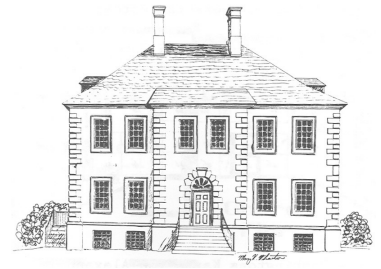


# Carlyle Connection

“It’s a fine beginning.”



## *The Carlyle House Grounds and Outbuildings-A Closer Look: What We Know and What We Can Surmise Part I*

By *Richard Klingenmaier*

“All the Drudgeries of Cookery, Washing, Dairies, etc. are performed in Offices detached from their Dwelling Houses, which by this means are kept more cool and Sweet.”

Robert Beverley, Virginia 1705

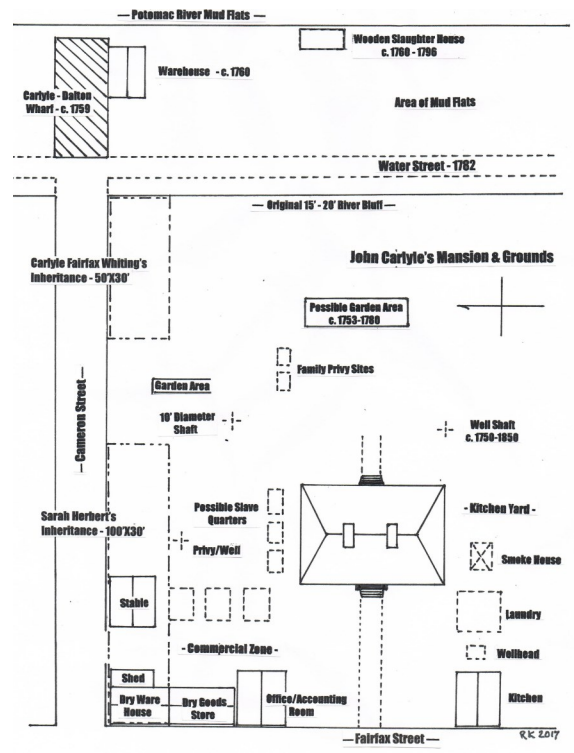
The landscape surrounding John Carlyle’s mansion house today is strikingly different in appearance from that of the eighteenth century. Not only has the contour of the land been altered beyond recognition, the structures that once stood in these areas have disappeared. Only crude outlines on insurance documents dating from 1796 represent these buildings, presumed to have been on the property during John Carlyle’s occupancy. Several of the structures lack any descriptive detail whatsoever, leaving their actual appearance and use to conjecture. [See Illustration]

The outbuildings found on eighteenth century Virginia properties were “purpose-built structures” designed to do a single task: cooking food, washing clothes, preserving meat, housing domestic animals, blacksmithing, general storage, and processing dairy products. Basic to most elite properties were a kitchen, a laundry, a dairy, a smoke house, a stable, a storehouse, and a privy.

The side yard working areas of John Carlyle’s in town property were where workers routinely faced smoke, heat, noise, and odors. These areas were not the manicured parts of the estate. Heat generated by kitchen fires and blacksmithing activity added to the discomfort of summer. The unpleasant odors emanating from food preparation, mixed with the smells of domestic animals in the nearby stable, drifted through open windows of the main house along with heat relieving breezes. The presence of manure in the stable area drew swarms of flies that also found

their way into the house, leaving flyspecks everywhere, on furniture, walls and curtains.

Additional odors would have been generated by the likely presence of a “midden” or dump site near the kitchen yard. Locations close to kitchen doors were considered prime dumping sites for kitchen refuse, and according to Mount Vernon archaeologists, there is no indication that trash in most dump sites was covered or sealed in any way over the span of a site’s use.



