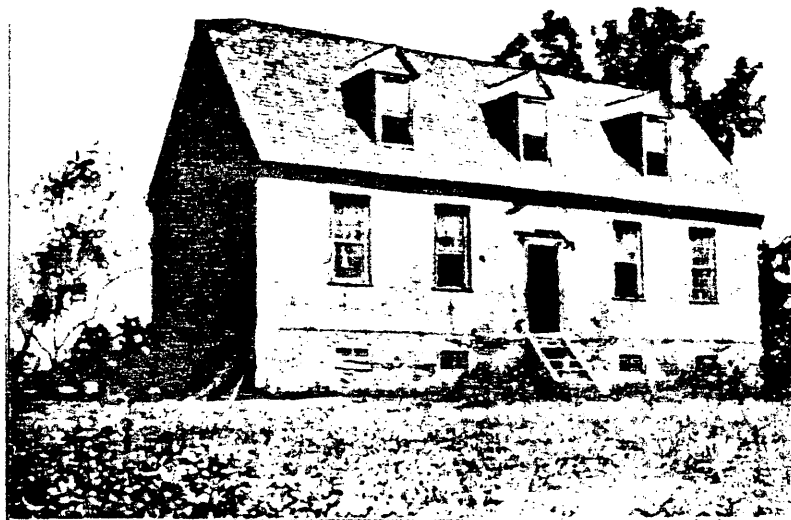
¹⁸

Stanard, Colonial Virginia, p. 61.



Ancient Foundations at Jamestown, Va. Discovered and Identified in 1903 by S.H. Yonge
(See Kimball, pp. 37)

Figure 5



From a photograph by H. P. Cook

Warren House, Smith's Fort, Virginia
Picture taken in 1901
(See Kimball, p. 38)

half, with or without a wing attached to the rear, a small square porch, and a "shedroom" kitchen. The two principal rooms consisted of a parlor, "kept for company," and a hall for everyday use. From this chamber a stairway "broken by a landing halfway up," led to the attic or sleeping loft. These structures typically had steep roofs and hooded windows.¹⁹

According to Mary Newton Stanard and Fiske Kimball the oldest existing building of this type, "Smith's Fort," sits in Surry County across the river from Jamestown. Built in 1654 by Thomas Warren, this house had thick walls of glazed brick and a length of fifty feet. The builder divided the interior into three sections - one relatively large room off each side of the center hall. (see Fig. 5) Another house of approximately the same age and floor pattern, known as the "Parker Place," stands on the Eastern Shore. It remains unusual, however, due to its hipped-roof. Of wooden frame construction, the gabled ends are of glazed brick.²⁰

Houses of greater affectation made their initial appearance during this period. Kimball contends, "In form, although some of the simpler brick houses did not differ essentially from the better ones of wood, other types appeared

¹⁹ Stanard, Colonial Virginia, pp. 61-63; Kimball, Domestic Architecture, p. 43.

²⁰ Stanard, Colonial Virginia, p. 65; Kimball, Domestic Architecture, p. 43.

as pretensions increased."²¹ Bacon's Castle, located in Surry County and built by Nathaniel Bacon before 1676, constituted the earliest example of this kind of elaboration. (see Fig. 6) However, this house and the others like it do not represent colonial attempts to copy the great mansions of contemporary England. They are, in fact, the result of extensive expansion and adaptation of English cottages by Virginians.²²

Numerous incidents from the court records of York and Lower Norfolk counties indicate that these assumptions about houses are correct. In a contract dated October 16, 1657, Ralph Graves agreed to accept 400 pounds of tobacco in payment for "Whitelimeing" a house.²³ In December 1652, Colonel Francis Yardley filed suit against Mr Jonathan Lownes for failing to meet the terms of a previous agreement. It appears that Lownes had bound his servant, William Eale, to do the bricklaying and plastering of Yardley's buildings at Lynhaven and Kecoughtan.²⁴

Glass windows continued to increase in popularity and availability during this period. Although not all Virginia colonist had dwelling structures containing leaded glass panes, most aspired to do so. The agreement reached

