

the anglo-american past

The personalities of prehistory will remain forever nameless and without faces. Dynamic and charismatic personae have peopled the stage of history: individuals such as the Paiute prophet Wovoka, who brought the Ghost Dance to the Plains Indians, George Washington, Susan B. Anthony, Phillis Wheatley, Stonewall Jackson, and many others of the American past. But in our not knowing them on personal, individual terms lies a great asset, for the true story of a people depends less on such knowledge than on a broader and more general familiarity with what life was like for all people.

However, there is often a tendency among historical archaeologists to excavate a site merely because some important person resided there. Such archaeology attracts the lay public's attention, and the news media give it good coverage. After all, history classes focus on the most powerful leader, the most significant event, or the key date. Rob-

ert E. Lee's command of the Army of Northern Virginia, and the fact that he suffered a disastrous defeat at Gettysburg, are generally known facts to most people; far fewer realize that the armies that faced each other in the July heat of southern Pennsylvania represented two strongly contrasting cultures. The South was the cultural heir of the Anglo-American tradition brought to America in the seventeenth century, culturally homogeneous and primarily agrarian in the ancient English tradition, while the North was culturally heterogeneous, a polyglot society that owed its form to the impact of the Industrial Revolution and the massive immigration from European nations it generated. These differences lay at the root of the economic and social differences that precipitated America's most bitter conflict.

To the historical archaeologist, such broad cultural contrasts and basic human motivations are of greater interest and significance than detailed specifics concerning discrete events or historical personages. It was an interest in such a personage that led James Hall to Duxbury, Massachusetts, in 1856. A civil engineer by profession, Hall was a descendant of Miles Standish, the military leader of the *Mayflower* Pilgrims who was immortalized by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in the long narrative poem *The Courtship of Miles Standish*. The site of Standish's house was known and visible as a depression in the ground marking the location of an old, filled-in cellar. Standish had moved across the bay from Plymouth to Duxbury in 1629, as had John Alden, his supposed rival for the affections of Priscilla Mullins. This move was a part of the dispersal of the origi-

nal fortified community of New Plimoth to the scattered farmsteads that would become typical of Plymouth Colony during the late seventeenth century. Hall conducted a dig of his illustrious ancestor's house, and his excavations were meticulous. As such, they stand as the earliest example of historic archaeology known, and possibly the first controlled excavation ever carried out.

The notes, map, and artifacts from this project came to light in 1963, when Hall's descendants discovered them among the effects of one of their number in Mexico. They were sent to the museum of the Pilgrim Society, in Plymouth, Massachusetts, where today they are a part of the collections. The map of the site is a credit to Hall's engineering expertise. He carefully created scale plans of the foundations he exposed. Extensive notes on the map refer to the stratigraphy of the site, and many of the artifacts are mapped in place. It is standard modern practice to relate excavations to a *datum point*, a fixed locus, on or near the site, that will not disappear through the years. The purpose of this practice is to insure that later excavators, should they desire to restudy the site, can easily locate the original diggings. Hall used not one but two datum points: springs in the near vicinity which are still flowing over a century later.

Most of the artifacts that Hall recovered have become lost over the years, but those that survive carry neat labels relating them to the map. The Miles Standish site thus stands as an important historical landmark not because it was Standish's house but because it marks an early episode

in the development of archaeology, both historical and pre-historic.

The excavation of the Standish house site is probably unique in historical archaeology. But it is only one of a large number of sites dug for the simple reason that they were the homes of important persons. Mount Vernon and Monticello have been the scenes of excavations, as have been the homes of John Alden, Henry David Thoreau, and Benjamin Franklin. In some cases, the work has been done in conjunction with over-all restoration and interpretive programs on the historic site in question. But, even in such a situation, the reason for the selection of the site, whether for restoration or for archaeology for its own sake, is primarily that a person of note resided there. Not only does such archaeology make questions of general cultural significance secondary, but since most famous people were of the more elite sector of society, if we were to depend only on such data for our interpretation of the American past, the picture would be decidedly skewed in the direction of greater affluence and status.

