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George Washington's Mount Vernon Stable in Context: A Comparative Analysis of Early American Stables

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GEORGE WASHINGTON'S MOUNT VERNON STABLE
IN CONTEXT: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
OF EARLY AMERICAN STABLES

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Schools of
Clemson University & The College of Charleston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
Historic Preservation

by
Meghan Paige White
May 2016

Accepted by:
Dr. Carter L. Hudgins, Committee Chair
Richard Marks III
Willie Graham
Tom Reinhart
ABSTRACT

As the Revolutionary War came to a close, George Washington sent orders from Pennsylvania to his Mount Vernon farm in Virginia to construct a new horse stable. Completed in 1782, this substantial brick building survives as one of the best representations between the planter-elite like Washington and the multiple roles horses played in the culture of eighteenth-century America. This thesis applies an investigation of surviving stables on the east coast and historical sources to explore the evolution of stable architecture in eighteenth and nineteenth-century America. Stables, like essentially everything else in early American life, represented the materialism, power, wealth, and education of those who ordered their construction. Extant stables at Mount Airy, Shirley, and Sabine Hall in Virginia, Shepherd’s Delight in Maryland, Woodlands in Pennsylvania, and the Aiken-Rhett House and others in Charleston, South Carolina illustrate shared patterns of stable construction and plan. These stables and information drawn from newspaper advertisements, insurance records, plats, paintings, sketches, and tax records reveal how design, materials, finish, and joinery employed in the construction of stables evolved in George Washington’s world and how they defined the relationships, architectural and spatial, between dwelling and stable. This thesis argues that stable fittings as expressions of wealth reflected a household’s aspirations and perceptions of its place in local and regional culture. Conclusions drawn from this research will support the restoration of the interior of Mount Vernon’s stable.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to George Washington, whose fondness for horses and architecture set a standard few can match. The past two years that culminated in this thesis were my version of the solace you found under your Vine and Fig tree. So, this is the order for my march: that I pursue preservation with the immutable determination you showed in everything you did.
I would like to thank my parents, Tim and Karen, for supporting my education and love of historic preservation. I am grateful to my friends who helped me document stables and patiently sat through my musings, especially Jean Stoll, Haley Schriber, Rachel Walling, and Meredith Wilson. I owe much to Tom Reinhart, who accepted my application for the 2015 Mid-West Tool Collectors Association (M-WTCA) internship at Mount Vernon. Thank you to those scholars of Chesapeake history, including Carl Lounsbury, Willie Graham, and Camille Wells, who helped me formulate my statistical analysis and gave me guidance. To the professors who taught me a greater appreciation for preservation, especially Carter Hudgins, thank you for your patience and insight. Those who opened their stables to me—I appreciate your hospitality and willingness to share the history of your home. This thesis would not be possible if it were not for my family, friends, and colleagues.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE PAGE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xxi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

1. **INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY** ........................................... 1

2. **MAKING A WAY FOR ONSELF: PRESENCE OF PLACE IN EARLY AMERICA** ........................................... 15

3. **GENTLEMANLY PURSUITS: HORSE CULTURE IN EARLY AMERICA** ........................................... 30
   - Early Horses in the Colonies ........................................... 33
   - Transportation and Horses in the Eighteenth Century .................. 35
   - Betting, Racing, and Hunting: Leisurely Lifestyles of the Elite .................. 36
   - The Decline of the Horse ........................................... 46

4. **THE DICHOTOMY OF GEORGE WASHINGTON’S BUILDING CAMPAIGNS (1754-1799)** ........................................... 47
   - The Making of a Virginia Planter ........................................... 47
   - The Stable ........................................... 53
   - Post-Washington Repairs to the Stable ........................................... 67
   - Context ........................................... 73
Table of Contents (Continued)

V. ANALYSIS OF EXTANT STABLES ................................................................. 77

   Mount Airy (VA) .................................................................................... 77
   Shirley Plantation (VA) ........................................................................ 88
   Shepherd’s Delight (MD) ....................................................................... 95
   Aiken Rhett (SC) .................................................................................. 101
   Sabine Hall (VA) ................................................................................... 106
   Charles Drayton House (SC) ............................................................... 115
   31 Legare Street (SC) ........................................................................... 120
   Conclusions ......................................................................................... 124

VI. “A good BRICK STABLE:” ANALYSIS OF STABLE TRENDS ................................................................. 127

   Stalls ..................................................................................................... 128
   Posts ..................................................................................................... 140
   Racks, Mangers/Troughs, & Feed Boxes ............................................. 144
   Joinery and Materials .......................................................................... 149
   Spatial Arrangement ........................................................................... 150
   Function Vs. Aesthetics ........................................................................ 159
   Statistical Analysis ............................................................................. 162
   A Change of Philosophy ...................................................................... 173

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOUNT VERNON’S STABLE ........................................................................ 181

   Stalls ..................................................................................................... 181
   Partitions ............................................................................................. 182
   Racks & Mangers ................................................................................ 183
   Ornamentation .................................................................................... 185
   Materials ............................................................................................... 187
   Joinery ................................................................................................. 187
   Other Considerations .......................................................................... 189
Table of Contents (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V. CONCLUSION</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A: 2003 Historic Structure Report on Mount Vernon’s Stable</th>
<th>197</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B: Mount Vernon Stable Chronology</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: Mount Vernon Stable Measured Drawings</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D: Measured Drawings of Shirley, Mount Airy, and Sabine Hall Stables By Colonial Williamsburg Foundation</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES

| REFERENCES | 331 |
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Nomini Hall, Westmoreland, VA. R.E. Collins. Unknown date. Library of Congress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td><em>The Plantation</em>. Ca. 1825. Oil on wood. 48.6 x 74.9 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Isaac Norris’ Fairhill, as depicted in 1717. Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Historical Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>A horse racing announcement, Virginia Gazette, Hunter, March 20, 1752. Courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Stable interior. Ridgley Papers. Courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td><em>Portrait of a Horseman</em>. James Seymour. Oil on canvas. 94 x 131.1 cm. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td><em>George Washington before the Battle of Trenton</em>. John Trumbull. 1792-179467.3 x 47 cm. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td><em>The Death of General Mercer at the Battle of Princeton, January 3, 1777</em>. John Trumbull. Oil on canvas. 51.1 x 75.9 cm. Courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Map of George Washington’s Farms at Mount Vernon. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association.</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Belvoir, Fairfax County, VA. Courtesy of the Historic American Building Survey, Library of Congress</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>The dotted outline illustrates the changes to Mount Vernon Once it reached George Washington’s possession. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association.</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>The South Lane. Photo by author.</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>The north elevation of the stable. Photo by author.</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>The south elevation of the stable, depicting The open shed. Photo by author.</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Dormer windows on the north elevation. Photo by author.</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>English bond. Photo by author.</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Sketch by Private Robert Knox Sneden on December 23, 1861. Courtesy of the Virginia Historical Society</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>Detail of the stable at Dogue Run. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>Current stalls. Courtesy of the MVLA.</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>The stalls likely added in 1896. Courtesy of the MVLA.</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>Circular saw marks on the top rail and wire nails. Note the Construction of the feed racks and boxes. Courtesy of the MVLA.</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>The poles are attached to the feed boxes and top rail. Courtesy of the MVLA.</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>Note the nail marks on the girder above the posts. Courtesy of the MVLA.</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>Courtesy of the MVLA.</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>The south elevation of the Mount Airy Stable. Photo by Author</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Elevation. Courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Opening leading from carriage room to west stall room. Note the brick and stone. Photo by author.</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Diamond grille window in the west stall room leading To the shed attachment. Photo by author.</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Photo by author.</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>West stall room, looking toward carriage room. Note the Different heights of the two partitions, though they both Feature the same curve and are made with identical boards Photo by author.</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>The stalls at Mount Airy. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>The covering on the stall partitions were added later, as is Seen by the smaller, circular cut nails that fasten the Covering to the wood. Photo by author.</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>Cut-through of Mount Airy’s stable showing the stalls. Courtesy of CWF</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>The finial is too narrow and the band is too thick. Photo By author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>The posts in the east stall room. Photo by author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>East stall room, looking toward the carriage room. Note The crude construction of these stalls. They serve the Same purpose as the curved partitions, but are of very Simple construction. Photo by author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>Note the similar construction of the stalls pictured above. From John C. Wooley, M.S. Farm Buildings (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1941), 196.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>The mangers at Mount Airy. Courtesy of the MVLA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>Metal feed racks added in the late-nineteenth century. Photo by author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>The cut into the girder indicates the original location of the Stall posts, indicating these posts are at least second Generation. Photo by author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>Pine. Photo by author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>Circular saw marks on the mangers. Dates them to c. 1850 Or later. Photo by author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>Evidence of whitewash on the partitions. Photo by author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>The 1816 Mutual Assurance policy for Mount Airy. The stable Is the rectangular building on the bottom right. Courtesy Of the Library of Virginia, Richmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>The east elevation of the stable at Shirley. Photo by Tom Reinhart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>The west elevation. The change in the brickwork on the north Show the shape of the shed roof before it was made into A full-height gable. Photo by Tom Reinhart</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>Looking northeast. The north wall is English bond and the East wall is Flemish bond. Photo by author.</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>Carriage and stall room. Photo by author.</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>North wall. Photo by author.</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>Interior elevation of the north wall. Courtesy of CWF.</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>Fragment of a stall partition. Photo by author.</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>The stable at Shepherd’s Delight. East elevation. Photo By author.</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>Whitewash. Photo by author.</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>Joist pocket. Photo by author.</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>Most of the original tie beams were stolen. Photo by author.</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>The stable building is to the right, or west. Photo by author.</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>The stable and carriage room at the Aiken Rhett House. Photo by author.</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>Urban plantations often used creative ways to protect their Property behind their walls. Here, a vertical slat in the Interior brick wall allows air flow that circulates from The outer brick wall. It prevents people from reaching Into the stable and the horses from reaching out. Photo By author.</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>The room in the foreground was once used for stabling, likely When the structure was half its current size. The wall partition, Now open, was once boarded up. The slats at the top were for Ventilation. Photo by author.</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>Six stalls are located in this room, with two more that were in The room between this room and the carriage room. Photo By author.</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>One of the existing stalls. Note the vertical slat in the brickwork, The Gothic arch above the feed box and rack, and the individual Mortises in the post to the right. Photo by author.</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>Metal hook to tie up the horse. Photo by author.</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>Individual mortise in the post. Photo by author.</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>The posts at Aiken-Rhett are eight-sided. Photo by author.</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>This divides the backs of each stall. Photo by author.</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>The stable (pictured in the foreground to the right) is located far Away from the main dwelling house. Photo by author.</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>The stable at Sabine Hall.</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>Plan of Sabine’s stable. Courtesy of CWF.</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>Evidence of paint. Photo by author.</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>Brick underpinning on the addition. Photo by author.</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>Window. Photo by author.</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>The box stall in the north room. Courtesy of MVLA.</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>The mangers in the stall room. The metal hook was likely Connected to the horse’s halter by a rope to keep the horse In its stall. Photo by author.</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>The gate to the box stall. Photo by author.</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>The gate is mortise and tenoned. Photo by author.</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>The second stall partition. The metal grille is no longer Attached. Photo taken in 2003. Courtesy of MVLA.</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>The stall is pegged and tenoned. Post of oak. Photo by author.</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>The posts of the stall is half-lapped to the girder. Note The early cut nail protruding from the post. Below It are two bolts that were probably added later. Photo by author</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>All that remains of this stall today is the post connected to the brick wall. The post is grooved to allow the planks to be inserted. The diagonal piece of wood on the partition is probably part of the manger that was removed at an unknown date. Photo taken in 1983. Courtesy of CWF</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>Photo showing the arrangement of two stalls. Photo taken in 2003. Courtesy of MVLA</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>The original stall in 1998. Photograph by Willie Graham. Courtesy of CWF</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>The exterior of the Charles Drayton stable after the renovation. Photo by author</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>One of the reconstructed stall partitions. Photo by author</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>The channels in the posts. Photo by author</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>Photo by author</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>The stable at 31 Legare. The kitchen is in the foreground. Photo by author</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>The deep overhanging eave and the slotted wall on the south facilitated ventilation and shade from the sun. Photo by author</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>The west wall of the stable. Notice the white bricks. These may indicate</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>that the stable continued to the brick or that this section was enclosed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>at some point. Photo by author.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>The interior brickwork shows no consistent bond. The wall on the west and</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the ladder leading to the hayloft may be later changes. Photo by author.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>Stall partition. Photo by author.</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>Stall partition. Photo by author.</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Sketch of Woodlands, drawn by Charles Drayton I, 1806. Courtesy of the</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lowcountry Digital Library.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>The original stalls at the Aiken Rhett House stable would have reached</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nearly 8 feet high with boards that ran parallel to the floor. Photo by</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>author.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Stall at the Charles Drayton House stable. Photo by author.</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Remnant extends perpendicular from the wall at Shirley. Photo by author.</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td><em>Horses in a Stable.</em> James Seymour. 1740. Oil on canvas. 21.4 x 34.5 cm.</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Courtesy of the Higgins Art Gallery and Museum. United Kingdom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>*The Stables and Two Famous Running Horses Belonging to His Grace, the</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Duke of Bolton.* James Seymour. 1747. Oil on canvas. 62.2 x 74.3 cm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7</td>
<td><em>Huntsman with Hunters and Dogs in Stable.</em> Thomas Burford. 1770. Mezzotint.</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25.3 x 35.2 cm. Courtesy of the Auckland Art Gallery.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8</td>
<td><em>Horses in a Stable with Ostler.</em> Thomas Burford. 1770. Mezzotint. 24.8 x</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35 cm. Courtesy of the Auckland Art Gallery.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>Plate 81. <em>The Practical Builder, or Workman's General Assistant</em>. William Pain. 1774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>Governor Penn’s stables, drawn by Thomas Jefferson, 1778. The Coolidge Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>Morris’s stalls, drawn by Thomas Jefferson in 1778. The Coolidge Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>Elevation of a cyma curved-stall partition. <em>Communications to the Board of Agriculture</em>. London. 1796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>Photograph depicting stalls in east stall room. Stalls likely From 1896. Photo is identified as “G” and is located On blueprints in Morley Williams file in Mount Vernon Library. Photograph taken in 1937 for Morley Williams’s Report of stable repairs and restoration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.15</td>
<td><em>Racing Cracks of the Day</em>. John Frederick Herring Sr. 1845. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of The Baltimore Museum Of Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.16</td>
<td><em>Bay Horse in a Stable</em>. Théodore Géricault. 1813-1814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>Markings on the girder. Courtesy of the MVLA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>Markings on the girder. Courtesy of the MVLA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Microfilm reel 3.32.16...</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Microfilm reel 9.69.1574...</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Microfilm reel 6.49.11...</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Microfilm reel 6.53.505...</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Microfilm reel 3.29.2098...</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Microfilm reel 9.70.1701...</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Microfilm reel 9.70.1702...</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Conjectural sketch of a sloping partition. Drawn by the author...</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Conjectural sketch of the chamfered details. Courtesy of Jean Stoll...</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>The joinery of the stalls to posts. Photo by author...</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Half-lap. Photo by author...</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>The cobblestones and cement were added in the nineteenth century. Below this lay the original dirt foundation...</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Distances Between Stable to Dwelling House From Mutual Assurance Records 1802-1822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Virginia Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Pennsylvania Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Maryland Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Stables in Sale Advertisements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Stable Material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>Acreage (451 Total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>Acreage (20% of Total Data)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>Compilation of Extant Stable Data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

The objective of this thesis is to determine the original appearance of George Washington’s brick horse stable (1782) located on the South Lane on the Mount Vernon estate. Analysis of historical and architectural evidence will support the restoration of the stable that is scheduled to begin within the decade. Of great importance to this restoration is determining the design of the interior fittings in the east and west stall rooms. In order to locate evidence of the stable’s eighteenth-century appearance, research was undertaken on two fronts. Documentary research through resources such as the Mount Vernon library and other archives was conducted first to establish a foundational understanding of Washington’s stable. Site visits to other contemporary stables was conducted so that the building fabric of these stables could be compared with Mount Vernon’s stable. These investigations gathered information to reconstruct the appearance of stables at the end of the eighteenth century and a clearer image of Mount Vernon’s exceptional stable.

At eighty-two feet long and forty feet wide, the stable remains one of the largest and most impressive eighteenth-century stables in the United States. The northern enclosed portion housed the carriage and personal riding horses of Washington and his family. The open shed to the south housed work animals such as mules and draft horses. The stable’s interior spatial arrangement, English bond, and year of construction speak to Washington’s building priorities at Mount Vernon, yet they also speak to local building practices and horse culture of the planter-elite in Virginia and other early-American colonies.

This thesis evolved from a 2015 internship at George Washington’s Mount Vernon. The purpose of that work was the cornerstone for this thesis. Research goals included a more comprehensive understanding of the design of the stall partitions in
the east and west stall rooms of the stable. Building on the work of that internship, the trajectory of the thesis traces the path of stall design and stable architecture in colonial America, especially in the Chesapeake. This thesis ends with a restoration plan for Mount Vernon’s stable that includes a specific design for the stalls, their materials, finish, and joinery.

Much of the information used for this report came from Mount Vernon’s library and relevant sources and materials from other archives, historical houses, and scholars in the field of historic preservation. Primary documents, such as the correspondence of George Washington, Superintendent Harrison Dodge’s diaries from the late-nineteenth century, and eye-witness accounts were useful in establishing a timeline for the construction, repairs, and restoration of the stable. Washington’s diaries and correspondence with his friends and with his overseers and managers at Mount Vernon during his absence from his estate provide a relatively detailed early history of the stable’s building program. His successors were not the fastidious record-keepers of Mount Vernon’s everyday working events that he was, and the dearth of documentation between 1801 and the purchase of Mount Vernon by Pamela Ann Cunningham and her female cohorts in the 1850s has made it difficult to reconstruct the building and repair campaigns of the stable in the nineteenth century. The existing records, along with architectural and archaeological reports, photographs, Historic Structure Reports (HSRs), and annual reports were crucial in documenting the stable’s building program.

Over the summer, databases like Eighteenth Century Collections Online proved essential to finding documents that mentioned “stalls,” “horses,” “stables,” and other pertinent words. From this, the specific text George Washington likely used in the construction and arrangement of stable involved in this study was discovered. The database was also useful in identifying the sheer number of published works that advised farmers on how to take care of horses and how they should be sheltered. These and
other databases like Early English Books Online, Hathi Trust, and Project Gutenberg established a timeline of ideology concerning stables and horse comfort from sixteenth-century English to early-twentieth-century American examples.

In addition to these texts that helped establish context, published sources directly relating to George Washington were of course vital to uncovering the appearance of his stable in 1799. American Founding Era Rotunda Collection, published by the University of Virginia, is a digital publication that contains thousands of papers from and to America’s founding men and women, including George Washington. They include collections such as *The Papers of George Washington Digital Edition* and George Washington’s diaries. They include letters that Mount Vernon did not have concerning Washington and his plantation. This source uncovered the papers of eighteenth-century elites that involved horse culture and stable architecture. These, again, provided context and formed the foundation for uncovering early attitudes relating to horses and architecture.

Architectural studies conducted by Mount Vernon were examined for this thesis. The restoration intern Carrie K. Schomig compiled during the summer of 2003 the Historic Structure Report (HSR) on Mount Vernon’s stable. She assembled a thorough building history of the current stable at Mount Vernon. Schomig presented detailed analysis of all building components of the structure and completed measured drawings. Her work was integral to this thesis.

Although the 2003 HSR on Mount Vernon’s stable pieced together a chronology of the construction of the stable, research during the summer internship discovered additional information. The restoration files at the Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington proved essential to this facet of research. The folders labeled “Stable” and “Barn” provided mangers’ reports, construction and maintenance events and costs, and photographs. Separate binders on managers’ reports also were
useful in establishing a fuller chronology of the stable and its maintenance history than previously known. References to the “stable” that were included in the HSR but that actually referred to stables on Washington’s other farms were corrected. This is important because it clarifies the construction history of the stable and allowed for comparisons between his other barns and stables that unfortunately no longer exist.

In addition to Mount Vernon’s archives, the collections at Colonial Williamsburg Foundation’s office contained a number of architectural drawings, photographs, and reports of stables. These included photographs of Mount Airy’s masonry stable in Virginia, whose tripartite arrangement is most similar to Mount Vernon’s, and Sabine Hall’s stable, which has early nineteenth-century stalls.

There were four types of stables in early America. The first were stables for personal use. The second were stables for local parishes or county courts. The third included stables primarily for work animals, such as stables for mills and distilleries. The last category was public stables found at taverns and other public places. This thesis considers only private stables. Though the architectural distinctions between a public stable and a private one is negligible, private stables offer better insights to gentry interests.

In order to discern building patterns of early American stables, the research spread outwards, encompassing broader topics of eighteenth-century culture that affected stable architecture. This research included analyzing the relationship, architectural and spatial, between a plantation’s main dwelling house and the stable, an exploration of the priorities of the planter elite and the role stables, and horses played in expressing status through material possessions. Extrapolating the data from these questions clarified the importance of stables as reflections of gentry culture and reinforces the argument for why they deserve to be better understood than they currently are.
Answering these questions presented difficulties. Many early stables have been razed or altered beyond recognition into living quarters or for other functions. The few that exist with minimal alterations generally do not preserve the original stall partitions. This is frequently due to the effects of the natural wear and decay that would have occurred in wooden stall partitions in use for more than 200 years. Also, as farming technology progressed and tractors replaced the need for horses on a farm, oftentimes stalls were removed to make way for new equipment. Scholarly literature has dedicated little time to understanding stable architecture. They are usually relegated to the background in favor of other outbuildings such as kitchens, about which one can find much scholarly literature relating to their evolution and function. The fragmentary source material on stables as an independent structure in its own right has left open a large gap in understanding the place of horses in the economic and cultural priorities of colonial planters and the role of horses in gentry life. This continuum can also be established by sifting through estate drawings, inventories, and tax records. Because so many eighteenth century stables, both frame and masonry, do not exist today, primary documents that indicate the presence of a stable, its arrangement on a plantation, its size, and sometimes its materials will benefit better comprehension of colonial stables.

The approach that best facilitated discovering answers to the questions above is one that examines what tangible and intangible aspects of the British-Atlantic world elites mirrored and appropriated and how this is reflected in stable building. Economic patterns, chiefly those that reflect the elite’s consumption habits and manner of living, provided additional guidance. Understanding their economic patterns threw light on new interpretations of the horse within this framework. Focusing on one social group, the planter-elite, created a more cohesive understanding of these patterns as applied to stables.
Stables, like essentially everything else in early American life, represented the materialism, power, wealth, and education of those who ordered their construction. Scholars have amply demonstrated that the British-Atlantic world in the eighteenth century was exceptionally materialistic. Elites used materials and their accumulation of wealth to show off their successes in a way that would provide them identities among their contemporaries. Those who could afford education, typically the children of wealthy planters and merchants, gained knowledge of the classical architectural style of Andrea Palladio and others that England was appropriating. These styles made their way overseas. Those early Americans who were educated enough to build their plantations in a way that reflected classical proportions and characteristics used their property to demonstrate their power.

This thesis argues that stables were among the most significant material possessions in the eighteenth century. Through examination of primary descriptions of planter life and plantation architecture, this thesis explains how the architectural design of stables served an important reflection of a gentleman’s perceived place in his community. It will show that how a stable looked to outsiders, from the quality of materials to the aesthetically pleasing proportions popular in the eighteenth century, was as instrumental as the appearance of one’s house and clothing in establishing a place in the upper tier of Chesapeake society.

An awareness of the economic and cultural priorities of the planter elite in the Chesapeake and along the eastern seaboard of colonial America was integral in establishing a baseline upon which to understand the cultural importance of horses and their shelters. Published sources that relate specifically to stalls, stabling, and horses such as newspapers and gazettes from Virginia, Maryland, South Carolina, and Pennsylvania were crucial to compiling the statistics in this thesis. Advertisements that specified the sale of plantations, horses, and other household goods provided this economic context. These
advertisements helped uncover the frequency of certain materials in construction, the number of specific mentions of stables in the descriptions, how often the sale of horses were advertised, and other topics relating to horse culture, such as racing announcements. *The Virginia Gazette* is accessible online through Colonial Williamsburg Foundation’s website and is searchable through an index. Both *The South Carolina Gazette* and *The Pennsylvania Gazette* are searchable through Accessible Archives, a database entered through College of Charleston. The database America’s Historical Newspapers, accessible through the Charleston county public library system, contains thousands of news articles from a variety of newspapers in a specified time period and geographical location. Assembling a strong sample of these advertisements complemented Camille Wells’ 1993 article that used *The Virginia Gazette* to establish trends on colonial outbuildings, and offers new information specifically for stables.

The 1798 Federal Direct Tax records provided detailed information concerning building dimensions and materials. Although most of the records from that year are gone, the Maryland State Archives has the scanned copies available electronically. Although searching through the thousands of pages is time consuming, gathering a large number of stables in Maryland provided the best chances to obtain representative statistics. The records for Pennsylvania, which are the most intact, are available online too. Many scholars transcribed the counties and townships that exist and are publicly accessible. This list provided 1,159 stables with dimensions and material descriptions. The large number of stables available in Pennsylvania will benefit this thesis by providing context for Mount Vernon’s stable. It also facilitated an answer to the question of whether stable dimensions and materials had regional differences, or if there are patterns that extended throughout the eastern seaboard.

Estate taxes and plats were used to answer the questions newspapers cannot. These offered a clearer idea of the number of stables in proportion to a dwelling, their
arrangement on a site, and the materials with which they were constructed. These documents also highlighted the economic divide, which was useful in stratifying the population studied in this thesis.

The Mutual Assurance records that documented properties and structures that were insured against fire from the late eighteenth century have all been digitized and can be found online through the University of Mary Washington. There are 31,138 records, and sixty-three search terms represent some type of stable. Only insurance records for Richmond and Henrico County properties have images available online. The rest of the documents are available at the Library of Virginia. Policy sketches and information including the valuations of stables from 181 properties across Virginia from the late eighteenth century through 1830 bolstered visual evidence concerning spatial arrangement and hierarchy.

The data collected from newspapers, tax records and plats were combined into a Microsoft Access document. Access was vital to the completion of this thesis. It allowed the data to be separated into specific queries that answered the questions in this thesis. One of Access’s most functional features is being able to easily sort for specific information, such as how many stables are in the database for each state. That could be narrowed down by county, or material, or dimension. Hopefully, the database will prove useful for whoever continues this research.

Diaries and written records by plantation owners illustrated farming practices, family roles, architecture, and the role of the horse. The diaries of Robert Carter, William Byrd II, and Landon Carter provided reflections of daily life that gave insight into the interests and activities of eighteenth-century Virginia planters.

Written records from visitors and outsiders provided a contextual foil against the diaries of planters. The Reverend Hugh Jones recorded his experience traveling the south
in the mid-1720s. Jones records some interesting insights into the relationship between horses and the colonists. In fact, Jones recorded some specific cases relating to horses that show that even he thought the colonists’ obsession with their horses was unfamiliar. Robert Beverley’s insights are similar to Hugh Jones in that they were recorded for London audiences and were recorded by outsiders. Beverley’s writings were published in 1705, which is very early. However, his book offered context that helped in identifying the evolving horse culture in Virginia.

Philip Vickers Fithian kept a diary for the short time he spent as a tutor at Nomini Hall in Virginia, plantation of Robert Carter. Fithian’s diary indirectly showed how his daily life as a tutor on the plantation differed from that of the owner. It also reflected the perspective on horse culture from a man of the middling class and the similarities and differences in perspectives with the elites.

In order to provide evidence for features missing in the Mount Vernon stable, this thesis will take a close look at the contemporary stables in the Chesapeake and those that George Washington may have come into contact to better understand the regional style of stall design. The timespan between the earliest stable (Mount Airy-1760s) and the latest (31 Legare-1870) is vast. Though 110 years between stables may seem unruly, in truth this parameter is a result of available stables with minimal alterations. While the documentary and statistical evidence is cut off at 1830, the analysis of stables visited in person offered insight into how trends that developed in the eighteenth century continued into the late-nineteenth century and beyond.

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Stables at Shirley Plantation, Mount Airy, and Sabine Hall in Virginia, Shepherd’s Delight in Maryland, the Aiken Rhett House, the Charles Drayton House, and 31 Legare in Charleston provided visual evidence of stall design. Comparing these extant stables with those described through secondary documents, photographs, and architectural drawings, like those for Hampton Plantation in Maryland and Woodlands in Pennsylvania, provided a fuller picture of stall designs, as well as the overall arrangement of stables.

Site visits over the summer to an eighteenth-century one room brick masonry stable on a Maryland farm and Shirley Plantation’s brick masonry tripartite stable in Virginia were useful in identifying the economic spectrum of masonry stables. The Maryland stable at Shepherd’s Delight, for example, would be considered an above average stable on a farm because of its durable and costly construction material. However, it is not as exceptional as Shirley’s or Mount Vernon’s because it is one room only and features no ornamentation. Establishing a continuum of masonry stables in terms of their financial cost and the balance between utility and aesthetics will contribute to a better understanding of Mount Vernon’s stable and ideally stall design as well. Site visits to these stables was necessary to support and strengthen the evidence shown in the photographs and drawings. They presented more information than the documentary evidence shows and enabled a more thorough examination of their interiors. During in person visits to Mount Airy and Sabine Hall in December of 2015, the stables were documented with photographs of the stables’ exterior and interior, focusing especially on evidence of stalls and where they may have been located. Because Colonial Williamsburg Foundation created architectural drawings of these stables, overall measured drawings were not necessary. Measurements taken of the stalls gave ideas of the widths and depths of stalls for comparative analysis.
Animal husbandry texts remain some of the most explicit evidence of eighteenth-century stall design that can complement evaluations of extant stables. They also provided useful chapters on the care of horses, which indirectly illuminated the level of importance colonial gentlemen allotted to their horses. They are also more specific about construction materials and provided greater specifications concerning stall architecture and dimensions. This was beneficial for the deliverable to Mount Vernon. The majority of these texts are located within the database Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

Architectural design books such as those by Andrea Palladio, James Gibbs, and William Pain often included stables in plan along with the main house and other dependencies. Studying the patterns of the ideal arrangement of structures on a plantation defined when the colonial Americans received their architectural and spatial ideas. These texts are available online and in print. The Carpenters’ Company of the City and County of Philadelphia 1786 Rule Book discusses the prices to build specific stall types. This book was especially invaluable because it is the only known eighteenth-century book on stalls written and published in America. Comparing descriptions from these sources with others contributed to an awareness of regional and national patterns.

Other visual data are the paintings that eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century painters created of farm scenes, race horses, and British aristocracy on horseback. Much of this research was conducted at Mount Vernon and included searching art websites and databases such as ARTstor for artists like James Seymour and John Frederick Herring, Sr., two British painters known for their painted scenes of horses. The interior scenes are the most helpful and were compared with the architectural design books and animal husbandry books to trace the reasons for the change in stall partition style.

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National Register Nomination forms are another type of secondary source that provided valuable information. Many of these nomination forms were created in the late 1960s and 1970s. Searching through these while at Mount Vernon, I realized oftentimes the structures described in the forms no longer exist today or have been altered since the form was written. However, the descriptions of stables in these forms were useful to compare with other sources and to draw conclusions on the functional and aesthetic purposes of stables on a plantation.

The data collected for this thesis helped identify trends and patterns that spoke to the elites’ materialism, architecture, and connection to horses. This was applied to the stables constructed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Advertisements in newspapers for plantation sales, for example, were compared with plats and Mutual Assurance records to create a framework addressing the number and types of stables that existed in the 1700s. Addressing the commonalities presented in paintings and in animal husbandry books aided a better understanding of a stable’s interior. Diaries and letters reinforced these sources to gain a more pointed perspective concerning horse culture and plantations in the Chesapeake and elsewhere.

Bernard Herman described presence of place as “the combination of artifacts and behaviors that lend a locale its distinctive visual and cultural identity.” Each geographical group in this thesis represents a distinct colonial presence of place. The Chesapeake, as the earliest settled region, with its heavily forested areas and land rich for tobacco farming, established a foothold in early America. Charleston, South Carolina, and its surrounding plantations represents a distinctive landscape in a strategically placed early port city. Pennsylvania, primarily Philadelphia, represents the northern spectrum in this study. Penn’s early colonists created domestic landscapes and a manner of living

that contrasted sharply with those in the Chesapeake and South Carolina. The narrative of these areas’ historic sites offer a way to understand the colonists through examining their architecture. By understanding the architectural patterns of stables in these three geographical areas, one can see trends develop that point to what colonists prioritized on their domestic landscapes. This in turn can answer their cultural patterns and, of course, the role horses played.

The following study presents a clearer image of early-American stall design and architecture than currently known, clarifies the relationship between the dwelling and the stable on a property, presents compelling evidence that illustrates the interior appearance of George Washington’s Mount Vernon stable, and argues successfully for the important role stables held in colonial America.
CHAPTER TWO

MAKING A WAY FOR ONESELF:
‘PRESENCE OF PLACE’ IN
EARLY AMERICA

On a Friday in 1774, Philip Vickers Fithian, a tutor from New Jersey working at Nomini Hall in Virginia, wrote in his diary a detailed account of Nomini, “for [his] own amusement, as also to be able with certainty to inform others of a Seat as magnificent in itself & with as many surrounding Conveniences, as any [he had] ever seen, & perhaps equal to any in this Colony.”¹ Fithian described all the land Robert Carter, master of Nomini Hall, owned in Virginia and Maryland before describing in close detail the main house (Figure 2.1). He began with the exterior, describing the building’s dimensions, its brick construction, five chimneys, and the 549 panes of glass that filled its windows. Fithian then moved into the interior of the house, explaining the functions of its many rooms.

What is most remarkable about this passage is the level of detail Fithian offered about the house. Indeed, he did not begin with a description of the landscape or the atmosphere of the drive to the house. The great house, with its 549

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panes of glass and its setting that enabled it to be visible from up to six miles, dominated Fithian’s eye and his description. From the nuclei of the property, Fithian moved outward to describe the four outbuildings that created a square around Nomini Hall. The school building, Fithian’s living quarters and work place, earned the most generous description. In contrast, the three other outbuildings—the stable, coach house, and wash house—received much less description. Fithian offered the smallest glimpse into the appearance of the stable, noting that the pitch was slightly higher to accommodate the hay loft.

In Fithian’s diary, the word “horse” appears 111 times, “mare” five, “horseback” five, and “ride[s]” in reference to horseback riding fifty-one times. As is evident in his diary, Fithian and those in his social circle often found themselves using horses to transport them through the forested areas of Virginia and to horse races. Why, then, is his description of the stable so sparse? Fithian’s account of Nomini Hall is not unique. Many contemporary descriptions of Virginia’s great plantation houses focused on the main house and often ignored outbuildings altogether.

This is surprising for a number of reasons. First, and most important, horses were a vital and necessary fixture for all colonists. They were the main source of transportation. They overtook the ox in the fields. Horses were often involved in the practice of gambling among the middling and elite planters supplanted through horse racing. They were important to the economy. Without horses, life in the colonies would have been burdensome. The plantation systems in the backcountry and interrelations between the colonists could not have thrived. Historian T.H. Breen has even asserted that those without a horse “felt despised, an object of ridicule.”

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Reverend Hugh Jones noted society’s dependence on the horse in the early 1700s:

The [common planters] are such lovers of riding that almost every ordinary person keeps a horse; and I have known some spend the morning in ranging several miles in the woods to find and catch their horses, only to ride two or three miles to church, to the courthouse, or to a horserace, where they…are more certain of finding those that they want to speak or deal with, than at their homes.3

Jones’s observation of planters walking more miles to find one horse than it would have taken to walk to their destinations shows how planters of all economic strata relied on horses.

Plantation life in the Chesapeake was often an isolating experience and reinforces the colonists’ reliance on horses for transportation. A combination of extensive landholdings and the slow emergence of towns meant that plantations more often than not were quite central to one’s daily activities. First-hand accounts show that a man’s independence was highly valued and desired.4 This newfound independence and material possessiveness came with some disadvantages. If a planter left his plantation to interact with other people, he would likely utilize a horse to do so. Owning a horse to leave one’s plantation and travel to other plantations and towns reinforced the establishment of an independent gentry and social pursuits.

As planters and gentlemen built more permanent structures on their plantations, the need for an established and respectable architectural style developed. This need was facilitated by the importation of English design books and publication of Andrea Palladio’s Four Books of Architecture. Owning classically proportioned buildings made with more permanent and expensive materials helped establish the gentry’s leadership

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4 Breen, Horses and Gentlemen, 243.
positions. Their visible possessions and buildings reinforced their claims to status. This trend, evident from New England to South Carolina, was especially apparent in large cultural centers such as Boston, Philadelphia, Annapolis, and Charleston.

The early American plantations that emulated English country houses of the aristocracy are complex embodiments of politics, ideology, emotions, visual interpretation, emblems, and a defined relationship between nature and man. The house and adjacent land worked together to illustrate one’s place in an increasingly stratified society. As Maiken Umbach pointed out in her article on visual culture in the eighteenth century, “visual images were open-ended, undefined: a starting point for culture, not its end product.” For those in the eighteenth century, visual images could be and were interpreted differently. This interpretation depended on several factors including class, education, and politics. The English country house and its imitations in early America were artistic in nature and served then and now as visual representations of building preferences.

Author Daniel Blake Smith dubbed the first half of the eighteenth century the Chesapeake’s “golden age.” Export of tobacco and economic diversity created positive growth in landholdings, personal wealth, and population. People were relatively open in personal ties and had wide networks. As the 1700s wore on, however, family structures turned inward, and people grew more private. The wealthiest strata became relatively fixed. Jackson T. Main described them as a “closed group.” Two reasons constituted this self-prescribed isolation. The first concerned the lack of availability of the most valuable

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land due to the increase in settlers. Secondly, landowners subdivided their land to heirs over generations, thereby reducing initial mobility.\(^9\) Neighborhoods formed, and within these neighborhoods a strong kinship developed between neighbors. Being close to family reduced the desire to move long distances.

This close-knit group more often than not married within their social equals, including their neighbors.\(^{10}\) One example of this is the prominent marriage between Rebecca Tayloe, second daughter of John Tayloe II, who married Francis Lightfoot Lee in 1769. Lee’s family seat was Stratford Hall, located about twenty miles north in Westmoreland County. While these two prominent families and their houses stood at the pinnacle of genteel society in their area, Tayloe worried about his daughter’s future with a man who was not the first born son in the Lee family. The marriage was agreed upon only after Lee agreed to live closer to Tayloe—two miles down the road, in fact, on a thousand acre tract of land called Menokin.\(^{11}\) The desire to keep family close was a conscious choice by one of the wealthiest and most important men in Virginia. Tayloe’s decision represents the ideology of the colonial gentry who often asserted their social values and identity through architecture and familial ties.

According to Jack P. Greene, the Chesapeake “was highly materialistic, infinitely more secular, competitive, exploitive, and very heavily devoted to commercial agricultural production for an export market.” Those in the Chesapeake were also “anxious” about their reputation abroad and tried to create a community made up of strong ties of kinship and leadership and emulated social patterns and customs from England.\(^{12}\) One example of this rise in the philosophy of gentility was the presentation

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of one’s house and land that were increasingly tied to the gentry’s outward perception of themselves. Colonists in the Chesapeake and in the South Carolina port city of Charleston, residents who often emulated British customs, built brick houses with classical proportions and imported luxury goods to visibly represent their social positions. As Breen put it, “these men determined social standing not by a man’s religiosity or philosophic knowledge but by his visible estate—his lands, slaves, buildings, even by the quality of his garments.” In the Chesapeake, the wealthier people became, the more they engaged in lifestyles like gambling and horse racing that were dependent on horses and that propagated the desire for material possessions.13

A house and surrounding land was a visible manifestation of a planter-elite’s reputation and position in early-American society. As early as 1687, the physical appearance of a plantation transmitted specific messages to outsiders (Figure 2.2). Durand of Dauphiné, the French Huguenot who recorded his travels through Virginia, observed that “in arriving at the plantation of a person of importance you think you are entering a considerable village.”14 Surviving plantations today echo Durand’s description, with dozens of auxiliary structures and multiple acres of land separating them from their neighbors that made them seem even more like isolated towns.

One of the scholars of the eighteenth-century who relied on insights from domestic architecture, James Deetz, delved into the process of understanding a culture through their architecture, ceramics, and gravestones in his influential work In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life (1977). Deetz developed new methods of how to look at a culture. This meant examining the smaller, seemingly less important artifacts and architectural details that are often overlooked by methods that

13 Greene, Pursuits of Happiness, 93; Breen, Horses and Gentlemen, 249; Greene, Pursuits of Happiness, 97.
14 Durand of Dauphiné, A Frenchman in Virginia, ed. Fairfax Harrison (privately printed, 1924), 113.
emphasized academic architecture and culture. Deetz correctly emphasized the house as an important reflection of the attitudes and aspirations.\textsuperscript{15} The architectural styles that developed in the Chesapeake, South Carolina, Pennsylvania and elsewhere in the colonies hinged on a number of factors. These included social values, manners of living, distribution of property and income, and available materials. These, combined with settlement patterns, ordained the symbolic values colonists placed upon built structures.

In Virginia, architects were non-existant until the end of the eighteenth century, which affected regional building types. Before trained architects came to America, those who were planning and building refined structures were either a “gentleman-amateur

architect” or, more often, a master craftsman.¹⁶ The education of the planter-elite included architecture as a subject. According to William Rasmussen, a member of the planter-elites was expected to be familiar with architectural drawings and might even produce one or two himself. George Washington fits this description aptly. He sketched plans of the treading barn at Dogue Run, the barn at Union Farm, and wrote detailed letters to his managers for the construction of buildings like his stable, thus playing an involved role in the building process at Mount Vernon. It is thought that another wealthy planter, Landon Carter, may have built his seat Sabine Hall in 1738, though the extent to which he participated in its construction remains unknown. Others, such as Shirley Plantation’s John Carter and John Tayloe of Mount Airy, hired laborers from England to construct their houses.¹⁷ Isaac Norris, executor of William Penn’s estate, used books imported from England.¹⁸ Because his house was constructed early in the eighteenth century, the spatial arrangement of the house and the outbuildings is most similar to the great estates in the English countryside. The house is situated in a forecourt, with a planned garden in the center, and outbuildings on either side, forming an open square. In a watercolor from 1764 of his house as depicted in 1711, the stable is visible to the viewer’s left (Figure 2.3).

As agriculture became a major portion of Great Britain’s economy, the spatial arrangement of auxiliary structures became more specific. The eighteenth-century economy in England outpaced other agricultural-based communities, including the

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¹⁷ Rasmussen, 200, 202-203.
colonies.\textsuperscript{19} This facilitated the influx of pattern books that devoted greater attention to farm buildings and country estates. The styles in these patterns were based on classical forms. The elite British of the eighteenth century saw themselves as emulators of the ancient Romans. The British preferred to imagine an ancient world that prided republicanism, honor, duty, and an emphasis on the arts and humanities. They considered farming a “morally uplifting” duty.\textsuperscript{20} The pattern books produced in England during this time depicted barns, dairies, and dwelling houses that reflected this fascination with classicism and the ennobling of farming.

The colonial ties between England, Charleston, and northern ports contributed to a spread of information through books and first- and second-hand accounts that linked these regions. Architectural designs moved through the colonies due to the importation of pattern books from England. Although factors such as climate and available building material oftentimes created distinctions in building style and function, many ideas did take in parts of the colonies. Probate inventories, such as George Washington’s, revealed one or more books that included chapters on farriery that preceded sections on the arrangement the exterior and interior of a stables. From these books emerge various themes such as ensuring proper amounts of light, ventilation, and drainage, and proper


\textsuperscript{20} Roberson, \textit{Georgian Model Farms}, 6.
maintenance of a stable as essential to securing the health and comfort of its horses.  

