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M A R Y L A N D

Historical Magazine



Friends of the Press of the Maryland Historical Society

THE MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY (MdHS) is committed to publishing the finest new work on Maryland history. In late 2005, the Publications Committee, with the advice and support of the development staff, launched the Friends of the Press, an effort dedicated to raising money used solely for bringing new titles into print. Response has been enthusiastic and generous and we thank you.

The first Friends of the Press publication, Leonard Augsburger's *Treasure in the Cellar: A Tale of Gold in Depression-Era Baltimore*, is selling well. Mr. Augsburger has been a featured speaker at several local events such as the American Numismatic Association convention and the Baltimore Book Festival. *Baltimore Sun* columnist Fred Rasmussen wrote two columns on the famous "gold hoard" story and is planning a third. Forthcoming books include Clara Ann Simmons, *Chesapeake Ferries: A Waterborne Tradition, 1632-2000* which will be available late spring 2009. This narrative history of ferry boat travel in the Chesapeake region includes dozens of old and rare photographs, maps, and manuscripts. Additional histories await your support, including Joseph Sterne's story of the *Baltimore Sun's* correspondents in World War II, scheduled for release next fall. These publications would not be possible without your generous support of the Press.

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Cover: Maryland, c. 1930s, A. Aubrey Bodine

In 1923, A. Aubrey Bodine (1906–1970) worked as an office boy at the *Baltimore Sun*. The editor of the Sunday edition agreed to publish the young reporter's pictures of the Thomas Viaduct at Relay and thereby launched the career of one of Maryland's most recognized and popular photographers. Throughout his career, Bodine submitted pictorialist-style photographs to national and international salon competitions and consistently won top honors. (Maryland Historical Society.)

The *Maryland Historical Magazine* welcomes submissions from authors and letters to the editor. Letters may be edited for space and clarity. All articles will be acknowledged, but only those accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope will be returned. Submissions should be printed or typed manuscript. Address Editor, *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 201 West Monument Street, Baltimore, Maryland, 21201. Include name, address, and daytime telephone number. Once accepted, articles should be on CDS (MS Word or PC convertible format), or may be emailed to panderson@mdhs.org. The guidelines for contributors are available on our website at www.mdhs.org.

Editor's Notebook

The Maryland Historical Society lost one of its most dedicated supporters on November 5, 2008, when Samuel Hopkins, past-president, former chairman of the board of trustees, and longtime member of the Publications Committee passed away at the age of ninety-five. Sam joined the society in 1956 as treasurer and throughout his fifty-two years of service remained devoted to its mission of preserving Maryland's history. Beyond the MdHS, Sam enjoyed a long and successful career with the Safe Deposit & Trust Company and later with Alex Brown & Sons while serving multiple board positions, including the Sheppard Pratt Hospital, the Baltimore City Board of Recreation and Parks, the Citizens Planning and Housing Association, and most recently the Friends of Clifton Mansion.

Sam Hopkins's commitment to preserving the past through the written word kept him an active member of the Publications Committee. Longtime members of that esteemed group of volunteers will recall his reminders that the legacy of the society's founders extended beyond preserving artifacts and included researching, writing, and publishing Maryland history. He also reminded us that our publications once drew the financial support of philanthropist George Peabody who, in 1867, endowed a publications fund, half of which supported the printing and distribution of papers, pamphlets, and books. Sam's belief in the value of the printed word led him to fund the society's history in 2006 and, when the development team suggested organizing the Friends of the Press, he wrote the first check.

In addition to supporting our books, Sam actually read every issue of this journal and often phoned to discuss the articles, particularly those that added to our knowledge of abolition. Although he claimed descent from numerous early Maryland families, and was a great grand nephew of philanthropist Johns Hopkins, the work of abolitionist Elisha Tyson stood in the forefront of those family members he most admired. And in the final accounting for *Challenging Slavery in the Chesapeake* (2007), when it looked as if we might not have full funding, Sam offered to make up the difference.

And thus he served, year after year, steadfastly promoting new work in local history through our books, this journal, and beyond. Sam encouraged new projects such as Kathy Sander's biography of Mary Elizabeth Garrett, and expanding the Baltimore philanthropy exhibition at Clifton, Johns Hopkins's country home. Those of us who had the privilege of working in Sam's "magic circle" are the benefactors of the joy he found in bringing another piece of the past into print. We are also the caretakers of Sam's belief in the power and importance of history, in basic human "goodness," and that knowledge of the past brings understanding of the present and a better ability to plan for the future. Sam Hopkins—resolute, passionate, quiet, and kind—we will miss him.

PDA



Samuel Hopkins, 1913–2008

The House at Mistake: Thomas Marshall and the Rise of Genteel Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake

Reynolds J. Scott-Childress

Thomas Marshall became the last pioneer settler of the tidewater Potomac through a series of surveyor errors.¹ Colonial surveyors, notoriously inexact in their measurements and boundary descriptions, often followed traditional practices and used crude instruments ill suited to the geography of the frontier Chesapeake. Even adequately trained surveyors could make significant miscalculations in laying out the sometimes vast acreage of provincial patents. The use of blazed trees, rocks, and other transient or difficult-to-interpret boundary markers often left property lines vague or subject to the faulty (or highly biased) memories of frontier neighbors who owned numerous widely scattered properties.² Although conflicts over property boundaries often led to bitter feuds and violent recriminations, surveying errors proved fortuitous for Thomas Marshall and his descendents.

Long after settlers had patented most of the land in the tidewater Potomac area, Marshall discovered that a prime section of shoreline on Pomonkey neck of western Charles County (just across the river from the future site of Mount Vernon) still lay unclaimed. In 1727, armed with information most likely gained through a series of family relations, he began the process of procuring the land through a patent. He named his new sixty-six-acre property, squeezed between several parcels that had been patented more than six decades earlier, Mistake. Soon after gaining title to the land, Marshall began to construct a house. And by the end of his life in 1759 he lived on his Mistake in one of the finest homes in the colonial Chesapeake region (the house that would many decades later come to be known as "Marshall Hall"). For the Marshall family the inconsistent practices of colonial surveyors became the basis for the vast plantation and prominent family seat Thomas Marshall's descendents would control for over a century.

Marshall's decision to build his house at Mistake was, of course, the result of many more factors than a surveyor's error. His evolving fortunes thrived on forces that stretched beyond the Chesapeake region and the intimate bonds between

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Samuel Lewis, Map of Maryland, 1795. Thomas Marshall built the house at Mistake on the Maryland side of the Potomac River. George Washington's Mt. Vernon sat on the opposite shore, just south of Alexandria.

brother and brother, husband and wife, parent and child. From booming and busting European tobacco markets, to changing social norms about the purpose of families, to the eruption of the “consumer revolution” in the colonies, to evolving ideas about the social and cultural significance of land—Marshall’s decision and its consequences reveal ways in which the Maryland gentry distinguished itself as a class at a specific moment in time. This story involves growing numbers of Marshalls in succeeding generations, changing ideas about family relations, and shifting ideas about the display of individual status in a growing commercial world.

Thomas Marshall began his adult life as an artisan shipwright but transformed himself into planter-merchant at an extremely opportune historical moment. The 1720s were years of economic expansion in the Chesapeake, largely because of events far across the Atlantic. Decisions made in London, Edinburgh, and other European cities intimately tied the Chesapeake to European fortunes. The first major development came with the end of Queen Anne’s War in 1713. Over the next decade Maryland and other New World English colonies were able to rebuild their decimated merchant marines.³ It is possible that Thomas Marshall, the young

shipwright, profited from this change of fortunes, both as one who worked on ships and as one who may have used his knowledge of shipping to take advantage of the opening up of transatlantic trade in the new era of peace.

A second development had equally significant ramifications for Thomas Marshall and the Chesapeake economy as a whole. A fifty-year period of prosperity for tobacco planters began around the late 1720s. The spark came when Sir Robert Walpole's administration, realizing that the tobacco trade was languishing, removed re-export fees in 1723. Soon after, the European market for tobacco grew rapidly, encouraged by the French government's bestowal of a monopoly on a company whose directors chose to import Chesapeake tobacco through Britain. At this moment, Thomas Marshall began his search for land and transformed himself from artisan to planter. For a man with ambition and some access to economic resources, the 1720s and 1730s proved an ideal time to seek a fortune.⁴

A man intent on winning social status among his fellow provincials could also succeed. The Tidewater Chesapeake underwent a simultaneous major social and cultural transformation. The improving economy made it possible for growing numbers of Maryland gentry to emulate the latest fashions and cultural mores popular in the metropolis of London. The house that Thomas Marshall built for himself, his family, and his descendants sumptuously reflected Maryland planters' deep immersion in English consumerism and the behaviors and social organization it engendered in the early and middle eighteenth century.⁵

Thomas Marshall's house and the goods he stored in it are testaments to the rapid transformation of Chesapeake cultural ideals. The design of the house can be read to give clues to the cultural aspirations of its builders. At the same time situating the house and its goods in their cultural world offers insight into Marshall's choices and his family's experiences as they rode the crest of a socio-economic wave that swelled across the Atlantic Ocean from the churning economic waters of Edinburgh and London. When it crashed on the Chesapeake, it remade local culture, but the reverberations (in the flotsam of the tobacco trade and the jetsam of new ideals of independence) had vast repercussions for European markets and ultimately for European politics. And just as Charles County's economy was closely tied to the fortunes of British merchants, so also was its culture. The Marshalls and other members of the southern Maryland gentry used non-essential goods bought from England to create a distinctly new culture of their own.

Generations of Land

As a second son, Thomas Marshall faced a potentially daunting problem in his teen years. This status could have tremendous ramifications on one's inheritance and future economic possibilities during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In England the practice of primogeniture (devising virtually all of a

father's property on only the eldest son) often severely limited a younger son's access to family wealth.⁶ And although growing numbers of American fathers abandoned the practice of bestowing the bulk of their wealth on the eldest son, they rarely divided up their estates among all of their sons (much less daughters) in equal amounts. In Thomas's case, his father William Marshall II, died at age thirty-nine or so in 1698, when Thomas was only three years old. William Marshall II left just one hundred acres of land to his second son Thomas, while he gave more than 500 acres to his first son, William Marshall III. Thomas's grandfather, William Marshall I, had amassed large tracts of land in the vicinity of the head of the Wicomico River in eastern Charles County that included the six hundred acres.

Although the ownership of 100 acres of land represented a moderate amount of wealth in 1700, Thomas Marshall's inheritance came with several problems. The land had been worked for more than sixty-five years, and although the soil typically produced the best tobacco, it may have been exhausted after decades of bearing the notoriously greedy crop. If the land did prove productive, the small plot would not have brought much income. Nor did William Marshall leave his son slaves to work the land. Moreover, the Wicomico property's locale, lying rather far inland, was not attractive enough to sell or trade in hopes of obtaining better land elsewhere. From the moment of his birth, Thomas Marshall bore the fate of a younger son.⁷

This accident of history left him in a precarious social and financial position. Where William Marshall III began adulthood with enough land to establish a plantation, Thomas could not simply assume that he too would become a planter. He would most likely have grown up understanding that if he were to become a planter like his brother, he would first have to raise capital through another occupation. His early chances did not look bright.

Second sons, particularly those who grew up in the house of a stepfather, often spent several years bound out to learn a trade. This is apparently what happened to young Thomas Marshall. By about 1710 he was learning the skills of a shipwright repairing and building boats. These skills, however, did not ensure a successful future. Only about one in five Marylanders listed a boat of any sort in the inventories of their estates. Additionally, most of Maryland's sailing vessel construction took place on the Eastern Shore, far from Marshall's home.⁸

Craftsmen found it difficult to establish lucrative trade on the lower Western Shore, particularly in the upper tidewater Potomac region. The area lacked hamlets and towns of sufficient size until well after 1730 and consequently the mechanism to focus economic activity into a market. Sparse settlement of only about seven settlers to the square mile in Charles County further diminished the possibility of plying a trade, much less achieving wealth through artisan production. The "open country" pattern of settlement and land use continually reinforced the primacy of the plantation as the region's sole means to economic wealth and

social status. To make matters worse for unpropertied men, planters increasingly consolidated land in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Land prices doubled between 1680 and 1700, while tobacco prices stagnated at less than a penny per pound. The long decline in tobacco prices throughout most of the second half of the seventeenth century created a widening gap among land owners. Those with greater amounts of land were able to procure more, while those with smaller parcels found it difficult even to hold on to what they already had, much less obtain additional acres.⁹

Such talk of plantations obscures one of the key developments of Thomas Marshall's lifetime. The very meaning of land underwent a far-reaching transformation. As the land filled up, immigrants found it increasingly difficult to obtain land through the old headright and patent mechanisms.¹⁰ Attaining land shifted from the quasi-feudal proprietary system to two other systems that did not always mesh well. First, the demise of the patent process closed the possibility of finding land through connection to the Lord Proprietor. Land thereafter became a commodity to be bought and sold in the market. This new system benefited families that owned land by 1700 and created a growing disparity between landed planters and subsistence farmers and laborers. Second, the establishment of family ties to certain parcels of land led to a system of procuring land through inheritance. This method in turn led to a cultural shift in the way Marylanders thought about their property, as a symbol of family status. Maryland settlers after the first generations of immigrants created legal bonds and traditions and reorganized their property holdings to give place to the ineffable feelings of family heritage. Land became the testament to a family's connection with past generations and its promise to future generations. By the early 1700s, Thomas Marshall was able to combine these two ways of thinking about land to deal successfully with a series of demographic changes that ramified throughout eighteenth-century Chesapeake society.

The lives of Chesapeake settlers underwent dramatic change in the years around 1700. The ratio of Maryland's native-born (or creole) population to its immigrants had begun to increase significantly. Immigration slowed, particularly as the province shifted its labor force from white indentures to African slaves. Creoles began to achieve natural increase and came to predominate in the lower Western Shore throughout the eighteenth century. Along with natural increase, they experienced longer life expectancy as more moved inland away from disease-ridden boggy riverbanks and as they improved both diet and general living conditions.¹¹

Creole predominance, natural increase, and longer life expectancy, in turn, altered marriage patterns. In the era of William Marshall I, people married later in life, the high mortality rate left many spouseless, with fewer children, within a short time. Men outnumbered women by a ratio as high as six to one. As immigrants who arrived as indentured servants, most of these women could not marry

until their terms of service ended, at which time the majority had reached their early twenties, a late age for the seventeenth century. Later marriages, with a life expectancy as low as forty years in the Chesapeake region, meant small families due to the squeeze on the wife's fertile years. Short lives meant that numerous children reached adulthood as orphans or with just one surviving parent. Still fewer knew any of their grandparents. The children of the immigrant William Marshall, for example, lost both parents before the eldest sibling reached fifteen. Fortunately, the Charles County Orphan's Court administered a portion of his land after his death. As William and Katherine Marshall had both arrived as immigrants, it is unlikely their children met their grandparents (still residing in England), with the exception of William II, who did so during two years spent in school in England.¹²

Beginning with the native-born generation of William Marshall, however, creoles experienced quite different circumstances. Creole marriages began to approximate the experiences of the home country after 1700. Natural increase reduced the ratio of males to females, although it was not nearly equivalent for several decades. This increase widened the marriage pool for both men and women. Creole women did not have to serve indentures, which lowered the average age of marriage for women. Lower marriage ages and longer life expectancies made longer marriages possible. In the middle third of the 1600s, marriages between immigrants lasted an average of only eleven years. But by the early 1700s the average had increased to twenty-two years. Longer creole marriages, in turn, typically produced more children than the marriages of immigrants. The marriage of Thomas Marshall and Elizabeth Bishop Stoddert in Prince George's County closely reflected this change. Their marriage lasted almost twenty-five years and they produced five children.¹³

Thomas Marshall, however, married rather late in life. His elder brother William III married in his early twenties, but Thomas did not marry Elizabeth Stoddert until he neared his thirtieth year. To a great extent, this disparity is explained by the different stations in life of the two brothers. William III could attract a fine marriage partner with his inherited wealth. Thomas, as a young man with no significant inheritance and working as an artisan in a locale ill suited to his particular trade, would have had few prospects, particularly during a time when men outnumbered women in Maryland by a ratio of three to two.¹⁴

For all of the ills associated with being born after the first son, Thomas Marshall's membership in the Marshall family gave him certain advantages. He had his hundred acres. He also had a wealthy brother. Through the 1720s, Thomas Marshall used these advantages to leverage his status from that coded in the official records of the day as "Mr." to that of "Gent." First, he sought land near his brother in the western part of the county along the Potomac shore. Next, he married a well-situated widow, Elizabeth Bishop Stoddert. She brought into the marriage a considerable amount of property in Thomas Marshall's new neigh-

borhood. Her deceased husband, James Stoddert, had played a major role in the development of Pomonkey and surrounding locales as both a large land owner and widely respected surveyor.¹⁵ At his death, Stoddert left an estate of almost £800 (including twenty-five slaves and a number of books) and nearly 7,000 acres of land in Charles and Prince George's Counties (much of it in the Pomonkey Neck). Thomas Marshall, on marrying Elizabeth Stoddert, gained control of all of James Stoddert's property.

The House at Mistake

Randolph and Jacob Brandt, neighbors to Thomas Marshall, were worried in the fall of 1731. They found themselves in a dispute over a piece of property called Greenwich situated on the Potomac Shore a short distance above Pomonkey Creek. Their problems had nothing to do with Marshall's land. The boundary dispute, however, is of great value, nonetheless, because the related documents provide the first clear evidence of the construction of Thomas Marshall's house at Mistake. In trying to place the proper boundary of Greenwich, court administrators placed the northern line one half mile below the "dwelling house of Thomas Marshall."¹⁶

Thomas Marshall's house, an impressive and imposing structure, would have stood out not only to the court's administrators but to anyone sailing the Potomac or living in Charles County. The manse, with its steeply pitched roof, soared far above the usual height of Maryland homes and gave the impression of a two-story house. The double-pile brick construction offered a striking comparison to the rude, dilapidated, wooden buildings that dominated the region.¹⁷ The exterior design, rigorously symmetrical with a five-bay façade on both the lower and upper floors of the west side of the house (facing the Potomac), echoed a similar design on the east side. Stylish molded, double-ogee-lined arches crowned each of the first-floor windows.

The interior spaces created for public events would have awed visitors in a place where many houses possessed only one or two rooms each of which had multiple uses. Although small by later standards of mansion building, the original Marshall house was one of the largest built in Southern Maryland before 1740, with nearly 2,000 square feet of living space. The main entrance of the westward facing façade opened directly into the house's largest and most richly decorated room. A visitor would have stepped directly from the outdoors into a room adorned with floor-to-ceiling raised panels on all four walls, sumptuous ceiling cornices, and a large, arched fireplace framed by complex bolection molding. The panels were a marvel of carpentry—mortise-and-tenoned so carefully that they appeared to require no wooden pegs to fit together, clearly the work of a joiner, such as a shipwright, who deeply appreciated the complexities of wood joinery and fine woodwork in general (Figure 1).¹⁸

Marshall's house introduced the style that dominated the homes of wealthy Charles County merchant-planters throughout the rest of the eighteenth cen-

Figure 1. Diagram of paneling in the original Marshall house. (Susan Long, "Historic Structure Report, Architectural Date Section for Marshall Hall, Piscataway Park" [Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1983].)



tury, with basic floor plans of four rooms at ground level. Most often these houses stood just one story tall. Some held a half floor above the first, but rarely a full second story. In those homes that did have a second floor, one of the four ground-floor rooms contained a stairway, giving it the feel of a closet rather than a usable room. No fifth space existed for a dedicated central hall such as that which developed in later architectural styles popular in the Chesapeake region. Many original features of the Mistake house are typical of the earliest datable examples in Southern Maryland. These include the floor plan, the double-ogee designs above the first-floor windows, the gauged and moulded brick pattern used on the bay heads above all the exterior doors and windows, the arched blind panel located in the east chimney, the flared roof eaves, and the one and one-half story construction.¹⁹

The style of the Mistake house became so prevalent in Charles County through the eighteenth century that it should perhaps be designated "Charlesian," a form to be emulated as a sign of the architectural ways of the wealthy. By the end of the century, local authorities recognized the value, if not the architectural significance, of Thomas Marshall's brick house. In 1783 the usually taciturn Charles County appraiser assigned the house his highest monetary and conditional rating of "very good," an opinion with which he flattered very few other houses. A 1798 assessor listed the house and its outbuildings among the ten most highly valued properties in the county.

The building of the house at Mistake utterly changed the significance of the land on which it sat. The problem for historians is to determine first why Thomas Marshall built his house in 1730 or so, and second what he thought he was doing

by constructing such an unusual and imposing structure. The dilemma in attacking this problem is that, unlike a number of Virginia homebuilders of the same period (such as George Washington and George Mason of Gunston Hall), the Marshalls left no personal, written documents explaining their motivations, interests, and desires. Yet the house can speak for itself. And there are also numerous documents—particularly wills, inventories, and final accounts—that make it possible to read the Marshalls' decisions in the context of transatlantic and local changes in economy, society, and culture.

Thomas Marshall built a house far different from those of his father and grandfather, and even his elder brother. His house had to contend with the necessity of displaying and protecting the new sorts of consumer goods, many of them fragile, that became integral to the coalescing culture of Chesapeake gentility.²⁰ Nondurable underscored non-necessity and amply illustrated how such goods served as material manifestations of the evanescence of the latest fashions. Correlatively, as the rising Chesapeake elite invested social capital in fragile impermanent goods, they simultaneously sought to build solid permanent structures to house their delicate wares. Tidewater gentry, in the first glimmers of the consumer revolution in America, needed more substantial homes in which to display their attachment to the culture of gentility.

Thomas Marshall's father, brother, and grandfather, as did planters at all points on the economic scale, built largely impermanent structures that generally survived ten to twenty years. Intent on developing both their land and labor on the higher priority of turning an agricultural profit, housing ranked second. The immigrant William Marshall and his son William II lived in houses that most likely used no brick whatsoever in their construction, not even for the chimneys. With few exceptions, houses such as these featured all wood construction, from the frame and the clapboard siding to the shingles. The frames would have been anchored by posts set directly into holes in the ground (i.e., "hole-set" posts) and these houses required frequent maintenance during their brief life spans. Even with great care, they rarely lasted more than three decades, less if a wooden chimney caught on fire, longer if the collapse came from the slower devastation of rot and termites.²¹

Multiple housing styles, variations of traditional British models, dotted the Chesapeake landscape at the time immigrant William Marshall arrived in Maryland in the 1640s. Through the middle decades of the century the wide variations winnowed down to a handful of standardized types. By the time William II constructed a home for his new family in the 1680s, one type so dominated that it became known as the "Virginia house," although the style was prevalent on both shores of the Potomac.²²

The Virginia house was characterized by a one or one-and-a-half story wooden hole-set frame that created one or two rooms on the ground floor. Most Virginia houses stood one story tall, yet those settlers who built houses with second floors could only access the space by ladder (in effect, an attic used for purposes other

than storage). The space did not have side walls, only the sloping ceiling on the underside of the roof. There could be a window or two at the ends of the attic, and perhaps a couple of narrow dormers as well. The ground floor of the two-room Virginia house plan consisted of a large main room known as "the hall." One entered directly into this room from the outside through a modest doorway. The smaller room, or "chamber," could be entered only through the hall.²³

During the period that the Virginia house became predominant, Chesapeake home builders revised the standard elements used in British home building and made extensive use of local building materials. The abundance of wood allowed for easy construction, frequent and low-cost repair, and ultimately convinced American builders to give up on thatch roofs altogether and replace them with wooden shingles. Rising Chesapeake fortunes made it possible for greater numbers of home builders to replace oiled paper (or gaping holes) with glass windows, and by the early eighteenth century brick chimneys had largely replaced wooden ones. For all these adaptations the Virginia house remained quite modest, even by late eighteenth-century standards.²⁴

Into the early years of the eighteenth century, Marylanders of all economic levels built houses primarily for shelter. Immigrant William Marshall, with his lack of interest in making social distinctions when choosing friends, would have cared little to make his house into a marker of his wealth and status. Wealthy Tidewater planters of his and his son's generations did not put much effort into creating large, well-apportioned homes. As late as the 1720s, 85 percent of Virginia's wealthiest decedents had lived in Virginia houses. In Maryland housing up until the early eighteenth century, "the principle differences between rich and poor lay not in size and quality of housing, but in the number of structures."²⁵

By the early eighteenth century the gentry (and those who aspired to gentry status) began to turn away from the old methods and styles (or, more accurately, nonstyles) of building. Throughout the North American colonies the twenty-five years between 1725 and 1750 brought an explosion of building mansion houses using new styles, floor plans, techniques, and materials. These larger houses, built in a style that starkly contrasted with those of the earlier era, reflected Marylanders' desires for larger houses in which they could enjoy and display their non-essential, consumer goods. The tenets of gentility called for a separation of interior spaces into public and private venues, and planters thus began to construct houses that were two rooms wide and two rooms deep, making a total of four rooms on the ground floor. The greater number of rooms allowed for increased specialization of function within each space. Soon, wealthy planters added second floors, also two by two. By the 1750s this new development had blossomed into the full-blown Georgian style.²⁶

Georgian houses stood a full two stories high, had hipped or gabled roofs, sashed windows placed symmetrically across the axial facades, and featured a

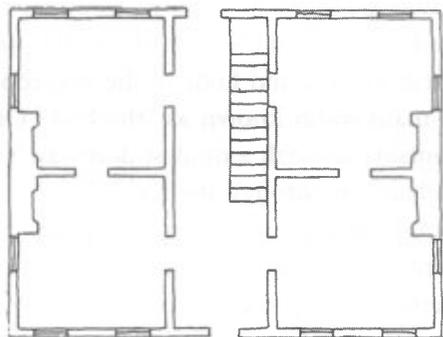


Figure 2. First floor layout of a typical Georgian-style house. (Henry Glassie, In *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture* [Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986].)

paneled, pedimented door squarely in the middle of the structure. Vital to the Georgian house was a central passageway that made possible four of the key elements of the style. The central hall set rooms apart and allowed for a separate entrance to each. It served as a greeting space where visitors could, in a sense, be sorted and allowed to pass only into those rooms that their status or purpose warranted. This central hall also complemented the elaborate doorway (and likely porch) through which visitors entered the house.²⁷

Lastly, the space housed the stairs that led to the upper chambers (for a typical Georgian floor plan see Figure 2). After 1750 or so, the Georgian design dominated house architecture in Virginia. There, homebuilders increasingly followed English models. George Washington's father built the original Mount Vernon on the Georgian plan, and George Mason employed the English builder William Buckland as an indentured servant with the express purpose of creating his house, Gunston Hall, in the latest English fashion.²⁸

Thomas Marshall's Mistake house is neither Virginian nor Georgian. It cropped up at a midpoint along the evolution from the former to the latter style, then developed into the unique Charlesian vernacular style. Mistake's floor plan remained exceedingly popular in Charles County until the end of the eighteenth century. Of the forty or so unaltered eighteenth-century houses in Charles County, only three followed the Georgian plan of two-room depth with central passage.²⁹ The rest were built on the Mistake house model, one that represents something quite important in thinking about cultural influence—the meeting of a transatlantic style with a local vernacular, the influence of which can be seen in a variety of ways.

