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The interplay of architectural form and ornament on Virginia's Northern Neck, 1720–1840

Laurent, Elizabeth MacLean, M.A.
University of Delaware, 1989

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THE INTERPLAY OF ARCHITECTURAL FORM AND ORNAMENT
ON VIRGINIA'S NORTHERN NECK 1720 - 1840

by

Elizabeth MacLean Laurent

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Arts in Early American Culture

May 1989

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THE INTERPLAY OF ARCHITECTURAL FORM AND ORNAMENT
ON VIRGINIA'S NORTHERN NECK 1720 - 1840

by

Elizabeth MacLean Laurent

Approved:

[Signature]

Bernard L. Herman, Ph.D.
Professor in charge of thesis
on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved:

[Signature]

James L. Curtis, Ph.D.
Chairman of the Department of the
Winterthur Program in Early American Culture

Approved:

[Signature]

Carol E. Hoffecker, Ph.D.
Acting Associate Provost for Graduate Studies
Exterior of Hard Bargain, Northumberland County.
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LIST OF CONVENTIONS ON FLOOR PLANS

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Original masonry is shown with solid black walls; second period masonry is shown with hollow walls.

Original frame construction is shown with close hatched walls, angling down from the right; second period frame construction is shown with sparse hatching, angling down from the left; third period frame construction is shown with double hatching angling down from the left.

Interior additions made after 1840 are indicated by double dotted lines. Exterior additions made after 1840 are indicated by double dotted lines extending from the main block of the house.

A ten foot scale is on the lower margin of each drawing.
ABSTRACT

This fieldwork based project studied the relation of house form and ornament to understand their respective roles in architectural communication.

The fieldwork area was the region of eastern Virginia called the Northern Neck, lying between the Potomac and Rappahannock rivers and including the counties of Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland. Fifty-eight houses dating from 1720 to 1840 were examined.

Virtually all house literature analyzes building technique or floor plan. This project explored the possibility of another meaningful way conceptually to organize a group of structures. Moving beyond the level of floor plan, I tried to ascertain any logic, function, or purpose to perceived patterns of domestic elaboration.
Architectural ornament is an important, unexplored technique for controlling and directing movement through domestic space. The fieldwork proves that the study of ornament can enrich our understanding of early domestic structures by amplifying but not precluding the fundamental study of floor plan.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This project was conceived as a fieldwork based investigation of the relation between house form and ornament as a means for understanding the role of ornament in architectural communication. The underlying concept was to approach architectural ornament as historical evidence able to be interpreted as a code for movement and perception. It appeared that household movement of inhabitants, servants, slaves, and visitors might be partially controlled and directed through an understanding of ornament.

While a vast literature has been compiled on the early houses of Virginia, until recently it has been primarily concerned with the most pretentious of the surviving homes. An array of volumes, often most useful for their early photographs and drawings, document efforts to record the genealogy and architecture of
Virginia's elite. These efforts continue to the present, in a variety of publications devoted to Virginia's already well-known homes. In the traditional works, the study of domestic ornament has been limited to examples of unusual virtuosity or those created by an identifiable craftsman: the fine cornices of Mount Airy, the elaborately turned stair balusters of Sabine Hall, or the carved capitals of Stratford's Great Hall.

In recent years, as students of many disciplines turn their attention to Virginia's buildings, new efforts have been made to understand previously unexplored aspects of early housing. Rather than limiting study to only the most prominent surviving houses in a region, strides have been made in expanding both the range of surviving buildings examined and the questions asked of what the structures meant to those who built them, lived and worked in them, and visited them.

By continuing to fascinate a variety of scholars, the early houses of Virginia, offer an ever more tantalizing understanding of Virginia's past. The early houses of Virginia are complex artifacts, whose usefulness in answering the wide variety of questions we ask of them seems vast.
Most of the recent literature on houses is based on an analysis of floor plan. While plans are indisputably useful, this preoccupation with plan results in the newer publications examining ornament even less that the traditional, mansion-oriented studies. Most of the new scholars have shied away from an examination of ornament because the topic inevitably raises questions of style and fashion. The aesthetic questions that so preoccupy traditional architectural historians are precisely those against which most the vernacular historians have reacted. Yet surviving ornament is historical evidence as valid as the tilted false plates and common rafter roofs, so well documented by the scholars of vernacular architecture.

Methods of recording architectural ornament are not standardized as are the methods of recording plan. Rather than carefully scaled measured drawings, the student of ornament has available the tools of photography, tracing and the molding comb. These tools combined can lead to effective documentation of ornament. Yet because ornament is less often studied than plan, the recorded body of comparative ornamental information is woefully unequal to the comparative information.
available among domestic plans. This makes more crucial the detailed investigation of architectural ornament—to start compilation of that comparative data base.

This project explores the possibility of an alternative way conceptually to organize a group of structures. The project provides a mixed answer to the use of ornamentation as a primary classifying tool yet makes clear the ways that the systematic study of architectural ornamentation can enhance our understanding of structures. The study of ornament can amplify but not preclude the basic and necessary study of floor plan.

Among the most useful theoretical bases for this study of early architecture and its ornament is Binford's categorization of the functions of artifacts. He posits that artifacts function on at least one of three levels. The primary context of technomic artifacts is coping directly with the physical environment. The primary context of socio-technic artifacts is in the social subsystems of the cultural system. The primary context of ideo-technic artifacts is in the ideological component of the social system.
Throughout this study, Binford's trio of functions recur with important implications for understanding how and why these early house were designed and used.

Other useful theoretical works are delineated in the notes, but of notable value have been Upton's work with performance theory, Bernstein's concept of restricted and elaborated codes, Chappell's work on the hierarchy of room use, and Van Gennep's work on liminality and the rites of passage.

The choice of a small regional study was intended both to locate many houses produced by the same culture at the same time, and provide a logical method for limiting the number of houses to examine. Only by examining the range of the region's early housing would it be possible to grasp any potential code of architectural ornament. In sum, choosing a small regional study provided a workable study unit for addressing the larger theoretical issues of form and ornament.

The fieldwork area was the region of Virginia known as the Northern Neck. The region is located between the
Potomac and Rappahannock rivers and consists of the counties of Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland. Fifty-eight surviving houses were examined ranging in date from circa 1720 to 1840. (See Appendix A: Alphabetical Listing of Houses in Test Group.)

The Northern Neck was chosen as the fieldwork region for several reasons. The houses of the area (with the exception of Mount Airy, Sabine Hall, and Stratford) have been little studied when compared to other regions of Virginia. The region was populated by English and African settlers starting in the middle of the seventeenth century, suggesting at least the possibility of some surviving early buildings. The area's geographical configuration made it easy to define the region's borders: as a long peninsula, the four county area is strictly defined on three sides by water. Finally, the continued rural character of the region, and the surprising lack of industrialization or modern development, seemed to indicate that the survival rate for early structures might be higher than in a heavily developed area. Northern Neck houses might have been destroyed due to neglect and indifference but
would not have been razed to make way for apartment complexes and shopping centers.

While early settlement and continued isolation suggested the possibility of a quantity of surviving early structures, virtually nothing survives above ground of the area's first eighty years of settlement, effectively establishing the starting date for my research at circa 1720. Although the fifty-eight early structures included in this study may seem a high number, it is pitifully few when compared to the number of structures known to be standing during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The design of the fieldwork system fulfilled its goal of enabling meaningful documentation and comparison of the use of architectural ornament on the full range of surviving early domestic structures on Virginia's Northern Neck. (See Appendix C: Fieldwork Methodology.)

Several assumptions framed this study. First, the interrelation of plan and ornament has been emphasized: it does matter where the ornament is placed in or on a house. By initially grouping houses by plan type, it was
possible to examine the architectural ornament within the house form.

Second, the density of ornament has been accepted as a meaningful indicator. Not just the presence, but the quantity and quality of the finish has been examined and recorded. Only by emphasizing the complex use of ornament do the meanings become fully exposed.

Third, the alteration of ornament was accepted as significant. By ignoring changes in finish, or assuming modifications destroy meanings, important evidence is lost. The modification of both ornament and plan can be significant reflections of changing needs and desires.

Fourth, the study was limited to surviving structures. "Surviving" was defined as either still standing, or documented in a way (either measured drawings or photographs) enabling mental reconstruction of the structure and its ornament. Survival is in two phases: survival of the house may be an issue separate from survival of the ornament.
The project is skewed heavily toward houses at the upper levels of the economic scale. The skew of surviving historic buildings tends to be based on economic level, technology, and age. First, surviving houses tend to be among the largest, most pretentious dwellings of a region for these were often the structures thought most important and suitable for preservation. These structures may also survive because they continue to serve the physical, social, or emotional needs of their inhabitants.

A disproportionate number of the less pretentious, more typical houses have been destroyed. Those representative houses that do survive tend to be modified from their original form, usually through addition. These alterations suggest that the smaller houses did not continue to serve the needs of their inhabitants. The survival rate for all early homes of the Northern Neck is low with a disproportionate number of the survivors being larger dwellings.

Building technology and material affect house survival rates. Least likely to survive are structures erected in the post hole tradition; these would not be
expected to stand as long as those of the more substantial frame or masonry technologies. More substantially framed houses are, in turn, susceptible to fire, rot and insects, making them less likely to survive than masonry houses. If at least 80% of Virginia's eighteenth century houses were wood,²⁸ in this study, only 55% of the survivors are of frame construction.

The date range of surviving houses is skewed toward those built later in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Despite the Northern Neck's early settlement, the earliest surviving house in the region is Linden Farm built around 1720.²⁹ The closer one approaches the present, the greater the chances of a house still standing.

The major handicap in exploring the use of ornament on early houses is its poor survival rate. The first level of architectural survival is that of the structure. This level occurs much more frequently than a second level: the survival of elaboration. Of the houses whose plans appear in these pages, several retain their original walls yet the original ornament is gone. This suggests that ornament is either such an important
cultural indicator that it must always be updated or so unimportant that its alteration is undertaken with abandon. More than any other factor, the low incidence of original elaboration in situ makes ornament a more elusive resource than plan in the study of architectural meaning.30

A fifth assumption was that the very topic of ornamentation may well be an economically biased one, yet another reason why the vernacular historians have avoided the topic. Ornamentation was not a structural, or what Binford would call a "technomic" necessity and we know that many interiors were unfinished.31

In addition, the surviving homes of the less well-off tend to have less ornamentation than the homes of the more affluent; in terms of the density assumption, the houses of the middling sort have less quantity and quality of ornament.32 This is not to suggest that houses with less ornament are less useful to the study, but merely to acknowledge that the choice of topics tended to make the surviving homes of the elite better able to answer my questions.
Finally, the project has from its inception, rejected artificial distinctions between the study of vernacular and high style architecture. There is no reason to limit a small regional study through arbitrary social distinctions: everything from mansions to shacks can be included easily given the low survival rate for all early houses. Upton supports this approach by stating,

The use of vernacular structures to achieve similar architectural effects to those attained in churches and great plantations is evident. The small house lacked the formalized unity...but was organized along similar principles.\textsuperscript{33}

As a part of the eastern Virginia Tidewater region, the Northern Neck was one of the state's areas of earliest settlement. The settlement pattern of the Northern Neck followed that of the rest of Virginia's tidewater region: most of the early settlers were English and built their structures in the "impermanent" tradition.\textsuperscript{34}

The Northern Neck diverged from the rest of the colony, in its method of land distribution through the Northern Neck Proprietary system.\textsuperscript{35} The Northern Neck proprietors did not require that their land grants be
seated meaning that the grantee did not have to move to, build on, or promise to farm the land. Inevitably, many acres were granted to those who hoped to amass large quantities of land with no intention of living on it. Increasingly large tracts were assigned to a very few people. The importance of the Proprietorship can not be overestimated:

All available evidence indicates that the territory which comprised the Northern Neck Proprietorship was unique. A greater concentration of large land grants than in adjacent areas, a greater concentration of wealth, a greater percentage of farmers operating as tenants and a greater emphasis on commercial agriculture are all characteristic of this region before the Civil War.

