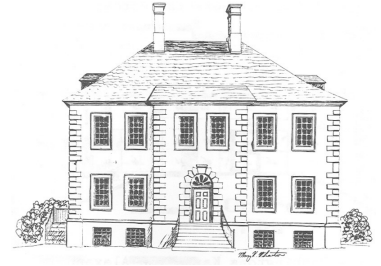


Carlyle Connection

“It’s a fine beginning.”



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

By *Richard Klingenmaier*

A continuation of the previous issue’s fascinating history:
John Carlyle’s Landscape and Slave Quarters

The cabin “...was built of pine boarding...The beds was made of puncheons fitted in holes bored in the walls, and planks laid across them poles. We had ticking mattresses filled with corn shucks. Sometimes men build chairs at night.” Mary Reynolds, former slave [1]

Constance Harrison, a Herbert descendant, visited Alexandria in April 1889 and subsequently recorded details of her visit to the Carlyle House. Her reference to “...the kitchens and quarters built apart from the house in the old days - are now no more,” is the earliest known recorded reference to the likely presence of slave quarters on the property and, by inference, that John Carlyle housed his enslaved house servants outside his Mansion house. [2]

It has been accepted practice for docents to tell visitors to the Carlyle House Museum that slave quarters probably did not exist on John Carlyle’s in-town property due to a lack of both documentary and archeological evidence. Indeed, the landscape of the two city lots surrounding the mansion house were altered in the nineteenth century to such a degree that any significant archeological study of the property was deemed useless when the house was restored in the mid-1970s. According to William Kelso of the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, “no undisturbed eighteenth century fill or features were discovered.” [3] Furthermore, recent studies reveal that most of the landscape was reduced in elevation anywhere from six to as much as twenty feet in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. [See illustration on page 3] Only crude drawings, part of insurance documents dating from 1796,

and several brief references in nineteenth century documents and newspapers provide any clue as to the structures that may have existed there during John Carlyle’s life time. [4]

In recent years a few scholarly studies have suggested that enslaved household servants on both rural and urban Virginia properties, when numbering less than a dozen, resided in and adjacent to the Master’s house. [5] In



Typical slave dwelling in North Carolina

general, many enslaved workers slept in and about kitchens, laundries, and other outbuildings where they worked. "House slaves in some instances slept in passages, closets, and the owner's bedchamber." [6] While a few primary sources add some credence to these in-house accommodations, the practice appears to have been far less prevalent than the studies would suggest when applied to wealthy owners. Carson and Lounsbury provide two examples in support of slave accommodations inside the mansion house. Plantation tutor Philip Vickers Fithian describes a young slave, "Sukey," residing in the nursery at Nomini Hall plantation. And John Harrower in his journal reveals that "Priscilla Dawson...died in the chamber where her daughter and an enslaved waiting maid slept." In both instances, however, the presence of the slaves in the master's house could very well have been temporary in nature, perhaps attending to sick white family members; their presence in these accounts is not necessarily evidence of long term residency. As Carson and Lounsbury acknowledge, "...physical and written evidence is often difficult to recover." Indeed, these details of life in the "Big House" were rarely considered worth documenting by eighteenth century owners. These studies, in fact, clearly ignore abundant evidence of the desire and the ability of wealthy owners to segregate enslaved servants from their private lives as much as possible.

Although southern elite relied on slave labor for their livelihood and in some instances even showed a paternalistic attachment to certain slaves, racial considerations nonetheless always influenced and limited the relationship between owner and enslaved. In Thomas Jefferson's own words, his slaves were "...those who labor for my happiness." [7] In reality, this statement could easily be applied to all slave ownership. Jefferson's racial bias is further reflected by an 1815 reference to illness in "our family, both indoors and out" in which he made a clear spatial distinction between white family members inside Monticello and enslaved black members residing outside the house, to include Sally Hemings. An interior design feature of his house appears to further support this bias. Jefferson designed a revolving door in his dining room that allowed servants to place food on shelves on the door which allowed the food but not the black servants to enter the room.

