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On Joe and the Burial Place(s) of the Enslaved at William & Mary

It is possible that in the 17th or 18th century W&M opened a burial ground on its 330 acre campus and that it buried there those it enslaved over some 172 years. We have no documentation of that, although we have several references to the College's providing coffins.¹ Since those record no further expenses such as transport to the grave or digging the grave, I presume there would have been no such expenses--other of our enslaved would undertake such tasks as part of their job.

Where such a burial ground (of some size) might be is impossible to know, at least so far. The [archeological dig](#) on Harrison Avenue, behind the old St. Bede Church, followed the right clues I think—ground that we thought was waste and had never been farmed; that lay at the rear of our property (like the 1859 cemetery near Blow Hall); that was near flowing water (reflecting African burial customs); and that was marked by periwinkle or English Ivy.² However, no evidence of burials was found.

¹ Bursar's Books, June 1817, "a Coffin for Lemon"; Kristin A. Zech notes an expenditure in 1766 of five shillings for a coffin for a black child ("So Well Endowed": Economic Support of The College of William and Mary During the Colonial Period." Honors Thesis. [History Department, College of William and Mary, 2001] p. 66). One other entry in the Faculty Minutes (Jan. 5, 1830; p. 462) refers to a funeral for one of our enslaved: "Ned belonging to the College having died the President is authorized to pay the necessary expenses of his Funeral." What these expenses were is not clear.

² See "Archaeological Assessment of a Site Near the Alumni House and the Early College Boundary, College of William and Mary, City of Williamsburg, Virginia," Prepared by William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research, Prepared for the Lemon Project, available at the "Research and Resources" sit of the Lemon Project.

Apart from the cemetery near Blow Hall opened by President Ewell and the Faculty in 1859, I know of only one other supposed burial or burials on campus, off the north west corner of the Wren Building (near the old site of the sundial); a knee joint from a "young man" and other bones were discovered in 1925 ([Flat Hat](#), April 10, 1925, pp. 1-8).

Emily Williams cites an unpublished paper by Ywone Edwards-Ingram as noting that though blacks made up more than 50% of Williamsburg's population in the 18th and 19th Centuries, "there is little evidence of their

But we have evidence, I think, that one of our enslaved workers, Joe,³ was perhaps buried off campus in roughly November 1837. An account book⁴ Thomas Roderick Dew kept for expenses to be reimbursed by the College contains this entry:

.50 cts for digging Joes Grave + .50 \$4 to R. Bucktrout 5 00

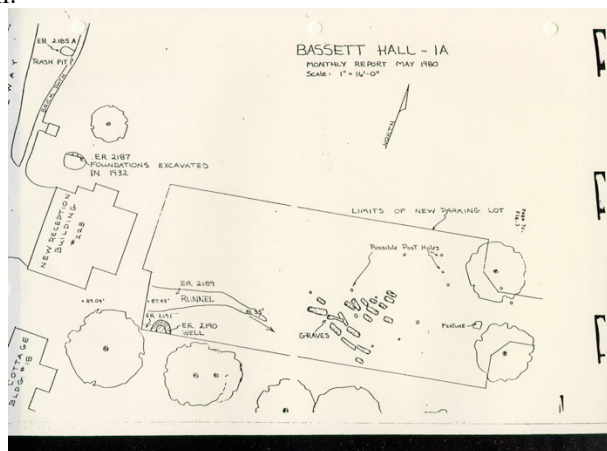
R. Bucktrout is Richard Manning Bucktrout whose later “[Day Book and Ledger](#)” records his business activities between 1850 and 1866, including income from burying Williamsburg’s dead, black and white, rich and poor, free and enslaved.

That Dew paid Bucktrout 50 cents to dig Joe’s grave and a further \$4.50 suggests to me that Joe was buried off campus in a coffin bought from Bucktrout and transported by him to the grave.