To generalize from a detailed study of early Lancaster County to the Northern Neck as a region, one scholar divides the area's historical development into four stages. The first period 1645-1657 (these dates would vary slightly in each county) was when the county was formed and a rudimentary society established. During the years 1657-1680, the sense of local community was defined. From 1680 to 1720, the county social and economic hierarchy matured. The final stage pinpoints the three decades 1720-1750 as the period during which the county formed a self-contained yet evolving
A crucial implication for purposes of architectural study is that the advent of both the durable building tradition and increased segmentation of house plan coincide with this process of societal maturation. The earliest surviving buildings and the first center passages date from the third period of evolution suggesting societal maturation made manifest in permanent, partitioned architecture.

The Northern Neck was, and continues to the present, primarily an agricultural region. Its dominance of the regional economy makes it useful to understand the region's agricultural history, and a detailed history may be found in the notes.

The Northern Neck seems always to have had a peculiar sense of isolation from its surrounding area. The Northern Neck has been a considered a distinct part of Virginia since its first century of settlement, as can be proven by the early manipulation of county lines to exclude any non-peninsular areas of certain counties.

During the period of this study, 1720 to 1840, the Northern Neck was an area easily reached by water, and
less accessible by land. During this era when travel and trade by water dominated, the area enjoyed fine transportation access precisely because of being surrounded by creeks, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay.\textsuperscript{42}

The historic perception of the Northern Neck as a distinct region continues to the present.\textsuperscript{43} To hear the complaints of modern residents about the region's isolation, one is struck by the consistency of these complaints over the past three centuries: in 1677, citizens of Lancaster County were telling English commissioners that the isolation of the Northern Neck had been one of the causes of Bacon's Rebellion.\textsuperscript{44} In sum, the historic and modern perception of the geographic area between the Potomac and Rappahannock rivers being a distinct region made the area ideally suited as the subject of a fieldwork-based study of early houses.
CHAPTER TWO

HOUSE TYPES

Plan Types

In trying to group houses into significant categories some method must be used to order the records of the structures. As Glassie has eloquently suggested, the most meaningful basis for forming typologies of houses is by form. If form is accepted as the basis for grouping structures, it becomes useful to examine the surviving houses of the Northern Neck by plan type. The form and construction of Northern Neck houses fit the patterns found in both Tidewater Virginia and the larger Chesapeake region. Buchanan has effectively codified the five most common house plans in colonial Virginia: the one-room plan; the two-room plan; the side-passage, double-pile plan; the center-passage, single-pile plan; and the center-passage, double-pile plan. For the most part, his categories coincide with the most common forms of surviving houses on the Northern Neck.
The exception is that the Northern Neck has a sixth category of plan, termed in this study, the Variation Plan. This category includes ten houses that do not fit Buchanan's five common types. While the variation houses are not easily categorized, they represent important historical documents. Variation houses, sometimes identified by the misnomer "odd," are not imperfectly understood examples of Tidewater architecture. They are, in fact, quite the opposite: important indicators of the choices available among options perceived as suitable for early Virginia houses. (See Table 1: Distribution of Surviving Plan Types in Test Group.)

It is not surprising that ten of the study houses (approximately 17%) do not fit the common categories. Rather it is surprising that 83% of the study houses do fit the five common forms. The houses of the Northern Neck form a relatively homogeneous group. This supports Upton's theory of architectural performance. He explains that a building is the product of a community sharing a common body of interactions. A building is the expression of an entire system of community approved possibilities. It is, therefore, performance that set
TABLE ONE

Distribution of Surviving Plan Types In Test Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan Type</th>
<th>Number of Houses</th>
<th>End note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. One-room plan (see figure 1)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Two-room plan (see figures 2 - 6, 46)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Side-passage, double-pile (see figures 7 - 12)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Center-passage, single-pile (see figures 13 - 23, 47 - 49, 51 - 56)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>(52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Center-passage, double-pile (see figures 24 - 35, 50, 57 - 58)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>(53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Variation plan (see figures 36 - 47)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(54)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Houses in Test Group 58
Figure 1. Rochester House, Westmoreland County.
Figure 2. House on Route 606, Lancaster County.
Figure 3. Lynhams, Northumberland County.
Figure 4. Mount Zion, Northumberland County.
Figure 7. Clifton, Lancaster County.
Figure 9. Wilna, Richmond County.
Figure 10. Auburn, Westmoreland County.
Figure 11. Liberty, Westmoreland County.
Figure 12. Spence's Point, Westmoreland County.
Figure 16. Ingleside, Northumberland County.
Figure 20. Blenheim, Westmoreland County.
Figure 22. Elba, Westmoreland County.
Figure 28. Sabine Hall, Richmond County.
Figure 29. Ditchley, Northumberland County.
Figure 30. Springfield, Northumberland County.
Figure 31. Wicomico View, Northumberland County.
Figure 32. Ingleside, Westmoreland County.
Figure 33. Kirman, Westmoreland County.
Virginia's buildings apart from those of Massachusetts or England and "...Virginians confined themselves to a relatively small number of forms and expressions."\textsuperscript{55}

This listing from small to large, is formed only for ease and clarity. The process of separating house forms makes it easy to forget the interrelation between these plan types.\textsuperscript{56} The list of categories actually proposes "...conceptual similarities between the basic plans and their variants."\textsuperscript{57}

The list is not designed to imply either an easy chronological or economic progression from small to large. Rejecting a notion of early, small houses naturally leading to later, large houses we might look to Stratford: built circa 1738,\textsuperscript{58} the largest of surviving Northern Neck houses was built at the beginning of the durable construction period. As an early, large house Stratford belies the idea that Virginians evolved from early, small to later, large houses.

Rejecting the theory of economic progression, some of the smaller houses on the Northern Neck were built by some of the more prosperous citizens. Verville in
Lancaster County was the home of the wealthy and prominent James Gordon, known to us through his surviving diary; his house is, however, "merely" a center-hall, single-pile structure.

To be sure, the very largest surviving mansions were built by the most prominent citizens: Stratford by Thomas Lee, Mount Airy by John Tayloe, and Sabine Hall by Landon Carter.

The most pretentious of...{the surviving houses on the Northern Neck} were outrageous statements of wealth and status and durability that only a few could claim.

The option of building an immense home was available to only the wealthy but the option of building a smaller house was open to many economic levels.

The Variation plans demonstrate the interrelation of the five common types. Mont Calm in Westmoreland County (figure 36) and Chowning's Ferry in Lancaster County (figure 37) are T-shaped variations, mediating between the single and double-pile, center-passage type. Both houses have their flanking single room stepped back from the facade.
Figure 36. Mont Calm, Westmoreland County.
The L-shaped plan Indian Banks in Richmond County (figure 38), might seem in function similar to Mont Calm and Chowning's Ferry. Yet despite their similarly asymmetrical plans, Indian Banks' second floor plan is distinct. Upstairs on its double-pile side, there is no access from the back room into the adjacent front room. This places Indian Banks into a separate category: it is actually a center-passage, single-pile house with its service dependency attached. The lack of connection between the upper rooms was a conscious design to segregate the inhabitants of the upper rear room from the rest of the house.63

Menokin in Richmond County (figure 39) is a variation on the double-pile, center-passage plan, whose center-passage penetrates only half the depth of the house.64 Belle Isle in Lancaster County (figure 40) and Hurstville in Northumberland County (figure 41) are variations on the Menokin plan: the double-pile structures have no distinct center-passage, yet the passage functions are clearly implied in the arrangement of partitions and exterior doors.
Figure 40. Belle Isle, Lancaster County.
Figure 41. Hurstville, Northumberland County.
Pomona (figure 42) and Spring Grove (figure 43) in Westmoreland County, are a combination of side-passage and center-passage plans. If the houses are basically side-passage, double-pile structures, they have an additional passage running perpendicular to the side passage and between the two flanking rooms.

Stratford in Westmoreland County (figure 44) is two center-passage, double-pile houses put together and joined by a distinctive center hall.

Nine of the ten Variation houses are the whole type. The one transformed Variation house, Merry Point in Lancaster County (figure 45), has been so heavily altered as to have no relation to the other fifty-seven houses of the test group.

Among the surviving buildings, the center-passage plan, either single or double-pile, was the clearly dominant option. Thirty-five of the 58 houses, (or 60% of the test group) are now the center-passage form. The frequent choice of the center-passage during the period 1720 to 1840, suggests that the plan suited the needs and desires of Northern Neck citizens.
Figure 43. Spring Grove, Westmoreland County.
Figure 44. Stratford, Westmoreland County.
Figure 45. Merry Point, Lancaster County.
There are numerous explanations for the prevalence of the center-passage in the American south. For example, the center-passage is traditionally explained by the hot, humid climate: opening the exterior doors at each end of the passage, and shielded from direct sunlight by the surrounding structure, the passage would perhaps remain cool and breezy. Although the center-passage did tend to be the coolest space in the house, the climatic explanation does not tell the entire story.65

One author identifies the center-passage plan as originally derived from seventeenth-century England and popular in Virginia "...reinforced by climatic and social factors."66 The investigation of social factors, what Binford would call "socio-technic," is a fruitful avenue of recent research. Many scholars have stressed the use of the central-passage in establishing and protecting the privacy of house occupants: "...privacy is essentially a function of plan."67

To understand the development of the passage in Virginia, we must briefly explore the seventeenth and early eighteenth century houses no longer surviving on
the Northern Neck. By 1670, houses were being built of one and two-room plans with separate dependencies for service tasks. The relatively unpartitioned space in the main house meant that visitors permitted inside the one or two-room house were immediately within the owner's intimate space.

The detached dependency was an unambiguous way for a planter to keep servants and slaves out of his house. Dependencies were used to segregate the people who lived in the house from those who worked for the household. These separate structures reflected the planter's need for increased physical separation68 "...from social inferiors, in this case his work force."69

In the first quarter of the eighteenth century,70 planters started to build larger houses by adding passages and semi-public rooms.71 The passage made outside access to the house interior more difficult,72 serving as "...the ultimate separator of outsiders from insiders..." elaborately emphasizing individual distinctions.73 The passage was an ambiguous space where the visitor was inside the structure but not permitted to enter a flanking room. Comparing the older one and
two-room plans to the passage plan: "...the most public room (the passage) was only as accessible as the most private room was in earlier buildings." 74

The center-passage plan, commonly called Georgian, allowed "...rooms to be sealed off from others for privacy."75 By careful manipulation of doors, "...access to every room could be directly and individually controlled."76 The passage separated space, dividing an inside space from its flanking rooms. "The partitioning of space reveals a need to categorize and control the direction of human activity."77 The differences between the passage and the flanking rooms, and also between the flanking rooms themselves, was reinforced through their hierarchical use of embellishment, to be explored below in chapter three.