The turn to bricks is the key element of the Mistake house and separated it from the vast majority of houses that preceded it in Charles County. The use of bricks allowed for significant reduction of dry rot and termite infestation. With the wood of the frame covered by masonry, the house could withstand centuries rather than mere decades of use.

Bricks account for the longevity of the house at Mistake and although they had been available for some time as a building material, the cost of transport and scarcity of skilled bricklayers proved prohibitive. Additionally, brick construction required far more bricks in building a masonry wall than can be seen from the exterior.³⁰ Although numerous carpenters with the knowledge required to build hole-set post structures lived and worked in the Tidewater, few brick masons found steady work until after the first third of the eighteenth century.

Bricks also carried cultural significance. For example, a Chesapeake homebuilder used brick to signal two vital claims about his family: permanency and stability.³¹ The durability of a brick structure suggested that the family living within had a long heritage and expected the family line to continue far into the future. Moreover, because masonry required an artisan of a rare sort during the first third of the eighteenth century in the Chesapeake region, it also signaled a homeowner's economic ability to engage the services of a craftsman. Although most property owners could afford hole-set post houses that could be built using readily available materials, bricks signaled a homeowner's vaunted level of taste. A house such as Thomas Marshall's, with its Flemish bond brickwork, displayed his aesthetic appreciation and revealed his reinterpretation of the function of a house.³² No longer merely a shelter, Marshall's house made a statement about family status.

Exterior and Interior Design

This status function carried over into the design of the house's exterior, and Marshall built an intensely symmetrical dwelling. Visitors from the land side (or eastern elevation) would proceed down a straight drive that bisected the house and pointed directly at the rear door of the east side of the building (Figure 3). There were two windows, one on either side, each equidistant from the centered door. At the second level, three windows rested directly above each of the bays on the ground floor. If one walked through the house with front and back doors open, the line of the drive would continue right down to the Potomac shore and onto the pier that carried the line of the drive out into the river. From the Potomac side of the house (or western elevation), a visitor would again encounter the structure's symmetry (Figure 4). The only difference would be the five bays instead of three as on the eastern elevation.

This rigorous symmetry was not simply a design motif. It was a cultural metaphor that expressed the occupants' desire for a genteel social order.³³ This social order—like the relations of the family residing within the household—was based on two sometimes confluent and sometimes conflicting principles at the heart of genteel culture. On the one hand, the genteel social order, based in notions of social division and hierarchy, was akin to the patriarchal division within the family. The father ruled the household in the then-legitimate legal order that gave him virtually all rights over his wife and her property, the couple's children, and

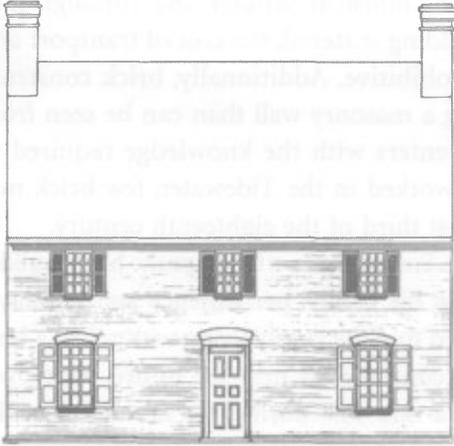


Figure 3. Mistake house, east elevation, c.1725. (Long, "Historic Structure," 113.)

all of the family's servants and slaves. Conversely, gentility in the Chesapeake hardly bespoke of naked power. Planters and elites legitimized gentility through a rhetoric of love and family nurture.³⁴ These two faces of gentility—patriarchal power and familial affection—created a new need in Chesapeake homes, a distinction between public and private, clearly seen in various aspects of the interior of Marshall's house and its furnishings.

The interior layout of Thomas Marshall's house suggests that it was an early experiment in creating a home with both public and private spaces. Although the first-floor plan lay rooted in vernacular English architecture, the design presented a clear advance over the rough-hewn Virginia house of the seventeenth century. The space held four rooms, but they were neither symmetrical in layout nor set off from a central hallway (Figure 5). With no interior hallway, visitors entered directly into the "hall" (in the old sense of the term as a large room) just as they would have in the homes of the first three William Marshalls, a continuation of older layouts in which homes had only two rooms on the ground level. Lack of the hallway eliminated the need for an elaborate entryway. Moreover, the stairs sat tucked in a small room rather than in the center of the home.

The floor plan of the Charlesian house suggests how the genteel gentry of Maryland thought about the interior spaces of their houses in a significantly different fashion from their forebears. In the houses of the first three William Marshalls, rooms had multiple uses. For example, a single lower floor room simultaneously served as sleeping and eating quarters, work room, and warehouse. Communal family and social activities such as sleeping, eating, and working placed parents, children, other relatives, and visitors together in the same room. The traditional Virginia house offered little differentiation between public and private spaces.

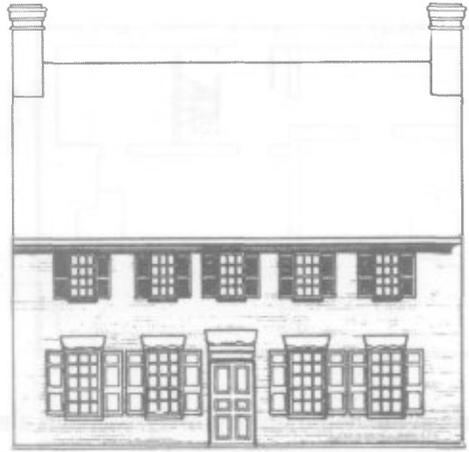


Figure 4. Mistake house, west elevation, c. 1725. (Long, "Historic Structure," 112.)

The Mistake house floor plan, however, shows a sharp distinction in the use of rooms. The hall has built-in cupboards, an indication that from its very inception the hall would feature a display of consumer goods—logical in that the Marshalls entertained other Charles County gentry with dinners, teas, or parties in this space.³⁵ The use of the second main room on the first floor, with a most unusual feature, is not so easy to decipher. Unlike the hall, which is but a doorway away from the outside, the inner first-floor chamber was not easy to enter. One had to pass through another room to reach it, yet the sumptuous decoration fully equaled that in the hall. Lavish décor and privacy suggest that Thomas Marshall conducted business or public service within these walls. Here he could have engaged in trade or other business dealings relating to his plantations or the public ferry that connected his property to Captain John Posey's land across the Potomac just below Mount Vernon. Or he could have performed his duties as a justice of the peace away from the more public hall.

The upstairs, constructed as a private realm (Figure 6), connected to the floor below via narrow stairs that snaked around three walls. It is most likely that the Marshalls slept in two of the front second-story rooms facing the Potomac. It is also possible that they had servants sleeping in the back two rooms as these had less square footage, fewer windows, and ceilings two feet lower than those in the front bedrooms. One of these rooms may have been used for storage, a typical use of the space. The few rooms dedicated to sleeping also suggest that the Marshalls would have lived in cramped quarters when they entertained long-term or even overnight guests, a distinct difference from the house of their neighbor across the way—George Washington's Mount Vernon has many guest rooms.

Thomas Marshall's Social Transformation

When the economic fortunes of the Tidewater region brightened in the 1720s, the

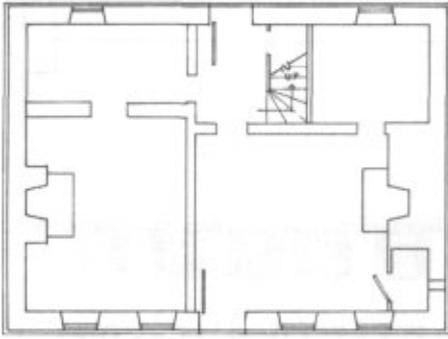


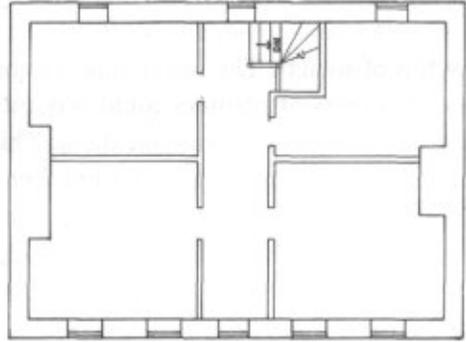
Figure 5. Mistake house, plan of first floor, c. 1725. (Long, "Historic Structure," 110.)

early eighteenth-century Marshalls had already begun constructing a kin network and a new sense of historical heritage. These forms of community and family were deeply tied to the demographic changes specific to the development of provincial Maryland. Necessity drove Thomas Marshall's Charles County forebears to create neighborhood networks with those who lived in close proximity. The primary social differentiation existed between servant and freeman and of the latter, wealthier men evinced little compunction to display their wealth by means of either special dress or grandiose architecture. Yet as members of the Marshall family placed greater emphasis on their historical heritage and kin networks, they simultaneously involved themselves in the new transatlantic cultural sensibility of gentility and expressed their acceptance of this new sensibility through the presentation of their home.

As the frontier gave way to settled communities, gentility distinguished wealthier Marylanders from the "lower sorts." The lifestyle involved the formation of cultural practices and the amassing of material goods. The tenets of gentility required that its adherents master new rituals of dining, entertaining, decorating, dressing, and interpersonal behavior with family and subordinates.³⁶ These rituals worked to demonstrate one's mastery of social skills, had little or no connection to the rigors of agricultural production or the crass bustle of commerce. Although gentility entailed new modes of social relations and thought, it also embodied a new form of economic enterprise—fashionable consumerism. In this new world, consumer goods offered a vital means through which Chesapeake elites could convey the transformation of their character. Items such as tea services, elaborate dinnerware, richly decorated homes, and wigs allowed elites to create a new identity that marked their social status. The existence of the Mistake house derives directly from the new genteel culture of the middle decades of the eighteenth century.

Exploring the construction and layout of the Mistake house enables the historian to conceptualize Thomas Marshall's place in upper Potomac society although his rise remains something of a mystery. As a shipwright he may have been involved

Figure 6. Second floor, c. 1725. (Long, "Historic Structure," 111.)



in intercoastal or even transatlantic trade. As shipping returned to “normal” after Queen Anne’s War (i.e. 1713, when Marshall would have been eighteen), a young man involved with ships would have been closely attuned to the upturn in merchants’ fortunes. Not an average artisan, he might be defined as “proto-gentry.” His family connections may have allowed him opportunities to strike at the main chance on first word that tobacco prices and the provincial economy in general were picking up. His brother William Marshall III may have been able to offer outright economic assistance and their close relationship placed them in the ideal position to create wealth in the Chesapeake, through planting and trading tobacco. The combination of experience in shipping and a family heritage in planting placed Thomas Marshall in an ideal position to become a merchant-planter.

Marshall’s decision to forsake artisanry for planting set the stage for transforming the piece of land at Mistake into the center of a large plantation. The changes that the house represented in Marshall’s life appeared in other families as consumer goods became more prevalent throughout Chesapeake society. They did so, as Lois Carr and Lorena Walsh have shown, without substantially altering general spending patterns.³⁷ The key to turning the use and display of consumer goods into a sign of genteel status lay in acquiring a profusion of them. Reaching this goal, without altering the percentage of wealth one put into consumer spending, meant improving one’s economic standing. Thomas Marshall transformed himself from an artisan into a planter at a fortuitously opportune historical moment, the significance of which is clear when one examines how he and his wives turned the Mistake house into a home.

Consumer Society and Gentility

Cultural changes began infiltrating the top of Chesapeake society by the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Estate inventories show the introduction of some of the comforts of the genteel life. Twenty years later estates worth more than about £500 generally contained a fair number of comforts and at least a handful of

luxury items. By 1715 luxury items began to appear in a widening array of homes. That is, there was a widening of consumerism among elites in general, not just the very top of society. The improving economic conditions of the 1720s meant that larger numbers of planters could buy more such goods while still spending the same percentage of income on them. This expansion led in the 1730s to intense competition among the growing number of stores that popped up in the Chesapeake. In turn, competition among merchants made consumer goods increasingly available to the middling sorts. Such competition intensified due to the fact that many planters also worked as merchants, a scenario that likely explains Thomas Marshall's story.³⁸

As a shipbuilder he would have been quite familiar with the vessels and the cargoes they carried. He probably learned early in life the advantages of controlling one's own economic destiny by refraining from falling into debt with economic representatives of large tobacco merchants. This fear of debt is borne out by Marshall's final accounts, which showed little if any debt to merchants. Moreover, in the accounts of John Glassford and Company's store at Piscataway (the closest such store to the Mistake property it would seem), there is no mention of Thomas Marshall I as customer, debtor, or seller of tobacco. Yet his son Thomas Hanson Marshall frequented the store in the 1760s. Thus it seems quite likely that by the 1750s Thomas Marshall I had become a well-established planter-merchant. No matter the source of his consumer purchases, the inventory of his estate demonstrates how enmeshed the Marshall's were in the culture of gentility.³⁹

Thomas Marshall built a lifestyle significantly altered from that of his grandfather, his father, and even his elder brother. The distinction, neither minor nor evolutionary, employed "different standards altogether" in evaluating status.⁴⁰ The immigrant William Marshall not only lived in a wooden home that provided temporary shelter, it is also highly likely that his family and friends drank from a single tankard passed round the table, ate from his one "great meals tray," and had no experience with cutlery or individual plates or bowls. When they sat down to a meal, they sat on the one or two chests in the hall as the first William Marshall did not own chairs. When it came time to sleep, the family of the immigrant unrolled their beds (they possessed no bedsteads) and slept together in a single room, perhaps along with some of their servants who would have used the flock (or stuffed woolen) mattress. The one luxury item in the immigrant's inventory was a looking glass.⁴¹ The lack of material comfort in William Marshall's home did not reflect some personal eccentricity. Rather, he lived his life like the vast majority of wealthy seventeenth-century Maryland planters, in strikingly modest circumstances.⁴²

Some of the comforts of modern life appeared in the inventory of William Marshall II. Family members could eat their meals sitting in chairs, using individual plates. They slept off the floor on mattresses placed in bedsteads. They had

a bit of earthenware and a bit of silver apparently deemed inconsequential by the appraiser who simply noted a small “parcel” of the former and three ounces of the latter, hardly enough to be considered integral to daily activities or appreciated as symbols of status. The one item that set William II off from the vast majority of his Tidewater neighbors was his parcel of books. His two years of education in England continued to blossom in the succeeding Marshall generations, and the immigrant’s foresight in providing his namesake with an education paid off handsomely. What he could not have foreseen was the rapid development of the consumerist world of genteel culture that saw books not only as vehicles for intellectual improvement, but also as object-signs of genteel status. The core of this material gentility consisted of items such as dinner ware, silver, books, and pictures that separated the genteel from the middling and lesser sorts. The numbers of these accoutrements listed in an estate inventory can be used with the Carr and Walsh “amenities index” to determine the decedent’s involvement in genteel consumerism.⁴³

Many of these pieces came into colonial society during the eighteenth century. In the late seventeenth century the mean number of amenities owned by Tidewater planters was only two.⁴⁴ William Marshall the immigrant was thus below the mean, owning only some bed and table linens. His son, William Marshall II, fared somewhat better in that he owned the small parcel of earthenware, the bit of silver, two Bibles and some books (whether religious or secular is unknown), and some bed and table linens. Yet these few possessions hardly set him high up on the amenities index.

Against the same index, Thomas Marshall lived more deeply immersed in consumerism than his forebears. Seventy years after the death of William Marshall II, the mean amenities score for Chesapeake planters had risen to five and Thomas Marshall scored far above this number. He owned nine of the items on the amenities list, lacking only wigs, pictures, and spices (although the inventory of his widow, Sabina Trueman Marshall, lists both pictures and spices as well—so it is entirely possible that Thomas Marshall possessed eleven of the twelve amenities items).

Several of Thomas Marshall’s genteel belongings reveal how new ideals of public and private selves had become integral to the lives of his family members. The feather beds and five bedsteads indicate that each of the Marshalls could sleep alone and did not have to share with others. Multiple place settings, knife and fork sets, and numerous, specialized drinking vessels suggest that meals became less-communal affairs than they had been in the days of his grandfather. The twenty-three chairs suggest that the Marshalls could certainly sit separately at meals, as could many guests at teas or formal dinners.⁴⁵

Books and the Wider World

Two items above all others stand out as signs of the simultaneous rise of gentility

and consumerism among Maryland gentry—books and tea. The use of both required special training and involved Tidewater planters in cultural and economic systems that stretched far beyond the shores of the Chesapeake. Moreover, each served as an indicator of the depth of one's commitment to the new culture.

Books became an essential element in the development of the Chesapeake's consumer society as the ability to read served as a gateway to gentility. Many of the early eighteenth-century planters who owned books likely owned a diverse assortment of consumer goods. And the ownership of books closely correlated with three of the consumer goods most associated with gentility, silverware, objects that adorned the household (including window curtains, china, pictures, clocks), and pieces for personal adornment (such as shoe buckles, silver watches, wigs, canes). As the century progressed a direct correlation developed between literacy and consumption.⁴⁶

From the time William Marshall II went to school in England, books remained part of the Marshall family's world, listed in all of the inventories after the first generation. Apart from the two Bibles listed in William Marshall II's inventory, the genre of the others is unknown. Thomas Marshall's inventory allows a better understanding. His holdings included religious books, including a prayer book and almost certainly a Bible (though it is not explicitly noted). Some time after 1752 he obtained the works of John Tillotson, the practical rather than theological Dean of Canterbury from 1672 to 1689. But, more importantly, Thomas Marshall owned secular books, extremely rare in eighteenth-century Chesapeake inventories, among them John Quincy's *English Dispensatory*, a medical book written in the 1720s that went through multiple editions over the ensuing decades. It also seems likely that Thomas Marshall knew of *Don Quixote*, as the four-volume edition showed up in the inventory of his widow Sabina.⁴⁷

Thomas Marshall, then, knew the world of books. There is no evidence that he visited the famed Tuesday Club of Annapolis, although his neighbor John Addison attended as an honorary member. It is easy to imagine them sitting in the hall of the Mistake house discussing literary matters over tea. Marshall must have hired tutors for his son as Thomas Hanson Marshall could read Latin and had an interest in European history (as evidenced by his purchases of Voltaire's *History* and a book in Latin at the Piscataway store of John Glassford and Company in the 1760s).⁴⁸

A Cup of Gentility

Carr and Walsh did not include tea or its equipage in their list of amenities, yet the drink did become crucial to the development of the culture of gentility. Its growing popularity in the colonies wrought major changes in the Atlantic world. Tea drinking stimulated a demand for sugar that increased the use of slaves on West Indian sugar plantations. The custom also led to the development of cheap earthen-

and chinaware, which in turn fostered the formation of integrated factories for large-scale production.⁴⁹ These connections involved the Marshalls in transatlantic networks of culture and trade through a set of practices somewhat different from those related to books and that created a far more difficult method for forming a status boundary between the gentry and those below.

Introduced in the early years of the eighteenth century, tea drinking functioned as an integral part of American culture in the second quarter. Tea, *per se*, did not change American life, but the manner in which people brewed, served, seasoned, and enjoyed the beverage left its imprint on colonial culture. As a ritual, tea drinking required the creation of numerous specialized items such as lidded containers light enough to pour with ease and made of a material that would not retain flavors and odors, cups with handles to hold hot beverage without burning hands and fingers, saucers to catch overflow, containers for sugar, spoons for transporting sugar from container to cup, and trays for carrying items from cupboards to table. In turn, use of these items called for new modes of imbibing. The fragility of the tea service (the china cups with their small handles, the china sugar bowls and tea pots) required great gentleness in their use. The use of sugar implied that each drinker had an individual taste—no more communal tankards—as he or she seasoned the tea to individual standards. Individual taste in turn necessitated individual utensils. The use of so many utensils required management, and management meant formalized training. Through the elaboration of a tea service in the early eighteenth century, then, families such as the Marshalls learned how to promote new social graces. As these became ritualized, they developed into practices that could be taught and criticized. In short, they became signs for judging the level of one's immersion in the culture of gentility.

Thomas Marshall and his wife Elizabeth introduced the rituals of tea into the Marshall family. Thomas's brother William, a middling and perhaps even moderately wealthy planter, did not own any tea or its accompanying equipage at the time of his death in 1734. Thomas's estate however was awash in tea and its accouterments. He owned a tea chest with numerous tea canisters, several china teapots (as well as two metal ones), a tea kettle, a tea strainer, forty-four china tea cups with thirty-eight china saucers, and various containers for holding milk and sugar. The Marshalls had a penchant for tea and for entertaining others over tea. This penchant placed them squarely in the transatlantic culture of gentility. Through taking tea, they would have learned to think of themselves as individuals in ways quite foreign to their forebears. In Kevin Sweeney's apt formulation, they would have developed "a cultivated individuation, not an unfettered individualism."⁵⁰

By mid-century the Marshalls, with numerous Tidewater gentry, discovered that tea drinking alone could not set them apart from the non-gentry. Unlike books, which required literacy to master, anyone could unlock the mysteries of tea. Although the drink represented the first inroads of gentility into Charles County (and

throughout the colonies), it hardly ranked as a luxury item. As now, one could easily find cheap ways to enjoy tea, without the expensive equipage. But tea drinking played a crucial role in the ways the Marshalls and others thought about their own colonial culture. This easy adaptation suggested that the tenets of gentility could also become the province of all and represented two contradictory beliefs to families such as the Marshalls. On the one hand, gentility in its consumerist mode was democratic, open to any who chose to pursue it. Conversely, as a set of ritual practices, gentility could create social boundaries that cordoned off the gentry from the lesser sorts.

Gentility required a set of ritualistic practices to solidify the gentry. One can see the development of these codes in a list that one of Thomas Marshall's young neighbors, George Washington, copied in 1747. Washington, hoping to impress the wife of a neighbor, took up and studied an old English book. He condensed *Youth's Behavior, or Decency in Conversation among Men* (published in England in the previous century) into a battery of 110 manners to be employed in genteel company. Among the social graces Washington learned to observe were rules such as, "29th, When you meet with one of Greater Quality than yourself, Stop, and retire especially if it be at a Door or any Straight place to give way for him to Pass"; "33rd, They that are in Dignity or in office have in all places Precedency"; "52nd, In your Apparel be Modest and endeavour to accomodate Nature, rather than to procure Admiration keep to the Fashion of your equals Such as are Civil and orderly with respect to Times and Places"; and "99th, Drink not too leisurely nor yet too hastily. Before and after Drinking wipe your Lips."⁵¹ Washington's rules offer insight into the type of education gentility required. One had to train one's emotions, body, and very soul to act in certain ways in particular contexts. The specific details of what Thomas Marshall taught his son about the social graces of gentility are unknown, yet the evidence in the tea cups certainly suggests that the young man learned the social graces Washington noted.