Books on architecture and stabling techniques, such as Andrea Palladio’s Four Books of Architecture (1570), James Gibbs’s Book of Architecture (1728), Thomas Wallis’s The Farrier’s and Horseman’s Complete Dictionary (1759), and others reached the hands of many planters. The planters who did not have direct access to these books could easily learn of the published designs through conversations with their peers. Consequently, Washington’s avid correspondence with contemporaries across the eastern coast and his travels during the Revolutionary War could have influenced the design of Mount Vernon’s stable and interior stall fittings.

The first chapter in Communications to the Board of Agriculture (1796), published in London, reflects eighteenth-century aesthetics applied to plantations and farm buildings. The author, Robert Beatson, explained that by strategically arranging buildings on a farm, not only would laborers (or slaves, in the colonies) be more efficient in their work, but the overall atmosphere of the farm would be less messy, “for if a barn is set down here, a stable there, a cow-house...all without rule or order...much unnecessary labour will be occasioned, and a great deal of time lost.” He advised that the dimensions of farm buildings related to the size of the farm. The size of the dwelling house, Beatson advised, should be in relation to “the situation in life [the owner] has been accustomed to” because there are many farmers who should have “the best accommodations.” A properly constructed and cared for dwelling house should impress visitors so much that they believe the interior is filled with “prosperity and happiness.” Beatson’s attitudes expressed in his chapter mirrors the early American balance between interior privacy and outward symbolism and assurance of a household’s perceived place in society.

21 These sources can be found through Eighteenth Century Collections Online.
While books such as Timothy Lightoler’s *Gentleman and Farmer’s Architect* and Nathaniel Kent’s *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property* were intended for the British elite, small farmers were the intended audience for other books, as were those without access to skilled craftsman and designs. Examples of such books include James Gibbs’ *Book of Architecture* and *Communications to the Board of Agriculture.* Many of these books made their way to the colonies. Eager to emulate their British counterparts, the colonists read these manuals and appropriated their designs.

This ideology behind the spatial and hierarchical arrangements of structures on a plantation stemmed from the growing importance of man controlling nature and the emphasis on aesthetics. Paul Guyer presented an excellent dissection of this in his article “Beauty and Utility in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics (2002).” He unfolded the discussion on aesthetics begun by the third Earl of Shaftesbury, one of the proprietors of Charleston, South Carolina, who published *The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody* in 1709. His belief that the perceived beauty of an object was dependent upon the object’s use prompted several response in the years following. In the 1720s, Francis Hutcheson asserted that the beauty of an object is not depended on its functionality. He provided the example of a chair with different styled legs, which, although silly looking, would be as functional as a well-designed chair. The difference is the human response to the beauty of each chair.

David Hume, who published *A Treatise of Human Nature* in 1738, went further than Hutcheson and applied the issue to functionality as a limitation to beauty. Guyer eloquently sums up Hume’s thoughts:

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If the utility of an object is the reason for being pleased with it, then it would seem that it should please only those sorts of creatures to whom it is in fact useful, or even more exclusively those individuals who can actually use it—that is, in the case of things like desks, houses, ships, and fields, the owners of those objects or those few others whom the owners might favor with the use or benefit of their possessions. But in fact any human who can perceive it properly, not just its owner, seems to take pleasure in the sight of a beautiful house or ship.  

Here, then, Guyer highlights the ethos behind the colonial American gentry: whether or not architectural style and design is functional, it is beautiful. Because people widely accepted that symmetry, ordered balance, classical proportions, and overall permanence was beautiful, one’s house and outbuildings must be a reflection of this ideology. One must fit in in order to stand out.

The stables that could be found on the majority of plantations and properties of the colonists from the early eighteenth century fit into the framework of visual culture that united beauty, function, symbolism, independence, and assimilation. The dichotomy of these terms, applied to one architectural form, expresses the complicated machination of architecture the American colonists circumscribed.

The 1782 brick stable at George Washington’s Mount Vernon is but one of the few existing eighteenth-century stables in the Chesapeake. Mount Vernon was unquestionably a gentleman’s plantation. Situated on a bluff above the Potomac River, Mount Vernon consists of the main house with dependences extending on either side to form an arc to the east of a bowling green (Figure 2.4). Few significant changes were made to the stable following Washington’s death. Unfortunately, a negligible amount of surviving letters and

managers’ reports from Washington’s life discuss the stable. None discovered hints at the design of the stall partitions and arrangement.

The present stable is not the first one constructed on the property. Two stables existed before the current one. At least one of them was framed construction. The second stable, built in 1768, was destroyed in a fire in 1781 that killed at least ten of Washington’s horses. Washington minimized the significance of the conflagration in a letter to the General Comte de Rochambeau writing, “my loss at Mount Vernon was not considerable, but I was in the greatest danger of having my House and all the adjacent

Figure 2.4 Samuel Vaughan, Plan of Mount Vernon, 1787, ink and watercolor, W-1434. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association.
Buildings consumed.”27 The event was an unsettling occurrence that Washington did not wish to have repeated.

While Washington was stationed in Philadelphia in 1782 during the end of the Revolutionary War, he corresponded with Lund Washington, his cousin and manager of his farms while he was away, about the construction of a new stable. The new one was to be built of brick. He included precise instructions for the new brick stable in a letter to Lund sent in January of 1782. In it, Washington noted the importance of a tripartite design with the stall rooms on either end of the coach house. Any other design with the coach house not placed in the center would give the stable “an uncouth appearance.”28 He also asked Lund to send him the measurements of the previous stable. Washington wanted his new stable to be larger. His letter offers the clearest evidence of the stable’s appearance in the first years of construction.

Washington’s principles exemplify those of the late eighteenth-century gentleman farmer. He took an active interest in the well-being of Mount Vernon and its accompanying farms from the time he inherited the property. His pragmatic way of thinking meant that the stable needed to be constructed in a way that would ensure it would not meet the same fate as his previous frame ones and could house his animals comfortably. Still, architectural style was important to Washington as well. Similarities between Mount Vernon’s architecture and those depicted in pattern books show that Washington took care in determining the proper way to design his plantation. In addition to illustrations from pattern books, his travels across the eastern seaboard, into the Virginia backcountry, and up north exposed him to a variety of architectural styles, tastes, and methods that could have influenced his ideas. A combination of both aesthetics and

function in all of the buildings at Mount Vernon were important to Washington. This attitude united him to many of his gentlemen contemporaries.

Though Washington’s experiences introduced him to stables and building practices outside of Mount Vernon, the construction of the stable likely was not produced solely by outside influences like pattern books. Rather, the building process in Virginia by 1782 was well-developed and gentlemen farmers like Washington would have been well-aware of them. The impact of local traditions and practices undoubtedly guided the construction of structures in Virginia. Though Washington was an experimenter, the laborers who built his stable would have built it in the ways that were familiar to them.

A number of restoration campaigns of the stable in the late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries have obstructed evidence concerning the original interior. Documentation concerning the stable’s building history is sparse until the 1880s, when Superintendent Harrison Dodge arrived at Mount Vernon. Few changes done before his arrival were recorded. The restoration files in the Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon document these restorations. After the stalls were replaced under Dodge’s direction in 1895, the next change to the stable occurred a little over thirty years later under Morley J. Williams. After conducting an archaeological study of the site, Williams and his team enacted a number of structural changes to stabilize the stable. In the early 1950s, Walter M. Macomber, consulting preservation architect, removed the remains of the stalls from the 1890s and replaced the partitions with what he believed would have been stylistically compatible to the ones in 1799, the year of Washington’s death.29 However, the design of the stall partitions are

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distinctly nineteenth-century, and likely would not have aligned with the style of the original stalls.

Sources like contemporary stables and documentation show commonalities in stable design and function that can direct the proper appearance of Washington’s stable interior. Stables at Shirley, Mount Airy, and Sabine Hall in Virginia are a few of the extant early stables that are similar in design to Washington’s. They maintain similar masonry construction, decorative elements, water-tables, and tripartite arrangements. Their position in relation to the main house also indicates that there was a certain standard and design in the eighteenth century among gentlemen concerning their stables.

Evidence from Thomas Jefferson, who sketched two stalls while visiting Pennsylvania, shows that there was an interest in stable architecture that perhaps extended nationally, rather than regionally. Unfortunately, none of the original stall partitions at these stables survive today. Comparing Washington’s stable with the physical fabric of extant stables, however, could help answer what kind of similarities in design and materials existed in stables outside of the Chesapeake and how stables functioned on a gentleman’s farm.

In both documentation from the eighteenth century concerning architecture and modern-day scholarship that analyze the symbolic role of a dwelling, stables are often relegated to the background. However, stables are an important missing link in those analyses. Houses sheltered the head of the house and his family. Stables housed his horses who served indispensable roles. Why are stables and their functional uses not considered as important as those of houses in both primary sources and secondary discussions by architectural historians? There was a need for style, for design, and for an outward appearance that reflected much of the same aspirations gentlemen desired in the appearance of their houses. A disorderly stable meant a disorderly gentlemen, and thus, no gentlemen at all.
Although discussions of the vernacular landscape—the objects that were a direct reflection of that society rather than a wider adoption of a popular style—often reflect the ideals and lifestyles of a wider population group, the influence of the Georgian or polite design order deserves attention, too, in the context of eighteenth-century Americans and their possessions. Placing stables into the eighteenth-century domestic landscape depends on establishing whether stables fall into this same framework. Are early American stables vernacular representations, and therefore products of specific regions, or is their architectural identity dependent on other cultural and economic factors than span the east coast? Determining the placement of the stables in this study, especially George Washington’s, can restore stables from a postscript in discussions of eighteenth-century America to the central role they played.

Surviving stables exude a sense of elegance, even when horses and equipment are absent. The classically proportioned masonry stables mirrored architectural elements represented on the houses of the great plantations. At Shirley Plantation, for example, the stable features the same Flemish bond brickwork as the house. Other decorative elements such as its water-table and rubbed brick surrounding the loft door show the intricate care in its construction. Stables were not simply an auxiliary structure on a property, intended to provide horses and other animals shelter only. They represented something bigger, something intricately tied to the position of a gentleman in society and the material culture that predominated in early America.

The importance of the horse in colonial America should not be underestimated. Even so, few stables from the eighteenth century survive. Repairs and renovations have significantly altered those that do. Although seen as auxiliary structures to the main house, stables offer important information regarding colonial life. Understanding the stable at Mount Vernon will not only illuminate Washington’s building priorities at Mount
Vernon. It will also contribute to the study of stables along the eastern seaboard in early America.

The following analysis will ascertain how a stable functioned as a stage that allowed the gentlemen to display wealth, status, and social adeptness. Understanding the motivating factors in the construction of expensive and well designed stables will help determine whether stables were purely functional, or if they had a deeper desire that directly came out of the materialism of society and the view that everyone is, indeed, on a stage.
CHAPTER THREE
GENTLEMANLY PURSUITS: HORSE CULTURE IN EARLY AMERICA

Early Horses in the Colonies

As reflections of the permanence and power of the colonial gentry, horses were visible fixtures of America’s pre- and post-Revolutionary landscape. Colonists used horses for a multitude of tasks. The earliest use of the horse included transportation of crops to market. Because the early landscape comprised plantations spaced far apart, planters utilized horses to travel to neighboring plantations, to town, church, and the court house. Imported Hobby horses and the Thoroughbred transformed the horse from a necessary part of the economy to part of the leisurely life of the colonists through horse racing that facilitated gambling, betting, and breeding.

Regardless of their wealth, most colonists owned at least one horse. However, horses were essential attributes for elite culture that differentiated genteel families from middling ones. Whether it was competing for owning the most profitable stallion to cover mares during the breeding season or owning the horse that collected the most purse money in local races, horses served as an outlet for men to showcase their accomplishments and prosperity.

Horses served practical roles through the seventeenth century, although they had a difficult beginning. During the “Starving Time” in 1611, the Jamestown colonists devoured all of their horses. Additional horses were sent from England to Jamestown the following years. However, horses were not numerous compared to other domesticated animals such as cows and pigs in these early years. This was partially due to the fact that the first settlers did not use work animals such as oxen and horses to plow their

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tobacco fields. The colonists did the work themselves with hoes instead. Early colonists farmed the way they had in England, which unfortunately was not compatible with the Chesapeake environment and the limited amount of resources available to them. The settlers soon learned that they had a better chance of surviving if they concentrated their efforts on growing tobacco and raising animals that did not require much maintenance. Pigs, for example, required very little from the colonists and roamed free in the woods. Horses, on the other hand, needed more care due, in part, to having a more sensitive eating palette that requires more grain so they can digest food as easily as other animals. The manure of horses was also not necessary for hoeing the tobacco, as people complained that they could taste it when they smoked the tobacco. As a result, by 1649, only 200 horses were recorded living in the settled areas.²

The horses shipped from England after the disastrous winter in Jamestown were fortunate in that they were not eaten for food, but nonetheless they were left to roam the woods in less than desirable conditions. As the French Huguenot Durand of Dauphiné noted during his travels in the country later in the century, as soon as a person was done with their horse, such as after they came back from an errand, they fed their horses little, if anything, and pushed them back into the woods where they roamed wild, sweaty, hungry, and unmaintained.³ A parson of Jamestown observed the lack of attention and maintenance colonists paid their horses as well, stating in 1686 that “they never shoe them nor stable them in general.”⁴ Though horses were not crucial to the farming process in the seventeenth century, the behaviors of the early colonists suggest in the early years

they were more concerned with their own livelihoods and less with animals that diverted large amounts of their attention than they could afford to give.

A century later Philip Vickers Fithian recorded the daily excursions he took with his horse that illustrate the frequent interactions colonists had with them. On October 28, 1773, Fithian recorded riding twelve miles by two o’clock that afternoon, noting that neither he nor his horse were tired by the journey. He also noted that nearly every “Gentlemen of Condition” owned a carriage and four to six horses to drive it. In 1774, Fithian spent an evening at the Tayloe’s Mount Airy. He recorded that the dining room contained twenty-four paintings of English racehorses and that horses was Colonel Tayloe’s favorite topic to discuss. His observations are that of a fastidious record keeper, especially when horses are concerned. This may be because the interactions he has with horses also correspond to the activities taking place in his daily life. Without one, he could not have the other.

*Transportation and Horses in the Eighteenth Century*

In order to fill the void of loneliness that came along with living on a plantation, men and women would travel to neighboring plantations to visit friends and family. Often, traveling could not be done without a horse. In addition, the emphasis on entertaining, whether it be social, political, or business, necessitated groups of people traveling to other’s homes. The colonists and their homes were constantly put on display, often for long stretches of time. When a family had overnight visitors, they merged with

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7 Fithian, *Journal and Letters,* 95.
the regular habits of their host. It was usual for the gentleman of the house to take his male visitors along on his daily inspection of his plantation.10

By the 1720s, colonists settled further from the primary rivers like the James and Rappahannock. Rather than using rivers and boats as the primary form of transportation like their grandparents had, these colonists built roads and pathways through forests that enabled easier travel across long distances.11

In a society where neighbors, church, and the courthouse were long walks away, when traveling on foot was not plausible, horses had become as integral and commonplace to Virginia as the country plantations. Horses became a status symbol as soon as they became necessary parts of life. Men preferred to ride horses than walk to these places, as observed by Hugh Jones.12 Just as a man’s clothes or his house represented who he was, so did the horse.

While the colonists certainly relied on horses to go about their daily lives, not everyone living in Virginia at the time felt the same way. William Byrd II recorded an event in 1728 in which a group of Native Americans he encountered laughed “at the English, who can’t stir to a next neighbor without a horse, and say that two legs are too much for such lazy people, who can’t visit their next neighbor without six.”13

Betting, Racing, and Hunting: Leisurably Lifestyles of the Elite

One of the most obvious ways to represent personal success among neighbors was through horse racing. Horse racing in the colonies evolved out of the new money

10 Carson, Colonial Virginians at Play, 1.
11 Virginia DeJohn Anderson, Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 244.
settlers earned from their crops. Those who could afford horses simply for racing sent a clear message to their neighbors that they were wealthy and had time for leisurely sport. Horse racing attracted gentlemen because they could use the horse a symbol for what was most important to them in society (Figure 3.1).

Betting on a race or racing on one’s horse asserted one’s competitive spirit. Early in the development of the Chesapeake, parents learned that they needed to instill in their sons a sense of independence. This independence encompassed wealth and reliance on oneself over one’s parents. Eventually, this created an intense need for competitiveness between men that continued into their adulthood. In a world where people were consciously divided into differing strata depending on their wealth and appearance, gentlemen found horse racing a way to proudly show off their success.

Horses and the activities that relied on them were one of the many manifestations illustrating elite Virginians’ materialism and competitiveness beginning in the mid-seventeenth century. Historian Rhys Isaac’s discussion of horse races and the gentry highlights their dependence on horses in the way they served as outlets for high-stakes gambling and a way for the gentry to interact with each other. T.H. Breen discussed

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15 Randy Sparks, “Gentlemen’s Sport: Horse Racing in Antebellum Charleston,” in *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 93, no. 1 (1992), 16.
this competitiveness through the common practice of horse racing. He emphasized the symbolic importance of a horse race, noting the power of the animal as a projection of its gentlemen owner and his social standing in society. In Randy Sparks’ article on racing in Charleston leading to the Civil War, he recounted the evolution of horses in America from the seventeenth century and the reasons horse culture declined following the war. He, too, pointed out the importance of the horse and races for the gentry. His article shows the powerful, lasting effect that horse culture of the eighteenth century had in the years following the Revolutionary War.

The English and Irish colonists began horse racing in Virginia in the seventeenth century. While races in their home countries usually ranged from two to four miles on a circular track, this was not possible in the heavily forested areas in the colonies. Because of the terrain, the colonists, who could not give up their love of racing, shortened their tracks to a quarter mile stretch with two paths that ran parallel to each other for two horses. South Carolina, another hotbed for racing, found it easier to race in the European style because the terrain was much more forgiving and had fewer dense forests. The racetracks often were located close to taverns where large crowds would gather. These events encouraged betting that in turn encouraged friendly but serious competition between peers. The outcomes of these races helped publicize who had better fortune, who could afford to pay up on one’s losses, and who was struggling to stay atop of this new, fast paced world in which horses had become the epicenter.

The earliest horses imported for racing came from England and Ireland. Costly to import, their numbers slowly grew throughout the course of the seventeenth century. Virginia began importing horses primarily for racing about 1730. These early horses were known as Hobby horses, favored for their comfortable seat and quick gait. Races

18 Breen, “Horses and Gentlemen,” 249.
19 Sparks, “Gentleman’s Sport,” 16-18.
encouraged colonists to travel long distances, spend money, bet, and transact business. Despite its general popularity, though, the planter-merchant class carved horse racing and breeding into a niche of their own. Most people could enter their horse in these races in the early years, something which worried those in political power in Virginia so much that they established a law in 1674 dictating that horse racing was for gentlemen only.\textsuperscript{20} This view was echoed fifty years later by the House of Burgesses. It declared that “no person not having a freehold of fifty acres, or land worth less than 20 l., shall keep or own a breeding horse or mare.”\textsuperscript{21}

Those directly involved in horse breeding, racing, and selling had entered into a high-risk venture. There was little profit from breeding and racing horses, given that there was no money awarded for places after first. Developing a reputation for owning a successful stallion to breed successful horses took time, and importing horses was expensive in itself.\textsuperscript{22} Still, the race culture enveloped the ideals gentility strove for, including competition, risk, acclaim, and power.

Diaries from those like Philip Vickers Fithian and William Byrd II, among others, give a sense of the excitement surrounding these races. Byrd described in 1721 a race that he attended with several friends. He woke at six o’clock in the morning and rode to a location where he met with more friends before riding two more miles to the race. At the race Byrd winning ten shillings. He and his companions did not return home until four o’clock, and then only because it was raining. That a quick horse race involved a nearly twelve hour adventure demonstrates how popular and involved these races were.

\textsuperscript{20} Kenneth Cohen, “Well Calculated for the Farmer: Thoroughbreds in the Early National Chesapeake, 1790-1850,” in \textit{The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography} 115, no. 3 (2007), 372-373; Allen Eustis Begnaud, “Hoofbeats in Colonial Maryland,” in \textit{Maryland Historical Magazine: A Quarterly}, 65 no. 3 (1970), 209; Cohen, “Well Calculated for the Farmer,” 372-373. A gentleman was defined in 1713 as one who held at least 50 acres of property that was worth 20 pounds or more.


\textsuperscript{22} Cohen, “Well Calculated for the Farmer,” 370-411.
to the Virginia gentry. Fithian echoed Byrd’s experience fifty years later. In November of
1773, Fithian described a race that took place in Richmond as well attended. It followed
a round one mile track. The horses, one of which was Colonel John Tayloe’s, ran it three
times. The winning purse was 500 pounds. Thirty years later Mrs. Anne Ritson, an
Englishwoman, wrote a poem that reflects the continued popularity of horse racing in
Virginia:

A race is a Virginian’s pleasure,
For which they always can find leisure;
From ev’ry quarter they can come;
With gentle, simple, rich and poor,
The race-ground soon is cover’d ov’er;
Males, females, all, both black and white
Together at this sport unite.

Clearly, horse racing was an important part of life in Virginia that affected social
differentiation, the ethos of gentility, and the cultural climate of the eighteenth and
nineteenth centuries.

In Maryland, horse racing was also an important element in the culture of
gentility. The governmental proceedings of the state in the seventeenth century point to an
early appreciation for the horse and its relation to the gentry. In 1682, the court decided
that no man could keep a horse if he owned less than fifty acres of land. In addition,
horses that measured under fourteen hands were not allowed to roam free, but had to be
penned. Though Maryland citizens in Prince George’s County regularly raced horses as
early as 1745, Annapolis quickly became the center of racing in the state. Members of

23 William Byrd II, The London Diary (1717-1727) And Other Writings, ed. By Louis B Wright and Marion
the gentry formed the Maryland Jockey Club that year. Still, the state’s racing rules were largely unregulated until the early 1760s.25

One who was the most involved in racing was Captain Charles Ridgeley (1733-1790), owner of Hampton Plantation, located in Towson. Records show that Ridgeley had multiple stables with a number of horses, many for racing.26

Undated drawings for a racing stable at Hampton that perhaps remained unbuilt highlights the importance of race culture in the size and design of the stable (Figure 3.2). The drawing likely pre-dates 1805, when one of the two extant stables was built on the property. The architect designed the structure to be two stories tall with a central pediment. The plan of the interior is quite detailed, showing individual stalls for twenty-two horses. Its rounded posts with decreasingly smaller concentric circles hint to the impressive ornamentation of the partitions separating the horses (Figure 3.3). The drawings that illustrate the stable were architecturally impressive. The symmetrical composition of the exterior, with its high-pitched roof balanced by the two stories, symmetrically arranged windows, and logical layout of the stalls on the interior point to a carefully constructed building that reinforced the importance of horses to the Ridgeley family.

Perhaps the significance of horse racing to the gentry rested not only in its purpose as an outlet for social dominance, but on the horse’s lineage. The colonies, no matter how much they appropriated British customs and material culture, did not value lineage as much as in England. Whereas a member of the British peerage gathered respect and a higher social strata than his peers because of his membership into this elite coterie, the colonists started out with little and relied on land and mercantile business upon which

Figure 3.2 Undated plan of stable interior, Hampton Plantation. Ridgely Papers. Courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society.

Figure 3.3 Stable interior. Ridgely Papers. Courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society.
to build their reputations. With racing and breeding, one could compete for the horse with the best lineage, and therefore the best performance. In more ways than one, therefore, horses served as an extension of the early American gentry as they established their own self-conceptions (Figure 3.4).

George Washington was well known for his horsemanship, with Thomas Jefferson saying that the first leader of the country was “the most graceful figure that could be seen on horseback.” Washington attended horse races frequently in cities such as Annapolis and Williamsburg in the southeast and Philadelphia in the north. Records show that by 1785, Washington owned approximately 130 horses that were used for both leisure and commercial activities. A visitor to Mount Vernon observed in surprise that after

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28 Campbell, The Horse in Virginia, 4.
29 Campbell, The Horse in Virginia, 5.
Washington jumped off his horse, he “gave a cut of the whip to his horse, which went off by itself to the stable.”

Washington owned two horses that he rode during the Revolutionary War, Thoroughbreds named Blueskin and Old Nelson. A visitor at Mount Vernon after the war noted that “The General makes no use of them now; he keeps them in a nice stable, where they feed away at their ease for their past services.” In 1789 Washington wrote to John Campbell that “the attachment which one feels for a good horse that has...been considered as a favorite, I know is very great.”

Washington’s relationship with his horses is evident not only in his personal letters but in contemporary paintings. John Trumbull’s *George Washington before the Battle of Trenton*, painted in the early 1790s, depicts a strong, confident Washington on the brink of battle (Figure 3.5). Behind his stoic and calm presence, his horse rears in excitement while a soldier tries to control him. The

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dichotomy between the horse and Washington’s emotions before heading into battle
served as a form of propaganda in a way that glorified America’s leader.

Trumbull painted another war scene in which the focus is the mortal wounding of
American general Hugh Mercer (Figure 3.6). The focal point of the painting is a white
horse, kneeling on the ground in the center of the foreground, neck bent in defeat, with a
trail of blood spotting his white coat. On top of him in a defensive but weakened position
is General Mercer, at the moment he is about to be struck the blow that would kill him
nine days later. While the sacrificial element of this scene is clearly heightened by the
horse, it is not a scene of desperation for the Americans. Behind Mercer and his dying
horse is General Washington on his own horse, sword raised, entering the fray. What
is notable about this scene is that to the viewer’s right the British are all on foot while
there are at least five horses on the American side. In this painting, Washington has the
advantage over the British because he is mounted. Trumbull, an American, used the

Figure 3.7 The Death of General Mercer at the Battle of Princeton, January 3, 1777. John
Trumbull. Oil on canvas. 51.1 x 75.9 cm. Courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery.

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horse as a symbol of strength and patriotism, even in a scene depicting a dying American general.

*The Decline of the Horse*

Horse racing declined during the American Revolution. Owners hid their prized horses in the swamps from the British. The importation of horses was nearly impossible. It picked up especially in Charleston after the war ended, with a noticed uptick in racing announcements per newspaper beginning around 1820.\(^{34}\) The popularity in racing continued in full force up to the Civil War.\(^{35}\) After, horse racing and foxhunting declined. The South was recovering from a heavy blow, financially and culturally, and could not afford to spend time and money on an activity like horse racing. Racing reminded them of the time before the war, which had come to an end. Soon after the train came to America, people turned to the new, faster form of transportation in the place of horses. Finally, the car at the turn of the twentieth century pushed the horse as an obsolete form of travel, although horses were still utilized in poorer areas.\(^{36}\)

The architecture of horse stables suffered as a result. Technological advances such as the car and tractors rendered horses obsolete. No longer needed on a farm, horses made way for tractors in stables. Stalls were considered a nuisance and were removed to provide more space. Other stables were adapted for other uses. In Charleston, for example, numerous carriage houses and stables, now converted into apartments, dot the peninsular landscape. The insides, however, contain little traces of the horses who lived there.

\(^{34}\) From analysis of newspaper advertisements in Charleston and South Carolina.  
\(^{35}\) Sparks, “Gentlemen’s Sport,” 19-20.  
CHAPTER FOUR
THE DICHOTOMY OF GEORGE WASHINGTON’S BUILDING CAMPAIGNS (1754--1799)

The Making of a Virginia Planter

The small tract of land on the bank of the Potomac in Fairfax County, known first as Little Hunting Creek, grew to a 7,600 acre plantation carefully cultivated to reflect its owner’s values (Figure 4.1). George Washington cared about Mount Vernon intensely. He sent countless letters and sketches to his overseers and managers while he was away from the house to oversee its care. These documents show the massive amount of attention he spent tending his home.1 From 1754, when Washington leased the land from his late brother’s wife Anne Fairfax Washington, to his death in 1799, Washington constantly strove to improve the performance and aesthetics of his land and the structures on it.2

The effort and money Washington spent on improving his house, other structures, and ordering the landscape reflected his emotional attachment to his plantation. A visitor noticed with astonishment “the niceness [Washington] directs everything in the building way, condescending even to measure the things himself, that all may be perfectly uniform.”3 Though the house itself is not perfectly symmetrical on the exterior, its “imperfections” reflect Washington’s building process. On the other hand, his stable contrasts with a more symmetrical design. Comparing the evolution of the house and stable reveals maturation in Washington’s architectural thinking. How he wished his home to be perceived, how others perceived it, and the continued improvement of Mount

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1 The managers’ records and correspondence between them and Washington can be found at Mount Vernon’s Library.
Figure 4.1: Map of George Washington’s Farms at Mount Vernon. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association.
Vernon while he was away at war for eight years all show how Washington valued the plantation he painstakingly cultivated during America’s most tumultuous decades.

In early America property was the framework, rather than wealth, for stratifying society. A poor man could start with a few acres and accumulate greater amounts until he could call himself a middling or wealthy planter. According to historian Jackson T. Main, about 99 percent of colonial America consisted of farms. The sizes of lots varied depending on a variety of factors, including available land, the purpose of the farm, and the wealth of buyers. The amount of acreage was a strong indicator for the social status of the property’s owner. In Virginia, owning between 500 and 700 was average. A man who owned that much could be considered of middling rank. In South Carolina and Virginia, approximately one fifth of farmers owned 500 acres. Most planter-elites owned more than 1,000 acres. By the 1720s, the planter-elites in the Chesapeake constituted five percent of the total population and owned nearly half of the land.4

Lawrence Washington, George’s elder brother, would have been considered an above average Virginia gentleman in pedigree and land possession, which was about 3,000 acres. His rank improved when he married Ann Fairfax in 1743 when George was eleven. Ann Fairfax was the daughter of Colonel William Fairfax, owner of Belvoir, a plantation four miles from Mount Vernon (Figure 4.2). Fairfax was the most important man in this area on the Potomac thanks to his position as land agent with the Northern Neck Propriety. The power that came from managing over five million acres established his family as exceptional. Washington gained connection to this elite Virginian family through his brother’s timely marriage and the friendship that developed between young

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Washington and Colonel Fairfax’s son. The Fairfaxes took Washington in, immersing him in their lives.\(^5\)

The arrival in 1746 of Colonel Fairfax’s cousin, the Baron Thomas Fairfax, coincided with Washington’s start as an apprentice surveyor. When the Baron chose to construct a hunting lodge in the Shenandoah Valley Washington, along with George William Fairfax, rode to the west to survey Fairfax lands.\(^6\)

With the support of the Fairfaxes and their interest in new territories, Washington rode out west a number of times as a teenager and as a young man, accumulating experience living in less than stellar conditions and making a way for himself. In 1749 George Washington became the surveyor for Culpeper County. One year later, he

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purchased close to 1,500 acres in the Shenandoah Valley. By the time he was twenty, he owned almost twice that.\(^7\)

Washington gained even more land in 1752 when his brother Lawrence died from tuberculosis. In his will, he gave George three parcels in the town of Fredericksburg outright, and the promise of Mount Vernon’s 2,500 acres once Anne Fairfax Washington or their only surviving daughter passed without an heir. His brother’s death prompted Washington to change course on his professional career. Eight months after Lawrence passed away, his younger brother became Major Washington, “district adjutant” of the Northern Neck.\(^8\)

It was not until the death of his niece in 1754 and a short time serving in the French and Indian War that Washington was able to put into action his plans for Mount Vernon. He purchased 500 acres and expanded the house (Figure 4.3).

\(\text{Figure 4.3} \) The dotted outline illustrates the changes to Mount Vernon once it reached George Washington’s possession. Courtesy of the MVLA.

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The transformation of Mount Vernon coincided with Washington’s rise to a well-respected gentleman in Virginia. Through his relationship with the Fairfaxes and his experience as a surveyor and member of the military, Washington cultivated relationships with Virginia’s most important men.9 His decision to expand Mount Vernon reflected Washington’s growing wealth and ambition.

By the time Washington died in 1799, he had close to fifteen structures at Mount Vernon and a formal English garden. A multitude of different local and imported flora dotted the landscape. Ron Chernow, a biographer of Washington, considered the years during which Washington improved Mount Vernon “the golden age of amateur gentlemen scientists.”10 Washington was an innovator when Mount Vernon was concerned. He borrowed, tinkered, modified, and ultimately succeeded in creating a unique colonial Virginian plantation.

Any construction in Virginia remained a “public performance.”11 Washington’s house was certainly discussed, and not always glowingly. An aide for Baron Friedrich von Stueben recalled the Baron noting that “if...Washington were not a better general than he was an architect the affairs of America would be in very bad condition.”12 Though von Stueben’s comments reveal he was unimpressed with Mount Vernon, there is little doubt that Mount Vernon is, and has been, misunderstood. Washington loved improving his estate, from sketching plans to overseeing the process and hiring carpenters, joiners, and masons. The house reflected the building culture of eighteenth-century Virginia as much as Belvoir, or Shirley, or any other house that was home to a genteel Virginia planter.

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9 Chernow, Washington, 77.
10 Chernow, Washington, 476, 482.
11 Dalzell, George Washington’s Mount Vernon, 45.
12 “Peter Stephen DuPonceau to Anna L. Garasche, 9 Sept 1837”, Mount Vernon Library.
The Stable

As much as any of Washington’s improvements, the stable at Mount Vernon reflected his ambition, wealth, and experiments with architectural design. Though the stable was built while he was in Pennsylvania, Washington made sure that its design included what he wanted. A large portion of the inspiration and the architectural details he appropriated at Mount Vernon came from his neighbors, friends, and acquaintances.\textsuperscript{13} Through his position as surveyor, member of the Virginia Regiment, and General of the American Army, Washington traveled to many places within Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. He saw a number of regional buildings, vernacular style, and plantations that mirrored the estates in the English countryside. It is not a far stretch that he would have noticed horse stables during his travels. He ordered the building of the current stable while stationed in Philadelphia, after all.\textsuperscript{14} Additionally, Washington often corresponded with friends and contemporaries on matters important to him, asking for their expertise or opinions. If he were interested in looking at a building he had heard about, it is not unlikely that while visiting a person’s plantation he would have asked to see that building. Washington designed his stable from experience and personal choice.

Washington consulted those who were familiar with architecture for the construction of the house and other buildings. Dr. William Thornton, architect of the Capitol and the Octagon House, the Tayloe’s capital city residence, became acquainted

\textsuperscript{13} Dalzell, 79; Alan Greenberg, \textit{George Washington, Architect} (London: Andreas Papadakis Publishers, 1999), 30. According to architect Alan Greenberg, Washington saw or was aware of Aquia Church, Gunston Hall, Thomas Nelson House, Cleve, and Carlyle House, and Mount Airy in Virginia, and Shirley Place in Massachusetts, all which share architectural similarities to Mount Vernon. The house at Mount Airy wasn’t fully constructed, but Greenberg hypothesizes that Washington was aware of the plan.

\textsuperscript{14} Dalzell, \textit{George Washington’s Mount Vernon}, 39-40, 69-70; Sharon Salinger, “Spaces, inside and outside,” in \textit{The Journal of Interdisciplinary History} 26, no. 1 (1995), 3. He visited Philadelphia in 1754, 1757, and 1773, all before the construction of his stable. The number of masonry structures within the city from the eighteenth century was due largely to the Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insuring of Houses From Loss by Fire. The Contributionship was the primary insurance company in the city until the war ended. In the mid-1760s they excluded any buildings constructed with wood from being insured. Because of this, people chose to construct their buildings, both primary and secondary, out of insurable materials.
with Washington when the latter was planning the construction of rental houses in the city. Thornton became involved in the construction. Washington added to the plans he had already drawn to include a central pediment with dormer windows flanking it. Thornton, however, disliked the style. Washington was persuaded, after all, because the houses were finished without pediments on the roofs.\textsuperscript{15} Although Washington spearheaded many architectural decisions, he was also influenced by others in his social network. William Buckland, the English carpenter who constructed many buildings in Annapolis, worked with William Sears, who later worked on Mount Vernon. Both Sears and Buckland also built Mount Airy.\textsuperscript{16} Sears could have shared with Washington what he had seen there, including the design of the stable.

While Washington consulted the leading sources on architecture and design for the house, he was too much of a tinkerer and experimenter to build an exact replica from the pattern books.\textsuperscript{17} As a Virginia planter, he was familiar with local building practices and styles, which undoubtedly influenced the style of the stable too. However, the building program of the stable is different. Lund Washington oversaw the construction of the stable between 1782 and 1783 during his employer’s absence from Mount Vernon at the close of the Revolutionary War. In addition to being more hands off for this building project, the similarity of the stable’s construction to that found in an animal husbandry book points to a change in how Washington constructed buildings at Mount Vernon.

\textsuperscript{15} Dalzell, \textit{George Washington’s Mount Vernon}, 74-75.
\textsuperscript{17} Dalzell, \textit{George Washington’s Mount Vernon}, 76-78. Two plates of windows pictured in Batty Langley’s \textit{City and Country Builder’s and Workman’s Treasury of Designs} (1750) show similarity to the window in Mount Vernon’s dining room and the window in the central pediment. Upon further examination of these features at Mount Vernon, however, the design is not exact. Of the popular pattern books Washington did own, they included Francis Price’s \textit{The British Carpenter}, Batty Langley’s \textit{New Principles of Gardening} (1728), W. Watt’s \textit{The Seats of Nobility and Gentry}, and Charles Middleton’s \textit{Picturesque and Architectural Views for Cottages, Farm Houses, and Country Villas}. Washington probably borrowed from his lawyer John Mercer who owned many architectural pattern books.
Though Washington altered the designs in pattern books that he used for his house, he followed unusually closely the architectural advice found in an English book on the care of horses. Washington’s probate inventory listed over 2,000 books, many of which concern best farming and livestock keeping practices. Among these is a book called *Horseman and Farrier*.\(^{18}\) No other information, including the author and date of publication, is included in the inventory. A search for a book with that specific title returned no results, suggesting that the book Washington owned may have had a different title. In London in 1759, a doctor named Thomas Wallis published *The Farrier’s and Horseman’s Complete Dictionary*.\(^{19}\) It contains several hundred pages on husbandry, from building the animals’ enclosures to treating their illnesses. The advice Wallis offered on stable design follows so closely to Washington’s stable that he may have owned this book and that he and Lund drew from it when constructing the stable.

The drainage system at the stable mirrors Wallis’s emphasis on keeping stable floors clean by implementing drains. Wallis suggested that the walls be built with “two bricks, or a brick and a half at least, for the sake of warmth in the winter, and to keep out the heat in the summer,” which is consistent with the stable’s brick construction. The fenestration on Mount Vernon’s stable also reflects Wallis’s advice that windows be placed on the east or north walls and should have louvers to prevent direct sunlight from hurting the horse’s eyes but that still allows ventilation.\(^{20}\)

\(^{18}\) “Inventory and Appraisement of the estate of Gen. George Washington Deceased for Inventory to Wills etc. of August Court 1810 filed,” Fairfax County Court Archives, Will Book J, 1801-1806, fol. 326. GunstonHall.org.

\(^{19}\) Thomas Wallis, Surgeon, *The Farrier’s and Horseman’s Complete Dictionary: Containing the Art of Farriery in All its Branches; With Whatever Relates to the Manage, and to the Knowledge, Breeding, Feeding, and Dieting of Horses; as Delivered by the Best Writers Upon These Subjects* (London: Printed for W. Owen, at Homer’s Head near Temple-Bar, 1759).

Washington left it up to Lund Washington to make the important arrangements, save that it was tripartite and made of brick. Lund may have used the book from Washington’s library to determine much about the proper arrangement.

At least three stables existed in total on Mount Vernon’s grounds. A ledger from 1758 identified the construction of “a lggd stable 16 x 8--a partition in middle and stalls, 2 racks, etc.” which may be the first stable during Washington’s ownership of the plantation. A 1768 entry in Washington’s diary stated that “the Carpenters finished getting the Frame for the Barn at my Ho. House.” While Washington used “barn” and “stable” interchangeably, there is no definitive agreement that this was a second stable.

However, the current stable was constructed on top of the foundation of a previous stable at the end of the South Lane. The final stable’s dimensions measures 82 feet wide by 40 feet deep and reaches 28 feet from the ground to its tallest point. According to Washington’s letter, the new stable was likely the same width but was slightly longer. This other stable could not have been the 1758 stable because its measurements were too small. Therefore, there was a second stable built between 1758 and 1782 where the current stable now stands.

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23 Stables and barns were distinct forms in the eighteenth century. According to Carl Lounsbury, a barn is “a type of outbuilding used for a variety of agricultural purposes, such as crop or equipment storage...barns served as generic, multi-purpose farm buildings throughout the South...[they had] shed additions often used as stables.” Carl Lounsbury, An Illustrated Glossary of Early Southern Architecture and Landscape (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 22. Lounsbury defines a stable as “a building used to house horses.” Lounsbury, 345.

24 Washington wrote to Lund (Fitzpatrick, “George Washington to Lund Washington, From Philadelphia, January 8, 1782,” vol. 37, 556-567) that he approved of Lund’s plan to enlarge the footprint of the new stable. Considering the first probable stable was 16 x 8 and the third was 82 x 40, the second stable was already bigger than the average Virginian stable.
Figure 4.4 The South Lane. Photo by author.

Figure 4.5 The north elevation of the stable. Photo by author.
Figure 4.6 The south elevation of the stable, depicting the open-air shed. Photo by author.

Figure 4.7 Dormer windows on the north elevation. Photo by author.
The stable faces to the north toward the four other outbuildings along the lane, including the coach house, wash house, smoke house, and butler’s house (Figure 4.4). The room in the center houses the coaches. The rooms to the east and west of it hold the horse stalls (Figure 4.5). Behind these rooms is an eight bay open shed that connects to the paddock (Figure 4.6). The enclosed room to the east of the shed contains two doors with a central louvered window. The east and west elevations have a gabled roof. The north elevation, which Washington considered the front of the stable, has a central pediment with white-painted wood. Red-painted cypress shingles cover the roof. Both the north and south elevations have two dormers (Figure 4.7). The east gable and the north pediment have doors leading to the loft. The loft is accessible by an exterior stairwell on the east side of the stable.

The stable features English bond on both the exterior and interior (Figure 4.8). The foundation of the stable rises to a water table. Because the stable is situated on a slope, the water table is five feet higher on the south elevation. The shed on this side is supported by timber posts that have been painted white.

The north elevation’s fenestration pattern is arranged symmetrically to reflect the stable’s tripartite arrangement. Beneath the pediment is an arched doorway that leads to the coach room with a set of board-and-batten doors. The stall rooms each feature a central opening with board-and-batten doors. On either side of the doors is a narrow, louvered window for a total of four windows. Above the stall rooms, flanking

Figure 4.8 English bond. Photo by author.
the pediment are two dormer windows that are also louvered. They are constructed with wood that is painted white.

The three interior rooms are separated by brick walls of English bond that is whitewashed, along with the other interior brick walls. They are accessible only through the doorways on the south elevation. Each stall room contains one grilled window to open ventilation between the rooms and the open air shed. Each room contains ten individual stalls to hold a total of twenty horses. The stalls in each room are separated by a central aisle. The floors in both rooms are currently dirt covered. The stall partitions, rebuilt by Walter Macomber in the late 1940s, were positioned in the same location as the original stalls. Morley J. Williams’ excavation in 1937 uncovered postholes that pointed to the original location.25

While in Philadelphia serving as President, Washington instructed his manager to add dormers to the roof for ventilation. It is unclear when exactly these were added, as there are several letters between 1793 and 1796 from a cross Washington wondering if they had been added yet.26 The last change to the stable while Washington lived was the replacement of the exterior stairs leading to the loft.27 Since 1796, the exterior of the stable has remained largely intact, save for a change Bushrod Washington ordered after he inherited Mount Vernon in 1801. He likely enclosed the open-air stalls at the rear of the stable with a timber-framed wall. This enclosed portion is visible in a sketch drawn by Private Robert Knox Sneden, in December, 1861 (Figure 4.9).28

25 The Morley Jeffery Williams collection at Mount Vernon’s library contains the full report of his findings and recommendations.
26 Washington sent a letter to his overseer William Pearce on June 5, 1796 writing that “I am equally ignorant whether the dormant windows are yet put into the stable & Corn lofts; both of which, for the purpose of Air, is indispensably necessary; besides adding to the appearance of the building.” The Founding Era Collection, University of Virginia Press, Rotunda.
Stalls & Mangers

The original stalls were added in 1783. Reports from 1782 note the initial purchase of “Scantling for Stalls and Racks of the Stable.” Lund Washington wrote to Washington in late January that “as yet none of the Stalls are put in place--next week I hope one of the Stables will be finishd.” The next documentation concerning them dates to 1795, in which a weekly manager report reveals that the stalls in the Mansion stable were being repaired, although the extent of this repair is unknown.