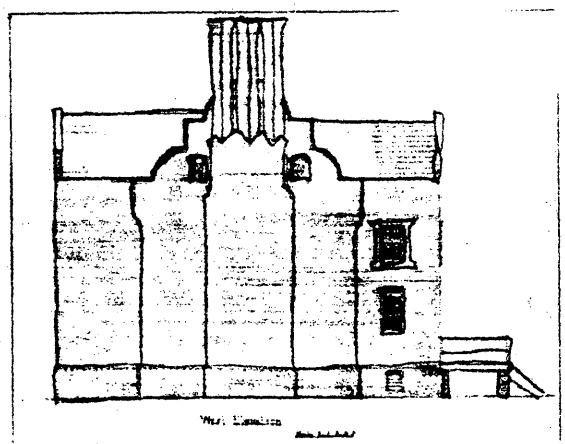
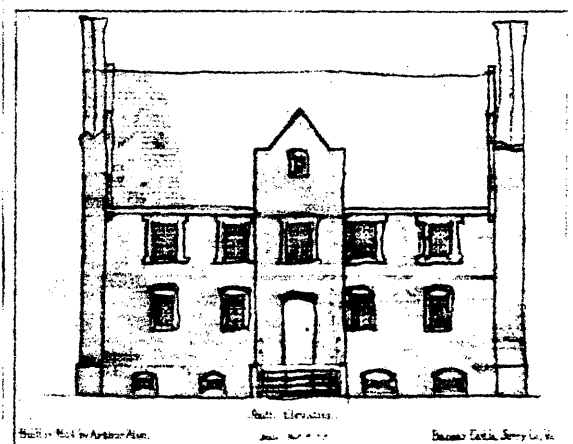
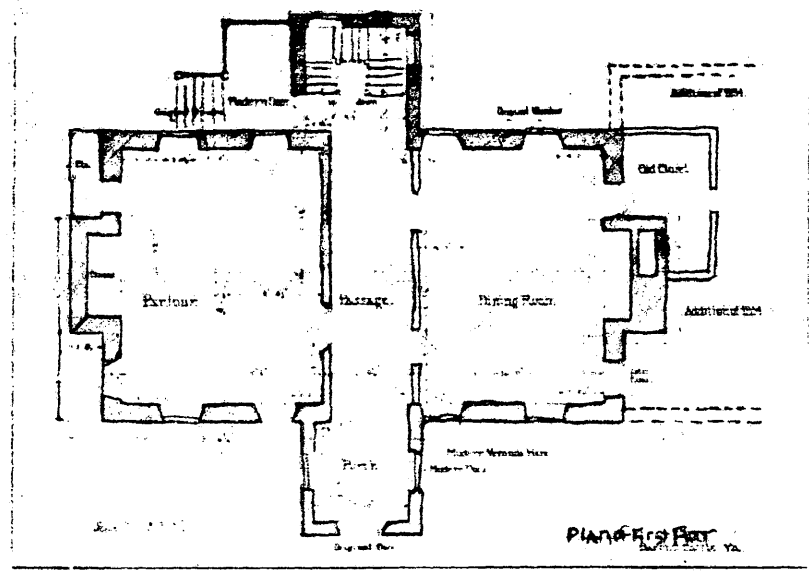
²¹ Kimball, Domestic Architecture, p. 43.

²² Ibid., p. 44.

²³ Fleet, "York County Court Orders," XXVI, p. 90.

²⁴ Fleet, "Lower Norfolk County Court Orders," XXXI, p. 51.

Figure 6



Bacon's Castle, Surry County, Virginia
Plan and elevation, restored. Before 1676.
(See Kimball, p. 40)

in January 1651/52 between Alice Mason (wife of Mr. Francis Mason, dec.) and Mr. Lemuell Mason, and Mr. James Thelabell is indicative of this trend. From the record it seems that some dispute over the possession of a dwelling house had arisen after Francis Mason's death. The county court in Lower Norfolk decided in favor of the Masons but included reparations for Thelabell. The Masons agreed to supply Thelabell with "two thousand foote of sawen planke [and] as much glasse and lead, as to make fower such glass windows as are in the now dwelling house wherein they remayne."²⁵

However, Virginians' preoccupation with tobacco and their failure to establish towns encouraged the less fortunate to maintain the rather insubstantial housing practices of their forerunners. Heavy storms and fire posed continual threats to these wooden structures. Morgan contends that although some "big men did build of brick" in attempt to meet English standards of civilization, "everyone else still lived in the rotting wooden affairs that lay about the landscape like so many landlocked ships."²⁶ This tendency toward temporary structures created concern even at the highest levels of colonial government. As late as April 1665, Thomas Ludwell, secretary of the colony, in a letter to Henry, Earl of Arlington, wrote at great length about this problem. He recalled for Arlington the king's instructions

²⁵
Ibid., p. 1.

²⁶
Morgan, American Slavery, pp. 185-186.

to begin a town of brick at Jamestown. He expressed hope that enough would soon be done to "accommodate the affairs of the country." and the merchants' trade.²⁷ The Virginians of the 1660s and 1670s continued the practice of burning old structures and sifting the ashes for nails (still a rare commodity). Wood remained inexpensive and plentiful, and therefore replacements posed no problem.²⁸ The Butler brothers, John and Christopher, apparently felt no misgiving concerning the construction of a wooden house upon the property of Edward Thomas of Westmoreland County. From the agreement made between John Butler and Thomas on April 15, 1657, it seems that the later "gave" the brothers a parcel of land in exchange for certain guarantees. Butler agreed never to sell the land and to "doe my best endeavor" to raise the crops planted there. Thomas also required him "to build a 20ft. house, also a tobacco house for this crop." In return, Thomas "binds himself to get what help [he] can to get timber for the twenty foote house and what buildings shalbe built upon the ground."²⁹ According to a later entry in the county court record, Butler failed to fulfill his part of the contract, even though Thomas had supplied him with his

27

British Public Records Office, C05, p. 290. Letter from Ludwell to Arlington, April 10, 1665. The structures referred to here are probably those burnt during Bacon's Rebellion and never rebuilt.

28

Morgan, American Slavery, pp. 185-186.

29

Fleet, Westmoreland County Court Orders," XXIII, p. 72.

needs. Thomas was then free to dispose of the property as he wished and sold it to Richard Hawkins in December.³⁰

Such structures continued to receive only cursory notice in the wills, deeds, and agreements of the period. Their insubstantial nature is indicated by the lack of description and modest monetary value. The buildings mentioned in various documents received only the briefest notice. In most cases the houses are described simply as being of wood and of certain length. Some entries indicate the purpose the house served. For example, Robert Wylde sold to Philip and Margaret Chesly fifty acres at Great Neck with a dwelling house built upon it.³¹ Most of these documents also treat structures built upon the land as an unalienable fixture of the property. When Jonathan Sheppard sold his holdings in New Poquoson to George Thompson in February 1646/7, he carefully included "the house wherin I dwelt which house belongeth to said land."³²

The York County Court Records also indicate that the cost of housing remained inexpensive during this period. For example, 700 pounds of tobacco were subtracted from the estate of Francis Morgan in October 1657, and "payd Gload Gallant for a 50 foot house on Walplates with a corne loafe." The remainder of the inventory indicated that Morgan possessed

³⁰ Ibid., p. 93.