*Conjectural site drawing by author, based on Mutual Assurance policies*

Although John Carlyle's house and property mimicked a country estate, a good portion of it was part of a commercial city. His mercantile and shipping business generated its own negative aspects. The odor of pine tar and pitch from nearby vessels and wharves would have permeated the air, and the constant noise and commotion related to the movement of ships' cargoes in and out of his warehouses would have been evident to the Carlyle family. Unlike more expansive rural plantation settings, the limitations posed by urban lot sizes brought these unpleasanties closer to the main house.

### Boundaries and Extensions

John Carlyle had built his mansion house in 1752-53 on a high bluff along the Potomac River on two lots at the very center of early Alexandria, Virginia. He and his business partner, John Dalton, obtained permission from the Town Trustees on July 18, 1759 to erect the first private wharf in Alexandria, in effect, an extension of Cameron Street across the mudflats to deeper water of the Potomac River where eventually his four ships would anchor in the main channel. This wharf came to be called the Carlyle/Dalton Wharf. According to Alexandria Archaeology's research, the wharf, of cribbed construction consisting of oak and pine timbers, was probably built in two construction stages. Each stage extended the landing further over the flats to deeper water, eventually ending short of Union Street about 1775. As part of the same agreement, the business partners were also granted private use of half of the wharf "...in consequence of the expense they will be at." By late 1760, Carlyle likely constructed a "2-story stone and wood warehouse" on or adjacent to the wharf, as shown on the 1796 insurance policy. Just 62 feet southeast of the warehouse was situated a "wooden slaughter house," possibly built by Carlyle as well.

The two sections of Water Street were not joined at the base of Carlyle's property until sometime in or shortly after 1782. In May of that year, the Virginia General Assembly authorized the town to connect the two sections of the street by "banking out the high ground by cutting it down to fill in the mudflats of the shallow bay." However, the 15-20 foot high bluff along the river edge of Carlyle's property may not have been "cut down" entirely at this time. Evidence suggests the bluff was not reduced to its current Lee Street level until James Green's ownership after 1848. In an advertisement in the Alexandria Gazette dated August 31, 1849, Green sought to contract for

removal of "...2,000 cubic yards of clay and sand from the bank east of the Mansion House," likely creating the current slope of the property from the mansion house down to Water [Lee] Street. In the process, he reduced what was likely John Carlyle's garden area down by as much as 15 feet below its original height. The height of the current terrace suggests the original elevation of John Carlyle's property from the house to the original 15-20 foot high river bluff.

While it has been assumed that John Carlyle had some type of formal "pleasure garden," as did George Wythe of Williamsburg and George Mason of Gunston Hall, no archaeological evidence of it has survived. However, John Carlyle's last will and testament reveals two brief references to "my garden." In an April 5, 1780 entry, he left to his grandson, Carlyle Fairfax Whiting, "a part of my two lotts (sic) whereon I live in Alex. beginning on Cameron & Water at the corner, continue on Cameron 50', then parallel to Fairfax into my garden 30'." Carlyle left a second portion to his daughter, Sarah Herbert. Her portion was 100' X 30' and entered the western edge of Carlyle's garden at a point east of the stable. Both parcels of land bordered Cameron Street between Water [Lee] and Fairfax Streets. While neither description indicates Carlyle's "garden" also extended behind his house, the examples of Wythe's and Mason's gardens suggest Carlyle's garden likely included the entire area between his house and the river bluff.

### Carlyle's Outbuildings

The 1796 Mutual Assurance policy identifies three "dwelling houses," a "shed," a "stable," and a "kitchen" in the immediate vicinity of the mansion house along Fairfax and Cameron Streets. The three "dwelling houses" have long been assumed to be the same "dry warehouse," "dry goods store," and "office/accounting room" built by John Carlyle and subsequently identified as such in George William Fairfax's accounts of 1762.