The individual may be a source of problems in historic archaeology in yet another and very different way. Humans have a marvelous and endearing capacity to indulge in whimsey, often realizing our ideas by the creation of incredible edifices. The Watts Towers in downtown Los Angeles are only one example of such creations. What has this to do with archaeology? Perhaps little, but one can but wonder if certain "mysterious" ruins on the American landscape might be attributed to similar motivations. Tuc-

son, Arizona, is the site of "The Valley of the Moon," an amazing complex of underground tunnels, rooms, and reflecting pools, with miniature buildings here and there containing dioramas from fairy tales. Abandoned today, it was the work of one man, created for the entertainment of the people of Tucson in the 1930s. The facts in this case are well known. However, in New Salem, New Hampshire, there is a complex of stone ruins known as "Mystery Hill," which has been the center of considerable controversy for years. These stone rooms, tunnels, and walls have been variously interpreted as root cellars; the excavation residue from the mining of raw materials for a seventeenth-century ironworks in Saugus, Massachusetts; a megalithic structure built by Irish monks or even by the carriers of the megalithic culture of Neolithic Europe in the third millennium B.C. Yet, one piece of historical information provides the necessary clue to the true meaning of Mystery Hill. In the 1920s, a wealthy individual set about to "restore" certain stone structures on the site. He was convinced that an order of Irish monks had come to New England in the ninth century, and saw the site as evidence of their presence. We know that he had at his disposal a team of oxen and a crew of laborers and more than sufficient capital to carry out the restoration. Yet no one knows how much "new" construction was involved in this project.

The similarities between Mystery Hill and The Valley of the Moon seem more than coincidental; since the facts of the creation of the latter are better known, one naturally wonders about the former. If any lesson is to be learned

from these examples, it is that due allowance must be made for the totally idiosyncratic and occasionally eccentric behavior of certain people, now and in the past.

This brief discussion of "individual archaeology" should serve as a *caveat* that some thought must be given to the questions the historical archaeologist should seek to answer in his work. All archaeologists who are at work today agree that some intelligent research design should underlie their studies, and that it should be spelled out in some detail before the first shovelful of sod is removed from a site.

The total number of historical archaeological sites in eastern North America alone must be astronomical. In contrast to prehistoric sites, which are the result of a population thinly dispersed across the American landscape and which form a very valuable and scarce resource, historical sites, since they represent the period of maximum population in America, increase in number and complexity over time at a spectacular rate. Every house is a part of a site that surrounds it, as is every public building, barn, or factory. With such a superabundance of material with which to work, the historical archaeologist must give explicit and careful thought to the reasons for digging this site now, that one later, and yet another in the distant future.

Of course, if the archaeologists' research design is too narrowly or rigidly constructed, there is no guarantee that its requirements will be satisfied by any given site's yield of data. The trick is to test, through archaeology, certain assumptions that are sufficiently general on the one hand to

hold promise of refutation or support from adequate information, but are on the other hand specific enough to assure a more detailed knowledge of the past as a result. Indeed, it is far more important that archaeologists be sensitive to questions of general cultural significance that they can apply to the data if they seem appropriate than to be locked into a single restricted approach. There are too many interested parties involved in historical archaeology and its related disciplines, representing different but valid viewpoints, to permit one's research strategy to derive from only one. In the case of salvage archaeology, involving the excavation of sites threatened by destruction from one or another agency, it is often impossible to construct a research design that is wholly appropriate without forcing the fit between data and design. Yet, in doing such archaeology, more often than not new and useful information, which can be placed in the context of broad and current social-scientific thought, is forthcoming, even though it was not explicitly being sought before the fact of excavation. A good example of such salvage work is provided by the excavation of a late-seventeenth-century tavern on Cape Cod.

Great Island forms the western side of Wellfleet Bay, on the outer Cape. No longer an island, but connected to the mainland by a narrow sand bar, it is a part of the Cape Cod National Seashore. For years, local tradition had it that one Samuel Smith had operated a tavern on the island in the late-seventeenth century. An archaeological site atop a high bluff was thought by many to be the remains of Smith's tavern. Other traditions held that the site had been

a Dutch trading post established in the early 1600s. The site had been dug into by unauthorized parties over the years, and the National Park Service decided to have it properly studied before any further damage was done to it.

What came to light was the well-preserved foundation of a large building with a floor plan typical of New England "salt box" construction. Fifty feet long and thirty feet wide, it had a central chimney and two large, flanking rooms and a lean-to at the rear. The artifacts the excavations produced numbered in the tens of thousands: pottery, window glass, parts of wine bottles and glasses, clay pipe-stems and bowls, nails, hinges, buckles, buttons, spoons, and forks—a rich and representative selection of domestic materials. They amply demonstrated that the site was English and dated from circa 1690 to about 1740, supporting the tradition of Smith's tavern and laying to rest the site's identification with Dutch traders earlier in the seventeenth century.