³¹ Fleet, "York County Court Orders," XXV, p. 59.

³² Ibid., p. 27.

a reasonably large estate for this period.³³

It also appears that the cost of labor remained low during this period. William Brown entered a contract with Captain Nicholas Martiau for the building of "certain houses" and was paid. After their completion Martiau discovered that the houses leaked and brought suit against Brown. In response Brown agreed to "make them tight" or to pay Martiau .8 pounds of tobacco for three days' labor.³⁴ Jane Trotter and Edward Gimes arrived at a more inventive fee in their contract. In exchange for building "certeyne Howseing," Gimes received one pair of shoes, eight poultry (unspecified), and one old gray rug.³⁵

Those men who contracted with the local government to build houses often fared much better than those who entered private agreements. Early in 1659, Lieutenant John Banister undertook the "finishing and fitting" of two houses belonging to the Commissioners of Charles City County. Banister committed himself to "feel, mall and bring in place and readiness" the timber necessary for the structures. In exchange for his services, he was to have the use of the buildings for "hanging and oureing [airing] of tobbo for the space of three or four yeares." He also remained responsible

³³ Ibid., p. 88.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 66.

for "secureing and repaying th sd. lofts."³⁶ In
 September of that year the court allotted 600 pounds of
 tobacco for "10 cutts of timber."³⁷ The Charles City County
 Court entered a much more complex agreement for the con-
 struction of a courthouse in 1659. The court allowed
 Colonel Edward Hill 700 pounds of tobacco from the August
 tax levy for which "he [was] to cause to be sufficiently
 Covered the Co'rt howse at Westov'r." They charged him "to
 find timber nailes &c w'thout public charge." John Stith
 received the contract for the completion of this structure.
 The court levied Stith 3800 pounds of tobacco to "finish and
 complete and sd. Co'rt house with seeling dawbing windows
 new locus posts and all things necessary a according to the
 agreem'nt w'th the Co'rt."³⁸ That fall the court levied a
 tax of 4 pounds of tobacco per poll on the "north side" of
 the county to pay "Col Edd Hill esqr. for cov'r the Co'rt
 howse."³⁹ Similarly in 1655, the Lancaster County Court
 ordered a series of courthouses built to accommodate the
 needs of their local administration. Three men in all,
 Major Jonathan Carter, Mr. William Underwood and William
 Neasham, received commissions to build single structures. On
 June 6, 1655, the court petitioned Carter to undertake

³⁶
 Fleet, "Charles City County Court Orders," XI,
 p. 20.

³⁷
Ibid., p. 54.

³⁸
Ibid., p. 47.

³⁹
Ibid., p. 55.

construction at Corotoman. In December of the same year, the court ordered Carter to be paid 600 pounds of tobacco, "for nayles for the lower Court House." Underwood received his summons at the same time and was ordered to build a structure on the land adjacent to his house. On its completion in December of that year the court, "now ordered that a market be kept there," for the upper part of the county. This court also recognized a debt of 10,000 pounds of tobacco to Underwood and Carter for the building of the two court houses. The same session commanded, "The next court for the upper part of this county to be kept at the house of Mr. Underwood, 6 Jan." Unlike the others, Neasham obtained his commission of October 25, 1655. The court requested him "... to take care for the building of A Court house," on the land formerly belonging to the Downmans. The charge for this structure was to be paid "by the Publique." During its December meeting, the court paid to Neasham 1976 pounds of tobacco from the county levy already collected by William Leach, and granted him permission "to detaine in his owne hands toward the building of the courthouse 2211 lb tobo,"⁴⁰ from the next one which Neasham himself was to gather.

The House of Assembly in October 1646 passed legislation requiring the construction of two houses in James City to be completed in eighteen months. These structures were

to house two children (orphans) from each county to be trained and employed in the public flax house. The Governor and the Assembly agreed to assume the cost of 10,000 pounds of tobacco to build and furnish the structures. The two houses were to be forty feet long and twenty feet wide and of "good and substantial timber." The statute directed that each house be "eight foot high in pitche and a stack of brick chimneys standing in the midst of each house, and that they be loafed with sawne boardes and made with convenient partitions."⁴¹

The most important form of construction undertaken by the colonial government remained the fort. During this period, however, the motivation for building and maintaining these structures definitely shifted away from external threats and toward the internal one, the Indians. For example, the Indian uprising in 1644 caused yet another rash of fort construction along the James Riber. An order by the Virginia Assembly in October of that year made it illegal for persons to reside in isolated, remote areas, and required them to remove the selected areas. The statute stated:

Only in places of danger it shall not be lawful for any seat or inhabitt without ten sufficient men at the least, and arms and ammunition accordingly, the said places of

41

Hening, Laws of Virginia, pp. 336-337. The death rate in Virginia made orphans a very common occurrence in that colony. Those left without provision for their support became a burden on the local parish or county.

danger to be considered, and parties licensed by the Leifts, and their deputies.⁴²