Managers reports show an order for nails in 1782, though they were primarily for the loft and roof, where the bulk of wood resides. Wrought nails were found in the joists

29 Mount Vernon Library, Restoration Files Box 7.
30 “To George Washington from Lund Washington, 29 January 1783,” The Founding Era Collection, University of Virginia Press, Rotunda. “Stables” refers to the stall rooms. This was a common usage of the term at the time.
31 Mount Vernon Library, Farm Ledger 1794-1796, 28 February 1795. “By 25 20 d Nales to James Donnaldson to Repair the Stalls in the Stable.”
in the twentieth century and in the places where the girders in the west stall room were removed.\textsuperscript{32} A farm ledger for 1794 to 1796 recorded that on February 1, 1795, twenty-five nails were purchased for “James Donnoldson to Repair the Stalls in the Stable.”\textsuperscript{33} The stable could refer to any stable on Washington’s farms. However, one month later 150 nails were ordered for the new steps at the stable loft.\textsuperscript{34} The reference to the steps leading to the stable loft fits the appearance of the stable at Mount Vernon rather than stables at Washington’s other farms. And in July, Washington wrote to overseer William Pearce that unless it would upset the work Donaldson was doing on the stable, the dormer windows should be installed. This further supports that the initial report refers to the stable at Mount Vernon.\textsuperscript{35} It is unknown why the stalls needed to be repaired after twelve years or what components the nails were for. The stall posts were nailed multiple times into the girders, though there is not existing evidence for nails used in the rest of the partitions. The constant wear and tear from the horses living in the stable and the humid climate may have tested the durability of the stalls.

Evidence from the other barns and stables at Washington’s farms hint to his preferences for partitions and mangers. In 1790 Washington received a letter from George Augustine Washington, his manager that replaced Lund Washington. The latter wrote that “the posts and cross bar’s of the other horse stalls are up and they are now about the Rack.”\textsuperscript{36} The stalls George A. Washington described are those at the brick stable at Ferry and French’s farm, which later became Union Farm. He began this project in 1788 and

\textsuperscript{32} Mount Vernon Library, Morley Jeffrey Williams Collection, Report, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{33} Mount Vernon Library, Farm Ledger, 1794-1796, p. 28, 1 Feb 1795.
\textsuperscript{34} Mount Vernon Library, Farm Ledger, 1794-1796, p. 30, 25 March 1795.
\textsuperscript{35} Mount Vernon Library, “5 July 1795 Letter from Washington to Pearce,” Farm Ledger 1794-1796.
finished in 1791. The “cross bar’s” are likely bars that enclosed the open part of the stall to prevent the animal from escaping. This is the terminology used in *The Complete Farmer* (1767). He does not say anything about the partitions, but he does note that the brick stable at this farm had a rack, perhaps one that extended across all of the stalls.

George Washington’s plans for the new stable at Dogue Run in 1792 offer interesting clues (Figure 4.10). The plan, which depicts the three-sided square brick building in plan view, shows the mangers and stalls for the animals to live there. In the annotations surrounding the image, Washington described how he wished the dimensions to follow and the material to be used. Indicated with the number three are the “Posts & Rails.” The posts are visible by rectangular icons as the vertical posts from the floor that may extend to the ceiling, if they are the posts of “white or box oak” to support the ceiling described in number four (Figure 4.11). The rails clearly refer to the stall partitions, which in the sketch Washington illustrated as a single line extending from the inner wall to the post.

The mangers in the sketch are marked with the number five, seen in (Figure 4.11). Washington wrote that they are to be “of pine plank and be 2 feet wide 9 inches deep in the front, and 18 inches deep behind which will be sufficient for both corn and hay.” Looking at the mangers straight on, the width was two feet. The manger, called a “bisecting manger,” was divided into two different compartments. The compartment closest to the viewer was nine inches deep. Behind it, the second compartment measured

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38 A Society of Gentlemen, *The Complete Farmer* (London, 1767), 168. “A cross bar, being placed at the outward end, may keep the beast from running backwards.”
41 “Union Farm,” Digital Encyclopedia, Mount Vernon, mountvernon.org.
Figure 4.10 Plan for the stable at Dogue Run. October 28, 1792. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Figure 4.11 Detail of the stable at Dogue Run. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.
Figure 4.12 The plan for the horse shed. October 28, 1792. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.
eighteen inches deep, making the total manger dimensions two feet wide and two feet three inches deep. The double compartment was probably considered an economical way to give the animals two types of feed, such as corn and hay or grain.

The second part of the letter explains the arrangement of the horse sheds (Figure 4.12). The posts of the sheds are indicated by the letter (d). Washington preferred locust or a durable oak for these because they were to bear the weight of the shed. He noted that the posts should be far enough apart so that the space between each post could contain two stalls. The backs were “to be boarded up close,” terminology that meant keeping boards flush against each other. In the last note on this page, Washington wrote that the shed should “give sufficient head room for the horses and for Racks, if Racks should be preferred.”

This letter is important for two reasons. It shows Washington’s preference for oak when used for supporting posts. The posts inside the stable provided structural support the girders in each stall room. This letter supports the idea that Washington may have wanted oak for the stall room posts. It suggests an ambivalence toward racks. Leaving the choice of racks to his manager George Augustine Washington indicates that for part of the stall architecture, Washington was not particular.

A letter in 1795 from Washington to William Pearce, who overtook George Augustine Washington as manager, indicates that the stable may not have had racks at all. In describing the feeding arrangement for the treading barn at Dogue Run, Washington wrote that there should be “…a range of troughs for feeding; and either racks, or places back of the troughs or mangers as in the stables at the Mansion house, for Hay.”

reveals that the stable may not have had racks at all, but instead a bisecting manger that was later replicated at Dogue Run.

Washington noted that the structural posts for the barn at Dogue Run should be cut from white or box oak. According to Williams’ report, the posts at Mount Vernon supported the girder in a structural capacity like the posts at Union Farm. Like other contemporary Virginians, Washington also used pine for flooring and for non-structural objects in most of his building campaigns.\textsuperscript{44}

\textit{Post-Washington Repairs to the Stable}

The stalls in place now at Mount Vernon were installed in 1948. Consulting architect Walter M. Macomber designed the stalls, racks, and mangers in what he thought was an authentic eighteenth-century style. The current stalls measure five feet wide by nine feet long (Figure 4.13). Wide, horizontal wooden boards form the partitions. The top board curves gently from the back of the stall to the open end. The stalls have individual racks and troughs that are connected to the partitions. The partitions terminate into the wall at the head and the posts flanking the central aisle. The posts for each stall extends from the floor to girders supporting the loft floor. The posts are elaborately chamfered. Beaded decoration at the midpoint of the shaft and on the capitals make

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Figure4.13}
\caption{Current stalls. Courtesy of the MVLA.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{44}The oak that he ordered for the floor of the Treading Barn at Dogue Run is an exception, given the necessity for strong floors capable of withstanding the horses threshing the hay for long periods of time.
these an embellished design. Each post has pegs to hang tack. At the tallest part the stalls measure six feet eight inches tall and four feet six inches at the open part. The pockets are four inches in height and begin at six feet four inches above the ground.

Macomber based his design on two known sources. He visited a stable at Marshall Hall, located across the Potomac in Maryland, in 1947. Unfortunately, it was demolished soon after his visit. No record of the stable’s interior exists. S.P. Moorehead, an architect of restoration for Colonial Williamsburg, visited Mount Vernon in 1949 to look at Macomber’s stable restoration. He recorded the visit and noted that the Macomber took note of the design and construction of the stalls “which used to stand” at King William Court House.

Figure 4.14 The only photograph from Williams’ 1937 report that includes the stalls added by Superintendent Dodge in 1896. Courtesy of the MVLA.

45 Macomber’s blueprints, Mount Vernon Library.
Figure 4.15 Circular saw marks on the top rail and wire nails. Note the construction of the feed racks and boxes. Courtesy of the MVLA.

Figure 4.16 The poles are attached to the feed boxes and the top rail. Courtesy of the MVLA.
It is unclear why Macomber did not replicate the stalls that he removed. These stalls are evident in a single photograph from 1937 and photographs taken in 1947 by Macomber’s team. The stalls shown in the single photograph from 1937 and the collection of photographs from 1947 show what must be the stalls Dodge installed (Figures 4.14, 4.15 & 4.16). He recorded in his diary in 1896 that “new partitions and mangers were built of old form.” This suggests that Dodge may have known the style of the stalls prior to the new ones and replicated them. Or, he could have meant it in a more general sense. There are no records of new stalls being added between Dodge and Macomber. In his final report, Williams recorded that he left the stalls alone until more research could be done. The circular saw marks on the stalls visible in most of the 1947 photos bolster the belief that they are the stalls Dodge added in 1896. Additionally, the slender poles in the 1947 photographs that extend from the feed racks near the backs of the stalls recall a modification to the stalls that Dodge ordered in 1902. In a letter to the Regent that year, Dodge wrote that “divisions in stalls in horse stable were improved to give better light and ventilation.” No additional information is included in either the letter or his diaries, so the specifics of this improvement remains unknown. These poles may have replaced older boards that served to separate access to the mangers in each stall but that also prevented ventilation.

The stalls in the early photograph are composed of flush vertical boards capped with a rail that is then attached to the posts on the open ends by metal straps. The

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47 Mount Vernon Library, Restoration Files, Minutes of the Council dated May, 1896. “After removing all woodwork therein and pointing up the brick foundation and walls…new partitions and mangers were built of old form, harness racks and feed bins provided…”

48 Superintendent Dodge’s Letters, Vol. 19, pg 291. Eighteenth-century thought concerning horses involved the belief that horses should be separated in stalls that were high enough to prevent the horses from bothering each other (see the 1767 version of The Complete Farmer). However, by the early 1900s it was considered more important that the horses have enough light and ventilation (see “Stalls and Stabling for Your Horse,” by F.M. Ware, in Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation, vol. 47 no. 5 (1906), 642).
photograph does not show the rest of the stalls. Ten years later, though, the stalls are clearly discernible. Though the vertical boards in each division were removed, the top rails show their construction. They extend from the wall to the posts and are composed of three boards. The rail consists of two boards nailed together and capped by a top rail with a beaded edge. These circular sawed boards are joined with nails. The void created by the insertion leaves space below filled with the board partitions for the dividers.

The posts of the stalls are stripped log posts that extend from the floor to the girder supporting the loft floor. They do not lap into the notches in the girder, however. The 1947 photographs show numerous nail holes in these notches (Figure 4.17). The nails rise to nearly the top of the girder. These suggest that the original posts were lapped and nailed. A lap joint, or a half-lap joint, requires two members crossing each other and fitting together. The square girder would require that the member lapping it would also be square. A bevel lap is also a possibility. The notch in the girder is cut at an angle toward the center. The post that laps to the timber is cut into a tusk tenon shape so that it fits cleanly into the notch. The girder is original to the construction of the stable, so the cuts reflect the original position and

Figure 4.17 Note the nail marks on the girder above the posts. Courtesy of the MVLA.
joinery of the original stalls.

The visual evidence from these photos suggests they are of the east stall room.

Williams wrote in his final report:

In the west section of the first story, new girders of oak have been installed in a similar manner and location to those which are in their original locations in the east portion. They are placed in the same position as the original pair, sometime removed. The exact place being determined by patched openings in the brickwork and by old nails and nail holes in the joists.49

Photographs taken in 1947 show a girder with extensive nail holes among the cuts for the posts. A ten year old girder would have no reason to have so many nails, especially when Williams did not remove the existing posts ten years before the date of the picture.

One of the 1947 photographs show the exposed brick walls and flooring after the stalls were removed (Figure 4.18). In the brick walls opposite the posts are pockets spaced five feet apart. They are four inches in height and are situated six feet four inches from the ground. The top rails of the stalls were inserted into these. Discerning whether or not these pockets are original is difficult because of the whitewash on the bricks. In 1876, twenty years before he replaced the stalls, Superintendent Dodge ordered the

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49 Mount Vernon Library, Morley Jeffrey Williams Collection, Box 2, Folder 25 a, Final Report, p. 2.
interior walls to be whitewashed.\textsuperscript{50} This was repeated twice after him and they remain like that today. The stable was repaired in 1876, during the superintendency of Col. Hollingsworth, though the extent of these changes were not documented.\textsuperscript{51} After Dodge became superintendent in the mid-nineteenth century no reports identify any significant brick campaigns in the east or west stall rooms. Dodge did not record replacing brick or adding new ones, only repointing and fixing foundations. Although his team did replace some bricks with differentiable ones, Williams recommended that the posts of the stalls be left alone until proper investigation into the original stalls was completed. He made no mention of removing the stalls. The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association minutes of 1937 documented that new bricks were inserted, but that they were easy to differentiate.\textsuperscript{52} Therefore, it seems likely that the pockets are original and that they were not touched until Macomber disassembled the stalls in 1947.

\textit{Context}

The stable shares cohesive architectural qualities that create a unified whole on the Mount Vernon estate. This is due partially to its position along the South Lane. Turned perpendicular to the other outbuildings on the lane, it is turned 90 degrees to the house. The stable’s position creates a proportioned terminus at the South Lane. The stable yard to the north offers a change in the landscape as the lane descends away from the dwelling house. The stable, turned perpendicular to the other structures on the lane and its marked contrast from being of brick instead of frame signifies a change in building program and the end of the lane. It connects, rather than imbalances, the overall presentation of the house and its dependencies.

\textsuperscript{50} Mount Vernon Library, Dodge Diaries, 28 June 1895.
\textsuperscript{51} Mount Vernon Library, Morley Jeffrey Williams Collection, Box 2, Folder 25 a.
\textsuperscript{52} Mount Vernon Library, Minutes of the Council, 1937.
The other primary and auxiliary structures on Mount Vernon’s grounds were frame structures underpinned with brick using English bond, the bond that the new stable’s foundation and walls were constructed of. The fire that destroyed ten of Washington’s horses no doubt influenced the reason for choosing a material distinctive from his other structures.

The use of English bond on Mount Vernon’s structures is unusual. In Virginia, the bond pattern fell out of style for exterior walls mid-century, although it was still used on interior walls. However, English bond, according to architectural historian Calder Loth, is twelve percent stronger than the more fashionable and expensive Flemish bond. Additionally, it was less expensive to lay than other bonds. Washington’s contemporaries would have been aware of this. By constructing the stable with a commonly used and less refined bond, he was ensuring that the stable, though made of brick, did not appear more ornate than his frame house. The use of brick also identifies the stable as one of the above average stables in the eighteenth century. The metaphoric nature of brick when contrasted with wood reinforced the materials’ popularity among the elite. Brick was more durable, more expensive to make, and required skilled masons and bricklayers. Outbuildings typically were constructed of wood both in the Chesapeake and in the northern colonies. Camille Wells revealed that less than two percent of outbuildings advertised in the Virginia Gazette were constructed with brick.

Shirley Plantation in Charles City, for example, is constructed out of Flemish bond, as is all other flanking outbuildings, including the stable. Mount Airy’s stable in

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54 Lounsbury, “Brickwork,” 239.
Warsaw used stone masonry, the same material on the house and its immediate flankers. However, while the house features ashlar masonry, the stable walls are of a rougher stone. Regardless, the stone reflects the building considerations of the Tayloes and the desire similar to Washington and John Carter to create a visually unified architectural ensemble.

It is interesting that Washington chose to construct such an aesthetically pleasing, functional, and expensive stable when he did. The 1780s experienced a sharp decrease in agricultural prices.\(^56\) Washington made hardly a penny from Mount Vernon and his four farms while he served during the Revolutionary War. However, he succeeded in implementing and completing the construction of the stable, an excessively large one by contemporary standards, with all brick walls and a coach room. This was in spite of the existence of a separate coach house directly across the paddock.

Washington was not an extravagant man prone to overspending or showing off his personal accomplishments. Though he did care what people thought of him, and though he aspired to live the life represented by the English gentlemen in the country, every building campaign and agricultural innovation at Mount Vernon was carefully planned.\(^57\)

Why did Washington build the stable the way he did, when he did? The need for a stable at the mansion grounds was likely imperative for daily life at the estate. He could have easily ordered Lund Washington to construct a lightweight shed, as was common for cattle in Virginia, with exterior racks and mangers, like in England. It would have been cheaper and functional enough to house the animals that would be living there. When Washington returned from war a year later, he could have spent more detail and attention to the stable, carefully inserting his own ideas into the plan. But instead, he wrote a

\(^{56}\) Chernow, *Washington*, 482.

\(^{57}\) Washington wrote to Richard Washington in London and instructed him that “whatever goods you may send me…you will let them be fashionable, neat, and good.” Quoted in Chernow, *Washington*, 76.
carefully worded letter to Lund with his specifications regarding the size and spatial arrangement and left the rest in Lund’s hands.

The choice to go ahead with this expensive building project stemmed from Washington’s emotional attachment to his horses and land. He undoubtedly enjoyed the image of arriving home once and for all and setting up his favorite horses in a comfortable stable with excellent shelter, drainage, ventilation, and warmth that they deserved. He probably disliked the idea of a temporary shelter on the spot because it would have stood out from the building landscape on the grounds. Because the other letters referred to in the letter written to Lund have not been located, some of the information concerning the destruction of the previous stable and the plans between Washington and Lund for the new one is unknowable.

Enough evidence exists concerning Washington’s prerogatives and the way he felt about Mount Vernon and horses that educated guesses are the best substitutes. The fire that killed ten of Washington’s horses likely deeply impacted him. Rather than letting the survivors live in a temporary shelter until the war officially ended and he returned home to oversee the construction of a new stable, he allowed Lund Washington to orchestrate its construction. Though he corresponded through letters to instruct his overseer on the building process, Washington was not there to keep an eye on it. In the end, though, the finished stable fits into the architectural identity of Mount Vernon. It reflects Washington’s attachment to his property, his personal values, and his aspirations.
CHAPTER FIVE

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS OF EXTANT STABLES

The stables that survive and maintain their architectural fabric today in Virginia, Maryland, South Carolina, and Pennsylvania are excellent sources to ascertain the evolution of stable architecture in early America. All of these stables were in private ownership for more than a century and many still are. This is one of the reasons these structures maintain their architectural configuration and stalls. Analyzing these stables in person shed light on the regional and national patterns in their architectural evolution.¹

MOUNT AIRY STABLE
Warsaw, VA
House c. 1754 Stable c. 1760s

The Mount Airy estate is located in the Northern Neck on a bluff overlooking the Rappahannock River. The central building and connected dependencies were constructed out of local sandstone by Colonel John Tayloe from 1754 to 1764. The main house is reminiscent of Palladio’s symmetrical composition and is considered one of the earliest Palladian representations of architecture in America.² The stone masonry and classical design sent a clear statement of Tayloe’s shared importance in the community and appropriate taste.

The first generations of Tayloes bred racing horses and built a number of racing stables on their expansive property. Today, however, only one stable survives. The stable’s size and construction implies that this may have held some racing horses.

¹The following architectural analyses are of stables the author visited in person. Architectural descriptions of other extant stables the author was unable to visit, such as Woodlands (PA), that contribute to this thesis can be found through the National Parks Service website and their National Register of Historic Places nominations.
Figure 5.2 Elevation. Courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.
The south elevation of the stable is the first outbuilding one sees when driving up the gravel driveway (Figure 5.1). The structure is composed of stuccoed stone on the exterior and brick masonry on the interior. The gabled east and west ends are frame. It measures eighty feet long by thirty feet wide. Like Mount Vernon’s stable, the stable is constructed in a tripartite arrangement (Figure 5.2)

![Figure 5.1 The south elevation of the Mount Airy stable. Photo by author.](image)

The coach room is in the center with the stall rooms on either side. The connected shed behind these three rooms houses a dairy on the east end, and a privy and another room in the west end. The stall rooms are accessible from the coach room by a door opening on each partition wall (Figure 5.3). Each stall room holds five stalls. Similar to Mount Vernon’s stable, each room has windows with grilles for

![Figure 5.3 Opening leading from carriage room to west stall room. Note the brick and stone. Photo by author.](image)
ventilation at the south elevation and between each stall room and the carriage room (Figure 5.4). It also has windows in the wall partitions between the stall rooms and the shed. The windows between the east stall room and the carriage room have been bricked up, however, at an unknown date.

The west stall room has a concrete floor that was added sometime after the construction of the stable. The stalls were there before it was poured (Figure 5.5). The stalls in the west stall room are made of wood and feature a cyma curve that ends with a short rounded post with a finial cap (Figures 5.6 & 5.7). The stall between the west and south exterior walls measures five feet eleven inches wide. The adjacent stall is six feet wide, and the third stall on the west wall is six foot eight inches wide. On the opposite side of the stall room are two stalls. The stall closest to the carriage room door is six feet wide and the stall next to it is five feet eleven inches.

In addition to the stalls being of different widths, the height of the tallest part of the cyma curves are also different, either five feet eleven inches tall or four foot eight inches. They appear to be of the same time of construction. This notable difference in height is unusual. Each stall partition is capped with metal that is nailed to the wooden
Figure 5.6 West stall room, looking toward carriage room. Note the different heights of the two partitions, though they both feature the same curve and are made with identical boards. Photo by author.

Figure 5.7 The stalls at Mount Airy. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

Figure 5.8 The covering on the stall partitions were added later, as is seen by the smaller, circular cut nails that fasten the covering to the wood. Photo by author.
Figure 5.9 Cut-through of Mount Airy’s stables showing the stalls. Courtesy of CWF.

Figure 5.10 The finial is too narrow and the band is too thick. Photo by author.

Figure 5.11 The posts in the east stall room. Photo by author.
boards with wire nails, suggesting the metal was added several decades after the stall partitions were constructed (Figure 5.8). The bases of the posts all suffer from rot.

Evidence of a wooden floor was found in the coach room, and it is possible that the stall rooms also had wooden floors. This would have exacerbated the rot on the bottom of the posts more than a masonry or concrete floor.

The presentation of the east stall room is starkly different than the west stall room (Figure 5.9). Two of the stalls feature the same cyma curve with metal capping as in the other room and rounded posts capped with finials. However, the post are rather wide and the finials are tall and narrow, leading to an unnatural and unbalanced appearance (Figure 5.10). The other three are of a cruder construction. The posts of these stalls are formed of a knotty wood with no decorative finial, cap, or base (Figure 5.11). The partitions are composed of a set of wide horizontal wooden boards. Rather than a gentle curve, the downward slope from the head of the stall to the end is drastic and abrupt (Figure 5.12). Comparing the two, it is easy to see which type was constructed with the most skill. The height of these at the tallest point are four inches higher than the curved partitions, at six feet and six inches. The effect is still the same, with the partition at the head of the stalls taller than at the open side. However, they have no decorative element to them and are clearly roughly constructed. That the Tayloe’s placed two distinct stall types in one
stall room is unusual for a family so involved in horses. It is possible that each were constructed during the tenure of a different Tayloe when horses held a different priority.

An image from a farm book published in 1941 shows a similar arrangement to the second stall type. The author identified it as “a standard stall.” The part of the stall at the head is the highest part and is constructed with wide horizontal boards. Then it slopes downward drastically (Figure 5.13). This one does not have a post, but the arrangement with the wide boards and simplified angular construction suggests farmers in the twentieth century were prioritizing simple construction over the more elaborate ones of the nineteenth century. Wire nails are visible along some of the boards of the stalls and on the posts of Mount Airy’s stalls. These were most likely added sometime between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century.

Each stall has its own manger composed of closed vertical wooden planks situated at an angle leaning out from the wall (Figure 5.14).

Figure 5.13 Note the similar construction to the stalls pictured above. From John C. Wooley, M.S., *Farm Buildings* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1941), 196.

Figure 5.14 The mangers at Mount Airy. Courtesy of the MVLA.

This would allow people to push hay from the hole above each stall room from the loft above down between the wall and the manger. The horses would be able to lean their heads down to eat the hay. The second form is composed of a metal rack raised above the horse’s head, seen in the west stall room (Figure 5.15). The metal is a more expensive design than wooden planks and was added later.

These stalls are not original to the stable. Two joists running directly above the posts of the stalls are chamfered, suggesting that they were cut to allow something to be joined. The posts with the capped finials in the west stall room have rough pieces of wood attached in front of them that lead from the floor to the ceiling, but are not attached to the joists (Figure 5.16). In addition, they are not chamfered and could not fit into the cuts.

The rounded posts with the finial are suggestive of a nineteenth-, rather than an eighteenth-, century design. This style is not a Georgian, Palladian, or Federal pattern. The nails visible in these stalls at Mount Airy are cut. These grew popular in the early-to mid-nineteenth century. It is possible that the earliest version of stalls were replaced for natural reasons, such as decay. This is likely the reason Washington replaced his stalls
Figure 5.17 Pine. Photo by author.

Figure 5.18 Circular saw marks on the mangers. Dates them to c. 1850 or later. Photo by author.

Figure 5.19 Evidence of whitewash on the partitions. Photo by author.
twelve years after the first installation. Being so close to the Rappahannock, it is possible that water may occasionally seep up from the ground at Mount Airy, soaking the original partitions and leading to their eventual decay, especially if the original floor was wood.

The stall partitions are made out of pine (Figure 5.17). The mangers are made out of oak (Figure 5.18). The partitions may have had a whitewash on them at one point (Figure 5.19).

Dating the stable presents difficulties. According to a report at the stable at Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, there is an 1805 Mutual Assurance policy that shows a similar structure in the location but is seventy by thirty-three feet and calls its material brick.4 A sketch from 1797 shows a much smaller stable turned too many degrees to be considered an accurate depiction of the current stable.5 It is also possible the stable was constructed near the construction of the house. The 1816 policy sketch shows the stable in its current position (Figure 5.20). The stalls, though, do not date to the original stable

Figure 5.20 The 1816 Mutual Assurance policy for Mount Airy. The stable is the rectangular building on the bottom right. Courtesy of the Library of Virginia, Richmond.

4 The dimensions are noted to be 70 x 33. R4-V13 VA Historic Landmarks Commission files, Richmond.
5 Jeff Klee, Ed Chappell, and Willie Graham of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation agree that the stable was constructed between 1754 and 1797.
construction. The absence of pit saw marks and wrought nails suggests it postdates 1800. The circular saw marks on all of the partitions and mangers suggest they were added after 1850.

SHIRLEY PLANTATION STABLE
Charles City, VA
House 1738  Stable c. 1771

Shirley Plantation, located on the James River in Charles City, Virginia, has been in the care of one family since Edward Hill I built the first house on the property in the early seventeenth century. The plantation operates as a working farm and is opened to the public daily. The main house and outbuildings are located several miles west off of Route 5. The driveway terminates several yards away from the forecourt that contains several outbuildings flanking the house on its north and south elevations. Completed in 1738, Shirley faces east toward the forecourt, with the James River to the west. The buildings in the forecourt were constructed in brick laid in matching Flemish bond. An eighteenth-century stable is situated to the south of the forecourt. Although the stable has undergone change in two and a half centuries, including the loss of the interior stall partitions, the Shirley stable retains important evidence about eighteenth-century stables of the gentry in the Chesapeake.

Rectangular in plan, the stable contains a coach room in the center and flanking stall rooms to the north and south (Figure 5.21). The structure is oriented to the east like the main house with its gabled ends facing north and south. The stable measures eighty feet by twenty-four feet. Changes in the brick work indicate that the stable originally

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7 The stable at Shirley documented by the Historic American Building Survey and uploaded to the Library of Congress’s website is incorrect. The building photographed is another outbuilding and not the stable.
Figure 5.21 The east elevation of the stable at Shirley. Photo by Tom Reinhart.

Figure 5.22 The west elevation. The changes in the brickwork on the north show the shape of the shed roof before it was made into a full-height gable. Photo by Tom Reinhart.
measured sixty-four feet long. At some point the building was expanded to the north with a shed addition. A second enlargement altered the addition’s roof from a shed to a full-height gable (Figure 5.22).

The foundation of the stable is of English bond and considered not as elegant by eighteenth-century standards than Flemish. It is likely that the ground is currently lower than when the stable was constructed. The English-bond foundation is visible, and the height from the ground to the ground floor is too high for a carriage to enter the stable easily or horses comfortably. A watertable highlights the change in grade. The ground surrounding the stable slopes slightly to the west. The exterior walls are laid in Flemish bond. The interior walls comprise a mix of both Flemish and English bond (Figure 5.23). A modillioned cornice runs across all four exterior sides of the stable, creating closed pediments on the gabled ends on the north and south elevations. The roof is framed as a principal rafter system with a false plate used to carry the common rafters.
Three original entrances on both the east and west elevations provide access to each room. These entrances span the height of the wall, although louvers fill the upper third of the openings to reduce the size of the door openings. The entryway on the east wall for the coach room has been narrowed. The mortar seam is evident on the exterior of the wall. The entrances to each stall room on the east elevation and all of the entrances on the west measure five feet wide. The addition on the northern end has two small windows on the west elevation and a matching window with a small door on the east. There are four six-inch-wide air vents on both the east and west elevations, two on either side of the stall room entrances. Each gable end features a loft door to lift up hay and other goods. The door to the loft on the south wall is surrounded by rubbed brick. There are no exterior staircases leading to these doors.

While the exterior shows few major alterations, the interior reveals several. Discoloration of the lowest courses of brick on the interior indicate that the floor was likely higher when the stable was first built than at present. The walls separating the coach room from the south stall room and the north stall room from the addition were...
Figure 5.25 North wall. Photo by author.

Figure 5.26 Interior elevation of the north wall. Courtesy of CWF.
removed, creating an open interior floor plan in three quarters of the building (Figure 5.24). Racking on the east and west walls and the remainder of the wall’s foundation are all that remain. The floor is dirt, although there is evidence that it was once bricked.

The interior of the south stall room is the most intact, although original stall partitions and feed mangers do not survive. They were removed, possibly in the twentieth century, when wooden troughs were added to both sides of the south stall room and the south end of the coach room. Animals were kept in the stable as late as the 1950s, with the occasional stabling of a horse afterwards. Now, the lower floor of the stable houses old farm equipment, doors, and various architectural components from around the site.

What architectural evidence remains of the stall arrangements is intriguing. The south stall room measures twenty feet deep and nine feet eight inches tall and features four rows of pockets of varying sizes and heights puncturing the brick work of the north wall (Figures 5.25 and 5.26). The bottom row (A) consists of three square-shaped pockets approximately three and a half feet from the floor. Four longer pockets (B) are spaced on either side of and five inches above row (A). Two and a half feet up are four members made out of oak (C) that jut out of the wall. They are spaced approximately six feet apart. Six inches above these are two irregularly shaped pockets (D) located five and a half feet and fifteen feet from the west side of the wall. The pocket closest to the west appears to have some bricks missing which accounts for its larger shape. These are located about a foot from the top of the wall. None of the pockets in the four rows align.

Because only one row preserves what was pocketed in them, determining a clear image of the stall arrangement based on the current fabric presents challenges. Speculation as to the original arrangement is possible, however, because the brick wall is intact, and the evidence has not been obscured through whitewashing or infilling the early pockets. The row of pockets that most likely took the framing for the stall partitions is row (B), which is located five feet above the floor. The pockets are one foot in height.
The two pockets on this row to the east and west of the wall are located about two feet from the adjacent walls, a width that would be too small to stall any animal, but could have served as work aisles. The remaining room between the pockets would create three separate stalls, each measuring five feet wide, a typical width of eighteenth-century stalls. The three square pockets in row (A) align inside the three stalls and could have been part of a small feedbox in each stall, which were a common feature in eighteenth-century stables. The wooden fragments in row (C) may have been part of a feed rack that would have extended a short distance from the wall to carry hay (Figure 5.27). These members are positioned six feet apart from each other. The mortar surrounding them is original and suggests no signs of alteration or realignment except for the one to the west.

The pockets in row (D) do not have a clear function. If they contained horizontal members that extended outward as row (C) does, they too would need to terminate at some point. Pockets in the walls abutting this wall align with them, leading to the possibility that a board may have run from east to west and joined with whatever was protruding from row (D) on the north interior wall. The two pockets could have been to offer more support for the stall partitions and feed rack, if they were freestanding from the east and west walls. This can be assumed by the fact that the east and west walls give no indications of pockets in the brickwork that align with row B, suggesting that the stalls would have been freestanding and need additional support by members on the north wall, a function that row (D) could have performed. Another possibility is that the
stalls terminated into posts on the open sides that extended into the ceiling, lapping into the girders to provide stability. As the loft floor was replaced in the twentieth century, unfortunately, it offers no clues to determine if this were the case.

The upper story in the stable spans continuously across the length of the stable with no wall partitions. The loft used to store hay and other goods, but today it houses inventoried objects from various decades, including an old gate post.

It is unfortunate that no original stall partitions have survived intact. Given the wealth at Shirley and the careful design executed in all of its buildings, the stalls may have offered clues as to the style and construction of expensive stall partitions. However, unlike the stable at Mount Vernon, the walls of at least one stall room in Shirley’s stable have largely been left intact that reveal signs of original construction. The evidence surviving in the walls continue to offer some idea of the width and length of the stalls, which can be used to compare with known stall dimensions from eighteenth-century husbandry books. Despite the lack of original interior fittings, the survival of Shirley’s stable with minimal alterations to the original plan is an important and rare example of eighteenth century brick stables in Virginia. Fortunately, the preservation easement that was enacted in 2006 on Shirley’s buildings and grounds, combined with the educated enthusiasm for the history and significance of Shirley by the current owner, ensures that no other alterations will change the building fabric of the stable.

SHEPHERD’S DELIGHT STABLE
Worton, Maryland
House c. 1767-1783 Stable c. 1790s

Situated on a nearly 240-acre lot surrounded by corn fields in Kent County, Maryland, the eighteenth-century farm Shepherd’s Delight is a positive example of what happens when one family maintains and lives on a historic property for nearly 200 years. The property is made up of a number of buildings that range from the eighteenth
to the twentieth centuries. The existing eighteenth-century structures on the property hold significance in their rarity in the region today. The earliest structures include the main house and a stable with twentieth-century shed additions. A frame granary, dating to c.1820s, is a rare early example. Later buildings include a smokehouse, dairy or storehouse, a twentieth-century dairy barn and a long, modern shed that houses cut wood, a tractor, and other farm supplies. All of the structures on the property are in good condition and have survived without major alterations.\footnote{The National Register of Historic Places Nomination form for Shepherd’s Delight, completed in 1975, offers detailed descriptions of the main house and its history.}

The entrance to Shepherd’s Delight consists of a gravel road off of route 213 that leads westward toward the long shed, brick stable, and frame granary, before curving to the left, or south, to where the main house lies on the property. The house faces north, toward the entrance road. To the east of the house are three small, square outbuildings, two brick and one frame. The four bay, one-and-a-half story main house was built as a

Figure 5.28 The stable at Shepherd’s Delight. East elevation. Photo by author.
hall and parlor plan that dates to the mid-eighteenth century. Attached to its east elevation is a four-bay, two-story kitchen that originally was one story tall.

To the north of the granary is a one-story brick stable with early-twentieth-century sheds attached to its northern and southern sides. The rarity of stables from the eighteenth century in the Chesapeake highlights the importance of this structure (Figure 5.28). The thirteen-inch-thick walls are laid in 1:3 common bond. The stable shows evidence of exterior whitewash or paint. It is mostly gone, but is intact underneath the north shed (Figure 5.29). Some of the bricks have been replaced, and some of the mortar has been repointed with Portland cement. The stable’s stone foundation is visible, indicating that the grade was likely higher when the stable was built, and thus the stone would have been covered. The gabled ends of this one-room stable are oriented to the east and west, with the east used as the main entrance. The length from gable end to gable end measures seventeen feet. The north and south elevations are twenty-two feet long.

The off-center door on the east elevation is mirrored on the west elevation. The fenestration pattern of the stable suggests the stable’s plan had an aisle along the south wall and multiple stalls along the north. In each gable is a door for loading hay for storage in the floored loft. The interior faces of the walls are plastered. The finish is mostly intact, although it shows significant wear on the north wall. On the north elevation are two diamond-bar windows located approximately four feet from the outer corners and measuring three feet and three inches wide. The wooden bars are gone, but a few remnants are lodged into some of the bar holes. Each window has a wooden shutter attached to the exterior. There is about five feet and six inches of space between the two
windows. Both window sills show signs of cribbing, or the process of a horse gripping onto a hard surface with their teeth and sucking in gulps of air. A piece of rusted hardware that looks like a cotter pin is located off to the right and below the western window on the north wall. A diamond-bar window placed centrally on the southern elevation at a similar height as the windows opposite has one remaining diamond bar. The wooden sill of the window is missing, as well as several bricks below it.

The current height to the window sills from the floor on the interior is too high for any horse to reach the sill. However, the ground level on both the stable floor and the exterior was likely higher than at present. This can be seen by the stone foundation that is currently visible but would have been hidden when first built. In addition, the presence of empty joist pockets on the interior indicate that the floor was originally higher and closer to the bottom of the door framing (Figure 5.30). The higher floor in the stable and the grade on the exterior would have allowed easier access to and from the stable for the horses and would have given them the ability to reach the windows.

The wearing of the plaster and sills, along with the location of the doors and windows, offer clues as to its interior plan. The horses were likely stalled against the north wall. The location of the doors strongly indicate that an aisle would have run along the south wall. Secondly, the significant indentations in the plaster on the north wall suggest daily wear. Plaster contains salt, which horses enjoy as a treat. Therefore, the probability is high that the horses stabled in the structure licked the salt in the plaster, causing its deterioration, and chewed on the window sills to pass the time.
Unfortunately, the walls offer no evidence of any stall partitions or enclosures. On the west wall, approximately six feet from the north wall, is a faint impression of a vertical mark that travels directly below a floor joist and abruptly stops several feet down. This could possibly indicate how deep the stalls were. Six feet was a common stall length, and its location beneath a joist suggests it could have been joined to it. No other ghost marks are visible along the opposite wall. This solitary clue, however, may not be a ghost mark when other factors are taken into consideration. The lack of other evidence could indicate that the partitions were taken out before the walls were plastered; thus, any vertical lines of discoloration are a result of debris falling from the joists above. If it was a ghost mark, the plaster should show impressions or nail holes from where the rest of the stall posts were situated in the stable, but the lack points to the conclusion that the plaster has covered up original pockets that housed the stall members.

Further obscuring evidence of the stable original stall partitions is the result of a chainsaw robbery in the 1970s that removed most of the tie beams and loft floor. Five beams survive, and the remainder have been replaced with twentieth-century beams (Figure 5.31). The surviving joists that show eighteenth-century saw marks and wrought nails located on the tops of these beams where the floor of the loft and the joists would have been joined. One curiosity is a wooden keeper, generally positioned vertically on a door to allow a crossbar to slide into it, which is located on one of the original joists that is to the east of the western window on the north wall. Sash saw marks are visible. Its purpose on the joist is unclear. It is positioned on the joist in a way that it could take a post. However, it does not line up with the possible ghost mark of a post on the west wall,
but is located several inches away toward the south wall. The cotter pin on the north wall appears to be the only one that was in the stable, as there are no others or pockets that would indicate the presence of others in the walls. The purpose for the pin is unknown. Its position could align with the height required to tie a horse to the wall, but at this point it is conjecture.

Based on the current conditions, several possibilities can explain the interior configuration regarding how the horses were stabled. Generally, stables included some form of aperture to allow for light and ventilation for the horses. The interior length of the north wall measures twenty feet, which evenly divides into either five four foot-wide stalls or four five foot-wide stalls. These were common stable widths in the eighteenth century according to contemporary animal husbandry books, but not every horse would have direct access to a window. The position of two windows spaced nearly six feet apart could suggest that there were only two horses stalled in the stable in compartments that centered on each window. A third option that appears possible given the lack of stall evidence on the stable’s interior fabric is that the horse were not housed in individual stalls, but in a type of pen, in which all of the horses could experience light and air from the windows. The pen could have been freestanding from the surrounding walls by having posts that lapped into the joists above. Unfortunately, there are not enough original joists to support this argument, but the lack of evidence on the walls suggests some type of freestanding enclosure.

The sheds on the north and south sides are in good condition. The southern shed houses supplies for maintaining a farm while the shed on the opposite side housed animals at one point. It contains stall partitions, but the circular saw marks and wire nails clearly place these stalls in the twentieth century.

The level of existing original fabric in the farm’s structures and the careful stewardship of the property by the owners make Shepherd’s Delight a rare and welcomed
example in the twenty-first century of early framed buildings and eighteenth-century farm structures in the Chesapeake. The brick stable is important for its rarity, as few eighteenth-century brick stables in Maryland and Virginia remain today, and often the ones that do exist with extensive alterations. The stable’s one room design, although simpler than contemporary stables such as Mount Vernon, Upton Scott, Mount Airy, Shirley, or Sabine Hall, is still reflective of the success of planter and owner of Shepherd’s Delight, John Angier. That the stable was constructed with brick and not wood was an outward indicator of the wealth and permanence afforded to Angier and his land. Although its original stall partitions no longer exist and the original layout of the interior was indiscernible, the stable is an important contribution to understanding eighteenth-century outbuildings and especially other brick stables in the greater context of colonial mid-Atlantic society.

AIKEN RHETT HOUSE STABLE
Charleston, South Carolina
House c. 1817 Stable c. 1817, enlarged 1830s

The stable at the Aiken Rhett house reflects the other end of the spectrum of stables included in this analysis. First constructed in the first decades of the nineteenth century...
century, the stable was doubled in size and the architectural ornamentation altered to reflect the Gothic Revival style that arrived in Charleston.

The stable is positioned in a court behind the house in a long backlot (Figure 5.32). It was built opposite the kitchen and slave quarters building. The first floor is the stable and the second floor served as housing for slaves. The building measures seventy feet long and seventeen feet wide (Figure 5.33). It is of brick masonry that was later stuccoed. The lower floor has four doors along the east wall. The one to the south end is the largest, as it served as the opening for the room with the carriages. The two doors in the center of the structure are smaller. One opens to a stairwell that leads to the upper floor and the other leads to the stall room. The last door to the north is slightly larger than these two but is smaller than the carriage door. Above these doors are ten windows spaced along the length of the east wall. The north gable end has two apertures, one on each floor level. The south end of the structure was built to house the family’s carriages. The room

Figure 5.33 The stable and carriage room at the Aiken Rhett House. Photo by author.
Figure 5.34 Urban plantations often used creative ways to protect their property behind their walls. Here, a vertical slat in the interior brick wall allows air flow that circulates from the outer brick wall. It prevents people from reaching into the stable and the horses from reaching out. Photo by author.

Figure 5.35 The room in the foreground was once used for stabling, likely when the stable was half its current size. The wall partition, now open, was once boarded up. The slats at the top were for ventilation. Photo by author.

Figure 5.36 Six stalls are located in this room, with two more that were in the room between this room and the carriage room. Photo by author.
next to it, empty now, was likely used to stall horses. This is seen by the presence of two vertical slats in the brickwork facing the street that allowed for ventilation for the horses but prevented outsiders from reaching in (Figure 5.34).

This portion is divided by a lathed-partition wall with louvers at the top near the ceiling from the room at the south end (Figure 5.35). This room measures thirty-five feet and ten inches long. It holds six individual horse stalls that are seven feet long and approximately five feet ten inches wide (Figures 5.36).

Each stall has pointed Gothic arches at the open and back ends. The arches terminate into Tuscan columns at the open end. The stalls have its own ventilation slat in the brickwork, a feed box and an open rack (Figure 5.37). The ends of the stalls are situated several feet away from the interior of the west wall. This space houses the individual feed boxes which are nailed to the slotted racks and to the brick wall. One rusted metal ring placed on the top rail beside

Figure 5.37 One of the existing stalls. Note the vertical slat in the brickwork, the Gothic arch above the feed box and rack, and the individual mortises in the post to the right. Photo by author.