After Elizabeth Marshall's death in 1749, Thomas Marshall married Sabina Trueman Greenfield. Very little is known about her beyond the fact that she was born in 1715 and lived as mistress of the Mistake house for almost a decade after her husband's death in 1759. Descended from two of Maryland's early families, the Greenfields and Trumans, she brought wealth to the marriage and left an £800 estate at the time of her death. The very fact that she left a will shows that she held some power and claimed rights that were exceedingly rare among colonial Tidewater women.⁵²

Sabina Marshall began her widowhood well endowed with property. Thomas Marshall left her the Mistake property, with several others, and slaves. But the fact that he left Sabina with land and slaves does not necessarily indicate that he expected her to become a planter. He placed a strict limitation on the bequest—she would lose it all if she married again. The slaves she inherited did not constitute a healthy and productive work force. The inventory of her estate included enslaved

people judged unfit for fieldwork, and although they undoubtedly tended the land, this group could not contribute much wealth-producing income. Moreover, her stepson Thomas Hanson Marshall managed much of the land and reaped the profits for himself, as indicated in the suit Sabina filed two years after her husband's death. Additionally, young Marshall, aged twenty-eight at his father's death, may not have felt great affection for his stepmother. Yet Sabina Marshall generated wealth on her own, as indicated by numerous items in her inventory that did not appear in her husband's, including eight new leather chairs, paintings, a large dressing glass with drawers, china, earthenware, kitchen utensils, and more.⁵³ The enumeration also shows abundant supplies for a plantation tailor or, perhaps, the itinerant tailors who wandered the countryside. The presence of tanned hides and various buckles suggests that someone on the property worked as a shoemaker. Whatever the source of Sabina Marshall's income, she clearly craved newer consumer goods.

Novelty remains a key component of consumerist fashion to this day. In the eighteenth century, British factors often complained to their home offices that they could not sell secondhand merchandise. This desire for "new" apparently extended to houses.

In 1768, Thomas Hanson Marshall inherited the Mistake house upon his stepmother's death, yet he did not take up occupancy for another five years. Three events influenced his decision to move into his father's house. First, as evidenced in Sabina's suit against him, the tension between them may have soured his desire to move into the house too soon after her death. Second, he made major additions that he undoubtedly wanted finished before he moved into the house. Lastly, his wife died in 1770, leaving him with five children. He clearly had his hands full, as indicated in the advertisements for a "woman qualified for managing a house and bringing up girls in a genteel way" that he placed in the *Maryland Gazette*.⁵⁴

Thomas Hanson Marshall benefited much as his father had from a rising economy. Britain's prosecution of the French and Indian War increased government spending throughout the colonies, which led to increases in consumer spending. Annual British imports nearly doubled in value in the decade of the 1750s, rising from £1.1 million in 1750 to £2.1 million in 1760. In the wake of this increase, a wave of competitive consumption blurred the fragile lines between elites and lesser sorts. This in turn caused those who wanted to claim gentry status to create new rituals (such as more elaborate dinners) and new consumer goods and decorations (such as rugs and wall papers that spread among elite homes just at this time) to distinguish themselves. These new rituals and goods required larger houses.

By 1770 the requirements of gentility and higher status changed the look of the house. Thomas Hanson Marshall's two-story addition to the north side of

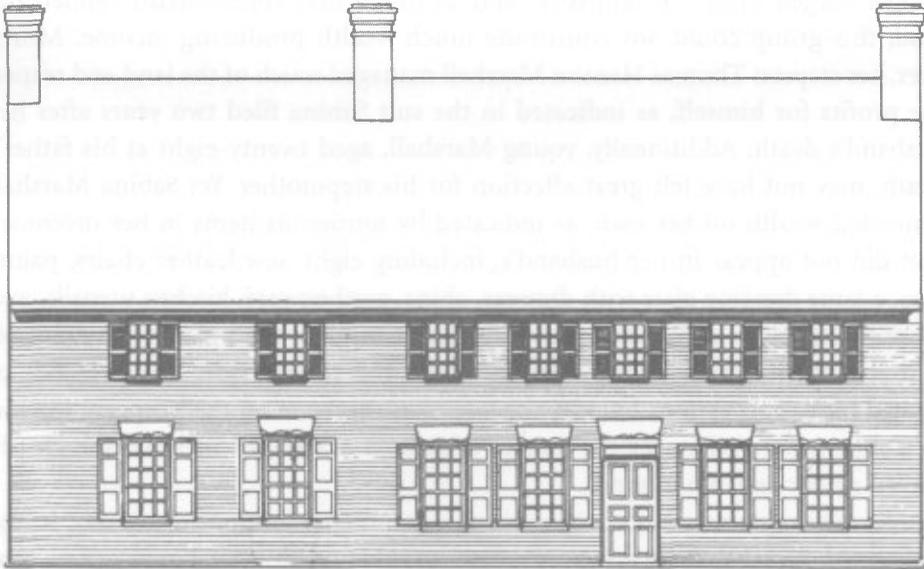


Figure 7. West elevation, Mistake House, c. 1770. (Long, "Historic Structure," 120.)

the house added 1,350 square feet for a total of approximately 3,350 square feet. On the exterior, he kept the style of the façade, but, preferring utility over design compromised its symmetry (Figure 7). The addition of a porch, accessed by a large arched doorway, altered the eastern elevation (Figure 8).⁵⁵ Although the addition of new windows and the arched doorway negated the symmetry, Marshall paid careful attention to the continuity of style and placed the same double-ogee pattern above the windows.

The addition behind and above the porch—in effect an attached outbuilding—must have been used as a kitchen and servants' quarters as no interior passageways or staircase to the rest of house existed on either floor. Servants would have climbed a ladder to gain access to the second floor where they could store kitchen items and perhaps sleep.

Thomas Hanson Marshall made other improvements to the property at this time, such as a small brick dependency, a brick carriage house-stable, and probably other buildings as well.⁵⁶ Once he decided to move to Mistake, he determined to make it one of the finest properties in the county, and judging by the tax assessments of 1783 and 1798, he succeeded handsomely.

The Marshalls: Charles County Gentry

Thomas Marshall did not travel far across Charles County during his lifetime, yet in social and cultural terms he stands as a veritable Christopher Columbus. Compared with earlier Tidewater Maryland generations, Thomas Marshall developed

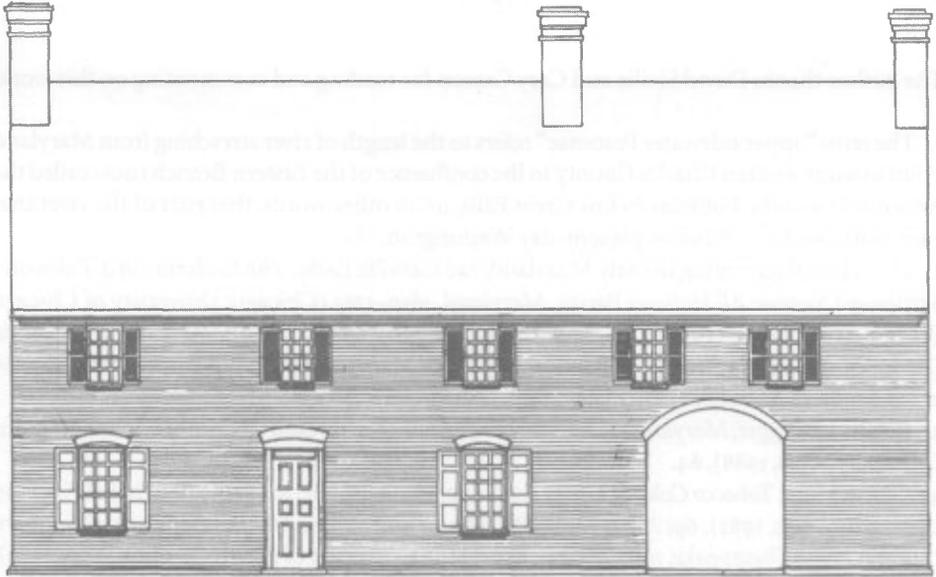


Figure 8. Eastern elevation, Mistake House, c. 1770 (Long, "Historic Structure," 121.)

a markedly different social sensibility. A shipwright intent on shedding his workingman's background, he took advantage of profitable trends and earned a most favored status. The manner in which he built and furnished his home at Mistake is clear sign that he intended to display the differences between the elite and men of a lesser sort.

Far from idiosyncratic, Thomas Marshall sought to showcase his knowledge of the new genteel culture through its accompanying rituals, signs, and behaviors. He built the house at Mistake as a sign to others that the family who lived within could purchase non-essential consumer goods, more specialized furniture, and dedicate rooms to specialized private and public functions.

Thomas Marshall's house remained a symbol, and a quite substantial one by eighteenth-century Charles County standards. Few houses could compare in size, style, or quality, to this example of the Charlesian type, a distinct vernacular form that took elements of Transatlantic styles and molded them to local interests. Mistake stood as a fine model for others to follow. On the 1783 tax list the assessor described the Mistake house as "very good" yet he labeled most houses as small, old, or "very old." Fewer than 5 percent of principle dwellings merited descriptions of "good" or better. The 1798 assessment placed the Mistake house as the ninth most valuable property in Charles County, where the federal assessor counted 2,500 houses and valued 60 percent at less than one hundred dollars. Thomas Marshall, his wife Sabina, and his son Thomas Hanson Marshall had transformed a landed "mistake" into a commodity of high value in the Transatlantic economy and a symbol of genteel status in the eighteenth-century consumer revolution.⁵⁷

NOTES

The author thanks David Sicilia and Cary Carson for reading and commenting on this work.

1. The term “upper tidewater Potomac” refers to the length of river stretching from Maryland Point in southwestern Charles County to the confluence of the Eastern Branch (now called the Anacostia) and the Potomac below Great Falls, or, in other words, that part of the river that runs north and south below present-day Washington, D.C.
2. On colonial surveying in early Maryland, see Carville Earle, *The Evolution of a Tidewater Settlement System: All Hallows Parish, Maryland, 1650–1783* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Sarah S. Hughes, *Surveyors and Statesmen: Land Measuring in Colonial Virginia* (Richmond: Virginia Surveyor’s Foundation, 1979); Mary Catherine Wilheit, *Colonial Surveyors in Southern Maryland* (PhD Diss., Texas A&M University, 2003).
3. Robert J. Brugger, *Maryland: A Middle Temperament, 1634–1980* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 64.
4. Gloria Main, *Tobacco Colony: Life in Early Maryland, 1650–1720* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), 69; Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680–1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 69; Brugger, *Middle Temperament*, 58; John J. McCusker & Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America 1607–1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), passim. For the effect of this development on Charles County in particular, see Jean B. Lee, *The Price of Nationhood: The American Revolution in Charles County* (New York: Norton, 1994), 32–34.
5. The transformation of the Chesapeake economy and its society was intimately tied to the planters’ turn to a slave labor force. See among other works: Main, *Tobacco Colony*; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*; Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004); Timothy Breen & Stephen Innes, “*Mine Own Ground*”: *Race and Freedom on Virginia’s Eastern Shore, 1640–1676* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); J. Douglas Deal, *Race and Class in Colonial Virginia: Indians, Englishmen, and Africans on the Eastern Shore of Virginia during the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Garland, 1993); and Anthony S. Parent Jr., *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia, 1660–1740* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003). On the development of British consumerism in the American colonies, see T.H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), esp. ch. 2.
6. On the related issues of primogeniture, the immigration of younger sons to America, and the development of Chesapeake culture, see Martin H. Quitt, “Immigrant Origins of the Virginia Gentry: A Study of Cultural Transmission and Innovation,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 45 (1988): 629–55.
7. William Marshall emigrated to Maryland in 1640, Land Patents, Vol. 4, Liber ABH: 58, Maryland State Archives (hereinafter cited MSA); For Thomas Weston transporting Marshall to Maryland, see William Hand Browne, et al., editors, *Archives of Maryland* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1883–1972), 73:69; (hereinafter cited *Arch. Md.*); Alexander H. Bell, “Marshall-Dent Family Notes,” *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*, 19 (1931): 1–2; Gust Skordas, *The Early Settlers of Maryland* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1979), 306. To make matters worse, because William Marshall II died when Thomas was still a child, he could not revise his will to reflect the more liberal methods of bequeathing estates that became widespread in the New World after 1700.

8. Prince George's County Rent Rolls, 1651–1772, Piscataway Hundred, Maryland State Archives (hereinafter cited MSA). Marshall is denoted as a shipwright in a land transaction with John Hutchinson of Prince George's County. Although this could indeed be a different Thomas Marshall than the grandson of the immigrant William Marshall, several aspects of the transaction suggest he is the descendent. First, he is listed as living in Charles County and there were no other Thomas Marshalls of proper age known to be living in the county in 1722. Second, John Hutchinson was a member of a family that lived and owned property along Piscataway Creek near Charley and Hansonton, two properties owned by Thomas's uncle Joshua and later part of the Marshall Hall estate. His brother Richard was trained to be a carpenter, see Charles County Land Records, Liber H2: 489, MSA; Richard Marshall appears as a carpenter in recording the conveyance of some of his eldest brother's land to him on January 30, 1721; Earle, *Evolution of a Tidewater Settlement System*, 143; Raphael Semmes, *Captains and Mariners of Early Maryland* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1937), 57.
9. In 1705 the population of Charles County was approximately 3,000 (2,400 whites, and almost 600 slaves), Lorena Walsh, "Charles County, Maryland, 1658–1705: A Study of Chesapeake Social and Political Structure" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1977), 8–10, 22; the most settled areas held only about twelve people per square mile; James T. Lemon, "Spatial Order: Households in Local Communities and Regions," in *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era*, ed. by Jack P. Greene & J.R. Pole (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 86–122. Aware of the economic pitfalls represented by the lack of towns, the Maryland legislature periodically attempted to encourage the growth of towns and regional markets, Lemon, "Spatial Order," 104–14; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 104–107 and ch. 6 & 7; Brugger, *Middle Temperament*, 61; Walsh, *Charles County*, 12, 14.
10. The headright system and patents were key mechanisms for apportioning land and creating a labor force in proprietary Maryland. The headright was a method devised by colonial business interests and administrators (such as Lord Baltimore) to populate North American colonies. Under the system a proprietor awarded to any individual fifty acres of land for each person imported into a province or colony. The system provided labor as well, which in turn created commodities (chiefly tobacco in the Chesapeake). Taxes and fees levied on various aspects of production and transportation of these commodities created a vast income for provincial administrators, from the proprietor on down. A patent was a specific method for turning "unclaimed" land into property. Anyone who proved that a particular area of land was available could apply to the provincial authorities for title. An individual who imported two people into Maryland, for example, could demand of Lord Baltimore 100 acres of land. If Baltimore and his authorities were convinced that the claimant had indeed imported two immigrants and that the parcel of land was free of encumbrances, they granted a patent to the claimant. The proprietary patent system had vestiges of feudal land relations. Often, patents required an annual or semi-annual "quit-rent" payable to the proprietor.
11. Walsh, *Charles County*, 15; Russell R. Menard, "Population, Economy, and Society in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 79 (1984): 72 (hereinafter cited *MdHM*); Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 33–34, 57–60.
12. Recall that Thomas Marshall's father died before he reached forty years of age. His brother, William III, would die at the age of forty-four; Walsh, *Charles County*, 11; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 170 table 21. Note that Kulikoff's figures compare seventeenth-century Middlesex County, Virginia, with eighteenth-century Prince George's County, Maryland. The former figures probably better represent the situation faced by the first two generations of Maryland Marshalls. Walsh, *Charles County*, 15; Menard, "Population, Economy," 72; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 250–51.
13. The ratio of male to female babies born in the province was virtually equivalent among creoles,

but, due to continuing immigration, men still outnumbered women three to two in the first decade of the eighteenth century, Menard, "Population, Economy," 73; Walsh, *Charles County*, 11; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 168–71; William and Katherine Marshall were lucky to exceed the norm by almost four years with a marriage of about fifteen years; her last name is sometimes spelled "Stoddard."

14. Menard, "Population, Economy," 73.

15. Stoddert is well-known historically for drawing a famous map of Annapolis. The map is reprinted in *The Maryland State Archives Atlas of Historical Maps of Maryland, 1608–1908*, ed. by Edward C. Papenfuse & Joseph M. Coale III (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

16. Prince George's County Land Records 1730–1733, CR49, 519: 371–74, MSA; patent of 1685 describes "Greenwigh [or "Greenwich"] on Patomac River," Liber 22, folio 380, SR7363, MSA. There is no irrefutable evidence that this "dwelling house" is the structure that eventually became Marshall Hall. There has been much speculation, but certain things are clear. The house was not built in the 1690s as the historical marker placed at Marshall Hall by the DAR once proclaimed. Family history shows this. The general time frame during which the house was built is between the late 1720s and 1783 when the tax assessment of that year described the Marshall Hall house. The possibility that the house was built later in the period rests on the chances that Thomas Marshall built an inferior house at or soon after the time of his first marriage and then replaced this at a later date with the Marshall Hall house. But this is unlikely for two reasons. First, infrared studies performed by the National Park Service of the Marshall Hall property show no other spot where an earlier house could have been. Second, some colonials built fine homes on the same site as older, inferior houses by encasing the former. That is, they simply built the new house around the shell of the older one, as was done at Spye Park in another area of Charles County. But there is no evidence whatsoever that Thomas Marshall did this. The three major investigations (by Long, Hughes and Hughes, and Rivoire) into the house generally accept a date earlier in the period. But there is one other possibility that might place the house's construction at the later date. What if Thomas Marshall built a wooden house on the very site where the brick one now stands and then tore it down to make way for the newer, more fashionable home? This is unlikely due to a variety of cultural, social, and economic reasons as this article explains. For more on the dates of construction see Susan Long, "Historic Structure Report, Architectural Date Section for Marshall Hall, Piscataway Park" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1983); Brady A. Hughes & Sarah S. Hughes, "A Historical Study of the Marshall Hall Site, 1634 to 1984," prepared for the National Park Service (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1985): ch. 4; and J. Richard Rivoire, *Homeplaces: Traditional Domestic Architecture of Charles County, Maryland* (La Plata, Md.: Southern Maryland Studies Center, 1990), 54–61.

17. In fact, the house was only one and one-half stories tall. But unlike the ruder examples of the form, Marshall Hall actually had half walls running parallel to the roof. This gave plenty of room in each of the rooms of the upper floor. The house was one of only two truly one-and-one-half story houses in Charles County built in the early eighteenth century (Long, "Historic Structure Report," 36, citing the National Register Form, p. 5).

18. Long, "Historic Structure Report," 46; Cary Carson notes that it is an "old wives' tale" that shipwrights built or finished houses as a side line. However, if Thomas Marshall was indeed a shipwright, this particular instance might prove to be the exception to the Carson's observation (Cary Carson, personal communication, November 7, 2006).

19. Long, "Historic Structure Report," v; dedicated central hall for stairway not popular in Charles County houses until late in 1700s, Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 11; Long, "Historic Structure Report," 36, citing the National Register Form; Holly Hill, built in 1698, shared the attribute of flared roof eaves, Carson, personal communication; for tax assessments see the Maryland

Assessment of 1783, Charles County, District 5, Land Tax, page 2, MSA and Federal Direct Tax of 1798, 2nd District, Charles County, MSA.

20. Kevin M. Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular: Lifestyles of the Colonial Elite," *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Cary Carson et al. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 10–11.

21. Seventeenth-century visitors to the Chesapeake often remarked on the rude state of all the region's homes. On the state of seventeenth-century house architecture and construction in the Chesapeake, see Main, *Tobacco Colony*, passim; Cary Carson et al., "Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies," *Winterthur Portfolio*, 16 (1981): 135–96; Dell Upton, "The Origins of Chesapeake Architecture," *Three Centuries of Maryland Architecture* (Annapolis, Md.: Maryland Historical Trust, 1982), 44–45; Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 2; Carson et al., "Impermanent Architecture," 169–70; Upton, *Three Centuries*, 47–48; Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 5. The hazards of hole-set post building are demonstrated in the history of the first Charles County courthouse, built in 1674, with an addition added several years later. By 1682, less than a decade after its initial construction, both the original structure and the addition were in dire need of repair. By 1699, less than thirty years after the initial construction, the building had to be completely rebuilt. The rebuilt courthouse required extensive renovations in 1715. County officials gave up on the dilapidated structure only ten years later, replacing the courthouse with a completely new brick building in a different locale.

22. Cary Carson, "The Virginia House in Maryland," *MdHM*, 69 (1982), 186; Dell Upton, "Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Virginia," in *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*, eds. Dale Upton & John Vlach (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 316–17; Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 156.

23. For a later example of a Virginia house, see Upton, "Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Virginia," fig. 5; and Upton, "Vernacular Domestic Architecture," 317.

24. On the major changes in Chesapeake building materials at the turn of the eighteenth century, see Main, *Tobacco Colony*, ch. 4; Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 145–47; Fraser D. Neiman, "Domestic Architecture at the Clifts Plantation: The Social Context of Early Virginia Building," in *Common Places*, 306. Wooden chimneys continued to be a feature of the homes of impoverished Marylanders into the twentieth century, George W. McDaniel, *Hearth and Home: Preserving a People's Culture* (Temple University Press 1982), 74–80.

25. Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 2; Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 148, 231–33; Carson, "Virginia House," 186–88; Upton, "Vernacular Domestic Architecture," 316–17.

26. Brugger, *Middle Temperament*, 70; Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 6; Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular," 11.

27. Upton, "Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Virginia," 317–18; Brugger, *Middle Temperament*, 80. In the third quarter of the eighteenth century, builders constructed additions to create mansions from earlier, small homes. These took the form of either hyphens or wings. The wings were sometimes balanced (as at Mount Vernon) or telescoped (as at Hard Bargain in Charles County, Brugger, *Middle Temperament*, 70); Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 157; Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular," 19.

28. Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular," 39; for more on Mason and Gunston Hall, see Jeff Broadwater, *George Mason, Forgotten Founder* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 5–6.

29. Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 11.

30. Carson, personal communication.

31. Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular," 15.

32. Although English bond was the earliest pattern used in colonial brick buildings, Flemish bond came into use in the early eighteenth century. The builders of the Cole Diggs house, further down the Chesapeake at Yorktown, also employed the pattern in the 1720s. Marc R.

Wenger et al., *Cole Digges House: A Historic Structure Report* (NPS, 2004, www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/cole-digges/index.htm).

33. See Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular," 19.

34. On the early American practice of "coverture," see Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Cornelia Hughes Dayton, *Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639–1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); and Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1998). For more on family relations in the eighteenth-century Chesapeake, see Daniel Blake Smith, *Inside the Great House: Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980); Jan Lewis, *The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*.

35. Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular," 22.

36. Bushman, *Refinement of America*; Cary Carson, "Consumption," *A Companion to Colonial America*, ed. Daniel Vickers (New York: Blackwell, 2003); Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, part 1.

37. Lois Carr & Lorena Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake," *Of Consuming Interest*, 112.

38. Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles," 65; Lorena Walsh, "Urban Amenities and Rural Sufficiency: Living Standards and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1643–1777," *Journal of Economic History*, 43 (1983): 110–11; Walsh, "Urban Amenities," 110–11; Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles," 108.

39. See the records of Marshall's visit to the store in the John Glassford Company Papers, Journal for 1766, Box 25, Library of Congress.

40. Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles," 64.

41. Charles County Records, Will A D, no. 5, MSA.

42. Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 158–62; James Horn, "Adapting to a New World: A Comparative Study of Local Society in England and Maryland, 1650–1700," in *Colonial Chesapeake Society*, ed. by Lois Carr et al. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 156–64.

43. To better ascertain the relationship between Tidewater planters, wealth, and the culture of gentility, Lois Carr and Lorena Walsh developed an "amenities index." This index is comprised of a list of twelve items that marked luxury spending from other forms of consumerism. These goods include coarse earthenware (for convenience and hygiene), bed or table linen (for convenience and hygiene), table knives (as display of up-to-date taste), table forks (as display of up-to-date taste), fine earthenware (also as a display of up-to-date taste), spices (for dietary variety), religious books, secular books (tools and symbols of education), wigs (sign of luxury), watches and clocks (signs of luxury), pictures (sign of luxury), and silver plate (sign of luxury), Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles," 69ff.

44. Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles," 70.

45. Chairs were also a key marker of wealth. "The richer the planter, the more chairs." Planters worth between £299 and £399 in the 1720s were lucky to have a dozen chairs. Marshall's twenty-three chairs represented a cornucopia of sittance. Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 250–51.

46. Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles," 130; Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 243–44.

47. Tillotson's collected works published 1752; see tables 1–4 in Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles."

48. Glassford Papers, Library of Congress.

49. Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular," 8–10; Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 248.

50. Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular," 7.

51. George Washington, "Rules of Civility & Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation," in *George Washington: Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1997), 3–10.
52. It is unclear when this second marriage took place. Gerald guesses it was August 3, 1756, *MdHM*, 24 (1929), 175, but the marriage may well have taken place anytime between Elizabeth Marshall's death in 1750 and the 1756 date. On women in the Chesapeake during the period of Sabina Marshall's widowhood, see Lorena Walsh, "The Experiences and Status of Women in the Chesapeake, 1750–1775," in *The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family, and Education*, ed. by Walter J. Fraser, Jr., et al. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 1–18; and Jean B. Lee, "Land and Labor: Parental Bequest Practices in Charles County, Maryland, 1732–1783," in *Colonial Chesapeake Society*, 306–41.
53. For more on this conflict, see Reynolds J. Scott-Childress, *History of the Marshall Hall Property* (National Park Service Report, December 2007), 168ff; the several items of jewelry in Sabina Marshall's inventory, absent from Thomas's, were probably hers before his death. If they were her property, they probably would not have been included in the accounting of her husband's estate.
54. Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles," 109; two dates have been offered for the renovation. Rivoire places the additions in the 1770s, while Susan Long offers 1760 as the date of the addition (Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 56; Long, "Historic Structure Report," 69). Rivoire's seems to be the better date, judging by historical events. The earlier date seems unlikely given the death of Thomas Marshall in 1759 and Sabina Marshall's sole ownership of the house for almost a decade thereafter. It is possible, as there is a tantalizing clue in an addendum to Thomas Marshall's inventory. It notes that Marshall was in possession of 236 feet of Walnut inch plank, the sort of wood one would use to make panels in a finely crafted hall or chamber. There is one further clue in Sabina Marshall's inventory: 14,700 nails of various sorts. This suggests some sort of major construction in the planning stages. These two clues of course may be completely unrelated, and certainly do not add up to an addition before 1770. The advertisement reads: "Wanted by Thomas Hanson Marshall, a woman qualified for managing a house, and bringing up Girls, in a genteel way, such a one (being well recommended) will meet with the best Encouragement, by applying to the Subscriber [i.e., Marshall], living about Eight Miles below *Piscataway*, THOMAS HANSON MARSHALL." *Maryland Gazette*, February 21, 1771, 3. See the same advertisement repeated the following week.
55. Long, "Historic Structure Report," 121; Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 59, fig. 71.
56. Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 59.
57. Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 16ff; the rest were valued at between \$105 and \$4,000 (the Lee family house at Blenheim). The average value of those houses worth more than \$100 was between \$350 and \$385. The house at Mistake, valued about \$3,000, was clearly far above this average.

The Potomac River Survey of 1822

Dan Guzy

On September 18, 1822, near the mouth of Goose Creek in Virginia, a joint Maryland and Virginian survey party of five distinguished commissioners, and at least three engineers and surveyors, halted what had been a grueling seven-week boat trip down the Potomac River from Cumberland. Low water levels during the trip forced them to drag their boats over shoals, rocks, and ledges several times each day. A river-borne disease, however, forced them to stop thirty-six miles upstream of tidewater, their destination—a disease that had debilitated most of the party and would soon kill two of its members.

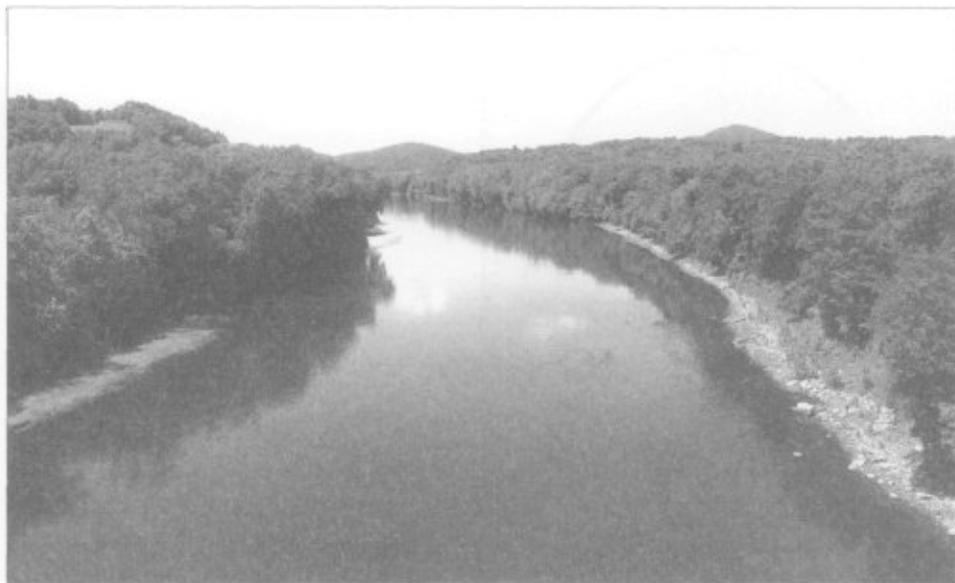
Three months later, a portion of the survey party, joined by new participants, would complete their investigation of the upper (i.e., non-tidal) Potomac River. The “joint commissioners” then issued the most damning report of the Potomac Company’s attempt to make the Potomac and its North Branch navigable by in-river improvements. This report would have a great influence in supporting the movement towards building a continuous and independent canal alongside the Potomac, eventually named the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal.

These joint commissioners did not create the first survey of the upper Potomac River. In 1736 earlier commissioners and surveyors traveled up the river and its North Branch, mapping them as the border between Virginia and Maryland. George Washington canoed down the Potomac’s North Branch and main stem in 1754 and wrote subsequent letters proclaiming the river’s great potential for navigation. Maryland colonial governor Horatio Sharpe and Sir John St. Clair made a similar downriver trip in January 1755, but gave a more pessimistic view of navigation. In 1770 future Maryland governor Thomas Johnson’s boat trip served as the basis for his own plan to open the Potomac River to commerce. In 1783, Normand Bruce and Charles Beatty assessed the river’s navigability at the request of the Maryland legislature.

In 1785, under George Washington’s enthusiastic leadership, the Potomac Company began “improving” the river for navigation. The company performed its own boat surveys, including the work Washington and the company directors performed in 1785 and George Gilpin and James Smith’s “leveling” (i.e., surveying elevations and distances) of the river four years later.

By 1802 the Potomac Company had finished its major works, that is, the skirting canals with locks at Great and Little Falls, and the long sluices at Seneca

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The Potomac River above Hancock, Maryland. (Author photograph.)

Falls and the falls above Harpers Ferry. The company's many smaller in-river navigational works, among them stone weirs, "chutes," and walls required continual maintenance and rebuilding. The toll revenues from the flatboats and batteaux shipping flour, coal, and other goods downstream did not generate enough income to cover costs. Consequently, many of the minor navigational works suffered neglect. The commissioners discussed other structures as well, some of which had faulty designs. By the 1820s, many of the Potomac Company's in-river works had failed to improve navigation.

The goal, as stated in the 1784 Potomac Company charters charged the group with making the upper Potomac River navigable for boats with one-foot drafts during "dry seasons." Despite delays and difficulties in meeting this goal, the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures and the general public (if not the shareholders who lost money), initially accepted the company's approach and efforts towards improving in-river navigation. Early acceptance of the proposal may have been due, in part, to George Washington's charisma and his involvement in the project. Additionally, the region lacked alternative methods of transportation to the West until the advent of better-quality roads and continuous independent canals that revolutionized internal improvements during the early years of the nineteenth century. Independent canals, built off rivers, relied on locks to raise and lower boats along their relatively still waters.¹

The independent Erie Canal in New York, on which construction began in 1817, proved to be an instant success. Workers completed the first fifteen-mile section of this canal, from Rome to Utica, in 1819. Isaac Briggs, from Sandy Spring,



Thomas Moore (Courtesy of the Sandy Spring Museum.)

Maryland, served as project engineer. Briggs, a business partner and brother-in-law of Thomas Moore, would play a key role in completing the 1822 Potomac River survey and writing its report.²

The Erie Canal threatened to take western trade away from Maryland, Virginia, and the new District of Columbia. Canal transportation proved cheaper than hauling by road and renewed local interests in connecting the Potomac and Ohio Rivers by a canal over the mountains and glades of the Allegheny Plateau. In 1820, Thomas Moore explored potential canal routes in the area.

Thomas Moore, a Quaker, self-taught scientific farmer, businessman, and inventor from Brookeville, Maryland, also worked as a surveyor. John Mason, a director and the last and longest-serving president of the Potomac Company, befriended Moore and hired him to direct the construction of the causeway connecting Mason's summer home on Analoatan Island (now Theodore Roosevelt Island) with the Virginia shore. In 1818, when the Virginia Board of Public Works sought a principal engineer, Mason recommended Moore and he accepted the position.³

As Moore noted in a letter to Isaac Briggs, he felt comfortable with the surveying aspects of the principal engineer job but admitted his limited knowledge of river improvements. Although few men could claim expertise in river improvement and canal construction, Moore, with Briggs's assistance, was soon planning, surveying, and building canals along the James and other Virginia rivers.⁴

In an attempt to improve its funding situation with the Virginia legislature, the Potomac Company resolved during its August 1819 annual meeting to request

that the Virginia Board of Public Works have its principal engineer (Moore) examine their navigational works and explore the country lying between the Potomac and Ohio Rivers "with a view to find the best manner to improve navigation." The Virginia Board of Public Works agreed to fund this survey.⁵ In June 1820, Thomas Moore took "the levels of the Monongahela River" and made arrangements to get a skiff at Westernport to boat down the Potomac River. Thus began his "examination" of the Potomac at the mouth of Savage River on June 30, continuing downriver in his skiff from Cumberland on July 10.⁶

In the report of his 1820 survey, Moore concluded that canal and sluice improvements offered practical solutions for navigable routes along either the Cheat or Youghiogheny Rivers. He also suggested that a tunnel might be used to connect to the latter river. As for the Potomac River, Moore presented cost estimates for both improving existing in-river navigation and for a new continuous independent canal. He predicted that, with some improvements to the Potomac Company's works, the Potomac's North Branch could be made navigable for about half the year. Moore also estimated that improvements totaling \$18,000 to \$20,000 would enable "boats carrying 100 barrels of flour [to] descend the river at all times, from the mouth of the South Branch to tidewater, except in an unusually dry season."⁷

Without "a minute examination on [the Potomac] shore," yet based on his experience with the James River canal, Moore roughly estimated the cost of a continuous independent canal along the Potomac from Cumberland to Great Falls at \$1,114,300. Thus, while recognizing the navigational superiority of a continuous independent canal over upgrades to the Potomac Company's in-river navigation system, Moore estimated the cost to be more than fifty times greater. He left the ultimate cost/benefit decision for further river improvements versus new continuous canal construction to others.

Thomas Moore's report did not satisfy Maryland and Virginia legislators. As shareholders in the Potomac Company who saw only constant debts, not dividends, these states wanted another survey and an analysis of the Potomac Company's finances and capabilities. The new study would have a joint commission of "men of high standing and residing in the vicinity of the waters of the Potomac" to accompany Thomas Moore and issue a more detailed report.⁸

On January 29, 1821, the Virginia legislature passed "An Act Concerning the Potowmac Company." The preamble to the act referenced a presentation to the general assembly that essentially claimed the Potomac Company's navigational works failed to meet the terms of its charter. The act went on to authorize the appointment of two commissioners who, in conjunction with the Maryland appointees, would "examine into and report the state of navigation of the said river and its branches, and whether the same has been perfected and completed according to the terms and conditions of the acts of incorporation." The act stated that the commissioners should also look into the company's financial situation to determine:

the measures most adviseable [sic] to be recommended to and conjointly adopted by the said states, wither for giving aid to the said company in the further prosecution of the said work, or for the institution of a prosecution against the president and directors of the said company for the purpose of annulling and vacating the charter of the said corporation.

The commissioners would receive four dollars per day, and the chain carriers and others employed would be compensated as the commissioners deemed appropriate. The act also empowered the group to buy boats.⁹ The Maryland legislature passed a similar act on February 16, 1821, in which they authorized the governor to appoint two commissioners:

to advise and consult with the commissioners on the part of the state of Virginia, as to the measures most advisable to be recommended to, and conjointly adopted by the said states, either for giving aid to the said company in the further prosecution of the said work, or for the more effectual improvement, of the navigation of the said river, by such other means as may be deemed most expedient.¹⁰

In April 1821 newspapers reported that the Maryland governor had appointed two men as joint commissioners to survey the Potomac, John Buchanan, Chief Judge of the 5th Judicial District, and Colonel George E. Mitchell. Surprisingly, both declined.¹¹

Mitchell, from Elkton, Maryland, was one of the heroes of the 1813 Battle of Sackets Harbor. Perhaps his upcoming duties as a newly-elected United States Congressman kept him from serving on the joint commission. Athanasius Fenwick, another veteran of the War of 1812, replaced him. The second replacement appointee, Elie Williams, was John Buchanan's father-in-law. Perhaps in declining to serve, Buchanan deferred to Williams's experience in surveying and navigational improvements, or simply to his financial need for employment.

Born in 1750, Elie Williams, the oldest member of the commission, had the most experience. A native of Williamsport (named for his more famous older brother, General Otho Holland Williams), Elie had helped lay out the town and had managed the family farm, Springfield, for forty years. During the Revolution, Williams had served as a colonel and later as a supply contractor through the Northwest Territory Indian Wars and the Whiskey Rebellion. The younger Williams worked as the first clerk of the Court of Washington County and later presided as a judge of the Orphans Court.¹²

Thomas Jefferson appointed Williams as the head of the three-man National Road Commission. During the fall and early winters of 1806 and 1807, and in the spring and summer of 1808, he worked with the other two commissioners, a crew

Elie Williams (Courtesy of the Williamsport Library.)



of surveyors, chainmen, and other workers to lay out the National Road's route from Cumberland to Wheeling. One of the commissioners, Senator Joseph Kerr of Ohio, left the group due to domestic concerns. The third commissioner, Thomas Moore, certainly established a professional and personal relationship with Williams as they traveled together over the mountains of western Maryland and Virginia, sharing meals and sleeping accommodations. The two collaborated on their findings and sent the final report to Jefferson on August 30, 1808.¹³

Otho Williams died in 1794 and, per the terms of his will, Springfield Farm would have passed to his younger brother Elie, yet the title of the property remained tied up in equity court until 1810 when Otho's son Edward Green Williams gained ownership. Elie served as the president of Potomac Company from 1815 to 1817. One account speculates that Williams had to flee from Georgetown to Kentucky in 1817 or 1818 due to debts he incurred from an unsuccessful paper mill venture. It is telling that an obituary for Elie Williams, thick with praise, also stated that "his fortunes were chequered." Perhaps the old man was still in financial trouble in 1821 thus prompting son-in-law John Buchanan to suggest Williams's appointment to the joint commission.¹⁴

The other Maryland joint commissioner, Athanasius Fenwick (1780–1824), came from a long line of St. Mary's County Catholics. He served as a lieutenant colonel in the 12th Regiment of the Maryland Militia during the War of 1812. Fenwick and his slaves farmed Cherry Fields on the banks of the St. Mary's River. Fenwick, a member of the St. Mary's County agricultural board, published articles in the *American Farmer*. Politically, he gained appointment as a revenue collector for the port of St. Mary's and won a seat in the Maryland House of Delegates.¹⁵



Temple Hall. (Author's photograph.)

As had John Buchanan, Athanasius Fenwick studied law under John Thompson Mason, whose half brother was William T. T. Mason a Virginian member of the joint commission, and first cousin of the Potomac Company's John Mason. Another connection between Fenwick and John Mason may have existed through Mason's partnership in the firm of Fenwick and Mason where he worked with James and Joseph Fenwick of Maryland and served in their firm's Bordeaux, France branch until 1791.¹⁶

The Virginia Council appointed two men to the joint commission on May 31, 1821. Moses T. Hunter was born in 1791, educated at Princeton, and studied law in Winchester. He inherited and lived at The Red House, one mile north of Martinsburg where his law practice included a circuit in Berkeley, Jefferson, Morgan, and Frederick Counties. Hunter married Mary Snickers with whom he had six children.¹⁷ Some recalled Hunter as "an eminent lawyer, orator and wit," and others remembered a drunken gambler. Although these different views may just demonstrate that one person's bon vivant and wag may be another's tosspot and profligate, Hunter's "imprudent habits" appear to have been most extreme during his youth and the period just before his death, rather than when he served on the joint commission.

William Temple Thomson Mason was born in 1782 and later lived at Temple Hall, a 757-acre plantation northeast of Leesburg, Virginia. With about twenty slaves, William T. T. Mason (also known as Temple Mason) raised wheat, corn, and livestock and cultivated an orchard. Mason married Ann Eliza Carroll, a Baltimore heiress, and together they raised a large family.¹⁸

The Mason family knew the river quite well. Temple Hall sat within two miles



William T. T. Mason (Courtesy of the Board of Regents of Gunston Hall.)

of Masons Landing and Lower Mason Island, and, as previously noted, William T. T. Mason's first cousin was John Mason of the Potomac Company. His father, Thomson Mason (originally from Stafford County and later settled Raspberry Plain, near Temple Hall) had been one of the trustees in John Ballendine's colonial scheme to improve Potomac River navigation. Additionally, his grandfather, George Mason III, had drowned in the Potomac at age forty-four when his sloop overturned as he attempted to cross the river.¹⁹

On February 16, 1822, Virginia's general assembly amended its previous "act concerning the Potomac company" to include a third joint commissioner from that state. The new act listed Hunter and Mason by name and added William Naylor of Hampshire County. Naylor may have been added for political reasons, specifically as a representative from the more western part of the state.²⁰

William Naylor, a prominent attorney from Romney on the South Branch of the Potomac, born in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, received his early education at Dickinson College. He then studied and practiced law in Winchester, Virginia before moving to Romney.²¹ His son, William Sanford Naylor (born 1801), graduated from Princeton University. In 1822 the junior Naylor helped with the Potomac River survey. Interestingly, both Naylors belonged to the Romney Literary Society. Early in 1822 the group had debated "canalling the Potomac" and concluded that it would be detrimental to the interests of Hampshire Country. They deemed the teamster business on the roads through Romney more important than water trade down the South Branch to the main stem of the Potomac. Hampshire County, however, also borders on the North Branch of the Potomac, and landowners such as William Naylor who owned land near the water would obviously benefit from improved navigation.²²

By February 1822 the joint commission was thus set—five men with backgrounds in politics, farming, the military, and the law. Elie Williams may have been the only one of the five with actual surveying experience, but the joint commission would rely on the expertise of Thomas Moore and the survey crew that accompanied them.

Although the states of Virginia and Maryland may have wanted objective participants, one must note that the engineer and some of the joint commissioners had strong ties to the Potomac Company and John Mason. The relatively small number of accomplished men at the time, however, limited those with the necessary credentials and increased the possibility of conflicts of interest. Regardless, ties to the Potomac Company did not prevent them from issuing negative assessments of the company and its works.

Neither of the original Maryland and Virginian acts charting the joint commissioners in early 1821 specifically ordered that they survey and prepare a cost estimate for a new, continuous, and independent canal alongside the Potomac. Unwritten yet understood, the commissioners accepted the charge when they assembled in mid-1822. “Canal fever” swept the nation in the 1820s, and by comparison, the Erie Canal, built between 1817 and 1825, made the Potomac Company’s in-river navigation system look outdated. Newspaper editors and politicians called for change. For example, while the joint commissioners’ survey was still in progress, the Harpers Ferry *Free Press* and the Washington *Daily National Intelligencer* wrote:

We do hope that the commissioners’ attention will be devoted entirely to the practicability of a canal independent of the bed of the river; and the former notion of improving the bed of the river, for the purposes of navigation, will be abandoned as fallacious and unworthy [of] the great states which are so vitally interested. Navigation on natural streams is always hazardous, precarious, and difficult. Besides the great safety which an independent canal would ensure to the property boated upon it, the ascending navigation would be equally important.²³

In early 1822, the District of Columbia Committee of the United States House of Representatives referenced Thomas Moore’s 1820 survey report and recommended that the Potomac Company build a continuous independent canal from Cumberland to tidewater. Members of the committee estimated that the canal would cost \$2.5 million, and suggested a scheme whereby the U.S. government, the states of Maryland and Virginia, and individual subscribers would pay for new canal construction and also pay off up to a half million dollars of the Potomac Company’s existing debts. The District of Columbia Committee’s estimated cost ran higher than Moore’s \$1,114,300, but the latter would extend the canal to the head of Great Falls whereas the Committee’s canal would go to the foot of Little Falls.²⁴

Legislative changes affecting the appointments of the joint commissioners delayed the project and Thomas Moore's commitment to survey the Roanoke River first, coupled with the difficulty of bringing together busy men who lived significant distances apart, cost additional time. Not until July 2, 1822, did the five joint commissioners first assemble in Georgetown to examine "the affairs of the Potomac Company." The Washington *Daily National Intelligencer* reported this event and opined: "We are glad to hear that they have seriously entered on the business of their Commission, with a determination to go through with it." On July 5 the joint commissioners formally issued a letter to company president John Mason asking for details on stock shares, expenditures, debts, and tolls. Mason transmitted this information on December 20, and the *Washington Daily National Intelligencer* published the figures as appendices to the joint commissioners' report.²⁵

After Georgetown the commissioners traveled to Cumberland. Thomas Moore arrived on July 15 and several others joined the crew, among them "Mr. M. W. Boyd, from Maryland, a civil engineer" and William Sanford Naylor (also called "W. Naylor, Jr.") as a surveyor. From Cumberland, the survey party inspected the Potomac's North Branch up to the mouth of Savage River, and from there "the connection between the western and eastern waters."²⁶

The joint commissioners did not document the details of the upper parts of their survey. Unlike Moore's earlier report, the joint commissioners did not record their assessment of navigation upstream of Cumberland. Although they did assert that there would be sufficient water supplies at summit levels for a canal up the Savage River and Crabtree Run, and then down Deep Creek to the Youghiogheny River, the report did not describe the structures needed for a proposed canal over the Allegheny Front. Rather, the commissioners focused on the condition of Potomac and North Branch navigation downstream of Cumberland, plus what would be required to construct a continuous independent canal that would connect with the National Road at Cumberland.

On or about July 31, 1822, the survey party began its downstream journey from Cumberland in at least two boats, including a skiff said to draw "only seven inches of water." Despite their shallow drafts—less than the one-foot draft specified in the Potomac Company charters—the boats had difficulties in passing over shoals and ledges.²⁷ The survey party slowly made its way downstream, averaging only about four miles per day when they could actually travel. The men rested every Sunday and at least an additional four days during its seven-week trip. On August 8 the party reached the Potomac's South Branch and nine days later stopped at Hancock. They reached Williamsport by August 29 and the following week docked at Harpers Ferry, Virginia.

The mission demanded a slow travel rate for the purpose of accommodating the "leveling" for the new proposed independent canal and to overcome the many obstacles in the unusually shallow river. The commissioners' day-to-day accounts

specifically mentioned their skiffs being “grounded,” “stuck fast,” “rubbed,” “dragged,” and “lifted” dozens of times on and over rocks, gravel shoals, ledges, and illegal fish dams. Several of the Potomac Company’s in-river dams and sluices were in disrepair and had become obstacles rather than aids to navigation. The joint commissioners’ overall assessment depicted even more extensive un-navigable conditions than did the daily accounts. “[T]he river . . . is in no section of ten miles at all navigable in low water by loaded boats of any kind or dimensions; and for more than eighty miles, obstructions from shallows, sufficient to stop a skiff are to be met on an average division of that distance every half mile.”²⁸

Assuming the previous quote came from personal experience implies that for the worst eighty miles—half the overall distance traveled—the boats grounded approximately 160 times. In most cases the crews dragged the boats over the shoals, rocks, and ledges, presumably after unloading them first. In other cases they lifted the boats “with hand spikes.” Both techniques would be arduous and time-consuming.