Statutes appearing in February of the following year called for the erection of three forts: one at Pamunkey called Fort Royal; an other named Fort Charles at the falls of the James; the third at the ridge of the "Chiquohomine" to be known as Fort James. The commanders received their appointments directly from the governor, but were granted the authority to recruit their own men. They were also required to raise their own supplies, arms, and ammunition. Friendly Indians could compose a segment of their forces. Inferior officers were appointed at the discretion of the commander. The government made provisions for the suitable reward of those serving in the defense of the colony. Commanders received 6000 pounds of tobacco, while lieutenants and sergeants earned 4000 pounds and 2000 pounds respectively. The charges for the defense of the northern and southern parts of the colony were to be maintained separately.⁴³ The following March, the government allotted funds for the construction of a fort "att the Falls of the Appamattock River, nominated fforte Henry," and housing forty-five soldiers. The Assembly allowed similar provisions for the maintenance of this fort and for its

⁴²

Ibid., pp. 285-286.

⁴³

Ibid., pp. 293-294.

officers' salaries.⁴⁴ In October, because the forts were thought to be of great consequence for the safety of the colony, the government undertook their total expense. It granted to the individual in charge land sufficient for the maintenance of an adequate force. Captains Henry Wood of Fort Henry and Roger Marshall of Fort Royal received grants of 600 acres, and were exempt from taxes so long as they maintained a force of ten men for a three-year period. Captain Thomas Rolfe was awarded 400 acres in return for the maintenance of six men at Fort James. Although no one had yet undertaken the upkeep of Fort Charles, provisions similar to those for Fort Henry and Fort Royal were made.⁴⁵

Colonists felt the anxiety created by the possibility of another large-scale Indian uprising throughout the late 1640s and 1650s. Illustrating this concern were statutes passed by the Assembly calling for militia musters and visitations to the Indians.⁴⁶ In 1661 Francis Moryson, "Gov'nor and Capt. Genn'all of Virga," sent orders to the county seats in an attempt "to quiet the fears of the people and yet making provision for their defense." At a court held at "James City" and attended by Moryson and Thomas Ludwell as well as local commissioners, all householders were commanded to keep ready sufficient arms and ammunition for their defense,

⁴⁴

Ibid., p. 315.

⁴⁵

Ibid., p. 327.

⁴⁶

Ibid., pp. 386, 403. This act and the preceding ones resulted directly from the Indian Uprising of 1644.

and to repair all "unservicable" arms. This group also ordered a three-day muster the following July and provided for the appointment of officers and appropriate meeting places. They declared the official alarm to be a series of three gun shots fired in the air, and made it unlawful to raise a false alarm.⁴⁷ In much the same mood, on September 23, 1667, the "Grand Assembly of James City" passed legislation concerning the necessity of erecting forts at five locations in the colony - James City, Nanssemond River, York River, Rappahannock River, and Potomac River.⁴⁸ Later that year Governor William Berkeley confirmed their construction in a letter to Arlington in England. Secretary Ludwell writing to John, Lord Berkeley of Stratton, in November of 1667, added to their intelligence. He stated that the Assembly voted to construct five forts of eight guns each.⁴⁹ A Ludwell letter to Arlington dated July 20, 1668, acknowledged their completion and radically increased the armaments requested by the colony. He observed, "They have five forts finished for which they want at least 140 pieces of ordinance."⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Fleet, "Charles City County Court Orders," XI, pp. 97-99.

⁴⁸ British Public Records Office, CO5-1585, p. 500.

⁴⁹ Ibid., CO5-1625-1627, p. 516. Letter from Ludwell to Lord Berkeley of Stratton.

⁵⁰ Ibid., CO5, p. 519. Letter from Ludwell to Arlington.

At the same time these events occurred and Virginians went about fortifying themselves against the Indians, colonists grew increasingly apathetic about the dangers of an invasion by European forces from the east. The continuing debate and controversy surrounding the construction of a fort at Point Comfort typified this tendency. Originally built to protect the colony from French or Spanish attacks (see Chapter II), the fort at Point Comfort devolved to a customs station by the mid-1650s.⁵¹

By the late 1660s discussion turned once again toward the possibility of using this fort for the defense of the colony. However, as early as July 13, 1666, Governor Berkeley questioned the value of this structure in a letter to Lord Arlington. He contended that access to the colony was so open that any enemy could easily retreat out of cannon range, and that the colonist "Find that all the forts they can build, though never so strong, will not absolutely answer what they are designed for."⁵² A Ludwell memorandum to Arlington received three days later indicated the same misgivings. The Virginia Assembly ordered one fort "with all their ordnance being 14" to be built for the colonies defense but asked that the King's command for a fort at Point

51

Hening, Laws of Virginia, p. 392. See this statute for details concerning the maintenance and duties of this customs station.

52

British Public Records Office, C05-1241, p. 396. Letter from Governor Berkeley to Arlington.

Comfort be altered.⁵³ In February 1667 Secretary Ludwell again wrote to Arlington that 70,000 pounds of tobacco had been voted to build a fort at Point Comfort but that work was impossible.⁵⁴ On June 24, 1667, the king's Colonial Council suggested the importance of the fort at Point Comfort for protection from the increasing Dutch threat. However, colonial representatives argued against it, indicating the fort had never been completed due to a lack of necessity and tax money. They also pointed out to the English representatives the doubtful value of the structure stating, "... not is it of any certain defense for James River."⁵⁵ Seen on a map, a definite pattern of fortifications developed for the tidewater region of Virginia. Colonists, after the initial period of settlement had a tendency to fortify the region along the periphery of the settled areas and to let those in the internal areas fall into disuse. (see appendix)

Unlike the construction patterns for houses and forts, the uses for fences or pales changed little during this period. Their functions remained basically the same - enclosing livestock or crops, and/or denoting property lines - although some were now used for decorative purposes. The Reverend John Clayton, writing during the 1680s, recounted

⁵³

Ibid., C05-1250, pp. 399-400.