Why a burial would have been outsourced, I don’t know. As far as I can tell, whatever 18th century burial ground we might have had we would still have owned; if we had enslaved people available surely they would have taken the matter in hand. But if Joe had been hired from another owner, it’s possible he would not have been eligible for burial in a College burial ground. These questions remain mysteries to me.

burials” (p. 82), though “many [20] were buried on marginal land near College Landing” (p. 120; the figure of 20 graves, dating from between 1790 and 1820, is in footnote 103 and notes the discovery was made in connection with the 1976 extension of South Henry St.) (Emily Williams, “Stories in Stone: Memorialization, the Creation of History, and the Role of Preservation,” Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester, School of Archeology and Ancient History, 2018; in the book of the same title [Wilmington DE: Vernon Press, 2020] the quotations are on pp. 79 and 101 [I have not found in the book the footnote containing the figure of 20]).

Another burial site (likely antebellum) containing the graves of 18 African-Americans is located beneath the parking lot of Bassett Hall:



(map in Rockefeller Library)

The Debress family burial ground is close to the Williamsburg Inn swimming pool. Colonial Williamsburg in recent times has documented multiple burial at and near the original site of the First Baptist Church.

³ See Appendix A for more on Joe and his labors for the College.

⁴ In Swem, SCRC, “Office of the President, Thomas Roderick Dew Papers,” UA 2.05. The account book is Acc. 1983.12 in Oversize Box 1. See page 30.

But I do now think Joe was possibly, even likely, buried in a potter's field all but forgotten today, but which, I think, was a common burial ground before the opening of Cedar Grove in 1859. And if Joe was buried there, perhaps all those we enslaved over some 172 years were buried there.

The evidence that such a potter's field existed is not crystal clear, though I think it reasonable to assume that any town of a certain size would, in the nature of things, require a place to bury paupers.

Williamsburg was a city for 160 years before Cedar Grove opened, and, in the 19th century at least, did pay costs for the indigent (see [March 11, 1852](#); [October 30, 1856](#); [January 1862](#); [1862](#));⁵ I would guess the practice was necessary and common in earlier days as well.⁶

So what is the evidence for such a burial place?

Some of it may be the way Richard Manning Bucktrout refers to Cedar Grove (it had no such name during the time of his Daybook); he refers to it as the "new grave yard" (see [September 14, 1860](#), its first mention), the "new burying ground," "new burial ground" or the "new semitary" (see [September 19, 1860](#), [November 18, 1861](#), [November 8, 1861](#)) (and once as the "Wms [Williamsburg] Cimatary" [see [December 18, 1861](#)]).

"New" can be, of course, simply a fact, not something that distinguishes the burial ground from an "old" one. In one instance, however, I think that distinction may have been involved, for Bucktrout first wrote "the burial ground," and then went back to interpolate "new" — to my mind suggesting that he intended to distinguish two grounds (see [November 18, 1861](#)).⁷

⁵ Kelley Marian Brennan notes that in June 1832, the City paid Bucktrout "\$6 for making coffins for the city's poor" "The Bucktrout Funeral Home, a Study of Professionalization and Community Service," MA Thesis (History Department, College of William and Mary, 2007), p. 13 (<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1961795668/?pq-origsite=primo>).

⁶ Taylor Stoerner has told me that another site in Williamsburg was for the remains of those executed at the nearby gallows out Capitol Landing Road.

⁷ John Seel kindly shared with me several items which he found at CW's Rockefeller Library. One is a sketch map of Bassett Hall and the area east, west, and south. To the west and labeled as belonging to "J. W. Curtis" is land apparently enclosed by a fence, the southern border being labeled "outside fence." Immediately south is an area labeled "Old Burying Ground." See Appendix B.

"Old" in this instance might distinguish the ground from the new burying ground, or it might suggest the ground dates from earlier days. Either meaning is helpful to my argument.

John also gave me a copy of a *Virginia Gazette* essay (May 27, 1998) by Anne Cutler, a great-granddaughter of Richard Manning Bucktrout. She mentions the plat of Bassett Hall and dates it to "about 1868"; also she quotes an unpublished memoir by her aunt, Minnie Braithwaite Jenkins, about the "old Revolutionary burying ground, where soldiers of both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars were buried." Jenkins says that "a great many others" were buried there, speculating that those might include "Blackbeard's pirates."