Figure 5.38 Metal hook to tie up the horse. Photo by author.
the feed rack in one stall may be the surviving remnant of the ties that kept the horses in their stalls (Figure 5.38). Though this stable is a later example, the evidence suggesting these were tie stalls shows that this type of stall that extended out of the eighteenth century still was practiced in the nineteenth century.

The dividers of the partitions are completed with horizontal boards with four inches of space between them to allow for ventilation. They extend parallel to the floor from the bottom to the top of the posts, which is approximately seven feet and seven inches tall. Most of the boards are now gone. However, individual mortises in the posts show the arrangement of these dividers (Figure 5.39). The posts are octagonal and
highlight the expensive nature of this stable, along with the pointed arches of each stall (Figure 5.40). Similar to other earlier stables, the loft above the stalls each have a hole to allow for hay to be dropped into the space between the west wall and the racks. The open space behind the racks were divided from each stall by nearly two feet of three beaded, vertical boards that connect to the back post and the wall (Figure 5.41). This prevented horses from reaching into the stalls of their neighbors and taking their feed.

The floor in this stall room is dirt, though it may have had boards, which is the currently floor in the middle room of the stable. The interior of the stable’s walls were painted brightly, as was the rest of the outbuildings and the exterior of the main dwelling house. Remaining paint on the arches suggest that the stalls themselves were painted too, another example that demonstrates the opulence of the Aiken Rhett House’s stable.

SABINE HALL STABLE
Warsaw, VA
House 1738 Stable c. 1820

Also located in Warsaw, VA, on the Rappahannock, Sabine Hall is an early plantation house constructed by Landon Carter, a wealthy Virginian planter. While the brick masonry house is clearly Georgian, the horse stable, located a short distance from
Figure 5.42 The stable (pictured in the foreground to the right) is located far away from the main dwelling house. Photo by author.

Figure 5.43 The stable at Sabine Hall.
the house, displays a number of architectural details that suggest the stable is not original to the property.

The stable is positioned far from the main house to the south (Figure 5.42). The one story structure is composed of a rectangular brick masonry section in a 1:5 common bond facing north to south and is punctured by a later wooden addition to form a cross (Figure 5.43). The brick section holds two stall rooms accessible only from the outside. The addition contains a large carriage room in the eastern addition and a small tack room in the west. The original section measures forty by twenty feet. The addition measures fifty feet long. The carriage room is twenty feet wide and the tack room is fourteen feet wide (Figure 5.44). The roof is not original in neither material nor form. Currently a gable roof with terne metal covering, the original wooden shingles are visible underneath it.

Figure 5.44 Plan of Sabine’s stable. Courtesy of CWF.
The south brick partition shows evidence of whitewash (Figure 5.45). This may have been added when the wooden addition was attached so that it looked more uniform. The underpinning of the wooden addition is a brick running bond (Figure 5.46). The fenestration pattern consists of a door on all four sections with a window on either side for a total of three apertures on each part of the stable. The windows for the carriage house have been boarded up. The entrance to the north stall room is not on grade with the ground. There are five visible brick courses. While this is a significant step into the stable, there is little evidence that the ground was higher at some point. One alternate explanation is that the carriage room and stalls had ramps to allow easier access that have long since disappeared.

The stable is relatively small in proportion to the size of the main house. Each stall room measures
nineteen feet by eleven feet. The rooms have windows three foot high that start six feet and four inches above the ground to allow for light and ventilation (Figure 5.47). The north stall room is more intact than the south stall room, which was dismantled at an unknown date and is used by animals today. The north stall room has three individual stalls. Assuming the south stall room was identical, that would leave a total of stalls for six horses.

The stall closest to the north measures seven feet six inches side and six feet nine inches deep. The partition is made of pine with beaded vertical planks that rise four feet six inches above the ground. Above them are two thin horizontal boards with several inches between them with a vertical piece of wood connecting them. They terminate at either end into the posts. They make the total height of the partition five feet eleven inches (Figure 5.48).

The manger in this stall extends outward at an angle with vertical planks capped with a rounded piece of wood that is connected to the brick wall with cement (Figure 5.49). The only nails on this manger are on two planks closest to the brick wall. They align horizontally, suggesting they may have been for something placed in the corner, like a feed box. No nails are visible on the
Figure 5.50 The gate to the box stall. Photo by author.

Figure 5.51 The gate is mortise and tenoned. Photo by author.
connection between the cap and the planks. The cap likely has grooves under it that the planks could be inserted into.

This stall is the only stall with a gate (Figures 5.50 & 5.51). The gate is made up of four wide horizontal boards and three thinner ones spaced apart. It is connected to the posts by a hinge on the top and bottom of the door. The gate was constructed with oak. Given that oak is more durable than pine, oak on a door that would experience much wear makes sense, just as making the mangers and partitions out of pine, a relatively rot- and bug-resistant wood does. The other posts are chamfered, while the gate, post, and top rails of the division are squared.

The middle stall measures six feet and three inches wide. The partition that separates the second stall from the third stall is constructed differently than the one separating the first stall from the second (Figure 5.52). This one has chamfered posts on either end that extend to the ceiling and lap into the joists. The partition is composed of vertical planks. The wood capping these is rounded and thicker than on the other
stall. It is mortise and tenoned into the posts (Figure 5.53). The curved metal partition placed on top of the stall offered additional height to prevent the horses from interacting with each other. The grill was added at a later date when metal accouterments in stables became more practical in the second half of the nineteenth century, as is seen with the metal feed racks at Mount Airy. The top of top rail has wire nails, further indicating that the grill was added later. The manger in this stall is identical to the first stall, except that it has a feed box positioned in the right corner.

The third stall is five feet and eleven inches wide. The stall is the only stall with wood floors. Behind the manger is a ladder leading to the loft above.

The chamfered post on the stall dividing the second and third stalls shows evidence of machine cut nails (Figure 5.54). The top of the post that laps into the joist above contains an early cut nail. This post is likely original to the stable, as is the wooden partition connected to it. Photographs of the stall partition in the south stall room show that the stall was the same style as this one is.

The south stall room is accessible only from the exterior. It has a concrete floor. There are a total of four remaining pieces of the stalls. In the center is a post with a channel five feet and ten inches tall. This would have been the height of the stall partition. It is not flush with the brick wall. There are a series of nails on this post that may have kept the boards in place. On either side of the room, in the corners near the location of the
stalls, are two pieces of wood connected to the brick wall in a diagonal. A long octagonal chamfered wooden post lays against one of the walls. It also has a groove. This groove is ten inches shorter than the post in the center of the brick wall. The two pieces of wood braced diagonally against the walls are connected to the bricks by a series of large nails with a rounded head. They are not mirrored in the other stall room, leaving their function unknown.

A photo from Colonial Williamsburg, taken 35 years ago, shows the stall that used to exist in the room (Figure 5.55). A photo taken in 2003 by Mount Vernon shows that not only was the stall still there, but that a second identical post was nailed to the wall for another partition (Figure 5.56). It was taken down sometime after, but this confirms that this stall

Figure 5.55. All that remains of this stall today is the post connected to the brick wall. The post is grooved to allow the planks to be inserted. The diagonal piece of wood on the partitions is probably part of the manger that was removed at an unknown date. Photo taken in 1983. Courtesy of CWF.

Figure 5.56. Two posts with channels. Photo taken in 2003. Courtesy of MVLA.
room also had a set of individual stalls. These stalls are shorter and not elaborate. This room, perhaps, held animals other than horses, or work horses. The other stall room could have held saddle horses. The different type of stall in here suggests that the stall rooms had different purposes.

The joists in the stall rooms show clear circular saw marks. The girders that the stall posts lap into, however, are roughly hewn, indicating two campaigns. When the wooden addition was added to the stable, the loft was probably reconfigured to accommodate the different roof shape. The girders remained, though, as they were still functional. The stable probably dates sometime in the 1820s. The 1:5 common bond was rarely used in America before the Revolutionary War. The cut nails in the stable were used in Virginia in the late 1790s to the late 1820s. There is no evidence that the stalls are not first generation. The joists of the loft floor do not show ghost marks or nails where posts used to connect to. The brick walls do not show any either. The mortise and tenoned connections in the partitions, posts, and the door to the first stall in the north stall room suggest an early joinery. Why the stall with the door did not receive the same treatment is odd, though it could reflect different priorities concerning the aesthetics of the stable’s interior when they were installed.

CHARLES DRAYTON HOUSE STABLE
Charleston, South Carolina
House c. 1883-1886 Stable c. as late as the 1860s

The stable at 25 East Battery predates the Victorian house, which the Drayton family constructed after the earlier Greek Revival house was destroyed in the Civil War.

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9 Calder Loth, “Notes on the Evolution of Virginia Brickwork from the Seventeenth Century to the late Nineteenth Century,” in Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology 6, no. 2 (1974), 108. According to Loth, “During the 1820’s five-course American bond...supplanted three-course American bond as the preferred bond for side and rear walls. It was more economical and could be laid quicker than three-course work. The use of five-course bond in Virginia persisted into the late-nineteenth century.”
The stable and tack house’s exterior retained its Greek Revival style. The stable and tack house was remodeled in 1999. Rather than turn the stall room into a living space, the owners chose to restore the stalls and leave the space as it was intended. Photographs taken in 1998 before the stable was renovated shows the remnants of the original stalls (Figure 5.57). Unfortunately, severe termite damage compromised the integrity of the original stalls, and many of them could not be saved. However, the reconstruction and the photographs show the original configuration of the stables and the design of the stalls.

The stable is located behind the tack house to the west. It is constructed of brick and was later stuccoed. The stable has a low sloped roof that extends from the wall.

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Figure 5.57 The original stall in 1998. Photograph by Willie Graham. Courtesy of CWF.

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Figure 5.55 & 5.59

The exterior of the Charles Drayton stable after the renovation and in 1998. Photo (top) taken by author. Photo (bottom) photo taken by Willie Graham. Courtesy of the CWF.
feet six inches wide. The one adjacent is also five foot six inches. The third stall measures five foot five inches, and the last stall is five foot nine inches wide. The length of the stalls is nine feet. From the floor to the top of the stall partition is four foot six inches, but that was not the original height. Grooves in the posts measure seven foot four inches tall from the floor. The planks of the partitions would have been inserted in these channels (Figure 5.61). The picture of the stalls pre-renovation show horizontal planks of varying widths that connect to the end posts either at a slope or parallel to the floor. It is most likely that these planks extended straight out. The grooves on either posts are the same heights, and the sloping planks in the photographs were likely falling down. The feed racks of this stable are positioned three feet and ten inches from the ground (Figure 5.62). They attach
not to the wall but to the partitions and posts. The members of the racks are chamfered. Though none of the feed boxes exist today, they are evident in the 1998 photographs. They were attached to the wall by strips of wood.

Along the top of the north wall is a wooden beam that runs the length of the wall. The joists of the roof are lapped into it. Directly below are pieces of wood positioned and then joined to the stall. A metal ring beneath each rack tethered the horses, similar to the stable at Sabine Hall.

The feed racks of this stable are positioned three feet and ten inches from the ground (Figure 5.62). They attach not to the wall but to the partitions and posts. The members of the racks are chamfered. Though none of the feed boxes exist today, they are evident in the 1998 photographs. They were attached to the wall by strips of wood. Along the top of the north wall is a wooden beam that runs the length of the wall. The joists of the roof are lapped into it. Directly below are pieces of wood positioned and then joined to the stall. A metal ring beneath each rack tethered the horses, similar to the stable
dividing this property from its neighbor. Originally, there were five doors leading to the stalls on the south elevation. Today, the fifth room is used for utilities. The doors each have six narrow vertical slats for air and ventilation (Figures 5.58 & 5.59).

The interior measures 23 feet 11 inches wide. The stall widths are different. The stall on the west side is five feet six inches wide (Figure 5.60). The one adjacent is also five foot six inches. The third stall measures five foot five inches, and the last stall is five at Sabine Hall. They and the feeding racks are the only chamfered pieces of the stall partitions. The wood of the stalls is made of pine, which is unfortunately often subject to termite damage.

31 LEGARE STREET STABLE
Charleston, South Carolina
House 1789 Stable c. 1870

The stable post-dates construction of the house. The eighteenth-century, six-bay weatherboard house fronts the street to the east. Like a traditional Charleston lot, the

Figure 5.63 The stable at 31 Legare. The kitchen is in the foreground. Photo by author.
outbuildings extend along one of the brick walls surrounding the property to the west of the structure, so that they are mostly hidden from the street. The brick kitchen house was likely built around the construction of the main house and has since been converted into apartments. Adjoining the kitchen further to the west is a long stable that is frame on three sides and brick masonry on one side adjoining the brick wall separating 31 Legare from 35 Legare.

The stable is a one story structure with a loft above (Figure 5.63). It is broken into two sections, a joint carriage house and tack room to the east and a stall room to the west. The east and west sides are gabled, with the west gable containing a loft door and brackets with small arched holes above them for doves. A wide cornice follows along the south elevation and is punctured by a central pediment over the tack room. The tack room contains two sets of double doors that open wide for the entrance of a carriage. The change from the tack room to the stall room is evident by thin, open slats about the height of a horse’s withers on the exterior cladding on the western half of the structure (Figure 5.64). They extend up to the roofline. Because proper ventilation and light for horses grew increasingly important as the nineteenth century wore on, it is likely that these cuts in the exterior shell were added to allow the horses to share the southerly breeze. There

![Figure 5.64 The deep overhanging eave and the slatted wall on the south facilitated ventilation and shade from the sun. Photo by author.](image)
are three separate doors to the stall room, each leading to a stall for one horse. The stable is currently painted white except for the doors that are painted Charleston green. The cornice overhangs by several feet above the stall, sheltering the horses from sun and inclement weather and also serving as an aesthetic improvement.

At the most western end of the stable is a closed wall of white vertical weatherboards like the rest of the structure. However, the brick wall adjoining it shows evidence that there was a structure where a garden now stands (Figure 5.65). The brick foundation is evident and is in plane with the stable. White paint or whitewash is still visible on many of the bricks, and a visible vertical ghost mark on one of the brick pilasters further indicates that a building once stood there. The most peculiar part is the grated window in the brick wall that divides the properties. It is at the same height and of the same design as the widows in the stall rooms, six feet eleven inches. While it is possible the building extended further and included room for a fourth stall, the width is six and a half feet, which is too narrow compared to the box stalls in the interior that measure between ten and thirteen feet wide. Secondly, the roofline and cornice give no evidence that the stable was shortened or that a separate structure stood beside it.

The interior offers little clues to the possible original function of the space by the western wall. The wood paneling on the interior looks new given the lack of stains, marking in the wood, and any other sign of deterioration. A ladder positioned in front of this walls leads to an opening in the roof that gives access to the loft above (Figure 5.66).
The ladder is in good condition and the wood appears new. However, the hole in the hay loft above appears to be in the original location. Possibly, the stall that is now on the outside may have been enclosed at one point and was used for smaller animals, such as chickens or pigs. The ventilation window would allow them to reach fresh air while the stable would maintain symmetry on the northern side.

The floor on the interior of the stable has been replaced with two inches of concrete. The measurements reflect the original dimensions. Only one stall partition
remains inside the stable (Figure 5.67). Vertical boards measuring four feet high are capped with a top rail that shows signs of cribbing (Figure 5.68). Above that is a metal grill that is two feet eight inches tall, making the total height of the partition six feet eight inches. Using evidence from the three doors and three windows, it was possible to ascertain the original locations of the partitions and the widths of the stalls. The stall closest to the tack room measures ten feet wide. The ventilation window is located six feet and eleven inches from the ground. The second stall is twelve feet and eight inches wide, a significant difference compared to the first stall. It is likely that the horses housed here were racing horses. They often were treated to larger stalls so that they could stretch out, especially in the nineteenth century.

The existence of mill saw and circular saw marks indicate that the stable was built no earlier than 1850.\textsuperscript{11} The house changed hands in 1870. This may coincide with the construction of the stable.

\textit{Conclusions}

The stables in this analysis range from the mid-eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. Comparing stables built earlier than Mount Vernon’s and stables

\textsuperscript{11} According to Willie Graham, mill-sawn lumber was not used in the area until the mid-1700s and was rare until the 1780s. Circular saws started being used in the late-1840s and did not become common until the early 1850s.
constructed some 100 years following demonstrates the longevity of patterns in stable design in America.

These stables demonstrate that their owners shared standard considerations. These included proper ventilation and light, balance in architectural design, interior spaces with designated purposes, and that the entirety of the stable, from its exterior finishes to the stall partitions, reflected thoughtful craftsmanship. The construction of Mount Vernon’s stable and its subsequent repairs and renovations have maintained these standards.

The construction and materials of these stables, the style of the stalls and how their parts were joined, present a continuum of stable architecture evolution. The concept of space is an important element to these stables. Every room and section of these stables are clearly defined by their architecture. Stall rooms have small, shaded windows often centrally placed on the wall. All of these stables save for Shepherd’s Delight include a separate room for carriages and tack. This suggests that for the larger stables and those whose owners were wealthy, there was a desire to keep the livestock and riding accouterments in separate spaces. The stables with multiple stall rooms used the same dimensions for each space. Rooms with central aisles had symmetrically placed stalls, though they were not always of the same width. Within these spaces, there were clear divisions between horse and human use. Central aisles for humans to walk through and easily access the stalls were clearly discernible. The hay lofts in all of these stables had openings in the floors to allow hay to drop to the hay racks below.

The construction of stalls share similarities. From Sabine Hall’s stalls of the early 1800s to the stalls at Charles Drayton that date to the 1860s at the latest, these stalls share commonalities that suggest there was a standard in their design. All of the stalls, for example, were constructed with pine or oak. Few nails were used in the partitions. The mortise-and-tenon joinery that connected the partitions to the posts at nearly all of the stables reflect a conscious choice in constructing durable and aesthetically pleasing stalls.
The mangers at most of the stables, the partitions at Sabine, and nearly all of the posts had channels for the insertion of boards. This choice created smoothly constructed stalls that hid their joinery. The stall joinery was planed. In addition to creating partitions that showed craftsmanship and taste, planed stalls protected the horses from harming themselves against sharp edges or from splinters from rough wood. The stables were whitewashed or painted on the interiors, though they may not have been originally. This was a level of finish typically reserved to outbuildings that experienced significant wear. The color of whitewash also kept the interiors light as they caught the sunlight through the apertures in the walls.\textsuperscript{12}

The stables outside of urban centers were located at some distance from the dwelling house. The stables in the city of Charleston were located on the boundary lines of each property. This is a reflection of the emphasis of placement of structures in the back-lot based on their function. Stables near boundary lines provided some space between them and the dwelling houses to keep the smell of the animals at bay, but they were close enough to an access point so that carriages had easy access.

\textsuperscript{12}According to Willie Graham, whitewash was less prevalent in buildings in the 1700s but was more so in the 1800s and later.
CHAPTER SIX

“A good BRICK STABLE:” ANALYSIS OF STABLE TRENDS

In 1806, Dr. Charles Drayton--of the South Carolina Draytons--dined with William Hamilton at his home in Pennsylvania. Hamilton owned Woodlands, a house several miles from Philadelphia on the banks of the Schuylkill River. Among the several page long description in his diary of the evening, Drayton gave considerable attention to the property. He was impressed not only with the size of the house but also the arrangement of the buildings and the gardens. He wrote in his diary that “the approach, its roads, woods, lawns & clumps are laid out with much taste and ingenuity. Also the location of the Stables: with a Yard between the house, stables, lawn of approach or park.” He was most impressed with the spatial arrangement of the stable to the house. He noted that “the Stable Yard, tho contiguous to the house, is perfectly concealed from it, the lawn, and the Garden.” Drayton also sketched a plan of the estate. The stable is visible to the right of the sketch, complete with a plan view of the stalls (Figure 6.1). The plan is very similar to the position of the house, road, and stable at Mount Airy. There, trees also obscured the stable from view of the house. Both are close

to the road leading to the house.

Dr. Drayton is one of many early American gentlemen who took notes on other people’s buildings and lands. His thoughts concerning Hamilton’s home show that there were active dialogues among the elite concerning property and architecture. That the stable earned a few sentences and its inclusion in the drawings from Drayton suggests that maybe they were not as much on the periphery as other outbuildings are considered to be in modern scholarship. The architecture and spatial arrangement of stables and what contemporaries say about them offer insight into the discerning world of the early American elite.

Stalls

Today, so many stalls and stables have been demolished, destroyed, or altered beyond recognition that the surviving record leave little to observe. Natural decay from weather, termites, and everyday wear and tear from the horses make it hard for a stall to survive 200 years or more. The few extant eighteenth-century stables like Mount Vernon, Shepherd’s Delight, Woodlands, and Shirley lost their interior partitions decades ago. Lack of contemporary documentation and their generally agreed upon lack of significance—either culturally or architecturally—have thwarted a comprehensive understanding of the specific stall types that could be found in any stables along the east coast.

Still, contemporary advertisements, paintings, sketches, and letters show three principal stall types. The first and likely earlier design shown in these documents generally feature a stall partition made up of horizontal or vertical planks set perpendicular to the wall terminating at posts that either reach to the ceiling or stop near the height of the partition. In a more elegant variation of this style, the horizontal or vertical planks decrease in height from the head of the stall to the posts. The third style
features a stall partition with a cyma curve that can range from a subtle shape to one that is very distinct. In all types, the partitions terminate into rounded, squared, or chamfered posts. Comparing extant stalls with written descriptions and examples from documented stables form a timeline of the evolution of stall architecture and design.

According to Thomas De Grey in *The compleat horse-man*, published in London in 1656, “many other accouterments there are belonging to a perfect Stable, as partitions with boards, posts, and barrs.” An author in 1715 also noted the accouterments belonging to the perfect stable that included “…posts and partitions, as you may see in all well-order’d stables.” These authors lay out the three components to a stall partition. Firstly, the boards, planks, or rails that create the partition by either being arranged vertically or horizontally. Secondly, the posts needed on at least one side of the stall for the posts to terminate into. The bars may serve as enclosure for the stalls. While De Grey probably means wooden bars, other stables used metal rings with rope attached to them and the horses’ halters or rope that would connect from end post to end post. Mangers, troughs, feed racks or feed boxes are also a necessary part of any stall setup.

The stall partition that extends perpendicular to the wall can be seen in the stable at the Aiken Rhett House, in the current stalls at the Charles Drayton stable, and the remnant at Shirley Plantation (Figures 6.2, 6.3, & 6.4). This is the earliest style. It was easy to construct, simple to handle, and effective at stabling horses. The posts were likely tenoned and inserted into mortises in the posts and pegged for rigidity. If they were high enough like at the Charles Drayton and Aiken Rhett stables, they would prevent horses from bothering each other. The partitions could be one or two simple rails to signal the division. This probably originated on farms where the need for function outweighed the

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3 A.S., *The Gentleman’s Compleat Jockey: with the perfect horse-man and experienc’d farrier…to which is added, the art of vermine-killing* (London, 1715), 9-10.
aesthetics and simplicity was preferred. Ones that were completely boarded up evolved out of this early form. The hay racks likely were not raised. Instead, a trough that either was one long piece that reached from one end of the stable to the other or were individual troughs for each stalls that was situated at the stall heads. This was the case in stables on eighteenth-century British farms. The common style involved large stalls with tall dividers with a long, single manger that extended along all of the horse stalls.⁴ Again, this was the simplest construction form.

Though Shirley, Aiken Rhett, and the Charles Drayton House were well-constructed dwellings for wealthy owners, this style was popular because of its efficiency. But though it may have been of simple construction, there were ways to make the stalls appear more expensive. At Charles Drayton and Aiken Rhett, the posts and feed racks were given chamfered details that were subtle enough as to not appear ostentatious, but ornate enough for a visitor to notice the extra details. It is unknown how the posts would have appeared at Shirley, but the stable is one of the most impressive eighteenth-century stables in the Chesapeake. Its size, Flemish bond, and architectural details—like the watertable, rubbed brick, and modillioned cornice—suggest that the interior would have been well finished too.

The style of partitions that slope downward toward the open part of the stall was commonplace from middling stables to wealthy stables in the 1700s and was certainly in use in America by the 1770s. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British paintings offer informative visuals concerning stable design. James Seymour, one of England’s most prominent painters of horses in the 1700s, rendered several interior scenes of stables that depicted stall partitions sloping downward. While the humans, horses, and dogs remain identical for the most part, the architectural elements differ. *Horses in a Stable*, painted in 1740, show two racing horses standing in individual stalls (Figure 6.5). A groomsman to the viewer’s left carries a tray, likely of food, to the horses who look on in anticipation. Each stall is composed of vertical planked partitions topped with a rounded profile. The partitions are taller than the groomsman and low enough to allow the larger bay horse to reach his head over into his neighbor’s stall. The end posts are more elaborate than the partitions. The bases are large wooden plinths that taper to the slender squared posts that carry to the ceiling in an arch with a keystone in the center. The arch above each stall is rare and generally does not appear in America until the Gothic Revival style became
Figure 6.5 *Horses in a Stable*. James Seymour. 1740. Oil on canvas. 21.4 x 34.5 cm. Courtesy of the Higgins Art Gallery and Museum, United Kingdom.

Figure 6.6 *The Stables and Two Famous Running Horses belonging to His Grace, the Duke of Bolton*. James Seymour. 1747. Oil on canvas. 62.2 x 74.3 cm. Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art.
popular, in which case the apex is pointed, such as in the Aiken Rhett House’s stable. In
the painting, the floor is paved with brick and the floors in the stalls are covered in straw.

_The Stables and Two Famous Running Horses Belonging to His Grace, the Duke
of Bolton_, which Seymour painted in 1747, shows a similar scene, with a man walking
toward a white and a bay horse in adjacent stalls (Figure 6.6). The stable in this later
painting appears simpler. Seymour painted the typical diagonal stall design with vertical
planks reinforced with a batten. The top of these stalls are capped with a chamfered
wooden rail. Unlike in the earlier painting, the posts of these stalls do not extend to an
arch. Instead they terminate slightly higher than the lowest part of the partition. These
posts are large square posts with chamfered caps. A manger is visible in the stall of the
gray horse at the head of the stall. Vertical slats are located in plane with the highest part
of the stall partitions that served as racks.

Thomas Burford, a British artist contemporary to James Seymour, painted two
paintings in 1752 that show the interior of two stables. In both _Huntsman with Hunters
and Dogs in Stable_ (Figure 6.7) and _Horses in a Stable with Ostler_ (Figure 6.8), the

![Figure 6.7 Huntsman with Hunters and Dogs in Stable. Thomas Burford. 1770. Mezzotint. 25.3 x 35.2 cm. Courtesy of the Auckland Art Gallery.](image)
Figure 6.8  Horses in a Stable with Ostler. Thomas Burford. 1770. Mezzotint. 24.8 x 35 cm. Courtesy of the Auckland Art Gallery.

Figure 6.9 Plate 81, The Practical Builder, or Workman’s General Assistant. William Pain. 1774.
slotted hay racks at the heads of each stall are more decorative.

A plate in William Pain’s *The Practical Builder* from 1774 shows a stall partition in profile, an unusual choice in a design book (Figure 6.9). The stall is situated four feet from the back of the wall. The rack is very elaborate, with scrollwork and a cornice. The stall at the highest part is approximately five feet and slopes to three feet nine inches. The partition is composed of a top rail with vertical boards beneath it. The post at the outer end of the stall does not reach the ceiling. It terminates with a ball-shaped finial. The stalls are a roomy six feet wide. The stall depicted would likely have been atypical if constructed in the Chesapeake or anywhere else in the colonies. While the partition

Figure 6.10 Governor Penn’s stables, drawn by Thomas Jefferson, 1778. Courtesy of the Coolidge Collection. Massachusetts Historical Society
itself could have been replicated, the elaborate scrollwork would be an unnecessary extravagance on most colonial plantations.

A stall partition Thomas Jefferson drew in 1778 of Governor Richard Penn’s stables during a trip to Philadelphia as he gathered information he might incorporate into his own stables at Monticello shows an elaborate American stable (Figure 6.10). The Tuscan columns that the stalls terminate into and the molded arches above each stall are a bit overwrought compared to what would be typical in early America. The annotation underneath the sketch describes the partitions:

Sides of stall boarded close 3 f. up. Then perpendicular lathing from floor to top of manger 4.f..the arch instead of an architrave has only this moulding [sketch] on the edge of a plank. If the sides of the stalls were (like Morris’s) lower in front and higher in back, would look better also if stalls were but 7 f. (like Morris’s) instead of 8 f.

The description offers an early idea of eighteenth-century stall design. The planks of the dividers begin at the bottom of the posts and extend three feet up with little or no room between them. On top of these are perpendicular lathing. This likely consisted of small strips of wood placed vertically with space between them. The functional reason for this construction would be to allow for ventilation between stalls, but to prevent horses from annoying each other by reaching into adjacent stalls. The height of these stalls would also make that more difficult. According to Jefferson’s dimensions, the heads of the stall are six feet and slant downward one foot.

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5 It should be noted that Tuscan columns are the plainest of the classical orders. Regardless, classical ordered columns were atypical in American stables.

A second sketch with stalls labeled as belonging to “Morris” accompanies the first (Figure 6.11). The stall Jefferson sketched features horizontal planks capped with a board. Jefferson noted that the “stalls in Morris’s stables makes them very light.” By “light,” he may have referred to the simple construction of the partitions, given the lack of any ornate detailing. Beneath the sketch he recorded that “the ends of the planks are let into grooves.” If the entire post has one long groove, this could be similar to the stall partitions at Sabine Hall and at Charles Drayton. The drawing is a loose sketch so some details cannot be determined with certainty. The posts appear rounded, for example, but it is hard to be certain.

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7 “Morris” refers to Robert Morris, an English architect who published Select Architecture, an architectural design book that was popularly used in Virginia. He was also one of the authors who contributed to T. Lightoler’s and William Half-penny’s The Modern Builders’s Assistant (London: 1742). Clay Lancaster, “Jefferson’s Indebtedness to Robert Morris,” in Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 10, no. 1 (1951), 3-10; Bertha Porter, Dictionary of National Biography (1885-1900) vol. 39, 104.
In comparison, Morris’s stalls are four feet at the lowest part. Although Jefferson did not record the height at the head of the stall, if it was an accurately measured drawing the highest part of the partition is likely no more than five or six feet. Jefferson favored the more dramatic slope of Morris’ stalls, critiquing the slant of Penn’s stalls. The angle is exaggerated by the stall’s length, which is one foot shorter than Penn’s stalls.

Jefferson’s comparison between Morris’s and Penn’s stalls are interesting considering that Robert Morris was a British architect and therefore was designing stall partitions from his surrounding environment. Jefferson must have seen the appeal in Morris’s no-nonsense stall design over Penn’s dramatic display.8

It is interesting that the stalls in the British paintings and Jefferson’s sketches do not depict the cyma curve that is in Mount Vernon’s stable currently and that appears in books by the end of the eighteenth century. It would seem logical that the elaborate curve of this particular stall design would be utilized in stables with similar architectural elements. Governor Penn’s stable already had a curvilinear element from arches above each stall, for example. Partitions with the same feature would only enhance the stable’s aesthetic feel. The most likely interpretation is that for the

Figure 6.12 Elevation of a cyma curved-stall partition. From *Communications to the Board of Agriculture*. London, 1796.

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8 There is some confusion over which house these stalls came from and if Washington would have come across them. Robert Morris is also the name of a financier who lived in Philadelphia and knew both Jefferson and Washington. His house had stables, but evidence shows he moved in after the sketches were drawn. Morris’s stalls Jefferson drew are likely the architect’s. See Edward Lawler, Jr. “The President’s House in Philadelphia: The Rediscovery of a Lost Landmark,” in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 126, no. 1 (Jan., 2002), pp. 5-95.
majority of the eighteenth century, the straight or diagonal stall was used because it was easy to construct and efficient at stabling horses.

The cyma partition rose in popularity at the end of the eighteenth century in England and the United States as people determined the best way to stable horses so that they would be comfortable and not be bothered by other horses in the stalls. The 1796 manual *Communications to the Board of Agriculture* contains discussions concerning agricultural practices and the construction of farm buildings, cottages, and roads. The first chapter, written by Robert Beatson, includes the profile of a stall partition (Figure 6.12). It has an exaggerated curve from the head of the stall to the end. The space below is filled with horizontal planks of equal width and the top is capped with a profile that follows the curve. Beatson recommended that stalls should be at least five feet wide with “the division between [the horses] so high, at least at the inner part, that strange horses may not see each other.” He acknowledged, though, that “horses are a social animal, and it is said they feel better, and are more cheerful when they live in society.” The emphasis on the inner part of the stall being high recalls the shape of a sloping stall and the cyma curve. These are higher in the “inner part,” or the

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9 Robert Beatson, “On Farming in General,” in *Communications to the Board of Agriculture* (London: W. Bulmer, 1796), 22.
part where the horse’s head would likely be. This suggests that the curve was so that it could both prevent horses from bothering each other at the highest part. However, the rest of the divider should be low enough so that the horses were not completely boarded up on either side and could not see anything. Here, the underlying reason is that horses are sociable creatures who need company, but that care should be taken so that one horse does not cause trouble with another. Therefore, the cyma curve may have evolved out of a more practical than aesthetic reason.

The cyma curve continued to be used into the twentieth century. In a book published in 1916, the author Alfred Hopkins showed a modernized stall with the cyma curve (Figure 6.13). He called it the “ventilating type of stall, which has the partition planks separated by iron spools so that air can pass between them.”\(^\text{10}\) He also recommended a larger sized stable so that the horse can turn around in. He recommended the width of six feet and either seven or nine feet for depth. Hopkins made a distinction in stalls in urban and rural areas, noting in the former they are often only four foot and six inches wide. His description of the box stalls echoes 31 Legare. He noted that they should be about ten feet wide and twelve feet deep with Dutch doors to encourage ventilation and light.\(^\text{11}\)

**Posts**

The three types of partitions show how the evolution of design coincided with better construction practices that allowed for more refinement and intricate detail. Stall posts represent this distinction the most clearly. The roughly cut logs that served as

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\(^\text{10}\) Alfred Hopkins, *Modern Farm Buildings, being suggestions for the most approved ways of designing the cow barn, dairy, house barn, hay barn, sheepcote, piggery, manure pit, chicken house, root cellar, ice house, and other buildings of the farm group, on practical sanitary and artistic lines* (New York: McBride, 1916), 118.

\(^\text{11}\) Hopkins, *Modern Farm Buildings*, 118-121.
the posts in Mount Airy, for example, are the most basic effort. The bark was still on
the wood and there were no attempts at planing. The rounded logs pictured in the mid-
twentieth century photographs at Mount Vernon represent a step above because they have
been debarked. Not much effort extended beyond that, however, for they were not hewn
on any side.12 Hewn timbers required the most preparation work before installation in the
eighteenth-century before construction practices became more mechanized. For the well-
constructed stables examined in this study, no posts would have been added originally
without being hewn and planed.

(Chapel Hill: University of Chapel Hill Press), 224.
Morley Williams’ report from 1937 for the stable at Mount Vernon recorded that “evidence of old posts [are] discernable and were square type let into the girder.” He offered no additional information on how he reached this conclusion. Macomber apparently chose to ignore this information, for the posts that currently grace the stall rooms are not square.

A photograph taken in 1937 for Williams’ report shows the old stalls added in 1896 under Superintendent Dodge that Macomber later removed (Figure 6.14). The posts for these stalls were rounded. The girder sat atop them because the posts were too large to fit into the notch in the girder.

There is little evidence for squared posts as the preferred type in eighteenth-century American stalls. Sabine Hall is the only known extant stable with truly squared

Figure 6.15 Racing Cracks of the Day. John Frederick Herring Sr. 1845. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of The Baltimore Museum of Art.

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The Charles Drayton stalls are all squared with delicate chamfered details at the tops and bases.

The majority of evidence for squared posts come from British paintings, such as those James Seymour painted. One exception is an 1845 painting by John Frederick Herring, Sr., a British artist (Figure 6.15). The scene depicts a stable interior with horses and jockeys on race day. The stall posts are squared and are attached to horizontal planks that slope downward toward the open end of the stall. The later date and the presence of an older stall form is unusual. It is possible the stable is older than when painted, or the stalls were designed that way because it was simple to construct.

The early stalls in Mount Airy’s stable have rounded posts that are about the same height of the partitions. The roundness of these stalls were emphasized with the rounded finials capping the posts. Rounded posts were preferred over square because it lessened the chance of horses hurting themselves against the corners of the posts.

The undated plan for a racing stable at Hampton Plantation in Maryland shows rounded posts on twenty-two stalls, indicated by three decreasingly smaller concentric circles. The smaller circles could represent bases, decorations along the shafts of the posts, or an indication of an ornate post cap. The posts, therefore, could also have been more elaborate than usual, similar to those of Governor Penn’s stables in Philadelphia or at Mount Airy.

Fully chamfered posts do not appear until the nineteenth century. French artist Théodore Géricault, in *Bay Horse Standing in a Stable* (1810-1813), depicted an interior stable scene with chamfered posts (Figure 6.16).

The current posts at Mount Vernon are rather ornamental. Morley’s decision for this choice is not entirely known. Eighteenth-century posts were for the most part unadorned. The Tuscan columns in the stable at Governor Penn’s residence that are chamfered at the top are ornate and atypical, which likely was why Jefferson sketched
them in the first place and compared them to the simple construction in Morris’s architectural book. That no original posts to eighteenth-century stables in Virginia and the surrounding areas exist today in any usable form testifies to the difficulty in ascertaining with certainty the most popular posts used in the area and the ones that were at Mount Vernon. Examination of contemporary stables in America suggest that squared posts were not as preferred as chamfered.

**Racks, Mangers/Troughs, and Feed Boxes**

Identifying the evolution of racks, mangers, troughs, and feed boxes are more difficult because each option was not relegated to specific stall forms. De Grey, in his book published in seventeenth-century England, advised that the manger could be set “at an indifferent height,” but that it should be one long piece.\(^{15}\) A single manger for every stall seems to be the earliest form. This design continued into the eighteenth-century stall design in England and then traveled to the American colonies.

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\(^{15}\) De Grey, 18.
In 1715, the author of *The Gentleman’s Compleat Jockey* suggested that “the Rack should be set high and sloping, that no dust or filth may annoy the horse’s Eyes or Main, or indanger his Crest, crooked or wry feeding; the Manger shou’d be deep and strong, for casting Provender out of it with the Horse’s nose.”

Over 80 years later, Robert Beatson considered the typical construction for the racks and mangers--that they measure the entire width of a stall with the rack tilted over the manger--a waste of material. He promoted instead a small drawer that could be removed and cleaned.

Governor Penn’s stalls in Philadelphia had elaborate racks that twisted when pulled, allowing for horses to pull the hay while protecting their faces, echoing instructions in the 1715 publication. The lower portion of the rack was “lathed” to allowed any extra hay or dust to fall to the ground, avoiding the horse’s eyes.

Another option for feeding horses is the construction of the stall box itself. If the back of the stall is offset a couple feet from the wall of the stable, stablehands could walk down this narrow aisle and place the feed down for the horses to eat. Or, the space could be configured to contain hold hay dropped from the loft above. This may be what is pictured in the illustrations by Seymour and Burford and is what exists at Aiken Rhett.

Thomas Wallis recommended the placement of a small feedbox or “drawer…. made in the wainscot partition” for corn, or feed. This is seen at the Charles Drayton stable and Sabine Hall.

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18 Philadelphia: stables, railing, and latch, recto, [probably 1778], by Thomas Jefferson. “The rounds of the rack 2 1/2 i. diameter and 2 1/2 in. to be turned, and have a pivot at each end on which they may turn in their sockets...The rack to be perpendicular, 1 f. from the wall. The rounds to reach from the top of the manger within 10 f. of the cieling [sp]. The piece in which the lower end of the rounds turn, must have its upper surface level with the tops of the manger. The bottom of the rack to be lathed to let dirt through.”
The typical construction for feeding horses, then, was a single or individual slotted rack slanted at an angle, set at an indifferent height, but usually higher than four feet. Mangers were placed beneath the racks to catch any hay and to hold any feed smaller in size than hay. Typical stalls had a feedbox installed in a corner, usually behind the manger or trough and attached to the stall or the wall.

One of the most informative, but also ambiguous, resources on stall design comes from the 1786 rule book by The Carpenter’s Company of Philadelphia. This was a secretive and elusive book that determined a standard way of pricing carpentry work in the city. One section explains stalls, racks, and mangers for two types of stables: “common stables” and “the better kind of stables.”

Racks and mangers are fixed in both kinds of stables. However, whereas the manger for the common stable is planed only on the inside, the mangers for the nicer stables are planed on both sides. They also have “back boards” and boards situated over the rack. The back boards may indicate that the racks are open only on the side closest to the horses so that they can reach the hay. The back of the rack would be closed to keep the hay in the rack. The boards over the rack are more difficult to visualize. No illustrations of boards over racks have surfaced. “Over” could suggest above the racks at some indeterminate height or covering over them. From the description, they seem to be similar to the racks at the Charles Drayton stable. They have beams running above the rack on either side that then runs to the posts on the open side, securing the rack.

The rule book describes two kinds of stalls. The first kind has a back post with a swinging bar that is “rounded, hooped, and hung with chains.” A vertical board the breadth of the manger stands between each stall. The bar appears to be hung horizontally

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from the ceiling or on the top of the stalls with chains. This bar could be a light rail that separates each stall. It could also be a bar that closes the back part of the stall.

The board the breadth of the manger sounds like the partition itself. “Breadth,” or width, suggests that if the manger is five feet wide, a board also five feet wide is situated perpendicular to the manger, thus separating each stall and isolating each manger.

The rule book describes the second type of stall as a “close partition” with a back post and top rail. The reference to the top rail suggests that the first stall described lacks this detail. This indicates that the second type of stall is the one for the “better kind of stables” because the division is more finished.

Stalls in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were either tie stalls or narrow stalls with bars on the open end to close them. In a tie stalls, horses’ halters were tied to the stalls or mangers so they would not escape. This type of stall did not need to be roomy because the ties prevented the horse from turning around. Seymour’s *Horses in a Stable* shows a rope hanging from the gray horse’s halter that recedes into the darkness at the head of the stall. Burford’s *Huntsman with Hunters and Dogs in a Stable* shows the horses facing toward the open ends of the stalls. One of the horses has a rope tied to the post and his halter. Sabine Hall, Charles Drayton, and the Aiken Rhett house stables both have small metal rings attached to the center of the mangers. These were likely to tie up the horses.

Tie-stalls grew out of fashion after the first half of the 1800s. This may correlate with the growing importance of a horse’s well being. Allowing a horse to roam free in his stall, turn around, lay down, and stretch out was seen as making horses more comfortable and less confined. Today, stalls are designed so that the horses’ heads can poke out of their stalls into the central aisle. This encourages sociability between horse neighbors and people walking by.
Figure 6.17 & 6.18 Markings on the girder. Courtesy of the MVLA.
There was no evidence of metal rings at Mount Airy except for one that was positioned at the head of the stall behind the manger. If this was how the horses there were tied, it would be an unusual location. It is possible that the ring held a feedbox instead. Remnant of a rope is positioned between one of the rounded posts and the square board in front of it. This may have reached across the stall as a makeshift cross bar. The horses likely were not facing the aisles because the stalls are too narrow for the horse to move around to reach the feed racks and mangers on the opposite side.

Mount Vernon’s stable may have relied on a cross bar at the open ends of the stalls to keep the horses contained, rather than ropes tied to the horses’ halters. Two markings on the north and south ends of the 1782 girders in the west stall room may be remnants of the components that enclosed the stalls (Figures 6.17 & 6.18). They are Dutchman repairs where a notch was cut into the girder to receive a post or beam. These marks would have allowed the stalls closest to the walls to attach a rope or cross bar from one of the posts to a wooden board that descended from the girder.

