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Speculations on Structures Once Near the Site of Lemon Hall

One of the most intriguing views of Williamsburg in antebellum days depicts a series of large and small structures along Jamestown Road, roughly between where Barrett Hall and Lemon Hall stand today.[1]

Made between 1859 and 1862 by James Austin Graham (1814/15-1878), the panorama presents Williamsburg as viewed roughly from where the law school is today and sweeps along the entire southern edge of town, from the Capitol on the east to, on the west, about the site of the College's Lemon Hall.

The structures I'm intrigued by are five two-storey frame buildings, each with a chimney and four (possibly five) smaller structures nearby, each also with a chimney. They are in a line stretching west, a bit south of a larger structure, seemingly a two-storey house with a steeply

[1] The pencil drawing, used with permission, is in the Folk Art Center Collection of Colonial Williamsburg, accession 1956.202.1 (the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Purchased through the intercession of Miss Mary Wall Christian, Williamsburg, VA, from four of her relatives: Mrs. R. L. Gilliam, Sr., Mrs. A. J. Broughton, Mrs. Lelia C. Lawson, and Mrs. Julia C. Comins).

Although Graham had been committed as "insane" to the Eastern Lunatic Asylum in 1855, there is no reason to doubt his reliability in depicting what he saw. The catalogue description of the panorama (the source of all that I know about Graham) notes that the perspective from where he must have stood is "fairly accurate" and that "the details of his south view of the town of Williamsburg are quite small, but their precision has led architectural historials [sic] to identify many structures with assurance" (credit for identifying a number of buildings is given to "Paul Buchanan, former Director of Architectural Research for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation").

I am deeply indebted in this paper to an expert on the housing of enslaved people, Dr. Douglas Sanford, Professor Emeritus of Historic Preservation at the University of Mary Washington. Professor Sanford generously read a draft of this paper and offered a number of compelling observations in an email to me (November 13, 2019; see Appendix A, used with permission). Part of the earlier draft forms Appendix B.

I am grateful too for support and information from a number of colleagues at the College: Jody Allen, Joe Jones, Susan Kern, and David Lewes. Any errors of fact or interpretation are mine alone.

angled roof and a chimney (possibly two chimneys) at its west wall; near that appear to be two dependencies.[2]

All appear to be behind a five or six strand wire fence[3] that extends east to a point where more structures are depicted.

[2] It is possible that the two apparent dependencies may be a sixth clustering of the same sort as the first five. And at the very far left of the panorama a very blurred representation may be one more structure.

This further group of buildings stretches roughly from where Jefferson Hall is today to the Wren Building and the Brafferton; the structures appear to be domestic dwellings with chimneys. The cluster closest to the College (with two towers that existed only between the 1859 and 1862 fires) seems to have a number of buildings with chimneys. Closer still to the College are several buildings apparently on the south side of Jamestown Road.

[3] I can account for the lines in no other way though, as Dr. Sanford noted to me, wire fencing appears not to develop until after the Civil War. Burt Meyers has suggested to me that possibly what is represented is pole fencing.

One of these appears to be crenellated and partially blocks the view of the Brafferton and the President's House. This may be the Steward's house that was destroyed during the Civil War. I know of no other representation of it, but the structure that replaced it, acquired by the College in 1894 and called the Deanery, was crenellated,[4] as possibly the Steward's House had been.

Of all these buildings, the ones at the left are at the center of a mystery. Could they or some of them have housed enslaved people, possibly those enslaved or hired by the College itself?

Professor Sanford (see note 1) waved me away from thinking the larger structures might have housed the enslaved: "we do see plantations with 'streets' and 'rows' of aligned outbuildings and slave quarters, but usually the slave quarters are smaller structures, similar to the small, one-story buildings seen in the Graham drawing. Right now, I cannot think of an example, whether existing or documented historically, with multiple two-story buildings." And he offered an intriguing possibility: "I think the smaller structures could be slave-related buildings, either cabins or perhaps, kitchen-quarters."

Professor Sanford made a further observation, that we may be seeing here an "institutional landscape":

> the five, 2-story buildings could represent larger housing units (dormitory-like), while the smaller buildings could be supporting kitchen-quarters, with slaves employed there to supply food and/or other services for the large buildings. A similar arrangement existed at the University of Virginia (within parts of Jefferson's academical village) wherein some students lived in what were called 'hotels,' which had small support structures occupied by slaves behind and nearby.