Anne noted that "as a child walking 'in the graveyard in the woods in back of the homeplace,'" she came "across a newly dug grave ... with a headboard of wood with printing on it ... [and] a little mayonnaise jar with violets in it." Anne died in 2015 at the age of 97.

And before the opening of Cedar Grove, Bucktrout often specifies, as in the first instance of the phrase ([July 3 \[1851\]](#)), taking a body “to ground”; the meaning clearly is “to [the burial] ground.” In some few instances, Bucktrout says which burial ground (for example, [December 5, 1852](#)), but my guess is that the “ground” would be at least some of the time the cemetery I am positing here (see Appendix C).

Other evidence comes also from a 1931 interview with a professor at the College: “In an interview with Professor Peebles he said that he had been told that not only had the Bucktrout Cemetary [sic] in back of his house always been used as a burying ground for public charges and negroes, but that it had been used as a French Revolutionary cemetary [sic]” (see p. 9 [here](#)).⁸

An expanded version of the lore passed on to Professor Peebles was passed on too to Dorothy Jenkins Ross, whose second great grandfather was Benjamin Bucktrout. In a film of a 1986 visit to Colonial Williamsburg by Bucktrout’s descendants, family members visit the site where several modern relations are buried. As the camera pans towards Providence Hall and Anne Cutler’s house, Mrs. Ross says, “they say that it was the burial ground for the early Middle Plantation which was the village here before Williamsburg was ever established and as Virginia⁹ always said all statuses of people were buried here, prominent people, paupers, insane people, and especially there were a lot of burials here right after the Civil War”¹⁰ (this characterization suggests, obviously, a burial site something more than a potter’s field).

That the French soldiers who died locally after the siege of Yorktown were buried there suggests to me indeed that the site was already a place for burials. The soldiers could not have

The essay also quotes from an unpublished oral history by Anne’s mother, Virginia B. Haughwout: “in the area of the potters’ [sic] field in back of the Bucktrout-Braithwaite-Peebles property on Francis Street ... [sic] some French military insignia had been uncovered during plowing.”

Anne told me [once](#) that her brother “grew up playing amongst the graves and at least once came home with some French military insignia.”

The [Virginia Gazette](#) of June 19, 1931 commented that the “well-nigh obliterated French soldier grave yard is nearly a mile [south east] from the site of the Palace.”

⁸ One other piece of evidence is surely inferential but perhaps relevant. In February 1859 a local black, Pleasant Baker, [killed himself](#) at the site of the soldiers burial ground. Certainty is of course impossible, but five years earlier, July 5, 1854, Baker’s [daughter had died](#) and might have been buried near where he killed himself. Perhaps his choice of the site reflected a deep and continuing sorrow.

⁹ Virginia Haughwout (1876-1956), Anne Cutler’s mother and owner of the land under discussion.

¹⁰ At 1:42:36 in “Colonial Williamsburg 1986: Legend of the Bucktrouts and Braithwaites,” produced by Sylvia Jenkins Lamon, assisted by Bruce Cleveland Rodamor, researched by Dorothy Jenkins Ross, narrated by the three of them, video editing by David Bruce Lamon. I accessed this family film on YouTube, May 8, 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmUNjEVbNxI&feature=youtu.be> (a digital copy has been promised to Special Collections, Swem Library).

been buried in an Anglican churchyard, nor in family or private burial grounds. But burying them at or adjacent to a potter's field would have been a rational choice (implying no disrespect whatsoever).¹¹

All this, I think, points to the existence of a largely forgotten potter's field and may point to the burial place of Joe in 1837.

If a potter's field was in existence where I think it was in both the 18th and 19th centuries, and if one of our enslaved laborers, even if on hire, was buried there, it seems to me, as I have said, at least possible that other of those we enslaved might be there as well.

Last thoughts: [Ivor Noel Hume](#) cites a 1661 law that "required every parish to provide three or four spaces [sic] to be fenced for 'publique buriall.'" That law seems particularly to focus on the burial of free and enslaved blacks and seems to require each parish to set up some form of a potter's field:

ACT XV.