The developing need to impose domestic privacy during the first half of the eighteenth century fits into a larger pattern of social distinction and segmentation. The changes in house plan, including the introduction of partitioned interior spaces (and not coincidentally, the first of the surviving Virginia mansions) reflect deep changes in colonial Virginia society. Through the
eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, social segregation increased as part of what Rhys Isaac has called "...the increasing consciousness of individual separateness." Darrett and Anita Rutman posit a societal scheme that changed from concentric social circles in the 1680s to tangential social circles in the 1730s.

One scholar theorizes that increasing segmentation is related to the development of a consumer society in efforts to establish and maintain social hierarchies. Spiralling inward to the intimate, Isaac feels that "All of the physical functions...came under new codes of behavior that emphasized privacy." He continues:

Privatism is an ugly neologism, but it fits the overall trends observable in the Anglo-Virginian living environments. Change was slow in coming to the dwellings of poor planters, who continued to live crowded in one room or two room houses well into the nineteenth century.

If these societal changes occurred by the middle of the eighteenth century, one might wonder how the passage plan, initially used to divide people, came to be used so commonly, as proven by the many center-passage plans included in this study:
...these single and double pile central passage houses become the vernacular structures of nineteenth century Virginia... as more and more such houses were built, they became, in a sense, cliches. They were symbols so widely agreed upon that they came to serve a unifying function in rural Virginia, rather than a distinguishing one.83

Whole and Transformed Types

Perhaps the strongest lesson to be learned from looking at old buildings is how few survive to the present without modification. This allows the houses of the Northern Neck to be divided meaningfully into two types: whole and transformed. (See Table 2: Distribution of Whole and Transformed Plans by Form.)

In this study, whole types are those houses which retained their forms as originally built, not being substantially altered before 1840. Among this type would be those houses that have been slightly altered, but not a way that changes the original plan. Forty-four houses are the whole type.

Transformed types started with one plan that was altered significantly before 1840. These modifications are those that changed a fundamental aspect of the original plan's function. Recognition of the
### TABLE 2

**Distribution of Whole and Transformed Plans by Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole</th>
<th>Transformed from</th>
<th>Transformed into</th>
<th>Original Totals</th>
<th>Existing Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>one-room</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two-room</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>side-passage, double-pile</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>center-passage, single-pile</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>center-passage, double-pile</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>variation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
transformed type, what Herman would call "...the subsequent performance," is a critical step in addressing the dimension of time in material culture. Rather than considering these transformed types as less meaningful or ruined by their development, this project considers them as significant evidence— an elusive reflection marking "...individuals' perceptions of themselves in their community under the stress of changing fashions and human needs."  

Alterations are more than obstructions to an understanding of original integrity, more than thoughtless accretions that must be stripped away in order to appreciate unblemished charm. With a few prominent exceptions, buildings do not survive because of fortuitous circumstances, but rather because they continue to fulfill needs.  

Fourteen of the houses in this study are the transformed type, and in their examination specific patterns are revealed about the ways that houses tend to be transformed.  

Among the five houses originally built as one-room houses, only one retains that plan today. Four houses started as one-room houses and were later altered into other plans. Roxbury in Westmoreland County (figure 46),
Figure 46. Roxbury, Westmoreland County.
began with one room to which a flanking room was added, forming a two-room plan.

Belleville in Northumberland County (figure 47) and Riverside in Lancaster County (figure 48) followed a more complex transformation gaining a passage and flanking room, thus becoming center-passage, single-pile houses. Both houses have received numerous modern additions placing them now among the largest houses in the survey, yet they started as one room buildings.

Clear Spring in Westmoreland County (figure 49) followed the Belleville/Riverside pattern, combined with an intriguing change of floor level: three steep steps ascend from the original room into the added passage, permitting no doubt about where the addition was made. The fenestration of Clear Spring also makes obvious the distinction in floor level, causing its exterior almost to resemble a modern split level home. In plan, however, the house is clearly a one-room house transformed into a center-passage house.

Linden Farm in Richmond County (figure 50), the earliest surviving house in the study, has a complex
building history. The front part of the current structure's east end is the original one-room house of Linden Farm. Early in its history, a second room was added behind, making it a two-room house.88 Still later, a partition wall was added, making a side-passage, double-pile plan. As a final addition, the house gained two flanking rooms. Linden Farm stands today a center-passage, double-pile house.89

Among these six one-room houses, four were transformed from one-room to center-passage plans. This seems clear evidence that as time passed, the one-room form was not adequate for the needs or desires of the inhabitants. While it is not surprising that the houses were altered, their sharing the same pattern of transformation into center-passage houses is significant.

Five houses in the study retain their original plan as two-room houses.90 An additional five houses were originally two-room houses which have undergone significant transformation. All of the transformed two-room houses were altered to center-passage, single-pile plans: Lancaster House (figure 51) and Pop Castle (figure 52) in Lancaster County, Christmas Cove in
Figure 51. Lancaster House, Lancaster County.
Figure 52. Pop Castle, Lancaster County.
Northumberland County (figure 53), Riverdale in Richmond County (figure 54), and Level Grove in Westmoreland County (figure 55). As with the one-room plans, the consistency of the transformation pattern is remarkable. The transformation patterns of these houses helps explain why:

The state's pre-Georgian legacy is sparse. A few hall-parlor houses and a few more one cell houses -- the latter significantly embedded in mid-century additions -- are all there are.92

Six houses in the study are now side-passage, double-pile houses.93 This form, sometimes called a two-thirds Georgian, is conceptually related to the center-passage plan. Regardless of whether the two rooms flank or are aligned on one side, the passage functions as an ambiguous space useful for segregation inside the house.94

An intricate transformed plan is Epping Forest in Lancaster County (figure 56). Originally a side-passage, double-pile house, a single flanking room was added, balancing the house facade and making it an L-shaped center-passage house. It is now both a single-pile and double-pile house: the original side of the house is
Figure 53. Christmas Cove, Northumberland County.
Figure 55. Level Grove, Westmoreland County.
Figure 56. Epping Forest, Lancaster County.
two-rooms deep, and the newer side of the house is one-
room deep. For purposes of typology, it is assigned
single-pile status.

Most of the eleven houses originally built as
center-passage, single-pile dwellings retain that form.
Yet, while an additional nine houses were transformed
into that type (making a total of 20), only one
originally single-pile house was transformed into another
plan. Oakville Farm in Westmoreland County (figure 57)
was effectively doubled backwards. Starting as a
center-passage, single-pile house, the passage was
extended and two rooms added to the rear making the house
a center-passage, double-pile dwelling.

Of the twelve houses built originally as center-
passage, double-pile structures, most retain that plan
today. Three houses, like Oakville and Linden Farm above,
were transformed into this double-pile form. Hard
Bargain in Northumberland County (figure 58) was
originally a side-passage, double-pile house. It
received the addition of two flanking rooms and stands
today as a center-passage house.
Figure 58. Hard Bargain, Northumberland County.
Several center-passage, double-pile houses had wings added in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries, mostly out from the narrow ends of the house: this includes Sabine Hall's east wing, Mount Airy's quadrant connectors\textsuperscript{95}, Belle Isle's wings,\textsuperscript{96} Ditchley's kitchen wing, and Ingleside's (Westmoreland County) wings. Kirnan is the only house of this plan to receive an addition projecting from the back of the house. For the most part, these additions did not change the circulation patterns within the original double-pile form. They pulled some of the action out to the sides of the house but did not change the important public functions of the center block.

As we consider the dominance of the center passage option on the Northern Neck, in both whole and transformed types, we might look to Stratford to grasp the social uses of plan. Built as an H-shaped house,\textsuperscript{97} the most helpful way to think of the structure is mentally to remove the central cross bar: what is left are two center-passage, double-pile houses—Thomas Lee joined two common Virginia house forms. In considering its plan, Stratford seems the ultimate center passage house. The east/west axis of ninety feet is among the
longest center passages in early Virginia, and the
north/south axis of thirty feet through the Great Hall
passes through one of the most architecturally elaborate
spaces to survive from the colonial period.

If in doubt about the social implications of plan,
think of the effect of Lee's house form on his visitors.
Stratford almost the size of two Kenmores, two Gunston
Halls, or two Mount Airys and its plan referred directly
to the seat of the colonial government, the first Capital
in Williamsburg. In Girouard's concept of English
country houses as "power houses," plan makes Thomas
Lee's Stratford the most overt power house of Virginia's
Northern Neck.

The plans of the early Northern Neck houses form an
interrelated group providing important clues to the ways
eyearly Virginians chose to live. The plans tell us about
the Virginians' daily lives and the presentation of that
existence to the community. The social and aesthetic
significance of plan can only be amplified through
careful scrutiny of the embellishment consciously applied
to those architectural forms.
CHAPTER THREE
HOUSE ORNAMENT

If, as has been suggested, "...there is important cultural information to be learned by paying attention to the relationship between shape and embellishment..." we must turn to the use of ornamental elements on the complex forms of Northern Neck houses.

Ornament is defined, for purposes of this study, as any detail added in aesthetic elaboration rather than constructural necessity. This includes, for example, extra shaping of bricks or wood in the form of moldings, and all non-structural woodwork such as cornices, mantelpieces, and panelling. The definition in no way precludes the use of ornament on structural members. Some ornament is used to hide or highlight structural members; some ornament is used exclusive of structural concerns. Ornament is best described as
...the decorative orientation within the household...fashion is oriented toward enhanced definition of both form and fabric.\textsuperscript{100}

Clear and recurring patterns emerge for ornamental placement on the exteriors and interiors of Northern Neck houses. Despite low survival rates, the patterns of surviving ornament prove that embellishment was considered an integral part of the architectural whole. Recording dozens of houses, made manifest that to both builders and inhabitants, there were relatively few acceptable options for the use of domestic ornament. As with plans, what is surprising is not the variety of surviving ornament but the rather the consistency of its design and use in the test group. In terms of performance again, "...Virginians confined themselves to a relatively small number of forms and expressions."\textsuperscript{101}

Ornament is repeatedly used in much the same ways, on most levels of surviving dwellings. The most pretentious houses tend to have greater quantity and quality of decorative embellishment but the specific locations of ornament remain constant among economic levels.\textsuperscript{102} The range of surviving house ornament is more related than immediately apparent:
"...the pretentious, intricately appointed mansions shared fundamental formal principles with the humblest, plainest cabins. Basically the same, they were superficially different."\textsuperscript{103}

Exterior Ornament

The use of exterior ornament is often determined by the house's construction fabric. Of the sixty houses in this study, all are built of either frame, brick, or stone. Of the study group, 32 are frame and 24 are brick, and 2 are stone.\textsuperscript{104}

The house fabric itself may be part of the hierarchy of structures. Most scholars identify brick as the material of the affluent.\textsuperscript{105} Although brick construction may not have been more expensive than frame, its selection may have served as a "...distinguishing marker...on the whole...thought more dignified than frame..."\textsuperscript{106} The house fabric may have surface ornament. The surface of brick houses is often embellished through varied patterns of brick bond, scoring on the mortar joints, or the use of glazed headers for contrasts of color and texture. The siding of frame houses can be subtly enhanced through beading on the lower edge of overlapping weatherboards.
On both whole and transformed types, exterior ornament is located in the same places. With a few notable exceptions,\textsuperscript{107} the exterior of a transformed house is consciously designed to resemble a whole plan. Exterior ornament is used to reinforce this sense of structural unity. The typical locations for exterior ornament include

-- edges
-- wall piercings (edges of a specific type)
-- changes of floor level
-- where two materials join
-- processional routes.