That suggestion drove me to look into where during ante-bellum times the students at the College were housed. The answer is that most boarded in the College itself, i.e. in the Wren

[4] See Swem's Special Collections Research Center Wiki, "Deanery." https://scdbwiki.swem.wm.edu/wiki/index.php/Deanery

Building, but others boarded in the town.[5]

In seeking further, in the minutes of the Faculty, I discovered a long entry about the sale of the very land (see p. 12) our mystery structures occupy. The sale of that land in 1847/48 seems to have revealed some friction between the Faculty and the Board of Visitors[6] and the Faculty had to justify the sale, as recorded in the minutes of March 3, 1848:

> The following Resolution of the Visitors was communicated to the Faculty.
> Resolved that the Faculty be requested to furnish to the Board of Visitors the contracts for the sale of College lands adjacent to the College, and which contracts were reported by President Saunders to the Faculty on the 29th of November, 1847, and the reasons for entering into such contracts; and furthermore whether such contracts be not in contravention of the Statute enacted by the Visitorial Board on the 6th of July 1825 entitled 'A Statute establishing a table in College.[']
> Whereupon On motion it was resolved to make the following reply—
> In reply to the inquiry of the Board of Visitors relative to the sale of the College lands the Faculty would respectfully submit the following statement; transmitting at the same time the contracts called for.
> The reasons for entering into the contracts were the following.
> 1. The existing income of the College was insufficient in the opinion of the Faculty after mature deliberation to support the establishment with six Professors: and there was absolutely no other source of increased income than the lands adjacent to the College.
> 2. An opportunity offered to make what was considered an advantageous sale of these lands and it was not certain that if the matter were delayed such an opportunity would come again.
> 3. The advantage arising to the College from the use made of these lands, was not, in the opinion of the Faculty, by any means commensurate with that which would ensue from

[5] See Document no. 31 in the Journal of the House of Delegates of the Commonwealth of Virginia (Richmond: Samuel Shepherd, 1835), pp. 10+. The Professor of Humanity boarded students (p. 17) and "the College building is calculated to accommodate from 40 to 50 students": the professors "have indeed the right to make use of apartments in the College building; but this right has not been exercised for many years, it being more convenient to them to reside in the town. This right too if exercised would necessarily abridge the capacity of the building to accommodate students" (p.22).

[6] David Lewes has reminded me that the friction between the Board and the Faculty was connected to a crisis following the death of College president,Thomas Roderick Dew in 1846 and disagreements over the appointment of Archibald Peachy, son of a member of the Board, as Professor of Moral Philosophy (see WMCAR 15, p. 11).

making the income of the College meet the expenses. The only use made of the land was to induce a College Steward to take Boarders at $130 for the Session instead of $150 which is the amount charged by Boarding houses in town: and the Faculty could find no reason for having two rates of boarding established. The Faculty intended still to retain a control over the rate of board by an arrangement with whomsoever should be the College Steward to charge $150 and no more: at which sum they intended to recommend to the Visitors to fix the rate of board.

As to the sale of these lands contravening the Statute upon the subject of the table in College the Faculty did not think that such was the effect of the sale; for that Statute allots to the Steward rent free so much land 'as the Faculty may direct and assign to him.' This clause they considered gave them a discretion which they employed with a view to the interests of the College.
The Faculty will add that the sale was made after consultation with the present Steward and with his consent: They remark also that (altho' by the contract with Mr. Maupin he was to pay $18 [?] per acre) in consequence of a subsequent arrangement whereby he is to have conveyed to him a small piece of land which was at first to be reserved, he is to pay $15 per acre for the whole land which he has purchased.[7]

As I read the account, the Faculty had allowed the Steward to board students on the land at a rate of $130 per session, less than the rate, $150, charged elsewhere in Williamsburg. The implication, I think, is that perhaps some part of the $130 was rebated to the College, but that with expenses still not covered, the Faculty felt the need to sell the land to raise funds. Moreover, it looks to me too that there was an agreement that the buyer would continue to allow the Steward to use the existing structures to board students at an increased rate of $150 per