Buriall of Servants or others privately prohibited. (b)

WHEREAS the private buriall of servants & others give occasion of much scandall against diverse persons and sometimes not undeservedly of being guilty of their deaths, from which if the persons suspected be innocent there can be noe vindication **(c)** if guilty noe punishment, by reason they are for the most part buried without the knowledge or view of any others then such of the family, as by neerenesse of relation (as being husband wife or children **(d)** are unwilling) or as servants are fearfull to make discovery if murther were **(e)** committed: ffor remedy whereof as alsoe for takeing away that barbarous custome of exposing the corps of the dead (by makeing their graves in comon and unfenced places) to the prey of hoggs and other vermine, *Be it enacted* that there be in every parish three or fower or more places appoynted (according to the greatnes or littlenes of the same) to be sett apart and fenced in, for places of publique buriall, for that precinct, And further that before the corps, and if none, yet according to the decent custome of all Christendome they may accompany itt to the ground, **(f)** *And be it further enacted* that noe persons **(g)** whether free or servants shall be buried in any other place then those soe appointed, unles such

¹¹ As an aside, let me note a frequent practice seems to have been to bury people not far from where they died; the French soldiers died at the Wren Building hospital; it strikes me that if the College had had a cemetery on its campus they perhaps ought to have been buried there. That they weren't might be inferential evidence that no such burial ground existed.

who by their own appointment in their life time have signified their desires of being interred in any particular place elsewhere.

From: <http://vagenweb.org/hening/vol02-03.htm>

Will Molineux has pointed out to me that a potter's field is sanctified ground, appropriate for Christian burials, and suggests that the College, as an ecclesiastical institution, would have offered a Christian burial to those it enslaved, whether on its land or at a potter's field. Fred Boelt has emphasized to me the lack of any evidence whatsoever, but notes that plantation owners habitually designated an area for the burial of their enslaved; he suggests that for residents of Williamsburg living on urban lots with no access to such areas, the hundreds of those they enslaved might well have been served by some kind of central or common burial ground (see Appendix C).

Appendix A

On Joe and his life of forced labor for the College, we have a fair number of records, more in some ways, actually, than for Lemon. I reproduce those below; they raise as many questions as they answer.

It's not entirely clear to me that Joe was enslaved by the College. William and Mary appears to pay a tax on him (if my reading is correct) and pays for his funeral, both of which would seem to suggest ownership and responsibility. But a much earlier arrangement (January 1, 1780 [sic, for 1781]), as the College hired out one of its own enslaved, suggests that the person doing the hiring could be held responsible for the tax.¹²

"College Servant," although it seems to imply College ownership, seems a kind of title or status that can apply to a man enslaved and leased to the College—at least so suggests a number of entries in the Faculty minutes about George, leased from Professor Millington.¹³

Whatever his status, Joe seems to be owed clothing and meat; a monthly payment of \$2 appears to be a payment to Joe in lieu of meat.¹⁴

There may well be two Joes at issue here, at least so I conclude from the first entry below, July 31, 1827. I think "Joe the College servant" is the subject of the later entries (though I cannot be certain) and is not the Joe at the same meeting who is hired out for the remainder of 1827. Dew's entry for October 18, 1836 also seems to distinguish "Mary Gavins Joe" from, perhaps, another Joe.

I have not checked transcriptions from the Faculty Minutes (those transcriptions below are the ones that do not have screenshots of the original entries; those that have screenshots are from the Thomas R. Dew account book).

¹² "Journal of the President and Masters or Professors of William and Mary College," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 15: 3 (Jan., 1907), p. 33.

¹³ From the Faculty Minutes:

p. 330, Jan. 17, 1843: "In the above accts a sum of One Hundred and fifty Dollars due to John Millington for the hire of George, the College servant was by mistake omitted; therefore ordered that he have permission to draw upon the Bursar for the same."

p. 385, Dec. 16, 1844: "Resolved that George the present College Servant should be again hired from Profr. Millington as collge Servt. For the year 1845 on the same terms as before."

p. 420, Jan. 5, 1846: "George, hired heretofore of Prof. Millington, as the College Servant, was hired for the year 1846 for the sume of \$150, Prof. Millington paying all his expenses."