### Carlyle's Kitchen Yard

John Carlyle's detached kitchen was located under the current Burke and Herbert bank building fronting on Fairfax Street. Kitchen yards invariably also included a laundry, a dairy, a smoke house, and a wellhead. Access to the mansion from the kitchen yard would have been through the door at the end of the first floor side passage, giving servants direct access to the servants staircase

leading to the “servants hall” in the cellar. Carlyle’s kitchen was a one story, wood frame structure measuring 26’ x 18’, and was likely similar to surviving eighteenth century Virginia detached kitchens. Invariably there is no mantel over the wide hearth which is equipped with an iron crane for suspending kettles over the fire. Utensils such as skimmers, flesh forks, skewers, pot hooks, and metal spoons [ladles] hung directly off the huge timber beam that served as the hearth lintel. Wooden dressers [work height shelving] partially lined the walls with bracketed shelves above for storage of pewter plate, earthenware dishes, wooden ware, etc. On or near the hearth would be found cooking utensils such as frying pans, a lidded “Dutch” oven, a griddle, an iron toaster, iron or brass cooking pots, skillets, a copper kettle, and iron trivets. Lighting would have been provided by one or two iron candlesticks. Since the kitchen was a work space, a work table would be located near the hearth for food preparation. One or two simple chairs or stools would have offered limited seating. The interior walls and ceiling of the kitchen would most likely have been plastered and kept “clean” by whitewashing on a regular basis. The floor could have been brick, although dirt floors were quite common as well. A window or two would have provided ventilation during the summer months; kitchens were always hot and smoky work spaces.

#### The Laundry

The 1796 Mutual Assurance policy depicts a second, though unidentified, building to the east of the kitchen. While it is not possible to discern its actual size, nonetheless, its depiction probably suggests a substantial structure and most likely constructed of wood like the kitchen. This structure was most likely the laundry or “wash house,” since kitchens and laundries were frequently found within close proximity to each other, and were usually of comparable size. The most prominent feature of John Carlyle’s laundry would have been a wide fireplace to accommodate large iron kettles for heating water for clothes washing. A table, padded and covered with a cloth, would have provided an ironing surface. Numerous utensils - large copper kettles for soaking laundry, wooden buckets to retrieve water from the nearby wellhead, wash tubs, rinsing tubs, wooden paddles, linen baskets, and flat irons - would have lined the walls on shelving or simply stacked nearby. A paved or planked floor would have handled water run off. Also like the kitchen, its walls and ceiling probably were whitewashed

to project an image of cleanliness. The laundry would have contained a variety of items that were being washed, dried or ironed as shown by the estate inventory of Gawen Corbin, Esqr. of Westmoreland, Virginia in 1760: “In the Wash House ... 1 pr. fine Sheets - 10 Course damask Table Cloaths (sic) - 3 Damask Napkins - 6 Course Damask Towells (sic) - 2 Diaper Ditto - 2 small Oznabrig (sic) Table cloaths (sic).”

#### The Dairy

John Carlyle did not have a dairy outbuilding on his in-town property. His estate inventory dated November 1780, lists no cows, no milk pans and no churns, etc. There is only a brief mention of “1 Butter gallon measure” and “2 Butter pots,” presumably in the detached kitchen. On the other hand, his plantation, “Torthorwald,” on the outskirts of Alexandria, had “30 Milk cows,” “2 churns,” “6 tin milk pans,” “1 Strayner” (sic), “1 Cheese press,” “6 Cheese hoops,” and “3 Butter pots,” all of which clearly indicate a dairy operation. With Torthorwald located within five miles of his mansion house, Carlyle could easily rely on this convenient source for his dairy product needs.

#### The Smokehouse

We can safely assume that John Carlyle’s formal dining needs necessitated a ready source of meat year around and that his smokehouse or “meat house” was situated in the kitchen yard near his kitchen. The typical smokehouse was usually a tightly constructed wooden structure between eight and fourteen feet square with a steep pyramidal roof, but without windows or a flue. Always found in this outbuilding were bushels of salt, wooden tubs and a center fire pit. Under its roof, cuts of meat, typically hams and bacon from freshly slaughtered pigs, even slabs of beef, were suspended from the rafters after weeks of curing in tubs of coarse salt meant to draw out the water from the flesh. The final curing process involved building a fire in the pit on the floor of the structure. The fire was allowed to smolder for one to two weeks, the resulting smoke drying the meat, preserving it, and giving it a desirable smoked flavor. Hickory wood was considered the most desirable for this process. Once the “smoking” process was completed, the meat remained in the tightly enclosed building, sometimes as long as a year before it was eaten. It was only removed from the smokehouse when it was to be consumed, the smokehouse being kept securely locked at all times to prevent theft of its valuable contents.