Sickness struck several members of the survey party “shortly after leaving Cumberland” and slowed the party’s progress as the malady spread, particularly toward the end of the journey. On September 12 the survey party was at the foot of Clapham’s (Lower Mason) Island, five miles above Goose Creek. Six days later the party had traveled less than six miles further when it halted the survey only a half mile below the creek. By then, all five joint commissioners and others lay “prostrated by the disease.” Thomas Moore apparently maintained his health, but only temporarily. The survey party estimated the distance it had traveled from Cumberland to be 157 miles.²⁹

The ailing commissioners left Goose Creek for a period of convalescence at Temple Hall, resolving to resume their survey in early November. Eli Williams’s nephew summed up the situation in a letter he wrote on September 24, 1822. “[S]orry to hear that Uncle [Elie] Williams is ill. He with the other commissioners surveying the banks of the Potomac has been seized with a violent bilious fever, and though all of them are better, they are still laying at the house of Temple Mason.” The letter also noted the cause of the low river levels—the “drought is bad.”³⁰

It is curious that Thomas Moore did not show bilious fever symptoms during the same period as his comrades. If the disease was typhoid, the incubation period would have been one to two weeks. The incubation period for malaria would have been between 10 days and four weeks. During the weeks-long boat trip, Moore must have been exposed to the same food, mosquitoes, and sanitation conditions, but somehow he appeared well as the sickness felled the others and halted their work.

Yet Moore already carried the disease that would soon kill him. In a newspaper account of his death, Isaac Briggs wrote that Moore attended a monthly Friends meeting in Indian Springs on September 20, started with chills the next day and

fought a continuous fever until his death on October 3, 1822. The report of the joint commissioners may have been markedly different had Moore lived.³¹

On October 26 the Virginia Board of Public Works resolved that Isaac Briggs would replace Moore on the Potomac River survey. Briggs received Moore's rough pencil-written notes and used them to write the joint commissioners' report. Moore's custom had been to review and rewrite his notes in ink, but his sudden and severe illness prevented him from doing so in this case. During the interval before the survey resumed, Briggs made calculations to estimate the cost for building a new independent canal.³²

The commissioners missed their November 4 reassembly date, but some of them did gather the following month. Through the week of December 11, despite "the inclemency of the weather," Isaac Briggs, William Naylor, Moses T. Hunter and Athanasius Fenwick completed the Potomac River survey from Goose Creek to Little Falls. Asa Moore, Thomas Moore's son, who served as a "surveyor and leveler" assisted them.³³

Elie Williams and William T. T. Mason did not participate in the final leg of the survey. Although their names appeared with the other three commissioners at the end of the main body of their report, only Fenwick, Naylor, and Hunter signed a December 19, 1822, letter to the governor of Maryland and a similar correspondence to the governor of Virginia in which they sent their finished report and explained the reasons for the survey's "long" delay.³⁴

Elie Williams never recovered from his "bilious disorder" and died in Georgetown on December 29, 1822. The reasons that William T. T. Mason did not complete the last phase of the survey are not known, but if he had remained ill, he eventually recovered and outlived the others by many years. It is noteworthy that Elie Williams's obituaries cited his participation in "the great plan of canalling the Potomac" and his "forwarding" of the "great national work." Thus the newspapers endorsed the concept of an independent canal along the Potomac only days after the joint commissioners finished their report, before it was released in a printed form.³⁵

As they stated in their report, the joint commissioners understood that their assignment was to examine: 1) the affairs of the Potomac Company 2) the state of navigation on the Potomac River 3) the river's susceptibility to improvement, and 4) whether the company had complied with the terms of its Maryland and Virginian charters. Regarding the affairs of the Potomac Company, the report contained a December 20, 1822, letter from John Mason indicating that the company stood deeply in debt. The total expenditures for the company (including construction and maintenance of its works, and presumably salaries) had been \$729,387.29. Through August 1, 1822, the total collected for tolls was \$221,977.67¾. Considering that the company paid only one dividend to stockholders—\$3,890 in 1802—the company was over a half million dollars in

debt, as had been recognized earlier in the report of the House of Representatives' District of Columbia Committee.

Regarding the state of navigation, the new report gave a worse assessment than Thomas Moore's earlier findings. The joint commissioners concluded that navigation on the upper Potomac was practical for only "thirty three to forty five days" per year for "fully loaded boats." The navigable days fell chiefly during the spring and fall floods and freshets, and their actual number would increase as one approached Great Falls and decrease towards the head of the river. During the floods and freshets, the river would be high but also fast and dangerous. Farmers and merchants who misjudged the duration of freshets could find their products stranded. The joint commissioners stated that during the dry period they examined the river, "there was not sufficient depth of water for the navigation of a boat drawing even six inches," that is, a boat with a draft only half that specified in the acts chartering the Potomac Company. And as for recommending the river's susceptibility to improvement, the report basically condemned the in-river "sluice navigation" approach of the Potomac Company. The joint commissioners wrote:

... upon full consultation [we] do not deem it prudent, or expedient, to further aid the Potomac Company; the only alternative therefore that remains is to divest them of character and adopt some more effective mode of improving the navigation of the river.

In other words, the joint commissioners recommended building a new continuous and independent canal but, unlike the recommendation of the District of Columbia Committee made less than a year earlier, this was to be done without the Potomac Company's participation. In effect, the report condemned the Potomac Company and led to its eventual dissolution in 1828.

The joint commissioners' report initially estimated a total cost of \$1,578,954 for a new independent canal, 30 feet wide and 3 feet deep, from Cumberland to the head of the Potomac Company's Little Falls canal. Isaac Briggs completed a separate report on January 23, 1823, that gave a more detailed and corrected analysis of the estimate that slightly lowered the total to \$1,575,074. This cost, higher than Thomas Moore's just three years earlier and less than the District of Columbia Committee's estimate, reflected, to some extent, three different downstream terminuses and lengths for the different canals. The second report (by Briggs) also provided information about the second leg of the survey not previously documented. This account failed to continue the detailed day-by-day notes of structures and conditions witnessed in the Potomac River that the joint commissioners' report presented in an appendix.³⁶

The joint commissioners' report covered topics that Thomas Moore had not addressed in his earlier report. For example, it discussed the possibility of a lock and

dam system on the Potomac, in which fifty-three dams with bypass canals and locks would essentially channelize the river. The commissioners, however, dismissed this approach for a river as wide as the Potomac as being of a lesser cost/benefit ratio than building a continuous independent canal.³⁷

The report also contained long discussions on the products and industries a continuous independent canal would potentially serve and the expected profits these sources could reap. The commissioners emphasized that canal and boat transportation would be considerably cheaper than road and wagon transportation. A new and independent canal would make it practical to ship fuel, building materials, and other bulky items to the seaboard.

Several versions of the report appeared in print, the first one sent to the governor of Maryland in December 1822 and then delivered to the general assembly. The Maryland legislature immediately resolved that the governor send this report to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives and to the governors of Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, requesting that they submit the report to their legislatures. On January 1, 1823, the Maryland governor sent out his printed report and the U.S. Senate published a slightly reformatted version at the end of the month. The Pennsylvania senate republished the entire Maryland version. Newspapers and magazines also printed the document, in its entirety and in condensed versions, including the January 21, 1823, Hagerstown *Torch Light and Public Advertiser*, the April 24, 1823, Washington *Daily National Intelligencer*, and the July 1823 *Washington Quarterly Magazine*. Newspaper editorials endorsing proposals for a continuous independent canal along the Potomac River often referred to the joint commissioners' report as the supporting evidence.³⁸

Although the Maryland and U.S. Senate versions of the joint commissioners' report were nearly identical, the Virginia version differed. The Virginia Board of Public Works account gave a better explanation of the Cumberland to Goose Creek boat trip and added to and corrected many items in the day-to-day journey accounts.³⁹

The reports circulated and enthusiasm for an independent Potomac canal spread. United States Congressman Charles Fenton Mercer from Loudoun County, Virginia, championed the proposed independent canal and organized several local meetings to drum up support. These meetings led to a three-day canal convention in Washington D.C. that opened on November 6, 1823.

Members of the 1822 Potomac River survey were well-represented at this "Grand Union Canal Convention." Athanasius Fenwick, Isaac Briggs, and Elie Williams' son, Otho Holland Williams, represented St. Mary's, Montgomery, and Washington Counties, Maryland, respectively. Delegates William T. Mason and Moses T. Hunter traveled from Loudoun and Berkeley Counties, Virginia. And William Naylor chaired the meeting that appointed the convention's delegates from Hampshire County, Virginia.⁴⁰

The canal convention successfully gained more public and political support for the new canal, renamed the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal during these meetings. Charles Fenton Mercer later developed much of the federal legislation needed to make the C&O Canal a reality and served as its first president.⁴¹

Baltimore merchants feared that the project would draw more western trade towards the ports of Georgetown and Alexandria and away from their port on the Patapsco River. A canal crossing Maryland and connecting the C&O Canal with Baltimore might placate their concerns. For this purpose, Athanasius Fenwick offered a resolution during the convention that would “disclaim and disavow all opposition to any lateral Canal” connecting to the new canal. The members of the convention adopted his proposal.⁴² Fenwick became one of the commissioners in the 1823 surveys to lay out proposed routes for a cross-Maryland canal, the first of several presented over the next fifteen years (Isaac Briggs led the 1823 survey).

After investigating several possible canal routes, the 1823 survey party concluded that one up the Monocacy River and Linganore Creek, through Parr’s Ridge via a tunnel, and down the Patapsco River watershed towards Baltimore was feasible. However, the survey party also concluded, as did the 1826 surveys led by William Howard, that the most practical and cheapest canal route from the C&O Canal would have been across Washington D.C., up the Anacostia River, and then overland to the Patapsco River and Baltimore. But the latter route would go right past Georgetown and Alexandria, and Baltimore merchants feared that the two other ports would have the first pick of goods from the West. The Baltimoreans eventually gave up on the idea of building a cross-Maryland canal. Long before three more sets of surveys for this purpose were made in 1837 and 1838, enough people invested in the alternative Baltimore and Ohio Railroad to begin its construction on July 4, 1828.⁴³

During the 1823 cross-Maryland canal surveys, a river-borne disease struck its participants, and all, including Athanasius Fenwick and Isaac Briggs, took sick. Briggs finished the report for the canal surveys, but was an invalid the rest of his life with a “long and painful illness.” He died of what was called “malarial fever” on January 5, 1825, at age sixty-one. Briggs’s obituary highlighted his “arduous service” in internal improvements for Maryland and Virginia, his partnership and friendship with Thomas Moore, and his strong faith.⁴⁴

Athanasius Fenwick died even sooner, of a “short illness,” on September 29, 1824. He must have been in reasonably good health earlier when he gave an Independence Day speech at Great Mills, Maryland, on July 5, 1824. His obituary summed up his accomplishments, noting his role in the 1822 Potomac survey rather than the surveys for the cross-Maryland canal in 1823. “After having acted for many years as Collector of the port of St. Mary’s, Maryland, having ably discharged the duties of commissioner on the great Potomac Canal, he was elected to the last House of Delegates, where he discovered such useful talents, that he was soon translated to the Senate of Maryland by the unanimous voice

of that body.” Athanasius Fenwick died before he could actually serve in Maryland’s senate.⁴⁵

In 1826 and 1827 there were two more surveys for an independent canal next to the Potomac River and its North Branch. Neither made any further consideration for fixing the existing navigational works of the Potomac Company. Army engineer John James Abert conducted the survey with topographical engineers and acted under the Board of Engineers for Internal Improvements. Their report estimated the cost for building a canal along the Potomac and over the mountains to the West at \$22,237,427.69. The significantly higher figures for the larger and longer canal dampened enthusiasm for the project. To regain momentum for the C&O Canal, supporters held another convention on December 6, 1826. President John Quincy Adams then appointed Erie Canal engineers James Geddes and Nathan Roberts to conduct yet another survey. The Geddes and Roberts 1827 survey report estimated the cost of a canal as far as Cumberland to be \$4,500,000—a much more palatable number.⁴⁶

The Maryland and Virginian legislatures passed acts chartering the new C&O Canal, and public subscriptions went on sale in late 1827 and early 1828. In August 1828, still heavily in debt and having lost public and political favor, the Potomac Company surrendered its properties, rights, and operations to the C&O Canal Company. The new company built seven feeder dams across the Potomac that would block and prevent further through-traffic on the river. Only local river commerce connecting to the new independent canal by river and inlet locks would be possible.

Of the three joint commissioners who survived long enough to know of the C&O Canal’s groundbreaking on July 4, 1828, Moses T. Hunter lived less than a year after the ceremony. He had continued in public service, spoke as “the orator of the day” at Martinsburg’s July 4, 1825, celebration and sat as one of twelve directors of the Berkeley County chapter of the American Society for Colonizing Free People of Color. In 1827, Hunter won a seat in the Virginia House of Delegates. Unfortunately, his subsequent move to the “sin city” of Richmond prompted a recurrence of his “habits of dissipation” that impaired his health and caused his death on June 4, 1829, at age thirty-eight. Hunter left his family in debt—and claimants against his estate filed their cases through 1846.

William Naylor became a prosecuting attorney in Hampshire County in 1828. While serving as a Hampshire County delegate to the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829–1830, he argued unsuccessfully the western point of view that representation should be based on “white population exclusively,” rather than favor slaveholders. In 1833, he ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Congress. Hunter died on March 4, 1840, while returning to Romney after visiting his farm on the North Branch of the Potomac.⁴⁷ Naylor’s surveyor son, William Sanford Naylor, became the superintendent of construction of the Northwest Turnpike (now U.S. Route 50) in the 1830s. He practiced law in Clarksburg, Virginia in 1836 and died in 1847.

William T. T. Mason ran Temple Hall until he sold it in 1857. Local history makes note of the Marquis de Lafayette, President John Quincy Adams, and ex-president James Monroe's visit to the farm in August 1825. At that time, Mason's two youngest daughters were baptized, and Lafayette, Adams, and Monroe served as godfathers. After selling Temple Hall, Mason retired to Washington, D.C. where he died in 1862, at age seventy-nine.⁴⁸

As discussed previously, the joint commissioners' report played a key role in persuading politicians, the press, and the public to replace the Potomac Company's in-river navigation system with a continuous independent canal. The instant success of the Erie Canal proved that the technology for the latter could work well. The internal improvements movement was well underway in the 1820s and the federal government willingly funded projects such as C&O Canal and earlier, the National Road. By contrast, when the Potomac Company began constructing its much less expensive works in 1785, the United States government functioned under the Articles of Confederation which proved difficult enough in simply establishing the interstate agreement that Maryland and Virginia needed for the Potomac Company's use of the river and its shores. No one expected federal funding.

Changes in the role and function of government, and transportation technology, certainly made the switch from in-river navigation possible, but what made it suddenly so desirable? Why had there been relatively fewer complaints about low water conditions during the early years of the Potomac Company operations? And why was the joint commissioners' 1822 report so much more negative about low water conditions than Thomas Moore's 1820 report? The answer may be largely meteorological.

It is important to note that the 1822 survey was made towards the end of a prolonged and severe drought, lasting from 1818 through 1823, the longest during the life of the Potomac Company. Delaying the start of the joint commissioners' boat trip to the end of the dry summer season with its consequent low water levels exacerbated the situation and accounted for conditions in the surveyors' report.⁴⁹

The joint commissioners and their survey party struggled and sacrificed during the 1822 expedition and their experiences undoubtedly left them with little regard for the Potomac Company. Their strong recommendations against that enterprise and for the development of an independent canal were key factors in the demise of the Potomac Company and the rise of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company. Those who lived long enough to see mules tow canal boats on the C&O Canal must have been justifiably proud of their contributions.

NOTES

1. The National Road from Cumberland and its feeder turnpikes provided one alternative to river navigation. Two of the three commissioners who surveyed the National Road, Elie Williams and Thomas Moore, would participate in the Potomac River survey of 1822.
2. The Erie Canal section between Rome and Utica was so level that it required no lift locks. The first tolls on this section were collected in 1820. Isaac Briggs (1763–1825) received BA and MA degrees from Pennsylvania College in 1782 and 1783. His surveying experience included laying out Washington D.C. per L'Enfant's plans and as Surveyor General of the Mississippi Territory. Biographical information on Isaac Briggs was obtained from the files of the Sandy Spring (Maryland) Museum; Briggs-Stabler Papers, MS 147, Maryland Historical Society; Ella Kent Barnard, "Isaac Briggs, A.M., F.A.P.S. (1763–1825)," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 7 (1912): 409–19 (hereinafter *MdHM*); and his obituary, [Washington D.C.] *Daily National Intelligencer*, January 10, 1825.
3. Thomas Moore (1760–1822) maintained his residence at Longwood in Brookeville, Maryland, while employed in Richmond as the principal engineer of Virginia. Information on Moore was obtained, in part, from the files of the Sandy Spring Museum, the Briggs-Stabler Papers, the Potomac Company records at the National Archives annex in College Park (Record Group 79, Entries 159–179, hereinafter, Potomac Company records), and the reports of the Virginia Board of Public Works (hereinafter, "Va. BPW").
4. July 13, 1818, letter from Thomas Moore to Isaac Briggs, Sandy Spring Museum. In the joint commissioners' report, Briggs noted that he and Moore had actually completed a part of the James River Canal.
5. Minutes of the August 2, 1819, annual meeting, Potomac Company records, and the Va. BPW 4th annual report, 1819, 40. Cora Bacon-Foster, *Early Chapters in the Development of the Patomac Route to the West* (Washington, D.C.: Columbia Historical Society, 1912), 125.
6. In a June 7, 1820, letter to Potomac Company president John Mason, Moore asked for the skiff but also suggested that if the river were too low from Westernport to Cumberland, he would examine that stretch without a boat. Mason ordered James Moore, the Potomac Company treasurer, to meet Thomas Moore at Westernport and to provide him "proper transportation." This response and the survey report itself seem to imply that Moore's first Potomac survey was done all by boat. However, the report does not actually note "our little skiff" until it was below Seneca Falls, so part of survey might have been done by land (Potomac Company records).
7. The report of Thomas Moore's 1820 Potomac survey was issued in several forms, including 1) two handwritten versions in the Potomac Company records 2) in the Va. BPW 5th annual report, 1820, 46–55; and 3) as Appendix D of the *House of Representatives Report No. 111* (for the 17th Congress, 1st Session), May 3, 1822, pages 19–27. Copies of this report are also in Appendix I of Dan Guzy, *Navigation on the Upper Potomac River and Its Tributaries* (Glen Echo, Md.: The C&O Canal Association, 2008) and Bacon-Foster, *Early Chapters*, Appendix F.
8. Report of annual meeting of president and directors of Potomac Company, August 6, 1821, Bacon-Foster, *Early Chapters*, 131–32; Va. BPW 5th annual report, 1820, 135.
9. *Acts Passed at a General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia*, Richmond, 1821, 95–96.
10. *Maryland Session Laws 1820, General Assembly December 4, 1820–February 19, 1821*, Volume 625: 174–75.
11. [Hagerstown] *Torch Light & Public Advertiser*, April 10, 1821; [Washington] *Daily National Intelligencer*, May 17, 1821; and the [Hagerstown] *Torch Light & Public Advertiser*, May 22, 1821.
12. Williams owned a town house in Hagerstown but subsequently moved to Georgetown.

- Biographical sources on Eli Williams include Mary Vernon Mish, "Springfield Farm of Conococheague," *MdHM*, 47 (1952): 314–35; J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Western Maryland*, Vol II. (1882, reprint Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1968), 1232–33; and Merrit Ierley, *Traveling the National Road* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1990), 22.
13. Karl Raitz, ed., *The National Road* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 127–33; Joseph E. Morse and R. Duff Green, *Thomas B. Searight's The Old Pike—An Illustrative Narrative of the National Road* (Orange, Va.: Green Tree Press, 1971), 144–48; Ierley, *Traveling the National Road*, 37–38.
14. The property became tied up in different courts of equity and by 1810 the farm was owned by Otho's son, Edward Green Williams. *Williamsport and Vicinity Reminiscences* (Williamsport, Md.: Chamber of Commerce, 1933), 22; Robert E. Harrigan, *Paper Mills and a Nation's Capital* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1995), 20–26; for Eli Williams' obituary, see the [Hagerstown] *Torch Light & Public Advertiser* and the *Maryland Herald and Hagerstown Weekly Advertiser*, December 31, 1822.
15. Biographical information on Athanasius Fenwick from email conversations with Linda Reno, and in [Washington D.C.] *Daily National Intelligencer*, March 24 and May 17, 1821, September 7, 1822, November 6, 1823, July 24, October 18, and November 16, 1824, and the *Baltimore American*, October 11, 1824.
16. *Virginia Council Journals*, Miscellaneous Reel 2992, Roll 12, Library of Virginia; [Washington D.C.] *Daily National Intelligencer*, August 17, 1821.
17. Biographical sources on Moses T. Hunter include Vernon F. Aler, *Aler's History of Martinsburg and Berkeley County, West Virginia* (Hagerstown, Md.: The Mail Publishing Company, 1888), 158–64; William F. Evans, *History of Berkeley County, West Virginia* (The Author, 1928), 222; J.E. Norris, editor, *History of the Lower Shenandoah Valley* (1890, reprint Berryville, Va.: The Virginia Book Company, 1972), 193, 272, 580; the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 11 (1904): 217; Thomas Jefferson Michie, "Cases decided in the Supreme Court of Virginia," *Virginia Reports, Annotated* (Richmond: The Michie Company, 1902), 26–77; and email conversations with Don Wood of the Berkeley County Historical Society.
18. The number of children differs. Information on Temple Hall came from the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA) and the Thomas Balch Library. Biographical sources for William T. T. Mason include the Gunston Hall Plantation, Mason Family Genealogy website, and Emily McCrae, "The Wallace Family," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 14 (1905), 181.
19. Colonel George Mason III, father of the famous patriot George Mason IV, drowned on March 5, 1735. Pamela C. Copeland and Richard K. MacMaster, *The Five George Masons: Patriot of Virginia and Maryland* (Lorton Va.: Board of regents of Gunston Hall, 1989), 73.
20. *Acts Passed at a General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia* (Richmond: Thomas Ritchie, 1822), chapter 49, page 41.
21. Biographical sources for William Naylor include Hu Maxwell and H.L. Swisher, *History of Hampshire County, West Virginia* (Morgantown, W. Va.: A. Brown Broughner, 1897), 96, 278, 280, 432, 433, and 494; Cornelia McDonald, *A Diary with Reminiscences of the War and Refugee Life in the Shenandoah Valley, 1860–1865* (Nashville, Tn.: Hunter MacDonald, 1934), 433–36; and email conversations with Wilmer L. Kerns and other Hampshire County genealogists.
22. William Naylor's large farm and mansion house on the North Branch was a half mile upstream of the mouth of Patterson Creek. For a discussion of the debate, see Maxwell and Swisher, *History of Hampshire County*, 432. Naylor's 400-plus acre farm was offered for sale in the *Washington Daily National Intelligencer* issued on December 5 and 8, 1835, and again on February 18, 20, and 23, 1841. This author did not learn when Naylor purchased this land. He may not have owned it in 1822.

23. [Harpers Ferry] *Free Press*, August 28, 1822, reprinted [Washington] *Daily National Intelligencer*, September 5, 1822.
24. *Report of the Committee of the District of Columbia*, House of Representatives Report No.111, 17th Congress, 1st Session, May 3, 1822 (Washington, D.C., Gales & Seaton, 1822).
25. [Washington D.C.] *Daily National Intelligencer*, July 6, 1822.
26. [Washington D.C.] *Daily National Intelligencer*, September 5, 1822. The Maryland Historical Society holds two early nineteenth-century maps showing roads from Baltimore to western Maryland that were prepared by "M.W. Boyd, surveyor."
27. The start of the boat trip from Cumberland is mentioned in letters to the Maryland and Virginian governors that are included in different versions of the joint commissioners' report. An article in the [Hagerstown] *Torchlight & Public Advertiser*, August 1, 1822 (reprinted, [Washington D.C.] *Daily National Intelligencer*, August 9, 1822) noted that the joint commissioners had already begun their downward journey from Cumberland on that day. The notes from the first days of this journey were lost and consequently the joint commissioners' report lacks details about the launching at Cumberland.
28. Va. BPW version of the joint commissioners' report, 81.
29. The day-to-day accounts of the survey end on September 12, 1822, in an appendix to the joint commissioners' report. It is therefore unclear what the commissioners did between that date and September 18, the day they said (in letters to the Maryland and Virginia governors) they halted their survey. U.S. Geological Survey river gauge information places the mouths of Wills Creek and the Monocacy River 153 miles apart. Modern maps show Goose Creek to be approximately ten miles below the Monocacy. By modern measurements of today's river, the distance traveled by the joint commissioners would have been 163 miles, rather than 157. The sickness was described as "bilious fever," a term then used for several diseases, including river-borne malaria and typhoid. An early version of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* described the symptoms of bilious fever, "It begins with intense heat, thirst, anguish and inquietude. There is likewise a vomiting, or perpetual retching to vomit, with frequent bilious stools, a coldness of the extremities, internal heat, and cardiologic anxiety," symptoms not conducive to lengthy surveys and boat trips. Michael Montagne and Dana Parker sent the author the quote about bilious fever symptoms from a facsimile of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1771).
30. Letters to the Maryland or Virginia governors are included in different versions of the joint commissioners' report. For example, letter from E.G. Williams to William Elie Williams, September 24, 1822, Otho Holland Williams Papers, MS 908, Maryland Historical Society.
31. *Richmond Enquirer*, October 29, 1822 (photocopy in files at the Sandy Spring Museum).
32. Annual report, Va. BPW, 1822, page 13, Annual report, Va. BPW, 1823, pages 11–13. Thomas Moore's pencil-written (and hard-to-read) notes now reside at the Library of Virginia in Richmond.
33. Asa Moore had worked with Briggs on the Erie Canal. Some have assumed that Isaac Briggs assisted Thomas Moore in the Potomac survey, a misunderstanding that may stem from an erroneous statement in George Washington Ward, *The Early Development of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Project* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1899), 42. The evidence infers that Briggs was not involved in the survey until after Moore's death. Briggs had to get Moore's notes from the estate, implying he did not have his own notes. Briggs's replacement of Moore on the survey went through a formal approval process with the Va. BPW, which would seem unnecessary had Briggs been involved with the survey from its beginning. Additionally, Briggs's name is not mentioned in the August 28, 1822, article in the [Harpers Ferry] *Free Press* that lists the participants in the Potomac survey.
34. The Maryland and U.S. Senate versions of joint commissioners' report included a Decem-

ber 22, 1822, letter from Athanasius Fenwick to the Maryland governor in which Fenwick suggested that because the states encouraged the Potomac Company's approach, they should share some of the blame for its debts. In this letter, Fenwick expressed his surprise at finding his signature at the end of the main body of the report. This, and the fact that no date appears with the names of the five joint commissioners in that place, suggests that the joint commissioners may not have formally signed the main body of the report.