**Joinery and Materials**

Early stalls would have been joined to the posts with mortise and tenon construction. If the divisions were made of horizontal boards, these would have been tongue and grooved and possibly beaded. Nails would have been used in the eighteenth century, as they were relatively inexpensive. However, nails were often unnecessary because of traditional joinery practices in the Chesapeake. The stalls at Sabine Hall, for example, were constructed entirely without nails save for the added metal cyma curve and the posts lapped into the joists. The Charles Drayton House stable used few nails as well. There were no visible pegs, but the grooves in the posts indicate that the planks were mortise and tenoned. Mount Airy used nails to connect the partitions to the posts and the posts to the joists.
The stalls at the Charles Drayton House, Mount Airy, and the mangers at Washington’s Union Farm and Aiken Rhett were constructed out of pine. Pine, which grew abundantly along the east coast, is a wood with a straight grain that was appealing to the colonists. Oak was also a preferred wood. Compared to pine, oak is stronger, wears better, and is less susceptible to rot. The posts at Union Farm were either white or box oak. The posts at Sabine Hall are white oak, and the perpendicular beams at Shirley are also of oak.

Spatial Arrangement

Benjamin Henry Latrobe declared in 1796 that the outbuildings on a plantation in Virginia “follow the dwelling house as a litter of pigs their mother.”

However, this was not always the case, as Mount Airy, Sabine Hall, and Mount Vernon show. One of the best sources to evaluate the spatial arrangements between stables and the dwelling houses are the policy sketches from the Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia. The Society was founded in 1796 to insure buildings against fire in the state of Virginia. Their policies include the name of the owner, the structures being insured, the dimensions and materials of the structures, the location, and the monetary amount insured. The distances between structures were recorded in feet or yards. This information was necessary when evaluating insurance for structures. The structures

located within 30 feet from each other were considered more of a fire risk than structures located farther away.\textsuperscript{25}

There existed three main spatial patterns for the arrangement of stables on a property. These patterns altered slightly if they were an urban lot. Not surprisingly, the stable often was the furthest structure from the dwelling house, whether the property was located in the city or in the country (Table 1). The first pattern is the most typical. The dwelling house would be located centrally on the lot or within the arrangement of buildings. Secondary structures were almost always located behind the house. The second arrangement was commonly found on plantations. The outbuildings are haphazardly scattered behind the dwelling house, with no apparent organized spatial arrangement. The third type offers more organization in the arrangement of the auxiliary structures, though the structures were not necessarily centrally located on the lot or in relation to each other.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
Distance & Count \\
\hline
< 30 ft & 4 \\
30-60 ft & 6 \\
> 60 ft & 23 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Distances Between Stable to Dwelling House from Mutual Assurance Records 1802-1822}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{25}The records in the first thirty years of the nineteenth century are useful to this thesis because many of these structures were not necessarily built the year they were insured. Oftentimes, a property owner would insure buildings years after construction. If a stable constructed in the eighteenth century was isolated greater than thirty feet from other structures, but then a new carriage house was constructed nearby, the property owner would be inclined to insure both buildings against fire.
With all of these, two observations are evident. The dwelling house is always the primary structure in terms of its spatial relationship with other outbuildings. Secondly, the stables are always furthest away—if not furthest away from the house, furthest away from the closest building the stable is adjacent to.

However much social considerations influenced the colonists, climatic concerns may have had a greater effect on the way a gentleman laid out his estate in the colonies and the materials that he used in the construction of his buildings. The number of insects and rodents that plagued wooden members in structures and the food for human and animal consumption, combined with the humid and hot climate in the Chesapeake, encouraged the spreading of outbuildings away from the house, building kitchens detached from the house unlike in England, and taking all measures to decrease unpleasant odors coming from the outbuildings. Donald Linebaugh’s discussion of the climactic concerns that affected how the colonists laid out their estates, combined with other analyses on Georgian architectural ideals of order, synthesize all of the considerations that went into building one’s estate in the countryside in colonial America.

A Mutual Assurance policy from 1803 documents Holbin Hall, a plantation in Fairfax County owned by Thompson Manor and situated near “Geo. Washington’s estate” (Figure 6.19). The assessor recorded the dwelling house centered at the bottom of the page. Closest to it is a second dwelling house, a smokehouse, kitchen, and dairy. The slave quarter is positioned further away, but not as far as the stable. An 1808 insurance record depicts a plantation with numerous outbuildings known as Woodstock in Henrico County (Figure 6.20). The stable and barn are the structures furthest from the dwelling house. Again, the smokehouse, dairy, and kitchen are the closest buildings to the dwelling house.

Donald Linebaugh, “‘All the Annoyances and Inconveniences of the Country:’ Environmental Factors in the Development of Outbuildings in the Colonial Chesapeake,” in Winterthur Portfolio 29, no. 1 (1994), 1.

Donald Linebaugh, “All the Annoyances and Inconveniences,” 7.
Figure 6.19. Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Microfilm reel 3.26.2045.

Figure 6.20. Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Microfilm reel 3.26.2067.
Figure 6.21. Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Microfilm reel 3.32.16.

Figure 6.22. Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Microfilm reel 9.69.1574.
house. The 1805 policy record for a property in Tappahannock, Essex County, shows the dwelling house, dairy, smokehouse, kitchen, and stable, although only the house, kitchen, and stable were insured (Figure 6.21). While the other buildings are located within thirty-six feet of each other, the stable is positioned 162 feet away from the dairy and nearly 200 feet from the house. The stable for a property owned by Mary Read Anderson in Dinwiddie County was insured along with a number of structures, including the dwelling house, dairy, smokehouse, greenhouse, and icehouse (Figure 6.22). The buildings were haphazardly scattered except for the dwelling house, which is positioned in the center of the property. The stable with adjoined carriage house is located the furthest away from the dwelling and all other structures except for the ice house.

Figure 6.23. Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Microfilm reel 6.49.11.

An 1805 policy for a property on Caroline Street in Fredericksburg, owned by Charles Jones, depicts the more typical plan, with the dwelling house in front, and the kitchen, meat house, and stable following (Figure 6.23). While the kitchen is twenty-four
feet away from the house, the stable is 125 feet from the kitchen. These three buildings are positioned on the boundary line of the property with the meat house abutting the kitchen. A Richmond City property from 1815, a Henrico County property a year later, and a Petersburg property from 1820 follows this pattern as well (Figure 6.24).

Other spatial arrangements include properties in which the outbuildings were grouped together behind the dwelling house, but the stable is not the furthest positioned outbuilding. The insurance policy for Archibald Freeland’s “well finished” dwelling house and outbuildings located in the city of Manchester, Chesterfield County, was completed in 1803 (Figure 6.25). Behind it, aligned along the boundary line, are the smoke house, kitchen, and stable. The stable and kitchen are separated by a mere twenty-five feet.

In urban centers, the spatial arrangement of structures on a property differed. They were constrained on four sides by the narrow property lots typical in early urban centers. The homes of Charlestonians grew from large urban lots to more compact town lots. Typically, they had space behind the houses to fit outbuildings like stables and kitchens.28 Aiken Rhett is unique in the size of its back lot because its first owner constructed it out in the suburbs of Charleston, where larger lots were easily available.

The lot arrangement in Philadelphia differed with city lots in the Chesapeake and Charleston. In Philadelphia, William Penn arranged the lots to be larger than a typical urban house lot. The extra space allowed people to build their houses in the center of the lots, instead of bordering the street, as was common elsewhere. In the years following 1753, construction on blocks multiplied dramatically.29 By the Revolutionary

Figure 6.24. Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Microfilm reel 6.53.505.

Figure 6.25. Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Microfilm reel 3.29.2098.
Figure 6.26. Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Microfilm reel 9.70.1701.

Figure 6.27. Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Microfilm reel 9.70.1702.
War, Philadelphia had the highest number of dwelling houses of all American cities.\textsuperscript{30} Lots housed many different buildings, including tenements, rental spaces, stores, and necessary outbuildings. Unlike its original plan, Philadelphia lots near the end of the eighteenth century lacked any sense of spatial order.\textsuperscript{31}

Like the Chesapeake, the stables in Charleston’s urban lots were usually situated near the property’s boundary lines, away from the house.\textsuperscript{32} These structures were independent from the main house.\textsuperscript{33} It was not until the nineteenth century that the outbuildings became contiguous. Sometimes, the position of the stable on the property appears not to be determined by the location of the other buildings, but where there is street access. This is especially true with stables and carriage houses under one roof, as seen in (Figures 6.26 & 6.27). In the Aiken Rhett House’s yard, the kitchen and slave quarters and the stable are closest to the house. The garden buildings, laundry room, and privies are placed behind them. The gate to the street is located at the opposite end of the lot as the house. In the original configuration, the drive ran not down the center of the backlot but along the east side of the lot. Access to the stable was obtained from the street.\textsuperscript{34}

\textit{Function Vs. Aesthetics}

Beauty and utility were paired in early America when speaking of the architectural climate, but one was not dependent on the other. Thomas Jefferson’s sketches of elaborate Tuscan columns adorning each stall partition and Washington’s calculated choice to place the coach house in the center of the stable were designed with both functionality and

\textsuperscript{30} Salinger, “Spaces, inside and outside,” 11-12.
\textsuperscript{31} Salinger, “Spaces, inside and outside,” 15.
\textsuperscript{32} Haney, “In Complete Order,” 27.
\textsuperscript{33} Haney, “In Complete Order,” 2.
\textsuperscript{34} From a conversation with Willie Graham.
aesthetics in mind, though perhaps they were not equally balanced.

In 1790 Tobias Lear wrote to Alexander Macomb, the builder behind the house in New York City that Washington leased from 1790 to 1791, that “the President thinks that a Stable 30 ft square, erected at the end of the brick Stable, would extend too far into the yard and obstruct the passage between the Coach House and the Stable--or, at any rate, would destroy the regularity of the buildings.” Washington did build the stable with the same dimensions with a “16 feet pitch, to contain 12 single stalls; a hay loft, Racks, mangers etc.—Planked floor and underpinned with Stone with Windows between each stall.” He must have changed his mind that the stable would affect the presentation of the buildings, though he undoubtedly considered it.

In January of 1799, Abigail Adams wrote to her husband John Adams concerning the new barn they were constructing. Abigail expressed her thoughts about the primary reasons for constructing the barn, which were to “keep the Hay Secure, and accommodate the Stock.” John apparently was considering adding stables to the barn, but Abigail disagreed. She wrote that “there are 16 foot posts procured for them. I do not pretend to be any judge my self. But tis said by those who are, that it will be a very Heavey looking Building & quite unaccomodating for Stables which will require to be tighter than the Barn. I should therefore think a plain Building for Stables Seperate would be best.” Though Abigail pointedly wrote that the opinion came from the experts, she ultimately agreed that the stable should be a simple building separate from the barn so that the overall presentation of the buildings was appropriate.

Benjamin Latrobe, who designed the stable at the President’s house in Washington, D.C. in 1805, sent a letter to Thomas Jefferson with several issues relating

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to the spatial arrangement of the stable. His first concern was that the proposed location would mean that those walking to and from the stable would not have the colonnade for cover. In addition, “the South front of the Colonnade will be soiled,--and become the resort of all the disagreeable people who loiter about a Stable.”37 Latrobe was also worried with the arrangement of the coach houses, for in their location the carriage could not be brought around without having to circle the other offices. Lastly, the space between the columns bothered Latrobe, who, although noting that “a very careful Coachman can easily draw out a Carriage through an opening of not more than 8 [feet] 6 [inches],” felt that “haste and carelessness” would end up injuring the carriages and columns.38 The function of the stable interfered with the aesthetics in this case, but the aesthetics were important enough to alter the location and arrangement of the stable and coach houses so that they were pleasing to the eye yet also functional.

Peter Lenox, a cabinet maker who worked on the President’s house and the Capitol, represents those who valued function over aesthetics. He wrote to Thomas Jefferson in 1806 that:

the size of the stable...is 27 feet 5 Inches Long by 20 feet 2 Inches wide. I think that if two of your horses are placed on a line of 20 feet they will have but little if any passage between, and if they are ill-natured in corse, hurt each other, (the stalls in the old stab[l]e is about 5 feet between) if you wish them to be as directed there will be but 4 on the North end, if 5 feet would do, then we could have 4 at each end. wish them to be as directed.39

Lenox believed that less than five feet between stalls was not wide enough and risked horses endangering each other.

The logic expressed in these examples explains why so many early Americans spent considerable time and effort constructing their stables. Washington’s correspondence with manager Lund Washington, for example, emphasizes the careful thought spent on designing his third and final stable at Mount Vernon. Thomas Jefferson was impressed enough with Morris’s and Governor Penn’s stalls that he sketched them to model his stable at Monticello after.

Statistical Analysis

The 2,015 stables catalogued from sale advertisements, tax records, insurance records, inventories, and letters between 1736 and 1830 in Virginia, Maryland, South Carolina, and Pennsylvania and the data they provide establishes a quantitative interpretation of the stables that were designed, talked about, and built (Tables 2-4).

Depending on the source, different categories were stressed over others. Property sale advertisements, for example, described the house in the great detail because it would be where the new inhabitants would spend their time. Plantation sale advertisements often focused on the acreage and the crops suitable to grow on the site. Fire insurance records needed material information to know how to value a structure. Tax records needed material, dimensions, and condition of all buildings on a property to properly tax the owners.

Newspapers offer an intriguing glimpse into the thought processes of early Americans and how they valued various buildings on a plantation. The property sale advertisements published in newspapers like the *Virginia Gazette* and others primarily

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40 It should be noted that some of the stables and houses within these records were probably constructed in the first half of the eighteenth century or earlier. Some records like the Federal Direct Tax and occasionally the Mutual Assurance records noted if the stable was new, but this was not the standard. So for these early structures the need for impermanent structures overshadowed the desire for impressive and costly structures. See Cary Carson, et. al., “Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies,” in *Winterthur Portfolio* 16, no. ⅔ (1981): 135-196.
Table 2. Compiled by author.

Table 3. Compiled by author.
catered to the planter-elites who knew how to read. The constant advertisements and announcements for horse races, horse sales, stolen horses, and property sales points to a targeted audience with education, money, and leisure.

Newspaper advertisements show that among listed outbuildings on a property, stables were identified less frequently than other outbuildings such as kitchens or smokehouses (Table 5).

Camille Wells noted the scarcity of stables in her article, “The Planter’s Prospect: Houses, Outbuildings, and Rural Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century Virginia (1993),” in which she analyzed all 1,019 separate parcel sale advertisements published in the Virginia Gazette from 1736 to 1780. Out of the advertisements that included a dwelling house, no more than eighty specifically mentioned horse stables.41

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Table 5. Compiled by author.

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**Tables in Sale Advertisements**
The primary building material was as aesthetically and functionally integral to the reception of the stable as with any structure in the eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries (Table 6). 64.7 percent of stables catalogued noted the building materials. Not surprisingly, frame stables were the most prevalent. 1,040 stables, or 82.3 percent of the sample, were built primarily of wood. 19 percent were masonry, and the rest was a combination of materials. 310, or one quarter, of records catalogued listed different materials for the house and stable. This number is not extreme compared to the nearly 70 percent of stables that shared the same materials as the house. This was the primary choice when constructing structures on a property for both primary and auxiliary structures. The stables and houses that were constructed with wood, stone, and brick were part of a greater cohesive unit that included other structures with the same materials too. Some factors would have affected the material choice. The Philadelphia Contributionship
for the Insuring of Houses From Loss by Fire, for example, pushed inhabitants to use masonry instead of wood to prevent against fires for all of their buildings. The availability of material too would have affected owners’ choices. Though the soil to make bricks would have been easy in the Chesapeake, the effort and human labor brickmaking required was often not worth it.42

23.1 percent of stables were constructed with a less expensive material than the house. All of these stables were constructed with wood while the house was constructed with masonry. 5 percent of houses recorded materials that were either multi, such as a part frame and part brick house, or listed “other” as the secondary material in the house. These were predominantly found in Maryland and Pennsylvania. That not even 2 percent of stables were built of more expensive and durable materials than the house speaks to the priorities of early Americans. Function over aesthetics may be the deciding factor here. It is likely that Washington’s primary reason for using brick instead of frame that would match the house and other outbuildings was for fireproofing purposes that stemmed from a horrific accident while he was away. For those who owned horses and considered them an important part of their plantation, building brick or stone stables would reflect this choice.

If the majority of colonists with moderate or greater amounts of wealth cared not only how their house expressed their wealth, success, and education, but how the rest of the structures on their plantations or urban lots also reflected this, one would expect to see an uptick in the number of masonry stables. Those with money were concerned with tangible representations of their success and could afford to build outbuildings of masonry to solidify this. The 70 percent of stables and houses built with the same materials reflects those early colonists with an average amount of wealth. Though they

42 Dalzell and Dalzell, George Washington’s Mount Vernon, 229.
emulated the elites in many ways, material for auxiliary structures may be an exception to the rule. The cost often outweighed the reception they were hoping to receive by using brick and stone.

The stables at Mount Airy, Shirley, Sabine Hall, 31 Legare, and Woodlands all used the same materials for the house and the stable. All of these properties were owned by wealthy Americans. Except for Mount Airy and Woodlands, the other stables were constructed years after the house was. This suggests that there may have been a conscious effort to keep the auxiliary structures on the property similar architecturally to the main house for those planter elites. Washington’s third stable, built almost fifty years after the dwelling house, presents an exceptional situation that should be considered. If the fire had consumed the adjacent buildings such as the dwelling house, as Washington feared would have happened as he wrote in his letter to the Comte de Rochambeau, would Washington have rebuilt all structures with brick? The original house was frame because it was what his father could afford. Washington’s choice to construct the later additions to the house with frame was due to a similar reason. He beveled the edges of the wood planks and painted them with sand inclusions to give the impression that the house was actually made of stone. This was a decision made by Washington to give a grander appearance to the exterior of his house so that it fit in with the dwellings of his neighbors and contemporaries. While his stable’s brick construction came from both practical and aesthetic reasons, it should be excluded from those properties in which the houses were constructed out of less expensive materials than the stables during the same building phase.

Acreage was an important consideration for potential buyers. The sale advertisements in South Carolina and Virginia and the Federal Direct Tax records for

Table 7. Acreage. Compiled by author.

Table 8. Acreage. 20% of total results. Compiled by author.
Maryland and Pennsylvania provide evidence for the typical acreage for properties with stables. Tables 7 and 8 show that out of 451 records that included acreage, the planter-elites made up less than a quarter of the results. Those with 100 acres or less made up more than half. Given that early rules concerning racing stated that those without fifty acres could not bet, and that the Federal Direct Tax separated properties consisting of 100 acres or less from those with over 100, an early American would have been considered a member of the landed gentry if he owned more than 100 acres. Those who owned 500 or more were likely the wealthiest gentry.

Only forty sale advertisements noted that a stable contained stalls. It was more common for advertisements to note the number of horses a stable could hold. Twenty-two out of eighty could hold four horses. Twelve advertisements mentioned that a stable for sale could hold six. Eight stables could hold eight horses while another eight could hold three. From these advertisements, the most common numbers of horses is four and six in a stable. That only eighty records specifically identified the number of horses the stable could hold suggests that people may have known the typical number stables could hold and was therefore unconcerned.

It likely was not until after the 1720s that horses were commonly stabled. A study by Colonial Williamsburg Foundation discovered that the earliest mention of a coach house was in 1724, in Westmoreland County. While horses can tolerate weather better than a coach, the colonists would have learned through trial and error that keeping horses dry, warm, and well fed prolonged their lives and kept them healthy. Order books in Westmoreland County show the construction of stables as early as 1686. Others followed in 1691, 1711, and 1732.44

The number of stables listed in sale advertisements jumps in 1745, with four listed in the surviving newspapers.\textsuperscript{45} The Chesapeake saw a spike in Thoroughbred importations between 1764 and 1766.\textsuperscript{46} That the number of coach houses and stables both spike mid-century suggest that there is a correlation between the cultural popularity in horse racing and the level of care taken for horses.\textsuperscript{47}

The turn from racing as a popular sport to a business by the start of the mid-eighteenth century supports the theory that the rise in coach houses and stables coincided with the popularity of horse racing. The few planters with disposable income, such as John Tayloe II of Mount Airy, left the tobacco farming to his overseer and focused on this new enterprise. It is a logical assumption that as race horses became more prized and valuable, their well-being became more important too. Ensuring that horses were well taken care for, that they were fed properly, had enough exercise, and were comfortable despite the weather could be accomplished by placing horses in carefully constructed shelters.

Regardless of exterior symmetry, the interior arrangement of the stalls was symmetrical. Mount Airy, for example, had three different stall widths in the west stall room. However, the stalls facing each other measured the same. Except for Sabine Hall and Mount Airy, where there are two distinct stalls from two different building periods, the stalls inside stables were of the same design. Aiken Rhett, Charles Drayton, and the plan of Hampton had a repetitive pattern for the stalls.

\textsuperscript{45} These numbers come from two sources. The Westmoreland County order books came from the generosity of Carl Lounsbury and the database at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. The \textit{Virginia Gazette} archives are accessible online through CWF’s website and through Accessible Archives.


The interior tripartite arrangement is found mostly at above-average stables, such as Mount Vernon, Mount Airy, Shirley, and Woodlands. Though 44 percent of sale advertisements note that the carriage house and stall rooms are attached, the percentage of those that are tripartite remain unknown. Only four made it clear that they were tripartite. What is likely is that this spatial organization was more common for wealthier stables. This may be because the wealthiest colonists were also the most educated. They could afford tutors and schooling in England, where they learned about architecture and classicism. The classically proportioned tripartite design reflected the Neo-Palladian style that had already existed in England for several decades before it became popular in the colonies.

It is also likely that in these descriptions architecture was not important. People prioritized the size of the stable and how many horses they could hold. They were less concerned whether the door to the hay loft was located in a central pediment or if the interior had an even number of stalls. Descriptions such as “large,” “well furnished,” and “good and comfortable” assured prospective buyers that the stable was satisfactory for their needs.

Due to the spread of books and pamphlets on architecture and husbandry, stall design may not have been as localized as other architectural forms. The existing stalls in the stables in South Carolina and Virginia, for example, were cut of white oak. The Pennsylvania Gazette published an advertisement for “white oak scantling” for one stable. This suggests that there was at least a standard in stall design concerning material that partially came from transferred knowledge of what wood types performed the best when used for stalls. One standard that is clear from these documents is that the elite understood that the main purpose of a stable interior was to house horses, especially

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48 Pennsylvania Gazette July 18, 1765. Accessible Archives.
horses used for leisure or transportation, in a way that they were comfortable. This was accomplished through the generally accepted standard that the horses received light, air, ventilation, warmth in the winter, coolness in the summer, and a way for dung and urine to drain so as to not create a dirty interior environment. Specific arrangements on the interior evolved because of these considerations. Otherwise, local building traditions were limited by climate, availability of material, and knowledge of craft. Stable architecture was determined not by only vernacular taste, but also by example.

Though the writers of advertisements neglected information that could be considered pertinent today, it was often these omissions and the diction of these ads that speak to general trends concerning property sales and early-American ideology concerning land and possession. Firstly, unless a structure was of masonry, the primary material was not discussed. Though some may list “plank” as the exterior cladding or a descriptive for flooring, rarely is the type of wood and dimensions identified. There did not exist a standard in the language describing stables. “Stalls” was used interchangeably with “stables” and “stands.”

A Change in Philosophy

For the most part, early Americans were not building stables that were excessive in size. Of the fifty-two results from Virginia that included both the dimensions for the stable and the dwelling house on the property, four stables were larger than the house. Out of 1,007 sources that give both the stable and the house dimensions, only 8 percent of stables had bigger dimensions than the house on the property from a period from 1765 to 1814. 80 percent of these stables were frame. 94 percent from this sample were from Pennsylvania and Maryland. The trends from these dimensions speak more about mid-Atlantic stabling practices than elsewhere in early America. There is no noticeable trend of a positive correlation between the size of the stable and the size of the dwelling house.
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<th>Stable SqFt (Lower Floor Only)</th>
<th>Stall LxW</th>
<th>Stall SqFt</th>
<th>Num. of Horses</th>
<th>Year Constructed</th>
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<td>3,200</td>
<td>5 x 9</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Vernon</td>
<td>86 x 20</td>
<td>1,062</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1789; 1791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepherd’s Delight</td>
<td>17 x 22</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>c. 1790-1810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampton</td>
<td>59 x 49</td>
<td>2,891</td>
<td>5.5 x 8</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Plan, pre-1805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiken Rhett</td>
<td>70 x 17</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>~7 x 5.10</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>c. 1818; c. 1836, 1857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabine Hall</td>
<td>40 x 20</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>~6.3 x 6.9</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1820s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Drayton</td>
<td>23 x 14</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>~5.5 x 9</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1850s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. “~” indicates that the stall widths were averaged. If the symbol is by the year, it means there is not a definitive date for the construction. Legare was omitted from this analysis because it is an outlier, having been constructed at the end of the nineteenth century and having loose stalls, not individual stalls. Though the stable is useful in comparing the evolution of stable architecture, the numbers from the stable would not present truthful comparisons with the stables above. Compiled by author.
that economy of size was more important than constructing large, impressive stables. The average stable dimensions, stall dimensions, and number of horses per stable bolster the exceptionalism of Mount Vernon and its comparable stables.

1,245 stables included dimensions.51 Forty stables measured 20 by 16 and thirty-five measured 12 by 16. Thirty-one stables measured 20 by 20, thirty stables were 14 by 16, thirty were 16 by 12, and twenty-five were 24 by 16. Less than a quarter were odd dimensions. This makes sense given that scantling was sold in early America in even numbers of feet and stall dimensions became standardized.52

According to architectural historian Orlando Ridout, the smallest stables in the Chesapeake were typically under 300 square feet.53 The most common stable measurements in this analysis above equal between 192 and 400 square feet.54 The average stable in this study, then, was not much bigger than the smallest. The stables of the wealthiest in this study greatly deviate from typical early American stables (Table 9). Mount Vernon’s stable—82 by 40—contains 3,200 square feet on the ground floor. Mount Airy’s stable, which is slightly smaller at 80 by 35, equates to 2,800 square feet. The stall rooms at Mount Airy are approximately 27 feet wide and 23 feet deep. At 621 square feet, they are twice the size of a typical stable building. The stable at Shepherd’s Delight is more reflective of typical stables. The square footage measures 374 square feet. The stone underpinning and brick construction made up for its smaller size and also distinguished it from the poorer stables of the same size. The racing stable at Hampton, had it been built,

51 No South Carolina sale advertisements gave the dimensions of any stable.
54 The two most prevalent--20 by 16 and 12 by 16--are 320 sq ft and 192 sq ft.
would have been larger than usual at 2,891 square feet and almost square, measuring 59 by 49.\textsuperscript{55}

The square footage for the average individual stalls and aisle space equated to between thirty and forty square feet.\textsuperscript{56} Considering the average stall was about five feet wide and eight feet deep and the most common stable dimensions were 20 by 16 and 12 by 16, most stalls could hold four to six horses. This supports Fithian’s note that everyone seems to own four to six carriage horses. The Upton Scott house stalls measured five feet wide and seven to eight feet deep and fall within the typical stall size. Shirley’s stalls, which likely were six feet wide and seven feet deep, are also average.

The outliers are the stables that belonged to wealthier Americans. The Charles Drayton House stalls measured different widths, but were within five and a half feet to six feet wide and nine feet deep, just slightly larger than the average. The stalls at Mount Vernon are roomier at five feet wide and nine feet deep.\textsuperscript{57} Sabine Hall’s stalls are wider but shorter than Mount Vernon’s. The stalls were different measurements, but the average is six feet three inches wide and six feet nine inches deep.\textsuperscript{58}

Those stables that exceeded the average square foot by more than three times held more horses than the average. The Hampton plan could hold twenty-two, Mount Vernon twenty, Mount Airy ten, and Shirley possibly twelve.\textsuperscript{59}

Analyzing the stable and stall dimensions of stables in early America show that more expensive stables had more square footage in the stall rooms than average stables.

\textsuperscript{55} Measurements from the author’s field work, records at CWF, and the Maryland Historical Society.
\textsuperscript{56} Ridout, “Agricultural Buildings,” 199.
\textsuperscript{57} Postholes from Williams’ excavation in the 1930s point to the original location of the stalls, so the current widths and lengths are probably what they were in 1799.
\textsuperscript{58} Individually, they were seven feet six inches, six feet three inches, and five feet eleven inches wide.
\textsuperscript{59} Two walls showed pockets, although only one was readable. The wall between the carriage room and the south stall room was knocked down, and thus any pockets were destroyed. There was probably three individual stalls on the one readable wall. Assuming opposite wall also held 3, and that the second stall room followed this pattern, that leaves 12 individual horse stalls.
From the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, the numbers show that early Americans began to consider the comfort of their horses more than they did in the seventeenth century. By the late-nineteenth century, a new standard developed. This involved the belief that taking care of one’s horses, ensuring that they have space to move around in, that they could interact with their neighbors, and that their environments were clean and comfortable benefitted their horses and showed others that they were good people.

This did not happen overnight. The British author Robert Beaton argued in 1796 that the work horses were as entitled to the comforts that race horses and carriage horses earned.60 John Martin Robinson explained that “to the English [in the 1700s] the horse was a superior type of animal, and nothing was too good for him.”61

An anonymous author who identified himself as an American painted a picture that suggests Americans held the opposite opinion as their British counterparts in 1775. He published a two volume book in London called *American Husbandry*. He scathingly scolded farmers in America about their treatment of horses:

Most of the farmers in this country are...the most negligent ignorant set of men in the world. Nor do I know any country in which animals are worse treated. Horses are in general, even valuable ones, worked hard, and starved: they plough, cart, and ride them to death, at the same time that they give them very little heed to their food; after the hardest day’s works, all the nourishment they are like to have is to be turned into a wood...A New Englander (and it is the same quite to Pennsylvania) will ride his horse full speed twenty or thirty miles; tye him to a tree, while he does his business, then re-mount, and gallop back again...the New England farmers have in all this matter the worst notions imaginable.62

60 Roberson, *Georgian Model Farms*, 32, 90.
This does not quite seem like criticism from one American to his fellow colonists, but a foreigner appalled at the treatment of horses. Not all Americans, though, were as unconcerned as the New England farmers depicted above.

In 1780 George Washington received a letter from a soldier named Samuel Allison who expressed his disappointment with the stabling situation:

One thing deserves to be noticed—Stables are built here [unknown location] at a most extraordinary expense to the public, yet a great part of this Winter they have not been half filled tho’ convenient, when near or quite one half the horses were kept in private Stables, and some of the Creatures belonging to the owners, by that means, were turned out of doors and compel’d to bear the severity of the Season, hence private hay has also been consumed, and the Owners creatures are now starving, when there was & might have been plenty at the public stable.63

The situation clearly alarmed Allison enough to send a complaint to the General of the army, whom he had never been introduced to.

Allison may have known how Washington felt toward the treatment of horses. The consideration Washington gave toward horses is evident in a memorandum he wrote in the last year of his life. Washington showed that he understood that the comfort of the horses led to their overall well being. This depended on the stable being “kept well littered, and the Stalls clean; as well for the comfort of the Creatures that are contained in them; as for the purpose of manure…”64 George Washington reflected the same attentiveness other colonists felt toward caring for their horses.

Consideration for horses’ comfort grew considerably in the twentieth century. In his 1916 book Alfred Hopkins prioritized access to sun and air in the interior layout. Having a central aisle with stalls on either side “enables one side of the stable to be

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thrown open to the sun and air….it is necessary to keep the windows in front of the horses so high and so small that little light or ventilation can he had through them.” He advised the placement of the windows at least six and a half feet from the floor to avoid blinding the horses and using overhanging eaves for shade, like at 31 Legare’s stable. The attitudes toward horses in the twentieth century underscore this evolution concerning horses over a 250 year history. From the 1600s, when horses were left to roam the woods and find whatever food they could, the 1700s, when the growing reliance on the horses encouraged permanent shelters for them, to the 1900s, when new technology and innovation encouraged greater experimentation with stables and other farm buildings, Americans grew to understand what kind of structures make a horse comfortable. Most importantly, Americans grew to understand why their horses needed to be comfortable.

The stables in the same tier as Mount Vernon share similarities that speak to the priorities of early American gentry. The use of pattern books show that these stables were created among a similar architectural landscape that included following established rules, appropriating ideas from successful examples, and creating something lasting that would contribute to the overall aesthetics of the plantations of the planter-elites.

There was a bit of “conspicuous consumption” prevalent in colonial society regarding stables as well. At Mount Vernon, for example, visitors recorded enjoying the Thoroughbreds at Washington’s stable that included the two horses who had carried him to victory in the American Revolution. People must have felt the same way when they were at Mount Airy admiring the Tayloe’s racehorses. When they were at Shirley, Woodlands, Sabine Hall, and Aiken Rhett, they could tell from looking at the stables that their horses would be taken care of. Well-designed stables showed effort and pride. It sent

a reassuring message that they will look after someone else’s property. Rundown stables (often identified in tax records) reflected a slovenly attitude, and therefore undercut one’s reputation as a gentleman. In a society where people’s property quantified importance, a stable was one outbuilding that could bolster what the dwelling house boldly stated.

In one sense, Washington is not exceptional. Like everybody else, he was well versed in pattern books and owned a few. He was familiar with local building practices and understood that his home provoked responses from visitors. What is unusual is that he probably let his manager control the construction more than Washington had ever allowed someone before. This was not his normal pattern. All in all, he did not experiment on the stable like he liked to do with buildings. Though he wanted it tripartite to avoid it looking “uncouth” (and we do not know if he thought that himself or was influenced by the classical proportions of Andrea Palladio’s designs), the book by Thomas Wallis reinforced its design. From what we know now, the stalls in the stable were similar to other stables in the Chesapeake and to other stables Washington saw during his travels. The tripartite form and use of brick also came from local building practices. So, in the context of Mount Vernon, the stable is unique in that it showed less experimentation than the house and other building projects on Washington’s farms. In the greater context of American stables, Washington’s stable and those of his wealthy contemporaries were architectural paradigms that conveyed exactly what they wanted—education, wealth, property, and the illusion that they had the liberty to choose and shape those tangible archetypes illustrating their lives.
CHAPTER SEVEN

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOUNT VERNON’S STABLE

The stable at Mount Vernon was in use until 1924, when the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association expressed concern that its continued use constituted “a menace.”

Though the shed occasionally offers shelter to animals such as sheep, and occasionally a horse, the stable for the most part is a relic of Mount Vernon’s past and is preserved as a museum building. While the exterior has been preserved, the interior, especially the east and west stall rooms, has been altered so much that the original arrangement of the interior and the exact design of the stall partitions is unknown. Analyses of contemporary animal husbandry books, extant stables, and letters provide a broad image of how Washington’s stable housed his saddle and carriage horses.

Stalls

Eighteenth-century aesthetics gradually valued a delicate and refined look in architecture. Washington’s contemporaries would have considered the current stalls in his stable quite bulky, though too graceful in finish and joinery. His stalls likely were graceful at least in its design. Washington kept his most valued horses at his stable. These were seasoned horses who led active lifestyles, went to war, and rode on long foxhunts. These horses were not small either, given Washington’s height (six foot). The stalls needed to be spacious, clean, and cool to offer comfort to his horses. The stalls, therefore, balanced the functional needs of the horses with the aesthetics preferred by Washington.

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1 Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, Annual Report 1924, mountvernon.org
Partitions

Of the stables with extant stalls, Sabine Hall’s stalls represent the best comparison for how Mount Vernon’s might have appeared. Mount Vernon’s were initially added in 1783 and were repaired or replaced in 1795. The stalls in Sabine Hall date to the construction of the stable near 1820. This places them within forty years of Mount Vernon’s.

The three basic stall partition styles presents three options that could have been in the stable. The cyma curved-stall can be eliminated because that first appeared in 1796 in a British publication. It seems unlikely that it appeared in the colonies soon after and thus would have had no effect on Washington’s stall design. No American evidence points to the use of curved partition at the time Washington added the stalls in 1783. The last two options are partitions that extended perpendicular from the wall or ones that sloped downward toward the posts at the open ends.

A sloped partition seems most likely. Evidence shows that sloping stalls were the preferred choice in both England and the colonies at this time. Sabine Hall’s straight stalls were short enough that the horses in their stalls were visible, so a slanting style was not necessary. If Mount Vernon’s did not slope, the stalls would be high and imposing and would keep the horses isolated from view. Though the stalls at Aiken Rhett’s stable had space between the boards for the circulation of air, the addition of the louvered aperture on the north side indicates that the stable hosted a humid environment. It is most probable that Washington’s stalls sloped downwards as depicted in the stalls Jefferson sketched and in the paintings of James Seymour and Thomas Burford.

Though most of the extant stalls in this analysis featured horizontal planks that served as the dividers, Washington’s likely were vertical. The presence of a single pocket for a rail at six feet four inches opposite each stall post in the stall rooms indicates that there was no back post near the walls. This post would be necessary to hold the other
ends of the horizontal planks not supported by the posts near the open ends. Washington’s stalls were likely vertical boards that stretched from the ground to the bottom of the rail that extended from the pocket in the masonry. They may have been tongue and grooved to provide structural support. The height of the pocket in the wall shows that these stalls, if they were that high, would be so high that circulation was essential.

Would these partitions, then, be composed of boards and a rail or something more complex, like Governor Penn’s? The second option seems likely. The height of the stalls would prohibit the circulation of air rather than shorter stalls like those in the south stall room at Sabine. If the stalls consisted of boards only, they would need to have space between them for ventilation. However, at nearly six and a half feet, the boards would block out most of the sunlight that came from the louvered windows on the north walls and the air space between the boards would be a lackluster attempt at making comfortable stalls. Perpendicular lathing, as Jefferson described the slender strips of wood topping Penn’s stalls, would provide ventilation as the climate demanded in addition to the passage of light. An added benefit to the open style at the tops of the stalls is that the horses were not as isolated as if the stalls were completely boarded up to the top rail. The vertical poles from Dodge’s stalls pictured in 1947 could have mimicked what Washington had as a compromise to the issues concerning isolation and the blocking of light (Figure 7.1).

Racks & Mangers

The troughs or mangers at the stable Washington described in his letter concerning Dogue Run likely describe a bisecting manger. He wrote that instead of racks the barn could have space behind the troughs for hay like the mangers in the stable at Mount Vernon. Instead of racks, the stalls would have had individual mangers connected
to the inner sides of the stall partitions that had two sections, one for hay and another for another type of feed.

Figure 7.1 Conjectural sketch of sloping partition. Chamfered posts and top rails. Open vertical slats. A bisecting manger—the front box is nine inches deep (for grain) and the back box is twice as deep (for hay). Mortise and tenoned into inner sides of stall partitions. Post half lapped into the girder and nailed. Post and top rails of white oak. Vertical planks and manger of pine. Drawn by the author.

The bisecting mangers at Dogue Run projected two feet. If this was the same depth of the mangers at the stable at Mount Vernon, it would leave seven feet of stall space for Washington’s horses. This was a typical stall depth and would have provided enough room for his horses.

Assuming the dimensions are the same, the box to the front of the manger was nine inches deep. Behind it, the second box was twice as deep. The closed bottom of the manger would be level, which would push up the second box so that it rose nine inches
higher than the box in front. This would allow the horse to reach both boxes without straining its neck. The deeper section would hold hay and the front would hold grain or something smaller.

*Ornamentation*

It is probable the stalls were chamfered like at Sabine Hall and the Charles Drayton House, especially the posts, top rails of the divisions, and possibly the mangers (Figure 7.2). The chamfered details represent the balance between function and aesthetics. In one sense they were practical in that by removing hard edges from squared posts, the chance of a horse harming themselves against sharp edges was eliminated. Chamfering wood also expressed a level of care in construction. This was practiced in the colonies as early as the 1660s in main structures, as seen in the lamb tongue chamfered details on the wooden members at Bacon's Castle in Surrey, Virginia. Even then, chamfering structural components was seen as a step further from ordinary construction practices. The beveled edges at Sabine and Charles Drayton were a detail that although small, reflected consideration and effort spent in the construction of the stalls.

The posts were the principal structural element of a stall. It supported the dividers, supported pegs for tack, created a place to hook up cross bars, and visually indicated the separation of stalls. Creating elegant posts in the stable would have been a priority to Lund Washington and his employer. The posts at Mount Vernon likely would have had a gentle bevel that began on all four sides of the posts several inches above the ground, creating a base or plinth. The notch would continue up the posts until several inches before it stops, thereby creating a finished cap. The top rails of the

Figure 7.2 Conjectural sketch of the chamfered details. Courtesy of Jean Stoll.
partitions and the rail capping the mangers would also have this detail. The hand tools available in the eighteenth- and early nineteenth century meant that pieces took more time and effort than their industrialized counterparts a century later. A workman would likely have used a drawknife and plane to cut out the bevels, for example, in Sabine and Mount Vernon’s stables, while the Charles Drayton House’s bevels may have been manufactured.²

The posts of the stall shed were apparently chamfered, though they would not have been as ornamental or thick as Macomber’s. Macomber’s report in 1949 recorded that they “found early hand-hewn timbers in the mule shed which supported stall posts... Chamfered plates and posts were discovered, proving the open shed. Mangers and tether poles were installed then.”³ Chamfered posts likely supported the shed roof. There are no photographs or further descriptions of these chamfered posts. If they were indeed chamfered, the possibility that the stall posts inside the stable were chamfered seems likely.

Like moldings that grew more prevalent on interior finishes of houses in the Chesapeake, small ornamentation that hid joinery and rough sides of wood also added grace and elegance. The extra time spent on carving out patterns in wood raised the member to a level of completeness that had not existed a century prior.⁴ The thick circumference of Macomber’s posts and the beaded decoration is a reflection of nineteenth century aesthetics and would not have existed at Mount Vernon.

Materials

Pine was preferred for flooring and other interior elements. Longleaf yellow pine (heart pine) was preferred for its durability. However, hardwoods such as oak was also common in the Cheasapeake. The grain of white oak is visually unusual compared to pine. The rays are visible and the growth rings are hardly distinguishable compared to pine, which is long and straight grained with prominent growth rings. The choice of white oak at Sabine Hall for the interior posts and pine for the mangers and stall divisions show a conscious effort in choosing wood that would hold up to wear and tear and also wood that was strong and could be used structurally. The posts in Sabine Hall are not structural, though, which would be the natural reason to use a durable hardwood like oak.

Washington most likely used a combination of wood for the posts, stalls, and mangers. Like the mangers at Mount Airy and Sabine Hall, Mount Vernon’s could have been made of pine. The vertical boards of the partitions at Sabine Hall are made of pine, while the top rail and the adjoining posts are white oak. This could be mirrored at Mount Vernon.

Joinery

Edward Chappell noted in *The Chesapeake House* that the joinery of materials in the eighteenth century became increasingly more refined. This evolved from a growing dislike of roughened, non-standardized construction commonplace since the seventeenth century. The joinery of stalls, like that of houses, was significant in that it indicated the wealth and gentility of the stables’ owner. It required the skills of a person trained in carpentry. There were not many ways to fabricate quality construction in the eighteenth-

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century Chesapeake. The materials and joinery in stalls were applied in such a way that the stalls of a wealthy planter were clearly discernable from that of a poor farmer.

Mortise and tenon joinery was the most precise and refined. It required the work of a skilled craftsman who could accurately create the tenons and open mortises prior to joining. Sabine Hall’s stalls reflect this high level of craftsmanship. They feature vertical boards with a top rail that is joined to the posts with blind mortise and tenoned construction that are pegged (Figure 7.3).

Mount Vernon, Sabine Hall, Mount Airy, and Aiken Rhett all have (or had) posts that extend to the ceiling. The posts at Sabine that are mounted to the tie beams of the loft floor feature the more common and less expensive joinery type. They are half-lapped, nailed, and later bolted. The lapping of the stall posts to the tie beam is obvious and not as refined as the stalls. The posts, though, are chamfered, suggesting a high degree of elegance and craftsmanship (Figure 7.4).