Within these locations, distinctions can also be made between the front, back, and sides of a house. In the Tidewater, distinctions between front and back are often complex.\textsuperscript{108} To service the dual traffic on water and land, many Northern Neck houses actually have two fronts—a land front and a river front. When ornamental distinctions do exist between facades, the more heavily ornamented is the primary entrance. Several Northern Neck houses sited far from the water (including Ingleside and Spring Grove in Westmoreland County) display more
readily the classic differentiation between front and back.

Ornamental discrimination between front and sides exists on all the houses. None of the Northern Neck houses has sides embellished as elaborately as the facade. The contrast varies from Stratford's overt use of triangular pediments over the land and river doors but no pediment over the east and west doors, to a more subtle distinction of the plain, unelaborated brick end walls of Sunnyside.

Edges enhanced with ornament include the house corners. On a masonry building the corners might be finished with rubbed brick; on a frame house the corner might have beaded cover boards. The decorative attention applied to the corners is a vestigial symbol of the corner as the house's major structural support—structure represented by ornamental abstraction.

Another edge is the cap of a masonry chimney, often marked either with molded bricks or standard bricks laid to project from the straight ascent of the chimney stack (figure 59). These extra touches to the
Figure 59. Chimney, Mount Zion Cottage
Northumberland County.
chimney's form seem almost to celebrate reaching the highest point of the structure, yet serve also to mark the top edge of the house.\textsuperscript{112}

Wall piercings, primarily doors and windows, almost always receive ornamental embellishment. (Doorways serve the dual function of wall piercing and processional element. They are discussed in detail below as part of the processional route.) Most of the doors and windows in the study group are rectilinear.\textsuperscript{113} These squared forms are one way domestic and public structures were distinguished from churches and courthouses that often featured doors and windows with compass tops.\textsuperscript{114}

The squareness of the house window is often emphasized. On brick houses, the brick is laid in a pattern or texture to emphasize the top, side, and bottom of the piercing (figure 60). Sometimes contrasting stone marks the top or bottom of windows. The window openings on the two stone houses in the group are encased in stone of contrasting color and texture.\textsuperscript{115}

On both masonry and frame houses, the actual window sash is wood with muntins of molded profile. The
Figure 60. Window, Spring Grove
Westmoreland County.
muntins are not strictly structural: window panes could be held in place as well with unfinished wood as carefully molded mullions. On frame houses, window frames are generally surrounded by molded wooden elements. Unlike brick houses, frame houses often had exterior shutters for there are no rubbed or patterned brick details to be obscured by shutters.

Exterior ornament applied to changes of floor level mediates between the structural and the aesthetic. On a masonry house, often the level of the main floor is made distinct from the foundation or basement below by a watertable (figure 61). This detail is based partly on the tradition of a brick wall being stepped in one brick at that point. Yet watertables repeatedly receive more than the simple indentation required by the bricklayer's tradition: they are often enriched with bricks whose moldings serve no constructural function.

Changes in upper floor level on a two story masonry structure are often marked with a brick course--two or three rows of bricks laid to project from the flat walls above and below. These courses, unlike the water table below, serve no structural purpose of a change in wall
Figure 61. Watertable, belt course, and cornice
Ditchley, Westmoreland County.
thickness: the belt course shows where the joists support the upper floor. Not all of the surviving masonry houses mark this change in floor level, and none of the frame houses includes this detail.

On both masonry and frame houses, ornament marks where two different materials join. On a frame house with brick foundation, extra beading or molding on the lower wooden member divides the adjacent materials. On both frame and brick houses, a cornice$^{116}$ marks the location where the upper wall joins the sloping roof shingles. The cornice may have a series of moldings, dentils or modillions.

Understanding the processional route is critical for understanding both the house interior and exterior.$^{117}$ Upton calls the sense of movement crucial: "...more important than being in a certain room was the route taken to get there, or how far along the formal route one progressed."$^{118}$ The idea of processing through man-made space is reflected also in the public structures of courthouse, church, and capitol, as well as the created landscape of garden, forecourt, and farm.
To understand movement to and through houses, one must imagine the larger picture of early Virginians moving through their surroundings. The approach to an Virginia house was often carefully conceived to move the approaching visitor through a carefully regulated series of spaces: on the exterior, up the driveway, through the forecourt, and on the walkways. The exterior approach culminated with the visitor standing in front of the house. At this point, he might look for a moment at the size or scale of the house; on first visit he might notice the embellishments described above. He would certainly note the entrance for ornament showed him how to enter.

Doorways serve as important elements of privacy in plan. Their use is similarly critical for understanding the relation of movement to architectural ornament. Van Gennep calls the door "...the boundary between the foreign and domestic worlds,"; his identification of rites of passage has deep resonance for the universal meanings of door and threshold. His trio consists of 1) preliminal, separation or transition rites, 2) liminal or threshold rites, and 3) postliminal or incorporation rites.
This universality applies usefully to our thinking about the doorways of Northern Neck houses. The planned approach is preliminal, with fences and roads explicitly separating spaces. The door and entry is the liminal, or threshold location. Inside the structure one enters the postliminal phase of incorporation. The liminal and postliminal phases are also useful for understanding social rites within the house, for the triad of rites is reenacted at each interior threshold.

A door is distinguished from a window by being open to the floor level. On all houses in the study, the primary doorway is more detailed than its flanking windows. On every facade, the door's decorative superiority is constant (figure 62). Decorative attention on the doorway acknowledges its dominant function in the processional path.

Herman explains the ornamentation of doorways as emphasizing "...the dimension of the house as a concrete space pierced with openings connecting interior to exterior (and) rooms to other rooms." Doorways are embellished in many ways. Moving from the door outward, the door itself may be of raised-panel construction.
Figure 62. Front door, Chicacoan Cottage
Northumberland County.
considered ornamentally superior to less complicated alternatives such as board and batten. The door's panel moldings are visually analogous to the window's muntin moldings. The door surround may be designed with complex combinations of moldings; a few doorways are recessed with panel surrounds.

The door may also center an irregular grouping of window panes unique to the facade. This includes windows of different dimensions from the other facade windows, such as windows in a transom or fanlight pattern above the doorway, or placed vertically at the edge of the door opening (figure 63). Another alternative, is at Twiford, where smaller versions of the facade windows are placed around the door to suggest the configuration of the interior passage.

Only a few brick gentry houses had doorways capped by decorative pediments laid in the brickwork. The north and south doors of Stratford have this feature in common with the impressive public buildings of the period such as churches and courthouses. Exterior doors at Sabine Hall, Mount Airy and Menokin are delineated with rusticated stonework trim.
Figure 63. Front door, Hague House
Westmoreland County.
Doorways are also marked by stairs or porches leading up to them. Most wooden porches are not original, but on the houses that originally had porches, the space served as a "...social point of transition." Most houses now have wooden stairs flanked by two handrails. Some porches have ornamental balusters, railings, and benches (figure 64). A few of the nineteenth-century houses have porches with columns supporting pedimented roofs.

In sum, the doorway of the house receives the heaviest concentration of ornamental detail on the entire exterior. To the visitor approaching the house, the interior plan may already be imagined through the ornament applied to the exterior. As with Van Gennep's theory of liminality, "...the lines of social and physical demarcation found in...(exterior) thresholds extended through the house interior."129

Interior Ornament

The use of interior ornament is similar to that of the exterior: interior ornament is placed on edges, wall piercings, and processional routes. In addition, the two interior locations of stairway and hearth become the
Figure 64. Front door and porch, Milden Hall  
Richmond County.
focus of decorative elements. Stairways are part of processional route, and fireplace openings are wall piercings, but the degree of elaboration these areas receive merits separate discussion.

Interior edges emphasized through decorative moldings include floor to wall edge, and wall to ceiling edge. These edges are usually covered by a baseboard and cornice respectively (figure 65).130

Wall piercings emphasized with ornament include windows, doors and fireplaces. The least elaborate interior window repeats the simple exterior treatment of plainly molded wooden frame and muntin. As exterior windows can be elaborated with extra wooden, stone or rubbed brick details, so the window interior can be adorned with extra wooden trim including complex wooden moldings, decorative corner blocks and ears, interior shutters, rectilinear or angled panelled window reveals, and panelled window seats (figure 66).131

Doors are at once edges, wall piercings, and part of the processional route serving as "...bridges joining domestic spaces."132 They are usually embellished with
Figure 65. Interior cornice, Wilna Richmond County.
Figure 66. Panelled window seat and chair rail
Indian Banks, Richmond County.
decorative details, establishing that "...the spaces lying beyond them {are} increasingly distinct and distant." Elaboration of doorframes follows the same vocabulary as windows including the various degrees of molding profiles, special shaping including corner blocks and ears, and recessed panel surrounds. Some interior doors have decorative transoms set with square, rectangular, or lozenge shaped panes. Interior transoms are usually direct quotations of the transoms over the exterior doors of the house.

An element of interior elaboration not falling into any of the standard categories is the chair rail (figure 67). These rails, usually placed about 30 inches above the floor level, serve the practical purpose of protecting white plaster from being scraped and nicked as furniture is placed and pushed against the wall. While the chair rail serves this practical function, there is no purely pragmatic reason for its embellishment with molding, gouging, or reeding. Perhaps the aesthetic purpose of the horizontal line enclosing the room, holding in the space with the cornice and baseboard, was considered important enough to merit the extra physical and financial resources for its placement.
Figure 67. Chair rail, Linden Farm
Richmond County.
The decorative focus on staircase and fireplace is constant among the Northern Neck houses.\textsuperscript{137} In most of the center-passage houses, the staircase is in the passage, (figure 68) immediately visible as one enters from the outside helping to create "...a particularly effective and affecting receptacle for outsiders."\textsuperscript{138} Most visitors never ascended the stair but through its elaboration it served a focal and sculptural purpose in the passage.\textsuperscript{139} The stair can be ornamented in a variety of places including (moving from bottom to top): curved lower treads; panelling on the wall supporting the risers and treads; decorative brackets applied to the edge of the treads; molded, turned or carved balusters supporting the rail (figure 69) \textsuperscript{140}; panelling along the wall opposite the hand rail; and molded edges to the rail. If the passage has either dado or full wall panelling, the pattern is usually carried up the staircase wall to the upper level.

Not every primary stair is in the passage. Some were placed out of view, either behind a door or in a location of the house not often seen or used by the public.\textsuperscript{141} In houses with less overt placement of the staircase, it usually did not receive the same type of
Figure 68. Center passage, Epping Forest Lancaster County.
Figure 69. Stair balusters, Linden Farm
Richmond County.
elaboration: this phenomenon supports the theory of the ornamented public stair as a display location in the passage.142

Many visitors never made it beyond the passage: they approached the house, were admitted into the passage, and then left the house. Those whose status or task rated, however, would have proceeded to one of the rooms flanking the passage. A hierarchy of rooms, based on relative interior dimension, and quantity and quality of ornament, made clear the significance of the room in which the visitor was received.