It is generally acknowledged that the primary purpose of a servants' staircase in elite Virginia houses was intended to

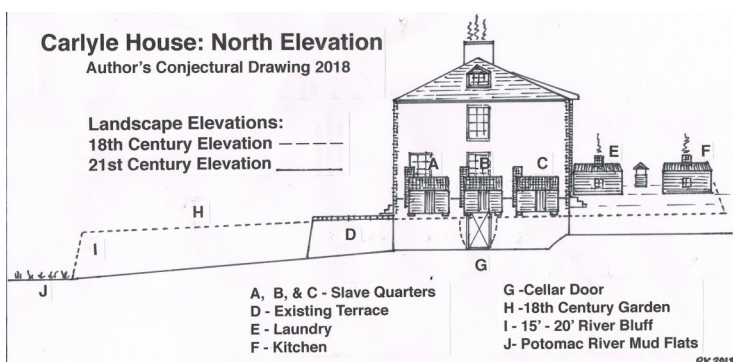
isolate black slaves from both family and visitors. It also has been suggested that the installation of bell-pull systems in Virginia gentry houses to summon servants served to limit a slave's presence in public and private areas except when specifically needed; the goal being to make slavery less visible in the experience of those who occupied the "Great House." [8] The surviving bell-pull system in Washington's Mount Vernon mansion likely served this purpose. [9]

Not surprisingly, some scholars also see a possible correlation between the removal of kitchen activities from elite Virginia houses by 1700 with the arrival of enslaved blacks to replace a dwindling supply of white servants and laborers from Ireland and Europe. [10] Unlike black slaves, indentured white workers could easily escape to the frontier to make new lives for themselves. The rapid expansion of labor-intensive tobacco cultivation in early eighteenth century Virginia further exacerbated the white labor shortage and increased dependency on black slave labor. As one writer concluded: "In the end, the detached kitchen...had little to do with the threat of fire, and everything to do with slavery." [11]

Except for the poorer landowner who had little choice but to both live and work in close proximity to his few enslaved workers, often sharing his dwelling and working beside his slaves in the fields as well, most wealthy landowners chose to house their enslaved house servants in separate quarters outside the main house. In urban environments, these quarters were generally situated to the side or at the rear of the house, but in close proximity to the "Big House." Peyton Randolph's in-town property in Williamsburg had its domestic slave quarter behind and less than fifty feet from the house. Jefferson's quarters for house servants were located among the south wing dependencies. George Mason's son, John, recorded in his "Recollections" that black servants serving the Gunston Hall mansion, including "my father's body servant James," lived in a slave quarter close to the house. The domestic slave quarters on James Madison's estate, Montpelier, were situated less than seventy-five feet from the mansion. As explained by Katherine Imhoff, President of the Montpelier Foundation, "Madison would have smelled the fires and the cooking, and heard the enslaved children, evidence of a very integrated society in some ways, but also very separate." In fact, there is no clear evidence that enslaved household servants resided in the master's house

on any of the above properties on a regular basis, if at all, to include George Washington's Mount Vernon estate. [12] Indeed, housing enslaved servants outside the Master's house "established a clearer separation between those who served and those who were served."

While it cannot be said with absolute certainty that John Carlyle housed all of his enslaved servants in quarters outside his mansion house, a number of factors taken as a whole, such as slave housing practices of Carlyle's contemporaries, surviving documentation to include Virginia Mutual Assurance Policies, and known racial bias on the part of most 18th century Virginians, strongly support the thesis that John Carlyle too would have provided separate housing for his household servants.



Of the fifteen (15) structures depicted on the 1796 Mutual Assurance policy, the three unidentified buildings situated on an east/west axis immediately north of the mansion house very likely represent slave quarters. Their close proximity to the mansion would suggest a domestic not a commercial use. These quarters would have been one-room structures, perhaps with a loft above, each with a brick fireplace for cooking and warmth. On rural plantations, slave quarters frequently were simple log structures with dirt floors. In urban settings, however, they tended to be sturdy frame structures with wood flooring set on masonry foundations and enclosed by clapboarded siding with wood shingle roofs. Their interiors could be finished with plain sheathing or left with framing exposed and possibly covered with white wash. In either case, they would have been sparsely furnished at best; beds would have consisted of straw-filled mattresses, perhaps on pallets or directly on the floor. Any additional refinements, such as a table, chairs or stools, would have depended upon the occupant's own resourcefulness or the generosity of the master. A few basic cooking utensils

would have been found on the hearth. The garret or loft above would have been accessible by an interior ladder. Window openings, if present, would have been small with hinged or sliding wooden shutters, although wealthy owners in urban areas are known to have provided glazed windows as a sign of their wealth. Adequate ventilation and lighting also better ensured healthy workers. [13] The exteriors of these structures as well as other outbuildings within view of the mansion were frequently painted white.