As seen in Aiken Rhett’s open mortises and common carpentry practices in the eighteenth century, the partitions would have been tenoned and inserted into individual mortises in the posts, or, at Charles Drayton and Sabine Hall, a continuous channel on the inside of the post would allow the partitions. Assuming that

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the boards at Mount Vernon were likely vertical, the tops of the partition would have been grooved so that it could be inserted into the channel or tongue on the underside of the top rail like at Sabine Hall.

The joining of the manger to the boards is difficult to determine. A lack of holes or pockets in the brickwork confirms that there were not back posts that supported racks or mangers. Therefore, the mangers would have likely attached to the partitions. They would likely have been or mortise-and-tenoned, which was the common joinery method in the Chesapeake. The two boards mirroring each other on the inner sides of the partitions would each have a cut carved out of them that would allow the top rail of the manger to slide in and lock together. For wooden members in the Chesapeake, nails often were not necessary as it was relatively easy to use wooden pegs to lock parts together.7

**Other Considerations**

The Minutes of the Council document from 1939 noted that the postholes that identified the location of the stall posts were found in “the small area of undisturbed, original soil,” suggesting that the stall floors may have been dirt and neither paved or planked (Figure 7.5).8 Design books recommended both paved and wooden floors, but the current floors at Mount Airy, Sabine, Shirley, and Mount Vernon are dirt.

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7 Edward Chappell, “Hardware,” 260.
8 Mount Vernon Library, Minutes of the Council 1939 Report.
The assumption that Dodge really did recreate the stalls from an old form may be wrong. It is possible that the stalls, when Dodge found them, had already disintegrated so much that their original form was unrecognizable. He designed a form with details that made sense to him, with angled partitions, rounded posts, and individual mangers and feed racks isolated from adjoining stalls by slender poles. Macomber’s stalls, though, are further away from any documented eighteenth-century style. What the stables in this analysis show is a sequence of basic forms made more intricate by small details made possible by eighteenth-century craft tools.

Would Washington have worried whether the posts of the stalls represented the classical form and true proportions? Probably not. He was not concerned with the minute details reflected in classical symmetry. He valued function over aesthetics. The stable was symmetrical on the exterior because the interior function allowed it to be so; his house was asymmetrical because the interior function did not allow it. So, while the exterior of the stable reflects the promulgated classical ideals of the colonial gentry, the design of the interior compartments did not require this. While there was a standard in eighteenth-century stall design, Washington’s stalls reflected more of what the horses needed and local Chesapeake building traditions.
CONCLUSION

Elite landowners shared a social knowledge that prescribed what was and was not acceptable in the context of their plantations and their organized world. This knowledge that shaped the eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries depended on a shared set of values among the gentry. These values encompassed every aspect of their lives. How they dressed, who they married, where they lived, how they earned their money and how much they owned, and displayed material possessions created a framework within which the elite established themselves. This schema can be seen as a kind of stage, a very visible stage, upon which elites strove to publicize their best attributes in order to stay within the upper echelon of colonial society. One’s dwelling house and surrounding plantation, of course, was one of the foremost ways in which to impart one’s accomplishments bounded by these shared values. Stables, too, shared a place in this scene.

This role of constantly balancing perceptions, organizing one’s environment, and embracing new interpretations of social values culminated in a very distinct way of life for America’s early elite. Everything in their lives was affected by this landscape. When reflecting on the first centuries of the colonists and what they left behind, it is easy to overlook horse stables. But by foregoing analyzing a building form that so clearly represents the balance between man and animal in early America risks negating one of the most significant areas of early American life. Horses were the lifeblood of the colonists. A horse was a possession that gentlemen projected increasingly their aspirations and power on. This was executed through the importation of expensive breeds like Thoroughbreds and Arabians, by riding into cultural centers that were close enough to walk to, and by using riding horses to reflect the leisurely life colonial gentlemen aspired to. The bond between elite culture and horses speaks clearly through the evidence extrapolated from
tax records, insurance policies, newspapers, letters, and diaries. The building culture of early America depended on external factors such as popular taste, the evolution of vernacular trends, consumer trends, and self-conceptions.

The stable structure itself was built for both the gentry and their horses. Essentially, how colonists organized and perceived the social values and aspirations of their world prescribed the evolution of the architecture of structures such as stables. This architecture encompassed much more than the materials and building style that developed from colonists’ characterization of their communities. Rather, the architecture of stables embodied the balance between a man and one of his most valuable possessions. Stables visibly and boldly asserted a gentleman’s agency through the size, quality of materials and construction, and the horses they sheltered. Betting his money on race horses, achieving independence from his family, and demonstrating his ability to shape his environment through building programs on his land were the tangible; crafting a specific image of himself--the intangible--asserted a gentleman’s agency in the elite cultural niche centered around horses.

Unlike kitchens, dairies, or smokehouses, all of which represented the divide between the servile labor on the plantation and their owners, stables hedged two of the most important fixtures of planter life. Some may argue this world balanced precariously on such aspects of life, especially the concept of gentility that was often more of an “outlook” that fluctuated as ephemeral depictions of a temporal landscape.¹ The willingness of the planter-elites to spend significant amounts of energy and money on the design, construction, and finish of these early American stables, though, reaffirms that stables were not simply an auxiliary structure relegated to the background, quite literally

and metaphorically. So, when George Washington ordered that his stable be of brick to protect his horses against another fire, or when Abigail Adams wished to build the best stable possible because it housed the valuable horses of the President, her husband, these Americans pushed the boundary reflected in other built structures that in many ways isolated the distinct social customs planters and their families were expected to follow. Instead, stables manifested the gentry’s desire to fit in their carefully organized world through the art of architecture. In addition, stables show a more poignant side of colonial life—the gentry’s passion for horses and sport.

In spite of Washington’s growing fame after his inheritance of Mount Vernon that coincided with his entrance into the military and becoming President, he managed to establish a building program on his farms that assimilated views concerning polite architecture, control of the environment, and the competitive dialogue between peers. The stable’s balanced composition on the exterior and interior reflected contemporary architectural style and appreciation for symmetry. Its distinctive material from the other structures on the farm and its position as the terminus of the South Lane illustrated Washington’s control over the environment. The use of brick and large size in contrast to typical Chesapeake stables reinforced Washington’s social position and personal priorities concerning the building scheme for Mount Vernon.

Washington’s assent in 1782 to commence the construction of a fashionable and expensive stable while aiding the conclusion of the Revolutionary War pointed to Washington’s change in eighteenth-century building doctrine. He managed to construct one of the best eighteenth-century stables without being there in person and without a steady flow of income. The stable is not simply one of the best of the sparse extant stables dotting the east coast. Rather, in 1782 and ever since, Washington’s horse stable at the house represented the apex of the intricately enfolded doctrine surrounding American stables. It not only showed off Washington’s social position in the neighborhood, his
knowledge of contemporary architectural and design guidelines, and the personal attachment he shared for constructing and sport. It is foremost a lasting legacy of a man who has become something so great in textbooks that American history has overlooked the man who constructed the 7,600 acre plantation on a bluff on the Potomac who was, ultimately, a great Virginia planter.
APPENDIX A:

HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT OF MOUNT VERNON’S STABLE
(Written in 2003 by Carrie K. Schomig with updates by Meghan P. White in 2015. Repetitive sections concerning the stalls were omitted)
INTRODUCTION

George Washington’s 1782 mansion stable at Mount Vernon stands among the finest stables in America surviving from the late-eighteenth century. The stable’s symmetrical composition, combined with the permanence afforded by its brick masonry construction, reflects the design principles practiced by Washington’s colonial contemporaries who were gentlemen farmers presiding over the affluent plantations of the Virginia-Chesapeake region. In doing this, the stable fulfills the requirements of a commodious, efficient, and an aesthetically pleasing stable. Few other stables similar in design to Mount Vernon’s exist today without significant alterations, making the mansion stable one of the few whose architectural integrity, for the most part, has remained. The stable design possesses the distinctive characteristic of its position in the landscape by its conformity to a gently sloping grade. This site provided the benefit of an effective drainage system as well as the opportunity for hierarchical spatial organization within the stable. Washington’s sensitivity to function and aesthetic tastes resulted in an efficient, genteel stable that served the Mansion Farm for over one hundred forty years.

This historic structure report begins by examining the history and meaning of the stable’s architectural features with a discussion of the historical context in Chapter I. In Chapter II, a documentation of the structural and aesthetic alterations since the stable’s conception in 1782 provides a history along with investigative analysis of the changes to the building. Finally, in Chapter III a condition report addresses the restoration that is necessary to maintain the stable’s integrity for future generations.

In the research for this report, special thanks goes to Mrs. H. Gwynn Tayloe of Mount Airy, Mr. Carter Wellford of Sabine Hall, and Mr. Charles Carter III of Shirley Plantation for their gracious generosity in opening their homes (and their stables) for
the benefit of this research. A note of appreciation also goes to Judith Hynson, Curator at Stratford Hall, Willie Graham, Curator of Buildings at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, and Orlando Ridout V, Chief of Research, Survey, and Registration at the Maryland Historical Trust, for sharing their expertise on eighteenth-century stable design.

LOCATION

The Mansion stable is a large, rectangular brick structure located along the South Lane, southwest of the Mansion, at the south-eastern corner of the Kitchen Garden Wall. The building measures 82 feet long by 40 feet in depth. The stable is located at the far edge of the South Lane within Washington’s elaborately configured “Mansion House Farm.”1 The stable is on axis with the orthogonal arrangement of the row of three outbuildings along the South Lane, which consists of the Butler’s House at the north end, followed by the Smoke House, Wash House, and the Coach House. The small yard in front of the stable is shared by the Coach House to allow the passage of the horses and coaches into both buildings. The stable is also due west of the Dung Repository across the Lane in convenient proximity for transferring horse manure from the stable to the Dung Repository to be used for fertilizer.

HISTORY

For over fifty years, it was believed that the stable was constructed in 1733. This date was attested by Dr. Joseph Meredith Toner, a nineteenth-century antiquarian, and was carried forth by a plaque on the stable’s loft door that read, “Built in 1733”. A re-

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1 From the 1793 survey map, drawn by G. Washington.
examination of the stable in the 1930s revealed that the existing stable is in fact the third generation of horse barns in the vicinity of the mansion. Evidence for the first stable at the Mount Vernon estate was discovered in the 1930s when excavators who were installing a drainage system inadvertently uncovered a sandstone foundation just below the southeast corner of the east lawn.² In 1776, Washington sent instructions to his cousin, Lund Washington, who also served as overseer at Mount Vernon in the former’s absence, to build a fence and to plant locust trees at “the point where the old Barn used to stand,” describing the same location as the excavation site from the 1930s. This concluded that the excavated foundation probably belonged to the first stable.³

Washington’s diary notes the construction of a second stable in 1768. On June 8, he recorded the assembly of a timber-framed barn and that “Carpenters went to getting the frame for my Barn at the House.”⁴ This stable was completed on June 28, 1768 and stood on the site of the existing stable.⁵ The design for this stable is unknown, but an excavation during the 1940s uncovered the foundation, revealing that the present stable foundation, while larger in plan, overlaps its predecessor and was placed in virtually the same location as the 1768 framed stable. Additionally, Washington’s letters reveal that while planning the design of the existing stable, he wanted a building that was larger than the previous stable.

The second stable at Mount Vernon stood until 1781, when it was destroyed by fire. The General Comte de Rochambeau sent his condolences for this unfortunate event from Williamsburg, writing to Washington on December 1781, “I have learnt by the common report, that your Excellency’s seat has suffered by fire.” Washington replied to Rochambeau the following year, “My loss at Mount Vernon was not considerable, but I was in the greatest danger of having my House and all the adjacent Buildings consumed.”⁶ In later years, an aide to Rochambeau who had visited Mount Vernon in 1782 remembered that “a stable was just being rebuilt that had been burned down

⁴ The terms “barn” and “stable” were used interchangeably by George Washington and in the annual MVLA reports.
⁵ “The Carpenters finished getting the Frame for the Barn at my Ho. House.” G.Washington’s diary entry on June 28th, 1768.
a short time before, in which accident the General had lost ten of the best of his horses.”7 This testimony reveals that Washington’s “loss” was probably a more significant burden than he had indicated to Rochambeau, having lost his most coveted horses in the blaze that also had consumed his stable. The aide’s statement also supports the original records at Mount Vernon that a new stable was constructed in 1782.8

To replace the burned stable, Washington made plans from his location in Philadelphia to construct a new building made of brick masonry. Unlike the 1768 stable, Washington thought the brick masonry would not only provide greater longevity over timber framing, but possessed the fireproof characteristic that could prevent another loss from fire.

The stable was constructed between 1782 and 1783 during Washington’s absence from Mount Vernon at the close of the Revolutionary War. During this time, Washington corresponded with Lund Washington until Washington’s return in 1783.9 Lund Washington followed Washington’s directions and served as his on-site liaison at Mount Vernon, organizing the carpenters, masons, and other workers who contributed to the stable’s construction. John Knowles, an indentured servant and bricklayer, laid

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7 “The Three Mount Vernon Barns”, HSR report, undated; Mount Vernon Library, Restoration Files, Box 7.
8 From an early description, 1782, July 18 or 19.
the brick foundation and structural walls.10 A decade later, while serving as President, Washington sent instructions from Philadelphia to add dormer windows to the north and south sides of the roof to provide ventilation for crops stored in the loft above. Sometime between 1793 and 1796, two dormer windows were added to the south roof. These were followed by the installation of two dormers on the north roof, one to either side of the central pediment. Washington also ordered new loft steps to be added to the east elevation in 1795, completing the stable during Washington’s lifetime.

Since 1796, the stewards of the Mount Vernon estate have kept the stable intact with a few relatively minor additions. Of these changes, the most significant alteration to the structure probably occurred sometime in the early nineteenth century when Bushrod Washington acquired Mount Vernon in 1801. It is possible that he enclosed the open-air stalls at the rear of the stable with a post-in-ground timber-framed wall. The succeeding stewards of the plantation have maintained the stable’s original structural integrity.

By the time the newly formed Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association acquired Mount Vernon, the stable had fallen into disrepair from age and neglect. Records indicate that the first restoration of the stable began with a mandate in 1875 from the Grand Council of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association. Each member pledged to raise fifty dollars to repair the derelict stable. When the funds were collected, a restoration program began and continued from 1885 to 1898, during Superintendent Harrison Dodge’s directorial tenure over Mount Vernon.

The stable underwent several major restorations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that have obscured much of the building fabric. Documentation is sparse until the 1880s, when Superintendent Harrison Dodge came to Mount Vernon, so any changes done before then were not recorded. Since the first restorative efforts, the wood trim, doors, bricks, mortar, and stall fittings have been repaired, repainted, or replaced. The restoration files in the Fred W. Smith National Library at Mount Vernon document in detail these restorations. Documentation of this work indicates that restorers were relatively conscientious about the structural impact of restoration, often using the existing historic fabric as a model for matching replacement components. In the 1930s, under Morley J. Williams’ direction, a major survey and restoration project substantially preserved the stable using modern methods of stabilization. From 1949 to 1953, consulting preservation architect Walter M. Macomber replaced and reconstructed the

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interior design features that had been lost over the years. Macomber aimed to return the stable to its 1799 condition by reconstructing the stable’s interior fittings and the walls of the open shed in the manner that he believed was in keeping with the late eighteenth-century. Since the mid-century, the stable’s structural integrity has been preserved with continuous monitoring and protection from undue impact.

FUNCTION

When Washington communicated from Philadelphia with Lund Washington about the construction of the stable, he was not designing the stable with the mind of a military general in the midst of a decisive war. Instead, his mindset was that of the gentleman farmer, who took an active interest in the well-being of Mount Vernon and its accompanying farms from the time he inherited. His pragmatic way of thinking meant that the stable needed to be constructed in a way that would ensure it would not meet the same fate as his previous frame stables and could house his animals comfortably. Architectural style was important to Washington as well, and similarities between Mount Vernon’s architecture and those depicted in pattern books show that Washington took care in determining the proper way to design his estate. In addition to illustrations from pattern books, his travels across the eastern seaboard and into the north exposed him to a variety of architectural styles, tastes, and methods that could have influenced his ideas. Thus, a combination of both aesthetics and function in all of the buildings at Mount Vernon were important to Washington. Washington’s third stable, with its English bond brick pattern and hierarchical arrangement of animals, demonstrates his building priorities at Mount Vernon.

As with other eighteenth-century gentleman farmer’s estates, a proper stable was an indispensable building at Mount Vernon. The stable sheltered and accommodated the horses that served the essential duty of transportation and, in some cases, the privilege of leisurely sporting activities. A visitor to Mount Vernon in 1801 wrote that “the stables are crowded with horses, asses, and mules, favorites and by the General’s orders exempt from labor,” a description highlighting how busy the stable often was.11 In light of this, maintaining the horses’ health within a clean and comfortable stable was fundamental to their effectiveness within a plantation farm such as Mount Vernon.

At Mount Vernon, a unique degree of hierarchy existed within the services of Washington’s horses. While the best horses were kept housed at the Mansion stable, the work horses and other utilitarian farm animals were kept in stables and barns further away from the Mansion, and later, at his the five outlying farms. Washington’s most prized horses and those of his guests were kept at the mansion stable, which could accommodate up to twenty horses at one time, with ten individual stalls in each of the two stall rooms. In 1796, in a letter preceding his visit home to Mount Vernon while serving as President, Washington wrote, “…I shall have eight or ten horses of my own with me, and there will be many others with Visitors.” A layer of hierarchy also occurred within the Mansion stable. The best horses occupied the rooms at the front of the stable, while at the rear stalls along the south wall of the stable, a row of open-tie stalls accommodated secondary, tethered working animals, such as horses and mules.

Even though the new stable stood immediately across a small yard facing the coach house that was constructed in the 1770s, the central room of the stable also accommodated a coach along with its fittings. This new coach room was larger than the existing coach house and could therefore accommodate a larger coach. The coach room also might have been designed to house the new coach that Washington had recently bought, custom-made, in Philadelphia in 1780.12

The spacious loft at the second level above the stall rooms and the coach room provided ample space to store feed and other crops, attested by records for keeping straw and hay for the horses, as well as tobacco and corn. The loft was accessed by an exterior platform and stairway at the east wall. There are no records from Washington that the loft was finished for people to inhabit, and it is unlikely that he approved of people dwelling in the stable for any length of time. This sentiment may be observed in 1790, when referring to his Presidential accommodations in Philadelphia, Washington expressed a concern that his servants were not to be housed in the loft above the stable, worrying about the potential fire hazard of their hot oil lamps. He wrote from Mount Vernon,

If the Servants can be conveniently accommodated without using the Stable loft it will certainly be much the best and safest; for I am certain no orders given to my people wd. restrain them from carrying lights if they were to be in it as lodgers.13

In the eighteenth century, the threat of conflagration was ever-present. In timber-framed barns, fires could easily be sparked by overcrowded conditions surrounded by flammable straw, hay, and wood. In 1798, while deciding the living arrangements of the newly arriving animals and their keepers, Washington expressed his misgivings about allowing the keepers to stay in the barns.

Except the Stallions, for whom, and more especially for their Keepers (who are generally very troublesome people) I have no conveniency at any of the Farms, and to suffer them to be in the Barns, or Stables with their horses, would be to risk the whole by fire. Nor have I any place at the Mansion house for either horses or men, as the conveniences thereat, are not more than adequate to the permanent, and occasional demands by visitors.14

This statement further attests to the unlikelihood that people were boarded in the stable’s loft during Washington’s lifetime. It also reveals that the mansion stable was a well-used dependency at the Mansion Farm, frequently filling its maximum capacity by horses owned by Washington and visitors.

The equine residents of the stable were likely well cared for, ready to fulfill Washington’s enjoyment of riding and equestrian sports. Washington himself was known for his gallant and knowledgeable horsemanship in both riding and horse training. He eagerly pursued horse racing, for which he tried his hand at horse breeding, albeit with mixed results. He was also known as an avid foxhunter and kept a pack of hounds at the estate.15 Upon visiting Mount Vernon in 1785, one observer recognized two of Washington’s famous horses, Old Blue and Nelson, and wrote that these “venerable” horses were living out their retirement in the stable, remarking that “the General makes no use of them now… they feed away at their ease for past service.”16

The stable was used for boarding horses well beyond Washington’s death, throughout the nineteenth century and until 1924, when the horses were finally removed for the purpose of better-preserving the building. The open-tie shed at the rear of the stable continues to be used and currently houses some animals as part of the cultural

15 Sadler, 47.
16 Sadler, 44-47.
interpretation at Mount Vernon.

Washington’s accounts and ledgers reveal that the mansion stable service was used for several distinct purposes. It provided accommodations for Washington’s best horses, bred for riding and racing, in addition to his secondary working horses that were housed at the less-conspicuous location at the rear of the stable. On the other hand, central to the more formal north façade, the Coach Room was constructed to be large enough to house Washington’s new coach. Finally, the large loft above the ground-floor rooms provided ample storage for feed and fodder as required by the services below. The sum of the services the stable provided made it an efficient building and an important outbuilding within the Mansion House farm.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

Mount Vernon’s stable assumes an important position in the greater historical context of the late-eighteenth century. Its brick construction stands among the best stables in material and quality. Its spatial design is reflective of the tripartite composition common to many of the stables built by Virginian elites and also the greater Mid-Atlantic region. An examination of stables contemporary with the Mansion stable shows the consistency of architectural features that were both aesthetically pleasing and practical.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

For the purposes of comparison, a brief description of the mansion stable will serve to aid a discussion of eighteenth and nineteenth-century stable design sources. The mansion stable is a rectangular brick shell measuring eighty-two feet long, forty feet in depth, and approximately twenty-eight feet in height from the ground at the façade to roof ridge. The primary elevation faces north, toward the Mansion by way of the South Lane. The interior of the stable is divided by two solid brick walls, creating a row of three rooms that are independent of one another, each accessed only from the exterior at the north façade. Overall the stable is one and one-half stories tall, housing a loft within the gabled roof. At the center of the northern slope of the roof, above the entrance to the central coach room, is a gabled projection with a door that allows for the transfer of goods to the loft. One smaller dormer window flanks each side of the gable. These two
dormers are matched at the southern roof slope with two identical dormer projections.

After the north façade, the secondary elevation is the rear of the stable where an open-air shed along the south wall houses additional animals. In section from front to back, the stable is a split-level building that follows the downward slope of the south lane, resulting in a five-foot descent along the east wall. The short, gabled ends at the east and west are composed of full brick masonry from grade to the apex of the roof. Only the loft door at the east elevation pierces the brick at these ends.

The stable’s brick walls were laid in English bond on both the interior and the exterior, resulting in double English bond brick framing. English bond consists of alternating courses of headers and stretchers and is considered the earliest and strongest method of bricklaying. This bond pattern was common before the Revolutionary War in Tidewater Virginia but fell out of fashion thereafter in favor of American bond, which utilizes a greater number of stretcher courses between the header courses. At Mount Vernon, the continued use of English bond may be regarded as Washington’s asserted desire to match the brick bonding throughout the mansions grounds, attested by its use for the brick foundations for all of the wood-framed outbuildings in the vicinity of the Mansion.

The bricks used for the foundation and masonry walls were made from clay excavated on the site, a typical practice during George Washington’s tenure at Mount Vernon. The bricks were handmade using wooden molds and laid in mortar made from burnt, crushed oyster shells for lime and mixed with sand. The mortar joints were

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17 Buchanan, 73, note 7.
18 Typically for Tidewater Virginia, crushed oyster shells were used in lieu of limestone, which was unavailable in the region. Usually the proportion of this mortar mixture was one part sand to one part.

Figure 4. The north facade is the primary elevation that allows access to the central Coach Room and to the two stall rooms to either side.
scraped flush with the face of the brick and then ruled in the center of the joint to create a finish also known as grapevine pointing. This created the appearance of neat, straight brick courses that Washington commonly preferred for the brick masonry at Mount Vernon.

The brick foundation rises to the water table, narrowing slightly to become the exterior and interior walls above ground, with the exception of the timber framing attached to the rear brick wall. This longitudinal area at the southern elevation was enclosed for most of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century. Walter M. Macomber reconstructed the open tie-stalls during the 1949-1953 period of renovation.

The structure consists of a seven-bay brick masonry shell with two parallel interior brick walls that transverse the rectangular plan. The brick walls extend up to the roof at the gabled ends. The side walls of the rear shed are brick, but the south wall is timber-framed. This wall has eleven bays, eight of which consist of an open screen of seven posts set in-ground, creating a rear open-air loggia.

The concentration of wood used for the stable resides in the roof framing. The larger timbers were hand-hewn, while the smaller timbers were pit-sawn. Both methods of timber preparation were typical at Mount Vernon well into the 1790s. For the hardware, wrought nails were purchased from a supplier in Alexandria and were primarily used for attaching the shingles to the roof lathing, as well as for building the door and window frames and the batten doors (or ledged door).

All of the rooms at the stable are accessed through doorways from the exterior. Along the front north façade are three doorways. The most prominent of these is the central double-door accessing the coach room. The stall rooms at either side of the coach room have a single door opening. These doors are each flanked by one window at either side. These windows are narrow and enclosed with wooden louvers for shade and ventilation. At the east façade is a door to the loft located high on the brick wall. This door is accessed by an exterior stair and platform that ascends parallel to the exterior of
the east wall. The framed shed attached to the brick wall consists of eight open bays that are divided by posts that run from the plate and into the ground. At the east end is an enclosed room with two doors separated by a slatted window. There are no openings at the exterior west wall.

Ventilation was particularly important in the warm, humid climate of Mount Vernon summers. Heat from sunlight was minimized with the louvered windows that allowed for both air and shade. At the

Figure 5. The south elevation accommodates the southward slope of the site.

south brick wall, three window openings in each stall rooms opened onto the open-air shed at the rear. These wide, interior windows have wooden bars to provide ventilation from the shed to the stall rooms.

The gabled “saltbox” roof of the stable is covered in wooden shingles, which constituted the most prevalent roofing material among Early American southern buildings. The southern slope of the roof extends lower than the northern slope to shelter the shed rooms at the south end. The downward sloping grade of the site allows for the rear rooms to be about five feet lower than the front rooms. The framing is a common rafter system joined to a plate that rests upon the brick shell.

Fashion likely came to influence the design of horse fittings and stable partitions, although Washington probably placed higher importance on functionality. However, it may be impossible to know the appearance of the original forms and details. The daily wear and tear on the wooden fittings prevented the original partitions and fittings from surviving for very long. Macomber’s reconstruction of the stall partitions, mangers, and

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22 Lounsbury, 329.
pegged boards that currently exist is an example of a conjectural reconstruction of the fittings and their eighteenth-century design and ornament.

The rectangular plan and the one and one-half story structure, the spatial organization of the rooms, and the materials used for the Mansion stable reflects many of the common features of stables belonging to the Mount Vernon’s greater Early American architectural landscape.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

After a long period of using the same farming techniques in England with little innovation, the rise of the Agricultural Revolution beginning in the mid-eighteenth century made farmers more conscientious about building efficient farm buildings. By 1700, the horse had slowly displaced the ox as the primary working animal. Along with this change, the stabling of the horses became increasingly important in light of the fact that the conditions of the stable had an immediate effect on the well-being and, thus, the performance of the horses it housed. This effect gave the farmer a clear incentive to provide adequate space, light, and air to the horses when planning the design of a stable. For direction on the proper and most advantageous methods of maintaining a stable, like many of his contemporaries, Washington probably consulted handbooks on animal husbandry. Pattern books from England, France, and Italy could have also provided information stable construction. One author of a book Washington probably owned recommended “firm, dry, and hard ground,” describing the common practice of paving the floor with stone or pebbles, with wooden planks laid at the stalls. The flooring Washington chose for the stable might have been this type, featuring the same clay floor that exists today at the minimum. Although Washington’s probate inventory does not list the exact title of this book, the similarities between the stable description and the stable at Mount Vernon suggest that Washington was familiar with current design and function of stables and may have used this book as a reference.

Among the other books written by Englishmen in the late-eighteenth century, Timothy Lightoler’s Gentleman and Farmer’s Architect (1762) and Nathaniel Kent’s Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property (1775) offer advice on the maintenance of estate and farming outbuildings. Lightoler’s farmyard plans show the farm buildings

24 The Farrier's and Horseman's Complete Dictionary, images 295-296.
organized symmetrically. His book shows several stable plans with a central aisle and room for stalls on either side, a similar arrangement for Washington’s 1782 stable. One plan specifically shows stall rooms for six stalls each located to either side of a central passage for a coach.25 While Kent recommends roofing a barn in thatch, he also notes that the best material for construction of barns and stables is brick, especially when the brick may be made and fired at the building site.26 He also advises that a lintel piece be placed into the brick above wall openings in order to absorb the settling of the walls, which is also practiced at the Mansion stable.27 Books like Lightoler’s *Gentleman and Farmer’s Architect* and Kent’s *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property* provide an important glimpse into a typical stable in the late 1700s, and reveal that Washington’s stable followed the contemporary standards of building and convenience.

In addition to literary sources, Washington actively corresponded with his educated contemporaries at home and abroad in letters, often seeking to acquire knowledge of horticulture and husbandry, but also for ideas on architectural design. Soon after completing the stable, Washington pursued the advice of Englishmen who were knowledgeable in the newest farming techniques, such as Arthur Young in 1786, in the design of his barns for his outlying farms.28

Books published in the early nineteenth century provide an image of a typical stable interior following the 1782 construction of Washington’s stable that serve to illustrate the evolution of stable design and function. The 1802 publication of *The Domestic Encyclopedia* by A.F.M. Willich M.D. advises using an earthen or a plank floor over one of stone or brick.29 *The Farmer’s Directory* by Leonard Towne (1822) offers similar advice as *The Farrier’s and Horseman’s Complete Dictionary*, but with more specific instructions for the dimensions of stalls and drainage systems.30 A. Lawson also gives a detailed description of the proper stall partitions in *The Farmer’s Practical Instructor* (1827).31 These books were published too late for Washington’s eyes, but nonetheless, their value lies in defining the context at the close of Washington’s life, illustrating the enduring principles of maintaining a stable.

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28 Ridout-Riley, 7.
For a gentleman farmer such as Washington, providing a well-functioning stable went hand-in-hand with creating the proper architectural presentation. The balance of the tripartite arrangement of a central door to the coach room and the stall partition rooms to either side of this was an important organization to Washington. The access to the rooms at the longitudinal side of the stable, rather than at the shorter gabled end, would prevent “an uncouth appearance” in Washington’s opinion. While the location of the stable within the vicinity of the Mansion farm landscape allowed for its convenience to provide horses to George Washington, his family, and his guests, at the same time, its placement at the terminus of the South Lane dependencies placed a suitable distance between the stable and the mansion. This spatial relationship echoes Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio’s treatise that recommended a stable be located “not too near the master’s house… nor so far off as to be out of sight.” Returning to Mount Vernon in 1783, Washington aimed to reorganize his estate into an arrangement that was similar in principle to that of an English country estate. During the eighteenth century, the ideal English landscape plan was greatly influenced by Palladio’s principles of balance, symmetry, and the proper placement of outbuildings relative to the central house. Although Washington never traveled to Europe and there is no evidence that Washington owned Palladio’s *Four Books of Architecture*, he was a learned man and an avid reader and was probably familiar with the popular Palladian concepts of his time. English writers, many of whom followed Palladio’s treatises during the eighteenth century, authored many of Washington’s books.

George Washington’s stable reflects many of the principles of his contemporary gentleman farmers used for their own stables. As a surveyor and a military leader, Washington traveled extensively across the eastern colonial states by 1782. During these travels he likely witnessed a myriad of stable designs. An examination of other stables contemporary with Washington’s 1782 stable reveals that its form was similar in design to other eighteenth-century stables in the Virginia region. Design, form and materials used for the stables in the prominent estates that were par in social standing with Mount Vernon serve provide a contextual foil on which to analyze Washington’s stable. Over the course of time and wear, almost none of these stables have retained their original eighteenth-century interior fittings; many have been replaced with updated nineteenth-century stall partitions and mangers. However, an examination of the structural shell and

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33 Sadler, 35.
architectural composition of these stables reveals the Mount Vernon mansion stable’s similarities.

At Shirley Plantation (c.1740), located 120 miles south of Mount Vernon along the James River in Charles County, Virginia, survives one of the first domestic stables in the country.\textsuperscript{34} The stable is located to the west of the central grouping of outbuildings flanking the house and its centralized forecourt. This short distance away from the house is similar to the distance between the Mount Vernon Mansion and the stable, allowing for a convenient proximity, but at the same time, providing an adequate distance to remove the family dwelling from the odors of an animal keeping. The Shirley stable is rectangular in plan, accommodating both a central carriage room and stall rooms to either side for horses.

The stable has endured considerable alterations over the years, including the loss of the original interior fittings and the stalls that once housed the racing horses of the Carter family.\textsuperscript{35} Four pockets, five feet above the floor and spaced five feet apart on the north wall of the south stall room, are what remains of what may have been the stall partitions. The measurements reflect typical stall dimensions in the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{36} The stall room follows the plan at Mount Vernon’s stable as well with two rows of stalls on either side of the stall room and a central passageway. Like the rest of the outbuildings on the estate, the stable is constructed of brick laid in Flemish bond. Shirley stable’s floors were made of brick that laid in sand, a common flooring method for the period, and is now covered in red clay dirt.

A surviving contemporary stable that is most similar in plan and form to the Mount Vernon stable resides at the Mount Airy estate (1758), located about one hundred miles southeast of Mount Vernon in Richmond County of the Northern Neck of Virginia. Washington corresponded with Mount Airy owner John Tayloe, and he likely visited the grand estate. The centralized arrangement of the Mount Airy house and its flankers created a sophisticated composition that is considered to be the first Palladian estate in the American colonies. The Tayloe’s had an impressive record of success in horse racing and breeding, both of which they pursued with zeal.\textsuperscript{37} While the many racing stables at Mount

\textsuperscript{34} Sadler, 35.
\textsuperscript{35} From conversation with the historian at the Shirley Plantation, Taft Kiser, June 12, 2003.
\textsuperscript{36} Investigation conducted at a site visit in July 2015.
\textsuperscript{37} Sadler, 36-7.
Airy have long disappeared, the coach stable survives, standing a short distance from the house. The stable’s longitudinal tripartite bay sequence of interior rooms is very similar to the interior of the Mount Vernon stable. Both stables feature a central coach room flanked by a stall room that housed individual stalls at the side walls. Likewise, the doors to the stall rooms are accessed from the outside and are located in the central bay of the wall flanked by two louvered openings piercing the masonry walls.

Like the Mount Vernon stable, a shed roof is attached to the rear of the stable. However, at Mount Airy, the slope is lower and does not continue to the upper slope of the roof as it does at Mount Vernon, where the sloping site at the rear of the building accommodates lower rooms. Another distinction between the two stables is that the masonry used for the walls at the Mount Airy stable does not continue up the roof ridge. Instead, the gabled end-walls of the loft were constructed of timber framing. On the other hand, at Mount Vernon, the brick walls at the east and west walls continue all the way up to the apex of the roof. Washington never mentioned the Mount Airy stable in his letters and so the structure cannot definitively be considered influential to Washington’s concept for his own stable. Empirically, however, these two stables are more similar to each other than to any other stables existing during that period.

Jefferson must have considered his own stable design to be good enough to be used again at other mansion farms. When Jefferson later designed the stable at the Bremo estate (1815-1819) of Fluvanna County, Virginia, he used his own stable configuration at Monticello as a model.

Matching the other impressive stone outbuildings at Bremo, the rustic stone walls and brick gables at the ends of this large stable are punctuated by arched doors and windows, almost create an effect of the arched fenestration and rustication of a Renaissance palazzo. The expense required to compose a stable such as this was exclusively found among the wealthiest landowners in the colonies at that time.

Modern day research into architecture of the mid-Atlantic region in the eighteenth century offers insights into common types of stables in Virginia. Studies support the belief that the more common stall design involved plank-sided stalls. The average

38 Sadler, 57-58.

39 When the stables at Monticello were reconstructed in 1938, archaeological research revealed that the stable at Bremo was a replica of the Jefferson’s stable design. This was confirmed by the later discovery of Jefferson’s own drawings for the stable. Sadler, 64.

40 Sadler, 63.
measurements of a stall were four feet wide and four to five feet tall. The current stall partitions average five feet wide, and excavations by Macomber corroborate that earlier stalls did have one extra foot in width. In the Mid-Atlantic region, the stable was likely constructed of log or frame, and often with a loft above. These were divided on the interior into stalls with feed boxes at the head, like Washington’s stable, although the average farm owned fewer horses requiring stall partitions. In Washington’s case, his financial means and his access to sophisticated literature allowed him to create a more spacious and permanent building to house his prized horses and his elaborate coach.

William Hamilton’s 1792 stable at his Woodlands estate in Philadelphia was among the grandest stables of the eighteenth century. The display of Federal architecture, with its balanced composition of geometrical blind niches and tall arches and windows, make this enormous stone building stand out among the other stables of its era.

Like the stable at Mount Vernon, the interior was divided into three rooms, with the carriage room at the center, flanked by stall rooms. The Woodlands stable extends even further out at the sides with rooms that provide spacious storage. Additionally, a tall second story is granted by the distinctive height of the building.

Considering Washington’s extensive travels across the Mid-Atlantic and his acquaintances with the plantation owners of his region, it is safe to say that he probably visited most, if not all of these stables that stood during his lifetime. He ordered the building of the current stable while stationed in Philadelphia, after all, and the stalls Jefferson sketched in 1778 could have been visited by Washington, as he knew both Gouverneur Morris and Robert Morris. For his own architectural projects, it is reasonable to assume that he remembered the features that he considered most convenient and handsome. Washington likely used this pedagogical method of gleaning information from published plans by noted English architects with his own regional observations for his plans for his sixteen-sided treading barn at his Dogue Run Farm in 1793.

Researching the scant amount of information on other eighteenth-century stables belonging to the important plantations in the Virginia vicinity reveals that, with an absence of surviving structures and documentation, many stables were constructed of

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42 Lanier and Herman, 195, 205.
44 Ridout and Riley, 7-18.
impermanent materials, or were eventually demolished before they could be recorded.\textsuperscript{45} For example, no records exist for the tall, rectangular brick stable at Stratford Hall, also located on the Northern Neck of Westmoreland County, Virginia, even though the house dates to as early as 1725.\textsuperscript{46} Similarly, at Sabine Hall (1738), the existing rectangular brick stable was probably built sometime in the early nineteenth century, as indicated by its absence on fire insurance drawings dating to 1801. The presently standing stable likely replaced a less-permanent one of timber framing.\textsuperscript{47} In nearby Alexandria, Virginia, at the fine brick and stone house (1751-53) of John Carlyle, a friend of Washington, the stable that was recorded in the insurance records no longer exists for our analysis.\textsuperscript{48} The absence of surviving stables and a lack of records testifies to the importance of the mansion stable at Mount Vernon not only because of its survival, but also its unique position among only a handful of masonry outbuildings in Virginia. While the inspiration for Washington’s stable design is impossible to know, Washington likely pooled all his resources, from his own personal visits to well-established acquaintances and from expert advice, to create the most efficient, structurally permanent, and aesthetically pleasing stable that to construct along the South Lane at the Mansion farm.

Several features of Washington’s stable follow a common pattern of stables design during the eighteenth century and illustrate that Washington’s Mount Vernon

\textsuperscript{45} This was the case with Washington’s stables that he constructed at his five outlying farms between 1786 and the mid-1790’s.
\textsuperscript{46} From conversation with Judith Hynson, Curator at Stratford Hall, on June 16, 2003.
\textsuperscript{47} From visit to Sabine Hall, July 8\textsuperscript{th}, 2003.
\textsuperscript{48} From phone conversation with the Director of the Carlyle House museum, July 22, 2003.
The tripartite arrangement of rooms with a centralized carriage room between two stall rooms appears to have been the preferred mode of interior organization. This division can also been seen at the stables at Mount Airy, Shirley, and at The Woodlands (1792). The moderate distance from the main house was also common among the contemporary estates, which makes logical sense given the common effort to balance convenience with the reality of unpleasant odors from any animal shelter. Furthermore, with the exception of Jefferson’s unique system of connecting Monticello’s outbuildings within a partially subterranean terrace, all of the stables discussed were independent structures that served the exclusive purpose of sheltering horses and the vehicles in which they pulled. One feature of Washington’s Mansion stable that sets it apart from its regional neighbors, however, is the hierarchy created by the distinction between the north façade and the shed spaces accessed at the lowered south elevation of the stable.

When Washington planned the design of his new brick stable from Philadelphia in 1782, he carefully considered the program for which it housed. Washington described his vision for the design to Lund Washington,

...the number of letters I have to read and write upon those occasions, will not allow me at this time, to say more about the Stable than that I entirely approve your plan for enlarging it, provided the Coach house can be placed in the middle; without which, the House, with large and dble. doors at one end would have an uncouth appearance, the Coach House should be in the middle and a pediment over it, with a door in the pediment for the purpose of receiving hay &ca., but as the length of the

Figure 7. The grand 1792 Woodlands stable repeats the centralized composition of a central coach house flanked by rooms with stall partitions, which is also seen in the Mansion stable at Mount Vernon. Historic American Buildings Survey.
House makes no other difference in the rafters and joice [sic] than in the number, they may be set about immediately, in the meantime, if you will let me know the exact distance from the inner range of the Garden Wall (which may become part of the gable end of the Stable) to the outer range of the New Coach House, and the range of the other Houses above it, and will also inform me of the size of the last Coach House and stables, and how much too small the latter were. I can then form some plan, and make a disposition of the Doors and Windows, and transmit it to you; you may also, at the time of furnishing me with these materials to work upon, give me your Ideas of a proper plan; and may consult Evans if he is a man capable of design upon the subject.49

In this letter, Washington pays special attention to the appearance of the building, desiring a balanced approach by placing the coach room, which he refers to as the “Coach House” at the center of the long side of the stable. The pediment that was placed over the door to this coach room, as Washington describes, accentuates its central location while adequately serving the function providing access to the loft and lifting hay up into it. He determined that the east wall of the previous, ruined stable was aligned with the existing row of outbuildings along the South Lane and was determined to make the new stable larger. At the same time, he offers Lund Washington the flexibility of extending the length of the side stall rooms by using the floor joists and rafters as a linear module as he found suitable.

The materials chosen for the construction of outbuildings can play a role in the significance placed upon a building within the context of his estate and beyond. That the stable is among the few brick stables constructed in eighteenth-century Virginia, imparts unique significance on it, placing it on a short list of the finer stables belonging to the prominent estates of the Virginia region. The all-brick construction was also unique to Mount Vernon. While the other outbuildings at Mount Vernon were timber-framed upon a brick foundation, the stable was the first building at Mount Vernon to be completely constructed of brick masonry, constituting a significant change in Washington’s building program at home. In addition to its valuable fireproof characteristics, the added expense and labor required testifies to Washington’s commitment to the proper housing of his horses.

Of all the eighteenth-century stables in Tidewater Virginia, only a small number of these were constructed of masonry, including brick. Architectural historian Camille Wells notes in her research of plantation sales during the 1760s and 1770s that “less than two percent of all 2,083 advertised outbuildings were constructed of brick, and only three percent more had brick or stone support below their posts and sills”.\textsuperscript{50} Brick stables were rare because the expense required of masonry made their construction possible to only the wealthiest plantation landholders of the Chesapeake region. At the opulent Shirley Plantation, all of the outbuildings, including the stable, were constructed in brick laid in Flemish bond to match the brickwork of the house.\textsuperscript{51} Likewise, the stable at Mount Airy was not constructed of brick, but of ashlar stone to match this distinctive material that was used for the house and its flankers. This attention to architectural continuity within the plantation landscape existed at the stable at Mount Vernon as well. Although the stable’s brick construction distinguished it from the other outbuildings, the English bond used throughout the building matched the English bond used for the highly-visible raised foundations of all of the other outbuildings that were otherwise wood-framed buildings.