In contemplating the meaning of the presence and pattern of ornament, the most compelling theory is that ornament helps determine the original intended hierarchy or architectural spaces. The sense of establishing hierarchies applies both to the exterior where ornament marks the entrance route, and the interior with ornament showing which room one is more privileged to enter. A historian who might otherwise be suspected of regarding ornamental studies with disdain, admits that "...embellishment...connotes a degree of superiority assumed by the users...."143 Another scholar studied
interior ornament to determine "...the ascending degrees of importance..." between rooms.\textsuperscript{144}

Ornament can be used to determine the intended distinctions between rooms. Chappell explores the use of profile moldings at Shirley in Charles City County, "...to establish the superiority of the river side of the house, reinforcing...ideas of how the house would function."\textsuperscript{145} In sum,

...building hierarchies reflect people's differing abilities and desires to expend capital on architectural space and its elaboration.\textsuperscript{146}

For those who doubt analysis of ornament as a useful tool, consider that "...the social meaning of rooms within houses is expressed by variation in detail."\textsuperscript{147} In most houses, the fireplace wall receives the most decorative elaboration of any part of the house (figure 70). The houses of the Northern Neck display "...a self apparent primary orientation ...to the hearth."\textsuperscript{148} Even in a house where the staircase is tucked away (therefore receiving little ornament), the fireplace in most rooms will be framed and defined architecturally. Usually the hearth decoration is
Figure 70. Fireplace wall, Wicomico View
Northumberland County.
"...scaled to meet and occasionally exceed the general degree of ornamentation."\textsuperscript{149} A fireplace is a structural edge of room and house and a wall piercing. It is anthropologically the heart of the home and "...the hearth burns in the center of the mind."\textsuperscript{150} It is perhaps because of deeply instilled human values that the fireplace receives the greatest ornamental focus in the house.

Among rooms with surviving wall treatments, the alternatives include plastered walls, walls with dado panelling, and full panelled walls. The fireplace wall always has the most embellishment of the room's walls, drawing one's eye to the room's primary axis.\textsuperscript{151} If a room has three plastered walls with chair rail and cornice, the fireplace wall may have cornice and mantelpiece, and be panelled below the chair rail. Or, if three walls of a room are panelled below the chair rail, the fireplace wall may be fully panelled (figure 71). In the entire room has full wall panelling, extra moldings form a mantel shelf, or pilasters surround the hearth.\textsuperscript{152} In the hierarchy of room walls the fireplace wall is always the decorative focus.
Figure 71. Fireplace wall full panelling
Kirnan, Westmoreland County.
Interior wall surfaces do not fall easily into established categories of ornament. Walls in Northern Neck house are either plaster or panelled. No original wallpaper survives among the study houses. Full wall panelling never was typical and few examples survive. The surviving full wall panelling tends to be on the earlier houses in the group.\textsuperscript{153}

Plaster walls were most typical.\textsuperscript{154} As the years passed, taste seemed to turn from panelling to plaster with increasingly focused embellishment.\textsuperscript{155} In place of a full panelled fireplace wall, there might be a plastered wall with cornice, chair rail, and a carved mantel topped with movable ornaments (figure 72).\textsuperscript{156} Rather than covering the whole wall with panels, the ornament becomes concentrated on smaller and smaller areas. This suggests that panelling became worn out as a sign: material and skill no longer need be expended creating panels if everyone already understood the ornamental code.\textsuperscript{157}

We have little evidence of how color was used on interior ornament.\textsuperscript{158} Most wood trim was pine, and was covered with paint. The unusual trim of walnut or
Figure 72. Mantel, Verville, Lancaster County.
mahogany may have been left unpainted. Paint on interior ornament means that the painted trim was darker than the adjacent plaster walls and ceiling, creating color contrast between the two wall surfaces. Darker paint both highlighted the trim and, in a perceptual sense, caused it to recede.

In sum, the placement of ornament on Northern Neck houses provides clues to the inhabitants' aesthetic and social values. Water tables, belt courses, cornices and glazed headers show us how Virginians used fashion to enhance the form of their houses. Trim consciously applied to doorways, porches and stairs shows us how they used embellishment to highlight paths of social procession. Ornament clearly did not determine social interaction, but its placement reflected the expected patterns of that interaction.

Ornamentation serves a constructural purpose of finishing openings in the neatest possible manner, but "...on a deeper level, it is an implicit acknowledgement that the spaces lying on opposite sides of a common wall are different." Primary sources for the study of early Virginia houses are few: the survival rates of
houses and ornament make imperative our examination of ornament with

...a tough minded awareness that much of the past is beyond recovery and that every piece of historical information is a chance survivor in need of careful evaluation.161

While the study of embellishment can not replace the basic and necessary study of plan, it is time to combine the two.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE INTERPLAY OF ARCHITECTURAL FORM AND ORNAMENT

This fieldwork based study of fifty-eight early houses in the four counties between Virginia's Potomac and Rappahannock rivers, proves that the complex interplay of plan and embellishment helped display, control, and direct social interaction. Virtually all existing literature on houses is based on an analysis of building technique or floor plan. This project attempted to evaluate the possibility of another meaningful way conceptually to organize a group of structures. Trying to move beyond the level of floor plan analysis, the project tried to determine if there were patterns of domestic elaboration, if there was logic to the use of ornament and to ascertain if ornament had any purpose or function.

Binford's concept that artifacts serve at least one of three functions is directly applicable to the
surviving houses of the Northern Neck. On the "technomic" level, technology of house construction protected inhabitants from shifting weather and temperature. The houses were much more, however, than basic shelter for early Virginians; the technomic function does not fully explain the house's important purposes.

The "socio-technic" function of the house is seen in the ways inhabitants presented themselves within the dwelling and the ways they adapted plan to enforce social hierarchy. They used ornament not only to "...maintain distinctions but to amplify and clarify them."162

On the third level, the house functions "ideo-technically" as the milieu for the enforcement of social partitions. Colonial and federal Virginians believed deeply in a stratified social system and used their houses to demonstrate where owner and visitor, servant and slave belonged in the social order. Partial reliance on architecture to order and communicate human relations, was part of a larger development of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Virginians increasingly relying on
their physical world to provide meaningful social intercourse.\textsuperscript{163}

Both exterior and interior exhibited the owner's place among his neighbors. A sense of display was strong in early Virginia and Upton suggests that Bishop William Meade

"...though (he) offered up the eighteenth century gentry as models...was unable to understand their mores...Their self-absorbed love of display shocked him."\textsuperscript{164}

On a universal level, Wagner suggests that "...human beings individually and collectively always devote a very large part of their time and energy to self-display and self-assertion."\textsuperscript{165} The Tayloes and Carters, therefore, used elaborate stone trim to show their position at the top of society, the same way that the middling sort showed their relative status with simpler ogee moldings. All the surviving houses share patterns of plan and ornamentation presenting direct messages of social segmentation.

Form and ornament endow both exterior and interior and exterior with the dual function of being seen and used\textsuperscript{166} to denote the owner's and visitor's societal standing. The house stood at the center of a complex
fashioned to declare "...the owner's status...by means of elaborately contrived formal relationships." Herman supports this asserting that

...architectural detail conveyed values of domestic interaction and social distance that were understood by many, accessible to some, and communicated by a few using combinations of formal, constructural, and aesthetic options. The house ornament related the structure to an entire landscape of imposed, dividing distinctions—a landscape full of man-made elaboration and embellishment.

It would be wrong to imply that all houses built on the Northern Neck between 1720 and 1840 shared these patterns of plan and ornament. Documentary references to unfinished interiors or exteriors covered only with tar, certify that the typical Virginia house may have been devoid of this ornamental code. In conducting a fieldwork study, however, one reports on the survivors: the fields of the Northern Neck supply an unambiguous answer to the prevalent code linking form and embellishment.

Glassie writes that houses, as artifacts, can be seen as "...an affecting presence, the perpetual mythic, enactment of a culture's essential structure." The
display of embellishment on houses is one way early Virginians came to live "artifactually elaborated lives." The development of a system of consumer goods evolved in the structures themselves and in increasing assemblages of objects placed within the dwellings. While the preference for the passage plan partially explains the larger societal process, our understanding of early Virginia houses is enhanced through the systematic study of their embellishment; the segmentation of plan is analogous to the segmentation of surface and form through ornament. Fashion and embellishment

...isolate and communicate strategic points of physical passage and social intersection. Where house form served as a map for interaction, style provided instructive signposts along those paths...

While plan is indispensable in discovering the meanings of houses, the meanings are vastly enriched through an awareness of the interplay of ornament and form.
ENDNOTES


   


5. An example of the earlier approach might be summed up by:

   It is a mistake to think that all Colonial people lived in 'splendor and plenty,' but in the case of the Northern Neck people, especially in the seventy five years preceding the Revolution, t is true for the most part. To be sure, little visual evidence is there to speak for this lordly existence.

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Edward Chase Earle, Jr. and Mildred Towles Wooding, "'Verville' Once Called 'Gordonsville,'" 605.

For an example of new efforts to study the region's houses, see Walter Biscoe Norris, editor, Westmoreland County Virginia 1653 - 1983, chapter VI, "A survey of Period Architecture."


7. For a fine discussion see Camille Wells, "Old Claims and New Demands: Vernacular Architecture Studies Today."


10. For a detailed, yet purely descriptive account of the placement and detail of interior ornament see M. Kirwan King, II, "Grove Mount: Its Architecture and History."

11. "...Vernacular architecture scholars tend to dismiss style and aesthetics as the concern of designers and art historians..." Camille Wells, "Old Claims and New Demands: Vernacular Architecture Studies Today." 7.

A fascinating exposure of the anti-aesthetic position appears in Henry Glassie's review of Petr Bogatyrev's book The Functions of Folk Costume in Moravian Slovakia. Glassie criticizes Bogatyrev for focusing on costume ornament:
...when he speaks of a costume's function, he speaks, in fact, of the function of some parts of costume, and basic forms are apt to be as communicative as the details with which they are trimmed. When he speaks of costume aesthetics he is trapped in the old mistake of art historical scholarship -- that of considering only applied ornament to be art, when the shape of the costume, too, is bound by aesthetic considerations.

Henry Glassie, "Structure and Function, Folklore and the Artifact," 332. Glassie's own work, of course, has focused on basic forms to the exclusion of applied ornament. This project is an attempt to combine the study of form and ornament.


17. Arnold Van Gennep, The Rites of Passage.

18. Only the region's western border with King George County is potentially open to interpretation. For purposes of this study, King George County is not part of the Northern Neck.
19. The Northern Neck's lack of development is particularly surprising considering the proximity of both Washington, D. C. and Richmond, Virginia.

20. Through the fieldwork, I examined virtually all the surviving eighteenth century houses in the region, many of the houses from the period 1800 - 1820, and a sampling of the houses from 1820 - 1840. Initially I planned to form the test group of only eighteenth century houses. To have a sufficiently large test group, dealing with survival rates forced me to include houses built later than originally planned.


22. The prime example of survival through documentation is Menokin in Richmond County. The house is now in ruins (its interior trim removed and in the custody of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities) but during the 1930's, HABS made a complete set of measured drawings, filed as VA-156.

23. Architecture and the decorative arts share this skew of survival toward the pretentious. Surviving furnishings tend to be from the upper economic levels, both because owners deemed them worthy of saving and took better care of them.

24. In Westmoreland County alone the houses Thomas Waterman would have termed "Mansions" now destroyed include Nomini Hall, Windsor, Machodoc, Lee Hall, Pope's Creek, Pecatone, and the Monroe family home at White Oak Swamp.

   Despite the skew toward the pretentious, houses associated with historic notables do not always survive at the expense of the more typical dwellings. Neither house of the two Northern Neck signers of the Declaration of Independence still stands: Richard Henry Lee's Chantilly is known to us only through archaeological remains, and Francis Lightfoot Lee's Menokin through HABS drawings, removed woodwork and structural ruins.