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[7] "Faculty Minutes, Book Five, 1846-1883." Swem Library, Special Collections Research Center, March 3, 1848, p. 67. That there were two sales of land is indicated in the Faculty Minutes for July 10, 1848 (p. 92): "A deed to Saml. F. Bright for a Tract of Land adjacent to the College containing 132. acres 2 Roods and 21 50/100 perches was executed and ordered to be acknowledged before the Clerk of the County Court of James City. Also a deed to John M. Maupin for a Tract of Land adjacent to the College containing 147 acres 3 roods 22 55/100 perches was executed and ordered to be acknowledged before the Clerk of the County Court of James City."

session; that would allow an "increased income … [from] the lands adjacent to the College," i.e., "making the income of the College meet the expenses." In this reading, the College would both realize a sum from the sale of the land and an improved cash flow from the Steward's boarding students at an increased fee. That "the sale was made after consultation with the present Steward and with his consent" suggests concern that students' boarding fees would continue to go to the Steward.

In any case, the minutes imply structures to board students on the land at issue from before 1847, presumably the same structures pictured by Graham in 1859/62.

But there are complexities in all this yet to be resolved. As it happens, the William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research has produced three reports[8] that document the ownership of the land under review over the years; one of the reports includes the results of shovel tests of the area before Lemon Hall was built.

The evidence in these reports, documentary and archaeological, is complicated, even conflicting, and may lead to as many questions as answers. The long and the short of it is that the reports find no other evidence for these structures from the 1840's into, perhaps, the 1860's—there is evidence of a domestic site, but only one that dates from the late 18th century into the early 19th. If the buildings in Graham's panorama housed students and possibly enslaved people in the smaller structures, there is, remarkably, so far no evidence of them in tax records or the ground.[9]

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[8] Elizabeth J. Monroe and David W. Lewes, Archaeological Survey of the Proposed Barksdale Dormitory Site, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, WMCAR Project No. 04-03, hereafter WMCAR O4.

Thomas F. Higgins, III, and David W. Lewes, Archaeological Survey of the Proposed Alumni House Expansion Project Area, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, VDHR File No. 2014-0700, WMCAR Project No. 14-11, hereafter WMCAR 14.

Elizabeth J. Monroe and David W. Lewes, Archaeological Assessment of a Site near the Alumni House and the Early College Boundary, College of William and Mary, City of Williamsburg, Virginia WMCAR Project No. 15-07, hereafter WMCAR 15.

[9] Joe Jones directs attention to Doug Sanford's comment in item 6 of Appendix A (pp. 10-11) that artifacts do not always immediately identify a particular ethnic or racial group, that the items recovered are common to many sites, white as well as black. He notes too that the absence of evidence for the structures in the WMCAR and Outlaw reports

I survey the evidence in Appendix B for the same reason I provide the drawing panels by Graham, as a spur to further research.

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may be more a consequence of the effects of landscape modification, ground disturbance, and deposition of spoils and fill on top of previous surface associated with 20th-century redevelopment of Barksdale Field area (i.e., reflects the complex reality of the archaeological record at the site) than a reduced potential that the structures and slaves occupied the site in the mid-19th century.

Appendix A

An expert on the housing of enslaved people, Dr. Douglas Sanford, Professor Emeritus of Historic Preservation at the University of Mary Washington, generously read an earlier draft (see Appendix B) of this paper and offered a number of important and compelling observations in an email to me November 13, 2019 (I have re-keyed the page numbers cited to the present essay):

> 1. As mentioned earlier, in reviewing the Graham drawing I find the five, aligned, two-story frame buildings to be highly unusual for a plantation setting. We do see plantations with "streets" and "rows" of aligned outbuildings and slave quarters, but usually the slave quarters are smaller structures, similar to the small, one-story buildings seen in the Graham drawing. Right now, I cannot think of an example, whether existing or documented historically, with multiple two-story buildings.
> 2. Oppositely, I think the smaller structures could be slave-related buildings, either cabins or perhaps, kitchen-quarters. I can clearly see three small buildings and I think a fourth towards the left (west) end of the alignment, which looks fainter or blurred. Another small building exists closer to the larger house to the right (east). All of these buildings have end chimneys.
>
> Such purposeful alignments and similar construction practices for this type of slave building usually were associated with larger-scale plantations and wealthier owners dealing with substantial numbers of enslaved African Americans.
>
> Terry, at one point I think you refer to the two-story buildings as cabins also, but those structures are much larger and more substantial than cabins.
>
> 3. As mentioned earlier, the other possibility is that the drawing shows some sort of institutional landscape, which could bring up a William and Mary association, although that seems a slight possibility from the available historical documents. Anyway, what I mean is that the five, 2-story buildings could represent larger housing units (dormitory-like), while the smaller buildings could be supporting kitchen-quarters, with slaves employed there to supply food and/or other services for the large buildings. A similar arrangement existed at the University of Virginia (within parts of Jefferson's academical

village) wherein some students lived in what were called "hotels," which had small support structures occupied by slaves behind and nearby.