### The Wellhead

A dependable and ready source of water would have been crucial for kitchen and laundry activities, as well as routine household needs. The most likely site for the wellhead would have been in the immediate vicinity of the kitchen and laundry buildings, an area now covered by the Burke and Herbert building. The discovery of a well shaft in 1974 at the southeast corner of the house [currently under the southern edge of the terrace] suggests an alternative site for the kitchen yard's wellhead. While the artifacts recovered from the shaft indicate a 19th century fill date, the shaft very possibly served originally as a cistern or water well that subsequently went dry and was later filled with trash and debris. The well's construction characteristics, according to Rescue Archaeologist Richard J. Muzzrole, suggest an 18th century construction date.

### Commercial Zone

John Carlyle's commercial activities - office, dry goods store, and warehouse - as well as the more mundane, yet essential, domestic support functions such as a stable, a storehouse, and possible blacksmith and carpentry shops, were located to the north and northwest of mansion. All are clearly shown on the 1796 insurance policy. Six additional structures of unknown size and function are also depicted in this area. The three structures shown in line on a north/south axis suggest a direct affiliation with Carlyle's mercantile business as they appear to form a courtyard area behind his office, store and dry warehouse. All three may have been storage sheds or smaller warehouses. However, one, given its proximity to Carlyle's stable, may represent a blacksmith shop. Carlyle's inventory lists: "9 Barrs (sic) Iron wt. 303 lb." and "1 Bundle Nail Rods," items associated with blacksmithing. A second structure may have been a carpentry shop for the manufacture of barrels and casks for cargo shipments. The three remaining unidentified structures on an east/west axis and parallel to the north side of the mansion house, roughly along the current brick path to the garden, were most likely slave quarters. Their positioning away from the commercial courtyard activities and adjacent to the mansion, suggest a domestic rather than a commercial purpose. The likelihood that these three structures housed additional domestic activities not already accounted for would be speculative. In fact, the historical record strongly suggests that slave quarters for domestic servants would have been on the property, and most likely in this area. Like many of his contemporaries, Carlyle would have housed his "black

family" outside the mansion house to establish "a clearer separation between those who served and those who were served."

### Privies

The whereabouts of the privies used by the Carlyle family remain a mystery. Two of three shafts uncovered outside the mansion appear to have been constructed initially as water wells in the eighteenth century. One shaft to the north of the house contained fecal and other organic matter, but its accompanying ceramic debris dated from the nineteenth not the eighteenth century. The second shaft, located to the southeast of the house did not contain any fecal matter. A third shaft discovered northeast of the mansion [under the gazebo] was never fully explored and its purpose is not known. We can only assume that the family's privy(s) was located between the mansion and the river bluff, in what was likely Carlyle's garden.

## News from the Educator

In the month of September, we hosted our first Crafts at Carlyle event to coincide with the King Street Art Festival. This was the first year so we had less than a hundred people stop through, but we have been offered a spot on King Street next year to be among the art with the crafts.

Since the beginning of September we have hosted one group tour. With school back in session once more though, we have already hosted 650 students on school programs. Revamping of these programs is still in progress and the programs will continue to shift over time. Teachers visiting the site with students have been asked to fill out an online survey for us so we can continue to improve our educational tours and provide the best experience for students.