The resolution of one question raised another. Since Great Island was separated from the mainland during the time the tavern was in use, its location seemed somewhat remote for patrons, who would have had to come by boat from Wellfleet and other neighboring communities. What special function might the tavern have served that would explain its location? Its identification as a tavern, rather than as a simple dwelling house, was supported by its large size and very great numbers of fragments of clay pipes and utensils for eating and drinking. Each of the main rooms had a cellar beneath its floor. One was filled with clean

sand, but on its floor was found a chopping block made from the cervical vertebra of a large whale. The other cellar was filled with refuse and included quantities of whalebone and the foreshaft of a harpoon.

These discoveries made sense in the light of the recorded history of Wellfleet and other outer Cape Cod towns. This area saw the earliest whaling by English colonists in New England. A Cape Cod whaler, Ichabod Paddock, is credited with introducing whaling to Nantucket Island in 1690, and New Bedford did not become a whaling center until the end of the eighteenth century. The whale commonly hunted on Cape Cod was the blackfish, a small animal that could be hunted from shore in small boats or driven ashore and killed. In 1793 a writer described what he knew of earlier Wellfleet whaling practices: "When they [the blackfish] come within our harbor, boats surround them. They are as easily driven to the shore as cattle or sheep are driven on land. The tide leaves them and they are easily killed. They are a fish of the whale kind, and will average a barrel of oil each. I have seen nearly four hundred at one time lying dead on the shore." Great Island occupies a commanding position in Wellfleet's harbor, and the location of the tavern, atop a high bluff, would have afforded a superb lookout for schools of blackfish. A tavern in such a location would have served as a center for the shore whalers, a place to which to repair nearby when there were no whales to be hunted.

Further support to this interpretation of the site comes

from the time of its occupation. The period 1690–1740 is indicated by pipestem dates as well as ceramic evidence. Frechen stoneware, from Germany, a brown, mottled, salt-glazed pottery commonly made in the form of jugs with grotesque faces molded on their shoulders, dates at the latest to the end of the seventeenth century. Small quantities of this pottery were recovered. A *terminus ante quem* of 1740 is suggested by the total absence of a distinctive English-made white stoneware from the Staffordshire district that is very common on sites occupied after this date. Again, certain key documents fit with the archaeological information and lend further support to this date. The writer quoted above remarked at the same time: "It is not, however, very often of late that these fish come into our harbor." In the March 20, 1727, issue of the *Boston News Letter* we read: "We hear from towns on the Cape that the whale fishery among them has failed much this winter, as it has done for several winters past, but having found out the way of going to sea upon that business . . . they are now fitting out several vessels to sail with all expedition upon that dangerous design this spring . . ."

The whalebone in the site, its identification as a tavern, its period of occupation, and the accounts of a contemporary newspaper and a diarist all fit comfortably to demonstrate that the tavern, accommodating shore whalers in the early eighteenth century, had no further purpose once the blackfish no longer came near the shore with regularity and dependability. What could not have been determined

solely from the documentary sources was the existence of such a specialized, occupation-related establishment, or its role in the Wellfleet whale fisheries.

This example again shows the way in which written and archaeological information can combine to give a more detailed picture than either could separately. The Great Island site was dug only because it was in danger of destruction, but the illumination in greater detail of a subsistence and economic process would be sufficient justification for having done the work. Yet other materials recovered from the site are of interest to scholars in other disciplines as well. Impressions of building laths in hundreds of plaster fragments from the building's walls showed that the siding of the building had been large sawn planks attached to the frame vertically. This method of siding, according to architectural historians studying early New England building, is typical of Plymouth Colony architecture, and its existence at Wellfleet extended the known range of the technique well out onto Cape Cod. In fact, so few seventeenth-century buildings have survived in southeastern Massachusetts that the addition of this example was a truly major and significant one. This information is also not without broader cultural implications, since a more detailed knowledge of regional variation in architectural forms allows us to make better sense out of the manner in which the English building tradition was altered and diversified regionally in the New World. The architectural information is of value to architectural historians and folklorists who study early building forms; the rich variety of artifacts, to stu-

dents of ceramic history and the decorative arts; and the elucidation of the tavern's role in the whaling industry, to workers in local history detailing Cape Cod's past.

Of course, there are also those instances when archaeological research can enjoy the luxury of being conducted in the absence of salvage constraints; research designs can be carefully developed and refined over time. Among others, the archaeological programs at Colonial Williamsburg, Historic Annapolis, Old Sturbridge Village, and Monticello have been in existence for years, and have been conducted for the most part at a relatively unhurried pace. We can consider one such program in greater detail, to see how a single project can grow and develop over the years.