4. Tax assessment information (pg. 13): the rise in assessment values between 1852 and 1857/61 is intriguing. But obviously, what exact property improvements caused the increase is unknown, as Terry notes. But if several buildings were constructed (like the 5 to 10 shown in the drawing), I think the increase would be more than $200.

5. FYI, I did not find any insured slave buildings for the Bright family in the Mutual Assurance Society (MAS) of Virginia database. Again, I only looked at slave-related buildings and thus, the Bright's may have insured other buildings. But I did not find any Williamsburg examples of insured slave buildings in my research.

From this research I found that slave buildings were insured for a considerable range of costs. But first, understand that the insured values reflected the cost of replacing the buildings' materials, not market or real estate values. Thus, slave buildings, which varied in size, number of stories, materials, etc., ranged from $100 to over $1200. Many of the examples were brick buildings in urban contexts (especially Richmond and Petersburg), so were more substantial investments. Still, most examples were in the $100 to $300 range.

For your questions about building costs, Terry, you can use this information to a degree. I will add that the MAS did not insure buildings that did not meet a $100 threshold (of materials). In that regard, I did not find a single example of an insured log cabin in the nearly 300 slave buildings I located within this database. In other words, they did not consider small log cabins worth $100. So for $200, someone in the mid-19th century probably could get 2-3 cabins constructed.

6. Artifacts potentially associated with enslaved people (pg. 16): I'm sure you and Joe [Jones, WMCAR] have discussed this point, but many of the artifacts recovered from archaeological sites cannot immediately identify a certain class or ethnic group. As we have seen on many slave-related sites, most of the artifacts (window glass, nails, glass wares, ceramics, etc.) are the same as what you find on non-slave or non-African American sites. Plus, artifacts considered more "African" or "African American" need to be recovered from secure contexts (specific features, rather than in plowed, disturbed

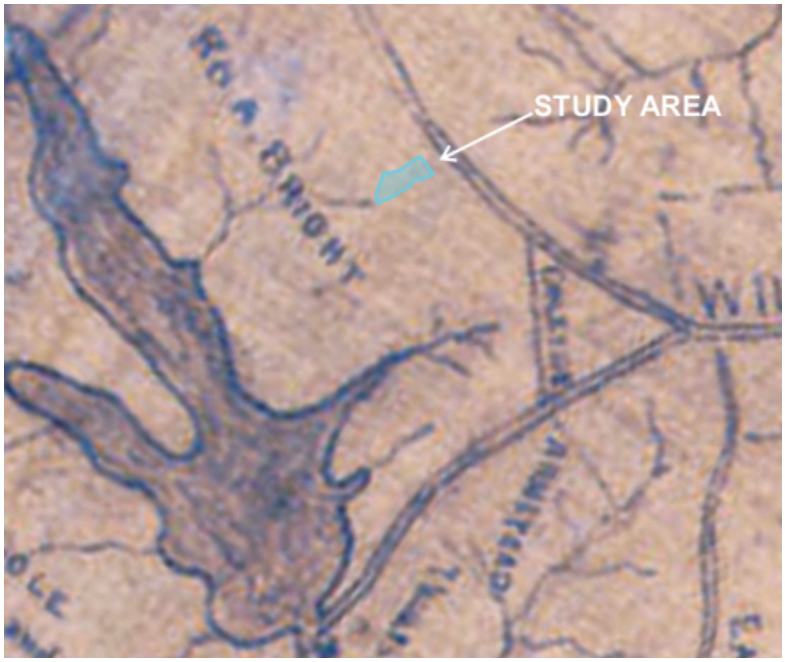
contexts). In the main, only further, comparative analysis serves to clarify social, ethnic, and cultural differences.

In an earlier email (October 31, 2019), Dr. Sanford queried whether what I see as wire fencing was likely given that wire fencing apparently developed after the date of the drawing. That had crossed my mind too, but the lines in the drawing seem hard to account for in any other way.