Having found and analyzed this information, some decisions can be made toward the stable at Mount Vernon and its impending restoration. Although past restorations have obscured evidence, disassembling one of the stall rooms may provide clues not currently available. This would include scraping away the whitewash on the interior of the brick wall to look for nail marks, holes, or other signifiers which could show position of original stalls. Removing the whitewash would also help in determining which brick is original and which brick has been replaced. Digging up the floor in the stall area could determine what the floor originally was composed of—brick, cobblestone, dirt, or wooden planks, for example—and show clues as to where the posts of the stalls were set. In addition, excavations of the floor could help develop a timeline of changes made to the floor, since to this date the flooring prior to the 1880s is unknown. Taking apart one of the stall rooms would prove a necessary step in developing a full picture of the evolution of the stable and aid in developing an authentic restoration of the stable to its original form.

\textsuperscript{50} Wells, 21.
\textsuperscript{51} Sadler and Sadler, 35.
ARCHITECTURAL AND MAINTENANCE HISTORY

DOORS

1784, Sept. 7  “By [sic] a lock for stable” Ledger B. p. 199, a 0.1.6.
1798, Mar 10  Fixed lock on stable door. (HSR)
1886, Mar. 23 “Paul the carpenter finished work on doors at Stable.”
1897, June 18  Put up wire door.
1948, Oct.     Post and rope barriers prepared and installed at stable experimental for crowd control. (HSR)
1970, July     Stable doors scraped and painted. (HSR)
2001          The Eastern Door on the north side was removed because it was deteriorating. After the door was stripped it was noticed that over 2/3 of the wood was beyond repair and so it was decided that it should be rebuilt. All the old hardware was reused and the old door has been moved to the collection. (HSR)

DESCRIPTION

At the north façade are three entryways, one to the Coach Room, and one to each of the two stall rooms. The wood typically used for the doors and doorjambs is pine, which is joined by cut nails.

The central arched entryway is enclosed by double-doors, each 8'-10” wide, to allow a coach to pass through. Each door is constructed of 10” vertical beaded boards secured by three horizontal battens connected by a two diagonal batten in between for stabilization. Two 2'-10” iron strap hinges fasten the door to the doorjamb. The timber doorjamb is 6” wide, painted white, and surrounds the double doors on the top and sides. The doorjamb is arched to fit the brick segmental arch at the top of the door opening and is constructed of two pieces of wooden that are joined at the center of the arch by an open mortise-and-tenon joint affixed with two pegs. Above the doorjamb is a brick segmental arch comprised of an alternating pattern of single stretchers and double headers.

The door to each of the two stall rooms is composed of 9” vertical beaded boards affixed by three horizontal battens. The doors are connected to a 5” wide doorjamb by two iron strap hinges. Brick jack arches crown the door openings. At the threshold is an oak plank seated on the brick foundation.

In the gable at the second floor of the north facade, a doorway allowed access to the loft from the north stable yard in order to store goods such as fodder for the horses. There a door comprised of 1” thick vertical boards with two horizontal and one diagonal
batten on the interior face is secured to a 3 ¼” wide doorjamb by two 2'-7” long iron strap hinges.

At the east elevation, a door to the loft is accessed by the east stair and platform from the ground. The door, measuring 6'-1’x 3’-10”, consists of vertical beaded boards secured by three horizontal battens and two hinges on the interior of the door. Above the center batten is faded graphite handwriting that reads, “This Old Barn was Built in the Year of 1733”. There are remnants from a wood-framed lockbox. Two 32” long strap hinges attach the door to a 5 ½ “-wide doorjamb.

The two doors at the south elevation date to the 1949-53 reconstruction of the mule shed by architect Walter Macomber. Both doors open onto an enclosed room and measure 5’-7”x 3’-10”. These consist of 1” vertical beaded boards averaging 8 ½” wide, each with 25” strap hinges.

HISTORY

None of the doors appear to be original to the stable’s 1782 construction. The 1886 record of work on the stable doors could indicate that many of these doors were replaced at that time. The east stall room door was replaced in 2001 because it had deteriorated beyond repair. Although both doors are constructed of vertical boards and horizontal battens, by comparison, the west stall room door that was left intact appears significantly older. The two doors accessing the mule shed enclosure were likely constructed during Macomber’s project to reconstruct the original timber framing of the south shed.

IMAGES

Figure 8. West Stall Room door, c.1886.
ELECTRICITY / WIRING

1965, Sept.  Electrical outlets added to stable. (HSR)
1968, Aug.   Fire detecting wire added. (HSR)
1975, Feb.   Alarm system installed at coach doorway. (HSR)

DESCRIPTION

Currently there are motion-sensor alarms in all three rooms of the barn. On the
cross plate in the loft is a set of two lamps that is powered by an electrical cord. Two
outlets and a small electrical box are distributed along the northern plate of the roof.
Three smoke alarms are installed near the top of rafters #6, #21, and #34. There are additional smoke alarms in the stall rooms and in the shed.

HISTORY

Electrical wiring was installed with electrical outlets in 1965 and fire detecting wire added in 1968. In 1975, an alarm system was placed at the entrance to the Coach Room. These preventative systems are necessary due to the thick dust covering all the wooden surfaces of the loft.

EXCAVATIONS

1943, Nov. Old brick walk found beneath gravel near stable; possibly cobble gutter.
1947, April Excavated bet. stable and kitchen garden wall
1947, May Possible 8’ square “fire pit” found north of stable, deemed “pre-revolutionary” w/iron grates and flue from the back. Raised question: “Part of ashhouse?” More cobblestones found with an East-West drain, possibly from a 1874 cistern. “Square cobbled structure” removed, requesting archeological research.
1947, Sept. Photographed stable “to record surface and trench conditions”.
1948, Jan. Stall floor excavations.
1948, March Edge of cobble platform at stable’s north side excavated.
1949, June 29 Macomber mentions finding sandstone foundations at the “southeast corner of the lawn”. (HSR)
1988, July Report of cobbled stable yard that possibly “covered entire area between stable, kitchen garden wall, fence, and north lane”. (HSR)

HISTORY

During the 1947 excavations at the yard due north of the stable uncovered a large cobblestone floor that was believed to have possibly been the floor to the 1767 stable that preceded the current stable. Within this foundation, there was a slight rise in the floor, indicating two rooms at slightly different levels. At this time, the interior floor of the existing stable was excavated and examined for clues to the original spatial organization
within the brick rooms. Two post holes were found and believed to be markers for the original posts of the stall partitions.

In the vicinity of the stable, features such as a cobble gutter (1943) and possibly a fire-pit (1947) were found along with a number of cobblestones, some as large as 8 inches. The drains are consistent with Washington’s attention to proper drainage leading to the south lane and down the southward slope.

IMAGES

Figures 11 & 12. The 1937 excavation of the north stable yard revealed a multi-leveled cobblestone foundation, seen above. In the stall room, seen right, a trench revealed two old post holes that confirmed the existence of single stall partitions for the horses.
WALLS AND FOUNDATION

1782 New barn erected, bricks laid by John Knowles.
1849 Description by Robert Criswell: “brick walls of large stables and other out-houses are falling down”, from “Early Descriptions of Mount Vernon Book #18, 1842-1900”, 1990.
1886, May 22 Underpinned corner of barn. (Superintendent Dodge diaries)
1888, Oct. 26 Drilled holes in barn wall for iron braces
1888, May 9 Iron braces passed through north façade to prevent further spreading. (Superintendent Dodge diaries)
1889 Added eave-gutters, down-spouts and snow breaks to prevent further water damage, which possible cause north wall spreading Dodge diaries.
1889, Sept. 3 Underpinned wall. (Superintendent Dodge diaries)
1916, May Re-pointed base wall of barn
1927, May Seven more iron braces added to the 5 installed in 1888. (Notes v. 7, p. 44.)
1937 Bricks were re-laid only when they were loose or disintegrated, and these were distinguishable from the original bricks. Old mortar was cut with a cross-saw to avoid damage to old bricks. New mortar made from Portland cement and lime, not to be confused with oyster shell mortar. All tie rods were removed, as few were carrying load at removal. Walls of stable were underpinned with concrete where necessary. Min. 96-98-99. (M.J. Williams.)
1941, Dec. West façade requires re-pointing while cutting out modern mortar to replace and match old work.
1942, Feb. Re-pointed east and west exterior ends.
1948, Feb. Completed repair-restoration work at south side of stable
1949, Sept. “Jesse & Frank” are doing restoration re-pointing, ivy removed. (HSR)

DESCRIPTION

The exterior walls rise to 12’-0” from the water table at the north elevation. From the water table at the east elevation, the wall is 26’-6”. In the loft the brick walls extend 2’-5” beyond the floorboards on the east and west divisions of the loft, and 4 ½” above the floorboards over the Coach Room in the center.

HISTORY
Over a fifty-year period, restorers tried to stabilize the lateral spreading and cracking of the north brick wall. In 1888, lateral spreading of the north brick wall was observed, indicated by vertical cracks. In order to stop this, five iron rods acting as braces were inserted into the walls through holes drilled down into the wall. Worried that the spreading of the north brick wall was due to water damage, in 1889, gutters, downspouts, and snow breaks were added to the roof to divert water away from the brick walls. By 1927, seven more metal rods were added to the existing five to further brace the north wall. In 1935, an undisclosed number of additional tie-rods were installed. By 1937, however, consultants determined that that the cracks in the wall were old and that the walls had settled into their own form. In light of this, the metal braces were deemed to be insufficient in supporting the wall and were consequently removed. At that time, instead of forcing the walls into perfect alignment and thus causing further damage, the cracks were repaired and the walls were tied. Additional support was added by underpinning the wall with concrete.

Restorers have inserted patches of brick and re-pointed the mortar as needed, though the extent of this work was often unnoted. The 1916 record notes that the base of the wall (unspecified) was re-pointed. In 1937, disintegrating bricks were removed and replaced using mortar made from Portland cement to achieve differentiation from the oyster-shell and lime mortar binding the original bricks. In 1942 the exterior brick of the east and west walls was again re-pointed.

In 1937, Morley Williams observed that over time, the shrinking wood of the lintel above the doorway to the stall rooms was causing the surrounding brick to become weak. Since the shrinkage was complete, no measures were taken to correct this beyond repairing the cracks.

According to historic photographs, ivy has overcome a considerable portion of the brick walls on several occasions. In one undated photograph pre-dating 1915 ivy covered almost the entire brick walls at the north and east facades. This was removed but the ivy grew back and it was removed again in 1949. Today, the stable walls are mostly free of ivy with the exception of the northwest corner of the stable, where the thick ivy from the kitchen garden wall is spreading onto the stable wall.

IMAGES
FLOORING

1888, June 29 Harding laid floor in “harness room”. (Mansion Stable or another barn/stable?) (Superintendent Dodge diaries)

1895, May “Stalls racks, mangers and floors should be renewed, better drainage arranged, and harness cases supplied.” (MVLA Minutes, v. 11, p. 38.)

1895, June 19 “Grading in stable, preparing sleepers for stall floors, have the attention of Murray and two laborers.”

1895, June 27 “… Dodson and Braxton laying brick floor in stable.” (Mansion Stable?)

1895, Sept. 24 “Stout and Dodson relaying cobblestones in front of Stable.”

1896, May “The repairs in the horse stable have been thoroughly done… the dilapidated floor of cobble stones, brick and clay was dug out, a concrete base constructed, the stalls floored with heavy plank, and the passageway resurfaced with brick on edge.” (MLVA, p. 22.)

1897, April 7 “…The coach room and granary, needing similar [sic] treatment to complete the discomfiture of the rats and strengthen the foundations of the barn itself. This was undertaken by the Vice-Regent for Rhode Island. A base course of stone and broken bricks covered by gas tar received a course of concrete and a finishing surface of Portland cement. Where the horses stand when hitched
in the coach room the floor was paved with vitrified brick.” (MLVA, p. 39.)

1903 “the floors in three of the horse stalls were removed…”
1904 “The flooring of the stalls in the horse stable was renewed and the drainage therefrom corrected,” (MLVA, p. 51)
1908 “Stall floors relaid”
1911 “in front of the water tub of the horse stable we paved a space with cobblestones set in cement”
1914 “the flooring of the stall in the horse stable [required renewell]
1919, Nov. 12 “Murray replacing rotted boards in horses stalls in barn.”
1920, May “Renewed flooring” of stalls in horse stable.
1927, May Concrete floor “laid back of the stalls”.
1930 Stalls in stable “refloored” (Notes, v.8, p. 40.)
1937 Concrete floors in east, west, north sections removed and under floor readied for investigation. The concrete floor of the coach room was left intact. (M.J.Williams)

DESCRIPTION

The stable floor in the stall rooms is a hard earthen combination of sand and clay. The Coach Room floor is also sand and clay embedded with scattered cobblestones.

HISTORY

The earliest record indicating the material used to cover the ground level of the stable floor is in 1885 when the floor was “renewed” with a brick floor, providing drainage. A few months later, cobblestones were laid in front of the stable. In 1896, the bricks were removed from the interior floor along with cobbles and clay to allow for a new concrete floor. The concrete was made using broken bricks and then covered in oak planks. Bricks were used for the edges of the concrete in the “passageway” or aisles in the stall rooms. In 1897, the Coach Room was also paved with concrete, except for the location where the horses would stand while they were hitched in the room. This area was paved with “vitrified brick.” In 1908, 1919, 1920, and 1927, the floors were renewed, replacing the concrete or floorboards as necessary. For the 1937 investigation directed by Morley Williams, the concrete in the west and east stall rooms was removed, although the concrete in the central room was left intact. This concrete was removed at a later time, resulting in the earthen floors that exist in all the ground-level rooms of the stable today.

Although there is no record of the original flooring materials used for any part of the stable, contemporary sources reveal several possible options available to the
late eighteenth-century farmer. According to Thomas Wallis, who wrote The Farrier’s and Horseman’s Complete Dictionary (1759), a proper and efficient stable should include a floor paved in stone with wooden planks laid on the stone.\footnote{Thomas Wallis, Surgeon, \textit{The Farrier’s and Horseman’s Complete Dictionary}, 1759.} It other cases, instead of stone, brick was used as a foundation for the wooden planks. Supporting this rationale is The Domestic Encyclopedia (1803), which states that floors of oak plank are more superior for barn floors than any other material, next to floors of hard clay. The encyclopedia recommends that these boards be placed over earthen floors mixed with gravel or free-stone chippings.\footnote{A.F.M. Willich M. D., \textit{The Domestic Encyclopedia}, Vol. 1, 1803.} In a later publication, The Farmer’s Dictionary, explains, “It is an approved method, when floors are made with planks, to lay them on a foundation of bricks, and to unite the different planks by ploughing and tonguing.”\footnote{Leonard Towne, \textit{The Farmer’s Dictionary}, 400.} Since there is no evidence of flooring prior to 1895, and the 1937 archeological excavation did not reveal confirmative evidence for any original materials, the original flooring used by Washington remains unknown.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure15.png}
\caption{The floor of the Coach Room consists of clay, sand, and pebbles.}
\end{figure}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
Date & Notes \\
\hline
1889, May 20 & Put in additional joists. (Superintendent Dodge diaries) \\
1896, May & “Ventilation improved by large central opening into loft above.” \\
1897, June 12 & “Thomas at stable patching loft floors.” \\
1898, May & Strengthened floor of barn loft, Minutes v.11, p. 51 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Second floor framing}
\end{table}
The 2nd floor flooring was removed for access to joists. The 2nd floor joists that were cut to make ventilation opening were replaced with new wood. A stair opening was found along with a replacement floor joist had been inserted to make room for the floor opening. A new joist was put in to match the original. New oak girders in West ground story were installed in same place as original, determined by old nails and holes in joists. (M.J. Williams)

1939, May 18 Access to the loft was found in the west stall room, and possibly another access in center room. (MVLA Minutes. 96-98-99)

1951 (?) Center room loft re-floored using “old boards”. (HSR)

**DESCRIPTION**

Reflecting the three rooms at the ground story below, the second floor framing is divided into three sections by the continuation of the two brick walls below that divide the ground floor into three rooms. These two walls project into the loft slightly, dividing the space into three sections: east, central, and west. The floorboards cover the joists in a layer of 7/8” un-jointed pine planks that vary in width from 8” to 12”.

At the east section, the floor joists are 4” x 9”, spaced 23” on center running east to west. These joists are in turn supported by two 4 ½” x 6 5/8” girders running north to south. These girders terminate into a pocket in the brick walls and are supported by four posts that define the stall divisions in the room.
At the central division over the Coach Room, the floor joists are 3 ½” x 8 ¼”, spaced 25” on center, and running north to south. A large supporting summer beam, 10 ¼” x 12 ¾”, runs between the east and west brick walls of the Coach Room on the center of the room, at pierces through the walls, which may be seen in the loft. The ceiling of the central room is higher than the east and west rooms, placing the joists and flooring in the loft 1’-10” higher than the flanking east and west sections.

In the west section, the floor joists are 3 ¾” x 8 ½”, spaced 23” on center, running between the east and west brick walls. Matching the framing of the east section, these joists are supported by two 4 ½” x 6 5/8” girders running north-south, located 8’-11 ¾” off the east and west walls, respectively. Lapped into the underside of each girder are four posts that define the stall divisions in the room. At the south wall of the west room is a rectangular opening, allowing access to the stall room below by a ladder. The opening is partially obstructed by the wood-encased steel beam that runs between the north and south brick walls.

**HISTORY**

In 1937, it was observed that the posts supporting the purlin in the loft above rested upon the floor joists, causing considerable sagging. These two girders are likely original and have been maintained in their position.

Also in 1937, an opening in the southwest corner of the central Coach Room was found and replaced with new joists, sawn to match the original joists. The 1937 report recommended that a ladder be restored at this location, assuming that this opening was used in the original stable. A tie-rod that was installed earlier to connect the girder to the front brick wall was removed in 1937, after it was found to be pulling the joists forward out of their tenons and the causing the girder to bow forward. In 1951, the loft flooring above the central room was replaced, using “old boards.”

At the west section, most likely sometime during the nineteenth century, the original supporting posts of these joists were removed. This caused a significant degree of sagging in the joists. At some point, a girder at the center of the room was installed to alleviate the stress on the joists, tied into the north brick wall above the door lintel. This bearing in turn placed a heavy load at the lintel, causing a crack at both sides of the doorway. At either side of the central girders was a girder supported by four posts placed directly into the ground. Each of these posts also tied into the rear edge of four stall partitions.
In the 1937 study, evidence of the original girders was discovered in the west stall room, revealing that this room was identical to the east stall room. Filled-in holes in the brick indicated where the original girders set within the wall were found, as well as wrought nail markings in the joists where the old girder had been nailed. At the time, the three existing girders were replaced with two new oak beams in the location of the original girders.

IMAGES

Figures 17 & 18. The joists in the stall rooms run north to south. The Coach Room ceiling is higher than the stall room and incorporates a large summer beam between the east and west interior brick walls.
INTERIOR WALL

1789, Apr 27  Walls of Barn inspected by Knowles. “Advises lower arches to be closed and the dirt raised against the wall so as to afford a passage for the water, the lower parts of the arches being below the surface of the surrounding ground.” (Mansion Stable?) (George A. Washington to G. W. P. S. 9.)

DESCRIPTION

Matching the exterior brick, the interior walls are constructed English bond brick, including the rear brick wall that is shared by all three of the rooms in the front section stable. The east and west stall room interiors are virtually identical, measuring 28′-3” wide by 25′-5 ½” deep. The rooms are enclosed by four brick walls rising to about 9′-2” to the bottom of the floor joists. The doorway at the north wall of the room is centered about 14′-4” from the wall on center and is symmetrically flanked by a louvered window at either side measuring 3′-8′x 4′-10”. Only the joining of the four stall partitions at each wall pierces the east and west brick walls. At the south wall is a row of three Fed windows measuring 3′-9″x 2′-5″, approximately 6′-10” above the floor.
The Coach Room measures 19’-5” wide and 25’-5 ½” deep. The 9’-9” wide double door is centered at the northern wall and remains the only feature piercing any of the otherwise solid walls in the room. Pegged wooden boards run along the east and west walls, hung from 2”x4” boards attached to the end joists. The brick walls and the exposed framing of the loft flooring are painted white.

In the loft, the bricks walls narrow from 16” to approximately 9” at the height of the collar beams, 9’ above the floor of the central loft division.

**HISTORY**

The interiors of the brick walls have been left structurally intact, without alterations.

**PEDIMENT**

1782, Jan. 8  “…the Coach House should be in the middle and a pediment over it, with a door in the pediment for the purpose of receiving hay &ca.” (GW to Lund Washington, from Philadelphia)

1793, Aug. 18 “…When I said the whole were to be employed at the new Barn at Dogue Run, I did not mean to leave the Dormant windows in the Stable (both back and front) unfinished as they have been begun; which would not have been the case if I could have conceived they would have taken half, or even a quarter of the time they have. In the front of the Stable I ordered two; one on each side of the Pediment; dividing the space equally between the latter, and the ends of the house…” (Howell Lewis to GW, Overseers’ letters)

1794, Dec. 28 “In bad weather, when the carpenters are unable to work out, let them prepare frames, shingles &ca. for putting in more dormant windows in the back of the Stables at Mansion house and two in the front part of them; one on each side the pediment, in the centre between it and the ends for the purpose of giving air to the Corn and hay loft.” (GW to William Pearce, Writings of Washington. Vol. 34, p. 73.)

1795, July 5 “If the dormant windows are not put in, on each side of the Pediment, front side of the stable, I could wish (if it does not interfere with the more important work of Donaldson) that it might be set about…” (GW to William Pearce, from Philadelphia)

**DESCRIPTION**
At the center of the north slope of the roof is a triangular pediment containing a door to provide access to the second-story loft. The pediment is timber-framed, covered with a shingle roof nailed into wood lathing. The north elevation is clad in random-width weatherboarding that is painted white.

The interior construction is composed of rafters that meet together in a lapped joint surrounding a ridge pole. Copper flashing seals the connection between the pediment’s rafters and lathing to that of the main roof. The purlin is interrupted by the space for the pediment, replaced with a smaller beam to close the gap. At this connecting beam, the rafters and lathing of the main roof rise to the ridge. The north wall of the pediment is constructed of three posts running from the door lintel to the gabled end rafters. An additional post to either side of the pediment door runs from plate to rafter. Where the rafters from the main roof intersect with the joist in front of the north plate at the pediment, two angled struts at either side of the door rise to meet the door’s lintel, providing support to the pediment’s front wall.

HISTORY

The pediment was planned with the Washington’s original 1782 construction of the stable in order to allow hay and fodder to be easily transferred from a cart parked in the stable yard below up to the loft for storage. However, the somewhat clumsy organization of the main roof timbers surrounding the projection makes the pediment appear more akin to an afterthought in the stable’s construction. For example, to the east of the pediment, the purlin is truncated and requires a shoulder brace in order to meet rafter #22. The bottom of the main roof rafters 16, 24, and 25, have been cut up to 40” at the bottom in order to accommodate the cross gable construction of the pediment.

IMAGES

ROOF FRAMING

1783 Shingles prepared.
1783, Jan. 29  “Two joiners at work on stable. Carpenters and coopers gathered timber and readying it for shingles, etc.” (Lund W. to GW)

1874  From 1910 MV Illustrated handbook: shingle roof renewed this year.

1876  In Visitor’s Guide Book: “Erected in 1733 by Lawrence Washington. Built of bricks from England. …Recently re-roofed and is in a perfect state of restoration…”

1937  The entire roof was re-shingled with shingles made from cypress grown in the swamps along the James River, where G.W. was known to retrieve supplies (no source given). The roof boarding under shingles was deemed not original but remained untouched, as it did not require replacement. All the flashing that was formerly tin was replaced with 16 oz. lead copper. (M.J. Williams)

1938  Using old mansion shingles, the roof was re-shingled, following 18th-century techniques. Shingles vary in width and thickness with free-hand curved ends. This variety was deemed aesthetically pleasing and favored over “monotonous” uniformity. All new shingles were made of heart cypress. Lightning rods were also installed, though an effort was made to keep them inconspicuous. Where old pieces of wood were removed, new replacements were reproduced to match the old, but in order to distinguish them from the original to avoid confusion each new piece was permanently marked with the date of its introduction. (MVLA Annual Report)

1948, April  Roof is repainted with paint sprayed on by a long boom pole. The shingles are deemed fragile. Hay racks were built. (HSR)

1949, April 4  One of the small cupolas removed. (HSR)

1953, April  Re-shingled roofs. (HSR)

1960, Oct.  Barn roof is repainted. (HSR)

1986, Oct.  South side of roof is re-shingled, old shingles are removed. (HSR)

1988, Oct.  Completing the re-shingling to match area roofs is postponed. (HSR)
DESCRIPTION

The roof extends in the east-west direction and is clad in 18” hand-rived cedar shingles with rounded ends. The shingles cover the gabled pediment at the north slope and the two dormer windows at both the north and south slopes and are painted red, matching the roofs of the other outbuildings and the Mansion. The wood lathing upon which the shingles are attached is wide, averaging 10”-12”, and is nailed into the rafters. Five lightning rods are located along the roof ridge, evenly spaced between the two ends of the ridge.

HISTORY

The present roof has been entirely re-shingled at least three times: in 1874, 1937, and 1953. The shingles on the south slope were most recently replaced in 1986, while the 1953 shingles remain at the northern slope. These older shingles were treated with insecticide and fireproofing that hindered the integrity of the cypress, causing reduced longevity of the roof, hence its partial replacement with untreated cypress shingles in 1986. The northern slope of the roof currently awaits replacement with similarly untreated, cypress shingles.

The original roof matched those of the other outbuildings and of the mansion by using hand-rived round butt shingles of cypress nailed into lathing. The shingles were cypress, 18 inches long, tapered at the top and rounded at the exposed end, which helped prevent warping. The benefit of using cypress, the second most common roofing material in the region, was its durability from rain. Like the other shingled roofs at Mount Vernon, the shingles were painted red as a protective layer. The bottom one-third of the shingle is exposed. Consultants in 1937 concluded that the wide-boarded roof lathing was not original, but was originally composed narrow strips of shingle lathing similar to that used for the roof of the mansion. The shingles are combed at the ridge of the main roof, pediments, and dormers, with the top course of shingles overlapping the opposite side of the roof to protect the ridge of the from water penetration.

4 Buchanan, 68-69.
There is no documentation as to when the two cupolas were erected on the roof ridge. However, their absence in an 1858 color lithograph by H. Wateley and their first appearance in an 1899 photograph reveals that their installation occurred sometime between these two dates. This addition served the dual function of ventilating the loft while embellishing the aesthetics of the roof, aligning the cupolas with the dormers and repeating their scale. During the industrial age of the late nineteenth century, stabling standards had risen with an increased emphasis on good ventilation and drainage. Square cupolas such as those added to the stable during this period were a common way to allow warm air to escape out from the loft, where hay and other crops might have been stored. In 1938 five lightening rods were installed along the roof ridge: one at each gable end, one through the apex of each of the two cupolas, and a fifth rod at the center of the ridge. The cupolas were removed in 1949 in order to return the stable to its 1799 condition, but the five lightning rods still remain in their original locations along the roof ridge.

The original lathing at Mount Vernon typically consisted of 1 inch-thick strips of oak planks, sawn into 3 inch-wide sheathing, spaced 6-inches wide on center, in order to allow air shingles to breathe and thus reduce rot. This type of narrow lathing may be seen in other outbuildings, such as the Wash House, which was constructed roughly in the same period as the stable. The existing lathing at the stable roof, however, consists of considerably wider boards, averaging 10” to 12”. Furthermore, machined saw marks in the existing lathing show that it is not original to the barn, but that the lathing was replaced in the early to mid-nineteenth century, at the earliest. The original lathing was possibly replaced in 1874 when the roof was “re-roofed”, according the 1910 Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association handbook.

IMAGES

6 Nigel Harvey, History of Farm Buildings in England and Wales, 137. For a contemporary reference, see Sir Frederick Willinton John Fitzwygram’s Horses and Stables (London: Longmans Green, and Co., 1894) 1.
7 Buchanan, 67.
8 From 1910 Mount Vernon Illustrated Handbook: “shingle roof renewed in 1874”.

238
Collar beams put between each pair of rafters, replaced those removed shortly after the stable was built. A few fragments of these original beams were held in place by orig. nails, which provided the model for “thickness and character”: whip sawed oak. The restored wood was cut with a band saw—but looks new. “supplementary seat pieces” were put into the purlins for strength, deemed “inconspicuous”. (M.J. Williams)

Figure 22. The pediment projects from the center of the roof’s northern slope.
The collar beams tie occurs at every rafter at 8’-2” above the brick walls. They are tied into the rafters in open mortise-and-tenon joints. The saw marks on the beam indicate modern band-saw technology and each beam is tagged by a dated nail.

HISTORY

The present collar beams are replacements of the originals that were removed sometime between construction and 1858, when the Mount Vernon Ladies Association took ownership of the estate. The date in which the original collar beams were removed is unknown. In 1937, they were replaced using some remaining fragments of the original collar beams as a model. The new wood was cut was a band saw in order to the simulate pit-sawed oak of the original collar beams.

The date when the collar beams were removed remains unclear since there are no documents explaining when or why this occurred. It is possible that when the collar beams were removed, the vertical struts were installed to defray some of the pivoting movement of the roof slopes. The combination of larger hand-hewn timbers of the vertical struts and their adjoining mill-sawn braces date this structural system sometime in the early to mid-nineteenth century, after the practice of mill sawing timbers came to Mount Vernon. If the struts and braces were inserted soon after the collar ties were removed, this could be the date of their removal.

The collar beams may have been removed to allow for greater vertical storage within the loft space. Another scenario is that replacing the collar beams with the vertical struts could have allowed for a long, central room down the center of the loft. This theory is supported by evidence of mortises and pockets in the east bearing plate that could indicate that the loft floor over the east and west stall rooms was raised to be flush with the top of the two interior brick walls, which would allow for a continuous, level floor across the entire loft. On the other hand, two factors conflict with this theory. First, the height of the collar beams from the top of the brick walls is 9 feet, which high enough for adequate headroom, even if the floor was raised. Second, the plates at west and most of the south and north plates lack the same mortises and pockets. Without documentation or definitive physical evidence, however, the reason for the collar beams’ removal remains speculative.

The absence of the support from the collar beams has caused damage to the stability of the north brick wall. The horizontal load carried by the plate placed a
significant amount of stress on the exterior brick walls, which was the primary cause of the north wall’s movement outward. In 1937, Morley Williams mended this instability by replacing the collar beams. In addition, he added five steel beams tying the north wall to the south wall at the loft floor, redistributing the roof’s weight downward upon the side walls instead of outward from the rafters. Williams concealed these steel beams by encasing them in timber.

IMAGES

PLATES

![Image](image_url)

Figures 24. The hand-rived cedar shingles, left, are nailed into the wide lathing as seen from the loft.

Wood plates inserted using anchor bolts, with a cross plate across the east wall where the wood was rotted. Wood plates were anchored into the walls using anchor bolts. Steel supporting beams and ties. (M.J. Williams)

DESCRIPTION

At the north and south slopes, a plate rests on top of the brick walls. The plate is butted against square corner plates at the east and west walls where the plate is embedded
flush within the brick masonry. A seat pocket marks the bearing plate at the east gable wall at either side of the loft door. Similarly, at the eastern third of the north and south plates are two pockets at opposing locations. This area of the south plate also features an open mortise. Presently, no type of framing is attached to these open joints. The timbers that compose the 84’ continuous plate at the north and south walls are each lapped together by a plate splice. The eastern section showing the pockets and mortises appear to be machine-cut, while the plates continuing to the west end of the loft are hand-hewn, without pockets or mortises. Loose bricks rest on the plate in between the rafters at the plate to fill in the voids. Additionally, at the south plate, wire mesh is nailed in to the bottom of the lathing.

Two cross-beams that rest on the two interior brick walls connect the north and south plates. Atop both walls, the lower timbers are hand-hewn, resting on a 1 ¼” bed of mortar. The second beam on top of this one is slightly narrower with machine-hewn scars.

HISTORY

The series of mortises and pockets in the east plate and 1/3 of the eastern section of the plate on the northern slope indicate that these portions of the original plates might have been replaced in 1937 restoration campaign with recycled timber sawn with machined technology (mill sawn). Another possibility for these mortises and seats could support a framing system that supported timber beams to transverse the loft space create storage racks or possibly even floor framing at some point. The “floor theory” is supported by the removal of the collar ties, which, presumably, would have allowed for more generous headroom had the floor been raised. However, access to this raised floor would have been difficult since the only exterior door to the loft, at the east wall, opens onto the loft at its current, low level. Additionally, there is no evidence for additional floor joists beyond the few mortises seen in the plates.

The additional wooden cross beams are 1937 additions, added where the wood was rotted or was deemed weak.

PURLINS
Roof boards, rafter, purlins posts, and kneebraces, were braced tied, supported. (M.J. Williams)

DESCRIPTION

The purlins, 6 ½” x 8”, are comprised of a continuous line of several timbers joined at the ends with pegged plate splices. The purlins terminate at the east and west brick walls where they rest on the brick masonry. The corner of the purlin meets the rafter at an angle, fitting into a small notch. To prevent the roof frame from rocking laterally, 2” supplementary seat pieces are nailed each with three staggered bolts to the rafter at the purlin-joint for added stability.

Four holes equally spaced along the length of the timber from west to east gable mark the length of the purlin. These holes penetrate completely through the purlin from front to back and appear to have been drilled using a spoon bit.

HISTORY

The purlin fulfils its structural role to laterally join the rafters, however, its large size and its relatively small attachment to the rafters is a somewhat tenuous connection. To provide additional support for this joint, in 1937, 2-inch wide “supplementary seat pieces,” were nailed to the rafter at the purlin to prevent the roof frame from rocking laterally. Whether the purlin was original to the construction remains unknown. Its considerably large size required the support from the struts, which were likely added after 1799. Therefore the existing purlin might be a replacement dating to the struts installation sometime during the early to mid-nineteenth century. Unfortunately, the saw marks purlins cannot provide a terminus post-quem since they are hand-hewn, much like the vertical struts. Hand hewing timbers of this size was not unusual as late as the mid-nineteenth century.

The four holes along the entire length of the purlin. The fact that these holes are located at same opposing points along both the north and south purlin indicates that the holes were probably drilled to hold metal rods joining the north and south roofs. The rods would have provided the similar rotational stability of the collar beams that were removed at an earlier date. Currently, no trace of the rods themselves is found in the loft.

IMAGES
RAFTERS

1937  Roof boards, rafter, purlin posts, and knee braces, were braced tied, supported. (M.J. Williams)

DESCRIPTION

The roof framing consists of a common rafter system. The rafters, 3” x 4 ½”, are separated by 24” to the center, have 3 ¼” x 2 ¾” collar beams at every other rafter. In the absence of a ridge board, the rafters are joined with an open mortise-and-tenon joint at the roof apex in a pattern of alternating overlapping joints. At the north plate, the ends of the rafters at the north slope widen by 3 inches with the addition of a 3’-6” long triangular piece attached to the rafter. This system is tied to the plate with a rafter pocket. The rafters at the south slope maintain their 4 ½” depth. These are attached to the shed roof rafters and continue the slope downward over the shed below. The rafters over the shed are tied into the main roof’s rafters at the sides. At most points along the south plate, this joint is buttressed by an additional 2” bracing timber nailed into the side of the shed rafter end to the main roof rafter.

HISTORY

In 1937 wood braces were attached to the rafters and purlins for additional support. At the plate, two small 1” thick boards were nailed into the bottom of the rafters
to buttress the weakening lower ends of the rafters, an area that has the greatest degree of deterioration. At the north slope, where the original rafters show the most decay and weakness, rafters #8, #17, #18 and #27 were reinforced by an additional rafter of the same dimensions and nailed to the side of the original rafter. In most cases, these reinforcements run from the plate up to the space between the purlin and the collar beams. At rafters #12, #16, and #28, two additional supporting rafters were similarly sistered to either side of the original rafter with nails. At rafters #16 and #28, a section is missing near the plate, presumably where a rotted section of the rafter was removed. This removal required that the rafters to be sistered with supporting timbers to either side.

At some point the rafter beams were covered in thin, wide boards up to the height of the purlins, as indicated by photographs. This was removed in 1937, but evidence of nails holes remains in the rafters.

IMAGES

Figure 26. Steel beams that are concealed in wood boards connect the north and south brick walls.

STRUTS

1937 Steel beams inserted with posts supporting the purlins. Steel beams under purlin-supporting posts to redistribute load to the side walls
instead of second floor. The steel was encased in hand-hewn oak to conceal it. (M.J. Williams)

DESCRIPTION

Along the length of each purlin are four struts (also referred to by Morley Williams as “posts”) that vertically support the purlin down to cross beams above the loft floor joists and at the top of the interior brick walls. At nearly all of the struts, two lateral braces diagonally tie the strut to the purlin with blind mortise-and-tenon joints. At the north side of the loft’s central division (over the Coach Room) are four struts spaced closer than the two struts at the opposite side of central division to allow for the pediment projection, thus only allowing for one diagonal brace each. At the north slope, the purlin is absent where the pediment projects from the roof.

HISTORY

It appears that when the collar beams were removed, struts were added, measuring 6 ½” x 7”, to connect the purlin to the floor joists. Originally, these struts were tied into the floor joists where a small 2” x 4” notched piece of wood stopped the thrust from the angle of the post. There is no record of when they were removed; however, the combination of larger hand-hewn timbers of the vertical struts that were inserted to replace the support provided by the collar ties dates the beam’s removal to sometime in the early to mid-nineteenth century. The smaller braces are mill-sawn, also indicating that this structural system was installed sometime after the practice of mill sawing timbers came to the Mount Vernon area, probably in the early to mid-1800s.

\[9\] MW 1937 Report, 2.
1838, Nov. 1
the stable.”

“Mr. Ball has nearly done
(Mansion Stable shed?)
1937  Wood purlin placed under lean-to rafters. Supported by temp. rafters, supported by temp. wooden posts. Seat pieces of oak were spiked to sides at upper ends and notched into upper plate. Sill supported south wall removed. New sill of creosoted wood replaced on a concrete wall. (M.J. Williams)

1937, May The south barn (mule shed area) is researched. The sill supporting the exterior timber-framed wall was removed; a new sill of creosoted wood replaced it. Below the sill, a concrete wall was added for support. (MVLA Minutes. p.115-16)

1949  Mule stable restoration completed by W.M. Macomber. (HSR)

1949, Oct. Whitewashed the interior of restored mule shed. (HSR)

1950, April At the mule shed final grade was established by filling immediately inside and outside the building line.

1952, April Posts prepared for mangers at mule stable. (HSR)

**DESCRIPTION**

The shed roof at the south elevation maintains the nearly 45-degree slope of the roof over the upper room of the stable. A row of earth-fast posts, separated by 6’-11”, rest on flat stones and support the shed roof. Seven of the western-most posts are freestanding without walls, creating an open-air room sheltered by the roof. The posts are 6” square, chamfered 1” at the corners. The shed’s roof construction is comprised of 3” x 4 ½” common rafters, 21” on center. These rafters are pegged into the upper plate at the north wall and terminate at a lower plate supported by the posts on the south side. At every other post, four tie beams measuring 4 ½” x 7 ¼” connect the south shed plate to the south brick wall and support four posts that support the purlin.

The brick walls at the east and west elevations extend 9’-4” beyond the stable’s south foundation wall, forming the east and west enclosure at the shed. At the east end of the shed is an 18’-4” long, 11’-10” deep wood-framed enclosure. While the west interior wall of this room is without openings, the southern 3-bay elevation is comprised of two doors separated by one louvered window opening. The posts terminate into a sill that rests on a concrete foundation. The framing is clad in random-width beaded weatherboard. At the west end of the south elevation, a single, narrow bay is enclosed in wood framing and clad in weatherboard, forming an open, shaded area for animals. Along the entire length of the northern brick wall of the shed is a continuous row of wood feed racks that rest on the 2” ledge of the water table at an angle. Below the racks, is a simple
continuous manger supported by earth-fast posts. The construction of the feed rack and the mangers is independent of one another, with approximately a 2’-vertical separation between them, unlike the hay rack-manger design in the stall rooms at the front of the stable. All the shed framing, including the interior of the brick walls, is painted white. All the brick on the exterior of the stable, however, is left in its natural, unpainted state.

HISTORY

It is possible that the shed was not part of the original construction but was attached to the brick stable shortly after it was completed, since it indeed appears in the Vaughn plan of 1787. In the Vaughn plan, the shed is divided into two distinct rooms along the south wall of the stable. Vaughn notes the east room with an “o”, which refers to “stable” on the map key. The map shows that the space was divided into four spaces, which were presumably four stalls for horses or perhaps mules. Vaughn labeled the larger room at the west end of the shed with an “r”, which refers to “cow houses” in the map key. This room opens onto a fenced in yard. Although oral history noted by investigators in the early twentieth century have noted that the shed housed mules, the only notation during Washington’s lifetime regarding this is a note stating that mules were brought to the mansion, which could refer to the stable or to another barn at the mansion. “…several of the Mules wch. are returned in the Mansion house…”

In section, the stable is a split-level building, following the downward slope of the site, resulting in approximately a five-foot decent along the east wall adjacent to the south lane. This created a discrepancy between the horses kept at the superior rooms in the front rooms and those animals, possibly including draft horses or mules, kept in the less commodious stalls at the lower rear of the stable.

From at least as early as the mid-nineteenth century, the shed was enclosed at the south wall by a thin timber-framed wall. As a consequence from the sill and the posts having been laid directly in to the ground, by 1937, the wall and lower portions of the timber framing was warped, badly rotted, and partially destroyed by insects.

In 1949, Mr. Macomber examined the history of the south shed construction. He found hand-hewn wooden members that he presumed had once supported stall partitions. Macomber later discovered chamfered posts and plates, leading him to conclude that the space was an open-air shed without walls. He theorized that with this configuration,

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the animals would have been tethered to the posts. Macomber also notes the “insistent reference to this part of the stable as the Mule-Shed…,” although no use of this term has been found in Washington’s accounts or diaries.\(^\text{11}\) There is evidence that mules were taken to the Mansion stable in at least one instance in Washington’s papers. Based on his findings, Macomber reconstructed the shed by removing the dilapidated wooden framing to construct the eight open bays and a three-bay timber-framed room. He also constructed the continuous hay rack and manger according to typical eighteenth-century motifs, resulting in the simple design which is apparent today. With historical analysis, Macomber’s reconstruction of the shed framing and its fittings successfully conform to the building technology and style typical to a late-eighteenth century stable.

Figure 30. Most of the shed wall was removed by Macomber in 1949 to recreate the open-tie stalls that he believed were part of the original design.

STAIRS AND PLATFORM

1787, Aug. 14  “Nails to mend the corn loft steps” in store book (for the stable??)
1885, Oct. 28  “Bradshaw at work replacing old steps at barn.” (Superintendent Dodge diaries)
1915, May  Exterior barn steps removed—were not deemed original and were “dangerous and unsightly.” Minutes 1915, v. 5, p. 38.
1948, Oct.  The ladder steps to be placed on the east gable and are ready
1948, Nov.  Steps and platform installed. (HSR)
1960, Oct.  Platform and steps at east side of stable rebuilt and treated for decay. (HSR)
1965, April  Steps repainted. (HSR)

DESCRIPTION

At the east wall an open staircase gives access to the loft door at the second floor of the stable. This stair is oak and comprised of plank treads without risers that are attached to a stringer by exposed tenons. A hand railing runs along the steps, featuring a decorative pyramidal finial atop the post at the bottom of the stair. The stair ascends eleven feet to a 3’-6”x 5’-0” platform before the loft door. Supporting the platform are two oak posts that rise between 12’ and 13’ to the base of the platform. The two eastern posts are secured midway by a tie beam and V-brace, rising past the platform and the hand railing where they are capped with decorative pyramidal finals.