Flowerdew Hundred,¹ Virginia, is a working farm located on the south side of the James River roughly halfway between Richmond and Williamsburg. Included within its boundaries is the thousand-acre tract granted to George Yeardley, first royal governor of Virginia, in 1619, and possibly even earlier. It has been continuously occupied from the early seventeenth century through the twentieth, and since there has been no development of the property of a residential or industrial nature, site preservation is excellent. Painstaking surveys of surface evidence of past occupations, carried out in the spring when the plows have turned the earth and rain has washed artifacts clean of soil, have produced more than a hundred sites representing human occupation from as early as 10,000 B.C. through the later nineteenth century. Furthermore, almost all of the

sites dating to the historic period represent relatively brief occupations, of the order of a generation or so, providing the archaeologist with a perfect context in which to observe change in material culture over time, and to determine what these changes mean in more general cultural historical terms.

Archaeological investigations have been under way at Flowerdew Hundred since 1971, encouraged and supported to a large extent by the present owner, David A. Harrison III, whose interest in the history of his farm was aroused shortly after he acquired the property in 1969. The results of this research have been spectacular, allowing us to see how the development of an early English colonial culture was played out in one location, to become something distinctively American, and ultimately modern. The documentary record for Flowerdew Hundred is rather thin. The county in which it is located, Prince George, lost many of its records to fire during the Civil War. However, we do have a relatively clear picture of the succession of owners of the property over time. The entire thousand acres initially owned by Yeardley were conveyed to Abraham Piersey in 1624, who on his death in 1628 passed the property to his daughter Elizabeth. She in turn sold it to a local merchant, William Barker, who willed it to his son John. Upon John's death, the property passed to his two sisters in 1673, from which time the property underwent successive subdivision, with the maximum number of owners residing on smaller landholdings occurring during the first quarter of the eighteenth century. But by mid-century, the land was being

assembled in increasingly larger tracts, with fewer owners, and by the early nineteenth century, under the ownership of John Vaughn Willcox, it was once again consolidated into the thousand-acre plantation first granted to Yeardley in 1619. It has remained a single tract since that time.

There is no question of the value of such information; in fact, it is of more than passing interest that almost all land conveyances were along lines of blood relationships. But useful as this knowledge is, it falls short of the more important question, of how all of these people passed their lives. What did living at Flowerdew Hundred actually mean to these people? How did they live out their days, and what were their ties to the larger world of colonial Virginia and America? The records are largely silent on these matters, but archaeology has provided some important answers.

The first excavations at Flowerdew Hundred were carried out when historical archaeology was just emerging as a distinct field of inquiry, and understandably, there was great interest in the physical form of the first English settlements in America. Jamestown's original fort was thought to have been eroded away by the James River, which we now know not to have been the case,² and no one had seen a site from the first two decades of the struggling colony's existence. Seven years of painstaking fieldwork revealed the physical remains of Yeardley's first settlement, consisting of several dwelling houses, a fortified compound, and a defensive redoubt.³ In these features, the settlement was similar to those established by the English in Ulster only a few

years earlier, and the same layout was to be found later at Martin's Hundred, another early settlement farther down the James River below Jamestown.⁴ The Yeardley settlement lies at the northern end of the property, but there are other sites from the same time located along a north-south line to the southern end, almost as if they had been connected by a road of some type. While we will probably never know the names of the people who occupied these sites, archaeology has shown us how they lived. But such knowledge was not immediately forthcoming; it had to await new scholarship and further archaeology at Flowerdew Hundred. By 1980, the scope of archaeological excavations was expanded to include sites from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in an attempt to secure a greater temporal perspective on events on the plantation. By 1984, excavation and intensive surface survey had produced large collections from twenty sites on the property, and it was these collections that provided the data which were used to construct an overall research design which has guided the archaeological program in the years since.

As is so often the case, the initial phase of the development of the research program was the result of almost serendipitous events. In the course of organizing the materials from seventeen of the sites located on the fertile flood plain, pipe stem histograms were prepared for each site that produced stems in sufficient quantity to provide reasonably dependable results. When these histograms were compared, a pattern emerged that no one had expected. The sites fell