Appendix B

[n.b. This appendix reproduces the text of part of an earlier draft of this article; in that draft I was working under the presumption that the larger structures might have housed enslaved people. I retain the original wording, even though my presumption has changed, in order to show what Professor Sanford was commenting on.]

The land formed part of the original 330 acres the College owned in 1693, but Samual F. Bright bought it from the College in October 1847 when he expanded his New Hope Farm, which was northwest of the Alumni House area, with a "132.5-acre College tract" (WMCAR 15, p. 11). The description of the bounds of the property appears to show "open land" starting 616 yards along now Jamestown Road from "Mill Pond," i.e., Lake Matoaka, with the "commencement of open lands to the corner at College lot" being 594 yards (p.10). There is no plat of the land (p. 11), but an 1871 map "shows the boundary between the Bright property and the reduced College lands" (Figure 7, p. 12) (disregard "study area"):



During the colonial era, WMCAR 04 suggests, "the … area probably served as farmland"; and it was anticipated that possibly an archeological survey might uncover at most "traces of outlying agricultural buildings such as stables or barns" (p. 9). The report reviews the few early maps of the area: "according to these maps the project area consisted of open land,

possibly under cultivation by the Bright family" (p. 9). And it cites an 1862 "Union Army map of the area [that] lacks any evidence of structures nearby" (p.9).

Other documentary evidence also seems to suggest that the land lacked any taxable buildings.

In 1849, according to tax assessments cited in WMCAR 15, taxes on the 132.5 acres purchased from the College were "assessed on the land alone; there were no buildings on the property" (p. 13). Assessments in 1850 were unchanged; the 1851 assessment indicated that "no additional construction had occurred the previous year." In 1851, the building value from New Hope Farm "declined to $650, and then rose to $800 in 1852 and remained unchanged through 1856." But "from 1857 through 1861, the building value was $1000" (p. 13).

Where this increase of $200 came from is not clear; it "could reflect improvements to existing buildings or the addition of minor structures" (p. 13). "Existing buildings" would have been on the New Hope Farm property, but new "minor structures" might have been on the 132.5 College tract and might, perhaps, have been cabins for the workers enslaved by Samuel Bright. WMCAR 14 does allow that "the only buildings that may have been constructed on this tract were agricultural buildings or possibly slave quarters" (p. 13), but the possibility is offered tepidly: "even these may have been built on the New Hope lands to the northwest, which he [Bright] had owned prior to the 132-acre purchase from the College (James City County Land Tax Records 1848–1861)" (p. 13).

In any case, all the structures appear to have soon disappeared, for "the 1865 land tax list indicates that no buildings were standing on the [combined] property" and in 1867 and 1868 Robert Bright, the then owner, paid taxes on a combined 463 acres, "but none of the taxes were for buildings on the still-desolate landscape" (p. 13).

So we have a mystery: a sketch from ca. 1859 showing a row of five or six reasonably substantial structures with brick chimneys, but tax documents recording no structures on the land

before, possibly, some "minor structures" in 1857, with all such structures gone or worthless by 1865.

I don't know what construction costs in 1857 might have been for cabins for enslaved workers. Could $200 build five such structures? Possibly: WMCAR 15 cites the building of a "negro quarter" at New Hope Farm for $60 in 1840 (p. 9). But if the structures under discussion were built in 1857, it's possible that with the effective end of local slavery under Federal occupation,[10] the cabins might have become worthless in terms of taxes; possibly they were even destroyed during the war itself.

WMCAR 04 offers evidence that contradicts and complicates things, for it offers archeological evidence that in fact the structures in Graham's drawing did exist and perhaps even dated from when the College owned the land.[11]

WMCAR 04 notes a domestic site predating the sale of the land to Bright:

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[10] In Defend this Old Town: Williamsburg During the Civil War (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), Carol Kettenburg Dubbs cites a variety of actions by the enslaved. Some remained with those who enslaved them, though not always reliably; Lucy Tucker noted that they "did not immediately leave their homes or refuse the usual service, but went off by degrees as they made their arrangements" (p. 278); "runaways" were seen as a problem (p. 282).

One journalist for the New York Evening Post, Mack, noted among the blacks "an evident relief at our occupation of the town" (p. 227). Some appear to have attached themselves to Union officers (p.245). The military governor offered a sympathetic ear (p. 251) and the provost marshal appears to have practiced "a policy of practical emancipation" in freeing Eliza Baker (p. 251). Still, the new Federal newspaper made clear that its slogan, "Freedom To All," involved "white folks" alone: "we do not wish it even insinuated that we have any sympathy with abalitionism [sic]" (pp. 258-259).