⁵⁴

Ibid., C05-1410, p. 446. Letter from Ludwell to Arlington.

⁵⁵

Ibid., C05-1508, p. 475.

for his English audience the types of fences popular in Virginia during the 1670s. He related that Virginians favored "three ways raileing in or fenceing their ground." According to Clayton, Virginians constructed the first and most popular kind of fence:

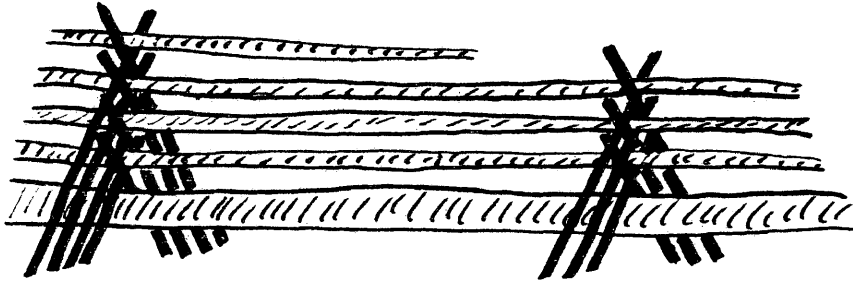
By first laying great timber trees at the bottom of the fences all around the field so that piggs may not creep into it & then by making holes on either side of the tree & stick stakes therin wch bearing against the tree make another fork to hold a long rail of timber above it ...

Four such layers of stakes or posts and rails "... one above another besides the timber tree," constituted this type of fence. Clayton continued his account with an explanation of the "Worm fence," so called because of its undulating appearance. This kind of fence consisted of "eight railes of cloven timber about nine foot long apiece," placed one on top of the other. Each section lay at an obtuse angle to the next. He added that a "lawful fence is 8 railes high." Clayton concluded his summary with a description of the "polony fence." Virginians built this structure by placing "thick poles standing with one end in the ground," leaning against smaller staves placed in a fork beneath them for support.⁵⁶ (see Fig 7)

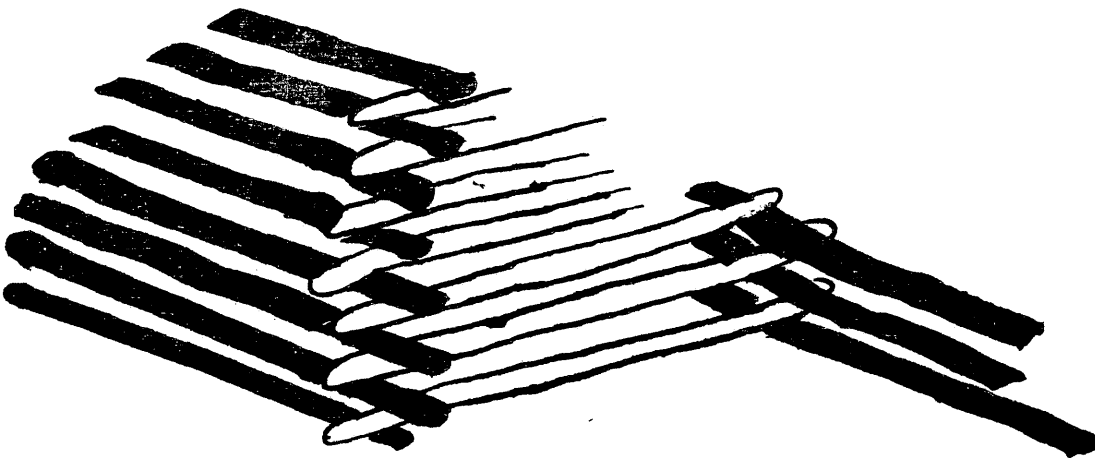
A 1653 Westmoreland County contract between Francis Sherwood and Thomas Hawkins accurately described Clayton's

Figure 7

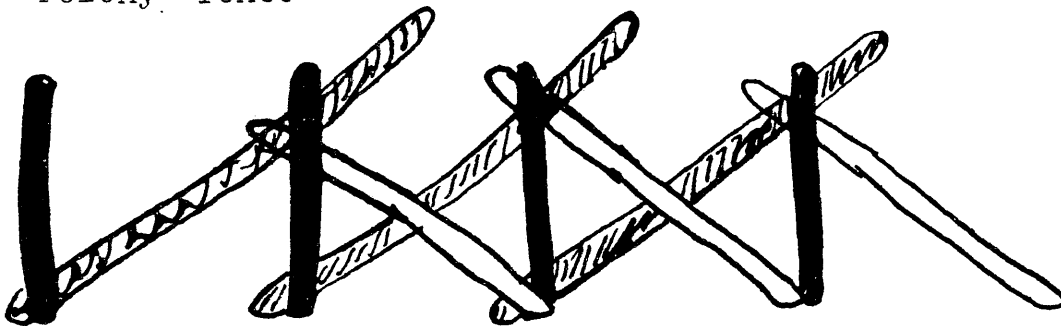
a. Post and rail fence



b. "Worm" fence



c. "Polony" fence



Three Types of Fencing Described by the Rev. John Clayton

first type of fencing. It stipulated that Sherwood was to "setup" for Hawkins at the head of the Nominy River one hundred and fifty "pannell of posts and railes five railes to the pannell sufficiently preformed by said Sherwood to keepe out hoggs and Cattle." Hawkins also required the posts "to be Locus or Chestnutt."⁵⁷