¹⁴ The terms for support such as food and clothing were known in Williamsburg as "found." The OED records a meaning along these lines as "obsolete":

b. To endow, make provision for the maintenance of (persons who are to perform certain functions). *Obsolete*.

But in the Bucktrout daybook the term appears several times, e.g.:

Dec ^r 7 th 1850	Messers Sands and Cowles	Paid
	to 6 days worck of my man	6.00
	William at \$1 a day and found	

July 31, 1827 (p. 279): “Resolved that Joe the College servant be placed under the Control of Mr Gresham the Steward, and that he be requested to make him cut sufficient pine and oak wood for the use of the College, and keep him employed in and about the College, and the Garden assigned to the President when not engaged in cutting Wood; that the Steward be requested to have the wood cut by Joe when sufficiently seasoned hauled up, for which he shall be paid what is reasonable—and that the Wood be stored away and secured against pillage.”

July 31, 1827 (p. 279): [The Rev. William H. Wilmer,¹⁵ President had just died] “Resolved that as far as the College is concerned Mr. Edloe may have the Services of Joe (hired by Dr. Wilmer at \$50) for the Residue of the year, he paying \$20.03 Cents for hire, and furnishing 5/12 of his Clothing, and that the College will pay the Residue of his Hire, and furnish 7/12 of his Clothing.”

Feb. 28, 1832 (p. 111): “Resolved that Joe be permitted to cultivate for his own use one Square of that part of the College Garden which is not appropriated as a garden by the Steward.”

On page 29, headed “W^m & Mary College to T R Dew Debtor 1836-37,” is an entry for October 18, 1836:

<i>To Mary Gavins Joe, for Augst. Sep. & Oct. ^{Nov.} 1836</i>	19	5 00
To Mary Gavins Joe, for Aug st . Sep. & Oct. ^{Nov.} 1836		5 00

Also on p. 29, in several entries beginning in January 1837:

<i>To Mrs Debriss for Joe's clothes \$3.50. 20th Jan'y \$16.85 to Mahone</i>	20 35
To Mrs Debriss for Joe's clothes \$3.50. 20 th Jan'y \$16.85 to Mahone	20.35

<i>To 110 lbs of pork 10 cts per pound Feb'y 10 for Joe</i>	11 00
<i>To Joe for Feb'y \$2 for Joe To \$10 advanced to Mr Morris 22nd March</i>	12 00
<i>7th March to \$2 for Joe To \$10 advanced to Mr Morris 22nd March</i>	12 00
<i>23rd March to \$2 to Joe for meat to \$32.10 paid to D. Galt 6th April</i>	34 10
<i>8th April to \$2 to Joe for month Paid to Wise \$16.75 April 8</i>	18 75

<To> To 110 lbs of pork 10 cts per pound Feb'y 10 for Joe	11 00
To Joe for Feb'y \$2 for Joe To \$10 advanced to Mr Morris 22 nd March	12 00
7 th March to \$2 to Joe for meat to \$32.10 paid to D. Galt 6 th April	12 00
23 rd March to \$2 to Joe for meat to \$32.10 paid D. Galt 6 th April	34 10
8 th April to \$2 to Joe for month [?] Paid to Wise \$16.75 April 8	18 75

¹⁵ Incidentally, Wilmer, according to Wikipedia, expended much of his income on purchasing and freeing enslaved people.

To \$2 to Joe for May To \$12.08 paid to Joseph Grisham on a/c Mistake in Mt. 14 08
 To \$1.50 to Joe instead of meat To \$6.75 to Morris 15th May 8 25

To \$2 to Joe for May To \$12.08 paid to Joseph Grisham [?] on a/c Mistake in [illeg.] 14 08
 To \$1.50 to Joe instead of meat. To \$6.75 to Morris 15th May 8 25

[from the Faculty Minutes]:

p. 78, June 29, 1837: "To Mr Jesse Cole for blacksmithing dated 31st Inst last \$6:25."
 "Messrs Sheldon & Maupin... Joe's Cloathing Paint &c. to 29th June 1837 11.13"

p. 86, July 6, 1837: "The following orders were passed in respect to repairs of the College Premises, and were to be attended to during the Vacation:

That Joe the College Servant is required to cut four cords of wood weekly during the recess, and that Mr. Pryor the constable be employed to measure such wood and see that this order is fulfilled.