26. The skew toward larger houses surviving is clear in Table One "Distribution of Surviving Plan Types in Test Group," page 18 of this text.

27. The early Virginian mentality of not necessarily wanting to build a permanent house is discussed in Cary Carson, et al., "Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies."

28. Personal conversation with Calder Loth, Senior Architectural Historian with the Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks, June 29, 1988. Dr. Bernard L. Herman suggests the figure of 95% as more accurate.

29. One source gives Linden Farm the date 1700. Calder Loth, editor The Virginia Landmarks Register, 396. Dell Upton assigns it to the first half of the eighteenth century in his catalog and the first quarter of the century in his text, "Early Vernacular Architecture in Southeastern Virginia," 482 and 189.

30. The high incidence of removal or alteration of architectural ornament makes ironic the common practice of dating a structure from its decorative details.


32. It would be a mistake, however, always to associate expensive decoration with expensive buildings. Poplar Spring, a relatively inexpensive seventeenth century house, had costly decoration. Dell Upton, Holy Things and Profane, 35.


34. Cary Carson, et al., "Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies." Fraser Neiman refutes the concept of post hole durability being impermanent, saying the theory applies "...standards which seem inappropriate even for even our own stable culture." "Domestic Architecture of the Clifts Plantation," 3117.

35. First granted in 1649 by King Charles II in exile, the charter was re-enrolled in 1661 after the Restoration. James B. Gouger, III, "Agricultural Change in the Northern Neck of Virginia 1700 - 1860," 54 - 55.
36. By 1661, 576 land grants had been made in the Northern Neck through the colonial government. By 1690, over 1200 land grants had been made, mostly in Lancaster and Westmoreland counties. After Robert "King" Carter assumed the role as agent for the Proprietary of the Northern Neck (first from 1702 - 1712, and again from 1722 - 1732) the numbers of inland grants increased "...with Mr. Carter himself taking the lead." James B. Gouger, III, "Agricultural Change in the Northern Neck of Virginia 1700 - 1860," 54 - 58.


39. Edward Chappell paraphrases Binford in discussing the advent of substantial, permanent housing:

   Binford argues that moderate and impermanent structures are replaced by what Nikolaus Pevsner might call architecture only where a society grown to a level at which most members of the community no longer intimately know each other. The need to establish an identity is the motivation for building substantial houses.

   "Cultural Change in the Shenandoah Valley: Northern Augusta County Houses before 1861," 75 - 76.

40. Wells asserts that the agricultural complex surrounding each house is "...the original, the proper context for the surviving houses of the Northern Neck." "The Eighteenth Century Landscape of Virginia's Northern Neck," 4246. Although outside the scope of this paper, it is important to understand the historical role of agriculture to the region. James B. Gouger's work on Northern Neck agriculture elucidates critical elements of the region's development. (Page numbers from "Agricultural Change in the Northern Neck of Virginia," appear below in parentheses.) Throughout the seventeenth century, land on the Northern Neck was primarily developed through tobacco cultivation, making the region one of the leading tobacco

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producers in Virginia by the early eighteenth century. By the end of the century, however, the agricultural crops of the Northern Neck had developed quite differently from those of the surrounding regions. Given that the physical geography and the same people (mainly English, Germans, and Scots-Irish) settled the entire Tidewater area, Gouger hypothesizes that the Northern Neck Proprietorship was the contributing factor causing the major differences in the developmental pattern of the Northern Neck vis-à-vis surrounding area. (15)

The structure of the Northern Neck Proprietorship made the Northern Neck an area where large landowners were permanently settled on the Neck, yet in possession of huge tracts of land stretching west into the Valley of Virginia. The Tidewater planters rented their western lands to settlers moving down into the Valley from Pennsylvania and Maryland. Gouger identifies the Valley as a

...a contact zone...a center of agricultural innovation for which new ideas about crop rotations and fertilizers spread eastward across the Northern Neck. (97)

Contact between immigrant farmers and Tidewater planters, through the landlord/tenant relationship, allowed the exchange of ideas helping to direct the Northern Neck planters' attention away from their longstanding devotion to tobacco. (97) Gouger credits the immigrants with introducing into Virginia their traditions about grain farming; their influence spread to the Northern Neck and not to other Tidewater areas precisely because of the distinctive economic structure of the Northern Neck Proprietorship. In essence, Gouger creates an agricultural region, stretching across from the Valley to the Northern Neck.

Gouger's explanation of the causes of increased grain cultivation on the Neck during the first half of the eighteenth century, identifies an important trend in crop cultivation. He writes that the high grain prices in the first half of the eighteenth century, not depleted tobacco lands, made grains attractive to Northern Neck planters. This economic explanation accounts for a returned emphasis on tobacco in the Northern Neck after 1760, when tobacco prices were restored to profitable levels. Yet the brief revival of tobacco cultivation did not last; after the Revolution, tobacco never again
dominated the economy of the Northern Neck. (106 - 107, italics mine)

By 1790, wheat replaced tobacco as the principal crop of Tidewater, (112) its cultivation encouraged in the low necklands by successful use of oyster shell fertilizer. On the sandy, upland soils of the Neck, wheat yields were less satisfactory, and upland farmers increasingly turned from wheat to corn. (115) This thirty year period, 1789 - 1819, was a prosperous one for Northern Neck farmers. Grain cultivation increased in the region due to generally good prices for wheat: the factors of warfare in Europe, and markets in Europe and the West Indies newly opened to American crops, contributed to the profitability of grains. In addition, the development of Baltimore as a major port -- then emerging as the principal flour milling and exporting center of the middle states -- and its easy accessibility from the Northern Neck by water, gave farmers in the Neck an advantageous position. (120)

The national depression of 1819 abruptly terminated Northern Neck prosperity. Wheat prices fell sharply, remaining generally low for the next three decades, and the Hessian fly appears to have been particularly troublesome. (121) After the Panic of 1819, many small farmers moved to other areas (including Kentucky, Alabama, and Ohio), making the large estates -- already the dominant feature on the Northern Neck -- even larger as lands of the emigrating farmers were bought up. (122)

The revival of agriculture in the Northern Neck started in the 1840's with a renewed emphasis on Peruvian guano. The dramatic, ten fold increase in importation of guano into Baltimore between 1849 and 1851, from 2,700 tons in 1849 to 25,000 tons in 1851, (126) was important to the Northern Neck: the guano seemed to be most beneficial on soils where other fertilizers had little effect. Throughout the upper south, the use of guano was "...embraced with enthusiasm which was unprecedented for an agricultural innovation." (125)

The expansion of wheat production (wheat production almost doubling between 1850 and 1860, rising by 231% in Lancaster County) made possible by the introduction of guano coupled with the rise of wheat prices at the outbreak of the Crimean War, made the decade preceding the Civil War "...a period of prosperity in the Northern Neck which exceeded even that of the halcyon days of the colonial tobacco trade." (128)

Gouger's theory of a contact zone between Virginia's Valley and Northern Neck may well apply to
agricultural practices, but there is no evidence that the architecture or decorative arts of eastern Virginia were influenced significantly by the Valley traditions.

41. Being the northernmost peninsula of Virginia, it was not clear in the 1630's whether the region would be part of the colony of Maryland or Virginia (Robert A. Wheeler, "Lancaster County, Virginia, 1650 - 1750: The Evolution of the Southern Tidewater Community," 8). By the late 1640's the region was part of Virginia: Northumberland County was formed in 1648 to include all land between the Potomac and Rappahannock rivers. (Robert A. Wheeler, "Lancaster County, Virginia, 1650 - 1750: The Evolution of the Southern Tidewater Community," 13 - 17; James B. Gouger, III, "Agricultural Change in the Northern Neck of Virginia, 1700 - 1860," 53.)

In 1651, Lancaster County was formed from Northumberland. Initially, Lancaster included its present area plus what is today Middlesex County, south of the Rappahannock. In 1669, Lancaster was divided so the county borders included only the land north of the Rappahannock. This division seems an early sign of the Northern Neck being the region between the Potomac and Rappahannock. Westmoreland County was formed in 1653. (James B. Gouger, III, "Agricultural Change in the Northern Neck of Virginia, 1700 - 1860," 53 - 54.)

Richmond County was formed in 1692 out of old Rappahannock County, a part of today's Westmoreland and Essex counties. As with Lancaster County in 1669, the Rappahannock county residents found it did not work to have one county straddle the Rappahannock river: the water was seen as a dividing line between the people on either side.

Neither Northumberland nor Westmoreland counties ever straddled the Potomac River, since their northern border was the separate colony of Maryland.

By 1692, the borders of the Northern Neck's four counties were established. The borders effectively provided and restricted each of the counties to one of the two river valleys, either the Potomac or the Rappahannock. James B. Gouger, III, "Agricultural Change in the Northern Neck of Virginia, 1700 - 1860," 54.

42. The region's subsequent isolation during the second half of the nineteenth century, resulted from the demise of the ferry system, the advent of land travel by rail and automobile, and the lack of bridges across the
Potomac or Rappahannock rivers. Without bridges, all land traffic from the Northern Neck to points north or south had to drive the length of the Neck to Fredericksburg, only then turning north or south. The region has never had rail transportation.

The Northern Neck's geographical isolation has been mitigated somewhat in the twentieth century by the opening of three bridges: two south across the Rappahannock (one crossing to Tappahannock, the other from Irvington) and one north across the Potomac at Dahlgren. Although the bridges have improved the Neck's integration with the rest of the state, they have not markedly accelerated the area's development.

43. Northern Neck inhabitants clearly think of it as a region. Among state-wide organizations, both the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities have "Northern Neck Branches" consisting of the four counties (and excluding King George County); the local phone book white pages lists one and one half columns of organizations calling themselves a variety of Northern Neck services, from "ambulance" through "workshop." Perhaps the modern regional pride is best captured in the bumper sticker "The Northern Neck: Virginia at its Best."


47. Although Buchanan calls these plans "odd," the term "variation" more usefully implies their relation to the five common plan types. Paul Buchanan, "The Eighteenth Century Frame Houses of Virginia," 58.


49. The only eighteenth century Northern Neck dwelling now standing as a one-room house is the Rochester House in Westmoreland County.
50. The six houses now standing as two-room structures are: in Lancaster County, the House on 606; in Northumberland County, Lynhams, Mount Zion and Wheatlands; and in Westmoreland County, Drum Bay and Roxbury.

51. The six houses now standing as side-passage, double-pile structures are: in Lancaster County, Clifton and Lancaster Tavern; in Richmond County, Wilna; in Westmoreland County, Auburn, Liberty, and Spence's Point. Both Edward Chappell and Henry Glassie identify this form as "...two-thirds of the Georgian double-pile plan." Edward Chappell, "Cultural Change in the Shenandoah Valley: Northern Augusta County Houses Before 1861," 78; Henry Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*, 91.

52. The twenty houses now standing as center-passage, single-pile structures are: in Lancaster County, Epping Forest, Lancaster House, Pop Castle, Riverside, Verville and Windsor; in Northumberland County, Belleville, Chicacoan Cottage, Christmas Cove, Ingleside, Sunnyside and West End; in Richmond County, Milden Hall and Riverdale; and in Westmoreland County, Blenheim, Brick House, Clear Spring, Elba, Hague House and Level Grove.