In Yankees in the Streets: Forgotten People and Stories of Civil War Williamsburg (West Conshohocken PA: Infinity, 2016), Carson Hudson mentions "two faithful slaves" remaining with Sally Galt (p. 102). In the chapter "Slavery and Emancipation," Hudson notes that "most of the remaining slaves in town quickly left their masters, but a number stayed, mostly the elderly, through loyalty to various families" (pp. 137-138).

[11] Reading a draft of the present [i.e. earlier] paper, David Lewes offered some interesting comments:

> Here's some speculation on my part, in an effort to reconcile ownership of the property by Bright, tax assessments, and the presence of such a large collection of buildings apparently in the area of Barksdale Field in 1859. Could the College have worked a deal with Bright to leave their quarter on his property as long as the College paid for any property taxes? Or maybe that strip with the cabins still belonged to the College after the sale. Bright no doubt would have wanted to cultivate the nice flat stretch of property encompassing Barksdale, PBK, and Mason, but perhaps didn't mind leaving the slave quarter in place if it just ran right along the road. Could the College have just kept that strip along the road? Neither the College nor Bright may have wanted the bother of tearing down or moving the cabins. The closest things we have to a plat of the acreage sold to Bright is the conjectural drawings of boundaries in Sacks' thesis and the much later 1871 boundary line on the property map of the Peninsula (15, p. 12). Perhaps the shapes of the boundaries were a little more complex right during the decade before the Civil War.

> Based on the artifacts recovered, Site 44WB97 represents a domestic occupation dating to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Construction debris, particularly window pane glass dating to that period, suggests that a structure was once present on or very near the project area. Tobacco pipe fragments and sherds of ceramic tableware indicate domestic activities associated with the historic occupation. The dry-bodied stoneware teapot fragment further supports this interpretation. Following and perhaps during the domestic occupation, Barksdale Field was under cultivation. Plowscars were observed at the base of the excavation for Test Unit 1. In addition, Figure 8 clearly shows portions of Barksdale Field under cultivation. Areas of the site have been subject to filling and excavation for utilities, but intact plowzone is clearly present under areas of redeposited fill. (p. 18)

Moreover, the debris fields seem to bear some similarity to the symmetry of Graham's sketch, possibly even to rows of cabins and a larger domestic building.

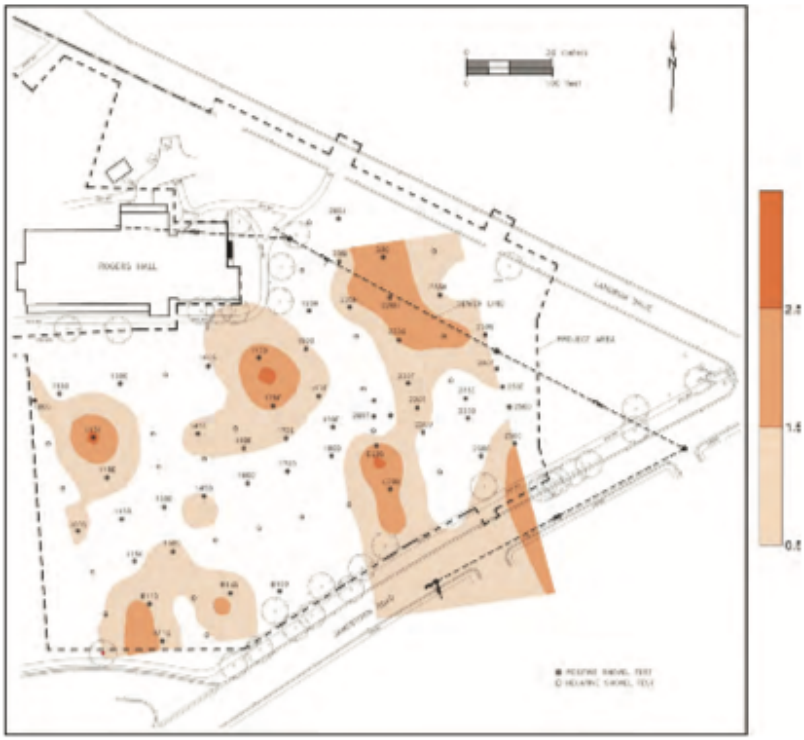


Figure 12. Distribution of architectural debris at Site 44WB97.