Likewise that Joe whitewash and clean the College chambers and Lecture rooms."

On p. 30, under "W^m & Mary College to Thomas R Dew Debtor 1837-38," are several entries:

To \$2 to Joe for July To \$6.75 expenses of Mr Parks To \$5 to Mr Brown 13 75

To \$2 to Joe for July to \$6.75 expenses of Mr Parks To \$5 to Mr Brown [?] 13 75

To \$2 to Joe for Oct to \$1.75 for scouring College 6th Oct. 3 75
 To tax on Joe & Poor Levy, 98 cts Paid Mr Millington \$74.63 75 61
 To Dr Cole on a/c Richardson \$7.63 to Pryor for supervising Joe 12 63
 To 4\$ for Manual of Class in Lit. \$2.50 for paper \$2 for Joe Oct. 8 50
 To \$2 to Mr Debriss for Joe's Clothes .25 cents for stove pipe, put up 2 25

To \$2 to Joe for Octr to \$1.75 for scouring College 6th Oct. 3 75

To tax [?] on Joe & Poor Levy [?], 98 cts Paid Mr Millington \$74.63 75 61

To Dr Cole on a/c Richardson \$7.63 to Pryor for supervising Joe ^{\$5.} 12 63

To 4\$ for Manuel of Class in Lit. \$2.50 for paper \$2 for Joe Oct. 8 50

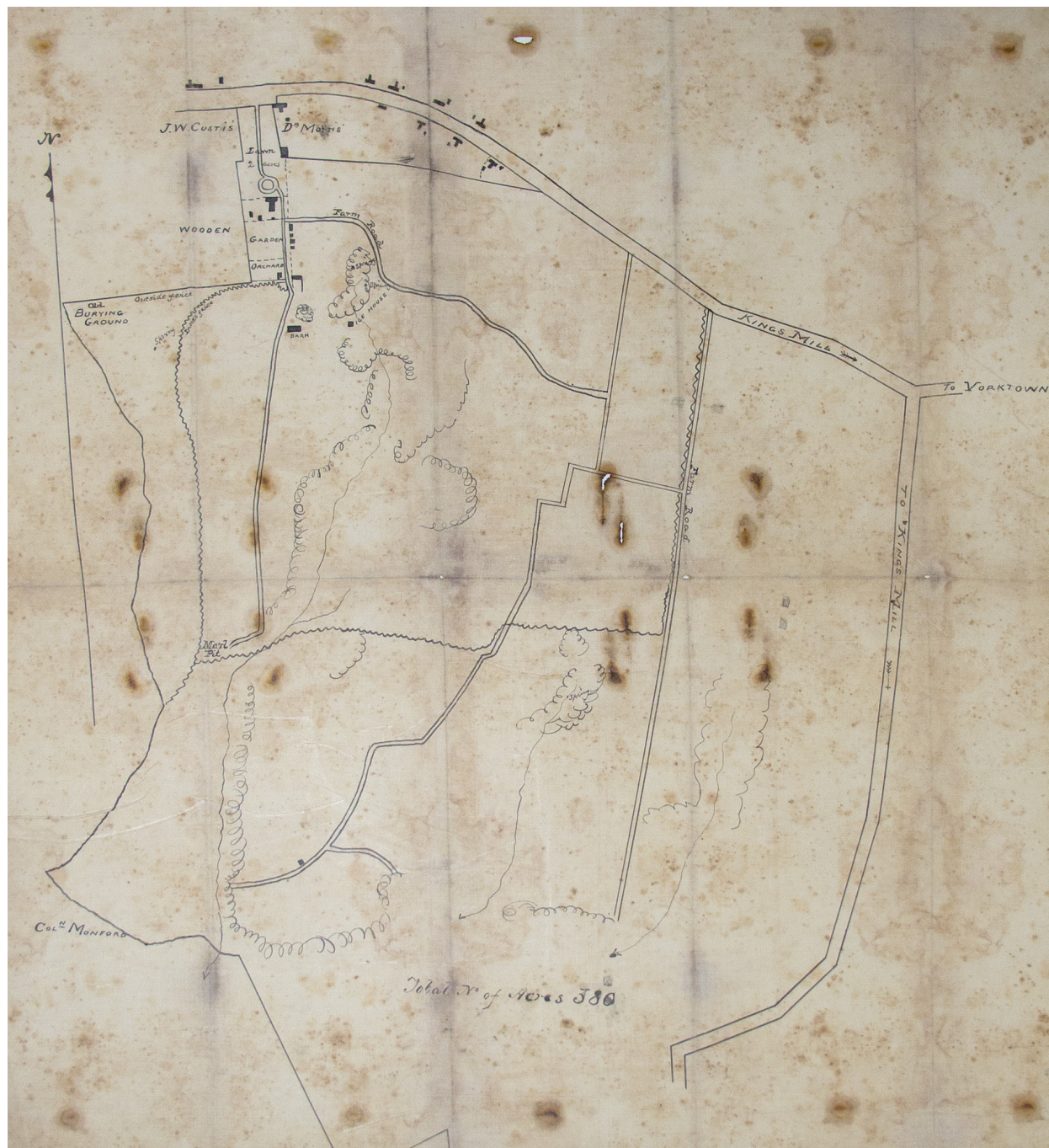
To \$2 to M^{rs} Debriss for Joe's Clothes .25 cents for stove pipe, put up 2 25