into three distinct groups, those in each showing an almost identical pattern, and each differing clearly from the other two. The earliest group of sites showed a sharp peak in their histograms, indicating a rather short occupation between 1619 and 1660, following which they appear to have been abandoned. The second group of sites shared in a much flatter histogram pattern, indicating longer occupation, between circa 1630 and 1700, and overlapping those histograms from the sites in both the first and third groups. The final group of sites showed a shorter period of occupation once more, between circa 1700 and 1750. The end of this last occupation appears to have resulted from people moving away from the river bottom to a ridge to the west. Clearly, such a pattern of settlement history must be the result of more than random happenings, and those events and forces which shaped the lives of Flowerdew Hundred's residents were probably of more than local significance. Turning to the broader canvas of Virginia history of which Flowerdew Hundred was but a small but significant part, we can see three aspects of that history which might well account for the pattern seen at the local level, these being the tobacco boom of the earlier seventeenth century, the attempt by the colonies to become economically independent of the mother country during the middle to late seventeenth century, and the dramatic increase in the importation of African slaves in the early years of the eighteenth century. While these connections were put forth only tentatively at first, corroboration from the archaeological evi-

dence made the relationship far more likely. The same pattern has subsequently been found at Martin's Hundred, lending even more credibility to the explanation.

John Rolfe's introduction of a high-quality strain of tobacco from Trinidad in 1616 set Virginia's economy on a narrow but lucrative course. The years before had been marked by discontent and disaster, but the new crop changed all of this. Those who survived the "seasoning" of Virginia's fever-ridden summers could hope to amass a fortune, and with luck, return to England wealthy enough to establish a fine estate and provide for their children a leisurely and comfortable life. Tobacco remained king through the mid seventeenth century, and as we have seen, tobacco planters' priorities were such that most chose to put the bulk of their capital into producing a lucrative crop, with substantial house construction relegated to secondary importance. This state of affairs lasted through the 1660s, to be followed by a sharp decline in tobacco prices, making its cultivation a much less attractive proposition than it had been during the years of the tobacco boom.

But while most Virginians were deeply committed to the production of tobacco, there were some who looked to other sources of income, beginning in the early years of the colony. Between the 1630s and the 1660s various types of local industry were being developed in an attempt to gain some economic independence from England, if not complete self-sufficiency. By mid-century a variety of domestically produced goods made their appearance, including leather and leather products, smelted iron, smoking pipes,

ceramics, and even ships. Such domestic industrial production was seen by England not to be in its best interests, and after the passage of the Navigation Acts in 1651 and 1660, which restricted colonial trade to only English goods, transported on English ships, Parliament followed with formal legislation forbidding local production of needed commodities. At the same time, the Virginia assembly was promoting local production through legislation of its own. During the last quarter century, following Bacon's Rebellion, local production slowed almost to a halt, brought about by even more aggressive action by the Crown. It was, as one writer has said, "the end of American independence."

But by century's end, other forces were at work which reshaped the Virginia economy once again. Inexpensive labor, in the form of slaves brought from Africa, made the production of tobacco a paying proposition once more. While there had been a small number of Africans in the colony from its early years, this number increased dramatically in the years following 1680, and by the turn of the century as many as six thousand slaves were in Virginia, where before there had been only hundreds.

The timing of these three episodes in seventeenth-century Virginia history fits comfortably with the dates of occupation of the three groups of sites at Flowerdew Hundred, and at Martin's Hundred as well. The earliest group might be of those sites occupied during the tobacco boom and abandoned at its close; the second group could relate in some way to local industrial production, and the third, to the emergence of large-scale slavery in the colony. It re-

mained to examine the archaeological evidence to determine if these relationships were truly causal and therefore valid. Of course, final and conclusive results must await the excavation of all seventeen sites in question, but those which have been excavated to date, and the material in surface collections from those which have not, all support and illuminate this explanation of Flowerdew Hundred's settlement history. And, as with all properly constructed research designs, this one permits the formulation of questions to be tested against the material recovered from the ground.

Three of the seven sites in the first group have been excavated, and all three have buildings that were constructed in the earthfast tradition. The remaining four have been plowed for decades, and no evidence of more substantial construction, such as brick footings or massive hearths, has come to light. While earthfast construction continued at Flowerdew Hundred into the first half of the eighteenth century, the two sites from the second group which have been excavated revealed the remains of buildings built in a different style, one suggesting a stronger commitment to place, a greater sense of permanence. The first of these is somewhat ambiguous in form, with a very large cellar, paved with square tiles, and no evidence of posts which would have supported the frame. Fragments of malformed smoking pipes known as wasters were recovered, suggesting that pipe production was carried out at the site. This site may have been that of the home of William Barker, who, as a merchant, would have had an interest in