WMCAR 04, p. 20.

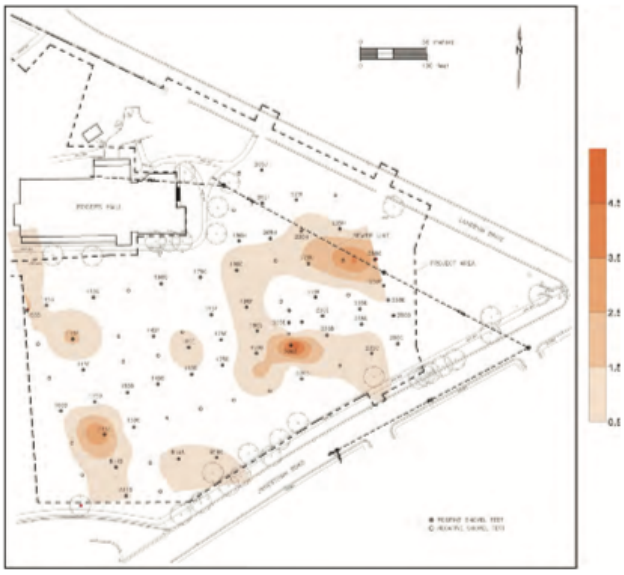
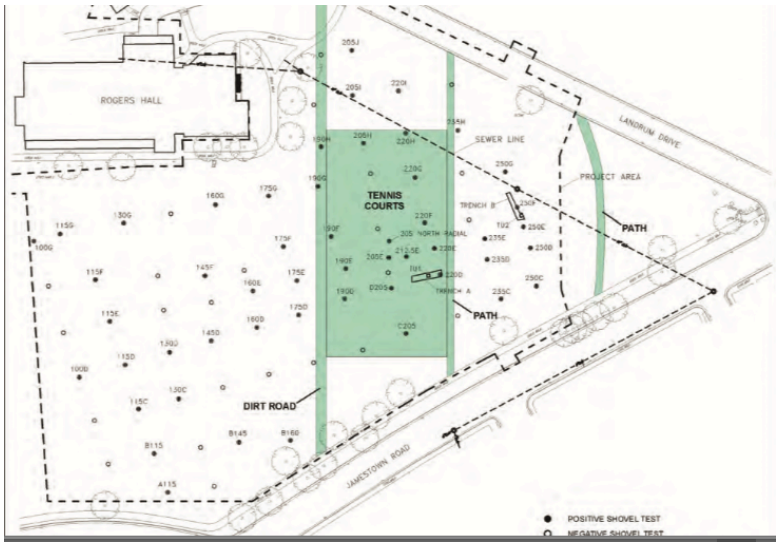


Figure 13. Distribution of diagnostic pre-twentieth century artifacts at Site 44WB97.

WMCAR 04, p. 21.

None of the recovered artifacts triggered any association with the lives or culture of enslaved people. Nevertheless, it is hard not to wonder whether this site, with its indications of habitation from the 18th century into the 19th, might not be worth further investigation, especially closer to Jamestown Road and to the east towards Landrum Drive:



WMCAR 04, p. 16.

One last note encouraging uncertainty. A fourth archeological survey of the area[12] was open to finding evidence of an urban farmstead: "given the location of the project area along a historic roadbed between Williamsburg and Jamestown and in proximity to Williamsburg, as well as the previous discovery of a light scatter of eighteenth/nineteenth century artifacts in a buried plowzone, a farmstead could be present in the project area"(p. 19).

In the end, no such site was found: "although no discrete cultural features were found, it was suggested [in WMCAR 04] that a domestic dwelling might be in the vicinity. *ACS* archeologists found no cultural features relating to such a dwelling and the eighteenth and nineteenth century artifacts discovered during unit excavations, trenching, and area excavations were scattered within the plowzone" (p. 54).

Still, the detailed "Artifact Inventory" (see the last 18 pages, unnumbered) does seem to suggest some kind of domestic presence in the area in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

[12] A Phase II survey was undertaken for the College a year after WMCAR 04: see Alain C. Outlaw, Timothy Morgan, Mary Clemons, and Donald Sadler, Phase II Archaeological Investigations, Barksdale Field, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia (VDHR File No. 2003-1182), Archaeological & Cultural Solutions, Inc., September 2005.