35. For Elie Williams's obituaries see the *Hagerstown Torch Light and Public Advertiser*, December 31, 1882 and [Washington D.C.] *Daily National Intelligencer*, January 1, 1823.

36. Isaac Briggs, "Report on the Potowmac," 8th annual report, Va. BPW, 1824, pages 11–65. The early plans for the Potomac Canal, later renamed the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, assumed that it would connect to the Potomac Company's Little Falls Canal rather than continue to Georgetown, as it eventually did.

37. The joint commissioners' report noted that a lock and dam system had been used for the narrower Schuylkill River in Pennsylvania. It failed to note that the Potomac Company had attempted and aborted such a system on Antietam Creek, see Dan Guzy, "Bateaux, Mills, and Fish Dams: Opening Navigation on the Monocacy River and the Conococheague and Antietam Creeks," *MdHM*, 93 (2003): 284–86.

38. For the Maryland version of the joint commissioners' report, *Message of the Governor of Maryland: communicating the report of the Commissioners appointed to survey the River Potomac* (Annapolis: J. Hughes, 1822). For the U.S. Senate version, see *Letter from the Governor and Council of Maryland, Transmitting a Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Survey the River Potomac* (Washington, D.C.: Gales & Seaton, 1823). (Parts of this report were reproduced in House of Representatives Report 46 of the 17th Congress, and in the *American State Papers* No. 38, Miscellaneous Report 535, 17th Congress, 2nd Session). For the Pennsylvania reprint of the Maryland version, see *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, Volume XXXIII (Harrisburg: Mowat & Cameron, 1822–1823), 241–88.

39. The Virginia Board of Public Works, *Report of the Joint Commissioners of the Potowmac River, with Sundry Documents* (Richmond: Thomas Ritchie, 1823). A reproduction of this version's daily accounts and a comparison to those in the Maryland and U.S. Senate accounts is in Appendix II of Guzy, *Navigation on the Upper Potomac*.

40. For a discussion of the Grand Union Canal Convention and a list of the delegates, see the [Washington D.C.] *Daily National Intelligencer*, November 6, 1823. This edition also included a separate news item from Hampshire County that noted William Naylor's role in selecting convention delegates.

41. Walter S. Sanderlin, *The Great National Project: A History of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1946). Karen Gray of the C&O Canal Association shared information on Mercer and the actions leading up to the chartering of the C&O Canal.

42. Fenwick's proposal at the canal convention is discussed in William M. Franklin, "The Tidewater End of the C&O Canal," *MdHM*, 81 (1986): 293–94.

43. *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Examine into the Practicability of a Canal from Baltimore to the Potomac, together with the Engineer's Report* (Baltimore: Fielding Lucas, 1823). William Howard and William Price served with Athanasius Fenwick as the three commissioners of the 1823 surveys. For further information on the cross-Maryland canal surveys, see Walter S. Sanderlin, "The Maryland Canal Project," *MdHM*, 39 (1946): 51–65; and Franklin, "The Tidewater End," 293–94. Isaac Briggs, leader of the 1823 survey team, lost the position of Virginia's principal engineer to Claudius Crozet.

44. See note 2.

45. [Washington D.C.] *Daily National Intelligencer*, July 24 and October 18, 1824.

46. Sanderlin, *The Great National Project*, 55–56.

47. For Moses T. Hunter's obituary, [Washington D.C.] *Daily National Intelligencer*, March 9, 1840.

48. The visit by Adams, Monroe, and Lafayette to Temple Hall is discussed in Harrison Williams, *Legends of Loudoun* (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1938), 191–93; Charles Poland Jr., *From Frontier to Suburbia* (Marceline, Mo.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1976), 111, note; and the NVRPA *Regional Park News*, June 16, 1994.

49. See Guzy, *Navigation on the Upper Potomac*, 23 and 100, and endnote 44, page 107, for more information on the drought of 1818 through 1823.

Research Notes and Maryland Miscellany

On the Road to Guilford Courthouse with Colonel Otho Holland Williams

William Stroock

During the southern campaign of the American Revolution, perhaps no line officer became more indispensable to the Continental Army than Colonel Otho Holland Williams who served as Nathanael Greene's second in command throughout the Guilford Courthouse campaign. During his race to the Dan River, Greene entrusted him with the rearguard, and when the general daringly re-crossed the Dan to seek out General Charles Cornwallis, Williams led the way. In addition to scouting missions, the colonel took command of the vital operations that led to the bloody battle of Guilford Courthouse. He lashed out at Cornwallis, bloodying his vanguard (van) on several occasions, none more impressive than the sharp skirmish at Wetzell's Mill. Williams's handling of Continental cavalry, light troops, and militia established him as one of the most able, and levelheaded commanders in the southern army.

Born in 1749 to recent Welsh immigrants, Williams was raised outside of Frederick, Maryland, and as a young man worked as a county clerk in Frederick and later in Baltimore. In 1774, Williams returned to Frederick to dabble in business, but the outbreak of hostilities with Great Britain interrupted his plan. He joined the Patriot cause and took a lieutenant's commission in the Frederick City Rifle Corps.

Williams saw much action during the next five years. He took part in the siege of Boston and the battle for Fort Washington (November 15, 1776), during which he was wounded in the leg and taken prisoner. Exchanged in 1778, Williams, now a colonel, commanded the 6th Maryland regiment on the hot and muggy field at the battle of Monmouth in New Jersey (June 28, 1778). Williams stayed in the north until the spring of 1780 when he marched south with Baron Johan De Kalb, who was bringing reinforcements to General Horatio Gate's Southern Depart-

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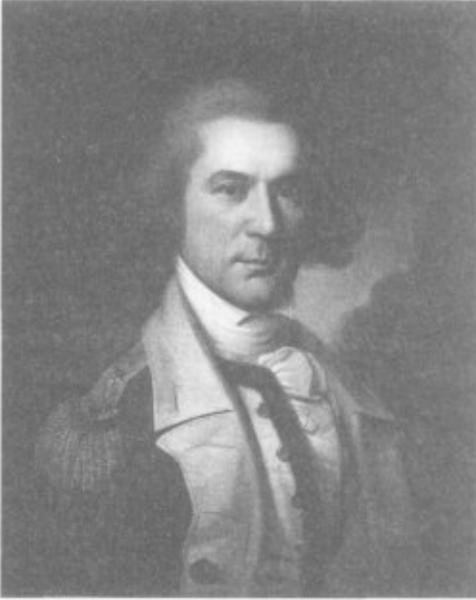
ment. At thirty-one years of age, Williams earned the rank of second in command of the army. He leaves to posterity a damning account of General Gates's blundering and mismanagement of his self-styled "Grand Army," which took a horrific drubbing at the battle of Camden (August 16, 1780). "The distress of the soldiery daily increased," Williams wrote of Gates's generalship.¹ By autumn, the British had control of virtually all of the Carolinas. Gates seemed unsure of how to stop British General Sir Charles Cornwallis, who made preparations to march north. Finally, on October 14, 1780, General Nathaniel Greene, the "Fighting Quaker," had replaced Gates.

Under Greene's command, the tide of the war in the south quickly turned. On January 17, 1781, General Daniel Morgan gave Banastre Tarleton what he called "a devil of whipping." Indeed, most of Tarleton's army had disintegrated before massed Continental musketry, bayonets, and Colonel William Washington's follow up cavalry pursuit.² Knowing that Cornwallis still lurked, Morgan raced to unite with Greene's main army, accomplishing a union on February 8 at Guilford Courthouse. The march to join Greene left General Morgan exhausted, and his medical ailments forced him to ask for leave to return home and recuperate. On February 10, despite Greene's pleadings, he left the army for his Virginia home, recommending that Williams take his place, a high compliment from an accomplished soldier. Greene agreed and formally turned over Morgan's command.³

Williams commanded what Greene would call "the flower of the army" and he warned the Marylander not to "expose the men too much, lest our situation should grow more critical."⁴ Indeed, Williams detachment was composed of 700 men, William Washington's cavalry, 240 Continental light infantry, sixty of Colonel William Campbell's militia fresh from their victory at King's Mountain, and Light Horse Harry Lee's vaunted legion.⁵ As he did not intend to fight right away, Greene tasked Williams with serving as the army's guard. His officers, Williams included, had convinced the "Fighting Quaker" to run seventy miles north, a move that placed the Dan River between the army and Cornwallis, and gave the troops an opportunity to rest, recoup, and draw supplies from secure bases in Virginia.

Cornwallis, twenty-five miles distant at Salem, had no intention of letting Greene escape north. His Lordship commanded an army of 2,500 regulars, well trained and battle hardened, including Banastre Tarleton's infamous Legion, then recovering from their Cowpens drubbing. In order to catch Greene, Cornwallis had to anticipate where Greene would cross. Based on intelligence indicating the lower fords (Dix's Ferry, Boyd's Ferry, Irwin's Ferry) would be too deep, Cornwallis believed Greene would push for the shallower upper fords closer to Salem. Cornwallis had incorrect information. The Continentals had boats between Dix's Ferry and Boyd's Ferry, and Greene intended to march his men to the site.⁶

The area over which the two armies campaigned was bracketed in the north by the Dan River and in the south by Alamance Creek. The Haw River flowed



Otho Holland Williams (1747–1794).
(Maryland Historical Society.)

through the middle of the region and turned south-southeast near High Rock ford. The Country Line Creek ran northeast between the Dan and Haw. Throughout the country were small towns and farms, some Loyalist, others Patriot. Salem lay at the western edge of the area, Hillsborough the east. The Reedy Fork River ran to the south, parallel to the Haw River, and flowed around Wetzell's Mill. Henry Lee described a hard chase:

The duty, severe at day, became more so at night; for numerous patrols and strong pickets were necessarily furnished by the light troops, not only for their own safety, but to prevent the enemy from placing himself, by a circuitous march, between Williams and Greene. Such a maneuver would have been fatal to the American army; and, to render it impossible, half of the troops were alternately appropriated every night to duty: so that each man, during the retreat, was entitled to but six hours' repose in forty-eight. . . . At the hour of three, their toils were renewed; for Williams always pressed forward with the utmost dispatch in the morning, to gain such a distance in front as would secure breakfast to his soldiers, their only meal during this rapid and hazardous retreat. So fatigued was officer and soldier, and so much more operative is weariness than hunger, that each man not placed on duty surrendered himself to repose as soon as the night position was taken.⁷

The race to the Dan started on February 10th. Greene's tired army of 2,300 men marched northeast with Williams and his light troops guarding the rear. On

the morning of February 11, with the army seven miles northeast of Guilford Courthouse, Williams received information that Cornwallis, in pursuit, had moved east from Salem. Concerned that the dreaded Tarleton might be with the British van, he wrote that although he did not know their route he would “search dilige[nt]ly for them.”⁸ The 10th was a cold and rainy morning, Williams’s force was encamped a few miles in front of the Haw River, when scouts told him that Cornwallis was no more than eight miles away. With the British vanguard approaching, Williams detached Lee’s legion with orders to delay Tarleton’s advance while Williams fell back with the rest of the rearguard. A brisk skirmish ensued between Lee and the British van. Unsure whether he was meeting a rear guard or Greene’s main army, and certainly hoping for the later, Cornwallis halted the pursuit and formed up his army for attack. Before Cornwallis had the chance to strike, Lee pulled back, having killed eighteen British and taken a few prisoners.⁹ The time he took to form up for attack cost Cornwallis several hours and Greene used the time to increase the distance between the two armies. Lee later wrote of the rearguard’s dispositions, “Williams retiring in compact order, with the Legion of Lee in his rear, held himself ready to strike, whenever an opportunity presented itself.”¹⁰

Throughout the next few days, Greene marched northeast and Cornwallis trailed closely. Williams maintained strong patrols to ensure the British wouldn’t take him by surprise and he sparred constantly with British scouts, “We have been all this Day almost in presence of the Enemy but have [sustained] no loss but of Sick and Strollers [sic].” By the 13th, Cornwallis’s main body was less than twenty-five miles away from Greene’s position at Harts Old Stores on the Country Line Creek. With British marauders about, Williams, uneasy in the situation, assured General Greene, “I shall use every precaution but cannot help being uneasy.”¹¹

Williams, rightfully nervous, knew that Lee had taken a short cut in trying to catch up with him. Lee tried to move quickly, but he was delayed when his men came upon a farm where he drew supplies. “It takes little imagination to see expectant troops circling the cooking fires, sniffing the aroma of frying bacon,” wrote John Buchanan. Lee, who should have known better, allowed his troops to stop.¹² Unfortunately, Cornwallis’s scouts found the same route and, according to Lee, “To the surprise and grief of all, the pleasant prospect [of breakfast] was instantly marred by the fire of the advanced vedettes (scouts)—certain signal of the enemy’s approach.” A creek ran before the farm, with a bridge across it the only way to get to the far side. Lee sprung into action and sent his infantry to secure the bridge while the cavalry galloped off to support his pickets. “The pause was sufficient. The bridge was gained, and soon passed by the corps.” Lee did not spare himself, “Criminal improvidence!” he said of the close call, “A soldier is always in danger, when his conviction of security leads him to dispense with the most vigilant precautions.”¹³

Despite Williams’s fear and Lee’s admitted carelessness, on the morning of the 14th, Greene reached Irwin’s Ferry on the Dan. By 2 P.M., Greene wrote Williams

that, "The greater part of our wagons are over, and the troops are crossing."¹⁴ At 5:30, Greene dashed off another note to Williams saying the troops had crossed and he would follow immediately.¹⁵ Williams brought his troops across at around 7:00 PM and a grateful Greene greeted them at the crossing. Lee's legion was the last across the Dan. John Buchanan wrote of the march across the Dan, "Greene had drawn Cornwallis 240 miles from his nearest base of communications and supply, Camden, South Carolina, and there were no supplies moving in his direction and precious few communications."¹⁶ Even Tarleton praised Greene's handling of the army, "Every measure of the Americans, during their march from the Catawba to Virginia, was judiciously designed and vigorously executed."¹⁷ While the main army drew supplies from bases in Virginia, Greene ordered Williams to guard the nearby fords. On the 18th, Williams wrote Greene that he believed "the army's situation is not the least bit insecure."¹⁸

As the American's situation improved, Cornwallis's worsened and he noted that his army had grown "Tired and ill-equipped, they were also hungry, for their speed of movement had for days at a time precluded foraging the countryside." As such, Cornwallis moved south to Hillsborough to rest and rally Loyalist militia.¹⁹

Greene had never intended to permanently abandon North Carolina. With Cornwallis's army camped at Hillsborough, Greene rested and recouped until the 22nd, when he crossed back into the state, intent on pestering his Lordship. Lee's legion preceded the main army that operated with Andrew Pickens' militia. On the afternoon of February 25, Lee encountered and gruesomely routed a force of four hundred-Tory militia under John Pyle's command. Lee's dragoons wore green jackets similar to Tarletons. Pyle had assumed therefore that Lee was friendly and the American allowed this impression to continue until his men were almost upon the Tories. He then unleashed his men on the unsuspecting Loyalists. "The conflict was quickly decided and bloody on one side only," wrote Lee.²⁰ The incident went down in history as "Pyle's Massacre," one that many Americans considered apt revenge for Tarleton's infamous massacre of Patriot militia the year before at Waxhaws. "The quality of Lee's mercy here was far worse than Tarleton's at the Waxhaws," the Green Dragoon dryly remarked.²¹

Lee kept his command moving lest Tarleton catch him unawares. Tarleton, his legion amounting to 180 cavalry and light infantry supported by 150 men from Colonel James Webster's brigade was looking for them, "Patrols were sent out to learn the course the American dragoons had taken after this event," Tarleton wrote.²² Tarleton, however, stood in grave danger. Lee and Pickens briefly considered an attack, but "The troops were fatigued by their long march, increased by preparation for two combats and the reencounter with Pyle. This consideration, combined with the close approach of night, determined them to postpone battle until the morning." By morning 300 Virginia militia reinforced Lee and Pickens. Their ranks swelling, they went after Tarleton, putting in motion a series of com-

Bannister Tarleton, by Werner Willis
(author photograph.)



plex maneuvers in which they tried to set a trap. Cornwallis suspected the danger and ordered Tarleton to pull back across the Haw River. Disappointed that their prey had escaped, Lee and Pickens backed off, “the capricious goddess gave us Pyle and saved Tarleton,” wrote Lee. Though Tarleton escaped, the legion’s operations before the Haw had great consequences. Lee’s massacre of Pyle’s Tories greatly hampered Cornwallis’s ability to draw supplies and gather information, severely damaged British credibility with local Loyalists, and most importantly, induced Cornwallis to march out from his base at Hillsborough. Even before the massacre, Tarleton referred to local Tory “indifference or terror.”²³ What must they have thought afterward?

Meanwhile, Greene inched closer to Cornwallis. Williams’s light troops scouted ahead, looking for the enemy, vetting the locals, and evaluating the availability of supplies, of which few remained. Williams wrote to Greene late on the 22nd, “this country is divested of everything but corn.”²⁴ Greene, however, pressed on, and three days later Williams received intelligence that Cornwallis had left Hillsborough and was marching on the road to Cross Creek west towards the Haw River. Williams scouted south to investigate, “Lt. Colonel [John Eager] Howard got within four miles of Hillsborough yesterday before he received information of the enemies not being gone.”²⁵ Williams quickly turned his force about and camped sixteen miles to the northwest at Mitchell’s Mill.

On the 26th, Lee informed Williams that his scouts saw Cornwallis leave Hillsborough in two columns. The main column pressed Greene, the other one set out in pursuit of Lee and Pickens, but could not catch them. Then, on the 27th, Cornwallis managed to break contact with Williams and slip across the Haw River and Williams



Change of Command, by Werner Willis (author photograph.)

sent Lee ahead to find him. At this point, Williams wondered if Cornwallis was playing “hide and seek” in order to bring about an engagement. Worried, Williams kept his infantry east of the Haw so he could quickly reunite with Greene.²⁶ Not wanting to remain passive, Greene ordered Williams to seek out an engagement if practical. “The Legion and Colonel Williams with the Light Infantry, had been previously detached to observe their motions, and embrace the first opportunity of giving them an advantageous blow,” wrote Greene to Baron von Steuben.²⁷

By March 1, Williams reestablished contact with Cornwallis, having learned that the British were three miles south of his position on the Alamance Creek. Williams sent Washington’s cavalry to his right, fanned out Picken’s militia to the north, and wrote to Greene of his intentions to fight:

I propose to attack the Enemy by break of day in the morning. Our only hope is a partial advantage. I do not think Lord Cornwallis knows our situation, or if he does, I’m not sure he does not know our numbers and may dispise us [sic]; Therefore I flatter myself that if we make a brisk, unexpected attack and are aided by Providence our advantage may be considerable and of great consequence to future operations.²⁸

On March 2, Williams began a series of skirmishes ending with the affair at Wetzell’s Mill. Lee advanced cautiously, about one mile outside his camp near Alamance when his light cavalry was fired upon. He pulled back behind his infantry, holding defensive positions. Each side exchanged fire until Williams ordered

Lee to withdraw.²⁹ Tarleton maintained contact but did not continue the fight, "The pursuit was restrained on account of the various roads by which the enemy's cavalry could escape, and in consequence of the report of pioneers, who acknowledged that General Greene was moving with the American army to the southward of the Reedy Fork." Tarleton was reinforced with a company of light guards, eighty Hessian jagers and some infantry.³⁰ Undaunted, on the night of the March 3, Williams sent a party to harass Tarleton's camp. This group exchanged fire with the pickets, killing several and taking a few prisoners. Williams's forays took their toll on the enemy. Tarleton's men became so skittish that on the 4th they actually intercepted and massacred a party of Tory militia marching to join them. Realizing the enemy's fear, Williams wrote Greene, "Whenever an Opportunity offers I will embrace it if I can be justified by the circumstances, or the opinion of the opinion of the principal Officers [sic] serving with me."³¹

Williams's pin-prick operations culminated on March 6 with the skirmish at Wetzell's Mill. With his camp on the south side of the Reedy Fork River, Williams dispatched a small party to annihilate a group of British foragers. But the British had learned that Greene's army was near Guilford Courthouse, and Cornwallis moved forward "to disturb the enemy's communications, and derange their projections."³² In the early morning fog, the raiding party spotted Tarleton's legion moving out and galloping fast around Williams's flank, with Cornwallis' main body following behind.³³ They rode back into camp with the new information. "We were instantly in motion," wrote Williams. He gathered his command and dispatched the bulk of it for the ford at Wetzell's Mill and sent skirmishers to slow Tarleton's advance. Colonel William Preston led the troops that harried Tarleton's flank with 'scattering fire.'

With Tarleton thus delayed, Preston fell back with Colonel Campbell and William Washington's dragoons covering his rear as they slashed away at the advancing British. Williams deployed his men on the far bank of the Reedy Fork and made ready to receive his pursuers. Before the enemy could form up and attack, Campbell and Washington fell back across the Reedy Fork. This time, Lee's Legion held the rear. The British tried to pin him down, but, "all his endeavors were successfully counteracted by the celerity and precision with which the Legion horse maneuvered." With his forces reunited, Williams continued to fall back, leaving Lee and Campbell on the Reedy Fork to further delay the British.

Lee arrayed his command along the river and astride the road, light infantry on the left, Campbell's militia on the right, his cavalry set back in reserve—and waited. "The British van appeared; and after a halt for a few minutes on the opposite bank, descended the hill approaching the water, where, receiving a heavy fire of musketry and rifles, it fell back," Lee wrote. A particularly brave officer rallied the British who then charged head long into the river, leaving his men no choice but to follow the example. When the British got to the far bank, Lee ordered his

men to pull back and Tarleton crossed with his legion and got his cavalry around the left flank. Lee refused his left turning 45 degrees to face the new threat. He made ready to receive Tarleton's charge but none was forth coming. Lee withdrew and rode hard to rejoin Williams and the British did not pursue.

Williams said his casualties were "inconsiderable" and Tarleton estimated his losses at approximately one hundred.³⁴ Tarleton was highly critical of Cornwallis' decision to let Williams escape:

An immediate movement of the King's troops across the High-rock ford might, at this period, have produced various and decisive events. Such a maneuver might have intercepted the American forces and reinforcements, then approaching from Hillsborough and Virginia, might have intercepted the retreat of the American army, or forced the continentals [sic] to hazard an action without the assistance of their eighteen months men and militia.³⁵

Regardless of having escaped the enemy at Wetzell's Mill, large numbers of militia men became disillusioned. The South Carolina and Georgia irregulars grew particularly resentful after being used to screen retreating Continentals. Not even Colonel Pickens could stop the men from marching out, and they did so, in great numbers.³⁶

The British remained at Wetzell's Mill for a day while Greene continued west along the Haw River. As he did so, reinforcements arrived, 1,000 Virginia militia and over 500 Virginia Continentals sent by von Steuben. Greene's army now numbered 4,200 men to Cornwallis's 2,200. Greene wrote his wife, "If there was a time to give battle, it was quickly approaching. We marched Yesterday to look for Cornwallis. . . . We are now strong enough, I hope, to cope with him to advantage."³⁷ Greene prepared for battle and on March 9 he dissolved the light infantry and incorporated Williams's force into the Continental line.³⁸ Williams gained command of the some the best infantry in the Continental Army, the Maryland Brigade, composed of the 1st Maryland Regiment commanded by Colonel John Gunby, and the 5th Maryland Regiment under Lt. Colonel Benjamin Ford (with some raw companies attached). Williams mustered 632 men at Guilford Courthouse.³⁹

Lee became Greene's "eyes and ears" and stayed close to Cornwallis. On March 11, he skirmished with the British and took twenty prisoners. Three days later, Greene was just south of Guilford Courthouse with Cornwallis marching north to engage. The armies clashed the following morning, March 15, 1781.