John Carlyle owned nine black slaves, five females and four males, on his in-town property at the time of his death in 1780. At least one of these workers, "Cook," valued at 55 pounds, is presumed to have fulfilled that function. He or she likely slept in the loft above the kitchen. The female slaves, Penny, Sibreia, Nanny and Cate, likely shared one of the three quarters by themselves, a luxury not found on most rural plantations where unrelated male and female slaves often were forced to share a common living space. [Editor's note: Carlyle's white indentured servants may have also resided in one or more of these buildings, although enslaved and indentured would not have shared the same building.]

John Carlyle's slave quarters were probably a step up in refinement from the usual plantation quarter frequently described as "wretched." As one traveler recorded on visiting a rural plantation in 1797, "We entered one of the huts of the Blacks...the husband and wife sleep on a mean pallet, the children on the ground; a very bad fireplace, some utensils for cooking, but in the middle of this poverty some cups and a teapot." [15]

Source Notes:

1 Vlach, John Michael. *Back of the Big House*. University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

2 "The Diaries of Constance Cary Harrison." The Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Burton N. Harrison Family Papers: Box 9, Vol. 1.

3 Carlyle House Restoration Report, July 1980.

4 Alexandria Gazette, Thursday, 1 April 1847. Property for sale notice: "The House and Lot south the Bank of Alexandria, now occupied by William Syphax..." This "house" was originally the "Office/Accounting room" used by both John Carlyle and William Herbert, and shown on

the 1796 insurance policy as one of three “Dwelling houses.”

5 Carson, Cary & Lounsbury, Carl R. *The Chesapeake House*. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

6 Carson & Lounsbury.

7 Stanton, Lucia Cinder. “Those Who Labor for My Happiness” - Slavery at Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello. The University of Virginia Press, 2012.

8 Carson & Lounsbury.

9 George Washington maintained a similar detached relationship with white hired servants as well. His hired white housekeeper, Mrs. Eleanor Forbes, will “... eat of the victuals from our Table, but will not set [sit] at it, at any time with us...” In addition, Mrs. Forbes did not reside in the mansion; she was provided quarters in a chamber above the detached kitchen. The only difference between her quarters and that of the enslaved cook who possibly resided in a separate space above the kitchen, was the quality of the furnishings provided for her use — “four chairs, a tea table, a bed and bedstead, a dressing glass, and fire place equipment.” See: Twohig, Dorothy, Ed. *The Papers of George Washington, Retirement Series, Vol. 1. George Washington to Bushrod Washington, Nov 3, 1797.*

10 Tate, Thad W. *The Negro in Eighteenth Century Williamsburg*. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1965. Between 1700 and 1730, the number of black slaves in Virginia had grown from 16,390 to 30,000. By 1740, the black population had doubled to 60,000, a result of importations and an increase in Virginia-born slaves.

11 Olmert, Michael. *Kitchens, Smoke Houses, and Privies*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca & London, 2009.

12 Fields, Joseph E. *Worthy Partners - The Papers of Martha Washington*. Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn., 1994. One possible exception might have been Washington’s butler, Frank Lee, who occupied a space in the “cellar kitchen” below Washington’s study. In a letter to Fanny Bassett Washington in August 1793, Martha Washington wrote: “...I should think Frank might white wash the kitchen and his room in the sellar [sic] ...” Lee’s

“room in the sellar,” however, may actually refer to a space where Lee could sit, rather than sleep, while on call as butler.

13 Pogue, Dennis and Sanford, Douglas. “Slave Housing in Virginia.” *Encyclopedia Virginia*, a publication of the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. Charlottesville, Virginia, 2016.

14 Coster, Sarah. “Interpreting Slavery at Carlyle House.” *Docent Dispatch*, February 2010.

15 Niemcewicz, Julian Ursyn. *Under Their Vine and Fig Tree: Travels through America in 1797-1799*.

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

(Fun with crafts on the Magnolia Terrace)



News from the Site Specialist

Spring is just around the corner which means all of our winter programming has come to an end. The 1st Virginia returned for our Soldier's Christmas program which brought over 500 people to the house. The annual Candlelight Tours took place on a cold and snowy evening but we still had about 400 people come through the house. They enjoyed a special treat of baklava and hot cider. On February 3rd we celebrated John Carlyle's 298th birthday with music, dancing, and birthday cake. Despite the cold, windy weather we had over 100 people celebrate with us. Our next event will be the March 3rd St. Patrick's Day Parade Open House, which will focus on the Herbert family's time here. We will be hosting historian Kyle Dalton at The Lyceum for his lecture "Braddock's Tars: Common Sailors & the Braddock Expedition" the evening of March 26th. If you'd like to help out at the St. Patrick's Day Parade Open House please let Allie and me know.