According to the 1646 statute, the owner of the fence or pale usually remained responsible for its stability. Should it be judged insufficient, the owner assumed the cost of all damaged by his animals to neighbors' crops, or of his neighbors' animals in his own fields. Cases such as those of William Thatcher and Abraham Moore illustrate the applications of the policy. In August 1653 the Lancaster County Court ordered Thatcher to pay Elias Edmonds 1000 pounds of tobacco for killing his hogs in violation of this statute.⁵⁸ A year later this same court ordered two men to view Moore's crops and report on the damage caused to his crops by a neighbor's trespassing animals. Unfortunately, their report to the court does not survive.⁵⁹ However, the Charles City Court meeting on August 20, 1657, dealt with a similar case. It took despositions from three men who had seen cattle and hogs trespassing in the field of Joseph Gaby. They agreed

⁵⁷ Fleet, "Westmoreland County Court Orders," XXIII, p. 21.

⁵⁸ Fleet, "Lancaster County Court Orders," X, p. 93.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 72.

that Gaby's fence was "in some places very low that it might
⁶⁰ be stept over." It appears likely, therefore, that Gaby's
 neighbors did not have to pay for the damage incurred by
 their wandering animals.

The local court apparently continued to have
 trouble with the interpretation of this statute, for in
 March 1657/8 the Assembly repeated its description of the
 1646 law and added another qualification. The commission
 was to appoint "two honest men" to inspect the fences of
 those filing suit under this provision. If they deemed the
 fences sufficient, the owner of the trespassing livestock
⁶¹ was to be held responsible.

Fences and pales also served to denote legal
 boundaries. For example, Nicholas Brookes, Sr., patented
 land in York County near Middle Plantation whose limits were
 bound by "the old Pallasadoes for the length of the land
⁶² claim." In a more general ruling passed in December 1656,
 the Virginia Assembly made it unlawful for any Indian without
 a "tickett" of permission to enter into any fenced settlement
⁶³ or plantation.

It was also during this period that Tidewater
 Virginians began to use fences for decorative purposes.

⁶⁰
 Fleet, "Charles City County Court Orders," X,
 p. 85.

⁶¹
 Hening, Laws of Virginia, p. 415.

⁶²
 Fleet, "York County Court Orders," XXV, p. 38.

⁶³
 Hening, Laws of Virginia, p. 458.

Stanard suggests that many houses of the middling sort used garden hedges. These structures often had a "yard enclosed by a white paling."⁶⁴

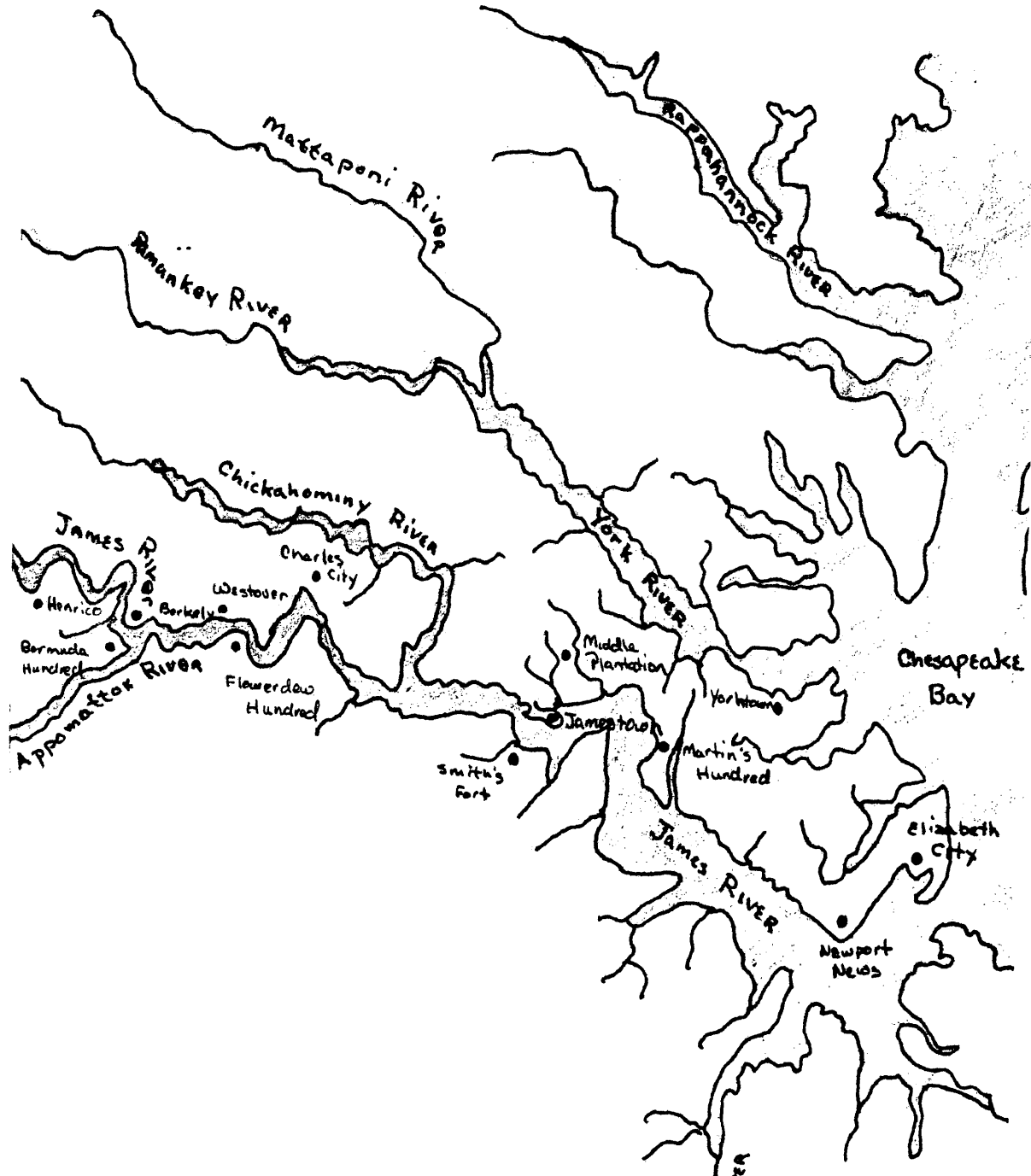
By the 1660s there remained no doubt that the tidewater area of Virginia was far from the edge of the colonial American frontier. Although the large plantation mansion would not be built until the next generation, many planters had substantial dwelling houses surrounded by beavies of outbuildings. These structures continued to be unplanned and organic in their growth patterns, but contained more and more of those things regarded as the luxuries of life in "civilized" England.