producing commodities for sale. The second site produced evidence of both local industry and more substantial architecture. The dwelling house had been constructed by setting posts inside a large cellar, woodlined and with a cross partition. A space between the walls and the outside of the cellar pit seems to have been intended for some kind of facing, perhaps of brick, very reminiscent of the house described in a building contract from Ipswich, Massachusetts, dating to 1638.⁵ Outside the house there were series of pits which have been interpreted as relating to the production of bog iron, a simple household industry, manageable by just a few people, but producing a reasonable quantity of usable metal.⁶ All of the sites from the third group, dating primarily to the first half of the eighteenth century, have produced, either from excavation or surface finds, quantities of a kind of ceramic known as Colono ware.⁷ None of the sites in the other groups have yielded this type of pottery. Unglazed, handmade, and fired at a low temperature, Colono ware is believed to have been made by slaves, lending credence to the relationship between these sites and the appearance of large-scale slavery at the time.

The likely relationship between the settlement history at Flowerdew Hundred and events taking place in the larger world permits us to say something about the way in which the lives of the plantation's inhabitants were shaped and given direction. The occupants of the sites of the first group were "tobacco boomers," and while we know that they abandoned their homesteads in the 1660s, we will never know where they went, or for that matter, who they

were. But we do know something about their way of life, their attitudes, and their priorities. Likewise with the inhabitants of the sites of group two. They appear to have had a different outlook on life, a stronger sense of place and belonging, and pursued different economic goals. The people who lived on the sites of the third group in all likelihood represent the very beginnings of what would become the slaveholding agrarian elite of eighteenth-century Virginia, people like William Byrd, Landon Carter, and Carter Burwell. Archaeology and the written record were critical to this explanation; it could not have been arrived at without a combination of both.

The tiny ships that crossed the Atlantic in the early seventeenth century, vessels such as the *Susan Constant*, the *Mayflower*, the *Ark*, the *Dove*, and the *Arabella*, all carried a precious cargo. Their passengers, English emigrants who had come to the New World for a variety of reasons, brought with them a blueprint—in their minds—for recreating the culture they had left behind. Likewise, the unwilling passengers aboard the thousands of slave ships that made the same crossing brought with them, against enormous odds, traditions from their West African homelands which would endure in a new and hostile environment. Both would come together in the New World, and combine in complex ways through both resistance and accommodation to form a new culture, one not seen before and one that would become a vital component of our modern society. For the English, theirs was a tradition that

owed much of its form to the English Middle Ages, recently drawn to a close. The Renaissance, which revolutionized our view of ourselves and our world, had not yet made its impact on the simple people of England, and it would be more than a century before its effects could be measured among their counterparts in North America.

Until circa 1660, Anglo-American colonial culture was essentially that of old England, since the first native-born generation was still a minority of younger people. The first four decades undoubtedly saw the establishment of the rural English tradition on New World soil. There were differences: the colonies were not established by members of the elite, and there was a resultant skew in cultural form in the direction of that of simple husbandmen and yeomen. Governor William Bradford of Plymouth wrote in his history of the colony: “. . . they [the Plymouth colonists] were not acquainted with trades nor traffic . . . but had only been used to a plain country life and the innocent trade of husbandry.”⁸ Other differences appear between English and American cultures at this time, but they are slight in comparison to the similarity. English common law controlled the society; the religion, even of those dissenting from the established church, was English, as was the entire material culture. Even “the first Thanksgiving,” which we observe today in a much altered form, was a reenactment of the English harvest home, a tradition of great antiquity in the home country.⁹ The essentially agrarian nature of the culture of America’s English settlers is important to keep in

mind when we seek comparisons with English architectural forms, ways of cooking and eating food, and other archaeologically available information. The best fit should be found in the culture of the English yeoman.

The year 1660 marked the restoration of the Crown in England under Charles II, and with it came a renewed interest in the American colonies. They had existed in considerable isolation before that time, enforced by the success of the Puritan revolution, which removed one of the strong motivations for removal to the New World. The time before 1660 saw the beginning of a drift away from the parent culture by American colonists, even though distinctive cultural differences would not be expected until a substantial population of people who had never seen England had developed. Of course, some immigration continued throughout, and colonial trade slowly increased.

The course of cultural development from 1680 until circa 1760 can be illustrated by an analogy with a rocket, fired into the atmosphere, that does not achieve escape velocity. Such a missile travels at its greatest speed immediately after firing, and while moving farther from the earth's surface, moves increasingly slower, until it stops rising and returns to earth, accelerating at a rate equal to its upward deceleration. Likewise did American colonial culture move away from its English parent beginning sometime prior to 1660, but while still diverging as the seventeenth century wore on, it did so at an increasingly slower rate, until it was brought back into the domain of English culture a second time, around the middle of the eighteenth century. This

"re-Anglicization" of American culture meant that on the eve of the American Revolution, Americans were more English than they had been in the past since the first years of the colonies.