The rest of the "Who These Wounded Are" exhibit came down in January which means the upstairs is back to being interpreted as the 18th century. Gary continues to scan the Carlyle House Restoration slides for us. Lee has been going through our research files to better arrange them for easier access. The mourning jewelry that we borrowed from the Wilton House Museum in Richmond will be returned in early March.

~Kerry Mitchell

(Photo of Martha Washington's Great Cake below)



Upcoming Events



St. Patrick's Day Parade Open House

Saturday, March 3; 12 pm to 4 pm
Step back in time to 19th century Alexandria. Free.

Braddock's Tars: Common Soldiers and the Braddock Expedition

Monday, March 26; 7 pm at The Lyceum
Kyle Dalton, Public Programs Administrator at Historic London Town, will explore the lives and experiences of common sailors in the eighteenth century through the lens of the Braddock Expedition. Free.

Braddock Day

Saturday, April 7; 12 pm to 4 pm
Visitors to the Carlyle House will experience Braddock's visit and the French and Indian War firsthand. Free.

Yoga on the Magnolia Terrace

Tuesdays, beginning April 10; 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm
Join yoga instructor Barbara Douglass for an hour long Vinyasa Flow Yoga. Fee.

Friends of Carlyle House Herb & Craft Sale

Saturday, April 21; 8 am to 4 pm
Tour Carlyle House and purchase plants raised at Mount Vernon. Enjoy live musical entertainment, a bake sale, book sale, white elephant table, and more. Free.

Perfectly Paired: Chocolate and Wine Tasting

Saturday, May 5; 6:30 pm
What goes better with wine than chocolate? Join Potomac Chocolate on the Magnolia Terrace for an evening of locally made chocolates paired with delicious wines. Fee.

Mother's Day Tea

Sunday, May 13; 2:30 pm
Treat that special woman in your life to an elegant afternoon tea on our Magnolia Terrace. Fee.

**See our website for more details.
Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram!**

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Keith Rouleau
Deborah Rudolph
Patrick Sheary

Emeritus:

E. Hunt Burke
Oscar P. Fitzgerald
J. Wm. Middendorf II

Museum Staff

Susan Hellman
Site Manager
Kerry Mitchell
Site Specialist
Allie Kelley
Educator

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



News from the Site Manager

That darn groundhog! We're getting pretty tired of this whole winter thing. As you can see from Kerry's and Allie's reports, we have been very busy and productive.

One event that just missed the fall newsletter was the Halloween film contest, a

new event created by Suellen Savukas, who came up with this fantastic idea as

a way to engage a younger audience. She handled every detail, which was enormously helpful to staff. Entrants had to make a scary film that featured Carlyle House and mentioned John Carlyle. First prize went to T.C. Williams; second prize went to Arlington Career Center. You can see the films here (control click):

<https://youtu.be/GJIVmTsjSuM> and <https://youtu.be/iO8Xe5Qz43Q>

Many of you expressed concern over whether or not the City will renew the NOVA Parks lease on our sister park at Cameron Run. Negotiations continue between the parties, and we should learn more by summer's end. In the meantime, City Council has assured us that Alexandria will remain in the NOVA Parks jurisdiction, and NOVA Parks will continue to own and operate Carlyle House.

Although the weather did not exactly cooperate, we greatly enjoyed the Friends holiday party at Gadsby's on January 5. Those who braved the cold had a lovely evening. We are sorry if you missed it, and hope for better weather next year.

Many thanks for your generosity during the Annual Appeal fundraising campaign. You raised approximately \$7300 to go towards repairing the garden walkways and other miscellaneous projects. We will participate in Alexandria's Spring2ACTION fundraiser this spring to increase that sum. Keep an eye out for the Historic Alexandria's Museum page.

Your biggest fundraiser, the Friends of Carlyle House Garden Day Herb & Craft Sale, is coming on April 21. Holly Hanisian will be heading up the event and needs lots of volunteers to make it a success. Please consider helping out your fellow Friends, if only for a few hours. Keep an eye out for an email with details, or email us at carlyle@nvrpa.org. Thank you for all you do to support Carlyle House!

~Susan Hellman



Garden Day in full swing. Mark you calendars for April 21st this year!