The battle of Guilford Courthouse was a bloody catastrophe for the British that left them in possession of the battlefield and little else. Cornwallis lost ninety-three dead and more than 400 wounded and the Continentals counted seventy-nine dead and 184 wounded.⁴⁰ Cornwallis claimed an utter victory. His best units had been battered by Greene's Continentals, his army lay at the end of a long supply line through hostile country, and his men were exhausted from months of

marches, countermarches, and ultimately fruitless fighting. In the aftermath of Guilford Courthouse, Cornwallis marched north to rest and recoup at Wilmington. Worst of all, Greene's army still had fight in it, and by the 18th had set about the task of liberating South Carolina from the British.

Throughout the operations leading up to Guilford Courthouse, Otho Holland Williams showed himself to be a brilliant commander. He was rarely surprised and managed to extricate his command in difficult situations. He maintained constant pressure on the British, so much so that they were shooting at their own men. Whether in the van or rear, Williams never led Greene astray, and provided him with accurate intelligence.

During the race to the Dan, Williams kept his men between Greene and Cornwallis, never allowing the latter to turn his flank. Although cautious and occasionally fearful, he showed his own men and those in the British army that they could still fight. Once Greene marched back into North Carolina, Williams so stymied Tarleton that the Green Dragoon (who notoriously left his defeats out of his memoirs) barely wrote of Williams's actions. In fact, although Tarleton does refer to Lee, he does not mention Williams at all. Additionally, one of Tarleton's chief biographers, Robert D. Bass, simply glanced over the period between Cornwallis leaving Hillsborough and the battle of Guilford Courthouse.⁴¹

The heavy skirmish at Wetzell's mill was a great, if small victory for Williams. Taken unawares by the advancing British, Williams retreated in good order, using covering parties to screen his withdrawal. After his command retreated across the Reedy Fork, Williams smartly dispatched his ablest man, Lee, to hold the rear. Lee did just that, inflicting casualties and delaying the British. After they gained the Reedy Fork, Cornwallis declined to pursue. In a situation where so much could have gone wrong, Williams fell back in good order, bloodying the enemy in the process. As mentioned above, Tarleton, highly critical of Cornwallis's decision to stop at the Reedy fork, believed that he could catch Greene, or at least Williams. One wonders why. Tarleton knew nothing but frustration at Williams's hands and luck alone saved him from destruction in his encounters with Lee and Pickens.

During the Guilford Courthouse campaign, Williams showed himself to be a fine officer who ably commanded famous soldiers such as Henry Lee and William Washington. He scouted and skirmished, took the van and held the rear, bested Cornwallis and Tarleton with minimized casualties while maximizing those of his enemy. All with whom he worked, his commanders and subordinates, trusted his judgment and his actions. Otho Holland Williams did achieve greatness as an officer of the revolution.

Williams retired from the army a brigadier general on January 16, 1783. The army held him in great esteem and offered him the post of second in command, but he turned it down due to his poor health. He settled in Baltimore after the war where served as collector of the port, a state and then a federal appointment that he held until his death in 1794.

NOTES

1. This account of the battle of Camden and the quotes from Williams are taken from John Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1997), 154.
2. For a remarkable modern interpretation of the battle of Cowpens see Lawrence E. Babits, *"A Devil of Whipping": the Battle of Cowpens* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998).
3. Burke Davis, *The Cowpens-Guilford Courthouse Campaign* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 103.
4. Letter from Greene to Williams, February 13, 1781, in *The Papers of Nathaniel Greene Vol. VII*, Richard K. Showman, et al., ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).
5. On October 7, 1780, a party of about 1,500 Patriot militia called the "Over the Mountain" men, defeated a Loyalist contingent of approximately 1,000 under the command of Major Patrick Ferguson. See profile of William Campbell in Mark Boatner, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1994), 172.
6. John Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1997), 354.
7. Henry Lee, *The Revolutionary War Memoirs of General Henry Lee*, Robert E. Lee, ed. (New York: Da Capo, 1998), 239.
8. Letter from Williams to Greene, February 11, 1781, *Papers of Nathaniel Greene*.
9. Account of this skirmish reconstructed from accounts in Lee, *Memoirs*, 242; Davis, *The Cowpens-Guilford Courthouse Campaign*, 108; and letter from Williams to Greene, February 13, 1781, *Papers of Nathaniel Greene*.
10. Lee, *Memoirs*, 243.
11. Letter from Williams to Greene, February 13, 1781, *Papers of Nathaniel Greene*.
12. Buchanan, *Guilford Courthouse*, 357.
13. Lee, *Memoirs*, 244.
14. Letter from Greene to Williams, February 14, 1781, *Papers of Nathaniel Greene*.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Buchanan, *Guilford Courthouse*, 359.
17. Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America* (London: T. Caddell, 1787), 229.
18. Letter from Williams to Greene, February 18, 1781, *Papers of Nathaniel Greene*.
19. Franklin and Mary B. Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), 284.
20. Lee, *Memoirs*, 258.
21. Robert D. Bass, *The Green Dragoon: The Lives of Banastre Tarleton and Mary Robinson* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1957), 168.
22. Tarleton, *Campaigns*, 232.
23. Lee, *Memoirs*, 259.
24. Tarleton, *Campaigns*, 231.
25. Letter from Williams to Greene, February 22, 1781, *Papers of Nathaniel Greene*.
26. *Ibid* letter from Greene to von Steuban, February 29, 1781.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid*, letter from Williams to Greene, March 2, 1781. Tarleton gives us a very different account of this action, not only the outcome, but the actual events. Curiously, Lee doesn't

mention the skirmish in his memoirs, but the editor does direct the reader to Tarleton's record of events. I am inclined to follow Williams's recounting in his letter to Greene, if for no other reason than Williams is a more accurate and honest recorder of events than Tarleton, who was well known to color details (or leave them out) to his advantage.

29. Lee left the field with ten or twelve wounded men, Tarleton, *Campaigns*, 236.

30. *Ibid*, 237.

31. Letter from Williams to Greene, March 4, 1781, *Papers of Nathaniel Greene*.

32. Tarleton, *Campaigns*, 237.

33. Combined with Colonel James Webster's brigade, Tarleton's force numbered approximately 1,000 men.

34. This account of the skirmish at Wetzell's Mill was pieced together from a letter that Williams wrote to Greene, March 7, 1781, *Papers of Nathaniel Greene*, Lee, *Memoirs*, 265–66, Tarleton, *Campaigns*, 237–38, and Davis, *The Cowpens-Guilford Courthouse Campaign*, 135–38.

35. Tarleton, *Campaigns*, 238. A version of this account will appear in *Strategy & Tactics Magazine*.

36. See Davis, *The Cowpens-Guilford Courthouse Campaign*, 139.

37. David Lee Russell, *The American Revolution in the Southern Colonies* (London: McFarland & Company, 2000).

38. Letter from Greene, March 9, 1781, *Papers of Nathaniel Greene*.

39. Reiman Steuart, *A History of the Maryland Line in the Revolutionary War, 1775–1783* (Towson, Maryland: Metropolitan Press, 1969).

40. Davis, *The Cowpens-Guilford Courthouse Campaign*, 171.

41. See Bass, *The Green Dragoon*, 169, he devotes but one sentence to these actions.

Every Picture Tells a Story: A Narrative Portrait of Yarrow Mamout

James H. Johnston

In January 1819, artist Charles Willson Peale traveled to Georgetown to paint Yarrow Mamout's portrait. Peale wrote in his diary, "I heard of a Negro who is living in Georgetown said to be 140 years of age. . . . He is comfortable in his Situation having Bank stock and lives in his own house. . . . I propose to make a portrait of him should I have the opportunity."¹ Peale spent two days and left with an extraordinary early portrait of an African American that depicts Yarrow as a well-to-do burgher. Three years later, Georgetown painter James Alexander Simpson did a less masterful portrait, showing an older, poorer man. That two artists decided to paint a seemingly obscure, ex-slave was obviously unusual. Who was Yarrow Mamout? And which, if either, portrayal is accurate? The paintings cannot reveal the answer, but Peale's diary offers clues for a narrative picture of Yarrow Mamout, a man who went from slave to capitalist, and of those who enslaved him and those who aided him.

In 1752, Yarrow (an English spelling of his African surname), a Muslim from Guinea and literate in Arabic, arrived in America, with his sister, as a slave on the snow *Elijah*. Two prominent Marylanders, Benjamin Tasker Jr. and Christopher Lowndes, sponsored the slaving voyage. After forty-five years in slavery Yarrow had gained his freedom, acquired stock in a bank, lent money, took back a deed of trust as security for the loan, and had his own a house in Georgetown. His story captivated Charles Willson Peale, who may not have realized that Tasker and Lowndes had profited from Yarrow's enslavement. Years earlier Tasker's father had helped finance Peale's art schooling in England and Peale painted portraits of Lowndes's widow and his grandchildren. Yarrow acquired fame as well. Stories about him became local legends, passed along in oral histories for at least thirty-six years after his death. He had a son, Aquilla, who married a woman named Mary "Polly" Turner. They lived in Pleasant Valley, Washington County, Maryland, where Polly worked as a midwife. Although Polly Yarrow died in 1885, her story is still recounted in oral history, and the place she lived is known as Yarrowsburg. There is also a Yarrow Drive in Rockville, Maryland, suggesting that both Yarrows led extraordinary lives.

The author, a practicing attorney in Washington D.C., has published several articles on Yarrow Mamout.



Yarrow Mamout, 1819. Oil on canvas, Charles Willson Peale (Courtesy Atwater-Kent Museum.)

Africa to Maryland

The only surviving information of Yarrow's life in Africa is that he was Muslim and, according to one reliable account came from Guinea. Peale's hearsay statement that Yarrow was 140 years old in 1819 is of course untrue. The artist raised the question as he worked on his portrait. Yarrow said that he was 134 years old, that he determined his age from counting twelve moons to the year, and that he came to America at the age of thirty-five. If in fact accurate, Yarrow would have been born in 1685 and come to Maryland in 1720. The assertion is implausible and inconsistent with the documentary record.²

Two sources suggest that Yarrow was born around 1736 and hence eighty-three years old in 1819, just five years older than Peale. First, the estate inventory of his owner, Brooke Beall, prepared in 1796, lists the slave Yarrow as sixty years old and thus places his birth circa 1736. The other source is David Baillie Warden's book on the new capital of the United States, published in Paris in 1816. In the section on "Negroes in the city," Warden wrote about Yarrow and said he was in his early eighties, a detail that supports a 1736 date of birth. Peale wrote additional entries on Yarrow's slavery and freedom including the fact that after he finished the portrait, he met with a "Mr. Bell" at a bank who directed him to the "ancient widow" of Yarrow's owner, the woman whom Peale identified as the "Widow Bell." The widow told Peale that she freed Yarrow to keep her husband's promise to grant Yarrow his freedom if he made the bricks for the family's new house in Georgetown.

Her husband had died before work started, and she carried out his instructions. The extrinsic evidence supports this account. Brooke Beall died on July 11, 1795, and two years later, in 1797, his son Upton Beall manumitted Yarrow. He appears as free man in the 1800 Georgetown census. Beall filed the same paperwork in the District of Columbia in 1807. Widow Bell (Margaret Beall) told Peale that Yarrow became her husband's property "at the decease" of his father, who had purchased him off of a slave ship.³

Committees determined the ages of the enslaved people for the purpose of setting a price. Yarrow, deemed fourteen years old, or perhaps slightly older, would have been born circa 1736 and would have arrived in the North American colonies in 1750. Brooke Beall's father, Samuel Beall Jr., owned one of the sixty lots in the newly created town of Bladensburg, Maryland. Merchant and slave trader Christopher Lowndes held title to another. Bladensburg sits on the east bank of the Anacostia River. In the early decades of the nineteenth century seagoing ships could navigate the waterway the entire distance to the town. Slave ships, however, docked at Annapolis, twenty-four miles to the east. On May 24, 1750, the *Maryland Gazette* reported that a cargo of slaves consigned to Benjamin Tasker Jr. and his son-in-law Christopher Lowndes would arrive any day at the Severn River in Annapolis. The *Beckey*, under the command of Captain Richard Baker had picked up cargo in Angola. Although Yarrow could have been on this ship, it is unlikely. He probably arrived two years later, in May 1752, aboard the *Elijah*. Tasker and Lowndes had also commissioned this voyage. The ship sailed under Captain James Lowe, and the crew picked up cargo on the Gold Coast, an area that included Guinea. On May 28, 1752, the *Gazette* announced that Tasker and Lowndes planned to sell, "A Parcel of healthy SLAVES, consisting of Men, Women, and Children" from the *Elijah* on the Severn on June 6.⁴

Yarrow later told Peale that "Capt. Dow" brought him. Given that Yarrow probably did not speak English in 1752 and that he later spoke in a heavy dialect, he may have confused "Lowe" as "Dow." There is also the possibility that Peale misheard him. The artist spelled the name both as "Yarrow" and as "Yallow" in his diary, perhaps a subconscious reflection of the different ways he heard the African's dialect. Moreover, by the time he met Yarrow, Peale had already begun to lose his hearing. It is unlikely that Yarrow arrived any later than 1752. Widow Bell said her father-in-law had purchased Yarrow directly from a slave ship, and Samuel Beall became sheriff of Frederick County, Maryland, in 1753, a move that took him inland. Peale, too, had connections to Tasker and Lowndes. Benjamin Tasker's father helped underwrite his 1767 trip to England to study art. In 1789 the artist painted Christopher Lowndes's widow, Elizabeth, and their grandchildren.⁵

In Western Maryland

Records of Yarrow's specific whereabouts from the time of his apparent arrival on

the *Elijah* in 1752 to his manumission forty-five years later are predictably scant. He may have stayed close to Samuel and Brooke Beall Jr. Although the Bealls owned several properties, following their lives offers a general contour of Yarrow's world.⁶

In 1753, when Samuel Beall accepted the sheriff's position and moved to Frederick, he probably took Yarrow with him. Ten years later he entered into a partnership with David Ross, Richard Henderson, and Joseph Capline (the Ross Company) and purchased Frederick Forge from John Semple. Later known as the Antietam Iron Works, the property lay at the mouth of Antietam Creek and the Potomac River in Washington County, Maryland. The Ross Company owners planned to build an iron forge, grist mill, sawmill, and dam on the site.⁷

Semple, like Beall, Henderson, and Ross, came from Bladensburg. He controlled the iron works in Occoquan, Virginia, located a few miles downriver on the Potomac from George Washington's Mount Vernon plantation. He also owned the Keep Tryst Furnace, located across the Potomac from Antietam Iron Works in Virginia, just north of what is now Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. Semple purchased both the Keep Tryst and Frederick Forge sites from Israel Friend, an early settler of Washington County and then sold the latter property to the Ross Company.⁸

Dr. David Ross of Bladensburg, physician, advertised the arrival of ships carrying convicts for sale and notices of runaway servants in the *Maryland Gazette*. His partner, Richard Henderson, served as the American representative for the Scottish firm of John Glassford and Company. Landowner Joseph Capline held large tracts on both sides of the Potomac River north of the present Harpers Ferry. Samuel Beall did not reside at the forge in 1763 as the partners had agreed to hire a manger to run the facility.⁹

Although there is no proof that Yarrow lived and worked at Frederick Forge, slaves often labored through the arduous business of making iron. Tax assessment records for 1783 (after Samuel Beall's death) show thirty-five adult male and female slaves at the forge. In his will, Beall made note of one slave who worked at the forge and another, "slave boy Jarro," whom he bequeathed to his son Isaac at Kelly's Purchase. Although this could have been Yarrow, he would have been about thirty-eight years old at the time and Beall described another male slave as "negro man."

The area around Frederick Forge held everything needed for the making of iron, including a bank of iron ore, deposits of limestone, and stands of hardwood trees for charcoal on the adjacent Elk Ridge and surrounding hills. Antietam Creek, dammed to supply water power, carried boats heavily loaded with iron down the Potomac River through portages to Georgetown. What is known of Yarrow's later life suggests that he had many skills, among them working on a ship, swimming, brick making, and basket weaving. He also learned how to nego-

tiate loans, how to protect investments by taking back deeds of trust, and the benefits of incorporation. Such a man would have proved quite valuable to Samuel Beall and his partners in constructing an iron forge, employing slaves, and trying to build a successful business. The fact that Yarrow's son, who is discussed later, settled in Washington County on Elk Ridge not far from the iron works indicates that Yarrow himself may once have lived in the area. Samuel Beall's will did not mention Yarrow by name but did specify that most of his slaves would belong to his widow. Although no slaves are listed by name in the inventory, the court valued one male slave at 200 sterling, twice the value of the other two adult males listed. This may have been Yarrow.¹⁰

In Montgomery County

Nothing in Samuel Beall's probate records confirms Widow Beall's statement to Peale, that his son Brooke inherited Yarrow. Brooke may have purchased him from the estate or later from another heir. As early as 1766, Brooke Beall started buying property in Montgomery County near the mouth of Watts Branch and the Potomac River and land along Watts Branch is listed in the inventory of his estate. Thus, if Brooke acquired Yarrow at Samuel Beall's death, the African may have lived for a time at the Watts Branch property. Beall's move to Georgetown dates to 1783 when he opened a trading business and lived near what is now Wisconsin Avenue and the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal. He kept the Watts Branch property, however, and may have spent time at both places. Whether Yarrow moved with Brooke is unknown, but in 1796 his name appeared in the inventory of the Georgetown property. Yarrow also had connections to what is now the city of Rockville in Montgomery County, fifteen miles northwest of Georgetown and five miles northeast of the Beall property at Watts Branch where his sister, his son, and his son's mother or sister apparently lived. Indeed, given that his young son was there for a time, Yarrow himself may have lived on Beall property around Rockville. If not, he certainly visited.¹¹

In 1850, a District of Columbia judge ruled that Nancy Hillman, a free black woman living in Frederick was the sole surviving heir of Yarrow's sister. The sister may have been the slave named Yarrow that is listed in the 1790 will of a Montgomery County man named Joseph Wilson. This could not have been Mamout as Brooke Beall owned him at that time. According to Wilson's will, Yarrow and other named slaves were living on property known as the Two Brothers tract of Valentine Gardens, Discontent, and Advantage. Today, there is a block-long street called Yarrow Drive in Kings Farm, a 1996 development in Rockville, Maryland, located within the Two Brothers tract mentioned in Wilson's will.¹²

Yarrow's son, Aquilla Yarrow, lived in Rockville, enslaved to Ann Chambers and manumitted March 16, 1796, at the age of seven or eight for twenty pounds, under the following provision. The "above named Boy shall not be taken out of

his family till he is able to get his living by any person unless by his Father Yarrow nor even him provided he don't obtain his freedom." Chambers did not want Yarrow to have custody of his son until he had gained his own freedom.

Another of Aquilla's relatives, perhaps his mother or a sister, may have been the slave named Jane who also belonged to Ann Chambers. In her will she stipulated that her slaves should be freed, her property sold, and the money equally distributed to the slaves. She apparently had no heirs or at least none that she cared to endow. At her estate sale, April 12, 1808, Aquilla Yarrow bought three old pots for ten cents and Jane Chambers purchased a loom for \$3.05. Young Aquilla's attendance at the estate sale suggests that he may have accompanied someone he knew, such as Jane Chambers, a woman who could have been his mother or sister.¹³

In Georgetown

Georgetown, part of Montgomery County when Brooke Beall took up residency in 1783, became part of the District of Columbia in 1790. That same year, the first decennial census reports enumerated Beall with twenty-six slaves scattered over three properties. Beall's business ledgers contain two entries that involve Yarrow. The merchant received payment for "2 days work on board the [ship] *Maryland* by Negro Yarrow," an ocean-going sailing vessel that belonged to fellow Georgetowner John Mason. Additionally, Robert Peter and Richard Johns purchased three yards of oznaburg for Yarrow, probably for clothing.¹⁴

By the time Charles Willson Peale met him in 1819, Yarrow already owned stock in the Columbia Bank of Georgetown. In fact, the artist wrote that Yarrow "was amongst the first who contributed to that Bank about 26 years past" and that he "sent to this Bank to ascertain this fact. The Clerks could not then refer to the Books but sent me the above date [26 years]." This dates Yarrow's stock ownership to around 1793. If Peale's information is correct, Yarrow acquired the bank stock as an enslaved man.

By 1800, however, Yarrow appeared as a free man when census takers once again collected population figures in Georgetown and found a second male in the household, presumably son Aquilla. On February 8, 1800, Francis Deakins gave Yarrow ownership of a house and lot on what is now Dent Street.

In 1803, for unknown reasons, Yarrow and Francis Deakins transferred this property to Aquilla. Yarrow apparently remained in the house as Peale thought he owned it. The older man signed the deed, and his signature, as copied by the Recorder of Deeds, suggests he was literate in Arabic. The original deed has disappeared, but the recorder's ledger with the hand written copy survives. The handwriting is perfectly legible, with the exception of Yarrow's signature. Rather than an "X," the customary mark of illiterates, there are foreign-looking symbols. Kevin Smullin Brown, a scholar of Arabic and Islam at University College London, suggested that the recorder of deeds tried to copy an Arabic signature. Sulayman

Nyang, a professor of African Studies at Howard University, determined that the signature is “distorted Arabic” and the recorder had attempted to copy the signature. Nyang concluded that Yarrow was probably literate in Arabic and of Fulani heritage.¹⁵

The next recorded mention of Yarrow Mamout is in David Warden’s 1816 book based on his time in Georgetown five years earlier. Warden learned of Yarrow through John Mason who had hired the enslaved man from Beall for work on the *Maryland*. According to Mason, Yarrow “toiled late and early and in the course of a few years he had amassed a hundred dollars.” He hoped to retire and gave the money to a merchant, but lost the entire sum when the merchant died insolvent. His advancing age and failing strength worried him, yet he went back to work during the day for fixed wages and at night, he made “nets, baskets, and other articles for sale.” After a few years, Yarrow had again saved \$100 that he entrusted to second merchant in Georgetown who went bankrupt. Once again Yarrow lost his savings. Undeterred, he went back to work a third time and acquired an even larger fortune, \$200. This time, wrote Warden:

By the advice of a friend, who explained to him the nature of a bank, he purchased shares to this amount in that of Columbia [Bank of Georgetown], in his own name, the interest of which now affords him a comfortable support. Though more than eighty years old, he walks erect, is active, cheerful, and good-natured. His history is known to several respectable families, who treat him with attention. . . . When young, he was the best swimmer ever seen on the Potomac; and though his muscles are now somewhat stiffened by age, he still finds pleasure in his exercise.¹⁶

Warden then repeated the story in what he claimed was Yarrow’s dialect, “Olda massa been tink he got all de work out of a Yaro bone. He tell a Yaro, go free Yaro; you been work nuff for me, go work for you now.”¹⁷

This tale became legend. Peale heard it and repeated it in his diary. Yet how much is legend and how much is true? Was Yarrow’s “olda massa” Brooke Beall? Yarrow said his old master told him to go work for himself, but then his master died, consistent with Margaret Beall’s recollection that Brooke promised to free Yarrow once he had finished work on the house, a promise interrupted by his death. Or perhaps “old massa” was Samuel Beall. If so, the second “young massa” could have been one of Samuel’s other sons (Samuel’s son Brooke handled money well). Or, all of this could have happened to Yarrow after he was freed in 1797 and before 1800 when he acquired his house. Yet this interpretation does not align with Peale’s determination that Yarrow acquired the bank stock in 1793 or 1794. If the artist is indeed correct, then Yarrow’s misfortunes occurred prior to 1794 and prior to manumission. There is also a different, less entrepreneurial version of the

legend that does not involve the Bealls, found in Grace Dunlop Ecker's 1933 history of Georgetown. This author added details not found in other writings, perhaps based on oral histories now lost to time:

On 6th Street [Dent], between Market (33rd) and Frederick (34th) Streets, was the house which Francis Deakins sold on February 8, 1800 to Old Yarrow as he was called, one of the most mysterious and interesting characters of the early days. It is not know whether he was an East Indian or a Guinea negro, but he was a Mohemmadan [sic]. He conducted a trade in hacking with a small cart, and his ambition in life was to own a hundred dollars. Twice he saved it and each time ill fortune overtook him. The first time he gave it to an old groceryman he knew, to keep for him. The old man died suddenly and Yarrow had nothing to prove that he had had his money. So the next time he picked a young man to keep it for him. Then he absconded. Some of the gentlemen of the town became so interested that they took up a collection and started an account for him in the Bank of Columbia. He must have been quite a figure in his day, for his portrait was painted by James Alexander Simpson, and is now owned by Mr. E. M. Talcott, who inherited it from Normanstone.¹⁸