53. The fifteen houses now standing as center-passage, double-pile houses are: in Lancaster County, Spring Hill; in Northumberland County, Ditchley, Hard Bargain, Springfield and Wicomico View; in Richmond County, Bladensfield, Haynesville, Linden Farm, Mount Airy, and Sabine Hall; and in Westmoreland County, Ingleside, Kirnan, Oakville, Twiford and Walnut Hill.

54. The ten houses now standing as variation structures are: in Lancaster County, Belle Isle, Chowning's Ferry and Merry Point; in Northumberland County, Hurstville; in Richmond County, Indian Banks and Menokin; and in Westmoreland County, Mont Calm, Pomona, Spring Grove and Stratford.


58. Dr. Herman J. Heikkenen, "Final Report, The Last Year of Tree Growth For Selected Timbers Within the Buildings of Stratford Hall Plantation As Derived By the Key-Year Dendrochronology Technique."


60. "The data has shown that many of these men did not necessarily build the largest houses they could afford." Dell Upton, "Early Vernacular Architecture in Southeastern Virginia," 349. Some smaller houses received much embellishment: "Well off Virginians who chose to abide in one or two room dwellings might also decide to make them solid and even finely detailed." Camille Wells, "The Eighteenth Century Landscape of Virginia's Northern Neck," 4240.

An example of the traditional attitude of equating large houses with wealthy planters, would be the statement that Verville as is stands, is "...only part of the dwelling of James Gordon." Edward Chase Earle and Mildred Towle Wooding, "'Verville' Once Called 'Gordonsville,'" 599. Italics mine.


62. This L-shape relates to the transformed T-shape of Epping Forest, figure 56, with its straight facade.

63. This relates to English plans of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century where non-communicating interior partitions appeared to segregate masters from servants, "...running vertically from kitchen to attic, not between the storeys(sic)..." Cary Carson, "Segregation in Vernacular Buildings," 24.

Dell Upton uses Indian Banks to explain the mediation between single and double pile forms of center passage houses. He writes that Virginia houses of the second half of the eighteenth century eventually reached a more "compact" solution than the L-shape: the double pile plan proliferated as the back room of Indian Bank. plan was collapsed into the body of the house, presenting the exterior image of a single pile house. The double rooms on each side of the passage might be served from corner fireplaces with a single chimney, as at Indian...

By the 1820s, home builders were willing to admit to the double pile plan by finally using double exterior end chimneys. Dell Upton, "Early Vernacular Architecture in Southeastern Virginia," 380.

64. Menokin's half-depth passage plan is similar to Kenmore in Fredericksburg, and the Hammond-Harwood House in Annapolis.

65. For a discussion of the evolution of the center passage plan, see Mark Wenger, "The Central Passage in Virginia: Evolution of an Eighteenth Century Living Space."

To test the climatic theory, one should examine house plans of other warm climates.


74. Henry Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*, 121. Italics mine.

The doorway must be stressed as an element in the establishment of privacy for it is the controlling element of the dividing wall. This makes it useful when looking at plans, to examine the angle at which the door swings open. The direction often indicates the way entrance to the room was controlled: its shows how movement was directed through the house. Since the functions of the door are usually recognized through embellishment, doorways are discussed at length in chapter three.

Today, we have many cultural assumptions about doorways. In the modern office complex, great importance is attached to whether one is assigned a doorless cubicle (low status) or an office with a door (high status). Carol Kim, "Sitting in the Corporate Sphere," unpublished term paper for the University of Delaware, Winterthur Program in Early American Culture, spring 1985.

Perhaps the story of "The Lady and the Tiger" best sums up the salient factor of a closed doorway: one is never certain what is on the other side. The options, even in the domestic setting, could vary from pleasant to terrifying.

82. Rhys Issac, The Transformation of Virginia, 303 - 305. The pattern described is directly applicable to both the form and the relation of survival to size among the Northern Neck houses. Few of those poor planter houses survive, leading to the high percentage of larger houses in the landscape and the study group.

85. Bernard L. Herman, "Time and Performance: Folk Houses in Delaware," 64.


87. The Rochester House, is a one-room house today because its later additions have been removed. Edward Chappell, "Architectural Recording and the Open Air Museum: A View from the Field," 30 - 31.

88. This may have been when the chimney was rebuilt to serve the two corner fireplaces.

89. Linden Farm is discussed in Camille Wells, "The Eighteenth Century Landscape of Virginia's Northern Neck," 420; Dell Upton, "Early Vernacular Architecture in Southeastern Virginia," 91-95, 189, 196; and Virginia Pearson, "Linden Farm."

90. The group called two-room includes a variety of relative room sizes. A few plans show two rooms of almost equal size, as at Mount Zion in Westmoreland County. Other two-room plans have rooms of decidedly different dimensions: rooms that might also be considered one room with a side passage. All houses with one partition wall are considered two-room dwellings.

91. Riverdale and Stratford are the only houses in the study with roof timbers dated by the process of dendrochronology. Both houses were tested by Dr. Herman J. Heikkenen of Blacksburg, VA.


93. This plan might be unexpected in the rural reaches of the Northern Neck, for it is often associated with the surviving colonial town houses of Philadelphia, Annapolis and Alexandria. Urban conventions made tall, narrow houses a useful form, yet their presence on the Northern Neck proves the form not exclusive to urban areas.
94. If the side-passage, double-pile houses are added to the center-passage group (both single and double-pile), these "passage plans" represent 41 of the 58 houses in the study (71%).

95. Dell Upton is the first to publish that Mount Airy's quadrant connectors are later additions to the original house. Holy Things and Profane, 218.

96. Belle Isle's center block dates from 1759, and its two wings from 1790. Calder Loth, editor, The Virginia Landmarks Register, 228.

97. Tuckahoe in Goochland County, Virginia is also an H-shaped colonial house but was transformed into that plan. The original Tuckahoe was a center-passage, single-pile house to which the cross bar and flanking wing were added. Henry Glassie defines Tuckahoe as "...only a couple of pretentious I houses arranged into an H-shape." Folk Housing in Middle Virginia, 176.


100. Bernard L. Herman, Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware 1700 - 1900, 43.


102. In a contrasting view, Dell Upton's study of colonial churches relates that the gentry's choices of the style of ornament on both their churches and houses, ".identified religious order with the gentry style." "Anglican Parish Churches in Eighteenth Century Virginia," 99.


104. Within the masonry group, the two stone houses are Menokin and Mount Airy. These two houses, so entwined by style, geography and genealogy, are distinctive among the houses of the Northern Neck and the houses of colonial Virginia.
In Westmoreland County, a later tradition of fieldstone end chimneys has been suggested. Walter Biscoe Norris, editor, *Westmoreland County, Virginia 1683 - 1983*, 233.


In explaining the advent of the use of brick for Virginia houses, Neiman explains that

"...when gentlemen became interested in displaying their social eminence before the world at large, brick became a handy tool to that end, a tool that was all the more valuable because of its previously infrequent employment."

Fraser Neiman, "Domestic Architecture at the Clifts Plantation," 3120 - 3121.

107. Clear Spring and Level Grove are two examples whose exterior readily betrays the transformed plan.


109. No house in the study has either simulated or real rusticated stone walls of the type found at Mount Vernon.


111. Although we know they were used, if any wooden chimneys survive on the Northern Neck they were not located for inclusion in the study group.

112. The chimney on the two room Mount Zion has strikingly detailed brickwork: a line of glazed headers ascends each chimney shoulder, joining into a single line climbing the full height of the chimney.

113. Spring Grove (Westmoreland County) is a notable exception with decorative fanlights both inside and out.

115. Often the modern use of exterior shutters covers original ornamental window details on masonry houses.

116. Most cornices in the text group are wooden. A more costly option was the infrequently used stone cornice: Evidence survives for stone cornices on Mount Airy and Sabine Hall. Outside the test group, stone cornices were used on the Carlyle House in Alexandria and Berkeley in Charles City County.

117. The sense of movement and processing relates directly to the design of the central passage, discussed in Chapter Two.


119. In contemplating the meanings of ornament, it is most useful to expand one's idea of architecture to include all man made structures in the spaces surrounding the house: fences, garden walks, garden walls, patterns of plant materials, fences, and vehicular access. Having grasped the notion of house ornament as a series of symbols applied to make clear the ways in which one will move in and out of the house, it is easy to conclude that decorative grids were actually laid down throughout the landscape to show one where to go and (even more important) to show one where not to go.

To reinforce the relation of house to landscape, Sven Hesselgren claims "...the space outs a building is often experienced as restricted or enc. esed, especially when other buildings, trees, and other features act as walls." *Man's Perception of Man-Made Environment*, 154; Dell Upton calls the culture and its landscape "inseparable." *Holy Things and Profane*, xix; Rhys Isaac carries the concept to its logical conclusion identifying as

...the most decisive act...in reshaping the configuration of the Chesapeake landscape was the imposition of the lines of exclusive property rights...

120. This sense of approaching the house is discussed from a visitor's point of view. Although inhabitants, servants, and slaves were presumably aware of the ornamental details of their surroundings, the concept of ornament sending signals is most clearly explained through the convention of the approaching visitor.

121. Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 20.


123. The exception in the region is the wicket door of Yeocomico Church, a opening stopping about one foot above ground level.


125. During the eighteenth century "Panelled (exterior) doors were installed on all but the smallest buildings." Paul Buchanan, "The Eighteenth Century Frame Houses of Virginia," 71.

126. Dell Upton presents the hierarchy of pediment shapes, identifying them as "...part of a continuous tradition...refer(ing) largely unconsciously, to the triumphal arches of Rome." Upton, *Holy Things and Profane*, 117.

127. "Porches...were rare but were added to almost every colonial building during the nineteenth century." Paul Buchanan, "The Eighteenth Century Frame Houses of Virginia," 71.


130. All of the ceilings in the study are flat except the inverted tray ceiling of Stratford's Great Hall. That ceiling retains completely original framing. Among the most pretentious forms of interior ornament, this ceiling form "...is part of a larger family of devices placing the honored under its own roof." Upton, *Holy Things and Profane*, 114.
131. Windows are an ambiguous decorative location in today's furnished historic houses, for they are often decorated with ahistorical treatments covering carefully placed architectural embellishment. Increasing documentary evidence for the use of curtains during the period 1720 - 1840, reveals that colonial windows were very seldom curtained while federal and empire windows were often covered with curtains. This makes more complex the attempts to understand the role of ornament on those embellished federal and empire window frames, raising inevitable questions about why a surface would be deliberately ornamented and then deliberately covered. For period window treatment design sources, Florence Montgomery, Textiles in America 1650 - 1870, 49 - 96.

132. Bernard L. Herman, Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware 1700 - 1900, 43.

133. Doors do not share with windows the ambiguous decorative twist of being embellished then deliberately covered with fabric.


135. On the Northern Neck, few examples of carved details on door frames survives. Spring Grove has the Northern Neck's most spectacular interior door frames with carved fanlights and sidelights. Spring Grove raises important issues of relative ornamentation of interior and exterior on early Virginia houses precisely because its interior door frames are so much more elaborate than its exterior.

136. To document the period practice of placing furniture against the wall, an English quotation of a practice common also in the colonies:

When a person comes into his chamber, and finds the chairs all standing in the middle of the room, he is angry with his servant, and rather than see them continue in that disorder, perhaps takes the trouble himself to see them all in their places with their backs to the wall...(for) the superior conueniency in leaving the floor free and disengaged.
137. This is in contrast to the findings of both Edward Chappell ("Cultural Change in the Shenandoah Valley: Northern Augusta County Houses Before 1861," 129) and Dell Upton ("Early Vernacular Architecture in Southeastern Virginia, 280).