Along with the houses, the landscape also changed. Livestock no longer had free run of the land. Most herds were detained behind stout fences as unclaimed and unsettled land grew scarce. The forts and fortified enclosed areas that were vital to survival during the opening decades of settlement gradually fell into disuse and most were left to crumble. The colonial fort, like the one-room house and the unfenced countryside, moved westward with the colonial frontier.

As English colonists came to recognize themselves as Virginians - people who would be born, live, and die there - their attitude toward the structures they built underwent a subtle change. They sought to recreate their

past rather than something new. The Virginia countryside of the 1660s and 1670s was not terribly unlike that of southeastern England several decades earlier. Large estates dominated the scene with the more humble holdings of the smaller farmers filling in the gaps. The range of tidewater dwellings approximated the diversity of the mother country. Although the finest Virginia houses did not yet match the formal grandeur of contemporary English manors, they did rival those of the earlier English style. As the tidewater area became more densely populated, colonists made greater use of fences. These structures ribboned the landscape and attempted to bring it to order. Conversely, as the number of colonists in the tidewater area increased, the need for fortification disappeared.

APPENDIX



Map 1. Towns and Major Settlements in Tidewater Virginia, 1620-1670.

● Forts constructed by 1620.

1. Jamestown
2. Blunt Point
3. Point Comfort
4. Fort Henry
5. Fort Charles
6. Henrico

○ Forts constructed by 1640.

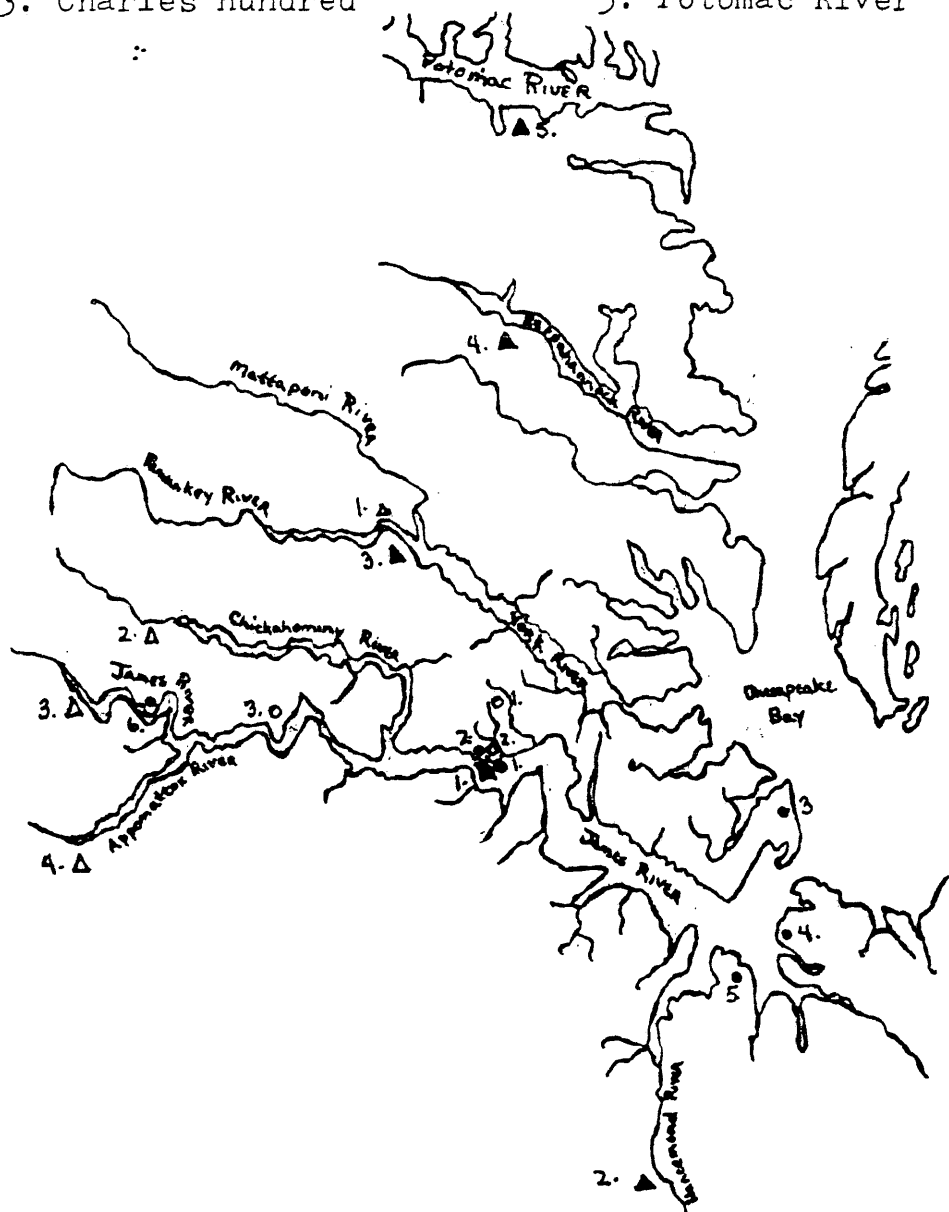
1. Middle Plantation
2. Blunt Point
3. Charles Hundred