During this century-long second phase in Anglo-American history, strong traditional cultures developed, with great regional diversity. They were folk cultures, changing slowly, and interacting with their neighbors to a very limited degree. Such isolation was certainly reinforced by poor transportation and communication facilities at the time, and by strong, locally oriented political units. We shall see later that archaeological research confirms this diversity and cultural conservatism in striking fashion.

Such traditional societies are termed *peasant societies* by anthropologists. Peasants the world over share in a common culture. Workers of the land, they exist in relation to and provide support for urban centers. Their values are conservative and traditional, characterized by close ties to kin; suspicion of outsiders, change, or innovation; and a life governed by the change of seasons. Our concern here is with the culture of the rural peoples of colonial America at the time, and it is these people who were most typical of peasant culture. The cities during this period—Portsmouth, Boston, Newport, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston—had their merchants, their religious and political leaders, and their social elite, but they should not be thought of as typical of English colonial culture. Rather, it is the rural tiller of the land, who lived in hundreds of tiny communities, who made the cities possible and represents

the true character of colonial Anglo-America. The cosmopolitan city dwellers were an important quantity, however, in the cultural transformations that took place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We can see them as brokers of taste and fashion. It was they who sent their sons to England to study architecture, who wanted the latest styles of clothing, china, and furniture. The cultural changes that mark the beginning of the third period, in about 1760, had their origins in the urban centers, where they had appeared as much as a half century or more earlier.

What are these changes? The full re-entry of the American colonies into the English cultural sphere during the eighteenth century involved an English culture profoundly changed from its early-seventeenth-century form. Before 1650 the impact of the Renaissance on the material culture of England was to be seen in little more than a handful of buildings designed by Inigo Jones, an architect familiar with the work of Andrea Palladio, the great Italian architect whose *Four Books of Architecture* was the chief instrument by which Renaissance design was introduced to the Anglo-American world. A century later, the Renaissance influence on English material culture was profound, and one might surmise that this influence went far beyond only the material, and in subtle ways had reformed the English worldview into something totally different from its earlier, medieval form. We might call this new worldview *Georgian*, a term that in its specific sense designates the architectural style that most typifies Anglo-American Renaissance building.

This contrast between the Georgian and the medieval worldview(s) has been commented upon by scholars in various disciplines. The art historian Alan Gowans remarks:

More than a change of style or detail is involved here: it is a change in basic tradition. Like folk buildings earlier, these structures grow out of a way of life, a new and different concept of the relationship between man and nature. Gone is the medieval "acceptance" of nature taking its course, along with the unworked materials, exposed construction, and additive composition that expressed it. This design is informed by very different convictions: that the world has a basic immutable order; that men by powers of reason can discover what that order is; and that, discovering it, they can control environment as they will.¹⁰

Order and control: the eighteenth century is called the age of reason, and it saw the rise of scientific thought in the Western world and the development of Renaissance-derived form, balanced and ordered, in the Anglo-American world. By 1760 significant numbers of American colonists partook of this new worldview. Mechanical where the older was organic, balanced where the older had been asymmetrical, individualized where the older had been corporate, this new way of perceiving the world is the hallmark of our third period, which lasts to the present and

accounts for much of the way in which we ourselves look out upon reality.

The archaeological concepts of *horizon* and *tradition* are made explicit by the differences between the first two periods and the third. An archaeological tradition as it is defined in prehistory is a pattern of long persistence of cultural traits in a restricted geographical area. It is the hallmark of cultural conservatism, and examples of such traditions are many. Black-and-white-painted pottery, underground ceremonial chambers, and masonry dwellings are characteristic of a few cultures in the Four Corners area of the American Southwest for several centuries. Such traditions not only suggest a strong degree of conservatism but a stable pattern of permanent settlement, allowing such development to take place relatively undisturbed. In contrast, a horizon in archaeology is a pattern characterized by widespread distribution of a complex of cultural traits that lasts a relatively short time. Factors that might create the pattern of a horizon would include rapid military conquest or effective religious mission. Examples from prehistory include the distribution of artifacts typical of the Inca in Peru, widely spread as a result of that people's known efficiency in conquest and empire-building. Deeper in the past, the occurrence of distinctive tomb types, pottery design, and metal artifacts in the Mediterranean basin and beyond into the North Sea in the third millennium B.C. is usually interpreted as evidence of a largely sea-borne religious proselytization.