~Allie Kelley

(photo at right from  
Zombie Escape)



## News from the Site Specialist

Our fall season of programming has finally come to an end. Our second annual Whiskey Tasting was well received, once again selling out the 40 tickets. Thank you again to our wonderful sponsors: Old Town Dolci Gelati, Visit Alexandria, Becky & Bill Herder, Tracy & Rich Gillespie, Sheri & Red Cavaney, Kim Abraham, Historic Alexandria Foundation, Oxford Finance, John Dumsick & Susannah Rast, Burke & Herbert Bank, and George Washington's Mount Vernon. October was a busy month with three programs. The annual Scottish Heritage took place in early October and had over 500 people on the grounds. Visitors enjoyed Scottish music, dancing, cooking, and tours of the house. At the end of the month we hosted two Halloween themed programs: Ghostly Tales (in conjunction with Footsteps to the Past) and Zombie Escape. Zombie Escape sold out and we had over 100 people enjoy ghostly tales about town. Next up we have two programs in December before taking a break until February. Soldier's Christmas will take place on Saturday, December 2nd from 12pm-4pm following Alexandria's Scottish Walk. Alexandria's Annual Candlelight Tours will be on Saturday, December 9th from 4pm-9pm. We're still looking for docents for these programs so if you're interested in helping please let Allie know.

This fall was slower on the collections front. Our Tuesday supervisor, Gary, has been helping scan slides that were cataloged a couple of years ago so we'll soon have more digitized images of the Carlyle House restoration. In October, Henry Desmarais donated a document with John Carlyle's signature on it. We're super excited to research the document and learn more about it.

~Kerry Mitchell

(photo at right from Ghostly Tales)



## Upcoming Events

### Museum Store Sunday

**Sunday, November 26; 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

Come to our gift shop the Sunday after Thanksgiving and get 10% off of your purchases plus a free postcard! Museum Store Sunday is a global one day annual shopping event where you can shop for uniquely curated gifts while supporting your local museums.



### Soldier's Christmas

**Saturday, December 2; 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

Enjoy holiday life at the time of the Revolution with the First Virginia Regiment. Free.

### Candlelight Tours

**Saturday, December 9; 4 p.m. to 9 p.m.**

Travel through centuries of local history during the holiday season! Tour Gadsby's Tavern Museum, Carlyle House, and Lee-Fendall House, enjoying seasonal decorations, entertainment, and light refreshments. This year Lloyd House joins the tour, hosting members of Beth El Hebrew Congregation, the oldest Jewish congregation in Northern Virginia, as they share the traditions of Hanukkah. Fee.

### John Carlyle's birthday celebration

**Saturday, February 3; 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

Help us celebrate John Carlyle's 298th birthday! Join us for birthday treats and entertainment. Free.

**See our website for more details.**

**Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram!**



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*Carlyle House Historic Park is accredited by  
the American Alliance of Museums.*



## News from the Site Manager

Isn't Richard's article fascinating? We are fortunate to have resources such as William Herbert's insurance policies available to us, and are even more fortunate to have a talented researcher like Richard working to decipher them.



*L to R: Rupert Fairfax, Susan Hellman, Maddy McCoy, Hugh Fairfax, Janice Magnuson*

In October we were excited to host two descendants of John Carlyle:

Hugh and Rupert Fairfax. They are the younger brothers of Nicholas Fairfax, the 14th Lord Fairfax of Cameron. Hugh recently published his book "Fairfax of Virginia: The Story of America's Only Peerage." I highly recommend it. You may purchase a copy at The Lyceum. Stellar docent Janice Magnuson led the Fairfax brothers on a tour. Janice also gave Hugh a tour about four years ago, back when he was beginning research on his book.

Carlyle House has joined forces with several other museums and local history organizations to work on a region-wide collaborative study focused on the movements and relationships of enslaved and free African Americans from about 1700 to 1870. We seek to provide individual histories for the thousands of enslaved people owned and traded within D.C., Maryland and Northern Virginia by documenting births, deaths, marriages, family relationships and movements throughout the region. Maddy McCoy, founder and principal of the Slavery Inventory Database, is researching the Carlyle enslaved population as part of this project. Stay tuned for her exciting finds!

Many thanks to those of you who have already answered our Annual Appeal. The gardens need some TLC and we're happy that you're supporting this gem.

Our annual holiday party is scheduled for Friday, January 5th at 6:00 p.m. in the Gadsby's Tavern Museum Ballroom. We will send out invitations shortly. We look forward to seeing you there! In the meantime, have a wonderful Thanksgiving.

~Susan Hellman