139. This discussion is in contrast to Paul Buchanan's view that "stairs were considered utilitarian objects and only a few bore ornamentation," in "The Eighteenth Century Frame Houses of Virginia," 72.

140. In churches, among decorative elements of the interior, "...formal variation appeared most often in turned balusters." Dell Upton, Holy Things and Profane, 107.

141. The only existing interior stair at Stratford is small, tucked into an inconspicuous corner. It the design of Stratford's restoration architect, Fiske Kimball, to simulate an eighteenth century stair. In the 1930s, Stratford still had a second interior stair in its northwest corner correctly identified by Kimball as a federal stair. At that time, the restoration policy of the Robert E. Lee Memorial Association was to take the house back to its Georgian appearance; hence, the federal stair was removed and its fragments stored on the property. One photograph survives showing the federal stair in place: Edith Tunis Sale, Colonial Interiors, Second Series, plate 21.

142. Mark Wenger asserts that in the third quarter of the eighteenth century there was "...a tendency to give the passage...an identity of its own, separate and distinct from that of the stair." "The Central Passage in Virginia," 141.

Some staircases not in the passage were considered part of the processional route, and highly embellished. The grand stair at Sabine Hall is set perpendicular to the passage: although its size makes it immediately visible, it is not actually in the passage. The stair, with elaborate balusters, accompanied by two story
panelling and an oversized landing window, is proof that a stair need not be in the passage to be treated as a focal point. Sabine Hall is unusual among the study group for its fully panelled second floor passage, reached by the staircase described above. Most houses display a markedly less ornamented second floor.


"The distribution of decoration throughout the house depended upon the relationship of each room to the hall which, of course, was afforded the most elaborate decoration.


146. Edward Chappell, "Looking at Buildings," ii. Chappell goes on to state on page iii that

Because of their scale and multiplicity of social signals, the largest Chesapeake gentry houses display particularly elaborate internal decorative hierarchies.


150. Henry Glassie, Passing the Time in Ballymenone, 327.


152. Dell Upton relates the domestic use of full panelling and pilasters to their sacred use as altarpieces, suggesting complex implications for the hearth. Holy Things and Profane, 120 – 132.
153. The decline of full wall panelling in Virginia may be connected to the state's strong tradition of raised panel furniture. The panelled surfaces of these movable pieces may eventually have made superfluous the extra layer of raised panelling permanently attached to the wall. For full discussion of panelled Virginia furniture, see James R. Melchor, N. Gordon Lohr and Marilyn Melchor, Eastern Shore Virginia Raised-Panel Furniture 1730 - 1830.

154. The use of white plaster reflecting more light than panelling, coincides with designs for larger windows and the use of larger looking glasses in formal rooms. Perhaps there is linkage between this and the period's interest in cookbooks, recipes for cleaning materials, and increased physical hygiene.

155. Gradually the focused yet exuberant wood trim became compressed, flattened and attenuated. Edward Chappell, "Cultural Change in the Shenandoah Valley: Northern Augusta County Houses before 1861," 136. Perhaps the ultimate flattening appears in the increased use of wallpaper in the nineteenth century -- completely flat wallpapers replacing the early deep panels. Paul Buchanan finds that in the eighteenth century "...wallpaper was only used occasionally." "The Eighteenth Century Frame Houses of Virginia," 72. For a full history of the use of wallpaper, see Catherine Lynn, Wallpaper in America.


158. Bernard L. Herman, Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware 1700 - 1900, 56 - 57. The exception to this lack of evidence for period color techniques is found on those structures documented through scientific paint analysis. In the region, only Stratford has documented the complete history of its interior paint

159. Paul Buchanan, "The Eighteenth Century Frame Houses of Virginia," 71. The infrequent use of oak in panelling, caused Waterman to hypothesize that Greenspring probably had oak panelling, "...although no example remains in America." Mansions of Virginia, 21.

160. Bernard L. Herman, Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware 1700 - 1900, 43 - 44.


162. Dell Upton, Holy Things and Profane, 220.


164. Dell Upton, Holy Things and Profane, xviii - xix.


166. This is in contrast to Glassie's idea that the interior of a house is designed primarily to be used, and the exterior is designed primarily to be seen -- implying that being designed to be seen is not a use. Henry Glassie, "Folk Art," 253.


168. Bernard L. Herman, Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware 1700 - 1900, 54. Dell Upton confirms this interpretation on page 102 of Holy Things and Profane:

Style is pervasive. It provides a context, or system of common understanding, within which the active participants of a society can operate in a coordinated manner...To make an analogy with linguistic scholarship, style is a kind of code, a concise bonding body of implicitly understood assumptions that need not be rehearsed; allusions suffice. Style is in some senses consensual.

170. The admirable phrase was used by Edward Chappell, in a paper delivered to the Capital Historical Society, March 1986.

APPENDIX A

Alphabetical Listing of Houses in Test Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House Name and County</th>
<th>Masonry or Frame</th>
<th>Whole or Transformed</th>
<th>Plan Type</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1. Auburn Westmoreland (figure 10)</td>
<td>f w</td>
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<td>side-passage, double-pile</td>
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<td>2. Belle Isle Lancaster (figure 40)</td>
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<td>variation</td>
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<td>3. Belleville Northumberland (figure 47)</td>
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<td>2. center-passage, single-pile</td>
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<td>4. Bladensfield Richmond (figure 25)</td>
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<td>center-passage, double-pile</td>
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<td>5. Blenheim Westmoreland (figure 20)</td>
<td>m w</td>
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<td>center-passage, single-pile</td>
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<td>6. Brick House Westmoreland (figure 21)</td>
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<td>7. Chicacoan Northumberland (figure 15)</td>
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<td>center-passage, single-pile</td>
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<td>Epping Forest f</td>
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<td>Indian Banks, Richmond</td>
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<td>Ingleside, Westmoreland</td>
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<td>Kirnan, Westmoreland</td>
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<td>Level Grove, Westmoreland</td>
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<td>Merry Point</td>
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<td>(figure 35)</td>
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</table>
54. West End  
Northumberland  
(figure 18)  
m  w  center-passage,  
single-pile

55. Wheatlands  
Northumberland  
(figure 5)  
f  w  two-room

56. Wicomico View  
Northumberland  
(figure 31)  
m  w  center-passage,  
double-pile

57. Wilna  
Richmond  
(figure 9)  
f  w  side-passage,  
double-pile

58. Windsor  
Lancaster  
(figure 14)  
m  w  center-passage,  
double-pile

**Totals**

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APPENDIX B

Fieldwork Methodology

The fieldwork research system was designed to locate quickly the range of surviving houses in the northern Tidewater region of Virginia. Starting in Washington, D. C. at the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, I examined the records of the Historic American Buildings Survey, the Carnegie Survey of the Architecture of the South, and the Pictorial Archive of American Architecture. I noted all of the records of seven adjacent Virginia counties included in those archives: the counties of King George, Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, Spotsylvania, Stafford, and Westmoreland. I photocopied the survey sheets, measured drawings, and photographs included in the three Library of Congress archives for any structure predating 1820 located in those seven counties.
From Washington, I proceeded to Richmond to the Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks. There again, I scanned their records for the seven counties, and photocopied all survey sheets and photographs for structures dating before 1820. The Landmarks Commission has recorded a greater number of structures than are included in the Library of Congress records; almost every house recorded in Washington was also recorded in Richmond.¹

Between the findings at the two repositories, it was clear from evaluating the structures of the seven counties that enough early structures survived in the four lower counties to form a viable test group. I also found that the four counties of Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland are commonly perceived as a region called the Northern Neck.

In beginning the fieldwork, I tackled one county at a time moving from east to west. I started in each county courthouse, checking real estate records to see which structures recorded in Washington or Richmond were still standing, who now owned them, and determine their location on my detail maps from the State Highway
Department. (Unfortunately, since compilation of most of the survey sheets between the 1930s and 1950s, the state route numbers have changed making those early survey location references almost meaningless.) After recording these details, I was fortunate in each county to find knowledgeable residents who could tell me of old houses in their county not included in either the state or federal repositories. As is to be expected, some of these leads were for houses not early enough for my purposes, yet other suggestions led to useful and important structures.

In making initial contact with homeowners, I tried to devise a system to give each homeowner confidence in my project so he would be willing to have me record his home with tape measure and camera. Using Winterthur Museum letterhead, I wrote a series of letters, identifying myself and explaining the project. I left a note at each house, in the mailbox or tucked into the front door, consciously trying to avoid the owner at this stage. I reasoned that if I were a homeowner, and a complete stranger asked me if she could measure my house (the process of measuring and photographing a house is, of course, the perfect groundwork for future burglary), I
would prefer to have some time to consider the request. This initial drop off also enabled me to make a cursory examination of the structure's suitability for inclusion.

I followed this initial contact with a phone call or return visit, hoping that giving the homeowner time to evaluate the request would increase my chance of being permitted to document the house. (As a digression, I must note here that it may be an asset in architectural fieldwork to be a female of unthreatening appearance.) Whatever the causes, I was fortunate in receiving only two outright rejections among my requests to examine houses.

Each house visit started in conversation with the homeowner, asking what they knew of the house's history of ownership and alteration. At each house, I made a measured plan of the first floor only. Rather than exhibit reticence about asking to see the more private areas of the upper levels, I examined all floors of the house.\(^2\) The choice to measure only the main floor was due as much to the fact that the bedroom floors tended to have sustained more alterations, as to constraints of time.\(^3\) It was unfortunately outside the scope of this
project to compile complete sets of drawings, including plans of all floors, elevations, sections, and site plans, for each house.

For five houses, complete sets of measured drawings are recorded in the Historic American Buildings Survey. A sixth house of the group has a fine published measured drawing. I did not remeasure these six houses. I would argue that in the best of all possible worlds, it would be important to remeasure each structure to better understand the house.

In addition to the first floor plans, I documented my visit with the products of two cameras: one for black and white prints, the other for color slides. These photographs of both exteriors and interiors, focused particularly on areas of architectural elaboration.

In retrospect, this combination of plans and photographs served as a good system enabling the mental and graphic recreation of each structure for comparative purposes. In addition, the plans and photographs now serve as an important archival record of the early houses of Virginia's Northern Neck.
1. The Landmarks Commission has very few measured drawings in its collection. Compared to HABS, the Landmarks Commission has more houses recorded with fewer of the details.

2. Henry Glassie thought it discourteous to ask house owners to allow him to invade the privacy of the upper floors. _Folk Housing in Middle Virginia_, page 47.

3. One author states that second floor plans tend to mirror those of the lower level. This observation is correct in a general sense. Dell Upton, "Early Vernacular Architecture of Southeastern Virginia," page 250 quoting Henry Glassie, _Folk Housing in Middle Virginia_, page 122. Exceptions would be that second floor rooms in one-room houses tend to be subdivided, and second floors plans in center-passage houses tend to have a small room over the entry.

4. The five houses drawn by HABS are in Lancaster County, Belle Isle (VA-64); in Richmond County, Menokin (VA-156) and Sabine Hall (VA-155); and in Westmoreland County, Spring Grove (VA-1203) and Stratford (VA-307).

5. The measured plan of Mount Airy in Richmond County, appears in _Great Georgian Houses of America_, volume I, page 58.
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