These archaeological concepts have their counterpart

in folklore as folk culture and popular culture. Folk culture is traditional and conservative; it exhibits great variation in space and relatively little change over time. Popular culture changes rapidly in time and shows great similarity over large areas. A good example of this contrast can be seen in the way in which the banjo is played. An African American musical instrument that was closely adapted to Anglo-American music in the highland South in the nineteenth century, the banjo is played by traditional musicians using two fingers in a variety of ways. At least three distinct two-finger playing techniques can be found along a line running from eastern Kentucky through western Virginia into North Carolina.¹¹ These styles are of considerable antiquity in their respective areas. Three-finger picking—the hallmark of bluegrass music—is a twentieth-century invention, and bluegrass musicians have played the banjo almost identically over the entire South, and well beyond. The three-finger technique has undergone a rather rapid evolution in the brief time it has been popular. This type of music is essentially urban, not rural, and thus is subject to the kinds of influences that are conducive to rapid change and dissemination.

We can see that the first two periods are times of folk culture that might appear as traditions were they to be examined archaeologically. The advent of popular culture occurs sometime during the third period, and the first horizon in Anglo-American archaeology might be expected to appear toward the end of the eighteenth century. The archaeological and material culture evidence demonstrates

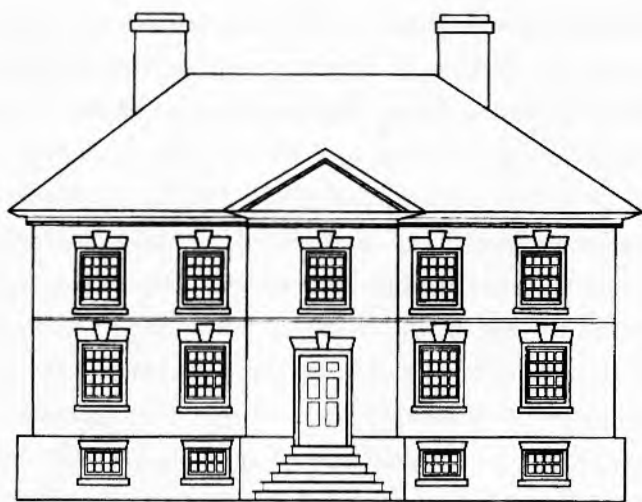


Figure 2a. Georgian house

this, as we shall see. While we have developed a threefold division of the cultural development of Anglo-America, the major division occurs at the point of separation between the latter two periods. The ordered view of the world and people's place within it emerges at this time. Henry Glasie's analysis of folk material culture¹² shows that the Georgian worldview manifests itself in material culture in a bilaterally symmetrical, three-part format. This form is apparent in the architectural style that gives it its name. A Georgian house is rigorously symmetrical, and left and right halves are appended to a central element that shares its design form with the lateral ones but is also somewhat different (see Figure 2a). The contrast with a pre-Georgian, mediievally derived house facade is striking, and the essentially organic form of the latter is manifest (see Figure 2b).

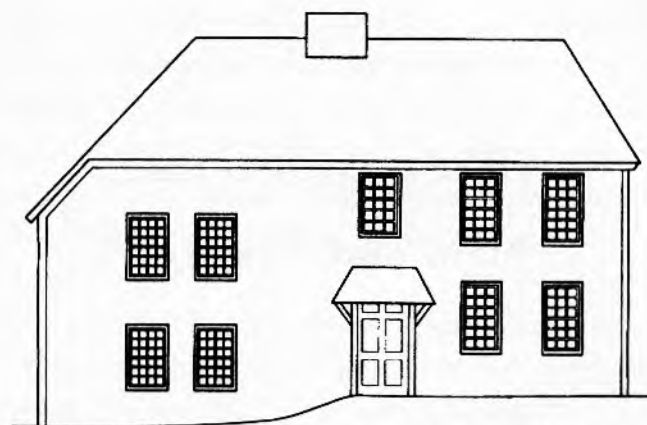


Figure 2b. The Mott farmhouse, Portsmouth, Rhode Island

But this structured worldview has impact far beyond architectural forms, and the extent to which it does demonstrates the power with which cognition reshaped the Anglo-American material world, beginning in the late eighteenth century.

Another expression of this new order is a strong emphasis on individuals and their place within their culture. The corporate nature of the earlier tradition extended to the organization of living space, of food consumption, and even of burial practices. We must look then at archaeological materials of the late eighteenth century for evidence of a new importance of the individual, and ways in which artifacts show this.