HISTORY

The loft door at the east gable appears to be original to the construction of the stable, indicating that an exterior stair was used during Washington’s time. This would have allowed easy access to the large loft space above, in addition to the door in the north pediment, which was primarily used for hoisting goods into the loft. The staircase appears in the 1859 watercolor by H. Wateley. Superintendent Dodge’s diary states that the staircase was replaced in 1885. This new stair and platform is clearly seen an 1899 photograph. The staircase appears to be similar to the existing staircase given its open treads, stringer, and posts supporting a simple platform. Visible differences are the absence of a railing, a wooden tie beam and V-brace for the posts, and the style of the finials, which were circular in profile, but flat on two sides. This entire stair and platform assemblage removed was in 1915 because its was deemed “dangerous and unsightly”
and, moreover, not original to the stable. An examination of an undated photograph with the staircase removed shows visible brick patching where the wooden platform and railings were inserted into the exterior of the east wall.

The stable stood without the staircase for thirty-three years until Walter M. Macomber constructed a new stair and platform in 1948, which remains standing to this day. In light of the lack of documentary details regarding this stair during Washington’s residence, Macomber likely copied the 1885 design that was recorded in photographs, adding simple safety and structural features, such as a hand railing, a V-brace and tie, and a concrete foundation at the base stair at the lower tread. He also changed the style of the finials to their pyramidal form, a design he probably copied from the pyramidal finials he saw elsewhere at Mount Vernon, such as on the fence along the north side of the stable yard, adjacent to the Coach House.

IMAGES

Figures 31 & 32. The 1885 stair to the loft, seen in the 1899 photograph at the left, was removed in 1915 because it was deemed unsafe and unsightly. The photograph on the right shows the east wall without the staircase and platform.

STALL PARTITIONS AND MANGERS
1782  “…Scantling for Stalls and Racks of the Stable”
1783  Stalls added.
1790, Sept. 18  “Thomas Mahony…repairing the stalls in the stables at the mansion house.”
1795, Jan. 11  “My plan for the two sheds at Dogue Run (one on each side of the barn, and adjoining the Corn houses, which were to make the ends of them) was, to lay Cills on the brick foundations, which were intended to be raised high enough above the ground, to prevent their rotting. On these Cills a frame was to be erected, the plate of which was to be high enough to be out of the way of the horses heads with a range of troughs for feeding; and either racks, or places back of the troughs or mangers as in the stables at the mansion house for Hay. The backs, and ends next the barn to be boarded up: and the fronts also, as low as to admit a tall horse to pass under with ease. The posts and studs may be placed at such distances as to suit for Stalls now, or hereafter. The enclosed rough sketch, with what I have hear said, will give you a full idea of my design." (GW to William Pearce, Writings of Washington, Vol. 34:., p. 83-84.)
(Superintendent Dodge diaries)
1895, May  “Stalls racks, mangers and floors should be renewed, better drainage arranged, and harness cases supplied” (MVLA Minutes v. 11. p. 38)
1895, June 15  Murray setting stall posts in stable.
1895, June 19  “Grading in stable, preparing sleepers for stall floors, have the attention of Murray and two laborers”
1895, June 27  “Murray building mangers…”
1895, June 28  “Rippon and Neitzey whitewashing inside walls of horse stable.”
1895, June 29  “Murray putting wire divisions at head of stalls.”
1896, May  “New Partitions and mangers built of old form…”
1902  “Divisions in stalls in horse stable were improved to give better light and ventilation”
1919, Nov. 12  “Murray replacing rotted boards in horses stalls in barn.”
1920, May  “Renewed flooring” of stalls in horse stable
1937  Eastern 1st flr & 2nd flr posts untouched. (M.J. Williams)
1938  Researched design and location of original stalls; “evidence of old posts discernable and were square type let into the girder”

12 A faint press copy of this “rough sketch” is in the Washington Papers at the Library of Congress under the date Mar. 27, 1796. An exterior side and front elevation are visible with reading that is almost indiscernible. The plan of the stable shows a symmetrical layout with a section of open ground, two square compartments on either side of the central opening, and long and narrow rooms on either side. Some dimensions can be read, but no illustration of stalls exist in this sketch of the Dogue Run stable.
1939, May 18  Marks were found in 2 places on undisturbed soil. 14. Gravelly soil made this difficult but 2 holes found in undisturbed soil. Varying depth of foundation. Similar length of stall/distance found in the East room. (MVLA Minutes, 96-98-99)

1948, Feb.  Feed racks for stable designed by Mr. Macomber.
1948, June  “Neitzey and Taylor fabricate and erect stall enclosures”

DESCRIPTION

At the west and east stall rooms, four stall partitions along the east and west walls create five single stalls at each wall for a total of ten stalls within each room. The partitions are composed of closed, 2” boards extending 9’ into the room at an angle. The head of the partitions at the brick wall is 6’-9” high, lowering to 4’-0” at the post in a cyma curve carved out of the top board. These timbers are inserted into a timber earth-fast post that in turn supports the two girts along the ceiling framing. The posts carry a harness peg for the saddle and are 6”x6”, chamfered at the corners, and topped by a carved cap. Wooden feed racks and mangers affixed to the stall partitions flank the rear wall at the head of the stalls.

HISTORY

The interior of the stable absorbed most of the daily wear from the horses that were kept there until as late as 1924, although, by that time, none of the original eighteenth-century stall fittings had survived. The stable underwent several major restorations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that have obscured the building fabric and any evidence of original stall fittings. Lack of documentation from the time when the Mount Vernon Ladies Association acquired Mount Vernon until their first meeting in the 1860s has left the condition of the stall partitions and mangers during that time unknown. It was not until the 1880s, when Harrison Dodge became Superintendent of Mount Vernon, that a comprehensive record of work at Mount Vernon was recorded. Dodge’s diaries document the daily activities of the workmen on the property, and they tell us that between 1895 and 1896 new stalls and mangers were built and added to the stable.13 There are no accompanying photographs or descriptions of these stalls, except for Dodge’s diaries in which he writes that they were made “of old form.”14 This phrase

13 Mount Vernon Library, Reading Room, Superintendent Dodge’s Diaries.
14 Mount Vernon Library, Restoration Files, Minutes of the Council dated May, 1896. “After removing all woodwork therein and pointing up the brick foundation and walls…new partitions and mangers were built
suggests that they were intended to look like the stalls before them in the stable, or older stalls in the more general sense.

A photograph taken in 1937 from Morley Williams’ restoration may show part of these stalls. The photo, pasted into the report of his stable restoration, shows a portion of the stalls. They appear to be made of wood, and the posts on the open sides extend into the girder above, lending support. They do not lap into the girder’s pockets, however; instead, the girder rests on top of the posts. The posts are rounded, while the cuts into the girder are angular, further proving that these stalls are not original. In his report, Williams wrote that “evidence of old posts discernible and were square type let into girder.” The pockets are angular and do not join with the rounded posts from the 1937 photograph, but Williams may have found evidence of some sort during his analysis of the stable further suggesting the type of the posts. Unfortunately, none of the photographs taken during his work at the stable further support or indicate what Williams meant by this find.

The rounded posts extend into the ground that appears to be dirt covered inside the stall area. Wide, vertical planks serve to separate the stalls from one another. Along the top of these planks run a straight wooden board that is tenoned into the posts at either end. A dowel is visible in the photograph. A wooden strip is situated on top of the others, suggesting that there are two sets of vertical planks back to back, and the boards on top serve to close them. A metal strap is visible wrapping around the posts from one side of the top board to the other side. Unfortunately, Williams and the information in his file do not offer any identification of these stalls. However, because documentation strongly suggests no major restorations were done of the interior between 1895 and 1937, except for a 1919 replacement of “rotted boards,” they likely are the stalls placed in the late nineteenth century.

These stalls are visible in the photographs taken by Walter Macomber during his restoration of the stable between 1949 and 1953. Much deteriorated, the vertical planks between stalls are missing, but the boards and strips placed on top of them are visible, as well as a metal strap. Photographs reveals the diagonal railing sloping down from the head to the stall opening, along with thin dowels at the head of the partition.

Left with almost no evidence to build from, in 1948, Macomber removed the ruins of the stalls and built the existing interior stall partitions, mangers, and feed racks in the stall rooms and at the shed. The blueprints for these are included in the restoration files of old form, harness racks and feed bins provided…”

15 Mount Vernon Library, Morley Jeffery Williams Collection, Box 2, Folder “25 a,” report, pg 3.
in the library. He believed he was designing a style authentic with the eighteenth-century stable, but in fact, he was creating a distinct nineteenth century style.

To confirm that the stall rooms were devised into two rows of single-stalls, Macomber excavated the ground floor of the room. He found evidence of two post-holes, confirming the interior arrangement of five stalls at the east and west walls of each stall room. Macomber noted that the partitions and mangers that he constructed in designs that were typical of the eighteenth century. With regard to the greater amount of evidence available today, Macomber’s reconstruction appears to be slightly more elaborate than the partitions that Washington’s contemporaries had designed in the late eighteenth century, thereby making the current partitions an improbable example of what might have stood during Washington’s lifetime.

Although Mount Vernon does not have specific evidence indicating where Macomber received his inspiration from, a document from Colonial Williamsburg suggests that the design came from the King William Courthouse stable in Virginia. The document, compiled in 1950, was for research of their own stable at the Governor’s Palace. J.P. Moorehead, of Colonial Williamsburg, visited Mount Vernon in 1949 to speak with Macomber and to see the restoration. He wrote in the document that Macomber told him the design came from the courthouse. Unfortunately, the stable no longer stands. In June of 1947, Macomber visited Marshall Hall, across the Potomac in Maryland, to examine its stables and stalls. It is not known what he found or if his design can also be traced to the stables at Marshall Hall. Unfortunately, the stables were torn down eighteen years later, and the house suffered a fire afterwards, leaving a shell and no records as to its previous condition. Macomber also could have seen the illustration in a book published in 1796 in London that shows the profile of a horse stall with a pronounced cyma curve, but that would still be too late. Although the possible sources of Macomber’s inspiration no longer exist, strong suggestions that the current stalls are of

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18 The Southern Maryland Studies Center has several collections pertaining to Marshall Hall at their repository, and although they cannot guarantee they have evidence pertaining to Marshall Hall’s stables, they do have many photographs and documents of the site. Time constrictions prohibited anybody from Mount Vernon from visiting them, but perhaps that can be a task for a future researcher.
19 Communications to the Board of Agriculture, 1796. Eighteenth Century Collections Online.
A late design is evident in existing nineteenth-century stalls, such as at Mount Airy. The cyma curve in both of these examples most strongly identifies them as nineteenth century.

An additional source of information that has provided clues as to the original design of Mount Vernon’s stalls, in addition to photographs and measured drawings or sketches, is the paintings of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America and England. These paintings reveal that a stylistic shift occurred between the eighteenth- and the nineteenth century. The stall partitions in the 1700s seem to have commonly been a simple construction of horizontal and vertical boards affixed to posts and capped by a straight, diagonal board along the top. This design is frequented in eighteenth-century paintings by British artists.

The sketches Thomas Jefferson drew in 1778 while in Philadelphia show two stall designs that correlate more closely with Mount Vernon’s stable in terms of date and geography. They offer the closest representations of stalls that Washington may have seen himself while in Philadelphia as well as the best illustration of stalls in colonial America. In the first drawing, Jefferson paid particular attention to the innovative design of the feed rack, which was located high at the head of the stall. The rack itself was enclosed by turned-spokes that pivot to prevent the horse’s face from scraping against fixed spokes while feeding. The voids between the spokes at the base of the rack allowed the dust from the hay to fall through to the ground. Jefferson measured the stall partition to be four feet high to the top of the manger and constructed of perpendicular lathing. The top rail of the stable partition is straight, angled downward from the head of the stall to the end. He also noted that the floor was sloped.20 His thoughts, written beneath the sketch, make clear that he wishes the diagonal angle of the stall partition sloped more dramatically at a two foot drop instead of a one foot, and that he wished the stalls were one foot shallower at seven feet instead of eight.

Jefferson drew these sketches to aide him in the design for his own stable at Monticello, which he remodeled soon after his visit to Philadelphia, opening the possibility that designs in the northern and southern parts of America shared commonalities. Jefferson reproduced the intermediate passage between the stalls that allowed a stable keeper to the refill the slotted hay racks from behind. Because Jefferson’s stable only had one exterior wall, he was not able to reconstruct the dung-removal doors below the mangers. In fact, Jefferson’s house stable was entirely hidden under the North

20 Fiske Kimball, Thomas Jefferson, Architect, 133.
Terrace at Monticello. This concealed the stable along with the other dependencies that were housed with the succession of rooms to either side of the house. This also kept the ceiling in the stable relatively low, at only seven feet, compared with the stable at Mount Vernon and at Mount Airy.\(^{21}\)

There is less evidence for the authenticity of Macomber’s design for the manger and feed racks in the stall rooms. From paintings and engravings, the eighteenth-century feeding trough and rack appears to be an efficient design to provide simple wooden mangers for feed and a higher, often slanted wooden rack to hold hay, from which a horse would raise its head to pull the hay out from the voids in the rack. These designs do appear to be consistent with the simplicity of Macomber’s feed racks and manger with the exception of the joined construction of the feed rack joined to the rear board of the manger. The source for this design remains unknown, as this joined featured is absent from the books, stables, and historical images researched in this project.

Due to the spread of books and pamphlets on architecture and husbandry, stall design may not have been as localized as stable architecture. Whereas available building material, craft knowledge, and climate dictated how a structure was to be built according to the region, the main purpose of a stable interior was to house horses, especially horses used for leisure or transportation, in a way that they were comfortable.\(^{22}\) This was accomplished through the generally accepted standard that the horses received light, air, ventilation, warmth in the winter, coolness in the summer, and a way for dung and urine to drain so as to not create a dirty interior environment.

\(\)\(^21\) Kimball, 134.

\(\)\(^22\) An example of this regional difference in style is The Woodlands’ stone stable in quarry-heavy Pennsylvania and the prevalence of frame stables in the forest-heavy Chesapeake region.
Figure 34. The existing stall partitions, feed racks and mangers in the east and west stall rooms were designed by Walter M. Macomber.

Figure 35. The manger, seen left, also reconstructed by Macomber, features an attached feed rack for hay. The feed rack is supported by the partitions and at the end walls.
Figure 36. Macomber’s stall partition design, left, is more akin to a nineteenth-century partition than the style of an eighteenth-century partition.
WHITEWASH / PAINTING

1887, Aug. 2    Refitted stalls for new horses, cleaned, whitewashed interior of stable. (Superintendent Dodge diaries)
1895, June 28    “Rippon and Neitzey whitewashing inside walls of horse stable.”
1898, Jan. 24    “Evans painting slats of barn windows.”
1913              Interior of stable whitewashed.
1944, April      Whitewashed interior.

DESCRIPTION

The woodwork used for the door jambs, window frames, and the beaded trim at the windows and cornice is painted white using the same modern alkyd-based oil paint used for all the outbuildings at Mount Vernon in order to imitate the traditional hand-ground paint of the same color that was commonly used in the eighteenth century. The weatherboard walls at the south elevation are also painted white, matching the other outbuildings along the South Lane. All of the doors and the louvers at the windows are painted “Spanish brown” of the same alkyd oil-based make-up. The interior brick walls of the stall room rooms, the Coach Room, and the brick walls of the rear shed are painted white, although much of this paint has been rubbed off with wear, exposing the red brick beneath. The joists, the bottoms of the loft floorboards, and the Coach Room summer beam are painted white. The rafters, lathing, and tie beams in the shed’s roof construction are similarly painted white.

HISTORY

The woodwork comprising the trim at the windows and doors has been repainted numerous times. The earliest record noting the whitewashing of the interior is in 1887.1 The last record is in 1944, resulting in the mottled appearance of the white-painted brick that currently exists.

WINDOWS

1783    “By making sashes for stable windows… 4 sashes also lights each in the yr 1783.” (From account of John Evans in Washington’s Mills Account Book, p. 45)

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1 Dodge Diaries, 1887, Aug. 2
1791, June  “Air, by means of dormant Windows, or doors like the others to be admitted into the graineries at the New Barn at Ferry and French’s. agreeably to directions given. The same thing to be done, and for the same purpose, on the stable at the Mansion House. This also has been explained.” (“Memorandum of Carpentry Work to be Done.”) Writings of Washington, Vol. 31.)

1793 Aug. 6 “Thomas Green has been all this week putting up 3 Dormound Windows on the Shed of the Stable…” (Howell Lewis to GW, Overseers’ letters)

1793, Aug. 18 “…When I said the whole were to be employed at the new Barn at Dogue Run, I did not mean to leave the Dormant windows in the Stable (both back and front) unfinished as they have been begun; which would not have been the case if I could have conceived they would have taken half, or even a quarter of the time they have. In the front of the Stable I ordered two; one on each side of the Pediment; dividing the space equally between the latter, and the ends of the house…” (Howell Lewis to GW, Overseers’ letters)

1793, Dec. 22 “Compleating the Dormant Windows in the back of the Stables at Mansion house and putting two in the front of it agreeable to directions already given to Thomas Green.” (GW to William Pearce, From Fitzpatrick, v.33, p.197)

1794, Dec. 28 “In bad weather, when the carpenters are unable to work out, let them prepare frames, shingles &ca. for putting in more dormant windows in the back of the Stables at Mansion house and two in the front part of them; one on each side the pediment, in the centre between it and the ends for the purpose of giving air to the Corn and hay loft.” (GW to William Pearce, Writings of Washington, Vol. 34, p. 73)

1795, July 5 “If the dormant windows are not put in, on each side of the Pediment, front side of the stable, I could wish (if it does not interfere with the more important work of Donaldson) that it might be set about; it would not only add to the look of the building, but the grain and hay both, would derive benefit from the air it wd receive from those windows; as would the Stables, if the back dormant windows could be compleated [sic] on the range with those already in, and of the same size, and appearance.” (GW to William Pearce)

1796, April 17 “Are all the repairs to the Mansion and other houses completed? If the windows in the Corn and hay lofts, over the Stables, and on the back side, are not put in, I request they may be; as both lofts and Stables wants Air exceedingly.” (GW to William Pearce, Writings of Washington, Vol. 35)

1796, June 5 “The omitting to give information of what has, or what cannot be done in consequence of such requests, often throws me into
a disagreeable suspense [sic], and frequently occasions me to write often on the same subjects. I am equally ignorant whether the dormant windows are yet put into the stable, and Corn lofts; both of which, for the purpose of Air, is indispensably necessary; besides adding to the appearance of the building.” (GW to William Pearce, Writings of Washington, Vol. 35)

1898, Jan. 24 “Evans painting slats of barn windows.”
1925, May Wire screens added to the slatted windows on the interior. (Notes v. 7, p.44)
1939, May 18 Possession of the “dormant” windows. (MVLA Min. 96, 98-99)
1948, Dec. Records reveal that the southern dormers were in storage “for several years” and are being restored. (HSR)

DESCRIPTION

At the north façade, the four narrow windows flanking the doorways to the stall rooms are 2'-4 ½" x 4'-8". These windows are trimmed with 4 ½” flat, beaded molding on framing and are covered with wide louvers made from pine with metal screens covering the interior. Two dormers at the northern slope measure 4’-1” x 6’-0” from the sill to the apex of the dormer’s gabled roof. The dormers are equidistant between the central pediment and the east and west gable ends. The two dormers at the south slope are identical to those in the front, located 15’-3” from the end of the roof to the center of the window. At the south brick wall between the stall room and the shed are row of six barred windows, with three piercing through the brick wall in each stall room. These openings measure 3’-9”x 2’-5” and are located approximately 6’-10” above the floor.

HISTORY

The four louvered windows at the northern elevation and the six openings in the south brick wall are original to the construction date of the stable. Washington added the two dormer windows at each side of the roof a decade after the stable was completed. In 1793, while away from his home, Washington ordered dormer windows to be constructed at the north and the south sides of the roof to help ventilate the loft. For Washington, an added secondary benefit to this addition was the improved the appearance of the stable. Even though Washington’s instructions initially specified three dormers to be installed in the rear slope of the roof early on, in subsequent requests he dropped his specification for three dormers and simply asked for dormers to be installed at the south slope, without indicating the number of windows to be added. He was more insistent about the two
dormers on the north (front) elevation. He called for equally spaced dormers to either side of the pediment at the north roof. He later called for an unspecified number of dormers over the rear shed to match those in front. Since Washington was residing in Philadelphia during this time, one may surmise that his early request for three dormers was either lost or forgotten and thus his following order to match the rear dormers to those in front resulted in two dormers on the back roof to match the two on the front, instead of the three he specified at the onset. The dormer windows at the south shed were removed sometime around 1946 for an unknown reason. In 1948, Walter M. Macomber noted that at least one of the original dormer windows was in storage. Returning the shed to its condition in 1799, Macomber replaced the two shed dormers in 1949 in their original location, as indicated by the scars left in the rafters. The wire screens that were added in 1925 to keep insects out are still present at all of the windows.

IMAGES

Figure 37. The four dormers were added to the roof over a decade after the stable was completed.
Figure 38. All of the exterior windows are enclosed with wooden louvers for ventilation and shade.

Figure 39. The six window openings along the interior south brick wall allow ventilation between the stall rooms and the shed.

WOODWORK / TRIM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Action Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948, Oct.</td>
<td>Woodwork completed, completed by workmen Wilfred Neitzey and Roy Taylor. (HSR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949, Sept.</td>
<td>Woodwork repainted. (HSR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960, Oct.</td>
<td>Wood trim repainted. (HSR)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DESCRIPTION

The wood trim at the north façade fenestration consists of 4 ½” plain boards including a ½” beaded edge, and the cornice at the roof eave.
HISTORY

The 1896 record indicating that the woodwork to the stable was removed points to the fact that none of the wood trim throughout the stable is original. In 1948, either some or all of the wood trim was replaced.

IMAGES

Figure 40. The exterior cornice consists of a plain board with a narrow bead at the bottom.

VICINITY

1787, May 27  “When you go about the repositary for the compost, at the mouth of the drain by the Stable, if the bottom should not be of good clay, put clay there and ram it well before you pave it, to prevent the liquid manure from sinking, and thereby being lost, this should also be done on the New sides wch. are to be walled up.” (GW to George Augustine Washington, from Philadelphia)

1790, Dec. 28  “Will have a pump made in Alexandria for the well at the Barn.” (George Washington papers, A.L.Reese trans., v. 248)

1795, Feb. 15  “If the lot between the Stable and the spring is not well, and thickly taken with Lucern, and entirely free from grass, I wish you would put a heavy harrow with sharp teeth thereon, and tare the ground in a manner to pieces, without regarding how much the lucern plants are torn and maimed.” (GW to William Pearce, Writings of Washington, Vol. 34, p. 116)

1889, Mar. 7  “Dick & George hauling stone to grade near barn.”

1889, Mar. 11  “Dick & George continue to haul gravel to barn-paddock.”

1896, May  Terracotta main drain leading to barnyard.

1921, Sept. 3  Underpinned brick wall between stable and kitchen garden. (Superintendent Dodge diaries)

1965, July  “Hitching post of informal design made and installed outside stable for the 4th of July pageant and horses.” (HSR)
DESCRIPTION

The stable yard at the north is flanked by a loosely undefined row of cobbles adjacent to the north wall. Some of these cobbled are bound in concrete, mostly at the entrance to the Coach Room. A hitching post consisting of three posts connected by a railing stands on the grassy knoll between the stable and the coach house. The brick kitchen garden wall is to the immediate west of the stable, meeting the northwest corner of the stable. This wall is covered in ivy that has in turn spread across a small section of the stable’s north façade. The exposed sandstone foundation of the kitchen garden wall reveals that the stable yard was re-graded and lowered after the wall was construction. This may have happened during the construction of the stable in 1782 when the new brick stable was built wider than its framed-replacement, requiring excavation of the earth adjacent to the kitchen garden wall in order to create a level stable yard for the use of the horses and carriages.

Along the east exterior brick wall to the south of the stair platform is a simple modern wooden bench set upon a bed of square paving tiles. Parallel to the downward slope of the South Lane, a shallow, open trench made of cobbles set in concrete provides drainage from the north stable yard to an underground drain of modern construction off of the rear southeast corner of the stable.

At the south yard of the stable, a fenced-in grassy yard encloses the open shed where domestic sheep roam freely between the rear shelter of the stable and the yard. The fence consists of white painted boards, and is immediately adjacent to the paddock at the west.

HISTORY

A number of drains have been installed in the area surrounding the stable over the past two hundred years. Washington constructed a drain that flanked the eastern wall of the stable. He intended for this channel to collect the “liquid manure” of the horses that would be transferred to the dung repository just at the opposite side of the South Lane. At the yard south of the stable, possibly in the location where the fenced-in enclosure exists today, Washington planted lucern in 1795. This area may have experienced a variety of uses during Washington’s lifetime including growing plants and being used by animals entering the stable’s rear stalls or moving to barn in the paddock to the adjacent western
lot. One of these was installed in May, 1896, when a “Terracotta main drain leading to barnyard” was constructed. Some of these drains were found during 1930s excavations.

In 1921, the wall between the stable’s northwest corner and the kitchen garden wall was underpinned.

According to a photograph taken in 1899, at the north façade of the barn, a small shed stood at the corner where the stable wall and the kitchen garden wall met.

The hitching post standing in the grass in front of the stable yard was added in 1965 when a “hitching post of informal design [was] made and installed outside stable for the 4th of July pageant and horses.”

IMAGES

Figure 41. The cobblestones at the entrance to the Coach Room spread out to the stable yard.

Figure 42. The southeast corner Kitchen Garden Wall meets the northwest corner of the stable, allowing its ivy to spread onto the stable facade.

2 1965, HSR.
Figure 43. The fenced yard at the rear of the stable shed follows the enclosure drawn in the 1787 plan by Samuel Vaughn.

Figure 44. The hitching posts were added to the front stable yard in 1965 for ceremonial purposes.
APPENDIX B:

MOUNT VERNON STABLE CHRONOLOGY
(Created by Carrie K. Schomig in 2003 and updated by Meghan P. White in 2015)
1768, June 25      GW’s diary- Carpenter finished framing of barn.
1776, Aug.           “Line from stable to dry well.”
1781 Barn burned.
1782 New barn erected, bricks laid by John Nowles.
1782, Jan 8  GW to Lund W., Approved Lund’s plan to enlarge stable with a coach house in the “middle” with a pediment over it w/ a door for hay. The Garden Wall may be part of stable wall. Requests size of former stable and Coach House and then GW will create a plan with doors and windows. “May consult Evans if he is a man capable of design upon the subject.” P. 576-7.
1783, Jan. 29 “Two joiners at work on stable. Carpenters and coopers gathered timber and readying it for shingles, etc.” Lund W. to GW.
1783 Stalls added, shingles prepared.
1783 “By making sashes for stable windows… 4 sashes also lights each in the yr 1783” From account of John Evans in Washington’s Mills Account Book, p. 45.
1784, Sept. 7 “By [sic] a lock for stable” Ledger B. p. 199a 0.1.6.
1787, Aug. 14 “Nails to mend the corn loft steps” in store book (for the stable??).
1789, Apr 27 Walls of Barn inspected by Knowles. “Advises lower arches to be closed and the dirt raised against the wall so as to afford a passage for the water, the lower parts of the arches being below the surface of the surrounding ground. George A. Washington to G. W. P. S. 9.
1789, Dec. 14 Roof and shed of “mansion House barn contained all the tobacco made here except 3 or 4 hundred weight which Fairfax says will make 2 hogsheads…” G. A. W. to GW P S-9.
1790, Jan. 9 Gutters added to shed of stable to prevent wall damage… other illegible writing.
1790, Sept. 18 “Thomas Mahony…repairing the stalls in the stables at the mans. house.”
1790, Dec. 4 “Making stalls in the shed of the barn.”
1790, Dec. 28 “Will have a pump made in Alexandria for the well at the Barn.” GW papers v.248. A.L.Reese trans.
1793, Aug. 6 Thomas Green put in 3 dormer windows at shed of stable… unfinished. Howell Lewis to GW.
1793, Nov. 3 “tell it is my wish as soon as his potatoes are up and secured in the manner already mentiioned to you; I desire he will immediately tresh out all the oats at the mansion on the
Barn floor if it can be spared by the work people. Measure and put them in the seed loft above mentioned, and inform me of the quantity…” GW to Howell Lewis; from Fitzpatrick, ed. v.33, p. 147.

1793 Aug. 6  “Thomas Green has been all this week putting up 3 Dormound Windows on the Shed of the Stable…” Howell Lewis to GW, Overseers’ letters

1793, Dec. 22  Carpenters completing dormant windows in the back of the stables and putting two in the front of “agreeable to directions” GW to Wm Pearce, From Fitzpatrick, v.33, p.197.

1794, May 11  Directions to store “drilled wheat” in the “Seed Loft” at the Mansion. GW to Wm. Pearce. Fitzpatrick, p. 362.

1794, Dec. 28  In bad weather, let carpenters prepare frames, shingles for dormant windows at front and back for the purpose of providing air to the barn and hay loft. GW to Wm Pearce, Fitzpatrick, p. 73.

1795  James Donaldson repairs stalls at Mansion stable.

1796, April 17  GW requests windows in “corn and haylofts” over the stables and on back to improve air circulation. Put in dormer window in stable.

1798, Mar. 10  Fixed lock on the stable door.

1799, March  Assessors list the stable, 84’x36’.

1838, Nov. 1  “Mr. Ball has nearly done the stable” (mansion stable?).

1849  Description by Robert Criswell: “brick walls of large stables and other out-houses are falling down”, from “Early Descriptions of Mount Vernon Book #18, 1842-1900”, 1990.

1874  From 1910 MV Illustrated handbook: shingle roof renewed this year.

1875  Congressional council decided to fund restoration of stable.

1876  In Visitor’s Guide Book: “Erected in 1733 by Lawrence Washington. Built of bricks from England. …Recently re-roofed and is in a perfect state of restoration…”

1885, Oct. 28  Steps replaced. Dodge diaries.

1886, May 22  Underpinned corner of barn. Dodge diaries.

1886, Mar. 23  “Paul the carpenter finished work on doors at Stable.”

1887, Aug. 2  Refitted stalls for new horses, cleaned, whitewashed interior of stable. Dodge diaries.

1888, May 9  Iron braces passed through north façade to prevent further spreading. Dodge diaries.

1888, Oct. 26  Drilled holes in barn wall for iron braces.

1888, Nov. 10  Burgess put bracing rod in barn wall. Dodge diaries.

1889, May 20  Put in additional joists. Dodge diaries.

1889, Sept. 3  Underpinned wall. Dodge diaries.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1889, Dec. 18</td>
<td>Dug postholes and set posts for shelter in barnyard. Dodge diaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Added eave-gutters, down-spouts and snow breaks to prevent further water damage, which possible cause north wall spreading. Dodge diaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Continued belief by “Conway”, that the stable dated to at least 1733, and possibly was built by GW’s grandfather.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889, Mar. 7</td>
<td>“Dick &amp; George hauling stone to grade near barn.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889, Mar. 11</td>
<td>“Dick &amp; George continue to haul gravel to barn-paddock.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895, May</td>
<td>“Stalls racks, mangers and floors should be renewed, better drainage arranged, and harness cases supplied.” Minutes, v. 11, p. 38.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895, June 15</td>
<td>Murray setting stall posts in stable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895, June 19</td>
<td>“Grading in stable, preparing sleepers for stall floors, have the attention of Murray and two laborers.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895, June 27</td>
<td>“Murray building mangers. Dodson and Braxton laying brick floor in stable.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895, June 28</td>
<td>“Rippon and Neitzey whitewashing inside walls of horse stable.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895, June 29</td>
<td>“Murray putting wire divisions at head of stalls.” (horse or cow stalls?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895, Sept. 24</td>
<td>“Stout and Dodson relaying cobblestones in front of Stable.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897, April 7</td>
<td>Coach room of the barn was graded and prepared for concrete, using broken bricks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897, June</td>
<td>Stable Loft floor repaired, patched, put up wire door.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898, Jan. 24</td>
<td>“Evans painting slats of barn windows.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898, May</td>
<td>Strengthened floor of barn loft, Minutes v.11, p. 51.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>“The flooring of the stalls in the horse stable was renewed and the drainage therefrom corrected,” MLVA, p. 51.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908, May</td>
<td>Stall floors re-laid. HSR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>From MV Illustrated handbook: “The barn is the oldest building…built by GW’s grandfather… from brick from England and oyster-shell lime…shingle roof renewed in 1874… interior renovation in 1796-7…. GW’s ha-ha ran from barn to summer house as a screen wall.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Interior of stable whitewashed.</td>
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274
1915, May Exterior barn steps removed—weren’t original and were “dangerous and unsightly.” Minutes 1915, v. 5, p. 38.

1916, May New barnyard fencing, re-pointed base wall of barn.

1919, Nov. 12 “Murray replacing rotted boards in horses stalls in barn.”

1920, May “Renewed flooring” of stalls in horse stable. HSR.

1921, May Suggested that building could be used as a fireproof building. Also suggested that the hayloft served as rooms for visiting officers, as it was the only accommodation for this. Decision to build new stable near employees’ cottages. HSR.

1921, June 4 Remaining straw and hay removed from barn. Dodge diaries.

1921, Sept. 3 Underpinned brick wall between stable and kitchen garden. Dodge diaries.

1921, Nov. 4 “The improvised horsestable, in the barnyard, is ready for use, thus removing a menace from the ancient brick barn which sheltered Washington’s famous animals…” Dodge report.

1922, May “Improvised horse stable, under metal roof of barnyard shed, removed as a fire menace”. Shed also used for hay storage. HSR.

1924, May Recommendation to stop using the stables in favor of a new stable out of view. HSR.

1925, May Wire screens added to the slatted windows on the interior Notes, v. 7, p.44.

1927, May Seven more iron braces added to the 5 added in 1888. Notes v. 7.p. 44.

1927, May Concrete floor “laid back of the stalls”. HSR.

1930 Stalls in stable “refloored” Notes, v.8, p. 40.

1934 Questioning of the original construction date.

1935, May 17 Plans to re-shingle roof using the same type GW used, conforming to the shingles used for the mansion roof. More tie-rods added to support north wall. Minutes 1935, p. 32.

1936 Shingles determined to be heart-wood cypress. Min. p.55.

1937 MVLA minutes: barn repairs carried out by the Charlottesville Lumber Company un accordance with plans and specifications of Cleverdon, Varney, and Pike, in April 1926.

1. Collar beams put between each pair of rafters, replaced those removed shortly after the stable was built. A few fragments of these original beams were held in placed by orig. nails, which provided the model for “thickness and character”: whip sawed oak. The restored wood was cut with a band saw—but looks new.

2. “supplementary seat pieces” were put into the purlins for strength, deemed “inconspicuous”

3. Steel beams inserted with posts supporting the purlins
4. Wood plates inserted using anchor bolts, with a cross plate across the east wall where the wood was rotted.

5. Wood plates were anchored into the walls using anchor bolts. Steel supporting beams and ties.

6. Entire roof reshingled. Cypress from swamps along the James River, where GW was known to retrieve supplies (no source given)

7. Roof boards were not replaced, although the existing lathing was not original

8. Steel beams under purlin-supporting posts to redistribute load to the side walls instead of second floor. The steel was encased in hand-hewn oak to conceal it.

9. Roof boards, rafter, purlins posts, and kneebraces, were braced tied, supported

10. Eastern 1st flr & 2nd flr posts untouched. 2nd flr joists that were cut to make ventilation opening were replaced with new wood.

11. 2nd flr floored removed for access to joists. Stair opening found. Also found that a floor joist had been replaced to make room for the floor opening. A new joist was put in to match the original

12. New oak girders in West 1st story, placed in same place as original, determined by old nails and holes in joists.

13. Loft load may not exceed 5 lbs./sq. in.

14. Brick replacement where soft or loose; differentiation. Old mortar was cut with a cross-saw to avoid damage to old bricks. New mortar made from Portland cement and lime, not to be confused with oyster shell mortar.

15. Concrete floors in east, west, north sections removed and under floor readied for investigation. Concrete of center room intact.

16. All tie rods removed, as few were carrying load at removal.

Lean-to, (or Mule Shed):

Wood purlin placed under lean-to rafters. Supported by temp. rafters, supported by temp. wooden posts.

Seat pieces of oak were spiked to sides at upper ends and notched into upper plate.

Sill supported south wall removed. New sill of creosoted wood replaced on a concrete wall.

Typed report by M.J. Williams—expanded from Minutes. Undated (In Assn File)

1937 Handbook of MV: Barn built in 1782 under Lund Washington’s supervision to replace frame barn destroyed by fire the previous year.

Bricks were molded from native clay close to building site and burned on the spot. Lime was made from oyster shells and lime. Wood came from local forest except for the cypress from the Dismal Swamp brought to MV. Via River.

1937, May 20 Roof boarding under shingles was deemed not original but remained untouched as it did not require replacement. Bricks were relaid only when they were loose or disintegrated,
and these were distinguishable from the original bricks. The south barn (mule shed area) is researched. The sill supporting the ext. wall was removed; a new sill of creosoted wood replaced it and below this, a concrete wall was added for support. Min. p.115-16.

1930s (?) Exploration trenches dug at west, east, north walls to determine underpinning required. The north wall did not require it, though the southern ends of the west and east walls did (3/4 of west, and a few feet of the east wall). The entire south wall required underpinning. These trenches revealed foundations of an earlier structure, though investigation was not pursued. Concrete was used in the underpinning. M. J. Williams, undated.

1938 Barn Restoration Report: Date adjusted to 1782. Old stalls non-existent, but main roof timbers and scantling of roof and upper-floor supports are original. Using old mansion shingles, the roof was reshingled, following 18thC. Techniques. Shingles vary in width and thickness with free-hand curved ends; this variety was deemed aesthetically pleasing and favored over “monotonous” uniformity. All new shingles were heart cypress. Lightening rods were also installed, though effort was made to keep them inconspicuous. Researched design and location of original stalls. Where old pieces of wood were removed, new replacements were reproduced to match the old, but in order to distinguish them from the original to avoid confusion each new piece was permanently marked with the date of its introduction. MVLA Annual Report.

1939, May 18 While digging to underpin walls with concrete, part of an old wall was discovered. Excavation reveal that this was the first barn foundation. The east wall of the first barn aligns with the west wall of the rebuilt 1782 Coach House. Purpose of the research was to locate to purpose and size of the posts used for the end posts of the stall partitions. Marks were found in 2 places on undisturbed soil. 14. Gravelly soil made this difficult but 2 holes found in undisturbed soil. Varying depth of foundation. Similar length of stall/distance found in the East room. Walls of stable underpinned with concrete were necessary. Access to loft found in West room, possibly one in center room. Possesion of the “dormant” windows. Barn paddock blueprints created, though nothing was unearthed. MLVA Minutes 96-98-99.

1939, Aug. 1 New gate built, installed at paddock below kitchen garden.

1941, Dec. West façade requires re-pointing while cutting out modern mortar to replace and match old work.

1942, Feb. Re-pointed east and west exterior ends.

1942, April New planked fence called “restoration fence” made to GW’s specifications in a letter.

1943, Nov. Old brick walk found beneath gravel near stable-photographed; possibly cobble gutter.

1944, April Whitewashed interior.

1947, April Excavated bet. stable and kitchen garden wall.

1947, May Possible 8’ square “fire pit” found north of stable, deemed “pre-revolutionary” w/iron grates and flue from the back. Raised question: “Part of Ashhouse?” More were
cobblestones found with an East-West drain. “Square cobbled structure” removed, requested for archeological research. HSR.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947, Sept.</td>
<td>Photographed stable “to record surface and trench conditions”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948, Jan.</td>
<td>Stall floor excavations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948, Feb.</td>
<td>Feed racks for stable designed by Mr. Macomber.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948, March</td>
<td>Exterior pavement is excavated revealing the edge of cobble platform at North side of stable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948, April</td>
<td>Roof repainted, sprayed on by a long boom pole. Shingles are deemed fragile. Hay racks were built. HSR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948, June</td>
<td>Wilfried Neitzey and Taylor built stall enclosures at stable, under Macomber’s direction, HSR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948, April</td>
<td>New doors for entryways at “N.Stable” (new stable? North elevation?) with a loft ladder for each stable compartment. Recommendation to discontinue drying herbs in stable loft. HSR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948, Sept.</td>
<td>Stable doors hung, material for exterior loft stairs and platform erected at east façade, HSR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948, Oct.</td>
<td>Post and rope barriers prepared and installed at stable—experimental for crowd control. Horses occupy stable again after 25 yrs. of vacancy, and is “temporary” to create authenticity. East stable room opened for public view. Woodwork completed, completed by workmen Wilfred Neitzey and Roy Taylor, HSR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948, Nov.</td>
<td>Steps and platform installed, HSR.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948, Dec.</td>
<td>Records reveal that the southern dormers were in storage “for several years”, and are being restored, HSR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Mule stable restoration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949, April 4</td>
<td>One of the small cupolas removed, HSR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949, Aug.</td>
<td>Continued stable restoration, HSR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949, Sept.</td>
<td>“Jesse &amp; Frank” are doing restoration re-pointing, Mule Shed restoration completed. Woodwork repainted, ivy removed, HSR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949, Oct.</td>
<td>Whitewashed interior of restored mule shed, HSR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950, April</td>
<td>Grading of earth inside and outside the mule stable, HSR.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1951 (?)  Center room loft refloored using “old boards”, HSR.
1952, April  Posts prepared for mangers at mule stable, HSR.
1953, April  Re-shingled roofs. Paddock enclosures added “in accordance with the evidence of the Vaughn plan” south of the mule shed, HSR.
1953, Oct.  Entire roof re-shingled w/fireproof shingles, HSR.
1958, April  One lamb arrived, more expected soon, HSR.
1960, Oct.  Barn roof and wood trim repainted. Platform and steps at east side of stable rebuilt and treated for decay, HSR.
1965, April  Steps repainted, HSR.
1965, July  “Hitching post of informal design made and installed outside stable for the 4th of July pageant and horses.” HSR.
1965, Sept.  Electrical outlets added to stable, HSR.
1968, Aug.  Fire detecting wire added, HSR.
1970, July  Stable doors scraped and painted, HSR.
1971, Oct.  Temporary barricades for sheep installed, HSR.
1972  Lawsuit over Koppers shingles.
1974, May  South gate replaced with new locks throughout gate, HSR.
1975, Feb.  Alarm system installed at coach doorway, HSR.
1976, Oct.  Trim repainted on stable, plans to re-shingle w/ 33,000 new shingles, HSR.
1980, Aug.  Storage move to stable lofts. Desire to restore cobblestone floor, HSR.
1981, Oct.  Trench revealed 8” cobblestones near stable, HSR.
1981, Aug.  Wood trim repainted, HSR.
1985, Oct.  Circular plot in paddock found, possibly a well, similar to those at family kitchen which were “negative”. HSR.
1986, Oct.  South side of roof reshingled, old shingles removed. HSR.
1988, July  Report of cobbled stable yard which possibly “covered entire area between stable, kitchen garden wall, fence, and north lane”, HSR.
1988, Oct.  Postponing of finishing reshingling to match area roofs. HSR. Structural survey of mansion and outbuildings, plans for stable included (by Robert Silman & Assoc.), HSR.
1990, Sept.  Service order to replace roof shingles at North side. The shingles treated
with fire retardant and insect repellant (Koppers CZC (FR)) caused them to deteriorate prematurely. A lawsuit in 1972 caused the company to replace the ruined cypress shingles, a project which continues until today, HSR.

2001 The Eastern Door on the north side was removed because it was deteriorating. After the door was stripped it was noticed that over 2/3 of the wood was beyond repair and so it was decided that it should be rebuilt. All the old hardware was reused and the old door has been moved to the collection.
APPENDIX C:

MOUNT VERNON STABLE MEASURED DRAWINGS
(Completed by Carrie K. Schomig in 2003)
NORTH ELEVATION
THE MANSION STABLE - MOUNT VERNON
APPENDIX D:

MISC. MEASURED DRAWINGS
A (LUMBER ORIGINALLY POSTED ON THE BEAMS, CUT IN 17TH PERIOD)
B (ADDED ORIGINAL CRASHING BEAMS FOR SASH AND FIREPLACE)
C (LUMBER ORIGIANLLY POSTED ON THE BEAMS, CUT IN 17TH PERIOD)
D (ADDED ORIGINAL CRASHING BEAMS FOR SASH AND FIREPLACE)
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