.50 cts for digging Joe's Grave + .50 \$4 to R. Bucktrout 5 00

.50 cts for digging Joes Grave + .50 \$4 to R. Bucktrout 5 00

Appendix B

Below (used with permission) is the map John Seel was given at Rockefeller Library. Although Anne Cutler says in her *Gazette* essay that it dates from “about 1868,” its [description in the Rockefeller Library catalogue](#) (“MS 1956.5 2X; Plat of ‘Bassett Hall’”) suggests it dates from “post 1869.” It is described as “probably a crude copy of an earlier plat. See Oversize MS /00/1869.” The older plat does not include the label “Old Burying Ground” but the lettering here seems consistent throughout so the label seems likely to have been added as the copy was made.



Plat of Bassett Hall, Williamsburg, Virginia, circa 1869, accession #MS1956.5 2X
Special Collections, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

Appendix C

The question of where Williamsburg's urban citizens buried their dead before Cedar Grove opened in 1859 is hard to answer definitively, but Fred's point may be supported by entries in the Bucktrout Daybook. I think an argument can be made that the burial ground I posit might have received the remains, in the 19th century at least, of all manner of people. If so, that might have been a continuation of practices from earlier times.

As I noted on pp. 3-4, Bucktrout rarely mentions where burials took place. His general phrase, "to the ground," is generic, i.e. "to the [burial] ground," the site of the grave.

But there are exceptions. The Galt family's Phibby, for example, was carried, "boy horse and cart," to her grave "in the country at farm" ([November 16, 1855](#))—not, by the way, to the Galt cemetery now in Bicentennial Park. And the funeral of R. R. Garrett ([January 17 1855](#)) was "on back River," in what is now the Winder-Garrett Cemetery at NASA Langley, where Bucktrout "carried the coffin down to huse."

Some Williamsburg residents did have family burial grounds on their property, e.g. the Saunders family, close to the Governor's Palace.¹⁶ And for others, we can deduce a likely burial site from external evidence.

Catherine Debriss ([August 22, 1857](#)), for example, had a coffin made for a small child, who, presumably, was then buried in the Debriss burial ground close to what is now the Williamsburg Inn pool. Same for her son ([September 19, 1859](#)).