△ Forts constructed between 1645 and 1650.

1. Fort Royal
2. Fort Charles
3. Fort James
4. Fort Henry

▲ Forts constructed by 1661.

1. James City
2. Nancemond
3. York River
4. Rappahannock River
5. Potomac River

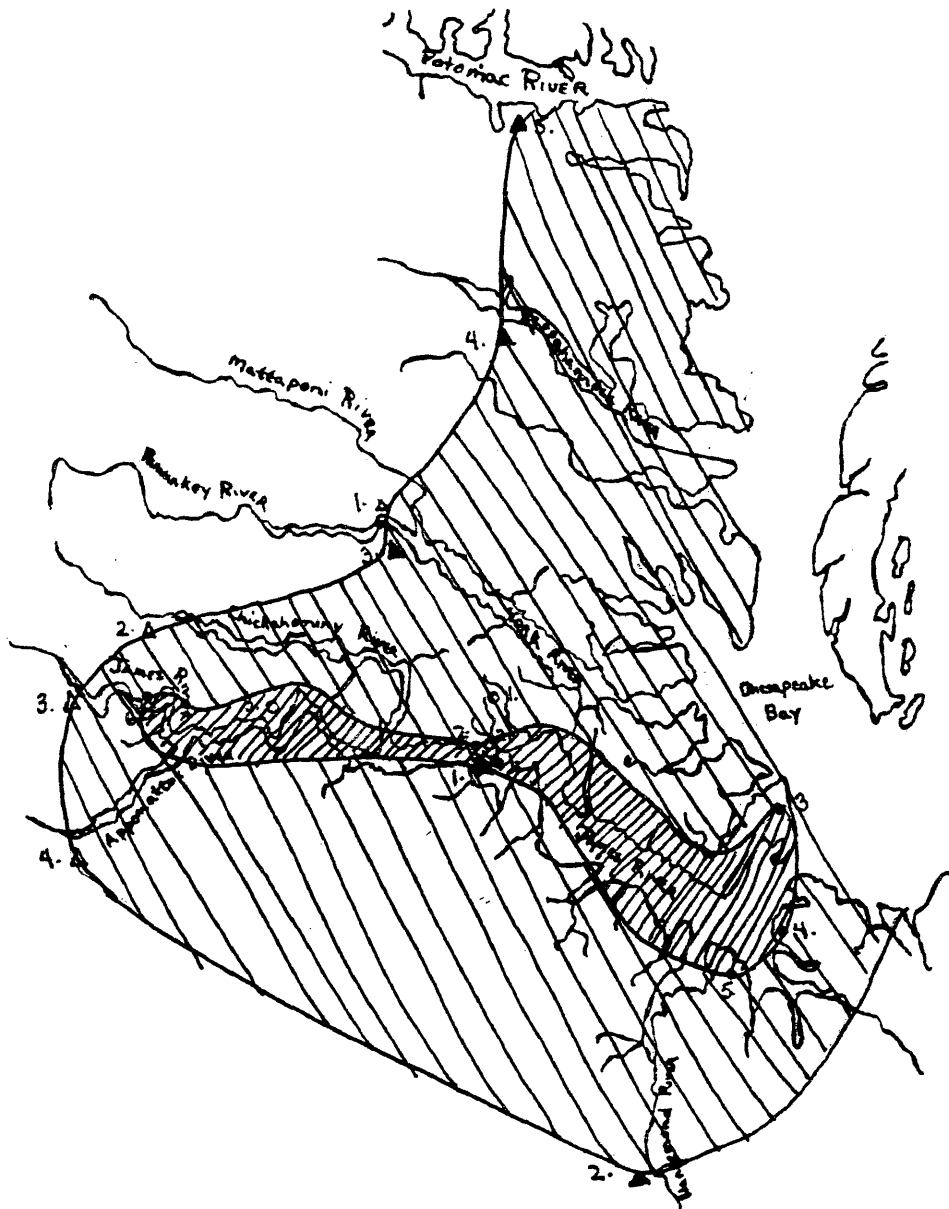


Map 2. Locations of Forts constructed in Tidewater Virginia between 1607 and 1670.

Area fortified by
1620.



Area fortified by
1670.



Map 3. Lines of Defense established by Fortification.

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