The Paintings and the Eccentric

Peale's diary suggests that Yarrow's reported age of 140 first attracted him to his subject. After meeting him, Peale lowered that figure slightly to 134, yet the man in his painting appears half this age. Peale biographer Charles Coleman Sellers offered one explanation for the flattering portrait:

When he [Peale] was cool toward the sitter, or uninterested, the portrait is often unrevealing, stiff, and even awkward. But when his heart was warm toward his subject he recorded not only the features but his own friendly feeling with both sympathy and charm.¹⁹

Sellers also pointed out that longevity interested Peale. He believed that a man who took care of himself physically and spiritually could live to be 200 years old. Perhaps Peale was also influenced by the fact that his son Raphaele had painted another prominent African American, the Reverend Absalom Jones, in 1810.²⁰ The elder Peale spent two days on Yarrow's portrait. After the first day he wrote in his diary, "I spend [spent] the whole day & not only painted a good likeness of him, but also the drapery & background." After the second day, Peale continued:

Yarrow owns a House & lotts and is known by most of the Inhabitants of Georgetown & particularly by the Boys who are often teasing him which he



*Yarrow Mamout, 1822. Oil on canvas,
James Alexander Simpson (Courtesy
Georgetown University Library.)*

takes in good humor. It appears to me that the good temper of the [m]an has contributed considerably to longevity. Yarrow has been noted for sobriety & a chearfull conduct, he professes to be a mahometan, and is often seen & heard in the Streets singing Praises to God—and conversing with him he said man is no good unless his religion comes from the heart. . . . The acquaintance of him often banter him about eating Bacon and drinking Whiskey—but Yarrow says it is no good to eat Hog—& drink whiskey is very bad. I retouched his Portrait the morning after his first setting to mark what rinkles & lines to characterise better his Portrait.²¹

Peale took the painting back to Philadelphia and may have put it on display in his museum. In 1852, well after Peale's death, his grandson Edmund mistakenly labeled the portrait "Billy Lee," a servant of George Washington and for the following ninety-five years the painting was known as "Billy Lee." In 1947 historian Charles Coleman Sellers relied on information from Peale's diary to conclude that the artist had painted Yarrow.²²

In 1822 a local Georgetown artist, James Alexander Simpson, painted a second portrait of Yarrow. Although not as artistic, the work seems more accurate as Yarrow looks his age, eighty-six. He may have worn the same clothing as for the Peale portrait, without the leather greatcoat draped over his shoulders and a slightly different color stocking cap. The Simpson portrait may have been com-

missioned. Ecker wrote that the painting hung at Normanstone (the Barnard family estate east of Georgetown) and later belonged to E. M. Talcott whose family placed it on loan to the Georgetown Library.²³ Yarrow Mamout died on January 19, 1823. An obituary appeared in the *Gettysburg Compiler* on February 23, 1823:

Died, at Georgetown, on the 19th ultimo, negro Yarrow, aged (according to his account) 136 years. He was interred in the corner of his garden, the spot where he usually resorted to pray, Yarrow has resided in town upwards of 60 years, it is known to all that knew him, that he was industrious, honest, and moral, in the early part of his life he met with several losses by loaning money, which he never got [back], but he persevered in industry and economy, and accumulated some Bank stock and a house and lot, on which he lived comfortably in his old age. Yarrow was never known to eat of swine, nor drink ardent spirits.”²⁴

The language of the obituary, similar to what Peale wrote in his diary, suggests that the artist may have authored the tribute and may therefore explain why the obituary appeared in a Pennsylvania newspaper.²⁵

Legacy

As previously stated, Yarrow transferred the title of house and lot to his son Aquilla in 1803, yet the reasons for deeding the property to a sixteen-year-old are unclear. Well after Yarrow's death, the property was sold for unpaid taxes in 1837. Yarrow apparently owned at least one additional property, identified in Nancy Hillman's suit to collect on an unpaid loan that her uncle had made in 1821 to a merchant for a “two story brick dwelling and store house with extensive back buildings, situated on the west side of High Street [now Wisconsin Avenue in Georgetown].”

Hillman claimed that she, as Yarrow's niece and his only surviving heir, was entitled to enforce a deed of trust that John Marbury held on Yarrow's behalf as security for the loan. In 1850 the court awarded the eighty-one year old descendant \$451 in unpaid principal and interest. She died the following year and left a will in which she bequeathed her entire estate to Frederick lawyers William and Worthington Ross, two lawyers in Frederick.²⁶

In 1859, twenty-six years after Yarrow's death, the Reverend Thomas Bloomer Balch delivered two lectures on the history of Georgetown. In the first lecture he mentioned Yarrow and described him as “grotesque”:

Reminiscences of various kinds are now crowding upon me which evinces the strength of the social affections. They consist of parties of innocent amusement; of water excursions; of boat races which came off on the Potomac. . .

Or we might indulge in recollections of such grotesque characters as old Yarra, who was a Mohammedan [sic] from Guinea, and of whom an admirable likeness was taken by Simpson, or of Lorenzo Dow, the great itinerant, whose weary limbs found their final repose in one of our graveyards.²⁷

In context, Balch seemed to be using the word “grotesque” more as a reference to Yarrow’s flamboyant street utterances and other eccentricities, than to any ugliness. Thus the minister recalled Yarrow in the same sentence as Lorenzo Dow, a traveling revival preacher of the time. Peale too saw this less dignified side of Yarrow:

[H]e seems delighted to sport with those in company, pretending that he would steal some thing – The Butchers in the Market can always find a bit of meat to give to yarrow – sometimes he will pretend to steal a piece of meat and put it into the Basket of some Gentleman, and then say me not tell if you give me half.²⁸

Aquilla and Mary “Polly” Turner Yarrow

Hillman’s lawsuit indicated that Yarrow’s son Aquilla had died in Harpers Ferry in 1832, leaving her the only surviving heir. The 1830 census report lists Aquilla Yarrow as free man living in rural Washington County, Maryland, just across the Potomac River to the east of Harper’s Ferry, information that supports her statement. An 1832 sheriff’s itemization of free persons of color in the county listed Aquilla Yarrow, and county probate records indicate that he died the same year. He did not leave a will, and although the court appraised the estate at \$170, Aquilla’s debts exceeded this amount.

There is no mention of heirs in the formal record, but an accumulation of evidence suggests that Aquilla had a wife named Mary “Polly” Turner Yarrow. In the 1832 sheriff’s listing, which is not in alphabetical order, the name Mary Turner appears immediately before Aquilla’s. The estate inventory lists fabrics, quilts, and similar items that a woman might own, and the name “Polly” is scribbled in the margin, as though these goods belonged to (or were intended for) her. Mary Turner purchased some of these items at the estate sale. The 1840 census for Washington County lists a forty-five-year-old black woman named Mary Yarrow, and by the 1860 enumeration one Polly Yaner lived in the same location.²⁹

Today, at the intersection of Yarrowsburg, Reed, and Kaetzel roads in the part of Washington County known as Pleasant Valley is a cluster of houses called Yarrowsburg. The town sits on the slope of forested Elks Ridge which stretches from Harpers Ferry to Antietam Creek, site of the Antietam Iron Works. The

community boasts a small Mennonite church but no commercial buildings. William Mullenix, who lives in Yarrowsburg, gave this oral history. His grandfather told him the area got its name from a woman named Polly Yarrow. According to Mullenix, she “lived here a long time ago, she was black. . . . My grandfather said the place was named after her because she was the midwife for the area. Delivered all the babies, black and white. She was old, but I don’t know when she died.”³⁰

An 1877 map of the area shows the location of “Mrs. Yarrow’s house.”³¹ Mullenix said it stood across the road from where he now lives, and he remembered being told that the tiny two-room house had burned to the ground. Polly Yarrow’s obituary is in the Hagerstown *Herald and Torch Light*, November 26, 1885. “An old colored woman, named Polly Yarrow, whose exact age is not known, but was over 100 years, died on last Saturday, at a little village, called Yarrowsburg, near Crampton’s Gap, in Pleasant Valley, in this county.” Mullenix thought that Polly Yarrow had been buried in a field down the road from where he lived. He recalled that as boy he had seen a rock that marked the grave but he cannot find it today.³²

Conclusion

Regardless of the evidence in two portraits and in the accounts of three men who knew him, Yarrow Mamout remains as enigmatic as the smile on his face in Peale’s portrait. He and his sister were brought to America as slaves yet left legacies that bear their names. The name Yarrow still appears on a road in Rockville, on a community in Pleasant Valley, and on portraits in Philadelphia and Georgetown. Yarrow kept his Muslim religion in a Christian early America and earned respect for adhering to his beliefs. He kept his Arabic language and yet could also speak English with poetry in phrases such as “old for true.” He learned the value of a deed of trust to protect a loan, allowing his niece to collect on it twenty-seven years after his death. After twice losing money entrusted to mortal and flighty individuals, Yarrow mastered the concept of a corporation, saying “all de massa can’t die, cant go away.” Yarrow Mamout, considered eccentric by some, survived forty-five years of slavery before gaining his freedom through force of will and hard work. James Alexander Simpson painted Yarrow as he might have looked if photographed, and Charles Willson Peale painted the inner man. Every picture does indeed tell a story.

NOTES

Diane Broadhurst, a researcher in Montgomery County, Maryland, provided invaluable advice and research assistance on Yarrow Mamout. In addition, researching Yarrow independently, she was the first to discover Yarrow Mamout had a son named Aquilla and found the slave named Yarrow in the will of Joseph Wilson, all as detailed in this article.

1. Charles Willson Peale, Lillian B. Miller, Sidney Hart, David C. Ward, and Rose S. Emerich, ed., *The Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family*, Volume 3 (Yale University Press, New Haven, Ct., 1991), 617. The Peale portrait hangs in the Atwater-Kent museum in Philadelphia. The Simpson painting is in the Washington, D.C. Public Library, Georgetown Branch.
2. Ibid. Peale also wrote: "Yarrow has been noted for sobriety & and a chearfull conduct, he professes to be a mahometan, and is often seen & heard in the Streets singing Praises to God." Peale, *Selected Papers* 652; The earliest reference to Yarrow's homeland indicates that "before the American revolutionary war, [he] was brought from Africa," David Baillie Warden, *A Chorographical and Statistical Description of the District of Columbia* (Paris, 1816), 48. However, in a lecture delivered in 1859 the Reverend Thomas Bloomer Balch said that Yarrow came from Guinea, Thomas Bloomer Balch, *Reminiscences of Georgetown, D.C.: A lecture delivered in the Methodist Protestant Church, Georgetown, D.C., 20 January 1859* (Washington, D.C., 1859), 15. Balch surely knew Yarrow. His father was pastor of the Presbyterian church there, and, after graduating from Princeton, Balch assisted his father at the church, and the church was just blocks from Yarrow's house, Thomas Willing Balch, *Balch Genealogica*, (Philadelphia: Allen, Lane, and Scott, 1907), 365; Peale, *Selected Papers*, 651.
3. Peale was born in 1741. Peale, *Selected Papers*, Volume 1 (1983) XLV, Eleanor Mildred Vaughn Cook, *The Brooke Beall Family and the Johns Family* (Unpublished, July 1986) xviii, Montgomery County Historical Society Library, Rockville, Md.; Warden, *Chorographical Description*, 49; Peale, *Selected Papers*, 651. Peale spelled both names phonetically. Thomas Brooke Beall was the president of Farmers and Mechanics Bank in Georgetown; Widow Bell was Brooke Beall's wife Margaret Johns Beall. The name Beall is often pronounced "Bell"; Thomas Bloomer Balch, *Reminiscences of Georgetown D.C., Second Lecture Delivered in the Methodist Protestant Church Georgetown D.C., 9 March 1859* (Washington, D.C., 1859), 7; Cook, *Brooke Beall Family*, 107.
4. Cook, *Brooke Beall Family*, 27; Diane D. Broadhurst, "An Examination of Slaves and Slavery in the Beall Family Household" (Unpublished report for the Montgomery County Historical Society, 2001), 16. Broadhurst references Montgomery County Deeds, G:285 for Yarrow's manumission there in 1797 and District of Columbia Deeds, R17:201 for his manumission there in 1807; Peale, *Selected Papers* 651; Cook, *Brooke Beall Family* 107; *Town of Bladensburg Minute Book 1742-1789*, Prince George's County Historical Society, transcribed from Maryland State Archives (transcriber and date of transcription unknown) 7-8; Ibid. In 1748, Lowndes built a house called Bostwick. The house still stands and is currently owned by the City of Bladensburg, which describes Lowndes as "His trading company imported spices, building materials, dry goods, and slaves. He also owned a shipyard where ocean-going vessels were constructed as well as a ropewalk that manufactured the cordage necessary for shipping lines." <http://www.bladensburg.com> (March 6, 2008); George Alfred Townsend, *Washington, Outside and Inside* (Cincinnati: James Betts & Co., 1874) 700; *Maryland Gazette*, May 16, 1750. In 1753, Benjamin Tasker was appointed interim governor of Maryland. Hester Dorsey Richardson, *Side-lights on Maryland History: With Sketches of Early Maryland Families*. (Bal-

timore: Williams and Wilkins Company, 1903) 17–18; David Eltis and Ugo G. Nwokeji, *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge University Press 1999); *Maryland Gazette* (May 28, 1752), 5.

5. Warden, *Chorographical Description* 50–51. Two years earlier, in October 1816, he wrote of using a chemical treatment for deafness that left him with a “disagreeable singing in my head.” By June 1820, a year and a half after meeting Yarrow, Peale investigated “accoustic instruments” and wrote of a “spiral Ear Trumpet,” Peale, *Selected Papers*, 652. Spellings were confirmed using the microfilms of the original documents at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington D.C.; *Ibid.*, 457, 829, 839; Cook, *Brooke Beall Family*, 70; Peale, *Selected Papers*, I:57, 567–70. These were the children of Benjamin Stoddert, a friend and business associate of George Washington and Secretary of the Navy under John Adams. Elizabeth Lowndes died the same day that Peale finished the miniatures of her. He went to Georgetown the next day to begin work on “The Stoddert Children.”

6. Cook, *Brooke Beall Family*, 66. The author uncovered sixty land patents and deeds for the elder Beall.

7. Michael Thompson, *The Iron Industry in Western Maryland* (Baltimore, Md.: M.D. Thompson, 1976) 19–22; Cook, *Brooke Beall Family*, 71–72.

8. Thompson, *Iron Industry*, 19–23; also see Alan L. Karras, *Sojourners in the Sun* (Ithica, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992) 93–99 for the familial and business relationships.

9. For example, the *Maryland Gazette*, July 26, 1749, carried a notice about the arrival of a ship of convicts “consigned to Dr. Ross.” Ross offered a reward of five pistols in the May 23, 1750, *Maryland Gazette* for the return of an escaped servant, and the offer continued to appear through August 29, 1750. The July 14, 1762, *Maryland Gazette* carried notice of the arrival of the *Neptune* with a cargo of seven-year servants imported by David Ross. Thompson, *Iron Industry in Western Maryland* 22, 23; Cook, *Brooke Beall Family* 69, 70. Samuel did buy Kelly’s Purchase, a tract that abutted the iron works, and there is where he died in September 1777. Will of Samuel Beall executed October 15, 1774, filed January 10, 1778. Register of Wills, Washington County, Maryland, Book TS 1: 19. Beall’s will states that he lived at Kelly’s Purchase. This property is shown as adjacent to the iron works on the map, *Early Settlers of Washington County Maryland*, <http://midatlantic.rootsweb.com/MD/washington/plats/map.html> (March 6, 2008), which is described as “a compilation of information contained on two hand drawn maps prepared by Dr. Arthur G. Tracey of Hampstead, Maryland, who died in 1960, and who’s [sic] work on Frederick County appears in ‘Pioneers of Old Monocacy’ published in 1987 by Grace L. Tracey, his daughter and John P. Dern.”

10. Thompson, *Iron Industry* 32–33; The natural advantages of the Antietam Iron Works are manifest even today, but also see Cook, *Brooke Beall Family*, 76. An analysis John Semple prepared of the cost of transporting pig iron to Georgetown in 1769 indicates he was floating his furnace’s output down the Potomac, Thompson, *Iron Industry*, 28–29; Samuel Beall’s will.

11. Of course, Peale did not say the Widow Bell’s husband “inherited” Yarrow. Peale said that upon the “decease” of his father, Mr. Bell acquired Yarrow, Peale, *Selected Papers* 651. To this day, an island in the river at Watt’s Branch is known as Beall Island, and two roads there carry the names Beall Springs Road and Beall Mountain Road, Cook, *Brooke Beall Family*, 2; various Bealls owned property in Rockville in this time period. The best known is the Beall-Dawson house that Brooke’s son Upton built and is the home of the Montgomery County Historical Society.

12. Judge Morsell, State of the Proceeding and Opinion, *Eliza M. Mozier v. John Marbury & William Redin*, Chancery Court of the District of Columbia (circa December 1849), National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C., RG 21, Entry 115, Old Series Administration Cases Files, 1801-78, #2472. As heir, Nancy Hillman could collect an unpaid debt that dated to 1821. Will of Joseph Wilson, November 5, 1790, Montgomery County Register of Wills

B: 433; Berkley County, West Virginia, Will Book, Volume 2, 1788–1796, 335; Map of Rockville Gaithersburg & Vicinity, Maryland National Park & Planning Commission (1987); overlay, F. Howard, Early Montgomery County Land Patents & survey #12 (1997), Montgomery County Historical Society Library.

13. Montgomery County Land Records, G-147, 17 (1796). Assuming Aquilla was eight years old in 1796, then he was conceived about 1787, when Yarrow was approximately fifty-one. If he were born in 1679, as Peale initially heard, then Yarrow would have been fertile into his 108th year. Will of Ann Chambers, Montgomery County Register of Wills F 184; the slaves named in her will were Levi, Walter, Jeremiah, Jane, Marget, Ruth, Elijah, and Elisa. Account of Sale of Property of the estates of Sarah and Ann Chambers, Montgomery County Register of Wills F 287.

14. The 1800 census for Georgetown counted 8,144 residents, of which 2,072 were slaves and 400 more were “free persons of color or Indians not taxed,” Cook, *Brooke Beall Family*, 89; Oznaburg was a fabric used both for sailcloth and for slaves’ clothing, *Ibid.*, 26; *Maryland 1793–1803* folder, Papers of John Mason, Gunston Hall Library & Archives, Gunston Hall, Mason Neck, Va.; Cook, *Brooke Beall Family*, 100.

15. The bank’s charter was granted on December 25, 1793, but subscriptions from stockholders were not taken until early 1794, John Joseph Wilson, “Early Banks in the District of Columbia 1792–1818, A Dissertation,” *The Catholic University of America, Studies in Economics*, Volume 2 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1940) 64–64; Peale, *Selected Papers*, 652. This author likewise attempted to confirm the fact that Yarrow held stock in the Columbia Bank of Georgetown by examining available records in the possession of its modern successor, the Riggs Bank. No evidence of Yarrow’s owning stock or having an account was found, but the records were incomplete. ; the Widow Bell told Peale that Yarrow wasn’t freed until after her husband died, and Brooke Brooke Beall died in 1795. Likewise, the recitation in Ann Chambers’s manumission of Yarrow’s son, Aquilla, that Yarrow had to obtain his own freedom, demonstrates that Yarrow was considered a slave as late as 1797. Indeed, his manumission papers were filed later that year. District of Columbia, Recorder of Deeds Liber E page 80 old page 67 new. The original ledger books are now at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington D.C. (hereinafter NARA, D.C.) The Recorder of Deeds has newer ledgers in which the old deeds are typed. Lot #217, Beatty’s & Hawkins Addition to Georgetown as shown in Real Estate Atlas, Baist’s Survey of Washington D.C. (date missing), Recorder of Deeds, Washington, D.C; Volume 10 of Liber K, Recorder of Deeds, District of Columbia (1803) 7, NARA, D.C.); email conversation with Kevin Smullen Brown, January 2006; Sulayman Nyang phone interview, January 2006.

16. Warden, *Chorographical Description* 49–50.

17. *Ibid.*, 50–51.

18. Grace Dunlop Ecker, *A Portrait of Old Georgetown*, (Richmond: Garrett and Mossie, 1933) 170–71.

19. Charles Coleman Sellers, “Charles Willson Peale and Yarrow Mamout,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 61 (1947), 99.

20. *Ibid.*, 99–100; Peale, *Selected Papers* Vol. 3, 37.

21. Peale, *Selected Papers*, 652.

22. Sellers, “Charles Willson Peale and Yarrow Mamout,” 99–101.

23. The only known writing on Simpson’s life is Kenneth C. Haley, “A Nineteenth Century Portraitist and More: James Alexander Simpson,” *Georgetown Day* (May 1977). Haley, assistant professor of fine arts at Georgetown University, noted “Facts about Simpson’s life are drawn from the letters of Francis A. Barnum,” the university’s first archivist. The greatcoat in the painting looks too expensive for an eighty-three-year-old ex-slave living on interest from

\$200 in bank stock. Peale did the painting in January and usually traveled around Washington by horse-drawn cab. Peale *Selected Papers* 650–51. Peale may have draped his own leather greatcoat over Yarrow's shoulders for artistic reasons. The British Embassy is today on Massachusetts Avenue in Washington D.C. Writing in 1933, Eker indicated the painting was first at Normanstone and then the Talcotts, Eker, *Portrait of Old Georgetown*, 178; the library's acquisition record reads: "Yarrah or Yarrow. Oil Portrait painted by Simpson. Loan from Mrs. Hugh (Talcott) Barclay. See Taggart, *Old Georgetown*, 102; Balch, "Reminiscences of," 15, 18. Michelle Krowl, processor, Robert Barnard Family Papers 1658-1917, Historical Society of Washington D.C., Special Collections, Finding Aid, MS 541 (April 1997). The Barnard papers suggest E. M. Talcott was related to the family and hence might have acquired the portrait by gift or inheritance; copy furnished author by Peabody Room librarian Jerry McCoy (December 2005).

24. *Gettysburg Compiler*, February 23, 1823.

25. Two townhouses now occupy the lot that Yarrow owned. Nancy Kasner, archaeologist for the District of Columbia examined the site and concluded there was not a non-invasive way to determine if Yarrow's body was still there. James H. Johnston, "The Man in the Knit Cap," *Washington Post Magazine* (February 6, 2006).

26. Tax assessment on heirs of Yarro, Record Group 351, Records of the Government of Washington, D.C. entry 184, Assessment Books 1835–1839, 101, NARA, D.C.; Eliza M. Mozier v. John Marbury & William Redin, Chancery Court of the District of Columbia (circa 1849), Record Group 21, Entry 115, Old Series Administration Cases Files, 1801–1878 #2472; Frederick County Register of Wills, 1851, Will Docket T. S. 1-152, Accounting Docket G.H. 1-22, NARA, D.C. Hillman's estate included a \$300 trust fund, which probably held the proceeds from the court award, essentially Yarrow Mamout's money; Yarrow's original owner, Samuel Beall, had been in partnership with David Ross of Bladensburg, but a distant relationship between David Ross and William and Worthington Ross of Frederick could not be established. Joseph Wilson's will gave the slave named Yarrow, presumably Hillman's mother, to Wilson's daughter Ann Worthington. A distant relationship between Ann Worthington and Worthington Ross of Frederick did exist.

27. Balch, *First Lecture*, 15.

28. Peale, *Selected Papers*, 652.

29. Jerry M. Hynson, *Free African Americans of Maryland 1832* (Westminster, Md.: Family Line Publications, 1998), 23. Montgomery County Historical Society library; Washington County Probate Court records, 1832, Personal Property Appraisal, I: 310, 554; Debts, A: 61, Sale of Personal Property, L: 159; Accounts, 9: 441 and 10: 4, Maryland State Archives; Polly is a common diminutive of Mary.

30. William Mullenix, Pleasant Valley, Washington County, interview (October 2005).

31. *An Illustrated Atlas of Washington County Maryland* (Philadelphia: Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson, 1877), Sandy Hook.

32. [Hagerstown] *Herald and Torch Light*, November 26, 1885; Mullenix interview.

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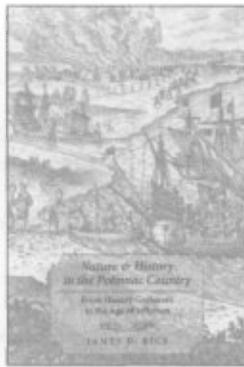
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