Louisa Mercer Waller Cosnahan ([October 30, 1856](#)) lived in the Waller House and was buried in the Waller burial ground there (see FindaGrave:

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/9100716/louisa-mercercosnahan>).

¹⁶ Parke Rouse noted the Saunders remains were reinterred at Bruton Parish Church ("Bruton's Old Tombstones Repaired," *Daily Press*, October 10, 1990; <https://www.dailypress.com/news/dp-xpm-19901010-1990-10-10-9010110068-story.html>).

For a survey of family burial grounds in the Restored Area, see Caitlin Verboon and Thomas H. Taylor, "Historic Area Graveyard Study," Colonial Williamsburg Library Research Report Series, RR-383 (2005).

Several burials have been unearthed at the site of the Anderson Armoury, two in 2011 dating from ca. 1750-1778 and two in 1975 dating from about 1830; for more on the 2011 discoveries, see Michael L. Blakey and Christopher Crain "Analysis of Human Remains Recovered from James Anderson's Public Armoury," Colonial Williamsburg" (2011) (<https://scholarworks.wm.edu/ihbpub/5>) Jack Gary furnished the date (e-mail to the author, July 1, 2020); for information on the 1975 discoveries I am also indebted to Jack Gary, for a copy of what appears to be an appendix to Robert Foss, *Report on the 1975 Archeological Excavations at the James Anderson House*, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1977, Leonard E. Winter, "The Human Skeletons" (see p. 113).

The burial ground kitty-corner from Matthew Whaley School likely contains the coffin and case Robert Armistead had made for his “little boy” ([July 23, 1855](#)).

But although at least one resident on the Duke of Gloucester Street, Alexander Dunlop, did in 1866 bury a family member on his lot (see Emily Williams’ study in note 2), my guess is that most did not.

It seems to me unlikely, for example, that Charles Waller’s “old man Barnett” (with a charge for “horse & cart to cary it out” ([July 9, 1855](#)) was buried in the Waller cemetery. Mrs. Catherine Coleman (about 58 years old)¹⁷ paid ([March 11, 1854](#)) for “a coffin for small child & diggin grave & buried the same,” but probably not, I think, near where she lived, in the western front outbuilding of the Governor’s Palace.

Similarly, I doubt that Scervant Jones, living at what is now Merchants Square, buried a “black boy” ([May 9, 1855](#)) near his home, or that Lemuel Bowden, living at what is now the Armistead House, had a “small child” ([December 2, 1856](#)) buried on his lot.

And three payments by William Vest suggest to me burials away from his home for both those he enslaved (Aggy, [January 6, 1857](#), and Denis, [April 9, 1860](#)) and possibly his own son ([July 7, 1854](#)); that he paid for head and foot boards for Aggy suggests perhaps a more formal, less anonymous burial ground than a potter’s field.¹⁸

¹⁷ This and other details come from Carol Dubbs’ fine work in the Name Index to the Bucktrout Daybook.

¹⁸ Vest himself rests in Hollywood Cemetery; he was in 1893 buried temporarily in his own garden. But I can find no record of other burials there. Two Colonial Williamsburg Research Reports mention General McClellan admiration for Vest’s “lovely flower garden” when he was occupying the house in 1862: Helen Bullock, “Palmer House Historical Report, Block 9 Building 24 Lot 27 Originally entitled: ‘The Kerr House’” (1938), Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report Series – 1133, 1990, p. 5; Mary A. Stephenson, “Palmer House Historical Report, Block 9 Building 24 Lot 27 Originally entitled: ‘The Kerr House (Block 9 Colonial Lot 27 North)’” (1948), Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report Series – 1132, (1990), n.p.; see “Footnotes.”

According to the Hollywood Cemetery website, Vest’s re-interment took place November 21, 1894, the same date as the service for a five year old, William W. Vest. I deduce that this is the son mentioned above, his body disinterred from its first resting place in Williamsburg. Possibly the son had been buried in the garden too, awaiting the father’s death to be buried together in Richmond. If he was buried in the burial ground I posit, finding his remains almost 40 years later would suggest some orderly keeping of records.